A STUDY OF CERTAIN ASPECTS OF NINETEENTH CENTURY PERIODICAL CRITICISM
(1788 – 1842)
especially in its influence on and attitude to new literary movements

by
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Volume Two
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CHAPTER THE FIFTH

A LITTLE POET, A NOBLE LORD,
AND AN ATHEIST.

We have seen at various points in the previous chapters that the critics had been very ready to discuss the moral implications of the books under review. There was little in any of these works which was morally objectionable to contemporary judgement, and most of what there was appeared, ironically enough in the writings of Scott and Crabbe. The Lake poets, no matter how much they were condemned as poets, were nearly always praised for their "amiable dispositions and virtuous principles." We have seen also that by the second decade of the century some critics actually directed their attention to Coleridge's moral character. In the present chapter we shall have under consideration three poets whose morals received so much attention from the reviewers that the merit or demerit of their art was more or less neglected. We shall find also, quite clearly marked, the same extension of the critic's inquiry and condemnation from the poem to the poet. Tom Moore, writing early in the century, did not find his private life looked
into. Byron and Shelley, later on, did. It will be possible to estimate to some extent why this should be so after we have examined the actual criticisms of the poets concerned.

The volume of poems published under the name of Thomas Little in 1802 and the Epistles, Odes, and Other Poems in Moore's own name, four years later, considerably shocked the critics, and judging by sales considerably amused the public. Indeed the earlier volume did so well that the publisher offered Moore a substantial sum to bring out the later one. Both were almost uniformly condemned by the reviewers. The British Critic, in answer to a correspondent, flatly refused to give them a notice: "As we despair of correcting the evil, we will not by our censure add to its publicity." But the earliest notice appeared in the Critical Review, and, if Zeitlin is correct in his attribution, Southey had the pleasure of exposing the sins of the Satanic School twenty years before he invented the name. Two short quotations will show Southey's opinion of the poetical and moral worth of Little's Poems: "The general subject is love - or what was called love in the days of Charles the Second; more decent indeed in its expression, but in its feeling and character the same. They abound in

(1) See British Critic Vol.29 p.700 June 1807

For other references to reviews see Appendix C.
wit, and discover a power of language and a simplicity which have rarely been equalled." "Few ages have ever been disgraced by a volume more corrupt in its whole spirit and tendency.... The Monk had its spots:—this is leprous all over."

The Monthly Review, admiring the same merits in the poetry, took a different attitude to the moral implications: "Although some of the poems may be such as rigid virtue must disapprove, decency of expression has been carefully consulted; and nothing occurs which can disgust a general reader of poetry."

The Epistles, etc. attracted a greater number of critics, who with one exception agreed with the Critical Review that Moore's poetry was attractive but pernicious. The most important notice was that written by Jeffrey, which Moore considered serious enough to justify the issuing of a challenge. But compared with later writers, Moore escaped lightly. Jeffrey regards the book as "a public nuisance." His anger is aroused by the cold-blooded attempt to inflame and pollute the unsuspecting and innocent. The immorality is concealed under the mask of refinement, and therefore the more insidious and malignant. Moore's "raptures....are the unhallowed fruits of cheap and vulgar prostitution." Infidelity becomes a subject for boast. But Jeffrey is wise enough not to preach on this theme. "To us, indeed, the perpetual kissing and twining, and panting of these amorous
persons, is rather ludicrous than seductive.... Even to younger men, we believe, the book will not be very dangerous.... It is upon the other sex that we conceive its effects may be most pernicious." Their innocent and sympathetic natures are likely to be misled by the apparent warmth and tenderness of it. They do not know that sensuality and refined sentiment do not so blend in real life. "Women are now beginning to receive a more extended education,....and to become more of intellectual and independent creatures, than they have yet been in these islands.... They should not consider modesty as one of the prejudices from which they are now to be emancipated." Otherwise Jeffrey foresees the destruction of the nation.

Considering the production as poetry, Jeffrey does not find much to praise either. Moore's style is "tawdry, affected, and finical,...in the right millinery taste." Various innocent passages are quoted in proof.

The other critics confirmed Jeffrey's opinions in their own way. The Literary Journal attributed Moore's licentiousness to the bad example of high society. "The men are not represented as saints, nor the women as Lucretias: all appears like what it is generally found in fashionable life." The Critical Review, however, thinks Moore's popularity greatest among "apprentices of both sexes; who found in them a tinsel, a gaudiness, a certain embroidery of expression so nearly resembling their own manners,
fashions, and ideas of gentility...that they could not but have hailed Mr. Moore as a superior species of their own genus." It goes further than Jeffrey, denies that Moore can write petry, and points to "that noble and truly heroic contempt for sense, which is here displayed." The Monthly Review thought the writing careless and the morals disgusting. The Eclectic Review referring to the high terms that tempted Moore to publish this volume asks, "If he degrades himself to be a literary pimp, is it any excuse to say he was hired?" This is the most personal of the early criticisms. It summarises the tendency of Moore's poetry in the following vigorous fashion: "In every page the poet is a libertine; in every song his mistress is a prostitute; and what the poet and his mistress are, he seems determined that his readers shall be; and verily we wish that none but such may be his readers." A religious strain is adopted in warning readers away from him.

In contrast to all these, the Universal Magazine gave Moore a mighty puff in two articles. It was obviously to praise the verse, but even for the "inflammatory" poetry this magazine had nothing but praise: "It may safely be said, that where it has led one to debauchery, it has induced twenty to marriage!" The Anti-Jacobin Review was so pleased with Moore's antipathy to the United States in a political aspect that most of the criticism is occupied in quoting and amplifying the anti-American passages. The amatory
poems are dismissed as being sensual rather than loving.

_Lalla Rookh_, published in 1817, belonged definitely to the Byronic period, and the treatment it received was modified by that fact. Opinion was divided on whether Moore had really amended although he had expressed repentance for the volumes of more than ten years previously. The commonest complaint now was that his poetry was cloying in its voluptuous imagery. The critics saw how much of an effort it cost Moore to write about anything but girls, birds, and flowers, and such sweetly pretty things. But was the present book innocent or dangerous? The _British Critic_ thought it was an improvement, but could not refrain from giving its considered retrospective opinion that "the poems of Little, as they are called, are perhaps the most formidable enemies to public morals which have issued at any time from the British press, and we do not hesitate to say that we have traced more dereliction of public principle to the effect of that little volume, than even to our intercourse with a profligate and an abandoned continent." Most of the remaining critics also thought the present volume more or less unexceptionable. But two critics were not satisfied with mere absence of offence. They wanted Moore's poetry to do positive good. For instance, _The Monthly Review_ praises Moore for having avoided the Byronic fault of taking villains for his
heroes and "adorning such beings with interesting attributes - of not only failing to hold them up to detestation but describing them as the lords and masters of the hearts of lovely and amiable women."

Yet it concludes with this complaint: "With the exception of 'Paradise and the Peri,' no great moral effect is either attained or attempted throughout the work.... What head is set right in one erroneous notion, what heart is softened in one obdurate feeling by this luxurious quarto?" The Eclectic Review, which thinks "Mr Moore's muse has somewhat improved in her morals, though she has rather gone off in her personal charms," has a higher notion of good poetry than the sentimental—didactic ideal of the previous paper. A poet, in its opinion, should profit his readers "by those high and severe imaginings of more than human excellence, those holy aspirations, those 'immortal longings' after all that is best and greatest in our nature.... Such a poet is a good poet, and a good citizen. Is Mr Moore such a one?"

As opposed to these six papers, two thought Lalla Rookh positively immoral. The British Review is fundamentally opposed to Moore's apparent creed that "man's heaven is properly in this world." As they put it, "He knows a place or two....where the very wind is full of wantonness, and the aspen—trees tremble all over with love....and harams, like living parterres, lie basking in blushes and odours." But where "sexual blandishments" are the main interest of a people,
"there dirt and every disgusting impurity is sure to prevail." The critic is consequently afraid of the moral and political effects of this volume. "A nation demoralized is never free.... A voluptuous homage paid to woman's charms argues no respect for her character or her comforts." So far, so good. But thereafter a very heavy sledge-hammer is taken to crush the little apologue, Paradise and the Peri: "We are not very fond of pretty thoughts about heaven, and prayer, and penitence, and pardon for sin: these are to us very awful sounds, too awful to be presented becomingly in the tinsel of Mr. Moore's decorations.... A little Mussulman in the act of prayer....does not, somehow or other, interest us as much as it may perhaps persons of a more oriental taste." The Literary Panorama thought the same poem "a very elegant trifle; full of fancy and poetical imagery; it is likewise pure." But the critic wondered how Moore could be popular with real ladies. The poet was reproved for "that voluptuous style, which he has cultivated at the expense of a-- the nobler faculties of his mind." The final judgement was: "Sensuality is the deep-rooted vice which imparts a flat and disgusting sameness to all his productions, a coarseness to all his sentiments... However calm and pure the surface may appear, venom and mischief lurk at the bottom."

There was, it may be noticed, nothing very personal in all this. It is true that the Gentleman's
Magazine concluded its appreciation with a flattering picture of Moore singing and accompanying himself on the piano—a pleasant but irrelevant edition. It was left to Blackwood's to be equally irrelevant but not so pleasant.

Blackwood's Magazine devoted two quite contradictory articles to Moore. The first, a review of Lalla Rookh, was written by Wilson while he was still a subordinate on the Magazine. Moore is called "the most ingenious, brilliant, and fanciful Poet of the present age. His external senses seem more delicate and acute than those of other men.... Along with this extreme delicacy and fineness of organization, he possesses an ever-active and creative Fancy." His early indiscretions are glossed over as best as may be: "Every lover of virtue must lament that while his first productions sometimes breathe and glow with genuine feeling and passion....they are so fatally infected with a spirit to which we can give no other name than licentiousness." But "he soon began....to pant for nobler achievements.... It is long since Mr Moore has redeemed himself—nobly redeemed himself and become the eloquent and inspired champion of virtue, liberty, and truth." In passing, Moore is called the Burns of Ireland. Ecstatic praise is lavished on Lalla Rookh. As for Paradise and the Peri, "Never did Genius so beautify religion; never did an inspired pen so illustrate the divine sentiment of a
The second article was a general estimate of Moore written by Lockhart under the signature of Lauerwinkel, and is mainly an attack on the past and present morals of Moore's poetry. Although ashamed of his early work, Moore cannot undo the damage. "The impure poet has roused a demon which he has no spell to lay.... Mr Moore, when he is stretched upon the bed of death, will understand what it was that troubled, with a tenfold pang, the last agonies of Rochester." This is cold comfort for a reformed sinner and is in the very worst critical taste. What has a reviewer to do with an author's deathbed? However, Lockhart thinks the reformation has stopped half-way. Lalla Rookh, for instance, "never rises to the true sublime of purity. The Epicurean tinge is diffused over the whole." Moore always employs the pagan corrupt conception of women. "He never for a moment contemplates them but with the eye of a sensualist." He never gives them the dignity that we find in Byron's women. The article concludes with a discussion and dismissal of Moore's claim to be Ireland's national poet.

As these two articles are not contributions to a symposium the only excuse that can be offered for their publication is the change in editorship of the Magazine between the first and second. Yet the "editor" nowhere makes a disclaimer of the opinions and standards of his predecessors, although this article represents a complete volte-face even in details.
The contrast with Byron, whom Blackwood's praised more consistently than they did anyone, is disingenuous, if not actually question-begging.

Such was the treatment meted out to the little poet. It will be noticed that while the moral degeneracy of his poetry was repeatedly called in question the man himself escaped with few insults, and those few delivered by Lockhart. His merits as a poet are generally exaggerated, and only a few critics like Jeffrey realised the utter vacuity of his verse. Unfortunately, owing to the scattered nature of their production, Irish Melodies, Moore's greatest achievement, were hardly noticed by the contemporary press, though it is obvious from frequent references that it was to them that Moore owed his position in later years.
BYRON'S *Hours of Idleness* is remembered today as much because it was cut up by the *Edinburgh Review* as because it was Byron's first bid for fame. As poetry it was almost negligible, but it was written by a Noble Lord, and was automatically made much of by the press.

Most of the reviews concurred with the verdict of the *Universal Magazine*, "very creditable to one so young as the author." There was a general feeling that any leisured youth, especially a nobleman, who devoted that leisure to poetry ought to be encouraged. The technical merits which attracted attention were *elegance*, facility, and vigour of the writing. The most popular poems were those on Newstead Abbey, followed closely by *Lachin-y-Gair* and *Oh, Had my Fate been joined with Thine* Various faults were indicated. The common attitude to them was voiced by the *Literary Panorama*: "The author is not an imbecile, but he is an incautious writer; he is spirited, but not always correct; wildish, but, when he is broke in that mettle which he now shows may prove his advantage." Most papers agreed with the *Critical Review* in its praise of Byron's purity: "Of the amatory poems in this collection, many are extremely pleasing, all are easy and unaffected, and (what to so young a man is rare and exalted praise) free from the slightest taint of immodesty." The opposite view was taken by the *Eclectic Review* and the *Literary Pamorama* only.

Some of the adulation of the Noble Lord was
'laid on with a trowel.' The following, from the Gentleman's Magazine, might be mistaken for irony but for the context: "Heartily hoping that the 'illness and depression of spirits,' which evidently pervade the greater part of these effusions, are entirely dispelled; confident that 'George-Gordon Lord Byron' will have a conspicuous niche in the future editions of 'Royal and Noble Authors,' and lamenting with his Lordship the fate of Newstead Abbey; the 'Hours of Idleness' shall be introduced to our Readers by the first in the collection."

The Eclectic and Edinburgh Reviews, apparently disgusted by such frothy effusions as the above, set about furnishing a slightly acid corrective. If further motive for hostility were needed, it might be found in the presumptuous tone of superiority adopted by the author, who had committed the further offence in Whig eyes of being a nobleman. The Eclectic reviewer knew he ought to feel reverence and delight at receiving a volume of poetry from an aristocrat. However "we shall not suffer this superior dignity, or these unnatural symptoms of intellect, to overwhelm us with astonishment.... Other noblemen, living and dead, have ventured to attract attention by publishing amatory verses, which happily escape from contempt, by sinking into obscurity." Some merit was allowed to the volume however. The critic dropped the bantering tone to discuss the morals of the book. In conclusion Byron is encouraged to give up poetry and do something
striking; he might make up his mind on religious matters and become an active Christian or a bold infidel in consequence, or he might be brave enough not to fight a duel.

Brougham's article in the Edinburgh was sarcastic all through, and allowed the book no merit at all: "The poesy of this young lord belongs to the class which neither gods nor men are said to permit.. .. His effusions are spread over a dead flat." For a young man to write poetry is not remarkable; "it happens in the life of nine men in ten who are educated in England; and the tenth man writes better verse than Lord Byron." The original poetry is unoriginal, while the translations may pass, but only as school exercises. The real sting lay in the tail: "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 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." It was this passage that rankled in Byron's mind and inspired his next effort. We may however pass over English Bards and direct our attention to the main bulk of Byron's poetry.

Byronism proper began with the first two cantos of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage in 1812. Its astonishing reception by the public is reflected in
the press. The critics were quite honestly carried away. It was not fear of another satire that caused the change of attitude but the sudden growth of Byron's own powers. Some of the reviews are worth examining in detail.

Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review* stated the general feeling pointedly: "Lord Byron has improved marvellously since his last appearance at our tribunal;—and this....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." It is a success in spite of the absence of the usual attractions—there is no story or incident, no real connection between the parts, and no character except the nominal hero. Incidentally, although Byron has issued a warning against taking Harold for a self-portrait, "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."

Passing lightly over the probable unpopularity of these sentiments, Jeffrey gives his reasons for his confidence in the success of the poem. "Its chief excellence is a singular freedom and boldness, both of thought and expression, and a great occasional force and felicity of diction,...a certain plain manliness and strength of manner, which is infinitely refreshing
after the sickly affectations of so many modern writers." The diction is admittedly unequal, but at its best has a "nervous simplicity and manly freshness" reminiscent of Dryden. Some short passages are quoted for commendation, including the pacifist stanzas on Talavera, the apostrophe to Parnassus, and two stanzas on solitude, which show "great power, we think, and great bitterness of soul."

The chief faults that Jeffrey finds are the lack of narrative, and the gloomy tone. The style is often diffuse, and sometimes tame. "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." A postscript denies the existence of any personal animosity in the review of Hours of Idleness or of any fear or favour in the present review.

The Quarterly Review was less likely to be pleased than the Edinburgh, although it was issued by Byron's publisher, but even it is "much gratified, and often highly delighted" by this "metrical itinerary." Travel books are very popular, and yet no one but Byron has thought of making one in verse, "but we doubt whether his plan be well conceived, and we are by no means disposed to applaud, in every instance, the selection of his ornaments." Ellis, the author of this article then states his objections in detail.
Firstly, Harold, instead of giving the poem connection, embarrasses it. In any case, "why revert to the rude and simple ages of chivalry in search of a character which can only exist in an age of vicious refinement?... Why is this group of antiques sent on a journey through Portugal and Spain, during the interval between the convention of Cintra and the Battle of Talavera?" Further the critic dislikes the "motley mixture of obsolete and modern phraseology" and the positive misuse of antique words. The actual character of Harold is "capriciously and uselessly degraded.... The boyish libertine whose imagination is chilled by his sated apetites, whose frightful gloom is only the result of disappointed selfishness....can only be viewed with unmixed disgust," The critic, Ellis, intensely dislikes Byron's opinions on war: "When we read the preceeding sarcasms on the 'bravo's trade', we are induced to ask, not without some anxiety and alarm, whether such are indeed the opinions which a British peer entertains of a British army." Worse still, scepticism about immortality "is the consummation of human misery.... As we are most....unwilling to impute to [Byron] the intention of giving offence to any class of his readers, we much wish that he had assigned to his imaginary Harold, instead of uttering as his own, the sentiments" expressing these doubts. Ellis is charmed by the inset lyrics and quotes Harold's Mediterranean voyage culminating in the stanzas on solitude, and the final verdict on
the poem is favourable; on the many marks of sterling genius "we have forborne to expatiate, because we apprehend that our readers are quite as well qualified as ourselves to estimate the merits of pleasing versification, of lively conception, and of accurate expression.... But it was our duty attentively to search for, and honestly to point out the faults arising from caprice, or from a disregard of general opinion."

The Christian Observer gives the narrow religious view. After some very definite disapproval of English Bards, the critic mentions Byron's desire not to be confused with his hero. "It is somewhat singular, however, that most of the offensive reflections in the poem are made, not by the 'Childe', but the poet." The contents of the poem are then summarised in a mocking style. Byron's attitude to Britain's part in the Peninsular War is not approved, although the critic sympathises with his pacifism in the abstract. Favourable references or quotations include passages on the maid of Saragoza, the bull fight, Athens, and solitude. The poet's scepticism is "the grand source of all the gloomy and bad passions displayed in the volume." The critic has not much to say in favour of the stanza. "One of the ends of poetry is to relax, and the artificial and elaborate stanza of Spencer costs us too much trouble, even in
the reading, to accomplish this end." Byron has improved on Spenser by discarding allegory, and providing food for the mind as well as for the eye. Unfortunately his philosophy and morals are of a kind to corrupt and offend. Thereupon the critic fills one page in an attempt to prove that poetry from Homer's day onwards has always had a moral, reformatory purpose; and another half page to prove, with references to Quintillian and Longinus, that the poet is expected to be a good man.

In conclusion he adopts a still graver tone. Childe Harold is the only thing of its kind since Rousseau's Confessions. Both are vicious and both are founded on vanity. Fortunately Byron also reveals his unmixed misery, thus preventing imitation and consoling the virtuous. Christianity is the only cure. Byron is advised to try it. The critic earnestly hopes for his conversion, and concludes the review with a sermon.

This was quite the most hostile notice of Childe Harold, indeed the only one that, on balance, disapproved of the poem, and the censure was obviously exaggerated. But the importance of the review must not be overlooked. It indicates that there was a body of Puritanical opinion opposed to Byron from the start. It picks on Byron's essential weakness, his vanity, although neither this nor any other paper saw how that vanity vitiated poetic taste at the time and
for many years to come. Above all the review is concerned with Byron's personal character. The critic is less interested in the poetical merits and demerits of Byron's theories or even in combatting these theories than in the spiritual welfare of their author. We shall see that as Byron's career became more phenomenal, more and more criticisms were directed at the man rather than at his poetry. In due time the habit spread, and other poets as well found their characters being examined by the reviewers, not always with the beneficent intentions of the Christian Observer.

A more liberal attitude, probably the typical attitude of the middle-class, is expressed by the Eclectic Review. A retraction of its former sarcasms is implicit in the opening sentences: "With a resolute, and, as the event has shewn, a very just confidence in his own talents, Lord Byron has...again demanded the applause, and dared the censure of the world; and the world, at length discovering that Lord Byron is really a man of genius, and a poet, is at least as profuse in its encomiums at present, as it was formerly liberal in its satire." The general praise, however, is a little excessive, some of it being paid to his politics rather than his poetry.

The character of Harold, according to this critic, although painted with much truth and force and pointing a valuable moral, is too gloomy and painful. Byron's intrusions in his own character are therefore
welcome, even if he sometimes confuses himself with his hero. The stanza suits a philosophical poem; but the philosophy is too bitter and disdainful. There are signs of misanthropy, "which, we trust, is very foreign to the character of the author."

In all other respects, the poem compels admiration. It displays energy and even sublimity of thought, lively sketches of character, and a sensitive appreciation of nature. The diction, although sometimes languid and careless, is usually nervous and idiomatic. A subtle, penetrating comment is passed on Byron's claims to permanence as a poet. The critic gives judgement against Byron because he reaches sublimity by reason and argument, not by intuition and inspiration. As an example, the passage on the folly of ambition is quoted. In conclusion the critic admires the bold personifications and the great descriptions of wild scenery. The passage on Parnassus and the song to Inez are quoted. Two further blemishes are pointed out - the attempts at satire, which are merely flippant, and his disbelief in immortality which is a more serious affair. It will be noticed that this last matter is not over-emphasised, and the whole review is quite judiciously balanced.

These four reviews may be taken as typical of the rest. The belief that Byron and Harold were the same person is quite general. Only the Anti-Jacobin
Review stands out strongly against this "impious supposition." Those critics who mention the absence of narrative agree with Jeffrey that it is a blemish. The *British Critic* is one of the few that does not express disapproval of Harold's gloomy character. Another is the *Literary Panorama* which thinks, "When the love of virtue, and the practice of vice, meet in the same person....condemnation in the observer is associated with pity approaching to affection." A somewhat similar idea is expressed by the *Critical Review*, which feels that much must be forgiven to "a character so beautifully sketched, that we have only to regret its glaring want of connection with the rest of the poem." The *British Review* agrees that Harold "has no business where he is," but does not admit that the brilliance of the drawing compensates for this fault. The *Anti-Jacobin Review* is as fiercely opposed as the *Quarterly* to Byron's pacifism: "As the deliberate reflection of a noble English mind, it staggers credibility, for it resembles the rant of democracy in its wildest form." The other papers ignore the political question. No other review lets the religious problem obscure its outlook to the same extent as the *Christian Observer*, although there is none without a sentence or two of disapproval, except the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

Obviously it was Byron's energy that proved so irresistible to his critics. Again and again one finds the adjective *nervous* applied to this poem,
although it was commonly recognised that the diction sometimes lapsed from its own high standard of forcefulness. Furthermore the poem possessed the attraction of novelty. Harold was an original character and so gained attention, if not approval. The poem itself was a new kind, "a metrical itinerary", and the descriptions were the most generally admired feature of it. Byron displayed quite a journalistic sense for choosing scenes in which the public were interested and describing them in a vivid way. Descriptive poetry was not new; but poetical descriptions of historical and topical scenes were, and every picturesque passage of any merit was referred to or quoted by some reviewer, the most popular being the Portuguese and Albanian scenes. The 'philosophy' of the poem also had a novel boldness, and if not really original was made to appear so by the freshness of Byron's approach. The favourite examples of this quality were the character-sketch of Harold and the stanzas on Solitude: "To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood
and fell...."
The Spenserian stanza was not exactly in common use, and a majority of the critics admired Byron's handling of it. The *Monthly Review* particularly recognised the

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(1) It seems probable that most of the reviews in this paper, which is always well-disposed to Byron, himself an occasional contributor to it, were written by his friend, Francis Hodgson.

(See Letters and Journals, passim)
vigour Byron infused into it: "The whole effect is powerful and elastic; the concluding line of the stanza in particular being no 'wounded snake', but a vigorous serpent, which takes a keen aim, and darts at its object with its full collected strength."

Byron's next four tales, The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, The Corsair, and Lara, followed each other so closely during 1813 and 1814 and were so similar in type that the notices of them may be considered as one group. Such treatment is further justified by the fact that the general attitude toward the poet varied little during this period, except that there was perhaps an increasing impatience with Byron's misanthropy and repetitiveness, an impatience which there is reason to believe was not shared by the reading public. Thirteen thousand copies of The Corsair were sold on the day of publication.

Novelty could not last for ever, and the critics had therefore to find some explanation of Byron's continued popularity. To put the matter briefly, they discovered it in Byron's minute psychological analysis of character, and especially of eccentric character. Jeffrey, as usual not content with superficial reasons, evolved an interesting theory to explain why such analysis should be popular at that period. The passage in which he does so has the further interest of displaying Jeffrey's realis-

(1) Edinburgh Review on Corsair
ation that the romantic movement was inevitable. He argues that manners and poetry run in parallel cycles. The unrepressed emotions of the ruder ages are in a later era consciously restrained; a period of cold politeness follows, and then one of gay dissipation. Poetry, correspondingly, is at first violent, next "pompous and stately, then affected refined and ingenious - and finally gay, witty, discursive and familiar." At last disgust at frivolity causes a reaction to violence and freedom of expression once more.

"This is the stage of society in which fanaticism has its second birth....the era of revolutions and projects." Literature "becomes more enthusiastic, authoritative and impassioned.... The feats of chivalry, and the loves of romance are revived with more than their primitive wildness and ardour. For the sake of the natural feeling they contain, the incidents and diction of the old vulgar ballads are once more imitated and surpassed; and poetry does not disdain in pursuit of her new idol of strong emotion, to descend to the very lowest conditions of society, and to stir up the most revolting dregs of utter wretchedness and depravity. This is the age to which we are now arrived.... It is a fact, independent of all theory, not only that all the poets of the last twenty years have dealt much more in powerful sensations, than those of the century that went before; but that in order to attain this object, they have employed themselves upon subjects which would have been rejected as
vulgar and offensive by the fastidious delicacy of that age of fine writing. Instead of ingenious essays, elegant pieces of gallantry and witty satires all stuck over with classical allusions, we have in our popular poetry, the dreams of convicts, and the agonies of Gypsy women, — and the exploits of buccaneers, freebooters and savages — and pictures to shudder at, of remorse, revenge, and insanity." By this penetrative analysis of the taste, and consequently literature of his time Jeffrey explains Byron's popularity, after which he goes on to point out a distinction between primitive and modern poetry.

The former is concerned with violence of action, the latter with violence of passion. The emphasis is therefore placed on character. "The minds of the great agents must be unmasked for us — and all the anatomy of their throbbing bosoms laid open to our gaze. We must be made to understand what they feel and enjoy and endure." This vivisection often leads to anachronisms, fifteenth century persons being endowed with nineteenth century emotions. "The combination we believe to be radically incongruous; but it was almost indispensable to the poetical effect that was in contemplation." The fault is nearly universal, appearing at its worst in Southey's Madoc, and to a varying degree in Campbell, Scott and Byron, "who has adorned a merciless corsair on a rock in the Mediterranean, with every virtue under heaven — except common honesty.... He is spoken of as an
abandoned and unfeeling ruffian - and he uniformly comports himself as a perfect pattern of tenderness and humanity."

So we arrive back at our starting point, that Byron's peculiar merit is the portrayal of eccentric character. Among the papers which share Jeffrey's opinion are the Critical Review, which speaks of Byron "guiding the imagination through all the intricacies of human thought to the very sources of human conduct," in The Giaour, but which by the time The Corsair is issued, has begun to think Byron's favourite character "inconceivable", the Christian Observer, (which contrariwise praises only The Corsair,) the Monthly Review, and the Universal Magazine. The Eclectic Review has even more difficulty than the Critical in reaching a decision on this question. Its first opinion is that "the character of the Giaour, in particular, ...is made up of qualities which, in real life never were nor will be united; and the tendency of this fragment (as well as of the unfinished poem of Childe Harold) we are convinced, is exceedingly pernicious. They both inculcate the dangerous error that vice does not degrade the mind." Five months later the writer in the new series of the Review states that Byron is "deeply read in the human heart", that he excels in the delineation of character, and that in The Corsair he excels himself. A portrait of Conrad is quoted with the comment, "We know nothing in the whole range of English poetry, which transcends
this, in beauty and pathos." If any further indication is needed of the grip which the Byronic character had on the contemporary mind, it may be found in the number of times that character sketches were quoted. That of Conrad, just referred to, was reprinted by no less than seven periodicals.

The opposition party was headed naturally by the Quarterly Review, which even in such an early criticism as that on The Giaour found it difficult to be reconciled to a character "whose feelings and motives, as described by himself, are, in our opinion, generally unnatural, and sometimes odious," while Ellis Conrad, in the reviewer's explicit opinion, is so remote from human nature that it is difficult to sympathise with him. Yet round this figure Byron sheds so much "apparent magnanimity, tenderness, and generosity" that the reader is almost compelled to admire it. "It is only after some recollection that we acquiesce in the truth of a remark which has been made on this poem, that Lord Byron has 'adorned a merciless corsair on a rock in the Mediterranean with every virtue under heaven - except common honesty.'" The reviewer, however feels compelled to protest against the "new canons of criticism" on which Jeffrey founds his opinion. His poetic cycle is "purely imaginary", and the "anatomical operation" which he recommends "is essentially unpoetical" because not an emotional one. This Ellis is a good point although ellipsis goes a little
astray when he comes to elaborate it. "The writer, who seeks to excite any emotion, will never effect this by attempting to analyse its nature and origin, but must content himself with describing its effects, because it is only with these that his readers can be supposed to be conversant." To attempt more is, in the Quarterly's opinion, to write metaphysics, not poetry. In spite of this vigorous protest poetry has chosen the path of increasing minuteness of such analysis, until to-day even the unconscious has been anatomised in verse.

Several reviews upheld the Quarterly's verdict. When Lara was published the British Critic declared "All his heroes have been hitherto harsh and unnatural," although it thought this fifth version of "his favourite model of intellectual and moral deformity" the most successful. As we have seen the Critical Review finally came into line with the Quarterly, while the British Review was consistently antagonistic to Byron: "There is a sort of morbid sentimental hue thrown over the stormy character of the Giaour, which is likely to beget a feeling in which too much of admiration enters, for a reader not well grounded in good principles to be safe under its influence." In the review of the next poem, the Review elaborated its attack on this sentimental type of hero as unnatural in the violent opposition of characteristics and immoral in tendency. The origin of the character is traced "to the ideal in morals so
well known to the German philosophers," with Walter Scott as the immediate model of bad taste. Finally "with respect to Conrad,...we cannot help observing the address with which the poet contrives to interest the female reader in the fate of a robber and murderer by profession.... When we find him rescuing the sex by dozens and passing through fire and smoking ruins to save a whole haram from destruction, our prejudices and affections can no longer resist the attraction of such brilliant humanity."

From the debate about this aspect of Byron's poetry some important facts transpire. None of the critics correctly appraised Byron as a creator of character. Jeffrey saw that his method was good, but was wise enough not to conclude, as so many critics did, that the characters were therefore lifelike. The group of reviewers who went to the opposite extreme and declared that Byron's hero was a combination of incompatibilities and therefore unreal were poor psychologists. Only one, the much despised British Review, came within sight of the truth when it took exception to the sentimentality of Byron's drawing. That was the quality which so greatly falsified the poet's heroes. They were unreal, not because they were impossible, but because they were never objectively imagined by the poet, being mainly projections of his self-admiration and self-pity. The Eclectic Review, as we shall see, thought this accounted for any merit in the characterisation.
The other characteristics of Byron's poetry which received praise were of a more conventional nature. It was agreed, almost unanimously, that no one wrote more forceful poetry than Byron, that his narrative was pleasingly rapid, that his descriptions were vivid, and that his diction was notably vigorous. The word condensation enjoyed quite a vogue in reviews of The Corsair. These virtues, however, it was generally said were accompanied by their respective faults: his force became turgidity, his rapidity careless haste, and his vigour harshness. Jeffrey defended the fragmentary style of narrative employed in The Giaour: "The greater part of polite readers would now no more think of sitting down to a whole Epic, than to a whole ox:- And truly....it is a taste which we are rather inclined to patronize." The Monthly Review on the other hand took exception to it: "as much too listless and too lofty." The same paper found the same fault continuing into Lara. The objection there raised is interesting: "Whatever the effect of such pieces may be in exciting interest, it is clear that no moral influence can be produced if actions be not ascribed to some motive.... When a human being is represented in such glowing colours of wickedness, and yet with such a mysterious mixture of tenderness and feeling, as The Corsair exhibited, every reader naturally suggests to himself the indulgence of some of the more violent passions of our nature as the cause which has made such a character what it is.... [One] would expect in a continuation of the tale, to learn the
nature of the passion to which the author meant to ascribe the production of such a being." In other words, the reviewer had shifted his objection from merely technical to moral grounds, in this case with some justification. Byron's self-accusing hero with a Mysterious Past is a bug to fright babes. Until the mystery is revealed he remains at best half alive, and therefore unable to serve any dramatic, or moral, purpose.

And so we pass to the grand problem, the moral influence of Byron's Tales, a problem that was debated with much heat and some dust. We have already seen how the British Review had been blinded in its analysis of the Byronic Hero. Some other reviews could not consider the character except as a moral tendency that would corrupt (or perhaps reform) the readers. For instance, reference to the quotation, given above, from the Eclectic Review on The Giaour will show that the supposedly pernicious effect of the tale lay at the root of its objections to the character. Even the Edinburgh Review thought that powerful character-drawing "when presented in combination with worthlessness and guilt, is one of the most powerful corrupters and perverters of our moral nature." The Anti-Jacobin Review took up the attitude that "he who writes for the public is amenable to the public for the rectitude and integrity of his principles.... We have heard it, indeed, gravely asserted that a reader has no right to expect a moral
poem. Such an assertion...is unworthy of a rational, and much more of a responsible, creature." The Bride of Abydos, the least "Byronic" of the tales, was morally acceptable to all except the British Review. The Quarterly, in fact, went out of its way to show that the characters in this poem were on a higher moral plane than their predecessors. Over The Corsair opinions were more divided. The Monthly Review spoke of the Tales as if they were Moral Tales: "The moral effect of these compositions (notwithstanding occasional passages of gloom) is good, as they shew - that of which it is most important to be aware, - the baleful effect of evil passions and evil actions on the destiny and conduct of human life." The Eclectic Review took the same line; Byron is said to achieve moral effects because he makes us so aware of the misery of vice and remorse. Nowhere is there anything designed to corrupt the virtuous, or to make vice lovable. Jeffrey expressed the opposite view in its mildest terms: "There is no intellectual dignity or accomplishment about any of his characters; and no very enlightened or equitable principles of morality." The Christian Observer went much further. The reviewer here complained that Byron's poetry was deficient in moral rather than in morality. "It is a pretty picture, but we can find no subject in it.... We have been most usually given to understand that the moral is a most essential part in the structure of a
poem." Dryden is quoted as an authority and the review develops into a three-page sermon on the necessity of a poet being a believer and concludes with the hope of seeing Byron as a religious poet. An example of the touchiness of the reviews about moral and religious matters is afforded by the British Critic. In The Corsair there occurs a reference to Socrates, "who lived and died as none can live or die," which prompted that paper to the remark, "There are a few old-fashioned people in the world, called Christians, whose death-bed we should prefer even to the last moments of Socrates." For Byron's benefit the death of Hooker is quoted.

Matters were further complicated by a very natural confusion in the reviewers' minds of Byron with the Byronic hero. "Lord B. has disclaimed the character," said the Eclectic Review, "but that he possesses the power of assuming it during the hour of inspiration, no one can well doubt." That remark was made when The Giaour was issued. The same paper quite frankly traces the successful portraiture of The Corsair to Byron's identity with his hero. Either his heroes are various modifications of himself, in which case Byron is attempting to attract to his own person the sympathy and pity given to his characters. "Or perhaps his Lordship wishes to merge his real character in that of the poet, and to substitute, in place of his conscious self, an imaginary representative bearing his name with whose features the dark lays of
his harp may seem more accordant, than with those of
the satirist, or lighter voluptuary." This, incident-
ally, is a very shrewd psychological analysis of
Byronism, and though belonging to the field of bio-
graphy rather than criticism affords a clue to the
impermanence of Byron's work. An even less friendly
line was taken by the British Review, which
had deliberately not confused Byron with his hero so
that it could attack the latter. That did not stop it
from making fun of the former and his new friends,
Moore and Jeffrey: "It is very pleasing to observe
the truly Christian spirit with which these various
persons have forgotten all their differences; to find
the author of the 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers'
laying down his animosities, and retracting his
denunciations, dedicating his Bride of Abydos to Lord
Holland, and his Corsair to the celebrated Mr. Moore,
to whose virtues and public services these same Scotch
Reviewers at one time forgot their own and their
country's obligations; and of the merit of whose
labours Lord Byron himself seemed once to entertain so
erroneous an opinion." The passage on Moore from
English Bards is quoted to give an additional zest to
these remarks. The dedication to Moore also amused, or
angered, a number of other writers. To all these
hunters of red herrings we have to add the reviewers
who definitely preached at or about Byron.

To sum up, we may state that any given
review of Byron's poetry may be vitiated as criticism
by the theory that all poetry should be didactic, inculcating a specific moral, or by the belief that the poet must conform to the critic's religious creed, or by the fear that readers may imitate the vices of the hero, or by the critic's misplaced interest in Byron's politics, morals, or private life.

In spite of all the differences of opinion however the critics still called Byron a "genius" and "the first poet of the age." The British Review and the Christian Observer were probably the only papers that would have been pleased to see his writing cease.

Hebrew Melodies (1815) would have been passed over here but for the extraordinary criticisms which appeared in the Critical Review. Hebrew Melodies appeared in two separate volumes, the second of which was noticed in this review in April 1816, the month in which Byron's domestic rupture became common knowledge. The first notice, published in August of the preceding year, consists mainly of sympathetic commiseration with the poet. It begins by contrasting "the pure outrage and simple atrocity" of "all the poems about border-chiefs, and witches, and wonders, with which of late years we have been so unmercifully deluged", with the deep and mournful thoughtfulness of Childe Harold. "We feel that such early advances in moral knowledge, and such accurate
estimation of the frailties of human nature, must have been the sad purchase of early misfortune, and that he who, in the spring of existence is capable, of painting with such truth and strength the dark and direful aspect of its winter must have been early overtaken by the steps of calamity, and walked by the side of Sorrow, till his mind reflected the hue which Affliction impressed upon his heart." (Byron must have enjoyed this if he read it.) The reviewer then turns to Hebrew Melodies: "Those delightful and divine persuasions to which he at length appears to have yielded a voluntary and tranquillizing dominion, has diffused a soft and holy light over the compositions before us."

The second volume is considered to have greater poetical merit than the first. The sympathy expressed for Byron's bleeding heart has received a sudden check, however. While discussing the poet's heroes the critic allows himself this amazingly impudent aside. "If any resemblance could be traced .... between his Lordship and these odious creations of his diseased brain, we fear recent experience has shown that it does not consist in their redeeming virtues of love and constancy." Neither Byron's supposed sufferings nor his separation from his wife had any connection with his publications, and no critic of taste would have committed either of these articles.
The third canto of *Childe Harold* (1816) was a peculiarly severe test of critical integrity. As poetry it was immeasurably superior to anything Byron had yet written, but it contained many references to the poet's private life and was his first major publication since the crash. The critics, broadly speaking, acquitted themselves remarkably well, at least as far as estimating the worth of the poetry was concerned. It was not so easy for them to avoid taking sides in Byron's personal squabbles. An examination of some of the more important reviews will show the general lines taken by the press. *The Prisoner of Chillon* was usually reviewed along with the longer poem.

Scott in *The Quarterly Review* flatteringly excused Byron by putting down all his troubles to the poetic temperament: "It has been...reserved for our own time to produce one distinguished example of the Muse having descended upon a bard of a wounded spirit, and lent her lyre to tell, and we trust to soothe, afflictions of no ordinary description, afflictions originating probably in that singular combination of feeling which has been called the poetical temperament, and which has so often saddened the days of those on whom it has been conferred."

Scott passes on to a summary of Byron's poetical and social career, in the course of which the part played by the poet's strikingly handsome appearance is discussed in some detail. His
chief poetical merits are rehearsed, and similarities between Byron and his heroes are pointed out—cynicism, combined with keen sensibility, nobility, and passion. But they are unlike him in their guilt: "We know enough even of his private story to give our warrant that, though his youth may have shared somewhat too largely in the indiscretions of those left too early the masters of their own actions and fortunes, falsehood and malice alone can impute to him any real cause for hopeless remorse or gloomy misanthropy." Three possible reasons are suggested for his making such criminals in his own image. Perhaps his melancholy nature enjoys the vicarious stings of conscience; or perhaps he likes "dressing up", putting himself into the situation and character of a different person; or perhaps the mere force of his imagination leads him to identify himself with his hero.

It will be noticed that nearly all this lengthy introduction is quite beside the point as far as literary criticism is concerned.

Scott's Canto III of Childe Harold, in eyes, shows no loss of power, and any slackening of public favour may be attributed to personal, not literary, causes. Indeed the objections that are raised against it are political rather than poetical. For instance, of the Waterloo stanzas it is said "We are not sure that any verses inbur language surpass the following in vigour and feeling." But from the political point of view,"it is melancholy to see a man
of genius duped by the mere cant of words and phrases.

... His lofty muse has soared in all her brilliance over the field of Waterloo without dropping even one leaf of laurel on the head of Wellington." The Scott also disapproves of Byron's sympathy for Rousseau and other revolutionaries.

As Byron has brought his private affairs into his poetry, the reviewer feels he must touch on them. Byron "does injustice to the world, if he imagines he has left it exclusively filled with those who rejoice in his sufferings.... Let the patient submit to the discipline of the soul enjoined by religion, and recommended by philosophy."

The Critical Review could achieve a higher standard of impartiality than the great Quarterly in this instance, perhaps because it recognizes the difficulty of doing so: "Lord Byron....in some degree interferes with the exercise of the true province of criticism, which properly has nothing to do with the author further than the work under review:....but his lordship....compels a criticism of his temper and failings as a man, as well as of his talents and acquirements as a poet." It is unjust, if not cruel, to use his popularity as a poet to win sympathy in his domestic quarrel. Some of the personal passages are quoted from Childe Harold with the remark, "The very tenderness of the above lines makes them more cutting
to the individual to whom they are applied."

With this dignified reproof the critic goes on to consider the poem as such. By quotation and reference praise is given to the passages on the Eve of Waterloo, the Rhine, and Rousseau, and to the verses to Augusta. Contrary to general opinion, the reviewer here thinks the thunderstorm "very inefficiently painted." In fact, "we cannot say that the descriptions of scenery in Switzerland are, in general, to our taste." There are however many imitations of Wordsworth, "and to this, in our view, may be attributed some of the advantages of this part of the pilgrimage over the two others."

This was about as far back from Byron, the man, as the critics of Childe Harold III were able to stand. Even Jeffrey, although he could keep clear of the domestic strife, was unable to leave Byron's personality without his comment. A restatement of Byron's characteristic merits and defects precedes the review proper. In this third canto Jeffrey finds the same excellencies as in the first two, with the addition of "deeper and more matured reflections, and a more intense sensibility to all that is grand or lovely in the external world." He quotes "the burst of grand poetry" with which the canto opens as well as the Waterloo ball, where he contrasts Byron's "easy strength" with the failure of all other poets on this
topic. The Alpine scenes are admired and quoted from. Byron's final reckoning with mankind, "I have not loved the world...." Jeffrey thinks "very singular, and written with much force and dignity." The closing stanzas are beautiful, but must not be given any additional publicity.

In his peroration Jeffrey turns to speak of Byron himself. He is outside his critical province here and he knows it. But the stern dignity of his utterance is a biting commentary on the prying, censorious tone of some of his self-righteous contemporaries. "We cannot maintain our accustomed tone of levity; or even speak like calm literary judges, in the midst of these agonising traces of a wounded and distempered spirit.... It is impossible to mistake these for fictitious sorrows conjured up for the purpose of poetical effect. There is a dreadful tone of sincerity, and an energy that cannot be counterfeited, in the expression of wretchedness and alienation from human kind, which occurs in every page of this publication.... It is impossible not to mourn over such a catastrophe of such a mind."

The uncharitable spirit at its worst was displayed by the British Review. Byron is declared to show his stunted resources by having returned to where he started, "in disparagement of good order, and human happiness, and the sacred right of living at large, and doing what one lists." The descriptions
in Childe Harold are good but are marred by "that foul admixture with which the personal character of the Childe has adulterated them....a moody profligate, who mistakes his quarrel with man... for a delight in the works of God."

This is at least criticism of a sort, but the reviewer soon transcends mere criticism when he comes to the details of the poem. "The introductory lines of the poem are as dull as an indifferent father, feigning rather than feeling, might have written upon the subject.... Why, with so pretty a pledge at home, he could not enjoy like other good fathers the sweets of domestic life, we presume not to conjecture." A wish is expressed that Byron would go to his solitudes and stay there. "No man has a right to complain that the promises of sensuality have proved false and treacherous. Of him who has ordered all things well this stands among the foremost of his gracious appointments." The critic goes on to hammer at this thought with biblical quotations to help him. He is honest enough however to sympathise with Byron's pacifism, though not with the cant of cosmopolitanism: "The Christian precept commands us to love our enemies, but not out of spite to our friends." The mention of Rousseau and his Confessions, "that drivelling register of a debauched imagination", sends the reviewer off again at a wild tangent. He admits however that the actual character-sketch is "vigorous, beautiful, and
just," praises the similar passage on Gibbon and Voltaire, and quotes the five "exquisite stanzas" on Jura by night.

Speaking of the concluding stanzas, the critic asks, if Lord Byron is robbed of his child's company, whose fault is it but his own. "But is he really wanting what is stolen?... Is he sure that he has the true relish for these innocent and tranquil joys?" At present he does not have the British Review's sympathy, as he is not a fit person to educate a child.

The British Critic and the Christian Observer fall into line with the previous paper in speaking of Byron's behaviour. The tone of the former may be judged from this quotation: "The address to his daughter... under all those circumstances with which the public are too well acquainted, is written in bad taste and worse morality. The English nation is not so easily to be whined out of its just and honourable feelings." The critic's displeasure makes him go the length of denying that Byron ever had any real poetical power: "The noble Lord has written a few very fine and a few very pretty verses, which may be selected from a heap of crude, harsh, unpoetical strains."

With care and industry "he might have been a star of the third or fourth magnitude." The Christian Observer is unbiased enough to rank the present poem far above its immediate predecessor, while the moral
The refrain of the review is to the tune 'Never too Late to Mend.' For instance, "We very sincerely hope and pray that at least he may have occasion to publish one canto more, with the title of 'the Wandering Childe reclaimed.'" The critic in conclusion contrasts Byron's introspection with Kirke White's, and his family life with Southey's.

The Eclectic Review added nothing fresh to its former opinions on Byron's poetry and egotism, and took up an attitude similar to the Critical's detachment towards his family affairs. The lesser periodicals struck the same sympathetic note as the Quarterly Review. In short only the Eclectic, the Critical and to a lesser extent the Edinburgh Review had the decency to leave Byron's affairs alone. The rest made themselves parties to the feud at the Noble Lord's bidding. That apart, it must be noticed that all the reviews, except the British Critic, appraise the poem at something like its true value.

The reviews of Manfred brought out nothing new except a sensitive criticism by Jeffrey, who appreciated in what way Manfred differed from the previous incarnations of Byronism, and Blackwood's first words on Byron written by Christopher North. He dismisses Manfred as "very imperfect" and devotes most of his attention to Byron's work in general. "He
surveys," says North, "with a stern delight, that tumult and conflict of terrible thoughts from which other highly gifted and powerful minds have involun-
arily recoiled.... There are in his poetry feelings, thoughts, sentiments, and passions, that we at once recognize to be human, though we know not whence they came." With Childe Harold, Canto III, "he leapt at once into the front rank of descriptive poets. He came into competition with Wordsworth upon his own ground, and with his own weapons; and in the first encounter he vanquished and overthrew him. His description of the stormy night among the Alps...is alone worth all the dull metaphysics of the Excurs-
ion."

The same magazine, and in fact the same writer, was the first to hail the fourth Canto of Childe Harold in 1818 as "perhaps the finest canto of Childe Harold, the finest beyond all comparison of Byron's poems." In Wilson's unique contribution to the Edinburgh Review he again calls it the "finest of them all", while Scott in the Quarterly Review declares that "Rome is the very ground on which we should have loved to cope with Childe Harold." The Literary Panorama and the Monthly Review preferred Canto III, the former thinking the present canto "to be the most remarkable falling off from previous excellence, that we ever remember to have noticed." The Eclectic Review likewise thought this canto "not perhaps the most interesting", but yet ranked it high. The British Critic, Literary Gazette, and Literary
Journal shared the Panorama's poor opinion of it. There was however a remarkable consensus on the passages to be admired. Of twelve reviews, no less than nine quoted "The moon is up..." and seven "Oh! Rome! my country..." and the closing address to the Ocean.

Where moral issues are involved there is a noticeable revulsion in favour of Byron. There were here none of the intensely personal references that distinguished Canto III and the critics were able to take a calmer view of the matter. The Edinburgh Magazine was the first to draw attention to Byron's moral recovery from "the terrible tone of anguish which broke forth in the magic sounds of the third canto." Wilson in the Edinburgh Review gives his opinion that "his mind is now clearing up." Later, "He seems to think more of others, and with a greater spirit of humanity," which the Literary Panorama declared to be a new virtue in Byron.

The British Review in a rather peculiar notice agrees that Canto IV shows more manliness, and less whining egotism and sensuality, but the sick heart is still there. Four sermons follow, one on Byron having identified himself with Harold, one on the demoralisation of Britain, one on the viciousness of Byron's canting love of solitude, and one on the infallible cure for the sorrow that Byron constantly parades. After all this the review comes to the astonishing conclusion that Byron's poetry, "such as it is, is among the least objectionable on the ground
of immoral tendency." Wilson in Blackwood's quite typically qualifies his former eulogy, asking, "Is this the best, the noblest poetry?" The answer is, "The good, the happy, and the innocent, can draw no instruction from what they cannot imagine even in dreams; while the spring or passion-stricken spirit contemplates too often, the ruins as it were of its own nature, without hope of the temple being rebuilt." Byron's usual dangerous exaltation of the senses over the reason is contrasted with "the calm, pure, lofty anthem that the poet sings to nature.... Lord Byron seems to have roamed through the Alps with the spirit of Wordsworth at his side; -- and his soul was elevated by the communion." Only one review suggests that there is no improvement. The British Critic still finds "the old leaven so mixed up with the mass, as to give that colour and flavour to the whole, with which we must ever own ourselves to be highly disgusted.... We are not sorry to part with so egotistical a companion."

Simultaneously with the reviews of the last canto of Childe Harold were appearing the opinions on a new kite that Byron had been flying anonymously to see how the wind was blowing for vers de société. This was Benno which found a very sympathetic press. The anonymity was a peculiarly kept secret. The British Critic in March of 1816 takes Byron's authorship for granted, while the Literary Panorama, as late as May, decides on internal evidence that Byron cannot
possibly be the author, and suggests Hookham Frere.

Jeffrey, first in the field, suggests that it should be attributed to Byron, and emphasises the novelty of this kind of literature in English:—"An example, unique we rather think in our language, of about one hundred stanzas of good verse, entirely composed of common words in their common places; never presenting us with one sprig of what is called poetical diction, or even making use of a single inversion, either to raise the style or assist the rhyme."

(Although the connection is really quite different, the wording of this thought makes one ask what about Wordsworth? Jeffrey sometimes comes very close to him without meaning to do so.)

As poetry Beppo "is, in itself, absolutely a thing of nothing.... But still these is something very engaging in the uniform gayety, politeness, and good humour."

The British Critic makes a sort of apology for all the nasty things it has said about Byron, but if a poet brings his personal character and affairs into his publications, he must expect to be criticised. "To bestow praise upon compositions, whose tendency is manifestly injurious, is more than we can be called upon to do, either as critics or as individuals.... We avail ourselves, with pleasure, of the opportunity which the poem before us affords, of introducing his Lordship to the notice of our readers, with praise.... There is nothing in it, which we can take reasonable
exception against on the score of morals, and a good
deal which displays satirical powers of no common
description."

These two reviews excellently express the
general opinion. The Eclectic Review put in a quiet
plea against the morality of the piece: "Were it not
that it is licentious in its moral, occasionally
vulgar and profane in its expressions, and rather
tedious in its narrative, it might serve very well to
laugh through after dinner."

Only the British Review stood out unrelent-
ingly with an amazingly fierce attack on the poem, an
attack which contains at least one hypocritical
disavowal. Quizzing it considers the most effectual
weapon against virtue and decency. Beppo is spoken of
as Byron's parody of himself, using his usual situation
but making his villany unheroic and his vice domestic.
If one could forget all virtue and civilisation "then
this little poem of Beppo, which it is said, but which
we are slow to believe, Lord Byron, an English noble-
man, an English husband, and an English father, hath
sent reeking from the stews of Venice, is a production
of great humour and unquestionable excellence."

The only thing comparable to this criticism
is a letter to the author of Beppo signed 'Presbyter
Anglicanus' in Blackwood's, protesting against Black-
wood's silence on Byron's tenets. The poet is
reproached for having wasted his genius in "mockery,
misanthropy, and contempt.... With you heroism is lunacy, philosophy folly, virtue a cheat, and religion a bubble. "We have come to suspect at last, that whatever sorrows you may have, they are all of your own creating.... Had your sorrow been so deep, my Lord, its echoes had been lower."

**Don Juan** differed from its predecessor mainly in being much less respectable. It was anonymous, but the authorship was an open secret months before publication, and Murray refused to put his name on the title page; two features which lent a piquancy to an already piquant work. As the Literary Chronicle said, "it was universally read, much admired, often abused...abjured by married men, and read in secret by their wives throughout the whole kingdom."

It is significant that neither the Edinburgh nor the Quarterly reviewed the poem, and were duly reproved by other periodicals for cowardly desertion of their posts in the hour of danger. Here, as elsewhere in respect to Byron, the Quarterly was in an unenviable position. Politically and morally the poet belonged to the opposite camp from the reviewers, but Byron was the publisher's gold mine, and his paper could not decry him as the editor might have wished. That Southey should be on the staff of that paper gave a touch of farce to a complicated situation.

The first important periodical actually to criticise the poem is the Monthly Review, which claims
that Don Juan at last reveals the wide scope of Byron's genius. "We always regarded him as superior in versatility of thought and numbers to any single poet of our times." But the "Salvator Rosa" style of his early successes has hitherto narrowed his achievement. Now, however, he has produced "the very superior poem of Don Juan;— a poem...which, if originality and variety be the surest test of genius, has certainly the highest title to it....

"A perusal of the poem appears more like a pleasing and ludicrous dream than the sober feeling of reality. It is certainly one of the strangest though not the best of dreams.... We must not be surprised if a poet will not always write to instruct as well as to please us." The picture of Juan asleep in Haidee's arms is "well worth all the rest." The review closes with a polite reminder to the poet of his death-bed, the politeness being a unique feature.

The later cantos are dismissed more briefly in a notice which disguises a less friendly attitude under a comical tone, the main theme being, "What benefit can accrue to the reader of a series of love-intrigues?"

A favourable notice of "this witty if a little licentious, and delightful if not very moral production" also appeared in the Literary Gazette. Special praise is given to Byron's command of language: "The noble author has shewn an absolute controul over
his means, and at every cadence, rhyme or construction, however whimsical, delighted us with novel and magical associations." The critic occasionally expresses his disapproval of "the too great laxity of the poet." The sequel is more seriously received. "Indeed, the imagination revolts from the ideas on which the fifth canto chiefly dwells." But a very detailed account of the book is given, quoting all the pieces of gossip, literary or biographical, as well as the Isles of Greece and Ave Maria stanzas.

Blackwood's Review agrees with the previous reviews on the power of the poem but takes a more serious view of its dangerous influence. It is characterised as "a work, in the composition of which there is unquestionably a more thorough and intense infusion of genius and vice - power and profligacy - than in any poem which had ever before been written in English.... A production...which, in spite of all that critics can do or refrain from doing, nothing can possibly prevent from taking a high place in the literature of our country, and remaining to all ages a perpetual monument of the exalted intellect, and depraved heart, of one of the most remarkable of men."

The reviewer finds it scarcely believable "that the odious malignity of this man's bosom should have carried him so far, as to make him commence a filthy and impious poem, with an elaborate satire on the character and manners of his wife." Such conduct
is "brutally, fiendishly, inexpiably mean?" Some well-selected quotations are given. It should be noticed that Blackwood had refused Murray's offer of a share in the publication of Don Juan; this review, probably written by Maginn, was his apologia.

The later cantos were reviewed in a letter from "Harry Franklin", (perhaps Maginn again?) Naturally, one had almost said, it takes as nearly an opposite view as possible. It is written in the Magazine's roystering style. The writer is at the dinner table when the book is handed in, and chatter about the meal is interspersed among the criticisms. The critic thinks these cantos "not so naughty as their predecessors." He quotes the opening and makes the comment, "This, you must allow, is pretty enough, and not at all objectionable in a moral point of view. I fear, however, that I cannot say so much for what follows; marriage is no joke, and therefore not a fit subject to joke about." Tha Ave Maria makes the reviewer go quite soft-hearted. In fact, if only Christopher North will repeat these lines while gazing on a sunset from Salisbury Crags, Harry Franklin "will venture to bet a plack to a bawbee, that from that hour all animosity against the wayward and unfortunate Byron will be forever hushed in thy bosom."

The British Critic takes the line, so often attempted by the prudish in the face of salacious
humour, of being not amused. "There are not a dozen places that even in the merriest mood could raise a smile." Any claims to excellence are briefly dismissed: "It has not wit enough to be comic; it has not spirit enough to make it lyric; nor is it didactic of anything but mischief.... It is not mad, but bad - bad in expression, worse in taste, and worst of all in feeling and heart." The later cantos fare no better at the British Critic's hands.

Towards the end of the first canto of Don Juan Byron gave some flippant reasons for expecting the public approbation, among them --

"I've bribed my grandmother's review - the British. I sent it in a letter to the Editor, Who thanked me duly by return of post - I'm for a handsome article his creditor; Yet, if my gentle Muse he please to raast, And break a promise after having made it her... All I can say is that he had the money."

This was funny enough, but the unfortunate editor of the British Review, William Roberts, improved on the joke immensely, he took it seriously. Having condemned the whole poem morally, he decides that the author cannot be Byron, because no English nobleman could publish a direct lie. "The miserable man...who has given birth to this pestilent poem" has actually accused the editor of taking a bribe. Byron must know that such a story is not true. If someone has been
impersonating the editor to get money by false pretences they may be able to trace him by the letter mentioned in the poem! In a letter in the *Liberal* Byron showed Roberts what a fool he had made of himself.

It was not until the issue of the sequel that the *British Review* was cool enough to consider the poem as such, and then its verdict was naturally not favourable. The great danger to be feared from the poem lies in its jesting with God's laws and man's duties. This second article ends with a sermon on "the Great Whole" to whom Byron professes to pray, and who, although he has produced the soul, may not receive it again, and a gentle hint at what Byron may expect hereafter.

The depths to which this evangelical style of criticism could descend is wonderfully displayed in the short-lived *Investigator*. Byron and Shelley are coupled as "companions and fellow-workers in iniquity...too enlightened to believe" in a future state, "though, with the devils they shall believe and tremble too." The present poem is a vehicle for immorality and irreligion. "The object of the author seems but the raising of a smile at a ludicrous association of ideas, when, in fact, it is to level the distinction between virtue and vice." Byron is recommended to consult the Bible. "'Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge' both as a poet and as a
man; he might find a short, but rather an awkward comment on his text." His crimes, which the reviewer kindly noted down, afford "ample food for the bitterest remorse of conscience... or it may, and who can say that it will not? be of the most dreadful and yet unavailing torments of a death-bed."

Fortunately for the reputation of the critical press, such displays of Christian charity as this were distinctly uncommon.

Don Juan was the first poem of Byron's to come under the notice of the Edinburgh Monthly Review, which accordingly gave a general estimate of the poet's work, and this review must be added to those that consider Childe Harold Canto IV as the high-water mark of his career. The article is given special attention here, however, because of an original and accurate piece of psychological criticism. The writer takes note of the vindictiveness and scorn which mark Byron's infidelity. "This attitude of defiance and contempt is not the natural one of calm and assured scepticism; there lurks a thick drop of believing terror in the inmost recesses of that bosom which discharges the poison of its contumely against the awful truths of religion." In view of Byron's mystery play which we are about to consider this sentence displays more insight into the character of Byron than does all the raving about his dreadfulness from the critics of the Giaour onwards.
Of the reviews just summarised it should be noticed that only two even pretend to be criticisms—those of the *Monthly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*. The former is eminently fair and realistic. The first review in *Blackwood's* is good, but suffers from the exaggerated rhetorical style of attack on what the writer conceives to be Byron's moral nature. The second, and favourable, review is merely silly. The *British Critic*, although hardly reviewing the poem, gives a sensible expression of that body of opinion which was honestly revolted by the poem. Of course *Don Juan* is not family reading, but the insistence on this fact in the reviews is one of the earliest pointers towards the Victorian idea that the writer should always have the family circle in mind. The other two theological reviews seem to have been unaware that in threatening the poet with hell-fire they were degrading the verities of Christianity far more than any of Byron's reckless fooling did. *Beppo* and *Don Juan* marked such a break with Byron's previous successes that one would have expected the press to devote some attention to the change. Jeffrey certainly did, pointing out Byron's ease in a style that is really very difficult; and the *Monthly* reviewer followed up with a valuable reminder of the vastly increased scope which Byron now displayed. These two apart, no one pointed out that Byron had changed from a sentimental, gloomy poseur to an easy, witty, natural writer, whose verses at last had the
ring of sincerity.

The thick drop of believing terror in Byron's bosom was revealed, for almost the only time, in Cain, published with two inferior plays in 1821. In this serious and dignified drama, the most moving though not the best of his serious writings, Byron honestly faced the problem of suffering, and though he perhaps did not intend it, presented a picture of predestination as it touches the non-elect. But to his contemporaries it seemed but the last and most daring insult flung by an impious man at his Maker. Byron gave some justification to this view by the uniform bitterness with which Lucifer is made to speak of the cruelty of the Creator. Naturally the Prince of Darkness had to speak in character, but the attitude of Cain, even at his most hostile, is an armed neutrality, and from the other persons, also speaking in character, come many tributes to the love and goodness of God. It is obvious of course that the poet sympathizes with Cain's attitude, and Byron gave his critics a further handle by asserting "that there is no allusion to a future state in any of the books of Moses, nor indeed in the Old Testament." The truth of the first half of this statement was ignored by the ecclesiastical press which, however, did not omit to refute the second, and really irrelevant, part at some length.

From the welter of shocked vituperation it
is difficult to select any valuable criticism. For example the Gentleman's Magazine speaks of Cain as "a series of wanton libels upon the Supreme Being and His attributes," and gives quotations from it under such headings as "Hideous Blasphemy", "Twaddle and Nonsense"; while the Edinburgh Magazine suggests that when Cain refused to pray Adam should have spanked him - "It is a disgusting exhibition of vulgar insolence in a son towards his parent, which would, in any station of life, demand the promptest of chastisement!"

The more reputable periodicals did not do much better. Blackwood's characterised Cain as "a wicked and blasphemous performance, destitute of any merit sufficient to overshadow essential defects of the most abominable nature," but devoted most of its article to a long attack on Lady Morgan's Italy and some light skirmishing in the Byron-Southey controversy. The Literary Gazette declares "a more direct, more dangerous, or more frightful production, than this miscalled Mystery, it never has been our lot to encounter.... It cannot be tolerated that any fictious personage should...directly curse...Almighty God."

The Monthly Review, however, ranks Cain's literary merit high: "Nowhere has he shown more if so much imagination, boldness of character, subtilty of reasoning, or energy of dialogue: but he has chosen a subject, and a mode of treating that subject, which can do no good, and may do much and most lamentable evil... The horrible career of the Evil Spirit and of Cain
is unchecked and their sad reasonings remain uncontroverted."

The big quarterlies at last consented to break their silence on Byron. Cain, Jeffrey thinks, "will give great scandal and offence to pious persons in general — and may be the means of suggesting the most painful doubts and distressing perplexities, to hundreds of minds that might never otherwise have been exposed to such dangerous disturbance." The poet was at liberty to write an essay on the Origin of Evil, but not to state a case in a way that gives no opportunity for forcing an answer to objections or for challenging his statements. From the particular instance Jeffrey passes to a generalisation that shows how far he has left the Georgian age behind and moved, we do not say progressed, towards the Victorian era: "Philosophy and Poetry are both very good things in their way; but, in our opinion, they do not go very well together." In the present case, the result is poor poetry and suspicious philosophy, with the further injustice that poetical paradoxes cannot be brought to the fair test of argument.

The Quarterly Review prefaced a long, dull article written by Heber with an apology for its recent silence. It has been unable to witness without regret "the systematic and increasing prostitution of those splendid talents to the expression of feelings, and
the promulgation of opinions, which as Christians, as Englishmen, and even as men, we were constrained to regard with abhorrence." For some time therefore, they have kept silence, hoping Byron would see the error of his ways and repent. "In this hope we have not been disappointed.... The Mystery of Cain, wicked as it may be, is the work of a nobler and more daring wickedness.... If the thing were possible it is better that he should be a moral and argumentative atheist, than the professed and systematic poet of seduction, adultery and incest." In Cain he appeals to reason, and his reasons must in duty be answered.

Some literary weaknesses are exposed. The characters are lacking in energy, "Lucifer... is as sententious and sarcastic as a Scotch metaphysician," and the dialogue is "cold and constrained." As philosophy, Cain does not possess much power of active mischief. "The sarcasms of Lucifer and the murmurs of Cain are directed against Providence in general; and proceed to the subversion of every system of theology: God is a capricious tyrant, Satan is "the champion of all which is energetic interesting and noble.... Of Lucifer, as drawn by Lord Byron, we absolutely know no evil." Heber answers Byron's arguments with Paley's assistance, and concludes that one cannot condemn Providence without taking the future life into account, and even if his immortality were not revealed to Cain, he should have been able to infer it as a deist. (This was surely asking rather much in the way
of philosophy from the second generation of mankind.) The politeness of this article should be compared with Heber's criticism of Shelley's Revolt of Islam below.

There remain to be examined two intelligent reviews of Cain. Although naturally hostile to the tenets of the play, the Eclectic Review again distinguishes itself by a sane and shrewd inquiry into the true nature of the subject. Cain and Southey's Vision of Judgment are considered in a single article. Byron's motive, the Eclectic thinks, could not possibly be good, but it was probably less a mere love of mischief than a trial of the liberty of the press. "We can easily imagine that... he laughs at the awkward situation in which he has placed the Poet Laureat, as at once his rebuker and his fellow culprit."

"'Cain' is not however, a profane poem... Profane ness is an irreverent use of sacred names and things. Now a religious drama or mystery, founded on the Scripture narrative, is, in itself, no profanation of anything sacred." Proceedings against Cain, therefore, could be taken only as against blasphemy, and "it would... be very difficult to bring home blasphemous intention to the Author of Cain.... Impiety is not an overt act: it cannot be laid hold of by human laws. ... The impiety chargeable on this Mystery, consists mainly in this; that the purposeless and gratuitous blasphemies put into the mouth of Lucifer and Cain, are left unrefuted, so that they appear introduced for their own sake." The critic goes on to refute some
of these blasphemies. To conclude, Byron "has but put into the Devil's mouth the bewildering question, Si Deus est, unde malum? making poetry the organ of the dark and barren metaphysics of Bayle and Spinosa. But...he sides with the enemies of human happiness, and with the arch enemy who inspires and leads them on."

The only friendly notice of them all appeared in the London Magazine. "This piece is essentially nothing but a vehicle for striking allusions to the mighty abstractions of Death and Life, Eternity and Time, for vast but dim descriptions of the regions of space, and for daring disquisitions on that great problem, the origin of evil...."

"The groundwork of the arguments, on the awful subjects handled, is very common place; but they are arrayed in great majesty of language, and conducted with frightful audacity. The direct attacks on the goodness of God are such as we dare not utter or transcribe." They are no bolder than those made by Milton's Satan, but Milton's God and Satan are mere characters in a poem, not supernatural beings. "God is only the name for the King of Heaven, not for the Father of all," whereas Byron's poem is "an abstract discussion held for its own sake." Perhaps the lapse of a century takes the fine edge off a sensational book, but the foregoing distinction to-day seems rather hair-splitting, and it would hardly have
pleased the poet who strove to "justify the ways of God to Man" to hear that his God was a mere character in a poem.

The London concludes sensibly that Cain is not a dangerous play. "The difficulty on which it founds its 'obstinate questionings' has often recurred to every mind capable of meditating; it is equally felt in every system except absolute Atheism; and, if it is reverently pursued, serves, while it baffles our scrutiny, to make us feel all the high capabilities, and intense yearnings of our own immortal nature."

Looking back across the years from Cain to the Hours of Idleness we can without hesitation apply to Byron's career the adjective phenomenal. Every turn and twist in his varied progress was marked by unusual features. Excluding from our reckoning the adulation bestowed on his youthful volume, which was after all normal for a titled author, we must still admit that the reception given to Childe Harold was the most uniformly flattering shown to the first major work of any poet. The reasons for that popularity have already been examined but it must be emphasised here that Byron showed it was possible for a poet writing in a new style to be a best-seller. In contrast to his immediate predecessors of the Lake School, Byron was novel without being strange; his originality was a step, and only a step, in advance of the accepted tradition. At the same time he supplied his readers with a reasonable amount of mental food without taxing
their intelligence. His subsequent tales owed much of their success to the fact that they were tales, very well told, and given an exciting exotic setting. The defects that have proved fatal to their permanence were not immediately obvious. The daring touches in his early work were sufficient to titillate his public without shocking it. All this success was unusual enough, but the next tumm of the wheel was more unusual still. Byron also succeeded in demonstrating that it was possible for a poet at the height of his popularity to lose the approbation of the public without losing any of his poetical ability. As we have noted in its due place, the scandal of Byron's separation had an immediate and baneful effect on the criticism of his work, although not sufficient to prevent the recognition of greatness in the continuations of Childe Harold.

There are various reasons why the Byron affair should so occupy the critics' attention. Scandal in high life has always had a particular attraction for the journalist, and even the yellow press of to-day could teach the newspapers of Byron's time nothing in the way of muck-raking or mud-slinging; it was hardly possible for the periodicals to deny themselves all reference to such an outstanding event. Journalism and human weakness apart, there was another and for our purpose more important reason. Byron's attitude invited remark. As the critics so often reiterated, he was the first English confession-
writer. He never tired of taking the world into his confidence, and the world was only too ready to offer advice. As his life was so obviously the material of his poetry, it became almost automatically the subject of criticism.

If the mischief had stopped there little damage would have been done. But Byron had taught the critics a habit which they did not readily lose. To his influence we must in a great part attribute the slandering irrelevance which we have remarked in the criticism of this period. It became an accepted rule that if you disliked a man's work, you raked up or invented some unsavoury details about his private affairs and offered that as criticism. It was of course not unusual for political controversy to be conducted in this fashion, and here another influence came to reinforce Byron's. In 1815 the Napoleonic Wars came to an end and political thinkers were free to direct more attention to the home front. The bitterness that had been concentrated in purely political channels flooded into social questions, and even into streams only indirectly connected with politics, perhaps the only relation being that a certain author was known to hold certain political opinions. The co-incidence of Byronism and a high political temperature apparently proved too much for the critics of the day. Literary libel had not been a custom in the first decade of the century, the remarks on Coleridge in the Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin
being a notable exception. We have also seen that irrelevant personalities began to appear in the later reviews of Coleridge and Moore. Shelley, Hunt, Hazlitt, and Keats suffered similar treatment or worse. In fact the decade centered on 1820 makes a dark spot in the history of periodical criticism, for which the critics themselves must bear the burden of the blame, but in our opinion it is not too much to say that without Byron that spot might never have existed.

In the last few years of his life Byron sprang another surprise on his critics by budding forth in a completely new direction. His light verse was as unlike his serious verse as could be, and displayed even more thoroughly than his defence of Pope and the unities how much he was a child of the eighteenth century. But the taste of the times was no longer for aristocratic cynicism and wit but for democratic humour and fun. So Byron's most brilliant

(1) The reasons for the attack were of course political. Another example of the same abuse of criticism, which was cited by the Tories in their own defence, occurred in the *Edinburgh Review, Vol. 2.* While reviewing the poems of Thelwall, a discontented shop-boy turned revolutionary poet, Jeffrey makes fun of his career and reprobates his character in no mild fashion, saying for example that Thelwall has spoiled a good tradesman to make a bad poet.
writing was unutterably shocking to his age, and Cain served his fame no better. The man who had begun as the first poet of his age went out as a scribbler of blasphemies. Continental critics can never understand why Byron ranks so low in our poetical hierarchy; in their histories of English literature he inevitably takes his place with Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth. The fact is that by his repeated affronts to middle-class opinion, which opinion had first put him on a pinnacle, Byron forfeited his poetical status and from the injury it then received his reputation has never recovered. His best work has never been really popular; and his popular work is not of a quality to restore him to fame. But his personality...
The pure unselfish flame of SHELLEY'S genius was to his contemporaries indistinguishable from the lurid flare of Byron or the infra-red warmth without light of Thomas Little. Their readers however saw one important difference - that Shelley demanded cerebration, and if we may judge by sales, they staunchly refused to make that effort. His work crept very slowly into public notice. Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire attracted only the most fugitive attention from two reviews, the Literary Chronicle and the British Critic.

Alastor (4816) hardly fared better. "We must candidly own," said the Monthly Review, "that these poems are beyond our comprehension; and we did not obtain a clue to their sublime obscurity, till an adress to Mr Wordsworth explained in what school the author had formed his taste." It is admitted none the less that the volume contains "some beautiful imagery and poetical expressions." The British Critic got immense fun out of Mad Shelley: "If this gentleman is not blessed with the inspiration, he may at least console himself with the madness of a poetic mind.... We are....not a little delighted with the nonsense which mounts, which rises, which spurns the earth, and all its dull realities.... A man's hair singing dirges, and a boat pausing and shuddering, are among the least of his inventions;... But we entreat the pardon of our
readers for dwelling so long upon this ne plus ultra of poetical sublimity."

The Eclectic Review makes an honest attempt to grapple with a difficult poem. It mentions the very important fact, ignored by the others, that the poem is an allegory and quotes Shelley's explanatory note, which, however, it thinks insufficient for the ordinary reader. "All is wild and specious, untangible and incoherent as a dream." The aim of the poem is "to shew the dangerous, the fatal tendency of the morbid ascendency of the imagination over the other faculties.... This could not be better illustrated, than in a poem where we have glitter without warmth, succession without progress, excitement without purpose, and a search which terminates in annihilation." Shelley has a talent for descriptive poetry; "but such heartless fictions as Alastor, fail in accomplishing the legitimate purposes of poetry." This was a plea less for a happy ending than for a more realistic kind of story. But "in justice" to Shelley a passage of fifty lines is quoted—

"..........The noonday sun

Now shone.... etc."

Not even the Lyrical Ballads had baffled the critics so completely as this. Beyond the recognition that it was something new, their incomprehension was nearly complete, and already the seedlings of distrust were showing. Obviously the public needed educating, and Leigh Hunt was ready to perform that task. Having
mentioned Shelley in his article on Young Poets, he followed up with quotations from his new poem, the Revolt of Islam, and finally gave a review of the poem itself. "This is an extraordinary production," he begins. "The ignorant will not understand it; the idle will not take pains to get acquainted with it; even the intelligent will be startled at first with its air of mysticism and wildness;...the bigot will be shocked, terrified, and enraged...." and so on through a rather provocative list concluding with a plea for the support of "the intelligent and the good, who are yet healthy-minded." The story of the poem is rehearsed with short quotations, and its social implications are discussed, with the help of Shelley's preface. Hunt then makes his own remarks on the poem. Firstly, its philosophy is based on Love as the great reformatory principle, and the poet is no idle perfectionist—"Such a charge, in truth, is only the first answer which egotism makes to any one who thinks he can go beyond its own ideas of the possible." Another provocative list, this time of the various egotists, leads pp to the final answer to criticisms of Shelley. "It seems forgotten all this while, that Jesus Christ himself recommended Love as the great law that was to supersede others; and recommended it too to an extreme which has been held impracticable."

As literature, "the beauties of the poem consist in depth of sentiment, in grandeur of imagery, and a versification remarkably sweet, various, and noble, like the placid playing of a great organ....
Mr Shelley's defects as a poet are obscurity... violation of costume, and too great a sameness and gratuitousness of image and metaphor.... The book is full of humanity; and yet it certainly does not go the best way to work of appealing to it, because it does not appeal to it through the medium of it's common knowledges." Consequently, "the work cannot possibly become popular." Because of the importance of his teaching, Shelley is besought to write with his eye more steadily on the common man.

Blackwood's Magazine provided the most competent of the adverse criticisms on the poem. The reviewer, apparently Wilson, hates the purpose of the poem, but wholeheartedly admires the poetry. Shelley is said to display pernicious morals, audacious unbelief, abundant uncharitableness, and self-conceit enough to render any one person contemptible. But he "possesses the qualities of a powerful and vigorous intellect, and therefore his fate cannot be sealed so quickly" as that of the other members of the Cockney School. But the allegory of the Revolt of Islam is unskilful, and the poem will never be a popular favourite.

"We are very willing to pass in silence the many faults of Mr Shelley's opinions.... Our business is with him as a poet, and, as such, he is strong, nervous, original." The lovers are especially admired:
"In the persons of these martyrs, the poet has striven to embody his ideas of the power and loveliness of the human affections.... It is in the pouring of this intense, overwhelming, unfearing, unfading love, that Mr Shelley has proved himself to be a genuine poet.... Around his lovers, moreover,... he has shed an air of calm gracefulness, a certain majestic monumental stillness."

The plot is not the main interest of Shelley. "His praise is, in our judgment, that of having poured over his narrative a very rare strength and abundance of poetic imagery and feeling — of having steeped every word in the essence of his inspiration." The conclusion of this fine appreciation is a typical Blackwood sneer, made with the ulterior motive of driving a wedge between the poet and his less fortunate friends: "Mr Shelley, whatever his errors may have been, is a scholar, a gentleman and a poet; and he must therefore despise from his soul the only eulogies to which he has hitherto been accustomed — paragraphs from the Examiner, and sonnets from Johnny Keats."

The Monthly Review still thinks Shelley a harmless lunatic, and laments the "waste of so much capability of better things." Shelley's "command of language is so thorough as to become a mere snare for loose and unmeaning expression: and his facility of writing, even in Spencer's stanza, leads him into a licentiousness of rhythm and of rhyme that is truly
It is a sobering thought that this article is the work of no less person than Heber, the friend of Walter Scott, later bishop of Calcutta, and still remembered as the writer of such hymns as 'From Greenland's icy mountains.'
contemptible." Two stanzas of "this demi-maniac composition" are quoted.

In an article, remarkable for the sheer beastliness of mind which it displays, the Quarterly Review tries to show that the lunatic is by no means harmless. A reference is made to the redrafting of the original version of the poem, Laon and Cythna, with its incestuous theme. "But Mr. Shelley is no penitent; he has reproduced the same poison, a little, and but a little more cautiously disguised." As a poem The Revolt of Islam is "not without beautiful passages", the language is free from errors of taste, and the versification is harmonious. There are many borrowings from Wordsworth, "to whose religious mind it must be a matter, we think, of perpetual sorrow to see the philosophy which comes pure and holy from his pen, degraded and perverted, as it continually is, by this miserable crew of atheists or pantheists."

Shelley's philosophy, in the Quarterly's recension, is that evil is caused by civil and religious institutions, without distinction. Man's "business here is to enjoy himself, to abstain from no gratification, to repent no sin, hate no crime, but be wise, happy and free, with plenty of 'lawless love'.... But kings have introduced war, legislators crime, priests sin." Quotations are given to show Shelley's frantic dislike of Christianity. Speaking of his self-confidence the reviewer remarks, "These indeed are
bold convictions for a young and inexperienced man, imperfectly educated, irregular in his application, and shamefully dissolute in his conduct." To prove his case, Shelley should take the best constitution and religion instead of a despotic government and a false religion and show that they degrade and corrupt the human mind. "His residence at Oxford was a short one, and, if we mistake not rather abruptly terminated" but he should know not to argue from a particular to a universal.

Details of the poem are criticised in the following gentlemanly style: "How the monarch himself, who had been a slave to [Cythna's] beauty, and to whom this model of purity and virtue had borne a child, was able to resist her voice, Mr. Shelley leaves his readers to find out for themselves." We must admire the delicacy with which this suggestio falsi is made. The public would naturally conclude that Shelley's heroine outraged/was a deliberate wanton. The hero of the poem is said to represent the poet, Cythna his second wife, and the sage the philosopher Godwin.

Shelley's character is compared to Leigh Hunt's, although it lacks the latter's bustling vulgarity, affectation, and selfishness heartlessness. Since childhood "he has carried about with him a soured and discontented spirit - unteachable in boyhood, unamiable in youth, querulous and unmanly in manhood, - singularly unhappy in all three." His
lines on his school-days display "an insubordinate, a vain, a mortified spirit." He is abjured to repent and read his Bible humbly.

Rosalind and Helen, a poem just put into the reviewer's hands, is very inferior in merit. "So it ever is and must be in the downward course of infidelity and immorality.... If we might withdraw the veil of private life, and tell what we now know about him, it would be a disgusting picture that we should exhibit, but it would be an unanswerable comment on our text; it is not easy for those who read only to conceive how much low pride, how much cold selfishness, how much unmanly cruelty are consistent with the laws of this 'universal' and 'lawless love'."

To his torrent of bitterness and hate no better answer can be made than Leigh Hunt's, who characterises it as "heavy and swelling, and soft with venom....like a skulking toad." The first injustice that Hunt points out is the reference to the original draft. "Perhaps but two or three copies of that first impression were sold.... And yet the Quarterly Reviewers, who think these theories so pernicious, drag forth the impression, in order to abuse what he has not used." Secondly the reviewer says that the argument of the poem cannot apply to Britain. "The Reviewer might as well ask what we learnt from any other fiction, which was to apply without being literal. Mr. Shelley is not bound to answer for his
critic's stupidity.... The Editor of the Review himself, for instance, might as well ask how Mr. Hazlitt's appellation of Grildrig applied to him,—his name being not Grildrig but Gifford; and he never having stood in the hand of an enormous prince, though he has licked the feet of petty ones, and thrown stones at their discarded mistresses' crutches."

Shelley is called insubordinate and so forth for his opinions on public schools. Hunt quotes a very bitter attack on these institutions and continues "Reader, these are not the profane Mr. Shelley's verses, but the pious Cowper's." The point is neatly made. As for the advice to read his Bible — "We will undertake to say that Mr. Shelley knows more of the Bible, than all the priests who have any thing to do with the Review or its writers.... What do they say to the injunctions against 'judging others that ye be not judged,' — against revenge, — against lying, hypocrisy ....and every species of worldliness and malignity?"

Canning, Croker, and Gifford are pilloried for various unchristian acts. "Men of this description are incapable of their own religion.... The moral spirit of [Shelley's] philosophy approaches infinitely nearer to that Christian benevolence so much preached and so little practised, than any the most orthodox dogmas ever published."

The reviewers have attacked Shelley's private life. "What right have they to know any thing
of the private life of an author? or how would they like to have the same argument used against themselves? ... What does this pretended judge and actual male-gossip, this willing listener to scandal, this minister to the petty wants of excitement, now know more than he ever knew of an absent man, whose own side of whatever stories have been told him he has never heard?" One particular calumny must be answered - that Shelley is shamefully dissolute in his conduct. This charge has been brought against all whose opinions on sexual conduct are unconventional - including Milton. Leigh Hunt answers it by giving a detailed account of the asceticism of Shelley's daily life. "We believe him from the bottom of our hearts, to be one of the noblest hearts as well as heads which the world has seen for a long time.... Blessings be upon thee, friend; and a part of the spirit which ye profess to serve, upon ye, enemies."

The little volume containing Rosalind and Helen, issued in 1819, attracted rather less attention than its predecessor. Leigh Hunt was first in the field with his appreciation of "another poem in behalf of liberality of sentiment and the deification of love." There are in his notice some fine touches of the romantic style of criticism. For instance, he quotes Rosalind's account of the appearance of her father just in time to prevent an incestuous wedding:

"I saw the stream of his thin grey hair
I saw his lean and lifted hand."

which he interprets thus: "He comes between them like a spirit grown old."

A rather pettish comparison with Wordsworth forms a blemish on the criticism, but Hunt's summing up is important. "Upon the whole, with all our admiration of the Revolt of Islam, we think that Rosalind and Helen contains, for the size, a still finer and more various, as well as a more popular style of poetry. The humanity is brought nearer to us, while the abstraction remains as lofty and noble."

An ecstatic comment on Shelley's vibrant apprehension of the life in all things concludes the review: "For him, if for any poet that ever lived, the beauty of the external world has an answering heart, and the very whispers of the wind a meaning."

Blackwood's is still on Shelley's side as far as he is a poet, but against his philosophy, which is marred by "a strange perversion of moral principle."

With Hunt the writer considers that "[Rosalind's] joy on feeling that a babe was to be born to comfort her dark and sullen lot, is exceedingly beautiful, and reminds us of the finest strains of Wordsworth."

The critic then passes on to fulfil a very useful function. He complains of the very slight recognition that the public have given to Shelley. "It is one of the great objects of this journal to support the cause of genius
and of imagination — and we are confident that our readers will think we have done so in this number, by the full and abundant specimens of fine poetry which we have selected from Percy Bysshe Shelley and Barry Cornwall." The collocation of names raises a smile to-day, but the intention is praiseworthy, and as long as Blackwood's was honestly searching for neglected worth it was doing some good.

Shelley's anti-religious opinions, however, cannot be allowed to pass without Blackwood's word of reprobation: "One seeks, in vain, through his poetry, fine as it often is, for any principles of action in the characters who move before us." His Godwinism in civil affairs seems to have been adopted in mere capriciousness. His opinions therefore carry no weight, apparently not even with himself. "Accordingly there is no great moral flow in his poetry."

Logical perhaps, but not based on the soundest of premises. This article is generally credited to Christopher North.

A similarly divided opinion on Shelley was expressed by the Monthly Review, which however emphasised the reprehensible opinions and passed more lightly over the meritorious verse. It will be noticed that this paper at last takes Shelley seriously. The general theme is "We lament to observe such extensive infidelity in the mind of a writer who is
evidently capable of better things." The particular complaint is that Shelley represents "the vicious union of two individuals of different sexes as equally sacred with the nuptial tie." To this reviewer Helen who remains faithful not merely to her lover, but to his memory, "seems about as chaste as her antient namesake and prototype." He admits however that the "poetical merits...are, on some occasions, of no common stamp."

The article in the Gentleman's Magazine was simply a little hymn of hate. "If we desired to bring a poetic sanction to the basest passions of the human heart, or the most odious, revolting and unnameable crimes of human society, we should seek it in the works of certain Poets who have lately visited the Lake of Geneva.... With them the more sickening the circumstance, the more exquisite the sensibility."

Meanwhile Blackwood's had been prosecuting its task of popularising neglected genius. The issue for November 1819 revived and reviewed Alastor as the first work "of a mind destined, in our opinion, under due discipline and self-management, to achieve great things in poetry." Many quotations are given, accompanied by a commentary mostly favourable. But the most interesting part of this article is a further consideration of the treatment of Shelley by the press.
where for once Blackwood's finds itself in complete though unacknowledged agreement with the Examiner. "Mr Shelley has been infamously and stupidly treated in the Quarterly Review. His Reviewer there, whoever he is, does not shew himself a man of such lofty principles as to entitle him to ride the high horse in company with the Revolt of Islam....a dunce rating a man of genius. If that critic does not know that Mr Shelley is a poet, almost in the very highest sense of that mysterious word," he has no right to be a critic. If he does know, "what manner of man is he who, with such conviction, brings himself, with the utmost difficulty, to admit that there is any beauty at all in Mr Shelley's writings.... He pretends to wield the weapons of honour, virtue, and truth, yet clothes himself in the armour of deceit, hypocrisy, and falsehood. He exults to calumniate Mr Shelley's moral character, but he fears to acknowledge his genius.... We care comparatively little for injustice offered to one moving majestical in the broad day of fame - it is the injustice done to the great, while their greatness is unknown or misunderstood that a generous nature most abhors, in as much as it seems more basely wicked to wish that genius might never lift its head, than to envy the glory with which it is encircled." As for the critic's hints of Shelley's immoral life,"let him speak out plainly, or let him hold his tongue." Shelley indeed holds wicked opinions, "but we do not think that he believes his
Alastor had just made Shelley’s name known, hardly that; let us say rather, it prepared the minds of a few critics to recognise the name when they heard it again. But the next two volumes definitely put Shelley on the map of public consciousness. The reviews it will be noticed are still few in number, but obviously Shelley had become someone to talk about, though not to read - 'Have you seen that new thing by Shelley? Shooting I believe. Of course I wouldn’t open it myself but....' That sort of publicity unfortunately does not do a poet much good. In fact it is perfectly certain that this preconceived hostility was responsible for the comparative silence of the critics about Shelley’s poetry. As criticism, the Quarterly’s notice was useless; it is difficult to say how much harm it did by giving a wide circulation to the utterly false picture of the poet as a dissolute atheist both in his life and his writings.

The genuine criticisms raise some interesting points. We cannot fail to notice the deliberate efforts of the Examiner and Blackwood’s to educate the public to appreciate Shelley. Not since Wordsworth’s appearance had there been a poet for whose writings the public were so unprepared, but the older poet had no one but himself to interpret him to the
public. Hunt being in sympathy with Shelley's very unpopular philosophy concentrates on trying to break down the prejudices that stand against it, while Blackwood's gives more attention to the less controversial literary qualities of Shelley's poetry. Hunt's interpretation is very pointed, and, in fact, must have done some further harm to Shelley by being too provocative. But he did put the essential loveliness of the poet's rather unpractical ideals simply and clearly to his readers. Blackwood's attempt to separate the theory from the poetry was not wholly sound, but even that did not prevent that paper from understanding the quality of love which Shelley made the mainspring of life. Hunt's was the wiser course; he insisted that the social problems discussed in the poems were their real motive force, and that Shelley's fault lay, not in making his poems too philosophical, but in divorcing the philosophy too much from common humanity. Hunt demanded that Shelley's poetry should convey its message in simpler terms to a wider public. For this reason he preferred the more human tale of Rosalind and Helen to the eccentric heroisms of the Revolt of Islam. While Hunt was thus appealing to the poet to reach the public, Blackwood's was trying to cajole the public into accepting the poet. Both these critics were appreciative of the more literary aspects of Shelley's writing - his keen apprehension of life, his energy, his facility of language and metre.
The lesser critics were equally aware of the fresh contribution that Shelley was making to English literature, but they were almost wholly puzzled and displeased, and showed their displeasure in no uncertain manner; nor did they show any great enthusiasm on the publication of *The Cenci* early in 1820.

Of this drama Gold's *London Magazine*, a new publication, began a favourable notice in a most unkindly fashion: "There has lately arisen a new-fangled style of poetry, facetiously yclept the Cockney School.... The principal requisites for admission...are as follows. First, an inordinate share of affectation and conceit,... Secondly, a prodigious quantity of assurance, that neither God nor man can daunt,...and lastly, a contempt for all institutions, moral and divine, with secret yearnings for aught that is degrading to human nature, or revolt- ing to decency." The critic suggests that the Lake School were the original exponents of this false style—"A few symptoms of this literary malady appeared as early as the year 1795, but it then assumed the guise of simplicity and pathos." The poets of that day "apostrophised donkeys in the innocence of primaeval nature;" and "sung tender songs to tender nightingales."

Shelley is charged with prostituting his "fervid imagination and splendid talents....by the utter degradation to which he unequivocally assigns
them." His previous poems are called in evidence.

"But in the midst of these disgraceful passages, there are beauties of such exquisite, such redeeming qualities, that we adore while we pity - we admire while we execrate.... In the modern eclogue of Rosalind and Helen in particular, there is a pensive sadness, a delicious melancholy, nurtured in the purest, the deepest recesses of the heart, and springing up like a fountain in the desert, that pervades the poem, and forms its principal attraction. The rich yet delicate imagery that is everywhere scattered over it, is like the glowing splendour of the setting sun, when he retires to rest, amid the blessings of exulting nature."

Turning to The Cenci, the critic speaks of it as "dark - wild, and unearthly. The characters that are in it are of no mortal stamp; they are daemons in human guise, inscrutable in their actions, subtle in their revenge.... Then in the midst of all these accumulated horrors comes the gentle Beatrice,

'Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
Has never trodden on a worm, or bruised
A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
With needless tears.'

She walks in the light of innocence; in the unclouded sunshine of loveliness and modesty; but her felicity is transient as the calm that precedes the tempest; and in the very whispers of her virtue, you hear the
indistinct muttering of the distant thunder. She is conceived in the true master spirit of genius; and in the very instant of her parricide, comes home to our imagination fresh in the spring time of innocence—hallowed in the deepest recesses of melancholy....

But notwithstanding all these transcendant qualities, there are numerous passages that warrant our introductory observations respecting the Cockney School, and plunge 'full fathom five,' into the profoundest depths of the Bathos." The review concludes with a protest against the poet as a teacher: "If he must be sceptical— if he must be lax in his human codes of excellence, let him be so; but in God's name let him not publish his principles, and cram them down the throats of others."

The more famous *London Magazine* was much concerned to free Shelley from the charge of affectation. "It is not more than fair towards Mr. Shelley to state, that the style of his writings betrays but little affectation, and that their manner evinces much real power of intellect, great vivacity of fancy, and a quick deep, serious feeling, responding readily, and harmoniously, to every call made on the sensibility.... His language as he travels through the most exaggerated incidents, retains its correctness and simplicity....but, strange and lamentable to say, closely connected with the signs of a depraved, nay
mawkish, or rather emasculated moral taste, craving after trash, filth, and poison, and sickening at wholesome nutriment."

Following the change of emphasis in the last sentence, the critic remarks Shelley's constantly morbid choice of subject, to which the present poem is no exception. Cenci is obviously mad, and none but a madman would make him the central figure of a drama. Greek tragedy is not a parallel case. "The luckless victim of the wrath of Jove might be lashed to the commission of heart-freezing enormities, without human nature appearing degraded, for it was seen that he was under a direct possession." In spite of the partial truth of his statement, the critic here forgets that Beatrice, not Cenci is the tragic figure. He continues to press the moral question, insisting that Shelley is mistaken about the influence of his poetry. "His work does not teach the human heart, but insults it." Cenci's speech cursing his sons and thanking God for their death is quoted as proof. "In this way Mr. Shelley proposes to teach the human heart, and thus to effect the highest moral purpose!"... In The Cenci, however, the fault in question is almost redeemed, so far as literary merit is concerned, by uncommon force of poetical sentiment, and very considerable purity of poetical style." Quoting among many other things Beatrice's farewell speech, the critic continues, "Here the Drama closes, but our excited
imaginations follow the parties to the scaffold of death. This tragedy is the production of a man of great genius, and of a most unhappy moral constitution."

A final word of praise is given to the character of Beatrice - "sustained in beauty, delicacy and refinement, unsullied by incidents of the most odious and contaminating kind." The critic does not seem to realise that this accurate appreciation of the heroine gives his whole case away. Shelley had succeeded in effecting a high moral purpose if he could make his readers believe in a woman who had been dragged through the mire and yet remained undefiled.

The attempt to separate Shelley's poetry from his philosophy was again made by the short-lived Edinburgh Monthly Review. The choice of such a theme as The Cenci is "to our judgment an abundant proof that he has embraced some pernicious and sophistical system of moral belief." Shelley gets the same thrill from anatomizing a crime that some natures get from committing it. The British public will never tolerate such moral perversion. Then comes the contrast: "Not a few of our contemporaries... seem to us to labour under a foolish timidity, which prevents them from doing justice to the genius, at the same time that they inflict due chastiment on the errors of this remarkable young man." Parts of the trial scene and all of the last scene are quoted to show the very high
merit of the play. "His genius is rich to overflowing in all the nobler requisites for tragic excellence.... He might easily and triumphantly overtop all that has been written during the last century for the English stage."

The remaining two critics of The Cenci continued to deprecate the morality of the poem and added little in the way of criticism. The Monthly Review dismissed Shelley's theory of poetry in these terms: "Now what is all this but the exploded Wordsworthian heresy that the language of poetry and the language of real life are the same? and this, too, when the tragic drama is in question!" The British Review was absolutely the first to call attention to Shelley's peculiar imagery, whereby objects are compared to concepts, not as in most poetry vice-versa. But the critic had no liking for such originality, speaking of it as "confused and not very intelligible imagery," and quoting as an example the crag huge as despair.

Leigh Hunt published an article on The Cenci but it was publicity rather than criticism. It appeared in No. XLII of the Indicator, the previous number having been occupied by the original history of Cenci on which the tragedy was based. The second article relates Shelley's work to the documents. Much of it is taken up by a discussion of Cenci as a real
atheist, and more by quotations of "detached beauties" from the play, usually accompanied by Hunt's interpretation of them.

Apparently the work of the Examiner and Blackwood's, not to mention Shelley's own merits, was bearing fruit, this drama being the first of Shelley's works to run quickly to a second edition. But in spite of this fact, perhaps because of it, Prometheus Unbound had to struggle on against an opposition that seemed to have become even more bitter in the few months between spring and summer of 1820.

A short but kind advance notice of the new drama appeared in the London Magazine: "Prometheus Unbound will be found to be a very noble effort of a high and commanding imagination.... The poet may perhaps be accused of taking a wild view of the latent powers and future fortunes of the human race; but its tendency is one of a far more magnanimous nature than that of the Cenci. The soul of man....is elevated to the highest point of the poetical Pisgah, from whence a land of promise, rich with blessings of every kind, is pointed out to its delighted contemplation."

When the actual reviews began to appear, a good friend deserted to the enemy through cowardice. Up till now Blackwood's in its criticism of Shelley had mixed about three parts of praise with one of
blame, but now in an article written by Lockhart the proportions were reversed, and worse was to follow. The Scorpion, to use his own name for himself, takes Jupiter to represent religion, and with the fall of religion, civil government is to fall too. "The patience of the contemplative spirit in Prometheus is to be followed by the daring of the active Demagorgon. ... It appears too plainly, from the luscious pictures with which his play terminates, that Mr Shelley looks forward to an unusual relaxation of all moral rules — or rather, indeed, to the extinction of all moral feelings, except that of a certain mysterious indefinable kindliness.... In short, it is quite impossible that there should exist a more pestiferous mixture of blasphemy, sedition, and sensuality, than is visible in the whole structure and strain of this poem — which, nevertheless,...must and will be considered by all that read it attentively, as abounding in poetical beauties of the highest order — as presenting many specimens not easily to be surpassed, of the moral sublime of eloquence — as overflowing with pathos, and most magnificent in description." The mixture of praise and blame in this paragraph is typical of the whole article. As a proof that Shelley's teaching is baneful while his poetry is splendid, Lockhart quotes the Speech of the Spirit of the Hour describing the regenerated Earth (Act III Sc IV) concluding with the well-known line, 'pinnacled/in the intense inane.'
The minor poems receive high praise. The odes *To the West Wind* and *To a Skylark* are referred to as "abounding in richest melody of versification, and great tenderness of feeling. But the most affecting of all is 'The sensitive plant."

If Lockhart had been wise he would have stopped at this point, but he foolishly continues, and in doing so gives away the real reason for the changed attitude of the magazine towards the poet. He refers to an article "in some one of the London Magazines; we forget which at this moment. We are pretty sure we know who the author of that most false accusation is." A very convenient memory that could identify an anonymous writer and yet forget where he wrote. The accusation is that Blackwood's praises Shelley because criticism cannot harm him financially; and abuses his friends, Hunt andKeats because they are dependent on their pens for a living; a very palpable hit if we remember the magazine's endeavour to embitter the relations of these three and Byron. To this Lockhart replies, "We have no personal acquaintance with any of these men, and no personal feelings in regard to any one of them, good or bad. We never even saw any one of their faces." There follows a passage on Keats which belongs to a chain of events to be narrated in the next chapter. Reverting to Shelley, Lockhart explains the present attack on him by the increasing wickedness of his opinions. "We think they are on the whole, more undisguisedly pernicious in this volume,"
than even in his Revolt of Islam. There is an Ode to Liberty... just as wicked as any thing that ever reached the world under the name of Mr Hunt himself."

This excuse is transparently disingenuous. Shelley's opinions had not grown wilder; the snobbery, that praised one poet as a scholar and a gentleman and damned another as an uneducated apothecary, was undoubtedly part-motive for the attacks on the Cockney School. As the exaggerated difference in tone between the articles on Shelley and on Hunt was attracting attention, something had to be done to bring them within measurable distance of each other, or the London Magazine would be justified, and rather than stop abusing Hunt, Lockhart deserted Shelley.

In complete contrast is the article in Gold's London Magazine, which is even more whole-heartedly in Shelley's favour than before. "The minor pieces," it begins, "are stamped throughout with all the vigorous peculiarities of the writer's mind, and are everywhere strongly impregnated with the alchymical properties of genius. But what we principally admire in them is their strong and healthy freshness.... They possess the fever and flush of poetry; the fragrant perfume and sunshine of a summer's morning, with its genial and kindly benevolence." The Cloud is quoted as exemplifying these qualities. Of the main piece the critic speaks with reverent awe: "This is one of
the most stupendous of those works which the daring and vigorous spirit of modern poetry and thought has created. We despair of conveying to our readers, either by analysis or description, any idea of its gigantic outlines, or of its innumerable sweetances. It is a vast wilderness of beauty, which at first seems stretching out on all sides to infinitude, yet the boundaries of which are all cast by the poet.... The subject is so treated, that we lose sight of persons in principles, and soon feel that all the splendid machinery around us is but the shadow of things unseen, the outward panoply of bright expectations and theories, which appear to the author's mind instinct with eternal and eternally progressive blessings."

The critic proceeds with some very sound arguments against those who can see nothing but poison in Shelley's teaching. "There is nothing pernicious in the belief that, even on earth, man is destined to attain a high degree of happiness and of virtue.... We further agree with Mr. Shelley, that Revenge is not the weapon with which men should oppose the erring and the guilty.... He only echoes the feeling of every genuine Christian, when he contends for looking with deep-thoughted pity on the vicious or regarding them tenderly as the unfortunate, and for striving 'not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good'."

At the same time the real weakness of Shelley's
Utopian theorisings is laid bare: "When he would attempt to realize in an instant his glorious visions; ...when he would cast down all restraint and authority as enormous evils; and would leave mankind to the guidance of passions yet unsubdued, and of desires yet unregulated, we must protest against his wishes, as tending fearfully to retard the good which he would precipitate."

Finally the critic turns to another aspect of the volume. "As a poem, the work before us is replete with clear, pure, and majestical imagery, accompanied by a harmony as rich and various as that of the loftiest of our English poets." Many quotations are given including the two songs, 'On a Poet's lips I slept' and 'My Soul is an enchanted boat', the latter being characterised as "more liquidly harmonious, and of a beauty more ravishing and paradisaical, than any passage which we can remember in modern poetry."

If the concluding sentence of the review were written by someone outside Shelley's circle, it shows that there was at least one critical mind that could penetrate to the real heart of Shelley unhindered by prejudice. It runs thus: "In the whole work there is a spirit of good - of gentleness, humanity, and even of religion, which has excited in us a deep admiration of its author, and a fond regret that he should ever attempt to adorn cold and dangerous paradoxes with the beauties which could only have been produced by a mind instinctively pious and reverential."
"What in the name of wonder on one side, and of common sense on the other, is the meaning of this metaphysical rhapsody about the unbinding of Prometheus?" Such a question indicates that the *Monthly Review* has retired to the 'Mad Shelley' position once more, and the answer, "Pure unmixed nonsense" emphasises that such is the fact. The Review does allow him some merit however, - "much benevolent feeling, beautiful language, and powerful versification."

A change of tactics is observable in the *Quarterly Review*, which takes the line that *Prometheus* is "absolutely and intrinsically unintelligible," a more decent form of attack than veiled hints at the horrors of Shelley's private life. The critic intends to show by quotation that want of meaning is the chief characteristic of Shelley's poetry. If the quotations given can be shown to have a meaning, the critic will stand condemned; if not, "we look upon the question of Mr. Shelley's poetical merits as at an end." The passages cited are three in number, and if the critic had not been disingenuous would have afforded further definite proof of the way in which a poet may be unintelligible to his own generation and quite comprehensible to the next. The first, which the critic kindly complicates by printing as prose, is that difficult piece of Shelley-Platonism from the
conclusion of Act III, which had been already praised as poetry even by Lockhart. Next come the first twelve lines of The Cloud, which appears in any school anthology to-day, and lastly a description of the Spirit of the Earth from Prometheus, Act IV.

The reviewer's next complaints are more genuine, and represent the reactions of the press to Shelley's peculiarities of style. It will be noticed how few critics mention these peculiarities, either for praise or blame. The Quarterly takes exception to the multiplication of metaphors: "His poetry is in general a mere jumble of words and heterogeneous ideas, connected by slight and accidental associations, among which it is impossible to distinguish the principal object from the accessory." The examples given include 'My Soul is an enchanted boat' which we have seen praised elsewhere. "Another characteristic trait of Mr. Shelley's poetry is, that in his descriptions he never describes the thing directly, but transfers to it the properties of something which he conceives to resemble it by language which is to be taken partly in a metaphorical meaning, and partly in no meaning at all." Here is that process in operation:-

'The snowdrop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour, sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.
And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,  
Which flung from its bell a sweet peal anew  
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,  
It was felt like an odour within the sense.'  
"These" declared the Quarterly, "are the tricks of a mere poetical harlequin." Of Prometheus itself a flippant account is given, and the critic wonders how a cultured man could come to write such stuff.

The review is not allowed to conclude without some remarks on the book's "flagrant offences against morality and religion," and here again some positive misrepresentation occurs. It is so easy to give certain passages an awkward twist, thus: "After a revolting description of the death of our Saviour, introduced merely for the sake of intimating, that the religion he preached is the great source of human misery and vice, he adds,

- 'Thy name I will not speak,
It hath become a curse'.

It was easy also to print a passage from the Ode to Liberty as:- "O that the free would stamp the impious name Of xxxxxx into the dust!" implying that the missing word was Christ, and not King as Shelley intended. "What is to be said," the reviewer asks, "of a man, who, like Mr. Shelley, wantonly and unnecessarily goes out of his way, not to reason against, but to revile Christianity and its author?... The real cause of his aversion to Christianity is easily discovered. Christianity is the great prop of the social order of
the civilised world; this social order is the object of Mr. Shelley's hatred." The painted veil passage is quoted, as prose, in proof of this assertion.

The most comprehensive exposure of the misrepresentations in the foregoing review is again supplied by Leigh Hunt in the Examiner in a series of three letters. The first is devoted to a general account of the methods of the Quarterly, which may be summarised in a few detached sentences: "It [the Review] flourishes because it is industrious, because it is subservient to the opinions of Government and Government-men, and because it has as much talent, and no more, than is comfortable to the common-place."

"The question is not, 'Has he genius?' but 'Is he one of us?'" "It is the same with regard to women.... To have a father in the Government interest is promising; and there is much literary merit in possessing a cousin on the pension list."

The second letter comes down to the particular case in which we are interested, Shelley's Prometheus. Hunt supposes the Quarterly article to have been written by "some assistant clergyman" because "the critic thinks it sufficient to quote a passage against priests, in order to have proved its erroneousness." The "little genuine Quarterly touch" of printing six stars instead of four is duly shown up before Hunt proceeds to the Crucifixion passage. "Who would suppose from the Reviewer's quotation," he asks
indignantly, "that Mr. Shelley, in this very passage, is instancing Christ as a specimen of the fate of benevolent reformers?" To show just how great the misrepresentation is, Hunt restores the passage to its context. He is willing to concede that Shelley does paint the present state of the world in over-gloomy shades, that his "poetry is often of too abstract and metaphysical a cast; that it is apt to be too wilful and gratuitous in its metaphors; and that it would be better if he did not write metaphysics and polemics in verse.... But let the reader judge, by this passage out of one of his poems least calculated to be popular, whether 'all' his poetry is the nonsense the Reviewer pretends it to be."

Lastly Hunt complains of the dishonesty of printing a difficult piece of poetry as prose and out of its context, and demonstrates that Dante can be made to appear meaningless in the same fashion. He reprints the misused passage properly and appends a detailed paraphrase of it. To prove once and for all that Shelley can write simple poetry with a human appeal he gives the Ode to a Skylark in full, adding, "I know of nothing more beautiful than this, - more choice of tones, more natural in words, more abundant in exquisite, cordial, and most poetical associations. One gets the stanzas by heart unawares, and repeats them 'like snatches of old tunes.'"

The Literary Gazette has changed its tactics
slightly, and makes lunacy rather than wickedness its main charge against the poet. "To our apprehensions, Prometheus is little else but absolute raving; and were we not assured to the contrary, we should take it for granted that the author was a lunatic - as his principles are ludicrously wicked, and his poetry a mélange of nonsense, cockneyism, poverty and pedantry. ... Moral feeling, as well as taste, inexorably condemns the stupid trash of this delirious dreamer."

A mocking account is given of the preface and plot. "The chief secret of Mr. Shelley's poetry ...is merely opposition of words, phrases, and sentiments, so violent as to be utter nonsense."

After a string of examples, he continues, "There is another part of Mr. Shelley's art of poetry, which deserves notice; it is his fancy, that by bestowing colouring epithets on every thing he mentions, he thereby renders his diction and descriptions vividly poetical." Among other examples of this trick the reviewer quotes the lovely description of the sphere, in which the Spirit of the Earth rides with the question, "Did ever the walls of Bedlam display more insane stuff than this?"

Out of this welter of accusation and defence is it possible to rescue any shreds of sane, honest criticism? Not many. It is almost impossible to escape the conclusion that Shelley and the Tories did not speak the same language. Their political philos-
ophies were so antipathetic that there was no common ground on which they could meet to exchange ideas. Shelley's good was their evil. But, whether inspired by rumours of Shelley's affairs or not, Blackwood's now and the Quarterly on a previous occasion were unable to speak of Shelley's philosophy without stressing their belief that the poet desired promiscuity as almost the first essential of his Utopia, an emphasis utterly unjustified by the selfless communism of Prometheus. Of the further misrepresentations of the Quarterly exposed by Hunt nothing more need be said, but we may remark on a similar, if more subtle, falsification of the religious tendency of the allegory by Lockhart when he speaks of Jupiter as representing religion instead of despotic authority. Shelley's ideology has grave weaknesses, and to expose these in reasoned argument would have been the ideal method for the Tories to adopt, perhaps too ideal to be achieved in the rather electric atmosphere of active politics. It needed a paper of mildly liberal sympathies, such as Gold's London Magazine, to discriminate nicely between the good intentions and probably evil results of the poet's creed. Hunt was too concerned with his defence of Shelley to do more than hint at the positive virtues of Prometheus, so that it was left again to Gold's magazine to set these down, and high praise indeed must be given to that paper for its appreciation of the spacious ether of this, the great mystery play of Shelley's religion.
From this valuable criticism, and from the response even of the Quarterly to Shelley's physical sensitivity, we may deduce that Shelley had at last become a name to which a definite style could be attached, and which stood for a definite ideology.

About this time there appeared in Gold's London Magazine an important article On the Philosophy and Poetry of Shelley. Although not a review this article is worth our attention here. It will be seen that in part it repeats the ideas expressed in the review of Prometheus. The intellectual freedom of the times is traced back to the French Revolution which gave "a new tone to the moral and religious sensibilities of human nature.... Byron, Godwin, of our own times; and Shelley... are the spawn of this mighty revolution. The minutiae of their system, perhaps, may be replete with errors, but its abstract abounds in the most beautiful sensibilities of truth and religion. Shelley in particular seems to have a higher notion of the capability of human nature than any poet or philosopher of the day. He has seen as from a distance, the glorious truths of divinity, but his mind has not yet embraced the whole." Love is the groundwork of his system - a divine basis. "In endeavouring to restore religion to its primitive purity, and to render it the voluntary incense of love and brotherly communion, he is performing an acceptable service to the Deity, and a benefit to society at l
large. It is not with religion that he bickers, but
with the adulterations that have so long disgraced
it." To show Shelley's contempt for bigotry the
writer quotes the controversial passage from the Ode
to Liberty with the remark, "If these are opinions
carried to an extravagant excess, they are at least
the excesses of a devotional mind and generous dispos-
ition."

Contemplation of the religious implications
of Prometheus lifts the journalist to almost mystical
heights. The hero of the drama is regarded as "a
type of religion oppressed by the united powers of
superstition and tyranny," a rather startling contrast
with Lockhart's reading of the myth, and the following
is the critic's verdict on the theme of the allegory:
"There can be but one opinion respecting the holiness
of benevolence, and universal philanthropy. Before
this great, this important truth, all minor creeds
sink into their native insignificance. It is the
ladder by which man mounts to Heaven."

The rest of the article is devoted to
Shelley as a poet. "He is perhaps the most intensely
sublime writer of his day, and with the exception of
Wordsworth, is more highly imaginative than any other
living poet." Hardly ever before had these two names
been intelligently linked together. Hunt's complaint
against Shelley is repeated: "We feel that Mr. Shelley
can never become a popular poet. He does not suffic-
iently link himself with man; he is too visionary for
the intellect of the generality of his readers."

Another shrewd comparison follows. "In intensity of description, depth of feeling, and richness of language, Mr. Shelley is infinitely superior to Lord Byron. He has less versatility of talent, but a purer and loftier imagination." The article concludes with a paean of triumph strangely reminiscent of a sonnet of Keats's: "Great days of light and liberty are on the eve of bursting forth with such excessive splendor, that the whole world shall bask in its cheering beams. Byron, Shelley, Godwin, Wordsworth, Hazlitt, and many other such glorious spirits, are the bows of promise that shine in the intellectual atmosphere, to predict the dispersal of gloom, and the restoration of unclouded sunshine."

*Adonais*, issued in 1821, involved Shelley directly in the Cockney School affair. The great question of course is, did the reviewers kill Keats? "How far this may have been the case we do not know," says the *Literary Chronicle*, "...but poor Keats was of too gentle a disposition for severity." Various cases of authors sinking under harsh criticism are recorded. "We have never been among the very enthusiastic admirers of Mr. Keats's poetry...but we are decidedly averse to that species of literary condemnation, which is often practised by men of wit and arrogance, without feeling and without discrimination." Quoting much of Shelley's preface, the reviewer concludes, "Of the
beauty of Mr. Shelley's elegy we shall not speak; to every poetic mind, its transcendant merits must be apparent."

In Blackwood's Magazine appeared an article written by Maginn which in scurrility and ferocity surpassed even Lockhart's attack on the poet. "The Della Crusca has visited us again," and there is little to choose between the new and the old, except that "the defunct Della Crusca...were not daring enough to boast of impurity; there was no pestilent hatred of every thing generous, true, and honourable." Adonais is said to display the Della-Cruscan characteristic of triviality, and its theme is related in the following pleasant fashion;—"A Mr John Keats, a young man who had left a decent calling for the melancholy trade of Cockney-poetry, has lately died of consumption, after having written two or three little books of verses, much neglected by the public. His vanity was probably wrung not less than his purse....

"The New School, however, will have it that he was slaughtered by a criticism of the Quarterly Review. —'O flesh, how art thou fishified!'.... The fact is, that the Quarterly finding before it a work at once silly and presumptuous, full of the servile slang that Cockaigne dictates to its servitors, and the vulgar indecorums which that Grub Street Empire rejoiceth to applaud, told the truth of the volume, and recommended a change of manners and of masters to the
scribbler. Keats wrote on; but he wrote indecently, probably in the indulgence of his social propensities. He selected from Boccacio, and, at the feet of the Italian Priapus, supplicated for fame and farthings."

Speaking of the literary aspect of the poem, Adonais, Maginn continues, "We could prove from the present Elegy, that it is possible to write two sentences of pure nonsense out of three." The proof consists in printing the first stanza, the last four lines being punctuated thus:

"And teach them thine own sorrow, say with me
Died Adonais! till the future does
Forget the past. His fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light!! unto eternity."

Shelley has been praised for his command of language. "But any man may have the command of every word in the vocabulary, if he will fling them like pebbles from a sack.... On these principles, a hundred or a hundred thousand verses might be made, equal to the best in Adonais, without taking the pen off the paper." A mock elegy on a broken leg is composed to demonstrate this possibility. "As this wild waste of words is altogether beyond our comprehension, we will proceed to the more gratifying office of giving a whole, unbroken specimen of the poet's powers, exercised on a subject rather more within their sphere." And so, with charming taste, Maginn concludes with a burlesque 'Elegy on my Tom-cat.'
A very similar line is taken by the Literary Gazette for which, it will be remembered, Maginn also wrote. "Adonais is an elegy after the manner of Moschus, on a foolish young man, who, after writing some volumes of very weak, and, in the greater part, of very indecent poetry, died some time since of a consumption: the breaking down of an infirm constitution having, in all probability, been accelerated by the discarding of his neckcloth, a practice of the cockney poets.... But death, even the death of the radically presumptuous profligate, is a serious thing." Keats, the critic thinks, was driven into bad ways by his companions and would probably have acquired common sense and decency had he lived.

Adonais as a poem is mostly nonsense. "We give some specimens of Mr. S.'s Nonsense — pastoral, Nonsense — physical, Nonsense — vermicular...." But the writer is terribly shocked by some blasphemies in the poem. "We are scarcely satisfied that even to quote such passages may not be criminal. The subject is too repulsive for us to proceed even in expressing our disgust for the general folly that makes the Poem as miserable in point of authorship, as in point of principle." One more charge remains: "It is hardly possible to help laughing at the mock solemnity with which Shelley charges the Quarterly Review for having murdered his friend with — a critique! If Criticism killed the disciples of that school, Shelley would not have been alive to write an Elegy on another."
In distant Italy, far from the gossip of publishing houses, Hunt could write a calm, almost scholarly essay on *Adonais* for the *Examiner*. "It is not a poem calculated to be popular, any more than the *Prometheus Unbound*;...but it will delight the few, to whom Mr. Shelley is accustomed to address himself. Spenser would be pleased with it if he were living. A mere town reader and a Quarterly Reviewer will find it caviare." Hunt spends some time refuting Dr Johnson's objections to the artificiality of classical elegy with the argument that "a poet's world is as real to him as the more palpable one to people in general. He spends his time in it as truly as Dr. Johnson did his in Fleet-street or at the club." Hunt quotes the passages on Rome and on the poet-mourners. The accusations against the reviewers are also given, and to "take the taste of the Gifford out of one's mouth", Hunt concludes with Shelley's remarks on Severn.

Shelley's own death quickly followed, and in 1824 his wife issued the *Posthumous Poems*. A rather peculiar, and in some ways unsatisfactory review of this publication was written by Hazlitt for the *Edinburgh Review*. It was for the most part an attempt to estimate Shelley's contribution to literature. "Mr Shelley's style is to poetry what astrology is to
natural science - a passionate dream, a straining after impossibilities, a record of fond conjectures, a confused embodying of vague abstractions.... Mr Shelley is the maker of his own poetry - out of nothing." He might have been a good poet of the ordinary type, but he had too fiery a mind to be content with the merely probable or actual, and introduced deliberate metaphysical argument into his poetry. "He mistook the nature of the poet's calling, which should be guided by involuntary not by voluntary impulses."

In other words Hazlitt is making the shrewd observation that Shelley has not thoroughly subdued to imaginative purposes the intellectual basis of his poetry. "In his smaller pieces, where he has attempted little, he has done most. If some casual and interesting idea touched his feelings or struck his fancy, he expressed it in pleasing and unaffected verse: but give him a larger subject, and time to reflect, and he was sure to get entangled in a system."

There follows a sympathetic description of Shelley's person and character. "He reminded those who saw him of some of Ovid's fables. His form, graceful and slender, drooped like a flower in the breeze. But he was crushed beneath the weight of thought which he aspired to bear, and was withered in the lightning-glare of a ruthless philosophy!... He was sincere in all his professions; and he practiced what he preached - to his own sufficient cost.... His fault was, that he had no deference for the opinions of
others, too little sympathy with their feelings (which he thought he had a right to sacrifice, as well as his own, to a grand ethical experiment) — and trusted too implicitly to the light of his own mind, and to the warmth of his own impulses."

After developing this theme at some length, Hazlitt turns to mourn over the great losses to literature of those years: "Mr Shelley died, it seems, with a volume of Mr Keats’s poetry grasped with one hand in his bosom! These are two out of four poets, patriots and friends, who have visited Italy within a few years, both of whom have been soon hurried to a more distant shore. Keats died young; and yet 'his infelicity had years too many.'.... The shaft was sped — venal, vulgar, venomous, that drove him from his country, with sickness and penury for companions, and followed him to his grave. And yet there are those who could trample on the faded flower — men to whom breaking hearts are a subject of merriment — who laugh loud over the silent urn of Genius, and play out their game of venality and infamy with the crumbling bones of their victims! To this band of immortals a third has since been added! — a mightier genius, a haughtier spirit, whose stubborn impatience and Achilles-like pride only Death could quell. Greece, Italy, the world have lost their poet-hero.... But he set like the sun in his glory; and his orb was greatest and brightest at the last; for his memory is now consecrated no less by freedom than genius."
Finally Hazlitt comments on the poems actually before him. Julian and Maddalo, breathing a spirit of "thoughtful and romantic humanity," is in Shelley's best, least mannered style, but is yet perplexing and obscure. "The depth and tenderness of his feelings seems often to have interfered with the expression of them, as the sight becomes blind with tears." The Triumph of Life "is in fact a new and terrific Dance of Death; but it is thus Mr Shelley transposes the appellations of the commonest things.".. The charnel-house details of much of Shelley's poetry force Hazlitt to point out a great weakness of romantic poetry, its tendency to whimsical moodiness and morbid melancholy. "A modern artist would rather shock, and be disgusting and extravagant, than produce no effect at all". Of the other poems, the Stanzas in Dejection and the Ode to Naples receive the highest praise.

Hazlitt's main thesis is directly contradicted by the Edinburgh Magazine: "Mr. Shelley was one of those unfortunate beings in whom the imagination had been exalted and developed at the expense of the reasoning faculty." His active hostility to received opinion involved him in much abuse, yet who will not lament at his death? His life was very unlike his theories, as is shown by a quotation from Mrs Shelley's Preface, "this testimony to the moral worth of Shelley."
The present volume is like his other works, "the same solemnity - the same obscurity - the same, or rather greater carelessness, and the same perfection of poetical expression.... Every word he uses, even though the idea he labours to express be vague, or exaggerated, or unnatural, is intensely poetical... It overshadows even his powers of conception, which are unquestionably great.... Hence it is in the vague, unearthly, and mysterious, that the peculiar power of his mind is displayed." The selection of short poems quoted by this critic shows real taste; they include When the Lamp is Shattered, Rarely, rarely, and Mutability.

"There is peace, there is pardon, there is tenderness in the grave." Such are the feelings with which the Literary Gazette takes up the last record of one for whom it had had little mercy in his life. "We can but liken his genius to some African river, - there is gold in its waters, but it is embedded in sand, mud, slime and filth. The Witch of Atlas is a good specimen of this author's style: wild, imaginative, revelling in dreams of unreal beauty." Ginerva is quoted as displaying "great sweetness and pathos." The criticism closes with a grumble at the exaggerated panegyric of the preface, and at the amount of mere rubbish included in the volume.
sport of attacking dead enemies in the first of the
Letters of Mr Mullion which is addressed to Barry
Cornwall as the supposed critic of Shelley's Posthum-
ous Poems in the Edinburgh Review. It is full of this
sort of vulgarity: "'Pray, Mr Tims,' Anner Mariar
Price will say, 'vat is your hown hopinion hof Mr
Shelley's werses?' — 'Vy, ma'am,' Mr Tims graciously
bending over his tea-cup, will answer, 'hit his to
poetry vat hastrolojy his to natteral science.'"
The description of Shelley calls forth this heartless
rejoinder: "But, in truth, is there nút something
sickening and Itaianized in thus beslaverung a man's
personal appearance? What need MEN care about his
freckled phiz and his hang-a-bone stoop?" Shelley's
death is made the subject of some more cruel fun.
"'Mr Shelley died, it seems, with a volume of Mr
Keats's poems grasped with one hand in his bosom' —
rather an awkward posture, as you will be convinced if
you try it. But what a rash man Shelley was, to put
to sea in a frail boat with Jack's poetry on board!
Why, man, it would sink a trireme.... I lay a wager
that it righted soon after ejecting Jack."
Speaking
of the four dead poets, Blackwood's concludes, "Poor
Byron sunk under the connexion, and, sick of his
associates, left Italy in despair, to die in Greece of
vexation and dread."

Very different is the tone of William Sidney
Walker writing under the pseudonym of Haselfoot in
Knight's Quarterly Magazine. "Amidst the crowd of feeble and tawdry writers with which we are surrounded it is refreshing to meet with a work upon which the genuine mark of intellectual greatness is stamped. Here are no misgivings, no chilling doubts.... We feel ourselves raised above criticism, to that of which criticism is only the shadow; we perceive that it is from sources like these that her rules, even where true, are exclusively derived.... We breathe freely in the open air of enlarged thought; and we deem ourselves ennobled by our relation to a superior mind, and by the sense of our own capabilities which its grand conceptions awaken in us."

So great is the public scorn in which Shelley's name is held that Walker feels he must offer some explanation for his unusual attitude. "We know that public opinion...has doomed the name of Shelley to unmixed reprobation. We are a review-and-newspaper-ridden people.... Shelley was a leveller in politics—this all knew; and they had been told that Shelley was an Atheist, that he was a man of flagitious character, and that his poems are nothing more than a heap of bombast and verbiage, of immorality and blasphemy. They believe implicitly what they are taught, and he who would disturb the fixed persuasion runs some danger of being himself involved in the obloquy which he would remove from another." But Walker does not believe that the outcry against Shelley was raised merely because of his moral or literary failings: "It
was not merely that he erred, but that his errors (so far as they were such) were unpopular, and that he was incapable of concealing them." He was also guilty of being a known friend of Hunt and Hazlitt.

Walker has his comments to make on the poet and his most vigorous enemies. Firstly Blackwood's "laudatory critiques were acute, vigorous, and written with a true feeling of the excellence which they extolled; their attack was mere vapid banter, betraying its insincerity by its laborious feebleness." The Quarterly reviewer, he thinks, is a more conscientious man than the reviewer of Keats, but with his sensibilities blunted by the habit of reviewing. "Hence the scanty measure of cold praise doled out to a work of extraordinary beauty and still more extraordinary promise, a work saturated and glowing all over with poetry beyond example since the days of Comus.... His attacks on the writer's character are not to be confounded with the wanton personalities so common of late among periodical writers." They are made because the reviewer sees in Shelley the active teacher of a new and disagreeable morality.

Many quotations are made to show the real poetry in Shelley's writings, being mainly taken from Alastor, the Revolt of Islam, and Prometheus. "With regard to the moral tendency of Shelley's works...the true question is - what is the effect produced by Shelley's writings on the reader?... Are they writings to which a bad man would resort in search of food for
his depraved propensities? We answer without hesita-
tion — no.... Even Wordsworth is scarcely worse adapted
to that purpose. The tendency of his writings is
uniformly elevated.... They inculcate truth and simpl-
icity of heart, intellectual liberty and enlargement
of thought, a passionate devotion to the graces and
sublimities of nature, and above all, allove for
others, fervent, deep-seated, persevering, unlimited
by place or circumstance." All the same, "his theory
hangs like a leaden weight on his poetry."

As a poet, "his element lay in the mixture
of passion and imagination — the imagery being; as it
were, impregnated with the passion which brooded over
it. His extraordinary sensitive power overbalanced
his power of reflection.... He wants pliancy of
genius; no first-rate poet ever possessed less variety
of powers; there is not merely a want of thought, but
a want of human interest in his productions. But no
words can do justice to the mixed sublimity and
sweetness of his images."

This article is "Haselfoot's" contribution
to a sort of Noctes Ambrosianae and in the subsequent
discussion, "Heaviside" (M. D. Hill) agrees that
Shelley's poetry is fine, but thinks him "a most
dangerous writer," whose life is an antidote to his
writings. "Vernon" (Charles Knight himself) seconds
this argument very pointedly: "Shelley was "not a man
of principle; he acted upon impulse.... That impulse
prompted him to marry a weak girl, (his first wife,)
and then to abandon her under circumstances of the most reckless inhumanity. "... Your article does credit to your head and your heart - but it is too zealous and enthusiastic."

Lockhart in the Quarterly Review coupled the Posthumous Poems with Lord Francis Leveson Gower's translation of Faust, and praised highly Shelley's translations from the German and the Greek. No original poems are mentioned. Lockhart's last words on Shelley are, "One department of literature has, without doubt, sustained a heavy loss in the early death of this unfortunate and misguided gentleman."

Now that Shelley and Keats had passed beyond the reach of criticism, it is amazing to read the wanton acrimony of the Blackwood's article. What purpose could it possibly serve? It could not make the poets amend their ways, it could not be accepted as criticism by the public. Was all this vulgarity published merely to hurt Leigh Hunt? Or merely to make a spicy article for the fun's sake? Hazlitt's review raises some further problems. The greatest of all is why did the Edinburgh Review ignore Shelley until, one might say, it was too late? Indeed we here come up against the biggest failure of Jeffrey's critical career. At this point we shall merely notice the fact that the Edinburgh Review, obviously sincere in its admiration of Shelley and Keats, yet
withheld its praise until the opposition had entrenched itself in public opinion. When we consider Jeffrey's career as a whole we will suggest some reasons why this unfortunate gap occurs. Furthermore considering Hazlitt's connection with the poet the praise that he gives seems rather grudging; his most enthusiastic comments are immediately qualified by some chilling hesitation. For the Edinburgh Review's only article on such an important figure, the critique lacks proportion and inclusiveness. Everything considered, Knight's Quarterly reached a better balance; its review was far more comprehensive, and gave a truer idea of Shelley's poetical status than did Hazlitt's abstractions, both when it praised and when it criticised him.

Shelley's poetical career was more homogeneous and simpler than Byron's and the critical response was correspondingly more single. The most obvious feature of this response was its scantiness. Unlike Byron, Shelley never had a dozen critics reviewing a single work; rarely ever was there half that number. The obvious reasons were suggested by Blackwood's and other contemporaries, namely that fear of Shelley's outrageous doctrines combined with awareness of his genius acted to keep the more timid critics silent. That fear was indeed the dominant factor, but it was reinforced by sheer inability to understand Shelley. Time and again his verse was stigmatised as nonsense,
and the critics were using the word literally. Obviously the reviews were not going to waste space on the apparently incomprehensible. Unlike most poets then, we can say of Shelley that the general neglect of him was significant of power, not of impotence.

From the day he sent copies of the *Necessity of Atheism* to the heads of the Oxford Colleges till the very end of his life Shelley was more interested in propaganda than literature. Just as much as Mrs Trimmer he desired to point a moral rather than adorn a tale, but that did not entirely prevent him turning the stuff of his thoughts into real poetry. Yet as we have seen, the propagandist elements in his writing were those on which his contemporaries seized. With *Alastor* as almost the sole exception, his work was criticised as if it were a series of pamphlets written by a Society for the Promotion of Vice. The reviewers were entitled to combat Shelley's philosophy if they thought it pernicious, but too often they forgot they were dealing not with polemical and political articles but poems which had to be judged by their literary value. That in itself sufficiently upset the critical balance to render fair judgment unattainable by the critics concerned, but we have already put on record how their prejudice expressed itself in vituperation, misrepresentation, and slander. Even so genial a soul as Charles Lamb could write, "Shelley the great Atheist has gone down by water to Eternal fire." For the common reader any adequate conception of Shelley was
impossible. It would have been a shock to him to learn that one day that writer of nonsense and immor-
ality would be unquestioningly accepted as one of the greatest poets of his generation. But we must keep in mind that Shelley owed his reputation mainly to his great lyric power, while his contemporary critics were so engrossed by his philosophical poetry that they hardly gave his lyrics enough thought even to abuse them.

How did Shelley exchange notoreity for fame? There is no need to ask why, as his power was recognised even by those who feared and condemned him. Those who appreciated Shelley in his lifetime were few but their patient labours, as the fires of controversy grew cold, spread a knowledge of the poet's greatness. Chief among them is the figure of Hunt, tirelessly fighting his own and his friends' battles. His efforts, later coupled with Mrs Shelley's quiet persistency as an editor, were probably the greatest forces which kept the poet's fairer name before the public. But there were outsiders who also did their share. Blackwood's later defection must not blind us to the worth of its earlier appreciation of the poet. Of still more significance was the work of Gold's London Magazine, because we can see there the critical mind in the process of being educated. The articles show a progressive understanding of Shelley's qualities. Knight's Quarterly represents another tendency. The writers in that magazine were brilliant
young men and Walker's article is an important contribution to criticism. Shelley had proved himself capable of awakening the enthusiasm of young writers, unafraid to accept what shocked their elders; they were the true guardians of his fame; as their generation replaced his own Shelley automatically became an accepted figure. Among these ardent young devotees was Robert Browning. It is never accurate to speak of Shelley as a popular poet. Except in the short poems, so admired by Hazlitt, Shelley's appeal was too intellectual or too didactic to attract a great public. He demanded more hard thinking than his contemporaries did, a fact as we have noticed which displeased Hunt who wanted everyone converted to Shelley. But what his audience lacked in quantity it probably made up in quality.

The subsequent reputation of the three figures considered in this chapter contrasts strongly with their ill report while they lived. Moore's verse, the bulk of it, has simply died and been forgotten; Byron, the Colossus of his age, is seen to be quite a human figure; and Shelley, that object of fun or monster of wickedness, has become almost a saint. They were from the first fundamentally different, and yet they were treated very much alike by their contemporaries. Because they all offended the current moral code, in their writings or their lives, they were
severally and conjointly damned in almost identical terms. Moore, indeed, was recognised as sinning out of sheer youthful luxuriance of fancy, and accordingly was merely reproved without the stars in their courses being asked to fight against him. But the critics tried literally to move heaven and earth to censure the other two, with it would seem rarely any conception that one was trying to rebuild the world nearly by the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, while the other was mainly interested in making a striking impression, if only on himself, whether as sentimentalist or satirist. Both, however, were men of forceful personality and astonishing careers and both paid the penalty in publicity of the worst sort.

Critical preoccupation with their immorality, real or imagined, and with their characters prevented the making of anything like a true estimate of the poetical status of Byron and Shelley. It led in the first place to a gross overestimation of the former, mainly because, as has been already indicated, Byron in his years of fame went just a step beyond the public. His poetry was a little, and only a little, more romantic than Scott's. His love stories were a little, and only a little, more passionate than what was normal. In fact, until the conclusion of Childe Harold, Byron's poetry, as poetry, fared better than it deserved at the critics' hands. It was not until he passed beyond reach of the public taste that his
poetical merit was underestimated. Although he was now out of touch with the public he was not in advance of them. He had rather turned back to a previous age, to a brilliant but sterile kind, from which neither readers nor disciples could expect any new fruits. Shelley's was rather a different case. He was far closer in kind to Wordsworth. His poetry really was new and looked forward to distant horizons. He had something to say and he had a new way of saying it. Accordingly he met with the same initial incomprehension as Wordsworth and until public taste had been re-educated he remained unappreciated. Unhappily the re-education was not completed in his lifetime.

In recent years the wheel of fortune has again turned against Shelley, and it has become the fashion in certain circles to disparage the poet once more. We find Mr T.S.Eliot writing in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, "The ideas of Shelley seem to me always to be ideas of adolescence.... I find his ideas repellent; and the difficulty of separating Shelley from his ideas and beliefs is still greater than with Wordsworth. And the biographical interest which Shelley has always excited makes it difficult to read the poetry without remembering the man: and the man was humourless, pedantic, self-centred, and sometimes almost a blackguard." Mr Eliot goes on to contrast Shelley with other poets whom he can enjoy although not accepting their philosophy. "But some of Shelley's views I positively dislike, and that hampers
my enjoyment of the poems in which they occur; and others seem to me so puerile that I cannot enjoy the poems in which they occur.... What complicates the problem still further is that in poetry so fluent as Shelley's there is a good deal which is just bad jingling." When Mr Eliot does light on a lovely passage he is "as much shocked at finding it in such company as pleased by finding it at all." Finally he suggests a reason why he can appreciate the poetry of a Dante or a Lucretius but not that of a Shelley: "When the doctrine...presented in a poem is one which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience, it interposes no obstacle to the reader's enjoyment, whether it be one that he accept or deny, approve or deprecate. When it is one which the reader rejects as childish or feeble, it may, for a reader of a well-developed mind, set up an almost complete check."

Now we have here the old charges in a new form - bad writing, and disgusting ideas; there is also a revival of the old false emphasis, a reading of Shelley as if he were a pamphleteer. In the essay from which the foregoing quotations are taken, greater praise has been given to Shelley than it has been possible to indicate here, but the fact remains that his weaknesses are stressed and his greatness minimised. It is true that much of Shelley's verse is second rate; it is true that a poem like the Revolt of Islam is a political pamphlet, and not a very good one. But it
is hardly criticism to judge Shelley's poetry of ideas by the Revolt when we have *Prometheus Unbound* and *Hellas*. It seems impossible also to estimate Shelley's stature without considering his exquisite lyrics. We have quoted Mr Eliot's explanation of the prejudices operating against Shelley, but his statements contain an element of arbitrariness, for they bring us up against the difficulty of drawing a line between those theories which are "coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience," and those which are "childish or feeble." In spite of the reiteration of catch-words and clichés like tyrants, priests, creeds outworn, in spite of extravagances and wilfulness, Shelley's ideas, especially if we relate them to their age, cannot be dismissed as "childish or feeble."

Amongst the dross, there is gold, the love of freedom, the unflinching courage, the spirit that could write:

"The soul of man, like unextinguished fire, Yet burns towards heaven."
CHAPTER THE SIXTH

MOHOCKS VERSUS COCKNEYS

The time has come for us to descend into the dust and heat of that struggle whose distant alarms have made themselves heard in the previous chapter, the battle-royal between Blackwood's Magazine and the group stigmatised by it as the Cockney School, Hunt, Keats and Hazlitt.

A certain Indian legend tells of a peasant who prayed for water for his drought-stricken farm. The gods obligingly turned the Ganges loose on it. In 1817 William Blackwood was in just such a predicament. His newly-founded magazine was dying a natural death in the hands of two incompetent editors, when he besought his two most capable contributors to take it over and infuse some life into it. John Wilson and J.G. Lockhart complied with alacrity. Blackwood got a little more than he bargained for. The seventh number of the magazine, made up by them, was so lively that it involved the publisher in one libel suit and the threat of two others. It rescued the magazine however, as three editions sold out immediately. The excitement was caused by three separate articles. One of these, bearing on Coleridge's character we have
already examined. Another was the Chaldee Manuscript, of which more will be said later. The third, signed Z, bore the title "On the Cockney School of Poetry, No.1," and its subject was Leigh Hunt's poem, The Story of Rimini, a sentimental version of Dante's tale of Paolo and Francesca, which had been published as long before as 1815.

At that date the press had taken some notice of it, chiefly on account of its metre, the unstopped heroic couplet, and its familiar diction, which Hunt defended in a preface restating the Wordsworthian creed of an "actual existing language" as the medium of poetry. The reception was on the whole favourable, in line with Hazlitt's verdict in the Edinburgh Review: "He has united something of the voluptuous pathos of Boccaccio with Ariosto's laughing graces.... His sunshine and flowers are his own!" The Chaucerian influence was also recognised and welcomed. Most of the critics objected to occasional lapses from familiarity to vulgarisms, but a few headed by the Quarterly Review dismissed the style as "an ungrammatical, unauthorised, chaotic jargon, such as we believe was never before spoken, much less written."

On one point, the conduct of the story, there was general agreement. Even the Quarterly agreed, "He has, at least, the merit of telling it with decency," although the Literary Panorama, while not hinting that the poem was inflammatory, declared that "the writer
who attributes evils to fate is not a moral writer."

In view of all this, Blackwood's article came as a shock to a public that had quietly accepted and perhaps forgotten Rimini with all its quaintness and affectations. The review begins most disarmingly: Rimini "possesses some tolerable passages which are all quoted in the Edinburgh Reviewer's account of the poem, and not one of which is quoted in the very illiberal attack upon it in the Quarterly." But, Z continues, Hunt displays as much bad taste and affectation as "a little mincing boarding-school mistress... Mr Hunt cannot utter a dedication, or even a note, without betraying the Shibboleth of low birth and low habits.... The poetry of this man is always on the stretch to be grand.... He would fain be always tripping and waltzing, and is sorry that he cannot be allowed to walk about in the morning with yellow breeches and flesh-coloured silk-stockings."

Further - "The extreme moral depravity of the Cockney School is another thing which is for ever thrusting itself upon the public attention.... How could any man of high original genius ever stoop publicly, at the present day, to dip his fingers in the least of those glittering and rancid obscenities which float on the surface of Mr. Hunt's Hippocrene? His poetry resembles that of a man who has kept company with kept mistresses. He talks indelicately like a tea-sipping milliner girl.... With him indecency is a disease, and he speaks unclean things from perfect
inanition. The very concubine of so impure a wretch as Leigh Hunt would be pitied, but alas! for the wife of such a husband! For him there is no charm in simple seduction; and he glōats over it only when accompanied with adultery and incest." This alarming passage is followed by the first of Z's many attempts to cut Hunt off from his richer friends. "But Lord Byron! How must the haughty spirit of Lara and Harold contemn the subaltern sneaking of our modern tuft-hunter." A last unkind fling suggests that Hazlitt wrote the Edinburgh critique at Hunt's own request. It is generally agreed that Lockhart was responsible for this article.

October the 20th was the date of this publication and for the next month events moved rapidly. Leigh Hunt being out of town, John published a challenge in the Examiner of November the 2nd, calling on Z to come forward and give satisfaction. The following day he called on Blackwood's London agents, Baldwin, demanding Z's name. They knew even less than John Hunt, not having read the offending passage, and speedily severed their connection with the Edinburgh firm. Blackwood, or perhaps Z, was sufficiently scared to omit from the second edition the sentence about the concubine and to tone down the rest by inserting "his muse" in place of "he" or an "it seems" at appropriate points. John Hunt issued a second challenge on November the 16th, failure to answer which was to brand Z with COWARDICE; at the same time
if Z's employers continued to screen him, they must take the consequences. But meanwhile Z had concocted a second article, which was published four days later.

On this occasion Z displayed a weakness which we noted elsewhere in Lockhart, that of saying just too much and so giving his case away. After a lengthy defence of incestuous themes in Greek tragedy, where the hero is under a curse, and in Byron's poems, where he suffers immediate punishment, Z condemns the unfeeling gaiety of the opening of *Rimini*: "It would fain be the genteel comedy of incest." Then comes Z's fatal admission: "Mr Hunt has indeed taken mighty pains to render *Rimini* a story not of incest but of love. The original betrothing of Francesca to Paolo he has changed into her being espoused by him as the proxy of her brother." As all the pother had been over this very subject, one feels that someone has been crying "Wolf! wolf!" Z himself says, "Many a one reads *Rimini* as a pleasant romance, and chooses it without having the least suspicion that he has been perusing a tale pregnant with all the horrors of most unpardonable guilt." Well, has he?

Meanwhile Blackwood's two dismissed editors, now in charge of Constable's *Edinburgh Magazine*, stepped forward as the champions of the Cockneys. Their critic, in a review of Hazlitt's *Table Talk*, refers to Blackwood's attack as obviously displaying no personal knowledge of Hunt or Hazlitt. "It is hard to believe that any man of sound taste, or real
honesty, or of unsophisticated principles of any sort, could have spoken of another as this writer has done of Mr Hunt, - apparently from the mere vulgar love of scandal; - or the still more vulgar, "slavish and contemptible motive of administering to that base appetite in others." A footnote advised Hunt to take legal action. To this sortie Blackwood's paid no attention.

Some time during the ensuing three weeks the irrepressible Z broke out in a new direction. He answered the Examiner's challenge and signed himself John Graham Dalyell. Hunt despatched a letter breathing fire and slaughter to the unfortunate Dalyell, only to discover that that poor innocent was himself one of Blackwood's victims, having recently recovered damages for a cruel libel on his congenital deformities. "Oh, the villany of these fellows! cried the unhappy man. Leigh Hunt's next move was to inform the world that Z had not yet come forward, "but he, or his employers, must not think to escape, while the same venomous malignity survives in the remaining parts of the reptile."

Z had to make some reply to this, and in January 1818 Blackwood's contained a letter from Z. On which charge, he asks, has Hunt called him a liar? He rehearses eight possible accusations, all of which he is ready to prove, and promises to continue the series with "diversions" against "the Keateles, the
Shellys, and the Webbes." Then comes a defence which
Z had already employed in the Dalyell forgery. "When
I charged you with depraved morality, obscenity, and
indecency, I spoke not of Leigh Hunt as a man. I deny
the fact - I have no reason to doubt that your private
character is respectable; but I judged of you from
your works, and I maintain that they are little calcul-
ated to support such a conclusion.... Your poem is
vile, profligate, obscene, indecent, and detestable... If
you can show that Rimini has no bad tendency, that
the young wife of an old, or the sentimental wife of a
busy husband can study it without danger, your cause
is won."

At some date, probably shortly after this
letter, Hunt threatened Blackwood that he would take
legal proceedings unless given Z's name, and one, John
Richardson, called at the Examiner office to "comprom-
ise the matter with money," but the Hunts wanted the
corpus delicti, not filthy lucre. Leigh gave up the
attempt to extract Z's name or names. Scorn, not
anger, had been his dominant emotion; he himself, as
he stated, was always ready to meet those who objected
to his articles. He had done all that honour demanded.
Z could now come forward with impunity; "my pity for
him, with very great sincerity, is still stronger than
my contempt."

Z under reprieve gambolled like a young ram.
In the month of May he began a second letter thus:
" SIRE, Your Majesty, the King of the Cockneys, having
signified your royal resolution to preserve an inviolable silence towards me...[etc.]" This strain of mock flattery is kept up. "Your personal appearance, which with wincing soreness you accuse me of having caricatured, is not uncaptivating. What with your 'ivy crown' 'shed nodding over both eyes,' as it was fixed there by the delicate hand of young Mister Keats, - what with 'your ripe locks and fair light limbs,' and the 'yellow breeches' celebrated by me in my first address...your Majesty must be a most formidable personage to the Maids of Honour about court." In a more serious tone, Z announces that he was about to disclose his identity when Hunt threatened him with the law, and then of course he could not come forward. He reiterates the charge that Rimini is an incestuous poem, and concludes, "I need fear nothing from you - so you inform me. But it would seem as if there were some other formidable Champion into whose hands you would wish slyly to deliver me.... You got him to praise you and your verses in the Edinburgh Review.... I observed him lately...using foul language to some humble squire who had spied a pimple on his nose."

(The champion was of course Hazlitt, whom Z had called "pimpled" in a passing reference.) Hunt had won the first round, but Z was game for another.

The third Cockney School article (July 1818) shows Z resting - on his imaginary laurels, being a frothy torrent of triumph at having consigned Rimini to oblivion: "The public voice has lifted up against
Hunt,—and sentence of excommunication from the poets of England has been pronounced, enrolled, and ratified." There is only one new topic mentioned. It is said that Hunt at first suspected Hazlitt of being Z because he imagined no one else could know that he had asked the latter to review Rimini in the Edinburgh Review. Incidentally the same number of the magazine contains a canto of Lockhart's poem, "The Mad Banker of Amsterdam", with a very flippant reference to adultery and luxuriant descriptions of female charms. Mrs Grundy has some strange champions.

In August of 1818 comes the first of the promised diversions, the notorious article on Keats's Endymion, for which Lockhart again generally gets the discredit. Z regrets that Keats has caught the poetry-making disease so badly, as he has great talents for a useful profession. "The phrenzy of the 'Poems' was bad enough in its way; but it did not alarm us half so seriously as the calm, settled, imperturbable drivelling idiocy of 'Endymion.'" His earliest efforts were praised in the Examiner: "This percocious adulation confirmed the wavering apprentice in his desire to quit the gallipots." The Great Spirits sonnet is quoted to be torn to pieces — "Wordsworth and Hunt! what a juxta-position!" — "The nations are to listen and be dumb, and why, good Johnny Keats? because Leigh Hunt is editor of the Examiner and Haydon has painted the judgment of Solomon, and you
and Cornelius Webb, and a few more city sparks, are pleased to look upon yourselves as so many future Shakespeares and Miltons!" Z bluntly passes his verdict on the group — "fanciful dreaming tea-drinkers... without logic enough to analyse a single idea, or imagination enough to form one original image." Still harping on the Poems, Z quotes the lines, in Elizabethan taste, describing Georgiana as "the following prurient and vulgar lines, evidently meant for some young lady east of Temple Bar."

Endymion, his present hero, is not a Greek but a Cockney. "Mr Keats has adopted the loose, nerveless versification, and Cockney rhymes of the poet of Rimini;... the defects of the system are tenfold more conspicuous in his disciple's work than in his own. Mr Hunt is a small poet, but he is a clever man. Mr Keats is a still smaller poet, and he is only a boy of pretty abilities, which he has done everything in his power to spoil." A jesting account of the poem is given, with quotations of amorous and fatuous passages and Cockney rhymes. "We had almost forgot to mention that Keats belongs to the Cockney School of Politics, as well as the Cockney School of Poetry.... Hear how their bantling has already learnt to lisp sedition." One of Keats's few "democratic" passages is quoted

Then comes Z's last piece of advice to Keats. "It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet, so back to the shop
Mr John, back to 'plasters, pills, and ointment boxes,' &c. But, for Heaven's sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of extenuatives and soporifics in your practice than you have been in your poetry."

Really, Keats in this encounter fared reasonably well at Z's hand; apart from the bullying, brutal snobbery of the references to his profession, Keats escaped almost entirely any such freedoms with his person and morals as Hunt, Shelley, and Byron suffered. There was a false emphasis on his political inclinations, but for the most part Z did concern himself with Keats's poetry. Unfortunately, his judgement of his subject was quite at fault. Neither of Keats's first volumes was entirely compact of silliness, and to convey that impression and no other was a serious lapse from critical integrity. It is obvious, and again unfortunate, that Keats was dragged into this squabble simply because his name was publicly associated with Leigh Hunt's, and it is interesting to notice that at this early date Z makes an attempt which he later abandons to fasten the same opprobrium of pruriency and radicalism on Keats's poetry as on Hunt's but with even less justification.

(1) Lord Houghton has put it on record that just before this article appeared, viz. in July 1818, Keats's friend Bailey "met, at Bishop Gleig's, in Scotland, a leading contributor to 'Blackwood's Magazine', with whom he had much conversation respecting Keats, especially about his relations with Leigh Hunt, and Mr Bailey thought his confidence had been abused."

Keats Letters p. 62
The majority of Keats's reviewers were more intelligent in their criticisms than Lockhart. The judgements of the Examiner group show why Keats attracted so much attention from Z, while the neutrals, Whig or Tory, may give us some idea of the public estimation of Keats. Let us see what they had said of him up to this time.

In 1817 one of Keats's friends had been early in the field, and was wise enough to criticise his faults as well as praise his merits. John Reynolds writing of the Poems in the Champion, a weekly of which John Scott was the editor, speaks of his friend as "a very young man, and one...that is likely to make a great addition to those who would overthrow that artificial taste which French criticism has long planted amongst us," and possessed of a genius "likely to eclipse" all his contemporaries. "He comes fresh from nature,— and the originals of his images are to be found in her keeping.... Again, though Mr. Keats' poetry is remarkably abstracted, it is never out of reach of the mind." His failings, Reynolds thinks easily remediable, namely a freedom of versification tending to "absolute faultiness", and a superfluity of compound epithets.

George Felton Mathew, of the European Maga-

(1) Mr Middleton Murry, without mentioning his evidence attributes this review to B.R.Haydon. But the evidence in favour of Reynolds, given in Keats Letters p.13 seems very conclusive.
zine, although praising Keats's "fine ear" for the "grand, elaborate, and abstracted music of nature", seems to have a grudge against his former friend. "The slovenly independance" of the verse is again condemned, and Mathew finds Calidore "as pretty and as innocent as childishness can make it, save that it savours too much - as do indeed almost all these poems - of the foppery and affectation of Leigh Hunt."

But his gravest weakness is immaturity of thought and experience. He must teach himself that poetry is not merely escape. It can "uphold the adamantine shield of virtue, and guard the soul from those insinuating sentiments, so fatally inculcated by many of the most popular writers of the day.... Religion and the love of virtue are not inconsistent with the character of a poet."

Hunt had already directed the attention of the Examiner's readers to the Homer sonnet; now he re-echoes Reynolds's idea in his own way: "Something which was not poetry has made way for the return of something which is.... It was the Lake Poets in our opinion...that were the first to revive a true taste for nature; and like most Revolutionists...they went to an extreme." From their ranks, Hunt selects Wordsworth as the truest poet. Keats marks a new advance. "Here is a young poet giving himself up to his own impressions and revelling in real poetry for its own sake.... Our author has all the sensitiveness of temperament requisite to receive impressions, and
wherever he has turned, he has evidently felt them deeply. Hunt notices the same faults as the previous reviewers, and sums up Keats's virtues as "a fine ear, a fancy and imagination at will, and an intense feeling of external beauty in its most natural and least expressible simplicity."

Two strangers also took notice of the 1817 volume. The Eclectic Review struck exactly the same note as G.F. Mathew. Keats is "capable of writing good poetry, for he has the requisite fancy and skill.... We cannot, however, accept this volume as anything more than an immature promise of possible excellence. There is, indeed, little in it that is positively good." The critic also warns Keats against Hunt as a model, and regrets his hasty publication of verses so juvenile that they may prejudice his future career.

In view of later developments one sentence deserves quotation without comment. It is an apology for any seeming harshness in the review. "The case has occurred, when a phlegmatic Reviewer, in a fit of morning spleen, or of after-dinner dulness, has had it in his power to dash to the ground, by his pen, the innocent hopes of a youth struggling for honourable distinction amid all the disadvantages of poverty, or to break the bruised reed of a tender and melancholy spirit; but such an opportunity of doing mischief must of necessity be happily rare."

The Edinburgh Magazine writes wholeheartedly in praise of Keats. "His youth accounts well enough for some
injudicious luxuriances and other faults in his poems; and his intimacy with two of the wittiest writers of their day [Hazlitt and Hunt] sufficiently vouches both for his intellect and taste." These two writers unfortunately "appear to be too full of conceits and sparkling points, ever to excite any thing more than a cold approbation at the long run.... If Mr. Keats does not forthwith cast off the uncleanliness of this school, he will never make his way to the truest strain of poetry, in which, taking him by himself, it appears he might succeed."

It will be seen how fundamentally all these reviews agreed on the merits of Keats's poetry and on the dangers with which he was faced. It must be added that there was complete agreement on the very high merit of the sonnets, but less unanimity of opinion on the worth of the individual poems, amongst which the Epistles found little favour, and Sleep and Poetry perhaps the greatest following.

When Endymion was issued, the Literary Journal added its tribute of praise, quoting from and commenting on the poem in a most flattering fashion, and encouraging Keats not to doubt his own genius; it "may with safety venture in the highest walk of poetry."

At the same time two die-hard Tories had accompanied Z in his wicked ways. The Quarterly article on Endymion, equally notorious with Blackwood's
is in the same bullying style: "On the present occasion we shall anticipate the author's complaint, and honestly confess that we have not read his work.... It is not that Mr. Keats (if that be his real name, for we almost doubt that any man in his senses would put his name to such a rhapsody,...) has not powers of language, rays of fancy, and gleams of genius – he has all these; but he is unhappily a disciple of the new school of what has been somewhere called Cockney poetry: which may be defined to consist of the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language." Mocking his self-criticism, the review continues, "We confess that we should have abstained from inflicting upon him any of the tortures of the 'fierce hell' of criticism, which terrify his imagination, if he had not begged to be spared in order that he might write more; if we had not observed in him a certain degree of talent which deserves to be put in the right way;...and if, finally, he had not told us that he is of an age and temper which imperiously require mental discipline." Among the detailed objections to the poem the critic includes the fact that "there is hardly a complete couplet enclosing a complete idea in the whole book." The review breaks off suddenly with, "But enough of Mr.

(1) Although dated April 1818, this review was apparently not issued till September. As Lockhart speaks of Blackwood's having "dished" Keats before the Quarterly had mentioned his name, the later date is probably correct. The conclusion of the review suggests that it originally formed part of the review of Hunt's Foliage.
Leigh Hunt and his simple neophyte." It is generally supposed that Croker was the author of this article. Again in a similar tone of mockery, the British Critic speaks of Endymion as "the most delicious poem of its kind." It contrives to tell the story of the poem by stringing together every phrase that is or can be made to appear silly, in this fashion: "After sleeping this 'magic sleep, O comfort-able,' for a 'triple hour,' he 'opens his eyelids with a healthier brain.'" In this task the critic shows commenable industry, but he closes on a more serious note. Keats "can strike from unmeaning absurdity into the gross slang of voluptuousness.... Not all the flimsy veil of words in which he would involve immoral images, can atone for their impurity." Z merely developed the hints supplied by these, his fellow Tories.

The Champion had intentionally delayed its review of Endymion for fear that its approval might prejudice the poem's chance of a fair hearing from the "great critical authorities." Seeing that this had been in vain John Scott, the probable author of the article, pleads for fairer reviews based on sound critical principles. Endymion will probably never be popular because its very excellence "will tell against it." Keats is compared in various ways to the great poets of England. The Hymn to Pan is "among the finest specimens of classic poetry in our language."

John Scott also may have been the author of
a letter in the *Morning Chronicle* of the 3rd October 1818, protesting against the Quarterly's treatment of Keats as an act "of gross malice and injustice.... Of John Keats I know nothing; from his Preface I collect that he is very young - no doubt a heinous sin; and I have been informed that he has incurred the additional guilt of an acquaintance with Mr. Leigh Hunt.... Hence Mr. K. is doomed to feel the merciless tomahawk of the Reviewers." The writer admits that the poem shows haste and carelessness, and perhaps should not have been published. Yet "I dare appeal to the taste and judgment of your readers, that beauties of the highest order may be found in almost every page." Lord Byron's refusal to be bullied by the *Edinburgh Review* is recalled. "Let Mr. Keats too persevere - he has talents of no common stamp.... Mr. K. is capable of producing a poem that shall challenge the admiration of every reader of true taste and feeling, nay if he will give up his acquaintance with Mr. Leigh Hunt, and apostatise in his friendships, his principles and his politics (if he have any), he may even command the approbation of the Quarterly Review."

Hunt, not wishing to make things more difficult for his young friend, refrained from a formal review, but republished in the *Examiner* this letter and an article from an Exeter paper by J.H. Reynolds.

To return to Z, This worthy's next move was
to cross-question Hazlitt. Since they had dubbed him "pimpled", Blackwood's had reported Hazlitt's lectures on Poetry, and the reporter, A.Z., (i.e. P.G. Patmore, later of the London Magazine) had commented very favourably on Hazlitt's critical powers, though recognising his prejudices: "In short if you want his praise you must die for it; and when such praise is deserved, and given really com amore, it is almost worth dying for." In a long article contrasting Hazlitt and Jeffrey much praise had been given to the pimpled squire: "Mr Hazlitt's apperçus, concerning particular works, are truer than those of Mr Jeffrey, because he lays out his mind in a more passive manner to receive impressions from them." His "nature exhibits no blind side;" his style is comparable to Swift's. The Cross-Questioning, therefore, appeared remarkably like deliberate maliciousness. These questions were eight in number, and were published in August 1818. By insinuation Hazlitt is accused of vilifying Wordsworth in his lectures, while having derived his ideas about poetry from conversations with the poet. "You once owed your personal safety, perhaps existence, to the humane and firm interference of that virtuous man, who rescued you from the hands of an indignant peasantry whose ideas of purity you, a cockney visitor, had dared to outrage." (A piece of Lakeland scandal known to Wilson.) Hazlitt is said to have been banished from the Edinburgh Review to the Edinburgh Magazine where he has poured out "all manner of gross blunders, and impudent falsehoods, and outrageous extravagancies.
which might happen to come into your head." But Hazlitt pared the Leopard's claws with the threat of a libel action, which Blackwood was glad to settle out of court by payment of £100, and for years Z had nothing more to say to Hazlitt, not in fact till he published the *Liber Amoris*.

After the Cross-Questioning apart from a very tame fifth number of the Cockney School series, Z kept silence for over a year. It was not until October 1819 that Hunt's *Foliage* was made the subject of a sixth article, in which Z struck a note of fantasy, quite amusingly maintained: "This is a posthumous production," but the executors have not given either a life or a face. "This was unkind, for no man admired his face more than poor Hunt; and many and oft is the time that we have stood by him, at pond and stream, when he tried to catch a reflected glimpse of his 'perked-up mouth' and 'crisp curls' in the liquid element." Z supplies the missing biography under the following headings:—

Love of Sociality: "Mr Hunt's notions of sociality are very moderate ones indeed.... Reader, if thou art an honest, stout county squire, what thinkst thou of the following debauch of two Cockney's?" The debauch consists of swilling tea. "There is too much reason to believe, that this everlasting tea-drinking was the chief cause of Leigh Hunt's death." Love of his Country: "It all hangs on one great principle — every grove has its nymph."
His love of the fine imagination of the Greeks: "There is something to us quite shocking in the idea of Hunt translating Homer." Love of Himself: "What is to be thought of a man writing a triumphal sonnet on his own bust, and publishing it." Z is amused at the Cockney "fashion of firing off sonnets at each other."

At the end of 1819, Blackwood's turned even more benign: "We propose now doing a truly wonderful thing – namely, in good earnest, to laud a production of Mr Leigh Hunt's." This proves to be the Pocket Book, and in the main, the critic fulfils his promise. Some praise is given even to Keats's sonnet on the Human Seasons, but that to Ailsa Craig is called "portentous folly." The writer pictures "Mr John Keates standing on the sea-shore at Dunbar, without a neckcloth, according to custom in Cokaigne, and cross-questioning the Craig of Ailsa!" Rather a far cry, surely! He continues, "Do not let John Keates think we dislike him. He is a young man of some poetry; but at present he has not more than a dozen admirers.... We alone like him and laugh at him. He is at present a very amiable, silly, lisping, and pragmatical young gentleman – but we hope to cure him of all that – and should have much pleasure in introducing him to our readers in a year or two speaking the language of this country, counting his fingers correctly, and condescending to a neckcloth." This was only a month after Blackwood's had put on record its abhorrence of the "injustice done to the great..."
In 1820 a fresh, and as it proved powerful, recruit was added to the Cockney ranks in the shape of Baldwin's *London Magazine*, that brilliant and short-lived rival and imitator of Blackwood's. It was not long before this new Liberal organ crossed swords with the Tories. In the fourth number appeared an ecstatic criticism of *Endymion* "from a correspondent".

"The public, and public critics, mutually serve and despise each other," he begins. But a stranger feeling than contempt is aroused by "certain attempts of modern criticism to blight and wither the maturity of genius; or - still worse - to change its youthful enthusiasm into despair, and thus tempt it to commit suicide; or - worst of all - to creep to its cradle, and strangle it in the first bloom and beauty of its childhood." Reference is made to Chatterton and Kirke White, Wordsworth, Keats and his compeers.

"Endymion," the writer continues, "if it be not technically speaking, a poem, is poetry itself. As a promise, we know of nothing like it, except some things of Chatterton.... It is not a poem at all. It is an ecstatic dream of poetry - a flush - a fever - a burning light - an involuntary outpouring of the spirit of poetry - that will not be controlled." The critic admits that there are faults, "faults that in many instances amount almost to the ludicrous: yet positive and palpable as they are, it may be said of them generally, that they are as much collateral evidences of poetical power, as the beauties themselves
are direct ones." Numerous quotations are given, with glowing comments, praising especially the sweetness and variety of the rhythm, and the power of the imagery. The poem is compared to a "glittering and fantastic temple, where we may wander about and delightfully lose ourselves." "Is it credible," the reviewer asks, "that the foregoing extracts are taken, almost at random, from a work in which a writer in the most popular — we will say deservedly the most popular — critical journal of the day, has been unable to discover any thing worthy to redeem it from mere contempt?... It would be foolish to doubt or to deny the extensive effect which such an article is likely to produce, appearing as it does in a work which is read by tens of thousands.... Its chief mischief, however, is likely to take effect on the poet himself! This, it should be noted, is directed against the Quarterly.

Of Endymion the "distinguishing feature is perhaps nothing more than that exuberant spirit of youth...which gushes forth from every part, in a glittering shower of words, and a confused and shadowy pomp of thoughts and images.... And there is no egotism in all this, and no affectation." Will Keats fulfil this rich promise? "The times in which we live are essentially unpoetical; and powerful and resolute indeed must that spirit be, which, even in its youth, can escape their influence.... We cannot conclude these slight and desultory remarks without entreating him not
to be cast down or turned aside from the course which nature has marked out for him. He is and must be a poet — and he may be a great one."

In the following month, May, the London contained an article on periodicals making a direct attack on the Blackwood gang. "Our Edinburgh brethren, we see, wish us to leave them an exclusive privilege to handle certain subjects: this is surely too much to ask." However the writer promises "to respect, as theirs exclusively, by every right of property, the manner of handling certain subjects which we find adopted in their magazine. We should reject, for instance, though Mr. Croker might recommend, the mean insincerity, and vulgar slander of Z." A footnote insinuates that, at least originally, this pseudonym concealed the gentleman here named: "Mr. Gifford is too honourable, and Mr. Canning too clever.... But Mr. Canning has a colleague to whom neither of these objections would apply." The article continues, "We engage never to imitate the mouthing cant of the article on Don Juan, doubting whether the writer be not a notorious libertine, openly mocking his readers, or only a hypocrite clumsily endeavouring to impose upon them. Again, we disclaim a right to encroach on the mæmbank, but tedious farce, carried on with the Ettrick Shepherd. Mr. Hogg, with singular good nature, seems to have consented to act the part of Blackwood's 'Mr. Merry-Man'.... Nor shall we seek to impart to our
sheets that redolency of Leith-ale, and tobacco smoke. ... The indecency of personalities, and the unmanliness of retractions, we mean to respect as belonging to our Scotch friends: - also...the magnanimous expedient of purchasing immunity for admitted calumny." Some honey was added to help Blackwood forget the taste of the medicine, and for a time there was peace between the magazines.

Meanwhile Keats was publishing the volume containing Lamia and other poems, which as the event proved was to settle once and for all his poetic worth. Hunt did not yet dare to compromise his friend's reputation by writing personally on his behalf in the Examiner, but in July 1820 he reprinted Lamb's review of the book from the New Times, with the comment that "the poet and the critic are worthy of each other." Lamb begins by quoting the description of Madeline's chamber, and continues, "Like the radiance, which comes from these old windows upon the limbs and garments of the damsel, is the almost Chaucer-like painting, with which this poet illumines every subject he touches. We have scarcely any thing like it in modern description." Isabella he thinks the "finest thing in the volume", although Lamia is "more exuberantly rich in imagery and painting," but "to us- an ounce of feeling is worth a pound of fancy." In passing Lamb lets drop one of his brilliant little gems of criticism, speaking of "these prodigal phrases which Mr Keats abounds in, which are such
This is fine work of Lamb's, but rather limited in its scope, and Hunt supplemented it in the Indicator, a purely literary periodical which did not share the Examiner's unenviable reputation. He characterised the volume in a telling phrase—"The essence of a heap of fertile thoughts." The divided interest of Lamia itself fills Hunt with the dissatisfaction which many readers feel to-day, although he expresses it in a way of his own: Keats "would see fair play to the serpent, and makes the power of the philosopher an ill-natured and disturbing thing." The Lamia has a soul of humanity even though in the philosopher's eyes she is not a mathematical truth. Keats's portrayal of her vindicates "the greater philosophy of poetry," but the ultimate victory of the scientist is "a condescension to a learned vulgarism; which so excellent a poet as Mr. Keats ought not to have made." Going on to discuss the relations of poetry and fact, Hunt reaches Coleridge's position: "The essence of poetical enjoyment does not consist in belief, but in a voluntary power to imagine." The chamber scene from the Eve of St. Agnes is quoted as "a striking specimen of the sudden and strong maturity of the author's genius." His remarks on the Nightingale Ode show Hunt at his best as a critic: "There is that mixture in it of real melancholy and imaginative relief, which poetry alone presents us in her 'charmed cup,' and which some over-rational critics have undertaken to find wrong because it is not true....
The imagination of Mr. Keats betakes itself, like the wind 'where it listeth,' and is as truly there, as if his feet could follow it." *Hyperion*, Hunt recognises, presented Keats with an impossible task. He concludes by indicating Keats's rapid development: "The author's versification is now perfected, the exuberances of his imagination restrained, and a calm power, the surest and loftiest of all power, takes place of the impatient workings of the younger god within him. The character of genius is that of energy and voluptuousness, each able at will to take leave of the other and possessing, in their union, a high feeling of humanity not common to the best authors who can less combine them. Mr. Keats undoubtedly takes his seat with the oldest and best of our living poets."

The neutral press showed a remarkable preponderance of opinion in favour of Keats, several of the critics agreeing with the *Monthly Review* that *Endymion* "cannot certainly be said to have had a fair trial before the public." The present volume, in the eyes of the same review, "displays the ore of the true poetic genius, though mingled with a large proportion of dross. Mr. Keats is a very bold author.... Yet, whatever may be his faults, he is no Della Crusca poet. ... We are sure of finding in all he writes the proof of deep thought and energetic reflection.... Very few persons, probably, will admire Mr. Keats on a short acquaintance; and the light and frivolous never will.
If we would enjoy his poetry, we must think over it."
The critic regrets that in Keats's coterie his
"strange intricacies of thought, and peculiarities of
expression" are admired rather than discouraged.

Hyperion is "decidedly the best" poem, and Isabella
the worst, while "his lines 'On Autumn'...bring the
reality of nature more before our eyes than almost any
description that we remember.... His writings present
us with so many fine and striking ideas, or passages,
that we shall always read his poems with much pleasure."

The Edinburgh Magazine in a general survey of
Keats's work has high praise for Endymion in spite of
its"positive faults". The religious procession and
festival "are told in words that would shed lustre
upon any age of poetry." After some quotation, the
critic goes on, "We hope that our readers begin to
feel that there are some (not ordinary) beauties in
the volumes of Mr Keats," and a little later, "If this
be not poetry, we do not know what is." Of the poems
in the later volume, the critic praises Isabella and
the Eve of St. Agnes, but not Hyperion. As for the
Nightingale Ode, "We are inclined to prefer it beyond
every other poem in the book.... The third and seventh
stanzas have a charm for us which we should find it
difficult to explain. We have read this ode over and
over again, and every time with increased delight."

The Literary Gazette did not give a formal
review of Lamia but did not do itself or the poet any
injustice by quoting the Nightingale Ode, To Autumn,
and the lines on the **Mermaid Tavern**.

Jeffrey, apparently with a consciousness that he had been tardy, at last took notice of Keats, with an implied apology for not having done so before: "We had never happened to see either of these volumes till very lately - and have been exceedingly struck with the genius they display, and the spirit of poetry which breathes through all their extravagance." But the criticism was worth waiting for: "That imitation of our older writers, and especially of our older dramatists, ... has brought on, as it were, a second spring in our poetry; - and few of its blossoms are either more profuse of sweetness, or richer in promise than this which is now before us." In *Endymion*, "it seems as if the author had ventured every thing that occurred to him in the shape of a glittering image or a striking expression - taken the first word that presented itself to make up a rhyme, and then made that word the germ of a new cluster of images - a hint for a new excursion of the fancy... till he had covered his pages with an interminable arabesque of connected and incongruous figures, that... were only harmonised by the brightness of their tints and the graces of their forms." For this reason he is easily ridiculed. "But we do not take that to be our office; - and must beg leave, on the contrary, to say, that any one who, on this account, would represent the whole poem as despicable, must either have no notion of poetry, or no regard to truth." The reader who cannot admire
this poem, cannot admire much of Shakespeare and Milton. Jeffrey gan think of no poem which would make so good a touchstone of real taste, because it is purely poetical, with no incidental charms of plot, character, thought, or sentiment. The "magnificent Hymn to Pan" and "a few little morsels" are quoted. From the later volume Jeffrey quotes the exhumation of Lorenzo, and the second and seventh stanzas of the Nightingale Ode as "equally distinguished for harmony and feeling". The lines on Fancy are "lively" but Hyperion is too far removed from human interest to succeed. Keats must not waste his gifts on unsuitable subjects nor luxuriate too much on good ones.

This review as originally published did not contain the references to the Eve of St. Agnes and Ode to Autumn which Jeffrey inserted in the Eclectic Review version published among his collected works.

The attitude of the Eclectic Review is less favourable than formerly, although not unjust to Keats at least in its selection of quotations. Wonder is expressed at Keats's wishing to keep Endymion, "that matchless tissue of sparkling and delicious nonsense" in the public mind. The critic turns to the short poems first "in order to taste the flavour of the poetry," quoting the Ode to Autumn, Fancy, and Robin Hood. Of the longer poems Lamia is selected as the best, and the story is retold with quotations, including the whole of the catastrophe. From the Eve of St. Agnes selected stanzas are dovetailed to make a coher-
ent story. Although Keats is allowed to plead his own cause by these quotations, the general appraisal of his merits is much less favourable: "Poetry is his mistress, — we were going to say, his Lamia, for we suspect that she has proved a syren,...and that her treasures will be found to be like the gold of Tantalus.... The exclusive cultivation of the imagination is always attended by a dwindling or contraction of the other powers of the mind.... It is the penalty which second-rate genius pays for the distinction purchased by the exhaustion of its whole strength in that direction.... It is the true source of affectation and eccentricity.... Poetry, after all, if pursued as an end, is but child's play; and no wonder that those who seem not to have any higher object than to be poets, should sometimes be very childish." Keats's enthusiasm for the classical is typical; it is schoolboy enthusiasm, which would have absorbed and tempered by a higher education. The lines "Beauty is truth..." are quoted. "That is all that Mr Keats knows or cares to know. But till he knows much more than this, he will never write verses fit to live." "At present there is a sickliness about his productions, which shews there is a mischief at the core. He has with singular ingenuousness and correctness described his own case in the preface to Endymion." His condition arises "from the want of a sufficient and worthy object of hope and enterprise; and of the regulating principle of religion."
The most severe of the hostile reviews of Lamia was the Literary Chronicle, with its three wishes: "We wish that he would renounce all acquaintance with our metropolitan poets," and "exiling himself for twelve months to North Wales of the Highlands of Scotland trust to nature's ever varying scene and his own talents," and above all, "never write any poem of more than a hundred verses at the utmost." His longer poems "have some fine passages, but we can award them no higher praise. Among the minor poems, many of which possess considerable merit, the following appears to be the best," and the critic shows his taste by quoting the Ode on a Grecian Urn. His disapproval of Keats is mainly directed against the latter's affectations and coinages. "We are confident he can do better."

A peculiar and unsatisfactory notice appeared in Gold's London Magazine, the writer seemingly being unable to decide whether to damn Keats or faintly praise him. "We do not think the poetical merits of Mr. Keats have been duly estimated; and that apparently for the worst of all reasons — because he is said to be a disciple of Leigh Hunt's." But the malicious criticisms cannot do him much damage. "When a critic avows...he has not read the work he condemns — the reputation of the author cannot be much endangered." The present critic has the same dislikes as the rest. "But still we feel Keats often thinks like a poet." Yet better things were expected from Lamia, and "though disappointed, on this occasion, we are still..."
sanguine of his success." Lamia and Isabella are outlined in brief, rather mocking fashion, and the conclusion shows the strange uncertain touch of the article. "To Mr. Keats's admirers we have nothing to say; they need no recommendation to peruse his works. On Primrose Hill, as in the Blue Coat School; in the druggist's shop, or by the Paddington Canal, they must guile the reader of many an hour, and often lead him to pause on the extraordinary powers of the human mind. ...and yet think there exists such gross stupidity, nay so deplorable a want of taste, amongst the bulk of English readers, as not to discover in Mr. Keats powers and acquirements that dazzle while they instruct, and astonish while they delight."

A very handsome recantation of its former criticism was published by the British Critic. "If there be one person in the present day, for whom we feel an especial contempt, it is Mr Examiner Hunt.... It was for this reason that Mr Keats fell under our lash, so severely, upon the occasion of his poem of Endymion. Upon recurring to the poem, we are not unwilling to admit that it possesses more of merit, than upon a first perusal of it we were able to perceive, or rather than we were in a frame of mind to appreciate.... Mr Keats is really a person of no ordinary genius; and if he will only have the good sense to take advice, making Spenser or Milton his model of poetical diction, instead of Mr Leigh Hunt, he need not despair of attaining to a very high and enviable place in the public esteem." Actually the critic does
not find much to admire in the present volume, except for Lamia, Part I, and Hyperion, which "contains some very beautiful poetry." But such phrases as 'an oath psalterian,' 'scarlet pain,' are "really too contemptible to criticise."

From the reviews we have quoted it will be seen that all along Keats won the approval of the press. In fact it has been estimated that out of the eighty contemporary references to Keats, only fifteen were actually hostile, while fifty were definitely in his favour. In view of this preponderance of friendly opinion, which was obvious even when the Quarterly and Blackwood's articles were appearing, the idea that these two reviews killed Keats does not really seem tenable. As early as 1817 Hunt and Reynolds were speaking of Keats as breaking the last fetters of French artificiality that still hindered English poetry from returning to its true style; and now in 1820 Lamb and Jeffrey count it amongst Keats's highest praise that his poetry is "Chaucer-like" and "an imitation of our older writers", and even Blackwood's was looking forward to see him writing like the "elder men of England."

There had been a general agreement about the faults that characterised Keats's earliest volume - the lax versification, the compound epithets, the closeness to the affectations of Hunt. It is a sign of his maturity that little is heard of technical weaknesses in the criticisms of the 1820 volume. Instead
we find individual poems selected for praise or blame, and in this connection an interesting divergence of opinion emerges. The sensitive critics choose their favourites from Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and the Nightingale Ode, but distrust Lamia and Hyperion, which are just the poems most admired by the less sensitive critics or by those who on the whole dislike Keats's work. In other words the best critics admired Keats when he was most himself, and those out of touch with him could make contact only when he was writing in a somewhat artificial mode. A recognition of Keats's increasing importance is shown by the fact that the Lamia volume is mentioned by no less than ten periodicals, not one of which does not find something to say in its favour, the most serious charge against it being that of the Eclectic, that it served no higher aim than to stimulate the imagination, a typically Evangelical thought. Indeed, apart from the two notorious articles on Endymion, the criticism which gave Keats the least credit for poetical powers, was that of his friend G.F.Mathew on the 1817 Poems. Of the quality of the praise he received, and of the men who gave it, it would be idle to say more.

There remain only the remarks of Blackwood's and the London Magazine on Keats's last volume, for the Quarterly ignored it, being ashamed, the Examiner said, to admit its merit. The London reviewer, probably John Scott himself, opened the Lamia with anxiety occasioned by the abuse with which Keats had been
assailed. "Perhaps from the whole history of criticism, real and pretended, nothing more truly unprincipled than that abuse can be quoted; nothing more heartless, more vindictive, - more nefarious in design, more pitiful and paltry in spirit. We consider it one of the worst signs of these, the worst times... that the miserable selfishness of political party has erected itself into a literary authority.... The vanity of the Examiner manifests just as great a deficiency in real candour as is apparent in the bitter spite of the Quarterly, or the merry ruffianism of Blackwood."

A long and elaborate objection to Keats's plunging into "some very delicate subjects" proves to be directed against the stanzas in Isabella abusing the heroine's brothers. They "dreadfully mar the musical tenderness of its general strain. They are no better than extravagant school-boy vituperation of trade and traders," and they are very foreign to Boccaccio's larger, genial realism. Keats has also expressed his distaste of Sabbath bells. "With our admiration of his powers, we are loath to see him irrevocably committed to a flippant and false system of reasoning on human nature;... to his picturesque imagination we wish that he would add a more pliable, and, at the same time, a more magnanimous sensibility."

Wordsworth's sonnet, 'The World is too much with us', is quoted as an example of real poetic indignation.

The critic is a little disappointed in the present volume, but "our wishes went far beyond reasonable expectations." Yet it is of a style to make an
impression on the common reader and so to "throw shame on the lying, vulgar spirit, in which this young worshipper in the temple of the Muses has been cried-down .... Take for instance, as a proof of the justice of our praise, the [concluding stanzas] from an Ode to the Nightingale:- it is distinct, noble, pathetic, and true: the thoughts have all chords of direct communication with naturally constituted hearts." Of Madeline's unrobing "we know not whether most to admire the magical delicacy of the hazardous picture, or its consummate irresistible attraction.... It has an exquisite moral influence, corresponding with the picturesque effect." Hyperion is "one of the most extraordinary creations of any modern imagination.... The soul of dim antiquity hovers, like a mountain-cloud, over its vast and gloomy grandeur.... Alas, centuries have brought littleness since then,— otherwise a crawling reptile of office, with just strength enough to leave its slimy traces on the pages of a fashionable Review, could never have done a real mischief to the poet of the Titans!" The advertisement attributing the discontinuance of Hyperion to the unfavourable reception of Endymion is quoted, and the reviewer continues, "Let Mr Croker read the following sublime and gorgeous personification of Asia, and be proud of the information thus given him." Later the critic again reverts indignantly to the "dastardly attempt...to assassinate a poet," briefly summarises Keats's faults, and breaks off with,"But we are by this time tired of criticism; as we hope our readers are:- let us then all turn
together to the book itself." It will be noticed that the anger of the London is still directed against the Quarterly, much more than Blackwood's.

The latter treated Keats in its most inconsistent fashion at this time. The September number of the Magazine contains three separate references to him. First Wastle's (Lockhart's) Diary repeats Blackwood's regrets that "this young man...should have belonged to the Cockney school - for he is evidently possessed of talents that, under better direction might have done very considerable things. As it is, he bids fair to sink himself entirely beneath...a mass of affectation, conceit, and Cockney pedantry...." There is much merit in some of the stanzas of Mr Keats' last volume, which I have just seen; no doubt he is a fine feeling lad - and I hope he will live to despise Leigh Hunt, and be a poet - 'After the fashion of the elder men of England.'" The story of Lamia "has spoiled in one sense and adorned in another." Lockhart was apparently in a forgiving mood, and the same kindness marks his reference to Keats in the review of Prometheus Unbound. "We are informed that he is in a very bad state of health, and that his friends attribute a great deal of it to the pain he has suffered from the critical castigation his Endymion drew down on him in this magazine. If it be so, we are most heartily sorry for it, and have no hesitation in saying, that had we suspected being that young author, so delicately nerved, we should have administered our reproof in a much more lenient shape and style. The truth is, we from the beginning
saw marks of feeling and power in Mr Keats' verses, which made us think it very likely, he might become a real poet of England, provided he could become a real poet of England, provided he could be persuaded to give up all the tricks of Cockneyism, and forswear for ever the thin potations of Mr Leigh Hunt. We, therefore, rated him as roundly as we decently could do, for the flagrant affectations of those early productions of his." His latest volume is some improvement, but still displaying the same absurdities. Then Lockhart begins to lose his temper. "It is quite ridiculous to see how the vanity of these Cockneys makes them over-rate their own importance, even in the eyes of us, that have always expressed such plain unvarnished contempt for them.... We should just as soon think of being wroth with vermin.... Mr Keats we have often heard spoken of in terms of great kindness, and we have no doubt his manners and feelings are calculated to make his friends love him. But what has all this to do with our opinion of their poetry?... What is the spell that must seal our lips, from uttering an opinion... concerning Mr John Keats?"

All this is very well, and apart from the final outbreak of spite which completely contradicts the initial apology, quite in line with Lockhart's current opinion of Keats's poetry. But it has simply no reference to the articles which spoke of Keats as a smaller poet than Hunt. If Keats's charm of manner is not the critic's affair, it is difficult to see how his profession and mode of dress can be. However let us
suppose that these two contributions of Lockhart's were kindly meant, and we still find it hard to explain how Blackwood allowed a jest of Maginn's, introducing all the magazine's butts by name, to be sandwiched in between them without some blue-pencilling. Actually the joke is quite harmless, because it is utterly pointless, but there is a footnote to it not without malicious intent, and the tone of the whole thing is quite at variance with the change of heart announced by Lockhart. Keats is there spoken of as surrounded by numerous drugs and

"Swearing and swaggering, rhyming and vapouring;
Seized with a fit a poetical fury,
(I thought he was drunk, my good sir, I assure ye)
Loud he exclaimed,'Behold, here's my truncheon;
I'm the Marshal of poets - I'll flatten your
nuncheon
Pitch physic to hell, you rascals, for dam' ye,a-
I'll physic you all with a clyster of Lamia.'"

The note runs: "The blasphemous language of the Cockney School is, with reluctance, imitated here."

John Scott decided that it was time that Blackwood's men were given a taste of their own medicine. In November 1820, the London Magazine contained an article headed Blackwood's Magazine, and bearing the epigraph, 'They do but jest - POISON IN JEST - no offence i' the world!' Scott warned his readers that this was to be a serious article to expose a serious offence, not merely an incident in a squabble between two rival magazines. His real motive for writing is "that their work forms the most foul and livid spot, indicative of an accursed taint in the literature of
the day." Blackwood's must be dealt with because "This most loathsome nuisance is no longer apologised for, or concealed, but is vaunted and paraded with brazen insolence, supported by the meanest hypocrisy." (Namely in an amazing article of Maginn's, An Hour's Tete-a-Tete with the Public) Scott's first accusation is that "a regular plan of fraud had been concocted at the very outset of the magazine...involving...the sacrifice of every feeling belonging to the writer of real principle...[and] low remorseless outrages on reputation, and on truth," The following evidence is led: "Z has made his virulent and lying attack on character and feeling; and Mr. Wastle has been of opinion that Z went too far; and Peter's Letters have expressed the regrets and contrition of Blackwood's Editors, for having been betrayed into unguarded personalities.... There is no longer, however, any doubt, that Z, and Wastle, and Peter and the contrite Editors, are often the self-same individual, and always of the same gang." This conduct they try to pass off as mere pleasantry. But how does it actually operate? Take the "nefarious assault on Coleridge" for example. "It was coolly designed to attract attention as a specimen of the sharp and stimulating materials of which the magazine was, for the future, to be composed." To be, like the Edinburgh Review, severe "far beyond the limits of justice," and yet gentlemanly "demands a fine tact, and very consummate ability." Blackwood's "has never contained a severe article, that has not at the same time, been a dirty one." Now the Coleridge article
was an expression of editorial opinion, and yet since then, "Coleridge has been as extravagantly PRAISED in Blackwood — and avowedly too by the conductors of the Magazine!" Similarly Wordsworth has been lampooned and praised even in a single number of the magazine, and yet one of the editors is Wordsworth's personal friend and poetical disciple. John Scott here exposes Wilson's treachery in laborious detail, and deduces that the purpose of all this inconsistency is to gain publicity and profit.

Scott's second charge is that the use of so many pseudonyms is not an innocent device to give the magazine variety. "Here we have two men, whose habits of life are notoriously free — not to use a stronger word — and whose real opinions are known to be loose and sceptical,— starting a publication in which systematically and of aforethought, the most licentious personal abuse was to be the lure for one class of readers, and the veriest hypocritical whine, on matters of religion and politics, the bait for another." (This was exactly a taste of their own medicine, and as true of the Edinburgh men as of the Londoners.) Scott goes on to show that the elaborate buffoonery is merely a cloak for "these deep-laid schemes," and then rebuts a possible apology: "But these men have expressed their contrition. Yes, we know they have,— as well as that their publisher has admitted the falsehood of their abuse, by paying an atonement to injured character." Since the first number there has been a constant stream of apologies from the editors, usually followed by..."
fresh insults to the same victims. The most sorrowful man of all is Blackwood himself - "Ebony in a white sheet, bewailing the licentiousness of his magazine, and refusing to be comforted." As these outbursts by his editors vex him so much, it is amazing that he makes no effort to escape from the situation. They are rather like a gang of pickpockets, one of whom knocks you down while the rest pretend to come to your rescue. Yet John Scott hopes to see some amendment because "we understood that Sir WALTER SCOTT, during his last visit to London, had spoken freely of the improprieties of the Magazine in question - coupling his disapprobation with something very like an assurance that its cause would be for the future be removed."

Sir Walter's tricks of anonymity have unfortunately encouraged Blackwood's men. He has to some extent identified himself with them by his "excessive zeal" in canvassing for Wilson as Professor of Moral Philosophy. The appointment of such a man to such a position is a scandal, especially as the magazine is publishing a series of articles attacking another of the professors by name. "In Blackwood's Magazine they allude sneeringly to the wives and children of the writers they attack. Does Sir Walter Scott countenance this practice and would he think reprisals fair?" - A hint at his relation to Lockhart. "If a man of character and genius will lend his great influence to strengthen a particular work, he must be held responsible for its qualities - society requires this security, and we are determined to enforce it." John Scott goes
on to suggest that his great namesake has actually contributed some mocking accounts of "certain London parties and prayer-meetings," introducing and caricaturing Wilberforce and others.

As for Blackwood's treatment of the Cockneys, "We shall prove that they have never offered one word of genuine criticism on the productions of these persons: that they have done nothing but abuse their faces, dress, professions, and conduct."

In this first article, Scott laid his finger on the real nature of Blackwood's villainy, the insincere and inconsistent mischief-making, for the sake of causing a stir. Except for the fashion in which he spoke of the editors' character, he was justified in all he said. His one false move was to draw Sir Walter Scott into the affair; as far as Sir Walter was an influence on the magazine at all he was a restraining one, and never contributed personally to its pages. It was probably this mistake that embittered Sir Walter the London editor.

Maginn, as Dr Olinthus Petre, answered this attack in a letter to Christopher North, calling it a "perfect specimen of spite, neutralized by stupidity."

(1) The reference here is to Galt's Ayrshire Legatees, then being serialised in Blackwood's. (See particularly Letter XVI.) This was surely the first occasion on which Galt was taken for the Great Unknown. The mistaken attribution in this case was singularly unfortunate.
and attributing it merely to a spirit of rivalry. He quotes examples of personalities from the London's pages, for example, speaking of Wilberforce as "making his affectation of principle a stalking-horse to his pitiful desire of distinction." Most of these examples are quite well chosen, except for one: "They have published the impertinencies of a Cockney Scribbler, who signs himself Elia, full of all kinds of personal, and often offensive allusions to every individual who had the misfortune of being educated at the same school with himself." The main purpose of the letter, however, is to point out that the writer and Christopher North are not identical, and that the former, not the latter, wrote the articles on Professor Leslie. Maginn restates his charges against Leslie. It is ironic enough that these accusations resulted in a successful libel action by the injured Professor and that Maginn was still as anonymous to Blackwood as to the public.

John Scott's second article appeared in the following month, December, with the effective title, The Mohock Magazine, which Scott justified by recalling to his readers' minds the "practical jests" played on the more defenceless inhabitants of London by the bullying young bloods, nicknamed Mohocks, in the eighteenth century, until called to order by the Spectator. It is easy, and not very clever, to carry on such hoaxes as Blackwood's does, for example, to call a man
pimpled when he is not, and to admit later that you have never seen his face. "Long impunity...has at length converted what was at first but a system of provocation, into a downright system of terror." The magazine has abused a certain individual, and then praised him, but accompanied that praise with a threat of more abuse 'if he is not duly respectful.' Scott makes another sharp hit in italics and capitals: "Three times within the space of very little more than two years, have they been compelled to pay, to injured individuals, heavy forfeitures, for calumnies uttered against private character, and to the detriment of private interests; AND IN NO ONE OF THESE THREE HAVE THEY ATTEMPTED DEFENCE OR JUSTIFICATION OF ANY KIND!" They have "acknowledged the lie by silently paying its forfeit."

At this point Scott makes another mistake by assuming that Wilson has withdrawn from the magazine on his appointment to the Professorship. He accordingly lays most of the sins of the magazine at Lockhart's door, for example the cross-questioning of Hazlitt and the attack on Coleridge, which were almost certainly Wilson's, and the Hour's Tete-a-Tete, which was by Maginn. "Writing usually in a convenient tone of burlesque, he balances his falsehoods between the few who will take them as jokes, and thousands who are likely to believe them in credulity;—equally deceiving both, for the apparent joke is spite or sordidness in sober gravity.... He will drop from an evident
exaggeration to what bears the semblance of a meek and
drilly stated fact,— and the lie will be lurking in the
latter, with its poisonous sting." The effrontery of
the Hour's Tete-a-Tete is exposed and compared to "the
conversation of some Irishmen we have met with," a bow
very successfully drawn at a venture.

"On balance, the parties to this nefarious
conspiracy are gainers.... Like smugglers, they can
afford to pay when occasionally caught, for their nef-
arious traffic as a lucrative one." Political and rel-
igious libels have long been admitted weapons of party
and sectarian warfare. "But who has ever heard of an
innocent private calumniator, in any state of society?
- Of an honourable person affirming absolute untruths
against private character?" And these are the people
who have the hypocrisy to regard Hunt's conviction for
libel as a proof of moral guilt!

Scott returns to the charge of inconsistency,
referring first to three contradictory articles on
Wordsworth, all of which are (even to-day) usually
attributed to Wilson. "Is it possible that this can be
true! Mr. Wilson was Mr. Wordsworth's intimate friend."  

(1) These articles were first an attack on Wordsworth
by 'Observer', a defence by 'N', and a second attack
on the poet by 'D'. Wilson certainly wrote the article
signed N. Almost certainly, Lockhart wrote that signed
D, as in it the editor of the Edinburgh Review is
regularly called Jeffray, a misspelling that recurs in
his 'Lauerwinkel' essay on periodicals. Lockhart had
a habit of misspelling names, sometimes apparently in
pure error, often by way of insult to the person
named. His variations on Keats and Shelley will have
been noticed above. The article signed D may have
been written by Wilson as a shoe-horn for the second.
Wilson's wild animal pranks are contrasted with his new position, his early Whiggery with his later Toryism. "Take away the simple quality of hypocrisy from the person we have been describing, and Mr. Wilson would at once lose his moral professorship, and regain his moral character." Poor Wilson! What would Scott have said if he had known that Alexander Blair was practically writing his lectures for him?

Lockhart, "the malignant Emperor of the Mohocks," next has his sins passed in review. Scott repeats his mistaken charge that the Scorpion was responsible for the attack on Coleridge. He makes the telling point, however, that the magazine has advertised, "Our own opinions, and those of our regular correspondents will be found uniformly consistent." His next attribution seems to be correct. "There is now a perfect understanding in Edinburgh, that [Lockhart] wrote the first article, at least, signed Z. in which Mr. Coleridge is styled "a still greater quack than Leigh Hunt."" The publication of a private letter of Coleridge's is "the most infamous part, however, of the treatment, which Mr. Coleridge has received at this person's hands.... Personal communication with such a man is deadly: one would suspect his palm to be poisoned, if he extended his hand in apparent friendship."

Scott makes the mistaken assumption that Lockhart is also Christopher North.

He next waxes wroth over the treatment of Hogg, "the regular fool-capped, bell-coated Zany of
their Magazine!...and all under the guise of friendship and affection!" Instances are given of the absurd attitudes in which Hogg has been exposed, and of the articles to which his signature has been forged. Particularly a constant endeavour is made to "inculpate the Poet in the guilt and filth of all the most odious articles that have appeared in Blackwood's Magazine."

The attack on Professor Playfair and the reviling of Macvey Napier are also mentioned.

The inconsistent treatment of Keats, apologising to and insulting him in a single number, mentioned above, is examined step by step. Scott asks his readers to observe "how decently, as well as roundly, they rate Mr. Keats for his affectations; how carefully they avoid trespassing on any thing belonging to the man, but his capacity of author.... This is to prove that 'they are most heartily sorry' for having hurt his feelings, and that they sympathise, as they conscientiously declare, with his friends who deplore his bad health! It conveys no satire, either against the man or his writings: it has no application whatever to him: it is therefore sheerly wicked and disgusting: a spontaneous emanation from a naturally coarse and profligate mind." This topic naturally suggests the hypocrisy of the magazine, the contrast of "the lusci-

(1) Later critics have tried to justify this treatment, pointing out that the Ettrick Shepherd displays far more genius than the original. But that effect is produced in the Noctes Ambrosianae which were not yet in existence.
ous larded cant...of the devout compositions," with the "obscenity and swearing for the company at Ambrose's." Obviously it is in the latter that "the real merit of the publication" is displayed. "Here it is genuine, original, strong, and often pointed."

An apology is made for having attributed the Ayrshire Legattes to Sir Walter Scott. But "a man should be careful of his conversation when he knows Doctor Morris is near him. Articles have lately issued from under the roof of Abbotsford that do no credit to the place."

It is important to notice that in none of these articles is Lockhart mentioned by name but only under his pseudonyms, as in the last quotation.

Blackwood's only published reply to all this was a short paragraph to the effect that "the writers in a paltry publication, which is hardly known beyond the limits of Cokaigne, are in the greatest consternation and alarm, lest we should fall upon them. We beg to assure them, we have no such intention."

In his answer, John Scott expresses amusement at this assumption of silent contempt, "contempt on compulsion too! Scorn in a cold sweat!... It proves their guilt and their chastisement." He promises to leave them alone in future provided that they give up their evil ways. Otherwise he will expose them and their friends. All this is in the editorial pages. But in the body of the magazine, in a short article headed The Mohocks, he discusses Professor Leslie's
libel action and in doing so oversteps himself completely and fatally: "We have been told that Mr. JOHN GIBSON LOCKART, having been originally included in the action now pending, has given it under his hand, that he is not the Editor of the Magazine.... It is well known...that Doctor Morris, under the assumed name of Christopher North is the Editor of the work, and the author of its most malignant articles!... The cowardice which denies a perpetrated wrong, is the natural associate of such qualities" as "fraud, calumny, and cupidity." If the editorship were charged against him, "Doctor Morris would deny just as firmly as Mr. Lockart." A liar and a coward by name, there was a familiar answer then to such a charge.

There followed a complicated series of manoeuvres that culminated in John Scott falling mortally wounded at the hand of Lockhart's friend, Christie. The course of these unhappy events is narrated in the next chapter.

One would have expected so shocking an event to have put an end to Blackwood's career of swaggering and bluster. Sir Walter Scott took the opportunity to lecture his son-in-law on the evil of his ways, begging him to break his connection with the dangerous Maga, "the mother of mischief", and indeed Lockhart and Wilson and Lockhart were both scared into silence for some months, the brunt of the work falling on Maginn, De Quincey, and Delta (Macbeth Moir). In April came
further melancholy news. On the tenth of that month Maginn wrote to the publisher: "I have just this moment heard of poor Keats's death. We are unlucky in our butts. It would appear very cruel if any jokes now appeared on the pharmacopoliical part of Endymion. And indeed when I heard that the poor devil was in a consumption, I was something sorry that I annoyed him at all of late. If I were able I should write a dirge over him, as a kind of amende honorable; but my Muse, I am afraid, does not run in the mournful.

"If you print my hymn strike out the hemistich concerning him, substituting any thing you like. ... I hope I am in time, for it would annoy me if it appeared that we were attacking any one who had it not in his power to reply - particularly an old enemy after his death." It is good to know that Maginn had these pangs of remorse, short-lived though they were, for when he came to criticise Adonais, his dirge issued forth as the Elegy on my Tom-Cat and the "old enemy after his death" was spoken of as having written indecently.

In the same month there appeared in the London Magazine an obituary of the poet, signed L. "Mr.Keats was, in the truest sense of the word, A POET." His writings "were full of high imagination and delicate fancy, and his images were beautiful and more entirely his own, perhaps, than those of any living writer whatever." The writer tells how Keats had asked that his epitaph might be, Here lies the body of
one whose name was writ in water. "There is something in this to us most painfully affecting."

John Scott killed, Keats dead, Blackwood's Magazine was at last silenced, and all through the summer of that fateful year pursued an inoffensive course. In the autumn came the first sign that the old spirit was merely dormant - an attempt to defend its evil ways by the argument *tu quoque*. It takes the form of a Familiar Epistle to Christopher North, From an Old Friend with a New Face. Christopher, he says, submits too tamely to "that dreadful pothead about personalities." There are others more to blame. "I allude to those who first set the example of personal attacks...particularly to the early writers in the Edinburgh Review." The Old Friend, in Christopher's place, "would lay any eight volumes of the 'blue and yellow calamity' under contribution, and with page, and day and date, dare them to match from your pages the base and merciless ribaldry with which these virulent journals have assailed every political opponent." Then comes a sentence unsurpassed for bare-faced impudence, "Private personalities you have ever avoided."

It was not until the following year that the Magazine dared to turn defence into attack. Then in February, 1822, "John Johnes" contributed a Letter from London, gossiping, among other things, of Hunt's
voyage to Italy. "His Lordship of Newstead has sent Leigh a subsidy, and has likewise prepared in a costly way, the lower part of his Pisan residence for the reception of his London ally." There follows the unique contemporary notice of Shelley's *Epipsychidion*:

"I read this poem last night at the hushed and sleeping hour of twelve, and never was I so enchanted as in wandering among its strange, ethereal, dreamy fancies, some of which contain in my opinion, the very soul and essence of ideal poesy." This is harmless enough, but then comes a footnote quite inconsonant with the rest:

"Percy Bysshe Shelley has now published a long series of poems, the only object of which seems to be the promotion of ATHEISM and INCEST.... Shelley is a man of genius, but he has no sort of sense or judgment. He is merely an 'inspired idiot!' Leigh Hunt is a man of talents, but vanity and vulgarity neutralize all his efforts to pollute the public mind. Lord Byron we regard as not only a man of lofty genius, but of great shrewdness and knowledge of the world. What can HE seriously hope from associating his name with people such as these?" The original attack on Hunt had included an attempt to disgust Lord Byron at him.

But shortly *Blackwood's* was called to face a new accusation - that it had killed John Keats. In August 1822, a review of Hazlitt's *Table Talk*, that "gaping sore of wounded and festering vanity," gives the magazine an occasion to state its defence in its
usual impudent way: "We decline going into the history of poor Mr Keats, whom in an unfeeling manner, Hazlitt... couples with the Cockney School — adding, that the fatal term 'Cockney' stuck in his side like a barbed arrow — drove him to Italy; and in short, killed him. Mr Shelley, who, bad as he is, is still rather better authority than Mr Hazlitt, has laid the sin of killing Mr Keats at the door of the Quarterly. The fact, however, is, that we do not conceive any Grand Jury in the world would find a true bill either against Christopher North of William Gifford on this charge. Mr Keats's death was occasioned by causes, which, if Mr Hazlitt chose, Mr Hazlitt could perhaps explain." Hazlitt unfeelingly coupling Keats and the Cockneys! We may agree to acquit North and Gifford; but it would be interesting to know what fearful secrets about Keats's death Hazlitt was supposed to keep locked in his bosom.

It will be noticed that these outbreaks are now occurring at much less frequent intervals than formerly, and it is on record that Blackwood himself was thinking it time that his Maga became more respectable, for in June he had written to Hogg, rejecting some suggestion, "The Magazine is now too serious a concern to be trifled with. It has got quite above attacks and malignities, and I shall take good care never again to give [the public] any handle for saying that they were entitled to speak of it as they once
Yet in December he allowed Wilson to have one grand fling at Hunt in another Cockney School article. It was inspired by the tale of the Florentine Lovers in the Liberal, and contained all Z's old tricks. First came the charge of licentiousness: "Leigh Hunt is the most irresistible knight-errant now extant.... No milliner's apprentice, removing with her band-boxes could long refuse his suit; no wet nurse going to suckle a young Norfolk turkey, could withstand this champion of the liberty of the press.... Soft whisperings would, at the end of the first stage, confess the triumph of Apollar with the yellow breeches." Of a certain description, Wilson asks, "Is there not something effeminate, Cockneyish, and Sporus-like, in a male writer speaking so of male lips? If Leigh Hunt... really be of the sex assumed, nothing can be more loathsome." Except, perhaps, Z's later comment, "Here the odious Cockney again stops short; and finishes his picture, which seems painted by an eunuch, with a parenthesis manifestly written by a fool."

The inherent snobbery of all Z's attacks comes out very strongly in this article. Hunt "had no right whatever to go to Italy...to put his Cockney feet...upon classic ground.... If he dares to go to Rome, we shall send over Hogg to assassinate him." (John Scott had remarked how careful they were to drag Hogg into their mud-puddles) "Secondly. It is gross impertinence in any Cockney to write about - love. Love, correctly speaking, is a tender affair between a
lady and a gentleman; whereas, King Leigh and his subjects imagine it to be merely a congress between a male and a female...."

"Thirdly, what, in the name of Katterfelto, can Byron mean by patronizing a Cockney? A Bear at College was all very well;— but, my lord, think on it, — a Cockney at Pisa! Fie, my lord! This is by far the greatest outrage you have ever yet committed on manners, and morals, and intellectuals...."

"Fourthly. It is, on the whole, however, satisfactory to see the Cockney in his proper situation — the menial of a lord...a scavenger raking in the filth of the common sewers and the stews, for a few gold pieces thrown down by a noble-man in a transient fit of self-willed generosity. That Satan should stoop to associate with an incubus, shews that there is degeneracy in hell."

These paragraphs were as bitter and mean as anything Z had yet written. It would be interesting to know what acrimony they added to the already strained relations in the Italian household.

Two years later, in 1825, appeared the eighth and last of Z's articles, this time on Hunt's Bacchus in Tuscany. A piece of fantastic fooling, it makes one regret that Z had not stuck consistently to such a style. Z pretends that having tried every other cure for Hunt's ill-health, he packed him off to Italy. But there Hunt forsook his former low diet of tea and saloop for stronger meat, and stronger drink
too. Great fun is made of the change and its results. Hunt is brought to Ambrose's and sent off to bed, happy-drunk.

To return on our traces a little, we have seen how Hazlitt had protected himself against the treatment meted out to his comrades. But in 1823 he apparently wearied of a quiet life, and delivered himself bound hand and foot to the lions by issuing the Liber Amoris. The man who was foolish enough to publish such a mixture of masochism and exhibitionism at a time when everyone knew the reference of the supposed fiction deserved all that Blackwood's said about him, and we need not go into the sordid business here. But the affair was not without its repercussions. Hazlitt contributed a most informative article on the Periodical Press to the Edinburgh Review, towards the end of which he tilted at Blackwood's. Some periodicals, he writes, "enjoy all the advantages that result from an entire contempt for the restraints of decency, consistency, or candour.... The reader feels almost as if he were admitted to look in on a club of thorough-going hack authors, in their moments of freedom and exaltation. There is plenty of slang-wit going, and some shrewd remark. The pipes and the tobacco are laid on the table, with a set-out of oysters and whisky, and bludgeons and sword-sticks in the corner. .... From foul words they get to blows and broken heads; till drunk with ribaldry, and stunned with
noise, they proceed to throw open the windows and abuse the passengers in the street for their want of religion, morals, and decorum! This is a modern and enormous abuse, and requires to be corrected."

From this, Hazlitt passes on to a consideration of the virtual censorship established by the brutality of the ministerial press. "It was pious and loyal to substitute abuse for argument.... He who calumniated his neighbour was a friend to his country." The treatment of Keats is cited as an example. He is praised by the Examiner, "and from that moment he is set upon, pulled in pieces, and hunted into his grave by the whole venal crew in full cry after him.... He should have thrown back his bounty in the face of the donor, and come with his manuscript in his hand, to have poetical justice dealt out to him by the unbiassed author of the Baviad and the Maeviad! His tenderness and beauties would then have been exalted with faint praise,... his faults would have been gently hinted at, and attributed to youth and inexperience; and his profession, instead of being made the subject of loud ribald jests by vile buffoons, would have been introduced to enhance the merit of his poetry. But a different fate awaited poor Keats!"

Lockhart replied to this article in the eighth Letter of Timothy Tickler. "I cannot look on this article as anything less or more than the death-warrant of Mr Jeffrey's editorial reputation.... He is gone - dished - dead - utterly defunct." Lockhart
rejoices to see the Review ruined, although sorry for Jeffrey personally. But to allow Hazlitt, a Cockney, to write such an important article has ruined his paper's prestige. "Mr Jeffrey has sunk so low as to suffer this thing to be done.... He has suffered William Hazlitt, author of the Liber Amoric, an old newspaper-monger...this low, vulgar, impudent gentleman of the press...he has suffered this despicable member of the Cockney School to write an Essay in the Edinburgh Review on 'the Periodical Press of Britain.' Francis Jeffrey has been obliged to swallow this bitter pill." It will be observed that this is a new version of Blackwood's old game of making trouble between the Cockneys and their influential friends. In a subsequent Letter Lockhart advises the New Monthly Magazine to "get shot" of Hazlitt.

The ill-treatment of Keats is defended in detail. In his political sonnets and "in a hundred ways" Keats had identified himself "with all the bad political principles, as well as with all the bad poetical taste of the Cockney school." An extraordinary brag follows. "It was not...the author of the Baviad and the Maeviad who commenced the attack upon Keats. Keats had been dished — utterly demolished, and dished by Blackwood — long before Mr Gifford's scribes mentioned his name." Lockhart repeats that the reviews did not actually murder Keats. As for references to his profession, "If John Keats cared for being called an apothecary, being one, he must really
have been a greater goose than even I took him for." Then Lockhart dismisses the subject with one of the spurts of black bitterness that justified his nickname, the Scorpion. "But let us hear no more of Johnny Keats. It is really too disgusting to have him and his poems recalled in this manner, after all the world thought that they had got rid of the concern."

There is something more shocking in the cold, venomous spirit of such a remark than in the boisterous ruffianism of Maginn and Wilson.

To conclude Lockhart thrusts two darts into the chinks in Jeffrey's armour. Why did the latter ignore Keats "until long after the Tory critics had had such abundance of time to make minced meat of him? ....Why, up to this blessed hour, has the Edinburgh Review never hinted that there has been such a man in the world as Percy Bysshe Shelley?.... But no - there is a reason for everything. Shelley, with all his faults, was a gentleman, a scholar, and a poet; and his merits as such were uniformly acknowledged in Blackwood's Magazine. That work, if there was a cry against Shelley, did not join it. On the contrary, it was in that work that he was first praised in a style worthy of his genius."

Every one of Blackwood's old tricks had now made its reappearance. It only needed another brush with the London to put things exactly as they were before John Scott's death. And it was not long before
that recurred. In February 1823 the London Magazine was indiscreet enough to publish a review of Peveril of the Peak, in which Scott was named as the author and contained the following amazing sentences: "The reputed author is accused of being a thorough paced partizan...intolerant, mercenary, mean; a professed toad-eater, a sturdy hack, a pitiful retailer or suborner of infamous slander, a literary Jack Ketch... Can this all be true of the Author of Waverley?"

After some copies had been issued, this offensive passage was cancelled and the space filled up with some harmless matter. It was not till August 1824 that one of the original issue fell into Blackwood's hands, and that Magazine rushed into print with The Profanity of the London Periodical Press. The metropolitan journalists are arraigned as Whigs and "VERMIN."

Blackwood's takes the inexcusable passage from the London Magazine as evidence and states that the authorship is usually attributed to John Taylor, the new editor and publisher, "We take pleasure in hanging him upon a gibbet as a fit object for the slow-moving finger of scorn." Then comes Blackwood's version of subsequent events. After two or three hundred copies had been sold, Taylor took fright, recalled as many as possible, and cancelled the passage. His reason for writing such a passage is the Whig supposition that Scott supports Blackwood's. Scott does not, but even if he did, even if he had written all the articles against the Cockneys and Whigs, "he would never have
been in any proportion so unsparing and so unfeeling a libeller of the Whigs, as Lord Byron or Mr Thomas Moore have been of the Tories." The article concludes by citing various Whig attacks.

In September, Taylor replied: "In the charge there are three distinct assertions. - They are three distinct falsehoods." Taylor did not write the review. Fewer than fifty copies were disposed of. It was not suppressed through fear. "The passage was not a libel in law; nothing, therefore, could be feared from its publication. The review in question was written by a celebrated critic - was received too late for examination - and was cleared of the passage objected to, as soon as possible, from a motive of good feeling towards the author of the novel."

In October Blackwood's published a typical answer. "Our readers will perceive that our main charges are altogether untouched. We distinctly allowed, by the very tone we used, - 'the chatter of booksellers' shops' - that we were anything but positive in setting down Mr Taylor as the author." (That was the reason, no doubt, why they took pleasure in hanging him on a gibbet.) Furthermore, it makes no difference whether fifty or three hundred copies were issued, the thing was made public. It strikes Blackwood's as comic to think of the London Magazine patronising the Author of Waverley out of good feeling. It is true that Taylor was not afraid of a libel action. "His fear was of a very different
action indeed." But he is really too old to be called out; his grey hairs will be respected.

That such a suggestion should be even hinted at at all that had passed between these two magazines displays a strange insensitivity to the decencies of human intercourse. To end our chronicle on such a note would be unpleasant and unfair. Let us turn the yellowing, double-columned pages of Maga till we come to a Noctes Ambrosianae in August 1834 where Christofer North buries the hatchet once and for all. The Shepherd remarks "Leigh Hunt loved Shelley." North replies, "And Shelley truly loved Leigh Hunt. Their friendship was honourable to both, for it was as disinterested as sincere; and I hope Gurney will let a certain person in the City understand that I treat his offer of a reviewal of Mr Hunt's London Journal with disdain.... He talks to me of Maga's desertion of principle; but if he were a Christian — nay, a man — his heart and head too would tell him that the Animosities are mortal, but the Humanities live for ever.... Mr Hunt's London Journal, my dear James, is not only beyond all comparison, but out of all sight, the most entertaining and instructive of all the cheap periodicals; and when laid, as it duly is once a-week, on my breakfast-table, it lies there — but is not permitted to lie long — like a spot of sunshine dazzling the snow."
As the two magazines whose relations we have been examining here inaugurated the second revolution among the periodicals of their time, we cannot close the present chapter without some estimate of the services they rendered to literature. The great change that had been wrought on the reviews had left the magazines untouched. They were still few in number, and hopelessly cursed with the sin of dull amateurism. Third-rate poets contributed their effusions and gentlemen of leisure wrote accounts of curious happenings, or their travels, or their antiquarian discoveries. All articles took the form of letters. Fiction was virtually unknown. The criticism was still the work of hacks, or of friends of the authors. But in the second decade of the century came a fresh impulse to literature, expressed not only in the work of the younger poets, but perhaps more significantly for our purpose in the novels of Scott, Jane Austen, and others, who gave fiction an unaccustomed dignity.

In Edinburgh, the political situation which gave birth to the great Review had been reversed; the brilliance and talents seemed all arrayed on the side of the Whigs. Scott, it is true, was a Tory, but he was committed to the Quarterly, which was published in London and which in any case displayed little brilliance. William Blackwood, a rising and ambitious Edinburgh publisher was smarting under the severe disappointment of having just lost the Great Unknown to Constable. He had to recover his self-respect, and do
something to justify his recent removal to fine new premises at 17 Princes Street. The something took the form of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. James Hogg foisted on to the publisher two quite incompetent rustics, Pringle and Cleghorn, as editors. They were quite content to flounder on in the old dull way, making the magazine as lame in spirit as they were in person. Blackwood was not, and when he intervened with more revolutionary ideas a violent quarrel ensued. Their contract expiring with the sixth number of the magazine, they followed Scott's example and seceded to Constable, whose Edinburgh Magazine they conducted for some time. Matter in hand for the seventh number of Blackwood's was passed on to John Wilson, in whom and in Lockhart the publisher recognised a spirit as daring as his own. These two young lawyers were nominally the editors for at least a year, but in fact they were sub-editors, doing perhaps most of the work, while Blackwood himself retained supreme but informal authority, giving his veto or imprimatur to everything, cajoling contributors, and paying them handsomely at the rate of £10 a sheet. We have seen how far Blackwood's desire for sensation was fulfilled by the new arrangement. A measure of its success is that the circulation jumped from 2000 to nearly 6000, and then began a slow climb that in a few years added another five hundred. The articles on Coleridge and Hunt secured the attention of the outside world but it was the Chaldee MS which made the magazine's name in
Edinburgh. This clever skit in pseudo-Biblical language has been discussed so fully by recent writers that it is sufficient here to remind the reader that it was an inside history of the defection of Cleghorn and Pringle, and of Blackwood's endeavours to find contributors. For the most part there was no guile in it, the persons introduced being caricatured but not slandered. Perhaps the only exception was J.G.Dayell, the person later presented to Leigh Hunt as Z. The descriptions of this person's deformities was so accurate, and they themselves so repulsive, that he was certainly entitled to the damages he won. Usually there was nothing more offensive than such playful descriptions as this of Blackwood: "a man clothed in plain apparel...and his name was as it had been the colour of ebony," or this of Scott: "that great Magician which hath his dwelling in the old fastness hard by the river Jordan, which is by the Border." In their own caricatures as a Leopard and a Scorpion, Wilson and Lockhart were as cruel to themselves as to anybody.

But to cause a sensation is not to carry through a revolution. This seventh number might well have been a flash in the pan. Yet Blackwood's achievement was truly revolutionary. First of all he paid well enough to attract good writers. Secondly these writers, especially Wilson, Lockhart, Hogg, and Maginn, worked as a team so that the magazine developed a distinctive personality. It would contradict itself,
as we have seen, with the greatest freedom, and yet retained its individuality. More interesting from the reader's point of view was the use made of pseudonyms. The writers soon elaborated fictitious characters to suit their assumed names. Morgan O'Doherty was not merely a name for Maginn, he was a person with a whole history; the Ettrick Shepherd was more real than James Hogg; while Wilson is far more recognisable as Christopher North than under his own name. Not least, the Magazine was not afraid of fiction. Short stories and serials soon made an appearance. A glance at the list of contributors and contributions explains the continued popularity of the magazine. Wilson himself was chiefly responsible for the famous Noctes Ambrosianae; the other Christopher North sketches and Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life were serialised in the magazine. Galt's Ayrshire Legatees and Steam-Boat also made their first appearance in this fashion. Macbeth Moir, who contributed much verse as Delta, imitated Galt with the still popular Mansie Waugh. Hogg contributed his Shepherd's Calendar and many poems, articles, and stories. De Quincey supplied the essay on Murder as a Fine Art as well as many more learned articles. Coleridge occasionally lent the weight of his name, and his son Hartley appeared as the Old Bachelor. Henry Mackenzie (the Man of Feeling) and George Croly, the poet, were among the regular writers. Add to all this a political complexion which could not be mistaken, and a constant awareness of the topical-
ities of political and literary life to which Lockhart Maginn and Wilson gave expression in the Noctes and in the Tickler, Mullion, and Wastle articles, and it is not difficult to understand why Blackwood almost worshipped his Maga.

The début of the London Magazine was less spectacular, and its life considerably shorter, but its brief career was one of amazing value. Baldwin had been Blackwood's London agent, but had speedily washed his hands of the Edinburgh magazine. When he saw the success that his former partner was enjoying, he may have felt some chagrin at having lost a good thing. But there was no reason why he should not have a magazine of his own, and he set about rectifying the deficiency in a thorough-going fashion. In John Scott he engaged an experienced journalist as editor. When tragedy involved John Scott after the magazine had been running for a year, Baldwin sold out to Taylor and Hessey, Keats's publishers, with Taylor acting as editor. H.F.Cary, the translator of Dante, conducted the magazine in the interim between Scott's death and Taylor's purchase. Under these editors worked a group of writers more brilliant than even Blackwood's, the most faithful of whom was Lamb as Elia. De Quincey's first version of the Opium Eater; much of Hazlitt's Table Talk and Landor's Imaginary Conversations, Carlyle's Life of Schiller, all these and other articles by the same writers made their first appearance
in the pages of the London Magazine. John Clare, Mary Shelley, and 'Barry Cornwall' were more or less frequent contributors. Among the lesser lights were Lamb's Quaker friend, Bernard Barton, Allen Cunningham, J.H. Reynolds, and Wainewright or Janus Weathercock, the forger and arsenic poisoner, although he contributed as poet and art-critic.

Superficially so similar, and of even superior merit, why did Baldwin's magazine prove so inferior in staying power to Blackwood's? We cannot eliminate entirely the factor of bad luck. It was unfortunate that a rival magazine with the same title should be floated at exactly the same time. The uncertainties and troubles incident to the John Scott affair and change of ownership came at a time when the magazine should have been consolidating its position. But these difficulties merely assisted, they did not cause the magazine's failure. A clue to the real weakness may be found in the fact that one is never spoken of as Baldwin's Magazine nor the other as the Edinburgh Magazine. For all its brilliance the London Magazine lacked individuality. Elia was the only personality comparable to the many elaborated by Blackwood's men. Wainewright, Reynolds and others tried but failed to evolve pseudonymous beings as solid as O'Doherty or Tickler or the Ettrick Shepherd. There was no evidence of the compelling, unifying force that Christopher North appeared to give to Blackwood's. The writers were merely a group not a team. There
was never that community of work and thought that made it possible for Wilson, Maginn, and Lockhart to collaborate so closely in article after article that their hands could not be told apart. The London writers conferred, but did not harmonise. Taylor jestingly protests that "eleven of our editors" wish to insert a particular poem which he would reject. The paper also lacked strong political motive, a factor whose influence we have so often had occasion to regret elsewhere but whose value we feel when it is missing. Lastly, though it may seem a strange fault, the magazine was too brilliant. The initial high standard could not be maintained for more than a few years. That standard itself was of a type to make an appeal to a limited class of readers, those who could appreciate the best. Few concessions were made to the lover of a mere story. Hessey had to admit in 1823 that a circulation of 1,600 "will not pay expenses." Unfortunately such a body of readers was obviously not sufficiently large to maintain a magazine, and when the contents of the magazine were not good they were dull. There were various series of impossibly erudite articles, quite out of touch with the real interests of the public. Blackwood’s on the other hand contained much material of no permanent literary value, but none the less interesting, topical, or entertaining. So the London Magazine burnt itself out, while Blackwood’s continues like one of the fixed stars.
CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

PERSONS AND PERSONALITIES

In the previous chapters we have been considering criticism mainly as it affects the victim. Quite a different perspective is obtained if we look at the critical landscape, not through the eyes of individual poets, but of individual critics. Unfortunately few of those whose names appear on the editors' payrolls are worthy of the title of critic; the majority are honest reviewers; some, criticasters. It is of the first class that we would speak here, and the names that will be mentioned are some of them famous, some, undeservedly obscure. As we have been dealing with two generations of poets, so we have two generations of critics, and it is a point worth mentioning that a critic, like a poet, is at his best when he is young. We are apt to think of a critic improving and maturing with age and experience, but the fact is that the outstanding critics of their day were all men in their twenties or early thirties.

In the first generation, FRANCIS JEFFREY stands head and shoulders above his fellow critics. The more one reads of his work, the more one respects him. His achievement as editor of the Edinburgh
Review has received sufficient notice in the first chapter but his work as a critic is equally remarkable. He personally criticised nearly every important contribution to literature that appeared during his editorship, so much so that in the foregoing pages the Edinburgh Review and Jeffrey are practically synonymous terms.

One of Jeffrey's most attractive features was the dynamic quality of his criticism. Jeffrey in 1829 was a very different critic from Jeffrey in 1802. From his début to his resignation we can trace a certain, if not constant, progression and widening of thought. In the preceding chapters we have observed various points in this progress as they came within our scope, but it is impossible to form an estimate of his standing without referring to them again more connectedly.

At the beginning of the century Jeffrey was unquestionably a Georgian, almost one might say an Augustan. He was a thorough-going believer in established conventions, mainly because they were established. He had a distrust, never entirely overcome, of innovation. Among the conventions which he supported was the use of poetic diction, which he defended as a means of enlivening the less elevated passages of a poem of any length - possibly the worst line of defence he could have adopted. But always he was aware that a simple pathetic fact "loses all its pathos by an attempt to express it with dignity.... In the
delineation of such objects, we are perfectly satisfied that the school of Southey and Coleridge is right, and that the whole effect of the representation must depend on the humble simplicity of the statement." His general attitude to literature had the aristocratic stamp of the previous century. His favourite measure was the heroic couplet. He thought "the vulgar" incapable of the sentiments and passions of "the refined", the feelings of the latter being regarded by Jeffrey as automatically superior to those of the former, both in themselves and as subjects for literature. Now this is a severe circumscription of the domain of art, and a less skilful critic would find the application of such a tenet leading him into ridiculous situations, but none the less it is an essential part of the Augustan code. Jeffrey is again linked to that code by his emphasis on "good taste" as the final criterion. It is a typical eighteenth century touch to speak of good taste and morals in one breath, as Jeffrey does in his review of Madoc: "In matters of taste...we conceive that there are no discoveries to be made, any more than in matters of morality. The end of poetry is to please; and men cannot be mistaken as to what has actually given them pleasure." This article as a whole shows Jeffrey in his narrowest and most sternly Augustan mood.

There is a pleasanter sida to the picture

(1) Smyth's English Lyrics in Edinb. Rev Vol.8 p.116 1806
than this. If the whole of Jeffrey's critical thought were outlined in the preceding paragraph he would have been forgotten except perhaps as a narrow-minded criticaster who had tried to blast Wordsworth's laurels. But even in the early years he was more than that. His salvation lay in his genuine love for literary traditions that were older than the code to which he paid intellectual homage. "The rules" modified, but not overthrown, by Cowper and his associates were accepted by Jeffrey as a standard of judgment because they were what he had been educated to accept, and also because his logical, abstracting type of mind turned naturally to a creed that enabled ideas to be set down in such satisfactory black and white. His emotional needs were not to be thus fulfilled, but being Scottish, he was reared in a second tradition—that of the poetry and song of Burns and of Scottish folk-lore. Here he found not only the emotional food he needed, but a richer, more natural style than the fashionable one. He drew also on another source of inspiration—the wealth of the Elizabethan drama, in whose return to popular favour Jeffrey proudly and justifiably claimed to have played a part. The review of Scott's Lay of the Last Minstrel shows Jeffrey still much afraid to give way to his impulses, but yet letting his admiration for the simple precision, force, and lively colouring of the ballad penetrate his faithfulness to the rules.

By 1810 we can see Jeffrey beginning to
make progress. In his review of Crabbe’s Borough he
displays a very marked swing away from the position
so confidently held in 1802 that the sentiments of a
"clown, a tradesman, or a market-wench" are not a
"proper object for poetical imitation." He now praises
Crabbe for choosing humble subjects which touch the
springs of imagination, stating that the greatest
emotions are aroused only by familiar things and
situations, that the reactions of the common people
reflect universal, primary affections. "Every one
thoroughly understands every thing about cottages,
streets, and villages.... If the poet can contrive,
therefore, to create a sufficient interest in subjects
like these, they will infallibly sink deeper into the
mind, and be more prolific of kindred trains of emotion,
than subjects of greater dignity." Here Jeffrey has
broken one of the fetters of his classical creed. He
can now accept a type of subject from Crabbe which he
would have despised at the outset of his career and
which he could still ridicule in Wordsworth. Almost
at the same time, reviewing Scott’s Lady of the Lake,
Jeffrey again departs from the aristocratic attitude,
as we have seen, by stating his belief that not only
humble subjects but popular reactions to literature
have a real value, differing from the cultured react-
tions only in degree. Again dealing with Crabbe in 1812
Jeffrey comes still closer to the Wordsworthian
position, even praising Crabbe’s use of the "natural
language" of the people. The latter passage we have
already examined in some detail, but it needs to be recollected at this point if we are to realise how much Jeffrey belonged to the romantic age.

Another aspect of Jeffrey the Romantic appears in his review of the 1811 edition of Ford's Dramatic Works. This article includes a brief history of literature since Elizabethan times, in the course of which Jeffrey looks back with admiration to that fertile, racy age, when even the prose writers were poets in the quality of their imagination. Then with the Restoration the English genius was made subservient to France. The classics became models to be slavishly imitated, not quarries in which rich materials could be discovered. The new ideal was more worldly and more elaborate; artificiality replaced Shakespeare's universality. Jeffrey writes off Dryden as a splendid failure. "Dryden was beyond all comparison, the greatest poet of his own day,...possessing a mastery over his language which no later writer has attained; if he had known nothing of foreign literature and been left to form himself on the models of Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton...there is reason to think that he would have built up the pure and original school of English poetry so firmly, as to have made it impossible for fashion, or caprice, or prejudice of any sort, ever to have rendered any other popular among our own inhabitants. As it is, he has not written one line that is pathetic, and very few that can be considered as sublime." The French style
Jeffrey considers to have reached its nadir in the poetry of Addison, only to be revivified by Pope. Yet "Pope is a satirist, and a moralist, and a wit, and a critic, and a fine writer, much more than he is a poet.... But he has not a great deal of fancy, and scarcely ever touches any of the greater passions. He is much the best, we think, of the classical Continental school; but he is not to be compared with the masters...of that Old English one." Jeffrey traces the first signs of a return to the true style in Thomson, and the other pre-romantics, until "at last Cowper threw off the whole trammels of French criticism and artificial refinement." The whole romantic attitude of the nineteenth century is implicit in this outline history; "the rules" are entirely abandoned as too artificial, and Jeffrey recognises the romantic as the highest style of poetry. He has at last put himself where a real critic should be, in the vanguard, and not the rear of opinion.

Yet he still has his blind spot. The Lake Poets have not yet won his whole-hearted confidence. His objection is his usual one: "Their style is more remarkably and offensively artificial than that of any other class of writers. They have mixed in, too, so much of the maukish tone of pastoral innocence and babyish simplicity, with a sort of pedantic emphasis and ostentatious glitter." There is something rather superficial about these criticisms, and it is one of Jeffrey's weaknesses, that he never got down to the
fundamentals of his dissidence from Wordsworth, not even when he had him at his mercy over *The Excursion*. "Innocence" and "simplicity" were words with a special connotation when Jeffrey applied them to the Lake Poets; they had a reference to the transcendental beliefs that Wordsworth held about nature and childhood, but that reference is rarely if ever explicit. Why Jeffrey should have been so entirely out of sympathy with these beliefs is not fully explicable without writing his whole biography. It does not take us much further to say that Jeffrey was hostile to mysticism, but that hostility was the real root of the trouble. Against his lack of appreciation of that aspect of the Lakists we must set another half-sentence from the same review in which he speaks of their having "a fertility and a force, a warmth of feeling and an exaltation of imagination about them, which classes them, in our estimation, with a much higher order of poets than the followers of Dryden and Addison; and justifies an anxiety for their fame, in all the admirers of Milton and Shakespeare."

It was a fortunate conjunction that brought together Jeffrey at the height of his critical powers and Byron embarking on his poetical career. It gave Jeffrey his opportunity to pay full and generous tribute to a poet breaking new ground. Yet such interest as the criticisms of Byron retain to-day centres in the faults Jeffrey had to find rather than in the praise which we recognise to have been too
generous. For it must be admitted that Byron succeeded in hoodwinking Jeffrey along with his thousands of readers into the belief that he was a really great tragic poet. It took the critic some time to see through the superficial impressiveness of the Byronic character. With the publication of the Giaour, however, came his first revolt against that character as morally objectionable in its sympathetic association of overpowering emotion with worthlessness and guilt. Ultimately this objection is justifiable as it is just such an association that makes for pornography. In the review of the Corsair Jeffrey went a step further when he realised that the Byronic guilt was an entirely gratuitous affair with no real connection with the character - "The character of the hero is needlessly loaded in the description with crimes and vices of which his conduct affords no indication." At the same time he makes the complaint that "there is no intellectual dignity or accomplishment about any of his characters" - a complaint only too well justified, for the overdose of emotion and lack of intellect in Byron's poems did not help the future development of English poetry. The reader will recall that it is in this review that Jeffrey analyses the reasons for the popularity of sensational poetry and evolves his theory of a cycle of literary and social history, while in passing he makes fun of the Augustan age and its "witty satires all stuck over with classical allusions."

The full stature of Jeffrey's growth as a
romantic critic is displayed in his review of Hazlitt's
Shakespeare Characters. He begins with an incidental
definition of a romantic critic, when he says that
Hazlitt has written his book "less to tell the reader
what Mr. H. knows about Shakespeare or his writings
than to explain to them what he feels about them — and
why he feels so.... He seems pretty generally, indeed,
in a state of happy intoxication." Before long Jeffrey
himself has caught the infection and "explains what he
feels" with the best of them; when he speaks of "that
eternal recurrence to what is sweet or majestic in the
simple aspects of nature — that indestructible love of
flowers and odours, and dews and clear waters, and soft
airs and sounds, and bright skies, and woodland soli-
tudes, and moonlight bowers, which are the Material
elements of Poetry — and that fine sense of their
undefinable relation to mental emotion, which is its
essence and vivifying Soul — ...which HE ALONE has
poured out from the richness of his own mind, without
effort or restraint; and contrived to intermingle with
the play of all the passions, and the vulgar course of
this world's affairs, without deserting for an instant
the proper business of the scene.... Every thing in
him is in unmeasured abundance, and unequalled perfect-
ion — but every thing so balanced and kept in subordin-
ation, as not to jostle or disturb or take the place of
another.... Although his sails are purple and perfumed,
and his prow of beaten gold, they waft him on his
voyage, not less, but more rapidly and directly than if
they had been composed of baser materials."

In this year, 1817, Jeffrey was just under forty-five, a climacteric age. Thereafter it seems that his arteries began to harden, he became more timid, in fact age was beginning to tell. He himself recognised the fact, and recruited younger, fresher judgements. Much of the most important critical work was handed over to Hazlitt. He tried to enlist John Wilson, newly entered upon his career in Blackwood's. Later he was to find valuable new blood in young Macaulay, perhaps the truest inheritor of his spirit. In these experiments Jeffrey displayed more than once his editorial tact, but in his critical work we can see the deleterious effects of his years. His work is touched not so much with a narrowing as with a numbing of his powers. Politically he found himself out of sympathy with the Left-wing members of his party; in this period indeed he wrote only one or two political articles. Towards literature he seems to have become less sensitive. He never trusted himself to treat of Shelley, to whose rapturous Platonism we may suppose him to have been antagonistic. Of Keats's Endymion he could say that he had not seen it till nearly three years after its publication. Now if this were true, it was bad journalism. That he had not taken the trouble to seek out and study the book about which his most dangerous rivals were making so much stir was a serious lapse from editorial alertness. One is inclined to suggest that timidity kept him away from the book.
It is true however that he made glorious amends for his tardiness, for Keats was a poet whom he could appreciate - a poet of the old English school.

One cannot close any record of Jeffrey's criticism without paying tribute to some outstanding features that run through all his work. First his sterling common-sense. Again and again, one is struck by his level-headed judgement. There is always reason and sanity behind his estimate. The effect on the reader is cumulative; one probably comes to him with a prejudice born of a knowledge of his injustice to Wordsworth, but finally he wins one's whole-hearted respect. Not unallied to this quality is Jeffrey's critical honesty, not a universal quality among his contemporaries. The lapses of the Edinburgh Review from critical integrity are few. Lastly we may mention his taste. He had a flair for the best passages even in works which he condemned as a whole. Time and again one finds in reading his reviews, that the passages he has quoted are those that have stuck most firmly in the public mind.

Something of Jeffrey's character filters through the years to us; his witty urbanity; his almost boyish eagerness. We have his account book for the furnishing of his Buccleugh Place house - a total of some £50, annotated with the delighted comment, "Could it be less?" The outcome of Moore's challenge to a duel is a pleasant contrast to another meeting at Chalk Hill Farm. Someone had kindly informed the
police, who promptly marched the two little fire-eaters off to the nearest police office, where it was found that at least one of the pistols was loaded with nothing more deadly than paper. Within a fortnight the pair "breakfasted together very lovingly," as Jeffrey put it, and a few months later Moore was contributing to the review. But not every one was so easily charmed. Mrs John Wilson on coming to Edinburgh about 1816 spoke of him as "a horrid little man, but held in as much estimation here as the Bible." Cockburn gives us another very human glimpse of him about the same time — the only occasion in his life on which he "stuck a speech." He was making a presentation to the great tragedian Kemble, but before his speech was well started, became confused and sat down without having handed over the gift. He confessed the cause of the trouble afterwards. When he rose to speak Kemble rose also, and the unexpected strain of talking up to the tall stately figure of the actor towering above him was too much for the little journalist. There is something about that story symbolic of Jeffrey's whole career.

Almost exactly a contemporary of Jeffrey's, James Montgomery possessed just those qualities which the more famous critic lacked. The name of Montgomery means little to-day, being remembered, if at all, as a signature to various hymns; but in his own day, Montgomery as the author of The Wanderer of Switzerland and
other poems, gained no small reputation. His career reads rather like a Samuel Smiles story. His father was a Moravian preacher at Irvine, Ayrshire, where James Montgomery was born in 1771. He was educated at a Moravian college, and wearying of the strictness of the sectarian régime, ran away to find himself work. After various experiences he became shop assistant and clerk to a Sheffield bookseller, who published a newspaper, the Iris. By a series of happy circumstances, Montgomery became a contributor to the paper, then editor, and finally by his patron's will, proprietor of it. In 1794 he fell foul of the authorities and was imprisoned for voicing his political convictions in his Iris. About 1802 Montgomery underwent a religious conversion which sent him back to the evangelical beliefs of his youth, although not into the arms of any particular sect. This was a very important occurrence, influencing the whole of his subsequent writing. In all his criticism there is a substratum of deep, honest religious feeling, a driving power which he shared with thousands of his countrymen. We shall observe shortly the peculiar value of this strand in his critical make-up.

In 1806 Daniel Parken, the youthful editor of the Eclectic Review, recognised a kindred spirit in the author of The Wanderer of Switzerland which he had favourably reviewed. He wrote inviting Montgomery to become a contributor, to find that the poet had already sent in an anonymous article. The association
thus happily begun lasted till Parken's resignation in 1811 after which Montgomery's contributions became very irregular.

His newspaper, the Iris, and his poetry remained his staple occupation till 1825 when he retired to devote the remaining thirty years of his life to philanthropic and humanitarian work, and to lecturing on literature. These lectures, in a vivid ecstatic style, very unlike most of his previous writing, attracted considerable attention. In fact he was invited to stand for the Professorship of Rhetoric at Edinburgh University, but did not let his name go forward.

The bulk of Montgomery's criticism is not perhaps very remarkable except for its severe impartiality and its common-sense, the only attributes which make it akin to Jeffrey's. The latter quality keeps cropping out in little things as well as big - his refusal to be intimidated by an author's reputation for duelling, admitting quite frankly he is a coward, - his recognition that Scott's poems owe their success to the merits which they share with the novel. We see it acting in a wider field when, apropos of Cmabbe he declares that any man of moderate talents can make himself into an original writer by sticking courageously to his last. It is not characteristic of a romantic writer to speak thus of literary ability as ten per cent inspiration and ninety per cent perspiration, and it was good to have a critic who could keep
his head in this matter at that juncture. For with Byron looming on the horizon, the requisite percentage of perspiration was going to be sadly underestimated. It is unfortunate that Montgomery had withdrawn from the Eclectic before Byron made his name, for apparently Byron had on the critic an electric influence that no other poet but Wordsworth aroused. He showed his breadth of mind by frankly admitting his admiration of Cain which he read at one sitting. "Byron," he said, "possesses me like a fiend."

Two of the theories underlying Montgomery's critical practice deserve mention. He never considers imaginative power sufficient of itself to give value to a poem; the real merit depends on its emotional content, "the heart and the affections" must be engaged. He notices Scott's diffidence in handling emotional scenes: "The minstrel...ignobly shrinks from the delicate and exquisitely difficult duty of describing the emotions and language of these lovers romantically restored to each other." It was to be revealed later that in his novels also Scott shirked his love scenes. But of course Montgomery did not apply this rule merely to love scenes. Another belief which he firmly held was the sound one that in the long run the public are infallible judges of literary excellence. Behind these theories lay something deeper than mere theory, his religious tenets. The influence that they exerted was rarely sectarian or narrowing; his heated defence of Methodism against the
criticisms implied in Sir Eustace Grey is the most outstanding exception. His condemnation of Moore is overemphatic, making too much play with such terms as 'hired pimp', 'libertines and prostitutes', but we may recall that this was his prentice piece, and he was probably rather anxious to make a hit. Against it we can set his appreciation of Cain, mentioned above. Actually his fear of Moore's influence corrupting the public is somewhat at variance with his belief in the ultimate soundness of their judgement. But the Non-conformist conscience always prefers blasphemy to obscenity. On the credit side of the account, Montgomery's faith was a stabilising influence, a final or implicitly court of appeal to which explicitly/implicitly all his judgements were referred. When we remember that his creed was also that of his collaborators and of the middle-class, the great and growing force in the English public, we begin to understand why the Eclectic Review was such an influential organ, and so typical of the taste of the ordinary man.

Interesting as all these qualities and achievements were, they did not lift Montgomery's criticism out of the rut, and he would not have been given such attention here, had Montgomery's contact with another, greater mind not struck out real fire. It was a happy chance that brought Wordsworth under Montgomery's notice in 1807; and when The Excursion was published seven years later the critic made one of his infrequent returns to the review. Montgomery's
response that Wordsworth was like that of a violin string in sympathetic vibration. We need not repeat here the sensitive praise of the poet which we have already recorded. It is sufficient to recall that he admired in Wordsworth the greatest and most typically Wordsworthian things, while exposing the fallacy of the theory of diction. No other critic pointed out how far the poet wandered from his own professions. A few of Montgomery's arguments in favour of poetic diction which were passed over formerly may be mentioned here. He is willing to follow Wordsworth as far as the poet is desirous of sweeping away superfluous ornament, but he bases his refutation of Wordsworth's theory on two of Wordsworth's own arguments — that a poet is a man of more than usual organic sensibility, and that he is one who has thought long and deeply. In dramatic verse or in the poet's simple tales "the real language of men" may be employed with pleasing effect; but when Mr Wordsworth would 'present ordinary things in an unusual way, by 'casting over them a certain colouring of the imagination,' he is compelled very frequently to resort to splendid, figurative, and amplifying language." In proving this point Montgomery again takes Wordsworth at his best with such brimming quotations as 'The holy time is quiet as a nun Breathless with adoration.'

We may notice in passing how Montgomery's comprehension increased between 1807 and 1814. At the earlier date he is fascinated by the Immortality Ode,
but is obviously puzzled by it; yet his tact for Wordsworth is such that he selects for quotation the most memorable stanzas in the poem. Seven years later he has pondered it sufficiently to be able to trace step by step the sequence of thought in what he had once called "a wilderness of sublimity, tenderness, bombast and absurdity." That fact alone is a fine tribute both to the poet and the critic.

It is worth noticing that Montgomery thought more of Wordsworth than he was willing to admit publicly in 1807. He accompanied his criticism with a letter to Parken: "I hope that your readers will find as much rigour of censure in this article as will reconcile them to the warmth of commendation which I have most honestly and heartily bestowed on Wordsworth's undeniable merits. The cry is up; and it is the fashion to yelp him down. I belong not to the pack, nor will I wag my tongue or my tail, on any occasion to please the multitude.... I hate his baldness and vulgarity of phrase;... but I feel the pulse of poetry beating through every vein of thought in all his compositions, even in his most pitiful, puerile, and affected pieces." Here, indeed, was one of the initiates; and he was to have his reward. One day in 1815 Conder, the then editor of the review, wrote to Montgomery, "Southey showed your review of the 'Ex- cursion' to Wordsworth, who was much pleased with it; and desired him to convey to the author his sense of the very able and very handsome manner in which the
work was treated, and especially of the spirit in which the criticism is written."

It is strange that the *Quarterly Review* for nearly twenty years failed to produce a critic of any standing. Those members of its staff, such as Scott and Southey, who had any literary insight, did not take the art of reviewing very seriously, being in the main desirous of patting the chosen poet on the back; on the other hand, those who, like Canning and Croker, had a critical code of reference, had absolutely no insight into the literary movements of their day and still lived in the eighteenth century. But the *Quarterly* did produce in William Gifford a new phenomenon, a vital, effective editor, who yet wrote practically nothing himself. It is difficult to like Gifford; there was essentially something of the understrapper about him. He had fought his way up through adversity and ill-health to a respectable literary station; and yet somehow he seemed to remain the underbred snob, the tool of his betters. His earliest editorial job, the *Anti-Jacobin*, put him in the position of office-boy to the hard, clever politicians who really made the paper. Virtually Canning, Ellis, and the rest merely left him the putting together of the articles they had concocted. Except in his own virulent department, the "exposure" of the "Jacobin" press, he had little voice in the conduct of the paper. When he was appointed to the *Quarterly*, Canning
expected he would again perform the same humble office. For quite a while, therefore, Gifford was at the mercy of a large number of advisers, of divergent views and varying importance, and Murray, quite frankly distrusting him, interfered continually. This irresponsibility combined with Gifford's ill-health led to a most unsatisfactory lack of wit, harmony, and punctuality in the new review. The Quarterly was capable of appearing a quarter late. Out of this morass Gifford doggedly fought his way to full editorial power, and at last succeeded in impressing his personality on the whole paper. He actually wrote about half a dozen reviews himself, but every article that passed through his hands received considerable editing. Occasionally he softened the asperities of the critics who were too acid in the wrong place; sometimes all that a review received was a general grooming. But an article that was not to his mind he cut unmercifully. The long-winded Southey suffered severely at his hands; again and again he grumbled to his friends about "Gifford, the review-gelder" and the fashion in which he "castrated" his articles; Ellis, by the way, said he "animated" them, so perhaps the excised portions were not so vital as Southey believed. Southey was not alone in his complaints, but humbler writers admitted that Gifford had improved their copy.

Gifford also exercised the more questionable editorial right of adding as well as blue-pencilling. He would emphasise an author's argument, develop an
illustration; and more, he would put into the author's mouth opinions and judgements of which he was quite innocent, making him condemn what perhaps in reality he approved. Lamb's review of *The Excursion* exemplifies all Gifford's editorial tricks; it was very late in appearing, and when it did appear, Lamb did not recognise it. "I never felt more vexed in my life than when I read it," he wrote bitterly to Wordsworth, "Whatever inadequateness it had to its subject, it was, in point of composition, the prettiest piece of prose I ever wrote.... That charm if it had any is all gone: more than a third of the substance is cut away, and that not all from one place, but passim, so as to make utter nonsense. Every warm expression is changed for a nasty cold one." He gives an example; he had written that Wordsworth "walks through common forests as through some Dodona or enchanted wood, and every casual bird that flits upon the boughs, like that miraculous one in Tasso, but in language more piercing than any articulate sounds, reveals to him far higher love-lays." In Gifford's version it becomes,"every bird that flits among the leaves, like that miraculous one in Tasso, but in language more intelligent, reveals to him far higher love-lays." Lamb concludes,"Every pretty expression (I know there are many), every warm expression (there was nothing else), is vulgarised and frozen.... God confound him and all caitiffs!"

Yet with all Gifford's doctoring, the *Quarterly Review* remained dull and heavy. Sententious,
serious, even authoritative, but never lively, rarely witty. As we have seen, the fault lay partly in the authors, but partly in Gifford himself, who had little sense of humour and little wit. He was primarily the satirist whose weapons were the bludgeons of indignation and abuse.

Never surely were there two such contrasted collaborators as Lockhart and Wilson. One was dark, the other fair, one "the Spanish hidalgo", the other "a Norse god", one was cool, shrewd, sardonic, the other hot-headed, reckless, emotional, one was a critic, the other was not.

JOHN WILSON's character was shrewdly summed up by the youthful Carlyle: "A human character of fine and noble elements, thought I, but not at one with itself." Years later he mournfully endorsed his early judgement: "Poor Wilson!... His whole being seems hollowed out, as it were, and false and counterfeit in his own eyes." "There was from the first a loose joint about the very centre of his existence - a want; namely, of distinct veracity of mind." Not at one with itself - a fatal lack of consistency, of veracity, that ruined so much of Wilson's career, and in a lesser field, took all value from his critical pronouncements. It would have been some comfort to his numerous victims to know that this merciless critic himself writhed under the lash. Wishing to do well by him, Blackwood invited the Man of Feeling to review one of Wilson's
novels. Some powder was mixed with the jam, and Wilson was so hurt on seeing the proofs that he wrote the publisher a furious letter and Blackwood obligingly substituted a more flattering article. When he had recovered Wilson wrote, "I do not object, however, to a nice little eulogistic touch of censure now and then, but I must always do these things with my own hand.... Do with my articles any thing you choose except abuse the writer of them, who is excessively thin-skinned." To return to his actual work as a critic.

One of Blackwood's proudest boasts was that it was the first to popularise Wordsworth's poetry. Now, the Magazine's first mention of the poet was a very contemptuous letter, which Wilson may, or may not have written, although he certainly did write the answer to that letter, praising the poet. It is also true that Blackwood's Magazine lavished high praise on every work of Wordsworth's that came under its notice, and that Wilson was the author of the majority of these criticisms. Yet the earlier and most important of these Essays on the Lake School of Poetry did not really discover any claims to originality in Wordsworth that had not been mentioned by Montgomery or Hazlitt or Lamb. Nor did the rhapsodies to which the philosophy of The Excursion there moved Wilson prevent him at the same period from protesting in other articles against its "dull metaphysics." Yet it is nevertheless true that Wilson's essays did introduce Wordsworth's poetry to a wider public than ever before.
There occurred, however, in 1825 an incident that shows how little Wilson’s praise, or blame, was really worth. It also casts a strong light on certain aspects of the man’s character. In August of that year, Scott was visiting the Lakes, and he and Wilson were entertained by Wordsworth in a very friendly fashion. Wilson promptly went home and dashed off a Noctes in which he declared, "Scott’s poetry...is often very bad. Except when his martial soul is up, he is but a tame and feeble writer." That might have passed, but Wordsworth - "I confess that the 'Excurs-
ion' is the worst poem of any character in the English language.... How ludicrously he overrates his own powers.... Wordsworth’s pride is like that of a straw-
crowned king of Bedlam." Even Lockhart was shocked. The matter unfortunately was not allowed to rest there. Wilson had also vented his spleen on an Irish M.P., Martin, who had been labelled a Jackass, because, hav-
ing successfully promoted the first 'Cruelty to Animals' Bill, he spent his spare time prosecuting carters who abused their horses and then standing surety for their good behaviour. Martin was roused at being ridiculed for this amateur probation system and instituted a libel action. Wilson foresaw himself exposed as the calumniator of his friends; and literally yellowed with fright. "I was seized with a trembling and shivering fit," he wrote to Blackwood, "and was deadly sick for some hours. I am somewhat better but in my bed.... To own that article is for a
thousand reasons impossible.... I would rather die this evening." Lockhart was as usual appiled to, and replied, "If I can do anything, I am at your command; but really the Professor ought to attend to his own business.... The Professor really seems to act on such occasions as if he were mad. I am sure you must have remonstrated against that *Noctes*, and it is too bad to fly out thus, altho' forewarned in so many ways." He wrote Martin an apology for Wilson to sign, but it was Maginn who proved the real saviour; with blarney and champagne to the tune of £3 7s he managed to placate his irate countryman, and Wilson's face was saved.

A threatened affair with Hunt a few years earlier showed Wilson apparently eager to face Hunt at the end of a pistol, but really desperately afraid that he was to be involved in a humiliating libel action. Proceedings were threatened, but never brought, as a consequence of the Cockney School article of 1822 that so bitterly assailed Byron for giving and Hunt for accepting an Italian home. There is some mystery about the action as Leigh was then in Italy. Perhaps John Hunt was again the moving spirit. At any rate, Wilson was very generous in his offers of help to Blackwood. "Hunt's insolence is intolerable," he wrote, "I wish not to get into contact with such a scoundrel, for it might possibly lead to the loss of my chair; but damn the Cockney if he shall crow over me!... If, on consulting only two or three of my most judicious friends, Mr L[ockhart] and you think I should give my
name without being in any predicament do so by all means." The circumscription takes most of the value from the offer. A second letter suggests that Wilson actually expected Hunt to travel from Italy to England for the pleasure of putting a bullet in him. "It appears to me that I might write a letter to Mr Cadell [Blackwood's London agent at the time] telling him I was ready to give my name on being asked it by Hunt himself or on being informed that he wanted my name for his own satisfaction. But that I dislike libel actions, either as Prosecutor or Defender, I have no sort of objection (an action excepted) to give my name, — quite the reverse, I assure you, and neither Cockney nor any one else shall ever intimidate me either by a blow (!!!!!!) or a bluster. If the knave really asks my name, he shall have it without an hour's delay." He suggests that Lockhart should "write such a letter from me to Cadell as you think judicious, which bring with you here. The publicity alone of any affair with this miscreant annoys me, for I value him at a single kick." Wilson even inquires about the services of a second. As Wilson must have known that it was quite impossible for Hunt to travel from Italy, this elaborate facade merely helps to conceal his real terror at being involved in a lawsuit, which as he said might cost him his chair. From these as from some other incidents, we are compelled to deduce that Wilson was a reckless moral coward. Physical courage he had in plenty, but when
his utter lack of self-restraint had led him into a situation where discovery meant disgrace, the great Norse god collapsed into a whining helpless schoolboy. It was the lack of that central tie-beam, which Carlyle had observed, that led to these ridiculous disintegrations.

The same irresponsible dualism marks Wilson's treatment of Coleridge, the catchpenny abuse of whose person was mollified by ecstatic praise of his poetry. It appears again in the alternate wooing and "flyting" at Byron, though Christopher's share in this is less clearly determined. The motives underlying his treatment of the Cockneys have already been sufficiently examined; but we may remark again how differently the same mixture of fooling, snobbery, and desire for advertisement, with a dash of devilment and of genuine poetic taste, operated when Wilson was eulogising Shelley's early productions. There seems never to have been a man of such impressive personality as Wilson's who was so much the creature of the moment. In nothing does he appear to have had any settled convictions; the whim and mood of the hour decided his opinion. Even the weather had its influence on him. His unfortunate tirade against Wordsworth was written while he was sweltering in a heat wave.

We have said that LOCKHART, in contrast to North, was a critic; unfortunately his best critical work does not come within the scope of this study, for
it appeared in the Quarterly Review and handled subjects which have no place here. He was a man of wide sympathies, but delicate taste, and peculiar sensitivity for his prerogatives as a scholar. Reserved and caustic himself, he disliked and suspected gush in others; we have seen his distaste for Wilson's whinings. In the Cockneys he found combined the two qualities which most exasperated him—gush and unscholastic admiration for classical lore. We can understand then the peculiar pleasure with which he loosed his darts against these persons so antipathetic in taste, learning and politics. In the Cockney School articles, he was in fact deeply implicated. It seems almost certain that the first two, attacking the immoralities of Rimini, and the fourth, on Endymion, were his work, and they are the blackest and bitterest of the lot. The same spleenetic spirit influences his review of Prometheus Unbound.

Apart from these articles, and the essay on Moore's Poetry, we can identify three of Lockhart's contributions to Blackwood's, in all of which he discusses the periodical press of his time. The first entitled On English Periodical Criticism, and signed "von Lauerwinkel", is in fact a comparison of Gifford and Jeffrey: "Both are men of great talents, and both are, I think very bad Reviewers." Gifford, because of his low breeding, is coarse and insensible, and his

(1) Blackwood's Magazine Vol.2 p.670 Mar.1818
severity is disproportionate to its subject. "How can one, who thinks the *Lauras* and *Della Crusca* matters of so great moment, form any rational opinion concerning such men as Scott, Wordsworth, Byron, or Goethe?" Lockhart attributes the prosperity of the *Quarterly* to "the admirable accounts it contains of all the books of travel." Jeffrey gains greater respect from Lockhart, although his opening remarks do not lead one to expect it: "The intellectual timidity of Jeffrey's profession has clung to him in all his pursuits and prevented him from coming manfully and decidedly to any firm opinion." He has insight, tact, and dignity, but lacks "habits of meditation" which alone keeps him from being among the greatest English thinkers. "He has as yet done nothing which will ever induce a man of research, in the next century, to turn over the volumes of his Review." — a sentence which made at least one reader smile a little wryly. By way of contrast to the *Quarterly*, Lockhart thinks the popularity of the *Edinburgh Review* due to its political papers.

Another article compares Jeffrey and Hazlitt, (1) Jeffrey *ratiocinative* and Hazlitt *perceptive*; Jeffrey the more original genius, Hazlitt the better teacher; Jeffrey *logiaal*, Hazlitt empirical. "Upon the whole Mr Hazlitt's appercues, concerning particular works, are truer than those of Mr Jeffrey, because he lays

(1) *Blackwood's Magazine* Vol. 3 p. 303 June 1818
out his mind in a more passive manner to receive impressions from them. Mr. Jeffrey's great merit lies in those general speculations which he has appended to his appreciations of particular books. In originality and ingenuity, they were so far above the level of all former publications, that they could not fail to be read with admiration." In general the style of the review is "a crude mass of ill-concocted epithets, which leave no unity of impression upon the memory.... It conveys [the sense] without grace, concentration, or singleness of effect." Hazlitt is the purer and simpler stylist of the two.

The third article is on Hazlitt's essay, On the Periodical Press. Lockhart is there concerned with blackballing the author of the Liber Amoris and defending Blackwood's treatment of Keats, and the article has already been examined in some detail. It need be recalled here only to contrast Lockhart's normal admiration for Hazlitt with his ferocity when his blood was up. If we discount this article and consider the first two, we get a brief glimpse of the real Lockhart, the Lockhart who was to be such a talented editor of the Quarterly; these two articles reveal sensibility and judgement, and are shrewd estimates of their respective subjects.

While we are on the subject of Lockhart, it will be opportune to outline the fatal affair in which he was involved with John Scott of the London Magazine.
We have already examined the articles which led up to the events narrated below, events which have not been fairly represented in various recent publications. The first move in the matter was made by Christie who, on the 28th December 1820, wrote drawing Lockhart's attention to the London articles and suggesting "I think you must do something." On New Year's Day appeared the number of the Magazine which virtually charged Lockhart by name with lying and cowardice. Lockhart read the article and asked Christie to see Scott and demand an apology or satisfaction for Lockhart. On the 10th January, 1821, Christie called on Scott and asked for the name of the author of the offending articles. Scott put his reply in writing, "If Mr Lockhart's motives in putting the inquiry should turn out to be such as gentlemen usually respect, there would be no difficulty about giving it an answer." When Christie assured him that Lockhart did not have a libel action in view, Scott asked whether Lockhart was in London, and whether, if Scott admitted his responsibility for the London articles, Lockhart would "declare distinctly his connection with Blackwood's." Scott replied that Lockhart was in Edinburgh, and that no preliminary explanation would be given as the articles in question contained many falsehoods, which Scott must know to be false or derived from a worthless source. To this Scott wrote a second note rightly refusing to do anything till Lockhart came to London and until he was given "an
open reference to the ground of complaint."

Lockhart then came to London, and on the 18th January Christie was despatched with Lockhart's second demand for an apology. Scott admitted responsibility for the articles and in return expected Lockhart to state "his concern with the management of Blackwood's Magazine," as "the justice of Mr Lockhart's pretension to having been unfairly treated...depended on the real state of his (Mr L's) connexion with the work just-named." That night Scott got in touch with Horace Smith and asked him to act as second if necessary. According to his own later statement, Smith refused, but said he would mediate if possible.

Early next morning, the 19th, Scott sent Christie a note: "If Mr Lockhart will even now make a disavowal of having been concerned in the system of imposition and scandal adopted in Blackwood's Magazine, Mr Scott consents to recognise his demand... and in that case, and that only, Mr Christie is referred to Mr Horatio Smith." Christie promptly called on Smith, but without the disavowal, and naturally enough nothing came of the visit.

On the 20th Lockhart wrote, still refusing what Scott had asked, but "Mr Lockhart...does nevertheless not hesitate to offer Mr Scott any explanation upon any subject in which Mr Scott's personal feelings and honour can be concerned." To which Scott replied late that evening, "Mr Lockhart should declare, upon his honour, in explicit terms,
that he has never derived money from any connection, direct or indirect, with the management of that work; and that he has never stood in a situation giving him, directly or indirectly, a pecuniary interest in its sale." As Scott's indignation had been directed against the supposed editor of Blackwood's, he was justified in this demand. If Lockhart were the editor, then Scott was right in the accusations he had made; if Lockhart were not, then Scott had certainly insulted him. Meanwhile Horace Smith had prudently left town and Scott enlisted P.G. Patmore as his provisional second.

For the next week the exact dating of events becomes impossible, but their sequence remains clear enough. Through Christie; Lockhart refused to declare that he had no connection with the management or ownership of Blackwood's, whereupon Scott announced that he considered the affair as terminated. Lockhart seems to have been non-plussed at being thus trapped in an equivocal situation, but Croker now magnanimously stepped forward with a suggestion for forcing Scott's hand, and under his direction Lockhart sent the London editor a letter calling him a scoundrel and poltroon and announcing his intention of returning to Scotland if he did not receive an immediate reply. Scott opened the letter because he did not recognise the seal, but consulting "the principles of justice and honour" decided to ignore it, and instead of replying published a full account of the affair, concluding
with the remark that he considered the last letter as "coming from the Editor of Blackwood's Magazine."
Scott's statement won him considerable respect, and as Constable wrote, "The prevailing opinion is that L. is now completely in the mire." Croker's private opinion as expressed in a letter to Sir Walter Scott, is just the reverse, "Lockhart has not been even perill'd and his rascal antagonist is rolled in the mire." Sir Walter was calling the same gentleman "a dish of skimm'd milk...everyway below contempt," a "blackguard" and a "shirker."

On the 27th January Lockhart made Scott the obvious reply by preparing a counter statement, concluding with a denial that he was Blackwood's editor, and a note, "The first copy of this statement was sent to Mr Scott." He accordingly despatched it with a letter to Scott announcing that he was returning to Scotland in twenty-four hours, which in due course he did. There the affair should have concluded. But during these twenty-four hours occurred a trifling event that showed fate was not yet finished with John Scott. On the 28th Lockhart called on the editor of the *New Times*, who was publishing the statement, and at his suggestion, Lockhart added a paragraph for the enlightenment of the public, denying that he "derived, or ever did derive, any emolument from the management" of Blackwood's. It was a little odd that Lockhart was now willing to tell the public what he withheld from Scott himself, but no one noticed the real and damaging
consequence of this addition to the statement.

Next morning, the 29th, the statement duly appeared in the *New Times* while Lockhart was whirling along in the north-bound coach. Two days later, Scott still ignorant of the contents of the *New Times*, was preparing a second statement to the effect that he was not shirking a meeting, that he had even modified his original demand and now wanted Lockhart merely to disavow the editorship. He repeated his original charge, that Lockhart's affidavit in the Leslie case was mendacious or at least quibbling; a disavowal now would have cost Lockhart only a word, "but he chose to withhold it on a point of mere punctilio! Has he been always equally scrupulous?" Before he had time to publish this new document, Scott's attention was drawn to the *New Times*, and on the 2nd February he issued his second statement with a note pointing out the extra-ordinary difference between Lockhart's statement as received by him and as published. He makes the natural deduction that this is another Blackwood's attempt to mislead the public; if Lockhart's disavowal as published had been sent to him, he would automatically have given Lockhart satisfaction.

On seeing this new turn of events, Christie wrote to Horace Smith suggesting that if Scott would go to Edinburgh, Lockhart would still meet him. To this letter Smith made no reply, and it is probable that he did not communicate it to Scott. Three days later, therefore, on the 8th February, Christie
published a statement explaining how the alteration was made, adding, "If after this statement Mr Scott can find any persons who believe that there was anything more atrocious than an over-sight in the circumstance of the two statements, Mr Scott is perfectly welcome to the whole weight of their good opinion."

Sir Walter Scott, who had taken a most implacable dislike to his namesake, (whether because of the references made to himself, or because of his infatuation for his son-in-law, it is difficult to say.) happened by now to be in London on business, and suggested that Christie should send a copy of his last statement to Patmore. At the same time Sir Walter took advice about Lockhart's position, and was able to write to him, "The Duke of Wellington whom I take to be the highest military authority in the world pronounces you can have nothing more to say to... Scoundrel Scott either by publication or otherwise."

The 16th February arrived, and as Christie was soon to write to Sir Walter, Patmore called on him with a letter from John Scott "demanding an explanation of the last sentence of the paper which I had written, and a disavowal of my having intended to say anything disrespectful of Mr Scott, which disavowal was to be published." Christie of course refused and Patmore produced a challenge from Scott which was accepted.

A meeting took place that night at Chalk Farm. At the first exchange Christie fired in the air. His second "insisted aloud" that he should not throw
away his chances again. Scott called out, "What, did not Mr Christie fire at me?" If Patmore had known more about duelling, he would have known that Christie's action closed the duel, but in his ignorance he made the grim reply; "You must not speak, you have nothing for it now but firing." At the second exchange, Scott fell.

For the two central figures, honest, blundering John Scott and Christie, with a "sleeveless quarrel fix'd on him", one has nothing but pity. But in the background lurk some questionable figures; Sir Walter Scott and Croker jeering and egging on the principals, Lockhart with his face-saving punctilios, Blackwood who sat quietly at home and did nothing when a word from him would have cut the whole tangled skein.

Of MAGINN, still "the bright", not yet "the broken" of Lockhart's bitter-sweet epitaph, it is not necessary to say much as a critic. He would not have arrogated the title to himself. He was first and foremost a gentleman of the press. We do not know his exact share in the Cockney School affair, but he certainly had a hand in it and wrote the doggerel lines on Lamia and the review of Adonais, which certainly betray his coarseness of mind just as clearly as his parody of Christabel in the form of a third part in which it is supposed that Geraldine is a man in disguise and that she has raped Christabel, whose pregnant appearance is repeatedly described. This by
the way was the man who blamed Keats for writing indecently.

Yet as a character Maginn comes out better than the other Blackwood men. When the London Magazine accused Lockhart of perjury in the Leslie case, Maginn sent Blackwood's a letter taking the blame on himself. Again it was he who saved Wilson's face when his fellow-countryman, Martin was breathing fire and slaughter. At one point of the episode he offered to accuse himself of writing the offending article, but that did not prove to be necessary. There was in all this a bold recklessness, a downrightness that contrasted favourably with the methods of the other two.

Frequent reference has been made in previous chapters to his article, An Hour's Tete-a-Tete with the Public, of which some account is perhaps needed. To grasp the full extent of his achievement, it must be remembered that when this was written Maginn was still an anonymous Irish correspondent, a total stranger to the gossip of Blackwood's shop or the business secrets of the magazine. The first of his confidences to the public is therefore "Our Sale is Prodigious." Things did not go too well at first. "Our first six numbers were but so-so.... The Chaldee Manuscript...gave us both a lift and a shove." In fact it gained for the Magazine "about 4,000 additional subscribers." Since then "our sale has been progressive. Positively we have barely face to whisper the
amount... SOMEWHERE BELOW 17000!" He was strictly truthful, it was about 6,000. He gives a table of the sales of rival magazines; where possible the actual sale has been bracketed after his estimate:—

Quarterly Review 14,000 (12,000)
London Magazine 1,100 (3,000)
Scots Magazine: 100—150 (?1,000)
Edinburgh Review 7,000 (12,000)
British Critic 4,000
British Review 400
Gentleman's Magazine 4,000.

Maginn goes on to state the case against the Edinburgh Review, that it is sceptical in religion, cowardly in foreign politics, factious in domestic, that its criticism shows "a lamentable ignorance of the true principles of poetry" and has done "more than all the other critics of the age, to blind men's eyes, and deaden men's hearts to the genuine works of imagination," and that "it was the first, to set an example of that insolent and reckless personality which has since become a leading feature of almost all periodical works but our own." He has a word in passing for the Lake School. "To us exclusively belongs the merit of obliging the people of Scotland to read Wordsworth. We have made him popular here, in spite of the Edinburgh Review."

Lastly Maginn answers the accusation that the Magazine is impertinent and slanderous: "Pray, what private gentleman have we dragged before the
public, and what particulars of his domestic hours have we been graciously pleased to lay before the world?... Is there a single author in Great Britain who wishes to be considered as a private gentleman? If so...we pledge our word of honour, that we shall never mention his name again while we breathe."

Even such a skeleton as the above outline gives some insight into the mixture of fun, impudence, and blarney that made up Maginn.

HUNT and HAZLITT have too great a place of their own in literature to be squeezed into the narrow bounds of this chapter. It is sufficient merely to underline their importance in the history of journalism. For our purposes they mark the first coincidence of left-wing opinions in politics and literature. Jeffrey's literary code had been reactionary, the Blackwood group had shown a certain sympathy for Shelley but politically could make no contact with the advanced writers of the day. In Hunt and Hazlitt we find for the first time radical critics who are abreast of the latest literary movement. Between them and Keats, Shelley, and Byron there was the contact and flow of shared interests, ideas, enthusiasms. In politics their opinions harmonised, although they did not coincide with each other. In their literary thought there was a complete understanding and appreciation of the poet's aims and methods. For Byron perhaps this did not matter so much, but for the
encouragement and reputation of Keats and Shelley, the existence of such a team as Hazlitt and Hunt was of inestimable value.

The novelty of the mode of criticism adopted by these two writers has already been indicated. We have given it the label, romantic, as its vital principle was that the critic should convey the impression of the work criticised, as opposed to the classic, which judged by an abstract, static code. It was a method closely allied in spirit to the work of Hunt's and Hazlitt's fellow-poets. Yet these two were hardly initiators, the way had been indicated by Lamb in his Dramatic Specimens, and on a wider canvas by Coleridge in his lectures on Shakespeare's plays. But it was still something new in journalism, and like most novelties, it was not long before it was imitated. It was to some extent adopted even by Wilson and Jeffrey, and became the standard method of the London Magazines. In numerous other places too, the genial influence of the style made itself felt.

Parallel examples of the classical and romantic styles will show clearly the essential differences between them. Speaking of the style of Endymion Jeffrey says: "It seems as if the author had ventured every thing that occurred to him in the shape of a glittering image or a striking expression — taken the first word that presented itself to make up a rhyme, and then made that word the germ of a new
cluster of images... till he had covered his pages with an interminable arabesque of connected and incongruous figures."

On the same subject the writer in the London Magazine declares, "It is not a poem at all. It is an ecstatic dream of poetry - a flush - a fever - a burning light - an involuntary out-pouring of the spirit of poetry - that will not be controlled.... a glittering and fantastic temple, where we may wander about and delighted lose ourselves."

These two passages express almost the same thought, a delighted appreciation of Keats's pleasant meandering style, with yet an implication that it is not perfect. Yet Jeffrey's is an actual objective analysis of Keats's method. The other is an emotional expression of the effect of the poet's style on the reader. The fundamental approach of the romantic style is different from that of the classical style, and other differences follow as a consequence. The romantic style is probably the more interesting to read and can be given a superficial attractiveness. At its best it deserves to be called creative criticism, and has an aesthetic value independent of the work criticised. But that value is secondary to the interpretative power of the great romantic critics. Hazlitt and Coleridge can do more than judge; they can open to us more fully the inner heart of the beauty they perceive. On the other hand, being an intensely personal style, romantic criticism has its dangers.
It may become esoteric, and in certain fields to-day we have seen esoteric art so esoterically criticised that few outside the family circle can tell what they are all talking about. It may become superficial - the method of the delighted gasp, for examples of which the reader can look here and there in this volume, or in the columns of the daily press hailing this week's genius. Or it may become whimsical, the fruit of the mood or fancy of the moment, as Christopher North so often made it.