THE FAIRNESS OF BYRON'S JUDGMENTS

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(His Attitude to his own Time
and his Influence in Europe.)

By

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PREFACE

This thesis attempts to review the general characteristics of Byron's work and to estimate his influence not only in his own country but in Europe. It discusses briefly the place of Byron's theories, social, political and artistic, in our day, and tries to show that time has proved the wisdom of many of his ideas and principles.

C O N T E N T S

INTRODUCTION

One hundred and thirteen years have passed since Byron died and one hundred and twenty years since he reached the height of his contemporary fame. In 1834 the young Alfred Tennyson, then fifteen years old, carved on a yew tree in his father's garden: "Byron is dead". It is probably very difficult for any one living in this day and age to understand more than half dimly the feelings at the moment of England's future Poet Laureate. But the effect on the boy Tennyson, although no doubt heightened by his own sensitive and poetic nature, was the very general effect throughout England. By dying in Missolonghi, Byron in consequence of his gallant gesture in behalf of Greek freedom, had at a stroke dispelled the obloquy which had clouded his name and had become something of a great national hero. At least for the moment, and for literary classes. But the

perspective wrought by time not infrequently puts an object into a light very different from that which first shone upon it. And time itself by its passage makes possible clarity in vision and dispassion in judgment. Despite the efforts of more than one critical writer to establish Byron as a great poet, very few unprejudiced ones can see him in that role. And despite the even greater efforts on the part of many to disparage Byron's poetry because of the irregularities of his life, we must now admit his work is not to be judged by his amours. Both in his life and in his work Byron is, in the main, viewed clearly today and judged dispassionately. There appears to be an increasing interest in Byron. Today it is as if the fire of the living man that so consumed those who came in contact with him and finally consumed him also, had somewhere endured down the years.

A great deal of Byron's subject matter is obsolete, and many of his ideas no longer interest us,

there is nevertheless in his work much that is of perennial interest. His liveliness, his frank directness, his intellectual dauntlessness, his wholesome contempt for social and artistic and political futility, his reckless valiancy of spirit, his hatred of shams,- all these traits will always be educative. They will always cry rebuke to the treachery and hypocrisy of our own time as well as to the putterers and patchers of poetry. Let us in the chapters that follow glance briefly at the qualities of his work that are most significant in our time.

Byron's Attitude to his Time

> Whate'er
> I may have been, or am, doth rest between
> Heaven and myself. I shall not choose a mortal
> To be my mediator.....

So said Byron, but his wish, as he knew it would be, was vain. Byron has been the subject of more controversy than almost any other poet in the language. So much has been written about him that it is almost impossible to throw fresh light on any partion of his life or work in an essay of this kind. I content myself, therefore, with presenting my personal impressions of Byron and his opinion of England.

Born in a time of changes, Byron came to maturity when it seemed as though those changes had been rendered futile, little remaining of them save memories. A man doomed by hereditary influences and by his early upbringing to be the slave of passion and emotion, (1) he was one to whom restraint was an incentive to rebellion. Impulse ruled unchecked in his life, and his own accounts tell of the way in which the passion of the hour often swept his mind like a tempest.

An aristocrat by birth, intellectually powerful, and noted for his remarkable physical beauty, Byron in his late

1. "Byron was not 'le fanfaron de vices qu'il n'avait pas,' but his passionate, uncontrolled, not altogether sane temperament (there was a strain of madness in his ancestral lines, Byrons, Duffs, Gordons,) drove him into vices which were not the deliberate choice of his soul." H.J.C.Guerson, "Byron and English Society" in the Nottingham lectures("Byron the Poet" ed. by W.A.Briscoe, pub. by Routledge and Sons London 1924).

youth was flattered by the society in which he moved by right. He had something more, however, than the usual education of the liberally-minded Harrow boy. Though the darling of the drawingrooms when scarcely out of his teens, he had steeped himself in the spirit of the French Revolution, to which he was linked by inclination and sympathy. Rebellion was life to him.(1)

As he reached maturity, he saw all that he had thought fair and free crushed unde r the reactionary policies of the Holy Alliance and the Restoration. The days of the old search for happiness seemed gone, and in his rage Byron roused himself to protest. Essentially a man of action, and trained by birth and inclination to lead and not to follow, Byron found himself alone and helpless before the stiff, conservative England that was yet the most Liberal country of Europe. Unable by the passing of the ages to draw his sword as he would have liked,(2) Byron grasped his pen and wrote. Before him the future frowned darkly. Looking back a short decade, extinction, or at least suppression of his ideals,

(1) "His work is the literature of revolt, and for the most part of unwise and unsuccessful revolt.. But even in his moments of utter perversity, when eager to maintain his affected pose as the most startlingly, sensationally, picturesquely wicked Englishman, he passed in an instant to strains of surpassing sweetness when he thought of his daughter or sister, to pictures of feminine charm and beauty and grace."

met his eyes. Around him...he saw an England overwhelmed with a self-complacency that was in the main to last until the emancipation of the middle classes in 1832. Intellectually and socially his country-men were snobs; society seemed rotten. This state of affairs Byron accepted, dissatisfied, but yet unquestioning.

In time, however, a vast feeling of repulsion arose in him, and contempt and scorn for the idolatry and lip-service on which the hypocrites around him set such store. The blind acceptance of tradition and convention disgusted him, and he sought in vain for a breath of true feeling.

"Apart he stalked in joyless reverie,
And from his native land resolved to go."(1)

He turned to Europe. He saw Liberalism crushed everywhere on the continent. Nowhere, not even in Greece, its ancient home, did he find the spiritual life he craved, but only a degraded present to match a glorious past.

Cont'd. from previous page (1) Whitelaw Reid, (Hon.) in the Nottingham Lectures, "The Fame of Byron". W.A. Briscoe, 1924.
(2) And I will war, at least in words (and should
my chance so happen deeds) with all who war
With Thought: and of Thought's foes by far most rude
Tyrants and syncophants have been and are...
.. My plain sworn downright detestation
Of every despotism in every nation."

(1) - this page - All his life he was a prey to melancholy, as Lady Byron pointed out: "And if I laugh at any mortal thing,
'Tis that I may not weep."

A man to whom action was life,(1) he would not sit still and see society plunging itself upon its virtues. He burst into abuse and satire. Creature of impulse that he was, he scorned to dwell on constructive programmes. "He made himself the mouthpiece of the dumb revolutionary indignation which was seething in the hearts of the best friends and lovers of liberty in Europe." (2) Wildly, untiringly, he slashed at cant, hypocrisy, intolerance. Reflection he scorned. "When Byron reflects, he is a child," said Goethe.

His violence and ill-taste, and his openess in immoral affairs, gave his enemies excuse to change his popularity into public resentment, and finally to drive him in disgust from the country. But he never wavered in his self-imposed struggle. He honestly felt and frankly expressed his contempt for artistic and social futility, and he hurled scorn at those who calmly "see hope collapse in the clash of humanity and who fail to take the indications of the time seriously."

(1) "My whole life was a contest since the day
That gave me being....." (To Augusta Leigh)

(2) G. Brandes

Stung by their behaviour,(1) sensitive almost to insanity, Byron determined to shock the English out of their complacent hypocrisy. In answer he found widespread and often exaggerated or false accounts of his lapses from the strictest codes of living, and condemnation of all his work on account of personal faults. This indignant wave of morality sickened him still more with the sham he now continually exposed.

To give the impression, however, that Byron emerged from the comparative obscurity of his lonely and unhappy childhood into the full-fledged champion of reform is entirely false. He can by no means be considered solely as a reforming angel. A vain side to his character was highly important in his life. He aspired to be the poet of his time, and, for a brief space, he was accorded the almost fulsome praise he craved. For three full, heady years, commencing in 1812,(2) Byron - spoilt from his cradle - knew the idolatry of society.

(1) "The world treated Byron as his mother had treated him; sometimes with fondness, sometimes with cruelty, never with real justice." Lord Macaulay in his essay on Moore's Life of Byron.

(2) "I awoke one morning and found myself famous."

Discussing the poet of this time, Quiller-Couch once remarked, (1) "Byron in the language of the day was the 'rage', and he fed it lavishly...all the while with an irritable care which vanity taught vanity to conceal."

As the same authority goes on to say, "Byron was noble of nature, at bottom fiercely proud and courageous, but spoilt in childhood, and so sensitive to the world's opinion that, the world flattering him for an idol, he returned the compliment by making the world his god." But the god he chose was vicious, hateful, false, yet rejoicing in its smug godliness. Suddenly, on a monstrous charge which has never been completely proced, his world crumbled away under the feet of Byron, and thereby proved its insincerity. "The buzz of adulation turned to a bray of hate'. As Macaulay puts it, "the very society which had worshipped him with an irrational idolatry now persecuted him with an irrational fury. The British public was in one of its fits of morality... and demanded a scapegoat." "Like a slash from a surgeon's knife," says Quiller-Couch, "the stroke fell, cutting through affected or practised falsities to the truth at the kernel of the man. This was in the early months of 1816.

(1) Sir A. Quiller-Couch in the Nottingham Lectures. (Byron the Poet, by J.A. Briscoe) Routledge & Sons, 1924.

The age, Macaulay noted, set about "smashing its idol in characteristic British fashion, assailing not the poetry he had written up to 1816, but the man for having been wicked in a wicked age, and this although his wickedness was half a parade of perverse vanity."(1) From this time on, Byron became most definitely the deadliest denouncer of that orthodoxy which is, with many, a lie to the soul.

A common opinion holds that this personal reverse is all that impelled Byron to his rebellion. Undoubtedly it was largely by reason of his rejection that through torment and bitterness he attained to know the heavenly powers. But to ascribe all his scathing denounciations to wounded self-love is a statement of which the absurdity should be patent to all. After 1816, he produced practically everything of his that will live; after 1816 he never swerved from the narrowness of sincerity; all this is true. But is that an argument supporting the theory that injured vanity inspired him? It is simply a proof that his eyes were at

(1) "This strange, perverse pleasure which he felt in painting himself unanimously to the world did not prevent him from being both startled and pained when the world took him at his word." Strahan (J.A.) Ed.R. 234, 331-45, Oct. '21.

last opened wide.(1) To me, Byron, the patriot, made bitter and cynical by the disappointment and disillusionment of Byron the man, worked as he died, not for himself alone.

This is no place for a lengthy discussion of the question, "Was Byron a patriot?" I am convinced that he was. Love of England was always his; it was England's parasitic upper and middle classes that roused his ire. He certainly had no reason to hate England before his fall as a public idol in 1816, and after that date, his letters and work prove that his thoughts were never far from "home". "Byron was an Englishman - with Scots' blood in his veins - and he never forgot it. His eyes were ever on England. Whatever part he played, in anticipation or actually, on the stage of Italian or Greek politics, the first thought in his mind was of the impression the new <u>role</u> would make upon his countrymen." (2)

During his years on the Continent he was always on the "qui vive" for news from England, and a sight of friendly English faces, while his journals are full of reference to

(1) He had, of course, rebelled before this. He had always revolted, but before 1816 his sincerity can be doubted. "If the alterations you desire have nothing to do with politics or religion, I will make them with great readiness. Letter to John Murray in 1813.
(2)Grierson (H.J.C.) Byron and English Society. Nottingham Lectures of Briscoe.

his hopes of an English future. There are, of course, dozens of his letters extant in which he refused the pleas of such good friends as Hobhouse and Kinnaird to come back in language that plainly shows that he was heartily sick of the very name of England. But there are others, many of them written within a few weeks of his most vehement refusals, telling of the time when he "will come back in the spring, perhaps, and democratize." He announces that if he never sees England again, he will be content, but in perhaps the next letter he promises to come back if the attraction is sufficiently great.

There can be no doubt, I think, that Byron loved England. This is admitted by several writers, who say that it was homesickness, and not the loftier patriotism that moved Byron to hesitate about his permanent self-banishment. Undoubtedly there is an element of truth in this theory. But a letter that Byron published in a Venetian newspaper in 1817 contains the following passage, "It is asserted that I do not love my country; excuse me, I love it well enough to smile at such an imputation, and to look back at my every vote which I have given in her Parliament as a refutation of the charge." I think he meant what he said here. In so far as I know, this claim of his concerning his actions in the Lords has never

been ridiculed. He had not been prominent in that body, as he made, (so he says in a letter) only three speeches, one being in support of Catholic Emancipation, and another giving a sympathetic view of the case of several Luddites from Nottinghamshire.

Although acutely sensitively aware of his unpopularity during the last seven or eight years of his life, Byron kept pouring out satire and scorn on the evils of England. For most of these years he was in difficult financial straits, and Murray, his publisher, wrote again and again to impress upon him that he dared not bring out poems that were too severe in tone. Byron could have made much-needed money by writing in his old thrilling way on less unpopular subjects than the ridicule he hurled at the whole aristocracy of a nation. But he preferred to complete his task, which was to arraign the wickedness before which he saw men fawning - wickedness in high places. This is a point too often overlooked.

A patriot is one who fights for his country and his countrymen. The greatest cosmopolitan of his age fought for

Liberalism - fought and died sincerely. The fact that he died for Greece does not alter the fact that he died for England as well. "That man's the best cosmopolite who loves his native country best." The England of his time would not agree - no one would then have dared to suggest that most of the Byronic inspiration and indignation was due to a real love of country. For England, seeing him solely as something unclean, to be avoided and ignored, refused him,living, a home and, dead, the burial privileges he had earned. Whether the English judgment of his morality was fair is neither here nor there. Byron was at times immoral. He was not always good; he was certainly never wholly bad. (1) He painted England as he saw it, or as he thought he saw it. No deep philosopher, he gave his picture of the life he knew to his cost. "How I do delight in observing life as it really is," he once wrote in his journal, and he says the same in many letters.

(1) "Byron was often whimsical, unreasonable, ungenerous; sometimes revengeful; he was violent, impatient. But he was capable of fine magnanimity; he was clear sighted and strong." J.F.A. Pyre. "B. in our day." Atlantic '99. "He was born with certain noble qualities which never failed him at his worst. He was courageous and kind, and he loved truth rather than lies." Coleridge. He never lost his compassion for those in need of it. It can be said that 'Byron loved his sister. Byron loved his dog. Byron loved and was able to inspire love in the humble persons who devoted their lives to his service.' He was a hero to his valet. This proves the nobility of at least one side of his extraordinary character. And..his friends and intimate associates were ready to to to any extent in his service.

"You talk of refinement: - Are you all more moral? Are you so moral? No such thing," said Byron in 1820 to Murray. "I know what the world is in England, by my own proper experience of it - .. and I have described it everywhere as it is to be found in all places." And in the following year, he exclaimed to Hoppner, "...After all, what is the higher society of England? According to my own experience, and to all that I have seen and heard, (and I have lived there in the very highest, and what is called the best) no way of life can be more corrupt... In England, the only homage they pay to virtue is hypocrisy." And in an attempt to be fair, he adds, "I speak, of course, of the tone of high life - the middle classes may be very virtuous."

Byron, naturally, was rather prone to see the worst of the life he was attacking; this was always a fault of his. But before continuing the discussion of his personal opinions, I think it only fair to prove that his were not entirely the eyes of a disillusioned cynic. The world of his days was in a state of chaos. After the decline of the Napoleonic menace, continental nationsl were manoeuvring through countless changes into something not unlike Europe before 1914. But this, as

Byron saw to his disgust, was not the case in Great Britain. "England was not merely standing still; she had turned resolutely backward. An arrogant, dissolute (1) aristocracy governed the country in the best manner of the old century. Society was intolerant and complacent. It was the age of the wit, the dandy, the profligate, the prizefighter."(2)

The condition of aristocratic society during Byron's lifetime can best be described as deplorable. When he exclaimed in the preface of "Don Juan," "Cant is the crying sin of this double-dealing and false speaking time of selfish spoilers," he was not elaborating upon the truth. "Decorum(3) and debauchery, moral hypocrisy support an oligarchy which ravages Europe, preys on Ireland and excites the people by use of the grand words, Virtue, liberty, Christianity."

England thought it was fighting for morality and liberty. Byron laughed, for was not this rotten society calmly "making phrases and killing men to preserve its sinecures

(1) The first three houses of the great aristocracy to welcome Byron were Devonshire House, Holland House, and Melbourne House. The heads and many of the inhabitants, of all three had been connected with such scandals that today they would be ostracized. And yet they led society.
(2) Byron's Centenary, by H.N. Jones in the Yale Review of 1924.
(3) He of course meant "false decorum" not that of Milton.

and rotten-boroughs?" Sir George Trevelyan has drawn a strong picture of the advantages (moral considerations apart) of being an aristocrat in the time of Fox, a few years before. In Byron's time, the conditions were certainly no better, but a hopeful sign was that frankness had been replaced by hypocrisy. People were paying some attention, very slight, it is true, to the rising public-opinion. The morals of English high society were practically those of the Restoration less flagrantly paraded. Trevelyan remarks, "A peculiarity of the period... was that men of age and standing, of strong mental powers and refined cultivation, lived openly, shamelessly and habitually in the face of all England, as no one with any care for his reputation would now live during a single fortnight of the year at Monaco." Aristocrats were privileged not only to indulge their vices but to make a parade of the indulgence. And again, "gambling was then rather a profession than a pastime, to the leaders of the London world," while no one "can study the public or personal history of the period without being impressed by the truly immence space which drinking occupied in the....lives of the time."

Mazzini vigorously remarks of the period, "Byron appears between epochs, in a community based upon an aristocracy which has outlived the vigour of its prime, in a Europe containing nothing grand, except of the kind of Napoleon and Pitt. Worship of great thoughts has passed away. That which IS raises the banner of corpse-like tradition: that which WOULD BE hoists the standard of physical wants." Allowing for Southern impetuosity, it is possible to see that his rather extreme view of society really coincides with those of the majority of Byronic writers. Similar comments concerning the fundamental unworthiness of English upper-class life could be continued almost indefinitely. Let it suffice to say that these opinions are generally accepted by most modern authorities.

Byron was at war with the society which had flattered, caressed and cast him out, at war with his country's political sentiment, for Waterloo(1) seemed to him to mark the triumph of reaction, at war with the creed by help of which he saw his own wrong-doing and its significance.

(1)"After Waterloo every hope of a republic is over, and we must go under the old system. But I am sick at heart of politics and slaughters." A letter to John Murray in 1815.

There were two great forces which dominated English life in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; aristocratic society, its ideals, policy, privileges; and the pietistic Evangelical Christianity which, quickened by the Wesleys, had become the inspiring religious influence within and without the Established Church.

A discussion of Byron's religious beliefs is a subject that cannot be adequately treated in a few pages, and I propose to consider chiefly his comments on English life and the politics that are inextricably mingled with it. But it must be clearly understood that Byron's conflict with England was at once with aristocratic society and with the one religious power, which, like himself, judged and condemned that society. His fight was with the impure upper classes and at the same time with evangelical, middleclass, religious sentiment, the union of which had driven him into exile.(1)

By his spirit of sceptical irony, Byron aided the cause of intellectual emancipation and brought the thought of liberty once more to the minds of men. In his poetry, he

(1) "The cruelty and envy of the people,
Permitted by our dastard nobles who
Have all forsook me, hath devoured the rest
And suffered me by the voice of slaves to be
Whooped out of Rome...."

combatted aristocratic prejudices by investing with the most brilliant qualities of the despot the heroes whom he finally dashed to destruction.

In one of his letters, the poet explains his method. "I take a vicious and unprincipled character, and lead him through those ranks of society whose external accomplishments cover and conceal internal and secret vices, and I point the natural effects of such characters; and certainly they are not so highly coloured as we find them in real life. It is impossible you can believe the higher classes of society worse than they are in England, France and Italy, for no language can sufficiently paint them." "And as...

> You hardly will believe such things were true
> As now occur, I thought that I would pen you 'em.
> But may their very memory perish too;-
> Yet, if perchance remembered, still disdain you 'em
> More than you score the savages of yore,
> Who paint their bare limbs but not with gore."

The hypocrisy and complacent satisfaction of the wicked always enraged Byron, "Don Juan will be known by and by for what it is intended - a <u>satire on abuses</u> of the present state of society, and not an eulogy of vice. It may now and then be voluptuous. I can't help that. Ariosto is worse...Smollett ten times

worse, and Fielding no better." In another letter he continues on the same line, "If the objection to Don Juan be to the indecency, the age which applauds the 'Bath Guide' and Little's Poems and reads Fielding and Smollett still may bear with that. I will not give way to all the cant of Christendom. I have been cloyed with applause and sickened with abuse...As to the prudery of the day, what is it? Are we more moral than when Prior wrote? Is there anything in Don Juan so strong as in Ariosto or Voltaire or Chaucer?"

After his exile Byron had no fear lest he offend public opinion. Rather he sought to arouse it. He wrote gleefully to Hobhouse in 1818 that the references in the first canto of Don Juan to the "damned cant and Toryism of the day may make Murray pause," and he sneered to Kinnaird, "As to the cant of the day, I despise it, as I have ever done all its other finical fashions, which become you as paint became the ancient Briton." To Murray, at a later date, he exclaimed, "Don't answer me with any more damn preaching about public opinion. (In connection with Don Juan) I never flattered that, and I never will, and when the public leave off reading what I write...I shall respect it more than ever I did yet."

Often he referred to his contempt of people's opinion of him, and he was sincere. But this was not always the case. (1) In his earlt years, the scoffing reception accorded his first poems touched him to the heart, and, later, he loved the deference which Society paid him up to 1816. After that date, he cared little what the public thought of him, although it seems likely, as I have already pointed out, that had he been assured of a cordial reception, he would have returned to England. But he was convinced that his personal unpopularity was permanent and wide-spread, and in his work he flayed public opinion fiercely. But the driving impulse (apart from the financial inducements) was sincerity and not personal pique. In England he saw

> "...truth a gem which loves the deep
> And all things weighed in custom's falsest scale;
> Opinion an omnipotence, whose veil
> Mantles the earth with darkness until right
> And wrong are accidents, and men grow pale
> Lest their own judgments should become too bright,
> And their free thoughts be crimes and earth have
> too much light."

(1) However, it is only fair to say that in his private journal of 1813 he wrote, "If I valued fame, I should flatter received opinions, which have gathered strength by time, and will wear yet longer than any living words to the contrary. But, for the soul of me, I cannot and will not give the lie to my own thoughts and doubts, come what may." It is true that about this time he offended many accepted conventions and customs, but he liked posing as a noble iconaclast. After his exile, I think he was entirely sincere; before that his sincerity was tempered by the fact he had a reputation for "startling." I say this after considering the evidence of his letters to intimate friends, to whom he would be likely to show his feelings, and whose deception would profit him nothing.

To correct the abuses of society and to show his lack of respect for it, Byron pinned his faith on satire. His picture of the modern gentleman preying upon Society is famous.

"He was the mildest-mannered man
That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat,
With such true breeding of a gentleman
You never could vidine his real thought.
No courtier could, and scarcely woman can
Gird more deceit within a petticoat.
Pity he loved adventurous life's variety,
He was so great a loss to good society."

Byron realized the hollowness and worthlessness of the social life of London. The Opera is the target of one of his well-aimed arrows of sarcasm. "Hence the pert shop-keeper, whose throbbing ear

Aches with orchestras which he pays to hear,

Whom shame, not sympathy, forbids to snore,
His anguish doubled by his own "encore."
Squeezed in "Fop's Alley," jostled by the beaux,
Teased with his hat and trembling for his toes,
Scarce wrestles through the night, nor tastes of ease
Till the dropp'd curtain gives a glad release;
Why this, and more, he suffers, can ye guess?-
Because it costs him dear, and makes him dress."

An interesting entry in his journal, showing what he thought of "high life" runs, "Last night, party at L's. Tonight, party at Lady C'..deplorable waste of time...Nothing imparted, nothing acquired...talking about ideas. And in this way, half London pass what is called life." In a previous note is a sneer at the utter hypocrisy around him. He wrote how both "the sheep and the goats may be seen in boxes at the Opera, while only sheep may enter Carleton and other houses," yet both sheep and goats are essentially rotten morally.

As Nichol once said, "The best in Byron is his naked cry for sincerity in an insincere and brutal time." And nowhere is this better seen than in his political opinions. Though they were ill-defined, he had definite ideas about politics.(1) Intolerance and oppression he always opposed. But he could never join any political party in England. Even when taking his seat in the Lords, he made this clear. "I am and have been for 'reform' always, but not for the 'reformers.'"

(1) "Amid the inconsistencies of his political sentiment, he had been consistent in so much love of liberty as led him to denounce oppression, even when he had no great faith in the oppressed." Nichol

This sentiment in one letter could be duplicated from fifty others. Byron, a whole-hearted, aristocratic lover of freedom, was never forgetful of his birth.

"...I wish to be free
As much from mobs as kings, from you as me."

He was not at all satisfied with the government of England. As he wrote in a bitter moment to Kinnaird in 1830, "If I did not abhor your Tory country to a degree of detestation ...I would have gone among you....but I prefer anything almost to making one of such a people as your present government has made of the present English." In 1813 he had said that he "had simplified his politics into an utter detestation of all existing governments," and, although youthful impetuosity was then at its peak, he kept these rebellious sentiments all his life. In the days of the Holy Alliance, all governments were detestable.

He considered Parliament, as it then was, unsuited to the needs of the country. "Pitt's exchequership at 23 had been the ruin, not only of his country, but of all its coxcombs; they want to be premiers at five-and-twenty, and the country is ruled accordingly."(1) In a serious letter to Hobhouse, written in October 1821, he states, "Your infamous government will drive honest men into the necessity of reversing it. I see nothing left for it but a republic. Come it must (2)

(1) See next page
(2) " " "

(1) In a poem written to amuse Lord Holland there is a picture of the Lords with the sentiments of Byron's more serious moments.

"The Devil got next to Westminster
And he turn'd to the "room" of the Commons.
But he heard, as he purposed to enter in there,
That the 'Lords' had received a summond,
And he thought, as a 'quondam aristocrat,'
He might peep at the peers, though to hear them was flat,
And he walk'd up the house, so like one of our own
That they say that he stood pretty near to the throne.
He saw the Lord Liverpool seemingly wise,
The Lord Westmoreland certainly silly,
And Johnny of Norfolk- a man of some sixe -
And Chatham, so like his friend Billy.
And he saw the tears in Lord Eldon's eyes
Because the Catholics would not rise
In spite of his prayers and his prophecies.
And he heard - which set Satan himself a-staring -
A certain Chief Justice say something like swearing,
And the devil was Shock'd, and - quoth he - I must go
For I find we have much better manners below.
If thus he harangues when he passes my border,
I shall hint to friend Moloch to call him to order.

(2) Byron once said, "A thousand years scarce serve to form a state: an hour may lay it in the dust."

In discussing Byron's religious opinions, it is difficult to avoid entanglement in the web of theological arguments which have no place in this paper. It has been said that Byron was opposed to religion. This, and similar nonsense, always aroused genuine indignation in the poet. He once wrote -

> "They accuse me - ME - the present writer
> Of the present poem - of - I know not what -
> A tendency to underrate and scoff
> At human power and virtue and all that;
> And this they say in language rather rough;
> Good God! I wonder what they would be at.
> I say no more than hath been said in Dante's
> Verse, and by Solomon, and by Cervantes..."

As he said, "I am no enemy to religion, but the contrary. I am educating my daughter(1) a strict Roman Catholic, for I think people can never have enough of religion if they are to have any. I incline, myself, very much towards the Catholic doctrines." I doubt, however, the depth and permanence of this inclination.'

His scoffing cynicism has convinced many of his dislike of religion. He was sceptical, but he was very lacking in the faith that "God is Love." He hurled scorn and abuse at the evils he saw in the Churches, and he refused to accept

(1) He had already taken this daughter, Allegra Biron, from Shelley's care lest she be taught that there was no God; she had been placed in a convent for particular instruction. In fairness, I must add that Shelley had constantly advised this course.

his faith ready-made for him. But he was never an opponent of true religion. He had a real faith in God, although he placed small value upon prayer, except for its effect upon the individual. His Bible he is known to have treasured as few men have treasured any book. He never failed to read it regularly, and he had enjoyed studying it from his early years, long before its literary value to him had become apparent. Significantly, he enjoyed the fierce turbulence of parts of the Old more than the New Testament. Byron was no tehologian (1) nòr could he plumb the depths of the human soul. His genius lay in bringing to light what may be called the superficial evils of life, but further he did not go.

Speaking in a religious sense, Byron had been educated by his nurse, May Gray, a narrow and ardent Calvinist. She taught him her faith, which was never to lose completely its hold on him, though in after years he wandered very far from the prescribed paths. Her early influence is evident in his statement to Kennedy, not long before he died, that "I believe in predestination, and in the depravity of the human

(1) "I feel a thousand mortal things about me,
But nothing god-like - unless it may be
The thing which you condemn, a disposition
To love and be merciful, to pardon
The folly of my species, and (that's human)
To be indulgent to my own."

heart in general and mine in particular," which seems to indicate that he had not forgotten all the doctrines of strict Calvinism.

But as he entered life, he saw that the faith of the pious middle-class circles in which he had passed his childhood days clashed with the irreligious, licentious ideals of his own order, to which he was sympathetic by reason of birth and inclination. Byron never repressed his scepticism, the sharpener of his darts, against outworn tradition. But Byron defies explanation. I do not think he ever understood himself in his attacks upon recognized religious. He was exceedingly affected and influenced by the movement he opposed to vehemently; that at least can be said.

Perhaps a clearer insight into Byron's feelings may be obtained from one of his letters, "I am no bigot to infidelity; I did not expect that, because I doubted the immortality of man, I should be charged with denying the existence of a God. It was the comparative insignificance of ourselves and our world when placed in comparison with the mighty whole, of which it is an atom, that first led me to believe that our pretensions to eternity might be over-rated. This, and early being disgusted

with a Calvinistic Scotch School where I was cudgelled to church for the first ten years of my life, afflicted me with this malady - for, after all, it is, I believe, a disease of the mind as much as other kinds of hypochondria."

"Byron fought a proud, passionate conflict with the doctrine of his childhood, of predestined guilt, and predestined sin. He vehemently denied the justice of the degree which makes man the victim of inherited passions and then condemns him as entirely responsible. The sense of sin, and the injustice of the decree which arraigns sin as guilt, form the central experiences of much of his work."(1)

Whatever his real thoughts or religion were, it is difficult to say. Generally he was by no means certain himself. But his countrymen considered him anti-religious because of his scoffs and sneers. "Byron attacked England's official faith, or at least elements of it which the Church shared in common with Calvanism, and this was too shocking for a society which found hardly more than matter for gossip in immoral connections."(2) Mazzini once confounded Byron's religious opponents by remarking, "While the Christian nations

(1)
(2) A review in the Nation, 1924.

were grudging their alms to aid the Cross against the Crescent, it was he, the pretended sceptic,..who was the first to throw fortune, genius, life at the feet of the first people that had arisen in the name of the nationality and the liberty that he loved."

In daring to dismiss Byron's European influence in a few lines, I find refuge in a summary of Gervinus. "When the policy of the Holy Alliance believed that it had arrested forever the aberration of the spirit of Revolution by the subjugation of France, then this English poet knit again the thread which a million soldiers had been called forth to sever."

And he was sincere in his efforts at reform. A man whose heart was wholly filled with scorn and hatred of his fellow creatures would never publish three or four poems every year simply to tell them so, especially when, as in Byron's case, it was to his pecuniary disadvantage. Had Byron written solely to annoy the classes he was attacking, he would have resorted almost entirely to personalities.

Lord Byron died for the cause of Liberty.

"Forgetful now, and set free forever from all faults and foes, he passed through the doorway of no ignoble death,

out of sight of love, out of hearing of hatred, out of reach of time... He was a great man, good at many things."

During Byron's sojourn in Italy he had indulged his love of "liberty" to its extreme. Determined to drink the cup of life to its dregs he had come upon the lees and found them bitter as gall. For several years he had been putting into practice his theory that may may do what he likes, where he likes and when he likes, only to find at last that man who is a most capricious creature, does not always rightly interpret his own likes and dislikes. What one likes today has lost its allure the day after. That is why it is never hard to sacrifice a supposed pleasure; it is in deciding to sacrifice that the struggle consists, and this truth Byron had never learned. Far from realising that "a man's reach should exceed his grasp," he had reached for pleasure after pleasure, sensation after sensation, only to taste the bitterness of disillusionment. It seemed that there was nothing left, when suddenly a new and glorious hope dawned on the horizon. His world-weariness, which had hitherto been the indulgence of an egoist became merged in a deeper sorrow exercised on behalf of a suffering nation; the agony of the one

became as nought compared with the agonies of the many.

Early in 1823 the Greek Committee had been formed in London, and a certain Mr. Edward Blaquiere was deputed to go to Greece for the purpose of reporting on the conditions he might find existing. Two very prominent members of the Committee, Kinnaird and Hobhouse, were Byron's bosom friends. To Hobhouse Byron wrote unofficially expressing his interest in the Greek cause, and his desire to be of service. After some misunderstanding and delay Byron was appointed representative, and as his preparations had been some months in progress, they were immediately completed. Few could know how large this outlet loomed to Byron, surfeited in mind and soul. So continually and fiercely had the sun of public disapproval beat upon his actions that even those who remained his friends could not take his new "venture" seriously. The letter which he wrote in acknowledgment of his appointment is a model of diplomacy and sound business sense, but ... "(The Committee) were not convinced. Hobhouse, for his part, doubted whether Byron would ever execute his engagements, or whether he would have the strength of character to remain there once he had

arrived...." "He did not realise that for Byron this Greek venture was the last chance; that there was really nothing else for him to do." (1)

"The last chance!" What a gift! And to how few the boon is granted! But Byron made good use of his last chance. In a letter to London treating of a proposed loan for Greece he said; "I desire the well-being of Greece and nothing else. I will do all I can to secure it." It is not only his keeping of this pledge that compels the attention of those interested in him as an individual, it is the necessity it imposed upon him for action so entirely at variance with what had formerly characterised him.

Edward Blaquiere, who had arrived in Zante, wrote advising Byron to proceed to the Ionian Islands, where he might acquaint himself fully with the facts of the situation. (From 1815 to 1863, the Ionian Islands, seven in number, were known as "the United States of the Ionian Islands." They enjoyed British protection, so that any one of them was therefore a neutral spot.)

(1) Nicolson, "Byron, the Last Journey." p.80 Ch.IV

Leaving Genoa in the July of 1823 Byron and his good ship 'Hercules' made for the Island of Cephalonia.* Impetuosity had hitherto been the keynote of his existence, and yet after his arrival in Cephalonia he was content to spend some three months gethering information which would enable him to regulate his movements.** "It would have been fatal to (his) prestige if, in a moment of impetuosity, he had cast in his lot with some particular faction. It was his fixed intention, as it was clearly his best policy, to reconcile differences and to bring the contending factions closer together."(1) "To reconcile differences" and to "bring the contending factions closer together" was surely a new role for one who had been the cause of more than one serious difference, and whose whole previous existence seemed to have been spent in splitting friends into factions. This he fully recognised:

* Cephalonia was one of the Ionian Islands.

** He later allied himself with the party in Western Greece, and took up residence in Missolonghi towards the end of the year 1823.

(1) Edgcumbe, "Byron,- the Last Phase". Ch. VIII, p.89.

"My injuries came down on those who loved me -
On those whom I best loved; I never quell'd
An enemy, save in my just defence -
But my embrace was fatal."
(Manfred, Act.II, Sc.1)

That he had formed new and stern resolves; that he hat at least begun to practise control, is known from Count Gamba's testimony to this effect; "Byron well knew that prudence had never been in the catalogue of his virtues; that he knew the necessity of such a virtue in his present situation and was determined to attain it."(1)

Byron's pen, which had been employed to curse, to bless, to flay, seemed to have lost its vituperative force. "The Island", the last poem which he wrote in Italy, is a work of softer and sadder tone; now only occasionally did he recur to "Don Juan." He must of necessity do this, for no reform is ever effected instantaneously; the customs of a life-time cannot be uprooted with one effort. It was at this time, too, that Byron met the Scotch doctor James Kennedy. Their well-known discussions on religion and immortality are interesting but cannot be said to have a place in this narrative, unless to show that Byron was practising respect

(1) Vide, Edgcombe, "Byron, the Last Phase," Ch.VI, p.65.

for the point of view of others; no semi-scoffing account of his contentious colleague came from his pen.

That Byron was consistent in some things has already been stated, and during this period, which bade fair to be one of regeneration, he was able to prove how sincere was his hatred of cruelty, inflicted on fellow-men. The horrors of war are great enough, even when the strife is between so-called "civilised" nations, but the very nameof the Turk conjures up nameless cruelties. When opportunity handed some Turkish prisoners over to Byron he at once put into the effect the dictum "Example is better than precept." . In returning these prisoners he wrote a letter to the Turkish authorities, stating that they had been treated kindly, and praying that similar treatment might be accorded to any Greeks who might fall to the Turks as spoils of war. The story of Byron's interest in a little eight-year old Turkish girl and her mother, may also be read in detail in any full account of his life.

The years were passing over him, and in dipping into the future he could see the cheerlessness and loneliness of his lot. Alas! his harvest was one of regrets,- regret for

the freedom he had abused, regret that he had ignored the responsibility which is linked hand in hand with individuality. The slippered, fire-side comfort at which he once might have scoffed, those

> ..... hopes
> Of cheerful old age and a quiet grave,
> With cross and garland over its green turf,
> And (his) grandchildren's love for epitaph.
> (Manfred, Act II, Sc.1)

could never be his. He had shut himself out from a "tame" existence, not realising that his fiery spirit might itself be tamed in time!

The Greek Committee decreed that a certain Colonel Stanhope should be allied with Byron in the work for the Greek cause. Byron would have preferred Colonel Napier, who, like himself, had travelled in Greece, and had a knowledge of the entire situation which would have been invaluable. Committees are not always capable judges of capability, and this choice of Stanhope was a poor one. The latter's conduct of affairs contrasts most unfavourably with Byron's handling of the situation. Stanhope, the military man, whom one would immediately conjure up as practical, seems to have been little more than an

exacting "faddist". He was vastly more interested in the enlightenment of the Greek intellect than in the securing of national independence. As a prelude, however, to his educational enthusiasm, he agitated for newspapers, having overlooked the fact that the majority of the people could not read! The poet, on the other hand, recognised that the first essentials were money and military organisation.** Not only was his person dedicated to the Greek cause, but his purse was likewise freely opened. Writing to Kinnaird, he speaks of having "advanced them four thousand pounds, which got the squadron to sea." The intensely practical side of of his nature is shown in the same letter. "I made them forward the deputies for the loan... In the meantime I stand paymaster and what not; and lucky it is that from the nature of the warfare and of the country the resources even of an individual can be of partial and temporary service."(1)

** Brandes has also interesting testimony to add to this effect: "Stanhope wished to open schools, Byron demanded and distributed cannon. Stanhope endeavoured, through the agency of missionaries, to introduce Protestant Christianity. Byron, who saw that this foolishness would alienate the whole Greek priesthood, would have nothing introduced but weapons and money... He had witnessed the collapse of Carbonarism when brought into contact with organised authority; hence his desire was to obtain for Greece recognition by the Great Powers. (Brandes, Main Currents of Nineteenth Century Literature, Vol. IV, Chap. XXIII, p.361.)

(1) Vide Nicolson, "The Last Journey," p.155

It is a pity that, after having been given "a last change," he was nevertheless denied the death he sought. To fall in battle, leading an enslaved people on to freedom, to give them an opportunity of making a finer and nobler use of their precious individuality than ever he had done, was Byron's ardent and expressed wish. What is practically his last poem is a prayer that this wish be granted:

"If thou regrett'st thy youth, why live?
The land of honourable death
Is here; up to the field and give
Away thy breath.

Seek out - less often sought than found -
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest."
(On this day I complete my thirty-sixth year.)

But a soldier's grave was not for him. He slept away ingloriously enough; the picture of the death-bed scene in a miserable house surrounded by a fever-swamp, is pathetic in the extreme.

BYRON'S SATIRE ON CONTEMPORARY LIFE

The epic Don Juan is a masterpiece of English poetry which gives a picture of contemporary life as Byron saw it. It deals with the politics, the religious thought, the scientific developments, and the life and socity of the upper class in city and country in the England of the early 19th century after the French revolution.

Byron holds up to the world the evils of his time along with his comments on them. It is in these comments that the real value of the poem and the satire lie. Here we get an insight into Byron's philosophy of life; we can study his ideals and evaluate his criticisms.

The satire in Don Juan is of four kinds, namely,- political, literary, social and personal. Political and social satire play a more predominant part in the poem than literary and personal; but these two last play an essential part in the whole work. Byron's peculiar qualities as a writer of political satire are of particular interest in revealing his own attitude to politics and the nature of his satire.

The first of these characteristics is his conservatism, which is apparent in many respects. He had a deep

reverence for history and tried to accommodate it to present circumstances. He saw the transciency and futility of many of the contemporary undertakings, as demonstrated, for example, in war, and felt that this was pointed out in the past. His conservatism is brought out further in his references to the older poets, especially Milton, Dryden and Pope, whom he praises. Comparing some of his contemporaries to Milton he says,

"He deign'd not to belie his soul in songs,
Nor turn his very talent to a crime;
He did not loathe the Sire to laud the Son,
But closed the tyrant-hater he begun."

Also he reverenced the old form - the heroic couplet - which he found to be perfect for his purposes. Further evidence of his conservatism is found in his distrust of the mob and its ideas. He had no illusions about the essential goodness of the knife-grinder or the essential evil of a king. He knew that they were both men and both liable to the same forces for good and evil.

A second characteristic of Byron as a political satirist is the way in which he plays off radicalism against conservatism. By temperament and feeling he was a lover of liberty and a liberal, but with Aristophanes and Swift he was a lover of the past and did not tear it up as other

radicals of his time did. So, from a cursory reading of Don Juan one would say that Byron was inconsistent and insincere. A closer study must result in a more enlightened view. Byron is evidently in an awkward position with his desire to change the present yet retain the past, especially since his views are based more on emotion than on consistent convictions. This emotion accounts for apparent insincerities which, in reality, are only mix-ups caused by his high ideal of using what is good in the past for the advantage of the present and the future.

Through a third characteristic, rhetoric, Byron is able to accomplish an almost unique end,-that of bringing beautiful peotry to a practical use. He uses his rhetoric for satirical ends by using words as Pope did to make the other man and the situation look ridiculous. But, more than this, rhetoric is one of Byron's first claims to fame, as in the passage beginning,

> "I have seen Napoleon, who seem'd quite a Jupiter,
> Shrink to a Saturn....."

and so on to the end of the Canto, a marvelous bit of rhetoric. Byron is greatly in-

debted for this power over words to his knowledge of the Old Testament.

A fourth charteristic of Byron as a political satirist is that he, like Rabelais and Erasmus, illustrates the end of an era. He saw the rise and decay of radicalism and with it the destruction of his dreams. This leads him to satirize the political machinery and the men who were responsible for the downfall of his hopes. As a result he rants against Wellington and Castlereagh who symbolized all that was corrupt for him.

Byron's attack on the narrow traits of nationalism is his fifth characteristic. Nationalism is one of his greatest inconsistencies. He contends that after Waterloo each country withdrew into itself having decided that all foreigners and foreign countries were evil. Being a cosmopolitan and primarily interested in international friendship he saw nothing but evil in nationalism and allowed himself to be blinded to its virtues. If there were evils in England so were there evils in other countries yet Byron satirizes England in particular. Over and above Byron's

grudge against England there must have been a concern for its welfare, yes, a love of the country to prompt his using the best weapon for reform that he knew, the satire, in its behalf. There is a certain inconsistency in Byron's emphasis on the nationalism in the world when he writes, in connection with the attack on Ismail,

> "'Mongst them were several Englishmen of pith
> 16 call'd Thomson, and 19 named Smith."

These men would not have been fighting in the ranks of other nations if they were as nationalistic as he claims they were in the following quotation,

> "Then there were Frenchmen, gallant, young and gay:
> But I'm too great a patriot to record
> Their Gallic names upon a glorious day."

A further characteristic is the manner in which Byron illustrates the medley nature of satire. He pours out everything that is in his mind regardless of its relevancy. It helps him in relieving his emotions but is very bad for his art. Canto <u>11</u> is the best example we have in Byron of the Roman "satura", and as good as can be found in any of the poets. He attacks with terrific onslaught the

poets of his day, passes to those beautiful lines beginning his song to Greece, "The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece! Where burning Sappho loved and sung,....." returns to the poets with biting personal references, then, leaving them again, quite naturally falls into the most beautiful passage of the whole poem,

"Ave Maria! o'er the earth and sea,
That heavenliest hour of Heaven is worthiest thee!....."

He then closes the Canto on an altogether different note,

"But I'm digressing; what on earth has Nero,
Or any such like sovereign buffoons,
To do with the transactions of my hero,
More than such madmen's fellow man - the Moon's?"

In the political characters whom Byron attacks he satirizes only those in high positions, those capable of defending themselves, such as George the Third whom he disdained for his stupidity, Castlereagh whom he hated for his sham opposition to tyranny and Wellington because he saved the world for the benefit of one class. In Byron's description of Old Lambro he introduces one especially salient - remark on the Government,

"Let not his mode of raising cash seem strange,
Although he fleeced the flags of every nation,
For into a prime minister but change
His title, and 'tis nothing but taxation."

Byron's satire is that of improvization. It is spontaneous and unpremeditated, written, one might say, as the Spirit moved him,- quite unlike the polish, deliberation and coldness of Pope. Byron himself is quite aware of this, as shown in his lines, "Irattle on exactly as I'd talk
With anybody in a ride or walk."
He does not, like Pope, give the impression of being primarily malicious, but that of being amusing. Of course this improvization is bad for his art from the point of view of art for art's sake' but if one believes that true poetry can be more than just beautiful then this improvization is valuable in revealing Byron himself and his cynical humour.

A ninth characteristic of Byron as a political satirist is that, although he did ally himself with one great national cause,-that of the freedom of Greece, he was a cosmopolitan. He was much more interested in international friendship than in national greatness. His two cosmopolitan platforms were pacificism and free trade, but they were a little shaky. Emotionally he felt the futility of war and saw how it engendered hatred yet he was not an absolute

pacifist since he was willing to fight, and did fight, when he felt a worthy end could be accomplished. His emotions demanded that he be a free trader, but his intellect could find no constructive policy for action. This reliance on inner convictions despite the lack of demonstrable proofs is an interesting and praiseworthy quality in Byron's character.

Finally, Byron is the only man in our literature who has handled that measure which is more suited to satire than any other - the eight-line measure - with success and beauty. He was convinced of its perfection and demonstrate his conviction to the world.

Byron deserves great praise for using so little personal satire. When one has enemies or friends who have been unkind and simultaneously has a gift of great satire it must be a great temptation to use it on many occasions and not in so restrained a manner as Byron succeeded in doing. However, he does make disparaging references to his wife, to contemporary poets, and to politicians, but most of these are too amusing to arouse disgust. The

references which are in bad taste are few, such as, -

"There was Miss Millpond, smooth as summer's sea,
That usual paragon, an only daughter,
Who seem'd the cream of equanimity
Till skimm'd - and then there was some milk and water."

referring to his wife; "You have your salary; wasn't for that you wrought?" referring to Southey; and "Wordsworth has his place in the Excise"; also, "The intellectual eunuch Castlereagh".

All these personal allusions refer to persons who were able to strike back, even to his wife, whose retaliation is probably more bitter and lasting than any of the other's.

As Professor Grierson says, Byron, in his social satire, attacks two main issues, "aristocratid society, its ideals, privileges and policy and that pietistic, Evangelical Christianity of the Wesleys."

Byron was himself an aristocrat and a snob, but he hated that society which took unto itself the right to outline the conventions which he must follow. He found

the origin of these conventions in superficial piety and propriety. He shows us the daily life of his social equals, their futile chatter about the weather, their idle gossip, and their empty flirtations. The picture Byron paints is done in black. It is a charge against the forts of hypocrisy and despotism, culminating in Canto XI with the encounter of Don Juan with the highwayman:

"Here are chaste wives, pure lives.....
Here laws are inviolate.....

Here - he was interrupted by a knife,
With - Damn your eyes! your money or your life!"

Byron attacks all the superficialities in society. Don Juan's first contact with "Blue Stocking" women is the most humourous bit of social satire in the poem. It is a perfect picture of the pedantry and pretentions at poetry of a certain class of women of the time for whom Byron had a righteous disgust.

He attacks the debutante and her glittering entry into society in search of a husband, which almost ruins her family. He then passes to loveless marriages, contracted either for money or just for the sake of being married;

"Without cash, Malthus tells you - "take no brides."
So Cash rules Love the ruler, on his own
High ground, as virgin Cynthia sways the tides:

> And as for "Heaven being Love," why not say honey
> Is Wax? Heaven is not Love, 'tis Matrimony."

Byron makes special reference to women in his satire, the general theme being to 'give her a looking-glass and an almond and she is happy'. He satirizes their fickleness and their vanity in biting terms, but in compensation gives one beautiful character, Haidée.

Throughout Byron's social satire he evinces a great deal of the "world sorrow" feeling of the time. His pessimism is so real, so vital, that the reader is carried with Byron into the depths of despondency. Byron's "too vivid sense of humanity" has a powerful influence, making transciency and futility the keynotes of the satire on society.

The satire is rendered even more poignant by the interjection of irresponsible flippancy. Byron carries the reader along in a serious vein making him despondent and pessimistic, and then he changes his mood, introducing an irrelevant flippant topic, making the reader blush at his own seriousness, and feel that Byron has been enjoying his low spirits. This attitude reveals Byron's own self more

than any other one thing. It shows his sensitiveness, making him want to laugh at you before you laugh at him; it is an obvious effort to hide his deepest emotions behind a mask of satire.

Finally, Byron satirizes literature, the literature of his own times as compared with that of Milton, Dryden and Pope. The poetry of Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge, or "the Lakers", as he calls them, is his main point of attack. He compares them to "A nest of tuneful persons" writing poetry to please the Regent. He says that Coleridge's explanation of Metaphysics itself needs an explanation, and that the person who could understand Wordsworth's "Excursion" could "add a story to the Tower of Babel". Thsir vagueness exasperates him; their romanticism is too unreal and too far from actual life for Byron to sympathize with their efforts. Byron's peotry is essentially personal, while "the Lakers" write impersonally.

Don Juan, as a whole, is a medley: it is humourous, satirical, and pessimistic; it is flippant and serious; it contains good peotry and bad. All these characteristics go to make up a fascinating study of the life Byron knew and

despised, and the puppets in that life whom he pitied. His satire is biting and often seems cruel, but he succeeded in rousing his contemporaries. The justification of his satire is found in his own words:

> "I've no great cause to love that spot of earth,
> Which holds what 'might have been' the noblest nation:
> But though I owe it little but my birth,
> I feel a mix'd regret and veneration
> For its decaying fame and former worth.
> Seven years (the usual term of transportation)
> Of absence lay one's old resentments level,
> When a man's country's going to the devil."

The Influence of Byron on the European Continent.

The interest taken in the works and career of Byron in Europe during the last century has no parallel in the history of English literature. He has been spoiled with praise and at the same time held up to ridicule. Some English critics have been unable to get away from the moral problem of Byron, and he is continually reproached by them. Other critics read only a select number of his poems and immediately pronounce him the greatest genius of lyric poetry. At one time stifling him with caresses, at another time insulting his deformity, his mother "alternately petted and abused him". Literary critics have treated him similarly. By many he has been praised undeservedly, by others he has been censured shamefully, seldom has he been treated with justice.

His character has been judged in various and contradictory ways. Leigh Hunt tended to reveal the scandalous life of Byron; Moore, however, could see nothing wrong and praised the poet extravagantly.

hypocritical or insincere about his characters. We may critize them but we cannot deny that they are impelled by the spirit of youth. Youth is essentially Byronic stage of life as is is revealed in Don Juan. "A little more courage, a little less false modesty, a little more sincerity, and the lambs of our democratic age would all show something of that leonine splendour."(1)

This character of Don Juan is merely a revelation of the author himself in his reaction against the hypocrisy in the world. Byron stands out alone bravely defying the storms which surround him, a natural man with natural instincts, defying the customs which harbour hypocrisy. He has the moral courage to stand alone acting as his instincts command.

"The sins of Byron seem only a splendid and poetic apotheosis of such a person's own sins. The rebelliousness of Byron seems a rebelliousness not so much deliberate and intellectual as instinctive and impulsive. It seems a normal revolt against normal restrictions. The ordinary man understands it and condones it, remembering the fires of his own youth."(2)

(1) An article on Byron in Haldimann Julius Series
(2) An article on Byron in Haldimann Julius Series

It is the picture of a pale, almost cadaverous youth, contemplating with a genuine melancholy on the affairs of the world. In it Byron is sincere. Though many have called him inconsistent, "always in the wrong, everything by starts and nothing long,"(1) he should never be accused of insincerity. He was sincere in his aim of denouncing hypocrisy and sham. He was forever striving "to unmask falsehood in politics, poetry, religion and morals."(2)

After what was really his exile from England, he proceeded on a tour through Switzerland and Italy, steeping himself in the voluptuous Italian life, following where passion led him, and locking, almost with defiance, upon all the "Puritan prudery" which had condemned him. In this spirit he wrote "Don Juan". Disregarding all conventions, he makes his hero undergo experiences which many critics condemn for debauchery and lack of decorum. Through the characters of Don Juan, Donna Julia, Haidee, Tulbegaz, Byron seems to sneer at convention and literary authority.

The point of this whole poem is the controversy which it carries on against cant and hypocrisy. There is nothing

(1) Dryden.
(2) Karl Elze. - Lord Byron, a biography.

He inherited nothing that was good from his blackguard father, and he was often the object of reproach for his capricious mother. Being sensitive, is it any wonder that he was melancholy and sought to nurse his bitterness in solitude.

Byron bore up bravely under these misfortunes. He tried to conceal his troubled mind by entering into all the rough games of the day; he rode, fenced, boxed, swam. Notwithstanding this he was continually conscious of his deformity. He had a good education at Eton and inherited a peerage. Instead of lifting up his spirit, these advantages caused him to become more embittered than before. Even in his early youth he became a rebel against all authority. He was vain yet very human. He instinctively desired to help those less fortunate than himself. He gave several speeches in the House of Parliament in which he championed the cause of the working people of England.

Byron received the inspiration for his "Childe Harold" when making the conventional tour of the continent. This poem is an idealized reflection of himself, as a lonely individual passing through the cities of Europe, viewing the wars and ruins with the attitude of a spectator.

It would be difficult to find a definite reason for these varied judgments, but one would be safe in ascribing them to the personality of Byron himself. His nature presents as many varieties as there are colours in a rainbow. He was both beautiful and deformed. His features would provide a remarkable model for any sculptor, but he had a foot, the deformity of which was jeered at by passers by. Throughout his life he was vain and overbearing due partly to his manly beauty. His lameness, however, caused him much bitterness. He loved society, but, ashamed of his ugliness, he sought solitude. He had great intellectual powers, but, at the same time, there seemed to be a fly-in-the-ointment which made itself evident in most of his work. Thus incarnate in one individual was, beauty and deformity, vanity and bitterness, genius and insanity. Seeing him in these different moods, it would be quite natural for men to judge him in various ways. A man of his temperament would naturally become the pet and scorn of society.

There is much more good than evil in his composition and even the evil was due largely to the selfishness of others.

After his epicurean life on the shores of the Mediterranean, the next notable event in the life of Lord Byron was his relationship with the Greeks in their fight for Freedom. Byron was the poet of revolt and his poetry has been borrowed, time after time, by insurgents throughout the world, as an expression of their feelings. He had already associated himself with the Italian youth in their agitation against the Austrian despotism. He was always willing to assist the weak; to take the part of a persecuted people in their fight for freedom. Hearing of the massacre of Constantinople, his feelings went out in sympathy for the oppressed Greeks. When these people sought to raise themselves out of their bondage he became more interested and even contributed money to help them in their plucky struggle. A short while later, he was offered a position as a member of the Greek committee. He had previously been in Greece, and it was under the inspiration of these people that he wrote many of his shorter poems. He has a warm spot in his heart for Greece as it was there that he spent the happiest years of his life. Influenced by these memories he accepted the offer and set set sail for Greece.

Some have mistakenly said that Byron went to Greece

to gain fame. He was really sincere in his enterprise. He arrived in Greece and we hear of him placing an army in the fields with certain shrewdness. His forces were ready to attack but his worn out body succumbed to the terrible fever of the Mediterranean. "Through these difficult months in the Greek peninsula he showed that he was unselfish, generous, helpful, thoughtful, chivalrous, merciful, considerate, brave."(1) "It was a noble expression of human enterprise and devotion and still after a hundred years of crowded history is capable of moving the observant heart to a pride of tears. "(2) The fact that Byron died in this way has meant a great deal to his tremendous influence over Europe.

We can never know a poet's personality unless we study the sincere works of his heart and brain. However we may regard the personality of Byron, he is certainly revealed to us in his poetry, which we must interpret in the light of what littlewe know of his experiences. His poetry is the natural expression of his life. All his personal characteristics, which are numerous, are excellently reflected in his poems. In all his work he has really given us only one character

(1) and (2) - C.E. Lawrence - Personality of Byron.
Edin. Rev. Apr. '24

which is himself represented under various disguises. "Manfred", "Childe Harould" "Tara", "The Corsair", "Don Juan", are "everlasting centos of himself." They are shades of a single personality, a personality new in literature, which is to play a very important role in the evolution of European literature and society. This tremendous influence can scarcely be imagined; yet, throughout Europe, the first half of the nineteenth century is mnown as the age of Byron.

In most of the countries on the continent Byron was the child of fortune. These countries had been bound by a classicism in art. A great war had just come to a close, and all Europe was in a state of unrest. The middle class realized its strength. All kinds of changes were taking place. Men learned to look at life from a different point of view. With this change in the minds of the people, the whole political, ecclesiastical and literary relations of Europe were altered. Anything new was acceptable. Despotic Europe had been overthrown. The governments of Europe still cleaved to the old institutions, but the people were enthusiastic for liberty.

Just at this time, Byron made his appearance and in a short time his poetry was accepted as the literary expression of the spirit of the people. The spirit of the age found its expression in his personal life. He became the champion of revolt. Soon he became the idol of Europe.

Byron's greatest influence was over the French people. We can easily understand this, as France was the centre of the unrest which permeated into every corner of Europe. It will be most convenient for us, in outlining the influence of Byron in the different countries, to begin with France. Hid influence just made itself evident in France and from there it spread in every direction, appearing in every European country.

In 1812, when Byron's "Childe Harold" made its first appearance, very little notice was taken of it in France. For the next eight years the Byronic poems were gradually filtering their way into popular favour among the French people. It was not until after 1820, however, that the French took a real interest in these poems. Esteve has called the period between 1820 and 1830 "L'Invasion"(1) and he is not far wrong. In the next few years the Byronic influence struck them with such force that it was impossible

(1) Esteve - Byron et le Romantisme Francais.

for the opponents of Byron to stem the tide of the onrushing stream. The people seemed to wake up suddenly to find that in this poetry which they had been ignoring was to be found the true expression of their feelings. In him they found a man expressing throughout his work the spirit of individualism. Immediately he was hailed with admiration and enthusiasm by all theyounger writers. They realized, that in his poetry, he crystallized for them the very sentiments they felt in their hearts.

In France at this time however there was a class of more conservative people who nevertheless called themselves "romanticists" taking Chateaubriand as the father of their movement. They looked upon "Rene" and "Atala" with their beautiful descriptive passages and their freedom from convention, as the only true type of romanticism. When Byron appeared with his sad, melancholy heros who were tortured by doubts about a Deity, and who were intent on prying into the mysterious, metaphysical problems of the universe and finding themselves at last in the position of Faust five up and say as he did;

"Alas! here I stand poor human fool
As wise as when I went to school."

It was something new for a poet to take such a sad, pessimistic view of life. There was, it is true, "Byronism" before Byron- "Weltschmerz" in Germany- "le mal du Siecle", in France! But, it was something new for a poet to speak of religion with a sneer of sarcasm and even to treat ideas of life and providence with flippancy. It was quite natural, then, that these conservative followers of the new nature poetry should rebel against the author who dared disregard all their ideas of poetic decorum. Not only did they rebel themselves but we find them trying to prevent any from following this "New Satan". For a while it looked as if they would succeed and the prospects of Byronic poetry in France looked doubtful.

In the year 1823 the eyes of Europe were attracted towards the quarrel between the Greeks and theTurks which was caused by the massacre of the Grecian citizens in Constantinople. The sympathy of all Europe was for the persecuted Greeks, and all classes were united in the same desire for the triumph of these people in their fight for freedom.

Very few people knew anything about the modern Greeks nor of Greece itself and in the search for a knowledge of them found that Byron's poetry contained several Grecian episodes, together with descriptions of Grecian scenery.

Immediately interest in his poetry was stimulated. "The Bride of Abydos", "The Siege of Corinth", "Childe Harold", and even "Don Juan" were read forwhat they contained of Grecian imagery and colouring. Byron's work became a service of inspiration. Delavigne, in his poem dedicated to the Greeks, "Nouvelles Messeniennes" admitted the influence of Byron; Vigny's "Helena" is nothing but a series of Byronian reminiscences. Philhellenism was becoming more and more popular. When it became known that the author himself had gone to help theGreeks in their fight for freedom, the interest in his work redoubled. When the account of his death was made known a few months later, all France was stunned by the sudden blow. In all the salons and theatres the main topic of conversation, carried on in muffled tones, was the death of Byron. Newspapers and reviews of all kinds were filled with eulogies and articles commemorating the great life and heroic death of Byron. Classicists and romanticists, his literary opponents and his literary disciples, were united in rendering tribute. "Byron was the martyr of his noblest purpose. Could any man destined inevitable to go the dusty final way have a better fate than to die at the right hour?"(1)

(1) C.E. Lawrence - Personality of Byron Edin. Rev. Apr. '24.

With this interest in his life, in his death, and in his works, the position of Byron in France reached its zenith. He reigned secure for over a decade.

After 1825 the predominant quality in French literature is the Byronic melancholy, the characteristic of Byron as it is revealed in "Manfred", "Tara" and "Childe Harold". Many of the poets of the period shqo a corresponding attraction to this Byronic melancholy. So greatan influence did this side of Byron's work exert that a group of young plebeians calling themselves "Les Jeunes France Byronienx" distinguished themselves by adopting Byronic customs as they understood them from Byron's melancholy masterpieces. They delighted in eccentricities and tried to imitate the expression of Childe Harould. They held their meetings at midnight at a kind of cabaret and drank their wine from a skull. Some of them attempted writing in imitation of Byron but they lacked his genius. Consequently most of their works are crude and wrought with exaggeration. A great deal of supernaturalism has entered. They descend to the use of goblins and dragons, or fiendish characters who tie human

beings into a letter bag and throw them into the river. Is it any wonder that this neo-romanticism brought about a reaction in French interest in literature of this type.

The pendulum of public taste makes periodic moves in one direction or the other. A few years after 1826, in France the pendulum began to swing away from the melancholy spirit of Byron's earlier poetry having reached the extreme in the exaggerations of "Les Jeunes France". But while it swung away from his earlier work, it swung rapidly towards his later poetry of irony and passion. So even this reaction turned to the advantage of Byron. "Don Juan" hitherto almost unnoticed and entirely misrepresented, came into popular favour about 1830. It was immediately called by the ambitious name - the true epic poem of the nineteenth century.

So popular did this poem become, that we find, a short while after its acceptance into popular favour, a school developing parallel to "Les Jeunes France". These disciples of Byron aimed at imitating the characteristics which seem to predominate in the personality of "Don Juan": irony passion, a preference for the countries of the south. In appearance, they desired to be black-haired, with a high forehead and a small mustache - this they considered the true Byronic type.

We see then how Byron influenced three types of men in France. We can better understand these types by picking a representative of each. Lamartine can be taken as an excellent representative of the sentimental side of world sorrow; "Musset of its cynical side generated by "Don Juan"; while Delavigne in his "Messeniennes" becake the inspired singer of Freedom".

Larmartine was a strong admirer of English literature believing it to be superior to the French or Italian. Unlike most French authors, he did not like to be called a man of letters. In this respect he is like Byron, but in most respects they are entirely unlike each other. As Byron is pessimistic, obstinate and rebellious; Lamartine is optimistic believing and adoring. There is a fatalism, however, which is common to both.

He admired Byron as soon as his Childe Harould appeared. He had not the least sympathy with "Don Juan" but the sad melancholy characters of Byron's verse have a distinct influence on all his work. When he leaves for the Orient, we find him waving farewell to his native country in the same

tone as "Childe Harold".

"Adieu donc, mon vieux pere, Adieu, mes soeurscheries,

Adieu ma maison blanche a l'ombre du noyer,

A Adieu, mes beaux coursiers oisifs dans les prairies,

Adieu, mon chien fidele, helas! seul au foyer."

His "Adieux a la mer" recalls Childe Harold's address to the ocean. Many of the characters in their poetry are similar, e.g., the character in "l'Humanite " and "The Bride of Abyedes". In "La liberte" we find the hero commenting on the ruins of Home in very much the same spirit as Childe Harold. It would be impossible in an essay of this nature to show all the similarities in these men. So enthusiastic was Lamartine about "Childe Harold" that after the death of Byron, he wrote a poem in imitation of the last Canto, calling it by the same name. In all these similarities there is more than a coincidental explanation. "There is the generous emulation of a genius who measures himself with another.".

Byron strengthened Lamartine's interest in human destiny. Also he opened for him the immemse poetic field which lay uncultivated in the landscape of Italy and Greece. During his trip to the Orient, Lamartine was always revealing this influence received from Byron.

Musset is less interested in Byron's earlier poems than in "Don Juan", and in the more cynical nature of the author himself. So much so that he became one of the members of the synical school imitating "Don Juan". Heine, the Byron of Germany deplores that "this author, by the study in his youth of a French translation of Byron's work, was seduced into affecting, in the costume of that splenetic lord, the satiety and weariness of life which at that period was the fashion among the youths of Paris". (1)

When Musset made his debutin literature, Byron's influence was at its height in France. Intense interest was aroused when his "Don Juan" appeared. Musset was interested in this lighter strain; and mostof his characters take their place in the ranks that follow Byron's cynical hero. In "Mardoche" and "Namouna" there are many reflections of "Don Juan". His famous "Ballade a la Lune" owes its origin to the idea expressed in "Don Juan".

(1) Karl Elze. Lord Byron, a biography.

"The devil's in the moon for our mischief; they
Who call'd her chaste, methinds began too soon
Their nomenclature; there is not a day,
The longest, not the twenty-first of June,
Sees half the business in a wicked way
On which three single hours of moonshine smile
And then she looks so modest all the while."

"La Coupe et les Levres" shows the influence of "Manfred". Franck tries to understand the problems of Destiny and from many points of view he resembles "Manfred". He has the same horror of mankind, the same pride, thinks of suicide and places the dagger to his breast in very much the same manner as Manfred stood on the cliff. He had a similar disbelief and the same satanic quality. Manfred is a much superior creation. Byron's outlook on life was not entirely suitable to Musset who was less philosophical. When Musset adopts the Byronic character, "Manfred" we feel there is something that is not entirely right. While reading "La Coupe et les Levres", it is impossible to feel that the author is sincere. It seems improbable that a shy young hunter should soliloquize in the tone of a philosopher.

In Musset's "Rolla" we have a Byronic type which really gives us an insight into the author's personality

exactly as "Childe Harold" reveals Byron. Datti in "Portia" and Tiburce in "Le Saule" are both Byronic characters.

So attracted was he to the character of Don Juan that he wrote a poem calling it by the same neme. In it he symbolizes the incessant pursuit of an unattainable ideal. This cynical attitude so characteristic of Byron's Don Juan runs throughout Musset's. He tells of a man of the world searching after something which he knows he cannot obtain. It is difficult to say whether this cynicism in Musset's poetry is a true expression of himself or not. If Byron was cynical, then it is reasonable to say that De Musset was, for they are alike in many circumstances of their lives.

Neither pays much attention to style or composition. Musset read Byron at a very impressionable age and absorbed much of his atmosphere and many of his mannerisma. He imitated him in throwing all kinds of quotations from foreign languages into his text. Neither took his writing very seriously and in relating a story they would frequently go off at a tangent along some by-path. Both had great genius and in these by-paths they usually fall into a style of intense lyrical beauty. Their stories are alike in atmosphere.

"Namouna" closely reproduces the atmosphere of Byron's "Don Juan". They are both fond of ending their poems in a vague way and their climax is usually shrouded in mystery. Byron also supplies Musset with an imaginative background. Both men seem to see a fascination about Venice, the strange romantic city of echoing courtyards and dark mystery.

Casimir Delavigne, another member of the earlier French Romanticits, shows a more marked influence than either Lamartine or de Musset. Delavigne was above all a patriot, and in 1815 he expressed this enthusiasm in a few poems "Waterloo", "Devastation" and "Sur le besoin de s'unir apres le depart des etrangers". He later published these poems in a collection which he called "Messeniennes". These poems show a decided Byronic influence. Leon Thiesse has shown us that in the first of these, Delavigne had 'appropriated' several passages from the great English poet. He cites one case of influence in which Delavigne repeats the English poet's comparison of Greece with a beautiful woman in the "The Bride of Abydos".

Delavigne was particularly interested in poems of a patriotic type and he was strongly influenced by this part

of Byron's nature. He would choose particular lines from Byron's different poems if they had any bearing, or if they in any way were an expression of his patriotic enthusiasm. In some cases he transfers lines directly from the English into his own poetry. In one of his "Nouvelles Messeniennes" is the stanza beginning:

"Je les brave tes flots, je ris de leur courroux"

taken directly from a stanza in Childe Harold.

Delavigne was a patriotic writer and soon became the recognized bard of the more liberal party. At the time of the Revolution, in 1830, he wrote his poem "La Parisienne" which later was set to music and became one of the most popular French songs.

Lamartine, de Musset and Delavigne were all members of the Romantic School. What relation had Byron to this school? Fortoul has admirably expressed this relation. "On its way Romanticism met Byron and Scott - who had recently been imported into France, and took possession of them. Little recking what they represented, Romanticism wanted them for their strangeness, not their real value, and used them both, indiscriminately and together, as a means for

carrying out a revolt. The young Romantics sought unity, and they made thrie first step towards it under the guardianship of Byron and Scott: they saw in these two writers a certain likeness in colour, one and the same redundance of exotic images, an almost similar rhetorical wealth of Oriental metaphor. Orientalism arrived in our midst by leaps and bounds." (1)

This new type of literature had a powerful influenee in France. In 1830, it was at the height of its power. The spirit of Byron had entered the hearts of the prople. They had to express this spirit in some way. The political revolution of 1830 took place. This was really the Byronic spirit giving expression in political revolt. A similar incident took place in Italy in 1848. It has been said that up to fifteen years ago, Byron was the only English poet whose poems were in the Italian National literature. With Pietro Giordani the literary epoch of the Italian classicists came to an end. The Romantic school had been struggling along since the fifteenth century but never had it exerted much influence. About 1818, this school comes to the front. Byron had already exerted considerable influence in France and also in Germany. The

(1) Eric Partridge - The French Romantics' Knowledge of English Literature.

Romantic schools in both these countries were already reaching their highest point. In Italy one of the great leaders was Manzoni. Of course there were many associated with him, but he stands out as an excellent representative.

When Manzoni's school days were completed, he went to stay with his father at Auteuil, a suburb of Paris, where he was influenced by the negative philosophy of Voltaire. It was likely at this time that, influenced by the ideas of romanticism which were beginning in Germany, he learned to oppose the classical school. In 1819 his tragedy "Il Conti di Carmagnola", violating all classical conventions, excited a lively controversy in the periodicals of the time. Goethe spoke loudly in its defence. Manzoni, like Byron, had been fascinated with the marvellous career of Napoleon, and in 1821 he wrote "Il Cinque Maggic" an ode on the death of Napoleon. This became one of the most popular lyrics in the Italian language. From this time onwards, Italian literature is characterized by realism, and it is the poets who follow Manzoni whom Byron influences.

The first of these was Giacomo Leopardi, the

great Italian poet of the age. As a boy he spent much of his time in his father's library and came out, not a bookworm, but a true Hellene with a classical conception of life. His father disagreed with his views and broke relations with him. On account of his solitude, physical weakness and his unhappy home relations, he developed a kind of melancholy similar to that of Byron. His pessimism increased as he grew older until it became almost monomaniacal. "Everything is terrible and grand in his poems which are the most agonizing cry in modern literature." In his attitude towards his fellowmen and even in his poetry he is an imitator of Byron. "The Song of a Wandering Shepherd in Asia" and "Filippo Ottonien" are purely Byronic. His "La Genestra" strongly resembles Shelley's Mont Blanc but the feeling is more Byronic. Throughout the later part of his life he is at war with every one except his sister to whom he remained a true friend. This is similar to Byron's relationship with his sister. Leopardi is an imitator of Byron because in him he found the true expression of his own experiences in life.

At this time a type of patriotic literature, inspired

by the love of Italy, made an appearance. The spirit of the literature as a whole seems to be preparing for the revolution which is to take place a few years later. The great representative of this type of poetry is Guiseppe Giusti who is largely under the influence of Byron. He is not interested in the melancholy, romantic part of Byron. He is the follower of Byron in his fight for political freedom.

As a boy, Giusti was extremely vivacious, and had to be sent to a private teacher for discipline. He was not a hard worker. He lived gaily and became enamoured with women much older than himslef, many of them already married. In short, his younger life seems to correspond to that expressed in Byron's poem "Don Juan". Like Byron he entered into many of the vices of society.

He had seen the princes of Europe overthrown, and he set about by means of his penetrating satire to write on behalf of his country. His first poem "La Ghigliottina" was a good start and was well received. The wim of his life was then revealed to him - "to undermine the Austrians rule in Italy" - He had to be very careful, and most of his

satire was passed about from hand to hand, but the influence he exerted by these satirical epigrammatical sketches was tremendous. He put his whole heart and soul into the work, and in the revolution of 1848 he was made one of the leaders. After it was over, when the Austrian rule was overthrown, he began to see that the fight for liberty was not so successful as he had expected. Seeing that "to the tyranny of princes had succeeded the tyranny of demagogues, began to fear and express his fear that for Italy evil rather than good had resulted". Disappointed with the results of his life work, he began to satirize the new form of government. Shortly afterwards he died. In his satire he is the imitator of Béranger but his life and his attitude towards freedom is peculiarly Byronic.

Contemporary with Giusti, Giovanni Berchet was conspicuous among the revolutionary Byronic school. From this we see that the political side of Byron's work was not without its effect on the revolutionary movement of Italy in 1898. The "world sorrow" of which Byron's poetry is the best expression in all literature did not influence the

people of Italy. They are of a different temperament and could not see anything poetic about "Manfred" or "Childe Harold". Leopardi is the only Italian who ever approaches the melancholy spirit of Byron, but even his spirit is more after the nature of "Don Juan" than of "Childe Harold".

Nevertheless we see that Byron did influence the Italian writers, whether directly or indirectly, through his influence on France and Germany. Even in Italy the first half of the nineteenth centry can be truly called the period of Byronic influence.

In Germany, Byron found a very sympathetic group of readers as he came at a most opportune time. The Romantic school did not make its appearance in Germany until 1806 when a small group about the town of Heidelberg began to interest the German people in their past, in the study of philology and in the literature of the early Teutonic tribes. This of course led to a type of literature of imagery. The fantastic tales of Hoffman were produced about this time but they would not have any good influence on the development of literature. They do not

give a representation of character nor are they an expression of a single trait in a personality. The interest is chiefly in the supernatural element which they contain. For a time an interest was taken in the philosophies of the Orient but a few looked to the literature of other European nations. Just then Byrnn, like a literary giant, was stalking over Europe. Many were naturally attracted to him and we find a great many German poets following him for inspiration. Some were led to an interest in the oppressed Greeks. This was a period of transition and we find several other poets giving vent to their feelings against the conditions in their native country and like Byron many of these undergo a voluntary exile, being influenced by Bryon's liberty-loving spirit. Even the majestic Goethe saw in Byron the interpreter of his own poetry. The "world sorrow" of "Childe Harold", "Tara" and "Manfred" scarcely intelligible in the countries to the South, received tremendous sympathy among the peoples of Germany and Russia.

Wilhelm Muller, a German lyric poet, contemporary with Byron was interested in philological and

historical studies. He lived during the transition period in Germany and in his search for inspiration had his attention drawn to the Grecian-Turkish controversy through the great cosmopolitan poet. Being interested in history, and having had his attention drawn to the situation by Byron, he wrote his great "Leider der Griechen" a poem on which his reputation was made and which is "Germany's chief tribute of sympathy to the Greeks in their struggle against the Turkish yoke."

A more marked Byronic influence is noticeable in the literary career of Hendrich Heine, German poet and journalist born a year before his great master. He resembles Byron in many respects. As boys, Byron and Heine, hearing of the brilliant campaigns of Napoleon had nothing but veneration for him. Both were passionate young men and tendered their love to girls who received, but did not return the same passion. When these girls were married, the lives of both men became extremely unsettled. Both were keen mountaineers. Many stories are told around Aberdeen about the prowess of the lame

poet among the mountain crags of Scotland. In his poetry his descriptions of mountains are very beautiful. Similarly Heine spent much of his time in the mountains of Germany and his first poem "Reisebilder" describes them beautifully. Both suffered much from their sceptical attitude towards religion and on account of their peculiar natures. Always inharmonious, and tending toward extremes, both had experiences in life which gave their expression a melancholy and even satirical note. They took a great deal of interest in any fight for freedom and on account of this, both were exiles from their native country. Is it any wonder then that this man has been called the "Byron of Germany".

Heine was born in 1797 of Jewish parentage. He had a good education at the Lyceum whence he went to work for his uncle, a wealthy banker who later set him up in business. He was interested in literature, however, and neglected his work in order to follow this hobby. Soon he was bankrupt. Again his uncle came to the rescue and sent him to Gottingers to study law. Here he

was once again more interested in literature than in his studies.

He became a member of the literary school known as "Young Germany". He had already written "Das Buch der Lieder" in which he strikes a new lyric note making full use of nature symbolism. The German"Bund" being persecuting all the members of this school and tried to suppress their writings. Heine left Germany for France, which he hailed as a land of freedom. Here he hoped to enjoy the literary privileges denied him in his native country. He had heard of the revolution of 1830 and arrived at Paris enthusiastically greeting - "The new Jerusalem of Liberalism" - After he had been there a short time he began to have doubts as to whether he would not have been as well off in Germany,having found that, on closer view, Paris no longer appeared a literary Utopia Then he became a bitter cynic and satirist displaying in all his poetic expression and even in his very life - "the world sorrow" which is so typically Byronic.

"The Poetry of both these men had very little

of the spirituality possessed by Shelley, which both English and Germans consider as the very essence of lyric poetry. Thus both these men hold greater fame in foreign countries than in their own."(1)

Very similar in every respect to Heine is his contemporary and friend Karl Ludwig Berne, a very irritable soul who could not seem to decide on a profession. Like Byron, he fell in love with women he could not marry. He became enamoured with his patron's wife. He, like his friend Heine, was persecuted by the German "Bund". Like Byron he changed his religion, becoming a Lutheran. The revolution of 1830 attracted him as it did his friend Heine, and he hurried to Paris expecting to find a poet's paradies, founded on the sort of freedom he conceived of himself. Of course, he was disappointed, but he realized it was a better condition than that which existed in Germany so he remained there and published his "Briefe aus Paris". This publication made him at once one of the leaders in the movement of "Young Germany".

Both Heine and Berne are followed by a host of minor writers but it would be too much to take all the

(1) Karl Elze - Lord Byron, a biography.

members of this literary school which became a synthetic whole, the bond of union being political persecution. It is enough at this time to say that it was among this group that Byron attained such importance in Germany. If he was not the founder, he was at least the main power, the true example of poetic genius, which these young men imitated. Like him they believed in the passions of youth, the striving for political, ecclesiastical and scholastic freedom. They realized that a man must be true to himself even if in doing so he incur the antagonism of society. Theyconsidered Byrons life as the supreme example, his poetry as the true expression of that life.

This type of literature introduced by Byron had a most powerful influence over this group of "Young Germany". The spirit of Byron had entered into their very hearts. Such a spirit could not be repressed. In France a similar spirit expressed itself in political revolt. In Germany, however, a different expression took place.

This group of 'Young Germany' definitely connected themselves with the philosophical school which at that time

was undergoing a period of transition. They seemed to be drifting away from Kant in the direction of the absolute ego. These young men saw in this absolute ego a representation of their spirit of Byronic individualism. The definitely identified themselves with this philosophical movement, which finally predominates in the philosophic schools of Germany. As the Byronic influence of France and Italy expressed itself in political revolt, similarly this influence in Germany found expression in the philosophical tendency of the period.

Byron's influence during his lifetime spread even as far as the Slavonic East. This is a greater accomplishment than we might at first imagine. When we think that he is one of the few Englishmen who have been of any influence on these people, we must begin to feel that there is something in Byron which strikes a universal note. It was not until after the eighteenth century that Russia even looked toward the West for literary inspiration. France and Germany supplied their best, and we can see influences of Moliere and Fontenelle in that country at a very early period. English influence,however, did not seem to spread

so far, and it was not until the time of Alexander Pushkin that any filtration of English poetic art is noticed. Pushkin had a brilliant career in his younger days, and on account of this, while still a young man, he was attached to the ministry of foreign affairs. In his position he would likely come in contact with a great many from all nations. It was about this time that the Byronic influence was running riot over France, Germany, and Italy. It is quite possible that in meeting these people from foreign countries, he would become tinged by his contact with them. In this way he probably heard of Byron. Such a thought is more firmly founded when we find him a year or so later writing a very daring "Ode to Liberty" in true Byronic style. He would not attempt to publish such a daring piece of work but rather passed it about among his friends in manuscript form. Careful as he was, however, he barely escaped a trip to Siberia on account of the revolutionary thought expressed in this poem. He was forced to leave the capital so accepted a post in South Russia. This banishment, however, did not kill his poem.

It soon became the watchword of the youth of Russia.

While in the South he probably came in contact with more Byronic influences for in a short time we find him intoxicated with the Byronic "world sorrow".

Being a lover of the mountains, as was his inspirer, he spent much of his time among them and finally wrote "The Prisoner of the Caucasus" a story of Byronic love. He too had great admiration for Napoleon and we find him writing his "Ode to Napoleon" which bears a relation to similar poems by Byron and Manzoni.

Byron had introduced Victor Hugo and many others to the poetic inspiration of the Orient. It therefore must be more than a mere coincidence that we next find Pushkin writing his "Tzurgani" (gypsies) an oriental tale of love and vengeance. This is another sign of Byronic influence.

In his poem "Poltava" we have included in it Byron's story of "Mazeppa". Pushkin then retired from public life and wrote his masterpiece "Eugene Onyyegien" which contains "satire, pathos & humour mixed together"(1) The poem is constructed after the style of Don Juan.

(1) W. P. Morfill.

Pushkin has been called the Russian Byron, and is no wonder that he has received this appelation when we consider the similarities between the two men.

Both were vain and delighted to be first in everything. Both had the courage to stay apart from the crowd, and to hold out against the whole of the society in which they lived, standing firm for certain principles in which they believed. In this poetry they are alike. Their words seem to be spirited and full for certain principles in which they believed. In this poetry they are alike. Their words seem be spirited and full of dramatic power. Their characterization is true to the different passions and emotions. Their descriptions of scenery show that they have an appreciation only possessed by those who have had a close contact with nature.

The first great novelist of any importance in Russia is Nicholzi-Gogal, who seems to have inherited much of Byron's satire, his powers of vivid characterization and picturesque description. In his "Memoirs of a Madman" he is most like Byron, displaying the weird fantasy which is so great a factor in Byron's "Oriental Tales".

We see then that even in Russia, Byron's influence was chiefly upon a group of men who are firm in their convictions and who dare to stand alone against all odds. This is the type of man for which Byron's work seems to have been a peculiar fascination. The Slavonic people are of a very passionate and emotional temperament so that it Byron's poetry, which is the truest expression of passion, would receive a sympathetic public.

Despotism had long been powerful in Russia. Men, wishing to express themselves freely on any question, would have to band themselves into secret leagues. Through these leagues anything would spread very rapidly over the country and it was probably by means of these that Pushkin's "Ode on Liberty" written under Byronic influence, became known very quickly throughout the country although no printed copies had been made.

In a similar way many of Byron's poems were translated and created a great stir through the land. Recently several complete translations of Byron have been made and it is to Byron's honour that he is the only

Englishman whose poems are translated into the Russian language.

We see then how Byron's imitators stretched from "St. Petersburg to the Susquehanna". (1) His influence had spread over the whole Caucasian race making itself evident in their very customs. This influence, it is true, has not remained at the same hightlevel through all these years. Shortly after 1830, the Byronic influence began to decline. It was not a fall! It declined slowly, at times making slight attempts at revival but seldom with any success. It has never, however, dropped below a certain mark. There has always been a quiet, steady current of Byronic literature in all European countries and seldom has the name of this English poet ceased to create an interest. As long as social conditions remain as they are, and as long as human nature is unchanged, Byron will live, for in his poetry he has expressed certain qualities of human nature in a way that is attractive to all mankind.

The poet was loudly condemned by certain factions in his own day. After writing "Don Juan" he was considered "a vast rambling Gothic Cathedral of Irrenerence" (2)

(1) F. E. Pierce - Byron and this Century. Literary Review, Apr. 24.

(2) Same as above.

but the stir produced by this poem is rather to Byron's credit than to his discredit for it shows that he understood human nature, while his critics did not.

Even in our own advanced age, Byron can be taken as the true literary expression of the times. His whole work is "a journey out of conventionalism, through emotionalism, into reality" and his poems have been called "the microcosm of modern life".

For the last quarter of a century, the interest in Byron has not slackened its pace.

The words of John Murray the grandson of Byron's publisher who possesses many of Byron's manuscripts prove this. "Since I came into possession of No. 50 Albermarle Street on my father's death in 1892, a continuous of visitors, year by year, has come to see the collection of Byron's Mss. and the other relics which it contains. The larger number of the visitors were strangers to me and came at their own request; they have included all nationalities; German, French, Greek and especially American, among whom there seems to be a large and devoted body of

admirers. One of them tells me that in sixteen States in the Union there are towns named after Byron. Before the war one or two German professors came to study certain of the Mss. and to collate them, which they did with Teutonic patience and thoroughness.

I have been struck with the fact, that with very few exceptions, these visitors, who ar now numbered by hundreds, came not from mere curiosity, but showed a real interest in Byron and knowledge of his work". (1)

Today many books are written which have distinct relations to the Byronic atmosphere. Byron seems to give us "at every turn the protoplasm of philosophy, the crude, unsorted subject matter for a theory of life". At present this germ seems to be taking particular effect under the conditions of social unrest which have predominated in the last few years. Byron seems to have found the note which strikes the soul of Europe during any period of unrest and even today the English poet is a living force in the countries on the European continent. The wheel has gone full circle and Byron is coming back to power again.

(1) J. Murray--Popularity of Byron - Living Age, May '24.

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