worships his kind are bounded, as we have said, by the limitations which he knows are incident to humanity; idealize as he may, he can never free himself of the belief that no perfect man or woman has ever trod this planet. How, then, is it possible that any one but the ignorant and unreflective can ever feel the glow of genuine devotion when he bows himself to a being whose nature he knows to have been but a fragmentary representative of the ideal of man, or when he worships his best conception of this ideal itself knowing it to be an idol of his own creation? These fatal weaknesses of Positivism have no application to the Theist: the fervour of his adoration is deadened by no secret consciousness that the object of his worship is marred with imperfection; for however great and glorious may be the attributes he ascribes to it, he feels assured that they are infinitely surpassed by the Reality itself.

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Art. II.—Recollections of Shelley and Byron.

Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron. By E. J. Trelawny. London: Edward Moxon. 1858.

Mr. TRELAWNY has done well in giving this manly and carelessly written little volume to the world: it will at least revive the personal memory of two Englishmen who, though long dead, can never be altogether of the past. Without telling much of either with which we were not previously acquainted, the information communicated is the result of intimate personal knowledge, and, gathered during the intervals of a familiar acquaintance, comes out with such freshness and vigour, that it possesses nearly all the merit of novelty; and the striking features of character are brought forward in much stronger relief, than in the tame and wearisome biography of which one at least was the victim. It is the least enviable appanage of genius that it perpetuates by its own lustre those faults and weaknesses which repose in the graves of meaner men; the biographer, even though a friend, cannot ignore these; and while he avoids giving them undue prominence, cannot forget that truth has its claims, as well as genius.

We recognise Shelley in these sketches as he appeared in his works—the gentle, guileless, noble soul who persisted in putting himself wrong with the world, and who rashly and fearlessly launched his indignant sarcasm at the cant and bigotry and sel-

fishness of society, without indicating any rational plan for its regeneration. Had he possessed a friend sufficiently influential and judicious to have delayed the publication of "Queen Mab" for ten years, Shelley's lot might have been far different. How could he reasonably expect forbearance from a society whose creed, by a portion of it sincerely venerated, he so recklessly outraged? The wisest man feels himself to be an infant if he attempts to understand the doctrine of Original Sin; and yet it was this problem that the youthful and inexperienced Shelley dared to grapple in his poem, in a spirit of unparalleled rashness and presumption.

Mr. Trelawny was for some time, as is well known, the companion of Byron and Shelley during their voluntary exile in Italy. Too manly and too honest to believe in the justice of the tremendous calumnies which drove Shelley from England, and deprived him of his children, he was yet, like all who ever came to personal knowledge of Shelley, astonished to find what manner of man was this of whom all who did *not* know him spoke so ill. We see him as Mr. Trelawny saw him, more than thirty years since, in the following scene:—

"Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall thin stripling held out both his hands; and although I could hardly believe, as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face, that it could be the poet, I returned his warm pressure. After the ordinary greetings and courtesies, he sat down and listened. I was silent from astonishment; was it possible this mild-looking, beardless boy could be the veritable monster at war with all the world?—excommunicated by the fathers of the Church, deprived of his civil rights by a grim Lord Chancellor, discarded by every member of his family, and denounced by the rival sages of our literature as the founder of a Satanic school? I could not believe it; it must be a hoax. He was habited like a boy, in black jacket and trousers, which he seemed to have outgrown, or his tailor, as is the custom, had shamefully stinted him in his 'sizings.'"

His wife's personal appearance, *née* Godwin, the authoress of "Frankenstein," is sketched on the same occasion:—

"The most striking feature in her face was her calm, grey eyes. She was rather under the English standard of woman's height, very fair and light-haired, witty, social and animated in the society of friends, though mournful in solitude; like Shelley, though in a minor degree, she had the power of expressing her thoughts in varied and appropriate words, derived from familiarity with the works of our vigorous old writers. Neither of them used obsolete or foreign words."

The artless and natural character of Shelley endeared him to the few who had the privilege of personal knowledge; and, as appears from these sketches, contrasted very favourably with

the artificial manner and undisguised egotism of Byron—but, in truth, the latter was only himself when in the stillness of night he was engaged in composition, and absorbed into forgetfulness of his physical deficiences and his chronic starvation.

Mr. Trelawny gives a more minute and circumstantial detail than has previously appeared, of the miserable circumstances attending the deaths of Shelley and his companion Mr. Williams. The letter which the latter had despatched to his wife on the previous day, informing her and Mrs. Shelley of their proposed return to the home in the Gulf of Spezzia, where both ladies were anxiously expecting their husbands, who had been unexpectedly detained in Leghorn, is surely, breathing as it does the warmest affection, destined to be so sadly quenched, the most touching document ever preserved from oblivion. The condition of the two bodies, when thrown ashore after many days, was such as to make incremation the most eligible means of disposing of the remains; and this proceeding was conducted in both cases—for they were not burned together—with great care by Mr. Trelawny, in an iron furnace constructed on purpose. Lord Byron may have given way to some apparent levity on the occasion; but it was but to conceal an emotion he deeply felt, but which he lacked the moral courage to evince publicly. Shelley's toy skiff, the *Don Juan*, in which they embarked with inauspicious omens on that melancholy evening, does not appear to have been capsized during the gale, notwithstanding the ominous remark of the Genoese mate of the *Bolivar* about the superfluous gaff-topsail; but from her damaged condition, when afterwards weighed by the exertions of Captain Roberts, was probably run down by some Italian speronare scudding before the gale.

Shelley stands far higher in the opinions of his countrymen now than when his gentle spirit and ardent love of truth were quenched for ever in the waves of the Mediterranean. It is not necessary to vindicate his character from calumnies which are long forgotten; but if there are any who, not knowing, yet care to know, how gentle, how generous, how accomplished, and how unselfish he was, it is written in this late testimony of one who knew him well, and knowing him well in life, had the hard task assigned him of communicating his premature death to the despairing widow.

Shelley formed a correct and candid estimate of his own writings when he said, "They are little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and just—they are dreams of what ought to be, or may be." He read too much, was altogether too much imbued with the ideas of others. His were the azure and vermilion clouds that float in insubstantial beauty through the atmosphere of an Alpine sunrise, rather than

the enduring creation of grandeur, strength, and beauty which we recognise in a great poem.

After Shelley's death, Byron moved from Pisa to Albaro, near Genoa, where he occupied the Casa Saluzzi; but the loss of one whom he must have looked on as a friend, and respected for the nobleness of his nature, together with the failure of the *Liberal*, which could hardly succeed under the auspices of two such editors as Hunt and himself, made him dissatisfied with an inactive existence, and he looked round for some field, not of enterprise, but excitement. He was quite unfit constitutionally to encounter real fatigue or privation; he had courage, no doubt; contempt of life, and tameless pride, but neither possessed the physical or mental robustness to see in well-planned, and long-sustained action a career of distinction or usefulness. After much wavering, he determined to revisit Greece, and bought a vessel to convey himself and his lares to the land which was to witness his own dissolution, and thus to derive from him another of its many claims to classic interest. The choice of his vessel seems to have been decided more by motives of economy than from any regard to its nautical capabilities, and when its defects were indicated by a more critical judgment than his own, he was consoled by the reflection that he had got it a bargain.

It was on the 13th of July, 1823, that he sailed in the *Hercules* from Genoa with Mr. Trelawny, Count Gamba, and an Italian crew; slowly they stood eastward up the Mediterranean, and so wretched were the sailing qualities of the vessel, that even with a fair wind the average progress was but twenty miles a day. They put into Leghorn, which they quitted for Cephalonia, on the 23rd of July.

"On coming near Lonza, a small islet converted into one of its many prisons by the Neapolitan government, I said to Byron, 'There is a sight that would curdle the blood of a poet laureate.' 'If Southey were here,' he answered, 'he would sing hosannahs to the Bourbons. Here kings and governors are only the jailors and hangmen of the detestable Austrian barbarians. What dolts and drivellers the people are to submit to such universal despotism. I should like to see from this our ark, the world, submerged, and all the rascals drowning on it like rats.' I put a pencil and paper into his hand, saying, 'Perpetuate your curses on tyranny,' &c. He readily took the paper and set to work. I walked the deck, and prevented his being disturbed. . . . After a long spell he said, 'You think it is as easy to write poetry as to smoke a cigar—look, it's only doggrel. Extemporising verse is nonsense; Poetry is a distinct faculty—it wont come when called. You may as well whistle for a wind; a Pythoness was primed when put into the tripod. I must chew the cud before I write. I have thought over most of my subjects for years before writing a line.' . . . 'Give me time—I can't forget the theme; but for this Greek business

I should have been at Naples writing a fifth canto of 'Childe Harold,' expressly to give vent to my detestation of the Austrian tyranny in Italy.'"

But his own earlier lines might well have recurred both to the poet and to his biographer, for surely none could be more applicable to the scene before their eyes then, as before ours now, when we look on Naples :—

> "It is as though the fiends prevailed
> Against the seraphs they assailed,
> And fixed on heavenly thrones should dwell
> The freed inheritors of hell—
> So fair the scene, so formed for joy,
> So cursed the tyrants that destroy."

"The poet had an antipathy to everything scientific; maps and charts offended him. . . . . Buildings the most ancient or modern he was as indifferent to as he was to painting, sculpture, or music. *But all natural objects, or changes in the elements, he was generally the first to point out, and the last to lose sight of.*" p. 187. [The italics are our own.]

Mr. Trelawny echoes an old remark of Baron Macaulay's (Warren Hastings), which every one's experience will confirm, as to the effect of a sea voyage in testing temper and character, and says—"I never was on shipboard with a better companion than Byron: he was generally cheerful, gave no trouble, assumed no authority, uttered no complaints, and did not interfere with the working of the ship; when appealed to, he always answered, 'Do as you like.'" There was much enjoyment of life on board this dull sailer, the *Hercules;* and the voyage, if protracted, was under clear, warm skies, and in smooth water. One scene narrated has a grimly comic element: *apropos* to some remark, Byron exclaimed, "Women, you should say; if we had a womankind on board, she would set us all at loggerheads, and make a mutiny; would she not, captain?" "I wish my old woman were here," replied the skipper; "she would make you as comfortable in my cabin at sea as your own wife would in her parlour on shore." Byron started, and looked savage. The skipper went on unconscious, &c. &c.

Byron had written an autobiography, it seems, conceived in manly, straightforward fashion,—in a vigorous, fearless style, and was apparently truthful as regarded himself. It was subsequently entrusted to Mr. Moore, as literary executor, and by him suppressed, following the advice of others, it would seem. "I told Murray Lady Byron was to read the manuscript if she wished it, and requested she would add, omit, or make any comments she pleased, now, or when it was going through the press." (p. 197.) They reached Zante and Cephalonia at last; and after

an absence of eleven years, Lord Byron again saw the Morea, which he loved so well—

"The sun, the sky, but *not* the slave the same."

The reckless greediness of the Suliote refugees at Cephalonia disgusted him; and the intelligence he received about the prospects of liberty in Greece, or the probability of assistance from the Western Powers, so long withheld, being far from encouraging, he determined to remain some time at Cephalonia, but preferred living on board to accepting the warmly-proffered hospitality of Colonel Charles Napier, or of the other residents in the island.

"One day, after a bathe, he held out his right leg to me, saying—'I hope this accursed limb will be knocked off in the war.' 'It wont improve your swimming,' I answered; 'I will exchange legs, if you will give me a portion of your brains.' 'You would repent your bargain,' he said, &c. &c." (p. 20.)

The Greeks, it appears, very rationally desired a strong centralized authority to suppress the hordes of robbers—much more numerous than usual, since the outbreak of the war with Turkey—and talked, at least a portion of them did, of offering the crown to Byron; he might have bought it, perhaps, afterwards at Salona, and the Greeks would have had a king for three months, if he had not abdicated before, worthy of their classical renown certainly, but not quite the man to disentangle, or divide the political and social complications in which they were entangled. The beauty of Ithaca, visited at this time, seems to have justified the persevering partiality of Ulysses for his island kingdom; but there is an inexcusable piece of rudeness to the abbot of a Greek convent on that island, recorded against Byron. The poor man had received him with all the honour in his power or knowledge, but proceeded, unluckily, to inflict an harangue of such length and solemnity, that Lord Byron, who had missed the indispensable siesta, broke into ungovernable wrath, and abused his entertainer with much more emphasis than euphony, from which his character, and wish to please, should certainly have protected the abbot. No wonder that the astounded abbot could find no better excuse for the conduct of the English peer and poet than madness—"*Ecolo e matto poveretto.*"

Mr. Trelawny left Lord Byron at Cephalonia, for he was long in moving when once settled, and never saw him again in life. Anxious to know something of the state of matters in the Morea, the former passed over, accompanied by Mr. Hamilton Browne. They found only confusion, intrigue, and embezzlement; and after transacting a little business, his companion, Mr. Browne, went to London, accompanying certain Greek deputies, who were com-

missioned to raise a loan there, which, wonderful to relate, they succeeded in doing; though the worthy stockbrokers could hardly have been moved to liberality, or rather credulity, by their classical sympathies; while Mr. Trelawny, quitting the Morea, made for Athens, and joined a celebrated robber chief, who had assumed political functions in the disturbed and anarchic state of the country, and bore the classical name of Odysseus. In January, 1824, Mr. Trelawny heard that Byron had gone to Missolonghi, and then, that he was dead; worn out with fatigue, anxiety, and disgust, his frame, already shattered by repeated attacks of remittent fever, acquired during former residence in the marsh-girt cities of Ravenna and Venice, succumbed in the prime of life to the miasma which in greater or less intensity, according to the season, constitutes the atmosphere of Missolonghi. Mr. Trelawny was at Salona, but left for Missolonghi directly, which he entered on the third day from his departure, and found it "situated on the verge of the most dismal swamp I had ever seen."

"No one was in the house but Fletcher, who withdrew the black pall and the white shroud, and there lay the embalmed body of the Pilgrim—more beautiful even in death than in life. The contraction of the skin and muscles had effaced every line traced by time or passion; few marble busts could have matched its stainless white, the harmony of its proportions, and its perfect finish. Yet he had been dissatisfied with that body, and longed to cast its slough. How often have I heard him curse it. I asked Fletcher to bring me a glass of water; and on his leaving the room, to confirm or remove my doubts as to the cause of his lameness, I uncovered the Pilgrim's feet, and was answered—both his feet were clubbed, and the legs withered to the knee: the form and face of an Apollo, with the feet and legs of a sylvan satyr."

The remaining chapters are exclusively autobiographical, and are not without interest, for Mr. Trelawny's name has become historical in Gordon's "History of the Greek Revolution." His adventures are not commonplace; and his intimate connexion with the family and fortunes of Odysseus afforded an opportunity of seeing and knowing more of the wilder and worthier elements of Romaic character than has fallen to the lot of any other educated Englishman. For some time he held watch and ward in the fortified, inaccessible cave on Mount Parnassus, where Odysseus had placed his family and property, with a garrison of a few men, and his brother-in-law, Mr. Trelawny, in command. He was at last desperately wounded in a very treacherous manner, by a Scotchman named Fenton, whom he had unduly trusted, but who had been bribed to act as a spy on Odysseus and himself. He tells his story, regardless of criticism, in a frank and

candid manner; and it must be a captious critic indeed, who can object to the consciousness of that superior physical strength and vigour, which sustained with ease exertions that exhausted the more delicate powers of the two celebrated companions, whose names lend so much interest to his book, and to whose intellectual pre-eminence he renders respectful and affectionate homage.

We have so recently recorded our opinions on Shelley's writings,* that we shall now offer a few remarks on some portion of Lord Byron's poetry, which, with all its popularity, has not, it appears to us, been always rightly estimated. He unaffectedly repudiated the opinion so generally entertained, that he was the hero of his own compositions—that the monotonous protagonists of his early and brilliantly successful Eastern tales, no less than the *blasé* and reflective "Childe," or the fortunate and brilliant "Don Juan," were drawn from the inspiration of a too partial egotism. We are inclined to believe in the sincerity of his protest, and to attribute to dramatic poverty the uniformity of his characters, and to his own physical imperfection the bodily strength and activity by which his heroes are so generally distinguished. In those short pieces which were the fruits of his early travels, and which at once attracted the attention of every reader by the unequalled brilliancy of the language, we perceive the immature judgment and the vehement sensation of his character; the verse flows onward in a torrent of splendour, and a false lustre is given to the passion whose fruit is ashes; beauty of form, and the easy and over-valued achievements of physical courage, are the artless and ordinary attractions of his actors; there is no depth or refinement of character, no difficult invention; the poems are but pictures of ordinary merit, in splendid frames.

But a deeper knowledge dawned upon him—a larger experience of his own heart, though little of the actual world from which he shrunk; and if he, as most men have done, regretted the delusions of the master-passion, and wished that the deception had lasted for ever, or had never existed, yet his later strains, in their deeper tone and wider sympathies, evince that better self-knowledge, without which no man has successfully mapped even the narrowest province of the human heart; for that knowledge is itself but the evidence and the record of sufferings which the conflicts of reason with passion must ever produce.

In the crude though not inharmonious products of his youth, we see how little he had felt his strength, and how he was fettered by the rules which had been the guide of his model and antithesis Pope; nowhere does he dare to be original, and the spirit which

* *Vide* Number for January of this year.

dictated his first and weakest satire, was but the natural resentment of an Englishman who had no mind to be bullied: the mere mechanical versification gives small promise of the matchless powers which produced "Don Juan" and "Beppo;" and in the matter, there is nothing to warn us of that contemplative and deeply poetical thought which is so apparent in the "Prophecy of Dante," and in the two later cantos of "Childe Harold." Even those unequalled satiric powers which culminated in the "Irish Avatar," are but shadowed, not developed, and the commonplace abuse and half-affected contempt of his first satire are calculated to produce a very different effect from the withering ridicule and careless contempt which overwhelmed those who provoked the displeasure of his later years.

The German critics, with a severity of taste that does them honour, place the three great poets, whose names at once occur to us—Homer, Shakspeare, and Goethe—so far above all rivalry, as to accord to these alone that supremacy and universality of intellect which we call poetic genius; and this may be just, but the human mind is so constituted in its appreciation of poetry, as sometimes to derive superior pleasure from strains which have emanated from minds of far inferior order. We like best that poetry which addresses most strongly and directly the prevailing sentiments of our own characters; and hence thousands in whom the finest of Homer's rhapsodies, Shakspeare's "Tempest," or Goethe's "Iphigenia," would awake no other sentiment than cool admiration, would be moved to tears or to enthusiasm by Pindar, Campbell, or Gray. It is no less certain that men of even the keenest intellect merely, are not unfrequently deficient in poetic taste and judgment. We know, for example, that Napoleon preferred Ossian, and Robert Hall Virgil to Homer; and that Lord Byron himself, utterly wanting in dramatic power, but little appreciated the true strength of Shakspeare. Poetry, indeed, especially of the first order, must be felt in the heart as well as judged by the head, and the greatest merit is least apparent to a superficial glance; long study, contemplation, and comparison are required to comprehend the consummate excellence of a masterpiece, whether it be from the hand of Shakspeare or the pencil of Raphael.

But if the very few of the first order of poets completely satisfy all the requirements of the most refined and matured intellect, the poetry of Lord Byron will always appeal strongly to those, and they are not a few, whose passions, at some period of their lives, have proved too strong for the control of reason, and where regret, if not remorse, has followed the fruitless contest—a contest which has left the mind vacant for want of strong excitement,

and wearied with a scene which offers no sufficient substitute for what has been lost. Flashes of the melancholy wisdom which follows on such experience are frequent in his later works, and their deep, and perhaps not barren truth, may sink with something of a healing and enlightening influence into hearts whose scars are not yet callous.

There is, too, a strong and ardent reverence for the nobleness of intellect, ever felt most strongly by those most highly endowed; that reverence which, rightly considered, is the only true religion, and a scorn, as strongly expressed, for the vulgar or tinsel idols of mob idolatry.

His spirit had wrestled with itself in vain; the vehement and unwise desire for something denied to mere mortality was his; the self-condemnation of performance so grievously inadequate to the lofty resolution, which more or less dwells in every heart, rebelling against the sway of low desires, was strong upon him; so that he hated life, and sought at first wildly, but afterwards more calmly, to give that feeling utterance: but the "voiceless thought" could not so be spoken, and he, the most eloquent, went to his grave without succeeding in the vain effort to unburden his full heart. Not by words, however eloquent, can man satisfy himself, or vindicate his life to others. Consistent action alone can satisfy the conscience, or justify us to our own hearts; and when action is denied or unsought, we strive for the relief, however inadequate, that words can furnish. Thus Chaucer:

> "For when we may not do, then will we speken,
> And in our ashen colde, is fire yreken."

Had any suitable career of action been open to him, or had he lived in feudal times, he might have surpassed Bertrand de Born in thirst for irregular warlike achievement, and in the strains that celebrated it; the monotony of a modern military career, and the subordination which can recognise no superiority but professional rank, where the opportunity of achievement is an accident, and routine the rule of life, was utterly unsuited to his character and his physical constitution. No better career offered to him than that miserable one of Missolonghi, and here he gave evidence of a moderation and self-command little to have been expected from a man whose vanity and egotism were not less conspicuous than his genius; this desire for an active career is translated into his eastern stories, and his heroes are rather models of what he wished to be, than what he was.

His forte, however, as he knew, was vivid description, varied and illuminated by flashes of earnest thought, and the results of a melancholy, if a short experience.

In sustained dramatic, or epic power, he was deficient; but this is an imperial endowment, and, in his own language,

> "Not Hellas could unrol
> From her Olympiads *two* such names."

His "Manfred," despite Mr. Moore's crude criticism, is a dramatic failure; and when he calls this creation of Lord Byron's "loftier and worse" than Milton's Satan, the critic shows how little of the dramatic or epic element he must have himself possessed. "Manfred" is not a great creation—he is but a dreamer, who, finding no pleasure in an earthly pursuit, itself a morbid and unhealthy feeling, strives to o'erpass the limits of mortality, and to coerce the Spirits whom the elements obey. Such a desire, as common as it was vain, before men had emerged from the superstitious element of the middle ages, evinces no elevation or greatness of character, and if with dauntless courage he defies the spirits whom he had evoked by his spells, and provoked by his contempt of their power, he does so as one who knows they cannot injure him, and who seeks death rather than shuns it.

The great blot of the piece, however, is the doubt that encompasses the fate of Astarte; the imagination can conceive no adequate cause for the terrible implacability which could reign in the bosom of a beatified spirit, and deny to a despairing brother one word of consolation in his awful abandonment. If SHE could condemn him, how can he be forgiven?

Such a subject, however attractive to a writer of strong imagination, and however promising in appearance, proves much more difficult to treat adequately, if, indeed, it can ever be so treated at all, than scenes and characters of a more earthly nature, where strictly human agents appeal to a kindred reason and sympathy.

The communion of the supernatural with the natural has been a favourite theme, and a certain stumbling-block, to the greatest poets. Homer succeeded best, because he invented little, taking the materials within his reach—and his gods and goddesses are but human beings, with a loftier physical and mental stature; it was easy to introduce them implementing the inferior powers of their favourite heroes, but we feel that, in all that should distinguish the supernatural Being above the human nature, the greatest of all, the tyrant Zeus, was inferior. Like some vulgar earthly ruler, he uses his power but to gratify passions unworthy of a God——and the charm of divine beauty and celestial grace which hovers for ever round the name of Aphrodite, is insufficient to overcome the disgust with which we regard her threat to Helena, when the latter indignantly refuses to return to her vanquished and fugitive paramour.

And when, in the "Tempest," Shakspeare introduces Ariel to

delude and torment a set of drunken menials, or frighten a brutal and ignorant drudge, he scarcely redeems the character of that "dainty" creation by his services in reconstructing the shattered ship, or even in deceiving the wretches who were plotting the death of the Duke. An inspired genius may walk through proprieties at will, as he so constantly does, but even Shakspeare might have remembered in the "Tempest," "*Nec Deus intersit,*" &c.

When Goethe, following the popular superstition, introduces the Devil, thinly disguised, as the companion and mentor of Faust, he goes easily enough with the pair through the temptations and the punishment of his neophyte and of Margaret—an episode too common in daily life to require the Devil as its agent—and Faust, when on the blasted heath he upbraids Mephisto with the cruel fate of her he should have protected from all harm, and curses himself as the dupe of a pitiless fiend, does but vent the reproaches many a man has heaped on himself, shuddering, if he had a conscience, at the cruel treachery which has rent a heart that beat only for him. But when the great German leaves the popular guide to invent a sphere of supernatural action, when Faust appears in scenes where the author has no guide from tradition, and subject to temptations of a less human character, we see how little mere mortal wit can observe any semblance of probability, or appearance of cohesion, in attempting that for which there is no actual precedent in human experience. There is but one Magician, and he has long laid aside all pretensions above mortality. Patient and sagacious interrogation of nature, in disclosing the hidden properties of matter, has evoked powers which the genii of the lamp might have envied, and wealth, which would have satisfied the avarice of the alchemists.

The greatest can but draw the supernatural from knowledge of the natural, and we have but human nature exaggerated in the majority of instances; Shakspeare's Ariel, and the spirits in "Manfred" are nearly the only exceptions. Homer is greatest where he describes the actions of men, and the submissive grace and tenderness of women. Shakspeare stirs the heart, and awakens our admiration most strongly when he depicts the loving constancy of the gentler sex, and the masculine heroism of Coriolanus or of Henry the Fifth. Goethe has an easy task when he echoes the sarcastic mockery, or paints the demon heart of Mephisto; but the master-hand is seen in the calm and natural beauty of the "Iphigenia," and above all in his unequalled delineation of the female nature; he who could draw such characters as Gretchen, Clara, Mignon, and Adelheid von Weislingen, has surpassed all others, Shakspeare himself, in this the most interesting province of observation and invention.

And Lord Byron, though he has clothed his demons with

majesty and power, though he has avoided the vulgar error of too easily vanquishing evil by good, Satan by Abdiel, yet hardly introduces these for purposes worthy their supernatural powers, unless it be to justify the magnificent "Hymn of the Spirits" in worship round the throne of Ahrimanes.

In the first two cantos of "Childe Harold," the objective element is strongly ascendant, written as they were at a period of life when the world was still fresh, and the essential identity of human nature, under all its phases, hardly appreciated. The boundless command of his own language, and the liveliest susceptibility to the beauty or grandeur of nature, produced a poem which riveted immediately the attention of contemporaries, partly, indeed, due to a comparative novelty of style, and the want of sustained originality, in the poetry which immediately preceded its publication; something too may have been owing to the lesser preoccupation of the public by the floods of ephemeral and amusing literature which dissipate the intellectual tastes of the readers of our day. It is in the two latter cantos, and especially the last, in which we find his powers completely matured, whether reflective or descriptive. In these cantos he has carried those important elements of poetry to their highest excellence, though of invention, the test of the highest genius, we find no traces. There is throughout a want of cohesion, if we consider "Childe Harold" as an attempt at poetic creation, for the "Childe" is a voice, not a living pilgrim; but if we recognise Lord Byron himself under an alias, narrating what he saw, and expressing in just and vivid language what he felt, we have a poem, the various merit of which it is difficult to over-estimate.

The vigour of description therein displayed is indeed without a parallel; who has equalled, or even approached, the power displayed in stanzas 27, 28, 29 of the fourth canto; in them we see actually brought before us by the magical force of his language, the exquisite and fugitive beauties of an Italian sunset, which would have mocked the pictorial art of Claude or Turner to transfer to canvas. Mere words are made to appeal to the mind more effectively than the consummate skill of the masters of painting could appeal to the sense of vision. Even Homer is here surpassed for a moment, for nowhere does he bring before us so striking and so difficult a phase of nature's ever-varying countenance; not even in the familiar passage in the eighth Rhapsody—

> *Ως δ' οτ' εν ουρανω αστρα φαεινην αμφι σεληνην*
> *Φαινεται αριπρεπεα. κ. τ. λ.*

though it well deserves the homage Byron pays it in the fourth canto of the "Prophecy of Dante"—

> "The kindled marble's bust may wear
> More poesy upon its speaking brow
> Than aught less than the Homeric page may bear."

In stanza 102, canto 3, we even seem to hear and see the busy summer forest life of birds and insects in the woods of Clarens, the rustle of the leaves in the early summer breath of June, and the very plash of Alpine waterfalls; the beautiful living solitude, unspoilt by the intrusion of man, comes before us as if in spirit, or in a dream we were transported to the Swiss wilderness; it is transferred to paper as delicately and with truer colouring than could have been effected by the calotype: but these scenes in their quiet loveliness yet suggest reminiscences of the world which the author and the reader have for a moment forgotten, and the vigorous sketches of Gibbon and Voltaire, who had long lived within sight of that beautiful scenery, come like a cloud over the mind which had just been revelling in the laughing sunshine of a Swiss landscape. Applied to graver scenes, the same matchless power nearly rivals the merit of invention, and when by the lake of Thrasymene (c. iv., vv. 62, 63, 64), he recals the strife that made Rome to reel on her seven-hilled throne, and strove with inexorable fate to reverse her stern decree, the ancient battle comes before us as by a lightning-flash darted into the abysses of the past, as the soldiers of Carthage and of Rome pass before us in their deadly struggle.

Nothing can be more exquisite than the various harmony of the stanzas from 86 to 104 of canto iii.: in these every variety of emotion and of feeling is characterized; of admiration, reverence, love, awe; and in the apostrophe to "Clarens, sweet Clarens," that passion which he felt with so much of its earthly alloy is exalted to a refinement almost unearthly, and to a dignity which truly belongs to it, as in its purity the least selfish of human desires.

Was there ever a tribute to the Divinity of Love so exquisite as that contained in stanza 100 of canto iii.?—

> "O'er the flower
> His eye is sparkling, and his breath hath blown
> His soft and summer breath, whose tender power
> Passes the strength of storms in their most desolate hour."

Such language may fairly excite a rapturous admiration, resembling that which he professes, and only professes to have felt, when beholding the marble loveliness of the Medicean Venus.

But in a different mood, and with feelings disappointed or blunted, he afterwards recurs to this, the dream of youth, and the disenchantment of maturity; and as a warning against the indulgence of that passionate and eager credulity, what homily or

worships his kind are bounded, as we have said, by the limitations which he knows are incident to humanity; idealize as he may, he can never free himself of the belief that no perfect man or woman has ever trod this planet. How, then, is it possible that any one but the ignorant and unreflective can ever feel the glow of genuine devotion when he bows himself to a being whose nature he knows to have been but a fragmentary representative of the ideal of man, or when he worships his best conception of this ideal itself knowing it to be an idol of his own creation? These fatal weaknesses of Positivism have no application to the Theist: the fervour of his adoration is deadened by no secret consciousness that the object of his worship is marred with imperfection; for however great and glorious may be the attributes he ascribes to it, he feels assured that they are infinitely surpassed by the Reality itself.

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Art. II.—Recollections of Shelley and Byron.

Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron. By E. J. Trelawny. London: Edward Moxon. 1858.

MR. TRELAWNY has done well in giving this manly and carelessly written little volume to the world: it will at least revive the personal memory of two Englishmen who, though long dead, can never be altogether of the past. Without telling much of either with which we were not previously acquainted, the information communicated is the result of intimate personal knowledge, and, gathered during the intervals of a familiar acquaintance, comes out with such freshness and vigour, that it possesses nearly all the merit of novelty; and the striking features of character are brought forward in much stronger relief, than in the tame and wearisome biography of which one at least was the victim. It is the least enviable appanage of genius that it perpetuates by its own lustre those faults and weaknesses which repose in the graves of meaner men; the biographer, even though a friend, cannot ignore these; and while he avoids giving them undue prominence, cannot forget that truth has its claims, as well as genius.

We recognise Shelley in these sketches as he appeared in his works—the gentle, guileless, noble soul who persisted in putting himself wrong with the world, and who rashly and fearlessly launched his indignant sarcasm at the cant and bigotry and sel-