

transport oneself back to the age in which he lived.”

Besides these I have but few other remarks to make upon this Canto. Supposing, as I proceed, that you have Dante or Cary's, or Wright's translation at the time upon your table, I shall refer you to two instances of Dante's bold and singular expressions—the one where, in the forest of vices, he says the Sun stands *silent*—and the other where, at the apparition of the Lion, the very air seemed as though it trembled at the breath of his nostrils.

Can Grande della Scala, who is introduced into this Canto under the figure of the greyhound, was the great friend and patron of the poet. You will find in the *Foreign and British Quarterly*, that in the palace of this prince, who was Lord of Verona, were separate apartments allotted to the various characters he received under his hospitality and protection, each apartment being distinguished by some painting emblematic of the occupant—whether warrior, patriot, or poet: and that Dante, in whose conversation and society he took much delight, was one of the few whom he ad-

mitted to the honour of his table. This explains the high encomium he has paid to so generous a patron.

I will not dwell further on this Canto, but pass on to the next, the substance of which likewise may be very shortly summed up. Dante fearing that his strength of mind may prove unequal to so adventurous a task, expostulates with Virgil on the temerity of the undertaking; but being reassured by the animated appeal he makes to him to recall his drooping courage, he once more sets forth under his guidance.

The second Canto thus commences—

“ Now waning was the day, and eve’s imbrowning shades

All living creatures had from toil released,

Reposed they from their weary travail all save I,

Who braced my mind the conflict to sustain

Of journey peril-fraught and sights of woe,

Sights, that unerring to retrace it ne’er can fail.

O Muses! and O Genius! raise me to the theme,

And thou my mind on which stands written all I saw,

Here to the world thy high and noble gifts set forth.”

To this succeeds his expostulation with Virgil on the temerity of attempting such a journey, and

I think both the language and reasoning he employs are equally obscure and in bad taste.

By whose sanction, he asks, is it permitted to me to visit the world of departed spirits? Such permission indeed was granted to *Æneas* by divine authority, because as the predestined founder of Rome and her empire, it was a matter of high importance, that he should there learn the tidings—not only that he was appointed to be the founder of a glorious empire, but of that city which was to be the seat of Christianity at the appointed time, in which the Papal mantle was doomed to bear sway, and where (be it observed) were to be enthroned in the chair of Saint Peter, the proud and ambitious Pontiffs, the successors of humble fishermen. Again he observes, if Saint Paul was snatched up into the third heaven, this was for the purpose of adding a testimony in confirmation of our holy faith. But I, exclaims Dante, am neither an *Æneas* or a Paul: of such honour neither I or others will deem me worthy. Virgil in reply, reproves him for thus giving way to his doubts and misgivings, to that degenerate fear—

“ Which oft times so o'erclouds the wavering soul,
 And turns it from glorious enterprise aside
 As in the dusk the startled animal vain image scares.”

To encourage him he then acquaints him, that
 Beatrix descending from heaven had exhorted
 him to fly to his aid, and relating the conversa-
 tion that had passed between them, he says he
 had asked her how she had ventured to quit her
 mansion in the sky, and descend to the deep
 centre of the nether world. Her answer is not
 to be omitted. She replies,

“ Things should we dread alone, that power possess
 To harm us ; not those objects of vain fear
 That cast their shadows o'er a fear engendering mind.

Thanks ! to my gracious Maker so his pleasure me hath form'd
 That your afflictions touch me not, nor can your flames
 A nature incorruptible as mine assail.”

Beatrix then proceeds to acquaint Virgil, that
 as she sat in Heaven conversing with Rachel of
 the antient days, Lucia had sought her out, and
 informed her of the perilous situation of him
 (Dante), whose love for her on earth had raised
 him above the vulgar crowd, and that on this
 moving invocation to her compassion, she had
 hastened from her seat amidst the blessed choir,

more eagerly than ever mortal had hastened below to seize on fortune or to escape mischance, to confide the cause of her lost friend to Virgil's persuasive tongue. For these reasons, says Virgil, I am now come to thy rescue. Wherefore then swells not thy soul with noble daring, thou who art an object of such solicitude to the blessed in Heaven? I attempt, and merely attempt to give the simile which illustrates the revival of Dante's courage—

“Chill'd by night's breath as tender flowrets droop
And hang their folded heads, but with the sun

Rise on their stalks erect and spread them to his beams.”

So Dante's courage reviving, he calls upon Virgil as his guide and lord to lead him on, and following his steps, enters with him into the windings of a wild and savage glen.

Thus having shortly disposed of the two first cantos, the difficulties of which Mr. Cary has very successfully combated, I purpose in my next to give you a more faithful and detailed account of the succeeding canto.

Believe me, &c.

To Trelawney Tomkinson, Esq.
Land's End, Cornwall.

LETTER VI.

REMARKS ON LITERATURE AS CONNECTED WITH
MORALITY, TOGETHER WITH SOME ON OUR PE-
RIODICALS.

Athenæum Club.

DEAR SIR,

IT must be a subject of deep regret to the lovers of literature to observe that the improvement of the moral sense does not always keep pace with the cultivation of the intellectual faculties—nor does this remark only apply to vulgar and venal writers. Then it were to be the less regretted—but how much is it to be lamented that in a genius of such high order as Byron's, the remark is no less applicable?

Allowing even for a moment that the talents displayed in *Don Juan*, and a certain license permitted to the poet, might be pleaded in apology for the reprehensible passages that are to be found in it,—allowing that these were no proof of a perverted moral sense and that we are not to



judge the private character of the man by the public character of the author : making all these allowances, however unallowable, what opinion *must* we form, in spite of our admiration of Byron's genius, of his want of a moral sense when we read his private letters, and particularly those addressed to his biographer ? Certainly it was no compliment to any man to address letters like these to him : and certainly no proof of discretion in a friend thus to throw light on the character of a brother poet. Yet destitute of a moral sense, as we are compelled to consider the noble poet, both from his poetry and confidential letters, he could recognize in the Bowles controversy, that this constituted one of Pope's claims to immortality. Cowper, however, was infinitely a more moral poet than Pope ; but as perhaps the morality of Cowper was of too high an order to find favor in the eyes of Byron, Cowper he decried as a poet. Did he ever read those splendid lines which the poet applied to his own unhappy state, and commencing,

“ And thou sad sufferer under nameless ill,” *

and concluding,

“ And thou enjoy an Eden e'er it fails,”

than which I doubt if there be any thing more beautiful in the whole range of English poetry? Cowper assuredly *was* a poet, though Byron has denied him that honour, and will most probably survive even that noble bard.

Rare, however, I am rejoiced to say, is the misalliance of immorality with genius of the highest order. A few instances only can I call to mind, and not amongst these are to be found the greatest and highest names of Homer, Dante, Milton, Shakespear, Spenser, Virgil, Racine, Corneille, Moliere, Schiller, Cervantes. But must I not forget, among those who have adorned our age, one who is now no more, Mrs. Hemans, for alas! “ *Cosa bella passa e non dura*”—in whom with the very inspiration of poetry was united a pure and holy feeling, that so nobly distinguishes her from venal poetasters of amatory sonnets, and maudlin sentiment, these “flesh flies of the land,” as they are denounced in the indignant language of Cowper. The time, however, has happily gone by, when poetry of such a stamp as this receives encouragement—it must

be something of such sterling merit as “von Artveldt,” to suit the more manly taste of the day, and such poetasters as these have now been driven to take up other ground, dabbling in history and politics, dabbling in religion, dabbling in biography, always superficial and ill-judging in whatever they attempt or execute.

The literature of the present day indeed in general has this superficial character, and is too hastily struck off to promise much endurance. Instead of devoting years to a single subject of which the author gives himself full time to understand all its bearings and details (Col. Napier's history of the Peninsula forms a brilliant exception to these mushroom productions), we find the same writer in the course of a few months “playing many parts” and displaying a very mountebank versatility of talent—but what cares *he* for the endurance of his work, or the judgment of posterity? He writes for himself, not for others, and provided he can sell his work and enjoy a fleeting and lucrative popularity, he has not scribbled in vain.

It has been remarked, that the enormously

increasing number of our Periodicals has tended much to fritter away the talents of our best writers, and to seduce them from devoting themselves to solid works of literature. I think the remark is just. And as I have now touched upon the subject of Periodicals, you will perhaps allow me to venture some remarks on them. I must say I regret whenever I find them deviating from their legitimate object, that of literature, and launching out into politics with all the rage of party violence. It has become a modern practise for Reviewers to place two or three political pamphlets at the head of an article as a stalking horse, and thus to seize the opportunity of entering into an elaborate statement of their own opinions. If these "learned Thebans" who set themselves up as our schoolmasters *will* deviate into politics, let them at least enlighten and instruct us—let them at least handle the subject with calm and dispassionate wisdom, and assuming a commanding eminence like Dante's sages in the Elysian fields

"dall' un de' canti

In luogo aperto luminoso e alto"

deliver 'ex cathedrâ' lectures worthy of philosophers and historians.

As to the swarms of our monthly reviews, excepting Blackwood's and the New Monthly, (perhaps you may except some other,) they may best be described as belonging to the Cockney school, corrupting our literature with their forced conceits, and attempting to enrich our language with such words as 'Talented,' 'Graphic,' 'Twaddle,' &c. &c. I am sorry whenever I find these new coinages adopted by writers of a class superior to that of the inventors, and I fear it affords a proof that our language is gradually declining from the manly simplicity and strength of the writers of our Augustan age of literature, to which decline has much contributed the deluge of yearly novels, and the tinsel and effeminate stile they have introduced among us. And now for the present I bid you farewell and remain, &c.

To Trelawney Tomkinson, Esq.
Land's End, Cornwall.

* And thou sad sufferer under nameless ill
That yields not to the touch of human skill,

Improve the kind occasion, understand
 A father's frown, and kiss his chastening hand.
 To thee the day-spring and the blaze of noon
 The purple evening and resplendent moon,
 The stars, that sprinkled o'er the vault of night
 Seem drops descending in a shower of light,
 Shine not, or undesir'd and hated shine
 Seen thro' the medium of a cloud like thine :
 Yet seek him, in his favour life is found
 And all beside a shadow and a sound ;
 Then Heaven eclips'd so long, and this dull Earth,
 Shall seem to start into a second birth ;
 Nature assuming a more lovely face
 Borr'wing a beauty from the works of grace,
 Shall be despised and overlook'd no more,
 Shall fill thee with delights unfelt before,
 Impart to things inanimate a voice,
 And bid her mountains and her hills rejoice ;
 The sound shall run along the winding vales,
 And thou enjoy an Eden ere it fails.

COWPER'S RETIREMENT.

LETTER VII.

ANALYSIS OF DANTE CONTINUED.

DEAR SIR,

I THINK that this third Canto to which I am going to introduce you will give you a truer idea of Dante's genius than the two first, with which I did not long detain your attention. This I shall not treat in the same cursory manner.

We left the poet following the steps of his guide through the turnings of a wild and savage glen. Without adding another word upon their journey, Dante immediately enters 'in medias res,' and thus commences the succeeding canto :

“ I, to a city lead ye that for ever weeps
I, to the realms of endless torment and of woe
I, to the sinful race for ever and for aye accurst.
Mov'd by his justice my high founder me uprear'd
Of might divine and wisdom's height supreme
And love primæval, awful monument I stand.
'Ere things created were, created I arose,
Save those that are eternal, and eternal I endure ;
Ah ! ye who enter hope for ever leave behind.”

Such are the words that Dante beholds in darkly traced characters inscribed over the threshold of a lofty gateway, the awful entrance to hell. You will observe in the original the stern brevity of these terrible words, and the wailing cadence of the versification. I shall now subjoin three French translations of this celebrated passage, together with Cary's—

“ C'est ici, de l'Enfer le passage effroyable
 C'est ici, le chemin vers la race coupable
 C'est ici, le séjour du crime, et des tourments.
 L'Eternel en jeta les sacrés fondements.
 La Sagesse et l'Amour gouvernent sa puissance,
 Sa justice m'a fait servir pour sa vengeance ;
 Je fus avant tout, et n'aurai point de fin :
 Vous qu'amènent ici les ordres du destin,
 Sur le seuil en entrant, déposez l'espérance,
 Ces mots étoient tracés sur des portes d'airain.”

CHABANON.

“ C'est moi, qui vis tomber les légions rebelles,
 C'est moi, qui vis passer les races criminelles ;
 C'est par moi qu'on arrive aux douleurs éternelles.
 La main qui fit les cieus posa mes fondements
 J'ai de l'homme et du jour précédé la naissance,
 Et je dure au delà des temps,
 Entre qui que tu sois, et laissez l'esperance.”

RIVAROL.

“ Par moi seule, on arrive a la cité des pleurs ;
 Par moi seule, on entend le long cri des douleurs ;
 Par moi seule, on parcourt les régions du crime ;
 La justice inspire l'architecte sublime
 Qui me créa sans fin ; son amour immortel
 La suprême Sagesse, et surtout sa puissance
 N'ont rien fait avant moi, qui ne soit éternel.
 Vous que je vois entrer, laissez toute espérance.”

TERRASSON.

Of the three I give the palm to Rivarol.

“ Through me you pass into the city of woe ;
 Through me you pass into the city of pain ;
 Through me among the people lost for aye.
 Justice the founder of my fabric mov'd :
 To rear me was the task of power divine,
 Supremest wisdom, and primæval love ;
 Before me things create were none, save things
 Eternal, and eternal I endure,
 All hope abandon ye, who enter here.”—CARY.

Here I observe Mr. Cary has omitted a word and that not an unimportant one. Dante says “ mio *alto* fattore.” Mr. Cary “ the founder of my fabric.”

Virgil after explaining to Dante that they are now arrived at the entrance of the sorrowful regions, bids him master every lurking fear in his

heart, and taking him by the hand ushers him into the dread world of mystery and torment.

“ Then heard I sighs re-echoing thro’ that starless air,
 And wailings bitter, and deep heart-fetch’d groans
 That as I enter’d first my eyes did flood with tears.
 Tongues of all nations, and blasphemings fierce,
 And anger’s ravings, and chok’d words of grief,
 Voices, hoarse, loud, and beatings of despairing hands
 A din of tumult caus’d, that ne’er did cease
 That ever haze ting’d atmosphere to circle through,
 Like that o’er sandy beach when by the tempest swept.”

With his head whirling and bewilder’d with these appalling sounds, Dante asks his guide, what sounds are these, and who are those unfortunates who seem so vanquished by their grief? He answers him, they are that vile and worthless race upon earth, those selfish souls, neither notorious for vice, nor redeemed from oblivion by the practice of a single virtue.

“ Confounded with that caitiff crew they stand
 Of fallen angels, who not rebels were
 Nor faithful to their Maker; serving but themselves.
 Heav’n cast them, faded in their beauty, from her forth
 And Hell against them clos’d its jaws profound,—
 The damn’d with such vile miscreants scorn’d to mate.

But master, what grief so heavy, from them, thus draws forth
 Lamentings of such loud and piercing note?
 He answer'd, I will tell thee; and will so in fewest words.
 Hope have they none, not e'en sad hope of Death—
 While here so vile and grovelling is their state,
 That every doom, they would, for this woe-weariness exchange.
 So scorn'd on earth their names no tongue records,
 Disdain'd by justice and by clemency alike
 Waste we not breath upon them—but pass on and mark."

Upon these fallen angels mentioned by Dante who were neither rebels or faithful servants of their Maker, I find the following note in Monsieur Artaud. "Rivarol observes that it is not known from whence he derived the idea of them: but Lombardi says it might have been from these words which occur in Clemens' Alexandrinus 'Novit quoque aliquos ex angelis propter socordiam humi esse lapsos, &c.' We hasten, however, to the ingenious remark of Monsieur Ginguéné. There has been much discussion (he says) respecting this third species of Angels. May we not with reason suppose, that Dante accustomed to the perpetual movement of a republick, in which the opposite parties were perpetually clashing together, intended to point out

to merited contempt those publick men who when the interests of their country were at stake, preserved a cowardly neutrality, and shunned the sacrifices imposed upon them by a sense of public duty, and the perils that their country had a right to expect they would not flinch from in her service—but who instead of taking manfully a decided part, reserved themselves ever ready to side with the victor.”

But I proceed with the text. Dante beholds a flag whirling round with such rapidity that it seemed to disdain a moment's pause, and following it trooped along such multitudes that he could never have imagined the hand of Death had despoiled so many bodies of the living. And after he had cast his eyes awhile around, he beheld the shade of him (Pope Celestine) who recreantly renounced his solemn charge.

“ Then knew I, and that instant flash'd upon my mind
 That here upon that miscreant crew I look'd
 By God and by his enemies alike abhorr'd.
 These outcasts who when living never lived,
 All naked unto swarming wasps and hornets stood
 Who buzzing ever round them gored them with their stings.

As trickling coursed adown their cheeks the blood
 Mixt with their tears it flow'd down to their feet
 And there by famish'd worms was greedily lapp'd up."

I stop to protest against the justice of Dante's condemning Pope Celestine to a place in his Hell, for no charge could be assigned against him but that of natural imbecility, and surely this is no more a crime, than strength of mind is of itself a virtue; since Providence bestows her gifts upon us or denies them, and therefore natural infirmity of mind can never be a vice, any more than the possession of talent a virtue.

But I must give you some account of this unfortunate Pontiff. Pietro Moroni, for such was his name, was a solitary devotee who was dragged from his mountain hermitage, to ascend the chair of St. Peter, as Cincinnatus from his plough to assume the purple of the Dictatorship. He appears to have been an illiterate old man, weak in intellect, attenuated by fasting, and wholly unacquainted with the world and mankind. After a brief possession of his irksome dignity of five months, he pronounced his solemn resignation, and for the remainder of his days was

kept in strict confinement by the watchful jealousy of his successor Boniface VIII.

The motives which urged him to this abdication are thus stated in the history of the Church Part XIV. (Library of Useful Knowledge). "I am told that I possess all power over souls in this world—why is it I cannot assure myself of the safety of mine own? that I cannot rid myself of all these anxieties, and impart to my own breast that repose which I can dispense so easily to others? Does God require from me that which is impossible; or has he only raised me to cast me down more terribly? I observe the Cardinals divided, and I hear from every side complaints against me. Is it not better to burst my chains and to resign the Holy See to some one who can rule it in peace? if only I could be permitted to quit this place and return to my solitude."

After all it is only a presumption that Pope Celestine is here indicated, and as Dante had perhaps more correct notions of morality than all his Commentators put together, the probability is that "l'ombra di colui che fece per viltate il

gran rifinto," refers to some one else. For my own part I confess the Apostle Saint Peter himself, who denied his master, thrice, "per viltate," seems to me to be quite as worthy of this honour as the unfortunate Pope who was so anxious for the care of his own soul, that he resigned all the pomps and vanities of the Tiara.

But to proceed with Dante, he beholds a throng of spirits assembled on a mighty river's bank, and enquiring who they are, and why they are so eager to pass over, Virgil answers him this shall be explained to him on his reaching the banks of the Acheron. Dante feeling this as a reproof of his importunity, proceeds in silence and opens not again his lips until they arrive at the river.

"And lo! appear'd towards us steering in a bark
 A wrinkled eld all grey with snow of age,
 Who at our sight, cried, woe to ye depraved souls!
 Hope not such as ye the light of Heav'n to see;
 I come to bear ye over to the other shore,
 Where reigns eternal darkness, never ceasing heat and cold.
 And thou presumptuous living man that standest here,
 Begone, and get thee from the dead apart—
 But when he saw, my foot I moved not to depart—

Hence by another boat, and port thou shalt embark

For here, he said, 't is not permitted thee to cross,

This is no bark to bear a living man as thou.

Why cried my guide, O Charon chafe thy spirit thus ?

On high it is ordain'd, where that which is ordain'd

Fulfill'd must be ; obey, and further question cease.

Then straight that livid lake's grim ferryman, his cheeks

With rage inflated, and with down o'erspread, becalm'd,

And sunk the fire that circling lighted up his eyes.

But those woe-weary naked spirits of the dead

Soon as they heard these cruel words let fall, [ground.

Chang'd colour and their knocking teeth against each other

Blaspheming 'gainst their maker, and their parents broke they

The human race entire, their hour and place of birth, [forth,

Their children and their children's offspring yet unborn.

With piteous moanings then they huddled in a throng towards

That river's banks accursed, whereon each soul

That fears not God is lingering doom'd to wait.

Charon fell fiend, with eyes like living coal that glow'd,

Each with his finger beckoning them collects

Whoe'er doth loiter onward with uplifted oar he drives.

* As drop the leaves in autumn, leaf succeeding leaf,

Till to its parent earth the bough all stript and bare,

Returns its wither'd spoils, so did that evil race

From Adam sprung, thus in like manner drop

From off the bank by turn, at his stern call,

As flocks of birds by fowler to his net allur'd."

Virgil now answers Dante's question, why these



poor ghosts are so eager to embark. The terrors of the living God spur them on, and the dread of that behind prevails over every fear of the place of torment to which they are to be conducted.

Thus spake my guide, when so 'gan rock and quake
 That murky region, that my heart still melts
 With fear, as o'er it the remembrance flits.
 And from that land of tears, forthsprung a stormy blast
 Which flashing crimson lightnings in my eyes
 My reeling senses so with stupor overcame,
 That fell I to the earth as one whom sleep o'ertakes.

I now subjoin a French translation of the simile marked with the Asterisk.

“ Quand l'Automne jaunit les feuilles desséchés,
 Tour à tour on les voit de leur tige arrachées
 Tomber, couvrir la terre, et l'arbre dans les airs
 Eleve un front hideux, symbole des hivers, &c.”

CHABANON.

The simile is taken from Virgil.

“ Quam multa in silvis autumnis frigore primo,
 Lapsa cadunt folia, aut ad terram gurgite ab alto
 Quam multæ glomerantur aves, ubi frigidus annus, &c.”

Now I presume those very sharp-sighted Literati who have discovered the wonderful resemblance

between Dante and Virgil, have founded their opinion upon such parallel passages as these. Why upon the very same principle they might have observed how very like Virgil himself is to Homer and again Tasso to Virgil. A grain of common sense is worth all the lucubrations of such mere pedants.

I remain, &c.

To Trelawney Tomkinson, Esq.

Land's End, Cornwall.

LETTER VIII.

Granada, Sept. 15th.

JOURNEY FROM SEVILLE TO GRANADA—GRANADA—
CONSIDERATIONS ON THE CRISIS OF SPANISH
AFFAIRS.

DEAR SIR,

I ARRIVED here without accident about a week since. The inn in which I am housed, del Comercio, is kept by a Maltese, the waiter and cook are Frenchmen, and my laquais de place a native of Majorca. The window of my room looks to a hill opposite cut into terraces, rising one above the other, studded with houses and fruit gardens, and the summit is crowned with the square towers of the Alhambra, the ancient palace of the Moorish kings.

But before I give you a description of Granada I must enter into the details of my journey hither from Seville. I left that city September 3rd, alone in the Berlina of the Madrid Diligence, which was drawn by eight mules, with a postil-