



TOMKINSON

THE
INQUISITOR

LONDON 1846



Paul Otter
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an account of a journey through
Spain interspersed with an
analysis of Dante!



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THE INQUISITOR ;

OR,

CONTENTS OF VOLUME I.

A VIEW OF MANY THINGS.

BY

TRELAWNEY TOMKINSON, ESQ.

O never like blind harper will I woo in rhyme ;
Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,
Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,
Figures pedantical ; - these summer flies,
I do forswear them !

LOVE'S LABOUR LOST.

LONDON :

JOHN MACRONE.

1846.

THE INQUIRER

A VIEW OF MANY THINGS

THE BELLWARY TOMLINSON, ESQ.

I do forget them
Purses pedantical, these common lies
These called hysterical, spurious affections
I have the blind paper will I was in rhyme
I have phrases, often terms phrases

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.

LONDON:

JOHN WAGBONE.

1846



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THE INQUISITOR.

LETTER I.

ON THE POPULAR LITERATURE OF THE DAY—ITS PLAGIARISMS—MULTITUDINOUS CHARACTER—NOVELS—TRAVELS—OF A NEW SPECIES OF LITERATURE.

Athenæum Club.

MY DEAR SIR,

You are pleased to express a wish to enlist me among the number of your various correspondents. I, therefore, purpose in fulfilment of the task, to collect together, as well as I am able, some scattered thoughts on the popular literature of the day, pretending to nothing more than to skim the surface of a subject so multifarious. For whose single shoulders could be equal to the Herculean task of entering into its details, in an age in which it seems as though the powers of steam were applied to the hatching of books as to the hatching of eggs; when authors are hourly

bursting into life like the ephemeral insects of a summer sunshine, when book begets book, and readers are so precociously making their debut as writers?

First of these ephemeral swarms burst upon us, the small fry of poetasters, who following in the wake of Byron, and affecting to be moody and melancholy like that noble bard, poured forth their imaginary woes to us in Spenserian stanzas. As Horace observes, the servile herd of imitators would have drank hellebore, had Byron drank hellebore before them. Next came the imitators of the brilliant and successful example of the great unknown, and now alas! the mighty deceased; and surfeited us with innumerable historical romances.

About this time likewise, science had its day. From the vivifying warmth of the Library of Useful Knowledge, sprung forth a progeny of little works on subjects of science, few of them alas! in sixpenny Numbers, but five and even ten shilling Duodecimos, the greater part of which were compiled by mere parrots in science, borrowing a shred here, and a patch there, and

abounding in blunders and errors for the instruction of the uninitiated in the onomies and ologies. Many were the valuable original works which I believe were superseded by this multitude of worthless specimens of literary mosaic work.

We must acknowledge with gratitude, however, that Sir J. Herschell, Mr. Babbage, and Mrs. Somerville, the lights of science, vindicated the cause of cheap knowledge, which must ever be a blessing where it is not superficial. Dr. Ure favoured us with a guinea work on geology, which, barring the plates, was worth sixpence. Mr. Lyall, however, has since favoured us with his volumes, most eloquently written, which will save us a guinea so ill bestowed. Dr. Arnold's *Physics*, likewise, is no catch-guinea work, but the work of original genius as well as of science.

But pass we on to the literary deluge, to the endemic of the day, to the tribe of boudoir butterflies, to the influenza which not only affects our aged spinsters and our young ones, as is natural, but our peers and our peeresses, our M. P's. and even our cabinet ministers.

Oh! this novel writing! that amongst our

great men, we should have had a novel writing Governor of the Ionian Isles, that we should still have a novel writing Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, when surely the crisis demanded a man of somewhat 'sterner stuff' to vindicate the majesty of insulted law! Can we ever have one of softer mood? Unless perchance we have a dancing one.

But how have I the presumption to dip into this mighty subject, I, who after turning over twenty pages only of three volumes, and finding one idea to recompense me, ungratefully fling back the volume to the table from whence I had taken it? Oh! this 'snivelling and drivelling folly without end,' concocted by vacant minds to divert the '*tædium vitæ*' of minds as vacant as their own.

I confess there are few through which my patience has enabled me to labour. The inimitable tales of the excellent Miss Edgeworth (if to be classed under this species of works) I have read, and Captain Marryatt's and Chamier's tales, which are cast in a manly mould, and the humorous and witty satires on the vulgarities of the 'little people,' as the great Rothschild would call

them, by Theodore Hook, and I have laughed over the Sketches by Boz—but never could I get through these pictures of the follies and vices of fashionable life, in which the writers (who may or may not belong to the circles they describe) veil their real motive under but a thin disguise.

For what object do they lay open the drawing-rooms of the vapid world of fashion? To reform the corruption of our manners? or to shew off their wit (if any they have)? Do they care to reform either others or themselves by thrusting forth their little stings? Or do they write to pander to malignant passions for their own profit, and perhaps to give vent to their own over-boiling spleen and mortification? I speak of such as shew their modicum of talent—for as to those who write from mere idleness and from vanity, or from a fit of the spleen and a long course of physic (one of Swift's receipts to make an author), they rest secure under the shelter of that oblivious mediocrity, which neither Gods, nor men, nor columns will record.

Thus briefly let us dismiss them, 'non ragiam di lor,' but pass on to another class of literateurs,

who in these 'piping times of peace,' are most liberally showering their favours on us; viz. travelling authors or book-making travellers.

For the present year we have one who has gained no very enviable notoriety, and particularly since that mild and cutting rebuke of Mr. Landor's, in the postscript to his last new work. I allude to a poet, reviewer, diplomatist, and traveller of Transatlantic fame, the author of *Pencillings by the Way*, to which I will suggest to him an appropriate motto for a third edition. 'Tollens vacuum plus nimio Gloria verticem, Arcanique fides perlucidior vitro.'

By christening his peregrinations in various countries by the name of *Pencillings*, we are to presume that it was a hasty production, and that with his pencil in one hand and his album in the other, he rattled away, and forthwith 'ere he had time soberly to review the work, sent it to be immortalized in printers' ink. Now this is a nice book to take up at some reposing hour after dinner, I allow, for this reason, that there is nothing so solid and deep as to interfere with digestion. Verily the reader who takes up the *Pencillings*,

will not find that he has lighted on the travels of a De Humboldt.

Very lightly and smoothly canters the citizen of the United States over his ground, occasioning but this perplexity to the reader, after following him through some hundred pages of polished and emasculated prose, namely, what, after all his trouble, he knows more of the countries he has been whisked over, than of the regions of the moon, and the various people who inhabit Jupiter, Mars, and Venus? With such a dearth of intelligence of countries which he wishes to know something about, he will glean some most surprizing information of his own. It is upon the authority of this pencilling gentleman, that during a visit with which he honoured a Scotch nobleman at his country seat, his host ('mirabile dictu!') descended to the breakfast-table in the deshabelle of his shooting-jacket, which was still more surprizing, as, I believe, it happened in the month of October. But the account of the literary symposium, at which the author had the honor of assisting, discloses facts still more extraordinary; viz. that a certain French Count is

the very beau ideal of gentlemanly taste and fashion in dress. Brummel remarked, that no one who elicited a stare in the streets, had hit the thing precisely,—but let that pass. An American reviewer, is doubtless the best judge of gentlemanly stile in dress. There is another interesting fact likewise, which he states was communicated to him by his hostess; viz. that this magnus Apollo of his had a peculiar predilection to the tune of Yankidoodle; which was, I presume, a joke of her ladyship's. But enough of the Pencillings.

The next work which has created a kind of sensation, is a two-volumed and expensive two months' residence in Paris, set off with caricatures, as places of refreshment to the reader through one thousand pages, by Mrs. Trollope, authoress of a witty and sarcastic book entitled, 'Domestic Manners of the Americans,' and various others works which have failed to create any sensation at all.

'Paris and the Parisians,' is intended to depict a faithful portrait of la jeune France, for Mrs. T., it is well known is a politician,

being the Thalestris of the Tory party as Lady M—— is the Penthesilea of the Liberal. Both of these ladies seem to travel for their respective political parties—each to possess the pen of a ready writer, and each to exhibit a dash of flippancy here and there.

The former amidst much tedious gossip, such as hatching up various stories to gull the most gullible of the Ultra Tories, occasionally favors us with some sensible remarks, and must upon the whole be considered a clever writer—nor does she shew a want of that sense of propriety in which the liberal lady has always shewn herself to be so lamentably deficient, though her pretensions to any extraordinary degree of gentility seem to be rather questionable.

We have two books of travels this year from the young American, and I must confess it excites my admiration that in both cases he has managed to compile two volumes, on tours of only two months after the example of Mrs. Trollope. The Booksellers, however, tell you that one volume will never pay the expense of advertisements. This may account for the num-

ber of pages being so disproportioned to the time, in the works of Tourists.

We must do this author the justice to acknowledge that he is very entertaining, besides possessing the rare merit of being free from affectation. He does not sicken us with vulgar boastings of introductions to great personages; furnishing the information he gives us of the manners of the people among whom he travels, from the middling and lower classes of society, and the manners of these classes alone possess the charm of novelty and variety, (those of the Aristocracy being cut upon much the same pattern throughout Europe) and throw a light upon national character. He appears to have rather a strong penchant to caricature and exaggeration, and is a desperate connoisseur in the beauty of female forms and ladies' legs.

Mr. Inglis who is now dead, has been much commended for his tour in Ireland. The only work, however, of his I ever read was his Spain, and it was such a prosy, pompous, conceited production, written in such an affected stile, with the word 'charming' ever on his pen, which I

took the pains to count seven times in a single page, that I had never the inclination to face any of his volumes a second time. Full of gross mis-statements, numbers of which I could point out if worth while, he is termed in Fraser's Magazine the most mendacious of Spanish travellers. I presume in his account of Ireland he was somewhat on his guard, through apprehension of detection. A terra incognita like Spain some years back was a fine field for the Munchausen school.

Perhaps you have observed how naturally works of fiction seem to agree with those of travels. Thus, Mr. Willis, Mr. Inglis, Dr. Maddan, Mrs. Trollope, Lady Morgan, and I know not how many others have all two strings to their bow, shooting at us one year a tour, and the next a novel; and yet these two species of literature appear to me to demand very different qualities. Into this subject, however, I am not going to enter. I would merely beg leave to caution travel writers against affectation, (very allowable in novellists) by which many a tourist