

have rested upon their level summit, and if they are afterwards concerted together by the soft materials of the secondary strata, in this situation they must still have remained horizontal.

Samure, in describing the puddling of the Valerius, near the sources of the Arno, tells us that he was astonished to find it in beds almost vertical, a situation in which it could not possibly have been formed. "That particles," he adds, "of extreme tenacity, suspended in a fluid, might become agglutinated, and form

vertical beds, is a thing that may be conceived; but that pieces of stone, of several pounds weight, should have rested on the side of a perpendicular wall till they were enveloped in a strong cement and united into one mass, is a supposition impossible and absurd." It should be considered, therefore, as a thing demonstrated, that this puddling was formed in a horizontal position, or one nearly such, and elevated after its induration.

(To be continued.)

SOME REMARKS ON THE MODERN SYSTEM OF POETRY.

THE poets of former times may be called the concentrators, and those of the present time the expanders or diluters. It was formerly thought an excellence in a poet to strive, but now-a-days, a poet seems to desire nothing better than to flow. Dryden and Pope thought it little less than a crime to carry a meaning beyond the conclusion of a couplet, or of a certain musical arrangement of complete; but many of our poets now, do not seem to regard the loss of music to their lines, half so much as the necessity of expressing their meaning even at the risk of losing the music altogether. There has been no greater number of music to the flow of words than Lord Byron, and in one of his pamphlets, in the howler's controversy, he has confessed his fault. But with him it was less a fault than with any other writer. All who have ever considered his character will confess that had his thoughts submitted to the handle of the most musical compiler, he had the talent for putting such a bridge on them; but though he had the talent, his thoughts did not allow him the power; in their force and rapidity of execution, they carried him away with them—they made his versification subservient to themselves—they showed that while he versified faster than perhaps any man that ever attempted it, he thought a thousand times more quickly than he versified. His rhythms seem often, not the rule, but the means, as rhythms are generally, but trammels on his flood of intellect. But then there is everywhere a redoubting awe for any temporary neglect of the usual music; there is everywhere a powerful rush of thought that shows us that it is not carelessness that produces the neglect of rhythm, but an absolute impossibility to interrupt

the progress of the tide. Along with the most amazing freedom, or, if we may use the expression, the most surprising volubility of verse, what point, what nerve, what vigor does not Lord Byron exhibit? It is seldom we meet with a mind at once so blazed with strength and power to use it. A strong mind is generally troubled with the weight of its own impressions, like a giant, who, while he wields a ponderous mass, shows by the heave with which he raises it, that it is difficult to wield even by his tremendous arm; but Lord Byron flourishes the club of Hercules with the ease and gracefulness of a fencer's foil.

Though his lordship has shown that he was rather trammelled by rhyme than musick, he has made but sorry work in some instances where he has abandoned rhyme altogether. We are not here about to enter on a review of his tragedies, but merely to remark, as we proceed, the phenomenon of Lord Byron's blank verse. We could not have believed, although his name is affixed to the tragedy, that they were written by him, if there were not an universal assent to the statement.— Indeed we know three or four literary gentlemen of no mean powers, and not over and above successful in most matters, who will not believe that Lord Byron is the author of these tragedies; nay, we have some ideas that they would hesitate to believe the assertion from the mouth of his lordship himself. But if these tragedies be written by the same pen and the same hand as *Childe Harold*, they display few proofs of identity of mind. There never was a more extraordinary proof of the difference between almost despising certain laws or rules, and being really free from them. In innumerable in-

stances the metre of his lordship's blank verse is doubtful, and in many it is decidedly wrong; and instead of the mere succession of energetic thought which we meet with in his other poems, there is often such a milk and water rambling of unconnected wildness, that we have involuntarily laid down the book with an expression of wonder that the same author could be so strong and so powerless, even in the greatest possible lapse of time. His lordship can write good blank verse.— Some parts of his *Mansfield* show this; but these tragedies seem to say, his good blank verse comes so seldom, that for his own sake he had better not write any more of it.

These remarks on his lordship's blank verse, however, are parenthetical, and we must proceed to the main purpose of our observations. His lordship's looseness of versification—his railing "straight on to the Propaganda," has procured him a host of imitators. They do not see that their imitating the manner of the flood will never communicate its force—they do not see that when little streams pretend to overflow their banks, they are washing the waters that would have been forcible within their natural limits, while rivers like the Rhone sometimes naturally rise over their boundaries from the overwhelming rapidly of their course. Such imitators are worse than the frog that tried to swell itself into an ox. The frog's ideas of size were so contracted, that it seems to have thought it was of the destined bulk long before it burst. The frog's ignorance was in its favor; but these imitators must know, that while they copy what is occasioned by Lord Byron's force of intellect, they are merely copying the defective consequence and not the animating cause—they are merely like those vile imitators of *Kean's* acting, who screw their throats into a semblance of his croak, without thinking for a moment of the soul, the reading fury of whose passions had made the actor hoarse.

There is another reason for the frequent occurrence of these imitations of Lord Byron. It is much easier to string a number of verses, one after the other, with little music but the rhyme at the end of each line, than it is to make each line have, as it were, a balanced regularity of sound in itself, and in company with its predecessor, or that which is to come after it. We

have a moral conviction that the great or facility with which such verse is written, was the cause of Leigh Hunt's writing in this manner, and the cause of John Keats, Barry Cornwall, and a number of our modern poets, having followed the same example. And yet how different are they from Byron!—They are chiefly of a milk school—of a class that delight in love and softness and fine Italian scenery. When they draw painful emotions, they are generally not hurried, but sorrow; not wrath, but tears; not madness or ferocity, but gentle despair and tremulous chidings. Their poetry is not of the kind that carries away, that would in itself apologise for the breaking down of rhyme, or defend a running on of the sense over nine or ten lines together. As well might we expect the beams of the sun to sweep away a bridge, or the zephyrs to throw down a stone wall, as for their verse to have any necessity for such apparent overflowing. All their feelings and beauties are tenderness, might have been as well expressed in better verse—that is, in verses formed more fully according to the rules of art by which versification was in former days generally understood to be regulated.

The system of carrying off the meaning through a whole stanza, (say of eight lines) however, has produced its evils upon Lord Byron himself.— There is no man who so seriously considers the effect of the flourish (the variation of *Beppo*, *Don Juan*, and similar poems, but must consider them an evil to our national poetry. Leaving all the disputes that have been raised about the morality of such productions, every person who has a true spirit of poetry about him must look upon them as a sort of poetical out-lets, which, however excellent they may be in part, are not to be set up as models, but rather avoided as examples of bad taste. What is excellent in them, let the reader observe, does not belong to the system which has been followed in their composition, but rather comes in spite of it.— These excellencies are specimens of more attention to art, and are introduced by the mere idle, trifling, detestable practice which these poems in general exhibit. They may arise from the poet's happy humour at the moment, for which he certainly does not wait in the course of such a poem, or,

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is much more probable, they are ways which the poet has actually taken up to a higher tone from a commonness that has been before away his time, would not be sent by the public without these

“*alter et perperam per-*”) a striking piece or two to keep in good humour.

is a feeling with which man will always be impressed—the work of labor. The feeling of labor has a great existence towards as it has coversis great calculations; and, indeed, not infrequently appeared to us chief reason why the verification of a strong proof of the action having occupied much of the mind and body of the poet. But Bergeon, Jeanes, and so forth, can be taken for greater proofs of works of idleness than of labor— are without plan, or rather the only appears once in twenty or so, more in the shape of an than the actual subject of the they are for the most part in a verse—that is, such verse that is obliged to read from line to the end of the sentence, which do year rated more the scenes—reading prose on titles than good problem—the poet does not select every or the subjects of his good sense, but rather collects them in good Don Juan is confessedly, in judges, a congregation of com-masters)—and when collected, re far more like the gathered-up of Court Garden market than suggests or wreaths from which a good taste would desire to ornament.

may be told here, that these are of a poor genus, and should be neglected in themselves and not sent to others. But we observe them both as compared to and as a new genus, if they are. They are doubtless very to a man who takes them up and the heap of huddled-logs contradiction they contain, and lay them down without for an instant of any thing but every entertainment. But if we to be considered as a new what is their merit? Is it that we introduced subjects and ver-

alike into poetry, which were always before thought too vulgar for such introduction? Is it that they have confounded and opposed comic and tragic feelings, fine and coarse ideas, poetical and prosaic phraseology? If these be their merits, and I can see no other which separate them from the rest of poetry, (unless it be that universal jumble in them which makes one as certain of being informed as to the subject at the 39th stanza as at the first,) will such qualifications stand before any man who has a correct notion of poetry at all? They will fall down before every judicious art that renders art itself immortal—they will fall down and perish.

But it is impossible justly to examine such works as having a pretension to be reckoned under a new classification, and yet not to compare them with the works of others. It is only by comparing works that we can ever know what rank any individual work can hold. And with that work will these tragic-comic, Japhet-scrapin-lucubrations bear a comparison? No poet would allow his volutes to stand by the side of such idle flourishes, even though of able pen. (Compare them, then, according to the kind of poetry we find in them—the comic will of itself hardly bear comparison, because all former comic poets wrote with something like industry, but the comic portions of these poems are generally only comic because the authors were too lazy to make them otherwise;—the comic of rhymes, because the authors took the first rhymes that suggested themselves, and made that vulgarly laughable which could not be made of Court Garden market than station, because the authors had exhausted the serious part of the stanza at the 7th line, and nothing came immediately to the imagination but—batter—Mr. Mann, of London—or something equally comic because common. The serious part of these poems is often excellent, but there is no occasion to compare that to any other poem—it need not be compared to it in the serious parts of Don Juan that the author has most frequently abandoned his system of jumping from line to line; there is still occasionally a portion of that system, but it is not so constantly employed—it is only the freedom of Childs Harold transferred to another poem.

The fault of this free, proing, straight-forward system, heinous of the ends of lines, or any thing but the sense, or the number of syllables, are seen even in Lord Byron himself, but still more in a horde of thoughtless young versifiers, who, conceiving they have found an easy road to Parnassus, strike into the very way they should not have followed.

We will put a question that we are persuaded Lord Byron himself would answer in the negative, had he been as much wedded to Pope as he has praised him.—We could he have descended to Don Juan, if he had adhered strictly to the rules of his art as Pope? To say he would, were in itself a contradiction. The regularity, the undulating elegance, the music of cadence to which Pope bound himself, were not assumed to be thrown off; they were so constant that they became necessary distinctions of his poetry. It is the evident display of art in the poetry of Pope that makes so many mistake that he was only a versifier. Seeing that he was perfect in the art of versifying, and becoming convinced every day of the effect which even that perfection has upon rank in general, they cried out that he was a secret versifier, but no poet! Fine verses will often hide from you that a man is no poet; but, perhaps, it is not much considered that they may prevent us from duly appreciating the finest poetry. We have no doubt that many thousands who have read Pope have been so fascinated by the beauty of the hints, as to deem the thoughts of secondary consideration. But the great cause in his own time of the change of Pope's being no poet, was evidently error. There were a number of impatient scribblers who never ceased to leave him with criticisms, in which they perpetually abused the works they could not comprehend. The poetical-mechanical labor, as it were, of the translation of Homer, rendered it necessary for Pope to employ some of their verses to suit the cadence and manner of his own, and their versation at being obliged to confess how much better he made what they had before thought complete, might be another strong reason for their giving him the name of versifier. There was a part of Pope's poetical course, too, which probably in itself gave rise to such an occasion from many inconsiderate

persons, viz: his writing his Essay on Man and his Essay on Criticism.— These were neither of them very poetical subjects; to most of readers they would be unpalatable under any circumstances, and at best they had only the appearance of metaphysical essays in verse. There is in each a share of what may be commonly called poetry; there may be said, indeed, to be as much poetry in both as they were capable of, but it is obvious that if any individual read them and them only, and of course from them received his idea of Pope as a poet, he must have got him down as a poet without any very large proportion of imagination.— Three pieces were never intended to be considered poems by Pope himself; but, as he really was able to express himself more tersely, powerfully, and in fewer words in verse, and also with greater ease to himself, for these reasons, and, perhaps, because by means of good verse he thought to make dry subjects popular, he wrote rather in verse than prose. To cut the matter short here, we may mention as indubitable proofs of Pope's poetical powers, the verses he has left us on the subject with which Rousseau so much interested every one, and the Rape of the Lock itself is a poem that confers honorably. Pope's Homer, too, should be recollected as containing innumerable proofs of original poetical powers.— Homer himself would hardly acknowledge the translation, but he would gladly welcome the author of the poem.

It was necessary to say thus much of Pope, lest many who are prejudiced against him might not think him fit to be held up as an example. If we look back on Pope, and farther back on Dryden, they appear like the ancient poets of Greece and Rome—men who walked about, and indeed did every thing, with the full consciousness of some superior dignity in which public estimation had enveloped them, and of which they were resolved not to divert themselves.— Though they lived amongst their fellow men, they yet seemed aloof from them; though they journeyed with them, they kept their wings ready for their flight. Most of our modern poets are more like drabbed geese in the streets of some dirty town, than “—birds of upper air, prepared to soar on clear and lady juncos to the skies.” Through the system of ruffling fancy

