

the punishment of others, he is himself a daily violator of the law, and his family have more than once been visited by its penalties. Yet with all his vices and his error, such is the power of eloquence, impudence, and the art of lying in the country, of which he is an exalted subject, that few individuals connected with the government are more gladly received at the palace, more respected in the council, or more generally caressed by the noble and fashionable classes of society. By the extent of his influence he has elevated one of his nearest relatives to the highest dignity of the church, and in consideration of his accommodating conduct and secret services during the progress of a certain investigation, has been promised a handsome rectory to his son-in-law, and a pension for himself. If any character be more dangerous than another to the morals, and the liberties of mankind, it is that of a cool calculating selfish being, who beneath the mask of judicial virtue, gratifies his malignant and sensual passions without suspicion. In that character, therefore, my dear J———, I am about to appear, and as your own interest is concerned, I know you too well to suppose that you will betray me.

BEELZEBUB.

### THE FAREWELL.

LEADON ! farewell !  
It is with joy methinks  
I hasten from thy bigotry and stinks.  
Fugate all land, adieu !  
Whatever the change,  
As o'er the world I range,  
I ne'er can meet so mean, so vile a crew.

"Modern Poets, No. 1," Scourge, 9 (June 1815)  
441-47.

Thy Insatiable coat  
A fertile soil can boast !  
But that thy slothful nation,  
Neglect the prize—  
It barren lies,  
For want of industry and cultivation,  
Sacred religion is a trade ;  
Your laws you easily evade,  
As both are sold,  
For weight of gold,  
By bulls and absolution given ;  
The veriest thief,  
Can have relief,  
And murderers can purchase heaven.  
Tho' one might offer any sum for't,  
You've no convenience nor comfort ;  
And as for ease !  
Lice, bugs, and fleas ;  
With beastly stench of garlick and of oil,  
And things expos'd,  
Which should be closed,  
That makes fair decency recoil.  
To sum up all in this account,  
I thus increase the vile account,  
Thy men are curst  
With pride and lust ;  
Thy women fl—zy,  
Filthy, lousy ;  
All sunk in sin and vile abomination,  
Blow ! breezes, blow !  
Quick let me go ;  
I would not leave my carcass in the nation.

### MODERN POETS.

No. 1.

It has been the general complaint of the candidates for fame, who have flourished since the time of Johnson, that the fervor of original genius is equally repressed by  
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the terrors of malignant and of impartial criticism; that the freedom of opinion, and the acuteness of intellect, exhibited in the writings of that celebrated man, have not only rendered a conformity to his decision on points of taste indispensable to the successful reception of the literary aspirant, but have communicated a tone of decision, and a weight of influence to the periodical reviews highly inimical to the interests of learning and of poetry. The mediocrity of Hayley was attributed to the congealing influence of the literary atmosphere in which he was bound to move; and the sluggish monotony of his verse, was ascribed to that timidity, which, afraid of criticism, is content to abandon the highest praise in the hope of escaping the humblest censure.

The fallacy of these conclusions, so convenient to the sons of dullness and mediocrity, has been too strikingly exemplified in the splendid efforts of our celebrated contemporaries to leave us any reason to believe that criticism, under any form, can destroy the shoots, or repress the luxuriance of original genius. It is only the abortive graft, or the sapless trunk, that withers in the ardent sun, and shrinks before the invigorating breeze. The native flowers of Parnassus will flourish on their parent hill, amidst the ruins of empires and the storms of time; but the deciduous productions that ignorance or presumption has transplanted to a sacred and uncongenial soil, no culture can improve, no skill invigorate.

The prejudices of the public mind, and the practice of our most celebrated poets, are equally inimical to the triumph of legitimate criticism. Extravagance in the vain pursuit of mere originality, is the character of our popular writers, and the chief attraction to the great majority of readers. The multitude of literary amateurs is too proud to be instructed, and they despise the investigations of those whom they are pleased to denominate metaphysical writers. According to them there is no utility in critical instructions, for every reader is able

to feel without them, and feeling is infallible. Yet the omnipotence of enthusiasm be once admitted; it would be difficult to explain why one poet should have pre-eminence over another, or why a Greek or a Roman should not elevate its author to as high a degree of immortality as an epic poem. The war-song of an Indian chief excites an enthusiasm which it would be vain to expect from the most animated recitation of the odes of Pindar, or the elegies of Tyrtæus; Kien Long's address to tea is repeated by a Chinese peasant as a perfect example of poetical beauty; and the Oxford tragedy has excited tears more frequent than ever embelished the memory of Werter, or bedewed the tomb of Juliet. A native of Greenland will breathe out his amorous emotions in strains to which an English lover would listen with disgust. Taste is not an abstract and independent quality of the mind, but a combination of the highest intellectual powers cultivated and invigorated by experience.

But if the authority of criticism be despised, the education of the public mind is only temporarily. Its principles have become familiar to the minds of men, and will ultimately remain triumphant over all the temporary violations of propriety, nature, and good sense. Thanks to the labours of Johnson, the freedom of critical speech is no longer doubted, and dullness, whether silent or indignant, is no longer protected from animadversion by the shadow of a name. The noblest masters of the art may be approached without reverence. It is now too late for some pettish enthusiasts to come forward with the agonised horror, and his extracies of admiration. The time is long since past in which the name of Milton would deprive a biographer of his reason or veracity. The world now converts a poet as of another man, and the praise which he receives is more valuable and lasting, because it is (unfortunately) the result of rational deliberation. A critic may at length be educated, though he does not believe every line of Shakespeare or Homer to be divine or good

he should venture to deny that the sound is  
sho to the sense, and should suppose it possi-  
-at genius may sometimes produce an inhar-  
-se, or commit an unworthy action. Had the  
- biographers, and critics of our English poets,  
discriminate in their praise, and less partial in  
- ves, the task of Johnson would have been more  
-ore popular.

it of blind and outrageous eulogy which Mr. T. not only does not deserve, but which he is evidently ashamed to receive. He is, however, justly admired, and which he has so laboriously acquired, has had no other influence than that of making him a national biography and criticism to a nation of epitiaphs which display every quality but its power of attraction.

a time of Johnson, the biography and criticism of a nation were little more than a repetition of *s* and eulogics: every *verte-man* was divine, and his greater iniquities totally concealed, and his greater iniquities totally concealed, represented. A reader, who should estimate intellectual character of the literary worthies, had at the commencement of the 17th century an indiscriminating praises, would suppose he been exempted from every human failing, attained the climax of literary excellence. And, the reputation of a wit was a sufficient every extravagance of folly and licentiousness; indulgence, which was granted to themselves by superlatives, the critics of the times, were not to allow their predecessors. Literature was a possession of a few: its members were personally acquainted with each other, and not jealousy equally conspired to render their course a scene of officious adulation, and recrimination. A poet was praised by his friends, might prove his attachment, and by his rival he display his generosity. The petty war-

fare of the inferior retainers of literature, had no other effect than to unite their superior in closer confederacy, to provoke their friends to more exaggerated praises, and to give a vain or an ostentatious writer a plausible opportunity of mentioning himself. The press granted beneath a perpetual load of complimentary epistles, commendatory stanzas were a necessary accompaniment of a poem that aspired at popularity; every statesman was a poet, and every country gentleman who could give a good dinner, and write a congratulatory epistle, a man of letters.

Even after the gradations of literary rank had been more impartially regulated, the same blindness of criticism for our established writers was equally observable. When criticism began to assume a milder tone, the weight of its severity was chiefly felt by contemporary writers. Walsh was still learned, and Cransville polite, but Cransville was a model of gentlemanly ease, and graceful vivacity. Not more celebrated men every error that a satire and every deformity a beauty. Lycidas was a model of pure diction, tenderness and simplicity, and Smith's tragedy of *Pygmalion* and *Hippolitus*, the noblest production of human genius.

Such was the state of English criticism and biography when Johnson first commenced his literary career, and though, in the course of a long life, he had, partly by his own exertions, and partly by the influence of his example, communicated to our criticism an energy and independence which it had not possessed before, yet he found in the decline of age, that much remained to be done towards exploding the collective fables and abuses of a century. He was well acquainted with the difficulties of the task that he had undertaken, and he knew that to perform it with ultimate honor to himself, or advantage to the public, it would be necessary to risk the temporary displeasure of the partial and the prejudiced. He was willing to incur, or even to deserve the censured of unrelenting severity, rather than to suffer the authority

of a celebrated name, to give lustre to dullness, or dignity to vice. It was he who first taught us the fallacy of those sophisms by which preceding biographers had been accustomed to palliate the moral transgressions, or defend the literary characters of their heroes. To elicit the true character of a writer from his own representation of himself, or the encomiums of his friends, was a task, however invidious, which the acquiescence of the world in pictures so delusive had rendered necessary; and we ought not to be angry, though we have some reason to be surprized, that the portrait appears less brilliant when deprived of its varnish. These observations are applicable to the sentiments of one of his opponents and traducers, who asserts, that the "Lives of the Poets" came out at a time very inauspicious to the fate of lustrous literature, when manly knowledge and taste were not much cultivated amongst us." If this be true, the criticisms of Johnson are the more to be admired for their spirit and independence; if false (as we believe it to be,) it only evinces that Mr. Hayley reasons badly from uncertain data.

Our readers may collect from the preceding observations that rigid impartiality will be the leading characteristic of our strictures, and in making this declaration we are well aware that we voluntarily incur the charge of invidious severity. To evade that accusation, if we honestly discharge our critical duty, would be impossible. Neither insensible to the loftier feelings inspired by the productions of the highest genius, nor unaffected by the pathos of the less ambitious but more enchanting volaries of Apollo, it is, we are afraid, too evident, that to *seek the truth* of the great majority of recent efforts in the department of poetry, is to mortify the vanity of their authors, and irritate their admirers. If the most eminent contemporary poets display considerable power, their faults and imperfections are still more prominent and observable. In proportion to the splendor of their excel-

lence it is necessary to ~~analyze and display the beauties~~ by which their lustre is dimmed, and their value impoverished. We wish not to be severe, our only anxiety is to be just.

Were any apology required for the establishment of a critical investigation into the merits of contemporary poets, it might be deduced from the singular partiality to very moderate versifiers, of a literary journal, which first attracted the notice of the public by the combination of unexampled talent, with reprehensible severity. With in the last five years it has become the enthusiastic and indiscriminate eulogist of annual rhymesters, and quasi scribblers of blank verse. So powerful is the influence of their Scottish prepossessions that they gaze with delight on the affectation of Campbell, and prefer the desultory efforts of Scott and the Ettrick Shepherd, to the most sublime and beautiful productions of ancient and modern poetry. To correct this propensity so far as our opportunities and talents will permit; to conduct an unbiased, a rigid, and an impartial scrutiny into the poetical pretensions of the candidates for immortality; and to deliver our opinion, rather than our sentence, on the merits of those contemporaries whose genius we acknowledge, while we regret their imperfections, is the object of the present series of essays, of which the remarks and the sentiments will always be open to the animadversions of intelligent correspondents.

H.

#### THE CASE WITH BONAPARTE EXAMINED.

SIR,

THE writer of your Political Review last month seems to me to be a person of no ordinary talents, and therefore entitled to more attention than the common political