
A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

Art. VI.—THE TWO CAMPS.

IN spite of Keats' assertion that Beauty and Truth are one, there are many who agree with Heine that an eternal battle rages between them:

> "War 'twixt the True and Beautiful has been
> And will be, and mankind as heretofore
> Ranged in two camps, Barbarian and Hellene."

But though Heine saw clearly that a sharp-set contrast between "Greek light-heartedness" and the "stern God-fearing spirit of Judah" exists among men, he did not go on to the further truth that these two camps may be established in the heart of an individual.

Is it possible for one man to hold two opposite opinions? The idea seems strange and startling, and yet, as we turn from "Don Juan," from "Lara," and "Manfred," to Byron's "Hebrew Melodies," we must at least confess that it is possible for one mind to contain two distinct phases of thought and feeling.

Nothing can at first sight seem more foreign to the poet's lurid genius than the cold, clear tints of the Judaic atmosphere, which, like the flawless perfection of King Arthur, lacks the warmth and colour that human nature so eagerly craves.

The Beautiful, as Byron conceived it, was the unchecked exercise of liberty in every department of life; the True was the tiresome and unnecessary bondage imposed upon that freedom by the customs of an artificial society. He was a typical Hellene, loving sunny lands and laughter-lit eyes, exulting in the wild tempest of unrestrained passion, and regarding the Fates as his natural enemies; and it is therefore not less surprising to find him turning his attention to "Hebrew Melodies" than it is to find Thomas Moore, the gay and graceful writer of "The Twopenny Postbag" and "Lalla Rookh," giving utterance to such poems as "Fall'n is thy throne, O Israel," or "Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea."

If this group of poems had been written during the second half of Byron's career, we could have better accounted for them, for in the midst of his wild and reckless dissipation there were frequent breaks of sorrow and of aspiration after higher things; but the "Hebrew Melodies" were written in the heyday of his youth and popularity, when the publication of the first two cantos of "Childe Harold" had made him suddenly famous, and when his talents and his mysterious fascination concentrated upon him the adoration of London society.

They come to us in strange company! Published in

December, 1814, the poems of the preceding twelve months had been "The Bride of Abydos," "The Corsair," and "Lara," and if it is true, as Byron would have his readers believe, that Conrad and the fierce chieftain of the Morea are shadows of his own personality, we may well echo the cry of the Israelites, and ask: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

There are, however, some lines in the "Corsair" that throw a light on the seeming mystery. If it is true that the poet depicted himself in the words,

> "Lone, wild, and strange, he stood alike exempt
> From all affection and from all contempt.
> His name could sadden and his acts surprise,
> But they that feared him dared not to despise,"

we must also apply to him the following stanza:

> "None are all evil: quickening round his heart
> One softer feeling would not yet depart.
> Oft could he sneer at others, as beguiled
> By passions worthy of a fool or child;
> Yet 'gainst that passion vainly still he strove,
> And ev'n in him it asks the name of Love."

The weeks during which Byron wrote the "Hebrew Melodies" were the weeks immediately preceding his marriage, and whether he really loved Miss Milbanke or not; there is no doubt that for a time, at least, he believed in his own affection. Wild and fierce as his nature was, he had the capacity of devotion, as is proved by his unswerving love for his sister, and that Mrs. Leigh, who knew him better than anyone else, was convinced of his affection for his bride is shown by her letter to Hodgson after the marriage: "I have every reason to think that my beloved B. is very happy and comfortable. I hear constantly from him and *his rib*. It appears to me that Lady B. sets about making him happy in the right way. I had many fears. Thank God that they do not appear likely to be realized."

It was, then, just after his suit had been accepted, the period of purest hope and joy in most men's lives, that the "Hebrew Melodies" were written, and in them, escaping for a moment from the atmosphere of passion and of crime, we catch a glimpse of the calmer attributes of his nature.

The first of the lyrics, though included in the "Melodies," seems probably designed to celebrate the praises of his own lady:

> "She walks in beauty, like the night
> Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
> And all that's best of dark and bright
> Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
> Thus mellowed to that tender light
> Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

The last verse proves conclusively that goodness was not so destitute of charm for him as some of his detractors maintain:

"And on that cheek and o'er that brow
So soft, so calm, so eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent."

The same pure note is heard in "My soul is dark" and "I saw thee weep," and in the exquisite lines:

"Sun of the sleepless! melancholy star!
Whose tearful beam glows tremulously far,
That show'st the darkness thou canst not dispel,
How like thou art to joys remembered well!
So gleams the past, the light of other days,
Which shines, but warms not with its powerless rays;
A night-beam Sorrow watcheth to behold,
Distinct but distant, clear, but oh! how cold!"

But perhaps the lines which in their purity and aspiration breathe most of that spirit of the Psalmist which panted for heaven as a hart for the waterbrooks are the following:

"If that high world, which lies beyond
Our own, surviving Love endears;
If there the cherished heart be fond,
The eye the same, except in tears—
How welcome those untrodden spheres,
How sweet this very hour to die!
To soar from earth, and find all fears
Lost in thy light—Eternity!

"It must be so; 'tis not for self
That we so tremble on the brink;
And striving to o'erleap the gulf
Yet cling to Being's severing link.
Oh! in that future let us think
To hold each heart the heart that shares;
With them the immortal waters drink,
And soul in soul grow deathless theirs!"

None knew better than Byron that an earth-stained passion dies of its own satiety, but here he expresses in so many words the correlative belief that a pure and holy love is eternal in its essence, and forms thus the strongest proof of man's immortality. Dr. Kennedy, the Scotch physician who undertook to argue with Byron at Cephalonia on theological subjects, was sorely disturbed by many of "his lordship's" opinions; but unorthodox as he undoubtedly was, Byron was not without his moments of belief in a future existence. The lines beginning "When coldness wraps this suffering clay" show that the prospect of possessing a boundless knowledge, and of finding the powers of the soul set free from the

hindrances of its earthly tenement, could rouse him to an enthusiasm which is strangely foreign to the ordinary idea of Byron—a libertine seared by crime and with a sneer on his pale lips for all things holy:

"When coldness wraps this suffering clay,
Ah! whither strays the immortal mind?
It cannot die, it cannot stay,
But leaves its darkened dust behind.
Then, unembodied, doth it trace
By steps each planet's heavenly way?
Or fill at once the realms of space,
A thing of eyes, that all survey?

* * * *

"Above or Love, Hope, Hate, or Fear,
It lies all passionless and pure:
An age shall fleet like earthly year,
Its years as moments shall endure.
Away, away, without a wing,
O'er all, through all, its thoughts shall fly,
A nameless and eternal thing,
Forgetting what it was to die."

But turning from this group of poems, we find the larger part of the "Hebrew Melodies" devoted to distinctly Jewish subjects, and it is here that Byron and Moore come into more direct competition.

In some of Moore's lyrics, such as "The bird let loose in Eastern skies" or "Oh! Thou who dry'st the mourner's tear," there is a music which haunts the memory, while in his "Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea" there is a majesty that claims the warmest admiration. But the well-known "Destruction of Sennacherib" is fully equal in power and beauty to Moore's song of triumph, and there is a depth of thought that outweighs the smoothness of the lesser poet's lines in such lyrics as:

"A spirit passed before me: I beheld
The face of Immortality unveiled—
Deep sleep came down on every eye save mine—
And there it stood—all formless—but divine:
Along my bones the creeping flesh did quake:
And as my damp hair stiffen'd, thus it spake:

"'Is man more just than God? Is man more pure
Than He who deems e'en seraphs insecure?
Creatures of clay—vain dwellers in the dust!
The moth survives you, and are ye more just?
Things of a day! you wither ere the night,
Heedless and blind to Wisdom's wasted light!'"

or in the "All is vanity," which seems a premonition of those sad lines written at Missolonghi on the completion of his thirty-sixth year:

"My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of love are gone:
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone."

There is, however, one chord, but lightly touched by Moore, which Byron sweeps again and again with a melancholy that darkly foreshadows his own fate—the chord of exile.

Even if the story of his marriage and subsequent separation should never be fully elucidated, one thing is proved beyond a doubt, viz., that, much as at times he longed to return to England, he could not face the storm that only needed his appearance to reawaken in all its fury. It was no poetic fiction for Byron to speak of himself as an exile; banished by no judicial decree, he was yet as irrevocably cut off from his fatherland as if he had been an outlaw. The outlaw of public opinion is, in fact, more effectually banished than the outlaw of justice. Justice may be appeased and terms of legal punishment survived; but society, once outraged, never forgives, and, having once passed its sentence, never remits it.

Byron, the former favourite of fortune, the followed, the flattered, the almost worshipped, was as powerless to return to his native land as any of the captives of Babylon, and in the light of his future there is a double pathos in such lines as "We sat down and wept by the waters," or in the still more beautiful "Wild Gazelle":

"The wild gazelle on Judah's hills
Exulting yet may bound,
And drink from all the living rills
That gush on holy ground;
Its airy step and glorious eye
May glance in tameless transport by.

"But we must wander witheringly
In other lands to die;
And where our fathers' ashes be
Our own may never lie:
Our temple hath not left a stone,
And Mockery sits on Salem's throne";

while all the bitterness of blighted hopes and vanished joys seems to be concentrated in the lines "Oh! weep for those that wept by Babel's stream":

"Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,
How shall ye flee away and be at rest?
The wild-dove hath her nest, the fox his cave,
Mankind their country—Israel but the grave!"

To apportion the blame between Lord and Lady Byron is a task which has proved tempting to many writers, but which is, after all, sufficiently profitless. That Lady Byron was cold

and formal and devoid of tact is very likely true, yet her later life shows that a softer spirit could sometimes take possession of her. "I sometimes hope I may have suffered for the good of others," she writes to her friend, Miss Carpenter. "All that I desire is to outlive self." Byron's life after their separation was of a very different order; his life was filled to the close of his career

> "With fiery passions that had poured their wrath
> In hurried desolation o'er his path,
> And left the bitter feelings all at strife
> In wild reflection o'er his stormy life."

But is it not possible that some of those excesses which were stigmatized by the world as the cause of his alienation from his wife were not, rather, its effect? Byron had begun life in a blaze of glory, which seemed calculated to satisfy even his overweening vanity; but the same stroke which deprived him of his home deprived him also of that adulation which was to him the very breath of life itself. But though in his resentment he professed to be willing to forget the world, he had no wish to be "by the world forgot"; to be neglected by mankind was the worst of all punishments to him, and if he could not win attention by his virtues, he was ready to do so by his vices. "To endeavour to appear worse than we are," says Greville in his "Memoirs," "is a species of perverted vanity the most disgusting; yet, with all his splendid genius, this sort of vanity certainly distinguished Lord Byron." And, again, we read in "Friends in Council": "Most thoughtful men have probably some dark fountains in their souls by the side of which they could let their thoughts sit down and wail indefinitely. That long Byron wail fascinated men for a time because there is that in human nature."

But we must remember that, though the expression that Byron gave to his woes was exaggerated, the woes themselves were not imaginary. Greville accuses him of a pose of vice, but he admits that his unhappiness was real. "When he deals around his fierce vituperation and bitter sarcasms, he is only clanking the chains which with all his pride and defiance and contempt he is unable to throw off." With his sister, the one real love of his life, Byron was probably at his best and truest, and in the "Epistle to Augusta" we find him speaking of his sorrows in a strain, not of defiance, but of manly acceptance:

> "If my inheritance of storm hath been
> In other elements, and on the rocks
> Of peril, overlooked or unforeseen,
> I have sustained my share of worldly shocks,

The fault was mine; nor do I seek to screen
My errors with defensive paradox;
I have been cunning in mine overthrow,
The careful pilot of my proper woe."

The contest of life was to him a hard one, for the wild blood that was born in his veins urged him on beyond his own control, and all the circumstances of his later life confirmed his straying feet in the path that they had chosen. His faults and his reward were alike patent to all men, and thus, though perhaps no worse than many others, his name has been continually used to point the moral of the preacher. It is this which leads us to regret that the "Hebrew Melodies," as is so often the case, should be slurred over by his biographers and critics, if not altogether ignored. "The 'Hebrew Melodies' are interesting," says Mr. Nichol, "in connection with the author's early familiarity with the Old Testament, and from the force and music that mark the best of them; but they can hardly be considered an important contribution to the devotional verse of England." Doubtless they are not "important" from this point of view; but their importance, and their true interest also, is found in the sidelights that they throw upon their author's character. Byron claimed to reveal himself in his writings, and therefore, if we are to estimate him justly, we must bring the whole of his writings into court. His vices are incontestable, but it is impossible to study these lyrics without feeling that he was not without some visitings of grace, some purer hopes, some salutary fears, and that David's harp and Byron's lyre are not so entirely opposed as some would have us believe.

"The harp the monarch minstrel swept,
The King of men, the loved of Heav'n,
Which Music hallowed while she wept
O'er tones her heart of hearts had giv'n,
Redoubled be her tears, its chords are riv'n!
It softened men of iron mould,
It gave them virtues not their own;
No ear so dull, no soul so cold,
That felt not, fir'd not to the tone,
Till David's lyre grew mightier than his throne.
It told the triumphs of our King,
It wafted glory to our God;
It made our gladdened valleys ring,
The cedars bow, the mountains nod;
Its sound aspired to heaven and there abode!
Since then, though heard on earth no more,
Devotion and her daughter Love,
Still bid the bursting spirit soar
To sounds that seem as from above,
In dreams that day's broad light cannot remove."

Some echoes of that long-silenced harp are heard in Byron's utterances, and they prepare us for that generous spending of

himself in the cause of the down-trodden and oppressed which led his self-centred life to its "chorus-ending."

"Nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it" is a saying which has been applied to many, but it can be applied to few with so much truth as to Byron. His vices and follies seemed to slip away from him when he stood face to face with problems that called out his highest qualities of head and heart. Courage and daring were not the only virtues that he displayed, but wisdom, prudence, foresight, and a statesmanship for which none had hitherto given him credit. The lofty spirit of devotion which speaks in his "Jephtha's Daughter," tells of a life laid down in the cause of freedom.

> "When this blood of thy giving hath gushed,
> When the voice that thou lovest is hushed,
> Let my memory still be thy pride,
> And forget not I smiled as I died";

and the same spirit of self-abnegation breathes through the "Song of Saul before his Last Battle":

> "Warriors and chiefs! should the shaft or the sword
> Pierce me in leading the hosts of the Lord,
> Heed not the corse, though a king's, in your path:
> Bury your steel in the bosoms of Gath."

As Hamlet, when he at last applied himself to action, found a strange calmness reigning in his disordered mind, so Byron, when he stood forth as the champion of a worthy cause, found an unexpected harmony diffusing its influence through the conflicting elements of his disordered life. A settled and steadfast purpose took possession of him, and through all the hurry and the hardships of his experiences in Greece his thoughts were never of himself, but only of those whom he had come to aid. There was something nobler in him than the vanity of vice and the wail of world-weariness; it found its early expression in the "Hebrew Melodies," it came to its belated fruition in the closing deeds of his days on earth. Hellene as he had been all his life, given up to pleasure and to luxury, the two camps had yet been established in his breast, and who shall say that at the last the "stern, God-fearing spirit of Judah" did not prevail, delivering him from the shameful bondage into which he had fallen, and making his own words his fittest epitaph?—

> "Thy name, our charging hosts along,
> Shall be the battle-word!
> Thy fall, the theme of choral song
> From virgin voices poured!
> To weep would do thy glory wrong;
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MARY BRADFORD WHITING.

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MARY BRADFORD WHITING.

CHRISTMAS.

IS it a fable of far-vanished days,
That through heaven's open door ethereal rays
Flooded the slopes of Bethlehem's gray hill?
Has not the noise of doubters silenced long
The music of that clear celestial song,
"Glory to God on high! to men good will"?

Dark o'er the sad earth bend the wintry skies;
Rare faith looks down with trembling starry eyes
On war's wild storm-cloud, black with threatening woe;
The slumberers, as in that once silent street,
Dream not that heaven and earth in glory meet,
And the soul's night may pass in summer glow!

Wake now! and, as in childhood's blessed days,
Lift to the world's best Friend loud Christmas praise,
Church of the Living God in every land!
With charity's beam divine the poor make glad!
Love's sunshine lighten hearts bereaved and sad!
Let friend meet friend again, and hand clasp hand!

Spirit of Life! Divine Eternal Friend!
Come shed abroad the love of God, and end
Earth's sins and doubts by the uplifting Cross;
The good news, as with silver trumpet, sound
Through Thy blest blowing to earth's furthest bound;
And for that glory, gain we find in loss.

Set we to noble deeds the angel-song—
In tuneful lives that perfect strain prolong—
Nor let one jarring note of earth remain;
For in the higher air of light and sound
I hear the Christmas bells of heaven ring round:
"He that once came to die shall surely come to reign!"

A. E. MOULE.

The Month.

THE appointment of Canon Gore to the See of Worcester has occasioned a good deal of disappointment. There was a general feeling that some day or another he would be made a Bishop, but sending him to Worcester to succeed a prelate who has not only been a firm Evangelical, but has also been attacked by extreme Anglicans because of his attitude towards rebellious clergy, has the same air of levity which has been apparent in some other Crown appointments. The advisers of the Crown did not even wait for the see to be vacant, so that the name of the Bishop