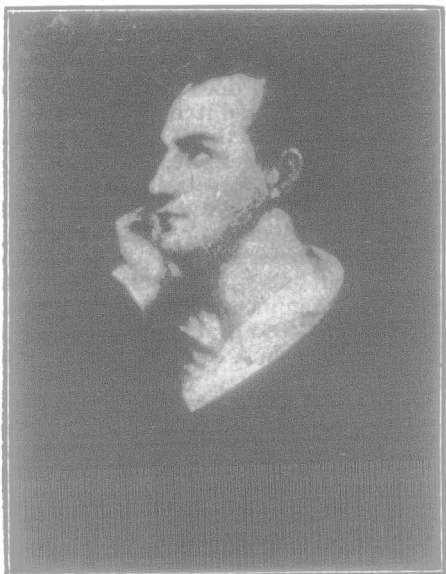


HOME JOURNAL

Life, Literature and Education

LORD BYRON.

A Ten Talent man is the name given to Byron by Newell Dwight Hillis in a chapter of one of his books, wherein he shows how often in our world, the man to whom much has been given drags his great gifts through the mire, dishonoring the giver and shaming his own soul. Such a man was Byron—head and



LORD BYRON.

shoulders above his brethern in brilliancy and keenness of intellect—fully aware of his possession of the ten talents, yet despite these great gifts and the knowledge of them, going down and down and down to the very bottom, the very powers that were fitted to raise himself and those around him, lending their strength to his speedy descent.

Carlyle, broad-minded and far-seeing could plead for merciful judgment in the case of Burns, another possessor of the ten talents, and nobly defended his fellow-countryman against the bitter tongues of his enemies; but Byron made defence impossible by his own attitude towards the extravagance and dissipation of his life. For he held "that greatness sanctifies whatever it does, that genius is exempt from moral laws that are binding upon dull people; that these superior gifts lend the possessor a chartered right to gratify his desires and passions in whatsoever garden of pleasure."

Such a view of his attitude towards life was largely the result of his upbringing. A fond indulgent mother exercised no control over the high-spirited sensitive boy, but yielded to his every caprice and granted his every whim, until it is not at all surprising that he came to believe that the world was fashioned and kept in motion largely for the gratification of his particular desires. He could not but be self-centred, taking the liveliest delight in the unusual beauty of his face, growing morbidly sensitive over his lameness and increasing bulk, and living his life within the circumference of his own wild desires and passions. Self-conscious always, he was constantly posing as a nature too fine to be understood by the common mind, and as the possessor of a genius which a cold and unsympathetic world was incapable of appreciating.

But so strong was the influence of his personality that morbidness, sentiment-

portals are opened to receive the ashes of England's greatest, closed her doors against him, and his few friends followed his body to the little church-yard at Hucknall

His poems are true pictures of himself. In them can be seen the love of posing, the recklessness the restless spirit, the extravagance and love of beauty that were characteristic of their composer, and above and through them all the glow of true genius which was his. His heroes are all Byron—he is Don Juan, he is Childe Harold and Count Lara in turn. They speak his thoughts and feel his emotions, they live his life, and see life through his eyes.

His first production to win any notice was, "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" a witty and vigorous piece of work that won for him the cordial dislike of those against whom it was aimed. Among his longer and best known poems are, "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," "Count Lara," "Don Juan" and "The Prisoner of Chillon". The finest passages in these are most familiar to the English speaking world, and are quoted largely, such as the stanzas beginning: "I see before me the Gladiator lie"; "I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs"; "Roll on thou deep and dark blue Ocean, roll!"

The finest of his shorter poems was written when the Greeks were striving to gain their independence. Byron had thrown himself into the excitement of the struggle and did all in his power to aid them in regaining their freedom. There is no more stirring patriotic poem in the English language than "The Isles of Greece."

" 'Tis something, in the dearth of fame,
Though linked among a fettered race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame
Even as I sing, suffuse my face.
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

Must we but weep o'er days more
blessed?
Must we but blush?—Our fathers bled.
Earth! render back from out thy breast
A remnant of our Spartan dead.
Of the three hundred, grant but three
To make a new Thermopylae.

What, silent still? and silent all?
Ah, no the voices of the dead
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,
And answer, "Let one living head,
But one arise—we come, we come,
'Tis but the living who are dumb."



BY PAUL PEEL

MATERNAL PRIDE.

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