

eyes, however, it was the *ne plus ultra* of oratorical efforts, and his vanity led him to misinterpret the encouragement with which a good natured house received the new fledged orator, into admiration of his great talent and forensic abilities. Mr. Dallas gives the following account of the sequel to this silly scene :

"When I left the great chamber," says that gentleman ; "I went and met Byron in the passage ; he was glowing with success, and much agitated. I had an umbrella in my right hand, not expecting that he would put out his hand to me ; in my haste to take it when offered, I had advanced my left hand. 'What !' said he, 'give your friend your left hand upon such an occasion ?' I showed the cause, and immediately changing the umbrella to the other, I gave him my right hand, which he shook and pressed warmly. He was greatly elated, and repeated some of the compliments which had been paid him, and mentioned one or two of the peers who had desired to be introduced to him. He concluded by saying, that he had by his speech given the best introduction to Childe Harold's pilgrimage."

About the same time, that is, just before the publication of Childe Harold, Mr. Galt observed, as he says, a paragraph in the London *Morning Post*, a notice of Lord Byron's return from Africa, in which he thought he could discover his lordship's own hand, and his lordship's embarrassment, on the subject being mentioned, confirmed the suspicion that he was the author. Galt adds : "I mention this only as a tint of character indicative of the appetite for distinction, by which, about this period, he became so powerfully incited, that at last it grew into a diseased craving, that were the figure allowable, it might be said, the mouth became incapable of supplying adequate means to appease it—every pore became another mouth, greedy of nourishment."

"Have you seen my three helmets," he inquired of Leigh Hunt, one day, with an air between hesitation and hurry. On being answered in the negative, he said he would show them to him, but stopped short, and put it off. These three helmets, says Hunt, he had got up in honor of his going to war, and as harbingers to achievement. They were in proper classical shape, gilt, and had his motto, "Crede Byron." Moore tells us that Lord Byron's notions of rank were in his boyish days so little disguised, that he got the nickname of the "Old English Baron," and anxious as he is to cover up and extenuate Byron's failings, and to apologise even for his graver crimes, Moore is forced to admit that Byron's pride and vanity were as conspicuous as his great talents. The celebrated Mr. Stendhal, who enjoyed a good deal of Byron's society, gives numerous anecdotes to the same effect. "I discovered," says he, "that Byron was at once enthusiastic in favour of Napoleon, and jealous of his fame. He used to say, 'Napoleon and myself are the only in-

dividuals who sign our names with the initials N. B.' (Noel Byron.) "During a third part of the day," says he, "Lord Byron was a dandy, expressed a constant dread of augmenting the bulk of his outward man, concealed his right foot as much as possible, and endeavoured to render himself agreeable in female society. His vanity, however, frequently induced him to lose sight of the end, in his attention to the means. Love was sacrificed—an affair of the heart would have interfered with his daily exercise on horseback !"

The charges of pride and of vanity which attach to Byron's character, could be abundantly proved, as well by examination of his letters and private journals, as by the evidence of his most intimate friends. These are the vices which tainted his whole life, which make his writings in numberless instances only the records of his own folly and weakness. To attempt to decide as to the merits of Byron's poetry, without taking into the account these traits of his character, would be but labour to no purpose. It is not with Byron as with most poets, whose writings may be judged of by their intrinsic poetical merit, without reference to the individual poet. Shakspeare may be judged of in this way, for he wrote as it were unpersonally, analysing human nature, and opening up the hidden fountains of passion and feeling which belong to the race. In all his writings he scarcely furnishes even the slightest data from which an opinion can be formed as to his personal character and habits. We hear nothing from Shakspeare of his blighted friendships, jealousies and private resentments, his "silent rages," his personal beauty or deformity. Indeed, self is entirely left out, the man is merged in the poet, and the laudable curiosity which we feel in relation to the private history and personal character of so great a man can only be increased, and not satisfied, by the hints of his cotemporaries, and the accidental notices which laborious antiquarians glean from the periodicals of that day. The same forgetfulness of self is apparent in Milton. In one beautiful and affecting passage of his divine poem, he breaks forth in a strain of subdued and gentle eloquence, when alluding to his blindness :

Hail holy light ! offspring of heaven, first born !

Theo I revisit safe,

And feel thy sovereign vital lamp ; but thou
Revisitest not these eyes, that roll in vain
To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn ;
So thick a drop serene hath quench'd their orbs
Or dim suffusion veiled.

* * *

Thus with the year
Seasons return ; but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
Or light of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine,