

Snapp'd at Jack's hand, in imitation of the Guicowar ;
But ere he could repeat the dose, Jack had him in a trice,
Yea! had his head in chancery, as though 'twere in a vice.
And how the rajah yell'd and laugh'd on that eventful day,
And burst his collar button when he heard Jack Tartar say,
As he smote poor Rammy's left jaw, and bang'd him on the right,—
"Ha! would yer? would yer bite? Aha! yer fat thief, would yer bite?"

For years, on the Vindayhan hills, fear check'd each childish game
When bandit sires but whisper'd of Jack Tartar's dreaded name,
And the terrors of invasion vex'd the Gekwar's heart no more
When Tartar ruled the province as his Minister of War.

Toronto.

H. K. COCKIN.

SOME OF LORD LYTTON'S NOVELS.—I.

IN an article published by me not long ago upon "The Novels of George Eliot," I gave as my reason for writing upon that subject the pleasure which we feel in giving our impressions of those literary productions which interest us most, and the benefit to be derived from an interchange of opinions, amongst even the humblest class of readers. In the present instance I have but the same excuse to offer. This article upon Lord Lytton's novels has been written, not because I supposed myself to be possessed of a power to criticize his works adequately, but because an additional intellectual pleasure is afforded me in attempting to analyse and criticize stories in the reading of which I spent so many enjoyable hours. Matthew Arnold says that "to be worth anything, literary and scientific criticism require, both of them, the finest heads and the most sure tact; and they require besides, that the world and the world's experience shall have come some considerable way." If I thought that this was absolutely true I should not have entered into the domain of criticism at all, but should have contented myself with remaining a silent member of the great body of literary sybarites—spending some of my pleasantest hours in reading good novels, and rejoicing to think that there are so many fine writers of them in our language.

With this preamble let me pass on. As well as making some general comments upon these novels I shall try to take up some of them separately but it will be easily understood that my treatment of them, as a whole and individually, must necessarily be brief and inadequate.

Lytton is probably the greatest of the aristocratic, or, as he would call it himself, the "patrician" school of novelists. Benjamin Disraeli, who was the other great aristocratic writer of the time, can hardly be set up as a rival, though in some respects he surpassed his contemporary. "In all that belongs to political life," says Justin McCarthy, "Mr. Disraeli's novels are far superior to those of Lord Lytton. We have nothing in our literature to compare with some of the best of Mr. Disraeli's novels for light political satire, and for easy, accurate characterization of political cliques and personages. But all else in Disraeli's novels is sham. The sentiment, the poetry, the philosophy—all these are sham. They have not half the reality about them that Lytton has contrived to give to his efforts of the same kind. In one at least of Disraeli's latest novels the political sketches and satirizing became sham also."

It is not my attention to enter into an elaborate comparison of these two authors. I may say, however, that while Lytton's novels are decidedly political, this seems to me a necessary consequence of their being aristocratic. On the other hand, Disraeli wrote political novels pure and simple. That there is a great difference, therefore, between the political novels of Disraeli and the political parts in the novels of Lytton is not unnatural. The latter's references to political affairs are general and casual, while with Disraeli, in most cases, the practical politics form the essence and staple of the book, and the art of the novelist is employed in making the subject interesting. Lytton, on the contrary, employs the references to politics as part of his art. In *What Will He Do With It?* he gives his own ideas on this point. "Since this survey of our modern world," says he, addressing the reader, "requires a large and crowded canvas, and would be incomplete did it not intimate those points of contact in which the private touches the public life of Social Man, so it is well that the reader should fully understand that all reference to such grand events, as political 'crises' and changes of Government, were written many months ago, and have no reference whatever to the actual occurrences of the passing day. Holding it, indeed, a golden maxim that practical politics and ideal art should be kept wholly distinct from each other, and seeking in this narrative to write that which may be read with unembittered and impartial pleasure by all classes and all parties—nay, perchance, in years to come, by the children of those whom he now addresses—the author deems it indispensable to such ambition to preserve the neutral ground of imaginative creation not only free from those personal portraiture which are fatal to comprehensive and typical delineations of character, but from all intentional appeal to an interest which can be but momentary, if given to subjects that best befit the leading articles of political journals." May it not in great measure be due to the causes here disclosed that for every one person who now reads Disraeli's novels, there are twenty who read Lytton's?

In relation to the other great schools of novelists, Lytton seems to largely combine their characteristics. His stories are never heavy; great attention is paid to the plot; but, at the same time, they are, in most cases, philosophical. He is, in fact, an eclectic. He tried his hand at every sort of story. At one time he is cynically light, at another he is realistic; the realistic period is succeeded by the historical, and this again by the philosophical and melodramatic. To quote McCarthy again—"He

began by writing of fops and *roués* of a time now almost forgotten; then he made heroes of highwaymen and murderers; afterwards he tried the philosophic and mildly didactic style; then he turned to mysticism and spiritualism; later still he wrote of the French Second Empire. Whatever he tried to do he did well."

The amount of erudition displayed in these novels is simply amazing. It even strikes one at times that the author goes to the verge of pedantry. The quotations and illustrative references bristling through his pages are the source of greater wonder when we remember that he was a very rapid writer. I have heard his writings spoken of as artificial, and no doubt they are, but so polished that the effect is not harsh. He must have been a prodigiously well-read man, or else he must have done an enormous amount of work in a very short time. We may suppose that of his literary scraps not many went to loss with him, but the admission does not explain away the wonder.

The style of the writing, as I have just remarked, is often artificial; nor are the sentences by any means always lucid. Long and exacting parentheses, such as in the following sentence, which I have selected at random, are not infrequent:

"We swear! we swear!" exclaimed every voice: and, crowding toward cross and weapon, the tapers were obscured by the intervening throng, and Montreal could not perceive the ceremony, nor hear the muttered formula of the oath; but he could guess that the rite then common to conspiracies—and which required each conspirator to shed some drops of his own blood, in token that life itself was devoted to the enterprise—had not been omitted, when, the group again receding, the same figure as before had again addressed the meeting, holding on high the bowl with both hands,—while from the left arm, which was bared, the blood weltered slowly, and trickled drop by drop upon the ground—said in a solemn voice and upturned eyes: etc." (Rienzi, Book i, Chap. xii.)

The caricature of his own writing, as far as involved sentences are concerned, may be seen in Squire Brandon's parenthetical speeches in *Paul Clifford*.

It must certainly be remarked of Lytton that his expressions of sentiment are extremely highly coloured—he represents his characters as experiencing feelings which are, I shall not say impossible or absurd, but, at the least, far too intense for the mass of mankind to feel, appreciate, believe in, or even imagine. But then he does not pretend that these passions or feelings are experienced by the world at large; he is only giving you the supposed history of certain individuals who are by no means typical of the mass. How far this is consistent with edification, morality, or even the true principles of art, I shall not attempt to discuss. Take Devereux's account of his honeymoon:

"Oh the intoxication of that sweet Elysium, that Tadmor in life's desert—the possession of the one whom we have first loved! It is as if poetry, and music, and light, and the fresh breath of flowers, were all blent into one being, and from that being rose our existence! It is content made rapture—nothing to wish for, yet everything to feel! Was that air—the air which I had breathed hitherto? that earth—the earth which I had hitherto beheld? No, my heart dwelt in a new world, and all these motley and restless senses were melted into one sense—deep, silent, fathomless delight. Well," he breaks off, "too much of this species of love is not fit for a worldly tale, and I will turn, for the reader's relief, to worldly affections."

We must agree with him, I think, that too much of this rhapsodical raving would be apt to call forth a slightly cynical smile upon the countenance of his worldly reader.

The Story of *Devereux* is in the form of a biography supposed to have been written in the time of Queen Anne. The style is open, simple, and sparkling—such as I wish to think the writings of a hundred years ago. Many of the great men of the Augustan period are introduced to the reader, Bolingbroke, Louis XIV., Pope, Swift, Peter the Great, and many others. The insights into Bolingbroke's life, and into Peter the Great's, are especially interesting. Parts of the story are highly sensational, as the murder scene and the death of Aubrey. The jealousy of the latter would have been too great, but for the element of insanity, adroitly introduced. The author in the preface says, "So minute an attention has been paid to accuracy, that even in petty details, and in relation to historical characters, but slightly known to the ordinary reader, a critic deeply acquainted with the memoirs of the age will allow that the novelist is always merged in the narrator." Here is indicated one of Lytton's chief sources of strength—his accurate and wide historical knowledge. I may mention that in his prefaces he generally exposes the aim which he had in view in the book, and criticizes his own work. This is, of course, a help to the reader.

I do not think that Lytton can be called hard names on account of his theological opinions, as far as they are hinted at in his novels. From a literary standpoint this remark may seem to bring us without the scope of this paper, but to my mind a literary criticism to at all approach completeness, must be largely philosophical; and if we admit that, I have my excuse. I shall not dwell upon the point, but shall only ask the reader to look for a moment at such expressions as these, which he put in the mouths of his heroes:—

"At this moment I am, in the strictest acceptation of the words, a believer and a Christian. I have neither anxiety nor doubt upon the noblest and the most comforting of all creeds, and I am grateful, among the other blessings which faith has brought me—I am grateful that it has brought me CHARITY! . . . My reason tells me that God will not punish the reluctant and involuntary error of one to whom all God's creatures were so dear; my religion bids me hope that I shall meet Him in that world where no error is, and where the Great Spirit, to whom all