

as advocated by Mr. Moore. In the present age the boundary walls between churches are being so fast pulled down, and the tendency towards increased toleration is finding so much favour, that we should think most sensible Christians would take sides with Mr. Moore rather than with his Close Communion opponents.

There are, however, some slips which should be corrected in a future edition, —Madame Roland (see page 63) did not die in 1794; nor can the martyr of Girondist Republicanism be fitly described as a 'courtly dame.' The book is on the whole well written, it abounds in interesting anecdote, and is a credit to its intelligent and large-minded author.

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*Byron.* By JOHN NICHOL. Morley's English Men of Letters series. New York: Harper Bros.; Toronto: James Campbell & Son, 1880.

We have often wondered that the opponents of aristocracy have not made more capital than they have out of the relation borne by noble birth to literary excellence. What has the English peerage done for English poetry? Are the names emblazoned in the heralds' visitations of the one high in the roll-call of the leaders of immortal verse? Do not, my Lords, do not offer us versifiers or poetasters, apt translators from the classics or coiners of the *vers de société* that sometimes pass current for sterling metal among the frequenters of palaces of these we will allow you have plenty, but answer,—where are your poets? At one time it seemed as though the aristocracy of Elizabeth might take rank upon the tables of another precedence than that of Rouge Croix or Clarencieux,—but the fair early prospect withered away. We might naturally expect more than usual promise from a nobility then but lately largely recruited with new blood after the Wars of the Roses, especially as their wealth enabled them to reap the first fruits of revived learning in advance of the commonalty. But once this was over what a dead level of prose does our House of Lords present to us, generation after generation till the monotonous sound of title succeeding title is broken by the name of Byron! And even in his case we may ask, would he not have been

at once finer poet and truer man if born without that magic pale?

Prof. Nichol believes that much of Byron's character was inherited. A wild strain of blood ran in his veins on both father's and mother's side; and if he owed much of his force and vigour to this endowment, there is no doubt he owed to it as well much of the sadness and of the strange impulses which led him to do things he afterwards thought of remorsefully.

The 'wicked Lord,' 'foul-weather Jack,' and 'Mad Jack,' were the sobriquets of three of Lord Byron's nearest paternal relations, his mother was of Scotch birth 'proud, impulsive, wayward and hysterical,' and such a slave to her passionate temper that Prof. Nichol tells us she died 'in a fit of rage brought on by reading an upholsterer's bill!' With such a mixture of blood in his veins, Byron set out to subdue the world.

Generous in his disposition, he found himself cramped in money matters; vain of his fine person he was tormented by the thought that he always bore with him a palpable personal deformity; fond of admiration, he was satiated with it for a period and when he wrote at last things more worthy of praise, the world turned round and tried to hoot him down. What wonder if these harsh contradictions, joined to a wife who skilfully contrived to make her very virtues so many knives to gall him with, should have embittered his spirit and driven him out, like an evil spirit, into unclean places? But he strove, on the whole, upon the side of goodness. It is not in his pages that one would seek the means of polluting innocence,—rather do his wildest fancies revel in tearing the evil from the face of the hypocrite and showing the rottenness that dwells beneath a smug exterior. The man who loved and was beloved by Shelley could not have been so bad at heart as many would still have us believe him.

In those days of political darkness when kings were putting their heels on prostrate nations and England blindly stood by in acquiescence, Byron, antedating opinion some half century, gave his suffrage in favour of free Italy and his genius, his purse and his life for free Greece. And he is rewarded. Unrecognised at home by all but the master-minds, and with even their suffrage obscured by pharisaic dogmatism, the