

Periander was a native of Corinth, and became a magistrate and leading man in the state. At this time he is said to have been of a mild and even amiable disposition: but ambition sprang up in his heart, and seems quickly to have obtained a mastery over his early good qualities. Bent upon attaining supreme power in his native country, and at first uncertain as to the best means of succeeding in his ambitious project he despatched an envoy to the court of the tyrant of Syracuse, that he might procure the advice of one well fitted to guide him aright in the course which he meditated. The tyrant was in the country when the messenger was brought to him; and after reading Periander's letter, he bade the envoy mark what he did, and then, plucking off all the ears of corn which overtopped the rest, told him that was the answer he was to make to his master. Periander divined his meaning. He forthwith surrounded himself with an armed guard, and, by high pay and other inducements, secured their fidelity to his person. By means of them he made himself supreme in Corinth, cutting off all those who by their talents or influence were likely to prove rivals, selecting his officials from the servile and the cowardly, and issuing death-warrants on the slightest suspicion.

The iniquities of his public career were only surpassed by those which stained his conduct in private life, where he was guilty of irregularities so gross that we are forced to forbear detail. As he became old, constant and harassing fears preyed upon his mind; his agitation, his terrors, his remorse punished the tyranny which he had not courage to abdicate; he trembled at his shadow—the echo of his own footsteps filled him with alarm. His tyranny and its punishment lasted forty years. Enfeebled by age and no longer able to bear the tortures of a guilty conscience, he one night despatched some youths of his body-guard to lie in ambush at a certain spot, with orders to kill the first man who should pass that way. It was himself who went: they had killed their prince ere they recognized him.

This monster of cruelty was possessed of learning and wisdom, and was on terms of friendship with the other six sages. Had not ambition come with its deadening and all-engrossing influence—and he continued in the rank in which it found him, he might have carried his attainments to a higher perfection, and have preserved the better nature of his youth; and so have bequeathed his title of sage uncoupled with that of tyrant. He has left some valuable maxims; but perhaps in his case the most striking is one which must have been wrung from him in bitterness of heart, when, alone, unloved, agitated by nervous terrors, the aged tyrant called to mind what he might have been and what he was—"Would you reign in safety?" he remorsefully asks: "surround not your person with armed satellites; have no other guard than the love of your subjects!" He lived eighty years, and died 585 years before the Christian era.

Sayings of Periander.

Pleasure endures but a moment: virtue is immortal.

Do not content yourself with checking those who have done ill; restrain those who are about to do it.

When you speak of your enemy, think that one day, perhaps, he may become your friend.

A dangerous promise has been drawn from you by force; go, you have promised nothing.

BYRON AND COWPER.

In nothing do men differ more widely than in their estimates of Poetry and Poets. Even the most common and miscellaneous reader has adopted some articles of faith, some standard by which to judge of all that comes under his view. One man is fond of simplicity, another of magnificence; one delights in blood and battles, another in music and moon-light. Some are pleased only with the witty or satirical; others with descriptions of nature. And even if we do not go so far as to set up our own altar and bow down to it, we are apt to overrate the beauties which agree with our propensities and associations, and to be unjust to those which wear a different complexion or which spring from different source. It is true there are some poets who have sten-

ded themselves on the universal sympathies of mankind; but the great majority are content with being at the head of a party. Hence schools of poetry are as various now, as schools of philosophy were in ancient days.

At the head of two of these schools, stand Byron and Cowper. We wish to compare their merits as Poets, but in order to do this we must first look at them as men; for their poetry is not impersonal, abstracted from their ordinary habits and feelings, it is the mere transcript of their inmost souls.

Cowper was a Christian, and his life the life of a Christian. Byron was an avowed, argumentative sceptic, and his life was but the acting out of his principles. We cannot believe that Byron's scepticism was assumed, that he had no other view than that of ably supporting a paradox, and if we did believe this, it would scarcely alter our opinion of his character. What would you think of the man who should attempt to sap the foundations of morality and religion out of mere vanity?—of the man who should cast about firebrands and then tell you he was in sport?

In natural disposition the two were unlike. Cowper was modest and retiring, always happiest when attracting least notice. Byron's craving for notoriety was insatiable. He sought it one hour by abusing the world, and the next by uttering his deep tones of woe, in that voice which denotes a heart desolate but unbroken, and still yearning for the sympathies of his fellows.

Cowper's manners were gentle and unassuming; Byron but for his vanity would have been unsufferably proud. Cowper was formed for social enjoyment. He lived only in and for his friends. Byron had no home; he sought admiration rather than friendship. "Friendship! (says he to Dillay) I do not believe I shall leave behind me, yourself and family excepted and perhaps my mother (!) a single being who will care what becomes of me." Captain Medwin represents him as saying, "Almost all the friends of my youth are dead, shot in duels, ruined or in the galleys." "I was at that time a mere Bond-Street lounge, a man of gambling and coffee-houses; my afternoons were spent in luncheons and boxing, not to say drinking. In fact my constitution was ruined by early excesses." Such were Byron's youthful indiscretions. Alas! his manhood unfolded a more melancholy story!

But Byron's most marked characteristic was misanthropy. This was his master failing, or rather his master vice. In excuse for this his friends cannot plead the unbridled pulse of passionate youth, the want of parental discipline, the enticements of vicious company, and the temptations surrounding a youthful Poet basking in the smiles of Fortune. Nor can they deny the charge. Why then, was Byron always gloomy, and melancholy, and complaining? He was blest with youth, and health, and fortune and fame; and yet he cursed the day of his birth.

Cowper was predisposed by his organization to the deepest melancholy; madness seized him, and for long years the light of his spirit was quenched. Yet in his writings we uniformly find tenderness of feeling, and a vein of cheerfulness and humor. Long continued, lingering disease, which tends more than any thing else 'to try the genuine temper of men's souls,' disclosed in him but growing virtues. He came forth from the furnace of affliction purified. Or if ever depressed by his mental disease, he flies for consolation to his books. He writes his publisher, "that he parts with a MS as with a dear friend that had long cheered him in his hours of sadness."

And here some one may say, "When you praise the dead, it is well; but why drag Byron's frailties from the grave." The answer is plain. It is not to gratify a malicious temper; for that must be a distasteful spirit that wars with the dead. It is because you cannot judge of the poetry without passing sentence on the Poet, (for his works are saturated with egotism;) it is because the evil that men do lives after them, and that his admirers when they know the man, may at least receive with some caution the lessons taught by the Poet.

Let us now contrast the poetry of Byron and Cowper. It requires very little penetration to fix upon the most prominent marks of distinction. Byron's poetry is the poetry of passion. He excels in the exhibition of pride, revenge, obstinacy, and solitary self-reliance. He cares not for the gay or the cheerful; he can sympathise only with the gloomy, the exciting, the pas-