CHAPTER XII.

LITERARY WARFARE.

The Reflector and the writers in it.—Feast of the Poets.—Its attack on Gifford for his attack on Mrs. Robinson.—Character of Gifford and his Writings.—Specimens of the Baviad and Mæviad.—His appearance at the Roxburgh Sale of Books.—Attack on Walter Scott, occasioned by a passage in his edition of Dryden.—Tory Calumny.—Quarrels and recriminations of authors.—The writer's present opinion of Sir Walter.—General offence caused by the Feast of the Poets.—Its inconsiderate treatment of Hayley.—Dinner of the Prince Regent.—Holland House and Lord Holland.—Neutralization of Whig advocacy.—Recollections of Blanco White.

The Examiner had been established about three years, when my brother projected a quarterly magazine of literature and politics, entitled the Reflector, which I edited. Lamb, Dyer, Barnes, Mitchell, the present Greek Professor Scholefield (all Christ-Hospital men), together with Dr. Aikin and his family wrote in it; and it was rising in sale every quarter, when it stopped at the close of the fourth number for want of funds. Its termination was not
owing to want of liberality in the payments. But the radical reformers in those days were not sufficiently rich or numerous to support such a publication.

Some of the liveliest effusions of Lamb first appeared in this magazine; and in order that I might retain no influential class for my good wishers, after having angered the stage, dissatisfied the Church, offended the State, not very well pleased the Whigs, and exasperated the Tories, I must needs commence the maturer part of my verse-making with contributing to its pages the Frast of the Poets.

The Frast of the Poets was (perhaps, I may say, is) a jeu-d’esprit suggested by the Session of the Poets of Sir John Suckling. Apollo gives the poets a dinner; and many verse-makers, who have no claim to the title, present themselves, and are rejected.

With this effusion, while thinking of nothing but showing my wit, and reposing under the shadow of my “laurels” (of which I expected a harvest as abundant as my self-esteem), I made almost every living poet and poetaster my enemy, and particularly exasperated those among the Tories. I speak of the shape in which it first appeared, before time and reflection had moderated its judgment. It drew upon my head all the personal hostility which had hitherto been held in a state of suspense by the vaguer daring of the Examiner; and I have reason to
believe that its inconsiderate, and I am bound to confess, in some respects, unwarrantable levity, was the origin of the gravest, and far less warrantable attacks which I afterwards sustained from political antagonists, and which caused the most serious mischief to my fortunes. Let the young satirist take warning; and consider how much self-love he is going to wound, by the indulgence of his own.

Not that I have to apologize to the memory of every one whom I attacked. I am sorry to have had occasion to differ with any of my fellow-creatures, knowing the mistakes to which we are all liable, and the circumstances that help to cause them. But I can only regret it, personally, in proportion to the worth or personal regret on the side of the enemy.

The Quarterly Review, for instance, had lately been set up, and its editor was Gifford, the author of the Baviad and Mæviald. I had been invited, nay, pressed by the publisher, to write in the new review; which surprised me, considering its politics and the great difference of my own. I was not aware of the little faith that was held in the politics of any beginner of the world; and I have no doubt, that the invitation had been made at the instance of Gifford himself, of whom, as the dictum of a "man of vigorous learning," and the "first satirist of his time," I had quoted in the Critical Essays the gentle observation, that "all
the fools in the kingdom seemed to have risen up with one accord, and exclaimed, 'let us write for the theatres!'"

Strange must have been Gifford's feelings, when, in the *Feast of the Poets*, he found his eulogizer falling as trenchantly on the author of the *Baviad and Mæviad* as the *Baviad and Mæviad* had fallen on the dramatists. The Tory editor discerned plainly enough, that if a man's politics were of no consideration with the *Quarterly Review*, provided the politician was his critical admirer, they were very different things with the editor Radical. He found also, that the new satirist had ceased to regard the old one as a "critical authority;" and he might not have unwarrantably concluded, that I had conceived some personal disgust against him as a man; for such, indeed, was the secret of my attack.

The reader is perhaps aware, that George the Fourth, when he was Prince of Wales, had a mistress of the name of Robinson. She was the wife of a man of no great character; had taken to the stage for a livelihood; was very handsome, wrote verses, and is said to have excited a tender emotion in the bosom of Charles Fox. The Prince allured her from the stage, and lived with her for some years. After their separation, and during her decline, which took place before she was old, she became afflicted with rheumatism; and as she solaced her pains, and perhaps
added to her subsistence, by writing verses, and as her verses turned upon her affections, and she could not discontinue her old vein of love and sentiment, she fell under the lash of this masculine and gallant gentleman, Mr. Gifford, who, in his *Baviad and Maeviad,* amused himself with tripping up her "crutches," particularly as he thought her on her way to her last home. This he considered the climax of the fun.

"See," exclaimed he, after a hit or two at other women, like a boy throwing stones in the street,—

"See Robinson forget her state, and move

*On crutches tow'ards the grave to 'Light o' Love.'"

This is the passage which put all the gall into anything which I said, then or afterwards, of Gifford, till he attacked myself and my friends. At least, it disposed me to think the worst of whatever he wrote; and as reflection did not improve nor suffering soften him, he is the only man I ever attacked, respecting whom I have felt no regret.

It would be easy for me, at this distance of time, to own that Gifford possessed genius, had such been the case. It would have been easy for me at any time. But he had not a particle. The scourger of poetasters was himself a poetaster. When he had done with his whip, everybody had a right to take it up, and lay it over the scourger's shoulders; for
though he had sense enough to discern glaring faults, he abounded in commonplaces. His satire itself, which at its best never went beyond smartness, was full of them.

The reader shall have a specimen or two, in order that Mr. Gifford may speak for himself; for his book has long ceased to be read. He shall see with how little a stock of his own a man may set up for a judge of others.

The *Baviad and Maeviad*—so called from two bad poets mentioned by Virgil—was a satire, imitated from Persius, on a set of fantastic writers who had made their appearance under the title of Della Cruscans. The coterie originated in the meeting of some of them at Florence, the seat of the famous Della Cruscan Academy. Mr. Merry, their leader, who was a member of that academy, and who wrote under its signature, gave occasion to the name. They first published a collection of poems, called the *Florence Miscellany*, and then sent verses to the London newspapers, which occasioned an overflow of contributions in the like taste. The taste was as bad as can be imagined; full of floweriness, conceits, and affectation; and, in attempting to escape from commonplace, it evaporated into nonsense:—

"Was it the shuttle of the morn
That wove upon the cobwebb'd thorn
Thy airy lay?"
"Hang o'er his eye the gossamery tear."

"Gauzy zephyrs, fluttering o'er the plain,
On twilight's bosom drop their filmy rain."

&c. &c.

It was impossible that such absurdities could have had any lasting effect on the public taste. They would have died of inanition. But Mr. Gifford, finding the triumph easy, and the temptation to show his superiority irresistible, chose to think otherwise; and hence his determination to scourge the rogues, and trample on their imbecility.

The female portion of them particularly offended him. The first name he mentions is that of Mrs. Piozzi, whose presumption in writing books he seemed to consider a personal offence,—as though he represented the whole dignity and indignation of literature. His attack on her, which he commences in a note, opens with the following unconscious satire on himself:—

"'Though no one better knows his own house' than I the vanity of this woman, yet the idea of her undertaking such a work" (British Synonimes) "had never entered my head, and I was thunderstruck when I first saw it announced."

Mrs. Piozzi was, perhaps, as incompetent to write British Synonimes as Mr. Gifford to write poetry; but what call had he to be offended with the mistake?
His satire consists, not in a critical exposure,—in showing why the objects of his contempt are wrong,—but in simply asserting that they are so. He turns a commonplace of his own in his verses, quotes a passage from his author in a note, expresses his amazement at it, and thus thinks he has proved his case, when he has made out nothing but an overweening assumption at the expense of what was not worth noticing. "I was born," says he,

"To brand obtrusive ignorance with scorn,
On bloated pedantry to pour my rage,
And hiss preposterous fustian from the stage."

What commonplace talking is that? And so he goes on:—

"Lo! Della Crusca, in his closet pent,
He toils to give the crude conceptions vent.
Abortive thoughts, that right and wrong confound,
Truth sacrificed to letters, [why 'letters'?] sense to sound:
False glare, incongruous images, combine;
And noise and nonsense clatter through the line."

What is the example of writing here which is shown to the poor Della Cruscans? What the masterly novelty of style or imagery? What the right evinced to speak in the language of a teacher? Yet Gifford never doubted himself on these points. He stood uttering his didactic nothings as if other literary defaulters were but so many children, whom
it taxed his condescension to instruct. Here is some more of the same stuff:

"Then let your style be brief, your meaning clear,  
Nor, like Lorenzo, tire the labouring ear  
With a wild waste of words; sound without sense,  
And all the florid glare of impotence.  
Still, with your characters your language change,—  
From grave to gay, as nature dictates, range:
Now droop in all the plaintiveness of woe,—(! !)  
Now in glad numbers light and airy flow;  
Now shake the stage with guilt's alarming tone, (! !)  
And make the aching bosom all your own."

Was there ever a fonder set of complacent old phrases, such as any schoolboy might utter? Yet this is the man who undertook to despise Charles Lamb, and to trample on Keats and Shelley.

I have mentioned the Roxburgh sale of books. I was standing among the bidders with my friend the late Mr. Barron Field, when he jogged my elbow, and said, "There is Gifford over the way, looking at you with such a face!" I met the eyes of my beholder, and saw a little man, with a warped frame and a countenance between the querulous and the angry, gazing at me with all his might. It was, truly enough, the satirist who could not bear to be satirized,—the denouncer of incompetencies, who could not bear to be told of his own. He had now learnt, as I was myself to learn, what it was to taste of his own bitter medicaments; and he never pro-
fited by it; for his *Review* spared neither age nor sex as long as he lived. What he did at first, out of a self-satisfied incompetence, he did at last out of an envious and angry one; and he was, all the while, the humble servant of power, and never expressed one word of regret for his inhumanity. This mixture of implacability and servility is the sole reason, as I have said before, why I still speak of him as I do. If he secretly felt regret for it, I am sorry,—especially if he retained any love for his "Anna," whom I take to have been not only the good servant and friend he describes her, but such a one as he could wish that he had married. Why did he not marry her, and remain a humbler and a happier man? or how was it, that the power to have any love at all could not teach him that other people might have feelings as well as himself, especially women and the sick?

Such were the causes of my disfavour with the Tory critics in England.

To those in Scotland I gave, in like manner, the first cause of offence, and they had better right to complain of me; though they ended, as far as regards the mode of resentment, in being still more in the wrong. I had taken a dislike to Walter Scott, on account of a solitary passage in his edition of *Dryden*,—nay, on account of a single word. The word, it must be allowed, was an extraordinary one,
and such as he must have regretted writing: for a more dastardly or deliberate piece of wickedness than allowing a ship with its crew to go to sea, knowing the vessel to be leaky, believing it likely to founder, and on purpose to destroy one of the passengers, it is not easy to conceive; yet, because this was done by a Tory king, the relater could find no severer term for it than "ungenerous." Here is the passage:—

"His political principles (the Earl of Mulgrave's) were those of a stanch Tory, which he maintained through his whole life; and he was zealous for the royal prerogative, although he had no small reason to complain of Charles the Second, who, to avenge himself of Mulgrave, for a supposed attachment to the Princess Anne, sent him to Tangiers, at the head of some troops, in a leaky vessel, which it was supposed must have perished in the voyage. Though Mulgrave was apprised of the danger, he scorned to shun it; and the Earl of Plymouth, a favourite son of the king, generously insisted upon sharing it along with him. This ungenerous attempt to destroy him in the very act of performing his duty, with the refusal of a regiment, made a temporary change in Mulgrave's conduct."—Notes on Absalom and Achitophel in Dryden's Works, vol. ix. p. 304.

This passage was the reason why the future great novelist was introduced to Apollo, in the Feast of the Poets, after a very irreverent fashion.

I believe, that with reference to high standards of poetry and criticism, superior to mere description,
however lively, to the demands of rhyme for its own sake, to prosaical groundworks of style, metaphors of common property, conventionalities in general, and the prevalence of a material over a spiritual treatment, my estimate of Walter Scott's then publications, making allowance for the manner of it, will still be found not far from the truth, by those who have profited by a more advanced age of æsthetic culture.

There is as much difference, for instance, poetically speaking, between Coleridge's brief poem, Christabel, and all the narrative poems of Walter Scott, or as Wordsworth called them, "novels in verse," as between a precious essence and a coarse imitation of it, got up for sale. Indeed, Coleridge, not unnaturally, though not with entire reason (for the story and the characters were the real charm), lamented that an endeavour, unavowed, had been made to catch his tone, and had succeeded just far enough to recommend to unbounded popularity what had nothing in common with it.

But though Walter Scott was no novelist at that time except in verse, the tone of personal assumption towards him in the Feast of the Poets formed a just ground of offence. Not that I had not as much right to differ with any man on any subject, as he had to differ with others; but it would have become me, especially at that time of life, and in speaking
of a living person, to express the difference with modesty. I ought to have taken care also not to fall into one of the very prejudices I was reproving, and think ill or well of people in proportion as they differed or agreed with me in politics. Walter Scott saw the good of mankind in a Tory or retrospective point of view. I saw it from a Whig, a Radical, or prospective one; and though I still think he was mistaken, and though circumstances have shown that the world think so too, I ought to have discovered, even by the writings which I condemned, that he was a man of a kindly nature; and it would have become me to have given him credit for the same good motives, which I arrogated exclusively for my own side of the question. It is true, it might be supposed, that I should have advocated that side with less ardour, had I been more temperate in this kind of judgment; but I do not think so. Or if I had, the want of ardour would probably have been compensated by the presence of qualities, the absence of which was injurious to its good effect. At all events, I am now of opinion, that whatever may be the immediate impression, a cause is advocated to the most permanent advantage by persuasive, instead of provoking manners; and certain I am, that whether this be the case or not, no human being, be he the best and wisest of his kind, much less a confident young man, can be so sure of the result of his confidence,
as to warrant the substitution of his will and pleasure in that direction, for the charity which befits his common modesty and his participation of error.

It is impossible for me, in other respects, to regret the war I had with the Tories. I rejoice in it as far as I can rejoice at anything painful to myself and others, and I am paid for the consequences in what I have lived to see; nay, in the respect and regrets of the best of my enemies. But I am sorry, that in aiming wounds which I had no right to give, I cannot deny that I brought on myself others which they had still less right to inflict; and I make the amends of this confession, not only in return for what they have expressed themselves, but in justice to the feelings which honest men of all parties experience as they advance in life, and when they look back calmly upon their common errors.

"I shall put this book in my pocket," said Walter Scott to Murray, after he had been standing a while at his counter, reading the *Story of Rimini*.

"Pray do," said the publisher. The copy of the book was set down to the author in the bookseller's account, as a present to Walter Scott. Walter Scott was beloved by his friends; the author of the *Story of Rimini* was an old offender, personal as well as political; and hence the fury with which they fell on him in their new publication.

Gifford, in his *Baviad and Mæviad*, speaking of
a daily paper called the *World*, had said, "In this paper were given the earliest specimens of those unqualified and audacious attacks on all private character, which the town first railed at for their quaintness, then tolerated for their absurdity, and now that other papers, equally wicked and more intelligible, have ventured to imitate it, will have to lament to the last hour of British liberty."

This close of Gifford's remark is one of his commonplaces,—a conventional cadence and turn of words. Calumny has been out of fashion for some time. But the example he speaks of was infectious in those days; and curiously enough, it was destined to be followed up, and carried to excess, by his own side of the question. It is to the honour of the Whigs and Radicals, that they went to no such extremities, even during the height of the warfare. The Priestleys, Aikins, and Gilbert Wakefields, were in too philosophic and suffering a minority for it; Montgomery the poet (who edited the *Sheffield Iris*), had too much religion for it; Cobbett, with all his virulence, appears never to have thought of it; Hazlitt, though his portrait-painting tempted him into minor personalities, disdained it; and all the notice (as far as I am aware) which any liberal journal took of matters of private life, the *Examiner* included, was confined to circumstances that were forced on the public attention by their connection with matters of state; as in the
instances of the Duke of York’s mistress, who trafficked in commissions, and of poor foolish Queen Caroline, who was victimized by an unworthy husband.

Every party has a right side and a wrong. The right side of Whiggism, Radicalism, or the love of liberty, is the love of justice; the wish to see fair-play to all men, and the advancement of knowledge and competence. The wrong side is the wish to pull down those above us, instead of the desire of raising those who are below. The right side of Toryism is the love of order, and the disposition to reverence and personal attachment; the wrong side is the love of power for power’s sake, and the determination to maintain it in the teeth of all that is reasonable and humane. A strong spice of superstition, generated by the habit of success, tended to confuse the right and wrong sides of Toryism, in minds not otherwise unjust or ungenerous. They seemed to imagine, that heaven and earth would “come together,” if the supposed favourites of Providence were to be considered as favourites no longer; and hence the unbounded license which they gave to their resentment, and the strange self-permission of a man like Walter Scott, not only to lament over the progress of society, as if the future had been ordained only to carry on the past, but to countenance the border-like forages of his friends into provinces which they had no business to invade, and to speculate upon still greater
organizations of them, which circumstances, luckily for his fame, prevented. I allude to the intended establishment of a journal, which, as it never existed, it is no longer necessary to name.

Readers in these kindlier days of criticism have no conception of the extent to which personal hostility allowed itself to be transported, in the periodicals of those times. Personal habits, appearances, connections, domesticities, nothing was safe from misrepresentations, begun perhaps in the gaiety of a saturnalian license, but gradually carried to an excess which would have been ludicrous, had it not sometimes produced tragical consequences. It threatened a great many more, and scattered, meantime, a great deal of wretchedness among unoffending as well as offending persons, sometimes in proportion to the delicacy which hindered them from exculpating themselves, and which could only have vindicated one portion of a family by sacrificing another. I was so caricatured, it seems, among the rest, upon matters great and small (for I did not see a tenth part of what was said of me), that persons, on subsequently becoming acquainted with me, sometimes expressed their surprise at finding me no other than I was in face, dress, manners, and very walk; to say nothing of the conjugalinity which they found at my fireside, and the affection which I had the happiness of enjoying among my friends in general. I never
retaliated in the same way; first, because I had never been taught to respect it, even by the jests of Aristophanes; secondly, because I observed the sorrow it caused both to right and wrong; thirdly, because it is impossible to know the truth of any story if related of a person, without hearing all the parties concerned; and fourthly, because, while people thought me busy with politics and contention, I was almost always absorbed in my books and verses, and did not, perhaps, sufficiently consider the worldly consequences of the indulgence.

The quarrels of authors, and the scandals which they have caused one another, were, unfortunately, not new to the reading part of the public, though the tone of hostility had hardly before been exceeded, except in religious controversy, and in the disputes between some of the early writers of Italy. “The life of a wit,” said Steele, “is a warfare upon earth.” He himself was called by an enemy, the “vilest of mankind;” upon which he said, in the gaiety of an honest heart, that “it would be a glorious world if he was.” Even Steele, so exasperating is this kind of warfare, allowed himself to be provoked into personalities. Swift abounded in it, though he lived in one of the most perilous of “glass-houses,” and miraculously escaped retribution; probably from the very pity which he denied. But why multiply examples on this painful subject? Clarke and Cud-
worth have been called "atheists"; and Fenelon, who was "only a little lower than the angels," a "ferocious brute!" I do not pretend to compare myself with the least of such men; and I am willing to have paid the penalty of what was really faulty in me, in suffering for what was not: but as I do not claim to be considered better than my neighbours, or to have been so at any time, so I may be allowed to comfort myself with thinking I am no worse. I may even presume so far in copying the jovial self-reconciliation of Steele, as to believe that the world would be no very great vale of tears, if all the men in it were no worse disposed.

If Sir Walter Scott was a poet of a purely conventional order, warmed with a taste for old books, and if he was a critic more agreeable than subtle, and a bitter and not very large-minded politician, unwilling, and perhaps unable, to turn his eyes from the past to the future, and to look with patience on the prospects of the many, he was a man of singular and admirable genius in the points in which he excelled, great in some respects, and charming almost in all. I beg leave to think that he did not possess that attribute of genius, which is said to partake of the feminine as well as the masculine; if feminine only it be to excel in sweet as well as strong, to be musical and graceful, and be able to paint women themselves; and I will not do such discredit to his
memory, in this or in any masculine respect, as to repeat the comparisons of him with Shakspeare, who painted both women and men to admiration, and was a great poet, and a profound universalist, and excelled as much in nature as in manners; for certainly Scott was in all these respects (and rare is the excellence that can be put even to such a disadvantage) but a half, or even a third or fourth kind of Shakspeare, with all the poetry (so to speak) taken out of him, and all the expression and the quotability besides; Sir Walter being, perhaps, the least quotable for sententiousness or wit, or any other memorable brevity, in the whole circle of illustrious writers. But he was an agreeable and kindly biographer, a most entertaining selector from history, an exquisite antiquary, a charming companion, a warm-hearted friend, a good father, husband, and man; and though his novels, as works of art and style, were inferior to Fielding, and I think it was a want of imagination in him, and a self-abasement, to wish to build a great house and be a feudal lord, instead of being content to write about houses and lords, and living among us all to this day in a cottage that still would have been a shrine for princes to visit; yet, assuredly, he was the most wonderful combiner of the novel and romance that ever existed. He was Shakspearian in the abundance and variety of his characters, unsurpassed, if ever equalled, in the substantial flow of
his pen; and in spite of admirable Burns and delightful Thomson, and all the historical and philosophical names of Edinburgh during the last and present century, was upon the whole the greatest writer that Scotland has produced.

It can be of no consequence to the memory of such a man what I said or thought of him, whether before his death or after; but for my own sake, since I am forced to speak of such things in a work like the present, I may be allowed to state, that whatever hostility I was forced to maintain with his politics, and so far with himself, I had the pleasure of expressing my regret for the mistakes which I had made about him, long before I experienced their ill effects. I will add, that long after those effects, and when he was lying sick in London on his way to his last home, I called every morning at his door (anonymously; for I doubted whether my name would please him) to furnish a respectful bulletin of his health to a daily paper, in which I suggested its appearance; and I will not conceal, that as I loved the humanities in his wonderful pages, in spite of the politics which accompanied them, so I mourned for his closing days, and shed tears at his death.

To return to the *Feast of the Poets*. I offended all the critics of the old or French school, by objecting to the monotony of Pope's versification, and all the critics of the new or German school, by laughing
at Wordsworth, with whose writings I was then unacquainted, except through the medium of his diderists. On reading him for myself, I became such an admirer, that Lord Byron accused me of making him popular upon town. I had not very well pleased Lord Byron himself, by counting him inferior to Wordsworth. Indeed, I offended almost everybody whom I noticed; some by finding any fault at all with them; some, by not praising them on their favourite points; some, by praising others on any point; and some, I am afraid, and those among the most good-natured, by needlessly bringing them on the carpet, and turning their very good-nature into a subject for caricature. Thus I introduced Mr. Hayley, whom I need not have noticed at all, as he belonged to a by-gone generation. He had been brought up in the courtesies of the old school of manners, which he ultra-polished and rendered caressing, after the fashion of my Arcadian friends of Italy; and as the poetry of the Triumphs of Temper was not as vigorous in style as it was amiable in its moral and elegant in point of fancy, I chose to sink his fancy and his amiableness, and to represent him as nothing but an effeminate parader of phrases of endearment and pickthank adulation. I looked upon him as a sort of powder-puff of a man, with no real manhood in him, but fit only to suffocate people with his frivolous vanity, and be struck aside with con-
tempt. I had not yet learned, that writers may be very "strong" and huffing on paper, while feeble on other points, and, _vice versâ_, weak in their metres, while they are strong enough as regards muscle. I remember my astonishment, years afterwards, on finding that the "gentle Mr. Hayley," whom I had taken for

"A puny insect, shivering at a breeze,"

was a strong-built man, famous for walking in the snow before daylight, and possessed of an intrepidity as a horseman amounting to the reckless. It is not improbable, that the feeble Hayley, during one of his equestrian passes, could have snatched up the "vigorous" Gifford, and pitched him over the hedge into the next field.

Having thus secured the enmity of the Tory critics north and south, and the indifference (to say the least of it) of the gentlest lookers on, it fell to the lot of the better part of my impulses, tolose me the only counteracting influence which was offered me in the friendship of the Whigs. I had partaken deeply of Whig indignation at the desertion of their party by the Prince Regent. The _Reflector_ contained an article on his Royal Highness, bitter accordingly, which bantered, among other absurdities, a famous dinner given by him to "one hundred and fifty particular friends." There was a real stream of water running down the table at this dinner,
stocked with gold fish. It had banks of moss and bridges of pasteboard; the salt-cellar were panniers borne by "golden asses"; everything, in short, was as unlike the dinners now given by the sovereign, in point of taste and good sense, as effeminacy is different from womanhood; and the Reflecter, in a parody of the complaint of the shepherd, described how

"Despairing, beside a clear stream,
The bust of a cod-fish was laid;
And while a false taste was his theme,
A drainer supported his head."

A day or two after the appearance of this article, I met in the street the late estimable Blanco White, whom I had the pleasure of being acquainted with. He told me of the amusement it had given at Holland House; and added, that Lord Holland would be glad to see me among his friends there, and that he (Blanco White) was commissioned to say so.

I did not doubt for an instant, that anything but the most disinterested kindness and good-nature dictated the invitation which was thus made me. It was impossible, at any future time, that I could speak with greater respect and admiration of his lordship, than I had been in the habit of doing already. Never had an unconstitutional or illiberal measure taken place in the House of Lords, but his protest was sure to appear against it; and this, and his elegant literature and reputation for hospitality,
had completely won my heart. At the same time, I did not look upon the invitation as any return for this enthusiasm. I considered his lordship (and now at this moment consider him) as having been as free from every personal motive as myself; and this absence of all suspicion, prospective or retrospective, enabled me to feel the more confident and consoled in the answer which I felt bound to make to his courtesy.

I said to Mr. Blanco White, that I could not sufficiently express my sense of the honour that his lordship was pleased to do me; that there was not a man in England at whose table I should be prouder or happier to sit; that I was fortunate in having a conveyer of the invitation, who would know how to believe what I said, and to make a true representation of it; and that with almost any other person, I should fear to be thought guilty of immodesty and presumption, in not hastening to avail myself of so great a kindness; but that the more I admired and loved the character of Lord Holland, the less I dared to become personally acquainted with him; that being a far weaker person than he gave me credit for being, it would be difficult for me to eat the mutton and drink the claret of such a man, without falling into any opinion into which his conscience might induce him to lead me; and that not having a single personal acquaintance, even among what was called my
own party (the Radicals), his lordship's goodness would be the more easily enabled to put its kindest and most indulgent construction on the misfortune which I was obliged to undergo, in denying myself the delight of his society.

I do not say that these were the very words, but they convey the spirit of what I said to Mr. Blanco White; and I should not have doubted his giving them a correct report, even had no evidence of it followed. But there did; for Lord Holland courteously sent me his publications, and never ceased, while he lived, to show me all the kindness in his power.

Of high life in ordinary, it is little for me to say that I might have had a surfeit of it, if I pleased. Circumstances, had I given way to them, might have rendered half my existence a round of it. I might also have partaken no mean portion of high life extraordinary. And very charming is its mixture of softness and strength, of the manliness of its taste and the urbanity of its intercourse. I have tasted, if not much of it, yet some of its very essence, and I cherish, and am grateful for it at this moment. What I have said, therefore, of Holland House, is mentioned under no feelings, either of assumption or servility. The invitation was made, and declined, with an equal spirit of faith on both sides in far better impulses.

Far, therefore, am I from supposing, that the
silence of the Whig critics respecting me was owing to any hostile influence which Lord Holland would have condescended to exercise. Not being among the visitors at Holland House, I dare say I was not thought of; or if I was thought of, I was regarded as a person who, in shunning Whig connection, and, perhaps, in persisting to advocate a reform towards which they were cooling, might be supposed indifferent to Whig advocacy. And, indeed, such was the case, till I felt the want of it.

Accordingly, the Edinburgh Review took no notice of the Feast of the Poets, though my verses praised it at the expense of the Quarterly, and though some of the reviewers, to my knowledge, liked it, and it echoed the opinions of others. It took no notice of the pamphlet on the Folly and Danger of Methodism, though the opinions in it were, perhaps, identical with its own. And it took as little of the Reformist's Answer to an Article in the Edinburgh Review—a pamphlet which I wrote in defence of its own reforming principles, which it had lately taken it into its head to renounce as impracticable. Reform had been apparently given up for ever by its originators; the Tories were increasing in strength every day; and I was left to battle with them as I could. Little did I suppose, that a time would come when I should be an Edinburgh Reviewer myself; when its former editor, agreeably to the dictates of his heart, would
be one of the kindest of my friends; and when a cadet of one of the greatest of the Whig houses, too young at that time to possess more than a prospective influence, would carry the reform from which his elders recoiled, and gift the prince-opposing Whig-Radical with a pension, under the gracious countenance of a queen whom the Radical loves. I think the *Edinburgh Review* might have noticed my books a little oftener. I am sure it would have done me a great deal of worldly good by it, and itself no harm in these progressing days of criticism. But I said nothing on the subject, and may have been thought indifferent.

Of Mr. Blanco White, thus brought to my recollection, a good deal is known in certain political and religious quarters; but it may be new to many readers, that he was an Anglo-Spaniard, who was forced to quit the Peninsula for his liberal opinions, and who died in his adopted country not long ago, after many years' endeavour to come to some positive faith within the Christian pale. At the time I knew him he had not long arrived from Spain, and was engaged, or about to be engaged, as tutor to the present Lord Holland. Though English by name and origin, he was more of the Spaniard in appearance, being very unlike the portrait prefixed to his *Life and Correspondence*. At least, he must have greatly altered from what he was when I knew
him, if that portrait ever resembled him. He had a long pale face, with prominent drooping nose, anxious and somewhat staring eyes, and a mouth turning down at the corners. I believe there was not an honester man in the world, or one of an acuter intellect, short of the mischief that had been done it by a melancholy temperament and a superstitious training. It is distressing, in the work alluded to, to see what a torment the intellect may be rendered to itself by its own sharpness, in its efforts to make its way to conclusions, equally unnecessary to discover and impossible to be arrived at.

But, perhaps, there was something naturally self-tormenting in the state of Mr. White's blood. The first time I met him at a friend's house, he was suffering under the calumnies of his countrymen; and though of extremely gentle manners in ordinary, he almost startled me by suddenly turning round, and saying, in one of those incorrect foreign sentences which force one to be relieved while they startle, "If they proceed more, I will go mad."

In like manner, while he was giving me the Holland-house invitation, and telling me of the amusement derived from the pathetic cod's head and shoulders, he looked so like the piscatory bust which he was describing, that with all my respect for his patriotism and his sorrows, I could not help partaking of the unlucky tendency of my country-
men to be amused, in spite of myself, with the involuntary burlesque.

Mr. White, on his arrival in England, was so anxious a student of the language, that he noted down in a pocket-book every phrase which struck him as remarkable. Observing the words "Cannon Brewery" on premises then standing in Knightsbridge, and taking the figure of a cannon which was over them, as the sign of the commodity dealt in, he put down as a nicety of speech, "The English brew cannon."

Another time, seeing maid-servants walking with children in a nursery-garden, he rejoiced in the progeny-loving character of the people among whom he had come, and wrote down, "Public gardens provided for nurses, in which they take the children to walk."

This gentleman, who had been called "Blanco" in Spain—which was a translation of his family name "White," and who afterwards wrote an excellent English book of entertaining letters on the Peninsula, under the Græco-Spanish appellation of Don Leucadio Doblado (White Doubled)—was author of a sonnet which Coleridge pronounced to be the best in the English language. I know not what Mr. Wordsworth said on this judgment. Perhaps he wrote fifty sonnets on the spot to disprove it. And in truth it was a bold sentence, and probably spoken
out of a kindly, though not conscious, spirit of exaggeration. The sonnet, nevertheless, is truly beautiful.

As I do not like to have such things referred to without being shown them, in case I have not seen them before, I shall do as I would be done by, and lay it before the reader:

"Mysterious night! when our first parent knew
Thee, from report divine, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,—
This glorious canopy of light and blue?
Yet, 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame
Hesperus, with the host of heaven, came,
And, lo! creation widened in Man's view.
Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O sun! or who could find,
Whilst fly, and leaf, and insect stood revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind!
Why do we then shun death with anxious strife?
If light can thus deceive, wherefore not life?"