

The Examiner.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL OF POLITICS, LITERATURE AND NEWS.

EDWARD WHELAN]

This is true Liberty, when Free-born Men, having to advise the Public, may speak free.—EURIPIDES.

[EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.

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MOON'S PHASES.—OCTOBER, 1856.

First Quarter 7th day, 0h. 58m. morning. W.
Full Moon 13th day, 6h. 20m. evening. E.
Last Quarter 20th day, 1h. 27m. evening. W.
New Moon 28th day, 5h. 15m. evening. W.

Literature.

FIELD FLOWERS.

BY THOMAS CAMPBELL.

Ye field flowers! the gardens eclipse you, 'tis true,
Yet, wildings of nature, I doate upon you,
For ye wait me to summers of old,
When the earth teem'd around me with fairy delight,
And when daisies and buttercups gladden'd my sight,
Like treasures of silver and gold.

I love you for lulling me back into dreams
Of the blue Highland mountains and echoing streams,
And of birchen glades breathing their balm,
While the deer was glancing in sunshine remote,
And the deep mellow crush of the wood pigeon's note
Made music that sweeten'd the calm.

Not a pastoral song has a pleasanter tune
Than ye speak to my heart, little wildings of June;
Of old ruinous castles ye tell,
Where I thought it delightful your beauties to find,
When the magic of Nature first breathed on my mind,
And your blossoms were part of her spell.

Ev'n now what affection the violet awakes;
What loved little islands twice seen in their lakes,
Can the wild water-lily restore!
What landscape I read in the primrose's looks,
And what pictures of pebbled and minnowy brooks
In the vetches that tangled their shore.

Earth's cultureless buds, to my heart ye were dear,
Ere the fever of passion or age of fear
Had seathed my existence's bloom;
Once I welcome you more, in life's passionless stage,
With the visions of youth to revisit my age,
And I wish you to grow on my tomb.

(From the North British Review for August, 1856.)

SAMUEL ROGERS AND HIS TIMES.

Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers. Second Edition. (London, Moxon, 1856.)

(Concluded.)

So much for the external facts of the history of British poetry during the life of Rogers. He lived, we may add, in six laureateships. Whitehead was Laureate when Rogers was born; and, as his term of office extended to 1788, Rogers began his poetic career as one of Whitehead's subjects. Then came Warton's short laureateship, from 1788 to 1790; then the reign of Henry James Pye, from 1790 to 1813; next that of Southey from 1813 to 1843; next that of Wordsworth, who died in 1850; and lastly that of Tennyson. Of all, therefore, that intervenes between the beginning of Whitehead's laureateship and the sixth year of Tennyson's, Rogers forms a part. A few of his reminiscences of the literary men of this period, will show at least his social relations to its successive peers and conjunctions of influence.

Early Poetical Readings.—"I was a mere lad when Mason's *Gray* was published. I read it in my young days with delight, and have done so ever since: the Letters have for me an inexpressible charm; they are as witty as Walpole's, and have, what his want, true wisdom. I used to take a pocket edition of *Gray's Poems* with me during my morning walks to town to my father's banking-house, where I was a clerk, and read them by the way. I can repeat them all. . . . I remember taking Beattie's *Minstrel* down from my father's shelves, on a fine summer evening, and reading it, for the first time, with such delight! It still charms me,—(I mean the First Book; the Second is very inferior.)"

Attempted call on Dr. Johnson.—"My friend Maltby and I, when we were very young men, had a strong desire to see Dr. Johnson; and we determined to call upon him and introduce ourselves. We accordingly proceeded to his house in Bolt Court; and I had my hand on the knocker, when our courage failed us, and we retreated. Many years afterwards I mentioned the circumstance to Boswell, who said, 'What a pity that you did not go boldly in! he would have received you with all kindness.'"

Burns.—"I never saw Burns: I was within thirty miles of Dumfries when he was living there, and yet I did not go to visit him, which I have regretted ever since. . . . I think his *Cotter's Saturday Night* the finest pastoral in any language. How incapable of estimating Burns's genius were the worthy folks of Edinburgh! Henry Mackenzie (who ought to have known better) advised him to take for his model in song-writing, Mrs. John Hunter."

Reception of Rogers's early Poems.—"On the publication of the *Pleasures of Memory*, I sent a copy to Mason, who never acknowledged it. I learned, however, from Gilpin, and to my great satisfaction, that Mason, in a letter to him, had spoken well of it; he pronounced it to be very different in style from the poetry of the day. . . . When I first came forward as a poet, I was highly gratified by the praise which Hayley bestowed on my writings, and which was communicated to me by Cadell, the publisher. In those days, indeed, praise was sweet to me, even when it came from those who were far inferior to Hayley; what pleasure I felt on being told that *Este* had said of me, 'A child of Goldsmith, sir!'"

Crabbe.—"I have heard Crabbe describe his mingled feelings of hope and fear as he stood on London Bridge, when he first came up to town to try his fortune in the literary world. . . . Crabbe's early poetry is by far the best as to finish. I asked him why he did not compose his later verses with equal care. He answered, 'Because my reputation is already made.' When he afterwards told me that he never produced more than forty verses a day, I said that he had better do as I do,—stint himself to four."

Wordsworth and Fox.—"I introduced Wordsworth to Fox, having taken him with me to a ball given by Mrs. Fox. 'I am very glad to see you, Mr. Wordsworth, though I am not of your faction,' was all that Fox said to him,—meaning that he admired a school of poetry different from that to which Wordsworth belonged."

Southey, Coleridge and Wordsworth.—"In all his domestic relations Southey was the most amiable of men; but he had no general philanthropy; he was what you call a cold man. He was never happy except when reading a book or making one. Coleridge once said to me, 'I can't think of Southey, without seeing him either mending or using a pen.' I spent some time with him at Lord Lonsdale's, in company with Wordsworth and others; and while the rest of the party were walking about, talking and amusing themselves, Southey preferred sitting *solus* in the library. 'How cold he is!' was the exclamation of Wordsworth,—himself so joyous and communicative.—Southey told me that he had read Spenser through about thirty times, and that he could not read Pope through once. He thought meanly of Virgil; so did Coleridge; and so, at one time, did Wordsworth. When I lately men-

tioned to Wordsworth an unfavourable opinion which he had formerly expressed to me about a passage in Virgil, 'Oh,' he said, 'we used to talk a great deal of nonsense in those days.'"

Sir Walter Scott.—"I introduced Sir Walter Scott to Madame D'Arbly, having taken him with me to her house. She had not heard that he was lame; and when he limped towards a chair, she said, 'Dear me, Sir Walter, I hope you have not met with an accident?' He answered, 'An accident, madam, nearly as old as my birth.' There is a very pleasing spirit of kindness in Scott's *Life of Swift* and *Lives of the Novelists*; he endeavours to place everybody's actions in the most favourable light. . . . As a story, his *Lady of the Lake* is delightful. On the whole, his poetry is too carelessly written to suit my taste; but parts of it are very happy."

Byron.—"Neither Moore nor myself had ever seen Byron, when it was settled that he should dine at my house to meet Moore; nor was he known by sight to Campbell, who, happening to call upon me that morning, consented to join the party. I thought it best that I alone should be in the drawing-room when Byron entered it; and Moore and Campbell accordingly withdrew. Soon after his arrival they returned, and I introduced them to him severally, naming them as Adam named the beasts. When we sat down to dinner, I asked Byron if he would take soup? 'No; he never took soup.'—'Would he take some fish?' 'No; he never took fish.'—'Presently I asked if he would eat some mutton?' 'No; he never ate mutton.'—'I then asked if he would take a glass of wine?' 'No; he never tasted wine.'—'It was now necessary to inquire what he did eat and drink; and the answer was,—'Nothing but hard biscuits and soda-water.' Unfortunately, neither hard biscuits nor soda-water were at hand; and he dined upon potatoes bruised down on his plate and drenched with vinegar. My guests stayed till very late, discussing the merits of Walter Scott and Joanna Baillie. Some days after, meeting Hobhouse, I said to him,—'How long will Lord Byron persevere in his present diet?' He replied,—'Just as long as you continue to notice it.' I did not know what I now know to be a fact,—that Byron, after leaving my house, had gone to a Club in St. James's Street, and eaten a hearty meat-supper. . . . Byron had a prodigious facility of composition. He was fond of suppers, and used often to sup at my house and eat heartily, (for he had then given up the hard biscuit and soda-water diet;) after going home he would throw off sixty or eighty verses, which he would send to press next morning. . . . In those days, at least, Byron had no readiness of reply in conversation. If you happened to let fall any observation which offended him, he would say nothing at the time, but the offence would lie rankling in his mind, and perhaps, a fortnight after, he would suddenly come out with some very cutting remarks upon you, giving them as his deliberate opinions, the results of his experience of your character. . . . My latest intercourse with Byron was in Italy. We travelled some time together; and if there was any scenery particularly well worth seeing, he generally contrived that we should pass through it in the dark. . . . At this time we generally had a regular quarrel every night, and he would abuse me through thick and thin, raking up all the stories he had heard which he thought most likely to mortify me—how I had behaved with great cruelty to Murphy, refusing to assist him in his distress, &c., &c. But next morning he would shake me kindly by both hands, and we were excellent friends again. When I parted from him in Italy, (never to meet him more,) a good many persons were looking on, anxious to catch a glimpse of 'the famous lord.'"

Shelley.—"One day, during dinner, at Pisa, when Shelley and Trelawney were with us, Byron chose to run down Shakespeare, (for whom he, like Sheridan, either had or pretended to have little admiration.) I said nothing. But Shelley immediately took up the defence of the great poet, and conducted it in his usual meek yet resolute manner, unmoved by the rude things with which Byron interrupted him,—'Oh, that's very well for an atheist,' &c., &c. Before meeting Shelley in Italy, I had seen him only once. It was at my own house in St. James's Place, where he called upon me—introducing himself—to request the loan of some money which he wished to present to Leigh Hunt; and he offered me a bond for it. Having numerous claims upon me at that time I was obliged to refuse the loan. Both in appearance and in manners, Shelley was the perfect gentleman."

In the language of these reminiscences, though they refer mainly to Rogers's social relations to his more distinguished poetic contemporaries, earlier and later, as far as Shelley, (and of such allusions as his table-talk contained to poets and poetical matters subsequent to Shelley, Mr. Dyce has not thought fit to preserve specimens,) there is a slight revelation also, it will be observed, of Rogers's feeling of his intellectual relations, as himself a poet, to the same series of men. On this point, however, a word or two, in conclusion, expressing a more precise judgment than Rogers himself could well give, may naturally be expected.

We have spoken of that era of the poetical literature of Britain, which extends from 1786 to the present time, as being, by the admission of all, an era pervaded, notwithstanding its variations within itself, by a certain common spirit, distinguishing it as a whole from the preceding era of the eighteenth century, and distinguishing it so advantageously that even when we refer to it as the period of the *Revival of British Poetry*, we are not supposed to exaggerate. We have named, also, the men concerned with this period, and on account of whose labours, severally and conjointly, it is thus highly spoken of. We have said little, however, as to the characteristics of the period—as to those internal peculiarities of its poetry and creative literature generally, imparted in different proportions by the genius of the men that have been named, which, taken together, constitute its historical difference and the cause of its historical continuity. Let us repair this defect by an observation or two, stated summarily rather than verified at length. (1.) In the first place then, we would sum up a large amount of what critics have unanimously for a long time been saying, by availing that the most general characteristic of British poetry since 1786 has been the prevalence of a spirit of literary Pre-Drydenism. All who are acquainted with the history of our literature know that the reform in the literary, and especially in the poetic art, preached and exemplified by Wordsworth in the closing decade of the last century, was essentially similar to that reform which, under the name of Pre-Raphaelitism, has recently been revolutionizing our art of painting. As the painting-reformers maintain that, in some respects, the painters who preceded Raphael worked on truer principles, both of invention and of execution, than Raphael himself, or at all events, those who came after him; so Wordsworth preached over and over again the one uniform doctrine that, from the time of Dryden to his own, the poets of Britain, with but a few exceptions, had mistaken both the meaning and the method of the poetic art. They had mistaken wit in metre, satire in metre, general manifestation of intellect in metre, for poetry; whereas poetry was a special produce of the senses, and the feelings in alliance with the imagination! In their references to nature and life, they had gone on using a stock of old images supposed to be sacred to the use of poets, without ever themselves bestowing a glance on nature's facts or life's realities! The very language they used, under the name of poetic diction, was an artificially distorted prose, the knack of writing which

could be easily acquired by a clever man, but which, in no conceivable circumstances, out of the so-called poetry for which it was considered appropriate, would be used or could be used! For true specimens of English poetry—poetry, the matter of which was natural, the words and phrases natural, and the versification natural—one must go back, with a few such exceptions as Thompson and Dyer, to the poets prior to Dryden! Pre-Drydenism, therefore, (if we may coin such a term,) was Wordsworth's life-long doctrine; and no wonder that Fox, with his enthusiastic admiration of Dryden, instinctively kept off from Wordsworth as the head of a new "faction." But though Wordsworth was the first recognized head of the faction, all the new poets rising into importance in Britain about or shortly after the year 1786, were independently tinged with the same Pre-Drydenist spirit. Crabbe, Bowles, Coleridge, Southey, and others, realized something of Wordsworth's main notion for themselves, and helped, along with Wordsworth, to develop and diffuse it. For, in fact, just as Pre-Raphaelitism in painting may be said to divide itself into several kinds, according to the different tendencies and constitutions of the painters who adopted the one Pre-Raphaelite principle of truth to nature, so there arose two or three kinds or applications of Pre-Drydenism. For example, the Pre-Drydenism of Wordsworth himself and his Lakist associates and disciples may be distinguished as Idealist Pre-Drydenism, on account of the combination in them of highly imaginative genius with that accuracy of natural observation, and that simplicity of verbal construction, which it was the essence of Pre-Drydenism to recommend; the Pre-Drydenism of Crabbe, and those who resemble him, might, on the other hand, be named Realist Pre-Drydenism for a converse reason; while, for the poetry of Scott and his followers, so far as he had any, might be invented the name of Historical or romantic Pre-Drydenism, to indicate its character as a third species. (2.) This generic quality of Pre-Drydenism still inhering in one or other of its forms in all our poetical literature, (though more in some cases than in others,) we have to note as a second characteristic, introduced considerably later into the British poetry of Rogers's age, and curiously blending with the now inherent Pre-Drydenism, a marvellously increased spirit of "subjectivity." Pre-Drydenism, we say, had become a settled habit of our literature—a habit, to some extent, even with those poets who, like Campbell, would have disowned the doctrine, and who fought for Dryden and Pope against Wordsworth and Bowles—when there passed athwart the face of our poetry, so re-conditioned, a certain shadow caused by an internal tumult in the newer poetic mind of the time. First came Byron with his storm and rage, bringing with him into our poetry that fierce kind of subjectivity which may be called the subjectivity of passion, of which since his day, despite the calmer influence of Wordsworth, our literature has been so full. Distinct, however, from this Byronic or passionate subjectivity was the subtle and more intellectual or metaphysical subjectivity of the Shelley school, breathed through our verse by Shelley himself, and since his time more or less affecting most of our celebrated poets.

In forming our notion of Rogers as one of the recognised British poets of an era so rich and so varied, it is necessary distinctly to remember the fact, that his first appearance as a poet took place when the era was hardly well begun. He preceded Wordsworth by six years, Bowles by three years; and Crabbe alone of the poets properly belonging to the era, was known to the public before him. In other words, he was "smit with the love of song" at a time when the older English poets of the eighteenth century were still without rivals. It is a proof of his true poetic sensibility, that among these poets his favourites and masters were precisely those whom even the critics of the new era regard as the most tasteful and natural—the most truly poetical. Gray, Collins, Dyer, Beattie, Goldsmith, and the Wartons, were more peculiarly his poetic teachers; and the anticipation that might have been formed of him was that, as the disciple of these poets, he would carry their smooth and pleasing style of verse into a new age, altered only in so far as there might be an element of originality in his own genius, and as this element of originality and his ideas of art might be acted upon by future contemporary influences. Now, as regards any original intellectual strength in Rogers to give a new form or direction, by his own unaided activity, to the poetry of his nation at the time when he became first acquainted with it, very little can be said. His own estimate of his original endowments, appended to his *Italy*, is modestly conceived; and there is no reason to reject it as inadequate:—

"Nature denied him much,
But gave him at his birth what must be valued,—
A passionate love for music, sculpture, painting,
For poetry, the language of the gods,
For all things here, or grand or beautiful,
A setting sun, a lake among the mountains,
The light of an ingenious countenance,
And, what transcends them all, a noble action."

In short, at the commencement of his poetical career, Rogers was simply a youth of fine tastes and affections, who, without possessing powers equal to those of the Grays and Goldsmiths in whom he delighted, could write musical and truly pleasing verses somewhat in their vein. If there was anything in him which, independently of influences from without, might have imparted a certain difference to his poetry as compared with that amid which he was formed, it was a certain touch of that Pre-Drydenism which seemed then to be hanging in the air, and affecting all rising poets, though it was reserved for Wordsworth formally to realize its influence. Rogers had acquired for himself the habit of referring to nature, and using only really perceived phenomena when he attempted to describe scenery; he had an instinctive feeling that the matter of real poetry must be matter as treated by the imagination; and he had also found out for himself the absurdity of that notion of poetic diction which Wordsworth afterwards satirized, and the superiority of the versification of some of our older poets to that which Dryden had introduced. It was, probably, because he had done all this to some extent before Bowles and Wordsworth were heard of, that Mason spoke of his early poems as being "different in style from the poetry of the day." But though there was thus in Rogers a touch of native Pre-Drydenism, it was but a touch, and, if left to himself, he would not have carried the revolution far. It was not, in fact, till after Crabbe and Bowles, and Wordsworth and Coleridge, had made their joint influence felt, that Rogers knew that a revolution had taken place at all, and that the Gray and Goldsmith era was at an end. He did not then hesitate to class himself with the Pre-Drydenists, and, in composing new poems, to submit himself to their influence. By the Realist Pre-Drydenism of Crabbe, indeed, he was scarcely affected; but his style corresponded sufficiently with that of Wordsworth and the Lakists, to cause him to be regarded as one of

that body, and to be on friendly terms with its members; and even Scott's *Minstrel Poetry* did not come too late to give him new inspiration. Still to the end of his life, as our quotations from the *Table-Talk* will have shown, Rogers was by no means such a zealot of Pre-Drydenism as Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, Bowles and others, with whom, by the general style of his poems, he was most closely associated. He never gave up Dryden, or Pope or Gray, or any other of the eighteenth century poets. Nor in his own practice, with all his laborious slowness, did he ever attain to what the more zealous Pre-Drydenists would have admitted to be the perfection of diction and versification. Always smooth, and careful and musical, his verse is by no means free from those faults of incoherent metaphor, and a distortion of the natural order of the words, which Wordsworth tried to banish from our poetry. Perhaps it was the laxness of his Pre-Drydenism that made him, when already past the meridian of life, so willing to welcome the poetry of Byron. But though, for a time, he was so intimately associated with Byron, as even to publish one of his poems in the same volume with one of Byron's, nothing of the true Byronic influence passed into his poetry. Such "subjectivity" as Rogers had was but that of a natural pensiveness and disposition to the meditative; and of that there had been examples in Wordsworth and the Lakists before Byron came. Much less was it likely that Rogers, at the same advanced period of life, could become subject to the Shelley influence. His own small metaphysics, as we have said, had already long ago been made up; and, content to the end with the practice of that tasteful and classic kind of verse which he had learnt from Gray and Goldsmith in his youth, he must have regarded the various developments of Shelley's poetry, by which he was surrounded in his extreme old age, as strange, unintelligible mist.

Correspondence.

[FOR THE EXAMINER.]

CHATHAM, CANADA WEST, Oct. 3, 1856.

DEAR EXAMINER.—Turning again to the St. Lawrence, and proceeding downwards from Kingston, we come upon the thousand Islands, just as the waters narrow into a river, and opposite the shore of parts of Frontenac and Leeds. A trip of the writer downwards through the romantic scenery of the thousand Islands in this part of the St. Lawrence, and the dexterous feat of shooting the rapids, will be the subject of some future communication. By shooting the rapids, I mean passing down those rapids, to avoid which the St. Lawrence Canals were built. The passing steamers from Kingston to Montreal downwards descend those rapids, but ascend by the many short canals built to avoid them, viz: the Junction Canal below Prescott and Johnstown, opposite Ogdensburgh, U. S., which avoids the rapids called *les Gallops*, (pronounced *le galooos*.) The Mariotau Canal further down, which avoids the short rapids called Point Cardinal, if my memory serves me, and the *long Sault Canal*, (pronounced *long saoo*), which avoids the rapids called *Long Sault*, and others of less note; and further down still, just below where the St. Lawrence widens and takes the name of Lake St. Peter, the Beauharnois Canal, of considerable length, and in the vicinity of Montreal, the Lachine Canal. All the St. Lawrence Canals are so substantially and superbly constructed, that they doubtless will last many years to come. Standing memorials of the energy, ability and intellect of the enterprising promoters and projectors of these grand national improvements. Just above Montreal, the river again widens, and has the name of Lake St. Louis. At Montreal, the River Ottawa, second only in size and importance to the River St. Lawrence, unites its waters with those of that river. Let us see for a moment what is the extent of the Ottawa and its surrounding country.

It is said the Ottawa has two known connections across the country via Lake Nipissing with Lake Huron. The Ottawa rises at Sowermnicaw, 100 miles above Lake Temiscaming, which is 350 miles north of the St. Lawrence. It flows through a country rich in valuable and natural productions, and most admirably calculated for lumbering and agriculture, as well as fitted for and destined to be a home for many persevering labourers and settlers. It passes through and drains 80,000 square miles of territory; its length is 450 miles; and its tributaries are many of them vast and extensive rivers. The country thus relieved of its surplus waters is estimated by those versed in statistics, to be capable of sustaining and supporting a population of 8,000,000. Its rapids, its waterfalls, its little lakes, are numerous, interesting and beautiful beyond comparison. Its entire scenery is of the most magnificent description. The Ottawa and its tributary, the Gatineau River, drains a country with an almost inexhaustible supply of iron and timber; abundance of copper and lead, and large quantities of marble and blacklead, &c. 25,000,000 cubic feet of timber, 100,000 deals and planks, and numerous quantities of staves and other timber, are shipped hence to Europe annually.

The Montreal River, 120 miles long; the River Blanche; the River Keepewa, on which is a cataract of 120 feet in height; the River Dumoine, 50 miles above the City of Ottawa—all comparatively unknown and flowing on amidst solitude, but little explored; the River Bon Chere, 110 miles in length and draining 180 square miles; eleven miles below Bon Chere, the River Madawaska, 210 miles in length and draining 4,000 square miles, the Mississippi River, 25 miles above the City of Ottawa, 100 miles long, draining an extent of 120 square miles of territory; the River Rideau, emptying at the City of Ottawa, draining 1,350 square miles, being 116 miles in length; the River Gatineau, entering the Ottawa, a mile below the city, after draining 12,000 square miles, its length being 420 miles, the upper part of which is almost entirely unexplored and unknown, it is however asserted to be 1,000 feet in width, after you have ascended it 215 miles from its confluence with the River Ottawa; the River Du Lievre, 260 miles in length and draining 4,000 square miles, emptying below the mouth of the Gatineau, 18 miles—still further down 15 miles, and entering on each side of the Ottawa River, the waters of the North and South Hation Rivers, each being 100 miles long—down yet again, and you meet the River Rouge, as it empties into the Ottawa, after a course of 90 miles—again the River Du Nord, 160 miles in length, and just before the Ottawa unites with the St. Lawrence, the waters of the River Assumption, 125 miles in length. These are the River Ottawa's tributaries—judge then of its extent—estimate its resources, its natural wealth and that of its vicinity; and say then does there not rest on the govern-