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AND
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For the Athenæum.

THE Hon. W. Herbert, in the preface to a second volume of his Miscellaneous Poetry, has thought fit to complain of a Critical Reviewer, who, in an account of the former volume (Critical Review for November 1804, page 301) used the following words. They relate to a translation of *Léonardo and Blandine*.

“Our readers will perceive, that the poem of Bürger is itself an abridgement of Dryden’s *Guiscardo and Sigismonda*, told in the ballad-form, and enriched with a fragment of *Romeo and Juliet*, whose dialogue of separation at day-break is here done into rhyme. The materials, therefore, are wholly English, and only made up on the continent.”

After some verbal criticism, the reviewer continues thus:

“The story, as formerly told by Dryden, is more heroic, but less in human nature; it resembles an event seen through the medium of French tragedy. Both the English and the German poet have made the incident a *vehicle of Jacobinism*, and put into the mouth of the heroine a solemn protest against nobility.”

This passage Mr. Herbert hastily interprets as a charge of Jacobinism against *him*, and thus repels the supposed accusation:

“I believe (p. vi.) few men bear a more rooted antipathy than myself to the tenets of modern innovators, and the form of republican government; that few would be more loath to circulate writings which might tend to vitiate the mind of their reader.”

Of this profession of faith let Mr. Herbert take the full benefit; but let him not impute any misrepresentation of his sentiments to the Reviewer. The only English poet mentioned in the obnoxious paragraph is Dryden; and the only German poet mentioned in the paragraph is Bürger: that these two poets have made their tales a *vehicle of Jacobinism*, the following passages demonstrate. The *tirade*, or diatribe, alluded to in Dryden, is too long to be copied here entire; but the following clauses of it amply display the spirit by which it is animated.

But, leaving that, search we the secret springs;
And backward trace the principles of things,
There we shall find, that when the world began,
One common mass compos'd the mould of man;
One paste of flesh on all degrees bestow'd,
And kneaded up alike with moist'ning blood.
The same almighty power inspir'd the frame
With kindled life, and form'd the souls the same.
Thus born alike, from virtue first began
The difference that distinguish'd man from man:
He claim'd no title from descent of blood,
But that which made him noble, made him good.
Warm'd with more particles of heavenly flame,
He wing'd his upward flight, and soar'd to fame;
The rest remain'd below, a tribe without a name.

This law, tho' custom now diverts the course,
As nature's institute, is yet in force;

Uncancell'd

Uncancell'd, tho' disus'd; and he whose mind
 Is virtuous, is alone of noble kind:
 Tho' poor in fortune, of celestial race;
 And he commits the crime, who calls him base.
 But if thou shalt allege, thro' pride of mind,
 Thy blood with one of base condition join'd,
 'Tis false; for 'tis not baseness to be poor;
 His poverty augments thy crime the more;
 Upbraids thy justice with the scant regard
 Of worth; whom princes praise, they should reward.
 Are these the kings intrusted by the crowd
 With wealth to be dispens'd for common good?
 The people sweat not for their king's delight,
 To' enrich a pimp, or raise a parasite;
 Their's is the toil; and he who well has serv'd
 His country, has his country's wealth deserv'd.
 E'en mighty monarchs oft are meanly born,
 And kings by birth to lowest rank return;
 All subject to the power of giddy chance,
 For fortune can depress or can advance:
 But true nobility is of the mind,
 Not given by chance, and not to chance resign'd.

In what part of Joel Barlow's *Advice to the Privileged Orders*, or of Paine's *Rights of Man*, is a broader, completer system of Jacobinism advocated? Bürger, who knew that feeling has not leisure thus to philosophize and declaim, contents himself with a short exclamation, beginning in the German poem thus:

Wer schuf wohl aus Erden den Ritter und Knecht, &c.

which may in thiswise be rendered—

God form'd of one clay both the knight and the clown;
 'Tis the mind that ennobles, not the star, or the crown.
 The soul of Lenardo was fine as his form,
 And well may look down on the titled with scorn.

These quotations appear to the Reviewer amply to justify his observation. It may be natural for Mr. Herbert, who is high-born, to consider the very suspicion of such sentiments as an imputation; but the Reviewer arrogates the praise* of partaking them, and places in the promulgation of them the chief poetic worth of Dryden's *Guiscardo* and *Sigismonda*. The descriptive portions of that tale are not very picturesque; the speeches want nature and pathos; the style is a protracted tissue of allegory and abstraction, full of conceit and antithesis, diffuse, cold and inflated, like the writing of Corneille, but abounding with moral axiom and sublime instruction, neatly expressed and smoothly versified.

It may not be uninteresting to the English public to observe, that sentiments which, immediately after the restoration, could be published, without exciting even a suspicion of disloyalty, are in this age of political superstition held up as criminally daring, and renegated

* The new Critical Reviewers, very characteristically, reproach their predecessors for this paragraph.

as personally disgraceful. The late superintendants of the state not only trembled with the alarms, but copied the persecutions, of superannuated inquisitors. Soon may a less servile tone of opinion supersede the disgraceful dotage of our long antijacobinism, and recal to their merited circulation and popularity the heroic eleutherism of Milton, the manly sense of Dryden, and the ardent exhortations of Fox, whose immeasurable loss those men are not entitled to deplore, who were deaf to his living voice, and banded against his philanthropic counsels.

The Critical Reviewer of Herbert's Translations.

 CHARACTER OF JACOBINISM.

To the Editor of the Athenæum.

Sir,

IT was with some surprize that I observed your Correspondent, who signs himself "the Critical Reviewer of Herbert's Translations," ascribing the decided character of *Jacobinism* to such sentiments as those which he quotes from Dryden and Bürger. If such an idea of the natural equality of man, as that which supposes that the Creator has formed no breed of the human species distinguished by superior qualities marking it out for rule and dominion over the rest, be the characteristic of a Jacobin, I know not how far back we are to go for the existence of this sect, or whom, in any country, who has aspired to philosophical and manly sentiments, we are to exclude from it. It would be easy to bring quotations to this purpose from poets and moralists, even without recurring to Juvenal's well-known satire on nobility. No one, indeed, but an imaginary Delville, could venture in this country to hold a contrary opinion; and certainly they who every year behold the rise of nobility in the persons of men of plebeian origin, who have made themselves conspicuous for civil or military merit, or even for the fortunate pursuit of wealth, cannot possibly regard it as a radical distinction among mankind.

The lax application of the term *Jacobinism* has been one of the grossest abuses of late years, and has been studiously fostered by those who, under an odious appellation, have been desirous of confounding the fundamental principles of liberty, with those excesses which are subversive of all regular government. To maintain the broadest system of political equality is not Jacobinism, because it does not imply a disinclination to submit to exertions of legal and constitutional authority for the public welfare. On the other hand, a Jacobin might exist under a constitution, which, like the American, admitted no prerogatives of birth or distinctions of rank. He would there be a clubbist, a demagogue, attempting to overawe or counteract the determinations of the legal representatives, by the clamour of popular meetings.

Though your Correspondent has not scrupled to avow his concurrence in Jacobin principles, understanding by them such as are displayed in the spirited and manly declamation of Dryden, I presume
 he

he would refuse to acknowledge himself a pupil of the true Jacobin club of Paris. As it is my sole purpose to attempt to introduce verbal accuracy in a matter where I conceive it to be really important, I think it unnecessary to apologize for the liberty I have taken, and remain, Sir, yours, &c.

PRISCUS.
