

**REVIEWERS  
REVIEWED:  
A SATIRE; PP. 19-71**

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Reviewers Reviewed: A Satire; pp. 19-71 by Anna Cora Ogden Mowatt Ritchie

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**ANNA CORA OGDEN MOWATT RITCHIE**

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# REVIEWERS REVIEWED:

A SATIRE:

BY THE AUTHOR OF PELAYO.

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— O! Goddess of the Song,  
Come, then, and guide my careless pen along;  
And let the flow of these spontaneous rhymes  
So truly touch the temper of the times,  
That he who rums may read; while well he knows  
I write in metre what he thinks in prose.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Ye sons of Freedom: 'tis to you I pay,  
Warm from the heart this tributary lay.

*Postscript of the heroic epistle to Sir W. Chambers, Knt.*

Who can contemplate Fame—through clouds unfold  
The star which rises o'er her steep, nor climb?

*Byron.*

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NEW-YORK:  
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR.  
1837.

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TO

THE HONOURABLE

RICHARD RIKER,

Recorder of the City of New-York,

THIS MATTER IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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## P R E F A C E .

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DESTINED, in anticipation, to meet but little (and that little perhaps undeserved) leniency, I will not offer this, my second "trifling with the muse," to the public, without that due defence, which every feeling of a woman's heart inspires. I would excuse my venturing in a path almost untrod by female steps; a road too hazardously rough to be willingly, or safely, encountered. I would fain *deserve* the favour, which, to *court*, would make me unworthy of, and, unknown, 't were presumptuous to demand. I would enlist the unprejudiced in my cause, and would convince them that, whatever may be alleged *against* this Satire, it has at least the merit of *Justice* and *Truth*; for, none have I accused groundlessly—none have I

censured who did not *attack* (not censure or criticise) me.\*

"Pelayo," the first rude effusion of a warm, though untutored heart, was presented to the public with all that rainbow hope, that unmingled buoyancy, which ever attends the joyous visions of expectant youth. I studied not the *science* of poetry—I heeded not its rules;—in the enthusiasm of the moment, I only felt that nature formed her poets before nature's scorners shackled them with their modern trammels. Little dreamed I, while tracing the carelessly light-toned preface of "Pelayo," of that literary ordeal, to which it was offered; and in some unfortunate allusion to critics, my imagination scarcely painting them as other than ideal beings, I naturally gave vent to the playful exuberance of spirit which might have amused a circle of my own friends. But, if I hoped to find amongst the "wrath dispensing race" a friend—if I thought to

\* Unless some few remarks on Willis, Bryant, Goodrich, Woodworth, &c. alluding to the wasting of their talents upon ignoble themes, may be deemed censure. Respecting the lines devoted to Bryant in particular, whose ever-beautiful and touching poetry cannot be read unmoved, they never would have been published, and never written, except upon the principle

"Grieved to condemn, the muse must still be just:"

for, great as the powers of that celebrated writer certainly are, it is undeniable that much of his talent has been spent on trivial and unworthy subjects.



ward off or beguile the tempestuous hurricane of critic censure, I but experienced the same disappointment thousands have before encountered—thousands must meet again.

The most inoffensive badinage was interpreted as *Scorn*, and excuses for my conscious deficiency translated into *Self-esteem*. Had a just, even though severe, criticism, been awarded me—had they quoted *one line* of mine, and displayed its excessive faultiness—had they used my own language, and proved its absurdity—had they showed how egregiously false was my versification—how imperfect my rhymes—or from whence my ideas were stolen, (for of all these “negligences and ignorances” they bestowed on me a most bountiful share,) I would have submitted, ay, thankfully, to the scourge which brought improvement with its sting; but, on the contrary, they gathered from the preface, that “*Pelays*” was written at the early age of sixteen—that proper attention had not been devoted to its revision, and that I, myself, was conscious of its innumerable defects, and, without further examination, made the above sweeping allegations. I do not, cannot deny their *truth*:—I am at variance only with the spirit that dictated them, and their want of demonstrative proof.

Another objection was urged against "Pelayo," which, not from me alone, but from the lips and soul of every patriot American, demands reply, viz :—The extreme folly of publishing poetry, when its age was on the wane. In the old world, where the muse's glory has reached its meridian height, her power may well decline—but are not we of the new world? and shines she here, or has she ever shone in full maturity and splendour, arrayed in laurels from which time has plucked no leaf! How revolting to our national pride—how humiliating to believe that America should only produce a sickly poetic fire, expiring at its birth! Can poetry be on the wane, while such men as Halleck and Bryant are in their prime? Though its infant pinions yet are weak, may they not one day soar beyond even proud Albion's constellated host of bards?

The small esteem in which modern poetical effusions are held in England, may be inferred from the remarks of Bulwer, in his dedication of *Paul Clifford*; but hard it is to admit that most of our modern American critics, literati, and even *bards themselves*, have adopted his (in this clime at least) erroneous opinions.

He says, in reference to an enthusiastic admiration

of the muse, for which he retains "all the clinging fondness of first love," yet his obligation to write prose :—" There is poetry, in the first place ; will you, will any one, read epic, or sonnet ; tale, or satire ; tragedy, or epigram ? Whatever be the variety, do not you object at once to the species ? and would you not deem it less fatigue and greater profit to skim through two volumes than to yawn over one single stanza ? A tide of popular feeling has set against poetry, and in the literary world, as in the natural one, the tide and the hour can scarcely be neglected by the hardest adventurer."

But to return to my subject. I had jestingly stated, in the preface to "Pelayo," that literary censors would meet with a twofold answer, (in allusion to the voluble propensity of the sex,) not supposing that, except in the same laughing spirit, I should be called upon to fulfil my promise ; the result proved different. An abusive criticism which appeared in the *Courier and Enquirer*, was answered as follows :—

"I had a dream which was not all a dream,  
 And more by half like waking truth did seem ;  
 As 't were through misty clouds a room I viewed ;  
 Where never Folly's footsteps dared intrude !  
 For soon the mysteries of learned lore,  
 Ink'd quills, loose verses, papers on the floor,  
 And desks with scribbled names all blotted o'er,