

**TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF  
LORD BYRON: SUPPOSED TO BE  
WRITTEN IN THE SCULPTURE  
ROOM OF THE "SOCIETY OF  
ARTS", BIRMINGHAM**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649239825

Tribute to the Memory of Lord Byron: Supposed to be Written in the Sculpture Room of the "Society of Arts", Birmingham by E. Bagnall

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Cover @ 2017

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**E. BAGNALL**

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To the Memory of

LORD BYRON;

SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN IN THE SCULPTURE ROOM  
OF THE "SOCIETY OF ARTS," BIRMINGHAM,

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BY E. BAGNALL, B. A.

MAGDALEN HALL, OXON.

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Man praises Man.—COWPER.

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LONDON:  
HURST, CHANCE, AND CO. ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD;  
AND  
W. HODGETTS, JOURNAL OFFICE, BIRMINGHAM.  
1830.

## INTRODUCTION.

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THE announcement of "MOORE'S LIFE OF BYRON" has anticipated the remarks originally prefacing the following STANZAS, and suppressed "Observations on the Character and Writings" of the Poet, which I had intended to have annexed to them. The poetic "Tribute," in fact, was written as a kind of Introduction to an Essay on the Character of Byron, which was the result of an attentive perusal of his writings, and the relaxation of gone-by hours. This Essay I now joyfully withhold for the present, as the pen of the talented Author alluded to, will, doubtlessly, elucidate more fully the varied and intermingling shades of Byron's Character, which are so blended one with another, as to baffle the keen-searching eye of investigation that fain would discern and arrange their untraced qualities. The following POEM, however, I venture forth to whisper its intermediate still small voice into the ear of the public; though inly conscious, indeed, that it will there have

to compete with the rivetted prejudices of the many and the unwilling reception of the few; and be in danger of drowning in the overwhelming violence of more mighty opponents, or condemned by the high haughtiness of self-assurance and esteem.

Regardless, however, of the fleeting visions of hasty opinions, and the empty chimeras raised by the idea of an "ill reception," I neither withhold my humble share of praise to the merit of Lord Byron as a poet, nor conceal my felt regret at the prostitution of his genius as a man. He, as every one else, must eventually rise or fall in the estimation of mankind according to the nature and validity of his claims to their veneration; and the merit awarded him by the oracles of futurity must be in proportion to their intrinsic value. What that merit may be, it is not for me to determine: neither am I so enthusiastic an admirer of the noble bard, as to imagine that it will be of the *most* superior kind—nor so lost to the witchery of his pen, as to believe, with his American satirist, that "he will soon dwindle into contempt and be no more talked of:" for it cannot be denied that the greatness of BYRON was only *second-rate*; by this I mean, merely *intellectual*, which, with all other species, is as much obscured by *moral greatness*, as apparently to our view, the less brilliant constellations in the canopy of Heaven, when eclipsed by the brighter effulgence of our dawning sun.

Such greatness, however, and a mighty one it is, no one, possessing the true key to genius, will dispute as an attribute of him, who, by the mastery of his spell called forth

"The look of Navy and the voice of Praise."

But beyond this his praise is voiceless, and his glory dim; for,

unhappily for Byron, the predominant passions of humanity were superior to the purer spirit of the divinity that "stirred" within, and their influence was triumphant over the struggling twinklings of his better nature. Hence it is, that the great disproportion of his writings, and especially his general want of moral feeling, affording such a lamentable contrast between the grandeur and sublimity of his conception and the weakness of his sentiment, must call forth from the minds of all candid readers, regret at the abuse of genius that might have enlightened a world—pity at the demoralizing effect of its injured qualities—and sympathy at the saddening picture presented to us in his nature—the strange and awful medley of perverted and depraved taste, joined with a mind more than human in capacity, yet clouded oft with such deep and shadowy obscurity as to tend to dim in part the sun-bright glories of his enchanting verse, and annul the sparkling scintillations of his burning pen.

His genius danced a Bacchanal—he crown'd  
The brimming goblet, seiz'd the thyrsus, bound  
His brows with ivy—rush'd into the field  
Of wild Imagination, and there reel'd  
The victim of his own lascivious fires  
And, dizzy with delight, profaned the sacred wires.

But how could the inspired and lawless genius of Byron be burdened with the oppression of pleasing all, when the taste of many who contemplated it could not appreciate its merits? How could his mind give up its majestic freedom and boldness to shrink within the limits of an ordinary understanding? or how, without paralysing its efforts, could it curb its native impetuosity, and adapt itself in all cases to the capacities of every reader? When the nature of the human mind shall be better



understood, the mighty enterprises of the soul will be better accounted for ; its conflicts with the elements of earth will be less censured ; and the greedy grasp of its extended vision will no longer be imputed to the overheated ardour of enthusiasm, but to its perpetual struggling for a state of more perfect blessedness, which, at present, it is obliged to picture in its own glorious imaginings.—And, indeed, when the tooth of Malice shall have decayed through age ; when the sources that may lead to the discovery of truth shall be no longer impeded by the secret workings of jealousy, or tinctured with the deep varnish of feeling—it will be acknowledged that the almost unequalled merit of some of LORD BYRON'S more dignified poetry is more than sufficient to atone for the extravagances of his wanton fancy and the complained of “*macula*”

Quas aut incuria fudit  
Aut humana parum cævet natura.

It will then be owned, that, for vividness and flights of imagination, combined with an intense power and application of thought, BYRON must be admired ; and that his richly coloured narrative, his gay and lively descriptions gemmed with a brilliancy almost dazzling, must ever please and delight. It will then be felt, that in peering the creative energies of his own spirit, and depicting them in the glowing hues of passion, he portrayed with terrible exactness the bursting efforts of humanity, and traced out its character with the master touch of reality ; representing in its endless varieties, each eager impulse, amplified and exhibited

Ev'n as a broken mirror, which the glass  
In every fragment multiplies, and makes  
A thousand images of one that was  
The more and still the more, the more it breaks.

With willingness, too, will posterity re-echo back the faintly  
hymn'd tribute of the present age to his memory ; and with  
readiness will the Trump of Fame hereafter resound still deeper  
and deeper the proclamation—that by the union of unrivalled  
excellence in the genius of poetry, “ though dead he yet speak-  
eth,” and that by the existing testimony of his

Thoughts that breathe and words that burn

he has erected for himself a monument more durable than brass,  
entwined with the wreath of deathless praise, and distin-  
guished by the true and honourable inscription

*Opinionum commenta delet dies, nature judicis confirmat.*

*Smethwick, January 6th, 1880.*

