JOHN WILSON CROKER AS A LITERARY CRITIC

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INTRODUCTION

There has been in recent years a growing interest among scholars in the periodical critics and criticism of the early nineteenth century. For a long time, of course, these writers have figured prominently in discussions of the literature and the literary figures of the period, for their activities form an inseparable part of literary history. But the point has been reached where individual studies of these critics, and investigations of the periodicals for which they wrote, are being conducted. There is now a study of the literary career of Francis Jeffrey, founder and long-time editor of the Edinburgh Review;[1] a biography, including a study of the literary criticism, of John Gibson Lockhart;[2] and a collection of the literary criticism, with an essay in evaluation, of Leigh Hunt.[3] There have been investigations of the publishing practices

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[1] James A. Greig, Francis Jeffrey of the Edinburgh Review (Edinburgh, 1948).

[2] Marion Lochhead, John Gibson Lockhart (London, 1954).

[3] Leigh Hunt's Literary Criticism, ed. L. H. and C. W. Houtchens (New York, 1956).

and literary criticism of The Athenaeum,[4] The London Magazine,[5] and Blackwood's Magazine.[6] Numerous articles have appeared in scholarly publications on phases of this group of writers, their work, and the periodicals for which they wrote. There is every reason for thinking that activity in the field will continue, for it has to do with an unusually interesting as well as with a highly important aspect of literary history during the Romantic Period.

A study of John Wilson Croker, then, has a place, inasmuch as he has not been subjected to any extended critical analysis thus far. That he has not is by no means an indication that he is lacking in interest and value. Croker, it is conceded, was not one of the great critics of the first half of the nineteenth century, and any intention of representing him as such would be widely misdirected. When the student of literature is seeking illuminating comments upon his subject, he may turn to Coleridge, to Lamb, to De Quincey, perhaps, but not, probably, to Croker. There is not much ground for hoping that a study of Croker's literary criticism

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[4]Leslie A. Marchand, The Athenaeum: A Mirror of Victorian Culture (Chapel Hill, 1941).

[5]Josephine Bauer, The London Magazine, 1820-29 (Copenhagen, 1953).

[6]F. D. Tredrey, The House of Blackwood 1804-1954 (London, 1954).

will throw any startling and new light upon the elements of English literature of his time or before. But, granting this, it would still be unwise to ignore his work. A study of Croker's critical methods shows that he followed many of the prevailing practices of his day; his literary criticism itself mirrors certain aspects of the literary currents of the period. Nor can the possible influence of his criticism be ignored. He was for much of his career in a peculiarly advantageous position to make his critical views effective, being for almost half a century connected with one of the most powerful and aggressive organs of literary criticism in England--the Quarterly Review. It is surely of some importance to investigate the critical principles of the man who was in some degree responsible for shaping the literary policies of such a publication for so many years during a highly significant period of English literature.

In spite of certain limitations as a critic, Croker is assured of a permanent place in literary history for his relationship with some of the most important literary figures of his time. For more than twenty years he was on terms of closest friendship with Scott. Southey and Moore considered him a good friend and were indebted to him for many kindnesses. His connections with the Quarterly Review resulted in almost daily intercourse with such men as John Murray, William Gifford, and John Gibson Lockhart. Finally, personal and

political differences earned him the enmity of and made him the recipient of bitter attacks by two of the most powerful figures of the time--Disraeli and Macaulay.

Croker's position in the mainstream of political and literary events of the first half of the nineteenth century is clear from an examination of The Croker Papers: The Correspondence and Diaries, edited with a memoir by Louis J. Jennings in three volumes in 1884. Articles on Croker in the Quarterly Review for July, 1876, and for October, 1884, as well as incisive little portraits by Harriet Martineau in Biographical Sketches (1868) and Keith Feiling in Sketches in Nineteenth Century Biography (1930), attest his unique character and his varied accomplishments. A great deal of information about Croker's personal and professional relations with individual literary figures is to be found in letters, journals, and memoirs of the period. Samuel Smiles' A Publisher and His Friends: Memoir and Correspondence of the late John Murray, published in two volumes in 1891, contains a wealth of information about Croker's part in helping to launch the Quarterly Review and his various connections with the periodical and its staff. But up to the present time the only serious and comprehensive appraisal of Croker in all his relations as a politician and writer has been a biography by Myron F. Brightfield, John Wilson Croker (1940). While this book contains much fine and stimulating comment, its comparative

brevity in treating Croker's literary criticism, especially his criticism of certain of the major writers of his time, leaves considerable ground for further study. Moreover, it seems justifiable to investigate the validity of Brightfield's rehabilitation of Croker's character and his position as a literary critic.

The aim of this study, then, is to examine in detail and to attempt an evaluation of Croker's criticism of the more important literary figures who came under his scrutiny in the pages of the Quarterly Review. Moreover, such an analysis of Croker's writings may throw some light upon certain literary tendencies of the time when he wrote. Finally, an effort will be made to measure the extent of his influence upon his contemporaries and upon the course of periodical criticism of the first half of the nineteenth century.

It is not intended in this study to consider the entire body of criticism that Croker published. Many of his critical writings dealt with literary works which possessed little permanent value or interest. The authors of these works, as well as the works themselves, are today all but forgotten. No attempt will be made to consider this portion of Croker's criticism.

Mention should here be made of one factor which imposes no limitation on this study. Following the prevailing practice of periodical critics of his day, Croker rarely

signed his name to any of his critical articles. Brightfield found, however, when he wrote his biography, that there was in most cases ample proof of Croker's authorship. Using as sources Murray's contributors' book; Croker's own lists of his articles in the Quarterly Review; a bound collection of Croker's articles, as selected by John Murray III, in the Cambridge University Library; and the correspondence between Croker, Murray, and Lockhart, Brightfield identified beyond question practically all of Croker's contributions during the forty-six years he was associated with the periodical. A more recent work which throws light on problems of authorship and which lists Croker's contributions under Gifford's editorship is H. and H. C. Shine's The Quarterly Review under Gifford: Identification of Contributors, 1809-1824 (1949).

The basic primary source materials for this study are, in order of their importance, Croker's articles in the Quarterly Review; the three-volume The Croker Papers (1884), edited and containing a memoir by L. J. Jennings; the two-volume A Publisher and His Friends (1891), edited by Samuel Smiles; articles on Croker in the Quarterly Review; John Gibson Lockhart's Memoirs of Sir Walter Scott (1900); the twelve-volume Letters of Sir Walter Scott (1937), edited by Sir Herbert Grierson; and collected editions of the correspondence of Southey, Moore, Lockhart, and Macaulay.

For purposes of presentation this study has been divided into five chapters. Chapter I presents Croker's background, his education, his personality, a brief review of his political and literary career, his reputation with his contemporaries, and his qualifications for critical work. Chapter II reviews the history of Croker's personal and professional relationships with certain of his outstanding contemporaries--Southey, Moore, Disraeli, Macaulay, Scott, and others--and suggests the degree of influence he exercised over certain of these writers. Chapter III is an inquiry into the status of periodicals during the early years of the nineteenth century, with the major emphasis on Croker's connection with the Quarterly Review. This chapter also measures the degree to which Croker subscribed to the rationale of Quarterly criticism and discusses his special interests and the scope of his critical writings.

Chapter IV of this study examines in detail Croker's criticism of the literary works of some of the outstanding writers of his time, notes his critical methods, principles, and procedures, and attempts to evaluate his critical writing. Chapter V reviews his career, influence, critical method, critical preferences, and suggests his strengths and weaknesses as a literary critic.

CHAPTER I

JOHN WILSON CROKER

A study of the life of John Wilson Croker touches on almost every element of the political, social, and cultural history of the British Isles in the first half of the nineteenth century. During a long career of nearly fifty years in public life, he became involved directly or indirectly in most of the political affairs of his day; his acquaintanceship with important people gave him access to the highest levels of English society; and his lifelong interest and activity in letters give him a permanent, if not prominent, place in the literary history of the Romantic Period. A capable public servant and a vigorous party debater, he possessed a strong spirit of Toryism which he carried with him into the arena of literary criticism and which earned him many powerful enemies. His influential position in connection with the Quarterly Review caused him to be respected, if not always liked, by most of the important figures of the time, and the many letters and opinions of his contemporaries attest his unique character and his varied accomplishments, as well as his partisan influence and his political biases.

John Wilson Croker was born in Galway, Ireland, on December 20, 1780. His father, John Croker, was for many years Surveyor General of Customs and Excise for the port of Dublin, and it is recorded, on the authority of Edmund Burke, that he was "a man of great abilities and most amiable manners, an able and upright public steward, and universally respected and beloved in private life."[1] He was descended from an old English family settled for many generations at Lineham in South Devon. A soldier of this family distinguished himself at the capture of the town of Waterford in 1650, and was rewarded with the grant of considerable estates in Waterford, Limerick, and Cork. But John Wilson Croker, being only the younger son of a younger son, did not inherit any portion of the family estates.

Croker spent the early years of his boyhood in the town of Newport, county Mayo, near the shores of Clew Bay. In order to cure him of a speech impediment, his parents sent him, at about the age of ten, to an "Academy of Elocution" in Cork maintained by James Knowles, first cousin of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. He was soon transferred to a school founded by French refugees, where he acquired a good training in the French language. About 1792, Croker entered

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[1][Sir William Smith], "John Wilson Croker," Quarterly Review, CXLII (July, 1876), 87.

Willis's school at Portarlington. The boy showed an early interest in Latin and Greek, an interest which was much strengthened by his remaining at Portarlington to enter, with about a half-dozen others, a course of classical study under the Reverand Richard Hood.

In November, 1796, shortly before his sixteenth birthday, Croker entered Trinity College, Dublin. Here he continued his classical studies and took a leading part in the Historical Society, an organization which encouraged young Irishmen to become orators. He wrote several prize essays for the society, and received the first gold medal it awarded. His first acquaintance with Thomas Moore began at this period, and the correspondence which ensued between them was rarely interrupted until the death of the poet, although political ties and other circumstances often threw them widely apart. Having completed college and taken the B.A. degree, Croker proceeded to London in 1800 and was entered as a student of law at Lincoln's Inn. Admitted to the Irish bar in 1802, he commenced law practice while resuming his studies in London at intervals in 1804 and 1805.

In 1806 Croker entered upon his political career. In his first attempt to get elected to Parliament from the borough of Downpatrick he was defeated. But in the following year there came the collapse of the Grenville Ministry, and, with financial aid from the Tory party, Croker undertook

another contest. This time he was victorious, and in June, 1807 he took his seat in the House of Commons, where he was placed in charge of Irish business by his lifelong friend, Sir Arthur Wellesley, then Chief Secretary. In 1809 he was appointed Secretary of the Admiralty, a post which he retained for twenty-one years. In 1816 he declined an offer to make him a Privy Councillor; but twelve years later he accepted the honor at the hands of the Duke of Wellington.

During his years in public office, Croker seems to have been as successful in social and cultural circles as he was in politics. He was elected a member of White's Club--at that time a high distinction--as well as a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was on friendly terms with not only most of the Tory statesmen, but, according to entries in his Diary, with the wit and fashion of the town. Although prone to argumentation and contradiction, he had, by contemporary accounts, great powers of conversation, and his presence undoubtedly gave life and spirit to the companies he joined. His friendship with the Prince Regent (later to become George IV) began soon after his appointment to the Admiralty post and resulted in many invitations to Carlton House. In Croker's notebook of 1813, under the head of engagements, is the entry: "For some years after this I dined very frequently,

sometimes twice a week, with the Prince Regent."[2] He wrote to his wife in August of the same year:

> The Plymouth Telegraph announces another complete victory of Lord Wellington over Soult on the 30th. When I went to the Prince with the news this morning, he embraced me with both arms. You never saw a man so rejoiced. I have seen him again today; and you cannot conceive how gracious he is to me. H. R. Highness has asked me to go to the Pavilion Wednesday and Thursday, or as long as I can stay.[3]

With the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel, Croker was on terms of closest intimacy for many years. The Duke's confidential conversations with him are scattered up and down the pages of the Croker Papers; Peel became godfather to Croker's son, and after the war accompanied him on a visit to Paris and the battlefield of Waterloo. Among the many cultural interests that engaged Croker's attention were the establishment of the Athenaeum Club and the acquisition of the Elgin Marbles for the British Museum. The Athenaeum Club, which was founded in 1824, owed its origin almost entirely to Croker; and it was chiefly through his exertions that the Government and Parliament were induced to purchase the Elgin Marbles.

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[2]As quoted in Ibid., p. 102.

[3]Louis J. Jennings, ed., The Croker Papers: The Correspondence and Diaries, 1 (London, 1884), 53.

Released from his post at the Admiralty by the accession of the Whigs to power in 1830, Croker took a prominent part in the debates on the Reform Bill in the House of Commons. On the passing of the Bill, which he had strenuously opposed, Croker in 1832 retired permanently from active political life. He took up residence at West Molesey, in Surrey, where he carried on an extensive correspondence and occupied himself in literary pursuits until his death in his seventy-seventh year, on August 10, 1857.

Croker's literary career began shortly after he entered upon the practice of law. His first literary effort had as its subject the French Revolution, which had produced a powerful impression upon him, though he was only in his ninth year when war broke out. An alliance which connected his family with Edmund Burke's helped perhaps to confirm him in that man's stand on the Revolution; but there is evidence that it was his mother's warning voice more than anything else that contributed to giving his mind the strong antirevolutionary bias which was one of his leading characteristics throughout life. Mention of his first writing, and a glimpse of the young Croker, appears in a memorandum written by a Mr. Jesse with whom he lived:

> I was lodging and boarding with a Miss Robinson in Middle Scotland Yard, about fifty-seven years ago, when Mr. Croker became an inmate. The society in the house consisted

> of four or five very pleasant men, and Mr. Croker soon became the life of the party by his wit and talents, and his constant readiness to provoke an argument, which he never failed to have the best of. In these lodgings he employed himself in writing political letters on the French Revolution, addressed to Tallien, which appeared in the Times newspaper.[4]

The letters affected to give an account of the visit to England of the regicide Tallien, hero of the 9th Thermidor, and were written in what Croker later characterized as "that style at once pert and pedantic which is apt to mark the transition state between college and the world, and particularly in young Irishmen."[5] But the attitude toward the French Revolution expressed in the letters was never afterwards altered; neither was the tendency for satire and pungent wit.

A year or two later Croker assisted James and Horace Smith (famous in their day as authors of the "Rejected Addresses") and other friends in starting two periodicals, the Picnic and the Cabinet. Among his contributions were some verses, written with epigrammatic smartness, on the localities of London, in imitation of a small collection of similar squibs on Paris, called Tout Paris en Vaudeville. These periodicals, however, had only a brief existence, and do not appear to have attracted much attention. Several other

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[4]As quoted in Smith, p. 90.

[5]As quoted in Myron F. Brightfield, John Wilson Croker (Berkeley, 1940), p. 7.

literary ventures occupied Croker's attention in 1804 and the succeeding year. One was a poetic satire on the Irish stage, entitled Familiar Epistles, which was so popular that it ran through five editions in less than a year. A contemporary of Croker's said that "the satire was felt and resented with great bitterness, its lightness and gaiety adding pungency to truths which in a graver dress would neither have attracted so much notice nor given so much offence."[6] It was followed in 1805 by a satirical work in prose, entitled An Intercepted Letter, in which, under the disguise of Chinese names, Croker gave an amusing account of Dublin politics and society. It had even a greater success than the Familiar Epistles, for it ran rapidly through seven editions, and received the praise of Maria Edgeworth: "It contains one of the best views of Dublin ever seen, evidently drawn by the hand of a master, though in a slight, playful, unusual style."[7] Croker's poem "Battle of Talavera," published in 1809, was reviewed by Sir Walter Scott, who bestowed high praise upon it and quoted several lines as possessing "peculiar and picturesque merit."[8] Robert Southey, too, professed

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[6] As quoted in Smith, p. 91.

[7] Ibid.

[8] "The Battle of Talavera," Quarterly Review, II (November, 1809), 429.

admiration, calling it "a poem which has been one of the most successful of modern times, or indeed of any times--and yet not more so than it deserves to be."[9]

In 1809 Croker, in association with Scott, John Murray, George Ellis, and William Gifford, founded the Quarterly Review as an equipoise to the Edinburgh Review, which had become obnoxious to the Tory party for the ferocity of its criticism. Croker became the Quarterly Review's chief supporter and one of its leading contributors for nearly half a century. But he continued to do other literary work besides. He edited three books of memoirs, the first two of which he also translated: Memoirs of the Embassy of the Marshal de Bassompierre to the Court of England in 1626 (1819) and Royal Memoirs on the French Revolution (1823). In 1848 appeared Memoirs of the Reign of George the Second. Two children's books came from his pen: Stories Selected from the History of England . . . for Children (1817) and Progressive Geography for Children (1828). Probably Croker's most important literary work was his edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson, which he published in 1831 and about which more will be discussed in Chapter II. Over the years he also edited numerous letters and speeches of figures important at the time but little-known today. Toward the end of his life he was engaged

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[9] Letter of March 27, 1812; as quoted in Brightfield, p. 270.

in editing the works of Pope, but failing health forced him to break off and leave the work incomplete. A great deal of his material went to enrich the Elwin-Courthope edition of Pope half a century later.

There are certain salient traits in Croker's character, due either to native tendency or to the play of circumstances, that are especially illuminating in an investigation of his successes and failures as a critic. Though these traits will be given fuller treatment later, a few observations may be apropos here. Croker had a propensity for sly satire and pungent wit. Not infrequently this tendency led into a vein of ridicule and sometimes cruel and fierce recrimination. He was a strong, even a bitter partisan, who understood very clearly the value of official propaganda and saw no reason for keeping politics out of anything, especially literary criticism. As he himself pointed out, "Party is much the strongest passion of an Englishman's mind. Friendship, love, even avarice give way before it."[10] He was thoroughly at home in a review where it was taken for granted that a writer's known or supposed political sympathies should help to determine the critic's attitude to his work. But it should be remembered, in extenuation of Croker's offences, that his

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[10] Letter of January 21, 1831; Samuel Smiles, ed., Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray, II (London, 1891), 322.

early manhood was passed in a time of bitter personal animosity, when there was hardly any social intercourse between persons of different political opinions, and when party spirit proceeded to lengths unknown in the present century. Added to this, he was frequently called upon, at short notice, to write a review which would stir the public's passions or to defend a Ministry savagely assailed by the most powerful writers and journalists of the day. Writing for the most part anonymously, he did not measure his words and phrases. To this habit of party warfare, joined to an innate spirit of criticism and to a hatred of humbug and imposture, may be attributed the severity with which he attacked and unravelled --even to the most minute details--everything which he thought bore the appearance of fraud and undue pretension. He was accused of descending to the merest trifles in his criticisms and reviews; but he himself said that he was never disposed to regard any fact as a trifle, because he had found by long experience that the smallest and apparently the most indifferent trifles often indicated serious matters, and led to important results.[11] His scholarly tenacity, "like that of an academic bloodhound,"[12] may be seen at its best in his

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[11]Jennings, I, 27-28.

[12]Ian Jack, English Literature 1815-1832 (Oxford, 1963), p. 334.

article on Fanny Burney, to be discussed in Chapter II, and in his edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson, so savagely attacked by Macaulay yet so valuable that Birkbeck Hill was to be deeply indebted to it half a century later.

The impression received of Croker's reputation among his contemporaries is not a unified one; there is a good deal of conflicting testimony. It is difficult to separate Croker the literary critic from Croker the politician. Moreover, almost all the evidence we have is likely to be tinged with prejudice, for it is furnished by bitter personal or political enemies or by close personal friends and admirers.

Croker's detractors--and there were many--maligned him with a vehemence not often found in the annals of English politics and letters. Many of those whom he offended by his political or literary judgments took care, sooner or later, to exact vengeance. As early as 1813 Thomas Barnes wrote a cutting sketch which appeared in Leigh Hunt's The Examiner, in which he spoke of Croker's "hard-faced and protrusive impudence," and his "arrogance of manner, unbecoming in any man, but least of all suited to a man of his small pretensions."[13] In her novel Florence Macarthy, Sydney Owenson,

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[13]This article is reprinted in part in Derek Hudson, Thomas Barnes of The Times (Cambridge, 1944), pp. 160-163.

who became known to the world as Lady Morgan, wrote a barbed caricature of Croker in the figure of the "bilious, saturnine" Counsellor Conway Crawley. In Disraeli's Coningsby, as no biographical sketch of Croker ever fails to point out, Croker was presented as Rigby, the servitor and toady of the Marquis of Monmouth. Macaulay called Croker a "varlet," and recorded in his diary his opinion that Croker was "a bad, a very bad man; a scandal to politics and to letters."[14] To Sydney Smith, the well-known clergyman, writer, and wit, Croker was "the calumniator general of the human race."[15] Two abusive articles--one attacking Croker as a politician, the other his standing as a critic--are representative of the many slashes that appeared in various periodicals of the time. The first, from the New Monthly Magazine, opens in a strain of irony by praising him, but wastes no time in launching into a direct attack:

> Mr. Croker is an elegant scholar, an elegant writer, a man of acute talents, and a wit; and has only to blame his own base sycophancy to power, and his tortuous and unerect, prying, and intriguing means of attacking it, for not being now the moral no less than the intellectual leader of his party.

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[14] G. Otto Trevelyan, ed., The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay, II (New York, 1877), 225.

[15] Nowell C. Smith, ed., The Letters of Sydney Smith, II (Oxford, 1953), 680.

> It is to a biting consciousness of this fact, and to a constitutional irritability of frame, and not to the mere proud-flesh insolence of office, that I would ascribe that peevish petulance and insolent assumption of manner which have won for him a more undivided unpopularity than is bestowed on any other individual . . . in either House of Parliament.[16]

The second article appeared in The Gentleman's Magazine exactly one month after Croker's death, and begins:

> In what may be called the pettifoggery of literature, the late Mr. Croker was an unrivalled adept. By patient delving he would undermine a molehill, and then complacently congratulate himself on having overthrown a mountain. His habit was to nibble at some unimportant fact in a noble composition, and then delude himself--or endeavour, by triumphant boasting, to delude others--into a belief that he had destroyed the credit of the work in which the fact occurred. His assiduity in this small work was extraordinary.[17]

In the years following his death the bitterness of the attacks on Croker redoubled, and his reputation, with few men stepping forth to defend it, gradually slipped downward, reaching its nadir towards the closing years of the century with G. Otto Trevelyan's broad and sweeping attack on Croker's moral character, in which he threw out a dark allusion to "certain unsavoury portions" of Croker's private life.[18]

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[16]XXXI (April, 1831), 355.

[17]January, 1858, p. 29.

[18]Trevelyan, I, 122.

But there is another picture to be gained of Croker from those of his contemporaries who saw him as an able politician, a discerning critic, and a steadfast friend. As Jennings observes,

> when we get fairly behind the scenes of his life, we find that Mr. Croker was the close and intimate friend of many of the most eminent men of his day, and not only their friend, but their adviser in every great emergency which befell them. They attached an extraordinary value to his opinions, and trusted in him to a degree which is rare either in public or in private life. Never was he known to betray this confidence.[19]

Croker was held in high regard by the leading Tory statesmen and politicians of his day. Testimonials from publishers, editors, and critics to his honorable reputation as a man, and his worth as a literary critic, are also abundant. John Gibson Lockhart, editor, biographer, and critic, spoke of Croker's "industrious researches and . . . sagacious criticism"[20] and declared that to literary matters Croker "brought his own piercing, strong, and liberal understanding, enriched with most multifarious knowledge of books, more especially of literary and political biography, and expanded by as extensive observation of men and manners as has fallen

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[19] Jennings, I, 2.

[20] "Croker's Edition of Boswell," Quarterly Review, XLVI (November, 1831), 11.

to the lot of any living person."[21] William Blackwood, the founder of Blackwood's Magazine, wrote Murray of his first meeting with Croker: "I think I have never been so much gratified with any one. His quickness of mind, intelligence, and activity are surprising; and what gives a complete charm to the whole is the simplicity and perfect gentlemanly tone of his manners."[22] For many years Blackwood sent Croker every number of "Maga,"[23] and asked him to express a frank and free opinion of its contents, a request with which Croker generally complied.[24] William Gifford, editor of the Quarterly Review until 1824, and a critic himself, always recognized Croker's merits as a literary critic and spoke of him to Murray as "really a treasure to us."[25] Perhaps the testimonials of three of the well-known literary figures of the time--Scott, Southey, and Moore--most convincingly reveal the esteem in which Croker was held by some of his contemporaries.

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[21] Ibid., p. 2.

[22] Letter of July 12, 1816; Smiles, I, 465.

[23] F. D. Tredrey, The House of Blackwood 1804-1954 (London, 1954), p. 61.

[24] For an example of Croker's criticism of the magazine, see Jennings, I, 143-144.

[25] Smiles, I, 201.

Their respect for both his character and his critical abilities is attested by the correspondence which passed between them. The history of Croker's relationship with these men will be discussed in Chapter II.

Croker's creative writings, though popular in their day, are little known to the modern reader. Such is to be expected, for they possess little intrinsic or historical value. It was in the critical rather than in the creative forms of literature that Croker's powers were permitted their fullest scope. He did his best work in primarily intellectual types of writing--in editing and in criticism. As this study is concerned with his criticism of literature, it will be well to inquire into his qualifications for this kind of work, and to attempt to determine the extent they shaped his critical outlook.

Keenness of intellect was croker's first qualification for critical work. His mental acuteness is to be detected while he was still a schoolboy at Portarlington. His schoolfellow there and perhaps his earliest intimate friend was Joseph Jackson, who, many years later, as Justice Jackson of the Irish Court of Common Pleas, wrote to Croker in a fondly reminiscent mood:

> You were then at the head of the school, and facile princeps in every branch of our course. You were also a great favourite with our master Mr. Willis, and with Monsieur

> Doineau, the French teacher, the principal assistant. They were proud of your talents and acquirements, as being likely to redound to the character and credit of the school.[26]

For a young Irishman of Croker's mental abilities, attendance at Trinity College was taken as a matter of course. Trinity was still the brilliant and worldly college which had graduated Sheridan and Burke. John Hely Hutchinson's administration had been a long scandal that ended in 1795, when the amiable Richard Murray became provost; but Hutchinson had known what he wanted. He aimed to attract the nobility and gentry, and instituted instruction in riding, fencing, and the modern languages as parts of a genteel education. The curriculum had been revised in 1793 and was, as a matter of fact, an advance over Oxford and Cambridge.[27] As a "Junior Freshman" Croker might look forward to Murray's Logic, equal parts of Virgil, Homer, and Horace, the first three books of Euclid, and portions of Livy and Herodotus.[28] Education was of course classical. The Latin theme was still presented by the student, an essay in which he reproduced

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[26] As quoted in Smith, p. 88.

[27] Constantia Maxwell, A History of Trinity College Dublin 1591-1892 (Dublin, 1946), pp. 122-129.

[28] John William Stubbs, The History of the University of Dublin (Dublin, 1889), p. 257.

what he had learned from his tutor during the week; declamations were still in vogue, and so were the disputations. As late as 1845 when Taylor published his History of the University, students taking the degrees of B.A. and M.A. had still to make two declamations, one in Greek and one in Latin, and to dispute in the old fashion. But besides the classics, the curriculum also included some astronomy and physics, a touch of political science, Conybeare's Defence of Revealed Religion, and "Locke on Government."[29] Trinity was not a mere college for future curates.

Croker appears to have lost no time in earning himself a reputation at Trinity. According to Professor Strong, he soon "showed signs of brilliance."[30] Jennings states that "his remarkable abilities appeared from the first to have attracted the attention of his associates."[31] Croker fortunately had for his tutor Dr. Bartholomew Lloyd, an exceptionally able man who would become provost in 1831 and who would achieve renown as a mathematician.

It is likely that Croker's mental acuteness was related to his early inclination towards satire. He had the

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[29] Maxwell, p. 149.

[30] L. A. G. Strong, The Minstrel Boy: A Portrait of Tom Moore (New York, 1937), p. 36.

[31] Croker Papers, I, 7.

faculty of penetrating observation, in life as well as in literature; and, when he brought this faculty to bear upon people, friends or enemies, he saw their incongruities more plainly than most. The coruscating banter and sly satire which obtained so much popularity for the Familiar Epistles and The Intercepted Letter could only have been written by someone who possessed keenness and quickness of mind. But it was these same mental qualities that would sometimes work to Croker's disadvantage in later years. A consciousness of his powers would often make him extremely impatient of other men's opinions if they differed from his, especially in regard to political beliefs. It would also lead him to assume a tone of authority which he reinforced by violence of language and bitterness of spirit, making his name one of the most hated and feared on the roll of periodical writers of his day.

Another quality of Croker's mind besides mere acuteness was intellectual curiosity. It was a trait fraught with notable consequences in his literary criticism, and it had a good deal to do with his preparation for his work and the extent of his scholarly attainments. His thirst for intellectual exploration accounts for his wide and appreciative reading, which can be considered his second qualification for critical work. Acquiring an interest in Latin and Greek

literature at an early age, he wrote to a friend: "Pope's Homer I had by heart . . . I knew of no translation of Virgil, and, stimulated by the example of Mr. Pope, was resolved to fill up that chasm in English literature."[32] Such a scheme, though more fanciful than realistic for a schoolboy, can be attributed mostly to Croker's boyish enthusiasm for his studies. But it also shows evidence of his mental avidity of the time, and there can be little doubt that his reading covered a wide range of classical works. Such an assumption can be deduced from a look at the course of study offered in Irish schools in the latter half of the eighteenth century. To prepare boys in classical schools for the entrance exams at Trinity, the Provost and Senior Fellows at that institution had sent several recommendations to the Irish schoolmasters, in which the former specified passages of certain classical authors that must be read, among them Homer, Lucian, Xenophon, Epictetus, Virgil, Terence, Horace, Juvenal, and Sallust. Furthermore,

> Literal translations were not to be used, translations from English to Latin and _vice versa_ were to be made continually, the boys were to be instructed in Greek and Roman History, to use globes and maps, to be able

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[32] As quoted in Smith, p. 88.

> to draw maps and trace out the boundaries of countries and provinces, to be taught the composition and proper pronunciation of English, etc.[33]

The fact that Croker was classically trained, both at Portarlington and at Trinity, is a consideration that affects greatly his criticism. But, despite the low estimation in which modern literatures were held at Trinity in those days, Croker's reading did not stop with the classics. His early facility in the French language enabled him to read widely in French literature, philosophy, and especially history, in which he continued to take a profound interest throughout life. His many articles on almost every facet of the French nation that appeared in issues of the Quarterly Review attest his broad knowledge of that subject. Nor did he neglect English literature, for he would scarcely devote himself to foreign models to the exclusion of those written in his own tongue. He read widely in English prose and poetry of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries; references to Marlowe, Milton, Dryden, Swift, Cowper, Gray, Burns, and Crabbe, to name only the most important authors, are scattered throughout his writings. Croker was a particular enthusiast of Shakespeare, Pope, and Johnson. Many years after he left Trinity, while in the midst of

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[33] Maxwell, pp. 153-154.

reviewing the Collier-Knight edition of Shakespeare for the Quarterly Review, he wrote to Murray:

> My work is delightful work:--so delightful that I find it very difficult to go on with it. The road is so charming that I sit down every three steps to admire the prospect; or I slip aside to gather flowers or to taste the sparkling stream "that brawls along the wood." I wish I could fancy myself writing a review without the necessity of really writing one. I believe I should wander contentedly in the Shakespearean maze to the end of my life. I feel like the prince in the fairy tale:--when I look at the exterior of the palace I have reached, I am lost in wonder at its general grandeur and beauty; but when I enter, I find the apartments so numerous and each room so resplendent with gold and jewels that my senses are bewildered, and 'pon my life I know not how I shall ever get out of the gorgeous labyrinth.[34]

Croker spoke often in praise of Pope. Writing to a friend in 1816, he declared: "I read more of Pope and Dryden than I do of even Scott and Byron; that is to say, I do not return to Scott and Byron with the same regular appetite that I do to the others."[35] On another occasion he spoke of the "brilliancy and beauty of Pope's poetry."[36] It was his dissatisfaction with existing editions of Pope that made him desire to try his hand at a new one. Johnson, wrote Croker in a

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[34]Letter of January 31, 1842; as quoted in Brightfield, p. 307.

[35]Jennings, I, 96.

[36]Letter of April 10, 1831; as quoted in Brightfield, p. 311.

review of 1825, was "one of the ablest and best men that ever adorned literature."[37] When Croker was planning his edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson, Murray wrote him that he had "long known how much your attention and time have been engaged in the literary history of the period (amongst others) to which this work refers."[38] It was Croker's wide reading and exhaustive investigations that prepared him for the writing of more than fifty reviews of biographies and memoirs covering the period 1775-1825. As Ian Jack has stated, "few men of his day knew so much about the eighteenth century as Croker."[39]

The picture we get of Croker through most of his life is that of one whose mind is kept in perpetual intense activity by a thirst for intellectual exploration; of one who attacks one subject after another with energy and enthusiasm, and who persevers with each until it is mastered. The eagerness with which he would labor upon any piece of work he might have in hand and the tenacity of purpose in prosecuting the study of anything that he set his mind to is attested by numerous contemporaries. The latter trait is especially to be remembered, for it made itself manifest in Croker's literary criticism.

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[37] Quarterly Review, XXXII (October, 1825), 350.

[38] Smiles, II, 287.

[39] English Literature 1815-1832, p. 333.

CHAPTER II

CROKER'S PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH CONTEMPORARIES

Croker was on friendly terms with a large number of the literary men of his time. With two noteworthy exceptions, his literary acquaintances--the men whom he met and with whom he talked and corresponded--attached great value to his opinions and trusted in him to a high degree. It is evident from a reading of The Croker Papers that his kindness and consideration induced him to exert his influence in various ways for the benefit of his friends. Those who had the slightest claim upon him rarely asked his aid without obtaining real and energetic assistance. Political differences sometimes cost him the loss of a friend; but no man can take an active part in public affairs without being required, sooner or later, to pay that penalty.

Croker had many opportunities to meet literary men. The Athenaeum, one of the two most important literary clubs in London, was his creation. He was a frequent diner-out and made friends at the dinner tables of literary men.

He was for years the chief contributor of a periodical to which some of the most distinguished writers of the day also contributed. He was a poet of some note and an editor of reputation. He attended the notable literary gatherings at the publisher Murray's place at 50 Albemarle Street.[1] With other recognized political patrons of the arts, he regularly attended the dinners of the Royal Academy, where he formed personal acquaintances with literary people as well as with painters and sculptors.

Many of Croker's literary acquaintances, though men of importance in their own time, are merely names today. Others, such as Theodore Hook, John Barrow, Henry Hallam, and Henry Hart Milman, have some claim to be remembered. As would be expected, Croker was widely acquainted with editors and publishers; his closest friendships were with William Gifford, John Gibson Lockhart, and John Murray, all of the Quarterly Review, William Blackwood of Blackwood's Magazine, and John Walter of The Times. Of the more important purely literary figures of his time, Croker was on very friendly terms with three: Southey, Moore, and Scott.

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[1] Smiles, II, 83; Murray's drawing room was at that time the main center of literary intercourse in the west end of London.

Though he once saw Wordsworth and Coleridge at a dinner,[2] he apparently never met them. Similarly, he had no real personal acquaintance with Byron, though it is likely he encountered him on at least one occasion at Murray's. Finally, in any discussion of Croker's relationship with contemporaries must be included the names of Disraeli and Macaulay. With these two important men he had the misfortune to fall foul and become the subject of their satirical pens.

Southey

Although Southey was a regular contributor to the Quarterly Review from its first number, he seems not to have met Croker until the summer of 1811 when he was on a visit to London. On this occasion, he recorded: "Croker has been very civil to me," and "I dined with him the other day at the Admiralty."[3] Details concerning their early meetings are lacking, but the two men must have conversed at length on matters relating to the Quarterly Review, an enterprise in which they both took a deep interest. Undoubtedly Southey also spoke to Croker of his recent visit with

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[2]Brightfield, p. 229.

[3]John Wood Warter, ed., Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, II (London, 1856), 228.

William Blake, a visit which had made a profound impression upon him.[4]

Although the relationship between Southey and Croker does not appear to have ever reached the stage of intimacy, in the years that followed the two men corresponded on friendly terms and saw each other occasionally during Southey's periodic trips to London. Like most of his distinguished contemporaries, Croker held Southey's work in surprisingly high estimation. Southey, more than anyone else except Wordsworth, was the "real poet" of the period, devoting his whole heart to literature and his whole time to literary pursuits. Croker always had high praise for the man as well as his poetry, so it is not surprising that on several occasions he used his influence to try to secure appointments for Southey. As early as 1809 the poet had let it be known to several influential friends that he wished to secure a well-paid sinecure. One appointment that he thought might suit very well was soon to fall vacant: the post of Historiographer Royal. When the office was vacated in May, 1812 by the death of Louis Dutens, there were strong attempts to secure the post for Southey:

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[4]Jack Simmons, Southey (New Haven, 1948), p. 134.

> Lord Lonsdale applied on his behalf; Croker, unsolicited, lobbied the Prime Minister and the Lord Chamberlain; Scott wrote to ask the help of Lord Melville.[5]

But the influences were exerted to no avail; the Prince Regent had decided upon the appointment of his private librarian, James Stanier Clarke. The disappointed candidate wrote to Croker:

> My friend William Wynn informs me that I am indebted to your kindness for an attempt to forward my wishes and worldly interests. The knowledge that this attempt was made in time has saved me from the little sort of repining which I might else have felt, in fancying that my application had failed because it was preferred too late. I wished for the office, not merely because it would have secured to me a moderate competence, but because I should have made it my pride to discharge the duties which ought to attach to it. The opportunity is lost--but I am not the less beholden to you for your friendly intentions and endeavour.[6]

It was in May of 1812 also that Southey published his Life of Nelson, a work which he had expanded from an article in the Quarterly Review at Murray's suggestion. Croker's praise of the work was immediate, and he wrote Southey an encouraging letter, prophesying that the book would always be "the popular Life of Nelson."[7]

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[5] Ibid., p. 138.

[6] As quoted in Brightfield, p. 208.

[7] Letter of May 7, 1813; Jennings, 1, 50-51.

In the summer of 1813 Croker had another opportunity to try to secure an appointment for Southey, and this time his persevering assistance was decisive. The death in August of Henry James Pye had created a vacancy in the Poet Laureateship. Croker immediately put forward Southey's name for the office, unaware that in some quarters Scott was already being seriously considered. Southey's letter of September 20 to his friend Wynn relates the details:

> I called on Croker: He had spoken to the Prince; and the Prince observing that I had written "some good things in favour of the Spaniards," said the office should be given me. . . . Presently Croker meets Lord Liverpool, and tells him what had passed; Lord Liverpool expressed his sorrow that he had not known it a day sooner, for he and the Marquis of Hertford had consulted together upon whom the vacant honour could most properly be bestowed. Scott was the greatest poet of the day, and to Scott therefore they had written to offer it. The Prince was displeased at this; though he said he ought to have been consulted, it was his pleasure that I should have it, and have it I should. Upon this Croker represented that he was Scott's friend as well as mine, that Scott and I were upon friendly terms; and for the sake of all three he requested that the business might rest where it was.[8]

Scott quickly decided, for a variety of reasons, to decline the offer. He then wrote to Croker, asking him to use his

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[8]Charles Cuthbert Southey, ed., The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey, IV (London, 1849-50), 42.

influence to get Southey appointed in his place. Croker, of course, had been working for Southey's appointment from the very beginning, not because he had the slightest personal or political objection to Scott, but because he was aware that Southey badly needed the salary. He renewed his efforts and soon had the affair satisfactorily settled, but not before Southey had written him that he would accept the office only if the Laureate's duties could be a little modified:

> Twenty years ago, when I had a reputation to win, it would have been easy for me to furnish odes upon demand on any subject. This is no longer the case. I should go to the task like a schoolboy, with reluctance and a sense of incapacity for executing it well; but unless I could so perform it as to give credit to the office, certain it is that the office could give none to me.
>
> But if these periodical exhibitions were dispensed with, and I were left to write upon great events, or to be silent, according as the spirit moved, I should then thankfully accept the office as a mark of honourable distinction, which it would then become.
>
> I write this to you, not as proposing terms to the Prince, an impropriety of which I should be fully aware, but as to a friend who has more than once shown me acts of kindness which I had no reason to expect and by whose advice I would be guided.[9]

Southey recorded Croker's answer to the request in the Preface to Volume III of his Poetical Works:

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[9]Jennings, I, 49-50.

> Upon this, Mr. Croker, whose friendliness to me upon every occasion I gladly take this opportunity of acknowledging, observed that it was not for us to make terms with the Prince Regent. "Go you," said he, "and write your Ode for the New Year. You can never have a better subject than the present state of the war affords you." He added that some fit time might be found for representing the matter to the Prince in its proper light.[10]

The final steps in Southey's appointment suffered the usual delays. But by the time the poet arrived in London in the middle of October, Croker was able to inform him that the Laureateship was his.

Southey acted on Croker's suggestion for his New Year ode. On December 15, 1813, he sent the poem, the "Carmen Triumphale," to Croker, asking not for criticism, but if there was "an impropriety in some parts of it appearing as the Poet Laureate's production."[11] Two days later he wrote to his friend John Rickman that "I am prepared to expect a letter from Mr. Croker, advising the suppression of anything discourteous towards Bonaparte."[12] Southey's anticipations were shortly realized; Croker wrote and pointed out that the ode was an official performance, and it was possible that before long France might become a friendly power. Thus it was necessary for the poet to exercise discretion in all

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[10] London, 1838.

[11] Southey, Life, IV, 52.

[12] Ibid., p. 52.

references to France; otherwise he might find himself in an embarrassing position. In deference to Croker's suggestions, Southey omitted from the poem the more violently anti-French stanzas. But he was by no means happy about the alterations, as he makes clear in a letter of December 28 to his uncle, the Reverend Herbert Hill:

> I spoilt my poem, in deference to . . . Croker's advice, by cutting out all that related to Bonaparte, and which gave strength, purport, and coherence to the whole. Perhaps I may discharge my conscience by putting these rejected parts together, and letting them off in the Courier before it becomes a libellous offence to call murder and tyranny by their proper names.[13]

The offending section was ultimately published, with some additional lines, as an "Ode Written During the Negotiations with Bonaparte."

In June, 1814, Southey wrote to Croker and informed him that he had written the "Carmina Aulica," consisting of odes to the Prince Regent, the Emperor Alexander, and the King of Prussia. He asked Croker to present, as a mark of respect, copies to the personages to whom the odes were addressed, a request with which Croker gladly complied.[14] Several years later when Southey was contemplating writing

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[13] Ibid., p. 54.

[14] Brightfield, pp. 214-215.

a companion volume to his popular ecclesiastical history of England, the Book of the Church, Croker wrote in warm praise of the project:

> I am delighted at your idea of a "Book of the State." If you execute it with the same spirit and success as the "Book of the Church," you will have created the two most valuable standard works in our language--works which will become (and it is the greatest praise and prognostication of usefulness which I can give) school books, and will lead future generations to good principles and right feelings in matters of Church and State.[15]

After about 1820 Croker and Southey corresponded infrequently, Southey being entirely occupied at his home in Keswick with literary work which completely absorbed his energies. The two men undoubtedly saw each other at Murray's drawing room when Southey visited London in May, 1828, and possibly again in the spring of 1838. The following year marked the beginning of Southey's slow decline in health which led ultimately to his death in 1843.

Moore

Croker met Thomas Moore in 1796 when the two were students at Trinity College, Dublin. Moore, almost two years ahead of Croker, had entered Trinity soon after the Act of 1793 made it possible for Roman Catholics to legally proceed to a degree. Because of their being in different

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[15] Letter of January 3, 1825; Jennings, I, 276-277.

classes and the fact that Moore was an "extern" residing with his parents in the city, no real intimacy was formed between them during their college years. They did have some contact, perhaps, from their membership in the Historical Society. By the time Croker joined, Moore had already achieved a certain notoriety in that group from the spirited reading of his satire against pedagogues and pedants, the "Ode upon Nothing."[16]

After graduating from college in 1798, Moore took up residence in London to arrange for the publication of his translation of Anacreon. Croker soon arrived in that city to study law, and throughout most of 1800 and the succeeding year the two young men were often together. The growing friendship is evidenced by a letter Moore wrote to Croker in January, 1800:

> I am delighted to find that your friendship is unchanged, and, believe me, my gratitude is as warm as ever. I had intended writing to you to confess the theft of an idea from you, which I have committed, not, however, without acknowledgment. In translating the fragments of Anacreon, I have adopted your idea of combining them so as to form little odes of them. Will you forgive me for the plagiary? I assure you I shall own the source whence I have drawn it.[17]

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[16] Strong, Minstrel Boy, p. 45.

[17] Correspondence Between the Right Hon. J. W. Croker and the Right Hon. Lord John Russell on Some Passages of Moore's Diary (London, 1854), pp. 21-22.

In 1803 an unsettling circumstance was to sever the friendship between Croker and Moore for several years. It was in that year that Moore was given a government appointment as registrar for the naval court in Bermuda, and he spent some months there at the uncongenial task of examining the accounts of vessels. During his absence, Croker published his Familiar Epistles, in which appeared a reference to Moore, with the following footnote:

> In Ireland we used to shew our admiration of his poetic talents by asking him to supper; in England they reward him with a commercial and in some degree, legal office: this shows the difference of the national taste;--with us, abilities are dissipated in conviviality, and with them, fettered by the ties of interest and business. Between us I fancy poor Tom is not likely to be much improved, or even enriched. And I am truly sorry for it; for with about as many faults as other people have, he possesses twice as much genius and agreeability as anybody else. I cannot say much for his morality.

When Moore returned to England after appointing a deputy to look after his Bermuda responsibilities, he took offence at what he considered to be a slur on his work and character. Croker's comment, though obviously intended to be taken humorously, was a little too pointed for Moore not to be stung. The result was that he renounced his friendship with Croker.

A reconciliation was brought about in 1809 when Croker, recently appointed to his Admiralty post, offered

to help Moore out of a certain difficulty. The poet had learned of his deputy's mismanagement of affairs in Bermuda, for which he was, of course, responsible. When Croker offered his assistance in patching things up, Moore immediately wrote the secretary expressing his regret for the coldness with which he had treated him.

> I have long thought that I was a fool to quarrel with you, and by no means required your present conduct to convince me how much you are in every way superior to me. In warmth of feeling, however, I will not be outdone, and I assure you that it is with all my heart and soul that I enter into the renewal of our friendship.[18]

With his gratitude for the past was mingled a "lively sense of favours to come," for Moore attempted soon after this to induce Croker to help him in a project of quite another nature. To Croker's indignation (hotly expressed forty years later), Moore wrote him in December, 1809 the following proposal:

> What I wanted to know was simply this--whether if the deputy I should appoint would make it worth my while to resign in his favour (i.e., in plain placemen's language, would consent to purchase the appointment), you could have interest enough to get him nominated my successor, as by that means I should get rid of the very troublesome medium of a deputation, and have a good large sum at once in my pocket. . . .[19]

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[18] Jennings, I, 51.

[19] Howard Mumford Jones, The Harp That Once--: A Chronicle of the Life of Thomas Moore (New York, 1937), p. 131.

Croker declined to undertake such a project, but he gave Moore some advice which, had it been followed, would have saved the poet from the embarrassments brought upon by his deputy a few years later. In 1813, Croker wrote:

> I wish I could give you any more agreeable advice on the subject of your office than that which I before have given, namely, that you should yourself go out and look after your profits. I have no doubt that they are well worth your doing so, and in your (since acquired) character of father of a family, I really think it is your bounden duty to look after your family interests. It is very unpoetical, and very un-Irish, and very unromantic to attend to worldly cares, but if not attended to they at last become too strong for the most poetical head and the most ardent heart.[20]

But the gregarious Moore now basked in the sunshine of celebrity and had no intention of subjecting himself to the monotonies of colonial life. Despite Croker's friendly warnings, the poet permitted his Bermuda affairs to drift, happy when an occasional draft came from his deputy, and careless of his own responsibility. Finally, in 1818, he received the startling news that his deputy had absconded with the proceeds of the sale of a ship and cargo. Moore suddenly found himself liable for the whole amount of £6000, a sum he could not possibly pay. To escape legal action he decided to go to Paris. Shortly before his departure in

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[20] Jennings, I, 52.

September, 1819, he recorded in his diary a friendly meeting with Croker.

> Called at Murray's, and found Croker there. Long conversation with him about the Catholic Question (which, he said, we should see carried with a high hand before very long), and about Peel's defeat by Brougham. Gave me a copy of his speech on the Catholic Question, and wrote in it, "To T. M. Esq., from his old friend the author."[21]

Croker and Moore saw each other on two or three occasions during the poet's exile in France. On September 23, 1820, Moore recorded in his diary that he "met Croker at St. Cloud with Theodore Hook, who is his travelling companion."[22] On October 14, he saw Croker in Paris. But although both men during these years avowed sentiments of friendly attachment, there was in their relationship a lack of complete rapport. For one thing, Moore was a Whig and made no secret of his close friendship with several of Croker's political and literary adversaries, men such as Francis Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, Samuel Rogers, and Leigh Hunt. Furthermore, Moore, in the newspapers and for his "Twopenny Post-Bag" and "Fudge Family in Paris," was writing personal satires on the Prince Regent, a fact which, in itself must have sorely tested Croker's patience. On the

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[21] Lord John Russell, ed., Memoirs, Journal, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore, II (London, 1853), 334.

[22] Ibid., III, 151.

basis of Irish connections and strong personal affection, Croker was willing to exert his influence in various ways for Moore's benefit. But for someone with the strong party feelings that Croker possessed, a difference in political outlook with a friend was bound to affect their relationship, however slightly.

For several years after 1821, Croker actively tried to win Moore to the Tory cause--being encouraged by his refusal of an offer to succeed Jeffrey as editor of the Edinburgh Review.[23] Thus, in 1821, Moore noticed that Croker would permit no real political assault on him.

> Bye the bye, there have been lately some attacks upon me in the "Courier," and a defence in the "Chronicle;" the former, however, far more flattering than the latter, as bestowing warm praise in the midst of its censure. Suspect Croker of it.[24]

Later in the same year a more significant incident occurred.

> Received a letter from Croker, to whom I had written, in consequence of a paragraph in the "Courier" charging the "Morning Chronicle" with "importing epigrams from Paris," begging him to set them right as to any suspicion they may have of me, as I have not published anything political, except the verses about the Neapolitans, for some years; and with respect to the King, if I occupied myself about him at all, it would be to praise him with all my heart for his wise and liberal conduct

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[23] Strong, p. 197; Jones, p. 231.

[24] Russell, III, 265.

> in Ireland, whatever I might think of the hollow and heartless sycophants who were the objects of it. Croker says in his answer, that, slight as this favourable mention of the King is, he read it with pleasure, and should hail a rapprochement between us on that point with real gratification.[25]

With the exception of Moore's political satires, Croker had a high regard for his fellow countryman's literary productions, and in 1822 he began to take an active interest in Moore's current writings. While he was marking the proof of his "Loves of the Angels," the poet recorded the fact that he "sent off the first sheet through Croker, who has offered me the use of his franks in town."[26] After the work appeared, he wrote to Murray, "saying that, from something which dropped from Croker, I had half a hope he might undertake me."[27] Croker replied to this, "reminding me that we had both agreed no friend should ever review the work of a friend; but that still, if he had time (which he had not), nothing would give him more pleasure than attempting to do justice to my poem."[28] When Moore later wished to make alterations in the work, he received "a long letter

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[25] Ibid., pp. 302-303.

[26] Ibid., IV, 24.

[27] Ibid., pp. 41-42.

[28] Ibid.

from Croker on the intended metamorphosis of my 'Angels' into Turks: very kind and sensible."[29] During this time, moreover, the poet dined sometimes at Croker's Kensington Palace apartments. In December, 1823, Moore recorded in his diary that he "received a note from Croker, proposing that I should belong to a new club for literary and scientific persons."[30] Moore, therefore, was one of the first persons that Croker invited into the proposed Athenaeum Club.

In the years that followed, Croker and Moore continued to correspond on friendly terms. The former occasionally received petitions about Moore's Bermuda business to which he always responded in a kindly fashion. In December, 1826, Croker sent Moore "an interesting anecdote of Lord Byron" for his projected Life of Byron.[31] When Croker was engaged in editing Boswell's Life of Johnson, he appealed to Moore for aid:

> Can you give me any account of O'Kane, the Irish Harper? He is mentioned in Boswell, and I should like to have a short note on him from you, in preference to one of my own.[32]

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[29] Ibid., p. 44.

[30] Ibid., pp. 152-153.

[31] Ibid., V, 136.

[32] Jennings, II, 39.

After 1832, the two friends lost touch with each other. When Moore dined at Murray's in April, 1837, it was "the first time of my meeting with Croker for many years."[33] Details concerning their relationship after this date are unfortunately lacking. Croker's final act in connection with Thomas Moore was his review for the Quarterly Review, a year after the poet's death, of the first four volumes of Moore's Memoirs, which were edited by Lord John Russell.

Disraeli

Croker first formed an acquaintance with the Disraeli family about 1809 when be became associated with the house of Murray in connection with the founding of the Quarterly Review. Isaac Disraeli (or D'Israeli, to adopt his own orthography) had had personal and professional connections with John Murray for several years, and it was at the publisher's offices that the young Secretary and the elderly Jewish writer met. For years afterward they remained on friendly terms, frequently corresponding and occasionally applying to each other for assistance in various literary matters. Croker's edition of the Memoirs of the Embassy of the Marshal de Bassompierre, published in 1819, contained a reference to two letters in the British Museum "to which I

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[33]Russell, VII, 182.

was kindly directed by Mr. D'Israeli."[34] When he was seeing the first chapters of his edition of Boswell through the press, Croker again sought assistance from the elder Disraeli:

> Though not troublesome to you, I am not idle; but the printer has adopted a new plan, which has disabled me from sending you _proofs_. In a day or two I shall trouble you with two or three _revises_.
>
> Where could I get a sight of Johnson's original _plan of his Dictionary_?
>
> Can you tell me when, and to whom, George the 3rd talked of the _Giants of Literature_--see Boswell, sub anno 1750.
>
> What can have become of Boswell's _original_ Diary? It would be invaluable, and cannot, I think, have been destroyed.[35]

Disraeli read some of the proofs of the new edition and appears frequently to have communicated with Croker while the sheets were in the printer's hands.[36] When in 1828 Disraeli published his _Commentaries on the Life and Reign of Charles the First_, the author in his preface referred to Croker in eulogistic terms: "To my ever kind and valued friend, the Right Hon. J. W. Croker, whose luminous and acute intelligence is as remarkable in his love of literature and art, as it has been in the course of a long, honourable, and

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[34] As quoted in Brightfield, p. 234.

[35] Letter of April 25, 1829; Jennings, II, 39.

[36] See _Ibid._, pp. 40-42.

distinguished public life, I stand deeply indebted."[37]

Benjamin Disraeli did not share his father's admiration for Croker's "acute intelligence." The exact origin of his enmity of Croker is a matter of some controversy. Disraeli's biographer, W. F. Monypenny, believes that it grew out of Disraeli's plan of 1825 to found the Representative.[38] Briefly stated, this plan was to publish, under Murray's auspices, a daily newspaper which would rival the established London Times. Murray's experience with the successful Quarterly Review encouraged him, and, when the young Disraeli turned loose his oratorical talents, Murray consented to be half-owner of the new paper. He also came to the decision to secure John Gibson Lockhart as editor, not only of the proposed paper, but of the Quarterly Review as well. The job of going to Edinburgh to conquer Lockhart fell to Disraeli. In the meantime, maintains Monypenny, "a cabal headed apparently by John Wilson Croker . . . had been formed among the old contributors to the Quarterly against Lockhart's appointment as Editor."[39] Murray, the

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[37] I (London, 1851), ix.

[38] The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, I (New York, 1929), 65-76. For the full story of the Representative, see also Smiles, II, chap. 26; Andrew Lang, The Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart, I (London, 1897), chap. 12; and David Douglas, ed., Familiar Letters of Sir Walter Scott, II (Edinburgh, 1894), Appendix III.

[39] Monypenny, I, 74.

biographer adds, became so alarmed that when Disraeli returned to London he asked him to revisit Scotland and request Lockhart to use what influence he had to propitiate his opponents. Sir Walter Scott, Lockhart's father-in-law, was then brought into consultation; he wrote several friends and also sent a firm note to Murray, who in his agitation replied that Disraeli should have gone direct to Scott, not to Lockhart. On his second return to London Disraeli had several exhausting scenes with Murray, who at length calmed down, took a determined line with the "Croker cabal," and wrote to Lockhart offering him the editorship. Monypenny concludes by suggesting that "it was probably at this time that Disraeli first began to feel that dislike of Croker which was to find memorable expression in Coningsby."[40]

Monypenny's suggestion is contested by M. F. Brightfield who persuasively argues that Croker had neither advance knowledge of Lockhart's appointment to the Quarterly Review editorship nor any part in the founding of the Representative.[41] Thus there could not be the slightest evidence to support the claim that Croker and Disraeli clashed in the launching of the new paper. Brightfield submits further facts to support his argument by showing that

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[40] Ibid., p. 76.

[41] Brightfield, pp. 184-195.

after Disraeli had withdrawn from the whole Representative enterprise,[42] he tried to obtain from Murray a letter of introduction to Croker.[43] When the publisher referred this request to Lockhart, he received the reply:

> I think Mr. B. Disraeli ought to tell you what it is that he wishes to say to Mr. Croker on a business of yours ere he asks of you a letter to the Secretary. If there really be something worth saying, I certainly know nobody that would say it better, but I confess I think, all things considered, you have no need of anybody to come between you and Mr. Croker. What can it be?[44]

Besides the affair of the Representative, Monypenny suggests a second reason for Disraeli's resentment of Croker. In the early part of 1832 Disraeli "failed in an attempt to secure election to the Athenaeum, a club of which his father was one of the original members and Croker practically the founder; and rightly or wrongly the Bradenham family laid the failure to the charge of Croker."[45] Brightfield also contests this charge and argues that there were "entirely adequate reasons" why Disraeli failed to gain membership in

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[42]Unable to raise his share of the capital, he quit the organization before the first number appeared.

[43]Up to this time, he had actually seen Croker only once; the occasion was at his father's dinner table when Disraeli was still a youth.

[44]Letter of February 14, 1826; Smiles, II, 215-216.

[45]Monypenny, I, 210.

the club.[46] The question of whether or not Disraeli himself was aware of these reasons remains unanswered. If he was not aware of them, he may have been entirely justified in suspecting Croker of blackballing him, Croker being chairman of the admittance committee and the dominating influence of the club. Thus Brightfield's refutation of Monypenny's charge is at best guesswork and is indefensible. The most plausible cause of Disraeli's enmity is suggested by Brightfield at the close of his long discussion of the whole affair. It was Disraeli's "intolerable humiliation" (his own words) at being rejected by Sir Robert Peel for the Secretaryship of the Admiralty in 1841. As this was Croker's old position, Disraeli assumed that Peel must have asked Croker's opinion and that the former Secretary disapproved of him.[47]

Whatever the cause of Disraeli's animosity to Croker, it resulted in his brutal caricature of that man in his Coningsby of 1844. Croker is represented as the Right Hon. Nicholas Rigby, an extraordinarily soulless and clever political schemer. Rigby is a masterly portrait of the genus described by Disraeli as "that fungous tribe,"[48] men who

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[46] Brightfield, pp. 238-239. He supplies only two reasons: that Disraeli, in defiance of club rules, had once walked insouciantly into the club library to confer with his father, and that the assigned numerical limit of membership had already been attained.

[47] Ibid., p. 241.

[48] Coningsby: or the New Generation (New York, 1903), p. 67.

attached themselves to the powerful noblemen of the day by their assiduity in making themselves useful. He was, however, not without certain accomplishments: he had been a member of Parliament, had held a minor office in a Tory government, and had also won some reputation as the author of "slashing" political articles. This was the climax of a career of pertinacious climbing and he then "set up to be a perfect man of business." He succeeded in this role too: "the world took him at his word, for he was bold, acute and voluble; with no thought, but a good deal of desultory information; and though destitute of all imagination and noble sentiment, was blessed with a vigorous, mendacious fancy, fruitful in small expedients, and never happier than when devising shifts for great men's scrapes."[49]

In the course of time Rigby met Lord Monmouth, who soon appraised his quality:

> He was just the animal that Lord Monmouth wanted, for Lord Monmouth always looked upon human nature with the callous eye of a jockey. He surveyed Rigby; and he determined to buy him. He bought him; with his clear head, his indefatigable industry, his audacious tongue, and his ready and unscrupulous pen; with all his dates, all his lampoons; all his private memoirs, and all his political intrigues. It was a good purchase. Rigby became a great personage, and Lord Monmouth's man.[50]

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[49] Ibid., p. 11.

[50] Ibid., pp. 11-12.

Croker's contemporaries at once identified him with Rigby. The parallels between the careers of the real man and the fictional man were too obvious for them to do otherwise. Disraeli himself, always chary of admitting that he drew directly from life, professed to see no reason why Croker should "assume that a character in one of my books, which he deemed odious, was intended for himself."[51] Nevertheless, he found it embarrassing when Croker was placed next to him at a political dinner in 1849, and was relieved that Croker behaved like a man of the world, spoke of his friendship with Isaac Disraeli, and made himself generally agreeable. Disraeli adds, "I treated him with great consideration, and spoke enough, but not too much, and took care never to break into cordiality, which I should have done under ordinary circumstances with so eminent a man, met under such conditions."[52]

From Croker's standpoint, Disraeli's embarrassment was completely unnecessary. For while English readers were identifying him with Rigby, he himself, it appears, had never had the curiosity even to look into Coningsby. According to his own story, as told in a letter of December 29, 1853, it

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[51] Monypenny, 1, 624.

[52] Ibid.

was only after he had published his review of Disraeli's budget speech of 1852[53] that his attention was called to the book by hearing that his review was regarded as retaliation for what Disraeli had said of him in Vivian Grey[54] and Coningsby. "Now the fact is, I never read either," Croker adds, and he goes on to state that he never read one of Theodore Hook's novels, "though some of them were written in this house, and the characters sketched from the society he met here." It was the same with Lytton, Dickens, and Ainsworth.

> I may say the exact same of Coningsby: I had never seen it nor heard of it in connection with myself till after the publication of the Budget review; and I can most sincerely affirm that I had not the slightest personal pique, or any motive to have any, towards Mr. Disraeli.
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> On the contrary, there were one or two circumstances, of which Mr. Murray was the channel, which led me to suppose that Mr. Disraeli looked towards me with a friendly and approving eye. If, therefore, I have given Mr. Disraeli tit for tat it has been quite unintentionally, and only by chance medley. . . . I cannot account for, nor in fact do I care enough about it to endeavour to account for, Mr. Disraeli's attacks upon me; all I care about is, that my political views as to him should be rightly understood

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[53] Quarterly Review, XCII (December, 1852).

[54] Actually, the two or three references to Croker in Vivian Grey (1826) are not uncomplimentary.

> as altogether uninfluenced by any personal pique or morbid spirit of retaliation.[55]

There are evident, however, close parallels between Croker and Rigby. Croker, although no parvenu, rose by his own abilities, exercised at the bar and in Parliament, to be First Secretary to the Admiralty at twenty-eight. He associated himself with the third Marquess of Hertford (the original of Lord Monmouth), first acting as his legal adviser and then taking a considerable part in the general management of his affairs. There is plenty of testimony as to the "slashing" character of Croker's articles and speeches. After one of the Reform Bill debates Lockhart wrote to a friend:

> Croker was capital and most powerful. I never saw so much horror excited as by his slashing dissection of Lord John Russell: and the House, at first cold and reluctant, became, as he went on, intoxicated with glee. He had some real eloquent declamation too, and his delivery was manly and authoritative, wherever it was not diabolical and vindictive.[56]

Oratory and invective of this kind were evidently genuinely impressive, and of higher quality than Rigby's shallow, insistent volubility. In fact, Croker's abilities were vastly superior to "the sharp talent, the shallow information, and

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[55] Jennings, III, 304-305.

[56] Lang, II, 140.

the worldly cunning that made a Rigby."[57]

Brightfield asserts that Croker took no fees from Lord Hertford and that the legacy he received from him was no more, if as much, than he might have charged for his legal services.[58] The terms of Lord Hertford's will were made public in the year in which Coningsby was written, and Disraeli represented Rigby as disappointed by the meagerness of his legacy from Lord Monmouth. As Croker was only three years Lord Hertford's junior he cannot have built great hopes upon a legacy; he had taken his reward in social and Parliamentary prestige, but he was certainly above the mean subservience of Rigby.

The story of Disraeli's attack on Croker has a somewhat pitiful conclusion, and one that does little credit to Disraeli's character. Evidently the caricature rankled Croker, in spite of his remarks to the contrary, and his mind reverted to it in his last illness, when he wrote to Lord Strangford that he had never been able to discover why Disraeli had attacked him, and implied that he would now be glad of some sort of reconciliation. Disraeli deputed his friend George Smythe to manage the affair with due consideration for Croker's "feelings and situation," but he could

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[57] Coningsby, p. 74.

[58] Brightfield, pp. 126-132.

not face an interview--"it was too late, and my sensibilities, which had been played upon in my earlier life, too much required nursing." He concluded: "The moral I draw from all this is that men of a certain age like the young ones who lick them."[59]

Macaulay

"Croker looks across the House of Commons at me with a leer of hatred, which I repay with a gracious smile of pity."[60] So wrote Thomas Babington Macaulay of his Tory opponent in what was one of the bitterest political and literary feuds of the nineteenth century. There have been many combats of the kind, but few offering so singular a display of malevolent and acrimonious feeling. Political before it became literary, the collision between Croker and Macaulay was marked by party vindictiveness, personal slander, and threats of revenge, and ended only with Croker's death in 1857.

It was in the Reform Bill debates in the House of Commons that Croker first came into contact with Macaulay, a brilliant and outspoken young Whig twenty years his junior. The two men disliked each other from the start. Croker later declared: "I cannot pretend to say that I like

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[59]Monypenny, I, 625.

[60]Trevelyan, I, 225.

Mr. Macaulay either politically or personally. I disliked him at first sight before I ever heard him open his mouth; his very person and countenance displeased me."[61] Macaulay wrote at the time that he "detested" Croker "more than cold boiled veal."[62] With such mutual antipathy, it was inevitable that these outspoken representatives of two opposing political factions would eventually indulge in open warfare.

Croker and Macaulay, it has been pointed out, were to some extent "pitted" against each other in the House of Commons, at least in the mind of the public,[63] and more than once Croker gained a marked and telling advantage over his antagonist. According to contemporary accounts, he possessed greater power as a debater than Macaulay, and on more than one occasion he utterly demolished an elaborately prepared and showy, but unsubstantial, speech of the Whig orator. The differences in the speeches of the two men have been well summarized by Croker's biographer:

> The general principles in Croker's addresses reposed firmly upon the details fought over in committee and on the points advanced during the debate. He spoke from mastery of the subject, and he thought as he spoke. Macaulay delivered set orations carefully rehearsed and committed to memory. Since they were never replies, they scarcely ever advanced, or even regarded, the precise

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[61] As quoted in Brightfield, p. 63.

[62] Trevelyan, I, 218.

[63] Smith, "Croker," p. 108.

> point the debate had reached. One natural result of this was that Macaulay's speeches read better as literature at the present day. . . . His methods were not those of the Parliamentary speakers even of his day. . . . Certain it is that, had Macaulay ever plunged into the give and take of daily Parliamentary life, he would have been forced to change his style and manner. The man who learns a part cannot successfully encounter one who thinks on his feet. Swelling periods are readily trimmed by a clever opponent; broad generalizations. . .can be successfully turned or shown to be irrelevant. Indeed, it was treatment of this kind that Macaulay experienced at Croker's hands during the Reform debates.[64]

It was in the very midst of these conflicts, when the passions of both parties were inflamed to the highest degree, that Croker's edition of Boswell made its appearance. There is clear evidence from Macaulay's own letters that it was because he writhed under the sting of Croker's successful replies in their parliamentary battles that he became the assailant in the field of literature. "I will certainly review Croker's "Boswell" when it comes out," he had written in March, 1831, to Macvey Napier, editor of the Edinburgh Review.[65] And after one of their passages of arms in the Committee on the Reform Bill, he wrote to his sister:

> I ought to tell you that Peel was very civil and cheered me loudly; and that impudent, leering Croker congratulated the House on the proof which I had given of my readiness.

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[64]Brightfield, pp. 64-65.

[65]Selected Correspondence of the Late Macvey Napier (London, 1879), p. 110.

> He was afraid, he said, that I had been silent so long on account of the many allusions which had been made to Calne [the borough for which Macaulay sat]. Now that I had risen again he hoped that they should hear me often. See whether I do not dust that varlet's jacket for him in the next number of the Blue and Yellow.[66]

From that time forth Macaulay waited impatiently for his opportunity to settle his account with Croker.

The threat of revenge was made in July; the article which carried the threat into execution appeared in the Edinburgh Review in September.[67] Somewhat more than a third of it is an attack on Croker's edition. The first sentence, "This work has greatly disappointed us," strikes at once the tone--approaching fairly closely the limits of hypocrisy and spite. It is maintained by a sprinkling of expressions such as "monstrous blunders," "absolutely swarm with misstatements," "utterly frivolous," "scandalous inaccuracy," "a degree of ignorance hardly credible," and "every schoolgirl knows." Moreover, Croker is accused generally of making his misstatements in a "cool and authoritative manner," and of having "no adequate sense of the obligation which a writer who proposes to relate facts owes to the public."

The method and substance of the attack was the pointing

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[66] Trevelyan, I, 218.

[67] CVII (September, 1831), 1-38.

out of a dozen or more mistakes in dates and of some irregularities in the translation of Latin and Greek words. Scarcely one of the comments involved a matter of consequence. But more--to discover mistakes of the kind that Macaulay sought requires little more apparatus than a biographical dictionary and a Greek and Latin grammar. For example, Croker is ridiculed for declaring that the Marquis of Montrose was beheaded; for, says Macaulay, he was hanged. The fact was that he was hanged and beheaded.[68] Again, the essayist pounces upon Croker's assertion that "Lord Mansfield survived Johnson full ten years," whereas the period was "eight years and a quarter." But the context of the passage shows clearly that the entire point was the fact and not the period of survival. Croker is accused of giving two sets of dates for the life of Allan Ramsay; the essayist fails to note that one set is clearly Boswell's inaccurate guess and the other Croker's correct assertion. Macaulay takes half a page to prove that Croker's translation of Philarchus as a "term expressing a paternal and kindly authority" means nothing of the kind, but simply "a man who loves rule." To enter further into Macaulay's specific charges of inaccuracy would be to engage in minute detail

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[68]Mark Napier, Memoirs of the Marquis of Montrose, II (Edinburgh, 1856), 802.

extending over pages. The fact that he passed off the result of such labors as a critical review allows by inference the belief that he knew nothing of criticism and little of Boswell or Johnson. In truth, Macaulay's strength lay in the popular essay, not in criticism. When he faced Croker's critical edition of a great work, he was (even if his intentions had been honest) quite beyond his depth.

The animus with which the article was written was obvious to most people who were at all familiar with the Croker-Macaulay feud, even before Macaulay's own revelations had told all the truth. "It will be evident," remarked the Spectator, "that the book has been taken up by one determined to punish the member of parliament in the editor, and who . . . is determined to sacrifice truth to brilliancy."[69] "Everybody is aware," remarked the Athenaeum, "that the article was originally leveled less against Mr. Croker the editor than Mr. Croker the politician, and the abuse which may have been relished in times of hot passion and party vindictiveness, reads in our calmer days as so much bad taste and bad feeling."[70] Other leading periodicals of the time contained reviews of a complimentary nature. Lockhart, in the Quarterly Review, did not suppress his disagreement with certain

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[69]September, 1831; as quoted in Jennings, II, 48-49.

[70]May 17, 1856, p. 615.

details of the work, but he summed them up as "a few trivial mistakes and inadvertencies easy to be corrected hereafter."[71] His conclusion was that Croker had united editing with scholarship, thus producing the first genuinely critical edition of an English writer. The Westminster Review marvelled at "the strict attention to fact and the minute examination of evidence."[72] And in Fraser's Magazine, Thomas Carlyle began his review by declaring that Croker had done a necessary piece of work in the most skillful manner.[73]

Macaulay returned to the charge in 1843 in his review in the Edinburgh Review of Madame D'Arblay's Diary and Letters. The offence of which he now arraigned Croker was based on an important literary discovery made by Croker: that the novel Evelina, which Johnson raved about and Reynolds sat up half the night to read, was not written (as was commonly believed) by a girl of seventeen, but by a woman of twenty-five. The fact thus discovered was recorded by Croker both in his 1833 review of her memoirs of her father (Memoirs of Dr. Burney)[74] and in his article on her own

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[71] XLVI (November, 1831), 46.

[72] XVIII (October, 1831), 119.

[73] V (May, 1832), 379-380.

[74] Quarterly Review, XLIX (April, 1833).

Diary and Letters which appeared in 1842.[75] It was a perfectly legitimate inquiry for Croker to make; indeed, the age of the author of Evelina in 1778 was the key to the entire Memoirs. Croker showed that almost all the sensation caused by the novel arose from the fact that the reading public was "utterly at a loss to comprehend how a girl of seventeen, slow, shy, secluded--almost neglected--never having been, as it would seem, from under the parental roof, and having seen little or nothing of life (but her own little play-room), could have written such a work as Evelina."[76] Yet Macaulay labelled Croker's discovery a "ferocious insult," and in the essay referred to, indulged in the following piece of abuse:

> There was no want of low minds and bad hearts in the generation which had witnessed her first appearance. There was the envious Kenrick and the savage Wolcot, the asp George Steevens, and the polecat John Williams. It did not, however, occur to them to search the parish register of Lynn, in order that they might be able to twit a lady with having concealed her age. That truly chivalrous exploit was reserved for a bad writer of our own time, whose spite she had provoked by not furnishing him with materials for a worthless edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson, some sheets of which our readers have doubtless seen round parcels of better books.[77]

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[75] Ibid., LXX (September, 1842).

[76] Ibid., XLIX (April, 1833), 109.

[77] Edinburgh Review, LXXVI (January, 1843), 537.

To the same effect Macaulay had previously written, "My article on Croker has smashed his book,"[78] an assertion not borne out by facts. For according to an article in the Quarterly Review appearing forty-five years later announcing the coming of a new edition of Boswell, the book had "steadily maintained its ground as by far the best edition of Boswell. Upwards of 40,000 copies have been sold; and such is still the demand for it, that a new library edition is even now in preparation."[79]

The next episode in the history of this literary quarrel was Croker's review of Macaulay's History of England, which appeared in the Quarterly Review of March, 1849. There was now another jacket to be dusted; but in this instance, although the dusting was done with equal gusto, it was carried out with a good deal less bias. True, for Croker to have maintained a perfectly impartial attitude towards a man who had injured him would have required more forebearance than he possessed. But he refrained from falling on the History with any fraction of the savagery with which Macaulay tried to demolish Boswell. There was also in the article an absence of all personal allusion. Macaulay's

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[78] Trevelyan, I, 225.

[79] CXLII (July, 1876), 113.

reactions, however, were entirely characteristic. On April 13, after the review had reached the public, he wrote in his Journal:

> The article has been received with general contempt. Really, Croker has done me a great service. I apprehended a strong reaction, the natural effect of such a success; and, if hatred had left him free to use his very slender faculties to the best advantage, he might have injured me much. He should have been large in acknowledgment; should have taken a mild and expostulatory tone; and should have looked out for real blemishes, which, as I too well know, he might easily have found. Instead of that, he has written with such rancor as to make everybody sick. I could almost pity him. But he is a bad, a very bad, man: a scandal to politics and to letters.[80]

Macaulay says that Croker "should have been large in acknowledgment." Was he not? The article begins: "The reading world will not need our testimony, though we willingly give it, that Mr. Macaulay possesses great talents and extraordinary acquirements. He unites powers and has achieved successes, not only various, but different in their character, and seldom indeed conjoined in one individual. He was while in Parliament, though not quite an orator, and still less a debater, the most brilliant rhetorician of the House." How much further is it possible to go in the way of acknowledgment? "He should have looked out for real blemishes."

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[80]Trevelyan, II, 225.

Croker did look out for them, and exposed them by the dozen. Though the style is sharp, and the criticisms are severe--sometimes too severe, in fact, as Croker occasionally overstates his case--it certainly does not follow that the article was what Macaulay's biographer called it, "a farrago of angry trash."[81] On the contrary, Croker's article contains some discerning criticism and employs a clever strategy. Presenting specific evidence and exhibiting an easy familiarity with sources, the author demonstrates Macaulay's great (though unacknowledged) dependence on the historian Mackintosh; he criticizes his reckless handling of the assertions of source documents; he penetrates his pretense of drawing from the "lighter literature of the age." He then considers the literary or romantic method of historical writing that Macaulay practiced and shows how it prevents the adding of any new material to historical knowledge. It demands bold strokes of the brush--contrasts and antithesis; its narrative invariably has a plot; and it forces the author to "take sides" on every historical question which arises. He sums up by saying that the book must be regarded chiefly as "an historical romance," and would "never be quoted as an authority on any question or point of the History of England."

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[81] Ibid., II, 210.

Nor was Croker alone in finding fault with Macaulay's book as a work of history. Lockhart, writing to Croker before the latter wrote his review, said: "I doubt if Macaulay's book will go down as a standard edition to our historical library, though it must always keep a high place among the specimens of English rhetoric."[82] Sir James Stephen told Bishop Phillpotts that he "had abandoned all idea of reviewing the book [for the Edinburgh Review], because it was, in truth, not what it pretended to be, a history, but an historical novel."[83] And many years later no less a figure than William Gladstone, when he had been on Macaulay's side in politics, remarked that Macaulay's statement on the low social condition of the clergy of the Restoration Period "is no more and no less than a pure fable."[84] While fully alive to the qualities which ensure to the History a permanent place in England's literature, Gladstone declared that Macaulay's "whole method of touch and handling are poetical."[85]

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[82]Jennings, III, 193.

[83]Ibid., p. 194.

[84]"The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay," Quarterly Review, CXLII (July, 1876), 41.

[85]Ibid., p. 48.

It is evident from the arguments of Macaulay's detractors that there was a fundamental disagreement on what constituted the "true method" of writing history. A discussion of that question would be long and involved, and has no place in the present study. Let it suffice to say that historical fashions change. Whereas previous histories had tended to discuss strictly political events, Macaulay decided to write about ordinary people as well as princes and statesmen. And whereas an earlier age regarded it as anathema for a historian to be either partisan or picturesque, Macaulay took sides and approached his subject as a storyteller. Perhaps it is absurd, as one commentator suggests, to quarrel with Macaulay without considering his aim: the History "was intended to reach the largest possible circle of readers, and its author must therefore be judged with due regard to what he attempted to achieve."[86] That Macaulay succeeded in his attempt there seems little question; the measure of his success is the enduring popularity of his book.

Whatever view one takes of Croker's attack, nothing can justify the unwarranted expressions which Macaulay threw upon his private life, and which G. O. Trevelyan amplified

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[86] Giles St. Aubyn, Macaulay (London, 1952), p. 98.

by reference to "certain unsavoury portions" of that life which "had been brought to light in the course of either parliamentary or judicial investigations."[87] Croker's private life, so far as has ever been ascertained, was blameless. "Nothing whatever," says L. J. Jennings, "that was injurious to Mr. Croker's private character was ever 'brought to life' in a 'parliamentary investigation,' or any other investigation."[88] It is not unlikely that Macaulay's hatred of Croker had become an unreasoning obsession. The only excuse to be made for him is that he gave vent to his anger in a private journal, which was probably never meant for publication.

Scott

Croker met Walter Scott in April, 1809, when the latter was in London for a two month's visit.[89] Scott, says his friend J. B. S. Morritt, in his Memoranda of the period, "was much with George Ellis, Canning, and Croker, and delighted

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[87] Trevelyan, I, 122.

[88] Jennings, II, 422.

[89] Lockhart misdates this visit. He states that Scott was in London when "the first number of that Journal [the Quarterly] appeared," which would have been in February, 1809 (John Gibson Lockhart, Memoirs of Sir Walter Scott, II [London, 1900], 79). Actually, however, Scott did not leave Edinburgh until April 5 (see his letter to Murray of April 4, 1809; Smiles, I, 151).

in them--as, indeed, who did not?"[90] The meetings of these men were chiefly occupied with the affairs of the newly-launched Quarterly Review, the second number of which appeared while Scott was in London.

From the first Croker and Scott found that they had much in common and shared many interests. Both had studied law and had held legal offices; both idealized the old order and resisted the destructive side of the Revolution. Toryism was an important bias of both men's minds and colored their view of life. Although Scott was immeasurably Croker's superior as a writer, both had published writings of a critical nature, Scott in his articles in the Edinburgh Review and Croker in his early satirical pieces. Finally, the two men had a common interest in making a success of the Quarterly Review, to which they both would devote so much time and effort. It is not surprising that the meeting in 1809 was the beginning of a long friendship. Though not without an occasional ruffle in later years, the relationship was one of mutual affection and warmth, as evidenced by the correspondence which passed between them over a period of more than twenty years.

In May, 1810, Scott wrote to Croker "to entreat your obliging acceptance of a certain square volume called The

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[90]Lockhart, II, 78.

Lady of the Lake. . . . I hope you will find her agreeable company for an evening or two."[91] The following October he wrote again to bestow praise on Croker's "Battle of Talavera," written in the "irregular Pindaric measure" which Scott's recently published "Marmion" had rendered so popular.

> I drop you these few lines, not to engage you in correspondence, for which I am aware you have so little time, but merely to thank you very sincerely for the eighth edition of your beautiful and spirited poem and the kind letter which accompanied it. Whatever the practised and hackneyed critic may say of that sort of poetry, which is rather moulded in an appeal to the general feelings of mankind than the technical rules of art, the warm and universal interest taken by those who are alive to fancy and feeling, will always compensate for his approbation, whether entirely withheld or given with tardy and ungracious reluctance. Many a heart has kindled at your "Talavera" which may be the more patriotic for the impulse as long as it shall last. I trust we shall soon hear from the conqueror of that glorious day such news as may procure us "another of the same."[92]

The Prince Regent had often heard of Scott from Croker and others and was greatly desirous of meeting him. On hearing from Croker that Scott was to be in London in March, 1815, the Prince said: "Let me know when he comes, and I'll get up a snug little dinner that will suit him."[93] Besides Croker and Scott, the party comprised the Dukes of York and

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[91] Jennings, I, 32.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Lockhart, II, 519.

Gordon, Lords Melville and Yarmouth, and the Earl of Fife. Croker afterwards told Lockhart that it was "the most interesting and agreeable" occasion in his recollection. "The Prince and Scott," Croker declared, "were the two most brilliant story-tellers in their several ways that I have ever happened to meet; they were both aware of their forte, and both exerted themselves that evening with delightful effect. On going home, I really could not decide which of them had shone the most. The Regent was enchanted with Scott, as Scott with him; and on all his subsequent visits to London he was a frequent guest at the Royal table."[94]

In the years that followed, Scott frequently applied to Croker for his help in various ways. It was through Croker that Scott usually approached the Regent. For instance, in a private conversation with the Prince about 1815, Scott had expressed a wish for the appointment of a commission to examine the long-sealed Crown Room in Edinburgh Castle. He was anxious to look for the lost regalia of Scotland, under the belief that important discoveries would result from a search. He therefore requested Croker, in 1816, to get the necessary permission from the Prince; and although Croker felt convinced that the Crown Room contained

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[94] Ibid., p. 520.

nothing of value, he exerted his efforts to gain the Prince's consent to have the room examined. It was not until January, 1818, that he was able to write Scott:

> I have the pleasure to tell you that at last I have gotten the warrant for searching for the old regalia of the Scottish Crown, which at your suggestion, and by the Prince's command, I have been soliciting so long. . . . I shall be, of course, anxious to hear of (although I am not very sanguine as to) the result of your search. I know that both the Regent and yourself have hopes of finding something. I limit my expectations to your ascertaining that there is nothing to be found. Do you think that such a fellow as Rob Roy would have driven cattle, while there was such a prize at Edinburgh Castle?[95]

When the search, conducted on February 4, 1818, proved that Scott was right, Croker was the first to whom he conveyed the news. "I know nobody entitled to earlier information, save ONE, to whom you can perhaps find the means of communicating the result of our researches."[96] In another letter to Croker written the day after the discovery, Scott gave a detailed account of the discoveries made, which included the Crown, Sceptre, and Sword of State. The chest in which they were deposited had never been opened since 1707, when the room where it was placed was sealed up.

For a number of other favors Croker was directly

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[95]Jennings, I, 113.

[96]Lockhart, III, 154.

responsible. In July, 1816, Scott wrote:

> You were kind enough to procure for a person of the name of Alexander Campbell permission to inscribe his Collection of Scottish music to H. R. [H.] the Prince Regent. Will you now have the additional goodness to take charge of the first copy which we have been able to get out of the engraver's hands and which is destined for Carleton House. . . . Excuse me giving you all this trouble and when you have an opportunity to mention the collection to His Royal Highness will you have the further goodness to lay my humble and grateful duty before him.[97]

In January, 1817, he asked Croker to procure for his younger brother Thomas, paymaster of a regiment in Canada, some military station more congenial to his health and the needs of a growing family.[98] Croker took the matter in hand and soon secured a satisfactory appointment.

In the following April, Scott wrote to ask Croker's opinion of a cipher he had invented. Scott called it his "mysterious mode of correspondence" and asked Croker whether or not the device had any originality.[99] Apparently he was fascinated by the subject, for in February, 1822, he wrote Croker that he had met a young man who had "made a curious discovery of a mode of carrying on secret correspondence

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[97] Sir Herbert Grierson, ed., Letters of Sir Walter Scott, IV (London, 1937), 259-261.

[98] Ibid., pp. 366-369.

[99] Ibid., I, 147.

without the use of any cypher or written key."[100] There is no record of Croker's reply to either of these schemes.

In March, 1820, Scott went to London for the purpose of receiving his baronetcy. On March 23, Croker's diary announced: "Walter Scott came to town and called upon me."[101] Two days later the entry reads:

> Scott and his son dined at Munster House with Palmerston and Miss Temple, Mr. and Mrs. Arbuthnot, Yarmouth, Torrens, &c. Speaker sent an apology. We had a very agreeable day.[102]

Scott returned to London about the middle of February, 1821,[103] and made the journey again in July for the coronation of George IV. On both these occasions he saw much of Croker, about whom he said at the time: "I know of no man to whose keeping I would sooner commit my own honour and that of whomever is dear to me."[104] In the summer of 1822 he was busy in Edinburgh making preparations for the King's visit to Scotland. Writing hastily to Croker in July, he

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[100] Ibid., VII, 84-85.

[101] Jennings, 1, 168.

[102] Ibid., p. 169.

[103] Lockhart's statement that "Scott made the trip before the end of January, 1821" (Memoirs, III, 437), is not borne out by the dates of Scott's letters. As late as February 6, he was still in Edinburgh, and in a letter of that date (to Lord Montagu) he wrote that he expected "to be in London in the course of a week" (Grierson, VI, 353-354).

[104] Letter of January 25, 1821; Grierson, VI, 341-343.

closed his letter: "Adieu my dear Croker--if the King come I hope you will come too & remember as lodgings will be scarce we have a chamber in the wall for you either here or in John Lockharts."[105] Pressing governmental affairs made it impossible for Croker to accept Scott's invitation, but a matter that arose shortly afterwards showed that he still had time to concern himself with Scott's interests. After the King's return to London, the rumor spread that His Majesty a little resented the prominence given to Scott during the Royal visit, and that "a visible coolness had, in fact, been manifested towards Sir Walter."[106] Croker's letter in September was intended to set Scott's mind entirely at ease on this point:

> I had the honour of receiving his Majesty on his return, when he, after the first three words, began most graciously to tell me "all about our friend Scott." Some silly or malicious person, his Majesty said, had reported that there had been some coolness between you; but he added, that it was utterly false, and that he was, in every respect, highly pleased and gratified, and, he said, grateful for the devoted attention you had paid him; and he celebrated very warmly the success that had attended all your arrangements.
>
> Peel has sung your praises to the same tune; and I have been flattered to find that

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[105] Ibid., VII, 204-206.

[106] Lockhart, IV, 54-55.

> both the King and Peel thought me so much your friend, that they, as it were, reported to me the merit of "my friend Scott."[107]

Early in 1826 an unsettling circumstance occurred which temporarily cast a shadow over the Croker-Scott friendship. The Government, alarmed at the recent convulsion in the commercial world, proposed to curb overextension of credit by taking from private banks, in Scotland as well as in England, the privilege of circulating their own notes as money, and limiting them to the issue of notes of £5 value and upwards. The Scotch bankers, apprehending a serious curtailment of their profits, strongly opposed the measure. Partly to take up their cause, but mostly because he had "long resented the purposeless changing of Scottish legal customs and practice by the English government,"[108] Scott launched an assault on the English policy in a series of Letters from Malachi Malagrowther, which appeared in the Edinburgh Weekly Journal. They were answered by two communications in the London Courier, which were reprinted by Murray in pamphlet form as Two Letters on Scottish Affairs from Edward Bradwardine Waverley Esq. to Malachi Malagrowther Esq. The author of this reply was Croker.

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[107] Ibid., p. 56.

[108] Sir Herbert Grierson, Sir Walter Scott, Bart. (New York, 1940), p. 265.

In a letter to the Duke of Wellington in March, 1826, Croker gave his own version of the business:

> Walter Scott, who, poor fellow, was ruined by dealings with his booksellers, and who had received courtesy and indulgence from the Scotch bankers, thought himself bound in gratitude to take the field for them, which he did in a series of clever but violent and mischievous letters, as he attacked with great violence and injustice the administration of Lord Melville, and indeed of our party in general. I was easily induced to take up my pen against him, and I scribbled away a reply to Sir Walter in the same style (as far as I could imitate so superior a genius), which he had used.[109]

Croker, ever ready to defend the government's policies, met Scott's theoretical arguments with little difficulty. His efforts to imitate Malachi's rustic pungency of expression, however, caused him considerably more trouble. He wrote in the guise of Bradwardine Waverley, grandson of the hero and heroine of Waverley, in complaint against the peevish and jaundiced views of a distant relative, Malagrowther. Although he showed a good deal more restraint than he usually did in a literary battle, the body of his reply contained a few personal allusions to Scott that might better have been spared, and which might have tempted a man with less forbearance than Scott to a fiery rejoinder.

Reports of Malachi's reception in London were not long

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[109] Jennings, I, 316.

in reaching Scott. Early in March he heard that the Government was much offended, especially as this attack against its measures came from one of its oldest and staunchest friends. "Last night," he wrote in his diary, "I had a letter from Lockhart, who speaking of Malachi, says, 'the Ministers are sore beyond imagination at present; and some of them, I hear, have felt this new whip on the raw to some purpose.'"[110] Scott then addressed a careful explanation to Sir Robert Dundas, disclaiming any intention of insulting Lord Melville. When Croker saw this letter (after the addressee had dispatched it to the Admiralty), he immediately wrote to Scott. It was true, he said, that

> Lord Melville certainly felt that his administration of Scottish affairs was sweepingly attacked, and the rest of the Government were astonished to see the one-pound note question made a kind of war-cry which might excite serious practical consequences; and, no doubt, these feelings were expressed pretty strongly, but it was in the spirit of et tu, Brute.[111]

Nevertheless, he wished to assure Scott "that these differences on speculative points of public policy do not, in this region, and ought not in yours, to cause any diminution of private intercourse and regard."

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110 Lockhart, IV, 466.

111 Ibid., pp. 480-481.

> As to myself . . . I am so ignorant of Scottish affairs, and so remote from Scottish interest, that you will easily believe that I felt no personal discomposure from Mr. Malagrowther. What little I know of Scotland you have taught me, and my chief feeling on this subject was wonder that so clever a fellow as M. M. could entertain opinions so different from those which I fancied that I had learnt from you.[112]

Scott's reply contained, after a long explanation, a gentle reprimand:

> Besides, my dear Croker, I must say you sported too many and too direct personal allusions to myself, not to authorize and even demand some retaliation dans le même genre; and however good-humouredly men begin this sort of "sharp encounter of their wits," their temper gets the best of them at last. . . . So I thought it best not to endanger the loss of an old friend for a bad jest, and sit quietly down with your odd hits, and the discredit which it gives me here for not repaying them or trying to do so.[113]

In other words, Scott feared that if he did not continue the controversy his friends would imagine that Croker had crushed him beyond reply. This fear caused him to record in his Journal, on March 19, the receipt of "a letter from Croker of a very friendly tone and tenor, which I will answer accordingly, not failing, however, to let him know that if I do not reply [in print] it is not for fear of his arguments

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[112] Ibid., p. 481.

[113] Letter of March 19, 1826; Jennings, I, 317-319.

or raillery, far less from diffidence in my cause."[114] On March 23 Croker wrote again, prompting Scott to write in his Journal for March 28: "Had a very kind letter from Croker disowning the least idea of personal attack in his answer to Malachi."[115] In the end, the Government withdrew its scheme so far as it applied to Scotland, and the victory rested with Scott.

In the Fall of 1826, Scott visited London and Paris to gather additional material for his Life of Napoleon. His numerous meetings with Croker during his stay in London show that no ill-feeling remained between them because of Malachi. His diary entry of November 11 records that he breakfasted with Croker, Lockhart, and Theodore Hook. "We had . . . a delicious morning, spent in abusing our neighbours, at which my three neighbours are no novices any more than I am myself."[116] On the 14th he dined with the Croker family at Kensington; on the following evening he was with Croker at the Duke of Wellington's; and on November 16 he and Lockhart "dined with Croker at the Admiralty au grand couvert. No less than five Cabinet Ministers were present . . . with

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[114] David Douglas, ed., The Journal of Sir Walter Scott, I (Edinburgh, 1891), 159.

[115] Ibid., p. 164.

[116] Lockhart, V, 68.

sub-secretaries by the bushel. The cheer was excellent, but the presence of too many men of distinguished rank and power always freezes the conversation. Each lamp shines brightest when placed by itself; when too close they neutralize each other."[117] Before Scott returned to Edinburgh, Croker, who was much interested in the progress of Scott's biography, gave him "a bundle of documents" dealing with Napoleon and the recent war with France.[118]

Scott soon showed himself to be Croker's debtor in other literary matters. The great popularity of Croker's Stories Selected from the History of England . . . for Children, first published in 1817, gave Scott himself the notion of putting together a series of children's stories. On May 24, 1827, he recorded in his Journal: "A good thing came into my head: to write stories for little Johnnie Lockhart [Scott's invalid grandson] from the History of Scotland, like those taken from the History of England. I will not write mine quite so simply as Croker has done."[119] Scott went to work, and the Tales of a Grandfather appeared in early December. He immediately sent a copy to Croker with

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[117] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

[118] Ibid., p. 47.

[119] Douglas, I, 396.

the following note:

> My Dear Croker,
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> I have been stealing from you; and as it seems the fashion to compound felony, I send you a sample of the swag, by way of stopping your mouth. . . .
>
> Always yours,
> W. Scott.[120]

Early in 1829 it was Croker who appealed to Scott for aid. After receiving Murray's acceptance of the project, Croker had begun work on his edition of Boswell. Besides using available printed and manuscript materials, he wrote letters to all of his friends who were likely to be of any service to him. It was Lockhart who first suggested to him that Scott could be helpful. "Sir Walter," he said, "has many MS. annotations in his 'Boswell,' both 'Life' and 'Tour,' and will, I am sure, give them with hearty good will."[121] Scott was enthusiastic about giving Croker his assistance. On January 30, he wrote:

> Your continued friendship and assistance on many occasions in life entitle you not to solicit, but to command, anything in my power to aid your wishes; and I am happy to express my readiness to do all in my power regretting only that it is so much limited.[122]

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[120] Lockhart, V, 112.

[121] Letter to Murray of January 19, 1829; Smiles, II, 288.

[122] Grierson, Letters, XI, 110.

Scott went on to give much information that Croker was able to use. For several months the harrassed author continued to send short notes, which he occasionally made mention of in his Journal: ". . . wrote notes to Croker upon Boswell's Scottish tour. It was an act of friendship, for time is something of a scarce article with me. But Croker has been at all times personally kind and actively serviceable to me, and he must always command my best assistance."[123] He also volunteered to peruse Croker's proofs of the Hebridean tour and all Scottish references so that misprints could be avoided.

In one important area, however, Scott was unable to provide aid. Croker knew that Boswell's papers must have been numerous; he therefore was anxious to establish relations with the Boswell family. Scott undertook to make the connection. On September 1, 1829, he wrote:

> There is a very fine library at Auchinleck. I should conceive the present Sir Alexander [i.e., James] Boswell is now nearly of age, but I will inquire about him at the circuit. The father, poor fellow, had a strong taste for literature. This young gentleman, I understand, is rather fond of the turf--which is an unhappy predilection. I doubt as every Scotsman gets fetlock deep. Our circuit comes on soon, when I will get you more accurate information, as I shall meet a brother-in-law of

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[123] Entry of March 23, 1829; Douglas, II, 256.

> the late Sir Alexander's on that occasion. So if you have anything else to ask, you can let me know.[124]

But Scott and Sir James Boswell missed one another when making mutual calls, and, though Croker often mentioned the subject in his letters, Scott went no farther. A direct application by Croker to Sir James brought no reply. The editor concluded, because of information from another source, that Boswell's papers were not at Auchinleck and that they had been "irretrievably dispersed."[125]

Croker's last meeting with Scott took place in the fall of 1831. Scott, who had recently suffered several severe strokes, spent a few days in London before sailing to Italy in quest of health. Since the state of his health did not permit his dining out, he often asked one or two of his old friends to dinner. The Journal records a visit from Croker on October 11; there must have been several more. At this time the Reform Bill was in discussion in Parliament. Lockhart states that "Mr. Croker made a very brilliant speech in opposition to it, and was not sorry to have it said, that he had owed his inspiration, in no small degree, to having risen

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[124]As quoted in Brightfield, p. 298.

[125]For the exciting story of the discovery of the Boswell papers, see Richard D. Altick, The Scholar Adventurers (New York, 1950), chap. I.

from the table at which Scott sat by his side."[126]

The next year, as Scott lay dying at Abbotsford, the Whigs, in appointing a new sheriff for Selkirkshire, generously made Scott's retiring allowance the same sum as his sheriff's salary. When Jeffrey introduced the bill in Parliament, relates Lockhart, "he used language so graceful and touching, that both Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Croker went across the House to thank him cordially for it."[127] During these last months, Lockhart wrote frequently to Croker from Scott's bedside. The last of these letters, on September 21, announced the death of his father-in-law on that day.

Croker's many professional and personal relationships with his contemporaries were by no means unique for the nineteenth century. The catholicity and versatility of the age fostered frequent intercourse between men interested in all the arts; as a consequence, men of letters, fine arts, and even science tended to gravitate together to form a coterie of artistic-tempered enthusiasts. Perhaps nothing better illustrates this than the membership of the Athenaeum Club. Though originally conceived as a gathering place for literary men, very soon after its founding the practice was established

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[126] Lockhart, V, 362.

[127] Ibid., p. 428.

of reserving a certain part of the membership roll for leading figures in the government, the clergy, the arts, and the sciences. The influences these men had on one another can only be estimated, but such estimates are likely to be too little rather than too much.

Croker's friends were indebted to him for a multitude of kindnesses. He played an important role in securing for Southey the Poet Laureateship, and on several occasions he advised the Laureate on various matters connected with his literary productions. For a number of years Moore looked to Croker for assistance and advice, first in connection with business and personal matters, and after 1822, in connection with his literary work, notably the "Loves of the Angels." Scott considered Croker an intimate friend and made him the recipient of his confidences on many matters. In their literary relations, Scott showed himself the debtor: he avowed that his Tales of a Grandfather were suggested and modelled by Croker's Stories from the History of England; and he was aided in his Life of Napoleon by Croker's loans of masses of papers.

Croker's personal qualities were probably not always engaging. He could be arrogant; moreover, he possessed a touch of the snob. He had a rough tongue and he usually expressed himself bluntly, to say the least. He was, it must be allowed, a strong, even a bitter partisan; and as

he rarely concealed his views, he made enemies, especially among the powerful. He had the bad fortune to incur the bitter enmity of two such opposite men of genius as Disraeli and Macaulay. Macaulay was so obviously extravagant in his injustice that it recoiled upon himself. Disraeli's animosity was much less violent, but violent enough in contrast to his usual cool detachment to lead him to make a spiteful attack on a man he never knew and to refuse to express contrition years later when that man was dying.

But Croker's frequent associations with his many other literary acquaintances were marked by mutual trust and warm regard. He was a good friend to literary men at times when they most needed a friend. The confidence they placed in him and the laudatory remarks they paid him indicate that he was stimulating, that his advice was valued, and that his society was sought after. In estimating Croker's influence over his contemporaries, the not inconsiderable authority he maintained in the world of letters as the leading contributor of one of England's most influential periodicals is far-reaching. But even if all these influences were discounted, and even if he had contributed nothing to literary history, Croker would be remembered for the company he kept and the enemies he made.

CHAPTER III

CROKER AND THE QUARTERLY REVIEW

The age in which Croker lived was a heyday for the periodical press. It was a period of tremendous growth not only in the number of publications that came into existence[1] and the variety of interests they served, but in the prodigious influence they wielded. Many circumstances contributed to make up this phenomenon: the rapid increase of wealth and population had made for a greater circulation; the concentration of workers in the manufacturing towns that had sprung up as a result of the industrial revolution created new and pressing problems to engage men's attention; the mastery of steam power to the service of printing and locomotion soon facilitated the publishing and distributing of reading matter, bringing it within the reach of all; and the growing educational opportunities contributed to the spread of literacy among the people, creating a new reading public. With the "wider dispersion of letters" the journalist

[1] Walter Graham, English Literary Periodicals (New York, 1930), p. 17, states that by the year 1800 a total of two hundred and sixty-four, of all kinds, were being issued for the perusal of British readers.

had "to please the million," as John Scott observed,

> now that literature has fairly become popular,--since it no longer rests in mighty fountains of knowledge, and vast reservoirs of learning,--but meanders, in small streams, over the whole of the land, irrigating its surface, and pleasantly refreshing its produce.[2]

Of the great variety of publications that sprang up to gratify the multiplicity of taste, none achieved more prominence than the great periodicals--the Edinburgh Review, the Quarterly Review, and the Westminster Review. In an age of discussion they were among the chief channels of discussion. At times their influence was comparable to that of Parliament itself. The political, literary, and even personal prejudices that governed their editorial policies were of paramount importance. The industrial revolution had by 1802 forced issues between Whig, Tory, and Radical to become sharply defined, while at the same time the Romantic type of literature, so different from the eighteenth century's approach to style, subject matter, and purpose, was beginning to demand a hearing from the critics. These considerations were not overlooked by the editors and the sponsors of the reviews.

The critics as well as the editors quite often reacted according to personal, political, literary, religious, or even mercenary considerations. Walter Graham defines in part

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[2]London Magazine, 1 (February, 1820), 187.

the outside pressures serving to influence literary criticism of the nineteenth century:

> In two ways the Review of the nineteenth century differed from earlier periodicals of the same type--it was comparatively free from the bookseller's influence, and it was affected as never before by political partisanship.[3]

Although evidence does not bear out the first of Graham's distinctions, there can be little argument over the soundness of his second. However, the practice of securing political backing for nominally literary productions was not peculiar to the first part of the Romantic Period. The eighteenth century, too, had its share of political propaganda in literary magazines. The Tatler and Spectator, with their comparatively pale political connections, are notable exceptions to the rule. Even so, the nineteenth century periodical, as Graham states above, "was affected as never before by political partisanship."

Two of the three reviews that were to be the official organs of the political factions existing in England were started in the first decade of the century. The Edinburgh Review was begun in 1802; and the Quarterly Review[4] was established in 1809. Many things would be involved in a complete account of the circumstances that surrounded the

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[3]Graham, p. 227.

[4]Hereafter referred to as the Quarterly.

Quarterly's entry into the periodical world of the time. In this connection literary, and to some extent social, considerations have a place as well as political ones. It will suffice to say that the Quarterly had one good raisons d'etre: to function as a Tory defensive and offensive against the Whig Edinburgh Review. Literary criticism and general discussion were to cloak political propaganda. Sir Walter Scott, the chief figure among the Quarterly's founders, declared that the political character of the review was a "string" of much delicacy. Its partisan purpose must not be obvious at first. A character of evident impartiality and the maintenance of a high reputation in literature were considered equally important.[5] So the Quarterly followed the lead of the Edinburgh in mingling artfully its politics with information and amusement. Scott's ideal for the review was later enunciated for the Edinburgh Annual Register--"it should not be partisan but constitutional."[6] And he believed that the Tory organ should not be held to advocating the cause of the Ministry on all occasions. Such subservience, he thought, would defeat its purpose.[7]

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[5]Smiles, I, 103-104.

[6]Lockhart, Memoirs of Scott, II, 49.

[7]Smiles, I, 104-106.

Determining the bearings of the Quarterly on political questions during the early years of its career has no place in the present study. It is enough to say that the range of the Quarterly's work was broad and its contacts with the political life of the century were numerous. It is evident that the general attitude of the Periodical on a few of the vital matters which stirred English thought during the first half of the century had an influence on matters of literary criticism. The Quarterly spoke always for a certain very conservative attitude of mind, opposed to innovation and change. It was a pattern of old fidelity to British institutions. Its critics often evinced a narrow-minded attitude in their championship of the Established Church, "the palladium of privileged aristocracy."

> Whatever tended to decrease general respect for the established order, the Church, the monarchial form of government, the laws, the King, and the landed aristocracy, was evil. Modified and varied by its applications, this was always the major consideration.[8]

That such a rationale should earn the review a notorious reputation is not surprising. The result was that the Quarterly's critics sacrificed all writers who referred disrepectfully to the "Good King"; all who showed admiration

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[8] Graham, p. 245.

for Napoleon and the French or any recognized enemies of England; all who were known to have inclinations toward liberalism in political thought or beliefs which operated for the subversion of the existing order; all who seemed to exalt the lower classes or to encourage the mob to seek equality with "their betters"; and all who countenanced Dissent or Popery or exhibited in their works signs of infidelity. The true principle of Quarterly criticism was to denounce as evil and mischievous the work (and often the character as well) of any writer whose doctrines were set against the ancient order of things.

There can be no doubt that John Wilson Croker subscribed to the current Tory attitudes toward Church and State. His mind was of a conservative cast, due partly to native tendency, and partly, no doubt, to the deep impression the French Revolution made on him at an early age. His classical training served to strengthen this conservative tendency. From his earliest years in the House of Commons he was an outspoken and zealous partisan of the Tory cause. His parliamentary speeches, his voluminous correspondence, and his many critical writings attest his deep belief in ancient British institutions and his fear and hatred of anything that threatened to upset the status quo. In his varied doings, Croker unquestionably exercised important influence in the determination of the policies of the periodical of

which he became chief supporter. During the early years, the influence went indirectly, partly through his short articles, which made easily imitable models for unformed writers, and partly through his correspondence with Murray. Later in the Quarterly's history Croker's direct influence became more palpable.

Although Croker was one of the founders of the Quarterly and was associated with the project from the start, his role during the first two years was a minor one. Throughout the year 1809 his time was almost wholly devoted to parliamentary work and the unfamiliar tasks of his new post at the Admiralty. Thus his first Quarterly article appeared in the third number (August, 1809), and his second in the tenth (May, 1811). It was not until the third year of the periodical's existence that his articles appeared with increasing regularity. By this time he had been also rendering important service to the Quarterly in other ways. William Gifford, the editor, wrote to him in 1810: "In common justice Murray ought to give you a share in the Quarterly, for almost the whole extra business lies on you. I really am ashamed to be so troublesome, but my friend C. Jenkinson, who was also very good, has deserted his post, and Mr. Peel I do not know."[9] Gifford's letter points to a serious problem that

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[9] Smith, "Croker," p. 95.

arose quite early in the Quarterly's history. The periodical had been founded with a political purpose; it felt obliged to match with each issue the political manifestoes of its rival, the Edinburgh Review. At first the Quarterly was eminently able to do this. The articles on current political themes, written for the most part by George Canning, the Tory Foreign Secretary, had an authority which indicated that the Quarterly was a Government organ. But Canning soon resigned his Cabinet post because of a quarrel with Viscount Castlereagh; he thus lost touch with the center of political affairs. Since, after 1812, no other high-ranking member of the Government could be found to fill Canning's place, the result was that the political connections of the periodical became very weak. Gifford felt the situation keenly.[10] In 1820, he complained to Murray:

> Mr. Croker is the only link that unites us at all with the Ministers, and the service he has done them by his various papers is incalcuable; but he cannot do everything, and it is certain that, to meet the present state of the country, an elaborate article is requisite.[11]

By this time Croker had gradually become the intermediary between the Government and the Quarterly. He brought information about the principles and intentions of the Ministers

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[10] Smiles, II, 52-53.

[11] Ibid., p. 53.

which enabled the editor to chart the political course of his publication.

Besides continuing as a regular contributor, and serving as the link between the Government and the Quarterly, Croker was confronted with additional duties beginning about 1822. While Gifford was temporarily incapacitated by illness, Croker several times assumed, and discharged effectively, heavy editorial responsibilities. Murray was forced frequently to appeal for Croker's aid:

> I find that our invaluable friend cannot engage in the onset of the Review any more--indeed, his medical attendant has told him that he must give up the overpowering anxiety which his frame can no longer bear.
>
> Upon a former occasion you allowed me to hope that I might rely upon your kind assistance in carrying on the Review under any emergency, and I now, therefore, will venture to beg your immediate assistance. I send three sheets of the Review printed off, and a great portion of good but not sufficiently interesting papers already set up. I will do myself the pleasure of calling before two o'clock, and, if you have leisure, will explain more particularly.[12]

As soon as Croker was able to get the 56th issue (dated January, 1823) out of his hands, he made a short trip to Paris. On this John Barrow[13] wrote to Murray:

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[12]From a private collection of Murray's correspondence; quoted in Brightfield, p. 180.

[13]As Second Secretary of the Admiralty he was Croker's immediate subordinate and also one of the founders of the Quarterly Review.

> Croker has run away to Paris, and left poor Gifford helpless. What will become of the Quarterly? It is very cruel, and I assure you I am exceedingly sorry for it; for I much fear that what with its delay some sharp-witted fellow may take the advantage and start a rival. . . .[14]

Throughout the year 1823 Gifford had almost incessant attacks of illness, making it imperative that Murray look for a new editor. Until one could be appointed, however, Croker continued to take charge of the periodical. In many ways his task was onerous, for Gifford's conceptions of the duties of an editor involved making alterations in every article accepted. Gifford's biographer states that he "exerted his influence and expressed his personality through his editorial prerogative of cutting, changing, augmenting, and correcting the reviews furnished by others; and in some instances he exercised this prerogative freely."[15] But Croker apparently agreed with Gifford's methods of editing, for, as evidenced in his letter to Murray, he used these methods himself:

> As I shall not be in Town in time to see you tomorrow, I send you some papers. I return the Poor article ["On the Poor Laws"] with its additions. Let the author's amendments be attended to, and let his termination be inserted between his former conclusion and that which I have written. It is a good article, not overdone and yet not dull. I return, to be set up, the

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[14] Smiles, II, 58.

[15] Roy Benjamin Clark, William Gifford: Tory Satirist, Critic, and Editor (New York, 1930), p. 177.

> article on Southey's "Peninsular War." It is very bad--a mere abstracted history of the war itself, and not in the least a review of the book. I have taken pains to remove some part of this error, but you must feel how impossible it is to change the whole frame of such an article. A touch thrown in here and there will give some relief, and the character of a review will be in some small degree preserved. This cursed system of writing dissertations will be the death of us, and if I were to edit another number, I should make a great alteration in that particular. But for this time I must be satisfied with plastering up what I have not time to rebuild. . . .[16]

But the busy Croker was so much occupied by his official business that he could not be depended upon for the continual editing. As it turned out, he was spared the task by the appointment in December, 1824 of a new editor, John Taylor Coleridge--nephew of the poet. Coleridge, however, because of an increasing law practice, was to remain at his post for only one year; and in December, 1825, John Gibson Lockhart assumed the editorship.

The coming of Lockhart to the Quarterly resulted in Croker's temporary retirement as a contributor. The origin of the misunderstanding that developed between these two men involved the founding of Murray's proposed newspaper, the Representative, and Lockhart's and Croker's interests in the undertaking. Statements were made, misunderstandings

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[16]Smiles, II, 57.

arose, and all parties concerned became nettled. The basis of it all seems to have been lack of communication more than anything else. At any rate, Croker's retirement followed indirectly from the statements made by the new editor to Murray in his letter of November, 1825:

> . . . I believe that his [Croker's] papers in the Review have (with a few exceptions) done the work a great deal more harm than good. I cannot express what I feel; but there was always the bitterness of Gifford without his dignity, and the bigotry of Southey without his bonne-foi. His scourging of such poor deer as Lady Morgan was unworthy of a work of that rank. If we can get the same information elsewhere, no fear that we need equally regret the secretary's quill. ...[17]

Brightfield interprets Lockhart's statement, particularly the last sentence of it quoted above, as evidence that "Lockhart himself . . . intended to write the political articles for the review, thus rendering Croker's services useless."[18] Evidence does not bear out Brightfield's assertion; it may be seriously doubted whether Lockhart ever had much zest for purely political matters.[19] Unlike Croker, he was a professional editor and man of letters; from his

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[17] Ibid., II, 225-226.

[18] Croker, p. 196.

[19] See Gilbert Macbeth, John Gibson Lockhart: A Critical Study, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, XVII (Urbana, 1935), 61, 187.

early years as editor of Blackwood's Magazine his primary interest had always been in literature and literary criticism. Furthermore, a survey of Lockhart's reviews for the Quarterly after he became editor of that periodical reveals that he confined himself almost wholly to literature, and gave hardly any attention, except incidentally, to the review of political or controversial writings. All of this is not to say, however, that Lockhart was not under some pressure to write political articles for the review. There is evidence that Scott, ambitious for his son-in-law's career, and anxious that he establish absolute rule over the Quarterly's contributors, had urged Lockhart to take charge of the political relations of the review and thus to supersede Croker, whom he thought was somewhat intractable on occasion.[20] But Lockhart apparently never took Scott's advice, for there is no evidence that the editor took any serious steps to make himself knowledgeable in political matters or to bring himself into touch with political leaders.

There was no open and definite break between Lockhart and Croker. But the latter must soon have perceived the editor's attitude toward him. The result was that Croker wrote nothing for the Quarterly between December, 1825, and

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[20] Andrew Lang, The Life and Letters of John Gibson Lockhart, I (London, 1897), 378.

January, 1831, except a brief notice in the April, 1829, number of a mathematical work written by Dr. Lloyd, his old Trinity College tutor.

During this interval Croker and Lockhart generally maintained amicable enough relations; after 1827, they resumed corresponding.[21] Croker also kept up his correspondence with Murray, who made several unsuccessful attempts to entice him back to the Quarterly. There was an amusing episode, occurring in 1828, which showed that the publisher still considered Croker as one of the Quarterly's men. Murray wrote:

> It is so currently and circumstantially stated that you are at this moment actually in treaty with Messrs. Longman and Company for becoming the future Editor of the Edinburgh Review--an event which would, inevitably, prove so fearfully injurious to my property and so overpoweringly painful to my feelings, that, I hope, you will pardon me for asking if there be any foundation for such a report. Had such a statement been made some years ago, I should instantly have disbelieved it on account of its impossibility, but, after the changes which I have witnessed within the last eighteen months, I am absolutely forced now to say that Credo quia impossibile est.[22]

Croker soon scotched the rumor with the following reply:

> Dear Murray:
> You are either mad or you must think that Messrs. Longman and I are in that

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[21] Marion Lochhead, John Gibson Lockhart (London, 1954), p. 172.

[22] As quoted in Brightfield, p. 197.

> unhappy condition--for, as I firmly believe that I still retain as much sense as ever I did, I advise you instantly to send for Doctor Matin. I hope to hear tomorrow that you are better. I trust that the loss of a little blood and a strict attention to your diet will have removed these disagreeable symptoms.
>
> Yours faithfully,
> J. W. Croker.[23]

Meanwhile, Croker was busily engaged in matters of government, which, in any case, would have allowed him little time for writing articles. Besides his arduous and exacting work at the Admiralty office, he had taken up the duties of a Privy Councillor. Moreover, the death of George IV in 1830 was followed by the dissolution of Parliament, and Croker was faced with another contest for his seat. Finally, he threw himself strenuously into the long fight against the Reform Bill. When it had finally passed through its final stages, he left Parliament and resolved never again to enter official life.

Croker's active mind, however, could not long remain at rest, and he turned with redoubled energy to literary work, deciding to devote his pen exclusively to the Quarterly. By writing for the periodical, he could still consider himself a worker behind the scenes in the interest of his party. So it was that with the July, 1831, number Croker

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[23] Ibid., p. 197.

took over the responsibility of determining the policy on all political questions. He retained this relation to the Quarterly until 1854, three years before his death.

A modern reader of Croker's contributions to the Quarterly is struck at once by the length of his articles and the variety of the subjects he discussed. It is not unusual to find his articles running to forty and fifty pages, especially those dealing with biographical and historical works. While the Quarterly had its specialist contributors, Croker's versatility enabled him to write on topics of a wide spectrum. His subjects ranged from the affairs of State to lyric poetry, from books of travel to municipal reform, from the history of the guillotine to rubric usage. Frequently called upon at short notice to write an article on some current political question or literary production, Croker rarely failed to produce the desired result. He had in a high degree the advocate's ability to compile a subject very quickly: if he did not know everything, he had the air of knowing everything. It is little wonder that Murray considered him an indispensable member of the Quarterly staff.

Of approximately 270 articles that Croker wrote for the Quarterly, over half dealt with current history, politics, and diplomacy. More than fifty others were reviews of memoirs and biographies dealing with the England of the

half-century after 1775. About thirty articles were of a purely literary nature: the novel, poetry, or the drama. Since his strictly literary contributions were somewhat limited, many of Croker's contemporaries never came under his scrutiny in the Quarterly. Scott, Maria Edgeworth, Hunt, Keats, Godwin, Mary Shelley, and Tennyson are some of the more important writers that were noticed by him. Many of the others that he dealt with are merely names today. The biography and the books of memoirs in particular tended, with few exceptions, to be of ephemeral interest, and Croker could not have failed to recognize this fact. Why he chose such works for his critical judgment is a matter that will be weighed later.

For most of the years that Croker was a contributor to the Quarterly his special province was recent French history, of which he was one of the best-informed men of his generation. A magnificent collection of printed materials on the French Revolution,[24] supplemented by visits to France and personal interviews with eye-witnesses of events, enabled him to write with perfectly confident authority on this subject. As we have already seen, Croker hated and deplored the Revolution, and he never missed an opportunity,

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[24]Before his death Croker sold the entire collection, consisting of 48,579 books, pamphlets and sets or volumes of periodicals, to the British Museum.

in his many articles on the subject, to point out its evils. But in spite of his partiality, his approach to the Revolution, according to Ian Jack, "was more empirical than that of many of his contemporaries."

> So far from regarding revolutions as "systematic and salutary movements, uniformly accomplishing the ends of justice with great fairness," he believed them to be terrible cataclysms in which the worst part of mankind gained the upper hand and tore down all that was civilized and valuable. His attitude to "the mob" was similar to that of Samuel Butler and Dryden a century and a half before.[25]

Croker appears to have passed most of his life in a state of trembling expectation that an exactly parallel sequence of events would happen in England. In 1832 he was quite convinced that the immediate future held revolution, to be followed by a military despotism bringing with it a much more repressive version of the status quo.[26] But in such fears Croker was by no means alone; most English conservatives, states R. B. Mcdowell, "did not see the immediate situation in the early thirties as a stage in a quiet shift of political power but rather as the prelude to a repetition in a familiar English setting of the melodramatic horrors of the French Revolution."[27]

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[25]Jack, p. 333.

[26]See Croker's letter of May 29, 1832, to "a friend;" Jennings, II, 181-182.

[27]British Conservatism 1832-1914 (London, 1959), p. 19.

It is not surprising that Croker's strong anti-revolutionary bias and his revulsion for the despotic Napoleon colored his attitudes toward everything French. He agreed with Lockhart when the latter said that it was "needful to caution the English against the course of France by showing up the audacious extent of her horrors, political, moral, and religious."[28] French literature must be included, for, according to Croker, no one "can deny the intimate, the vital connection of popular literature with popular character."[29] He therefore had no hesitation in attacking French writers and hanging them up in the Quarterly's pillory. English essayists or poets or fictioneers who seemed to him to have Bonapartist leanings or anti-royalist sentiments were likely also to feel the sharpness of his attack.

In all his work as literary critic, editor, and essayist, Croker is most remembered for his abusive articles on two young, unknown poets of his day. To understand fully these articles and Croker's motives for writing them, it is necessary to discuss briefly an important policy of the Quarterly in regard to contributors and the contents of the periodical itself.

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[28] Smiles, II, 233-234.

[29] "French Novels," Quarterly Review, LVI (April, 1836), 106.

From the beginning the founders of the Quarterly had observed strict anonymity. The contributions were either unsigned or signed with pseudonym. This offered several advantages. For one thing the staff was limited, and each man could contribute several articles assuming different styles, thus giving a spirited tone to the publication. Moreover, controversial matter could be more safely presented, the editor assuming the responsibility with the less censure since he could truthfully deny authorship. And, of course, a reviewer felt freer behind the mask of anonymity, since consideration for writers' feelings would have less power to inhibit his frank evaluation of a work when he could present it not as the feeling of an individual but as the more impersonal judgment of a publication. Judgments so rendered, moreover, gained authority by their representative character; use of the editorial "we" carried the implication of a symposium, the solemn consideration not of a reviewer but of the periodical. The practice was not without its disadvantages, too. Unscrupulous writers, screened by anonymity, could publish lies or unfair attacks which they would not dare to sign. Danger also lay in the temptation of the contributor to mould his style to the more general one of the publication, to become less scrupulous and meticulous in rendering his thoughts, especially when he realized that if the editor found it at all inconsistent

with that of the journal as he conceived it, he might tamper with it, as Gifford usually did.

It is evident that the habit of anonymity was strong in Croker, confirmed as it was by the strict practice of the Quarterly. He was surely not ashamed of his literary pursuits, for they were widely known or suspected. Nor is it possible to believe that he questioned the worth of his critical writings; such feelings would have been antithetical to his whole nature. It seems likely that Croker preferred to remain a power behind the scenes rather than reveal his identity and seek popular acclaim. But there is another consideration: the policy of submitting anonymous contributions made it conveniently possible for Croker to practice at times a sort of critical despotism, uttering dogmatic pronouncements on works and censuring personally the writers of them. In short, he could use his weapons without the necessity of ever descending into the arena to confront the enemy.

There is another matter that bears more directly on Croker's writing abusive reviews. In the early years of its career, there had been a distinct seriousness in the Quarterly. Although the subjects were of an adequately varied nature--politics, theology, geology, medicine, antiquarian research, biography, literature, and travel--the contents were apt to be heavy and the political views possessing a rigid bias. More attention was given to an article's matter

and to a writer's attitude than to style. Even notices of the works of established authors tended to be lengthy, carefully worded, solemn affairs. Perhaps the heaviness was due partly to doughty Gifford's authoritarian manner and high seriousness,[30] and partly to the fact that many contributors were not men of letters. At any rate, Murray came to recognize the need for articles to add zest to the Quarterly, for something to relieve "the tediousness of the metaphysical and polemic divinity and of religious subjects genrally, and . . . the necessity of catching subjects and books of public interest."[31] What was needed was short, lively accounts of secondary or newly appearing poets and novelists. Here was where Croker--widely read, bold, acute, and satirically bent--could give valuable service. Editor and publisher both saw his importance. "Gifford is telling me every day," wrote Murray on one occasion, "to apply for one or two of those short, smart papers from you which give so much zest to our review."[32] Lockhart, too, after he became editor, and after he and Croker had mended the rift between them, found the latter's services indispensable:

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[30]Clark, p. 246.

[31]As quoted in Brightfield, p. 336.

[32]Ibid., p. 336.

> I have plenty of good solid length papers . . . but nothing of the lighter order to float off these pieces de resistance. . . . There are plenty of good, grave articles in hand, but unless you can give them wings, I fear it won't do. . . . Perhaps you could give a short, stinging resume of ministerial blunders, foreign and domestic. But at all events, do favour us with the flagellation of some literary quack.[33]

It must be admitted, in favor of Lockhart and Croker, that there was a formidable amount of quackery at this period: poetasters flourished, novelists of unapproachable demerits abounded, memoirs and reminiscences poured forth in streams. And there were the Annuals, those elegant compilations of insipid verse and prose. But as often as not, a "quack," in the vocabulary of Lockhart and Croker, was simply a young and unknown writer; to the Quarterly staff, he was technically known as a "fool." He may or may not have had liberal or radical tendencies. If not, he had probably associated with known corruptors of aesthetic or personal or political character. At any rate, when such "fools" were to be cut up in slash reviews, Croker was the reviewer who could do it with effect and who would do it with relish. "The public," he wrote to Murray, "is so fastidious and indeed so blase that its appetite requires a great deal of the piquant. Mere

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33 Lochhead, pp. 175-176.

solidity and information will not do; there must be something to awaken the fancy or to stir the passions."[34] So to enliven a dull number, Croker would assail a literary work. He could be extremely facetious and ironical, or he could assume a tone of contemptuous ridicule. He could and did string together illustrations to make a poem or other work appear wholly absurd. And sometimes he could be and was downright brutal.

To form a proper estimate of Croker's culpability in indulging in personalities and invective one must be aware of the viciousness and savagery that prevailed quite generally among the periodical and other critics of the age. The severity of reviewers at this time is almost proverbial. The age itself has been characterized as one in which the prevailing tone of criticism was "a combination of scurrility, invective, personal attacks and name calling" which "made the air foggy with prejudice and rancor and concealed in most cases the real issues."[35] It was an age when Jeffrey could say of The Excursion that "this will never do," that the end of the Ode to Duty is utterly without meaning, and that the Ode on Intimations of Immortality is illegible and

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[34] As quoted in Brightfield, p. 337.

[35] Paul Mowbray Wheeler, "The Great Quarterlies of the Early Nineteenth Century and Leigh Hunt," South Atlantic Quarterly, XXIX (1930), 283.

unintelligible.[36] Everyone seemed infected with the brutal give and take of the period: Jeffery in another of his few distored moments maintained that he could not find one couplet in all of Coleridge's Christabel "which would be reckoned poetry, or even sense, were it found in the corner of a newspaper."[37] Coleridge himself indulged in the exchange of polysyllabic invective, for it was he who said that Maturin's Bertram was a "superfetation of blasphemy upon nonsense."[38] Even the gallant and gentle Scott was not immune, for he believed that "to take notice of such men as Hazlitt and Hunt in the Quarterly would be to introduce them into a world which is scarce conscious of their existence."[39] Nor could Byron refrain from firing a few shots in the barrage; here is a sample, concerning Hunt's Foliage:

> Foliage . . . of all the ineffable Centaurs that were ever begotten by Self-love upon a Night-mare, I think this monstrous Sagittary the most prodigious.[40]

With consummate invective, Lockhart called Hunt one who "can touch nothing that mankind would wish to respect without

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[36] Edinburgh Review, XXIV (1814), 1.

[37] Ibid., XXVII (1816), 66.

[38] Biographia Literaria, II (London, 1847), 288.

[39] Journal, I (Edinburgh, 1891), 22.

[40] Quarterly Review, XLIV (1831), 206.

polluting it."[41]

As one reads such distorted statements from all sides it is easy to be more sympathetic with Hazlitt's contention that

> No statement in The Quarterly Review is to be trusted: there is no fact that is not misrepresented in it, no quotation that is not garbled, no character that is not slandered, if it can answer the purposes of a party to do so.[42]

Although Hazlitt himself could hardly take an unbiased attitude toward the Quarterly,[43] his charge certainly contains an element of truth. Partisan prejudice was strong enough in that day to blind even the best of the reviewers. That Croker added his fair share of prejudice and rancor is unquestionably true. He regarded it as his duty to brand what he considered "literary quackery" and to expose and ridicule what he believed to be ignorance and dullness. Yet in his critical assaults he was only following the prevailing practice of his day. He was typical of a great many reviewers who approached their victim's work in a predetermined manner and on the assumption that too much praise was more injurious than censure.

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[41] Ibid., XXXVII (1828), 424.

[42] "Mr. Gifford," Selected Essays, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1930), p. 765.

[43] For the history of the long, bitter quarrel between Hazlitt and the Quarterly, see Clark, pp. 213-222.

Striking as Croker's slash reviews may be, they were, however, only a fraction of his whole contribution. He could and did intersperse his valuable historical studies and his scathing literary reviews with articles of sober insight into Maria Edgeworth's Tales and into John Galt's Annals of the Parish. Yet Croker's really discerning criticisms are little known to the modern reader, as are his articles on Bonaparte and Wraxall and Waldegrave; his short, ill-advised (though to some extent true) attack on Keats is found in every collection of old reviews. Croker lives not for his best criticism but for his worst.

CHAPTER IV

CROKER'S LITERARY CRITICISM

Croker's opinions of the great figures of English literature before the nineteenth century are sparse, since most of his criticism was written for the Quarterly Review and naturally tended to confine itself to contemporaries. Like most educated persons he regarded Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton as great writers. But he took them for granted and had little to say about them in his writings. Dryden, Pope, and Johnson he accepted much in the same way. His position in regard to the English writers of the eighteenth century, however, has a special interest, inasmuch as it has some bearing upon his attitudes toward the Romantics. A classically trained mind like Croker's, imbued with a sense of order and restraint, would be likely to find something to admire in the writers of the English classical period. He calls Dryden "one of our best and greatest of poets,"[1] speaks of the "brilliancy and beauty" of Pope's verse,[2] and refers

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[1] Jennings, I, 96.

[2] Ibid, II, 144.

to Johnson as "one of the ablest and best men that ever adorned literature."[3] Always loyal to these writers, Croker could be counted on to rise to their defense whenever their literary principles or productions were criticized or questioned by his contemporaries.

Judgments of Poets

About the poetry of the first generation of Romantic writers Croker had little to say. His criticism of their writings is to be gathered only from short and incidental remarks, as he never reviewed any of their poetry. Scott's name is one which is mentioned fairly often. Scattered throughout Croker's correspondence are comments which reveal not only his esteem for Scott the man but also his high regard for Scott the poet. For several years before he met Scott in 1809 Croker had been an enthusiast of the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and "The Lay of the Last Minstrel;" and in 1810 he joined in the universal acclaim given "The Lady of the Lake." His rather extensive criticism of the Waverley novels will be discussed in a further section of this chapter. For the poet Crabbe, also, Croker had a steady and high admiration, perhaps because Crabbe's work possessed something of the classical spirit. In a letter to Murray in

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[3] "Pichot's Literary Tour," *Quarterly Review*, XXXII (October, 1825), 350.

July, 1819, he calls the newly-published "Tales of the Hall" a "treasure" and "a delightful book."[4] In another place he says of Crabbe's poetry:

> Wherever the English language is read, the accurate delineations of life, the delicate strokes of character, the grave humour, the weighty sense, and, above all, the tender and pathetic touches of nature and good feeling which pervade the works of George Crabbe, are admired by every understanding, and felt by every heart.[5]

Croker's admiration of Southey's work has been touched upon in Chapter II. At the time he helped secure for Southey the office of Poet Laureate, he remarked that "of living poets and of poets that will live beyond our day, Mr. Southey is 'if not first, in the very first line.'"[6]

For the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, however, Croker had little enthusiasm. Though he was favorably impressed with Wordsworth's "high sounding blank verse, intricate combinations of thought and affected phrases," he considered the "objects" upon which the poet wrote to be "ludicrously low."[7] And his sensibilities were apparently impervious to the qualities of poetry found in Coleridge's verse.

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[4]Jennings, I, 146.

[5]"Sketch of Old England," Quarterly Review, XXX (January, 1824), 538-539.

[6]As quoted in Brightfield, p. 211.

[7]"The Poetic Mirror," Quarterly Review, XV (July, 1816), 472.

He calls "Christabel" a "wandering and unintelligible riddle," in which the poet has "scattered flowers of poetry over the dark pall that covers and conceals the meaning."[8] Although Croker failed to elaborate, he almost certainly objected to the supernatural agency in the poem; and perhaps, like the celebrated Mrs. Barbauld, he thought that Coleridge had not included enough moralizing.[9] The basis for making these assumptions will become clear later in the chapter when Croker's critical theories are discussed.

Byron

For the poetry of the second generation of Romantic writers Croker had, with but one exception, almost no appreciation whatsoever. The exception was Byron. From the very first Croker was favorably disposed toward this young lord. Along with Gifford and other members of the Quarterly staff, he shared in giving general acclaim to the first two cantos of "Childe Harold" when they were published by Murray in February, 1812. Declaring the poem to be the work of a "genius," the critic says that "the most striking and essential feature of Byron's poetry" is "the description of the workings of the mind, the agitation of the intellect, the

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[8] Ibid., p. 473.

[9] Ernest Bernbaum, Guide Through the Romantic Movement, Second Edition (New York, 1949), p. 61.

embodying the feelings of a high and wounded spirit, of a vain, proud, selfish heart, of a wild, daring, and romantic imagination."[10] Having read the early proofs of the third canto of the poem, he wrote Murray his opinion:

> I have read with great pleasure the poem you lent me. It is written with great vigour, and all the descriptive part is peculiarly to my taste, for I am fond of realities, even to the extent of being fond of localities.[11]

Other than "a note or two which reflects on the Bourbon family," which he censures as "irreverent" and which he feels may offend many readers, Croker declares that "nothing in the poem can be altered for the better."[12]

Croker continued to express high regard for Byron when the appearance of Don Juan was greeted by derision and condemnation by most of the English newspapers and periodicals. The publication of the first two cantos in July, 1819, startled England with the suddenness of an electric shock. Works like "Manfred" and "Beppo" had given the moralistic critics some qualms, but now their worst suspicions were confirmed. The poem was generally condemned upon the ground of indecency. It was lewd, insulting, corrupt, and entirely

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[10] "The Poetic Mirror," p. 470.

[11] Letter of September 18, 1816; Jennings, I, 94.

[12] Ibid., I, 95.

disgraceful: in such terms, at any rate, it was damned from all sides.[13] Hearing of Murray's fears about the moral character of the work, Croker hastened to write the publisher and express his opinion:

> I am agreeably disappointed at finding "Don Juan" very little offensive. It is by no means worse than "Childe Harold," which it resembles as comedy does tragedy. There is a prodigious power of versification in it, and a great deal of very good pleasantry. There is also some magnificent poetry, and the shipwreck, though too long, and in parts very disgusting, is on the whole finely described. In short, I think it will not lose him any character as a poet, and, on the score of morality, I confess it seems to me a more innocent production than "Childe Harold." What "Don Juan" may become by-and-bye I cannot foresee, but at present I had rather a son of mine were Don Juan than, I think, any other of Lord Byron's heroes. Heaven grant he may never resemble any of them.[14]

Notwithstanding the remarkable sale of the poem, Murray decided, after publishing the first five cantos anonymously, that he would publish no more of it.[15] Croker thought this a mistake and attempted, unsuccessfully, to persuade Murray to continue to publish the remaining cantos:

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[13] Samuel C. Chew's Byron in England (New York, 1924), pp. 27-43, gives a vivid account of the reception of Don Juan in England.

[14] Letter of July 18, 1819; Jennings, I, 145-146.

[15] Smiles, I, 413.

> You, Mr. Murray, . . . have done this poem great injustice. There are levities here and there, more than good taste approves, but nothing to make such a terrible rout about--nothing so bad as "Tom Jones," nor within a hundred degrees of "Count Fathom." I know that it is no justification of one fault to produce a greater, neither am I justifying Lord Byron. I have acquaintance none, or next to none, with him, and of course no interest beyond what we must all take in a poet who, on the whole, is one of the first, if not the very first, of our age; but I direct my observations against you and those whom you deferred to. If you print and sell "Tom Jones" and "Peregrine Pickle," why did you start at "Don Juan?" Why smuggle it into the world and, as it were, pronounce it illegitimate in its birth, and induce so many of the learned rabble, when they could find so little specific offence in it, to refer to its supposed original state as one of original sin? If instead of this you had touched the right string and in the right place, Lord Byron's own good taste and good nature would have revised and corrected some phrases in his poem which in reality disparage it more than its imputed looseness of principle; I mean some expressions of political and personal feelings which I believe he, in fact, never felt, and threw in wantonly and de gaieté de coeur, and which he would have omitted, advisedly and de bonté de coeur, if he had not been goaded by indiscreet, contradictory, and urgent criticisms, which in some cases were dark enough to be called calumnies.[16]

Croker's opinion of Byron forms an interesting comment on his deviation from his usual course of criticism. He tended to look for ethical values in literature; poetry, he felt, should be consonant, at least, with the moral views of the

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[16] Letter of March 26, 1820; Ibid., I, 414-415.

society in which it is produced. There are numerous examples of his emphasis upon moral and religious sentiments in his reviews to the end of his career; the position was a permanent one, and it colored a good share of his critical work. On rather rare occasions, however, he was capable of being lenient enough. His acceptance of Don Juan, a work peculiarly open to attack on this ground, is indicative of his indulgence in these respects. One reason for his defense of Byron was certainly his recognition of the poet's transcendent talents. Another was his awareness that Byron was in many respects an admirer of the neo-classical school of Dryden and Pope, and that Byron's writings contained certain outstanding qualities usually associated with Neo-classicism--namely, clearness, concreteness, and an addiction to the satirical. But Croker was also firmly convinced that Byron was at heart a Tory. He told Murray in 1820:

> In politics he [Byron] cannot be what he appears, or rather what Messrs. Hobhouse and Leigh Hunt wish to make him appear. A man of his birth, a man of his taste, a man of his talents, a man of his habits, can have nothing in common with such miserable creatures as we now call Radicals.[17]

Thus Croker could call Byron, in spite of the latter's liberal and erratic politics, "one of the first, if not the

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[17] Ibid., I, 415.

very first," poets of the age; and he could bestow praise on Don Juan in spite of the poem's questionable moral tone and its definite attacks on Wellington and George IV. It seems undeniable that Croker's attitude toward a "gentleman" like Byron, even when he disapproved strongly of the tendency of his work, was always different from his attitude toward a Cockney like Keats.

Shelley

The motives which prompted Croker's assaults on Shelley had little to do with literature. Godwinian lawlessness, atheism, and utter lack of moral scruples were the evils which operated to reduce Shelley's rank as a poet. In a footnote in his review of Hunt's Foliage, Croker wrote that the "Revolt of Islam" was

> the production of a man of some ability, and possessing itself some beauty; but we are in doubt, whether it would be morally right to lend it notoriety by any comments. We know the author's disgraceful and flagitious history well, and could put down some of the vain boasting of his preface. At Eton we remember him notorious for setting fire to old trees with burning glasses, no unmeet emblem for a man, who perverts his ingenuity and knowledge to the attacking of all that is ancient and venerable in our civil and religious institutions.[18]

Men like Shelley and Hunt were, in fact, attempting a

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[18]"Leigh Hunt's Foliage," Quarterly Review, XVIII (May, 1818), 327.

systematic revival of the philosophy of Epicurus; "and their leading tenet is, that the enjoyment of the pleasures of intellect and sense is not to be considered as the permitted, and regulated use of God's blessings, but the great object, and duty of life."[19] Croker's statements regarding Shelley are a manifestation of his ethical bias, an outgrowth of his adherence to the religious and political traditions against which Shelley was revolting.

Evidence is lacking which would indicate whether Croker ever changed or modified his opinion of Shelley. Judging from his reticence in later life on Hunt, Keats, and others whom he had condemned, it is doubtful if he did. Like several other critics of his time, he chose to overlook the greatness of Shelley's works written during his Italian period. A few writers pleaded the poet's cause; but they were overborne by those like Croker to whom Shelley remained a deserter of his wife, a seducer, an atheist, a blasphemer, and a revolutionist. Croker was incapable of separating the man from the poet.

Hunt

Croker's review of the Story of Rimini in the Quarterly Review of January, 1816,[20] marked the declaration of war

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[19] Ibid., p. 327.

[20] "Leigh Hunt's Rimini," Quarterly Review, XIV (January, 1816), 473-481.

between the Cockneys and the Tory press. From this time on Hunt was the choice prey of the critics, and others were attacked principally on account of him, or reached through him. Blackwood's Magazine of October, 1817, joined the battle by publishing the first of the long series of abusive articles on the "Cockney School," to be followed by Croker's second article on Hunt, a review of Foliage, which appeared in the Quarterly of May, 1818.[21]

Croker opens his review of the Story of Rimini by noting that the poem was written in Newgate Prison, where Hunt had been confined for libeling the Prince Regent. Although this was hardly "calculated to make a very favourable impression," the reviewer's attitude will remain entirely unprejudiced: "We are to judge him solely from the work now before us; and our criticism would be worse than uncandid if it were swayed by any other consideration." Such a statement is, of course, utterly absurd. Hunt's connection with the liberal Examiner, his unprovoked attack on Gifford in the "Feast of the Poets" in 1814, his lukewarm support of the war against Napoleon, his offensively violent and personal polemic against the Prince Regent[22] leading to his recent imprisonment--all called for a blasting review in the

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[21]"Foliage," Quarterly Review, XVIII (May, 1818), 324-335.

[22]In the Examiner of March 22, 1812.

Quarterly. Add to these the fact that in Hunt Croker felt he was dealing with a "fool," and it is small wonder there was little attempt to estimate the poem from the viewpoint of literature.

Croker could, however, make out a case against his author, and he did so in this instance. He begins by noting that Hunt professes to write "on certain pretended principles . . . put forth as a pattern for imitation. These canons Mr. Hunt endeavours to explain and establish in a long preface." Hunt demands of poetry "great freedom of versification," "a free and idiomatic cast of language," and a style free from artificiality. And how does Hunt's practice comport with his theories? He has violated the very rules he himself has laid down.

> When Mr. Hunt goes on to say that by freedom of versification he means something which neither Pope nor Johnson possessed, and of which even "they know less than any poets perhaps who ever wrote," we check our confidence; and, after a little consideration, find that by freedom Mr. Hunt means only an inaccurate, negligent, and harsh style of versification, which our early poets fell into from want of polish, and such poets as Mr. Hunt still practise from want of ease, of expression, and of taste.

Hunt's depreciation of Pope and Johnson was especially bound to arouse Croker's resentment, admiring as he did the poetry of the English classical period. Indeed, to Croker, Hunt's censure of these poets was tantamount to blasphemy. In a

tone alternating between raillery and sarcasm, the reviewer proceeds to point out examples of faulty versification from "the warblings of Mr. Hunt's nightingales."

Of Hunt's second principle, that poetry should have a free and idiomatic cast of language, Croker declares:

> If there be one fault more eminently conspicuous and ridiculous in Mr. Hunt's work than another, it is,--that it is full of mere vulgarisms and fugitive phrases, and that in every page the language is--not only not the actual, existing language [Hunt's phrase], but an ungrammatical, unauthorised, chaotic jargon, such as we believe was never before spoken, much less written.

Croker cites as examples of such undignified diction "clipsome waist," "enormous shout," "quoit-like drop," "unbedinned music," "leaping accents," "pin-drop silence," "half indifferent wonderment," "boy-storied trees and passion-plighted spots," "ships coming up with scattery light," "cored in our complacencies." Hunt is particularly censured for his excessive use of certain words, of which a good example is "heave."

> This word is deservedly a great favourite with the poet; he heaves it in upon all occasions. "The deep talk heaves;" with heav'd out tapestry the windows glow;" "then heave the crowd;" "and after a rude heave from side to side;" "the marble bridge comes heaving forth below."

Hunt's cockney ruralism is presented with cutting sarcasm in the opening paragraph of the review of Foliage. In a counterfeited style the reviewer contorts Hunt's devotion

to his leafy luxuries, his flowerets, music, and other social joys into a frivolous epicureanism:

> Winter has at length passed away: spring returns upon us, like a reconciled mistress, with redoubled smiles and graces; and even we poor critics, "in populous city pent," feel a sort of ungainly inspiration from the starved leaflets and smutty buds in our window-pots; what, then, must be the feelings with which the Arcadian Hunt,
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> "half-stretched on the ground,
> With a cheek-smoothing air coming taking him round,"
>
> --p. lxxxi.
>
> must welcome the approach of the "fair-limbed" goddess to his rural retreat at Hampstead? He owes her indeed especial gratitude; and it would be unpardonable in him to suffer his "day-sweet" voice, and "smoothing-on" "sleeking-up" harp to be mute upon this occasion. The spring is to Mr. Hunt what the night was to Endymion, the season for receiving peculiar favours; the "smiling Naiads" and even the "coy Ephydriads" will soon again admit him "in sun-sprinkled ease" to their bath and toilette; while the bolder "Nepheliads" will leave their chariots in the air to kiss with "breathless lips serene" their "little ranting" favourite adoncino d'amore.

The third and last principle which Hunt professes to follow, that poetry should be written in a style free from artificiality, is dealt with by placing a passage from Rimini in contrast with its source--a paragraph from the prose romance of Sir Launcelot. Croker declares that the simplicity and directness of the prose passage give it "far more of poetry, of sentiment and of nature." In his review of Foliage, Croker singles out the "effusion" entitled "On

hearing a little Music Box" and quotes the opening lines as typical of the affection of language and sentiment which mark much of Hunt's verse.

> Hallo--what? where?--what can it be
> That strikes up so deliciously?--
> I never in my life--what no!
> That little tin-box playing so.

In spite of his general attitude, Croker was not wholly condemnatory in his reviews of Rimini and Foliage. "Admidst all the vanity, vulgarity, ignorance, and coarseness, there are here and there some well-executed descriptions, and occasionally a line of which the sense and the expression are good." Of Rimini the reviewer says: "The interest of the story itself is so great that we do not think it wholly lost even in Mr. Hunt's hands. He has, at least, the merit of telling it with decency." This, it must be admitted, is faint praise, but clearly of a higher order than Blackwood's declaration that "no woman who has not either lost her chastity, or is desirous of losing it, ever read 'The Story of Rimini' without the flushings of shame and self-reproach."[23] Although Croker in the Foliage review speaks scathingly of Hunt's "total want of taste and of ear for metrical harmony," he finds certain lines in the "Nymphs" which are "entitled to praise." So, too, the poem addressed

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[23] John Gibson Lockhart, "Letter from Z to Leigh Hunt," Blackwood's Magazine, III (May, 1818), 200.

to Hunt's small son has merits, and "must come home, we think, to the feelings of every father." After quoting it in its entirety, the reviewer declares that he "will not spoil the effect of these pleasing stanzas by any verbal criticism."

The general characteristics of Rimini and Foliage are much the same, and Croker appears to have recognized this. There are poor lines and good ones, never sustained power, and no poetry of a very high order. The subjects themselves are often unpoetical. And Hunt obtrudes himself too frequently in a breezy, offhand manner. Many of Croker's strictures are, therefore, entirely justified. Hunt did violate his own poetic theories. In his desire to achieve freedom of versification and an idiomatic spirit in his verse, he too often mistook for grace and fluency of diction, a turn of phrase that was without poetic connection and often in very poor taste. In the Story of Rimini, especially, a grave subject in the garb of everyday language is degraded into the incongruous and prosaic. It is in physical description, as Croker points out, that this undignified diction most strikingly violates good taste. An example is:

> And both their cheeks, like peaches on a tree,
> Leaned with a touch together, thrillingly.

Sometimes the prosaic quality of Hunt's diction is due to its being pitched upon a merely "society" level:

> May I come in? said he:--it made her start,--
> That smiling voice;--she coloured, pressed her heart
> A moment, as for breath and then with free
> and usual tone said, "O yes,--certainly."

Such a treatment of the meeting of Paolo and Francesca in the bower is wholly inadequate to the situation and the emotion of the moment, a fact which Croker recognizes when he accuses Hunt of "affectation of language and sentiment."

But having said that Croker's criticism of Hunt is frequently well-taken is not to say there is really any fairness in his reviews. He either willfully ignored or utterly failed to recognize Hunt's best poems, which may be counted the sonnets to Shelley, Keats, Haydon, and Raphael; those entitled the "Grasshopper and the Cricket," "To the Nile," "On a Lock of Milton's Hair," and the series on Hampstead. Following his usual practice when dealing with a "fool," he selected for censure the weakest poems and the feeblest passages contained in those poems. He detached words and individual phrases for his sarcastic reproof--a process which Hazlitt called "flyblowing an author's style."[24] He presented an impressive array of examples to support his charges, but he conveniently overlooked most of the virtues.

As was typical in his method of attack, Croker saved his most virulent criticism for the conclusions of his two

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[24] "Mr. Gifford," The Spirt of the Age; reprinted in Selected Essays, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1930), p. 754.

reviews where Hunt comes under a barrage of personal abuse. Rimini's dedication to Lord Byron, the reviewer declared, could be nothing less than an insult. "We never in so few lines saw so many clear marks of the vulgar impatience of a low man, anxious and ashamed of his wretched vanity, and labouring, with coarse flippancy, to scramble over the bounds of birth and education, and fidget himself into the stout-heartedness of being familiar with a LORD." The prophetic sounding passage at the close of the review of Foliage is addressed not to the poet, but rather to the editor of the Examiner, the champion of free thought, the asperser of the Government and the Prince Regent, the champion of Shelley's devious courses in theory and real life:

> Henceforth all will be wormwood and bitterness to him: he may write a few more stinging and a few more brilliant periods, he may slander a few more eminent characters, he may go on to deride venerable and holy institutions, he may stir up more discontent and sedition, but he will have no peace of mind within, he will do none of the good he once hoped to do, nor yet have the bitter satisfaction of doing all the evil he now desires; he will live and die unhonoured in his own generation, and, for his own sake it is to be hoped, moulder unknown in those which are to follow.

Keats

More than for anything else he wrote, Croker is remembered by posterity for his four-page assault on Keats's

"Endymion" in the well-know review of April, 1818.[25] Few pieces of writing of comparable length have been so steadfastly condemned or secured for their author a greater notoriety.

For the motives which prompted Croker's attack, one must look to the relations of Keats and Hunt. Keats was a member of the radical group of which Hunt was the leader. The latter's politics made him particularly obnoxious to Croker, and this feeling extended to Keats, who indeed shared Hunt's opinions about government to a large extent. Moreover, Croker makes clear at the beginning of his review that he sees Keats also as a literary disciple of Hunt.

> This author is a copyist of Mr. Hunt; but he is more unintelligible, almost as rugged, twice as diffuse, and ten times more tiresome and absurd than his prototype, who, though he impudently presumed to seat himself in the chair of criticism, and to measure his own poetry by his own standard, yet generally had a meaning. But Mr. Keats had advanced no dogmas which he was bound to support by examples; his nonsense, therefore, is quite gratuitous; he writes it for its own sake; and being bitten by Mr. Leigh Hunt's insane criticism, more than rivals the insanity of his poetry.

Having established to his satisfaction that Keats is Hunt's "simple neophyte," Croker next jeers at Keats's modest preface, deliberately misconstruing it into a formula for Huntian poetry and turning the poet's frank avowals unfairly against him.

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[25] "Keats's 'Endymion'," Quarterly Review, XIX (May, 1818), 204-208.

At length Croker launches into specific charges against the poem. Many of the defects are the same as those he had found earlier in Hunt's poetry. First he points out the lack of organic structure and logical progression in the story.

> Of the story we have been able to make out but little; it seems to be mythological, and probably relates to the loves of Diana and Endymion; but of this, as the scope of the work has altogether escaped us, we cannot speak with any degree of certainty.

The reviewer goes on to declare that the writing is loosely associative--that one word suggests the next.

> At first it appeared to us that Mr. Keats had been amusing himself and wearying his readers with an immeasurable game of bouts-rimes, but, if we recollect rightly, it is an indispensable condition at this play, that the rhymes when filled up shall have a meaning; and our author, as we have already hinted, has no meaning. He seems to us to write a line at random, and then he follows not the thought excited by this line, but that suggested by the rhyme with which it concludes. There is hardly a complete couplet inclosing a complete idea in the whole book. He wanders from one subject to another, from the association, not of ideas but of sounds, and the work is composed of hemistichs which, it is quite evident, have forced themselves upon the author by the mere force of the catchwords on which they turn.

Croker singles out several passages in which the catchword of the rhyme is all too obviously dictating to Keats his next idea. The following serves as his final example:

> Be still the unimaginable lodge
> For solitary thinkings, such as dodge
> Conception to the very bourne of heaven,

> Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,
> That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
> Gives it a touch ethereal--a new birth. (ll. 293-298)

Croker then declares: "Lodge, dodge--heaven, leaven--earth, birth; such, in six words, is the sum and substance of six lines." After indicating by examples what he considers the metrical weaknesses of Keats's verse, he proceeds to quote and condemn the poet's neologisms and coinages:

> We are told that "turtles passion their voices" [l. 248]; that an "arbour was nested" [l. 431]; and a lady's locks "gordian'd up" [l. 614]; and to supply the place of the nouns thus verbalized, Mr. Keats, with great fecundity, spawns new ones; such as "men-slugs and human serpentry" [l. 821]; the "honey-feel of bliss" [l. 903]; "wives prepare needments" [l. 208]--and so forth.

Further defects in diction are found where Keats forms new verbs

> by the process of cutting off their natural tails, the adverbs, and affixing them to their foreheads; thus, "the wine out-sparkled" [l. 154]; the "multitude up-followed" [l. 164]; and "night up-took" [l. 561]. "The wind up-blows" [l. 627]; and the "hours are down-sunken" [l. 708].

In a tone of cutting sarcasm, Croker concludes his review with a challenge to the readers of the romance:

> But enough of Mr. Leigh Hunt and his simple neophyte. If any one should be bold enough to purchase this "Poetic Romance" and so much more patient than ourselves as to get beyond the first book, and so much more fortunate as to find a meaning, we entreat him to make us acquainted with his success; we shall then return to the task which we now abandon in despair, and endeavour to make all due amends to Mr. Keats and to our readers.

Although Croker's criticism of "Endymion" is harsh, and, at times, abusive, it does point out some very real weaknesses in the poem. Croker, unlike Lockhart and certain other critics, has at least paid careful attention to the style of the poem and the dangerously vague standards that governed its writing. He is quite correct in asserting that the story is difficult to follow, that the "scope of the work" escapes the reader. As a narrative poem "Endymion" is digressive and obscure, the course and connection of the incidents being at times so uncertain as to result in tediousness. Even Shelley, the brother-poet and friend of Keats, admitted his recognition of this fault.[26] Croker is justified also in his censure of Keats's diction. Though individual words and phrases are quoted out of context, thus making them easy to condemn, "Endymion" abounds in eccentricities and improprieties of diction which add greatly to its florid and diffuse style. Moreover, there is truth in the reviewer's charge that the necessities of rhyme dominate the expression of idea. The process of letting sense follow

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[26] In September, 1819, Shelley wrote: "Much praise is due to me for having read [Endymion], the author's intention appearing to be that no person should possibly get to the end of it. . . . I think, if he had printed about 50 pages of fragments from it, I should have been lead to admire Keats as a poet more than I ought, of which there is now no danger" (Complete Works, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck [New York, 1965], X, 80).

sound weakens the poem at many points. One must search to find an instance where the rhyme has suggested an effective figure. Even the leafy perfection of the "Hymn to Pan" reminds one of an untamed wilderness that by some happy accident has assumed delightful and immaculate form. In the passages he singles out, Croker's criticism is not wide of its mark; the selected passages are diffuse and the rhyme is forced. To see the passages otherwise is to say, in effect, that Keats never in his life wrote a line of bad poetry. Too often "Endymion" is seriously marred by excessive luxury and laxness. The young poet had yet to achieve the restraint of expression and integrity of stanzaic form which are found in later works.

But Croker's assertion that Keats was wholly under the influence of Hunt when he wrote "Endymion" is highly doubtful. Although M. F. Brightfield says that Croker "quite correctly sees Keats as a disciple of Leigh Hunt,"[27] the biographer ignores the evidence that Keats had reacted against Hunt's poetic style almost a year before "Endymion" was published. Claude Finney has shown in a detailed investigation how Keats gradually discarded Hunt's familiar and sentimental style of poetry and how he rejected also Hunt's philosophy

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[27] Brightfield, pp. 346-347.

of optimism.[28] As Finney observes:

> Keats composed "Endymion" independently . . . and developed his new system of poetry at the same time. He was not able to discard at once the diction and the versification which he had learned from Hunt. His philosophy of poetry developed so rapidly that, before he had completed the third book of "Endymion," he was dissatisfied with what he had composed.[29]

Hunt's influence upon Keats was, during the months of "Endymion's" composition, gradually superseded by that of others--Chapman, Brown, Spenser, and especially Shakespeare.[30] What Huntian influence lingered is seen in the general theory of versification and in the diction, with some traces in matters of taste. But what Sidney Colvin has called Hunt's "sentimental chirp"[31] has been superseded largely by a luxury of imagery, glimpses into the heights and depths of nature, and an absorbing love of Greek fable. Undoubtedly Croker truly believed that Keats was merely Hunt's neophyte. But it was also expedient for him to make the accusation; by so doing, he indirectly makes Keats the recipient of the vilification that had been heaped upon Hunt.

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[28] The Evolution of Keat's Poetry, I (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), 200-216.

[29] Ibid., I, 447.

[30] Bernbaum, pp. 227-228.

[31] John Keats: His Life and Poetry (New York, 1925), p. 107.

It can be argued that the great promise of "Endymion" outweighs the faults that Croker found, but it should be remembered that this promise is more apparent to the modern reader who travels backwards, approaching the poem from the direction of "The Eve of St. Agnes," "Hyperion," and the great odes. If Croker's vision seems limited, it should be remembered also with what paucity of favorable comment the great critics and poets of his age greeted "Endymion." Shelley, Lamb, Hazlitt, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Hunt, and De Quincey either spoke of it disparagingly or withheld comment of any kind.[32] Even at that, Croker was not entirely blind to what he calls the "powers of language, rays of fancy, and gleams of genius" discernible in "such a rhapsody."

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[32]Shelley's comments have been already noted; of Lamb, Hazlitt, and Coleridge, nothing is recorded. Wordsworth's opinion of the "Hymn to Pan" was that it was "a pretty piece of Paganism" (Colvin, John Keats, p. 227). Byron denounced Keats's writing as "a sort of mental masturbation--* * * * his Imagination. I don't mean he is indecent, but viciously soliciting his own ideas into a state, which is neither poetry nor any thing else but a Bedlam vision produced by raw pork and opium" (Letter of November 9, 1820 to Murray; Peter Quennell, ed., Byron: A Self-Portrait, II [London, 1950], 536). Even Hunt said that "Endymion" had no versification (Imagination and Fancy [New York, 1845], p. 231), and that one of the poem's greatest faults was its "unpruned luxuriance" (Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries, II [London, 1828], 252). And almost thirty years later De Quincey wrote: "The very midsummer madness of affectation, of false vapoury sentiment, and of fantastic effeminacy, seemed to me combined in Keats's 'Endymion' when I first saw it . . ." ("Notes on Gilfillan's Literary Portraits: Keats," Collected Writings, XI [Edinburgh, 1890], 388-389).

Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that Croker did not more clearly appreciate, and give credit for, these "powers of language" and "gleams of genius." Although he succeeds in exposing some of the chief flaws of the poem, his arguments are weakened by his choice of passages to quote and censure. Throughout his review, he singles out the feeblest passages he can find to justify his condemnation. To point out real weaknesses in Keats's early writing is one thing; to consistently censure the faults and ignore the virtues is quite another, and can hardly lead to first-rate criticism. In short, it is not so much in what it says, as in what it does not say, that the review goes wrong. Egregious failure to see the promise of Keats is the most unforgivable thing about it.

Croker's attack, then, stemmed partly from his assumptions that Keats was Hunt's disciple. But the reviewer felt also that he was dealing with another "fool;" the onslaught against a young and unknown poet would provide spice and zest to an otherwise solemn number of the Quarterly Review. Finally, Croker's blindness to Keats's merits can be accounted for partly by his classical training and poetic leanings. When he complains of "Endymion" that "there is hardly a complete couplet inclosing a complete idea in the whole book," he makes abundantly clear his allegiance to eighteenth century poetic tradition. He is judging the poem by so-called

neoclassical principles, with the result that Keats is found deficient on every count. Considering the types of flaws the poem contains, it would have been surprising if a man of Croker's tastes and background had found any merits at all. It is difficult to conceive of a more unsuitable critic to review such a poem.

Probably much of the notoriety of Croker's article was set going by Bryon and Shelley in the widely-credited fiction that the article killed Keats. Byron's contemptuous but half-humorous epigram--

> Who kill'd John Keats?
> "I," says the Quarterly,
> So savage and Tartarly;
> "'Twas one of my feats"--[33]

and his well-known lines in Don Juan--

> John Keats, who was kill'd off by one critique,
> Just as he really promised something great,
>
> 'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
> Should let itself be snuff'd out by an article--

were surely not written in earnestness. But that Shelley sincerely believed that the Quarterly was responsible for Keats's early death cannot be doubted. He wrote a letter of remonstrance to Gifford which, however, he failed to send.[34]

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[33]Letter of July 30, 1821, to Murray; Quennell, II, 661.

[34]Richard Moncton Milnes, Life, Letters and Literary Remains of John Keats, I (London, 1848), 208 ff.

His words as expressed in the preface to "Adonais" were uttered in grim seriousness:

> The savage criticism on his "Endymion," which appeared in the Quarterly Review, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in a rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgements from more candid critics of the true greatness of his powers were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

Keats himself dismissed Croker's critical attack with dignity. Although it must have caused him pain, he wrote his brother that the criticism actually did him good: "The attempt to crush me in the "Quarterly" has only brought me more into notice."[35] Both he and Shelley admitted the justice of at least part of Croker's censure. And in a letter to his publisher, James Augustus Hessey, Keats wrote that the crudities of "Endymion" offended him far more than Croker's slanderous criticism.[36] The publication of these letters, coupled with the rise of a more exact, if less picturesque, approach to literary history, has long since dispelled the legend of Keats's murder.

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[35] Poetical Works, ed H. Buxton Forman (London, 1889), III, 238.

[36] Letter of October 9, 1818; Ibid., III, 230-231.

Tennyson

Croker's third and final critical assault on the work of a contemporary poet was his scathing review of Tennyson's Poems which appeared in the Quarterly of April, 1833.[37] His attitude towards Tennyson is to be connected with his attitude towards Keats; in his opening paragraph he makes clear that he sees Tennyson as Keats's disciple and successor:

> We gladly seize this opportunity . . . of introducing to the admiration of our more sequestered readers a new prodigy of genius--another and a brighter star of that galaxy or milky way of poetry of which the lamented Keats was the harbinger.

Keats's lack of popularity is referred to in biting irony:

> We certainly did not discover in that poem ["Endymion"] the same degree of merit that its more clear-sighted and prophetic admirers did. We did not foresee the unbounded popularity which has carried it through we know not how many editions; which has placed it on every table; and, what is still more unequivocal, familiarized it in every mouth.[38]

Tennyson's indebtedness to the earlier poet is, of course,

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[37]"Poems by Alfred Tennyson," Quarterly Review, XLIX (April, 1833), 81-96. Until 1909 this critique had been attributed to Lockhart, whose name had been written into the Quarterly register of contributors in place of the cancelled one of Croker. In that year a letter from Lockhart to Croker was printed in the Quarterly which leaves no doubt that Croker was the author (see Quarterly Review, CCX [April, 1909], 772-775). See also Brightfield, p. 349.

[38]"Endymion," in fact, was not reissued in England until the first collected edition of Keats's works in 1840--which itself sold very poorly.

recognized for purposes of depreciation.

Besides the matter of discipleship, another factor helps also to explain the virulence of Croker's attack. Most of the Tory critics saw Tennyson as a radical. First were his associations with liberals and radicals, particularly the Cambridge intellectuals.[39] Second, Effingham Wilson and Edward Moxon, the publishers of Tennyson's 1830 and 1833 volumes of poetry, were engaged in Radical publishing ventures; the latter had published the works of both Hunt and Shelley.[40] Finally, most of the periodicals that first noticed Tennyson's 1833 volume had reputations for advocating liberal or radical causes.[41] All of these factors would have tended to strengthen Tory misgivings about the poet. As Edgar F. Shannon observes:

> Nothing more than the association of Tennyson with radicalism and the Cockney poets was needed to incite Croker to the attack. . . . With Tennyson appearing to be of the same poetical school and political stamp as Keats, Shelley, and Leigh Hunt, there is little likelihood that any other tone would have been adopted in the Quarterly.[42]

Croker's attitude is clearly revealed in his letter of January 7, 1833, to young John Murray, the son of the publisher

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[39] Edgar F. Shannon, Jr., Tennyson and the Reviewers (Cambridge, Mass., 1952), pp. 22-23.

[40] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[41] Ibid., pp. 24-25.

[42] Ibid., p. 25.

of the Quarterly: "Tell your father and Mr. Lockhart that I undertake Tennyson and hope to make another Keats of him."[43]

Again Croker set out to "stir the passions" of his readers by assailing the work of a young and aspiring poet. The charges are similar to those directed against Hunt and Keats: the domination of the necessities of rhyme over the expression of idea; affectation; superfluous lines; and absurdities of expression and meaning.

The reviewer proceeds to substantiate his first charge by singling out examples of Tennyson's versification in which the necessities of rhyme dominate the idea of the passage. In the prefatory sonnet to the volume ("Mine be the Strength"), which expresses the aspirations of the young poet, Croker takes objection to "forward flee" (l. 5). He says: "Perhaps the poet uses the word flee for flow; which latter he could not well employ in this place, it being, as we shall see, essentially necessary to rhyme to Mexico towards the end of the sonnet--as an equivalent to flow he has, therefore, with great taste and ingenuity, hit on the combination of forward flee. . . ." In the second stanza of the song in "The Hesperides" in which is described the "red-combed dragon" which

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[43]As quoted in Brightfield, p. 350.

guards the golden fruit, Croker objects to the expression "older than the world." "Older than the hills," he sarcastically remarks, "besides not rhyming to 'curl'd,' would hardly have been a sufficiently venerable phrase for this most harmonious of lyrics." In "O Darling Room" he censures "exquisite" (ll. 4, 15) which is used to rhyme with "delight" and "white." Such laxity in rhyme is by no means restricted to the poems Croker singles out. Innumerable examples could be cited where the poet apparently uses a word for the sole purpose of achieving rhyme. It will suffice to say that all three of the poems the reviewer censures on this count were omitted from Tennyson's editon of 1842.

Although Croker, unlike several other critics who reviewed Poems, failed to rebuke Tennyson for his excessive compounding of words, he lambasts the poet for his affectation in the constant use of the accented ed. Citing "The north wind fall'n, in the new-starrèd night" from "The Hesperides," he asserts that the poet

> suppresses the e in fallen, where it is usually written and where it must be pronounced, and transfers it to the word new-starrèd, where it would not be pronounced if he did not take due care to superfix a grave accent. This use of the grave accent is, as our readers may have already perceived, so habitual with Mr. Tennyson, and so obvious an improvement, that we really wonder how the language has hitherto done without it.

Croker's stricture had its effect; in the 1842 volume Tennyson

dispensed with many accented endings and deleted nearly all of the accent marks.

The reviewer directs his ridicule also at Tennyson's printing of extra lines in footnotes. Besides thirty-three extra lines in a footnote to "Rosalind," two shorter footnotes appended to "The Palace of Art" draw his attention, and all provide further fuel for his fire:

> No one who has ever written verse but must have felt the pain of erasing some happy line, some striking stanza, which, however excellent in itself, did not exactly suit the place for which it was destined. How curiously does an author mould and remould the plastic verse in order to fit in the favourite thought; and when he finds that he cannot introduce it, . . . with what reluctance does he at last reject the intractable, but still cherished off-spring of his brain! Mr. Tennyson manages this delicate matter in a new and better way; he says, with great candour and simplicity, "If this poem were not already too long, I should have added the following stanzas," and then he adds them, . . . or, "the following lines are manifestly superfluous, as a part of the text, but they may be allowed to stand as a separate poem," . . . which they do. . . . This is certainly the most ingenious device that has ever come under our observation, for reconciling the rigour of criticism with the indulgence of parental partiality.

Evidently these footnotes became "manifestly superfluous" even to Tennyson, for he deleted them when the poems were reprinted.

Croker's most severe censure was reserved for pointing out what he considered absurdities of expression and meaning. He begins by aiming his fire at the second stanza of "To---."

> When, in the darkness over me,
> The four-handed mole shall scrape,

Plant thou no dusky cypress tree,
Nor wreath thy cap with doleful crape,
But pledge me in the flowing grape.

Croker sarcastically comments: "Observe how all ages become present to the mind of a great poet; and admire how naturally he combines the funeral cypress of classical antiquity with the crape hatband of the modern undertaker." He goes on to criticize the "laughters of the jay" in the same poem:

> This . . . poet endows all nature not merely with human sensibilities but with human functions--the jay laughs, and we find, indeed, a little further on, that the woodpecker laughs also; but to mark the distinction between their merriment and that of men, both jays and woodpeckers laugh upon melancholy occasions.

Absurd as is Croker's ridicule of this point, Tennyson changed "laughters" to "stritches" when the poem was finally reprinted in 1865. The reviewer then cites the fourth stanza of "To--" as an example of the absurdity of meaning that he finds throughout the poem:

Then let wise Nature work her will,
And on my clay her darnels grow,
Come only when the days are still,
And at my head-stone whisper low,
And tell me--

At this point Croker interjects: "Now, what would an ordinary bard wish to be told under such circumstances?--why, perhaps, how his sweetheart was, or his child, or his family, or how the Reform Bill worked, or whether the last edition of the poems has been sold--papae! our genuine poet's first

wish is

And tell me--if the woodbines blow!"

Such writing is not literary criticism; it is mere pleasantry and badinage. But it does call attention to the lack of substance of some of Tennyson's early verse and a certain over-luxuriance of imagination which one of his biographers has called the poet's "overtrailing of life with profuse flowers."[44]

In discussing "The Miller's Daughter" Croker directs his criticism almost wholly to what he considers grotesqueries in expression. Citing the opening stanza--

I met in all the close green ways,
While walking with my line and rod,
The wealthy miller's mealy face,
Like the moon in an ivy-tod--

he censures the comparison of the "mealy face" with "the moon in an ivy-tod," as he does also the "tender images" of the young lovers lying "beneath those gummy chestnut-buds" (stanza 10). Perhaps stanza 11 is even more deserving of censure:

A water-rat from off the bank
Plunged in the stream. With idle care,
Downlooking through the sedges rank,
I saw your troubled image there.

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[44]Hugh I. Fausset, Tennyson: A Modern Portrait (New York, 1923), p. 56.

"A masterly touch," observes Croker, "of likening the first intrusion of love into the virgin bosom of the Miller's daughter to the plunging of a water-rat into the mill-dam." Tennyson obviously felt such strictures to be justified; the poem reappeared much changed in 1842: the opening stanza was omitted entirely, the chestnuts were no longer "gummy," and the water-rat had become a trout.

Certain passages in "The Lady of Shalott" are censured on the same grounds. Croker criticizes the couplet

> Till her eyes were darkened <u>wholly</u>,
> And her smooth face <u>sharpened slowly</u>, [Croker's italics]

which became in the 1842 edition

> Till her blood was frozen slowly,
> And here eyes were darkened wholly,

an improvement over the original passage, not only because slowly freezing blood is a more powerful image than a slowly sharpening face, but because the finality of "wholly" is reserved for the second line where it more logically follows "slowly." Iphigenia's lament in "A Dream of Fair Women" contains the lines

> One drew a sharp knife through my tender throat--
> Slowly,--and nothing more!

which evoke from Croker: "What touching simplicity--what pathetic resignation--he cut my throat--'<u>nothing more</u>!' One might indeed ask, what '<u>more</u>' she would have?" Under the critic's gibe Tennyson revised the passage to the more subtle

and suggestive

> The bright death quiver'd at the victim's throat;
> Touched: and I knew no more.

Croker had nothing but scorn for "Darling Room."

Quoting from the opening stanza--

> O Darling room, my heart's delight,
> Dear room, the apple of my sight,
> With thy two couches soft and white,
> There is no room so exquisite,
> No little room so warm and bright,
> Wherein to read, wherein to write--

he caustically comments: "We entreat our readers to note how, even in this little trifle, the singular taste and genius of Mr. Tennyson break forth. In such a dear little room a narrow-minded scribbler would have been content with one sofa, and that one he would probably have covered with black mohair or red cloth, or a good striped chintz; how infinitely more characteristic is white dimity!--'tis as it were a type of the purity of the poet's mind." The gibe is unnecessarily barbed, but again, Croker's censure is justified. As Hugh I. Fausset has stated, "this cosy little poem, with its dilettante upholstery, was not a mere lapse of youth into foolishness; it revealed more nakedly than elsewhere the relaxed fastidiousness which continually sapped Tennyson's energy."[45] Although sorely embittered by such criticism,[46]

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[45] Ibid., pp. 55-56.

[46] Shannon states that Tennyson had an "almost morbid sensitiveness to criticism" (Tennyson and the Reviewers, pp. 33-36).

Tennyson seems to have recognized its basic justice. Such open ridicule as Croker's taught him the wisdom of concealing intellectual emptiness and listless feeling under a more closely controlled style. "Darling Room" was never reprinted.

It is difficult to determine the degree of influence that Croker's criticism had on Tennyson. The fact that the poet altered or omitted a censured line or passage does not necessarily mean, of course, that Croker's censure alone produced the change or omission. The poet's development had its own spontaneous impetus, and his power to recognize his faults cannot be supposed to have depended solely on Croker's comments. Perhaps it would be safe to say that Tennyson's alterations and omissions were a result of both his maturer judgment and the critic's objections. At any rate, of the fifty passages in his poems that Croker criticized, thirty-five were either corrected or suppressed in the 1842 volume.[47]

There can be no question that Croker in his flailing about hit on real as well as superficial faults contained in Poems. The very fact that Tennyson made so many revisions in the light of Croker's review shows that the poet considered many of Croker's strictures as just. Moreover, in an age in which the severity of reviewers is almost proverbial, Croker's

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[47] Ibid., p. 41.

review, in spite of its scathing irony and merciless fun, contained no personal reflections on Tennyson's character. It did censure much that was silly and affected, grotesque and artificial. In an article on French drama written a year after his review of Tennyson, Croker voiced his theory of criticism when he noted that the French had divided their literature "into the Classical and the Romantic--which might better be denominated the pedantic and the extravagant--but no one amongst them seems to have once thought of the Natural!"[48] Croker's basic standard for poetry was precisely simplicity and naturalness, a fact which helps to explain his obtuseness to the luxuriance of imagination and the refinements of phrase and rhythm which run through so much of Tennyson's poetry. Just as he had failed utterly to find merit in the sensuous, imaginative, and fanciful "Endymion," so also was he blind to the soft, languorous beauty of "The Lotos-Eaters," the incantatory lyricism of "The Lady of Shalott," and the irregular rhythms and magical elusiveness of "The Hesperides."

Although it is true that Croker dealt the young poet a hard blow, it cannot be said that his review killed Tennyson in the manner which the "Endymion" review was reputed

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[48]"State of the French Drama," Quarterly Review, LI (March, 1834), 179-180.

to have killed Keats. The most that can be alleged is that general popular agreement with the reviewer's verdict made the poet a literary pariah,[49] that he became greatly depressed, and that he published no more poetry for a decade.

Judgments of Prose Writers

It was as a critic of the novel that Croker began his literary reviewing for the Quarterly. The fact that he chose this literary genre for his critical judgment is significant. In the early years of the nineteenth century the novel was in low repute, so far as it had any repute at all. Periodicals such as the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly Review condescended only in rare instances to recognize the novel's existence. The great novelists of the mid-eighteenth century were now classics; the once lively and vivacious Fanny Burney of Evelina had become the elderly and feeble Mme. D'Arblay of The Wanderer, and like her that ancient Scotch master of letters, Henry Mackenzie, "The Man of Feeling," was living on the triumphs of a bygone age. Francis Jeffrey summed up the situation when he said that "a greater mass of trash and

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[49] Shannon states that Tennyson "believed for a time that English readers could never care for his verse and felt the atmosphere of England to be so inimical that he thought seriously of living abroad" (Tennyson and the Reviewers, p. 35).

rubbish never disgraced the press of any country, than the ordinary Novels that filled and supported our circulating libraries. . . ."[50] Such a state of affairs was to be changed shortly, of course, by the achievements of Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott, both of whom greatly increased the prestige of the novel. But until 1811, the only writer of prose fiction whom the critics could find in their hearts to approach with real respect was Maria Edgeworth. Though they knew well enough that she was not the peer of Fielding or Sterne, they recognized her as a genuinely creative writer who gave clear evidence of a fresh, realistic response to the stale material which had been used in the novel of manners for more than two decades.

Maria Edgeworth

Croker's two reviews of Maria Edgeworth's Tales of Fashionable Life contain some appreciative criticism and are, for the most part, highly discerning. The first review, which appeared in August, 1809,[51] considers the first three volumes of the Tales, and opens with complimentary remarks on Miss Edgeworth's literary abilities. "Though not perhaps what is called a fine writer, she possesses a considerable

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[50]As quoted in Jack, English Literature 1815-1832, p. 225.

[51]"Miss Edgeworth's Tales of Fashionable Life," Quarterly Review, II (August, 1809), 146-154.

share of genius and originality." Unlike most authors of prose fiction, she has, according to the reviewer, the worthy aim of "venturing to dispense common sense to her readers, and to bring them within the precincts of real life and natural feeling."

That a story should be realistic counted for much with Croker, detesting as he did the extravagances and improbabilities of most of the romantic fiction of the time. But simple realism is not easily achieved:

> We are well aware how difficult it is to keep a due medium between flatness and commonplace on the one hand, and romance and improbabilities on the other; and we are ready to admit that in order to excite extraordinary interest, the novelist must be permitted the use of incidents less usual, and of characters less common than are met with in the streets and society of London.

Nevertheless, the critic cannot reconcile himself to what he considers the "violent and unnecessary vicissitudes of fortune and feeling" which disfigure many of the tales of the first three volumes. Numbered among such incredible and improbable incidents, says Croker, are

> the disgusting duel on which the whole drama of "Belinda" turns; the change of nurse of the heir of Glenthorn for the son of the blacksmith which constitutes the plot and produces the denouement of "Ennui;" the nauseous folly of the romantic friendship in "Almeria;" the indelicate and unlikely incident which operates the conversion of Colonel Pembroke in "The Dun;" and the threadbare improbability of Emile de Coulanges' refusing to marry the son of her

> friend, because her heart was engaged to an interesting unknown, and the stale surprize of discovering this same interesing unknown to be the very son of her friend.

But while the incidents of Miss Edgeworth's Tales are too often improbable, the author, Croker feels, is totally exempt from a fault which he alleges is found in "almost the whole class of modern novel writers,--the want of truth and nature in the manners of the persons of the story." Miss Edgeworth, he declares in his review of the last three volumes of the Tales,[52] is nothing less than a master in the delineation of character; with the exception of the authors of Gil Blas and Don Quixote, she is without a rival. In the representation of Irish manners Croker thinks she is particularly successful. Whereas other authors have caught only the "general feature" of the Irish,

> to Miss Edgeworth's keen observation and vivid pencil, it was reserved to separate the genus into its species and individuals, and to exhibit the most accurate and yet the most diversified views that have ever been drawn of a national character.

Furthermore, to this power Miss Edgeworth adds another, which is that of "interweaving the peculiarities of her persons with the conduct of her piece, and making them, without forgetting for a moment their personal consistency, conduce to

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[52]"Miss Edgeworth's Tales of Fashionable Life: second series," Quarterly Review, VII (June, 1812), 329-342.

the general lesson which she undertakes to inculcate."

That each of Miss Edgeworth's Tales contains a "general lesson" to warn people against the faults they display was another factor which weighed heavily with Croker. He liked the moral earnestness that lay behind the Tales, and the fact that each one inculcated a specific system of moral duty: Learn How to Say No! ("Vivian"), Be Alert to Avoid Boredom ("Ennui"), Be Prompt to Pay Your Debts ("The Dun"), Shun Empty Ambition ("Almeria"), and so on. Literature, for Croker, as well as Miss Edgeworth, was not a criticism of life, nor even a faithful imitation of reality, nor still less a form of art. Literature was an aid to education, a vehicle to convey the knowledge of virtue and vice with more efficacy than axioms and definitions. In a word, literature was a didactic art. As Croker himself puts it, "A novel, which is not in some degree a lesson either of morals or conduct, is, we think, a production which the world might be quite as well without." Between the extremes of portraying virtue and vice, the novelist should hold his way; his characters should be natural, but they should also contribute to the object he has in view. Virtue and vice should always conduce to a moral conclusion.

But that a tale should inculcate a moral is not enough, says Croker. Morality without religion is at best a cold and

empty virtue. Though the sober and didactic texture of the Tales is well adapted to the purpose of moral instruction, there is in them an absence of all spiritual content. This, the reviewer declares, can be attributed solely to the absence of religious education from Miss Edgeworth's system of education.[53] Thus he finds it difficult to admire the "tone" of her morality. Lacking the spiritual content, the author's morality is little more than

> a system of manners regulated by prudence and a sense of propriety, having little connection with the heart, and rarely leading to any difficult or important efforts of virtue. There is little in her standard of moral duty to which every man of common discretion and average goodness of disposition does not naturally conform, and scarcely any thing in the motives which she proposes, of a nobler source than a regard to worldly and selfish interests.

In short, it was not that Miss Edgeworth attacked religion or inveighed against it, but that she made it appear unnecessary by exhibiting perfect virtue without it.

Though Croker had a decided preference for "Ennui," feeling that the story was "not ill conceived and on the whole very well told," he was not particularly enthusiastic about any of the tales in the first three volumes of Miss Edgeworth's work. That he recognized how the author's educational preoccupations sometimes spoil her as a

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[53] Croker is here referring to Miss Edgeworth's earlier Treatise on Education.

storyteller is apparent from his objection to "Vivian" and other of the tales--that the hero's leading characteristic (in "Vivian" it is weakness of will) is so much the most important part of the narrative that the incidents are contrived, and contrived for this purpose alone, to show the defect in action. Evidently Miss Edgeworth herself was not unaware of this weakness in her tales. "How difficult it is to introduce the moral into a story," she had said to Walter Scott, and he had replied that the rats would not go into the trap if they could smell the hand of the rat-catcher.[54]

The tales in the last three volumes pleased Croker better, and his review of them shows a real understanding and appreciation of Miss Edgeworth's strengths as a writer. He particularly liked "The Absentee" and pronounced it the best of the tales, a judgment which most modern critics would endorse. Whereas the other moral tales had sprung from some abstract idea, this one sprang from an observable situation. Whereas "Vivian," "Almeria," and others sprang from a Puritan system of moral precepts, "The Absentee" arose from a great contemporary abuse--the Irish landowners living in London while their agents mulcted the peasantry of money that would eventually be thrown away on the gambling table. The moral had thus been not so much "introduced," as it had been woven

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[54] P. H. Newby, Maria Edgeworth (Denver, 1950), pp. 89-90.

into the texture of the story, and the characters, rather than being creatures of didactic exigency, have been created in the round and seem to exist independently of the author.

Croker's praise of Miss Edgeworth's gift of character portrayal in her Irish tales has borne the test of ultimate opinion as well as any criticism he wrote. Like his friend Scott,[55] he clearly recognized that Miss Edgeworth was at her best when she wrote of a country and a people she knew at first hand. Writing with her eye on familiar objects, she perceived the relation between the local habitation and the people who dwell in it. Thus many of her characters are, as it were, organic growths of the Irish earth. Croker thought Miss Edgeworth was especially good with smaller characters, and he particularly liked the charm and vitality of the peasants and Irish gentlemen in "The Absentee." Indeed, figures such as Sir Terence O'Fay and Count O'Halloran are no less striking in their own way than is the incomparable Lady Clonbrony, who is at the center of the story. All three, together with the humble, modest, warm-hearted, and long-suffering peasants, exhibit what Croker called "the most accurate and yet the most diversified views that have ever been drawn of a national character." When it is considered

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[55] Scott said in the postscript to Waverley that his aim in fiction was "in some distant degree to emulate the admirable Irish portraits drawn by Miss Edgeworth."

that Croker wrote these words two years before the appearance of Waverley, his praise is not unjustified. He saw clearly and sharply that Miss Edgeworth, in an age of romantic fiction, wrote of ordinary people and of things within her range that bore in consequence the impress of truth and integrity.

Scott

The prominence Croker had attained within a few years as a reviewer of fiction is shown by the fact that the task of reviewing the first three novels of the "Great Unknown" fell into his hands.[56] That he knew the identity of the author of these novels at the time he wrote his reviews is doubtful. Certainly Scott himself seems to have taken good care not to divulge the secret of the authorship in his intimate correspondence with Croker.[57] Evidence contained in a letter of January, 1817, from William Blackwood to John Murray indicates Croker was in little doubt at that time about Scott's authorship. Blackwood wrote: "It is an odd story here, that Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Scott are the authors of all these Novels. I, however, still think, as Mr. Croker said to me in one of his letters, that if they were not by

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[56] "Waverley," Quarterly Review, XI (July, 1814), 354-377; "Guy Mannering," Quarterly Review, XII (January, 1815), 501-509; "The Antiquary," Quarterly Review, XV (April, 1816), 125-139.

[57] Scott did not publicly acknowledge the authorship of Waverley and its successors until 1827.

Mr. Walter Scott, the only alternative is to give them to the devil, as by one or the other they must be written."[58]

A few months later, however, Croker was apparently less certain of his theory, for in a letter of May, 1817, to a friend, he wrote:

> I send you the Antiquary and Tales of My Landlord, by the author of Waverley and Guy Mannering. They are the most popular novels which have been published these many years; they are, indeed, almost histories rather than novels. The author is certainly Walter Scott, or his brother Mr. Thomas Scott. The internal evidence is in favour of the former, but his asseverations, and all external evidence, are for the latter. I cannot decide.[59]

If Croker still entertained doubts about the authorship almost three years after he wrote his review of Waverley, there is little likelihood that he even suspected Scott as early as 1814. At any rate, when it is considered that Scott was a dedicated Tory, a fellow contributor to the Quarterly, and an intimate friend, Croker's lukewarm, if not slightly unfavorable, reviews may be regarded as something of a faux pas on his part. That he would have written with such caution and lack of enthusiasm if he had known the true authorship of the novels seems doubtful, especially since his criticism was so often colored by political prejudice and favoritism.

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[58] Smiles, I, 473.

[59] Jennings, I, 112.

Of the three novels he reviewed Croker ranked Waverley highest and Guy Mannering lowest, with The Antiquary someplace in between. The review of Waverley opens with a resume of the history of the novel form, which is traced from the older, and according to Croker, original type, where "heroes all generosity and ladies all chastity, exalted above the vulgarities of society and nature, maintain through eternal folios their visionary virtues, without the stain of any moral frailty or the degradation of any human necessities." A second stage he finds to be revealed in the characters of Gil Blas and Tom Jones, who stand as type specimens of the human race. The present age has gone, Croker says, beyond this generic description to show us "men of a peculiar nation, profession, or temper, or, to go a step further--individuals." The older type he finds comparable to the picture of Raphael, Correggio, or Murillo; the new can aspire only to the level of Teniers or Gerard Dow. Yet, he hastens to add, though they are not sublime, he likes the modern type and would not have Miss Edgeworth or the author of Waverley undervalued. They are "less compehensive and less sublime, but not less entertaining or less useful. . . . We do not believe that any man or woman was ever improved in morals or manners by the reading of Tom Jones or Peregrine Pickle, though we are confident that many have profited by the Tales of Fashionable Life, and the Cottagers of Glenburnie."

The bulk of Croker's review is given over to very full quotations, chiefly to illustrate the Scotch quality of the novel. In concluding his analysis, he declares: "Waverley . . . is far from being its hero, and in truth the interest and merit of the work is derived, not from any of the ordinary qualities of a novel, but from the truth of its facts, and the accuracy of its delineations." In other words, Croker sees clearly that the novel's great merit lies in its account of the manners and habits of old Scotland rather than in its characterization or plot. Certainly the plot, as the reviewer recognizes, is the novel's chief fault; Waverley's journeyings do not constitute an adequate plot. In fact, as modern critics frequently point out, one of Scott's most glaring weaknesses, even in the cream of his work, is his rather arbitrary, if not mechanical, plot work.[60] Even Scott himself admitted that everything in Waverley was contrived with a view to the description of the old Scottish way of life.[61] Croker's criticism, then, is valid enough. But the weaknesses he points out require no great critical acumen to recognize, and the review itself, it must be allowed, is rather colorless.

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[60]See Walter Allen, The English Novel (New York, 1958), pp. 130, 135; Ernest A. Baker, The History of the English Novel, VI (New York, 1950), pp. 138, 213.

[61]Introduction to Waverley.

Croker was unable to find much good to say of the second Waverley novel, Guy Mannering. In matters of style and organization, it is "a hasty and undigested work." Its inferiority to Waverley is due chiefly, he feels, to its less spirited setting and characters. The manners of the greater part of the latter are "barbarous and vulgar, extravagant and mean."

He then goes on to analyze the plot in detail. It contains, he declares, a great degree of improbability; "the statements in which the plot . . . is founded are absolutely impossible." Not only are the incidents "trite and hackneyed," but they are "unnaturally brought about." It soon becomes clear that Croker's basis for these objections is the supernatural agency of Mannering and Meg Merrilies. Not only is it out of keeping in a story of the late eighteenth century to introduce astrology, but, worse, the author "treats the supernatural agency not as a superstition, but as a truth." All the combinations of Hoyle and De Moivre, the critic asserts, would be insufficient to calculate the degree of the improbability of Mannering's astrological predictions being verified.

Croker was also much offended by what seemed to him the vulgar slang and dialect of the characters.

> In Waverley, the picturesque scenes and the original manners of the country are heightened and stamped as it were with the impress of

> reality by the use of the appropriate dialect. But the events and objects of Mannering not only do not require but do not excuse the pages of barbarous slang with which the author wearies our ears and puzzles our understandings; and we assure him that we think that his work, though it should thereby become more intelligible, would be on the whole improved, by being translated into English.

Such censure is hardly justifiable. Certainly a good deal of the intensity with which Scott realized his characters was through their speech. It is a commonplace of Scott criticism to say that his characters generally come alive in their dialogue only in the vernacular.[62] To divest a character such as Meg Merrilies of her "Scotch Jargon," as Croker called it, and make her speak a "correct" English would be to destroy one of the richest and most colorful characters in the whole Waverley gallery. Like Dominie Sampson, Dandy Dinmont, and so many others, Meg's Scottish peasant speech gives her an interest and a vitality she would not otherwise possess. It is precisely the language of Scott's characters, says Ian Jack, which is the root of his greatness.

> It is difficult to realize the daring of Scott's innovation. For a long period before his time the Scots language had habitually been used in literature for the purposes of low comedy and farce. He had to contend with "stock responses" which were the result of prejudice and ignorance.[63]

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[62] See Allen, p. 133; Jack, pp. 211-212.

[63] English Literature 1815-1832, p. 211.

Croker's strictures on the Scots-speaking characters in Guy Mannering are a typical "stock response." Unfamiliar with their language--a "dark dialect of Anglified Erse," he called it--and scornful of anything that smacked of the racy or bizarre, he pronounced them vulgar and unnatural. His conservative tastes allowed for none of the foible and idiosyncrasy that Scott seemed to take such delight in characterizing.

The Antiquary pleased Croker better. Here, as in Guy Mannering, he objected to the supernatural and considered the story itself neither novel nor probable. In other respects, however, he found The Antiquary successful, its great merit being that its characters "are all human beings, to whose pains and whose pleasures our own hearts are responsive, and to whose reasons and motives of action our minds assent." He also quoted long passages to illustrate various high qualities: the author's power of fine description in the scene where Sir Arthur and Miss Wardour are caught by the tide, his reality in dealing with human character, and his skill in dialect. There is no good explanation for his reversal in feeling regarding the last quality. Did he strongly suspect Scott's authorship by the time he wrote the last of his three reviews? At any rate, in spite of adverse criticism in detail, the review is practically all in terms of high praise and shows a critical acumen that its two predecessors lack.

Judging by modern criticism of the first three Waverley novels, Croker missed fire badly when he rated Waverley far above Guy Mannering. The best critics would have it just the other way around. Certainly in Mannering Scott avoided the most glaring weakness of his earlier book, its casual plot. Unlike Waverley, in which practically nothing happens until the book is half over, Mannering thrusts the reader immediately into the midst of a complicated action. The story itself has a unity which the earlier novel lacks, and the characters--with Meg Merrilies heading the list--possess a fullness and richness that transcends anything found in Waverley.

Croker's strictures on the style and organization of Guy Mannering cannot be easily dismissed. Modern critics are as likely to censure Scott on these accounts as was Croker. Take the matter of style. It is well known that Scott is wordy and diffuse, that he should have revised and boiled down. Often pointed out are his slipshod diction and his pompous eighteenth-century clichés, his "feathered denizens of the air," for instance. His disciple Stevenson and many others since have complained of such foibles as one of the irritating things about Scott's novels.[64] Another source

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[64] Robert Louis Stevenson, "A Gossip of Romance," Works (New York, 1925), XIII, 132-145.

of irritation is his slowness in getting under way. He is apt to flounder about in a mass of introductory material, apparently getting his bearings and gradually deciding what he will do with his story. These faults Croker recognized. They offended and irritated him and are the basis for his assertion that Guy Mannering is "a hasty and undigested work."

After all his growling, Croker had to confess that he read all three of the Scottish novels with interest and amusement. Yet when it is considered that these novels were works of first importance for literature and for the publishing business, it must be allowed that Croker's reviews are at best undistinguished. His lack of real appreciation or enthusiasm can be attributed mainly to his attitude towards romance. Near the close of his Waverley review he remarked:

> We confess that we have, speaking generally, a great objection to what may be called historical romance, in which real and fictitious personages, and actual and fabulous events are mixed together to the utter confusion of the reader, and the unsettling of all accurate recollections of past transactions.

Croker's words obviously apply with less force to Waverley than they do to the multitude of extravagant and impossible romances with which the reading public had been bombarded for almost three decades. Certainly Waverley is marked by few if any of the irresponsibilities of romance that are so abundant in the forgotten works of such writers as Leland and Clara Reeve, the Lees, and Mrs. Charlotte Smith. By and

large, the novel presents an authentic picture of life as it really was "sixty years since." Scott's practical sagacity and knowledge of mankind ensured that his reconstruction of the 1740's would be the image of a real world. Nothing less could satisfy him. Yet for all his realistic predilections, Scott remained, says Ernest A. Baker, "a romantic from start to finish."[65] Rarely could he resist dragging into his novels the well-known properties of earlier and inferior writers, the sentimental tale and much of the Gothic paraphernalia. Waverley, Guy Mannering, The Antiquary--all are not without some leaven or strong suggestion of the supernatural, some ghost or hallucination, legend, omen, or vision prophesying disaster. They are infused with romance too in the heroic and adventurous spirit that animates them, in the atmosphere of strangeness and remoteness with which even the commonest actualities are invested. Inclined as he was toward indulgence on the side of simple realism, Croker was quick to note these lapses into the extravagances and improbabilities of romance.

John Galt

Scott's enormous popular success as a writer of Scottish fiction produced a number of imitators who tried their

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[65] History of the English Novel, VI, 213.

hand at writing novels of Scottish life. Perhaps the ablest of these writers was John Galt, whose Annals of the Parish was reviewed by Croker in April, 1821.[66]

Croker opens his review by noting the tremendous influence of the Waverley novels on contemporary writers of prose fiction. He sees the Annals as the "literary offspring" of the Waverley novels, and notes correctly that it has "some peculiar features which distinguish it from the servile herd of imitators." Indeed, the novel possesses, he says, an easy and unaffected charm which can be found in few if any of its type. Its resemblance to Waverley is chiefly in its "description of humble Scottish life, delivered in the peculiar phraseology of the lowlands, neither altogether Scottish nor English." He also discerns Galt's indebtedness to The Vicar of Wakefield. But although the Annals has the "relish" of these works, it is "not equal to the Scottish novels in national delineation . . . nor to the Vicar of Wakefield in either the humour or the tenderness of that admirable work."

Croker has high praise for Galt's skill in character portrayal. The outstanding personage, he feels, is the old minister who makes a most effective narrator. He points out the way in which the Rev. Mr. Balwhidder's self-importance

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[66] "Galt's Annals of the Parish," Quarterly Review, XXV (April, 1821), 147-153.

frequently betrays itself as he tells his story. For example, the old man is convinced that there is some kind of similitude between his ministry in the Parish of Dalmailing and George the Third's reign in England. Without doubt the elderly minister's foibles are one of the most delightful things about the novel. And his parishioners, says Croker, are drawn with equal skill; they are pictured with simple realism and faithfulness to national manners. The vigor with which they are drawn more than compensates for the novel's rather weak plot.

Croker was justified in calling attention to the Annals' rather rambling, loosely-knit plot. It is apparent throughout the book that Galt is not as concerned with telling a story for its own sake as he is with demonstrating some truths about human life. Attention never shifts from the attitudes and reactions of the minister and his parishioners to Dalmailing's change from a small, static country community existing in isolation to a busy industrial town in the mainstream of the social and economic history of its time. Each of the characters must adapt himself to changing conditions in the community in his own special way. At one level, then, the novel is a kind of lesson in how to retain one's equilibrium in a rapidly-changing world. Tending as he did to place such importance on the instructive aspects of literature, Croker could be expected to write of the Annals with general approval.

The reviewer does single out a few specific points for his censure. He objects to the "brutal and shocking impiety" of certain expressions uttered by Mr. Cayenne, the fiery American loyalist who has settled in the parish. Croker found especially distasteful the account of the death of Cayenne whose blasphemies in his final moments "no gentleman could have uttered and no Christian minister should have recorded." He objects also to the introduction into the story of the ignoble death of the Earl of Eglintoun who was killed in a scuffle in 1769.

> Such melancholy realities are not fit subjects for a work of this nature, particularly as there is no merit nor novelty in the telling of the story and no moral inculcated by the result. The revival of such recollections can only give pain, and is neither amusing nor instructive.

On the whole, however, Croker admits that he has been pleased and affected by the Annals. For though its scope is narrow and its pretensions low, yet it provides "excellent morality, sober pleasantry, and unassuming simplicity, both of matter and manner, to such readers as may prefer this quiet kind of merit to the glare, brilliancy, and hurry of a modern novel." This is a just evaluation of a work which, though it can never measure up to the artistry of the Waverley novels, deserves a permanent place in the literature of Scotland.

Mary Shelley, William Godwin, and Charles Maturin

Croker's critical dislike of extravagance and improbability in fiction caused him to view with extreme distaste the several belated examples of Gothic romance which appeared, almost a decade after the vogue had ceased, between 1817 and 1821. Chief among these were Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, William Godwin's Mandeville, and Charles Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer.

The review of Frankenstein, which appeared in May, 1818,[67] opens with a summary of the plot to show "what a tissue of horrible and disgusting absurdity this work presents." But the review is not wholly condemnatory; to show "the vigour of fancy and language" with which the novel is written, Croker quotes three passages of some length--the account of the animation of the monster, the description of the meeting of Frankenstein and the monster in the valley of Chamouny, and Captain Walton's description of the monster he found in his cabin. The reviewer then accedes:

> It cannot be denied that this is nonsense--but it is nonsense decked out with circumstances and clothed in language highly terrific: it is, indeed,
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> --"a tale
> Told by an ideot [sic], full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing--"

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[67]"Frankenstein," Quarterly Review, XVIII (May, 1818), 379-385.

> but still there is something tremendous in the unmeaning hollowness of its sound, and the vague obscurity of its images.

But although Croker concedes that Frankenstein contains some striking passages, "our taste and our judgment alike revolt at this kind of writing, and the greater the ability with which it may be executed the worse it is." And here he strikes at what he considers the novel's chief weakness: "It inculcates no lesson of conduct, manners, or morality; it cannot mend, and will not even amuse its readers, unless their tastes have been deplorably vitiated. . . ."

Considering the stress Croker placed upon religious and ethical elements in literature, it is not surprising that he condemned Frankenstein on the score of morality. Certainly the novel contains ample enough reason to make a critic with his outlook fear its impiety and to shudder at its general theme. He shows better sense, however, when he singles out for censure, in his summary of the story, specific improbabilities in this most "improbable" tale: the monster's acquiring a complete education by the easy process of listening at the window of a cottage where a young Frenchman teaches an Arabian girl all about geography, history, and natural science; and the monster's ability to elude capture and even detection. In fact, because of what appears to be partly the result of hasty construction on the author's part, the chain which links important events together is weakened throughout the

story by improbable situations, a fact which Croker recognizes.

There are still other factors about Frankenstein which help to explain Croker's condemnation. He certainly could not have read with approval Mrs. Shelley's comments on the evils of the division of society into classes. Her novel is interlarded with various social and economic comments. As Elizabeth Nitchie observes:

> in contemporary England and Europe, [Mrs. Shelley] looked upon the poor as pathetic victims of the social system and upon the rich and highborn . . . with undisguised scorn and contempt. She deplored the extremes in English society, the gigantic fortunes and well-ordered luxury, the squalid penury, hard labor, and famine. Frankenstein's Monster heard with horrified astonishment of the "strange system of human society . . . of the division of property, of immense wealth and squalid poverty; of rank, descent, and noble blood."[68]

To one of Croker's temperament, possessed of a conservative attitude of mind and opposed to innovation and change, such writing must have appeared not only mischievous but incendiary. He did not know, of course, that the author of Frankenstein was William Godwin's daughter, but he noted that the work was dedicated to the philosopher and showed his influence:

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[68] Mary Shelley (New Brunswick, N. J., 1953), p. 43.

> Mr. Godwin is the patriarch of a literary family, whose chief skill is in delineating the wanderings of the intellect, and which strangely delights in the most afflicting and humiliating of human miseries. His disciples are a kind of out-pensioners of Bedlam, and, like 'Mad Bess' or 'Mad Tom,' are occasionally visited with paroxysms of genius and fits of expression, which make sober-minded people wonder and shudder.

Croker's distaste for the "wanderings of the intellect" had led him a few months previously to launch an attack on Godwin's Mandeville. In a two-page review which appeared in October, 1817,[69] he found the work "intolerably tedious and disgusting" and its author "intimately skilled in the perversity of the human mind, and in all the blackest and most horrible passions of the human heart." The hero of the story, the critic felt, was particularly objectionable. He was "one of those unhappy beings whose minds are so irritable and liable to disorder, as never to be clearly and securely rational, nor, except in occasional paroxysms, wholly and decidedly mad." But worse yet, "when Mr. Godwin makes the Bedlamite not only the hero but the relater of the tale, it is evident that all contrast is lost, all interest vanishes, the characters are all seen by the same discoloured eye, and all described by the same rambling tongue."

That the rather mediocre Mandeville deserved such

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[69] "Godwin's Mandeville," Quarterly Review, XVIII (October, 1817), 176-177.

castigation is doubtful. In spite of its grandiloquence and bombast, Croker failed to note that it is not lacking in a certain appealing nobility of thought. As a semi-historical romance, it contains a good deal of historical erudition, although, as E. A. Baker has pointed out, there is "a complete lack of historical imagination."[70] But the endless moralistic expatiation with which the story is told and the constant "philosophizing" on the part of all the characters--even the schoolboys at Winchester are continually discussing, meditating, and criticizing the social order and themselves--makes for a dullness that is, as Croker declares, "not only unamusing but painful."

There is little doubt that the Gothic elements contained in Mandeville had much to do with Croker's intense dislike of the work. The spirit of gloom which pervades almost every chapter is intensified by the moody, resentful, and violent nature of Mandeville himself, brooding over the injustices that have brought to nothing his ambition to make the figure in the world which his wealth and lineage led him to expect. The victim of an Irish massacre, a fanatic teacher, blighted ambitions, and invidious comparison with a rival, the hero, in a murderous attack, finally receives a

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[70] History of the English Novel, V, 248.

sabre-cut in the face which blinds and disfigures him--the last straw in the misanthrope's burden of grievances against the world. Croker justly observes that Godwin is "truly in his element in this gloomy style," that "all the heroes of all his novels are infected with this malady. Falkland, St. Leon, and Mandeville are members of the same family, and their portraits are painted with the same melancholy force and disgusting accuracy."

Croker's most virulent criticism of Gothic romance is found in his review of Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer, which appeared in January, 1821.[71] Written in a tone which alternates between righteous indignation and stinging satire, the article adds little glory to either its author or the Quarterly Review. Besides finding all the usual faults, the critic accuses Maturin of plagiarism, a charge based on the author's statement that he had taken the idea of his tale from a passage in one of his own sermons.

It is soon apparent, however, that Croker's real grievance is based on the fact that Melmoth was written by a clergyman. For such "trash" to have been written by a Shelley or a Godwin is conceivable; but for a clergyman to stoop to such depths is a debasement of the profession, and

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[71] "Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer," Quarterly Review, XXIV (January, 1821), 303-311.

the critic feels it his duty "to endeavour to counteract the mischief of what he has done."

> If Melmoth had been only silly and tiresome, we should gladly have treated it with silent contempt; but it unfortunately variegates its stupidity with some characteristics of a more disgusting kind, which our respect for good manners and decency obliges us to denounce. . . . Mr. Maturin . . . makes the most violent assaults, not merely on common sense and the English tongue, --these are trifles--but on decency, and even religion.

Thus Croker finds the hero of the stories--the Devil--particularly offensive, not because of the introduction of the Devil, per se, but because "he is brought forward in seriousness and sadness, surrounded with his scriptural attributes, and employed in ensnaring consciences and in propagating damnation." One might reasonably ask what other function a devil should have. At any rate, the reviewer maintains that the mixture of such solemnities and absurdities can be attributed only to insanity or impiety, and it is clear that he believes it to be the latter.

Having expressed his indignation at what he considered the general immorality of the work, Croker devotes the rest of his review to quoting passages which illustrate the novel's nonsense, its lack of truth, its ignorance, and its obscenity. Writing in a captious, quibbling strain, he complains of Maturin's deficiencies in French, Latin, and Greek, of the impossiblilty of a devil living one hundred seventy-seven

years, and of "the abuse of scripture phrases which are put into the mouths of reprobate characters." He is averse to "sully our pages with quotations," but since "justice" obliges him to do so, he does it. A final salvo fired at the clergyman who writes novels ends the review.

It was criticism of this sort which prompted certain of Croker's contemporaries to accuse him of "pettifoggery." Certainly his preoccupation with searching out and censuring such trivia frequently deprived him of noticing the real virtues in a literary work. This is true of his review of Melmoth, where he shows a complete blindness to Maturin's acute insight into character, vivid descriptive faculty, and sensitive style of writing. But even when he successfully resists, as he often does, introducing such minutiae into his reviews, his obsession with searching for "moral purity" imbues his criticism with a strong tincture of ethical bias which for the modern reader is not pleasant.

French Literature

To French literature produced after 1832 Croker paid some critical attention. In March, 1834, there appeared his long article "State of the French Drama."[72] This was a

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[72]"State of the French Drama," Quarterly Review, LI (March, 1834), 177-212.

review of the plays of the two leaders of the Romantic school, Victor Hugo and Dumas the elder. The article is in essence a strong protest against what Croker conceived to be the alarming state of French morality as evidenced by its current literary output.

The review opens with a sketch of the progress of modern French literature. For some years, says Croker, there had been two schools of writers--the Classicists and the Romantics. The former were "the Roman Catholics of literature--they reverenced a kind of papal infallibility in Aristotle and his successors, and, by too rigorous an adherence to antiquated errors and abuses, brought into contempt a system, which, though originally founded in nature and truth, was disfigured by absurd formalities and incredible fictions." The latter, on the other hand, were like the Calvinists: they "pushed their contempt of the ancient authority so far, that, in eradicating the errors, they sacrificed many of the decencies of the old school, and have at length . . . run into all the immoral and mischievous extravagance of freethinking." But between the antiquated formalities of the old school and the extravagant license of the new, there is, insists the reviewer, a "juste milieu." So far, however, not one French writer seems to have once thought of striking a happy mean, of trying to achieve the "Natural."

Of modern French dramatists, Hugo and Dumas, the two

most popular, have pushed extravagance, absurdity, and immorality the fartherst. Moreover, they exhibit "the gradations by which men with more talents than taste, and more power than judgment, are led to outbid not only one another, but themselves, when they have once commenced the career of vulgar popularity." Croker examines in some detail several works by each author. What he denounces in such plays as "Marion de Lorme," "Le Roi s'amuse," "Lucrèce Borgia," "La Tour de Nesle," and "Marie Tudor," is primarily their indecency, but also the

> extraordinary paucity of invention, which drives the authors to such frequent repetitions of the same character and similar situations. Nothing can be less new than their novelties--nothing so servile as their freedoms--nothing so threadbare as their extravagances. Bastardy, seduction, rape, adultery, and incest as motives--the poniard, poison, and prostitution as means--this is their whole gamut; and even these original notes they contrive to repeat in the same monotonous succession, borrowing from themselves, and from one another, with the least possible variety of combination.

The total phenomenon, the reviewer concludes, "must be the consequence, or must be the cause, of a general lapse of morals--an universal dissolution of the principles of society--in the people who are fed nightly on such intoxicating and mortal poison."

Croker's review of contemporary French novels, which

appeared in April, 1836,[73] is a continuation of his assault on French literature, and is even more condemnatory than his earlier article. The French novelists, he declares, are "still more immoral than the dramatists;" their works are "packets of poison" which

> pervert not only private but public morals--they deprave not only individuals but nations, and are alternately the cause and the consequence of a spirit which threatens the whole fabric of European society.

Having thus made clear the tone and tenor of his review from the outset, Croker proceeds to a discussion of the history of the French novel--from Madame de Lafayette to Le Sage, Crébillon, Voltaire, and Rousseau. Considerable space is devoted to an outline of the career of Rousseau, than whom "a baser, meaner, filthier scoundrel never polluted society." The reviewer sees Jean-Jacques as the "Apostle of Disorder"; the immorality of modern novelists, he asserts, is directly attributable to Rousseau's influence.

There follows then a detailed examination of the principle French novels written between 1830 and 1835. The works of Paul de Kock are considered first; though by no means the most offensive, they are "coarse and loose, rather than deeply licentious, and belong rather to the grivois

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[73]"French Novels," Quarterly Review, LVI (April, 1836), 65-131.

than to the criminal style." Hugo's Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné is "odious and idle, equally destitute of interest or instruction." But Croker has no serious objection except for the "depraved taste which the author shows in himself, and imputes to the French public, by drawing out into a volume the agonies of a dying wretch." Two of the five tales which comprise Dumas' Les Souvenirs d'Antony are summarized to show their emphasis on murder, gambling, licentiousness, rape, suicide, and dueling. The portrayal of such vices, declares the reviewer, is bad enough in itself; "what gives these otherwise contemptible fictions a peculiar importance is, that M. Dumas takes great pains to divest them of all the characters of mere fiction . . . and labours to give them an air of reality." The works of Michel Raymond show a "deep depravity"; they are "polluted by sensual descriptions, by adultery, or by murder; and some of them are a combination of all." And George Sand, by "the union of impassioned rhetorick [sic] and sensual ideas, carries to its most pernicious excess this species of demoralizing novel." Croker denounces Indiana, Valentine, André, and Jacques. But he is outraged by Lelia; quoting several passages from this "vague and vicious production," he solemnly assures his reader that they "are innocent commonplaces of morality compared with passages which swarm in every page, but which we trembled and shuddered to read, and

which we dare not copy."

Croker directs his heaviest fire at Balzac, partly because the Frenchman was a most voluminous writer, but mainly because Balzac had been extolled by French critics as one of the greatest moralists of the age. On the contrary, says the reviewer, Balzac's works, instead of being

> . . . a profound and well-digested course of moral philosophy, written with one great design, and deserving to be distinguished by the loftier title of Etudes sur les Moeurs, [are] . . . a series of unconnected tales of the vulgarist and most licentious character.

To substantiate his charge, Croker examines individual tales from Scènes de la vie privée, parisienne, et de province. "La Vendetta," although the least offensive, shows a perverted justice; "Les Dangers de l'inconduite" is a "lesson of corruption"; "La Femme vertueuse" contains "inconsistencies and absurdities . . . which are quite equal to its deep immorality"; "Le Père Goriot," with its "mean, selfish, and vulgar characters," is "a clumsy tissue of odious exaggerations." Only "Eugénie Grandet" receives Croker's approbation; a tale of "almost singular merit," it may be read "by a man without indignation, and by a woman without a blush. . . . The details are painted with vivid accuracy, and the characters are worked up with equal originality and truth." Such moral soundness and artistic integrity, however, are all too rarely found; the overwhelming majority of tales

are "tainted, impregnated, saturated with every kind of crime, every kind of filth, every kind of meanness, and, we must add, every kind of absurdity and improbability."

Croker makes clear that his criticism is not intended to be a literary judgment of Balzac's novels:

> If we were considering the literary merit of these works, we should have much to say in praise and at least as much in censure of M. de Balzac. He has considerable powers of local description, but he considerably abuses them by idle and wearisome minutiae. He occasionally excites great interest, but quite as often destroys all interest by the improbability and incongruity of his incidents. He is often eloquent, and sometimes pathetic; but, in his efforts after these qualities, frequently deviates into whining and bombast. But it is only as evidence of the state of moral feeling and social life in France that we have at present to deal with M. de Balzac.

Such a statement leaves little doubt what Croker's verdict would have been had he decided to evaluate the "literary merit" of Balzac's works. His obsession with morality all but blinds him to the novelist's artistic mastery and superior talents.

It must be said that Croker was by no means the only English critic of the 1830's and 40's who condemned French literature on the score of morality. Even a cursory search through the English reviews (great and small, including the Athenaeum, Fraser's Magazine, the London Review, the Foreign

Quarterly Review, etc.)[74] furnishes ample evidence of a prevalent hostility or indifference to contemporary French novels and plays. Not infrequently, as in Croker's article, the whole of French literature was attacked, with Hugo, Sand, Balzac, and others lumped together and consigned to perdition with Rousseau and all his progeny. French literary output was looked upon as a deluge of impurity, obscenity, and impiety, and proved to many critics the depravation of not only French taste but French morals.[75] Croker himself expressed the attitude of the moralistic critics when he declared that "no one can deny the intimate, the vital connection of popular literature with popular character, whether popular literature be looked upon as an index of the popular character as it exists,--or as an instrument by which popular character may be made,--or, in its broader and truer light, of both index and instrument." French literature, it was felt, reflected not only the moral corruption with which French society was saturated; worse, it poisoned the minds of the

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[74]See, e.g., "French Authors on English Subjects," Athenaeum, September 12, 1846, p. 932; "French Romances," Fraser's Magazine, XXVIi (February, 1843), 184-194; "Modern French Romance," Dublin Review, IX (November, 1840), 353-396; "Present State and Prospects of French Literature," Foreign Quarterly Review, Xi (January, 1833), 181-200; "Rousseau and the modern Littérature Extravagante," Foreign Quarterly Review, XXVii (April, 1841), 118-141.

[75]Marcel Moraud's Le Romantisme français en Angleterre (Paris, 1933), pp. 266-306, gives an account of the opposition of English critics to French literature produced in the 1830's.

innocent who hitherto had succeeded in resisting the moral contagion.

Nor was Croker's belief in the corruption of French manners after the July Revolution without evidence in its favor. France in the 1830's was a nation plagued by national frustration and discontent.[76] The long dispute was still being carried on between the last supporters of tradition--of that regime which could not be restored--and the newcomers, those newly-rich nobles who constituted the rejuvenated aristocracy of bourgeois society. The new order had not entirely dispossessed the old, and the latter remained present, critical and violently hostile. There was the nostalgic evocation of the great years, the humiliation of defeat, and the claustrophobia of all those who refused to believe that the history of France was destined to fulfill itself in the monarchy of Louis-Philippe. But, more deeply, the frustration and discontent fed on an economic uneasiness. Economic stagnation and material distress, especially among the urban lower classes, contributed to a deepening unrest which spread gradually throughout all levels of society. In 1832, one-seventh of the population of Paris was dependent on

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[76]An incisive analysis of this period of French history is given in Georges Duby and Robert Mandrou's A History of French Civilization, trans. James B. Atkinson (New York, 1964), pp. 444-478.

charity.[77] Insurrections and riots of workers against the rising economic feudalism were almost a monthly occurrence in many French cities. It was inevitable that political and economic disorder would lead to moral disorder. Several prominent French writers of the period, including Charles Fourier, saw a direct correlation between the nation's material poverty and its moral laxity.[78] Moreover, the alienation of the masses from the traditional religion, the most violent manifestations of which were the waves of anti-clericalism which broke out in 1831, contributed to the loosening of the nation's moral fiber.

But that France's moral disorder had reached the proportions of a national catastrophe, as Croker believed, was simply not true. As frequently happened, the critic's religious and moral biases led him to overstate his case. Taken as a whole, his criticism of French literature is neither discerning nor persuasive. Assuredly it is not so much his traditional puritanism that weakens his review as it is the outrageous terms of his recrimination. The tone of harshness and malevolence, and the deep prejudice and deliberate hostility aroused some loud protests. Almost immediately a writer

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[77]David Owen Evans, Social Romanticism in France 1830-1848 (Oxford, 1951), p. 5.

[78]Duby and Mandrou, p. 466.

in the London and Westminster Review took up the quarrel,[79] awakened doubts as to the Quarterly's good faith, reviewed English literature from Elizabethan times, and showed abundantly that English masterpieces are not devoid of indecencies and atrocity. A similar onslaught against English squeamishness appeared in the British and Foreign Review in April, 1839.[80] It is not to be supposed, then, that an insistence upon traditional or conventional morality completely obscured the vision of literary critics in England. Among a few of them there was no blind surrender to an impulse of Francophobia. Some there were who, however severe their animadversions on French authors, had decided on the usefulness, and even the urgency, of a close Anglo-French collaboration.[81]

Such certainly was never the case with Croker. Although he had absorbed a good measure of French culture, he rarely missed the opportunity of directing sallies and sarcasms against France and the French. He was a bitter opponent of the French Revolution, not only of the excesses of

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[79]"The Quarterly Review for April, 1836: Article on French Novels," London and Westminster Review, XXV (July, 1836), 300.

[80]"The Works of G. Sand," British and Foreign Review, VIII (April, 1839), 360.

[81]See, e.g., "French and English Alliance," Monthly Chronicle, VII (January, 1841), 1-11, 133-145.

the Revolutionists, but of the fundamental principles of the movement. This anti-revolutionary bias, plus his revulsion for the despotic Napoleon, colored his attitude towards everything French. He saw little good in the French people--in their politics, their public and private way of life, their habits, their morals. In his essays on Robespierre, on the Revolutionary tribunals, on Napoleon, on the Revolution of 1830, on French plays and novels, and on a score of other topics, he pointed up what he considered France's political, moral, religious, and literary corruption, and he undoubtedly felt that he was performing a real service for English readers by doing so. Rarely if ever did nineteenth century Francophobes have such a vociferous spokesman.

CHAPTER V

CROKER AS A LITERARY CRITIC: HIS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

John Wilson Croker's wide range of interests and activities made him representative of the age of versatility in which he lived. During a career which extended over half a century, he was, simultaneously, a memeber of Parliament, a government official, an editor, a literary critic, a patron of the arts, and a close friend of the royalty, the aristocracy, and the literary class of his day. Born in Ireland of English descent, he was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where he received a thorough classical training which served to strengthen the conservative cast of his mind and imbue him with a reverence for tradition and established authority. His parliamentary speeches, his voluminous correspondence, and his many critical writings attest his deep belief in ancient British institutions and his fear and hatred of anything religious, political, or literary that threatened to bring about innovation or change.

Croker was a man of high intellectual caliber and great tenacity of purpose. When he set his mind to a subject, he persevered until he had mastered it. He made it

his business to know at least something about almost everything. His personal qualities were probably not always engaging, for he could be arrogant and at times snobbish. Possessed with a rough tongue and a blunt manner, he was a strong, bitter partisan of the Tory cause; and as he rarely concealed his views, he made enemies, especially among the powerful. Partly because of political differences and partly because of his plain speaking when the occasion demanded it, he incurred the enmity and the bitter attacks of two very important figures of his time--Disraeli and Macaulay.

But Croker was on friendly terms with a large number of the eminent men of his day who saw him as an able politician, a discerning critic, and a steadfast friend. He maintained cordial relations with George IV; and he was for many years on terms of closest friendship with the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, and the third Marquis of Hertford. He was widely acquainted with editors and publishers, chief of whom were William Gifford, John Gibson Lockhart, John Murray, John Walter, and William Blackwood. He belonged to the coterie of luminaries writing for the Quarterly Review, and he was a frequenter of the Athenaeum Club, which he helped to organize and which was a gathering place of many leading political and literary figures. Robert Southey and Thomas Moore referred to him as a close friend, and Sir

Walter Scott was a lifelong confidant with whom Croker worked in establishing the Quarterly Review and with whom he corresponded over the years.

Croker's friends respected him for his editorial and critical abilities and trusted his judgment in both personal and public affairs. They were indebted to him for a multitude of kindnesses; over the years he exerted his influence in various ways for their benefit. He played an important role in securing for Southey the Poet Laureateship, and on several occasions he advised the Laureate on various matters connected with his literary productions. For a number of years Moore looked to Croker for assitance and advice, first in business and personal matters and later in Moore's literary work. Scott made Croker the recipient of his confidences on many matters. In their literary relations, Scott showed himself the debtor by acknowledging that his Tales of a Grandfather were suggested by and modelled on Croker's Stories from the History of England and by borrowing from Croker a mass of documents to aid him in writing his Life of Napoleon.

Croker maintained considerable authority in the world of letters through his connections with one of England's most powerful and influential periodicals. For nearly fifty years his name was intimately bound with that of the Quarterly Review. He was one of its founders, became its chief

supporter, and was its most frequent and constant reviewer. In his varied doings he unquestionably exercised important influence upon the course of the periodical. During the early years the influence went indirectly, partly through his short articles, which made easily imitable models for unformed writers, and partly through his correspondence with Murray the publisher. In later years his influence was more direct. Several times, during the regular editor's attacks of illness, Croker assumed and discharged heavy editorial responsibilities and for a long period served as the political link between the Government and the Quarterly. Although he maintained that he did not wish to emphasize the political character of the periodical, he took care whenever he had a chance--and he had many--that its political flavor should at least be pronounced. This was especially true after 1831, at which time he took over the entire responsibility of determining the Quarterly's policy on all political questions.

Croker's wide range of interests and activities and his friendship with scores of influential people enabled him to write with authority on a great variety of subjects. Over half of the approximately two hundred and seventy articles he wrote for the Quarterly deal with current history, politics, and diplomacy. More than fifty others are reviews of memoirs and biographies of eminent figures of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, an area in which

Croker's wide reading and exhaustive investigations made him well-qualified. About thirty articles are of a purely literary nature. Almost all of his contributions to the Quarterly were unsigned, a practice which not only conformed to the prevailing policy of the periodical itself but which also made it conveniently possible for Croker to practice at times a sort of critical despotism, uttering dogmatic pronouncements upon writers and works from behind a mask of anonymity.

For years Croker's special province in the Quarterly was recent French history, of which he was one of the best-informed men of his generation. To the study of the first French Revolution, an event which he hated and deplored, he devoted a substantial portion of his life. He detested not only the excesses of the Revolutionists but the fundamental principles of the movement as well. His constant effort was to resist change of any kind, especially if that change appeared to threaten the comfort, wealth, or prestige of the landed aristocracy, who, in his eyes, were the backbone of England. Hence he read in the Revolution the danger of an exactly parallel sequence of events happening in England. This strong anti-revolutionary bias, coupled with his abhorrence of subsequent political events which led to France's military aggressions, permanently colored Croker's attitude toward everything French. He saw little good in the French people, their institutions, their way of life, their habits,

or their morals. His virulent criticism of French drama and novels can be attributed in large measure to his enmity toward France and the French people.

As a periodical critic Croker shared many of the disabilities of similar writers of the time. Perhaps more than most of his colleagues in the profession, he was guilty of the most prevalent critical sin of the age--political partiality. Narrowly partisan in his political sympathies, he saw no reason for keeping politics out of anything, least of all literary criticism. He was thoroughly at home in a review where it was taken for granted that a writer's known or supposed political sympathies should help to determine the critic's verdict of his work. Poets, like Shelley and Hunt, who had liberal or radical tendencies, or who, like Keats and Tennyson, were suspected of having associations with known corruptors of personal or political character, could count with assurance on being ridiculed and assailed in the pages of the Quarterly. So, also writers, like Godwin and Mary Shelley, who were known to have beliefs which operated for the subversion of the existing order or who seemed to exalt the lower classes, could expect to feel the sharpness of Croker's attack. When such "fools," as he called them, were to be cut up in slash reviews, Croker was the reviewer who could do it with effect and with relish.

Croker is vulnerable also to the accusation of permitting certain other factors to influence his attitude towards the writers receiving judgment before his tribunal. His haughtiness and pride sometimes degenerated into an objectionable sense of superiority. For example, his position in regard to Hunt and Keats was determined to some extent by the fact of their lack of social prestige. He subscribed to the belief then current among the Tory critics that Hunt and Keats were "cockneys," a term which had an unpleasantly snobbish implication, since a cockney belonged to the lower level of London society, and spoke, or at least was presumed to speak, a characteristic dialect. Hunt and Keats, accordingly, were censured for their provincialisms of language and their deficient education, while the fact of their low birth was expressly or implicitly introduced.

Moreover, rarely was Croker able to disengage his verdicts on literature from moral and ethical considerations. His interest in tradition led to an insistence upon traditional or conventional morality, which appears in his writings from the beginning of his career. The position was a permanent one and colored all his critical work. His reviews of Maria Edgeworth, Mary Shelley, Galt, Godwin, Maturin, and, above all, the French dramatists and novelists, show his insistence upon the moral aspects of literature. These writers are, in large measure, either praised or

condemned on the basis of the degree of moral purity and efficacy in moral instruction which Croker could find in their writings.

Yet the fact that Croker often let political, personal, and moral prejudices determine his judgment of a writer does not mean that he could not make out a convincing case against that writer's work. In his reviews of Keats and Tennyson, especially, he unquestionably succeeded in exposing some of the chief flaws of their poetry. He was one of the first critics to censure "Endymion" for its digressive and obscure narrative, its excessive luxury and laxness, and its eccentricities and improprieties of diction--weaknesses that subsequent critics have acknowledged valid. Similarly, there is every justification for his censure of Poems on the counts of artificiality in style, affectation of language and sentiment, and the domination of the necessities of rhyme over the expression of idea. The manner in which later critics have endorsed or appropriated Croker's pronouncements pays tribute to the value of many of his judgments.

Still, Croker supported his views with a malevolence and violence which it is impossible to admire. Following his usual practice when he thought he was dealing with a "fool," he singled out the feeblest passages he could find to justify his condemnation of a poem. He detached individual words and phrases for his sarcastic reproof. In short, he

presented an impressive array of examples to support his charges, but he either willfully ignored or utterly failed to perceive the budding poetic genius which would one day place Keats and Tennyson among the immortals of English literature.

As a literary critic, Croker belonged to an old order in a changing era. Political and moral considerations apart, there is reason enough for expecting him to show a dogmatic antipathy to the poetry of the new school. The norms of poetry were for him those of Dryden, Pope, and Dr. Johnson, or in general those of the mid-eighteenth century. Most of the Romantics were in revolt against the literary conventions of the preceding century. Rather than regarding poetry as an imitation or an embellishment, they saw it as something more vital and essential. For them poetry was no superficial decorative art, but a representation of emotional and imaginative experience, an interpretation of the deepest feelings of man. A critic with Croker's sense of the importance of traditional elements in literature made it almost inevitable that he should reject this view of poetry. His classical training, his conservative tastes, and his reverence for established authority allowed no place for the metaphysical or abstract, or even the particularly imaginative. He demanded above all things clearness and simplicity. The refinements of versification had no charm for him; to the witchery of

words he turned a deaf ear. In short, though some poetry was within his range, he was a thoroughly unpoetical person. Moreover, he was handicapped in his appraisal of new poets by choosing to affiliate himself with a periodical which was the mouthpiece of highly conservative elements in politics and literature, with the result that he had every inducement to go to extremes in the application of his critical theory.

As a critic of prose writings, or of any work in which reason predominates and accuracy of statement is essential, Croker could be an acute and discriminating, if severe, critic. His critical canons for novels were the laws of probability and the attainment of a happy medium between the extremes of the dullness of too faithful reproduction and of the impossibilities of the usual romance themes. He was inclined toward indulgence on the side of simple realism, particularly when it was faithful to national manners. Thus he gave much praise to Galt's Annals of the Parish and to the second series of Maria Edgeworth's Tales of Fashionable Life. His reviews of these two works contain, on the whole, much discerning criticism and sober insight. His praise of Miss Edgeworth's gift of character portrayal in her Irish tales, especially, has borne the test of ultimate opinion as well as any criticism he wrote. Conversely, his critical dislike of extravagance and improbability account for his condemnatory reviews of Gothic romance, and, to a lesser extent, his

lukewarm and cautious reviews of the first three Waverley novels. His reviews of these works take refuge only too often in pointing out the faults and weaknesses which required no great critical acumen to recognize, and they show little understanding or appreciation of the newly revealed genius which more clear-eyed critics rushed to meet with open arms.

Croker's literary criticism, then, has its defects and its merits, its weakness as well as its strength. Of the four usually assumed requisites of a competent critic--knowledge, insight, sympathy, and detachment--he possessed only the first one in large measure. He had the faculty of penetrating observation, but as often as not it was clouded by extrinsic considerations. He was often wanting in sympathy, and he was seldom able to maintain the judicial attitude towards his material. If he was in sympathy with his writer, as in the case of Byron and Maria Edgeworth, his position was that of an advocate. Like the lawyer he trained to be, he was for or against the question at issue: if in an author he discovered merits, it was to praise them; if he found defects, it was to condemn them. He did not sit apart and coolly exercise the function of a judge. All too often, as has been pointed out, he imposed on literature an extra-literary schematism, a sort of religio-political color-filter, which

made some writers leap into prominence and others show up as dark and faulty. His knowledge of literature was wide; but his literary judgment was narrow and ultra-conservative. In truth, Croker showed little of the ideal temper and taste of the objective critic. Where his taste and sympathy were not appealed to, he was apt to become intolerent and sometimes frankly antagonistic. Hence, his critical writings usually lack the disinterestedness and universality necessary for good criticism.

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