

BIOGRAPHY.

From the Analytic Magazine.

James Hunt, the author of the Feast of the Poets, has written much and well in verse and prose, on various subjects, particularly politics, literature and dramatic criticism. But in every thing he writes, he discovers a personal character. He is naturally a poet, and perhaps, of the romantic and probably incapable of producing the highest effect of sublimity or pathos, but full of fancy, of spirit, of force, and of sentiment. The following sketch of his life, written by himself about four years ago, possesses much interest, and places in a strong light the boldness and independence of the author's literary and political character. It is to be regretted that so much of violent asperity and personal feeling should mingle with his political opinions. Since the date of this letter Mr. Hunt was for about a year the editor of a quarterly literary publication of great merit, entitled the Reflector, in which the Feast of the Poets first appeared, after which he again entered with much violence into political controversy, and has since shared the fate of Cobbett, having been convicted of a libel upon the Prince Regent, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment in Surry Goal.

MEMOIR OF MR. JAMES HENRY LEIGH HUNT. WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

To the Editor of the Monthly Mirror. EXAMINER OFFICE, APRIL 20, 1816.

Dear Sir—You know my opinions respecting the biography of living persons, especially those who either deserve no such notice, or may wish to deserve it better; but you have succeeded in persuading me that a public writer, who pays attention to the drama, is a person of some interest to your readers; and as an author on these occasions must be an assisting party to what is said of him, I have thought it best to say quite as much as need be said, in my own person, and thus perform the task as frankly and decently as possible.

Addison has observed, in corroboration of your arguments, "that a reader seldom peruses a book with pleasure, till he knows whether the writer of it be a black or a fair man, of a mild or choleric disposition, married or a bachelor, with other particulars of the like nature, that conduce very much to the right understanding of an author." (Spec. No. 1.) And it was said of Tom Brown, I think, when the second edition of his poems did not sell, that the joke was lost, because he omitted the portrait. Now, as my first wish is to be well understood, I would not willingly lose any help towards that valuable qualification. I should be very sorry were the reader puzzled with any opinion of mine, from his ignorance of my having a dark complexion, or the ladies incline to doubt my sensibility, for want of knowing that I am very happily married. Thus I fairly disclose these two important secrets to the public; and that no possible joke may be lost, the artists, you see, have produced a very good likeness of my face.

Of birth, &c. you tell me it is absolutely necessary to say something. Well—I was born at Southgate, in October, 1784. My parents were the late Rev. I. Hunt, at that time tutor in the Duke of Chandos's family, and Mary, daughter of Stephen Shewell, merchant of Philadelphia, whose sister is the lady of Mr. President West. Here, indeed, I could enlarge, both seriously and proudly; for if any one circumstance of my life could give me cause for boasting, it would be that of having had such a mother. She was indeed a mother in every exalted sense of the word, in piety, in sounding teaching, in patient care, in spotless example. Married at an early age, and commencing from that time a life of sorrow, the world afflicted, but it could not change her: no rigid economy could hide the native generosity of her heart, no sophisticated and skulking example injure her fine sense or her contempt of worldly-mindedness, no unmerited sorrow convert her resignation into bitterness. But let me not hurt the noble simplicity of her character by a declamation, however involuntary. At the time when she died, the recollection of her sufferings and virtues tended to embitter the loss; but knowing what she was, and believing where she is, I now feel her memory as a serene and inspiring influence, that comes over my social moments only to temper cheerfulness, and over my reflecting ones, to animate me in the love of truth. At seven I was admitted into the grammar school of Christ's Hospital, where I remained till 15, and received a good foundation in the Greek and Latin languages. On my departure from school, a collection of verses, consisting of some school exercises, and of some larger pieces, written during the first part of 1800, was published that year under the title of Juvenilia, and in a manner, which, however I may have regretted it, it does not become me, perhaps, to reprobate. The verses were my own, but not my will. The pieces were written with sufficient imitative enthusiasm, but that is all! I had read Gray, and I must write something like Gray; I admired Collins, and I must write something like Collins; I adored Spencer, and I must write a long allegorical poem, filled with ne's, whiloms, and personifications, like Spencer. I say thus much upon the subject, because, as I was a sort of rhyming young Roscius, and tended to lead astray other youths, who mistook reading for inspiration, as in fact has been the case, I wish to deprecate these precocious appearances in public, which are always dangerous to the taste, and in general dissatisfactory to the recollection. After spending some time in that gloomiest of all "darkness palpable," a lawyer's office—and plunging when I left it, into alternate study and morbid idleness, studious all night, and hypochondriac all day, to the great and reprehensible injury of my health

This letter is recompiled in the Monthly Mirror by very far head.

and spirits, it fell into my way to comment theatrical critic in a newly established paper, called the News, and I did so with an ardour proportioned to the want of honest newspaper criticism, and to the insufferable dramatic nonsense which then raged in public favour. In 1805 an amiable nobleman, at that time high in office, procured me a humble situation in a government office. This office, in January, 1809, I voluntarily gave up, not only from habitual disinclination, but from certain hints, futile enough in themselves, yet sufficiently annoying, respecting the feelings of the higher orders, who could not contemplate with pleasure a new paper called the Examiner, which, in concert with one of my brothers, I had commenced the year before, and in which I pursued the uncourteous plan of caring for nothing but the truth. This paper, which it is our pleasure to manage as well as we can, and our pride to keep as independant as we ought, is now my only regular employment; but I contrive to make it a part of other literary studies, which may at a future time, by God's blessing, enable me to do something better for the good opinion of the public; and as to its profits—with constitutional reform for its object, and a stubborn consistency for its merit, it promises, in spite of the wretched efforts of the wretched men in power, to procure for me all that I wish to acquire—a good name and a decent competency.

I find I have been getting serious on this magnificent subject; but a man's muscles unconsciously return to their gravity when employed in talking of his own affairs, and few persons have enjoyed a more effectual round of flatteries than myself, who have been abused and vilified by every publication that has had the least pretension to infamy;—not to mention the grateful things said of me by the writers of "comedy," to whom I have been teaching grammar any time these six years—or the epithets lavished upon my head by our prepossessing ATTORNEY-GENERAL, who has twice brought me into court as "a malicious and ill-disposed person," purely to show that he could not prove his accusation. It is in vain, however, that I write as clearly as I can for the comprehension of the ministerialists; nothing can persuade them, or their writers, that all I desire is an honest reputation on my own part, and a little sense and decency on theirs. It is to no purpose that I have preserved a singleness of conduct, and even kept myself studiously aloof from public men whom I admire, in order to write at all times just what I think. The corruptionists will have it that I am a turbulent demagogue, a factious, ferocious, and diabolical republician; a wretch who "horrifies the pure and amiable nature" of royal personages, a plotter with Cobden, whom I never saw in my life, and an imitator of the designs of HORNE TOOKER, whom I never wish to see. It is equally in vain that I have taken such pains to secure the gratitude of the dramatists. I understand they never could be brought to regard me in the proper light; and a variety of criticisms, as well as the reports of my "good-natured friends," have conveyed to me, at divers times, the most positive assurances that I was an unfeeling, an unwarrantable, and an unfeeling critic—a malignant critic—a bad critic—no critic all—nay, a black-hearted being who delighted in tormenting—a sort of critical RHYMICK WILLIAMS who went about slashing in the dark—and in fine—what I must confess I really was at one period of my life—a boy. The worst publications that attacked me I abstained from noticing, not only from a proper respect to myself, but upon the principle that their own vices had already given them their death blow. However, they still continued fighting, like the vivacious ecclesiastical in the romance who had not time, you know, to discover he was dead:

Il poter' uomo che non ten era accorto, Andava combattendo, ed era morto. Orlando Innam.

But you see they die off one after the other. The process is the same, though slower, with these "living dead men," the dramatists; and even the attorney-general and his right honorable friends, whose vigour consists in the persecution of newspapers, and whose genius in the waste of their country's blood, will recollect, I trust, that the inevitable hour awaits them also, and a much more serious one than can be contemplated in jest.

But enough of this egregious history. Disinclined as I was at first to the publication of this little memoir, I am at length not dissatisfied, I confess, with having an opportunity of contradicting, under my name, all those motives of envy or of ill temper, to which my humble efforts in the cause of taste and reason may have been attributed. To envy Mr. CHERRY or Mr. DIDDIN is no easy task; but to feel a personal ill will against bad writers would be, I trust, a still harder with me, if possible. If such persons lose their reputation or their profits, and become by words for bad writing, they must attribute the misfortune to its real cause, and make the plain shoulder-shrugging confession which the other day escaped Mr. REYNOLDS, who has now given the town not only a fair warning, but a better proof of his sense than all his comedies put together. The just severity of criticism regards nothing but what is public; and had I made any answer to those reprobates, who, when they could find nothing personal to attack in me, attacked the character of those who were related to me, I should have challenged them to produce a single passage, in which I have made any personal attack on the deformities

of some, or parts of those whom I criticised. Political literature is another thing; and to be severely strict on men who grow wealthy and waster in the lavishment of English blood, requires nothing but to be commonly virtuous. But I have heard that even some of our present rulers cut a very good figure at their fire sides, and I have no doubt that our bad writers cut much better. So far from meddling with either of them there, who would not wish them there, wrapped up forever in social enjoyment? The dramatists would at once make the proper use of their talents by firing up baby theatres for their children; and Mr. PERCEVAL, instead of sending his countrymen to prisons and gaols, would hit the exact pitch of his genius in the forging of cherrystone chains and the blowing of bubbles. But as criticism is not to invade the privacies of men, so private considerations are never to issue out upon, and obstruct, public criticism; still less are they to be sacred in the defence of political character, when they are so continually brought into play by the politicians themselves, and elevated to the room and to the rank of public virtue. As I began, therefore, I shall proceed. I am not conscious of ever having given praise for policy's sake, or blame for malignity's; and I never will. A strict adherence to truth, and a recurrence to first principles, are the only things calculated to bring back the happier times of our literature and constitution; and however humble as an individual, I have found myself formidable as a lover of truth, and shall never cease to exert myself in its cause, as long as the sensible will endure my writings, and the honest appreciate my intentions.

Yours, my dear Sir, very sincerely, LEIGH HUNT.



Copy of a letter from Commodore Barney to the Secretary of the Navy, dated Farm, at Elk Ridge, August 29, 1814.

SIR—This is the first moment I have had in my power to make a report of the proceedings of the forces under my command since I had the honor of seeing you on Tuesday, the 26th inst. at the Camp at the "Old Fields." On the afternoon of that day we were informed that the enemy was advancing upon us. Our army was put into order of battle and our positions taken; my forces were on the right flanked by the two battalions of the 36th and 38th regiments, where we remained some hours. The enemy did not, however, make his appearance. A little before sunset Gen. Winder came to me and recommended that the heavy artillery should be withdrawn, with the exception of one 12-pounder to cover the retreat. We took up the line of march, and in the night entered Washington by the Eastern Branch Bridge. I marched my men, &c. to the Marine Barracks, and took up quarters for the night. About 2 o'clock, Gen. Winder came to my quarters, and we made some arrangements. In the morning I received a note from Gen. Winder, and waited upon him. He requested me to take command and place my artillery to defend the passage of the bridge on the Eastern Branch, as the enemy was approaching the city in that direction. I immediately put my guns in position, leaving the marines and the rest of my men at the Barracks, to wait further orders. I was in this situation when I had the honor to meet you with the President and Heads of Departments, when it was determined I should draw off my guns and men, and proceed towards Bladensburg, which was immediately put into execution. On our way I was informed the enemy was within a mile of Bladensburg; we hurried on, tho' the day was very hot, and my men much crippled from the severe marches we had experienced the preceding days. I preceded the men, & when I arrived at the line which separates the District from Maryland, the battle began. I sent an officer back to hasten on my men—they came up in a trot. We took our position on the rising ground, put the pieces in battery, posted the marines under Captain Miller, and militia men who were to act as infantry under their own officers, on my right, to support the pieces, & waited the approach of the enemy. During this period the engagement continued—the enemy advancing and our army retreating before them, apparently in much disorder. At length the enemy made his appearance on the main road in force and in front of my battery, and on seeing us made a halt; I reserved our fire; in a few minutes the enemy advanced, when I ordered an 18 pounder to be fired, which completely cleared the road; shortly after, a second and third attempt was made by the enemy to come forward, but all who made the attempt were destroyed. The enemy then crossed over into an open field and attempted to flank our right. He was there met by three 12 pounders, the marines under Captain Miller, and my men acted as infantry, and again totally cut up. By this time not a vestige of the American army remained except a body of five or six hundred posted on a height on my right from whom I expected much support from their fine situation. The enemy from this period never appeared in force in

front of us. He however pushed forward his sharpshooters, one of whom shot my horse under me, which fell dead between two of my guns. The enemy who had been taken in check by our fire for nearly half an hour, began to outflank us on the right. Our men were turned that way; he pushed up the hill about 2 or 300 men towards the corps of Americans stationed as above described, who to my great mortification made no resistance, giving a fire or two on retiring.

In this situation we had the whole army of the enemy to contend with; our ammunition was expended, and unfortunately the drivers of my ammunition waggons had gone off in the general panic. At this time I received a severe wound in my thigh. Capt. Miller was wounded, sailing-master Warner killed, sailing-master Martin killed, and sailing-master Martin wounded, but to the honor of my officers and men, as far as their courageous and manly conduct was concerned, they were instantly replaced from those acting as infantry. Finding the enemy now completely in our rear and no means of defence, I gave orders to my officers and men to retire. Three of my officers assisted me to get off a short distance, but the great loss of blood occasioned such a weakness that I was compelled to lie down. I requested my officers to leave me, which they obstinately refused, but upon being ordered they obeyed; one only remained. In a short time a British soldier and had him called, and ordered him to seek an officer; in a few minutes an officer came who, on learning who I was, brought General Ross and Adm. Cockburn to me. These officers behaved to me with the most marked attention, respect and politeness, had a surgeon brought and my wound dressed immediately. After a few minutes conversation the General informed me (after paying me a handsome compliment) that I was paroled and at liberty to proceed to Washington or Bladensburg, as was also Mr. Haffington who had remained with me, offering me every assistance in his power, giving orders for a litter to be brought, in which I was carried to Bladensburg. Gen. Wainwright, first captain to Adm. Cochrane, remained with me and behaved to me as if I was a brother.

During the stay of the enemy at Bladensburg I received the most polite attention from the officers both of the navy and army.

My wound is deep, but I flatter myself not dangerous; the ball is not yet extracted. I fondly hope a few weeks will restore me to health, and that an exchange will take place that I may resume my command, or any other that you and the president may think proper to honor me with.

Yours, respectfully, JOSHUA BARNEY, Hon. Wm. Jones, Sec. of the Navy.

Extract of a letter from Com. Chinnicy to the Secretary of the Navy, dated on board the U.S. ship Superior, off Kingston, August 16, 1814.

"I have been daily honored with your letters of the 19th and 24th July.

"I do assure you, sir, that I have never been under any pledge to meet Gen. Brown at the head of the Lake; but on the contrary when we parted at Sacket's Harbor, I told him distinctly, that I should not visit the head of the lake, unless the enemy's fleet did."

"I can ascribe the juxtaposition of General Brown, that he expected the co-operation of the fleet to no other motive, than a cautious attempt to provide an apology for the public, against any contingency, disaster to which his army might be exposed.

"But, sir, if any one will take the trouble to examine the topography of the peninsula (the scene of the General's operations) he will discover that this fleet could be of no more service to Gen. Brown, or his army, than it could to an army in Tennessee.

"Gen. Brown has never been able to penetrate nearer to Lake Ontario than Queens-town, and the enemy is in possession of all the intermediate country; so that I could not even communicate with the army, but by a circuitous route of 70 or 80 miles.

"Admitting Gen. Brown could have invested Fort George, the only service he could have derived from the fleet, would be preventing the supplies of the enemy from entering the Niagara river; for the water is so shallow that the large vessels could not approach within two miles of their works.

"Gen. Brown had therefore two abundantly sufficient reasons for not expecting the co-operation of this fleet; it was not pronounced him—and was chimerical in itself.

"My fixed determination has always been to seek a meeting with the enemy the moment the fleet was ready, and, to deprive him of an apology for not meeting me, I have sent four guns on shore from the Superior, to reduce her armament in number to an equality with the Prince Regent's, yielding the advantage of their 68 pounders. The Mohawk mounts 2 guns less than the Princes Charlotte, and the Montreal and Niagara are equal to the General Pike and Madison. I have detached, on separate service, all the brigades and am blockading his four ships, with our four ships, in the hope that this may induce him to come out."

General Ross is a young officer, about thirty-five years old. He has never before had a higher command than a regiment. The officers that have been taken, and the surgeons left to attend the wounded at Bladensburg say, that Ross is considered a rash officer.—Alexandria Gazette.