GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

After the portrait by Kramer

# SELECTIONS FROM BYRON

## CHILDE HAROLD, CANTO IV
## THE PRISONER OF CHILLON
## MAZEPPA, AND OTHER POEMS

EDITED
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY

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TO
WILLIAM PETERFIELD TRENT
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS INSCRIBED
IN GRATITUDE AND ESTEEM

# PREFACE

The primary purpose of this book is to give the young reader some insight into Byron's genius by presenting for study and for reading those of his poems which should make the most immediate appeal. For such a purpose much of Byron's poetry is admirably fitted, since, as a whole, it is not abstruse in its subject-matter, is lucid in its expression, and, above all, is spirited and energetic.

To teach the essential spirit of literature, not grammar, philology, or rhetoric, surely should be our aim when we present poetry to our classes. Even history, biography, mythology, or anything else, except as these are absolutely essential to a proper appreciation of the poem, are not really within our province. Teachers of literature have something to do that cannot be done by teachers of other subjects; and we have no business to poach upon the preserves of our colleagues. A great poem, rightly presented, is sure not only to give æsthetic pleasure, but to train the mind and the heart as well. In this connection it may not be amiss for one of his old students to acknowledge the help he has received from three essays by Professor W. P. Trent, — "Teaching the Spirit of Literature," in *The Authority of Criticism*, and "The Aims and Methods of Literary Study" and "Teaching Literature," in *Greatness in Literature*.

The length of the Introduction to this book, especially of the biographical part, can perhaps be justified by Byron's importance as a historic figure and by the intimate relations

subsisting between his life and his works. The criticism claims to be neither technical nor subtle, but attempts to deal rather in broad generalizations which may appeal to the young reader and yet not mislead him. In the Introduction, the notes, and the critical comments I have tried to be accurate in matters of fact, and still to present both facts and opinions in a style that might awaken *interest* — without which all literary study is of course soulless and ineffective.

In the choice of selections for this volume, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, *Mazeppa*, and *Childe Harold*, Canto IV, since they are among the college-entrance requirements, were naturally the first consideration. Other poems, in whole or in part, have been included, either for study or for reading, that the book may perhaps be found useful in college classes also. Lack of space, the purpose of the volume, and, in some cases, objectionable matter in the poems themselves have excluded from this collection the dramas, the longer narrative poems, and the satires; but the second and third cantos of *Childe Harold*, *Don Juan*, and *The Vision of Judgment* very well lend themselves to selection, and we find among Byron's poems many beautiful and appropriate lyrics.

It is hoped that the notes may be found sufficiently elaborate to pave the way to a full appreciation of the poems, without hampering the instructor or interfering with the student's self-activity. I was in such dread of overediting, having several terrible examples before my eyes, that my first intention was to include nothing in the notes that could be found by the student in any ordinary work of reference. So rigorous a policy, however, seemed to be mistaken in view of the fact that in some cases such works of reference may not be readily accessible; hence the historical, geographical, and other annotations. Some of Byron's allusions are of doubtful significance, and in such instances I have expressed merely an opinion.

Acknowledgments are due to Mr. John Murray, of London, for his courteous permission to use his definitive text of Byron's poems as edited by Mr. Coleridge and published in the twelve-volume edition of the prose and poetical works of Lord Byron and in the one-volume edition of the poems, both of which editions are imported into this country by Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons. The spelling of this text has, without exception, been preserved, even in its obvious inconsistencies. Certain changes in Byron's erratic punctuation, however, seemed absolutely necessary in the interests of clearness. It may be that the punctuation still remains somewhat inconsistent both with itself and with modern usage, but it is hoped that the poet's meaning will always be readily apparent.

S. M. T.

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# INTRODUCTION

## GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Less than a century ago Byron shared with Napoleon the wonder of Europe. With the sole exception of Shakespeare, the author of *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan* is still to the foreign world by far the greatest figure in English poetry. His influence upon European literature has been almost incalculable. Perhaps never did a man's personality more deeply impress his generation; and Byron's poems are but a revelation of his personality,—complex, powerful, and brilliant. All this inevitably leads us to some consideration of the poet's life, character, and place in literature.

**Byron a great historical and literary figure**

Byron, always something of a fighter and adventurer, sprang from an old and fighting stock. The Byrons, or Buruns, were Normans, who came over with the Conqueror, and are mentioned in his Domesday Book. They perhaps took part in the Crusades; certainly they fought at Crécy, and at Calais one of them was knighted. Various Sir Johns, Sir Richards, and Sir Nicholases continued the fighting tradition, and in 1643 one particular Sir John, a prominent Royalist, was created Baron of Rochdale for his services to the royal cause.

**Byron's ancestry**

For us the chief interest in Byron's pedigree begins with 1722, in which year his great-uncle, the fifth lord, was born. "The wicked lord," as he came to be known, having murdered a relative, Mr. Chaworth, bore an unenviable reputation. He left the ancestral property in

**"The wicked lord"**

a ruinous condition, and made the name of Byron a rather questionable heritage for his descendants. His brother, John Byron, became a famous seaman and traveler, who wrote an entertaining autobiography, from which his illustrious grandson, the poet, gained material for some of his poetry.

**The seaman and traveler**

The eldest son of this traveler and seaman, also named John Byron, the father of the poet, was born in 1751, and became a captain in the Guards. He was a dissipated, worthless fellow, known as "Mad Jack," though his character seems to have been somewhat redeemed by a certain careless generosity and good nature. He eloped with the wife of the Marquis of Carmarthen, and married her after she had secured a divorce from her former husband. Of this marriage was born Augusta, afterwards Mrs. Leigh, the poet's half-sister. This first wife died in 1784, and in the next year the fortune hunter entrapped a Scotch lady, Miss Catherine Gordon, of Gight, who was of an old family and possessed considerable estates. On January 22, 1788, the boy known as George Gordon Byron was born in Holles Street, London. Soon after this event, having squandered all of his wife's fortune, "Jack" Byron deserted his family, fled to France, and there died in 1791.

**"Mad Jack"**

**Byron's birth**

The boy George came into the world heavily handicapped. His father's race was a violent one; his mother's, foolish. Had Byron's mother been other than she was, the tenor of her son's life might have been more equable. But "Mrs. Byron," as the boy often called her, was a vain, impulsive woman, hysterical and passionate, and utterly capricious in her treatment of her son. She alternately abused and petted him; would berate him as a "lame brat" one instant, and caress him the next. So, although she was always ready to sacrifice herself for him,

**Character of Byron's mother**

and doubtless really loved him in her own way, their relations were in general most unfortunate. She was no mother for such a boy as Byron, — headstrong, passionate, moody, as he was. "Your mother's a fool," once remarked a fellow-schoolboy. "I know it," was the startling and significant reply.

This was not all: Byron was lame. This lameness has been the subject of endless controversy; but it is now finally stated, and probably with truth, that he "was afflicted with an infantile paralysis which affected the muscles of the right leg and foot." From this resulted a slight limp, never corrected, in spite of severe treatment. About this deformity, which was scarcely noticeable, Byron up to the very end of his life was abnormally sensitive. "What a pretty boy Byron is!" remarked a friend of his nurse; "what a pity he is lame!" Thereupon the boy, with flashing eyes, struck at her with his baby whip, exclaiming, "Dinna speak of it!" This abnormal sensitiveness undoubtedly colored his views of society and embittered his disposition.

**Byron's lameness**

Byron's life now falls into five clearly defined periods, — his early school life up to and through his Harrow days; his university career; his two years' stay in southern Europe; his London residence, marriage, and subsequent unpopularity; and his life abroad until his death, in 1824, at the age of thirty-six.

**Five epochs of Byron's life**

In 1790 Mrs. Byron took her son to Aberdeen and put him to school under various tutors. He showed himself a poor student, but read with avidity all the history and romance he could find. From 1794 to 1798 he attended the grammar school, during which period he was sent, in order to recuperate after an attack of scarlet fever, to Ballater. Here he wandered through the mountains and added to his passionate love of the sea, gained at Aberdeen, the love of mountain scenery that glorifies so much of his

**School days at Aberdeen**

verse. In 1794, through the death of a cousin, he became the next heir to the title, and in 1798 the death of "the wicked lord" made him, at the age of ten, the sixth Lord Byron.

After this event Mrs. Byron left at once for Newstead Abbey, the ancestral estate in Nottinghamshire. The desolation of the family home forced the two into residence at Nottingham. Here young Byron was placed under the treatment of a quack named Lavender, who inflicted upon the boy unnecessary and fruitless torture, which he is said to have borne with remarkable fortitude. When his tutor referred to his suffering he replied, "Never mind, Mr. Rogers; you shall not see any sign of it in me." Within a year he was taken to London for treatment and put to school at Dulwich.

**At Nottingham**

Here he was contented, and did well, according to the testimony of Dr. Glennie, the head master, who speaks of Byron's wide reading in history and poetry, and of his good humor while among his comrades.

**At Dulwich**

In spite of all this, however, Mrs. Byron was not satisfied, and at her request her son was removed by his guardian, Lord Carlisle, to the great public school at Harrow. Here he remained until 1804, leading pretty much the ordinary schoolboy life — with a difference; for sometimes he went off by himself and dreamed. At this time the head master of Harrow was Dr. Drury, a famous teacher, who seems to have understood his eccentric yet gifted pupil, and for whom Byron always entertained an affectionate regard. "He was," Byron says, "the best, the kindest (and yet strict, too) friend I ever had; and I look on him still as a father, whose warnings I have remembered but too well, though too late, when I have erred, and whose counsel I have but followed when I have done well or wisely." Though he grew to love Harrow as the time approached for him to leave it, Byron at first hated the discipline of the school, and was

**Life at Harrow**

never an accurate scholar. But he was a great reader, and was fond of declaiming, at which he was remarkably good. In athletic sports, where he figured as a leader, swimming and rowing were his special favorites, for with these his lameness did not interfere. Fighting, it seems, was a pastime with him; and his physical prowess was often exercised in behalf of smaller and weaker boys, whom he characteristically regarded as the victims of tyranny. To one of these he once said, "Harness, if any one bullies you, tell me, and I 'll thrash him if I can."

**Friends at Harrow**

The warm friendships that were always to mark Byron's life existed even in his Harrow days. Among these friends were the Duke of Dorset, his favorite fag; Sir Robert Peel, afterwards the famous statesman; and Lord Clare. For the last named, Byron's affection was peculiarly romantic. Many years later, after contact with the world had somewhat embittered his disposition, his affection for Clare had suffered no change. As late as 1821 he said, "I never hear the name of Clare without a beating of the heart, even now." But none of these friends played any great part in his after life.

**Miss Chaworth**

More romantic than any friendship, and perhaps as lasting as any attachment Byron ever experienced, was his very real and ardent love for his cousin, Mary Ann Chaworth. The love was all on Byron's side, however, for the young lady was so far from returning the sentiment that she could rather unfeelingly refer to her young lover as "that lame boy," — a remark which Byron overheard and bitterly resented. Miss Chaworth married in 1805, and Byron never wholly recovered from this first disappointment. His powerful poem, *The Dream*, written in 1816, is merely a testimony to the strength and duration of the attachment.

In 1805 Byron regretfully left Harrow for Trinity College, Cambridge. Here he took his M.A. degree three years later, apparently without really earning it; for his studies were

very erratically conducted, and he was absent from college during the entire year of 1807. Though Byron wished to go to Oxford, and so entered Cambridge in a bad temper, yet he made the most of his life there, from a social standpoint at least. For sports — cricket, shooting, boxing, and riding — he felt all his former fondness, and in them showed the same leadership as at Harrow. Again he became the center of a coterie of friends, — this time a brilliant set, some of whom were to influence his later life, and one or two of whom, such as Hobhouse and Hodgson, were to remain forever his ardent champions. Newstead Abbey had been let, and Byron spent his vacations in London, and with his mother at Southwell. The scenes that here took place between mother and son were surely such as never other poet experienced. At times Mrs. Byron seemed quite insane; and on one occasion both separately made visits to the local apothecary, each begging him not to sell poison to the other. Quarrels and reconciliations alternated, and deserve attention only because such unnatural relations could not fail to have their effect for the worse on Byron's disposition, and should perhaps mitigate our blame for certain features of his after life.

**Life at Cambridge**

**Byron's relations with his mother**

Poetry was an early passion with Byron, and in January, 1807, he privately printed his first volume, *Poems on Various Occasions*. This was followed in March by a second volume, printed at Newark, which he called *Hours of Idleness*. In this not very remarkable effort there was still some little promise of genius, but its main importance lies in the fact that it prompted the famous criticism written by Lord Brougham, and printed in *The Edinburgh Review* for January, 1808. The *Edinburgh's* onslaught was terrific. The inoffensive little volume of juvenile verse certainly did not deserve the sarcasm and abuse heaped upon it by the distinguished

**"Hours of Idleness"**

critic ; but that was often the way of critics in those days. The review stung Byron to fury. He had long been an admirer of the poetry of Pope, and now deliberately planned an elaborate literary satire, after the model of *The Dunciad*, which should attack, and, as the author hoped, annihilate, not only the Scotch reviewers but the inoffensive English poets as well.

**Life at Newstead Abbey**

At Cambridge Byron indulged in all kinds of dissipation, which, in accord with his histrionic character, he had the bad taste to boast about. What he told about himself, little as his exploits redounded to his credit, was probably true, and he loved to parade it. Such was his tendency almost to the end of his life, until Missolonghi made him a hero. Newstead being now untenanted, he took up his residence there, surrounding himself with a wild and hilarious set, — Hobhouse, Matthews, Scrope Davies, and other Cambridge friends. High carnival reigned in the fine old Gothic building ; but to such revels it had, perhaps, long been accustomed. All sorts of absurd and outrageous practices were encouraged. The company dressed as monks and drank wine out of a human skull made into a drinking cup ; got up in the dead of night to practice pistol shooting ; and indulged in many other freaks of the same kind.

**Love of animals: Boatswain**

Byron loved animals, and surrounded himself now as always with a whole menagerie of pets, — dogs, monkeys, parrots, and bears. He once took a pet bear to college with him, and on being asked what he meant to do with it responded, to the indignation of the college authorities, "He shall sit for a fellowship." To Boatswain, a Newfoundland dog, he was especially attached. When Boatswain died his master's misanthropy, as well as his love for his pet, found expression in the famous epitaph,

> To mark a friend's remains these stones arise ;
> I never knew but *one*, and *here* he lies, —

a statement both untrue and affected, but not without some excuse. Such sentiments, if sincere, sprang naturally, even inevitably, from Byron's morbid outlook on life. He alternated between fits of hilarious mirth and moods of profound gloom. His satirical and clear-sighted friend, Scrope Davies, must have proved a wholesome antidote. "I shall go mad," the poet once exclaimed, in one of his despairing and passionate moods. "It is much more like silliness than madness," cuttingly remarked Davies.

Byron's coming of age in 1809 was, on account of lack of means, celebrated very quietly at Newstead; and after this event the young peer went up to London to take his seat in the House of Lords. When introduced, he appeared awkward and ill at ease. "I have taken my seat, and now I will go abroad," was his remark after the ceremony. In the same month *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, the satire on which he had been working for a year, was given to the public. Its effect was immediate. The scathing sarcasm, often merciless and in the worst possible taste, fell alike on the just and on the unjust, on small and on great, even on such famous poets as Scott and Moore. It delighted the public, and forever established Byron's ability to fight his own battles, and the impossibility of attacking him with impunity. The lamb had shown himself a lion. But he soon became heartily ashamed of his boyish satire, and tried to withdraw it from circulation; while some of the poets he so unjustly attacked became afterwards his warmest friends.

**Byron's coming of age; the House of Lords; "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers"**

The third epoch in Byron's life began in 1809, when he borrowed money and left England for an extended tour through southern Europe, accompanied by his friend Hobhouse and several servants. After visiting Portugal and Spain, he stopped at Sardinia and Malta, and spent the greater part

of two years wandering about Albania and Greece. He was entertained by the famous Albanian bandit and despot, Ali Pasha; visited Missolonghi, where some twelve years later he was to die; and spent several months at Athens, where he finished the first canto of *Childe Harold* and met the young girl to whom he addressed his *Maid of Athens*. In March, 1810, he was at Smyrna. Here he completed the second canto of *Childe Harold*, and shortly after, in April of the same year, accomplished his famous feat of swimming across the Hellespont. Of this achievement Byron was inordinately proud, and he celebrated it both in his letters and in his poems. He took especial delight in the classical associations connected with this exhibition of his prowess and looked upon himself as a second Leander. For over a year he wandered about the adjacent country, visiting Constantinople, and incidentally gathering material for his Eastern romances. Some of his adventures were undoubtedly romantic enough for even his daring disposition, but they gathered around them the most absurd exaggerations, and to this day it is difficult to separate the truth from the falsehood. Whatever may have been the romantic side of this two years' wandering, the experience probably fostered the poet's personal interest in Greece, provided him with new literary material, and certainly greatly enlarged his knowledge of the world.

**A tour through southern Europe; the "Maid of Athens"**

Tired of this sort of life, Byron finally returned to England by sea in July, 1811. He reached home to find trouble. Not only were his finances in a desperate state, but his mother died on August 1, before he could reach her side. "I now feel the truth of Gray's observation, that we only can have one mother. Peace be with her," he said; and he spoke with sincerity, doubtless, for after all she was his mother, and had loved him.

**Return to England; death of Byron's mother**

Upon his return to England Byron entered on the fourth period of his life, — that of his extraordinary London career, his first literary fame, his marriage, and his subsequent unpopularity. At this period began his warm friendship with the famous Irish poet, Tom Moore, whom he had ridiculed in *English Bards*. The Irishman generously forgave the attack, and the two became the best of friends. Moore's biography of his fellow-poet, *The Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, is one of the most admirable books of its kind in existence, — discriminating, trustworthy, and sympathetic. Shortly after his return, Byron was asked by his relative, Dallas what poems he had brought back with him. The poet handed over to his friend an inferior satire which he had named *Hints from Horace*. Dallas, disappointed, asked, "Have you no other result of your travels?" To this Byron answered, "A few short pieces, and a lot of Spenserian stanzas; not worth troubling you with, but you are welcome to them." These "Spenserian stanzas" of which their author thought so little were the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, whose publication, in the spring of 1812, brought immediate and widespread popularity. "I awoke one morning and found myself famous," said the poet. These first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, with their melancholy young hero, their declamatory rhetoric, and their commonplaces, were exactly on the level of their age, and suited the public taste to perfection. It may be doubted whether the two later and infinitely finer cantos, written several years afterwards, could possibly have created so tremendous a sensation.

**Life in London; Tom Moore; "Childe Harold"**

Byron's youth, personal beauty, rank, and genius now lifted him to the pinnacle of social favor. He posed as a mere literary dilettante, — a lord who amused himself by occasional ventures into literature, and aimed to discriminate sharply between professional writers, whom he affected to despise,

and men of rank who condescended to dabble in letters. This, however, was only a phase, and passed away as Byron grew to take his art more seriously. These were years of unalloyed social and literary triumphs; also, it must be confessed, of dissipation, and of poetic power expended upon unworthy achievements. But Byron's literary activity was remarkable. The success of his *Childe Harold* stimulated him to further effort. His verse romances of Eastern life poured forth in astonishing profusion. Between May, 1813 and 1816, *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *The Siege of Corinth*, and *Parisina* were written and published. All are variations on one single theme, with but one hero under many disguises, and that hero Byron himself. Some of these tales were written in the meter that Scott had rendered popular, and, though inferior in many ways to *Marmion* and its companion pieces, quite eclipsed the fresher and more wholesome romances of the older poet. On the first day of its publication *The Corsair* sold ten thousand copies; and the total profits from all the tales amounted to several thousand pounds. But Byron wrote for love of writing, not for money, though he needed the latter badly enough; so with characteristic generosity he handed over the proceeds to his rather ungrateful relative, Dallas. *The Giaour* is perhaps the best of these tales, now little read and almost forgotten, which represent the literary fashion of a day, and to the taste of the present generation seem commonplace and crude. *Hebrew Melodies*, however, published early in 1815, contained some excellent lyrics, among others the matchless *She Walks in Beauty* and the favorite *Destruction of Sennacherib*.

**Byron's social and literary popularity**

**The Eastern romances; "Hebrew Melodies"**

Byron made several speeches in Parliament, and created a favorable impression. As a born orator and a vigorous protester

against what he considered oppression and tyranny, he might, perhaps, have become a great parliamentary figure; but it is fortunate for literature that his energies were turned into other channels.

**Byron in Parliament**

At this time Byron wore an air of rather pretentious melancholy, which probably was sincere enough, but of which he was entirely too conscious. Though not without some excuse for his despondency,—the death of his mother, the recent loss of several intimate friends, the constant sense of his lameness,—he was still a born actor, and happy only when in the limelight. The pose was popular and effective. In London, Byronic melancholy became the vogue. Even the poet's very peculiarities of dress were imitated. Into this unwholesome atmosphere entered at least one refreshing influence. Augusta Leigh, Byron's half-sister, visited him in London in June, 1813. This visit strengthened their mutual affection, and the strong and beautiful bonds binding the brother and sister together were severed only by death.

**Byron's melancholy; Augusta Leigh**

Among all the great men whom the poet met in his London life, none impressed him more than Scott. The mighty "Wizard of the North," whose poetic star had been eclipsed by *Childe Harold*, extended to the younger poet a generous appreciation and sympathy that could not fail to conciliate even one so resentful as Byron of any air of patronage and condescension. The two met in London in the spring of 1815, and again in September of the same year. Of Byron, Scott said: "What I liked about him, besides his boundless genius, was his generosity of spirit as well as of purse, and his utter contempt of all the affectations of literature. . . . He wrote from impulse, never from effort, and therefore I have always reckoned Burns and Byron the most genuine poetic geniuses of my time, and of half a century

**Walter Scott**

before me. We have many men of high poetic talents, but none of that ever-gushing and perennial fountain of natural waters."

Byron felt that the time had come for him to marry; and he now, at the age of twenty-six, deliberately made his choice — or, rather, allowed it to be made for him. Anna Isabella Milbanke was pretty, clever, and accomplished. More than this, she was the daughter of Sir Ralph Milbanke, and an heiress. A marriage was finally arranged between the poet, who needed money, and the heiress, who appreciated fame and social position. The marriage, which took place on January 2, 1815, was bound to be unhappy, and so it proved.

**Marriage to Miss Milbanke; separation**

Lady Byron probably at first loved her husband, but loved herself more, and was quite intolerant of such irregularities as marked his social career; and Byron's character — impatient of restraint, self-centered, moody, passionate — was unintelligible to her. Only a year passed before Lady Byron, with her daughter Ada, one month old, left her husband forever. Her conduct has never been explained; and Byron, so garrulous about most of his private affairs, maintained on this one topic an almost complete silence. It is enough for us to know that their temperaments were incompatible. But the whole affair is so notorious, and bore so important a relation to the poet's after life, that it cannot be passed over without some mention.

The separation marked the reaction of favor against the darling of society. The British public, according to Macaulay, now entered upon "one of its periodical fits of morality." Byron had been overpraised; he was now to be heartily condemned. Though he was no worse than other men of the same set,

**Unpopularity**

his misdemeanors were retailed, and innumerable scandals about him were wholly invented. The small literary fry, who envied his success, joyously swarmed about to smirch his name; the newspapers attacked him

unsparingly and bitterly; an unfortunate and tactless poem, which he wrote in an angry mood, added to the universal indignation. Byron was ostracized from society — was even hissed on the streets. He had before been famous; he was now infamous. There was only one thing for him to do, — to leave England forever. Years later he wrote: "The press was active and scurrilous. . . . My name — which had been a knightly or a noble one since my fathers helped to conquer the kingdom for William the Norman — was tainted. I felt that if what was whispered and muttered and murmured was true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was unfit for me."

So in April, 1816, he left his country, home, and friends. His finances were, as usual, in a tangle. Two years later Newstead had to be sold, and the proceeds — ninety thousand pounds — went mostly to pay off mortgages and debts. With this final departure from England began the fifth and last period of the poet's life.

**Final departure from England**

Byron's exile opened a new and better era of his poetic activity. It revealed to him a new world, and it was a tonic to his energies. Without it he might never have proved so great a poet and so powerful a force in European literature. He sailed first for Ostend, and traveled through Belgium, visiting Brussels, where his imagination heard the "sound of revelry by night," and Waterloo, where his "tread was on an empire's dust"; he went up the Rhine, his "exulting and abounding river," and thence to Basel, Bern, Lausanne, and Geneva. At the last-named city he met Shelley. Byron now came into intimate contact with a poet whose idealism profoundly attracted him. Shelley taught him many things, and his influence is seen in several of Byron's productions, from the noble *Prometheus* to the more elaborate *Prisoner of Chillon*. Byron's attitude towards Shelley's poetry was not always favorable, — indeed, it is doubtful if he fully

**Byron in Switzerland; Shelley**

appreciated the great genius of his friend; but his admiration for Shelley the man was unbounded, — "the best and least selfish man I ever knew," he calls him. Shelley looked upon Byron as

> The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
> Over his living head like heaven was bent,

but could scarcely sympathize with some of Byron's traits of character or habits of life. Nevertheless, the friendship between the two poets, whose names are so often linked together, continued until the end.

In September Byron journeyed through Switzerland, incidentally gathering material for his lyrical drama, *Manfred*, and for the later cantos of *Childe Harold*, in which the grandeur of the Alpine scenery plays so large a part. Already, in June, while detained by bad weather at a little village named Ouchy, near Lausanne, he had written *The Prisoner of Chillon*, a tribute to moral and political liberty, and a tremendous advance over his earlier romances in verse. About this time, too, he completed the third canto of *Childe Harold*. Switzerland had taught him her mighty lessons, and in October he crossed over into Italy, accompanied by his friend Hobhouse, the companion of his earlier wanderings. They journeyed first to Verona, then to Ferrara (which inspired *The Lament of Tasso*), to Florence, to Rome ("the Niobe of nations," which he gloriously celebrates in the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*), and finally to his Mecca, Venice, the "sea Cybele, fresh from ocean." All through this tour the poet had been collecting material for some of his noblest productions; but for us the fairest flower of the Italian wandering is the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, a glorification of Italy, which was finished in Venice in the early spring of 1818, about

**"The Prisoner of Chillon;" "Childe Harold" again**

**Tour through Italy; "Manfred"**

the same time with *Manfred*, a strange, mystical, dramatic poem bearing some general resemblance to Goethe's *Faust*.

The period of Byron's Venetian residence — extending through the greater part of two years — is one over which any lover of his fame would gladly draw a veil. Such a life of excesses of every kind was unworthy of a true man, much more so of a great poet. He wallowed in the mire, with results disastrous to his health, character, and reputation.

**Byron's life in Venice; "Mazeppa"; "Don Juan"**

But, strangely enough, the period was one of intense literary activity. One elaborate poem after another was turned out, with seemingly inexhaustible fertility, showing in the main a steady growth in art and in power. To this period belong *Beppo*, *Mazeppa*, and the earliest cantos of his masterpiece, *Don Juan*. In August, 1818, he was visited by Shelley, who records their walks and talks in his *Julian and Maddalo*. Tom Moore also came to see him while he was living in Venice, and in his famous biography gives many interesting details about his visit. As at Newstead, Byron had filled his house with animals, and "Keep clear of the dog," "Take care, or the monkey will fly at you," were among his reassuring cautions to Moore as the two felt their way up the stairs in the dark.

At this time, too, there came into Byron's life an influence which, though springing from an illegal relationship, brightened his existence and inspired his poetic genius. The Countess Guiccioli was the young and beautiful wife of an old Italian count. She was, furthermore, highly educated and attractive, with considerable depth of character and capacity for feeling. Byron and the countess met by chance; the attachment between the two was immediate and enduring. Henceforth she played a large part in the poet's life. They were together now and again at Venice, Bologna,

**Countess Guiccioli**

Ravenna, Pisa, and Genoa, — in fact, until Byron left Italy for Greece. Whatever we of the present day may think of the character of the relationship, and certainly that is beyond approbation, it is admitted that the Countess Guiccioli was a refining influence in Byron's life. She was a faithful friend, and we must remember, in estimating her character, that Italian society at this period was somewhat too tolerant of such relationships. Any biography of Byron, however brief, which should omit some mention of so important a factor, would be essentially incomplete.

**Life at Ravenna; literary activity; "Cain"**

After some two years at Venice, Byron removed to Bologna, and later to Ravenna. These changes of residence were dictated by the movements of the countess, whose family, the Gambas, were ardent workers in the cause of Italian liberty. When one locality grew uncomfortable for them by reason of the suspicions of the dominant Austrian government, they went elsewhere and continued their operations afresh. At Ravenna Byron's literary activity continued unabated. Here he wrote his brilliant satire, *The Vision of Judgment*, and entered the lists as a dramatist with the Venetian plays, *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari*, as well as with the more successful *Sardanapalus*. None of these, however, compares in power of imagination or in splendor of expression with the great dramatic poem, *Cain*, written at about the same time.

Byron had always been an ardent and probably sincere, though rather too declamatory, lover of liberty, both moral and political, and he had long been known to all Europe as "the poet of revolt." "I have simplified my politics into an utter detestation of all existing governments," he once said. His sympathy with the oppressed masses was rather condescending, but he was nevertheless quite ready to act upon his very positive convictions. Italy was secretly struggling for

independence of the galling Austrian yoke. The conspirators were working largely through a society known as the Carbonari.

**Byron's attitude toward Italian freedom**

Of this organization Byron's friends, the Gambas, were enthusiastic members. The author of the fourth canto of *Childe Harold* and of *The Prophecy of Dante*, which was intended for the Italians as a vision of their independence, was naturally an object of suspicion to the Austrians. For this Byron did not care a straw, and he delighted to flaunt his revolutionary principles in the very faces of his foes. He moved about with the Gambas, however, and after consulting with Shelley, left Ravenna for Pisa in October, 1821. At this place Shelley had secured for his use the Lanfranchi palace, in which Byron lived and worked

**Life at Pisa**

industriously for ten months, riding and shooting, for amusement, and entertaining his friends. Shelley was near by, at Lerici, on the Gulf of Spezia.

Long before this time Byron had become a great figure in the world's regard. The publication of one of his poems was an important literary event. From his work he derived a large income and could now afford to be independent. The tone of some of his later productions was such that his old London publisher, Murray, was unwilling to give them to the public. In order to control a medium for the circulation of his ideas and the publication of his poems, he conceived the

**Leigh Hunt and "The Liberal"**

notion of founding a periodical of his own. Largely at Shelley's instigation, Leigh Hunt, the London radical and poet, was asked over to take charge of the new venture, which was to be named *The Liberal*. In July, 1822, the Hunts — for the editor was accompanied by his wife and six children — appeared on the scene. Four numbers of *The Liberal* were published, the last in July, 1823. But the venture was a failure, mainly owing to the fact that, in the very nature of things, two such men as Hunt and Byron could

not agree. The Hunts were impecunious and improvident, and relied on Byron's bounty. Of this attitude the poet soon tired. The result was disruption and the financial failure of the paper.

Before *The Liberal* had ceased publication, however, and while Leigh Hunt was still at Byron's house, occurred a tragedy that plunged both men into mourning. In July, 1822, Shelley was drowned while sailing on the Gulf of Spezia. Byron was present at the cremation of the body, that weird and tragic event which has impressed itself so powerfully upon the imagination of mankind.

**Death of Shelley**

In the following September Byron removed to Genoa, his final place of residence in Italy. Here he finished the sixteenth canto of *Don Juan*, still leaving the poem incomplete. This was his last work of any note. He now stood on the very pinnacle of poetic fame. He had proved his power as a lyrist, written one of the greatest of descriptive poems, accomplished something in the drama, and as narrative poet and satirist reigned supreme. Nothing, apparently, remained to be achieved in the realm of poetry. He was growing tired of it all, even of the applause and adulation that once were as music in his ears. Pleasure palled on him; dissipation had left its inevitable and ugly mark upon his health and his noble personal beauty. He wanted new worlds to conquer, and soon came the opportunity. Greece was in the midst of a desperate struggle for independence of Turkey. Beset with foes without and within, she was in dire straits for want of money and competent leadership. In England a "Greek Committee" of prominent men had been formed to promote the cause of Grecian independence. This committee felt the need of adding to their number some great name of powerful influence among the Greeks themselves. In April, 1823, Byron was elected to membership. After a creditable hesitation he

**Genoa; "Don Juan"**

**Grecian liberty: a new interest**

accepted, and offered money and counsel. Tired of inaction, dissatisfied with his former achievements, longing for new renown, and genuinely sympathizing with the Greeks, he threw himself into the cause with all his wonderful ardor and energy. On July 14, 1823, he sailed for Greece on the brig *Hercules*, which he had purchased and loaded with stores and arms. And now opens the last and by far the most creditable act in the complicated drama of the poet's life.

**Byron's departure for Greece**

In August Byron reached his destination, Cephalonia, and there remained until the end of the year, awaiting instructions. With this period is connected an interesting and amusing experience that throws a peculiar side light upon certain aspects of the poet's character. Dr. Kennedy, a Scotch physician and a warm Presbyterian, was conducting a series of religious meetings at the neighboring town of Argostoli. Byron, always a curious though sometimes a scoffing inquirer, had from the beginning been interested in religion. Without any really justifiable basis, he had been looked upon in England, especially since the publication of *Cain*, as an utter atheist. Fond of religious disputation, and arguing acutely yet good-humoredly upon religious subjects, he invariably represented himself as a seeker after light. After attending Dr. Kennedy's meetings he grew to know and admire the sincerely good man, and there ensued between the two a series of elaborate theological discussions in which the poet seems to have had the best of it, though up to the end the good doctor was still hoping to bring his brilliant opponent to see the error of his ways. But Byron can scarcely with justice be called a scoffer at religion. His fundamental attitude toward such matters is rather that of a skeptical yet really earnest seeker after the actual truth as apart from superstition and sham.

**At Cephalonia; Dr. Kennedy and religion**

Finally, in December, Byron went to the stronghold of Missolonghi to join the Greek leader, Prince Mavrocordatos. He brought with him four thousand pounds of his personal loan and the magic of his presence. Daring and resourceful as he was, the situation that confronted him was enough to tax even his energy, sympathy, and clear judgment. But Byron had never shown himself in his true colors until confronted with a situation that called for all the qualities of a hero. Everywhere about him was discord, intrigue, mismanagement, and disorder. In all this he showed himself a general and a statesman. At his touch unity sprang from discord, and order from confusion. Ships were built, fortifications repaired, troops organized and drilled. His resourcefulness and self-command were instant and unfailing. The Greeks recognized his ability by appointing him to lead the important military expedition against the Turkish stronghold, Lepanto; but, in spite of his eagerness to be in the actual conflict, this attack never took place. For all his courage, Byron never had a chance to fight.

**Missolonghi; Byron as general and statesman**

On January 22, 1824, in the midst of confusion and alarms, he wrote his last poem of any note, the lines on his thirty-sixth birthday. They breathe the new and nobler spirit that was now animating his life:

**His last poem(?)**

> The sword, the banner, and the field,
> Glory and Greece, around me see!
> The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
> Was not more free.

Pleasure, ease, luxury, self-contentment, even poetry, had been left behind forever. The hero had replaced the man of the world; the soldier, the poet. About this time came the beginning of the end. Byron's health, undermined by wrong living and by the extremely ascetic regimen he insisted upon

following, began to give way under the strain. Missolonghi was a fever-stricken place, which his friends were continually beseeching him to leave. But he stuck to his post, though beset by sickness and burdened with heavy cares. When preparing for the attack against Lepanto, the Suliotes, forming a contingent of the Greek troops, revolted. This threw Byron into a convulsive attack, from which he had not recovered when the mutinous soldiers actually broke into his sick room, demanding redress. His courage and control of the situation, under these terrible circumstances, is said to have been sublime.

**The beginning of the end**

Byron's will conquered. He rallied in health for a time, and displayed much of his former vivacity. On March 30 he was presented with the freedom of the city of Missolonghi. But the end was not far off. On April 9 he rode out, was drenched with rain, yet insisted upon returning home in a boat. He was soon seized with a rheumatic fever, and all the efforts of his physicians proved unavailing. In his delirium he fancied himself leading the attack against Lepanto, crying, "Forwards! forwards! follow me!" We cannot fail to recall the deathbed of "the great emperor who with the great poet divided the wonder of Europe." He mentioned Lady Byron, Augusta his sister, Ada his daughter; and on April 19, with "Now I shall go to sleep," he died.

**Byron's illness and death**

Byron's death, to the Greeks, came in the nature of a national calamity. Greece was plunged into mourning. She had lost a brilliant and heroic champion, the one man above all others on whom her hopes were fixed. "England has lost her brightest genius, Greece her noblest friend," wrote Colonel Stanhope, another distinguished worker for Grecian freedom. The remains of the poet were sent to England and arrived there in May. Interment in Westminster

**Interment at Hucknall**

Abbey was refused, and Byron was laid to rest on July 16, 1824, beside his mother and his ancestors, in the village churchyard of Hucknall.

Byron's personality and character have furnished food for almost endless discussion. All who knew him agreed as to his wonderful personal beauty and attractiveness. Scott said he had "a countenance to dream of," and an irresistible charm of address. His head was small, and covered with light-brown curls; his complexion, colorless; his eyes, light gray; his mouth, perfectly molded. Various portraits agree in giving him a high forehead, regularity of features, and an expression of brilliant intelligence. His manner with his intimates was genial and delightful, though not always equable; his love of fun was almost superabundant, manifesting itself in flashes between fits of melancholy and depression. To the latter his lameness and his early environment, as well as his irregular habits, may have largely contributed. Child of his strange race as he was, Byron was also the victim of unfortunate circumstances. This should never be forgotten when we are estimating his wonderfully complex and paradoxical traits of character.

**Personal appearance; character**

What were those traits, forming the personality that so powerfully impressed itself upon a whole continent? On the one side, absurd vanity, often displayed in many unworthy little ways; habitual arrogance and pride of rank; an uncertain temper, impulsive, even violent, running into extravagant fits of passion; a tendency towards self-indulgence that led him, genius and poet though he was, into criminal excesses.

**Byron's unattractive side**

On the other and better side we find dauntless physical courage, and moral courage even more splendid than the physical; a remarkable fondness for small, defenseless creatures of all kinds; a warm heart for his friends and lasting fidelity and

attachment to the few who befriended and believed in him; princely generosity of heart and purse; but, even above all this, the two supreme traits that make the man's poetry so great and enduring, — an intense and consuming hatred of hypocrisy and sham in every phase of life, and just as sincere and ardent a love of every kind of liberty.

**His finer qualities**

Underneath all this superficial contradiction lay a will of iron and a capacity for genuine self-sacrifice and heroism that rose to actual greatness when occasion demanded, as at Missolonghi. Byron was not a good man, but his character so colors and molds his poetry as to render it inevitable that we should know something of his extraordinary personality. Compound of gold and clay that he was, his often sordid and unworthy life was fairly redeemed by his heroic death, and so we may still apply to him at least a part of Dr. Johnson's beautiful tribute to his friend Goldsmith, — "Enough of his failings; he was a very great man."

**A final estimate**

Farewell, thou Titan fairer than the gods!
Farewell, farewell, thou swift and lovely spirit,
Thou splendid warrior with the world at odds,
Unpraised, unpraisable beyond thy merit;
Chased, like Orestes, by the furies' rods,
Like him at length thy peace dost thou inherit;
Beholding whom, men think how fairer far
Than all the steadfast stars the wandering star!

ANDREW LANG, in *Letters to Dead Authors*

## BYRON AS A POET

For almost a century Byron's place as a poet has been the theme of constant dispute. Was he truly a great poet, or merely a retailer of cheap commonplaces clothed in pretentious rhetoric? The distinguished English critic, Professor Saintsbury, says: "Byron seems to me a poet distinctly of

the second class, and not even of the best kind of second. . . . His verse is to the greatest poetry what melodrama is to tragedy, what plaster is to marble, what pinchbeck is to gold" (*A History of Nineteenth Century Literature*, p. 80).

**Diversity of opinion; Saintsbury and Arnold**

But Mr. Matthew Arnold, perhaps the most famous of all English literary critics, himself a great poet, says, on the contrary: "Wordsworth and Byron stand, it seems to me, first and preëminent in actual performance, a glorious pair, among the English poets of this century. . . . When the year 1900 is turned, and our nation comes to recount her poetic glories in the century which has then just ended, the first names with her will be these" (*Essay on Byron*).

Which shall we follow? or shall we rather find a safer point of view between these two extremes?

Byron was born in the midst of an era of revolution. Five years before his birth the American colonies had gained their independence. One year after his birth the French Revolution began. For the fifty years following that terrible social cataclysm the progress of liberal ideas was widespread and rapid. All Europe felt the new impulse toward national independence and personal liberty, toward free thought, free speech, and democracy. Byron saw Napoleon's rise to supreme power, his victories at Austerlitz, Marengo, Jena, and Wagram; his retreat from Moscow, and his final overthrow at Waterloo. He saw old institutions, beliefs, and customs summoned before the bar of reason and overthrown almost in a day. He felt the powerful impulse toward new thought in politics, literature, and religion. He saw a common revolutionary sentiment make Liberty, Democracy, Reason, Revolution, the watchwords in almost every country of Europe.

**An age of revolution**

Byron and Shelley, far beyond all other English poets, were the children of this new thought. They were indeed "poets

of revolt," not only abreast of the new movements in every sphere of activity, but even ahead of them. While Wordsworth was quietly communing with Nature in his Westmoreland hills; while Coleridge was dreaming about the supernatural, and Keats was worshiping Beauty, apart from the crowd, — Byron and Shelley, the apostles of revolution, were living and working in a world of men. Byron's poems, from first to last, ring with vigorous protests against "tyranny," eloquent praise of "liberty," national and personal, and bitter denunciation of oppression, superstition, and worn-out customs. In the main, the protest and the praise are real and sincere; almost always they are eloquent; often they are splendid. If *Cain* is a voice crying out for rationalism in religion, *Childe Harold* is one long, fervent tribute to liberty and democracy, and *Don Juan* is one superb protest against superstition and sham.

**The "poets of revolt"**

The reforms that Byron advocated, the ideas that he set forth through the entire range of his poems, were not fully to reach their fruition until almost a generation after his death, in the revolutions of 1848; but even during his lifetime he was to such an extent the voice of his revolutionary age that his name became to Europe at large the synonym of progress and revolt. The energy and power with which he set forth his opinions, and the pomp and circumstance with which he gathered up and interpreted the thought and emotion of a continent, dazzled the public and made it captive to the splendid sweep and eloquence of his verse. This was his unique triumph while he lived, and it has since proved almost his undoing. That Byron was a great historic figure cannot be gainsaid; but what remains, now that the reforms he so ardently advocated have long since become established facts, and the daring ideas he advanced have long been platitudes?

**Byron's contemporary fame**

Byron's fascinating personality also had its effect on his immense contemporary fame ; but the time has passed

> When thousands counted every groan,
> And Europe made his woe her own.

The spell that enchanted Europe has dissolved ; yet something more substantial still remains to be considered.

Byron, as we have seen, even now figures to the continent as the greatest English poet next to Shakespeare. His works have been translated into every important foreign language. No less a poet and critic than Goethe has pronounced him "the greatest genius of the century." Castelar, the Spaniard ; Sainte-Beuve and Taine, the Frenchmen ; Elze, the German ; Mazzini, the Italian, who said, "Byron led the genius of Britain on a pilgrimage throughout all Europe," — all bear witness to his tremendous influence and universal popularity. So unanimous a verdict should make us pause, and lead us to examine the evidence on which it is founded.

**His influence upon European literature**

Byron's literary activity was phenomenal. Within eighteen years he wrote, as Mr. Coleridge reminds us, two epics or quasi-epics, twelve tales, eight dramas, seven or eight satires, and a multitude of occasional poems, lyrics, and epigrams. This is the sum of his achievement, — a versatile one. Though his play *Werner* for a time held the stage, as a dramatic poet he is virtually a failure. A dramatist must possess the gift of objective characterization. In this Byron was singularly lacking. So self-centered a poet could create no real figures apart from himself. "He made the men after his own image ; the women, after his own heart." Another fatal defect is Byron's lack of what is called "the architectonic faculty," — the ability to plan and construct a harmonious and complete

**Byron's versatility; lack of dramatic talent and of architectonic faculty**

whole. *Childe Harold* is but a series of short poems; even *Don Juan* is little more. Rendered a unit by the poet's personality only, Byron's masterpiece fascinates the mature reader not through the adventures of its hero, but through the poet's own comments and reflections, and through interspersed lyric passages of singular beauty and power.

This same failure in dramatic characterization follows us through all of Byron's earlier narrative poems. His elaborate Eastern tales, while they show narrative *verve*, and contain admirable passages, have long since lost their pristine savor. The two narrative poems which still live as wholes, and must live indefinitely it would now seem, are *The Prisoner of Chillon* and *Mazeppa*, which are thoroughly true and sincere.

**Byron's narrative poems**

Byron's place as a lyric poet is still in dispute. Certainly his really fine lyrics are few in number, but the author of *She Walks in Beauty*, *Stanzas to Augusta*, *On this Day I complete my Thirty-sixth Year*, cannot be refused recognition as a lyrist. That Byron is not a supreme lyric poet is due rather to lack of effort than to lack of power. The autobiographic character of his best lyrics, laying bare to the whole earth, utterly and some would say shamelessly, the poet's inmost emotions, is redeemed by the powerful and complex personality inspiring them and giving them interest and value.

**Byron as a lyrist**

*Childe Harold* is beyond doubt a great contribution to descriptive and reflective poetry; and here Byron approaches that climax of his power to be fully attained only in *Don Juan*. As a satirist Byron is quite supreme among English poets. Here we need not qualify our praise. Satire in the hands of this master is no longer sordid and realistic; it is transfigured into something highly imaginative and ideal. Acute criticism of life, extensive knowledge of human nature, the most abounding and

**As descriptive poet; as satirist; "Don Juan"**

inexhaustible energy, — all this abides in Byron's masterpiece, his chief claim to immortality.

What is Byron's place among the world poets, the supreme few? Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, perhaps one or two others, were poets of the highest architectonic power, and of unfailing art. Above all this, their great works show a "high seriousness" and a noble and consistent outlook on life. Among these poets of the first order it is doubtful if Byron can with any justice be ranked. Though *Don Juan* is an elaborate work of highly sustained art, it is deficient in characterization, in organism, and in a serious and consistent point of view. Thus, superb as it is, it yet can scarcely be placed among the world's supreme masterpieces of poetry.

**Byron's place among the world poets**

We must, then, compare Byron with the poets of the second order, and, naturally, with those of England. Even here, as we have seen, reigns a variety of opinion. As a close and accurate student of nature and a portrayer of her more intimate and peculiar beauties, Byron cannot compare with Wordsworth. Neither has he the power to take a seemingly commonplace or prosaic subject and lift it into poetry by the magic of his treatment, as do Wordsworth and Arnold. He has nothing of the haunting magic and rich melodies of Coleridge; the delicacy, the sensuous beauty, as well as the perfect expression, of Keats, are utterly beyond him. With Shelley, as a lyric poet and a master of music, he cannot for an instant be compared. Tennyson is an infinitely finer and more careful artist. Byron is lacking in the sound knowledge of life, the wide scholarship, the profound insight into the human soul, that render Browning so potent a force in poetry. What, then, remains?

**Byron as compared with his English contemporaries and successors**

The answer is easily found. Any one who reads the few selections in the present volume cannot fail to be impressed with the one trait that, above everything else, marks them as a whole, — their fire, their vigor, their "exulting and abounding" energy. In this Byron takes his place second only to Shakespeare. Energy and strength are no small poetical assets. Byron is the greatest singer of the mountains and the sea. The Apostrophe to the Ocean, the stanzas on the Alps, the Rhine, the Marble Cascade, in the energy and sweep of their splendid verse, are worthy of their theme. Byron, too, can make the dead past live again as can no other poet: he finds out the poetry in history and quickens it to life. We are swept along with him in the impetuous torrent of his verse, and inspired by the poet's own emotion.

**Some permanent qualities of Byron's poetry**

It is idle to say that Byron is only too often a faulty artist, careless, sometimes even uncouth. He does not belong to the order of the poets of art. He worked on a large scale, — painted on an immense canvas in vivid colors. To assert, furthermore, that Byron says only the thing that is obvious, is instantly to provoke the answer that he says that thing as no other could, and glorifies it while saying it. He is perhaps not a profoundly original thinker, yet he expressed, interpreted, and applied the thought of a whole continent. A definite philosophy of life and coherent teaching he never attempted, but he voiced universal hopes and aspirations in spirited and inspiring verse. His faults of technic, even his frequent lapses from good taste, are forgotten in his actual greatness. After reading all of his work, — unequal, disappointing, crude, as much of it is, — we must finally say, with Mr. Swinburne, that "his is the splendid and imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength."

**Byron not an art poet**

**His essential greatness: sincerity and strength**

## REFERENCES

The standard, and apparently definitive, edition of the complete works of Lord Byron is that published by Mr. John Murray of London. In this edition the prose works, in six volumes, are edited by Mr. R. W. Prothero; and the poetical works, in seven volumes, are edited by Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge. A one-volume edition, *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, is also published by Mr. John Murray, with introduction and notes by Mr. Coleridge. Both editions are imported into this country by Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons. An excellent one-volume edition is that edited by Mr. Paul Elmer More, and published by Houghton Mifflin Company.

For a further study of Byron and his poems the student will find the following critical and biographical books and articles helpful and interesting:

BYRON, by John Nichol, in the English Men of Letters Series.
LORD BYRON, by Hon. Roden Noel, in the Great Writers Series.
ESSAY ON MOORE'S LIFE OF LORD BYRON, Macaulay.
BYRON, by Matthew Arnold, in *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series.
THE BYRON REVIVAL, by W. P. Trent, in *The Authority of Criticism*.
BYRON, by Theodore Watts-Dunton, in the revised edition of Chambers's Cyclopedia of English Literature.

Needless to say, the bibliography of Byron is almost endless. It is not so easy, however, to find estimates of his genius which err neither on the side of undue depreciation nor on that of excessive praise. There is only one way by which to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, — and that is by a thorough and careful reading of Byron's works.

# SELECTIONS FROM BYRON

## LACHIN Y GAIR

This poem was first printed in *Hours of Idleness*, 1807. It is probably the best of Byron's juvenile poems.

"Lachin y Gair, or, as it is pronounced in the Erse, *Loch na Garr*, towers proudly preëminent in the northern Highlands, near Invercauld. One of our modern tourists mentions it as the highest mountain, perhaps, in Great Britain. Be this as it may, it is certainly one of the most sublime and picturesque amongst our 'Caledonian Alps.' Its appearance is of a dusky hue, but the summit is the seat of eternal snows. Near Lachin y Gair I spent some of the early part of my life, the recollection of which has given birth to these stanzas."—*Byron's note*

I

AWAY, ye gay landscapes, ye gardens of roses!
In you let the minions of luxury rove;
Restore me the rocks, where the snow-flake reposes,
Though still they are sacred to freedom and love:
Yet, Caledonia, belov'd are thy mountains,
Round their white summits though elements war;
Though cataracts foam 'stead of smooth-flowing fountains,
I sigh for the valley of dark Loch na Garr.

II

Ah! there my young footsteps in infancy wander'd:
My cap was the bonnet, my cloak was the plaid;
On chieftains, long perish'd, my memory ponder'd,
As daily I strode through the pine-cover'd glade;

I sought not my home till the day's dying glory
Gave place to the rays of the bright polar star;
For fancy was cheer'd by traditional story,
Disclos'd by the natives of dark Loch na Garr.

III

"Shades of the dead! have I not heard your voices
Rise on the night-rolling breath of the gale?"
Surely, the soul of the hero rejoices,
And rides on the wind, o'er his own Highland vale!
Round Loch na Garr, while the stormy mist gathers,
Winter presides in his cold icy car:
Clouds there encircle the forms of my Fathers;[1]
They dwell in the tempests of dark Loch na Garr.

IV

"Ill starr'd, though brave, did no visions foreboding
Tell you that fate had forsaken your cause?"
Ah! were you destin'd to die at Culloden,[2]
Victory crown'd not your fall with applause:
Still were you happy: in Death's earthy slumber
You rest with your clan in the caves of Braemar;
The Pibroch[3] resounds, to the piper's loud number,
Your deeds, on the echoes of dark Loch na Garr.

V

Years have roll'd on, Loch na Garr, since I left you,
Years must elapse ere I tread you again:
Nature of verdure and flowers has bereft you,
Yet still are you dearer than Albion's plain:

[1] Many of Byron's maternal ancestors, the Gordons, fought for the Stuart Pretender, Prince Charles.

[2] **Culloden**: the battle that put an end to the hopes of the House of Stuart. It was fought near Inverness, Scotland, April 16, 1746.

[3] **Pibroch**: the martial music played on the bagpipe, but in this instance Byron probably refers to the instrument itself.

England ! thy beauties are tame and domestic,
To one who has rov'd on the mountains afar :
Oh ! for the crags that are wild and majestic,
The steep, frowning glories of dark Loch na Garr.

## MAID OF ATHENS, ERE WE PART

*Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ*

This, perhaps the most popular of Byron's lyrics, was written at Athens in 1810, and addressed to a young girl, Theresa Macri, daughter of Byron's landlady, the widow of a former English vice consul. The Greek refrain means " My life, I love you."

I

MAID of Athens, ere we part,
Give, oh give me back my heart !
Or, since that has left my breast,
Keep it now, and take the rest !
Hear my vow before I go,
*Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ.*

II

By those tresses unconfined,
Wooed by each Ægean wind ;
By those lids whose jetty fringe
Kiss thy soft cheeks' blooming tinge ;
By those wild eyes like the roe,
*Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ.*

III

By that lip I long to taste ;
By that zone-encircled waist ;

By all the token-flowers that tell
What words can never speak so well;
By Love's alternate joy and woe,
*Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ.*

IV

Maid of Athens! I am gone:
Think of me, sweet! when alone.
Though I fly to Istambol,[1]
Athens holds my heart and soul:
Can I cease to love thee? No!
*Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ.*

## MODERN GREECE

(From *The Giaour*)

HE who hath bent him o'er the dead
Ere the first day of Death is fled,
The first dark day of Nothingness,
The last of Danger and Distress,
(Before Decay's effacing fingers
Have swept the lines where Beauty lingers,)
And marked the mild angelic air,
The rapture of Repose that 's there,
The fixed yet tender traits that streak
The languor of the placid cheek,
And — but for that sad shrouded eye,
That fires not, wins not, weeps not, now,
And but for that chill, changeless brow,
Where cold Obstruction's apathy
Appals the gazing mourner's heart,
As if to him it could impart

[1] **Istambol**: Constantinople.

The doom he dreads, yet dwells upon;
Yes, but for these and these alone,
Some moments, aye, one treacherous hour,
He still might doubt the Tyrant's power;
So fair, so calm, so softly sealed,
The first, last look by Death revealed!
Such is the aspect of this shore:
'T is Greece, but living Greece no more!
So coldly sweet, so deadly fair,
We start, for Soul is wanting there.
Hers is the loveliness in death,
That parts not quite with parting breath;
But beauty with that fearful bloom,
That hue which haunts it to the tomb,
Expression's last receding ray,
A gilded Halo hovering round decay,
The farewell beam of Feeling past away!
Spark of that flame, perchance of heavenly birth,
Which gleams, but warms no more its cherished earth!

## KNOW YE THE LAND?

This introduction to *The Bride of Abydos*, written in 1813, was perhaps suggested by the opening lines of Goethe's *Mignon:*

"Kennst du das Land wo die Citronen blühn?"

KNOW ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime?
Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle,
Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime?
Know ye the land of the cedar and vine,
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;

Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppressed with perfume,
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gúl[1] in her bloom;
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
And the voice of the nightingale never is mute;
Where the tints of the earth, and the hues of the sky,
In colour though varied, in beauty may vie,
And the purple of Ocean is deepest in dye;
Where the virgins are soft as the roses they twine,
And all, save the spirit of man, is divine —
'Tis the clime of the East — 't is the land of the Sun —
Can he smile on such deeds as his children have done?
Oh! wild as the accents of lovers' farewell
Are the hearts which they bear and the tales which they tell.

## SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY

(From *Hebrew Melodies*)

Byron, at the request of a friend, wrote a number of lyrics to be set to music. In April, 1815, these were published, with the music, under the title of *Selections of Hebrew Melodies*. Though the poet was, or pretended to be, ashamed of the volume, at least five of its twenty-three poems have achieved immortality. Only fifteen are on Biblical themes; and the first in order, *She Walks in Beauty*, has for its subject Anne Horton, who married Byron's cousin, Robert Wilmot. This is perhaps Byron's most finished lyric poem, though written long before his poetic power reached its climax.

I

SHE walks in Beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that 's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.

[1] **Gúl**: the rose.

II

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

III

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

## SONG OF SAUL BEFORE HIS LAST BATTLE

The death of Saul is related in 1 Samuel xxxi; though Byron's *Song* is of course purely imaginary.

I

WARRIORS and Chiefs! should the shaft or the sword
Pierce me in leading the host of the Lord,
Heed not the corse, though a King's, in your path:
Bury your steel in the bosoms of Gath!

II

Thou who art bearing my buckler and bow,
Should the soldiers of Saul look away from the foe,
Stretch me that moment in blood at thy feet!
Mine be the doom which they dared not to meet.

III

Farewell to others, but never we part,
Heir to my Royalty — Son of my heart!
Bright is the diadem, boundless the sway,
Or kingly the death, which awaits us to-day![1]

## VISION OF BELSHAZZAR

The *Vision of Belshazzar* is based upon Daniel v.

I

THE King was on his throne,
The Satraps thronged the hall:
A thousand bright lamps shone
O'er that high festival.
A thousand cups of gold,
In Judah deemed divine —
Jehovah's vessels hold
The godless Heathen's wine!

II

In that same hour and hall,
The fingers of a hand
Came forth against the wall,
And wrote as if on sand:
The fingers of a man; —
A solitary hand
Along the letters ran,
And traced them like a wand.

[1] In this last stanza Saul addresses Jonathan.

III

The monarch saw, and shook,
And bade no more rejoice;
All bloodless waxed his look,
And tremulous his voice.
"Let the men of lore appear,
The wisest of the earth,
And expound the words of fear,
Which mar our royal mirth."

IV

Chaldea's seers are good,
But here they have no skill;
And the unknown letters stood
Untold and awful still.
And Babel's men of age
Are wise and deep in lore;
But now they were not sage,
They saw — but knew no more.

V

A captive in the land,
A stranger and a youth,
He heard the King's command,
He saw that writing's truth.
The lamps around were bright,
The prophecy in view;
He read it on that night, —
The morrow proved it true.

VI

"Belshazzar's grave is made,
His kingdom passed away,

He, in the balance weighed,
Is light and worthless clay;
The shroud, his robe of state,
His canopy the stone;
The Mede is at his gate!
The Persian on his throne!"

## THE DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB

See 2 Kings xviii and xix for the historical incident.

I

THE Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

II

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

III

For the angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved—and forever grew still!

IV

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

V

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:
And the tents were all silent — the banners alone —
The lances unlifted — the trumpet unblown.

VI

And the widows of Ashur[1] are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

## STANZAS FOR MUSIC

### THERE 'S NOT A JOY THE WORLD CAN GIVE

O Lachrymarum fons, tenero sacros
Ducentium ortus ex animo: quater
Felix! in imo qui scatentem
Pectore te, pia Nympha, sensit.

— GRAY'S *Poemata*

These stanzas were written on hearing of the death of the Duke of Dorset, who was killed by a fall from his horse while hunting, in March, 1815. Dorset had been among Byron's warmest friends at Harrow.

"Do you remember the lines I sent you early last year? . . . I mean those beginning, 'There 's not a joy the world can give,' etc., on which I pique myself as being the *truest*, though the most melancholy, I ever wrote." — *Byron's letter to Moore, March, 1816*

I

THERE 'S not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,
When the glow of early thought declines in Feeling's dull decay;
'T is not on Youth's smooth cheek the blush alone, which fades so fast,
But the tender bloom of heart is gone, ere Youth itself be past.

[1] **Ashur**: the highest god of the Assyrians; but the word here stands for the country of Assyria itself.

II

Then the few whose spirits float above the wreck of happiness
Are driven o'er the shoals of guilt or ocean of excess:
The magnet of their course is gone, or only points in vain
The shore to which their shivered sail shall never stretch again.

III

Then the mortal coldness of the soul like Death itself comes down;
It cannot feel for others' woes, it dare not dream its own;
That heavy chill has frozen o'er the fountain of our tears,
And though the eye may sparkle still, 't is where the ice appears.

IV

Though wit may flash from fluent lips, and mirth distract the breast,
Through midnight hours that yield no more their former hope of rest;
'T is but as ivy-leaves around the ruined turret wreath,
All green and wildly fresh without, but worn and grey beneath.

V

Oh, could I feel as I have felt, — or be what I have been,
Or weep as I could once have wept, o'er many a vanished scene;
As springs, in deserts found, seem sweet, all brackish though they be,
So, midst the withered waste of life, those tears would flow to me.

## NAPOLEON'S FAREWELL

This poem was written in London in 1815, soon after the battle of Waterloo. It is one of several productions concerned with Napoleon, "the great Emperor who with the great poet divided the wonder of Europe." The anapæstic meter employed in this and several other of Byron's most popular poems is one that lends itself easily to spirited effects. It was a great favorite with Tom Moore, whose influence is clearly seen both here and elsewhere, as in the *Stanzas for Music* and *Stanzas written between Florence and Pisa.*

I

FAREWELL to the Land where the gloom of my Glory
Arose and o'ershadowed the earth with her name —
She abandons me now — but the page of her story,
The brightest or blackest, is filled with my fame.
I have warred with a World which vanquished me only
When the meteor of conquest allured me too far;
I have coped with the nations which dread me thus lonely,
The last single Captive to millions in war.

II

Farewell to thee, France! when thy diadem crowned me,
I made thee the gem and the wonder of earth, —
But thy weakness decrees I should leave as I found thee,
Decayed in thy glory and sunk in thy worth.
Oh! for the veteran hearts that were wasted
In strife with the storm, when their battles were won —
Then the Eagle, whose gaze in that moment was blasted,
Had still soared with eyes fixed on Victory's sun!

III

Farewell to thee, France! — but when Liberty rallies
Once more in thy regions, remember me then, —

The Violet[1] still grows in the depth of thy valleys;
Though withered, thy tear will unfold it again.
Yet, yet, I may baffle the hosts that surround us,
And yet may thy heart leap awake to my voice —
There are links which must break in the chain that has bound us,
*Then* turn thee and call on the Chief of thy choice!

## STANZAS FOR MUSIC

(Written in England, March, 1816)

I

THERE be none of Beauty's daughters
With a magic like thee;
And like music on the waters
Is thy sweet voice to me:
When, as if its sound were causing
The charmèd Ocean's pausing,
The waves lie still and gleaming,
And the lulled winds seem dreaming:

II

And the Midnight Moon is weaving
Her bright chain o'er the deep;
Whose breast is gently heaving,
As an infant's asleep:
So the spirit bows before thee,
To listen and adore thee;
With a full but soft emotion,
Like the swell of Summer's ocean.

[1] **The violet**: when Napoleon was banished to Elba, in April, 1814, it was predicted by his partisans that he would return to France with the violets in the following spring. For this reason the violet was taken as the Napoleonic emblem. Now, though defeated and exiled, Napoleon is represented in the poem as hoping to return from St. Helena, as he did from Elba.

## FARE THEE WELL

The sincerity of this poem, which was written in March, 1816, soon after the separation from Lady Byron and shortly before the poet's final departure from England, has been seriously questioned. It seems almost incredible that any man, even one so spectacular as Byron, could lay bare to the world such emotions. Yet, according to Byron, as quoted by Moore, the verses were written under stress of profound feeling, were not intended for publication, and were given to the public only "through the injudicious zeal of a friend whom he suffered to take a copy."

> Alas! they had been friends in youth;
> But whispering tongues can poison truth;
> And Constancy lives in realms above;
> And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
> And to be wroth with one we love,
> Doth work like madness in the brain.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> But never either found another
> To free the hollow heart from paining—
> They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
> Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
> A dreary sea now flows between,
> But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
> Shall wholly do away, I ween,
> The marks of that which once hath been.
>
> —COLERIDGE'S *Christabel*

FARE thee well! and if forever,
Still forever, fare *thee well:*
Even though unforgiving, never
'Gainst thee shall my heart rebel.
Would that breast were bared before thee
Where thy head so oft hath lain,
While that placid sleep came o'er thee
Which thou ne'er canst know again:
Would that breast, by thee glanced over,
Every inmost thought could show!
Then thou would'st at last discover
'Twas not well to spurn it so.

Though the world for this commend thee —
Though it smile upon the blow,
Even its praises must offend thee,
Founded on another's woe:
Though my many faults defaced me,
Could no other arm be found,
Than the one which once embraced me,
To inflict a cureless wound?
Yet, oh yet, thyself deceive not —
Love may sink by slow decay,
But by sudden wrench, believe not
Hearts can thus be torn away:
Still thine own its life retaineth —
Still must mine, though bleeding, beat;
And the undying thought which paineth
Is — that we no more may meet.
These are words of deeper sorrow
Than the wail above the dead;
Both shall live — but every morrow
Wake us from a widowed bed.
And when thou would'st solace gather —
When our child's first accents flow —
Wilt thou teach her to say "Father!"
Though his care she must forego?
When her little hands shall press thee —
When her lip to thine is pressed —
Think of him whose prayer shall bless thee —
Think of him thy love *had* blessed!
Should her lineaments resemble
Those thou never more may'st see,
Then thy heart will softly tremble
With a pulse yet true to me.
All my faults perchance thou knowest —
All my madness — none can know;

All my hopes — where'er thou goest —
Wither — yet with *thee* they go.
Every feeling hath been shaken ;
Pride — which not a world could bow —
Bows to thee — by thee forsaken,
Even my soul forsakes me now.
But 't is done — all words are idle —
Words from me are vainer still ;
But the thoughts we cannot bridle
Force their way without the will.
Fare thee well ! thus disunited —
Torn from every nearer tie —
Seared in heart — and lone — and blighted —
More than this I scarce can die.

## SONNET ON CHILLON

This sonnet, one of the noblest of its kind, though prefixed to *The Prisoner of Chillon*, was in fact written later than that poem as an especial tribute to the Swiss patriot, Bonnivard.

François de Bonnivard was born near Geneva, in 1496, and succeeded in 1510 to the priory of St. Victor, just outside the walls of the city. As an ardent republican, he espoused the cause of Geneva against the Duke of Savoy, on whose entrance into the city in 1519 Bonnivard was seized and imprisoned for two years at Grolée. Again, in 1530, he was captured by robbers and handed over to the Duke, who this time imprisoned him in the famous Castle of Chillon. Here Bonnivard remained for six years, until liberated by the Bernese and Genevese. By this time Geneva had established her freedom, and the patriot was honored and pensioned by the people for whom he had suffered so long. Bonnivard lived in peace through the remainder of his life, wrote a history of Geneva, and, when he died, either in 1570 or in 1571, left his books as a legacy to the city.

ETERNAL Spirit of the chainless Mind !
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty ! thou art :
For there thy habitation is the heart —
The heart which love of thee alone can bind ;

And when thy sons to fetters are consigned —
To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.
Chillon! thy prison is a holy place,
And thy sad floor an altar — for 't was trod,
Until his very steps have left a trace
Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
By Bonnivard! — May none those marks efface!
For they appeal from tyranny to God.

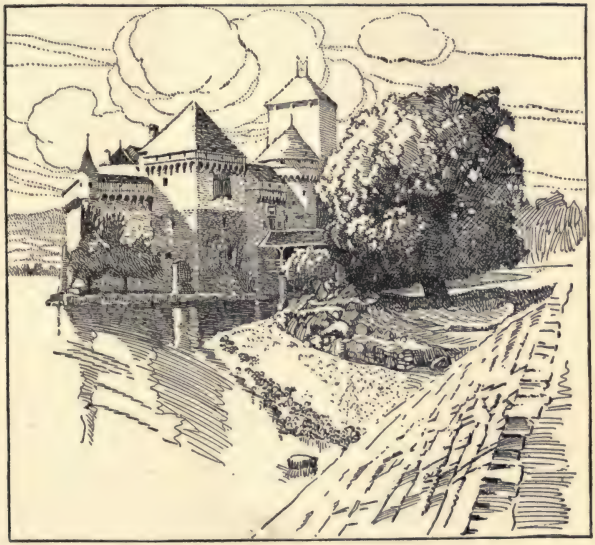
## THE PRISONER OF CHILLON

Among the great lakes of the world, Geneva is famous for the beauty of its surroundings and the depth and purity of its waters. It was known to the Romans as *Lacus Lemannus*, whence Byron's favorite name for it, "Lake Leman."

At the eastern end of Lake Geneva, on an isolated rock at the edge of the water, rises the picturesque building known as the Castle of Chillon, its walls washed by the waters of the lake, which here attain a depth of nearly one thousand feet. The foundations of the castle date from a very early period; though as it stands, with its one central tower surrounded by towers either semicircular or square, it is essentially of the thirteenth century. In the eighteenth century it was used as a state prison, and afterwards as an arsenal. In this building, rendered famous by his genius, Byron lays the scene of his *Prisoner of Chillon.* The hero of the poem is an entirely fictitious personage, whose dreadful captivity bears little resemblance to that of Bonnivard, although the latter is often and wrongly supposed to be the hero. But Byron himself says in the "advertisement" prefixed to *The Prisoner of Chillon:* "When this poem was composed I was not sufficiently aware of the history of Bonnivard, or I should have endeavoured to dignify the subject by an attempt to celebrate his courage and his virtues."

But, although the whole story is purely imaginary, we must allow the poem — in addition to its high poetic truth — a certain measure of historical probability, when we remember the deeds done in the days of religious intolerance and persecution, before men had learned to acknowledge the freedom of the individual conscience.

Byron wrote *The Prisoner of Chillon* in two days — June 26 and 27 1816, while detained by bad weather at the village of Ouchy, near



CASTLE OF CHILLON

Exterior

Lausanne. In dignity of theme and in descriptive power it far surpasses any of the narrative poems that preceded it. The hopeless captivity, the deaths of the two young brothers, the prisoner's grief, his unconsciousness of time and space in

> A sea of stagnant idleness,
> Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless;

the carol of the bird arousing him from his despair, his contentment with captivity, and at last — the crown of his desolation — his regaining his freedom with a sigh, — all these are scenes that could be adequately pictured only by the hand of a great master.

I

MY hair is grey, but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears:
My limbs are bowed, though not with toil,
But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
And mine has been the fate of those
To whom the goodly earth and air
Are banned and barred — forbidden fare;
But this was for my father's faith
I suffered chains and courted death;
That father perished at the stake
For tenets he would not forsake;
And for the same his lineal race
In darkness found a dwelling-place;
We were seven — who now are one,
Six in youth and one in age,
Finished as they had begun,
Proud of Persecution's rage;
One in fire, and two in field,
Their belief with blood have sealed,
Dying as their father died,
For the God their foes denied; —

Three were in a dungeon cast,
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

II

There are seven pillars of Gothic mould,
In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,
There are seven columns, massy and grey,
Dim with a dull imprisoned ray,
A sunbeam which hath lost its way,
And through the crevice and the cleft
Of the thick wall is fallen and left;
Creeping o'er the floor so damp,
Like a marsh's meteor lamp:
And in each pillar there is a ring,
And in each ring there is a chain;[1]
That iron is a cankering thing,
For in these limbs its teeth remain,
With marks that will not wear away,
Till I have done with this new day,
Which now is painful to these eyes,
Which have not seen the sun so rise
For years — I cannot count them o'er,
I lost their long and heavy score
When my last brother dropped and died,
And I lay living by his side.

III

They chained us each to a column stone,
And we were three — yet, each alone;
We could not move a single pace,
We could not see each other's face,

[1] This is said to be an accurate description of the interior of the castle, except that the third column bears no trace of ever having had a ring. On the southern side of this third column is carved Byron's name.

But with that pale and livid light
That made us strangers in our sight:
And thus together — yet apart,
Fettered in hand, but joined in heart,
'T was still some solace in the dearth
Of the pure elements of earth,
To hearken to each other's speech,
And each turn comforter to each
With some new hope, or legend old,
Or song heroically bold;
But even these at length grew cold.
Our voices took a dreary tone,
An echo of the dungeon stone,
A grating sound, not full and free
As they of yore were wont to be:
It might be fancy — but to me
They never sounded like our own.

IV

I was the eldest of the three,
And to uphold and cheer the rest
I ought to do — and did — my best —
And each did well in his degree.
The youngest, whom my father loved,
Because our mother's brow was given
To him, with eyes as blue as heaven —
For him my soul was sorely moved:
And truly might it be distressed
To see such bird in such a nest;
For he was beautiful as day —
(When day was beautiful to me
As to young eagles, being free) —
A polar day, which will not see

A sunset till its summer 's gone,
  Its sleepless summer of long light,
The snow-clad offspring of the sun:
  And thus he was as pure and bright,
And in his natural spirit gay,
With tears for naught but others' ills,
And then they flowed like mountain rills,
Unless he could assuage the woe
Which he abhorred to view below.

V

The other was as pure of mind,
But formed to combat with his kind;
Strong in his frame, and of a mood
Which 'gainst the world in war had stood,
And perished in the foremost rank
  With joy: — but not in chains to pine:
His spirit withered with their clank,
  I saw it silently decline —
  And so perchance in sooth did mine:
But yet I forced it on to cheer
Those relics of a home so dear.
He was a hunter of the hills,
  Had followed there the deer and wolf;
  To him this dungeon was a gulf,
And fettered feet the worst of ills.

VI

  Lake Leman lies by Chillon's walls:
A thousand feet in depth below
Its massy waters meet and flow;
Thus much the fathom-line was sent
From Chillon's snow-white battlement,

Which round about the wave enthralls:
A double dungeon wall and wave
Have made — and like a living grave.
Below the surface of the lake
The dark vault lies wherein we lay: [1]
We heard it ripple night and day;
Sounding o'er our heads it knocked;
And I have felt the winter's spray
Wash through the bars when winds were high
And wanton in the happy sky;
And then the very rock hath rocked,
And I have felt it shake, unshocked,
Because I could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free.

VII

I said my nearer brother pined,
I said his mighty heart declined;
He loathed and put away his food;
It was not that 't was coarse and rude,
For we were used to hunters' fare,
And for the like had little care:
The milk drawn from the mountain goat
Was changed for water from the moat;
Our bread was such as captives' tears
Have moistened many a thousand years,
Since man first pent his fellow men
Like brutes within an iron den;
But what were these to us or him?
These wasted not his heart or limb;
My brother's soul was of that mould

[1] The level of the dungeon is now about ten feet above the lake, and could never at any time have been below its surface.

Which in a palace had grown cold,
Had his free breathing been denied
The range of the steep mountain's side;
But why delay the truth? — he died.
I saw, and could not hold his head,
Nor reach his dying hand — nor dead, —
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.
He died — and they unlocked his chain,
And scooped for him a shallow grave
Even from the cold earth of our cave.
I begged them, as a boon, to lay
His corse in dust whereon the day
Might shine — it was a foolish thought,
But then within my brain it wrought,
That even in death his freeborn breast
In such a dungeon could not rest.
I might have spared my idle prayer —
They coldly laughed — and laid him there:
The flat and turfless earth above
The being we so much did love;
His empty chain above it leant,
Such Murder's fitting monument!

VIII

But he, the favourite and the flower,
Most cherished since his natal hour,
His mother's image in fair face,
The infant love of all his race,
His martyred father's dearest thought,
My latest care, for whom I sought
To hoard my life, that his might be
Less wretched now, and one day free;

He, too, who yet had held untired
A spirit natural or inspired —
He, too, was struck, and day by day
Was withered on the stalk away.
Oh, God ! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing
In any shape, in any mood :
I 've seen it rushing forth in blood,
I 've seen it on the breaking ocean
Strive with a swoln convulsive motion,
I 've seen the sick and ghastly bed
Of Sin delirious with its dread :
But these were horrors — this was woe
Unmixed with such — but sure and slow :
He faded, and so calm and meek,
So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
So tearless, yet so tender — kind,
And grieved for those he left behind ;
With all the while a cheek whose bloom
Was as a mockery of the tomb,
Whose tints as gently sunk away
As a departing rainbow's ray ;
An eye of most transparent light,
That almost made the dungeon bright ;
And not a word of murmur — not
A groan o'er his untimely lot, —
A little talk of better days,
A little hope my own to raise,
For I was sunk in silence — lost
In this last loss, of all the most ;
And then the sighs he would suppress
Of fainting Nature's feebleness,
More slowly drawn, grew less and less :

I listened, but I could not hear;
I called, for I was wild with fear;
I knew 't was hopeless, but my dread
Would not be thus admonishèd;
I called, and thought I heard a sound —
I burst my chain with one strong bound,
And rushed to him: — I found him not,
*I* only stirred in this black spot,
*I* only lived, *I* only drew
The accursèd breath of dungeon-dew;
The last, the sole, the dearest link
Between me and the eternal brink,
Which bound me to my failing race,
Was broken in this fatal place.
One on the earth, and one beneath —
My brothers — both had ceased to breathe!
I took that hand which lay so still —
Alas! my own was full as chill;
I had not strength to stir, or strive,
But felt that I was still alive —
A frantic feeling, when we know
That what we love shall ne'er be so.
I know not why
I could not die,
I had no earthly hope — but faith,
And that forbade a selfish death.

IX

What next befell me then and there
I know not well — I never knew —
First came the loss of light, and air,
And then of darkness too:
I had no thought, no feeling — none —

Among the stones I stood a stone,
And was, scarce conscious what I wist,
As shrubless crags within the mist;
For all was blank, and bleak, and grey;
It was not night — it was not day;
It was not even the dungeon-light,
So hateful to my heavy sight,
But vacancy absorbing space,
And fixedness — without a place;
There were no stars — no earth — no time —
No check — no change — no good — no crime —
But silence, and a stirless breath
Which neither was of life nor death;
A sea of stagnant idleness,
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless.

X

A light broke in upon my brain, —
It was the carol of a bird;
It ceased, and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard;
And mine was thankful till my eyes
Ran over with the glad surprise,
And they that moment could not see
I was the mate of misery;
But then by dull degrees came back
My senses to their wonted track;
I saw the dungeon walls and floor
Close slowly round me as before;
I saw the glimmer of the sun
Creeping as it before had done,
But through the crevice where it came
That bird was perched, as fond and tame,

And tamer than upon the tree;
A lovely bird, with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
And seemed to say them all for me!
I never saw its like before,
I ne'er shall see its likeness more:
It seemed like me to want a mate,
But was not half so desolate,
And it was come to love me when
None lived to love me so again,
And cheering from my dungeon's brink,
Had brought me back to feel and think.
I know not if it late were free,
Or broke its cage to perch on mine,
But knowing well captivity,
Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine!
Or if it were, in wingèd guise,
A visitant from Paradise;
For — Heaven forgive that thought! the while
Which made me both to weep and smile —
I sometimes deemed that it might be
My brother's soul come down to me;
But then at last away it flew,
And then 't was mortal well I knew,
For he would never thus have flown —
And left me twice so doubly lone, —
Lone — as the corse within its shroud;
Lone — as a solitary cloud,
A single cloud on a sunny day,
While all the rest of heaven is clear,
A frown upon the atmosphere,
That hath no business to appear
When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

XI

A kind of change came in my fate,
My keepers grew compassionate ;
I know not what had made them so,
They were inured to sights of woe,
But so it was : — my broken chain
With links unfastened did remain,
And it was liberty to stride
Along my cell from side to side,
And up and down, and then athwart,
And tread it over every part ;
And round the pillars one by one,
Returning where my walk begun,
Avoiding only, as I trod,
My brothers' graves without a sod ;
For if I thought with heedless tread
My step profaned their lowly bed,
My breath came gaspingly and thick,
And my crushed heart felt blind and sick.

XII

I made a footing in the wall,
It was not therefrom to escape,
For I had buried one and all,
Who loved me in a human shape ;
And the whole earth would henceforth be
A wider prison unto me :
No child — no sire — no kin had I,
No partner in my misery ;
I thought of this, and I was glad,
For thought of them had made me mad ;
But I was curious to ascend
To my barred windows, and to bend

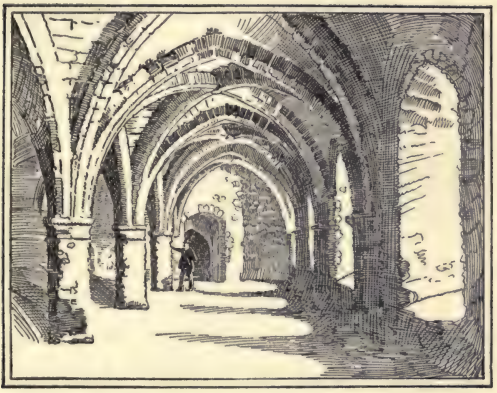
Once more, upon the mountains high,
The quiet of a loving eye.

XIII

I saw them, and they were the same,
They were not changed like me in frame;
I saw their thousand years of snow
On high — their wide long lake below,
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow;
I heard the torrents leap and gush
O'er channelled rock and broken bush;
I saw the white-walled distant town,[1]
And whiter sails go skimming down;
And then there was a little isle,
Which in my very face did smile,
The only one in view;
A small green isle,[2] it seemed no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,
But in it there were three tall trees,
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing,
Of gentle breath and hue.
The fish swam by the castle wall,
And they seemed joyous each and all;
The eagle rode the rising blast,
Methought he never flew so fast
As then to me he seemed to fly;

[1] Villeneuve.

[2] "Between the entrances of the Rhone and Villeneuve, not far from Chillon, is a very small island; the only one I could perceive, in my voyage round and over the lake, within its circumference. It contains a few trees (I think not above three), and from its singleness and diminutive size has a peculiar effect upon the view." — *Byron's note.*



CASTLE OF CHILLON

Interior

And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled — and would fain
I had not left my recent chain;
And when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode
Fell on me as a heavy load;
It was as is a new-dug grave,
Closing o'er one we sought to save, —
And yet my glance, too much opprest,
Had almost need of such a rest.

XIV

It might be months, or years, or days —
I kept no count, I took no note —
I had no hope my eyes to raise,
And clear them of their dreary mote;
At last men came to set me free;
I asked not why, and recked not where;
It was at length the same to me,
Fettered or fetterless to be,
I learned to love despair.
And thus when they appeared at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,
These heavy walls to me had grown
A hermitage — and all my own!
And half I felt as they were come
To tear me from a second home:
With spiders I had friendship made,
And watched them in their sullen trade,
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,
And why should I feel less than they?
We were all inmates of one place,
And I, the monarch of each race,

Had power to kill — yet, strange to tell!
In quiet we had learned to dwell;
My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us what we are; — even I
Regained my freedom with a sigh.

## STANZAS TO AUGUSTA

These stanzas were written at the Villa Diodati, near Geneva, July, 1816, and form one of several poems addressed to the poet's half-sister, Augusta (Mrs. Leigh), who was true to her brother through all his career, and for whom he felt the warmest affection up to the very end of his life. This is but one among Byron's many autobiographical poems, the egotism of which is amply redeemed by the revelation of a rich and interesting personality.

I

THOUGH the day of my Destiny 's over,
And the star of my Fate hath declined,
Thy soft heart refused to discover
The faults which so many could find;
Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,
It shrunk not to share it with me,
And the Love which my Spirit hath painted
It never hath found but in *Thee*.

II

Then when Nature around me is smiling,
The last smile which answers to mine,
I do not believe it beguiling,
Because it reminds me of thine;
And when winds are at war with the ocean,
As the breasts I believed in with me,
If their billows excite an emotion,
It is that they bear me from *Thee*.

III

Though the rock of my last Hope is shivered,
And its fragments are sunk in the wave,
Though I feel that my soul is delivered
To Pain — it shall not be its slave.
There is many a pang to pursue me:
They may crush, but they shall not contemn —
They may torture, but shall not subdue me —
'T is of *Thee* that I think — not of them.

IV

Though human, thou didst not deceive me,
Though woman, thou didst not forsake,
Though loved, thou forborest to grieve me,
Though slandered, thou never couldst shake, —
Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,
Though parted, it was not to fly,
Though watchful, 't was not to defame me,
Nor, mute, that the world might belie.

V

Yet I blame not the World, nor despise it,
Nor the war of the many with one;
If my soul was not fitted to prize it,
'T was folly not sooner to shun:
And if dearly that error hath cost me,
And more than I once could foresee,
I have found that, whatever it lost me,
It could not deprive me of *Thee*.

VI

From the wreck of the past, which hath perished,
Thus much I at least may recall,

It hath taught me that what I most cherished
Deserved to be dearest of all:
In the Desert a fountain is springing,
In the wide waste there still is a tree,
And a bird in the solitude singing,
Which speaks to my spirit of *Thee*.

## PROMETHEUS

*Prometheus* was written in July, 1816, at the Villa Diodati. Here began the most interesting of Byron's friendships, that with his great fellow-poet, Shelley. This poem, in subject at least, shows the influence of Shelley, who afterwards, in his *Prometheus Unbound*, produced a lyrical drama on the same theme, — a favorite one since the days of Æschylus. Byron's protest against tyranny is here voiced in a strain rather more elevated than was characteristic of him. The student will find it interesting to compare Byron's poem with the fine *Prometheus* of Longfellow. (For the story of Prometheus, see Gayley's *Classic Myths* (1903), pp. 44–46.)

I

TITAN! to whose immortal eyes
The sufferings of mortality,
Seen in their sad reality,
Were not as things that gods despise;
What was thy pity's recompense?
A silent suffering, and intense;
The rock, the vulture, and the chain,
All that the proud can feel of pain,
The agony they do not show,
The suffocating sense of woe,
Which speaks but in its loneliness,
And then is jealous lest the sky
Should have a listener, nor will sigh
Until its voice is echoless.

II

Titan! to thee the strife was given
Between the suffering and the will,
Which torture where they cannot kill;
And the inexorable Heaven,
And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
The ruling principle of Hate,
Which for its pleasure doth create
The things it may annihilate,
Refused thee even the boon to die:
The wretched gift Eternity
Was thine — and thou hast borne it well.
All that the Thunderer wrung from thee
Was but the Menace which flung back
On him the torments of thy rack;
The fate thou didst so well foresee,
But would not to appease him tell;
And in thy Silence was his Sentence,
And in his Soul a vain repentance,
And evil dread so ill dissembled
That in his hand the lightnings trembled.

III

Thy Godlike crime was to be kind,
To render with thy precepts less
The sum of human wretchedness,
And strengthen Man with his own mind;
But baffled as thou wert from high,
Still in thy patient energy,
In the endurance, and repulse
Of thine impenetrable Spirit,
Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
A mighty lesson we inherit:

Thou art a symbol and a sign
To Mortals of their fate and force;
Like thee, Man is in part divine,
A troubled stream from a pure source;
And Man in portions can foresee
His own funereal destiny;
His wretchedness, and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence:
To which his Spirit may oppose
Itself — an equal to all woes —
And a firm will, and a deep sense,
Which even in torture can descry
Its own concentered recompense,
Triumphant where it dares defy,
And making Death a Victory.

## WHEN WE TWO PARTED

(Written between 1814 and 1816)

I

WHEN we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

II

The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow —

It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame:
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

III

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me —
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well: —
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

IV

In secret we met —
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee? —
With silence and tears.

## THE COLISEUM BY MOONLIGHT

(From *Manfred*, Act III, Scene IV; written in Venice, April, 1817)

SCENE IV. *Interior of the tower*

MANFRED *alone*

THE stars are forth, the moon above the tops
Of the snow-shining mountains. — Beautiful!
I linger yet with Nature, for the Night
Hath been to me a more familiar face
Than that of man; and in her starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness,
I learned the language of another world.
I do remember me, that in my youth,
When I was wandering, — upon such a night
I stood within the Coliseum's wall,
'Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome;
The trees which grew along the broken arches
Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars
Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar
The watch-dog bayed beyond the Tiber; and
More near from out the Cæsar's palace came
The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly,
Of distant sentinels the fitful song
Begun and died upon the gentle wind.
Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach
Appeared to skirt the horizon, yet they stood
Within a bowshot. Where the Cæsars dwelt,
And dwell the tuneless birds of night, amidst
A grove which springs through levelled battlements,
And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,

Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth; —
But the gladiators' bloody Circus stands,
A noble wreck in ruinous perfection,
While Cæsar's chambers, and the Augustan halls,
Grovel on earth in indistinct decay. —
And thou didst shine, thou rolling Moon, upon
All this, and cast a wide and tender light,
Which softened down the hoar austerity
Of rugged desolation, and filled up,
As 't were anew, the gaps of centuries;
Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not — till the place
Became religion, and the heart ran o'er
With silent worship of the Great of old, —
The dead, but sceptred, Sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns.

## TO THOMAS MOORE

(Written July, 1817)

I

MY boat is on the shore,
And my bark is on the sea;
But, before I go, Tom Moore,
Here 's a double health to thee!

II

Here 's a sigh to those who love me,
And a smile to those who hate;
And, whatever sky 's above me,
Here 's a heart for every fate.

III

Though the Ocean roar around me,
Yet it still shall bear me on;
Though a desert should surround me,
It hath springs that may be won.

IV

Were 't the last drop in the well,
As I gasped upon the brink,
Ere my fainting spirit fell,
'T is to thee that I would drink.

V

With that water, as this wine,
The libation I would pour
Should be — peace with thine and mine,
And a health to thee, Tom Moore.

# SELECTIONS FROM CHILDE HAROLD

## CANTOS II AND III

*Childe Harold* is a series of descriptive, reflective, and lyrical stanzas, strung together on a slender thread of narrative. It is divided into four cantos, and is written in the nine-line stanza of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, — a measure that, in Byron's hands, becomes an instrument of many strings.

The impressions made upon the poet by his tour through Portugal, Spain, Albania, and Greece are recorded in the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, which, when published in March,[1] 1812, inspired Byron's oft-quoted remark, "I awoke one morning and found myself famous." Among much that is trivial and commonplace, certain stanzas in Cantos I and II rise into greatness.

But there is a vast gulf fixed between the first two and the last two cantos of *Childe Harold*. Cantos III and IV, published in 1816 and 1818, respectively, first showed the world the scope of Byron's genius. They form an imperishable contribution to literature. Their subject-matter is furnished by the scenery and historical associations of Belgium, the Rhine, Switzerland, and Italy. But *Childe Harold* is no mere versified notebook. Here Byron's passion for the grander aspects of nature — the mountains and the sea — finds its highest expression. The poem is even more than a series of brilliant scenic descriptions: it is, as the poet himself says, "a mark of respect for what is venerable, and of feeling for what is glorious." Byron's sense of historic continuity and his vivid imagination bring the dead past to life again, with its art and literature, its great deeds and its mighty men, — "The glory that was Greece, the grandeur that was Rome."

## GREECE BEFORE THE REVOLUTION OF 1821

### (From Canto II)

Though Greece, enslaved by the Turks and rent by domestic discord, showed at this period little capacity for self-government, she yet regained her independence as the result of the revolution begun in 1821. Some twelve years after writing the present stanzas Byron was to offer up his own life upon the altar of Grecian freedom.

[1] Nicol, *Byron* (English Men of Letters), gives February 29; but Leslie Stephen, article "Byron," *Dictionary of National Biography*, gives March; and E. H. Coleridge, *Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (1 vol.), gives March 10.

II

ANCIENT of days! august Athena! where,
Where are thy men of might? thy grand in soul?
Gone—glimmering through the dream of things that were:
First in the race that led to Glory's goal,
They won, and passed away—is this the whole?
A schoolboy's tale, the wonder of an hour!
The Warrior's weapon and the Sophist's stole
Are sought in vain, and o'er each mouldering tower,
Dim with the mist of years, gray flits the shade of power.

LXXIII

Fair Greece! sad relic of departed Worth!
Immortal, though no more; though fallen, great!
Who now shall lead thy scattered children forth,
And long-accustomed bondage uncreate?
Not such thy sons who whilome did await,
The hopeless warriors of a willing doom,
In bleak Thermopylæ's [1] sepulchral strait—
Oh! who that gallant spirit shall resume,
Leap from Eurotas' [2] banks, and call thee from the tomb?

LXXIV

Spirit of Freedom! when on Phyle's brow
Thou sat'st with Thrasybulus [3] and his train,
Couldst thou forebode the dismal hour which now
Dims the green beauties of thine Attic plain?

[1] **Thermopylæ**: a narrow pass on the eastern coast, through which ran the only road from northern to southern Greece. Here, in 480 B.C., Leonidas, the Spartan, with three hundred Spartans and seven hundred Thebans, met the Persian army of Xerxes. The Greeks were slain to a man, and "Thermopylæ" has become a synonym of "patriotism."

[2] **Eurotas**: a river of Greece, on which Sparta was situated.

[3] **Thrasybulus**: an Athenian general and statesman who, in 403 B.C., by seizing Phyle and the Piræus, overthrew the Thirty Tyrants of Athens and restored the democracy.

Not thirty tyrants now enforce the chain,
But every *carle*[1] can lord it o'er thy land;
Nor rise thy sons, but idly rail in vain,
Trembling beneath the scourge of Turkish hand,
From birth till death enslaved — in word, in deed, unmanned.

LXXVI

Hereditary Bondsmen! know ye not
*Who* would be free *themselves* must strike the blow?
By their right arms the conquest must be wrought?
Will Gaul or Muscovite[2] redress ye? No!
True — they may lay your proud despoilers low,
But not for you will Freedom's Altars flame.
Shades of the Helots![3] triumph o'er your foe!
Greece! change thy lords, thy state is still the same;
Thy glorious day is o'er, but not thine years of shame.

LXXXVII

Yet are thy skies as blue, thy crags as wild;
Sweet are thy groves, and verdant are thy fields,
Thine olives ripe as when Minerva smiled,
And still his honey'd wealth Hymettus[4] yields;
There the blithe bee his fragrant fortress builds,
The free-born wanderer of thy mountain air;
Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds,
Still in his beam Mendeli's[5] marbles glare;
Art, Glory, Freedom fail, but Nature still is fair.

[1] **Carle**: rustic, boor. [2] **Gaul or Muscovite**: Frenchman or Russian.

[3] **Helots**: a class of serfs among the ancient Spartans. They were owned by the state, were cruelly treated, and sometimes massacred. Now, says Byron, in the present degraded state of Greece the shades of the Helots can triumph over the descendants of their oppressors.

[4] **Hymettus**: the ancient name of a mountain southeast of Athens, celebrated for its honey.

[5] **Mendeli**: the modern name of Pentelicus, a mountain near Athens famous for its marble.

LXXXVIII

Where'er we tread 't is haunted, holy ground;
No earth of thine is lost in vulgar mould,
But one vast realm of Wonder spreads around,
And all the Muse's tales seem truly told,
Till the sense aches with gazing to behold
The scenes our earliest dreams have dwelt upon;
Each hill and dale, each deepening glen and wold
Defies the power which crushed thy temples gone:
Age shakes Athena's tower,[1] but spares gray Marathon.[2]

## THE EVE BEFORE WATERLOO

(From Canto III)

On the night of June 15, 1815, traditionally the "eve before Waterloo," the Duchess of Richmond gave a ball in Brussels, near which the English army was encamped. Wellington, though uncertain of Napoleon's movements, ordered his officers to attend the ball, in order to avert a panic among the townspeople. While "all went merry as a marriage bell" Napoleon approached the city. On the following day was fought the battle of Quatrebras; two days later, Waterloo.

XXI

THERE was a sound of revelry by night,
And Belgium's Capital had gathered then
Her Beauty and her Chivalry — and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell;
But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell.

[1] **Athena's tower**: probably refers to the Parthenon at Athens.

[2] **Marathon**: a plain eighteen miles northeast of Athens, where, in 490 B.C., Miltiades, with eleven thousand Greeks, defeated a hundred thousand Persians, thus saving Europe from the "barbarians."

XXII

Did ye not hear it? — No — 't was but the Wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;
On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;
No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet
To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet —
But hark! — that heavy sound breaks in once more,
As if the clouds its echo would repeat;
And nearer — clearer — deadlier than before!
Arm! Arm! it is — it is — the cannon's opening roar!

XXIV

Ah! then and there was hurrying to and fro —
And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,
And cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago
Blushed at the praise of their own loveliness —
And there were sudden partings, such as press
The life from out young hearts, and choking sighs
Which ne'er might be repeated; who could guess
If ever more should meet those mutual eyes,
Since upon night so sweet such awful morn could rise!

XXV

And there was mounting in hot haste — the steed,
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war —
And the deep thunder peal on peal afar;
And near, the beat of the alarming drum
Roused up the soldier ere the Morning Star;
While thronged the citizens with terror dumb,
Or whispering, with white lips — "The foe! They come! they come!"

## THE RHINE

(From Canto III)

L

BUT Thou, exulting and abounding river!
Making thy waves a blessing as they flow
Through banks whose beauty would endure for ever
Could man but leave thy bright creation so,
Nor its fair promise from the surface mow
With the sharp scythe of conflict, — then to see
Thy valley of sweet waters, were to know
Earth paved like Heaven — and to seem such to me,
Even now what wants thy stream? — that it should Lethe[1] be.

LIX

Adieu to thee, fair Rhine! How long delighted
The stranger fain would linger on his way!
Thine is a scene alike where souls united,
Or lonely Contemplation thus might stray;
And could the ceaseless vultures cease to prey
On self-condemning bosoms, it were here,
Where Nature, nor too sombre nor too gay,
Wild but not rude, awful yet not austere,
Is to the mellow Earth as Autumn to the year.

LX

Adieu to thee again! a vain adieu!
There can be no farewell to scene like thine;
The mind is coloured by thy every hue;
And if reluctantly the eyes resign

[1] **Lethe**: in Greek mythology a river of the lower world, whose waters, when drunk by the souls, brought oblivion of all former existence.

Their cherished gaze upon thee, lovely Rhine!
'T is with the thankful glance of parting praise;
More mighty spots may rise — more glaring shine,
But none unite, in one attaching maze,
The brilliant, fair, and soft, — the glories of old days,

LXI

The negligently grand, the fruitful bloom
Of coming ripeness, the white city's sheen,
The rolling stream, the precipice's gloom,
The forest's growth, and Gothic walls between, —
The wild rocks shaped, as they had turrets been,
In mockery of man's art; and these withal
A race of faces happy as the scene,
Whose fertile bounties here extend to all,
Still springing o'er thy banks, though Empires near them fall.

## NIGHT AND STORM IN THE ALPS

(From Canto III)

LXXXV

CLEAR, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake,
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
To waft me from distraction; once I loved
Torn ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
Sounds sweet as if a Sister's voice reproved,
That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.

LXXXVI

It is the hush of night, and all between
Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,

Mellowed and mingling, yet distinctly seen,
Save darkened Jura, whose capt heights appear
Precipitously steep; and, drawing near,
There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,
Of flowers yet fresh with childhood; on the ear
Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more;

LXXXVII

He is an evening reveller, who makes
His life an infancy, and sings his fill;
At intervals, some bird from out the brakes
Starts into voice a moment, then is still.
There seems a floating whisper on the hill,
But that is fancy, for the starlight dews
All silently their tears of love instil,
Weeping themselves away, till they infuse
Deep into Nature's breast the spirit of her hues.

LXXXVIII

Ye stars! which are the poetry of heaven,
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires, — 'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
A beauty and a mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That fortune, fame, power, life, have named themselves a star.

LXXXIX

All heaven and earth are still — though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep: —

All heaven and earth are still: From the high host
Of stars, to the lulled lake and mountain-coast,
All is concentred in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

XC

Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt
In solitude, where we are *least* alone;
A truth, which through our being then doth melt
And purifies from self: it is a tone,
The soul and source of music, which makes known
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm,
Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,
Binding all things with beauty; — 't would disarm
The spectre Death, had he substantial power to harm.

XCI

Not vainly did the early Persian make
His altar the high places and the peak
Of earth-o'ergazing mountains, and thus take
A fit and unwalled temple, there to seek
The Spirit in whose honor shrines are weak,
Upreared of human hands. Come, and compare
Columns and idol-dwellings, Goth or Greek,
With Nature's realms of worship, earth and air,
Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe thy prayer!

XCII

The sky is changed! — and such a change! Oh night,
And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in woman! Far along,

From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!

XCIII

And this is in the night: — Most glorious night!
Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be
A sharer in thy fierce and far delight, —
A portion of the tempest and of thee!
How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,
And the big rain comes dancing to the earth!
And now again 't is black, — and now, the glee
Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain-mirth,
As if they did rejoice o'er a young earthquake's birth.

XCIV

Now, where the swift Rhone cleaves his way between
Heights which appear as lovers who have parted
In hate, whose mining depths so intervene,
That they can meet no more, though broken-hearted!
Though in their souls, which thus each other thwarted,
Love was the very root of the fond rage
Which blighted their life's bloom, and then departed: —
Itself expired, but leaving them an age
Of years all winters, — war within themselves to wage:

XCV

Now, where the quick Rhone thus hath cleft his way,
The mightiest of the storms hath ta'en his stand:
For here, not one, but many, make their play,
And fling their thunder-bolts from hand to hand,
Flashing and cast around: of all the band,

The brightest through these parted hills hath forked
His lightnings, — as if he did understand,
That in such gaps as desolation worked,
There the hot shaft should blast whatever therein lurked.

XCVI

Sky, mountains, river, winds, lake, lightnings! ye!
With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a soul
To make these felt and feeling, well may be
Things that have made me watchful; the far roll
Of your departing voices, is the knoll
Of what in me is sleepless, — if I rest.
But where of ye, oh tempests! is the goal?
Are ye like those within the human breast?
Or do ye find, at length, like eagles, some high nest?

XCVII

Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me, — could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel, and yet breathe — into *one* word,
And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;
But as it is, I live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.

# CHILDE HAROLD, CANTO IV

## INTRODUCTION

### *The Elements of its Subject-Matter*

The subject-matter of the fourth canto of *Childe Harold* contains three elements, sometimes separate and distinct, sometimes commingled. These elements may be designated as *descriptive*, *reflective*, and *lyrical*. The *descriptive* element occupies itself directly with description of the cities, the men, the events, the scenes of nature, and the works of art, which the poet contemplates in fact or in imagination. This element is closely related to, indeed usually flows into, what may be called the *reflective* element, which consists in the poet's reflections upon what he sees; such reflective stanzas form what is often called "didactic" poetry. Finally, the *lyrical* element directly expresses the poet's own emotions. This element is so closely connected with the reflective as sometimes to be practically identical with it. For instance, the reflective stanzas on Love (CXX–CXXVII) are at least partly lyrical, and would perhaps be called wholly so if taken out of their context and presented as a separate poem. But the term "lyrical" here means a direct revelation of the poet's own emotions, such as we find in stanzas CXXX–CXXXVIII. Of this strictly lyrical and purely subjective element there is enough in the poem to justify a separate classification.

### *Unity of the Poem*

With all its variety of subject-matter, *Childe Harold* has a unity of its own. This results from several circumstances. First, Byron's attitude towards his subject is the same throughout — consistent reverence for great men, great deeds, and great works of nature and of art. Again, the subject-matter, as far as it deals with externals, is all drawn from Italy. Finally, the poem really has a plan: it purports to be the record of a journey from Venice southward to Rome, with many side trips in the shape of lyrical and reflective digressions.

The poet's wanderings are easily followed. The three centers of interest are Venice, Florence, and Rome. Starting from Venice the poet proceeds in a general southwesterly direction toward Rome, his goal. On the way he stops on the banks of the river Brenta to admire the sunset. At the village of Arquá, a few miles farther south, he visits the

tomb of Petrarch. Next he proceeds fifty miles due south to Ferrara, the home of Tasso and Ariosto; then southwest to Florence. Having left Florence he finds on his way Lake Trasimeno; farther south, the river Clitumnus; still farther on, the Marble Cascade, near Terni. He remembers Horace, as he looks upon Mount Soracte, northeast of the Eternal City. At last in Rome he pauses long over the vast riches the city has to offer him. Leaving Rome he seeks from the summit of the Alban mountains a view of the object he loves best — the sea. With the magnificent stanzas on the ocean the poem ends.

### *The Meaning and the Value of the Poem*

*Childe Harold*, though it does indeed describe places, works of art, scenes from nature, and great men and great events of ancient and modern Italy, is not at all a guidebook. For two reasons: first, it was not written to order; Byron fails to mention a host of things he must have seen and might well have included in his poem. *Childe Harold* is thus a very incomplete picture of Italy — even of Byron's own imaginary journey from Venice to Rome. The poet describes only what made to him a special appeal, what most impressed his imagination and aroused his emotions. Fortunately, all that Byron describes is great and memorable in itself and has taken a strong and permanent hold on the imagination of mankind. It is strange, however, that he names not one single painter (Michelangelo is named as sculptor and architect), though Italy has produced many of the greatest, and he knew very well their names; that he mentions not one single picture, though he must have wandered through the most superb picture galleries of the world, at Venice, Florence, and Rome. He selects his material simply according to the demands of his own nature. Again, and as a result of this fact, *Childe Harold* is not merely what is called a descriptive poem, dealing only with external objects as they must appear to any casual observer. As such the poem would be little more than versified prose. *Childe Harold* is in truth highly *subjective*, that is, it presents external objects as seen through the medium of Byron's own individuality, with his very eyes — colored, glorified, and interpreted by the sensibility and imagination of a great poet. The poem thus becomes a consistent and splendid work of art and the revelation of a great personality.

### OUTLINE

VENICE: I–XIX (I–IV, descriptive and reflective; V–X, lyrical; XI–XIX, descriptive and reflective).
LYRICAL STANZAS: XX–XXIV (suffering, and its effect upon the soul).
ITALY: XXV–XXVI (its beauty and its ruins; reflective).

I

I STOOD in Venice,[1] on the "Bridge of Sighs";[2]
A palace and a prison on each hand:
I saw from out the wave her structures rise
As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand:
A thousand Years their cloudy wings expand
Around me, and a dying Glory smiles
O'er the far times, when many a subject land
Looked to the wingèd Lion's[3] marble piles,
Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles!

II

She looks a sea Cybele,[4] fresh from Ocean,
Rising with her tiara of proud towers
At airy distance, with majestic motion,
A ruler of the waters and their powers:
And such she was;—her daughters had their dowers
From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East

[1] **Venice**: This city has shared with Florence the especial favor of great English poets. Compare Byron's more elaborate "Ode on Venice," beginning,

"Oh, Venice! Venice! when thy marble walls
Are level with the waters, there shall be
A cry of nations o'er thy sunken halls,
A loud lament along the sleeping sea!"

[2] "**Bridge of Sighs**": so called from the fact that through its passages prisoners were led for trial and judgment. It was built in 1597 over the Rio (canal) della Paglia, and connects the Doge's palace with the state prisons.

[3] **The wingèd Lion's**: St Mark, the patron saint of Venice, has the lion for his symbol in Christian art, and the "Lion of St. Mark" thus became the standard of the Republic. Its image in bronze is one of the sights of the city.

[4] **A sea Cybele**: Cybele, originally an Asiatic goddess, was later identified with the Greek Rhea, mother of the gods. The source of social progress and civilization, she was also regarded as the founder of towns and cities, and for this reason is represented in art as crowned with a diadem of towers. She traveled riding on a lion or in a chariot drawn by lions. Byron's reference to Venice as a "sea Cybele" is hence peculiarly appropriate. Venice was a mother of civilization and the arts, wore a "tiara of proud towers," and had for her standard the "wingèd Lion."

Poured in her lap all gems in sparkling showers:
In purple was she robed, and of her feast
Monarchs partook, and deemed their dignity increased.

III

In Venice Tasso's echoes[1] are no more,
And silent rows the songless Gondolier;
Her palaces are crumbling to the shore,
And music meets not always now the ear:
Those days are gone — but Beauty still is here.
States fall, arts fade — but Nature doth not die,
Nor yet forget how Venice once was dear,
The pleasant place of all festivity,
The Revel[2] of the earth — the Masque[2] of Italy!

IV

But unto us she hath a spell beyond
Her name in story, and her long array
Of mighty shadows, whose dim forms despond
Above the dogeless city's vanished sway;
Ours is a trophy which will not decay
With the Rialto[3]; Shylock and the Moor,[4]

[1] **Tasso's echoes**: in the days when Venice was an independent state it is said that a favorite song of the gondoliers consisted of selections from Tasso's famous epic poem, *Jerusalem Delivered*, translated from the Tuscan into the Venetian dialect. For *Tasso*, see note 4, p. 69.

[2] **Revel; Masque**: a "revel" in old times was what the name implies, — a boisterous entertainment, full of jollity and noisy sport. "Masque" here perhaps stands for the carnivals for which Venice was famous, since masques were worn at these festivals. The word may however refer to that species of dramatic entertainment known as the "Masque," — a mixture of pageant, song, and dance, which originated in Italy.

[3] **Rialto**: this word comes from "rivo alto" (deep stream), and at first designated the group of islands on the left of the Grand Canal, which formed the site of the original city. But Byron incorrectly uses the word for the Ponte di Rialto (Bridge of the Rialto), which spans the Grand Canal and forms one of the most famous landmarks of Venice.

[4] **Shylock and the Moor**: Shylock is the principal character of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice;* the Moor is Shakespeare's Othello. The scenes of both

And Pierre,[1] cannot be swept or worn away —
The keystones of the arch! though all were o'er,
For us repeopled were the solitary shore.

V

The Beings of the Mind are not of clay:
Essentially immortal, they create
And multiply in us a brighter ray
And more beloved existence: that which Fate
Prohibits to dull life in this our state
Of mortal bondage, by these Spirits supplied,
First exiles, then replaces, what we hate;
Watering the heart whose early flowers have died,
And with a fresher growth replenishing the void.

VI

Such is the refuge of our youth and age —
The first from Hope, the last from Vacancy:
And this wan feeling peoples many a page —
And, may be, that which grows beneath mine eye.
Yet there are things whose strong reality
Outshines our fairy-land; in shape and hues
More beautiful than our fantastic sky,
And the strange constellations which the Muse
O'er her wild universe is skillful to diffuse:

VII

I saw or dreamed of such, — but let them go, —
They came like Truth — and disappeared like dreams;
And whatsoe'er they were — are now but so:
I could replace them if I would; still teems

plays are laid in part in Venice. Byron here names the two greatest of all imaginary characters connected with the city.

[1] **Pierre**: the hero of a famous English tragedy, *Venice Preserved*, by Thomas Otway (1652–1685).

My mind with many a form which aptly seems
Such as I sought for, and at moments found;
Let these too go — for waking Reason deems
Such overweening phantasies unsound,
And other voices speak, and other sights surround.

VIII

I've taught me other tongues — and in strange eyes
Have made me not a stranger; to the mind
Which is itself, no changes bring surprise;
Nor is it harsh to make, nor hard to find
A country with — ay, or without — mankind;
Yet was I born where men are proud to be, —
Not without cause; and should I leave behind
The inviolate Island of the sage and free,
And seek me out a home by a remoter sea,

IX

Perhaps I loved it well; and should I lay
My ashes in a soil which is not mine,
My Spirit shall resume it — if we may
Unbodied choose a sanctuary. I twine
My hopes of being remembered in my line
With my land's language: if too fond and far
These aspirations in their scope incline, —
If my fame should be, as my fortunes are,
Of hasty growth and blight, and dull Oblivion bar

X

My name from out the temple where the dead
Are honored by the Nations — let it be —
And light the laurels on a loftier head!
And be the Spartan's epitaph on me —

"Sparta[1] hath many a worthier son than he."
Meantime I seek no sympathies — nor need;
The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree
I planted, — they have torn me, — and I bleed:
I should have known what fruit would spring from such a seed.

XI

The spouseless Adriatic mourns her Lord,[2]
And annual marriage now no more renewed —
The Bucentaur[3] lies rotting unrestored,
Neglected garment of her widowhood!
St. Mark yet sees his Lion[4] where he stood
Stand, but in mockery of his withered power,
Over the proud Place where an Emperor sued,[5]
And monarchs gazed and envied in the hour
When Venice was a Queen with an unequalled dower.

XII

The Suabian sued, and now the Austrian[6] reigns —
An Emperor tramples where an Emperor[6] knelt;

[1] **Sparta . . . son than he**: this was the answer given by the mother of Brasidas, the Spartan general (d. 422 B.C.), to strangers who praised the memory of her son.

[2] **Her Lord**: Venice has been called "the Bride of the Adriatic." Byron has confused the gender: the Adriatic (in Latin, *Hadria*, the Adriatic Sea, is masculine) is the bridegroom, Venice the bride.

[3] **Bucentaur**: the state barge of Venice, in which, on Ascension Day, the Doge used to wed the Adriatic by dropping a ring into it. Three ships of this name were built, the last of which was destroyed by the French in 1797. The ship perhaps took its name from the figure of a "bucentaur" (head of a man and body of a bull) in its bow.

[4] **His Lion**: see note 3, p. 55.

[5] **An Emperor sued**: Frederick Barbarossa ("the Suabian"), emperor of Germany, knelt as a suitor, July 24, 1177, in the plaza before the church of St. Mark. However, it was not to the Venetians, but to Pope Alexander III, that he sued; and he knelt only as a son of the Church, not as a vanquished enemy. The treaty entered into on this occasion concluded a long and bloody war between Germany and Italy.

[6] **The Austrian; An Emperor**: Napoleon conquered Venice in 1797, and in the same year ceded it to the Austrians, who held the city intermittently until

Kingdoms are shrunk to provinces, and chains
Clank over sceptred cities; nations melt
From Power's high pinnacle, when they have felt
The sunshine for a while, and downward go
Like lauwine[1] loosened from the mountain's belt;
Oh for one hour of blind old Dandolo![2]
Th' octogenarian chief, Byzantium's conquering foe.

XIII

Before St. Mark still glow his steeds of brass,[3]
Their gilded collars glittering in the sun;
But is not Doria's menace[4] come to pass?
Are they not *bridled?*—Venice, lost and won,
Her thirteen hundred years of freedom done,
Sinks, like a sea-weed, into whence she rose!
Better be whelmed beneath the waves, and shun,
Even in Destruction's depth, her foreign foes,
From whom submission wrings an infamous repose.

1866. The reader cannot fail to be struck with Byron's frequent references to Napoleon; see also stanzas LXXXIX–XCII, XCVII; and note 3, p. 92.

[1] **Lauwine** (German, *lawine*): avalanche.

[2] **Blind old Dandolo**: Enrico Dandolo was elected doge of Venice in 1192, at the age of eighty-five, and commanded the Venetians at the taking of Constantinople in 1204. He was one of the most famous of Venetian rulers and conquerors.

"Oh, for an hour of Dundee" was the exclamation of a Highland chieftain at the indecisive battle of Sheriff-muir, in 1715, between the Scotch Royalists and the Jacobite Highlanders. "Dundee" was John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount of Dundee, who won the battle of Killicrankie (1689). He is the chief figure in Scott's *Old Mortality*.

[3] **Steeds of brass**: the four bronze "Horses of St. Mark," which stand before the church of St. Mark, were, according to history or legend, brought by the emperor Augustus from Alexandria; were next taken by Constantine to Constantinople; were again transferred, by Dandolo, to Venice, in 1204; were captured by Napoleon in 1797, and taken to Paris; but were finally restored to the Venetians in 1815. The later events are of course authentic history.

[4] **Doria's menace**: according to tradition the Genoese admiral, Pietro Doria, in 1379, threatened the Venetians that he would "put a rein on those unbridled horses of yours." He failed to do this, however, and the horses remained unbridled until the conquest by Napoleon.

XIV

In youth She was all glory, — a new Tyre,[1] —
Her very by-word sprung from victory,
The "Planter of the Lion,"[2] which through fire
And blood she bore o'er subject earth and sea;
Though making many slaves, Herself still free,
And Europe's bulwark 'gainst the Ottomite;[3]
Witness Troy's rival, Candia![4] Vouch it, ye
Immortal waves that saw Lepanto's[5] fight!
For ye are names no time nor tyranny can blight.

XV

Statues of glass — all shivered — the long file
Of her dead Doges are declined to dust;
But where they dwelt, the vast and sumptuous pile
Bespeaks the pageant of their splendid trust;
Their sceptre broken, and their sword in rust,
Have yielded to the stranger: empty halls,
Thin streets, and foreign aspects, such as must
Too oft remind her who and what enthralls,
Have flung a desolate cloud o'er Venice' lovely walls.

[1] **Tyre**: the chief city of Phœnicia, whose very name was the synonym of wealth and luxury. Under Hiram, the contemporary and friend of Solomon, it became the great commercial city of the Mediterranean (see Ezekiel xxvi).

[2] **Planter of the Lion**: Byron has in mind the name sometimes given to Venetians — "Pantaloni." The poet's etymology is fanciful, since the word is not connected with the standard of the Republic (the "winged lion"), but is probably derived from St. *Pantaleon*, a favorite among the Venetians.

[3] **Ottomite**: for Ottoman; see *Othello*, Act II, sc. iii, l. 171. From the fourteenth to the nineteenth century the Turks continually menaced Europe.

[4] **Troy's rival, Candia**: Candia (Crete) was lost by the Venetians to the Turks in 1669, after a defense of twenty-five years. She is "Troy's rival," as the siege of Troy lasted ten years.

[5] **Lepanto**: one of the great sea fights of history, fought off Lepanto, Greece, on October 7, 1571, between the Italian and Spanish fleets under Don John of Austria, and the Turks. The loss was 8000 Christians and 30,000 Turks.

XVI

When Athens' armies fell at Syracuse,
And fettered thousands bore the yoke of war,
Redemption rose up in the Attic Muse,[1]
Her voice their only ransom from afar:
See! as they chant the tragic hymn, the car
Of the o'ermastered victor stops — the reins
Fall from his hands — his idle scimitar
Starts from its belt — he rends his captive's chains,
And bids him thank the Bard[2] for freedom and his strains.

XVII

Thus, Venice! if no stronger claim were thine,
Were all thy proud historic deeds forgot,
Thy choral memory of the Bard divine,
Thy love of Tasso, should have cut the knot
Which ties thee to thy tyrants; and thy lot
Is shameful to the nations, — most of all,
Albion![3] to thee: the Ocean Queen[3] should not
Abandon Ocean's children; in the fall
Of Venice think of thine, despite thy watery wall.

XVIII

I loved her from my boyhood — she to me
Was as a fairy city of the heart,

[1] **Attic Muse**: Plutarch (*Life of Nicias*) says that when the Athenians were defeated at Syracuse (Sicily) in 413 B.C., made prisoners, and sold as slaves, some of them won hospitality and protection by reciting passages from the dramas of Euripides (the "Attic Muse"), which were very popular throughout the island (see Grote's *History of Greece*, Vol. VII, pp. 178–179, ed. 1888). This pretty story is admirably used as the basis of Browning's *Balaustion's Adventure*.

[2] **Bard**: Euripides.

[3] **Albion; Ocean Queen**: "Albion" (from Latin *albus*, white) is a name given to England on account of her white cliffs of Dover, first of her region to be seen by the voyager across the Channel. She is still the "Ocean Queen," since her navies, military and merchant, dominate the seas.

Rising like water-columns from the sea —
Of joy the sojourn, and of wealth the mart;
And Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare's art,[1]
Had stamped her image in me, and even so,
Although I found her thus, we did not part —
Perchance even dearer in her day of woe,
Than when she was a boast, a marvel, and a show.

XIX

I can repeople with the past — and of
The present there is still for eye and thought,
And meditation chastened down, enough;
And more, it may be, than I hoped or sought,
And of the happiest moments which were wrought
Within the web of my existence, some
From thee, fair Venice! have their colors caught:
There are some feelings Time cannot benumb,
Nor Torture shake, or mine would now be cold and dumb.

XX

But, from their nature, will the Tannen[2] grow
Loftiest on loftiest and least sheltered rocks,
Rooted in barrenness, where nought below
Of soil supports them 'gainst the Alpine shocks
Of eddying storms; yet springs the trunk, and mocks
The howling tempest, till its height and frame
Are worthy of the mountains from whose blocks
Of bleak, gray granite into life it came,
And grew a giant tree; — the Mind may grow the same.

[1] **Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare's art**: for Otway and Shakespeare, see note 1, p. 57; and note 4, p. 56. The scene of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, one of the novels of Mrs. Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823), is laid in part in Venice, as is that of *The Ghost-Seer or Armenian*, an unfinished novel by Schiller (1759–1805), the great German poet and dramatist.

[2] **Tannen** (plural of German *tanne*): a species of fir tree found throughout the mountainous region of central Europe.

XXI

Existence may be borne, and the deep root
Of life and sufferance make its firm abode
In bare and desolated bosoms: mute
The camel labors with the heaviest load,
And the wolf dies in silence, — not bestowed
In vain should such example be; if they,
Things of ignoble or of savage mood,
Endure and shrink not, we of nobler clay
May temper it to bear, — it is but for a day.

XXII

All suffering doth destroy, or is destroyed,
Even by the sufferer; and, in each event,
Ends: — Some, with hope replenished and rebuoyed,
Return to whence they came — with like intent,
And weave their web again; some, bowed and bent,
Wax gray and ghastly, withering ere their time,
And perish with the reed on which they leant;
Some seek devotion — toil — war — good or crime,
According as their souls were formed to sink or climb.

XXIII

But ever and anon of griefs subdued
There comes a token like a scorpion's sting,
Scarce seen, but with fresh bitterness imbued;
And slight withal may be the things which bring
Back on the heart the weight which it would fling
Aside forever: it may be a sound —
A tone of music — summer's eve — or spring —
A flower — the wind — the ocean — which shall wound,
Striking the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound;

XXIV

And how and why we know not, nor can trace
Home to its cloud this lightning of the mind,
But feel the shock renewed, nor can efface
The blight and blackening which it leaves behind,
Which out of things familiar, undesigned,
When least we deem of such, calls up to view
The Spectres whom no exorcism can bind —
The cold — the changed — perchance the dead, anew —
The mourned, the loved, the lost — too many! yet how few!

XXV

But my Soul wanders; I demand it back
To meditate amongst decay, and stand
A ruin amidst ruins; there to track
Fallen states and buried greatness, o'er a land
Which *was* the mightiest in its old command,
And *is* the loveliest, and must ever be
The master-mould of Nature's heavenly hand;
Wherein were cast the heroic and the free —
The beautiful, the brave — the lords of earth and sea.

XXVI[1]

The Commonwealth of Kings — the Men of Rome!
And even since, and now, fair Italy!
Thou art the Garden of the World, the home
Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree;

[1] **Stanza XXVI**: with this should be read the following, from Canto III:

"Italia! too, Italia! looking on thee,
Full flashes on the soul the light of ages,
Since the fierce Carthaginian almost won thee,
To the last halo of the chiefs and sages
Who glorify thy consecrated pages;
Thou wert the throne and grave of empires; still
The fount at which the panting mind assuages
Her thirst of knowledge, quaffing there her fill,
Flows from the eternal source of Rome's imperial hill."

Even in thy desert, what is like to thee?
Thy very weeds are beautiful — thy waste
More rich than other climes' fertility;
Thy wreck, a glory; and thy ruin, graced
With an immaculate charm which can not be defaced.

XXVII

The moon is up, and yet it is not night —
Sunset divides the sky with her — a sea
Of glory streams along the Alpine height
Of blue Friuli's mountains;[1] Heaven is free
From clouds, but of all colors seems to be, —
Melted to one vast Iris of the West,
Where the Day joins the past Eternity;
While, on the other hand, meek Dian's crest
Floats through the azure air — an island of the blest!

XXVIII

A single star is at her side, and reigns
With her o'er half the lovely heaven; but still
Yon sunny sea heaves brightly, and remains
Rolled o'er the peak of the far Rhætian hill,[2]
As Day and Night contending were, until
Nature reclaimed her order: — gently flows
The deep-dyed Brenta,[3] where their hues instil
The odorous purple of a new-born rose,
Which streams upon her stream, and glassed within it glows,

[1] **Friuli's mountains**: Friuli is a district north of the Adriatic Sea. Stanzas XXVII, XXVIII, and XXIX are, Byron avers, a "literal and hardly sufficient delineation of an August evening, as contemplated in one of many rides along the banks of the Brenta, near La Mira." At La Mira, near Venice, the poet spent the summers of 1817 and 1818.

[2] **Rhætian hill**: probably the "Rhætian Alps," a chain of the Alps which extends down into Rhætia, the ancient name of a Roman province in northern Italy.

[3] **Brenta**: a river in northeastern Italy, which rises in the Tyrol and flows into the Gulf of Venice, south of the city.

XXIX

Filled with the face of heaven, which, from afar,
Comes down upon the waters! all its hues,
From the rich sunset to the rising star,
Their magical variety diffuse;
And now they change — a paler Shadow strews
Its mantle o'er the mountains; parting Day
Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
With a new color as it gasps away —
The last still loveliest, till — 't is gone — and all is gray.

XXX

There is a tomb in Arquá;[1] — reared in air,
Pillared in their sarcophagus, repose
The bones of Laura's lover:[2] here repair
Many familiar with his well-sung woes,
The Pilgrims of his genius. He arose
To raise a language, and his land reclaim
From the dull yoke of her barbaric foes;
Watering the tree which bears his Lady's name
With his melodious tears, he gave himself to Fame.

[1] **Arquá**: a village thirteen miles southwest of Padua and about thirty miles southwest of Venice. Here Petrarch died and is buried.

[2] **Laura's lover**: Petrarch (1304–1374), the great poet and scholar, one of the chief names in Italian literature. At Vaucluse, near Avignon, in France, he bought a little house, where he lived in seclusion and did most of his best work; hence he has been called "the hermit of Vaucluse." In 1340 he was summoned on the same day to both Rome and Paris to be crowned poet laureate; but he preferred Rome, and there received the laurel crown in 1341. He was the friend of Boccaccio, and helped largely to bring about the Revival of Learning in Italy. Many of his sonnets are addressed to a certain "Laura," who has never been positively identified, though innumerable pages have been written on the subject. If "Laura" was indeed Madame de Sale, of Avignon, there is no reason to suppose that she ever returned the poet's devotion; indeed, it is highly probable that the Laura of the sonnets was more an ideal than a real person. Yet the phrase "Petrarch and Laura" has become proverbial.

XXXI

They keep his dust in Arquá, where he died;
The mountain-village where his latter days
Went down the vale of years; and 't is their pride —
An honest pride — and let it be their praise,
To offer to the passing stranger's gaze
His mansion and his sepulchre — both plain
And venerably simple, such as raise
A feeling more accordant with his strain
Than if a pyramid formed his monumental fane.

XXXII

And the soft quiet hamlet where he dwelt
Is one of that complexion which seems made
For those who their mortality have felt,
And sought a refuge from their hopes decayed
In the deep umbrage of a green hill's shade,
Which shows a distant prospect far away
Of busy cities, now in vain displayed,
For they can lure no further; and the ray
Of a bright sun can make sufficient holiday.

XXXIII

Developing the mountains, leaves, and flowers,
And shining in the brawling brook, where-by,
Clear as its current, glide the sauntering hours
With a calm languor, which, though to the eye
Idlesse it seem, hath its morality.
If from society we learn to live,
'T is Solitude should teach us how to die;
It hath no flatterers — Vanity can give
No hollow aid; alone — man with his God must strive:

XXXIV

Or, it may be, with Demons, who impair
The strength of better thoughts, and seek their prey
In melancholy bosoms — such as were
Of moody texture from their earliest day,
And loved to dwell in darkness and dismay,
Deeming themselves predestined to a doom
Which is not of the pangs that pass away;
Making the sun like blood, the earth a tomb,
The tomb a hell, — and hell itself a murkier gloom.

XXXV

Ferrara![1] in thy wide and grass-grown streets,
Whose symmetry was not for solitude,
There seems as 't were a curse upon the seats
Of former sovereigns, and the antique brood
Of Este,[2] which for many an age made good
Its strength within thy walls, and was of yore
Patron or Tyrant, as the changing mood
Of petty power impelled, of those who wore
The wreath[3] which Dante's brow alone had worn before.

XXXVI

And Tasso[4] is their glory and their shame —
Hark to his strain! and then survey his cell!

[1] **Ferrara**: a city of Italy about fifty-five miles southwest of Venice, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries famous as a center of literature and art. It was ruled by the great family of Este, and was the home of both Ariosto and Tasso.

[2] **Este**: one of the oldest and most renowned of the princely houses of Italy, ruling over Ferrara, Modena, and Reggio, and famous as patrons of art and literature. The family became extinct in 1803.

[3] **Those who wore the wreath**: the great poets Ariosto and Tasso, who were successors by right of genius to Dante's wreath of laurel, and who were patronized by the house of Este.

[4] **Tasso**: Torquato Tasso, one of the most celebrated of Italian poets, was born in Sorrento, Italy, in 1544, and died in Rome in 1595. He led a varied and eventful life, and finally went to Ferrara, where Duke Alfonso loaded him with

And see how dearly earned Torquato's fame,
And where Alfonso [1] bade his poet dwell:
The miserable despot could not quell
The insulted mind he sought to quench, and blend
With the surrounding maniacs, in the hell
Where he had plunged it. Glory without end
Scattered the clouds away — and on that name attend

XXXVII

The tears and praises of all time; while thine
Would rot in its oblivion — in the sink
Of worthless dust, which from thy boasted line
Is shaken into nothing — but the link
Thou formest in his fortunes bids us think
Of thy poor malice, naming thee with scorn:
Alfonso! how thy ducal pageants shrink
From thee! if in another station born,
Scarce fit to be the slave of him thou mad'st to mourn.

XXXVIII

*Thou!* formed to eat, and be despised, and die,
Even as the beasts that perish — save that thou
Hadst a more splendid trough and wider sty:
*He!* with a glory round his furrowed brow,
Which emanated then, and dazzles now,

favors. After an attack of fever, in 1574, he became subject to strange delusions and fits of melancholy. In time his disorder became so violent that the duke was forced to place him in an insane asylum, where he remained for seven years. Though he lived to be honored by his countrymen, the latter part of his life was unhappy. His *Jerusalem Delivered* is one of the great epic poems of the world. Byron's stanzas on Tasso are based on the idea that the poet was imprisoned by Alfonso on account of his love for Leonora d'Este, the duke's sister, — a story that forms the basis of Goethe's drama *Torquato Tasso* and Byron's *Lament of Tasso*. Though this was not the case, there is little doubt that Tasso suffered some injustice and mistreatment.

[1] **Alfonso**: see preceding note.

In face of all his foes, the Cruscan quire,[1]
And Boileau,[2] whose rash envy could allow
No strain which shamed his country's creaking lyre,
That whetstone of the teeth — monotony in wire!

XXXIX

Peace to Torquato's injured shade! 't was his
In life and death to be the mark where Wrong
Aimed with her poisoned arrows — but to miss.
Oh, Victor unsurpassed in modern song!
Each year brings forth its millions; but how long
The tide of generations shall roll on,
And not the whole combined and countless throng
Compose a mind like thine? though all in one
Condensed their scattered rays, they would not form a sun.

XL

Great as thou art, yet paralleled by those,
Thy countrymen, before thee born to shine,
The Bards of Hell and Chivalry:[3] first rose
The Tuscan father's Comedy Divine;[4]

[1] **Cruscan quire**: the Accademia della Crusca (the Academy of the Bran) was founded in Florence in 1582, to refine the Italian language and literature. It did not favor Tasso's work.

[2] **Boileau**: a French poet and critic (1636–1711), who, in one of his satires, contrasts *le clinquant du Tasse* (the tinsel of Tasso) with the pure gold of Virgil. The "creaking lyre" probably refers to the French Alexandrine verse, which seems to us a rather monotonous meter, though in it many great French masterpieces are written. Boileau used it exclusively.

[3] **The Bards of Hell and Chivalry**: Dante and Ariosto (see the two notes following).

[4] **The Tuscan father's Comedy Divine**: Dante (1265–1321), the greatest of Italian poets, wrote the *Divine Comedy*. Dante was a Florentine, hence a "Tuscan"; and was, like Milton, both poet and patriot. His life was stormy and eventful, and he died an unhappy exile from his native city, which treated him with ingratitude, but which afterwards begged for his body and came to regard his fame as her proudest possession. Dante is the "Bard of Hell," since the *Inferno*, the first part of the *Divine Comedy*, is a picture of hell. Byron wrote a long poem called *The Prophecy of Dante*, but it does not rank high among his works.

Then, not unequal to the Florentine,
The southern Scott,[1] the minstrel who called forth
A new creation with his magic line,
And, like the Ariosto of the North,[1]
Sang ladye-love and war, romance and knightly worth.

XLI

The lightning rent from Ariosto's bust[2]
The iron crown of laurel's mimicked leaves;
Nor was the ominous element unjust,
For the true laurel-wreath which Glory weaves
Is of the tree no bolt of thunder cleaves,[3]
And the false semblance but disgraced his brow;
Yet still, if fondly Superstition grieves,
Know, that the lightning sanctifies[4] below
Whate'er it strikes; — yon head is doubly sacred now.

XLII[5]

Italia! oh, Italia! thou who hast
The fatal gift of beauty, which became

[1] **The southern Scott; the Ariosto of the North**: Ariosto (1474–1533), the "Bard of Chivalry," one of the four most celebrated of Italian poets, wrote the *Orlando Furioso*, a poem of love and chivalry; and as a poet of love and chivalry he may perhaps be called the "southern Scott," but here the likeness ends. The "Ariosto of the North" is, of course, Sir Walter himself. Byron is perhaps thinking of Scott's *Marmion*, which is indeed a poem of love and chivalry, but very different from the work of Ariosto.

[2] **Ariosto's bust**: the body of Ariosto was at first entombed in the Benedictine church of Ferrara. The bust that surmounted the tomb was once struck by lightning, which melted the iron crown of laurel leaves.

[3] **The tree no bolt of thunder cleaves**: the Roman superstition was that the laurel tree was never struck by lightning.

[4] **The lightning sanctifies**: the Romans, as worshipers of Jupiter, the thunder god, held sacred certain objects struck by lightning.

[5] **Stanzas XLII and XLIII**: these are, with the exception of a line or two, a translation of a famous sonnet by the Italian poet Filicaja. From the very beginning of her history Italy has been the scene of almost perpetual conflict. Since Byron wrote, however, the united and prosperous Italy he dreamed of and worked for has become a reality in the modern kingdom of Italy; and the cities

A funeral dower of present woes and past —
On thy sweet brow is sorrow ploughed by shame,
And annals graved in characters of flame.
Oh, God! that thou wert in thy nakedness
Less lovely or more powerful, and couldst claim
Thy right, and awe the robbers back, who press
To shed thy blood, and drink the tears of thy distress;

XLIII

Then might'st thou more appall; or, less desired,
Be homely and be peaceful, undeplored
For thy destructive charms; then, still untired,
Would not be seen the armèd torrents[1] poured
Down the deep Alps; nor would the hostile horde
Of many-nationed spoilers[1] from the Po
Quaff blood and water; nor the stranger's sword[1]
Be thy sad weapon of defence, and so,
Victor or vanquished, thou the slave of friend or foe.

XLIV

Wandering in youth,[2] I traced the path of him,
The Roman friend of Rome's least-mortal mind,

he loved and sung about so nobly — Venice, Florence, and Rome — all are members of one enlightened government, and again, after ages, are enjoying both prosperity and peace.

[1] **The armèd torrents**: this might refer to Hannibal's passage through the Alps into Italy (218 B.C.); to Charles VIII's invasion, in 1494 A.D.; or to other incursions; but more probably it refers to the then recent invasion by Napoleon. The "many-nationed spoilers" are chiefly the French and the Austrians: the French conquered, but gave northern Italy to Austria. "From the Po" (l. 6) is an adverbial phrase modifying "quaff." "The stranger's sword" is probably Napoleon's, who had overrun Italy and held her against the nations of the north; or it may be the sword of the Austrian.

[2] **Wandering in youth**: his trip to Asia Minor, Greece, and Albania, in 1809–1811, which furnished material for the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*. For another allusion to this tour, see stanzas CLXXV and CLXXVI.

The friend of Tully:[1] as my bark did skim
The bright blue waters with a fanning wind,
Came Megara before me, and behind
Ægina lay — Piræus on the right,
And Corinth on the left; I lay reclined
Along the prow, and saw all these unite
In ruin — even as he had seen the desolate sight;

XLV

For Time hath not rebuilt them, but upreared
Barbaric dwellings on their shattered site,
Which only make more mourned and more endeared
The few last rays of their far-scattered light,
And the crushed relics of their vanished might.
The Roman saw these tombs in his own age,
These sepulchres of cities, which excite
Sad wonder, and his yet surviving page
The moral lesson bears, drawn from such pilgrimage.

XLVI

That page is now before me, and on mine
*His* country's ruin added to the mass
Of perished states he mourned in their decline,
And I in desolation: all that *was*
Of then destruction, *is;* and now, alas!
Rome — Rome imperial, bows her to the storm,
In the same dust and blackness, and we pass
The skeleton of her Titanic form,
Wrecks of another world, whose ashes still are warm.

[1] **The friend of Tully**: Tully, "Rome's least mortal mind," is Marcus *Tullius* Cicero (106–43 B.C.), the greatest of Roman orators and prose writers. His friend was Servius Sulpicius, who wrote to Cicero a description of his voyage past the coast of Greece, where he saw, even then in ruins, the places mentioned by Byron in stanza XLIV (see also stanza CLXXIV).

XLVII

Yet, Italy! through every other land
Thy wrongs should ring — and shall — from side to side;
Mother of Arts! as once of Arms; thy hand
Was then our Guardian, and is still our Guide;
Parent of our Religion! whom the wide
Nations have knelt to for the keys of heaven![1]
Europe, repentant of her parricide,
Shall yet redeem thee, and, all backward driven,
Roll the barbarian tide, and sue to be forgiven.

XLVIII

But Arno wins us to the fair white walls,
Where the Etrurian Athens[2] claims and keeps
A softer feeling for her fairy halls:
Girt by her theatre of hills, she reaps
Her corn, and wine, and oil, and Plenty leaps
To laughing life, with her redundant horn.
Along the banks where smiling Arno sweeps
Was modern Luxury of Commerce born,
And buried Learning rose, redeemed to a new morn.

[1] **The keys of heaven**: it was Rome rather than Italy who was "the parent of our religion," and who, as the seat of the Popes, successors to St. Peter, held the "keys of heaven" (see Matthew xvi, 19).

[2] **The Etrurian Athens**: Florence, often called the "Modern Athens," is in the province known to the ancient Romans as Etruria (now Tuscany), and is built on both sides of the river Arno. Its prosperity first arose from its commerce and great banking institutions — "modern luxury of Commerce born." Its merchants were princes, the wealthiest and most powerful of whom, the Medici, became the leaders of the city. This great family, one of the most remarkable known to history, patronized all the arts and sciences to an extent never known before. Under the patronage of the Medici, Florence, during the Age of the Renaissance (about 1400–1550), produced numberless men of science, scholars, architects, painters, and poets. Around Lorenzo de' Medici, the "Magnificent," gathered Machiavelli (see note 4, p. 78), Michelangelo (see note 1, p. 78), Politian, the scholar, Ghirlandajo, the painter, and a host of other men of genius. Florence is still one of the most beautiful and interesting cities in the world. A roll of the great men associated with her name reads like a history of civilization.

XLIX

There, too, the Goddess[1] loves in stone, and fills
The air around with beauty; we inhale
The ambrosial aspect, which, beheld, instils
Part of its immortality; the veil
Of heaven is half undrawn; within the pale
We stand, and in that form and face behold
What Mind can make, when Nature's self would fail;
And to the fond idolaters of old
Envy the innate flash which such a Soul could mould:

L

We gaze and turn away, and know not where,
Dazzled and drunk with beauty, till the heart
Reels with its fulness; there — for ever there —
Chained to the chariot of triumphal Art,
We stand as captives, and would not depart.
Away! — there need no words, nor terms precise,
The paltry jargon of the marble mart,
Where Pedantry gulls Folly — we have eyes:
Blood — pulse — and breast confirm the Dardan Shepherd's[2] prize.

LI

Appearedst thou not to Paris in this guise?
Or to more deeply blest Anchises?[3] or,
In all thy perfect goddess-ship, when lies
Before thee thy own vanquished Lord of War?[3]

[1] **The Goddess**: the famous statue known as the Venus de Medici, a replica of which stands in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence.

[2] **The Dardan Shepherd**: according to the Greek myth, Paris, son of Priam, king of Troy, became a shepherd on Mt. Ida (see note 2, p. 86). He is here called the "Dardan" shepherd, since Troy was founded by Dardanus. Paris, called in as judge, awarded the prize of beauty to Venus in preference to Juno and Minerva. This was the indirect cause of the Trojan War.

[3] **Anchises; Lord of War**: Anchises was a beautiful youth beloved of Venus, and the father of Æneas, the hero of Virgil's *Æneid*. The "Lord of War" is Mars, the husband of Venus.

And gazing in thy face as toward a star,
Laid on thy lap, his eyes to thee upturn,
Feeding on thy sweet cheek! while thy lips are
With lava kisses melting while they burn,
Showered on his eyelids, brow, and mouth, as from an urn!

LII

Glowing, and circumfused in speechless love —
Their full divinity inadequate
That feeling to express, or to improve —
The gods become as mortals, and man's fate
Has moments like their brightest; but the weight
Of earth recoils upon us; — let it go!
We can recall such visions, and create,
From what has been, or might be, things which grow
Into thy statue's form, and look like gods below.

LIII

I leave to learned fingers, and wise hands,
The Artist and his Ape, to teach and tell
How well his connoisseurship understands
The graceful bend, and the voluptuous swell:
Let these describe the undescribable:
I would not their vile breath should crisp the stream
Wherein that image shall for ever dwell —
The unruffled mirror of the loveliest dream
That ever left the sky on the deep soul to beam.

LIV

In Santa Croce's[1] holy precincts lie
Ashes which make it holier, dust which is
Even in itself an immortality,
Though there were nothing save the past, and this,

[1] **Santa Croce**: the Westminster Abbey of Florence. Here are buried Michelangelo, Machiavelli, Alfieri, and Galileo.

The particle of those sublimities
Which have relapsed to chaos: — here repose
Angelo's,[1] Alfieri's [2] bones, and his,
The starry Galileo,[3] with his woes;
Here Machiavelli's [4] earth returned to whence it rose.

LV

These are four minds, which, like the elements,
Might furnish forth creation: — Italy!
Time, which hath wronged thee with ten thousand rents
Of thine imperial garment, shall deny
And hath denied, to every other sky,
Spirits which soar from ruin: — thy decay
Is still impregnate with divinity,
Which gilds it with revivifying ray;
Such as the great of yore, Canova [5] is to-day.

LVI

But where repose the all Etruscan three[6] —
Dante, and Petrarch, and, scarce less than they,

[1] **Angelo**: Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564), perhaps the greatest artistic genius of all time, was preëminent as sculptor, architect, and painter, and is also numbered among the Italian poets. His greatest piece of architecture is the dome of St. Peter's Church in Rome (see note 2, p. 117); his greatest painting, the "Last Judgment," in the Sistine Chapel of the Vatican, Rome; and among his finest statues are the "Moses" and the "David." His genius was titanic, akin to that of Beethoven in music and Shakespeare in poetry. He began his career in Florence under the patronage of the Medici.

[2] **Alfieri**: Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803), the most celebrated of Italian tragic dramatists. *Saul* is perhaps his best play.

[3] **Galileo**: Galileo (1564–1642), the most famous of all astronomers. Milton met Galileo in Italy, and alludes to him in *Paradise Lost*, Book I, l. 288; III, 590; and V, 262.

[4] **Machiavelli**: Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527), the great Italian historian and philosophic statesman. His most famous work is *The Prince*, a treatise on government, but his *History of Florence* is also a classic. He belonged to Lorenzo de' Medici's circle at Florence.

[5] **Canova**: Antonio Canova (1757–1822), the most celebrated of modern Italian sculptors.

[6] **The all Etruscan three**: Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio (see note following) were all born in Tuscany.

The Bard of Prose,[1] creative spirit! he
Of the Hundred Tales of love — where did they lay
Their bones, distinguished from our common clay
In death as life? Are they resolved to dust,
And have their country's marbles nought to say?
Could not her quarries furnish forth one bust?
Did they not to her breast their filial earth intrust?

LVII

Ungrateful Florence! Dante sleeps afar,[2]
Like Scipio,[3] buried by the upbraiding shore:
Thy factions, in their worse than civil war,
Proscribed the bard whose name for evermore
Their children's children would in vain adore
With the remorse of ages; and the crown[4]
Which Petrarch's laureate brow supremely wore,
Upon a far and foreign soil had grown —
His life, his fame — his grave, though rifled — not thine own.

LVIII

Boccaccio to his parent earth bequeathed
His dust, — and lies it not her Great among,

[1] **The Bard of Prose**: Boccaccio (1313–1375), the creator of Italian prose, and one of the greatest prose writers of the world, was born at Certaldo, but spent most of his life in Florence. He is one of the best of story-tellers; his collection of one hundred tales, known as the *Decameron*, has passed into every literature. Boccaccio was also a great scholar, was the friend of Petrarch, and did much to bring about the Revival of Learning. He was buried in the church of the Canonica at Certaldo, near Florence; but in 1783 his sepulcher was removed on the plea that a recent edict forbidding burial in churches applied also to ancient interments. This was only a pretext; the reason was that Boccaccio had been a bitter satirist of the Church.

[2] **Dante sleeps afar**: Dante was buried, not at Florence, his own city, but at Ravenna, "by the upbraiding shore" (see also note 4, p. 71; and stanza LIX).

[3] **Scipio**: the older Scipio Africanus (237–185 or 183 B.C.), the Roman conqueror of Hannibal, was, according to Livy, so disgusted by Rome's ingratitude that he retired to the coast of Campania, Italy, and ordered his body to be buried there. Another account asserts that he was buried by the Cælian hill in Rome (see note 2, p. 88).

[4] **Crown**: see note 2, p. 67.

With many a sweet and solemn requiem breathed
O'er him who formed the Tuscan's siren tongue?
That music in itself, whose sounds are song,
The poetry of speech? No; — even his tomb
Uptorn, must bear the hyæna bigot's wrong,
No more amidst the meaner dead find room,
Nor claim a passing sigh, because it told for *whom!*

LIX

And Santa Croce wants their mighty dust;
Yet for this want more noted, as of yore
The Cæsar's pageant,[1] shorn of Brutus' bust
Did but of Rome's best Son remind her more:
Happier Ravenna! on thy hoary shore,
Fortress of falling empire! honored sleeps
The immortal exile;[2] — Arquá, too, her store
Of tuneful relics proudly claims and keeps,
While Florence vainly begs her banished dead and weeps.

LX

What is her pyramid of precious stones?[3]
Of porphyry, jasper, agate, and all hues
Of gem and marble, to incrust the bones
Of merchant-dukes[3]? the momentary dews
Which, sparkling to the twilight stars, infuse
Freshness in the green turf that wraps the dead,

[1] **Cæsar's pageant**: a pageant decreed in 22 A.D. by Tiberius Cæsar at the funeral of Junia, wife of Cassius and sister of Brutus. The busts of her husband and of her brother were not allowed to be carried in the procession, since Cassius and Brutus had taken part in the assassination of Julius Cæsar. "Nevertheless," says Tacitus, the Roman historian, "their glory was all the more present in men's minds in that their images were withheld from men's eyes."

[2] **The immortal exile**: Dante (see note 4, p. 71).

[3] **Her pyramid of precious stones; merchant-dukes**: several of the Medici (see note 2, p. 75), the "merchant-dukes," are buried in the church of San Lorenzo, Florence, in magnificent sepulchers.

Whose names are mausoleums of the Muse,
Are gently prest with far more reverent tread
Than ever paced the slab which paves the princely head.

LXI

There be more things to greet the heart and eyes
In Arno's dome of Art's[1] most princely shrine,
Where Sculpture with her rainbow Sister vies;
There be more marvels yet — but not for mine;
For I have been accustomed to entwine
My thoughts with Nature, rather, in the fields,
Than Art in galleries: though a work divine
Calls for my Spirit's homage, yet it yields
Less than it feels, because the weapon which it wields

LXII

Is of another temper, and I roam
By Thrasimene's lake,[2] in the defiles
Fatal to Roman rashness, more at home;
For there the Carthaginian's warlike wiles
Come back before me, as his skill beguiles
The host between the mountains and the shore,
Where Courage falls in her despairing files,
And torrents, swollen to rivers with their gore,
Reek through the sultry plain, with legions scattered o'er,

[1] **Arno's dome of Art**: Byron probably refers to the Uffizi Gallery of sculpture and painting ("her rainbow Sister"), which is situated near the banks of the Arno in Florence, and which is, all things considered, perhaps the "most princely shrine" of art in the world. The word "dome" here means simply building, as is often the case with Byron.

[2] **Thrasimene's lake**: a lake ten miles long, lying ten miles west of the city of Perugia; the correct spelling is Trasimeno (Latin, *Trasimenus*). On its shores, in 217 B.C., Hannibal almost annihilated the army of the Romans. Livy states that, in the heat of the conflict, a severe earthquake passed unnoticed! However absurd the legend, Byron makes fine use of it. "The Carthaginian" is, of course, Hannibal, who is now acknowledged to have been a military genius of the first order.

LXIII

Like to a forest felled by mountain winds;
And such the storm of battle on this day,
And such the frenzy, whose convulsion blinds
To all save carnage, that, beneath the fray,
An earthquake reeled unheededly away!
None felt stern Nature rocking at his feet,
And yawning forth a grave for those who lay
Upon their bucklers for a winding-sheet —
Such is the absorbing hate when warring nations meet!

LXIV

The Earth to them was as a rolling bark
Which bore them to Eternity; they saw
The Ocean round, but had no time to mark
The motions of their vessel; Nature's law,
In them suspended, recked not of the awe
Which reigns when mountains tremble, and the birds
Plunge in the clouds for refuge, and withdraw
From their down-toppling nests; and bellowing herds
Stumble o'er heaving plains — and Man's dread hath no words.

LXV

Far other scene is Thrasimene now;
Her lake a sheet of silver, and her plain
Rent by no ravage save the gentle plough;
Her aged trees rise thick as once the slain
Lay where their roots are; but a brook hath ta'en —
A little rill of scanty stream and bed —
A name of blood from that day's sanguine rain;
And Sanguinetto[1] tells ye where the dead
Made the earth wet, and turned the unwilling waters red.

[1] **Sanguinetto**: This word means "bloody rivulet," and is the name of a small river flowing into Lake Trasimeno.

LXVI

But thou, Clitumnus![1] in thy sweetest wave
Of the most living crystal that was e'er
The haunt of river nymph, to gaze and lave
Her limbs where nothing hid them, thou dost rear
Thy grassy banks whereon the milk-white steer
Grazes — the purest God of gentle waters!
And most serene of aspect, and most clear;
Surely that stream was unprofaned by slaughters —
A mirror and a bath for Beauty's youngest daughters!

LXVII

And on thy happy shore a Temple still,
Of small and delicate proportion, keeps,
Upon a mild declivity of hill,
Its memory of thee; beneath it sweeps
Thy current's calmness; oft from out it leaps
The finny darter with the glittering scales,
Who dwells and revels in thy glassy deeps;
While, chance, some scattered water-lily sails
Down where the shallower wave still tells its bubbling tales.

LXVIII

Pass not unblest the Genius of the place!
If through the air a zephyr more serene
Win to the brow, 't is his; and if ye trace
Along his margin a more eloquent green,
If on the heart the freshness of the scene
Sprinkle its coolness, and from the dry dust
Of weary life a moment lave it clean
With Nature's baptism, — 't is to him ye must
Pay orisons for this suspension of disgust.

[1] **Clitumnus**: a river of Umbria, Italy, flowing into the Tinia, celebrated for its beauty and sanctity. Cattle who drank of its waters became snowy white!

LXIX

The roar of waters![1]— from the headlong height
Velino cleaves the wave-worn precipice;
The fall of waters! rapid as the light
The flashing mass foams shaking the abyss;
The hell of waters! where they howl and hiss,
And boil in endless torture; while the sweat
Of their great agony, wrung out from this
Their Phlegethon,[2] curls round the rocks of jet
That gird the gulf around, in pitiless horror set,

LXX

And mounts in spray the skies, and thence again
Returns in an unceasing shower, which round,
With its unemptied cloud of gentle rain,
Is an eternal April to the ground,
Making it all one emerald: — how profound
The gulf! and how the giant Element
From rock to rock leaps with delirious bound,
Crushing the cliffs, which, downward worn and rent
With his fierce footsteps, yield in chasms a fearful vent

LXXI

To the broad column which rolls on, and shows
More like the fountain of an infant sea

[1] **The roar of waters**: the waters of the Cascata del Marmore, or Marble Cascade, fifty-three miles northeast of Rome, near the city of Terni. It is formed by the Velino River, and falls six hundred and fifty feet. Byron says: "I saw the Cascata del Marmore of Terni twice, at different periods, — once from the summit of the precipice, and again from the valley below. The lower view is far to be preferred, if the traveller has time for one only; but in any point of view, either from above or below, it is worth all the cascades and torrents of Switzerland put together: the Staubach, Reichenbach, fall of Arpenaz, etc., are rills in comparative appearance. Of the fall of Schaffhausen I cannot speak, not yet having seen it."

[2] **Phlegethon**: in Greek mythology, a river of fire in the lower world.

Torn from the womb of mountains by the throes
Of a new world, than only thus to be
Parent of rivers, which flow gushingly,
With many windings, through the vale: — Look back!
Lo! where it comes like an Eternity,
As if to sweep down all things in its track,
Charming the eye with dread, — a matchless cataract,

LXXII

Horribly beautiful! but on the verge,
From side to side, beneath the glittering morn,
An Iris[1] sits, amidst the infernal surge,
Like Hope upon a death-bed, and, unworn
Its steady dyes, while all around is torn
By the distracted waters, bears serene
Its brilliant hues with all their beams unshorn:
Resembling, 'mid the torture of the scene,
Love watching Madness with unalterable mien.

LXXIII

Once more upon the woody Apennine[2] —
The infant Alps, which, — had I not before
Gazed on their mightier Parents, where the pine
Sits on more shaggy summits, and where roar
The thundering lauwine — might be worshipped more;
But I have seen the soaring Jungfrau[3] rear
Her never-trodden snow, and seen the hoar
Glaciers of bleak Mont Blanc[3] both far and near,
And in Chimari heard the thunder-hills of fear,

[1] **Iris**: not the flower, known as the *fleur de lys*, but the *rainbow* so characteristic of Alpine torrents and found by Byron at the Marble Cascade also.

[2] **The woody Apennine**: Byron is proceeding southward, towards Rome, and is skirting the eastern edge of the Apennines.

[3] **Jungfrau**; **Mont Blanc**: great peaks of the Alps, in height 13,670 and 15,781 feet respectively (see pp. 47–51 for Byron's feeling toward the Alps).

LXXIV

Th' Acroceraunian mountains[1] of old name;
And on Parnassus[2] seen the eagles fly
Like spirits of the spot, as 't were for fame,
For still they soared unutterably high;
I 've looked on Ida[2] with a Trojan's eye;
Athos[2] — Olympus[2] — Ætna[2] — Atlas[2] — made
These hills seem things of lesser dignity,
All — save the lone Soracte's[3] height, displayed
Not *now* in snow, which asks the lyric Roman's aid

LXXV

For our remembrance, and from out the plain
Heaves like a long-swept wave about to break,
And on the curl hangs pausing: not in vain
May he, who will, his recollections rake,
And quote in classic raptures, and awake
The hills with Latin echoes[4] — I abhorred

[1] **The Acroceraunian mountains**: Acroceraunia (modern Glossa), which in Greek means "the thunder-smitten peaks," was in ancient geography a promontory projecting from Epirus into the Ionian Sea.

[2] **Parnassus**: a mountain ridge eighty-three miles northwest of Athens, celebrated in Greek mythology as the abode of Apollo, the Muses, and the nymphs; greatest height, 8068 feet. **Ida**: a mountain range in Asia Minor, near which was ancient Troy; to the Trojans, a sacred mountain; height, 5700 feet. **Athos**: a mountain on the extremity of a peninsula of eastern Greece; height about 6000 feet. **Olympus**: the most celebrated mountain in Greece, regarded as the home of the gods; it is in Thessaly, and is almost 10,000 feet in height. **Ætna**: the great volcano in Sicily, famous in mythology as the abode of the giant Enceladus; height almost 11,000 feet. **Atlas**: a mountain system in northern Africa; its highest summit is 14,600 feet.

[3] **Soracte**: a low, isolated mountain, twenty-five miles northeast of Rome, 2260 feet in height, and not a part of the Apennine chain. It has been made classic by Horace's references to it. Byron evidently means that the Apennines appeal little to him as compared with the giant Alps and the classic associations of the other mountains he names; the Apennines are not so high as the Alps nor so celebrated as the classic peaks. The poet makes an exception of Soracte, but he need not have done so, since Soracte is *not* one of the Apennines.

[4] **Latin echoes**: Byron means the use of quotations from Horace, referring to Soracte. Horace (65–8 B.C.), the Roman lyric poet and satirist, uttered a pious wish that his works might never be used as schoolbooks; yet as such

Too much, to conquer for the Poet's sake,
The drilled dull lesson, forced down word by word
In my repugnant youth, with pleasure to record

LXXVI

Aught that recalls the daily drug which turned
My sickening memory; and, though Time hath taught
My mind to meditate what then it learned,
Yet such the fixed inveteracy wrought
By the impatience of my early thought,
That, with the freshness wearing out before
My mind could relish what it might have sought,
If free to choose, I cannot now restore
Its health — but what it then detested, still abhor.

LXXVII

Then farewell, Horace — whom I hated so,
Not for thy faults, but mine: it is a curse
To understand, not feel thy lyric flow,
To comprehend, but never love thy verse;
Although no deeper Moralist rehearse
Our little life, nor Bard prescribe his art,
Nor livelier Satirist the conscience pierce,
Awakening without wounding the touched heart,
Yet fare thee well — upon Soracte's ridge we part.

LXXVIII

Oh, Rome![1] my country! City of the soul!
The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,

they have been used ever since his death. Though in truth one of the most charming and graceful of all poets, he is yet to many a student just the bugbear he was to Byron, in whose complaints there lies some justice.

[1] **Rome**: "I have been some days in Rome the Wonderful. I am delighted with Rome. As a whole — ancient and modern — it beats Greece, Constantinople, everything, — at least that I have ever seen. But I can't describe, because my first impressions are always strong and confused, and my memory selects and reduces them to order, like distance in the landscape, and blends them better, although they may be less distinct. I have been on horseback most of the day,

Lone Mother of dead empires! and control
In their shut breasts their petty misery.
What are our woes and sufferance? Come and see
The cypress, hear the owl, and plod your way
O'er steps of broken thrones and temples, Ye!
Whose agonies are evils of a day —
A world is at our feet as fragile as our clay.

LXXIX

The Niobe[1] of nations! there she stands,
Childless and crownless, in her voiceless woe;
An empty urn within her withered hands,
Whose holy dust was scattered long ago;
The Scipios' tomb[2] contains no ashes now;
The very sepulchres lie tenantless
Of their heroic dwellers: dost thou flow,
Old Tiber! through a marble wilderness?
Rise, with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress.

LXXX

The Goth, the Christian, Time, War, Flood and Fire,
Have dealt upon the seven-hilled City's pride;[3]

all days since my arrival. I have been to Albano, its lakes, and to the top of the Alban Mount, and to Frascati, Aricia, etc. As for the Coliseum, Pantheon, etc., etc., they are quite inconceivable, and must be seen."—*Byron's Letters, May, 1817.*

[1] **Niobe**: according to the Greek myth, the daughter of Tantalus and wife of Amphion. She had seven sons and seven daughters, whom she proclaimed to be superior to Apollo and Artemis, children of Leto. For this impiety the gods destroyed all her children. Niobe, through her grief, was turned to stone, but still wept eternally. Thus she has become the type of "voiceless woe."

[2] **The Scipios' tomb**: discovered in 1780 within the limits of the modern city of Rome. The Scipios formed one of the greatest families of Rome — the one above all others who made her mistress of the world. Byron perhaps means that Rome not only has no Scipios at the present day, but has lost even the very traditions of patriotism.

[3] **The Goth; the Christian, etc.**: Rome is the most famous of all cities. During its twenty-six hundred years of history it has achieved innumerable triumphs and suffered many and various misfortunes. Examples to illustrate Byron's lament are scarcely needed; but it may be remembered that the Goths sacked Rome in 410 A.D.; that the "Christians," under the Byzantine general

She saw her glories star by star expire,
And up the steep barbarian monarchs ride,
Where the car climbed the capitol; far and wide
Temple and tower went down, nor left a site: —
Chaos of ruins! who shall trace the void,
O'er the dim fragments cast a lunar light,
And say, "here was, or is," where all is doubly night?

LXXXI

The double night of ages, and of her,
Night's daughter, Ignorance, hath wrapt and wrap
All round us; we but feel our way to err:
The Ocean hath his chart, the stars their map,
And Knowledge spreads them on her ample lap;
But Rome is as the desert, where we steer
Stumbling o'er recollections; now we clap
Our hands, and cry "Eureka! it is clear" —
When but some false mirage of ruin rises near.

LXXXII

Alas! the lofty city! and, alas,
The trebly hundred triumphs![1] and the day
When Brutus[2] made the dagger's edge surpass
The conqueror's sword in bearing fame away!
Alas, for Tully's[2] voice, and Virgil's[2] lay,
And Livy's[2] pictured page! — but these shall be

Belisarius, took the city in 536 A.D.; that it was sacked by the Constable de Bourbon in 1527; that the destructive floods of the Tiber had, up to 1870, numbered one hundred and thirty-two; and that the city was almost destroyed by fire under Nero, and has since suffered many serious conflagrations. Many other catastrophes might be added to this list. But since Byron wrote these stanzas Rome, as the head of united Italy, has grown to be a great modern capital.

[1] **The trebly hundred triumphs**: Rome, from Romulus to Titus, celebrated three hundred and twenty "triumphs," — magnificent processions and religious ceremonies in honor of a victorious military leader. A "triumph" was the highest honor attainable by a Roman general.

[2] **Brutus; Tully; Virgil; Livy**: Brutus (85–42 B.C.), the most prominent among the assassins of Cæsar, is regarded by Byron as an exalted patriot

Her resurrection; all beside — decay.
Alas, for Earth, for never shall we see
That brightness in her eye she bore when Rome was free!

LXXXIII

Oh, thou, whose chariot rolled on Fortune's wheel,
Triumphant Sylla![1] Thou, who didst subdue
Thy country's foes ere thou wouldst pause to feel
The wrath of thy own wrongs, or reap the due
Of hoarded vengeance till thine eagles flew
O'er prostrate Asia; — thou, who with thy frown
Annihilated senates; — Roman, too,
With all thy vices, for thou didst lay down
With an atoning smile a more than earthly crown —

LXXXIV

The dictatorial wreath, — couldst thou divine
To what would one day dwindle that which made
Thee more than mortal? and that so supine,
By aught than Romans, Rome should thus be laid? —
She who was named Eternal, and arrayed
Her warriors but to conquer — she who veiled
Earth with her haughty shadow, and displayed,
Until the o'er-canopied horizon failed,
Her rushing wings — Oh! she who was Almighty hailed!

**Tully**: see note 1, p. 74. Virgil (70–19 B.C.) was the Roman poet, author of the *Æneid* and of other works. Livy (59 B.C.–17 A.D.) was the most picturesque of Roman historians. Byron here names the three writers who, above all others, celebrate in their works the majesty and power of Rome.

[1] **Sylla**: Lucius Cornelius Sulla (or Sylla) (138–78 B.C.), Roman general and dictator. Stanza LXXXIII refers to the following events in his life: in 86 B.C., during the consulship of his enemies, Marius and Cinna, his party had been overthrown and his regulations repealed; yet he refused to "vent the wrath of his own wrongs" until he conquered Mithridates in 83 B.C., and his "eagles flew o'er prostrate Asia." In 81 B.C. he was made dictator, but — strangest of all from such a man — in 79 B.C. he resigned his office and retired into private life.

LXXXV

Sylla was first of victors; but our own,
The sagest of usurpers, Cromwell! — he
Too swept off senates while he hewed the throne
Down to a block — immortal rebel! See
What crimes it cost to be a moment free,
And famous through all ages! but beneath
His fate the moral lurks of destiny;
His day of double victory and death[1]
Beheld him win two realms, and, happier, yield his breath.

LXXXVI

The third of the same moon whose former course
Had all but crowned him, on the selfsame day
Deposed him gently from his throne of force,
And laid him with the earth's preceding clay.
And showed not Fortune thus how fame and sway,
And all we deem delightful, and consume
Our souls to compass through each arduous way,
Are in her eyes less happy than the tomb?
Were they but so in Man's, how different were his doom!

LXXXVII

And thou, dread Statue![2] yet existent in
The austerest form of naked majesty,
Thou who beheldest, 'mid the assassins' din,
At thy bathed base the bloody Cæsar lie,
Folding his robe in dying dignity —

[1] **Day of double victory and death**: on September 3, 1650, Cromwell gained his victory at Dunbar; on September 3, 1651, he won his "crowning mercy" of Worcester; on September 3, 1658, he died. The "double victory" is, of course, Dunbar and Worcester; the "two realms," England and Scotland.

[2] **Dread Statue**: this statue of Pompey, now in the Palazza Spada, Rome, though probably a portrait of the great rival of Julius Cæsar, cannot be positively identified with that statue at the base of which "great Cæsar fell." See *Julius Cæsar*, Act III, sc. ii, l. 192.

An offering to thine altar from the queen
Of gods and men, great Nemesis![1] did he die,
And thou, too, perish, Pompey? have ye been
Victors of countless kings, or puppets of a scene?

LXXXVIII

And thou, the thunder-stricken nurse of Rome,[2]
She-wolf! whose brazen-imaged dugs impart
The milk of conquest yet within the dome
Where, as a monument of antique art,
Thou standest: — Mother of the mighty heart,
Which the great Founder sucked from thy wild teat,
Scorched by the Roman Jove's ethereal dart,
And thy limbs black with lightning — dost thou yet
Guard thine immortal cubs, nor thy fond charge forget?

LXXXIX

Thou dost; — but all thy foster-babes are dead —
The men of iron; and the world hath reared
Cities from out their sepulchres: men bled
In imitation of the things they feared,
And fought and conquered, and the same course steered,
At apish distance; but as yet none have,
Nor could, the same supremacy have neared,
Save one vain Man,[3] who is not in the grave,
But, vanquished by himself, to his own slaves a slave —

[1] **Nemesis**: in classic mythology the goddess who avenged crimes, humbled the arrogant, and punished overprosperity.

[2] **The thunder-stricken nurse of Rome**: legend says that Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, were nursed by a she-wolf. An ancient bronze statue of a wolf suckling two children is preserved in the Palace of the Conservators, in Rome. The statue was evidently once struck by lightning.

[3] **One vain Man**: Napoleon, who at this time was an exile on St. Helena. Besides these stanzas and others in *Childe Harold*, Byron wrote four poems on or about Napoleon, who made a powerful appeal to the poet's imagination. For *Napoleon's Farewell* see p. 13 of this volume.

XC

The fool of false dominion — and a kind
Of bastard Cæsar, following him of old
With steps unequal; for the Roman's mind
Was modelled in a less terrestrial mould,
With passions fiercer, yet a judgment cold,
And an immortal instinct which redeemed
The frailties of a heart so soft, yet bold —
Alcides with the distaff [1] now he seemed
At Cleopatra's feet, — and now himself he beamed,

XCI

And came — and saw — and conquered! But the man
Who would have tamed his eagles down to flee,
Like a trained falcon, in the Gallic van,
Which he, in sooth, long led to victory,
With a deaf heart which never seemed to be
A listener to itself, was strangely framed;
With but one weakest weakness — vanity,
Coquettish in ambition — still he aimed —
At what? can he avouch — or answer what he claimed?

XCII

And would be all or nothing — nor could wait
For the sure grave to level him; few years
Had fixed him with the Cæsars in his fate,
On whom we tread: For *this* the conqueror rears
The arch of triumph! and for this the tears
And blood of earth flow on as they have flowed,

[1] **Alcides with the distaff**: Alcides is Hercules, who is so called as a descendant of Alcæus. In a fit of madness Hercules killed his friend Iphitus, and was condemned for this offense to become for three years the slave of Queen Omphale. During this servitude his nature seemed changed to effeminacy, — he took his mistress's distaff and spun wool with her maidens (see Gayley's *Classic Myths*, p. 239). Thus "Hercules with the distaff" has become a proverbial expression for a strong man engaged in some incongruous task.

An universal deluge, which appears
Without an ark[1] for wretched man's abode,
And ebbs but to reflow! — Renew thy rainbow,[1] God!

XCIII

What from this barren being do we reap?
Our senses narrow, and our reason frail,
Life short, and truth a gem which loves the deep,
And all things weighed in Custom's falsest scale;
Opinion an omnipotence, — whose veil
Mantles the earth with darkness, until right
And wrong are accidents, and men grow pale
Lest their own judgments should become too bright,
And their free thoughts be crimes, and earth have too much light.

XCIV

And thus they plod in sluggish misery,
Rotting from sire to son, and age to age,
Proud of their trampled nature, and so die,
Bequeathing their hereditary rage
To the new race of inborn slaves, who wage
War for their chains, and rather than be free,
Bleed gladiator-like, and still engage
Within the same arena where they see
Their fellows fall before, like leaves of the same tree.

XCV

I speak not of men's creeds — they rest between
Man and his Maker — but of things allowed,
Averred, and known, and daily, hourly seen —
The yoke that is upon us doubly bowed,
And the intent of Tyranny avowed,

[1] **Ark; rainbow**: this deluge of blood, unlike the deluge of Noah, offers no ark of safety; and a rainbow like Noah's, which marked the end of the flood and symbolized God's mercy towards Man, has not yet appeared to foretell the end of bloodshed.

The edict of Earth's rulers, who are grown
The apes of him [1] who humbled once the proud,
And shook them from their slumbers on the throne;
Too glorious, were this all his mighty arm had done.

XCVI

Can tyrants but by tyrants conquered be,
And Freedom find no Champion and no Child,
Such as Columbia [2] saw arise when she
Sprung forth a Pallas,[2] armed and undefiled?
Or must such minds be nourished in the wild,
Deep in the unpruned forest, 'midst the roar
Of cataracts, where nursing Nature smiled
On infant Washington? Has Earth no more
Such seeds within her breast, or Europe no such shore?

XCVII

But France [3] got drunk with blood to vomit crime,
And fatal have her Saturnalia [4] been

[1] **Of him**: of Napoleon; what Napoleon did on a vast scale and in a lordly way other European rulers are attempting in the manner of apes.

[2] **Columbia; Pallas**: Columbia is the United States of America; Pallas (Minerva) sprang full-armed from the brain of Jupiter. Byron was a great admirer of Washington. Cf. the last stanza of his *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte:*

"Where may the wearied eye repose
When gazing on the Great;
Where neither guilty glory glows,
Nor despicable state?
Yes — one — the first — the last — the best —
The Cincinnatus of the West,
Whom envy dared not hate,
Bequeathed the name of Washington,
To make men blush there was but one!"

[3] **France**: the French Revolution, the result of centuries of oppression by the monarchy and aristocracy, went to hideous extremes. Under Napoleon the pendulum swung back again — even as far as tyranny. But the final result of the Revolution and of Napoleon's dictatorship has not been fatal "to Freedom's cause," though, when Byron wrote, it threatened to be. It has all resulted in the present French Republic.

[4] **Saturnalia**: in ancient Rome, the festival of Saturn, celebrated in December as a harvest home. It was a period of license, even of orgy, extending through all classes of society.

To Freedom's cause, in every age and clime;
Because the deadly days which we have seen,
And vile Ambition, that built up between
Man and his hopes an adamantine wall,
And the base pageant[1] last upon the scene,
Are grown the pretext for the eternal thrall
Which nips Life's tree, and dooms man's worst—his second fall.

XCVIII

Yet, Freedom! yet thy banner, torn, but flying,
Streams like the thunder-storm *against* the wind!
Thy trumpet voice, though broken now and dying,
The loudest still the tempest leaves behind;
Thy tree hath lost its blossoms, and the rind,
Chopped by the axe, looks rough and little worth,
But the sap lasts, and still the seed we find
Sown deep, even in the bosom of the North;
So shall a better spring less bitter fruit bring forth.

XCIX

There is a stern round tower[2] of other days,
Firm as a fortress, with its fence of stone,
Such as an army's baffled strength delays,
Standing with half its battlements alone,
And with two thousand years of ivy grown,

[1] **Base pageant**: Byron here alludes to three different historical events: the Congress of Vienna, September, 1814, held by all the great powers of Europe except France, and resulting in the humiliation of that country; the Holy Alliance, September, 1815, which was a league of various European sovereigns, who made a treaty embodying a clause that debarred any member of the Bonaparte family from ascending any European throne; the Second Treaty of Paris, November, 1815, between France and the chief powers of Europe, which reduced France to her original limits.

[2] **A stern round tower**: the tomb of Cecilia Metella, on the Appian Way, Rome,—one of the most striking and interesting of Roman antiquities. During the Middle Ages it was used as a fortress. The "fence of stone" refers to the basement of concrete on which the tower rests.

The garland of Eternity, where wave
The green leaves over all by Time o'erthrown; —
What was this tower of strength? within its cave
What treasure lay so locked, so hid? — A woman's grave.

C

But who was she, the Lady of the Dead,
Tombed in a palace? Was she chaste and fair?
Worthy a king's — or more — a Roman's bed?
What race of Chiefs and Heroes did she bear?
What daughter of her beauties was the heir?
How lived — how loved — how died she? Was she not
So honored — and conspicuously there,
Where meaner relics must not dare to rot,
Placed to commemorate a more than mortal lot?

CI

Was she as those who love their lords, or they
Who love the lords of others? such have been
Even in the olden time, Rome's annals say.
Was she a matron of Cornelia's[1] mien,
Or the light air of Egypt's graceful queen,
Profuse of joy — or 'gainst it did she war,
Inveterate in virtue? Did she lean
To the soft side of the heart, or wisely bar
Love from amongst her griefs? — for such the affections are.

CII

Perchance she died in youth: it may be, bowed
With woes far heavier than the ponderous tomb
That weighed upon her gentle dust; a cloud

[1] **Cornelia**: the mother of the Gracchi (second century B.C.); the typical Roman matron, celebrated for her accomplishments and virtues. "Egypt's graceful queen" is, of course, Cleopatra.

Might gather o'er her beauty, and a gloom
In her dark eye, prophetic of the doom
Heaven gives its favorites — early death — yet shed
A sunset charm around her, and illume
With hectic light, the Hesperus[1] of the dead,
Of her consuming cheek the autumnal leaf-like red.

CIII

Perchance she died in age — surviving all,
Charms — kindred — children — with the silver gray
On her long tresses, which might yet recall,
It may be, still a something of the day
When they were braided, and her proud array
And lovely form were envied, praised, and eyed
By Rome — but whither would Conjecture stray?
Thus much alone we know — Metella died,
The wealthiest Roman's wife: Behold his love or pride!

CIV

I know not why — but standing thus by thee
It seems as if I had thine inmate known,
Thou tomb! and other days come back on me
With recollected music, though the tone
Is changed and solemn, like the cloudy groan
Of dying thunder on the distant wind;
Yet, could I seat me by this ivied stone
Till I had bodied, forth the heated mind,
Forms from the floating wreck which Ruin leaves behind;

CV

And from the planks, far shattered o'er the rocks,
Built me a little bark of hope, once more
To battle with the ocean and the shocks

[1] **Hesperus**: in classic mythology the evening star.

Of the loud breakers, and the ceaseless roar
Which rushes on the solitary shore
Where all lies foundered that was ever dear:
But could I gather from the wave-worn store
Enough for my rude boat, where should I steer?
There woos no home, nor hope, nor life, save what is here.

CVI

Then let the winds howl on! their harmony
Shall henceforth be my music, and the night
The sound shall temper with the owlet's cry,
As I now hear them, in the fading light
Dim o'er the bird of darkness' native site,
Answering each other on the Palatine,
With their large eyes, all glistening gray and bright,
And sailing pinions. — Upon such a shrine
What are our petty griefs? — let me not number mine.

CVII

Cypress and ivy, weed and wallflower grown
Matted and massed together, hillocks heaped
On what were chambers, arch crushed, column strown
In fragments, choked up vaults, and frescos steeped
In subterranean damps, where the owl peeped,
Deeming it midnight: — Temples — baths — or halls?
Pronounce who can: for all that Learning reaped
From her research hath been, that these are walls —
Behold the Imperial Mount![1] 't is thus the mighty falls.

[1] **Imperial Mount**: ancient Rome was built on seven hills, the most celebrated of which were the Capitoline and the Palatine. The latter (the "Imperial Mount") was the seat of sumptuous private residences, and, later, of the vast and splendid palaces of the emperors. It is now one mass of ruins. "Learning," since Byron's time, has done much to reveal the "obliterated plan" (stanza CIX) of the Palatine and to identify its buildings.

CVIII

There is the moral of all human tales;
'T is but the same rehearsal of the past.
First Freedom, and then Glory — when that fails,
Wealth, Vice, Corruption, — barbarism at last.
And History, with all her volumes vast,
Hath but *one* page, — 't is better written here,
Where gorgeous Tyranny hath thus amassed
All treasures, all delights, that eye or ear,
Heart, soul could seek, tongue ask — Away with words! draw near,

CIX

Admire — exult — despise — laugh — weep, — for here
There is such matter for all feeling: — Man!
Thou pendulum betwixt a smile and tear,
Ages and Realms are crowded in this span,
This mountain, whose obliterated plan
The pyramid of Empires pinnacled,
Of Glory's gewgaws shining in the van
Till the sun's rays with added flame were filled!
Where are its golden roofs?[1] where those who dared to build?

CX

Tully was not so eloquent as thou,
Thou nameless column[2] with the buried base!
What are the laurels of the Cæsar's brow?
Crown me with ivy from his dwelling-place.

[1] **Golden roofs**: this may refer either to the "Golden House" of Nero, between the Aventine and Palatine hills, the roof of which was covered with gold-plated tiles; to the temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline, which Domitian roofed with gold-plated tiles; or to the original roof of the Pantheon.

[2] **Thou nameless column**: the column of Phocas, in the Roman Forum. But when Byron wrote this it had ceased to be nameless, since an inscription had been discovered on its base, stating that it was erected by the Exarch Smaragdus in honor of the Emperor Phocas, in 608 A.D.

Whose arch or pillar[1] meets me in the face,
Titus or Trajan's? No — 't is that of Time:
Triumph, arch, pillar, all he doth displace
Scoffing; and apostolic statues climb
To crush the imperial urn, whose ashes slept sublime,

CXI

Buried in air, the deep blue sky of Rome,
And looking to the stars: they had contained
A Spirit[2] which with these would find a home,
The last of those who o'er the whole earth reigned,
The Roman globe — for, after, none sustained,
But yielded back his conquests: — he was more
Than a mere Alexander, and, unstained
With household blood and wine, serenely wore
His sovereign virtues — still we Trajan's name adore.

CXII

Where is the rock of Triumph,[3] the high place
Where Rome embraced her heroes? — where the steep
Tarpeian?[4] — fittest goal of Treason's race,
The promontory whence the Traitor's Leap
Cured all ambition? Did the conquerors heap
Their spoils here? Yes; and in yon field below,

[1] **Arch or pillar**: the arch of Titus; the pillar of Trajan. The column of Trajan was originally surmounted by a bronze statue of the emperor holding a gilded globe, which was said to contain Trajan's ashes. But the statue of Trajan had long since disappeared when, in 1588, it was replaced with one of St. Peter. The column is now surmounted by a statue of St. Paul.

[2] **A Spirit**: that of Trajan (about 57–117 A.D.), one of the greatest of the Roman emperors.

[3] **Rock of Triumph**: the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, on the Capitoline, the goal of all triumphal processions. Its exact site has now been established.

[4] **The steep Tarpeian**: the Tarpeian Rock, from which traitors were hurled to death, has not been positively identified, but is now supposed to be a precipitous cliff at the southwest corner of the Capitoline hill.

A thousand years of silenced factions sleep —
The Forum,[1] where the immortal accents glow,
And still the eloquent air breathes — burns with Cicero!

CXIII

The field of freedom, faction, fame, and blood:
Here a proud people's passions were exhaled,
From the first hour of empire in the bud
To that when further worlds to conquer failed;
But long before had Freedom's face been veiled,
And Anarchy assumed her attributes;
Till every lawless soldier, who assailed,
Trod on the trembling senate's[2] slavish mutes,
Or raised the venal voice of baser prostitutes.

CXIV

Then turn we to her latest tribune's[3] name,
From her ten thousand tyrants[4] turn to thee,
Redeemer of dark centuries of shame —
The friend of Petrarch — hope of Italy —

[1] **Forum**: originally the market place (*forum*) of Rome, which in time became the center of the city's life and, under the Roman Empire, the veritable heart of the world. The open square was surrounded by magnificent temples and other great public buildings. Here Cicero delivered some of his famous orations, and here took place innumerable great events in Roman history.

[2] **The trembling senate**: the Roman senate which, in the days of the Republic, had been the most august legislative body the world ever knew, became under the Empire a mere slavish tool in the hands, first, of the emperors, and later of the soldiery, who raised to the purple any one of their favorites of the moment.

[3] **Her latest tribune**: Rienzi, the Italian patriot, who was born at Rome about 1313, and killed at Rome, October, 1354. He led a revolution against the aristocracy, conquered, and introduced reforms; but his later arrogant conduct alienated the good will even of the common people, and he was finally killed in a riot. Though a remarkable man, Rienzi was by no means the ideal patriot pictured by Byron. He is the hero of Bulwer's novel, *Rienzi, the Last of the Tribunes*.

[4] **Ten thousand tyrants**: the soldiers of the famous Pretorian Guard, who at last dominated Rome, made tools of the emperors and senate, and largely aided in bringing about the downfall of the Empire.

Rienzi! last of Romans! While the tree
Of Freedom's withered trunk puts forth a leaf,
Even for thy tomb a garland let it be —
The forum's Champion, and the people's chief —
Her new-born Numa [1] thou — with reign, alas! too brief.

CXV

Egeria! [2] sweet creation of some heart
Which found no mortal resting-place so fair
As thine ideal breast; whate'er thou art
Or wert, — a young Aurora of the air,
The nympholepsy of some fond despair —
Or, it might be, a beauty of the earth,
Who found a more than common votary there
Too much adoring; whatsoe'er thy birth,
Thou wert a beautiful Thought, and softly bodied forth.

CXVI

The mosses of thy fountain still are sprinkled
With thine Elysian water-drops; the face
Of thy cave-guarded spring, with years unwrinkled,
Reflects the meek-eyed Genius of the place,
Whose green, wild margin now no more erase
Art's works; nor must the delicate waters sleep
Prisoned in marble — bubbling from the base
Of the cleft statue, with a gentle leap
The rill runs o'er; and, round, fern, flowers, and ivy creep,

[1] **Numa**: according to legend, the second king of Rome, who lived from 715 B.C. to 672 B.C. He was wise and just, and instituted the Roman forms of worship.

[2] **Egeria**: in Roman mythology, a nymph who taught Numa the forms of worship he was to introduce into Rome. On the Aventine hill are the grotto and spring which tradition assigns as the meeting place of Numa and Egeria.

CXVII

Fantastically tangled; the green hills
Are clothed with early blossoms; through the grass
The quick-eyed lizard rustles; and the bills
Of summer-birds sing welcome as ye pass;
Flowers fresh in hue, and many in their class,
Implore the pausing step, and with their dyes
Dance in the soft breeze in a fairy mass;
The sweetness of the violet's deep blue eyes,
Kissed by the breath of heaven, seems colored by its skies.

CXVIII

Here didst thou dwell, in this enchanted cover,
Egeria! thy all heavenly bosom beating
For the far footsteps of thy mortal lover;
The purple Midnight veiled that mystic meeting
With her most starry canopy; and seating
Thyself by thine adorer, what befell?
This cave was surely shaped out for the greeting
Of an enamoured Goddess, and the cell
Haunted by holy Love — the earliest oracle!

CXIX

And didst thou not, thy breast to his replying,
Blend a celestial with a human heart;
And Love, which dies as it was born, in sighing,
Share with immortal transports? could thine art
Make them indeed immortal, and impart
The purity of heaven to earthly joys,
Expel the venom and not blunt the dart —
The dull satiety which all destroys —
And root from out the soul the deadly weed which cloys?

CXX

Alas! our young affections run to waste,
Or water but the desert; whence arise
But weeds of dark luxuriance, tares of haste,
Rank at the core, though tempting to the eyes,
Flowers whose wild odors breathe but agonies,
And trees whose gums are poison; such the plants
Which spring beneath her steps as Passion flies
O'er the world's wilderness, and vainly pants
For some celestial fruit forbidden to our wants.

CXXI

Oh, Love! no habitant of earth thou art —
An unseen seraph, we believe in thee, —
A faith whose martyrs are the broken heart;
But never yet hath seen, nor e'er shall see
The naked eye, thy form, as it should be;
The mind hath made thee, as it peopled heaven,
Even with its own desiring phantasy,
And to a thought such shape and image given,
As haunts the unquenched soul — parched — wearied — wrung — and riven.

CXXII

Of its own beauty is the mind diseased,
And fevers into false creation: — where,
Where are the forms the sculptor's soul hath seized?
In him alone. Can Nature show so fair?
Where are the charms and virtues which we dare
Conceive in boyhood and pursue as men,
The unreached Paradise of our despair,
Which o'er-informs the pencil and the pen,
And overpowers the page where it would bloom again?

CXXIII

Who loves, raves — 'tis youth's frenzy — but the cure
Is bitterer still, as charm by charm unwinds
Which robed our idols, and we see too sure
Nor worth nor beauty dwells from out the mind's
Ideal shape of such; yet still it binds —
The fatal spell, and still it draws us on,
Reaping the whirlwind from the oft-sown winds;
The stubborn heart, its alchemy begun,
Seems ever near the prize — wealthiest when most undone.

CXXIV

We wither from our youth, we gasp away —
Sick — sick; unfound the boon — unslaked the thirst,
Though to the last, in verge of our decay,
Some phantom lures, such as we sought at first —
But all too late, — so are we doubly curst.
Love, Fame, Ambition, Avarice — 't is the same,
Each idle — and all ill — and none the worst —
For all are meteors with a different name,
And Death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame.

CXXV

Few — none — find what they love or could have loved,
Though accident, blind contact, and the strong
Necessity of loving, have removed
Antipathies — but to recur, ere long,
Envenomed with irrevocable wrong;
And Circumstance, that unspiritual god
And miscreator, makes and helps along
Our coming evils with a crutch-like rod,
Whose touch turns Hope to dust, — the dust we all have trod.

CXXVI

Our life is a false nature — 't is not in
The harmony of things, — this hard decree,
This uneradicable taint of sin,
This boundless upas,[1] this all-blasting tree,
Whose root is earth, whose leaves and branches be
The skies which rain their plagues on men like dew —
Disease, death, bondage — all the woes we see —
And worse, the woes we see not — which throb through
The immedicable soul, with heart-aches ever new.

CXXVII

Yet let us ponder boldly — 't is a base
Abandonment of reason to resign
Our right of thought — our last and only place
Of refuge; this, at least, shall still be mine:
Though from our birth the faculty divine
Is chained and tortured — cabined, cribbed, confined,
And bred in darkness, lest the truth should shine
Too brightly on the unprepared mind,
The beam pours in — for time and skill will couch the blind.

CXXVIII

Arches on arches![2] as it were that Rome,
Collecting the chief trophies of her line,
Would build up all her triumphs in one dome,[3]
Her Coliseum stands; the moonbeams shine

[1] **Upas**: a Javanese tree, the gum of which contains a deadly poison. The upas was once thought to be fatal to all animal life that approached it, but this superstition has been exploded.

[2] **Arches on arches**: the Coliseum, the mightiest and most interesting of all Roman ruins, was begun by the Emperor Vespasian in 72 A.D., as a theater for gladiatorial combats and other open-air spectacles. For a description of the Coliseum by moonlight see stanza CXLIV.

[3] **One dome**: Byron repeatedly uses the word "dome" to designate a great building of any description.

As 't were its natural torches, for divine
Should be the light which streams here, to illume
This long-explored but still exhaustless mine
Of contemplation; and the azure gloom
Of an Italian night, where the deep skies assume

CXXIX

Hues which have words and speak to ye of heaven,
Floats o'er this vast and wondrous monument,
And shadows forth its glory. There is given
Unto the things of earth, which Time hath bent,
A spirit's feeling, and where he hath leant
His hand, but broke his scythe, there is a power
And magic in the ruined battlement,
For which the palace of the present hour
Must yield its pomp, and wait till ages are its dower.

CXXX

Oh, Time![1] the beautifier of the dead,
Adorner of the ruin,[1] comforter
And only healer when the heart hath bled; —
Time! the corrector where our judgments err,
The test of truth, love, — sole philosopher,
For all beside are sophists — from thy thrift,
Which never loses though it doth defer —
Time, the Avenger! unto thee I lift
My hands, and eyes, and heart, and crave of thee a gift:

CXXXI

Amidst this wreck, where thou hast made a shrine
And temple more divinely desolate,

[1] **Time; Adorner of the ruin**: at this time the Coliseum was clad in a multitude of shrubs and wild flowers; these were afterwards destroyed for fear their roots might help to disintegrate the structure.

Among thy mightier offerings here are mine,
Ruins of years — though few, yet full of fate: —
If thou hast ever seen me too elate,
Hear me not; but if calmly I have borne
Good, and reserved my pride against the hate
Which shall not whelm me, let me not have worn
This iron in my soul in vain — shall *they* not mourn?

CXXXII

And Thou, who never yet of human wrong
Left the unbalanced scale, great Nemesis![1]
Here, where the ancient paid thee homage long —
Thou, who didst call the Furies from the abyss,
And round Orestes[2] bade them howl and hiss
For that unnatural retribution — just,
Had it but been from hands less near — in this
Thy former realm, I call thee from the dust!
Dost thou not hear my heart? — Awake! thou shalt, and must.

CXXXIII

It is not that I may not have incurred
For my ancestral faults or mine, the wound
I bleed withal;[3] and, had it been conferred
With a just weapon, it had flowed unbound;
But now my blood shall not sink in the ground —

[1] **Nemesis**: see note 1, p. 92.

[2] **Orestes**: the son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. His mother, Clytemnestra, murdered her husband; Orestes, to avenge his father's death, slew his mother. Nemesis called the Furies to punish him for his crime of parricide.

[3] **The wound I bleed withal**: the eight stanzas from CXXX to CXXXVII are purely lyrical and subjective, — the poet's appeal to Time, the Avenger of his wrongs. The wound to which he refers must be his unhappy marriage and his subsequent social ostracism (see Introduction). Byron had indeed suffered in many ways, and is doubtless sincere in these and similar stanzas referring to his sufferings; but it looks to an impartial observer that the poet's gifts from Fortune — youth, rank, beauty, wealth, and genius — should have gone far to reconcile him to existence. It is to such surprising self-revelations as

To thee I do devote it — *thou* shalt take
The vengeance, which shall yet be sought and found —
Which if *I* have not taken for the sake —
But let that pass — I sleep, but thou shalt yet awake.

CXXXIV

And if my voice break forth, 't is not that now
I shrink from what is suffered: let him speak
Who hath beheld decline upon my brow,
Or seen my mind's convulsion leave it weak;
But in this page a record will I seek.
Not in the air shall these my words disperse,
Though I be ashes; a far hour shall wreak
The deep prophetic fulness of this verse,
And pile on human heads the mountain of my curse!

CXXXV

That curse shall be Forgiveness.[1] — Have I not —
Hear me, my mother Earth! behold it, Heaven! —
Have I not had to wrestle with my lot?
Have I not suffered things to be forgiven?
Have I not had my brain seared, my heart riven,
Hopes sapped, name blighted, Life's life lied away?
And only not to desperation driven,
Because not altogether of such clay
As rots into the souls of those whom I survey.

we find in *Childe Harold* that Matthew Arnold alludes in a famous stanza in his *Grande Chartreuse*:

> "What helps it now, that Byron bore,
> With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,
> Through Europe to the Ætolian shore
> The pageant of his bleeding heart?
> That thousands counted every groan,
> And Europe made his woe her own?"

[1] **That curse shall be Forgiveness**: cf. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, Act I. ll. 55–73.

CXXXVI

From mighty wrongs to petty perfidy
Have I not seen what human things could do?
From the loud roar of foaming calumny
To the small whisper of the as paltry few—
And subtler venom of the reptile crew,
The Janus glance [1] of whose significant eye,
Learning to lie with silence, would *seem* true,
And without utterance, save the shrug or sigh,
Deal round to happy fools its speechless obloquy.

CXXXVII

But I have lived, and have not lived in vain:
My mind may lose its force, my blood its fire,
And my flame perish even in conquering pain;
But there is that within me which shall tire
Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire;
Something unearthly, which they deem not of,
Like the remembered tone of a mute lyre,
Shall on their softened spirits sink, and move
In hearts all rocky now the late remorse of love.

CXXXVIII

The seal is set.— Now welcome, thou dread Power!
Nameless, yet thus omnipotent, which here
Walk'st in the shadow of the midnight hour
With a deep awe, yet all distinct from fear;
Thy haunts are ever where the dead walls rear
Their ivy mantles, and the solemn scene

[1] **Janus glance**: in Roman mythology Janus was the god of the beginning and the end of all undertakings, the protector of doors and gateways, and the god of the sun's rising and setting. In this last capacity Janus had two faces, one looking to the east, the other to the west.

Derives from thee a sense so deep and clear
That we become a part of what has been,
And grow unto the spot — all-seeing but unseen.

CXXXIX

And here the buzz of eager nations ran,
In murmured pity, or loud-roared applause,
As man was slaughtered by his fellow man.
And wherefore slaughtered? wherefore, but because
Such were the bloody Circus' genial laws,
And the imperial pleasure. — Wherefore not?
What matters where we fall to fill the maws
Of worms — on battle-plains or listed spot?
Both are but theatres — where the chief actors rot.

CXL

I see before me the Gladiator[1] lie:
He leans upon his hand — his manly brow
Consents to death, but conquers agony,
And his drooped head sinks gradually low,
And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow
From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,
Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now
The arena swims around him — he is gone,
Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hailed the wretch who won.

CXLI

He heard it, but he heeded not — his eyes
Were with his heart, and that was far away:
He recked not of the life he lost nor prize,

[1] **The Gladiator**: gladiators were either voluntary or forced. The latter were largely recruited from the ranks of barbarian captives, one of whom figures in the present stanzas. The scene is suggested by the famous statue once known as "The Dying Gladiator," but now called "The Dying Gaul," in the Capitoline Museum, Rome.

But where his rude hut by the Danube lay —
*There* were his young barbarians all at play,
*There* was their Dacian[1] mother — he, their sire,
Butchered to make a Roman holiday —
All this rushed with his blood — Shall he expire
And unavenged? — Arise! ye Goths,[2] and glut your ire!

CXLII

But here, where Murder breathed her bloody steam;
And here, where buzzing nations choked the ways,
And roared or murmured like a mountain stream
Dashing or winding as its torrent strays;
Here, where the Roman millions' blame or praise
Was death or life — the playthings of a crowd —
My voice sounds much — and fall the stars' faint rays
On the arena void — seats crushed — walls bowed —
And galleries, where my steps seem echoes strangely loud.

CXLIII

A ruin — yet what ruin![3] from its mass
Walls, palaces, half-cities, have been reared;
Yet oft the enormous skeleton ye pass,
And marvel where the spoil could have appeared.
Hath it indeed been plundered, or but cleared?
Alas! developed, opens the decay,
When the colossal fabric's form is neared:
It will not bear the brightness of the day,
Which streams too much on all years, man, have reft away.

[1] **Dacian**: the reference is to a region on the north bank of the Danube which supplied many of the gladiators for the Coliseum.

[2] **Goths**: the Goths under Alaric sacked Rome in 410 A.D.

[3] **A ruin — yet what ruin**: during the Middle Ages, and even, strange to say, after the Renaissance, the mighty buildings of ancient Rome were plundered for stone to build the fortresses, churches, and palaces of the later city. The Coliseum especially suffered.

CXLIV

But when the rising moon begins to climb
Its topmost arch, and gently pauses there;
When the stars twinkle through the loops of time,
And the low night-breeze waves along the air
The garland forest, which the gray walls wear,
Like laurels on the bald first Cæsar's head[1]
When the light shines serene but doth not glare —
Then in this magic circle raise the dead:
Heroes have trod this spot — 't is on their dust ye tread.

CXLV

"While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;
"When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall;
"And when Rome falls — the World." From our own land
Thus spake the pilgrims o'er this mighty wall
In Saxon times, which we are wont to call
Ancient; and these three mortal things are still
On their foundations, and unaltered all —
Rome and her Ruin past Redemption's skill,
The World, the same wide den — of thieves, or what ye will.

CXLVI

Simple, erect, severe, austere, sublime —
Shrine of all saints and temple of all gods,
From Jove to Jesus — spared and blest by time;
Looking tranquillity, while falls or nods
Arch, empire, each thing round thee, and Man plods
His way through thorns to ashes — glorious dome!

[1] **Laurels on the bald first Cæsar's head**: according to the Roman historian Suetonius, Julius Cæsar was peculiarly pleased by a decree of the senate that permitted him to wear on all occasions a wreath of laurel. He wore the wreath, however, not to gratify his vanity but to conceal his baldness!

Shalt thou not last? Time's scythe and tyrants' rods
Shiver upon thee — sanctuary and home
Of art and piety — Pantheon![1] — pride of Rome!

CXLVII

Relic of nobler days, and noblest arts!
Despoiled yet perfect! with thy circle spreads
A holiness appealing to all hearts;
To Art a model; and to him who treads
Rome for the sake of ages, Glory sheds
Her light through thy sole aperture; to those
Who worship, here are altars for their beads;
And they who feel for genius may repose
Their eyes on honored forms,[2] whose busts around them close.

CXLVIII

There is a dungeon,[3] in whose dim drear light
What do I gaze on? Nothing. Look again!
Two forms are slowly shadowed on my sight —
Two insulated phantoms of the brain:
It is not so — I see them full and plain —
An old man, and a female young and fair,
Fresh as a nursing mother, in whose vein
The blood is nectar: — but what doth she there,
With her unmantled neck, and bosom white and bare?

[1] **Pantheon**: "The temple of all the gods," the most perfectly preserved building of ancient Rome, was built in 27 B.C. and is now a Christian church. Its excellent architecture has served as a model for many great edifices elsewhere. The building has no windows, and is lighted solely through an aperture twenty-eight feet in diameter in the center of the great dome.

[2] **Honored forms**: in place of the images of pagan divinities the Pantheon now holds the busts of the great men of modern Italy.

[3] **A dungeon**: a cell under the church of San Niccolo in Carcere; the reputed scene of the highly improbable story of the Roman daughter who kept her imprisoned father alive by feeding him from her own breasts.

CXLIX

Full swells the deep pure fountain of young life,
Where *on* the heart and *from* the heart we took
Our first and sweetest nurture, when the wife,
Blest into mother, in the innocent look,
Or even the piping cry of lips that brook
No pain and small suspense, a joy perceives
Man knows not, when from out its cradled nook
She sees her little bud put forth its leaves —
What may the fruit be yet? — I know not — Cain was Eve's.

CL

But here Youth offers to Old Age the food,
The milk of his own gift: — it is her sire
To whom she renders back the debt of blood
Born with her birth. No; he shall not expire
While in those warm and lovely veins the fire
Of health and holy feeling can provide
Great Nature's Nile, whose deep stream rises higher
Than Egypt's river: — from that gentle side
Drink, drink and live, old man! Heaven's realm holds no such tide.

CLI

The starry fable[1] of the milky way
Has not thy story's purity; it is
A constellation of a sweeter ray,
And sacred Nature triumphs more in this
Reverse of her decree, than in the abyss
Where sparkle distant worlds: — Oh, holiest nurse!
No drop of that clear stream its way shall miss
To thy sire's heart, replenishing its source
With life, as our freed souls rejoin the universe.

[1] **The starry fable**: it was fabled of the Milky Way that when Mercury held up the infant Hercules to Juno's breast, the goddess pushed him away, and that drops of milk fell into space and became a multitude of tiny stars.

CLII

Turn to the Mole[1] which Hadrian reared on high,
Imperial mimic of old Egypt's piles,
Colossal copyist of deformity,
Whose travelled phantasy from the far Nile's
Enormous model, doomed the artist's toils
To build for giants, and for his vain earth,
His shrunken ashes, raise this dome: How smiles
The gazer's eye with philosophic mirth,
To view the huge design which sprung from such a birth!

CLIII

But lo! the Dome[2] — the vast and wondrous dome,
To which Diana's marvel[3] was a cell —
Christ's mighty shrine above His martyr's tomb!
I have beheld the Ephesian's miracle —
Its columns strew the wilderness, and dwell
The hyæna and the jackal in their shade;

[1] **The Mole**: the gigantic mausoleum built by the emperor Hadrian for the reception of his own body. It is a circular tower about 220 feet in diameter, and was originally surrounded by columns and statues and surmounted by a cone of masonry. During the Middle Ages it was despoiled and changed, was used as a fortress by the Pope, and became known as the Castle of San Angelo. The mausoleum is "an imperial mimic of old Egypt's piles" only in that it is a royal sepulcher of immense size, for its architecture has nothing in common with that of the pyramids.

[2] **The Dome**: the dome of St. Peter's Church in Rome, the most famous as well as the largest and most splendid of all churches. Its vast dome, perhaps the greatest architectural achievement of the world, was designed by Michelangelo. As we read Byron's stanzas we may recall Emerson's beautiful lines on the great architect:

"The hand that rounded Peter's dome
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome,
Wrought in a sad sincerity;
Himself from God he could not free;
He builded better than he knew;
The conscious stone to beauty grew."

[3] **Diana's marvel**: the temple of Diana in Ephesus, one of the "seven wonders" of the ancient world. Byron was mistaken in supposing that he had surveyed its ruins; what he really saw was probably the gymnasium. The ruins of the temple were not excavated and identified until 1870.

I have beheld Sophia's [1] bright roofs swell
Their glittering mass i' the sun, and have surveyed
Its sanctuary the while the usurping Moslem prayed;

CLIV

But thou, of temples old, or altars new,
Standest alone — with nothing like to thee —
Worthiest of God, the holy and the true!
Since Zion's desolation,[2] when that He
Forsook his former city, what could be,
Of earthly structures, in his honor piled,
Of a sublimer aspect? Majesty,
Power, Glory, Strength, and Beauty, all are aisled
In this eternal ark of worship undefiled.

CLV

Enter: its grandeur overwhelms thee not;
And why? it is not lessened; but thy mind,
Expanded by the genius of the spot,
Has grown colossal, and can only find
A fit abode wherein appear enshrined
Thy hopes of immortality; and thou
Shalt one day, if found worthy, so defined,
See thy God face to face, as thou dost now
His Holy of Holies — nor be blasted by his brow.

[1] **Sophia**: the mosque of St. Sophia in Constantinople, one of the largest and most magnificent places of worship in the world. It was built by the emperor Justinian in 537 A.D., but has been used as a mosque since the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453.

[2] **Zion's desolation**: "Zion" is Jerusalem, in which was Solomon's temple. The city was so often besieged, captured, and despoiled, the temple so often destroyed and rebuilt, that one is not sure what Byron means by "Zion's desolation." Perhaps he refers to the first great "desolation" in 586 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, captured the city, destroyed the original temple of Solomon, and absolutely desolated the entire land. But he may have in mind the destruction by the Roman emperor Titus in 70 A.D., when the last temple, built by Herod, was destroyed, and the ancient city obliterated.

CLVI

Thou movest — but increasing with the advance,
Like climbing some great Alp, which still doth rise,
Deceived by its gigantic elegance;
Vastness which grows — but grows to harmonize —
All musical in its immensities;
Rich marbles, richer painting — shrines where flame
The lamps of gold — and haughty dome which vies
In air with Earth's chief structures, though their frame
Sits on the firm-set ground — and this the clouds must claim.

CLVII

Thou seest not all; but piecemeal thou must break,
To separate contemplation, the great whole;
And as the ocean many bays will make
That ask the eye — so here condense thy soul
To more immediate objects, and control
Thy thoughts until thy mind hath got by heart
Its eloquent proportions, and unroll
In mighty graduations, part by part,
The Glory which at once upon thee did not dart,

CLVIII

Not by its fault — but thine: Our outward sense
Is but of gradual grasp — and as it is
That what we have of feeling most intense
Outstrips our faint expression; even so this
Outshining and o'erwhelming edifice
Fools our fond gaze, and greatest of the great
Defies at first our Nature's littleness,
Till, growing with its growth, we thus dilate
Our Spirits to the size of that they contemplate.

CLIX

Then pause, and be enlightened; there is more
In such a survey than the sating gaze
Of wonder pleased, or awe which would adore
The worship of the place, or the mere praise
Of Art and its great Masters, who could raise
What former time, nor skill, nor thought could plan;
The fountain of sublimity displays
Its depth, and thence may draw the mind of Man
Its golden sands, and learn what great conceptions can.

CLX

Or, turning to the Vatican,[1] go see
Laocoon's [1] torture dignifying pain —
A father's love and mortal's agony
With an immortal's patience blending: — Vain
The struggle; vain, against the coiling strain
And gripe, and deepening of the dragon's grasp,
The old man's clench; the long envenomed chain
Rivets the living links, — the enormous asp
Enforces pang on pang, and stifles gasp on gasp.

CLXI

Or view the Lord of the unerring bow,[1]
The God of life, and poesy, and light —
The Sun in human limbs arrayed, and brow
All radiant from his triumph in the fight;

[1] **The Vatican; Laocoon; the Lord of the unerring bow**: the Vatican is the vast palace of the Pope, at Rome, which contains one of the finest art collections in the world. Among its famous statues is the masterpiece known as the "Laocoon," a Greek work, showing the Trojan priest Laocoon struggling to free himself and his young sons from the toils of the serpent. Another is the statue of Apollo, called the "Apollo Belvedere," which the poet refers to as "the Lord of the unerring bow," showing the "God of poesy and light" just after he has discharged his arrow at the serpent Python.

The shaft hath just been shot — the arrow bright
With an Immortal's vengeance; in his eye
And nostril beautiful disdain, and might
And majesty, flash their full lightnings by,
Developing in that one glance the Deity.

CLXII

But in his delicate form — a dream of Love,
Shaped by some solitary nymph, whose breast
Longed for a deathless lover from above,
And maddened in that vision — are exprest
All that ideal beauty ever blessed
The mind with in its most unearthly mood,
When each conception was a heavenly guest —
A ray of immortality — and stood,
Starlike, around, until they gathered to a god!

CLXIII

And if it be Prometheus[1] stole from Heaven
The fire which we endure, it was repaid
By him to whom the energy was given
Which this poetic marble hath arrayed
With an eternal glory — which, if made
By human hands, is not of human thought;
And Time himself hath hallowed it, nor laid
One ringlet in the dust — nor hath it caught
A tinge of years, but breathes the flame with which 't was wrought.

CLXIV

But where is he, the Pilgrim of my song,[2]
The being who upheld it through the past?

[1] **Prometheus**: see p. 34.

[2] **The Pilgrim of my song**: the four cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* are supposed to be the record of the travels or pilgrimage of a young Englishman of noble birth whom the poet calls "Childe Harold." The name "Harold" was

Methinks he cometh late and tarries long.
He is no more — these breathings are his last;
His wanderings done, his visions ebbing fast,
And he himself as nothing: — if he was
Aught but a phantasy, and could be classed
With forms which live and suffer — let that pass —
His shadow fades away into Destruction's mass,

CLXV

Which gathers shadow, substance, life, and all
That we inherit in its mortal shroud,
And spreads the dim and universal pall
Through which all things grow phantoms; and the cloud
Between us sinks and all which ever glowed,
Till Glory's self is twilight, and displays
A melancholy halo scarce allowed
To hover on the verge of darkness — rays
Sadder than saddest night, for they distract the gaze,

CLXVI

And send us prying into the abyss,[1]
To gather what we shall be when the frame
Shall be resolved to something less than this
Its wretched essence; and to dream of fame,
And wipe the dust from off the idle name
We never more shall hear, — but never more,

chosen at random. "Childe" is the old English word for the young scion of a noble house, and was used in order to give to the poem a flavor of antiquity (cf. the old ballad *Childe Waters* and Browning's *Childe Roland*). The "Pilgrim" played but a small part even in the two first cantos of the poem, is barely mentioned in the third canto, and is forgotten entirely in the fourth. He was indeed never other than Byron himself; and now at last the thin disguise — a mere literary artifice — is formally thrown aside.

[1] **The abyss**: of "Destruction," or oblivion (see last line of stanza CLXIV and first line of stanza CLXVI).

Oh, happier thought! can we be made the same:
It is enough in sooth that *once* we bore
These fardels of the heart[1]—the heart whose sweat was gore.

CLXVII

Hark! forth from the abyss a voice proceeds,[2]
A long low distant murmur of dread sound,
Such as arises when a nation bleeds
With some deep and immedicable wound;
Through storm and darkness yawns the rending ground;
The gulf is thick with phantoms, but the Chief
Seems royal still, though with her head discrowned,
And pale, but lovely, with maternal grief
She clasps a babe, to whom her breast yields no relief.

CLXVIII

Scion of chiefs and monarchs, where art thou?
Fond Hope of many nations, art thou dead?
Could not the grave forget thee, and lay low
Some less majestic, less beloved head?
In the sad midnight, while thy heart still bled,
The mother of a moment, o'er thy boy,
Death hushed that pang for ever: with thee fled
The present happiness and promised joy
Which filled the imperial isles so full it seemed to cloy.

CLXIX

Peasants bring forth in safety.—Can it be,
Oh thou that wert so happy, so adored!

[1] **Fardels of the heart**: evidently a reminiscence of *Hamlet*, Act III, sc. i, l. 76.

[2] **A voice proceeds**: the voice of lamentation for the death of Charlotte Augusta, only daughter of the prince regent, afterwards George IV of England. She was married in 1816 to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, and died in giving birth to her child, November 6, 1817. She forms the subject of the six following stanzas.

Those who weep not for kings shall weep for thee,
And Freedom's heart, grown heavy, cease to hoard
Her many griefs, for ONE — for she had poured
Her orisons for thee, and o'er thy head
Beheld her Iris.[1] — Thou, too, lonely lord,[2]
And desolate consort — vainly wert thou wed!
The husband of a year! the father of the dead!

CLXX

Of sackcloth was thy wedding garment made;
Thy bridal's fruit is ashes: in the dust
The fair-haired Daughter of the Isles is laid,
The love of millions! How we did intrust
Futurity to her![3] and, though it must
Darken above our bones, yet fondly deemed
Our children should obey her child, and blessed
Her and her hoped-for seed, whose promise seemed
Like stars to shepherds' eyes: — 't was but a meteor beamed.

CLXXI

Woe unto us, not her; for she sleeps well:[4]
The fickle reek of popular breath, the tongue
Of hollow counsel, the false oracle,
Which from the birth of monarchy hath rung
Its knell in princely ears, 'till the o'erstung
Nations have armed in madness, the strange fate
Which tumbles mightiest sovereigns, and hath flung
Against their blind omnipotence a weight
Within the opposing scale, which crushes soon or late, —

[1] **Iris**: the rainbow (iris) of hope.

[2] **Lonely lord**: Leopold, her husband.

[3] This stanza shows that even in exile Byron preserved his loyalty to England (cf. also stanzas VIII–X).

[4] **She sleeps well**: with the whole of this stanza compare stanza XL of Shelley's *Adonais*.

CLXXII

These might have been her destiny; but no —
Our hearts deny it; and so young, so fair,
Good without effort, great without a foe;
But now a bride and mother — and now *there!*
How many ties did that stern moment tear!
From thy Sire's to his humblest subject's breast
Is linked the electric chain of that despair,
Whose shock was as an earthquake's, and opprest
The land which loved thee so that none could love thee best.

CLXXIII

Lo, Nemi![1] navelled in the woody hills
So far, that the uprooting wind which tears
The oak from his foundation, and which spills
The ocean o'er its boundary, and bears
Its foam against the skies, reluctant spares
The oval mirror of thy glassy lake;
And, calm as cherished hate, its surface wears
A deep cold settled aspect naught can shake,
All coiled into itself and round, as sleeps the snake.

CLXXIV

And near Albano's[2] scarce divided waves
Shine from a sister valley; — and afar
The Tiber winds, and the broad ocean laves
The Latian coast where sprang the Epic war,
"Arms and the Man,"[3] whose re-ascending star

[1] **Nemi**: a lovely lake, seventeen miles southeast of Rome, in the Alban Mountains. It is the crater of an extinct volcano; hence its likeness to the "coiled snake."

[2] **Albano**: a lake near Nemi and similar to it. Byron has now left the city, and has returned to the open country. He has climbed to the summit of the Alban Mountains, up Monte Albano ("the Alban Mount"), which commands a superb view of Rome, the Tiber, the Sabine Mountains, and the sea.

[3] **"Arms and the Man"**: the opening words of Virgil's *Æneid.* The "Man" is Æneas, whose victories on the "Latian (Italian) coast" ultimately led to the founding of Rome.

Rose o'er an empire: — but beneath thy right
Tully[1] reposed from Rome; — and where yon bar
Of girdling mountains intercepts the sight
The Sabine farm[2] was tilled, the weary bard's delight.

CLXXV

But I forget. — My Pilgrim's shrine is won,
And he and I must part, — so let it be, —
His task and mine alike are nearly done;
Yet once more let us look upon the Sea;
The midland ocean breaks on him and me,
And from the Alban Mount we now behold
Our friend of youth, that ocean, which when we
Beheld it last by Calpe's rock[3] unfold
Those waves, we followed on till the dark Euxine rolled

CLXXVI

Upon the blue Symplegades:[4] long years —
Long, though not very many, since have done
Their work on both; some suffering and some tears
Have left us nearly where we had begun;
Yet not in vain our mortal race hath run —
We have had our reward — and it is here:
That we can yet feel gladdened by the sun,
And reap from earth, sea, joy almost as dear
As if there were no man to trouble what is clear.

[1] **Tully**: Cicero had a country place at Tusculum, in the Alban Mountains.

[2] **The Sabine farm**: though Byron has said "Farewell, Horace" (stanza LXXVII), he cannot forbear another allusion. Horace's references to his farm in the Sabine hills cause a smile; he *praised* the farm, but he *lived* in the city!

[3] **Calpe's rock**: Gibraltar.

[4] **Symplegades**: two rocky islets at the entrance of the Bosporus into the Black Sea. Byron here alludes to his first voyage, in 1809–1811, which furnished the material for the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*.

CLXXVII

Oh! that the desert were my dwelling-place,
With one fair Spirit for my minister,
That I might all forget the human race,
And, hating no one, love but only her!
Ye Elements! — in whose ennobling stir
I feel myself exalted — Can ye not
Accord me such a Being? Do I err
In deeming such inhabit many a spot?
Though with them to converse can rarely be our lot.

CLXXVIII[1]

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

CLXXIX

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean — roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin — his control
Stops with the shore; — upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,

[1] **Stanzas CLXXVIII-CLXXXIV**: Byron's love of nature, though ardent and sincere, was reserved chiefly for her grander aspects. Both the mountains and the sea called to him with irresistible appeal, and both he celebrated in verse that fairly rises to the sublimity of his themes. The reader should compare the above stanzas with those in Canto III, on Night and Storm in the Alps (see pp. 47–51). These stanzas on the ocean, though hackneyed, can never grow old, such is their glorious energy and power.

When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.

CLXXX

His steps are not upon thy paths, — thy fields
Are not a spoil for him, — thou dost arise
And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And send'st him, shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his Gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth: — there let him lay.

CLXXXI

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake
And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
Their clay creator the vain title take
Of Lord of thee, and Arbiter of War —
These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
Alike the Armada's[1] pride, or spoils of Trafalgar.[1]

CLXXXII

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee —
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?

[1] **Armada; Trafalgar**: two of the most decisive naval events in history. The Spanish fleet, known as the "Armada," was met and partly destroyed by the English in 1588. Terrible storms completed the destruction. The battle of Trafalgar, in which the English, under Lord Nelson, won a famous victory over the French fleet, under Admiral Villeneuve, was fought in 1805, near the coast of Spain, off Cape Trafalgar.

Thy waters washed them power while they were free,
And many a tyrant since; their shores obey
The stranger, slave, or savage; their decay
Has dried up realms to deserts: — not so thou,
Unchangeable save to thy wild waves' play —
Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow —
Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

CLXXXIII

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,
Calm or convulsed — in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving; — boundless, endless, and sublime —
The image of Eternity — the throne
Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made; each zone
Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

CLXXXIV

And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy
Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be
Borne, like thy bubbles, onward: from a boy
I wantoned with thy breakers — they to me
Were a delight; and if the freshening sea
Made them a terror — 't was a pleasing fear,
For I was as it were a child of thee,
And trusted to thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane — as I do here.

CLXXXV

My task is done — my song hath ceased — my theme
Has died into an echo; it is fit

The spell should break of this protracted dream.
The torch shall be extinguished which hath lit
My midnight lamp — and what is writ, is writ, —
Would it were worthier! but I am not now
That which I have been — and my visions flit
Less palpably before me — and the glow
Which in my spirit dwelt is fluttering, faint, and low.

CLXXXVI

Farewell! a word that must be, and hath been —
A sound which makes us linger; — yet — farewell!
Ye! who have traced the Pilgrim to the scene
Which is his last — if in your memories dwell
A thought which once was his — if on ye swell
A single recollection, not in vain
He wore his sandal-shoon, and scallop-shell;[1]
Farewell! with *him* alone may rest the pain,
If such there were — with *you*, the moral of his strain!

[1] **Scallop-shell**: in allusion to Childe Harold's pilgrimage to places consecrated by tradition or history; in the Middle Ages a pilgrim to a holy shrine wore a scallop-shell as a badge.

## SUN OF THE SLEEPLESS!

Sun of the sleepless! melancholy star!
Whose tearful beam glows tremulously far,
That show'st the darkness thou canst not dispel,
How like art thou to joy remember'd well!
So gleams the past, the light of other days,
Which shines, but warms not with its powerless rays;
A night-beam Sorrow watcheth to behold,
Distinct, but distant — clear, but oh, how cold!

## MAZEPPA

In *Mazeppa*, which he wrote at Venice in 1818, Byron reverts to the meter of his earlier romances and of *The Prisoner of Chillon*. The incident of Mazeppa's ride is historical, though of course transfigured by the poet's imagination.

The Ukraine (Borderland) was a name formerly applied to a district of uncertain boundaries, forming part of the old kingdom of Poland, but now belonging entirely to Russia. The inhabitants were Cossacks, a mixed race with Polish, Russian, and Tartar blood in their veins. Wild and free, they lived in the saddle and were engaged in constant warfare. They were organized into a government by the king of Poland in the sixteenth century; but, to escape oppression, less than a century later they revolted to Russia.

This brings us down to the time of Mazeppa, a famous "hetman," or chief of the Cossacks, who was born somewhere in the Ukraine, the exact place of his birth being a matter of dispute, as is the time, which is variously stated as 1640 and as 1644. Mazeppa was educated as a page at the court of John Casimir, king of Poland. Here occurred the romantic incident that Byron has taken as the basis of his narrative. Having been detected in an intrigue with a Polish lady of high rank, Mazeppa was bound naked to the back of a wild Tartar horse, who fled with him into the wilderness — the Ukraine; whether to Mazeppa's own home, as some assert, or to the native haunts of the horse, as others say, does not greatly affect the romance of the story.

Mazeppa remained among the Cossacks of the Ukraine, and in 1687 became their chief. Although subsequently made Prince of the Ukraine by Peter the Great, he desired independence of Russia, and

so conspired with Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, with whom he was defeated at Pultowa. After Pultowa he accompanied Charles to Bender, and there died, the same or the following year.

Mazeppa's story has been a favorite theme for writers. The Russian novelist Bulgarin used it in a novel, and the Russian poet Pushkin made Mazeppa the hero of his drama, *Poltàva*. But Byron's spirited narrative is the most celebrated treatment of the subject. The poet doubtless gained his historic facts from the *Histoire de Charles XII* by Voltaire, whose brief and matter-of-fact account is quoted in the "Advertisement" prefixed to the original edition of *Mazeppa*, 1819. Even the mere setting of Byron's poem is significant and suggestive: after the great defeat the old Hetman, pursued and fleeing, yet bold and dauntless as ever, tells to the despairing and wounded king of Sweden the wild and romantic story of his youth. The rush of the terrible ride through the forests and over the plains, Mazeppa's absolute helplessness, his hot anger and fruitless scorn, his torture by cold and thirst, his peril from the wolves, his passage of the river, form the main elements of a story that perhaps only Byron could have told with such breathless energy and graphic power.

I

'T WAS after dread Pultowa's[1] day,
When fortune left the royal Swede —
Around a slaughtered army lay,
No more to combat and to bleed.
The power and glory of the war,
Faithless as their vain votaries, men,
Had passed to the triumphant Czar,
And Moscow's walls were safe again —
Until a day more dark and drear
And a more memorable year,
Should give to slaughter and to shame
A mightier host and haughtier name;
A greater wreck, a deeper fall,
A shock to one — a thunderbolt to all.[2]

[1] **Pultowa**: a city in southwestern Russia, near which Peter the Great won a famous victory over Charles the Twelfth, on July 8, 1709. This battle marked the beginning of Charles's downward career and the rise of Russia.

[2] Napoleon began his retreat from Moscow on October 19, 1812.

II

Such was the hazard of the die;
The wounded Charles [1] was taught to fly
By day and night through field and flood,
Stained with his own and subjects' blood;
For thousands fell that flight to aid:
And not a voice was heard to upbraid
Ambition in his humbled hour,
When Truth had nought to dread from Power.
His horse was slain, and Gieta [2] gave
His own — and died the Russians' slave.
This, too, sinks after many a league
Of well-sustained but vain fatigue;
And in the depth of forests darkling
The watch-fires in the distance sparkling —
The beacons of surrounding foes —
A king must lay his limbs at length.
Are these the laurels and repose
For which the nations strain their strength?
They laid him by a savage tree,
In outworn Nature's agony;
His wounds were stiff, his limbs were stark;
The heavy hour was chill and dark;
The fever in his blood forbade
A transient slumber's fitful aid:
And thus it was; but yet through all,
Kinglike the Monarch bore his fall,
And made, in this extreme of ill,
His pangs the vassals of his will:
All silent and subdued were they,
As once the nations round him lay.

[1] Charles had been wounded in the foot ten days before the battle of Pultowa.
[2] **Gieta**: a Swedish officer.

III

A band of chiefs! — alas! how few,
Since but the fleeting of a day
Had thinned it; but this wreck was true
And chivalrous: upon the clay
Each sate him down, all sad and mute,
Beside his monarch and his steed;
For danger levels man and brute,
And all are fellows in their need.
Among the rest, Mazeppa made
His pillow in an old oak's shade —
Himself as rough, and scarce less old,
The Ukraine's Hetman, calm and bold;
But first, outspent with this long course,
The Cossack prince rubbed down his horse,
And made for him a leafy bed,
And smoothed his fetlocks and his mane,
And slacked his girth, and stripped his rein,
And joyed to see how well he fed;
For until now he had the dread
His wearied courser might refuse
To browse beneath the midnight dews:
But he was hardy as his lord,
And little cared for bed and board;
But spirited and docile too,
Whate'er was to be done, would do.
Shaggy and swift, and strong of limb,
All Tartar-like he carried him;
Obeyed his voice, and came to call,
And knew him in the midst of all:
Though thousands were around, — and Night,
Without a star, pursued her flight, —
That steed from sunset until dawn
His chief would follow like a fawn.

IV

This done, Mazeppa spread his cloak,
And laid his lance beneath his oak,
Felt if his arms in order good
The long day's march had well withstood —
If still the powder filled the pan,
And flints unloosened kept their lock —
His sabre's hilt and scabbard felt,
And whether they had chafed his belt;
And next the venerable man,
From out his havresack and can,
Prepared and spread his slender stock;
And to the Monarch and his men
The whole or portion offered then
With far less of inquietude
Than courtiers at a banquet would.
And Charles of this his slender share
With smiles partook a moment there,
To force of cheer a greater show,
And seem above both wounds and woe; —
And then he said: "Of all our band,
Though firm of heart and strong of hand,
In skirmish, march, or forage, none
Can less have said or more have done
Than thee, Mazeppa! On the earth
So fit a pair had never birth,
Since Alexander's days till now,
As thy Bucephalus[1] and thou:
All Scythia's[2] fame to thine should yield
For pricking[3] on o'er flood and field."

[1] **Bucephalus**: a favorite horse of Alexander the Great.
[2] **Scythia**: an ill-defined region of western Asia and southeastern Europe, regarded by the Romans as the home of the best horsemen in the world.
[3] **Pricking**: spurring.

Mazeppa answered, "Ill betide
The school wherein I learned to ride!"
Quoth Charles, "Old Hetman, wherefore so,
Since thou hast learned the art so well?"
Mazeppa said, "'T were long to tell;
And we have many a league to go,
With every now and then a blow,
And ten to one at least the foe,
Before our steeds may graze at ease,
Beyond the swift Borysthenes:[1]
And, Sire, your limbs have need of rest,
And I will be the sentinel
Of this your troop." — "But I request,"
Said Sweden's monarch, "thou wilt tell
This tale of thine, and I may reap,
Perchance, from this the boon of sleep;
For at this moment from my eyes
The hope of present slumber flies."

"Well, Sire, with such a hope, I 'll track
My seventy years of memory back:
I think 't was in my twentieth spring, —
Ay, 't was, — when Casimir was king —
John Casimir,[2] — I was his page
Six summers, in my earlier age:
A learnèd monarch, faith! was he,
And most unlike your majesty;
He made no wars, and did not gain
New realms to lose them back again;
And (save debates in Warsaw's diet)

[1] **Borysthenes**: the Dnieper.

[2] **John Casimir**: king of Poland from 1648 to 1668. He *did*, in fact, make war, but was always rather more of a monk than of a king. After an unsuccessful reign he abdicated in 1668 and died in France in 1672.

He reigned in most unseemly quiet,
Not that he had no cares to vex;
He loved the muses and the Sex;
And sometimes these so froward are,
They made him wish himself at war;
But soon his wrath being o'er, he took
Another mistress, or new book:
And then he gave prodigious fêtes —
All Warsaw gathered round his gates
To gaze upon his splendid court,
And dames and chiefs, of princely port.
He was the Polish Solomon,
So sung his poets, all but one,
Who, being unpensioned, made a satire,
And boasted that he could not flatter.
It was a court of jousts and mimes,
Where every courtier tried at rhymes;
Even I for once produced some verses,
And signed my odes 'Despairing Thyrsis.'
There was a certain Palatine,[1]
A count of far and high descent,
Rich as a salt or silver mine;[2]
And he was proud, ye may divine,
As if from heaven he had been sent:
He had such wealth in blood and ore
As few could match beneath the throne;
And he would gaze upon his store,
And o'er his pedigree would pore,

[1] **Palatine**: a term of varied significance; but Byron probably means either a nobleman of high rank, charged with certain duties at court, or one endowed by the sovereign with privileges and judicial prerogatives inferior only to those of the king himself.

[2] **Rich as a salt mine**: a pardonable comparison, when it is remembered that the wealth of the region once known as Poland lies largely in its salt mines.

Until by some confusion led,
Which almost looked like want of head,
He thought their merits were his own.
His wife was not of this opinion;
His junior she by thirty years,
Grew daily tired of his dominion;
And, after wishes, hopes, and fears,
To virtue a few farewell tears,
A restless dream or two, some glances
At Warsaw's youth, some songs, and dances
Awaited but the usual chances,
Those happy accidents which render
The coldest dames so very tender,
To deck her Count with titles given,
'T is said, as passports into Heaven;
But, strange to say, they rarely boast
Of these, who have deserved them most.

V

"I was a goodly stripling then;
At seventy years I so may say,
That there were few, or boys, or men,
Who, in my dawning time of day,
Of vassal or of knight's degree,
Could vie in vanities with me;
For I had strength — youth — gaiety,
A port, not like to this ye see,
But smooth, as all is rugged now;
For Time, and Care, and War, have ploughed
My very soul from out my brow;
And thus I should be disavowed
By all my kind and kin, could they
Compare my day and yesterday:

This change was wrought, too, long ere age
Had ta'en my features for his page:
With years, ye know, have not declined
My strength — my courage — or my mind,
Or at this hour I should not be
Telling old tales beneath a tree,
With starless skies my canopy.
But let me on: Theresa's form —
Methinks it glides before me now,
Between me and yon chestnut's bough,
The memory is so quick and warm;
And yet I find no words to tell
The shape of her I loved so well:
She had the Asiatic eye,
Such as our Turkish neighbourhood
Hath mingled with our Polish blood,
Dark as above us is the sky;
But through it stole a tender light,
Like the first moonrise of midnight;
Large, dark, and swimming in the stream,
Which seemed to melt to its own beam;
All love, half languor, and half fire,
Like saints that at the stake expire,
And lift their raptured looks on high,
As though it were a joy to die.
A brow like a midsummer lake,
Transparent with the sun therein,
When waves no murmur dare to make,
And Heaven beholds her face within.
A cheek and lip — but why proceed?
I loved her then, I love her still;
And such as I am, love indeed
In fierce extremes — in good and ill.

But still we love even in our rage,
And haunted to our very age
With the vain shadow of the past, —
As is Mazeppa to the last.

VI

"We met — we gazed — I saw, and sighed;
She did not speak, and yet replied;
There are ten thousand tones and signs
We hear and see, but none defines —
Involuntary sparks of thought,
Which strike from out the heart o'erwrought,
And form a strange intelligence,
Alike mysterious and intense,
Which link the burning chain that binds,
Without their will, young hearts and minds;
Conveying, as the electric wire,
We know not how, the absorbing fire.
I saw, and sighed — in silence wept,
And still reluctant distance kept,
Until I was made known to her,
And we might then and there confer
Without suspicion — then, even then,
I longed, and was resolved to speak;
But on my lips they died again,
The accents tremulous and weak,
Until one hour. — There is a game,
A frivolous and foolish play,
Wherewith we while away the day;
It is — I have forgot the name —
And we to this, it seems, were set,
By some strange chance, which I forget:
I recked not if I won or lost,

It was enough for me to be
So near to hear, and oh! to see
The being whom I loved the most.
I watched her as a sentinel,
(May ours this dark night watch as well!)
Until I saw, and thus it was,
That she was pensive, nor perceived
Her occupation, nor was grieved
Nor glad to lose or gain; but still
Played on for hours, as if her will
Yet bound her to the place, though not
That hers might be the winning lot.
Then through my brain the thought did pass,
Even as a flash of lightning there,
That there was something in her air
Which would not doom me to despair;
And on the thought my words broke forth,
All incoherent as they were;
Their eloquence was little worth,
But yet she listened — 't is enough —
Who listens once will listen twice;
Her heart, be sure, is not of ice —
And one refusal no rebuff.

VII

"I loved, and was beloved again —
They tell me, Sire, you never knew
Those gentle frailties; if 't is true,
I shorten all my joy or pain;
To you 't would seem absurd as vain;
But all men are not born to reign,
Or o'er their passions, or as you
Thus o'er themselves and nations too.

I am — or rather *was* — a Prince,
  A chief of thousands, and could lead
  Them on where each would foremost bleed;
But could not o'er myself evince
The like control. — But to resume:
  I loved, and was beloved again;
In sooth, it is a happy doom,
  But yet where happiest ends in pain.
We met in secret, and the hour
Which led me to that lady's bower
Was fiery Expectation's dower.
My days and nights were nothing — all
Except that hour which doth recall,
In the long lapse from youth to age,
  No other like itself: I 'd give
  The Ukraine back again to live
It o'er once more, and be a page,
The happy page, who was the lord
Of one soft heart, and his own sword,
And had no other gem nor wealth,
Save Nature's gift of Youth and Health.
We met in secret — doubly sweet,
Some say, they find it so to meet;
I know not that — I would have given
  My life but to have called her mine
In the full view of Earth and Heaven;
  For I did oft and long repine
That we could only meet by stealth.

VIII

"For lovers there are many eyes,
  And such there were on us; the Devil
  On such occasions should be civil —

The Devil! — I 'm loth to do him wrong,
It might be some untoward saint,
Who would not be at rest too long,
But to his pious bile gave vent —
But one fair night, some lurking spies
Surprised and seized us both.
The Count was something more than wroth —
I was unarmed; but if in steel,
All cap-à-pie from head to heel,
What 'gainst their numbers could I do?
'T was near his castle, far away
From city or from succour near,
And almost on the break of day;
I did not think to see another,
My moments seemed reduced to few;
And with one prayer to Mary Mother,
And, it may be, a saint or two,
As I resigned me to my fate,
They led me to the castle gate:
Theresa's doom I never knew,
Our lot was henceforth separate.
An angry man, ye may opine,
Was he, the proud Count Palatine;
And he had reason good to be,
But he was most enraged lest such
An accident should chance to touch
Upon his future pedigree;
Nor less amazed, that such a blot
His noble 'scutcheon should have got,
While he was highest of his line;
Because unto himself he seemed
The first of men, nor less he deemed
In others' eyes, and most in mine.

'Sdeath! with a *page* — perchance a king
Had reconciled him to the thing;
But with a stripling of a page —
I felt — but cannot paint his rage.

IX

"'Bring forth the horse!' — the horse was brought!
In truth, he was a noble steed,
A Tartar of the Ukraine breed,
Who looked as though the speed of thought
Were in his limbs; but he was wild,
Wild as the wild deer, and untaught,
With spur and bridle undefiled —
'T was but a day he had been caught;
And snorting, with erected mane,
And struggling fiercely, but in vain,
In the full foam of wrath and dread
To me the desert-born was led:
They bound me on, that menial throng,
Upon his back with many a thong;
They loosed him with a sudden lash —
Away! — away — and on we dash! —
Torrents less rapid and less rash.

X

"Away! — away! — My breath was gone,
I saw not where he hurried on:
'T was scarcely yet the break of day,
And on he foamed — away! — away!
The last of human sounds which rose,
As I was darted from my foes,
Was the wild shout of savage laughter,
Which on the wind came roaring after

A moment from that rabble rout:
With sudden wrath I wrenched my head,
And snapped the cord, which to the mane
Had bound my neck in lieu of rein,
And, writhing half my form about,
Howled back my curse; but 'midst the tread,
The thunder of my courser's speed,
Perchance they did not hear nor heed:
It vexes me — for I would fain
Have paid their insult back again.
I paid it well in after days:
There is not of that castle gate,
Its drawbridge and portcullis' weight,
Stone — bar — moat — bridge — or barrier left;
Nor of its fields a blade of grass,
Save what grows on a ridge of wall,
Where stood the hearth-stone of the hall;
And many a time ye there might pass,
Nor dream that e'er the fortress was.
I saw its turrets in a blaze,
Their crackling battlements all cleft,
And the hot lead pour down like rain
From off the scorched and blackening roof
Whose thickness was not vengeance-proof.
They little thought that day of pain,
When launched, as on the lightning's flash,
They bade me to destruction dash,
That one day I should come again,
With twice five thousand horse, to thank
The Count for his uncourteous ride.
They played me then a bitter prank,
When, with the wild horse for my guide,
They bound me to his foaming flank:

At length I played them one as frank —
For Time at last sets all things even —
And if we do but watch the hour,
There never yet was human power
Which could evade, if unforgiven,
The patient search and vigil long
Of him who treasures up a wrong.

XI

"Away, away, my steed and I,
Upon the pinions of the wind.
All human dwellings left behind,
We sped like meteors through the sky,
When with its crackling sound the night
Is chequered with the Northern light.
Town — village — none were on our track,
But a wild plain of far extent,
And bounded by a forest black;
And, save the scarce seen battlement
On distant heights of some stronghold,
Against the Tartars[1] built of old,
No trace of man. The year before,
A Turkish army had marched o'er;
And where the Spahi's[2] hoof hath trod,
The verdure flies the bloody sod:
The sky was dull, and dim, and gray,

[1] **Tartar**: the Tartars, or *Tatars*, were originally the Mongolian tribes of eastern Asia. Afterwards the term was used in a vague sense to include the various Asiatic tribes and races led into Europe by Genghis Khan about 1225 A.D. In a more restricted sense, the "Tartars" were certain tribes, largely of Turkish race, who lived in Siberia and central and southeastern Russia, and made inroads upon the Russians and Poles. Hence the "strongholds" along the Polish frontier. Byron may here refer either to the Tartar incursions of Genghis Khan or to the predatory inroads of the "Tartar" tribes of southeastern Russia.

[2] **Spahi**: a Turkish cavalryman.

And a low breeze crept moaning by —
I could have answered with a sigh —
But fast we fled — away ! away ! —
And I could neither sigh nor pray ;
And my cold sweat-drops fell like rain
Upon the courser's bristling mane ;
But, snorting still with rage and fear,
He flew upon his far career :
At times I almost thought, indeed,
He must have slackened in his speed ;
But no — my bound and slender frame
Was nothing to his angry might,
And merely like a spur became :
Each motion which I made to free
My swoln limbs from their agony
Increased his fury and affright :
I tried my voice, — 't was faint and low —
But yet he swerved as from a blow ;
And, starting to each accent, sprang
As from a sudden trumpet's clang :
Meantime my cords were wet with gore,
Which, oozing through my limbs, ran o'er ;
And in my tongue the thirst became
A something fierier far than flame.

XII

" We neared the wild wood — 't was so wide,
I saw no bounds on either side :
'T was studded with old sturdy trees,
That bent not to the roughest breeze
Which howls down from Siberia's waste,
And strips the forest in its haste, —
But these were few and far between,

Set thick with shrubs more young and green,
Luxuriant with their annual leaves,
Ere strown by those autumnal eves
That nip the forest's foliage dead,
Discolored with a lifeless red,
Which stands thereon like stiffened gore
Upon the slain when battle 's o'er ;
And some long winter's night hath shed
Its frosts o'er every tombless head —
So cold and stark, the raven's beak
May peck unpierced each frozen cheek :
'T was a wild waste of underwood,
And here and there a chestnut stood,
The strong oak, and the hardy pine ;
But far apart — and well it were,
Or else a different lot were mine :
The boughs gave way, and did not tear
My limbs ; and I found strength to bear
My wounds, already scarred with cold ;
My bonds forbade to loose my hold.
We rustled through the leaves like wind, —
Left shrubs, and trees, and wolves behind ;
By night I heard them on the track,
Their troop came hard upon our back,
With their long gallop, which can tire
The hound's deep hate, and hunter's fire :
Where'er we flew they followed on,
Nor left us with the morning sun ;
Behind I saw them, scarce a rood,
At daybreak winding through the wood,
And through the night had heard their feet
Their stealing, rustling step repeat.
Oh ! how I wished for spear or sword,

At least to die amidst the horde,
And perish — if it must be so —
At bay, destroying many a foe!
When first my courser's race begun,
I wished the goal already won;
But now I doubted strength and speed:
Vain doubt! his swift and savage breed
Had nerved him like the mountain-roe —
Nor faster falls the blinding snow
Which whelms the peasant near the door
Whose threshold he shall cross no more,
Bewildered with the dazzling blast,
Than through the forest-paths he passed —
Untired, untamed, and worse than wild —
All furious as a favored child
Balked of its wish; or — fiercer still —
A woman piqued — who has her will!

XIII

"The wood was passed; 't was more than noon.
But chill the air, although in June;
Or it might be my veins ran cold —
Prolonged endurance tames the bold;
And I was then not what I seem,
But headlong as a wintry stream,
And wore my feelings out before
I well could count their causes o'er:
And what with fury, fear, and wrath,
The tortures which beset my path —
Cold — hunger — sorrow — shame — distress —
Thus bound in Nature's nakedness;
Sprung from a race whose rising blood
When stirred beyond its calmer mood,

And trodden hard upon, is like
The rattle-snake's, in act to strike —
What marvel if this worn-out trunk
Beneath its woes a moment sunk ?
The earth gave way, the skies rolled round,
I seemed to sink upon the ground ;
But erred — for I was fastly bound.
My heart turned sick, my brain grew sore,
And throbbed awhile, then beat no more :
The skies spun like a mighty wheel ;
I saw the trees like drunkards reel,
And a slight flash sprang o'er my eyes,
Which saw no farther. He who dies
Can die no more than then I died,
O'ertortured by that ghastly ride.
I felt the blackness come and go,
And strove to wake ; but could not make
My senses climb up from below :
I felt as on a plank at sea,
When all the waves that dash o'er thee,
At the same time upheave and whelm,
And hurl thee towards a desert realm.
My undulating life was as
The fancied lights that flitting pass
Our shut eyes in deep midnight, when
Fever begins upon the brain ;
But soon it passed, with little pain,
But a confusion worse than such :
I own that I should deem it much,
Dying, to feel the same again ;
And yet I do suppose we must
Feel far more e'er we turn to dust !
No matter ! I have bared my brow
Full in Death's face — before — and now.

XIV

"My thoughts came back. Where was I? Cold,
And numb, and giddy: pulse by pulse
Life reassumed its lingering hold,
And throb by throb, — till grown a pang
Which for a moment would convulse,
My blood reflowed, though thick and chill;
My ear with uncouth noises rang,
My heart began once more to thrill;
My sight returned, though dim; alas!
And thickened, as it were, with glass.
Methought the dash of waves was nigh;
There was a gleam too of the sky,
Studded with stars; — it is no dream;
The wild horse swims the wilder stream!
The bright broad river's gushing tide
Sweeps, winding onward, far and wide,
And we are half-way, struggling o'er
To yon unknown and silent shore.
The waters broke my hollow trance,
And with a temporary strength
My stiffened limbs were rebaptized.
My courser's broad breast proudly braves,
And dashes off the ascending waves,
And onward we advance!
We reach the slippery shore at length,
A haven I but little prized,
For all behind was dark and drear,
And all before was night and fear.
How many hours of night or day
In those suspended pangs I lay,
I could not tell; I scarcely knew
If this were human breath I drew.

XV

"With glossy skin, and dripping mane,
And reeling limbs, and reeking flank,
The wild steed's sinewy nerves still strain
Up the repelling bank.
We gain the top: a boundless plain
Spreads through the shadow of the night,
And onward, onward, onward — seems,
Like precipices in our dreams,
To stretch beyond the sight;
And here and there a speck of white,
Or scattered spot of dusky green,
In masses broke into the light,
As rose the moon upon my right:
But nought distinctly seen
In the dim waste would indicate
The omen of a cottage gate;
No twinkling taper from afar
Stood like a hospitable star;
Not even an ignis-fatuus rose
To make him merry with my woes:
That very cheat had cheered me then!
Although detected, welcome still,
Reminding me, through every ill,
Of the abodes of men.

XVI

"Onward we went — but slack and slow;
His savage force at length o'erspent,
The drooping courser, faint and low,
All feebly foaming went:
A sickly infant had had power
To guide him forward in that hour!

But, useless all to me,
His new-born tameness nought availed —
My limbs were bound ; my force had failed,
Perchance, had they been free.
With feeble effort still I tried
To rend the bonds so starkly tied,
But still it was in vain ;
My limbs were only wrung the more,
And soon the idle strife gave o'er,
Which but prolonged their pain.
The dizzy race seemed almost done,
Although no goal was nearly won :
Some streaks announced the coming sun —
How slow, alas ! he came !
Methought that mist of dawning gray
Would never dapple into day ;
How heavily it rolled away !
Before the eastern flame
Rose crimson, and deposed the stars,
And called the radiance from their cars,
And filled the earth, from his deep throne,
With lonely lustre, all his own.

XVII

" Uprose the sun ; the mists were curled
Back from the solitary world
Which lay around — behind — before.
What booted it to traverse o'er
Plain — forest — river? Man nor brute,
Nor dint of hoof, nor print of foot,
Lay in the wild luxuriant soil —
No sign of travel, none of toil —
The very air was mute :

And not an insect's shrill small horn,
Nor matin bird's new voice was borne
From herb nor thicket. Many a *werst*,[1]
Panting as if his heart would burst,
The weary brute still staggered on;
And still we were — or seemed — alone:
At length, while reeling on our way,
Methought I heard a courser neigh
From out yon tuft of blackening firs.
Is it the wind those branches stirs?
No, no! from out the forest prance
A trampling troop; I see them come!
In one vast squadron they advance!
I strove to cry — my lips were dumb!
The steeds rush on in plunging pride;
But where are they the reins to guide?
A thousand horse, and none to ride!
With flowing tail, and flying mane,
Wide nostrils never stretched by pain,
Mouths bloodless to the bit or rein,
And feet that iron never shod,
And flanks unscarred by spur or rod,
A thousand horse, the wild, the free,
Like waves that follow o'er the sea,
Came thickly thundering on,
As if our faint approach to meet!
The sight re-nerved my courser's feet,
A moment staggering, feebly fleet,
A moment, with a faint low neigh,
He answered, and then fell!
With gasps and glazing eyes he lay,
And reeking limbs immoveable,

[1] **Werst**: a Russian measure equivalent to about three fifths of an English mile.

His first and last career is done!
On came the troop — they saw him stoop,
They saw me strangely bound along
His back with many a bloody thong.
They stop — they start — they snuff the air,
Gallop a moment here and there,
Approach, retire, wheel round and round,
Then plunging back with sudden bound,
Headed by one black mighty steed,
Who seemed the Patriarch of his breed,
Without a single speck or hair
Of white upon his shaggy hide;
They snort — they foam — neigh — they swerve aside
And backward to the forest fly,
By instinct, from a human eye.
They left me there to my despair,
Linked to the dead and stiffening wretch,
Whose lifeless limbs beneath me stretch,
Relieved from that unwonted weight,
From whence I could not extricate
Nor him nor me — and there we lay,
The dying on the dead!
I little deemed another day
Would see my houseless, helpless head.

"And there from morn till twilight bound,
I felt the heavy hours toil round,
With just enough of life to see
My last of suns go down on me,
In hopeless certainty of mind,
That makes us feel at length resigned
To that which our foreboding years
Presents the worst and last of fears:

Inevitable — even a boon,
Nor more unkind for coming soon,
Yet shunned and dreaded with such care,
As if it only were a snare
That Prudence might escape:
At times both wished for and implored,
At times sought with self-pointed sword,
Yet still a dark and hideous close
To even intolerable woes,
And welcome in no shape.
And, strange to say, the sons of pleasure,
They who have revelled beyond measure
In beauty, wassail, wine, and treasure,
Die calm, or calmer, oft than he
Whose heritage was Misery:
For he who hath in turn run through
All that was beautiful and new,
Hath nought to hope, and nought to leave;
And, save the future (which is viewed
Not quite as men are base or good,
But as their nerves may be endued),
With nought perhaps to grieve:
The wretch still hopes his woes must end,
And Death, whom he should deem his friend,
Appears, to his distempered eyes,
Arrived to rob him of his prize,
The tree of his new Paradise.
To-morrow would have given him all,
Repaid his pangs, repaired his fall;
To-morrow would have been the first
Of days no more deplored or curst,
But bright, and long, and beckoning years,
Seen dazzling through the mist of tears,

Guerdon of many a painful hour;
To-morrow would have given him power
To rule — to shine — to smite — to save —
And must it dawn upon his grave?

XVIII

"The sun was sinking — still I lay
Chained to the chill and stiffening steed!
I thought to mingle there our clay;
And my dim eyes of death had need,
No hope arose of being freed.
I cast my last looks up the sky,
And there between me and the sun
I saw the expecting raven fly,
Who scarce would wait till both should die,
Ere his repast begun;
He flew, and perched, then flew once more,
And each time nearer than before;
I saw his wing through twilight flit,
And once so near me he alit
I could have smote, but lacked the strength;
But the slight motion of my hand,
And feeble scratching of the sand,
The exerted throat's faint struggling noise,
Which scarcely could be called a voice,
Together scared him off at length.
I know no more — my latest dream
Is something of a lovely star
Which fixed my dull eyes from afar,
And went and came with wandering beam,
And of the cold — dull — swimming — dense
Sensation of recurring sense,
And then subsiding back to death,

And then again a little breath,
A little thrill — a short suspense,
An icy sickness curdling o'er
My heart, and sparks that crossed my brain —
A gasp — a throb — a start of pain,
A sigh — and nothing more.

XIX

"I woke — where was I? — Do I see
A human face look down on me?
And doth a roof above me close?
Do these limbs on a couch repose?
Is this a chamber where I lie?
And is it mortal yon bright eye,
That watches me with gentle glance?
I closed my own again once more,
As doubtful that my former trance
Could not as yet be o'er.
A slender girl, long-haired, and tall,
Sate watching by the cottage wall:
The sparkle of her eye I caught,
Even with my first return of thought;
For ever and anon she threw
A prying, pitying glance on me
With her black eyes so wild and free:
I gazed, and gazed, until I knew
No vision it could be, —
But that I lived, and was released
From adding to the vulture's feast:
And when the Cossack maid beheld
My heavy eyes at length unsealed,
She smiled — and I essayed to speak,
But failed — and she approached, and made

With lip and finger signs that said,
I must not strive as yet to break
The silence, till my strength should be
Enough to leave my accents free;
And then her hand on mine she laid,
And smoothed the pillow for my head,
And stole along on tiptoe tread,
And gently oped the door, and spake
In whispers — ne'er was voice so sweet!
Even music followed her light feet; —
But those she called were not awake,
And she went forth; but, ere she passed,
Another look on me she cast,
Another sign she made, to say,
That I had nought to fear, that all
Were near, at my command or call,
And she would not delay
Her due return: — while she was gone,
Methought I felt too much alone.

XX

"She came with mother and with sire —
What need of more? — I will not tire
With long recital of the rest,
Since I became the Cossack's guest.
They found me senseless on the plain,
They bore me to the nearest hut,
They brought me into life again, —
Me — one day o'er their realm to reign!
Thus the vain fool who strove to glut
His rage, refining on my pain,
Sent me forth to the wilderness,
Bound — naked — bleeding — and alone,

To pass the desert to a throne, —
  What mortal his own doom may guess?
  Let none despond, let none despair!
To-morrow the Borysthenes
May see our coursers graze at ease
Upon his Turkish bank, — and never
Had I such welcome for a river
  As I shall yield when safely there.
Comrades, good night!" — The Hetman threw
  His length beneath the oak-tree shade,
  With leafy couch already made —
A bed nor comfortless nor new
To him, who took his rest whene'er
The hour arrived, no matter where:
  His eyes the hastening slumbers steep. —
And if ye marvel Charles forgot
To thank his tale, *he* wondered not, —
  The king had been an hour asleep!

## STANZAS FROM *THE VISION OF JUDGMENT*

George III of England died in January, 1820. In April, 1821, Robert Southey, poet laureate, published a poem describing the king's reception into heaven, called *The Vision of Judgment*. The poem is written in lame hexameters, and is altogether an absurd performance. In his preface Southey bitterly attacked what he called "the Satanic school of poets," meaning chiefly Byron and Shelley. In this Southey blundered; he had provoked the most pitiless and brilliant satirist of the age. Byron retorted, in October, 1822, with his *Vision of Judgment*, which is at once a mirthful parody of Southey's poem and a scathing satire on the poet himself. Southey had already placed George III in heaven, so Byron had to let him stay there. He contents himself with telling us how hard it was for the king to get in, and how near he came to going the other way. The result is certainly the most brilliant of all English satires, — one among the very few, perhaps the only one, in which satire becomes truly sublime. The poem consists of one hundred and six stanzas of the *Don Juan* type, and is therefore eight hundred and forty-eight lines in length. We can here give only the few stanzas which serve as an introduction to the trial scene.

I

SAINT PETER sat by the celestial gate:
His keys were rusty, and the lock was dull,
So little trouble had been given of late;
Not that the place by any means was full,
But since the Gallic era "eighty-eight" [1]
The devils had ta'en a longer, stronger pull,
And "a pull all together," as they say
At sea — which drew most souls another way.

II

The angels all were singing out of tune,
And hoarse with having little else to do,
Excepting to wind up the sun and moon,
Or curb a runaway young star or two,

[1] **The Gallic era "eighty-eight"**: the era of the French Revolution.

Or wild colt of a comet, which too soon
Broke out of bounds o'er the ethereal blue,
Splitting some planet with its playful tail,
As boats are sometimes by a wanton whale.

III

The guardian seraphs had retired on high,
Finding their charges past all care below;
Terrestrial business filled nought in the sky
Save the Recording Angel's black bureau;
Who found, indeed, the facts to multiply
With such rapidity of vice and woe,
That he had stripped off both his wings in quills,
And yet was in arrear of human ills.

IV

His business so augmented of late years,
That he was forced, against his will, no doubt
(Just like those cherubs, earthly ministers),
For some resource to turn himself about,
And claim the help of his celestial peers,
To aid him ere he should be quite worn out
By the increased demand for his remarks:
Six angels and twelve saints were named his clerks.[1]

V

This was a handsome board — at least for heaven;
And yet they had even then enough to do,
So many conquerors' cars were daily driven,
So many kingdoms fitted up anew;
Each day, too, slew its thousands six or seven,
Till at the crowning carnage, Waterloo,

[1] **Clerks**: pronounced by the English so as to rhyme with "remarks."

They threw their pens down in divine disgust —
The page was so besmeared with blood and dust.

XVI

Saint Peter sat by the celestial gate,
And nodded o'er his keys; when, lo! there came
A wondrous noise he had not heard of late —
A rushing sound of wind, and stream, and flame;
In short, a roar of things extremely great,
Which would have made aught save a Saint exclaim;
But he, with first a start and then a wink,
Said, "There 's another star gone out, I think!"

XVII

But ere he could return to his repose,
A cherub flapped his right wing o'er his eyes —
At which Saint Peter yawned, and rubbed his nose:
"Saint porter," said the angel, "prithee rise!"
Waving a goodly wing, which glowed, as glows
An earthly peacock's tail, with heavenly dyes:
To which the saint replied, "Well, what 's the matter?
Is Lucifer come back with all this clatter?"

XVIII

"No," quoth the cherub; "George the Third is dead."
"And who *is* George the Third?" replied the apostle:
"*What George? what Third?*" "The king of England," said
The angel. "Well! he won't find kings to jostle
Him on his way; but does he wear his head?
Because the last we saw here had a tussle,
And ne'er would have got into heaven's good graces,
Had he not flung his head in all our faces.

XIX

"He was, if I remember, king of France;[1]
That head of his, which could not keep a crown
On earth, yet ventured in my face to advance
A claim to those of martyrs — like my own.
If I had had my sword, as I had once
When I cut ears off, I had cut him down;
But having but my *keys*, and not my brand,
I only knock'd his head from out his hand."

XXII

The angel answered, "Peter! do not pout:
The king who comes has head and all entire,
And never knew much what it was about —
He did as doth the puppet — by its wire,
And will be judged like all the rest, no doubt:
My business and your own is not to inquire
Into such matters, but to mind our cue —
Which is to act as we are bid to do."

XXIII

While thus they spake, the angelic caravan,
Arriving like a rush of mighty wind,
Cleaving the fields of space, as doth the swan
Some silver stream (say Ganges, Nile, or Inde,
Or Thames, or Tweed), and 'midst them an old man
With an old soul, and both extremely blind,
Halted before the gate, and in his shroud
Seated their fellow-traveller on a cloud.

XXIV

But bringing up the rear of this bright host
A Spirit of a different aspect waved

[1] **King of France**: Louis XVI, beheaded in 1793.

His wings, like thunder-clouds above some coast
  Whose barren beach with frequent wrecks is paved;
His brow was like the deep when tempest-tossed;
  Fierce and unfathomable thoughts engraved
Eternal wrath on his immortal face,
And *where* he gazed a gloom pervaded space.

XXV

As he drew near, he gazed upon the gate
  Ne'er to be entered more by him or sin,
With such a glance of supernatural hate,
  As made Saint Peter wish himself within;
He pottered with his keys at a great rate,
  And sweated through his apostolic skin:
Of course his perspiration was but ichor,
Or some such other spiritual liquor.

XXVI

The very cherubs huddled all together,
  Like birds when soars the falcon; and they felt
A tingling to the tip of every feather,
  And formed a circle like Orion's belt
Around their poor old charge; who scarce knew whither
  His guards had led him, though they gently dealt
With royal manes[1] (for by many stories,
And true, we learn the angels all are Tories).

XXVII

As things were in this posture, the gate flew
  Asunder, and the flashing of its hinges
Flung over space an universal hue
  Of many-colored flame, until its tinges

[1] **Manes** (pronounced *ma'nes*): shades, ghosts.

Reached even our speck of earth, and made a new
Aurora borealis spread its fringes
O'er the North Pole; the same seen, when ice-bound,
By Captain Parry's [1] crew, in Melville's Sound.

XXVIII

And from the gate thrown open issued beaming
A beautiful and mighty Thing of Light,
Radiant with glory, like a banner streaming
Victorious from some world-o'erthrowing fight:
My poor comparisons must needs be teeming
With earthly likenesses, for here the night
Of clay obscures our best conceptions, saving,
Johanna Southcote,[2] or Bob Southey raving.

XXIX

'T was the archangel Michael: [3] all men know
The make of angels and archangels, since
There 's scarce a scribbler has not one to show,
From the fiends' leader to the angels' prince.
There also are some altar-pieces, though
I really can't say that they much evince
One's inner notions of immortal spirits;
But let the connoisseurs explain *their* merits.

XXX

Michael flew forth in glory and in good;
A goodly work of him from whom all glory
And good arise; the portal past — he stood;
Before him the young cherubs and saints hoary —

[1] **Captain Parry**: a celebrated arctic explorer, who commanded a polar expedition in 1819.

[2] **Johanna (Joanna) Southcote (Southcott)**: an English religious fanatic, originally a domestic servant, who dictated her prophecies in rhyme. By coupling her name with that of the poet laureate, Byron intends the rankest insult.

[3] **The archangel Michael**: Byron, with his Lucifer and Michael, has not forgotten his *Paradise Lost*.

(I say *young*, begging to be understood
By looks, not years; and should be very sorry
To state, they were not older than Saint Peter,
But merely that they seemed a little sweeter).

XXXI

The cherubs and the saints bowed down before
That arch-angelic hierarch, the first
Of essences angelical, who wore
The aspect of a god; but this ne'er nursed
Pride in his heavenly bosom, in whose core
No thought, save for his Maker's service, durst
Intrude — however glorified and high,
He knew him but the viceroy of the sky.

XXXII

He and the sombre silent Spirit met —
They knew each other both for good and ill;
Such was their power, that neither could forget
His former friend and future foe; but still
There was a high, immortal, proud regret
In either's eye, as if 't were less their will
Than destiny to make the eternal years
Their date of war, and their "champ clos" the spheres.

XXXV

The spirits were in neutral space, before
The gate of heaven: like eastern thresholds is
The place where Death's grand cause is argued o'er,
And souls despatch'd to that world or to this;
And therefore Michael and the other wore
A civil aspect; though they did not kiss,
Yet still between his Darkness and his Brightness
There pass'd a mutual glance of great politeness.

## STANZAS

(Written, probably at Venice, in 1819)

I

COULD Love for ever
Run like a river,
And Time's endeavour
Be tried in vain —
No other pleasure
With this could measure;
And like a treasure
We 'd hug the chain.
But since our sighing
Ends not in dying,
And, formed for flying,
Love plumes his wing;
Then for this reason
Let 's love a season;
But let that season be only Spring.

II

When lovers parted
Feel broken-hearted,
And, all hopes thwarted,
Expect to die;
A few years older,
Ah! how much colder
They might behold her
For whom they sigh!

When linked together,
In every weather,
They pluck Love's feather
From out his wing —
He 'll stay for ever,
But sadly shiver
Without his plumage, when past the Spring.

. . . . . .

## STANZAS WRITTEN ON THE ROAD BETWEEN FLORENCE AND PISA

(Written in 1821)

I

OH, talk not to me of a name great in story —
The days of our Youth are the days of our glory;
And the myrtle and ivy of sweet two-and-twenty
Are worth all your laurels, though ever so plenty.

II

What are garlands and crowns to the brow that is wrinkled?
'T is but as a dead flower with May-dew besprinkled:
Then away with all such from the head that is hoary!
What care I for the wreaths that can *only* give glory?

III

Oh FAME! — if I e'er took delight in thy praises,
'T was less for the sake of thy high-sounding phrases,
Than to see the bright eyes of the dear One discover,
She thought that I was not unworthy to love her.

IV

*There* chiefly I sought thee, *there* only I found thee;
Her Glance was the best of the rays that surround thee;
When it sparkled o'er aught that was bright in my story,
I knew it was Love, and I felt it was Glory.

# SELECTIONS FROM DON JUAN

*Don Juan* is undoubtedly Byron's masterpiece, on which his claim to immortality must largely rest. It was the last and by far the most elaborate of his productions, and had attained a length of over fifteen thousand lines when the poet's departure for Greece left it forever unfinished. *Don Juan* is in many ways a marvelous poem, but especially so in its perfectly sustained art; while its remarkable mingling of satire and sentiment, cynicism and pathos, sublimity and absurdity, shows forth Byron himself, with all his complexities and contradictions of character. With the possible exception of Butler's *Hudibras*, it is the wittiest of English poems, and as a complete picture of its age it is certainly unique. Its verse form, the Italian *ottiva rima*, or eight-line stanza, is handled with an ease and a variety of effect unsurpassed in literature. Whatever the subject-matter, the style of *Don Juan* never falls below a high level of excellence, although the poet's moods change with startling rapidity from grave to gay, often leaving the reader in doubt as to what effect was intended. But such anticlimaxes form an essential part of the poem. Through the perfection of its art, its scathing satire, true pathos, and brilliant wit, *Don Juan* must forever take its place among the great sustained poems of the world.

## "'T IS SWEET TO HEAR . . ."

(From Canto I)

CXXII

'T is sweet to hear
At midnight on the blue and moonlit deep
The song and oar of Adria's[1] gondolier,
By distance mellowed, o'er the waters sweep;
'T is sweet to see the evening star appear;
'T is sweet to listen as the night-winds creep
From leaf to leaf; 't is sweet to view on high
The rainbow, based on ocean, span the sky.

[1] **Adria**: the Adriatic Sea. In this instance Byron perhaps refers to Venice, the "bride of the Adriatic."

CXXIII

'T is sweet to hear the watch-dog's honest bark
Bay deep-mouthed welcome as we draw near home;
'T is sweet to know there is an eye will mark
Our coming, and look brighter when we come;
'T is sweet to be awakened by the lark,
Or lulled by falling waters; sweet the hum
Of bees, the voice of girls, the song of birds,
The lisp of children, and their earliest words.

CXXIV

Sweet is the vintage, when the showering grapes
In Bacchanal profusion reel to earth,
Purple and gushing: sweet are our escapes
From civic revelry to rural mirth;
Sweet to the miser are his glittering heaps;
Sweet to the father is his first-born's birth;
Sweet is revenge — especially to women —
Pillage to soldiers, prize-money to seamen.

## THE SHIPWRECK

(From Canto II)

This marvelous piece of description, probably the most famous of its kind, is a mosaic from various sources, one of which is the account, given by the poet's grandfather, John Byron, of the loss of "The Wager," in 1741, in the Straits of Magellan. No mere selection can do justice to Byron's descriptive and comic art. The story of Juan's shipwreck, followed by famine, despair, the death of his companions, and his own final rescue, should be read as a whole.

XXIV

THE ship, called the most holy "Trinidada,"
Was steering duly for the port Leghorn;
For there the Spanish family Moncada
Were settled long ere Juan's sire was born;

They were relations, and for them he had a
Letter of introduction, which the morn
Of his departure had been sent him by
His Spanish friends for those in Italy.

XXV

His suite consisted of three servants and
A tutor, the licentiate Pedrillo,
Who several languages did understand,
But now lay sick and speechless on his pillow,
And, rocking in his hammock, longed for land,
His headache being increased by every billow;
And the waves oozing through the porthole made
His berth a little damp, and him afraid.

XXVI

'T was not without some reason, for the wind
Increased at night, until it blew a gale;
And though 't was not much to a naval mind,
Some landsmen would have looked a little pale,
For sailors are, in fact, a different kind;
At sunset they began to take in sail,
For the sky showed it would come on to blow,
And carry away, perhaps, a mast or so.

XXVII

At one o'clock the wind with sudden shift
Threw the ship right into the trough of the sea,
Which struck her aft, and made an awkward rift,
Started the stern-post, also shattered the
Whole of her stern-frame, and, ere she could lift
Herself from out her present jeopardy,
The rudder tore away: 't was time to sound
The pumps, and there were four feet water found.

XXX

As day advanced the weather seemed to abate,
And then the leak they reckoned to reduce,
And keep the ship afloat, though three feet yet
Kept two hand and one chain-pump still in use.
The wind blew fresh again; as it grew late
A squall came on, and while some guns broke loose,
A gust — which all descriptive power transcends —
Laid with one blast the ship on her beam ends.

XXXIII

It may be easily supposed, while this
Was going on, some people were unquiet,
That passengers would find it much amiss
To lose their lives, as well as spoil their diet;
That even the able seaman, deeming his
Days nearly o'er, might be disposed to riot,
As upon such occasions tars will ask
For grog, and sometimes drink rum from the cask.

XXXIV

There 's nought, no doubt, so much the spirit calms
As rum and true religion: thus it was,
Some plundered, some drank spirits, some sung psalms,
The high wind made the treble, and as bass
The hoarse, harsh waves kept time; fright cured the qualms
Of all the luckless landsmen's sea-sick maws:
Strange sounds of wailing, blasphemy, devotion,
Clamored in chorus to the roaring ocean.

XXXVIII

But now there came a flash of hope once more;
Day broke, and the wind lulled: the masts were gone,
The leak increased; shoals round her, but no shore,

The vessel swam, yet still she held her own.
They tried the pumps again, and though, before
Their desperate efforts seemed all useless grown,
A glimpse of sunshine set some hands to bale —
The stronger pumped, the weaker thrummed a sail.

XXXIX

Under the vessel's keel the sail was past,
And for the moment it had some effect;
But with a leak, and not a stick of mast,
Nor rag of canvas, what could they expect?
But still 't is best to struggle to the last,
'T is never too late to be wholly wrecked:
And though 't is true that man can only die once,
'T is not so pleasant in the Gulf of Lyons.

XL

There winds and waves had hurled them, and from thence,
Without their will, they carried them away;
For they were forced with steering to dispense,
And never had as yet a quiet day
On which they might repose, or even commence
A jurymast or rudder, or could say
The ship would swim an hour, which, by good luck,
Still swam — though not exactly like a duck.

XLI

The wind, in fact, perhaps, was rather less,
But the ship laboured so, they scarce could hope
To weather out much longer; the distress
Was also great with which they had to cope
For want of water, and their solid mess
Was scant enough: in vain the telescope
Was used — nor sail nor shore appeared in sight,
Nought but the heavy sea, and coming night.

XLIII

Then came the carpenter, at last, with tears
In his rough eyes, and told the captain, he
Could do no more: he was a man in years,
And long had voyaged through many a stormy sea,
And if he wept at length they were not fears
That made his eyelids as a woman's be,
But he, poor fellow, had a wife and children, —
Two things for dying people quite bewildering.

XLIV

The ship was evidently settling now
Fast by the head; and, all distinction gone,
Some went to prayers again, and made a vow
Of candles to their saints — but there were none
To pay them with; and some looked o'er the bow;
Some hoisted out the boats; and there was one
That begged Pedrillo for an absolution,
Who told him to be damned — in his confusion.

XLV

Some lashed them in their hammocks; some put on
Their best clothes, as if going to a fair;
Some cursed the day on which they saw the Sun,
And gnashed their teeth, and, howling, tore their hair;
And others went on as they had begun,
Getting the boats out, being well aware
That a tight boat will live in a rough sea,
Unless with breakers close beneath her lee.

XLVIII

The other boats, the yawl and pinnace, had
Been stove in the beginning of the gale;
And the long-boat's condition was but bad,
As there were but two blankets for a sail,

And one oar for a mast, which a young lad
Threw in by good luck over the ship's rail;
And two boats could not hold, far less be stored,
To save one half the people then on board.

XLIX

'T was twilight, and the sunless day went down
Over the waste of waters; like a veil,
Which, if withdrawn, would but disclose the frown
Of one whose hate is masked but to assail.
Thus to their hopeless eyes the night was shown,
And grimly darkled o'er the faces pale,
And the dim desolate deep: twelve days had Fear
Been their familiar, and now Death was here.

LI

At half-past eight o'clock, booms, hencoops, spars,
And all things, for a chance, had been cast loose,
That still could keep afloat the struggling tars,
For yet they strove, although of no great use:
There was no light in heaven but a few stars,
The boats put off o'ercrowded with their crews;
She gave a heel, and then a lurch to port,
And, going down head foremost — sunk, in short.

LII

Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell —
Then shrieked the timid, and stood still the brave, —
Then some leaped overboard with dreadful yell,
As eager to anticipate their grave;
And the sea yawned around her like a hell,
And down she sucked with her the whirling wave,
Like one who grapples with his enemy,
And strives to strangle him before he die.

LIII

And first one universal shriek there rushed,
Louder than the loud Ocean, like a crash
Of echoing thunder; and then all was hushed,
Save the wild wind and the remorseless dash
Of billows; but at intervals there gushed,
Accompanied by a convulsive splash,
A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry
Of some strong swimmer in his agony.

## THE ISLES OF GREECE

(From Canto III)

This famous lyric, an interlude in the narrative, is supposed to be sung by a wandering poet or minstrel. Its invocation to Greece as she was before the Revolution of 1821 connects itself with the spirited stanzas in *Childe Harold*, Canto II. Such poems rendered the name of Byron familiar and dear to the Greeks, long before the poet identified himself with the struggle for independence. In English poetry, at least, the dead glories of Greece have never found a nobler eulogist than Byron.

I

THE Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho[1] loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of War and Peace,
Where Delos[2] rose, and Phœbus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their Sun, is set.

[1] **Sappho**: generally considered the world's greatest poetess. She flourished toward the close of the seventh century B.C. The scanty remains of her poetry that we possess are distinguished by their lyric intensity and power.

[2] **Delos**: an island in the Ægean Sea, that rose from the waves at the command of Poseidon, to be the birthplace of Artemis and of her brother Apollo, god of poetry and music (see Gayley's *Classic Myths*, 1903, p. 63).

2

The Scian[1] and the Teian muse,[2]
The Hero's harp, the Lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse:
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo further west
Than your Sires' "Islands of the Blest."[3]

3

The mountains look on Marathon[4] —
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dreamed that Greece might still be free;
For, standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

4

A King sate on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;[5]
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
And men in nations; — all were his!
He counted them at break of day —
And, when the Sun set, where were they?

[1] **The Scian muse**: Homer. Scio, anciently known as Chios, an island in the Ægean Sea, was considered by the ancients as the most probable birthplace of Homer, the greatest of epic poets, who played "the hero's harp."

[2] **The Teian muse**: Anacreon, the Greek lyric poet, who excelled in love songs ("the lover's lute"), was born about 550 B.C. at Teos, an Ionian Greek town in Asia.

[3] "**Islands of the Blest**": in Greek mythology, the happy abodes far in the west to which those favored by the gods passed without dying. At first purely imaginary, these blessed isles were later identified with the Canaries.

[4] **Marathon**: see note 2, p. 44.

[5] **Salamis**: one of the most famous naval battles of history, in which the Greek fleet under Eurybiades utterly defeated the Persian fleet of Xerxes, the "King." It was fought 480 B.C. off the island of Salamis, near Athens.

5

And where are they? and where art thou,
My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now —
The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must thy Lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

6

'T is something, in the dearth of Fame,
Though linked among a fettered race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
Even as I sing, suffuse my face;
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush — for Greece a tear.

15

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
Our virgins dance beneath the shade —
I see their glorious black eyes shine;
But gazing on each glowing maid,
My own the burning tear-drop laves,
To think such breasts must suckle slaves.

16

Place me on Sunium's[1] marbled steep,
Where nothing, save the waves and I,
May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;
There, swan-like, let me sing and die:
A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine —
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

[1] **Sunium**: a promontory forming the southern extremity of Attica, now known as Cape Colonna. It was once crowned, at a height of three hundred feet above the sea, by a magnificent temple of Pallas Athena. The marble pillars still remain; hence, "Sunium's marbled steep."

## SWEET HOUR OF TWILIGHT

(From Canto III)

These tender and exquisite stanzas, in the midst of the cynicism and satire of *Don Juan*, are but another exhibition of Byron's versatility.

CII

AVE MARIA! blessèd be the hour!
The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
Have felt that moment in its fullest power
Sink o'er the earth — so beautiful and soft —
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
Or the faint dying day-hymn stole aloft,
And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer.

CIII

Ave Maria! 't is the hour of prayer!
Ave Maria! 't is the hour of Love!
Ave Maria! may our spirits dare
Look up to thine and to thy Son's above!
Ave Maria! oh that face so fair!
Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty Dove —
What though 't is but a pictured image? — strike —
That painting is no idol, — 't is too like.

CV

Sweet hour of Twilight! — in the solitude
Of the pine forest, and the silent shore
Which bounds Ravenna's immemorial wood,
Rooted where once the Adrian wave flowed o'er,

To where the last Cæsarean fortress[1] stood,
Evergreen forest! which Boccaccio's lore
And Dryden's lay[2] made haunted ground to me,
How have I loved the twilight hour and thee!

CVII

Oh, Hesperus![3] thou bringest all good things —
Home to the weary, to the hungry cheer,
To the young bird the parent's brooding wings;
The welcome stall to the o'erlaboured steer;
Whate'er of peace about our hearthstone clings,
Whate'er our household gods protect of dear,
Are gathered round us by thy look of rest;
Thou bring'st the child, too, to the mother's breast.

CVIII

Soft Hour! which wakes the wish and melts the heart
Of those who sail the seas, on the first day
When they from their sweet friends are torn apart;
Or fills with love the pilgrim on his way
As the far bell of Vesper makes him start,
Seeming to weep the dying day's decay;
Is this a fancy which our reason scorns?
Ah! surely Nothing dies but Something mourns!

[1] **The last Cæsarean fortress**: the palace of Odoacer, king of Italy, who, in 493 A.D., was defeated and murdered by Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths.

[2] **Evergreen forest**; **Boccaccio's lore**; **Dryden's lay**: the famous pine forest near Ravenna was a favorite haunt of Byron's. Here Boccaccio, the great Italian story-teller, laid the scene of his tale of "the spectre huntsman," which was versified by Dryden in his *Theodore and Honoria*.

[3] **Hesperus**: the evening star. Stanza CVII is in part paraphrased from Sappho.

## ON THIS DAY I COMPLETE MY THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR

This, with the exception of a few unimportant stanzas, Byron's last poem, was written three months before his death, in the midst of confusion and alarms. With its high resolves and its revelation of a devoted and heroic spirit, it must forever rank among the most powerful and impressive autobiographic poems in literature. It is at the same time both a dirge and a pæan.

I

'TIS time this heart should be unmoved,
Since others it hath ceased to move:
Yet, though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love!

II

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of Love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone!

III

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some Volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze —
A funeral pile.

IV

The hope, the fear, the zealous care,
The exalted portion of the pain
And power of love, I cannot share,
But wear the chain.

V

But 't is not *thus* — and 't is not *here* —
Such thoughts should shake my soul, nor *now*,
Where Glory decks the hero's bier,
Or binds his brow.

VI

The Sword, the Banner, and the Field,
Glory and Greece, around me see!
The Spartan,[1] borne upon his shield,
Was not more free.

VII

Awake! (not Greece — she *is* awake!)
Awake, my spirit! Think through *whom*
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,
And then strike home!

VIII

Tread those reviving passions down,
Unworthy manhood! — unto thee
Indifferent should the smile or frown
Of Beauty be.

IX

If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live?*
The land of honourable death
Is here: — up to the Field, and give
Away thy breath!

[1] **The Spartan, etc.:** perhaps refers to the famous charge given by the Spartan mother to her son when he was about to depart for battle: "Return either *with* your shield or *upon* it."

X

Seek out — less often sought than found —
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy Rest.

MISSOLONGHI, January 22, 1824.