And if she sits in Este's bower,
'Tis not for the sake of its full-blown flower;
She listens—but not for the nightingale—
Though her ear expects as soft a tale.
There glides a step through the foliage thick,
And her cheek grows pale, and her heart beats quick.
There whispers a voice through the rustling leaves,
And her blush returns, and her bosom heaves:
A moment more—and they shall meet—
'Tis past—her Lover's at her feet.

III.

And what unto them is the world beside,
With all its change of time and tide?
Its living things—its earth and sky—
Are nothing to their mind and eye.
And heedless as the dead are they
Of aught around, above, beneath;
As if all else had passed away,
They only for each other breathe;
Their very sighs are full of joy
So deep, that did it not decay,
That happy madness would destroy
The hearts which feel its fiery sway:
Of guilt, of peril, do they deem
In that tumultuous tender dream?
Who that have felt that passion's power,
Or paused, or feared in such an hour?
Or thought how brief such moments last?
But yet—they are already past!
Alas! we must awake before
We know such vision comes no more.

IV.

With many a lingering look they leave
The spot of guilty gladness past:
And though they hope, and vow, they grieve,
As if that parting were the last.
The frequent sigh—the long embrace—
The lip that there would cling for ever,
While gleams on Parisina's face
The Heaven she fears will not forgive her,
As if each calmly conscious star
Beheld her frailty from afar—
The frequent sigh, the long embrace,
Yet binds them to their trysting-place.
But it must come, and they must part
In fearful heaviness of heart,
With all the deep and shuddering chill
Which follows fast the deeds of ill.

V.

And Hugo is gone to his lonely bed,
To covet there another's bride;
But she must lay her conscious head
A husband's trusting heart beside,
But fevered in her sleep she seems,
And red her cheek with troubled dreams,
And mutters she in her unrest
A name she dare not breathe by day,
And clasps her Lord unto the breast
Which pants for one away:
And he to that embrace awakes,
And, happy in the thought, mistakes
That dreaming sigh and warm caress,
For such as he was wont to bless;
And could in very fondness weep
O'er her who loves him even in sleep.

VI.

He clasped her sleeping to his heart,
And listened to each broken word:
He hears—Why doth Prince Azo start,
As if the Archangel's voice he heard?
And well he may—a deeper doom
Could scarcely thunder o'er his tomb,
When he shall wake to sleep no more,
And stand the eternal throne before.
And well he may—his earthly peace
Upon that sound is doomed to cease.
That sleeping whisper of a name
Bespeaks her guilt and Azo's shame.
And whose that name? that o'er his pillow
Sounds fearful as the breaking billow,
Which rolls the plank upon the shore,
And dashes on the pointed rock
The wretch who sinks to rise no more,—
So came upon his soul the shock.
And whose that name?—'tis Hugo's—his—
In sooth he had not deemed of this!—
'Tis Hugo's,—he, the child of one
He loved—his own all-evil son—
The offspring of his wayward youth,
When he betrayed Bianca's truth,
The maid whose folly could confide
In him who made her not his bride.

VII.

He plucked his poniard in its sheath,
But sheathed it ere the point was bare;
Howe'er unworthy now to breathe,
He could not slay a thing so fair—

At least, not smiling—sleeping—there—
Nay, more:—he did not wake her then,
But gazed upon her with a glance
Which, had she roused herfrom her trance,
Had frozen her sense to sleep again;
And o'er his brow the burning lamp
Gleamed on the dew-drops big and damp.
She spake no more—but still she slumbered—
While, in his thought, her days are numbered.

VIII.

And with the morn he sought and found,
In many a tale from those around,
The proof of all he feared to know,
Their present guilt—his future woe;
The long conniving damsels seek
To save themselves, and would transfer
The guilt—the shame—the doom—to her:
Concealment is no more—they speak
All circumstance which may compel
Full credence to the tale they tell:
And Azo's tortured heart and ear
Have nothing more to feel or hear.

IX.

He was not one who brooked delay:
Within the chamber of his state,
The Chief of Este's ancient sway
Upon his throne of judgment sate;
His nobles and his guards are there,—
Before him is the sinful pair;
Both young,—and *one* how passing fair!
With swordless belt, and fettered hand,
Oh, Christ! that thus a son should stand
Before a father's face!
Yet thus must Hugo meet his sire,
And hear the sentence of his ire,
The tale of his disgrace!
And yet he seems not overcome,
Although, as yet, his voice be dumb.

X.

And still,—and pale—and silently
Did Parisina wait her doom;
How changed since last her speaking eye
Glanced gladness round the glittering room,
Where high-born men were proud to wait—
Where Beauty watched to imitate
Her gentle voice—her lovely mien—
And gather from her air and gait
The graces of its Queen:
Then,—had her eye in sorrow wept,
A thousand warriors forth had leapt,
A thousand swords had sheathless shone,
And made her quarrel all their own.
Now,—what is she? and what are they?
Can she command, or these obey?
All silent and unheeding now,
With downcast eyes and knitting brow,
And folded arms, and freezing air,
And lips that scarce their scorn forbear,
Her knights, her dames—her court is there:
And he—the chosen one, whose lance
Had yet been couched before her glance,
Who—were his arm a moment free—
Had died, or gained her liberty;
The minion of his father's bride,—
He, too, is fettered by her side;
Nor sees her swoln and full eye swim
Less for her own despair than him:
Those lids—o'er which the violet vein
Wandering, leaves a tender stain,
Shining through the smoothest white
That e'er did softest kiss invite—
Now seemed with hot and livid glow
To press, not shade, the orbs below,
Which glance so heavily, and fill,
As tear on tear grows gathering still.

XI.

And he for her had also wept,
But for the eyes that on him gazed:
His sorrow, if he felt it, slept;
Stern and erect his brow was raised.
Whate'er the grief his soul avowed,
He would not shrink before the crowd;
But yet he dared not look on her;
Remembrance of the hours that were—
His guilt—his love—his present state—
His father's wrath, all good men's hate—
His earthly, his eternal fate—
And hers,—oh, hers! he dared not throw
One look upon that death-like brow!
Else had his rising heart betrayed
Remorse for all the wreck it made.

XII.

And Azo spake:—"But yesterday
I gloried in a wife and son;
That dream this morning passed away;
Ere day declines, I shall have none.
My life must linger on alone;
Well,—let that pass,—there breathes not one
Who would not do as I have done:
Those ties are broken—not by me;
Let that too pass;—the doom's prepared!
Hugo, the priest awaits on thee,
And then—thy crime's reward!

Away! address thy prayers to Heaven;
  Before its evening stars are met,
Learn if thou there canst be forgiven;
  Its mercy may absolve thee yet.
But here, upon the earth beneath,
  There is no spot where thou and I
Together for an hour could breathe:
  Farewell! I will not see thee die—
But thou, frail thing! shalt view his head—
  Away! I cannot speak the rest:
  Go! woman of the wanton breast;
Not I, but thou his blood dost shed:
Go! if that sight thou canst outlive,
And joy thee in the life I give."

XIII.

And here stern Azo hid his face—
  For on his brow the swelling vein
  Throbbed as if back upon his brain
  The hot blood ebbed and flowed again;
And therefore bowed he for a space,
  And passed his shaking hand along
  His eye, to veil it from the throng;
While Hugo raised his chainéd hands,
And for a brief delay demands
His father's ear: the silent sire
Forbids not what his words require.
  "It is not that I dread the death—
For thou hast seen me by thy side
All redly through the battle ride,
And that—not once a useless brand—
Thy slaves have wrested from my hand
Hath shed more blood in cause of thine,
Than e'er can stain the axe of mine:
  Thou gav'st, and may'st resume my breath,
A gift for which I thank thee not;
Nor are my mother's wrongs forgot,
Her slighted love and ruined name,
Her offspring's heritage of shame;
But she is in the grave, where he,
Her son—thy rival—soon shall be.
Her broken heart—my severed head—
Shall witness for thee from the dead
How trusty and how tender were
Thy youthful love—paternal care.
'Tis true that I have done thee wrong—
  But wrong for wrong:—this,—deemed thy bride,
  The other victim of thy pride,—
Thou know'st for me was destined long;
Thou saw'st, and coveted'st her charms;
  And with thy very crime—my birth,—
  Thou taunted'st me—as little worth;
A match ignoble for her arms;
Because, forsooth, I could not claim
The lawful heirship of thy name,
Nor sit on Este's lineal throne:
  Yet, were a few short summers mine,
  My name should more than Este's shine
With honours all my own.
I had a sword—and have a breast
That should have won as haught[1] a crest
As ever waved along the line
Of all these sovereign sires of thine.
Not always knightly spurs are worn
The brightest by the better born;
And mine have lanced my courser's flank
Before proud chiefs of princely rank,
When charging to the cheering cry
Of 'Este and of Victory!'
I will not plead the cause of crime,
Nor sue thee to redeem from time
A few brief hours or days that must
At length roll o'er my reckless dust;—
Such maddening moments as my past,
They could not, and they did not, last;—
Albeit my birth and name be base,
And thy nobility of race
Disdained to deck a thing like me—
  Yet in my lineaments they trace
  Some features of my father's face,
And in my spirit—all of thee.
From thee this tamelessness of heart—
From thee—nay, wherefore dost thou start?—
From thee in all their vigour came
My arm of strength, my soul of flame—
Thou didst not give me life alone,
But all that made me more thine own.
See what thy guilty love hath done!
Repaid thee with too like a son!
I am no bastard in my soul,
For that, like thine, abhorred control;
And for my breath, that hasty boon
Thou gav'st and wilt resume so soon,
I valued it no more than thou,
When rose thy casque above thy brow,
And we, all side by side, have striven,
And o'er the dead our coursers driven:
The past is nothing—and at last
The future can but be the past;
Yet would I that I then had died!
  For though thou work'dst my mother's ill,
And made thy own my destined bride,
  I feel thou art my father still:

[1] Haught—haughty. "Away, *haught* man, thou art insulting me."—SHAKESPEARE [*Richard II.*, act iv. sc. 1, line 254—
"No lord of thine, thou haught insulting man."]

And harsh as sounds thy hard decree,
'Tis not unjust, although from thee.
Begot in sin, to die in shame,
My life begun and ends the same:
As erred the sire, so erred the son,
And thou must punish both in one.
My crime seems worst to *human* view,
But God must judge between us too!"

XIV.

He ceased—and stood with folded arms,
On which the circling fetters sounded;
And not an ear but felt as wounded,
Of all the chiefs that there were ranked,
When those dull chains in meeting clanked:
Till Parisina's fatal charms
Again attracted every eye—
Would she thus hear him doomed to die!
She stood, I said, all pale and still,
The living cause of Hugo's ill:
Her eyes unmoved, but full and wide,
Not once had turned to either side—
Nor once did those sweet eyelids close,
Or shade the glance o'er which they rose,
But round their orbs of deepest blue
The circling white dilated grew—
And there with glassy gaze she stood
As ice were in her curdled blood;
But every now and then a tear
So large and slowly gathered slid
From the long dark fringe of that fair lid:
It was a thing to see, not hear!
And those who saw, it did surprise,
Such drops could fall from human eyes.
To speak she thought—the imperfect note
Was choked within her swelling throat,
Yet seemed in that low hollow groan
Her whole heart gushing in the tone.
It ceased—again she thought to speak,
Then burst her voice in one long shriek,
And to the earth she fell like stone
Or statue from its base o'erthrown,
More like a thing that ne'er had life,—
A monument of Azo's wife,—
Than her, that living guilty thing,
Whose every passion was a sting,
Which urged to guilt, but could not bear
That guilt's detection and despair.
But yet she lived—and all too soon
Recovered from that death-like swoon—
But scarce to reason—every sense
Had been o'erstrung by pangs intense;
And each frail fibre of her brain
(As bowstrings, when relaxed by rain,
The erring arrow launch aside)
Sent forth her thoughts all wild and wide—
The past a blank, the future black,
With glimpses of a dreary track,
Like lightning on the desert path,
When midnight storms are mustering wrath.
She feared—she felt that something ill
Lay on her soul, so deep and chill;
That there was sin and shame she knew,
That someone was to die—but who?
She had forgotten:—did she breathe?
Could this be still the earth beneath,
The sky above, and men around;
Or were they fiends who now so frowned
On one, before whose eyes each eye
Till then had smiled in sympathy?
All was confused and undefined
To her all-jarred and wandering mind;
A chaos of wild hopes and fears:
And now in laughter, now in tears,
But madly still in each extreme,
She strove with that convulsive dream;
For so it seemed on her to break:
Oh! vainly must she strive to wake!

XV.

The Convent bells are ringing,
But mournfully and slow;
In the grey square turret swinging,
With a deep sound, to and fro.
Heavily to the heart they go!
Hark! the hymn is singing—
The song for the dead below,
Or the living who shortly shall be so!
For a departed being's soul
The death-hymn peals and the hollow bells knoll:
He is near his mortal goal;
Kneeling at the Friar's knee,
Sad to hear, and piteous to see—
Kneeling on the bare cold ground,
With the block before and the guards around;
And the headsman with his bare arm ready,
That the blow may be both swift and steady,
Feels if the axe be sharp and true
Since he set its edge anew:
While the crowd in a speechless circle gather
To see the Son fall by the doom of the Father

XVI.

It is a lovely hour as yet
Before the summer sun shall set,
Which rose upon that heavy day,
And mocked it with his steadiest ray;

And his evening beams are shed
Full on Hugo's fated head,
As his last confession pouring
To the monk, his doom deploring
In penitential holiness,
He bends to hear his accents bless
With absolution such as may
Wipe our mortal stains away.
That high sun on his head did glisten
As he there did bow and listen,
And the rings of chestnut hair
Curled half down his neck so bare;
But brighter still the beam was thrown
Upon the axe which near him shone
With a clear and ghastly glitter——
Oh! that parting hour was bitter!
Even the stern stood chilled with awe:
Dark the crime, and just the law—
Yet they shuddered as they saw.

XVII.

The parting prayers are said and over
Of that false son, and daring lover!
His beads and sins are all recounted,
His hours to their last minute mounted;
His mantling cloak before was stripped,
His bright brown locks must now be clipped;
'Tis done—all closely are they shorn;
The vest which till this moment worn—
The scarf which Parisina gave—
Must not adorn him to the grave.
Even that must now be thrown aside,
And o'er his eyes the kerchief tied;
But no—that last indignity
Shall ne'er approach his haughty eye.
All feelings seemingly subdued,
In deep disdain were half renewed,
When headman's hands prepared to bind
Those eyes which would not brook such blind,
As if they dared not look on death.
"No—yours my forfeit blood and breath;
These hands are changed, but let me die
At least with an unshackled eye—
Strike:"—and as the word he said,
Upon the block he bowed his head;
These the last accents Hugo spoke:
"Strike"—and flashing fell the stroke—
Rolled the head—and, gushing, sunk
Back the stained and heaving trunk,
In the dust, which each deep vein
Slaked with its ensanguined rain;
His eyes and lips a moment quiver,
Convulsed and quick—then fix for ever.

He died, as erring man should die,
Without display, without parade;
Meekly had he bowed and prayed,
As not disdaining priestly aid,
Nor desperate of all hope on high.
And while before the Prior kneeling,
His heart was weaned from earthly feeling;
His wrathful Sire—his Paramour—
What were they in such an hour?
No more reproach,— no more despair,—
No thought but Heaven, — no word but prayer—
Save the few which from him broke,
When, bared to meet the headsman's stroke
He claimed to die with eyes unbound,
His sole adieu to those around.

XVIII.

Still as the lips that closed in death,
Each gazer's bosom held his breath:
But yet, afar, from man to man,
A cold electric shiver ran,
As down the deadly blow descended
On him whose life and love thus ended;
And, with a hushing sound compressed,
A sigh shrunk back on every breast;
But no more thrilling noise rose there,
Beyond the blow that to the block
Pierced through with forced and sullen shock,
Save one:—what cleaves the silent air
So madly shrill, so passing wild?
That, as a mother's o'er her child,
Done to death by sudden blow,
To the sky these accents go,
Like a soul's in endless woe.
Through Azo's palace-lattice driven,
That horrid voice ascends to heaven,
And every eye is turned thereon;
But sound and sight alike are gone!
It was a woman's shriek—and ne'er
In madlier accents rose Despair;
And those who heard it, as it past,
In mercy wished it were the last.

XIX.

Hugo is fallen; and, from that hour,
No more in palace, hall, or bower,
Was Parisina heard or seen:
Her name—as if she ne'er had been—
Was banished from each lip and ear,
Like words of wantonness or fear;
And from Prince Azo's voice, by none
Was mention heard of wife or son;

No tomb—no memory had they;
Theirs was unconsecrated clay—
At least the Knight's who died that day.
But Parisina's fate lies hid
Like dust beneath the coffin lid:
Whether in Convent she abode,
And won to heaven her dreary road,
By blighted and remorseful years
Of scourge, and fast, and sleepless tears;
Or if she fell by bowl or steel,
For that dark love she dared to feel;
Or if, upon the moment smote,
She died by tortures less remote,
Like him she saw upon the block,
With heart that shared the headsman's shock,
In quickened brokenness that came,
In pity, o'er her shattered frame,
None knew—and none can ever know:
But whatsoe'er its end below,
Her life began and closed in woe!

XX.

And Azo found another bride,
And goodly sons grew by his side;
But none so lovely and so brave
As him who withered in the grave;
Or if they were—on his cold eye
Their growth but glanced unheeded by,
Or noticed with a smothered sigh.
But never tear his cheek descended,
And never smile his brow unbended;
And o'er that fair broad brow were wrought
The intersected lines of thought;
Those furrows which the burning share
Of Sorrow ploughs untimely there;
Scars of the lacerating mind
Which the Soul's war doth leave behind.
He was past all mirth or woe:
Nothing more remained below
But sleepless nights and heavy days,
A mind all dead to scorn or praise,
A heart which shunned itself—and yet
That would not yield, nor could forget,
Which, when it least appeared to melt,
Intensely thought—intensely felt:
The deepest ice which ever froze
Can only o'er the surface close;
The living stream lies quick below,
And flows, and cannot cease to flow.
Still was his sealed-up bosom haunted
By thoughts which Nature hath implanted;
Too deeply rooted thence to vanish,
Howe'er our stifled tears we banish;
When struggling as they rise to start,
We check those waters of the heart,
They are not dried—those tears unshed
But flow back to the fountain head,
And resting in their spring more pure,
For ever in its depth endure,
Unseen—unwept—but uncongealed,
And cherished most where least revealed.
With inward starts of feeling left,
To throb o'er those of life bereft,
Without the power to fill again
The desert gap which made his pain;
Without the hope to meet them where
United souls shall gladness share:—
With all the consciousness that he
Had only passed a just decree,
That they had wrought their doom of ill:—
Yet Azo's age was wretched still.
The tainted branches of the tree,
If lopped with care, a strength may give,
By which the rest shall bloom and live
All greenly fresh and wildly free:
But if the lightning, in its wrath,
The waving boughs with fury scathe,
The massy trunk the ruin feels,
And never more a leaf reveals.

POEMS OF THE SEPARATION.[1]

FARE THEE WELL.

"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;
* * * * * * * *

[1] [Early in March 1816 a deed of separation between Lord Byron and his wife was drawn up and signed. *Fare Thee Well* (March 18), and *A Sketch* (March 29), which had been printed for distribution among friends, were published, without Byron's knowledge or assent, in the *Champion*, Sunday, April 14, and in the course of the ensuing week the two poems appeared either singly or together in the *Sun*, the *Courier*, the *Times*, and other London journals. Hence the publicity and wide diffusion of the scandal arising from the quarrel and separation.]

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 for ever,
Still for ever, 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 'tis 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.

[First draft, *March* 18, 1816.
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A SKETCH.[1]

"Honest—honest Iago!
If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee."
—SHAKESPEARE.

BORN in the garret, in the kitchen bred,
Promoted thence to deck her mistress' head;
Next—for some gracious service unexpressed,
And from its wages only to be guessed—
Raised from the toilet to the table,—where
Her wondering betters wait behind her chair.
With eye unmoved, and forehead unabashed,
She dines from off the plate she lately washed.
Quick with the tale, and ready with the lie,
The genial confidante and general spy—
Who could, ye gods! her next employment guess—
An only infant's earliest governess!
She taught the child to read, and taught so well,
That she herself, by teaching, learned to spell.
An adept next in penmanship she grows,
As many a nameless slander deftly shows:

[1] [The original of *A Sketch* was a Mrs Clermont, the daughter of a respectable tradesman, who had been employed by Lady Byron's mother, at first as lady's maid, and afterwards as nursery-governess to her only child. Byron was led to believe that she had made mischief, and was, in fact, the cause of the separation, by a statement (perhaps statements), of his valet's wife, Mrs Fletcher. There is reason to believe that he was misinformed and mistaken.]

What she had made the pupil of her art,
None know—but that high Soul secured the heart,
And panted for the truth it could not hear,
With longing breast and undeluded ear.
Foiled was perversion by that youthful mind,
Which Flattery fooled not, Baseness could not blind,
Deceit infect not, near Contagion soil,
Indulgence weaken, nor Example spoil,
Nor mastered Science tempt her to look down
On humbler talents with a pitying frown,
Nor Genius swell, nor Beauty render vain,
Nor Envy ruffle to retaliate pain,
Nor Fortune change, Pride raise, nor Passion bow,
Nor Virtue teach austerity—till now.
Serenely purest of her sex that live,
But wanting one sweet weakness—to forgive;
Too shocked at faults her soul can never know,
She deems that all could be like her below:
Foe to all vice, yet hardly Virtue's friend—
For Virtue pardons those she would amend.

But to the theme, now laid aside too long,
The baleful burthen of this honest song,
Though all her former functions are no more,
She rules the circle which she served before.
If mothers—none know why—before her quake;
If daughters dread her for the mother's sake;
If early habits—those false links, which bind
At times the loftiest to the meanest mind—
Have given her power too deeply to instil
The angry essence of her deadly will;
If like a snake she steal within your walls,
Till the black slime betray her as she crawls;
If like a viper to the heart she wind,
And leave the venom there she did not find;
What marvel that this hag of hatred works
Eternal evil latent as she lurks,
To make a Pandemonium where she dwells,
And reign the Hecate of domestic hells?
Skilled by a touch to deepen Scandal's tints
With all the kind mendacity of hints,
While mingling truth with falsehood—sneers with smiles—
A thread of candour with a web of wiles;
A plain blunt show of briefly-spoken seeming,
To hide her bloodless heart's soul-hardened scheming;
A lip of lies; a face formed to conceal,
And, without feeling, mock at all who feel:
With a vile mask the Gorgon would disown,—
A cheek of parchment, and an eye of stone.
Mark, how the channels of her yellow blood
Ooze to her skin, and stagnate there to mud,
Cased like the centipede in saffron mail,
Or darker greenness of the scorpion's scale—
(For drawn from reptiles only may we trace
Congenial colours in that soul or face)—
Look on her features! and behold her mind
As in a mirror of itself defined:
Look on the picture! deem it not o'ercharged—
There is no trait which might not be enlarged:
Yet true to "Nature's journeymen," who made
This monster when their mistress left off trade—
This female dog-star of her little sky,
Where all beneath her influence droop or die.

Oh! wretch without a tear—without a thought,
Save joy above the ruin thou hast wrought—
The time shall come, nor long remote, when thou
Shalt feel far more than thou inflictest now;
Feel for thy vile self-loving self in vain,
And turn thee howling in unpitied pain.
May the strong curse of crushed affections light
Back on thy bosom with reflected blight!
And make thee in thy leprosy of mind
As loathsome to thyself as to mankind!
Till all thy self-thoughts curdle into hate,
Black—as thy will for others would create:
Till thy hard heart be calcined into dust,
And thy soul welter in its hideous crust.
Oh, may thy grave be sleepless as the bed,
The widowed couch of fire, that thou hast spread!
Then, when thou fain wouldst weary Heaven with prayer,
Look on thine earthly victims—and despair!
Down to the dust!—and, as thou rott'st away,
Even worms shall perish on thy poisonous clay.
But for the love I bore, and still must bear,
To her thy malice from all ties would tear—
Thy name—thy human name—to every eye
The climax of all scorn should hang on high,
Exalted o'er thy less abhorred compeers—
And festering in the infamy of years.

[First draft, *March* 29, 1816
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STANZAS TO AUGUSTA.[1]

WHEN all around grew drear and dark,
And Reason half withheld her ray—
And Hope but shed a dying spark
Which more misled my lonely way;
In that deep midnight of the mind,
And that internal strife of heart,
When dreading to be deemed too kind,
The weak despair—the cold depart;
When Fortune changed—and Love fled far,
And Hatred's shafts flew thick and fast,
Thou wert the solitary star
Which rose and set not to the last.
Oh! blest be thine unbroken light!
That watched me as a Seraph's eye,
And stood between me and the night,
For ever shining sweetly nigh.
And when the cloud upon us came,
Which strove to blacken o'er thy ray—
Then purer spread its gentle flame,
And dashed the darkness all away.
Still may thy Spirit dwell on mine,
And teach it what to brave or brook—
There's more in one soft word of thine
Than in the world's defied rebuke.
Thou stood'st, as stands a lovely tree,
That still unbroke, though gently bent,
Still waves with fond fidelity
Its boughs above a monument.
The winds might rend—the skies might pour,
But there thou wert—and still wouldst be
Devoted in the stormiest hour
To shed thy weeping leaves o'er me.
But thou and thine shall know no blight,
Whatever fate on me may fall;
For Heaven in sunshine will requite
The kind—and thee the most of all.
Then let the ties of baffled love
Be broken—thine will never break;
Thy heart can feel—but will not move;
Thy soul, though soft, will never shake.

And these, when all was lost beside,
Were found and still are fixed in thee;—
And bearing still a breast so tried,
Earth is no desert—ev'n to me.

[First published, *Poems*, 1816.]

[1] [Byron's half-sister, the Honourable Augusta Byron (1783-1851), was the daughter of Captain John Byron by his first wife, Amelia D'Arcy, Baroness Conyers in her own right, the divorced wife of Francis, Marquis of Carmarthen, afterwards fifth Duke of Leeds. She married (1807) her first cousin, Colonel George Leigh of the Tenth Dragoons, son of General Charles Leigh, by Frances, daughter of the Admiral, the Honourable John Byron.]

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON.[1]

SONNET ON CHILLON.

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 'twas 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.

ADVERTISEMENT.

WHEN this poem was composed, I was not sufficiently aware of the history of Bonnivard,[2] or I should have endeavoured to dignify the subject by an attempt to celebrate his courage and his virtues. With some account of his life I have been furnished, by the kindness of a citizen of that republic, which is still proud of the memory of a man worthy of the best age of ancient freedom:—

"François De Bonnivard, fils de Louis de Bonnivard, originaire de Seyssel et Seigneur de Lunes, naquit en 1496. Il fit ses études à Turin: en 1510 Jean Aimé de Bonnivard, son oncle, lui résigna le Prieuré de St. Victor, qui aboutissoit aux murs de Genève, et qui formait un bénéfice considérable. . . .

[1] [*The Prisoner of Chillon* was written at Ouchy, near Lausanne, at the end of June, and published, December 5, 1816.]

[2] [Bonivard. There is no contemporary authority for Bonnivard.]

"Ce grand homme—(Bonnivard mérite ce titre par la force de son âme, la droiture de son cœur, la noblesse de ses intentions, la sagesse de ses conseils, le courage de ses démarches, l'étendue de ses connaissances, et la vivacité de son esprit),—ce grand homme, qui excitera l'admiration de tous ceux qu'une vertu héroïque peut encore émouvoir, inspirera encore la plus vive reconnaissance dans les cœurs des Génevois qui aiment Genève. Bonnivard en fut toujours un des plus fermes appuis: pour assurer la liberté de notre République, il ne craignit pas de perdre souvent la sienne; il oublia son repos; il méprisa ses richesses; il ne négligea rien pour affermir le bonheur d'une patrie qu'il honora de son choix: dès ce moment il la chérit comme le plus zélé de ses citoyens; il la servit avec l'intrépidité d'un héros, et il écrivit son Histoire avec la naïveté d'un philosophe et la chaleur d'un patriote.

"Il dit dans le commencement de son Histoire de Genève, que, *dès qu'il eut commencé de lire l'histoire des nations, il se sentit entraïné par son goût pour les Républiques, dont il épousa toujours les intérêts:* c'est ce goût pour la liberté qui lui fit sans doute adopter Genève pour sa patrie. . . .

"Bonnivard, encore jeune, s'annonca hautement comme le défenseur de Genève contre le Duc de Savoye et l'E'vêque. . . .

"En 1519, Bonnivard devient le martyr de sa patrie: Le Duc de Savoye étant entré dans Genève avec cinq cents hommes, Bonnivard craint le ressentiment du Duc; il voulut se retirer à Fribourg pour en éviter les suites; mais il fut trahi par deux hommes qui l'accompagnaient, et conduit par ordre du Prince à Grolée, où il resta prisonnier pendant deux ans. Bonnivard était malheureux dans ses voyages: comme ses malheurs n'avaient point ralenti son zèle pour Genève, il était tojours un ennemi redoutable pour ceux qui la menaçaient, et par conséquent il devait être exposé à leurs coups. Il fut rencontré en 1530 sur le Jura par des voleurs, qui le dépouillèrent, et qui le mirent encore entre les mains du Duc de Savoye: ce Prince le fit enfermer dans le Château de Chillon, où il resta sans être interrogé jusques en 1536; il fut alors delivré par les Bernois, qui s'emparèrent du Pays-de-Vaud.

"Bonnivard, en sortant de sa captivité, eut le plaisir de trouver Genève libre et réformée: la République s'empressa de lui témoigner sa reconnaissance, et de le dédommager des maux qu'il avoit soufferts; elle le reçut Bourgeois de la ville au mois de Juin, 1536; elle lui donna la maison habitée autrefois par le Vicaire-Général, et elle lui assigna une pension de deux cents écus d'or tant qu'il séjournerait à Genève. Il fut admis dans le Conseil des Deux-Cent en 1537.

"Bonnivard n'a pas fini d'être utile: après avoir travaillé à rendre Genève libre, il réussit à la rendre tolérante. Bonnivard engagea le Conseil à accorder [aux ecclésiastiques et aux paysans] un tems suffisant pour examiner les propositions qu'on leur faisait; il réussit par sa douceur: on prêche toujours le Christianisme avec succès quand on le prêche avec charité. . . .

"Bonnivard fut savant: ses manuscrits, qui sont dans la bibliothèque publique, prouvent qu'il avait bien lu les auteurs classiques Latins, et qu'il avait approfondi la théologie et l'histoire. Ce grand homme aimait les sciences, et il croyait qu'elles pouvaient faire la gloire de Genève; aussi il ne négligea rien pour les fixer dans cette ville naissante; en 1551 il donna sa bibliothèque au public; elle fut le commencement de notre bibliothèque publique; et ces livres sont en partie les rares et belles éditions du quinzième siècle qu'on voit dans notre collection. Enfin, pendant la même année, ce bon patriote institua la République son héritière, à condition qu'elle employerait ses biens à entretenir le collège dont on projettait la fondation.

"Il parâit que Bonnivard mourut en 1570; mais on ne peut l'assurer, parce qu'il y a une lacune dans le Nécrologe depuis le mois de Juillet, 1570, jusques en 1571."—[*Histoire Littéraire de Geneve*, par Jean Sénebier (1741-1809), 1786, i. 131-137.]

I.

My hair is grey, but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,[1]
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;

[1] Ludovico Sforza, and others.—The same is asserted of Marie Antoinette's, the wife of Louis the Sixteenth, though not in quite so short a period. Grief is said to have the same effect; to such, and not to fear, this change in *hers* was to be attributed.

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,[1]
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,[2]
  And in each ring there is a chain;
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.

[1] ["This is really so: the loop-holes that are partly stopped up are now but long crevices or clefts, but Bonivard, from the spot where he was chained, could, perhaps, never get an idea of the loveliness and variety of radiating light which the sunbeam shed at different hours of the day. . . . In the morning this light is of luminous and transparent shining, which the curves of the vaults send back all along the hall. During the afternoon the hall assumes a much deeper and warmer colouring, and the blue transparency of the morning disappears; but at eventide, after the sun has set behind the Jura, the scene changes to the deep glow of fire. . . ."—*Guide to the Castle of Chillon*, by A. Naef, 1896, pp. 35, 36.]

[2] [This ". . . is not exactly so; the third column does not seem to have ever had a ring, but the traces of these rings are very visible in the two first columns from the entrance. . . . The fifth column is said to be the one to which Bonivard was chained during four years. Byron's name is carved on the southern side of the third column."]

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,
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,
'Twas 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 worse 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 inthralls:
A double dungeon wall and wave
Have made—and like a living grave.
Below the surface of the lake[1]
The dark vault lies wherein we lay:

[1] The Château de Chillon is situated between Clarens and Villeneuve, which last is at one extremity of the Lake of Geneva. On its left are the entrances of the Rhone, and opposite are the heights of Meillerie and the range of Alps above Boveret and St. Gingo. Near it, on a hill behind, is a torrent: below it, washing its walls, the lake has been fathomed to the depth of 800 feet, French measure: within it are a range of dungeons, in which the early reformers, and subsequently prisoners of state, were confined. Across one of the vaults is a beam black with age, on which we were informed that the condemned were formerly executed. In the cells are seven pillars, or, rather, eight, one being half merged in the wall; in some of these are rings for the fetters and the fettered: in the pavement the steps of Bonnivard have left their traces. He was confined here several years. It is by this castle that Rousseau has fixed the catastrophe of his Héloïse, in the rescue of one of her children by Julie from the water; the shock of which, and the illness produced by the immersion, is the cause of her death. The chateau is large, and seen along the lake for a great distance. The walls are white.

[The belief or tradition that Bonivard's prison is "below the surface of the lake," for which Shelley as well as Rousseau is responsible, but which Byron only records in verse, may be traced to a statement attributed to Bonivard himself, who says (*Mémoires, etc.*, 1845, iv. 268) that the commandant thrust him "en unes croctes desquelles le fond estoit plus bas que le lac sur lequel Chillon estoit citue." As a matter of fact, "the level [of *les souterrains*] is now three metres higher than the level of the water, and even if we take off the difference arising from the fact that the level of the lake was once much higher, and that the floor of the halls has been raised, still the halls must originally have been built about two metres above the surface of the lake."—*Guide, etc.*, pp. 28, 29.]

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 'twas coarse and rude,
For we were used to hunter's 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
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 'twas hopeless, but my dread
Would not be thus admonishéd;
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 accurséd 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 mind 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 wingéd 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 'twas 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;[1]
I saw the white-walled distant town,
And whiter sails go skimming down;
And then there was a little isle,[2]
Which in my very face did smile,
The only one in view;
A small green isle, 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;
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,

[1] [Villeneuve.]

[2] Between the entrances of the Rhone and Villeneuve, not far from Chillon, is a very small island [Ile de Paix]; 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.

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.

POEMS OF JULY–SEPTEMBER, 1816.

THE DREAM.[1]

I.

Our life is twofold: Sleep hath its own world,
A boundary between the things misnamed
Death and existence: Sleep hath its own world,
And a wide realm of wild reality,
And dreams in their development have breath,
And tears, and tortures, and the touch of Joy;
They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts,
They take a weight from off our waking toils,
They do divide our being; they become
A portion of ourselves as of our time,
And look like heralds of Eternity;
They pass like spirits of the past,—they speak
Like Sibyls of the future; they have power—
The tyranny of pleasure and of pain;
They make us what we were not—what they will,
And shake us with the vision that's gone by,
The dread of vanished shadows—Are they so?
Is not the past all shadow—What are they?
Creations of the mind?—The mind can make
Substance, and people planets of its own
With beings brighter than have been, and give
A breath to forms which can outlive all flesh.
I would recall a vision which I dreamed
Perchance in sleep—for, in itself, a thought,
A slumbering thought, is capable of years,
And curdles a long life into one hour.

II.

I saw two beings in the hues of youth
Standing upon a hill, a gentle hill,
Green and of mild declivity, the last
As 'twere the cape of a long ridge of such,
Save that there was no sea to lave its base,
But a most living landscape, and the wave
Of woods and cornfields, and the abodes of men
Scattered at intervals, and wreathing smoke
Arising from such rustic roofs;—the hill
Was crowned with a peculiar diadem[1]
Of trees, in circular array, so fixed,
Not by the sport of nature, but of man:
These two, a maiden and a youth, were there
Gazing—the one on all that was beneath
Fair as herself—but the Boy gazed on her;
And both were young, and one was beautiful:
And both were young—yet not alike in youth.
As the sweet moon on the horizon's verge,
The Maid was on the eve of Womanhood;
The Boy had fewer summers, but his heart
Had far outgrown his years, and to his eye
There was but one beloved face on earth,
And that was shining on him: he had looked
Upon it till it could not pass away;
He had no breath, no being, but in hers;
She was his voice; he did not speak to her,

[1] [*The Dream* was written at the Villa Diodati, Geneva, July, 1816. It was published with the *Prisoner of Chillon*, Dec. 5, 1816.]

[1] ["Diadem Hill" is the cape or rounded spur of the long ridge of Howatt Hill which lies about half a mile to the south-east of Annesley Hall, at that time the property of Byron's distant cousin and near neighbour, Mary Anne Chaworth.]

But trembled on her words; she was his sight,
For his eye followed hers, and saw with hers,
Which coloured all his objects:—he had ceased
To live within himself; she was his life,
The ocean to the river of his thoughts,
Which terminated all: upon a tone,
A touch of hers, his blood would ebb and flow,
And his cheek change tempestuously—his heart
Unknowing of its cause of agony.
But she in these fond feelings had no share:
Her sighs were not for him; to her he was
Even as a brother—but no more; 'twas much,
For brotherless she was, save in the name
Her infant friendship had bestowed on him;
Herself the solitary scion left
Of a time-honoured race.—It was a name
Which pleased him, and yet pleased him not
—and why?
Time taught him a deep answer—when she loved
Another: even *now* she loved another,
And on the summit of that hill she stood
Looking afar if yet her lover's steed[1]
Kept pace with her expectancy, and flew.

III.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
There was an ancient mansion, and before
Its walls there was a steed caparisoned:
Within an antique Oratory[2] stood
The Boy of whom I spake;—he was alone,
And pale, and pacing to and fro: anon
He sate him down, and seized a pen, and traced
Words which I could not guess of; then he leaned
His bowed head on his hands, and shook as 'twere
With a convulsion—then arose again,
And with his teeth and quivering hands did tear
What he had written, but he shed no tears.
And he did calm himself, and fix his brow
Into a kind of quiet: as he paused,
The Lady of his love re-entered there;
She was serene and smiling then, and yet
She knew she was by him beloved—she knew,
For quickly comes such knowledge, that his heart
Was darkened with her shadow, and she saw
That he was wretched, but she saw not all.
He rose, and with a cold and gentle grasp
He took her hand; a moment o'er his face
A tablet of unutterable thoughts
Was traced, and then it faded, as it came;
He dropped the hand he held, and with slow steps
Retired, but not as bidding her adieu,
For they did part with mutual smiles; he passed
From out the massy gate of that old Hall,
And mounting on his steed he went his way;
And ne'er repassed that hoary threshold more.

IV.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Boy was sprung to manhood: in the wilds
Of fiery climes he made himself a home,
And his Soul drank their sunbeams: he was girt
With strange and dusky aspects; he was not
Himself like what he had been; on the sea
And on the shore he was a wanderer;
There was a mass of many images
Crowded like waves upon me, but he was
A part of all; and in the last he lay
Reposing from the noontide sultriness,
Couched among fallen columns, in the shade
Of ruined walls that had survived the names
Of those who reared them; by his sleeping side
Stood camels grazing, and some goodly steeds
Were fastened near a fountain; and a man
Clad in a flowing garb did watch the while,
While many of his tribe slumbered around:
And they were canopied by the blue sky,
So cloudless, clear, and purely beautiful,
That God alone was to be seen in Heaven.[1]

V.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Lady of his love was wed with One
Who did not love her better:—in her home,
A thousand leagues from his,—her native home,
She dwelt, begirt with growing Infancy,
Daughters and sons of Beauty,—but behold!
Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
The settled shadow of an inward strife,
And an unquiet drooping of the eye,
As if its lid were charged with unshed tears.
What could her grief be?—she had all she loved,
And he who had so loved her was not there

[1] [Mary Chaworth was looking for her lover's steed along the road as it winds up the common from Hucknall Torkard. Her lover was her future husband, John Musters.]

[2] [The "antique oratory" is a small room built over the porch and looking into the courtyard of the hall.]

[1] ["Byron's Dream" is the subject of a well-known picture by Sir Charles Eastlake.]

To trouble with bad hopes, or evil wish,
Or ill-repressed affliction, her pure thoughts.
What could her grief be?—she had loved him not,
Nor given him cause to deem himself beloved,
Nor could he be a part of that which preyed
Upon her mind—a spectre of the past.

VI.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Wanderer was returned.—I saw him stand
Before an Altar—with a gentle bride;
Her face was fair, but was not that which made
The Starlight[1] of his Boyhood;—as he stood
Even at the altar, o'er his brow there came
The self-same aspect, and the quivering shock[2]
That in the antique Oratory shook
His bosom in its solitude; and then—
As in that hour—a moment o'er his face
The tablet of unutterable thoughts
Was traced,—and then it faded as it came,
And he stood calm and quiet, and he spoke
The fitting vows, but heard not his own words,
And all things reeled around him; he could see
Not that which was, nor that which should have been—
But the old mansion, and the accustomed hall,

[1] [An old servant of the Chaworth family, Mary Marsden, told Washington Irving (*Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey*, 1835, p. 204) that Byron used to call Mary Chaworth "his bright morning star of Annesley." Compare the well-known lines—

"She was a form of Life and Light,
That, seen, became a part of sight;
And rose, where'er I turned mine eye,
The Morning-star of Memory!"
—*The Giaour*, lines 1127-1130.]

[2] ["This touching picture agrees closely, in many of its circumstances, with Lord Byron's own prose account of the wedding in his Memoranda; in which he describes himself as waking, on the morning of his marriage, with the most melancholy reflections, on seeing his wedding-suit spread out before him. In the same mood, he wandered about the grounds alone, till he was summoned for the ceremony, and joined, for the first time on that day, his bride and her family. He knelt down—he repeated the words after the clergyman; but a mist was before his eyes—his thoughts were elsewhere: and he was but awakened by the congratulations of the bystanders to find that he was—married."—*Life*, p. 272.]

And the remembered chambers, and the place,
The day, the hour, the sunshine, and the shade,
All things pertaining to that place and hour,
And her who was his destiny, came back
And thrust themselves between him and the light:
What business had they there at such a time?

VII.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Lady of his love;—Oh! she was changed
As by the sickness of the soul; her mind
Had wandered from its dwelling, and her eyes
They had not their own lustre, but the look
Which is not of the earth; she was become
The Queen of a fantastic realm; her thoughts
Were combinations of disjointed things;
And forms, impalpable and unperceived
Of others' sight, familiar were to hers.
And this the world calls frenzy; but the wise
Have a far deeper madness—and the glance
Of melancholy is a fearful gift;
What is it but the telescope of truth?
Which strips the distance of its fantasies,
And brings life near in utter nakedness,
Making the cold reality too real!

VIII.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Wanderer was alone as heretofore,
The beings which surrounded him were gone,
Or were at war with him; he was a mark
For blight and desolation, compassed round
With Hatred and Contention; Pain was mixed
In all which was served up to him, until,
Like to the Pontic monarch of old days,[1]
He fed on poisons, and they had no power,
But were a kind of nutriment; he lived

[1] Mithridates of Pontus. [Mithridates, King of Pontus (B.C. 120-63), surnamed Eupator, succeeded to the throne when he was only eleven years of age. He is said to have safeguarded himself against the designs of his enemies by drugging himself with antidotes against poison, and so effectively that, when he was an old man, he could not poison himself, even when he was minded to do so.]

Through that which had been death to many men,
And made him friends of mountains: with the stars
And the quick Spirit of the Universe
He held his dialogues; and they did teach
To him the magic of their mysteries;
To him the book of Night was opened wide,
And voices from the deep abyss revealed
A marvel and a secret—Be it so.

IX.

My dream was past; it had no further change.
It was of a strange order, that the doom
Of these two creatures should be thus traced out
Almost like a reality—the one
To end in madness—both in misery.

July, 1816.

[First published, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, etc. 1816.]

DARKNESS.

I HAD a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguished, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy Earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chilled into a selfish prayer for light:
And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
The palaces of crownéd kings—the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consumed,
And men were gathered round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other's face;
Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
Of the volcanoes, and their mountain-torch:
A fearful hope was all the World contained;
Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour
They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks
Extinguished with a crash—and all was black.
The brows of men by the despairing light
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
The flashes fell upon them; some lay down
And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest
Their chins upon their clenchéd hands, and smiled;
And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and looked up
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
The pall of a past World; and then again
With curses cast them down upon the dust,
And gnashed their teeth and howled: the wild birds shrieked,
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawled
And twined themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food:
And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again:—a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no Love was left;
All earth was but one thought—and that was Death,
Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meagre by the meagre were devoured,
Even dogs assailed their masters, all save one,
And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds and beasts and famished men at bay,
Till hunger clung them,[1] or the dropping dead
Lured their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,
But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answered not with a caress—he died.
The crowd was famished by degrees; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies: they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place
Where had been heaped a mass of holy things

[1] [Fruit is said to be "clung" when the skin shrivels, and a corpse when the face becomes wasted and gaunt.]

For an unholy usage; they raked up,
And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects—saw, and shrieked, and died—
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Famine had written Fiend. The World was void,
The populous and the powerful was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless—
A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,
And nothing stirred within their silent depths;
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropped
They slept on the abyss without a surge—
The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
The Moon, their mistress, had expired before;
The winds were withered in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perished; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

Diodati, *July* 1816.

[First published, *Prisoner of Chillon*, etc., 1816.]

CHURCHILL'S GRAVE.[1]

A FACT LITERALLY RENDERED.

I STOOD beside the grave of him who blazed
The Comet of a season, and I saw
The humblest of all sepulchres, and gazed
With not the less of sorrow and of awe
On that neglected turf and quiet stone,
With name no clearer than the names unknown,
Which lay unread around it; and I asked
The Gardener of that ground, why it might be
That for this plant strangers his memory tasked,
Through the thick deaths of half a century;
And thus he answered—"Well, I do not know
Why frequent travellers turn to pilgrims so;
He died before my day of Sextonship,
And I had not the digging of this grave."
And is this all? I thought,—and do we rip
The veil of Immortality, and crave
I know not what of honour and of light
Through unborn ages, to endure this blight?
So soon, and so successless? As I said,
The Architect of all on which we tread,
For Earth is but a tombstone, did essay
To extricate remembrance from the clay,
Whose minglings might confuse a Newton's thought,
Were it not that all life must end in one,
Of which we are but dreamers;—as he caught
As 'twere the twilight of a former Sun,
Thus spoke he,—"I believe the man of whom
You wot, who lies in this selected tomb,
Was a most famous writer in his day,
And therefore travellers step from out their way
To pay him honour,—and myself whate'er
Your honour pleases:"—then most pleased I shook
From out my pocket's avaricious nook
Some certain coins of silver, which as 'twere
Perforce I gave this man, though I could spare
So much but inconveniently:—Ye smile,
I see ye, ye profane ones! all the while,
Because my homely phrase the truth would tell.
You are the fools, not I—for I did dwell
With a deep thought, and with a softened eye,
On that old Sexton's natural homily,
In which there was Obscurity and Fame,—
The Glory and the Nothing of a Name.

Diodati, 1816.

[First published, *Prisoner of Chillon*, etc., 1816.]

[1] [Charles Churchill was born in February, 1731, and died at Boulogne, November 4, 1764. The body was brought to Dover and buried in the churchyard attached to the demolished church of St. Martin-le-Grand, a small deserted cemetery in an obscure lane above the market-place. There is a tablet to his memory on the south wall of St. Mary's Church, and the present headstone in the graveyard (it was a "plain headstone" in 1816) bears the following inscription:—

"1764.
Here lie the remains of the celebrated
C. CHURCHILL.
'Life to the last enjoy'd, here Churchill lies.'"

Byron spent Sunday, April 25, 1816, at Dover. He was to sail that night for Ostend, and, to while away the time, "turned to Pilgrim" and thought out, perhaps began to write, the lines which were finished three months later at the Villa Diodati.]

PROMETHEUS

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.

Diodati, *July*, 1816.

[First published, *Prisoner of Chillon*, etc., 1816.]

A FRAGMENT.[1]

COULD I remount the river of my years
To the first fountain of our smiles and tears,
I would not trace again the stream of hours
Between their outworn banks of withered flowers,
But bid it flow as now—until it glides
Into the number of the nameless tides.

* * * * *

What is this Death?—a quiet of the heart?
The whole of that of which we are a part?
For Life is but a vision—what I see
Of all which lives alone is Life to me,
And being so—the absent are the dead,
Who haunt us from tranquillity, and spread
A dreary shroud around us, and invest
With sad remembrancers our hours of rest.
The absent are the dead—for they are cold,
And ne'er can be what once we did behold;
And they are changed, and cheerless,—or if yet
The unforgotten do not all forget,
Since thus divided—equal must it be
If the deep barrier be of earth, or sea;
It may be both—but one day end it must
In the dark union of insensate dust.
The under-earth inhabitants—are they
But mingled millions decomposed to clay?
The ashes of a thousand ages spread
Wherever Man has trodden or shall tread?
Or do they in their silent cities dwell
Each in his incommunicative cell?
Or have they their own language? and a sense
Of breathless being?—darkened and intense

1 [*A Fragment*, which remained unpublished till 1830, was written at the same time as *Churchill's Grave* (July, 1816), and is closely allied to it in purport and in sentiment.]

As Midnight in her solitude?—Oh Earth!
Where are the past?—and wherefore had they birth?
The dead are thy inheritors—and we
But bubbles on thy surface; and the key
Of thy profundity is in the Grave,
The ebon portal of thy peopled cave,
Where I would walk in spirit, and behold
Our elements resolved to things untold,
And fathom hidden wonders, and explore
The essence of great bosoms now no more.

* * * * * *

Diodati, *July*, 1816.

[First published, *Letters and Journals*, 1830, ii. 36.]

SONNET TO LAKE LEMAN

ROUSSEAU—Voltaire—our Gibbon—and De Staël—
Leman![1] these names are worthy of thy shore,
Thy shore of names like these! wert thou no more,
Their memory thy remembrance would recall:
To them thy banks were lovely as to all,
But they have made them lovelier, for the lore
Of mighty minds doth hallow in the core
Of human hearts the ruin of a wall
Where dwelt the wise and wondrous; but by *thee*
How much more, Lake of Beauty! do we feel,
In sweetly gliding o'er thy crystal sea,
The wild glow of that not ungentle zeal,
Which of the Heirs of Immortality
Is proud, and makes the breath of Glory real!

Diodati, *July*, 1816.

[First published, *Prisoner of Chillon*, etc, 1816.]

STANZAS TO AUGUSTA.

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—
'Tis 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, 'twas 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,
'Twas 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*.

July 24, 1816.

[First published, *Prisoner of Chillon*, etc., 1816.]

[1] Geneva, Ferney, Copet, Lausanne.

EPISTLE TO AUGUSTA.

I.

My Sister! my sweet Sister! if a name
Dearer and purer were, it should be thine.
Mountains and seas divide us, but I claim
No tears, but tenderness to answer mine:
Go where I will, to me thou art the same—
A loved regret which I would not resign.
There yet are two things in my destiny,—
A world to roam through, and a home with thee.

II.

The first were nothing—had I still the last,
It were the haven of my happiness;
But other claims and other ties thou hast,
And mine is not the wish to make them less.
A strange doom is thy father's son's, and past
Recalling, as it lies beyond redress;
Reversed for him our grandsire's[1] fate of yore,—
He had no rest at sea, nor I on shore.

III.

If my inheritance of storms hath been
In other elements, and on the rocks
Of perils, overlooked or unforeseen,
I have sustained my share of worldly shocks,
The fault was mine; nor do I seek to screen
My errors with defensive paradox;
I have been cunning in mine overthrow,
The careful pilot of my proper woe.

IV.

Mine were my faults, and mine be their reward.
My whole life was a contest, since the day
That gave me being, gave me that which marred
The gift,—a fate, or will, that walked astray;
And I at times have found the struggle hard,
And thought of shaking off my bonds of clay:
But now I fain would for a time survive,
If but to see what next can well arrive.

V.

Kingdoms and Empires in my little day
I have outlived, and yet I am not old;
And when I look on this, the petty spray
Of my own years of trouble, which have rolled
Like a wild bay of breakers, melts away:
Something—I know not what—does still uphold
A spirit of slight patience;—not in vain,
Even for its own sake, do we purchase Pain.

VI.

Perhaps the workings of defiance stir
Within me—or, perhaps, a cold despair
Brought on when ills habitually recur,—
Perhaps a kinder clime, or purer air,
(For even to this may change of soul refer,
And with light armour we may learn to bear,)
Have taught me a strange quiet, which was not
The chief companion of a calmer lot.

VII.

I feel almost at times as I have felt
In happy childhood; trees, and flowers, and brooks,
Which do remember me of where I dwelt,
Ere my young mind was sacrificed to books,
Come as of yore upon me, and can melt
My heart with recognition of their looks;
And even at moments I could think I see
Some living thing to love—but none like thee.

VIII.

Here are the Alpine landscapes which create
A fund for contemplation;—to admire
Is a brief feeling of a trivial date;
But something worthier do such scenes inspire:
Here to be lonely is not desolate,
For much I view which I could most desire,
And, above all, a Lake I can behold
Lovelier, not dearer, than our own of old.

IX.

Oh that thou wert but with me!—but I grow
The fool of my own wishes, and forget
The solitude which I have vaunted so
Has lost its praise in this but one regret;
There may be others which I less may show;—
I am not of the plaintive mood, and yet
I feel an ebb in my philosophy,
And the tide rising in my altered eye.

[1] ["Admiral Byron was remarkable for never making a voyage without a tempest. He was known to the sailors by the facetious name of 'Foul-weather Jack' (or 'Hardy Byron').

"'But, though it were tempest-toss'd,
Still his bark could not be lost.'

He returned safely from the wreck of the *Wager* (in Anson's voyage), and many years after circumnavigated the world, as commander of a similar expedition" (Moore). Admiral the Hon. John Byron, (1723-1786), next brother to William, fifth Lord Byron, published his *Narrative*, of his shipwreck in the *Wager*, in 1768.]

X.

I did remind thee of our own dear Lake,[1]
By the old Hall which may be mine no more.
Leman's is fair; but think not I forsake
The sweet remembrance of a dearer shore:
Sad havoc Time must with my memory make,
Ere that or thou can fade these eyes before;
Though, like all things which I have loved, they are
Resigned for ever, or divided far.

XI.

The world is all before me; I but ask
Of Nature that with which she will comply—
It is but in her Summer's sun to bask,
To mingle with the quiet of her sky,
To see her gentle face without a mask,
And never gaze on it with apathy.
She was my early friend, and now shall be
My sister—till I look again on thee.

XII.

I can reduce all feelings but this one,—
And that I would not;—for at length I see
Such scenes as those wherein my life begun—
The earliest—even the only paths for me—
Had I but sooner learnt the crowd to shun,
I had been better than I now can be;
The Passions which have torn me would have slept—
I had not suffered, and *thou* hadst not wept.

XIII.

With false Ambition what had I to do?
Little with Love, and least of all with Fame;
And yet they came unsought, and with me grew,
And made me all which they can make—a Name.
Yet this was not the end I did pursue;
Surely I once beheld a nobler aim.
But all is over—I am one the more
To baffled millions which have gone before.

XIV.

And for the future, this world's future may
From me demand but little of my care:
I have outlived myself by many a day,
Having survived so many things that were;
My years have been no slumber, but the prey
Of ceaseless vigils; for I had the share
Of life which might have filled a century,
Before its fourth in time had passed me by.

[1] [For a description of the lake at Newstead, see *Don Juan*, Canto XIII. stanza lvii.]

XV.

And for the remnant which may be to come
I am content; and for the past I feel
Not thankless,—for within the crowded sum
Of struggles, Happiness at times would steal,
And, for the present, I would not benumb
My feelings farther.—Nor shall I conceal
That with all this I still can look around,
And worship Nature with a thought profound.

XVI.

For thee, my own sweet sister, in thy heart
I know myself secure, as thou in mine;
We were and are—I am, even as thou art—
Beings who ne'er each other can resign;
It is the same, together or apart—
From Life's commencement to its slow decline
We are entwined—let Death come slow or fast,
The tie which bound the first endures the last!

[First published, *Letters and Journals*, 1830, ii. 38-41.]

LINES ON HEARING THAT LADY BYRON WAS ILL.[1]

And thou wert sad—yet I was not with thee;
And thou wert sick, and yet I was not near;
Methought that Joy and Health alone could be
Where I was *not*—and pain and sorrow here!
And is it thus?—it is as I foretold,
And shall be more so; for the mind recoils
Upon itself, and the wrecked heart lies cold,
While Heaviness collects the shattered spoils.
It is not in the storm nor in the strife
We feel benumbed, and wish to be no more,
But in the after-silence on the shore,
When all is lost, except a little life.

I am too well avenged!—but 'twas my right;
Whate'er my sins might be, *thou* wert not sent
To be the Nemesis who should requite—
Nor did Heaven choose so near an instrument.
Mercy is for the merciful!—if thou
Hast been of such, 'twill be accorded now.

[1] [These verses were written immediately after the fruitless intervention of Madame de Staël, who had persuaded Byron "to write a letter to a friend in England, declaring himself still willing to be reconciled to Lady Byron" (*Life*, p. 321), but were not intended for the public eye.]

Thy nights are banished from the realms of
sleep:—
Yes! they may flatter thee, but thou shall
feel
A hollow agony which will not heal,
For thou art pillowed on a curse too deep;
Thou hast sown in my sorrow, and must reap
The bitter harvest in a woe as real!
I have had many foes, but none like thee;
For 'gainst the rest myself I could defend,
And be avenged, or turn them into friend;
But thou in safe implacability
Hadst nought to dread—in thy own weakness
shielded,
And in my love, which hath but too much
yielded,
And spared, for thy sake, some I should
not spare;
And thus upon the world—trust in thy truth,
And the wild fame of my ungoverned youth—
On things that were not, and on things
that are—
Even upon such a basis hast thou built
A monument, whose cement hath been guilt,
The moral Clytemnestra of thy lord!
And hewed down, with an unsuspected
sword,
Fame, peace, and hope—and all the better life
Which, but for this cold treason of thy heart,
Might still have risen from out the grave of
strife,
And found a nobler duty than to part.
But of thy virtues didst thou make a vice,
Trafficking with them in a purpose cold,
For present anger, and for future gold—
And buying others' grief at any price.
And thus once entered into crooked ways,
The early truth, which was thy proper praise,
Did not still walk beside thee—but at times,
And with a breast unknowing its own crimes,
Deceit, averments incompatible,
Equivocations, and the thoughts which dwell
In Janus-spirits—the significant eye
Which learns to lie with silence—the pretext
Of prudence, with advantages annexed—
The acquiescence in all things which tend,
No matter how, to the desired end—
All found a place in thy philosophy.
The means were worthy, and the end is won—
I would not do by thee as thou hast done!

September, 1816.

[First published, *New Monthly Magazine*, August, 1832, vol. xxxv. pp. 142, 143.]

MONODY ON THE DEATH OF THE RIGHT HON. R. B. SHERIDAN,[1]

SPOKEN AT DRURY-LANE THEATRE, LONDON.

When the last sunshine of expiring Day
In Summer's twilight weeps itself away,
Who hath not felt the softness of the hour
Sink on the heart, as dew along the flower?
With a pure feeling which absorbs and awes
While Nature makes that melancholy
pause—
Her breathing moment on the bridge where
Time
Of light and darkness forms an arch
sublime—
Who hath not shared that calm, so still and
deep,
The voiceless thought which would not speak
but weep,
A holy concord, and a bright regret,
A glorious sympathy with suns that set?
'Tis not harsh sorrow, but a tenderer woe,
Nameless, but dear to gentle hearts below,
Felt without bitterness—but full and clear,
A sweet dejection—a transparent tear,
Unmixed with worldly grief or selfish stain—
Shed without shame, and secret without pain.
Even as the tenderness that hour instils
When Summer's day declines along the hills,
So feels the fulness of our heart and eyes
When all of Genius which can perish dies.
A mighty Spirit is eclipsed—a Power
Hath passed from day to darkness—to whose
hour
Of light no likeness is bequeathed—no
name,
Focus at once of all the rays of Fame!
The flash of Wit—the bright Intelligence,
The beam of Song—the blaze of Eloquence,
Set with their Sun, but still have left behind
The enduring produce of immortal Mind;
Fruits of a genial morn, and glorious noon,
A deathless part of him who died too soon.

[1] [The *Monody*, etc., was written at the Villa Diodati, July 17, 1816. It was spoken by Mrs. Davison at Drury Lane Theatre, September 7, and published September 9, 1816.]

But small that portion of the wondrous whole,
These sparkling segments of that circling Soul,
Which all embraced, and lightened over all,
To cheer—to pierce—to please—or to appal.
From the charmed council to the festive board,
Of human feelings the unbounded lord;
In whose acclaim the loftiest voices vied,
The praised—the proud—who made his praise their pride.
When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan
Arose to Heaven in her appeal from Man,
His was the thunder—his the avenging rod,
The wrath—the delegated voice of God!
Which shook the nations through his lips, and blazed
Till vanquished senates trembled as they praised.[1]

And here, oh! here, where yet all young and warm,
The gay creations of his spirit charm,
The matchless dialogue—the deathless wit,
Which knew not what it was to intermit;
The glowing portraits, fresh from life, that bring
Home to our hearts the truth from which they spring;
These wondrous beings of his fancy, wrought
To fulness by the fiat of his thought,
Here in their first abode you still may meet,
Bright with the hues of his Promethean heat;
A Halo of the light of other days,
Which still the splendour of its orb betrays.
But should there be to whom the fatal blight
Of failing Wisdom yields a base delight,
Men who exult when minds of heavenly tone
Jar in the music which was born their own,
Still let them pause—ah! little do they know
That what to them seemed Vice might be but Woe.
Hard is his fate on whom the public gaze
Is fixed for ever to detract or praise;
Repose denies her requiem to his name,
And Folly loves the martyrdom of Fame.
The secret enemy whose sleepless eye
Stands sentinel—accuser—judge—and spy;
The foe, the fool, the jealous, and the vain,
The envious who but breathe in others' pain—

[1] [Sheridan's first speech on behalf of the Begum of Oude was delivered February 7, 1787.]

Behold the host! delighting to deprave,
Who track the steps of Glory to the grave,
Watch every fault that daring Genius owes
Half to the ardour which its birth bestows,
Distort the truth, accumulate the lie,
And pile the pyramid of Calumny!
These are his portion—but if joined to these
Gaunt Poverty should league with deep Disease,
If the high Spirit must forget to soar,
And stoop to strive with Misery at the door,[1]
To soothe Indignity—and face to face
Meet sordid Rage, and wrestle with Disgrace,
To find in Hope but the renewed caress,
The serpent-fold of further Faithlessness:—
If such may be the Ills which men assail,
What marvel if at last the mightiest fail?
Breasts to whom all the strength of feeling given
Bear hearts electric—charged with fire from Heaven,
Black with the rude collision, inly torn,
By clouds surrounded, and on whirlwinds borne,
Driven o'er the lowering atmosphere that nurst
Thoughts which have turned to thunder—scorch, and burst.

But far from us and from our mimic scene
Such things should be—if such have ever been;
Ours be the gentler wish, the kinder task,
To give the tribute Glory need not ask,
To mourn the vanished beam, and add our mite
Of praise in payment of a long delight.
Ye Orators! whom yet our councils yield,
Mourn for the veteran Hero of your field!
The worthy rival of the wondrous *Three*![2]
Whose words were sparks of Immortality!
Ye Bards! to whom the Drama's Muse is dear,
He was your Master—emulate him *here*!
Ye men of wit and social eloquence!
He was your brother—bear his ashes hence!

[1] [Only a few days before his death, Sheridan wrote thus to Rogers: "I am absolutely undone and broken-hearted. They are going to put the carpets out of window, and break into Mrs. S.'s room and *take me*. For God's sake let me see you!" (Moore's *Life of Sheridan*, 1825, ii. 455).]

[2] Fox—Pitt—Burke.

While Powers of mind almost of boundless range,
Complete in kind, as various in their change,
While Eloquence—Wit—Poesy—and Mirth,
That humbler Harmonist of care on Earth,
Survive within our souls—while lives our sense
Of pride in Merit's proud pre-eminence,
Long shall we seek his likeness—long in vain,
And turn to all of him which may remain,
Sighing that Nature formed but one such man,
And broke the die—in moulding Sheridan![1]

MANFRED:[2]

A DRAMATIC POEM.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."
[*Hamlet*, Act i. Scene 5, Lines 166, 167.]

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Manfred.
Chamois Hunter.
Abbot of St. Maurice.
Manuel.
Herman.

Witch of the Alps.
Arimanes.
Nemesis.
The Destinies.
Spirits, etc.

The Scene of the Drama is amongst the Higher Alps—partly in the Castle of Manfred, and partly in the Mountains.

[1] [It has often been pointed out that this fine metaphor may be traced to Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. The subject is Zerbino, the son of the King of Scotland—

"Non è vu si bello in tante altre persone:
Natura il fece e poi ruppe la stampa."
—Canto X. stanza lxxxiv. lines 5, 6.]

[2] [Acts i. and ii. of *Manfred* were written in Switzerland, September 17-29, 1816. Act iii. was written in Venice, April 1817. *Manfred* was published June 16, 1817.]

[*Manfred*, a choral tragedy in three acts, was performed at Covent Garden Theatre, October 29—November 14, 1834 [Denvil (afterwards known as "Manfred" Denvil) took the part of "Manfred," and Miss Ellen Tree (afterwards Mrs. Charles Kean) played "The Witch of the Alps"]; at Drury Lane Theatre, October 10, 1863-64 [Phelps played "Manfred," Miss Rosa Le Clercq "The Phantom of Astarte," and Miss Heath "The Witch of the Alps"]; at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester, March 27 — April 20, 1867 [Charles Calvert played "Manfred"]; and again, in 1867, under the same management, at the Royal Alexandra Theatre, Liverpool; and at the Princess's Theatre Royal, London, August 16, 1873 [Charles Dillon played "Manfred"; music by Sir Henry Bishop, as in 1834].]

ACT I.

Scene I.—Manfred *alone.*—*Scene, a Gothic Gallery.*—*Time, Midnight.*

Man. The lamp must be replenished, but even then
It will not burn so long as I must watch:
My slumbers—if I slumber—are not sleep,
But a continuance of enduring thought,
Which then I can resist not: in my heart
There is a vigil, and these eyes but close
To look within; and yet I live, and bear
The aspect and the form of breathing men.
But Grief should be the Instructor of the wise;
Sorrow is Knowledge: they who know the most
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth—
The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.
Philosophy and Science, and the springs
Of Wonder, and the wisdom of the World,
I have essayed, and in my mind there is
A power to make these subject to itself—
But they avail not: I have done men good,
And I have met with good even among men—
But this availed not: I have had my foes,
And none have baffled, many fallen before me—
But this availed not:—Good—or evil—life—
Powers, passions—all I see in other beings,
Have been to me as rain unto the sands,
Since that all-nameless hour. I have no dread,
And feel the curse to have no natural fear,
Nor fluttering throb that beats with hopes or wishes,
Or lurking love of something on the earth.
Now to my task.—

Mysterious Agency!
Ye Spirits of the unbounded Universe!
Whom I have sought in darkness and in light—
Ye, who do compass earth about, and dwell
In subtler essence—ye, to whom the tops
Of mountains inaccessible are haunts,
And Earth's and Ocean's caves familiar things—
I call upon ye by the written charm
Which gives me power upon you—Rise! Appear!

[*A pause.*

They come not yet.—Now by the voice of him
Who is the first among you[1]—by this sign,
Which makes you tremble—by the claims of him
Who is undying,—Rise! Appear!—— Appear!

[*A pause.*

If it be so.—Spirits of Earth and Air,
Ye shall not so elude me! By a power,
Deeper than all yet urged, a tyrant-spell,
Which had its birthplace in a star condemned,
The burning wreck of a demolished world,
A wandering hell in the eternal Space;
By the strong curse which is upon my Soul,
The thought which is within me and around me,
I do compel ye to my will.—Appear!

[*A star is seen at the darker end of the gallery; it is stationary: and a voice is heard singing.*

FIRST SPIRIT.

Mortal! to thy bidding bowed,
From my mansion in the cloud,
Which the breath of Twilight builds,
And the Summer's sunset gilds
With the azure and vermilion,
Which is mixed for my pavilion;
Though thy quest may be forbidden,
On a star-beam I have ridden,
To thine adjuration bowed:
Mortal—be thy wish avowed!

Voice of the SECOND SPIRIT.

Mont Blanc is the Monarch of mountains;
They crowned him long ago
On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,
With a Diadem of snow.
Around his waist are forests braced,
The Avalanche in his hand;
But ere it fall, that thundering ball
Must pause for my command.
The Glacier's cold and restless mass
Moves onward day by day;
But I am he who bids it pass,
Or with its ice delay.
I am the Spirit of the place,
Could make the mountain bow
And quiver to his caverned base—
And what with me would'st *Thou*?

Voice of the THIRD SPIRIT.

In the blue depth of the waters,
Where the wave hath no strife,
Where the Wind is a stranger,
And the Sea-snake hath life,
Where the Mermaid is decking
Her green hair with shells,
Like the storm on the surface
Came the sound of thy spells;
O'er my calm Hall of Coral
The deep Echo rolled—
To the Spirit of Ocean
Thy wishes unfold!

FOURTH SPIRIT.

Where the slumbering Earthquake
Lies pillowed on fire,
And the lakes of bitumen
Rise boilingly higher;
Where the roots of the Andes
Strike deep in the earth,
As their summits to heaven
Shoot soaringly forth;
I have quitted my birthplace,
Thy bidding to bide—
Thy spell hath subdued me,
Thy will be my guide!

FIFTH SPIRIT.

I am the rider of the wind,
The stirrer of the storm;
The hurricane I left behind
Is yet with lightning warm;
To speed to thee, o'er shore and sea
I swept upon the blast:
The fleet I met sailed well—and yet
'Twill sink ere night be past.

SIXTH SPIRIT.

My dwelling is the shadow of the Night,
Why doth thy magic torture me with light?

[1] [The Prince of the Spirits is Arimanes, *vide post*, act ii. sc. 4. line 1. *seq.*]

Seventh Spirit.

The Star which rules thy destiny
Was ruled, ere earth began, by me:
It was a World as fresh and fair
As e'er revolved round Sun in air;
Its course was free and regular,
Space bosomed not a lovelier star.
The Hour arrived—and it became
A wandering mass of shapeless flame,
A pathless Comet, and a curse,
The menace of the Universe;
Still rolling on with innate force,
Without a sphere, without a course,
A bright deformity on high,
The monster of the upper sky!
And Thou! beneath its influence born—
Thou worm! whom I obey and scorn—
Forced by a Power (which is not thine,
And lent thee but to make thee mine)
For this brief moment to descend,
Where these weak Spirits round thee bend
And parley with a thing like thee—
What would'st thou, Child of Clay! with me?

The Seven Spirits.

Earth — ocean — air — night — mountains—
winds—thy Star,
Are at thy beck and bidding, Child of Clay!
Before thee at thy quest their Spirits are—
What would'st thou with us, Son of mortals
—say?

Man. Forgetfulness——

First Spirit. Of what—of whom—and
why?

Man. Of that which is within me; read it
there—
Ye know it—and I cannot utter it.

Spirit. We can but give thee that which we
possess:
Ask of us subjects, sovereignty, the power
O'er earth—the whole, or portion—or a sign
Which shall control the elements, whereof
We are the dominators,—each and all,
These shall be thine.

Man. Oblivion—self-oblivion!
Can ye not wring from out the hidden realms
Ye offer so profusely—what I ask?

Spirit. It is not in our essence, in our skill;
But—thou may'st die.

Man. Will Death bestow it on me?

Spirit. We are immortal, and do not forget;
We are eternal; and to us the past
Is, as the future, present. Art thou answered?

Man. Ye mock me—but the Power which
brought ye here
Hath made you mine. Slaves, scoff not at
my will!
The Mind—the Spirit—the Promethean spark,
The lightning of my being, is as bright,
Pervading, and far darting as your own,
And shall not yield to yours, though cooped
in clay!
Answer, or I will teach you what I am.

Spirit. We answer—as we answered; our
reply
Is even in thine own words.

Man. Why say ye so?

Spirit. If, as thou say'st, thine essence be
as ours,
We have replied in telling thee, the thing
Mortals call death hath nought to do with
us.

Man. I then have called ye from your
realms in vain;
Ye cannot, or ye will not, aid me.

Spirit. Say—
What we possess we offer; it is thine:
Bethink ere thou dismiss us;—ask again;
Kingdom, and sway, and strength, and length
of days—

Man. Accursèd! what have I to do with
days?
They are too long already. — Hence — be-
gone!

Spirit. Yet pause: being here, our will
would do thee service;
Bethink thee, is there then no other gift
Which we can make not worthless in thine
eyes?

Man. No, none: yet stay—one moment,
ere we part,
I would behold ye face to face. I hear
Your voices, sweet and melancholy sounds,
As Music on the waters; and I see
The steady aspect of a clear large Star—
But nothing more. Approach me as ye
are,
Or one—or all—in your accustomed forms.

Spirit. We have no forms, beyond the
elements
Of which we are the mind and principle:
But choose a form—in that we will appear.

Man. I have no choice; there is no form
on earth
Hideous or beautiful to me. Let him,
Who is most powerful of ye, take such
aspect
As unto him may seem most fitting—Come!

Seventh Spirit (*appearing in the shape of a beautiful female figure*).[1] Behold!

Man. Oh God! if it be thus, and *thou*
Art not a madness and a mockery,
I yet might be most happy. I will clasp thee,
And we again will be——
[*The figure vanishes.*
My heart is crushed!
[MANFRED *falls senseless.*

(*A voice is heard in the Incantation which follows.*)

When the Moon is on the wave,
And the glow-worm in the grass,
And the meteor on the grave,
And the wisp on the morass;
When the falling stars are shooting,
And the answered owls are hooting,
And the silent leaves are still
In the shadow of the hill,
Shall my soul be upon thine,
With a power and with a sign.

Though thy slumber may be deep,
Yet thy Spirit shall not sleep;
There are shades which will not vanish,
There are thoughts thou canst not banish;
By a Power to thee unknown,
Thou canst never be alone;
Thou art wrapt as with a shroud,
Thou art gathered in a cloud;
And for ever shalt thou dwell
In the spirit of this spell.

Though thou seest me not pass by,
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye
As a thing that, though unseen,
Must be near thee, and hath been;
And when in that secret dread
Thou hast turned around thy head,
Thou shalt marvel I am not
As thy shadow on the spot,
And the power which thou dost feel
Shall be what thou must conceal.

And a magic voice and verse
Hath baptized thee with a curse;
And a Spirit of the air
Hath begirt thee with a snare;
In the wind there is a voice
Shall forbid thee to rejoice;
And to thee shall Night deny
All the quiet of her sky;
And the day shall have a sun,
Which shall make thee wish it done.

From thy false tears I did distil
An essence which hath strength to kill;
From thy own heart I then did wring
The black blood in its blackest spring;
From thy own smile I snatched the snake,
For there it coiled as in a brake;
From thy own lip I drew the charm
Which gave all these their chiefest harm;
In proving every poison known,
I found the strongest was thine own.

By the cold breast and serpent smile,
By thy unfathomed gulfs of guile,
By that most seeming virtuous eye,
By thy shut soul's hypocrisy;
By the perfection of thine art
Which passed for human thine own heart:
By thy delight in others' pain,
And by thy brotherhood of Cain,
I call upon thee! and compel
Thyself to be thy proper Hell!

And on thy head I pour the vial
Which doth devote thee to this trial;
Nor to slumber, nor to die,
Shall be in thy destiny;
Though thy death shall still seem near
To thy wish, but as a fear;
Lo! the spell now works around thee,
And the clankless chain hath bound thee;
O'er thy heart and brain together
Hath the word been passed—now wither!

SCENE II.—*The Mountain of the Jungfrau.—Time, Morning.*—MANFRED *alone upon the cliffs.*

Man. The spirits I have raised abandon me,
The spells which I have studied baffle me,
The remedy I recked of tortured me:
I lean no more on superhuman aid
It hath no power upon the past, and for
The future, till the past be gulfed in darkness,
It is not of my search.—My Mother Earth!
And thou fresh-breaking Day, and you, ye Mountains,
Why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye.
And thou, the bright Eye of the Universe,
That openest over all, and unto all
Art a delight—thou shin'st not on my heart.

[1] [It is evident that the female figure is not that of Astarte, but of the subject of the "Incantation."]

And you ye crags, upon whose extreme edge
I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath
Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs
In dizziness of distance; when a leap,
A stir, a motion, even a breath, would bring
My breast upon its rocky bosom's bed
To rest for ever—wherefore do I pause?
I feel the impulse—yet I do not plunge;
I see the peril—yet do not recede;
And my brain reels—and yet my foot is firm:
There is a power upon me which withholds,
And makes it my fatality to live,—
If it be life to wear within myself
This barrenness of Spirit, and to be
My own Soul's sepulchre, for I have ceased
To justify my deeds unto myself—
The last infirmity of evil. Aye,
Thou winged and cloud-cleaving minister,

[*An Eagle passes.*

Whose happy flight is highest into heaven,
Well may'st thou swoop so near me—I should be
The prey, and gorge thine eaglets; thou art gone
Where the eye cannot follow thee; but thine
Yet pierces downward, onward, or above,
With a pervading vision.—Beautiful!
How beautiful is all this visible world!
How glorious in its action and itself!
But we, who name ourselves its sovereigns, we,
Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
To sink or soar, with our mixed essence make
A conflict of its elements, and breathe
The breath of degradation and of pride,
Contending with low wants and lofty will,
Till our Mortality predominates,
And men are—what they name not to themselves,
And trust not to each other. Hark! the note,

[*The Shepherd's pipe in the distance is heard.*

The natural music of the mountain reed—
For here the patriarchal days are not
A pastoral fable—pipes in the liberal air,
Mixed with the sweet bells of the sauntering herd;
My soul would drink those echoes. Oh, that I were
The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,
A living voice, a breathing harmony,
A bodiless enjoyment—born and dying
With the blest tone which made me!

Enter from below a CHAMOIS HUNTER.

Chamois Hunter. Even so
This way the Chamois leapt: her nimble feet
Have baffled me; my gains to-day will scarce
Repay my break-neck travail.—What is here?
Who seems not of my trade, and yet hath reached
A height which none even of our mountaineers,
Save our best hunters, may attain: his garb
Is goodly, his mien manly, and his air
Proud as a free-born peasant's, at this distance:—
I will approach him nearer.

Man. (*not perceiving the other*). To be thus—
Grey-haired with anguish, like these blasted pines,
Wrecks of a single winter, barkless, branchless,
A blighted trunk upon a cursèd root,
Which but supplies a feeling to Decay—
And to be thus, eternally but thus,
Having been otherwise! Now furrowed o'er
With wrinkles, ploughed by moments, not by years
And hours, all tortured into ages—hours
Which I outlive!—Ye toppling crags of ice!
Ye Avalanches, whom a breath draws down
In mountainous o'erwhelming, come and crush me!
I hear ye momently above, beneath,
Crash with a frequent conflict; but ye pass,
And only fall on things that still would live;
On the young flourishing forest, or the hut
And hamlet of the harmless villager.

C. Hun. The mists begin to rise from up the valley;
I'll warn him to descend, or he may chance
To lose at once his way and life together.

Man. The mists boil up around the glaciers; clouds
Rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphury,
Like foam from the roused ocean of deep Hell,
Whose every wave breaks on a living shore,
Heaped with the damned like pebbles.—I am giddy.

C. Hun. I must approach him cautiously; if near,
A sudden step will startle him, and he
Seems tottering already.

Man. Mountains have fallen,
Leaving a gap in the clouds, and with the shock
Rocking their Alpine brethren; filling up

The ripe green valleys with Destruction's splinters;
Damming the rivers with a sudden dash,
Which crushed the waters into mist, and made
Their fountains find another channel—thus,
Thus, in its old age, did Mount Rosenberg—[1]
Why stood I not beneath it?
C. Hun. Friend! have a care,
Your next step may be fatal!—for the love
Of Him who made you, stand not on that brink!
Man. (*not hearing him*). Such would have been for me a fitting tomb;
My bones had then been quiet in their depth;
They had not then been strewn upon the rocks
For the wind's pastime—as thus—thus they shall be—
In this one plunge.—Farewell, ye opening Heavens!
Look not upon me thus reproachfully—
You were not meant for me—Earth! take these atoms!

[*As* MANFRED *is in act to spring from the cliff, the* CHAMOIS HUNTER *seizes and retains him with a sudden grasp.*

C. Hun. Hold, madman!—though aweary of thy life,
Stain not our pure vales with thy guilty blood:
Away with me——I will not quit my hold.
Man. I am most sick at heart—nay, grasp me not—
I am all feebleness—the mountains whirl,
Spinning around me——I grow blind——
What art thou?
C. Hun. I'll answer that anon.—Away with me——
The clouds grow thicker——there—now lean on me—
Place your foot here—here, take this staff, and cling
A moment to that shrub—now give me your hand,
And hold fast by my girdle—softly—well—
The Chalet will be gained within an hour:
Come on, we'll quickly find a surer footing,
And something like a pathway, which the torrent
Hath washed since winter.—Come, 'tis bravely done—
You should have been a hunter.—Follow me.

[*As they descend the rocks with difficulty, the scene closes.*

[1] [The fall of the Rossberg took place September 2, 1806. "A huge mass of conglomerate rock, 1000 feet broad and 100 feet thick, detached itself from the face of the mountain (Rossberg or Rufiberg, near Goldau, south of Lake Zug), and slipped down into the valley below. . . . More than four hundred and fifty human beings perished, and whole herds of cattle were swept away. Five minutes sufficed to complete the work of destruction. The inhabitants were first roused by a loud and grating sound like thunder . . . and beheld the valleys shrouded in a cloud of dust; when it had cleared away they found the face of nature changed."—*Handbook of Switzerland*, Part I. pp. 58, 59.]

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Cottage among the Bernese Alps.*—MANFRED *and the* CHAMOIS HUNTER.

C. Hun. No—no—yet pause—thou must not yet go forth:
Thy mind and body are alike unfit
To trust each other, for some hours, at least;
When thou art better, I will be thy guide—
But whither?
Man. It imports not: I do know
My route full well, and need no further guidance.
C. Hun. Thy garb and gait bespeak thee of high lineage—
One of the many chiefs, whose castled crags
Look o'er the lower valleys—which of these
May call thee lord? I only know their portals;
My way of life leads me but rarely down
To bask by the huge hearths of those old halls,
Carousing with the vassals; but the paths,
Which step from out our mountains to their doors,
I know from childhood—which of these is thine?
Man. No matter.
C. Hun. Well, Sir, pardon me the question,
And be of better cheer. Come, taste my wine;
'Tis of an ancient vintage; many a day
'T has thawed my veins among our glaciers, now
Let it do thus for thine—Come, pledge me fairly!
Man. Away, away! there's blood upon the brim!
Will it then never—never sink in the earth?
C. Hun. What dost thou mean? thy senses wander from thee.

Man. I say 'tis blood—my blood! the pure warm stream
Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
When we were in our youth, and had one heart,
And loved each other as we should not love,
And this was shed: but still it rises up,
Colouring the clouds, that shut me out from Heaven,
Where thou art not—and I shall never be.
C. Hun. Man of strange words, and some half-maddening sin,
Which makes thee people vacancy, whate'er
Thy dread and sufferance be, there's comfort yet—
The aid of holy men, and heavenly patience——
Man. Patience—and patience! Hence—that word was made
For brutes of burthen, not for birds of prey!
Preach it to mortals of a dust like thine,—
I am not of thine order.
C. Hun. Thanks to Heaven!
I would not be of thine for the free fame
Of William Tell; but whatsoe'er thine ill,
It must be borne, and these wild starts are useless.
Man. Do I not bear it?—Look on me—I live.
C. Hun. This is convulsion, and no healthful life.
Man. I tell thee, man! I have lived many years,
Many long years, but they are nothing now
To those which I must number: ages—ages—
Space and eternity—and consciousness,
With the fierce thirst of death—and still unslaked!
C. Hun. Why, on thy brow the seal of middle age
Hath scarce been set; I am thine elder far.
Man. Think'st thou existence doth depend on time?
It doth; but actions are our epochs: mine
Have made my days and nights imperishable,
Endless, and all alike, as sands on the shore,
Innumerable atoms; and one desert,
Barren and cold, on which the wild waves break,
But nothing rests, save carcasses and wrecks,
Rocks, and the salt-surf weeds of bitterness.
C. Hun. Alas! he's mad—but yet I must not leave him.
Man. I would I were—for then the things I see
Would be but a distempered dream.
C. Hun. What is it
That thou dost see, or think thou look'st upon?
Man. Myself, and thee—a peasant of the Alps—
Thy humble virtues, hospitable home,
And spirit patient, pious, proud, and free;
Thy self-respect grafted on innocent thoughts;
Thy days of health, and nights of sleep: thy toils,
By danger dignified, yet guiltless; hopes
Of cheerful old age and a quiet grave,
With cross and garland over its green turf,
And thy grandchildren's love for epitaph!
This do I see—and then I look within—
It matters not—my Soul was scorched already!
C. Hun. And would'st thou then exchange thy lot for mine?
Man. No, friend! I would not wrong thee, nor exchange
My lot with living being: I can bear—
However wretchedly, 'tis still to bear—
In life what others could not brook to dream,
But perish in their slumber.
C. Hun. And with this—
This cautious feeling for another's pain,
Canst thou be black with evil?—say not so.
Can one of gentle thoughts have wreaked revenge
Upon his enemies?
Man. Oh! no, no, no!
My injuries came down on those who loved me—
On those whom I best loved: I never quelled
An enemy, save in my just defence—
But my embrace was fatal.
C. Hun. Heaven give thee rest!
And Penitence restore thee to thyself;
My prayers shall be for thee.
Man. I need them not,
But can endure thy pity. I depart—
'Tis time—farewell!—Here's gold, and thanks for thee—
No words—it is thy due.—Follow me not—
I know my path—the mountain peril's past:
And once again I charge thee, follow not!

[*Exit* MANFRED.

SCENE II.—*A lower Valley in the Alps.—A Cataract.*[1]

Enter MANFRED.

It is not noon—the Sunbow's rays[2] still arch
The torrent with the many hues of heaven,
And roll the sheeted silver's waving column
O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular,
And fling its line of foaming light along,
And to and fro, like the pale courser's tail,
The Giant steed, to be bestrode by Death,
As told in the Apocalypse. No eyes
But mine now drink this sight of loveliness;
I should be sole in this sweet solitude,
And with the Spirit of the place divide
The homage of these waters.—I will call her.

[MANFRED *takes some of the water into the palm of his hand and flings it into the air, muttering the adjuration. After a pause, the* WITCH OF THE ALPS *rises beneath the arch of the sunbow of the torrent.*

Beautiful Spirit! with thy hair of light,
And dazzling eyes of glory, in whose form
The charms of Earth's least mortal daughters grow
To an unearthly stature, in an essence
Of purer elements; while the hues of youth,—
Carnationed like a sleeping Infant's cheek,
Rocked by the beating of her mother's heart,
Or the rose tints, which Summer's twilight leaves
Upon the lofty Glacier's virgin snow,
The blush of earth embracing with her Heaven,—
Tinge thy celestial aspect, and make tame
The beauties of the Sunbow which bends o'er thee.
Beautiful Spirit! in thy calm clear brow,
Wherein is glassed serenity of Soul,
Which of itself shows immortality,
I read that thou wilt pardon to a Son
Of Earth, whom the abstruser powers permit
At times to commune with them—if that he
Avail him of his spells—to call thee thus,
And gaze on thee a moment.

Witch. Son of Earth!
I know thee, and the Powers which give thee power!
I know thee for a man of many thoughts,
And deeds of good and ill, extreme in both,
Fatal and fated in thy sufferings.
I have expected this—what would'st thou with me?

Man. To look upon thy beauty—nothing further.
The face of the earth hath maddened me, and I
Take refuge in her mysteries, and pierce
To the abodes of those who govern her—
But they can nothing aid me. I have sought
From them what they could not bestow, and now
I search no further.

Witch. What could be the quest
Which is not in the power of the most powerful,
The rulers of the invisible?

Man. A boon;—
But why should I repeat it? 'twere in vain.

Witch. I know not that; let thy lips utter it.

Man. Well, though it torture me, 'tis but the same;
My pang shall find a voice. From my youth upwards
My Spirit walked not with the souls of men,
Nor looked upon the earth with human eyes;
The thirst of their ambition was not mine,
The aim of their existence was not mine;
My joys—my griefs—my passions—and my powers,
Made me a stranger; though I wore the form,
I had no sympathy with breathing flesh,
Nor midst the Creatures of Clay that girded me
Was there but One who ——but of her anon.
I said with men, and with the thoughts of men,
I held but slight communion; but instead,
My joy was in the wilderness,—to breathe
The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,
Where the birds dare not build—nor insect's wing
Flit o'er the herbless granite; or to plunge
Into the torrent, and to roll along
On the swift whirl of the new-breaking wave
Of river-stream, or ocean, in their flow.
In these my early strength exulted; or
To follow through the night the moving moon,

[1] [The original of the cataract was the Staubbach; see *Letters*, 1899, iii. 358, 359.]

[2] This iris is formed by the rays of the sun over the lower part of the Alpine torrents: it is exactly like a rainbow come down to pay a visit, and so close that you may walk into it: this effect lasts till noon.

The stars and their development; or catch
The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim;
Or to look, list'ning, on the scattered leaves,
While Autumn winds were at their evening song.
These were my pastimes, and to be alone;
For if the beings, of whom I was one,—
Hating to be so,—crossed me in my path,
I felt myself degraded back to them,
And was all clay again. And then I dived,
In my lone wanderings, to the caves of Death,
Searching its cause in its effect; and drew
From withered bones, and skulls, and heaped up dust,
Conclusions most forbidden. Then I passed
The nights of years in sciences untaught,
Save in the old-time; and with time and toil,
And terrible ordeal, and such penance
As in itself hath power upon the air,
And spirits that do compass air and earth,
Space, and the peopled Infinite, I made
Mine eyes familiar with Eternity,
Such as, before me, did the Magi, and
He who from out their fountain-dwellings raised
Eros and Anteros,[1] at Gadara,
As I do thee;—and with my knowledge grew
The thirst of knowledge, and the power and joy
Of this most bright intelligence, until——

1 The philosopher Jamblicus. The story of the raising of Eros and Anteros may be found in his life by Eunapius. It is well told. ["It is reported of him," says Eunapius, "that while he and his scholars were bathing in the hot baths of Gadara, in Syria, a dispute arising concerning the baths, he, smiling, ordered his disciples to ask the inhabitants, by what names the two lesser springs, that were fairer than the rest, were called. To which the inhabitants replied, that 'the one was called Love, and the other Love's Contrary, but for what reason they knew not.' Upon which Iamblichus, who chanced to be sitting on the fountain's edge where the stream flowed out, put his hand on the water, and, having uttered a few words, called up from the depths of the fountain a fair-skinned lad, not over-tall, whose golden locks fell in sunny curls over his breast and back, so that he looked like one fresh from the bath; and then, going to the other spring, and doing as he had done before, called up another Amoretto like the first, save that his long flowing locks now seemed black, now shot with sunny gleams. Whereupon both the Amoretti nestled and clung round Iamblichus as if they had been his own children"—Eunapii Sardiani *Vitæ Philosophorum et Sophistarum* (28, 29).]

Witch. Proceed.

Man. Oh! I but thus prolonged my words,
Boasting these idle attributes, because
As I approach the core of my heart's grief—
But—to my task. I have not named to thee
Father or mother, mistress, friend, or being,
With whom I wore the chain of human ties;
If I had such, they seemed not such to me—
Yet there was One——

Witch. Spare not thyself—proceed.

Man. She was like me in lineaments—her eyes—
Her hair—her features—all, to the very tone,
Even of her voice, they said were like to mine;
But softened all, and tempered into beauty:
She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind
To comprehend the Universe: nor these
Alone, but with them gentler powers than mine,
Pity, and smiles, and tears—which I had not;
And tenderness—but that I had for her;
Humility—and that I never had.
Her faults were mine—her virtues were her own—
I loved her, and destroyed her!

Witch. With thy hand?

Man. Not with my hand, but heart, which broke her heart;
It gazed on mine, and withered. I have shed
Blood, but not hers—and yet her blood was shed;
I saw—and could not stanch it.

Witch. And for this—
A being of the race thou dost despise—
The order, which thine own would rise above,
Mingling with us and ours,—thou dost forego
The gifts of our great knowledge, and shrink'st back
To recreant mortality——Away!

Man. Daughter of Air! I tell thee, since that hour—
But words are breath—look on me in my sleep,
Or watch my watchings—Come and sit by me!
My solitude is solitude no more,
But peopled with the Furies;—I have gnashed
My teeth in darkness till returning morn,
Then cursed myself till sunset;—I have prayed
For madness as a blessing—'tis denied me.
I have affronted Death—but in the war
Of elements the waters shrunk from me,
And fatal things passed harmless; the cold hand
Of an all-pitiless Demon held me back,
Back by a single hair, which would not break

In Fantasy, Imagination, all
The affluence of my soul—which one day was
A Crœsus in creation—I plunged deep,
But, like an ebbing wave, it dashed me back
Into the gulf of my unfathomed thought.
I plunged amidst Mankind—Forgetfulness
I sought in all, save where 'tis to be found—
And that I have to learn—my Sciences,
My long pursued and superhuman art,
Is mortal here: I dwell in my despair—
And live—and live for ever.
Witch. It may be
That I can aid thee.
Man. To do this thy power
Must wake the dead, or lay me low with them.
Do so—in any shape—in any hour—
With any torture—so it be the last.
Witch. That is not in my province; but if thou
Wilt swear obedience to my will, and do
My bidding, it may help thee to thy wishes.
Man. I will not swear—Obey! and whom? the Spirits
Whose presence I command, and be the slave
Of those who served me—Never!
Witch. Is this all?
Hast thou no gentler answer?—Yet bethink thee,
And pause ere thou rejectest.
Man. I have said it.
Witch. Enough! I may retire then—say!
Man. Retire!

[*The* WITCH *disappears.*

Man. (*alone*). We are the fools of Time and Terror: Days
Steal on us, and steal from us; yet we live,
Loathing our life, and dreading still to die.
In all the days of this detested yoke—
This vital weight upon the struggling heart,
Which sinks with sorrow, or beats quick with pain,
Or joy that ends in agony or faintness—
In all the days of past and future—for
In life there is no present—we can number
How few—how less than few—wherein the soul
Forbears to pant for death, and yet draws back
As from a stream in winter, though the chill
Be but a moment's. I have one resource
Still in my science—I can call the dead,
And ask them what it is we dread to be:
The sternest answer can but be the Grave,
And that is nothing: if they answer not——
The buried Prophet answered to the Hag
Of Endor; and the Spartan Monarch drew
From the Byzantine maid's unsleeping spirit
An answer and his destiny—he slew
That which he loved, unknowing what he slew,
And died unpardoned—though he called in aid
The Phyxian Jove, and in Phigalia roused
The Arcadian Evocators to compel
The indignant shadow to depose her wrath,
Or fix her term of vengeance—she replied
In words of dubious import, but fulfilled.[1]
If I had never lived, that which I love
Had still been living; had I never loved
That which I love would still be beautiful,

[1] The story of Pausanias, king of Sparta (who commanded the Greeks at the battle of Platea, and afterwards perished for an attempt to betray the Lacedæmonians), and Cleonice, is told in Plutarch's life of Cimon; and in the Laconics of Pausanias the sophist in his description of Greece.

[The following is the passage from Plutarch: "It is related that when Pausanias was at Byzantium, he cast his eyes upon a young virgin named Cleonice, of a noble family there, and insisted on having her for a mistress. The parents, intimidated by his power, were under the hard necessity of giving up their daughter. The young woman begged that the light might be taken out of his apartment, that she might go to his bed in secrecy and silence. When she entered he was asleep, and she unfortunately stumbled upon the candlestick, and threw it down. The noise waked him suddenly, and he, in his confusion, thinking it was an enemy coming to assassinate him, unsheathed a dagger that lay by him, and plunged it into the virgin's heart. After this he could never rest. Her image appeared to him every night, and with a menacing tone repeated this heroic verse—

'Go to the fate which pride and lust prepare!'

The allies, highly incensed at this infamous action, joined Cimon to besiege him in Byzantium. But he found means to escape thence; and, as he was still haunted by the spectre, he is said to have applied to a temple at Heraclea, where the *manes* of the dead were consulted. There he invoked the spirit of Cleonice, and entreated her pardon. She appeared, and told him 'he would soon be delivered from all his troubles, after his return to Sparta': in which, it seems, his death was enigmatically foretold." "Thus," adds the translator in a note, "we find that it was a custom in the pagan as well as in the Hebrew theology to conjure up the spirits of the dead, and that the witch of Endor was not the only witch in the world."—Langhorne's *Plutarch*, 1838, p. 339.

The same story is told in the *Periegesis Græciæ*, lib. iii. cap. xvii., but Pausanias adds, "This was the deed from the guilt of which Pausanias could never fly, though he employed all-various purifications, received the deprecations of Jupiter Phyxius, and went to Phigalea to the Arcadian evocators of souls."—(Translation by T. Taylor), 1794, i. 304, 305.]

Happy and giving happiness. What is she?
What is she now?—a sufferer for my sins—
A thing I dare not think upon—or nothing.
Within few hours I shall not call in vain—
Yet in this hour I dread the thing I dare:
Until this hour I never shrunk to gaze
On spirit, good or evil—now I tremble,
And feel a strange cold thaw upon my heart.
But I can act even what I most abhor,
And champion human fears.—The night
approaches. [*Exit.*

Scene III.—*The summit of the Jungfrau Mountain.*

Enter First Destiny.

The Moon is rising broad, and round, and
bright;
And here on snows, where never human foot
Of common mortal trod, we nightly tread,
And leave no traces: o'er the savage sea,
The glassy ocean of the mountain ice,
We skim its rugged breakers, which put on
The aspect of a tumbling tempest's foam
Frozen in a moment—a dead Whirlpool's
image:
And this most steep fantastic pinnacle,
The fretwork of some earthquake—where the
clouds
Pause to repose themselves in passing by—
Is sacred to our revels, or our vigils;
Here do I wait my sisters, on our way
To the Hall of Arimanes—for to-night
Is our great festival—'tis strange they come not.

A Voice without, singing.

The Captive Usurper,
Hurled down from the throne,
Lay buried in torpor,
Forgotten and lone;
I broke through his slumbers,
I shivered his chain,
I leagued him with numbers—
He's Tyrant again!
With the blood of a million he'll answer my care,
With a Nation's destruction—his flight and
despair![1]

[1] [Compare *Napoleon's Farewell*, stanza 3. The "Voice" prophesies that St. Helena will prove a second Elba, and that Napoleon will "live to fight another day."]

Second Voice, without.

The Ship sailed on, the Ship sailed fast,
But I left not a sail, and I left not a mast;
There is not a plank of the hull or the deck,
And there is not a wretch to lament o'er his
wreck;
Save one, whom I held, as he swam, by the
hair,
And he was a subject well worthy my care;
A traitor on land, and a pirate at sea—[1]
But I saved him to wreak further havoc for me

First Destiny, *answering.*

The City lies sleeping;
The morn, to deplore it,
May dawn on it weeping:
Sullenly, slowly,
The black plague flew o'er it—
Thousands lie lowly;
Tens of thousands shall perish;
The living shall fly from
The sick they should cherish;
But nothing can vanquish
The touch that they die from.
Sorrow and anguish,
And evil and dread,
Envelop a nation;
The blest are the dead,
Who see not the sight
Of their own desolation;
This work of a night—
This wreck of a realm—this deed of my doing—
For ages I've done, and shall still be renewing!

Enter the Second *and* Third Destinies.

The Three.

Our hands contain the hearts of men,
Our footsteps are their graves;
We only give to take again
The Spirits of our slaves!

First Des. Welcome!—Where's Nemesis?
Second Des. At some great work;
But what I know not, for my hands were full.
Third Des. Behold she cometh.

Enter Nemesis.

First Des. Say, where hast thou been?
My Sisters and thyself are slow to-night.

[1] [Byron may have had in his mind Thomas Lord Cochrane (1775-1860), "who had done brilliant service in his successive commands—the *Speedy*, *Pallas*, *Impérieuse*, and the flotilla of fire-ships at Basque Roads in 1809." In his Diary, March 10, 1814, he speaks of him as "the stock-jobbing hoaxer" (*Letters*, 1898, ii. 396, *note* 1).]

Nem. I was detained repairing shattered thrones—
Marrying fools, restoring dynasties—
Avenging men upon their enemies,
And making them repent their own revenge;
Goading the wise to madness; from the dull
Shaping out oracles to rule the world
Afresh—for they were waxing out of date,
And mortals dared to ponder for themselves,
To weigh kings in the balance—and to speak
Of Freedom, the forbidden fruit.—Away!
We have outstayed the hour—mount we our clouds! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*The Hall of Arimanes.*[1]—*Arimanes on his Throne, a Globe of Fire, surrounded by the Spirits.*

Hymn of the SPIRITS.

Hail to our Master!—Prince of Earth and Air!
Who walks the clouds and waters—in his hand
The sceptre of the Elements, which tear
Themselves to chaos at his high command!
He breatheth—and a tempest shakes the sea;
He speaketh—and the clouds reply in thunder;
He gazeth—from his glance the sunbeams flee;
He moveth—Earthquakes rend the world asunder.
Beneath his footsteps the Volcanoes rise;
His shadow is the Pestilence: his path
The comets herald through the crackling skies;
And Planets turn to ashes at his wrath.
To him War offers daily sacrifice;
To him Death pays his tribute; Life is his,
With all its Infinite of agonies—
And his the Spirit of whatever is!

Enter the DESTINIES *and* NEMESIS.

First Des. Glory to Arimanes! on the earth
His power increaseth—both my sisters did
His bidding, nor did I neglect my duty!
Second Des. Glory to Arimanes! we who bow
The necks of men, bow down before his throne!
Third Des. Glory to Arimanes! we await
His nod!
Nem. Sovereign of Sovereigns! we are thine,
And all that liveth, more or less, is ours,
And most things wholly so; still to increase
Our power, increasing thine, demands our care,
And we are vigilant. Thy late commands
Have been fulfilled to the utmost.

Enter MANFRED.

A Spirit. What is here?
A mortal!—Thou most rash and fatal wretch,
Bow down and worship!
Second Spirit. I do know the man—
A Magian of great power, and fearful skill!
Third Spirit. Bow down and worship, slave!—What, know'st thou not
Thine and our Sovereign?—Tremble, and obey!
All the Spirits. Prostrate thyself, and thy condemnéd clay,
Child of the Earth! or dread the worst.
Man. I know it;
And yet ye see I kneel not.
Fourth Spirit. 'Twill be taught thee.
Man. 'Tis taught already;—many a night on the earth,
On the bare ground, have I bowed down my face,
And strewed my head with ashes; I have known
The fulness of humiliation—for
I sunk before my vain despair, and knelt
To my own desolation.
Fifth Spirit. Dost thou dare
Refuse to Arimanes on his throne
What the whole earth accords, beholding not
The terror of his Glory?—Crouch! I say.
Man. Bid *him* bow down to that which is above him,
The overruling Infinite—the Maker
Who made him not for worship—let him kneel,
And we will kneel together.
The Spirits. Crush the worm!
Tear him in pieces!—
First Des. Hence! Avaunt!—he's mine.
Prince of the Powers invisible! This man
Is of no common order, as his port
And presence here denote: his sufferings
Have been of an immortal nature—like
Our own; his knowledge, and his powers and will,
As far as is compatible with clay,
Which clogs the ethereal essence, have been such
As clay hath seldom borne; his aspirations
Have been beyond the dwellers of the earth,
And they have only taught him what we know—

[1] [Arimanes, the Aherman of *Vathek*, the Arimanius of Greek and Latin writers, is the Ahriman, the spirit of evil, the counter-creator of the *Zend-Avesta*.]

That knowledge is not happiness, and science
But an exchange of ignorance for that
Which is another kind of ignorance.
This is not all—the passions, attributes
Of Earth and Heaven, from which no power, nor being,
Nor breath from the worm upwards is exempt,
Have pierced his heart; and in their consequence
Made him a thing—which—I who pity not,
Yet pardon those who pity. He is mine—
And thine it may be; be it so, or not—
No other Spirit in this region hath
A soul like his—or power upon his soul.

Nem. What doth he here then?

First Des. Let *him* answer that.

Man. Ye know what I have known; and without power
I could not be amongst ye: but there are
Powers deeper still beyond—I come in quest
Of such, to answer unto what I seek.

Nem. What would'st thou?

Man. *Thou* canst not reply to me.
Call up the dead—my question is for them.

Nem. Great Arimanes, doth thy will avouch
The wishes of this mortal?

Ari. Yea.

Nem. Whom wouldst thou
Uncharnel?

Man. One without a tomb—call up
Astarte.[1]

Nemesis.

Shadow! or Spirit!
Whatever thou art,
Which still doth inherit
The whole or a part
Of the form of thy birth,
Of the mould of thy clay,
Which returned to the earth,
Re-appear to the day!
Bear what thou borest,
The heart and the form,
And the aspect thou worest
Redeem from the worm.
Appear!—Appear!—Appear!
Who sent thee there requires thee here!

[*The Phantom of* Astarte *rises and stands in the midst.*

Man. Can this be death? there's bloom upon her cheek;
But now I see it is no living hue,
But a strange hectic—like the unnatural red
Which Autumn plants upon the perished leaf,
It is the same! Oh, God! that I should dread
To look upon the same—Astarte!—No,
I cannot speak to her—but bid her speak—
Forgive me or condemn me.

Nemesis.

By the Power which hath broken
The grave which enthralled thee,
Speak to him who hath spoken,
Or those who have called thee!

Man. She is silent,
And in that silence I am more than answered.

Nem. My power extends no further. Prince of Air!
It rests with thee alone—command her voice.

Ari. Spirit—obey this sceptre!

Nem. Silent still!
She is not of our order, but belongs
To the other powers. Mortal! thy quest is vain,
And we are baffled also.

Man. Hear me, hear me—
Astarte! my belovéd! speak to me:
I have so much endured—so much endure—
Look on me! the grave hath not changed thee more
Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me
Too much, as I loved thee: we were not made
To torture thus each other—though it were
The deadliest sin to love as we have loved.
Say that thou loath'st me not—that I do bear
This punishment for both—that thou wilt be
One of the blesséd—and that I shall die;
For hitherto all hateful things conspire
To bind me in existence—in a life
Which makes me shrink from Immortality—
A future like the past. I cannot rest.
I know not what I ask, nor what I seek:
I feel but what thou art, and what I am;
And I would hear yet once before I perish
The voice which was my music—speak to me!
For I have called on thee in the still night,
Startled the slumbering birds from the hushed boughs,
And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves
Acquainted with thy vainly echoed name,
Which answered me—many things answered me—
Spirits and men—but thou wert silent all.

[1] [Milton's

"Moonéd Ashtaroth,
Heaven's queen and mother both."]

Yet speak to me! I have outwatched the stars,
And gazed o'er heaven in vain in search of thee.
Speak to me! I have wandered o'er the earth,
And never found thy likeness—Speak to me!
Look on the fiends around—they feel for me:
I fear them not, and feel for thee alone.
Speak to me! though it be in wrath;—but say—
I reck not what—but let me hear thee once—
This once—once more!

Phantom of Astarte. Manfred!

Man. Say on, say on—
I live but in the sound—it is thy voice!

Phan. Manfred! to-morrow ends thine earthly ills.
Farewell!

Man. Yet one word more—am I forgiven?

Phan. Farewell!

Man. Say, shall we meet again?

Phan. Farewell!

Man. One word for mercy! Say thou lovest me.

Phan. Manfred!

[*The Spirit of* ASTARTE *disappears.*

Nem. She's gone, and will not be recalled:
Her words will be fulfilled. Return to the earth.

A Spirit. He is convulsed—This is to be a mortal,
And seek the things beyond mortality.

Another Spirit. Yet, see, he mastereth himself, and makes
His torture tributary to his will.
Had he been one of us, he would have made
An awful Spirit.

Nem. Hast thou further question
Of our great sovereign, or his worshippers?

Man. None.

Nem. Then, for a time, farewell.

Man. We meet then! Where? On the earth?—
Even as thou wilt: and for the grace accorded
I now depart a debtor. Fare ye well!

[*Exit* MANFRED.

(*Scene closes.*)

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Hall in the Castle of Manfred.*

MANFRED *and* HERMAN.

Man. What is the hour?

Her. It wants but one till sunset,
And promises a lovely twilight.

Man. Say,
Are all things so disposed of in the tower
As I directed?

Her. All, my Lord, are ready:
Here is the key and casket.

Man. It is well:
Thou mayst retire.

[*Exit* HERMAN.

Man. (*alone.*) There is a calm upon me—
Inexplicable stillness! which till now
Did not belong to what I knew of life.
If that I did not know Philosophy
To be of all our vanities the motliest,
The merest word that ever fooled the ear
From out the schoolman's jargon, I should deem
The golden secret, the sought "Kalon," found,
And seated in my soul. It will not last,
But it is well to have known it, though but once:
It hath enlarged my thoughts with a new sense,
And I within my tablets would note down
That there is such a feeling. Who is there?

Re-enter HERMAN.

Her. My Lord, the Abbot of St. Maurice craves
To greet your presence.

Enter the ABBOT OF ST. MAURICE.[1]

Abbot. Peace be with Count Manfred!

Man. Thanks, holy father! welcome to these walls;
Thy presence honours them, and blesseth those
Who dwell within them.

Abbot. Would it were so, Count!—
But I would fain confer with thee alone.

Man. Herman, retire.—What would my reverend guest?

Abbot. Thus, without prelude:—Age and zeal—my office—
And good intent must plead my privilege;
Our near, though not acquainted neighbourhood,
May also be my herald. Rumours strange,
And of unholy nature, are abroad,
And busy with thy name—a noble name
For centuries: may he who bears it now

[1] [St. Maurice is in the Rhone valley, some sixteen miles from Villeneuve. The abbey (now occupied by Augustinian monks) was founded in the fourth century, and endowed by Sigismund, King of Burgundy.]

Transmit it unimpaired!
Man. Proceed,—I listen.
Abbot. 'Tis said thou holdest converse with the things
Which are forbidden to the search of man;
That with the dwellers of the dark abodes,
The many evil and unheavenly spirits
Which walk the valley of the Shade of Death,
Thou communest. I know that with mankind,
Thy fellows in creation, thou dost rarely
Exchange thy thoughts, and that thy solitude
Is as an Anchorite's—were it but holy.
Man. And what are they who do avouch these things?
Abbot. My pious brethren — the scared peasantry—
Even thy own vassals—who do look on thee
With most unquiet eyes. Thy life's in peril!
Man. Take it.
Abbot. I come to save, and not destroy:
I would not pry into thy secret soul;
But if these things be sooth, there still is time
For penitence and pity: reconcile thee
With the true church, and through the church to Heaven.
Man. I hear thee. This is my reply—whate'er
I may have been, or am, doth rest between
Heaven and myself—I shall not choose a mortal
To be my mediator—Have I sinned
Against your ordinances? prove and punish!
Abbot. My son! I did not speak of punishment,
But penitence and pardon;—with thyself
The choice of such remains—and for the last,
Our institutions and our strong belief
Have given me power to smooth the path from sin
To higher hope and better thoughts; the first
I leave to Heaven,—"Vengeance is mine alone!"
So saith the Lord, and with all humbleness
His servant echoes back the awful word.
Man. Old man! there is no power in holy men,
Nor charm in prayer, nor purifying form
Of penitence, nor outward look, nor fast,
Nor agony—nor, greater than all these,
The innate tortures of that deep Despair,
Which is Remorse without the fear of Hell,
But all in all sufficient to itself
Would make a hell of Heaven—can exorcise
From out the unbounded spirit the quick sense
Of its own sins—wrongs—sufferance—and revenge
Upon itself; there is no future pang
Can deal that justice on the self-condemned
He deals on his own soul.
Abbot. All this is well;
For this will pass away, and be succeeded
By an auspicious hope, which shall look up
With calm assurance to that blessed place,
Which all who seek may win, whatever be
Their earthly errors, so they be atoned:
And the commencement of atonement is
The sense of its necessity. Say on—
And all our church can teach thee shall be taught;
And all we can absolve thee shall be pardoned.
Man. When Rome's sixth Emperor[1] was near his last,
The victim of a self-inflicted wound,
To shun the torments of a public death
From senates once his slaves, a certain soldier,
With show of loyal pity, would have stanched
The gushing throat with his officious robe;
The dying Roman thrust him back, and said—
Some empire still in his expiring glance—
"It is too late—is this fidelity?"
Abbot. And what of this?
Man. I answer with the Roman—
"It is too late!"
Abbot. It never can be so,
To reconcile thyself with thy own soul,
And thy own soul with Heaven. Hast thou no hope?
'Tis strange—even those who do despair above,
Yet shape themselves some fantasy on earth,
To which frail twig they cling, like drowning men.
Man. Aye—father! I have had those early visions,
And noble aspirations in my youth,
To make my own the mind of other men,
The enlightener of nations; and to rise
I knew not whither—it might be to fall;
But fall, even as the mountain-cataract,
Which having leapt from its more dazzling height,
Even in the foaming strength of its abyss,
(Which casts up misty columns that become
Clouds raining from the re-ascended skies,)[2]
Lies low but mighty still.—But this is past,

[1] [Nero.]
[2] [A reminiscence of the clouds of spray from the Fall of the Staubbach, which, in certain aspects, appear to be springing upwards from the bed of the waterfall.]

My thoughts mistook themselves.
Abbot. And wherefore so?
Man. I could not tame my nature down; for he
Must serve who fain would sway; and soothe, and sue,
And watch all time, and pry into all place,
And be a living Lie, who would become
A mighty thing amongst the mean — and such
The mass are; I disdained to mingle with
A herd, though to be leader—and of wolves.
The lion is alone, and so am I.
Abbot. And why not live and act with other men?
Man. Because my nature was averse from life;
And yet not cruel; for I would not make,
But find a desolation. Like the Wind,
The red-hot breath of the most lone Simoom,
Which dwells but in the desert, and sweeps o'er
The barren sands which bear no shrubs to blast,
And revels o'er their wild and arid waves,
And seeketh not, so that it is not sought,
But being met is deadly,—such hath been
The course of my existence; but there came
Things in my path which are no more.
Abbot. Alas!
I 'gin to fear that thou art past all aid
From me and from my calling; yet so young,
I still would——
Man. Look on me! there is an order
Of mortals on the earth, who do become
Old in their youth, and die ere middle age,
Without the violence of warlike death;
Some perishing of pleasure—some of study—
Some worn with toil, some of mere weariness,—
Some of disease—and some insanity—
And some of withered, or of broken hearts;
For this last is a malady which slays
More than are numbered in the lists of Fate,
Taking all shapes, and bearing many names.
Look upon me! for even of all these things
Have I partaken; and of all these things
One were enough; then wonder not that I
Am what I am, but that I ever was,
Or having been, that I am still on earth.
Abbot. Yet, hear me still——
Man. Old man! I do respect
Thine order, and revere thine years; I deem
Thy purpose pious, but it is in vain:
Think me not churlish; I would spare thyself,
Far more than me, in shunning at this time
All further colloquy—and so—farewell.
[*Exit* MANFRED.
Abbot. This should have been a noble creature: he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled; as it is,
It is an awful chaos—Light and Darkness—
And mind and dust—and passions and pure thoughts
Mixed, and contending without end or order,—
All dormant or destructive. He will perish—
And yet he must not—I will try once more,
For such are worth redemption; and my duty
Is to dare all things for a righteous end.
I'll follow him—but cautiously, though surely.
[*Exit* ABBOT.

SCENE II.—*Another Chamber.*

MANFRED *and* HERMAN.

Her. My lord, you bade me wait on you at sunset:
He sinks behind the mountain.
Man. Doth he so?
I will look on him.
[MANFRED *advances to the Window of the Hall.*
Glorious Orb! the idol
Of early nature, and the vigorous race
Of undiseased mankind, the giant sons[1]
Of the embrace of Angels, with a sex
More beautiful than they, which did draw down
The erring Spirits who can ne'er return.—
Most glorious Orb! that wert a worship, ere
The mystery of thy making was revealed!
Thou earliest minister of the Almighty,
Which gladdened, on their mountain tops, the hearts
Of the Chaldean shepherds, till they poured
Themselves in orisons! Thou material God!
And representative of the Unknown—
Who chose thee for his shadow! Thou chief Star!
Centre of many stars! which mak'st our earth
Endurable, and temperest the hues

[1] "And it came to pass, that the *Sons of God* saw the daughters of men, that they were fair," etc.—"There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the *Sons of God* came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown."—*Genesis*, ch. vi. verses 2 and 4.

And hearts of all who walk within thy rays!
Sire of the seasons! Monarch of the climes,
And those who dwell in them! for near or far,
Our inborn spirits have a tint of thee
Even as our outward aspects;—thou dost rise,
And shine, and set in glory. Fare thee well!
I ne'er shall see thee more. As my first glance
Of love and wonder was for thee, then take
My latest look: thou wilt not beam on one
To whom the gifts of life and warmth have been
Of a more fatal nature. He is gone—
I follow. [*Exit* Manfred.

Scene III.—*The Mountains—The Castle of Manfred at some distance—A Terrace before a Tower.—Time, Twilight.*

Herman, Manuel, *and other dependants of* Manfred.

Her. 'Tis strange enough! night after night, for years,
He hath pursued long vigils in this tower,
Without a witness. I have been within it,—
So have we all been oft-times; but from it,
Or its contents, it were impossible
To draw conclusions absolute, of aught
His studies tend to. To be sure, there is
One chamber where none enter: I would give
The fee of what I have to come these three years,
To pore upon its mysteries.
Manuel. 'Twere dangerous;
Content thyself with what thou know'st already.
Her. Ah! Manuel! thou art elderly and wise,
And couldst say much; thou hast dwelt within the castle—
How many years is't?
Manuel. Ere Count Manfred's birth,
I served his father, whom he nought resembles.
Her. There be more sons in like predicament!
But wherein do they differ?
Manuel. I speak not
Of features or of form, but mind and habits;
Count Sigismund was proud, but gay and free,—
A warrior and a reveller; he dwelt not
With books and solitude, nor made the night
A gloomy vigil, but a festal time,
Merrier than day; he did not walk the rocks
And forests like a wolf, nor turn aside
From men and their delights.
Her. Beshrew the hour,
But those were jocund times! I would that such
Would visit the old walls again; they look
As if they had forgotten them.
Manuel. These walls
Must change their chieftain first. Oh! I have seen
Some strange things in them, Herman.
Her. Come, be friendly;
Relate me some to while away our watch:
I've heard thee darkly speak of an event
Which happened hereabouts, by this same tower.
Manuel. That was a night indeed! I do remember
'Twas twilight, as it may be now, and such
Another evening:—yon red cloud, which rests
On Eigher's pinnacle, so rested then,—
So like that it might be the same; the wind
Was faint and gusty, and the mountain snows
Began to glitter with the climbing moon;
Count Manfred was, as now, within his tower,—
How occupied, we knew not, but with him
The sole companion of his wanderings
And watchings—her, whom of all earthly things
That lived, the only thing he seemed to love,—
As he, indeed, by blood was bound to do,
The Lady Astarte, his——
Hush! who comes here?

Enter the Abbot.

Abbot. Where is your master?
Her. Yonder in the tower.
Abbot. I must speak with him.
Manuel. 'Tis impossible;
He is most private, and must not be thus
Intruded on.
Abbot. Upon myself I take
The forfeit of my fault, if fault there be—
But I must see him.
Her. Thou hast seen him once
This eve already.
Abbot. Herman! I command thee,
Knock, and apprize the Count of my approach.
Her. We dare not.

Abbot. Then it seems I must be herald
Of my own purpose.
Manuel. Reverend father, stop—
I pray you pause.
Abbot. Why so?
Manuel. But step this way,
And I will tell you further. [*Exeunt.*

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 'twere 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.
'Twas such a night!
'Tis strange that I recall it at this time;
But I have found our thoughts take wildest flight
Even at the moment when they should array
Themselves in pensive order.

Enter the ABBOT.

Abbot. My good Lord!
I crave a second grace for this approach;
But yet let not my humble zeal offend
By its abruptness—all it hath of ill
Recoils on me; its good in the effect
May light upon your head—could I say *heart*—
Could I touch *that*, with words or prayers, I should
Recall a noble spirit which hath wandered,
But is not yet all lost.
Man. Thou know'st me not;
My days are numbered, and my deeds recorded:
Retire, or 'twill be dangerous—Away!
Abbot. Thou dost not mean to menace me?
Man. Not I!
I simply tell thee peril is at hand,
And would preserve thee.
Abbot. What dost thou mean?
Man. Look there!
What dost thou see?
Abbot. Nothing.
Man. Look there, I say,
And steadfastly;—now tell me what thou see'st?
Abbot. That which should shake me,—but I fear it not:
I see a dusk and awful figure rise,
Like an infernal god, from out the earth;
His face wrapt in a mantle, and his form
Robed as with angry clouds: he stands between
Thyself and me—but I do fear him not.
Man. Thou hast no cause—he shall not harm thee—but

His sight may shock thine old limbs into palsy.
I say to thee—Retire!
Abbot. And I reply—
Never—till I have battled with this fiend:—
What doth he here?
Man. Why—aye—what doth he here?
I did not send for him,—he is unbidden.
Abbot. Alas! lost Mortal! what with guests like these
Hast thou to do? I tremble for thy sake:
Why doth he gaze on thee, and thou on him?
Ah! he unveils his aspect: on his brow
The thunder-scars are graven; from his eye
Glares forth the immortality of Hell—
Avaunt!—
Man. Pronounce—what is thy mission?
Spirit. Come!
Abbot. What art thou, unknown being? answer!—speak!
Spirit. The genius of this mortal.—Come! 'tis time.
Man. I am prepared for all things, but deny
The Power which summons me. Who sent thee here?
Spirit. Thou'lt know anon—Come! come!
Man. I have commanded
Things of an essence greater far than thine,
And striven with thy masters. Get thee hence!
Spirit. Mortal! thine hour is come—Away! I say.
Man. I knew, and know my hour is come, but not
To render up my soul to such as thee:
Away! I'll die as I have lived—alone.
Spirit. Then I must summon up my brethren.—Rise!
[*Other Spirits rise up.*
Abbot. Avaunt! ye evil ones!—Avaunt! I say,—
Ye have no power where Piety hath power,
And I do charge ye in the name—
Spirit. Old man!
We know ourselves, our mission and thine order;
Waste not thy holy words on idle uses—
It were in vain: this man is forfeited.
Once more—I summon him—Away! Away!
Man. I do defy ye,—though I feel my soul
Is ebbing from me, yet I do defy ye;
Nor will I hence, while I have earthly breath
To breathe my scorn upon ye—earthly strength
To wrestle, though with spirits; what ye take
Shall be ta'en limb by limb.
Spirit. Reluctant mortal!
Is this the Magian who would so pervade
The world invisible, and make himself
Almost our equal? Can it be that thou
Art thus in love with life? the very life
Which made thee wretched?
Man. Thou false fiend, thou liest!
My life is in its last hour,—*that* I know,
Nor would redeem a moment of that hour;
I do not combat against Death, but thee
And thy surrounding angels; my past power
Was purchased by no compact with thy crew,
But by superior science—penance, daring,
And length of watching, strength of mind, and skill
In knowledge of our Fathers—when the earth
Saw men and spirits walking side by side,
And gave ye no supremacy: I stand
Upon my strength—I do defy—deny—
Spurn back, and scorn ye!—
Spirit. But thy many crimes
Have made thee——
Man. What are they to such as thee?
Must crimes be punished but by other crimes,
And greater criminals?—Back to thy hell!
Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel;
Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know:
What I have done is done; I bear within
A torture which could nothing gain from thine:
The Mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts,—
Is its own origin of ill and end—
And its own place and time: its innate sense,
When stripped of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without,
But is absorbed in sufferance or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.
Thou didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not tempt me;
I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey—
But was my own destroyer, and will be
My own hereafter.—Back, ye baffled fiends!
The hand of Death is on me—but not yours!
[*The Demons disappear.*
Abbot. Alas! how pale thou art—thy lips are white—
And thy breast heaves—and in thy gasping throat

The accents rattle: Give thy prayers to
Heaven—
Pray—albeit but in thought,—but die not thus.
Man. 'Tis over—my dull eyes can fix thee
not;
But all things swim around me, and the earth
Heaves as it were beneath me. Fare thee
well—
Give me thy hand.
Abbot. Cold—cold—even to the heart—
But yet one prayer—Alas! how fares it with
thee?
Man. Old man! 'tis not so difficult to die.
[MANFRED *expires.*
Abbot. He's gone—his soul hath ta'en its
earthless flight;
Whither? I dread to think—but he is gone.

THE LAMENT OF TASSO.[1]

ADVERTISEMENT.

AT Ferrara, in the Library, are preserved the original MSS. of Tasso's Gerusalemme and of Guarini's Pastor Fido, with letters of Tasso, one from Titian to Ariosto, and the inkstand and chair, the tomb and the house, of the latter. But, as misfortune has a greater interest for posterity, and little or none for the cotemporary, the cell where Tasso was confined in the hospital of St. Anna attracts a more fixed attention than the residence or the monument of Ariosto —at least it had this effect on me. There are two inscriptions, one on the outer gate, the second over the cell itself, inviting, unnecessarily, the wonder and the indignation of the spectator. Ferrara is much decayed and depopulated: the castle still exists entire; and I saw the court where Parisina and Hugo were beheaded, according to the annal of Gibbon.

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[1] [The MS. of the *Lament of Tasso* is dated April 20, 1817. The poem was published, June 17, 1817.]

I.

LONG years!—It tries the thrilling frame to
bear
And eagle-spirit of a Child of Song—
Long years of outrage—calumny—and wrong;
Imputed madness, prisoned solitude,
And the Mind's canker in its savage mood,
When the impatient thirst of light and air
Parches the heart; and the abhorréd grate,
Marring the sunbeams with its hideous shade,
Works through the throbbing eyeball to the
brain,
With a hot sense of heaviness and pain;
And bare, at once, Captivity displayed
Stands scoffing through the never-opened gate,
Which nothing through its bars admits, save
day,
And tasteless food, which I have eat alone
Till its unsocial bitterness is gone;
And I can banquet like a beast of prey,
Sullen and lonely, couching in the cave
Which is my lair, and—it may be—my grave.
All this hath somewhat worn me, and may wear,
But must be borne. I stoop not to despair;
For I have battled with mine agony,
And made me wings wherewith to overfly
The narrow circus of my dungeon wall,
And freed the Holy Sepulchre from thrall;
And revelled among men and things divine,
And poured my spirit over Palestine,
In honour of the sacred war for Him,
The God who was on earth and is in Heaven,
For He has strengthened me in heart and limb.
That through this sufferance I might be
forgiven,
I have employed my penance to record
How Salem's shrine was won, and how adored.

II.

But this is o'er—my pleasant task is done:—
My long sustaining Friend of many years!
If I do blot thy final page with tears,
Know, that my sorrows have wrung from me
none.
But Thou, my young creation! my Soul's
child!
Which ever playing round me came and smiled,
And wooed me from myself with thy sweet
sight,
Thou too art gone—and so is my delight:

[1] [Tasso's imprisonment in the Hospital of Sant' Anna lasted from March, 1579, to July, 1586. The *Gerusalemme* had been finished many years before.]

And therefore do I weep and inly bleed
With this last bruise upon a broken reed.
Thou too art ended—what is left me now?
For I have anguish yet to bear—and how?
I know not that—but in the innate force
Of my own spirit shall be found resource.
I have not sunk, for I had no remorse,
Nor cause for such: they called me mad—
and why?
Oh Leonora! wilt not *thou* reply?
I was indeed delirious in my heart
To lift my love so lofty as thou art;
But still my frenzy was not of the mind:
I knew my fault, and feel my punishment
Not less because I suffer it unbent.
That thou wert beautiful, and I not blind,
Hath been the sin which shuts me from
mankind;
But let them go, or torture as they will,
My heart can multiply thine image still:
Successful Love may sate itself away;
The wretchéd are the faithful; 'tis their fate
To have all feeling, save the one, decay,
And every passion into one dilate,
As rapid rivers into Ocean pour;
But ours is fathomless, and hath no shore.

III.

Above me, hark! the long and maniac cry
Of minds and bodies in captivity.
And hark! the lash and the increasing howl,
And the half-inarticulate blasphemy!
There be some here with worse than frenzy foul,
Some who do still goad on the o'er-laboured
mind,
And dim the little light that's left behind
With needless torture, as their tyrant Will
Is wound up to the lust of doing ill:
With these and with their victims am I classed;
'Mid sounds and sights like these long years
have passed;
'Mid sights and sounds like these my life may
close:
So let it be—for then I shall repose.

IV.

I have been patient, let me be so yet;
I had forgotten half I would forget,
But it revives—Oh! would it were my lot
To be forgetful as I am forgot!—
Feel I not wroth with those who bade me dwell
In this vast Lazar-house of many woes?
Where laughter is not mirth, nor thought the
mind,
Nor words a language, nor ev'n men mankind;
Where cries reply to curses, shrieks to blows,
And each is tortured in his separate hell—
For we are crowded in our solitudes—
Many, but each divided by the wall,
Which echoes madness in her babbling moods,
While all can hear, none heed his neighbour's
call—
None! save that One, the veriest wretch of all,
Who was not made to be the mate of these,
Nor bound between Distraction and Disease.
Feel I not wroth with those who placed me
here?
Who have debased me in the minds of men,
Debarring me the usage of my own,
Blighting my life in best of its career,
Branding my thoughts as things to shun and
fear?
Would I not pay them back these pangs again,
And teach them inward Sorrow's stifled groan?
The struggle to be calm, and cold distress,
Which undermines our Stoical success?
No!—still too proud to be vindictive—I
Have pardoned Princes' insults, and would die.
Yes, Sister of my Sovereign! for thy sake
I weed all bitterness from out my breast,
It hath no business where *thou* art a guest:
Thy brother hates—but I can not detest;
Thou pitiest not—but I can not forsake.

V.

Look on a love which knows not to despair,
But all unquenched is still my better part,
Dwelling deep in my shut and silent heart,
As dwells the gathered lightning in its cloud,
Encompassed with its dark and rolling shroud,
Till struck,—forth flies the all-ethereal dart!
And thus at the collision of thy name
The vivid thought still flashes through my
frame,
And for a moment all things as they were
Flit by me;—they are gone—I am the same.
And yet my love without ambition grew;
I knew thy state—my station—and I knew
A Princess was no love-mate for a bard:[1]
I told it not—I breathed it not—it was

[1] [It is highly improbable that Tasso openly indulged, or secretly nourished, a consuming passion for Leonora d'Este, and it is certain that the "Sister of his Sovereign" had nothing to do with his being shut up in the Hospital of Sant' Anna. That poet and princess had known each

Sufficient to itself, its own reward;
And if my eyes revealed it, they, alas!
Were punished by the silentness of thine,
And yet I did not venture to repine.
Thou wert to me a crystal-girded shrine,
Worshipped at holy distance, and around
Hallowed and meekly kissed the saintly ground;
Not for thou wert a Princess, but that Love
Had robed thee with a glory, and arrayed
Thy lineaments in beauty that dismayed—
Oh! not dismayed—but awed, like One above!
And in that sweet severity there was
A something which all softness did surpass—
I know not how—thy Genius mastered mine—
My Star stood still before thee:—if it were
Presumptuous thus to love without design,
That sad fatality hath cost me dear;
But thou art dearest still, and I should be
Fit for this cell, which wrongs me—but for *thee*.
The very love which locked me to my chain
Hath lightened half its weight; and for the rest,
Though heavy, lent me vigour to sustain,
And look to thee with undivided breast,
And foil the ingenuity of Pain.

VI.

It is no marvel—from my very birth
My soul was drunk with Love,—which did pervade
And mingle with whate'er I saw on earth:
Of objects all inanimate I made
Idols, and out of wild and lonely flowers,
And rocks, whereby they grew, a Paradise,
Where I did lay me down within the shade
Of waving trees, and dreamed uncounted hours,
Though I was chid for wandering; and the Wise
Shook their white agéd heads o'er me, and said
Of such materials wretched men were made,
And such a truant boy would end in woe,
And that the only lesson was a blow;
And then they smote me, and I did not weep,
But cursed them in my heart, and to my haunt
Returned and wept alone, and dreamed again
The visions which arise without a sleep.
And with my years my soul began to pant
With feelings of strange tumult and soft pain;
And the whole heart exhaled into One Want,
But undefined and wandering, till the day
I found the thing I sought—and that was thee;
And then I lost my being, all to be
Absorbed in thine;—the world was past away;—
Thou didst annihilate the earth to me!

VII.

I loved all Solitude—but little thought
To spend I know not what of life, remote
From all communion with existence, save
The maniac and his tyrant;—had I been
Their fellow, many years ere this had seen
My mind like theirs corrupted to its grave.
But who hath seen me writhe, or heard me rave?
Perchance in such a cell we suffer more
Than the wrecked sailor on his desert shore;
The world is all before him—*mine* is *here*,
Scarce twice the space they must accord my bier.
What though *he* perish, he may lift his eye,
And with a dying glance upbraid the sky;
I will not raise my own in such reproof,
Although 'tis clouded by my dungeon roof.

VIII.

Yet do I feel at times my mind decline,
But with a sense of its decay:—I see
Unwonted lights along my prison shine,
And a strange Demon,[1] who is vexing me
With pilfering pranks and petty pains, below
The feeling of the healthful and the free;
But much to One, who long hath suffered so,
Sickness of heart, and narrowness of place,
And all that may be borne, or can debase.

other for over thirteen years, that the princess was seven years older than the poet, and, in March, 1579, close upon forty-two years of age, are points to be considered; but the fact that she died in February, 1581, and that Tasso remained in confinement for five years longer, is a stronger argument against the truth of the legend. She was a beautiful woman, his patroness and benefactress, and the theme of sonnets and canzoni; but it was not for her "sweet sake" that Tasso lost either his wits or his liberty.]

[1] [In a letter to Maurizio Cataneo, dated December 25, 1585, Tasso gives an account of his sprite (*folletto*): "The little thief has stolen from me many crowns. . . . He puts all my books topsy-turvy (*mi mette tutti i libri sottosopra*), opens my chest and steals my keys, so that I can keep nothing." Again, December 30, with regard to his hallucinations he says, "Know then that in addition to the wonders of the Folletto . . . I have many nocturnal alarms. For even when awake I have seemed to behold small flames in the air, and sometimes my eyes sparkle in such a manner, that I dread the loss of sight, and I have . . . seen sparks issue from them."—Letters 454, 456, *Le Lettere*, 1853, ii. 475, 479.]

I thought mine enemies had been but Man,
But Spirits may be leagued with them—all Earth
Abandons — Heaven forgets me; — in the dearth
Of such defence the Powers of Evil can—
It may be—tempt me further,—and prevail
Against the outworn creature they assail.
Why in this furnace is my spirit proved,
Like steel in tempering fire? because I loved?
Because I loved what not to love, and see,
Was more or less than mortal, and than me.

IX.

I once was quick in feeling—that is o'er;—
My scars are callous, or I should have dashed
My brain against these bars, as the sun flashed
In mockery through them;—If I bear and bore
The much I have recounted, and the more
Which hath no words,—'t is that I would not die
And sanction with self-slaughter the dull lie
Which snared me here, and with the brand of shame
Stamp Madness deep into my memory,
And woo Compassion to a blighted name,
Sealing the sentence which my foes proclaim.
No—it shall be immortal!—and I make
A future temple of my present cell,
Which nations yet shall visit for my sake.
While thou, Ferrara! when no longer dwell
The ducal chiefs within thee, shalt fall down,
And crumbling piecemeal view thy hearthless halls,
A Poet's wreath shall be thine only crown,—
A Poet's dungeon thy most far renown,
While strangers wonder o'er thy unpeopled walls!
And thou, Leonora! — thou — who wert ashamed
That such as I could love—who blushed to hear
To less than monarchs that thou couldst be dear,
Go! tell thy brother, that my heart, untamed
By grief—years—weariness—and it may be
A taint of that he would impute to me—
From long infection of a den like this,
Where the mind rots congenial with the abyss,—
Adores thee still;—and add—that when the towers
And battlements which guard his joyous hours
Of banquet, dance, and revel, are forgot,
Or left untended in a dull repose,
This—this—shall be a consecrated spot!
But *Thou*—when all that Birth and Beauty throws
Of magic round thee is extinct—shalt have
One half the laurel which o'ershades my grave.
No power in death can tear our names apart,
As none in life could rend thee from my heart.
Yes, Leonora! it shall be our fate
To be entwined for ever—but too late!

BEPPO:[1]

A VENETIAN STORY.

Rosalind. Farewell, Monsieur Traveller; Look, you lisp, and wear strange suits: disable all the benefits of your own country; be out of love with your Nativity, and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are; or I will scarce think you have swam in a *Gondola.*

—*As You Like It*, act iv. sc. 1, lines 33-35.

Annotation of the Commentators.

That is, *been at Venice*, which was much visited by the young English gentlemen of those times, and was *then* what *Paris* is *now*—the seat of all dissoluteness.—S. A.

[The initials S. A. (Samuel Ayscough) are not attached to this note, but to another note on the same page (see *Dramatic Works* of William Shakespeare, 1807, i. 242).]

I.

'Tis known, at least it should be, that throughout
All countries of the Catholic persuasion,
Some weeks before Shrove Tuesday comes about,
The People take their fill of recreation,
And buy repentance, ere they grow devout,
However high their rank, or low their station,
With fiddling, feasting, dancing, drinking, masquing,
And other things which may be had for asking.

1 [*Beppo* was written in the Autumn (Sept. 6—Oct. 12) of 1817, and published, February 28, 1818. Byron admitted that the metre (the *ottava rima* of the Italians) and style of *Beppo* was "after the excellent manner" of John Hookham Frere's *jeu d'esprit* generally known as *Whistlecraft*, but entitled *Prospectus and Specimen of an Intended National Work* by William and Robert Whistlecraft, London. 1817.]

II.

The moment night with dusky mantle covers
The skies (and the more duskily the better),
The Time less liked by husbands than by lovers
Begins, and Prudery flings aside her fetter;
And Gaiety on restless tiptoe hovers,
Giggling with all the gallants who beset her;
And there are songs and quavers, roaring, humming,
Guitars, and every other sort of strumming.

III.

And there are dresses splendid, but fantastical,
Masks of all times and nations, Turks and Jews,
And harlequins and clowns, with feats gymnastical,
Greeks, Romans, Yankee-doodles, and Hindoos;
All kinds of dress, except the ecclesiastical,
All people, as their fancies hit, may choose,
But no one in these parts may quiz the Clergy,—
Therefore take heed, ye Freethinkers! I charge ye.

IV.

You'd better walk about begirt with briars,
Instead of coat and small clothes, than put on
A single stitch reflecting upon friars,
Although you swore it only was in fun;
They'd haul you o'er the coals, and stir the fires
Of Phlegethon with every mother's son,
Nor say one mass to cool the cauldron's bubble
That boiled your bones, unless you paid them double.

V.

But saving this, you may put on whate'er
You like by way of doublet, cape, or cloak,
Such as in Monmouth-street, or in Rag Fair,
Would rig you out in seriousness or joke;
And even in Italy such places are,
With prettier name in softer accents spoke,
For, bating Covent Garden, I can hit on
No place that's called "Piazza" in Great Britain.

VI.

This feast is named the Carnival, which being
Interpreted, implies "farewell to flesh"—
So called, because the name and thing agreeing,
Through Lent they live on fish both salt and fresh.
But why they usher Lent with so much glee in,
Is more than I can tell, although I guess
'Tis as we take a glass with friends at parting,
In the Stage-Coach or Packet, just at starting.

VII.

And thus they bid farewell to carnal dishes,
And solid meats, and highly spiced ragouts,
To live for forty days on ill-dressed fishes,
Because they have no sauces to their stews;
A thing which causes many "poohs" and "pishes,"
And several oaths (which would not suit the Muse),
From travellers accustomed from a boy
To eat their salmon, at the least, with soy;

VIII.

And therefore humbly I would recommend
"The curious in fish-sauce," before they cross
The sea, to bid their cook, or wife, or friend,
Walk or ride to the Strand, and buy in gross
(Or if set out beforehand, these may send
By any means least liable to loss),
Ketchup, Soy, Chili-vinegar, and Harvey,
Or, by the Lord! a Lent will well nigh starve ye;

IX.

That is to say, if your religion's Roman,
And you at Rome would do as Romans do,
According to the proverb,—although no man,
If foreign, is obliged to fast; and you,
If Protestant, or sickly, or a woman,
Would rather dine in sin on a ragout—
Dine and be d—d! I don't mean to be coarse,
But that's the penalty, to say no worse.

X.

Of all the places where the Carnival
Was most facetious in the days of yore,
For dance, and song, and serenade, and ball,
And Masque, and Mime, and Mystery, and more
Than I have time to tell now, or at all,
Venice the bell from every city bore,—
And at the moment when I fix my story,
That sea-born city was in all her glory.

XI.

They've pretty faces yet, those same Venetians,
Black eyes, arched brows, and sweet expressions still;
Such as of old were copied from the Grecians,
In ancient arts by moderns mimicked ill;

And like so many Venuses of Titian's
(The best's at Florence—see it, if ye will,)
They look when leaning over the balcony,
Or stepped from out a picture by Giorgione,

XII.

Whose tints are Truth and Beauty at their best;
And when you to Manfrini's palace go,
That picture (howsoever fine the rest)
Is loveliest to my mind of all the show;
It may perhaps be also to *your* zest,
And that's the cause I rhyme upon it so:
'Tis but a portrait of his Son, and Wife,
And self; but *such* a Woman! Love in Life![1]

XIII.

Love in full and length, not love ideal,
No, nor ideal beauty, that fine name,
But something better still, so very real,
That the sweet Model must have been the same;
A thing that you would purchase, beg, or steal,
Wer't not impossible, besides a shame:
The face recalls some face, as 'twere with pain,
You once have seen, but ne'er will see again;

XIV.

One of those forms which flit by us, when we
Are young, and fix our eyes on every face;
And, oh! the Loveliness at times we see
In momentary gliding, the soft grace,
The Youth, the Bloom, the Beauty which agree,
In many a nameless being we retrace,
Whose course and home we knew not, nor shall know,
Like the lost Pleiad seen no more below.

XV.

I said that like a picture by Giorgione
Venetian women were, and so they *are*,
Particularly seen from a balcony,
(For beauty's sometimes best set off afar)
And there, just like a heroine of Goldoni,[1]
They peep from out the blind, or o'er the bar;
And truth to say, they're mostly very pretty,
And rather like to show it, more's the pity!

XVI.

For glances beget ogles, ogles sighs,
Sighs wishes, wishes words, and words a letter,
Which flies on wings of light-heeled Mercuries,
Who do such things because they know no better;
And then, God knows what mischief may arise,
When Love links two young people in one fetter,
Vile assignations, and adulterous beds,
Elopements, broken vows, and hearts, and heads.

XVII.

Shakespeare described the sex in Desdemona
As very fair, but yet suspect in fame,
And to this day from Venice to Verona
Such matters may be probably the same,
Except that since those times was never known a
Husband whom mere suspicion could inflame
To suffocate a wife no more than twenty,
Because she had a "Cavalier Servente."

XVIII.

Their jealousy (if they are ever jealous)
Is of a fair complexion altogether,
Not like that sooty devil of Othello's
Which smothers women in a bed of feather,
But worthier of these much more jolly fellows,
When weary of the matrimonial tether
His head for such a wife no mortal bothers,
But takes at once another, or *another's*.

1 [The picture which caught Byron's fancy was the so-called *Famiglia di Giorgione*, which was removed from the Manfrini Palace in 1856, and is now in the Palazzo Giovanelli. It represents "an almost nude woman, probably a gipsy, seated with a child in her lap, and a standing warrior gazing upon her, a storm breaking over the landscape."—*Handbook of Painting*, by Austen H. Layard, 1891, part ii. p. 553.]

[According to Vasari and others, Giorgione (Giorgio Barbarelli, b. 1478) was never married. He died of the plague, A.D. 1511.]

1 [Carlo Goldoni (1707-1793). His play, *Belisarius*, was first performed November 24, 1734; *Le Bourru Bienfaisant*, November 4, 1771. *La Bottega del Caffè*, *La Locandiera*, *etc.*, still hold the stage.]

XIX.

Didst ever see a Gondola? For fear
You should not, I'll describe it you exactly:
'Tis a long covered boat that's common here,
Carved at the prow, built lightly, but compactly,
Rowed by two rowers, each called "Gondolier,"
It glides along the water looking blackly,
Just like a coffin clapt in a canoe,
Where none can make out what you say or do.

XX.

And up and down the long canals they go,
And under the Rialto[1] shoot along,
By night and day, all paces, swift or slow,
And round the theatres, a sable throng,
They wait in their dusk livery of woe,—
But not to them do woeful things belong,
For sometimes they contain a deal of fun,
Like mourning coaches when the funeral's done.

XXI.

But to my story.—'Twas some years ago,
It may be thirty, forty, more or less,
The Carnival was at its height, and so
Were all kinds of buffoonery and dress;
A certain lady went to see the show,
Her real name I know not, nor can guess,
And so we'll call her Laura, if you please,
Because it slips into my verse with ease.

XXII.

She was not old, nor young, nor at the years
Which certain people call a "*certain age*,"
Which yet the most uncertain age appears,
Because I never heard, nor could engage
A person yet by prayers, or bribes, or tears,
To name, define by speech, or write on page,
The period meant precisely by that word,—
Which surely is exceedingly absurd.

[1] ["An English abbreviation. Rialto is the name, not of the bridge, but of the island from which it is called; and the Venetians say, *Il ponte di Rialto*, as we say Westminster Bridge." Note to the *Brides of Venice*, *Poems*, by Samuel Rogers, 1852, ii. 88, 89.]

XXIII.

Laura was blooming still, had made the best
Of Time, and Time returned the compliment,
And treated her genteelly, so that, dressed,
She looked extremely well where'er she went;
A pretty woman is a welcome guest,
And Laura's brow a frown had rarely bent;
Indeed, she shone all smiles, and seemed to flatter
Mankind with her black eyes for looking at her.

XXIV.

She was a married woman; 'tis convenient,
Because in Christian countries 'tis a rule
To view their little slips with eyes more lenient;
Whereas if single ladies play the fool,
(Unless within the period intervenient
A well-timed wedding makes the scandal cool)
I don't know how they ever can get over it.
Except they manage never to discover it.

XXV.

Her husband sailed upon the Adriatic,
And made some voyages, too, in other seas,
And when he lay in Quarantine for pratique[1]
(A forty days' precaution 'gainst disease),
His wife would mount, at times, her highest attic,
For thence she could discern the ship with ease:
He was a merchant trading to Aleppo,
His name Giuseppe, called more briefly, Beppo.[2]

XXVI.

He was a man as dusky as a Spaniard,
Sunburnt with travel, yet a portly figure;
Though coloured, as it were, within a tan-yard,
He was a person both of sense and vigour—
A better seaman never yet did man yard;
And she, although her manner showed no rigour,
Was deemed a woman of the strictest principle,
So much as to be thought almost invincible.

[1] [A clean bill of health after quarantine.]
[2] Beppo is the "Joe" of the Italian Joseph.

XXVII.

But several years elapsed since they had met;
Some people thought the ship was lost, and some
That he had somehow blundered into debt,
And did not like the thought of steering home;
And there were several offered any bet,
Or that he would, or that he would not come;
For most men (till by losing rendered sager)
Will back their own opinions with a wager.

XXVIII.

'Tis said that their last parting was pathetic,
As partings often are, or ought to be,
And their presentiment was quite prophetic,
That they should never more each other see,
(A sort of morbid feeling, half poetic,
Which I have known occur in two or three,)
When kneeling on the shore upon her sad knee
He left this Adriatic Ariadne.

XXIX.

And Laura waited long, and wept a little,
And thought of wearing weeds, as well she might;
She almost lost all appetite for victual,
And could not sleep with ease alone at night;
She deemed the window-frames and shutters brittle
Against a daring housebreaker or sprite,
And so she thought it prudent to connect her
With a vice-husband, *chiefly* to *protect her*.

XXX.

She chose, (and what is there they will not choose,
If only you will but oppose their choice?)
Till Beppo should return from his long cruise,
And bid once more her faithful heart rejoice,
A man some women like, and yet abuse—
A Coxcomb was he by the public voice;
A Count of wealth, they said, as well as quality,
And in his pleasures of great liberality.

XXXI.

And then he was a Count, and then he knew
Music, and dancing, fiddling, French and Tuscan;
The last not easy, be it known to you,
For few Italians speak the right Etruscan.
He was a critic upon operas, too,
And knew all niceties of sock and buskin;
And no Venetian audience could endure a
Song, scene, or air, when he cried "seccatura!"[1]

XXXII.

His "bravo" was decisive, for that sound
Hushed "Academie" sighed in silent awe;
The fiddlers trembled as he looked around,
For fear of some false note's detected flaw;
The "Prima Donna's" tuneful heart would bound,
Dreading the deep damnation of his "Bah!"
Soprano, Basso, even the Contra-Alto,
Wished him five fathom under the Rialto.

XXXIII.

He patronised the Improvisatori,
Nay, could himself extemporise some stanzas,
Wrote rhymes, sang songs, could also tell a story,
Sold pictures, and was skilful in the dance as
Italians can be, though in this their glory
Must surely yield the palm to that which France has;
In short, he was a perfect Cavaliero
And to his very valet seemed a hero.[2]

XXXIV.

Then he was faithful too, as well as amorous;
So that no sort of female could complain,
Although they're now and then a little clamorous,
He never put the pretty souls in pain;

1 ["Some of the Italians liked him [a famous improvisatore], others called his performance '*seccatura*' (a devilish good word, by the way), and all Milan was in controversy about him."—Letter to Moore, November 6, 1816, *Letters*, 1899, iii. 384.]

2 [The saying, "Il n'y a point de héros pour son valet de chambre," is attributed to Maréchal (Nicholas) Catinat (1637-1712). His biographer speaks of presenting "*le héros en dêshabillé.*" (See his *Mémoires*, 1819, ii. 118.)]

His heart was one of those which most
enamour us,
Wax to receive, and marble to retain:
He was a lover of the good old school,
Who still become more constant as they cool.

XXXV.

No wonder such accomplishments should turn
A female head, however sage and steady—
With scarce a hope that Beppo could return,
In law he was almost as good as dead, he
Nor sent, nor wrote, nor showed the least
concern,
And she had waited several years already:
And really if a man won't let us know
That he's alive, he's *dead*—or should be so.

XXXVI.

Besides, within the Alps, to every woman,
(Although, God knows, it is a grievous sin,)
'Tis, I may say, permitted to have *two* men;
I can't tell who first brought the custom in,
But "Cavalier Serventes" are quite common
And no one notices or cares a pin;
And we may call this (not to say the worst)
A *second* marriage which corrupts the *first*.

XXXVII.

The word was formerly a "Cicisbeo,"[1]
But *that* is now grown vulgar and indecent;
The Spaniards call the person a "*Cortejo*,"[2]
For the same mode subsists in Spain,
though recent;
In short it reaches from the Po to Teio,
And may perhaps at last be o'er the sea sent:
But Heaven preserve Old England from such
courses!
Or what becomes of damage and divorces?

[1] [The origin of the word is obscure. According to the *Vocab. della Crusca*, "cicisbeo" is an inversion of "bel cece," beautiful chick (pea). Pasqualino, cited by Diez, says it is derived from the French *chiche beau*.—*N. Eng. Dict.*, art. "Cicisbeo."]

[2] Cortejo is pronounced Corte*h*o, with an aspirate, according to the Arabesque guttural. It means what there is as yet no precise name for in England, though the practice is as common as in any tramontane country whatever.

XXXVIII.

However, I still think, with all due deference
To the fair *single* part of the creation,
That married ladies should preserve the
preference
In *tête à tête* or general conversation—
And this I say without peculiar reference
To England, France, or any other nation—
Because they know the world, and are at ease,
And being natural, naturally please.

XXXIX.

'Tis true, your budding Miss is very charming,
But shy and awkward at first coming out,
So much alarmed, that she is quite alarming,
All Giggle, Blush—half Pertness, and half
Pout;
And glancing at *Mamma*, for fear there's
harm in
What you, she, it, or they, may be about:
The Nursery still lisps out in all they utter—
Besides, they always smell of bread and butter.

XL.

But "Cavalier Servente" is the phrase
Used in politest circles to express
This supernumerary slave, who stays
Close to the lady as a part of dress,
Her word the only law which he obeys.
His is no sinecure, as you may guess;
Coach, servants, gondola, he goes to call,
And carries fan and tippet, gloves and shawl.

XLI.

With all its sinful doings, I must say,
That Italy's a pleasant place to me,
Who love to see the Sun shine every day,
And vines (not nailed to walls) from tree
to tree
Festooned, much like the back scene of a play,
Or melodrame, which people flock to see,
When the first act is ended by a dance
In vineyards copied from the south of France.

XLII.

I like on Autumn evenings to ride out,
Without being forced to bid my groom
be sure
My cloak is round his middle strapped about,
Because the skies are not the most secure;
I know too that, if stopped upon my route,
Where the green alleys windingly allure,
Reeling with *grapes* red wagons choke the
way,—
In England 'twould be dung, dust, or a dray.

XLIII.

I also like to dine on becaficas,
To see the Sun set, sure he'll rise to-morrow,
Not through a misty morning twinkling weak as
A drunken man's dead eye in maudlin sorrow,
But with all Heaven t'himself; the day will break as
Beauteous as cloudless, nor be forced to borrow
That sort of farthing candlelight which glimmers
Where reeking London's smoky cauldron simmers.

XLIV.

I love the language, that soft bastard Latin,
Which melts like kisses from a female mouth,
And sounds as if it should be writ on satin,
With syllables which breathe of the sweet South,
And gentle liquids gliding all so pat in,
That not a single accent seems uncouth,
Like our harsh northern whistling, grunting guttural,
Which we're obliged to hiss, and spit, and sputter all.

XLV.

I like the women too (forgive my folly!),
From the rich peasant cheek of ruddy bronze,
And large black eyes that flash on you a volley
Of rays that say a thousand things at once,
To the high Dama's brow, more melancholy,
But clear, and with a wild and liquid glance,
Heart on her lips, and soul within her eyes,
Soft as her clime, and sunny as her skies.

XLVI.

Eve of the land which still is Paradise!
Italian Beauty didst thou not inspire
Raphael, who died in thy embrace, and vies
With all we know of Heaven, or can desire,
In what he hath bequeathed us?—in what guise
Though flashing from the fervour of the Lyre,
Would *words* describe thy past and present glow,
While yet Canova can create below?[1]

[1] ["(In talking thus, the writer, more especially
Of women, would be understood to say,
He speaks as a Spectator, not officially,
And always, Reader, in a modest way;
Perhaps, too, in no very great degree shall he
Appear to have offended in this lay,
Since, as all know, without the Sex, our Sonnets
Would seem unfinished, like their untrimmed bonnets.)
"(Signed) PRINTER'S DEVIL."]

XLVII.

"England! with all thy faults I love thee still,"[1]
I said at Calais, and have not forgot it;
I like to speak and lucubrate my fill;
I like the government (but that is not it);
I like the freedom of the press and quill;
I like the Habeas Corpus (when we've got it);
I like a Parliamentary debate,
Particularly when 'tis not too late;

XLVIII.

I like the taxes, when they're not too many;
I like a seacoal fire, when not too dear;
I like a beef-steak, too, as well as any;
Have no objection to a pot of beer;
I like the weather,—when it is not rainy,
That is, I like two months of every year.
And so God save the Regent, Church, and King!
Which means that I like all and every thing.

XLIX.

Our standing army, and disbanded seamen,
Poor's rate, Reform, my own, the nation's debt,
Our little riots, just to show we're free men,
Our trifling bankruptcies in the Gazette,
Our cloudy climate, and our chilly women,
All these I can forgive, and those forget,
And greatly venerate our recent glories,
And wish they were not owing to the Tories.

L.

But to my tale of Laura,—for I find
Digression is a sin, that by degrees
Becomes exceeding tedious to my mind,
And, therefore, may the reader too displease—
The gentle reader, who may wax unkind,
And caring little for the Author's ease,
Insist on knowing what he means—a hard
And hapless situation for a Bard.

LI.

Oh! that I had the art of easy writing
What should be easy reading! could I scale
Parnassus, where the Muses sit inditing
Those pretty poems never known to fail,
How quickly would I print (the world delighting)
A Grecian, Syrian,[2] or *Ass*yrian tale;

[1] [*The Task*, by William Cowper, ii. 206. Compare *The Farewell*, line 27, by Charles Churchill—
"Be England what she will,
With all her faults, she is my Country still."]

[2] [The allusion is to Gally Knight's *Ilderim*, a Syrian Tale.]

And sell you, mixed with western Sentimentalism,
Some samples of the *finest Orientalism.*

LII.

But I am but a nameless sort of person,
(A broken Dandy lately on my travels)
And take for rhyme, to hook my rambling verse on,
The first that Walker's Lexicon unravels,
And when I can't find that, I put a worse on,
Not caring as I ought for critics' cavils;
I've half a mind to tumble down to prose,
But verse is more in fashion—so here goes!

LIII.

The Count and Laura made their new arrangement,
Which lasted, as arrangements sometimes do,
For half a dozen years without estrangement;
They had their little differences, too;
Those jealous whiffs, which never any change meant;
In such affairs there probably are few
Who have not had this pouting sort of squabble,
From sinners of high station to the rabble.

LIV.

But, on the whole, they were a happy pair,
As happy as unlawful love could make them;
The gentleman was fond, the lady fair,
Their chains so slight, 'twas not worth while to break them:
The World beheld them with indulgent air;
The pious only wished "the Devil take them!"
He took them not; he very often waits,
And leaves old sinners to be young ones' baits.

LV.

But they were young: Oh! what without our Youth
Would Love be! What would Youth be without Love!
Youth lends its joy, and sweetness, vigour, truth,
Heart, soul, and all that seems as from above;
But, languishing with years, it grows uncouth—
One of few things Experience don't improve;
Which is, perhaps, the reason why old fellows
Are always so preposterously jealous.

LVI.

It was the Carnival, as I have said
Some six and thirty stanzas back, and, so,
Laura the usual preparations made,
Which you do when your mind's made up to go
To-night to Mrs. Boehm's masquerade,[1]
Spectator, or partaker in the show;
The only difference known between the cases
Is—*here*, we have six weeks of "varnished faces."

LVII.

Laura, when dressed, was (as I sang before)
A pretty woman as was ever seen,
Fresh as the Angel o'er a new inn door,
Or frontispiece of a new Magazine,
With all the fashions which the last month wore,
Coloured, and silver paper leaved between
That and the title-page, for fear the Press
Should soil with parts of speech the parts of dress.

LVIII.

They went to the Ridotto; 'tis a hall
Where People dance, and sup, and dance again;
Its proper name, perhaps, were a masqued ball,
But that's of no importance to my strain;
'Tis (on a smaller scale) like our Vauxhall,
Excepting that it can't be spoilt by rain;
The company is "mixed" (the phrase I quote is
As much as saying, they're below your notice);

LIX.

For a "mixed company" implies that, save
Yourself and friends, and half a hundred more,
Whom you may bow to without looking grave,
The rest are but a vulgar set, the bore
Of public places, where they basely brave
The fashionable stare of twenty score
Of well-bred persons, called "*The World*"; but I,
Although I know them, really don't know why.

[1] [The *Morning Chronicle* of June 17, 1817, reports at length "MRS. BOEHM'S GRAND MASQUERADE." Mrs. Boehm was the widow of a West Indian merchant, a millionairess, and on more or less intimate terms with the Royal Family.]