

[64 original: rewritten at Egerton 2027 f.49v.]
**Childe Harold with that chief held colloquy,
 Yet what they spake, it boots not to repeat,²³⁷
 Converse may little charm strange ear, or eye; –
 Four days he rested in that spacious seat
 Of Moslem luxury,²³⁸ the choice retreat
 Of sated Grandeur from the city's noise,
 And were it humbler, it in sooth were sweet;
 But Peace abhorreth artificial joys,
 And Pleasure, leagued with Pomp, the zest of both destroys. –²³⁹**

65.

Fierce are Albania's children, yet they lack
 Not virtues, were those virtues more mature,
 Where is the foe that ever saw their back?
 Who can so well the toil of war endure? 580
 Their native fastnesses not more secure
 Than they in doubtful time of troublous need:
 Their wrath how deadly! but their friendship sure,
 When Gratitude or Valour bids them bleed,
 Unshaken rushing on where'er their chief may lead. 585

66.

Childe Harold saw them in their chieftain's tower
 Thronging to war in splendour and success;
 And after viewed them, when, within their power,
 Himself awhile the victim of distress;
 That saddening hour when bad men hotlier press: 590
 But these did shelter him beneath their roof,
 When less barbarians would have cheered him less,
 And fellow-countrymen have stood aloof – *
 In aught that tries the heart how few withstand the proof!

* Alluding to the wreckers of Cornwall.

67.²⁴⁰

It chanced that adverse winds once drove his bark 595
 Full on the coast of Suli's shaggy shore,
 When all around was desolate and dark,²⁴¹
 To land was perilous, to sojourn more;
 Yet for a while the mariners forbore,
 Dubious to trust where treachery might lurk: 600
 At length they ventured forth, though doubting sore
 That those who loathe alike the Frank and Turk
 Might once again renew their ancient butcher-work.

237: See Appendix 3.

238: Perhaps indecent.

239: Text edited from Erdman/Worrall 139.

240: The adventure described here happened on November 8th – 9th 1809.

241: Compare *Stanzas to Augusta* (1816), line 1: *When all around grew drear and dark*

68.

Vain fear! the Suliotes stretched the welcome hand,
 Led them o'er rocks and past the dangerous swamp, 605
 Kinder than polished slaves though not so bland,
 And piled the hearth, and wrung their garments damp,
 And filled the bowl, and trimmed the cheerful lamp,
 And spread their fare; though homely, all they had:
 Such conduct bears Philanthropy's rare stamp – 610
 To rest the weary and to soothe the sad,
 Doth lesson happier men, and shames at least the bad.

69.

It came to pass, that when he did address
 Himself to quit at length this mountain-land,
 Combined marauders half-way barred egress, 615
 And wasted far and near with glaive and brand;
 And therefore did he take a trusty band²⁴²
 To traverse Acarnania's forest wide,
 In war well seasoned, and with labours tanned,
 Till he did greet white Achelous' tide, 620
 And from his further bank Ætolia's woods espied.

70.

Where lone Utraikey forms its circling cove,
 And weary waves retire to gleam at rest,
 How brown the foliage of the green hill's grove,
 Nodding at midnight o'er the calm bay's breast, 625
 As winds come lightly whispering from the west,
 Kissing, not ruffling, the blue deep's serene: –
 Here Harold was received a welcome guest;
 Nor did he pass unmoved the gentle scene,
 For many a joy could he from Night's soft presence glean. 630

71.

On the smooth shore the night-fires brightly blazed,
 The feast was done, the red wine circling fast, *
 And he that unawares had there ygazed
 With gaping wonderment had stared aghast;
 For ere night's midmost, stillest hour was past, 635
 The native revels of the troop began;
 Each Palikar his sabre from him cast, †
 And bounding hand in hand, man linked to man,
 Yelling their uncouth dirge, long danced the kirtled clan.

* The Albanian Musselmans do not abstain from wine, and indeed very few of the others.

† Palikar, shortened when addressed to a single person, from Παλικαρι, a general name for a soldier amongst the Greeks and Albinese who speak Romaic – it means properly “a lad.”²⁴³

²⁴²: Having been entertained by Ali Pacha, B. was given by him a fifty-strong bodyguard (“a trusty band”) to escort him back to the Gulf of Corinth; but the poem makes it sound as though he recruited the band himself.

²⁴³: A definition from Pouqueville, *Voyages en Morée*, III 20.

72.

Childe Harold at a long distance stood²⁴⁴ 640
 And viewed, but not displeased, the revelrie,
 Nor hated harmless mirth, however rude:
 In sooth it was no vulgar sight to see
 Their barbarous, yet their not indecent, glee;²⁴⁵
 And as the flames along their faces gleamed, 645
 Their gestures nimble, dark eyes flashing free,
 The long wild locks that to their girdles streamed,
 While thus in concert they this half sang, half screamed.²⁴⁶

I

Tambourgi! Tambourgi! thy 'larum afar *
 Gives hope to the valiant, and promise of war; 650
 All the sons of the mountains arise at the note,
 Chimariot, Illyrian, and dark Suliote!

II

Oh! who is more brave than a dark Suliote,
 In his snowy camise and his shaggy capote?
 To the wolf and the vulture he leaves his wild flock, 655
 And descends to the plain like the stream from the rock.²⁴⁷

III

Shall the sons of Chimari, who never forgive
 The fault of a friend, bid an enemy live?
 Let those guns so unerring such vengeance forego?
 What mark is so fair as the breast of a foe? 660

IV

Macedonia sends forth her invincible race;
 For a time they abandon the cave and the chase;
 But those scarfs of blood-red shall be redder, before
 The sabre is sheathed and the battle is o'er.

244: Harold is not mentioned in the poem again.

245: Such condescension ill befits one who was "Sore given to revel and ungodly glee" (I, 15 above).

246: H.'s diary entry for Tuesday, November 14th 1809, goes in part: We had with us, from Prevesa, including Captain Lato and Vasily, thirty-seven soldiers, and the scene at night-time was not a little picturesque, a goat being roasted whole for the Albanians. They assembled in four parties round as many fires, and the night being fine they sung and danced to their songs round the largest blaze after their manner. Several of these songs turned on the exploits of robbers, one beginning thus 'When we set sail a band of thieves from Parga – we were in number eighty-two.' κλεπτεϊς ποτε Παργα! κλεπτεϊς ποτε Παργα! ['Robbers all at Parga! Robbers all at Parga!'] Indeed, we afterwards learnt that the most polished *Boli Basha* amongst them had been, only four years ago, a most formidable thief, commanding nearly two hundred men in the mountains of Hepacto, which, it seems, was also the condition of His Highness [*that is, Ali Pacha*] once, who began the world, at the death of the last Pacha for lower Albania, with, as he says, sixty *parasi*. This night, including the guard of the place, our company amounted to sixty-seven people."

247: Anticipates *The Destruction of Semnacherib* from *Hebrew Melodies*.