

[MANFRED *expires.*]

ABBOT He's gone—his soul hath ta'en its earthless flight—
Whither? I dread to think—but he is gone.

1816-17

1817

Don juan Byron began his masterpiece (pronounced in the English fashion, *Don Joo-nn*) in July 1818, published it in installments beginning with cantos 1 and 2 in 1819, and continued working on it almost until his death. Initially he improvised the poem from episode to episode. "I *have* no plan," he said, "I *had* no plan; but I had or have materials." The work was composed with remarkable speed (the 888 lines of canto 13, for example, were dashed off within a week), and it aims at the effect of improvisation rather than of artful compression; it asks to be read rapidly, at a conversational pace.

The poem breaks off with the sixteenth canto, but even in its unfinished state *Don Juan* is the longest satirical poem, and indeed one of the longest poems of any kind, in English. Its hero, the Spanish libertine, had in the original legend been superhuman in his sexual energy and wickedness. Throughout Byron's version the unspoken but persistent joke is that this archetypal lady-killer of European legend is in fact more acted upon than active. Unfailingly amiable and well intentioned, he is guilty largely of youth, charm, and a courteous and compliant spirit. The women do all the rest.

The chief models for the poem were the Italian seriocomic versions of medieval chivalric romances; the genre had been introduced by Pulci in the fifteenth century and was adopted by Ariosto in his *Orlando Furioso* (1532). From these writers Byron caught the mixed moods and violent oscillations between the sublime and the ridiculous as well as the colloquial management of the complex ottava rima—an eight-line stanza in which the initial interlaced rhymes (*ahahab*) build up to the comic turn in the final couplet (cc). Byron was influenced in the English use of this Italian form by a mildly amusing poem published in 1817, under the pseudonym of "Whistlecraft," by his friend John Hookham Frere. Other recognizable antecedents of *Don Juan* are Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas*, both of which had employed the naive traveler as a satiric device, and Laurence Sterne's novel *Tristram Shandy*, with its comic exploitation of a narrative medium blatantly subject to the whimsy of the author. But even the most original literary works play variations on inherited conventions. Shelley at once recognized his friend's poem as "something wholly new and relative to the age."

Byron's literary advisers thought the poem unacceptably immoral, and John Murray took the precaution of printing the first two installments (cantos 1–2, then 3–5) without identifying Byron as the author or himself as the publisher. The eleven completed cantos that followed were, because of Murray's continuing jitters, brought out in 1823–24 by the radical publisher John Hunt. In those cantos Byron's purpose deepened. He set out to create a comic yet devastatingly critical history of the Europe of his own age, sending the impressionable Juan from West to East and back again, from his native Spain to a Russian court (by way of a primitive Greek island and the 1790 siege of the Turkish town of Ismail) and then into the English gentry's country manors. These journeys, which facilitated Byron's satire on almost all existing forms of political organization, would, according to the scheme that he projected for the poem as a whole, ultimately have taken Juan to a death by guillotining in Revolutionary France.

Yet the controlling element of *Don Juan* is not the narrative but the narrator. His running commentary on Juan's misadventures, his reminiscences, and his opinionated remarks on the epoch of political reaction in which he is actually telling Juan's

story together add another level to the poem's engagement with history. The narrator's reflections also at the same time lend unity to *Don Juan's* effervescent variety. Tellingly, the poem opens with the first-person pronoun and immediately lets us into the storyteller's predicament: "I want a hero. . . ." The voice then goes on, for almost two thousand stanzas, with effortless volubility and shifts of mood. The poet who in his brilliant successful youth created the gloomy Byronic hero, in his later and sadder life created a character (not the hero, but the narrator of *Don Juan*) who is one of the great comic inventions in English literature.

FROM DON JUAN

Fragment¹

I would to Heaven that I were so much Clay –
As I am blood – bone – marrow, passion – feeling –
Because at least the past were past away –
And for the future – (but I write this reeling
5 Having got drunk exceedingly to day
So that I seem to stand upon the ceiling)
I say – the future is a serious matter –
And so – for Godsake – Hock² and Soda water.

From Canto 1

[JUAN AND DONNA JULIA]

I

I want a hero: an uncommon want,
When every year and month sends forth a new one,
Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant,
The age discovers he is not the true one;
5 Of such as these I should not care to vaunt,
I'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan,
We all have seen him in the pantomime¹
Sent to the devil, somewhat ere his time.

5

Brave men were living before Agamemnon²
And since, exceeding valorous and sage,
35 A good deal like him too, though quite the same none;
But then they shone not on the poet's page,

1. This stanza was written on the back of a page of the manuscript of canto 1. For the author's revisions while composing two stanzas of *Don Juan*, see "Poems in Process," in the appendices to this volume.
2. A white Rhine wine, from the German *Hoch-*

heimer.

1. The Juan legend was a popular subject in English pantomime.

2. In Homer's *Iliad* the king commanding the Greeks in the siege of Troy. This line is translated from a Latin ode by Horace.

And so have been forgotten—I condemn none,
But can't find any in the present age
Fit for my poem (that is, for my new one);
40 So, as I said, I'll take my friend Don Juan.

6

Most epic poets plunge in "*medias res*,"³
(Horace makes this the heroic turnpike road)⁴
And then your hero tells, whene'er you please,
What went before—by way of episode,
45 While seated after dinner at his ease,
Beside his mistress in some soft abode,
Palace, or garden, paradise, or cavern,
Which serves the happy couple for a tavern.

7

That is the usual method, but not mine—
50 My way is to begin with the beginning;
The regularity of my design
Forbids all wandering as the worst of sinning,
And therefore I shall open with a line
(Although it cost me half an hour in spinning)
55 Narrating somewhat of Don Juan's father,
And also of his mother, if you'd rather.

8

In Seville was he born, a pleasant city,
Famous for oranges and women—he
Who has not seen it will be much to pity,
60 So says the proverb—and I quite agree;
Of all the Spanish towns is none more pretty,
Cadiz perhaps—but that you soon may see:—
Don Juan's parents lived beside the river,
A noble stream, and call'd the Guadalquivir.

9

65 His father's name was Jose⁵—*Don*, of course,
A true Hidalgo,⁰ free from every stain
Of Moor or Hebrew blood, he traced his source
Through the most Gothic gentlemen of Spain;
A better cavalier ne'er mounted horse,
70 Or, being mounted, e'er got down again,
Than Jose, who begot our hero, who
Begot—but that's to come Well, to renew:

noble man

10

His mother was a learned lady, famed
For every branch of every science known—
75 In every christian language ever named,
With virtues equall'd by her wit alone,
She made the cleverest people quite ashamed,

3. Into the middle of things (Latin; Horace's *Art of Poetry*, 148).

4. I.e., the smoothest road for heroic poetry.

5. Normally "Jose"; Byron transferred the accent to keep his meter.

672 / GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

And even the good with inward envy groan,
Finding themselves so very much exceeded
80 In their own way by all the things that she did.

11

Her memory was a mine: she knew by heart
All Calderon and greater part of Lope,⁶
So that if any actor miss'd his part
She could have served him for the prompter's copy;
85 For her Feinagle's⁷ were an useless art,
And he himself obliged to shut up shop – he
Could never make a memory so fine as
That which adorn'd the brain of Donna Inez.

12

Her favourite science was the mathematical,
90 Her noblest virtue was her magnanimity,
Her wit (she sometimes tried at wit) was Attic⁸ all,
Her serious sayings darken'd to sublimity;
In short, in all things she was fairly what I call
A prodigy – her morning dress was dimity,⁰ *cotton*
95 Her evening silk, or, in the summer, muslin,
And other stuffs, with which I won't stay puzzling.

!3

She knew the Latin – that is, "the Lord's prayer,"
And Greek – the alphabet – I'm nearly sure;
She read some French romances here and there,
100 Although her mode of speaking was not pure;
For native Spanish she had no great care,
At least her conversation was obscure;
Her thoughts were theorems, her words a problem,
As if she deem'd that mystery would ennoble 'em.

a ≐ *

22

'Tis pity learned virgins ever wed
170 With persons of no sort of education,
Or gentlemen, who, though well-born and bred,
Grow tired of scientific conversation:
I don't choose to say much upon this head,
I'm a plain man, and in a single station,
175 But – Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,
Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd you all?

23

Don Jose and his lady quarrell'd – *why*,
Not any of the many could divine,
Though several thousand people chose to try,

6. Calderon de la Barea and Lope de Vega, the great Spanish dramatists of the early 17th century.
7. Gregor von Feinagle, a German expert on the art of memory, who had lectured in England in

1811.
8. Athenian. *Attic salt* is a term for the famed wit of the Athenians.

180 'Twas surely no concern of theirs nor mine;
I loathe that low vice curiosity,
But if there's any thing in which I shine
'Tis in arranging all my friends' affairs.
Not having, of my own, domestic cares.

24

is? And so I interfered, and with the best
Intentions, but their treatment was not kind;
I think the foolish people were possess'd,
For neither of them could I ever find,
Although their porter afterwards confess'd—
190 But that's no matter, and the worst's behind,
For little Juan o'er me threw, down stairs,
A pail of housemaid's water unawares.

25

A little curly-headed, good-for-nothing,
And mischief-making monkey from his birth;
195 His parents ne'er agreed except in doting
Upon the most unquiet imp on earth;
Instead of quarrelling, had they been but both in
Their senses, they'd have sent young master forth
To school, or had him soundly whipp'd at home,
200 To teach him manners for the time to come.

26

Don Jose and the Donna Inez led
For some time an unhappy sort of life,
Wishing each other, not divorced, but dead;
They lived respectably as man and wife,
205 Their conduct was exceedingly well-bred,
And gave no outward signs of inward strife,
Until at length the smother'd fire broke out,
And put the business past all kind of doubt.

27

For Inez call'd some druggists and physicians,
210 And tried to prove her loving lord was *mad*,⁹
But as he had some lucid intermissions,
She next decided he was only *bad*;
Yet when they ask'd her for her depositions,
No sort of explanation could be had,
215 Save that her duty both to man and God
Required this conduct—which seem'd very odd.

28

She kept a journal, where his faults were noted,
And open'd certain trunks of books and letters,
All which might, if occasion served, be quoted;

9. Lady Byron had thought her husband might be insane and sought medical advice on the matter. This and other passages obviously allude to his wife, although Byron insisted that Donna Inez was

not intended to be a caricature of Lady Byron. In her determination to preserve her son's innocence, Donna Inez also shares traits with Byron's mother.

674 / GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

220 And then she had all Seville for abettors,
Besides her good old grandmother (who doted);
The hearers of her case became repeaters,
Then advocates, inquisitors, and judges,
Some for amusement, others for old grudges.

29

225 And then this best and meekest woman bore
With such serenity her husband's woes,
Just as the Spartan ladies did of yore,
Who saw their spouses kill'd, and nobly chose
Never to say a word about them more –
230 Calmly she heard each calumny that rose,
And saw *his* agonies with such sublimity,
That all the world exclaim'd "What magnanimity!"

32

Their friends had tried at reconciliation,
250 Then their relations, who made matters worse;
('Twere hard to say upon a like occasion
To whom it may be best to have recourse –
I can't say much for friend or yet relation):
The lawyers did their utmost for divorce,
255 But scarce a fee was paid on either side
Before, unluckily, Don Jose died.

33

He died: and most unluckily, because,
According to all hints I could collect
From counsel learned in those kinds of laws,
260 (Although their talk's obscure and circumspect)
His death contrived to spoil a charming cause;⁰ *law case*
A thousand pities also with respect
To public feeling, which on this occasion
Was manifested in a great sensation.

37.

Dying intestate,⁰ Juan was sole heir *without a will*
290 To a chancery suit, and messuages,¹ and lands,
Which, with a long minority and care,
Promised to turn out well in proper hands:
Inez became sole guardian, which was fair,
And answer'd but to nature's just demands;
295 An only son left with an only mother
Is brought up much more wisely than another.

1. Houses and the adjoining lands. "Chancery suit": a case in what was then the highest English court, notorious for its delays.

Sagest of women, even of widows, she
Resolved that Juan should be quite a paragon,
And worthy of the noblest pedigree:
300 (His sire was of Castile, his dam from Arragon).
Then for accomplishments of chivalry,
In case our lord the king should go to war again,
He learn'd the arts of riding, fencing, gunnery,
And how to scale a fortress – or a nunnery.

39

305 But that which Donna Inez most desired,
And saw into herself each day before all
The learned tutors whom for him she hired,
Was, that his breeding should be strictly moral;
Much into all his studies she inquired,
310 And so they were submitted first to her, all,
Arts, sciences, no branch was made a mystery
To Juan's eyes, excepting natural history.²

4°

The languages, especially the dead,
The sciences, and most of all the abstruse,
315 The arts, at least all such as could be said
To be the most remote from common use,
In all these he was much and deeply read;
But not a page of anything that's loose,
Or hints continuation of the species,
320 Was ever suffer'd, lest he should grow vicious.

41

His classic studies made a little puzzle,
Because of filthy loves of gods and goddesses,
Who in the earlier ages made a bustle,
But never put on pantaloons or boddices;
325 His reverend tutors had at times a tussle,
And for their Aeneids, Iliads, and Odysseys,
Were forced to make an odd sort of apology,
For Donna Inez dreaded the mythology.

42

Ovid's a rake, as half his verses show him,
330 Anacreon's morals are a still worse sample,
Catullus scarcely has a decent poem,
I don't think Sappho's Ode a good example,
Although Longinus³ tells us there is no hymn
Where the sublime soars forth on wings more ample;
335 But Virgil's songs are pure, except that horrid one
Beginning with "*Formosum Pastor Corydon*."⁴

2. Includes biology, physiology, and particularly botany, popular in the era in part because study of plants' stamens and pistils offered a form of surreptitious sex education.

3. In *On the Sublime* 10, the Greek rhetorician

Longinus praises a passage of erotic longing from one of Sappho's odes.

4. Virgil's *Eclogue* 2 begins: "The shepherd, Corydon, burned with love for the handsome Alexis."

43
<http://www.englishworld2011.info/>

Lucretius' irreligion⁵ is too strong
 For early stomachs, to prove wholesome food;
 I can't help thinking Juvenal⁶ was wrong,
 340 Although no doubt his real intent was good,
 For speaking out so plainly in his song,
 So much indeed as to be downright rude;
 And then what proper person can be partial
 To all those nauseous epigrams of Martial?

44

345 Juan was taught from out the best edition,
 Expurgated by learned men, who place,
 Judiciously, from out the schoolboy's vision,
 The grosser parts; but fearful to deface
 Too much their modest bard by this omission,
 350 And pitying sore his mutilated case,
 They only add them all in an appendix,⁷
 Which saves, in fact, the trouble of an index.

For my part I say nothing—nothing—but
 410 *This* I will say—my reasons are my own—
 That if I had an only son to put
 To school (as God be praised that I have none)
 'Tis not with Donna Inez I would shut
 Him up to learn his catechism alone,
 415 No—No—I'd send him out betimes to college,
 For there it was I pick'd up my own knowledge.

53

For there one learns—'tis not for me to boast,
 Though I acquired—but I pass over *that*,
 As well as all the Greek I since have lost:
 420 I say that there's the place—but "*Verbum sat*,"⁸
 I think I pick'd up too, as well as most,
 Knowledge of matters—but no matter *what*—
 I never married—but, I think, I know
 That sons should not be educated so.

54

425 Young Juan now was sixteen years of age,
 Tall, handsome, slender, but well knit; he seem'd
 Active, though not so sprightly, as a page;
 And every body but his mother deem'd
 Him almost man; but she flew in a rage,

5. In *De Rerum Natura* (*On the Nature of Things*), Lucretius argues that the universe can be explained in entirely materialist terms without reference to any god.

6. The Latin satires of Juvenal attacked the corruption of Roman society in the 1st century c.E.

and displayed its vices.

7. Fact! There is, or was, such an edition, with all the obnoxious epigrams of Martial placed by themselves at the end [Byron's note]. Martial, another Latin poet, was a contemporary of Juvenal.

8. A word [to the wise] is sufficient (Latin).

430 And bit her lips (for else she might have scream'd),
If any said so, for to be precocious
Was in her eyes a thing the most atrocious.

55

Amongst her numerous acquaintance, all
Selected for discretion and devotion,
435 There was the Donna Julia, whom to call
Pretty were but to give a feeble notion
Of many charms in her as natural
As sweetness to the flower, or salt to ocean,
Her zone to Venus,⁹ or his bow to Cupid,
440 (But this last simile is trite and stupid).

56

The darkness of her Oriental eye
Accorded with her Moorish origin;
(Her blood was not all Spanish, by the by;
In Spain, you know, this is a sort of sin).
445 When proud Grenada fell, and, forced to fly,
Boabdil wept,¹ of Donna Julia's kin
Some went to Africa, some staid in Spain,
Her great great grandmamma chose to remain.

57

She married (I forget the pedigree)
450 With an Hidalgo, who transmitted down
His blood less noble than such blood should be;
At such alliances his sires would frown,
In that point so precise in each degree
That they bred *in and in*, as might be shown,
455 Marrying their cousins—nay, their aunts and nieces,
Which always spoils the breed, if it increases.

58

This heathenish cross restored the breed again,
Ruin'd its blood, but much improved its flesh;
For, from a root the ugliest in Old Spain
460 Sprung up a branch as beautiful as fresh;
The sons no more were short, the daughters plain:
But there's a rumour which I fain would hush,
'Tis said that Donna Julia's grandmamma
Produced her Don more heirs at love than law.

59

465 However this might be, the race⁰ went on
Improving still through every generation,
Until it center'd in an only son,
Who left an only daughter; my narration
May have suggested that this single one
470 Could be but Julia (whom on this occasion

family line

9. The belt ("zone") of Venus made its wearer sexually irresistible.

1. The Moorish king of Granada (the last Islamic

enclave in Spain) wept when his capital fell and he and his people were forced to emigrate to Africa (1492).

678 / GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

I shall have much to speak about), and she
Was married, charming, chaste,² and twenty-three.

60

Her eye (I'm very fond of handsome eyes)
Was large and dark, suppressing half its fire
475 Until she spoke, then through its soft disguise
Flash'd an expression more of pride than ire,
And love than either; and there would arise
A something in them which was not desire,
But would have been, perhaps, but for the soul
480 Which struggled through and chasten'd down the whole.

61

Her glossy hair was cluster'd o'er a brow
Bright with intelligence, and fair and smooth;
Her eyebrow's shape was like the aerial bow,
Her cheek all purple with the beam of youth,
485 Mounting, at times, to a transparent glow,
As if her veins ran lightning; she, in sooth,
Possess'd an air and grace by no means common:
Her stature tall—I hate a dumpy woman.

62

Wedded she was some years, and to a man
490 Of fifty, and such husbands are in plenty;
And yet, I think, instead of such a **ONE**
'Twere better to have **TWO** of five and twenty,
Especially in countries near the sun:
And now I think on't, "mi vien in mente,"³
495 Ladies even of the most uneasy virtue
Prefer a spouse whose age is short of thirty.

63

'Tis a sad thing, I cannot choose but say,
And all the fault of that indecent sun,
Who cannot leave alone our helpless clay,
500 But will keep baking, broiling, burning on,
That howsoever people fast and pray
The flesh is frail, and so the soul undone:
What men call gallantry, and gods adultery,
Is much more common where the climate's sultry.

64

505 Happy the nations of the moral north!
Where all is virtue, and the winter season
Sends sin, without a rag on, shivering forth;
('Twas snow that brought St. Francis back to reason);
Where juries cast up what a wife is worth
510 By laying whate'er sum, in mulct,⁴ they please on
The lover, who must pay a handsome price,
Because it is a marketable vice.

2. I.e., faithful to her husband.

3. It comes to my mind (Italian).

4. By way of a fine or legal penalty.

65

Alfonso was the name of Julia's lord,
A man well looking for his years, and who
515 Was neither much beloved, nor yet abhorr'd;
They lived together as most people do,
Suffering each other's foibles by accord,
And not exactly either *one* or *two*;
Yet he was jealous, though he did not show it,
520 For jealousy dislikes the world to know it.

« \$

69

545 Juan she saw, and, as a pretty child,
Caress'd him often, such a thing might be
Quite innocently done, and harmless styled,
When she had twenty years, and thirteen he;
But I am not so sure I should have smiled
550 When he was sixteen, Julia twenty-three,
These few short years make wondrous alterations,
Particularly amongst sun-burnt nations.

70

Whate'er the cause might be, they had become
Changed; for the dame grew distant, the youth shy,
555 Their looks cast down, their greetings almost dumb,
And much embarrassment in either eye;
There surely will be little doubt with some
That Donna Julia knew the reason why,
But as for Juan, he had no more notion
560 Than he who never saw the sea of ocean.

71

Yet Julia's very coldness still was kind,
And tremulously gentle her small hand
Withdrew itself from his, but left behind
A little pressure, thrilling, and so bland
565 And slight, so very slight, that to the mind
'Twas but a doubt; but ne'er magician's wand
Wrought change with all Armida's⁵ fairy art
Like what this light touch left on Juan's heart.

And if she met him, though she smiled no more,
570 She look'd a sadness sweeter than her smile,
As if her heart had deeper thoughts in store
She must not own, but cherish'd more the while,
For that compression in its burning core;
Even innocence itself has many a wile,
575 And will not dare to trust itself with truth,
And love is taught hypocrisy from youth.

5. The sorceress in Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* (1581) who seduces Rinaldo into forgetting his vows as a crusader.

75

Poor Julia's heart was in an awkward state;
She felt it going, and resolved to make
The noblest efforts for herself and mate,
For honour's, pride's, religion's, virtue's sake;
Her resolutions were most truly great,
And almost might have made a Tarquin⁶ quake;
She pray'd the Virgin Mary for her grace,
As being the best judge of a lady's case.

76

She vow'd she never would see Juan more,
And next day paid a visit to his mother,
And look'd extremely at the opening door,
Which, by the Virgin's grace, let in another;
Grateful she was, and yet a little sore –
Again it opens, it can be no other,
'Tis surely Juan now – No! I'm afraid
That night the Virgin was no further pray'd.

77

She now determined that a virtuous woman
Should rather face and overcome temptation,
That flight was base and dastardly, and no man
Should ever give her heart the least sensation;
That is to say, a thought beyond the common
Preference, that we must feel upon occasion,
For people who are pleasanter than others,
But then they only seem so many brothers.

78

And even if by chance – and who can tell?
The devil's so very sly – she should discover
That all within was not so very well,
And, if still free, that such or such a lover
Might please perhaps, a virtuous wife can quell
Such thoughts, and be the better when they're over;
And if the man should ask, 'tis but denial:
I recommend young ladies to make trial.

79

And then there are such things as love divine,
Bright and immaculate, unmix'd and pure,
Such as the angels think so very fine,
And matrons, who would be no less secure,
Platonic, perfect, "just such love as mine":
Thus Julia said – and thought so, to be sure,
And so I'd have her think, were I the man
On whom her reveries celestial ran.

6. A member of a legendary family of Roman kings noted for tyranny and cruelty; perhaps a reference specifically to Lucius Tarquinius, the villain of Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece*.

86

So much for Julia. Now we'll turn to Juan,
Poor little fellow! he had no idea
Of his own case, and never hit the true one;
In feelings quick as Ovid's Miss Medea,⁷
685 He puzzled over what he found a new one,
But not as yet imagined it could be a
Thing quite in course, and not at all alarming,
Which, with a little patience, might grow charming.

90

Young Juan wander'd by the glassy brooks
Thinking unutterable things; he threw
715 Himself at length within the leafy nooks
Where the wild branch of the cork forest grew;
There poets find materials for their books,
And every now and then we read them through,
So that their plan and prosody are eligible,
720 Unless, like Wordsworth, they prove unintelligible.

91

He, Juan (and not Wordsworth), so pursued
His self-communion with his own high soul,
Until his mighty heart, in its great mood,
Had mitigated part, though not the whole
725 Of its disease; he did the best he could
With things not very subject to control,
And turn'd, without perceiving his condition,
Like Coleridge, into a metaphysician.

92

He thought about himself, and the whole earth,
730 Of man the wonderful, and of the stars,
And how the deuce they ever could have birth;
And then he thought of earthquakes, and of wars,
How many miles the moon might have in girth,
Of air-balloons, and of the many bars
735 To perfect knowledge of the boundless skies;
And then he thought of Donna Julia's eyes.

93

In thoughts like these true wisdom may discern
Longings sublime, and aspirations high,
Which some are born with, but the most part learn
740 To plague themselves withal, they know not why:
'Twas strange that one so young should thus concern
His brain about the action of the sky;
If *you* think 'twas philosophy that this did,
I can't help thinking puberty assisted.

7. In *Metamorphoses* 7 Ovid tells the story of Medea's mad infatuation for Jason.

94

745 He pored upon the leaves, and on the flowers,
And heard a voice in all the winds; and then
He thought of wood nymphs and immortal bowers,
And how the goddesses came down to men:
He miss'd the pathway, he forgot the hours,
750 And when he look'd upon his watch again,
He found how much old Time had been a winner –
He also found that he had lost his dinner.

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'Twas on a summer's day – the sixth of June: –
I like to be particular in dates,
Not only of the age, and year, but moon;
820 They are a sort of post-house, where the Fates
Change horses, making history change its tune,
Then spur away o'er empires and o'er states,
Leaving at last not much besides chronology,
Excepting the post-obits⁸ of theology.

104

825 'Twas on the sixth of June, about the hour
Of half-past six – perhaps still nearer seven,
When Julia sate within as pretty a bower
As e'er held houri in that heathenish heaven
Described by Mahomet, and Anacreon Moore,⁹
830 To whom the lyre and laurels have been given,
With all the trophies of triumphant song –
He won them well, and may he wear them long!

105

She sate, but not alone; I know not well
How this same interview had taken place,
835 And even if I knew, I should not tell –
People should hold their tongues in any case;
No matter how or why the thing befell,
But there were she and Juan, face to face –
When two such faces are so, 'twould be wise,
840 But very difficult, to shut their eyes.

106

How beautiful she look'd! her conscious¹ heart
Glow'd in her cheek, and yet she felt no wrong.
Oh Love! how perfect is thy mystic art,
Strengthening the weak, and trampling on the strong,

8. I.e., postobit bonds (post *obitum*, "after death" [Latin]): loans to an heir that fall due after the death of the person whose estate he or she is to inherit. Byron's meaning is probably that only theology purports to tell us what rewards are due in heaven.

9. Byron's friend the poet Thomas Moore, who in

1800 had translated the *Odes* of the ancient Greek Anacreon and whose popular Orientalist poem *Lalla Rookh* (1817) had portrayed the "heathenish heaven" of Islam as populated by "houris," beautiful maidens who in the afterlife will give heroes their reward.

1. Secretly aware (of her feelings).

845 How self-deceitful is the sagest part
Of mortals whom thy lure hath led along –
The precipice she stood on was immense,
So was her creed° in her own innocence. *belief*

107

She thought of her own strength, and Juan's youth,
850 And of the folly of all prudish fears,
Victorious virtue, and domestic truth,
And then of Don Alfonso's fifty years:
I wish these last had not occur'd, in sooth,
Because that number rarely much endears,
855 And through all climes, the snowy and the sunny,
Sounds ill in love, whate'er it may in money.

s s

" 3

The sun set, and up rose the yellow moon:
The devil's in the moon for mischief; they
Who call'd her **CHASTE**, methinks, began too soon
900 Their nomenclature; there is not a day,
The longest, not the twenty-first of June,
Sees half the business in a wicked way
On which three single hours of moonshine smile –
And then she looks so modest all the while.

114

905 There is a dangerous silence in that hour,
A stillness, which leaves room for the full soul
To open all itself, without the power
Of calling wholly back its self-control;
The silver light which, hallowing tree and tower,
910 Sheds beauty and deep softness o'er the whole,
Breathes also to the heart, and o'er it throws
A loving languor, which is not repose.

" 5

And Julia sate with Juan, half embraced
And half retiring from the glowing arm,
915 Which trembled like the bosom where 'twas placed;
Yet still she must have thought there was no harm,
Or else 'twere easy to withdraw her waist;
But then the situation had its charm,
And then – God knows what next – I can't go on;
920 I'm almost sorry that I e'er begun.

116

Oh Plato! Plato! you have paved the way,
With your confounded fantasies, to more
Immoral conduct by the fancied sway
Your system feigns o'er the controlless core
925 Of human hearts, than all the long array
Of poets and romancers: – You're a bore,

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A charlatan, a coxcomb – and have been,
At best, no better than a go-between.

117

And Julia's voice was lost, except in sighs,
930 Until too late for useful conversation;
The tears were gushing from her gentle eyes,
I wish, indeed, they had not had occasion,
But who, alas! can love, and then be wise?
Not that remorse did not oppose temptation,
935 A little still she strove, and much repented,
And whispering "I will ne'er consent" – consented.

* § §

126

'Tis sweet to win, no matter how, one's laurels
By blood or ink; 'tis sweet to put an end
To strife; 'tis sometimes sweet to have our quarrels,
Particularly with a tiresome friend;
1005 Sweet is old wine in bottles, ale in barrels;
Dear is the helpless creature we defend
Against the world; and dear the schoolboy spot
We ne'er forget, though there we are forgot.

127

But sweeter still than this, than these, than all,
1010 Is first and passionate love – it stands alone,
Like Adam's recollection of his fall;
The tree of knowledge has been pluck'd – all's known –
And life yields nothing further to recall
Worthy of this ambrosial sin, so shown,
1015 No doubt in fable, as the unforgiven
Fire which Prometheus² filch'd for us from heaven.

* ◀ *

133

Man's a phenomenon, one knows not what,
And wonderful beyond all wondrous measure;
'Tis pity though, in this sublime world, that
1060 Pleasure's a sin, and sometimes sin's a pleasure;
Few mortals know what end they would be at,
But whether glory, power, or love, or treasure,
The path is through perplexing ways, and when
The goal is gain'd, we die, you know – and then –

134

1065 What then? – I do not know, no more do you –
And so good night. – Return we to our story:
'Twas in November, when fine days are few,
And the far mountains wax a little hoary,
And clap a white cape on their mantles blue;

2. The Titan Prometheus incurred the wrath of Zeus by stealing fire from heaven for humans.

1070 And the sea dashes round the promontory,
And the loud breaker boils against the rock,
And sober suns must set at five o'clock.

135

'Twas, as the watchmen say, a cloudy night;
No moon, no stars, the wind was low or loud
1075 By gusts, and many a sparkling hearth was bright
With the piled wood, round which the family crowd;
There's something cheerful in that sort of light,
Even as a summer sky's without a cloud:
I'm fond of fire, and crickets, and all that,
1080 A lobster-salad, and champagne, and chat.

136

'Twas midnight—Donna Julia was in bed,
Sleeping, most probably—when at her door
Arose a clatter might awake the dead,
If they had never been awake before,
1085 And that they have been so we all have read,
And are to be so, at the least, once more—
The door was fasten'd, but with voice and fist
First knocks were heard, then "Madam—Madam—hist!

137

"For God's sake, Madam—Madam—here's my master,
1090 With more than half the city at his back—
Was ever heard of such a curst disaster!
'Tis not my fault—I kept good watch—Alack!
Do, pray undo the bolt a little faster—
They're on the stair just now, and in a crack⁰ *moment*
1095 Will all be here; perhaps he yet may fly—
Surely the window's not so *very* high!"

138

By this time Don Alfonso was arrived,
With torches, friends, and servants in great number;
The major part of them had long been wived,
1100 And therefore paused not to disturb the slumber
Of any wicked woman, who contrived
By stealth her husband's temples to encumber:³
Examples of this kind are so contagious,
Were one not punish'd, all would be outrageous.

139

1105 I can't tell how, or why, or what suspicion
Could enter into Don Alfonso's head;
But for a cavalier of his condition⁰ *rank*
It surely was exceedingly ill-bred
Without a word of previous admonition,
1110 To hold a levee⁴ round his lady's bed,
And summon lackeys, arm'd with fire and sword,
To prove himself the thing he most abhorr'd.

3. I.e., with horns that, growing on the forehead,
were the traditional emblem of the cuckolded hus-

band.
4. Morning reception.

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140

Poor Donna Julia! starting as from sleep,
 (Mind – that I do not say – she had not slept)
ins Began at once to scream, and yawn, and weep;
 Her maid Antonia, who was an adept,
 Contrived to fling the bed-clothes in a heap,
 As if she had just now from out them crept:
I can't tell why she should take all this trouble
1120 To prove her mistress had been sleeping double.

141

But Julia mistress, and Antonia maid,
 Appear'd like two poor harmless women, who
 Of goblins, but still more of men afraid,
 Had thought one man might be deterr'd by two,
1125 And therefore side by side were gently laid,
 Until the hours of absence should run through,
 And truant husband should return, and say,
 "My dear, I was the first who came away."

142

Now Julia found at length a voice, and cried,
1130 "In heaven's name, Don Alfonso, what d'ye mean?
 Has madness seized you? would that I had died
 Ere such a monster's victim I had been!
 What may this midnight violence betide,
 A sudden fit of drunkenness or spleen?
1135 Dare you suspect me, whom the thought would kill?
 Search, then, the room!" – Alfonso said, "I will."

143

He search'd, *they* search'd, and rummaged every where,
 Closet and clothes'-press, chest and window-seat,
And found much linen, lace, and seven pair
1140 Of stockings, slippers, brushes, combs, complete,
 With other articles of ladies fair,
 To keep them beautiful, or leave them neat:
Arras⁵ they prick'd and curtains with their swords,
And wounded several shutters, and some boards.

144

1145 Under the bed they search'd, and there they found –⁶
 No matter what – it was not that they sought;
 They open'd windows, gazing if the ground
 Had signs or footmarks, but the earth said nought;
And then they stared each others' faces round:
1150 'Tis odd, not one of all these seekers thought,
 And seems to me almost a sort of blunder,
 Of looking *in* the bed as well as under.

145

During this inquisition Julia's tongue
 Was not asleep – "Yes, search and search," she cried,

5. A tapestry hanging on a wall.

6. Perhaps a chamber pot.

us? "Insult on insult heap, and wrong on wrong!
It was for this that I became a bride!
For this in silence I have suffer'd long
A husband like Alfonso at my side;
But now I'll bear no more, nor here remain,
1160 If there be law, or lawyers, in all Spain.

146

"Yes, Don Alfonso! husband now no more,
If ever you indeed deserved the name,
Is't worthy of your years?—you have threescore,
Fifty, or sixty—it is all the same—
ii65 Is't wise or fitting causeless to explore
For facts against a virtuous woman's fame?
Ungrateful, perjured, barbarous Don Alfonso,
How dare you think your lady would go on so?"

159

1265 The Senhor Don Alfonso stood confused;
Antonia bustled round the ransack'd room,
And, turning up her nose, with looks abused
Her master, and his myrmidons,⁷ of whom
Not one, except the attorney, was amused;
1270 He, like Achates,⁸ faithful to the tomb,
So there were quarrels, cared not for the cause,
Knowing they must be settled by the laws.

160

With prying snub-nose, and small eyes, he stood,
Following Antonia's motions here and there,
1275 With much suspicion in his attitude;
For reputations he had little care;
So that a suit or action were made good,
Small pity had he for the young and fair,
And ne'er believed in negatives, till these
1280 Were proved by competent false witnesses.

161

But Don Alfonso stood with downcast looks,
And, truth to say, he made a foolish figure;
When, after searching in five hundred nooks,
And treating a young wife with so much rigour,
1285 He gain'd no point, except some self-rebukes,
Added to those his lady with such vigour
Had pour'd upon him for the last half-hour,
Quick, thick, and heavy—as a thunder-shower.

162

At first he tried to hammer an excuse,
1290 To which the sole reply was tears, and sobs,

7. Servants, so named for the followers Achilles led to the Trojan War.

8. The *fidus Achates* ("faithful Achates") of Virgil's

Aeneid, whose loyalty to Aeneas has become proverbial.

And indications of hysterics, whose
Prologue is always certain throes, and throbs,
Gasps, and whatever else the owners choose:—
Alfonso saw his wife, and thought of Job's;⁹
125 He saw too, in perspective, her relations,
And then he tried to muster all his patience.

163

He stood in act to speak, or rather stammer,
But sage Antonia cut him short before
The anvil of his speech received the hammer,
130 With "Pray sir, leave the room, and say no more,
Or madam dies."—Alfonso mutter'd "D—n her,"
But nothing else, the time of words was o'er;
He cast a rueful look or two, and did,
He knew not wherefore, that which he was bid.

164

135 With him retired his "*posse comitatus*,"
The attorney last, who linger'd near the door,
Reluctantly, still tarrying there as late as
Antonia let him— not a little sore
At this most strange and unexplain'd "*hiatus*"
1310 In Don Alfonso's facts, which just now wore
An awkward look; as he resolved the case
The door was fasten'd in his legal face.

165

No sooner was it bolted, than—Oh shame!
Oh sin! Oh sorrow! and Oh womankind!
1315 How can you do such things and keep your fame,
Unless this world, and t'other too, be blind?
Nothing so dear as an unfilch'd good name!
But to proceed—for there is more behind:
With much heart-felt reluctance be it said,
1320 Young Juan slipp'd, half-smother'd, from the bed.

166

He had been hid—I don't pretend to say
How, nor can I indeed describe the where—
Young, slender, and pack'd easily, he lay,
No doubt, in little compass, round or square;
1325 But pity him I neither must nor may
His suffocation by that pretty pair;
'Twere better, sure, to die so, than be shut
With maudlin Clarence in his Malmsey butt.²

s s s

9. Job's wife advised her afflicted husband to "curse God, and die." He replied, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh" (Job 2.9–10).

1. The complete form of the modern word *posse* (*posse comitatus* means literally "power of the

county" [Latin], i.e., the body of citizens summoned by a sheriff to preserve order in the county).

2. Clarence, brother of Edward IV and of the future Richard III, was reputed to have been assassinated by being drowned in a cask ("butt") of malmsey, a sweet and aromatic wine.

169

What's to be done? Alfonso will be back
The moment he has sent his fools away.
Antonia's skill was put upon the rack,
But no device could be brought into play—
And how to parry the renew'd attack?
Besides, it wanted but few hours of day:
Antonia puzzled; Julia did not speak,
But press'd her bloodless lip to Juan's cheek.

170

He turn'd his lip to hers, and with his hand
Call'd back the tangles of her wandering hair;
Even then their love they could not all command,
And half forgot their danger and despair:
Antonia's patience now was at a stand—
"Come, come, 'tis no time now for fooling there,"
She whisper'd, in great wrath—"I must deposit
This pretty gentleman within the closet."

173

Now, Don Alfonso entering, but alone,
Closed the oration of the trusty maid:
She loiter'd, and he told her to be gone,
1380 An order somewhat sullenly obey'd;
However, present remedy was none,
And no great good seem'd answer'd if she staid:
Regarding both with slow and sidelong view,
She snuff'd the candle, curtsied, and withdrew.

174

1385 Alfonso paused a minute—then begun
Some strange excuses for his late proceeding;
He would not justify what he had done,
To say the best, it was extreme ill-breeding;
But there were ample reasons for it, none
1390 Of which he specified in this his pleading:
His speech was a fine sample, on the whole,
Of rhetoric, which the learn'd call "*rigmarole*."

180

Alfonso closed his speech, and begg'd her pardon,
Which Julia half withheld, and then half granted,
1435 And laid conditions, he thought, very hard on,
Denying several little things he wanted:
He stood like Adam lingering near his garden,
With useless penitence perplex'd and haunted,
Beseeching she no further would refuse,
1440 When lo! he stumbled o'er a pair of shoes.

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181

A pair of shoes!—what then? not much, if they
Are such as fit with lady's feet, but these
(No one can tell how much I grieve to say)
Were masculine; to see them, and to seize,
1445 Was but a moment's act.—Ah! Well-a-day!
My teeth begin to chatter, my veins freeze—
Alfonso first examined well their fashion,
And then flew out into another passion.

182

He left the room for his relinquish'd sword,
1450 And Julia instant to the closet flew,
"Fly, Juan, fly! for heaven's sake—not a word—
The door is open—you may yet slip through
The passage you so often have explored—
Here is the garden-key—Fly—fly—Adieu!
1455 Haste—haste!—I hear Alfonso's hurrying feet—
Day has not broke—there's no one in the street."

183

None can say that this was not good advice,
The only mischief was, it came too late;
Of all experience 'tis the usual price,
1460 A sort of income-tax laid on by fate:
Juan had reach'd the room-door in a trice,
And might have done so by the garden-gate,
But met Alfonso in his dressing-gown,
Who threaten'd death—so Juan knock'd him down.

184

1465 Dire was the scuffle, and out went the light,
Antonia cried out "Rape!" and Julia "Fire!"
But not a servant stirr'd to aid the fight.
Alfonso, pommell'd to his heart's desire,
Swore lustily he'd be revenged this night;
1470 And Juan, too, blasphemed an octave higher,
His blood was up; though young, he was a Tartar,³
And not at all disposed to prove a martyr.

185

Alfonso's sword had dropp'd ere he could draw it,
And they continued battling hand to hand,
1475 For Juan very luckily ne'er saw it;
His temper not being under great command,
If at that moment he had chanced to claw it,
Alfonso's days had not been in the land
Much longer.—Think of husbands', lovers' lives!
1480 And how ye may be doubly widows—wives!

186

Alfonso grappled to detain the foe,
And Juan throttled him to get away,

3. A formidable opponent.

And blood ('twas from the nose) began to flow;
At last, as they more faintly wrestling lay,
1485 Juan contrived to give an awkward blow,
And then his only garment quite gave way;
He fled, like Joseph,⁴ leaving it; but there,
I doubt, all likeness ends between the pair.

187

Lights came at length, and men, and maids, who found
1490 An awkward spectacle their eyes before;
Antonia in hysterics, Julia swoon'd,
Alfonso leaning, breathless, by the door;
Some half-torn drapery scatter'd on the ground,
Some blood, and several footsteps, but no more:
1495 Juan the gate gain'd, turn'd the key about,
And liking not the inside, lock'd the out.

188

Here ends this canto.—Need I sing, or say,
How Juan, naked, favour'd by the night,
Who favours what she should not, found his way,
1500 And reach'd his home in an unseemly plight?
The pleasant scandal which arose next day,
The nine days' wonder which was brought to light,
And how Alfonso sued for a divorce,
Were in the English newspapers, of course.

189

1505 If you would like to see the whole proceedings,
The depositions, and the cause at full,
The names of all the witnesses, the pleadings
Of counsel to nonsuit,³ or to annul,
There's more than one edition, and the readings
1510 Are various, but they none of them are dull,
The best is that in shorthand ta'en by Gurney,⁶
Who to Madrid on purpose made a journey.

190

But Donna Inez, to divert the train
Of one of the most circulating scandals
1515 That had for centuries been known in Spain,
Since Roderic's Goths, or older Genseric's Vandals,⁷
First vow'd (and never had she vow'd in vain)
To Virgin Mary several pounds of candles;
And then, by the advice of some old ladies,
1520 She sent her son to be embark'd at Cadiz.

191

She had resolved that he should travel through
All European climes, by land or sea,

4. In Genesis 39.7ff. the chaste Joseph flees from the advances of Potiphar's wife, leaving "his garment in her hand."

5. Judgment against the plaintiff for failure to establish his case.

6. William B. Gurney (1777-1855), official short-

hand writer for the houses of Parliament and a famous court reporter.

7. The Germanic tribes that overran Spain and other parts of southern Europe in the 5th through 8th centuries, notorious for rape and violence.

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To mend his former morals, or get new,
Especially in France and Italy,
1525 (At least this is the thing most people do).
Julia was sent into a nunnery,
And there, perhaps, her feelings may be better
Shown in the following copy of her letter:

192

"They tell me 'tis decided; you depart:
1530 'Tis wise—'tis well, but not the less a pain;
I have no further claim on your young heart,
Mine was the victim, and would be again;
To love too much has been the only art
I used;—I write in haste, and if a stain
1535 Be on this sheet,'tis not what it appears,
My eyeballs burn and throb, but have no tears.

193

"I loved, I love you, for that love have lost
State, station, heaven, mankind's, my own esteem,
And yet can not regret what it hath cost,
1540 So dear is still the memory of that dream;
Yet, if I name my guilt,'tis not to boast,
None can deem harshlier of me than I deem:
I trace this scrawl because I cannot rest—
I've nothing to reproach, nor to request.

194

1545 "Man's love is of his life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart,
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,
1550 And few there are whom these can not estrange;
Man has all these resources, we but one,
To love again, and be again undone.

195

"My breast has been all weakness, is so yet;
I struggle, but cannot collect my mind;
1555 My blood still rushes where my spirit's set,
As roll the waves before the settled wind;
My brain is feminine, nor can forget—
To all, except your image, madly blind;
As turns the needle⁸ trembling to the pole
1560 It ne'er can reach, so turns to you, my soul.

196

"You will proceed in beauty, and in pride,
Beloved and loving many; all is o'er
For me on earth, except some years to hide
My shame and sorrow deep in my heart's core;

8. Of a compass.

1565 These I could bear, but cannot cast aside
The passion which still rends it as before,
And so farewell—forgive me, love me—No,
That word is idle now—but let it go.

197

"I have no more to say, but linger still,
1570 And dare not set my seal upon this sheet,
And yet I may as well the task fulfil,
My misery can scarce be more complete:
I had not lived till now, could sorrow kill;
Death flies the wretch who fain the blow would meet,
1575 And I must even survive this last adieu,
And bear with life, to love and pray for you!"

198

This note was written upon gilt-edged paper
With a neat crow-quill, rather hard, but new;
Her small white fingers scarce could reach the taper,⁹
1580 But trembled as magnetic needles do,
And yet she did not let one tear escape her;
The seal a sunflower; "*Elle vous suit partout*,"¹
The motto, cut upon a white cornelian;
The wax was superfine, its hue vermilion.

199

1585 This was Don Juan's earliest scrape; but whether
I shall proceed with his adventures is
Dependent on the public altogether;
We'll see, however, what they say to this,
Their favour in an author's cap's a feather,
1590 And no great mischief's done by their caprice;
And if their approbation we experience,
Perhaps they'll have some more about a year hence.

200

My poem's epic, and is meant to be
Divided in twelve books; each book containing,
1595 With love, and war, a heavy gale at sea,
A list of ships, and captains, and kings reigning,
New characters; the episodes are three:
A panorama view of hell's in training,
After the style of Virgil and of Homer,
1600 So that my name of Epic's no misnomer.

201

All these things will be specified in time,
With strict regard to Aristotle's rules,
The *vade mecum*² of the true sublime,

9. The candle (to melt wax to seal the letter).
1. She follows you everywhere (French). This motto was inscribed on one of Byron's seals and on a jewel he gave to John Edleston, the boy with whom he had a romantic friendship while at Cambridge. Their friendship was memorialized in

Byron's 1807 poem "The Cornelian."
2. Go with me (Latin, literal trans.); handbook. Byron is deriding the neoclassical view that Aristotle's *Poetics* proposes "rules" for writing epic and tragedy.

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Which makes so many poets, and some fools;
Prose poets like blank-verse, I'm fond of rhyme,
Good workmen never quarrel with their tools;
I've got new mythological machinery,³
And very handsome supernatural scenery.

There's only one slight difference between
Me and my epic brethren gone before,
And here the advantage is my own, I ween;
(Not that I have not several merits more,
But this will more peculiarly be seen)
They so embellish, that 'tis quite a bore
Their labyrinth of fables to thread through,
Whereas this story's actually true.

203

If any person doubt it, I appeal
To history, tradition, and to facts,
To newspapers, whose truth all know and feel,
To plays in five, and operas in three acts;
All these confirm my statement a good deal,
But that which more completely faith exacts
Is, that myself, and several now in Seville,
Saw Juan's last elopement with the devil.⁴

204

If ever I should condescend to prose,
I'll write poetical commandments, which
Shall supersede beyond all doubt all those
That went before; in these I shall enrich
My text with many things that no one knows,
And carry precept to the highest pitch:
I'll call the work "Longinus o'er a Bottle,
Or, Every Poet his *own* Aristotle."

205

Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;⁵
Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey;
Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,
The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy:
With Crabbe it may be difficult to cope,
And Campbell's Hippocrene⁶ is somewhat drouthy:
Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rogers, nor –
Commit – flirtation with the muse of Moore.

3. The assemblage of supernatural personages and incidents introduced into a literary work.

4. The usual plays on the Juan legend ended with Juan in hell; an early-20th-century version is Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*.

5. This is one of many passages, in prose and verse, in which Byron vigorously defends Dryden and Pope against his Romantic contemporaries.

6. Fountain on Mount Helicon whose waters supposedly gave inspiration. George Crabbe, whom Byron admired, was the author of *The Village* and other realistic poems of rural life. Thomas Campbell, Samuel Rogers, and Thomas Moore were lesser poets of the Romantic period; the last two were close friends of Byron and members of London's liberal Whig circles.

Thou shalt not covet Mr. Sotheby's Muse,
His Pegasus,⁷ nor any thing that's his;
Thou shalt not bear false witness like "the Blues,"⁸
(There's one, at least, is very fond of this);
1645 Thou shalt not write, in short, but what I choose:
This is true criticism, and you may kiss –
Exactly as you please, or not, the rod,
But if you don't, I'll lay it on, by G – d!⁹

207

If any person should presume to assert
1650 This story is not moral, first I pray
That they will not cry out before they're hurt,
Then that they'll read it o'er again, and say,
(But, doubtless, nobody will be so pert)
That this is not a moral tale, though gay;
1655 Besides, in canto twelfth, I mean to show
The very place where wicked people go.

213

But now at thirty years my hair is gray –
(I wonder what it will be like at forty?
I thought of a peruke⁰ the other day)
1700 My heart is not much greener; and, in short, I
Have squander'd my whole summer while 'twas May,
And feel no more the spirit to retort; I
Have spent my life, both interest and principal,
And deem not, what I deem'd, my soul invincible.

wig

214

1705 No more – no more – Oh! never more on me
The freshness of the heart can fall like dew,
Which out of all the lovely things we see
Extracts emotions beautiful and new,
Hived in our bosoms like the bag o' the bee:
1710 Think'st thou the honey with those objects grew?
Alas! 'twas not in them, but in thy power
To double even the sweetness of a flower.

215

No more – no more – Oh! never more, my heart,
Canst thou be my sole world, my universe!
1715 Once all in all, but now a thing apart,

7. The winged horse symbolizing poetic inspiration. The wealthy William Sotheby, minor poet and translator, is satirized, as Botherby, in Byron's *Beppo*.

8. I.e., bluestockings, a contemporary term for female intellectuals, among whom Byron numbered his wife (line 1644).

9. Byron's parody of the Ten Commandments

seemed blasphemous to some commentators. Radical publishers like William Hone, who in 1817 had been put on trial for the ostensible blasphemy of political satires that used the form of the Anglican Church's creed and catechism bitterly noted a double standard: books brought out by the ultra-respectable John Murray were not subject to the same reprisals as Hone's books.

Thou canst not be my blessing or my curse:
The illusion's gone for ever, and thou art
Insensible, I trust, but none the worse,
And in thy stead I've got a deal of judgment,
1720 Though heaven knows how it ever found a lodgement.

216

My days of love are over, me no more
The charms of maid, wife, and still less of widow,
Can make the fool of which they made before,
In short, I must not lead the life I did do;
1725 The credulous hope of mutual minds is o'er,
The copious use of claret is forbid too,
So for a good old gentlemanly vice,
I think I must take up with avarice.

217

Ambition was my idol, which was broken
1730 Before the shrines of Sorrow and of Pleasure;
And the two last have left me many a token
O'er which reflection may be made at leisure:
Now, like Friar Bacon's brazen head, I've spoken,
"Time is, Time was, Time's past,"¹ a chymic treasure²
1735 Is glittering youth, which I have spent betimes –
My heart in passion, and my head on rhymes.

218

What is the end of fame? 'tis but to fill
A certain portion of uncertain paper:
Some liken it to climbing up a hill,
1740 Whose summit, like all hills', is lost in vapour;
For this men write, speak, preach, and heroes kill,
And bards burn what they call their "midnight taper,"
To have, when the original is dust,
A name, a wretched picture, and worse bust.³

219

1745 What are the hopes of man? old Egypt's King
Cheops erected the first pyramid
And largest, thinking it was just the thing
To keep his memory whole, and mummy hid;
But somebody or other rummaging,
1750 Burglariously broke his coffin's lid:
Let not a monument give you or me hopes,
Since not a pinch of dust remains of Cheops.

220

But I, being fond of true philosophy,
Say very often to myself, "Alas!

1. Spoken by a bronze bust in Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1594). This comedy was based on legends about the magical power of Roger Bacon, the 13th-century Franciscan monk who was said to have built with diabolical assistance a brazen head capable of speech.

2. "Chymic": alchemic; i.e., the "treasure" is counterfeit gold.

3. Byron was unhappy with the portrait bust of him recently made by the Danish sculptor Thorwaldsen.

175 All things that have been born were born to die,
And flesh (which Death mows down to hay) is grass;⁴
You've pass'd your youth not so unpleasantly,
And if you had it o'er again—'twould pass—
So thank your stars that matters are no worse,
176 And read your Bible, sir, and mind your purse."

221

But for the present, gentle reader! and
Still gentler purchaser! the bard—that's I—
Must, with permission, shake you by the hand,
And so your humble servant, and good bye!
176 We meet again, if we should understand
Each other; and if not, I shall not try
Your patience further than by this short sample—
'Twere well if others follow'd my example.

222

"Go, little book, from this my solitude!
170 I cast thee on the waters, go thy ways!
And if, as I believe, thy vein be good,
The world will find thee after many days."
When Southey's read, and Wordsworth understood,
I can't help putting in my claim to praise—
175 The four first rhymes are Southey's every line:⁵
For God's sake, reader! take them not for mine.

From Canto 2

[THE SHIPWRECK]

8

But to our tale: the Donna Inez sent
Her son to Cadiz only to embark;
To stay there had not answer'd her intent,
60 But why?—we leave the reader in the dark—
'Twas for a voyage that the young man was meant,
As if a Spanish ship were Noah's ark,
To wean him from the wickedness of earth,
And send him like a dove of promise forth.

9

65 Don Juan bade his valet pack his things
According to direction, then received
A lecture and some money: for four springs
He was to travel; and though Inez grieved,
(As every kind of parting has its stings)
70 She hoped he would improve—perhaps believed:
A letter, too, she gave (he never read it)
Of good advice—and two or three of credit.¹

4. An echo of Isaiah 40.6 and 1 Peter 1.24: "All flesh is grass."
5. The lines are part of the last stanza of Southey's

"Epilogue to the Lay of the Laureate."
1. Letters of credit allowed travelers to obtain cash from an international network of bankers.

698 / GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

10

In the mean time, to pass her hours away,
Brave Inez now set up a Sunday school
75 For naughty children, who would rather play
(Like truant rogues) the devil, or the fool;
Infants of three years old were taught that day,
Dunces were whipt, or set upon a stool:
The great success of Juan's education,
80 Spurr'd her to teach another generation.

11

Juan embark'd—the ship got under way,
The wind was fair, the water passing rough;
A devil of a sea rolls in that bay,
As I, who've cross'd it oft, know well enough;
85 And, standing upon deck, the dashing spray
Flies in one's face, and makes it weather-tough:
And there he stood to take, and take again,
His first—perhaps his last—farewell of Spain.

12

I can't but say it is an awkward sight
90 To see one's native land receding through
The growing waters; it unmans one quite,
Especially when life is rather new:
I recollect Great Britain's coast looks white,
But almost every other country's blue,
95 When gazing on them, mystified by distance,
We enter on our nautical existence.

§ « »

17

And Juan wept, and much he sigh'd and thought,
130 While his salt tears dropp'd into the salt sea,
"Sweets to the sweet"; (I like so much to quote;
You must excuse this extract, 'tis where she,
The Queen of Denmark, for Ophelia brought
Flowers to the grave);² and sobbing often, he
135 Reflected on his present situation,
And seriously resolved on reformation.

18

"Farewell, my Spain! a long farewell!" he cried,
"Perhaps I may revisit thee no more,
But die, as many an exiled heart hath died,
140 Of its own thirst to see again thy shore:
Farewell, where Guadalquivir's waters glide!
Farewell, my mother! and, since all is o'er,
Farewell, too dearest Julia!"—(here he drew
Her letter out again, and read it through).

2. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* 5.1.227.

145 "And oh! if e'er I should forget, I swear –
But that's impossible, and cannot be –
Sooner shall this blue ocean melt to air,
Sooner shall earth resolve itself to sea,
Than I resign thine image, Oh! my fair!
150 Or think of any thing excepting thee;
A mind diseased no remedy can physic – "
(Here the ship gave a lurch, and he grew sea-sick.)

20

"Sooner shall heaven kiss earth" – (here he fell sicker)
"Oh, Julia! what is every other woe? –
155 (For God's sake let me have a glass of liquor,
Pedro, Battista, help me down below.)
Julia, my love! – (you rascal, Pedro, quicker) –
Oh Julia! – (this curst vessel pitches so) –
Beloved Julia, hear me still beseeching!"
160 (Here he grew inarticulate with retching.)

21

He felt that chilling heaviness of heart,
Or rather stomach, which, alas! attends,
Beyond the best apothecary's art,
The loss of love, the treachery of friends,
165 Or death of those we doat on, when a part
Of us dies with them as each fond hope ends:
No doubt he would have been much more pathetic,
But the sea acted as a strong emetic.³

s s &

49

385 'Twas twilight, and the sunless day went down
Over the waste of waters; like a veil,
Which, if withdrawn, would but disclose the frown
Of one whose hate is masked but to assail;
Thus to their hopeless eyes the night was shown
390 And grimly darkled o'er their faces pale,
And the dim desolate deep; twelve days had Fear
Been their familiar, and now Death was here.

5°

Some trial had been making at a raft,
With little hope in such a rolling sea,
395 A sort of thing at which one would have laugh'd,
If any laughter at such times could be,
Unless with people who too much have quaff'd,
And have a kind of wild and horrid glee,
Half epileptical, and half hysterical: –
400 Their preservation would have been a miracle.

3. In stanzas 22–48 (here omitted) the ship, bound for Leghorn in Italy, runs into a violent storm and is battered into a helpless, sinking wreck.

700 / GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

51

At half-past eight o'clock, booms, hencoops, spars,
And all things, for a chance, had been cast loose,
That still could keep afloat the struggling tars,
For yet they strove, although of no great use:
405 There was no light in heaven but a few stars,
The boats put off o'ercrowded with their crews;
She gave a heel, and then a lurch to port,
And, going down head foremost—sunk, in short.

52

Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell,
410 Then shriek'd the timid, and stood still the brave,
Then some leap'd overboard with dreadful yell,
As eager to anticipate their grave;
And the sea yawn'd around her like a hell,
And down she suck'd with her the whirling wave,
415 Like one who grapples with his enemy,
And strives to strangle him before he die.

53

And first one universal shriek there rush'd,
Louder than the loud ocean, like a crash
Of echoing thunder; and then all was hush'd,
420 Save the wild wind and the remorseless dash
Of billows; but at intervals there gush'd,
Accompanied with a convulsive splash,
A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry
Of some strong swimmer in his agony.

« « *

56

Juan got into the long-boat, and there
Contrived to help Pedrillo to a place;
It seem'd as if they had exchanged their care,
For Juan wore the magisterial face
45 Which courage gives, while poor Pedrillo's pair
Of eyes were crying for their owner's case:
Battista, though (a name call'd shortly Tita),
Was lost by getting at some aqua-vita.^o

brandy

57

Pedro, his valet, too, he tried to save,
450 But the same cause, conducive to his loss,
Left him so drunk, he jump'd into the wave
As o'er the cutter's edge he tried to cross,
And so he found a wine-and-watery grave;
They could not rescue him although so close,
45 Because the sea ran higher every minute,
And for the boat—the crew kept crowding in it.

4. Juan's tutor.

86

"Tis thus with people in an open boat,
They live upon the love of life, and bear
More than can be believed, or even thought,
And stand like rocks the tempest's wear and tear;
525 And hardship still has been the sailor's lot,
Since Noah's ark went cruising here and there;
She had a curious crew as well as cargo,
Like the first old Greek privateer, the Argo.⁵

67

But man is a carnivorous production,
530 And must have meals, at least one meal a day;
He cannot live, like woodcocks, upon suction,⁶
But, like the shark and tiger, must have prey:
Although his anatomical construction
Bears vegetables in a grumbling way,
535 Your labouring people think beyond all question,
Beef, veal, and mutton, better for digestion.

68

And thus it was with this our hapless crew,
For on the third day there came on a calm,
And though at first their strength it might renew,
540 And lying on their weariness like balm,
Lull'd them like turtles sleeping on the blue
Of ocean, when they woke they felt a qualm,
And fell all ravenously on their provision,
Instead of hoarding it with due precision.

3 3 *

72

The seventh day,⁷ and no wind—the burning sun
570 Blister'd and scorch'd, and, stagnant on the sea,
They lay like carcasses; and hope was none,
Save in the breeze that came not; savagely
They glared upon each other—all was done,
Water, and wine, and food,—and you might see
575 The longings of the cannibal arise
(Although they spoke not) in their wolfish eyes.

73

At length one whisper'd his companion, who
Whisper'd another, and thus it went round,
And then into a hoarser murmur grew,
580 An ominous, and wild, and desperate sound,
And when his comrade's thought each sufferer knew,

5. In the Greek myth the *Argo* is the ship on which Jason set out in quest of the Golden Fleece. Byron ironically calls it a "privateer" (a private ship licensed by a government in wartime to attack and pillage enemy vessels).

6. Woodcocks probe the turf with their long flexible bills, seeming to suck air as they feed.

7. On the fourth day the crew had killed and eaten Juan's pet spaniel. Byron based the episode of cannibalism that follows on various historical accounts of disasters at sea, including his grandfather Admiral Byron's 1768 narrative of his misadventure off the coast of Patagonia.

702 / GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Twas but his own, suppress'd till now, he found:
And out they spoke of lots for flesh and blood,
And who should die to be his fellow's food.

74

585 But ere they came to this, they that day shared
Some leathern caps, and what remain'd of shoes;
And then they look'd around them, and despair'd,
And none to be the sacrifice would choose;
At length the lots were torn up, and prepared,
590 But of materials that must shock the Muse –
Having no paper, for the want of better,
They took by force from Juan Julia's letter.

75

The lots were made, and mark'd, and mix'd, and handed,
In silent horror, and their distribution
595 Lull'd even the savage hunger which demanded,
Like the Promethean vulture,⁸ this pollution;
None in particular had sought or plann'd it,
'Twas nature gnaw'd them to this resolution,
By which none were permitted to be neuter –
600 And the lot fell on Juan's luckless tutor.

76

He but requested to be bled to death:
The surgeon had his instruments, and bled
Pedrillo, and so gently ebb'd his breath,
You hardly could perceive when he was dead.
605 He died as born, a Catholic in faith,
Like most in the belief in which they're bred,
And first a little crucifix he kiss'd,
And then held out his jugular and wrist.

77

The surgeon, as there was no other fee,
610 Had his first choice of morsels for his pains;
But being thirstiest at the moment, he
Preferr'd a draught from the fast-flowing veins:
Part was divided, part thrown in the sea,
And such things as the entrails and the brains
615 Regaled two sharks, who follow'd o'er the billow –
The sailors ate the rest of poor Pedrillo.

7«

The sailors ate him, all save three or four,
Who were not quite so fond of animal food;
To these was added Juan, who, before
620 Refusing his own spaniel, hardly could
Feel now his appetite increased much more;
'Twas not to be expected that he should,
Even in extremity of their disaster,
Dine with them on his pastor and his master.

8. Because Prometheus had stolen fire from heaven to give to humans, Zeus punished him by chaining him to a mountain peak, where an eagle fed on his ever-renewing liver.

86

625 'Twas better that he did not; for, in fact,
The consequence was awful in the extreme;
For they, who were most ravenous in the act,
Went raging mad—Lord! how they did blaspheme!
And foam and roll, with strange convulsions rack'd,
630 Drinking salt-water like a mountain-stream,
Tearing, and grinning, howling, screeching, swearing,
And, with hyaena laughter, died despairing.

« * «

103

As they drew nigh the land, which now was seen
Unequal in its aspect here and there,
They felt the freshness of its growing green,
820 That waved in forest-tops, and smooth'd the air,
And fell upon their glazed eyes like a screen
From glistening waves, and skies so hot and bare—
Lovely seem'd any object that should sweep
Away the vast, salt, dread, eternal deep.

104

825 The shore look'd wild, without a trace of man,
And girt by formidable waves; but they
Were mad for land, and thus their course they ran,
Though right ahead the roaring breakers lay:
A reef between them also now began
830 To show its boiling surf and bounding spray,
But finding no place for their landing better,
They ran the boat for shore, and overset her.

105

But in his native stream, the Guadalquivir,
Juan to lave^o his youthful limbs was wont;
835 And having learnt to swim in that sweet river,
Had often turn'd the art to some account:
A better swimmer you could scarce see ever,
He could, perhaps, have pass'd the Hellespont,
As once (a feat on which ourselves we prided)
840 Leander, Mr. Ekenhead, and I did.^o

bathe

106

So here, though faint, emaciated, and stark,
He buoy'd his boyish limbs, and strove to ply
With the quick wave, and gain, ere it was dark,
The beach which lay before him, high and dry:
845 The greatest danger here was from a shark,
That carried off his neighbour by the thigh;
As for the other two, they could not swim,
So nobody arrived on shore but him.

9. Like Leander in the myth, Byron and Lieutenant Ekenhead had swum the Hellespont, on May 3, 1810. See "Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos" (p. 611).

107

Nor yet had he arrived but for the oar,
Which, providentially for him, was wash'd
Just as his feeble arms could strike no more,
And the hard wave o'erwhelm'd him as 'twas dash'd
Within his grasp; he clung to it, and sore
The waters beat while he thereto was lash'd;
At last, with swimming, wading, scrambling, he
Roll'd on the beach, half senseless, from the sea:

108

There, breathless, with his digging nails he clung
Fast to the sand, lest the returning wave,
From whose reluctant roar his life he wrung,
Should suck him back to her insatiate grave:
And there he lay, full length, where he was flung,
Before the entrance of a cliff-worn cave,
With just enough of life to feel its pain,
And deem that it was saved, perhaps, in vain.

109

With slow and staggering effort he arose,
But sunk again upon his bleeding knee
And quivering hand; and then he look'd for those
Who long had been his mates upon the sea,
But none of them appear'd to share his woes,
Save one, a corpse from out the famish'd three,
Who died two days before, and now had found
An unknown barren beach for burial ground.

no

And as he gazed, his dizzy brain spun fast,
And down he sunk; and as he sunk, the sand
Swam round and round, and all his senses pass'd:
He fell upon his side, and his stretch'd hand
Droop'd dripping on the oar, (their jury-mast)¹
And, like a wither'd lily, on the land
His slender frame and pallid aspect lay,
As fair a thing as e'er was form'd of clay.

[JUAN AND HAIDEE]

III

How long in his damp trance young Juan lay
He knew not, for the earth was gone for him,
And Time had nothing more of night nor day
For his congealing blood, and senses dim;
885 And how this heavy faintness pass'd away
He knew not, till each painful pulse and limb,
And tingling vein seem'd throbbing back to life,
For Death, though vanquish'd, still retired with strife.

1. A mast put up in the place of one that has been carried away or broken.

112

His eyes he open'd, shut, again unclosed,
890 For all was doubt and dizziness; methought
He still was in the boat, and had but dozed,
And felt again with his despair o'erwrought,
And wish'd it death in which he had reposed,
And then once more his feelings back were brought,
895 And slowly by his swimming eyes was seen
A lovely female face of seventeen.

'Twas bending close o'er his, and the small mouth
Seem'd almost prying into his for breath;
And chafing him, the soft warm hand of youth
900 Recall'd his answering spirits back from death;
And, bathing his chill temples, tried to soothe
Each pulse to animation, till beneath
Its gentle touch and trembling care, a sigh
To these kind efforts made a low reply.

114

905 Then was the cordial pour'd, and mantle flung
Around his scarce-clad limbs; and the fair arm
Raised higher the faint head which o'er it hung;
And her transparent cheek, all pure and warm,
Pillow'd his death-like forehead; then she wrung
910 His dewy curls, long drench'd by every storm;
And watch'd with eagerness each throb that drew
A sigh from his heaved bosom—and hers, too.

" 5

And lifting him with care into the cave,
The gentle girl, and her attendant,—one
915 Young, yet her elder, and of brow less grave,
And more robust of figure,—then begun
To kindle fire, and as the new flames gave
Light to the rocks that roof'd them, which the sun
Had never seen, the maid, or whatsoe'er
920 She was, appear'd distinct, and tall, and fair.

116

Her brow was overhung with coins of gold,
That sparkled o'er the auburn of her hair,
Her clustering hair, whose longer locks were roll'd
In braids behind, and though her stature were
925 Even of the highest for a female mould,
They nearly reach'd her heel; and in her air
There was a something which bespoke command,
As one who was a lady in the land.

117

Her hair, I said, was auburn; but her eyes
930 Were black as death, their lashes the same hue,
Of downcast length, in whose silk shadow lies

706 / GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Deepest attraction, for when to the view
Forth from its raven fringe the full glance flies,
Ne'er with such force the swiftest arrow flew;
935 Tis as the snake late coil'd, who pours his length,
And hurls at once his venom and his strength.

123

And these two tended him, and cheer'd him both
With food and raiment, and those soft attentions,
Which are (as I must own) of female growth,
980 And have ten thousand delicate inventions:
They made a most superior mess of broth,
A thing which poesy but seldom mentions,
But the best dish that e'er was cook'd since Homer's
Achilles order'd dinner for new comers.²

124

985 I'll tell you who they were, this female pair,
Lest they should seem princesses in disguise;
Besides, I hate all mystery, and that air
Of clap-trap, which your recent poets prize;
And so, in short, the girls they really were
990 They shall appear before your curious eyes,
Mistress and maid; the first was only daughter
Of an old man, who lived upon the water.

125

A fisherman he had been in his youth,
And still a sort of fisherman was he;
995 But other speculations were, in sooth,
Added to his connection with the sea,
Perhaps not so respectable, in truth:
A little smuggling, and some piracy,
Left him, at last, the sole of many masters
1000 Of an ill-gotten million of piastres.³

126

A fisher, therefore, was he—though of men,
Like Peter the Apostle,⁴—and he fish'd
For wandering merchant vessels, now and then,
And sometimes caught as many as he wish'd;
1005 The cargoes he confiscated, and gain
He sought in the slave-market too, and dish'd
Full many a morsel for that Turkish trade,
By which, no doubt, a good deal may be made.

2. A reference to the lavish feast with which Achilles entertained Ajax, Phoenix, and Ulysses (*Iliad* 9.193ff.l).

3. Near-Eastern coins.

4. Christ's words to Peter and Andrew, both fishermen: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4.19).

101

He was a Greek, and on his isle had built
1010 (One of the wild and smaller Cyclades):
A very handsome house from out his guilt,
And there he lived exceedingly at ease;
Heaven knows what cash he got, or blood he spilt,
A sad old fellow was he, if you please,
1015 But this I know, it was a spacious building,
Full of barbaric carving, paint, and gilding.

128

He had an only daughter, call'd Haidee,
The greatest heiress of the Eastern Isles;
Besides, so very beautiful was she,
1020 Her dowry was as nothing to her smiles:
Still in her teens, and like a lovely tree
She grew to womanhood, and between whiles
Rejected several suitors, just to learn
How to accept a better in his turn.

129

1025 And walking out upon the beach, below
The cliff, towards sunset, on that day she found,
Insensible,"—not dead, but nearly so,— *unconscious*
Don Juan, almost famish'd, and half drown'd;
But being naked, she was shock'd, you know,
1030 Yet deem'd herself in common pity bound,
As far as in her lay, "to take him in,
A stranger":⁷ dying, with so white a skin.

But taking him into her father's house
Was not exactly the best way to save,
1035 But like conveying to the cat the mouse,
Or people in a trance into their grave;
Because the good old man had so much "*vovog*,"⁸
Unlike the honest Arab thieves so brave,
He would have hospitably cured the stranger,
1040 And sold him instantly when out of danger.

•3•

And therefore, with her maid, she thought it best
(A virgin always on her maid relies)
To place him in the cave for present rest:
And when, at last, he open'd his black eyes,
1045 Their charity increased about their guest;
And their compassion grew to such a size,
It open'd half the turnpike-gates to heaven—
(St. Paul says 'tis the toll which must be given).⁹

* #

5. A group of islands in the Aegean Sea.

6. In the playful sense: wicked.

7. Cf. Matthew 25.35: "I was a stranger, and ye took me in."

8. *Nous*, intelligence (Greek); in England pro-

nounced so as to rhyme with *mouse*.

9. 1 Corinthians 13.13: "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

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141

And Haidee met the morning face to face;
Her own was freshest, though a feverish flush
Had dyed it with the headlong blood, whose race
From heart to cheek is curb'd into a blush,
1125 Like to a torrent which a mountain's base,
That overpowers some Alpine river's rush,
Checks to a lake, whose waves in circles spread;
Or the Red Sea—but the sea is not red.

142

And down the cliff the island virgin came,
1130 And near the cave her quick light footsteps drew,
While the sun smiled on her with his first flame,
And young Aurora^o kiss'd her lips with dew, *dawn*
Taking her for a sister; just the same
Mistake you would have made on seeing the two,
1135 Although the mortal, quite as fresh and fair,
Had all the advantage too of not being air.

143

And when into the cavern Haidee stepp'd
All timidly, yet rapidly, she saw
That like an infant Juan sweetly slept;
H40 And then she stopp'd, and stood as if in awe,
(For sleep is awful)^o and on tiptoe crept *awe-inspiring*
And wrapt him closer, lest the air, too raw,
Should reach his blood, then o'er him still as death
Bent, with hush'd lips, that drank his scarce-drawn breath.

148

And she bent o'er him, and he lay beneath,
Hush'd as the babe upon its mother's breast,
Droop'd as the willow when no winds can breathe,
1180 Lull'd like the depth of ocean when at rest,
Fair as the crowning rose of the whole wreath,
Soft as the callow^o cygnet^o in its nest; *young/swan*
In short, he was a very pretty fellow,
Although his woes had turn'd him rather yellow.

149

ii85 He woke and gazed, and would have slept again,
But the fair face which met his eyes forbade
Those eyes to close, though weariness and pain
Had further sleep a further pleasure made;
For woman's face was never form'd in vain
1190 For Juan, so that even when he pray'd
He turn'd from grisly saints, and martyrs hairy,
To the sweet portraits of the Virgin Mary.

150

And thus upon his elbow he arose,
And look'd upon the lady, in whose cheek

1195 The pale contended with the purple rose,
As with an effort she began to speak;
Her eyes were eloquent, her words would pose,
Although she told him, in good modern Greek,
With an Ionian accent, low and sweet,
1200 That he was faint, and must not talk, but eat.

s s

168

And every day by day-break—rather early
For Juan, who was somewhat fond of rest—
She came into the cave, but it was merely
1340 To see her bird reposing in his nest;
And she would softly stir his locks so curly,
Without disturbing her yet slumbering guest,
Breathing all gently o'er his cheek and mouth,
As o'er a bed of roses the sweet south.¹

169

1345 And every morn his colour freshier came,
And every day help'd on his convalescence;
'Twas well, because health in the human frame
Is pleasant, besides being true love's essence,
For health and idleness to passion's flame
1350 Are oil and gunpowder; and some good lessons
Are also learnt from Ceres² and from Bacchus,
Without whom Venus will not long attack us.

170

While Venus fills the heart (without heart really
Love, though good always, is not quite so good)
1355 Ceres presents a plate of vermicelli,—
For love must be sustain'd like flesh and blood,—
While Bacchus pours out wine, or hands a jelly:
Eggs, oysters too, are amatory food;
But who is their purveyor from above
1360 Heaven knows,—it may be Neptune, Pan, or Jove.

171

When Juan woke he found some good things ready,
A bath, a breakfast, and the finest eyes
That ever made a youthful heart less steady,
Besides her maid's, as pretty for their size;
1365 But I have spoken of all this already—
And repetition's tiresome and unwise,—
Well—Juan, after bathing in the sea,
Came always back to coffee and Haidee.

172

Both were so young, and one so innocent,
1370 That bathing pass'd for nothing; Juan seem'd

1. The south wind.
2. Ceres, goddess of the grain; Bacchus, god of wine and revelry.

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To her, as 'twere, the kind of being sent,
Of whom these two years she had nightly dream'd,
A something to be loved, a creature meant
To be her happiness, and whom she deem'd
1375 To render happy; all who joy would win
Must share it,—Happiness was born a twin.

173

It was such pleasure to behold him, such
Enlargement of existence to partake
Nature with him, to thrill beneath his touch,
1380 To watch him slumbering, and to see him wake:
To live with him for ever were too much;
But then the thought of parting made her quake:
He was her own, her ocean-treasure, cast
Like a rich wreck—her first love, and her last.

174

1385 And thus a moon^o roll'd on, and fair Haidee *month*
Paid daily visits to her boy, and took
Such plentiful precautions, that still he
Remain'd unknown within his craggy nook;
At last her father's prows put out to sea,
1390 For certain merchantmen upon the look,
Not as of yore to carry off an Io,³
But three Ragusan vessels, bound for Scio.⁴

175

Then came her freedom, for she had no mother,
So that, her father being at sea, she was
1395 Free as a married woman, or such other
Female, as where she likes may freely pass,
Without even the encumbrance of a brother,
The freest she that ever gazed on glass:^o *in a mirror*
I speak of christian lands in this comparison,
1400 Where wives, at least, are seldom kept in garrison.

176

Now she prolong'd her visits and her talk
(For they must talk), and he had learnt to say
So much as to propose to take a walk,—
For little had he wander'd since the day
1405 On which, like a young flower snapp'd from the stalk,
Drooping and dewy on the beach he lay,—
And thus they walk'd out in the afternoon,
And saw the sun set opposite the moon.

177

1410 It was a wild and breaker-beaten coast,
With cliffs above, and a broad sandy shore,
Guarded by shoals and rocks as by an host,

3. A mistress of Zeus who was persecuted by his jealous wife, Hera, and kidnapped by Phoenician merchants.

4. The Italian name for Chios, an island near Turkey. "Ragusan": Ragusa (or Dubrovnik) is an Adriatic port located in what is now Croatia.

With here and there a creek, whose aspect wore
A better welcome to the tempest-tost;
And rarely ceas'd the haughty billow's roar,
1415 Save on the dead long summer days, which make
The outstretch'd ocean glitter like a lake.

178

And the small ripple spilt upon the beach
Scarcely o'erpass'd the cream of your champagne,
When o'er the brim the sparkling bumpers reach,
1420 That spring-dew of the spirit! the heart's rain!
Few things surpass old wine; and they may preach
Who please,—the more because they preach in vain,—
Let us have wine and woman, mirth and laughter,
Sermons and soda water the day after.

179

1425 Man, being reasonable, must get drunk;
The best of life is but intoxication:
Glory, the grape, love, gold, in these are sunk
The hopes of all men, and of every nation;
Without their sap, how branchless were the trunk
1430 Of life's strange tree, so fruitful on occasion:
But to return,—Get very drunk; and when
You wake with head-ache, you shall see what then.

180

Ring for your valet—bid him quickly bring
Some hock and soda-water, then you'll know
1435 A pleasure worthy Xerxes' the great king;
For not the blest sherbet, sublimed with snow,
Nor the first sparkle of the desert-spring,
Nor Burgundy in all its sunset glow,
After long travel, ennui, love, or slaughter,
1440 Vie with that draught of hock and soda-water.

181

The coast—I think it was the coast that I
Was just describing—Yes, it *WAS* the coast—
Lay at this period quiet as the sky,
The sands untumbled, the blue waves untost,
1445 And all was stillness, save the sea-bird's cry,
And dolphin's leap, and little billow crost
By some low rock or shelve, that made it fret
Against the boundary it scarcely wet.

182

And forth they wandered, her sire being gone,
1450 As I have said, upon an expedition;
And mother, brother, guardian, she had none,
Save Zoe, who, although with due precision
She waited on her lady with the sun,

5. The 5th-century Persian king was said to have offered a reward to anyone who could discover a new kind of pleasure.

Thought daily service was her only mission,
Bringing warm water, wreathing her long tresses,
And asking now and then for cast-off dresses.

183

It was the cooling hour, just when the rounded
Red sun sinks down behind the azure hill,
Which then seems as if the whole earth it bounded,
Circling all nature, hush'd, and dim, and still,
With the far mountain-crescent half surrounded
On one side, and the deep sea calm and chill
Upon the other, and the rosy sky,
With one star sparkling through it like an eye.

184

And thus they wander'd forth, and hand in hand,
Over the shining pebbles and the shells,
Glided along the smooth and harden'd sand,
And in the worn and wild receptacles
Work'd by the storms, yet work'd as it were plann'd,
In hollow halls, with sparry roofs and cells,
They turn'd to rest; and, each clasp'd by an arm,
Yielded to the deep twilight's purple charm.

185.

They look'd up to the sky, whose floating glow
Spread like a rosy ocean, vast and bright;
They gazed upon the glittering sea below,
Whence the broad moon rose circling into sight;
They heard the wave's splash, and the wind so low,
And saw each other's dark eyes darting light
Into each other—and, beholding this,
Their lips drew near, and clung into a kiss;

186

A long, long kiss, a kiss of youth and love,
And beauty, all concentrating like rays
Into one focus, kindled from above;
Such kisses as belong to early days,
Where heart, and soul, and sense, in concert move,
And the blood's lava, and the pulse a blaze,
Each kiss a heart-quake,—for a kiss's strength,
I think, it must be reckon'd by its length.

187

By length I mean duration; theirs endured
Heaven knows how long—no doubt they never reckon'd;
And if they had, they could not have secured
The sum of their sensations to a second:
They had not spoken; but they felt allured,
As if their souls and lips each other beckon'd,
Which, being join'd, like swarming bees they clung—
Their hearts the flowers from whence the honey sprung.

188

They were alone, but not alone as they
Who shut in chambers think it loneliness;
The silent ocean, and the starlight bay,
1500 The twilight glow, which momentarily grew less,
The voiceless sands, and dropping caves, that lay
Around them, made them to each other press,
As if there were no life beneath the sky
Save theirs, and that their life could never die.

189

1505 They fear'd no eyes nor ears on that lone beach,
They felt no terrors from the night, they were
All in all to each other: though their speech
Was broken words, they *thought* a language there,—
And all the burning tongues the passions teach
1510 Found in one sigh the best interpreter
Of nature's oracle—first love,—that all
Which Eve has left her daughters since her fall.

190

Haidee⁶ spoke not of scruples, ask'd no vows,
Nor offer'd any; she had never heard
1515 Of plight and promises to be a spouse,
Or perils by a loving maid incurr'd;
She was all which pure ignorance allows,
And flew to her young mate like a young bird;
And, never having dreamt of falsehood, she
1520 Had not one word to say of constancy.

191

She loved, and was beloved—she adored,
And she was worshipp'd; after nature's fashion,
Their intense souls, into each other pour'd,
If souls could die, had perish'd in that passion,—
1525 But by degrees their senses were restored,
Again to be o'ercome, again to dash on;
And, beating 'gainst *his* bosom, Haidee's heart
Felt as if never more to beat apart.

192

Alas! they were so young, so beautiful,
1530 So lonely, loving, helpless, and the hour
Was that in which the heart is always full,
And, having o'er itself no further power,
Prompts deeds eternity can not annul,
But pays off moments in an endless shower
1535 Of hell-fire—all prepared for people giving
Pleasure or pain to one another living.

6. Byron said, with reference to Haidee: "I was, and am, penetrated with the conviction that women only know evil from men, whereas men have no criterion to judge of purity or goodness but woman."

'93

Alas! for Juan and Haidee! they were
So loving and so lovely—till then never,
Excepting our first parents, such a pair
1540 Had run the risk of being damn'd for ever;
And Haidee, being devout as well as fair,
Had, doubtless, heard about the Stygian river,⁷
And hell and purgatory—but forgot
Just in the very crisis she should not.

194

1545 They look upon each other, and their eyes
Gleam in the moonlight; and her white arm clasps
Round Juan's head, and his around hers lies
Half buried in the tresses which it grasps;
She sits upon his knee, and drinks his sighs,
1550 He hers, until they end in broken gasps;
And thus they form a group that's quite antique,
Half naked, loving, natural, and Greek.

195

And when those deep and burning moments pass'd,
And Juan sunk to sleep within her arms,
1555 She slept not, but all tenderly, though fast,
Sustain'd his head upon her bosom's charms;
And now and then her eye to heaven is cast,
And then on the pale cheek her breast now warms,
Pillow'd on her o'erflowing heart, which pants
1560 With all it granted, and with all it grants.

196

An infant when it gazes on a light,
A child the moment when it drains the breast,
A devotee when soars the Host⁸ in sight,
An Arab with a stranger for a guest,
1565 A sailor when the prize has struck⁹ in fight,
A miser filling his most hoarded chest,
Feel rapture; but not such true joy are reaping
As they who watch o'er what they love while sleeping.

197

For there it lies so tranquil, so beloved,
1570 All that it hath of life with us is living;
So gentle, stirless, helpless, and unmoved,
And all unconscious of the joy 'tis giving;
All it hath felt, inflicted, pass'd, and proved,
Hush'd into depths beyond the watcher's diving;
1575 There lies the thing we love with all its errors
And all its charms, like death without its terrors.

7. The Styx, which flows through Hades.

8. The bread or wafer that a priest consecrates to celebrate Mass.

9. When a captured vessel (a "prize") lowers its flag in token of surrender.

101

The lady watch'd her lover—and that hour
Of Love's, and Night's, and Ocean's solitude,
O'erflow'd her soul with their united power;
1580 Amidst the barren sand and rocks so rude
She and her wave-worn love had made their bower,
Where nought upon their passion could intrude,
And all the stars that crowded the blue space
Saw nothing happier than her glowing face.

199

1585 Alas! the love of women! it is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing;
For all of theirs upon that die is thrown,
And if 'tis lost, life hath no more to bring
To them but mockeries of the past alone,
1590 And their revenge is as the tiger's spring,
Deadly, and quick, and crushing; yet, as real
Torture is theirs, what they inflict they feel.

200

They are right; for man, to man so oft unjust,
Is always so to women; one sole bond
1595 Awaits them, treachery is all their trust;
Taught to conceal, their bursting hearts despond
Over their idol, till some wealthier lust
Buys them in marriage—and what rests beyond?
A thankless husband, next a faithless lover,
1600 Then dressing, nursing, praying, and all's over.

201

Some take a lover, some take drams^a or prayers, *drink*
Some mind their household, others dissipation,
Some run away, and but exchange their cares,
Losing the advantage of a virtuous station;
1605 Few changes e'er can better their affairs,
Theirs being an unnatural situation,
From the dull palace to the dirty hovel:
Some play the devil, and then write a novel.¹

202

Haidee was Nature's bride, and knew not this;
1610 Haidee was Passion's child, born where the sun
Showers triple light, and scorches even the kiss
Of his gazelle-eyed daughters; she was one
Made but to love, to feel that she was his
Who was her chosen: what was said or done
1615 Elsewhere was nothing—She had nought to fear,
Hope, care, nor love beyond, her heart beat *here*.

1. The impetuous Lady Caroline Lamb, having thrown herself at Byron and been after a time rejected, incorporated incidents from the affair in her novel *Glenarvon* (1816).

203

And oh! that quickening of the heart, that beat!
How much it costs us! yet each rising throb
Is in its cause as its effect so sweet,
1620 That Wisdom, ever on the watch to rob
Joy of its alchymy, and to repeat
Fine truths, even Conscience, too, has a tough job
To make us understand each good old maxim,
So good—I wonder Castlereagh² don't tax 'em.

204

1625 And now 'twas done—on the lone shore were plighted
Their hearts; the stars, their nuptial torches, shed
Beauty upon the beautiful they lighted:
Ocean their witness, and the cave their bed,
By their own feelings hallow'd and united,
1630 Their priest was Solitude, and they were wed:
And they were happy, for to their young eyes
Each was an angel, and earth paradise.³

* # «

208

But Juan! had he quite forgotten Julia?
And should he have forgotten her so soon?
I can't but say it seems to me most truly a
1640 Perplexing question; but, no doubt, the moon
Does these things for us, and whenever newly a
Strong palpitation rises, 'tis her boon,
Else how the devil is it that fresh features
Have such a charm for us poor human creatures?

209

1665 I hate inconstancy—I loathe, detest,
Abhor, condemn, abjure the mortal made
Of such quicksilver clay that in his breast
No permanent foundation can be laid;
Love, constant love, has been my constant guest,
1670 And yet last night, being at a masquerade,
I saw the prettiest creature, fresh from Milan,
Which gave me some sensations like a villain.

210

But soon Philosophy came to my aid,
And whisper'd "think of every sacred tie!"
1675 "I will, my dear Philosophy!" I said,
"But then her teeth, and then, Oh heaven! her eye!

2. Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, detested by Byron for the ruthlessness he had shown in 1798 as the government's chief secretary for Ireland and for the foreign policy he later pursued as foreign secretary (1812–22). His belligerence with political opponents contributed to his unpopularity. Byron refers to a famously testy speech in

which Castlereagh complained of "an ignorant impatience of taxation."

3. This episode rewrites *Aeneid* 4 in which, influenced by the malicious goddess Juno's love spells, the hero Aeneas and Dido, queen of Carthage, consummate their union in the cave in which they have taken refuge from a storm.

I'll just inquire if she be wife or maid,
Or neither—out of curiosity."
"Stop!" cried Philosophy, with air so Grecian,
1680 (Though she was masqued then as a fair Venetian).

211

"Stop!" so I stopp'd.—But to return: that which
Men call inconstancy is nothing more
Than admiration due where nature's rich
Profusion with young beauty covers o'er
1685 Some favour'd object; and as in the niche
A lovely statue we almost adore,
This sort of adoration of the real
Is but a heightening of the "beau ideal."⁴

212

'Tis the perception of the beautiful,
1690 A fine extension of the faculties,
Platonic, universal, wonderful,
Drawn from the stars, and filter'd through the skies,
Without which life would be extremely dull;
In short, it is the use of our own eyes,
1695 With one or two small senses added, just
To hint that flesh is form'd of fiery dust.

213

Yet 'tis a painful feeling, and unwilling,
For surely if we always could perceive
In the same object graces quite as killing
1700 As when she rose upon us like an Eve,
'Twould save us many a heart-ache, many a shilling,
(For we must get them anyhow, or grieve),
Whereas, if one sole lady pleased for ever,
How pleasant for the heart, as well as liver!

216

In the mean time, without proceeding more
In this anatomy, I've finish'd now
Two hundred and odd stanzas as before,
That being about the number I'll allow
1725 Each canto of the twelve, or twenty-four;
And, laying down my pen, I make my bow,
Leaving Don Juan and Haidee to plead
For them and theirs with all who deign to read.

4. Ideal beauty (French), a common phrase in discussions of aesthetics.

From Canto 3

[JUAN AND HAIDEE]

1

Hail, Muse! *et cetera*.—We left Juan sleeping,
Pillow'd upon a fair and happy breast,
And watch'd by eyes that never yet knew weeping,
And loved by a young heart, too deeply blest
5 To feel the poison through her spirit creeping,
Or know who rested there, a foe to rest
Had soil'd the current of her sinless years,
And turn'd her pure heart's purest blood to tears.

2

Oh, Love! what is it in this world of ours
10 Which makes it fatal to be loved? Ah why
With cypress branches¹ hast thou wreathed thy bowers,
And made thy best interpreter a sigh?
As those who dote on odours pluck the flowers,
And place them on their breast—but place to die!
15 Thus the frail beings we would fondly cherish
Are laid within our bosoms but to perish.

3

In her first passion woman loves her lover,
In all the others all she loves is love,²
Which grows a habit she can ne'er get over,
20 And fits her loosely—like an easy glove,
As you may find, whene'er you like to prove³ her: *test*
One man alone at first her heart can move;
She then prefers him in the plural number,
Not finding that the additions much encumber.

4

25 I know not if the fault be men's or theirs;
But one thing's pretty sure; a woman planted³—
(Unless at once she plunge for life in prayers)—
After a decent time must be gallanted;
Although, no doubt, her first of love affairs
30 Is that to which her heart is wholly granted;
Yet there are some, they say, who have had *none*,
But those who have ne'er end with only *one*.⁴

5

'Tis melancholy, and a fearful sign
Of human frailty, folly, also crime,
35 That love and marriage rarely can combine,
Although they both are born in the same clime;
Marriage from love, like vinegar from wine—

1. Signifying sorrow.

2. An epigram that Byron translates from the 17th-century French wit Francois de la Rochefoucauld.

3. Abandoned (from the French *planter la*, to leave in the lurch).

4. Another epigram from la Rochefoucauld.

A sad, sour, sober beverage—by time
Is sharpen'd from its high celestial flavour
40 Down to a very homely household savour.

6

There's something of antipathy, as 'twere,
Between their present and their future state;
A kind of flattery that's hardly fair
Is used until the truth arrives too late—
45 Yet what can people do, except despair?
The same things change their names at such a rate;
For instance—passion in a lover's glorious,
But in a husband is pronounced uxorious.

7

Men grow ashamed of being so very fond;
50 They sometimes also get a little tired
(But that, of course, is rare), and then despond:
The same things cannot always be admired,
Yet 'tis "so nominated in the bond,"⁵
That both are tied till one shall have expired.
55 Sad thought! to lose the spouse that was adorning
Our days, and put one's servants into mourning.

8

There's doubtless something in domestic doings,
Which forms, in fact, true love's antithesis;
Romances paint at full length people's wooings,
60 But only give a bust of marriages;
For no one cares for matrimonial cooings,
There's nothing wrong in a connubial kiss:
Think you, if Laura had been Petrarch's wife,
He would have written sonnets all his life?⁶

9

65 All tragedies are finish'd by a death,
All comedies are ended by a marriage;
The future states of both are left to faith,
For authors fear description might disparage
The worlds to come of both, or fall beneath,
70 And then both worlds would punish their miscarriage;
So leaving each their priest and prayer-book ready,
They say no more of Death or of the Lady.⁷

10

The only two that in my recollection
Have sung of heaven and hell, or marriage, are
75 Dante and Milton, and of both the affection
Was hapless in their nuptials, for some bar
Of fault or temper ruin'd the connexion
(Such things, in fact, it don't ask much to mar);

5. Spoken by Shylock in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* 4.1.254: "Is it so nominated in the bond?"

6. The 14th-century Italian poet Petrarch made

Laura the subject of his sonnets but loved her only from afar.

7. Alluding to a popular ballad, "Death and the Lady."

But Dante's Beatrice and Milton's Eve
50 Were not drawn from their spouses, you conceive.

11

Some persons say that Dante meant theology
By Beatrice, and not a mistress—I,
Although my opinion may require apology,
Deem this a commentator's phantasy,
85 Unless indeed it was from his own knowledge he
Decided thus, and show'd good reason why;
I think that Dante's more abstruse ecstasies
Meant to personify the mathematics.

12

Haidee and Juan were not married, but
90 The fault was theirs, not mine: it is not fair,
Chaste reader, then, in any way to put
The blame on me, unless you wish they were;
Then if you'd have them wedded, please to shut
The book which treats of this erroneous pair,
95 Before the consequences grow too awful;
'Tis dangerous to read of loves unlawful.

'3

Yet they were happy,—happy in the illicit
Indulgence of their innocent desires;
But more imprudent grown with every visit,
100 Haidee forgot the island was her sire's;
When we have what we like, 'tis hard to miss it,
At least in the beginning, ere one tires;
Thus she came often, not a moment losing,
Whilst her piratical papa was cruising.

14

Let not his mode of raising cash seem strange,
105 Although he fleeced the flags of every nation,
For into a prime minister but change
His title, and 'tis nothing but taxation;
But he, more modest, took an humbler range
110 Of life, and in an honest vocation
Pursued o'er the high seas his watery journey,
And merely practised as a sea-attorney.

15

The good old gentleman had been detain'd
By winds and waves, and some important captures;
115 And, in the hope of more, at sea remain'd,
Although a squall or two had damp'd his raptures,
By swamping one of the prizes; he had chain'd
His prisoners, dividing them like chapters
In number'd lots; they all had cuffs and collars,
120 And averaged each from ten to a hundred dollars.

145 Then having settled his marine affairs,⁰¹
Despatching single cruisers here and there,
His vessel having need of some repairs,
He shaped his course to where his daughter fair
Continued still her hospitable cares;
150 But that part of the coast being shoal and bare,
And rough with reefs which ran out many a mile,
His port lay on the other side o' the isle.

20

And there he went ashore without delay,
Having no custom-house nor quarantine
155 To ask him awkward questions on the way
About the time and place where he had been:
He left his ship to be hove down next day,
With orders to the people to careen;*
So that all hands were busy beyond measure,
160 In getting out goods, ballast, guns, and treasure.

« # #

27

He saw his white walls shining in the sun,
210 His garden trees all shadowy and green;
He heard his rivulet's light bubbling run,
The distant dog-bark; and perceived between
The umbrage of the wood so cool and dun
The moving figures, and the sparkling sheen
215 Of arms (in the East all arm)—and various dyes
Of colour'd garbs, as bright as butterflies.

28

And as the spot where they appear he nears,
Surprised at these unwonted signs of idling,
He hears—alas! no music of the spheres,
220 But an unhallow'd, earthly sound of fiddling!
A melody which made him doubt his ears,
The cause being past his guessing or unriddling;
A pipe, too, and a drum, and shortly after,
A most unoriental roar of laughter.

* n «

38

He did not know (Alas! how men will lie)
That a report (especially the Greeks)
Avouch'd his death (such people never die),
300 And put his house in mourning several weeks,
But now their eyes and also lips were dry;
The bloom too had return'd to Haidee's cheeks.

8. To tip a vessel on its side to clean and repair its hull. "To be hove down": to weigh anchor.

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Her tears too being return'd into their fount,
She now kept house upon her own account.

39

305 Hence all this rice, meat, dancing, wine, and fiddling,
Which turn'd the isle into a place of pleasure;
The servants all were getting drunk or idling,
A life which made them happy beyond measure.
Her father's hospitality seem'd middling,
310 Compared with what Haidee did with his treasure;
'Twas wonderful how things went on improving,
While she had not one hour to spare from loving.

4°

Perhaps you think in stumbling on this feast
He flew into a passion, and in fact
315 There was no mighty reason to be pleased;
Perhaps you prophesy some sudden act,
The whip, the rack, or dungeon at the least,
To teach his people to be more exact,
And that, proceeding at a very high rate,
320 He showed the royal *penchants* of a pirate.

4·

You're wrong.—He was the mildest manner'd man
That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat;
With such true breeding of a gentleman,
You never could divine his real thought;
325 No courtier could, and scarcely woman can
Gird more deceit within a petticoat;
Pity he loved adventurous life's variety,
He was so great a loss to good society.

* * *

48

Not that he was not sometimes rash or so,
But never in his real and serious mood;
Then calm, concentrated, and still, and slow,
380 He lay coil'd like the boa in the wood;
With him it never was a word and blow,
His angry word once o'er, he shed no blood,
But in his silence there was much to rue,
And his *one* blow left little work for *two*.

49

385 He ask'd no further questions, and proceeded
On to the house, but by a private way,
So that the few who met him hardly heeded,
So little they expected him that day;
If love paternal in his bosom pleaded
390 For Haidee's sake, is more than I can say,
But certainly to one deem'd dead returning,
This revel seem'd a curious mode of mourning.

If all the dead could now return to life,
(Which God forbid!) or some, or a great many,
395 For instance, if a husband or his wife
(Nuptial examples are as good as any),
No doubt whate'er might be their former strife,
The present weather would be much more rainy—
Tears shed into the grave of the connexion
400 Would share most probably its resurrection.

5¹

He enter'd in the house no more his home,
A thing to human feelings the most trying,
And harder for the heart to overcome,
Perhaps, than even the mental pangs of dying;
405 To find our hearthstone turn'd into a tomb,
And round its once warm precincts palely lying
The ashes of our hopes, is a deep grief,
Beyond a single gentleman's belief.

5²

He enter'd in the house—his home no more,
410 For without hearts there is no home;—and felt
The solitude of passing his own door
Without a welcome; *there* he long had dwelt,
There his few peaceful days Time had swept o'er,
There his worn bosom and keen eye would melt
415 Over the innocence of that sweet child,
His only shrine of feelings undefiled.

53

He was a man of a strange temperament,
Of mild demeanour though of savage mood,
Moderate in all his habits, and content
420 With temperance in pleasure, as in food,
Quick to perceive, and strong to bear, and meant
For something better, if not wholly good;
His country's wrongs⁹ and his despair to save her
Had stung him from a slave to an enslaver.

a # #

96

But let me to my story: I must own,
If I have any fault, it is digression;
Leaving my people to proceed alone,
860 While I soliloquize beyond expression;
But these are my addresses from the throne,¹
Which put off business to the ensuing session:
Forgetting each omission is a loss to
The world, not quite so great as Ariosto.²

9. Referring to the Greek nation's subjugation by the Ottoman Empire.

1. The speeches with which the British monarch opens sessions of Parliament.

2. Byron warmly admired this poet, author of *Orlando Furioso* (1532), the greatest of the Italian chivalric romances.

97

- 865 I know that what our neighbours call "*longueurs*,"³
 (We've not so good a *word*, but have the *thing*
In that complete perfection which ensures
 An epic from Bob Southey's every spring—)
Form not the true temptation which allures
870 The reader; but 'twould not be hard to bring
Some fine examples of the *epopee*,⁴
To prove its grand ingredient is *ennui*.

98

- We learn from Horace, Homer sometimes sleeps;⁵
 We feel without him: Wordsworth sometimes wakes,
875 To show with what complacency he creeps,
 With his dear "*Waggoners*,"⁷ around his lakes;
He wishes for "a boat" to sail the deeps—
 Of ocean?—No, of air; and then he makes
Another outcry for "a little boat,"
880 And drivels seas to set it well afloat.⁶

99

- If he must fain sweep o'er the etherial plain,
 And Pegasus⁹ runs restive in his "waggon,"
Could he not beg the loan of Charles's Wain?⁸
 Or pray Medea for a single dragon?²
885 Or if too classic for his vulgar brain,
 He fear'd his neck to venture such a nag on,
And he must needs mount nearer to the moon,
Could not the blockhead ask for a balloon?

100

- "Pedlars,"³ and "boats," and "waggons!" Oh! Ye shades
890 Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?
That trash of such sort not alone evades
 Contempt, but from the bathos' vast abyss
Floats scumlike uppermost, and these Jack Cades⁴
 Of sense and song above your graves may hiss—
895 The "little boatman" and his "Peter Bell"
Can sneer at him who drew "Achitophel!"⁵

3. Boringly wordy passages of verse or prose (French).

4. Robert Southey (1774-1843), poet laureate and author of a number of epic-length narrative poems.

5. Epic poem (French).

6. Horace's *Art of Poetry* 359: "Sometimes great Homer nods."

7. A reference to Wordsworth's long narrative poem *The Waggoner* (1819).

8. In the prologue to his poem *Peter Bell* (1819), Wordsworth wishes for "a little boat, / In shape a very crescent-moon: / Fast through the clouds my boat can sail."

9. The winged horse of Greek myth.

1. The constellation known in the United States as the Big Dipper. "Wain" is an archaic term for

wagon.

2. When the Argonaut Jason abandoned Medea to take a new wife, she murdered their sons to punish him, then escaped in a chariot drawn by winged dragons.

3. Wordsworth's Peddler is the narrator of the story in his early manuscript *The Ruined Cottage* (p. 280), which was later incorporated into book 1 of *The Excursion* (1814).

4. A rebel commoner who led an uprising against Henry VI in 1450.

5. I.e., John Dryden, author of the satiric *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), whom Byron greatly admired. Wordsworth had criticized Dryden's poetry in the *Essay, Supplementary to the Preface to his Poems* (1815).

101

T' our tale.—The feast was over, the slaves gone,
The dwarfs and dancing girls had all retired;
The Arab lore and poet's song were done,
900 And every sound of revelry expired;
The lady and her lover, left alone,
The rosy flood of twilight's sky admired;—
Ave Maria!⁶ o'er the earth and sea,
That heavenliest hour of Heaven is worthiest thee!

102

905 Ave Maria! blessed be the hour!
The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
Have felt that moment in its fullest power
Sink o'er the earth so beautiful and soft,
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
910 Or the faint dying day-hymn stole aloft,
And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seem'd stirr'd with prayer.

103

Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of prayer!
Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of love!
915 Ave Maria! may our spirits dare
Look up to thine and to thy Son's above!
Ave Maria! oh that face so fair!
Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty dove—
What though 'tis but a pictured image strike—
920 That painting is no idol, 'tis too like.

104

Some kinder casuists⁶ are pleased to say, *moralists*
In nameless print—that I have no devotion;
But set those persons down with me to pray,
And you shall see who has the properest notion
925 Of getting into Heaven the shortest way;
My altars are the mountains and the ocean,
Earth, air, stars,—all that springs from the great Whole,
Who hath produced, and will receive the soul.

* « *

From Canto 4

[JUAN AND HAIDEE]

3

As boy, I thought myself a clever fellow,
And wish'd that others held the same opinion;

6. Hail, Mary (Latin); the opening words of a Roman Catholic prayer. *Ave Maria* is sometimes used to refer to evening (or morning), because the

prayer is part of the service at these times.
7. I.e., "those downcast eyes" seize the attention.

726 / GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

They took it up when my days grew more mellow,
20 And other minds acknowledged my dominion:
Now my sere fancy "falls into the yellow
Leaf,"¹ and imagination droops her pinion,² *wing*
And the sad truth which hovers o'er my desk
Turns what was once romantic to burlesque.

4
25 And if I laugh at any mortal thing,
'Tis that I may not weep; and if I weep,
'Tis that our nature cannot always bring
Itself to apathy, for we must steep
Our hearts first in the depths of Lethe's³ spring
30 Ere what we least wish to behold will sleep:
Thetis baptized her mortal son in Styx;⁴
A mortal mother would on Lethe fix.

5
Some have accused me of a strange design
Against the creed and morals of the land,
35 And trace it in this poem every line:
I don't pretend that I quite understand
My own meaning when I would be *very* fine,
But the fact is that I have nothing plann'd,
Unless it were to be a moment merry,
40 A novel word in my vocabulary.

6
To the kind reader of our sober clime
This way of writing will appear exotic;
Pulci⁴ was sire of the half-serious rhyme,
Who sang when chivalry was more Quixotic,
45 And revell'd in the fancies of the time,
True knights, chaste dames, huge giants, kings despotic;
But all these, save the last, being obsolete,
I chose a modern subject as more meet.

7
How I have treated it, I do not know;
50 Perhaps no better than they have treated me
Who have imputed such designs as show
Not what they saw, but what they wish'd to see;
But if it gives them pleasure, be it so,
This is a liberal age, and thoughts are free:
55 Meantime Apollo plucks me by the ear,
And tells me to resume my story here.

1. Cf. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* 5.3.22-24: "My way of life / Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf."
2. A river in Hades that brings forgetfulness of life.
3. The river in Hades into which the nymph Thetis dipped Achilles to make him invulnerable.

4. Author of the *Morgante Maggiore*, prototype of the Italian seriocomic romance from which Byron derived the stanza and manner of *Don Juan* (see headnote, p. 669).

Juan and Haidee gazed upon each other
With swimming looks of speechless tenderness,
Which mix'd all feelings, friend, child, lover, brother,
All that the best can mingle and express
205 When two pure hearts are pour'd in one another,
And love too much, and yet can not love less;
But almost sanctify the sweet excess
By the immortal wish and power to bless.

27

Mix'd in each other's arms, and heart in heart,
210 Why did they not then die?—they had lived too long
Should an hour come to bid them breathe apart;
Years could but bring them cruel things or wrong,
The world was not for them, nor the world's art⁵
For beings passionate as Sappho's song;
215 Love was born *with* them, *in* them, so intense,
It was their very spirit—not a sense.

28

They should have lived together deep in woods,
Unseen as sings the nightingale; they were
Unfit to mix in these thick solitudes
220 Call'd social, haunts of Hate, and Vice, and Care:
How lonely every freeborn creature broods!
The sweetest song-birds nestle in a pair;
The eagle soars alone; the gull and crow
Flock o'er their carrion, just like men below.

29

225 Now pillow'd cheek to cheek, in loving sleep,
Haidee and Juan their siesta took,
A gentle slumber, but it was not deep,
For ever and anon a something shook
Juan, and shuddering o'er his frame would creep;
230 And Haidee's sweet lips murmur'd like a brook
A wordless music, and her face so fair
Stir'd with her dream as rose-leaves with the air;

30

Or as the stirring of a deep clear stream
Within an Alpine hollow, when the wind
235 Walks o'er it, was she shaken by the dream,
The mystical usurper of the mind—
O'erpowering us to be whate'er may seem
Good to the soul which we no more can bind;
Strange state of being! (for 'tis still to be)
240 Senseless to feel, and with seal'd eyes to see.

31

She dream'd of being alone on the sea-shore,
Chain'd to a rock; she knew not how, but stir

5. An echo of Romeo's words to the impoverished apothecary: "The world is not thy friend, nor the world's law" (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* 5.1.72).

She could not from the spot, and the loud roar
Grew, and each wave rose roughly, threatening her;
And o'er her upper lip they seem'd to pour,
Until she sobb'd for breath, and soon they were
Foaming o'er her lone head, so fierce and high—
Each broke to drown her, yet she could not die.

32

Anon—she was released, and then she stray'd
O'er the sharp shingles^a with her bleeding feet, *loose pebbles*
And stumbled almost every step she made;
And something roll'd before her in a sheet,
Which she must still pursue howe'er afraid;
'Twas white and indistinct, nor stopp'd to meet
Her glance nor grasp, for still she gazed and grasp'd,
And ran, but it escaped her as she clasp'd.

33

The dream changed; in a cave she stood, its walls
Were hung with marble icicles; the work
Of ages on its water-fretted halls,
Where waves might wash, and seals might breed and lurk;
Her hair was dripping, and the very balls
Of her black eyes seemed turn'd to tears, and murk
The sharp rocks look'd below each drop they caught,
Which froze to marble as it fell, she thought.

34

And wet, and cold, and lifeless at her feet,
Pale as the foam that froth'd on his dead brow,
Which she essay'd in vain to clear, (how sweet
Were once her cares, how idle seem'd they now!)
Lay Juan, nor could aught renew the beat
Of his quench'd heart; and the sea dirges low
Rang in her sad ears like a mermaid's song,
And that brief dream appear'd a life too long.

35

And gazing on the dead, she thought his face
Faded, or alter'd into something new—
Like to her father's features, till each trace
More like and like to Lambro's aspect grew—
With all his keen worn look and Grecian grace;
And starting, she awoke, and what to view?
Oh! Powers of Heaven! what dark eye meets she there?
'Tis—'tis her father's—fix'd upon the pair!

36

Then shrieking, she arose, and shrieking fell,
With joy and sorrow, hope and fear, to see
Him whom she deem'd a habitant where dwell
The ocean-buried, risen from death, to be
Perchance the death of one she loved too well:
Dear as her father had been to Haidee,

It was a moment of that awful kind—
I have seen such—but must not call to mind.

37

Up Juan sprung to Haidee's bitter shriek,
And caught her falling, and from off the wall
Snatch'd down his sabre, in hot haste to wreak
Vengeance on him who was the cause of all:
Then Lambro, who till now forbore to speak,
Smiled scornfully, and said, "Within my call,
A thousand scimitars await the word;
Put up, young man, put up your silly sword."

38

And Haidee clung around him; "Juan, 'tis—
'Tis Lambro—'tis my father! Kneel with me—
He will forgive us—yes—it must be—yes.
Oh! dearest father, in this agony
Of pleasure and of pain—even while I kiss
Thy garment's hem with transport, can it be
That doubt should mingle with my filial joy?
Deal with me as thou wilt, but spare this boy."

39

High and inscrutable the old man stood,
Calm in his voice, and calm within his eye—
Not always signs with him of calmest mood:
He look'd upon her, but gave no reply;
Then turn'd to Juan, in whose cheek the blood
Oft came and went, as there resolved to die;
In arms, at least, he stood, in act to spring
On the first foe whom Lambro's call might bring.

40

"Young man, your sword"; so Lambro once more said:
Juan replied, "Not while this arm is free."
The old man's cheek grew pale, but not with dread,
And drawing from his belt a pistol, he
Replied, "Your blood be then on your own head."
Then look'd close at the flint, as if to see
'Twas fresh—for he had lately used the lock—
And next proceeded quietly to cock.

41

It has a strange quickjar upon the ear,
That cocking of a pistol, when you know
A moment more will bring the sight to bear
Upon your person, twelve yards off, or so;
A gentlemanly distance,⁷ not too near,
If you have got a former friend for foe;
But after being fired at once or twice,
The ear becomes more Irish, and less nice.⁸

6. The part of the gun that explodes the charge.
7. I.e., dueling distance.

8. Finicky. Byron alludes to the propensity of hot-headed young Irishmen to fight duels.

730 / GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

42

Lambro presented, and one instant more
330 Had stopp'd this Canto, and Don Juan's breath,
When Haidee threw herself her boy before;
Stern as her sire: "On me," she cried, "let death
Descend—the fault is mine; this fatal shore
He found—but sought not. I have pledged my faith;
335 I love him—I will die with him: I knew
Your nature's firmness—know your daughter's too."

43

A minute past, and she had been all tears,
And tenderness, and infancy: but now
She stood as one who champion'd human fears—
340 Pale, statue-like, and stern, she woo'd the blow;
And tall beyond her sex, and their compeers,⁹
She drew up to her height, as if to show
A fairer mark; and with a fix'd eye scann'd
Her father's face—but never stopp'd his hand.

44

345 He gazed on her, and she on him; 'twas strange
How like they look'd! the expression was the same;
Serenely savage, with a little change
In the large dark eye's mutual-darted flame;
For she too was as one who could avenge,
350 If cause should be—a lioness, though tame:
Her father's blood before her father's face
Boil'd up, and prov'd her truly of his race.

45

I said they were alike, their features and
Their stature differing but in sex and years;
355 Even to the delicacy of their hand
There was resemblance, such as true blood wears;
And now to see them, thus divided, stand
In fix'd ferocity, when joyous tears,
And sweet sensations, should have welcomed both,
360 Show what the passions are in their full growth.

46

The father paused a moment, then withdrew
His weapon, and replaced it; but stood still,
And looking on her, as to look her through,
"Not I," he said, "have sought this stranger's ill;
365 Not I have made this desolation: few
Would bear such outrage, and forbear to kill;
But I must do my duty—how thou hast
Done thine, the present vouches for the past.

47

"Let him disarm; or, by my father's head,
370 His own shall roll before you like a ball!"

9. i.e., she was the match in height of Lambro and Juan.

He raised his whistle, as the word he said,
And blew; another answer'd to the call,
And rushing in disorderly, though led,
And arm'd from boot to turban, one and all,
375 Some twenty of his train came, rank on rank;
He gave the word, "Arrest or slay the Frank."

48

Then, with a sudden movement, he withdrew
His daughter; while compress'd within his clasp,
Twixt her and Juan interposed the crew;
380 In vain she struggled in her father's grasp—
His arms were like a serpent's coil: then flew
Upon their prey, as darts an angry asp,
The file of pirates; save the foremost, who
Had fallen, with his right shoulder half cut through.

49

385 The second had his cheek laid open; but
The third, a wary, cool old sworder, took
The blows upon his cutlass, and then put
His own well in; so well, ere you could look,
His man was floor'd, and helpless at his foot,
390 With the blood running like a little brook
From two smart sabre gashes, deep and red—
One on the arm, the other on the head.

50

And then they bound him where he fell, and bore
Juan from the apartment: with a sign
395 Old Lambro bade them take him to the shore,
Where lay some ships which were to sail at nine.
They laid him in a boat, and plied the oar
Until they reach'd some galliots,² placed in line;
On board of one of these, and under hatches,
400 They stow'd him, with strict orders to the watches.

51

The world is full of strange vicissitudes,
And here was one exceedingly unpleasant:
A gentleman so rich in the world's goods,
Handsome and young, enjoying all the present,
405 Just at the very time when he least broods
On such a thing is suddenly to sea sent,
Wounded and chain'd, so that he cannot move,
And all because a lady fell in love.

« «

56

Afric is all the sun's, and as her earth
Her human clay is kindled; full of power

1. Term used in the Near East to designate a Western European.

2. Small, fast galleys, propelled by both oars and sails.

732 / GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

For good or evil, burning from its birth,
The Moorish blood partakes the planet's hour,
445 And like the soil beneath it will bring forth:
Beauty and love were Haidee's mother's dower;³ *dmvry*
But her large dark eye show'd deep Passion's force,
Though sleeping like a lion near a source.

57

Her daughter, temper'd with a milder ray,
450 Like summer clouds all silvery, smooth, and fair,
Till slowly charged with thunder they display
Terror to earth, and tempest to the air,
Had held till now her soft and milky way;
But overwrought with passion and despair,
455 The fire burst forth from her Numidian⁴ veins, *North African*
Even as the Simoom⁵ sweeps the blasted plains.

58

The last sight which she saw was Juan's gore,
And he himself o'ermaster'd and cut down;
His blood was running on the very floor
460 Where late he trod, her beautiful, her own;
Thus much she view'd an instant and no more,—
Her struggles ceased with one convulsive groan;
On her sire's arm, which until now scarce held
Her writhing, fell she like a cedar fell'd.

59

465 A vein had burst, and her sweet lips' pure dyes
Were dabbled with the deep blood which ran o'er;⁶
And her head droop'd as when the lily lies
O'ercharged with rain: her summon'd handmaids bore
Their lady to her couch with gushing eyes;
470 Of herbs and cordials they produced their store,
But she defied all means they could employ,
Like one life could not hold, nor death destroy.

60

Days lay she in that state unchanged, though chill
With nothing livid,⁷ still her lips were red;
475 She had no pulse, but death seem'd absent still;
No hideous sign proclaim'd her surely dead;
Corruption came not in each mind to kill
All hope; to look upon her sweet face bred
New thoughts of life, for it seem'd full of soul,
480 She had so much, earth could not claim the whole.

* s *

3. A violent, hot, dust-laden desert wind.
4. This is no very uncommon effect of the violence
of conflicting and different passions [Byron's

note].
5. I.e., though she was ashen pale,

545 Twelve days and nights she wither'd thus; at last,
Without a groan, or sigh, or glance, to show
A parting pang, the spirit from her past:° *passed*
And they who watch'd her nearest could not know
The very instant, till the change that cast
550 Her sweet face into shadow, dull and slow,
Glazed o'er her eyes—the beautiful, the black—
Oh! to possess such lustre—and then lack!

70

She died, but not alone; she held within
A second principle of life, which might
555 Have dawn'd a fair and sinless child of sin;
But closed its little being without light,
And went down to the grave unborn, wherein
Blossom and bough lie wither'd with one blight;
In vain the dews of Heaven descend above
560 The bleeding flower and blasted fruit of love.

71

Thus lived—thus died she; never more on her
Shall sorrow light, or shame. She was not made
Through years or moons the inner weight to bear,
Which colder hearts endure till they are laid
565 By age in earth; her days and pleasures were
Brief, but delightful—such as had not staid
Long with her destiny; but she sleeps well
By the sea shore, whereon she loved to dwell.

72

That isle is now all desolate and bare,
570 Its dwellings down, its tenants past away;
None but her own and father's grave is there,
And nothing outward tells of human clay;
Ye could not know where lies a thing so fair,
No stone is there to show, no tongue to say
575 What was; no dirge, except the hollow sea's,
Mourns o'er the beauty of the Cyclades.

73

But many a Greek maid in a loving song
Sighs o'er her name; and many an islander
With her sire's story makes the night less long;
580 Valour was his, and beauty dwelt with her;
If she loved rashly, her life paid for wrong—
A heavy price must all pay who thus err,
In some shape; let none think to fly the danger,
For soon or late Love is his own avenger.

585 But let me change this theme, which grows too sad,
And lay this sheet of sorrows on the shelf;
I don't much like describing people mad,
For fear of seeming rather touch'd myself—
Besides Fve no more on this head to add;
590 And as my Muse is a capricious elf,
We'll put about, and try another tack
With Juan, left half-kill'd some stanzas back.⁶

1818-23

1819-24

Stanzas Written on the Road between Florence and Pisa

Oh, talk not to me of a name great in story—
The days of our youth are the days of our glory;
And the myrtle and ivy¹ of sweet two-and-twenty
Are worth all your laurels,² though ever so plenty.

5 What are garlands and crowns to the brow that is wrinkled?
'Tis but as a dead-flower with May-dew besprinkled:
Then away with all such from the head that is hoary!³
What care I for the wreaths that can *only* give glory?

Oh FAME!—if I e'er took delight in thy praises,
10 'Twas less for the sake of thy high-sounding phrases,
Than to see the bright eyes of the dear one discover
She thought that I was not unworthy to love her.

There chiefly I sought thee, *there* only I found thee;
Her glance was the best of the rays that surround thee;
15 When it sparkled o'er aught that was bright in my story,
I knew it was love, and I felt it was glory.

Nov. 1821

1830

6. Juan's adventures continue. He is sold as a slave in Constantinople to an enamored sultana; she disguises him as a girl and adds him to her husband's harem for convenience of access. Juan escapes, joins the Russian army that is besieging Ismail, and so well distinguishes himself in the capture of the town that he is sent with dispatches to St. Petersburg. There he becomes "man-mistress" to the insatiable empress Catherine the Great. As the result of her assiduous attentions, he falls into a physical decline and, for a salutary change of scene

and climate, is sent on a diplomatic mission to England. In canto 16, the last that Byron finished, he is in the middle of an amorous adventure while a guest at the medieval country mansion of an English nobleman, Lord Henry Amundeville, and his very beautiful wife.

1. Sacred to Bacchus, god of wine and revelry. "Myrtle": sacred to Venus, goddess of love.

2. A laurel crown was awarded by the Greeks as a mark of high honor.

3. White or gray with age.