

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON (1788-1824), who best personified the proud, agonized, solitary figure of the Romantic artist during his lifetime, was born near Aberdeen Scotland. He inherited the hereditary title and estate of an uncle at age ten. Born with a clubfoot, he compensated by becoming an excellent swimmer. He was educated at Cambridge. Even in the decadent Regency Society of the 1800s and 1810s, Byron managed to court infamy. He conducted affairs with a number of women, including Lady Oxford and Lady Caroline Lamb; he is also rumored to have had homosexual affairs as well as an incestuous relationship with a half-sister Augusta Leigh (whom he met as an adult). In 1815 he married the conventional Anne Milbanke with whom he had a daughter Ada; however, they separated the following year. Byron's literary persona played up the role of persecuted outsider haunted by unspeakable sins. Though his early works were dismissed, the appearance of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in 1812 made him an overnight sensation. Despite, or perhaps because of, the literary device of the persona "Childe" or "Knight" Harold, Byron became inextricably associated with the pose of world-weary Nietzschean anti-hero. Later Byron would toy with the anti-hero character in the mock-epic masterpiece *Don Juan*. Though a close friend and poetic peer of Percy Shelley and an admirer of Coleridge, Byron was never fully at home with the Romantic method or theory as articulated by Wordsworth and Coleridge. Byron relied upon complex stanzaic patterns with intricate rhyme schemes such as Rhyme Royale (used in *Don Juan*). He adopted a literary tone less filled with Romantic awe of the universal spirit than the biting neoclassic satire of a Swift or Pope that is quicker to see the flaws of human nature rather its potential. A defender of human rights and national liberty, Byron died—rather unheroically, of a fever—in a failed campaign for Greek independence from Turkish rule.

SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY

1
 She walks in Beauty, like the night
 Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
 And all that's best of dark and bright
 Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
 Thus mellow'd to that tender light
 Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.

2
 One shade the more, one ray the less,
 Had half impair'd the nameless grace
 Which waves in every raven tress,
 Or softly lightens o'er her face;
 Where thoughts serenely sweet express
 How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

3
 And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
 So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
 The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
 But tell of days in goodness spent,
 A mind at peace with all below,
 A heart whose love is innocent!

WRITTEN AFTER SWIMMING FROM SESTOS TO
 ABYDOS

If, in the month of dark December,
 Leander, who was nightly wont
 (What maid will not the tale remember?)
 To cross thy stream, broad Hellespont!

If, when the wintry tempest roared,
 He sped to Hero, nothing loath,
 And thus of old thy current poured,
 Fair Venus! how I pity both!

For me, degenerate modern wretch,
 Though in the genial month of May,
 My dripping limbs I faintly stretch,
 And think I've done a feat today.

But since he crossed the rapid tide,
 According to the doubtful story,
 To woo -and -Lord knows what beside,
 And swam for Love, as I for Glory;

'Twere hard to say who fared the best:
 Sad mortals! thus the gods still plague you!
 He lost his labour, I my jest;
 For he was drowned, and I've the ague.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB

1
 The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
 And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
 And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
 When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

2
 Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
 That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
 Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
 That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

3
 For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
 And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass'd,
 And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
 And their hearts but once heav'd—and for ever grew still!

4
 And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
 But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride;
 And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
 And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

5
 And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
 With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:
 And the tents were all silent—the banners alone—
 The lances unlifted—the trumpets unblown.

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

SO WE'LL GO NO MORE A-ROVING

1

So, we'll go no more a-roving
 So late into the night,
 Though the heart be still as loving,
 And the moon be still as bright.

2

For the sword outwears its sheath,
 And the soul wears out the breast,
 And the heart must pause to breathe,
 And Love itself have rest.

3

Though the night was made for loving,
 And the day returns too soon,
 Yet we'll go no more a-roving
 By the light of the moon.

DARKNESS

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
 The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
 Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
 Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
 Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
 Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day,
 And men forgot their passions in the dread
 Of this their desolation; and all hearts
 Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:
 And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
 The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,
 The habitations of all things which dwell,
 Were burnt for beacons; cities were consum'd,
 And men were gather'd round their blazing homes
 To look once more into each other's face;
 Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
 Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch:
 A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;
 Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour
 They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks
 Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black.
 The brows of men by the despairing light
 Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
 The flashes fell upon them; some lay down
 And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest
 Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smil'd;
 And others hurried to and fro, and fed
 Their funeral piles with fuel, and look'd up
 With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
 The pall of a past world; and then again
 With curses cast them down upon the dust,

And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild birds shriek'd
 And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
 And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
 Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd
 And twin'd themselves among the multitude,
 Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food.
 And War, which for a moment was no more,
 Did glut himself again: a meal was bought
 With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
 Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
 All earth was but one thought—and that was death
 Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
 Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
 Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
 The meagre by the meagre were devour'd,
 Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,
 And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
 The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
 Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead
 Lur'd their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,
 But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
 And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
 Which answer'd not with a caress—he died.
 The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two
 Of an enormous city did survive,
 And they were enemies: they met beside
 The dying embers of an altar-place
 Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things
 For an unholy usage; they rak'd up,
 And shivering scrap'd with their cold skeleton hands
 The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
 Blew for a little life, and made a flame
 Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
 Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
 Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and died—
 Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
 Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
 Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,
 The populous and the powerful was a lump,
 Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless—
 A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
 The rivers, lakes and ocean all stood still,
 And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;
 Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
 And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropp'd
 They slept on the abyss without a surge—
 The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
 The moon, their mistress, had expir'd before;
 The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,
 And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need
 Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

ON THIS DAY I COMPLETE MY THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR

1

'Tis time the heart should be unmoved,
 Since others it hath ceased to move:
 Yet, though I cannot be beloved,
 Still let me love!

2

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of Love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone!

3

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some Volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze—
A funeral pile.

4

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
The exalted portion of the pain
And power of love, I cannot share,
But wear the chain.

5

But 'tis not thus—and 'tis not here—
Such thoughts should shake my soul nor now,
Where Glory decks the hero's bier,
Or binds his brow.

6

The Sword, the Banner, and the Field,
Glory and Greece, around me see!
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
Was not more free.

7

Awake! (not Greece—she is awake!)
Awake, my spirit! Think through whom
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,
And then strike home!

8

Tread those reviving passions down,
Unworthy manhood!—unto thee
Indifferent should the smile or frown
Of Beauty be.

9

If thou regret'st thy youth, why live?
The land of honourable death
Is here:—up to the Field, and give
Away thy breath!

10

Seek out—less often sought than found—
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy Rest.

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE
CANTO THE THIRD.

I.

Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child!
Ada! sole daughter of my house and heart?

When last I saw thy young blue eyes, they smiled,
And then we parted,—not as now we part,
But with a hope. -

Awaking with a start,

The waters heave around me; and on high
The winds lift up their voices: I depart,
Whither I know not; but the hour's gone by,
When Albion's lessening shores could grieve or glad mine eye.

II.

Once more upon the waters! yet once more!
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows his rider. Welcome to their roar!
Swift be their guidance, wheresoe'er it lead!
Though the strained mast should quiver as a reed,
And the rent canvas fluttering strew the gale,
Still must I on; for I am as a weed,
Flung from the rock, on Ocean's foam, to sail
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail.

V.

He who, grown aged in this world of woe,
In deeds, not years, piercing the depths of life,
So that no wonder waits him; nor below
Can love or sorrow, fame, ambition, strife,
Cut to his heart again with the keen knife
Of silent, sharp endurance: he can tell
Why thought seeks refuge in lone caves, yet rife
With airy images, and shapes which dwell
Still unimpaired, though old, in the soul's haunted cell.

VI.

'Tis to create, and in creating live
A being more intense, that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now.
What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou,
Soul of my thought! with whom I traverse earth,
Invisible but gazing, as I glow
Mixed with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,
And feeling still with thee in my crushed feelings' dearth.

VII.

Yet must I think less wildly: I HAVE thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame:
And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poisoned. 'Tis too late!
Yet am I changed; though still enough the same
In strength to bear what time cannot abate,
And feed on bitter fruits without accusing fate.

VIII.

Something too much of this: but now 'tis past,
And the spell closes with its silent seal.
Long-absent Harold reappears at last;
He of the breast which fain no more would feel,
Wrung with the wounds which kill not, but ne'er heal;
Yet Time, who changes all, had altered him
In soul and aspect as in age: years steal

Fire from the mind as vigour from the limb;
And life's enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim.

IX.

His had been quaffed too quickly, and he found
The dregs were wormwood; but he filled again,
And from a purer fount, on holier ground,
And deemed its spring perpetual; but in vain!
Still round him clung invisibly a chain
Which galled for ever, fettering though unseen,
And heavy though it clanked not; worn with pain,
Which pined although it spoke not, and grew keen,
Entering with every step he took through many a scene.

X.

Secure in guarded coldness, he had mixed
Again in fancied safety with his kind,
And deemed his spirit now so firmly fixed
And sheathed with an invulnerable mind,
That, if no joy, no sorrow lurked behind;
And he, as one, might midst the many stand
Unheeded, searching through the crowd to find
Fit speculation; such as in strange land
He found in wonder-works of God and Nature's hand.

XI.

But who can view the ripened rose, nor seek
To wear it? who can curiously behold
The smoothness and the sheen of beauty's cheek,
Nor feel the heart can never all grow old?
Who can contemplate fame through clouds unfold
The star which rises o'er her steep, nor climb?
Harold, once more within the vortex rolled
On with the giddy circle, chasing Time,
Yet with a nobler aim than in his youth's fond prime.

XII.

But soon he knew himself the most unfit
Of men to herd with Man; with whom he held
Little in common; untaught to submit
His thoughts to others, though his soul was quelled,
In youth by his own thoughts; still uncompelled,
He would not yield dominion of his mind
To spirits against whom his own rebelled;
Proud though in desolation; which could find
A life within itself, to breathe without mankind.

XVI.

Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,
With naught of hope left, but with less of gloom;
The very knowledge that he lived in vain,
That all was over on this side the tomb,
Had made Despair a smilingness assume,
Which, though 'twere wild--as on the plundered wreck
When mariners would madly meet their doom
With draughts intemperate on the sinking deck -
Did yet inspire a cheer, which he forbore to check.

XVII.

Stop! for thy tread is on an empire's dust!

An earthquake's spoil is sepulchred below!
Is the spot marked with no colossal bust?
Nor column trophied for triumphal show?
None; but the moral's truth tells simpler so,
As the ground was before, thus let it be; -
How that red rain hath made the harvest grow!
And is this all the world has gained by thee,
Thou first and last of fields! king-making Victory?

XVIII.

And Harold stands upon this place of skulls,
The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo!
How in an hour the power which gave annals
Its gifts, transferring fame as fleeting too!
In 'pride of place' here last the eagle flew,
Then tore with bloody talon the rent plain,
Pierced by the shaft of banded nations through:
Ambition's life and labours all were vain;
He wears the shattered links of the world's broken chain.

XIX.

Fit retribution! Gaul may champ the bit,
And foam in fetters, but is Earth more free?
Did nations combat to make ONE submit;
Or league to teach all kings true sovereignty?
What! shall reviving thralldom again be
The patched-up idol of enlightened days?
Shall we, who struck the Lion down, shall we
Pay the Wolf homage? proffering lowly gaze
And servile knees to thrones? No; PROVE before ye praise!

* * * *

XXXIV.

There is a very life in our despair,
Vitality of poison--a quick root
Which feeds these deadly branches; for it were
As nothing did we die; but life will suit
Itself to Sorrow's most detested fruit,
Like to the apples on the Dead Sea shore,
All ashes to the taste: Did man compute
Existence by enjoyment, and count o'er
Such hours 'gainst years of life,--say, would he name
threescore?

XXXV.

The Psalmist numbered out the years of man:
They are enough: and if thy tale be TRUE,
Thou, who didst grudge him e'en that fleeting span,
More than enough, thou fatal Waterloo!
Millions of tongues record thee, and anew
Their children's lips shall echo them, and say,
'Here, where the sword united nations drew,
Our countrymen were warring on that day!'
And this is much, and all which will not pass away.

XXXVI.

There sunk the greatest, nor the worst of men,
Whose spirit anithetically mixed
One moment of the mightiest, and again
On little objects with like firmness fixed;

Extreme in all things! hadst thou been betwixt,
Thy throne had still been thine, or never been;
For daring made thy rise as fall: thou seek'st
Even now to reassume the imperial mien,
And shake again the world, the Thunderer of the scene!

XXXVII.

Conqueror and captive of the earth art thou!
She trembles at thee still, and thy wild name
Was ne'er more bruited in men's minds than now
That thou art nothing, save the jest of Fame,
Who wooed thee once, thy vassal, and became
The flatterer of thy fierceness, till thou wert
A god unto thyself; nor less the same
To the astounded kingdoms all inert,
Who deemed thee for a time whate'er thou didst assert.

XXXVIII.

Oh, more or less than man--in high or low,
Battling with nations, flying from the field;
Now making monarchs' necks thy footstool, now
More than thy meanest soldier taught to yield:
An empire thou couldst crush, command, rebuild,
But govern not thy pettiest passion, nor,
However deeply in men's spirits skilled,
Look through thine own, nor curb the lust of war,
Nor learn that tempted Fate will leave the loftiest star.

XXXIX.

Yet well thy soul hath brooked the turning tide
With that untaught innate philosophy,
Which, be it wisdom, coldness, or deep pride,
Is gall and wormwood to an enemy.
When the whole host of hatred stood hard by,
To watch and mock thee shrinking, thou hast smiled
With a sedate and all-enduring eye;
When Fortune fled her spoiled and favourite child,
He stood unbowed beneath the ills upon him piled.

XL.

Sager than in thy fortunes; for in them
Ambition steeled thee on to far too show
That just habitual scorn, which could condemn
Men and their thoughts; 'twas wise to feel, not so
To wear it ever on thy lip and brow,
And spurn the instruments thou wert to use
Till they were turned unto thine overthrow:
'Tis but a worthless world to win or lose;
So hath it proved to thee, and all such lot who choose.

XLI.

If, like a tower upon a headland rock,
Thou hadst been made to stand or fall alone,
Such scorn of man had helped to brave the shock;
But men's thoughts were the steps which paved thy throne,
THEIR admiration thy best weapon shone;
The part of Philip's son was thine, not then
(Unless aside thy purple had been thrown)
Like stern Diogenes to mock at men;
For sceptred cynics earth were far too wide a den.

XLII.

But quiet to quick bosoms is a hell,
And THERE hath been thy bane; there is a fire
And motion of the soul, which will not dwell
In its own narrow being, but aspire
Beyond the fitting medium of desire;
And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.

XLIII.

This makes the madmen who have made men mad
By their contagion! Conquerors and Kings,
Founders of sects and systems, to whom add
Sophists, Bards, Statesmen, all unquiet things
Which stir too strongly the soul's secret springs,
And are themselves the fools to those they fool;
Enviied, yet how unenviable! what stings
Are theirs! One breast laid open were a school
Which would unteach mankind the lust to shine or rule:

XLIV.

Their breath is agitation, and their life
A storm whereon they ride, to sink at last,
And yet so nursed and bigoted to strife,
That should their days, surviving perils past,
Melt to calm twilight, they feel overcast
With sorrow and supineness, and so die;
Even as a flame unfed, which runs to waste
With its own flickering, or a sword laid by,
Which eats into itself, and rusts ingloriously.

XLV.

He who ascends to mountain-tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below.
Though high ABOVE the sun of glory glow,
And far BENEATH the earth and ocean spread,
ROUND him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.

XLVI.

Away with these; true Wisdom's world will be
Within its own creation, or in thine,
Maternal Nature! for who teems like thee,
Thus on the banks of thy majestic Rhine?
There Harold gazes on a work divine,
A blending of all beauties; streams and dells,
Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, corn-field, mountain, vine,
And chiefless castles breathing stern farewells
From grey but leafy walls, where Ruin greenly dwells.

XLVII.

And there they stand, as stands a lofty mind,
Worn, but unstooping to the baser crowd,
All tenantless, save to the cranny wind,
Or holding dark communion with the cloud.
There was a day when they were young and proud,

Banners on high, and battles passed below;
But they who fought are in a bloody shroud,
And those which waved are shredless dust ere now,
And the bleak battlements shall bear no future blow.

XLVIII.

Beneath these battlements, within those walls,
Power dwelt amidst her passions; in proud state
Each robber chief upheld his armed halls,
Doing his evil will, nor less elate
Than mightier heroes of a longer date.
What want these outlaws conquerors should have
But History's purchased page to call them great?
A wider space, an ornamented grave?
Their hopes were not less warm, their souls were full as brave.

XLIX.

In their baronial feuds and single fields,
What deeds of prowess unrecorded died!
And Love, which lent a blazon to their shields,
With emblems well devised by amorous pride,
Through all the mail of iron hearts would glide;
But still their flame was fierceness, and drew on
Keen contest and destruction near allied,
And many a tower for some fair mischief won,
Saw the discoloured Rhine beneath its ruin run.

L.

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

LI.

A thousand battles have assailed thy banks,
But these and half their fame have passed away,
And Slaughter heaped on high his weltering ranks:
Their very graves are gone, and what are they?
Thy tide washed down the blood of yesterday,
And all was stainless, and on thy clear stream
Glassed with its dancing light the sunny ray;
But o'er the blackened memory's blighting dream
Thy waves would vainly roll, all sweeping as they seem.

LII.

Thus Harold inly said, and passed along,
Yet not insensible to all which here
Awoke the jocund birds to early song
In glens which might have made e'en exile dear:
Though on his brow were graven lines austere,
And tranquil sternness which had ta'en the place
Of feelings fierier far but less severe,
Joy was not always absent from his face,
But o'er it in such scenes would steal with transient trace.

LIX.

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

LX.

Adieu to thee again! a vain adieu!
There can be no farewell to scene like thine;
The mind is coloured by thy every hue;
And if reluctantly the eyes resign
Their cherished gaze upon thee, lovely Rhine!
'Tis with the thankful glance of parting praise;
More mighty spots may rise--more glaring shine,
But none unite in one attaching maze
The brilliant, fair, and soft;--the glories of old days.

LXI.

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

LXII.

But these recede. Above me are the Alps,
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
The avalanche--the thunderbolt of snow!
All that expands the spirit, yet appals,
Gathers around these summits, as to show
How Earth may pierce to Heaven, yet leave vain man below.

LXVII.

But these are deeds which should not pass away,
And names that must not wither, though the earth
Forgets her empires with a just decay,
The enslavers and the enslaved, their death and birth;
The high, the mountain-majesty of worth,
Should be, and shall, survivor of its woe,
And from its immortality look forth
In the sun's face, like yonder Alpine snow,
Imperishably pure beyond all things below.

LXVIII.

Lake Lemman woos me with its crystal face,
The mirror where the stars and mountains view
The stillness of their aspect in each trace
Its clear depth yields of their far height and hue:
There is too much of man here, to look through

With a fit mind the might which I behold;
But soon in me shall Loneliness renew
Thoughts hid, but not less cherished than of old,
Ere mingling with the herd had penned me in their fold.

LXIX.

To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind;
All are not fit with them to stir and toil,
Nor is it discontent to keep the mind
Deep in its fountain, lest it overboil
In one hot throng, where we become the spoil
Of our infection, till too late and long
We may deplore and struggle with the coil,
In wretched interchange of wrong for wrong
Midst a contentious world, striving where none are strong.

LXX.

There, in a moment, we may plunge our years
In fatal penitence, and in the blight
Of our own soul, turn all our blood to tears,
And colour things to come with hues of Night;
The race of life becomes a hopeless flight
To those that walk in darkness: on the sea,
The boldest steer but where their ports invite,
But there are wanderers o'er Eternity
Whose bark drives on and on, and anchored ne'er shall be.

LXXI.

Is it not better, then, to be alone,
And love Earth only for its earthly sake?
By the blue rushing of the arrowy Rhone,
Or the pure bosom of its nursing lake,
Which feeds it as a mother who doth make
A fair but froward infant her own care,
Kissing its cries away as these awake; -
Is it not better thus our lives to wear,
Than join the crushing crowd, doomed to inflict or bear?

LXXII.

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me,
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture: I can see
Nothing to loathe in Nature, save to be
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
Classed among creatures, when the soul can flee,
And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain
Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain.

LXXIII.

And thus I am absorbed, and this is life:
I look upon the peopled desert Past,
As on a place of agony and strife,
Where, for some sin, to Sorrow I was cast,
To act and suffer, but remount at last
With a fresh pinion; which I felt to spring,
Though young, yet waxing vigorous as the blast
Which it would cope with, on delighted wing,
Spurning the clay-cold bonds which round our being cling.

LXXIV.

And when, at length, the mind shall be all free
From what it hates in this degraded form,
Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be
Existent happier in the fly and worm, -
When elements to elements conform,
And dust is as it should be, shall I not
Feel all I see, less dazzling, but more warm?
The bodiless thought? the Spirit of each spot?
Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot?

LXXV.

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion? should I not contemn
All objects, if compared with these? and stem
A tide of suffering, rather than forego
Such feelings for the hard and worldly phlegm
Of those whose eyes are only turned below,
Gazing upon the ground, with thoughts which dare not glow?

LXXVI.

But this is not my theme; and I return
To that which is immediate, and require
Those who find contemplation in the urn,
To look on One whose dust was once all fire,
A native of the land where I respire
The clear air for awhile--a passing guest,
Where he became a being,--whose desire
Was to be glorious; 'twas a foolish quest,
The which to gain and keep he sacrificed all rest.

LXXVII.

Here the self-torturing sophist, wild Rousseau,
The apostle of affliction, he who threw
Enchantment over passion, and from woe
Wrung overwhelming eloquence, first drew
The breath which made him wretched; yet he knew
How to make madness beautiful, and cast
O'er erring deeds and thoughts a heavenly hue
Of words, like sunbeams, dazzling as they past
The eyes, which o'er them shed tears feelingly and fast.

LXXVIII.

His love was passion's essence--as a tree
On fire by lightning; with ethereal flame
Kindled he was, and blasted; for to be
Thus, and enamoured, were in him the same.
But his was not the love of living dame,
Nor of the dead who rise upon our dreams,
But of Ideal beauty, which became
In him existence, and o'erflowing teems
Along his burning page, distempered though it seems.

LXXIX.

THIS breathed itself to life in Julie, THIS
Invested her with all that's wild and sweet;
This hallowed, too, the memorable kiss
Which every morn his fevered lip would greet,
From hers, who but with friendship his would meet:

But to that gentle touch, through brain and breast
Flashed the thrilled spirit's love-devouring heat;
In that absorbing sigh perchance more blest,
Than vulgar minds may be with all they seek possess.

LXXX.

His life was one long war with self-sought foes,
Or friends by him self-banished; for his mind
Had grown Suspicion's sanctuary, and chose
For its own cruel sacrifice, the kind,
'Gainst whom he raged with fury strange and blind.
But he was frenzied,--wherefore, who may know?
Since cause might be which skill could never find;
But he was frenzied by disease or woe
To that worst pitch of all, which wears a reasoning show.

LXXXI.

For then he was inspired, and from him came,
As from the Pythian's mystic cave of yore,
Those oracles which set the world in flame,
Nor ceased to burn till kingdoms were no more:
Did he not this for France, which lay before
Bowed to the inborn tyranny of years?
Broken and trembling to the yoke she bore,
Till by the voice of him and his compeers
Roused up to too much wrath, which follows o'ergrown fears?

LXXXII.

They made themselves a fearful monument!
The wreck of old opinions--things which grew,
Breathed from the birth of time: the veil they rent,
And what behind it lay, all earth shall view.
But good with ill they also overthrew,
Leaving but ruins, wherewith to rebuild
Upon the same foundation, and renew
Dungeons and thrones, which the same hour refilled,
As heretofore, because ambition was self-willed.

LXXXIII.

But this will not endure, nor be endured!
Mankind have felt their strength, and made it felt.
They might have used it better, but, allured
By their new vigour, sternly have they dealt
On one another; Pity ceased to melt
With her once natural charities. But they,
Who in Oppression's darkness caved had dwelt,
They were not eagles, nourished with the day;
What marvel then, at times, if they mistook their prey?

CXIII.

I have not loved the world, nor the world me;
I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bowed
To its idolatries a patient knee, -
Nor coined my cheek to smiles, nor cried aloud
In worship of an echo; in the crowd
They could not deem me one of such; I stood
Among them, but not of them; in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,
Had I not filed my mind, which thus itself subdued.

CXIV.

I have not loved the world, nor the world me, -

But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be
Words which are things,--hopes which will not deceive,
And virtues which are merciful, nor weave
Snares for the falling: I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve;
That two, or one, are almost what they seem, -
That goodness is no name, and happiness no dream.

CXV.

My daughter! with thy name this song begun -
My daughter! with thy name this much shall end -
I see thee not, I hear thee not,--but none
Can be so wrapt in thee; thou art the friend
To whom the shadows of far years extend:
Albeit my brow thou never shouldst behold,
My voice shall with thy future visions blend,
And reach into thy heart, when mine is cold, -
A token and a tone, even from thy father's mould.

CXVI.

To aid thy mind's development,--to watch
Thy dawn of little joys,--to sit and see
Almost thy very growth,--to view thee catch
Knowledge of objects, wonders yet to thee!
To hold thee lightly on a gentle knee,
And print on thy soft cheek a parent's kiss, -
This, it should seem, was not reserved for me
Yet this was in my nature: --As it is,
I know not what is there, yet something like to this.

CXVII.

Yet, though dull Hate as duty should be taught,
I know that thou wilt love me; though my name
Should be shut from thee, as a spell still fraught
With desolation, and a broken claim:
Though the grave closed between us,--'twere the same,
I know that thou wilt love me: though to drain
MY blood from out thy being were an aim,
And an attainment,--all would be in vain, -
Still thou wouldst love me, still that more than life retain.

CXVIII.

The child of love,--though born in bitterness,
And nurtured in convulsion. Of thy sire
These were the elements, and thine no less.
As yet such are around thee; but thy fire
Shall be more tempered, and thy hope far higher.
Sweet be thy cradled slumbers! O'er the sea,
And from the mountains where I now respire,
Fain would I waft such blessing upon thee,
As, with a sigh, I deem thou mightst have been to me!

CANTO THE FOURTH.

I.

I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs;
A palace and a prison on each hand:
I saw from out the wave her structures rise
As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand:
A thousand years their cloudy wings expand

Around me, and a dying glory smiles
O'er the far times when many a subject land
Looked to the winged Lion's marble piles,
Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles!

II.

She looks a sea Cybele, fresh from ocean,
Rising with her tiara of proud towers
At airy distance, with majestic motion,
A ruler of the waters and their powers:
And such she was; her daughters had their dowers
From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East
Poured in her lap all gems in sparkling showers.
In purple was she robed, and of her feast
Monarchs partook, and deemed their dignity increased.

III.

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

IV.

But unto us she hath a spell beyond
Her name in story, and her long array
Of mighty shadows, whose dim forms despond
Above the dogeless city's vanished sway;
Ours is a trophy which will not decay
With the Rialto; Shylock and the Moor,
And Pierre, cannot be swept or worn away -
The keystones of the arch! though all were o'er,
For us repeopled were the solitary shore.

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

I saw or dreamed of such,--but let them go -
They came like truth, and disappeared like dreams;
And whatsoever they were--are now but so;
I could replace them if I would: still teems
My mind with many a form which aptly seems
Such as I sought for, and at moments found;
Let these too go--for waking reason deems
Such overweening phantasies unsound,
And other voices speak, and other sights surround.

XIV.

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

XV.

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

XVI.

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

XVII.

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

XVIII.

I loved her from my boyhood: she to me
Was as a fairy city of the heart,
Rising like water-columns from the sea,
Of joy the sojourn, and of wealth the mart
And Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakspeare's art,

Had stamped her image in me, and e'en so,
Although I found her thus, we did not part,
Perchance e'en dearer in her day of woe,
Than when she was a boast, a marvel, and a show.

XIX.

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

XX.

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

XXI.

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

XXII.

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

XXIII.

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

XXIV.

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

XXV.

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

DON JUAN

FRAGMENT ON THE BACK OF THE MS. OF
CANTO I.

I WOULD to Heaven that I were so much clay,
As I am blood, bone, marrow, passion, feeling--
Because at least the past were passed away,
And for the future--(but I write this reeling,
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 God's sake--hock and soda-water!

DEDICATION

I.

BOB SOUTHEY! You're a poet--Poet-laureate,
And representative of all the race;
Although 't is true that you turned out a Tory at
Last,--yours has lately been a common case;
And now, my Epic Renegade! what are ye at?
With all the Lakers, in and out of place?
A nest of tuneful persons, to my eye
Like "four and twenty Blackbirds in a pye;

II.

"Which pye being opened they began to sing,"
(This old song and new simile holds good),
"A dainty dish to set before the King,"
Or Regent, who admires such kind of food;--
And Coleridge, too, has lately taken wing,
But like a hawk encumbered with his hood,--
Explaining Metaphysics to the nation--
I wish he would explain his Explanation.

III.

You, Bob! are rather insolent, you know,
At being disappointed in your wish

To supersede all warblers here below,
And be the only Blackbird in the dish;
And then you overstrain yourself, or so,
And tumble downward like the flying fish
Gasping on deck, because you soar too high, Bob,
And fall, for lack of moisture, quite a-dry, Bob!

IV.

And Wordsworth, in a rather long "Excursion,"
(I think the quarto holds five hundred pages),
Has given a sample from the vasty version
Of his new system to perplex the sages;
'T is poetry-at least by his assertion,
And may appear so when the dog-star rages--
And he who understands it would be able
To add a story to the Tower of Babel.

V.

You--Gentlemen! by dint of long seclusion
From better company, have kept your own
At Keswick, and, through still continued fusion
Of one another's minds, at last have grown
To deem as a most logical conclusion,
That Poesy has wreaths for you alone:
There is a narrowness in such a notion,
Which makes me wish you'd change your lakes for Ocean.

VI.

I would not imitate the petty thought,
Nor coin my self-love to so base a vice,
For all the glory your conversion brought,
Since gold alone should not have been its price.
You have your salary; was 't for that you wrought?
And Wordsworth has his place in the Excise.
You're shabby fellows--true--but poets still,
And duly seated on the Immortal Hill.

* * * *

CANTO THE FIRST.

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;
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 pantomime,
Sent to the Devil somewhat ere his time.

* * * *

V.

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

So, as I said, I'll take my friend Don Juan.

VI.

Most epic poets plunge "in medias res"
(Horace makes this the heroic turnpike road),
And then your hero tells, whene'er you please,
What went before--by way of episode,
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.

VII.

That is the usual method, but not mine--
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),
Narrating somewhat of Don Juan's father,
And also of his mother, if you'd rather.

VIII.

In Seville was he born, a pleasant city,
Famous for oranges and women,--he
Who has not seen it will be much to pity,
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 called the Guadalquivir.

IX.

His father's name was Jose--_Don_, of course,--
A true Hidalgo, 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,
Or, being mounted, e'er got down again,
Than Jose, who begot our hero, who
Begot--but that's to come---Well, to renew:

* * * *

XII.

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

XXII.

'T is pity learned virgins ever wed
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,

But--Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,
Inform us truly, have they not hen-pecked you all?

* * * *

XXIII.

Don Jose and his lady quarrelled--_why_,
Not any of the many could divine,
Though several thousand people chose to try,
'T was surely no concern of theirs nor mine;
I loathe that low vice--curiosity;
But if there's anything in which I shine,
'T is in arranging all my friends' affairs,
Not having, of my own, domestic cares.

XXIV.

And so I interfered, and with the best
Intentions, but their treatment was not kind;
I think the foolish people were possessed,
For neither of them could I ever find,
Although their porter afterwards confessed--
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.

XXV.

A little curly-headed, good-for-nothing,
And mischief-making monkey from his birth;
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 whipped at home,
To teach him manners for the time to come.

XXVI.

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,
Their conduct was exceedingly well-bred,
And gave no outward signs of inward strife,
Until at length the smothered fire broke out,
And put the business past all kind of doubt.

XXXII.

Their friends had tried at reconciliation,
Then their relations, who made matters worse.
('T were hard to tell 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,
But scarce a fee was paid on either side
Before, unluckily, Don Jose died.

XXXIII.

He died: and most unluckily, because,
According to all hints I could collect
From Counsel learned in those kinds of laws,
(Although their talk's obscure and circumspect)
His death contrived to spoil a charming cause;

A thousand pities also with respect
To public feeling, which on this occasion
Was manifested in a great sensation.

* * * *

XXXIX.

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,
And so they were submitted first to her, all,
Arts, sciences--no branch was made a mystery
To Juan's eyes, excepting natural history.

XL.

The languages, especially the dead,
The sciences, and most of all the abstruse,
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,
Was ever suffered, lest he should grow vicious.

XLI.

His classic studies made a little puzzle,
Because of filthy loves of gods and goddesses,
Who in the earlier ages raised a bustle,
But never put on pantaloons or bodices;
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.

* * * *

L.

At six, I said, he was a charming child,
At twelve he was a fine, but quiet boy;
Although in infancy a little wild,
They tamed him down amongst them: to destroy
His natural spirit not in vain they toiled,
At least it seemed so; and his mother's joy
Was to declare how sage, and still, and steady,
Her young philosopher was grown already.

LI.

I had my doubts, perhaps I have them still,
But what I say is neither here nor there:
I knew his father well, and have some skill
In character--but it would not be fair
From sire to son to augur good or ill:
He and his wife were an ill-sorted pair--
But scandal's my aversion--I protest
Against all evil speaking, even in jest.

LII.

For my part I say nothing--nothing--but
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),
'T is not with Donna Inez I would shut
Him up to learn his catechism alone,
No--no--I'd send him out betimes to college,
For there it was I picked up my own knowledge.

LIII.

For there one learns--'t is not for me to boast,
Though I acquired--but I pass over _that_,
As well as all the Greek I since have lost:
I say that there's the place--but "_Verbum sat_",
I think I picked 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.

LIV.

Young Juan now was sixteen years of age,
Tall, handsome, slender, but well knit: he seemed
Active, though not so sprightly, as a page;
And everybody but his mother deemed
Him almost man; but she flew in a rage
And bit her lips (for else she might have screamed)
If any said so--for to be precocious
Was in her eyes a thing the most atrocious.

LV.

Amongst her numerous acquaintance, all
Selected for discretion and devotion,
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, or his bow to Cupid,
(But this last simile is trite and stupid.)

LVI.

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;)
When proud Granada fell, and, forced to fly,
Boabdil wept: of Donna Julia's kin
Some went to Africa, some stayed in Spain--
Her great great grandmamma chose to remain.

LVII.

She married (I forget the pedigree)
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,
Marrying their cousins--nay, their aunts, and nieces,
Which always spoils the breed, if it increases.

LVIII.

This heathenish cross restored the breed again,
Ruined its blood, but much improved its flesh;
For from a root the ugliest in Old Spain

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,
'T is said that Donna Julia's grandmamma
Produced her Don more heirs at love than law.

LIX.

However this might be, the race went on
Improving still through every generation,
Until it centred in an only son,
Who left an only daughter; my narration
May have suggested that this single one
Could be but Julia (whom on this occasion
I shall have much to speak about), and she
Was married, charming, chaste, and twenty-three.

LX.

Her eye (I'm very fond of handsome eyes)
Was large and dark, suppressing half its fire
Until she spoke, then through its soft disguise
Flashed 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
Which struggled through and chastened down the whole.

LXI.

Her glossy hair was clustered 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,
Mounting, at times, to a transparent glow,
As if her veins ran lightning; she, in sooth,
Possessed an air and grace by no means common:
Her stature tall--I hate a dumpy woman.

LXII.

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

LXIII.

'T is a sad thing, I cannot choose but say,
And all the fault of that indecent sun,
Who cannot leave alone our helpless clay,
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,

LXIV.

Happy the nations of the moral North!
Where all is virtue, and the winter season
Sends sin, without a rag on, shivering forth
('T was snow that brought St. Anthony to reason);

Where juries cast up what a wife is worth,
By laying whate'er sum, in mulct, they please on
The lover, who must pay a handsome price,
Because it is a marketable vice.

LXV.

Alfonso was the name of Julia's lord,
A man well looking for his years, and who
Was neither much beloved nor yet abhorred:
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,
For Jealousy dislikes the world to know it.

LXVI.

Julia was--yet I never could see why--
With Donna Inez quite a favourite friend;
Between their tastes there was small sympathy,
For not a line had Julia ever penned:
Some people whisper (but, no doubt, they lie,
For Malice still imputes some private end)
That Inez had, ere Don Alfonso's marriage,
Forgot with him her very prudent carriage;

LXVII.

And that still keeping up the old connection,
Which Time had lately rendered much more chaste,
She took his lady also in affection,
And certainly this course was much the best:
She flattered Julia with her sage protection,
And complimented Don Alfonso's taste;
And if she could not (who can?) silence scandal,
At least she left it a more slender handle.

LXVIII.

I can't tell whether Julia saw the affair
With other people's eyes, or if her own
Discoveries made, but none could be aware
Of this, at least no symptom e'er was shown;
Perhaps she did not know, or did not care,
Indifferent from the first, or callous grown:
I'm really puzzled what to think or say,
She kept her counsel in so close a way.

LXIX.

Juan she saw, and, as a pretty child,
Caressed 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
When he was sixteen, Julia twenty-three;
These few short years make wondrous alterations,
Particularly amongst sun-burnt nations.

LXX.

Whate'er the cause might be, they had become
Changed; for the dame grew distant, the youth shy,
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
Than he who never saw the sea of Ocean.

LXXI.

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
And slight, so very slight, that to the mind
'T was but a doubt; but ne'er magician's wand
Wrought change with all Armida's fairy art
Like what this light touch left on Juan's heart.

LXXII.

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

LXXIII.

But Passion most dissembles, yet betrays
Even by its darkness; as the blackest sky
Foretells the heaviest tempest, it displays
Its workings through the vainly guarded eye,
And in whatever aspect it arrays
Itself, 't is still the same hypocrisy;
Coldness or Anger, even Disdain or Hate,
Are masks it often wears, and still too late.

LXXIV.

Then there were sighs, the deeper for suppression,
And stolen glances, sweeter for the theft,
And burning blushes, though for no transgression,
Tremblings when met, and restlessness when left;
All these are little preludes to possession,
Of which young Passion cannot be bereft,
And merely tend to show how greatly Love is
Embarrassed at first starting with a novice.

LXXV.

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 Tarquin quake:
She prayed the Virgin Mary for her grace,
As being the best judge of a lady's case.

LXXVI.

She vowed she never would see Juan more,
And next day paid a visit to his mother,
And looked 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,

'T is surely Juan now--No! I'm afraid
That night the Virgin was no further prayed.

LXXVII.

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.

LXXVIII.

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, 't is but denial:
I recommend young ladies to make trial.

LXXIX.

And, then, there are such things as Love divine,
Bright and immaculate, unmixed 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.

LXXX.

Such love is innocent, and may exist
Between young persons without any danger.
A hand may first, and then a lip be kissed;
For my part, to such doings I'm a stranger,
But hear these freedoms form the utmost list
Of all o'er which such love may be a ranger:
If people go beyond, 't is quite a crime,
But not my fault--I tell them all in time.

LXXXI.

Love, then, but Love within its proper limits,
Was Julia's innocent determination
In young Don Juan's favour, and to him its
Exertion might be useful on occasion;
And, lighted at too pure a shrine to dim its
Ethereal lustre, with what sweet persuasion
He might be taught, by Love and her together--
I really don't know what, nor Julia either.

* * * *

XC.

Young Juan wandered by the glassy brooks,
Thinking unutterable things; he threw
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,
Unless, like Wordsworth, they prove unintelligible.

XCI.

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
Of its disease; he did the best he could
With things not very subject to control,
And turned, without perceiving his condition,
Like Coleridge, into a metaphysician.

XCII.

He thought about himself, and the whole earth,
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
To perfect knowledge of the boundless skies;--
And then he thought of Donna Julia's eyes.

* * * *

CV.

She sate, but not alone; I know not well
How this same interview had taken place,
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, 't would be wise,
But very difficult, to shut their eyes.

CVI.

How beautiful she looked! her conscious heart
Glowed 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!
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.

CVII.

She thought of her own strength, and Juan's youth,
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 occurred, in sooth,
Because that number rarely much endears,
And through all climes, the snowy and the sunny,
Sounds ill in love, whate'er it may in money.

CVIII.

When people say, "I've told you fifty times,"
They mean to scold, and very often do;
When poets say, "I've written fifty rhymes,"
They make you dread that they 'll recite them too;

In gangs of _fifty_, thieves commit their crimes;
At _fifty_ love for love is rare, 't is true,
But then, no doubt, it equally as true is,
A good deal may be bought for _fifty_ Louis.

CIX.

Julia had honour, virtue, truth, and love
For Don Alfonso; and she inly swore,
By all the vows below to Powers above,
She never would disgrace the ring she wore,
Nor leave a wish which wisdom might reprove;
And while she pondered this, besides much more,
One hand on Juan's carelessly was thrown,
Quite by mistake--she thought it was her own;

CX.

Unconsciously she leaned upon the other,
Which played within the tangles of her hair;
And to contend with thoughts she could not smother
She seemed by the distraction of her air.
'T was surely very wrong in Juan's mother
To leave together this imprudent pair,
She who for many years had watched her son so--
I'm very certain _mine_ would not have done so.

CXI.

The hand which still held Juan's, by degrees
Gently, but palpably confirmed its grasp,
As if it said, "Detain me, if you please;"
Yet there's no doubt she only meant to clasp
His fingers with a pure Platonic squeeze;
She would have shrunk as from a toad, or asp,
Had she imagined such a thing could rouse
A feeling dangerous to a prudent spouse.

CXII.

I cannot know what Juan thought of this,
But what he did, is much what you would do;
His young lip thanked it with a grateful kiss,
And then, abashed at its own joy, withdrew
In deep despair, lest he had done amiss,--
Love is so very timid when 't is new:
She blushed, and frowned not, but she strove to speak,
And held her tongue, her voice was grown so weak.

CXIII.

The sun set, and up rose the yellow moon:
The Devil's in the moon for mischief; they
Who called her CHASTE, methinks, began too soon
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!

CXIV.

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,

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.

CXV.

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

CXVI.

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
Of human hearts, than all the long array
Of poets and romancers:--You're a bore,
A charlatan, a coxcomb--and have been,
At best, no better than a go-between.

CXVII.

And Julia's voice was lost, except in sighs,
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;
A little still she strove, and much repented,
And whispering "I will ne'er consent"--consented.

* * * *

CXXXIII.

Man's a phenomenon, one knows not what,
And wonderful beyond all wondrous measure;
'T is pity though, in this sublime world, that
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 gained, we die, you know--and then---

CXXXIV.

What then?--I do not know, no more do you--
And so good night.--Return we to our story:
'T was in November, when fine days are few,
And the far mountains wax a little hoary,
And clap a white cape on their mantles blue;
And the sea dashes round the promontory,
And the loud breaker boils against the rock,
And sober suns must set at five o'clock.

CXXXV.

'Twas, as the watchmen say, a cloudy night;
No moon, no stars, the wind was low or loud
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,
A lobster salad, and champagne, and chat.

CXXXVI.

'T was 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,
And that they have been so we all have read,
And are to be so, at the least, once more;--
The door was fastened, but with voice and fist
First knocks were heard, then "Madam--Madam--hist!

CXXXVII.

"For God's sake, Madam--Madam--here's my master,
With more than half the city at his back--Was
ever heard of such a curst disaster!
'T is 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 crack
Will all be here; perhaps he yet may fly--
Surely the window's not so very high!"

CXXXVIII.

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

CXXXIX.

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

CXL.

Poor Donna Julia! starting as from sleep,
(Mind--that I do not say--she had not slept),
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
To prove her mistress had been sleeping double.

CXLI.

But Julia mistress, and Antonia maid,
Appeared like two poor harmless women, who
Of goblins, but still more of men afraid,
Had thought one man might be deterred by two,

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."

CXLII.

Now Julia found at length a voice, and cried,
"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?
Dare you suspect me, whom the thought would kill?
Search, then, the room!"--Alfonso said, "I will."

CXLIII.

He searched, they searched, and rummaged everywhere,
Closet and clothes' press, chest and window-seat,
And found much linen, lace, and several pair
Of stockings, slippers, brushes, combs, complete,
With other articles of ladies fair,
To keep them beautiful, or leave them neat:
Arras they pricked and curtains with their swords,
And wounded several shutters, and some boards.

CXLIV.

Under the bed they searched, and there they found--
No matter what--it was not that they sought;
They opened windows, gazing if the ground
Had signs or footmarks, but the earth said nought;
And then they stared each others' faces round:
'T is 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.

CXLV.

During this inquisition Julia's tongue
Was not asleep--"Yes, search and search," she cried,
"Insult on insult heap, and wrong on wrong!
It was for this that I became a bride!
For this in silence I have suffered long
A husband like Alfonso at my side;
But now I'll bear no more, nor here remain,
If there be law or lawyers in all Spain.

* * * *

CLXI.

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,
He gained no point, except some self-rebukes,
Added to those his lady with such vigour
Had poured upon him for the last half-hour,
Quick, thick, and heavy--as a thunder-shower.

CLXII.

At first he tried to hammer an excuse,
To which the sole reply was tears, and sobs,
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;
He saw too, in perspective, her relations,
And then he tried to muster all his patience.

CLXIII.

He stood in act to speak, or rather stammer,
But sage Antonia cut him short before
The anvil of his speech received the hammer,
With "Pray, sir, leave the room, and say no more,
Or madam dies."--Alfonso muttered, "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.

CLXIV.

With him retired his "posse comitatus,"
The attorney last, who lingered near the door
Reluctantly, still tarrying there as late as
Antonia let him--not a little sore
At this most strange and unexplained "hiatus"
In Don Alfonso's facts, which just now wore
An awkward look; as he revolved the case,
The door was fastened in his legal face.

CLXV.

No sooner was it bolted, than--Oh Shame!
Oh Sin! Oh Sorrow! and Oh Womankind!
How can you do such things and keep your fame,
Unless this world, and t' other too, be blind?
Nothing so dear as an unfilched good name!
But to proceed--for there is more behind:
With much heartfelt reluctance be it said,
Young Juan slipped, half-smothered, from the bed.

CLXVI.

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

CLXVII.

And, secondly, I pity not, because
He had no business to commit a sin,
Forbid by heavenly, fined by human laws;--
At least 't was rather early to begin,
But at sixteen the conscience rarely gnaws
So much as when we call our old debts in
At sixty years, and draw the accompts of evil,
And find a deuced balance with the Devil.

CLXVIII.

Of his position I can give no notion:
'T is written in the Hebrew Chronicle,
How the physicians, leaving pill and potion,
Prescribed, by way of blister, a young belle,

When old King David's blood grew dull in motion,
And that the medicine answered very well;
Perhaps 't was in a different way applied,
For David lived, but Juan nearly died.

CLXIX.

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 renewed attack?
Besides, it wanted but few hours of day:
Antonia puzzled; Julia did not speak,
But pressed her bloodless lip to Juan's cheek.

CLXX.

He turned his lip to hers, and with his hand
Called 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, 't is no time now for fooling there,"
She whispered, in great wrath--"I must deposit
This pretty gentleman within the closet:

* * * *

CLXXX.

Alfonso closed his speech, and begged her pardon,
Which Julia half withheld, and then half granted,
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 perplexed and haunted;
Beseeching she no further would refuse,
When, lo! he stumbled o'er a pair of shoes.

CLXXXI.

A pair of shoes!--what then? not much, if they
Are such as fit with ladies' feet, but these
(No one can tell how much I grieve to say)
Were masculine; to see them, and to seize,
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.

CLXXXII.

He left the room for his relinquished sword,
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!
Haste--haste! I hear Alfonso's hurrying feet--
Day has not broke--there's no one in the street."

CLXXXIII.

None can say that this was not good advice,
The only mischief was, it came too late;
Of all experience 't is the usual price,

A sort of income-tax laid on by fate:
Juan had reached the room-door in a trice,
And might have done so by the garden-gate,
But met Alfonso in his dressing-gown,
Who threatened death--so Juan knocked him down.

CLXXXIV.

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

CLXXXV.

Alfonso's sword had dropped ere he could draw it,
And they continued battling hand to hand,
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!
And how ye may be doubly widows--wives!

CLXXXVI.

Alfonso grappled to detain the foe,
And Juan throttled him to get away,
And blood ('t was from the nose) began to flow;
At last, as they more faintly wrestling lay,
Juan contrived to give an awkward blow,
And then his only garment quite gave way;
He fled, like Joseph, leaving it; but there,
I doubt, all likeness ends between the pair.

CLXXXVII.

Lights came at length, and men, and maids, who found
An awkward spectacle their eyes before;
Antonia in hysterics, Julia swooned,
Alfonso leaning, breathless, by the door;
Some half-torn drapery scattered on the ground,
Some blood, and several footsteps, but no more:
Juan the gate gained, turned the key about,
And liking not the inside, locked the out.

CLXXXVIII.

Here ends this canto.--Need I sing, or say,
How Juan, naked, favoured by the night,
Who favours what she should not, found his way,
And reached 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.

CLXXXIX.

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, or to annul,
There's more than one edition, and the readings
Are various, but they none of them are dull:
The best is that in short-hand ta'en by Gurney,
Who to Madrid on purpose made a journey.

CXC.

But Donna Inez, to divert the train
Of one of the most circulating scandals
That had for centuries been known in Spain,
At least since the retirement of the Vandals,
First vowed (and never had she vowed in vain)
To Virgin Mary several pounds of candles;
And then, by the advice of some old ladies,
She sent her son to be shipped off from Cadiz.

CXCI.

She had resolved that he should travel through
All European climes, by land or sea,
To mend his former morals, and get new,
Especially in France and Italy--
(At least this is the thing most people do.)
Julia was sent into a convent--she
Grieved--but, perhaps, her feelings may be better
Shown in the following copy of her Letter:--

CXCII.

"They tell me 't is decided you depart:
'T is wise--'t is well, but not the less a pain;
I have no further claim on your young heart,
Mine is 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
Be on this sheet, 't is not what it appears;
My eyeballs burn and throb, but have no tears.

CXCIII.

"I loved, I love you, for this love have lost
State, station, Heaven, Mankind's, my own esteem,
And yet can not regret what it hath cost,
So dear is still the memory of that dream;
Yet, if I name my guilt, 't is 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, or to request.

CXCIV.

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'T is a 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,
And few there are whom these can not estrange;
Men have all these resources, We but one,
To love again, and be again undone."

CXCV.

"You will proceed in pleasure, 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:
These I could bear, but cannot cast aside
The passion which still rages as before,--
And so farewell--forgive me, love me--No,
That word is idle now--but let it go.

CXCVI.

"My breast has been all weakness, is so yet;
But still I think I can collect my mind;
My blood still rushes where my spirit's set,
As roll the waves before the settled wind;
My heart is feminine, nor can forget--
To all, except one image, madly blind;
So shakes the needle, and so stands the pole,
As vibrates my fond heart to my fixed soul.

CXCVII.

"I have no more to say, but linger still,
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 shuns the wretch who fain the blow would meet,
And I must even survive this last adieu,
And bear with life, to love and pray for you!"

CXCVIII.

This note was written upon gilt-edged paper
With a neat little crow-quill, slight and new;
Her small white hand could hardly reach the taper,
It trembled as magnetic needles do,
And yet she did not let one tear escape her;
The seal a sun-flower; "Elle vous suit partout,"
The motto cut upon a white cornelian;
The wax was superfine, its hue vermilion.

CXCIX.

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,
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.

CC.

My poem's epic, and is meant to be
Divided in twelve books; each book containing,
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 panoramic view of Hell's in training,
After the style of Virgil and of Homer,
So that my name of Epic's no misnomer.

CCI.

All these things will be specified in time,
With strict regard to Aristotle's rules,
The Vade Mecum of the true sublime,
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,
And very handsome supernatural scenery.

CCII.

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 't is quite a bore
Their labyrinth of fables to thread through,
Whereas this story's actually true.

* * * *

CCXIII.

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

CCXIV.

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.
Think'st thou the honey with those objects grew?
Alas! 't was not in them, but in thy power
To double even the sweetness of a flower.

CCXV.

No more--no more--Oh! never more, my heart,
Canst thou be my sole world, my universe!
Once all in all, but now a thing apart,
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,
Though Heaven knows how it ever found a lodgment.

CCXVI.

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;
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.

CCXVII.

Ambition was my idol, which was broken
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:"--a chymic treasure
Is glittering Youth, which I have spent betimes--
My heart in passion, and my head on rhymes.

CCXVIII.

What is the end of Fame? 't is but to fill
A certain portion of uncertain paper:
Some liken it to climbing up a hill,
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.

CCXIX.

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,
Burglariously broke his coffin's lid:
Let not a monument give you or me hopes,
Since not a pinch of dust remains of Cheops.

CCXX.

But I, being fond of true philosophy,
Say very often to myself, "Alas!
All things that have been born were born to die,
And flesh (which Death mows down to hay) is grass;
You've passed your youth not so unpleasantly,
And if you had it o'er again--'t would pass--
So thank your stars that matters are no worse,
And read your Bible, sir, and mind your purse."

CCXXI.

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!"
We meet again, if we should understand
Each other; and if not, I shall not try
Your patience further than by this short sample--
'T were well if others followed my example.

CCXXII.

"Go, little Book, from this my solitude!
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--
The four first rhymes are Southey's every line:
For God's sake, reader! take them not for mine.

from CANTO THE SECOND

XI.

Juan embarked--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 crossed it oft, know well enough;
And, standing on the 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.

XII.

I can't but say it is an awkward sight
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,
When gazing on them, mystified by distance,
We enter on our nautical existence.

XIII.

So Juan stood, bewildered on the deck:
The wind sung, cordage strained, and sailors swore,
And the ship creaked, the town became a speck,
From which away so fair and fast they bore.
The best of remedies is a beef-steak
Against sea-sickness: try it, Sir, before
You sneer, and I assure you this is true,
For I have found it answer--so may you.

XIV.

Don Juan stood, and, gazing from the stern,
Beheld his native Spain receding far:
First partings form a lesson hard to learn,
Even nations feel this when they go to war;
There is a sort of unexpressed concern,
A kind of shock that sets one's heart ajar,
At leaving even the most unpleasant people
And places--one keeps looking at the steeple.

XV.

But Juan had got many things to leave,
His mother, and a mistress, and no wife,
So that he had much better cause to grieve
Than many persons more advanced in life:
And if we now and then a sigh must heave
At quitting even those we quit in strife,
No doubt we weep for those the heart endears--
That is, till deeper griefs congeal our tears.

XVI.

So Juan wept, as wept the captive Jews
By Babel's waters, still remembering Sion:
I'd weep,--but mine is not a weeping Muse,
And such light griefs are not a thing to die on;
Young men should travel, if but to amuse
Themselves; and the next time their servants tie on
Behind their carriages their new portmanteau,
Perhaps it may be lined with this my canto.

XVII.

And Juan wept, and much he sighed and thought,
While his salt tears dropped into the salt sea,
"Sweets to the sweet;" (I like so much to quote;

You must excuse this extract,--'t is where she,
The Queen of Denmark, for Ophelia brought
Flowers to the grave;) and, sobbing often, he
Reflected on his present situation,
And seriously resolved on reformation.

XVIII.

"Farewell, my Spain! a long farewell!" he cried,
"Perhaps I may revisit thee no more,
But die, as many an exiled heart hath died,
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.)

XIX.

"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!
Or think of anything, excepting thee;
A mind diseased no remedy can physic--
(Here the ship gave a lurch, and he grew sea-sick.)

XX.

"Sooner shall Heaven kiss earth--(here he fell sicker)
Oh, Julia! what is every other woe?--
(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!"
(Here he grew inarticulate with retching.)

* * * *

L.

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

LI.

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

LII.

Then rose from sea to sky the wild farewell--
Then shrieked the timid, and stood still the brave,--
Then some leaped overboard with dreadful yell,

As eager to anticipate their grave;
And the sea yawned around her like a hell,
And down she sucked with her the whirling wave,
Like one who grapples with his enemy,
And strives to strangle him before he die.

LIII.

And first one universal shriek there rushed,
Louder than the loud Ocean, like a crash
Of echoing thunder; and then all was hushed,
Save the wild wind and the remorseless dash
Of billows; but at intervals there gushed,
Accompanied by a convulsive splash,
A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry
Of some strong swimmer in his agony.

LIV.

The boats, as stated, had got off before,
And in them crowded several of the crew;
And yet their present hope was hardly more
Than what it had been, for so strong it blew
There was slight chance of reaching any shore;
And then they were too many, though so few--
Nine in the cutter, thirty in the boat,
Were counted in them when they got afloat.

LV.

All the rest perished; near two hundred souls
Had left their bodies; and what's worse, alas!
When over Catholics the Ocean rolls,
They must wait several weeks before a mass
Takes off one peck of purgatorial coals,
Because, till people know what's come to pass,
They won't lay out their money on the dead--
It costs three francs for every mass that's said.

LVI.

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

LVII.

Pedro, his valet, too, he tried to save,
But the same cause, conducive to his loss,
Left him so drunk, he jumped 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,
Because the sea ran higher every minute,
And for the boat--the crew kept crowding in it.

LVIII.

A small old spaniel,--which had been Don Jose's,
His father's, whom he loved, as ye may think,
For on such things the memory reposes
With tenderness--stood howling on the brink,

Knowing, (dogs have such intellectual noses!)
No doubt, the vessel was about to sink;
And Juan caught him up, and ere he stepped
Off threw him in, then after him he leaped.

LIX.

He also stuffed his money where he could
About his person, and Pedrillo's too,
Who let him do, in fact, whate'er he would,
Not knowing what himself to say, or do,
As every rising wave his dread renewed;
But Juan, trusting they might still get through,
And deeming there were remedies for any ill,
Thus re-embarked his tutor and his spaniel.

LX.

'T was a rough night, and blew so stiffly yet,
That the sail was becalmed between the seas,
Though on the wave's high top too much to set,
They dared not take it in for all the breeze:
Each sea curled o'er the stern, and kept them wet,
And made them bale without a moment's ease,
So that themselves as well as hopes were damped,
And the poor little cutter quickly swamped.

LXI.

Nine souls more went in her: the long-boat still
Kept above water, with an oar for mast,
Two blankets stitched together, answering ill
Instead of sail, were to the oar made fast;
Though every wave rolled menacing to fill,
And present peril all before surpassed,
They grieved for those who perished with the cutter,
And also for the biscuit-casks and butter.

LXII.

The sun rose red and fiery, a sure sign
Of the continuance of the gale: to run
Before the sea until it should grow fine,
Was all that for the present could be done:
A few tea-spoonfuls of their rum and wine
Were served out to the people, who begun
To faint, and damaged bread wet through the bags,
And most of them had little clothes but rags.

* * * *

LXVI.

'T is 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;
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.

LXVII.

But man is a carnivorous production,
And must have meals, at least one meal a day;
He cannot live, like woodcocks, upon suction,

But, like the shark and tiger, must have prey;
Although his anatomical construction
Bears vegetables, in a grumbling way,
Your labouring people think, beyond all question,
Beef, veal, and mutton, better for digestion.

LXVIII.

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,
And lying on their weariness like balm,
Lulled 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.

LXIX.

The consequence was easily foreseen--
They ate up all they had, and drank their wine,
In spite of all remonstrances, and then
On what, in fact, next day were they to dine?
They hoped the wind would rise, these foolish men!
And carry them to shore; these hopes were fine,
But as they had but one oar, and that brittle,
It would have been more wise to save their victual.

LXX.

The fourth day came, but not a breath of air,
And Ocean slumbered like an unweaned child:
The fifth day, and their boat lay floating there,
The sea and sky were blue, and clear, and mild--
With their one oar (I wish they had had a pair)
What could they do? and Hunger's rage grew wild:
So Juan's spaniel, spite of his entreating,
Was killed, and portioned out for present eating.

LXXI.

On the sixth day they fed upon his hide,
And Juan, who had still refused, because
The creature was his father's dog that died,
Now feeling all the vulture in his jaws,
With some remorse received (though first denied)
As a great favour one of the fore-paws,
Which he divided with Pedrillo, who
Devoured it, longing for the other too.

LXXII.

The seventh day, and no wind--the burning sun
Blistered and scorched, 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
The longings of the cannibal arise
(Although they spoke not) in their wolfish eyes.

LXXIII.

At length one whispered his companion, who
Whispered another, and thus it went round,
And then into a hoarser murmur grew,
An ominous, and wild, and desperate sound;

And when his comrade's thought each sufferer knew,
'T was but his own, suppressed till now, he found:
And out they spoke of lots for flesh and blood,
And who should die to be his fellow's food.

LXXIV.

But ere they came to this, they that day shared
Some leathern caps, and what remained of shoes;
And then they looked around them, and despaired,
And none to be the sacrifice would choose;
At length the lots were torn up, and prepared,
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.

LXXV.

The lots were made, and marked, and mixed, and handed,
In silent horror, and their distribution
Lulled even the savage hunger which demanded,
Like the Promethean vulture, this pollution;
None in particular had sought or planned it,
'T was Nature gnawed them to this resolution,
By which none were permitted to be neuter--
And the lot fell on Juan's luckless tutor.

LXXVI.

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

LXXVII.

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

LXXVIII.

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
Refusing his own spaniel, hardly could
Feel now his appetite increased much more;
'T was not to be expected that he should,
Even in extremity of their disaster,
Dine with them on his pastor and his master.

LXXIX.

'T was 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 racked,

Drinking salt-water like a mountain-stream,
Tearing, and grinning, howling, screeching, swearing,
And, with hyaena-laughter, died despairing.

Study Questions:

1. Byron's short lyrics in this seem to have more in common with neo-classic literary style than romantic. What themes or subjects make them romantic?
2. What historical sites or figures draw the speaker's scorn and admiration in *Childe Harolde's Pilgrimage*? The poem is at once a travel memoir, a meditation upon history and a personal question for meaning—how do these differing motives shape the poem?
3. How does the speaker in *Childe Harolde's Pilgrimage* differ from the character Don Juan?
4. What is the role of the narrator in *Don Juan*? Does he transcend the role of ordinary narrator? What is his relationship with his subject Don Juan?
5. Byron has been called a “romantic nihilist.” Do works such as “Darkness” and *Don Juan* ultimately reflect a belief that “nothing matters” or that there are no absolute values?
6. Byron seems to enjoy poking fun at Wordsworth, Southey and the Lake Poets in *Don Juan*. Do you think Byron would consider himself to belong to the same literary tradition as the first generation romantics such as Wordsworth? Is his ridicule of Wordsworth fair?
7. How does the figure of the pariah/social outcast/genius appear in Byron's poetry and his own poetic persona? How does that persona embody key notions of the romantic tradition? Who is “Byron”?