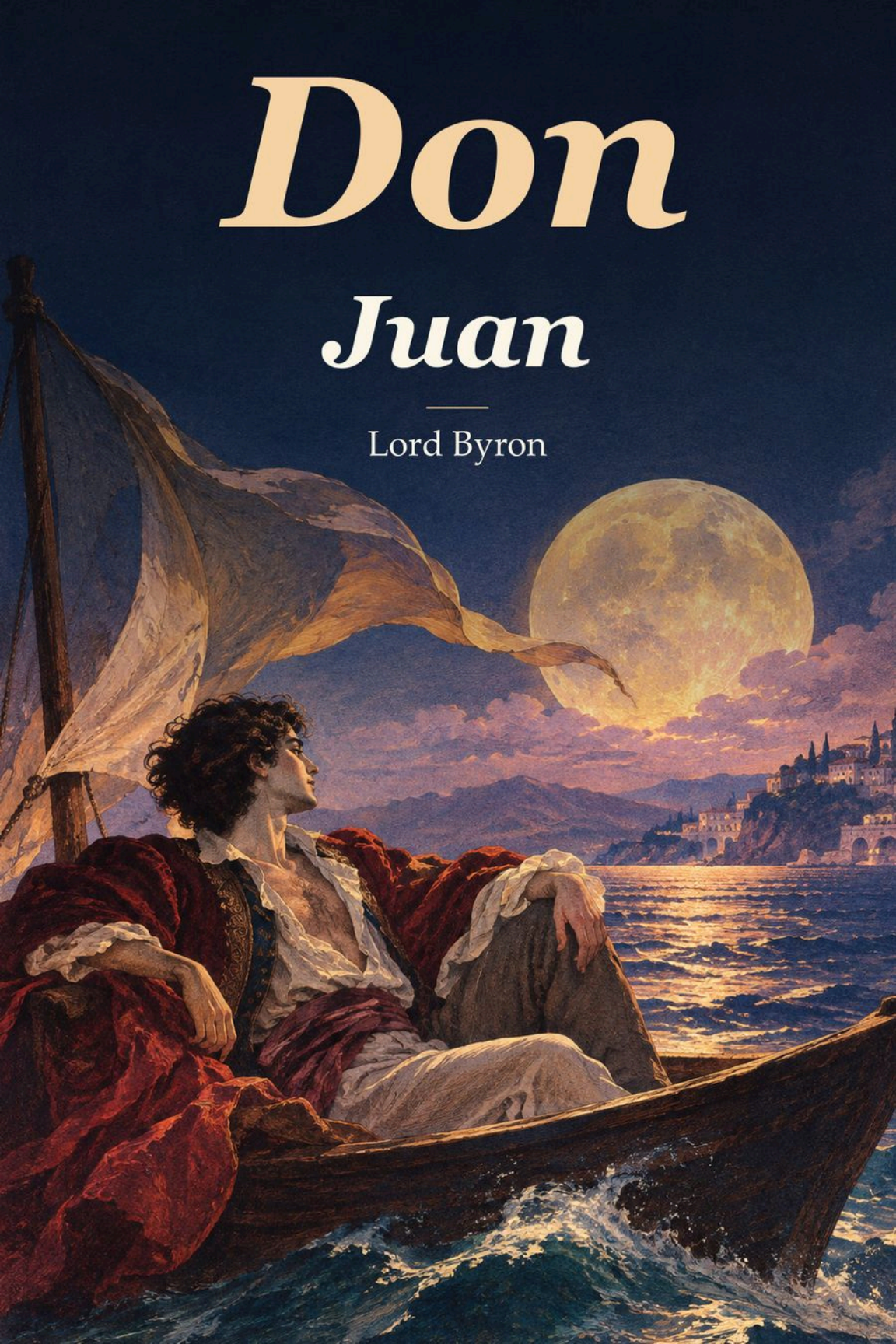
Don Juan

Lord Byron



PIPCUB EDITIONS

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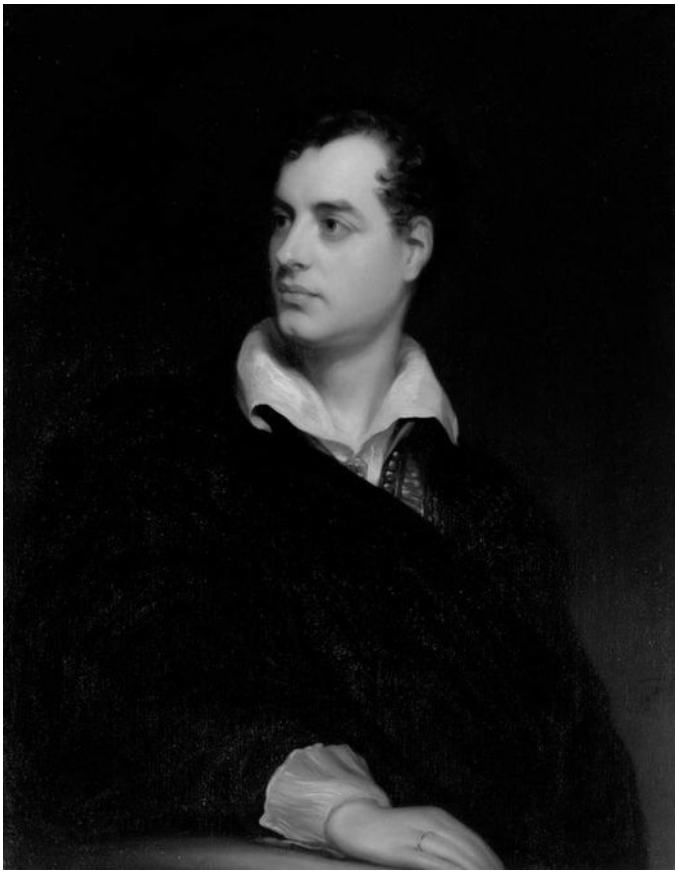
Lord Byron

THE AUTHOR



Lord Byron

1788 – 1824

Historical portrait by Thomas Phillips. Wikimedia Commons.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lord Byron

George Gordon, Lord Byron, was a British Romantic poet. His writing ranges from lyric and narrative verse to political satire, often using a conversational narrator who treats the reader as both confidant and opponent.

Byron studied at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge. Childe Harold's Pilgrimage helped establish his reputation before Don Juan. The difference between their narrators is one measure of how widely Byron's public voice could range.

Byron's narrator can set an adventure in motion and interrupt it almost at once to talk to the reader. The interruption may be a joke, an argument, or an unexpected piece of self-disclosure. Those turns are part of the poem's subject as much as Juan's travels.

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EDITION NOTE

Don Juan

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Cover illustration and book design prepared for this Pipcub edition.

DON JUAN

By Lord Byron



Painted by H.W Pickersgill, R.A. Engraved by Henry Rolls.

HAIDEE.

DON JUAN:

In Sixteen Cantos,

WITH NOTES.

BY LORD BYRON.

COMPLETE EDITION.

"Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more Cakes and Ale? Yes, by St. Ann; and Ginger shall be hot in the mouth too."

SHAKESPEARE.

HALIFAX:
MILNER AND SOWERBY.
1857.

[Note: Stanza and Line numbers have not been included.]

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DEDICATION

Bob Southey! You're a poet, poet laureate,
And representative of all the race.
Although 'tis 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,

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.

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.

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.
'Tis 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.

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.

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.

Your bays may hide the baldness of your brows,
Perhaps some virtuous blushes; let them go.
To you I envy neither fruit nor boughs,
And for the fame you would engross below,
The field is universal and allows
Scope to all such as feel the inherent glow.
Scott, Rogers, Campbell, Moore, and Crabbe will try
'Gainst you the question with posterity.

For me, who, wandering with pedestrian Muses,
Contend not with you on the winged' steed,
I wish your fate may yield ye, when she chooses,
The fame you envy and the skill you need.
And recollect a poet nothing loses
In giving to his brethren their full meed
Of merit, and complaint of present days
Is not the certain path to future praise.

He that reserves his laurels for posterity
(Who does not often claim the bright reversion)
Has generally no great crop to spare it, he
Being only injured by his own assertion.
And although here and there some glorious rarity
Arise like Titan from the sea's immersion,
The major part of such appellants go
To—God knows where—for no one else can know.

If fallen in evil days on evil tongues,
Milton appealed to the avenger, Time,
If Time, the avenger, execrates his wrongs

And makes the word Miltonic mean sublime,
He deigned not to belie his soul in songs,
Nor turn his very talent to a crime.
He did not loathe the sire to laud the son,
But closed the tyrant-hater he begun.

Think'st thou, could he, the blind old man, arise
Like Samuel from the grave to freeze once more
The blood of monarchs with his prophecies,
Or be alive again—again all hoar
With time and trials, and those helpless eyes
And heartless daughters—worn and pale and poor,
Would he adore a sultan? He obey
The intellectual eunuch Castlereagh?

Cold-blooded, smooth-faced, placid miscreant!
Dabbling its sleek young hands in Erin's gore,
And thus for wider carnage taught to pant,
Transferred to gorge upon a sister shore,
The vulgarest tool that tyranny could want,
With just enough of talent and no more,
To lengthen fetters by another fixed
And offer poison long already mixed.

An orator of such set trash of phrase,
Ineffably, legitimately vile,
That even its grossest flatterers dare not praise,
Nor foes—all nations—condescend to smile.
Not even a sprightly blunder's spark can blaze
From that Ixion grindstone's ceaseless toil,
That turns and turns to give the world a notion
Of endless torments and perpetual motion.

A bungler even in its disgusting trade,
And botching, patching, leaving still behind
Something of which its masters are afraid,
States to be curbed and thoughts to be confined,
Conspiracy or congress to be made,

Cobbling at manacles for all mankind,
A tinkering slave-maker, who mends old chains,
With God and man's abhorrence for its gains.

If we may judge of matter by the mind,
Emasculated to the marrow, it
Hath but two objects, how to serve and bind,
Deeming the chain it wears even men may fit,
Eutropius of its many masters, blind
To worth as freedom, wisdom as to wit,
Fearless, because no feeling dwells in ice;
Its very courage stagnates to a vice.

Where shall I turn me not to view its bonds,
For I will never feel them. Italy,
Thy late reviving Roman soul desponds
Beneath the lie this state-thing breathed o'er thee.
Thy clanking chain and Erin's yet green wounds
Have voices, tongues to cry aloud for me.
Europe has slaves, allies, kings, armies still,
And Southey lives to sing them very ill.

Meantime, Sir Laureate, I proceed to dedicate
In honest simple verse this song to you.
And if in flattering strains I do not predicate,
'Tis that I still retain my buff and blue;
My politics as yet are all to educate.
Apostasy's so fashionable too,
To keep one creed's a task grown quite
Herculean Is it not so, my Tory, ultra-Julian?

CANTO THE FIRST

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.

Vernon, the butcher Cumberland, Wolfe, Hawke,
Prince Ferdinand, Granby, Burgoyne, Keppel, Howe,
Evil and good, have had their tithe of talk,
And fill'd their sign posts then, like Wellesley now;
Each in their turn like Banquo's monarchs stalk,
Followers of fame, 'nine farrow' of that sow:
France, too, had Buonaparte and Dumourier
Recorded in the Moniteur and Courier.

Barnave, Brissot, Condorcet, Mirabeau,
Petion, Clootz, Danton, Marat, La Fayette,
Were French, and famous people, as we know:
And there were others, scarce forgotten yet,
Joubert, Hoche, Marceau, Lannes, Desaix, Moreau,
With many of the military set,
Exceedingly remarkable at times,
But not at all adapted to my rhymes.

Nelson was once Britannia's god of war,
And still should be so, but the tide is turn'd;
There's no more to be said of Trafalgar,
'Tis with our hero quietly inurn'd;
Because the army 's grown more popular,

At which the naval people are concern'd;
Besides, the prince is all for the land-service,
Forgetting Duncan, Nelson, Howe, and Jervis.

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.

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.

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.

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 call'd the Guadalquivir.

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:

His mother was a learned lady, famed
For every branch of every science known
In every Christian language ever named,
With virtues equall'd by her wit alone,
She made the cleverest people quite ashamed,
And even the good with inward envy groan,
Finding themselves so very much exceeded
In their own way by all the things that she did.

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

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 darken'd 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.

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

She liked the English and the Hebrew tongue,
  And said there was analogy between 'em;
She proved it somehow out of sacred song,
  But I must leave the proofs to those who've seen 'em;
But this I heard her say, and can't be wrong
  And all may think which way their judgments lean 'em,
"'Tis strange—the Hebrew noun which means "I am,"
The English always use to govern d—n.'

Some women use their tongues—she look'd a lecture,
  Each eye a sermon, and her brow a homily,
An all-in-all sufficient self-director,
  Like the lamented late Sir Samuel Romilly,
The Law's expounder, and the State's corrector,
  Whose suicide was almost an anomaly—
One sad example more, that 'All is vanity'
(The jury brought their verdict in 'Insanity').

In short, she was a walking calculation,
  Miss Edgeworth's novels stepping from their covers,
Or Mrs. Trimmer's books on education,
  Or 'Coelebs' Wife' set out in quest of lovers,
Morality's prim personification,
  In which not Envy's self a flaw discovers;
To others' share let 'female errors fall,'
For she had not even one—the worst of all.

O! she was perfect past all parallel—
  Of any modern female saint's comparison;

So far above the cunning powers of hell,
  Her guardian angel had given up his garrison;
Even her minutest motions went as well
  As those of the best time-piece made by Harrison:
In virtues nothing earthly could surpass her,
Save thine ‘incomparable oil,’ Macassar!

Perfect she was, but as perfection is
  Insipid in this naughty world of ours,
Where our first parents never learn’d to kiss
  Till they were exiled from their earlier bowers,
Where all was peace, and innocence, and bliss
  (I wonder how they got through the twelve hours),
Don Jose, like a lineal son of Eve,
Went plucking various fruit without her leave.

He was a mortal of the careless kind,
  With no great love for learning, or the learn’d,
Who chose to go where’er he had a mind,
  And never dream’d his lady was concern’d;
The world, as usual, wickedly inclined
  To see a kingdom or a house o’erturn’d,
Whisper’d he had a mistress, some said two—
But for domestic quarrels one will do.

Now Donna Inez had, with all her merit,
  A great opinion of her own good qualities;
Neglect, indeed, requires a saint to bear it,
  And such, indeed, she was in her moralities;
But then she had a devil of a spirit,
  And sometimes mix’d up fancies with realities,
And let few opportunities escape
Of getting her liege lord into a scrape.

This was an easy matter with a man
  Oft in the wrong, and never on his guard;
And even the wisest, do the best they can,
  Have moments, hours, and days, so unprepared,

That you might 'brain them with their lady's fan;'
And sometimes ladies hit exceeding hard,
And fans turn into falchions in fair hands,
And why and wherefore no one understands.

'Tis 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-peck'd you all?

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

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

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 whipp'd at home,
To teach him manners for the time to come.

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 smother'd fire broke out,
And put the business past all kind of doubt.

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

She kept a journal, where his faults were noted,
  And open'd certain trunks of books and letters,
All which might, if occasion served, be quoted;
  And then she had all Seville for abettors,
Besides her good old grandmother (who doted);
  The hearers of her case became repeaters,
Then advocates, inquisitors, and judges,
Some for amusement, others for old grudges.

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

No doubt this patience, when the world is damning us,
  Is philosophic in our former friends;
'Tis also pleasant to be deem'd magnanimous,
  The more so in obtaining our own ends;
And what the lawyers call a 'malus animus'
  Conduct like this by no means comprehends;
Revenge in person 's certainly no virtue,
But then 'tis not my fault, if others hurt you.

And if your quarrels should rip up old stories,
  And help them with a lie or two additional,
I'm not to blame, as you well know—no more is
  Any one else—they were become traditional;
Besides, their resurrection aids our glories
  By contrast, which is what we just were wishing all:
And science profits by this resurrection—
Dead scandals form good subjects for dissection.

Their friends had tried at reconciliation,
  Then their relations, who made matters worse.
('Twere 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.

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.

But, ah! he died; and buried with him lay

The public feeling and the lawyers' fees:
His house was sold, his servants sent away,
A Jew took one of his two mistresses,
A priest the other—at least so they say:
I ask'd the doctors after his disease—
He died of the slow fever call'd the tertian,
And left his widow to her own aversion.

Yet Jose was an honourable man,
That I must say who knew him very well;
Therefore his frailties I'll no further scan
Indeed there were not many more to tell;
And if his passions now and then outran
Discretion, and were not so peaceable
As Numa's (who was also named Pompilius),
He had been ill brought up, and was born bilious.

Whate'er might be his worthlessness or worth,
Poor fellow! he had many things to wound him.
Let 's own—since it can do no good on earth—
It was a trying moment that which found him
Standing alone beside his desolate hearth,
Where all his household gods lay shiver'd round him:
No choice was left his feelings or his pride,
Save death or Doctors' Commons—so he died.

Dying intestate, Juan was sole heir
To a chancery suit, and messuages, and lands,
Which, with a long minority and care,
Promised to turn out well in proper hands:
Inez became sole guardian, which was fair,
And answer'd but to nature's just demands;
An only son left with an only mother
Is brought up much more wisely than another.

Sagest of women, even of widows, she
Resolved that Juan should be quite a paragon,
And worthy of the noblest pedigree

(His sire was of Castile, his dam from Aragon):
Then for accomplishments of chivalry,
In case our lord the king should go to war again,
He learn'd the arts of riding, fencing, gunnery,
And how to scale a fortress—or a nunnery.

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.

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 any thing that 's loose,
Or hints continuation of the species,
Was ever suffer'd, lest he should grow vicious.

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 theirÆneids, Iliads, and Odysseys,
Were forced to make an odd sort! of apology,
For Donna Inez dreaded the Mythology.

Ovid 's a rake, as half his verses show him,
Anacreon's morals are a still worse sample,
Catullus scarcely has a decent poem,
I don't think Sappho's Ode a good example,
Although Longinus tells us there is no hymn

Where the sublime soars forth on wings more ample:
But Virgil's songs are pure, except that horrid one
Beginning with 'Formosum Pastor Corydon.'

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

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

For there we have them all 'at one fell swoop,'
Instead of being scatter'd through the Pages;
They stand forth marshall'd in a handsome troop,
To meet the ingenuous youth of future ages,
Till some less rigid editor shall stoop
To call them back into their separate cages,
Instead of standing staring all together,
Like garden gods—and not so decent either.

The Missal too (it was the family Missal)
Was ornamented in a sort of way
Which ancient mass-books often are, and this all
Kinds of grotesques illumined; and how they,
Who saw those figures on the margin kiss all,
Could turn their optics to the text and pray,
Is more than I know—But Don Juan's mother

Kept this herself, and gave her son another.

Sermons he read, and lectures he endured,
And homilies, and lives of all the saints;
To Jerome and to Chrysostom inured,
He did not take such studies for restraints;
But how faith is acquired, and then ensured,
So well not one of the aforesaid paints
As Saint Augustine in his fine Confessions,
Which make the reader envy his transgressions.

This, too, was a seal'd book to little Juan—
I can't but say that his mamma was right,
If such an education was the true one.
She scarcely trusted him from out her sight;
Her maids were old, and if she took a new one,
You might be sure she was a perfect fright;
She did this during even her husband's life—
I recommend as much to every wife.

Young Juan wax'd in goodliness and grace;
At six a charming child, and at eleven
With all the promise of as fine a face
As e'er to man's maturer growth was given:
He studied steadily, and grew apace,
And seem'd, at least, in the right road to heaven,
For half his days were pass'd at church, the other
Between his tutors, confessor, and mother.

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 toil'd,
At least it seem'd so; and his mother's joy
Was to declare how sage, and still, and steady,
Her young philosopher was grown already.

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.

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),
'Tis 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 pick'd up my own knowledge.

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

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

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).

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 stay'd in Spain,
Her great-great-grandmamma chose to remain.

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.

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

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.

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
  Flash'd an expression more of pride than ire,
And love than either; and there would arise
  A something in them which was not desire,
But would have been, perhaps, but for the soul
Which struggled through and chasten'd down the whole.

Her glossy hair was cluster'd o'er a brow
  Bright with intelligence, and fair, and smooth;
Her eyebrow's shape was like th' 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,
Possess'd an air and grace by no means common:
Her stature tall—I hate a dumpy woman.

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
  'Twere better to have TWO of five-and-twenty,
Especially in countries near the sun:
  And now I think on 't, 'mi vien in mente,'
Ladies even of the most uneasy virtue
Prefer a spouse whose age is short of thirty.

'Tis 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.

Happy the nations of the moral North!
   Where all is virtue, and the winter season
Sends sin, without a rag on, shivering forth
   ('Twas snow that brought St. 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.

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

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 penn'd:
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;

And that still keeping up the old connection,
   Which time had lately render'd much more chaste,
She took his lady also in affection,
   And certainly this course was much the best:
She flatter'd 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.

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.

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

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.

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
'Twas 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.

And if she met him, though she smiled no more,

She look'd a sadness sweeter than her smile,
As if her heart had deeper thoughts in store
She must not own, but cherish'd more the while
For that compression in its burning core;
Even innocence itself has many a wile,
And will not dare to trust itself with truth,
And love is taught hypocrisy from youth.

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, 'tis still the same hypocrisy;
Coldness or anger, even disdain or hate,
Are masks it often wears, and still too late.

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
Embarrass'd at first starting with a novice.

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 pray'd the Virgin Mary for her grace,
As being the best judge of a lady's case.

She vow'd she never would see Juan more,
And next day paid a visit to his mother,
And look'd extremely at the opening door,

Which, by the Virgin's grace, let in another;
Grateful she was, and yet a little sore—
Again it opens, it can be no other,
'Tis surely Juan now—No! I'm afraid
That night the Virgin was no further pray'd.

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.

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

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

Such love is innocent, and may exist
Between young persons without any danger.
A hand may first, and then a lip be kist;
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, 'tis quite a crime,
But not my fault—I tell them all in time.

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.

Fraught with this fine intention, and well fenced
In mail of proof—her purity of soul—
She, for the future of her strength convinced.
And that her honour was a rock, or mole,
Exceeding sagely from that hour dispensed
With any kind of troublesome control;
But whether Julia to the task was equal
Is that which must be mention'd in the sequel.

Her plan she deem'd both innocent and feasible,
And, surely, with a stripling of sixteen
Not scandal's fangs could fix on much that 's seizable,
Or if they did so, satisfied to mean
Nothing but what was good, her breast was peaceable—
A quiet conscience makes one so serene!
Christians have burnt each other, quite persuaded
That all the Apostles would have done as they did.

And if in the mean time her husband died,
But Heaven forbid that such a thought should cross
Her brain, though in a dream! (and then she sigh'd)
Never could she survive that common loss;
But just suppose that moment should betide,
I only say suppose it—inter nos.
(This should be entre nous, for Julia thought

In French, but then the rhyme would go for naught.)

I only say suppose this supposition:
  Juan being then grown up to man's estate
Would fully suit a widow of condition,
  Even seven years hence it would not be too late;
And in the interim (to pursue this vision)
  The mischief, after all, could not be great,
For he would learn the rudiments of love,
I mean the seraph way of those above.

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

Silent and pensive, idle, restless, slow,
  His home deserted for the lonely wood,
Tormented with a wound he could not know,
  His, like all deep grief, plunged in solitude:
I'm fond myself of solitude or so,
  But then, I beg it may be understood,
By solitude I mean a sultan's, not
A hermit's, with a haram for a grot.

'Oh Love! in such a wilderness as this,
  Where transport and security entwine,
Here is the empire of thy perfect bliss,
  And here thou art a god indeed divine.'
The bard I quote from does not sing amiss,
  With the exception of the second line,
For that same twining 'transport and security'
Are twisted to a phrase of some obscurity.

The poet meant, no doubt, and thus appeals
To the good sense and senses of mankind,
The very thing which every body feels,
As all have found on trial, or may find,
That no one likes to be disturb'd at meals
Or love.—I won't say more about 'entwined'
Or 'transport,' as we knew all that before,
But beg 'Security' will bolt the door.

Young Juan wander'd 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.

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 turn'd, without perceiving his condition,
Like Coleridge, into a metaphysician.

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.

In thoughts like these true wisdom may discern
Longings sublime, and aspirations high,

Which some are born with, but the most part learn
To plague themselves withal, they know not why:
'Twas strange that one so young should thus concern
His brain about the action of the sky;
If you think 'twas philosophy that this did,
I can't help thinking puberty assisted.

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

Sometimes he turn'd to gaze upon his book,
Boscan, or Garcilasso;—by the wind
Even as the page is rustled while we look,
So by the poesy of his own mind
Over the mystic leaf his soul was shook,
As if 'twere one whereon magicians bind
Their spells, and give them to the passing gale,
According to some good old woman's tale.

Thus would he while his lonely hours away
Dissatisfied, nor knowing what he wanted;
Nor glowing reverie, nor poet's lay,
Could yield his spirit that for which it panted,
A bosom whereon he his head might lay,
And hear the heart beat with the love it granted,
With—several other things, which I forget,
Or which, at least, I need not mention yet.

Those lonely walks, and lengthening reveries,
Could not escape the gentle Julia's eyes;
She saw that Juan was not at his ease;
But that which chiefly may, and must surprise,

Is, that the Donna Inez did not tease
  Her only son with question or surmise:
Whether it was she did not see, or would not,
Or, like all very clever people, could not.

This may seem strange, but yet 'tis very common;
  For instance—gentlemen, whose ladies take
Leave to o'erstep the written rights of woman,
  And break the—Which commandment is 't they break?
(I have forgot the number, and think no man
  Should rashly quote, for fear of a mistake.)
I say, when these same gentlemen are jealous,
They make some blunder, which their ladies tell us.

A real husband always is suspicious,
  But still no less suspects in the wrong place,
Jealous of some one who had no such wishes,
  Or pandering blindly to his own disgrace,
By harbouring some dear friend extremely vicious;
  The last indeed 's infallibly the case:
And when the spouse and friend are gone off wholly,
He wonders at their vice, and not his folly.

Thus parents also are at times short-sighted;
  Though watchful as the lynx, they ne'er discover,
The while the wicked world beholds delighted,
  Young Hopeful's mistress, or Miss Fanny's lover,
Till some confounded escapade has blighted
  The plan of twenty years, and all is over;
And then the mother cries, the father swears,
And wonders why the devil he got heirs.

But Inez was so anxious, and so clear
  Of sight, that I must think, on this occasion,
She had some other motive much more near
  For leaving Juan to this new temptation;
But what that motive was, I sha'n't say here;
  Perhaps to finish Juan's education,

Perhaps to open Don Alfonso's eyes,
In case he thought his wife too great a prize.

It was upon a day, a summer's day.—
  Summer's indeed a very dangerous season,
And so is spring about the end of May;
  The sun, no doubt, is the prevailing reason;
But whatsoe'er the cause is, one may say,
  And stand convicted of more truth than treason,
That there are months which nature grows more merry in,—
March has its hares, and May must have its heroine.

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

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

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, 'twould be wise,
But very difficult, to shut their eyes.

How beautiful she look'd! her conscious heart
  Glow'd in her cheek, and yet she felt no wrong.
O 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.

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 occurr'd, 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.

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, 'tis true,
But then, no doubt, it equally as true is,
A good deal may be bought for fifty Louis.

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 ponder'd this, besides much more,
One hand on Juan's carelessly was thrown,
Quite by mistake—she thought it was her own;

Unconsciously she lean'd upon the other,

Which play'd within the tangles of her hair:
And to contend with thoughts she could not smother
She seem'd by the distraction of her air.
'Twas surely very wrong in Juan's mother
To leave together this imprudent pair,
She who for many years had watch'd her son so—
I'm very certain mine would not have done so.

The hand which still held Juan's, by degrees
Gently, but palpably confirm'd 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.

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

The sun set, and up rose the yellow moon:
The devil 's in the moon for mischief; they
Who call'd her CHASTE, methinks, began too soon
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.

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.

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

O 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 controulless 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.

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.

'Tis said that Xerxes offer'd a reward
To those who could invent him a new pleasure:
Methinks the requisition 's rather hard,
And must have cost his majesty a treasure:
For my part, I'm a moderate-minded bard,

Fond of a little love (which I call leisure);
I care not for new pleasures, as the old
Are quite enough for me, so they but hold.

O Pleasure! you are indeed a pleasant thing,
Although one must be damn'd for you, no doubt:
I make a resolution every spring
Of reformation, ere the year run out,
But somehow, this my vestal vow takes wing,
Yet still, I trust it may be kept throughout:
I'm very sorry, very much ashamed,
And mean, next winter, to be quite reclaim'd.

Here my chaste Muse a liberty must take—
Start not! still chaster reader—she'll be nice hence—
Forward, and there is no great cause to quake;
This liberty is a poetic licence,
Which some irregularity may make
In the design, and as I have a high sense
Of Aristotle and the Rules, 'tis fit
To beg his pardon when I err a bit.

This licence is to hope the reader will
Suppose from June the sixth (the fatal day,
Without whose epoch my poetic skill
For want of facts would all be thrown away),
But keeping Julia and Don Juan still
In sight, that several months have pass'd; we'll say
'Twas in November, but I'm not so sure
About the day—the era 's more obscure.

We'll talk of that anon.—'Tis sweet to hear
At midnight on the blue and moonlit deep
The song and oar of Adria's gondolier,
By distance mellow'd, o'er the waters sweep;
'Tis sweet to see the evening star appear;
'Tis sweet to listen as the night-winds creep
From leaf to leaf; 'tis sweet to view on high

The rainbow, based on ocean, span the sky.

'Tis sweet to hear the watch-dog's honest bark
Bay deep-mouth'd welcome as we draw near home;
'Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark
Our coming, and look brighter when we come;
'Tis sweet to be awaken'd by the lark,
Or lull'd by falling waters; sweet the hum
Of bees, the voice of girls, the song of birds,
The lisp of children, and their earliest words.

Sweet is the vintage, when the showering grapes
In Bacchanal profusion reel to earth,
Purple and gushing: sweet are our escapes
From civic revelry to rural mirth;
Sweet to the miser are his glittering heaps,
Sweet to the father is his first-born's birth,
Sweet is revenge—especially to women,
Pillage to soldiers, prize-money to seamen.

Sweet is a legacy, and passing sweet
The unexpected death of some old lady
Or gentleman of seventy years complete,
Who've made 'us youth' wait too—too long already
For an estate, or cash, or country seat,
Still breaking, but with stamina so steady
That all the Israelites are fit to mob its
Next owner for their double-damn'd post-obits.

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

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

Man 's a strange animal, and makes strange use
   Of his own nature, and the various arts,
And likes particularly to produce
   Some new experiment to show his parts;
This is the age of oddities let loose,
   Where different talents find their different marts;
You'd best begin with truth, and when you've lost your
Labour, there's a sure market for imposture.

What opposite discoveries we have seen!
   (Signs of true genius, and of empty pockets.)
One makes new noses, one a guillotine,
   One breaks your bones, one sets them in their sockets;
But vaccination certainly has been
   A kind antithesis to Congreve's rockets,
With which the Doctor paid off an old pox,
By borrowing a new one from an ox.

Bread has been made (indifferent) from potatoes;
   And galvanism has set some corpses grinning,
But has not answer'd like the apparatus
   Of the Humane Society's beginning
By which men are unsuffocated gratis:
   What wondrous new machines have late been spinning!
I said the small-pox has gone out of late;
Perhaps it may be follow'd by the great.

'Tis said the great came from America;
   Perhaps it may set out on its return,—

The population there so spreads, they say
'Tis grown high time to thin it in its turn,
With war, or plague, or famine, any way,
So that civilisation they may learn;
And which in ravage the more loathsome evil is—
Their real lues, or our pseudo-syphilis?

This is the patent-age of new inventions
For killing bodies, and for saving souls,
All propagated with the best intentions;
Sir Humphry Davy's lantern, by which coals
Are safely mined for in the mode he mentions,
Tombuctoo travels, voyages to the Poles,
Are ways to benefit mankind, as true,
Perhaps, as shooting them at Waterloo.

Man 's a phenomenon, one knows not what,
And wonderful beyond all wondrous measure;
'Tis 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 gain'd, we die, you know—and then—

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

'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.

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

'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!
'Tis not my fault—I kept good watch—Alack!
Do pray undo the bolt a little faster—
They're on the stair just now, and in a crack
Will all be here; perhaps he yet may fly—
Surely the window 's not so very high!'

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 punish'd, all would be outrageous.

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, arm'd with fire and sword,
To prove himself the thing he most abhorr'd.

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.

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

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.'

He search'd, they search'd, 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 prick'd and curtains with their swords,
And wounded several shutters, and some boards.

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

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 suffer'd 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.

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

'Is it for this I have disdain'd to hold
  The common privileges of my sex?
That I have chosen a confessor so old
  And deaf, that any other it would vex,
And never once he has had cause to scold,
  But found my very innocence perplex
So much, he always doubted I was married—
How sorry you will be when I've miscarried!

'Was it for this that no Cortejo e'er

I yet have chosen from out the youth of Seville?
Is it for this I scarce went anywhere,
Except to bull-fights, mass, play, rout, and revel?
Is it for this, whate'er my suitors were,
I favor'd none—nay, was almost uncivil?
Is it for this that General Count O'Reilly,
Who took Algiers, declares I used him vilely?

'Did not the Italian Musico Cazzani
Sing at my heart six months at least in vain?
Did not his countryman, Count Corniani,
Call me the only virtuous wife in Spain?
Were there not also Russians, English, many?
The Count Strongstroganoff I put in pain,
And Lord Mount Coffeehouse, the Irish peer,
Who kill'd himself for love (with wine) last year.

'Have I not had two bishops at my feet,
The Duke of Ichar, and Don Fernan Nunez?
And is it thus a faithful wife you treat?
I wonder in what quarter now the moon is:
I praise your vast forbearance not to beat
Me also, since the time so opportune is—
O, valiant man! with sword drawn and cock'd trigger,
Now, tell me, don't you cut a pretty figure?

'Was it for this you took your sudden journey.
Under pretence of business indispensable
With that sublime of rascals your attorney,
Whom I see standing there, and looking sensible
Of having play'd the fool? though both I spurn, he
Deserves the worst, his conduct 's less defensible,
Because, no doubt, 'twas for his dirty fee,
And not from any love to you nor me.

'If he comes here to take a deposition,
By all means let the gentleman proceed;
You've made the apartment in a fit condition:

There's pen and ink for you, sir, when you need—
Let every thing be noted with precision,
I would not you for nothing should be fee'd—
But, as my maid 's undrest, pray turn your spies out.'
'Oh!' sobb'd Antonia, 'I could tear their eyes out.'

'There is the closet, there the toilet, there
The antechamber—search them under, over;
There is the sofa, there the great arm-chair,
The chimney—which would really hold a lover.
I wish to sleep, and beg you will take care
And make no further noise, till you discover
The secret cavern of this lurking treasure—
And when 'tis found, let me, too, have that pleasure.

'And now, Hidalgo! now that you have thrown
Doubt upon me, confusion over all,
Pray have the courtesy to make it known
Who is the man you search for? how d' ye cal
Him? what 's his lineage? let him but be shown—
I hope he 's young and handsome—is he tall?
Tell me—and be assured, that since you stain
My honour thus, it shall not be in vain.

'At least, perhaps, he has not sixty years,
At that age he would be too old for slaughter,
Or for so young a husband's jealous fears
(Antonia! let me have a glass of water).
I am ashamed of having shed these tears,
They are unworthy of my father's daughter;
My mother dream'd not in my natal hour
That I should fall into a monster's power.

'Perhaps 'tis of Antonia you are jealous,
You saw that she was sleeping by my side
When you broke in upon us with your fellows:
Look where you please—we've nothing, sir, to hide;
Only another time, I trust, you'll tell us,

Or for the sake of decency abide
A moment at the door, that we may be
Drest to receive so much good company.

'And now, sir, I have done, and say no more;
The little I have said may serve to show
The guileless heart in silence may grieve o'er
The wrongs to whose exposure it is slow:
I leave you to your conscience as before,
'Twill one day ask you why you used me so?
God grant you feel not then the bitterest grief!—
Antonia! where's my pocket-handkerchief?'

She ceased, and turn'd upon her pillow; pale
She lay, her dark eyes flashing through their tears,
Like skies that rain and lighten; as a veil,
Waved and o'ershading her wan cheek, appears
Her streaming hair; the black curls strive, but fail,
To hide the glossy shoulder, which uprears
Its snow through all;—her soft lips lie apart,
And louder than her breathing beats her heart.

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

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

Were proved by competent false witnesses.

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

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.

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 mutter'd, 'D—n her,'
But nothing else, the time of words was o'er;
He cast a rueful look or two, and did,
He knew not wherefore, that which he was bid.

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

No sooner was it bolted, than—Oh shame!
O 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 unfilch'd good name!
But to proceed—for there is more behind:
With much heartfelt reluctance be it said,
Young Juan slipp'd half-smother'd, from the bed.

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

And, secondly, I pity not, because
He had no business to commit a sin,
Forbid by heavenly, fined by human laws,
At least 'twas 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.

Of his position I can give no notion:
'Tis 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 answer'd very well;
Perhaps 'twas in a different way applied,
For David lived, but Juan nearly died.

What 's to be done? Alfonso will be back
The moment he has sent his fools away.

Antonia's skill was put upon the rack,
But no device could be brought into play—
And how to parry the renew'd attack?
Besides, it wanted but few hours of day:
Antonia puzzled; Julia did not speak,
But press'd her bloodless lip to Juan's cheek.

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

'Pray, keep your nonsense for some luckier night—
Who can have put my master in this mood?
What will become on 't—I'm in such a fright,
The devil 's in the urchin, and no good—
Is this a time for giggling? this a plight?
Why, don't you know that it may end in blood?
You'll lose your life, and I shall lose my place,
My mistress all, for that half-girlish face.

'Had it but been for a stout cavalier
Of twenty-five or thirty (come, make haste)—
But for a child, what piece of work is here!
I really, madam, wonder at your taste
(Come, sir, get in)—my master must be near:
There, for the present, at the least, he's fast,
And if we can but till the morning keep
Our counsel—(Juan, mind, you must not sleep).'

Now, Don Alfonso entering, but alone,
Closed the oration of the trusty maid:
She loiter'd, and he told her to be gone,
An order somewhat sullenly obey'd;

However, present remedy was none,
And no great good seem'd answer'd if she stay'd:
Regarding both with slow and sidelong view,
She snuff'd the candle, curtsied, and withdrew.

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

Julia said nought; though all the while there rose
A ready answer, which at once enables
A matron, who her husband's foible knows,
By a few timely words to turn the tables,
Which, if it does not silence, still must pose,—
Even if it should comprise a pack of fables;
'Tis to retort with firmness, and when he
Suspects with one, do you reproach with three.

Julia, in fact, had tolerable grounds,—
Alfonso's loves with Inez were well known,
But whether 'twas that one's own guilt confounds—
But that can't be, as has been often shown,
A lady with apologies abounds;—
It might be that her silence sprang alone
From delicacy to Don Juan's ear,
To whom she knew his mother's fame was dear.

There might be one more motive, which makes two;
Alfonso ne'er to Juan had alluded,—
Mention'd his jealousy but never who
Had been the happy lover, he concluded,
Conceal'd amongst his premises; 'tis true,
His mind the more o'er this its mystery brooded;

To speak of Inez now were, one may say,
Like throwing Juan in Alfonso's way.

A hint, in tender cases, is enough;
Silence is best, besides there is a tact
(That modern phrase appears to me sad stuff,
But it will serve to keep my verse compact)—
Which keeps, when push'd by questions rather rough,
A lady always distant from the fact:
The charming creatures lie with such a grace,
There's nothing so becoming to the face.

They blush, and we believe them; at least I
Have always done so; 'tis of no great use,
In any case, attempting a reply,
For then their eloquence grows quite profuse;
And when at length they're out of breath, they sigh,
And cast their languid eyes down, and let loose
A tear or two, and then we make it up;
And then—and then—and then—sit down and sup.

Alfonso closed his speech, and begg'd 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 perplex'd and haunted,
Beseeching she no further would refuse,
When, lo! he stumbled o'er a pair of shoes.

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.

He left the room for his relinquish'd 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:

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

Dire was the scuffle, and out went the light;
Antonia cried out 'Rape!' and Julia 'Fire!'
But not a servant stirr'd to aid the fight.
Alfonso, pommell'd to his heart's desire,
Swore lustily he'd be revenged this night;
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.

Alfonso's sword had dropp'd 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!

Alfonso grappled to detain the foe,

And Juan throttled him to get away,
And blood (’twas 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.

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

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

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.

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 vow'd (and never had she vow'd in vain)
To Virgin Mary several pounds of candles;
And then, by the advice of some old ladies,
She sent her son to be shipp'd off from Cadiz.

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:—

'They tell me 'tis decided; you depart:
'Tis wise—'tis 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, 'tis not what it appears;
My eyeballs burn and throb, but have no tears.

'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, 'tis not to boast,
None can deem harshlier of me than I deem:
I trace this scrawl because I cannot rest—
I've nothing to reproach, or to request.

'Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart;
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,

And few there are whom these cannot estrange;
Men have all these resources, we but one,
To love again, and be again undone.

'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.

'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 fix'd soul.

'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!'

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

If any person should presume to assert
This story is not moral, first, I pray,

That they will not cry out before they're hurt,
  Then that they'll read it o'er again, and say
(But, doubtless, nobody will be so pert)
  That this is not a moral tale, though gay;
Besides, in Canto Twelfth, I mean to show
The very place where wicked people go.

If, after all, there should be some so blind
  To their own good this warning to despise,
Led by some tortuosity of mind,
  Not to believe my verse and their own eyes,
And cry that they 'the moral cannot find,'
  I tell him, if a clergyman, he lies;
Should captains the remark, or critics, make,
They also lie too—under a mistake.

The public approbation I expect,
  And beg they'll take my word about the moral,
Which I with their amusement will connect
  (So children cutting teeth receive a coral);
Meantime, they'll doubtless please to recollect
  My epical pretensions to the laurel:
For fear some prudish readers should grow skittish,
I've bribed my grandmother's review—the British.

I sent it in a letter to the Editor,
  Who thank'd me duly by return of post—
I'm for a handsome article his creditor;
  Yet, if my gentle Muse he please to roast,
And break a promise after having made it her,
  Denying the receipt of what it cost,
And smear his page with gall instead of honey,
All I can say is—that he had the money.

I think that with this holy new alliance
  I may ensure the public, and defy
All other magazines of art or science,
  Daily, or monthly, or three monthly; I

Have not essay'd to multiply their clients,
  Because they tell me 'twere in vain to try,
And that the Edinburgh Review and Quarterly
Treat a dissenting author very martyrly.

'Non ego hoc ferrem calida juventa
  Consule Planco,' Horace said, and so
Say I; by which quotation there is meant a
  Hint that some six or seven good years ago
(Long ere I dreamt of dating from the Brenta)
  I was most ready to return a blow,
And would not brook at all this sort of thing
In my hot youth—when George the Third was King.

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 squander'd my whole summer while 'twas May,
  And feel no more the spirit to retort; I
Have spent my life, both interest and principal,
And deem not, what I deem'd, my soul invincible.

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! 'twas not in them, but in thy power
To double even the sweetness of a flower.

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.

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.

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.

What is the end of Fame? 'tis 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.

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.

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 pass’d your youth not so unpleasantly,
And if you had it o’er again—’twould pass—
So thank your stars that matters are no worse,
And read your Bible, sir, and mind your purse.’

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-b’ye!’
We meet again, if we should understand
Each other; and if not, I shall not try
Your patience further than by this short sample—
’Twere well if others follow’d my example.

‘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.

Don Juan.

CANTO THE SECOND.

I.

O ye! who teach the ingenuous youth of nations, 1
Holland, France, England, Germany, or Spain,
I pray ye flog them upon all occasions;
It mends their morals; never mind the pain.
The best of mothers and of educations,
In Juan's case, were but employ'd in vain,
Since, in a way that's rather of the oddest, he
Became divested of his native modesty.

II.

Had he but been plac'd at a public school, 2
In the third form, or even in the fourth,
His daily task had kept his fancy cool,
At least, had he been nurtur'd in the north;
Spain may prove an exception to this rule,
But then exceptions always prove its worth—
A lad of sixteen causing a divorce,
Puzzled his tutors very much, of course.

III.

I can't say that it puzzles me at all, 3
If all things be consider'd: first there was
His lady-mother, mathematical,
A———never mind;—his tutor, an old ass;
A pretty woman—(that's quite natural,
Or else the thing had hardly come to pass)
A husband rather old, not much in unity
With his young wife—a time and opportunity.

IV.

Well—well, the world must turn upon its axis, 4
And all mankind turn with it, heads or tails,
And live and die, make love, and pay our taxes,
And as the veering wind shifts, shift our sails;
The king commands us, and the doctor quacks us,
The priest instructs, and so our life exhales,
A little breath, love, wine, ambition, fame,
Fighting, devotion, dust,—perhaps a name.

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I said that Juan had been sent to Cadiz—
A pretty town, I recollect it well—
'Tis there the mart of the colonial trade is
(Or was, before Peru learn'd to rebel),
And such sweet girls—I mean, such graceful ladies,
Their very walk would make your bosom swell;
I can't describe it, though so much it strike,
Nor liken it—I never saw the like:

An Arab horse, a stately stag, a barb
New broke, a cameleopard, a gazelle,
No—none of these will do;—and then their garb!
Their veil and petticoat—Alas! to dwell
Upon such things would very near absorb
A canto—then their feet and ankles,—well,
Thank Heaven I've got no metaphor quite ready
(And so, my sober Muse—come, let 's be steady—

Chaste Muse!—well, if you must, you must)—the veil
Thrown back a moment with the glancing hand,
While the o'erpowering eye, that turns you pale,
Flashes into the heart:—All sunny land
Of love! when I forget you, may I fail
To—say my prayers—but never was there plann'd
A dress through which the eyes give such a volley,
Excepting the Venetian Fazzioli.

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

And send him like a dove of promise forth.

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

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

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

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.

So Juan stood, bewilder'd on the deck:
  The wind sung, cordage strain'd, and sailors swore,
And the ship creak'd, 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.

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 unexprest 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.

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.

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.

And Juan wept, and much he sigh'd and thought,
  While his salt tears dropp'd into the salt sea,

‘Sweets to the sweet’ (I like so much to quote;
You must excuse this extract, ’tis where she,
The Queen of Denmark, for Ophelia brought
Flowers to the grave); and, sobbing often, he
Reflected on his present situation,
And seriously resolved on reformation.

‘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.)

‘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 any thing excepting thee;
A mind diseased no remedy can physic
(Here the ship gave a lurch, and he grew sea-sick).

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

He felt that chilling heaviness of heart,
Or rather stomach, which, alas! attends,
Beyond the best apothecary’s art,
The loss of love, the treachery of friends,

Or death of those we dote on, when a part
  Of us dies with them as each fond hope ends:
No doubt he would have been much more pathetic,
But the sea acted as a strong emetic.

Love 's a capricious power: I've known it hold
  Out through a fever caused by its own heat,
But be much puzzled by a cough and cold,
  And find a quincy very hard to treat;
Against all noble maladies he 's bold,
  But vulgar illnesses don't like to meet,
Nor that a sneeze should interrupt his sigh,
Nor inflammations redden his blind eye.

But worst of all is nausea, or a pain
  About the lower region of the bowels;
Love, who heroically breathes a vein,
  Shrinks from the application of hot towels,
And purgatives are dangerous to his reign,
  Sea-sickness death: his love was perfect, how else
Could Juan's passion, while the billows roar,
Resist his stomach, ne'er at sea before?

The ship, call'd the most holy 'Trinidada,'
  Was steering duly for the port Leghorn;
For there the Spanish family Moncada
  Were settled long ere Juan's sire was born:
They were relations, and for them he had a
  Letter of introduction, which the morn
Of his departure had been sent him by
His Spanish friends for those in Italy.

His suite consisted of three servants and
  A tutor, the licentiate Pedrillo,
Who several languages did understand,
  But now lay sick and speechless on his pillow,
And rocking in his hammock, long'd for land,
  His headache being increased by every billow;

And the waves oozing through the port-hole made
His berth a little damp, and him afraid.

'Twas not without some reason, for the wind
  Increased at night, until it blew a gale;
And though 'twas not much to a naval mind,
  Some landsmen would have look'd a little pale,
For sailors are, in fact, a different kind:
  At sunset they began to take in sail,
For the sky show'd it would come on to blow,
And carry away, perhaps, a mast or so.

At one o'clock the wind with sudden shift
  Threw the ship right into the trough of the sea,
Which struck her aft, and made an awkward rift,
  Started the stern-post, also shatter'd the
Whole of her stern-frame, and, ere she could lift
  Herself from out her present jeopardy,
The rudder tore away: 'twas time to sound
The pumps, and there were four feet water found.

One gang of people instantly was put
  Upon the pumps and the remainder set
To get up part of the cargo, and what not;
  But they could not come at the leak as yet;
At last they did get at it really, but
  Still their salvation was an even bet:
The water rush'd through in a way quite puzzling,
While they thrust sheets, shirts, jackets, bales of muslin,

Into the opening; but all such ingredients
  Would have been vain, and they must have gone down,
Despite of all their efforts and expedients,
  But for the pumps: I'm glad to make them known
To all the brother tars who may have need hence,
  For fifty tons of water were upthrown
By them per hour, and they had all been undone,
But for the maker, Mr. Mann, of London.

As day advanced the weather seem'd to abate,
And then the leak they reckon'd to reduce,
And keep the ship afloat, though three feet yet
Kept two hand and one chain-pump still in use.
The wind blew fresh again: as it grew late
A squall came on, and while some guns broke loose,
A gust—which all descriptive power transcends—
Laid with one blast the ship on her beam ends.

There she lay motionless, and seem'd upset;
The water left the hold, and wash'd the decks,
And made a scene men do not soon forget;
For they remember battles, fires, and wrecks,
Or any other thing that brings regret,
Or breaks their hopes, or hearts, or heads, or necks:
Thus drownings are much talk'd of by the divers,
And swimmers, who may chance to be survivors.

Immediately the masts were cut away,
Both main and mizen; first the mizen went,
The main-mast follow'd: but the ship still lay
Like a mere log, and baffled our intent.
Foremast and bowsprit were cut down, and they
Eased her at last (although we never meant
To part with all till every hope was blighted),
And then with violence the old ship righted.

It may be easily supposed, while this
Was going on, some people were unquiet,
That passengers would find it much amiss
To lose their lives, as well as spoil their diet;
That even the able seaman, deeming his
Days nearly o'er, might be disposed to riot,
As upon such occasions tars will ask
For grog, and sometimes drink rum from the cask.

There's nought, no doubt, so much the spirit calms

As rum and true religion: thus it was,
Some plunder'd, some drank spirits, some sung psalms,
The high wind made the treble, and as bas
The hoarse harsh waves kept time; fright cured the qualms
Of all the luckless landsmen's sea-sick maws:
Strange sounds of wailing, blasphemy, devotion,
Clamour'd in chorus to the roaring ocean.

Perhaps more mischief had been done, but for
Our Juan, who, with sense beyond his years,
Got to the spirit-room, and stood before
It with a pair of pistols; and their fears,
As if Death were more dreadful by his door
Of fire than water, spite of oaths and tears,
Kept still aloof the crew, who, ere they sunk,
Thought it would be becoming to die drunk.

'Give us more grog,' they cried, 'for it will be
All one an hour hence.' Juan answer'd, 'No!
'Tis true that death awaits both you and me,
But let us die like men, not sink below
Like brutes;'—and thus his dangerous post kept he,
And none liked to anticipate the blow;
And even Pedrillo, his most reverend tutor,
Was for some rum a disappointed suitor.

The good old gentleman was quite aghast,
And made a loud and pious lamentation;
Repented all his sins, and made a last
Irrevocable vow of reformation;
Nothing should tempt him more (this peril past)
To quit his academic occupation,
In cloisters of the classic Salamanca,
To follow Juan's wake, like Sancho Panca.

But now there came a flash of hope once more;
Day broke, and the wind lull'd: the masts were gone,
The leak increased; shoals round her, but no shore,

The vessel swam, yet still she held her own.
They tried the pumps again, and though before
Their desperate efforts seem'd all useless grown,
A glimpse of sunshine set some hands to bale—
The stronger pump'd, the weaker thrumm'd a sail.

Under the vessel's keel the sail was past,
And for the moment it had some effect;
But with a leak, and not a stick of mast,
Nor rag of canvas, what could they expect?
But still 'tis best to struggle to the last,
'Tis never too late to be wholly wreck'd:
And though 'tis true that man can only die once,
'Tis not so pleasant in the Gulf of Lyons.

There winds and waves had hurl'd them, and from thence,
Without their will, they carried them away;
For they were forced with steering to dispense,
And never had as yet a quiet day
On which they might repose, or even commence
A jurymast or rudder, or could say
The ship would swim an hour, which, by good luck,
Still swam—though not exactly like a duck.

The wind, in fact, perhaps was rather less,
But the ship labour'd so, they scarce could hope
To weather out much longer; the distress
Was also great with which they had to cope
For want of water, and their solid mess
Was scant enough: in vain the telescope
Was used—nor sail nor shore appear'd in sight,
Nought but the heavy sea, and coming night.

Again the weather threaten'd,—again blew
A gale, and in the fore and after hold
Water appear'd; yet, though the people knew
All this, the most were patient, and some bold,
Until the chains and leathers were worn through

Of all our pumps:—a wreck complete she roll'd,
At mercy of the waves, whose mercies are
Like human beings during civil war.

Then came the carpenter, at last, with tears
In his rough eyes, and told the captain he
Could do no more: he was a man in years,
And long had voyaged through many a stormy sea,
And if he wept at length, they were not fears
That made his eyelids as a woman's be,
But he, poor fellow, had a wife and children,—
Two things for dying people quite bewildering.

The ship was evidently settling now
Fast by the head; and, all distinction gone,
Some went to prayers again, and made a vow
Of candles to their saints—but there were none
To pay them with; and some look'd o'er the bow;
Some hoisted out the boats; and there was one
That begg'd Pedrillo for an absolution,
Who told him to be damn'd—in his confusion.

Some lash'd them in their hammocks; some put on
Their best clothes, as if going to a fair;
Some cursed the day on which they saw the sun,
And gnash'd their teeth, and, howling, tore their hair;
And others went on as they had begun,
Getting the boats out, being well aware
That a tight boat will live in a rough sea,
Unless with breakers close beneath her lee.

The worst of all was, that in their condition,
Having been several days in great distress,
'Twas difficult to get out such provision
As now might render their long suffering less:
Men, even when dying, dislike inanition;
Their stock was damaged by the weather's stress:
Two casks of biscuit and a keg of butter

Were all that could be thrown into the cutter.

But in the long-boat they contrived to stow
  Some pounds of bread, though injured by the wet;
Water, a twenty-gallon cask or so;
  Six flasks of wine; and they contrived to get
A portion of their beef up from below,
  And with a piece of pork, moreover, met,
But scarce enough to serve them for a luncheon—
Then there was rum, eight gallons in a puncheon.

The other boats, the yawl and pinnace, had
  Been stove in the beginning of the gale;
And the long-boat's condition was but bad,
  As there were but two blankets for a sail,
And one oar for a mast, which a young lad
  Threw in by good luck over the ship's rail;
And two boats could not hold, far less be stored,
To save one half the people then on board.

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

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 laugh'd,
  If any laughter at such times could be,
Unless with people who too much have quaff'd,
  And have a kind of wild and horrid glee,
Half epileptical and half hysterical:—
Their preservation would have been a miracle.

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.

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

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

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.

All the rest perish'd; 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.

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

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

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 stepp'd
Off, threw him in, then after him he leap'd.

He also stuff'd 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 renew'd;
   But Juan, trusting they might still get through,
And deeming there were remedies for any ill,
Thus re-embark'd his tutor and his spaniel.

'Twas a rough night, and blew so stiffly yet,
   That the sail was becalm'd 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 curl'd 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 damp'd,
And the poor little cutter quickly swamp'd.

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

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.

They counted thirty, crowded in a space
   Which left scarce room for motion or exertion;
They did their best to modify their case,
   One half sate up, though numb'd with the immersion,
While t'other half were laid down in their place
   At watch and watch; thus, shivering like the tertian

Ague in its cold fit, they fill'd their boat,
With nothing but the sky for a great coat.

'Tis very certain the desire of life
  Prolongs it: this is obvious to physicians,
When patients, neither plagued with friends nor wife,
  Survive through very desperate conditions,
Because they still can hope, nor shines the knife
  Nor shears of Atropos before their visions:
Despair of all recovery spoils longevity,
And makes men's miseries of alarming brevity.

'Tis said that persons living on annuities
  Are longer lived than others,—God knows why,
Unless to plague the grantors,—yet so true it is,
  That some, I really think, do never die;
Of any creditors the worst a Jew it is,
  And that's their mode of furnishing supply:
In my young days they lent me cash that way,
Which I found very troublesome to pay.

'Tis thus with people in an open boat,
  They live upon the love of life, and bear
More than can be believed, or even thought,
  And stand like rocks the tempest's wear and tear;
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.

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.

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,
Lull'd them like turtles sleeping on the blue
Of ocean, when they woke they felt a qualm,
And fell all ravenously on their provision,
Instead of hoarding it with due precision.

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.

The fourth day came, but not a breath of air,
And Ocean slumber'd like an unwean'd 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 kill'd and portion'd out for present eating.

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
Devour'd it, longing for the other too.

The seventh day, and no wind—the burning sun

Blister'd and scorch'd, and, stagnant on the sea,
They lay like carcasses; and hope was none,
Save in the breeze that came not; savagely
They glared upon each other—all was done,
Water, and wine, and food,—and you might see
The longings of the cannibal arise
(Although they spoke not) in their wolfish eyes.

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

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

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

He but requested to be bled to death:
The surgeon had his instruments, and bled
Pedrillo, and so gently ebb'd his breath,

You hardly could perceive when he was dead.
He died as born, a Catholic in faith,
Like most in the belief in which they're bred,
And first a little crucifix he kiss'd,
And then held out his jugular and wrist.

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

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;
'Twas not to be expected that he should,
Even in extremity of their disaster,
Dine with them on his pastor and his master.

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

Their numbers were much thinn'd by this infliction,
And all the rest were thin enough, Heaven knows;
And some of them had lost their recollection,
Happier than they who still perceived their woes;
But others ponder'd on a new dissection,

As if not warn'd sufficiently by those
Who had already perish'd, suffering madly,
For having used their appetites so sadly.

And next they thought upon the master's mate,
As fattest; but he saved himself, because,
Besides being much averse from such a fate,
There were some other reasons: the first was,
He had been rather indisposed of late;
And that which chiefly proved his saving clause
Was a small present made to him at Cadiz,
By general subscription of the ladies.

Of poor Pedrillo something still remain'd,
But was used sparingly,—some were afraid,
And others still their appetites constrain'd,
Or but at times a little supper made;
All except Juan, who throughout abstain'd,
Chewing a piece of bamboo and some lead:
At length they caught two boobies and a noddy,
And then they left off eating the dead body.

And if Pedrillo's fate should shocking be,
Remember Ugolino condescends
To eat the head of his arch-enemy
The moment after he politely ends
His tale: if foes be food in hell, at sea
'Tis surely fair to dine upon our friends,
When shipwreck's short allowance grows too scanty,
Without being much more horrible than Dante.

And the same night there fell a shower of rain,
For which their mouths gaped, like the cracks of earth
When dried to summer dust; till taught by pain
Men really know not what good water 's worth;
If you had been in Turkey or in Spain,
Or with a famish'd boat's-crew had your berth,
Or in the desert heard the camel's bell,

You'd wish yourself where Truth is—in a well.

It pour'd down torrents, but they were no richer
  Until they found a ragged piece of sheet,
Which served them as a sort of spongy pitcher,
  And when they deem'd its moisture was complete
They wrung it out, and though a thirsty ditcher
  Might not have thought the scanty draught so sweet
As a full pot of porter, to their thinking
They ne'er till now had known the joys of drinking.

And their baked lips, with many a bloody crack,
  Suck'd in the moisture, which like nectar stream'd;
Their throats were ovens, their swoln tongues were black,
  As the rich man's in hell, who vainly scream'd
To beg the beggar, who could not rain back
  A drop of dew, when every drop had seem'd
To taste of heaven—If this be true, indeed
Some Christians have a comfortable creed.

There were two fathers in this ghastly crew,
  And with them their two sons, of whom the one
Was more robust and hardy to the view,
  But he died early; and when he was gone,
His nearest messmate told his sire, who threw
  One glance at him, and said, 'Heaven's will be done!
I can do nothing,' and he saw him thrown
Into the deep without a tear or groan.

The other father had a weaklier child,
  Of a soft cheek and aspect delicate;
But the boy bore up long, and with a mild
  And patient spirit held aloof his fate;
Little he said, and now and then he smiled,
  As if to win a part from off the weight
He saw increasing on his father's heart,
With the deep deadly thought that they must part.

And o'er him bent his sire, and never raised
His eyes from off his face, but wiped the foam
From his pale lips, and ever on him gazed,
And when the wish'd-for shower at length was come,
And the boy's eyes, which the dull film half glazed,
Brighten'd, and for a moment seem'd to roam,
He squeezed from out a rag some drops of rain
Into his dying child's mouth—but in vain.

The boy expired—the father held the clay,
And look'd upon it long, and when at last
Death left no doubt, and the dead burthen lay
Stiff on his heart, and pulse and hope were past,
He watch'd it wistfully, until away
'Twas borne by the rude wave wherein 'twas cast;
Then he himself sunk down all dumb and shivering,
And gave no sign of life, save his limbs quivering.

Now overhead a rainbow, bursting through
The scattering clouds, shone, spanning the dark sea,
Resting its bright base on the quivering blue;
And all within its arch appear'd to be
Clearer than that without, and its wide hue
Wax'd broad and waving, like a banner free,
Then changed like to a bow that 's bent, and then
Forsook the dim eyes of these shipwreck'd men.

It changed, of course; a heavenly chameleon,
The airy child of vapour and the sun,
Brought forth in purple, cradled in vermilion,
Baptized in molten gold, and swathed in dun,
Glittering like crescents o'er a Turk's pavilion,
And blending every colour into one,
Just like a black eye in a recent scuffle
(For sometimes we must box without the muffle).

Our shipwreck'd seamen thought it a good omen—
It is as well to think so, now and then;

’Twas an old custom of the Greek and Roman,
And may become of great advantage when
Folks are discouraged; and most surely no men
Had greater need to nerve themselves again
Than these, and so this rainbow look’d like hope—
Quite a celestial kaleidoscope.

About this time a beautiful white bird,
Webfooted, not unlike a dove in size
And plumage (probably it might have err’d
Upon its course), pass’d oft before their eyes,
And tried to perch, although it saw and heard
The men within the boat, and in this guise
It came and went, and flutter’d round them till
Night fell: this seem’d a better omen still.

But in this case I also must remark,
’Twas well this bird of promise did not perch,
Because the tackle of our shatter’d bark
Was not so safe for roosting as a church;
And had it been the dove from Noah’s ark,
Returning there from her successful search,
Which in their way that moment chanced to fall,
They would have eat her, olive-branch and all.

With twilight it again came on to blow,
But not with violence; the stars shone out,
The boat made way; yet now they were so low,
They knew not where nor what they were about;
Some fancied they saw land, and some said ‘No!’
The frequent fog-banks gave them cause to doubt—
Some swore that they heard breakers, others guns,
And all mistook about the latter once.

As morning broke, the light wind died away,
When he who had the watch sung out and swore,
If ’twas not land that rose with the sun’s ray,
He wish’d that land he never might see more;

And the rest rubb'd their eyes and saw a bay,
  Or thought they saw, and shaped their course for shore;
For shore it was, and gradually grew
Distinct, and high, and palpable to view.

And then of these some part burst into tears,
  And others, looking with a stupid stare,
Could not yet separate their hopes from fears,
  And seem'd as if they had no further care;
While a few pray'd (the first time for some years)—
  And at the bottom of the boat three were
Asleep: they shook them by the hand and head,
And tried to awaken them, but found them dead.

The day before, fast sleeping on the water,
  They found a turtle of the hawk's-bill kind,
And by good fortune, gliding softly, caught her,
  Which yielded a day's life, and to their mind
Proved even still a more nutritious matter,
  Because it left encouragement behind:
They thought that in such perils, more than chance
Had sent them this for their deliverance.

The land appear'd a high and rocky coast,
  And higher grew the mountains as they drew,
Set by a current, toward it: they were lost
  In various conjectures, for none knew
To what part of the earth they had been tost,
  So changeable had been the winds that blew;
Some thought it was Mount Ætna, some the highlands,
Of Candia, Cyprus, Rhodes, or other islands.

Meantime the current, with a rising gale,
  Still set them onwards to the welcome shore,
Like Charon's bark of spectres, dull and pale:
  Their living freight was now reduced to four,
And three dead, whom their strength could not avail
  To heave into the deep with those before,

Though the two sharks still follow'd them, and dash'd
The spray into their faces as they splash'd.

Famine, despair, cold, thirst, and heat, had done
  Their work on them by turns, and thinn'd them to
Such things a mother had not known her son
  Amidst the skeletons of that gaunt crew;
By night chill'd, by day scorch'd, thus one by one
  They perish'd, until wither'd to these few,
But chiefly by a species of self-slaughter,
In washing down Pedrillo with salt water.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And as he gazed, his dizzy brain spun fast,

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

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

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

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

Then was the cordial pour'd, and mantle flung
Around his scarce-clad limbs; and the fair arm
Raised higher the faint head which o'er it hung;

And her transparent cheek, all pure and warm,
Pillow'd his death-like forehead; then she wrung
His dewy curls, long drench'd by every storm;
And watch'd with eagerness each throb that drew
A sigh from his heaved bosom—and hers, too.

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

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

Her hair, I said, was auburn; but her eyes
Were black as death, their lashes the same hue,
Of downcast length, in whose silk shadow lies
Deepest attraction; for when to the view
Forth from its raven fringe the full glance flies,
Ne'er with such force the swiftest arrow flew;
'Tis as the snake late coil'd, who pours his length,
And hurls at once his venom and his strength.

Her brow was white and low, her cheek's pure dye
Like twilight rosy still with the set sun;
Short upper lip—sweet lips! that make us sigh
Ever to have seen such; for she was one
Fit for the model of a statuary

(A race of mere impostors, when all 's done—
I've seen much finer women, ripe and real,
Than all the nonsense of their stone ideal).

I'll tell you why I say so, for 'tis just
One should not rail without a decent cause:
There was an Irish lady, to whose bust
I ne'er saw justice done, and yet she was
A frequent model; and if e'er she must
Yield to stern Time and Nature's wrinkling laws,
They will destroy a face which mortal thought
Ne'er compass'd, nor less mortal chisel wrought.

And such was she, the lady of the cave:
Her dress was very different from the Spanish,
Simpler, and yet of colours not so grave;
For, as you know, the Spanish women banish
Bright hues when out of doors, and yet, while wave
Around them (what I hope will never vanish)
The basquina and the mantilla, they
Seem at the same time mystical and gay.

But with our damsel this was not the case:
Her dress was many-colour'd, finely spun;
Her locks curl'd negligently round her face,
But through them gold and gems profusely shone:
Her girdle sparkled, and the richest lace
Flow'd in her veil, and many a precious stone
Flash'd on her little hand; but, what was shocking,
Her small snow feet had slippers, but no stocking.

The other female's dress was not unlike,
But of inferior materials: she
Had not so many ornaments to strike,
Her hair had silver only, bound to be
Her dowry; and her veil, in form alike,
Was coarser; and her air, though firm, less free;
Her hair was thicker, but less long; her eyes

As black, but quicker, and of smaller size.

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

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

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

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

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

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



Painted by H.W Pickersgill, R.A. Engraved by Henry Rolls.

HAIDEE.

And walking out upon the beach, below
The cliff, towards sunset, on that day she found,
Insensible,—not dead, but nearly so,—
Don Juan, almost famish'd, and half drown'd;
But being naked, she was shock'd, you know,

Yet deem'd herself in common pity bound,
As far as in her lay, 'to take him in,
A stranger' dying, with so white a skin.

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

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

They made a fire,—but such a fire as they
Upon the moment could contrive with such
Materials as were cast up round the bay,—
Some broken planks, and oars, that to the touch
Were nearly tinder, since so long they lay
A mast was almost crumbled to a crutch;
But, by God's grace, here wrecks were in such plenty,
That there was fuel to have furnish'd twenty.

He had a bed of furs, and a pelisse,
For Haidee stripped her sables off to make
His couch; and, that he might be more at ease,
And warm, in case by chance he should awake,
They also gave a petticoat apiece,
She and her maid—and promised by daybreak
To pay him a fresh visit, with a dish

For breakfast, of eggs, coffee, bread, and fish.

And thus they left him to his lone repose:
Juan slept like a top, or like the dead,
Who sleep at last, perhaps (God only knows),
Just for the present; and in his lull'd head
Not even a vision of his former woes
Throbb'd in accursed dreams, which sometimes spread
Unwelcome visions of our former years,
Till the eye, cheated, opens thick with tears.

Young Juan slept all dreamless:—but the maid,
Who smooth'd his pillow, as she left the den
Look'd back upon him, and a moment stay'd,
And turn'd, believing that he call'd again.
He slumber'd; yet she thought, at least she said
(The heart will slip, even as the tongue and pen),
He had pronounced her name—but she forgot
That at this moment Juan knew it not.

And pensive to her father's house she went,
Enjoining silence strict to Zoe, who
Better than her knew what, in fact, she meant,
She being wiser by a year or two:
A year or two 's an age when rightly spent,
And Zoe spent hers, as most women do,
In gaining all that useful sort of knowledge
Which is acquired in Nature's good old college.

The morn broke, and found Juan slumbering still
Fast in his cave, and nothing clash'd upon
His rest; the rushing of the neighbouring rill,
And the young beams of the excluded sun,
Troubled him not, and he might sleep his fill;
And need he had of slumber yet, for none
Had suffer'd more—his hardships were comparative
To those related in my grand-dad's 'Narrative.'

Not so Haidee: she sadly toss'd and tumbled,
And started from her sleep, and, turning o'er
Dream'd of a thousand wrecks, o'er which she stumbled,
And handsome corpses strew'd upon the shore;
And woke her maid so early that she grumbled,
And call'd her father's old slaves up, who swore
In several oaths—Armenian, Turk, and Greek—
They knew not what to think of such a freak.

But up she got, and up she made them get,
With some pretence about the sun, that makes
Sweet skies just when he rises, or is set;
And 'tis, no doubt, a sight to see when breaks
Bright Phoebus, while the mountains still are wet
With mist, and every bird with him awakes,
And night is flung off like a mourning suit
Worn for a husband,—or some other brute.

I say, the sun is a most glorious sight,
I've seen him rise full oft, indeed of late
I have sat up on purpose all the night,
Which hastens, as physicians say, one's fate;
And so all ye, who would be in the right
In health and purse, begin your day to date
From daybreak, and when coffin'd at fourscore,
Engrave upon the plate, you rose at four.

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

And down the cliff the island virgin came,
And near the cave her quick light footsteps drew,

While the sun smiled on her with his first flame,
And young Aurora kiss'd her lips with dew,
Taking her for a sister; just the same
Mistake you would have made on seeing the two,
Although the mortal, quite as fresh and fair,
Had all the advantage, too, of not being air.

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

And thus like to an angel o'er the dying
Who die in righteousness, she lean'd; and there
All tranquilly the shipwreck'd boy was lying,
As o'er him the calm and stirless air:
But Zoe the meantime some eggs was frying,
Since, after all, no doubt the youthful pair
Must breakfast—and betimes, lest they should ask it,
She drew out her provision from the basket.

She knew that the best feelings must have victual,
And that a shipwreck'd youth would hungry be;
Besides, being less in love, she yawn'd a little,
And felt her veins chill'd by the neighbouring sea;
And so, she cook'd their breakfast to a tittle;
I can't say that she gave them any tea,
But there were eggs, fruit, coffee, bread, fish, honey,
With Scio wine,—and all for love, not money.

And Zoe, when the eggs were ready, and
The coffee made, would fain have waken'd Juan;
But Haidee stopp'd her with her quick small hand,
And without word, a sign her finger drew on

Her lip, which Zoe needs must understand;
And, the first breakfast spoilt, prepared a new one,
Because her mistress would not let her break
That sleep which seem'd as it would ne'er awake.

For still he lay, and on his thin worn cheek
A purple hectic play'd like dying day
On the snow-tops of distant hills; the streak
Of sufferance yet upon his forehead lay,
Where the blue veins look'd shadowy, shrunk, and weak;
And his black curls were dewy with the spray,
Which weigh'd upon them yet, all damp and salt,
Mix'd with the stony vapours of the vault.

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

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

And thus upon his elbow he arose,
And look'd upon the lady, in whose cheek
The pale contended with the purple rose,
As with an effort she began to speak;
Her eyes were eloquent, her words would pose,
Although she told him, in good modern Greek,

With an Ionian accent, low and sweet,
That he was faint, and must not talk, but eat.

Now Juan could not understand a word,
  Being no Grecian; but he had an ear,
And her voice was the warble of a bird,
  So soft, so sweet, so delicately clear,
That finer, simpler music ne'er was heard;
  The sort of sound we echo with a tear,
Without knowing why—an overpowering tone,
Whence Melody descends as from a throne.

And Juan gazed as one who is awoke
  By a distant organ, doubting if he be
Not yet a dreamer, till the spell is broke
  By the watchman, or some such reality,
Or by one's early valet's cursed knock;
  At least it is a heavy sound to me,
Who like a morning slumber—for the night
Shows stars and women in a better light.

And Juan, too, was help'd out from his dream,
  Or sleep, or whatso'er it was, by feeling
A most prodigious appetite: the steam
  Of Zoe's cookery no doubt was stealing
Upon his senses, and the kindling beam
  Of the new fire, which Zoe kept up, kneeling
To stir her viands, made him quite awake
And long for food, but chiefly a beef-steak.

But beef is rare within these oxless isles;
  Goat's flesh there is, no doubt, and kid, and mutton;
And, when a holiday upon them smiles,
  A joint upon their barbarous spits they put on:
But this occurs but seldom, between whiles,
  For some of these are rocks with scarce a hut on;
Others are fair and fertile, among which
This, though not large, was one of the most rich.

I say that beef is rare, and can't help thinking
That the old fable of the Minotaur—
From which our modern morals rightly shrinking
Condemn the royal lady's taste who wore
A cow's shape for a mask—was only (sinking
The allegory) a mere type, no more,
That Pasiphae promoted breeding cattle,
To make the Cretans bloodier in battle.

For we all know that English people are
Fed upon beef—I won't say much of beer,
Because 'tis liquor only, and being far
From this my subject, has no business here;
We know, too, they are very fond of war,
A pleasure—like all pleasures—rather dear;
So were the Cretans—from which I infer
That beef and battles both were owing to her.

But to resume. The languid Juan raised
His head upon his elbow, and he saw
A sight on which he had not lately gazed,
As all his latter meals had been quite raw,
Three or four things, for which the Lord he praised,
And, feeling still the famish'd vulture gnaw,
He fell upon whate'er was offer'd, like
A priest, a shark, an alderman, or pike.

He ate, and he was well supplied: and she,
Who watch'd him like a mother, would have fed
Him past all bounds, because she smiled to see
Such appetite in one she had deem'd dead;
But Zoe, being older than Haidee,
Knew (by tradition, for she ne'er had read)
That famish'd people must be slowly nurst,
And fed by spoonfuls, else they always burst.

And so she took the liberty to state,

Rather by deeds than words, because the case
Was urgent, that the gentleman, whose fate
Had made her mistress quit her bed to trace
The sea-shore at this hour, must leave his plate,
Unless he wish'd to die upon the place—
She snatch'd it, and refused another morsel,
Saying, he had gorged enough to make a horse ill.

Next they—he being naked, save a tatter'd
Pair of scarce decent trowsers—went to work,
And in the fire his recent rags they scatter'd,
And dress'd him, for the present, like a Turk,
Or Greek—that is, although it not much matter'd,
Omitting turban, slippers, pistols, dirk,—
They furnish'd him, entire, except some stitches,
With a clean shirt, and very spacious breeches.

And then fair Haidee tried her tongue at speaking,
But not a word could Juan comprehend,
Although he listen'd so that the young Greek in
Her earnestness would ne'er have made an end;
And, as he interrupted not, went eking
Her speech out to her protege and friend,
Till pausing at the last her breath to take,
She saw he did not understand Romaic.

And then she had recourse to nods, and signs,
And smiles, and sparkles of the speaking eye,
And read (the only book she could) the lines
Of his fair face, and found, by sympathy,
The answer eloquent, where soul shines
And darts in one quick glance a long reply;
And thus in every look she saw exprest
A world of words, and things at which she guess'd.

And now, by dint of fingers and of eyes,
And words repeated after her, he took
A lesson in her tongue; but by surmise,

No doubt, less of her language than her look:
As he who studies fervently the skies
Turns oftener to the stars than to his book,
Thus Juan learn'd his alpha beta better
From Haidee's glance than any graven letter.

'Tis pleasing to be school'd in a strange tongue
By female lips and eyes—that is, I mean,
When both the teacher and the taught are young,
As was the case, at least, where I have been;
They smile so when one 's right, and when one 's wrong
They smile still more, and then there intervene
Pressure of hands, perhaps even a chaste kiss;—
I learn'd the little that I know by this:

That is, some words of Spanish, Turk, and Greek,
Italian not at all, having no teachers;
Much English I cannot pretend to speak,
Learning that language chiefly from its preachers,
Barrow, South, Tillotson, whom every week
I study, also Blair, the highest reachers
Of eloquence in piety and prose—
I hate your poets, so read none of those.

As for the ladies, I have nought to say,
A wanderer from the British world of fashion,
Where I, like other 'dogs, have had my day,'
Like other men, too, may have had my passion—
But that, like other things, has pass'd away,
And all her fools whom I could lay the lash on:
Foes, friends, men, women, now are nought to me
But dreams of what has been, no more to be.

Return we to Don Juan. He begun
To hear new words, and to repeat them; but
Some feelings, universal as the sun,
Were such as could not in his breast be shut
More than within the bosom of a nun:

He was in love,—as you would be, no doubt,
With a young benefactress,—so was she,
Just in the way we very often see.

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

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

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

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

Came always back to coffee and Haidee.

Both were so young, and one so innocent,
That bathing pass'd for nothing; Juan seem'd
To her, as 'twere, the kind of being sent,
Of whom these two years she had nightly dream'd,
A something to be loved, a creature meant
To be her happiness, and whom she deem'd
To render happy; all who joy would win
Must share it,—Happiness was born a twin.

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

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

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

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

It was a wild and breaker-beaten coast,
With cliffs above, and a broad sandy shore,
Guarded by shoals and rocks as by an host,
With here and there a creek, whose aspect wore
A better welcome to the tempest-tost;
And rarely ceased the haughty billow's roar,
Save on the dead long summer days, which make
The outstretch'd ocean glitter like a lake.

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

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

Ring for your valet—bid him quickly bring
Some hock and soda-water, then you'll know

A pleasure worthy Xerxes the great king;
   For not the bless'd sherbet, sublimed with snow,
Nor the first sparkle of the desert-spring,
   Nor Burgundy in all its sunset glow,
After long travel, ennui, love, or slaughter,
Vie with that draught of hock and soda-water.

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

And forth they wander'd, her sire being gone,
   As I have said, upon an expedition;
And mother, brother, guardian, she had none,
   Save Zoe, who, although with due precision
She waited on her lady with the sun,
   Thought daily service was her only mission,
Bringing warm water, wreathing her long tresses,
And asking now and then for cast-off dresses.

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

And thus they wander'd forth, and hand in hand,
   Over the shining pebbles and the shells,
Glided along the smooth and harden'd sand,
   And in the worn and wild receptacles

Work'd by the storms, yet work'd as it were plann'd,
In hollow halls, with sparry roofs and cells,
They turn'd to rest; and, each clasp'd by an arm,
Yielded to the deep twilight's purple charm.

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

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

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

They were alone, but not alone as they
Who shut in chambers think it loneliness;
The silent ocean, and the starlight bay,
The twilight glow which momently grew less,
The voiceless sands and dropping caves, that lay
Around them, made them to each other press,

As if there were no life beneath the sky
Save theirs, and that their life could never die.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For there it lies so tranquil, so beloved,

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

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

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

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

Some take a lover, some take drams or prayers,
Some mind their household, others dissipation,
Some run away, and but exchange their cares,

Losing the advantage of a virtuous station;
Few changes e'er can better their affairs,
Theirs being an unnatural situation,
From the dull palace to the dirty hovel:
Some play the devil, and then write a novel.

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

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

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

O, Love! of whom great Caesar was the suitor,
Titus the master, Antony the slave,
Horace, Catullus, scholars, Ovid tutor,
Sappho the sage blue-stocking, in whose grave
All those may leap who rather would be neuter

(Leucadia's rock still overlooks the wave)—
O, Love! thou art the very god of evil,
For, after all, we cannot call thee devil.

Thou mak'st the chaste connubial state precarious,
And jestest with the brows of mightiest men:
Caesar and Pompey, Mahomet, Belisarius,
Have much employ'd the muse of history's pen;
Their lives and fortunes were extremely various,
Such worthies Time will never see again;
Yet to these four in three things the same luck holds,
They all were heroes, conquerors, and cuckolds.

Thou mak'st philosophers; there's Epicurus
And Aristippus, a material crew!
Who to immoral courses would allure us
By theories quite practicable too;
If only from the devil they would insure us,
How pleasant were the maxim (not quite new),
'Eat, drink, and love, what can the rest avail us?'
So said the royal sage Sardanapalus.

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

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

Which gave me some sensations like a villain.

But soon Philosophy came to my aid,
And whisper'd, 'Think of every sacred tie!'
'I will, my dear Philosophy!' I said,
'But then her teeth, and then, oh, Heaven! her eye!
I'll just inquire if she be wife or maid,
Or neither—out of curiosity.'
'Stop!' cried Philosophy, with air so Grecian
(Though she was masqued then as a fair Venetian);

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

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

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

The heart is like the sky, a part of heaven,
  But changes night and day, too, like the sky;
Now o'er it clouds and thunder must be driven,
  And darkness and destruction as on high:
But when it hath been scorch'd, and pierced, and riven,
  Its storms expire in water-drops; the eye
Pours forth at last the heart's blood turn'd to tears,
Which make the English climate of our years.

The liver is the lazaret of bile,
  But very rarely executes its function,
For the first passion stays there such a while,
  That all the rest creep in and form a junction,
Life knots of vipers on a dunghill's soil,—
  Rage, fear, hate, jealousy, revenge, compunction,—
So that all mischiefs spring up from this entrail,
Like earthquakes from the hidden fire call'd 'central,'

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

Don Juan.

CANTO THE THIRD.

I.

HAIL, Muse! *et cetera.*—We left Juan sleeping, 1
Pillow'd upon a fair and happy breast,
And watch'd by eyes that never yet knew weeping,
And lov'd by a young heart, too deeply blest
To feel the poison through her spirit creeping,
Or know who rested there; a foe to rest,
Had soil'd the current of her sinless years,
And turn'd her pure heart's purest blood to tears!

II.

Oh, Love! what is it, in this world of ours, 2
Which makes it fatal to be lov'd? Ah! why
With cypress branches hast thou wreath'd thy bowers,
And made thy best interpreter a sigh?
As those who dote on odours pluck the flowers,
And place them on their breast—but place to die—
Thus the frail beings we would fondly cherish,
Are laid within our bosoms but to perish.

III.

In her first passion, woman loves her lover; 3
In all the others, all she loves is love,
Which grows a habit she can ne'er get over,
And fits her loosely—like an easy glove,
As you may find, whene'er you like to prove her:
One man alone at first her heart can move;
She then prefers him in the plural number,
Not finding that the additions much encumber.

IV.

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

CANTO THE THIRD.

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

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

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

I know not if the fault be men's or theirs;
But one thing 's pretty sure; a woman planted
(Unless at once she plunge for life in prayers)
After a decent time must be gallanted;
Although, no doubt, her first of love affairs

Is that to which her heart is wholly granted;
Yet there are some, they say, who have had none,
But those who have ne'er end with only one.

'Tis melancholy, and a fearful sign
Of human frailty, folly, also crime,
That love and marriage rarely can combine,
Although they both are born in the same clime;
Marriage from love, like vinegar from wine—
A sad, sour, sober beverage—by time
Is sharpen'd from its high celestial flavour
Down to a very homely household savour.

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

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

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

He would have written sonnets all his life?

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

The only two that in my recollection
  Have sung of heaven and hell, or marriage, are
Dante and Milton, and of both the affection
  Was hapless in their nuptials, for some bar
Of fault or temper ruin'd the connection
  (Such things, in fact, it don't ask much to mar):
But Dante's Beatrice and Milton's Eve
Were not drawn from their spouses, you conceive.

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

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

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

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

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

Some he disposed of off Cape Matapan,
Among his friends the Mainots; some he sold
To his Tunis correspondents, save one man
Toss'd overboard unsaleable (being old);
The rest—save here and there some richer one,
Reserved for future ransom—in the hold
Were link'd alike, as for the common people he
Had a large order from the Dey of Tripoli.

The merchandise was served in the same way,
Pieced out for different marts in the Levant;

Except some certain portions of the prey,
  Light classic articles of female want,
French stuffs, lace, tweezers, toothpicks, teapot, tray,
  Guitars and castanets from Alicant,
All which selected from the spoil he gathers,
Robb'd for his daughter by the best of fathers.

A monkey, a Dutch mastiff, a mackaw,
  Two parrots, with a Persian cat and kittens,
He chose from several animals he saw—
  A terrier, too, which once had been a Briton's,
Who dying on the coast of Ithaca,
  The peasants gave the poor dumb thing a pittance;
These to secure in this strong blowing weather,
He caged in one huge hamper altogether.

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

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

Arriving at the summit of a hill
  Which overlook'd the white walls of his home,
He stopp'd.—What singular emotions fill
  Their bosoms who have been induced to roam!

With fluttering doubts if all be well or ill—
  With love for many, and with fears for some;
All feelings which o'erleap the years long lost,
And bring our hearts back to their starting-post.

The approach of home to husbands and to sires,
  After long travelling by land or water,
Most naturally some small doubt inspires—
  A female family 's a serious matter
(None trusts the sex more, or so much admires—
  But they hate flattery, so I never flatter);
Wives in their husbands' absences grow subtler,
And daughters sometimes run off with the butler.

An honest gentleman at his return
  May not have the good fortune of Ulysses;
Not all lone matrons for their husbands mourn,
  Or show the same dislike to suitors' kisses;
The odds are that he finds a handsome urn
  To his memory—and two or three young misses
Born to some friend, who holds his wife and riches,—
And that his Argus—bites him by the breeches.

If single, probably his plighted fair
  Has in his absence wedded some rich miser;
But all the better, for the happy pair
  May quarrel, and the lady growing wiser,
He may resume his amatory care
  As cavalier servente, or despise her;
And that his sorrow may not be a dumb one,
Write odes on the Inconstancy of Woman.

And oh! ye gentlemen who have already
  Some chaste liaison of the kind—I mean
An honest friendship with a married lady—
  The only thing of this sort ever seen
To last—of all connections the most steady,
  And the true Hymen (the first 's but a screen)—

Yet for all that keep not too long away,
I've known the absent wrong'd four times a day.

Lambro, our sea-solicitor, who had
Much less experience of dry land than ocean,
On seeing his own chimney-smoke, felt glad;
But not knowing metaphysics, had no notion
Of the true reason of his not being sad,
Or that of any other strong emotion;
He loved his child, and would have wept the loss of her,
But knew the cause no more than a philosopher.

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

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

And still more nearly to the place advancing,
Descending rather quickly the declivity,
Through the waved branches o'er the greensward glancing,
'Midst other indications of festivity,
Seeing a troop of his domestics dancing
Like dervises, who turn as on a pivot, he
Perceived it was the Pyrrhic dance so martial,
To which the Levantines are very partial.

And further on a group of Grecian girls,
  The first and tallest her white kerchief waving,
Were strung together like a row of pearls,
  Link'd hand in hand, and dancing; each too having
Down her white neck long floating auburn curls
  (The least of which would set ten poets raving);
Their leader sang—and bounded to her song,
With choral step and voice, the virgin throng.

And here, assembled cross-legg'd round their trays,
  Small social parties just begun to dine;
Pilaus and meats of all sorts met the gaze,
  And flasks of Samian and of Chian wine,
And sherbet cooling in the porous vase;
  Above them their dessert grew on its vine,
The orange and pomegranate nodding o'er
Dropp'd in their laps, scarce pluck'd, their mellow store.

A band of children, round a snow-white ram,
  There wreathe his venerable horns with flowers;
While peaceful as if still an unwean'd lamb,
  The patriarch of the flock all gently cowers
His sober head, majestically tame,
  Or eats from out the palm, or playful lowers
His brow, as if in act to butt, and then
Yielding to their small hands, draws back again.

Their classical profiles, and glittering dresses,
  Their large black eyes, and soft seraphic cheeks,
Crimson as cleft pomegranates, their long tresses,
  The gesture which enchants, the eye that speaks,
The innocence which happy childhood blesses,
  Made quite a picture of these little Greeks;
So that the philosophical beholder
Sigh'd for their sakes—that they should e'er grow older.

Afar, a dwarf buffoon stood telling tales

To a sedate grey circle of old smokers,
Of secret treasures found in hidden vales,
Of wonderful replies from Arab jokers,
Of charms to make good gold and cure bad ails,
Of rocks bewitch'd that open to the knockers,
Of magic ladies who, by one sole act,
Transform'd their lords to beasts (but that 's a fact).

Here was no lack of innocent diversion
For the imagination or the senses,
Song, dance, wine, music, stories from the Persian,
All pretty pastimes in which no offence is;
But Lambro saw all these things with aversion,
Perceiving in his absence such expenses,
Dreading that climax of all human ills,
The inflammation of his weekly bills.

Ah! what is man? what perils still environ
The happiest mortals even after dinner—
A day of gold from out an age of iron
Is all that life allows the luckiest sinner;
Pleasure (whene'er she sings, at least) 's a siren,
That lures, to flay alive, the young beginner;
Lambro's reception at his people's banquet
Was such as fire accords to a wet blanket.

He—being a man who seldom used a word
Too much, and wishing gladly to surprise
(In general he surprised men with the sword)
His daughter—had not sent before to advise
Of his arrival, so that no one stirr'd;
And long he paused to re-assure his eyes
In fact much more astonish'd than delighted,
To find so much good company invited.

He did not know (alas! how men will lie)
That a report (especially the Greeks)
Avouch'd his death (such people never die),

And put his house in mourning several weeks,—
But now their eyes and also lips were dry;
The bloom, too, had return'd to Haidee's cheeks,
Her tears, too, being return'd into their fount,
She now kept house upon her own account.

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

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

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

Advancing to the nearest dinner tray,
Tapping the shoulder of the nighest guest,
With a peculiar smile, which, by the way,
Boded no good, whatever it express'd,
He ask'd the meaning of this holiday;

The vinous Greek to whom he had address'd
His question, much too merry to divine
The questioner, fill'd up a glass of wine,

And without turning his facetious head,
Over his shoulder, with a Bacchant air,
Presented the o'erflowing cup, and said,
'Talking 's dry work, I have no time to spare.'
A second hiccup'd, 'Our old master 's dead,
You'd better ask our mistress who 's his heir.'
'Our mistress!' quoth a third: 'Our mistress!—pooh!—
You mean our master—not the old, but new.'

These rascals, being new comers, knew not whom
They thus address'd—and Lambro's visage fell—
And o'er his eye a momentary gloom
Pass'd, but he strove quite courteously to quell
The expression, and endeavouring to resume
His smile, requested one of them to tell
The name and quality of his new patron,
Who seem'd to have turn'd Haidee into a matron.

'I know not,' quoth the fellow, 'who or what
He is, nor whence he came—and little care;
But this I know, that this roast capon 's fat,
And that good wine ne'er wash'd down better fare;
And if you are not satisfied with that,
Direct your questions to my neighbour there;
He'll answer all for better or for worse,
For none likes more to hear himself converse.'

I said that Lambro was a man of patience,
And certainly he show'd the best of breeding,
Which scarce even France, the paragon of nations,
E'er saw her most polite of sons exceeding;
He bore these sneers against his near relations,
His own anxiety, his heart, too, bleeding,
The insults, too, of every servile glutton,

Who all the time was eating up his mutton.

Now in a person used to much command—
To bid men come, and go, and come again—
To see his orders done, too, out of hand—
Whether the word was death, or but the chain—
It may seem strange to find his manners bland;
Yet such things are, which I can not explain,
Though doubtless he who can command himself
Is good to govern—almost as a Guelf.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The love of power, and rapid gain of gold,
The hardness by long habitude produced,
The dangerous life in which he had grown old,
The mercy he had granted oft abused,
The sights he was accustom'd to behold,
The wild seas, and wild men with whom he cruised,
Had cost his enemies a long repentance,
And made him a good friend, but bad acquaintance.

But something of the spirit of old Greece
Flash'd o'er his soul a few heroic rays,

Such as lit onward to the Golden Fleece
His predecessors in the Colchian days;
T is true he had no ardent love for peace—
Alas! his country show'd no path to praise:
Hate to the world and war with every nation
He waged, in vengeance of her degradation.

Still o'er his mind the influence of the clime
Shed its Ionian elegance, which show'd
Its power unconsciously full many a time,—
A taste seen in the choice of his abode,
A love of music and of scenes sublime,
A pleasure in the gentle stream that flow'd
Past him in crystal, and a joy in flowers,
Bedew'd his spirit in his calmer hours.

But whatsoe'er he had of love reposed
On that beloved daughter; she had been
The only thing which kept his heart unclosed
Amidst the savage deeds he had done and seen;
A lonely pure affection unopposed:
There wanted but the loss of this to wean
His feelings from all milk of human kindness,
And turn him like the Cyclops mad with blindness.

The cubless tigress in her jungle raging
Is dreadful to the shepherd and the flock;
The ocean when its yeasty war is waging
Is awful to the vessel near the rock;
But violent things will sooner bear assuaging,
Their fury being spent by its own shock,
Than the stern, single, deep, and wordless ire
Of a strong human heart, and in a sire.

It is a hard although a common case
To find our children running restive—they
In whom our brightest days we would retrace,
Our little selves re-form'd in finer clay,

Just as old age is creeping on apace,
And clouds come o'er the sunset of our day,
They kindly leave us, though not quite alone,
But in good company—the gout or stone.

Yet a fine family is a fine thing
(Provided they don't come in after dinner);
'Tis beautiful to see a matron bring
Her children up (if nursing them don't thin her);
Like cherubs round an altar-piece they cling
To the fire-side (a sight to touch a sinner).
A lady with her daughters or her nieces
Shines like a guinea and seven-shilling pieces.

Old Lambro pass'd unseen a private gate,
And stood within his hall at eventide;
Meantime the lady and her lover sate
At wassail in their beauty and their pride:
An ivory inlaid table spread with state
Before them, and fair slaves on every side;
Gems, gold, and silver, form'd the service mostly,
Mother of pearl and coral the less costly.

The dinner made about a hundred dishes;
Lamb and pistachio nuts—in short, all meats,
And saffron soups, and sweetbreads; and the fishes
Were of the finest that e'er flounced in nets,
Drest to a Sybarite's most pamper'd wishes;
The beverage was various sherbets
Of raisin, orange, and pomegranate juice,
Squeezed through the rind, which makes it best for use.

These were ranged round, each in its crystal ewer,
And fruits, and date-bread loaves closed the repast,
And Mocha's berry, from Arabia pure,
In small fine China cups, came in at last;
Gold cups of filigree made to secure
The hand from burning underneath them placed,

Cloves, cinnamon, and saffron too were boil'd
Up with the coffee, which (I think) they spoil'd.

The hangings of the room were tapestry, made
  Of velvet panels, each of different hue,
And thick with damask flowers of silk inlaid;
  And round them ran a yellow border too;
The upper border, richly wrought, display'd,
  Embroider'd delicately o'er with blue,
Soft Persian sentences, in lilac letters,
From poets, or the moralists their betters.

These Oriental writings on the wall,
  Quite common in those countries, are a kind
Of monitors adapted to recall,
  Like skulls at Memphian banquets, to the mind
The words which shook Belshazzar in his hall,
  And took his kingdom from him: You will find,
Though sages may pour out their wisdom's treasure,
There is no sterner moralist than Pleasure.

A beauty at the season's close grown hectic,
  A genius who has drunk himself to death,
A rake turn'd methodistic, or Eclectic
  (For that 's the name they like to pray beneath)—
But most, an alderman struck apoplectic,
  Are things that really take away the breath,—
And show that late hours, wine, and love are able
To do not much less damage than the table.

Haidee and Juan carpeted their feet
  On crimson satin, border'd with pale blue;
Their sofa occupied three parts complete
  Of the apartment—and appear'd quite new;
The velvet cushions (for a throne more meet)
  Were scarlet, from whose glowing centre grew
A sun emboss'd in gold, whose rays of tissue,
Meridian-like, were seen all light to issue.

Crystal and marble, plate and porcelain,
Had done their work of splendour; Indian mats
And Persian carpets, which the heart bled to stain,
Over the floors were spread; gazelles and cats,
And dwarfs and blacks, and such like things, that gain
Their bread as ministers and favourites (that 's
To say, by degradation) mingled there
As plentiful as in a court, or fair.

There was no want of lofty mirrors, and
The tables, most of ebony inlaid
With mother of pearl or ivory, stood at hand,
Or were of tortoise-shell or rare woods made,
Fretted with gold or silver:—by command,
The greater part of these were ready spread
With viands and sherbets in ice—and wine—
Kept for all comers at all hours to dine.

Of all the dresses I select Haidee's:
She wore two jelicks—one was of pale yellow;
Of azure, pink, and white was her chemise—
'Neath which her breast heaved like a little billow;
With buttons form'd of pearls as large as peas,
All gold and crimson shone her jelick's fellow,
And the striped white gauze baracan that bound her,
Like fleecy clouds about the moon, flow'd round her.

One large gold bracelet clasp'd each lovely arm,
Lockless—so pliable from the pure gold
That the hand stretch'd and shut it without harm,
The limb which it adorn'd its only mould;
So beautiful—its very shape would charm;
And, clinging as if loath to lose its hold,
The purest ore enclosed the whitest skin
That e'er by precious metal was held in.

Around, as princess of her father's land,

A like gold bar above her instep roll'd
Announced her rank; twelve rings were on her hand;
Her hair was starr'd with gems; her veil's fine fold
Below her breast was fasten'd with a band
Of lavish pearls, whose worth could scarce be told;
Her orange silk full Turkish trousers furl'd
About the prettiest ankle in the world.

Her hair's long auburn waves down to her heel
Flow'd like an Alpine torrent which the sun
Dyes with his morning light,—and would conceal
Her person if allow'd at large to run,
And still they seem resentfully to feel
The silken fillet's curb, and sought to shun
Their bonds whene'er some Zephyr caught began
To offer his young pinion as her fan.

Round her she made an atmosphere of life,
The very air seem'd lighter from her eyes,
They were so soft and beautiful, and rife
With all we can imagine of the skies,
And pure as Psyche ere she grew a wife—
Too pure even for the purest human ties;
Her overpowering presence made you feel
It would not be idolatry to kneel.

Her eyelashes, though dark as night, were tinged
(It is the country's custom), but in vain;
For those large black eyes were so blackly fringed,
The glossy rebels mock'd the jetty stain,
And in their native beauty stood avenged:
Her nails were touch'd with henna; but again
The power of art was turn'd to nothing, for
They could not look more rosy than before.

The henna should be deeply dyed to make
The skin relieved appear more fairly fair;
She had no need of this, day ne'er will break

On mountain tops more heavenly white than her:
The eye might doubt if it were well awake,
She was so like a vision; I might err,
But Shakspeare also says, 'tis very silly
'To gild refined gold, or paint the lily'

Juan had on a shawl of black and gold,
But a white baracan, and so transparent
The sparkling gems beneath you might behold,
Like small stars through the milky way apparent;
His turban, furl'd in many a graceful fold,
An emerald aigrette with Haidee's hair in 't
Surmounted as its clasp—a glowing crescent,
Whose rays shone ever trembling, but incessant.

And now they were diverted by their suite,
Dwarfs, dancing girls, black eunuchs, and a poet,
Which made their new establishment complete;
The last was of great fame, and liked to show it:
His verses rarely wanted their due feet;
And for his theme—he seldom sung below it,
He being paid to satirize or flatter,
As the psalm says, 'inditing a good matter.'

He praised the present, and abused the past,
Reversing the good custom of old days,
An Eastern anti-jacobin at last
He turn'd, preferring pudding to no praise—
For some few years his lot had been o'ercast
By his seeming independent in his lays,
But now he sung the Sultan and the Pacha
With truth like Southey, and with verse like Crashaw.

He was a man who had seen many changes,
And always changed as true as any needle;
His polar star being one which rather ranges,
And not the fix'd—he knew the way to wheedle:
So vile he 'scaped the doom which oft avenges;

And being fluent (save indeed when fee'd ill),
He lied with such a fervour of intention—
There was no doubt he earn'd his laureate pension.

But he had genius,—when a turncoat has it,
The 'Vates irritabilis' takes care
That without notice few full moons shall pass it;
Even good men like to make the public stare:—
But to my subject—let me see—what was it?—
O!—the third canto—and the pretty pair—
Their loves, and feasts, and house, and dress, and mode
Of living in their insular abode.

Their poet, a sad trimmer, but no less
In company a very pleasant fellow,
Had been the favourite of full many a mess
Of men, and made them speeches when half mellow;
And though his meaning they could rarely guess,
Yet still they deign'd to hiccup or to bellow
The glorious meed of popular applause,
Of which the first ne'er knows the second cause.

But now being lifted into high society,
And having pick'd up several odds and ends
Of free thoughts in his travels for variety,
He deem'd, being in a lone isle, among friends,
That, without any danger of a riot, he
Might for long lying make himself amends;
And, singing as he sung in his warm youth,
Agree to a short armistice with truth.

He had travell'd 'mongst the Arabs, Turks, and Franks,
And knew the self-loves of the different nations;
And having lived with people of all ranks,
Had something ready upon most occasions—
Which got him a few presents and some thanks.
He varied with some skill his adulations;
To 'do at Rome as Romans do,' a piece

Of conduct was which he observed in Greece.

Thus, usually, when he was ask'd to sing,
He gave the different nations something national;
'Twas all the same to him—'God save the king,'
Or 'Ca ira,' according to the fashion all:
His muse made increment of any thing,
From the high lyric down to the low rational:
If Pindar sang horse-races, what should hinder
Himself from being as pliable as Pindar?

In France, for instance, he would write a chanson;
In England a six canto quarto tale;
In Spain, he'd make a ballad or romance on
The last war—much the same in Portugal;
In Germany, the Pegasus he'd prance on
Would be old Goethe's (see what says De Stael);
In Italy he'd ape the 'Trecentisti;'
In Greece, he sing some sort of hymn like this t' ye:

The isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.

The Scian and the Teian muse,
The hero's harp, the lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse;
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo further west
Than your sires' 'Islands of the Blest.'

The mountains look on Marathon—
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dream'd that Greece might still be free;

For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

A king sate on the rocky brow
    Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
    And men in nations;—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—
And when the sun set where were they?

And where are they? and where art thou,
    My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
    The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

'Tis something, in the dearth of fame,
    Though link'd among a fetter'd race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
    Even as I sing, suffuse my face;
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

Must we but weep o'er days more blest?
    Must we but blush?—Our fathers bled.
Earth! render back from out thy breast
    A remnant of our Spartan dead!
Of the three hundred grant but three,
To make a new Thermopylae!

What, silent still? and silent all?
    Ah! no;—the voices of the dead
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,
    And answer, 'Let one living head,
But one arise,—we come, we come!'
'Tis but the living who are dumb.

In vain—in vain: strike other chords;
    Fill high the cup with Samian wine!
Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,
    And shed the blood of Scio's vine!
Hark! rising to the ignoble call—
How answers each bold Bacchanal!

You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet,
    Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?
Of two such lessons, why forget
    The nobler and the manlier one?
You have the letters Cadmus gave—
Think ye he meant them for a slave?

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
    We will not think of themes like these!
It made Anacreon's song divine:
    He served—but served Polycrates—
A tyrant; but our masters then
Were still, at least, our countrymen.

The tyrant of the Chersonese
    Was freedom's best and bravest friend;
That tyrant was Miltiades!
    O! that the present hour would lend
Another despot of the kind!
Such chains as his were sure to bind.

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
    On Suli's rock, and Parga's shore,
Exists the remnant of a line
    Such as the Doric mothers bore;
And there, perhaps, some seed is sown,
The Heracleidan blood might own.

Trust not for freedom to the Franks—
    They have a king who buys and sells;
In native swords, and native ranks,

The only hope of courage dwells;
But Turkish force, and Latin fraud,
Would break your shield, however broad.

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
Our virgins dance beneath the shade—
I see their glorious black eyes shine;
But gazing on each glowing maid,
My own the burning tear-drop laves,
To think such breasts must suckle slaves

Place me on Sunium's marbled steep,
Where nothing, save the waves and I,
May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;
There, swan-like, let me sing and die:
A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine—
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

Thus sung, or would, or could, or should have sung,
The modern Greek, in tolerable verse;
If not like Orpheus quite, when Greece was young,
Yet in these times he might have done much worse:
His strain display'd some feeling—right or wrong;
And feeling, in a poet, is the source
Of others' feeling; but they are such liars,
And take all colours—like the hands of dyers.

But words are things, and a small drop of ink,
Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think;
'Tis strange, the shortest letter which man uses
Instead of speech, may form a lasting link
Of ages; to what straits old Time reduces
Frail man, when paper—even a rag like this,
Survives himself, his tomb, and all that 's his.

And when his bones are dust, his grave a blank,
His station, generation, even his nation,

Become a thing, or nothing, save to rank
In chronological commemoration,
Some dull MS. oblivion long has sank,
Or graven stone found in a barrack's station
In digging the foundation of a closet,
May turn his name up, as a rare deposit.

And glory long has made the sages smile;
'Tis something, nothing, words, illusion, wind—
Depending more upon the historian's style
Than on the name a person leaves behind:
Troy owes to Homer what whist owes to Hoyle:
The present century was growing blind
To the great Marlborough's skill in giving knocks,
Until his late life by Archdeacon Coxe.

Milton 's the prince of poets—so we say;
A little heavy, but no less divine:
An independent being in his day—
Learn'd, pious, temperate in love and wine;
But, his life falling into Johnson's way,
We're told this great high priest of all the Nine
Was whipt at college—a harsh sire—odd spouse,
For the first Mrs. Milton left his house.

All these are, certes, entertaining facts,
Like Shakspeare's stealing deer, Lord Bacon's bribes;
Like Titus' youth, and Caesar's earliest acts;
Like Burns (whom Doctor Currie well describes);
Like Cromwell's pranks;—but although truth exacts
These amiable descriptions from the scribes,
As most essential to their hero's story,
They do not much contribute to his glory.

All are not moralists, like Southey, when
He prated to the world of 'Pantisocracy;'
Or Wordsworth unexcised, unhired, who then
Season'd his pedlar poems with democracy;

Or Coleridge, long before his flighty pen
  Let to the Morning Post its aristocracy;
When he and Southey, following the same path,
Espoused two partners (milliners of Bath).

Such names at present cut a convict figure,
  The very Botany Bay in moral geography;
Their loyal treason, renegado rigour,
  Are good manure for their more bare biography.
Wordsworth's last quarto, by the way, is bigger
  Than any since the birthday of typography;
A drowsy frowzy poem, call'd the 'Excursion.'
Writ in a manner which is my aversion.

He there builds up a formidable dyke
  Between his own and others' intellect;
But Wordsworth's poem, and his followers, like
  Joanna Southcote's Shiloh, and her sect,
Are things which in this century don't strike
  The public mind,—so few are the elect;
And the new births of both their stale virginities
Have proved but dropsies, taken for divinities.

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

I know that what our neighbours call 'longueurs'
  (We've not so good a word, but have the thing
In that complete perfection which ensures
  An epic from Bob Southey every spring),
Form not the true temptation which allures
  The reader; but 'twould not be hard to bring

Some fine examples of the epopee,
To prove its grand ingredient is ennui.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sweet hour of twilight!—in the solitude
Of the pine forest, and the silent shore
Which bounds Ravenna's immemorial wood,
Rooted where once the Adrian wave flow'd o'er,
To where the last Caesarean fortress stood,
Evergreen forest! which Boccaccio's lore
And Dryden's lay made haunted ground to me,
How have I loved the twilight hour and thee!

The shrill cicadas, people of the pine,

Making their summer lives one ceaseless song,
Were the sole echoes, save my steed's and mine,
And vesper bell's that rose the boughs along;
The spectre huntsman of Onesti's line,
His hell-dogs, and their chase, and the fair throng
Which learn'd from this example not to fly
From a true lover,—shadow'd my mind's eye.

O, Hesperus! thou bringest all good things—
Home to the weary, to the hungry cheer,
To the young bird the parent's brooding wings,
The welcome stall to the o'erlabour'd steer;
Whate'er of peace about our hearthstone clings,
Whate'er our household gods protect of dear,
Are gather'd round us by thy look of rest;
Thou bring'st the child, too, to the mother's breast.

Soft hour! which wakes the wish and melts the heart
Of those who sail the seas, on the first day
When they from their sweet friends are torn apart;
Or fills with love the pilgrim on his way
As the far bell of vesper makes him start,
Seeming to weep the dying day's decay;
Is this a fancy which our reason scorns?
Ah! surely nothing dies but something mourns!

When Nero perish'd by the justest doom
Which ever the destroyer yet destroy'd,
Amidst the roar of liberated Rome,
Of nations freed, and the world overjoy'd,
Some hands unseen strew'd flowers upon his tomb:
Perhaps the weakness of a heart not void
Of feeling for some kindness done, when power
Had left the wretch an uncorrupted hour.

But I'm digressing; what on earth has Nero,
Or any such like sovereign buffoons,
To do with the transactions of my hero,

More than such madmen's fellow man—the moon's?
Sure my invention must be down at zero,
And I grown one of many 'wooden spoons'
Of verse (the name with which we Cantabs please
To dub the last of honours in degrees).

I feel this tediousness will never do—
'Tis being too epic, and I must cut down
(In copying) this long canto into two;
They'll never find it out, unless I own
The fact, excepting some experienced few;
And then as an improvement 'twill be shown:
I'll prove that such the opinion of the critic is
From Aristotle passim.—See poietikes.

CANTO THE FOURTH.

Nothing so difficult as a beginning
In poesy, unless perhaps the end;
For oftentimes when Pegasus seems winning
The race, he sprains a wing, and down we tend,
Like Lucifer when hurl'd from heaven for sinning;
Our sin the same, and hard as his to mend,
Being pride, which leads the mind to soar too far,
Till our own weakness shows us what we are.

But Time, which brings all beings to their level,
And sharp Adversity, will teach at last
Man,—and, as we would hope,—perhaps the devil,
That neither of their intellects are vast:
While youth's hot wishes in our red veins revel,
We know not this—the blood flows on too fast;
But as the torrent widens towards the ocean,
We ponder deeply on each past emotion.

As boy, I thought myself a clever fellow,
And wish'd that others held the same opinion;
They took it up when my days grew more mellow,
And other minds acknowledged my dominion:
Now my sere fancy 'falls into the yellow
Leaf,' and Imagination droops her pinion,
And the sad truth which hovers o'er my desk
Turns what was once romantic to burlesque.

And if I laugh at any mortal thing,
'Tis that I may not weep; and if I weep,
'Tis that our nature cannot always bring
Itself to apathy, for we must steep
Our hearts first in the depths of Lethe's spring,

Ere what we least wish to behold will sleep:
Thetis baptized her mortal son in Styx;
A mortal mother would on Lethe fix.

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

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

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

Young Juan and his lady-love were left
To their own hearts' most sweet society;
Even Time the pitiless in sorrow cleft
With his rude scythe such gentle bosoms; he
Sigh'd to behold them of their hours bereft,
Though foe to love; and yet they could not be
Meant to grow old, but die in happy spring,

Before one charm or hope had taken wing.

Their faces were not made for wrinkles, their
  Pure blood to stagnate, their great hearts to fail;
The blank grey was not made to blast their hair,
  But like the climes that know nor snow nor hail
They were all summer: lightning might assail
  And shiver them to ashes, but to trail
A long and snake-like life of dull decay
Was not for them—they had too little day.

They were alone once more; for them to be
  Thus was another Eden; they were never
Weary, unless when separate: the tree
  Cut from its forest root of years—the river
Damm'd from its fountain—the child from the knee
  And breast maternal wean'd at once for ever,—
Would wither less than these two torn apart;
Alas! there is no instinct like the heart—

The heart—which may be broken: happy they!
  Thrice fortunate! who of that fragile mould,
The precious porcelain of human clay,
  Break with the first fall: they can ne'er behold
The long year link'd with heavy day on day,
  And all which must be borne, and never told;
While life's strange principle will often lie
Deepest in those who long the most to die.

'Whom the gods love die young,' was said of yore,
  And many deaths do they escape by this:
The death of friends, and that which slays even more—
  The death of friendship, love, youth, all that is,
Except mere breath; and since the silent shore
  Awaits at last even those who longest miss
The old archer's shafts, perhaps the early grave
Which men weep over may be meant to save.

Haidee and Juan thought not of the dead—
The heavens, and earth, and air, seem'd made for them:
They found no fault with Time, save that he fled;
They saw not in themselves aught to condemn:
Each was the other's mirror, and but read
Joy sparkling in their dark eyes like a gem,
And knew such brightness was but the reflection
Of their exchanging glances of affection.

The gentle pressure, and the thrilling touch,
The least glance better understood than words,
Which still said all, and ne'er could say too much;
A language, too, but like to that of birds,
Known but to them, at least appearing such
As but to lovers a true sense affords;
Sweet playful phrases, which would seem absurd
To those who have ceased to hear such, or ne'er heard,—

All these were theirs, for they were children still,
And children still they should have ever been;
They were not made in the real world to fill
A busy character in the dull scene,
But like two beings born from out a rill,
A nymph and her beloved, all unseen
To pass their lives in fountains and on flowers,
And never know the weight of human hours.

Moons changing had roll'd on, and changeless found
Those their bright rise had lighted to such joys
As rarely they beheld throughout their round;
And these were not of the vain kind which cloys,
For theirs were buoyant spirits, never bound
By the mere senses; and that which destroys
Most love, possession, unto them appear'd
A thing which each endearment more endear'd.

O beautiful! and rare as beautiful
But theirs was love in which the mind delights

To lose itself when the old world grows dull,
And we are sick of its hack sounds and sights,
Intrigues, adventures of the common school,
Its petty passions, marriages, and flights,
Where Hymen's torch but brands one strumpet more,
Whose husband only knows her not a wh—re.

Hard words; harsh truth; a truth which many know.
Enough.—The faithful and the fairy pair,
Who never found a single hour too slow,
What was it made them thus exempt from care?
Young innate feelings all have felt below,
Which perish in the rest, but in them were
Inherent—what we mortals call romantic,
And always envy, though we deem it frantic.

This is in others a factitious state,
An opium dream of too much youth and reading,
But was in them their nature or their fate:
No novels e'er had set their young hearts bleeding,
For Haidee's knowledge was by no means great,
And Juan was a boy of saintly breeding;
So that there was no reason for their loves
More than for those of nightingales or doves.

They gazed upon the sunset; 'tis an hour
Dear unto all, but dearest to their eyes,
For it had made them what they were: the power
Of love had first o'erwhelm'd them from such skies,
When happiness had been their only dower,
And twilight saw them link'd in passion's ties;
Charm'd with each other, all things charm'd that brought
The past still welcome as the present thought.

I know not why, but in that hour to-night,
Even as they gazed, a sudden tremor came,
And swept, as 'twere, across their hearts' delight,
Like the wind o'er a harp-string, or a flame,

When one is shook in sound, and one in sight;
And thus some boding flash'd through either frame,
And call'd from Juan's breast a faint low sigh,
While one new tear arose in Haidee's eye.

That large black prophet eye seem'd to dilate
And follow far the disappearing sun,
As if their last day! of a happy date
With his broad, bright, and dropping orb were gone;
Juan gazed on her as to ask his fate—
He felt a grief, but knowing cause for none,
His glance inquired of hers for some excuse
For feelings causeless, or at least abstruse.

She turn'd to him, and smiled, but in that sort
Which makes not others smile; then turn'd aside:
Whatever feeling shook her, it seem'd short,
And master'd by her wisdom or her pride;
When Juan spoke, too—it might be in sport—
Of this their mutual feeling, she replied—
'If it should be so,—but—it cannot be—
Or I at least shall not survive to see.'

Juan would question further, but she press'd
His lip to hers, and silenced him with this,
And then dismiss'd the omen from her breast,
Defying augury with that fond kiss;
And no doubt of all methods 'tis the best:
Some people prefer wine—'tis not amiss;
I have tried both; so those who would a part take
May choose between the headache and the heartache.

One of the two, according to your choice,
Woman or wine, you'll have to undergo;
Both maladies are taxes on our joys:
But which to choose, I really hardly know;
And if I had to give a casting voice,
For both sides I could many reasons show,

And then decide, without great wrong to either,
It were much better to have both than neither.

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

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

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

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

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

She dream'd of being alone on the sea-shore,
Chain'd to a rock; she knew not how, but stir
She could not from the spot, and the loud roar
Grew, and each wave rose roughly, threatening her;
And o'er her upper lip they seem'd to pour,
Until she sobb'd for breath, and soon they were
Foaming o'er her lone head, so fierce and high—
Each broke to drown her, yet she could not die.

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

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

And wet, and cold, and lifeless at her feet,

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

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

Then shrieking, she arose, and shrieking fell,
With joy and sorrow, hope and fear, to see
Him whom she deem'd a habitant where dwell
The ocean-buried, risen from death, to be
Perchance the death of one she loved too well:
Dear as her father had been to Haidee,
It was a moment of that awful kind—
I have seen such—but must not call to mind.

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

And Haidee clung around him; 'Juan, 'tis—
'Tis Lambro—'tis my father! Kneel with me—
He will forgive us—yes—it must be—yes.

O! dearest father, in this agony
Of pleasure and of pain—even while I kiss
Thy garment's hem with transport, can it be
That doubt should mingle with my filial joy?
Deal with me as thou wilt, but spare this boy.'

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

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

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

Lambro presented, and one instant more
Had stopp'd this Canto, and Don Juan's breath,
When Haidee threw herself her boy before;
Stern as her sire: 'On me,' she cried, 'let death
Descend—the fault is mine; this fatal shore

He found—but sought not. I have pledged my faith;
I love him—I will die with him: I knew
Your nature's firmness—know your daughter's too.'

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

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

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

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

Done thine, the present vouches for the past.

‘Let him disarm; or, by my father’s head,
His own shall roll before you like a ball!’
He raised his whistle, as the word he said,
And blew; another answer’d to the call,
And rushing in disorderly, though led,
And arm’d from boot to turban, one and all,
Some twenty of his train came, rank on rank;
He gave the word,—‘Arrest or slay the Frank.’

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

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

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

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

Here I must leave him, for I grow pathetic,
Moved by the Chinese nymph of tears, green tea!
Than whom Cassandra was not more prophetic;
For if my pure libations exceed three,
I feel my heart become so sympathetic,
That I must have recourse to black Bohea:
'Tis pity wine should be so deleterious,
For tea and coffee leave us much more serious,

Unless when qualified with thee, Cogniac!
Sweet Naiad of the Phlegethontic rill!
Ah! why the liver wilt thou thus attack,
And make, like other nymphs, thy lovers ill?
I would take refuge in weak punch, but rack
(In each sense of the word), whene'er I fill
My mild and midnight beakers to the brim,
Wakes me next morning with its synonym.

I leave Don Juan for the present, safe—
Not sound, poor fellow, but severely wounded;
Yet could his corporal pangs amount to half
Of those with which his Haidee's bosom bounded?
She was not one to weep, and rave, and chafe,
And then give way, subdued because surrounded;
Her mother was a Moorish maid, from Fez,
Where all is Eden, or a wilderness.

There the large olive rains its amber store
In marble fonts; there grain, and flower, and fruit,

Gush from the earth until the land runs o'er;
   But there, too, many a poison-tree has root,
And midnight listens to the lion's roar,
   And long, long deserts scorch the camel's foot,
Or heaving whelm the helpless caravan;
And as the soil is, so the heart of man.

Afric is all the sun's, and as her earth
   Her human day is kindled; full of power
For good or evil, burning from its birth,
   The Moorish blood partakes the planet's hour,
And like the soil beneath it will bring forth:
   Beauty and love were Haidee's mother's dower;
But her large dark eye show'd deep Passion's force,
Though sleeping like a lion near a source.

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

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

A vein had burst, and her sweet lips' pure dyes
   Were dabbled with the deep blood which ran o'er;
And her head droop'd as when the lily lies
   O'ercharged with rain: her summon'd handmaids bore

Their lady to her couch with gushing eyes;
Of herbs and cordials they produced their store,
But she defied all means they could employ,
Like one life could not hold, nor death destroy.

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

The ruling passion, such as marble shows
When exquisitely chisell'd, still lay there,
But fix'd as marble's unchanged aspect throws
O'er the fair Venus, but for ever fair;
O'er the Laocoon's all eternal throes,
And ever-dying Gladiator's air,
Their energy like life forms all their fame,
Yet looks not life, for they are still the same.

She woke at length, but not as sleepers wake,
Rather the dead, for life seem'd something new,
A strange sensation which she must partake
Perforce, since whatsoever met her view
Struck not on memory, though a heavy ache
Lay at her heart, whose earliest beat still true
Brought back the sense of pain without the cause,
For, for a while, the furies made a pause.

She look'd on many a face with vacant eye,
On many a token without knowing what;
She saw them watch her without asking why,
And reck'd not who around her pillow sat;
Not speechless, though she spoke not; not a sigh
Relieved her thoughts; dull silence and quick chat

Were tried in vain by those who served; she gave
No sign, save breath, of having left the grave.

Her handmaids tended, but she heeded not;
   Her father watch'd, she turn'd her eyes away;
She recognized no being, and no spot,
   However dear or cherish'd in their day;
They changed from room to room—but all forgot—
   Gentle, but without memory she lay;
At length those eyes, which they would fain be weaning
Back to old thoughts, wax'd full of fearful meaning.

And then a slave bethought her of a harp;
   The harper came, and tuned his instrument;
At the first notes, irregular and sharp,
   On him her flashing eyes a moment bent,
Then to the wall she turn'd as if to warp
   Her thoughts from sorrow through her heart re-sent;
And he begun a long low island song
Of ancient days, ere tyranny grew strong.

Anon her thin wan fingers beat the wall
   In time to his old tune; he changed the theme,
And sung of love; the fierce name struck through all
   Her recollection; on her flash'd the dream
Of what she was, and is, if ye could call
   To be so being; in a gushing stream
The tears rush'd forth from her o'erclouded brain,
Like mountain mists at length dissolved in rain.

Short solace, vain relief!—thought came too quick,
   And whirl'd her brain to madness; she arose
As one who ne'er had dwelt among the sick,
   And flew at all she met, as on her foes;
But no one ever heard her speak or shriek,
   Although her paroxysm drew towards its dose;—
Hers was a phrensy which disdain'd to rave,
Even when they smote her, in the hope to save.

Yet she betray'd at times a gleam of sense;
Nothing could make her meet her father's face,
Though on all other things with looks intense
She gazed, but none she ever could retrace;
Food she refused, and raiment; no pretence
Avail'd for either; neither change of place,
Nor time, nor skill, nor remedy, could give her
Senses to sleep—the power seem'd gone for ever.

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

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

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

That isle is now all desolate and bare,

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

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

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

Wounded and fetter'd, 'cabin'd, cribb'd, confined,'
Some days and nights elapsed before that he
Could altogether call the past to mind;
And when he did, he found himself at sea,
Sailing six knots an hour before the wind;
The shores of Ilion lay beneath their lee—
Another time he might have liked to see 'em,
But now was not much pleased with Cape Sigaeum.

There, on the green and village-cotted hill, is
(Flank'd by the Hellespont and by the sea)
Entomb'd the bravest of the brave, Achilles;

They say so (Bryant says the contrary):
And further downward, tall and towering still, is
The tumulus—of whom? Heaven knows! 't may be
Patroclus, Ajax, or Protesilaus—
All heroes, who if living still would slay us.

High barrows, without marble or a name,
A vast, untill'd, and mountain-skirted plain,
And Ida in the distance, still the same,
And old Scamander (if 'tis he) remain;
The situation seems still form'd for fame—
A hundred thousand men might fight again
With case; but where I sought for Ilion's walls,
The quiet sheep feeds, and the tortoise crawls;

Troops of untended horses; here and there
Some little hamlets, with new names uncouth;
Some shepherds (unlike Paris) led to stare
A moment at the European youth
Whom to the spot their school-boy feelings bear;
A turk, with beads in hand and pipe in mouth,
Extremely taken with his own religion,
Are what I found there—but the devil a Phrygian.

Don Juan, here permitted to emerge
From his dull cabin, found himself a slave;
Forlorn, and gazing on the deep blue surge,
O'ershadow'd there by many a hero's grave;
Weak still with loss of blood, he scarce could urge
A few brief questions; and the answers gave
No very satisfactory information
About his past or present situation.

He saw some fellow captives, who appear'd
To be Italians, as they were in fact;
From them, at least, their destiny he heard,
Which was an odd one; a troop going to act
In Sicily (all singers, duly rear'd

In their vocation) had not been attack'd
In sailing from Livorno by the pirate,
But sold by the impresario at no high rate.

By one of these, the buffo of the party,
Juan was told about their curious case;
For although destined to the Turkish mart, he
Still kept his spirits up—at least his face;
The little fellow really look'd quite hearty,
And bore him with some gaiety and grace,
Showing a much more reconciled demeanour,
Than did the prima donna and the tenor.

In a few words he told their hapless story,
Saying, 'Our Machiavellian impresario,
Making a signal off some promontory,
Hail'd a strange brig—Corpo di Caio Mario!
We were transferr'd on board her in a hurry,
Without a Single scudo of salario;
But if the Sultan has a taste for song,
We will revive our fortunes before long.

'The prima donna, though a little old,
And haggard with a dissipated life,
And subject, when the house is thin, to cold,
Has some good notes; and then the tenor's wife,
With no great voice, is pleasing to behold;
Last carnival she made a deal of strife
By carrying off Count Cesare Cicogna
From an old Roman princess at Bologna.

'And then there are the dancers; there's the Nini,
With more than one profession, gains by all;
Then there's that laughing slut the Pelegrini,
She, too, was fortunate last carnival,
And made at least five hundred good zecchini,
But spends so fast, she has not now a paul;
And then there's the Grotesca—such a dancer!

Where men have souls or bodies she must answer.

‘As for the figuranti, they are like
The rest of all that tribe; with here and there
A pretty person, which perhaps may strike,
The rest are hardly fitted for a fair;
There’s one, though tall and stiffer than a pike,
Yet has a sentimental kind of air
Which might go far, but she don’t dance with vigour;
The more ’s the pity, with her face and figure.

‘As for the men, they are a middling set;
The musico is but a crack’d old basin,
But being qualified in one way yet,
May the seraglio do to set his face in,
And as a servant some preferment get;
His singing I no further trust can place in:
From all the Pope makes yearly ’twould perplex
To find three perfect pipes of the third sex.

‘The tenor’s voice is spoilt by affectation,
And for the bass, the beast can only bellow;
In fact, he had no singing education,
An ignorant, noteless, timeless, tuneless fellow;
But being the prima donna’s near relation,
Who swore his voice was very rich and mellow,
They hired him, though to hear him you’d believe
An ass was practising recitative.

‘’Twould not become myself to dwell upon
My own merits, and though young—I see, Sir—you
Have got a travell’d air, which speaks you one
To whom the opera is by no means new:
You’ve heard of Raucocanti?—I’m the man;
The time may come when you may hear me too;
You was not last year at the fair of Lugo,
But next, when I’m engaged to sing there—do go.

‘Our baritone I almost had forgot,
A pretty lad, but bursting with conceit;
With graceful action, science not a jot,
A voice of no great compass, and not sweet,
He always is complaining of his lot,
Forsooth, scarce fit for ballads in the street;
In lovers’ parts his passion more to breathe,
Having no heart to show, he shows his teeth.’

Here Raucocanti’s eloquent recital
Was interrupted by the pirate crew,
Who came at stated moments to invite all
The captives back to their sad berths; each threw
A rueful glance upon the waves (which bright all
From the blue skies derived a double blue,
Dancing all free and happy in the sun),
And then went down the hatchway one by one.

They heard next day—that in the Dardanelles,
Waiting for his Sublimity’s firman,
The most imperative of sovereign spells,
Which every body does without who can,
More to secure them in their naval cells,
Lady to lady, well as man to man,
Were to be chain’d and lotted out per couple,
For the slave market of Constantinople.

It seems when this allotment was made out,
There chanced to be an odd male, and odd female,
Who (after some discussion and some doubt,
If the soprano might be deem’d to be male,
They placed him o’er the women as a scout)
Were link’d together, and it happen’d the male
Was Juan,—who, an awkward thing at his age,
Pair’d off with a Bacchante blooming visage.

With Raucocanti lucklessly was chain’d
The tenor; these two hated with a hate

Found only on the stage, and each more pain'd
With this his tuneful neighbour than his fate;
Sad strife arose, for they were so cross-grain'd,
Instead of bearing up without debate,
That each pull'd different ways with many an oath,
'Arcades ambo,' id est—blackguards both.

Juan's companion was a Romagnole,
But bred within the March of old Ancona,
With eyes that look'd into the very soul
(And other chief points of a 'bella donna'),
Bright—and as black and burning as a coal;
And through her dear brunette complexion shone
Great wish to please—a most attractive dower,
Especially when added to the power.

But all that power was wasted upon him,
For sorrow o'er each sense held stern command;
Her eye might flash on his, but found it dim;
And though thus chain'd, as natural her hand
Touch'd his, nor that—nor any handsome limb
(And she had some not easy to withstand)
Could stir his pulse, or make his faith feel brittle;
Perhaps his recent wounds might help a little.

No matter; we should ne'er too much enquire,
But facts are facts: no knight could be more true,
And firmer faith no ladye—love desire;
We will omit the proofs, save one or two:
'Tis said no one in hand 'can hold a fire
By thought of frosty Caucasus;' but few,
I really think; yet Juan's then ordeal
Was more triumphant, and not much less real.

Here I might enter on a chaste description,
Having withstood temptation in my youth,
But hear that several people take exception
At the first two books having too much truth;

Therefore I'll make Don Juan leave the ship soon,
Because the publisher declares, in sooth,
Through needles' eyes it easier for the camel is
To pass, than those two cantos into families.

'Tis all the same to me; I'm fond of yielding,
And therefore leave them to the purer page
Of Smollett, Prior, Ariosto, Fielding,
Who say strange things for so correct an age;
I once had great alacrity in wielding
My pen, and liked poetic war to wage,
And recollect the time when all this cant
Would have provoked remarks which now it shan't.

As boys love rows, my boyhood liked a squabble;
But at this hour I wish to part in peace,
Leaving such to the literary rabble:
Whether my verse's fame be doom'd to cease
While the right hand which wrote it still is able,
Or of some centuries to take a lease,
The grass upon my grave will grow as long,
And sigh to midnight winds, but not to song.

Of poets who come down to us through distance
Of time and tongues, the foster-babes of Fame,
Life seems the smallest portion of existence;
Where twenty ages gather o'er a name,
'Tis as a snowball which derives assistance
From every flake, and yet rolls on the same,
Even till an iceberg it may chance to grow;
But, after all, 'tis nothing but cold snow.

And so great names are nothing more than nominal,
And love of glory 's but an airy lust,
Too often in its fury overcoming all
Who would as 'twere identify their dust
From out the wide destruction, which, entombing all,
Leaves nothing till 'the coming of the just'—

Save change: I've stood upon Achilles' tomb,
And heard Troy doubted; time will doubt of Rome.

The very generations of the dead
  Are swept away, and tomb inherits tomb,
Until the memory of an age is fled,
  And, buried, sinks beneath its offspring's doom:
Where are the epitaphs our fathers read?
  Save a few glean'd from the sepulchral gloom
Which once-named myriads nameless lie beneath,
And lose their own in universal death.

I canter by the spot each afternoon
  Where perish'd in his fame the hero-boy,
Who lived too long for men, but died too soon
  For human vanity, the young De Foix!
A broken pillar, not uncouthly hewn,
  But which neglect is hastening to destroy,
Records Ravenna's carnage on its face,
While weeds and ordure rankle round the base.

I pass each day where Dante's bones are laid:
  A little cupola, more neat than solemn,
Protects his dust, but reverence here is paid
  To the bard's tomb, and not the warrior's column.
The time must come, when both alike decay'd,
  The chieftain's trophy, and the poet's volume,
Will sink where lie the songs and wars of earth,
Before Pelides' death, or Homer's birth.

With human blood that column was cemented,
  With human filth that column is defiled,
As if the peasant's coarse contempt were vented
  To show his loathing of the spot he soil'd:
Thus is the trophy used, and thus lamented
  Should ever be those blood-hounds, from whose wild
Instinct of gore and glory earth has known
Those sufferings Dante saw in hell alone.

Yet there will still be bards: though fame is smoke,
   Its fumes are frankincense to human thought;
And the unquiet feelings, which first woke
   Song in the world, will seek what then they sought;
As on the beach the waves at last are broke,
   Thus to their extreme verge the passions brought
Dash into poetry, which is but passion,
Or at least was so ere it grew a fashion.

If in the course of such a life as was
   At once adventurous and contemplative,
Men, who partake all passions as they pass,
   Acquire the deep and bitter power to give
Their images again as in a glass,
   And in such colours that they seem to live;
You may do right forbidding them to show 'em,
But spoil (I think) a very pretty poem.

O! ye, who make the fortunes of all books!
   Benign Ceruleans of the second sex!
Who advertise new poems by your looks,
   Your 'imprimatur' will ye not annex?
What! must I go to the oblivious cooks,
   Those Cornish plunderers of Parnassian wrecks?
Ah! must I then the only minstrel be,
Proscribed from tasting your Castalian tea!

What! can I prove 'a lion' then no more?
   A ball-room bard, a foolscap, hot-press darling?
To bear the compliments of many a bore,
   And sigh, 'I can't get out,' like Yorick's starling;
Why then I'll swear, as poet Wordy swore
   (Because the world won't read him, always snarling),
That taste is gone, that fame is but a lottery,
Drawn by the blue-coat misses of a coterie.

O! 'darkly, deeply, beautifully blue,'

As some one somewhere sings about the sky,
And I, ye learned ladies, say of you;
They say your stockings are so (Heaven knows why,
I have examined few pair of that hue);
Blue as the garters which serenely lie
Round the Patrician left-legs, which adorn
The festal midnight, and the levee morn.

Yet some of you are most seraphic creatures—
But times are alter'd since, a rhyming lover,
You read my stanzas, and I read your features:
And—but no matter, all those things are over;
Still I have no dislike to learned natures,
For sometimes such a world of virtues cover;
I knew one woman of that purple school,
The loveliest, chastest, best, but—quite a fool.

Humboldt, 'the first of travellers,' but not
The last, if late accounts be accurate,
Invented, by some name I have forgot,
As well as the sublime discovery's date,
An airy instrument, with which he sought
To ascertain the atmospheric state,
By measuring 'the intensity of blue:'
O, Lady Daphne! let me measure you!

But to the narrative:—The vessel bound
With slaves to sell off in the capital,
After the usual process, might be found
At anchor under the seraglio wall;
Her cargo, from the plague being safe and sound,
Were landed in the market, one and all,
And there with Georgians, Russians, and Circassians,
Bought up for different purposes and passions.

Some went off dearly; fifteen hundred dollars
For one Circassian, a sweet girl, were given,
Warranted virgin; beauty's brightest colours

Had deck'd her out in all the hues of heaven:
Her sale sent home some disappointed bawlers,
Who bade on till the hundreds reach'd eleven;
But when the offer went beyond, they knew
'Twas for the Sultan, and at once withdrew.

Twelve negresses from Nubia brought a price
Which the West Indian market scarce would bring;
Though Wilberforce, at last, has made it twice
What 'twas ere Abolition; and the thing
Need not seem very wonderful, for vice
Is always much more splendid than a king:
The virtues, even the most exalted, Charity,
Are saving—vice spares nothing for a rarity.

But for the destiny of this young troop,
How some were bought by pachas, some by Jews,
How some to burdens were obliged to stoop,
And others rose to the command of crews
As renegadoes; while in hapless group,
Hoping no very old vizier might choose,
The females stood, as one by one they pick'd 'em,
To make a mistress, or fourth wife, or victim:

All this must be reserved for further song;
Also our hero's lot, howe'er unpleasant
(Because this Canto has become too long),
Must be postponed discreetly for the present;
I'm sensible redundancy is wrong,
But could not for the muse of me put less in 't:
And now delay the progress of Don Juan,
Till what is call'd in Ossian the fifth duan.

Don Juan.

CANTO THE FIFTH.

I.

1 When amatory poets sing their loves
In liquid lines mellifluously bland,
And pair their rhymes as Venus yokes her doves,
They little think what mischief is in hand;
The greater their success, the worse it proves,
As Ovid's verse may give to understand;
Even Petrarch's self, if judg'd with due severity,
Is the Platonic pimp of all posterity.

II.

2 I therefore do denounce all amorous writing,
Except in such a way as not to attract;
Plain—simple—short, and by no means inviting,
But with a moral to each error tack'd,
Form'd rather for instructing than delighting,
And with all passions in their turn attack'd;
Now, if my Pegasus should not be shod ill,
This poem will become a moral model.

III.

3 The European with the Asian shore
Sprinkled with palaces; the ocean-stream
Here and there studded with a seventy-four;
Sophia's Cupola, with golden gleam;
The cypress groves; Olympus high and hoar;
The twelve isles, and the more than I could dream,
Far less describe, present the very view
Which charm'd the charming Mary Montagu.

IV.

4 I have a passion for the name of "Mary,"
For once it was a magic sound to me;
And still it half calls up the realms of fairy,
Where I beheld what never was to be;
All feelings chang'd, but this was last to vary,
A spell from which even yet I am not quite free:
But I grow sad—and let a tale grow cold,
Which must not be pathetically told.

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The wind swept down the Euxine, and the wave
Broke foaming o'er the blue Symplegades;
'Tis a grand sight from off 'the Giant's Grave
To watch the progress of those rolling seas
Between the Bosphorus, as they lash and lave
Europe and Asia, you being quite at ease;
There's not a sea the passenger e'er pukes in,
Turns up more dangerous breakers than the Euxine.

'Twas a raw day of Autumn's bleak beginning,
When nights are equal, but not so the days;
The Parcae then cut short the further spinning
Of seamen's fates, and the loud tempests raise
The waters, and repentance for past sinning
In all, who o'er the great deep take their ways:
They vow to amend their lives, and yet they don't;
Because if drown'd, they can't—if spared, they won't.

A crowd of shivering slaves of every nation,
And age, and sex, were in the market ranged;
Each bevy with the merchant in his station:
Poor creatures! their good looks were sadly changed.
All save the blacks seem'd jaded with vexation,
From friends, and home, and freedom far estranged;
The negroes more philosophy display'd,—
Used to it, no doubt, as eels are to be flay'd.

Juan was juvenile, and thus was full,
As most at his age are, of hope and health;
Yet I must own he looked a little dull,
And now and then a tear stole down by stealth;
Perhaps his recent loss of blood might pull
His spirit down; and then the loss of wealth,
A mistress, and such comfortable quarters,

To be put up for auction amongst Tartars,

Were things to shake a stoic; ne'ertheless,
   Upon the whole his carriage was serene:
His figure, and the splendour of his dress,
   Of which some gilded remnants still were seen,
Drew all eyes on him, giving them to guess
   He was above the vulgar by his mien;
And then, though pale, he was so very handsome;
And then—they calculated on his ransom.

Like a backgammon board the place was dotted
   With whites and blacks, in groups on show for sale,
Though rather more irregularly spotted:
   Some bought the jet, while others chose the pale.
It chanced amongst the other people lotted,
   A man of thirty rather stout and hale,
With resolution in his dark grey eye,
Next Juan stood, till some might choose to buy.

He had an English look; that is, was square
   In make, of a complexion white and ruddy,
Good teeth, with curling rather dark brown hair,
   And, it might be from thought or toil or study,
An open brow a little mark'd with care:
   One arm had on a bandage rather bloody;
And there he stood with such sang-froid, that greater
Could scarce be shown even by a mere spectator.

But seeing at his elbow a mere lad,
   Of a high spirit evidently, though
At present weigh'd down by a doom which had
   O'erthrown even men, he soon began to show
A kind of blunt compassion for the sad
   Lot of so young a partner in the woe,
Which for himself he seem'd to deem no worse
Than any other scrape, a thing of course.

‘My boy!’ said he, ‘amidst this motley crew
Of Georgians, Russians, Nubians, and what not,
All ragamuffins differing but in hue,
With whom it is our luck to cast our lot,
The only gentlemen seem I and you;
So let us be acquainted, as we ought:
If I could yield you any consolation,
’Twould give me pleasure.—Pray, what is your nation?’

When Juan answer’d—‘Spanish!’ he replied,
‘I thought, in fact, you could not be a Greek;
Those servile dogs are not so proudly eyed:
Fortune has play’d you here a pretty freak,
But that ’s her way with all men, till they’re tried;
But never mind,—she’ll turn, perhaps, next week;
She has served me also much the same as you,
Except that I have found it nothing new.’

‘Pray, sir,’ said Juan, ‘if I may presume,
What brought you here?’—‘Oh! nothing very rare—
Six Tartars and a drag-chain.’—‘To this doom
But what conducted, if the question’s fair,
Is that which I would learn.’—‘I served for some
Months with the Russian army here and there,
And taking lately, by Suwarrow’s bidding,
A town, was ta’en myself instead of Widdin.’

‘Have you no friends?’—‘I had—but, by God’s blessing,
Have not been troubled with them lately. Now
I have answer’d all your questions without pressing,
And you an equal courtesy should show.’
‘Alas!’ said Juan, ‘’twere a tale distressing,
And long besides.’—‘Oh! if ’tis really so,
You’re right on both accounts to hold your tongue;
A sad tale saddens doubly, when ’tis long.

‘But droop not: Fortune at your time of life,
Although a female moderately fickle,

Will hardly leave you (as she 's not your wife)
   For any length of days in such a pickle.
To strive, too, with our fate were such a strife
   As if the corn-sheaf should oppose the sickle:
Men are the sport of circumstances, when
The circumstances seem the sport of men.'

''Tis not,' said Juan, 'for my present doom
   I mourn, but for the past;—I loved a maid:';—
He paused, and his dark eye grew full of gloom;
   A single tear upon his eyelash staid
A moment, and then dropp'd; 'but to resume,
   'Tis not my present lot, as I have said,
Which I deplore so much; for I have borne
Hardships which have the hardiest overworn,

'On the rough deep. But this last blow—' and here
   He stopp'd again, and turn'd away his face.
'Ay,' quoth his friend, 'I thought it would appear
   That there had been a lady in the case;
And these are things which ask a tender tear,
   Such as I, too, would shed if in your place:
I cried upon my first wife's dying day,
And also when my second ran away:

'My third—'—'Your third!' quoth Juan, turning round;
   'You scarcely can be thirty: have you three?'
'No—only two at present above ground:
   Surely 'tis nothing wonderful to see
One person thrice in holy wedlock bound!'
   'Well, then, your third,' said Juan; 'what did she?
She did not run away, too,—did she, sir?'
'No, faith.'—'What then?'—'I ran away from her.'

'You take things coolly, sir,' said Juan. 'Why,'
   Replied the other, 'what can a man do?
There still are many rainbows in your sky,
   But mine have vanish'd. All, when life is new,

Commence with feelings warm, and prospects high;
   But time strips our illusions of their hue,
And one by one in turn, some grand mistake
Casts off its bright skin yearly like the snake.

‘’Tis true, it gets another bright and fresh,
   Or fresher, brighter; but the year gone through,
This skin must go the way, too, of all flesh,
   Or sometimes only wear a week or two;—
Love ’s the first net which spreads its deadly mesh;
   Ambition, Avarice, Vengeance, Glory, glue
The glittering lime-twigs of our latter days,
Where still we flutter on for pence or praise.’

‘All this is very fine, and may be true,’
   Said Juan; ‘but I really don’t see how
It betters present times with me or you.’
   ‘No?’ quoth the other; ‘yet you will allow
By setting things in their right point of view,
   Knowledge, at least, is gain’d; for instance, now,
We know what slavery is, and our disasters
May teach us better to behave when masters.’

‘Would we were masters now, if but to try
   Their present lessons on our Pagan friends here,’
Said Juan,—swallowing a heart-burning sigh:
   ‘Heaven help the scholar whom his fortune sends here!’
‘Perhaps we shall be one day, by and by,’
   Rejoin’d the other, when our bad luck mends here;
Meantime (yon old black eunuch seems to eye us)
I wish to God that somebody would buy us!

‘But after all, what is our present state?
   ’Tis bad, and may be better—all men’s lot:
Most men are slaves, none more so than the great,
   To their own whims and passions, and what not;
Society itself, which should create
   Kindness, destroys what little we had got:

To feel for none is the true social art
Of the world's stoics—men without a heart.'

Just now a black old neutral personage
Of the third sex stept up, and peering over
The captives, seem'd to mark their looks and age,
And capabilities, as to discover
If they were fitted for the purposed cage:
No lady e'er is ogled by a lover,
Horse by a blackleg, broadcloth by a tailor,
Fee by a counsel, felon by a jailor,

As is a slave by his intended bidder.
'Tis pleasant purchasing our fellow-creatures;
And all are to be sold, if you consider
Their passions, and are dext'rous; some by features
Are bought up, others by a warlike leader,
Some by a place—as tend their years or natures;
The most by ready cash—but all have prices,
From crowns to kicks, according to their vices.

The eunuch, having eyed them o'er with care,
Turn'd to the merchant, and begun to bid
First but for one, and after for the pair;
They haggled, wrangled, swore, too—so they did!
As though they were in a mere Christian fair
Cheapening an ox, an ass, a lamb, or kid;
So that their bargain sounded like a battle
For this superior yoke of human cattle.

At last they settled into simple grumbling,
And pulling out reluctant purses, and
Turning each piece of silver o'er, and tumbling
Some down, and weighing others in their hand,
And by mistake sequins with paras jumbling,
Until the sum was accurately scann'd,
And then the merchant giving change, and signing
Receipts in full, began to think of dining.

I wonder if his appetite was good?
Or, if it were, if also his digestion?
Methinks at meals some odd thoughts might intrude,
And conscience ask a curious sort of question,
About the right divine how far we should
Sell flesh and blood. When dinner has opprest one,
I think it is perhaps the gloomiest hour
Which turns up out of the sad twenty-four.

Voltaire says 'No:' he tells you that Candide
Found life most tolerable after meals;
He 's wrong—unless man were a pig, indeed,
Repletion rather adds to what he feels,
Unless he 's drunk, and then no doubt he 's freed
From his own brain's oppression while it reels.
Of food I think with Philip's son, or rather
Ammon's (ill pleased with one world and one father);

I think with Alexander, that the act
Of eating, with another act or two,
Makes us feel our mortality in fact
Redoubled; when a roast and a ragout,
And fish, and soup, by some side dishes back'd,
Can give us either pain or pleasure, who
Would pique himself on intellects, whose use
Depends so much upon the gastric juice?

The other evening ('twas on Friday last)—
This is a fact and no poetic fable—
Just as my great coat was about me cast,
My hat and gloves still lying on the table,
I heard a shot—'twas eight o'clock scarce past—
And, running out as fast as I was able,
I found the military commandant
Stretch'd in the street, and able scarce to pant.

Poor fellow! for some reason, surely bad,

They had slain him with five slugs; and left him there
To perish on the pavement: so I had
Him borne into the house and up the stair,
And stripp'd and look'd to—But why should I ad
More circumstances? vain was every care;
The man was gone: in some Italian quarrel
Kill'd by five bullets from an old gun-barrel.

I gazed upon him, for I knew him well;
And though I have seen many corpses, never
Saw one, whom such an accident befell,
So calm; though pierced through stomach, heart, and liver,
He seem'd to sleep,—for you could scarcely tell
(As he bled inwardly, no hideous river
Of gore divulged the cause) that he was dead:
So as I gazed on him, I thought or said—

'Can this be death? then what is life or death?
Speak!' but he spoke not: 'Wake!' but still he slept:—
'But yesterday and who had mightier breath?
A thousand warriors by his word were kept
In awe: he said, as the centurion saith,
"Go," and he goeth; "come," and forth he stepp'd.
The trump and bugle till he spake were dumb—
And now nought left him but the muffled drum.'

And they who waited once and worshipp'd—they
With their rough faces throng'd about the bed
To gaze once more on the commanding clay
Which for the last, though not the first, time bled:
And such an end! that he who many a day
Had faced Napoleon's foes until they fled,—
The foremost in the charge or in the sally,
Should now be butcher'd in a civic alley.

The scars of his old wounds were near his new,
Those honourable scars which brought him fame;
And horrid was the contrast to the view—

But let me quit the theme; as such things claim
Perhaps even more attention than is due
From me: I gazed (as oft I have gazed the same)
To try if I could wrench aught out of death
Which should confirm, or shake, or make a faith;

But it was all a mystery. Here we are,
And there we go:—but where? five bits of lead,
Or three, or two, or one, send very far!
And is this blood, then, form'd but to be shed?
Can every element our elements mar?
And air—earth—water—fire live—and we dead?
We whose minds comprehend all things? No more;
But let us to the story as before.

The purchaser of Juan and acquaintance
Bore off his bargains to a gilded boat,
Embark'd himself and them, and off they went thence
As fast as oars could pull and water float;
They look'd like persons being led to sentence,
Wondering what next, till the caique was brought
Up in a little creek below a wall
O'ertopp'd with cypresses, dark-green and tall.

Here their conductor tapping at the wicket
Of a small iron door, 'twas open'd, and
He led them onward, first through a low thicket
Flank'd by large groves, which tower'd on either hand:
They almost lost their way, and had to pick it—
For night was closing ere they came to land.
The eunuch made a sign to those on board,
Who row'd off, leaving them without a word.

As they were plodding on their winding way
Through orange bowers, and jasmine, and so forth
(Of which I might have a good deal to say,
There being no such profusion in the North
Of oriental plants, 'et cetera,'

But that of late your scribblers think it worth
Their while to rear whole hotbeds in their works
Because one poet travell'd 'mongst the Turks)—

As they were threading on their way, there came
Into Don Juan's head a thought, which he
Whisper'd to his companion:—'twas the same
Which might have then occurr'd to you or me.
'Methinks,' said he, 'it would be no great shame
If we should strike a stroke to set us free;
Let 's knock that old black fellow on the head,
And march away—'twere easier done than said.'

'Yes,' said the other, 'and when done, what then?
How get out? how the devil got we in?
And when we once were fairly out, and when
From Saint Bartholomew we have saved our skin,
To-morrow 'd see us in some other den,
And worse off than we hitherto have been;
Besides, I'm hungry, and just now would take,
Like Esau, for my birthright a beef-steak.

'We must be near some place of man's abode;—
For the old negro's confidence in creeping,
With his two captives, by so queer a road,
Shows that he thinks his friends have not been sleeping;
A single cry would bring them all abroad:
'Tis therefore better looking before leaping—
And there, you see, this turn has brought us through,
By Jove, a noble palace!—lighted too.'

It was indeed a wide extensive building
Which open'd on their view, and o'er the front
There seem'd to be besprent a deal of gilding
And various hues, as is the Turkish wont,—
A gaudy taste; for they are little skill'd in
The arts of which these lands were once the font:
Each villa on the Bosphorus looks a screen

New painted, or a pretty opera-scene.

And nearer as they came, a genial savour
Of certain stews, and roast-meats, and pilaus,
Things which in hungry mortals' eyes find favour,
Made Juan in his harsh intentions pause,
And put himself upon his good behaviour:
His friend, too, adding a new saving clause,
Said, 'In Heaven's name let's get some supper now,
And then I'm with you, if you're for a row.'

Some talk of an appeal unto some passion,
Some to men's feelings, others to their reason;
The last of these was never much the fashion,
For reason thinks all reasoning out of season.
Some speakers whine, and others lay the lash on,
But more or less continue still to tease on,
With arguments according to their 'forte;'
But no one ever dreams of being short.—

But I digress: of all appeals,—although
I grant the power of pathos, and of gold,
Of beauty, flattery, threats, a shilling,—no
Method 's more sure at moments to take hold
Of the best feelings of mankind, which grow
More tender, as we every day behold,
Than that all-softening, overpowering knell,
The tocsin of the soul—the dinner-bell.

Turkey contains no bells, and yet men dine;
And Juan and his friend, albeit they heard
No Christian knoll to table, saw no line
Of lackeys usher to the feast prepared,
Yet smelt roast-meat, beheld a huge fire shine,
And cooks in motion with their clean arms bared,
And gazed around them to the left and right
With the prophetic eye of appetite.

And giving up all notions of resistance,
  They follow'd close behind their sable guide,
Who little thought that his own crack'd existence
  Was on the point of being set aside:
He motion'd them to stop at some small distance,
  And knocking at the gate, 'twas open'd wide,
And a magnificent large hall display'd
The Asian pomp of Ottoman parade.

I won't describe; description is my forte,
  But every fool describes in these bright days
His wondrous journey to some foreign court,
  And spawns his quarto, and demands your praise—
Death to his publisher, to him 'tis sport;
  While Nature, tortured twenty thousand ways,
Resigns herself with exemplary patience
To guide-books, rhymes, tours, sketches, illustrations.

Along this hall, and up and down, some, squatted
  Upon their hams, were occupied at chess;
Others in monosyllable talk chatted,
  And some seem'd much in love with their own dress.
And divers smoked superb pipes decorated
  With amber mouths of greater price or less;
And several strutted, others slept, and some
Prepared for supper with a glass of rum.

As the black eunuch enter'd with his brace
  Of purchased Infidels, some raised their eyes
A moment without slackening from their pace;
  But those who sate ne'er stirr'd in anywise:
One or two stared the captives in the face,
  Just as one views a horse to guess his price;
Some nodded to the negro from their station,
But no one troubled him with conversation.

He leads them through the hall, and, without stopping,
  On through a farther range of goodly rooms,

Splendid but silent, save in one, where, dropping,
A marble fountain echoes through the glooms
Of night which robe the chamber, or where popping
Some female head most curiously presumes
To thrust its black eyes through the door or lattice,
As wondering what the devil a noise that is.

Some faint lamps gleaming from the lofty walls
Gave light enough to hint their farther way,
But not enough to show the imperial halls,
In all the flashing of their full array;
Perhaps there's nothing—I'll not say appals,
But saddens more by night as well as day,
Than an enormous room without a soul
To break the lifeless splendour of the whole.

Two or three seem so little, one seems nothing:
In deserts, forests, crowds, or by the shore,
There solitude, we know, has her full growth in
The spots which were her realms for evermore;
But in a mighty hall or gallery, both in
More modern buildings and those built of yore,
A kind of death comes o'er us all alone,
Seeing what 's meant for many with but one.

A neat, snug study on a winter's night,
A book, friend, single lady, or a glass
Of claret, sandwich, and an appetite,
Are things which make an English evening pass;
Though certes by no means so grand a sight
As is a theatre lit up by gas.
I pass my evenings in long galleries solely,
And that 's the reason I'm so melancholy.

Alas! man makes that great which makes him little:
I grant you in a church 'tis very well:
What speaks of Heaven should by no means be brittle,
But strong and lasting, till no tongue can tell

Their names who rear'd it; but huge houses fit ill—
  And huge tombs worse—mankind, since Adam fell:
Methinks the story of the tower of Babel
Might teach them this much better than I'm able.

Babel was Nimrod's hunting-box, and then
  A town of gardens, walls, and wealth amazing,
Where Nabuchadonosor, king of men,
  Reign'd, till one summer's day he took to grazing,
And Daniel tamed the lions in their den,
  The people's awe and admiration raising;
'Twas famous, too, for Thisbe and for Pyramus,
And the calumniated queen Semiramis.

That injured Queen by chroniclers so coarse
  Has been accused (I doubt not by conspiracy)
Of an improper friendship for her horse
  (Love, like religion, sometimes runs to heresy):
This monstrous tale had probably its source
  (For such exaggerations here and there I see)
In writing 'Courser' by mistake for 'Courier:'
I wish the case could come before a jury here.

But to resume,—should there be (what may not
  Be in these days?) some infidels, who don't,
Because they can't find out the very spot
  Of that same Babel, or because they won't
(Though Claudius Rich, Esquire, some bricks has got,
  And written lately two memoirs upon't),
Believe the Jews, those unbelievers, who
Must be believed, though they believe not you,

Yet let them think that Horace has exprest
  Shortly and sweetly the masonic folly
Of those, forgetting the great place of rest,
  Who give themselves to architecture wholly;
We know where things and men must end at best:
  A moral (like all morals) melancholy,

And ‘Et sepulchri immemor struis domos’
Shows that we build when we should but entomb us.

At last they reach’d a quarter most retired,
  Where echo woke as if from a long slumber;
Though full of all things which could be desired,
  One wonder’d what to do with such a number
Of articles which nobody required;
  Here wealth had done its utmost to encumber
With furniture an exquisite apartment,
Which puzzled Nature much to know what Art meant.

It seem’d, however, but to open on
  A range or suite of further chambers, which
Might lead to heaven knows where; but in this one
  The movables were prodigally rich:
Sofas ’twas half a sin to sit upon,
  So costly were they; carpets every stitch
Of workmanship so rare, they made you wish
You could glide o’er them like a golden fish.

The black, however, without hardly deigning
  A glance at that which wrapt the slaves in wonder,
Trampled what they scarce trod for fear of staining,
  As if the milky way their feet was under
With all its stars; and with a stretch attaining
  A certain press or cupboard niched in yonder—
In that remote recess which you may see—
Or if you don’t the fault is not in me,—

I wish to be perspicuous; and the black,
  I say, unlocking the recess, pull’d forth
A quantity of clothes fit for the back
  Of any Mussulman, whate’er his worth;
And of variety there was no lack—
  And yet, though I have said there was no dearth,
He chose himself to point out what he thought
Most proper for the Christians he had bought.

The suit he thought most suitable to each
Was, for the elder and the stouter, first
A Candiote cloak, which to the knee might reach,
And trousers not so tight that they would burst,
But such as fit an Asiatic breech;
A shawl, whose folds in Cashmire had been nurst,
Slippers of saffron, dagger rich and handy;
In short, all things which form a Turkish Dandy.

While he was dressing, Baba, their black friend,
Hinted the vast advantages which they
Might probably attain both in the end,
If they would but pursue the proper way
Which fortune plainly seem'd to recommend;
And then he added, that he needs must say,
'Twould greatly tend to better their condition,
If they would condescend to circumcision.

'For his own part, he really should rejoice
To see them true believers, but no less
Would leave his proposition to their choice.'
The other, thanking him for this excess
Of goodness, in thus leaving them a voice
In such a trifle, scarcely could express
'Sufficiently' (he said) 'his approbation
Of all the customs of this polish'd nation.

'For his own share—he saw but small objection
To so respectable an ancient rite;
And, after swallowing down a slight refection,
For which he own'd a present appetite,
He doubted not a few hours of reflection
Would reconcile him to the business quite.'
'Will it?' said Juan, sharply: 'Strike me dead,
But they as soon shall circumcise my head!

'Cut off a thousand heads, before—'—'Now, pray,'

Replied the other, ‘do not interrupt:
You put me out in what I had to say.
Sir!—as I said, as soon as I have supt,
I shall perpend if your proposal may
Be such as I can properly accept;
Provided always your great goodness still
Remits the matter to our own free-will.’

Baba eyed Juan, and said, ‘Be so good
As dress yourself—’ and pointed out a suit
In which a Princess with great pleasure would
Array her limbs; but Juan standing mute,
As not being in a masquerading mood,
Gave it a slight kick with his Christian foot;
And when the old negro told him to ‘Get ready,’
Replied, ‘Old gentleman, I’m not a lady.’

‘What you may be, I neither know nor care,’
Said Baba; ‘but pray do as I desire:
I have no more time nor many words to spare.’
‘At least,’ said Juan, ‘sure I may enquire
The cause of this odd travesty?’—‘Forbear,’
Said Baba, ‘to be curious; ’twill transpire,
No doubt, in proper place, and time, and season:
I have no authority to tell the reason.’

‘Then if I do,’ said Juan, ‘I’ll be—’—‘Hold!’
Rejoin’d the negro, ‘pray be not provoking;
This spirit ’s well, but it may wax too bold,
And you will find us not top fond of joking.’
‘What, sir!’ said Juan, ‘shall it e’er be told
That I unsex’d my dress?’ But Baba, stroking
The things down, said, ‘Incense me, and I call
Those who will leave you of no sex at all.

‘I offer you a handsome suit of clothes:
A woman’s, true; but then there is a cause
Why you should wear them.’—‘What, though my soul loathes

The effeminate garb?'—thus, after a short pause,
Sigh'd Juan, muttering also some slight oaths,
'What the devil shall I do with all this gauze?'
Thus he profanely term'd the finest lace
Which e'er set off a marriage-morning face.

And then he swore; and, sighing, on he slipp'd
A pair of trousers of flesh-colour'd silk;
Next with a virgin zone he was equipp'd,
Which girt a slight chemise as white as milk;
But tugging on his petticoat, he tripp'd,
Which—as we say—or, as the Scotch say, whilk
(The rhyme obliges me to this; sometimes
Monarchs are less imperative than rhymes)—

Whilk, which (or what you please), was owing to
His garment's novelty, and his being awkward:
And yet at last he managed to get through
His toilet, though no doubt a little backward:
The negro Baba help'd a little too,
When some untoward part of raiment stuck hard;
And, wrestling both his arms into a gown,
He paused, and took a survey up and down.

One difficulty still remain'd—his hair
Was hardly long enough; but Baba found
So many false long tresses all to spare,
That soon his head was most completely crown'd,
After the manner then in fashion there;
And this addition with such gems was bound
As suited the ensemble of his toilet,
While Baba made him comb his head and oil it.

And now being femininely all array'd,
With some small aid from scissors, paint, and tweezers,
He look'd in almost all respects a maid,
And Baba smilingly exclaim'd, 'You see, sirs,
A perfect transformation here display'd;

And now, then, you must come along with me, sirs,
That is—the Lady:' clapping his hands twice,
Four blacks were at his elbow in a trice.

'You, sir,' said Baba, nodding to the one,
'Will please to accompany those gentlemen
To supper; but you, worthy Christian nun,
Will follow me: no trifling, sir; for when
I say a thing, it must at once be done.
What fear you? think you this a lion's den?
Why, 'tis a palace; where the truly wise
Anticipate the Prophet's paradise.

'You fool! I tell you no one means you harm.'
'So much the better,' Juan said, 'for them;
Else they shall feel the weight of this my arm,
Which is not quite so light as you may deem.
I yield thus far; but soon will break the charm
If any take me for that which I seem:
So that I trust for everybody's sake,
That this disguise may lead to no mistake.'

'Blockhead! come on, and see,' quoth Baba; while
Don Juan, turning to his comrade, who
Though somewhat grieved, could scarce forbear a smile
Upon the metamorphosis in view,—
'Farewell!' they mutually exclaim'd: 'this soil
Seems fertile in adventures strange and new;
One 's turn'd half Mussulman, and one a maid,
By this old black enchanter's unsought aid.'

'Farewell!' said Juan: 'should we meet no more,
I wish you a good appetite.'—'Farewell!'
Replied the other; 'though it grieves me sore;
When we next meet we'll have a tale to tell:
We needs must follow when Fate puts from shore.
Keep your good name; though Eve herself once fell.'
'Nay,' quoth the maid, 'the Sultan's self shan't carry me,

Unless his highness promises to marry me.

And thus they parted, each by separate doors;
Baba led Juan onward room by room
Through glittering galleries and o'er marble floors,
Till a gigantic portal through the gloom,
Haughty and huge, along the distance lowers;
And wafted far arose a rich perfume:
It seem'd as though they came upon a shrine,
For all was vast, still, fragrant, and divine.

The giant door was broad, and bright, and high,
Of gilded bronze, and carved in curious guise;
Warriors thereon were battling furiously;
Here stalks the victor, there the vanquish'd lies;
There captives led in triumph droop the eye,
And in perspective many a squadron flies:
It seems the work of times before the line
Of Rome transplanted fell with Constantine.

This massy portal stood at the wide close
Of a huge hall, and on its either side
Two little dwarfs, the least you could suppose,
Were sate, like ugly imps, as if allied
In mockery to the enormous gate which rose
O'er them in almost pyramidic pride:
The gate so splendid was in all its features,
You never thought about those little creatures,

Until you nearly trod on them, and then
You started back in horror to survey
The wondrous hideousness of those small men,
Whose colour was not black, nor white, nor grey,
But an extraneous mixture, which no pen
Can trace, although perhaps the pencil may;
They were mis-shapen pigmies, deaf and dumb—
Monsters, who cost a no less monstrous sum.

Their duty was—for they were strong, and though
They look'd so little, did strong things at times—
To ope this door, which they could really do,
The hinges being as smooth as Rogers' rhymes;
And now and then, with tough strings of the bow,
As is the custom of those Eastern climes,
To give some rebel Pacha a cravat;
For mutes are generally used for that.

They spoke by signs—that is, not spoke at all;
And looking like two incubi, they glared
As Baba with his fingers made them fall
To heaving back the portal folds: it scared
Juan a moment, as this pair so small
With shrinking serpent optics on him stared;
It was as if their little looks could poison
Or fascinate whome'er they fix'd their eyes on.

Before they enter'd, Baba paused to hint
To Juan some slight lessons as his guide:
'If you could just contrive,' he said, 'to stint
That somewhat manly majesty of stride,
'Twould be as well, and (though there's not much in 't)
To swing a little less from side to side,
Which has at times an aspect of the oddest;—
And also could you look a little modest,

''Twould be convenient; for these mutes have eyes
Like needles, which may pierce those petticoats;
And if they should discover your disguise,
You know how near us the deep Bosphorus floats;
And you and I may chance, ere morning rise,
To find our way to Marmora without boats,
Stitch'd up in sacks—a mode of navigation
A good deal practised here upon occasion.'

With this encouragement, he led the way
Into a room still nobler than the last;

A rich confusion form'd a disarray
In such sort, that the eye along it cast
Could hardly carry anything away,
Object on object flash'd so bright and fast;
A dazzling mass of gems, and gold, and glitter,
Magnificently mingled in a litter.

Wealth had done wonders—taste not much; such things
Occur in Orient palaces, and even
In the more chasten'd domes of Western kings
(Of which I have also seen some six or seven),
Where I can't say or gold or diamond flings
Great lustre, there is much to be forgiven;
Groups of bad statues, tables, chairs, and pictures,
On which I cannot pause to make my strictures.

In this imperial hall, at distance lay
Under a canopy, and there reclined
Quite in a confidential queenly way,
A lady; Baba stopp'd, and kneeling sign'd
To Juan, who though not much used to pray,
Knelt down by instinct, wondering in his mind,
What all this meant: while Baba bow'd and bended
His head, until the ceremony ended.

The lady rising up with such an air
As Venus rose with from the wave, on them
Bent like an antelope a Paphian pair
Of eyes, which put out each surrounding gem;
And raising up an arm as moonlight fair,
She sign'd to Baba, who first kiss'd the hem
Of her deep purple robe, and speaking low,
Pointed to Juan who remain'd below.

Her presence was as lofty as her state;
Her beauty of that overpowering kind,
Whose force description only would abate:
I'd rather leave it much to your own mind,

Than lessen it by what I could relate
  Of forms and features; it would strike you blind
Could I do justice to the full detail;
So, luckily for both, my phrases fail.

Thus much however I may add,—her years
  Were ripe, they might make six-and-twenty springs;
But there are forms which Time to touch forbears,
  And turns aside his scythe to vulgar things,
Such as was Mary's Queen of Scots; true—tears
  And love destroy; and sapping sorrow wrings
Charms from the charmer, yet some never grow
Ugly; for instance—Ninon de l'Enclos.

She spake some words to her attendants, who
  Composed a choir of girls, ten or a dozen,
And were all clad alike; like Juan, too,
  Who wore their uniform, by Baba chosen;
They form'd a very nymph-like looking crew,
  Which might have call'd Diana's chorus 'cousin,'
As far as outward show may correspond;
I won't be bail for anything beyond.

They bow'd obeisance and withdrew, retiring,
  But not by the same door through which came in
Baba and Juan, which last stood admiring,
  At some small distance, all he saw within
This strange saloon, much fitted for inspiring
  Marvel and praise; for both or none things win;
And I must say, I ne'er could see the very
Great happiness of the 'Nil Admirari.'

'Not to admire is all the art I know
  (Plain truth, dear Murray, needs few flowers of speech)
To make men happy, or to keep them so'
  (So take it in the very words of Creech)—
Thus Horace wrote we all know long ago;
  And thus Pope quotes the precept to re-teach

From his translation; but had none admired,
Would Pope have sung, or Horace been inspired?

Baba, when all the damsels were withdrawn,
  Motion'd to Juan to approach, and then
A second time desired him to kneel down,
  And kiss the lady's foot; which maxim when
He heard repeated, Juan with a frown
  Drew himself up to his full height again,
And said, 'It grieved him, but he could not stoop
To any shoe, unless it shod the Pope.'

Baba, indignant at this ill-timed pride,
  Made fierce remonstrances, and then a threat
He mutter'd (but the last was given aside)
  About a bow-string—quite in vain; not yet
Would Juan bend, though 'twere to Mahomet's bride:
  There's nothing in the world like etiquette
In kingly chambers or imperial halls,
As also at the race and county balls.

He stood like Atlas, with a world of words
  About his ears, and nathless would not bend:
The blood of all his line 's Castilian lords
  Boil'd in his veins, and rather than descend
To stain his pedigree a thousand swords
  A thousand times of him had made an end;
At length perceiving the 'foot' could not stand,
Baba proposed that he should kiss the hand.

Here was an honourable compromise,
  A half-way house of diplomatic rest,
Where they might meet in much more peaceful guise;
  And Juan now his willingness exprest
To use all fit and proper courtesies,
  Adding, that this was commonest and best,
For through the South the custom still commands
The gentleman to kiss the lady's hands.

And he advanced, though with but a bad grace,
Though on more thorough-bred or fairer fingers
No lips e'er left their transitory trace;
On such as these the lip too fondly lingers,
And for one kiss would fain imprint a brace,
As you will see, if she you love shall bring hers
In contact; and sometimes even a fair stranger's
An almost twelvemonth's constancy endangers.

The lady eyed him o'er and o'er, and bade
Baba retire, which he obey'd in style,
As if well used to the retreating trade;
And taking hints in good part all the while,
He whisper'd Juan not to be afraid,
And looking on him with a sort of smile,
Took leave, with such a face of satisfaction
As good men wear who have done a virtuous action.

When he was gone, there was a sudden change:
I know not what might be the lady's thought,
But o'er her bright brow flash'd a tumult strange,
And into her dear cheek the blood was brought,
Blood-red as sunset summer clouds which range
The verge of Heaven; and in her large eyes wrought,
A mixture of sensations might be scann'd,
Of half voluptuousness and half command.

Her form had all the softness of her sex,
Her features all the sweetness of the devil,
When he put on the cherub to perplex
Eve, and paved (God knows how) the road to evil;
The sun himself was scarce more free from specks
Than she from aught at which the eye could cavil;
Yet, somehow, there was something somewhere wanting,
As if she rather order'd than was granting.

Something imperial, or imperious, threw

A chain o'er all she did; that is, a chain
Was thrown as 'twere about the neck of you,—
And rapture's self will seem almost a pain
With aught which looks like despotism in view:
Our souls at least are free, and 'tis in vain
We would against them make the flesh obey—
The spirit in the end will have its way.

Her very smile was haughty, though so sweet;
Her very nod was not an inclination;
There was a self-will even in her small feet,
As though they were quite conscious of her station—
They trod as upon necks; and to complete
Her state (it is the custom of her nation),
A poniard deck'd her girdle, as the sign
She was a sultan's bride (thank Heaven, not mine!).

'To hear and to obey' had been from birth
The law of all around her; to fulfill
All phantasies which yielded joy or mirth,
Had been her slaves' chief pleasure, as her will;
Her blood was high, her beauty scarce of earth:
Judge, then, if her caprices e'er stood still;
Had she but been a Christian, I've a notion
We should have found out the 'perpetual motion.'

Whate'er she saw and coveted was brought;
Whate'er she did not see, if she supposed
It might be seen, with diligence was sought,
And when 'twas found straightway the bargain closed;
There was no end unto the things she bought,
Nor to the trouble which her fancies caused;
Yet even her tyranny had such a grace,
The women pardon'd all except her face.

Juan, the latest of her whims, had caught
Her eye in passing on his way to sale;
She order'd him directly to be bought,

And Baba, who had ne'er been known to fail
In any kind of mischief to be wrought,
At all such auctions knew how to prevail:
She had no prudence, but he had; and this
Explains the garb which Juan took amiss.

His youth and features favour'd the disguise,
And, should you ask how she, a sultan's bride,
Could risk or compass such strange phantasies,
This I must leave sultanas to decide:
Emperors are only husbands in wives' eyes,
And kings and consorts oft are mystified,
As we may ascertain with due precision,
Some by experience, others by tradition.

But to the main point, where we have been tending:—
She now conceived all difficulties past,
And deem'd herself extremely condescending
When, being made her property at last,
Without more preface, in her blue eyes blending
Passion and power, a glance on him she cast,
And merely saying, 'Christian, canst thou love?'
Conceived that phrase was quite enough to move

And so it was, in proper time and place;
But Juan, who had still his mind o'erflowing
With Haidee's isle and soft Ionian face,
Felt the warm blood, which in his face was glowing,
Rush back upon his heart, which fill'd apace,
And left his cheeks as pale as snowdrops blowing;
These words went through his soul like Arab-spears,
So that he spoke not, but burst into tears.

She was a good deal shock'd; not shock'd at tears,
For women shed and use them at their liking;
But there is something when man's eye appears
Wet, still more disagreeable and striking;
A woman's tear-drop melts, a man's half sears,

Like molten lead, as if you thrust a pike in
His heart to force it out, for (to be shorter)
To them 'tis a relief, to us a torture.

And she would have consoled, but knew not how:
Having no equals, nothing which had e'er
Infected her with sympathy till now,
And never having dreamt what 'twas to bear
Aught of a serious, sorrowing kind, although
There might arise some pouting petty care
To cross her brow, she wonder'd how so near
Her eyes another's eye could shed a tear.

But nature teaches more than power can spoil,
And, when a strong although a strange sensation
Moves—female hearts are such a genial soil
For kinder feelings, whatsoe'er their nation,
They naturally pour the 'wine and oil,'
Samaritans in every situation;
And thus Gulbeyaz, though she knew not why,
Felt an odd glistening moisture in her eye.

But tears must stop like all things else; and soon
Juan, who for an instant had been moved
To such a sorrow by the intrusive tone
Of one who dared to ask if 'he had loved,'
Call'd back the stoic to his eyes, which shone
Bright with the very weakness he reproved;
And although sensitive to beauty, he
Felt most indignant still at not being free.

Gulbeyaz, for the first time in her days,
Was much embarrass'd, never having met
In all her life with aught save prayers and praise;
And as she also risk'd her life to get
Him whom she meant to tutor in love's ways
Into a comfortable tête-à-tête,
To lose the hour would make her quite a martyr,

And they had wasted now almost a quarter.

I also would suggest the fitting time
To gentlemen in any such like case,
That is to say in a meridian clime—
With us there is more law given to the chase,
But here a small delay forms a great crime:
So recollect that the extremest grace
Is just two minutes for your declaration—
A moment more would hurt your reputation.

Juan's was good; and might have been still better,
But he had got Haidee into his head:
However strange, he could not yet forget her,
Which made him seem exceedingly ill-bred.
Gulbeyaz, who look'd on him as her debtor
For having had him to her palace led,
Began to blush up to the eyes, and then
Grow deadly pale, and then blush back again.

At length, in an imperial way, she laid
Her hand on his, and bending on him eyes
Which needed not an empire to persuade,
Look'd into his for love, where none replies:
Her brow grew black, but she would not upbraid,
That being the last thing a proud woman tries;
She rose, and pausing one chaste moment, threw
Herself upon his breast, and there she grew.

This was an awkward test, as Juan found,
But he was steel'd by sorrow, wrath, and pride:
With gentle force her white arms he unwound,
And seated her all drooping by his side,
Then rising haughtily he glanced around,
And looking coldly in her face, he cried,
'The prison'd eagle will not pair, nor
Serve a Sultana's sensual phantasy.

‘Thou ask’st if I can love? be this the proof
How much I have loved—that I love not thee!
In this vile garb, the distaff, web, and woof,
Were fitter for me: Love is for the free!
I am not dazzled by this splendid roof,
Whate’er thy power, and great it seems to be;
Heads bow, knees bend, eyes watch around a throne,
And hands obey—our hearts are still our own.’

This was a truth to us extremely trite;
Not so to her, who ne’er had heard such things:
She deem’d her least command must yield delight,
Earth being only made for queens and kings.
If hearts lay on the left side or the right
She hardly knew, to such perfection brings
Legitimacy its born votaries, when
Aware of their due royal rights o’er men.

Besides, as has been said, she was so fair
As even in a much humbler lot had made
A kingdom or confusion anywhere,
And also, as may be presumed, she laid
Some stress on charms, which seldom are, if e’er,
By their possessors thrown into the shade:
She thought hers gave a double ‘right divine;’
And half of that opinion ’s also mine.

Remember, or (if you can not) imagine,
Ye, who have kept your chastity when young,
While some more desperate dowager has been waging
Love with you, and been in the dog-days stung
By your refusal, recollect her raging!
Or recollect all that was said or sung
On such a subject; then suppose the face
Of a young downright beauty in this case.

Suppose,—but you already have supposed,
The spouse of Potiphar, the Lady Booby,

Phaedra, and all which story has disclosed
Of good examples; pity that so few by
Poets and private tutors are exposed,
To educate—ye youth of Europe—you by!
But when you have supposed the few we know,
You can't suppose Gulbeyaz' angry brow.

A tigress robb'd of young, a lioness,
Or any interesting beast of prey,
Are similes at hand for the distress
Of ladies who can not have their own way;
But though my turn will not be served with less,
These don't express one half what I should say:
For what is stealing young ones, few or many,
To cutting short their hopes of having any?

The love of offspring 's nature's general law,
From tigresses and cubs to ducks and ducklings;
There's nothing whets the beak, or arms the claw
Like an invasion of their babes and sucklings;
And all who have seen a human nursery, saw
How mothers love their children's squalls and chucklings;
This strong extreme effect (to tire no longer
Your patience) shows the cause must still be stronger.

If I said fire flash'd from Gulbeyaz' eyes,
'Twere nothing—for her eyes flash'd always fire;
Or said her cheeks assumed the deepest dyes,
I should but bring disgrace upon the dyer,
So supernatural was her passion's rise;
For ne'er till now she knew a check'd desire:
Even ye who know what a check'd woman is
(Enough, God knows!) would much fall short of this.

Her rage was but a minute's, and 'twas well—
A moment's more had slain her; but the while
It lasted 'twas like a short glimpse of hell:
Nought 's more sublime than energetic bile,

Though horrible to see yet grand to tell,
  Like ocean warring 'gainst a rocky isle;
And the deep passions flashing through her form
Made her a beautiful embodied storm.

A vulgar tempest 'twere to a typhoon
  To match a common fury with her rage,
And yet she did not want to reach the moon,
  Like moderate Hotspur on the immortal page;
Her anger pitch'd into a lower tune,
  Perhaps the fault of her soft sex and age—
Her wish was but to 'kill, kill, kill,' like Lear's,
And then her thirst of blood was quench'd in tears.

A storm it raged, and like the storm it pass'd,
  Pass'd without words—in fact she could not speak;
And then her sex's shame broke in at last,
  A sentiment till then in her but weak,
But now it flow'd in natural and fast,
  As water through an unexpected leak;
For she felt humbled—and humiliation
Is sometimes good for people in her station

It teaches them that they are flesh and blood,
  It also gently hints to them that others,
Although of clay, are yet not quite of mud;
  That urns and pipkins are but fragile brothers,
And works of the same pottery, bad or good,
  Though not all born of the same sires and mothers:
It teaches—Heaven knows only what it teaches,
But sometimes it may mend, and often reaches.

Her first thought was to cut off Juan's head;
  Her second, to cut only his—acquaintance;
Her third, to ask him where he had been bred;
  Her fourth, to rally him into repentance;
Her fifth, to call her maids and go to bed;
  Her sixth, to stab herself; her seventh, to sentence

The lash to Baba:—but her grand resource
Was to sit down again, and cry of course.

She thought to stab herself, but then she had
  The dagger close at hand, which made it awkward;
For Eastern stays are little made to pad,
  So that a poniard pierces if 'tis stuck hard:
She thought of killing Juan—but, poor lad!
  Though he deserved it well for being so backward,
The cutting off his head was not the art
Most likely to attain her aim—his heart.

Juan was moved; he had made up his mind
  To be impaled, or quarter'd as a dish
For dogs, or to be slain with pangs refined,
  Or thrown to lions, or made baits for fish,
And thus heroically stood resign'd,
  Rather than sin—except to his own wish:
But all his great preparatives for dying
Dissolved like snow before a woman crying.

As through his palms Bob Acres' valour oozed,
  So Juan's virtue ebb'd, I know not how;
And first he wonder'd why he had refused;
  And then, if matters could be made up now;
And next his savage virtue he accused,
  Just as a friar may accuse his vow,
Or as a dame repents her of her oath,
Which mostly ends in some small breach of both.

So he began to stammer some excuses;
  But words are not enough in such a matter,
Although you borrow'd all that e'er the muses
  Have sung, or even a Dandy's dandiest chatter,
Or all the figures Castlereagh abuses;
  Just as a languid smile began to flatter
His peace was making, but before he ventured
Further, old Baba rather briskly enter'd.

‘Bride of the Sun! and Sister of the Moon!’
(’Twas thus he spake) ‘and Empress of the Earth!
Whose frown would put the spheres all out of tune,
Whose smile makes all the planets dance with mirth,
Your slave brings tidings—he hopes not too soon—
Which your sublime attention may be worth:
The Sun himself has sent me like a ray,
To hint that he is coming up this way.’

‘Is it,’ exclaim’d Gulbeyaz, ‘as you say?
I wish to heaven he would not shine till morning!
But bid my women form the milky way.
Hence, my old comet! give the stars due warning—
And, Christian! mingle with them as you may,
And as you’d have me pardon your past scorning—’
Here they were interrupted by a humming
Sound, and then by a cry, ‘The Sultan ’s coming!’

First came her damsels, a decorous file,
And then his Highness’ eunuchs, black and white;
The train might reach a quarter of a mile:
His majesty was always so polite
As to announce his visits a long while
Before he came, especially at night;
For being the last wife of the Emperour,
She was of course the favorite of the four.

His Highness was a man of solemn port,
Shawl’d to the nose, and bearded to the eyes,
Snatch’d from a prison to preside at court,
His lately bowstrung brother caused his rise;
He was as good a sovereign of the sort
As any mention’d in the histories
Of Cantemir, or Knolles, where few shine
Save Solyman, the glory of their line.

He went to mosque in state, and said his prayers

With more than ‘Oriental scrupulosity;’
He left to his vizier all state affairs,
And show’d but little royal curiosity:
I know not if he had domestic cares—
No process proved connubial animosity;
Four wives and twice five hundred maids, unseen,
Were ruled as calmly as a Christian queen.

If now and then there happen’d a slight slip,
Little was heard of criminal or crime;
The story scarcely pass’d a single lip—
The sack and sea had settled all in time,
From which the secret nobody could rip:
The Public knew no more than does this rhyme;
No scandals made the daily press a curse—
Morals were better, and the fish no worse.

He saw with his own eyes the moon was round,
Was also certain that the earth was square,
Because he had journey’d fifty miles, and found
No sign that it was circular anywhere;
His empire also was without a bound:
’Tis true, a little troubled here and there,
By rebel pachas, and encroaching giaours,
But then they never came to ‘the Seven Towers;’

Except in shape of envoys, who were sent
To lodge there when a war broke out, according
To the true law of nations, which ne’er meant
Those scoundrels, who have never had a sword in
Their dirty diplomatic hands, to vent
Their spleen in making strife, and safely wording
Their lies, yclep’d despatches, without risk or
The singeing of a single inky whisker.

He had fifty daughters and four dozen sons,
Of whom all such as came of age were stow’d,
The former in a palace, where like nuns

They lived till some Bashaw was sent abroad,
When she, whose turn it was, was wed at once,
Sometimes at six years old—though it seems odd,
'Tis true; the reason is, that the Bashaw
Must make a present to his sire in law.

His sons were kept in prison, till they grew
Of years to fill a bowstring or the throne,
One or the other, but which of the two
Could yet be known unto the fates alone;
Meantime the education they went through
Was princely, as the proofs have always shown:
So that the heir apparent still was found
No less deserving to be hang'd than crown'd.

His majesty saluted his fourth spouse
With all the ceremonies of his rank,
Who clear'd her sparkling eyes and smooth'd her brows,
As suits a matron who has play'd a prank;
These must seem doubly mindful of their vows,
To save the credit of their breaking bank:
To no men are such cordial greetings given
As those whose wives have made them fit for heaven.

His Highness cast around his great black eyes,
And looking, as he always look'd, perceived
Juan amongst the damsels in disguise,
At which he seem'd no whit surprised nor grieved,
But just remark'd with air sedate and wise,
While still a fluttering sigh Gulbeyaz heaved,
'I see you've bought another girl; 'tis pity
That a mere Christian should be half so pretty.'

This compliment, which drew all eyes upon
The new-bought virgin, made her blush and shake.
Her comrades, also, thought themselves undone:
O! Mahomet! that his majesty should take
Such notice of a giaour, while scarce to one

Of them his lips imperial ever spake!
There was a general whisper, toss, and wriggle,
But etiquette forbade them all to giggle.

The Turks do well to shut—at least, sometimes—
The women up, because, in sad reality,
Their chastity in these unhappy climes
Is not a thing of that astringent quality
Which in the North prevents precocious crimes,
And makes our snow less pure than our morality;
The sun, which yearly melts the polar ice,
Has quite the contrary effect on vice.

Thus in the East they are extremely strict,
And Wedlock and a Padlock mean the same;
Excepting only when the former 's pick'd
It ne'er can be replaced in proper frame;
Spoilt, as a pipe of claret is when prick'd:
But then their own Polygamy 's to blame;
Why don't they knead two virtuous souls for life
Into that moral centaur, man and wife?

Thus far our chronicle; and now we pause,
Though not for want of matter; but 'tis time
According to the ancient epic laws,
To slacken sail, and anchor with our rhyme.
Let this fifth canto meet with due applause,
The sixth shall have a touch of the sublime;
Meanwhile, as Homer sometimes sleeps, perhaps
You'll pardon to my muse a few short naps.

CANTO THE SIXTH.

‘There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which,—taken at the flood,’—you know the rest,
And most of us have found it now and then;
At least we think so, though but few have guess’d
The moment, till too late to come again.
But no doubt every thing is for the best—
Of which the surest sign is in the end:
When things are at the worst they sometimes mend.

There is a tide in the affairs of women
Which, taken at the flood, leads—God knows where:
Those navigators must be able seamen
Whose charts lay down its current to a hair;
Not all the reveries of Jacob Behmen
With its strange whirls and eddies can compare:
Men with their heads reflect on this and that—
But women with their hearts on heaven knows what!

And yet a headlong, headstrong, downright she,
Young, beautiful, and daring—who would risk
A throne, the world, the universe, to be
Beloved in her own way, and rather whisk
The stars from out the sky, than not be free
As are the billows when the breeze is brisk—
Though such a she ’s a devil (if that there be one),
Yet she would make full many a Manichean.

Thrones, worlds, et cetera, are so oft upset
By commonest ambition, that when passion
O’erthrows the same, we readily forget,
Or at the least forgive, the loving rash one.
If Antony be well remember’d yet,

'Tis not his conquests keep his name in fashion,
But Actium, lost for Cleopatra's eyes,
Outbalances all Caesar's victories.

He died at fifty for a queen of forty;
I wish their years had been fifteen and twenty,
For then wealth, kingdoms, worlds are but a sport—I
Remember when, though I had no great plenty
Of worlds to lose, yet still, to pay my court, I
Gave what I had—a heart: as the world went, I
Gave what was worth a world; for worlds could never
Restore me those pure feelings, gone forever.

'Twas the boy's 'mite,' and, like the 'widow's,' may
Perhaps be weigh'd hereafter, if not now;
But whether such things do or do not weigh,
All who have loved, or love, will still allow
Life has nought like it. God is love, they say,
And Love 's a god, or was before the brow
Of earth was wrinkled by the sins and tears
Of—but Chronology best knows the years.

We left our hero and third heroine in
A kind of state more awkward than uncommon,
For gentlemen must sometimes risk their skin
For that sad tempter, a forbidden woman:
Sultans too much abhor this sort of sin,
And don't agree at all with the wise Roman,
Heroic, stoic Cato, the sententious,
Who lent his lady to his friend Hortensius.

I know Gulbeyaz was extremely wrong;
I own it, I deplore it, I condemn it;
But I detest all fiction even in song,
And so must tell the truth, howe'er you blame it.
Her reason being weak, her passions strong,
She thought that her lord's heart (even could she claim it)
Was scarce enough; for he had fifty-nine

Years, and a fifteen-hundredth concubine.

I am not, like Cassio, ‘an arithmetician,’
But by ‘the bookish theoric’ it appears,
If ’tis summ’d up with feminine precision,
That, adding to the account his Highness’ years,
The fair Sultana err’d from inanition;
For, were the Sultan just to all his dears,
She could but claim the fifteen-hundredth part
Of what should be monopoly—the heart.

It is observed that ladies are litigious
Upon all legal objects of possession,
And not the least so when they are religious,
Which doubles what they think of the transgression:
With suits and prosecutions they besiege us,
As the tribunals show through many a session,
When they suspect that any one goes shares
In that to which the law makes them sole heirs.

Now, if this holds good in a Christian land,
The heathen also, though with lesser latitude,
Are apt to carry things with a high hand,
And take what kings call ‘an imposing attitude,’
And for their rights connubial make a stand,
When their liege husbands treat them with ingratitude:
And as four wives must have quadruple claims,
The Tigris hath its jealousies like Thames.

Gulbeyaz was the fourth, and (as I said)
The favourite; but what ’s favour amongst four?
Polygamy may well be held in dread,
Not only as a sin, but as a bore:
Most wise men, with one moderate woman wed,
Will scarcely find philosophy for more;
And all (except Mahometans) forbear
To make the nuptial couch a ‘Bed of Ware.’

His Highness, the sublimest of mankind,—
So styled according to the usual forms
Of every monarch, till they are consign'd
To those sad hungry jacobins the worms,
Who on the very loftiest kings have dined,—
His Highness gazed upon Gulbeyaz' charms,
Expecting all the welcome of a lover
(A 'Highland welcome' all the wide world over).

Now here we should distinguish; for howe'er
Kisses, sweet words, embraces, and all that,
May look like what is—neither here nor there,
They are put on as easily as a hat,
Or rather bonnet, which the fair sex wear,
Trimm'd either heads or hearts to decorate,
Which form an ornament, but no more part
Of heads, than their caresses of the heart.

A slight blush, a soft tremor, a calm kind
Of gentle feminine delight, and shown
More in the eyelids than the eyes, resign'd
Rather to hide what pleases most unknown,
Are the best tokens (to a modest mind)
Of love, when seated on his loveliest throne,
A sincere woman's breast,—for over-warm
Or over-cold annihilates the charm.

For over-warmth, if false, is worse than truth;
If true, 'tis no great lease of its own fire;
For no one, save in very early youth,
Would like (I think) to trust all to desire,
Which is but a precarious bond, in sooth,
And apt to be transferr'd to the first buyer
At a sad discount: while your over chilly
Women, on t' other hand, seem somewhat silly.

That is, we cannot pardon their bad taste,
For so it seems to lovers swift or slow,

Who fain would have a mutual flame confess'd,
And see a sentimental passion glow,
Even were St. Francis' paramour their guest,
In his monastic concubine of snow;—
In short, the maxim for the amorous tribe is
Horatian, 'Medio tu tutissimus ibis.'

The 'tu' 's too much,—but let it stand,—the verse
Requires it, that 's to say, the English rhyme,
And not the pink of old hexameters;
But, after all, there's neither tune nor time
In the last line, which cannot well be worse,
And was thrust in to close the octave's chime:
I own no prosody can ever rate it
As a rule, but truth may, if you translate it.

If fair Gulbeyaz overdid her part,
I know not—it succeeded, and success
Is much in most things, not less in the heart
Than other articles of female dress.
Self-love in man, too, beats all female art;
They lie, we lie, all lie, but love no less;
And no one virtue yet, except starvation,
Could stop that worst of vices—propagation.

We leave this royal couple to repose:
A bed is not a throne, and they may sleep,
Whate'er their dreams be, if of joys or woes:
Yet disappointed joys are woes as deep
As any man's day mixture undergoes.
Our least of sorrows are such as we weep;
'Tis the vile daily drop on drop which wears
The soul out (like the stone) with petty cares.

A scolding wife, a sullen son, a bill
To pay, unpaid, protested, or discounted
At a per-centage; a child cross, dog ill,
A favourite horse fallen lame just as he 's mounted,

A bad old woman making a worse will,
  Which leaves you minus of the cash you counted
As certain;—these are paltry things, and yet
I've rarely seen the man they did not fret.

I'm a philosopher; confound them all!
  Bills, beasts, and men, and—no! not womankind!
With one good hearty curse I vent my gall,
  And then my stoicism leaves nought behind
Which it can either pain or evil call,
  And I can give my whole soul up to mind;
Though what is soul or mind, their birth or growth,
Is more than I know—the deuce take them both!

So now all things are d—n'd, one feels at ease, As after reading
Athanasius' curse,
Which doth your true believer so much please:
  I doubt if any now could make it worse
O'er his worst enemy when at his knees,
  'Tis so sententious, positive, and terse,
And decorates the book of Common Prayer,
As doth a rainbow the just clearing air.

Gulbeyaz and her lord were sleeping, or
  At least one of them!—Oh, the heavy night,
When wicked wives, who love some bachelor,
  Lie down in dudgeon to sigh for the light
Of the gray morning, and look vainly for
  Its twinkle through the lattice dusky quite—
To toss, to tumble, doze, revive, and quake
Lest their too lawful bed-fellow should wake!

These are beneath the canopy of heaven,
  Also beneath the canopy of beds
Four-posted and silk curtain'd, which are given
  For rich men and their brides to lay their heads
Upon, in sheets white as what bards call 'driven
  Snow.' Well! 'tis all hap-hazard when one weds.

Gulbeyaz was an empress, but had been
Perhaps as wretched if a peasant's quean.

Don Juan in his feminine disguise,
  With all the damsels in their long array,
Had bow'd themselves before th' imperial eyes,
  And at the usual signal ta'en their way
Back to their chambers, those long galleries
  In the seraglio, where the ladies lay
Their delicate limbs; a thousand bosoms there
Beating for love, as the caged bird's for air.

I love the sex, and sometimes would reverse
  The tyrant's wish, 'that mankind only had
One neck, which he with one fell stroke might pierce:'
  My wish is quite as wide, but not so bad,
And much more tender on the whole than fierce;
  It being (not now, but only while a lad)
That womankind had but one rosy mouth,
To kiss them all at once from North to South.

O, enviable Briareus! with thy hands
  And heads, if thou hadst all things multiplied
In such proportion!—But my Muse withstands
  The giant thought of being a Titan's bride,
Or travelling in Patagonian lands;
  So let us back to Lilliput, and guide
Our hero through the labyrinth of love
In which we left him several lines above.

He went forth with the lovely Odalisques,
  At the given signal join'd to their array;
And though he certainly ran many risks,
  Yet he could not at times keep, by the way
(Although the consequences of such frisks
  Are worse than the worst damages men pay
In moral England, where the thing 's a tax),
From ogling all their charms from breasts to backs.

Still he forgot not his disguise:—along
The galleries from room to room they walk'd,
A virgin-like and edifying throng,
By eunuchs flank'd; while at their head there stalk'd
A dame who kept up discipline among
The female ranks, so that none stirr'd or talk'd
Without her sanction on their she-parades:
Her title was 'the Mother of the Maids.'

Whether she was a 'mother,' I know not,
Or whether they were 'maids' who call'd her mother;
But this is her seraglio title, got
I know not how, but good as any other;
So Cantemir can tell you, or De Tott:
Her office was to keep aloof or smother
All bad propensities in fifteen hundred
Young women, and correct them when they blunder'd.

A goodly sinecure, no doubt! but made
More easy by the absence of all men—
Except his majesty, who, with her aid,
And guards, and bolts, and walls, and now and then
A slight example, just to cast a shade
Along the rest, contrived to keep this den
Of beauties cool as an Italian convent,
Where all the passions have, alas! but one vent.

And what is that? Devotion, doubtless—how
Could you ask such a question?—but we will
Continue. As I said, this goodly row
Of ladies of all countries at the will
Of one good man, with stately march and slow,
Like water-lilies floating down a rill—
Or rather lake, for rills do not run slowly—
Paced on most maiden-like and melancholy.

But when they reach'd their own apartments, there,

Like birds, or boys, or bedlamites broke loose,
Waves at spring-tide, or women anywhere
When freed from bonds (which are of no great use
After all), or like Irish at a fair,
Their guards being gone, and as it were a truce
Establish'd between them and bondage, they
Began to sing, dance, chatter, smile, and play.

Their talk, of course, ran most on the new comer;
Her shape, her hair, her air, her everything:
Some thought her dress did not so much become her,
Or wonder'd at her ears without a ring;
Some said her years were getting nigh their summer,
Others contended they were but in spring;
Some thought her rather masculine in height,
While others wish'd that she had been so quite.

But no one doubted on the whole, that she
Was what her dress bespoke, a damsel fair,
And fresh, and 'beautiful exceedingly,'
Who with the brightest Georgians might compare:
They wonder'd how Gulbeyaz, too, could be
So silly as to buy slaves who might share
(If that his Highness wearied of his bride)
Her throne and power, and every thing beside.

But what was strangest in this virgin crew,
Although her beauty was enough to vex,
After the first investigating view,
They all found out as few, or fewer, specks
In the fair form of their companion new,
Than is the custom of the gentle sex,
When they survey, with Christian eyes or Heathen,
In a new face 'the ugliest creature breathing.'

And yet they had their little jealousies,
Like all the rest; but upon this occasion,
Whether there are such things as sympathies

Without our knowledge or our approbation,
Although they could not see through his disguise,
All felt a soft kind of concatenation,
Like magnetism, or devilism, or what
You please—we will not quarrel about that:

But certain 'tis they all felt for their new
Companion something newer still, as 'twere
A sentimental friendship through and through,
Extremely pure, which made them all concur
In wishing her their sister, save a few
Who wish'd they had a brother just like her,
Whom, if they were at home in sweet Circassia,
They would prefer to Padisha or Pacha.

Of those who had most genius for this sort
Of sentimental friendship, there were three,
Lolah, Katinka, and Dudu; in short
(To save description), fair as fair can be
Were they, according to the best report,
Though differing in stature and degree,
And clime and time, and country and complexion;
They all alike admired their new connection.

Lolah was dusk as India and as warm;
Katinka was a Georgian, white and red,
With great blue eyes, a lovely hand and arm,
And feet so small they scarce seem'd made to tread,
But rather skim the earth; while Dudu's form
Look'd more adapted to be put to bed,
Being somewhat large, and languishing, and lazy,
Yet of a beauty that would drive you crazy.

A kind of sleepy Venus seem'd Dudu,
Yet very fit to 'murder sleep' in those
Who gazed upon her cheek's transcendent hue,
Her Attic forehead, and her Phidian nose:
Few angles were there in her form, 'tis true,

Thinner she might have been, and yet scarce lose;
Yet, after all, 'twould puzzle to say where
It would not spoil some separate charm to pare.

She was not violently lively, but
Stole on your spirit like a May-day breaking;
Her eyes were not too sparkling, yet, half-shut,
They put beholders in a tender taking;
She look'd (this simile 's quite new) just cut
From marble, like Pygmalion's statue waking,
The mortal and the marble still at strife,
And timidly expanding into life.

Lolah demanded the new damsel's name—
'Juanna.'—Well, a pretty name enough.
Katinka ask'd her also whence she came—
'From Spain.'—'But where is Spain?'—'Don't ask such stuff,
Nor show your Georgian ignorance—for shame!'
Said Lolah, with an accent rather rough,
To poor Katinka: 'Spain 's an island near
Morocco, betwixt Egypt and Tangier.'

Dudu said nothing, but sat down beside
Juanna, playing with her veil or hair;
And looking at her steadfastly, she sigh'd,
As if she pitied her for being there,
A pretty stranger without friend or guide,
And all abash'd, too, at the general stare
Which welcomes hapless strangers in all places,
With kind remarks upon their mien and faces.

But here the Mother of the Maids drew near,
With, 'Ladies, it is time to go to rest.
I'm puzzled what to do with you, my dear,'
She added to Juanna, their new guest:
'Your coming has been unexpected here,
And every couch is occupied; you had best
Partake of mine; but by to-morrow early

We will have all things settled for you fairly.'

Here Lolah interposed—'Mamma, you know
You don't sleep soundly, and I cannot bear
That anybody should disturb you so;
I'll take Juanna; we're a slenderer pair
Than you would make the half of;—don't say no;
And I of your young charge will take due care.'
But here Katinka interfered, and said,
'She also had compassion and a bed.

'Besides, I hate to sleep alone,' quoth she.
The matron frown'd: 'Why so?'—'For fear of ghosts,'
Replied Katinka; 'I am sure I see
A phantom upon each of the four posts;
And then I have the worst dreams that can be,
Of Guebres, Giaours, and Ginns, and Gouls in hosts.'
The dame replied, 'Between your dreams and you,
I fear Juanna's dreams would be but few.

'You, Lolah, must continue still to lie
Alone, for reasons which don't matter; you
The same, Katinka, until by and by;
And I shall place Juanna with Dudu,
Who 's quiet, inoffensive, silent, shy,
And will not toss and chatter the night through.
What say you, child?'—Dudu said nothing, as
Her talents were of the more silent class;

But she rose up, and kiss'd the matron's brow
Between the eyes, and Lolah on both cheeks,
Katinka, too; and with a gentle bow
(Curt'sies are neither used by Turks nor Greeks)
She took Juanna by the hand to show
Their place of rest, and left to both their piques,
The others pouting at the matron's preference
Of Dudu, though they held their tongues from deference.

It was a spacious chamber (Oda is
The Turkish title), and ranged round the wall
Were couches, toilets—and much more than this
I might describe, as I have seen it all,
But it suffices—little was amiss;
'Twas on the whole a nobly furnish'd hall,
With all things ladies want, save one or two,
And even those were nearer than they knew.

Dudu, as has been said, was a sweet creature,
Not very dashing, but extremely winning,
With the most regulated charms of feature,
Which painters cannot catch like faces sinning
Against proportion—the wild strokes of nature
Which they hit off at once in the beginning,
Full of expression, right or wrong, that strike,
And pleasing or unpleasing, still are like.

But she was a soft landscape of mild earth,
Where all was harmony, and calm, and quiet,
Luxuriant, budding; cheerful without mirth,
Which, if not happiness, is much more nigh it
Than are your mighty passions and so forth,
Which some call 'the sublime:' I wish they'd try it:
I've seen your stormy seas and stormy women,
And pity lovers rather more than seamen.

But she was pensive more than melancholy,
And serious more than pensive, and serene,
It may be, more than either—not unholy
Her thoughts, at least till now, appear to have been.
The strangest thing was, beauteous, she was wholly
Unconscious, albeit turn'd of quick seventeen,
That she was fair, or dark, or short, or tall;
She never thought about herself at all.

And therefore was she kind and gentle as
The Age of Gold (when gold was yet unknown,

By which its nomenclature came to pass;
  Thus most appropriately has been shown
'Lucus a non lucendo,' not what was,
  But what was not; a sort of style that 's grown
Extremely common in this age, whose metal
The devil may decompose, but never settle:

I think it may be of 'Corinthian Brass,'
  Which was a mixture of all metals, but
The brazen uppermost). Kind reader! pass
  This long parenthesis: I could not shut
It sooner for the soul of me, and class
  My faults even with your own! which meaneth, Put
A kind construction upon them and me:
But that you won't—then don't—I am not less free.

'Tis time we should return to plain narration,
  And thus my narrative proceeds:—Dudu,
With every kindness short of ostentation,
  Show'd Juan, or Juanna, through and through
This labyrinth of females, and each station
  Described—what 's strange—in words extremely few:
I have but one simile, and that 's a blunder,
For wordless woman, which is silent thunder.

And next she gave her (I say her, because
  The gender still was epicene, at least
In outward show, which is a saving clause)
  An outline of the customs of the East,
With all their chaste integrity of laws,
  By which the more a haram is increased,
The stricter doubtless grow the vestal duties
Of any supernumerary beauties.

And then she gave Juanna a chaste kiss:
  Dudu was fond of kissing—which I'm sure
That nobody can ever take amiss,
  Because 'tis pleasant, so that it be pure,

And between females means no more than this—
That they have nothing better near, or newer.
'Kiss' rhymes to 'bliss' in fact as well as verse—
I wish it never led to something worse.

In perfect innocence she then unmade
Her toilet, which cost little, for she was
A child of Nature, carelessly array'd:
If fond of a chance ogle at her glass,
'Twas like the fawn, which, in the lake display'd,
Beholds her own shy, shadowy image pass,
When first she starts, and then returns to peep,
Admiring this new native of the deep.

And one by one her articles of dress
Were laid aside; but not before she offer'd
Her aid to fair Juanna, whose excess
Of modesty declined the assistance proffer'd:
Which pass'd well off—as she could do no less;
Though by this politesse she rather suffer'd,
Pricking her fingers with those cursed pins,
Which surely were invented for our sins,—

Making a woman like a porcupine,
Not to be rashly touch'd. But still more dread,
O ye! whose fate it is, as once 'twas mine,
In early youth, to turn a lady's maid;—
I did my very boyish best to shine
In tricking her out for a masquerade;
The pins were placed sufficiently, but not
Stuck all exactly in the proper spot.

But these are foolish things to all the wise,
And I love wisdom more than she loves me;
My tendency is to philosophise
On most things, from a tyrant to a tree;
But still the spouseless virgin Knowledge flies.
What are we? and whence came we? what shall be

Our ultimate existence? what 's our present?
Are questions answerless, and yet incessant.

There was deep silence in the chamber: dim
And distant from each other burn'd the lights,
And slumber hover'd o'er each lovely limb
Of the fair occupants: if there be sprites,
They should have walk'd there in their sprightliest trim,
By way of change from their sepulchral sites,
And shown themselves as ghosts of better taste
Than haunting some old ruin or wild waste.

Many and beautiful lay those around,
Like flowers of different hue, and clime, and root,
In some exotic garden sometimes found,
With cost, and care, and warmth induced to shoot.
One with her auburn tresses lightly bound,
And fair brows gently drooping, as the fruit
Nods from the tree, was slumbering with soft breath,
And lips apart, which show'd the pearls beneath.

One with her flush'd cheek laid on her white arm,
And raven ringlets gather'd in dark crowd
Above her brow, lay dreaming soft and warm;
And smiling through her dream, as through a cloud
The moon breaks, half unveil'd each further charm,
As, slightly stirring in her snowy shroud,
Her beauties seized the unconscious hour of night
All bashfully to struggle into light.

This is no bull, although it sounds so; for
'Twas night, but there were lamps, as hath been said.
A third's all pallid aspect offer'd more
The traits of sleeping sorrow, and betray'd
Through the heaved breast the dream of some far shore
Beloved and deplored; while slowly stray'd
(As night-dew, on a cypress glittering, tinges
The black bough) tear-drops through her eyes' dark fringes.

A fourth as marble, statue-like and still,
Lay in a breathless, hush'd, and stony sleep;
White, cold, and pure, as looks a frozen rill,
Or the snow minaret on an Alpine steep,
Or Lot's wife done in salt,—or what you will;—
My similes are gather'd in a heap,
So pick and choose—perhaps you'll be content
With a carved lady on a monument.

And lo! a fifth appears;—and what is she?
A lady of a 'certain age,' which means
Certainly aged—what her years might be
I know not, never counting past their teens;
But there she slept, not quite so fair to see,
As ere that awful period intervenes
Which lays both men and women on the shelf,
To meditate upon their sins and self.

But all this time how slept, or dream'd, Dudu?
With strict inquiry I could ne'er discover,
And scorn to add a syllable untrue;
But ere the middle watch was hardly over,
Just when the fading lamps waned dim and blue,
And phantoms hover'd, or might seem to hover,
To those who like their company, about
The apartment, on a sudden she scream'd out:

And that so loudly, that upstarted all
The Oda, in a general commotion:
Matron and maids, and those whom you may call
Neither, came crowding like the waves of ocean,
One on the other, throughout the whole hall,
All trembling, wondering, without the least notion
More than I have myself of what could make
The calm Dudu so turbulently wake.

But wide awake she was, and round her bed,

With floating draperies and with flying hair,
With eager eyes, and light but hurried tread,
And bosoms, arms, and ankles glancing bare,
And bright as any meteor ever bred
By the North Pole,—they sought her cause of care,
For she seem'd agitated, flush'd, and frighten'd,
Her eye dilated and her colour heighten'd.

But what was strange—and a strong proof how great
A blessing is sound sleep—Juanna lay
As fast as ever husband by his mate
In holy matrimony snores away.
Not all the clamour broke her happy state
Of slumber, ere they shook her,—so they say
At least,—and then she, too, unclosed her eyes,
And yawn'd a good deal with discreet surprise.

And now commenced a strict investigation,
Which, as all spoke at once and more than once,
Conjecturing, wondering, asking a narration,
Alike might puzzle either wit or dunce
To answer in a very clear oration.
Dudu had never pass'd for wanting sense,
But, being 'no orator as Brutus is,'
Could not at first expound what was amiss.

At length she said, that in a slumber sound
She dream'd a dream, of walking in a wood—
A 'wood obscure,' like that where Dante found
Himself in at the age when all grow good;
Life's half-way house, where dames with virtue crown'd
Run much less risk of lovers turning rude;
And that this wood was full of pleasant fruits,
And trees of goodly growth and spreading roots;

And in the midst a golden apple grew,—
A most prodigious pippin,—but it hung
Rather too high and distant; that she threw

Her glances on it, and then, longing, flung
Stones and whatever she could pick up, to
Bring down the fruit, which still perversely clung
To its own bough, and dangled yet in sight,
But always at a most provoking height;—

That on a sudden, when she least had hope,
It fell down of its own accord before
Her feet; that her first movement was to stoop
And pick it up, and bite it to the core;
That just as her young lip began to ope
Upon the golden fruit the vision bore,
A bee flew out and stung her to the heart,
And so—she awoke with a great scream and start.

All this she told with some confusion and
Dismay, the usual consequence of dreams
Of the unpleasant kind, with none at hand
To expound their vain and visionary gleams.
I've known some odd ones which seem'd really plann'd
Prophetically, or that which one deems
A 'strange coincidence,' to use a phrase
By which such things are settled now-a-days.

The damsels, who had thoughts of some great harm,
Began, as is the consequence of fear,
To scold a little at the false alarm
That broke for nothing on their sleeping car.
The matron, too, was wroth to leave her warm
Bed for the dream she had been obliged to hear,
And chafed at poor Dudu, who only sigh'd,
And said that she was sorry she had cried.

'I've heard of stories of a cock and bull;
But visions of an apple and a bee,
To take us from our natural rest, and pull
The whole Oda from their beds at half-past three,
Would make us think the moon is at its full.

You surely are unwell, child! we must see,
To-morrow, what his Highness's physician
Will say to this hysteric of a vision.

'And poor Juanna, too—the child's first night
Within these walls to be broke in upon
With such a clamour! I had thought it right
That the young stranger should not lie alone,
And, as the quietest of all, she might
With you, Dudu, a good night's rest have known;
But now I must transfer her to the charge
Of Lolah—though her couch is not so large.'

Lolah's eyes sparkled at the proposition;
But poor Dudu, with large drops in her own,
Resulting from the scolding or the vision,
Implored that present pardon might be shown
For this first fault, and that on no condition
(She added in a soft and piteous tone)
Juanna should be taken from her, and
Her future dreams should all be kept in hand.

She promised never more to have a dream,
At least to dream so loudly as just now;
She wonder'd at herself how she could scream—
'Twas foolish, nervous, as she must allow,
A fond hallucination, and a theme
For laughter—but she felt her spirits low,
And begg'd they would excuse her; she'd get over
This weakness in a few hours, and recover.

And here Juanna kindly interposed,
And said she felt herself extremely well
Where she then was, as her sound sleep disclosed
When all around rang like a tocsin bell:
She did not find herself the least disposed
To quit her gentle partner, and to dwell
Apart from one who had no sin to show,

Save that of dreaming once ‘mal-a-propos.’

As thus Juanna spoke, Dudu turn’d round
And hid her face within Juanna’s breast:
Her neck alone was seen, but that was found
The colour of a budding rose’s crest.
I can’t tell why she blush’d, nor can expound
The mystery of this rupture of their rest;
All that I know is, that the facts I state
Are true as truth has ever been of late.

And so good night to them,—or, if you will,
Good morrow—for the cock had crown, and light
Began to clothe each Asiatic hill,
And the mosque crescent struggled into sight
Of the long caravan, which in the chill
Of dewy dawn wound slowly round each height
That stretches to the stony belt, which girds
Asia, where Kaff looks down upon the Kurds.

With the first ray, or rather grey of morn,
Gulbeyaz rose from restlessness; and pale
As passion rises, with its bosom worn,
Array’d herself with mantle, gem, and veil.
The nightingale that sings with the deep thorn,
Which fable places in her breast of wail,
Is lighter far of heart and voice than those
Whose headlong passions form their proper woes.

And that ’s the moral of this composition,
If people would but see its real drift;—
But that they will not do without suspicion,
Because all gentle readers have the gift
Of closing ’gainst the light their orbs of vision;
While gentle writers also love to lift
Their voices ’gainst each other, which is natural,
The numbers are too great for them to flatter all.

Rose the sultana from a bed of splendour,
  Softer than the soft Sybarite's, who cried
Aloud because his feelings were too tender
  To brook a ruffled rose-leaf by his side,—
So beautiful that art could little mend her,
  Though pale with conflicts between love and pride;—
So agitated was she with her error,
She did not even look into the mirror.

Also arose about the self-same time,
  Perhaps a little later, her great lord,
Master of thirty kingdoms so sublime,
  And of a wife by whom he was abhorr'd;
A thing of much less import in that clime—
  At least to those of incomes which afford
The filling up their whole connubial cargo—
Than where two wives are under an embargo.

He did not think much on the matter, nor
  Indeed on any other: as a man
He liked to have a handsome paramour
  At hand, as one may like to have a fan,
And therefore of Circassians had good store,
  As an amusement after the Divan;
Though an unusual fit of love, or duty,
Had made him lately bask in his bride's beauty.

And now he rose; and after due ablutions
  Exacted by the customs of the East,
And prayers and other pious evolutions,
  He drank six cups of coffee at the least,
And then withdrew to hear about the Russians,
  Whose victories had recently increased
In Catherine's reign, whom glory still adores,
As greatest of all sovereigns and w—s.

But oh, thou grand legitimate Alexander!
  Her son's son, let not this last phrase offend

Thine ear, if it should reach—and now rhymes wander
  Almost as far as Petersburgh and lend
A dreadful impulse to each loud meander
  Of murmuring Liberty's wide waves, which blend
Their roar even with the Baltic's—so you be
Your father's son, 'tis quite enough for me.

To call men love-begotten or proclaim
  Their mothers as the antipodes of Timon,
That hater of mankind, would be a shame,
  A libel, or whate'er you please to rhyme on:
But people's ancestors are history's game;
  And if one lady's slip could leave a crime on
All generations, I should like to know
What pedigree the best would have to show?

Had Catherine and the sultan understood
  Their own true interests, which kings rarely know
Until 'tis taught by lessons rather rude,
  There was a way to end their strife, although
Perhaps precarious, had they but thought good,
  Without the aid of prince or plenipo:
She to dismiss her guards and he his haram,
And for their other matters, meet and share 'em.

But as it was, his Highness had to hold
  His daily council upon ways and means
How to encounter with this martial scold,
  This modern Amazon and queen of queans;
And the perplexity could not be told
  Of all the pillars of the state, which leans
Sometimes a little heavy on the backs
Of those who cannot lay on a new tax.

Meantime Gulbeyaz, when her king was gone,
  Retired into her boudoir, a sweet place
For love or breakfast; private, pleasing, lone,
  And rich with all contrivances which grace

Those gay recesses:—many a precious stone
Sparkled along its roof, and many a vase
Of porcelain held in the fetter'd flowers,
Those captive soothers of a captive's hours.

Mother of pearl, and porphyry, and marble,
Vied with each other on this costly spot;
And singing birds without were heard to warble;
And the stain'd glass which lighted this fair grot
Varied each ray;—but all descriptions garble
The true effect, and so we had better not
Be too minute; an outline is the best,—
A lively reader's fancy does the rest.

And here she summon'd Baba, and required
Don Juan at his hands, and information
Of what had pass'd since all the slaves retired,
And whether he had occupied their station;
If matters had been managed as desired,
And his disguise with due consideration
Kept up; and above all, the where and how
He had pass'd the night, was what she wish'd to know.

Baba, with some embarrassment, replied
To this long catechism of questions, ask'd
More easily than answer'd,—that he had tried
His best to obey in what he had been task'd;
But there seem'd something that he wish'd to hide,
Which hesitation more betray'd than mask'd;
He scratch'd his ear, the infallible resource
To which embarrass'd people have recourse.

Gulbeyaz was no model of true patience,
Nor much disposed to wait in word or deed;
She liked quick answers in all conversations;
And when she saw him stumbling like a steed
In his replies, she puzzled him for fresh ones;
And as his speech grew still more broken-kneed,

Her cheek began to flush, her eyes to sparkle,
And her proud brow's blue veins to swell and darkle.

When Baba saw these symptoms, which he knew
To bode him no great good, he deprecated
Her anger, and beseech'd she'd hear him through—
He could not help the thing which he related:
Then out it came at length, that to Dudu
Juan was given in charge, as hath been stated;
But not by Baba's fault, he said, and swore on
The holy camel's hump, besides the Koran.

The chief dame of the Oda, upon whom
The discipline of the whole haram bore,
As soon as they re-enter'd their own room,
For Baba's function stopt short at the door,
Had settled all; nor could he then presume
(The aforesaid Baba) just then to do more,
Without exciting such suspicion as
Might make the matter still worse than it was.

He hoped, indeed he thought, he could be sure
Juan had not betray'd himself; in fact
'Twas certain that his conduct had been pure,
Because a foolish or imprudent act
Would not alone have made him insecure,
But ended in his being found out and sack'd,
And thrown into the sea.—Thus Baba spoke
Of all save Dudu's dream, which was no joke.

This he discreetly kept in the background,
And talk'd away—and might have talk'd till now,
For any further answer that he found,
So deep an anguish wrung Gulbeyaz' brow:
Her cheek turn'd ashes, ears rung, brain whirl'd round,
As if she had received a sudden blow,
And the heart's dew of pain sprang fast and chilly
O'er her fair front, like Morning's on a lily.

Although she was not of the fainting sort,
Baba thought she would faint, but there he err'd—
It was but a convulsion, which though short
Can never be described; we all have heard,
And some of us have felt thus 'all amort,'
When things beyond the common have occurr'd;—
Gulbeyaz proved in that brief agony
What she could ne'er express—then how should I?

She stood a moment as a Pythoness
Stands on her tripod, agonised, and full
Of inspiration gather'd from distress,
When all the heart-strings like wild horses pull
The heart asunder;—then, as more or less
Their speed abated or their strength grew dull,
She sunk down on her seat by slow degrees,
And bow'd her throbbing head o'er trembling knees.

Her face declined and was unseen; her hair
Fell in long tresses like the weeping willow,
Sweeping the marble underneath her chair,
Or rather sofa (for it was all pillow,
A low soft ottoman), and black despair
Stirr'd up and down her bosom like a billow,
Which rushes to some shore whose shingles check
Its farther course, but must receive its wreck.

Her head hung down, and her long hair in stooping
Conceal'd her features better than a veil;
And one hand o'er the ottoman lay drooping,
White, waxen, and as alabaster pale:
Would that I were a painter! to be grouping
All that a poet drags into detail
O that my words were colours! but their tints
May serve perhaps as outlines or slight hints.

Baba, who knew by experience when to talk

And when to hold his tongue, now held it till
This passion might blow o'er, nor dared to balk
Gulbeyaz' taciturn or speaking will.
At length she rose up, and began to walk
Slowly along the room, but silent still,
And her brow clear'd, but not her troubled eye;
The wind was down, but still the sea ran high.

She stopp'd, and raised her head to speak—but paused,
And then moved on again with rapid pace;
Then slacken'd it, which is the march most caused
By deep emotion:—you may sometimes trace
A feeling in each footstep, as disclosed
By Sallust in his Catiline, who, chased
By all the demons of all passions, show'd
Their work even by the way in which he trode.

Gulbeyaz stopp'd and beckon'd Baba:—'Slave!
Bring the two slaves!' she said in a low tone,
But one which Baba did not like to brave,
And yet he shudder'd, and seem'd rather prone
To prove reluctant, and begg'd leave to crave
(Though he well knew the meaning) to be shown
What slaves her highness wish'd to indicate,
For fear of any error, like the late.

'The Georgian and her paramour,' replied
The imperial bride—and added, 'Let the boat
Be ready by the secret portal's side:
You know the rest.' The words stuck in her throat,
Despite her injured love and fiery pride;
And of this Baba willingly took note,
And begg'd by every hair of Mahomet's beard,
She would revoke the order he had heard.

'To hear is to obey,' he said; 'but still,
Sultana, think upon the consequence:
It is not that I shall not all fulfil

Your orders, even in their severest sense;
But such precipitation may end ill,
Even at your own imperative expense:
I do not mean destruction and exposure,
In case of any premature disclosure;

'But your own feelings. Even should all the rest
Be hidden by the rolling waves, which hide
Already many a once love-beaten breast
Deep in the caverns of the deadly tide—
You love this boyish, new, seraglio guest,
And if this violent remedy be tried—
Excuse my freedom, when I here assure you,
That killing him is not the way to cure you.'

'What dost thou know of love or feeling?—Wretch!
Begone!' she cried, with kindling eyes—'and do
My bidding!' Baba vanish'd, for to stretch
His own remonstrance further he well knew
Might end in acting as his own 'Jack Ketch;'
And though he wish'd extremely to get through
This awkward business without harm to others,
He still preferr'd his own neck to another's.

Away he went then upon his commission,
Growling and grumbling in good Turkish phrase
Against all women of whate'er condition,
Especially sultanas and their ways;
Their obstinacy, pride, and indecision,
Their never knowing their own mind two days,
The trouble that they gave, their immorality,
Which made him daily bless his own neutrality.

And then he call'd his brethren to his aid,
And sent one on a summons to the pair,
That they must instantly be well array'd,
And above all be comb'd even to a hair,
And brought before the empress, who had made

Inquiries after them with kindest care:
At which Dudu look'd strange, and Juan silly;
But go they must at once, and will I—nill I.

And here I leave them at their preparation
For the imperial presence, wherein whether
Gulbeyaz show'd them both commiseration,
Or got rid of the parties altogether,
Like other angry ladies of her nation,—
Are things the turning of a hair or feather
May settle; but far be 't from me to anticipate
In what way feminine caprice may dissipate.

I leave them for the present with good wishes,
Though doubts of their well doing, to arrange
Another part of history; for the dishes
Of this our banquet we must sometimes change;
And trusting Juan may escape the fishes,
Although his situation now seems strange
And scarce secure, as such digressions are fair,
The Muse will take a little touch at warfare.

Don Juan.

CANTO THE SEVENTH.

I.

O Love! O Glory! what are ye who fly 1
Around us ever, rarely to alight?
There's not a meteor in the polar sky
Of such transcendent and more fleeting flight.
Chill, and chain'd to cold earth, we lift on high
Our eyes in search of either lovely light;
A thousand and a thousand colours they
Assume, then leave us on our freezing way.

II.

And such as they are, such my present tale is, 2
A non-descript and ever-varying rhyme,
A versified Aurora Borealis,
Which flashes o'er a waste and icy clime.
When we know what all are, we must bewail us,
But ne'ertheless I hope it is no crime
To laugh at *all* things—for I wish to know
What, after *all*, are *all* things—but a *show*?

III.

They accuse me—*Me*—the present writer of 3
The present poem—of—I know not what—
A tendency to under-rate and scoff
At human power and virtue, and all that;
And this they say in language rather rough.
Good God! I wonder what they would be at!
I say no more than hath been said in Dante's
Verse, and by Solomon and by Cervantes;

IV.

By Swift, by Machiavel, by Rochefoucault, 4
By Fenelon, by Luther, and by Plato;
By Tillotson, and Wesley, and Rousseau,
Who knew this life was not worth a potatoe.
'Tis not their fault, nor mine, if this be so—
For my part, I pretend not to be Cato,
Nor even Diogenes.—We live and die,
But which is best, you know no more than I.

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  Around us ever, rarely to alight?
There's not a meteor in the polar sky
  Of such transcendent and more fleeting flight.
Chill, and chain'd to cold earth, we lift on high
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A versified Aurora Borealis,
  Which flashes o'er a waste and icy clime.
When we know what all are, we must bewail us,
  But ne'ertheless I hope it is no crime
To laugh at all things—for I wish to know
What, after all, are all things—but a show?

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A tendency to under-rate and scoff
  At human power and virtue, and all that;
And this they say in language rather rough.
  Good God! I wonder what they would be at!
I say no more than hath been said in Dante's
Verse, and by Solomon and by Cervantes;

By Swift, by Machiavel, by Rochefoucault,
  By Fenelon, by Luther, and by Plato;
By Tillotson, and Wesley, and Rousseau,
  Who knew this life was not worth a potato.
'Tis not their fault, nor mine, if this be so—

For my part, I pretend not to be Cato,
Nor even Diogenes.—We live and die,
But which is best, you know no more than I.

Socrates said, our only knowledge was
'To know that nothing could be known;' a pleasant
Science enough, which levels to an ass
Each man of wisdom, future, past, or present.
Newton (that proverb of the mind), alas!
Declared, with all his grand discoveries recent,
That he himself felt only'like a youth
Picking up shells by the great ocean—Truth.'

Ecclesiastes said, 'that all is vanity'—
Most modern preachers say the same, or show it
By their examples of true Christianity:
In short, all know, or very soon may know it;
And in this scene of all-confess'd inanity,
By saint, by sage, by preacher, and by poet,
Must I restrain me, through the fear of strife,
From holding up the nothingness of life?

Dogs, or men!—for I flatter you in saying
That ye are dogs—your betters far—ye may
Read, or read not, what I am now essaying
To show ye what ye are in every way.
As little as the moon stops for the baying
Of wolves, will the bright muse withdraw one ray
From out her skies—then howl your idle wrath!
While she still silvers o'er your gloomy path.

'Fierce loves and faithless wars'—I am not sure
If this be the right reading—'tis no matter;
The fact 's about the same, I am secure;
I sing them both, and am about to batter
A town which did a famous siege endure,
And was beleaguer'd both by land and water
By Souvaroff, or Anglice Suwarrow,

Who loved blood as an alderman loves marrow.

The fortress is call'd Ismail, and is placed
  Upon the Danube's left branch and left bank,
With buildings in the Oriental taste,
  But still a fortress of the foremost rank,
Or was at least, unless 'tis since defaced,
  Which with your conquerors is a common prank:
It stands some eighty versts from the high sea,
And measures round of toises thousands three.

Within the extent of this fortification
  A borough is comprised along the height
Upon the left, which from its loftier station
  Commands the city, and upon its site
A Greek had raised around this elevation
  A quantity of palisades upright,
So placed as to impede the fire of those
Who held the place, and to assist the foe's.

This circumstance may serve to give a notion
  Of the high talents of this new Vauban:
But the town ditch below was deep as ocean,
  The rampart higher than you'd wish to hang:
But then there was a great want of precaution
  (Prithee, excuse this engineering slang),
Nor work advanced, nor cover'd way was there,
To hint at least 'Here is no thoroughfare.'

But a stone bastion, with a narrow gorge,
  And walls as thick as most skulls born as yet;
Two batteries, cap-a-pie, as our St. George,
  Case-mated one, and t' other 'a barbette,'
Of Danube's bank took formidable charge;
  While two and twenty cannon duly set
Rose over the town's right side, in bristling tier,
Forty feet high, upon a cavalier.

But from the river the town 's open quite,
   Because the Turks could never be persuaded
A Russian vessel e'er would heave in sight;
   And such their creed was, till they were invaded,
When it grew rather late to set things right.
   But as the Danube could not well be waded,
They look'd upon the Muscovite flotilla,
And only shouted, 'Allah!' and 'Bis Millah!'

The Russians now were ready to attack:
   But oh, ye goddesses of war and glory!
How shall I spell the name of each Cossacque
   Who were immortal, could one tell their story?
Alas! what to their memory can lack?
   Achilles' self was not more grim and gory
Than thousands of this new and polish'd nation,
Whose names want nothing but—pronunciation.

Still I'll record a few, if but to increase
   Our euphony: there was Strongenoff, and Strokonoff,
Meknop, Serge Lwow, Arsniew of modern Greece,
   And Tschitsshakoff, and Roguenoff, and Chokenoff,
And others of twelve consonants apiece;
   And more might be found out, if I could poke enough
Into gazettes; but Fame (capricious strumpet),
It seems, has got an ear as well as trumpet,

And cannot tune those discords of narration,
   Which may be names at Moscow, into rhyme;
Yet there were several worth commemoration,
   As e'er was virgin of a nuptial chime;
Soft words, too, fitted for the peroration
   Of Londonderry drawling against time,
Ending in 'ischskin,' 'ousckin,' 'iffskchy,' 'ouski:
Of whom we can insert but Rousamouski,

Scherematoff and Chrematoff, Koklophti,
   Koclobski, Kourakin, and Mouskin Pouskin,

All proper men of weapons, as e'er scoff'd high
  Against a foe, or ran a sabre through skin:
Little cared they for Mahomet or Mufti,
  Unless to make their kettle-drums a new skin
Out of their hides, if parchment had grown dear,
And no more handy substitute been near.

Then there were foreigners of much renown,
  Of various nations, and all volunteers;
Not fighting for their country or its crown,
  But wishing to be one day brigadiers;
Also to have the sacking of a town,—
  A pleasant thing to young men at their years.
'Mongst them were several Englishmen of pith,
Sixteen call'd Thomson, and nineteen named Smith.

Jack Thomson and Bill Thomson; all the rest
  Had been call'd 'Jemmy,' after the great bard;
I don't know whether they had arms or crest,
  But such a godfather 's as good a card.
Three of the Smiths were Peters; but the best
  Amongst them all, hard blows to inflict or ward,
Was he, since so renown'd 'in country quarters
At Halifax;' but now he served the Tartars.

The rest were Jacks and Gills and Wills and Bills;
  But when I've added that the elder Jack Smith
Was born in Cumberland among the hills,
  And that his father was an honest blacksmith,
I've said all I know of a name that fills
  Three lines of the despatch in taking 'Schmacksmith,'
A village of Moldavia's waste, wherein
He fell, immortal in a bulletin.

I wonder (although Mars no doubt 's a god I
  Praise) if a man's name in a bulletin
May make up for a bullet in his body?
  I hope this little question is no sin,

Because, though I am but a simple noddy,
I think one Shakspeare puts the same thought in
The mouth of some one in his plays so doting,
Which many people pass for wits by quoting.

Then there were Frenchmen, gallant, young, and gay:
But I'm too great a patriot to record
Their Gallic names upon a glorious day;
I'd rather tell ten lies than say a word
Of truth;—such truths are treason; they betray
Their country; and as traitors are abhorr'd
Who name the French in English, save to show
How Peace should make John Bull the Frenchman's foe.

The Russians, having built two batteries on
An isle near Ismail, had two ends in view;
The first was to bombard it, and knock down
The public buildings and the private too,
No matter what poor souls might be undone.
The city's shape suggested this, 'tis true;
Form'd like an amphitheatre, each dwelling
Presented a fine mark to throw a shell in.

The second object was to profit by
The moment of the general consternation,
To attack the Turk's flotilla, which lay nigh
Extremely tranquil, anchor'd at its station:
But a third motive was as probably
To frighten them into capitulation;
A phantasy which sometimes seizes warriors,
Unless they are game as bull-dogs and fox-terriers.

A habit rather blamable, which is
That of despising those we combat with,
Common in many cases, was in this
The cause of killing Tchitchitzkoff and Smith;
One of the valorous 'Smiths' whom we shall miss
Out of those nineteen who late rhymed to 'pith;'

But ’tis a name so spread o’er ‘Sir’ and ‘Madam,’
That one would think the first who bore it ‘Adam.’

The Russian batteries were incomplete,
  Because they were constructed in a hurry;
Thus the same cause which makes a verse want feet,
  And throws a cloud o’er Longman and John Murray,
When the sale of new books is not so fleet
  As they who print them think is necessary,
May likewise put off for a time what story
Sometimes calls ‘murder,’ and at others ‘glory.’

Whether it was their engineer’s stupidity,
  Their haste, or waste, I neither know nor care,
Or some contractor’s personal cupidity,
  Saving his soul by cheating in the ware
Of homicide, but there was no solidity
  In the new batteries erected there;
They either miss’d, or they were never miss’d,
And added greatly to the missing list.

A sad miscalculation about distance
  Made all their naval matters incorrect;
Three fireships lost their amiable existence
  Before they reach’d a spot to take effect:
The match was lit too soon, and no assistance
  Could remedy this lubberly defect;
They blew up in the middle of the river,
While, though ’twas dawn, the Turks slept fast as ever.

At seven they rose, however, and survey’d
  The Russ flotilla getting under way;
’Twas nine, when still advancing undismay’d,
  Within a cable’s length their vessels lay
Off Ismail, and commenced a cannonade,
  Which was return’d with interest, I may say,
And by a fire of musketry and grape,
And shells and shot of every size and shape.

For six hours bore they without intermission
The Turkish fire, and aided by their own
Land batteries, work'd their guns with great precision:
At length they found mere cannonade alone
By no means would produce the town's submission,
And made a signal to retreat at one.
One bark blew up, a second near the works
Running aground, was taken by the Turks.

The Moslem, too, had lost both ships and men;
But when they saw the enemy retire,
Their Delhis mann'd some boats, and sail'd again,
And gall'd the Russians with a heavy fire,
And tried to make a landing on the main;
But here the effect fell short of their desire:
Count Damas drove them back into the water
Pell-mell, and with a whole gazette of slaughter.

'If' (says the historian here) 'I could report
All that the Russians did upon this day,
I think that several volumes would fall short,
And I should still have many things to say;'
And so he says no more—but pays his court
To some distinguish'd strangers in that fray;
The Prince de Ligne, and Langeron, and Damas,
Names great as any that the roll of Fame has.

This being the case, may show us what Fame is:
For out of these three 'preux Chevaliers,' how
Many of common readers give a guess
That such existed? (and they may live now
For aught we know.) Renown 's all hit or miss;
There's fortune even in fame, we must allow.
'Tis true the Memoirs of the Prince de Ligne
Have half withdrawn from him oblivion's screen.

But here are men who fought in gallant actions

As gallantly as ever heroes fought,
But buried in the heap of such transactions
Their names are rarely found, nor often sought.
Thus even good fame may suffer sad contractions,
And is extinguish'd sooner than she ought:
Of all our modern battles, I will bet
You can't repeat nine names from each Gazette.

In short, this last attack, though rich in glory,
Show'd that somewhere, somehow, there was a fault,
And Admiral Ribas (known in Russian story)
Most strongly recommended an assault;
In which he was opposed by young and hoary,
Which made a long debate; but I must halt,
For if I wrote down every warrior's speech,
I doubt few readers e'er would mount the breach.

There was a man, if that he was a man,
Not that his manhood could be call'd in question,
For had he not been Hercules, his span
Had been as short in youth as indigestion
Made his last illness, when, all worn and wan,
He died beneath a tree, as much unblest on
The soil of the green province he had wasted,
As e'er was locust on the land it blasted.

This was Potemkin—a great thing in days
When homicide and harlotry made great;
If stars and titles could entail long praise,
His glory might half equal his estate.
This fellow, being six foot high, could raise
A kind of phantasy proportionate
In the then sovereign of the Russian people,
Who measured men as you would do a steeple.

While things were in abeyance, Ribas sent
A courier to the prince, and he succeeded
In ordering matters after his own bent;

I cannot tell the way in which he pleaded,
But shortly he had cause to be content.
In the mean time, the batteries proceeded,
And fourscore cannon on the Danube's border
Were briskly fired and answer'd in due order.

But on the thirteenth, when already part
Of the troops were embark'd, the siege to raise,
A courier on the spur inspired new heart
Into all panters for newspaper praise,
As well as dilettanti in war's art,
By his despatches couch'd in pithy phrase;
Announcing the appointment of that lover of
Battles to the command, Field-Marshal Souvaroff.

The letter of the prince to the same marshal
Was worthy of a Spartan, had the cause
Been one to which a good heart could be partial—
Defence of freedom, country, or of laws;
But as it was mere lust of power to o'er-arch all
With its proud brow, it merits slight applause,
Save for its style, which said, all in a trice,
'You will take Ismail at whatever price.'

'Let there be light! said God, and there was light!'
'Let there be blood!' says man, and there's a seal
The fiat of this spoil'd child of the Night
(For Day ne'er saw his merits) could decree
More evil in an hour, than thirty bright
Summers could renovate, though they should be
Lovely as those which ripen'd Eden's fruit;
For war cuts up not only branch, but root.

Our friends the Turks, who with loud 'Allahs' now
Began to signalise the Russ retreat,
Were damnably mistaken; few are slow
In thinking that their enemy is beat
(Or beaten, if you insist on grammar, though

I never think about it in a heat),
But here I say the Turks were much mistaken,
Who hating hogs, yet wish'd to save their bacon.

For, on the sixteenth, at full gallop, drew
In sight two horsemen, who were deem'd Cossacques
For some time, till they came in nearer view.
They had but little baggage at their backs,
For there were but three shirts between the two;
But on they rode upon two Ukraine hacks,
Till, in approaching, were at length descried
In this plain pair, Suwarrow and his guide.

'Great joy to London now!' says some great fool,
When London had a grand illumination,
Which to that bottle-conjurer, John Bull,
Is of all dreams the first hallucination;
So that the streets of colour'd lamps are full,
That Sage (said John) surrenders at discretion
His purse, his soul, his sense, and even his nonsense,
To gratify, like a huge moth, this one sense.

'Tis strange that he should farther 'damn his eyes,'
For they are damn'd; that once all-famous oath
Is to the devil now no farther prize,
Since John has lately lost the use of both.
Debt he calls wealth, and taxes Paradise;
And Famine, with her gaunt and bony growth,
Which stare him in the face, he won't examine,
Or swears that Ceres hath begotten Famine.

But to the tale:—great joy unto the camp!
To Russian, Tartar, English, French, Cossacque,
O'er whom Suwarrow shone like a gas lamp,
Presaging a most luminous attack;
Or like a wisp along the marsh so damp,
Which leads beholders on a boggy walk,
He flitted to and fro a dancing light,

Which all who saw it follow'd, wrong or right.

But certes matters took a different face;
   There was enthusiasm and much applause,
The fleet and camp saluted with great grace,
   And all presaged good fortune to their cause.
Within a cannon-shot length of the place
   They drew, constructed ladders, repair'd flaws
In former works, made new, prepared fascines,
And all kinds of benevolent machines.

'Tis thus the spirit of a single mind
   Makes that of multitudes take one direction,
As roll the waters to the breathing wind,
   Or roams the herd beneath the bull's protection;
Or as a little dog will lead the blind,
   Or a bell-wether form the flock's connection
By tinkling sounds, when they go forth to victual;
Such is the sway of your great men o'er little.

The whole camp rung with joy; you would have thought
   That they were going to a marriage feast
(This metaphor, I think, holds good as aught,
   Since there is discord after both at least):
There was not now a luggage boy but sought
   Danger and spoil with ardour much increased;
And why? because a little—odd—old man,
Stript to his shirt, was come to lead the van.

But so it was; and every preparation
   Was made with all alacrity: the first
Detachment of three columns took its station,
   And waited but the signal's voice to burst
Upon the foe: the second's ordination
   Was also in three columns, with a thirst
For glory gaping o'er a sea of slaughter:
The third, in columns two, attack'd by water.

New batteries were erected, and was held
A general council, in which unanimity,
That stranger to most councils, here prevail'd,
As sometimes happens in a great extremity;
And every difficulty being dispell'd,
Glory began to dawn with due sublimity,
While Souvaroff, determined to obtain it,
Was teaching his recruits to use the bayonet

It is an actual fact, that he, commander
In chief, in proper person deign'd to drill
The awkward squad, and could afford to squander
His time, a corporal's duty to fulfil:
Just as you'd break a sucking salamander
To swallow flame, and never take it ill:
He show'd them how to mount a ladder (which
Was not like Jacob's) or to cross a ditch.

Also he dress'd up, for the nonce, fascines
Like men with turbans, scimitars, and dirks,
And made them charge with bayonet these machines,
By way of lesson against actual Turks:
And when well practised in these mimic scenes,
He judged them proper to assail the works;
At which your wise men sneer'd in phrases witty:
He made no answer; but he took the city.

Most things were in this posture on the eve
Of the assault, and all the camp was in
A stern repose; which you would scarce conceive;
Yet men resolved to dash through thick and thin
Are very silent when they once believe
That all is settled:—there was little din,
For some were thinking of their home and friends,
And others of themselves and latter ends.

Suwarrow chiefly was on the alert,
Surveying, drilling, ordering, jesting, pondering;

For the man was, we safely may assert,
  A thing to wonder at beyond most wondering;
Hero, buffoon, half-demon, and half-dirt,
  Praying, instructing, desolating, plundering;
Now Mars, now Momus; and when bent to storm
A fortress, Harlequin in uniform.

The day before the assault, while upon drill—
  For this great conqueror play'd the corporal—
Some Cossacques, hovering like hawks round a hill,
  Had met a party towards the twilight's fall,
One of whom spoke their tongue—or well or ill,
  'Twas much that he was understood at all;
But whether from his voice, or speech, or manner,
They found that he had fought beneath their banner.

Whereon immediately at his request
  They brought him and his comrades to head-quarters;
Their dress was Moslem, but you might have guess'd
  That these were merely masquerading Tartars,
And that beneath each Turkish-fashion'd vest
  Lurk'd Christianity; which sometimes barters
Her inward grace for outward show, and makes
It difficult to shun some strange mistakes.

Suwarrow, who was standing in his shirt
  Before a company of Calmucks, drilling,
Exclaiming, fooling, swearing at the inert,
  And lecturing on the noble art of killing,—
For deeming human clay but common dirt,
  This great philosopher was thus instilling
His maxims, which to martial comprehension
Proved death in battle equal to a pension;—

Suwarrow, when he saw this company
  Of Cossacques and their prey, turn'd round and cast
Upon them his slow brow and piercing eye:—
  'Whence come ye?'—'From Constantinople last,

Captives just now escaped,' was the reply.
'What are ye?'—'What you see us.' Briefly pass'd
This dialogue; for he who answer'd knew
To whom he spoke, and made his words but few.

'Your names?'—'Mine 's Johnson, and my comrade 's Juan;
The other two are women, and the third
Is neither man nor woman.' The chief threw on
The party a slight glance, then said, 'I have heard
Your name before, the second is a new one:
To bring the other three here was absurd:
But let that pass:—I think I have heard your name
In the Nikolaiew regiment?'—'The same.'

'You served at Widdin?'—'Yes.'—'You led the attack?'
'I did.'—'What next?'—'I really hardly know.'
'You were the first i' the breach?'—'I was not slack
At least to follow those who might be so.'
'What follow'd?'—'A shot laid me on my back,
And I became a prisoner to the foe.'
'You shall have vengeance, for the town surrounded
Is twice as strong as that where you were wounded.

'Where will you serve?'—'Where'er you please.'—'I know
You like to be the hope of the forlorn,
And doubtless would be foremost on the foe
After the hardships you've already borne.
And this young fellow—say what can he do?
He with the beardless chin and garments torn?'
'Why, general, if he hath no greater fault
In war than love, he had better lead the assault.'

'He shall if that he dare.' Here Juan bow'd
Low as the compliment deserved. Suwarrow
Continued: 'Your old regiment's allow'd,
By special providence, to lead to-morrow,
Or it may be to-night, the assault: I have vow'd
To several saints, that shortly plough or harrow

Shall pass o'er what was Ismail, and its tusk
Be unimpeded by the proudest mosque.

'So now, my lads, for glory!'—Here he turn'd
And drill'd away in the most classic Russian,
Until each high, heroic bosom burn'd
For cash and conquest, as if from a cushion
A preacher had held forth (who nobly spurn'd
All earthly goods save tithes) and bade them push on
To slay the Pagans who resisted, battering
The armies of the Christian Empress Catherine.

Johnson, who knew by this long colloquy
Himself a favourite, ventured to address
Suwarrow, though engaged with accents high
In his resumed amusement. 'I confess
My debt in being thus allow'd to die
Among the foremost; but if you'd express
Explicitly our several posts, my friend
And self would know what duty to attend.'

'Right! I was busy, and forgot. Why, you
Will join your former regiment, which should be
Now under arms. Ho! Katskoff, take him to
(Here he call'd up a Polish orderly)
His post, I mean the regiment Nikolaiew:
The stranger stripling may remain with me;
He 's a fine boy. The women may be sent
To the other baggage, or to the sick tent.'

But here a sort of scene began to ensue:
The ladies,—who by no means had been bred
To be disposed of in a way so new,
Although their haram education led
Doubtless to that of doctrines the most true,
Passive obedience,—now raised up the head,
With flashing eyes and starting tears, and flung
Their arms, as hens their wings about their young,

O'er the promoted couple of brave men
Who were thus honour'd by the greatest chief
That ever peopled hell with heroes slain,
Or plunged a province or a realm in grief.
O, foolish mortals! Always taught in vain!
O, glorious laurel! since for one sole leaf
Of thine imaginary deathless tree,
Of blood and tears must flow the unebbing sea.

Suwarrow, who had small regard for tears,
And not much sympathy for blood, survey'd
The women with their hair about their ears
And natural agonies, with a slight shade
Of feeling: for however habit sears
Men's hearts against whole millions, when their trade
Is butchery, sometimes a single sorrow
Will touch even heroes—and such was Suwarrow.

He said,—and in the kindest Calmuck tone,—
'Why, Johnson, what the devil do you mean
By bringing women here? They shall be shown
All the attention possible, and seen
In safety to the waggons, where alone
In fact they can be safe. You should have been
Aware this kind of baggage never thrives:
Save wed a year, I hate recruits with wives.'

'May it please your excellency,' thus replied
Our British friend, 'these are the wives of others,
And not our own. I am too qualified
By service with my military brothers
To break the rules by bringing one's own bride
Into a camp: I know that nought so bothers
The hearts of the heroic on a charge,
As leaving a small family at large.

'But these are but two Turkish ladies, who

With their attendant aided our escape,
And afterwards accompanied us through
A thousand perils in this dubious shape.
To me this kind of life is not so new;
To them, poor things, it is an awkward scrape.
I therefore, if you wish me to fight freely,
Request that they may both be used genteelly.'

Meantime these two poor girls, with swimming eyes,
Look'd on as if in doubt if they could trust
Their own protectors; nor was their surprise
Less than their grief (and truly not less just)
To see an old man, rather wild than wise
In aspect, plainly clad, besmear'd with dust,
Stript to his waistcoat, and that not too clean,
More fear'd than all the sultans ever seen.

For every thing seem'd resting on his nod,
As they could read in all eyes. Now to them,
Who were accustom'd, as a sort of god,
To see the sultan, rich in many a gem,
Like an imperial peacock stalk abroad
(That royal bird, whose tail 's a diadem),
With all the pomp of power, it was a doubt
How power could condescend to do without.

John Johnson, seeing their extreme dismay,
Though little versed in feelings oriental,
Suggested some slight comfort in his way:
Don Juan, who was much more sentimental,
Swore they should see him by the dawn of day,
Or that the Russian army should repent all:
And, strange to say, they found some consolation
In this—for females like exaggeration.

And then with tears, and sighs, and some slight kisses,
They parted for the present—these to await,
According to the artillery's hits or misses,

What sages call Chance, Providence, or Fate
(Uncertainty is one of many blisses,
A mortgage on Humanity's estate)—
While their beloved friends began to arm,
To burn a town which never did them harm.

Suwarrow,—who but saw things in the gross,
Being much too gross to see them in detail,
Who calculated life as so much dross,
And as the wind a widow'd nation's wail,
And cared as little for his army's loss
(So that their efforts should at length prevail)
As wife and friends did for the boils of Job,—
What was 't to him to hear two women sob?

Nothing.—The work of glory still went on
In preparations for a cannonade
As terrible as that of Ilion,
If Homer had found mortars ready made;
But now, instead of slaying Priam's son,
We only can but talk of escalade,
Bombs, drums, guns, bastions, batteries, bayonets, bullets,—
Hard words, which stick in the soft Muses' gullets.

O, thou eternal Homer! who couldst charm
All ears, though long; all ages, though so short,
By merely wielding with poetic arm
Arms to which men will never more resort,
Unless gunpowder should be found to harm
Much less than is the hope of every court,
Which now is leagued young Freedom to annoy;
But they will not find Liberty a Troy:—

O, thou eternal Homer! I have now
To paint a siege, wherein more men were slain,
With deadlier engines and a speedier blow,
Than in thy Greek gazette of that campaign;
And yet, like all men else, I must allow,

To vie with thee would be about as vain
As for a brook to cope with ocean's flood;
But still we moderns equal you in blood;

If not in poetry, at least in fact;
And fact is truth, the grand desideratum!
Of which, howe'er the Muse describes each act,
There should be ne'ertheless a slight substratum.
But now the town is going to be attack'd;
Great deeds are doing—how shall I relate 'em?
Souls of immortal generals! Phoebus watches
To colour up his rays from your despatches.

O, ye great bulletins of Bonaparte!
O, ye less grand long lists of kill'd and wounded!
Shade of Leonidas, who fought so hearty,
When my poor Greece was once, as now, surrounded!
O, Caesar's Commentaries! now impart, ye
Shadows of glory! (lest I be confounded)
A portion of your fading twilight hues,
So beautiful, so fleeting, to the Muse.

When I call 'fading' martial immortality,
I mean, that every age and every year,
And almost every day, in sad reality,
Some sucking hero is compell'd to rear,
Who, when we come to sum up the totality
Of deeds to human happiness most dear,
Turns out to be a butcher in great business,
Afflicting young folks with a sort of dizziness.

Medals, rank, ribands, lace, embroidery, scarlet,
Are things immortal to immortal man,
As purple to the Babylonian harlot:
An uniform to boys is like a fan
To women; there is scarce a crimson varlet
But deems himself the first in Glory's van.
But Glory's glory; and if you would find

What that is—ask the pig who sees the wind!

At least he feels it, and some say he sees,
  Because he runs before it like a pig;
Or, if that simple sentence should displease,
  Say, that he scuds before it like a brig,
A schooner, or—but it is time to ease
  This Canto, ere my Muse perceives fatigue.
The next shall ring a peal to shake all people,
Like a bob-major from a village steeple.

Hark! through the silence of the cold, dull night,
  The hum of armies gathering rank on rank!
Lo! dusky masses steal in dubious sight
  Along the leaguer'd wall and bristling bank
Of the arm'd river, while with straggling light
  The stars peep through the vapours dim and dank,
Which curl in curious wreaths:—how soon the smoke
Of Hell shall pall them in a deeper cloak!

Here pause we for the present—as even then
  That awful pause, dividing life from death,
Struck for an instant on the hearts of men,
  Thousands of whom were drawing their last breath!
A moment—and all will be life again!
  The march! the charge! the shouts of either faith!
Hurra! and Allah! and—one moment more,
The death-cry drowning in the battle's roar.

Don Juan.

CANTO THE EIGHTH.

I.

Oh! blood and thunder! and Oh! blood and wounds! 1
These are but vulgar oaths, as you may deem,
Too gentle reader; and most shocking sounds:
And so they are; yet thus is Glory's dream
Unriddled, and as my true Muse expounds
At present such things: since they are her theme,
So be they her inspirers! Call them Mars,
Bellona, what you will—they mean but wars.

II.

All was prepar'd—the fire, the sword, the men 2
To wield them in their terrible array:
The army, like a lion from his den,
March'd forth with nerve and sinews bent to slay,—
A human Hydra, issuing from its fen
To breathe destruction on its winding way,
Whose heads were heroes, which, cut off in vain,
Immediately in others grew again.

III.

History can only take things in the gross; 3
But could we know them in detail, perchance
In balancing the profit and the loss,
War's merit it by no means might enhance,
To waste so much gold for a little dross,
As hath been done, mere conquest to advance:
The drying up a single tear has more
Of honest fame, than shedding seas of gore.

IV.

And why? Because it brings self-approbation; 4
Whereas the other, after all its glare,
Shouts, bridges, arches, pensions from a nation,
Which (it may be) has not much left to spare,
A higher title, or a loftier station,
Though they may make Corruption gape or stare,
Yet, in the end, except in Freedom's battles,
Are nothing but a child of Murder's rattles.

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Are nothing but a child of Murder's rattles.

And such they are—and such they will be found:
Not so Leonidas and Washington,
Whose every battle-field is holy ground,
Which breathes of nations saved, not worlds undone.
How sweetly on the ear such echoes sound!
While the mere victor's may appal or stun
The servile and the vain, such names will be
A watchword till the future shall be free.

The night was dark, and the thick mist allow'd
Nought to be seen save the artillery's flame,
Which arch'd the horizon like a fiery cloud,
And in the Danube's waters shone the same—
A mirror'd hell! the volleying roar, and loud
Long booming of each peal on peal, o'ercame
The ear far more than thunder; for Heaven's flashes
Spare, or smite rarely—man's make millions ashes!

The column order'd on the assault scarce pass'd
Beyond the Russian batteries a few toises,
When up the bristling Moslem rose at last,
Answering the Christian thunders with like voices:
Then one vast fire, air, earth, and stream embraced,
Which rock'd as 'twere beneath the mighty noises;
While the whole rampart blazed like Etna, when
The restless Titan hiccups in his den.

And one enormous shout of 'Allah!' rose
In the same moment, loud as even the roar
Of war's most mortal engines, to their foes
Hurling defiance: city, stream, and shore
Resounded 'Allah!' and the clouds which close
With thick'ning canopy the conflict o'er,
Vibrate to the Eternal name. Hark! through

All sounds it pierceth ‘Allah! Allah! Hu!’

The columns were in movement one and all,
   But of the portion which attack’d by water,
Thicker than leaves the lives began to fall,
   Though led by Arseniew, that great son of slaughter,
As brave as ever faced both bomb and ball.
   ‘Carnage’ (so Wordsworth tells you) ‘is God’s daughter:’
If he speak truth, she is Christ’s sister, and
Just now behaved as in the Holy Land.

The Prince de Ligne was wounded in the knee;
   Count Chapeau-Bras, too, had a ball between
His cap and head, which proves the head to be
   Aristocratic as was ever seen,
Because it then received no injury
   More than the cap; in fact, the ball could mean
No harm unto a right legitimate head:
‘Ashes to ashes’—why not lead to lead?

Also the General Markow, Brigadier,
   Insisting on removal of the prince
Amidst some groaning thousands dying near,—
   All common fellows, who might writhe and wince,
And shriek for water into a deaf ear,—
   The General Markow, who could thus evince
His sympathy for rank, by the same token,
To teach him greater, had his own leg broken.

Three hundred cannon threw up their emetic,
   And thirty thousand muskets flung their pills
Like hail, to make a bloody diuretic.
   Mortality! thou hast thy monthly bills;
Thy plagues, thy famines, thy physicians, yet tick,
   Like the death-watch, within our ears the ills
Past, present, and to come;—but all may yield
To the true portrait of one battle-field.

There the still varying pangs, which multiply
Until their very number makes men hard
By the infinities of agony,
Which meet the gaze whate'er it may regard—
The groan, the roll in dust, the all-white eye
Turn'd back within its socket,—these reward
Your rank and file by thousands, while the rest
May win perhaps a riband at the breast!

Yet I love glory;—glory 's a great thing:—
Think what it is to be in your old age
Maintain'd at the expense of your good king:
A moderate pension shakes full many a sage,
And heroes are but made for bards to sing,
Which is still better; thus in verse to wage
Your wars eternally, besides enjoying
Half-pay for life, make mankind worth destroying.

The troops, already disembark'd, push'd on
To take a battery on the right; the others,
Who landed lower down, their landing done,
Had set to work as briskly as their brothers:
Being grenadiers, they mounted one by one,
Cheerful as children climb the breasts of mothers,
O'er the entrenchment and the palisade,
Quite orderly, as if upon parade.

And this was admirable; for so hot
The fire was, that were red Vesuvius loaded,
Besides its lava, with all sorts of shot
And shells or hells, it could not more have goaded.
Of officers a third fell on the spot,
A thing which victory by no means boded
To gentlemen engaged in the assault:
Hounds, when the huntsman tumbles, are at fault.

But here I leave the general concern,
To track our hero on his path of fame:

He must his laurels separately earn;
   For fifty thousand heroes, name by name,
Though all deserving equally to turn
   A couplet, or an elegy to claim,
Would form a lengthy lexicon of glory,
And what is worse still, a much longer story:

And therefore we must give the greater number
   To the Gazette—which doubtless fairly dealt
By the deceased, who lie in famous slumber
   In ditches, fields, or wheresoe'er they felt
Their clay for the last time their souls encumber;—
   Thrice happy he whose name has been well spelt
In the despatch: I knew a man whose loss
Was printed Grove, although his name was Grose.

Juan and Johnson join'd a certain corps,
   And fought away with might and main, not knowing
The way which they had never trod before,
   And still less guessing where they might be going;
But on they march'd, dead bodies trampling o'er,
   Firing, and thrusting, slashing, sweating, glowing,
But fighting thoughtlessly enough to win,
To their two selves, one whole bright bulletin.

Thus on they wallow'd in the bloody mire
   Of dead and dying thousands,—sometimes gaining
A yard or two of ground, which brought them nigher
   To some odd angle for which all were straining;
At other times, repulsed by the close fire,
   Which really pour'd as if all hell were raining
Instead of heaven, they stumbled backwards o'er
A wounded comrade, sprawling in his gore.

Though 'twas Don Juan's first of fields, and though
   The nightly muster and the silent march
In the chill dark, when courage does not glow
   So much as under a triumphal arch,

Perhaps might make him shiver, yawn, or throw
A glance on the dull clouds (as thick as starch,
Which stiffen'd heaven) as if he wish'd for day;—
Yet for all this he did not run away.

Indeed he could not. But what if he had?
There have been and are heroes who begun
With something not much better, or as bad:
Frederic the Great from Molwitz deign'd to run,
For the first and last time; for, like a pad,
Or hawk, or bride, most mortals after one
Warm bout are broken into their new tricks,
And fight like fiends for pay or politics.

He was what Erin calls, in her sublime
Old Erse or Irish, or it may be Punic
(The antiquarians who can settle time,
Which settles all things, Roman, Greek, or Runic,
Swear that Pat's language sprung from the same clime
With Hannibal, and wears the Tyrian tunic
Of Dido's alphabet; and this is rational
As any other notion, and not national);—

But Juan was quite 'a broth of a boy,'
A thing of impulse and a child of song;
Now swimming in the sentiment of joy,
Or the sensation (if that phrase seem wrong),
And afterward, if he must needs destroy,
In such good company as always throng
To battles, sieges, and that kind of pleasure,
No less delighted to employ his leisure;

But always without malice: if he warr'd
Or loved, it was with what we call 'the best
Intentions,' which form all mankind's trump card,
To be produced when brought up to the test.
The statesman, hero, harlot, lawyer—ward
Off each attack, when people are in quest

Of their designs, by saying they meant well;
'Tis pity 'that such meaning should pave hell.'

I almost lately have begun to doubt
Whether hell's pavement—if it be so paved—
Must not have latterly been quite worn out,
Not by the numbers good intent hath saved,
But by the mass who go below without
Those ancient good intentions, which once shaved
And smooth'd the brimstone of that street of hell
Which bears the greatest likeness to Pall Mall.

Juan, by some strange chance, which oft divides
Warrior from warrior in their grim career,
Like chastest wives from constant husbands' sides
Just at the close of the first bridal year,
By one of those odd turns of Fortune's tides,
Was on a sudden rather puzzled here,
When, after a good deal of heavy firing,
He found himself alone, and friends retiring.

I don't know how the thing occurr'd—it might
Be that the greater part were kill'd or wounded,
And that the rest had faced unto the right
About; a circumstance which has confounded
Caesar himself, who, in the very sight
Of his whole army, which so much abounded
In courage, was obliged to snatch a shield,
And rally back his Romans to the field.

Juan, who had no shield to snatch, and was
No Caesar, but a fine young lad, who fought
He knew not why, arriving at this pass,
Stopp'd for a minute, as perhaps he ought
For a much longer time; then, like an ass
(Start not, kind reader; since great Homer thought
This simile enough for Ajax, Juan
Perhaps may find it better than a new one)—

Then, like an ass, he went upon his way,
   And, what was stranger, never look'd behind;
But seeing, flashing forward, like the day
   Over the hills, a fire enough to blind
Those who dislike to look upon a fray,
   He stumbled on, to try if he could find
A path, to add his own slight arm and forces
To corps, the greater part of which were corses.

Perceiving then no more the commandant
   Of his own corps, nor even the corps, which had
Quite disappear'd—the gods know how! (I can't
   Account for every thing which may look bad
In history; but we at least may grant
   It was not marvellous that a mere lad,
In search of glory, should look on before,
Nor care a pinch of snuff about his corps):—

Perceiving nor commander nor commanded,
   And left at large, like a young heir, to make
His way to—where he knew not—single handed;
   As travellers follow over bog and brake
An 'ignis fatuus;' or as sailors stranded
   Unto the nearest hut themselves betake;
So Juan, following honour and his nose,
Rush'd where the thickest fire announced most foes.

He knew not where he was, nor greatly cared,
   For he was dizzy, busy, and his veins
Fill'd as with lightning—for his spirit shared
   The hour, as is the case with lively brains;
And where the hottest fire was seen and heard,
   And the loud cannon peal'd his hoarsest strains,
He rush'd, while earth and air were sadly shaken
By thy humane discovery, Friar Bacon!

And as he rush'd along, it came to pass he

Fell in with what was late the second column,
Under the orders of the General Lascy,
But now reduced, as is a bulky volume
Into an elegant extract (much less massy)
Of heroism, and took his place with solemn
Air 'midst the rest, who kept their valiant faces
And levell'd weapons still against the glacis.

Just at this crisis up came Johnson too,
Who had 'retreated,' as the phrase is when
Men run away much rather than go through
Destruction's jaws into the devil's den;
But Johnson was a clever fellow, who
Knew when and how 'to cut and come again,'
And never ran away, except when running
Was nothing but a valorous kind of cunning.

And so, when all his corps were dead or dying,
Except Don Juan, a mere novice, whose
More virgin valour never dreamt of flying
From ignorance of danger, which indues
Its votaries, like innocence relying
On its own strength, with careless nerves and thews,—
Johnson retired a little, just to rally
Those who catch cold in 'shadows of Death's valley.'

And there, a little shelter'd from the shot,
Which rain'd from bastion, battery, parapet,
Rampart, wall, casement, house,—for there was not
In this extensive city, sore beset
By Christian soldiery, a single spot
Which did not combat like the devil, as yet,
He found a number of Chasseurs, all scatter'd
By the resistance of the chase they batter'd.

And these he call'd on; and, what 's strange, they came
Unto his call, unlike 'the spirits from
The vasty deep,' to whom you may exclaim,

Says Hotspur, long ere they will leave their home.
Their reasons were uncertainty, or shame
At shrinking from a bullet or a bomb,
And that odd impulse, which in wars or creeds
Makes men, like cattle, follow him who leads.

By Jove! he was a noble fellow, Johnson,
And though his name, than Ajax or Achilles,
Sounds less harmonious, underneath the sun soon
We shall not see his likeness: he could kill his
Man quite as quietly as blows the monsoon
Her steady breath (which some months the same still is):
Seldom he varied feature, hue, or muscle,
And could be very busy without bustle;

And therefore, when he ran away, he did so
Upon reflection, knowing that behind
He would find others who would fain be rid so
Of idle apprehensions, which like wind
Trouble heroic stomachs. Though their lids so
Oft are soon closed, all heroes are not blind,
But when they light upon immediate death,
Retire a little, merely to take breath.

But Johnson only ran off, to return
With many other warriors, as we said,
Unto that rather somewhat misty bourn,
Which Hamlet tells us is a pass of dread.
To Jack howe'er this gave but slight concern:
His soul (like galvanism upon the dead)
Acted upon the living as on wire,
And led them back into the heaviest fire.

Egad! they found the second time what they
The first time thought quite terrible enough
To fly from, malgré all which people say
Of glory, and all that immortal stuff
Which fills a regiment (besides their pay,

That daily shilling which makes warriors tough)—
They found on their return the self-same welcome,
Which made some think, and others know, a hell come.

They fell as thick as harvests beneath hail,
Grass before scythes, or corn below the sickle,
Proving that trite old truth, that life 's as frail
As any other boon for which men stickle.
The Turkish batteries thrash'd them like a flail,
Or a good boxer, into a sad pickle
Putting the very bravest, who were knock'd
Upon the head, before their guns were cock'd.

The Turks, behind the traverses and flanks
Of the next bastion, fired away like devils,
And swept, as gales sweep foam away, whole ranks:
However, Heaven knows how, the Fate who levels
Towns, nations, worlds, in her revolving pranks,
So order'd it, amidst these sulphury revels,
That Johnson and some few who had not scamper'd,
Reach'd the interior talus of the rampart.

First one or two, then five, six, and a dozen,
Came mounting quickly up, for it was now
All neck or nothing, as, like pitch or rosin,
Flame was shower'd forth above, as well 's below,
So that you scarce could say who best had chosen,
The gentlemen that were the first to show
Their martial faces on the parapet,
Or those who thought it brave to wait as yet.

But those who scaled, found out that their advance
Was favour'd by an accident or blunder:
The Greek or Turkish Cohorn's ignorance
Had palisado'd in a way you'd wonder
To see in forts of Netherlands or France
(Though these to our Gibraltar must knock under)—
Right in the middle of the parapet

Just named, these palisades were primly set:

So that on either side some nine or ten
Paces were left, whereon you could contrive
To march; a great convenience to our men,
At least to all those who were left alive,
Who thus could form a line and fight again;
And that which farther aided them to strive
Was, that they could kick down the palisades,
Which scarcely rose much higher than grass blades.

Among the first,—I will not say the first,
For such precedence upon such occasions
Will oftentimes make deadly quarrels burst
Out between friends as well as allied nations:
The Briton must be bold who really durst
Put to such trial John Bull's partial patience,
As say that Wellington at Waterloo
Was beaten—though the Prussians say so too;—

And that if Blucher, Bulow, Gneisenau,
And God knows who besides in 'au' and 'ow,'
Had not come up in time to cast an awe
Into the hearts of those who fought till now
As tigers combat with an empty craw,
The Duke of Wellington had ceased to show
His orders, also to receive his pensions,
Which are the heaviest that our history mentions.

But never mind;—'God save the king!' and kings!
For if he don't, I doubt if men will longer—
I think I hear a little bird, who sings
The people by and by will be the stronger:
The veriest jade will wince whose harness wrings
So much into the raw as quite to wrong her
Beyond the rules of posting,—and the mob
At last fall sick of imitating Job.

At first it grumbles, then it swears, and then,
  Like David, flings smooth pebbles 'gainst a giant;
At last it takes to weapons such as men
  Snatch when despair makes human hearts less pliant.
Then comes 'the tug of war;'—'twill come again,
  I rather doubt; and I would fain say 'fie on 't,'
If I had not perceived that revolution
Alone can save the earth from hell's pollution.

But to continue:—I say not the first,
  But of the first, our little friend Don Juan
Walk'd o'er the walls of Ismail, as if nursed
  Amidst such scenes—though this was quite a new one
To him, and I should hope to most. The thirst
  Of glory, which so pierces through and through one,
Pervaded him—although a generous creature,
As warm in heart as feminine in feature.

And here he was—who upon woman's breast,
  Even from a child, felt like a child; howe'er
The man in all the rest might be confest,
  To him it was Elysium to be there;
And he could even withstand that awkward test
  Which Rousseau points out to the dubious fair,
'Observe your lover when he leaves your arms;'
But Juan never left them, while they had charms,

Unless compell'd by fate, or wave, or wind,
  Or near relations, who are much the same.
But here he was!—where each tie that can bind
  Humanity must yield to steel and flame:
And he whose very body was all mind,
  Flung here by fate or circumstance, which tame
The loftiest, hurried by the time and place,
Dash'd on like a spurr'd blood-horse in a race.

So was his blood stirr'd while he found resistance,
  As is the hunter's at the five-bar gate,

Or double post and rail, where the existence
Of Britain's youth depends upon their weight,
The lightest being the safest: at a distance
He hated cruelty, as all men hate
Blood, until heated—and even then his own
At times would curdle o'er some heavy groan.

The General Lascy, who had been hard press'd,
Seeing arrive an aid so opportune
As were some hundred youngsters all abreast,
Who came as if just dropp'd down from the moon,
To Juan, who was nearest him, address'd
His thanks, and hopes to take the city soon,
Not reckoning him to be a 'base Bezonian'
(As Pistol calls it), but a young Livonian.

Juan, to whom he spoke in German, knew
As much of German as of Sanscrit, and
In answer made an inclination to
The general who held him in command;
For seeing one with ribands, black and blue,
Stars, medals, and a bloody sword in hand,
Addressing him in tones which seem'd to thank,
He recognised an officer of rank.

Short speeches pass between two men who speak
No common language; and besides, in time
Of war and taking towns, when many a shriek
Rings o'er the dialogue, and many a crime
Is perpetrated ere a word can break
Upon the ear, and sounds of horror chime
In like church-bells, with sigh, howl, groan, yell, prayer,
There cannot be much conversation there.

And therefore all we have related in
Two long octaves, pass'd in a little minute;
But in the same small minute, every sin
Contrived to get itself comprised within it.

The very cannon, deafen'd by the din,
  Grew dumb, for you might almost hear a linnet,
As soon as thunder, 'midst the general noise
Of human nature's agonising voice!

The town was enter'd. Oh eternity!—
  'God made the country and man made the town,'
So Cowper says—and I begin to be
  Of his opinion, when I see cast down
Rome, Babylon, Tyre, Carthage, Nineveh,
  All walls men know, and many never known;
And pondering on the present and the past,
To deem the woods shall be our home at last

Of all men, saving Sylla the man-slayer,
  Who passes for in life and death most lucky,
Of the great names which in our faces stare,
  The General Boon, back-woodsman of Kentucky,
Was happiest amongst mortals anywhere;
  For killing nothing but a bear or buck, he
Enjoy'd the lonely, vigorous, harmless days
Of his old age in wilds of deepest maze.

Crime came not near him—she is not the child
  Of solitude; Health shrank not from him—for
Her home is in the rarely trodden wild,
  Where if men seek her not, and death be more
Their choice than life, forgive them, as beguiled
  By habit to what their own hearts abhor—
In cities caged. The present case in point I
Cite is, that Boon lived hunting up to ninety;

And what 's still stranger, left behind a name
  For which men vainly decimate the throng,
Not only famous, but of that good fame,
  Without which glory 's but a tavern song—
Simple, serene, the antipodes of shame,
  Which hate nor envy e'er could tinge with wrong;

An active hermit, even in age the child
Of Nature, or the man of Ross run wild.

'Tis true he shrank from men even of his nation,
When they built up unto his darling trees,—
He moved some hundred miles off, for a station
Where there were fewer houses and more ease;
The inconvenience of civilisation
Is, that you neither can be pleased nor please;
But where he met the individual man,
He show'd himself as kind as mortal can.

He was not all alone: around him grew
A sylvan tribe of children of the chase,
Whose young, unwaken'd world was ever new,
Nor sword nor sorrow yet had left a trace
On her unwrinkled brow, nor could you view
A frown on Nature's or on human face;
The free-born forest found and kept them free,
And fresh as is a torrent or a tree.

And tall, and strong, and swift of foot were they,
Beyond the dwarfing city's pale abortions,
Because their thoughts had never been the prey
Of care or gain: the green woods were their portions;
No sinking spirits told them they grew grey,
No fashion made them apes of her distortions;
Simple they were, not savage; and their rifles,
Though very true, were not yet used for trifles.

Motion was in their days, rest in their slumbers,
And cheerfulness the handmaid of their toil;
Nor yet too many nor too few their numbers;
Corruption could not make their hearts her soil;
The lust which stings, the splendour which encumbers,
With the free foresters divide no spoil;
Serene, not sullen, were the solitudes
Of this unsighing people of the woods.

So much for Nature:—by way of variety,
Now back to thy great joys, Civilisation!
And the sweet consequence of large society,
War, pestilence, the despot's desolation,
The kingly scourge, the lust of notoriety,
The millions slain by soldiers for their ration,
The scenes like Catherine's boudoir at threescore,
With Ismail's storm to soften it the more.

The town was enter'd: first one column made
Its sanguinary way good—then another;
The reeking bayonet and the flashing blade
Clash'd 'gainst the scimitar, and babe and mother
With distant shrieks were heard Heaven to upbraid:
Still closer sulphury clouds began to smother
The breath of morn and man, where foot by foot
The madden'd Turks their city still dispute.

Koutousow, he who afterward beat back
(With some assistance from the frost and snow)
Napoleon on his bold and bloody track,
It happen'd was himself beat back just now;
He was a jolly fellow, and could crack
His jest alike in face of friend or foe,
Though life, and death, and victory were at stake;
But here it seem'd his jokes had ceased to take:

For having thrown himself into a ditch,
Follow'd in haste by various grenadiers,
Whose blood the puddle greatly did enrich,
He climb'd to where the parapet appears;
But there his project reach'd its utmost pitch
('Mongst other deaths the General Ribaupierre's
Was much regretted), for the Moslem men
Threw them all down into the ditch again.

And had it not been for some stray troops landing

They knew not where, being carried by the stream
To some spot, where they lost their understanding,
And wander'd up and down as in a dream,
Until they reach'd, as daybreak was expanding,
That which a portal to their eyes did seem,—
The great and gay Koutousow might have lain
Where three parts of his column yet remain.

And scrambling round the rampart, these same troops,
After the taking of the 'Cavalier,'
Just as Koutousow's most 'forlorn' of 'hopes'
Took like chameleons some slight tinge of fear,
Open'd the gate call'd 'Kilia,' to the groups
Of baffled heroes, who stood shyly near,
Sliding knee-deep in lately frozen mud,
Now thaw'd into a marsh of human blood.

The Kozacks, or, if so you please, Cossacques
(I don't much pique myself upon orthography,
So that I do not grossly err in facts,
Statistics, tactics, politics, and geography)—
Having been used to serve on horses' backs,
And no great dilettanti in topography
Of fortresses, but fighting where it pleases
Their chiefs to order,—were all cut to pieces.

Their column, though the Turkish batteries thunder'd
Upon them, ne'ertheless had reach'd the rampart,
And naturally thought they could have plunder'd
The city, without being farther hamper'd;
But as it happens to brave men, they blunder'd—
The Turks at first pretended to have scamper'd,
Only to draw them 'twixt two bastion corners,
From whence they sallied on those Christian scorners.

Then being taken by the tail—a taking
Fatal to bishops as to soldiers—these
Cossacques were all cut off as day was breaking,

And found their lives were let at a short lease—
But perish'd without shivering or shaking,
Leaving as ladders their heap'd carcasses,
O'er which Lieutenant-Colonel Yesouskoi
March'd with the brave battalion of Polouzki:—

This valiant man kill'd all the Turks he met,
But could not eat them, being in his turn
Slain by some Mussulmans, who would not yet,
Without resistance, see their city burn.
The walls were won, but 'twas an even bet
Which of the armies would have cause to mourn:
'Twas blow for blow, disputing inch by inch,
For one would not retreat, nor t' other flinch.

Another column also suffer'd much:—
And here we may remark with the historian,
You should but give few cartridges to such
Troops as are meant to march with greatest glory on:
When matters must be carried by the touch
Of the bright bayonet, and they all should hurry on,
They sometimes, with a hankering for existence,
Keep merely firing at a foolish distance.

A junction of the General Meknop's men
(Without the General, who had fallen some time
Before, being badly seconded just then)
Was made at length with those who dared to climb
The death-disgorging rampart once again;
And though the Turk's resistance was sublime,
They took the bastion, which the Seraskier
Defended at a price extremely dear.

Juan and Johnson, and some volunteers,
Among the foremost, offer'd him good quarter,
A word which little suits with Seraskiers,
Or at least suited not this valiant Tartar.
He died, deserving well his country's tears,

A savage sort of military martyr.
An English naval officer, who wish'd
To make him prisoner, was also dish'd:

For all the answer to his proposition
Was from a pistol-shot that laid him dead;
On which the rest, without more intermission,
Began to lay about with steel and lead—
The pious metals most in requisition
On such occasions: not a single head
Was spared;—three thousand Moslems perish'd here,
And sixteen bayonets pierced the Seraskier.

The city 's taken—only part by part—
And death is drunk with gore: there's not a street
Where fights not to the last some desperate heart
For those for whom it soon shall cease to beat.
Here War forgot his own destructive art
In more destroying Nature; and the heat
Of carnage, like the Nile's sun-sodden slime,
Engender'd monstrous shapes of every crime.

A Russian officer, in martial tread
Over a heap of bodies, felt his heel
Seized fast, as if 'twere by the serpent's head
Whose fangs Eve taught her human seed to feel:
In vain he kick'd, and swore, and writhed, and bled,
And howl'd for help as wolves do for a meal—
The teeth still kept their gratifying hold,
As do the subtle snakes described of old.

A dying Moslem, who had felt the foot
Of a foe o'er him, snatch'd at it, and bit
The very tendon which is most acute
(That which some ancient Muse or modern wit
Named after thee, Achilles), and quite through 't
He made the teeth meet, nor relinquish'd it
Even with his life—for (but they lie) 'tis said

To the live leg still clung the sever'd head.

However this may be, 'tis pretty sure
  The Russian officer for life was lamed,
For the Turk's teeth stuck faster than a skewer,
  And left him 'midst the invalid and maim'd:
The regimental surgeon could not cure
  His patient, and perhaps was to be blamed
More than the head of the inveterate foe,
Which was cut off, and scarce even then let go.

But then the fact 's a fact—and 'tis the part
  Of a true poet to escape from fiction
Whene'er he can; for there is little art
  In leaving verse more free from the restriction
Of truth than prose, unless to suit the mart
  For what is sometimes called poetic diction,
And that outrageous appetite for lies
Which Satan angles with for souls, like flies.

The city 's taken, but not render'd!—No!
  There's not a Moslem that hath yielded sword:
The blood may gush out, as the Danube's flow
  Rolls by the city wall; but deed nor word
Acknowledge aught of dread of death or foe:
  In vain the yell of victory is roar'd
By the advancing Muscovite—the groan
Of the last foe is echoed by his own.

The bayonet pierces and the sabre cleaves,
  And human lives are lavish'd everywhere,
As the year closing whirls the scarlet leaves
  When the stripp'd forest bows to the bleak air,
And groans; and thus the peopled city grieves,
  Shorn of its best and loveliest, and left bare;
But still it falls in vast and awful splinters,
As oaks blown down with all their thousand winters.

It is an awful topic—but 'tis not
   My cue for any time to be terrific:
For checker'd as is seen our human lot
   With good, and bad, and worse, alike prolific
Of melancholy merriment, to quote
   Too much of one sort would be soporific;—
Without, or with, offence to friends or foes,
I sketch your world exactly as it goes.

And one good action in the midst of crimes
   Is 'quite refreshing,' in the affected phrase
Of these ambrosial, Pharisaic times,
   With all their pretty milk-and-water ways,
And may serve therefore to bedew these rhymes,
   A little scorch'd at present with the blaze
Of conquest and its consequences, which
Make epic poesy so rare and rich.

Upon a taken bastion, where there lay
   Thousands of slaughter'd men, a yet warm group
Of murder'd women, who had found their way
   To this vain refuge, made the good heart droop
And shudder;—while, as beautiful as May,
   A female child of ten years tried to stoop
And hide her little palpitating breast
Amidst the bodies lull'd in bloody rest.

Two villainous Cossacques pursued the child
   With flashing eyes and weapons: match'd with them,
The rudest brute that roams Siberia's wild
   Has feelings pure and polish'd as a gem,—
The bear is civilised, the wolf is mild;
   And whom for this at last must we condemn?
Their natures? or their sovereigns, who employ
All arts to teach their subjects to destroy?

Their sabres glitter'd o'er her little head,
   Whence her fair hair rose twining with affright,

Her hidden face was plunged amidst the dead:
  When Juan caught a glimpse of this sad sight,
I shall not say exactly what he said,
  Because it might not solace ‘ears polite;’
But what he did, was to lay on their backs,
The readiest way of reasoning with Cossacques.

One’s hip he slash’d, and split the other’s shoulder,
  And drove them with their brutal yells to seek
If there might be chirurgeons who could solder
  The wounds they richly merited, and shriek
Their baffled rage and pain; while waxing colder
  As he turn’d o’er each pale and gory cheek,
Don Juan raised his little captive from
The heap a moment more had made her tomb.

And she was chill as they, and on her face
  A slender streak of blood announced how near
Her fate had been to that of all her race;
  For the same blow which laid her mother here
Had scarr’d her brow, and left its crimson trace,
  As the last link with all she had held dear;
But else unhurt, she open’d her large eyes,
And gazed on Juan with a wild surprise.

Just at this instant, while their eyes were fix’d
  Upon each other, with dilated glance,
In Juan’s look, pain, pleasure, hope, fear, mix’d
  With joy to save, and dread of some mischance
Unto his protege; while hers, transfix’d
  With infant terrors, glared as from a trance,
A pure, transparent, pale, yet radiant face,
Like to a lighted alabaster vase;—

Up came John Johnson (I will not say ‘Jack,’
  For that were vulgar, cold, and commonplace
On great occasions, such as an attack
  On cities, as hath been the present case):

Up Johnson came, with hundreds at his back,
Exclaiming;—'Juan! Juan! On, boy! brace
Your arm, and I'll bet Moscow to a dollar
That you and I will win St. George's collar.

'The Seraskier is knock'd upon the head,
But the stone bastion still remains, wherein
The old Pacha sits among some hundreds dead,
Smoking his pipe quite calmly 'midst the din
Of our artillery and his own: 'tis said
Our kill'd, already piled up to the chin,
Lie round the battery; but still it batters,
And grape in volleys, like a vineyard, scatters.

'Then up with me!'—But Juan answer'd, 'Look
Upon this child—I saved her—must not leave
Her life to chance; but point me out some nook
Of safety, where she less may shrink and grieve,
And I am with you.'—Whereon Johnson took
A glance around—and shrugg'd—and twitch'd his sleeve
And black silk neckcloth—and replied, 'You're right;
Poor thing! what 's to be done? I'm puzzled quite.'

Said Juan: 'Whatsoever is to be
Done, I'll not quit her till she seems secure
Of present life a good deal more than we.'
Quoth Johnson: 'Neither will I quite ensure;
But at the least you may die gloriously.'
Juan replied: 'At least I will endure
Whate'er is to be borne—but not resign
This child, who is parentless, and therefore mine.'

Johnson said: 'Juan, we've no time to lose;
The child 's a pretty child—a very pretty—
I never saw such eyes—but hark! now choose
Between your fame and feelings, pride and pity;—
Hark! how the roar increases!—no excuse
Will serve when there is plunder in a city;—

I should be loth to march without you, but,
By God! we'll be too late for the first cut.'

But Juan was immovable; until
Johnson, who really loved him in his way,
Pick'd out amongst his followers with some skill
Such as he thought the least given up to prey;
And swearing if the infant came to ill
That they should all be shot on the next day;
But if she were deliver'd safe and sound,
They should at least have fifty rubles round,

And all allowances besides of plunder
In fair proportion with their comrades;—then
Juan consented to march on through thunder,
Which thinn'd at every step their ranks of men:
And yet the rest rush'd eagerly—no wonder,
For they were heated by the hope of gain,
A thing which happens everywhere each day—
No hero trusteth wholly to half pay.

And such is victory, and such is man!
At least nine tenths of what we call so;—God
May have another name for half we scan
As human beings, or his ways are odd.
But to our subject: a brave Tartar khan—
Or 'sultan,' as the author (to whose nod
In prose I bend my humble verse) doth call
This chieftain—somehow would not yield at all:

But flank'd by five brave sons (such is polygamy,
That she spawns warriors by the score, where none
Are prosecuted for that false crime bigamy),
He never would believe the city won
While courage clung but to a single twig.—Am I
Describing Priam's, Peleus', or Jove's son?
Neither—but a good, plain, old, temperate man,
Who fought with his five children in the van.

To take him was the point. The truly brave,
When they behold the brave oppress'd with odds,
Are touch'd with a desire to shield and save;—
A mixture of wild beasts and demigods
Are they—now furious as the sweeping wave,
Now moved with pity: even as sometimes nods
The rugged tree unto the summer wind,
Compassion breathes along the savage mind.

But he would not be taken, and replied
To all the propositions of surrender
By mowing Christians down on every side,
As obstinate as Swedish Charles at Bender.
His five brave boys no less the foe defied;
Whereon the Russian pathos grew less tender,
As being a virtue, like terrestrial patience,
Apt to wear out on trifling provocations.

And spite of Johnson and of Juan, who
Expended all their Eastern phraseology
In begging him, for God's sake, just to show
So much less fight as might form an apology
For them in saving such a desperate foe—
He hew'd away, like doctors of theology
When they dispute with sceptics; and with curses
Struck at his friends, as babies beat their nurses.

Nay, he had wounded, though but slightly, both
Juan and Johnson; whereupon they fell,
The first with sighs, the second with an oath,
Upon his angry sultanship, pell-mell,
And all around were grown exceeding wroth
At such a pertinacious infidel,
And pour'd upon him and his sons like rain,
Which they resisted like a sandy plain

That drinks and still is dry. At last they perish'd—

His second son was levell'd by a shot;
His third was sabred; and the fourth, most cherish'd
Of all the five, on bayonets met his lot;
The fifth, who, by a Christian mother nourish'd,
Had been neglected, ill-used, and what not,
Because deform'd, yet died all game and bottom,
To save a sire who blush'd that he begot him.

The eldest was a true and tameless Tartar,
As great a scorner of the Nazarene
As ever Mahomet pick'd out for a martyr,
Who only saw the black-eyed girls in green,
Who make the beds of those who won't take quarter
On earth, in Paradise; and when once seen,
Those houris, like all other pretty creatures,
Do just whate'er they please, by dint of features.

And what they pleased to do with the young khan
In heaven I know not, nor pretend to guess;
But doubtless they prefer a fine young man
To tough old heroes, and can do no less;
And that 's the cause no doubt why, if we scan
A field of battle's ghastly wilderness,
For one rough, weather-beaten, veteran body,
You'll find ten thousand handsome coxcombs bloody.

Your houris also have a natural pleasure
In lopping off your lately married men,
Before the bridal hours have danced their measure
And the sad, second moon grows dim again,
Or dull repentance hath had dreary leisure
To wish him back a bachelor now and then.
And thus your houri (it may be) disputes
Of these brief blossoms the immediate fruits.

Thus the young khan, with houris in his sight,
Thought not upon the charms of four young brides,
But bravely rush'd on his first heavenly night.

In short, howe'er our better faith derides,
These black-eyed virgins make the Moslems fight,
As though there were one heaven and none besides,—
Whereas, if all be true we hear of heaven
And hell, there must at least be six or seven.

So fully flash'd the phantom on his eyes,
That when the very lance was in his heart,
He shouted 'Allah!' and saw Paradise
With all its veil of mystery drawn apart,
And bright eternity without disguise
On his soul, like a ceaseless sunrise, dart:—
With prophets, houris, angels, saints, descried
In one voluptuous blaze,—and then he died,

But with a heavenly rapture on his face.
The good old khan, who long had ceased to see
Houris, or aught except his florid race
Who grew like cedars round him gloriously—
When he beheld his latest hero grace
The earth, which he became like a fell'd tree,
Paused for a moment, from the fight, and cast
A glance on that slain son, his first and last.

The soldiers, who beheld him drop his point,
Stopp'd as if once more willing to concede
Quarter, in case he bade them not 'aroynt!'
As he before had done. He did not heed
Their pause nor signs: his heart was out of joint,
And shook (till now unshaken) like a reed,
As he look'd down upon his children gone,
And felt—though done with life—he was alone

But 'twas a transient tremor;—with a spring
Upon the Russian steel his breast he flung,
As carelessly as hurls the moth her wing
Against the light wherein she dies: he clung
Closer, that all the deadlier they might wring,

Unto the bayonets which had pierced his young;
And throwing back a dim look on his sons,
In one wide wound pour'd forth his soul at once.

'Tis strange enough—the rough, tough soldiers, who
Spared neither sex nor age in their career
Of carnage, when this old man was pierced through,
And lay before them with his children near,
Touch'd by the heroism of him they slew,
Were melted for a moment: though no tear
Flow'd from their bloodshot eyes, all red with strife,
They honour'd such determined scorn of life.

But the stone bastion still kept up its fire,
Where the chief pacha calmly held his post:
Some twenty times he made the Russ retire,
And baffled the assaults of all their host;
At length he condescended to inquire
If yet the city's rest were won or lost;
And being told the latter, sent a bey
To answer Ribas' summons to give way.

In the mean time, cross-legg'd, with great sang-froid,
Among the scorching ruins he sat smoking
Tobacco on a little carpet;—Troy
Saw nothing like the scene around:—yet looking
With martial stoicism, nought seem'd to annoy
His stern philosophy; but gently stroking
His beard, he puff'd his pipe's ambrosial gales,
As if he had three lives, as well as tails.

The town was taken—whether he might yield
Himself or bastion, little matter'd now:
His stubborn valour was no future shield.
Ismail 's no more! The crescent's silver bow
Sunk, and the crimson cross glared o'er the field,
But red with no redeeming gore: the glow
Of burning streets, like moonlight on the water,

Was imaged back in blood, the sea of slaughter.

All that the mind would shrink from of excesses;
   All that the body perpetrates of bad;
All that we read, hear, dream, of man's distresses;
   All that the devil would do if run stark mad;
All that defies the worst which pen expresses;
   All by which hell is peopled, or as sad
As hell—mere mortals who their power abuse—
Was here (as heretofore and since) let loose.

If here and there some transient trait of pity
   Was shown, and some more noble heart broke through
Its bloody bond, and saved perhaps some pretty
   Child, or an aged, helpless man or two—
What 's this in one annihilated city,
   Where thousand loves, and ties, and duties grew?
Cockneys of London! Muscadins of Paris!
Just ponder what a pious pastime war is.

Think how the joys of reading a Gazette
   Are purchased by all agonies and crimes:
Or if these do not move you, don't forget
   Such doom may be your own in aftertimes.
Meantime the Taxes, Castlereagh, and Debt,
   Are hints as good as sermons, or as rhymes.
Read your own hearts and Ireland's present story,
Then feed her famine fat with Wellesley's glory.

But still there is unto a patriot nation,
   Which loves so well its country and its king,
A subject of sublimest exultation—
   Bear it, ye Muses, on your brightest wing!
Howe'er the mighty locust, Desolation,
   Strip your green fields, and to your harvests cling,
Gaunt famine never shall approach the throne—
Though Ireland starve, great George weighs twenty stone.

But let me put an end unto my theme:
   There was an end of Ismail—hapless town!
Far flash'd her burning towers o'er Danube's stream,
   And redly ran his blushing waters down.
The horrid war-whoop and the shriller scream
   Rose still; but fainter were the thunders grown:
Of forty thousand who had mann'd the wall,
Some hundreds breathed—the rest were silent all!

In one thing ne'ertheless 'tis fit to praise
   The Russian army upon this occasion,
A virtue much in fashion now-a-days,
   And therefore worthy of commemoration:
The topic 's tender, so shall be my phrase—
   Perhaps the season's chill, and their long station
In winter's depth, or want of rest and victual,
Had made them chaste;—they ravish'd very little.

Much did they slay, more plunder, and no less
   Might here and there occur some violation
In the other line;—but not to such excess
   As when the French, that dissipated nation,
Take towns by storm: no causes can I guess,
   Except cold weather and commiseration;
But all the ladies, save some twenty score,
Were almost as much virgins as before.

Some odd mistakes, too, happen'd in the dark,
   Which show'd a want of lanterns, or of taste—
Indeed the smoke was such they scarce could mark
   Their friends from foes,—besides such things from haste
Occur, though rarely, when there is a spark
   Of light to save the venerably chaste:
But six old damsels, each of seventy years,
Were all deflower'd by different grenadiers.

But on the whole their continence was great;
   So that some disappointment there ensued

To those who had felt the inconvenient state
Of 'single blessedness,' and thought it good
(Since it was not their fault, but only fate,
To bear these crosses) for each waning prude
To make a Roman sort of Sabine wedding,
Without the expense and the suspense of bedding.

Some voices of the buxom middle-aged
Were also heard to wonder in the din
(Widows of forty were these birds long caged)
'Wherefore the ravishing did not begin!'
But while the thirst for gore and plunder raged,
There was small leisure for superfluous sin;
But whether they escaped or no, lies hid
In darkness—I can only hope they did.

Suwarrow now was conqueror—a match
For Timour or for Zinghis in his trade.
While mosques and streets, beneath his eyes, like thatch
Blazed, and the cannon's roar was scarce allay'd,
With bloody hands he wrote his first despatch;
And here exactly follows what he said:—
'Glory to God and to the Empress!' (Powers
Eternal! such names mingled!) 'Ismail 's ours.'

Methinks these are the most tremendous words,
Since 'Mene, Mene, Tekel,' and 'Upharsin,'
Which hands or pens have ever traced of swords.
Heaven help me! I'm but little of a parson:
What Daniel read was short-hand of the Lord's,
Severe, sublime; the prophet wrote no farce on
The fate of nations;—but this Russ so witty
Could rhyme, like Nero, o'er a burning city.

He wrote this Polar melody, and set it,
Duly accompanied by shrieks and groans,
Which few will sing, I trust, but none forget it—
For I will teach, if possible, the stones

To rise against earth's tyrants. Never let it
  Be said that we still truckle unto thrones;—
But ye—our children's children! think how we
Show'd what things were before the world was free!

That hour is not for us, but 'tis for you:
  And as, in the great joy of your millennium,
You hardly will believe such things were true
  As now occur, I thought that I would pen you 'em;
But may their very memory perish too!—
  Yet if perchance remember'd, still disdain you 'em
More than you scorn the savages of yore,
Who painted their bare limbs, but not with gore.

And when you hear historians talk of thrones,
  And those that sate upon them, let it be
As we now gaze upon the mammoth's bones,
  'And wonder what old world such things could see,
Or hieroglyphics on Egyptian stones,
  The pleasant riddles of futurity—
Guessing at what shall happily be hid,
As the real purpose of a pyramid.

Reader! I have kept my word,—at least so far
  As the first Canto promised. You have now
Had sketches of love, tempest, travel, war—
  All very accurate, you must allow,
And epic, if plain truth should prove no bar;
  For I have drawn much less with a long bow
Than my forerunners. Carelessly I sing,
But Phoebus lends me now and then a string,

With which I still can harp, and carp, and fiddle.
  What farther hath befallen or may befall
The hero of this grand poetic riddle,
  I by and by may tell you, if at all:
But now I choose to break off in the middle,
  Worn out with battering Ismail's stubborn wall,

While Juan is sent off with the despatch,
For which all Petersburgh is on the watch.

This special honour was conferr'd, because
He had behaved with courage and humanity—
Which last men like, when they have time to pause
From their ferocities produced by vanity.
His little captive gain'd him some applause
For saving her amidst the wild insanity
Of carnage,—and I think he was more glad in her
Safety, than his new order of St. Vladimir.

The Moslem orphan went with her protector,
For she was homeless, houseless, helpless; all
Her friends, like the sad family of Hector,
Had perish'd in the field or by the wall:
Her very place of birth was but a spectre
Of what it had been; there the Muezzin's cal
To prayer was heard no more!—and Juan wept,
And made a vow to shield her, which he kept.

Don Juan.

CANTO THE NINTH.

I.

O, Wellington! (or "Vilainton"—for Fame 1
Sounds the heroic syllables both ways:
France could not even conquer your great name,
But punn'd it down to this facetious phrase—
Beating or beaten she will laugh the same,)
You have obtain'd great pensions and much praise:
Glory like yours should any dare gainsay,
Humanity would rise, and thunder "Nay!"

II.

I don't think that you used Kinnaird quite well 2
In Marinèt's affair—in fact, 'twas shabby;
And, like some other things, won't do to tell
Upon your tomb in Westminster's old abbey.
Upon the rest 'tis not worth while to dwell,
Such tales being for the tea-hours of some tabby;
But though your years as *man* tend fast to zero,
In fact your grace is still but a *young hero*.

III.

Though Britain owes (and pays you too) so much, 3
Yet Europe doubtless owes you greatly more:
You have repair'd Legitimacy's crutch,
A prop not quite so certain as before:
The Spanish and the French, as well as Dutch,
Have seen, and felt, how strongly you *restore*;
And Waterloo has made the world your debtor—
(I wish your bards would sing it rather better).

IV.

You are "the best of cut-throats:"—do not start; 4
The phrase is Shakespeare's, and not misapplied:—
War's a brain-spattering, windpipe-slitting art,
Unless her cause by right be sanctified.
If you have acted *once* a generous part,
The world, not the world's masters, will decide;
And I shall be delighted to learn who,
Save you and yours, have gain'd by Waterloo.

CANTO THE NINTH.

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  Sounds the heroic syllables both ways;
France could not even conquer your great name,
  But punn'd it down to this facetious phrase—
Beating or beaten she will laugh the same),
  You have obtain'd great pensions and much praise:
Glory like yours should any dare gainsay,
Humanity would rise, and thunder 'Nay!'

I don't think that you used Kinnaird quite well
  In Marinet's affair—in fact, 'twas shabby,
And like some other things won't do to tell
  Upon your tomb in Westminster's old abbey.
Upon the rest 'tis not worth while to dwell,
  Such tales being for the tea-hours of some tabby;
But though your years as man tend fast to zero,
In fact your grace is still but a young hero.

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  Yet Europe doubtless owes you greatly more:
You have repair'd Legitimacy's crutch,
  A prop not quite so certain as before:
The Spanish, and the French, as well as Dutch,
  Have seen, and felt, how strongly you restore;
And Waterloo has made the world your debtor
(I wish your bards would sing it rather better).

You are 'the best of cut-throats:'—do not start;
  The phrase is Shakspeare's, and not misapplied:
War 's a brain-spattering, windpipe-slitting art,
  Unless her cause by right be sanctified.
If you have acted once a generous part,

The world, not the world's masters, will decide,
And I shall be delighted to learn who,
Save you and yours, have gain'd by Waterloo?

I am no flatterer—you've supp'd full of flattery:
They say you like it too—'tis no great wonder.
He whose whole life has been assault and battery,
At last may get a little tired of thunder;
And swallowing eulogy much more than satire, he
May like being praised for every lucky blunder,
Call'd 'Saviour of the Nations'—not yet saved,
And 'Europe's Liberator'—still enslaved.

I've done. Now go and dine from off the plate
Presented by the Prince of the Brazils,
And send the sentinel before your gate
A slice or two from your luxurious meals:
He fought, but has not fed so well of late.
Some hunger, too, they say the people feels:—
There is no doubt that you deserve your ration,
But pray give back a little to the nation.

I don't mean to reflect—a man so great as
You, my lord duke! is far above reflection:
The high Roman fashion, too, of Cincinnatus,
With modern history has but small connection:
Though as an Irishman you love potatoes,
You need not take them under your direction;
And half a million for your Sabine farm
Is rather dear!—I'm sure I mean no harm.

Great men have always scorn'd great recompenses:
Epaminondas saved his Thebes, and died,
Not leaving even his funeral expenses:
George Washington had thanks and nought beside,
Except the all-cloudless glory which few men's is
To free his country: Pitt too had his pride,
And as a high-soul'd minister of state is

Renown'd for ruining Great Britain gratis.

Never had mortal man such opportunity,
  Except Napoleon, or abused it more:
You might have freed fallen Europe from the unity
  Of tyrants, and been blest from shore to shore:
And now—what is your fame? Shall the Muse tune it ye?
  Now—that the rabble's first vain shouts are o'er?
Go! hear it in your famish'd country's cries!
Behold the world! and curse your victories!

As these new cantos touch on warlike feats,
  To you the unflattering Muse deigns to inscribe
Truths, that you will not read in the Gazettes,
  But which 'tis time to teach the hireling tribe
Who fatten on their country's gore, and debts,
  Must be recited, and—without a bribe.
You did great things; but not being great in mind,
Have left undone the greatest—and mankind.

Death laughs—Go ponder o'er the skeleton
  With which men image out the unknown thing
That hides the past world, like to a set sun
  Which still elsewhere may rouse a brighter spring—
Death laughs at all you weep for:—look upon
  This hourly dread of all! whose threaten'd sting
Turns life to terror, even though in its sheath:
Mark how its lipless mouth grins without breath!

Mark how it laughs and scorns at all you are!
  And yet was what you are: from ear to ear
It laughs not—there is now no fleshy bar
  So call'd; the Antic long hath ceased to hear,
But still he smiles; and whether near or far,
  He strips from man that mantle (far more dear
Than even the tailor's), his incarnate skin,
White, black, or copper—the dead bones will grin.

And thus Death laughs,—it is sad merriment,
   But still it is so; and with such example
Why should not Life be equally content
   With his superior, in a smile to trample
Upon the nothings which are daily spent
   Like bubbles on an ocean much less ample
Than the eternal deluge, which devours
Suns as rays—worlds like atoms—years like hours?

'To be, or not to be? that is the question,'
   Says Shakspeare, who just now is much in fashion.
I am neither Alexander nor Hephaestion,
   Nor ever had for abstract fame much passion;
But would much rather have a sound digestion
   Than Buonaparte's cancer: could I dash on
Through fifty victories to shame or fame—
Without a stomach what were a good name?

'O dura ilia messorum!'—'Oh
   Ye rigid guts of reapers!' I translate
For the great benefit of those who know
   What indigestion is—that inward fate
Which makes all Styx through one small liver flow.
   A peasant's sweat is worth his lord's estate:
Let this one toil for bread—that rack for rent,
He who sleeps best may be the most content.

'To be, or not to be?'—Ere I decide,
   I should be glad to know that which is being?
'Tis true we speculate both far and wide,
   And deem, because we see, we are all-seeing:
For my part, I'll enlist on neither side,
   Until I see both sides for once agreeing.
For me, I sometimes think that life is death,
Rather than life a mere affair of breath.

'Que scais-je?' was the motto of Montaigne,
   As also of the first academicians:

That all is dubious which man may attain,
  Was one of their most favourite positions.
There's no such thing as certainty, that 's plain
  As any of Mortality's conditions;
So little do we know what we're about in
This world, I doubt if doubt itself be doubting.

It is a pleasant voyage perhaps to float,
  Like Pyrrho, on a sea of speculation;
But what if carrying sail capsize the boat?
  Your wise men don't know much of navigation;
And swimming long in the abyss of thought
  Is apt to tire: a calm and shallow station
Well nigh the shore, where one stoops down and gathers
Some pretty shell, is best for moderate bathers.

'But heaven,' as Cassio says, 'is above all—
  No more of this, then,—let us pray!' We have
Souls to save, since Eve's slip and Adam's fall,
  Which tumbled all mankind into the grave,
Besides fish, beasts, and birds. 'The sparrow's fall
  Is special providence,' though how it gave
Offence, we know not; probably it perch'd
Upon the tree which Eve so fondly search'd.

O, ye immortal gods! what is theogony?
  O, thou too, mortal man! what is philanthropy?
O, world! which was and is, what is cosmogony?
  Some people have accused me of misanthropy;
And yet I know no more than the mahogany
  That forms this desk, of what they mean; lykanthropy
I comprehend, for without transformation
Men become wolves on any slight occasion.

But I, the mildest, meekest of mankind,
  Like Moses, or Melancthon, who have ne'er
Done anything exceedingly unkind,—
  And (though I could not now and then forbear

Following the bent of body or of mind)
  Have always had a tendency to spare,—
Why do they call me misanthrope? Because
They hate me, not I them.—and here we'll pause.

'Tis time we should proceed with our good poem,—
  For I maintain that it is really good,
Not only in the body but the proem,
  However little both are understood
Just now,—but by and by the Truth will show 'em
  Herself in her sublimest attitude:
And till she doth, I fain must be content
To share her beauty and her banishment.

Our hero (and, I trust, kind reader, yours)
  Was left upon his way to the chief city
Of the immortal Peter's polish'd boors
  Who still have shown themselves more brave than witty.
I know its mighty empire now allures
  Much flattery—even Voltaire's, and that 's a pity.
For me, I deem an absolute autocrat
Not a barbarian, but much worse than that.

And I will war, at least in words (and—should
  My chance so happen—deeds), with all who war
With Thought;—and of Thought's foes by far most rude,
  Tyrants and sycophants have been and are.
I know not who may conquer: if I could
  Have such a prescience, it should be no bar
To this my plain, sworn, downright detestation
Of every depotism in every nation.

It is not that I adulate the people:
  Without me, there are demagogues enough,
And infidels, to pull down every steeple,
  And set up in their stead some proper stuff.
Whether they may sow scepticism to reap hell,
  As is the Christian dogma rather rough,

I do not know;—I wish men to be free
As much from mobs as kings—from you as me.

The consequence is, being of no party,
I shall offend all parties: never mind!
My words, at least, are more sincere and hearty
Than if I sought to sail before the wind.
He who has nought to gain can have small art: he
Who neither wishes to be bound nor bind,
May still expatiate freely, as will I,
Nor give my voice to slavery's jackal cry.

That 's an appropriate simile, that jackal;—
I've heard them in the Ephesian ruins howl
By night, as do that mercenary pack all,
Power's base purveyors, who for pickings prowl,
And scent the prey their masters would attack all.
However, the poor jackals are less foul
(As being the brave lions' keen providers)
Than human insects, catering for spiders.

Raise but an arm! 'twill brush their web away,
And without that, their poison and their claws
Are useless. Mind, good people! what I say
(Or rather peoples)—go on without pause!
The web of these tarantulas each day
Increases, till you shall make common cause:
None, save the Spanish fly and Attic bee,
As yet are strongly stinging to be free.

Don Juan, who had shone in the late slaughter,
Was left upon his way with the despatch,
Where blood was talk'd of as we would of water;
And carcasses that lay as thick as thatch
O'er silenced cities, merely served to flatter
Fair Catherine's pastime—who look'd on the match
Between these nations as a main of cocks,
Wherein she liked her own to stand like rocks.

And there in a kibitka he roll'd on
(A cursed sort of carriage without springs,
Which on rough roads leaves scarcely a whole bone),
Pondering on glory, chivalry, and kings,
And orders, and on all that he had done—
And wishing that post-horses had the wings
Of Pegasus, or at the least post-chaises
Had feathers, when a traveller on deep ways is.

At every jolt—and they were many—still
He turn'd his eyes upon his little charge,
As if he wish'd that she should fare less ill
Than he, in these sad highways left at large
To ruts, and flints, and lovely Nature's skill,
Who is no paviour, nor admits a barge
On her canals, where God takes sea and land,
Fishery and farm, both into his own hand.

At least he pays no rent, and has best right
To be the first of what we used to call
'Gentlemen farmer'—a race worn out quite,
Since lately there have been no rents at all,
And 'gentlemen' are in a piteous plight,
And 'farmers' can't raise Ceres from her fall:
She fell with Buonaparte—What strange thoughts
Arise, when we see emperors fall with oats!

But Juan turn'd his eyes on the sweet child
Whom he had saved from slaughter—what a trophy
O! ye who build up monuments, defiled
With gore, like Nadir Shah, that costive sophy,
Who, after leaving Hindostan a wild,
And scarce to the Mogul a cup of coffee
To soothe his woes withal, was slain, the sinner!
Because he could no more digest his dinner;—

O ye! or we! or he! or she! reflect,

That one life saved, especially if young
Or pretty, is a thing to recollect
Far sweeter than the greenest laurels sprung
From the manure of human clay, though deck'd
With all the praises ever said or sung:
Though hymn'd by every harp, unless within
Your heart joins chorus, Fame is but a din.

O! ye great authors luminous, voluminous!
Ye twice ten hundred thousand daily scribes!
Whose pamphlets, volumes, newspapers, illumine us!
Whether you're paid by government in bribes,
To prove the public debt is not consuming us—
Or, roughly treading on the 'courtier's kibes'
With clownish heel, your popular circulation
Feeds you by printing half the realm's starvation;—

O, ye great authors!—'Apropos des bottes,'—
I have forgotten what I meant to say,
As sometimes have been greater sages' lots;
'Twas something calculated to allay
All wrath in barracks, palaces, or cots:
Certes it would have been but thrown away,
And that 's one comfort for my lost advice,
Although no doubt it was beyond all price.

But let it go:—it will one day be found
With other relics of 'a former world,'
When this world shall be former, underground,
Thrown topsy-turvy, twisted, crisp'd, and curl'd,
Baked, fried, or burnt, turn'd inside-out, or drown'd,
Like all the worlds before, which have been hurl'd
First out of, and then back again to chaos,
The superstratum which will overlay us.

So Cuvier says;—and then shall come again
Unto the new creation, rising out
From our old crash, some mystic, ancient strain

Of things destroy'd and left in airy doubt:
Like to the notions we now entertain
Of Titans, giants, fellows of about
Some hundred feet in height, not to say miles,
And mammoths, and your winged crocodiles.

Think if then George the Fourth should be dug up!
How the new worldlings of the then new East
Will wonder where such animals could sup!
(For they themselves will be but of the least:
Even worlds miscarry, when too oft they pup,
And every new creation hath decreased
In size, from overworking the material—
Men are but maggots of some huge Earth's burial.)

How will—to these young people, just thrust out
From some fresh Paradise, and set to plough,
And dig, and sweat, and turn themselves about,
And plant, and reap, and spin, and grind, and sow,
Till all the arts at length are brought about,
Especially of war and taxing,—how,
I say, will these great relics, when they see 'em,
Look like the monsters of a new museum?

But I am apt to grow too metaphysical:
'The time is out of joint,'—and so am I;
I quite forget this poem 's merely quizzical,
And deviate into matters rather dry.
I ne'er decide what I shall say, and this I call
Much too poetical: men should know why
They write, and for what end; but, note or text,
I never know the word which will come next.

So on I ramble, now and then narrating,
Now pondering:—it is time we should narrate.
I left Don Juan with his horses baiting—
Now we'll get o'er the ground at a great rate.
I shall not be particular in stating

His journey, we've so many tours of late:
Suppose him then at Petersburgh; suppose
That pleasant capital of painted snows;

Suppose him in a handsome uniform,—
A scarlet coat, black facings, a long plume,
Waving, like sails new shiver'd in a storm,
Over a cock'd hat in a crowded room,
And brilliant breeches, bright as a Cairn Gorme,
Of yellow casimere we may presume,
White stocking drawn uncurdled as new milk
O'er limbs whose symmetry set off the silk;

Suppose him sword by side, and hat in hand,
Made up by youth, fame, and an army tailor—
That great enchanter, at whose rod's command
Beauty springs forth, and Nature's self turns paler,
Seeing how Art can make her work more grand
(When she don't pin men's limbs in like a gaoler),—
Behold him placed as if upon a pillar! He
Seems Love turn'd a lieutenant of artillery:—

His bandage slipp'd down into a cravat;
His wings subdued to epaulettes; his quiver
Shrunk to a scabbard, with his arrows at
His side as a small sword, but sharp as ever;
His bow converted into a cock'd hat;
But still so like, that Psyche were more clever
Than some wives (who make blunders no less stupid),
If she had not mistaken him for Cupid.

The courtiers stared, the ladies whisper'd, and
The empress smiled: the reigning favourite frown'd—
I quite forget which of them was in hand
Just then; as they are rather numerous found,
Who took by turns that difficult command
Since first her majesty was singly crown'd:
But they were mostly nervous six-foot fellows,

All fit to make a Patagonian jealous.

Juan was none of these, but slight and slim,
  Blushing and beardless; and yet ne'ertheless
There was a something in his turn of limb,
  And still more in his eye, which seem'd to express,
That though he look'd one of the seraphim,
  There lurk'd a man beneath the spirit's dress.
Besides, the empress sometimes liked a boy,
And had just buried the fair-faced Lanskoi.

No wonder then that Yermoloff, or Momonoff,
  Or Scherbatoff, or any other off
Or on, might dread her majesty had not room enough
  Within her bosom (which was not too tough)
For a new flame; a thought to cast of gloom enough
  Along the aspect, whether smooth or rough,
Of him who, in the language of his station,
Then held that 'high official situation.'

O, gentle ladies! should you seek to know
  The import of this diplomatic phrase,
Bid Ireland's Londonderry's Marquess show
  His parts of speech; and in the strange displays
Of that odd string of words, all in a row,
  Which none divine, and every one obeys,
Perhaps you may pick out some queer no meaning,
Of that weak wordy harvest the sole gleaning.

I think I can explain myself without
  That sad inexplicable beast of prey—
That Sphinx, whose words would ever be a doubt,
  Did not his deeds unriddle them each day—
That monstrous hieroglyphic—that long spout
  Of blood and water, leaden Castlereagh!
And here I must an anecdote relate,
But luckily of no great length or weight.

An English lady ask'd of an Italian,
What were the actual and official duties
Of the strange thing some women set a value on,
Which hovers oft about some married beauties,
Called 'Cavalier servente?'—a Pygmalion
Whose statues warm (I fear, alas! too true 'tis)
Beneath his art. The dame, press'd to disclose them,
Said—'Lady, I beseech you to suppose them.'

And thus I supplicate your supposition,
And mildest, matron-like interpretation,
Of the imperial favourite's condition.
'Twas a high place, the highest in the nation
In fact, if not in rank; and the suspicion
Of any one's attaining to his station,
No doubt gave pain, where each new pair of shoulders,
If rather broad, made stocks rise and their holders.

Juan, I said, was a most beauteous boy,
And had retain'd his boyish look beyond
The usual hirsute seasons which destroy,
With beards and whiskers, and the like, the fond
Parisian aspect which upset old Troy
And founded Doctors' Commons:—I have conn'd
The history of divorces, which, though chequer'd,
Calls Ilion's the first damages on record.

And Catherine, who loved all things (save her lord,
Who was gone to his place), and pass'd for much
Admiring those (by dainty dames abhorr'd)
Gigantic gentlemen, yet had a touch
Of sentiment; and he she most adored
Was the lamented Lanskoi, who was such
A lover as had cost her many a tear,
And yet but made a middling grenadier.

O thou 'teterrima causa' of all 'belli'—
Thou gate of life and death—thou nondescript!

Whence is our exit and our entrance,—well I
   May pause in pondering how all souls are dipt
In thy perennial fountain:—how man fell I
   Know not, since knowledge saw her branches stript
Of her first fruit; but how he falls and rises
Since, thou hast settled beyond all surmises.

Some call thee ‘the worst cause of war,’ but I
   Maintain thou art the best: for after all
From thee we come, to thee we go, and why
   To get at thee not batter down a wall,
Or waste a world? since no one can deny
   Thou dost replenish worlds both great and small:
With, or without thee, all things at a stand
Are, or would be, thou sea of life’s dry land!

Catherine, who was the grand epitome
   Of that great cause of war, or peace, or what
You please (it causes all the things which be,
   So you may take your choice of this or that)—
Catherine, I say, was very glad to see
   The handsome herald, on whose plumage sat
Victory; and pausing as she saw him kneel
With his despatch, forgot to break the seal.

Then recollecting the whole empress, nor
   forgetting quite the woman (which composed
At least three parts of this great whole), she tore
   The letter open with an air which posed
The court, that watch’d each look her visage wore,
   Until a royal smile at length disclosed
Fair weather for the day. Though rather spacious,
Her face was noble, her eyes fine, mouth gracious.

Great joy was hers, or rather joys: the first
   Was a ta’en city, thirty thousand slain.
Glory and triumph o’er her aspect burst,
   As an East Indian sunrise on the main.

These quench'd a moment her ambition's thirst—
  So Arab deserts drink in summer's rain:
In vain!—As fall the dews on quenchless sands,
Blood only serves to wash Ambition's hands!

Her next amusement was more fanciful;
  She smiled at mad Suwarrow's rhymes, who threw
Into a Russian couplet rather dull
  The whole gazette of thousands whom he slew.
Her third was feminine enough to annul
  The shudder which runs naturally through
Our veins, when things call'd sovereigns think it best
To kill, and generals turn it into jest.

The two first feelings ran their course complete,
  And lighted first her eye, and then her mouth:
The whole court look'd immediately most sweet,
  Like flowers well water'd after a long drouth.
But when on the lieutenant at her feet
  Her majesty, who liked to gaze on youth
Almost as much as on a new despatch,
Glanced mildly, all the world was on the watch.

Though somewhat large, exuberant, and truculent,
  When wroth—while pleased, she was as fine a figure
As those who like things rosy, ripe, and succulent,
  Would wish to look on, while they are in vigour.
She could repay each amatory look you lent
  With interest, and in turn was wont with rigour
To exact of Cupid's bills the full amount
At sight, nor would permit you to discount.

With her the latter, though at times convenient,
  Was not so necessary; for they tell
That she was handsome, and though fierce look'd lenient,
  And always used her favourites too well.
If once beyond her boudoir's precincts in ye went,
  Your 'fortune' was in a fair way 'to swell

A man' (as Giles says); for though she would widow all
Nations, she liked man as an individual.

What a strange thing is man? and what a stranger
  Is woman! What a whirlwind is her head,
And what a whirlpool full of depth and danger
  Is all the rest about her! Whether wed
Or widow, maid or mother, she can change her
  Mind like the wind: whatever she has said
Or done, is light to what she'll say or do;—
The oldest thing on record, and yet new!

O Catherine! (for of all interjections,
  To thee both oh! and ah! belong of right
In love and war) how odd are the connections
  Of human thoughts, which jostle in their flight!
Just now yours were cut out in different sections:
  First Ismail's capture caught your fancy quite;
Next of new knights, the fresh and glorious batch;
And thirdly he who brought you the despatch!

Shakspeare talks of 'the herald Mercury
  New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;'
And some such visions cross'd her majesty,
  While her young herald knelt before her still.
'Tis very true the hill seem'd rather high,
  For a lieutenant to climb up; but skill
Smooth'd even the Simplon's steep, and by God's blessing
With youth and health all kisses are 'heaven-kissing.'

Her majesty look'd down, the youth look'd up—
  And so they fell in love;—she with his face,
His grace, his God-knows-what: for Cupid's cup
  With the first draught intoxicates apace,
A quintessential laudanum or 'black drop,'
  Which makes one drunk at once, without the base
Expedient of full bumpers; for the eye
In love drinks all life's fountains (save tears) dry.

He, on the other hand, if not in love,
Fell into that no less imperious passion,
Self-love—which, when some sort of thing above
Ourselves, a singer, dancer, much in fashion,
Or duchess, princess, empress, 'deigns to prove'
('Tis Pope's phrase) a great longing, though a rash one,
For one especial person out of many,
Makes us believe ourselves as good as any.

Besides, he was of that delighted age
Which makes all female ages equal—when
We don't much care with whom we may engage,
As bold as Daniel in the lion's den,
So that we can our native sun assuage
In the next ocean, which may flow just then,
To make a twilight in, just as Sol's heat is
Quench'd in the lap of the salt sea, or Thetis.

And Catherine (we must say thus much for Catherine),
Though bold and bloody, was the kind of thing
Whose temporary passion was quite flattering,
Because each lover look'd a sort of king,
Made up upon an amatory pattern,
A royal husband in all save the ring—
Which, being the damn'dest part of matrimony,
Seem'd taking out the sting to leave the honey.

And when you add to this, her womanhood
In its meridian, her blue eyes or gray
(The last, if they have soul, are quite as good,
Or better, as the best examples say:
Napoleon's, Mary's (queen of Scotland), should
Lend to that colour a transcendent ray;
And Pallas also sanctions the same hue,
Too wise to look through optics black or blue)—

Her sweet smile, and her then majestic figure,

Her plumpness, her imperial condescension,
Her preference of a boy to men much bigger
(Fellows whom Messalina's self would pension),
Her prime of life, just now in juicy vigour,
With other extras, which we need not mention,—
All these, or any one of these, explain
Enough to make a stripling very vain.

And that 's enough, for love is vanity,
Selfish in its beginning as its end,
Except where 'tis a mere insanity,
A maddening spirit which would strive to blend
Itself with beauty's frail inanity,
On which the passion's self seems to depend:
And hence some heathenish philosophers
Make love the main spring of the universe.

Besides Platonic love, besides the love
Of God, the love of sentiment, the loving
Of faithful pairs (I needs must rhyme with dove,
That good old steam-boat which keeps verses moving
'Gainst reason—Reason ne'er was hand-and-glove
With rhyme, but always leant less to improving
The sound than sense)—beside all these pretences
To love, there are those things which words name senses;

Those movements, those improvements in our bodies
Which make all bodies anxious to get out
Of their own sand-pits, to mix with a goddess,
For such all women are at first no doubt.
How beautiful that moment! and how odd is
That fever which precedes the languid rout
Of our sensations! What a curious way
The whole thing is of clothing souls in clay!

The noblest kind of love is love Platonical,
To end or to begin with; the next grand
Is that which may be christen'd love canonical,

Because the clergy take the thing in hand;
The third sort to be noted in our chronicle
As flourishing in every Christian land,
Is when chaste matrons to their other ties
Add what may be call'd marriage in disguise.

Well, we won't analyse—our story must
Tell for itself: the sovereign was smitten,
Juan much flatter'd by her love, or lust;—
I cannot stop to alter words once written,
And the two are so mix'd with human dust,
That he who names one, both perchance may hit on:
But in such matters Russia's mighty empress
Behaved no better than a common sempstress.

The whole court melted into one wide whisper,
And all lips were applied unto all ears!
The elder ladies' wrinkles curl'd much crisper
As they beheld; the younger cast some leers
On one another, and each lovely lisper
Smiled as she talk'd the matter o'er; but tears
Of rivalship rose in each clouded eye
Of all the standing army who stood by.

All the ambassadors of all the powers
Enquired, Who was this very new young man,
Who promised to be great in some few hours?
Which is full soon—though life is but a span.
Already they beheld the silver showers
Of rubles rain, as fast as specie can,
Upon his cabinet, besides the presents
Of several ribands, and some thousand peasants.

Catherine was generous,—all such ladies are:
Love, that great opener of the heart and all
The ways that lead there, be they near or far,
Above, below, by turnpikes great or small,—
Love (though she had a cursed taste for war,

And was not the best wife, unless we call
Such Clytemnestra, though perhaps 'tis better
That one should die, than two drag on the fetter)—

Love had made Catherine make each lover's fortune,
Unlike our own half-chaste Elizabeth,
Whose avarice all disbursements did importune,
If history, the grand liar, ever saith
The truth; and though grief her old age might shorten,
Because she put a favourite to death,
Her vile, ambiguous method of flirtation,
And stinginess, disgrace her sex and station.

But when the levee rose, and all was bustle
In the dissolving circle, all the nations'
Ambassadors began as 'twere to hustle
Round the young man with their congratulations.
Also the softer silks were heard to rustle
Of gentle dames, among whose recreations
It is to speculate on handsome faces,
Especially when such lead to high places.

Juan, who found himself, he knew not how,
A general object of attention, made
His answers with a very graceful bow,
As if born for the ministerial trade.
Though modest, on his unembarrass'd brow
Nature had written 'gentleman.' He said
Little, but to the purpose; and his manner
Flung hovering graces o'er him like a banner.

An order from her majesty consign'd
Our young lieutenant to the genial care
Of those in office: all the world look'd kind
(As it will look sometimes with the first stare,
Which youth would not act ill to keep in mind),
As also did Miss Protasoff then there,
Named from her mystic office'l'Eprouveuse,'

A term inexplicable to the Muse.

With her then, as in humble duty bound,
  Juan retired,—and so will I, until
My Pegasus shall tire of touching ground.
  We have just lit on a ‘heaven-kissing hill,’
So lofty that I feel my brain turn round,
  And all my fancies whirling like a mill;
Which is a signal to my nerves and brain,
To take a quiet ride in some green Lane.

Don Juan.

CANTO THE TENTH.

I.

1 When Newton saw an apple fall, he found,
In that slight startle from his contemplation—
'Tis *said* (for I'll not answer above ground
For any sage's creed or calculation)—
A mode of proving that the earth turn'd round
In a most natural whirl, call'd "gravitation;"
And this is the sole mortal who could grapple,
Since Adam, with a fall, or with an apple.

II.

2 Man fell with apples, and with apples rose,
If this be true; for we must deem the mode
In which Sir Isaac Newton could disclose
Through the then unpav'd stars the turnpike road,
A thing to counterbalance human woes:
For, ever since, immortal man hath glow'd
With all kinds of mechanics, and full soon
Steam-engines will conduct him to the moon.

III.

3 And wherefore this exordium?—Why, just now,
In taking up this paltry sheet of paper,
My bosom underwent a glorious glow,
And my internal spirit cut a caper:
And though so much inferior, as I know,
To those who, by the dint of glass and vapour,
Discover stars, and sail in the wind's eye,
I wish to do as much by poesy.

IV.

4 In the wind's eye I have sail'd, and sail; but for
The stars, I own my telescope is dim;
But at the least I've shunn'd the common shore,
And, leaving land far out of sight, would skim
The ocean of eternity: the roar
Of breakers has not daunted my slight, trim,
But *still* sea-worthy, skiff; and she may float
Where ships have founder'd, as doth many a boat.

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We left our hero, Juan, in the bloom
Of favouritism, but not yet in the blush;
And far be it from my Muses to presume
(For I have more than one Muse at a push)
To follow him beyond the drawing-room:
It is enough that Fortune found him flush
Of youth, and vigour, beauty, and those things
Which for an instant clip enjoyment's wings.

But soon they grow again and leave their nest.
'Oh!' saith the Psalmist, 'that I had a dove's
Pinions to flee away, and be at rest!'
And who that recollects young years and loves,—
Though hoary now, and with a withering breast,
And palsied fancy, which no longer roves
Beyond its dimm'd eye's sphere,—but would much rather
Sigh like his son, than cough like his grandfather?

But sighs subside, and tears (even widows') shrink,
Like Arno in the summer, to a shallow,
So narrow as to shame their wintry brink,
Which threatens inundations deep and yellow!
Such difference doth a few months make. You'd think
Grief a rich field which never would lie fallow;
No more it doth, its ploughs but change their boys,
Who furrow some new soil to sow for joys.

But coughs will come when sighs depart—and now
And then before sighs cease; for oft the one
Will bring the other, ere the lake-like brow
Is ruffled by a wrinkle, or the sun
Of life reach'd ten o'clock: and while a glow,
Hectic and brief as summer's day nigh done,
O'erspreads the cheek which seems too pure for clay,

Thousands blaze, love, hope, die,—how happy they!

But Juan was not meant to die so soon.
   We left him in the focus of such glory
As may be won by favour of the moon
   Or ladies' fancies—rather transitory
Perhaps; but who would scorn the month of June,
   Because December, with his breath so hoary,
Must come? Much rather should he court the ray,
To hoard up warmth against a wintry day.

Besides, he had some qualities which fix
   Middle-aged ladies even more than young:
The former know what 's what; while new-fledged chicks
   Know little more of love than what is sung
In rhymes, or dreamt (for fancy will play tricks)
   In visions of those skies from whence Love sprung.
Some reckon women by their suns or years,
I rather think the moon should date the dears.

And why? because she 's changeable and chaste.
   I know no other reason, whatsoe'er
Suspicious people, who find fault in haste,
   May choose to tax me with; which is not fair,
Nor flattering to 'their temper or their taste,'
   As my friend Jeffrey writes with such an air:
However, I forgive him, and I trust
He will forgive himself;—if not, I must.

Old enemies who have become new friends
   Should so continue—'tis a point of honour;
And I know nothing which could make amends
   For a return to hatred: I would shun her
Like garlic, howsoever she extends
   Her hundred arms and legs, and fain outrun her.
Old flames, new wives, become our bitterest foes—
Converted foes should scorn to join with those.

This were the worst desertion:—renegadoes,
   Even shuffling Southey, that incarnate lie,
Would scarcely join again the ‘reformadoes,’
   Whom he forsook to fill the laureate’s sty:
And honest men from Iceland to Barbadoes,
   Whether in Caledon or Italy,
Should not veer round with every breath, nor seize
To pain, the moment when you cease to please.

The lawyer and the critic but behold
   The baser sides of literature and life,
And nought remains unseen, but much untold,
   By those who scour those double vales of strife.
While common men grow ignorantly old,
   The lawyer’s brief is like the surgeon’s knife,
Dissecting the whole inside of a question,
And with it all the process of digestion.

A legal broom ’s a moral chimney-sweeper,
   And that ’s the reason he himself ’s so dirty;
The endless soot bestows a tint far deeper
   Than can be hid by altering his shirt; he
Retains the sable stains of the dark creeper,
   At least some twenty-nine do out of thirty,
In all their habits;—not so you, I own;
As Caesar wore his robe you wear your gown.

And all our little feuds, at least all mine,
   Dear Jefferson, once my most redoubted foe
(As far as rhyme and criticism combine
   To make such puppets of us things below),
Are over: Here ’s a health to ‘Auld Lang Syne!’
   I do not know you, and may never know
Your face—but you have acted on the whole
Most nobly, and I own it from my soul.

And when I use the phrase of ‘Auld Lang Syne!’
   ’Tis not address’d to you—the more ’s the pity

For me, for I would rather take my wine
With you, than aught (save Scott) in your proud city.
But somehow,—it may seem a schoolboy's whine,
And yet I seek not to be grand nor witty,
But I am half a Scot by birth, and bred
A whole one, and my heart flies to my head,—

As 'Auld Lang Syne' brings Scotland, one and all,
Scotch plaids, Scotch snoods, the blue hills, and clear streams,
The Dee, the Don, Balgounie's brig's black wall,
All my boy feelings, all my gentler dreams
Of what I then dreamt, clothed in their own pall,
Like Banquo's offspring;—floating past me seems
My childhood in this childishness of mine:
I care not—'tis a glimpse of 'Auld Lang Syne.'

And though, as you remember, in a fit
Of wrath and rhyme, when juvenile and curly,
I rail'd at Scots to show my wrath and wit,
Which must be own'd was sensitive and surly,
Yet 'tis in vain such sallies to permit,
They cannot quench young feelings fresh and early:
I 'scotch'd not kill'd' the Scotchman in my blood,
And love the land of 'mountain and of flood.'

Don Juan, who was real, or ideal,—
For both are much the same, since what men think
Exists when the once thinkers are less real
Than what they thought, for mind can never sink,
And 'gainst the body makes a strong appeal;
And yet 'tis very puzzling on the brink
Of what is call'd eternity, to stare,
And know no more of what is here, than there;—

Don Juan grew a very polish'd Russian—
How we won't mention, why we need not say:
Few youthful minds can stand the strong concussion
Of any slight temptation in their way;

But his just now were spread as is a cushion
  Smooth'd for a monarch's seat of honour; gay
Damsels, and dances, revels, ready money,
Made ice seem paradise, and winter sunny.

The favour of the empress was agreeable;
  And though the duty wax'd a little hard,
Young people at his time of life should be able
  To come off handsomely in that regard.
He was now growing up like a green tree, able
  For love, war, or ambition, which reward
Their luckier votaries, till old age's tedium
Make some prefer the circulating medium.

About this time, as might have been anticipated,
  Seduced by youth and dangerous examples,
Don Juan grew, I fear, a little dissipated;
  Which is a sad thing, and not only tramples
On our fresh feelings, but—as being participated
  With all kinds of incorrigible samples
Of frail humanity—must make us selfish,
And shut our souls up in us like a shell-fish.

This we pass over. We will also pass
  The usual progress of intrigues between
Unequal matches, such as are, alas!
  A young lieutenant's with a not old queen,
But one who is not so youthful as she was
  In all the royalty of sweet seventeen.
Sovereigns may sway materials, but not matter,
And wrinkles, the d—d democrats, won't flatter.

And Death, the sovereign's sovereign, though the great
  Gracchus of all mortality, who levels
With his Agrarian laws the high estate
  Of him who feasts, and fights, and roars, and revels,
To one small grass-grown patch (which must await
  Corruption for its crop) with the poor devils

Who never had a foot of land till now,—
Death 's a reformer, all men must allow.

He lived (not Death, but Juan) in a hurry
  Of waste, and haste, and glare, and gloss, and glitter,
In this gay clime of bear-skins black and furry—
  Which (though I hate to say a thing that 's bitter)
Peep out sometimes, when things are in a flurry,
  Through all the 'purple and fine linen,' fitter
For Babylon's than Russia's royal harlot—
And neutralize her outward show of scarlet.

And this same state we won't describe: we would
  Perhaps from hearsay, or from recollection;
But getting nigh grim Dante's 'obscure wood,'
  That horrid equinox, that hateful section
Of human years, that half-way house, that rude
  Hut, whence wise travellers drive with circumspection
Life's sad post-horses o'er the dreary frontier
Of age, and looking back to youth, give one tear;—

I won't describe,—that is, if I can help
  Description; and I won't reflect,—that is,
If I can stave off thought, which—as a whelp
  Clings to its teat—sticks to me through the abyss
Of this odd labyrinth; or as the kelp
  Holds by the rock; or as a lover's kiss
Drains its first draught of lips:—but, as I said,
I won't philosophise, and will be read.

Juan, instead of courting courts, was courted,—
  A thing which happens rarely: this he owed
Much to his youth, and much to his reported
  Valour; much also to the blood he show'd,
Like a race-horse; much to each dress he sported,
  Which set the beauty off in which he glow'd,
As purple clouds befringe the sun; but most
He owed to an old woman and his post.

He wrote to Spain:—and all his near relations,
Perceiving he was in a handsome way
Of getting on himself, and finding stations
For cousins also, answer'd the same day.
Several prepared themselves for emigrations;
And eating ices, were o'erheard to say,
That with the addition of a slight pelisse,
Madrid's and Moscow's climes were of a piece.

His mother, Donna Inez, finding, too,
That in the lieu of drawing on his banker,
Where his assets were waxing rather few,
He had brought his spending to a handsome anchor,—
Replied, 'that she was glad to see him through
Those pleasures after which wild youth will hanker;
As the sole sign of man's being in his senses
Is, learning to reduce his past expenses.

'She also recommended him to God,
And no less to God's Son, as well as Mother,
Warn'd him against Greek worship, which looks odd
In Catholic eyes; but told him, too, to smother
Outward dislike, which don't look well abroad;
Inform'd him that he had a little brother
Born in a second wedlock; and above
All, praised the empress's maternal love.

'She could not too much give her approbation
Unto an empress, who preferr'd young men
Whose age, and what was better still, whose nation
And climate, stopp'd all scandal (now and then):—
At home it might have given her some vexation;
But where thermometers sunk down to ten,
Or five, or one, or zero, she could never
Believe that virtue thaw'd before the river.'

O for a forty-parson power to chant

Thy praise, Hypocrisy! Oh for a hymn
Loud as the virtues thou dost loudly vaunt,
Not practise! Oh for trumps of cherubim!
Or the ear-trumpet of my good old aunt,
Who, though her spectacles at last grew dim,
Drew quiet consolation through its hint,
When she no more could read the pious print.

She was no hypocrite at least, poor soul,
But went to heaven in as sincere a way
As any body on the elected roll,
Which portions out upon the judgment day
Heaven's freeholds, in a sort of doomsday scroll,
Such as the conqueror William did repay
His knights with, lotting others' properties
Into some sixty thousand new knights' fees.

I can't complain, whose ancestors are there,
Erneis, Radulphus—eight-and-forty manors
(If that my memory doth not greatly err)
Were their reward for following Billy's banners:
And though I can't help thinking 'twas scarce fair
To strip the Saxons of their hydes, like tanners;
Yet as they founded churches with the produce,
You'll deem, no doubt, they put it to a good use.

The gentle Juan flourish'd, though at times
He felt like other plants called sensitive,
Which shrink from touch, as monarchs do from rhymes,
Save such as Southey can afford to give.
Perhaps he long'd in bitter frosts for climes
In which the Neva's ice would cease to live
Before May-day: perhaps, despite his duty,
In royalty's vast arms he sigh'd for beauty:

Perhaps—but, sans perhaps, we need not seek
For causes young or old: the canker-worm
Will feed upon the fairest, freshest cheek,

As well as further drain the wither'd form:
Care, like a housekeeper, brings every week
His bills in, and however we may storm,
They must be paid: though six days smoothly run,
The seventh will bring blue devils or a dun.

I don't know how it was, but he grew sick:
The empress was alarm'd, and her physician
(The same who physick'd Peter) found the tick
Of his fierce pulse betoken a condition
Which augur'd of the dead, however quick
Itself, and show'd a feverish disposition;
At which the whole court was extremely troubled,
The sovereign shock'd, and all his medicines doubled.

Low were the whispers, manifold the rumours:
Some said he had been poison'd by Potemkin;
Others talk'd learnedly of certain tumours,
Exhaustion, or disorders of the same kin;
Some said 'twas a concoction of the humours,
Which with the blood too readily will claim kin;
Others again were ready to maintain,
'"Twas only the fatigue of last campaign.'

But here is one prescription out of many:
'Sodae sulphat. ʒvj., ʒss. Mannae optim.
Aq. fervent. f. ʒiss. ʒij. tinct. Sennae
Haustus' (And here the surgeon came and cupp'd him)
'℞ Pulv. Com gr. iij. Ipecacuanhae'
(With more beside if Juan had not stopp'd 'em).
'Bolus Potassae Sulphuret. sumendus,
Et haustus ter in die capiendus.'

This is the way physicians mend or end us,
Secundum artem: but although we sneer
In health—when ill, we call them to attend us,
Without the least propensity to jeer:
While that 'hiatus maxime deflendus'

To be fill'd up by spade or mattock's near,
Instead of gliding graciously down Lethe,
We tease mild Baillie, or soft Abernethy.

Juan demurr'd at this first notice to
Quit; and though death had threaten'd an ejection,
His youth and constitution bore him through,
And sent the doctors in a new direction.
But still his state was delicate: the hue
Of health but flicker'd with a faint reflection
Along his wasted cheek, and seem'd to gravel
The faculty—who said that he must travel.

The climate was too cold, they said, for him,
Meridian-born, to bloom in. This opinion
Made the chaste Catherine look a little grim,
Who did not like at first to lose her minion:
But when she saw his dazzling eye wax dim,
And drooping like an eagle's with clipt pinion,
She then resolved to send him on a mission,
But in a style becoming his condition.

There was just then a kind of a discussion,
A sort of treaty or negotiation
Between the British cabinet and Russian,
Maintain'd with all the due prevarication
With which great states such things are apt to push on;
Something about the Baltic's navigation,
Hides, train-oil, tallow, and the rights of Thetis,
Which Britons deem their 'uti possidetis.'

So Catherine, who had a handsome way
Of fitting out her favourites, conferr'd
This secret charge on Juan, to display
At once her royal splendour, and reward
His services. He kiss'd hands the next day,
Received instructions how to play his card,
Was laden with all kinds of gifts and honours,

Which show'd what great discernment was the donor's.

But she was lucky, and luck 's all. Your queens
  Are generally prosperous in reigning;
Which puzzles us to know what Fortune means.
  But to continue: though her years were waning
Her climacteric teased her like her teens;
  And though her dignity brook'd no complaining,
So much did Juan's setting off distress her,
She could not find at first a fit successor.

But time, the comforter, will come at last;
  And four-and-twenty hours, and twice that number
Of candidates requesting to be placed,
  Made Catherine taste next night a quiet slumber:—
Not that she meant to fix again in haste,
  Nor did she find the quantity encumber,
But always choosing with deliberation,
Kept the place open for their emulation.

While this high post of honour 's in abeyance,
  For one or two days, reader, we request
You'll mount with our young hero the conveyance
  Which wafted him from Petersburgh: the best
Barouche, which had the glory to display once
  The fair czarina's autocratic crest,
When, a new Iphigene, she went to Tauris,
Was given to her favourite, and now bore his.

A bull-dog, and a bullfinch, and an ermine,
  All private favourites of Don Juan;—for
(Let deeper sages the true cause determine)
  He had a kind of inclination, or
Weakness, for what most people deem mere vermin,
  Live animals: an old maid of threescore
For cats and birds more penchant ne'er display'd,
Although he was not old, nor even a maid;—

The animals aforesaid occupied
Their station: there were valets, secretaries,
In other vehicles; but at his side
Sat little Leila, who survived the parries
He made 'gainst Cossacque sabres, in the wide
Slaughter of Ismail. Though my wild Muse varies
Her note, she don't forget the infant girl
Whom he preserved, a pure and living pearl

Poor little thing! She was as fair as docile,
And with that gentle, serious character,
As rare in living beings as a fossile
Man, 'midst thy mouldy mammoths, 'grand Cuvier!'
Ill fitted was her ignorance to jostle
With this o'erwhelming world, where all must err:
But she was yet but ten years old, and therefore
Was tranquil, though she knew not why or wherefore.

Don Juan loved her, and she loved him, as
Nor brother, father, sister, daughter love.
I cannot tell exactly what it was;
He was not yet quite old enough to prove
Parental feelings, and the other class,
Call'd brotherly affection, could not move
His bosom,—for he never had a sister:
Ah! if he had, how much he would have miss'd her!

And still less was it sensual; for besides
That he was not an ancient debauchee
(Who like sour fruit, to stir their veins' salt tides,
As acids rouse a dormant alkali),
Although ('twill happen as our planet guides)
His youth was not the chastest that might be,
There was the purest Platonism at bottom
Of all his feelings—only he forgot 'em.

Just now there was no peril of temptation;
He loved the infant orphan he had saved,

As patriots (now and then) may love a nation;
   His pride, too, felt that she was not enslaved
Owing to him;—as also her salvation
   Through his means and the church's might be paved.
But one thing 's odd, which here must be inserted,
The little Turk refused to be converted.

'Twas strange enough she should retain the impression
   Through such a scene of change, and dread, and slaughter;
But though three bishops told her the transgression,
   She show'd a great dislike to holy water:
She also had no passion for confession;
   Perhaps she had nothing to confess:—no matter,
Whate'er the cause, the church made little of it—
She still held out that Mahomet was a prophet.

In fact, the only Christian she could bear
   Was Juan; whom she seem'd to have selected
In place of what her home and friends once were.
   He naturally loved what he protected:
And thus they form'd a rather curious pair,
   A guardian green in years, a ward connected
In neither clime, time, blood, with her defender;
And yet this want of ties made theirs more tender.

They journey'd on through Poland and through Warsaw,
   Famous for mines of salt and yokes of iron:
Through Courland also, which that famous farce saw
   Which gave her dukes the graceless name of 'Biron.'
'Tis the same landscape which the modern Mars saw,
   Who march'd to Moscow, led by Fame, the siren!
To lose by one month's frost some twenty years
Of conquest, and his guard of grenadiers.

Let this not seem an anti-climax:—'Oh!
   My guard! my old guard exclaim'd!' exclaim'd that god of clay.
Think of the Thunderer's falling down below
   Carotid-artery-cutting Castlereagh!

Alas, that glory should be chill'd by snow!
   But should we wish to warm us on our way
Through Poland, there is Kosciusko's name
Might scatter fire through ice, like Hecla's flame.

From Poland they came on through Prussia Proper,
   And Konigsberg the capital, whose vaunt,
Besides some veins of iron, lead, or copper,
   Has lately been the great Professor Kant.
Juan, who cared not a tobacco-stopper
   About philosophy, pursued his jaunt
To Germany, whose somewhat tardy millions
Have princes who spur more than their postilions.

And thence through Berlin, Dresden, and the like,
   Until he reach'd the castellated Rhine:—
Ye glorious Gothic scenes! how much ye strike
   All phantasies, not even excepting mine;
A grey wall, a green ruin, rusty pike,
   Make my soul pass the equinoctial line
Between the present and past worlds, and hover
Upon their airy confine, half-seas-over.

But Juan posted on through Manheim, Bonn,
   Which Drachenfels frowns over like a spectre
Of the good feudal times forever gone,
   On which I have not time just now to lecture.
From thence he was drawn onwards to Cologne,
   A city which presents to the inspector
Eleven thousand maidenheads of bone,
The greatest number flesh hath ever known.

From thence to Holland's Hague and Helvoetsluys,
   That water-land of Dutchmen and of ditches,
Where juniper expresses its best juice,
   The poor man's sparkling substitute for riches.
Senates and sages have condemn'd its use—
   But to deny the mob a cordial, which is

Too often all the clothing, meat, or fuel,
Good government has left them, seems but cruel.

Here he embark'd, and with a flowing sail
  Went bounding for the island of the free,
Towards which the impatient wind blew half a gale;
  High dash'd the spray, the bows dipp'd in the sea,
And sea-sick passengers turn'd somewhat pale;
  But Juan, season'd, as he well might be,
By former voyages, stood to watch the skiffs
Which pass'd, or catch the first glimpse of the cliffs.

At length they rose, like a white wall along
  The blue sea's border; and Don Juan felt—
What even young strangers feel a little strong
  At the first sight of Albion's chalky belt—
A kind of pride that he should be among
  Those haughty shopkeepers, who sternly dealt
Their goods and edicts out from pole to pole,
And made the very billows pay them toll.

I've no great cause to love that spot of earth,
  Which holds what might have been the noblest nation;
But though I owe it little but my birth,
  I feel a mix'd regret and veneration
For its decaying fame and former worth.
  Seven years (the usual term of transportation)
Of absence lay one's old resentments level,
When a man's country 's going to the devil.

Alas! could she but fully, truly, know
  How her great name is now throughout abhorr'd:
How eager all the earth is for the blow
  Which shall lay bare her bosom to the sword;
How all the nations deem her their worst foe,
  That worse than worst of foes, the once adored
False friend, who held out freedom to mankind,
And now would chain them, to the very mind:—

Would she be proud, or boast herself the free,
Who is but first of slaves? The nations are
In prison,—but the gaoler, what is he?
No less a victim to the bolt and bar.
Is the poor privilege to turn the key
Upon the captive, freedom? He 's as far
From the enjoyment of the earth and air
Who watches o'er the chain, as they who wear.

Don Juan now saw Albion's earliest beauties,
Thy cliffs, dear Dover! harbour, and hotel;
Thy custom-house, with all its delicate duties;
Thy waiters running mucks at every bell;
Thy packets, all whose passengers are booties
To those who upon land or water dwell;
And last, not least, to strangers uninstructed,
Thy long, long bills, whence nothing is deducted.

Juan, though careless, young, and magnifique,
And rich in rubles, diamonds, cash, and credit,
Who did not limit much his bills per week,
Yet stared at this a little, though he paid it
(His Maggior Duomo, a smart, subtle Greek,
Before him summ'd the awful scroll and read it);
But doubtless as the air, though seldom sunny,
Is free, the respiration's worth the money.

On with the horses! Off to Canterbury!
Tramp, tramp o'er pebble, and splash, splash through puddle;
Hurrah! how swiftly speeds the post so merry!
Not like slow Germany, wherein they muddle
Along the road, as if they went to bury
Their fare; and also pause besides, to fuddle
With 'schnapps'—sad dogs! whom 'Hundsfot,' or 'Verflucter,'
Affect no more than lightning a conductor.

Now there is nothing gives a man such spirits,

Leavening his blood as cayenne doth a curry,
As going at full speed—no matter where its
Direction be, so 'tis but in a hurry,
And merely for the sake of its own merits;
For the less cause there is for all this flurry,
The greater is the pleasure in arriving
At the great end of travel—which is driving.

They saw at Canterbury the cathedral;
Black Edward's helm, and Becket's bloody stone,
Were pointed out as usual by the bedral,
In the same quaint, uninterested tone:—
There's glory again for you, gentle reader! All
Ends in a rusty casque and dubious bone,
Half-solved into these sodas or magnesias;
Which form that bitter draught, the human species.

The effect on Juan was of course sublime:
He breathed a thousand Cressys, as he saw
That casque, which never stoop'd except to Time.
Even the bold Churchman's tomb excited awe,
Who died in the then great attempt to climb
O'er kings, who now at least must talk of law
Before they butcher. Little Leila gazed,
And ask'd why such a structure had been raised:

And being told it was 'God's house,' she said
He was well lodged, but only wonder'd how
He suffer'd Infidels in his homestead,
The cruel Nazarenes, who had laid low
His holy temples in the lands which bred
The True Believers:—and her infant brow
Was bent with grief that Mahomet should resign
A mosque so noble, flung like pearls to swine.

O! oh! through meadows managed like a garden,
A paradise of hops and high production;
For after years of travel by a bard in

Countries of greater heat, but lesser suction,
A green field is a sight which makes him pardon
The absence of that more sublime construction,
Which mixes up vines, olives, precipices,
Glaciers, volcanos, oranges, and ices.

And when I think upon a pot of beer—
But I won't weep!—and so drive on, postilions!
As the smart boys spurr'd fast in their career,
Juan admired these highways of free millions;
A country in all senses the most dear
To foreigner or native, save some silly ones,
Who 'kick against the pricks' just at this juncture,
And for their pains get only a fresh puncture.

What a delightful thing 's a turnpike road!
So smooth, so level, such a mode of shaving
The earth, as scarce the eagle in the broad
Air can accomplish, with his wide wings waving.
Had such been cut in Phaeton's time, the god
Had told his son to satisfy his craving
With the York mail;—but onward as we roll,
'Surgit amari aliquid'—the toll!

Alas, how deeply painful is all payment!
Take lives, take wives, take aught except men's purses:
As Machiavel shows those in purple raiment,
Such is the shortest way to general curses.
They hate a murderer much less than a claimant
On that sweet ore which every body nurses;—
Kill a man's family, and he may brook it,
But keep your hands out of his breeches' pocket.

So said the Florentine: ye monarchs, hearken
To your instructor. Juan now was borne,
Just as the day began to wane and darken,
O'er the high hill, which looks with pride or scorn
Toward the great city.—Ye who have a spark in

Your veins of Cockney spirit, smile or mourn
According as you take things well or ill;—
Bold Britons, we are now on Shooter's Hill!

The sun went down, the smoke rose up, as from
A half-unquench'd volcano, o'er a space
Which well beseem'd the 'Devil's drawing-room,'
As some have qualified that wondrous place:
But Juan felt, though not approaching home,
As one who, though he were not of the race,
Revered the soil, of those true sons the mother,
Who butcher'd half the earth, and bullied t' other.

A mighty mass of brick, and smoke, and shipping,
Dirty and dusky, but as wide as eye
Could reach, with here and there a sail just skipping
In sight, then lost amidst the forestry
Of masts; a wilderness of steeples peeping
On tiptoe through their sea-coal canopy;
A huge, dun cupola, like a foolscap crown
On a fool's head—and there is London Town!

But Juan saw not this: each wreath of smoke
Appear'd to him but as the magic vapour
Of some alchymic furnace, from whence broke
The wealth of worlds (a wealth of tax and paper):
The gloomy clouds, which o'er it as a yoke
Are bow'd, and put the sun out like a taper,
Were nothing but the natural atmosphere,
Extremely wholesome, though but rarely clear.

He paused—and so will I; as doth a crew
Before they give their broadside. By and by,
My gentle countrymen, we will renew
Our old acquaintance; and at least I'll try
To tell you truths you will not take as true,
Because they are so;—a male Mrs. Fry,
With a soft besom will I sweep your halls,

And brush a web or two from off the walls.

O Mrs. Fry! Why go to Newgate? Why
  Preach to poor rogues? And wherefore not begin
With Carlton, or with other houses? Try
  Your head at harden'd and imperial sin.
To mend the people 's an absurdity,
  A jargon, a mere philanthropic din,
Unless you make their betters better:—Fy!
I thought you had more religion, Mrs. Fry.

Teach them the decencies of good threescore;
  Cure them of tours, hussar and highland dresses;
Tell them that youth once gone returns no more,
  That hired huzzas redeem no land's distresses;
Tell them Sir William Curtis is a bore,
  Too dull even for the dullest of excesses,
The witless Falstaff of a hoary Hal,
A fool whose bells have ceased to ring at all.

Tell them, though it may be perhaps too late,
  On life's worn confine, jaded, bloated, sated,
To set up vain pretence of being great,
  'Tis not so to be good; and be it stated,
The worthiest kings have ever loved least state;
  And tell them—But you won't, and I have prated
Just now enough; but by and by I'll prattle
Like Roland's horn in Roncesvalles' battle.

Don Juan.

CANTO THE ELEVENTH.

I.

When Bishop Berkeley said "there was no matter," 1
And prov'd it—'t was no matter what he said:
They say his system 'tis in vain to batter,
Too subtle for the airiest human head;
And yet who can believe it? I would shatter
Gladly all matters down to stone or lead,
Or adamant, to find the world a spirit,
And wear my head, denying that I wear it.

II.

What a sublime discovery t'was to make the 2
Universe universal egotism!
That all 's ideal—*all ourselves:* I'll stake the
World (be it what you will) that *that's* no schism.
O Doubt!—if thou be'st Doubt, for which some take thee,
But which I doubt extremely—thou sole prism
Of the Truth's rays, spoil not my draught of spirit!
Heaven's brandy, though our brain can hardly bear it.

III.

For, ever and anon, comes Indigestion, 3
(Not the most "dainty Ariel") and perplexes
Our soarings with another sort of question:
And that which, after all, my spirit vexes,
Is, that I find no spot where man can rest eye on,
Without confusion of the sorts and sexes,
Of beings, stars, and this unriddled wonder,
The world, which at the worst's a glorious blunder,—

IV.

If it be chance; or if it be according 4
To the old text, still better:—lest it should
Turn out so, we'll say nothing 'gainst the wording,
As several people think such hazards rude.
They're right; our days are too brief for affording
Space to dispute what *no one* ever could
Decide, and *every body one day* will
Know very clearly—or at least lie still.

T

CANTO THE ELEVENTH.

When Bishop Berkeley said ‘there was no matter,’
And proved it—’twas no matter what he said:
They say his system ’tis in vain to batter,
Too subtle for the airiest human head;
And yet who can believe it? I would shatter
Gladly all matters down to stone or lead,
Or adamant, to find the world a spirit,
And wear my head, denying that I wear it.

What a sublime discovery ’twas to make the
Universe universal egotism,
That all ’s ideal—all ourselves: I’ll stake the
World (be it what you will) that that ’s no schism.
O Doubt!—if thou be’st Doubt, for which some take thee;
But which I doubt extremely—thou sole prism
Of the Truth’s rays, spoil not my draught of spirit!
Heaven’s brandy, though our brain can hardly bear it.

For ever and anon comes Indigestion,
(Not the most ‘dainty Ariel’) and perplexes
Our soarings with another sort of question:
And that which after all my spirit vexes,
Is, that I find no spot where man can rest eye on,
Without confusion of the sorts and sexes,
Of beings, stars, and this unriddled wonder,
The world, which at the worst ’s a glorious blunder—

If it be chance; or if it be according
To the old text, still better:—lest it should
Turn out so, we’ll say nothing ’gainst the wording,
As several people think such hazards rude.
They’re right; our days are too brief for affording

Space to dispute what no one ever could
Decide, and every body one day will
Know very clearly—or at least lie still.

And therefore will I leave off metaphysical
Discussion, which is neither here nor there:
If I agree that what is, is; then this I call
Being quite perspicuous and extremely fair;
The truth is, I've grown lately rather phthisical:
I don't know what the reason is—the air
Perhaps; but as I suffer from the shocks
Of illness, I grow much more orthodox.

The first attack at once proved the Divinity
(But that I never doubted, nor the Devil);
The next, the Virgin's mystical virginity;
The third, the usual Origin of Evil;
The fourth at once establish'd the whole Trinity
On so uncontrovertible a level,
That I devoutly wish'd the three were four,
On purpose to believe so much the more.

To our Theme.—The man who has stood on the Acropolis,
And look'd down over Attica; or he
Who has sail'd where picturesque Constantinople is,
Or seen Timbuctoo, or hath taken tea
In small-eyed China's crockery-ware metropolis,
Or sat amidst the bricks of Nineveh,
May not think much of London's first appearance—
But ask him what he thinks of it a year hence?

Don Juan had got out on Shooter's Hill;
Sunset the time, the place the same declivity
Which looks along that vale of good and ill
Where London streets ferment in full activity;
While every thing around was calm and still,
Except the creak of wheels, which on their pivot he
Heard,—and that bee-like, bubbling, busy hum

Of cities, that boil over with their scum:—

I say, Don Juan, wrapt in contemplation,
  Walk'd on behind his carriage, o'er the summit,
And lost in wonder of so great a nation,
  Gave way to 't, since he could not overcome it.
'And here,' he cried, 'is Freedom's chosen station;
  Here peals the people's voice, nor can entomb it
Racks, prisons, inquisitions; resurrection
Awaits it, each new meeting or election.

'Here are chaste wives, pure lives; here people pay
  But what they please; and if that things be dear,
'Tis only that they love to throw away
  Their cash, to show how much they have a-year.
Here laws are all inviolate; none lay
  Traps for the traveller; every highway 's clear:
Here—' he was interrupted by a knife,
With,—'Damn your eyes! your money or your life!'

These freeborn sounds proceeded from four pads
  In ambush laid, who had perceived him loiter
Behind his carriage; and, like handy lads,
  Had seized the lucky hour to reconnoitre,
In which the heedless gentleman who gads
  Upon the road, unless he prove a fighter,
May find himself within that isle of riches
Exposed to lose his life as well as breeches.

Juan, who did not understand a word
  Of English, save their shibboleth, 'God damn!'
And even that he had so rarely heard,
  He sometimes thought 'twas only their 'Salam,'
Or 'God be with you!'—and 'tis not absurd
  To think so: for half English as I am
(To my misfortune), never can I say
I heard them wish 'God with you,' save that way;—

Juan yet quickly understood their gesture,
And being somewhat choleric and sudden,
Drew forth a pocket pistol from his vesture,
And fired it into one assailant's pudding—
Who fell, as rolls an ox o'er in his pasture,
And roar'd out, as he writhed his native mud in,
Unto his nearest follower or henchman,
'Oh Jack! I'm floor'd by that 'ere bloody Frenchman!'

On which Jack and his train set off at speed,
And Juan's suite, late scatter'd at a distance,
Came up, all marvelling at such a deed,
And offering, as usual, late assistance.
Juan, who saw the moon's late minion bleed
As if his veins would pour out his existence,
Stood calling out for bandages and lint,
And wish'd he had been less hasty with his flint.

'Perhaps,' thought he, 'it is the country's wont
To welcome foreigners in this way: now
I recollect some innkeepers who don't
Differ, except in robbing with a bow,
In lieu of a bare blade and brazen front.
But what is to be done? I can't allow
The fellow to lie groaning on the road:
So take him up; I'll help you with the load.'

But ere they could perform this pious duty,
The dying man cried, 'Hold! I've got my gruel!
O for a glass of max! We've miss'd our booty;
Let me die where I am!' And as the fuel
Of life shrunk in his heart, and thick and sooty
The drops fell from his death-wound, and he drew ill
His breath,—he from his swelling throat untied
A kerchief, crying, 'Give Sal that!'—and died.

The cravat stain'd with bloody drops fell down
Before Don Juan's feet: he could not tell

Exactly why it was before him thrown,
Nor what the meaning of the man's farewell.
Poor Tom was once a kiddy upon town,
A thorough varmint, and a real swell,
Full flash, all fancy, until fairly diddled,
His pockets first and then his body riddled.

Don Juan, having done the best he could
In all the circumstances of the case,
As soon as 'Crowner's quest' allow'd, pursued
His travels to the capital apace;—
Esteeming it a little hard he should
In twelve hours' time, and very little space,
Have been obliged to slay a freeborn native
In self-defence: this made him meditative.

He from the world had cut off a great man,
Who in his time had made heroic bustle.
Who in a row like Tom could lead the van,
Booze in the ken, or at the spellken hustle?
Who queer a flat? Who (spite of Bow Street's ban)
On the high toby-spice so flash the muzzle?
Who on a lark, with black-eyed Sal (his blowing),
So prime, so swell, so nutty, and so knowing?

But Tom's no more—and so no more of Tom.
Heroes must die; and by God's blessing 'tis
Not long before the most of them go home.
Hail! Thamis, Hail! Upon thy verge it is
That Juan's chariot, rolling like a drum
In thunder, holds the way it can't well miss,
Through Kennington and all the other 'tons,'
Which makes us wish ourselves in town at once;—

Through Groves, so call'd as being void of trees
(Like lucus from no light); through prospects named
Mount Pleasant, as containing nought to please,
Nor much to climb; through little boxes framed

Of bricks, to let the dust in at your ease,
With 'To be let' upon their doors proclaim'd;
Through 'Rows' most modestly call'd 'Paradise,'
Which Eve might quit without much sacrifice;—

Through coaches, drays, choked turnpikes, and a whirl
Of wheels, and roar of voices, and confusion;
Here taverns wooing to a pint of 'purl,'
There mails fast flying off like a delusion;
There barbers' blocks with periwigs in curl
In windows; here the lamplighter's infusion
Slowly distill'd into the glimmering glass
(For in those days we had not got to gas);—

Through this, and much, and more, is the approach
Of travellers to mighty Babylon:
Whether they come by horse, or chaise, or coach,
With slight exceptions, all the ways seem one.
I could say more, but do not choose to encroach
Upon the Guide-book's privilege. The sun
Had set some time, and night was on the ridge
Of twilight, as the party cross'd the bridge,—

That 's rather fine. The gentle sound of Thamis—
Who vindicates a moment, too, his stream,
Though hardly heard through multifarious 'damme's'—
The lamps of Westminster's more regular gleam,
The breadth of pavement, and yon shrine where fame is
A spectral resident—whose pallid beam
In shape of moonshine hovers o'er the pile—
Make this a sacred part of Albion's isle.

The Druids' groves are gone—so much the better:
Stone-Henge is not—but what the devil is it?—
But Bedlam still exists with its sage fetter,
That madmen may not bite you on a visit;
The Bench too seats or suits full many a debtor;
The Mansion House too (though some people quiz it)

To me appears a stiff yet grand erection;
But then the Abbey 's worth the whole collection.

The line of lights, too, up to Charing Cross,
Pall Mall, and so forth, have a coruscation
Like gold as in comparison to dross,
Match'd with the Continent's illumination,
Whose cities Night by no means deigns to gloss.
The French were not yet a lamp-lighting nation,
And when they grew so—on their new-found lantern,
Instead of wicks, they made a wicked man turn.

A row of gentlemen along the streets
Suspended may illuminate mankind,
As also bonfires made of country seats;
But the old way is best for the purblind:
The other looks like phosphorus on sheets,
A sort of ignis fatuus to the mind,
Which, though 'tis certain to perplex and frighten,
Must burn more mildly ere it can enlighten.

But London 's so well lit, that if Diogenes
Could recommence to hunt his honest man,
And found him not amidst the various progenies
Of this enormous city's spreading span,
'Twere not for want of lamps to aid his dodging his
Yet undiscover'd treasure. What I can,
I've done to find the same throughout life's journey,
But see the world is only one attorney.

Over the stones still rattling up Pall Mall,
Through crowds and carriages, but waxing thinner
As thunder'd knockers broke the long seal'd spell
Of doors 'gainst duns, and to an early dinner
Admitted a small party as night fell,—
Don Juan, our young diplomatic sinner,
Pursued his path, and drove past some hotels,
St. James's Palace and St. James's 'Hells.'

They reach'd the hotel: forth stream'd from the front door
A tide of well-clad waiters, and around
The mob stood, and as usual several score
Of those pedestrian Paphians who abound
In decent London when the daylight 's o'er;
Commodious but immoral, they are found
Useful, like Malthus, in promoting marriage.—
But Juan now is stepping from his carriage

Into one of the sweetest of hotels,
Especially for foreigners—and mostly
For those whom favour or whom fortune swells,
And cannot find a bill's small items costly.
There many an envoy either dwelt or dwells
(The den of many a diplomatic lost lie),
Until to some conspicuous square they pass,
And blazon o'er the door their names in brass.

Juan, whose was a delicate commission,
Private, though publicly important, bore
No title to point out with due precision
The exact affair on which he was sent o'er.
'Twas merely known, that on a secret mission
A foreigner of rank had graced our shore,
Young, handsome, and accomplish'd, who was said
(In whispers) to have turn'd his sovereign's head.

Some rumour also of some strange adventures
Had gone before him, and his wars and loves;
And as romantic heads are pretty painters,
And, above all, an Englishwoman's roves
Into the excursive, breaking the indentures
Of sober reason wheresoe'er it moves,
He found himself extremely in the fashion,
Which serves our thinking people for a passion.

I don't mean that they are passionless, but quite

The contrary; but then 'tis in the head;
Yet as the consequences are as bright
As if they acted with the heart instead,
What after all can signify the site
Of ladies' lucubrations? So they lead
In safety to the place for which you start,
What matters if the road be head or heart?

Juan presented in the proper place,
To proper placemen, every Russ credential;
And was received with all the due grimace
By those who govern in the mood potential,
Who, seeing a handsome stripling with smooth face,
Thought (what in state affairs is most essential)
That they as easily might do the youngster,
As hawks may pounce upon a woodland songster.

They err'd, as aged men will do; but by
And by we'll talk of that; and if we don't,
'Twill be because our notion is not high
Of politicians and their double front,
Who live by lies, yet dare not boldly lie:—
Now what I love in women is, they won't
Or can't do otherwise than lie, but do it
So well, the very truth seems falsehood to it.

And, after all, what is a lie? 'Tis but
The truth in masquerade; and I defy
Historians, heroes, lawyers, priests, to put
A fact without some leaven of a lie.
The very shadow of true Truth would shut
Up annals, revelations, poesy,
And prophecy—except it should be dated
Some years before the incidents related.

Praised be all liars and all lies! Who now
Can tax my mild Muse with misanthropy?
She rings the world's 'Te Deum,' and her brow

Blushes for those who will not:—but to sigh
Is idle; let us like most others bow,
Kiss hands, feet, any part of majesty,
After the good example of ‘Green Erin,’
Whose shamrock now seems rather worse for wearing.

Don Juan was presented, and his dress
And mien excited general admiration—
I don’t know which was more admired or less:
One monstrous diamond drew much observation,
Which Catherine in a moment of ‘ivresse’
(In love or brandy’s fervent fermentation)
Bestow’d upon him, as the public learn’d;
And, to say truth, it had been fairly earn’d.

Besides the ministers and underlings,
Who must be courteous to the accredited
Diplomatists of rather wavering kings,
Until their royal riddle ’s fully read,
The very clerks,—those somewhat dirty springs
Of office, or the house of office, fed
By foul corruption into streams,—even they
Were hardly rude enough to earn their pay:

And insolence no doubt is what they are
Employ’d for, since it is their daily labour,
In the dear offices of peace or war;
And should you doubt, pray ask of your next neighbour,
When for a passport, or some other bar
To freedom, he applied (a grief and a bore),
If he found not his spawn of taxborn riches,
Like lap-dogs, the least civil sons of b—s.

But Juan was received with much ‘empressement:’—
These phrases of refinement I must borrow
From our next neighbours’ land, where, like a chessman,
There is a move set down for joy or sorrow
Not only in mere talking, but the press. Man

In islands is, it seems, downright and thorough,
More than on continents—as if the sea
(See Billingsgate) made even the tongue more free.

And yet the British ‘Damme’ ’s rather Attic:
Your continental oaths are but incontinent,
And turn on things which no aristocratic
Spirit would name, and therefore even I won’t anent
This subject quote; as it would be schismatic
In politesse, and have a sound affronting in ’t:—
But ‘Damme’ ’s quite ethereal, though too daring—
Platonic blasphemy, the soul of swearing.

For downright rudeness, ye may stay at home;
For true or false politeness (and scarce that
Now) you may cross the blue deep and white foam—
The first the emblem (rarely though) of what
You leave behind, the next of much you come
To meet. However, ’tis no time to chat
On general topics: poems must confine
Themselves to unity, like this of mine.

In the great world,—which, being interpreted,
Meaneth the west or worst end of a city,
And about twice two thousand people bred
By no means to be very wise or witty,
But to sit up while others lie in bed,
And look down on the universe with pity,—
Juan, as an inveterate patrician,
Was well received by persons of condition.

He was a bachelor, which is a matter
Of import both to virgin and to bride,
The former’s hymeneal hopes to flatter;
And (should she not hold fast by love or pride)
’Tis also of some moment to the latter:
A rib ’s a thorn in a wed gallant’s side,
Requires decorum, and is apt to double

The horrid sin—and what 's still worse, the trouble.

But Juan was a bachelor—of arts,
And parts, and hearts: he danced and sung, and had
An air as sentimental as Mozart's
Softest of melodies; and could be sad
Or cheerful, without any 'flaws or starts,'
Just at the proper time; and though a lad,
Had seen the world—which is a curious sight,
And very much unlike what people write.

Fair virgins blush'd upon him; wedded dames
Bloom'd also in less transitory hues;
For both commodities dwell by the Thames,
The painting and the painted; youth, ceruse,
Against his heart preferr'd their usual claims,
Such as no gentleman can quite refuse:
Daughters admired his dress, and pious mothers
Inquired his income, and if he had brothers.

The milliners who furnish 'drapery Misses'
Throughout the season, upon speculation
Of payment ere the honey-moon's last kisses
Have waned into a crescent's coruscation,
Thought such an opportunity as this is,
Of a rich foreigner's initiation,
Not to be overlook'd—and gave such credit,
That future bridegrooms swore, and sigh'd, and paid it.

The Blues, that tender tribe who sigh o'er sonnets,
And with the pages of the last Review
Line the interior of their heads or bonnets,
Advanced in all their azure's highest hue:
They talk'd bad French or Spanish, and upon its
Late authors ask'd him for a hint or two;
And which was softest, Russian or Castilian?
And whether in his travels he saw Ilion?

Juan, who was a little superficial,
And not in literature a great Drawcansir,
Examined by this learned and especial
Jury of matrons, scarce knew what to answer:
His duties warlike, loving or official,
His steady application as a dancer,
Had kept him from the brink of Hippocrene,
Which now he found was blue instead of green.

However, he replied at hazard, with
A modest confidence and calm assurance,
Which lent his learned lucubrations pith,
And pass'd for arguments of good endurance.
That prodigy, Miss Araminta Smith
(Who at sixteen translated 'Hercules Furens'
Into as furious English), with her best look,
Set down his sayings in her common-place book.

Juan knew several languages—as well
He might—and brought them up with skill, in time
To save his fame with each accomplish'd belle,
Who still regretted that he did not rhyme.
There wanted but this requisite to swell
His qualities (with them) into sublime:
Lady Fitz-Frisky, and Miss Maevia Mannish,
Both long'd extremely to be sung in Spanish.

However, he did pretty well, and was
Admitted as an aspirant to all
The coteries, and, as in Banquo's glass,
At great assemblies or in parties small,
He saw ten thousand living authors pass,
That being about their average numeral;
Also the eighty 'greatest living poets,'
As every paltry magazine can show its.

In twice five years the 'greatest living poet,'
Like to the champion in the fisty ring,

Is call'd on to support his claim, or show it,
  Although 'tis an imaginary thing.
Even I—albeit I'm sure I did not know it,
  Nor sought of foolscap subjects to be king—
Was reckon'd a considerable time,
The grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme.

But Juan was my Moscow, and Faliero
  My Leipsic, and my Mount Saint Jean seems Cain:
'La Belle Alliance' of dunces down at zero,
  Now that the Lion 's fall'n, may rise again:
But I will fall at least as fell my hero;
  Nor reign at all, or as a monarch reign;
Or to some lonely isle of gaolers go,
With turncoat Southey for my turnkey Lowe.

Sir Walter reign'd before me; Moore and Campbell
  Before and after; but now grown more holy,
The Muses upon Sion's hill must ramble
  With poets almost clergymen, or wholly;
And Pegasus hath a psalmodic amble
  Beneath the very Reverend Rowley Powley,
Who shoes the glorious animal with stilts,
A modern Ancient Pistol—by the hilts?

Then there's my gentle Euphues, who, they say,
  Sets up for being a sort of moral me;
He'll find it rather difficult some day
  To turn out both, or either, it may be.
Some persons think that Coleridge hath the sway;
  And Wordsworth has supporters, two or three;
And that deep-mouth'd Boeotian 'Savage Landor'
Has taken for a swan rogue Southey's gander.

John Keats, who was kill'd off by one critique,
  Just as he really promised something great,
If not intelligible, without Greek
  Contrived to talk about the gods of late,

Much as they might have been supposed to speak.
Poor fellow! His was an untoward fate;
'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
Should let itself be snuff'd out by an article.

The list grows long of live and dead pretenders
To that which none will gain—or none will know
The conqueror at least; who, ere Time renders
His last award, will have the long grass grow
Above his burnt-out brain, and sapless cinders.
If I might augur, I should rate but low
Their chances; they're too numerous, like the thirty
Mock tyrants, when Rome's annals wax'd but dirty.

This is the literary lower empire,
Where the praetorian bands take up the matter;—
A 'dreadful trade,' like his who 'gathers samphire,'
The insolent soldiery to soothe and flatter,
With the same feelings as you'd coax a vampire.
Now, were I once at home, and in good satire,
I'd try conclusions with those Janizaries,
And show them what an intellectual war is.

I think I know a trick or two, would turn
Their flanks;—but it is hardly worth my while
With such small gear to give myself concern:
Indeed I've not the necessary bile;
My natural temper 's really aught but stern,
And even my Muse's worst reproof 's a smile;
And then she drops a brief and modern curtsy,
And glides away, assured she never hurts ye.

My Juan, whom I left in deadly peril
Amongst live poets and blue ladies, past
With some small profit through that field so sterile,
Being tired in time, and, neither least nor last,
Left it before he had been treated very ill;
And henceforth found himself more gaily class'd

Amongst the higher spirits of the day,
The sun's true son, no vapour, but a ray.

His morns he pass'd in business—which, dissected,
  Was like all business a laborious nothing
That leads to lassitude, the most infected
  And Centaur Nessus garb of mortal clothing,
And on our sofas makes us lie dejected,
  And talk in tender horrors of our loathing
All kinds of toil, save for our country's good—
Which grows no better, though 'tis time it should.

His afternoons he pass'd in visits, luncheons,
  Lounging and boxing; and the twilight hour
In riding round those vegetable puncheons
  Call'd 'Parks,' where there is neither fruit nor flower
Enough to gratify a bee's slight munchings;
  But after all it is the only 'bower'
(In Moore's phrase), where the fashionable fair
Can form a slight acquaintance with fresh air.

Then dress, then dinner, then awakes the world!
  Then glare the lamps, then whirl the wheels, then roar
Through street and square fast flashing chariots hurl'd
  Like harness'd meteors; then along the floor
Chalk mimics painting; then festoons are twirl'd;
  Then roll the brazen thunders of the door,
Which opens to the thousand happy few
An earthly paradise of 'Or Molu.'

There stands the noble hostess, nor shall sink
  With the three-thousandth curtsy; there the waltz,
The only dance which teaches girls to think,
  Makes one in love even with its very faults.
Saloon, room, hall, o'erflow beyond their brink,
  And long the latest of arrivals halts,
'Midst royal dukes and dames condemn'd to climb,
And gain an inch of staircase at a time.

Thrice happy he who, after a survey
Of the good company, can win a corner,
A door that's in or boudoir out of the way,
Where he may fix himself like small 'Jack Horner,'
And let the Babel round run as it may,
And look on as a mourner, or a scorner,
Or an approver, or a mere spectator,
Yawning a little as the night grows later.

But this won't do, save by and by; and he
Who, like Don Juan, takes an active share,
Must steer with care through all that glittering sea
Of gems and plumes and pearls and silks, to where
He deems it is his proper place to be;
Dissolving in the waltz to some soft air,
Or proudlier prancing with mercurial skill
Where Science marshals forth her own quadrille.

Or, if he dance not, but hath higher views
Upon an heiress or his neighbour's bride,
Let him take care that that which he pursues
Is not at once too palpably descried.
Full many an eager gentleman oft rues
His haste: impatience is a blundering guide,
Amongst a people famous for reflection,
Who like to play the fool with circumspection.

But, if you can contrive, get next at supper;
Or, if forestalled, get opposite and ogle:—
O, ye ambrosial moments! always upper
In mind, a sort of sentimental bogle,
Which sits for ever upon memory's crupper,
The ghost of vanish'd pleasures once in vogue! Ill
Can tender souls relate the rise and fall
Of hopes and fears which shake a single ball.

But these precautionary hints can touch

Only the common run, who must pursue,
And watch, and ward; whose plans a word too much
Or little overturns; and not the few
Or many (for the number's sometimes such)
Whom a good mien, especially if new,
Or fame, or name, for wit, war, sense, or nonsense,
Permits whate'er they please, or did not long since.

Our hero, as a hero, young and handsome,
Noble, rich, celebrated, and a stranger,
Like other slaves of course must pay his ransom,
Before he can escape from so much danger
As will environ a conspicuous man. Some
Talk about poetry, and 'rack and manger,'
And ugliness, disease, as toil and trouble;—
I wish they knew the life of a young noble.

They are young, but know not youth—it is anticipated;
Handsome but wasted, rich without a sou;
Their vigour in a thousand arms is dissipated;
Their cash comes from, their wealth goes to a Jew;
Both senates see their nightly votes participated
Between the tyrant's and the tribunes' crew;
And having voted, dined, drunk, gamed, and whored,
The family vault receives another lord.

'Where is the world?' cries Young, at eighty—'Where
The world in which a man was born? 'Alas!
Where is the world of eight years past? 'Twas there—
I look for it—'tis gone, a globe of glass!
Crack'd, shiver'd, vanish'd, scarcely gazed on, ere
A silent change dissolves the glittering mass.
Statesmen, chiefs, orators, queens, patriots, kings,
And dandies, all are gone on the wind's wings.

Where is Napoleon the Grand? God knows.
Where little Castlereagh? The devil can tell:
Where Grattan, Curran, Sheridan, all those

Who bound the bar or senate in their spell?
Where is the unhappy Queen, with all her woes?
And where the Daughter, whom the Isles loved well?
Where are those martyr'd saints the Five per Cents?
And where—oh, where the devil are the rents?

Where's Brummel? Dish'd. Where's Long Pole Wellesley? Diddled.
Where's Whitbread? Romilly? Where's George the Third?
Where is his will? (That 's not so soon unriddled.)
And where is 'Fum' the Fourth, our 'royal bird?'
Gone down, it seems, to Scotland to be fiddled
Unto by Sawney's violin, we have heard:
'Caw me, caw thee'—for six months hath been hatching
This scene of royal itch and loyal scratching.

Where is Lord This? And where my Lady That?
The Honourable Mistresses and Misses?
Some laid aside like an old Opera hat,
Married, unmarried, and remarried (this is
An evolution oft performed of late).
Where are the Dublin shouts—and London hisses?
Where are the Grenvilles? Turn'd as usual. Where
My friends the Whigs? Exactly where they were.

Where are the Lady Carolines and Franceses?
Divorced or doing thereanent. Ye annals
So brilliant, where the list of routs and dances is,—
Thou Morning Post, sole record of the panels
Broken in carriages, and all the phantasies
Of fashion,—say what streams now fill those channels?
Some die, some fly, some languish on the Continent,
Because the times have hardly left them one tenant.

Some who once set their caps at cautious dukes,
Have taken up at length with younger brothers:
Some heiresses have bit at sharpers' hooks:
Some maids have been made wives, some merely mothers;
Others have lost their fresh and fairy looks:

In short, the list of alterations bothers.
There's little strange in this, but something strange is
The unusual quickness of these common changes.

Talk not of seventy years as age; in seven
I have seen more changes, down from monarchs to
The humblest individual under heaven,
Than might suffice a moderate century through.
I knew that nought was lasting, but now even
Change grows too changeable, without being new:
Nought 's permanent among the human race,
Except the Whigs not getting into place.

I have seen Napoleon, who seem'd quite a Jupiter,
Shrink to a Saturn. I have seen a Duke
(No matter which) turn politician stupider,
If that can well be, than his wooden look.
But it is time that I should hoist my 'blue Peter,'
And sail for a new theme:—I have seen—and shook
To see it—the king hiss'd, and then caress'd;
But don't pretend to settle which was best.

I have seen the Landholders without a rap—
I have seen Joanna Southcote—I have seen—
The House of Commons turn'd to a tax-trap—
I have seen that sad affair of the late Queen—
I have seen crowns worn instead of a fool's cap—
I have seen a Congress doing all that 's mean—
I have seen some nations like o'erloaded asses
Kick off their burthens, meaning the high classes.

I have seen small poets, and great prosers, and
Interminable—not eternal—speakers—
I have seen the funds at war with house and land—
I have seen the country gentlemen turn squeakers—
I have seen the people ridden o'er like sand
By slaves on horseback—I have seen malt liquors
Exchanged for 'thin potations' by John Bull—

I have seen John half detect himself a fool.—

But ‘carpe diem,’ Juan, ‘carpe, carpe!’
To-morrow sees another race as gay
And transient, and devour’d by the same harpy.
‘Life ’s a poor player,’—then ‘play out the play,
Ye villains!’ above all keep a sharp eye
Much less on what you do than what you say:
Be hypocritical, be cautious, be
Not what you seem, but always what you see.

But how shall I relate in other cantos
Of what befell our hero in the land,
Which ’tis the common cry and lie to vaunt as
A moral country? But I hold my hand—
For I disdain to write an Atalantis;
But ’tis as well at once to understand,
You are not a moral people, and you know it
Without the aid of too sincere a poet.

What Juan saw and underwent shall be
My topic, with of course the due restriction
Which is required by proper courtesy;
And recollect the work is only fiction,
And that I sing of neither mine nor me,
Though every scribe, in some slight turn of diction,
Will hint allusions never meant. Ne’er doubt
This—when I speak, I don’t hint, but speak out.

Whether he married with the third or fourth
Offspring of some sage husband-hunting countess,
Or whether with some virgin of more worth
(I mean in Fortune’s matrimonial bounties)
He took to regularly peopling Earth,
Of which your lawful awful wedlock fount is,—
Or whether he was taken in for damages,
For being too excursive in his homages,—

Is yet within the unread events of time.
   Thus far, go forth, thou lay, which I will back
Against the same given quantity of rhyme,
   For being as much the subject of attack
As ever yet was any work sublime,
   By those who love to say that white is black.
So much the better!—I may stand alone,
But would not change my free thoughts for a throne.

Don Juan.

CANTO THE TWELFTH.

I.

Of all the barbarous middle ages, that 1
Which is most barbarous is the middle age
Of man: it is—I really scarce know what;
But, when we hover between fool and sage,
And don't know justly what we would be at—
A period something like a printed page,
Black letter upon foolscap, while our hair
Grows grizzled, and we are not what we were;—

II.

Too old for youth,—too young, at thirty-five, 2
To herd with boys, or hoard with good threescore,—
I wonder people should be left alive;
But, since they are, that epoch is a bore;
Love lingers still, although 'twere late to wive:
And as for other love, the illusion's o'er;
And money, that most pure imagination,
Gleams only through the dawn of its creation.

III.

O Gold! Why call we misers miserable? 3
Theirs is the pleasure that can never pall;
Theirs is the best bower-anchor, the chain-cable
Which holds fast other pleasures great and small.
Ye who but see the saving man at table,
And scorn his temperate board, as none at all,
And wonder how the wealthy can be sparing,
Know not what visions spring from each cheese-paring.

IV.

Love or lust makes man sick, and wine much sicker; 4
Ambition rends, and gaming gains a loss;
But making money, slowly first, then quicker,
And adding still a little through each cross
(Which *will* come over things), beats love or liquor,
The gamester's counter, or the statesman's *dross*.
O Gold! I still prefer thee unto paper,
Which makes bank credit like a bark of vapour.

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O Gold! I still prefer thee unto paper,
Which makes bank credit like a bank of vapour.

Who hold the balance of the world? Who reign
O'er congress, whether royalist or liberal?
Who rouse the shirtless patriots of Spain?
(That make old Europe's journals squeak and gibber all.)
Who keep the world, both old and new, in pain
Or pleasure? Who make politics run glibber all?
The shade of Buonaparte's noble daring?—
Jew Rothschild, and his fellow-Christian, Baring.

Those, and the truly liberal Lafitte,
Are the true lords of Europe. Every loan
Is not a merely speculative hit,
But seats a nation or upsets a throne.
Republics also get involved a bit;
Columbia's stock hath holders not unknown
On 'Change; and even thy silver soil, Peru,
Must get itself discounted by a Jew.

Why call the miser miserable? as
I said before: the frugal life is his,
Which in a saint or cynic ever was
The theme of praise: a hermit would not miss
Canonization for the self-same cause,
And wherefore blame gaunt wealth's austerities?
Because, you'll say, nought calls for such a trial;—
Then there's more merit in his self-denial.

He is your only poet;—passion, pure
And sparkling on from heap to heap, displays,
Possess'd, the ore, of which mere hopes allure
Nations athwart the deep: the golden rays
Flash up in ingots from the mine obscure;
On him the diamond pours its brilliant blaze,
While the mild emerald's beam shades down the dies

Of other stones, to soothe the miser's eyes.

The lands on either side are his; the ship
  From Ceylon, Inde, or far Cathay, unloads
For him the fragrant produce of each trip;
  Beneath his cars of Ceres groan the roads,
And the vine blushes like Aurora's lip;
  His very cellars might be kings' abodes;
While he, despising every sensual call,
Commands—the intellectual lord of all.

Perhaps he hath great projects in his mind,
  To build a college, or to found a race,
A hospital, a church,—and leave behind
  Some dome surmounted by his meagre face:
Perhaps he fain would liberate mankind
  Even with the very ore which makes them base;
Perhaps he would be wealthiest of his nation,
Or revel in the joys of calculation.

But whether all, or each, or none of these
  May be the hoarder's principle of action,
The fool will call such mania a disease:—
  What is his own? Go—look at each transaction,
Wars, revels, loves—do these bring men more ease
  Than the mere plodding through each 'vulgar fraction'?
Or do they benefit mankind? Lean miser!
Let spendthrifts' heirs enquire of yours—who 's wiser?

How beauteous are rouleaus! how charming chests
  Containing ingots, bags of dollars, coins
(Not of old victors, all whose heads and crests
  Weigh not the thin ore where their visage shines,
But) of fine unclipt gold, where dully rests
  Some likeness, which the glittering cirque confines,
Of modern, reigning, sterling, stupid stamp:—
Yes! ready money is Aladdin's lamp.

‘Love rules the camp, the court, the grove,’—‘for love
Is heaven, and heaven is love:’—so sings the bard;
Which it were rather difficult to prove
(A thing with poetry in general hard).
Perhaps there may be something in ‘the grove,’
At least it rhymes to ‘love;’ but I’m prepared
To doubt (no less than landlords of their rental)
If ‘courts’ and ‘camps’ be quite so sentimental.

But if Love don’t, Cash does, and Cash alone:
Cash rules the grove, and fells it too besides;
Without cash, camps were thin, and courts were none;
Without cash, Malthus tells you—‘take no brides.’
So Cash rules Love the ruler, on his own
High ground, as virgin Cynthia sways the tides:
And as for ‘Heaven being Love,’ why not say honey
Is wax? Heaven is not Love, ’tis Matrimony.

Is not all love prohibited whatever,
Excepting marriage? which is love, no doubt,
After a sort; but somehow people never
With the same thought the two words have help’d out:
Love may exist with marriage, and should ever,
And marriage also may exist without;
But love sans bans is both a sin and shame,
And ought to go by quite another name.

Now if the ‘court,’ and ‘camp,’ and ‘grove,’ be not
Recruited all with constant married men,
Who never coveted their neighbour’s lot,
I say that line ’s a lapsus of the pen;—
Strange too in my ‘buon camerado’ Scott,
So celebrated for his morals, when
My Jeffrey held him up as an example
To me;—of whom these morals are a sample.

Well, if I don’t succeed, I have succeeded,
And that ’s enough; succeeded in my youth,

The only time when much success is needed:
And my success produced what I, in sooth,
Cared most about; it need not now be pleaded—
Whate'er it was, 'twas mine; I've paid, in truth,
Of late the penalty of such success,
But have not learn'd to wish it any less.

That suit in Chancery,—which some persons plead
In an appeal to the unborn, whom they,
In the faith of their procreative creed,
Baptize posterity, or future clay,—
To me seems but a dubious kind of reed
To lean on for support in any way;
Since odds are that posterity will know
No more of them, than they of her, I trow.

Why, I'm posterity—and so are you;
And whom do we remember? Not a hundred.
Were every memory written down all true,
The tenth or twentieth name would be but blunder'd;
Even Plutarch's Lives have but pick'd out a few,
And 'gainst those few your annalists have thunder'd;
And Mitford in the nineteenth century
Gives, with Greek truth, the good old Greek the lie.

Good people all, of every degree,
Ye gentle readers and ungentle writers,
In this twelfth Canto 'tis my wish to be
As serious as if I had for inditers
Malthus and Wilberforce:—the last set free
The Negroes and is worth a million fighters;
While Wellington has but enslaved the Whites,
And Malthus does the thing 'gainst which he writes.

I'm serious—so are all men upon paper;
And why should I not form my speculation,
And hold up to the sun my little taper?
Mankind just now seem wrapt in mediation

On constitutions and steam-boats of vapour;
While sages write against all procreation,
Unless a man can calculate his means
Of feeding brats the moment his wife weans.

That 's noble! That 's romantic! For my part,
I think that 'Philo-genitiveness' is
(Now here's a word quite after my own heart,
Though there's a shorter a good deal than this,
If that politeness set it not apart;
But I'm resolved to say nought that 's amiss)—
I say, methinks that 'Philo-genitiveness'
Might meet from men a little more forgiveness.

And now to business.—O my gentle Juan,
Thou art in London—in that pleasant place,
Where every kind of mischief 's daily brewing,
Which can await warm youth in its wild race.
'Tis true, that thy career is not a new one;
Thou art no novice in the headlong chase
Of early life; but this is a new land,
Which foreigners can never understand.

What with a small diversity of climate,
Of hot or cold, mercurial or sedate,
I could send forth my mandate like a primate
Upon the rest of Europe's social state;
But thou art the most difficult to rhyme at,
Great Britain, which the Muse may penetrate.
All countries have their 'Lions,' but in thee
There is but one superb menagerie.

But I am sick of politics. Begin,
'Paulo Majora.' Juan, undecided
Amongst the paths of being 'taken in,'
Above the ice had like a skater glided:
When tired of play, he flirted without sin
With some of those fair creatures who have prided

Themselves on innocent tantalisation,
And hate all vice except its reputation.

But these are few, and in the end they make
  Some devilish escapade or stir, which shows
That even the purest people may mistake
  Their way through virtue's primrose paths of snows;
And then men stare, as if a new ass spake
  To Balaam, and from tongue to ear o'erflows
Quicksilver small talk, ending (if you note it)
With the kind world's amen—'Who would have thought it?'

The little Leila, with her orient eyes,
  And taciturn Asiatic disposition
(Which saw all western things with small surprise,
  To the surprise of people of condition,
Who think that novelties are butterflies
  To be pursued as food for inanition),
Her charming figure and romantic history
Became a kind of fashionable mystery.

The women much divided—as is usual
  Amongst the sex in little things or great.
Think not, fair creatures, that I mean to abuse you all—
  I have always liked you better than I state:
Since I've grown moral, still I must accuse you all
  Of being apt to talk at a great rate;
And now there was a general sensation
Amongst you, about Leila's education.

In one point only were you settled—and
  You had reason; 'twas that a young child of grace,
As beautiful as her own native land,
  And far away, the last bud of her race,
Howe'er our friend Don Juan might command
  Himself for five, four, three, or two years' space,
Would be much better taught beneath the eye
Of peeresses whose follies had run dry.

So first there was a generous emulation,
   And then there was a general competition,
To undertake the orphan's education.
   As Juan was a person of condition,
It had been an affront on this occasion
   To talk of a subscription or petition;
But sixteen dowagers, ten unwed she sages,
Whose tale belongs to 'Hallam's Middle Ages,'

And one or two sad, separate wives, without
   A fruit to bloom upon their withering bough—
Begg'd to bring up the little girl and 'out,'—
   For that 's the phrase that settles all things now,
Meaning a virgin's first blush at a rout,
   And all her points as thorough-bred to show:
And I assure you, that like virgin honey
Tastes their first season (mostly if they have money).

How all the needy honourable misters,
   Each out-at-elbow peer, or desperate dandy,
The watchful mothers, and the careful sisters
   (Who, by the by, when clever, are more handy
At making matches, where ''tis gold that glisters,'
   Than their he relatives), like flies o'er candy
Buzz round 'the Fortune' with their busy battery,
To turn her head with waltzing and with flattery!

Each aunt, each cousin, hath her speculation;
   Nay, married dames will now and then discover
Such pure disinterestedness of passion,
   I've known them court an heiress for their lover.
'Tantaene!' Such the virtues of high station,
   Even in the hopeful Isle, whose outlet 's 'Dover!'
While the poor rich wretch, object of these cares,
Has cause to wish her sire had had male heirs.

Some are soon bagg'd, and some reject three dozen.

'Tis fine to see them scattering refusals
And wild dismay o'er every angry cousin
(Friends of the party), who begin accusals,
Such as—'Unless Miss (Blank) meant to have chosen
Poor Frederick, why did she accord perusals
To his billets? Why waltz with him? Why, I pray,
Look yes last night, and yet say no to-day?

'Why?—Why?—Besides, Fred really was attach'd;
'Twas not her fortune—he has enough without:
The time will come she'll wish that she had snatch'd
So good an opportunity, no doubt:—
But the old marchioness some plan had hatch'd,
As I'll tell Aurea at to-morrow's rout:
And after all poor Frederick may do better—
Pray did you see her answer to his letter?'

Smart uniforms and sparkling coronets
Are spurn'd in turn, until her turn arrives,
After male loss of time, and hearts, and bets
Upon the sweepstakes for substantial wives;
And when at last the pretty creature gets
Some gentleman, who fights, or writes, or drives,
It soothes the awkward squad of the rejected
To find how very badly she selected.

For sometimes they accept some long pursuer,
Worn out with importunity; or fall
(But here perhaps the instances are fewer)
To the lot of him who scarce pursued at all.
A hazy widower turn'd of forty 's sure
(If 'tis not vain examples to recall)
To draw a high prize: now, howe'er he got her, I
See nought more strange in this than t' other lottery.

I, for my part (one 'modern instance' more,
'True, 'tis a pity—pity 'tis, 'tis true'),
Was chosen from out an amatory score,

Albeit my years were less discreet than few;
But though I also had reform'd before
Those became one who soon were to be two,
I'll not gainsay the generous public's voice,
That the young lady made a monstrous choice.

O, pardon my digression—or at least
Peruse! 'Tis always with a moral end
That I dissert, like grace before a feast:
For like an aged aunt, or tiresome friend,
A rigid guardian, or a zealous priest,
My Muse by exhortation means to mend
All people, at all times, and in most places,
Which puts my Pegasus to these grave paces.

But now I'm going to be immoral; now
I mean to show things really as they are,
Not as they ought to be: for I avow,
That till we see what 's what in fact, we're far
From much improvement with that virtuous plough
Which skims the surface, leaving scarce a scar
Upon the black loam long manured by Vice,
Only to keep its corn at the old price.

But first of little Leila we'll dispose;
For like a day-dawn she was young and pure,
Or like the old comparison of snows,
Which are more pure than pleasant to be sure.
Like many people everybody knows,
Don Juan was delighted to secure
A goodly guardian for his infant charge,
Who might not profit much by being at large.

Besides, he had found out he was no tutor
(I wish that others would find out the same);
And rather wish'd in such things to stand neuter,
For silly wards will bring their guardians blame:
So when he saw each ancient dame a suitor

To make his little wild Asiatic tame,
Consulting ‘the Society for Vice
Suppression,’ Lady Pinchbeck was his choice.

Olden she was—but had been very young;
Virtuous she was—and had been, I believe;
Although the world has such an evil tongue
That—but my chaster ear will not receive
An echo of a syllable that ’s wrong:
In fact, there’s nothing makes me so much grieve,
As that abominable tittle-tattle,
Which is the cud eschew’d by human cattle.

Moreover I’ve remark’d (and I was once
A slight observer in a modest way),
And so may every one except a dunce,
That ladies in their youth a little gay,
Besides their knowledge of the world, and sense
Of the sad consequence of going astray,
Are wiser in their warnings ’gainst the woe
Which the mere passionless can never know.

While the harsh prude indemnifies her virtue
By railing at the unknown and envied passion,
Seeking far less to save you than to hurt you,
Or, what ’s still worse, to put you out of fashion,—
The kinder veteran with calm words will court you,
Entreating you to pause before you dash on;
Expounding and illustrating the riddle
Of epic Love’s beginning, end, and middle.

Now whether it be thus, or that they are stricter,
As better knowing why they should be so,
I think you’ll find from many a family picture,
That daughters of such mothers as may know
The world by experience rather than by lecture,
Turn out much better for the Smithfield Show
Of vestals brought into the marriage mart,

Than those bred up by prudes without a heart.

I said that Lady Pinchbeck had been talk'd about—
  As who has not, if female, young, and pretty?
But now no more the ghost of Scandal stalk'd about;
  She merely was deem'd amiable and witty,
And several of her best bon-mots were hawk'd about:
  Then she was given to charity and pity,
And pass'd (at least the latter years of life)
For being a most exemplary wife.

High in high circles, gentle in her own,
  She was the mild reprover of the young,
Whenever—which means every day—they'd shown
  An awkward inclination to go wrong.
The quantity of good she did 's unknown,
  Or at the least would lengthen out my song:
In brief, the little orphan of the East
Had raised an interest in her, which increased.

Juan, too, was a sort of favourite with her,
  Because she thought him a good heart at bottom,
A little spoil'd, but not so altogether;
  Which was a wonder, if you think who got him,
And how he had been toss'd, he scarce knew whither:
  Though this might ruin others, it did not him,
At least entirely—for he had seen too many
Changes in youth, to be surprised at any.

And these vicissitudes tell best in youth;
  For when they happen at a riper age,
People are apt to blame the Fates, forsooth,
  And wonder Providence is not more sage.
Adversity is the first path to truth:
  He who hath proved war, storm, or woman's rage,
Whether his winters be eighteen or eighty,
Hath won the experience which is deem'd so weighty.

How far it profits is another matter.—
Our hero gladly saw his little charge
Safe with a lady, whose last grown-up daughter
Being long married, and thus set at large,
Had left all the accomplishments she taught her
To be transmitted, like the Lord Mayor's barge,
To the next comer; or—as it will tell
More Muse-like—like to Cytherea's shell.

I call such things transmission; for there is
A floating balance of accomplishment
Which forms a pedigree from Miss to Miss,
According as their minds or backs are bent.
Some waltz; some draw; some fathom the abyss
Of metaphysics; others are content
With music; the most moderate shine as wits;
While others have a genius turn'd for fits.

But whether fits, or wits, or harpsichords,
Theology, fine arts, or finer stays,
May be the baits for gentlemen or lords
With regular descent, in these our days,
The last year to the new transfers its hoards;
New vestals claim men's eyes with the same praise
Of 'elegant' et caetera, in fresh batches—
All matchless creatures, and yet bent on matches.

But now I will begin my poem. 'Tis
Perhaps a little strange, if not quite new,
That from the first of Cantos up to this
I've not begun what we have to go through.
These first twelve books are merely flourishes,
Preludios, trying just a string or two
Upon my lyre, or making the pegs sure;
And when so, you shall have the overture.

My Muses do not care a pinch of rosin
About what 's call'd success, or not succeeding:

Such thoughts are quite below the strain they have chosen;
'Tis a 'great moral lesson' they are reading.
I thought, at setting off, about two dozen
Cantos would do; but at Apollo's pleading,
If that my Pegasus should not be founder'd,
I think to canter gently through a hundred.

Don Juan saw that microcosm on stilts,
Yclept the Great World; for it is the least,
Although the highest: but as swords have hilts
By which their power of mischief is increased,
When man in battle or in quarrel tilts,
Thus the low world, north, south, or west, or east,
Must still obey the high—which is their handle,
Their moon, their sun, their gas, their farthing candle.

He had many friends who had many wives, and was
Well look'd upon by both, to that extent
Of friendship which you may accept or pass,
It does nor good nor harm being merely meant
To keep the wheels going of the higher class,
And draw them nightly when a ticket 's sent:
And what with masquerades, and fetes, and balls,
For the first season such a life scarce palls.

A young unmarried man, with a good name
And fortune, has an awkward part to play;
For good society is but a game,
'The royal game of Goose,' as I may say,
Where every body has some separate aim,
An end to answer, or a plan to lay—
The single ladies wishing to be double,
The married ones to save the virgins trouble.

I don't mean this as general, but particular
Examples may be found of such pursuits:
Though several also keep their perpendicular
Like poplars, with good principles for roots;

Yet many have a method more reticular—
'Fishers for men,' like sirens with soft lutes:
For talk six times with the same single lady,
And you may get the wedding dresses ready.

Perhaps you'll have a letter from the mother,
To say her daughter's feelings are trepann'd;
Perhaps you'll have a visit from the brother,
All strut, and stays, and whiskers, to demand
What 'your intentions are?'—One way or other
It seems the virgin's heart expects your hand:
And between pity for her case and yours,
You'll add to Matrimony's list of cures.

I've known a dozen weddings made even thus,
And some of them high names: I have also known
Young men who—though they hated to discuss
Pretensions which they never dream'd to have shown—
Yet neither frighten'd by a female fuss,
Nor by mustachios moved, were let alone,
And lived, as did the broken-hearted fair,
In happier plight than if they form'd a pair.

There's also nightly, to the uninitiated,
A peril—not indeed like love or marriage,
But not the less for this to be depreciated:
It is—I meant and mean not to disparage
The show of virtue even in the vitiated—
It adds an outward grace unto their carriage—
But to denounce the amphibious sort of harlot,
'Couleur de rose,' who 's neither white nor scarlet.

Such is your cold coquette, who can't say 'No,'
And won't say 'Yes,' and keeps you on and off-ing
On a lee-shore, till it begins to blow—
Then sees your heart wreck'd, with an inward scoffing.
This works a world of sentimental woe,
And sends new Werters yearly to their coffin;

But yet is merely innocent flirtation,
Not quite adultery, but adulteration.

'Ye gods, I grow a talker!' Let us prate.
The next of perils, though I place it sternest,
Is when, without regard to 'church or state,'
A wife makes or takes love in upright earnest.
Abroad, such things decide few women's fate—
(Such, early traveller! is the truth thou learnest)—
But in old England, when a young bride errs,
Poor thing! Eve's was a trifling case to hers.

For 'tis a low, newspaper, humdrum, lawsuit
Country, where a young couple of the same ages
Can't form a friendship, but the world o'erawes it.
Then there's the vulgar trick of those d—d damages! !
A verdict—grievous foe to those who cause it!—
Forms a sad climax to romantic homages;
Besides those soothing speeches of the pleaders,
And evidences which regale all readers.

But they who blunder thus are raw beginners;
A little genial sprinkling of hypocrisy
Has saved the fame of thousand splendid sinners,
The loveliest oligarchs of our gynocracy;
You may see such at all the balls and dinners,
Among the proudest of our aristocracy,
So gentle, charming, charitable, chaste—
And all by having tact as well as taste.

Juan, who did not stand in the predicament
Of a mere novice, had one safeguard more;
For he was sick—no, 'twas not the word sick I meant—
But he had seen so much love before,
That he was not in heart so very weak;—I meant
But thus much, and no sneer against the shore
Of white cliffs, white necks, blue eyes, bluer stockings,
Tithes, taxes, duns, and doors with double knockings.

But coming young from lands and scenes romantic,
Where lives, not lawsuits, must be risk'd for Passion,
And Passion's self must have a spice of frantic,
Into a country where 'tis half a fashion,
Seem'd to him half commercial, half pedantic,
Howe'er he might esteem this moral nation:
Besides (alas! his taste—forgive and pity!)
At first he did not think the women pretty.

I say at first—for he found out at last,
But by degrees, that they were fairer far
Than the more glowing dames whose lot is cast
Beneath the influence of the eastern star.
A further proof we should not judge in haste;
Yet inexperience could not be his bar
To taste:—the truth is, if men would confess,
That novelties please less than they impress.

Though travell'd, I have never had the luck to
Trace up those shuffling negroes, Nile or Niger,
To that impracticable place, Timbuctoo,
Where Geography finds no one to oblige her
With such a chart as may be safely stuck to—
For Europe ploughs in Afric like 'bos piger:'
But if I had been at Timbuctoo, there
No doubt I should be told that black is fair.

It is. I will not swear that black is white;
But I suspect in fact that white is black,
And the whole matter rests upon eyesight.
Ask a blind man, the best judge. You'll attack
Perhaps this new position—but I'm right;
Or if I'm wrong, I'll not be ta'en aback:—
He hath no morn nor night, but all is dark
Within; and what seest thou? A dubious spark.

But I'm relapsing into metaphysics,

That labyrinth, whose clue is of the same
Construction as your cures for hectic phthisics,
Those bright moths fluttering round a dying flame;
And this reflection brings me to plain physics,
And to the beauties of a foreign dame,
Compared with those of our pure pearls of price,
Those polar summers, all sun, and some ice.

Or say they are like virtuous mermaids, whose
Beginnings are fair faces, ends mere fishes;—
Not that there's not a quantity of those
Who have a due respect for their own wishes.
Like Russians rushing from hot baths to snows
Are they, at bottom virtuous even when vicious:
They warm into a scrape, but keep of course,
As a reserve, a plunge into remorse.

But this has nought to do with their outsides.
I said that Juan did not think them pretty
At the first blush; for a fair Briton hides
Half her attractions—probably from pity—
And rather calmly into the heart glides,
Than storms it as a foe would take a city;
But once there (if you doubt this, prithee try)
She keeps it for you like a true ally.

She cannot step as does an Arab barb,
Or Andalusian girl from mass returning,
Nor wear as gracefully as Gauls her garb,
Nor in her eye Ausonia's glance is burning;
Her voice, though sweet, is not so fit to warb—
le those bravuras (which I still am learning
To like, though I have been seven years in Italy,
And have, or had, an ear that served me prettily);—

She cannot do these things, nor one or two
Others, in that off-hand and dashing style
Which takes so much—to give the devil his due;

Nor is she quite so ready with her smile,
Nor settles all things in one interview
(A thing approved as saving time and toil);—
But though the soil may give you time and trouble,
Well cultivated, it will render double.

And if in fact she takes to a 'grande passion,'
It is a very serious thing indeed:
Nine times in ten 'tis but caprice or fashion,
Coquetry, or a wish to take the lead,
The pride of a mere child with a new sash on,
Or wish to make a rival's bosom bleed:
But the tenth instance will be a tornado,
For there's no saying what they will or may do.

The reason 's obvious; if there's an eclat,
They lose their caste at once, as do the Parias;
And when the delicacies of the law
Have fill'd their papers with their comments various,
Society, that china without flaw
(The hypocrite!), will banish them like Marius,
To sit amidst the ruins of their guilt:
For Fame 's a Carthage not so soon rebuilt.

Perhaps this is as it should be;—it is
A comment on the Gospel's 'Sin no more,
And be thy sins forgiven:'—but upon this
I leave the saints to settle their own score.
Abroad, though doubtless they do much amiss,
An erring woman finds an opener door
For her return to Virtue—as they call
That lady, who should be at home to all.

For me, I leave the matter where I find it,
Knowing that such uneasy virtue leads
People some ten times less in fact to mind it,
And care but for discoveries and not deeds.
And as for chastity, you'll never bind it

By all the laws the strictest lawyer pleads,
But aggravate the crime you have not prevented,
By rendering desperate those who had else repented.

But Juan was no casuist, nor had ponder'd
Upon the moral lessons of mankind:
Besides, he had not seen of several hundred
A lady altogether to his mind.
A little 'blase'—'tis not to be wonder'd
At, that his heart had got a tougher rind:
And though not vainer from his past success,
No doubt his sensibilities were less.

He also had been busy seeing sights—
The Parliament and all the other houses;
Had sat beneath the gallery at nights,
To hear debates whose thunder roused (not rouses)
The world to gaze upon those northern lights
Which flash'd as far as where the musk-bull browses;
He had also stood at times behind the throne—
But Grey was not arrived, and Chatham gone.

He saw, however, at the closing session,
That noble sight, when really free the nation,
A king in constitutional possession
Of such a throne as is the proudest station,
Though despots know it not—till the progression
Of freedom shall complete their education.
'Tis not mere splendour makes the show august
To eye or heart—it is the people's trust.

There, too, he saw (whate'er he may be now)
A Prince, the prince of princes at the time,
With fascination in his very bow,
And full of promise, as the spring of prime.
Though royalty was written on his brow,
He had then the grace, too, rare in every clime,
Of being, without alloy of fop or beau,

A finish'd gentleman from top to toe.

And Juan was received, as hath been said,
Into the best society: and there
Occurr'd what often happens, I'm afraid,
However disciplined and debonnaire:—
The talent and good humour he display'd,
Besides the mark'd distinction of his air,
Exposed him, as was natural, to temptation,
Even though himself avoided the occasion.

But what, and where, with whom, and when, and why,
Is not to be put hastily together;
And as my object is morality
(Whatever people say), I don't know whether
I'll leave a single reader's eyelid dry,
But harrow up his feelings till they wither,
And hew out a huge monument of pathos,
As Philip's son proposed to do with Athos.

Here the twelfth Canto of our introduction
Ends. When the body of the book 's begun,
You'll find it of a different construction
From what some people say 'twill be when done:
The plan at present 's simply in concoction,
I can't oblige you, reader, to read on;
That 's your affair, not mine: a real spirit
Should neither court neglect, nor dread to bear it.

And if my thunderbolt not always rattles,
Remember, reader! you have had before
The worst of tempests and the best of battles
That e'er were brew'd from elements or gore,
Besides the most sublime of—Heaven knows what else:
An usurer could scarce expect much more—
But my best canto, save one on astronomy,
Will turn upon 'political economy.'

That is your present theme for popularity:
   Now that the public hedge hath scarce a stake,
It grows an act of patriotic charity,
   To show the people the best way to break.
My plan (but I, if but for singularity,
   Reserve it) will be very sure to take.
Meantime, read all the national debt-sinkers,
And tell me what you think of your great thinkers.

Don Juan.

CANTO THE THIRTEENTH.

I.

I now mean to be serious:—it is time; 1
Since laughter now-a-days is deem'd too serious.
A jest at Vice, by Virtue's call'd a crime,
And critically held as deleterious:
Besides, the sad's a source of the sublime;
Although, when long, a little apt to weary us:
And therefore shall my lay soar high and solemn,
As an old temple dwindled to a column.

II.

The Lady Adeline Amundeville 2
('Tis an old Norman name, and to be found
In pedigrees, by those who wander still
Along the last fields of that Gothic ground)
Was high-born, wealthy by her father's will,
And beauteous, even where beauties most abound,
In Britain—which, of course, true patriots find
The goodliest soil of body and of mind.

III.

I'll not gainsay them: it is not my cue: 3
I'll leave them to their taste, no doubt the best:
An eye's an eye, and whether black or blue
Is no great matter, so 'tis in request:
'Tis nonsense to dispute about a hue—
The kindest may be taken as a test.
The fair sex should be always fair; and no man,
Till thirty, should perceive there's a plain woman.

IV.

And, after that serene and somewhat dull 4
Epoch, that awkward corner turn'd, for days
More quiet, when our moon's no more at full,
We may presume to criticise or praise;
Because indifference begins to lull
Our passions, and we walk in wisdom's ways;
Also because the figure and the face
Hint that 'tis time to give the younger place.

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Hint, that 'tis time to give the younger place.

I know that some would fain postpone this era,
Reluctant as all placemen to resign
Their post; but theirs is merely a chimera,
For they have pass'd life's equinoctial line:
But then they have their claret and Madeira
To irrigate the dryness of decline;
And county meetings, and the parliament,
And debt, and what not, for their solace sent.

And is there not religion, and reform,
Peace, war, the taxes, and what 's call'd the 'Nation'?
The struggle to be pilots in a storm?
The landed and the monied speculation?
The joys of mutual hate to keep them warm,
Instead of love, that mere hallucination?
Now hatred is by far the longest pleasure;
Men love in haste, but they detest at leisure.

Rough Johnson, the great moralist, profess'd,
Right honestly, 'he liked an honest hater!'—
The only truth that yet has been confest
Within these latest thousand years or later.
Perhaps the fine old fellow spoke in jest:—
For my part, I am but a mere spectator,
And gaze where'er the palace or the hovel is,
Much in the mode of Goethe's Mephistopheles;

But neither love nor hate in much excess;
Though 'twas not once so. If I sneer sometimes,
It is because I cannot well do less,
And now and then it also suits my rhymes.
I should be very willing to redress
Men's wrongs, and rather check than punish crimes,
Had not Cervantes, in that too true tale

Of Quixote, shown how all such efforts fail.

Of all tales 'tis the saddest—and more sad,
  Because it makes us smile: his hero 's right,
And still pursues the right;—to curb the bad
  His only object, and 'gainst odds to fight
His guerdon: 'tis his virtue makes him mad!
  But his adventures form a sorry sight;
A sorrier still is the great moral taught
By that real epic unto all who have thought.

Redressing injury, revenging wrong,
  To aid the damsel and destroy the caitiff;
Opposing singly the united strong,
  From foreign yoke to free the helpless native:—
Alas! must noblest views, like an old song,
  Be for mere fancy's sport a theme creative,
A jest, a riddle, Fame through thin and thick sought!
And Socrates himself but Wisdom's Quixote?

Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away;
  A single laugh demolish'd the right arm
Of his own country;—seldom since that day
  Has Spain had heroes. While Romance could charm,
The world gave ground before her bright array;
  And therefore have his volumes done such harm,
That all their glory, as a composition,
Was dearly purchased by his land's perdition.

I'm 'at my old lunes'—digression, and forget
  The Lady Adeline Amundeville;
The fair most fatal Juan ever met,
  Although she was not evil nor meant ill;
But Destiny and Passion spread the net
  (Fate is a good excuse for our own will),
And caught them;—what do they not catch, methinks?
But I'm not OEdipus, and life 's a Sphinx.

I tell the tale as it is told, nor dare
To venture a solution: 'Davus sum!'
And now I will proceed upon the pair.
Sweet Adeline, amidst the gay world's hum,
Was the Queen-Bee, the glass of all that 's fair;
Whose charms made all men speak, and women dumb.
The last 's a miracle, and such was reckon'd,
And since that time there has not been a second.

Chaste was she, to detraction's desperation,
And wedded unto one she had loved well—
A man known in the councils of the nation,
Cool, and quite English, imperturbable,
Though apt to act with fire upon occasion,
Proud of himself and her: the world could tell
Nought against either, and both seem'd secure—
She in her virtue, he in his hauteur.

It chanced some diplomatical relations,
Arising out of business, often brought
Himself and Juan in their mutual stations
Into close contact. Though reserved, nor caught
By specious seeming, Juan's youth, and patience,
And talent, on his haughty spirit wrought,
And form'd a basis of esteem, which ends
In making men what courtesy calls friends.

And thus Lord Henry, who was cautious as
Reserve and pride could make him, and full slow
In judging men—when once his judgment was
Determined, right or wrong, on friend or foe,
Had all the pertinacity pride has,
Which knows no ebb to its imperious flow,
And loves or hates, disdaining to be guided,
Because its own good pleasure hath decided.

His friendships, therefore, and no less aversions,
Though oft well founded, which confirm'd but more

His prepossessions, like the laws of Persians
And Medes, would ne'er revoke what went before.
His feelings had not those strange fits, like tertians,
Of common likings, which make some deplore
What they should laugh at—the mere ague still
Of men's regard, the fever or the chill.

'Tis not in mortals to command success:
But do you more, Sempronius—don't deserve it,'
And take my word, you won't have any less.
Be wary, watch the time, and always serve it;
Give gently way, when there's too great a press;
And for your conscience, only learn to nerve it,
For, like a racer, or a boxer training,
'Twill make, if proved, vast efforts without paining.

Lord Henry also liked to be superior,
As most men do, the little or the great;
The very lowest find out an inferior,
At least they think so, to exert their state
Upon: for there are very few things wearier
Than solitary Pride's oppressive weight,
Which mortals generously would divide,
By bidding others carry while they ride.

In birth, in rank, in fortune likewise equal,
O'er Juan he could no distinction claim;
In years he had the advantage of time's sequel;
And, as he thought, in country much the same—
Because bold Britons have a tongue and free quill,
At which all modern nations vainly aim;
And the Lord Henry was a great debater,
So that few members kept the house up later.

These were advantages: and then he thought—
It was his foible, but by no means sinister—
That few or none more than himself had caught
Court mysteries, having been himself a minister:

He liked to teach that which he had been taught,
And greatly shone whenever there had been a stir;
And reconciled all qualities which grace man,
Always a patriot, and sometimes a placeman.

He liked the gentle Spaniard for his gravity;
He almost honour'd him for his docility;
Because, though young, he acquiesced with suavity,
Or contradicted but with proud humility.
He knew the world, and would not see depravity
In faults which sometimes show the soil's fertility,
If that the weeds o'erlive not the first crop—
For then they are very difficult to stop.

And then he talk'd with him about Madrid,
Constantinople, and such distant places;
Where people always did as they were bid,
Or did what they should not with foreign graces.
Of coursers also spake they: Henry rid
Well, like most Englishmen, and loved the races;
And Juan, like a true-born Andalusian,
Could back a horse, as despots ride a Russian.

And thus acquaintance grew, at noble routs,
And diplomatic dinners, or at other—
For Juan stood well both with Ins and Outs,
As in freemasonry a higher brother.
Upon his talent Henry had no doubts;
His manner show'd him sprung from a high mother;
And all men like to show their hospitality
To him whose breeding matches with his quality.

At Blank-Blank Square;—for we will break no squares
By naming streets: since men are so censorious,
And apt to sow an author's wheat with tares,
Reaping allusions private and inglorious,
Where none were dreamt of, unto love's affairs,
Which were, or are, or are to be notorious,

That therefore do I previously declare,
Lord Henry's mansion was in Blank-Blank Square.

Also there bin another pious reason
  For making squares and streets anonymous;
Which is, that there is scarce a single season
  Which doth not shake some very splendid house
With some slight heart-quake of domestic treason—
  A topic scandal doth delight to rouse:
Such I might stumble over unawares,
Unless I knew the very chastest squares.

'Tis true, I might have chosen Piccadilly,
  A place where peccadillos are unknown;
But I have motives, whether wise or silly,
  For letting that pure sanctuary alone.
Therefore I name not square, street, place, until I
  Find one where nothing naughty can be shown,
A vestal shrine of innocence of heart:
  Such are—but I have lost the London Chart.

At Henry's mansion then, in Blank-Blank Square,
  Was Juan a recherche, welcome guest,
As many other noble scions were;
  And some who had but talent for their crest;
Or wealth, which is a passport every where;
  Or even mere fashion, which indeed 's the best
Recommendation; and to be well drest
Will very often supersede the rest.

And since 'there's safety in a multitude
  Of counsellors,' as Solomon has said,
Or some one for him, in some sage, grave mood;—
  Indeed we see the daily proof display'd
In senates, at the bar, in wordy feud,
  Where'er collective wisdom can parade,
Which is the only cause that we can guess
Of Britain's present wealth and happiness;—

But as ‘there’s safety’ grafted in the number
‘Of counsellors’ for men, thus for the sex
A large acquaintance lets not Virtue slumber;
Or should it shake, the choice will more perplex—
Variety itself will more encumber.
’Midst many rocks we guard more against wrecks;
And thus with women: howsoe’er it shocks some’s
Self-love, there’s safety in a crowd of coxcombs.

But Adeline had not the least occasion
For such a shield, which leaves but little merit
To virtue proper, or good education.
Her chief resource was in her own high spirit,
Which judged mankind at their due estimation;
And for coquetry, she disdain’d to wear it:
Secure of admiration, its impression
Was faint, as of an every-day possession.

To all she was polite without parade;
To some she show’d attention of that kind
Which flatters, but is flattery convey’d
In such a sort as cannot leave behind
A trace unworthy either wife or maid;—
A gentle, genial courtesy of mind,
To those who were, or pass’d for meritorious,
Just to console sad glory for being glorious;

Which is in all respects, save now and then,
A dull and desolate appendage. Gaze
Upon the shades of those distinguish’d men
Who were or are the puppet-shows of praise,
The praise of persecution; gaze again
On the most favour’d; and amidst the blaze
Of sunset halos o’er the laurel-brow’d,
What can ye recognise?—a gilded cloud.

There also was of course in Adeline

That calm patrician polish in the address,
Which ne'er can pass the equinoctial line
Of any thing which nature would express;
Just as a mandarin finds nothing fine,—
At least his manner suffers not to guess
That any thing he views can greatly please.
Perhaps we have borrow'd this from the Chinese—

Perhaps from Horace: his 'Nil admirari'
Was what he call'd the 'Art of Happiness;'
An art on which the artists greatly vary,
And have not yet attain'd to much success.
However, 'tis expedient to be wary:
Indifference certes don't produce distress;
And rash enthusiasm in good society
Were nothing but a moral inebriety.

But Adeline was not indifferent: for
(Now for a common-place!) beneath the snow,
As a volcano holds the lava more
Within—et caetera. Shall I go on?—No!
I hate to hunt down a tired metaphor,
So let the often-used volcano go.
Poor thing! How frequently, by me and others,
It hath been stirr'd up till its smoke quite smothers!

I'll have another figure in a trice:—
What say you to a bottle of champagne?
Frozen into a very vinous ice,
Which leaves few drops of that immortal rain,
Yet in the very centre, past all price,
About a liquid glassful will remain;
And this is stronger than the strongest grape
Could e'er express in its expanded shape:

'Tis the whole spirit brought to a quintessence;
And thus the chilliest aspects may concentre
A hidden nectar under a cold presence.

And such are many—though I only meant her
From whom I now deduce these moral lessons,
On which the Muse has always sought to enter.
And your cold people are beyond all price,
When once you have broken their confounded ice.

But after all they are a North-West Passage
Unto the glowing India of the soul;
And as the good ships sent upon that message
Have not exactly ascertain'd the Pole
(Though Parry's efforts look a lucky presage),
Thus gentlemen may run upon a shoal;
For if the Pole 's not open, but all frost
(A chance still), 'tis a voyage or vessel lost.

And young beginners may as well commence
With quiet cruising o'er the ocean woman;
While those who are not beginners should have sense
Enough to make for port, ere time shall summon
With his grey signal-flag; and the past tense,
The dreary 'Fuimus' of all things human,
Must be declined, while life's thin thread 's spun out
Between the gaping heir and gnawing gout.

But heaven must be diverted; its diversion
Is sometimes truculent—but never mind:
The world upon the whole is worth the assertion
(If but for comfort) that all things are kind:
And that same devilish doctrine of the Persian,
Of the two principles, but leaves behind
As many doubts as any other doctrine
Has ever puzzled Faith withal, or yoked her in.

The English winter—ending in July,
To recommence in August—now was done.
'Tis the postilion's paradise: wheels fly;
On roads, east, south, north, west, there is a run.
But for post-horses who finds sympathy?

Man's pity 's for himself, or for his son,
Always premising that said son at college
Has not contracted much more debt than knowledge.

The London winter 's ended in July—
Sometimes a little later. I don't err
In this: whatever other blunders lie
Upon my shoulders, here I must aver
My Muse a glass of weatherology;
For parliament is our barometer:
Let radicals its other acts attack,
Its sessions form our only almanack.

When its quicksilver 's down at zero,—lo
Coach, chariot, luggage, baggage, equipage!
Wheels whirl from Carlton palace to Soho,
And happiest they who horses can engage;
The turnpikes glow with dust; and Rotten Row
Sleeps from the chivalry of this bright age;
And tradesmen, with long bills and longer faces,
Sigh—as the postboys fasten on the traces.

They and their bills, 'Arcadians both,' are left
To the Greek kalends of another session.
Alas! to them of ready cash bereft,
What hope remains? Of hope the full possession,
Or generous draft, conceded as a gift,
At a long date—till they can get a fresh one—
Hawk'd about at a discount, small or large;
Also the solace of an overcharge.

But these are trifles. Downward flies my lord,
Nodding beside my lady in his carriage.
Away! away! 'Fresh horses!' are the word,
And changed as quickly as hearts after marriage;
The obsequious landlord hath the change restored;
The postboys have no reason to disparage
Their fee; but ere the water'd wheels may hiss hence,

The ostler pleads too for a reminiscence.

'Tis granted; and the valet mounts the dickey—
That gentleman of lords and gentlemen;
Also my lady's gentlewoman, tricky,
Trick'd out, but modest more than poet's pen
Can paint,—'Cosi viaggino i Ricchi!'
(Excuse a foreign slipslop now and then,
If but to show I've travell'd; and what 's travel,
Unless it teaches one to quote and cavil?)

The London winter and the country summer
Were well nigh over. 'Tis perhaps a pity,
When nature wears the gown that doth become her,
To lose those best months in a sweaty city,
And wait until the nightingale grows dumber,
Listening debates not very wise or witty,
Ere patriots their true country can remember;—
But there's no shooting (save grouse) till September.

I've done with my tirade. The world was gone;
The twice two thousand, for whom earth was made,
Were vanish'd to be what they call alone—
That is, with thirty servants for parade,
As many guests, or more; before whom groan
As many covers, duly, daily, laid.
Let none accuse Old England's hospitality—
Its quantity is but condensed to quality.

Lord Henry and the Lady Adeline
Departed like the rest of their compeers,
The peerage, to a mansion very fine;
The Gothic Babel of a thousand years.
None than themselves could boast a longer line,
Where time through heroes and through beauties steers;
And oaks as olden as their pedigree
Told of their sires, a tomb in every tree.

A paragraph in every paper told
Of their departure: such is modern fame:
'Tis pity that it takes no farther hold
Than an advertisement, or much the same;
When, ere the ink be dry, the sound grows cold.
The Morning Post was foremost to proclaim—
'Departure, for his country seat, to-day,
Lord H. Amundeville and Lady A.

'We understand the splendid host intends
To entertain, this autumn, a select
And numerous party of his noble friends;
'Midst whom we have heard, from sources quite correct,
With many more by rank and fashion deck'd;
Also a foreigner of high condition,
The envoy of the secret Russian mission.'

And thus we see—who doubts the Morning Post?
(Whose articles are like the 'Thirty-nine,'
Which those most swear to who believe them most)—
Our gay Russ Spaniard was ordain'd to shine,
Deck'd by the rays reflected from his host,
With those who, Pope says, 'greatly daring dine.'
'Tis odd, but true,—last war the News abounded
More with these dinners than the kill'd or wounded;—

As thus: 'On Thursday there was a grand dinner;
Present, Lords A. B. C.'—Earls, dukes, by name
Announced with no less pomp than victory's winner:
Then underneath, and in the very same
Column; date, 'Falmouth. There has lately been here
The Slap-dash regiment, so well known to fame,
Whose loss in the late action we regret:
The vacancies are fill'd up—see Gazette.'

To Norman Abbey whirl'd the noble pair,—
An old, old monastery once, and now
Still older mansion; of a rich and rare

Mix'd Gothic, such as artists all allow
Few specimens yet left us can compare
Withal: it lies perhaps a little low,
Because the monks preferr'd a hill behind,
To shelter their devotion from the wind.

It stood embosom'd in a happy valley,
Crown'd by high woodlands, where the Druid oak
Stood like Caractacus in act to rally
His host, with broad arms 'gainst the thunderstroke;
And from beneath his boughs were seen to sally
The dappled foresters—as day awoke,
The branching stag swept down with all his herd,
To quaff a brook which murmur'd like a bird.

Before the mansion lay a lucid lake,
Broad as transparent, deep, and freshly fed
By a river, which its soften'd way did take
In currents through the calmer water spread
Around: the wildfowl nestled in the brake
And sedges, brooding in their liquid bed:
The woods sloped downwards to its brink, and stood
With their green faces fix'd upon the flood.

Its outlet dash'd into a deep cascade,
Sparkling with foam, until again subsiding,
Its shriller echoes—like an infant made
Quiet—sank into softer ripples, gliding
Into a rivulet; and thus allay'd,
Pursued its course, now gleaming, and now hiding
Its windings through the woods; now clear, now blue,
According as the skies their shadows threw.

A glorious remnant of the Gothic pile
(While yet the church was Rome's) stood half apart
In a grand arch, which once screen'd many an aisle.
These last had disappear'd—a loss to art:
The first yet frown'd superbly o'er the soil,

And kindled feelings in the roughest heart,
Which mourn'd the power of time's or tempest's march,
In gazing on that venerable arch.

Within a niche, nigh to its pinnacle,
Twelve saints had once stood sanctified in stone;
But these had fallen, not when the friars fell,
But in the war which struck Charles from his throne,
When each house was a fortalice, as tell
The annals of full many a line undone,—
The gallant cavaliers, who fought in vain
For those who knew not to resign or reign.

But in a higher niche, alone, but crowned,
The Virgin Mother of the God-born Child,
With her Son in her blessed arms, look'd round,
Spared by some chance when all beside was spoil'd;
She made the earth below seem holy ground.
This may be superstition, weak or wild,
But even the faintest relics of a shrine
Of any worship wake some thoughts divine.

A mighty window, hollow in the centre,
Shorn of its glass of thousand colourings,
Through which the deepen'd glories once could enter,
Streaming from off the sun like seraph's wings,
Now yawns all desolate: now loud, now fainter,
The gale sweeps through its fretwork, and oft sings
The owl his anthem, where the silenced quire
Lie with their hallelujahs quench'd like fire.

But in the noontide of the moon, and when
The wind is winged from one point of heaven,
There moans a strange unearthly sound, which then
Is musical—a dying accent driven
Through the huge arch, which soars and sinks again.
Some deem it but the distant echo given
Back to the night wind by the waterfall,

And harmonised by the old choral wall:

Others, that some original shape, or form
  Shaped by decay perchance, hath given the power
(Though less than that of Memnon's statue, warm
  In Egypt's rays, to harp at a fix'd hour)
To this grey ruin, with a voice to charm.
  Sad, but serene, it sweeps o'er tree or tower;
The cause I know not, nor can solve; but such
The fact:—I've heard it—once perhaps too much.

Amidst the court a Gothic fountain play'd,
  Symmetrical, but deck'd with carvings quaint—
Strange faces, like to men in masquerade,
  And here perhaps a monster, there a saint:
The spring gush'd through grim mouths of granite made,
  And sparkled into basins, where it spent
Its little torrent in a thousand bubbles,
Like man's vain glory, and his vainer troubles.

The mansion's self was vast and venerable,
  With more of the monastic than has been
Elsewhere preserved: the cloisters still were stable,
  The cells, too, and refectory, I ween:
An exquisite small chapel had been able,
  Still unimpair'd, to decorate the scene;
The rest had been reform'd, replaced, or sunk,
And spoke more of the baron than the monk.

Huge halls, long galleries, spacious chambers, join'd
  By no quite lawful marriage of the arts,
Might shock a connoisseur; but when combined,
  Form'd a whole which, irregular in parts,
Yet left a grand impression on the mind,
  At least of those whose eyes are in their hearts:
We gaze upon a giant for his stature,
Nor judge at first if all be true to nature.

Steel barons, molten the next generation
To silken rows of gay and garter'd earls,
Glanced from the walls in goodly preservation;
And Lady Marys blooming into girls,
With fair long locks, had also kept their station;
And countesses mature in robes and pearls:
Also some beauties of Sir Peter Lely,
Whose drapery hints we may admire them freely.

Judges in very formidable ermine
Were there, with brows that did not much invite
The accused to think their lordships would determine
His cause by leaning much from might to right:
Bishops, who had not left a single sermon:
Attorneys-general, awful to the sight,
As hinting more (unless our judgments warp us)
Of the 'Star Chamber' than of 'Habeas Corpus.'

Generals, some all in armour, of the old
And iron time, ere lead had ta'en the lead;
Others in wigs of Marlborough's martial fold,
Huger than twelve of our degenerate breed:
Lordlings, with staves of white or keys of gold:
Nimrods, whose canvass scarce contain'd the steed;
And here and there some stern high patriot stood,
Who could not get the place for which he sued.

But ever and anon, to soothe your vision,
Fatigued with these hereditary glories,
There rose a Carlo Dolce or a Titian,
Or wilder group of savage Salvatore's;
Here danced Albano's boys, and here the sea shone
In Vernet's ocean lights; and there the stories
Of martyrs awed, as Spagnoletto tainted
His brush with all the blood of all the sainted.

Here sweetly spread a landscape of Lorraine;
There Rembrandt made his darkness equal light,

Or gloomy Caravaggio's gloomier stain
  Bronzed o'er some lean and stoic anchorite:—
But, lo! a Teniers woos, and not in vain,
  Your eyes to revel in a livelier sight:
His bell-mouth'd goblet makes me feel quite Danish
Or Dutch with thirst—What, ho! a flask of Rhenish.

O reader! if that thou canst read,—and know,
  'Tis not enough to spell, or even to read,
To constitute a reader; there must go
  Virtues of which both you and I have need;—
Firstly, begin with the beginning (though
  That clause is hard); and secondly, proceed;
Thirdly, commence not with the end—or, sinning
In this sort, end at least with the beginning.

But, reader, thou hast patient been of late,
  While I, without remorse of rhyme, or fear,
Have built and laid out ground at such a rate,
  Dan Phoebus takes me for an auctioneer.
That poets were so from their earliest date,
  By Homer's 'Catalogue of ships' is clear;
But a mere modern must be moderate—
I spare you then the furniture and plate.

The mellow autumn came, and with it came
  The promised party, to enjoy its sweets.
The corn is cut, the manor full of game;
  The pointer ranges, and the sportsman beats
In russet jacket:—lynx-like is his aim;
  Full grows his bag, and wonderful his feats.
Ah, nut-brown partridges! Ah, brilliant pheasants!
And ah, ye poachers!—'Tis no sport for peasants.

An English autumn, though it hath no vines,
  Blushing with Bacchant coronals along
The paths, o'er which the far festoon entwines
  The red grape in the sunny lands of song,

Hath yet a purchased choice of choicest wines;
The claret light, and the Madeira strong.
If Britain mourn her bleakness, we can tell her,
The very best of vineyards is the cellar.

Then, if she hath not that serene decline
Which makes the southern autumn's day appear
As if 'twould to a second spring resign
The season, rather than to winter drear,
Of in-door comforts still she hath a mine,—
The sea-coal fires the 'earliest of the year;'
Without doors, too, she may compete in mellow,
As what is lost in green is gain'd in yellow.

And for the effeminate villeggiatura—
Rife with more horns than hounds—she hath the chase,
So animated that it might allure
Saint from his beads to join the jocund race;
Even Nimrod's self might leave the plains of Dura,
And wear the Melton jacket for a space:
If she hath no wild boars, she hath a tame
Preserve of bores, who ought to be made game.

The noble guests, assembled at the Abbey,
Consisted of—we give the sex the pas—
The Duchess of Fitz-Fulke; the Countess Crabby;
The Ladies Scilly, Busey;—Miss Eclat,
Miss Bombazeen, Miss Mackstay, Miss O'Tabby,
And Mrs. Rabbi, the rich banker's squaw;
Also the honourable Mrs. Sleep,
Who look'd a white lamb, yet was a black sheep:

With other Countesses of Blank—but rank;
At once the 'lie' and the 'elite' of crowds;
Who pass like water filter'd in a tank,
All purged and pious from their native clouds;
Or paper turn'd to money by the Bank:
No matter how or why, the passport shrouds

The ‘passee’ and the past; for good society
Is no less famed for tolerance than piety,—

That is, up to a certain point; which point
  Forms the most difficult in punctuation.
Appearances appear to form the joint
  On which it hinges in a higher station;
And so that no explosion cry ‘Aroint
  Thee, witch!’ or each Medea has her Jason;
Or (to the point with Horace and with Pulci)
‘Omne tulit punctum, quae miscuit utile dulci.’

I can’t exactly trace their rule of right,
  Which hath a little leaning to a lottery.
I’ve seen a virtuous woman put down quite
  By the mere combination of a coterie;
Also a so-so matron boldly fight
  Her way back to the world by dint of plottery,
And shine the very Siria of the spheres,
Escaping with a few slight, scarless sneers.

I have seen more than I’ll say:—but we will see
  How our villeggiatura will get on.
The party might consist of thirty-three
  Of highest caste—the Brahmins of the ton.
I have named a few, not foremost in degree,
  But ta’en at hazard as the rhyme may run.
By way of sprinkling, scatter’d amongst these,
There also were some Irish absentees.

There was Parolles, too, the legal bully,
  Who limits all his battles to the bar
And senate: when invited elsewhere, truly,
  He shows more appetite for words than war.
There was the young bard Rackrhyme, who had newly
  Come out and glimmer’d as a six weeks’ star.
There was Lord Pyrrho, too, the great freethinker;
And Sir John Pottledeep, the mighty drinker.

There was the Duke of Dash, who was a—duke,
'Ay, every inch a' duke; there were twelve peers
Like Charlemagne's—and all such peers in look
And intellect, that neither eyes nor ears
For commoners had ever them mistook.
There were the six Miss Rawbolds—pretty dears!
All song and sentiment; whose hearts were set
Less on a convent than a coronet.

There were four Honourable Misters, whose
Honour was more before their names than after;
There was the preux Chevalier de la Ruse,
Whom France and Fortune lately deign'd to waft here,
Whose chiefly harmless talent was to amuse;
But the clubs found it rather serious laughter,
Because—such was his magic power to please—
The dice seem'd charm'd, too, with his repartees.

There was Dick Dubious, the metaphysician,
Who loved philosophy and a good dinner;
Angle, the soi-disant mathematician;
Sir Henry Silvercup, the great race-winner.
There was the Reverend Rodomont Precisian,
Who did not hate so much the sin as sinner;
And Lord Augustus Fitz-Plantagenet,
Good at all things, but better at a bet.

There was Jack Jargon, the gigantic guardsman;
And General Fireface, famous in the field,
A great tactician, and no less a swordsman,
Who ate, last war, more Yankees than he kill'd.
There was the waggish Welsh Judge, Jefferies Hardsman,
In his grave office so completely skill'd,
That when a culprit came far condemnation,
He had his judge's joke for consolation.

Good company 's a chess-board—there are kings,

Queens, bishops, knights, rooks, pawns; the world 's a game;
Save that the puppets pull at their own strings,
Methinks gay Punch hath something of the same.
My Muse, the butterfly hath but her wings,
Not stings, and flits through ether without aim,
Alighting rarely:—were she but a hornet,
Perhaps there might be vices which would mourn it.

I had forgotten—but must not forget—
An orator, the latest of the session,
Who had deliver'd well a very set
Smooth speech, his first and maidenly transgression
Upon debate: the papers echoed yet
With his debut, which made a strong impression,
And rank'd with what is every day display'd—
'The best first speech that ever yet was made.'

Proud of his 'Hear hims!' proud, too, of his vote
And lost virginity of oratory,
Proud of his learning (just enough to quote),
He revell'd in his Ciceronian glory:
With memory excellent to get by rote,
With wit to hatch a pun or tell a story,
Graced with some merit, and with more effrontery,
'His country's pride,' he came down to the country.

There also were two wits by acclamation,
Longbow from Ireland, Strongbow from the Tweed,
Both lawyers and both men of education;
But Strongbow's wit was of more polish'd breed:
Longbow was rich in an imagination
As beautiful and bounding as a steed,
But sometimes stumbling over a potato,—
While Strongbow's best things might have come from Cato.

Strongbow was like a new-tuned harpsichord;
But Longbow wild as an *Æ*olian harp,
With which the winds of heaven can claim accord,

And make a music, whether flat or sharp.
Of Strongbow's talk you would not change a word:
At Longbow's phrases you might sometimes carp:
Both wits—one born so, and the other bred—
This by his heart, his rival by his head.

If all these seem a heterogeneous mas
To be assembled at a country seat,
Yet think, a specimen of every class
Is better than a humdrum tête-à-tête.
The days of Comedy are gone, alas!
When Congreve's fool could vie with Molière's bête:
Society is smooth'd to that excess,
That manners hardly differ more than dress.

Our ridicules are kept in the back-ground—
Ridiculous enough, but also dull;
Professions, too, are no more to be found
Professional; and there is nought to cull
Of folly's fruit; for though your fools abound,
They're barren, and not worth the pains to pull.
Society is now one polish'd horde,
Form'd of two mighty tribes, the Bores and Bored.

But from being farmers, we turn gleaners, gleaning
The scanty but right-well thresh'd ears of truth;
And, gentle reader! when you gather meaning,
You may be Boaz, and I—modest Ruth.
Farther I'd quote, but Scripture intervening
Forbids. Its great impression in my youth
Was made by Mrs. Adams, where she cries,
'That Scriptures out of church are blasphemies.'

But what we can we glean in this vile age
Of chaff, although our gleanings be not grist.
I must not quite omit the talking sage,
Kit-Cat, the famous Conversationist,
Who, in his common-place book, had a page

Prepared each morn for evenings. ‘List, oh, list!’—
‘Alas, poor ghost!’—What unexpected woes
Await those who have studied their bon-mots!

Firstly, they must allure the conversation
By many windings to their clever clinch;
And secondly, must let slip no occasion,
Nor bate (abate) their hearers of an inch,
But take an ell—and make a great sensation,
If possible; and thirdly, never flinch
When some smart talker puts them to the test,
But seize the last word, which no doubt ’s the best.

Lord Henry and his lady were the hosts;
The party we have touch’d on were the guests:
Their table was a board to tempt even ghosts
To pass the Styx for more substantial feasts.
I will not dwell upon ragouts or roasts,
Albeit all human history attests
That happiness for man—the hungry sinner!—
Since Eve ate apples, much depends on dinner.

Witness the lands which ‘flow’d with milk and honey,’
Held out unto the hungry Israelites;
To this we have added since, the love of money,
The only sort of pleasure which requites.
Youth fades, and leaves our days no longer sunny;
We tire of mistresses and parasites;
But oh, ambrosial cash! Ah! who would lose thee?
When we no more can use, or even abuse thee!

The gentlemen got up betimes to shoot,
Or hunt: the young, because they liked the sport—
The first thing boys like after play and fruit;
The middle-aged to make the day more short;
For ennui is a growth of English root,
Though nameless in our language:—we retort
The fact for words, and let the French translate

That awful yawn which sleep can not abate.

The elderly walk'd through the library,
And tumbled books, or criticised the pictures,
Or saunter'd through the gardens piteously,
And made upon the hot-house several strictures,
Or rode a nag which trotted not too high,
Or on the morning papers read their lectures,
Or on the watch their longing eyes would fix,
Longing at sixty for the hour of six.

But none were 'gêné:' the great hour of union
Was rung by dinner's knell; till then all were
Masters of their own time—or in communion,
Or solitary, as they chose to bear
The hours, which how to pass is but to few known.
Each rose up at his own, and had to spare
What time he chose for dress, and broke his fast
When, where, and how he chose for that repast.

The ladies—some rouged, some a little pale—
Met the morn as they might. If fine, they rode,
Or walk'd; if foul, they read, or told a tale,
Sung, or rehearsed the last dance from abroad;
Discuss'd the fashion which might next prevail,
And settled bonnets by the newest code,
Or cramm'd twelve sheets into one little letter,
To make each correspondent a new debtor.

For some had absent lovers, all had friends.
The earth has nothing like a she epistle,
And hardly heaven—because it never ends.
I love the mystery of a female missal,
Which, like a creed, ne'er says all it intends,
But full of cunning as Ulysses' whistle,
When he allured poor Dolon:—you had better
Take care what you reply to such a letter.

Then there were billiards; cards, too, but no dice;—
  Save in the clubs no man of honour plays;—
Boats when 'twas water, skating when 'twas ice,
  And the hard frost destroy'd the scenting days:
And angling, too, that solitary vice,
  Whatever Izaak Walton sings or says;
The quaint, old, cruel coxcomb, in his gullet
Should have a hook, and a small trout to pull it.

With evening came the banquet and the wine;
  The conversazione; the duet,
Attuned by voices more or less divine
  (My heart or head aches with the memory yet).
The four Miss Rawbolds in a glee would shine;
  But the two youngest loved more to be set
Down to the harp—because to music's charms
They added graceful necks, white hands and arms.

Sometimes a dance (though rarely on field days,
  For then the gentlemen were rather tired)
Display'd some sylph-like figures in its maze;
  Then there was small-talk ready when required;
Flirtation—but decorous; the mere praise
  Of charms that should or should not be admired.
The hunters fought their fox-hunt o'er again,
And then retreated soberly—at ten.

The politicians, in a nook apart,
  Discuss'd the world, and settled all the spheres;
The wits watch'd every loophole for their art,
  To introduce a bon-mot head and ears;
Small is the rest of those who would be smart,
  A moment's good thing may have cost them years
Before they find an hour to introduce it;
And then, even then, some bore may make them lose it.

But all was gentle and aristocratic
  In this our party; polish'd, smooth, and cold,

As Phidian forms cut out of marble Attic.
   There now are no Squire Westerns as of old;
And our Sophias are not so emphatic,
   But fair as then, or fairer to behold.
We have no accomplish'd blackguards, like Tom Jones,
But gentlemen in stays, as stiff as stones.

They separated at an early hour;
   That is, ere midnight—which is London's noon:
But in the country ladies seek their bower
   A little earlier than the waning moon.
Peace to the slumbers of each folded flower—
   May the rose call back its true colour soon!
Good hours of fair cheeks are the fairest tinters,
And lower the price of rouge—at least some winters.

Don Juan.

CANTO THE FOURTEENTH.

I.

If from great nature's or our own abyss 1
Of thought, we could but snatch a certainty,
Perhaps mankind might find the path they miss—
But then 'twould spoil much good philosophy.
One system eats another up, and this
Much as old Saturn ate his progeny;
For when his pious consort gave him stones
In lieu of sons, of these he made no bones.

II.

But System doth reverse the Titan's breakfast, 2
And eats her parents, albeit the digestion
Is difficult. Pray tell me, can you make fast,
After due search, your faith to any question?
Look back o'er ages, ere unto the stake fast
You bind yourself, and call some mode the best one.
Nothing more true than *not* to trust your senses;
And yet what are your other evidences?

III.

For me, I know nought: nothing I deny, 3
Admit, reject, contemn; and what know *you*,
Except, perhaps, that you were born to die?
And both may, after all, turn out untrue.
An age may come, Font of Eternity,
When nothing shall be either old or new.
Death, so call'd, is a thing which makes men weep;
And yet a third of life is pass'd in sleep.

IV.

A sleep without dreams, after a rough day 4
Of toil, is what we covet most; and yet
How clay shrinks back from more quiescent clay!
The very suicide that pays his debt
At once without instalments (an old way
Of paying debts, which creditors regret)
Lets out impatiently his rushing breath,
Less from disgust of life than dread of death.

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'Tis round him, near him, here, there, every where;
And there's a courage which grows out of fear,
Perhaps of all most desperate, which will dare
The worst to know it:—when the mountains rear
Their peaks beneath your human foot, and there
You look down o'er the precipice, and drear
The gulf of rock yawns,—you can't gaze a minute
Without an awful wish to plunge within it.

'Tis true, you don't—but, pale and struck with terror,
Retire: but look into your past impression!
And you will find, though shuddering at the mirror
Of your own thoughts, in all their self-confession,
The lurking bias, be it truth or error,
To the unknown; a secret prepossession,
To plunge with all your fears—but where? You know not,
And that's the reason why you do—or do not.

But what 's this to the purpose? you will say.
Gent. reader, nothing; a mere speculation,
For which my sole excuse is—'tis my way;
Sometimes with and sometimes without occasion
I write what 's uppermost, without delay:
This narrative is not meant for narration,
But a mere airy and fantastic basis,
To build up common things with common places.

You know, or don't know, that great Bacon saith,
'Fling up a straw, 'twill show the way the wind blows;'
And such a straw, borne on by human breath,
Is poesy, according as the mind glows;
A paper kite which flies 'twixt life and death,
A shadow which the onward soul behind throws:
And mine 's a bubble, not blown up for praise,

But just to play with, as an infant plays.

The world is all before me—or behind;
For I have seen a portion of that same,
And quite enough for me to keep in mind;—
Of passions, too, I have proved enough to blame,
To the great pleasure of our friends, mankind,
Who like to mix some slight alloy with fame;
For I was rather famous in my time,
Until I fairly knock'd it up with rhyme.

I have brought this world about my ears, and eke
The other; that 's to say, the clergy, who
Upon my head have bid their thunders break
In pious libels by no means a few.
And yet I can't help scribbling once a week,
Tiring old readers, nor discovering new.
In youth I wrote because my mind was full,
And now because I feel it growing dull.

But 'why then publish?'—There are no rewards
Of fame or profit when the world grows weary.
I ask in turn,—Why do you play at cards?
Why drink? Why read?—To make some hour less dreary.
It occupies me to turn back regards
On what I've seen or ponder'd, sad or cheery;
And what I write I cast upon the stream,
To swim or sink—I have had at least my dream.

I think that were I certain of success,
I hardly could compose another line:
So long I've battled either more or less,
That no defeat can drive me from the Nine.
This feeling 'tis not easy to express,
And yet 'tis not affected, I opine.
In play, there are two pleasures for your choosing—
The one is winning, and the other losing.

Besides, my Muse by no means deals in fiction:
She gathers a repertory of facts,
Of course with some reserve and slight restriction,
But mostly sings of human things and acts—
And that 's one cause she meets with contradiction;
For too much truth, at first sight, ne'er attracts;
And were her object only what 's call'd glory,
With more ease too she'd tell a different story.

Love, war, a tempest—surely there's variety;
Also a seasoning slight of lucubration;
A bird's-eye view, too, of that wild, Society;
A slight glance thrown on men of every station.
If you have nought else, here's at least satiety
Both in performance and in preparation;
And though these lines should only line portmanteaus,
Trade will be all the better for these Cantos.

The portion of this world which I at present
Have taken up to fill the following sermon,
Is one of which there's no description recent.
The reason why is easy to determine:
Although it seems both prominent and pleasant,
There is a sameness in its gems and ermine,
A dull and family likeness through all ages,
Of no great promise for poetic pages.

With much to excite, there's little to exalt;
Nothing that speaks to all men and all times;
A sort of varnish over every fault;
A kind of common-place, even in their crimes;
Factitious passions, wit without much salt,
A want of that true nature which sublimes
Whate'er it shows with truth; a smooth monotony
Of character, in those at least who have got any.

Sometimes, indeed, like soldiers off parade,
They break their ranks and gladly leave the drill;

But then the roll-call draws them back afraid,
And they must be or seem what they were: still
Doubtless it is a brilliant masquerade;
But when of the first sight you have had your fill,
It palls—at least it did so upon me,
This paradise of pleasure and ennui.

When we have made our love, and gamed our gaming,
Drest, voted, shone, and, may be, something more;
With dandies dined; heard senators declaiming;
Seen beauties brought to market by the score,
Sad rakes to sadder husbands chastely taming;
There's little left but to be bored or bore.
Witness those 'ci-devant jeunes hommes' who stem
The stream, nor leave the world which leaveth them.

'Tis said—indeed a general complaint—
That no one has succeeded in describing
The monde, exactly as they ought to paint:
Some say, that authors only snatch, by bribing
The porter, some slight scandals strange and quaint,
To furnish matter for their moral gibing;
And that their books have but one style in common—
My lady's prattle, filter'd through her woman.

But this can't well be true, just now; for writers
Are grown of the beau monde a part potential:
I've seen them balance even the scale with fighters,
Especially when young, for that 's essential.
Why do their sketches fail them as inditers
Of what they deem themselves most consequential,
The real portrait of the highest tribe?
'Tis that, in fact, there's little to describe.

'Haud ignara loquor;' these are Nugae, 'quarum
Pars parva fui,' but still art and part.
Now I could much more easily sketch a harem,
A battle, wreck, or history of the heart,

Than these things; and besides, I wish to spare 'em,
For reasons which I choose to keep apart.
'Vetabo Cereris sacrum qui vulgarit—'
Which means that vulgar people must not share it.

And therefore what I throw off is ideal—
Lower'd, leaven'd, like a history of freemasons;
Which bears the same relation to the real,
As Captain Parry's voyage may do to Jason's.
The grand arcanum 's not for men to see all;
My music has some mystic diapasons;
And there is much which could not be appreciated
In any manner by the uninitiated.

Alas! worlds fall—and woman, since she fell'd
The world (as, since that history less polite
Than true, hath been a creed so strictly held)
Has not yet given up the practice quite.
Poor thing of usages! coerced, compell'd,
Victim when wrong, and martyr oft when right,
Condemn'd to child-bed, as men for their sins
Have shaving too entail'd upon their chins,—

A daily plague, which in the aggregate
May average on the whole with parturition.
But as to women, who can penetrate
The real sufferings of their she condition?
Man's very sympathy with their estate
Has much of selfishness, and more suspicion.
Their love, their virtue, beauty, education,
But form good housekeepers, to breed a nation.

All this were very well, and can't be better;
But even this is difficult, Heaven knows,
So many troubles from her birth beset her,
Such small distinction between friends and foes,
The gilding wears so soon from off her fetter,
That—but ask any woman if she'd choose

(Take her at thirty, that is) to have been
Female or male? a schoolboy or a queen?

‘Petticoat influence’ is a great reproach,
  Which even those who obey would fain be thought
To fly from, as from hungry pikes a roach;
  But since beneath it upon earth we are brought,
By various joltings of life’s hackney coach,
  I for one venerate a petticoat—
A garment of a mystical sublimity,
No matter whether russet, silk, or dimity.

Much I respect, and much I have adored,
  In my young days, that chaste and goodly veil,
Which holds a treasure, like a miser’s hoard,
  And more attracts by all it doth conceal—
A golden scabbard on a Damasque sword,
  A loving letter with a mystic seal,
A cure for grief—for what can ever rankle
Before a petticoat and peeping ankle?

And when upon a silent, sullen day,
  With a sirocco, for example, blowing,
When even the sea looks dim with all its spray,
  And sulkily the river’s ripple ’s flowing,
And the sky shows that very ancient gray,
  The sober, sad antithesis to glowing,—
’Tis pleasant, if then any thing is pleasant,
To catch a glimpse even of a pretty peasant.

We left our heroes and our heroines
  In that fair clime which don’t depend on climate,
Quite independent of the Zodiac’s signs,
  Though certainly more difficult to rhyme at,
Because the sun, and stars, and aught that shines,
  Mountains, and all we can be most sublime at,
Are there oft dull and dreary as a dun—
Whether a sky’s or tradesman’s is all one.

An in-door life is less poetical;
And out of door hath showers, and mists, and sleet,
With which I could not brew a pastoral.
But be it as it may, a bard must meet
All difficulties, whether great or small,
To spoil his undertaking or complete,
And work away like spirit upon matter,
Embarrass'd somewhat both with fire and water.

Juan—in this respect, at least, like saints—
Was all things unto people of all sorts,
And lived contentedly, without complaints,
In camps, in ships, in cottages, or courts—
Born with that happy soul which seldom faints,
And mingling modestly in toils or sports.
He likewise could be most things to all women,
Without the coxcombry of certain she men.

A fox-hunt to a foreigner is strange;
'Tis also subject to the double danger
Of tumbling first, and having in exchange
Some pleasant jesting at the awkward stranger:
But Juan had been early taught to range
The wilds, as doth an Arab turn'd avenger,
So that his horse, or charger, hunter, hack,
Knew that he had a rider on his back.

And now in this new field, with some applause,
He clear'd hedge, ditch, and double post, and rail,
And never craned, and made but few 'faux pas,'
And only fretted when the scent 'gan fail.
He broke, 'tis true, some statutes of the laws
Of hunting—for the sagest youth is frail;
Rode o'er the hounds, it may be, now and then,
And once o'er several country gentlemen.

But on the whole, to general admiration

He acquitted both himself and horse: the squires
Marvell'd at merit of another nation;
The boors cried 'Dang it? who 'd have thought it?'—Sires,
The Nestors of the sporting generation,
Swore praises, and recall'd their former fires;
The huntsman's self relented to a grin,
And rated him almost a whipper-in.

Such were his trophies—not of spear and shield,
But leaps, and bursts, and sometimes foxes' brushes;
Yet I must own,—although in this I yield
To patriot sympathy a Briton's blushes,—
He thought at heart like courtly Chesterfield,
Who, after a long chase o'er hills, dales, bushes,
And what not, though he rode beyond all price,
Ask'd next day, 'If men ever hunted twice?'

He also had a quality uncommon
To early risers after a long chase,
Who wake in winter ere the cock can summon
December's drowsy day to his dull race,—
A quality agreeable to woman,
When her soft, liquid words run on apace,
Who likes a listener, whether saint or sinner,—
He did not fall asleep just after dinner;

But, light and airy, stood on the alert,
And shone in the best part of dialogue,
By humouring always what they might assert,
And listening to the topics most in vogue;
Now grave, now gay, but never dull or pert;
And smiling but in secret—cunning rogue!
He ne'er presumed to make an error clearer;—
In short, there never was a better hearer.

And then he danced;—all foreigners excel
The serious Angles in the eloquence
Of pantomime;—he danced, I say, right well,

With emphasis, and also with good sense—
A thing in footing indispensable;
He danced without theatrical pretence,
Not like a ballet-master in the van
Of his drill'd nymphs, but like a gentleman.

Chaste were his steps, each kept within due bound,
And elegance was sprinkled o'er his figure;
Like swift Camilla, he scarce skimm'd the ground,
And rather held in than put forth his vigour;
And then he had an ear for music's sound,
Which might defy a crotchet critic's rigour.
Such classic pas—sans flaws—set off our hero,
He glanced like a personified Bolero;

Or, like a flying Hour before Aurora,
In Guido's famous fresco which alone
Is worth a tour to Rome, although no more a
Remnant were there of the old world's sole throne.
The 'tout ensemble' of his movements wore a
Grace of the soft ideal, seldom shown,
And ne'er to be described; for to the dolour
Of bards and prosers, words are void of colour.

No marvel then he was a favourite;
A full-grown Cupid, very much admired;
A little spoilt, but by no means so quite;
At least he kept his vanity retired.
Such was his tact, he could alike delight
The chaste, and those who are not so much inspired.
The Duchess of Fitz-Fulke, who loved 'tracasserie,'
Began to treat him with some small 'agacerie.'

She was a fine and somewhat full-blown blonde,
Desirable, distinguish'd, celebrated
For several winters in the grand, grand monde.
I'd rather not say what might be related
Of her exploits, for this were ticklish ground;

Besides there might be falsehood in what 's stated:
Her late performance had been a dead set
At Lord Augustus Fitz-Plantagenet.

This noble personage began to look
A little black upon this new flirtation;
But such small licences must lovers brook,
Mere freedoms of the female corporation.
Woe to the man who ventures a rebuke!
'Twill but precipitate a situation
Extremely disagreeable, but common
To calculators when they count on woman.

The circle smiled, then whisper'd, and then sneer'd;
The Misses bridled, and the matrons frown'd;
Some hoped things might not turn out as they fear'd;
Some would not deem such women could be found;
Some ne'er believed one half of what they heard;
Some look'd perplex'd, and others look'd profound;
And several pitied with sincere regret
Poor Lord Augustus Fitz-Plantagenet.

But what is odd, none ever named the duke,
Who, one might think, was something in the affair;
True, he was absent, and, 'twas rumour'd, took
But small concern about the when, or where,
Or what his consort did: if he could brook
Her gaieties, none had a right to stare:
Theirs was that best of unions, past all doubt,
Which never meets, and therefore can't fall out.

But, oh! that I should ever pen so sad a line!
Fired with an abstract love of virtue, she,
My Dian of the Ephesians, Lady Adeline,
Began to think the duchess' conduct free;
Regretting much that she had chosen so bad a line,
And waxing chiller in her courtesy,
Look'd grave and pale to see her friend's fragility,

For which most friends reserve their sensibility.

There's nought in this bad world like sympathy:
'Tis so becoming to the soul and face,
Sets to soft music the harmonious sigh,
And robes sweet friendship in a Brussels lace.
Without a friend, what were humanity,
To hunt our errors up with a good grace?
Consoling us with—'Would you had thought twice!
Ah, if you had but follow'd my advice!'

O Job! you had two friends: one 's quite enough,
Especially when we are ill at ease;
They are but bad pilots when the weather 's rough,
Doctors less famous for their cures than fees.
Let no man grumble when his friends fall off,
As they will do like leaves at the first breeze:
When your affairs come round, one way or t' other,
Go to the coffee-house, and take another.

But this is not my maxim: had it been,
Some heart-aches had been spared me: yet I care not—
I would not be a tortoise in his screen
Of stubborn shell, which waves and weather wear not.
'Tis better on the whole to have felt and seen
That which humanity may bear, or bear not:
'Twill teach discernment to the sensitive,
And not to pour their ocean in a sieve.

Of all the horrid, hideous notes of woe,
Sadder than owl-songs or the midnight blast,
Is that portentous phrase, 'I told you so,'
Utter'd by friends, those prophets of the past,
Who, 'stead of saying what you now should do,
Own they foresaw that you would fall at last,
And solace your slight lapse 'gainst 'bonos mores,'
With a long memorandum of old stories.

The Lady Adeline's serene severity
Was not confined to feeling for her friend,
Whose fame she rather doubted with posterity,
Unless her habits should begin to mend:
But Juan also shared in her austerity,
But mix'd with pity, pure as e'er was penn'd:
His inexperience moved her gentle ruth,
And (as her junior by six weeks) his youth.

These forty days' advantage of her years—
And hers were those which can face calculation,
Boldly referring to the list of peers
And noble births, nor dread the enumeration—
Gave her a right to have maternal fears
For a young gentleman's fit education,
Though she was far from that leap year, whose leap,
In female dates, strikes Time all of a heap.

This may be fix'd at somewhere before thirty—
Say seven-and-twenty; for I never knew
The strictest in chronology and virtue
Advance beyond, while they could pass for new.
O Time! why dost not pause? Thy scythe, so dirty
With rust, should surely cease to hack and hew.
Reset it; shave more smoothly, also slower,
If but to keep thy credit as a mower.

But Adeline was far from that ripe age,
Whose ripeness is but bitter at the best:
'Twas rather her experience made her sage,
For she had seen the world and stood its test,
As I have said in—I forget what page;
My Muse despises reference, as you have guess'd
By this time;—but strike six from seven-and-twenty,
And you will find her sum of years in plenty.

At sixteen she came out; presented, vaunted,
She put all coronets into commotion:

At seventeen, too, the world was still enchanted
With the new Venus of their brilliant ocean:
At eighteen, though below her feet still panted
A hecatomb of suitors with devotion,
She had consented to create again
That Adam, call'd 'The happiest of men.'

Since then she had sparkled through three glowing winters,
Admired, adored; but also so correct,
That she had puzzled all the acutest hinters,
Without the apparel of being circumspect:
They could not even glean the slightest splinters
From off the marble, which had no defect.
She had also snatch'd a moment since her marriage
To bear a son and heir—and one miscarriage.

Fondly the wheeling fire-flies flew around her,
Those little glitterers of the London night;
But none of these possess'd a sting to wound her—
She was a pitch beyond a coxcomb's flight.
Perhaps she wish'd an aspirant profounder;
But whatsoe'er she wish'd, she acted right;
And whether coldness, pride, or virtue dignify
A woman, so she 's good, what does it signify?

I hate a motive, like a lingering bottle
Which with the landlord makes too long a stand,
Leaving all-claretless the unmoisten'd throttle,
Especially with politics on hand;
I hate it, as I hate a drove of cattle,
Who whirl the dust as simooms whirl the sand;
I hate it, as I hate an argument,
A laureate's ode, or servile peer's 'content.'

'Tis sad to hack into the roots of things,
They are so much intertwisted with the earth;
So that the branch a goodly verdure flings,
I reck not if an acorn gave it birth.

To trace all actions to their secret springs
Would make indeed some melancholy mirth;
But this is not at present my concern,
And I refer you to wise Oxenstiern.

With the kind view of saving an eclat,
Both to the duchess and diplomatist,
The Lady Adeline, as soon 's she saw
That Juan was unlikely to resist
(For foreigners don't know that a faux pas
In England ranks quite on a different list
From those of other lands unblest with juries,
Whose verdict for such sin a certain cure is);—

The Lady Adeline resolved to take
Such measures as she thought might best impede
The farther progress of this sad mistake.
She thought with some simplicity indeed;
But innocence is bold even at the stake,
And simple in the world, and doth not need
Nor use those palisades by dames erected,
Whose virtue lies in never being detected.

It was not that she fear'd the very worst:
His Grace was an enduring, married man,
And was not likely all at once to burst
Into a scene, and swell the clients' clan
Of Doctors' Commons: but she dreaded first
The magic of her Grace's talisman,
And next a quarrel (as he seem'd to fret)
With Lord Augustus Fitz-Plantagenet.

Her Grace, too, pass'd for being an intrigante,
And somewhat méchante in her amorous sphere;
One of those pretty, precious plagues, which haunt
A lover with caprices soft and dear,
That like to make a quarrel, when they can't
Find one, each day of the delightful year;

Bewitching, torturing, as they freeze or glow,
And—what is worst of all—won't let you go:

The sort of thing to turn a young man's head,
  Or make a Werter of him in the end.
No wonder then a purer soul should dread
  This sort of chaste liaison for a friend;
It were much better to be wed or dead,
  Than wear a heart a woman loves to rend.
'Tis best to pause, and think, ere you rush on,
If that a 'bonne fortune' be really 'bonne.'

And first, in the o'erflowing of her heart,
  Which really knew or thought it knew no guile,
She call'd her husband now and then apart,
  And bade him counsel Juan. With a smile
Lord Henry heard her plans of artless art
  To wean Don Juan from the siren's wile;
And answer'd, like a statesman or a prophet,
In such guise that she could make nothing of it.

Firstly, he said, 'he never interfered
  In any body's business but the king's:'
Next, that 'he never judged from what appear'd,
  Without strong reason, of those sort of things:'
Thirdly, that 'Juan had more brain than beard,
  And was not to be held in leading strings;'
And fourthly, what need hardly be said twice,
'That good but rarely came from good advice.'

And, therefore, doubtless to approve the truth
  Of the last axiom, he advised his spouse
To leave the parties to themselves, forsooth—
  At least as far as bienséance allows:
That time would temper Juan's faults of youth;
  That young men rarely made monastic vows;
That opposition only more attaches—
But here a messenger brought in despatches:

And being of the council call'd 'the Privy,'
Lord Henry walk'd into his cabinet,
To furnish matter for some future Livy
To tell how he reduced the nation's debt;
And if their full contents I do not give ye,
It is because I do not know them yet;
But I shall add them in a brief appendix,
To come between mine epic and its index.

But ere he went, he added a slight hint,
Another gentle common-place or two,
Such as are coin'd in conversation's mint,
And pass, for want of better, though not new:
Then broke his packet, to see what was in 't,
And having casually glanced it through,
Retired; and, as went out, calmly kiss'd her,
Less like a young wife than an aged sister.

He was a cold, good, honourable man,
Proud of his birth, and proud of every thing;
A goodly spirit for a state divan,
A figure fit to walk before a king;
Tall, stately, form'd to lead the courtly van
On birthdays, glorious with a star and string;
The very model of a chamberlain—
And such I mean to make him when I reign.

But there was something wanting on the whole—
I don't know what, and therefore cannot tell—
Which pretty women—the sweet souls!—call soul.
Certes it was not body; he was well
Proportion'd, as a poplar or a pole,
A handsome man, that human miracle;
And in each circumstance of love or war
Had still preserved his perpendicular.

Still there was something wanting, as I've said—

That undefinable ‘Je ne sçais quoi,’
Which, for what I know, may of yore have led
To Homer’s Iliad, since it drew to Troy
The Greek Eve, Helen, from the Spartan’s bed;
Though on the whole, no doubt, the Dardan boy
Was much inferior to King Menelaus:—
But thus it is some women will betray us.

There is an awkward thing which much perplexes,
Unless like wise Tiresias we had proved
By turns the difference of the several sexes;
Neither can show quite how they would be loved.
The sensual for a short time but connects us,
The sentimental boasts to be unmoved;
But both together form a kind of centaur,
Upon whose back ’tis better not to venture.

A something all-sufficient for the heart
Is that for which the sex are always seeking:
But how to fill up that same vacant part?
There lies the rub—and this they are but weak in.
Frail mariners afloat without a chart,
They run before the wind through high seas breaking;
And when they have made the shore through every shock,
’Tis odd, or odds, it may turn out a rock.

There is a flower call’d ‘Love in Idleness,’
For which see Shakspeare’s everblooming garden;—
I will not make his great description less,
And beg his British godship’s humble pardon,
If in my extremity of rhyme’s distress,
I touch a single leaf where he is warden;—
But though the flower is different, with the French
Or Swiss Rousseau, cry ‘Voilà la Pervenche!’

Eureka! I have found it! What I mean
To say is, not that love is idleness,
But that in love such idleness has been

An accessory, as I have cause to guess.
Hard labour's an indifferent go-between;
Your men of business are not apt to express
Much passion, since the merchant-ship, the Argo,
Convey'd Medea as her supercargo.

'Beatus ille procul!' from 'negotiis,'
Saith Horace; the great little poet 's wrong;
His other maxim, 'Noscitur a sociis,'
Is much more to the purpose of his song;
Though even that were sometimes too ferocious,
Unless good company be kept too long;
But, in his teeth, whate'er their state or station,
Thrice happy they who have an occupation!

Adam exchanged his Paradise for ploughing,
Eve made up millinery with fig leaves—
The earliest knowledge from the tree so knowing,
As far as I know, that the church receives:
And since that time it need not cost much showing,
That many of the ills o'er which man grieves,
And still more women, spring from not employing
Some hours to make the remnant worth enjoying.

And hence high life is oft a dreary void,
A rack of pleasures, where we must invent
A something wherewithal to be annoy'd.
Bards may sing what they please about Content;
Contented, when translated, means but cloy'd;
And hence arise the woes of sentiment,
Blue devils, and blue-stockings, and romances
Reduced to practice, and perform'd like dances.

I do declare, upon an affidavit,
Romances I ne'er read like those I have seen;
Nor, if unto the world I ever gave it,
Would some believe that such a tale had been:
But such intent I never had, nor have it;

Some truths are better kept behind a screen,
Especially when they would look like lies;
I therefore deal in generalities.

'An oyster may be cross'd in love,'—and why?
Because he mopeth idly in his shell,
And heaves a lonely subterraqueous sigh,
Much as a monk may do within his cell:
And a-propos of monks, their piety
With sloth hath found it difficult to dwell;
Those vegetables of the Catholic creed
Are apt exceedingly to run to seed.

O Wilberforce! thou man of black renown,
Whose merit none enough can sing or say,
Thou hast struck one immense Colossus down,
Thou moral Washington of Africa!
But there's another little thing, I own,
Which you should perpetrate some summer's day,
And set the other halt of earth to rights;
You have freed the blacks—now pray shut up the whites.

Shut up the bald-coot bully Alexander!
Ship off the Holy Three to Senegal;
Teach them that 'sauce for goose is sauce for gander,'
And ask them how they like to be in thrall?
Shut up each high heroic salamander,
Who eats fire gratis (since the pay 's but small);
Shut up—no, not the King, but the Pavilion,
Or else 'twill cost us all another million.

Shut up the world at large, let Bedlam out;
And you will be perhaps surprised to find
All things pursue exactly the same route,
As now with those of soi-disant sound mind.
This I could prove beyond a single doubt,
Were there a jot of sense among mankind;
But till that point d'appui is found, alas!

Like Archimedes, I leave earth as 'twas.

Our gentle Adeline had one defect—
  Her heart was vacant, though a splendid mansion;
Her conduct had been perfectly correct,
  As she had seen nought claiming its expansion.
A wavering spirit may be easier wreck'd,
  Because 'tis frailer, doubtless, than a stanch one;
But when the latter works its own undoing,
Its inner crash is like an earthquake's ruin.

She loved her lord, or thought so; but that love
  Cost her an effort, which is a sad toil,
The stone of Sisyphus, if once we move
  Our feelings 'gainst the nature of the soil.
She had nothing to complain of, or reprove,
  No bickerings, no connubial turmoil:
Their union was a model to behold,
Serene and noble,—conjugal, but cold.

There was no great disparity of years,
  Though much in temper; but they never clash'd:
They moved like stars united in their spheres,
  Or like the Rhone by Leman's waters wash'd,
Where mingled and yet separate appears
  The river from the lake, all bluely dash'd
Through the serene and placid glassy deep,
Which fain would lull its river-child to sleep.

Now when she once had ta'en an interest
  In any thing, however she might flatter
Herself that her intentions were the best,
  Intense intentions are a dangerous matter:
Impressions were much stronger than she guess'd,
  And gather'd as they run like growing water
Upon her mind; the more so, as her breast
Was not at first too readily impress'd.

But when it was, she had that lurking demon
Of double nature, and thus doubly named—
Firmness yclept in heroes, kings, and seamen,
That is, when they succeed; but greatly blamed
As obstinacy, both in men and women,
Whene'er their triumph pales, or star is tamed:—
And 'twill perplex the casuist in morality
To fix the due bounds of this dangerous quality.

Had Buonaparte won at Waterloo,
It had been firmness; now 'tis pertinacity:
Must the event decide between the two?
I leave it to your people of sagacity
To draw the line between the false and true,
If such can e'er be drawn by man's capacity:
My business is with Lady Adeline,
Who in her way too was a heroine.

She knew not her own heart; then how should I?
I think not she was then in love with Juan:
If so, she would have had the strength to fly
The wild sensation, unto her a new one:
She merely felt a common sympathy
(I will not say it was a false or true one)
In him, because she thought he was in danger,—
Her husband's friend, her own, young, and a stranger.

She was, or thought she was, his friend—and this
Without the farce of friendship, or romance
Of Platonism, which leads so oft amiss
Ladies who have studied friendship but in France,
Or Germany, where people purely kiss.
To thus much Adeline would not advance;
But of such friendship as man's may to man be
She was as capable as woman can be.

No doubt the secret influence of the sex
Will there, as also in the ties of blood,

An innocent predominance annex,
And tune the concord to a finer mood.
If free from passion, which all friendship checks,
And your true feelings fully understood,
No friend like to a woman earth discovers,
So that you have not been nor will be lovers.

Love bears within its breast the very germ
Of change; and how should this be otherwise?
That violent things more quickly find a term
Is shown through nature's whole analogies;
And how should the most fierce of all be firm?
Would you have endless lightning in the skies?
Methinks Love's very title says enough:
How should 'the tender passion' e'er be tough?

Alas! by all experience, seldom yet
(I merely quote what I have heard from many)
Had lovers not some reason to regret
The passion which made Solomon a zany.
I've also seen some wives (not to forget
The marriage state, the best or worst of any)
Who were the very paragons of wives,
Yet made the misery of at least two lives.

I've also seen some female friends ('tis odd,
But true—as, if expedient, I could prove)
That faithful were through thick and thin, abroad,
At home, far more than ever yet was Love—
Who did not quit me when Oppression trod
Upon me; whom no scandal could remove;
Who fought, and fight, in absence, too, my battles,
Despite the snake Society's loud rattles.

Whether Don Juan and chaste Adeline
Grew friends in this or any other sense,
Will be discuss'd hereafter, I opine:
At present I am glad of a pretence

To leave them hovering, as the effect is fine,
And keeps the atrocious reader in suspense;
The surest way for ladies and for books
To bait their tender, or their tenter, hooks.

Whether they rode, or walk'd, or studied Spanish
To read Don Quixote in the original,
A pleasure before which all others vanish;
Whether their talk was of the kind call'd 'small,'
Or serious, are the topics I must banish
To the next Canto; where perhaps I shall
Say something to the purpose, and display
Considerable talent in my way.

Above all, I beg all men to forbear
Anticipating aught about the matter:
They'll only make mistakes about the fair,
And Juan too, especially the latter.
And I shall take a much more serious air
Than I have yet done, in this epic satire.
It is not clear that Adeline and Juan
Will fall; but if they do, 'twill be their ruin.

But great things spring from little:—Would you think,
That in our youth, as dangerous a passion
As e'er brought man and woman to the brink
Of ruin, rose from such a slight occasion,
As few would ever dream could form the link
Of such a sentimental situation?
You'll never guess, I'll bet you millions, milliards—
It all sprung from a harmless game at billiards.

'Tis strange,—but true; for truth is always strange;
Stranger than fiction; if it could be told,
How much would novels gain by the exchange!
How differently the world would men behold!
How oft would vice and virtue places change!
The new world would be nothing to the old,

If some Columbus of the moral seas
Would show mankind their souls' antipodes.

What 'antres vast and deserts idle' then
  Would be discover'd in the human soul!
What icebergs in the hearts of mighty men,
  With self-love in the centre as their pole!
What Anthropophagi are nine of ten
  Of those who hold the kingdoms in control
Were things but only call'd by their right name,
Caesar himself would be ashamed of fame.

CANTO THE FIFTEENTH.

Ah!—What should follow slips from my reflection;
  Whatever follows ne'ertheless may be
As *à propos* of hope or retrospection,
  As though the lurking thought had follow'd free.
All present life is but an interjection,
  An 'Oh!' or 'Ah!' of joy or misery,
Or a 'Ha! ha!' or 'Bah!'—a yawn, or 'Pooh!'
Of which perhaps the latter is most true.

But, more or less, the whole 's a syncope
  Or a singultus—emblems of emotion,
The grand antithesis to great ennui,
  Wherewith we break our bubbles on the ocean,—
That watery outline of eternity,
  Or miniature at least, as is my notion,
Which ministers unto the soul's delight,
In seeing matters which are out of sight.

But all are better than the sigh suppressed,
  Corroding in the cavern of the heart,
Making the countenance a masque of rest,
  And turning human nature to an art.
Few men dare show their thoughts of worst or best;
  Dissimulation always sets apart
A corner for herself; and therefore fiction
Is that which passes with least contradiction.

Ah! who can tell? Or rather, who can not
  Remember, without telling, passion's errors?
The drainer of oblivion, even the sot,
  Hath got blue devils for his morning mirrors:
What though on Lethe's stream he seem to float,

He cannot sink his tremors or his terrors;
The ruby glass that shakes within his hand
Leaves a sad sediment of Time's worst sand.

And as for love—O love!—We will proceed.
The Lady Adeline Amundeville,
A pretty name as one would wish to read,
Must perch harmonious on my tuneful quill.
There's music in the sighing of a reed;
There's music in the gushing of a rill;
There's music in all things, if men had ears:
Their earth is but an echo of the spheres.

The Lady Adeline, right honourable;
And honour'd, ran a risk of growing less so;
For few of the soft sex are very stable
In their resolves—alas! that I should say so!
They differ as wine differs from its label,
When once decanted;—I presume to guess so,
But will not swear: yet both upon occasion,
Till old, may undergo adulteration.

But Adeline was of the purest vintage,
The unmingled essence of the grape; and yet
Bright as a new Napoleon from its mintage,
Or glorious as a diamond richly set;
A page where Time should hesitate to print age,
And for which Nature might forego her debt—
Sole creditor whose process doth involve in 't
The luck of finding every body solvent.

O Death! thou dunnest of all duns! thou daily
Knockest at doors, at first with modest tap,
Like a meek tradesman when, approaching palely,
Some splendid debtor he would take by sap:
But oft denied, as patience 'gins to fail, he
Advances with exasperated rap,
And (if let in) insists, in terms unhandsome,

On ready money, or ‘a draft on Ransom.’

Whate’er thou takest, spare a while poor Beauty!
She is so rare, and thou hast so much prey.
What though she now and then may slip from duty,
The more ’s the reason why you ought to stay.
Gaunt Gourmand! with whole nations for your booty,
You should be civil in a modest way:
Suppress, then, some slight feminine diseases,
And take as many heroes as Heaven pleases.

Fair Adeline, the more ingenuous
Where she was interested (as was said),
Because she was not apt, like some of us,
To like too readily, or too high bred
To show it (points we need not now discuss)—
Would give up artlessly both heart and head
Unto such feelings as seem’d innocent,
For objects worthy of the sentiment.

Some parts of Juan’s history, which Rumour,
That live gazette, had scatter’d to disfigure,
She had heard; but women hear with more good humour
Such aberrations than we men of rigour:
Besides, his conduct, since in England, grew more
Strict, and his mind assumed a manlier vigour;
Because he had, like Alcibiades,
The art of living in all climes with ease.

His manner was perhaps the more seductive,
Because he ne’er seem’d anxious to seduce;
Nothing affected, studied, or constructive
Of coxcombry or conquest: no abuse
Of his attractions marr’d the fair perspective,
To indicate a Cupidon broke loose,
And seem to say, ‘Resist us if you can’—
Which makes a dandy while it spoils a man.

They are wrong—that 's not the way to set about it;
  As, if they told the truth, could well be shown.
But, right or wrong, Don Juan was without it;
  In fact, his manner was his own alone;
Sincere he was—at least you could not doubt it,
  In listening merely to his voice's tone.
The devil hath not in all his quiver's choice
An arrow for the heart like a sweet voice.

By nature soft, his whole address held off
  Suspicion: though not timid, his regard
Was such as rather seem'd to keep aloof,
  To shield himself than put you on your guard:
Perhaps 'twas hardly quite assured enough,
  But modesty 's at times its own reward,
Like virtue; and the absence of pretension
Will go much farther than there's need to mention.

Serene, accomplish'd, cheerful but not loud;
  Insinuating without insinuation;
Observant of the foibles of the crowd,
  Yet ne'er betraying this in conversation;
Proud with the proud, yet courteously proud,
  So as to make them feel he knew his station
And theirs:—without a struggle for priority,
He neither brook'd nor claim'd superiority.

That is, with men: with women he was what
  They pleased to make or take him for; and their
Imagination 's quite enough for that:
  So that the outline 's tolerably fair,
They fill the canvas up—and 'verbum sat.'
  If once their phantasies be brought to bear
Upon an object, whether sad or playful,
They can transfigure brighter than a Raphael.

Adeline, no deep judge of character,
  Was apt to add a colouring from her own:

'Tis thus the good will amiably err,
And eke the wise, as has been often shown.
Experience is the chief philosopher,
But saddest when his science is well known:
And persecuted sages teach the schools
Their folly in forgetting there are fools.

Was it not so, great Locke? and greater Bacon?
Great Socrates? And thou, Diviner still,
Whose lot it is by man to be mistaken,
And thy pure creed made sanction of all ill?
Redeeming worlds to be by bigots shaken,
How was thy toil rewarded? We might fill
Volumes with similar sad illustrations,
But leave them to the conscience of the nations.

I perch upon an humbler promontory,
Amidst life's infinite variety:
With no great care for what is nicknamed glory,
But speculating as I cast mine eye
On what may suit or may not suit my story,
And never straining hard to versify,
I rattle on exactly as I'd talk
With any body in a ride or walk.

I don't know that there may be much ability
Shown in this sort of desultory rhyme;
But there's a conversational facility,
Which may round off an hour upon a time.
Of this I'm sure at least, there's no servility
In mine irregularity of chime,
Which rings what 's uppermost of new or hoary,
Just as I feel the 'Improvvisatore.'

'Omnia vult belle Matho dicere—dic aliquando
Et bene, dic neutrum, dic aliquando male.'
The first is rather more than mortal can do;
The second may be sadly done or gaily;

The third is still more difficult to stand to;
   The fourth we hear, and see, and say too, daily.
The whole together is what I could wish
To serve in this conundrum of a dish.

A modest hope—but modesty 's my forte,
   And pride my feeble:—let us ramble on.
I meant to make this poem very short,
   But now I can't tell where it may not run.
No doubt, if I had wish' to pay my court
   To critics, or to hail the setting sun
Of tyranny of all kinds, my concision
Were more;—but I was born for opposition.

But then 'tis mostly on the weaker side;
   So that I verily believe if they
Who now are basking in their full-blown pride
   Were shaken down, and 'dogs had had their day,'
Though at the first I might perchance deride
   Their tumble, I should turn the other way,
And wax an ultra-royalist in loyalty,
Because I hate even democratic royalty.

I think I should have made a decent spouse,
   If I had never proved the soft condition;
I think I should have made monastic vows,
   But for my own peculiar superstition:
'Gainst rhyme I never should have knock'd my brows,
   Nor broken my own head, nor that of Priscian,
Nor worn the motley mantle of a poet,
If some one had not told me to forego it.

But 'laissez aller'—knights and dames I sing,
   Such as the times may furnish. 'Tis a flight
Which seems at first to need no lofty wing,
   Plumed by Longinus or the Stagyrite:
The difficultly lies in colouring
   (Keeping the due proportions still in sight)

With nature manners which are artificial,
And rend'ring general that which is especial.

The difference is, that in the days of old
  Men made the manners; manners now make men—
Pinn'd like a flock, and fleeced too in their fold,
  At least nine, and a ninth beside of ten.
Now this at all events must render cold
  Your writers, who must either draw again
Days better drawn before, or else assume
The present, with their common-place costume.

We'll do our best to make the best on 't:—March!
  March, my Muse! If you cannot fly, yet flutter;
And when you may not be sublime, be arch,
  Or starch, as are the edicts statesmen utter.
We surely may find something worth research:
  Columbus found a new world in a cutter,
Or brigantine, or pink, of no great tonnage,
While yet America was in her non-age.

When Adeline, in all her growing sense
  Of Juan's merits and his situation,
Felt on the whole an interest intense,—
  Partly perhaps because a fresh sensation,
Or that he had an air of innocence,
  Which is for innocence a sad temptation,—
As women hate half measures, on the whole,
She 'gan to ponder how to save his soul.

She had a good opinion of advice,
  Like all who give and eke receive it gratis,
For which small thanks are still the market price,
  Even where the article at highest rate is:
She thought upon the subject twice or thrice,
  And morally decided, the best state is
For morals, marriage; and this question carried,
She seriously advised him to get married.

Juan replied, with all becoming deference,
He had a predilection for that tie;
But that, at present, with immediate reference
To his own circumstances, there might lie
Some difficulties, as in his own preference,
Or that of her to whom he might apply:
That still he'd wed with such or such a lady,
If that they were not married all already.

Next to the making matches for herself,
And daughters, brothers, sisters, kith or kin,
Arranging them like books on the same shelf,
There's nothing women love to dabble in
More (like a stock-holder in growing pelf)
Than match-making in general: 'tis no sin
Certes, but a preventative, and therefore
That is, no doubt, the only reason wherefore.

But never yet (except of course a miss
Unwed, or mistress never to be wed,
Or wed already, who object to this)
Was there chaste dame who had not in her head
Some drama of the marriage unities,
Observed as strictly both at board and bed
As those of Aristotle, though sometimes
They turn out melodrames or pantomimes.

They generally have some only son,
Some heir to a large property, some friend
Of an old family, some gay Sir John,
Or grave Lord George, with whom perhaps might end
A line, and leave posterity undone,
Unless a marriage was applied to mend
The prospect and their morals: and besides,
They have at hand a blooming glut of brides.

From these they will be careful to select,

For this an heiress, and for that a beauty;
For one a songstress who hath no defect,
For t' other one who promises much duty;
For this a lady no one can reject,
Whose sole accomplishments were quite a booty;
A second for her excellent connections;
A third, because there can be no objections.

When Rapp the Harmonist embargo'd marriage
In his harmonious settlement (which flourishes
Strangely enough as yet without miscarriage,
Because it breeds no more mouths than it nourishes,
Without those sad expenses which disparage
What Nature naturally most encourages)—
Why call'd he 'Harmony' a state sans wedlock?
Now here I've got the preacher at a dead lock.

Because he either meant to sneer at harmony
Or marriage, by divorcing them thus oddly.
But whether reverend Rapp learn'd this in Germany
Or no, 'tis said his sect is rich and godly,
Pious and pure, beyond what I can term any
Of ours, although they propagate more broadly.
My objection 's to his title, not his ritual,
Although I wonder how it grew habitual.

But Rapp is the reverse of zealous matrons,
Who favour, malgré Malthus, generation—
Professors of that genial art, and patrons
Of all the modest part of propagation;
Which after all at such a desperate rate runs,
That half its produce tends to emigration,
That sad result of passions and potatoes—
Two weeds which pose our economic Catos.

Had Adeline read Malthus? I can't tell;
I wish she had: his book 's the eleventh commandment,
Which says, 'Thou shalt not marry,' unless well:

This he (as far as I can understand) meant.
'Tis not my purpose on his views to dwell
Nor canvass what so 'eminent a hand' meant;
But certes it conducts to lives ascetic,
Or turning marriage into arithmetic.

But Adeline, who probably presumed
That Juan had enough of maintenance,
Or separate maintenance, in case 'twas doom'd—
As on the whole it is an even chance
That bridegrooms, after they are fairly groom'd,
May retrograde a little in the dance
Of marriage (which might form a painter's fame,
Like Holbein's 'Dance of Death'—but 'tis the same);—

But Adeline determined Juan's wedding
In her own mind, and that 's enough for woman:
But then, with whom? There was the sage Miss Reading,
Miss Raw, Miss Flaw, Miss Showman, and Miss Knowman.
And the two fair co-heiresses Giltbedding.
She deem'd his merits something more than common:
All these were unobjectionable matches,
And might go on, if well wound up, like watches.

There was Miss Millpond, smooth as summer's sea,
That usual paragon, an only daughter,
Who seem'd the cream of equanimity
Till skimm'd—and then there was some milk and water,
With a slight shade of blue too, it might be,
Beneath the surface; but what did it matter?
Love 's riotous, but marriage should have quiet,
And being consumptive, live on a milk diet.

And then there was the Miss Audacia Shoestring,
A dashing demoiselle of good estate,
Whose heart was fix'd upon a star or blue string;
But whether English dukes grew rare of late,
Or that she had not harp'd upon the true string,

By which such sirens can attract our great,
She took up with some foreign younger brother,
A Russ or Turk—the one 's as good as t' other.

And then there was—but why should I go on,
Unless the ladies should go off?—there was
Indeed a certain fair and fairy one,
Of the best class, and better than her class,—
Aurora Raby, a young star who shone
O'er life, too sweet an image for such glass,
A lovely being, scarcely form'd or moulded,
A rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded;

Rich, noble, but an orphan; left an only
Child to the care of guardians good and kind;
But still her aspect had an air so lonely!
Blood is not water; and where shall we find
Feelings of youth like those which overthrown lie
By death, when we are left, alas! behind,
To feel, in friendless palaces, a home
Is wanting, and our best ties in the tomb?

Early in years, and yet more infantine
In figure, she had something of sublime
In eyes which sadly shone, as seraphs' shine.
All youth—but with an aspect beyond time;
Radiant and grave—as pitying man's decline;
Mournful—but mournful of another's crime,
She look'd as if she sat by Eden's door.
And grieved for those who could return no more.

She was a Catholic, too, sincere, austere,
As far as her own gentle heart allow'd,
And deem'd that fallen worship far more dear
Perhaps because 'twas fallen: her sires were proud
Of deeds and days when they had fill'd the ear
Of nations, and had never bent or bow'd
To novel power; and as she was the last,

She held their old faith and old feelings fast.

She gazed upon a world she scarcely knew,
  As seeking not to know it; silent, lone,
As grows a flower, thus quietly she grew,
  And kept her heart serene within its zone.
There was awe in the homage which she drew;
  Her spirit seem'd as seated on a throne
Apart from the surrounding world, and strong
In its own strength—most strange in one so young!

Now it so happen'd, in the catalogue
  Of Adeline, Aurora was omitted,
Although her birth and wealth had given her vogue
  Beyond the charmers we have already cited;
Her beauty also seem'd to form no clog
  Against her being mention'd as well fitted,
By many virtues, to be worth the trouble
Of single gentlemen who would be double.

And this omission, like that of the bust
  Of Brutus at the pageant of Tiberius,
Made Juan wonder, as no doubt he must.
  This he express'd half smiling and half serious;
When Adeline replied with some disgust,
  And with an air, to say the least, imperious,
She marvell'd 'what he saw in such a baby
As that prim, silent, cold Aurora Raby?'

Juan rejoin'd—'She was a Catholic,
  And therefore fittest, as of his persuasion;
Since he was sure his mother would fall sick,
  And the Pope thunder excommunication,
If—' But here Adeline, who seem'd to pique
  Herself extremely on the inoculation
Of others with her own opinions, stated—
As usual—the same reason which she late did.

And wherefore not? A reasonable reason,
If good, is none the worse for repetition;
If bad, the best way 's certainly to tease on,
And amplify: you lose much by concision,
Whereas insisting in or out of season
Convinces all men, even a politician;
Or—what is just the same—it wearies out.
So the end 's gain'd, what signifies the route?

Why Adeline had this slight prejudice—
For prejudice it was—against a creature
As pure as sanctity itself from vice,
With all the added charm of form and feature,
For me appears a question far too nice,
Since Adeline was liberal by nature;
But nature 's nature, and has more caprices
Than I have time, or will, to take to pieces.

Perhaps she did not like the quiet way
With which Aurora on those baubles look'd,
Which charm most people in their earlier day:
For there are few things by mankind less brook'd,
And womankind too, if we so may say,
Than finding thus their genius stand rebuked,
Like 'Anthony's by Caesar,' by the few
Who look upon them as they ought to do.

It was not envy—Adeline had none;
Her place was far beyond it, and her mind.
It was not scorn—which could not light on one
Whose greatest fault was leaving few to find.
It was not jealousy, I think: but shun
Following the 'ignes fatui' of mankind.
It was not—but 'tis easier far, alas!
To say what it was not than what it was.

Little Aurora deem'd she was the theme
Of such discussion. She was there a guest;

A beauteous ripple of the brilliant stream
Of rank and youth, though purer than the rest,
Which flow'd on for a moment in the beam
Time sheds a moment o'er each sparkling crest.
Had she known this, she would have calmly smiled—
She had so much, or little, of the child.

The dashing and proud air of Adeline
Imposed not upon her: she saw her blaze
Much as she would have seen a glow-worm shine,
Then turn'd unto the stars for loftier rays.
Juan was something she could not divine,
Being no sibyl in the new world's ways;
Yet she was nothing dazzled by the meteor,
Because she did not pin her faith on feature.

His fame too,—for he had that kind of fame
Which sometimes plays the deuce with womankind,
A heterogeneous mass of glorious blame,
Half virtues and whole vices being combined;
Faults which attract because they are not tame;
Follies trick'd out so brightly that they blind:—
These seals upon her wax made no impression,
Such was her coldness or her self-possession.

Juan knew nought of such a character—
High, yet resembling not his lost Haidee;
Yet each was radiant in her proper sphere:
The island girl, bred up by the lone sea,
More warm, as lovely, and not less sincere,
Was Nature's all: Aurora could not be,
Nor would be thus:—the difference in them
Was such as lies between a flower and gem.

Having wound up with this sublime comparison,
Methinks we may proceed upon our narrative,
And, as my friend Scott says, 'I sound my warison;'
Scott, the superlative of my comparative—

Scott, who can paint your Christian knight or Saracen,
Serf, lord, man, with such skill as none would share it, if
There had not been one Shakspeare and Voltaire,
Of one or both of whom he seems the heir.

I say, in my slight way I may proceed
To play upon the surface of humanity.
I write the world, nor care if the world read,
At least for this I cannot spare its vanity.
My Muse hath bred, and still perhaps may breed
More foes by this same scroll: when I began it, I
Thought that it might turn out so—now I know it,
But still I am, or was, a pretty poet.

The conference or congress (for it ended
As congresses of late do) of the Lady
Adeline and Don Juan rather blended
Some acids with the sweets—for she was heady;
But, ere the matter could be marr'd or mended,
The silvery bell rang, not for 'dinner ready,
But for that hour, call'd half-hour, given to dress,
Though ladies' robes seem scant enough for less.

Great things were now to be achieved at table,
With massy plate for armour, knives and forks
For weapons; but what Muse since Homer 's able
(His feasts are not the worst part of his works)
To draw up in array a single day-bill
Of modern dinners? where more mystery lurks,
In soups or sauces, or a sole ragout,
Than witches, b—ches, or physicians, brew.

There was a goodly 'soupe a la bonne femme,'
Though God knows whence it came from; there was, too,
A turbot for relief of those who cram,
Relieved with 'dindon à la Parigeux;'
There also was—the sinner that I am!
How shall I get this gourmand stanza through?—

‘Soupe à la Beauveau,’ whose relief was dory,
Relieved itself by pork, for greater glory.

But I must crowd all into one grand mess
Or mass; for should I stretch into detail,
My Muse would run much more into excess,
Than when some squeamish people deem her frail.
But though a ‘bonne vivante,’ I must confess
Her stomach ’s not her peccant part; this tale
However doth require some slight refection,
Just to relieve her spirits from dejection.

Fowls ‘à la Condé,’ slices eke of salmon,
With ‘sauces Génévoises,’ and haunch of venison;
Wines too, which might again have slain young Ammon—
A man like whom I hope we shan’t see many soon;
They also set a glazed Westphalian ham on,
Whereon Apicius would bestow his benison;
And then there was champagne with foaming whirls,
As white as Cleopatra’s melted pearls.

Then there was God knows what ‘à l’Allemande,’
‘A l’Espagnole,’ ‘timballe,’ and ‘salpicon’—
With things I can’t withstand or understand,
Though swallow’d with much zest upon the whole;
And ‘entremets’ to piddle with at hand,
Gently to lull down the subsiding soul;
While great Lucullus’ Robe triumphal muffles
(There’s fame) young partridge fillets, deck’d with truffles.

What are the fillets on the victor’s brow
To these? They are rags or dust. Where is the arch
Which nodded to the nation’s spoils below?
Where the triumphal chariots’ haughty march?
Gone to where victories must like dinners go.
Farther I shall not follow the research:
But oh! ye modern heroes with your cartridges,
When will your names lend lustre e’en to partridges?

Those truffles too are no bad accessaries,
Follow'd by 'petits puits d'amour'—a dish
Of which perhaps the cookery rather varies,
So every one may dress it to his wish,
According to the best of dictionaries,
Which encyclopedize both flesh and fish;
But even sans 'confitures,' it no less true is,
There's pretty picking in those 'petits puits.'

The mind is lost in mighty contemplation
Of intellect expanded on two courses;
And indigestion's grand multiplication
Requires arithmetic beyond my forces.
Who would suppose, from Adam's simple ration,
That cookery could have call'd forth such resources,
As form a science and a nomenclature
From out the commonest demands of nature?

The glasses jingled, and the palates tingled;
The diners of celebrity dined well;
The ladies with more moderation mingled
In the feast, pecking less than I can tell;
Also the younger men too: for a springald
Can't, like ripe age, in gormandize excel,
But thinks less of good eating than the whisper
(When seated next him) of some pretty lisper.

Alas! I must leave undescribed the gibier,
The salmi, the consommé, the purée,
All which I use to make my rhymes run glibber
Than could roast beef in our rough John Bull way:
I must not introduce even a spare rib here,
'Bubble and squeak' would spoil my liquid lay:
But I have dined, and must forego, Alas!
The chaste description even of a 'bécasse;'

And fruits, and ice, and all that art refines

From nature for the service of the gout—
Taste or the gout,—pronounce it as inclines
Your stomach! Ere you dine, the French will do;
But after, there are sometimes certain signs
Which prove plain English truer of the two.
Hast ever had the gout? I have not had it—
But I may have, and you too, reader, dread it.

The simple olives, best allies of wine,
Must I pass over in my bill of fare?
I must, although a favourite 'plat' of mine
In Spain, and Lucca, Athens, every where:
On them and bread 'twas oft my luck to dine,
The grass my table-cloth, in open-air,
On Sunium or Hymettus, like Diogenes,
Of whom half my philosophy the progeny is.

Amidst this tumult of fish, flesh, and fowl,
And vegetables, all in masquerade,
The guests were placed according to their roll,
But various as the various meats display'd:
Don Juan sat next an 'à l'Espagnole'—
No damsel, but a dish, as hath been said;
But so far like a lady, that 'twas drest
Superbly, and contain'd a world of zest.

By some odd chance too, he was placed between
Aurora and the Lady Adeline—
A situation difficult, I ween,
For man therein, with eyes and heart, to dine.
Also the conference which we have seen
Was not such as to encourage him to shine;
For Adeline, addressing few words to him,
With two transcendent eyes seem'd to look through him.

I sometimes almost think that eyes have ears:
This much is sure, that, out of earshot, things
Are somehow echoed to the pretty dears,

Of which I can't tell whence their knowledge springs.
Like that same mystic music of the spheres,
Which no one hears, so loudly though it rings,
'Tis wonderful how oft the sex have heard
Long dialogues—which pass'd without a word!

Aurora sat with that indifference
Which piques a preux chevalier—as it ought:
Of all offences that 's the worst offence,
Which seems to hint you are not worth a thought.
Now Juan, though no coxcomb in pretence,
Was not exactly pleased to be so caught;
Like a good ship entangled among ice,
And after so much excellent advice.

To his gay nothings, nothing was replied,
Or something which was nothing, as urbanity
Required. Aurora scarcely look'd aside,
Nor even smiled enough for any vanity.
The devil was in the girl! Could it be pride?
Or modesty, or absence, or inanity?
Heaven knows? But Adeline's malicious eyes
Sparkled with her successful prophecies,

And look'd as much as if to say, 'I said it;'
A kind of triumph I'll not recommend,
Because it sometimes, as I have seen or read it,
Both in the case of lover and of friend,
Will pique a gentleman, for his own credit,
To bring what was a jest to a serious end:
For all men prophesy what is or was,
And hate those who won't let them come to pass.

Juan was drawn thus into some attentions,
Slight but select, and just enough to express,
To females of perspicuous comprehensions,
That he would rather make them more than less.
Aurora at the last (so history mentions,

Though probably much less a fact than guess)
So far relax'd her thoughts from their sweet prison,
As once or twice to smile, if not to listen.

From answering she began to question; this
With her was rare: and Adeline, who as yet
Thought her predictions went not much amiss,
Began to dread she'd thaw to a coquette—
So very difficult, they say, it is
To keep extremes from meeting, when once set
In motion; but she here too much refined—
Aurora's spirit was not of that kind.

But Juan had a sort of winning way,
A proud humility, if such there be,
Which show'd such deference to what females say,
As if each charming word were a decree.
His tact, too, temper'd him from grave to gay,
And taught him when to be reserved or free:
He had the art of drawing people out,
Without their seeing what he was about.

Aurora, who in her indifference
Confounded him in common with the crowd
Of flatterers, though she deem'd he had more sense
Than whispering foplings, or than witlings loud—
Commenced (from such slight things will great commence)
To feel that flattery which attracts the proud
Rather by deference than compliment,
And wins even by a delicate dissent.

And then he had good looks;—that point was carried
Nem. con. amongst the women, which I grieve
To say leads oft to crim. con. with the married—
A case which to the juries we may leave,
Since with digressions we too long have tarried.
Now though we know of old that looks deceive,
And always have done, somehow these good looks

Make more impression than the best of books.

Aurora, who look'd more on books than faces,
Was very young, although so very sage,
Admiring more Minerva than the Graces,
Especially upon a printed page.
But Virtue's self, with all her tightest laces,
Has not the natural stays of strict old age;
And Socrates, that model of all duty,
Own'd to a penchant, though discreet, for beauty.

And girls of sixteen are thus far Socratic,
But innocently so, as Socrates;
And really, if the sage sublime and Attic
At seventy years had phantasies like these,
Which Plato in his dialogues dramatic
Has shown, I know not why they should displease
In virgins—always in a modest way,
Observe; for that with me 's a 'sine qua.'

Also observe, that, like the great Lord Coke
(See Littleton), whene'er I have express'd
Opinions two, which at first sight may look
Twin opposites, the second is the best.
Perhaps I have a third, too, in a nook,
Or none at all—which seems a sorry jest:
But if a writer should be quite consistent,
How could he possibly show things existent?

If people contradict themselves, can I
Help contradicting them, and every body,
Even my veracious self?—But that 's a lie:
I never did so, never will—how should I?
He who doubts all things nothing can deny:
Truth's fountains may be clear—her streams are muddy,
And cut through such canals of contradiction,
That she must often navigate o'er fiction.

Apologue, fable, poesy, and parable,
Are false, but may be render'd also true,
By those who sow them in a land that 's arable.
'Tis wonderful what fable will not do!
'Tis said it makes reality more bearable:
But what 's reality? Who has its clue?
Philosophy? No: she too much rejects.
Religion? Yes; but which of all her sects?

Some millions must be wrong, that 's pretty dear;
Perhaps it may turn out that all were right.
God help us! Since we have need on our career
To keep our holy beacons always bright,
'Tis time that some new prophet should appear,
Or old indulge man with a second sight.
Opinions wear out in some thousand years,
Without a small refreshment from the spheres.

But here again, why will I thus entangle
Myself with metaphysics? None can hate
So much as I do any kind of wrangle;
And yet, such is my folly, or my fate,
I always knock my head against some angle
About the present, past, or future state.
Yet I wish well to Trojan and to Tyrian,
For I was bred a moderate Presbyterian.

But though I am a temperate theologian,
And also meek as a metaphysician,
Impartial between Tyrian and Trojan,
As Eldon on a lunatic commission—
In politics my duty is to show John
Bull something of the lower world's condition.
It makes my blood boil like the springs of Hecla,
To see men let these scoundrel sovereigns break law.

But politics, and policy, and piety,
Are topics which I sometimes introduce,

Not only for the sake of their variety,
   But as subservient to a moral use;
Because my business is to dress society,
   And stuff with sage that very verdant goose.
And now, that we may furnish with some matter all
Tastes, we are going to try the supernatural.

And now I will give up all argument;
   And positively henceforth no temptation
Shall 'fool me to the top up of my bent:'—
   Yes, I' ll begin a thorough reformation.
Indeed, I never knew what people meant
   By deeming that my Muse's conversation
Was dangerous;—I think she is as harmless
As some who labour more and yet may charm less.

Grim reader! did you ever see a ghost?
   No; but you have heard—I understand—be dumb!
And don't regret the time you may have lost,
   For you have got that pleasure still to come:
And do not think I mean to sneer at most
   Of these things, or by ridicule benumb
That source of the sublime and the mysterious:—
For certain reasons my belief is serious.

Serious? You laugh;—you may: that will I not;
   My smiles must be sincere or not at all.
I say I do believe a haunted spot
   Exists—and where? That shall I not recall,
Because I'd rather it should be forgot,
   'Shadows the soul of Richard' may appal.
In short, upon that subject I've some qualms very
Like those of the philosopher of Malmsbury.

The night (I sing by night—sometimes an owl,
   And now and then a nightingale) is dim,
And the loud shriek of sage Minerva's fowl
   Rattles around me her discordant hymn:

Old portraits from old walls upon me scowl—
I wish to heaven they would not look so grim;
The dying embers dwindle in the grate—
I think too that I have sate up too late:

And therefore, though 'tis by no means my way
To rhyme at noon—when I have other things
To think of, if I ever think—I say
I feel some chilly midnight shudderings,
And prudently postpone, until mid-day,
Treating a topic which, alas! but brings
Shadows;—but you must be in my condition
Before you learn to call this superstition.

CANTO THE SIXTEENTH.

The antique Persians taught three useful things,
To draw the bow, to ride, and speak the truth.
This was the mode of Cyrus, best of kings—
A mode adopted since by modern youth.
Bows have they, generally with two strings;
Horses they ride without remorse or ruth;
At speaking truth perhaps they are less clever,
But draw the long bow better now than ever.

The cause of this effect, or this defect,—
'For this effect defective comes by cause,'—
Is what I have not leisure to inspect;
But this I must say in my own applause,
Of all the Muses that I recollect,
Whate'er may be her follies or her flaws
In some things, mine 's beyond all contradiction
The most sincere that ever dealt in fiction.

And as she treats all things, and ne'er retreats
From any thing, this epic will contain
A wilderness of the most rare conceits,
Which you might elsewhere hope to find in vain.
'Tis true there be some bitters with the sweets,
Yet mix'd so slightly, that you can't complain,
But wonder they so few are, since my tale is
'De rebus cunctis et quibusdam aliis.'

But of all truths which she has told, the most
True is that which she is about to tell.
I said it was a story of a ghost—
What then? I only know it so befell.
Have you explored the limits of the coast,

Where all the dwellers of the earth must dwell?
'Tis time to strike such puny doubters dumb as
The sceptics who would not believe Columbus.

Some people would impose now with authority,
Turpin's or Monmouth Geoffry's Chronicle;
Men whose historical superiority
Is always greatest at a miracle.
But Saint Augustine has the great priority,
Who bids all men believe the impossible,
Because 'tis so. Who nibble, scribble, quibble, he
Quiets at once with 'quia impossibile.'

And therefore, mortals, cavil not at all;
Believe:—if 'tis improbable you must,
And if it is impossible, you shall:
'Tis always best to take things upon trust.
I do not speak profanely, to recall
Those holier mysteries which the wise and just
Receive as gospel, and which grow more rooted,
As all truths must, the more they are disputed:

I merely mean to say what Johnson said,
That in the course of some six thousand years,
All nations have believed that from the dead
A visitant at intervals appears;
And what is strangest upon this strange head,
Is, that whatever bar the reason rears
'Gainst such belief, there's something stronger still
In its behalf, let those deny who will.

The dinner and the soiree too were done,
The supper too discuss'd, the dames admired,
The banqueteers had dropp'd off one by one—
The song was silent, and the dance expired:
The last thin petticoats were vanish'd, gone
Like fleecy Clouds into the sky retired,
And nothing brighter gleam'd through the saloon

Than dying tapers—and the peeping moon.

The evaporation of a joyous day
Is like the last glass of champagne, without
The foam which made its virgin bumper gay;
Or like a system coupled with a doubt;
Or like a soda bottle when its spray
Has sparkled and let half its spirit out;
Or like a billow left by storms behind,
Without the animation of the wind;

Or like an opiate, which brings troubled rest,
Or none; or like—like nothing that I know
Except itself;—such is the human breast;
A thing, of which similitudes can show
No real likeness,—like the old Tyrian vest
Dyed purple, none at present can tell how,
If from a shell-fish or from cochineal.
So perish every tyrant's robe piece-meal!

But next to dressing for a rout or ball,
Undressing is a woe; our robe de chambre
May sit like that of Nessus, and recall
Thoughts quite as yellow, but less clear than amber.
Titus exclaim'd, 'I've lost a day!' Of all
The nights and days most people can remember
(I have had of both, some not to be disdain'd),
I wish they'd state how many they have gain'd.

And Juan, on retiring for the night,
Felt restless, and perplex'd, and compromised:
He thought Aurora Raby's eyes more bright
Than Adeline (such is advice) advised;
If he had known exactly his own plight,
He probably would have philosophised:
A great resource to all, and ne'er denied
Till wanted; therefore Juan only sigh'd.

He sigh'd;—the next resource is the full moon,
Where all sighs are deposited; and now
It happen'd luckily, the chaste orb shone
As clear as such a climate will allow;
And Juan's mind was in the proper tone
To hail her with the apostrophe—'O thou!'
Of amatory egotism the Tuism,
Which further to explain would be a truism.

But lover, poet, or astronomer,
Shepherd, or swain, whoever may behold,
Feel some abstraction when they gaze on her:
Great thoughts we catch from thence (besides a cold
Sometimes, unless my feelings rather err);
Deep secrets to her rolling light are told;
The ocean's tides and mortals' brains she sways,
And also hearts, if there be truth in lays.

Juan felt somewhat pensive, and disposed
For contemplation rather than his pillow:
The Gothic chamber, where he was enclosed,
Let in the rippling sound of the lake's billow,
With all the mystery by midnight caused;
Below his window waved (of course) a willow;
And he stood gazing out on the cascade
That flash'd and after darken'd in the shade.

Upon his table or his toilet,—which
Of these is not exactly ascertain'd
(I state this, for I am cautious to a pitch
Of nicety, where a fact is to be gain'd),—
A lamp burn'd high, while he leant from a niche,
Where many a Gothic ornament remain'd,
In chisell'd stone and painted glass, and all
That time has left our fathers of their hall.

Then, as the night was clear though cold, he threw
His chamber door wide open—and went forth

Into a gallery, of a sombre hue,
Long, furnish'd with old pictures of great worth,
Of knights and dames heroic and chaste too,
As doubtless should be people of high birth.
But by dim lights the portraits of the dead
Have something ghastly, desolate, and dread.

The forms of the grim knight and pictured saint
Look living in the moon; and as you turn
Backward and forward to the echoes faint
Of your own footsteps—voices from the urn
Appear to wake, and shadows wild and quaint
Start from the frames which fence their aspects stern,
As if to ask how you can dare to keep
A vigil there, where all but death should sleep.

And the pale smile of beauties in the grave,
The charms of other days, in starlight gleams,
Glimmer on high; their buried locks still wave
Along the canvas; their eyes glance like dreams
On ours, or spars within some dusky cave,
But death is imaged in their shadowy beams.
A picture is the past; even ere its frame
Be gilt, who sate hath ceased to be the same.

As Juan mused on mutability,
Or on his mistress—terms synonymous—
No sound except the echo of his sigh
Or step ran sadly through that antique house;
When suddenly he heard, or thought so, nigh,
A supernatural agent—or a mouse,
Whose little nibbling rustle will embarrass
Most people as it plays along the arras.

It was no mouse, but lo! a monk, array'd
In cowl and beads and dusky garb, appear'd,
Now in the moonlight, and now lapsed in shade,
With steps that trod as heavy, yet unheard;

His garments only a slight murmur made;
He moved as shadowy as the sisters weird,
But slowly; and as he pass'd Juan by,
Glanced, without pausing, on him a bright eye.

Juan was petrified; he had heard a hint
Of such a spirit in these halls of old,
But thought, like most men, there was nothing in 't
Beyond the rumour which such spots unfold,
Coin'd from surviving superstition's mint,
Which passes ghosts in currency like gold,
But rarely seen, like gold compared with paper.
And did he see this? or was it a vapour?

Once, twice, thrice pass'd, repass'd—the thing of air,
Or earth beneath, or heaven, or t' other place;
And Juan gazed upon it with a stare,
Yet could not speak or move; but, on its base
As stands a statue, stood: he felt his hair
Twine like a knot of snakes around his face;
He tax'd his tongue for words, which were not granted,
To ask the reverend person what he wanted.

The third time, after a still longer pause,
The shadow pass'd away—but where? the hall
Was long, and thus far there was no great cause
To think his vanishing unnatural:
Doors there were many, through which, by the laws
Of physics, bodies whether short or tall
Might come or go; but Juan could not state
Through which the spectre seem'd to evaporate.

He stood—how long he knew not, but it seem'd
An age—expectant, powerless, with his eyes
Strain'd on the spot where first the figure gleam'd;
Then by degrees recall'd his energies,
And would have pass'd the whole off as a dream,
But could not wake; he was, he did surmise,

Waking already, and return'd at length
Back to his chamber, shorn of half his strength.

All there was as he left it: still his taper
Burnt, and not blue, as modest tapers use,
Receiving sprites with sympathetic vapour;
He rubb'd his eyes, and they did not refuse
Their office; he took up an old newspaper;
The paper was right easy to peruse;
He read an article the king attacking,
And a long eulogy of 'patent blacking.'

This savour'd of this world; but his hand shook—
He shut his door, and after having read
A paragraph, I think about Horne Tooke,
Undrest, and rather slowly went to bed.
There, couch'd all snugly on his pillow's nook,
With what he had seen his phantasy he fed;
And though it was no opiate, slumber crept
Upon him by degrees, and so he slept.

He woke betimes; and, as may be supposed,
Ponder'd upon his visitant or vision,
And whether it ought not to be disclosed,
At risk of being quizz'd for superstition.
The more he thought, the more his mind was posed:
In the mean time, his valet, whose precision
Was great, because his master brook'd no less,
Knock'd to inform him it was time to dress.

He dress'd; and like young people he was wont
To take some trouble with his toilet, but
This morning rather spent less time upon 't;
Aside his very mirror soon was put;
His curls fell negligently o'er his front,
His clothes were not curb'd to their usual cut,
His very neckcloth's Gordian knot was tied
Almost an hair's breadth too much on one side.

And when he walk'd down into the saloon,
He sate him pensive o'er a dish of tea,
Which he perhaps had not discover'd soon,
Had it not happen'd scalding hot to be,
Which made him have recourse unto his spoon;
So much distrait he was, that all could see
That something was the matter—Adeline
The first—but what she could not well divine.

She look'd, and saw him pale, and turn'd as pale
Herself; then hastily look'd down, and mutter'd
Something, but what 's not stated in my tale.
Lord Henry said his muffin was ill butter'd;
The Duchess of Fitz-Fulke play'd with her veil,
And look'd at Juan hard, but nothing utter'd.
Aurora Raby with her large dark eyes
Survey'd him with a kind of calm surprise.

But seeing him all cold and silent still,
And everybody wondering more or less,
Fair Adeline enquired, 'If he were ill?'
He started, and said, 'Yes—no—rather—yes.'
The family physician had great skill,
And being present, now began to express
His readiness to feel his pulse and tell
The cause, but Juan said, 'He was quite well.'

'Quite well; yes,—no.'—These answers were mysterious,
And yet his looks appear'd to sanction both,
However they might savour of delirious;
Something like illness of a sudden growth
Weigh'd on his spirit, though by no means serious:
But for the rest, as he himself seem'd loth
To state the case, it might be ta'en for granted
It was not the physician that he wanted.

Lord Henry, who had now discuss'd his chocolate,

Also the muffin whereof he complain'd,
Said, Juan had not got his usual look elate,
At which he marvell'd, since it had not rain'd;
Then ask'd her Grace what news were of the duke of late?
Her Grace replied, his Grace was rather pain'd
With some slight, light, hereditary twinges
Of gout, which rusts aristocratic hinges.

Then Henry turn'd to Juan, and address'd
A few words of condolence on his state:
'You look,' quoth he, 'as if you had had your rest
Broke in upon by the Black Friar of late.'
'What friar?' said Juan; and he did his best
To put the question with an air sedate,
Or careless; but the effort was not valid
To hinder him from growing still more pallid.

'Oh! have you never heard of the Black Friar?
The spirit of these walls?'—'In truth not I.'
'Why Fame—but Fame you know 's sometimes a liar—
Tells an odd story, of which by and by:
Whether with time the spectre has grown shyer,
Or that our sires had a more gifted eye
For such sights, though the tale is half believed,
The friar of late has not been oft perceived.

"The last time was—" "I pray," said Adeline—
(Who watch'd the changes of Don Juan's brow,
And from its context thought she could divine
Connexions stronger then he chose to avow
With this same legend)—'if you but design
To jest, you'll choose some other theme just now,
Because the present tale has oft been told,
And is not much improved by growing old.'

'Jest!' quoth Milor; 'why, Adeline, you know
That we ourselves—'twas in the honey-moon—
Saw—'—'Well, no matter, 'twas so long ago;

But, come, I'll set your story to a tune.'
Graceful as Dian, when she draws her bow,
She seized her harp, whose strings were kindled soon
As touch'd, and plaintively began to play
The air of '"Twas a Friar of Orders Gray.'

'But add the words,' cried Henry, 'which you made;
For Adeline is half a poetess,'
Turning round to the rest, he smiling said.
Of course the others could not but express
In courtesy their wish to see display'd
By one three talents, for there were no less—
The voice, the words, the harper's skill, at once
Could hardly be united by a dunce.

After some fascinating hesitation,—
The charming of these charmers, who seem bound,
I can't tell why, to this dissimulation,—
Fair Adeline, with eyes fix'd on the ground
At first, then kindling into animation,
Added her sweet voice to the lyric sound,
And sang with much simplicity,—a merit
Not the less precious, that we seldom hear it.

Beware! beware! of the Black Friar,
Who sitteth by Norman stone,
For he mutters his prayer in the midnight air,
And his mass of the days that are gone.
When the Lord of the Hill, Amundeville,
Made Norman Church his prey,
And expell'd the friars, one friar still
Would not be driven away.

Though he came in his might, with King Henry's right,
To turn church lands to lay,
With sword in hand, and torch to light
Their walls, if they said nay;
A monk remain'd, unchased, unchain'd,

And he did not seem form'd of clay,
For he 's seen in the porch, and he 's seen in the church,
Though he is not seen by day.

And whether for good, or whether for ill,
It is not mine to say;
But still with the house of Amundeville
He abideth night and day.
By the marriage-bed of their lords, 'tis said,
He flits on the bridal eve;
And 'tis held as faith, to their bed of death
He comes—but not to grieve.

When an heir is born, he 's heard to mourn,
And when aught is to befall
That ancient line, in the pale moonshine
He walks from hall to hall.
His form you may trace, but not his face,
'Tis shadow'd by his cowl;
But his eyes may be seen from the folds between,
And they seem of a parted soul.

But beware! beware! of the Black Friar,
He still retains his sway,
For he is yet the church's heir
Whoever may be the lay.
Amundeville is lord by day,
But the monk is lord by night;
Nor wine nor wassail could raise a vassal
To question that friar's right.

Say nought to him as he walks the hall,
And he'll say nought to you;
He sweeps along in his dusky pall,
As o'er the grass the dew.
Then grammercy! for the Black Friar;
Heaven sain him, fair or foul!
And whatsoe'er may be his prayer,

Let ours be for his soul.

The lady's voice ceased, and the thrilling wires
Died from the touch that kindled them to sound;
And the pause follow'd, which when song expires
Pervades a moment those who listen round;
And then of course the circle much admires,
Nor less applauds, as in politeness bound,
The tones, the feeling, and the execution,
To the performer's diffident confusion.

Fair Adeline, though in a careless way,
As if she rated such accomplishment
As the mere pastime of an idle day,
Pursued an instant for her own content,
Would now and then as 'twere without display,
Yet with display in fact, at times relent
To such performances with haughty smile,
To show she could, if it were worth her while.

Now this (but we will whisper it aside)
Was—pardon the pedantic illustration—
Trampling on Plato's pride with greater pride,
As did the Cynic on some like occasion;
Deeming the sage would be much mortified,
Or thrown into a philosophic passion,
For a spoil'd carpet—but the 'Attic Bee'
Was much consoled by his own repartee.

Thus Adeline would throw into the shade
(By doing easily, whene'er she chose,
What dilettanti do with vast parade)
Their sort of half profession; for it grows
To something like this when too oft display'd;
And that it is so everybody knows
Who have heard Miss That or This, or Lady T'other,
Show off—to please their company or mother.

O! the long evenings of duets and trios!
  The admirations and the speculations;
The 'Mamma Mia's!' and the 'Amor Mio's!'
  The 'Tanti palpiti's' on such occasions:
The 'Lasciami's,' and quavering 'Addio's!'
  Amongst our own most musical of nations;
With 'Tu mi chamas's' from Portingale,
To soothe our ears, lest Italy should fail.

In Babylon's bravuras—as the home
  Heart-ballads of Green Erin or Gray Highlands,
That bring Lochaber back to eyes that roam
  O'er far Atlantic continents or islands,
The calentures of music which o'ercome
  All mountaineers with dreams that they are nigh lands,
No more to be beheld but in such visions—
Was Adeline well versed, as compositions.

She also had a twilight tinge of 'Blue,'
  Could write rhymes, and compose more than she wrote,
Made epigrams occasionally too
  Upon her friends, as everybody ought.
But still from that sublimer azure hue,
  So much the present dye, she was remote;
Was weak enough to deem Pope a great poet,
And what was worse, was not ashamed to show it.

Aurora—since we are touching upon taste,
  Which now-a-days is the thermometer
By whose degrees all characters are class'd—
  Was more Shakspearian, if I do not err.
The worlds beyond this world's perplexing waste
  Had more of her existence, for in her
There was a depth of feeling to embrace
Thoughts, boundless, deep, but silent too as Space.

Not so her gracious, graceful, graceless Grace,
  The full-grown Hebe of Fitz-Fulke, whose mind,

If she had any, was upon her face,
And that was of a fascinating kind.
A little turn for mischief you might trace
Also thereon,—but that 's not much; we find
Few females without some such gentle leaven,
For fear we should suppose us quite in heaven.

I have not heard she was at all poetic,
Though once she was seen reading the 'Bath Guide,'
And 'Hayley's Triumphs,' which she deem'd pathetic,
Because she said her temper had been tried
So much, the bard had really been prophetic
Of what she had gone through with—since a bride.
But of all verse, what most ensured her praise
Were sonnets to herself, or 'bouts rimes.'

'Twere difficult to say what was the object
Of Adeline, in bringing this same lay
To bear on what appear'd to her the subject
Of Juan's nervous feelings on that day.
Perhaps she merely had the simple project
To laugh him out of his supposed dismay;
Perhaps she might wish to confirm him in it,
Though why I cannot say—at least this minute.

But so far the immediate effect
Was to restore him to his self-propriety,
A thing quite necessary to the elect,
Who wish to take the tone of their society:
In which you cannot be too circumspect,
Whether the mode be persiflage or piety,
But wear the newest mantle of hypocrisy,
On pain of much displeasing the gynocracy.

And therefore Juan now began to rally
His spirits, and without more explanation
To jest upon such themes in many a sally.
Her Grace, too, also seized the same occasion,

With various similar remarks to tally,
  But wish'd for a still more detail'd narration
Of this same mystic friar's curious doings,
About the present family's deaths and wooings.

Of these few could say more than has been said;
  They pass'd as such things do, for superstition
With some, while others, who had more in dread
  The theme, half credited the strange tradition;
And much was talk'd on all sides on that head:
  But Juan, when cross-question'd on the vision,
Which some supposed (though he had not avow'd it)
Had stirr'd him, answer'd in a way to cloud it.

And then, the mid-day having worn to one,
  The company prepared to separate;
Some to their several pastimes, or to none,
  Some wondering 'twas so early, some so late.
There was a goodly match too, to be run
  Between some greyhounds on my lord's estate,
And a young race-horse of old pedigree
Match'd for the spring, whom several went to see.

There was a picture-dealer who had brought
  A special Titian, warranted original,
So precious that it was not to be bought,
  Though princes the possessor were besieging all.
The king himself had cheapen'd it, but thought
  The civil list he deigns to accept (obliging all
His subjects by his gracious acceptation)
Too scanty, in these times of low taxation.

But as Lord Henry was a connoisseur,—
  The friend of artists, if not arts,—the owner,
With motives the most classical and pure,
  So that he would have been the very donor,
Rather than seller, had his wants been fewer,
  So much he deem'd his patronage an honour,

Had brought the capo d'opera, not for sale,
But for his judgment—never known to fail.

There was a modern Goth, I mean a Gothic
  Bricklayer of Babel, call'd an architect,
Brought to survey these grey walls, which though so thick,
  Might have from time acquired some slight defect;
Who after rummaging the Abbey through thick
  And thin, produced a plan whereby to erect
New buildings of correctest conformation,
And throw down old—which he call'd restoration.

The cost would be a trifle—an 'old song,'
  Set to some thousands ('tis the usual burden
Of that same tune, when people hum it long)—
  The price would speedily repay its worth in
An edifice no less sublime than strong,
  By which Lord Henry's good taste would go forth in
Its glory, through all ages shining sunny,
For Gothic daring shown in English money.

There were two lawyers busy on a mortgage
  Lord Henry wish'd to raise for a new purchase;
Also a lawsuit upon tenures burgage,
  And one on tithes, which sure are Discord's torches,
Kindling Religion till she throws down her gage,
  'Untying' squires 'to fight against the churches;'
There was a prize ox, a prize pig, and ploughman,
For Henry was a sort of Sabine showman.

There were two poachers caught in a steel trap,
  Ready for gaol, their place of convalescence;
There was a country girl in a close cap
  And scarlet cloak (I hate the sight to see, since—
Since—since—in youth, I had the sad mishap—
  But luckily I have paid few parish fees since):
That scarlet cloak, alas! unclosed with rigour,
Presents the problem of a double figure.

A reel within a bottle is a mystery,
One can't tell how it e'er got in or out;
Therefore the present piece of natural history
I leave to those who are fond of solving doubt;
And merely state, though not for the consistory,
Lord Henry was a justice, and that Scout
The constable, beneath a warrant's banner,
Had bagg'd this poacher upon Nature's manor.

Now justices of peace must judge all pieces
Of mischief of all kinds, and keep the game
And morals of the country from caprices
Of those who have not a license for the same;
And of all things, excepting tithes and leases,
Perhaps these are most difficult to tame:
Preserving partridges and pretty wenches
Are puzzles to the most precautious benches.

The present culprit was extremely pale,
Pale as if painted so; her cheek being red
By nature, as in higher dames less hale
'Tis white, at least when they just rise from bed.
Perhaps she was ashamed of seeming frail,
Poor soul! for she was country born and bred,
And knew no better in her immorality
Than to wax white—for blushes are for quality.

Her black, bright, downcast, yet espiegle eye,
Had gather'd a large tear into its corner,
Which the poor thing at times essay'd to dry,
For she was not a sentimental mourner
Parading all her sensibility,
Nor insolent enough to scorn the scorner,
But stood in trembling, patient tribulation,
To be call'd up for her examination.

Of course these groups were scatter'd here and there,

Not nigh the gay saloon of ladies gent.
The lawyers in the study; and in air
The prize pig, ploughman, poachers; the men sent
From town, viz., architect and dealer, were
Both busy (as a general in his tent
Writing despatches) in their several stations,
Exulting in their brilliant lucubrations.

But this poor girl was left in the great hall,
While Scout, the parish guardian of the frail,
Discuss'd (he hated beer yclept the 'small')
A mighty mug of moral double ale.
She waited until justice could recall
Its kind attentions to their proper pale,
To name a thing in nomenclature rather
Perplexing for most virgins—a child's father.

You see here was enough of occupation
For the Lord Henry, link'd with dogs and horses.
There was much bustle too, and preparation
Below stairs on the score of second courses;
Because, as suits their rank and situation,
Those who in counties have great land resources
Have 'Public days,' when all men may carouse,
Though not exactly what 's call'd 'open house.'

But once a week or fortnight, uninvited
(Thus we translate a general invitation),
All country gentlemen, esquired or knighted,
May drop in without cards, and take their station
At the full board, and sit alike delighted
With fashionable wines and conversation;
And, as the isthmus of the grand connection,
Talk o'er themselves the past and next election.

Lord Henry was a great electioneerer,
Burrowing for boroughs like a rat or rabbit;
But county contests cost him rather dearer,

Because the neighbouring Scotch Earl of Giftgabbit
Had English influence in the self-same sphere here;
His son, the Honourable Dick Dicedrabbit,
Was member for the 'other interest' (meaning
The same self-interest, with a different leaning).

Courteous and cautious therefore in his county,
He was all things to all men, and dispensed
To some civility, to others bounty,
And promises to all—which last commenced
To gather to a somewhat large amount, he
Not calculating how much they condensed;
But what with keeping some, and breaking others,
His word had the same value as another's.

A friend to freedom and freeholders—yet
No less a friend to government—he held,
That he exactly the just medium hit
'Twixt place and patriotism—albeit compell'd,
Such was his sovereign's pleasure (though unfit,
He added modestly, when rebels rail'd),
To hold some sinecures he wish'd abolish'd,
But that with them all law would be demolish'd.

He was 'free to confess' (whence comes this phrase?
Is 't English? No—'tis only parliamentary)
That innovation's spirit now-a-days
Had made more progress than for the last century.
He would not tread a factious path to praise,
Though for the public weal disposed to venture high;
As for his place, he could but say this of it,
That the fatigue was greater than the profit.

Heaven, and his friends, knew that a private life
Had ever been his sole and whole ambition;
But could he quit his king in times of strife,
Which threaten'd the whole country with perdition?
When demagogues would with a butcher's knife

Cut through and through (oh! damnable incision!)
The Gordian or the Geordi-an knot, whose strings
Have tied together commons, lords, and kings.

Sooner ‘come lace into the civil list
And champion him to the utmost’—he would keep it,
Till duly disappointed or dismiss’d:
Profit he care not for, let others reap it;
But should the day come when place ceased to exist,
The country would have far more cause to weep it:
For how could it go on? Explain who can!
He gloried in the name of Englishman.

He was as independent—ay, much more—
Than those who were not paid for independence,
As common soldiers, or a common—shore,
Have in their several arts or parts ascendance
O’er the irregulars in lust or gore,
Who do not give professional attendance.
Thus on the mob all statesmen are as eager
To prove their pride, as footmen to a beggar.

All this (save the last stanza) Henry said,
And thought. I say no more—I’ve said too much;
For all of us have either heard or read—
Off—or upon the hustings—some slight such
Hints from the independent heart or head
Of the official candidate. I’ll touch
No more on this—the dinner-bell hath rung,
And grace is said; the grace I should have sung—

But I’m too late, and therefore must make play.
’Twas a great banquet, such as Albion old
Was wont to boast—as if a glutton’s tray
Were something very glorious to behold.
But ’twas a public feast and public day,—
Quite full, right dull, guests hot, and dishes cold,
Great plenty, much formality, small cheer,

And every body out of their own sphere.

The squires familiarly formal, and
  My lords and ladies proudly condescending;
The very servants puzzling how to hand
  Their plates—without it might be too much bending
From their high places by the sideboard's stand—
  Yet, like their masters, fearful of offending.
For any deviation from the graces
Might cost both man and master too—their places.

There were some hunters bold, and coursers keen,
  Whose hounds ne'er err'd, nor greyhounds deign'd to lurch;
Some deadly shots too, Septembrizers, seen
  Earliest to rise, and last to quit the search
Of the poor partridge through his stubble screen.
  There were some massy members of the church,
Takers of tithes, and makers of good matches,
And several who sung fewer psalms than catches.

There were some country wags too—and, alas!
  Some exiles from the town, who had been driven
To gaze, instead of pavement, upon grass,
  And rise at nine in lieu of long eleven.
And lo! upon that day it came to pass,
  I sate next that o'erwhelming son of heaven,
The very powerful parson, Peter Pith,
The loudest wit I e'er was deafen'd with.

I knew him in his livelier London days,
  A brilliant diner out, though but a curate;
And not a joke he cut but earn'd its praise,
  Until preferment, coming at a sure rate
(O Providence! how wondrous are thy ways!
  Who would suppose thy gifts sometimes obdurate?),
Gave him, to lay the devil who looks o'er Lincoln,
A fat fen vicarage, and nought to think on.

His jokes were sermons, and his sermons jokes;
   But both were thrown away amongst the fens;
For wit hath no great friend in aguish folks.
   No longer ready ears and short-hand pens
Imbibed the gay bon-mot, or happy hoax:
   The poor priest was reduced to common sense,
Or to coarse efforts very loud and long,
To hammer a horse laugh from the thick throng.

There is a difference, says the song, 'between
   A beggar and a queen,' or was (of late
The latter worse used of the two we've seen—
   But we'll say nothing of affairs of state);
A difference ''twixt a bishop and a dean,'
   A difference between crockery ware and plate,
As between English beef and Spartan broth—
And yet great heroes have been bred by both.

But of all nature's discrepancies, none
   Upon the whole is greater than the difference
Beheld between the country and the town,
   Of which the latter merits every preference
From those who have few resources of their own,
   And only think, or act, or feel, with reference
To some small plan of interest or ambition—
Both which are limited to no condition.

But 'en avant!' The light loves languish o'er
   Long banquets and too many guests, although
A slight repast makes people love much more,
   Bacchus and Ceres being, as we know
Even from our grammar upwards, friends of yore
   With vivifying Venus, who doth owe
To these the invention of champagne and truffles:
Temperance delights her, but long fasting ruffles.

Dully past o'er the dinner of the day;
   And Juan took his place, he knew not where,

Confused, in the confusion, and distrait,
And sitting as if nail'd upon his chair:
Though knives and forks clank'd round as in a fray,
He seem'd unconscious of all passing there,
Till some one, with a groan, exprest a wish
(Unheeded twice) to have a fin of fish.

On which, at the third asking of the bans,
He started; and perceiving smiles around
Broadening to grins, he colour'd more than once,
And hastily—as nothing can confound
A wise man more than laughter from a dunce—
Inflicted on the dish a deadly wound,
And with such hurry, that ere he could curb it
He had paid his neighbour's prayer with half a turbot.

This was no bad mistake, as it occurr'd,
The supplicator being an amateur;
But others, who were left with scarce a third,
Were angry—as they well might, to be sure.
They wonder'd how a young man so absurd
Lord Henry at his table should endure;
And this, and his not knowing how much oats
Had fallen last market, cost his host three votes.

They little knew, or might have sympathised,
That he the night before had seen a ghost,
A prologue which but slightly harmonised
With the substantial company engross'd
By matter, and so much materialised,
That one scarce knew at what to marvel most
Of two things—how (the question rather odd is)
Such bodies could have souls, or souls such bodies.

But what confused him more than smile or stare
From all the 'squires and 'squiresses around,
Who wonder'd at the abstraction of his air,
Especially as he had been renown'd

For some vivacity among the fair,
   Even in the country circle's narrow bound
(For little things upon my lord's estate
Were good small talk for others still less great)—

Was, that he caught Aurora's eye on his,
   And something like a smile upon her cheek.
Now this he really rather took amiss:
   In those who rarely smile, their smiles bespeak
A strong external motive; and in this
   Smile of Aurora's there was nought to pique
Or hope, or love, with any of the wiles
Which some pretend to trace in ladies' smiles.

'Twas a mere quiet smile of contemplation,
   Indicative of some surprise and pity;
And Juan grew carnation with vexation,
   Which was not very wise, and still less witty,
Since he had gain'd at least her observation,
   A most important outwork of the city—
As Juan should have known, had not his senses
By last night's ghost been driven from their defences.

But what was bad, she did not blush in turn,
   Nor seem embarrass'd—quite the contrary;
Her aspect was as usual, still—not stern—
   And she withdrew, but cast not down, her eye,
Yet grew a little pale—with what? concern?
   I know not; but her colour ne'er was high—
Though sometimes faintly flush'd—and always clear,
As deep seas in a sunny atmosphere.

But Adeline was occupied by fame
   This day; and watching, witching, condescending
To the consumers of fish, fowl, and game,
   And dignity with courtesy so blending,
As all must blend whose part it is to aim
   (Especially as the sixth year is ending)

At their lord's, son's, or similar connection's
Safe conduct through the rocks of re-elections.

Though this was most expedient on the whole,
And usual—Juan, when he cast a glance
On Adeline while playing her grand role,
Which she went through as though it were a dance,
Betraying only now and then her soul
By a look scarce perceptibly askance
(Of weariness or scorn), began to feel
Some doubt how much of Adeline was real;

So well she acted all and every part
By turns—with that vivacious versatility,
Which many people take for want of heart.
They err—'tis merely what is call'd mobility,
A thing of temperament and not of art,
Though seeming so, from its supposed facility;
And false—though true; for surely they're sincerest
Who are strongly acted on by what is nearest.

This makes your actors, artists, and romancers,
Heroes sometimes, though seldom—sages never;
But speakers, bards, diplomatists, and dancers,
Little that 's great, but much of what is clever;
Most orators, but very few financiers,
Though all Exchequer chancellors endeavour,
Of late years, to dispense with Cocker's rigours,
And grow quite figurative with their figures.

The poets of arithmetic are they
Who, though they prove not two and two to be
Five, as they might do in a modest way,
Have plainly made it out that four are three,
Judging by what they take, and what they pay.
The Sinking Fund's unfathomable sea,
That most unliquidating liquid, leaves
The debt unsunk, yet sinks all it receives.

While Adeline dispensed her airs and graces,
The fair Fitz-Fulke seem'd very much at ease;
Though too well bred to quiz men to their faces,
Her laughing blue eyes with a glance could seize
The ridicules of people in all places—
That honey of your fashionable bees—
And store it up for mischievous enjoyment;
And this at present was her kind employment.

However, the day closed, as days must close;
The evening also waned—and coffee came.
Each carriage was announced, and ladies rose,
And curtsying off, as curtsies country dame,
Retired: with most unfashionable bows
Their docile esquires also did the same,
Delighted with their dinner and their host,
But with the Lady Adeline the most.

Some praised her beauty; others her great grace;
The warmth of her politeness, whose sincerity
Was obvious in each feature of her face,
Whose traits were radiant with the rays of verity.
Yes; she was truly worthy her high place!
No one could envy her deserved prosperity.
And then her dress—what beautiful simplicity
Draperied her form with curious felicity!

Meanwhile Sweet Adeline deserved their praises,
By an impartial indemnification
For all her past exertion and soft phrases,
In a most edifying conversation,
Which turn'd upon their late guests' miens and faces,
And families, even to the last relation;
Their hideous wives, their horrid selves and dresses,
And truculent distortion of their tresses.

True, she said little—'twas the rest that broke

Forth into universal epigram;
But then 'twas to the purpose what she spoke:
Like Addison's 'faint praise,' so wont to damn,
Her own but served to set off every joke,
As music chimes in with a melodrame.
How sweet the task to shield an absent friend!
I ask but this of mine, to—not defend.

There were but two exceptions to this keen
Skirmish of wits o'er the departed; one
Aurora, with her pure and placid mien;
And Juan, too, in general behind none
In gay remark on what he had heard or seen,
Sate silent now, his usual spirits gone:
In vain he heard the others rail or rally,
He would not join them in a single sally.

'Tis true he saw Aurora look as though
She approved his silence; she perhaps mistook
Its motive for that charity we owe
But seldom pay the absent, nor would look
Farther—it might or might not be so.
But Juan, sitting silent in his nook,
Observing little in his reverie,
Yet saw this much, which he was glad to see.

The ghost at least had done him this much good,
In making him as silent as a ghost,
If in the circumstances which ensued
He gain'd esteem where it was worth the most.
And certainly Aurora had renew'd
In him some feelings he had lately lost,
Or harden'd; feelings which, perhaps ideal,
Are so divine, that I must deem them real:—

The love of higher things and better days;
The unbounded hope, and heavenly ignorance
Of what is call'd the world, and the world's ways;

The moments when we gather from a glance
More joy than from all future pride or praise,
Which kindle manhood, but can ne'er entrance
The heart in an existence of its own,
Of which another's bosom is the zone.

Who would not sigh Ai ai Tan Kuuerheian
That hath a memory, or that had a heart?
Alas! her star must fade like that of Dian:
Ray fades on ray, as years on years depart.
Anacreon only had the soul to tie an
Unwithering myrtle round the unblunted dart
Of Eros: but though thou hast play'd us many tricks,
Still we respect thee, 'Alma Venus Genetrix!'

And full of sentiments, sublime as billows
Heaving between this world and worlds beyond,
Don Juan, when the midnight hour of pillows
Arrived, retired to his; but to despond
Rather than rest. Instead of poppies, willows
Waved o'er his couch; he meditated, fond
Of those sweet bitter thoughts which banish sleep,
And make the worldling sneer, the youngling weep.

The night was as before: he was undrest,
Saving his night-gown, which is an undress;
Completely 'sans culotte,' and without vest;
In short, he hardly could be clothed with less:
But apprehensive of his spectral guest,
He sate with feelings awkward to express
(By those who have not had such visitations),
Expectant of the ghost's fresh operations.

And not in vain he listen'd;—Hush! what 's that?
I see—I see—Ah, no!—'tis not—yet 'tis—
Ye powers! it is the—the—the—Pooh! the cat!
The devil may take that stealthy pace of his!
So like a spiritual pit-a-pat,

Or tiptoe of an amatory Miss,
Gliding the first time to a rendezvous,
And dreading the chaste echoes of her shoe.

Again—what is 't? The wind? No, no—this time
It is the sable friar as before,
With awful footsteps regular as rhyme,
Or (as rhymes may be in these days) much more.
Again through shadows of the night sublime,
When deep sleep fell on men, and the world wore
The starry darkness round her like a girdle
Spangled with gems—the monk made his blood curdle.

A noise like to wet fingers drawn on glass,
Which sets the teeth on edge; and a slight clatter,
Like showers which on the midnight gusts will pass,
Sounding like very supernatural water,
Came over Juan's ear, which throbb'd, alas!
For immaterialism 's a serious matter;
So that even those whose faith is the most great
In souls immortal, shun them tête-à-tête.

Were his eyes open?—Yes! and his mouth too.
Surprise has this effect—to make one dumb,
Yet leave the gate which eloquence slips through
As wide as if a long speech were to come.
Nigh and more nigh the awful echoes drew,
Tremendous to a mortal tympanum:
His eyes were open, and (as was before
Stated) his mouth. What open'd next?—the door.

It open'd with a most infernal creak,
Like that of hell. 'Lasciate ogni speranza
Voi che entrate!' The hinge seem'd to speak,
Dreadful as Dante's rhima, or this stanza;
Or—but all words upon such themes are weak:
A single shade 's sufficient to entrance a
Hero—for what is substance to a spirit?

Or how is 't matter trembles to come near it?

The door flew wide,—not swiftly, but, as fly
  The sea-gulls, with a steady, sober flight,
And then swung back, nor close, but stood awry,
  Half letting in long shadows on the light,
Which still in Juan's candlesticks burned high,
  For he had two, both tolerably bright,
And in the doorway, darkening darkness, stood
The sable Friar in his solemn hood.

Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
  'Twixt night and morn, upon the horizon's verge.
How little do we know that which we are!
  How less what we may be! The eternal surge
Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
  Our bubbles; as the old burst, new emerge,
Lash'd from the foam of ages; while the graves
Of empires heave but like some passing waves.

Don Juan shook, as erst he had been shaken
  The night before, but being sick of shaking,
He first inclined to think he had been mistaken,
  And then to be ashamed of such mistaking.
His own internal ghost began to awaken
  Within him and to quell his corporal quaking,
Hinting that soul and body on the whole
Were odds against a disembodied soul.

And then his dread grew wrath, and his wrath fierce,
  And he arose, advanced. The shade retreated,
But Juan, eager now the truth to pierce,
  Followed, his veins no longer cold, but heated,
Resolved to thrust the mystery carte and tierce,
  At whatsoever risk of being defeated.
The ghost stopped, menaced, then retired, until
He reached the ancient wall, then stood stone still.

Juan put forth one arm. Eternal powers!
   It touched no soul nor body, but the wall,
On which the moonbeams fell in silvery showers
   Checkered with all the tracery of the hall.
He shuddered, as no doubt the bravest cowers
   When he can't tell what 'tis that doth appal.
How odd, a single hobgoblin's nonentity
Should cause more fear than a whole host's identity.

But still the shade remained, the blue eyes glared,
   And rather variably for stony death.
Yet one thing rather good the grave had spared;
   The ghost had a remarkably sweet breath.
A straggling curl showed he had been fair-haired.
   A red lip with two rows of pearls beneath
Gleamed forth, as through the casement's ivy shroud
The moon peeped, just escaped from a grey cloud.

And Juan, puzzled but still curious, thrust
   His other arm forth. Wonder upon wonder!
It pressed upon a hard but glowing bust,
Which beat as if there was a warm heart under.
He found, as people on most trials must,
   That he had made at first a silly blunder
And that in his confusion he had caught
Only the wall, instead of what he sought

The ghost, if ghost it were, seemed a sweet soul
   As ever lurked beneath a holy hood.
A dimpled chin, a neck of ivory stole
   Forth into something much like flesh and blood.
Back fell the sable frock and dreary cowl
   And they revealed, alas, that ere they should,
In full, voluptuous, but not o'ergrown bulk,
The phantom of her frolic Grace—Fitz-Fulke!

[The end of the 1857 edition]

CANTO THE SEVENTEENTH.

The world is full of orphans: firstly, those
    Who are so in the strict sense of the phrase
(But many a lonely tree the loftier grows
    Than others crowded in the forest's maze);
The next are such as are not doomed to lose
    Their tender parents in their budding days,
But merely their parental tenderness,
Which leaves them orphans of the heart no less.

The next are 'only children', as they are styled,
    Who grow up children only, since the old saw
Pronounces that an 'only' 's a spoilt child.
    But not to go too far, I hold it law
That where their education, harsh or mild,
    'Transgresses the great bounds of love or awe,
The sufferers, be't in heart or intellect,
Whate'er the cause are orphans in effect.

But to return unto the stricter rule
   (As far as words make rules), our common notion
Of orphans paints at once a parish school,
    A half-starved babe, a wreck upon life's ocean,
A human (what the Italians nickname) 'mule',
    A theme for pity or some worse emotion;
Yet, if examined, it might be admitted
The wealthiest orphans are to be more pitied.

Too soon they are parents to themselves; for what
    Are tutors, guardians, and so forth, compared
With Nature's genial genitors, so that
   A child of Chancery, that Star Chamber ward
(I'll take the likeness I can first come at),

Is like a duckling by Dame Partlett reared
And frights, especially if 'tis a daughter,
The old hen by running headlong to the water.

There is a commonplace book argument,
Which glibly glides from every vulgar tongue
When any dare a new light to present:
'If you are right, then everybody's wrong.'
Suppose the converse of this precedent
So often urged, so loudly and so long:
'If you are wrong, then everybody's right.'
Was ever everybody yet so quite?

Therefore I would solicit free discussion
Upon all points, no matter what or whose,
Because as ages upon ages push on,
The last is apt the former to accuse
Of pillowing its head on a pincushion,
Heedless of pricks because it was obtuse.
What was a paradox becomes a truth or
A something like it, as bear witness Luther.

The sacraments have been reduced to two
And witches unto none, though somewhat late
Since burning aged women (save a few,
Not witches, only bitches, who create
Mischief in families, as some know or knew,
Should still be singed, but slightly let me state)
Has been declared an act of inurbanity,
Malgré Sir Matthew Hale's great humanity.

Great Galileo was debarred the sun,
Because he fixed it, and to stop his talking
How earth could round the solar orbit run,
Found his own legs embargoed from mere walking.
The man was well nigh dead, ere men begun
To think his skull had not some need of caulking,
But now it seems he's right, his notion just,

No doubt a consolation to his dust.

Pythagoras, Locke, Socrates—but pages
Might be filled up, as vainly as before,
With the sad usage of all sorts of sages,
Who in his lifetime each was deemed a bore.
The loftiest minds outrun their tardy ages;
This they must bear with and perhaps much more.
The wise man's sure when he no more can share it, he
Will have a firm post-obit on posterity.

If such doom waits each intellectual giant,
We little people in our lesser way
To life's small rubs should surely be more pliant,
And so for one will I, as well I may.
Would that I were less bilious—but oh fie on't!
Just as I make my mind up everyday
To be a totus teres stoic, sage,
The wind shifts and I fly into a rage.

Temperate I am, yet never had a temper;
Modest I am, yet with some slight assurance;
Changeable too, yet somehow idem semper;
Patient, but not enamoured of endurance;
Cheerful, but sometimes rather apt to whimper;
Mild, but at times a sort of Hercules furens;
So that I almost think that the same skin
For one without has two or three within.

Our hero was in canto the sixteenth
Left in a tender moonlight situation,
Such as enables man to show his strength
Moral or physical: on this occasion
Whether his virtue triumphed, or at length
His vice—for he was of a kindling nation—
Is more than I shall venture to describe,
Unless some beauty with a kiss should bribe.

I leave the thing a problem, like all things.
   The morning came, and breakfast, tea and toast,
Of which most men partake, but no one sings.
   The company, whose birth, wealth, worth have cost
My trembling lyre already several strings,
   Assembled with our hostess and mine host.
The guests dropped in, the last but one, Her Grace,
The latest, Juan with his virgin face.

Which best is to encounter, ghost or none,
   'Twere difficult to say, but Juan looked
As if he had combated with more than one,
   Being wan and worn, with eyes that hardly brooked
The light that through the Gothic windows shone.
   Her Grace too had a sort of air rebuked,
Seemed pale and shivered, as if she had kept
A vigil or dreamt rather more than slept.

Colophon

Don Juan
Lord Byron

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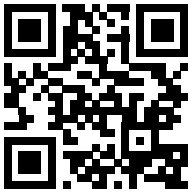

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