Merrill's English Texts

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE
CANTO FOURTH

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON
BYRON

LORD BYRON

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AND

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON

BY

LORD BYRON

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Merrill's English Texts

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PREFACE

These poems, and indeed all poems, should be taught as literature, and the primary aim should be literary appreciation. The teacher is often confronted with the problem of getting pupils to see the essential difference between poetry and prose. This can best be done by good interpretative reading and by calling attention to the fact that poetry makes more of an emotional than an intellectual appeal, that it is largely imaginative and suggestive, and that it deals more with great truths than with facts.

All methods which hinder an appreciation of the poetry should be avoided. Attention to matters of grammar and rhetoric, other than as aids in understanding the poetry, is manifestly out of harmony. The Notes in this edition are consequently devoted to the explanation of historical allusions which the pupil could not well investigate for himself, and to such interpretative suggestions as should stimulate the pupil in his own search for the poetic beauties in which the poems abound.

The fact that there are serious problems connected with the life and poetry of Byron only necessitates the greater tact and care in dealing with him. Byron should not be shunned, but so studied that his life may

be justly estimated and his works read with proper discrimination. He is an excellent poet to awaken such as need awakening to the charm of poetry.

C. E. R.

Buffalo, February 1, 1911.

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INTRODUCTION

GEORGE GORDON BYRON (1788–1824)

To understand Lord Byron is almost impossible; to learn enough of his life and work to read him with discrimination is entirely within the range of possibility. Without entering into an analysis of his character, concerning which there has been endless controversy, and without seeking to estimate all his works, it must suffice here to summarize the facts of the poet's life and the characteristics of his poetry, as an introduction merely to the pupil's later knowledge of Byron and his works.

Heredity and Environment. The environment into which Byron was born and in which he was brought up was about as bad as can be conceived. His family was descended from one of the oldest houses of the English nobility, of Norse origin; but his father was a man of no character, in fact a worthless profligate, who had the nickname of "Mad Jack." William, the poet's uncle, was known as "the wicked lord," and the grandfather had committed murder. The poet's mother, whom "Mad Jack" had married for her money, was descended from James I and was excessively proud of her Highland ancestry. But she seems to have been devoid of such qualities as make a good mother, and her impulsiveness, pride, and hysterical tendencies combined to spoil her child. She alternately caressed and abused him. She even made fun of his clubfoot and called him "a lame brat." The boy Byron never knew a true home or real parental affection. Such qualities as he naturally inherited were never curbed, and such training as might, in a measure, have overcome his perilous tendencies, was never given him. One teacher, to be sure, did seem to understand the boy and might have done much

for him, had not the opportunity been limited. As it was, his kindness and tact were never forgotten by Byron.

Education. Under such circumstances and in view of the fact that the conditions at the university, which he entered in 1805, were then conducive to fast living rather than to sobriety, it is not to be wondered at that his career at Trinity College, Cambridge, was marked by self-will, haughtiness, and passion. After three years of residence at the university, where he did not distinguish himself as a student, he was given, the "gentleman's degree" and his formal education was ended.

First Poems. At the age of nineteen, while in college, Byron published a volume of poems called *Hours of Idleness*. The *Edinburgh Review's* ridicule of it so exasperated the young poet that, two years later, he published his brilliant satirical reply, "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." This was a bitter essay, but it proved popular with the readers of the day who liked controversy. In later years Byron repented of this early explosion and called it an "evil work of his nonage." In 1809 Byron took his seat in the House of Lords and three months afterwards went to the continent, where he traveled with his friend Hobhouse for two years. During this tour he gathered material for several poems, including the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, *The Corsair*, and *The Giaour*. The publication of *Childe Harold* brought instant fame. At this time Byron would take no payment for his poems.

Marriage. During the period of his phenomenal popularity and while he was the idol of fashionable society, Byron was married to Miss Millbanke, a woman cold, formal, and precise, who admired the poet and seemed ambitious to reform him. The task of reform was beyond her power, for she lacked the necessary winning qualities and tact; and within a year after the wedding day she left him and returned to her father, alleging that she believed her husband insane. When convinced that he was not mad, she still persisted in refusing to live with him, though Byron several times sought a reconciliation. He often asserted that he never knew why his wife left him.

Society sided with the wife. The tide not only turned against Byron but became a tidal wave of vituperative abuse which was more than he could endure. He says of his treatment: "The press was active and scurrilous; . . . my name—which had been a knightly or a noble one since my fathers helped to conquer the kingdom for William the Norman—was tainted. I felt that, if what was whispered and muttered was true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was not fit for me. I withdrew; but this was not enough. In other countries—in Switzerland, in the shadow of the Alps, and by the blue depth of the lakes—I was pursued and breathed upon by the same blight. I crossed the mountains, but it was the same; so I went a little farther, and settled myself by the waves of the Adriatic, like the stag at bay, who betakes himself to the waters."

Lest these words of the poet should seem prejudiced, we also quote Macaulay upon the same subject: "His country was in a bad humor with him. His writings and his character had lost the charm of novelty. He had been guilty of the offense which, of all offenses, is punished most severely: he had been over-praised; he had excited too warm an interest; and the public, with its usual justice, chastised him for its own folly. . . .

"The obloquy which Byron had to endure was such as might well have shaken a more constant mind. The newspapers were filled with lampoons. The theatres shook with execrations. He was excluded from circles where he had lately been the observed of all observers. All those creeping things that riot in the decay of nobler natures hastened to their repast; and they were right; they did after their kind. . . .

"First came the execution, then the investigation, and last of all, or rather not at all, the accusation. The public, without knowing anything at all about the transactions in his family, flew into a violent passion with him, and proceeded to invent stories which might justify its anger. Ten or twenty different accounts of the separation, inconsistent with each other, with themselves, and with common sense, circulated at the same time. What evidence there might be for any one of these, the virtuous

people who repeated them neither knew nor cared. For in fact these stories were not the causes, but the effects of the public indignation."

This quotation puts in strong terms what we believe to be the truth concerning the most tragic event in the life of one whose whole life was a tragedy and many of whose subsequent wanderings and falls were, in part at least, due to the manner in which he was treated by his countrymen.

Life on the Continent. In April, 1816, Byron left England, never to return. For the remaining eight years of his life he wandered, nomad-like, over much of Europe, wasting himself with riotous living. He never recovered from the misanthropy caused by his treatment previous to his departure from England. His personal disappointment in life was deepened by the anguish he felt over the failure of the French Revolution to solve the great problem of national freedom. His words on France in canto IV of *Childe Harold* (p. 58) show how seriously he took that failure. He was so passionate a lover of liberty that he became the most revolutionary of all the poets of the romantic school of English poetry. He felt that he must break away from all the traditions and conventions of organized society—social, religious, and political.

Much of the first year of Byron's life abroad was spent with the poet Shelley, whom he met at Geneva, and who did much to stimulate his literary activities. But for Shelley's influence some of Byron's best poetry would never have been written. Their natures were the complements of each other. To this period of Byron's life belong *The Prisoner of Chillon* and the third canto of *Childe Harold*, which is in many respects the best section of the poem.

At Venice, where he resided for three years, Byron wrote the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, finished *Manfred*, wrote *Beppo*, and began *Don Juan*. Here he came under the influence of the Countess Guiccioli, who understood him and succeeded in restraining him as few did. She later wrote a biography of Byron.

The Poems. In 1820 Byron wrote his first dramas, but they

were not successful; he was not a dramatist. *Cain*, however, a dramatic poem which was written the following year, was superior to his early work. It reveals marvelous power. Shelley says of it, "In my opinion it contains finer poetry than has appeared in England since *Paradise Lost*." Scott speaks in the same strain and refers to the poem as an "awful and tremendous drama"; concerning Byron he says, "He has certainly matched Milton on his own ground." Still another critic, Mr. Mather, comments thus, "*Cain* is a drama in which Byron depicts the magnificence of a soul's revolt, the awfulness of a soul's isolation and despair, and the untold desolation of a soul's defeat when powerless in the face of irrevocable law. That soul was Byron's, *Cain* being the historic fragment in which he portrayed himself and his destiny." The statement is significant in view of the fact that Byron considered himself a wanderer upon the face of the earth.

Manfred may be regarded as a companion to *Cain*, for in their main outlines they are alike. *Don Juan* is Byron's masterpiece, and the character of Don Juan is essentially Byron himself. The poem is wonderful and terrible. In it the poet sought revenge upon the world, England especially. It contains passages of most exquisite beauty and passages of bitterest satire. It is his "own biography written with a pen of fire."

In 1822 Byron wrote, "If I live ten years longer, you will see that it is not all over with me. I do not mean in literature—I do not think that is my vocation; but I shall do something."

Expedition to Greece. Byron was not content to write about liberty; he was ever on the lookout for some larger and more effective outlet for the passion for universal freedom which consumed him. During his residence in Italy he had sympathized with the Carbonari movement, which aimed to free Italy from Austrian rule, but the leading revolutionists were discovered and banished and Byron himself escaped only because he was an English nobleman. A better opportunity seemed open to him in the struggle of the Greeks against the Turks. The Greek committee at London enlisted his sympathies and he threw himself with all his powers heartily into the struggle. Every penny of his

income that he could secure from England was devoted to the cause. In 1823 he set out for Greece with a vessel containing arms and ammunition and with the equivalent of $20,000 in money. His courage and sagacity won him instant recognition from the Greek leaders. His "counsels were listened to like oracles."

Mr. Nichol says, "Nothing can be more statesmanlike than some of Byron's papers of this and the immediately preceding period, nothing more noble than the spirit which inspires them. . . . Neither trusting too much nor distrusting too much, with a clear head and a good will he set about enforcing a series of excellent measures. From first to last he was engaged in denouncing dissension, in advocating unity, in doing everything that man could do to concentrate and utilize the disorderly elements with which he had to work. He occupied himself in repairing fortifications, managing ships, restraining license, promoting courtesy between foes, and regulating the disposal of the sinews of war."

The affairs of Greece soon began to improve. Through Byron's influence a loan was successfully negotiated in London and other volunteers, inspired by his noble example, set out to aid Greece.

On the morning of January 22, 1824, his thirty-sixth birthday, he entered his friend Stanhope's room saying, "You complain that I never write any poetry now." Then he read the poem beginning,

> "'T is time this heart should be unmoved,
> Since others it hath ceased to move.
> . . . . . .
> "Awake! (not Greece—she is awake!)
> Awake, my spirit! think through whom
> Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,
> And then strike home!
> . . . . . .
> "If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live?*
> The land of honorable death
> Is here:—up to the field, and give
> Away thy breath!

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

Death in Greece, 1824. The next spring he contracted a fatal illness. Missolonghi was situated on a muddy, malarial swamp and Byron's house was situated in the worst possible place. The fever seized him; he was in no condition to fight it and, in spite of rallies, it gained upon his constitution. His medical treatment was unscientific and as the soldier—for such we now call him—would not go away for his health's sake, death soon overtook him.

During the course of the fever Byron expressed fear that his friends might become infected by watching with him. He was also most solicitous for others far away, his sister and his wife. In his dying hours he said of Greece, "I have given her my time, my means, my health—and now I give her my life! What could I do more? Poor Greece, poor town, poor servants!" In one of his fits of delirium, evidently thinking he was leading the assault on Lepanto, he cried out, "Forwards, forwards,—courage—follow my example—don't be afraid!" His last words were, "Now I shall go to sleep." He died on April 19, 1824.

Twenty-two days of universal mourning for Byron were proclaimed in Greece. Shops were closed for three days, and even the Easter festivities were suspended that prayers might be offered. The Greeks desired to have the body buried in the Temple of Theseus at Athens; other cities contended for the remains; but the body was taken to England. As the Dean of Westminster refused sepulture there, he was interred in the village church at Hucknall, beside his ancestors. Stanhope said, "England has lost her brightest genius—Greece her noblest friend." His own words, as spoken by the good abbot over the sins of *Manfred*, are appropriate for himself.

"This should have been a noble creature—he
Hath all the energy, which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled."

"Byron is dead!" The news meant sorrow as it ran around the world. Mrs. Carlyle said, "Had I heard that the sun and moon had fallen out of their spheres, it could not have conveyed to me the feeling of a more awful blank than did the simple words, 'Byron is dead.'" Tennyson, speaking long afterward, said, "I thought the world was at an end. I thought everything was over and finished for everyone—that nothing else mattered." Mrs. Shelley's words were heartfelt: "Can I ever forget our excursions on the lake, when he sang the Tyrolese hymn, and his voice harmonized with winds and waves? Can I forget his attentions and consolations to me during my deepest misery? Never!"

Byron's Place in Literature. How shall we estimate Byron's elusive character and the poems which so perfectly record its many and various phases? That he is to be ranked high among our greatest English poets there can be no doubt. He was a born poet; he had genius. He was not preëminently an artist, for he lacked the painstaking care essential in great artists. He aimed rather at force, and he imparted a virility and vitality to English poetry that were needed and are sufficient to keep his poetry alive. He was a citizen of the world and he gave a cosmopolitan quality to English poetry. On the continent his poetry never suffered from the blighting reaction which was so extreme in England. But the work of Byron is now finding its true level; it is receiving the appreciation that is its due.

Byron's Personality. Men are seldom described as beautiful, but Byron was so called—even by men. "Both face and figure were of the finest mould of manly grace." "He had the head of a Greek god." His manner was characterized by an exquisite charm which always distinguished him. Shelley says that into whatever society he went, he became the nucleus of it. His physical beauty and the favor it won for him made him vain; his club-foot, of which he was morbidly conscious, made him bitter. These two qualities—vanity and bitterness—were his worst enemies. His rank accentuated his vanity so that it led him far astray; his passionate temper sometimes coöperated with his vanity, resulting in wild excess; again it seemed in league with his bitterness and

despair ensued. A man so constituted and living in an age of revolt naturally becomes a man of revolt, who cares not for the conventions of life. He rather takes pleasure in shocking those who overvalue the conventionalities, so that he often exaggerates his own evil tendencies. So it was with Byron. He seemed to have a morbid desire for a bad reputation. Posing made him appear worse than he was and this complicates the task of estimating his character aright.

While it cannot be truly said that Byron always portrayed himself in his poems, it is true that he put more of himself into his poems than any other poet has ever done. The characters in the poems are invariably Byron made up for the occasion, Byron acting a part, a part he can act as any good actor can, but in no sense presenting his own true character. This distinction is important, for too many have come to believe that Byron always pictured himself with photographic precision, when it would be more correct to say that he caricatured himself. For instance, his life before the pilgrimage recounted in *Childe Harold* I and II, is positively known to have been of a very different character from that of the pilgrim.

Byron was a victim of circumstances, if ever there was one. Of course that does not excuse him; but a man of such bad blood as he inherited, who knew no good influences during his boyhood, who was handsome yet deformed, and who often gave unmistakable evidences of tenderness, generosity, and nobility,—such a man deserves much more at the hands of the world than unqualified abuse and condemnation. He sinned, but he was sinned against. He did much that was wrong, but no man could have written the best that he wrote, and no man could have given his life for a cause of freedom as he did, without much inherent goodness. It does no good to blame him; such as he deserve pity and help. His life was a tragedy. The forces working against him were too many and too great for him, but in the last act, as he dies, we see some faint signs of what might have been another denouement had his elements "been more wisely mingled."

Matthew Arnold wrote,

> "When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
> We bowed our heads and held our breath.
> He taught us little; but our soul
> Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
> With shivering heart the strife we saw
> Of passion with eternal law;
> And yet with reverential awe
> We watch'd the fount of fiery life
> Which served for that Titanic strife."

No words on Byron are more appropriate than those of Mrs. Browning in her "Vision of Poets,"

> And poor proud Byron! Sad as grave
> And salt as life; forlornly brave
> And quivering with the dart he drave.

CRITICAL OPINIONS

"There was a dauntless Viking spirit in Byron's breast, a sincere opposition to tyranny and bigotry. This very characteristic, which was his deepest and most abiding, which made him hate the sham and falseness of himself as well as of others, is in both his life and his work the most predominant note. It is on this, in fact, that his fame depends; and by strange irony, it was by this vigorous, defiant spirit, which scorned and resented correction, that he wrought his own downfall. . . .

"No man in the whole history of English literature has become so suddenly famous as Byron did on the publication of *Childe Harold*, and no poet has had heaped upon him such wrathful denunciations by the virtuous and the zealous misinformed. As a result, he figured in exaggerated, superlative terms. Because he was a peer, because he wrote excellent verses, because he was beautiful, he had received absurd adulation. Because he made certain very serious moral and social slips, because he had the grim humor to pretend he was much worse than he really was, because scandal-mongers spread almost unimaginable lies about him, he was practically driven from England and has been, since his death, the victim of unjustified calumny. . . .

"In looking back over the life of Byron one feels that he was just beginning to find himself—to live down the sentimental *poseur* in him and to reveal the strong, sincere spirit underneath—when he was cut short. . . . In his nobler moments and at what he finally achieved, Byron was the better self of his heroes: Harold, Don Juan, Cain, Manfred, Bonnivard—the

Eternal spirit of the chainless mind.

His friend Shelley, who understood what was best in him, called him 'the Pilgrim of Eternity.' "—Hinchman and Gummere, *Great English Writers.*

"Byron's works present the tragedy of a Titan struggling against forces of heredity, environment and will; he was afflicted with the *welt-schmerz*, world-weariness, of a Hamlet; and his utterance was—

O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right!

We must confess, I think, that Byron did much of his own deliberate choice to render himself unable to 'lift himself above himself.' This fact is clear and we must not blink it; but, while we know what's done, we know also what's *resisted:* we can judge, but we must pity such a life. A man who could win the praise of Scott, Goethe, Mazzini, Sainte-Beuve, Arnold, Tennyson, Morley, and Dowden, was surely no charlatan."—Andrew J. George.

"No satirist has surpassed him in the keenness of his irony, no controversialist in the violence of his invective, no humorist in the grotesqueness of his imagination, no writer of any age in the masculine good sense which he can manifest when it so pleases him; and yet in all, and through all, there runs an element of depraved egotism, a contempt for virtue curiously allied with a remorseful loathing of vice, a perpetual bitterness and cynicism which leaves upon the mind the unhappiest and most perilous deposits. In truth, Byron was a great but morbid genius."—W. J. Dawson, *The Makers of English Poetry.*

"Filled with all these (Nature's) images of nobility and greatness, he gave them back to his page with a tone so philosophically profound, with a music so thrilling, with a dignity so graceful and yet so tender, that nothing in poetry can be conceived more fascinating and perfect."—W. M. Howitt.

"He never lost a keen perception of the pure and beautiful. . . . The passages of thoughtful beauty which are scat-

tered over his stormy and impulsive poems—following, as they so often do, fierce bursts of passion and the bad idolatry of hate and despair—are as pleasing to the eye as starlight after lightning. In the third and fourth cantos of *Childe Harold*, in *Don Juan*, in the narratives and meditations which he has cast in a dramatic form, passages might be selected of most witching loveliness, of deep pathos, of sad and mournful beauty of sentiment, of aspiration after truth and goodness—of pity and charity and faith and humanity and love. . . . Wielding an uncontrolled dominion over language, and profusely gifted with all the weapons of sarcasm, hatred, and contempt, he battled fiercely in the service of freedom, and knew well how to overwhelm its adversaries with denunciations and stormy threats, with ridicule and irony, which should eat into their hearts as rust into iron."—E. P. Whipple.

"The superficial inconsistencies of his character must always tempt critics who have a liking for difficult problems. He is like Hamlet in this respect. . . . In the desolation of his youth, in his moodiness, in his distempered variation between the extremes of laughter and tears, in his yearning for sympathy, his habit of brooding over the mysteries of life, Byron unconsciously played the part of Hamlet with the world for a stage, and left a kindred problem for the wonder of mankind and the puzzled speculation of the curious in such matters."—William Minto.

"To acquire a right feeling for Byron and his poetry is a discipline in equity. It is easy to yield to a sense of his power, to the force and sweep of his genius; it is easy to be repelled by his superficial insincerity, his license, his cynicism, his poverty of thought, his looseness of construction, his carelessness in execution. To know aright the evil and the good is difficult. It is difficult to feel justly toward this dethroned idol,—presently, perhaps, to be re-enthroned,—an idol in whose composition iron and clay are mingled with fine gold. But what interests us in Byron and in Byron's work is precisely this mingling of noble

and ignoble, of gold and a base alloy. . . . We must take him or leave him as he is,—the immortal spoilt by his age, great and petty, weak and strong, exalted and debased. . . . In its mingled elements Byron's poetry represents at once the mind and character of the writer and the temper of his age."—Edward Dowden, *Princeton Lectures.*

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CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE

CANTO FOURTH

I

I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs,
A palace and a prison on each hand;
I saw from out the wave her structures rise
As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand:
A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
Around me, and a dying Glory smiles
O'er the far times, when many a subject land
Looked to the winged Lion's marble piles,
Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles.

II

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

III

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

IV

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

V

The beings of the mind are not of clay;
Essentially immortal, they create
And multiply in us a brighter ray
And more beloved existence: that which Fate
Prohibits to dull life, in this our state
Of mortal bondage, by these spirits supplied,

First exiles, then replaces what we hate;
Watering the heart whose early flowers have died,
And with a fresher growth replenishing the void.

VI

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

VII

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

VIII

I've taught me other tongues, and in strange eyes
Have made me not a stranger; to the mind

Which is itself, no changes bring surprise;
Nor is it harsh to make, nor hard to find
A country with—ay, or without mankind:
Yet was I born where men are proud to be,
Not without cause; and should I leave behind
The inviolate island of the sage and free,
And seek me out a home by a remoter sea?

IX

Perhaps I loved it well; and should I lay
My ashes in a soil which is not mine,
My spirit shall resume it—if we may
Unbodied choose a sanctuary. I twine
My hopes of being remembered in my line
With my land's language: if too fond and far
These aspirations in their scope incline,—
If my fame should be, as my fortunes are,
Of hasty growth and blight, and dull Oblivion bar

X

My name from out the temple where the dead
Are honored by the nations—let it be—
And light the laurels on a loftier head!
And be the Spartan's epitaph on me,
"Sparta hath many a worthier son than he."
Meantime I seek no sympathies, nor need;
The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree
I planted; they have torn me, and I bleed:
I should have known what fruit would spring from such a seed.

XI

The spouseless Adriatic mourns her lord;
And, annual marriage now no more renewed,
The Bucentaur lies rotting unrestored,
Neglected garment of her widowhood!
St. Mark yet sees his lion where he stood
Stand, but in mockery of his withered power,
Over the proud Place where an Emperor sued,
And monarchs gazed and envied in the hour
When Venice was a queen with an unequalled dower.

XII

The Suabian sued, and now the Austrian reigns—
An Emperor tramples where an Emperor knelt;
Kingdoms are shrunk to provinces, and chains
Clank over sceptred cities; nations melt
From power's high pinnacle, when they have felt
The sunshine for a while, and downward go
Like lauwine loosened from the mountain's belt;
Oh for one hour of blind old Dandolo!
Th' octogenarian chief, Byzantium's conquering foe!

XIII

Before St. Mark still glow his steeds of brass,
Their gilded collars glittering in the sun;
But is not Doria's menace come to pass?
Are they not *bridled?*—Venice, lost and won,
Her thirteen hundred years of freedom done,
Sinks, like a sea-weed, into whence she rose!

Better be whelmed beneath the waves, and shun
Even in destruction's depth, her foreign foes,
From whom submission wrings an infamous repose.

XIV

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

XV

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

XVI

When Athens' armies fell at Syracuse,
And fettered thousands bore the yoke of war,

Redemption rose up in the Attic Muse,
Her voice their only ransom from afar:
See! as they chant the tragic hymn, the car
Of the o'ermastered victor stops, the reins
Fall from his hands, his idle scimitar
Starts from its belt—he rends his captive's chains,
And bids him thank the bard for freedom and his strains.

XVII

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

XVIII

I loved her from my boyhood; she to me
Was as a fairy city of the heart,
Rising like water-columns from the sea,
Of joy the sojourn, and of wealth the mart;
And Otway, Radcliffe, Schiller, Shakespeare's art,
Had stamped her image in me, and even so,
Although I found her thus, we did not part;
Perchance even dearer in her day of woe,
Than when she was a boast, a marvel, and a show.

XIX

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

XX

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

XXI

Existence may be borne, and the deep root
Of life and sufferance make its firm abode
In bare and desolated bosoms; mute

The camel labours with the heaviest load,
And the wolf dies in silence,—not bestowed
In vain should such example be; if they,
Things of ignoble or of savage mood,
Endure and shrink not, we of nobler clay
May temper it to bear,—it is but for a day.

XXII

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

XXIII

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

XXIV

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

XXV

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

XXVI

The commonwealth of kings, the men of Rome!
And even since, and now, fair Italy!
Thou art the garden of the world, the home
Of all Art yields, and Nature can decree;
Even in thy desert, what is like to thee?
Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste

More rich than other climes' fertility;
Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin graced
With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced.

XXVII

The moon is up, and yet it is not night;
Sunset divides the sky with her; a sea
Of glory streams along the Alpine height
Of blue Friuli's mountains; Heaven is free
From clouds, but of all colors seems to be,—
Melted to one vast Iris of the West,—
Where the Day joins the past Eternity;
While, on the other hand, meek Dian's crest
Floats through the azure air—an island of the blest!

XXVIII

A single star is at her side, and reigns
With her o'er half the lovely heaven; but still
Yon sunny sea heaves brightly, and remains
Rolled o'er the peak of the far Rhætian hill,
As Day and Night contending were, until
Nature reclaimed her order: gently flows
The deep-dyed Brenta, where their hues instil
The odorous purple of a new-born rose,
Which streams upon her stream, and glassed within it glows,

XXIX

Filled with the face of heaven, which, from afar,
Comes down upon the waters; all its hues,

From the rich sunset to the rising star,
Their magical variety diffuse:
And now they change; a paler shadow strews
Its mantle o'er the mountains; parting day
Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
With a new color as it gasps away,
The last still loveliest, till—'tis gone—and all is gray.

XXX

There is a tomb in Arqua;—reared in air,
Pillared in their sarcophagus, repose
The bones of Laura's lover: here repair
Many familiar with his well-sung woes,
The pilgrims of his genius. He arose
To raise a language, and his land reclaim
From the dull yoke of her barbaric foes:
Watering the tree which bears his lady's name
With his melodious tears, he gave himself to fame.

XXXI

They keep his dust in Arqua, where he died;
The mountain-village where his latter days
Went down the vale of years; and 'tis their pride—
An honest pride, and let it be their praise—
To offer to the passing stranger's gaze
His mansion and his sepulchre; both plain
And venerably simple, such as raise
A feeling more accordant with his strain
Than if a pyramid formed his monumental fane.

XXXII

And the soft quiet hamlet where he dwelt
Is one of that complexion which seems made
For those who their mortality have felt,
And sought a refuge from their hopes decayed
In the deep umbrage of a green hill's shade,
Which shows a distant prospect far away
Of busy cities, now in vain displayed,
For they can lure no further; and the ray
Of a bright sun can make sufficient holiday,

XXXIII

Developing the mountains, leaves, and flowers,
And shining in the brawling brook, where-by,
Clear as its current, glide the sauntering hours
With a calm languor, which, though to the eye
Idlesse it seem, hath its mortality.
If from society we learn to live,
'Tis solitude should teach us how to die;
It hath no flatterers; vanity can give
No hollow aid; alone—man with his God must strive:

XXXIV

Or, it may be, with demons, who impair
The strength of better thoughts, and seek their prey
In melancholy bosoms, such as were
Of moody texture from their earliest day,
And loved to dwell in darkness and dismay,
Deeming themselves predestined to a doom

Which is not of the pangs that pass away;
Making the sun like blood, the earth a tomb,
The tomb a hell, and hell itself a murkier gloom.

XXXV

Ferrara! in thy wide and grass-grown streets,
Whose symmetry was not for solitude,
There seems as 'twere a curse upon the seats
Of former sovereigns, and the antique brood
Of Este, which for many an age made good
Its strength within thy walls, and was of yore
Patron or tyrant, as the changing mood
Of petty power impelled, of those who wore
The wreath which Dante's brow alone had worn before.

XXXVI

And Tasso is their glory and their shame.
Hark to his strain, and then survey his cell!
And see how dearly earned Torquato's fame,
And where Alfonso bade his poet dwell.
The miserable despot could not quell
The insulted mind he sought to quench, and blend
With the surrounding maniacs, in the hell
Where he had plunged it. Glory without end
Scattered the clouds away; and on that name attend

XXXVII

The tears and praises of all time; while thine
Would rot in its oblivion—in the sink

Of worthless dust, which from thy boasted line
Is shaken into nothing—but the link
Thou formest in his fortunes bids us think
Of thy poor malice, naming thee with scorn;
Alfonso, how thy ducal pageants shrink
From thee! if in another station born,
Scarce fit to be the slave of him thou mad'st to mourn:

XXXVIII

Thou, formed to eat, and be despised, and die,
Even as the beasts that perish, save that thou
Hadst a more splendid trough and wider sty!
He, with a glory round his furrowed brow,
Which emanated then, and dazzles now,
In face of all his foes, the Cruscan squire,
And Boileau, whose rash envy could allow
No strain which shamed his country's creaking lyre,
That whetstone of the teeth—monotony in wire!

XXXIX

Peace to Torquato's injured shade! 'twas his
In life and death to be the mark where Wrong
Aimed with her poisoned arrows,—but to miss.
Oh, victor unsurpassed in modern song!
Each year brings forth its millions; but how long
The tide of generations shall roll on,
And not the whole combined and countless throng
Compose a mind like thine! though all in one
Condensed their scattered rays, they would not form a sun.

XL

Great as thou art, yet paralleled by those,
Thy countrymen, before thee born to shine,
The Bards of Hell and Chivalry: first rose
The Tuscan father's comedy divine;
Then, not unequal to the Florentine,
The southern Scott, the minstrel who called forth
A new creation with his magic line,
And, like the Ariosto of the North,
Sang lady-love and war, romance and knightly worth.

XLI

The lightning rent from Ariosto's bust
The iron crown of laurel's mimiced leaves;
Nor was the ominous element unjust,
For the true laurel-wreath which Glory weaves
Is of the tree no bolt of thunder cleaves,
And the false semblance but disgraced his brow;
Yet still, if fondly Superstition grieves,
Know, that the lightning sanctifies below
Whate'er it strikes;—yon head is doubly sacred now.

XLII

Italia! oh Italia! thou who hast
The fatal gift of beauty, which became
A funeral dower of present woes and past,
On thy sweet brow is sorrow ploughed by shame,
And annals graved in characters of flame.
Oh, God! that thou wert in thy nakedness

Less lovely or more powerful, and could claim
Thy right, and awe the robbers back, who press
To shed thy blood, and drink the tears of thy distress;

XLIII

Then might'st thou more appal; or, less desired,
Be homely and be peaceful, undeplored
For thy destructive charms; then, still untired,
Would not be seen the armed torrents poured
Down the deep Alps; nor would the hostile horde
Of many-nationed spoilers from the Po
Quaff blood and water; nor the stranger's sword
Be thy sad weapon of defence, and so,
Victor or vanquished, thou the slave of friend or foe.

XLIV

Wandering in youth, I traced the path of him,
The Roman friend of Rome's least-mortal mind,
The friend of Tully: as my bark did skim
The bright blue waters with a fanning wind,
Came Megara before me, and behind
Ægina lay, Piræus on the right,
And Corinth on the left; I lay reclined
Along the prow, and saw all these unite
In ruin, even as he had seen the desolate sight;

XLV

For Time hath not rebuilt them, but upreared
Barbaric dwellings on their shattered site,

Which only make more mourned and more endeared
The few last rays of their far-scattered light,
And the crushed relics of their vanished might.
The Roman saw these tombs in his own age,
These sepulchres of cities, which excite
Sad wonder, and his yet surviving page
The moral lesson bears, drawn from such pilgrimage.

XLVI

That page is now before me, and on mine
His country's ruin added to the mass
Of perished states he mourned in their decline,
And I in desolation: all that *was*
Of then destruction *is:* and now, alas!
Rome—Rome imperial, bows her to the storm,
In the same dust and blackness, and we pass
The skeleton of her Titanic form,
Wrecks of another world, whose ashes still are warm.

XLVII

Yet, Italy, through every other land
Thy wrongs should ring, and shall, from side to side!
Mother of Arts, as once of arms; thy hand
Was then our guardian, and is still our guide!
Parent of our Religion! whom the wide
Nations have knelt to for the keys of heaven!
Europe, repentant of her parricide,
Shall yet redeem thee, and, all backward driven,
Roll the barbarian tide, and sue to be forgiven.

XLVIII

But Arno wins us to the fair white walls,
Where the Etrurian Athens claims and keeps
A softer feeling for her fairy halls,
Girt by her theatre of hills, she reaps
Her corn, and wine, and oil, and Plenty leaps
To laughing life, with her redundant horn.
Along the banks where smiling Arno sweeps
Was modern Luxury of Commerce born,
And buried Learning rose, redeemed to a new morn.

XLIX

There, too, the Goddess loves in stone, and fills
The air around with beauty; we inhale
The ambrosial aspect, which, beheld, instils
Part of its immortality; the veil
Of heaven is half undrawn; within the pale
We stand, and in that form and face behold
What Mind can make, when Nature's self would fail;
And to the fond idolaters of old
Envy the innate flash which such a soul could mould:

L

We gaze and turn away, and know not where,
Dazzled and drunk with beauty, till the heart
Reels with its fulness; there—for ever there—
Chained to the chariot of triumphal Art,
We stand as captives, and would not depart.

Away!—there need no words, nor terms precise,
The paltry jargon of the marble mart,
Where Pedantry gulls Folly—we have eyes:
Blood, pulse, and breast confirm the Dardan Shepherd's prize.

LI

Appearedst thou not to Paris in this guise?
Or the more deeply blest Anchises? or,
In all thy perfect goddess-ship, when lies
Before thee thy own vanquished Lord of War,
And gazing in thy face as toward a star,
Laid on thy lap, his eyes to thee upturn,
Feeding on thy sweet cheek! while thy lips are
With lava kisses melting while they burn,
Showered on his eyelids, brow, and mouth, as from an urn!

LII

Glowing, and circumfused in speechless love,
Their full divinity inadequate
That feeling to express, or to improve,
The gods become as mortals, and man's fate
Has moments like their brightest; but the weight
Of earth recoils upon us; let it go!
We can recall such visions, and create,
From what has been, or might be, things which grow
Into thy statue's form, and look like gods below.

LIII

I leave to learned fingers, and wise hands,
The artist and his ape, to teach and tell
How well his connoisseurship understands
The graceful bend, and the voluptuous swell:
Let these describe the undescribable:
I would not their vile breath should crisp the stream
Wherein that image shall for ever dwell:
The unruffled mirror of the loveliest dream
That ever left the sky on the deep soul to beam.

LIV

In Santa Croce's holy precincts lie
Ashes which make it holier, dust which is
Even in itself an immortality,
Though there were nothing save the past, and this,
The particle of those sublimities
Which have relapsed to chaos: here repose
Angelo's, Alfieri's bones, and his,
The starry Galileo, with his woes;
Here Machiavelli's earth returned to whence it rose.

LV

These are four minds, which, like the elements,
Might furnish forth creation:—Italy!
Time, which hath wronged thee with ten thousand rents

Of thine imperial garment, shall deny,
And hath denied, to every other sky,
Spirits which soar from ruin: thy decay
Is still impregnate with divinity,
Which gilds it with revivifying ray:
Such as the great of yore, Canova is to-day.

LVI

But where repose the all Etruscan three—
Dante and Petrarch, and scarce less than they,
The bard of Prose, creative spirit! he
Of the Hundred Tales of love—where did they lay
Their bones, distinguished from our common clay
In death as life? Are they resolved to dust,
And have their country's marbles nought to say?
Could not her quarries furnish forth one bust?
Did they not to her breast their filial earth entrust?

LVII

Ungrateful Florence! Dante sleeps afar,
Like Scipio, buried by the upbraiding shore:
Thy factions, in their worse than civil war,
Proscribed the bard whose name for evermore
Their children's children would in vain adore
With the remorse of ages: and the crown
Which Petrarch's laureate brow supremely wore,
Upon a far and foreign soil had grown,
His life, his fame, his grave, though rifled—not thine own.

LVIII

Boccaccio to his parent earth bequeathed
His dust,—and lies it not her great among,
With many a sweet and solemn requiem breathed
O'er him who formed the Tuscan's siren tongue?
That music in itself, whose sounds are song,
The poetry of speech? No;—even his tomb,
Uptorn, must bear the hyæna bigot's wrong,
No more amidst the meaner dead find room,
Nor claim a passing sigh, because it told for *whom!*

LIX

And Santa Croce wants their mighty dust;
Yet for this want more noted, as of yore
The Cæsar's pageant, shorn of Brutus' bust,
Did but of Rome's best Son remind her more:
Happier Ravenna! on thy hoary shore,
Fortress of falling empire! honored sleeps
The immortal exile:—Arqua, too, her store
Of tuneful relics proudly claims and keeps,
While Florence vainly begs her banished dead and weeps.

LX

What is her pyramid of precious stones?
Of porphyry, jasper, agate, and all hues
Of gem and marble, to encrust the bones
Of merchant-dukes? the momentary dews
Which, sparkling to the twilight stars, infuse

Freshness in the green turf that wraps the dead
Whose names are mausoleums of the Muse,
Are gently prest with far more reverent tread
Than ever placed the slab which paves the princely head.

LXI

There be more things to greet the heart and eyes
In Arno's dome of Art's most princely shrine,
Where Sculpture with her rainbow sister vies;
There be more marvels yet—but not for mine;
For I have been accustomed to entwine
My thoughts with Nature rather in the fields,
Than Art in galleries: though a work divine
Calls for my spirit's homage, yet it yields
Less than it feels, because the weapon which it wields

LXII

Is of another temper, and I roam
By Thrasimene's lake, in the defiles
Fatal to Roman rashness, more at home;
For there the Carthaginian's warlike wiles
Come back before me, as his skill beguiles
The host between the mountains and the shore,
Where Courage falls in her despairing files,
And torrents, swollen to rivers with their gore,
Reek through the sultry plain, with legends scattered o'er,

LXIII

Like to a forest felled by mountain winds;
And such the storm of battle on this day,
And such the frenzy, whose convulsion blinds
To all save carnage, that, beneath the fray,
An earthquake reeled unheededly away!
None felt stern Nature rocking at his feet,
And yawning forth a grave for those who lay
Upon their bucklers for a winding sheet;
Such is the absorbing hate when warring nations meet!

LXIV

The earth to them was as a rolling bark
Which bore them to eternity; they saw
The Ocean round, but had no time to mark
The motions of their vessel; Nature's law
In them suspended, recked not of the awe
Which reigns when mountains tremble, and the birds
Plunge in the clouds for refuge, and withdraw
From their down-toppling nests; and bellowing herds
Stumble o'er heaving plains, and man's dread hath no words.

LXV

Far other scene is Thrasimene now:
Her lake a sheet of silver, and her plain
Rent by no ravage save the gentle plough;
Her aged trees rise thick as once the slain

Lay where their roots are; but a brook hath ta'en—
A little rill of scanty stream and bed—
A name of blood from that day's sanguine rain;
And Sanguinetto tells ye where the dead
Made the earth wet, and turned the unwilling waters red.

LXVI

But thou, Clitumnus, in thy sweetest wave
Of the most living crystal that was e'er
The haunt of river nymph, to gaze and lave
Her limbs where nothing hid them, thou dost rear
Thy grassy banks whereon the milk-white steer
Grazes; the purest god of gentle waters,
And most serene of aspect, and most clear!
Surely that stream was unprofaned by slaughters,
A mirror and a bath for Beauty's youngest daughters!

LXVII

And on thy happy shore a Temple still,
Of small and delicate proportion, keeps,
Upon a mild declivity of hill,
Its memory of thee; beneath it sweeps
Thy current's calmness; oft from out it leaps
The finny darter with the glittering scales,
Who dwells and revels in thy glassy deeps;
While, chance, some scattered water-lily sails
Down where the shallower wave still tells its bubbling tales.

LXVIII

Pass not unblest the Genius of the place!
If through the air a zephyr more serene
Win to the brow, 'tis his; and if ye trace
Along his margin a more eloquent green,
If on the heart the freshness of the scene
Sprinkle its coolness, and from the dry dust
Of weary life a moment lave it clean
With Nature's baptism—'tis to him ye must
Pay orisons for this suspension of disgust.

LXIX

The roar of waters!—from the headlong height
Velino cleaves the wave-worn precipice;
The fall of waters! rapid as the light
The flashing mass foams shaking the abyss;
The hell of waters! where they howl and hiss,
And boil in endless torture; while the sweat
Of their great agony, wrung out from this
Their Phlegethon, curls round the rocks of jet
That gird the gulf around, in pitiless horror set,

LXX

And mounts in spray the skies, and thence again
Returns in an unceasing shower, which round,
With its unemptied cloud of gentle rain,
Is an eternal April to the ground,
Making it all one emerald:—how profound
The gulf! and how the giant element

From rock to rock leaps with delirious bound,
Crushing the cliffs, which, downward worn and rent
With his fierce footsteps, yield in chasms a fearful vent

LXXI

To the broad column which rolls on, and shows
More like the fountain of an infant sea
Torn from the womb of mountains by the throes
Of a new world, than only thus to be
Parent of rivers, which flow gushingly,
With many windings, through the vale:—Look back!
Lo! where it comes like an eternity,
As if to sweep down all things in its track,
Charming the eye with dread,—a matchless cataract,

LXXII

Horribly beautiful! but on the verge,
From side to side, beneath the glittering morn,
An Iris sits, amidst the infernal surge,
Like hope upon a death-bed, and, unworn
Its steady dyes, while all around is torn
By the distracted waters, bears serene
Its brilliant hues with all their beams unshorn:
Resembling, 'mid the torture of the scene,
Love watching Madness with unalterable mien.

LXXIII

Once more upon the woody Apennine,
The infant Alps, which—had I not before

Gazed on their mightier parents, where the pine
Sits on more shaggy summits, and where roar
The thundering lauwine—might be worshipped more;
But I have seen the soaring Jungfrau rear
Her never-trodden snow, and seen the hoar
Glaciers of bleak Mont Blanc both far and near,
And in Chimari heard the thunder-hills of fear,

LXXIV

Th' Acroceraunian mountains of old name;
And on Parnassus seen the eagles fly
Like spirits of the spot, as 'twere for fame,
For still they soared unutterably high:
I've looked on Ida with a Trojan's eye;
Athos, Olympus, Ætna, Atlas, made
These hills seem things of lesser dignity,
All, save the lone Soracte's height, displayed
Not *now* in snow, which asks the lyric Roman's aid

LXXV

For our remembrance, and from out the plain
Heaves like a long-swept wave about to break,
And on the curl hangs pausing. Not in vain
May he, who will, his recollections rake,
And quote in classic raptures, and awake
The hills with Latian echoes; I abhorred
Too much, to conquer for the poet's sake,
The drilled dull lesson, forced down word by word
In my repugnant youth, with pleasure to record

LXXVI

Aught that recalls the daily drug which turned
My sickening memory; and, though Time hath taught
My mind to meditate what then it learned,
Yet such the fixed inveteracy wrought
By the impatience of my early thought,
That, with the freshness wearing out before
My mind could relish what it might have sought
If free to choose, I cannot now restore
Its health; but what it then detested, still abhor.

LXXVII

Then farewell, Horace, whom I hated so,
Not for thy faults, but mine; it is a curse
To understand, not feel thy lyric flow,
To comprehend, but never love thy verse;
Although no deeper moralist rehearse
Our little life, nor bard prescribe his art,
Nor livelier Satirist the conscience pierce,
Awakening without wounding the touched heart,
Yet fare thee well—upon Soracte's ridge we part.

LXXVIII

Oh Rome, my country, City of the soul!
The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,
Lone mother of dead empires! and control
In their shut breasts their petty misery,
What are our woes and sufferance? Come and see
The cypress, hear the owl, and plod your way

O'er steps of broken thrones and temples, Ye!
Whose agonies are evils of a day—
A world is at our feet as fragile as our clay.

LXXIX

The Niobe of nations! there she stands
Childless and crownless, in her voiceless woe;
An empty urn within her withered hands,
Whose holy dust was scattered long ago;
The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now;
The very sepulchres lie tenantless
Of their heroic dwellers: dost thou flow,
Old Tiber! through a marble wilderness?
Rise, with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress.

LXXX

The Goth, the Christian, Time, War, Flood, and Fire,
Have dwelt upon the seven-hilled city's pride;
She saw her glories star by star expire,
And up the steep barbarian monarchs ride
Where the car climbed the Capitol; far and wide
Temple and tower went down, nor left a site:
Chaos of ruins! who shall trace the void,
O'er the dim fragments cast a lunar light,
And say, "here was," or "is," where all is doubly night?

LXXXI

The double night of ages, and of her,
Night's daughter, Ignorance, hath wrapt and wrap

All round us; we but feel our way to err:
The ocean hath his chart, the stars their map,
And Knowledge spreads them on her ample lap;
But Rome is as the desert, where we steer
Stumbling o'er recollections; now we clap
Our hands, and cry "Eureka! it is clear"—
When but some false mirage of ruin rises near.

LXXXII

Alas, the lofty city! and alas,
The trebly hundred triumphs! and the day
When Brutus made the dagger's edge surpass
The conqueror's sword in bearing fame away!
Alas, for Tully's voice, and Virgil's lay,
And Livy's pictured page! but these shall be
Her resurrection; all beside—decay.
Alas, for Earth, for never shall we see
That brightness in her eye she bore when Rome was free!

LXXXIII

Oh thou, whose chariot rolled on Fortune's wheel,
Triumphant Sylla! Thou, who didst subdue
Thy country's foes ere thou wouldst pause to feel
The wrath of thy own wrongs, or reap the due
Of hoarded vengeance till thine eagles flew
O'er prostrate Asia;—thou, who with thy frown
Annihilated senates—Roman, too,
With all thy vices, for thou didst lay down
With an atoning smile a more than earthly crown—

LXXXIV

The dictatorial wreath,—couldst thou divine
To what would one day dwindle that which made
Thee more than mortal? and that so supine
By aught than Romans Rome should thus be laid?
She who was named eternal, and arrayed
Her warriors but to conquer—she who veiled
Earth with her haughty shadow, and displayed,
Until the o'er-canopied horizon failed,
Her rushing winds—Oh, she who was Almighty hailed!

LXXXV

Sylla was first of victors; but our own,
The sagest of usurpers, Cromwell!—he
Too swept off senates while he hewed the throne
Down to a block—immortal rebel! See
What crimes it costs to be a moment free,
And famous through all ages! but beneath
His fate the moral lurks of destiny;
His day of double victory and death
Beheld him win two realms, and happier, yield his breath.

LXXXVI

The third of the same moon whose former course
Had all but crowned him, on the selfsame day
Deposed him gently from his throne of force,
And laid him with the earth's preceding clay.
And showed not Fortune thus how fame and sway,

And all we deem delightful, and consume
Our souls to compass through each arduous way,
Are in her eyes less happy than the tomb?
Were they but so in man's, how different were his doom!

LXXXVII

And thou, dread statue, yet existent in
The austerest form of naked majesty,
Thou who beheldest, 'mid the assassin's din,
At thy bathed base the bloody Cæsar lie,
Folding his robe in dying dignity,
An offering to thine altar from the queen
Of gods and men, great Nemesis! did he die,
And thou, too, perish, Pompey? have ye been
Victors of countless kings, or puppets of a scene?

LXXXVIII

And thou, the thunder-stricken nurse of Rome!
She-wolf! whose brazen-imaged dugs impart
The milk of conquest yet within the dome
Where, as a monument of antique art,
Thou standest:—Mother of the mighty heart,
Which the great founder sucked from thy wild teat,
Scorched by the Roman Jove's ethereal dart,
And thy limbs black with lightning—dost thou yet
Guard thine immortal cubs, nor thy fond charge forget?

LXXXIX

Thou dost; but all thy foster-babes are dead—
The men of iron; and the world hath reared
Cities from out their sepulchres: men bled
In imitation of the things they feared,
And fought and conquered, and the same course steered,
At apish distance; but as yet none have,
Nor could, the same supremacy have neared,
Save one vain man, who is not in the grave,
But, vanquished by himself, to his own slaves a slave—

XC

The fool of false dominion—and a kind
Of bastard Cæsar, following him of old
With steps unequal; for the Roman's mind
Was modelled in a less terrestrial mould,
With passions fiercer, yet a judgment cold,
And an immortal instinct which redeemed
The frailties of a heart so soft, yet bold,
Alcides with the distaff now he seemed
At Cleopatra's feet,—and now himself he beamed,

XCI

And came—and saw—and conquered! But the man
Who would have tamed his eagles down to flee,
Like a trained falcon, in the Gallic van,
Which he, in sooth, long led to victory,

With a deaf heart, which never seemed to be
A listener to itself, was strangely framed;
With but one weakest weakness—vanity,
Coquettish in ambition, still he aimed—
At what? can he avouch or answer what he claimed?

XCII

And would be all or nothing—nor could wait
For the sure grave to level him; few years
Had fixed him with the Cæsars in his fate,
On whom we tread: For *this* the conqueror rears
The arch of triumph; and for this the tears
And blood of earth flow on as they have flowed,
An universal deluge, which appears
Without an ark for wretched man's abode,
And ebbs but to reflow! Renew thy rainbow, God!

XCIII

What from this barren being do we reap?
Our senses narrow, and our reason frail,
Life short, and truth a gem which loves the deep,
And all things weighed in custom's falsest scale;
Opinion an omnipotence,—whose veil
Mantles the earth with darkness, until right
And wrong are accidents, and men grow pale
Lest their own judgments should become too bright,
And their free thoughts be crimes, and earth have too much light.

XCIV

And thus they plod in sluggish misery,
Rotting from sire to son, and age to age,
Proud of their trampled nature, and so die,
Bequeathing their hereditary rage
To the new race of inborn slaves, who wage
War for their chains, and rather than be free,
Bleed gladiator-like, and still engage
Within the same arena where they see
Their fellows fall before, like leaves of the same tree.

XCV

I speak not of men's creeds—they rest between
Man and his Maker—but of things allowed,
Averred, and known, and daily, hourly seen—
The yoke that is upon us doubly bowed,
And the intent of tyranny avowed,
The edict of Earth's rulers, who are grown
The apes of him who humbled once the proud,
And shook them from their slumbers on the throne;
Too glorious, were this all his mighty arm had done.

XCVI

Can tyrants but by tyrants conquered be,
And Freedom find no champion and no child
Such as Columbia saw arise when she
Sprung forth a Pallas, armed and undefiled?
Or must such minds be nourished in the wild,
Deep in the unpruned forest 'midst the roar

Of cataracts, where nursing Nature smiled
On infant Washington? Has Earth no more
Such seeds within her breast, or Europe no such shore?

XCVII

But France got drunk with blood to vomit crime,
And fatal have her Saturnalia been
To Freedom's cause, in every age and clime;
Because the deadly days which we have seen,
And vile Ambition, that built up between
Man and his hopes an adamantine wall,
And the base pageant last upon the scene,
Are grown the pretext for the eternal thrall
Which nips life's tree, and dooms man's worst—his second fall.

XCVIII

Yet, Freedom! yet thy banner, torn, but flying,
Streams like the thunder-storm *against* the wind;
Thy trumpet voice, though broken now and dying,
The loudest still the tempest leaves behind;
Thy tree hath lost its blossoms, and the rind,
Chopped by the axe, looks rough and little worth,
But the sap lasts,—and still the seed we find
Sown deep, even in the bosom of the North;
So shall a better spring less bitter fruit bring forth.

XCIX

There is a stern round tower of other days,
Firm as a fortress, with its fence of stone,

Such as an army's baffled strength delays,
Standing with half its battlements alone,
And with two thousand years of ivy grown,
The garland of eternity, where wave
The green leaves over all by time o'erthrown:—
What was this tower of strength? within its cave
What treasure lay so locked, so hid?—A woman's grave.

C

But who was she, the lady of the dead,
Tombed in a palace? Was she chaste and fair?
Worthy a king's or more—a Roman's bed?
What race of chiefs and heroes did she bear?
What daughter of her beauties was the heir?
How lived, how loved, how died she? Was she not
So honored—and conspicuously there,
Where meaner relics must not dare to rot,
Placed to commemorate a more than mortal lot?

CI

Was she as those who love their lords, or they
Who love the lords of others? such have been
Even in the olden time, Rome's annals say.
Was she a matron of Cornelia's mien,
Or the light air of Egypt's graceful queen,
Profuse of joy—or 'gainst it did she war,
Inveterate in virtue? Did she lean
To the soft side of the heart, or wisely bar
Love from amongst her griefs?—for such the affections are.

CII

Perchance she died in youth; it may be, bowed
With woes far heavier than the ponderous tomb
That weighed upon her gentle dust, a cloud
Might gather o'er her beauty, and a gloom
In her dark eye, prophetic of the doom
Heaven gives its favorites—early death; yet shed
A sunset charm around her, and illume
With hectic light, the Hesperus of the dead,
Of her consuming cheek the autumnal leaf-like red.

CIII

Perchance she died in age—surviving all,
Charms, kindred, children—with the silver gray
On her long tresses, which might yet recall,
It may be, still a something of the day
When they were braided, and her proud array
And lovely form were envied, praised, and eyed
By Rome—But whither would Conjecture stray?
Thus much alone we know—Metella died,
The wealthiest Roman's wife. Behold his love or pride!

CIV

I know not why—but standing thus by thee
It seems as if I had thine inmate known,
Thou Tomb, and other days come back to me
With recollected music, though the tone
Is changed and solemn, like a cloudy groan

Of dying thunder on the distant wind;
Yet could I seat me by this ivied stone
Till I had bodied forth the heated mind
Forms from the floating wreck which Ruin leaves behind;

CV

And from the planks, far shattered o'er the rocks,
Built me a little bark of hope, once more
To battle with the ocean and the shocks
Of the loud breakers, and the ceaseless roar
Which rushes on the solitary shore
Where all lies foundered that was ever dear:
But could I gather from the wave-worn store
Enough for my rude boat, where should I steer?
There woos no home, nor hope, nor life, save what is here.

CVI

Then let the winds howl on! their harmony
Shall henceforth be my music, and the night
The sound shall temper with the owlets' cry
As I now hear them, in the fading light
Dim o'er the bird of darkness' native site,
Answering each other on the Palatine,
With their large eyes, all glistening gray and bright,
And sailing pinions.—Upon such a shrine
What are our petty griefs?—let me not number mine.

CVII

Cypress and ivy, weed and wallflower grown
Matted and massed together, hillocks heaped
On what were chambers, arch crushed, column strown
In fragments, choked up vaults, and frescos steeped
In subterranean damps, where the owl peeped,
Deeming it midnight:—Temples, baths, or halls?
Pronounce who can; for all that Learning reaped
From her research hath been, that these are walls—
Behold the Imperial Mount! 'tis thus the mighty falls.

CVIII

There is the moral of all human tales;
'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past,
First freedom and then glory—when that fails,
Wealth, vice, corruption,—barbarism at last.
And History, with all her volumes vast,
Hath but *one* page—'tis better written here,
Where gorgeous Tyranny hath thus amassed
All treasures, all delights, that eye or ear,
Heart, soul could seek, tongue ask—Away with words—draw near,

CIX

Admire, exult, despise, laugh, weep,—for here
There is such matter for all feeling:—Man,
Thou pendulum betwixt a smile and tear!

Ages and realms are crowded in this span,
This mountain, whose obliterated plan
The pyramid of empires pinnacled,
Of Glory's gewgaws shining in the van
Till the sun's rays with added flame were filled!
Where are its golden roofs? where those who dared to build?

CX

Tully was not so eloquent as thou,
Thou nameless column with the buried base!
What are the laurels of the Cæsar's brow?
Crown me with ivy from his dwelling-place.
Whose arch or pillar meets me in the face,
Titus or Trajan's? No—'tis that of Time;
Triumph, arch, pillar, all he doth displace
Scoffing; and apostolic statues climb
To crush the imperial urn, whose ashes slept sublime,

CXI

Buried in air, the deep blue sky of Rome,
And looking to the stars: they had contained
A spirit which with these would find a home,
The last of those who o'er the whole earth reigned,
The Roman globe, for after none sustained,
But yielded back his conquests:—he was more
Than a mere Alexander, and unstained
With household blood and wine, serenely wore
His sovereign virtues—still we Trajan's name adore.

CXII

Where is the rock of Triumph, the high place
Where Rome embraced her heroes? where the steep
Tarpeian, fittest goal of Treason's race,
The promontory whence the Traitor's Leap
Cured all ambition? Did the conquerors heap
Their spoils here? Yes; and in yon field below
A thousand years of silenced factions sleep—
The Forum, where the immortal accents glow,
And still the eloquent air breathes—burns with Cicero!

CXIII

The field of freedom, faction, fame, and blood:
Here a proud people's passions were exhaled,
From the first hour of empire in the bud
To that when further worlds to conquer failed;
But long before had Freedom's face been veiled,
And Anarchy assumed her attributes;
Till every lawless soldier who assailed
Trod on the trembling senate's slavish mutes,
Or raised the venal voice of baser prostitutes.

CXIV

Then turn we to her latest tribune's name,
From her ten thousand tyrants turn to thee,
Redeemer of dark centuries of shame—
The friend of Petrarch—hope of Italy—
Rienzi, last of Romans! While the tree
Of freedom's withered trunk puts forth a leaf,

Even for thy tomb a garland let it be—
The forum's champion, and the people's chief—
Her new-born Numa thou—with reign, alas! too brief.

CXV

Egeria, sweet creation of some heart
Which found no mortal resting-place so fair
As thine ideal breast! whate'er thou art
Or wert,—a young Aurora of the air,
The nympholepsy of some fond despair;
Or, it might be, a beauty of the earth,
Who found a more than common votary there
Too much adoring; whatsoe'er thy birth,
Thou wert a beautiful thought, and softly bodied forth.

CXVI

The mosses of thy fountain still are sprinkled
With thine Elysian water-drops; the face
Of thy cave-guarded spring, with years unwrinkled,
Reflects the meek-eyed genius of the place,
Whose green, wild margin now no more erase
Art's works; nor must the delicate waters sleep,
Prisoned in marble; bubbling from the base
Of the cleft statue, with a gentle leap
The rill runs o'er, and round, fern, flowers, and ivy creep,

CXVII

Fantastically tangled; the green hills
Are clothed with early blossoms, through the grass

The quick-eyed lizard rustles, and the bills
Of summer-birds sing welcome as ye pass;
Flowers fresh in hue, and many in their class,
Implore the pausing step, and with their dyes
Dance in the soft breeze in a fairy mass;
The sweetness of the violet's deep blue eyes,
Kissed by the breath of heaven, seems colored by its skies.

CXVIII

Here didst thou dwell, in this enchanted cover,
Egeria, thy all heavenly bosom beating
For the far footsteps of thy mortal lover!
The purple Midnight veiled that mystic meeting
With her most starry canopy, and seating
Thyself by thine adorer, what befell?
This cave was surely shaped out for the greeting
Of an enamored Goddess, and the cell
Haunted by holy Love—the earliest oracle!

CXIX

And didst thou not, thy breast to his replying,
Blend a celestial with a human heart;
And Love, which dies as it was born, in sighing,
Share with immortal transports? could thine art
Make them indeed immortal, and impart
The purity of heaven to earthly joys,
Expel the venom and not blunt the dart—
The dull satiety which all destroys—
And root from out the soul the deadly weed which cloys.

CXX

Alas! our young affections run to waste,
Or water but the desert; whence arise
But weeds of dark luxuriance, tares of haste,
Rank at the core, though tempting to the eyes,
Flowers whose wild odors breathe but agonies,
And trees whose gums are poison; such the plants
Which spring beneath her steps as Passion flies
O'er the world's wilderness, and vainly pants
For some celestial fruit forbidden to our wants.

CXXI

Oh Love, no habitant of earth thou art—
An unseen seraph, we believe in thee,—
A faith whose martyrs are the broken heart,—
But never yet hath seen, nor e'er shall see
The naked eye, thy form, as it should be;
The mind hath made thee, as it peopled heaven,
Even with its own desiring phantasy,
And to a thought such shape and image given,
As haunts the unquenched soul—parched, wearied, wrung, and riven.

CXXII

Of its own beauty is the mind diseased,
And fevers into false creation. Where,
Where are the forms the sculptor's soul hath seized?
In him alone. Can nature show so fair?
Where are the charms and virtues which we dare

Conceive in boyhood and pursue as men,
The unreached Paradise of our despair,
Which o'er-informs the pencil and the pen,
And overpowers the page where it would bloom again?

CXXIII

Who loves, raves—'tis youth's frenzy—but the cure
Is bitterer still, as charm by charm unwinds
Which robed our idols, and we see too sure
Nor worth nor beauty dwells from out the mind's
Ideal shape of such; yet still it binds
The fatal spell, and still it draws us on,
Reaping the whirlwind from the oft-sown winds;
The stubborn heart, its alchemy begun,
Seems ever near the prize—wealthiest when most undone.

CXXIV

We wither from our youth, we gasp away—
Sick—sick; unfound the boon, unslaked the thirst,
Though to the last, in verge of our decay,
Some phantom lures, such as we sought at first—
But all too late,—so are we doubly curst.
Love, fame, ambition, avarice—'tis the same,
Each idle, and all ill, and none the worst—
For all are meteors with a different name,
And Death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame.

CXXV

Few—none—find what they love or could have loved.
Though accident, blind contact, and the strong
Necessity of loving, have removed
Antipathies—but to recur, ere long,
Envenomed with irrevocable wrong;
And Circumstance, that unspiritual god
And miscreator, makes and helps along
Our coming evils with a crutch-like rod,
Whose touch turns hope to dust,—the dust we all have trod.

CXXVI

Our life is a false nature: 'tis not in
The harmony of things,—this hard decree,
This uneradicable taint of sin,
This boundless upas, this all-blasting tree,
Whose root is earth, whose leaves and branches be
The skies which rain their plagues on men like dew—
Disease, death, bondage—all the woes we see,
And worse, the woes we see not—which throb through
The immedicable soul, with heart-aches ever new.

CXXVII

Yet let us ponder boldly—'tis a base
Abandonment of reason to resign
Our right of thought—our last and only place
Of refuge: this at least, shall still be mine.

Though from our birth the faculty divine
Is chained and tortured—cabined, cribbed, confined,
And bred in darkness, lest the truth should shine
Too brightly on the unprepared mind,
The beam pours in, for time and skill will couch the blind.

CXXVIII

Arches on arches! as it were that Rome,
Collecting the chief trophies of her line,
Would build up all her triumphs in one dome,
Her Coliseum stands; the moonbeams shine
As 'twere its natural torches, for divine
Should be the light which streams here, to illume
This long-explored but still exhaustless mine
Of contemplation; and the azure gloom
Of an Italian night, where the deep skies assume

CXXIX

Hues which have words, and speak to ye of heaven,
Floats o'er this vast and wondrous monument,
And shadows forth its glory. There is given
Unto the things of earth, which time hath bent,
A spirit's feeling, and where he hath leant
His hand, but broke his scythe, there is a power
And magic in the ruined battlement,
For which the palace of the present hour
Must yield its pomp, and wait till ages are its dower.

CXXX

Oh Time, the beautifier of the dead,
Adorner of the ruin, comforter
And only healer when the heart hath bled!—
Time! the corrector where our judgments err,
The test of truth, love—sole philosopher,
For all beside are sophists—from thy thrift,
Which never loses though it doth defer—
Time, the avenger! unto thee I lift
My hands, and eyes, and heart, and crave of thee a gift:

CXXXI

Amidst this wreck, where thou hast made a shrine
And temple more divinely desolate,
Among thy mightier offerings here are mine,
Ruins of years, though few, yet full of fate:
If thou hast ever seen me too elate,
Hear me not; but if calmly I have borne
Good, and reserved my pride against the hate
Which shall not whelm me, let me not have worn
This iron in my soul in vain—shall *they* not mourn?

CXXXII

And thou, who never yet of human wrong
Left the unbalanced scale, great Nemesis!
Here, where the ancient paid thee homage long—
Thou, who didst call the Furies from the abyss,
And round Orestes bade them howl and hiss
For that unnatural retribution—just,

Had it but been from hands less near—in this
Thy former realm, I call thee from the dust!
Dost thou not hear my heart?—Awake! thou shalt, and must.

CXXXIII

It is not that I may not have incurred
For my ancestral faults or mine the wound
I bleed withal, and had it been conferred
With a just weapon, it had flowed unbound;
But now my blood shall not sink in the ground:
To thee I do devote it—*thou* shalt take
The vengeance, which shall yet be sought and found
Which if *I* have not taken for the sake—
But let that pass—I sleep, but thou shalt yet awake.

CXXXIV

And if my voice break forth, 'tis not that now
I shrink from what is suffered: let him speak
Who hath beheld decline upon my brow,
Or seen my mind's convulsion leave it weak;
But on this page a record will I seek.
Not in the air shall these my words disperse,
Though I be ashes; a far hour shall wreak
The deep prophetic fulness of this verse,
And pile on human heads the mountains of my curse!

CXXXV

That curse shall be Forgiveness,—Have I not—
Hear me, my mother Earth! behold it, Heaven!—

Have I not had to wrestle with my lot?
Have I not suffered things to be forgiven?
Have I not had my brain seared, my heart riven,
Hopes sapped, name blighted, Life's life lied away?
And only not to desperation driven,
Because not altogether of such clay
As rots into the souls of those whom I survey.

CXXXVI

From mighty wrongs to petty perfidy
Have I not seen what human things could do?
From the loud roar of foaming calumny
To the small whisper of the as paltry few,
And subtler venom of the reptile crew,
The Janus glance of whose significant eye,
Learning to lie with silence, would *seem* true,
And without utterance, save the shrug or sigh,
Deal round to happy fools its speechless obloquy.

CXXXVII

But I have lived, and have not lived in vain:
My mind may lose its force, my blood its fire,
And my frame perish even in conquering pain;
But there is that within me which shall tire
Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire;
Something unearthly, which they deem not of,
Like the remembered tone of a mute lyre,
Shall on their softened spirits sink, and move
In hearts all rocky now the late remorse of love.

CXXXVIII

The seal is set.—Now welcome, thou dread power,
Nameless, yet thus omnipotent, which here
Walkest in the shadow of the midnight hour
With a deep awe, yet all distinct from fear!
Thy haunts are ever where the dead walls rear
Their ivy mantles, and the solemn scene
Derives from thee a sense so deep and clear
That we become a part of what has been,
And grow unto the spot, all-seeing but unseen.

CXXXIX

And here the buzz of eager nations ran,
In murmured pity, or loud-roared applause,
As man was slaughtered by his fellow man.
And wherefore slaughtered? wherefore, but because
Such were the bloody Circus' genial laws,
And the imperial pleasure.—Wherefore not?
What matters where we fall to fill the maws
Of worms,—on battle-plains or listed spot?
Both are but theatres where the chief actors rot.

CXL

I see before me the Gladiator lie:
He leans upon his hands—his manly brow
Consents to death, but conquers agony,
And his drooped head sinks gradually low—
And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow
From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,

Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now
The arena swims around him—he is gone,
Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hailed the wretch
who won.

CXLI

He heard it, but he heeeded not—his eyes
Were with his heart, and that was far away;
He recked not of the life he lost nor prize,
But where his rude hut by the Danube lay,
There were his young barbarians all at play,
There was their Dacian mother—he, their sire,
Butchered to make a Roman holiday—
All this rushed with his blood—Shall he expire
And unavenged? Arise! ye Goths, and glut your ire!

CXLII

But here, where Murder breathed her bloody steam;
And here, where buzzing nations choked the ways,
And roared or murmured like a mountain stream
Dashing or winding as its torrent strays;
Here, where the Roman millions' blame or praise
Was death or life, the playthings of a crowd,
My voice sounds much—and fall the stars' faint rays
On the arena void—seats crushed—walls bowed—
And galleries, where my steps seem echoes strangely
loud.

CXLIII

A ruin—yet what ruin!—from its mass
Walls, palaces, half-cities, have been reared;

Yet oft the enormous skeleton ye pass,
And marvel where the spoil could have appeared.
Hath it indeed been plundered, or but cleared?
Alas! developed, opens the decay,
When the colossal fabric's form is neared:
It will not bear the brightness of the day,
Which streams too much to all years, man, have reft away.

CXLIV

But when the rising moon begins to climb
Its topmost arch, and gently pauses there;
When the stars twinkle through the loops of time,
And the low night-breeze waves along the air
The garland-forest, which the gray walls wear,
Like laurels on the bald first Cæsar's head;
When the light shines serene but doth not glare,
Then in this magic circle raise the dead:
Heroes have trod this spot—'tis on their dust ye tread.

CXLV

"While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;
When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall,
And when Rome falls—the World." From our own land
Thus spake the pilgrims o'er this mighty wall
In Saxon times, which we are wont to call
Ancient; and these three mortal things are still
On their foundations, and unaltered all;

Rome and her Ruin past Redemption's skill,
The World, the same wide den—of thieves, or what ye will.

CXLVI

Simple, erect, severe, austere, sublime—
Shrine of all saints and temple of all gods,
From Jove to Jesus—spared and blessed by time;
Looking tranquillity, while falls or nods
Arch, empire, each thing round thee, and man plods
His way through thorns to ashes—glorious dome!
Shalt thou not last? Time's scythe and tyrants' rods
Shiver upon thee—sanctuary and home
Of art and piety—Pantheon!—pride of Rome!

CXLVII

Relic of nobler days, and noblest arts!
Despoiled yet perfect, with thy circle spreads
A holiness appealing to all hearts—
To art a model; and to him who treads
Rome for the sake of ages, Glory sheds
Her light through thy sole aperture; to those
Who worship, here are altars for their beads;
And they who feel for genius may repose
Their eyes on honored forms, whose busts around them close.

CXLVIII

There is a dungeon, in whose dim drear light
What do I gaze on? Nothing: Look again!

Two forms are slowly shadowed on my sight—
Two insulated phantoms of the brain:
It is not so; I see them full and plain—
An old man, and a female young and fair,
Fresh as a nursing mother, in whose vein
The blood is nectar:—But what doth she there,
With her unmantled neck, and bosom white and bare?

CXLIX

Full swells the deep pure fountain of young life,
Where *on* the heart and *from* the heart we took
Our first and sweetest nurture, when the wife,
Blest into mother, in the innocent look,
Or even the piping cry of lips that brook
No pain, and small suspense, a joy perceives
Man knows not, when from out its cradled nook
She sees her little bud put forth its leaves—
What may the fruit be yet?—I know not—Cain was Eve's.

CL

But here youth offers to old age the food,
The milk of his own gift: it is her sire
To whom she renders back the debt of blood
Born with her birth. No; he shall not expire
While in those warm and lovely veins the fire
Of health and holy feeling can provide
Great Nature's Nile, whose deep stream rises higher

Than Egypt's river: from that gentle side
Drink, drink and live, old man! Heaven's realm holds
no such tide.

CLI

The starry fable of the milky way
Has not thy story's purity: it is
A constellation of a sweeter ray,
And sacred Nature triumphs more in this
Reverse of her decree, than in the abyss
Where sparkle distant worlds:—Oh, holiest nurse!
No drop of that clear stream its way shall miss
To thy sire's heart, replenishing its source
With life, as our freed souls rejoin the universe.

CLII

Turn to the mole which Hadrian reared on high,
Imperial mimic of old Egypt's piles,
Colossal copyist of deformity,
Whose travelled phantasy from the far Nile's
Enormous model, doomed the artist's toils
To build for giants, and for his vain earth,
His shrunken ashes, raised his doom: How smiles
The gazer's eye with philosophic mirth,
To view the huge design which sprung from such a
birth!

CLIII

But lo! the dome—the vast and wondrous dome,
To which Diana's marvel was a cell—

Christ's mighty shrine above his martyr's tomb!
I have beheld the Ephesian's miracle;—
Its columns strew the wilderness, and dwell
The hyæna and the jackal in their shade;
I have beheld Sophia's bright roofs swell
Their glittering mass i' the sun, and have surveyed
Its sanctuary the while the usurping Moslem prayed;

CLIV

But thou, of temples old, or altars new,
Standest alone, with nothing like to thee—
Worthiest of God the holy and the true.
Since Zion's desolation, when that He
Forsook his former city, what could be,
Of earthly structures, in his honor piled,
Of a sublimer aspect? Majesty,
Power, Glory, Strength, and Beauty all are aisled
In this eternal ark of worship undefiled.

CLV

Enter: its grandeur overwhelms thee not;
And why? it is not lessened; but thy mind,
Expanded by the genius of the spot,
Has grown colossal, and can only find
A fit abode wherein appear enshrined
Thy hopes of immortality; and thou
Shalt one day, if found worthy, so defined,
See thy God face to face, as thou dost now
His Holy of Holies, nor be blasted by his brow.

CLVI

Thou movest, but increasing with the advance,
Like climbing some great Alp, which still doth rise,
Deceived by its gigantic elegance;
Vastness which grows, but grows to harmonize—
All musical in its immensities;
Rich marbles, richer painting—shrines where flame
The lamps of gold—and haughty dome which vies
In air with Earth's chief structures, though their frame
Sits on the firm-set ground, and this the clouds must claim.

CLVII

Thou seest not all; but piecemeal thou must break,
To separate contemplation, the great whole;
And as the ocean many bays will make
That ask the eye—so here condense thy soul
To more immediate objects, and control
Thy thoughts until thy mind hath got by heart
Its eloquent proportions, and unroll
In mighty graduations, part by part,
The glory which at once upon thee did not dart,

CLVIII

Not by its fault—but thine: Our outward sense
Is but of gradual grasp—and as it is
That what we have of feeling most intense
Outstrips our faint expression: even so this

Outshining and o'erwhelming edifice
Fools our fond gaze, and greatest of the great
Defies at first our Nature's littleness,
Till, growing with its growth, we thus dilate
Our spirits to the size of that they contemplate.

CLIX

Then pause, and be enlightened; there is more
In such a survey than the sating gaze
Of wonder pleased, or awe which would adore
The worship of the place, or the mere praise
Of art and its great masters, who could raise
What former time, nor skill, nor thought could plan;
The fountain of sublimity displays
Its depth, and thence may draw the mind of man
Its golden sands, and learn what great conceptions can.

CLX

Or, turning to the Vatican, go see
Laocoön's torture dignifying pain—
A father's love and mortal's agony
With an immortal patience blending. Vain
The struggle; vain, against the coiling strain
And gripe, and deepening of the dragon's grasp,
The old man's clench; the long envenomed chain
Rivets the living links,—the enormous asp
Enforces pang on pang, and stifles gasp on gasp.

CLXI

Or view the Lord of the unerring bow,
The God of life, and poesy, and light—
The sun in human limbs arrayed, and brow
All radiant from his triumph in the fight;
The shaft hath just been shot—the arrow bright
With an immortal's vengeance; in his eye
And nostril beautiful disdain, and might
And majesty, flash their full lightnings by,
Developing in that one glance the Deity.

CLXII

But in his delicate form—a dream of Love,
Shaped by some solitary nymph, whose breast
Longed for a deathless lover from above,
And maddened in that vision—are exprest
All that ideal beauty ever blessed
The mind with, in its most unearthly mood,
When each conception was a heavenly guest—
A ray of immortality—and stood,
Starlike, around, until they gathered to a god!

CLXIII

And if it be Prometheus stole from Heaven
The fire which we endure, it was repaid
By him to whom the energy was given
Which this poetic marble hath arrayed
With an eternal glory—which, if made
By human hands, is not of human thought;

And Time himself hath hallowed it, nor laid
One ringlet in the dust—nor hath it caught
A tinge of years, but breathes the flame with which
'twas wrought.

CLXIV

But where is he, the Pilgrim of my song,
The being who upheld it through the past?
Methinks he cometh late and tarries long.
He is no more—these breathings are his last;
His wanderings done, his visions ebbing fast,
And he himself is nothing:—if he was
Aught but a phantasy, and could be classed
With forms which live and suffer—let that pass—
His shadow fades away into Destruction's mass,

CLXV

Which gathers shadow, substance, life, and all
That we inherit in its mortal shroud,
And spreads the dim and universal pall
Through which all things grow phantoms; and the cloud
Between us sinks and all which ever glowed,
Till Glory's self is twilight, and displays
A melancholy halo scarce allowed
To hover on the verge of darkness; rays
Sadder than saddest night, for they distract the gaze,

CLXVI

And send us prying into the abyss,
To gather what we shall be when the frame
Shall be resolved to something less than this
Its wretched essence; and to dream of fame,
And wipe the dust from off the idle name
We never more shall hear,—but never more,
Oh, happier thought! can we be made the same:
It is enough in sooth that *once* we bore
These fardels of the heart—the heart whose sweat was gore.

CLXVII

Hark—forth from the abyss a voice proceeds,
A long low distant murmur of dread sound,
Such as arises when a nation bleeds
With some deep and immedicable wound;
Through storm and darkness yawns the rending ground,
The gulf is thick with phantoms, but the chief
Seems royal still, though with her head discrowned,
And pale, but lovely, with maternal grief
She clasps a babe, to whom her breast yields no relief.

CLXVIII

Scion of chiefs and monarchs, where art thou?
Fond hope of many nations, art thou dead?
Could not the grave forget thee, and lay low
Some less majestic, less beloved head?

In the sad midnight, while thy heart still bled,
The mother of a moment, o'er thy boy,
Death hushed that pang for ever: with thee fled
The present happiness and promised joy
Which filled the imperial isles so full it seemed to cloy.

CLXIX

Peasants bring forth in safety.—Can it be,
Oh thou that wert so happy, so adored,
Those who weep not for kings shall weep for thee,
And freedom's heart grown heavy, cease to hoard
Her many griefs for ONE! for she had poured
Her orisons for thee, and o'er thy head
Beheld her Iris.—Thou, too, lonely lord,
And desolate consort—vainly wert thou wed!
The husband of a year! the father of the dead!

CLXX

Of sackcloth was thy wedding garment made;
Thy bridal's fruit is ashes: in the dust
The fair haired Daughter of the Isles is laid,
The love of millions! How we did entrust
Futurity to her; and, though it must
Darken above our bones, yet fondly deemed
Our children should obey her child, and blessed
Her and her hoped-for seed, whose promise seemed
Like stars to shepherd's eyes:—'twas but a meteor beamed.

CLXXI

Woe unto us, not her; for she sleeps well:
The fickle reek of popular breath, the tongue
Of hollow counsel, the false oracle,
Which from the birth of monarchy hath rung
Its knell in princely ears, till the o'erstung
Nations have armed in madness, the strange fate
Which tumbles mightiest sovereigns, and hath flung
Against their blind omnipotence a weight
Within the opposing scale, which crushes soon or late,—

CLXXII

These might have been her destiny; but no,
Our hearts deny it: and so young, so fair,
Good without effort, great without a foe.
But now a bride and mother—and now *there!*
How many ties did that stern moment tear!
From thy Sire's to his humblest subject's breast
Is linked the electric chain of that despair,
Whose shock was as an earthquake's, and opprest
The land which loved thee so that none could love thee best.

CLXXIII

Lo, Nemi! navelled in the woody hills
So far, that the uprooting wind which tears
The oak from his foundation, and which spills
The ocean o'er its boundary, and bears
Its foam against the skies, reluctant spares

The oval mirror of thy glassy lake;
And calm as cherished hate, its surface wears
A deep cold settled aspect nought can shake,
All coiled into itself and round, as sleeps the snake.

CLXXIV

And near, Albano's scarce divided waves
Shine from a sister valley;—and afar
The Tiber winds, and the broad ocean laves
The Latian coast where sprung the Epic war,
"Arms and the man," whose re-ascending star
Rose o'er an empire:—but beneath thy right
Tully reposed from Rome;—and where yon bar
Of girdling mountains intercepts the sight
The Sabine farm was tilled, "the weary bard's" delight.

CLXXV

But I forget.—My Pilgrim's shrine is won,
And he and I must part,—so let it be,—
His task and mine alike are nearly done;
Yet once more let us look upon the sea;
The midland ocean breaks on him and me,
And from the Alban Mount we now behold
Our friend of youth, that Ocean, which when we
Beheld it last by Calpe's rock unfold
Those waves, we followed on till the dark Euxine rolled

CLXXVI

Upon the blue Symplegades: long years—
Long, though not very many—since have done

Their work on both; some suffering and some tears
Have left us nearly where we had begun:
Yet not in vain our mortal race hath run;
We have had our reward, and it is here,—
That we can yet feel gladdened by the sun,
And reap from earth, sea, joy almost as dear
As if there were no man to trouble what is clear.

CLXXVII

Oh! that the Desert were my dwelling-place,
With one fair Spirit for my minister,
That I might all forget the human race,
And, hating no one, love but only her!
Ye elements!—in whose ennobling stir
I feel myself exalted—can ye not
Accord me such a being? Do I err
In deeming such inhabit many a spot,
Though with them to converse can rarely be our lot?

CLXXVIII

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

CLXXIX

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.

CLXXX

His steps are not upon thy paths,—thy fields
Are not a spoil for him,—thou dost arise
And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
And sendest him shivering in thy playful spray
And howling, to his Gods, where haply lies
His petty hope in some near port or bay,
And dashest him again to earth:—there let him lay.

CLXXXI

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,
And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
Their clay creator the vain title take
Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war—

These are thy toys, and as the snowy flake,
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
Alike the Armada's pride or spoils of Trafalgar.

CLXXXII

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee—
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?
Thy waters washed them power while they were free,
And many a tyrant since; their shores obey
The stranger, slave, or savage! their decay
Has dried up realms to deserts:—not so thou;
Unchangeable, save to thy wild waves' play—
Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow—
Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

CLXXXIII

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,—
Calm or convulsed, in breeze or gale or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving—boundless, endless, and sublime,
The image of eternity, the throne
Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made; each zone
Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

CLXXXIV

And I have loved thee, Ocean! and my joy
Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be

Borne, like thy bubbles, onward: from a boy
I wantoned with thy breakers—they to me
Were a delight; and if the freshening sea
Made them a terror—'twas a pleasing fear,
For I was as it were a child of thee,
And trusted to thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane—as I do here.

CLXXXV

My task is done, my song has ceased, my theme
Has died into an echo; it is fit
The spell should break of this protracted dream.
The torch shall be extinguished which hath lit
My midnight lamp—and what is writ, is writ;
Would it were worthier! but I am not now
That which I have been—and my visions flit
Less palpably before me—and the glow
Which in my spirit dwelt is fluttering, faint, and low.

CLXXXVI

Farewell! a word that must be, and hath been—
A sound which makes us linger;—yet—farewell!
Ye! who have traced the pilgrim to the scene
Which is his last, if in your memories dwell
A thought which once was his, if on ye swell
A single recollection, not in vain
He wore his sandal-shoon, and scallop-shell;
Farewell! with *him* alone may rest the pain,
If such there were—with *you*, the moral of his strain.

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON

I

My hair is gray, but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears:
My limbs are bow'd, though not with toil,
But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
And mine has been the fate of those
To whom the goodly earth and air
Are bann'd, and barr'd—forbidden fare;
But this was for my father's faith
I suffer'd chains and courted death;
That father perish'd at the stake
For tenets he would not forsake;
And for the same his lineal race
In darkness found a dwelling-place;
We were seven—who now are one,
Six in youth, and one in age,
Finish'd as they had begun,
Proud of Persecution's rage;
One in fire, and two in field,
Their belief with blood have seal'd;
Dying as their father died,
For the God their foes denied;

Three were in a dungeon cast,
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

II

There are seven pillars of Gothic mould,
In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,
There are seven columns, massy and gray,
Dim with a dull imprison'd ray,
A sunbeam which hath lost its way,
And through the crevice and the cleft
Of the thick wall is fallen and left;
Creeping o'er the floor so damp,
Like a marsh's meteor lamp:
And in each pillar there is a ring,
And in each ring there is a chain;
That iron is a cankering thing,
For in these limbs its teeth remain,
With marks that will not wear away,
Till I have done with this new day,
Which now is painful to these eyes,
Which have not seen the sun to rise
For years—I cannot count them o'er,
I lost their long and heavy score
When my last brother droop'd and died,
And I lay living by his side.

III

They chain'd us each to a column stone,
And we were three—yet, each alone:

We could not move a single pace,
We could not see each other's face,
But with that pale and livid light
That made us strangers in our sight:
And thus together—yet apart,
Fetter'd in hand, but joined in heart,
'Twas still some solace, in the dearth
Of the pure elements of earth,
To hearken to each other's speech,
And each turn comforter to each
With some new hope, or legend old,
Or song heroically bold;
But even these at length grew cold.
Our voices took a dreary tone,
An echo of the dungeon-stone,
A grating sound—not full and free
As they of yore were wont to be:
It might be fancy—but to me
They never sounded like our own.

IV

I was the eldest of the three,
And to uphold and cheer the rest
I ought to do—and did—my best
And each did well in his degree.
The youngest, whom my father loved,
Because our mother's brow was given
To him—with eyes as blue as heaven,
For him my soul was sorely moved:

And truly might it be distress'd
To see such bird in such a nest;
For he was beautiful as day—
(When day was beautiful to me
As to young eagles, being free)—
A polar day, which will not see
A sunset till its summer's gone,
Its sleepless summer of long light,
The snow-clad offspring of the sun!
And thus he was as pure and bright,
And in his natural spirit gay,
With tears for nought but others' ills,
And then they flow'd like mountain rills,
Unless he could assuage the woe
Which he abhorr'd to view below.

V

The other was as pure of mind,
But form'd to combat with his kind;
Strong in his frame, and of a mood
Which 'gainst the world in war had stood,
And perish'd in the foremost rank
With joy:—but not in chains to pine:
His spirit wither'd with their clank,
I saw it silently decline—
And so perchance in sooth did mine:
But yet I forced it on to cheer
Those relics of a home so dear.
He was a hunter of the hills,

Had follow'd there the deer and wolf;
To him this dungeon was a gulf,
And fetter'd feet the worst of ills.

VI

Lake Leman lies by Chillon's walls:
A thousand feet in depth below
Its massy waters meet and flow;
Thus much the fathom-line was sent
From Chillon's snow-white battlement,
Which round about the wave enthrals:
A double dungeon wall and wave
Have made—and like a living grave
Below the surface of the lake
The dark vault lies wherein we lay,
We heard it ripple night and day;
Sounding o'er our heads it knock'd;
And I have felt the winter's spray
Wash through the bars when winds were high
And wanton in the happy sky;
And then the very rock hath rock'd,
And I have felt it shake, unshock'd,
Because I could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free.

VII

I said my nearer brother pined,
I said his mighty heart declined,
He loathed and put away his food;

It was not that 'twas coarse and rude,
For we were used to hunter's fare,
And for the like had little care:
The milk drawn from the mountain goat
Was changed for water from the moat,
Our bread was such as captives' tears
Have moisten'd many a thousand years,
Since man first pent his fellow-men
Like brutes within an iron den;
But what were these to us or him?
These wasted not his heart or limb;
My brother's soul was of that mould
Which in a palace had grown cold,
Had his free breathing been denied
The range of the steep mountain's side;
But why delay the truth?—he died.
I saw, and could not hold his head,
Nor reach his dying hand—nor dead—
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.
He died—and they unlock'd his chain,
And scoop'd for him a shallow grave
Even from the cold earth of our cave.
I begg'd them, as a boon, to lay
His corse in dust whereon the day
Might shine—it was a foolish thought,
But then within my brain it wrought,
That even in death his freeborn breast
In such a dungeon could not rest.
I might have spared my idle prayer—

They coldly laugh'd—and laid him there:
The flat and turfless earth above
The being we so much did love;
His empty chain above it leant,
Such murder's fitting monument!

VIII

But he, the favorite and the flower,
Most cherish'd since his natal hour,
His mother's image in fair face,
The infant love of all his race,
His martyr'd father's dearest thought,
My latest care, for whom I sought
To hoard my life, that his might be
Less wretched now, and one day free;
He, too, who yet had held untired
A spirit natural or inspired—
He, too, was struck, and day by day
Was wither'd on the stalk away.
Oh God! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing
In any shape, in any mood:
I've seen it rushing forth in blood,
I've seen it on the breaking ocean
Strive with a swoln convulsive motion,
I've seen the sick and ghastly bed
Of sin delirious with its dread:
But these were horrors—this was woe
Unmix'd with such—but sure and slow:
He faded, and so calm and meek,

So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
So tearless, yet so tender—kind,
And grieved for those he left behind;
With all the while a cheek whose bloom
Was as a mockery of the tomb,
Whose tints as gently sunk away
As a departing rainbow's ray—
An eye of most transparent light,
That almost made the dungeon bright,
And not a word of murmur—not
A groan o'er his untimely lot,—
A little talk of better days,
A little hope my own to raise,
For I was sunk in silence—lost
In this last loss, of all the most;
And then the sighs he would suppress
Of fainting nature's feebleness,
More slowly drawn, grew less and less:
I listen'd, but I could not hear—
I call'd, for I was wild with fear;
I knew 'twas hopeless, but my dread
Would not be thus admonishéd;
I call'd and thought I heard a sound—
I burst my chain with one strong bound,
And rush'd to him:—I found him not,
I only stirred in this black spot,
I only lived—*I* only drew
The accursed breath of dungeon-dew;
The last—the sole—the dearest link
Between me and the eternal brink,

Which bound me to my failing race,
Was broken in this fatal place.
One on the earth, and one beneath—
My brothers—both hath ceased to breathe:
I took that hand which lay so still,
Alas! my own was full as chill;
I had not strength to stir, or strive,
But felt that I was still alive—
A frantic feeling, when we know
That what we love shall ne'er be so.
I know not why
I could not die,
I had no earthly hope but faith,
And that forbade a selfish death.

IX

What next befell me then and there
I know not well—I never knew—
First came the loss of light, and air,
And then of darkness too:
I had no thought, no feeling—none—
Among the stones I stood a stone,
And was, scarce conscious what I wist,
As shrubless crags within the mist;
For all was blank, and bleak, and gray;
It was not night—it was not day;
It was not even the dungeon-light,
So hateful to my heavy sight,
But vacancy absorbing space,

And fixedness—without a place:
There were no stars—no earth—no time—
No check—no change—no good—no crime—
But silence, and a stirless breath
Which neither was of life nor death;
A sea of stagnant idleness,
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless!

X

A light broke in upon my brain,—
It was the carol of a bird;
It ceased, and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard,
And mine was thankful till my eyes
Ran over with the glad surprise,
And they that moment could not see
I was the mate of misery;
But then by dull degrees came back
My senses to their wonted track;
I saw the dungeon walls and floor
Close slowly round me as before,
I saw the glimmer of the sun
Creeping as it before had done,
But through the crevice where it came
That bird was perch'd, as fond and tame,
And tamer than upon the tree;
A lovely bird with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
And seem'd to say them all for me!

I never saw its like before,
I ne'er shall see its likeness more:
It seem'd like me to want a mate,
But was not half so desolate,
And it was come to love me when
None lived to love me so again,
And cheering from my dungeon's brink,
Had brought me back to feel and think.
I know not if it late were free,
Or broke its cage to perch on mine,
But knowing well captivity,
Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine!
Or if it were, in wingéd guise,
A visitant from Paradise;
For—Heaven forgive that thought! the while
Which made me both to weep and smile;
I sometimes deem'd that it might be
My brother's soul come down to me;
But then at last away it flew,
And then 'twas mortal—well I knew,
For he would never thus have flown,
And left me twice so doubly lone,—
Lone—as the corse within its shroud,
Lone—as a solitary cloud,
A single cloud on a sunny day,
While all the rest of heaven is clear,
A frown upon the atmosphere,
That hath no business to appear
When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

XI

A kind of change came in my fate,
My keepers grew compassionate;
I know not what had made them so,
They were inured to sights of woe,
But so it was:—my broken chain
With links unfasten'd did remain,
And it was liberty to stride
Along my cell from side to side,
And up and down, and then athwart,
And tread it over every part;
And round the pillars one by one,
Returning where my walk begun,
Avoiding only, as I trod,
My brothers' graves without a sod;
For if I thought with heedless tread
My step profaned their lowly bed,
My breath came gaspingly and thick,
And my crush'd heart felt blind and sick.

XII

I made a footing in the wall,
It was not therefrom to escape,
For I had buried one and all
Who loved me in a human shape;
And the whole earth would henceforth be
A wider prison unto me:
No child—no sire—no kin had I,
No partner in my misery;

I thought of this, and I was glad,
For thought of them had made me mad;
But I was curious to ascend
To my barr'd windows, and to bend
Once more, upon the mountains high,
The quiet of a loving eye.

XIII

I saw them—and they were the same,
They were not changed like me in frame;
I saw their thousand years of snow
On high—their wide long lake below,
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow;
I heard the torrents leap and gush
O'er channell'd rock and broken bush;
I saw the white-wall'd distant town,
And whiter sails go skimming down;
And then there was a little isle,
Which in my very face did smile,
The only one in view;
A small green isle, it seem'd no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,
But in it there were three tall trees,
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing,
Of gentle breath and hue.
The fish swam by the castle wall,
And they seem'd joyous each and all;

The eagle rode the rising blast,
Methought he never flew so fast
As then to me he seem'd to fly,
And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled—and would fain
I had not left my recent chain;
And when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode
Fell on me as a heavy load;
It was as is a new-dug grave,
Closing o'er one we sought to save,—
And yet my glance, too much oppress'd,
Had almost need of such a rest.

XIV

It might be months, or years, or days,
I kept no count—I took no note,
I had no hope my eyes to raise,
And clear them of their dreary mote;
At last men came to set me free,
I ask'd not why, and reck'd not where,
It was at length the same to me,
Fetter'd or fetterless to be,
I learn'd to love despair.
And thus when they appear'd at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,
These heavy walls to me had grown
A hermitage—and all my own!
And half I felt as they were come

To tear me from a second home:
With spiders I had friendship made,
And watch'd them in their sullen trade,
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,
And why should I feel less than they?
We were all inmates of one place,
And I, the monarch of each race,
Had power to kill—yet, strange to tell!
In quiet we had learn'd to dwell—
My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us what we are:—even I
Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.

SONNET ON CHILLON

Eternal Spirit of the chainless Mind!
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art,
For there thy habitation is the heart—
The heart which love of thee alone can bind;
And when thy sons to fetters are consigned—
To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.
Chillon! thy prison is a holy place,
And thy sad floor an altar—for 'twas trod,
Until his very steps have left a trace
Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
By Bonnivard!—May none those marks efface!
For they appeal from tyranny to God.

NOTES

Black figures indicate pages; Roman numerals indicate stanzas; Arabic indicate lines.

CHILDE HAROLD

The pupil should read the first three cantos of *Childe Harold*, of which the fourth canto is presented here for study. If that is impossible, the following paragraphs should be noted by way of introduction to Canto IV.

Byron did not intend to publish the first two cantos, which were written hastily as a sort of journal of his first trip to the continent. The first canto deals with his visit to Spain, toward which the eyes of the world were then turned, and the second with Greece. These two cantos were written soon after the scenes described in them were witnessed and, hence, while they were fresh in the poet's mind.

The third canto, written in 1816, seven years after the second, has as its chief themes " The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo! " Napoleon, the Rhine, the Rhone, Switzerland, and the Alps. It closes with tender and loving words to his daughter, who never knew of his love for her until she read the poem after his death. Canto III is considered by many the most beautiful of all, and no description of it can take the place of reading it.

I. Throughout the study of the poem, you should try to imagine that you can see what the poet saw, thus securing the local point of view; then, thinking the poet's thoughts as he conjured up the past, you will be able, in a measure, with the aid of the historical allusions, to get the poet's mental point of view. Keep constantly in mind the fact that Byron seeks to suggest things rather than to relate them in detail, and also that the greatest appeal is to the imagination. This will help you to live among the scenes described and to make the study of the poem a real experience, rather than a task.

The first eighteen stanzas deal with Venice, whose history so impressed Byron that he also wrote, under its inspiration, the " Ode on Venice," " Beppo—a Venetian Story," and the two

dramas, *Marino Faliero* and *The Two Foscari*. The "Ode on Venice," should be read.

21, 1. The Bridge of Sighs connects the Ducal Palace with the State Prison across the canal and was so named because the condemned crossed it to meet their doom. Byron's words in *The*

ITALY

Two Foscari, "which few repass," are significant. It was an appropriate place from which to contemplate the past of the city.

8. **The winged Lion.** The Lion of St. Mark and the emblem of the city.

9. **Her hundred isles.** Venice is built upon three large and 114 small islands, which are connected by 378 bridges.

10. **A sea Cybele.** Cybele was the mother of the Olympian gods. She was represented as wearing a turreted crown, and was usually enthroned between two lions.

15. Why was the East called " exhaustless "?

22, 19. Tasso's echoes are no more. Torquato Tasso (1544–95) was ranked next to Dante among the Italian epic poets. The reference is to the famous song of the gondoliers from his *Jerusalem Delivered.*

24. **But nature doth not die.** When Byron contemplates the ruins of what man has built, he turns to nature with a sense of relief. Be on the alert for evidences of this attitude in Byron's other writings, in Arnold, Tennyson, and others.

25. **How Venice once was dear.** Read, in proof of this statement, Wordsworth's sonnet " On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic."

27. **The masque of Italy.** A carnival; not the masque that is a form of the drama.

31. **Dogeless.** The office of doge, the highest in the Venetian republic, was abolished in 1797 when Napoleon conquered the city.

33. **Rialto.** The famous bridge, and for a long time the only bridge, across the Grand Canal. It takes its name from one of the islands. Near it was the Merchants' Exchange of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice.*

34. **Pierre.** A character in Otway's *Venice Preserved.* What does Byron mean by saying that these characters are " the keystones of the arch "?

V—X. These six stanzas develop the thought touched upon in the last lines of stanza iv, and furnish one of the numerous passages in which the poet stops to reflect upon what he has seen. He becomes somewhat didactic at first, and then drifts, as was natural with him, into autobiographical musings. Study these passages carefully, for they reveal much concerning Byron's mind and character. Byron's opinions should always be weighed, for some will be found wanting.

His reference to " these beings of the mind " reveals one of his characteristic moods—he was a man of many moods—and shows how characters in books and the people of his own dreams affected him. Ponder over stanzas v and vi until you feel that you have mastered their contents.

23, 46. Why does Byron designate youth and age as periods when these creatures of the mind furnish a refuge?

VII. What do you conjecture Byron was thinking of when, in this stanza, he vaguely recalled some of the realities which " outshine our fairyland," of which he says, " They came like truth, and disappeared like dreams "? Was it some lost ideal? Read Tennyson's " Merlin and the Gleam," and then answer the above question.

64. **I've taught me other tongues.** Byron spoke Italian like a native and was moderately skilled in French, German, Latin, and Greek. Byron was cosmopolitan—at home everywhere. Yet, in spite of all that his country had done to make him hate her, he here shows great depth of patriotic feeling. Though he often said he would never return to England, he as often expressed a longing to see his native land again.

25, 91. Spouseless Adriatic. The poet now returns to his objective consideration of Venice. While Venice maintained her maritime supremacy, it was the custom of the doge, annually on Ascension Day, to marry the Adriatic by throwing a ring into the sea from his state barge *Bucentaur*. Some relics of this vessel are still preserved at Venice.

95. **St. Mark.** The patron saint of Venice. The saint still "sees" the emblem, but an empty, powerless one.

97. **The proud Place where an Emperor sued.** The Place was in front of the cathedral where Frederic Barbarossa (referred to as the Swabian in the next stanza), who had opposed the papacy, was forced to yield to Pope Alexander III.

100. **Austrian.** Napoleon took Venice from Austria in 1805. In 1814 it was restored to her, but in 1866 it was ceded to Italy.

106. **Lauwine.** A corrupted form of the German word for *avalanche*.

107. **Blind old Dandolo!** He became doge in 1192, at the age of eighty-five. When Dandolo took Constantinople, at the age of ninety-seven, he himself led the attack.

109. **Steeds of brass.** Brought from Constantinople by Dandolo.

111. **Doria's menace.** When the Venetians were overcome by the Genoese in 1379, they sent word to their conquerors promising to agree to any terms provided they were allowed their independence. Pietro Doria, the Genoese commander, replied: "On God's faith, Gentlemen of Venice, ye shall have no peace . . . until we have first put a rein upon these unbridled horses of yours, that are upon the porch of your evangelist St. Mark."

113. **Thirteen hundred years of freedom.** To be exact 1,365 years, for Venice was founded in 452 when Attila led the Huns into Italy. Byron also speaks of the same long period in his "Ode on Venice,"

> Thirteen hundred years
> Of wealth and glory turned to dust and tears.

114. **Sinks, like a sea-weed.** This may refer to the settling of the Venetian buildings, which are on piles, or it may be that Byron

used the words metaphorically and referred to the deterioration of the people. Shelley, however, undoubtedly meant himself to be taken literally in his "Lines Written among the Euganean Hills," in which he says:

> Sun-girt city! thou hast been
> Ocean's child, and then his queen;
> Now is come a darker day,
> And thou soon must be his prey.

26. 118. **A new Tyre.** The old Tyre, according to the prophet Ezekiel, was built upon islands and was, like Venice, a beautiful city. See *Ezekiel* xxvi–xxviii.

120. **The Planter of the Lion.** Byron has a note on this nickname for the Venetians, and derives the word *pantaloon* from Piantaleone. St. Panteleone was a patron saint of Venice and his name came to be a nickname for a Venetian.

123. **Europe's bulwark.** Wordsworth calls Venice "the safeguard of the West."

124. **Troy's rival, Candia.** Candia was a town on the island of Crete. It could be regarded as the rival of Troy only in that it held out against its enemies for twenty-four years, whereas the siege of Troy lasted but ten.

125. **Lepanto's fight.** Referring to the victory of the Venetians over the Turks in the Bay of Lepanto in 1571.

XV. The poet has selected details and arranged them so as to make a very effective stanza. The "sumptuous pile" is the Ducal Palace and "foreign aspects" indicates the Austrian soldiers.

27, 138. **Redemption rose up in the Attic Muse.** Byron cites the story from Plutarch's *Life of Nicias*. When the Athenians were forced to yield at Syracuse, 413 B. C., Plutarch says that some of the Athenian captives were granted their freedom because they recited passages from Euripides. Note the vividness of Byron's description, which he secures by the use of the present tense.

XVII. In this stanza Byron applies to Venice the illustration given in the preceding stanza. *Albion*, "the white island," was the earliest name of England and by that name, according to tradition, she was designated to Brutus by Diana. Byron is again didactic, calling his country's attention to the fact that she might fall in spite of her "watery wall."

XVIII. This stanza concludes Byron's reference to Venice. He shows how his love had dated from boyhood, when he had probably read Otway's *Venice Preserved*, Mrs. Radcliffe's romance *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Schiller's *Ghost-seer*, and Shake-

speare's *The Merchant of Venice*. His love was not impaired, in spite of the changes he found in Venice.

28, XIX. In this stanza the poet again becomes subjective and speaks of what the imagination does for him. He gives in an echo, as it were, one more loving tribute to Venice, which he leaves with regret.

Byron's intimate friend and fellow poet, Shelley, gives, in "Euganean Hills," his testimony of what Venice was to Byron,—

> That a tempest-cleaving swan
> Of the songs of Albion,
> Driven from his ancestral streams
> By the might of evil dreams,
> Found a nest in thee; and Ocean
> Welcomed him with such emotion
> That its joy grew his, and sprung
> From his lips like music flung
> O'er a mighty thunder-fit,
> Chastening terror:—what tho' yet
> Poesy's unfailing River
> Which thro' Albion winds forever
> Lashing with melodious wave
> Many a sacred poet's grave,
> Mourn its latest nursling fled?

XX–XXIV. In this group of five stanzas Byron philosophizes upon life and states his conclusions concerning suffering and sorrow. Study all he says, but do not accept his conclusions. Your own may be different and better. Some of Byron's statements are sound and worthy of acceptance; some are not. Try to discriminate. As the tannen, a kind of fir-tree, may grow to giant proportions where nothing else can live, so the mind may develop. As the beasts learn to endure, so should we, "of nobler clay."

29, Stanza XXII carries into higher regions the thought of the two preceding stanzas. Suffering destroys us or is destroyed by us "according as [our] souls were formed to sink or climb."

Stanza XXIII is especially Byronic. Can you tell why? Note that Byron states indisputable facts, but that his inferences are often tainted with his own misanthropy. There were many spectres "whom no exorcism [could] bind" for Byron, as for many others; but not for all,—not for Browning, for instance.

E. H. Coleridge calls attention to Browning's words in his "Bishop Bloughram's Apology," and they are in accord with Byron's sentiments in this passage. But they do not express Browning's philosophy.

Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul.

Browning's conception of life was that a real victory is possible, and he trusts that it will come. Hear him in "Rabbi Ben Ezra:"

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made.
. . . . . .
Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit, nor stand, but go!
Be our joy three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!
. . . . . .
'Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do!'
. . . . . .
So, take and use Thy work,
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!

If in the midst of Byron's beautiful descriptions we become too conscious of his pessimism and misanthropy, it is well to turn to other poets, like Browning and Tennyson, whose sane optimism is a sufficient corrective. Let Byron give you all he can; if he sometimes fails to give all you demand, remember that others may supplement him without detracting from his own message.

30, XXV. Note how Byron checks himself and returns from things abstract to the consideration of Italy in the concrete. He gives a general program of what he intends to accomplish and, incidentally, pays a beautiful tribute to Italy,

Wherein were cast the heroic and the free,
The beautiful, the brave, the lords of earth and sea.

But even here he cannot refrain from speaking of himself disparagingly as a "ruin amidst ruins." Why do you think he did it?

XXVI. Note, in this stanza, the elements of beauty amid the ruins.

31. XXVII–XXIX. These three stanzas are an exquisite picture of an Italian sunset and should be read and re-read for the sake of the beauty of the scene as you see it through the poet's eyes. Note the sensory appeal, the delicate word painting, and the skill with which we are made to see " the one vast Iris of the West " fade into gray.

32, XXX–XXXIV. These stanzas are devoted to Petrarch, the great Italian lyric poet and sonneteer whose tomb inspires Byron's reflections.

262. **There is a tomb in Arqua;—reared in air.** Arqua is a small village thirteen miles southwest of Padua, where Petrarch died in 1374. His sarcophagus is said to be " reared in air," because it is supported by pillars of red marble. (Look up the names Petrarch and Laura in the *Century Dictionary* or in an encyclopedia.)

264. **Laura's lover.** Laura, whom Petrarch loved, was a French woman residing at Avignon.

266. **He arose to raise a language.** Petrarch and Boccaccio practically created the Italian language, much as Chaucer created the English.

267. **His land reclaim.** Petrarch sought, through Rienzi, to aid the cause of freedom in Italy.

269. **Watering the tree.** The laurel, dear to Petrarch because it reminded him of Laura.

XXXI. The simple tomb of Petrarch is more appropriate than a great monument would be. Milton's epitaph for Shakespeare is:

> What needs my Shakespeare for his honored bones
> The labor of an age in pilèd stones?

33. XXXIII, XXXIV. Since Petrarch died in a quiet place, Byron enlarges upon the thought suggested. Here again we see evidences of the poet's tendency toward brooding, for he speaks of some

> Deeming themselves predestined to a doom,
> Which is not of the pangs that pass away.

34, XXXV–XXXIX. These stanzas deal with the town of Ferrara and the poet Tasso.

311. **Este.** The house of Este was one of the most famous of the old princely families of Italy. See Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered.*

314, 315. **Those who wore the wreath which Dante's brow,** etc. Tasso and Ariosto.

316. **And Tasso is their glory and their shame.** It is believed that Alphonso II had Tasso confined as a lunatic in a narrow cell because of his political intrigues and of his love for Alphonso's sister. Later authorities contend, however, that the poet was actually insane. Whatever the truth, Byron has here, and in his "Lament of Tasso," written nobly according to what he believed the truth.

35, 339. **Cruscan squire.** This was the Academy della Crusca of Florence, whose object was the purifying of the national language. It condemned Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered.*

340. **Boileau.** The famous French critic who attacked the public for liking Tasso.

342. **Monotony in wire.** In this way Byron refers to the heroic couplet which Boileau used.

36, XL, XLI. These two stanzas give Byron's appreciation of Ariosto.

354. **Bards of Hell and Chivalry.** Dante and Ariosto.

357. **The southern Scott.** Byron thus designates Ariosto, and it is a high tribute, for Byron greatly admired Scott. The Ariosto of the North (l. 359) is, of course, Scott.

364. What is "the true laurel-wreath which Glory weaves"?

XLII, XLIII. The Apostrophe to Italy. These stanzas, Byron tells us, are a free translation of the famous sonnet by Filicaja.

37, 389. **The Roman friend of Rome's least-mortal mind.** Servius Sulpicius wrote to Cicero to console him at the time of the death of his daughter Tullia. Servius wrote from Athens, and Byron, returning from Constantinople, went over the same route which Servius had taken. Concerning it he writes: "On my return from Asia as I was sailing from Ægina towards Megara, I began to contemplate the prospects of the countries around me: Ægina was behind, Megara before me; Piræus on the right, Corinth on the left; all which towns, once famous and flourishing, now lie overturned and buried in their ruins. Upon this sight, I could not but think presently within myself: Alas! how do we poor mortals fret and vex ourselves if any of our friends happen to die or be killed, whose life is yet so short, when the carcasses of so many noble cities lie here exposed before me in one view."

38, 406. **That page is now,** etc. The page, also referred to in l. 404 as "his yet surviving page, was from Cicero's *Letters.*

XLVII. Note the comprehensiveness of the tribute to Italy in this stanza.

39, 425. **Etrurian Athens.** Florence, on the Arno, is thus designated. Etruria is the old name for what is now called Tuscany. Florence is called "Athens" because, in the modern world,

she held a position, with respect to art, such as Athens had once held in the ancient world.

431. **Modern Luxury of Commerce.** The refined luxury of Florence was derived from success in trade.

432. **Buried Learning rose.** Florence produced several men prominent in the Renaissance; among them were Petrarch, Ficino, and Poliziano.

XLIX–LIII. These five stanzas are devoted to the statue of Venus de'Medici, which stands in the Tribune of the Uffizi Gallery. Byron calls the statue undescribable, nor does he attempt any direct description. He does not try to point out any details to help us to see its beauty of form. He does better. He tells of the effect of the beauty and so enhances its power.

> We gaze and turn away, and know not where,
> Dazzled and drunk with beauty, till the heart
> Reels with its fulness.

Byron professed to care little for art; if his profession was true, his magnificent enthusiasm over this statue is all the more remarkable.

40, 448. **Paltry jargon.** The stereotyped cant of the statuary vendors.

449. **Where Pedantry gulls Folly.** Refers to the success of those who use such jargon; the trash is sold to those who think they are buying something of real value.

450. **Dardan Shepherd.** Paris was the Dardan Shepherd who bestowed the prize for beauty upon Venus (Aphrodite) to the sorrow of Hera and Athena.

452. **More deeply blessed Anchises.** Venus was the wife of Anchises.

454. **Lord of War.** Mars.

463. **Man's fate,** etc. Browning spoke of man as "a God though in the germ." As the gods sometimes become like mortals, so mortals have godlike moments.

41, 470. **Ape.** One who imitates.

LIV–LVI. These three stanzas deal with Santa Croce, which Byron called the Westminster Abbey of Italy, and with the dead who are buried there.

478. **Santa Croce.** In a letter written in 1817, Byron said of the church of Santa Croce: "The tombs of Machiavelli, Michael Angelo, Galileo, and Alfieri make it the Westminster Abbey of Italy. I did not admire these tombs—beyond their contents. . . . What is necessary but a bust and name? and perhaps a date. . . . All your allegory and eulogy is infernal."

Consult an encyclopedia for full information concerning Angelo, Alfieri, Machiavelli, and Canova.

Byron says: "Alfieri is the great name of this age. The Italians, without waiting for three hundred years, consider him as 'a poet good in law.' His memory is the more dear to them because he is the bard of freedom; and because, as such, his tragedies can receive no countenance from any of their sovereigns."

42, 496. **But where repose all the Etruscan three?** Why were Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio not buried at Florence?

505. **Dante sleeps afar.** He was buried in Ravenna.

506. **Like Scipio,** etc. Scipio had given orders that he must be buried at Liturnum where he, a voluntary exile, had spent many years. It is said that there was once upon his tomb an inscription saying, "Ungrateful country, you shall not have my bones." Dante had said something similar,

> She denied me what was mine—my roof,
> And shall not have what is not hers—my tomb.

507. **Thy factions.** The Guelf and Ghibbeline parties.

511. **Petrarch's laureate brow.** He was crowned with the laurel in Rome in 1341, though he had gained most of his renown in another country—France. His grave, at Arqua, was desecrated by Florentine ghouls.

43, 519. **Even his tomb, uptorn,** etc. The ecclesiastical authorities, whom Byron calls "hyæna bigots," would not leave anything to remind future generations of Boccaccio, who had satirized churchmen. "They had their revenge on Boccaccio, and Byron has had his revenge on them."

525. **Cæsar's pageant.** Whatever doubt there may be as to the meaning of these words is cleared up by the lines in *Don Juan:*

> And this omission, like that of the bust
> Of Brutus at the pageant of Tiberius.

At the funeral of Junia, who was the wife of Cassius and the sister of Brutus, the busts of Brutus and Cassius were not allowed to be carried in the procession because they had participated in the assassination of Julius Cæsar. They were "conspicuous by their absence." So Byron says Santa Croce is more noted because she has not the dust of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.

532. **Her pyramid of precious stones.** The reference is to the costly tombs of the Medici in the Medici chapel, a part of the church of San Lorenzo in Florence. Byron says in a letter to Murray: "I went into the Medici chapel,—fine frippery in great slabs of various expensive stones, to commemorate fifty rotten

and forgotten carcasses." It is said that the poet was so disgusted to see such costly monuments for such characters, that he failed to notice some of the famous work of Michael Angelo on the tombs.

The last four lines of stanza lx contain another tribute to the poets who need no costly monuments.

44, LXI. Here we have the transition from art to nature and Byron's statement, " For I have been accustomed to entwine my thoughts with Nature rather in the fields, than with Art in galleries." He feels that he is constitutionally incapable of doing justice to " a work divine." It was Shelley who had infused in him a love of nature. All his best descriptions of nature were written after the beginning of his intimacy with his brother poet.

542. **Arno's dome of Art's most princely shrine.** Mr. E. H. Coleridge is probably correct in saying the Duomo is intended. His note on this line is: " The Duomo, crowned with Brunelleschi's cupola, and rich in sculpture and stained glass, is, as it were, a symbol of Florence, the shrine of art."

LXII–LXV. These stanzas deal with Lake Trasimene. Byron describes a scene in the Carthaginian wars and then a contrasting picture of the lake as he saw it. Here Hannibal, by strategy, defeated a whole Roman army. The Roman historian, Livy, says that the struggle was so intense that the fighters did not notice an earthquake which occurred at the time of the battle. Wordsworth also makes mention of it in one of his sonnets:

> When here with Carthage Rome to conflict came,
> An earthquake, mingling with the battle's shock,
> Checked not its rage; unfelt the ground did rock,
> Sword dropped not, javelin kept its deadly aim.

46, 584. **Sanguinetto.** The place was named from the bloody battle.

LXVI–LXVIII. In these stanzas Byron gives the reflections occasioned by his view of Clitumnus, a branch of the Tiber, and the ruins of a temple upon a hill by its banks. This river is often referred to in pastoral poetry. Byron says of it that no scenery, even in Italy, is more worthy of description.

590. **Milk-white steer.** According to Pliny, the waters of some streams possessed the power of turning white the cattle that drank from them.

600. **The finny darter with glittering scales.** In a letter to his friend Murray Byron says: " On my way back from Rome, close to the temple by its banks, I got some famous trout out of the river Clitumnus, the prettiest little stream in all poesy."

LXVIII. What do you learn from this stanza concerning the

effect of nature upon Byron? Does he here show love of nature or something more?

47, LXIX–LXXII. This is one of Byron's most exquisite descriptions. Read it with unusual care that you may realize its beauty. Try to imagine what the poet sought to express. Note the emotional appeal of the exclamatory outbursts.

Byron combines into one description the views he had of the falls at two different times. He says: "I saw the Cascata del Marmore of Terni twice, at different periods—once from the summit of the precipice, and again from the valley below. The lower view is far to be preferred, if the traveller has time for one only; but in any point of view, either from above or below, it is worth all the cascades and torrents of Switzerland put together."

620. **Phlegethon.** One of the four rivers of Hades. Tozer calls attention to the fact that the poet seems to have in mind spirits in torment as he describes the agonizing waters.

48, LXXIII–LXVII. Here we have only a slight description of the Apennines (which would seem grand to the poet had he not seen so many greater mountains), and not much about Horace, whom Byron admires. We have, however, an interesting comment on the wrong way of teaching poetry. Hence, this passage is of biographical interest and of pedagogical value. Byron here confesses to his early dislike for classic poetry, and attributes it to the wrong methods by which he was taught. The poetry was presented to him—as it is sometimes presented to pupils now—as a means of acquiring information, and not as a means of gaining power to perceive the inner spiritual beauty of poetry. If poetry is properly taught, it becomes a source of the greatest delight.

49, 654. **Jungfrau.** A peak of the Alps. It is no longer untrodden, for Alpine climbers have often ascended its heights. Byron places some important scenes of his *Manfred* on this peak.

For other proper names in these stanzas consult a dictionary of proper names or an encyclopedia.

665. **Soracte's height.** This mountain, upon which there was once a temple to Apollo, was mentioned by Virgil and Horace, and hence it becomes the occasion of Byron's remarks on the study of poetry.

50, LXXVIII–LXXXII. This long passage deals with Rome in her desolation. These stanzas show us Byron at his best, for here he is really eloquent and even noble. The whole section of the poem should be read over and over again. The fact that the allusions are more easily interpreted, since Roman history is more familiar than that of the rest of Italy, will be a new source of delight.

694. **Oh, Rome, my country, City of the soul!** Why did Byron so address Rome? Can you suggest why that city should appeal more strongly to him than Venice or Florence? Why must the "orphans of the heart" turn to Rome?

51, 703. The Niobe of nations! Niobe has been called "the beau-ideal of grief." After the death of her twelve children, she was turned into a stone, from which ran water. The legend has been a favorite with artists, and the most notable work was that attributed to Scopas—though some say it was by Praxiteles—a copy of which Byron had probably seen at the Uffizi gallery at Florence. It represents Niobe horror-stricken at the death of her children, who are being struck dead by the unseen darts of Apollo. By boasting of her twelve children, she had offended Apollo and Artemus, who had only two. From these few facts Byron's meaning can be easily understood, though he did not adhere to the details of the classic group.

707. **The Scipios' tomb.** In 1780 this tomb was discovered on the Appian Way. It was soon rifled, probably with the hope of finding ornaments buried with the dead.

711. **Rise, . . . and mantle her distress.** Referring to the frequent inundations of the Tiber. One hundred thirty-two inundations were recorded down to 1870, when the river rose thirty feet above its normal height.

LXXX. So great has been the destruction wrought by "The Goth, the Christian, Time, War, Flood, and Fire," that identification is almost impossible.

LXXXI. The construction in the first two lines of this stanza is faulty. There seems a confusion of figures, yet it is possible that Byron referred to steering the camel across the desert. The meaning is clear: the theories of the antiquarian at Rome prove as unreliable as a mirage.

52, 735. These shall be her resurrection. Rome has gone; Rome's men of letters shall make her live again. Cicero, Virgil, and Livy do indeed make her live in our schools and colleges.

LXXXIII–LXXXVI. These stanzas contain the comparison between Sylla and Cromwell and reflections suggested by them both.

Stanza LXXXIII gives the main facts of Sylla's life. He was given the title "Felix" for his continual good luck, which Byron refers to in the words, "whose chariot rolled on Fortune's wheel." He did not wait to settle disputes after his victory over Marius, but at once went to war with Mithridates and conquered him. He was appointed dictator, which gave him power over the senate; then he retired to private life. He was held in high repute

because of this act; otherwise he might have been counted only a monster.

53, LXXXV. This stanza characterizes the career of Cromwell, who dissolved the Long Parliament and brought Charles I to the block. He died on the anniversary of his two victories at Dunbar and at Worcester.

54, LXXXVII. **And thou, dread Statue!** The statue of Pompey at whose feet "great Cæsar fell." The present statue, however, is probably not the original one. Byron asks Nemesis, the god of retribution, if the death of Cæsar was in retribution for the death of Pompey. Were these two really victors, or only puppets in the hands of the god of retribution?

LXXXVIII. The bronze "Wolf of the capitol" in the Palace of the Conservators is believed to be ancient, dating from the fifth century B. C. Byron says she still guards her immortal cubs, for they live in story, but other Romans no longer share her protection.

55, LXXXIX. Napoleon still lived when Byron wrote this poem. He was the only man who could be compared with the Roman conquerors for he alone had approached the same "supremacy."

In Canto III Byron has given a full characterization of Napoleon and stanzas xxxvi–xli of that canto should be read.

XC. Yet Napoleon was but a "bastard Cæsar." In spite of being fascinated by Cleopatra, as Hercules had been by Omphale, Cæsar was not withheld from his career of conquest.

> And now himself he beam'd,
> And came and saw and conquered!

But Napoleon, coquetting with inordinate ambition, which was worse than Cæsar's infatuation, and as vain as ambitious, fell short in his achievement. Byron's figure of the flood of blood, without an ark for man's refuge, is bold and most suggestive. His closing prayer is a fitting conclusion: "Renew thy rainbow, God!"

56, XCIII–XCVII. Here again we see the reflective Byron. It was natural, after his reference to Napoleon—suggested by the thought of Cæsar—to review the state of affairs in Europe after the fall of Napoleon. Whether we agree with the poet or not, we must give him credit for serious thought upon a great subject. Read these stanzas in the light of the history Byron knew and of the history of the period since he wrote, and then form your own opinion of the reaction in 1815.

Byron's language here is strong. Is it too strong? Answer this question with special reference to stanza xcvii.

Byron was a great admirer of Washington because he was a

friend of freedom. He asks whether it is possible for Freedom ever again to arise suddenly, as Pallas sprang full-armed from the head of Jove. He pays the following tribute to Washington:

> Where may the wearied eye repose
> When gazing on the Great;
> Where neither guilty glory glows
> Nor despicable state?
> Yes—one—the first—the last—the best,
> The Cincinnatus of the West,
> Whom envy dared not hate,
> Bequeath the name of Washington,
> To make man blush there was but one.

58, XCVIII. This is a notable stanza. Byron does not want his dark picture of France to convey the idea that Freedom is dead. If the Saturnalia there have been fatal to Freedom's cause, there is still hope elsewhere—in England, which Byron here calls the North. Note Byron's analysis of freedom. As was natural for a poet, he used a succession of figures, which, if clearly understood, make a vivid mental picture. It is worth while to pause here until one gets the poet's meaning; it gave a message of hope and in time it proved truly prophetic.

In *The Giaour* Byron used similar words:

> For Freedom's battle once begun,
> Bequeath'd by bleeding sire to son,
> Though baffled oft, is ever won.

XCIX–CV. These stanzas contain Byron's speculations inspired by the tomb of Cæcilia Metella, on the Appian Way near Rome.

884. **Fortress.** The low, round tower had been used as a fortress in earlier days, and well it might be, for it is sixty-three feet in diameter.

59, C. **But who was she?** The fact that so little is known of the woman—only that she was the daughter of Metellus Creticus and the wife of Crassus—is enough to arouse Byron's imagination.

CI. Here the poet makes inquiry concerning her character. Was she like Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi whom she called her jewels; or was she like Cleopatra?

60, 914. **Doom.** Byron has in mind the Greek saying, "Whom the gods love die young."

917. **The Hesperus of the dead.** As Hesperus, the evening star, is the harbinger of night, so the hectic flush presages death.

918. **Consuming.** Hollow, wasting.

918 **Autumnal leaf-like red.** In *Manfred* Byron says:

> There's bloom upon her cheek;
> But now I see it is no living hue,
> But a strange hectic—like the autumnal red
> Which Autumn paints upon the perished leaf.

CIII. The poet ceases his conjectures; they are useless. Yet he adds one more; did Crassus bury her so magnificently because he loved her, or because of his own pride?

CIV–CV. Tombs possessed a peculiar charm for Byron. (Here, again, he becomes reflective.) Like Shakespeare, he "bodies forth the forms of things unknown." He seeks "a little bark of hope" and wonders if he would know where to steer it, but ends with the thought that, for him, there is no home, no hope, no life, but only the grave. His thinking only deepens his sadness. He could have said from the heart the words of Gray, "The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

61, CVI–CIX. These four stanzas deal with the Palatine Hill and the ruins which now mark it. Finding no consolation as he reviews the past, Byron turns to the Palatine whose desolation is so great that his own troubles seem small.

> —Upon such a shrine
> What are our petty griefs?—let me not number mine.

Note stanza cvi well for its details of description. Such was the confusion among the ruins of the Palatine that it was impossible to distinguish temples from baths or halls. All that research had decided was that they were walls.

62. Stanzas civi and cix give the reflections of the poet. He compares Man with the Palatine in ruins. The Imperial Mount is an epitome of human history which ever repeats itself—"History, with all her volumes vast, hath but *one* page,"—and words are unnecessary with such an object lesson before one's eyes.

Line 975, "Man, thou pendulum betwixt a smile and a tear," is one of the most frequently quoted of all the lines Byron has written.

Lest one should get a morbid view of man from this passage, it is well to recall what others have said. Shakespeare makes Hamlet exclaim: "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty; in form, and moving, how express and admirable! in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!"

63, CX, CXI. The columns of Phocas and of Trajan. As a matter of fact the column was no longer nameless in 1817, when

Byron visited Rome. It had been identified in 1813 as that of Phocas, A. D. 608.

989. **Apostolic statues climb.** There is a statue of St. Peter on the column of Trajan and one of St. Paul on that of Marcus Aurelius.

990. **Whose ashes slept sublime.** It was once believed that the ashes of Trajan were deposited in a globe held in the hand of his statue; the belief, however, was not well founded.

995. **The Roman globe.** The Roman Empire.

999. **We Trajan's name adore.** Trajan was considered the best of the emperors. Byron means that *even now* he is adored. He was the last to rule over the empire as a whole.

64, 1000. **Rock of Triumph.** The Capitoline Hill. On this hill the triumphal processions ended. Here the heroes were "embraced," that is, welcomed home after their conquests.

1002. **Tarpeian, fittest goal of Treason's race.** Criminals were thrown from this rock.

1022. **Rienzi.** Cola di Rienzi (1313–1354) was ambitious to free his country from the oppression of the nobles and to establish a republic. For a time he was successful, and in 1347 he was proclaimed tribune and liberator of the Holy Roman Republic. Success, however, turned his head and popular feeling changed toward him. He was killed in 1354 during a revolt. Petrarch in 1340, when he was crowned laureate at Rome, met Rienzi and is said to have shared his enthusiasms. See Bulwer-Lytton's *Rienzi—The Last of the Tribunes.*

65, 1026. **New-born Numa.** The king, Numa Pompilius, the great lawgiver of early Rome.

CXV–CXIX. These four stanzas deal with Byron's imagined story of Egeria and give his description of "Egeria's Grotto." According to Roman mythology, Egeria instructed Numa concerning the form of worship he should introduce. Byron conceives her to be "a beautiful thought, and softly bodied forth." His description of her grotto, to which he devotes two stanzas, is most picturesque. Then, taking advantage of the fabled love between Egeria and Numa, he briefly pictures a love scene in the grotto, wondering if she could "impart the purity of Heaven to earthly joys." This is one of Byron's loftiest imaginative pictures.

1031. **Nympholepsy.** An ecstatic vision. The Greeks believed that when anyone had seen a nymph, her image remained with him making him long for an impossible ideal. In stanza cxxii Byron speaks of "the unreached Paradise of our despair." The line throws light on nympholepsy.

67, CXX–CXXVII. This long passage is essentially Byronic.

It gives the poet's view of love, but it is love seen through the eyes of a misanthrope. Byron never experienced real love and did not know what it is; he could not therefore describe it. This passage, then, is to be taken as a pathetic attempt to analyze what the writer saw from a wrong point of view and, hence, saw falsely. Without doubt the poet has in mind his unfortunate marriage.

For a moment, in the Egeria passage, Byron seemed to be on the heights and expressed himself as one on the heights. He spoke of an ideal; but then came the reaction so characteristic of his thought.

70, CXXVIII–CXLV. This long passage deserves special study; it is one of Byron's most notable ones. The first two stanzas (cxxvii, cxxxix) and the last three (cxliii–cxlv) are largely descriptive of the Coliseum. Stanzas cxl–cxlii are devoted to the statue of the gladiator and to the thoughts suggested by it. The rest of the passage is largely personal and therefore of great biographical value. Keeping these facts in mind, study the passage as a whole, until you comprehend it fully. Then, give special attention to such details as require further thought.

1144–1147. **Arches on arches! . . . her Coliseum stands.** The Coliseum, or Flavian Amphitheater, was the largest building at Rome. It was capable of seating 80,000 people. The first three stories were built upon arches. Between the arches, eighty to each story, stood three-quarter columns. About one-third of the structure remains. Much has been carried away for building purposes.

71, 1162. **Oh Time.** The thought of how Time has dealt with these ruins makes Byron digress and ask a boon of Time for himself (l. 1170). He asks Time, if they who have dealt with him so unjustly, shall not mourn (l. 1179). He believes they will.

1180, 1181. **And thou, . . . great Nemesis!** Nemesis, the god of retribution, is also summoned to avenge him by meting out to the British public due punishment.

1184. **Orestes.** The Furies pursued Orestes because he had killed his mother to avenge the death of his father. On this passage Lady Byron comments: "It has been argued that Byron inserted these stanzas with the deliberate purpose of diverting sympathy from his wife to himself."

72, 1196. **Not taken for the sake—** The dash doubtless refers to his sister, whom Byron dearly loved, and, hence, would not mention in this connection. But for her, he might have sought vengeance.

1202. **But on this page a record will I seek.** Byron confesses that his poem shall be his vengeance. In a measure, too, he spoke

truly. There are several erasures and changes in the manuscript of this stanza, showing that the poet found it hard to express himself.

CXXXV. Here is unstinted self-praise. What the poet said, however, was true. There may be some question as to the taste which would allow the poet to use such words; but when we consider his feelings, we may be inclined to pardon him.

Between this stanza and the next Byron had in his manuscript the following lines which he later eliminated:

> If to forgive be heaping coals of fire—
> As God hath spoken—on the heads of foes,
> Mine should be a volcano, and rise higher
> Than, o'er the Titans crushed, Olympus rose,
> Or Athos soars, or blazing Etna glows;—
> True, they who stung were creeping things; but what
> Than serpent's teeth inflicts with deadlier throes?
> The lion may be goaded by the gnat.—
> Who seeks the slumberer's blood? The eagle? No, the bat.

In a word, the poet had much to forgive.

73, 1221. **Janus glance.** Janus looked both ways. The allusion is significant with reference to Byron's critics.

CXXXVII. In spite of melancholy, near to desperation, there emerges and, the poet says, will remain, a hope unconquerable.

> There is that within me which shall tire
> Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire;
> Something unearthly which they deem not of.

Compare Shelley's,

> Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.

And Browning's third stanza of the Epilogue to Asolando,

> One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
> Never doubted clouds would break,
> Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
> Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
> Sleep to wake.

74, 1234. **The seal is set.—Now welcome, thou dread power.** The poet here evidently means that his complaint is over and his resolution made. The spirit of the past, as felt by one beholding the Coliseum, is welcome, since it brings a peace where before

have been only confusion and discontent. "The solemn scene derives from thee a sense so deep and clear that we become a part of what has been, and grow unto the spot, all-seeing but unseen." To a considerable degree, this contemplative frame of mind remained with the poet during the last years of his life.

1252. **Gladiator.** The statue of the dying Gaul. Here Byron's description is most vivid and effective. Note all that is merely suggested by the picture.

Concerning this passage Ruskin writes: "That passage is noble primarily because it contains the utmost number that will come together into the space of absolutely just, wise, and kind thoughts. But it is more than noble; it is *perfect*, because the quantity it holds is not artificially or intricately concentrated, but with the serene swiftness of a smith's hammer-strokes on hot iron." Matthew Arnold is equally enthusiastic in his praise of Byron's power to handle scenes of human suffering. The deep pathos here depicted is unrivaled.

Line 1267, "Butchered to make a Roman holiday," has become almost hackneyed with use.

75, 1266. **Their Dacian mother.** The people of Dacia were noted for their courage and were much prized in the amphitheatre, for the Romans liked to witness a good fight. In his "The Deformed Transformed" Byron says:

> Made even the forest pay its tribute of
> Life to their amphitheatre, as well
> As Dacia men to die the eternal death
> For a sole instant's pastime, and pass on
> To a new gladiator!

1269. **Arise! ye Goths,** etc. Here the poet, from the viewpoint of an actual spectator of the gladiator's death, calls upon the Goths to avenge it vigorously, as history shows them to have done.

1279. **From its mass.** Alluding to the fact that the Coliseum was used as a stone quarry.

76, 1288. **The rising moon begins to climb.** Byron, and others, have enriched literature with references to the effect of moonlight upon the Coliseum. In *Manfred* he says:

> Upon such a night
> I stood within the Coliseum's wall,
> Midst the chief relics of Almighty Rome;
> The trees which grew along the broken arches
> Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars
> Shone through the rents of ruin.

1293. **Like laurels on the bald first Cæsar's head.** Byron compares the trees growing on the Coliseum to the laurel which Cæsar wore especially, says Suetonius, because it concealed his baldness.

1297. **While stands the Coliseum,** etc. Words ascribed to the Venerable Bede, the great Saxon historian.

77, CXLVI–CXLVII. The Pantheon was built B. C. 27, and is the best preserved of all the old Roman buildings. It consists of two parts, a porch supported by sixteen Corinthian columns and behind it, and yet a part of it, the rotunda, or round temple. The niches which once contained the statues of the gods now contain busts of great Italians, Raphael among the rest. It was consecrated as a church in 609.

CXLVIII–CLI. Byron's note is: "This and the next three stanzas allude to the story of the Roman daughter, which is called to the traveller by the site, or pretended site, of that adventure, now shown at the church of S. Nicolo in Carcere." Pliny and others relate the legend.

79, 1351. **The starry fable of the milky way.** The story is that when Mercury held the infant Hercules up to Juno's breast, that he might drink in divinity, the goddess pushed him away, and some drops of the milk fell into the void and became a multitude of stars—the Milky Way.

CLII. What is now known as the Castle of St. Angelo was originally built as a mausoleum for the ashes of the Emperor Hadrian. It is composed of a square basement surmounted by a low circular tower 1,000 feet in circumference.

CLIII–CLIX. These seven stanzas are evidence of a splendid attempt to describe the indescribable—St. Peter's. The poet is wholly conscious of the magnitude of his task and consequently begins with a most appropriate exclamation, such as one would naturally make upon first seeing the great building: "But lo! the dome—the vast and wondrous dome," etc. The first stanza of the seven is made effective by means of a series of comparisons with other great edifices, the Temple of Diana at Ephesus and of St. Sophia at Constantinople. Stanza cliv continues the comparison, more vaguely, with an allusion to the Temple at Jerusalem and ends with two lines of fine climax. The entire passage should be studied until the pupil feels that he has fully caught the poet's whole conception. Note especially stanza clix. It is unusual with Byron.

82, CLX. The Laocoön group is in the Vatican Museum. Look up Laocoön in the *Classical Dictionary.* In this stanza Byron is at his best. Why?

83, CLXI–CLXIII. The statue of Apollo Belvedere.

84, CLXIV–CLXVI. Childe Harold is recalled. In Cantos I and II and in most of Canto III Childe Harold was the central figure of the poem. Critics said that the hero was Byron himself, but he denied it. In Canto IV the poet speaks in his own person, thus confessing that denial was useless. Even now the hero is recalled only to be dismissed.

> He is no more, . . . if he was
> Aught but a phantasy.

As usual the backward glance saddens the poet. He looks into an abyss; his sadness is deepened. Life seems to have nothing to offer.

In contrast to this Byronic pessimism, see Tennyson in "The Making of Man":

> Man is yet being made, and ere the crowning Age of ages
> Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into shape?

And Browning says:

> I count life just the stuff
> To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.

85, CLXVII–CLXXII. The next six stanzas, which show Byron's deep feeling for his country, are in splendid contrast with the foregoing stanzas. The contrast is revealed in his words occasioned by the death of the Princess Charlotte, which occurred while the poet was in Venice. Byron's letters show how much he was moved.

The Princess, the only daughter of George IV, then Prince Regent, was Heiress Presumptive to the British crown. Her character was such that the hopes of England were centered in her. Hence the shock occasioned by her sudden death affected "the love of millions."

87, 1549. **Lo, Nemi!** The poet's place of observation is now on the summit of the Alban Hills, whence he can behold the sea. Lake Nemi was also within his range of vision. Byron says of it: "The lake lies in a very deep bottom, so surrounded on all sides with mountains and groves that the surface of it is never ruffled with the least breath of wind, which, perhaps, together with the clearness of the water, gave it formerly the name of Diana's Looking Glass." Another says: "The basin of the Lago di Nemi is the crater of an extinct volcano. Hence the comparison to a coiled snake. Its steel-blue waters are never ruffled by the winds which lash the near-by ocean into fury. Hence its likeness to 'cherished hate,' as contrasted with 'generous and active wrath.'"

88, CLXXIV. From his vantage ground the poet sees another and similar lake, Albano, as well as the Tiber, the sea, and the coast of Latium, which suggested Virgil and Cicero's Sabine farm.

CLXXV–CLXXVI. These two stanzas are retrospective, telling of the journeys and experiences of Byron and his hero. As they must part, the poet feels they have some reward in being able to enjoy the beauties of earth and sea.

1574. **Calpe's rock.** Gibraltar.

1576. **Symplegades.** Two small islands near the Black Sea.

89, 1585. **Oh! that the Desert were my dwelling-place.** Byron was so constituted that he longed for the grand things of nature: the Alps, the ocean, the desert. Daffodils and daisies do not possess for him the charm they had for Chaucer and Wordsworth.

1588. **Love but only her.** Whether Byron had in mind his sister or some genius of the place, we cannot positively state. Mr. E. H. Coleridge and some others are inclined to think the reference is to his sister. In substantiation of this view, see the opening lines of Byron's "Epistle to Augusta":

> My sister! my sweet sister! if a name
> Dearer and purer were, it should be thine;
> Mountains and seas divide us, but I claim
> No tears, but tenderness to answer mine:
> Go where I will, to me thou art the same—
> A loved regret which I would not resign.
> There yet are two things in my destiny,—
> A world to roam through and a home with thee.
> The first is nothing—had I still the last,
> It were the haven of my happiness.

On the other hand, we cite the poet's words from "The Witch of the Alps":

> Beautiful spirit! in thy calm clear brow,
> Wherein is glass'd serenity of soul,
> Which of itself shows immortality, etc.

Since the poet speaks of the desired presence as "one fair Spirit," and since he often longed for solitude, we are inclined to think he did not want any human being near him while in the frame of mind here expressed. Moreover, he asks for such a being from the elements, and adds:

> Do I err in deeming such inhabit many a spot
> Though with them to converse can rarely be our lot.

CLXXVIII. In such stanzas as this some see, and rightly, the influence of Wordsworth. It surely suggests "Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey." This passage marks one of the heights of Byron's achievement and shows a noble ecstacy, which he felt beyond the power of expression:

Which I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

90, CLXXIX. This is probably the best known of all of Byron's stanzas and must endure as long as the language. Let the pupil seek for the secret of the power the lines express. There are similar lines among the works of other poets; can you name them?

91, CLXXXII. This stanza is unsurpassed in showing the contrast between the unchangeable ocean and the transitoriness of all that man had built. "Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now." "Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?"

CLXXXIII. Adjectives are great revealers of literary power and taste. Note the effectiveness of Byron's adjectives in this stanza: "Dark-heaving—boundless, endless and sublime, . . . dread, fathomless, alone." See also line 1611, "unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown."

CLXXXIV. Byron's lines about the ocean are here heightened into greater interest by the personal touch.

92, 1656. As I do now. The poet has, without mentioning it, changed his point of view from where he began his apostrophe to the ocean. Now he stands on the shore and in imagination strokes the water tenderly, as he would his horse's mane.

Having told his story, or having used his available material, the poet brings his poem to a rather sudden close, and yet with dignity and not too abruptly. The interest is sustained until the end.

CRITICAL ESTIMATES OF CHILDE HAROLD

"*Childe Harold* is one woven mass of beauty and intellectual gold from end to end."—W. M. Howitt.

"In his *Childe Harold* he assumes a lofty and philosophic tone, and 'reasons high of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate.' . . . . Lord Byron has strength and elevation enough to fill up the moulds of our classical and time-honored recollections and to rekindle the earliest aspirations of the mind after greatness and true glory with a pen of fire."—W. M. Howitt.

"Byron's mind was the battlefield of contending impulses. . . . The intensity of his feelings imparts to his style a splendor and

passion that raises it [*Childe Harold*] far above the diction of his earlier poems. . . . Looking at his poetry from a purely lyrical standpoint, it is surely impossible for any man not to be carried away on the tide of its power and passion."—W. H. Courthope.

"Childe Harold may not be, nor do we believe he is, Lord Byron's very self, but he is Lord Byron's picture sketched by Lord Byron himself."—Walter Scott.

"The poem is a glorified guide-book; but it is something more, for in the person of his hero Byron creates a type which represents modern romance, modern melancholy (when the Revolutionary passions remained unsatisfied and the Revolutionary faiths were obscured), and, with these, the capacities for wide and varied pleasure proper to a time of culture, of travel, and cosmopolitan sympathies and interests."—Edward Dowden.

"The third and fourth cantos placed him on the platform of the *Dii Majores* of English verse. These cantos are separated from their predecessors, not by a stage, but by a gulf. Previous to their publication, he had only known how far the force of rhapsody could go; now he struck with his right hand and from the shoulder. Knowledge of life and study of Nature were the mainsprings of a growth which the indirect influence of Wordsworth and the happy companionship of Shelley played their part in fostering."—John Nichol.

"Not alone! wher'er thou bidest;
For we know thee what thou art.
Ah! if from the day thou hidest,
Still to thee will cling each heart.
Scarce we venture to lament thee,
Singing, envious of thy fate;
For in storm and sun were lent thee
Song and courage, fair and great."

GOETHE.

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON

Concerning "The Prisoner of Chillon" little need be said. It does not abound in historical allusions like *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. There is nothing to divert us from the poem itself, which can best be enjoyed, in spite of its sadness, by imagining one's self in the place of the prisoner and sharing his meditations. It is well, in reading, to keep in mind the topic of each of the fourteen stanzas and to note the transitions in the poem and in the thought of its hero.

The fact that Byron called the poem "a fable" warns us against considering it historical, even though it is about an historical character. In fact, as the poet himself tells us, he did not know the history of Bonnivard when he wrote the poem. Sailing on Lake Geneva in 1816 with his friend Shelley, Byron was impressed with the old castle of Chillon, so picturesquely situated on the northern shore of the lake; its romance and its forbidding dungeons appealed to his imagination. He wrote the poem at Ouchy, a little village on the lake near Geneva, where he was detained for two days on account of bad weather. The poem is well-nigh perfect and it gives us a glimpse of the poet at his best, for in this noble study of imprisonment there is no touch of misanthropy.

Scholars have called attention to the fact that there are some echoes in the poem of the character of Ugolino (Dante's *Inferno*, XXXII, 124), and Shelley testifies that Byron had studied that character. It is more than probable that the study, the sight of the castle, a few scant facts about Bonnivard, and the detention on account of the weather united in ripening the occasion for Byron to write this poem.

93, I. The use of the first person gives a vividness which could be imparted to the poem in no other way. Note how much is said of the family in a few words in this opening stanza. Then the attention is focussed upon the three surviving brothers. Note, also, that Byron represents the hero and his brothers as suffering for religious views, while the historical Bonnivard suffered for a political offense.

What effect is secured by making lines 2 and 3 dimeters? What is the versification of the poem? Why is it especially effective for such a poem?

94, II. Note the description of the dungeon. What is the effect of mentioning the single ray of light? Has the poet succeeded in creating a suitable atmosphere? If so, how has he done it?

III–V. Stanza iii gives the situation of the three: "and thus together—yet apart," and then, in stanzas iv and v, the characteristics of the brothers are given. Tell what these characteristics are, in your own words.

97, VI. Note how the poet gradually makes us feel the isolation of the prison, "a double dungeon, wall and wave." The castle itself is imprisoned by the lake, which is almost a thousand feet deep near the castle. Leman is the old name for Lake Geneva.

A few weeks after writing this poem, Byron wrote the following sonnet on Lake Leman:

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

VII, VIII. In these two stanzas Byron describes the death of the two brothers. Note the difference in the two accounts, and the different emotions produced in the heart of the survivor. How does the poet make especially vivid his grief at the death of the younger brother? Again note the dimeter lines and the effect.

What is meant by the last two lines of stanza viii?

101, IX. In some respects stanza ix is the most effective in the poem. Note the details given by the poet in describing how the prisoner gradually lost consciousness. Especially examine lines 240–250. The effect of the series of negatives in lines 245, 246, is exquisite. Byron was strong in diction, especially in the use of adjectives: "A sea of stagnant idleness, blind, boundless, mute, and motionless!"

102, X. Here we learn of the awakening. Nothing could be more effective than to have the unconscious prisoner recalled by the song of a bird, "the sweetest song ear ever heard." Byron makes his descriptions of the slow processes most effective by dwelling upon their gradual nature. "By dull degrees came back my senses."

Note also the gradual description of the bird, as the prisoner came to notice it more minutely, and the return to the song, "that said a thousand things and seemed to say them all for me." It is not strange that he wondered if it were "a visitant from Paradise." At first, before he fully realized the new situation, he wondered if the bird was not the spirit of his brother; but when the bird flew away he felt anew his loneliness.

104, XI. But conditions improved: the keepers became more compassionate; he was allowed to walk around. What is the etymology of *profaned?*

XII. He climbed the wall for a look at God's out-of-doors.

He felt the whole world would be a prison to him, and yet the thought of a glimpse of the mountains, even through barred windows, was some consolation.

105, XIII. He saw the view, and the poet describes the details of it with fidelity and effectiveness. But all he saw only caused " new tears," for it emphasized his confinement. The darkness was like a load upon him, but the rest, after the effort, was welcome.

What figure of speech is " a thousand years of snow "?

Note the emotional power of this stanza, and its suggestiveness.

106, XIV. Here we see the deadening effect of the imprisonment. The prisoner had lost interest in the outside world. His very surroundings had become a part of him; his higher nature seemed to be atrophied. He did not even take note of time! How much is told and how much more suggested by the expressions, " I learned to love despair," and " my very chains and I became friends," and " I regained my freedom with a sigh."

Having read the poem carefully, until you are familiar with its details, read it again leisurely, to enjoy it as a whole. Does the poem sadden you, or do you get something else, something better, from it?

THE SONNET ON CHILLON

Although the sonnet was not written till later, it was prefixed to " The Prisoner of Chillon." We place it after the poem, where it more logically belongs and makes a most fitting close, with its note of victory. It tells of the real Bonnivard, whose history Byron had learned since completing the poem. Byron is always eloquent when speaking of Liberty.

We are reminded by this poem of Lovelace's words:

Stone walls do not a prison make,
  Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
  That for a hermitage:
If I have freedom in my love
  And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above,
  Enjoy such liberty.

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR STUDY

The Life of Byron

1. What in Byron's early environment accounts for many of the characteristics that afterward distinguished him?
2. What had his early education, or lack of education, to do with his subsequent career?
3. Tell about Byron's first trip to the continent. What poems grew out of this trip?
4. Comment upon Byron's marriage and separation from his wife.
5. Why did Byron go to the continent the second time?
6. Comment upon the attitude of society toward him after his fall from favor.
7. What can you say of Byron's custom of putting himself into his poems?
8. How do you account for Byron's morbid desire for a bad reputation?
9. What noble qualities did Byron possess?
10. Outline Byron's wanderings on the continent. Who were some of his associates?
11. In what way was his going to Greece characteristic of him?
12. What is Bryon's place in literature?
13. What great contemporaries appreciated Byron and his poetry?

Childe Harold. Canto IV

1. When and how did Byron gather the material for *Childe Harold?*
2. The first two cantos are very different from the last two. What is that difference and how do you account for it?
3. Canto III has been called the best of the four cantos. In what respect is the statement true?
4. How do you account for the superior qualities of Canto IV?
5. Judging from Canto IV, what could you infer as to the habits of observation and reflection characteristic of the writer?
6. Trace on the map (p. 110) the journey of Byron through Italy as related in Canto IV.

7. Which do you consider the better, Byron's descriptions of nature or his descriptions of buildings, monuments, etc.? Give reasons.
8. The poet Shelley influenced Byron. Tell in what way and point out a passage in the poem to illustrate your answer.
9. Answer a similar question in regard to Wordsworth.
10. How do you account for the frequent outbursts of sadness, often amounting almost to despair?
11. Why does Byron speak mostly in the first person in Canto IV, instead of speaking through the character of his hero Childe Harold, as in the other cantos?
12. What are your favorite passages in Canto IV? Mention four, with reasons for your preference.
13. Judging from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, what do you consider Byron's most noteworthy characteristics as a poet?
14. Byron is called a poet of revolt. Is there evidence of his revolutionary tendencies in this poem? If so, what is it?
15. Comment on Byron's love of freedom as that love is reflected in this poem.
16. Comment on Byron's opinions concerning the effects of the French Revolution as he gives them in this poem.
17. What five great Italian writers does Byron mention in Canto IV? What can we learn as to his appreciation of these writers from what he says of them?
18. Comment on Byron's opinion of Horace, and account for that opinion by giving Byron's reason for it.
19. What is the significance of Byron's references to the Medici?
20. What are the chief objects of interest in Venice mentioned by Byron?
21. What most attracted the poet's attention to Florence?
22. Name five of the principal objects of interest in Rome that especially interested Byron. Tell which of these seem to have impressed him most and why.
23. What inspired the poet's most noteworthy expressions on love?
24. What do you consider the best example of Byron's power to express pathos?
25. Where in the poem does Byron refer to England and how does he do it?
26. Where and how does he refer to his sister?
27. Comment upon Byron's comparison of Cæsar and Napoleon.
28. Where in Canto IV does Byron assume the rôle of a prophet? How far have his prophesies come to pass?
29. Why is Childe Harold recalled in stanza clxiv?
30. Cite a passage in proof of Byron's patriotism.

31. Comment on Byron's apostrophe to the Ocean.
32. Illustrate, by reference to specific passages, Byron's use of words.
33. Comment on his manner of closing the poem.
34. What is your estimate of the canto as a whole?
35. What do you consider Byron's best qualities as seen in Canto IV?
36. Do you feel inclined to read more of Byron? Why?

The Prisoner of Chillon

1. What circumstances led to the writing of this poem?
2. Who was Byron's companion at the time of the writing of this poem?
3. How far is this poem historical and how far pure invention?
4. What poem had Byron been reading that might have influenced him in writing "The Prisoner of Chillon"?
5. What would you give as the theme of the poem?
6. What can be learned concerning Byron from this poem?
7. What kind of feelings are mostly appealed to in this poem? How does the poet make that appeal?
8. Mention two examples of effective description in this poem.
9. How does Byron arouse, maintain, and increase our interest as the poem advances?
10. What is your conception as to the character of the surviving brother? How does the poet arouse our sympathy with him?
11. What opinions of his own does Byron express in this poem?
12. What is the artistic effect of introducing the incident of the singing of the bird?
13. What is the effect of the view of nature upon the prisoner?
14. What is gained by having the prisoner tell his own story?
15. What effect has the poem upon you?

Sonnet on Chillon

1. What is the biographical value of this sonnet?
2. Comment on the poetic value of this sonnet.