

MAZEPPE.

A POEM.

BY LORD BYRON.

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ALBANY

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THE HISTORY OF THE

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ADVERTISEMENT.

“ CELUI qui remplissait alors cette place, était un gentilhomme Polonais, nommé Mazeppa, né dans le palatinat de Padolie; il avait été élevé page de Jean Casimir, et avit pris à sa cour quelque teinture des belles-lettres. Une intrigue qu’il eut dans sa jeunesse avec la femme d’un gentilhomme Polonais, ayant été découverte, le mari le fit lier tout nu sur un cheval farouche, et le laissa aller en cet état. Le cheval, qui était du pays de l’Ukraine, y retourna, et y porta Mazeppa, demi-mort de fatigue et de faim. Quelque paysans le secoururent: il resta long-tems parmi eux, et se signala dans plusieurs courses contre les Tartares. La supériorité de ses lumières lui donna une grande considération parmi les Cosaques: sa réputation s’augmentant de jour en jour, obligea le Czar à le faire prince de l’Ukraine.”

VOLTAIRE, *Histoire de Charles XII.* p. 196.

“ Le roi fuyant et poursuivi eut son cheval tué sous lui; le colonel Gieta, blessé, et perdant tout sa sang, lui donna le sien. Ainsi on remit deux fois à cheval, dans la suite, ce conquérant qui n’avait puy monter pendant la bataille.”

VOLTAIRE, *Histoire de Charles XII.* p. 216.

“ Le roi alla par un autre chemin avec quelques cavaliers. Le carrosse, où il était, rompit dans la marche; on le remit à cheval. Pour comble de disgrâce, il s'égara pendant la nuit dans un bois; là son courage ne pouvant plus suppléer à ses forces épuisées, les douleurs de sa blessure devenues plus insupportable par la fatigue, son cheval étant tombé de lassitude, il se coucha quelques heures au pied d'un arbre, en danger d'être surpris à tout moment par les vainqueurs qui le cherchaient de tout côtés.”—VOLTAIRE, *Histoire de Charles XII.* p. 218.

MAZEPPA.

I.

'TWAS after dread Pultowa's day,
When fortune left the royal Swede,
Around a slaughter'd army lay,
No more to combat and to bleed.
The power and glory of the war,
Faithless as their vain votaries, men,
Had pass'd to the triumphant Czar,
And Moscow's walls were safe again,
Until a day more dark and drear,
And a more memorable year,
Should give to slaughter and to shame
A mightier host, and haughtier name;
A greater wreck, a deeper fall,
A shock to one—a thunderbolt to all.

II.

Such was the hazard of the die;
 The wounded Charles was taught to fly
 By day and night through field and flood,
 Stain'd with his own and subjects' blood;
 For thousands fell that flight to aid:
 And not a voice was heard t'upbraid
 Ambition in his humbled hour,
 When truth had nought to dread from power.
 His horse was slain, and Gieta gave
 His own—and died the Russians' slave.
 This too sinks after many a league
 Of well sustain'd, but vain fatigue;
 And in the depth of forests, darkling
 The watch-fires in the distance sparkling—

The beacons of surrounding foes—
 A king must lay his limbs at length.

Are these the laurels and repose
 For which the nations strain their strength?
 They laid him by a savage tree,
 In out-worn nature's agony;
 His wounds were stiff—his limbs were stark—
 The heavy hour was chill and dark;
 The fever in his blood forbade
 A transient slumber's fitful aid:
 And thus it was; but yet through all,
 Kinglike the monarch bore his fall,
 And made, in this extreme of ill,
 His pangs the vassals of his will;

All silent and subdued were they,
As once the nations round him lay.

III.

A band of chiefs!—alas! how few,
Since but the fleeting of a day
Had thinn'd it; but this wreck was true
And chivalrous: upon the clay
Each sate him down, all sad and mute,
Beside his monarch and his steed,
For danger levels man and brute,
And all are fellows in their need.
Among the rest, Mazeppa made
His pillow in an old oak's shade—
Himself as rough, and scarce less old,
The Ukraine's hetman, calm and bold;
But first, outspent with this long course,
The Cossack prince rubb'd down his horse,
And made for him a leafy bed,
And smooth'd his fetlocks and his mane,
And slack'd his girth and stripp'd his rein,
And joy'd to see how well he fed;
For until now he had the dread
His wearied courser might refuse
To browse beneath the midnight dews:
But he was hardy as his lord,
And little cared for bed and board;
But spirited and docile too;
Whate'er was to be done, would do,

Shaggy and swift, and strong of limb,
 All Tartar-like he carried him;
 Obey'd his voice, and came at call,
 And knew him in the midst of all:
 Though thousands were around,—and Night,
 Without a star, pursued her flight,—
 That steed from sunset until dawn
 His chief would follow like a fawn.

IV.

This done, Mazeppa spread his cloak,
 And laid his lance beneath his oak,
 Felt if his arms in order good
 The long day's march had well withstood—
 If still the powder fill'd the pan,

And flints unloosen'd kept their lock—
 His sabre's hilt and scabbard felt,
 And whether they had chafed his belt—
 And next the venerable man,
 From out his haversack and can,

Prepared and spread his slender stock;
 And to the monarch and his men
 The whole or portion offer'd then
 With far less of inquietude
 Than courtiers at a banquet would.
 And Charles of this his slender share
 With smiles partook a moment there,
 To force of cheer a greater show,
 And seem above both wounds and wo;—

And then he said—‘ Of all our band,
 Though firm of heart and strong of hand,
 In skirmish, march, or forage, none
 Can less have said or more have done
 Than thee, Mazeppa! On the earth
 So fit a pair had never birth,
 Since Alexander’s days till now,
 As thy Bucephalus and thou:
 All Scythia’s fame to thine should yield
 For pricking on o’er flood and field.’
 Mazeppa answer’d—‘ Ill betide
 The school wherein I learn’d to ride!’
 Quoth Charles—‘ Old hetman, wherefore so,
 Since thou hast learn’d the art so well?’
 Mazeppa said—‘ ’Twere long to tell;
 And we have many a league to go
 With every now and then a blow,
 And ten to one at least the foe,
 Before our steeds may graze at ease
 Beyond the swift Borysthenes:
 And, sire, your limbs have need of rest,
 And I will be the centinel
 Of this your troop.’—‘ But I request,’
 Said Sweden’s monarch, ‘ thou wilt tell
 This tale of thine, and I may reap,
 Perchance, from this the boon of sleep,
 For at this moment from my eyes
 The hope of present slumber flies.’

' Well, sire, with such a hope, I'll track
 My seventy years of memory back:
 I think 'twas in my twentieth spring,—
 Ay, 'twas,—when Casimir was king—
 John Casimir,—I was his page
 Six summers in my earlier age;
 A learned monarch, faith! was he,
 And most unlike your majesty:
 He made no wars, and did not gain
 New realms to lose them back again;
 And (save debates in Warsaw's diet)
 He reign'd in most unseemly quiet;
 Not that he had no cares to vex,
 He loved the muses and the sex;
 And sometimes these so froward are,
 They made him wish himself at war;
 But soon his wrath being o'er, he took
 Another mistress, or new book:
 And then he gave prodigious fêtes—
 All Warsaw gather'd round his gates
 To gaze upon his splendid court,
 And dames, and chiefs, of princely port:
 He was the Polish Solomon,
 So sung his poets, all but one,
 Who, being unpension'd, made a satire,
 And boasted that he could not flatter.
 It was a court of jousts and mimes,
 Where every courtier tried at rhymes;

Even I for once produced some verses,
 And sign'd my odes Despairing Thirsis.
 There was a certain Palatine,
 A count of far and high descent,
 Rich as a salt or silver mine;*
 And he was proud, ye may divine,
 As if from heaven he had been sent:
 He had such wealth in blood and ore
 As few could match beneath the throne;
 And he would gaze upon his store,
 And o'er his pedigree would pore,
 Until by some confusion led,
 Which almost look'd like want of head,
 He thought their merits were his own.
 His wife was not of his opinion—
 His junior she by thirty years—
 Grew daily tired of his dominion;
 And, after wishes, hopes, and fears,
 To virtue a few farewell tears,
 A restless dream or two, some glances
 At Warsaw's youth, some songs, and dances,
 Awaited but the usual chances,
 Those happy accidents which render
 The coldest dames so very tender,

*. This comparison of a "salt mine" may perhaps be permitted to a Pole, as the wealth of the country consists greatly in the salt mines.

To deck her Count with titles given,
 'Tis said, as passports into heaven;
 But, strange to say, they rarely boast
 Of these who have deserved them most.

V.

I was a goodly stripling then;
 At seventy years I so may say,
 That there were few, or boys or men,
 Who, in my dawning time of day,
 Of vassal or of knight's degree,
 Could vie in vanities with me;
 For I had strength, youth, gayety,
 A port, not like to this ye see,
 But smooth, as all is rugged now;
 For time, and care, and war, have plough'd
 My very soul from out my brow;
 And thus I should be disavow'd
 By all my kind and kin, could they
 Compare my day and yesterday;
 This change was wrought, too, long ere age
 Had ta'en my features for his page:
 With years, ye know, have not declined
 My strength, my courage, or my mind,
 Or at this hour I should not be
 Telling old tales beneath a tree,
 With starless skies my canopy.
 But let me on; Theresa's form—

Methinks it glides before me now,
 Between me and yon chestnut's bough.
 The memory is so quick and warm;
 And yet I find no words to tell
 The shape of her I loved so well:
 She had the Asiatic eye,

Such as our Turkish neighbourhood
 Hath mingled with our Polish blood,
 Dark as above us is the sky;
 But through it stole a tender light,
 Like the first moonrise at midnight;
 Large, dark, and swimming in the stream,
 Which seem'd to melt to its own beam;
 All love, half languor, and half fire,
 Like saints that at the stake expire,
 And lift their raptured looks on high,
 As though it were a joy to die.
 A brow like a midsummer lake,

Transparent with the sun therein,
 When waves no murmur dare to make,
 And heaven beholds her face within.
 A cheek and lip—but why proceed?

I loved her then—I love her still;
 And such as I am, love indeed
 In fierce extremes—in good and ill.

But still we love even in our rage,
 And haunted to our very age
 With the vain shadow of the past,
 As is Mazeppa to the last.

VI.

We met—we gazed—I saw, and sigh'd,
 She did not speak, and yet replied;
 There are ten thousand tones and signs
 We hear and see, but none defines—
 Involuntary sparks of thought,
 Which strike from out the heart o'erwrought,
 And from a strange intelligence,
 Alike mysterious and intense,
 Which link the burning chain that binds,
 Without their will, young hearts and minds;
 Conveying, as the electric wire,
 We know not how, the absorbing fire.—
 I saw, and sigh'd—in silence wept,
 And still reluctant distance kept,
 Until I was made known to her,
 And we might then and there confer
 Without suspicion—then, even then,
 I long'd, and was resolved to speak;
 But on my lips they died again,
 The accents tremulous and weak,
 Until one hour. There is a game,
 A frivolous and foolish play,
 Wherewith we while away the day;
 It is—I have forgot the name—
 And we to this, it seems, were set,
 By some strange chance, which I forget:
 I reck'd not if I won or lost,

It was enough for me to be
 So near to hear, and oh! to see
 The being whom I lov'd the most.—
 I watch'd her as a centinel,
 (May ours this dark night watch as well!)
 Until I saw, and thus it was,
 That she was pensive, nor perceived
 Her occupation, nor was grieved
 Nor glad to lose or gain; but still
 Play'd on for hours, as if her will
 Yet bound her to the place, though not
 That hers might be the winning lot.
 Then through my brain the thought did pass
 Even as a flash of lightning there,
 That there was something in her air
 Which would not doom me to despair;
 And on the thought my words broke forth,
 All incoherent as they were—
 Their eloquence was little worth,
 But yet she listen'd—'tis enough—
 Who listens once will listen twice;
 Her heart, be sure, is not of ice,
 And one refusal no rebuff.

VII.

I loved, and was beloved again—
 They tell me, sire, you never knew
 Those gentle frailties; if 'tis true,

I shorten all my joy or pain;
 To you 'twould seem absurd as vain;
 But all men are not born to reign,
 Or o'er their passions, or as you
 Thus o'er themselves and nations too.

I am—or rather *was*—a prince,
 A chief of thousands, and could lead
 Them on where each would foremost bleed;
 But could not o'er myself evince
 The like control—But to resume:

I loved, and was beloved again;
 In sooth, it is a happy doom,

But yet where happiest ends in pain.—
 We met in secret, and the hour
 Which led me to that lady's bower
 Was fiery Expectation's dower.

My days and nights were nothing—all
 Except that hour, which doth recal
 In the long lapse from youth to age

No other like itself—I'd give

The Ukraine back again to live
 It o'er once more—and be a page,
 The happy page, who was the lord
 Of one soft heart, and his own sword,
 And had no other gem nor wealth
 Save nature's gift of youth and health.—

We met in secret—doubly sweet,
 Some say, they find it so to meet;

I know not that—I would have given
 My life but to have call'd her mine
 In the full view of earth and heaven;
 For I did oft and long repine
 That we could only meet by stealth.

VIII.

For lovers there are many eyes,
 And such there were on us;—the devil
 On such occasions should be civil—
 The devil!—I'm loth to do him wrong,
 It might be some untoward saint,
 Who would not be at rest too long,
 But to his pious bile gave vent—
 But one fair night, some lurking spies
 Surprised and seized us both.
 The Count was something more than wroth—
 I was unarm'd; but if in steel,
 All cap-a-pie from head to heel,
 What 'gainst their numbers could I do?
 'Twas near his castle, far away
 From city or from succour near,
 And almost on the break of day;
 I did not think to see another,
 My moments seem'd reduced to few;
 And with one prayer to Mary Mother,
 And, it may be, a saint or two,
 As I resign'd me to my fate,
 They led me to the castle gate:

Theresa's doom I never knew,
 Our lot was henceforth separate.—
 An angry man, ye may opine,
 Was he, the proud Count Palatine;
 And he had reason good to be,
 But he was most enraged lest such
 An accident should chance to touch
 Upon his future pedigree;
 Nor less amaz'd, that such a blot
 His noble 'scutcheon should have got,
 While he was highest of his line;
 Because unto himself he seem'd
 The first of men, nor less he deem'd
 In other's eyes, and most in mine.
 'Sdeath! with a *page*—perchance a king
 Had reconciled him to the thing;
 But with a stripling of a page—
 I felt—but cannot paint his rage.

IX.

“Bring forth the horse!”—the horse was brought;
 In truth, he was a noble steed,
 A Tartar of the Ukraine breed,
 Who look'd as though the speed of thought
 Were in his limbs; but he was wild,
 Wild as the wild deer, and untaught,
 With spur and bridle undefiled—
 'Twas but a day he had been caught;

And snorting, with erected mane,
 And struggling fiercely, but in vain,
 In the full foam of wrath and dread
 To me the desert-born was led:
 They bound me on, that menial throng,
 Upon his back with many a thong;
 Then loosed him with a sudden lash—
 Away!—away!—and on we dash!—
 Torrents less rapid and less rash.
 Away!—away!—My breath was gone—
 I saw not where he hurried on:
 'Twas scarcely yet the break of day,
 And on he foam'd—away!—away!—
 The last of human sounds which rose,
 As I was darted from my foes,
 Was the wild shout of savage laughter,
 Which on the wind came roaring after
 A moment from that rabble rout:
 With sudden wrath I wrench'd my head,
 And snapp'd the cord, which to the mane
 Had bound my neck in lieu of rein,
 And, writhing half my form about,
 Howl'd back my curse; but 'midst the tread,
 The thunder of my courser's speed,
 Perchance they did not hear nor heed:
 It vexes me—for I would fain
 Have paid their insult back again.
 I paid it well in after days:

There is not of that castle gate,
 Its drawbridge and portcullis' weight,
 Stone, bar, moat, bridge, or barrier left;
 Nor of its fields a blade of grass,
 Save what grows on a ridge of wall,
 Where stood the hearth-stone of the hall;
 And many a time ye there might pass,
 Nor dream that e'er that fortress was:
 I saw its turrets in a blaze,
 Their crackling battlements all cleft,
 And the hot lead pour down like rain
 From off the scorch'd and blackening roof,
 Whose thickness was not vengeance-proof.
 They little thought that day of pain,
 When lanch'd, as on the lightning's flash,
 They bade me to destruction dash,
 That one day I should come again,
 With twice five thousand horse, to thank
 The Count for his uncourteous ride.
 They play'd me then a bitter prank,
 When, with the wild horse for my guide,
 They bound me to his foaming flank:
 At length I play'd them one as frank—
 For time at last sets all things even—
 And if we do but watch the hour,
 There never yet was human power
 Which could evade, if unforgiven,
 The patient search and vigil long
 Of him who treasures up a wrong.

XI.

Away, away, my steed and I,
Upon the pinions of the wind,
All human dwellings left behind;
We sped like meteors through the sky,
When with its crackling sound the night
Is checker'd with the northern light:
Town—village—none were on our track,
But a wild plain of far extent,
And bounded by a forest black;
And, save the scarce seen battlement
On distant heights of some strong hold,
Against the Tartars built of old,
No trace of man. The year before
A Turkish army had march'd o'er;
And where the Spahi's hoof hath trod,
The verdure flies the bloody sod:—
The sky was dull, and dim, and gray,
And a low breeze crept moaning by—
I could have answer'd with a sigh—
But fast we fled, away, away—
And I could neither sigh nor pray;
And my cold sweat-drops fell like rain
Upon the courser's bristling mane;
But, snorting still with rage and fear,
He flew upon his far career:
At times I almost thought, indeed,
He must have slacken'd in his speed;

But no—my bound and slender frame
 Was nothing to his angry might,
 And merely like a spur became:
 Each motion which I made to free
 My swoln limbs from their agony
 Increased his fury and affright:
 I tried my voice,—'twas faint and low,
 But yet he swerved as from a blow;
 And, starting to each accent, sprang
 As from a sudden trumpet's clang:
 Meantime my cords were wet with gore,
 Which, oozing through my limbs, ran o'er;
 And in my tongue the thirst became
 A something fierier far than flame.

XII.

We near'd the wild wood—'twas so wide,
 I saw no bounds on either side;
 Twas studded with old sturdy trees,
 That bent not to the roughest breeze
 Which howls down from Siberia's waste,
 And strips the forest in its haste,—
 But these were few, and far between
 Set thick with shrubs more young and green,
 Luxuriant with their annual leaves,
 Ere strown by those autumnal eves
 That nip the forest's foliage dead,
 Discolour'd with a lifeless red,

Which stands thereon like stiffen'd gore
 Upon the slain when battle's o'er,
 And some long winter's night hath shed
 Its frost o'er every tombless head,
 So cold and stark the raven's beak
 May peck unpierced each frozen cheek:
 'Twas a wild waste of underwood,
 And here and there a chestnut stood,
 The strong oak, and the hardy pine;
 But far apart—and well it were,
 Or else a different lot were mine—

The boughs gave way, and did not tear
 My limbs; and I found strength to bear
 My wounds, already scarr'd with cold—
 My bonds forbade to loose my hold.
 We rustled through the leaves like wind,
 Left shrubs, and trees, and wolves behind;
 By night I heard them on the track,
 Their troop came hard upon our back,
 With their long gallop, which can tire
 The hound's deep hate, and hunter's fire:
 Where'er we flew they follow'd on,
 Nor left us with the morning sun;
 Behind I saw them, scarce a rood,
 At day-break winding through the wood,
 And through the night had heard their feet
 Their stealing, rustling step repeat.
 Oh! how I wish'd for spear or sword,
 At least to die amidst the horde,

And perish—if it must be so—
 At bay, destroying many a foe.
 When first my courser's race begun,
 I wish'd the goal already won;
 But now I doubted strength and speed.
 Vain doubt! his swift and savage breed
 Had nerved him like the mountain-roe;
 Nor faster falls the blinding snow
 Which whelms the peasant near the door.
 Whose threshold he shall cross no more,
 Bewilder'd with the dazzling blast,
 Than through the forest-paths he past—
 Untired, untamed, and worse than wild;
 All furious as a favour'd child
 Balk'd of its wish; or fiercer still—
 A woman piqued—who has her will.

XIII.

The wood was past; 'twas more than noon,
 But chill the air, although in June;
 Or it might be my veins ran cold—
 Prolong'd endurance tames the bold;
 And I was then not what I seem,
 But headlong as a wintry stream,
 And wore my feelings out before
 I we'd could count their causes o'er:
 And what with fury, fear, and wrath,
 The tortures which beset my path,

Cold, hunger, sorrow, shame, distress,
 Thus bound in nature's nakedness;
 Sprung from a race whose rising blood
 When stirr'd beyond its calmer mood,
 And trodden hard upon, is like
 The rattle-snake's, in act to strike,
 What marvel if this worn-out trunk
 Beneath its woes a moment sunk?
 The earth gave way, the skies roll'd round,
 I seem'd to sink upon the ground;
 But err'd, for I was fastly bound.
 My heart turn'd sick, my brain grew sore,
 And throb'd awhile, then beat no more:
 The skies spun like a mighty wheel;
 I saw the trees like drunkards reel,
 And a slight flash sprang o'er my eyes,
 Which saw no farther: he who dies
 Can die no more than then I died.
 O'ertortured by that ghastly ride,
 I felt the blackness come and go.

And strove to wake; but could not make
 My senses climb up from below:
 I felt as on a plank at sea,
 When all the waves that dash o'er thee,
 At the same time upheave and whelm,
 And hurl thee towards a desert realm,
 My undulating life was as
 The fancied lights that flitting pass

Our shut eyes in deep midnight, when
 Fever begins upon the brain;
 But soon it pass'd, with little pain,
 But a confusion worse than such;
 I own that I should deem it much,
 Dying, to feel the same again;
 And yet I do suppose we must
 Feel far more ere we turn to dust:
 No matter; I have bared my brow
 Full in Death's face—before—and now.

XIV.

My thoughts came back; where was I? Cold,
 And numb, and giddy: pulse by pulse
 Life reassumed its lingering hold,
 And throb by throb; till grown a pang
 Which for a moment would convulse,
 My blood reflow'd, though thick and chill;
 My ear with uncouth noises rang,
 My heart began once more to thrill;
 My sight return'd, though dim; alas!
 And thicken'd, as it were, with glass.
 Methought the dash of waves was nigh;
 There was a gleam too of the sky,
 Studded with stars;—it is no dream;
 The wild horse swims the wilder stream!
 The bright broad river's gushing tide
 Sweeps, winding onward, far and wide,

And we are half-way, struggling o'er
To yon unknown and silent shore.

The waters broke my hollow trance,
And with a temporary strength

My stiffen'd limbs were rebaptized.
My courser's broad breast proudly braves,
And dashes off the ascending waves
And onward we advance!

We reach the slippery shore at length,

A haven I but little prized,
For all behind was dark and drear,
And all before was night and fear.

How many hours of night or day
In those suspended pangs I lay,
I could not tell; I scarcely knew
If this were human breath I drew.

XV.

With glossy skin, and dripping mane,
And reeling limbs, and reeking flank,
The wild steed's sinewy nerves still strain
Up the repelling bank.

We gain the top: a boundless plain
Spreads through the shadow of the night,
And onward, onward, onward, seems
Like precipices in our dreams,
To stretch beyond the sight;
And here and there a speck of white,

Or scatter'd spot of dusky green,
 In masses broke into the light,
 As rose the moon upon my right.

But nought distinctly seen
 In the dim waste, would indicate
 The omen of a cottage gate;
 No twinkling taper from afar
 Stood like an hospitable star;
 Not even an ignis-fatuus rose
 To make him merry with my woes:

That very cheat had cheer'd me then!
 Although detected, welcome still,
 Reminding me, through every ill,
 Of the abodes of men.

XVI.

Onward we went—but slack and slow;
 His savage force at length o'erspent,
 The drooping courser, faint and low,
 All feebly foaming went.

A sickly infant had had power
 To guide him forward in that hour;
 But useless all to me.

His new-born tameness nought avail'd,
 My limbs were bound; my force had fail'd,
 Perchance, had they been free.

With feeble effort still I tried
 To rend the bonds so starkly tied—

But still it was in vain;
 My limbs were only wrung the more,
 And soon the idle strife gave o'er,
 Which but prolong'd their pain:
 The dizzy race seem'd almost done,
 Although no goal was nearly won:
 Some streaks announced the coming sun—

How slow, alas! he came!
 Methought that mist of dawning gray
 Would never dapple into day;
 How heavily it roll'd away—

Before the eastern flame
 Rose crimson, and deposed the stars,
 And call'd the radiance from their cars,
 And fill'd the earth, from his deep throne,
 With lonely lustre, all his own.

XVII.

Up rose the sun; the mists were curl'd
 Back from the solitary world
 Which lay around—behind—before:
 What boot'd it to traverse o'er
 Plain, forest, river? Man nor brute,
 Nor dint of hoof, nor print of foot,
 Lay in the wild luxuriant soil;
 No sign of travel—none of toil;
 The very air was mute;
 And not an insect's shrill small horn,
 Nor matin bird's new voice was borne

From herb nor thicket. Many a werst,
 Panting as if his heart would burst,
 The weary brute still stagger'd on;
 And still we were—or seem'd—alone:
 At length, while reeling on our way,
 Methought I heard a courser neigh,
 From out yon tuft of blackening firs.
 Is it the wind those branches stirs?
 No, no! from out the forest prance

A trampling troop; I see them come!
 In one vast squadron they advance!

I strove to cry—my lips were dumb.
 The steeds rush on in plunging pride;
 But where are they the reins to guide?
 A thousand horse—and none to ride!
 With flowing tail, and flying mane,
 Wide nostrils—never stretch'd by pain,
 Mouths bloodless to the bit or rein,
 And feet that iron never shod,
 And flanks unscarr'd by spur or rod.
 A thousand horse, the wild, the free,
 Like waves that follow o'er the sea,

Came thickly thundering on,
 As if our faint approach to meet;
 The sight re-nerved my courser's feet,
 A moment staggering, feebly fleet,
 A moment, with a faint low neigh,
 He answer'd, and then fell;
 With gasps and glazing eyes he lay,

And reeking limbs immoveable,
 His first and last career is done!
 On came the troop—they saw him stoop,
 They saw me strangely bound along
 His back with many a bloody thong:
 They stop—they start—they snuff the air,
 Gallop a moment here and there,
 Approach, retire, wheel round and round,
 Then plunging back with sudden bound,
 Headed by one black mighty steed,
 Who seem'd the patriarch of his breed,
 Without a single speck or hair
 Of white upon his shaggy hide;
 They snort—they foam—neigh—swerve aside,
 And backward to the forest fly,
 By instinct, from a human eye.—
 They left me there, to my despair,
 Link'd to the dead and stiffening wretch,
 Whose lifeless limbs beneath me stretch,
 Relieved from that unwonted weight,
 From whence I could not extricate
 Nor him nor me—and there we lay,
 The dying on the dead!
 I little deem'd another day
 Would see my houseless, helpless head.

And there from morn till twilight bound,
 I felt the heavy hours toil round,

With just enough of life to see
 My last of suns go down on me,
 In hopeless certainty of mind,
 That makes us feel at length resign'd
 To that which our foreboding years
 Presents the worst and last of fears
 Inevitable—even a boon,
 Nor more unkind for coming soon;
 Yet shunn'd and dreaded with such care,
 As if it only were a snare

That prudence might escape:
 At times both wish'd for and implored,
 At times sought with self-pointed sword,
 Yet still a dark and hideous close
 To even intolerable woes,

And welcome in no shape.

And, strange to say, the sons of pleasure,
 They who have revell'd beyond measure
 In beauty, wassail, wine, and treasure,
 Die calm, or calmer, oft than he
 Whose heritage was misery:

For he who hath in turn run through
 All that was beautiful and new,

Hath nought to hope, and nought to leave;
 And, save the future, (which is view'd
 Not quite as men are base or good,
 But as their nerves may be endued),

With nought perhaps to grieve:—

The wretch still hopes his woes must end,
 And Death, whom he should deem his friend,
 Appears, to his distemper'd eyes,
 Arrived to rob him of his prize,
 The tree of his new Paradise.
 To-morrow would have given him all,
 Repaid his pangs, repair'd his fall;
 To-morrow would have been the first
 Of days no more deplored or curst,
 But bright, and long, and beckoning years,
 Seen dazzling through the mist of tears,
 Guerdon of many a painful hour;
 To-morrow would have given him power
 To rule, to shine, to smite, to save—
 And must it dawn upon his grave?

XVIII.

The sun was sinking—still I lay
 Chain'd to the chill and stiffening steed,
 I thought to mingle there our clay;
 And my dim eyes of death had need,
 No hope arose of being freed:
 I cast my last looks up the sky,
 And there between me and the sun
 I saw the expecting raven fly,
 Who scarce would wait till both should die,
 Ere his repast begun;
 He flew, and perch'd, then flew once more,
 And each time nearer than before;

I saw his wing through twilight flit,
And once so near me he alit

I could have smote, but lack'd the strength;
But the slight motion of my hand,
And feeble scratching of the sand,
The exerted throat's faint struggling noise,
Which scarcely could be call'd a voice,

Together scared him off at length.—

I know no more—my latest dream

Is something of a lovely star

Which fix'd my dull eyes from afar,
And went and came with wandering beam,
And of the cold, dull, swimming, dense
Sensation of recurring sense,

And then subsiding back to death,

And then again a little breath,

A little thrill, a short suspense,

An icy sickness curdling o'er

My heart, and sparks that cross'd my brain—

A gasp, a throb, a start of pain,

A sigh, and nothing more.

XIX.

I woke—Where was I?—Do I see

A human face look down on me?

And doth a roof above me close?

Do these limbs on a couch repose?

Is this a chamber where I lie?

And is it mortal yon bright eye,

That watches me with gentle glance?

I closed my own again once more,
As doubtful that the former trance
Could not as yet be o'er.

A slender girl, long-hair'd, and tall,
Sate watching by the cottage wall;
The sparkle of her eye I caught,
Even with my first return of thought;
For ever and anon she threw

A prying, pitying glance on me
With her black eyes so wild and free:
I gazed, and gazed, until I knew
No vision it could be,—

But that I lived, and was released
From adding to the vulture's feast:
And when the Cossack maid beheld
My heavy eyes at length unseal'd,
She smiled—and I essay'd to speak,

But fail'd—and she approach'd, and made
With lip and finger signs that said,
I must not strive as yet to break
The silence; till my strength should be
Enough to leave my accents free;
And then her hand on mine she laid,
And smooth'd the pillow for my head,
And stole along on tiptoe tread,

And gently oped the door, and spake
In whispers—ne'er was voice so sweet!
Even music follow'd her light feet;—

But those she call'd were not awake,
And she went forth; but, ere she pass'd,
Another look on me she cast,

Another sign she made, to say,
That I had nought to fear, that all
Were near, at my command or call,
And she would not delay
Her due return:—while she was gone,
Methought I felt too much alone.

XX.

She came with mother and with sire—
What need of more?—I will not tire
With long recital of the rest,
Since I became the Cossacks' guest:
They found me senseless on the plain—

They bore me to the nearest hut—
They brought me into life again—
Me—one day o'er their realm to reign!

Thus the vain fool who strove to glut
His rage, refining on my pain,

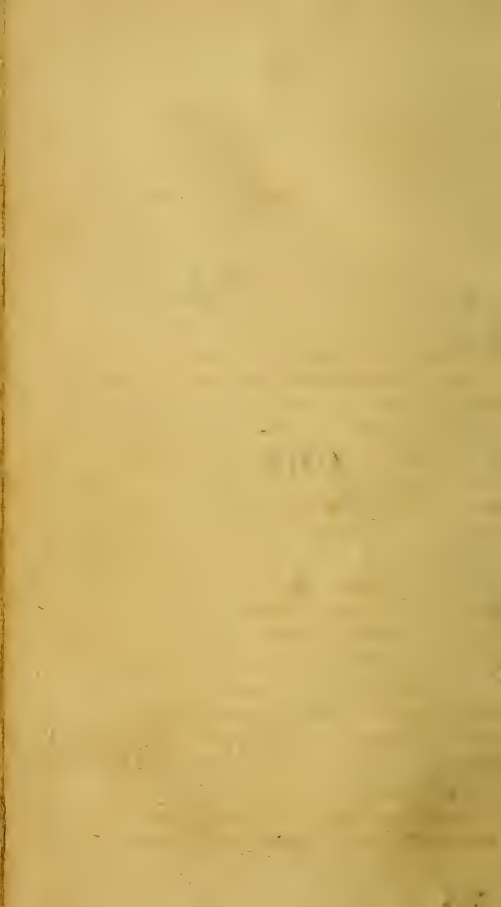
Sent me forth to the wilderness,
Bound, naked, bleeding, and alone,
To pass the desert to a throne,—

What mortal his own doom may guess?—

Let none despond, let none despair!
To-morrow the Borysthenes
May see our coursers graze at ease

Upon his Turkish bank,—and never
Had I such welcome for a river
As I shall yield when safely there.
Comrades, good night!"—The hetman threw
His length beneath the oak-tree shade,
With leafy couch already made,
A bed nor comfortless nor new
To him, who took his rest whene'er
The hour arrived, no matter where:—
His eyes the hastening slumbers steep.
And if ye marvel Charles forgot
To thank his tale, *he* wonder'd not,—
The king had been an hour asleep.

ODE.



ODE.

I.

OH Venice! Venice! when thy marble walls
Are level with the waters, there shall be
A cry of nations o'er thy sunken halls,
A loud lament along the sweeping sea!
If I, a northern wanderer, weep for thee,
What should thy sons do?—any thing but weep:
And yet they only murmur in their sleep.
In contrast with their fathers—as the slime,
The dull green ooze of the receding deep,
Is with the dashing of the spring-tide foam,
That drives the sailor shipless to his home,
Are they to those that were; and thus they creep,
Crouching and crab-like, through their sapping
streets.

Oh! agony—that centuries should reap
No mellow harvest! Thirteen hundred years
Of wealth and glory turn'd to dust and tears;
And every monument the stranger meets,
Church, palace, pillar, as a mourner greets;
And even the Lion all subdued appears,

nd the harsh sound of the barbarian drum,
 With dull and daily dissonance, repeats
 The echo of the tyrant's voice along
 The soft waves, once all musical to song,
 That heaved beneath the moonlight with the
 throng

Of gondolas—and to the busy hum
 Of cheerful creatures, whose most sinful deeds
 Were but the overbeating of the heart,
 And flow of too much happiness, which needs
 The aid of age to turn its course apart
 From the luxuriant and voluptuous flood
 Of sweet sensat ^{ions}, battling with the blood.
 But these are better than the gloomy errors,
 The weeds of nations in their last decay,
 When Vice walks forth with her unsoften'd ter-
 rors,

And Mirth is madness, and but smiles to slay;
 And Hope is nothing but a false delay,
 The sick man's lightning half an hour ere death,
 When Faintness, the last mortal birth of Pain,
 And apathy of limb, the dull beginning
 Of the cold staggering race which Death is win-
 ning,

Steals vein by vein and pulse by pulse away:
 Yet so relieving the o'er-tortured clay,
 To him appears renewal of his breath,
 And freedom the mere numbness of his chain;—
 And then he talks of life, and how again

He feels his spirits soaring—albeit weak,
 And of the fresher air, which he would seek;
 And as he whispers knows not that he gasps,
 That his thin finger feels not what it clasps,
 And so the film comes o'er him—and the dizzy
 Chamber swims round and round—and shadows
 busy,
 At which he vainly catches, flit, and gleam,
 Till the last rattle chokes the strangled scream,
 And all is ice and blackness,—and the earth
 That which it was the moment ere our birth.

II.

'There is no hope for nations!—Search the page
 Of many thousand years—the daily scene,
 The flow and ebb of each recurring age,
 The everlasting *to be* which *hath been*,
 Hath taught us nought or little: still we lean
 On things that rot beneath our weight, and wear
 Our strength away in wrestling with the air;
 For 'tis our nature strikes us down: the beasts
 Slaughter'd in hourly hecatombs for feasts
 Are of as high an order—they must go
 Even where their driver goads them, though to
 slaughter.
 Ye men, who pour your blood for kings as water,
 What have they given your children in return?
 A heritage of servitude and woes,
 A blindfold bondage, where your hire is blows.

What! do not yet the red-hot ploughshares burn,
 O'er which you stumble in a false ordeal,
 And deem this proof of loyalty the *real*;
 Kissing the hand that guides you to your scars,
 And glorying as you tread the glowing bars?
 All that your sires have left you, all that Time
 Bequeaths of free, and History of sublime,
 Spring from a different theme!—Ye see and read,
 Admire and sigh, and then succumb and bleed!
 Save the few spirits, who, despite of all,
 And worse than all, the sudden crimes engender'd,
 By the down-thundering of the prison-wall,
 And thirst to swallow the sweet waters tender'd
 Gushing from Freedom's fountains—when the
 crowd,
 Madden'd with centuries of drought, are loud,
 And trample on each other to obtain
 The cup which brings oblivion of a chain
 Heavy and sore,—in which long yoked they
 plough'd
 The sand,—or if there sprung the yellow grain,
 'Twas not for them, their necks were too much
 bow'd,
 And their dead palates chew'd the cud of pain:—
 Yes! the few spirits—who, despite of deeds
 Which they abhor, confound not with the cause,
 Those momentary starts from Nature's laws,
 Which, like the pestilence and earthquake, smite
 But for a term, then pass, and leave the earth

With all her seasons to repair the blight
 With a few summers, and again put forth
 Cities and generations—fair, when free—
 For, Tyranny, there blooms no bud for thee!

III.

Glory and Empire! once upon these towers
 With Freedom—godlike Triad! how ye sate!
 The league of mightiest nations, in those hours
 When Venice was an envy, might abate,
 But did not quench, her spirit—in her fate
 All were enwrapp'd: the feasted monarchs knew
 And loved their hostess, nor could learn to hate,
 Although they humbled—with the kingly few
 The many felt, for from all days and climes
 She was the voyager's worship;—even her crimes
 Were of the softer order—born of Love,
 She drank no blood, nor fatten'd on the dead,
 But gladden'd where her harmless conquests
 spread;

For these restored the Cross, that from above
 Hallow'd her sheltering banners, which incessant
 Flew between earth and the unholy Crescent,
 Which, if it waned and dwindled, Earth may
 thank

The city it has clothed in chains, which clank
 Now, creaking in the ears of those who owe
 The name of Freedom to her glorious struggles;
 Yet she but shares with them a common wo,

And call'd the "kingdom" of a conquering foe,—
 But knows what all—and, most of all, *we* know—
 With what set gilded terms a tyrant juggles!

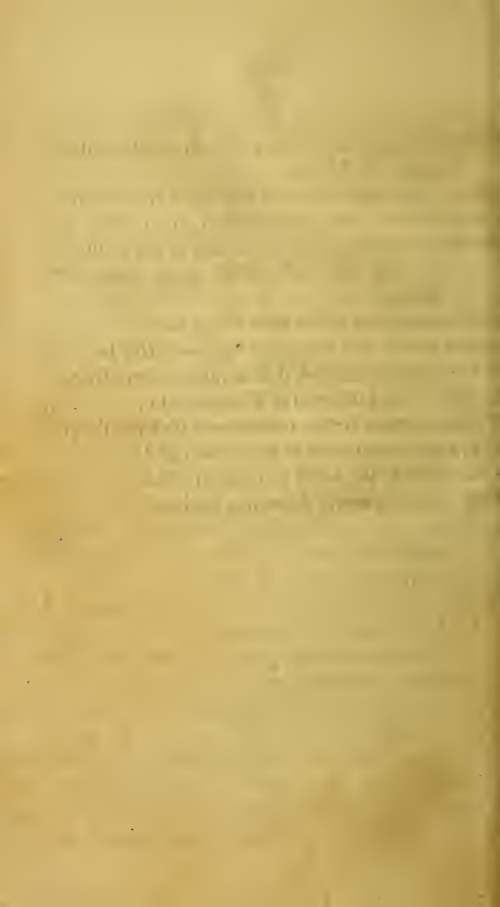
IV.

The name of Commonwealth is past and gone
 O'er the three fractions of the groaning globe
 Venice is crush'd, and Holland deigns to own
 A sceptre, and endures the purple robe;
 If the free Switzer yet bestrides alone
 His chainless mountains, 'tis but for a time,
 For tyranny of late is cunning grown,
 And in its own good season tramples down
 The sparkles of our ashes. One great clime,
 Whose vigorous offspring by dividing ocean
 Are kept apart and nursed in the devotion
 Of Freedom, which their fathers fought for, and
 Bequeath'd—a heritage of heart and hand,
 And proud distinction from each other land,
 Whose sons must bow them at a monarch's motion,
 As if his senseless sceptre were a wand
 Full of the magic of exploded science—
 Still one great clime, in full and free defiance,
 Yet rears her crest, unconquer'd and sublime,
 Above the far Atlantic!—She has taught
 Her Esau-brethren that the haughty flag,
 The floating fence of Albion's feeble crag,
 May strike to those whose red right hands have
 bought

Rights cheaply earn'd with blood. Still, still, for
ever

Better, though each man's life-blood were a river,
That it should flow, and overflow, than creep
Through thousand lazy channels in our veins,
Damm'd like the dull canal with locks and
chains,

And moving, as a sick man in his sleep,
Three paces, and then faltering:—better be
Where the extinguish'd Spartans still are free,
In their proud charnel of Thermopylæ,
Than stagnate in our marsh,—or o'er the deep
Fly, and one current to the ocean add,
One spirit to the souls our fathers had,
One freeman more, America, to thee!



A FRAGMENT.

June 17, 1816.

IN the year 17—, having for some time determined on a journey through countries not hitherto much frequented by travellers, I set out, accompanied by a friend, whom I shall designate by the name of Augustus Darvell. He was a few years my elder, and a man of considerable fortune and ancient family—advantages which an extensive capacity prevented him alike from undervaluing or overrating. Some peculiar circumstances in his private history had rendered him to me an object of attention, of interest, and even of regard, which neither the reserve of his manners, nor occasional indications of an inquietude, at times nearly approaching to alienation of mind, could extinguish.

I was yet young in life, which I had begun early; but my intimacy with him was of a recent date: we had been educated at the same schools and university; but his progress through these had

preceded mine, and he had been deeply initiated into what is called the world, while I was yet in my noviciate. While thus engaged, I had heard much both of his past and present life; and although in these accounts there were many and irreconcilable contradictions, I could still gather from the whole that he was a being of no common order, and one who, whatever pains he might take to avoid remark, would still be remarkable. I had cultivated his acquaintance subsequently, and endeavoured to obtain his friendship, but this last appeared to be unattainable; whatever affections he might have possessed seemed now, some to have been extinguished, and others to be concentrated: that his feelings were acute, I had sufficient opportunities of observing; for, although he could control, he could not altogether disguise them: still he had a power of giving to one passion the appearance of another in such a manner that it was difficult to define the nature of what was working within him; and the expressions of his features would vary so rapidly, though slightly, that it was useless to trace them to their sources. It was evident that he was a prey to some cureless disquiet; but whether it arose from ambition, love, remorse, grief, from one or all of these, or merely from a morbid temperament akin to disease, I could not discover: there were circumstances alleged, which might have justified the appli-

cation to each of these causes; but, as I have before said, these were so contradictory and contradicted, that none could be fixed upon with accuracy. Where there is mystery, it is generally supposed that there must also be evil: I know not how this may be, but in him there certainly was the one, though I could not ascertain the extent of the other—and felt loth, as far as regarded himself, to believe in its existence. My advances were received with sufficient coldness; but I was young, and not easily discouraged, and at length succeeded in obtaining, to a certain degree, that common-place intercourse and moderate confidence of common and every day concerns, created and cemented by similarity of pursuit and frequency of meeting, which is called intimacy, or friendship, according to the ideas of him who uses those words to express them.

Darvell had already travelled extensively; and to him I had applied for information with regard to the conduct of my intended journey. It was my secret wish that he might be prevailed on to accompany me: it was also a probable hope, founded upon the shadowy restlessness which I had observed in him, and to which the animation which he appeared to feel on such subjects, and his apparent indifference to all by which he was more immediately surrounded, gave fresh strength. This wish I first hinted, and then expressed: his

answer, though I had partly expected it, gave me all the pleasure of surprise—he consented; and, after the requisite arrangements, we commenced our voyages. After journeying through various countries of the south of Europe, our attention was turned towards the East, according to our original destination; and it was in my progress through those regions that the incident occurred upon which will turn what I may have to relate.

The constitution of Darvell, which must from his appearance have been in early life more than usually robust, had been for some time gradually giving way, without the intervention of any apparent disease: he had neither cough nor hectic, yet he became daily more enfeebled: his habits were temperate, and he neither declined nor complained of fatigue, yet he was evidently wasting away: he became more and more silent and sleepless, and at length so seriously altered, that my alarm grew proportionate to what I conceived to be his danger.

We had determined, on our arrival at Smyrna, on an excursion to the ruins of Ephesus and Sardis, from which I endeavoured to dissuade him in his present state of indisposition—but in vain: there appeared to be an oppression on his mind, and a solemnity in his manner, which ill corresponded with his eagerness to proceed on what I regarded as a mere party of pleasure, little suited

to a valetudinarian; but I opposed him no longer—and in a few days we set off together, accompanied only by a serrugee and a single janizary.

We had passed halfway towards the remains of Ephesus, leaving behind us the more fertile environs of Smyrna, and were entering upon that wild and tenantless track through the marshes and defiles which lead to the few huts yet lingering over the broken columns of Diana—the roofless walls of expelled Christianity, and the still more recent but complete desolation of abandoned mosques—when the sudden and rapid illness of my companion obliged us to halt at a Turkish cemetery, the turbaned tombstones of which were the sole indication that human life had ever been a sojourner in this wilderness. The only caravansera we had seen was left some hours behind us, not a vestige of a town or even cottage was within sight or hope, and this “city of the dead” appeared to be the sole refuge for my unfortunate friend, who seemed on the verge of becoming the last of its inhabitants.

In this situation, I looked round for a place where he might most conveniently repose:—contrary to the usual aspect of Mahometan burial-grounds, the cypresses were in this few in number, and these thinly scattered over its extent: the tombstones were mostly fallen, and worn with age;—upon one of the most considerable of these,

and beneath one of the most spreading trees, Darvell supported himself, in a half-reclining posture, with great difficulty. He asked for water. I had some doubts of our being able to find any, and prepared to go in search of it with hesitating despondency—but he desired me to remain; and turning to Suleiman, our janizary, who stood by us smoking with great tranquillity, he said, “Suleiman, *verbana su*,” (i. e. bring some water,) and went on describing the spot where it was to be found with great minuteness, at a small well for camels, a few hundred yards to the right: the janizary obeyed. I said to Darvell, “How did you know this?”—He replied, “From our situation; you must perceive that this place was once inhabited, and could not have been so without springs: I have also been here before.”

“You have been here before!—how came you never to mention this to me? and what could you be doing in a place where no one would remain a moment longer than they could help it?”

To this question I received no answer. In the mean time Suleiman returned with the water, leaving the serrugee and the horses at the fountain. The quenching of his thirst had the appearance of reviving him for a moment; and I conceived hopes of his being able to proceed, or at least to return, and I urged the attempt. He was si-

lent—and appeared to be collecting his spirits for an effort to speak. He began.

“This is the end of my journey, and of my life—I came here to die: but I have a request to make, a command—for such my last words must be—You will observe it?”

“Most certainly; but have better hopes.”

“I have no hopes, nor wishes, but this—conceal my death from every human being.”

“I hope there will be no occasion: that you will recover, and ——”

“Peace!—it must be so; promise this.”

“I do.”

“Swear it, by all that”——He here dictated an oath of great solemnity.

“There is no occasion for this—I will observe your request; and to doubt me is ——”

“It cannot be helped,—you must swear.”

I took the oath; it appeared to relieve him. He removed a seal ring from his finger, on which were some Arabic characters, and presented it to me. He proceeded—

“On the ninth day of the month, at noon precisely (what month you please, but this must be the day), you must fling this ring into the salt springs which run into the bay of Eleusis; the day after, at the same hour, you must repair to the ruins of the temple of Ceres, and wait one hour.”

“Why?”

“ You will see.”

“ The ninth day of the month, you say?”

“ The ninth.”

As I observed that the present was the ninth day of the month, his countenance changed, and he paused. As he sate, evidently becoming more feeble, a stork, with a snake in her beak, perched upon a tombstone near us; and, without devouring her prey, appeared to be stedfastly regarding us. I know not what impelled me to drive it away, but the attempt was useless; she made a few circles in the air, and returned exactly to the same spot. Darvell pointed to it and smiled; he spoke—I know not whether to himself or to me—but the words were only, “ ‘Tis well!”

“ What is well? what do you mean?”

“ No matter; you must bury me here this evening, and exactly where that bird is now perched. You know the rest of my injunctions.”

He then proceeded to give me several directions as to the manner in which his death might be best concealed. After these were finished, he exclaimed, “ You perceive that bird?”

“ Certainly.”

“ And the serpent writhing in her beak?”

“ Doubtless; there is nothing uncommon in it; it is her natural prey. But it is odd that she does not devour it.”

He smiled in a ghastly manner, and said, faintly, "It is not yet time!" As he spoke, the stork flew away. My eyes followed it for a moment, it could hardly be longer than ten might be counted. I felt Darvell's weight, as it were, increase upon my shoulders, and, turning to look upon his face, perceived that he was dead!

I was shocked with the sudden certainty which could not be mistaken—his countenance in a few minutes became nearly black. I should have attributed so rapid a change to poison, had I not been aware that he had no opportunity of receiving it unperceived. The day was declining, the body was rapidly altering, and nothing remained but to fulfil his request. With the aid of Suleiman's ataghan and my own sabre, we scooped a shallow grave upon the spot which Darvell had indicated; the earth easily gave way, having already received some Mahometan tenant. We dug as deeply as the time permitted us, and throwing the dry earth upon all that remained of the singular being so lately departed, we cut a few sods of greener turf from the less withered soil around us, and laid them upon his sepulchre.

Between astonishment and grief, I was tearless.

* * * * *













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