

THE CORSAIR and LARA

These two poems *may* make a pair: Byron's note to that effect, at the start of *Lara*, leaves the question to the reader. I have put them together to test the thesis. Quite apart from the discrepancy between the heroine's hair-colour (first pointed out by E.H.Coleridge) it seems to me that the protagonists are different men, and that to see the later poem as a sequel to and political development of the earlier, is not of much use in understanding either.

Lara is a man of uncontrollable violence, unlike Conrad, whose propensity towards gentlemanly self-government is one of two qualities (the other being his military incompetence) which militates against the convincing depiction of his buccaneer's calling. Conrad, offered rescue by Gulnare, almost turns it down – and is horrified when Gulnare murders Seyd with a view to easing his escape. On the other hand, Lara, astride the fallen Otho (*Lara*, 723-31) would happily finish him off.



Henry James has a dialogue in which it is imagined what George Eliot's Daniel Deronda would do, once he got to the Holy Land.¹ The conclusion is that he'd drink lots of tea. I'm working at an alternative ending to *Götterdämmerung*, in which Brunnhilde accompanies Siegfried on his Rheinfahrt, sees through Gunther and Gutrune at once, poisons Hagen, and gets bored with Siegfried, who goes off to be a forest warden while she settles down in bed with Loge, because he's clever and amusing.² By the same token, I think that Gulnare would become irritated with Conrad, whose passivity and lack of masculinity she'd find trying. She'd resent, in retrospect, his poor treatment of Medora, take Medora's side (as Teresa Guiccioli would take Annabella's), finish him off one night, and sail back to be Queen of his pirate isle, in answer to an offer made by his men (see *The Corsair*, 1677) with whom she would sleep on a rota basis.

*Conrad saves Gulnare from the haram fire.*³

1: This seemingly facetious paragraph is in fact derived from the critical program "Ivanhoe," devised by Professor Jerome J. McGann.

2: Also in my version, once the Rheinmaidens get their gold back, the world does not end, for Donner and Froh lead a revolt against Wotan, and, snarling "Das ende ist's nicht!", turn him out of the still-standing Valhalla to wander for the rest of eternity, playing riddle-games with any midget or dwarf who happens by.

3: Illustration from <http://people.bu.edu/jwvail/byron_illustrations.html>

She would *not*, I think, returning with him to his native Spain, dress as a page to satisfy his quasi-pederastic whim, dye her naturally auburn hair raven-black, and follow him around mutely, conversing – when *he* felt like it – in a Levantine language which only they understood.

If the protagonist's personality makes *The Corsair* hard to deal with, the narrative of *Lara* makes re-reading that poem an annoyance. The eruption of Esselin into the banquet is never explained (we'd like to know the secret he has about Lara's earlier years) – Otho's self-substitution at the planned duel is unconvincing – the "serf"-revolt is dragged in without preparation, to keep things going – and the presumed assassination of Esselin is tagged on, with a huge and irrelevant prose-note to paper over the crack. The questions asked are not tantalising, just annoying examples of Byron's indifference. In a letter of January 1815 to Thomas Moore he wrote,



*Kaled*⁴

*I have tired the rascals (i.e. the public) with my Harrys and Larrys, Pilgrims and Pirates. Nobody but S<outhe>y has done any thing worth a slice of bookseller's pudding; and he has not luck enough to be found out in doing a good thing. Now, Tom, is thy time ...*⁵

The note of fatigue and literary self-disgust seems genuine – you would not know that *The Corsair* had sold 10,000 copies on the first day of its sale. However, despite what Byron says in the first sentence of his dedication, the two best of the "Turkish Tales" – *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina* – were still to come.

⁴: Illustration from <<http://people.bu.edu/jwvvail/byron_illustrations.html>>.

⁵: BLJ IV 252-3.

The Corsair;

A TALE

“– I suoi pensieri in lui dormir non ponno.”

TASSO, *Canto decimo, Gerusalemme Liberata*.

TO

THOMAS MOORE, ESQ.

MY DEAR MOORE,

I dedicate to you the last production with which I shall trespass on public patience, and your indulgence, for some years; and I own that I feel anxious to avail myself of this latest and only opportunity of adorning my pages with a name, consecrated by unshaken public principle, and the most undoubted and various talents. While Ireland ranks you amongst the foremost of her patriots – while you stand alone the first of her bards in her estimation, and Britain repeats and ratifies the decree – permit me, whose only regret, since our first acquaintance, has been the years he had lost before it commenced, to add the humble, but sincere suffrage of friendship, to the voice of more than one nation. It will at least prove to you, that I have neither forgotten the gratification derived from your society, nor abandoned the prospect of its renewal, whenever your leisure or inclination allows you to atone to your friends for too long an absence. It is said among those friends, I trust truly, that you are engaged in the composition of a poem⁶ whose scene will be laid in the East; none can do those scenes such justice. The wrongs of your own country, the magnificent and fiery spirit of her sons, the beauty and feeling of her daughters, may there be found; and Collins, when he denominated his *Oriental*, his *Irish Eclogues*, was not aware how true, at least, was a part of his parallel. Your imagination will create a warmer sun, and less clouded sky; but wildness, tenderness, and originality are part of your national claim of oriental descent,⁷ to which you have already thus far proved your title more clearly than the most zealous of your country's antiquarians. May I add a few words on a subject on which all men are supposed to be fluent, and none agreeable? – Self. I have written much, and published more than enough to demand a longer silence than I now meditate; but for some years to come it is my intention to tempt no further the award of “Gods, men, nor columns.”⁸ In the present composition I have attempted not the most difficult, but, perhaps, the best adapted measure to our language, the good old and now neglected heroic couplet: – the stanza of Spenser⁹ is perhaps too slow and dignified for narrative; though, I confess, it is the measure most after my own heart; and Scott alone, of the present generation, has hitherto completely triumphed over the fatal facility of the octo-syllabic verse; and this is not the least victory of his fertile and mighty genius. In blank verse, Milton, Thomson, and our dramatists, are the beacons that shine along the deep, but warn us from the rough and barren rock on which they are kindled. The heroic couplet is not the most popular measure certainly; but as I do not deviate into the other from a wish to flatter what is called public opinion, I shall quit it without further apology, and take my chance once more with that versification, in which I have hitherto published nothing but compositions whose former circulation is part of my present and will be of my future regret.¹⁰

6: *Lalla Rookh*. Its publication was to motivate B.'s realisation of his distaste for the Romantic movement.

7: Two philologists, Major (later General) Charles Vallancey (1721-1812) and Sir Laurence Parsons (later Earl of Rosse: 1758-1841) were both Irish patriots. Parsons, M.P. for Dublin University, opposed the Union with England in 1801. Their researches led them to the conclusion that the Irish had, via their contact with Carthage, a more distinguished pedigree than the English. Parsons floated the idea that the Carthaginians were descended from the Irish: Vallancey asserted a resemblance between Irish and Kalmuck, Algonquin, Egyptian, Persian, and Hindustani. See *Don Juan*, VIII, stanza 23.

8: Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 372-3; quoted at *HfH* 588, or *TVOJ* 91, 8.

9: B. had written *Childe Harold* I and II in Spenserian stanzas.

10: B. refers to *EBSR*.

With regard to my story, and stories in general, I should have been glad to have rendered my personages more perfect and amiable, if possible, inasmuch as I have been sometimes criticised, and considered no less responsible for their deeds and qualities than if all had been personal. Be it so – if I have deviated into the gloomy vanity of “drawing from self,” the pictures are probably like, since they are unfavourable; and if not, those who know me are undeceived, and those who do not, I have little interest in undeceiving. I have no particular desire that any but my acquaintance should think the author better than the beings of his imagining; but I cannot help a little surprise, and perhaps amusement, at some odd critical exceptions in the present instance, when I see several bards (far more deserving, I allow) in very reputable plight, and quite exempted from all participation in the faults of those heroes, who, nevertheless, might be found with little more morality than “The Giaour,” and perhaps – but no – I must admit Chile Harold to be a very repulsive personage; and as to his identity, those who like it must give him whatever “alias” they please.

If, however, it were worth while to remove the impression, it might be of some service to me, that the man who is alike the delight of his readers and his friends – the poet of all circles – and the idol of his own, permits me here and elsewhere to subscribe myself,

most truly,

and affectionately,

his obedient servant,

BYRON

January 2, 1814.

The Corsair

CANTO THE FIRST

“----- nessun maggior dolore,
 Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
 Nelle miseria, -----” DANTE.¹¹

The time in this poem may seem too short for the occurrences, but the whole of the Ægean isles are within a few hours sail of the continent, and the reader must be kind enough to take the *wind* as I have often found it.¹²

1.

“O’ER the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
 Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,¹³
 Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
 Survey our empire, and behold our home!
 These are our realms, no limits to their sway – 5
 Our flag the sceptre all who meet obey.
 Ours the wild life in tumult still to range
 From toil to rest, and joy in every change.
 Oh, who can tell? not thou, luxurious slave!
 Whose soul would sicken o’er the heaving wave; 10
 Not thou, vain lord of wantonness and ease!
 Whom slumber soothes not – pleasure cannot please –
 Oh, who can tell, save he whose heart hath tried,
 And danced in triumph o’er the waters wide,
 The exulting sense – the pulse’s maddening play, 15
 That thrills the wanderer of that trackless way?
 That for itself can woo the approaching fight,
 And turn what some deem danger to delight;
 That seeks what cravens shun with more than zeal,
 And where the feeblers faint – can only feel – 20
 Feel – to the rising bosom’s inmost core,
 Its hope awaken and its spirit soar?
 No dread of death – if with us die our foes –
 Save that it seems even duller than repose;
 Come when it will – we snatch the life of life – 25
 When lost – what reck’s it – by disease or strife?
 Let him who crawls enamoured of decay,
 Cling to his couch, and sicken years away:
 Heave his thick breath, and shake his palsied head;
 Ours – the fresh turf; and not the feverish bed. 30
 While gasp by gasp he falters forth his soul,
 Ours with one pang – one bound – escapes controul.
 His corse may boast its urn and narrow cave,
 And they who loathed his life may gild his grave –
 Ours are the tears, though few, sincerely shed, 35

11: *Inferno*, V, 122-4; translated by B.: “The greatest of all woes / Is to recall to mind our happy days / In misery ...” (*Francesca of Rimini*, 25-7). Francesca speaks to Dante in the Circle of the Lustful. It is hard to see the relevance of her words, in any of the three epigraphs, to the action of *The Corsair*.

12: In his eastern travels, B. skirted the Aegean twice.

13: B. opens with a hymn to the joy of the pirate’s life, reminiscent of the long speech of Selim at *BoA*, 633-972.

When Ocean shrouds and sepulchres our dead.
 For us, even banquets fond regret supply
 In the red cup that crowns our memory;
 And the brief epitaph in danger's day,
 When those who win at length divide the prey, 40
 And cry, Remembrance saddening o'er each brow,
 How had the brave who fell exulted now!"

2.

Such were the notes that from the Pirate's isle
 Around the kindling watch-fire rang the while:
 Such were the sounds that thrilled the rocks along, 45
 And unto ears as rugged seemed a song!
 In scattered groupes upon the golden sand,
 They game – carouse – converse – or whet the brand;
 Select the arms – to each his blade assign,
 And careless eye the blood that dims its shine. 50
 Repair the boat, replace the helm or oar,
 While others straggling muse along the shore:
 For the wild bird the busy springes set,
 Or spread beneath the sun the dripping net:
 Gaze where some distant sail a speck supplies 55
 With all the thirsting eve of Enterprize:
 Tell o'er the tales of many a night of toil,
 And marvel where they next shall seize a spoil;
 No matter where – their chief's allotment this;
 Theirs, to believe no prey nor plan amiss. 60
 But who that CHIEF? his name on every shore
 Is famed and feared – they ask and know no more.
 With these he mingles not but to command –
 Few are his words, but keen his eye and hand.
 Ne'er seasons he with mirth their jovial mess, 65
 But they forgive his silence for success.
 Ne'er for his lip the purpling cup they fill,
 That goblet passes him untasted still –
 And for his fare – the rudest of his crew
 Would that, in turn, have passed untasted too; 70
 Earth's coarsest bread, the garden's homeliest roots,
 And scarce the summer luxury of fruits,
 His short repast in humbleness supply
 With all a hermit's board would scarce deny.
 But while he shuns the grosser joys of sense, 75
 His mind seems nourished by that abstinence.
 "Steer to that shore!" – they sail. "Do this!" – 'tis done –
 "Now form and follow me!"¹⁴ – the spoil is won.
 Thus prompt his accents and his actions still,
 And all obey and few enquire his will; 80
 To such, brief answer and contemptuous eye
 Convey reproof, nor further deign reply.

3.

14: Compare the Centurion at Matthew 8, 9: *For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*

“A sail! – sail!” – a promised prize to Hope!
 Her nation – flag – how speaks the telescope?
 No prize, alas! but yet a welcome sail; 85
 The blood-red signal glitters in the gale.
 Yes – she is ours – a home-returning bark –
 Blow fair, thou breeze! – she anchors ere the dark.
 Already doubled is the cape – our bay
 Receives that prow which proudly spurns the spray. 90
 How gloriously her gallant course she goes!
 Her white wings flying – never from her foes –
 She walks the waters like a thing of life,
 And seems to dare the elements to strife –
 Who would not brave the battle – fire – the wreck – 95
 To move the monarch of her peopled deck?

4.

Hoarse o’er her side the rustling cable rings;
 The sails are furled; and anchoring round she swings;
 And gathering loiterers on the land discern
 Her boat descending from the latticed stern. 100
 ’Tis manned – the oars keep concert to the strand,
 Till grates her keel upon the shallow sand.
 Hail to the welcome shout! – the friendly speech!
 When hand grasps hand uniting on the beach;
 The smile, the question, and the quick reply, 105
 And the heart’s promise of festivity!

5.

The tidings spread, and gathering grows the crowd;
 The hum of voices, and the laughter loud,
 And woman’s gentler anxious tone is heard –
 Friends’, husbands’, lovers’ names in each dear word; 110
 “Oh! are they safe? we ask not of success –
 But shall we see them? will their accents bless?
 From where the battle roars, the billows chafe,
 They doubtless boldly did – but who are safe?
 Here let them haste to gladden and surprize, 115
 And kiss the doubt from these delighted eyes!”

6.

“Where is our chief? for him we bear report –
 And doubt that joy – which hails our coming – short,
 Yet thus sincere, ’tis cheering, though so brief;
 But, Juan! instant guide us to our chief – 120
 Our greeting paid, we’ll feast on our return,
 And all shall hear what each may wish to learn.”
 Ascending slowly by the rock-hewn way,
 To where his watch-tower beetles o’er the bay,
 By bushy brake, and wild flowers blossoming, 125
 And freshness breathing from each silver spring,

Whose scattered streams from granite basins burst,
 Leap into life, and, sparkling, woo your thirst;
 From crag to cliff they mount – Near yonder cave,
 What lonely straggler looks along the wave? 130
 In pensive posture leaning on the brand,
 Not oft a resting-staff to that red hand?
 “Tis he – ’tis Conrad – here, as wont, alone;
 On – Juan! on – and make our purpose known.
 The bark he views – and tell him we would greet 135
 His ear with tidings he must quickly meet;
 We dare not yet approach – thou know’st his mood
 When strange or uninvited steps intrude.”

7.

Him Juan sought, and told of their intent –
 He spake not, but a sign expressed assent. 140
 These Juan calls – they come – to their salute
 He bends him slightly, but his lips are mute.
 “These letters, Chief, are from the Greek – the spy,
 Who still proclaims our spoil or peril nigh;
 Whate’er his tidings, we can well report, 145
 Much that –” – “Peace, peace!” – he cuts their prating short.
 Wondering they turn, abashed, while each to each
 Conjecture whispers in his muttering speech;
 They watch his glance with many a stealing look,
 To gather how that eye the tidings took; 150
 But, this as if he guessed, with head aside,
 Perchance from some emotion – doubt, or pride,
 He read the scroll – “My tablets, Juan – hark –
 Where is Gonsalvo?”¹⁵

In the anchored bark.”

“There let him stay – to him this order bear. 155
 Back to your duty – for my course prepare:
 Myself this enterprize to-night will share.”
 “To-night, Lord Conrad!”

“Ay! at set of sun;

The breeze will freshen when the day is done.
 My corslet – cloak – one hour and we are gone. 160
 Sling on thy bugle – see that free from rust
 My carbine-lock springs worthy of my trust.
 Be the edge sharpened of my boarding-brand,
 And give its guard more room to fit my hand.
 This let the Armourer with speed dispose; 165
 Last time, it more fatigued my arm than foes;
 Mark that the signal-gun be duly fired,
 To tell us when the hour of stay’s expired.”

15: It is not clear why Conrad asks for Gonsalvo. See below, 578 n.

8.

They make obeisance, and retire in haste,
 Too soon to seek again the watery waste; 170
 Yet they repine not – so that Conrad guides;
 And who dare question aught that he decides?
 That man of loneliness and mystery,
 Scarce seen to smile, and seldom heard to sigh –
 Whose name appals the fiercest of his crew, 175
 And tints each swarthy cheek with sallower hue;
 Still sways their souls with that commanding art
 That dazzles, leads, yet chills the vulgar heart.
 What is that spell, that thus his lawless train
 Confess and envy – yet oppose in vain? 180
 What should it be, that thus their faith can bind?
 The power of Thought – the magic of the Mind!
 Linked with success, assumed and kept with skill,
 That moulds another's weakness to its will;
 Wields with their hands, but, still to these unknown, 185
 Makes even their mightiest deeds appear his own.
 Such hath it been shall be – beneath the sun
 The many still must labour for the one!
 'Tis Nature's doom – but let the wretch who toils
 Accuse not – hate not – him who wears the spoils. 190
 Oh! if he knew the weight of splendid chains,
 How light the balance of his humbler pains!

9.

Unlike the heroes of each ancient race,
 Demons in act, but Gods at least in face,
 In Conrad's form seems little to admire, 195
 Though his dark eyebrow shades a glance of fire;
 Robust but not Herculean – to the sight
 No giant frame sets forth his common height;¹⁶
 Yet, in the whole, who paused to look again,
 Saw more than marks the crowd of vulgar men; 200
 They gaze and marvel how – and still confess
 That thus it is, but why they cannot guess.
 Sun-bumt his cheek, his forehead high and pale –
 The sable curls in wild profusion veil;
 And oft perforce his rising lip reveals 205
 The haughtier thought it curbs, but scarce conceals.
 Though smooth his voice, and calm his general mien,
 Still seems there something he would not have seen;
 His features' deepening lines and varying hue
 At times attracted, yet perplexed the view, 210
 As if within that murkiness of mind
 Worked feelings fearful, and yet undefined;
 Such might it be – that none could truly tell –
 Too close enquiry his stern glance would quell.
 There breathe but few whose aspect might defy 215
 The full encounter of his searching eye;

16: Conrad has the figure of Edmund Kean.

He had the skill, when Cunning's gaze would seek
 To probe his heart and watch his changing cheek
 At once the observer's purpose to espy,
 And on himself roll back his scrutiny, 220
 Lest he to Conrad rather should betray
 Some secret thought, than drag that chief's to day.
 There was a laughing Devil in his sneer,
 That raised emotions both of rage and fear;
 And where his frown of hatred darkly fell, 225
 Hope withering fled – and Mercy sighed farewell!

10.

Slight are the outward signs of evil thought,
 Within – within – 'twas there the spirit wrought!
 Love shows all changes – Hate, Ambition, Guile,
 Betray no further than the bitter smile; 230
 The lip's least curl, the lightest paleness thrown
 Along the governed aspect, speak alone
 Of deeper passions; and to judge their mien,
 He, who would see, must be himself unseen.
 Then – with the hurried tread, the upward eye, 235
 The clenched hand, the pause of agony,
 That listens, starting, lest the step too near
 Approach intrusive on that mood of fear;
 Then – with each feature working from the heart,
 With feelings, loosed to strengthen – not depart – 240
 That rise – convulse – contend – that freeze, or glow
 Flush in the cheek, or damp upon the brow;
 Then, Stranger! if thou canst, and tremblest not
 Behold his soul – the rest that soothes his lot!
 Mark – how that lone and blighted bosom sears 245
 The scathing thought of execrated years!
 Behold – but who hath seen, or e'er shall see,
 Man as himself – the secret spirit free?

11.

Yet was not Conrad thus by Nature sent
 To lead the guilty – guilt's worse instrument – 250
 His soul was changed, before his deeds had driven
 Him forth to war with man and forfeit Heaven.
 Warped by the world in Disappointment's school,
 In words too wise – in conduct there a fool –
 Too firm to yield, and far too proud to stoop, 255
 Doomed by his very virtues for a dupe,
 He cursed those virtues as the cause of ill,
 And not the traitors who betrayed him still;
 Nor deemed that gifts bestowed on better men
 Had left him joy, and means to give again. 260
 Feared – shunned – belied – ere youth had lost her force,
 He hated man too much to feel remorse,
 And thought the voice of wrath a sacred call,
 To pay the injuries of some on all.
 He knew himself a villain – but he deemed 265

The rest no better than the thing he seemed;
 And scorned the best as hypocrites, who hid
 Those deeds the bolder spirit plainly did.
 He knew himself detested, but he knew
 The hearts that loathed him, crouched and dreaded too. 270
 Lone, wild, and strange, he stood alike exempt
 From all affection and from all contempt;
 His name could sadden, and his acts surprize;
 But they that feared him dared not to despise;
 Man spurns the worm, but pauses ere he wake 275
 The slumbering venom of the folded snake.
 The first may turn, but not avenge the blow;
 The last expires, but leaves no living foe;
 Fast to the doomed offender's form it clings,
 And he may crush – not conquer – still it stings! 280

12.

None are all evil – quickening round his heart,
 One softer feeling would not yet depart;
 Oft could he sneer at others as beguiled
 By passions worthy of a fool or child –
 Yet 'gainst that passion vainly still he strove, 285
 And even in him it asks the name of Love!
 Yes, it was love – unchangeable – unchanged,
 Felt but for one from whom he never ranged;
 Though fairest captives daily met his eye,
 He shunned, nor sought, but coldly passed them by; 290
 Though many a beauty drooped in prisoned bower,
 None ever soothed his most unguarded hour.
 Yes – it was Love – if thoughts of tenderness
 Tried in temptation, strengthened by distress,
 Unmoved by absence, firm in every clime, 295
 And yet – Oh, more than all! untired by time –
 Which nor defeated hope, nor baffled wile,
 Could render sullen were she ne'er to smile,
 Nor rage could fire, nor sickness fret to vent
 On her one murmur of his discontent; 300
 Which still would meet with joy, with calmness part,
 Lest that his look of grief should reach her heart;
 Which nought removed – nor menaced to remove –
 If there be love in mortals – this was love!
 He was a villain – aye – reproaches shower 305
 On him – but not the passion, nor its power,
 Which only proved, all other virtues gone,
 Not guilt itself could quench this loveliest one!

13.

He paused a moment – till his hastening men
 Passed the first winding downward to the glen. 310
 “Strange tidings! – many a peril have I passed
 Nor know I why this next appears the last!
 Yet so my heart forebodes, but must not fear,
 Nor shall my followers find me falter here.

'Tis rash to meet, but surer death to wait 315
 Till here they hunt us to undoubted fate;
 And, if my plan but hold, and Fortune smile,
 We'll furnish mourners for our funeral-pile.
 Ay, let them slumber – peaceful be their dreams!
 Morn ne'er awoke them with such brilliant beams 320
 As kindle high to-night (but blow, thou breeze!)
 To warm these slow avengers of the seas.
 Now to Medora – Oh! my sinking heart,
 Long may her own be lighter than thou art!
 Yet was I brave – mean boast, where all are brave! 325
 Ev'n insects sting for aught they seek to save;
 This common courage which with brutes we share
 That owes its deadliest efforts to despair,
 Small merit claims – but 'twas my nobler hope
 To teach my few with numbers still to cope; 330
 Long have I led them – not to vainly bleed;
 No medium now – we perish or succeed!
 So let it be – it irks not me to die;
 But thus to urge them whence they cannot fly –
 My lot hath long had little of my care, 335
 But chafes my pride thus baffled in the snare;
 Is this my skill? my craft? to set at last
 Hope, power, and life upon a single cast?
 Oh, Fate! – accuse thy folly, not thy fate!
 She may redeem thee still – nor yet too late.” 340

14.

Thus with himself communion held he, till
 He reached the summit of his tower-crowned hill;
 There at the portal paused – for wild and soft
 He heard those accents never heard too oft 345
 Through the high lattice far yet sweet they rung,
 And these the notes his bird of beauty sung:

I.

“Deep in my soul that tender secret dwells,
 Lonely and lost to light for evermore,
 Save when to thine my heart responsive swells,
 Then trembles into silence as before. 350

II.

“There, in its centre, a sepulchral lamp
 Burns the slow flame, eternal, but unseen;
 Which not the darkness of despair can damp,
 Though vain its ray as it had never been.

III.

“Remember me – Oh! pass not thou my grave 355
 Without one thought whose relics there recline;
 The only pang my bosom dare not brave

Must be to find forgetfulness in thine.

IV.

“My fondest, faintest, latest accents hear –
 Grief for the dead not virtue can reprove; 360
 Then give me all I ever asked – a tear,
 The first – last – sole reward of so much love!”

He passed the portal, crossed the corridore,
 And reached the chamber as the strain gave o'er:
 “My own Medora! sure thy song is sad –” 365

“In Conrad's absence wouldst thou have it glad?
 Without thine ear to listen to my lay,
 Still must my song my thoughts, my soul betray;
 Still must each action to my bosom suit,
 My heart unhushed, although my lips were mute! 370
 Oh! many a night on this lone couch reclined,
 My dreaming fear with storms hath winged the wind,
 And deemed the breath that faintly fanned thy sail
 The murmuring prelude of the ruder gale;
 Though soft, it seemed the low prophetic dirge, 375
 That mourned thee floating on the savage surge;
 Still would I rise to rouse the beacon fire,
 Lest spies less true should let the blaze expire;
 And many a restless hour outwatched each star,
 And morning came – and still thou wert afar. 380
 Oh! how the chill blast on my bosom blew,
 And day broke dreary on my troubled view,
 And still I gazed and gazed – and not a prow
 Was granted to my tears, my truth, my vow!
 At length 'twas noon – I hailed and blest the mast 385
 That met my sight – it neared – Alas! it passed!
 Another came – Oh God! 'twas thine at last!
 Would that those days were over! wilt thou ne'er,
 My Conrad! learn the joys of peace to share?
 Sure thou hast more than wealth, and many a home 390
 As bright as this invites us not to roam;
 Thou know'st it is not peril that I fear,
 I only tremble when thou art not here;¹⁷
 Then not for mine, but that far dearer life,
 Which flies from love and languishes for strife – 395
 How strange that heart, to me so tender still,
 Should war with nature and its better will!”

“Yea, strange indeed – that heart hath long been changed;
 Worm-like 'twas trampled, adder-like avenged,
 Without one hope on Earth beyond thy love, 400
 And scarce a glimpse of mercy from above.
 Yet the same feeling which thou dost condemn,
 My very love to thee is hate to them,
 So closely mingling here, that disentwined,

¹⁷: Medora is Penelope, without the suitors, and without such a long time to wait.

I cease to love thee when I love mankind; 405
 Yet dread not this – the proof of all the past
 Assures the future that my love will last;
 But – oh, Medora! nerve thy gentler heart;
 This hour again¹⁸ – but not for long – we part.”

“This hour we part! – my heart foreboded this; 410
 Thus ever fade my fairy dreams of bliss –
 This hour – it cannot be – this hour away!
 Yon bark hath hardly anchored in the bay.

Her consort still is absent, and her crew
 Have need of rest before they toil anew; 415
 My love! thou mock’st my weakness; and wouldst steel
 My breast before the time when it must feel;

But trifle now no more with my distress,
 Such mirth hath less of play than bitterness.
 Be silent, Conrad!¹⁹ – dearest! – come and share 420
 The feast these hands delighted to prepare;

Light toil! to cull and dress thy frugal fare!
 See, I have plucked the fruit that promised best,
 And where not sure, perplexed, but pleased, I guessed
 At such as seemed the fairest; thrice the hill 425
 My steps have wound to try the coolest rill;

Yes! thy Sherbet to-night will sweetly flow –
 See how it sparkles in its vase of snow!
 The grapes’ gay juice thy bosom never cheers;
 Thou more than Moslem when the cup appears: 430
 Think not I mean to chide, for I rejoice –
 What others deem a penance is thy choice.

But come, the board is spread; our silver lamp
 Is trimmed, and heeds not the Sirocco’s damp;
 Then shall my handmaids while the time along, 435
 And join with me the dance, or wake the song;

Or my guitar, which still thou lov’st to hear,
 Shall soothe or lull – or, should it vex thine ear,²⁰
 We’ll turn the tale, by Ariosto told,
 Of fair Olympia loved and left of old. * 440

Why, thou wert worse than he who broke his vow
 To that lost damsel, shouldst thou leave me now;
 Or even that traitor chief²¹ – I’ve seen thee smile,
 When the dear sky showed Ariadne’s Isle,
 Which I have pointed from these cliffs the while; 445

And thus, half sportive, half in fear, I said,
 Lest time should rake that doubt to more than dread,
 Thus Conrad, too, will quit me for the main;
 And he deceived me – for he came again!”

“Again, again – and oft again – my love! 450
 If there be life below, and hope above,

18: It’s not clear why Conrad’s expedition can’t wait until the next day. We never know what’s in the Greek spy’s letter which he’s given at 143 and reads at 153. But it makes for a dramatic and sentimental farewell scene.

19: CPW compares *Paradise Lost*, V, 321-48 (in fact 49), in which Eve prepares a meal for the Archangel Raphael.

20: Our suspicion is that Conrad, like The Giaour and Lara, does not enjoy music.

21: Theseus, who abandoned Ariadne on Naxos. See *Beppo*, 28, 7-8.

He will return – but now, the moments bring
 The time of parting with redoubled wing;
 The why, the where – what boots it now to tell?
 Since all must end in that wild word – farewell! 455
 Yet would I fain – did time allow disclose –
 Fear not – these are no formidable foes;
 And here shall watch a more than wonted guard,
 For sudden siege and long defence prepared;
 Nor be thou lonely, though thy lord's away, 460
 Our matrons and thy handmaids with thee stay;
 And this thy comfort – that, when next we meet,
 Security shall make repose more sweet.
 List! – 'tis the bugle!" – Juan shrilly blew –
 "One kiss – one more – another – Oh! Adieu!" 465

She rose – she sprung – she clung to his embrace,
 Till his heart heaved beneath her hidden face.
 He dared not raise to his that deep-blue eye,
 Which downcast drooped in tearless agony. 470
 Her long fair hair lay floating o'er his arms,
 In all the wildness of dishevelled charms;
 Scarce beat that bosom where his image dwelt
 So full – that feeling seemed almost Unfelt!
 Hark – peals the thunder of the signal-gun!
 It told 'twas sunset, and he cursed that sun. 475
 Again – again²² – that form he madly pressed,
 Which mutely clasped, imploringly caressed!
 And tottering to the couch his bride he bore,
 One moment gazed, as if to gaze no more;
 Felt that for him Earth held but her alone, 480
 Kissed her cold forehead – turned – is Conrad gone?

* Orlando, Canto 10.²³

15.

"And is he gone?" on sudden solitude
 How oft that fearful question will intrude!
 'Twas but an instant past, and here he stood!
 And now" – without the portal's porch she rushed, 485
 And then at length her tears in freedom gushed;
 Big, bright, and fast, unknown to her they fell;
 But still her lips refused to send – "Farewell!"
 For in that word – that fatal word – howe'er
 We promise, hope, believe, there breathes despair. 490
 O'er every feature of that still, pale face,
 Had sorrow fixed what time can ne'er erase;
 The tender blue of that large loving eye
 Grew frozen with its gaze on vacancy,
 Till – Oh, how far! – it caught a glimpse of him, 495
 And then it flowed, and phrenzied seemed to swim

22: Compare *Othello* II, i, 196-7: *And this, and this, the greatest discords be / That e'er our hearts shall make!* except that there the lovers are married, and are being reunited, not parted, after danger at sea.

23: At the start of Canto X of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, the inconstant Bireno deserts Olimpia on a Scottish island.

Through those' long, dark, and glistening lashes dewed
 With drops of sadness oft to be renewed.
 "He's gone!" – against her heart that hand is driven,
 Convulsed and quick – then gently raised to Heaven; 500
 She looked and saw the heaving of the main;
 The white sail set – she dared not look again;
 But turned with sickening soul within the gate –
 "It is no dream – and I am desolate!"

16.

From crag to crag descending, swiftly sped 505
 Stern Conrad down, nor once he turned his head;
 But shrunk whene'er the windings of his way
 Forced on his eye what he would not survey –
 His lone but lovely dwelling on the steep,
 That hailed him first when homeward from the deep; 510
 And she – the dim and melancholy star,
 Whose ray of beauty reached him from afar,
 On her he must not gaze, he must not think,
 There he might rest – but on Destruction's brink –
 Yet once almost he stopped, and nearly gave 515
 His fate to chance, his projects to the wave –
 But no – it must not be – a worthy chief
 May melt, but not betray to woman's grief.
 He sees his bark, he notes how fair the wind,
 And sternly gathers all his might of mind: 520
 Again he hurries on – and as he hears
 The dang of tumult vibrate on his ears,
 The busy sounds, the bustle of the shore,
 The shout, the signal, and the dashing oar;
 As marks his eye the seaboy on the mast, 525
 The anchors rise, the sails unfurling fast,
 The waving kerchiefs of the crowd that urge
 That mute adieu to those who stem the surge;
 And more than all, his blood-red flag aloft,
 He marvelled how his heart could seem so soft. 530
 Fire in his glance, and wildness in his breast,
 He feels of all his former self possess;
 He bounds – he flies – until his footsteps reach
 The verge where ends the cliff, begins the beach,
 There checks his speed; but pauses less to breathe 535
 The breezy freshness of the deep beneath,
 Than there his wonted statelier step renew;
 Nor rush, disturbed by haste, to vulgar view –
 For well had Conrad learned to curb the crowd,
 By arts that veil and oft preserve the proud; 540
 His was the lofty port, the distant mien,
 That seems to shun the sight – and awes if seen –
 The solemn aspect, and the high-born eye,
 That checks low mirth, but lacks not courtesy;
 All these he wielded to command assent; 545
 But where he wished to win, so well unbent,
 That kindness cancelled fear in those who heard,
 And others' gifts shewed mean beside his word –

When echoed to the heart as from his own,
 His deep yet tender melody of tone; 550
 But such was foreign to his wonted mood,
 He cared not what he softened, but subdued;
 The evil passions of his youth had made
 Him value less who loved – than what obeyed.

17.

Around him mustering ranged his ready guard, 555
 Before him Juan stands – “Are all prepared?”

“They are – nay more – embarked; the boats
 Waits but my Chief –”

“My sword, and my capote.”

Soon firmly girded on, and lightly slung,
 His belt and cloak were o’er his shoulders flung; 560

“Call Pedro here!” He comes – and Conrad bends,

With all the courtesy he deigned his friends;

“Receive these tablets, and peruse with care,

Words of high trust and truth are graven there;

Double the guard, and when Anselmo’s bark 565

Arrives, let him alike these orders mark;

In three days (serve the breeze) the sun shall shine

On our return – till then all peace be thine!”

This said, his brother Pirate’s hand he wrung,

Then to his boat with haughty gesture sprung. 570

Flashed the dipt oars, and sparkling with the stroke,

Around the waves’ phosphoric brightness broke; *

They gain the vessel – on the deck he stands.

Shrieks the shrill whistle – ply the busy hands –

He marks how well the ship her helm obeys, 575

How gallant all her crew – and deigns to praise.

His eyes of pride to young Gonsalvo turn;²⁴

Why doth he start, and inly seem to mourn?

Alas! those eyes beheld his rocky tower,

And live a moment o’er the parting hour; 580

She – his Medora – did she mark the prow?

Ah! never loved he half so much as now!

But much must yet be done ere dawn of day –

Again he mans himself and turns away;

Down to the cabin with Gonsalvo bends, 585

And there unfolds his plan, his means, and ends;

Before them burns the lamp, and spreads the chart,

And all that speaks and aids the naval art;

They to the midnight watch protract debate –

To anxious eyes what hour is ever late? 590

Meantime, the steady breeze serenely blew,

And fast and Falcon-like the vessel flew;

Passed the high headlands of each clustering isle,

To gain their port – long – long ere morning smile;

And soon the night-glass through the narrow bay 595

²⁴: The suspicion is planted that Conrad is in love with young Gonsalvo (see above, 154), but pretends that his real passion is for Medora.

Discovers where the Pacha's galleys lay.
Count they each sail, and mark how there supine
The lights in vain o'er heedless Moslem shine;
Secure, unnoted, Conrad's prow passed by, 600
And anchored where his ambush meant to lie;
Screened from espial by the jutting cape,
That rears on high its rude fantastic shape.
Then rose his band to duty – not from sleep –
Equipped for deeds alike on land or deep;
While leaned their leader o'er the fretting flood, 605
And calmly talked – and yet he talked of blood!

* By night, particularly in a warm latitude, every stroke of the oar, every motion of the boat or ship, is followed by a slight flash like sheet lightning from the water.

CANTO THE SECOND

“Conoscesti i dubiosi desiri?” – DANTE., *Inferno* V. 120.²⁵

1.

IN Coron's bay²⁶ floats many a Galley light,
 Through Coron's lattices the lamps are bright
 For Seyd, the Pacha, makes a feast to-night;
 A feast for promised triumph yet to come,
 When he shall drag the fettered Rovers home;
 This hath he sworn by Allah and his sword, 610
 And faithful to his firman and his word,
 His summoned prows collect along the coast,
 And great the gathering crews, and loud the boast;
 Already shared the captives and the prize,
 Though far the distant foe they thus despise. 615
 'Tis but to sail – no doubt to-morrow's Sun
 Will see the Pirates bound, their haven won!
 Meantime the watch may slumber, if they will,
 Nor only wake to war, but dreaming kill.
 Though all, who can, disperse on shore, and seek 620
 To flesh their glowing valour on the Greek;
 How well such deed becomes the turbaned brave –
 To bare the sabre's edge before a slave!
 Infest his dwelling – but forbear to slay,
 Their arms are strong, yet merciful to-day, 625
 And do not deign to smite because they may!
 Unless some gay caprice suggests the blow,
 To keep in practice for the coming foe.
 Revel and rout the evening hours beguile,
 And they who wish to wear a head must smile; 630
 For Moslem mouths produce their choicest cheer,
 And hoard their curses, till the coast is clear.

2.

High in his hall reclines the turbaned Seyd;
 Around – the bearded chiefs he came to lead. 635
 Removed the banquet, and the last pilaff –
 Forbidden draughts, 'tis said, he dared to quaff,
 Though to the rest the sober berry's juice, *
 The slaves bear round for rigid Moslem's use;
 The long chibouque's dissolving cloud supply, †
 While dance the Almas to wild minstrelsy. ‡ 640
 The rising morn will view the chiefs embark;
 But waves are somewhat treacherous in the dark;
 And revellers may more securely sleep
 On silken couch than o'er the rugged deep;
 Feast there who can – nor combat till they must, 645

²⁵: From the same passage from the *Inferno* as the epigraph to Canto I. Translated by B., “... his dim desires to recognize?”

²⁶: Coron is to the north of Livadia Point on the western shore of the Gulf of Kalamata in south-eastern Peloponnese.

And less to conquest than to Korans trust:
 And yet the numbers crowded in his host
 Might warrant more than even the Pacha's boast.

* Coffee.

† Pipe.

‡ Dancing-girls.²⁷

3.

With cautious reverence from the outer gate
 Slow stalks the slave, whose office there to wait, 650
 Bows his bent head, his hand salutes the floor,
 Ere yet his tongue the trusted tidings bore –
 “A captive Dervise, from the Pirate's nest
 Escaped, is here – himself would tell the rest.” *
 He took the sign from Seyd's assenting eye, 655
 And led the holy man in silence nigh.
 His arms were folded on his dark-green vest,
 His step was feeble, and his look deprest;
 Yet worn he seemed of hardship more than years,
 And pale his cheek with penance, not from fears. 660
 Vowed to his God – his sable locks he wore,
 And these his lofty cap rose proudly o'er;
 Around his form his loose long robe was thrown
 And wrapt, a breast bestowed on Heaven alone;
 Submissive, yet with self-possession manned, 665
 He calmly, met the curious eyes that scanned;
 And question of his coming fain would seek,
 Before the Pacha's will allowed to speak.

* It has been observed, that Conrad's entering disguised as a spy is out of nature. Perhaps so. I find something not unlike it in history. – “Anxious to explore with his own eyes the state of the Vandals, Marjorian ventured, after disguising the colour of his hair, to visit Carthage in the character of his own ambassador; and Genseric was afterwards mortified by the discovery, that he had entertained and dismissed the Emperor of the Romans. Such an anecdote may be rejected as an improbable fiction; but it is a fiction which would not have been imagined unless in the life of a hero.” – See Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*.

²⁷: An Alma was a female improviser of poetry, not a dancer. Should be “Ilmas”. They are in any case much more likely to have been dancing boys.

'Twere vain to guess what shook the pious man, 710
 Who looked not lovingly on that Divan;
 Nor showed high relish for the banquet prest,
 And less respect for every fellow guest.
 'Twas but a moment's peevish hectic passed
 Along his cheek, and tranquillised as fast; 715
 He sate him down in silence, and his look
 Resumed the calmness which before forsook;
 This feast was ushered in – but sumptuous fare
 He shunned as if some poison mingled there.
 For one so long condemned to toil and fast, 720
 Methinks he strangely spares the rich repast.
 “What ails thee, Dervise? eat – dost thou suppose
 This feast a Christian's? or my friends thy foes?
 Why dost thou shun the salt?³¹ that sacred pledge,
 Which once partaken, blunts the sabre's edge, 725
 Makes even contending tribes in peace unite,
 And hated hosts seem brethren to the sight!”

“Salt seasons dainties – and my food is still
 The humblest root, my drink the simplest rill;
 And my stern vow and order's laws oppose * 730
 To break or mingle bread with friends or foes;
 It may seem strange – if there be aught to dread,
 That peril rests upon my single head;
 But for thy sway – nay more – thy Sultan's throne,
 I taste nor bread nor banquet – save alone; 735
 Infringed our order's rule, the Prophet's rage
 To Mecca's dome might bar my pilgrimage.”

“Well – as thou wilt – ascetic as thou art –
 One question answer; then in peace depart.
 How many ? – Ha! it cannot sure be day? 740
 What star – what sun is bursting on the bay?
 It shines a lake of fire ! – away – away!
 Ho! treachery! my guards! my scimitar!
 The galleys feed the flames – and I afar!
 Accursed Dervise! – these thy tidings – thou 745
 Some villain spy – seize – cleave him – slay him now!”

Up rose the Dervise with that burst of light,
 Nor less his change of form appalled the sight –
 Up rose that Dervise – not in saintly garb,
 But like a warrior bounding on his barb, 750
 Dashed his high cap, and tore his robe away –
 Shone his mailed breast, and flashed his sabre's ray!
 His close but glittering casque, and sable plume,
 More glittering eye, and black brow's sabler gloom,
 Glared on the Moslems' eyes some Afrit sprite, 755

31: To refuse the salt at table is a breach of etiquette – see *Giaour*, 343, or *Vathek*: So high an idea of these rights prevails amongst the Arabians, that a *bread and salt traitor* is the most opprobrious invective with which one person can reproach another (1786 p.312: Lonsdale p.150 / 74). Conrad's unnecessary disguise is getting him into more unnecessary trouble.

Whose demon death-blow left no hope for fight.
 The wild confusion, and the swarthy glow
 Of flames on high, and torches from below;
 The shriek of terror, and the mingling yell –
 For swords began to dash, and shouts to swell – 760
 Flung o'er that spot of Earth the air of Hell!
 Distracted, to and fro, the flying slaves
 Behold but bloody shore and fiery waves;
 Nought heeded they the Pacha's angry cry,
 They seize that Dervise! – seize on Zatanai! † 765
 He saw their terror – checked the first despair
 That urged him but to stand and perish there,
 Since far too early and too well obeyed,
 The flame was kindled ere the signal made;
 He saw their terror – from his baldric drew 770
 – His bugle – brief the blast – but shrilly blew;
 “'Tis answered –” Well ye speed, my gallant crew!
 Why did I doubt their quickness of career?
 And deem design had left me single here?”
 Sweeps his long arm – that sabre's whirling sway 775
 Sheds fast atonement for its first delay;
 Completes his fury what their fear begun,
 And makes the many basely quail to one.
 The cloven turbans o'er the chamber spread,
 And scarce an arm dare rise to guard its head; 780
 Even Seyd, convulsed, o'erwhelmed, with rage, surprize,
 Retreats before him, though he still defies.
 No craven he – and yet he dreads the blow,
 So much Confusion magnifies his foe!
 His blazing galleys still distract his sight, 785
 He tore his beard, and foaming fled the fight; ‡
 For now the pirates passed the Haram gate,
 And burst within – and it were death to wait
 Where wild Amazement shrieking – kneeling – throws
 The sword aside – in vain – the blood o'erflows! 790
 The Corsairs pouring, haste to where within
 Invited Conrad's bugle, and the din
 Of groaning victims, and wild cries for life,
 Proclaimed how well he did the work of strife.
 They shout to find him grim and lonely there, 795
 A glutted tiger mangling in his lair!
 But short their greeting, shorter his reply –
 'Tis well but Seyd escapes, and he must die –
 Much hath been done, but more remains to do –
 Their galleys blaze – why not their city too?” 800

* The Dervises are in colleges, and of different orders, as the monks.³²

† Satan.

‡ A common and not very novel effect of Mussulman anger. See Prince Eugene's Memoirs, page 24. “The Seraskier received a wound in the thigh; he plucked up his beard by the roots, because he was obliged to quit the field.”

³²: See note to line 669 above.

5.

Quick at the word, they seized him each a torch,
 And fire the dome from minaret to porch.
 A stern delight was fixed in Conrad's eye,
 But sudden sunk – for on his ear the cry
 Of women struck, and like a deadly knell 805
 Knocked at that heart unmoved by battle's yell.
 "Oh! burst the Haram – wrong not on your lives
 One female form – remember – we have wives.³³
 On them such outrage Vengeance will repay;
 Man is our foe, and such 'tis ours to slay; 810
 But still we spared – must spare the weaker prey.
 Oh! I forgot – but Heaven will not forgive
 If at my word the helpless cease to live;
 Follow who will – I go – we yet have time³⁴
 Our souls to lighten of at least a crime." 815
 He climbs the crackling stair – he bursts the door,
 Nor feels his feet glow scorching with the floor;
 His breath choaked gasping with the volumed smoke,
 But still from room to room his way he broke.
 They search – they find – they save; with lusty arms 820
 Each bears a prize of unregarded charms;
 Calm their loud fears; sustain their sinking frames
 With all the care defenceless beauty claims –
 So well could Conrad tame their fiercest mood,
 And check the very hands with gore imbrued. 825
 But who is she, whom Conrad's arms convey
 From reeking pile and combat's wreck away –
 Who but the love of him he dooms to bleed?
 The Haram queen – but still the slave of Seyd!

6.

Brief time had Conrad now to greet Gulnare, * 830
 Few words to reassure the trembling fair;³⁵
 For in that pause compassion snatched from war,
 The foe before retiring, fast and far,
 With wonder saw their footsteps unpursued,
 First slowlier fled – then rallied – then withstood. 835
 This Seyd perceives, then first perceives how few,
 Compared with his, the Corsair's roving crew,
 And blushes o'er his error, as he eyes
 The ruin wrought by panic and surprize.³⁶
 Alla il Alla! Vengeance swells the cry – 840
 Shame mounts to rage that must atone or die!
 And flame for flame and blood for blood must tell,
 The tide of triumph ebbs that flowed too well –
 When wrath returns to renovated strife,

33: Conrad's gallantry seems unpiratical.

34: His plans have in this case misfired, and should not have been acted on so rapidly.

35: B.'s first rhyme tells how her name is pronounced.

36: Conrad's attack on Seyd's stronghold – the rationale for which has never been explained – looks like a serious military miscalculation.

And those who fought for conquest strike for life 845
 Conrad beheld the danger – he beheld
 His followers faint by freshening foes repelled;
 “One effort – one – to break the circling host!”
 They form – unite – charge – waver – all is lost!
 Within a narrower ring compressed, beset, 850
 Hopeless, not heartless, strive and struggle yet –
 Ah! now they fight in firmest file no more,
 Hemmed in, cut off, cleft down, and trampled o’er,
 But each strikes singly, silently, and home,
 And sinks outwearied rather than o’ercome, 855
 His last faint quittance rendering with his breath,
 Till the blade glimmers in the grasp of death!

* Gulnare, a female name; it means, literally, the flower of the pomegranate.³⁷

7.

But first, ere came the rallying host to blows,
 And rank to rank, and hand to hand oppose, 860
 Gulnare and all her Haram handmaids freed,
 Safe in the dome of one who held their creed,
 By Conrad’s mandate safely were bestowed,³⁸
 And dried those tears for life and fame that flowed;
 And when that dark-eyed lady, young Gulnare,
 Recalled those thoughts late wandering in despair, 865
 Much did she marvel o’er the courtesy
 That smoothed his accents, softened in his eye –
 ’Twas strange – that robber, thus with gore bedewed,
 Seemed gentler then than Seyd in fondest mood.
 The Pacha wooed as if he deemed the slave 870
 Must seem delighted with the heart he gave;
 The Corsair vowed protection, soothed affright,
 As if his homage were a woman’s right.
 “The wish is wrong – nay, worse for female – vain;
 Yet much I long to view that chief again; 875
 If but to thank for, what my fear forget,
 The life my loving lord remembered not!”

8.

And him she saw, where thickest carnage spread,
 But gathered breathing from the happier dead;
 Far from his band, and battling with a host 880
 That deem right dearly won the field he lost,
 Felled – bleeding – baffled of the death he sought,
 And snatched to expiate all the ills he wrought;
 Preserved to linger and to live in vain,
 While Vengeance pondered o’er new plans of pain, 885
 And stanchd the blood she saves to shed again –
 But drop for drop, for Seyd’s unglutted eye
 Would doom him ever dying – ne’er to die!

³⁷: In fact the Persian word “julnar” is a plural: “pomegranate flowers.”

³⁸: Compare *Hamlet*, IV, ii, 1: *Safely stowed*.

Can this be he? triumphant late she saw,
 When his red hand's wild gesture waved a law! 890
 'Tis he indeed – disarmed but undeprest,
 His sole regret the life he still possess;
 His wounds too slight, though taken with that will,
 Which would have kissed the hand that then could kill.
 Oh were there none, of all the many given, 895
 To send his soul – he scarcely asked to Heaven?
 Must he alone of all retain his breath,
 Who more than all had striven and struck for death?
 He deeply felt – what mortal hearts must feel,
 When thus reversed on faithless fortune's wheel, 900
 For crimes committed, and the victor's threat
 Of lingering tortures to repay the debt –
 He deeply, darkly felt;³⁹ but evil pride,
 That led to perpetrate, now serves to hide.
 Still in his stern and self-collected mien 905
 A conqueror's more than captive's air is seen,
 Though faint with wasting toil and stiffening wound,
 But few that saw – so calmly gazed around:
 Though the far shouting of the distant crowd,
 Their tremors o'er, rose insolently loud, 910
 The better warriors who beheld him near,
 Insulted not the foe who taught them fear –
 And the grim guards that to his durance led,
 In silence eyed him with a secret dread.

9.

The Leech was sent – but not in mercy – there, 915
 To note how much the life yet left could bear;
 He found enough to load with heaviest chain,
 And promise feeling for the wretch of pain;
 To-morrow – yea – tomorrow's evening gun
 Will sinking see impalement's pangs⁴⁰ begun, 920
 And rising with the wonted blush of morn
 Behold how well or ill those pangs are borne.
 Of torments this the longest and the worst,
 Which adds all other agony to thirst,
 That day by day death still forbears to slake, 925
 While famished vultures flit around the stake.
 “Oh! Water – water!” – smiling Hate denies
 The victim's prayer, for if he drinks he dies.
 This was his doom; the Leech, the guard were gone,
 And left proud Conrad fettered and alone. 930

39: Compare *Don Juan* IV, 110, 1: the line is from Southey's *Madoc: Oh darkly, deeply, beautifully blue!* In *Don Juan* B. is joking: but this seems an unconscious borrowing.

40: “The sickening reality of impalement was that the victim was spreadeagled face down, and held in place by ropes attached to each leg while a man with a heavy mallet drove a long sharpened pole into his anus. The pole was then set upright and he was left to die of his internal injuries” – David Brewer, *The Flame of Freedom*, (John Murray 2001) p. 86.

10.

'Twere vain to paint to what his feelings grew –
 It even were doubtful if their victim knew.
 There is a war, a chaos of the mind,
 When all its elements convulsed, combined,
 Lie dark and jarring with perturbed force, 935
 And gnashing with impenitent Remorse –
 That juggling fiend,⁴¹ who never spake before
 But cries “I warned thee!” when the deed is o’er.
 Vain voice! the spirit burning but unbent
 May writhe – rebel – the weak alone repent! 940
 Even in that lonely hour when most it feels,
 And, to itself, all, all that self reveals, –
 No single passion, and no ruling thought
 That leaves the rest, as once, unseen, unsought,
 But the wild prospect when the soul reviews, 945
 All rushing through their thousand avenues –
 Ambition’s dreams expiring, love’s regret,
 Endangered glory, life itself beset;
 The joy untasted, the contempt or hate
 ’Gainst those who fain would triumph in our fate; 950
 The hopeless past, the hasting future driven
 Too quickly on to guess if Hell or Heaven;
 Deeds, thoughts, and words, perhaps remembered not
 So keenly till that hour, but ne’er forgot;
 Things light or lovely in their acted time, 955
 But now to stern reflection each a crime;
 The withering sense of evil unrevealed,
 Not cankering less because the more concealed –
 All, in a word, from which all eyes must start,
 That opening sepulchre – the naked heart 960
 Bares with its buried woes, till Pride awake,
 To snatch the mirror from the soul – and break.
 Ay, Pride can veil, and Courage brave it all –
 All – all – before – beyond – the deadliest fall.
 Each hath some fear, and he who least betrays, 965
 The only hypocrite deserving praise;
 Not the loud recreant wretch who boasts and flies;
 But he who looks on death – and silent dies.
 So steeled by pondering o’er his far career,
 He half-way meets him should he menace near! 970

11.

In the high chamber of his highest tower
 Sate Conrad, fettered in the Pacha’s power.
 His palace perished in the flame – this fort
 Contained at once his captive and his court.
 Not much could Conrad of his sentence blame – 975
 His foe, if vanquished, had but shared the same;
 Alone he sate – in solitude had scanned
 His guilty bosom, but that breast he manned;

41: For *juggling fiends*, see *Macbeth*, V, viii, 19.

One thought alone he could not – dared not meet –
 “Oh, how these tidings will Medora greet?” 980
 Then – only then – his clanking hands he raised,
 And strained with rage the chain on which he gazed;
 But soon he found, or feigned, or dreamed relief,
 And smiled in self-derision of his grief,
 “And now come torture when it will – or may, 985
 More need of rest to nerve me for the day!”
 This said, with languor to his mat he crept,
 And, whatsoe’er his visions, quickly slept.

’Twas hardly midnight when that fray begun,
 For Conrad’s plans matured, at once were done; 990
 And Havoc loathes so much the waste of time,
 She scarce had left an uncommitted crime.
 One hour beheld him since the tide he stemmed –
 Disguised, discovered, conquering, ta’en, condemned –
 A chief on land, an outlaw on the deep 995
 Destroying, saving, prisoned – and asleep!

12.

He slept in calmest seeming, for his breath
 Was hushed so deep – Ah! happy if in death!
 He slept – Who o’er his placid slumber bends?
 His foes are gone, and here he hath no friends; 1000
 Is it some seraph sent to grant him grace?
 No, ’tis an earthly form with heavenly face!
 Its white arm raised a lamp – yet gently hid,
 Lest the ray flash abruptly on the lid
 Of that closed eye, which opens but to pain, 1005
 And once unclosed – but once may close again.
 That form, with eye so dark, and cheek so fair,
 And auburn waves of gemmed and braided hair;⁴²
 With shape of fairy lightness – naked foot,
 That shines like snow, and falls on earth as mute – 1010
 Through guards and dunnest night how came it there?
 Ah! rather ask what will not woman dare?
 Whom youth and pity lead like thee, Gulnare!
 She could not sleep – and while the Pacha’s rest
 In muttering dreams yet saw his pirate-guest; 1015
 She left his side – his signet-ring she bore,
 Which oft in sport adorned her hand before –
 And with it, scarcely questioned, won her way
 Through drowsy guards that must that sign obey.
 Worn out with toil, and tired with changing blows, 1020
 Their eyes had envied Conrad his repose;
 And chill and nodding at the turret door,
 They stretch their listless limbs, and watch no more;
 Just raised their heads to hail the signet-ring,
 Nor ask or what or who the sign may bring. 1025

42: Note that Gulnare’s hair is auburn. Now see below, *Lara*, 1154 and n.

13.

She gazed in wonder.⁴³ “Can he calmly sleep,
 While other eyes his fall or ravage weep?
 And mine in restlessness are wandering here –
 What sudden spell hath made this man so dear?
 True – ’tis to him my life, and more, I owe, 1030
 And me and mine he spared from worse than woe;
 ’Tis late to think – but soft, his slumber breaks –
 How heavily he sighs! – he starts – awakes!”

He raised his head, and dazzled with the light,
 His eye seemed dubious if it saw aright: 1035
 He moved his hand – the grating of his chain
 Too harshly told him that he lived again.
 “What is that form? if not a shape of air,
 Methinks, my jailor’s face shows wondrous fair!”

“Pirate! thou know’st me not – but I am one, 1040
 Grateful for deeds thou hast too rarely done;
 Look on me – and remember her, thy hand
 Snatched from the flames, and thy more fearful band.
 I come through darkness and I scarce know why –
 Yet not to hurt – I would not see thee die. 1045

“If so, kind lady! thine the only eye
 That would not here in that gay hope delight;
 Theirs is the chance – and let them use their right.
 But still I thank their courtesy or thine,
 That would confess me at so fair a shrine!” 1050

Strange though it seem – yet with extremest grief
 Is linked a mirth – it doth not bring relief –
 That playfulness of Sorrow ne’er beguiles,
 And smiles in bitterness – but still it smiles;
 And sometimes with the wisest and the best, 1055
 Till even the scaffold echoes with their jest! *
 Yet not the joy to which it seems akin –
 It may deceive all hearts, save that within.
 Whate’er it was that flashed on Conrad, now
 A laughing wildness half unbent his brow – 1060
 And these his accents had a sound of mirth,
 As if the last he could enjoy on Earth;
 Yet ’gainst his nature – for through that short life,
 Few thoughts had he to spare from gloom and strife.

* In Sir Thomas More, for instance, on the scaffold, and Ann Boleyn in the Tower, when grasping her neck, she remarked, that it “was too slender to trouble the headsman much.” During one part of the French Revolution, it became a fashion to leave some “mot” as a legacy; and the quantity of facetious words spoken during that period would form a melancholy jest-book of a considerable size.

⁴³: Gulnare gazing at the sleeping Conrad should be compared to the Ukrainian maid gazing at Mazeppa, or to Haidee gazing at the sleeping Juan in Canto II.

14.

“Corsair! thy doom is named – but I have power 1065
 To soothe the Pacha in his weaker hour.
 Thee would I spare – nay more – would save thee now,
 But this – time – hope – nor even thy strength allow;
 But all I can, I will – at least, delay
 The sentence that remits thee scarce a day. 1070
 More now were ruin – even thyself were loth
 The vain attempt should bring but doom to both.”

“Yes! loth indeed – my soul is nerved to all,
 Or fall’n too low to fear a further fall;
 Tempt not thyself with peril – me with hope, 1075
 Of flight from foes with whom I could not cope;
 Unfit to vanquish, shall I meanly fly,
 The one of all my band that would not die?
 Yet there is one to whom my memory clings,
 Till to these eyes her own wild softness springs. 1080
 My sole resources in the path I trod
 Were these – my bark, my sword, my love, my God!
 The last I left in youth! – he leaves me now –
 And Man but works his will to lay me low.
 I have no thought to mock his throne with prayer 1085
 Wrung from the coward crouching of despair;
 It is enough – I breathe, and I can bear.
 My sword is shaken from the worthless hand
 That might have better kept so true a brand;
 My bark is sunk or captive – but my love – 1090
 For her in sooth my voice would mount above;
 Oh! she is all that still to Earth can bind –
 And this will break a heart so more than kind,
 And blight a form – till thine appeared, Gulnare!⁴⁴
 Mine eye ne’er asked if others were as fair.” 1095

“Thou lov’st another then? – but what to me
 Is this – ’tis nothing – nothing e’er can be;
 But yet – thou lov’st – and – Oh! I envy those
 Whose hearts on hearts as faithful can repose,
 Who never feel the void – the wandering thought 1100
 That sighs o’er visions such as mine hath wrought.”

“Lady, methought thy love was his, for whom
 This arm redeemed thee from a fiery tomb.”

“My love stern Seyd’s! Oh – No – No – not my love –
 Yet much this heart, that strives no more, once strove 1105
 To meet his passion – but it would not be.
 I felt – I feel – love dwells with – with the free.
 I am a slave, a favoured slave at best,
 To share his splendour, and seem very blest!
 Oft must my soul the question undergo, 1100
 Of – ‘Dost thou love?’ and burn to answer, ‘No!’

44: How does Conrad know Gulnare’s name?

Oh! hard it is that fondness to sustain,
 And struggle not to feel averse in vain;
 But harder still the heart's recoil to bear,
 And hide from one – perhaps another there. 1115
 He takes the hand I give not, nor withhold –
 Its pulse nor checked, nor quickened – calmly cold;
 And when resigned, it drops a lifeless weight
 From one I never loved enough to hate. 1120
 No warmth these lips return by his imprest,
 And chilled remembrance shudders o'er the rest.
 Yes – had I ever proved that passion's zeal,
 The change to hatred were at least to feel;
 But still he goes unmourned, returns unsought,
 And oft when present – absent from my thought. 1125
 Or when reflection comes – and come it must –
 I fear that henceforth 'twill but bring disgust;
 I am his slave – but, in despite of pride,
 'Twere worse than bondage to become his bride. 1130
 Oh! that this dotage of his breast would cease!
 Or seek another and give mine release,
 But yesterday – I could have said, to peace!
 Yes, if unwonted fondness now I feign,
 Remember – captive! 'tis to break thy chain;
 Repay the life that to thy hand I owe 1135
 To give thee back to all endeared below,
 Who share such love as I can never know.
 Farewell – morn breaks – and I must now away;
 'Twill cost me dear – but dread no death to-day!"⁴⁵

15.

She pressed his fettered fingers to her heart, 1140
 And bowed her head, and turned her to depart,
 And noiseless as a lovely dream is gone.
 And was she here? and is he now alone?
 What gem hath dropped and sparkles o'er his chain?
 The tear most sacred, shed for others' pain,
 That starts at once – bright – pure – from Pity's mine, 1145
 Already polished by the hand divine!

Oh! too convincing – dangerously dear –
 In woman's eye the unanswerable tear!
 That weapon of her weakness she can wield, 1150
 To save, subdue at once her spear and shield –
 Avoid it – Virtue ebbs and Wisdom errs,
 Too fondly gazing on that grief of hers!
 What lost a world,⁴⁶ and bade a hero fly?
 The timid tear in Cleopatra's eye. 1155
 Yet be the soft triumvir's fault forgiven;
 By this – how many lose not Earth – but Heaven!
 Consign their souls to man's eternal foe,
 And seal their own to spare some wanton's woe!

⁴⁵: Gulnare has all her work cut out to persuade Conrad to be saved.

⁴⁶: Recalls the title of Dryden's version of *Antony and Cleopatra*, *All for Love all the World Well Lost*.

16.

'Tis morn, and o'er his altered features play 1160
The beams – without the hope of yesterday.
What shall he be ere night? perchance a thing
O'er which the raven flaps her funeral wing;
By his closed eye unheeded and unfelt;
While sets that sun, and dews of evening melt, 1165
Chill, wet, and misty round each stiffened limb,
Refreshing earth – reviving all but him!

CANTO THE THIRD

“Come vedi – ancor non m’abbandona” – DANTE.⁴⁷ *

1.

SLOW sinks, more lovely ere his race be run,⁴⁸
 Along Morea’s hills the setting sun;
 Not, as in Northern climes, obscurely bright, 1170
 But one unclouded blaze of living light!
 O’er the hushed deep the yellow beam he throws,
 Gilds the green wave, that trembles as it glows.
 On old Ægina’s rock and Idra’s isle,
 The god of gladness sheds his parting smile; 1175
 O’er his own regions lingering, loves to shine,
 Though there his altars are no more divine.
 Descending fast the mountain shadows kiss
 Thy glorious gulf, unconquered Salamis!
 Their azure arches through the long expanse 1180
 More deeply purpled meet his mellowing glance,
 And tenderest tints, along their summits driven,
 Mark his gay course, and own the hues of heaven;
 Till, darkly shaded from the land and deep,
 Behind his Delphian cliff he sinks to sleep. 1185

On such an eve, his palest beam he cast,
 When – Athens! here thy wisest looked his last.
 How watched thy better sons his farewell ray,
 That closed their murdered sage’s latest day! †
 Not yet – not yet – Sol pauses on the hill – 1190
 The precious hour of parting lingers still;
 But sad his light to agonising eyes,
 And dark the mountain’s once delightful dyes;
 Gloom o’er the lovely land he seemed to pour,
 The land, where Phœbus never frowned before; 1195
 But ere he sank below Cithæron’s head,
 The cup of woe was quaffed – the spirit fled;
 The soul of him who scorned to fear or fly –
 Who lived and died, as none can live or die!

But lo! from high Hymettus⁴⁹ to the plain, 1200
 The queen of night asserts her silent reign. ‡
 No murky vapour, herald of the storm,
 Hides her fair face, nor girds her glowing form;
 With cornice glimmering as the moon-beams play,
 There the white column greets her grateful ray, 1205
 And, bright around with quivering beams beset,
 Her emblem sparkles o’er the minaret;
 The groves of olive scattered dark and wide
 Where meek Cephisus pours his scanty tide,

47: The third epigraph from *Inferno*, V: it’s line 106, translated, by B., *That, as thou seest, yet, yet it doth remain*, a version which ignores what Francesca says, namely, that she and Paolo are joined in the sexual act for all eternity.

48: Lines 1168-1221 were originally the start of the virtually-unpublished *Curse of Minerva* (1811).

49: Hymettus was a promontory in the vicinity of Athens.

The cypress saddening by the sacred mosque, 1210
 The gleaming turret of the gay Kiosk, §
 And, dun and sombre 'mid the holy calm,
 Near Theseus' fane yon solitary palm,
 All tinged with varied hues arrest the eye –
 And dull were his that passed them heedless by. 1215

Again the Ægean, heard no more afar,
 Lulls his chafed breast from elemental war;
 Again his waves in milder tints unfold
 Their long array of sapphire and of gold,
 Mixed with the shades of many a distant isle, 1220
 That frown – where gentler ocean seems to smile. §

* The opening lines as far as section II. have, perhaps, little business here, and were annexed to an unpublished (though printed) poem;⁵⁰ but they were written on the spot in the spring of 1811, and – I scarce know why – the reader must excuse their appearance here if he can.

† Socrates drank the hemlock a short time before sunset (the hour of execution), notwithstanding the entreaties of his disciples to wait till the sun went down.

‡ The twilight in Greece is much shorter than in our own country; the days in winter are longer, but in summer of shorter duration.

§ The Kiosk is a Turkish summer-house; the palm is without the present walls of Athens, not far from the temple of Theseus, between which and the tree the wall intervenes. – Cephisus' stream is indeed scanty, and Ilissus has no stream at all.⁵¹

2.

Not now my theme – why turn my thoughts to thee?⁵²
 Oh! who can look along thy native sea,
 Nor dwell upon thy name, whate'er the tale
 So much its magic must o'er all prevail? 1225
 Who that beheld that Sun upon thee set,
 Fair Athens! could thine evening face forget?
 Not he – whose heart nor time nor distance frees,
 Spell-bound within the clustering Cyclades!
 Nor seems this homage foreign to its strain, 1230
 His Corsair's isle was once thine own domain –
 Would that with freedom it were thine again!

3.

The Sun hath sunk – and, darker than the night,
 Sinks with its beam upon the beacon height –
 Medora's heart – the third day's come and gone – 1235
 With it he comes not – sends not – faithless one!
 The wind was fair though light; and storms were none;
 Last eve Anselmo's bark returned, and yet
 His only tidings that they had not met!

⁵⁰: *The Curse of Minerva*.

⁵¹: Cephisus and Ilissus were – or should have been – streams on the Athenian plain.

⁵²: B. realises he's been digressing – something which in his later poems he does all the time.

Though wild, as now, far different were the tale 1240
Had Conrad waited for that single sail.

The night-breeze freshens – she that day had passed
In watching all that Hope proclaimed a mast;
Sadly she sate on high – Impatience bore
At last her footsteps to the midnight shore, 1245
And there she wandered, heedless of the spray
That dashed her garments oft, and warned away;
She saw not, felt not this – nor dared depart,
Nor deemed it cold – her chill was at her heart;
Till grew such certainty from that suspense, 1250
His very sight had shocked from life or sense!

It came at last – a sad and shattered boat,
Whose inmates first beheld whom first they sought;
Some bleeding – all most wretched – these the few –
Scarce knew they how escaped – this all they knew. 1255
In silence, darkling, each appeared to wait
His fellow's mournful guess at Conrad's fate.
Something they would have said; but seemed to fear
To trust their accents to Medora's ear.
She saw at once, yet sunk not – trembled not – 1260
Beneath that grief, that loneliness of lot;
Within that meek fair form were feelings high,
That deemed not, till they found, their energy.
While yet was Hope, they softened, fluttered, wept –
All lost – that softness died not – but it slept; 1265
And o'er its slumber rose that Strength which said,
"With nothing left to love, there's nought to dread."
'Tis more than nature's; like the burning night
Delirium gathers from the fever's height.

"Silent you stand – nor would I hear you tell 1270
What – speak not – breathe not – for I know it well –
Yet would I ask – almost my lip denies
The – quick, your answer! – tell me where he lies."

"Lady! we know not – scarce with life we fled –
But here is one denies that he is dead; 1275
He saw him bound and bleeding – but alive."

She heard no further – 'twas in vain to strive –
So throbb'd each vein – each thought – till then withstood;
Her own dark soul – these words at once subdued;
She totters – falls – and senseless had the wave 1280
Perchance but snatched her from another grave,
But that with hands though rude, yet weeping eyes,
They yield such aid as Pity's haste supplies;
Dash o'er her deathlike cheek the ocean dew,
Raise, fan, sustain – till life returns anew; 1285
Awake her handmaids, with the matrons leave
That fainting form o'er which they gaze and grieve;
Then seek Anselmo's cavern, to report
The tale too tedious – when the triumph short.

4.

In that wild council words waxed warm and strange, 1290
 With thoughts of ransom, rescue, and revenge;
 All, save repose or flight – still lingering there
 Breathed Conrad's spirit, and forbade despair;
 Whate'er his fate – the breasts he formed and led
 Will save him living, or appease him dead. 1295
 Woe to his foes! there yet survive a few
 Whose deeds are daring, as their hearts are true.

5.

Within the Haram's Secret chamber sate
 Stern Seyd, still pondering o'er his Captive's fate;
 His thoughts on love and hate alternate dwell, 1300
 Now with Gulnare, and now in Conrad's cell;
 Here at his feet the lovely slave reclined
 Surveys his brow – would soothe his gloom of mind;
 While many an anxious glance her large dark eye
 Sends in its idle search for sympathy, 1305
 His only bends in seeming o'er his beads, *
 But inly views his victim as he bleeds.

“Pacha! the day is time; and on thy crest
 Sits Triumph – Conrad taken – fall'n the rest!
 His doom is fixed – he dies; and well his fate 1310
 Was earned – yet much too worthless for thy hate;
 Methinks, a short release, for ransom told
 With all his treasure, not unwisely sold;
 Report speaks largely of his pirate-ward –
 Would that of this my Pacha were the lord! 1315
 While baffled, weakened by this fatal fray –
 Watched – followed – he were then an easier prey;
 But once cut off – the remnant of his band
 Embark their wealth, and seek a safer strand.”

“Gulnare! – if for each drop of blood a gem 1320
 Were offered rich as Stamboul's diadem;
 If for each hair of his a massy mine
 Of virgin ore should supplicating shine;
 If all our Arab tales divulge or dream
 Of wealth were here – that gold should not redeem! 1325
 It had not now redeemed a single hour,
 But that I know him fettered, in my power;
 And, thirsting for revenge, I ponder still
 On pangs that longest rack – and latest kill.”

“Nay, Seyd! I seek not to restrain thy rage, 1330
 Too justly moved for mercy to assuage;
 My thoughts were only to secure for thee
 His riches – thus released, he were not free:
 Disabled, shorn of half his might and band,
 His capture could but wait thy first command.” 1335

“His capture could! – shall I then resign
 One day to him – the wretch already mine?
 Release my foe! – at whose remonstrance? – thine!
 Fair suitor! – to thy virtuous gratitude,
 That thus repays this Giaour’s relenting mood, 1340
 Which thee and thine alone of all could spare,
 No doubt – regardless if the prize were fair,
 My thanks and praise alike are due – now hear!
 I have a counsel for thy gentler ear –
 I do mistrust thee, woman! and each word 1345
 Of thine stamps truth on all Suspicion heard.
 Borne in his arms through fire from yon Serai –
 Say, wert thou lingering there with him to fly?
 Thou need’st not answer – thy confession speaks,
 Already reddening on thy guilty cheeks; 1350
 Then, lovely dame, bethink thee! and beware;
 ’Tis not his life alone may claim such care!
 Another word and – nay – I need no more.
 Accursed was the moment when he bore
 Thee from the flames, which better far – but no – 1355
 I then had mourned thee with a lover’s woe –
 Now ’tis thy lord that warns – deceitful thing!
 Know’st thou that I can clip thy wanton wing?
 In words alone I am not wont to chafe –
 Look to thyself – nor deem thy falsehood safe!” 1360

He rose – and slowly, sternly thence withdrew,
 Rage in his eye, and threats in his adieu;
 Ah! little recked that chief of womanhood –
 Which frowns ne’er quelled, nor menaces subdued;
 And little deemed he what thy heart, Gulnare! 1365
 When soft could feel, and when incensed could dare.
 His doubts appeared to wrong – nor yet she knew
 How deep the root from whence compassion grew –
 She was a slave – from such may captives claim
 A fellow-feeling, differing but in name; 1370
 Still half unconscious – heedless of his wrath,
 Again she ventured on the dangerous path,
 Again his rage repelled – until arose
 That strife of thought, the source of woman’s woes!

* The Comboloio, or Mahometan rosary; the beads are in number ninety-nine.

6.

Meanwhile, long anxious, weary, still the same 1375
 Rolled day and night; his soul could terror tame –
 This fearful interval of doubt and dread,
 When every hour might doom him worse than dead,
 When every step that echoed by the gate,
 Might entering lead where axe and stake await; 1380
 When every voice that grated on his ear
 Might be the last that he could ever hear;
 Could terror tame – that spirit stern and high

Had proved unwilling as unfit to die;
 'Twas worn – perhaps decayed – yet silent bore 1385
 That conflict, deadlier far than all before;
 The heat of fight, the hurry of the gale,
 Leave scarce one thought inert enough to quail;
 But bound and fixed in fettered solitude,
 To pine, the prey of every changing mood; 1390
 To gaze on thine own heart; and meditate
 Irrevocable faults, and coming fate –
 Too late the last to shun – the first to mend –
 To count the hours that struggle to thine end,
 With not a friend to animate, and tell 1395
 To other ears that death became thee well;
 Around thee foes to forge the ready lie,
 And blot life's latest scene with calumny;
 Before thee tortures, which the soul can dare,
 Yet doubts how well the shrinking flesh may bear; 1400
 But deeply feels a single cry would shame –
 To valour's praise thy last and dearest claim;
 The life thou leav'st below, denied above
 By kind monopolists of heavenly love;
 And more than doubtful paradise – thy Heaven 1405
 Of earthly hope – thy loved one from thee riven.
 Such were the thoughts that outlaw must sustain,
 And govern pangs surpassing mortal pain;
 And those sustained he – boots it well or ill?
 Since not to sink beneath, is something still! 1410

7.

The first day passed – he saw not her – Gulnare –
 The second, third⁵³ – and still she came not there;
 But what her words avouched, her charms had done,
 Or else he had not seen another sun.
 The fourth day rolled along, and with the night 1415
 Came storm and darkness in their mingling might –
 Oh! how he listened to the rushing deep,
 That ne'er till now so broke upon his sleep;
 And his wild spirit wilder wishes sent,
 Roused by the roar of his own element! 1420
 Oft had he ridden on that winged wave,
 And loved its roughness for the speed it gave;
 And now its dashing echoed on his ear,
 A long known voice – alas! too vainly near!
 Loud sung the wind above; and, doubly loud, 1425
 Shook o'er his turret cell the thunder-cloud;
 And flashed the lightning by the latticed bar,
 To him more genial than the midnight star;
 Close to the glimmering grate he dragged his chain,
 And hoped that peril might not prove in vain. 1430
 He raised his iron hand to Heaven, and prayed
 One pitying flash to mar the form it made;
 His steel and impious prayer attract alike –

53: But at 919-20 above it is said that Conrad will be impaled *the day after* he is captured.

The storm rolled onward, and disdained to strike;
 Its peal waxed fainter – eased – he felt alone, 1435
 As if some faithless friend had spurned his groan!

8.

The midnight passed, and to the massy door
 A light step came – it paused – it moved once more;
 Slow turns the grating bolt and sullen key:
 'Tis as his heart foreboded – that fair she! 1440
 Whate'er her sins, to him a guardian saint,
 And beauteous still as hermit's hope can paint;
 Yet changed since last within that cell she came,
 More pale her cheek, more tremulous her frame –
 On him she cast her dark and hurried eye, 1445
 Which spoke before her accents – “Thou must die!
 Yes, thou must die – there is but one resource,
 The last – the worst – if torture were not worse.”

“Lady! I look to none; my lips proclaim
 What last proclaimed they – Conrad still the same; 1450
 Why shouldst thou seek an outlaw's life to spare,
 And change the sentence I deserve to bear?
 Well have I earned – nor here alone – the meed
 Of Seyd's revenge, by many a lawless deed.”⁵⁴

“Why should I seek? Because – Oh! didst thou not 1455
 Redeem my life from worse than slavery's lot?⁵⁵
 Why should I seek? – hath misery made thee blind
 To the fond workings of a woman's mind?
 And must I say? – albeit my heart rebel
 With all that woman feels, but should not tell – 1460
 Because, despite thy crimes, that heart is moved;
 It feared thee – thanked thee – pitied – maddened – loved.
 Reply not – tell not now thy tale again,
 Thou lov'st another – and I love in vain;
 Though fond as mine her bosom, form more fair, 1465
 I rush through peril which she would not dare.
 If that thy heart to hers were truly dear,
 Were I thine own thou wert not lonely here –
 An outlaw's spouse – and leave her lord to roam!
 What hath such gentle dame to do with home? 1470
 But speak not now – o'er thine and o'er my head
 Hangs the keen sabre by a single thread;
 If thou hast courage still, and wouldst be free,
 Receive this poniard – rise and follow me!”

“Ay – in my chains! my steps will gently tread, 1475
 With these adornments, o'er each slumbering head!
 Thou hast forgot – is this a garb for flight?”

54: To express ethical approval at one's death sentence from the hand of an authority one detests is most unpiratical.

55: Gulnare's sense that the establishment she serves denies her as a person is one with the similar feeling of Selim in *BoA*.

Or is that instrument more fit for fight?"⁵⁶

"Misdoubting Corsair! I have gained the guard,
 Ripe for revolt, and greedy for reward. 1480
 A single word of mine removes that chain;
 Without some aid, how here could I remain?
 Well, since we met, hath sped my busy time,
 If in aught evil, for thy sake the crime;
 The crime – 'tis none to punish those of Seyd – 1485
 That hated tyrant, Conrad – he must bleed!
 I see thee shudder, but my soul is changed –
 Wronged – spurned – reviled – and it shall be avenged –
 Accused of what till now my heart disdained –
 Too faithful, though to bitter bondage chained. 1490
 Yes, smile! – but he had little cause to sneer,
 I was not treacherous then, nor thou too dear –
 But he has said it – and the jealous well –
 Those tyrants, teasing, tempting to rebel –
 Deserve the fate their fretting lips foretell. 1495
 I never loved – he bought me – somewhat high –
 Since with me came a heart he could not buy.⁵⁷
 I was a slave un murmuring; he hath said,
 But for his rescue I with thee had fled.
 'Twas false thou know'st – but let such augurs rue, 1500
 Their words are omens insult renders true.
 Nor was thy respite granted to my prayer;
 This fleeting grace was only to prepare
 New torments for thy life, and my despair.
 Mine too he threatens; but his dotage still 1505
 Would fain reserve me for his lordly will;
 When wearier of these fleeting charms and me,
 There yawns the sack – and yonder rolls the sea!
 What, am I then a toy for dotard's play,
 To wear but till the gilding frets away? 1510
 I saw thee – loved thee – owe thee all – would save,
 If but to show how grateful is a slave.
 But had he not thus menaced fame and life –
 (And well he keeps his oaths pronounced in strife) –
 I still had saved thee, but the Pacha spared. 1515
 Now I am all thine own – for all prepared –
 Thou lov'st me not, nor know'st – or but the worst.
 Alas! this love – that hatred – are the first –
 Oh! couldst thou prove my truth, thou wouldst not start,
 Nor fear the fire that lights an Eastern heart; 1520
 'Tis now the beacon of thy safety – now
 It points within the port a Mainote prow;
 But in one chamber, where our path must lead,
 There sleeps – he must not wake – the oppressor Seyd!"

 "Gulnare – Gulnare – I never felt till now 1525
 My abject fortune, withered fame so low;

56: Conrad appears to be happy at the prospect of death. A real pirate would try and see some way of seizing the opportunity Gulnare offers.

57: Compare Selim's words at *BoA*, 482 and 633.

Seyd is mine enemy; had swept my band
 From Earth with ruthless but with open hand,
 And therefore came I, in my bark of war,
 To smite the smiter with the scimitar; 1530
 Such is my weapon – not the secret knife;
 Who spares a woman's seeks not slumber's life.
 Thine saved I gladly, Lady – not for this –
 Let me not deem that mercy shown amiss.⁵⁸
 Now fare thee well – more peace be with thy breast! 1535
 Night wears apace, my last of earthly rest!”⁵⁹

“Rest! rest! by sunrise must thy sinews shake,
 And thy limbs writhe around the ready stake.
 I heard the order – saw – I will not see –
 If thou wilt perish, I will fall with thee. 1540
 My life, my love, my hatred – all below
 Are on this cast – Corsair! 'tis but a blow!
 Without it flight were idle – how evade
 His sure pursuit? – my wrongs too unrepaid,
 My youth disgraced; the long, long wasted years, 1545
 One blow shall cancel with our future fears;
 But since the dagger suits thee less than brand,⁶⁰
 I'll try the firmness of a female hand.
 The guards are gained – one moment all were o'er –
 Corsair! we meet in safety or no more; 1550
 If errs my feeble hand, the morning cloud
 Will hover o'er thy scaffold, and my shroud.”

9.

She turned, and vanished ere he could reply,
 But his glance followed far with eager eye;
 And gathering, as he could, the links that bound 1555
 His form, to curl their length, and curb their sound,
 Since bar and bolt no more his steps preclude,
 He, fast as fettered limbs allow, pursued.⁶¹
 'Twas dark and winding, and he knew not where
 That passage led; nor lamp nor guard was there. 1560
 He sees a dusky glimmering – shall he seek
 Or shun that ray so indistinct and weak?
 Chance guides his steps – a freshness seems to bear
 Full on his brow, as if from morning air;
 He reached an open gallery – on his eye 1565
 Gleamed the last star of night, the clearing sky –
 Yet scarcely heeded these – another light
 From a lone chamber struck upon his sight.
 Towards it he moved; a scarcely closing door
 Revealed the ray within, but nothing more. 1570
 With hasty step a figure outward passed,
 Then paused, and turned – and paused – 'tis She at last!

58: Contrast Macbeth's admiring lines, at I, vii, 72-4: *Bring forth men children only; / For thy undaunted mettle should compose nothing but males.*

59: Conrad really would have preferred impalement to escape at the cost of his worst enemy's life.

60: By "brand" she means "sword" (a more manly weapon than the treacherous dagger).

61: Thereby ignoring his own caution about noise at 1475-8 above.

No poniard in that hand, nor sign of ill –
 “Thanks to that softening heart – she could not kill!”
 Again he looked, the wildness of her eye 1575
 Starts from the day abrupt and fearfully.
 She stopped – threw back her dark, far-floating hair,
 That nearly veiled her face and bosom fair,
 As if she late had bent her leaning head
 Above some object of her doubt or dread. 1580
 They meet – upon her brow – unknown, forgot –
 Her hurrying hand had left – ’twas but a spot –
 Its hue was all he saw, and scarce withstood –
 Oh! slight but certain pledge of crime – ’tis blood!

10.

He had seen battle – he had brooded lone 1585
 O’er promised pangs to sentenced guilt foreshown –
 He had been tempted – chastened – and the chain
 Yet on his arms might ever there remain –
 But ne’er from strife, captivity, remorse –
 From all his feelings in their inmost force – 1590
 So thrilled, so shuddered every creeping vein
 As now they froze before that purple stain.
 That spot of blood, that light but guilty streak,
 Had banished all the beauty from her cheek!
 Blood he had viewed – could view unmoved – but then 1595
 It flowed in combat, or was shed by men!

11.

“’Tis done – he nearly waked – but it is done.
 Corsair! he perished – thou art dearly won.
 All words would now be vain – away – away!
 Our bark is tossing – ’tis already day. 1600
 The few gained over, now are wholly mine,
 And these thy yet surviving band shall join;
 Anon my voice shall vindicate my hand,
 When once our sail forsakes this hated strand.”

12.

She clapped her hands, and through the gallery pour, 1605
 Equipped for flight, her vassals – Greek and Moor;
 Silent but quick they stoop, his chains unbind;
 Once more his limbs are free as mountain wind!
 But on his heavy heart such sadness sate,
 As if they there transferred that iron weight. 1610
 No words are uttered – at her sign, a door
 Reveals the secret passage to the shore:
 The city lies behind – they speed, they reach
 The glad waves dancing on the yellow beach;
 And Conrad following, at her beck, obeyed, 1615
 Nor cared he now if rescued or betrayed;
 Resistance were as useless as if Seyd
 Yet lived to view the doom his ire decreed.

13.

Embarked, the sail unfurled, the light breeze blew –
 How much had Conrad's memory to review! 1620
 Sunk he in contemplation, till the cape
 Where last he anchored reared its giant shape.
 Ah! – since that fatal night, though brief the time,
 Had swept an age of terror, grief, and crime.
 As its far shadow frowned above the mast, 1625
 He veiled his face, and sorrowed as he passed;
 He thought of all – Gonsalvo and his band,
 His fleeting triumph and his failing hand;
 He thought on her afar, his lonely bride:
 He turned and saw – Gulnare, the homicide!⁶² 1630

14.

She watched his features till she could not bear
 Their freezing aspect and averted air;
 And that strange fierceness, foreign to her eye,
 Fell quenched in tears, too late to shed or dry.
 She knelt beside him and his hand she pressed, 1635
 “Thou may'st forgive, though Allah's self detest;
 But for that deed of darkness what wert thou?
 Reproach me – but not yet – Oh! spare me now!
 I am not what I seem – this fearful night
 My brain bewildered – do not madden quite! 1640
 If I had never loved – though less my guilt –
 Thou hadst not lived to – hate me – if thou wilt.”

15.

She wrongs his thoughts; they more himself upbraid
 Than her, though undesigned, the wretch he made;
 But speechless all, deep, dark, and unexpressed, 1645
 They bleed within that silent cell – his breast.
 Still onward, fair the breeze, nor rough the surge,
 The blue waves sport around the stern they urge;
 Far on the horizon's verge appears a speck⁶³ –
 A spot – a mast – a sail – an armed deck! 1650
 Their little bark her men of watch descry,
 And ampler canvas woos the wind from high;
 She bears her down majestically near,
 Speed on her prow, and terror in her tier;
 A flash is seen – the ball beyond their bow 1655
 Booms harmless, hissing to the deep below.
 Uprose keen Conrad from his silent trance,
 A long, long absent gladness in his glance;
 “'Tis mine – my blood-red flag! Again – again –
 I am not all deserted on the main!” 1660
 They own the signal, answer to the hail,

⁶²: The line implies that Conrad, a pirate, is unused to the company of homicides.

⁶³: A little speck appears at *TVOJ*, 57, 2; and at *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, 3, 2, 1.

Hoist out the boat at once, and slacken sail.
 "'Tis Conrad! Conrad!" shouting from the deck,
 Command nor duty could their transport check!
 With light alacrity and gaze of pride, 1665
 They view him mount once more his vessel's side;
 A smile relaxing in each rugged face,
 Their arms can scarce for bear a rough embrace.
 He, half forgetting danger and defeat,
 Returns their greeting as a chief may greet, 1670
 Wrings with a cordial grasp Anselmo's hand,
 And feels he yet can conquer and command!⁶⁴

16.

These greetings o'er, the feelings that o'erflow,
 Yet grieve to win him back without a blow;
 They sailed prepared for vengeance – had they known 1675
 A woman's hand secured that deed her own,
 She were their queen – less scrupulous are they
 Than haughty Conrad how they win their way.⁶⁵
 With many an asking smile, and wondering stare,
 They whisper round, and gaze upon Gulnare; 1680
 And her, at once above – beneath her sex
 Whom blood appalled not, their regards perplex.
 To Conrad turns her faint imploring eye,
 She drops her veil, and stands in silence by;
 Her arms are meekly folded on that breast, 1685
 Which – Conrad safe – to fate resigned the rest.
 Though worse than frenzy could that bosom fill,
 Extreme in love or hate, in good or ill,
 The worst of crimes had left her woman still!⁶⁶

17.

This Conrad marked, and felt – ah! could he less? – 1690
 Hate of that deed, but grief for her distress;
 What she has done no tears can wash away,
 And Heaven must punish on its angry day;⁶⁷
 But – it was done – he knew, whate'er her guilt,
 For him that poniard smote, that blood was spilt; 1695
 And he was free! and she for him had given
 Her all on Earth, and more than all in Heaven!
 And now he turned him to that dark-eyed slave,
 Whose brow was bowed beneath the glance he gave,
 Who now seemed changed and humbled, faint and meek, 1700
 But varying oft the colour of her cheek
 To deeper shades of paleness – all its red
 That fearful spot which stained it from the dead!
 He took that hand – it trembled – now too late –
 So soft in love, so wildly nerved in hate; 1705

64: Gulnare's presence unmans him; that of his subordinates and comrades renews his manhood.

65: They have greater piratical common sense than he.

66: Yet tyrannicide has never been regarded as "the worst of crimes."

67: What the fate would be, in the Christian afterlife, for a Moslem woman who had killed a Moslem tyrant, is not a question to ask.

He clasped that hand – it trembled – and his own
 Had lost its firmness, and his voice its tone.
 “Gulnare!” – but she replied not – “Dear Gulnare!”
 She raised her eye – her only answer there –
 At once she sought and sunk in his embrace; 1710
 If he had driven her from that resting-place,
 His had been more or less than mortal heart,
 But – good or ill – it bade her not depart.
 Perchance, but for the bodings of his breast,
 His latest virtue then had joined the rest. 1715
 Yet even Medora might forgive the kiss
 That asked from form so fair no more than this,
 The first, the last that Frailty stole from Faith –
 To lips where Love had lavished all his breath,
 To lips – whose broken sighs such fragrance fling, 1720
 As he had fanned them freshly with his wing!

18.

They gain by twilight’s hour their lonely isle;
 To them the very rocks appear to smile;
 The haven hums with many a cheering sound,
 The beacons blaze their wonted stations round, 1725
 The boats are darting o’er the curly bay,
 And sportive dolphins bend them through the spray;
 Even the hoarse sea-bird’s shrill, discordant shriek
 Greets like the welcome of his tuneless beak!
 Beneath each lamp that through its lattice gleams, 1730
 Their fancy paints the friends that trim the beams.
 Oh! what can sanctify the joys of home,
 Like Hope’s gay glance from Ocean’s troubled foam?

19.

The lights are high on beacon and from bower,
 And ’midst them Conrad seeks Medora’s tower; 1735
 He looks in vain – ’tis strange – and all remark,
 Amid so many, hers alone is dark.
 ’Tis strange – of yore its welcome never failed,
 Nor now, perchance, extinguished, only veiled.
 With the first boat descends he for the shore, 1740
 And looks impatient on the lingering oar.
 Oh! for a wing beyond the falcon’s flight,
 To bear him like an arrow to that height!⁶⁸
 With the first pause the resting rowers gave,
 He waits not – looks not – leaps into the wave, 1745
 Strives through the surge, bestrides the beach, and high
 Ascends the path familiar to his eye.

He reached his turret door – he paused – no sound
 Broke from within; and all was night around.
 He knocked, and loudly – footstep nor reply 1750
 Announced that any heard or deemed him nigh;

68: Compare *Romeo and Juliet*, II, ii, 158-9: *Oh for a falconer’s voice, / To lure this tassel-gentle back again!*

He knocked, but faintly – for his trembling hand
 Refused to aid his heavy heart's demand.
 The portal opens – 'tis a well-known face,
 But not the form he panted to embrace. 1755
 Its lips are silent – twice his own essayed,
 And failed to frame the question they delayed;
 He snatched the lamp – its light will answer all –
 It quits his grasp – expiring in the fall.
 He would not wait for that reviving ray – 1760
 As soon could he have lingered there for day;
 But, glimmering through the dusky corridor,
 Another chequers o'er the shadowed floor;
 His steps the chamber gain – his eyes behold
 All that his heart believed not – yet foretold! 1765

20.

He turned not – spoke not – sunk not – fixed his look,
 And set the anxious frame that lately shook;
 He gazed – how long we gaze despite of pain,
 And know, but dare not own, we gaze in vain! 1770
 In life itself she was so still and fair,
 That death with gentler aspect withered there;
 And the cold flowers her colder hand contained, *
 In that last grasp as tenderly were strained
 As if she scarcely felt, but feigned a sleep,
 And made it almost mockery yet to weep; 1775
 The long dark lashes fringed her lids of snow –
 And veiled – thought shrinks from all that lurked below –
 Oh! o'er the eye Death most exerts his might,
 And hurls the spirit from her throne of light!
 Sinks those blue orbs in that long last eclipse, 1780
 But spares, as yet, the charm around her lips –
 Yet, yet they seem as they forbore to smile,
 And wished repose, – but only for a while;
 But the white shroud, and each extended tress,
 Long, fair – but spread in utter lifelessness, 1785
 Which, late the sport of every summer wind,
 Escaped the baffled wreath that strove to bind;
 These, and the pale pure cheek, became the bier –
 But she is nothing – wherefore is he here?

* In the Levant it is the custom to strew flowers on the bodies of the dead, and in the hands of young persons to place a nosegay.

21.

He asked no question – all were answered now 1790
 By the first glance on that still, marble brow.
 It was enough – she died – what reaked it how?
 The love of youth, the hope of better years,
 The source of softest wishes, tenderest fears,
 The only living thing he could not hate, 1795
 Was reft at once – and he deserved his fate,
 But did not feel it less – the good explore,

For peace, those realms where guilt can never soar;
 The proud, the wayward – who have fixed below
 Their joy, and find this Earth enough for woe, 1800
 Lose in that one their all – perchance a mite –
 But who in patience parts with all delight?
 Full many a stoic eye and aspect stern
 Mask hearts where grief hath little left to learn;
 And many a withering thought lies hid, not lost 1805
 In smiles that least befit who wear them most.

22.

By those, that deepest feel, are ill express
 The indistinctness of the suffering breast;
 Where thousand thoughts begin to end in one,
 Which seeks from all the refuge found in none; 1810
 No words suffice the secret soul to show,
 For Truth denies all eloquence to Woe.
 On Conrad's stricken soul exhaustion prest,
 And stupor almost lulled it into rest;
 So feeble now – his mother's softness crept 1815
 To those wild eyes, which like an infant's wept;
 It was the very weakness of his brain,
 Which thus confessed without relieving pain.
 None saw his trickling tears – perchance if seen,
 That useless flood of grief had never been; 1820
 Nor long they flowed – he dried them to depart,
 In helpless – hopeless – brokenness of heart:
 The sun goes forth, but Conrad's day is dim;
 And the night cometh – ne'er to pass from him.
 There is no darkness like the cloud of mind, 1825
 On Grief's vain eye – the blindest of the blind!
 Which may not – dare not see – but turns aside
 To blackest shade – nor will endure a guide!

23.

His heart was formed for softness – warped to wrong;
 Betrayed too early, and beguiled too long; 1830
 Each feeling pure – as falls the dropping dew
 Within the grot – like that had hardened too;
 Less clear, perchance, its earthly trials passed,
 But sunk, and chilled, and petrified at last.
 Yet tempests wear, and lightning cleaves the rock; 1835
 If such his heart, so shattered it the shock.
 There grew one flower beneath its rugged brow,
 Though dark the shade – it sheltered – saved till now.
 The thunder came – that bolt hath blasted both,
 The Granite's firmness, and the Lily's growth; 1840
 The gentle plant hath left no leaf to tell
 Its tale, but shrunk and withered where it fell,
 And of its cold protector, blacken round
 But shivered fragments on the barren ground!

24.

'Tis morn – to venture on his lonely hour 1845
 Few dare; though now Anselmo sought his tower.
 He was not there, nor seen along the shore;
 Ere night, alarmed, their isle is traversed o'er;
 Another morn – another bids them seek,
 And shout his name till echo waxeth weak; 1850
 Mount, grotto, cavern, valley searched in vain,
 They find on shore a sea – boat's broken chain;
 Their hope revives – they follow o'er the main.
 'Tis idle all – moons roll on moons away,
 And Conrad comes not – came not since that day – 1855
 Nor trace, nor tidings of his doom declare
 Where lives his grief, or perished his despair!
 Long mourned his band whom none could mourn beside;
 And fair the monument they gave his bride;
 For him they raise not the recording stone – 1860
 His death yet dubious, deeds too widely known;
 He left a Corsair's name to other times,
 Linked with one virtue, and a thousand crimes.⁶⁹

69: Compare *Lara*, 18. The phrase “a thousand crimes” is from the last paragraph of *Vathek* (ed. Lonsdale, p.120).

BYRON'S TWO NOTES TO THE EIGHTH EDITION

[It is hard to justify either of these notes, which may have been inserted after criticism of Byron's depiction of Conrad as pirate. Lafitte was clearly much better at piracy than Conrad, and was any case merciful to an old associate rather than unhappy at the murder of his worst enemy; and Blackbourne was – as the article virtually admits – never a pirate at all. But both items are entertaining. I append an illustration.]

That the point of honour which is represented in one instance of Conrad's character has not been carried beyond the bounds of probability may perhaps be in some degree confirmed by the following ANECDOTE OF A BROTHER BUCCANEER in the present year 1814.

Our readers have all seen the account of the enterprise against the pirates of Barratrarria; but few, we believe, were informed of the situation, history, or nature of that establishment. For the information of such as were unacquainted with it, we have procured from a friend the following interesting narrative of the main facts, of which he has some personal knowledge, and which cannot fail to interest some of our readers.



Jean Lafitte

Barratrarria is a bay, or a narrow arm of the gulf of Mexico: it runs through a rich but very flat country, until it reaches within a mile of the Mississippi river, fifteen miles below the city of New Orleans. The bay has branches almost innumerable, in which persons can lie concealed from the severest scrutiny. It communicates with three lakes which lie on the southwest side, and these, with the lake of the same name, and which lies contiguous to the sea, where there is an island formed by the two arms of this lake and the sea. The east and west points of this island were fortified in the year 1811, by a band of pirates, under the command of one Monsieur La Fitte. A large majority of these outlaws are of that class of the population of The state of Louisiana who fled from the island of St. Domingo during the troubles

there, and took refuge in the island of Cuba: and when the last war between France and Spain commenced, they were compelled to leave that island with the short notice of a few days. Without ceremony, they entered the United States, the most of them the State of Louisiana, with all the negroes they had possessed in Cuba. They were notified by the Governor of that State of the clause in the constitution which forbid the importation of slaves; but, at the same time, received the assurance of the Governor that he would obtain, if possible, the approbation of the general Government for their retaining this property.

The island of Barratrarria is situated about lat. 29 deg. 15 min. lon. 92 30. and is as remarkable for its health as for the superior scale and shell fish with which its waters abound. The chief of this horde, like Charles de Moor, had mixed with his many vices some virtues. In the year 1813, this party had, from its turpitude and boldness, claimed the attention of the Governor of Louisiana; and to break up the establishment, he thought proper to strike at the head. He therefore offered a reward of 500 dollars for the head of Monsieur La Fitte, who was well known to the inhabitants of the city of New Orleans, from his immediate connection, and his having once been a fencing-master in that city of great reputation, which art he learned in Buonaparte's army, where he was a Captain. The reward which was offered by the Governor for the head of La Fitte was answered by the offer of a reward from the latter of 15,000 for the head of the Governor. The Governor ordered out a company to march from the city to La

Fitte's island, and to burn and destroy all the property, and to bring to the city of New Orleans all his banditti. This company, under the command of a man who had been the intimate associate of this bold Captain, approached very near to the fortified island, before he saw a

terre son visage féroce, en donnoit point d'essor à sa profonde indignation. De toutes partes cependant les soldats et les peuples accouroient; ils vouloient voir cet homme, jadis si puissant ... et la joie universelle éclatoit de toutes partes. ... Eccelino étoit d'une petite taille; mais tout l'aspect de sa personne, tous ses mouvements, indiquoient un soldat. Son langage étoit amer, son déportement superbe, et par son seul regard, il faisoit trembler les plus hardis." – Sismondi, *Histoire des Républiques Italiennes du Moyen Age*, 1809, iii. 219.

Again, "Gizericus staturâ mediocris, et equi casu claudicans, animo profundus, sermone ratus, luxuriæ contemptor, irâ turbidus, habendi cupidus, ad sollicitandas gentes providentissimus," etc., etc. – Jornandes, *De Getarum Origine*, cap. 33, ed. 1597, p.92.

I beg leave to quote those gloomy realities to keep in countenance my Giaour and Corsair.

BYRON'S NOTE TO THE TENTH EDITION

[*This is from the same volume as the source to Parisina.*]

"The only voice that could soothe the passions of the savage (Alphonso 3d) was that of an amiable and virtuous wife, the sole object of his love; the voice of Donna Isabella, the daughter of the Duke of Savoy, and the grand-daughter of Philip 2d, King of Spain. – Her dying words sunk deep into his memory; his fierce spirit melted into tears; and after the last embrace, Alphonso retired into his chamber to bewail his irreparable loss, and to meditate on the vanity of human life." *Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon*, New Edition, 8vo, vol. 3, page 473.

Lara

LARA. * The reader of “Lara” may probably regard it as a sequel to a poem that recently appeared: whether the cast of the hero’s character, the turn of his adventures, and the general outline and colouring of the story, may not encourage such a supposition, shall be left to his determination.⁷⁰

CANTO THE FIRST.

1.

THE SERFS are glad through Lara’s wide domain, *
 And Slavery half forgets her feudal chain;
 He, their unhop’d, but unforgotten lord –
 The long self-exiled chieftain is restored;
 There be bright faces in the busy hall, 5
 Bowls on the board, and banners on the wall;
 Far chequering o’er the pictured window, plays
 The unwonted fagots’ hospitable blaze;
 And gay retainers gather round the hearth,
 With tongues all loudness, and with eyes all mirth. 10

* The reader is advertised that the name only of Lara being Spanish, and no circumstance of local or national description fixing the scene or hero of the poem to any country or age, the word “*Serf*,” which could not be correctly applied to the lower classes in Spain, who were never vassals of the soil, has nevertheless been employed to designate the followers of our fictitious chieftain.

2.

The chief of Lara is returned again –
 And why had Lara crossed the bounding main?
 Left by his sire, too young such loss to know,
 Lord of himself – that heritage of woe,
 That fearful empire which the human breast 15
 But holds to rob the heart within of rest! –
 With none to check, and few to point in time
 The thousand paths that slope the way to crime;⁷¹
 Then, when he most required commandment, then
 Had Lara’s daring boyhood governed men. 20
 It skills not, boots not, step by step to trace
 His youth through all the mazes of its race;
 Short was the course his restlessness had run,
 But long enough to leave him half undone.

70: In July 1814, Hobhouse wrote to Murray: “Mr Murray is requested by Mr Hobhouse to look again at the advertisement which, in consequence of the alteration, is, as it now stands, not English – the first sentence must be either – ‘The reader of Lara may probably regard it as a sequel to a poem *which has* recently appeared’ or, ‘The reader of Lara may probably *have regarded* it as a sequel to a poem *which* recently appeared’ – The first is the best form – ‘*That* is never used by correct writers for ‘which’ and the word *appeared* is in a different tense from the former part of the sentence – It is really of considerable consequence that the mistake should be corrected as it is neither more nor less than an offence against grammar – which the first who reads the lines will be certain to remark ... (John Murray Archive / National Library of Scotland).

71: Echoes *The Corsair*, last line.

3.

And Lara left in youth his fatherland; 25
 But from the hour he waved his parting hand
 Each trace waxed fainter of his course, till all
 Had nearly ceased his memory to recall.
 His sire was dust, his vassals could declare,
 'Twas all they knew, that Lara was not there; 30
 Nor sent, nor came he, till conjecture grew
 Cold in the many, anxious in the few.
 His hall scarce echoes with his wonted name,
 His portrait darkens in its fading frame,
 Another chief consoled his destined bride, 35
 The young forgot him, and the old had died;
 "Yet doth he live!" exclaims the impatient heir,
 And sighs for sables which he must not wear.
 A hundred scutcheons deck with gloomy grace
 The Laras' last and longest dwelling-place; 40
 But one is absent from the mouldering file,
 That now were welcome to that Gothic pile.

4.

He comes at last in sudden loneliness,
 And whence they know not, why they need not guess;
 They more might marvel, when the greeting's o'er, 45
 Not that he came, but came not long before;
 No train is his beyond a single page,
 Of foreign aspect, and of tender age.
 Years had rolled on, and fast they speed away
 To those that wander as to those that stay; 50
 But lack of tidings from another clime
 Had lent a flagging wing to weary Time.
 They see, they recognise, yet almost deem
 The present dubious, or the past a dream.

He lives, nor yet is past his manhood's prime, 55
 Though seared by toil, and something touched by time;
 His faults, whate'er they were, if scarce forgot,
 Might be untaught him by his varied lot;
 Nor good nor ill of late were known, his name
 Might yet uphold his patrimonial fame. 60
 His soul in youth was haughty, but his sins
 No more than pleasure from the stripling wins;
 And such, if not yet hardened in their course,
 Might be redeemed, nor ask a long remorse.

5.

And they indeed were changed – 'tis quickly seen, 65
 Whate'er he be, 'twas not what he had been;
 That brow in furrowed lines had fixed at last,
 And spake of passions, but of passion past;
 The pride, but not the fire, of early days,

Coldness of mien, and carelessness of praise; 70
 A high demeanour, and a glance that took
 Their thoughts from others by a single look;
 And that sarcastic levity of tongue,
 The stinging of a heart the world hath stung,
 That darts in seeming playfulness around, 75
 And makes those feel that will not own the wound;
 All these seemed his, and something more beneath
 Than glance could well reveal, or accent breathe.
 Ambition, glory, love, the common aim
 That some can conquer, and that all would claim, 80
 Within his breast appeared no more to strive,
 Yet seemed as lately they had been alive;
 And some deep feeling it were vain to trace
 At moments lightened o'er his livid face.

6.

Not much he loved long question of the past, 85
 Nor told of wondrous wilds, and deserts vast,⁷²
 In those far lands where he had wandered lone,
 And – as himself would have it seem – unknown;
 Yet these in vain his eye could scarcely scan,
 Nor glean experience from his fellow-man; 90
 But what he had beheld he shunned to show,
 As hardly worth a stranger's care to know;
 If still more prying such inquiry grew,
 His brow fell darker, and his words more few.

7.

Not unrejoiced to see him once again, 95
 Warm was his welcome to the haunts of men;
 Born of high lineage, linked in high command,
 He mingled with the Magnates of his land;
 Joined the carousals of the great and gay,
 And saw them smile or sigh their hours away; 100
 But still he only saw, and did not share
 The common pleasure or the general care;
 He did not follow what they all pursued,
 With hope still baffled, still to be renewed;
 Nor shadowy honour, nor substantial gain, 105
 Nor beauty's preference, and the rival's pain;
 Around him some mysterious circle thrown
 Repelled approach, and showed him still alone;
 Upon his eye sate something of reproof,
 That kept at least frivolity aloof; 110
 And things more timid that beheld him near,
 In silence gazed, or whispered mutual fear;
 And they, the wiser, friendlier few, confessed
 They deemed him better than his air expressed.

72: Compare *Othello*, I, iii, 140-2: *Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle ... It was my hint to speak.*

8.

'Twas strange – in youth all action and all life, 115
 Burning for pleasure, not averse from strife;
 Woman – the field – the ocean – all that gave
 Promise of gladness, peril of a grave,
 In turn he tried – he ransacked all below,
 And found his recompence in joy or woe, 120
 No tame, trite medium; for his feelings sought
 In that intenseness an escape from thought;
 The tempest of his heart in scorn had gazed
 On that the feebler elements hath raised;
 The rapture of his heart had looked on high, 125
 And asked if greater dwelt beyond the sky;
 Chained to excess, the slave of each extreme,
 How woke he from the wildness of that dream?
 Alas! he told not – but he did awake
 To curse the withered heart that would not break. 130

9.

Books, for his volume heretofore was Man,
 With eye more curious he appeared to scan,
 And oft, in sudden mood, for many a day
 From all communion he would start away;
 And then, his rarely called attendants said, 135
 Through night's long hours would sound his hurried tread
 O'er the dark gallery,⁷³ where his fathers frowned
 In rude but antique portraiture around.
 They heard, but whispered – “*That* must not be known –
 The sound of words less earthly than his own. 140
 Yes, they who chose might smile, but some had seen
 They scarce knew what, but more than should have been.
 Why gazed he so upon the ghastly head
 Which hands profane had gathered from the dead,
 That still beside his opened volume lay, 145
 As if to startle all save him away?
 Why slept he not when others were at rest?
 Why heard no music,⁷⁴ and received no guest?
 All was not well, they deemed – but where the wrong?
 Some knew perchance – but 'twere a tale too long; 150
 And such besides were too discreetly wise,
 To more than hint their knowledge in surmise;
 But if they would – they could”⁷⁵ – around the board,
 Thus Lara's vassals prattled of their lord.

73: Long, dark galleries are favoured haunts for the melancholy hero in B.. See *Manfred*, I, i; or *Don Juan* V, 57, 5 or 58, 7; or *Don Juan* XIII, 67, 1.

74: Lara's distaste for music aligns him with Shylock, Malvolio and Jacques, all of whom feature in the epigraphs to *Beppo*, *Don Juan* VI-VIII, and *The Vision of Judgement*. See also *The Giaour*, 887-8.

75: Compare *Hamlet*, I, v, 176: “We could, an if we would.”

10.

It was the night – and Lara’s glassy stream 155
 The stars are studding, each with imaged beam;
 So calm, the waters scarcely seem to stray,
 And yet they glide like happiness away;
 Reflecting far and fairy-like from high
 The immortal lights that live along the sky; 160
 Its banks are fringed with many a goodly tree,
 And flowers the fairest that may feast the bee;
 Such in her chaplet infant Dian wove,
 And Innocence would offer to her love.
 These deck the shore; the waves their channel make 165
 In windings bright and mazy like the snake.
 All was so still, so soft in earth and air,
 You scarce would start to meet a spirit there;
 Secure that nought of evil could delight
 To walk in such a scene, on such a night! 170
 It was a moment only for the good;
 So Lara deemed, nor longer there he stood,
 But turned in silence to his castle-gate;
 Such scene his soul no more could contemplate.
 Such scene reminded him of other days, 175
 Of skies more cloudless, moons of purer blaze,
 Of nights more soft and frequent, hearts that now –
 No – no – the storm may beat upon his brow,
 Unfelt – unsparing – but a night like this,
 A night of beauty mocked such breast as his. 180

11.

He turned within his solitary hall,
 And his high shadow shot along the wall;
 There were the painted forms of other times,
 ’Twas all they left of virtues or of crimes, 185
 Save vague tradition; and the gloomy vaults
 That hid their dust, their foibles, and their faults;⁷⁶
 And half a column of the pompous page,
 That speeds the specious tale from age to age;
 When history’s pen its praise or blame supplies,
 And lies like truth,⁷⁷ and still most truly lies. 190
 He wandering mused, and as the moonbeam shone
 Through the dim lattice o’er the floor of stone,
 And the high fretted roof, and saints, that there
 O’er Gothic windows knelt in pictured prayer,
 Reflected in fantastic figures grew, 195
 Like life, but not like mortal life, to view;
 His bristling locks of sable, brow of gloom,
 And the wide waving of his shaken plume,
 Glanced like a spectre’s attributes, and gave
 His aspect all that terror gives the grave. 200

⁷⁶: Compare *Siege*, 575-82; or the Norman Abbey portraits at *Don Juan*, XIII, stanzas 67-70.

⁷⁷: *Macbeth*, V, v, 43-4: *The fiend that lies like truth*.

12.

'Twas midnight – all was slumber; the lone light
 Dimmed in the lamp, as loth to break the night.
 Hark! there be murmurs heard in Lara's hall –
 A sound – voice – a shriek – a fearful call!
 A long, loud shriek – and silence – did they hear 205
 That frantic echo burst the sleeping ear?
 They heard and rose, and tremulously brave
 Rush where the sound invoked their aid to save;
 They come with half-lit tapers in their hands,
 And snatched in startled haste unbelted brands.⁷⁸ 210

13.

Cold as the marble where his length was laid,
 Pale as the beam that o'er his features played,
 Was Lara stretched; his half-drawn sabre near,
 Dropped it, should seem, in more than nature's fear;
 Yet he was firm, or had been firm till now, 215
 And still defiance knit his gathered brow;
 Though mixed with terror, senseless as he lay,
 There lived upon his lip the wish to slay;
 Some half-formed threat in utterance there had died,
 Some imprecation of despairing pride; 220
 His eye was almost sealed, but not forsook,
 Even in its trance the gladiator's look,
 That oft awake his aspect could disclose,
 And now was fixed in horrible repose.
 They raise him – bear him – hush! he breathes, he speaks! 225
 The swarthy blush recolours in his cheeks,
 His lip resumes its red, his eye, though dim,
 Rolls wide and wild, each slowly quivering limb
 Recalls its function, but his words are strung
 In terms that seem not of his native tongue; 230
 Distinct but strange, enough they understand
 To deem them accents of another land,
 And such they were, and meant to meet an ear
 That hears him not – alas! that cannot hear!

14.

His page approached, and he alone appeared 235
 To know the import of the words they heard;
 And by the changes of his cheek and brow
 They were not such as Lara should avow,
 Nor he interpret, yet with less surprise
 Than those around their chieftain's state he eyes, 240
 But Lara's prostrate form he bent beside,
 And in that tongue, which seemed his own, replied,
 And Lara heeds those tones that gently seem
 To soothe away the horrors of his dream;
 If dream it were, that thus could overthrow 245

78: Brands are swords.

A breast that needed not ideal woe.

15.

Whate'er his frenzy dreamed or eye beheld,
 If yet remembered ne'er to be revealed,
 Rests at his heart – the custom'd morning came,
 And breathed new vigour in his shaking frame; 250
 And solace sought he none from priest nor leech,
 And soon the same in movement and in speech
 As heretofore he filled the passing hours,
 Nor less he smiles, nor more his forehead lours
 Than these were wont; and if the coming night 255
 Appeared less welcome now to Lara's sight,
 He to his marvelling vassals shewed it not,
 Whose shuddering proved *their* fear was less forgot.
 In trembling pairs (alone they dared not) crawl
 The astonished slaves, and shun the fated hall; 260
 The waving banner, and the clapping door;
 The rustling tapestry, and the echoing floor;
 The long dim shadows of surrounding trees,
 The flapping bat, the night song of the breeze;
 Aught they behold or hear their thought appals 265
 As evening saddens o'er the dark gray walls.

16.

Vain thought! that hour of ne'er unravelled gloom
 Came not again, or Lara could assume
 A seeming of forgetfulness that made
 His vassals more amazed nor less afraid – 270
 Had memory vanished then with sense restored?
 Since word, nor look, nor gesture of their lord
 Betrayed a feeling that recalled to these
 That fevered moment of his mind's disease.
 Was it a dream? was his the voice that spoke 275
 Those strange wild accents? his the cry that broke
 Their slumber? his the oppressed o'er-laboured heart
 That ceased to beat, the look that made them start?
 Could he, who thus had suffered, so forget
 When such as saw that suffering shudder yet? 280
 Or did that silence prove his memory fixed
 Too deep for words, indelible, unmixed
 In that corroding secrecy which gnaws
 The heart to shew the effect, but not the cause?
 Not so in him; his breast had buried both, 285
 Nor common gazers could discern the growth
 Of thoughts that mortal lips must leave half told;
 They choak the feeble words that would unfold.

17.⁷⁹

In him inexplicably mixed appeared
 Much to be loved and hated, sought and feared; 290
 Opinion varying o'er his hidden lot,
 In praise or railing ne'er his name forgot;
 His silence formed a theme for others' prate –
 They guessed – they gazed – they fain would know his fate.
 What had he been? what was he, thus unknown, 295
 Who walked their world, his lineage only known?
 A hater of his kind? yet some would say,
 With them he could seem gay amidst the gay;
 But owned that smile, if oft observed and near,
 Waned in its mirth and withered to a sneer; 300
 That smile might reach his lip, but passed not by,
 None e'er could trace its laughter to his eye;
 Yet there was softness too in his regard,
 At times, a heart as not by nature hard,
 But once perceived, his spirit seemed to chide 305
 Such weakness, as unworthy of its pride,
 And steeled itself, as scorning to redeem
 One doubt from others' half-withheld esteem;
 In self-inflicted penance of a breast
 Which tenderness might once have wrung from rest; 310
 In vigilance of grief that would compel
 The soul to hate for having loved too well.

18.

There was in him a vital scorn of all –
 As if the worst had fall'n which could befall, 315
 He stood a stranger in this breathing world,
 An erring spirit from another hurled;
 A thing of dark imaginings, that shaped
 By choice the perils he by chance escaped;
 But 'scaped in vain, for in their memory yet
 His mind would half exult and half regret; 320
 With more capacity for love than Earth
 Bestows on most of mortal mould and birth,
 His early dreams of good outstripped the truth,
 And troubled manhood followed baffled youth;
 With thought of years in phantom chase misspent, 325
 And wasted powers for better purpose lent;
 And fiery passions that had poured their wrath
 In hurried desolation o'er his path,
 And left the better feelings all at strife
 In wild reflection o'er his stormy life; 330
 But haughty still, and loth himself to blame,
 He called on Nature's self to share the shame,
 And charged all faults upon the fleshly form
 She gave to clog the soul, and feast the worm;

79: Sections 17-19 form B.'s longest portrait of The Byronic Hero: much of them is self-depiction. B. has "deviated into the gloomy vanity of 'drawing from self'" of which he says in the preface to *The Corsair* he has been guilty. B. also knows by now that such teasing material sells poems very well.

'Till he at last confounded good and ill, 335
 And half mistook for fate the acts of will;
 Too high for common selfishness, he could
 At times resign his own for others' good,
 But not in pity, not because he ought,
 But in some strange perversity of thought, 340
 That swayed him onward with a secret pride
 To do what few or none would do beside;
 And this same impulse would, in tempting time,
 Mislead his spirit equally to crime;
 So much he soared beyond, or sunk beneath 345
 The men with whom he felt condemned to breathe,
 And longed by good or ill to separate
 Himself from all who shared his mortal state;
 His mind, abhorring this, had fixed her throne
 Far from the world, in regions of her own; 350
 Thus coldly passing all that passed below,
 His blood in temperate seeming now would flow:
 Ah! happier if it ne'er with guilt had glowed,
 But ever in that icy smoothness flowed!
 'Tis true, with other men their path he walked, 355
 And like the rest in seeming did and talked,
 Nor outraged Reason's rules by flaw nor start,
 His madness was not of the head, but heart;
 And rarely wandered in his speech, or drew
 His thoughts so forth as to offend the view. 360

19.

With all that chilling mystery of mien,
 And seeming gladness to remain unseen,
 He had (if 'twere not nature's boon) an art
 Of fixing memory on another's heart;
 It was not love, perchance – nor hate – nor aught 365
 That words can image to express the thought;
 But they who saw him did not see in vain,
 And once beheld, would ask of him again;
 And those to whom he spake remembered well,
 And on the words, however light, would dwell. 370
 None knew nor how, nor why, but he entwined
 Himself perforce around the hearer's mind;
 There he was stamped, in liking, or in hate,
 If greeted once; however brief the date
 That friendship, pity, or aversion knew, 375
 Still there within the inmost thought he grew.
 You could not penetrate his soul, but found
 Despite your wonder, to your own he wound.
 His presence haunted still; and from the breast
 He forced an all-unwilling interest; 380
 Vain was the struggle in that mental net,
 His spirit seemed to dare you to forget!

20.

There is a festival, where knights and dames,
 And aught that wealth or lofty lineage claims,
 Appear – a high – born and a welcomed guest 385
 To Otho's hall came Lara with the rest.
 The long carousal shakes the illumined hall,
 Well speeds alike the banquet and the ball;
 And the gay dance of bounding Beauty's train
 Links grace and harmony in happiest chain; 390
 Blest are the early hearts and gentle hands
 That mingle there in well according bands;
 It is a sight the careful brow might smoothe,
 And make Age smile, and dream itself to youth,
 And Youth forget such hour was passed on Earth, 395
 So springs the exulting bosom to that mirth!

21.

And Lara gazed on these sedately glad,
 His brow belied him if his soul was sad,
 And his glance followed fast each fluttering fair,
 Whose steps of lightness woke no echo there; 400
 He leaned against the lofty pillar nigh
 With folded arms and long attentive eye,
 Nor marked a glance so sternly fixed on his,
 Ill brooked high Lara scrutiny like this;
 At length he caught it⁸⁰ – 'tis a face unknown, 405
 But seems as searching his, and his alone;
 Prying and dark, a stranger's by his mien,
 Who still till now had gazed on him unseen;
 At length encountering meets the mutual gaze
 Of keen inquiry, and of mute amaze; 410
 On Lara's glance emotion gathering grew,
 As if distrusting that the stranger threw;
 Along the stranger's aspect fixed and stern
 Flashed more than thence the vulgar eye could learn.

22.

"'Tis he!" the stranger cried, and those that heard 415
 Re-echoed fast and far the whispered word.
 "'Tis he!" – "'Tis who?" they question far and near,
 Till louder accents rang on Lara's ear;
 So widely spread, few bosoms well could brook
 The general marvel, or that single look; 420
 But Lara stirred not, changed not, the surprise
 That sprung at first to his arrested eyes
 Seemed now subsided; neither sunk nor raised
 Glanced his eye round, though still the stranger gazed;
 And drawing nigh, exclaimed, with haughty sneer, 425
 "'Tis he! – how came he thence? – what doth he here?"

80: The idea of the observer at the ball, observed by another observer, is treated comically at *Beppo* stanzas 69 and 81.

23.

It were too much for Lara to pass by
 Such question, so repeated fierce and high;
 With look collected, but with accent cold,
 More mildly firm than petulantly bold, 430
 He turned, and met the inquisitorial tone –
 “My name is Lara! – when thine own is known,
 Doubt not my fitting answer to requite
 The unlooked for courtesy of such a knight.
 ’Tis Lara! – further wouldst thou mark or ask? 435
 I shun no question, and I wear no mask.”

“Thou shunn’st no question! Ponder – is there none
 Thy heart must answer, though thine ear would shun?
 And deem’st thou me unknown too? Gaze again!
 At least thy memory was not given in vain. 440
 Oh! never canst thou cancel half her debt,
 Eternity forbids thee to forget.”

With slow and searching glance upon his face
 Grew Lara’s eyes, but nothing there could trace
 They knew, or chose to know – with dubious look 445
 He deigned no answer, but his head he shook,
 And half contemptuous turned to pass away;
 But the stern stranger motioned him to stay.

“A word! – I charge thee stay, and answer here
 To one, who, wert thou noble, were thy peer, 450
 But as thou wast and art – nay, frown not, lord,
 If false, ’tis easy to disprove the word –
 But as thou wast and art, on thee looks down,
 Distrusts thy smiles, but shakes not at thy frown.
 Art thou not he? whose deeds –”

“Whate’er I be, 455
 Words wild as these, accusers like to thee,
 I list no further; those with whom they weigh
 May hear the rest, nor venture to gainsay
 The wondrous tale no doubt thy tongue can tell,
 Which thus begins courteously and well. 460

Let Otho cherish here his polished guest,
 To him my thanks and thoughts shall be expressed.”
 And here their wondering host hath interposed –
 “Whate’er there be between you undisclosed,
 This is no time nor fitting place to mar 465
 The mirthful meeting with a wordy war.

If thou, Sir Ezzelin, hast ought to show
 Which it befits Count Lara’s ear to know,
 To-morrow, here, or elsewhere, as may best
 Beseem your mutual judgement, speak the rest; 470
 I pledge myself for thee, as not unknown,
 Though, like Count Lara, now returned alone

From other lands, almost a stranger grown;
 And if from Lara’s blood and gentle birth
 I augur right of courage and of worth, 475
 He will not that untainted line belie,
 Nor aught that knighthood may accord deny.”

“To-morrow be it,” Ezzelin replied,
 “And here our several worth and truth be tried;
 I gage my life, my falchion to attest 480
 My words, so may I mingle with the blest!”
 What answers Lara? to its centre shrunk
 His soul, in deep abstraction sudden sunk;
 The words of many, and the eyes of all
 That there were gathered, seemed on him to fall; 485
 But his were silent, his appeared to stray
 In far forgetfulness away – away –
 Alas! that heedlessness of all around
 Bespoke remembrance only too profound.

24.

“To-morrow! – ay, to-morrow!” – further word 490
 Than those repeated none from Lara heard;
 Upon his brow no outward passion spoke,
 From his large eye no flashing anger broke;
 Yet there was something fixed in that low tone
 Which shewed resolve, determined, though unknown. 495
 He seized his cloak – his head he slightly bowed,
 And passing Ezzelin he left the crowd;
 And as he passed him, smiling met the frown
 With which that chieftain’s brow would bear him down;
 It was nor smile of mirth, nor struggling pride 500
 That curbs to scorn the wrath it cannot hide;
 But that of one in his own heart secure
 Of all that he would do, or could endure.
 Could this mean peace? the calmness of the good?
 Or guilt grown old in desperate hardihood? 505
 Alas! too like in confidence are each
 For man to trust to mortal look or speech;
 From deeds, and deeds alone, may he discern
 Truths which it wrings the unpractised heart to learn.

25.

And Lara called his page, and went his way – 510
 Well could that stripling word or sign obey;
 His only follower from those climes afar
 Where the soul glows beneath a brighter star;⁸¹
 For Lara left the shore from whence he sprung,
 In duty patient, and sedate though young; 515
 Silent as him he served, his fate appears
 Above his station, and beyond his years.
 Though not unknown the tongue of Lara’s land,
 In such from him he rarely heard command;
 But fleet his step, and clear his tones would come, 520
 When Lara’s lip breathed forth the words of home;
 Those accents, as his native mountains dear,
 Awake their absent echoes in his ear,

81: B. implies that the night skies of the Eastern Mediterranean (if that’s what “climes adar” means), are brighter than those of the Western.

Friends', kindreds', parents', wonted voice recall,⁸²
 Now lost, abjured, for one – his friend, his all; 525
 For him Earth now disclosed no other guide;
 What marvel then he rarely left his side?

26.

Light was his form, and darkly delicate
 That brow whereon his native sun had sate,
 But had not marred, though in his beams he grew, 530
 The cheek where oft the unbidden blush shone through;
 Yet not such blush as mounts when health would show
 All the heart's hue in that delighted glow;
 But 'twas a hectic tint of secret care
 That for a burning moment fevered there; 535
 And the wild sparkle of his eye seemed caught
 From high, and lightened with electric thought,
 Though its black orb those long low lashes' fringe,
 Had tempered with a melancholy tinge;
 Yet less of sorrow than of pride was there, 540
 Or, if 'twere grief, a grief that none should share;
 And pleased not him the sports that please his age,
 The tricks of youth, the frolics of the page;
 For hours on Lara he would fix his glance,
 As all-forgotten in that watchful trance; 545
 And from his chief withdrawn, he wandered lone;
 Brief were his answers, and his questions none;
 His walk the wood, his sport some foreign book;
 His resting-place the bank that curbs the brook;
 He seemed, like him he served, to live apart 550
 From all that lures the eye, and fills the heart;
 To know no brotherhood; and take from Earth
 No gift beyond that bitter boon – our birth.

27.

If aught he loved, 'twas Lara; but was shown
 His faith in reverence and in deeds alone; 555
 In mute attention; and his care, which guessed
 Each wish, fulfilled it ere the tongue expressed.⁸³
 Still there was haughtiness in all he did,
 A spirit deep that brooked not to be chid;
 His zeal, though more than that of servile hands, 560
 In act alone obeys, his air commands;
 As if 'twas Lara's less than *his* desire
 That thus he served, but surely not for hire.⁸⁴
 Slight were the tasks enjoined him by his lord,

82: If Kaled "is" Gulnare, we have no way from the details in *The Corsair* of assessing how strong her nostalgia for home might be.

83: Compare Gulnare's self-effacement, at *The Corsair*, 1698-1707.

84: Caroline Lamb to B.: *Oh God, can you give me up if I am so dear? Take me with you, – Take me, my master, my friend. Who will fight for you, serve you, in sickness and health, live but for your wishes and die when that can please you – who so faithfully as the one you have made yours, bound to your heart of hearts? Yet when you read this you will be gone.*

To hold the stirrup, or to bear the sword; 565
 To tune his lute, or, if he willed it more,
 On tomes of other times and tongues to pore;
 But ne'er to mingle with the menial train,
 To whom he shewed not deference nor disdain,
 But that well-worn reserve which proved he knew 570
 No sympathy with that familiar crew;
 His soul, whate'er his station or his stem,
 Could bow to Lara, not descend to them.
 Of higher birth he seemed, and better days,
 Nor mark of vulgar toil that hand betrays, 575
 So femininely white it might bespeak
 Another sex, when matched with that smooth cheek,
 But for his garb, and something in his gaze,
 More wild and high than woman's eye betrays;
 A latent fierceness that far more became 580
 His fiery climate than his tender frame;
 True, in his words it broke not from his breast,
 But from his aspect might be more than guessed.
 Kaled his name, though rumour said he bore
 Another ere he left his mountain shore; 585
 For sometimes he would hear, however nigh,
 That name repeated loud without reply,
 As unfamiliar, or, if roused again,
 Start to the sound, as but remembered then;
 Unless 'twas Lara's wonted voice that spake, 590
 For then, ear, eyes, and heart would all awake.

28.

He had looked down upon the festive hall,
 And marked that sudden strife so marked of all;
 And when the crowd around and near him told
 Their wonder at the calmness of the bold, 595
 Their marvel how the high-born Lara bore
 Such insult from a stranger, doubly sore,
 The colour of young Kaled went and came,
 The lip of ashes, and the cheek of flame;
 And o'er his brow the dampening heart-drops threw 600
 The sickening iciness of that cold dew
 That rises as the busy bosom sinks
 With heavy thoughts from which reflection shrinks.
 Yes – there be things which we must dream and dare,
 And execute ere thought be half aware; 605
 Whate'er might Kaled's be, it was enow
 To seal his lip, but agonise his brow.
 He gazed on Ezzelin till Lara cast
 That sidelong smile upon on the knight he passed;
 When Kaled saw that smile his visage fell, 610
 As if on something recognised right well;
 His memory read in such a meaning more
 Than Lara's aspect unto others wore,
 Forward he sprung – a moment, both were gone,
 And all within that hall seemed left alone; 615
 Each had so fixed his eye on Lara's mien,

All had so mixed their feelings with that scene,
 That when his long dark shadow through the porch
 No more relieves the glare of yon high torch,
 Each pulse beats quicker, and all bosoms seem 620
 To bound as doubting from too black a dream,
 Such as we know is false, yet dread in sooth,
 Because the worst is ever nearest truth.
 And they are gone – but Ezzelin is there,
 With thoughtful visage and imperious air; 625
 But long remained not; ere an hour expired
 He waved his hand to Otho, and retired.

29.

The crowd are gone, the revellers at rest;
 The courteous host, and all-approving guest,
 Again to that accustomed couch must creep 630
 Where joy subsides, and sorrow sighs to sleep,
 And man, o'er-laboured with his being's strife,
 Shrinks to that sweet forgetfulness of life;
 There lie love's feverish hope, and cunning's guile,
 Hate's working brain, and lulled ambition's wile; 635
 O'er each vain eye oblivion's pinions wave,
 And quenched existence crouches in a grave.
 What better name may slumber's bed become?
 Night's sepulchre, the universal home,
 Where weakness, strength, vice, virtue, sunk supine, 640
 Alike in naked helplessness recline;
 Glad for a while to heave unconscious breath,
 Yet wake to wrestle with the dread of death,
 And shun, though day but dawn on ills increased,
 That sleep, the loveliest, since it dreams the least. 645

CANTO THE SECOND.

1.

NIGHT wanes – the vapours round the mountains curled,
 Melt into morn, and Light awakes the world.
 Man has another day to swell the past,
 And lead him near to little, but his last;
 But mighty Nature bounds as from her birth, 650
 The sun is in the heavens, and life on earth;
 Flowers in the valley, splendour in the beam,
 Health on the gale, and freshness in the stream.
 Immortal man! behold her glories shine,
 And cry, exulting inly, “They are thine!” 655
 Gaze on, while yet thy gladdened eye may see,
 A morrow comes when they are not for thee;
 And grieve what may above thy senseless bier,
 Nor earth nor sky will yield a single tear;
 Nor cloud shall gather more, nor leaf shall fall, 660
 Nor gale breathe forth one sigh for thee, for all;
 But creeping things shall revel in their spoil,
 And fit thy clay to fertilize the soil.

2.

'Tis morn – 'tis noon – assembled in the hall,
 The gathered chieftains come to Otho's call; 665
 'Tis now the promised hour, that must proclaim
 The life or death of Lara's future fame;
 When Ezzelin his charge may here unfold,
 And whatsoe'er the tale, it must be told.
 His faith was pledged, and Lara's promise given, 670
 To meet it in the eye of man and Heaven.
 Why comes he not? Such truths to be divulged,
 Methinks the accuser's rest is long indulged.

3.

The hour is past, and Lara too is there,
 With self-confiding, coldly patient air; 675
 Why comes not Ezzelin? The hour is past,
 And murmurs rise, and Otho's brow's o'er-cast,
 “I know my friend! his faith I cannot fear,
 If yet he be on Earth, expect him here;
 The roof that held him in the valley stands 680
 Between my own and noble Lara's lands;
 My halls from such a guest had honour gained,
 Nor had Sir Ezzelin his host disdained,
 But that some previous proof forbade his stay,
 And urged him to prepare against to-day; 685
 The word I pledge for his I pledge again,
 Or will myself redeem his knighthood's stain.”

He ceased – and Lara answered, “I am here

To lend at thy demand a listening ear,
 To tales of evil from a stranger's tongue, 690
 Whose words already might my heart have wrung,
 But that I deemed him scarcely less than mad,
 Or, at the worst, a foe ignobly bad.
 I know him not – but me it seems he knew
 In lands where – but I must not trifle too – 695
 Produce this babbler – or redeem the pledge;
 Here in thy hold, and with thy falchion's edge.”

Proud Otho on the instant, reddening, threw
 His glove on earth, and forth his sabre flew.
 “The last alternative befits me best, 700
 And thus I answer for mine absent guest.”

With cheek unchanging from its sallow gloom,
 However near his own or other's tomb;
 With hand, whose almost careless coolness spoke
 Its grasp well-used to deal the sabre-stroke; 705
 With eye, though calm, determined not to spare,
 Did Lara too his willing weapon bare.
 In vain the circling chieftains round them closed,
 For Otho's frenzy would not be opposed;
 And from his lip those words of insult fell – 710
 His sword is good who can maintain them well.

4.

Short was the conflict; furious, blindly rash,
 Vain Otho gave his bosom to the gash;
 He bled, and fell; but not with deadly wound,
 Stretched by a dextrous sleight along the ground. 715
 “Demand thy life!” He answered not – and then
 From that red floor he ne'er had risen again,
 For Lara's brow upon the moment grew
 Almost to blackness in its demon hue;
 And fiercer shook his angry falchion now 720
 Than when his foe's was levelled at his brow;
 Then all was stern collectedness and art,
 Now rose the unleavened hatred of his heart;
 So little sparing to the foe he felled,
 That when the approaching crowd his arm withheld, 725
 He almost turned the thirsty point on those
 Who thus for mercy dared to interpose;
 But to a moment's thought that purpose bent;
 Yet looked he on him still with eye intent,
 As if he loathed the ineffectual strife 730
 That left a foe, how'er o'erthrown, with life;
 As if to search how far the wound he gave
 Had sent its victim onward to his grave.

5.

They raised the bleeding Otho, and the Leech
 Forbade all present question, sign, and speech; 735
 The others met within a neighbouring hall,
 And he, incensed and heedless of them all,
 The cause and conqueror in this sudden fray,
 In haughty silence slowly strode away;
 He backed his steed, his homeward path he took, 740
 Nor cast on Otho's tower a single look.

6.

But where was he? that meteor of a night,
 Who menaced but to disappear with light?
 Where was this Ezzelin? who came and went
 To leave no other trace of his intent. 745
 He left the dome of Otho long ere morn,
 In darkness, yet so well the path was worn
 He could not miss it – near his dwelling lay;
 But there he was not, and with coming day
 Came fast inquiry, which unfolded nought, 750
 Except the absence of the chief it sought.
 A chamber tenantless, a steed at rest,
 His host alarmed, his murmuring squires distressed;
 Their search extends along, around the path,
 In dread to met the marks of prowlers' wrath – 755
 But none are there, and not a brake hath borne
 Nor gout of blood, nor shred of mantle torn;
 Nor fall nor struggle hath defaced the grass,
 Which still retains a mark where murder was;
 Nor dabbling fingers left to tell the tale, 760
 The bitter print of each convulsive nail,
 When agonised hands that cease to guard,
 Wound in that pang the smoothness of the sward.
 Some such had been, if here a life was reft,
 But these were not; and doubting hope is left; 765
 And strange suspicion, whispering Lara's name,
 Now daily mutters o'er his blackened fame;
 Then sudden silent when his form appeared,
 Awaits the absence of the thing it feared –
 Again its wonted wondering to renew, 770
 And dye conjecture with a darker hue.

7.

Days roll along, and Otho's wounds are healed,
 But not his pride; and hate no more concealed –
 He was a man of power, and Lara's foe,
 The friend of all who sought to work him woe, 775
 And from his country's justice now demands
 Account of Ezzelin at Lara's hands.
 Who else than Lara could have cause to fear
 His presence? who had made him disappear,

If not the man on whom his menaced charge 780
 Had sate too deeply were he left at large?
 The general rumour ignorantly loud,
 The mystery dearest to the curious crowd;
 The seeming friendlessness of him who strove
 To win no confidence, and wake no love; 785
 The sweeping fierceness which his soul betrayed,
 The skill with which he wielded his keen blade;
 Where had his arm unwarlike caught that art?
 Where had that fierceness grown upon his heart?
 For it was not the blind capricious rage 790
 A word can kindle and a word assuage;
 But the deep working of a soul unmixed
 With aught of pity where its wrath had fixed;
 Such as long power and overgorged success
 Concentrates into all that's merciless;⁸⁵ 795
 These, linked with that desire which ever sways
 Mankind, the rather to condemn than praise,
 'Gainst Lara gathering raised at length a storm,
 Such as himself might fear, and foes would form,
 And he must answer for the absent head 800
 Of one that haunts him still, alive or dead.

8.

Within that land was many a malcontent,
 Who cursed the tyranny to which he bent;⁸⁶
 That soil full many a wringing despot saw,
 Who worked his wantonness in form of law; 805
 Long war without and frequent broil within
 Had made a path for blood and giant sin,
 That waited but a signal to begin
 New havock, such as civil discord blends,
 Which knows no neuter, owns but foes or friends; 810
 Fixed in his feudal fortress each was lord,
 In word and deed obeyed, in soul abhorred.
 Thus Lara had inherited his lands,
 And with them pining hearts and sluggish hands;
 But that long absence from his native clime 815
 Had left him stainless of oppression's crime,
 And now, diverted by his milder sway,
 All dread by slow degrees had worn away;
 The menials felt their usual awe alone,
 But more for him than them that fear was grown; 820
 They deemed him now unhappy, though at first
 Their evil judgement augured of the worst,
 And each long restless night, and silent mood,
 Was traced to sickness, fed by solitude;
 And though his lonely habits threw of late 825
 Gloom o'er his chamber, cheerful was his gate;
 For thence the wretched ne'er unsoothed withdrew,
 For them, at least, his soul compassion knew.

⁸⁵: The qualities outlined do not seem to fit the scrupulous pirate Conrad (if Lara is indeed he).

⁸⁶: The story's sudden move into a political dimension seems unplanned.

Cold to the great, contemptuous to the high,
 The humble passed not his unheeding eye; 830
 Much he would speak not, but beneath his roof
 They found asylum oft, and ne'er reproof.
 And they who watched might mark that, day by day,
 Some new retainers gathered to his sway;
 But most of late, since Ezzelin was lost, 835
 He played the courteous lord and bounteous host;
 Perchance his strife with Otho made him dread
 Some snare prepared for his obnoxious head;
 Whate'er his view, his favour more obtains
 With these, the people, than his fellow thanes. 840
 If this were policy, so far 'twas sound,
 The million judged but of him as they found;
 From him by sterner chiefs to exile driven
 They but required a shelter, and 'twas given.
 By him no peasant mourned his rifled cot, 845
 And scarce the Serf could murmur o'er his lot;⁸⁷
 With him old avarice found its hoard secure,
 With him contempt forbore to mock the poor;
 Youth present cheer and promised recompense
 Detained, till all too late to part from thence; 850
 To hate he offered, with the coming change,
 The deep reversion of delayed revenge;
 To love, long baffled by the unequal match,
 The well-won charms success was sure to snatch. 855
 All now was ripe – he waits but to proclaim
 That slavery nothing which was still a name.
 The moment came, the hour when Otho thought
 Secure at last the vengeance which he sought –
 His summons found the destined criminal
 Begirt by thousands in his swarming hall, 860
 Fresh from their feudal fetters newly riven,
 Defying Earth, and confident of Heaven.
 That morning he had freed the soil-bound slaves
 Who dig no land for tyrants but their graves!
 Such is their cry – some watchword for the fight 865
 Must vindicate the wrong, and warp the right;
 Religion – freedom – vengeance – what you will,
 A word's enough to raise mankind to kill;
 Some factious phrase by cunning caught and spread,
 That guilt may reign, and wolves and worms be fed! 870

9.

Throughout that clime the feudal chiefs had gained
 Such sway, their infant monarch hardly reigned;
 Now was the hour for faction's rebel growth,
 The serfs contemned the one, and hated both;
 They waited but a leader, and they found 875
 One to their cause inseparably bound;
 By circumstance compelled to plunge again
 In self-defence, amidst the strife of men.

⁸⁷: Spain was never a feudal society, so "serfs" is the wrong word.

Cut off by some mysterious fate from those
 Whom birth and nature meant not for his foes, 880
 Had Lara from that night, to him accurst,
 Prepared to meet, but not alone, the worst;
 Some reason urged, whate'er it was, to shun
 Inquiry into deeds at distance done;
 By mingling with his own the cause of all, 885
 E'en if he failed, he still delayed his fall.
 The sullen calm that long his bosom kept,
 The storm that once had spent itself and slept,
 Roused by events that seemed foredoomed to urge
 His gloomy fortunes to their utmost verge, 890
 Burst forth, and made him all he once had been,
 And is again;⁸⁸ he only changed the scene.
 Light care had he for life, and less for fame,
 But not less fitted for the desperate game –
 He deemed himself marked out for others' hate, 895
 And mocked at ruin, so they shared his fate.
 What cared he for the freedom of the crowd?
 He raised the humble but to bend the proud.
 He had hoped quiet in his sullen lair,
 But man and destiny beset him there; 900
 Inured to hunters, he was found at bay;
 And they must kill, they cannot snare the prey.
 Stern, unambitious, silent, he had been
 Henceforth⁸⁹ a calm spectator of life's scene;
 But dragged again upon the arena, stood 905
 A leader not unequal to the feud;
 In voice – mien – gesture – savage nature spoke,
 And from his eye the gladiator broke.

10.

What boots the oft-repeated tale of strife,
 The feast of vultures, and the waste of life? 910
 The varying fortune of each separate field,
 The fierce that vanquish, and the faint that yield?
 The smoking ruin, and the crumbled wall?
 In this the struggle was the same with all;
 Save that distempered passions lent their force 915
 In bitterness that banished all remorse.
 None sued, for Mercy know her cry was vain,
 The captive died upon the battle-slain:
 In either cause, one rage alone possessed
 The empire of the alternate victor's breast; 920
 And they that smote for freedom or for sway,
 Deemed few were slain, while more remained to slay.
 It was too late to check the wasting brand,
 And Desolation reaped the famished land;
 The torch was lighted, and the flame was spread, 925
 And Carnage smiled upon her daily bread.

88: Conrad was never a revolutionary.

89: B. means "hitherto."

11.

Fresh with the nerve the new-born impulse strung,
 The first success to Lara's numbers clung –
 But that vain victory hath ruined all –
 They form no longer to their leader's call; 930
 In blind confusion on the foe they press,
 And think to snatch is to secure success.
 The lust of booty, and the thirst of hate
 Lure on the broken brigands to their fate;
 In vain he doth whate'er a chief may do 935
 To check the headlong fury of that crew,
 In vain their stubborn ardour he would tame,
 The hand that kindles cannot quench the flame.⁹⁰
 The wary foe alone hath turned their mood,
 And shewn their rashness to that erring brood; 940
 The feigned retreat, the nightly ambushade,
 The daily harass, and the fight delayed,
 The long privation of the hoped supply,
 The tentless rest beneath the humid sky,
 The stubborn wall that mocks the leaguer's art, 945
 And palls the patience of his baffled heart,
 Of these they had not deemed – the battle-day
 They could encounter as a veteran may;
 But more preferred the fury of the strife,
 And present death, to hourly suffering life; 950
 And famine wrings, and fever sweeps away
 His numbers melting fast from their array;
 Intemperate triumph fades to discontent,
 And Lara's soul alone seems still unbent;
 But few remain to aid his voice and hand, 955
 And thousands dwindled to a scanty band –
 Desperate, though few, the last and best remained
 To mourn the discipline they late disdained.
 One hope survives – the frontier is not far,
 And thence they may escape from native war; 960
 And bear within them to the neighbouring state
 An exile's sorrows, or an outlaw's hate –
 Hard is the task their fatherland to quit,
 But harder still to perish or submit.

12.

It is resolved – they march – consenting Night 965
 Guides with her star their dim and torchless flight;
 Already they perceive its tranquil beam
 Sleep on the surface of the barrier stream;
 Already they descry – Is yon the bank?
 Away! 'tis lined with many a hostile rank. 970
 Return or fly! – What glitters in the rear?
 'Tis Otho's banner – the pursuer's spear!
 Are those the shepherds' fires upon the height?
 Alas! they blaze too widely for the flight;

90: Lara, for all his greater ferocity, is less successful at keeping his men in check than Conrad was.

Cut off from hope, and compassed in the toil, 975
 Less blood, perchance, hath bought a richer spoil!

13.

A moment's pause – 'tis but to breathe their band –
 Or shall they onward press, or here withstand?
 It matters little – if they charge the foes
 Who by their border-stream their march oppose, 980
 Some few, perchance, may break and pass the line,
 However linked to baffle such design.
 "The charge be ours! to wait for their assault
 Were fate well worthy of a coward's halt."
 Forth flies each sabre, reined is every steed, 985
 And the next word shall scarce outstrip the deed –
 In the next tone of Lara's gathering breath
 How many shall but hear the voice of death!

14.

His blade is bared – in him there is an air
 As deep, but far too tranquil for despair; 990
 A something of indifference more than then
 Becomes the bravest, if they feel for men.
 He turned his eye on Kaled, ever near,
 And still too faithful to betray one fear;
 Perchance 'twas but the moon's dim twilight threw 995
 Along his aspect an unwonted hue
 Of mournful paleness, whose deep tint expressed
 The truth, and not the terror of his breast.
 This Lara marked, and laid his hand on his –
 It trembled not in such an hour as this; 1000
 His lip was silent, scarcely beat his heart,
 His eye alone proclaimed – "We will not part!
 Thy band may perish, or thy friends may flee,
 Farewell to life, but not adieu to thee!"

The word hath passed his lips, and onward driven, 1005
 Pours the linked band through ranks asunder riven;
 Well has each steed obeyed the armed heel,
 And flash the scimitars, and rings the steel;
 Outnumbered, not outbraved, they still oppose
 Despair to daring, and a front to foes; 1010
 And blood is mingled with the dashing stream,
 Which runs all redly till the morning beam.

15.

Commanding, aiding, animating all,
 Where foe appeared to press, or friend to fall,
 Cheers Lara's voice, and waves or strikes his steel, 1015
 Inspiring hope himself had ceased to feel.
 None fled, for well they knew that flight were vain –
 But those that waver turn to smite again,

While yet they find the firmest of the foe
 Recoil before their leader's look and blow; 1020
 Now girt with numbers, now almost alone,
 He foils their ranks, or reunites his own;
 Himself he spared not – once they seemed to fly –
 Now was the time, he waved his hand on high,
 And shook – Why sudden droops that plumed crest? 1025
 The shaft is sped – the arrow's in his breast!
 That fatal gesture left the unguarded side,⁹¹
 And Death hath stricken down yon arm of pride.
 The word of triumph faded from his tongue;
 That hand, so raised, how droopingly it hung! 1030
 But yet the sword instinctively retains,
 Though from its fellow shrink the falling reins;
 These Kaled snatches – dizzy with the blow,
 And senseless bending o'er his saddle-bow,
 Perceives not Lara that his anxious page 1035
 Beguiles his charger from the combat's rage;
 Meantime his followers charge and charge again;
 Too mixed the slayers now to heed the slain!

16.

Day glimmers on the dying and the dead,
 The cloven cuirass, and the helmless head; 1040
 The war-horse masterless is on the earth,
 And that last gasp hath burst his bloody girth;
 And near, yet quivering with what life remained,
 The heel that urged him, and the hand that reined;
 And some too near that rolling torrent lie, 1045
 Whose waters mock the lip of those that die;
 That panting thirst which scorches in the breath
 Of those that die the soldier's fiery death,
 In vain impels the burning mouth to crave
 One drop – the last – to cool it for the grave; 1050
 With feeble and convulsive effort swept
 Their limbs along the crimsoned turf have crept;
 The faint remains of life such struggles waste,
 But yet they reach the stream, and bend to taste;
 They feel its freshness, and almost partake – 1055
 Why pause? – No further thirst have they to slake –
 It is unquenched, and yet they feel it not –
 It was an agony – but now forgot!

17.

Beneath a lime, remoter from the scene,
 Where but for him that strife had never been, 1060
 A breathing but devoted warrior lay –
 'Twas Lara, bleeding fast from life away.
 His follower once, and now his only guide,
 Kneels Kaled watchful o'er his willing side,
 And with his scarf would stanch the tides that rush 1065

⁹¹: B. means "left the side unguarded."

With each convulsion in a blacker gush;
 And then, as his faint breathing waxes low,
 In feebler, not less fatal tricklings flow;
 He scarce can speak, but motions him 'tis vain,
 And merely adds another throb to pain. 1070
 He clasps the hand that pang which would assuage,
 And sadly smiles his thanks to that dark page,
 Who nothing fears, nor feels, nor heeds, nor sees,
 Save that damp brow which rests upon his knees;
 Save that pale aspect, where the eye, though dim, 1075
 Held all the light that shone on Earth for him.

18.

The foe arrives, who long had searched the field,
 Their triumph nought till Lara too should yield;
 They would remove him, but they see 'twere vain,
 And he regards them with a calm disdain, 1080
 That rose to reconcile him with his fate,
 And that escape to death from living hate;
 And Otho comes, and leaping from his steed,
 Looks on the bleeding foe that made him bleed,
 And questions of his state; he answers not, 1085
 Scarce glances on him as on one forgot,
 And turns to Kaled – each remaining word,
 They understood not, if distinctly heard;
 His dying tones are in that other tongue,
 To which some strange remembrance wildly clung. 1090
 They spake of other scenes, but what – is known
 To Kaled, whom their meaning reached alone;
 And he replied, though faintly, to their sound,
 While gazed the rest in dumb amazement round;
 They seemed even then – that twain – unto the last 1095
 To half forget the present in the past;
 To share between themselves some separate fate,
 Whose darkness none beside should penetrate.

19.

Their words, though faint, were many – from the tone 1100
 Their import those who heard could judge alone;
 From this, you might have deemed young Kaled's death
 More near than Lara's by his voice and breath,
 So sad, so deep, and hesitating broke
 The accents his scarce-moving pale lips spoke;
 But Lara's voice, though low, at first was clear 1105
 And calm, till murmuring death gasped hoarsely near;
 But from his visage little could we⁹² guess,
 So unrepentant, dark, and passionless,
 Save that when struggling nearer to his last,
 Upon that page his eye was kindly cast; 1110
 And once, as Kaled's answering accents ceased,
 Rose Lara's hand, and pointed to the East –

92: For one line, the poem becomes a first-person narrative.

Whether (as then the breaking sun from high
 Rolled back the clouds) the morrow caught his eye,
 Or that 'twas chance, or some remembered scene 1115
 That raised his arm to point where such had been,
 Scarce Kaled seemed to know, but turned away,
 As if his heart abhorred that coming day,
 And shrunk his glance before that morning light
 To look on Lara's brow – where all grew night. 1120
 Yet sense seemed left, though better were its loss;
 For when one near displayed the absolving cross,
 And proffered to his touch the holy bead,
 Of which his parting soul might own the need,
 He looked upon it with an eye profane, 1125
 And smiled – Heaven pardon! if 'twere with disdain;⁹³
 And Kaled, though he spoke not, nor withdrew
 From Lara's face his fixed despairing view,
 With brow repulsive, and with gesture swift,
 Flung back the hand which held the sacred gift, 1130
 As if such but disturbed the expiring man,
 Nor seemed to know his life but *then* began,
 The life immortal infinite, secure,
 To all for whom that cross hath made it sure!⁹⁴

20.

But gasping heaved the breath that Lara drew, 1135
 And dull the film along his dim eye grew;
 His limbs stretched fluttering, and his head drooped o'er
 The weak yet still untiring knee that bore;
 He pressed the hand he held upon his heart –
 It beats no more, but Kaled will not part 1140
 With the cold grasp, but feels, and feels in vain,
 For that faint throb which answers not again.
 "It beats!" – Away, thou dreamer! he is gone –
 It once was Lara which thou look'st upon.

21.

He gazed, as if not yet had passed away 1145
 The haughty spirit of that humble clay;
 And those around have roused him from his trance,
 But cannot tear from thence his fixed glance;
 And when in raising him from where he bore
 Within his arms the form that felt no more, 1150
 He saw the head his breast would still sustain,
 Roll down like earth to earth upon the plain;
 He did not dash himself thereby, nor tear
 The glossy tendrils of his raven hair,⁹⁵
 But strove to stand and gaze, but reeled and fell, 1155
 Scarce breathing more than that he loved so well.

⁹³: Like *The Giaour*, Lara rejects the Church's consolation as he dies.

⁹⁴: This seems not to be B., the infallible narrator, speaking, but the eye-witness who appears briefly at 1107 above.

⁹⁵: If Kaled is Gulnare, "he"'s changed his hair. See above, *The Corsair*, 1008 and n.

Than that *he* loved! Oh! never yet beneath
 The breast of man such trusty love may breathe!
 That trying moment hath at once revealed
 The secret long and yet but half concealed; 1160
 In baring to revive that lifeless breast,
 Its grief seemed ended, but the sex confessed;
 And life returned, and Kaled felt no shame –
 What now to her was Womanhood or Fame?⁹⁶

22.

And Lara sleeps not where his fathers sleep, 1165
 But where he died his grave was dug as deep;
 Nor is his mortal slumber less profound,
 Though priest nor blessed, nor marble decked the mound;
 And he was mourned by one whose quiet grief,
 Less loud, outlasts a people's for their chief. 1170
 Vain was all question asked her of the past,
 And vain e'en menace – silent to the last;
 She told nor whence nor why she left behind
 Her all for one who seemed but little kind.
 Why did she love him? Curious fool! – be still – 1175
 Is human love the growth of human will?
 To her he might be gentleness; the stern
 Have deeper thoughts than your dull eyes discern,
 And when they love, your smilers guess not how
 Beats the strong heart, though less the lips avow. 1180
 They were not common links that formed the chain
 That bound to Lara Kaled's heart and brain;
 But that wild tale she brooked not to unfold,
 And sealed is now each lip that could have told.

23.

They laid him in the earth, and on his breast, 1185
 Besides the wound that sent his soul to rest,
 They found the scattered dints of many a scar
 Which were not planted there in recent war;
 Where'er had passed his summer years of life,
 It seems they vanished in a land of strife; 1190
 But all unknown his glory or his guilt,
 These only told that somewhere blood was spilt.
 And Ezzelin, who might have spoke the past,
 Returned no more – that night appeared his last.

24.

Upon that night (a peasant's is the tale) 1195
 A Serf that crossed the intervening vale,
 When Cynthia's light almost gave way to morn,
 And nearly veiled in mist her waning horn;
 A Serf, that rose betimes to thread the wood,
 And hew the bough that bought his children's food, 1200

⁹⁶: As Kaled dresses for Lara, so Leila dresses for the Giaour – see *Giaour* 456.

Passed by the river that divides the plain
 Of Otho's lands and Lara's broad domain –
 He heard a tramp – a horse and horseman broke
 From out the wood – before him was a cloak
 Wrapt round some burthen at his saddle-bow; 1205
 Bent was his head, and hidden was his brow.
 Roused by the sudden sight at such a time,
 And some foreboding that it might be crime,
 Himself unheeded watched the stranger's course,
 Who reached the river, bounded from his horse, 1210
 And lifting thence the burthen which he bore,
 Heaved up the bank, and dashed it from the shore, *
 Then paused, and looked, and turned, and seemed to watch,
 And still another hurried glance would snatch,
 And follow with his step the stream that flowed, 1215
 As if even yet too much its surface showed –
 At once he started, stooped, around him strewn
 The winter floods had scattered heaps of stone;
 Of these the heaviest thence he gathered there,
 And slung them with a more than common care. 1220
 Meantime the Serf had crept to where unseen
 Himself might safely mark what this might mean –
 He caught a glimpse, as of a floating breast,
 And something glittered starlike on the vest,
 But ere he well could mark the buoyant trunk, 1225
 A massy fragment smote it, and it sunk;
 It rose again, but indistinct to view,
 And left the waters of a purple hue,
 Then deeply disappeared. The horseman gazed
 Till ebbed the latest eddy it had raised; 1230
 Then turning, vaulted on his pawing steed,
 And instant spurred him into panting speed.
 His face was masked – the features of the dead,
 If dead it were, escaped the observer's dread;
 But if in sooth a star its bosom bore, 1235
 Such is the badge that knighthood ever wore,
 And such 'tis known Sir Ezzelin had worn
 Upon the night that led to such a morn.
 If thus he perished, Heaven receive his soul!
 His undiscovered limbs to ocean roll; 1240
 And charity upon the hope would dwell
 It was not Lara's hand by which he fell.

* The event in this section was suggested by the description of the death, or rather burial, of the Duke of Gandia. The most interesting and particular account of it is given by Burchard, and is in substance as follows: – “On the eighth day of June, the Cardinal of Valenza and the Duke of Gandia, sons of the Pope, supped with their mother, Vanozza, near the church of *S. Pietro ad vincula*; several other persons being present at the entertainment. A late hour approaching, and the cardinal having reminded his brother, that it was time to return to the apostolic palace, they mounted their horses or mules, with only a few attendants, and proceeded together as far as the palace of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, when the duke informed the cardinal that, before he returned home, he had to pay a visit of pleasure. Dismissing therefore all his attendants, excepting his *staffiero*, or footman, and a person in a mask, who had paid him a visit whilst at supper, and who, during the space of a month, or thereabouts, previous to this time, had called upon him almost daily at the apostolic palace, he took this

person behind him on his mule, and proceeded to the street of the Jews, where he quitted his servant, directing him to remain there until a certain hour; when, if he did not return, he might repair to the palace. The duke then seated the person in the mask behind him, and rode, I know not whither; but in that night he was assassinated, and thrown into the river. The servant, after having been dismissed, was also assaulted and mortally wounded; and although he was attended with great care, yet such was his situation that he could give no intelligible account of what had befallen his master. In the morning, the duke not having returned to the palace, his servants began to be alarmed; and one of them informed the pontiff of the evening excursion of his sons, and that the duke had not yet made his appearance. This gave the pope no small anxiety; but he conjectured that the duke had been attracted by some courtesan to pass the night with her, and, not choosing to quit the house in open day, waited till the following evening to return home. When, however, the evening arrived, and he found himself disappointed in his expectations, he became deeply afflicted, and began to make inquiries from different persons, whom he ordered to attend him for that purpose. Amongst these was a man named Giorgio Schiavoni, who, having discharged some timber from a bark in the river, had remained on board the vessel to watch it; and being interrogated whether he had seen any one thrown into the river on the night preceding, he replied, that he saw two men on foot, who came down the street, and looked diligently about, to observe whether any person was passing. That seeing no one, they returned, and a short time later two others came, and looked around in the same manner as the former: no person still appearing, they gave a sign to their companions, when a man came, mounted on a white horse, having behind him a dead body, the head and arms of which hung on one side, and the feet on the other side of the horse; the two persons on foot supporting the body to prevent its falling. They thus proceeded towards that part where the filth of the city is usually discharged into the river, and turning the horse, with his tail towards the water, the two persons took the dead body by the arms and feet, and with all their strength flung it into the river. The person on horseback then asked if they had thrown it in; to which they replied, 'Signor, si' (Yes, Sir). He then looked towards the river, and seeing a mantle floating in the stream, he inquired what it was that appeared black, to which they answered, it was a mantle; and one of them throw stones upon it, in consequence of which it sunk. The attendants of the pontiff then inquired from Giorgio why he had not revealed this to the governor of the city; to which he replied, that he had seen in his time a hundred dead bodies thrown into the river at the same place, without any inquiry being made respecting them; and that he had not, therefore, considered it as a matter of any importance. The fishermen and seamen were then collected. and ordered to search the river, where on the following evening, they found the body of the duke, with his habit entire, and thirty ducats in his purse. He was pierced with nine wounds, one of which was in his throat, the others in his hand, body, and limbs. No sooner was the pontiff informed of the death of his son, and that he had been thrown, like filth, into the river, than, giving way to his grief, he shut himself up in a chamber, and wept bitterly. The Cardinal of Segovia, and other attendants on the pope, went to the door, and after many hours spent in persuasions and exhortations, prevailed upon him to admit them. From the evening of Wednesday till the following Saturday the pope took no food; nor did he sleep from Thursday morning till the same hour on the ensuing day. At length, however, giving way to the entreaties of his attendants, he began to restrain his sorrow, and to consider the injury which his own health might sustain by the further indulgence of his grief." – Roscoe's *Life and Pontificate of Leo the Tenth*, vol. i. p. 265.

25.

And Kaled – Lara – Ezzelin, are gone,
 Alike without their monumental stone!
 The first, all efforts vainly strove to wean 1245
 From lingering where her chieftain's blood had been;
 Grief had so tamed a spirit once too proud,
 Her tears were few, her wailing never loud;
 But furious would you tear her from the spot

Where yet she scarce believed that he was not, 1250
 Her eye shot forth with all the living fire
 That haunts the tigress in her whelpless ire;
 But left to waste her weary moments there,

She talked all idly unto shapes of air,
 Such as the busy brain of Sorrow paints, 1255
 And woos to listen to her fond complaints;
 And she would sit beneath the very tree,
 Where lay his drooping head upon her knee;
 And in that posture where she saw him fall,
 His words, his looks, his dying grasp recall; 1260

And she had shorn, but saved her raven hair,
 And oft would snatch it from her bosom there,
 And fold and press it gently to the ground,
 As if she stanch'd anew some phantom's wound.
 Herself would question, and for him reply; 1265

Then rising, start, and beckon him to fly
 From some imagined spectre in pursuit;
 Then seat her down upon some linden's root,
 And hide her visage with her meagre hand,
 Or trace strange characters along the sand. – 1270
 This could not last – she lies by him she loved;
 Her tale untold – her truth too dearly proved.

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