

## Lara:

A T A L E.<sup>1</sup>

## Lara.

## CANTO THE FIRST.

## I.

THE Serfs<sup>2</sup> are glad through Lara's wide domain,  
And slavery half forgets her feudal chain;  
He, their unhop'd, but unforgotten lord,  
The long self-exil'd chieftain, is restored:  
There be bright faces in the busy hall,  
Bowls on the board, and banners on the wall;  
Far checkering o'er the pictured window, plays  
The unwonted faggots' hospitable blaze;  
And gay retainers gather round the hearth,  
With tongues all loudness, and with eyes all mirth.

## II.

The chief of Lara is return'd again:  
And why had Lara cross'd 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  
But holds to rob the heart within of rest!—

<sup>1</sup> [A few days after he had put the finishing hand to the "Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte," Lord Byron adopted the most extraordinary resolution that, perhaps, ever entered into the mind of an author of any celebrity. Annoyed at the tone of disparagement in which his assailants—not content with blackening his moral and social character—now affected to speak of his genius, and somewhat mortified, there is reason to believe, by finding that his own friends dreaded the effects of constant publication on his ultimate fame, he came to the determination, not only to print no more in future, but to purchase back the whole of his past copyrights, and suppress every line he had ever written. With this view, on the 29th of April, he actually enclosed his publisher a draft for the money. "For all this," he said, "it might be as well to assign some reason: I have none to give, except my own caprice, and I do not consider the circumstance of consequence enough to require explanation." An appeal, however, from Mr. Murray, to his good-nature and considerateness, brought, in eight and forty hours, the following reply:—"If your present note is serious, and it really would be inconvenient, there is an end of the matter: tear my draft, and go on as usual: that I was perfectly serious, in wishing to suppress all future publication, is true; but certainly not to interfere with the convenience of others, and more particularly your own."

The following passages in his Diary depict the state of Lord Byron's mind at this period:—"Murray has had a letter from his brother bibliophile of Edinburgh, who says, 'he is lucky in having such a poet'—something as if one was a pack-horse, or 'ass, or any thing that is his; or like Mrs. Packwood, who replied to some inquiry after the Odes on Razors, 'Laws, sir, we keeps a poet.' The same illustrious Edinburgh bookseller once sent an order for books, poetry, and cookery, with this agreeable postscript:—'The *Harold* and *Cookery* are much wanted.' Such is fame! and, after all, quite as good as any other 'life in others' breath.' 'Tis much the same to divide purchasers with Hannah Glasse or Hannah More."—"March 17th, Redde the 'Quarrels of Authors,' a new work by that most entertaining and researching writer, D'Israeli. They seem to be an irritable set, and I wish myself well out of it. 'I'll not march through

With none to check and few to point in time  
The thousand paths that slope the way to crime;  
Then, when he most required commandment, then  
Had Lara's daring boyhood govern'd men.  
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.<sup>3</sup>

## III.

And Lara left in youth his father-land;  
But from the hour he waved his parting hand  
Each trace wax'd 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;  
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,  
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;

Coventry with them, that's flat.' What the devil had I to do with the scribbling? It is too late to inquire, and all regret is useless. But 'an it were to do again—I should write again, I suppose. Such is human nature, at least my share of it;—though I shall think better of myself if I have sense to stop now. If I have a wife, and that wife has a son, I will bring up mine heir in the most anti-poetical way—make him a lawyer, or a pirate, or anything. But if he writes, too, I shall be sure he is none of mine, and will cut him off with a Bank token."—"April 19. I will keep no further journal; and, to prevent me from returning, like a dog, to the vomit of memory, I tear out the remaining leaves of this volume. 'Oh fool! I shall go mad.'"

These extracts are from the Diary of March and April, 1814. Before the end of May he had begun the composition of "Lara," which has been almost universally considered as the continuation of "The Corsair." This poem was published anonymously in the following August, in the same volume with Mr. Rogers's elegant tale of "Jacqueline;" an unnatural and unintelligible conjunction, which, however, gave rise to some pretty good jokes. "I believe," says Lord Byron, in one of his letters, "I told you of Larry and Jacquy. A friend of mine—at least a friend of his—was reading said Larry and Jacquy in a Brighton coach. A passenger took up the book and queried as to the author. The proprietor said, 'there were two;'—to which the answer of the unknown was, 'Ay, ay,—a joint concern, I suppose, *summat* like Sternhold and Hopkins.' Is not this excellent? I would not have missed the 'vile comparison' to have escaped being the 'Arcades ambo et cantare pares.'"

<sup>2</sup> The reader is apprised, that the name of Lara being Spanish, and no circumstance of local and natural 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.—[Lord Byron elsewhere intimates, that he meant Lara for a chief of the Morea.]

<sup>3</sup> [Lord Byron's own tale is partly told in this section.—SIR WALTER SCOTT.]

But one is absent from the mouldering file,  
That now were welcome in that Gothic pile.

## IV.

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,  
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 roll'd on, and fast they speed away  
To those that wander as to those that stay;  
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, [time;  
Though sear'd by toil, and something touch'd by  
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:  
His soul in youth was haughty, but his sins  
No more than pleasure from the stripling wins;  
And such, if not yet harden'd in their course,  
Might be redeem'd, nor ask a long remorse.

## V.

And they indeed were changed—'tis quickly seen,  
Whate'er he be, 'twas not what he had been:  
That brow in furrow'd lines had fix'd 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;  
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,<sup>1</sup>  
That darts in seeming playfulness around,  
And makes those feel that will not own the wound;  
All these seem'd 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,  
Within his breast appear'd no more to strive,  
Yet seem'd as lately they had been alive;  
And some deep feeling it were vain to trace  
At moments lighten'd o'er his livid face.

<sup>1</sup> [It is a remarkable property of the poetry of Lord Byron, that although his manner is frequently varied,—although he appears to have assumed for an occasion the characteristic stanza and style of several contemporaries,—yet not only is his poetry marked in every instance by the strongest cast of originality, but in some leading particulars, and especially in the character of his heroes, each story so closely resembled the other, that, managed by a writer of less power, the effect would have been an unpleasant monotony. All, or almost all, his heroes have somewhat the attributes of Childe Harold:—all, or almost all, have minds which seem at variance with their fortunes, and exhibit high and poignant feelings of pain and pleasure; a keen sense of what is noble and honourable; and an equally keen susceptibility of injustice or injury, under the garb of stoicism or contempt of mankind. The strength of early passion, and the glow of youthful feeling, are uniformly painted as chilled or subdued by a train of early imprudences or of darker guilt, and the sense of enjoyment tarnished, by too intimate an acquaintance with the vanity of human wishes. These general attributes mark the stern features of all Lord Byron's heroes, from those which are shaded by the scalloped hat of the illustrious Pilgrim, to those which lurk under the turban of Alp the Renegade. It was reserved to him to present the same character on the public stage again

## VI.

Not much he loved long question of the past,  
Nor told of wondrous wilds, and deserts vast,  
In those far lands where he had wander'd 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;  
But what he had beheld he shunn'd 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.

## VII.

Not unrejoiced to see him once again,  
Warm was his welcome to the haunts of men;  
Born of high lineage, link'd in high command,  
He mingled with the Magnates of his land;  
Join'd the carousals of the great and gay,  
And saw them smile or sigh their hours away;<sup>2</sup>  
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 renew'd;  
Nor shadowy honour, nor substantial gain,  
Nor beauty's preference, and the rival's pain:  
Around him some mysterious circle thrown  
Repell'd approach, and show'd him still alone;  
Upon his eye sat something of reproof,  
That kept at least frivolity aloof;  
And things more timid that beheld him near,  
In silence gazed, or whisper'd mutual fear;  
And they the wiser, friendlier few confess'd  
They deem'd him better than his air express'd.

## VIII.

'Twas strange—in youth all action and all life,  
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 ransack'd all below,  
And found his recompence in joy or woe,  
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 feeble elements hath raised;  
The rapture of his heart had look'd on high,  
And ask'd if greater dwelt beyond the sky:  
Chain'd to excess, the slave of each extreme,  
How woke he from the wildness of that dream?

and again, varied only by the exertions of that powerful genius which, searching the springs of passion and of feeling in their innermost recesses, knew how to combine their operations, so that the interest was eternally varying, and never abated, although the most important personage of the drama retained the same lineaments. It will one day be considered as not the least remarkable literary phenomenon of this age, that during a period of four years, notwithstanding the quantity of distinguished poetical talent of which we may be permitted to boast, a single author—and he managing his pen with the careless and negligent ease of a man of quality, and choosing for his theme subjects so very similar, and personages bearing so close a resemblance to each other,—did, in despite of these circumstances, of the unamiable attributes with which he usually invested his heroes, and of the proverbial fickleness of the public, maintain the ascendancy in their favour, which he had acquired by his first matured production. So, however, it indisputably has been.—SIR WALTER SCOTT.]

<sup>2</sup> [This description of Lara, suddenly and unexpectedly returned from distant travels, and re-assuming his station in the society of his own country, has strong points of resemblance to the part which the author himself seemed occasionally to bear amid the scenes where the great mingle with the fair.—SIR WALTER SCOTT.]



Alas! he told not—but he did awake  
To curse the wither'd heart that would not break.

## IX.

Books, for his volume heretofore was Man,  
With eye more curious he appear'd to scan,  
And oft, in sudden mood, for many a day,  
From all communion he would start away:  
And then, his rarely call'd attendants said, [tread  
Through night's long hours would sound his hurried  
O'er the dark gallery, where his fathers frown'd  
In rude but antique portraiture around:  
They heard, but whisper'd—"that must not be  
known—

The sound of words less earthly than his own.  
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 gather'd from the dead,  
That still beside his open'd volume lay,  
As if to startle all save him away?  
Why slept he not when others were at rest?  
Why heard no music, and received no guest?  
All was not well, they deem'd—but where the wrong?  
Some knew perchance—but 'twere a tale too long;  
And such besides were too discreetly wise,  
To more than hint their knowledge in surmise;  
But if they would—they could"—around the board,  
Thus Lara's vassals prattled of their lord.

## X.

It was the night—and Lara's glassy stream  
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:  
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  
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!  
It was a moment only for the good:  
So Lara deem'd, nor longer there he stood,  
But turn'd in silence to his castle-gate;  
Such scene his soul no more could contemplate:  
Such scene reminded him of other days,  
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, mock'd such breast as his.

## XI.

He turn'd 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,  
Save vague tradition; and the gloomy vaults  
That hid their dust, their foibles, and their faults;  
And half a column of the pompous page,  
That speeds the specious tale from age to age;

Where history's pen its praise or blame supplies,  
And lies like truth, and still most truly lies.  
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,  
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.

## XII.

'Twas midnight—all was slumber; the lone light  
Dimm'd in the lamp, as loth to break the night.  
Hark! there he murmurs heard in Lara's hall—  
A sound—a voice—a shriek—a fearful call!  
A long, loud shriek—and silence—did they hear  
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 snatch'd in startled haste unbelted brands.

## XIII.

Cold as the marble where his length was laid,  
Pale as the beam that o'er his features play'd,  
Was Lara stretch'd; his half-drawn sabre near,  
Dropp'd it should seem in more than nature's fear;  
Yet he was firm, or had been firm till now,  
And still defiance knit his gather'd brow;  
Though mix'd with terror, senseless as he lay,  
There lived upon his lip the wish to slay;  
Some half-form'd threat in utterance there had died,  
Some imprecation of despairing pride;  
His eye was almost seal'd, but not forsook  
Even in its trance the gladiator's look,  
That oft awake his aspect could disclose,  
And now was fix'd in horrible repose.  
They raise him—bear him;—hush! he breathes,  
he speaks,

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;  
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!

## XIV.

His page approach'd, and he alone appear'd  
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,  
But Lara's prostrate form he bent beside,  
And in that tongue which seem'd 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  
A breast that needed not ideal woe.

## XV.

Whate'er his frenzy dream'd or eye beheld,  
If yet remember'd ne'er to be reveal'd,

Rests at his heart: the custom'd morning came,  
And breathed new vigour in his shaken frame;  
And solace sought he none from priest nor leech,  
And soon the same in movement and in speech  
As heretofore he fill'd the passing hours,—  
Nor less he smiles, nor more his forehead lowers,  
Than these were wont; and if the coming night  
Appear'd less welcome now to Lara's sight,  
He to his marvelling vassals show'd it not,  
Whose shuddering proved *their* fear was less forgot.  
In trembling pairs (alone they dared not) crawl  
The astonish'd slaves, and shun the fated hall;  
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,  
As evening saddens o'er the dark grey walls.

## XVI.

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

## XVII.

In him inexplicably mix'd appear'd  
Much to be loved and hated, sought and fear'd;  
Opinion varying o'er his hidden lot,  
In praise or railing ne'er his name forgot:  
His silence form'd a theme for others' prate—  
They guess'd—they gazed—they fain would know  
his fate.

What had he been? what was he, thus unknown,  
Who walk'd 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 own'd that smile, if oft observed and near,  
Waned in its mirth, and wither'd to a sneer;  
That smile might reach his lip, but pass'd 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 seem'd to chide  
Such weakness, as unworthy of its pride,  
And steel'd 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;

In vigilance of grief that would compel  
The soul to hate for having loved too well.

## XVIII.

There was in him a vital scorn of all:  
As if the worst had fall'n which could befall,  
He stood a stranger in this breathing world,  
An erring spirit from another hurl'd;  
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:  
With more capacity for love than earth  
Bestows on most of mortal mould and birth,  
His early dreams of good outstripp'd the truth,  
And troubled manhood follow'd baffled youth;  
With thought of years in phantom chase misspent,  
And wasted powers for better purpose lent;  
And fiery passions that had pour'd 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;  
But haughty still, and loth himself to blame,  
He call'd on Nature's self to share the shame,  
And charged all faults upon the fleshy form  
She gave to clog the soul, and feast the worm;  
Till he at last confounded good and ill,  
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,  
That sway'd 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 soar'd beyond, or sunk beneath,  
The men with whom he felt condemn'd to breathe,  
And long'd by good or ill to separate  
Himself from all who shared his mortal state;  
His mind abhorring this had fix'd her throne  
Far from the world, in regions of her own:  
Thus coldly passing all that pass'd below,  
His blood in temperate seeming now would flow:  
Ah! happier if it ne'er with guilt had glow'd,  
But ever in that icy smoothness flow'd!  
'Tis true, with other men their path he walk'd,  
And like the rest in seeming did and talk'd,  
Nor outraged Reason's rules by flaw nor start,  
His madness was not of the head, but heart;  
And rarely wander'd in his speech, or drew  
His thoughts so forth as to offend the view.

## XIX.

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  
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 remember'd well,  
And on the words, however light, would dwell:  
None knew, nor how, nor why, but he entwined  
Himself perforce around the hearer's mind;  
There he was stamp'd, in liking, or in hate,  
If greeted once; however brief the date



That friendship, pity, or aversion knew,  
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:  
Vain was the struggle in that mental net,  
His spirit seem'd to dare you to forget!

## XX.

There is a festival, where knights and dames,  
And aught that wealth or lofty lineage claims,  
Appear—a highborn and a welcome guest  
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:  
Blest are the early hearts and gentle hands  
That mingle there in well according bands;  
It is a sight the careful brow might smooth,  
And make Age smile, and dream itself to youth,  
And Youth forget such hour was past on earth,  
So springs the exulting bosom to that mirth!

## XXI.

And Lara gazed on these, sedately glad,  
His brow belied him if his soul was sad;  
And his glance follow'd fast each fluttering fair,  
Whose steps of lightness woke no echo there:  
He lean'd against the lofty pillar nigh,  
With folded arms and long attentive eye,  
Nor mark'd a glance so sternly fix'd on his—  
Ill brook'd high Lara scrutiny like this:  
At length he caught it—'tis a face unknown,  
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;  
On Lara's glance emotion gathering grew,  
As if distrusting that the stranger threw;  
Along the stranger's aspect, fix'd and stern,  
Flash'd more than thence the vulgar eye could learn.

## XXII.

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

## XXIII.

It were too much for Lara to pass by  
Such questions, so repeated fierce and high;  
With look collected, but with accent cold,  
More mildly firm than petulantly bold,  
He turn'd, and met the inquisitorial tone—  
"My name is Lara!—when thine own is known,

Doubt not my fitting answer to requite  
The unlook'd for courtesy of such a knight.  
'Tis Lara!—further wouldst thou mark or ask?  
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.  
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  
He deign'd no answer, but his head he shook,  
And half contemptuous turn'd to pass away;  
But the stern stranger motion'd him to stay.  
"A word!—I charge thee stay, and answer here  
To one, who, wert thou noble, were thy peer,  
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,

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 so courteously and well.  
Let Otho cherish here his polish'd guest,  
To him my thanks and thoughts shall be express'd."  
And here their wondering host hath interposed—  
"Whate'er there be between you undisclosed,  
This is no time nor fitting place to mar  
The mirthful meeting with a wordy war.  
If thou, Sir Ezzelin, hast aught to show  
Which it befits Count Lara's ear to know,  
To-morrow, here, or elsewhere, as may best  
Beseech your mutual judgment, speak the rest;  
I pledge myself for thee, as not unknown,  
Though, like Count Lara, now return'd 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,  
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  
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 gather'd, seem'd on him to fall;  
But his were silent, his appear'd to stray  
In far forgetfulness away—away—  
Alas! that heedlessness of all around  
Bespoke remembrance only too profound.

## XXIV.

"To-morrow!—ay, to-morrow!" further word  
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 fix'd in that low tone,  
Which show'd resolve, determined, though unknown.

He seized his cloak—his head he slightly bow'd,  
And passing Ezzelin, he left the crowd;  
And, as he pass'd him, smiling met the frown  
With which that chieftain's brow would bear him down:  
It was nor smile of mirth, nor struggling pride  
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?  
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.

## XXV.

And Lara call'd his page, and went his way—  
Well could that stripling word or sign obey:  
His only follower from those climes afar,  
Where the soul glows beneath a brighter star;  
For Lara left the shore from whence he sprung,  
In duty patient, and sedate though young;  
Silent as him he served, his faith 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,  
When Lara's lip breathed forth the words of home:  
Those accents, as his native mountains dear,  
Awake their absent echoes in his ear,  
Friends', kindreds', parents', wonted voice recall,  
Now lost, abjured, for one—his friend, his all:  
For him earth now disclosed no other guide;  
What marvel then he rarely left his side?

## XXVI.

Light was his form, and darkly delicate  
That brow whereon his native sun had sate,  
But had not marr'd, though in his beams he grew,  
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 fever'd there;  
And the wild sparkle of his eye seem'd caught  
From high, and lighten'd with electric thought,  
Though its black orb those long low lashes' fringe  
Had temper'd with a melancholy tinge;  
Yet less of sorrow than of pride was there,  
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;  
And from his chief withdrawn, he wander'd 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 seem'd, like him he served, to live apart  
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.

## XXVII.

If aught he loved, 'twas Lara; but was shown  
His faith in reverence and in deeds alone;

In mute attention; and his care, which guess'd  
Each wish, fulfill'd it ere the tongue express'd.  
Still there was haughtiness in all he did,  
A spirit deep that brook'd not to be chid;  
His zeal, though more than that of servile hands,  
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.  
Slight were the tasks enjoin'd him by his lord,  
To hold the stirrup, or to bear the sword;  
To tune his lute, or, if he will'd it more,  
On tomes of other times and tongues to pore;  
But ne'er to mingle with the menial train,  
To whom he show'd nor deference nor disdain,  
But that well-worn reserve which proved he knew  
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 seem'd, and better days,  
Nor mark of vulgar toil that hand betrays,  
So femininely white it might bespeak  
Another sex, when match'd 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  
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 guess'd.  
Kaled his name, though rumour said he bore  
Another ere he left his mountain-shore;  
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 remember'd then;  
Unless 'twas Lara's wonted voice that spake,  
For then, ear, eyes, and heart would all awake.

## XXVIII.

He had look'd down upon the festive hall,  
And mark'd that sudden strife so mark'd of all;  
And when the crowd around and near him told  
Their wonder at the calmness of the bold,  
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  
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:  
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 the knight he past:  
When Kaled saw that smile his visage fell,  
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 seem'd left alone;  
Each had so fix'd his eye on Lara's mien,  
All had so mix'd 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  
To bound as doubting from too black a dream,