

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;
But long remain'd not; ere an hour expired
He waved his hand to Otho, and retired.

XXIX.

The crowd are gone, the revellers at rest;
The courteous host, and all-approving guest,
Again to that accustom'd couch must creep
Where joy subsides, and sorrow sighs to sleep,
And man, o'erlabour'd 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 lull'd ambition's wile;
O'er each vain eye oblivion's pinions wave,
And quench'd 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,
Alike in naked helplessness recline;
Glad for awhile 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.

Lara.

CANTO THE SECOND.¹

I.

NIGHT wanes—the vapours round the mountains
curl'd

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,
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!"
Gaze on, while yet thy gladden'd 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,
Nor gale breathe forth one sigh for thee, for all;
But creeping things shall revel in their spoil,
And fit thy clay to fertilise the soil.

II.

'Tis morn—'tis noon—assembled in the hall,
The gather'd chieftains come to Otho's call;
'Tis now the promised hour, that must proclaim
The life or death of Lara's future fame;

¹ [Lord Byron seems to have taken a whimsical pleasure in disappointing, by his second Canto, most of the expectations which he had excited by the first. For, without the resuscitation of Sir Ezzelin, Lara's mysterious vision in his antique hall becomes a mere useless piece of lumber, inapplicable to any intelligible purpose. The character of Medora, whom we had been satisfied to behold very contentedly

When Ezzelin his charge may here unfold,
And whatsoever the tale, it must be told.
His faith was pledged, and Lara's promise given,
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.

III.

The hour is past, and Lara too is there,
With self-confiding, coldly patient air;
Why comes not Ezzelin? The hour is past,
And murmurs rise, and Otho's brow's o'ercast.
"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
Between my own and noble Lara's lands;
My halls from such a guest had honour gain'd,
Nor had Sir Ezzelin his host disdain'd,
But that some previous proof forbade his stay,
And urged him to prepare against to-day;
The word I pledged for his I pledge again,
Or will myself redeem his knighthood's stain."

He ceased—and Lara answer'd, "I am here
To lend at thy demand a listening ear
To tales of evil from a stranger's tongue,
Whose words already might my heart have wrung,
But that I deem'd 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:
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,
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;
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—
His sword is good who can maintain them well.

IV.

Short was the conflict; furious, blindly rash,
Vain Otho gave his bosom to the gash:
He bled, and fell; but not with deadly wound,
Stretch'd by a dextrous sleight along the ground.
"Demand thy life!" He answer'd 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
Than when his foe's was levell'd at his brow;

domesticated in the Pirate's Island, without inquiring whence or why she had emigrated thither, is, by means of some mysterious relation between her and Sir Ezzelin, involved in very disagreeable ambiguity;—and, further, the high-minded and generous Conrad, who had preferred death and torture to life and liberty, if purchased by a nightly murder, is degraded into a vile and cowardly assassin.—GEORGE ELLIS.]

Then all was stern collectedness and art,
Now rose the unleaven'd hatred of his heart;
So little sparing to the foe he fell'd,
That when the approaching crowd his arm withheld,
He almost turn'd the thirsty point on those,
Who thus for mercy dared to interpose;
But to a moment's thought that purpose bent;
Yet look'd he on him still with eye intent,
As if he loathed the ineffectual strife
That left a foe, howe'er o'erthrown, with life;
As if to search how far the wound he gave
Had sent its victim onward to his grave.

V.

They raised the bleeding Otho, and the Leech
Forbade all present question, sign, and speech;
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 back'd his steed, his homeward path he took,
Nor cast on Otho's towers a single look.

VI.

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.
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
Except the absence of the chief it sought.
A chamber tenantless, a steed at rest,
His host alarm'd, his murmuring squires distress'd:
Their search extends along, around the path,
In dread to meet the marks of prowlers' wrath:
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,
The bitter print of each convulsive nail,
When agonised hands that cease to guard,
Wound in that pang the smoothness of the sword.
Some such had been, if here a life was left,
But these were not; and doubting hope is left;
And strange suspicion, whispering Lara's name,
Now daily mutters o'er his blacken'd fame;
Then sudden silent when his form appear'd,
Awaits the absence of the thing it fear'd
Again its wonted wondering to renew,
And dye conjecture with a darker hue.

VII.

Days roll along, and Otho's wounds are heal'd,
But not his pride; and hate no more conceal'd:
He was a man of power, and Lara's foe,
The friend of all who sought to work him woe,
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
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;
The sweeping fierceness which his soul betray'd,
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
A word can kindle and a word assuage;
But the deep working of a soul unmix'd
With aught of pity where its wrath had fix'd;
Such as long power and overgorged success
Concentrates into all that's merciless:
These, link'd 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
Of one that haunts him still, alive or dead.

VIII.

Within that land was many a malcontent,
Who cursed the tyranny to which he bent;
That soil full many a wringing despot saw,
Who work'd his wantonness in form of law;
Long war without and frequent broil within
Had made a path for blood and giant sin,
That waited but a signal to begin
New havoc, such as civil discord blends,
Which knows no neuter, owns but foes or friends;
Fix'd in his feudal fortress each was lord,
In word and deed obey'd, in soul abhor'd.
Thus Lara had inherited his lands,
And with them pining hearts and sluggish hands;
But that long absence from his native clime
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;
They deem'd him now unhappy, though at first
Their evil judgment augur'd 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
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.
Cold to the great, contemptuous to the high,
The humble pass'd not his unheeding eye;
Much he would speak not, but beneath his roof
They found asylum oft, and ne'er reproof.
And they who watch'd might mark that, day by day,
Some new retainers gather'd to his sway;
But most of late, since Ezzelin was lost,
He play'd 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.
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 mourn'd his rifed cot,
And scarce the Serf could murmur o'er his lot;
With him old avarice found its hoard secure,
With him contempt forbore to mock the poor;

Youth present cheer and promised recompence
 Detain'd, till all too late to part from thence :
 To hate he offer'd, with the coming change,
 The deep reversion of delay'd revenge ;
 To love, long baffled by the unequal match,
 The well-won charms success was sure to snatch.
 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,
 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
 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 !

IX.

Throughout that clime the feudal chiefs had gain'd
 Such sway, their infant monarch hardly reign'd ;
 Now was the hour for faction's rebel growth,
 The Serfs contemn'd the one, and hated both :
 They waited but a leader, and they found
 One to their cause inseparably bound ;
 By circumstance compell'd to plunge again,
 In self-defence, amidst the strife of men.
 Cut off by some mysterious fate from those
 Whom birth and nature meant not for his foes,
 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,
 E'en if he fail'd, he still delay'd his fall.
 The sullen calm that long his bosom kept,
 The storm that once had spent itself and slept,
 Roused by events that seem'd foredoom'd to urge
 His gloomy fortunes to their utmost verge,
 Burst forth, and made him all he once had been,
 And is again ; he only changed the scene.
 Light care had he for life, and less for fame,
 But not less fitted for the desperate game :
 He deem'd himself mark'd out for others' hate,
 And mock'd 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 :
 Inured to hunters, he was found at bay ;
 And they must kill, they cannot snare the prey.
 Stern, unambitious, silent, he had been
 Henceforth a calm spectator of life's scene ;
 But dragg'd again upon the arena, stood
 A leader not unequal to the feud ;
 In voice — mien — gesture — savage nature spoke,
 And from his eye the gladiator broke.

X.

What boots the oft-repeated tale of strife,
 The feast of vultures, and the waste of life ?
 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 distemper'd passions lent their force
 In bitterness that banish'd all remorse.
 None sued, for Mercy knew her cry was vain,
 The captive died upon the battle-slain :
 In either cause, one rage alone possess'd
 The empire of the alternate victor's breast ;
 And they that smote for freedom or for sway,
 Deem'd few were slain, while more remain'd to slay.
 It was too late to check the wasting brand,
 And Desolation reap'd the famish'd land ;
 The torch was lighted, and the flame was spread,
 And Carnage smiled upon her daily dead.

XI.

Fresh with the nerve the new-born impulse strung,
 The first success to Lara's numbers clung :
 But that vain victory hath ruin'd all ;
 They form no longer to their leader's call :
 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,
 To check the headlong fury of that crew ;
 In vain their stubborn ardour he would tame,
 The hand that kindles cannot quench the flame ;
 The wary foe alone hath turn'd their mood,
 And shown their rashness to that erring brood :
 The feign'd retreat, the nightly ambushade,
 The daily harass, and the fight delay'd,
 The long privation of the hoped supply,
 The tentless rest beneath the humid sky,
 The stubborn wall that mocks the leaguer's art,
 And palls the patience of his baffled heart,
 Of these they had not deem'd : the battle-day
 They could encounter as a veteran may ;
 But more prefer'd the fury of the strife,
 And present death, to hourly suffering life :
 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,
 And thousands dwindled to a scanty band :
 Desperate, though few, the last and best remain'd
 To mourn the discipline they late disdain'd.
 One hope survives, the frontier is not far,
 And thence they may escape from native war ;
 And bear within them to the neighbouring state
 An exile's sorrows, or an outlaw's hate :
 Hard is the task their father-land to quit,
 But harder still to perish or submit.

XII.

It is resolved — they march — consenting Night
 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.
 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 :
 Cut off from hope, and compass'd in the toil,
 Less blood perchance hath bought a richer spoil !

XIII.

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,
 Some few, perchance, may break and pass the line,
 However link'd 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, rein'd is every steed,
 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 !

XIV.

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

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

XV.

Commanding, aiding, animating all,
 Where foe appear'd to press, or friend to fall,
 Cheers Lara's voice, and waves or strikes his steel,
 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 :
 Now girt with numbers, now almost alone,
 He foils their ranks, or re-unites his own ;
 Himself he spared not — once they seem'd to fly —
 Now was the time, he waved his hand on high,
 And shook — Why sudden droops that plumed crest ?
 The shaft is sped — the arrow's in his breast !
 That fatal gesture left the unguarded side,
 And Death hath stricken down yon arm of pride.
 The word of triumph fainted from his tongue ;
 That hand, so raised, how droopingly it hung !
 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
 Beguiles his charger from the combat's rage :
 Meantime his followers charge, and charge again ;
 Too mix'd the slayers now to heed the slain !

XVI.

Day glimmers on the dying and the dead,
 The cloven cuirass, and the helmless head ;
 The war-horse masterless is on the earth,
 And that last gasp hath burst his bloody girth ;
 And near, yet quivering with what life remain'd,
 The heel that urged him and the hand that rein'd ;
 And some too near that rolling torrent lie,
 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 ;
 With feeble and convulsive effort swept,
 Their limbs along the crimson'd 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 —
 Why pause ? No further thirst have they to slake —
 It is unquench'd, and yet they feel it not ;
 It was an agony — but now forgot !

XVII.

Beneath a lime, remoter from the scene,
 Where but for him that strife had never been,
 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 welling side,
 And with his scarf would stanch the tides that rush,
 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.
 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,
 Held all the light that shone on earth for him.

XVIII.

The foe arrives, who long had search'd the field,
 Their triumph nought till Lara too should yield ;
 They would remove him, but they see 't were vain,
 And he regards them with a calm disdain,
 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,
 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.
 They spake of other scenes, but what — is known
 To Kaled, whom their meaning reach'd alone ;
 And he replied, though faintly, to their sound,
 While gazed the rest in dumb amazement round :
 They seem'd even then — that twain unto — the
 last
 To half forget the present in the past ;
 To share between themselves some separate fate,
 Whose darkness none beside should penetrate.

XIX.

Their words though faint were many — from the tone
Their import those who heard could judge alone ;
From this, you might have deem'd 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
And calm, till murmuring death gasp'd hoarsely near :
But from his visage little could we guess,
So unrepentant, dark, and passionless,
Save that when struggling nearer to his last,
Upon that page his eye was kindly cast ;
And once, as Kaled's answering accents ceased,
Rose Lara's hand, and pointed to the East :
Whether (as then the breaking sun from high
Roll'd back the clouds) the morrow caught his eye,
Or that 't was chance, or some remember'd scene,
That raised his arm to point where such had been,
Scarce Kaled seem'd to know, but turn'd away,
As if his heart abhor'd that coming day,
And shrunk his glance before that morning light,
To look on Lara's brow — where all grew night.
Yet sense seem'd left, though better were its loss ;
For when one near display'd the absolving cross,
And proffer'd to his touch the holy bead,
Of which his parting soul might own the need,
He look'd upon it with an eye profane,
And smiled — Heaven pardon ! if 't were with disdain :
And Kaled, though he spoke not, nor withdrew
From Lara's face his fix'd despairing view,
With brow repulsive, and with gesture swift,
Flung back the hand which held the sacred gift,
As if such but disturb'd the expiring man,
Nor seem'd to know his life but *then* began,
That life of Immortality, secure
To none, save them whose faith in Christ is sure.

XX.

But gasping heaved the breath that Lara drew,
And dull the film along his dim eye grew ;
His limbs stretch'd fluttering, and his head droop'd o'er
The weak yet still untiring knee that bore ;
He press'd the hand he held upon his heart —
It beats no more, but Kaled will not part
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. ¹

XXI.

He gazed, as if not yet had pass'd away
The haughty spirit of that humble clay ;
And those around have roused him from his trance,
But cannot tear from thence his fixed glance ;

¹ [The death of Lara is, by far, the finest passage in the poem, and is fully equal to any thing else which the author ever wrote. The physical horror of the event, though described with a terrible force and fidelity, is both relieved and enhanced by the beautiful pictures of mental energy and affection with which it is combined. The whole sequel of the poem is written with equal vigour and feeling, and may be put in competition with any thing that poetry has produced, in point either of pathos or energy. — JEFFREY.]

² 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 Burghard, 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

And when, in raising him from where he bore
Within his arms the form that felt no more,
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,
But strove to stand and gaze, but reel'd and fell,
Scarce breathing more than that he loved so well.
Than that *he* loved ! Oh ! never yet beneath
The breast of man such trusty love may breathe !
That trying moment hath at once reveal'd
The secret long and yet but half conceal'd ;
In baring to revive that lifeless breast,
Its grief seem'd ended, but the sex confess'd ;
And life return'd, and Kaled felt no shame —
What now to her was Womanhood or Fame ?

XXII.

And Lara sleeps not where his fathers sleep,
But where he died his grave was dug as deep ;
Nor is his mortal slumber less profound,
Though priest nor bless'd, nor marble deck'd the
mound ;
And he was mourn'd by one whose quiet grief,
Less loud, outlasts a people's for their chief.
Vain was all question ask'd 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 seem'd but little kind.
Why did she love him ? Curious fool ! — be still —
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.
They were not common links, that form'd the chain
That bound to Lara Kaled's heart and brain ;
But that wild tale she brook'd not to unfold,
And seal'd is now each lip that could have told.

XXIII.

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

XXIV.

Upon that night (a peasant's is the tale)
A Serf that cross'd the intervening vale, ²

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 Cynthia's light almost gave way to morn,
And nearly veil'd in mist her waning horn ;
A Serf, that rose betimes to thread the wood,
And hew the bough that bought his children's
food,
Pass'd 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,
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 watch'd the stranger's course,
Who reach'd the river, bounded from his horse,
And lifting thence the burthen which he bore,
Heaved up the bank, and dash'd it from the shore,
Then paused, and look'd, and turn'd, and seem'd to
watch,

And still another hurried glance would snatch,
And follow with his step the stream that flow'd,
As if even yet too much its surface show'd :
At once he started, stoop'd, around him strown
The winter floods had scatter'd heaps of stone ;
Of these the heaviest thence he gather'd there,
And slung them with a more than common care.
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 glitter'd starlike on the vest ;
But ere he well could mark the buoyant trunk,
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 disappear'd : the horseman gazed
Till ebb'd the latest eddy it had raised ;
Then turning, vaulted on his pawing steed,
And instant spur'd him into panting speed.
His face was mask'd — the features of the dead,
If dead it were, escaped the observer's dread ;

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, had 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 afterwards 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

But if in sooth a star its bosom bore,
Such is the badge that knighthood ever wore,
And such 't is known Sir Ezzelin had worn
Upon the night that led to such a morn.
If thus he perish'd, Heaven receive his soul !
His undiscover'd limbs to ocean roll ;
And charity upon the hope would dwell
It was not Lara's hand by which he fell.

XXV.

And Kaled — Lara — Ezzelin, are gone,
Alike without their monumental stone !
The first, all efforts vainly strove to wean
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,
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 talk'd all idly unto shapes of air,
Such as the busy brain of Sorrow paints,
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 ;
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 ;
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 —
This could not last — she lies by him she loved ;
Her tale untold — her truth too dearly proved. ¹

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 on the stream, he inquired what it was that appeared black, to which they answered, it was a mantle ; and one of them threw 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 head, 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 Leo the Tenth*, vol. i. p. 265.

¹ [Lara, though it has many good passages, is a further proof of the melancholy fact, which is true of all sequels, from the continuation of the *Æneid*, by one of the famous Italian poets of the middle ages, down to "Polly, a sequel to the Beggar's Opera," that "more last words" may generally be