

XIX.

He sate him down at a pillar's base,¹
 And pass'd his hand athwart his face;
 Like one in dreary musing mood,
 Declining was his attitude;
 His head was drooping on his breast,
 Fever'd, throbbing, and oppress'd:
 And o'er his brow, so downward bent,
 Oft his beating fingers went,
 Hurriedly, as you may see
 Your own run over the ivory key,
 Ere the measured tone is taken
 By the chords you would awaken.
 There he sate all heavily,
 As he heard the night-wind sigh.
 Was it the wind through some hollow stone,
 Sent that soft and tender moan?²
 He lifted his head, and he look'd on the sea,
 But it was unrippled as glass may be;
 He look'd on the long grass—it waved not a blade;
 How was that gentle sound convey'd?
 He look'd to the banners—each flag lay still,
 So did the leaves on Cithæron's hill,
 And he felt not a breath come over his cheek;
 What did that sudden sound bespeak?
 He turn'd to the left—is he sure of sight?
 There sate a lady, youthful and bright!

XX.

He started up with more of fear
 Than if an armed foe were near.
 "God of my fathers! what is here?
 Who art thou, and wherefore sent
 So near a hostile armament?"
 His trembling hands refused to sign
 The cross he deem'd no more divine:
 He had resumed it in that hour,
 But conscience wrung away the power.
 He gazed, he saw: he knew the face
 Of beauty, and the form of grace;
 It was Francesca by his side,
 The maid who might have been his bride!

The rose was yet upon her cheek,
 But mellow'd with a tenderer streak:
 Where was the play of her soft lips fled?
 Gone was the smile that enliven'd their red.
 The ocean's calm within their view,
 Beside her eye had less of blue;
 But like that cold wave it stood still,
 And its glance³, though clear, was chill.
 Around her form a thin robe twining,
 Nought conceal'd her bosom shining;
 Through the parting of her hair,
 Floating darkly downward there,
 Her rounded arm show'd white and bare:

¹ [From this, all is beautiful to—
 "He saw not, he knew not; but nothing is there."—
 GIFFORD.]

² I must here acknowledge a close, though unintentional, resemblance in these twelve lines to a passage in an unpublished poem of Mr. Coleridge, called "Christabel." It was not till after these lines were written that I heard that wild and singularly original and beautiful poem recited; and the MS. of that production I never saw till very recently, by the kindness of Mr. Coleridge himself, who, I hope, is convinced that I have not been a wilful plagiarist. The original idea undoubtedly pertains to Mr. Coleridge, whose poem has been composed above fourteen years. Let me conclude by a hope that he will not longer delay the publication of a production, of which I can only add my mite of approbation to the applause

And ere yet she made reply,
 Once she raised her hand on high;
 It was so wan, and transparent of hue,
 You might have seen the moon shine through.

XXI.

"I come from my rest to him I love best,
 That I may be happy, and he may be bless'd.
 I have pass'd the guards, the gate, the wall;
 Sought thee in safety through foes and all.
 'Tis said the lion will turn and flee
 From a maid in the pride of her purity;
 And the Power on high, that can shield the good
 Thus from the tyrant of the wood,
 Hath extended its mercy to guard me as well
 From the hands of the leaguering infidel.
 I come—and if I come in vain,
 Never, oh never, we meet again!
 Thou hast done a fearful deed
 In falling away from thy father's creed:
 But dash that turban to earth, and swear
 The sign of the cross, and for ever be mine;
 Wring the black drop from thy heart,
 And to-morrow unites us no more to part."

"And where should our bridal couch be spread?
 In the midst of the dying and the dead?
 For to-morrow we give to the slaughter and flame
 The sons and the shrines of the Christian name.
 None, save thou and thine, I've sworn,
 Shall be left upon the morn:
 But thee will I bear to a lovely spot, [forgot.
 Where our hands shall be join'd, and our sorrow
 There thou yet shalt be my bride,
 When once again I've quell'd the pride
 Of Venice; and her hated race
 Have felt the arm they would debase
 Scourge, with a whip of scorpions, those
 Whom vice and envy made my foes."

Upon his hand she laid her own—
 Light was the touch, but it thrill'd to the bone,
 And shot a chillness to his heart,
 Which fix'd him beyond the power to start.
 Though slight was that grasp so mortal cold,
 He could not loose him from its hold;
 But never did clasp of one so dear
 Strike on the pulse with such feeling of fear,
 As those thin fingers, long and white,
 Froze through his blood by their touch that night.
 The feverish glow of his brow was gone,
 And his heart sank so still that it felt like stone,
 As he look'd on the face, and beheld its hue,
 So deeply changed from what he knew:
 Fair but faint—without the ray
 Of mind, that made each feature play
 Like sparkling waves on a sunny day;

of far more competent judges.—[The following are the lines in "Christabel" which Lord Byron had unintentionally imitated:—

"The night is chill, the forest bare,
 Is it the wind that moneth bleak?
 There is not wind enough in the air
 To move away the ringlet curl
 From the lovely lady's cheek—
 There is not wind enough to twirl
 The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
 That dances as often as dance it can,
 Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
 On the topmost twig that looks at the sky."

³ [And its thrilling glance, &c.—GIFFORD.]

And her motionless lips lay still as death,
 And her words came forth without her breath,
 And there rose not a heave o'er her bosom's swell,
 And there seem'd not a pulse in her veins to dwell.
 Though her eye shone out, yet the lids were fix'd,
 And the glance that it gave was wild and unmix'd
 With aught of change, as the eyes may seem
 Of the restless who walk in a troubled dream;
 Like the figures on arras, that gloomily glare,
 Stirr'd by the breath of the wintry air,¹
 So seen by the dying lamp's fitful light,
 Lifeless, but life-like, and awful to sight; [down
 As they seem, through the dimness, about to come
 From the shadowy wall where their images frown;²
 Fearfully flitting to and fro,
 As the gusts on the tapestry come and go.

"If not for love of me be given
 Thus much, then, for the love of heaven,—
 Again I say—that turban tear
 From off thy faithless brow, and swear
 Thine injured country's sons to spare,
 Or thou art lost; and never shalt see—
 Not earth—that's past—but heaven or me.
 If this thou dost accord, albeit
 A heavy doom 'tis thine to meet,
 That doom shall half absolve thy sin,
 And mercy's gate may receive thee within:
 But pause one moment more, and take
 The curse of Him thou didst forsake;
 And look once more to heaven, and see
 Its love for ever shut from thee.
 There is a light cloud by the moon—³
 'Tis passing, and will pass full soon—
 If, by the time its vapoury sail
 Hath ceased her shaded orb to veil,
 Thy heart within thee is not changed,
 Then God and man are both avenged;
 Dark will thy doom be, darker still
 Thine immortality of ill."

Alp look'd to heaven, and saw on high
 The sign she spake of in the sky;
 But his heart was swollen, and turn'd aside,
 By deep interminable pride.
 This first false passion of his breast
 Roll'd like a torrent o'er the rest.
He sue for mercy! *He* dismay'd
 By wild words of a timid maid!
He, wrong'd by Venice, vow to save
 Her sons, devoted to the grave!

¹ ["Like a picture, that magic had charm'd from its frame,
 Lifeless but life-like, and ever the same."—MS.]

² [In the summer of 1803, when in his sixteenth year, Lord Byron, though offered a bed at Annesley, used at first to return every night to sleep at Newstead; alleging as a reason, that he was afraid of the family pictures of the Chaworths; that he fancied "they had taken a grudge to him on account of the duel." Mr. Moore thinks it may possibly have been the recollection of these pictures that suggested to him these lines.]

³ I have been told that the idea expressed in this and the five following lines has been admired by those whose approbation is valuable. I am glad of it: but it is not original—at least not mine; it may be found much better expressed in pages 182-3-4. of the English version of "Vathek" (I forget the precise page of the French), a work to which I have before referred; and never recur to, or read, without a renewal of gratification.—[The following is the passage:—"Deluded prince!" said the Genius, addressing the Caliph, "to whom Providence hath confided the care of innumerable subjects; is it thus that thou fulfillst thy mission? Thy crimes are already completed; and art thou now hastening to thy punishment? Thou knowest that be-

No—though that cloud were thunder's worst,
 And charged to crush him—let it burst!

He look'd upon it earnestly
 Without an accent of reply;
 He watch'd it passing; it is flown:
 Full on his eye the clear moon shone,
 And thus he spake—"Whate'er my fate,
 I am no changeling—'t is too late:
 The reed in storms may bow and quiver,
 Then rise again; the tree must shiver.
 What Venice made me, I must be,
 Her foe in all, save love to thee:
 But thou art safe: oh, fly with me!"

He turn'd, but she is gone!
 Nothing is there but the column stone.
 Hath she sunk in the earth, or melted in air?
 He saw not—he knew not—but nothing is there.

XXII.

The night is past, and shines the sun
 As if that morn were a jocund one.⁴
 Lightly and brightly breaks away
 The Morning from her mantle grey,
 And the Noon will look on a sultry day.⁵
 Hark to the trump, and the drum,
 And the mournful sound of the barbarous horn,
 And the flap of the banners, that fit as they're borne,
 And the neigh of the steed, and the multitude's hum,
 And the clash, and the shout, "They come! they
 come!"
 The horsetails⁶ are pluck'd from the ground, and the
 sword [word.
 From its sheath; and they form, and but wait for the
 Tartar, and Spahi, and Turcoman,
 Strike your tents, and throng to the van;
 Mount ye, spur ye, skirr the plain,
 That the fugitive may flee in vain,
 When he breaks from the town; and none escape,
 Aged or young, in the Christian shape;
 While your fellows on foot, in a fiery mass,
 Bloodstain the breach through which they pass.⁷
 The steeds are all bridled, and snort to the rein;
 Curved is each neck, and flowing each mane;
 White is the foam of their champ on the bit:
 The spears are uplifted; the matches are lit;
 The cannon are pointed, and ready to roar,
 And crush the wall they have crumbled before:⁸
 Forms in his phalanx each Janiziar;
 Alp at their head; his right arm is bare,
 So is the blade of his scimitar;

yond those mountains Eblis and his accursed dives hold their infernal empire; and, seduced by a malignant phantom, thou art proceeding to surrender thyself to them! This moment is the last of grace allowed thee: give back Nouronahar to her father, who still retains a few sparks of life: destroy thy tower with all its abominations: drive Carathis from thy councils: be just to thy subjects: respect the ministers of the prophet: compensate for thy impieties by an exemplary life; and, instead of squandering thy days in voluptuous indulgence, lament thy crimes on the sepulchres of thy ancestors. Thou beholdest the clouds that obscure the sun: at the instant he recovers his splendour, if thy heart be not changed, the time of mercy assigned thee will be past for ever."

⁴ [Leave out this couplet.—GIFFORD.]

⁵ [Strike out—"And the Noon will look on a sultry day."—G.]

⁶ The horsetails, fixed upon a lance, a pacha's standard.

⁷ [Omit—

"While your fellows on foot, in a fiery mass,
 Bloodstain the breach through which they pass."—G.]

⁸ [And crush the wall they have shaken before.—G.]

The khan and the pachas are all at their post;
The vizier himself at the head of the host.
When the culverin's signal is fired, then on;
Leave not in Corinth a living one—
A priest at her altars, a chief in her halls,
A hearth in her mansions, a stone on her walls.
God and the prophet—Alla Hu!

Up to the skies with that wild halloo!

“There the breach lies for passage, the ladder to
scale;

And your hands on your sabres, and how should ye
fail?

He who first downs with the red cross may crave¹
His heart's dearest wish; let him ask it, and have!”
Thus utter'd Coumourgi, the dauntless vizier;
The reply was the brandish of sabre and spear,
And the shout of fierce thousands in joyous ire:—
Silence—hark to the signal—fire!

XXIII.

As the wolves, that headlong go
On the stately buffalo,
Though with fiery eyes, and angry roar,
And hoofs that stamp, and horns that gore,
He tramples on earth, or tosses on high
The foremost, who rush on his strength but to die:
Thus against the wall they went,
Thus the first were backward bent;²
Many a bosom, sheathed in brass,
Strew'd the earth like broken glass,
Shiver'd by the shot, that tore
The ground whereon they moved no more:
Even as they fell, in files they lay,
Like the mower's grass at the close of day,
When his work is done on the levell'd plain;
Such was the fall of the foremost slain.³

XXIV.

As the spring-tides, with heavy plash,
From the cliffs invading dash
Huge fragments, sapp'd by the ceaseless flow,
Till white and thundering down they go,
Like the avalanche's snow
On the Alpine vales below;
Thus at length, outbreathed and worn,
Corinth's sons were downward borne
By the long and oft renew'd
Charge of the Moslem multitude.
In firmness they stood, and in masses they fell,
Heap'd, by the host of the infidel,
Hand to hand, and foot to foot:
Nothing there, save death, was mute;
Stroke, and thrust, and flash, and cry
For quarter, or for victory,
Mingle there with the volleying thunder,
Which makes the distant cities wonder
How the sounding battle goes,
If with them, or for their foes;
If they must mourn, or may rejoice
In that annihilating voice,

¹ [“He who first downs with the red-cross may crave,” &c. What vulgarism is this!—

“He who lowers,—or plucks down,” &c.—GIFFORD.]

² [Thus against the wall they bent,
Thus the first were backward sent.—G.]

³ [Such was the fall of the foremost train.—G.]

⁴ [There stood a man, &c.—G.]

⁵ [“Lurk'd,” a bad word—say “Was hid.”—G.]

Which pierces the deep hills through and through
With an echo dread and new:
You might have heard it, on that day,
O'er Salamis and Megara;
(We have heard the hearers say,)
Even unto Piræus' bay.

XXV.

From the point of encountering blades to the hilt,
Sabres and swords with blood were gilt;
But the rampart is won, and the spoil begun,
And all but the after carnage done.
Shriller shrieks now mingling come
From within the plunder'd dome:
Hark to the haste of flying feet,
That splash in the blood of the slippery street;
But here and there, where 'vantage ground
Against the foe may still be found,
Desperate groups, of twelve or ten,
Make a pause, and turn again—
With banded backs against the wall,
Fiercely stand, or fighting fall.

There stood an old man⁴—his hairs were white,
But his veteran arm was full of might:
So gallantly bore he the brunt of the fray,
The dead before him, on that day,
In a semicircle lay;
Still he combated unwounded,
Though retreating, unsurrounded.
Many a scar of former fight
Lurk'd⁵ beneath his corslet bright;
But of every wound his body bore,
Each and all had been ta'en before:
Though aged, he was so iron of limb,
Few of our youth could cope with him;
And the foes, whom he singly kept at bay,
Outnumber'd his thin hairs⁶ of silver grey.
From right to left his sabre swept:

Many an Othman mother wept
Sons that were unborn, when dipp'd⁷
His weapon first in Moslem gore,
Ere his years could count a score.
Of all he might have been the sire⁸
Who fell that day beneath his ire:
For, sonless left long years ago,
His wrath made many a childless foe;
And since the day, when in the strait⁹
His only boy had met his fate,
His parent's iron hand did doom
More than a human hecatomb.¹⁰
If shades by carnage be appeased,
Patroclus' spirit less was pleased
Than his, Minotti's son, who died
Where Asia's bounds and ours divide.
Buried he lay, where thousands before
For thousands of years were inhumed on the shore;
What of them is left, to tell
Where they lie, and how they fell?

Not a stone on their turf, nor a bone in their graves;
But they live in the verse that immortally saves.

⁶ [Outnumber'd his hairs, &c.—GIFFORD.]

⁷ [Sons that were unborn, when he dipp'd.—G.]

⁸ [Bravo!—this is better than King Priam's fifty sons.—G.]

⁹ In the naval battle at the mouth of the Dardanelles, between the Venetians and Turks.

¹⁰ [There can be no such thing; but the whole of this is poor, and spun out.—G.]

XXVI.

Hark to the Allah shout!¹ a band
Of the Mussulman bravest and best is at hand:
Their leader's nervous arm is bare,
Swifter to smite, and never to spare—
Unclothed to the shoulder it waves them on;
Thus in the fight is he ever known:
Others a gaudier garb may show,
To tempt the spoil of the greedy foe;
Many a hand's on a richer hilt,
But none on a steel more ruddily gilt;
Many a loftier turban may wear,—
Alp is but known by the white arm bare;
Look through the thick of the fight, 'tis there!
There is not a standard on that shore
So well advanced the ranks before;
There is not a banner in Moslem war
Will lure the Delhi's half so far;
It glances like a falling star!
Where'er that mighty arm is seen,
The bravest be, or late have been;²
There the craven cries for quarter
Vainly to the vengeful Tartar;
Or the hero, silent lying,
Scorns to yield a groan in dying;
Mustering his last feeble blow
'Gainst the nearest levell'd foe,
Though faint beneath the mutual wound,
Grappling on the gory ground.

XXVII.

Still the old man stood erect,
And Alp's career a moment check'd.
“Yield thee, Minotti; quarter take,
For thine own, thy daughter's sake.”

“Never, renegado, never!
Though the life of thy gift would last for ever.”³

“Francesca!—Oh, my promised bride!⁴
Must she too perish by thy pride?”

“She is safe.”—“Where? where?”—“In heaven;
From whence thy traitor soul is driven—
Far from thee, and undefiled.”
Grimly then Minotti smiled,
As he saw Alp staggering bow
Before his words, as with a blow.

“Oh God! when died she?”—“Yesternight—
Nor weep I for her spirit's flight:
None of my pure race shall be
Slaves to Mahomet and thee—
Come on!”—That challenge is in vain—
Alp's already with the slain!
While Minotti's words were wreaking
More revenge in bitter speaking
Than his falchion's point had found,
Had the time allow'd to wound,

¹ [Hark to the Alla Hu! &c.—GIFFORD.]

² [Omit the remainder of the section.—G.]

³ [In the original MS.—

“Though the life of thy giving would last for ever.”]

⁴ [“Where's Francesca?—my promised bride!”—MS.]

⁵ [Here follows in MS.—

“Twice and once he roll'd a space,
Then lead-like lay upon his face.”]

⁶ [One cannot help suspecting, on longer and more mature consideration, that one has been led to join in ascribing much more force to the objections made against such characters as

From within the neighbouring porch
Of a long defended church,
Where the last and desperate few
Would the failing fight renew,
The sharp shot dash'd Alp to the ground;
Ere an eye could view the wound
That crash'd through the brain of the infidel,
Round he spun, and down he fell;
A flash like fire within his eyes
Blazed, as he bent no more to rise,
And then eternal darkness sunk
Through all the palpitating trunk;⁵
Nought of life left, save a quivering
Where his limbs were slightly shivering:
They turn'd him on his back; his breast
And brow were stain'd with gore and dust,
And through his lips the life-blood oozed,
From its deep veins lately loosed;
But in his pulse there was no throb,
Nor on his lips one dying sob;
Sigh, nor word, nor struggling breath
Heralded his way to death:
Ere his very thought could pray,
Unanel'd he pass'd away,
Without a hope from mercy's aid,—
To the last—a Renegade.⁶

XXVIII.

Fearfully the yell arose
Of his followers, and his foes;
These in joy, in fury those:⁷
Then again in conflict mixing,
Clashing swords, and spears transfixing,
Interchanged the blow and thrust,
Hurling warriors in the dust.
Street by street, and foot by foot,
Still Minotti dares dispute
The latest portion of the land
Left beneath his high command;
With him, aiding heart and hand,
The remnant of his gallant band.
Still the church is tenable,

Whence issued late the fated ball
That half avenged the city's fall,
When Alp, her fierce assailant, fell:
Thither bending sternly back,
They leave before a bloody track;
And, with their faces to the foe,
Dealing wounds with every blow,⁸
The chief, and his retreating train,
Join to those within the fane;
There they yet may breathe awhile,
Shelter'd by the massy pile.

XXIX.

Brief breathing-time! the turban'd host,
With adding ranks and raging boast,

the Corsair, Lara, the Giaour, Alp, &c. than belongs to them. The incidents, habits, &c. are much too remote from modern and European life to act as mischievous examples to others; while, under the given circumstances, the splendour of imagery, beauty and tenderness of sentiment, and extraordinary strength and felicity of language, are applicable to human nature at all times, and in all countries, and convey to the best faculties of the reader's mind an impulse which elevates, refines, instructs, and enchants, with the noblest and purest of all pleasures.—Sir E. BRYDGES.]

⁷ [“These in rage, in triumph those.”—MS.]

⁸ [Dealing death with every blow.—GIFFORD.]

Press onwards with such strength and heat,
Their numbers balk their own retreat;
For narrow the way that led to the spot
Where still the Christians yielded not;
And the foremost, if fearful, may vainly try
Through the massy column to turn and fly;
They perforce must do or die.
They die; but ere their eyes could close,
Avengers o'er their bodies rose;
Fresh and furious, fast they fill
The ranks unthinn'd, though slaughter'd still;
And faint the weary Christians wax
Before the still renew'd attacks:
And now the Othmans gain the gate;
Still resists its iron weight,
And still, all deadly aim'd and hot,
From every crevice comes the shot;
From every shatter'd window pour
The volleys of the sulphurous shower;
But the portal wavering grows and weak—
The iron yields, the hinges creak—
It bends—it falls—and all is o'er;
Lost Corinth may resist no more!

XXX.

Darkly, sternly, and all alone,
Minotti stood o'er the altar stone:
Madonna's face upon him shone,
Painted in heavenly hues above,
With eyes of light and looks of love;
And placed upon that holy shrine
To fix our thoughts on things divine,
When pictured there, we kneeling see
Her, and the boy-God on her knee,
Smiling sweetly on each prayer
To heaven, as if to waft it there.
Still she smiled; even now she smiles,
Though slaughter streams along her aisles:
Minotti lifted his aged eye,
And made the sign of a cross with a sigh,
Then seized a torch which blazed thereby;
And still he stood, while, with steel and flame,
Inward and onward the Mussulman came.

XXXI.

The vaults beneath the mosaic stone
Contain'd the dead of ages gone;
Their names were on the graven floor,
But now illegible with gore;
The carved crests, and curious hues
The varied marble's veins diffuse,
Were smear'd, and slippery—stain'd, and strown
With broken swords, and helmets o'erthrown:
There were dead above, and the dead below
Lay cold in many a coffin'd row;
You might see them piled in sable state,
By a pale light through a gloomy grate;
But War had enter'd their dark caves,
And stored along the vaulted graves
Her sulphurous treasures, thickly spread
In masses by the fleshless dead:
Here, throughout the siege, had been
The Christians' chiefest magazine;
To these a late form'd train now led,

¹ ["Oh, but it made a glorious show!!!"] Out.—GIF-
FORD.]

Minotti's last and stern resource
Against the foe's o'erwhelming force.

XXXII.

The foe came on, and few remain
To strive, and those must strive in vain:
For lack of further lives, to slake
The thirst of vengeance now awake,
With barbarous blows they gash the dead,
And lop the already lifeless head,
And fell the statues from their niche,
And spoil the shrines of offerings rich,
And from each other's rude hands wrest
The silver vessels saints had bless'd.
To the high altar on they go;
Oh, but it made a glorious show!¹
On its table still behold
The cup of consecrated gold;
Massy and deep, a glittering prize,
Brightly it sparkles to plunderers' eyes:
That morn it held the holy wine,
Converted by Christ to his blood so divine,
Which his worshippers drank at the break of day,
To shrive their souls ere they join'd in the fray.
Still a few drops within it lay;
And round the sacred table glow
Twelve lofty lamps, in splendid row,
From the purest metal cast;
A spoil—the richest, and the last.

XXXIII.

So near they came, the nearest stretch'd
To grasp the spoil he almost reach'd,
When old Minotti's hand
Touch'd with the torch the train—
'Tis fired!
Spire, vaults, the shrine, the spoil, the slain,
The turban'd victors, the Christian band,
All that of living or dead remain,
Hurl'd on high with the shiver'd fane,
In one wild roar expired!
The shatter'd town—the walls thrown down—
The waves a moment backward bent—
The hills that shake, although unrent,
As if an earthquake pass'd—
The thousand shapeless things all driven
In cloud and flame athwart the heaven,
By that tremendous blast—
Proclaim'd the desperate conflict o'er
On that too long afflicted shore:²
Up to the sky like rockets go
All that mingled there below:
Many a tall and goodly man,
Scorch'd and shrivell'd to a span,
When he fell to earth again
Like a cinder strew'd the plain:
Down the ashes shower like rain;
Some fell in the gulf, which received the sprinkles
With a thousand circling wrinkles;
Some fell on the shore, but, far away,
Scatter'd o'er the isthmus lay;
Christian or Moslem, which be they?
Let their mothers see and say!
When in cradled rest they lay,
And each nursing mother smiled
On the sweet sleep of her child,

² [Strike out from "Up to the sky," &c. to "All blacken'd
there and reeking lay." Despicable stuff.—GIF-
FORD.]

Little deem'd she such a day
Would rend those tender limbs away.
Not the matrons that them bore
Could discern their offspring more;
That one moment left no trace
More of human form or face
Save a scatter'd scalp or bone:
And down came blazing rafters, strown
Around, and many a falling stone,
Deeply dinted in the clay,
All blacken'd there and reeking lay.
All the living things that heard
That deadly earth-shock disappear'd:
The wild birds flew; the wild dogs fled,
And howling left the unburied dead;¹
The camels from their keepers broke;
The distant steer forsook the yoke—

The nearer steed plunged o'er the plain,
And burst his girth, and tore his rein;
The bull-frog's note, from out the marsh,
Deep-mouth'd arose, and doubly harsh;
The wolves yell'd on the cavern'd hill
Where echo roll'd in thunder still;
The jackal's troop, in gather'd cry,²
Bay'd from afar complainingly,
With a mix'd and mournful sound,
Like crying babe, and beaten hound:³
With sudden wing, and ruffled breast,
The eagle left his rocky nest,
And mounted nearer to the sun,
The clouds beneath him seem'd so dun;
Their smoke assail'd his startled beak,
And made him higher soar and shriek—
Thus was Corinth lost and won!⁴

Parisina.⁵

TO

SCROPE BERDMORE DAVIES, ESQ.

THE FOLLOWING POEM IS INSCRIBED,

BY ONE WHO HAS LONG ADMIR'D HIS TALENTS AND VALU'D HIS FRIENDSHIP.

January 22, 1816.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following poem is grounded on a circumstance mentioned in Gibbon's "Antiquities of the House of Brunswick." I am aware, that in modern times the

¹ [Omit the next six lines.—GIF-
FORD.]

² I believe I have taken a poetical licence to transplant the jackal from Asia. In Greece I never saw nor heard these animals; but among the ruins of Ephesus I have heard them by hundreds. They haunt ruins and follow armies.

³ [Leave out this couplet.—GIF-
FORD.]

⁴ The "Siege of Corinth," though written, perhaps, with too visible an effect, and not very well harmonised in all its parts, cannot but be regarded as a magnificent composition. There is less misanthropy in it than in any of the rest; and the interest is made up of alternate representations of soft and solemn scenes and emotions, and of the tumult, and terrors, and intoxication of war. These opposite pictures are, perhaps, too violently contrasted, and, in some parts, too harshly coloured; but they are in general exquisitely designed, and executed with the utmost spirit and energy.—JEFFREY.]

⁵ [This poem, perhaps the most exquisitely versified one that ever the author produced, was written in London in the autumn of 1815, and published in February, 1816. Although the beauties of it were universally acknowledged, and fragments of its music ere long on every lip, the nature of the subject prevented it from being dwelt upon at much length in the critical journals of the time; most of which were content to record, generally, their regret that so great a poet should have permitted himself, by awakening sympathy for a pair of incestuous lovers, to become, in some sort, the apologist of their sin. An anonymous writer, in "Blackwood's Magazine," seems, however, to have suggested some particulars, in the execution of the story, which ought to be taken into consideration, before we rashly class Lord Byron with those poetical offenders, who have bent their powers "to divest incest of its hereditary horrors." "In Parisina," says this critic, "we are scarcely permitted to have a single glance at the guilt, before our attention is rivetted upon the punishment: we have scarcely had time to

delicacy or fastidiousness of the reader may deem such subjects unfit for the purposes of poetry. The Greek dramatists, and some of the best of our old English writers, were of a different opinion: as Alfieri and Schiller have also been, more recently,

condemn, within our own hearts, the sinning, though injured son, when—

'For a departing being's soul
The death-hymn peals and the hollow bells knoll:
He is near his mortal goal;
Kneeling at the Friar's knee;
Sad to hear—and piteous to see—
Kneeling on the bare cold ground,
With the block before and the guards around—
And the headman with his bare arm ready,
That the blow may be both swift and steady,
Feels if the axe be sharp and true—
Since he set its edge anew:
While the crowd in a speechless circle gather
To see the Son fall by the doom of the Father!

The fatal guilt of the Princess is in like manner swallowed up in the dreary contemplation of her uncertain fate. We forbear to think of her as an adulteress, after we have heard that "horrid voice" which is sent up to heaven at the death of her paramour—

'Whatsoe'er its end below,
Her life began and closed in woe.'

"Not only has Lord Byron avoided all the details of this unhallowed love, he has also contrived to mingle in the very incest which he condemns the idea of retribution; and our horror for the sin of Hugo is diminished by our belief that it was brought about by some strange and super-human fatalism, to revenge the ruin of Bianca. That gloom of righteous visitation, which invests, in the old Greek tragedies, the fated house of Atreus, seems here to impend with some portion of its ancient horror over the line of Esté. We hear, in the language of Hugo, the voice of the same prophetic solemnity which announced to Agamemnon, in the very moment of his triumph, the approaching and inevitable darkness of his fate:—