

A small green isle, it seem'd no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,
But in it there were three tall trees,
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing,
Of gentle breath and hue.
The fish swam by the castle wall,
And they seem'd joyous each and all;
The eagle rode the rising blast,
Methought he never flew so fast
As then to me he seem'd to fly,
And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled—and would fain
I had not left my recent chain;
And when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode
Fell on me as a heavy load;
It was as is a new-dug grave,
Closing o'er one we sought to save,—
And yet my glance, too much oppress'd,
Had almost need of such a rest.

XIV.

It might be months, or years, or days,
I kept no count—I took no note,

I had no hope my eyes to raise,
And clear them of their dreary mote;
At last men came to set me free,
I ask'd not why, and reck'd not where,
It was at length the same to me,
Fetter'd or fetterless to be,
I learn'd to love despair.
And thus when they appear'd at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,
These heavy walls to me had grown
A hermitage—and all my own!
And half I felt as they were come
To tear me from a second home:
With spiders I had friendship made,
And watch'd them in their sullen trade,
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,
And why should I feel less than they?
We were all inmates of one place,
And I, the monarch of each race,
Had power to kill—yet, strange to tell!
In quiet we had learn'd to dwell—¹
My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us what we are:—even I
Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.²

Beppo:

A VENETIAN STORY.

Rosalind. Farewell, Monsieur Traveller: Look, you lisp, and wear strange suits: disable all the benefits of your own country; be out of love with your Nativity, and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are; or I will scarce think that you have swam in a *Gondola*.
As You Like It, Act IV. Sc. 1.

Annotation of the Commentators.

That is, been at *Venice*, which was much visited by the young English gentlemen of those times, and was then what *Paris* is now—the seat of all dissoluteness.
S. A. ³

[*Beppo* was written at Venice, in October, 1817, and acquired great popularity immediately on its publication in the May of the following year. Lord Byron's letters show that he attached very little importance to it at the time. He was not aware that he had

opened a new vein, in which his genius was destined to work out some of its brightest triumphs. "I have written," he says to Mr. Murray, "a poem humorous, in or after the excellent manner of Mr. Whistlecraft, and founded on a Venetian anecdote which

deafened and astounded by the sudden exchange of the silence of a dungeon for the busy hum of men, the wretches sit more like rude images fashioned to a fantastic imitation of humanity, than like living and reflecting beings. In the course of time we are assured they generally become either madmen or idiots, as mind or matter happens to predominate, when the mysterious balance between them is destroyed. It will readily be allowed that this singular poem is more powerful than pleasing. The dungeon of Bonnivard, is like that of Ugolino, a subject too dismal for even the power of the painter or poet to counteract its horrors. It is the more disagreeable as affording human hope no anchor to rest upon, and describing the sufferer, though a man of talents and virtues, as altogether inert and powerless under his accumulated sufferings: yet, as a picture, however gloomy the colouring, it may rival any which Lord Byron has drawn; nor is it possible to read it without a sinking of the heart, corresponding with that which he describes the victim to have suffered.—SIR WALTER SCOTT.]

³ ["Although I was only nine days at Venice, I saw, in that little time, more liberty to sin, than ever I heard tell of in the city of London in nine years."—*Roger Ascham*.]

¹ [Here follow in MS.—

"Nor slew I of my subjects one—
What sovereign { hath so little } hath done?"

² [It has not been the purpose of Lord Byron to paint the peculiar character of Bonnivard. The object of the poem, like that of Sterne's celebrated sketch of the prisoner, is to consider captivity in the abstract, and to mark its effects in gradually chilling the mental powers as it benumbs and freezes the animal frame, until the unfortunate victim becomes, as it were, a part of his dungeon, and identified with his chains. This transmutation we believe to be founded on fact: at least, in the Low Countries, where solitude for life is substituted for capital punishments, something like it may be witnessed. On particular days in the course of the year, these victims of a jurisprudence which calls itself humane, are presented to the public eye, upon a stage erected in the open market-place, apparently to prevent their guilt and their punishment from being forgotten. It is scarcely possible to witness a sight more degrading to humanity than this exhibition: with matted hair, wild looks, and haggard features, with eyes dazzled by the unwonted light of the sun, and ears

amused me. It is called *Beppo*—the short name for Giuseppe,—that is, the *Joe* of the Italian Joseph. It has politics and ferocity." Again—"Whistlecraft is my immediate model, but Berni is the father of that kind of writing; which, I think, suits our language, too, very well. We shall see by this experiment. It will, at any rate, show that I can write cheerfully, and repel the charge of monotony and mannerism." He wished Mr. Murray to accept of *Beppo* as a free gift, or, as he chose to express it, "as part of the contract for Canto Fourth of *Childe Harold*;" adding, however,—“if it pleases, you shall have more in the same mood; for I know the Italian way of life, and, as for the *verse* and the *passions*, I have them still in tolerable vigour.”

The Right Honourable John Hookham Frere has, then, by Lord Byron's confession, the merit of having first introduced the *Bernesque* style into our language; but his performance, entitled "Prospectus and Specimen of an intended National Work, by William and Robert Whistlecraft, of Stowmarket, in Suffolk, Harness and Collar Makers, intended to comprise the most interesting Particulars relating to King Arthur and his Round Table," though it delighted all elegant and learned readers, obtained at the time little notice from the public at large, and is already almost forgotten. For the causes of this failure, about which Mr. Rose and others have written at some length, it appears needless to look further than the last sentence we have been quoting from the letters of the author of the more successful *Beppo*. Whistlecraft had the *verse*: it had also the humour, the wit, and even the poetry of the Italian model; but it wanted the life of actual manners, and the strength of stirring passions. Mr. Frere had forgot, or was, with all his genius, unfit to profit by remembering, that the poets, whose style he was adopting, always made their style *appear* a secondary matter. They never failed to embroider their merit on the texture of a really interesting story. Lord Byron perceived this; and avoiding his immediate master's one fatal error, and at least equalling him in the excellencies which he did display, engaged at once the sympathy of readers of every class, and became substantially the founder of a new species of English poetry.

In justice to Mr. Frere, however, whose "Specimen" has long been out of print, we must take this opportunity of showing how completely, as to style and versification, he had anticipated *Beppo* and Don Juan. In the introductions to his cantos, and in various detached passages of mere description, he had produced precisely the sort of effect at which Lord Byron aimed in what we may call the secondary, or merely ornamental, parts of his Comic Epic. For example, this is the beginning of Whistlecraft's first canto:—

"I've often wish'd that I could write a book,
Such as all English people might peruse;
I never should regret the pains it took,
That's just the sort of fame that I should choose:
To sail about the world like Captain Cook,
I'd sling a cot up for my favourite Muse,
And we'd take verses out to Demarara,
To New South Wales, and up to Niagara.

"Poets consume exciseable commodities,
They raise the nation's spirit when victorious,
They drive an export trade in whims and oddities,
Making our commerce and revenue glorious;

As an industrious and pains-taking body 't is
That Poets should be reckon'd meritorious:
And therefore I submissively propose
To erect one Board for Verse and one for Prose.

"Princes protecting Sciences and Art
I've often seen, in copper-plate and print;
I never saw them elsewhere, for my part,
And therefore I conclude there's nothing in 't:
But every body knows the Regent's heart;
I trust he won't reject a well-meant hint;
Each Board to have twelve members, with a seat
To bring them in per ann. five hundred neat:—

"From Princes I descend to the Nobility:
In former times all persons of high stations,
Lords, Baronets, and Persons of gentility,
Paid twenty guineas for the dedications:
This practice was attended with utility:
The patrons lived to future generations,
The poets lived by their industrious earning,—
So men alive and dead could live by Learning.

"Then, twenty guineas was a little fortune;
Now, we must starve unless the times should mend:
Our poets now-a-days are deem'd importune
If their addresses are diffusely penn'd;
Most fashionable authors make a short one
To their own wife, or child, or private friend,
To show their independence, I suppose;
And that may do for Gentlemen like those.

"Lastly, the common people I beseech—
Dear People! if you think my verses clever,
Preserve with care your noble parts of speech,
And take it as a maxim to endeavour
To talk as your good mothers used to teach,
And then these lines of mine may last for ever;
And don't confound the language of the nation
With long-tail'd words in *osity* and *ation*.

"I think that Poets (whether Whig or Tory)
(Whether they go to meeting or to church)
Should study to promote their country's glory
With patriotic, diligent research;
That children yet unborn may learn the story,
With grammars, dictionaries, canes, and birch:
It stands to reason—This was Homer's plan,
And we must do—like him—the best we can.

"Madoc and Marmion, and many more,
Are out in print, and most of them have sold;
Perhaps together they may make a score;
Richard the First has had his story told—
But there were Lords and Princes long before,
That had behaved themselves like warriors bold:
Amongst the rest there was the great KING ARTHUR,
What hero's fame was ever carried farther?"

The following description of King Arthur's Christmas at Carlisle is equally meritorious:—

"THE GREAT KING ARTHUR made a sumptuous Feast,
And held his Royal Christmas at Carlisle,
And thither came the Vassals, most and least,
From every corner of this British Isle;
And all were entertain'd, both man and beast,
According to their rank, in proper style;
The steeds were fed and litter'd in the stable,
The ladies and the knights sat down to table.

"The bill of fare (as you may well suppose)
Was suited to those plentiful old times,
Before our modern luxuries arose,
With truffles and ragouts, and various crimes;
And therefore, from the original in prose
I shall arrange the catalogue in rhymes:
They served up salmon, venison, and wild boars
By hundreds, and by dozens, and by scores.

"Hogsheads of honey, kilderkins of mustard,
Muttons, and fatted beeves, and bacon swine;
Herons and bitterns, peacock, swan and bustard,
Teal, mallard, pigeons, widgeons, and in fine
Plum-puddings, pancakes, apple-pies and custard:
And therewithal they drank good Gascon wine,
With mead, and ale, and cyder, of our own;
For porter, punch, and negus were not known.

"The noise and uproar of the scullery tribe,
All pilfering and scrambling in their calling,
Was past all powers of language to describe—
The din of manifold oaths and female squalling:
The sturdy porter, huddling up his bribe,
And then at random breaking heads and bawling,

Outcries, and cries of order, and contusions,
Made a confusion beyond all confusions ;

"Beggars and vagabonds, blind, lame, and sturdy,
Minstrels and singers with their various airs,
The pipe, the tabor, and the hurdy-gurdy,
Jugglers and mountebanks with apes and bears,
Continued from the first day to the third day,
An uproar like ten thousand Smithfield fairs ;
There were wild beasts and foreign birds and creatures,
And Jews and Foreigners with foreign features.

"All sorts of people there were seen together,
All sorts of characters, all sorts of dresses ;
The fool with fox's tail and peacock's feather,
Pilgrims, and penitents, and grave burgesses ;
The country people with their coats of leather,
Vintners and victuallers with cans and messes ;
Grooms, archers, varlets, falconers and yeomen,
Damsels and waiting-maids, and waiting-women.

"But the profane, indelicate amours,
The vulgar, unenlighten'd conversation
Of minstrels, menials, courtezans, and boors,
(Although appropriate to their meaner station)
Would certainly revolt a taste like yours ;
Therefore I shall omit the calculation
Of all the curses, oaths, and cuts, and stabs,
Occasion'd by their dice, and drink, and drabs.

"We must take care in our poetic cruise,
And never hold a single tack too long ;
Therefore my versatile, ingenious Muse,
Takes leave of this illiterate, low-bred throng,
Intending to present superior views,
Which to genteeler company belong,
And show the higher orders of society
Behaving with politeness and propriety.

"And certainly they say, for fine behaving
King Arthur's Court has never had its match ;
True point of honour, without pride or braving,
Strict etiquette for ever on the watch :
Their manners were refined and perfect—saving
Some modern graces, which they could not catch,
As spitting through the teeth, and driving stages,
Accomplishments reserved for distant ages.

"They look'd a manly, generous generation ;
Beards, shoulders, eyebrows, broad, and square, and thick,
Their accents firm and loud in conversation,
Their eyes and gestures eager, sharp, and quick,
Showed them prepared, on proper provocation,
To give the lie, pull noses, stab, and kick ;
And for that very reason, it is said,
They were so very courteous and well-bred.

"The ladies look'd of an heroic race—
At first a general likeness struck your eye,
Tall figures, open features, oval face,
Large eyes, with ample eyebrows arch'd and high ;
Their manners had an odd, peculiar grace,
Neither repulsive, affable, nor shy,
Majestical, reserved, and somewhat sullen ;
Their dresses partly silk and partly woollen."

The little snatches of critical *quizzing* introduced
in Whistlecraft are perfect in their way. Take, for
example, this good-humoured parody on one of the
most magnificent passages in Wordsworth :—

"In castles and in courts Ambition dwells,
But not in castles or in courts alone ;
She breathed a wish, throughout those sacred cells,
For bells of larger size, and louder tone ;
Giants abominate the sound of bells,
And soon the fierce antipathy was shown,
The tinkling and the jingling, and the clangor,
Roused their irrational, gigantic anger.

"Unhappy mortals ! ever blind to fate !
Unhappy Monks ! you see no danger nigh ;
Exulting in their sound, and size, and weight,
From morn till noon the merry peal you ply :
The belfry rocks, your bosoms are elate,
Your spirits with the ropes and pulleys fly ;
Tired, but transported, panting, pulling, hauling,
Ramping and stamping, overjoy'd and bawling.

"Meanwhile the solemn mountains that surrounded
The silent valley where the convent lay,
With tintinnabular uproar were astounded,
When the first peal burst forth at break of day :

Feeling their granite ears severely wounded,
They scarce knew what to think, or what to say ;
And (though large mountains commonly conceal
Their sentiments, dissembling what they feel,

"Yet) Cader-Gibbrish from his cloudy throne
To huge Loblommon gave an intimation
Of this strange rumour, with an awful tone,
Thund'ring his deep surprise and indignation ;
The lesser hills, in language of their own,
Discuss'd the topic by reverberation ;
Discoursing with their echoes all day long,
Their only conversation was, 'ding-dong.'"

Mr. Rose has a very elegant essay on Whistlecraft,
in his "Thoughts and Recollections by One of the
last Century," which thus concludes :—

"Beppo, which had a story, and which pointed but one
way, met with signal and universal success ; while 'The
Monks and the Giants' have been little appreciated, by the
majority of readers. Yet those who will only laugh upon a
sufficient warrant, may, on analysing this bravura-poem, find
legitimate matter for their mirth. The want of meaning
certainly cannot be objected to it, with reason ; for it contains
a deep substratum of sense, and does not exhibit a character
which has not, or might not, have its parallel in nature. I
remember at the time this poem was published, (which was,
when the French monarchy seemed endangered by the vacil-
lating conduct of Louis XVIII., who, under the guidance of
successive ministers, was trimming between the loyalists and
the liberals, apparently thinking that civility and conciliation
was a remedy for all evils,) a friend dared me to prove my
assertion ; and, by way of a text, referred me to the character
of the crippled abbot, under whose direction,

'The convent was all going to the devil,
While he, poor creature, thought himself beloved
For saying handsome things, and being civil,
Wheeling about as he was pull'd and shoved.'

"The obvious application of this was made by me to
Louis XVIII. ; and if it was not the intention of the author
to designate him in particular, the applicability of the passage
to the then state of France, and her ruler, shows, at least, the
intrinsic truth of the description. Take, in the same way,
the character of Sir Tristram, and we shall find its elements,
if not in one, in different living persons.

'Songs, music, languages, and many a lay
Asturian, or Armoric, Irish, Basque,
His ready memory seized and bore away ;
And ever when the ladies chose to ask,
Sir Tristram was prepared to sing and play,
Not like a minstrel, earnest at his task,
But with a sportive, careless, easy style,
As if he seem'd to mock himself the while.

'His ready wit, and rambling education,
With the congenial influence of his stars,
Had taught him all the arts of conversation,
All games of skill, and stratagems of wars ;
His birth, it seems, by Merlin's calculation,
Was under Venus, Mercury, and Mars ;
His mind with all their attributes was mix'd,
And, like those planets, wand'ring and unfix'd.'

"Who can read this description, without recognising in it
the portraits (flattering portraits, perhaps) of two military
characters well known in society ?"

The reader will find a copious criticism on Whistle-
craft, from the pen of Ugo Foscolo, in the Quarterly
Review, vol. xxi.]

Beppo.

I.

'T is known, at least it should be, that throughout
All countries of the Catholie persuasion,
Some weeks before Shrove Tuesday comes about,
The people take their fill of recreation,

And buy repentance, ere they grow devout,
However high their rank, or low their station,
With fiddling, feasting, dancing, drinking, masquing,
And other things which may be had for asking.

II.

The moment night with dusky mantle covers
The skies (and the more duskily the better),
The time less liked by husbands than by lovers
Begins, and prudery flings aside her fetter ;
And gaily on restless tiptoe hovers,
Giggling with all the gallants who beset her ;
And there are songs and quavers, roaring, humming,
Guitars, and every other sort of strumming.

III.

And there are dresses splendid, but fantastical,
Masks of all times and nations, Turks and Jews,
And harlequins and clowns, with feats gymnastical,
Greeks, Romans, Yankee-doodles, and Hindoos ;
All kinds of dress, except the ecclesiastical,
All people, as their fancies hit, may choose,
But no one in these parts may quiz the clergy,—
Therefore take heed, ye Freethinkers ! I charge ye.

IV.

'You'd better walk about begirt with briars,
Instead of coat and smallclothes, than put on
A single stitch reflecting upon friars,
Although you swore it only was in fun ;
They'd haul you o'er the coals, and stir the fires
Of Phlegethon with every mother's son,
Nor say one mass to cool the caldron's bubble
That boil'd your bones, unless you paid them double.

V.

But saving this, you may put on whate'er
You like by way of doublet, cape, or cloak,
Such as in Monmouth-street, or in Rag Fair,
Would rig you out in seriousness or joke ;
And even in Italy such places are,
With prettier name in softer accents spoke,
For, bating Covent Garden, I can hit on
No place that's call'd "Piazza" in Great Britain. ¹

VI.

This feast is named the Carnival², which being
Interpreted, implies "farewell to flesh."
So call'd, because the name and thing agreeing,
Through Lent they live on fish both salt and fresh.

¹ ["For, bating Covent Garden, I can't hit on
A place," &c.—MS.]

² ["The Carnival," says Mr. Rose, "though it is gayer or
duller, according to the genius of the nations which celebrate
it, is, in its general character, nearly the same all over the
peninsula. The beginning is like any other season ; towards
the middle you begin to meet masques and mummers in sun-
shine ; in the last fifteen days the plot thickens ; and during
the three last all is hurly-burly. But to paint these, which
may be almost considered as a separate festival, I must avail
myself of the words of Messrs. William and Thomas Whistle-
craft, in whose 'Prospectus and Specimen of an intended
National Work' I find the description ready made to my
hand, observing that, besides the ordinary dramatis per-
sonae,—

'Beggars and vagabonds, blind, lame, and sturdy,
Minstrels and singers, with their various airs,
The pipe, the tabor, and the hurdy-gurdy,
Jugglers and mountebanks, with apes and bears,
Continue, from the first day to the third day,
An uproar like ten thousand Smithfield fairs'—

But why they usher Lent with so much glee in,
Is more than I can tell, although I guess
'T is as we take a glass with friends at parting,
In the stage-coach or packet, just at starting.

VII.

And thus they bid farewell to carnal dishes,
And solid meats, and highly spiced ragouts,
To live for forty days on ill-dress'd fishes,
Because they have no sauces to their stew,
A thing which causes many "poohs" and "pishes,"
And several oaths (which would not suit the Muse),
From travellers accustom'd from a boy
To eat their salmon, at the least, with soy ;

VIII.

And therefore humbly I would recommend
"The curious in fish-sauce," before they cross
The sea, to bid their cook, or wife, or friend,
Walk or ride to the Strand, and buy in gross
(Or if set out beforehand, these may send
By any means least liable to loss),
Ketchup, Soy, Chili-vinegar, and Harvey,
Or, by the Lord ! a Lent will well nigh starve ye ;

IX.

That is to say, if your religion's Roman,
And you at Rome would do as Romans do,
According to the proverb,—although no man,
If foreign, is obliged to fast ; and you,
If Protestant, or sickly, or a woman,
Would rather dine in sin on a ragout—
Dine and be d—d ! I don't mean to be coarse,
But that's the penalty, to say no worse.

X.

Of all the places where the Carnival
Was most facetious in the days of yore,
For dance, and song, and serenade, and ball,
And masque, and mime, and mystery, and more
Than I have time to tell now, or at all,
Venice the bell from every city bore,—
And at the moment when I fix my story,
That sea-born city was in all her glory.

XI.

They've pretty faces yet, those same Venetians,
Black eyes, arch'd brows, and sweet expressions still ;
Such as of old were copied from the Grecians,
In ancient arts by moderns mimick'd ill ;
And like so many Venuses of Titian's
(The best's at Florence³—see it, if ye will,)

the shops are shut, all business is at a stand, and the drunken
cries heard at night afford a clear proof of the pleasures to
which these days of leisure are dedicated. These holidays
may surely be reckoned amongst the secondary causes which
contribute to the indolence of the Italian, since they reconcile
this to his conscience, as being of religious institution. Now
there is, perhaps, no offence which is so unproportionably
punished by conscience as that of indolence. With the wicked
man, it is an intermittent disease ; with the idle man, it is
a chronic one."—Letters from the North of Italy, vol. ii,
p. 171.]

³ ["At Florence I remained but a day, having a hurry for
Rome. However, I went to the two galleries, from which
one returns drunk with beauty ; but there are sculpture and
painting, which, for the first time, gave me an idea of what
people mean by their *cant* about those two most artificial of
the arts. What struck me most were,—the mistress of Ra-
phael, a portrait ; the mistress of Titian, a portrait ; a Venus
of Titian, in the Medici gallery ; the Venus ; Canova's Venus,
also in the other gallery," &c.—Byron Letters, 1817.]

L.

They look when leaning over the balcony,
Or stepp'd from out a picture by Giorgione,¹

XII.

Whose tints are truth and beauty at their best ;
And when you to Manfrini's palace go,²
That picture (howsoever fine the rest)
Is loveliest to my mind of all the show ;
It may perhaps be also to your zest,
And that's the cause I rhyme upon it so ;
'T is but a portrait of his son, and wife,
And self ; but such a woman ! love in life !³

XIII.

Love in full life and length, not love ideal,
No, nor ideal beauty, that fine name,
But something better still, so very real,
That the sweet model must have been the same ;
A thing that you would purchase, beg, or steal,
Wer't not impossible, besides a shame :
The face recalls some face, as 'twere with pain,
You once have seen, but ne'er will see again ;

XIV.

One of those forms which flit by us, when we
Are young, and fix our eyes on every face ;
And, oh ! the loveliness at times we see
In momentary gliding, the soft grace,
The youth, the bloom, the beauty which agree,
In many a nameless being we retrace,
Whose course and home we knew not, nor shall know,
Like the lost Pleiad⁴ seen no more below.

XV.

I said that like a picture by Giorgione
Venetian women were, and so they are,
Particularly seen from a balcony,
(For beauty's sometimes best set off afar)
And there, just like a heroine of Goldoni,
They peep from out the blind, or o'er the bar ;
And, truth to say, they're mostly very pretty,
And rather like to show it, more's the pity !

XVI.

For glances beget ogles, ogles sighs,
Sighs wishes, wishes words, and words a letter,

¹ ["I know nothing of pictures myself, and care almost as little ; but to me there are none like the Venetian — above all, Giorgione. I remember well his Judgment of Solomon, in the Mariscalchi gallery in Bologna. The real mother is beautiful, exquisitely beautiful." — *Byron Letters*, 1820.]

² [The following is Lord Byron's account of his visit to this palace, in April, 1817. — "To-day, I have been over the Manfrini palace, famous for its pictures. Amongst them, there is a portrait of Ariosto, by Titian, surpassing all my anticipation of the power of painting or human expression : it is the poetry of portrait, and the portrait of poetry. There was also one of some learned lady centuries old, whose name I forget, but whose features must always be remembered. I never saw greater beauty, or sweetness, or wisdom ; — it is the kind of face to go mad for, because it cannot walk out of its frame. There is also a famous dead Christ and live Apostles, for which Buonaparte offered in vain five thousand louis ; and of which, though it is a capo d'opera of Titian, as I am no connoisseur, I say little, and thought less, except of one figure in it. There are ten thousand others, and some very fine Giorgiones amongst them. There is an original Laura and Petrarch, very hideous both. Petrarch has not only the dress, but the features and air of an old woman ; and Laura looks by no means like a young one, or a pretty one. What struck most in the general collection, was the extreme resemblance of the style of the female faces to the mass of pictures, so meet every day among the existing Italians. The Queen of Cyprus and Giorgione's wife, particularly the latter, are Venetians as it were of yesterday ; the same eyes and expression, and, to my mind, there is none finer. You

Which flies on wings of light-heel'd Mercuries,
Who do such things because they know no better :
And then, God knows, what mischief may arise,
When love links two young people in one fetter,
Vile assignations, and adulterous beds,
Elopements, broken vows, and hearts, and heads.

XVII.

Shakspeare described the sex in Desdemona
As very fair, but yet suspect in fame,⁵
And to this day from Venice to Verona
Such matters may be probably the same,
Except that since those times was never known a
Husband whom mere suspicion could inflame
To suffocate a wife no more than twenty,
Because she had a "cavalier servente."

XVIII.

Their jealousy (if they are ever jealous)
Is of a fair complexion altogether,
Not like that sooty devil of Othello's
Which smothers women in a bed of feather,
But worthier of these much more jolly fellows,
When weary of the matrimonial tether
His head for such a wife no mortal bothers,
But takes at once another, or another's.⁶

XIX.

Didst ever see a Gondola ? For fear
You should not, I'll describe it you exactly :
'T is a long cover'd boat that's common here,
Carved at the prow, built lightly, but compactly,
Row'd by two rowers, each call'd "Gondolier,"
It glides along the water looking blackly,
Just like a coffin clapt in a canoe,
Where none can make out what you say or do.

XX.

And up and down the long canals they go,
And under the Rialto⁷ shoot along,
By night and day, all paces, swift or slow,
And round the theatres, a sable throng,
They wait in their dusk livery of woe, —
But not to them do woeful things belong,
For sometimes they contain a deal of fun,
Like mourning coaches when the funeral's done.

must recollect, however, that I know nothing of painting, and that I detest it, unless it reminds me of something I have seen, or think it possible to see."

³ [This appears to be an incorrect description of the picture ; as, according to Vasari and others, Giorgione never was married, and died young.]

⁴ "Quæ septem dici sex tamen esse solent." — OVID.

⁵ ["Look to 't :
In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands ; their best conscience
Is — not to leave undone, but keep unknown." — *Othello*.]

⁶ ["Jealousy is not the order of the day in Venice, and daggers are out of fashion, while duels on love matters are unknown — at least, with the husbands." — *Byron Letters*.]

⁷ [An English abbreviation. Rialto is the name, not of the bridge, but of the island from which it is called ; and the Venetians say, il ponte di Rialto, as we say Westminster Bridge. In that island is the Exchange ; and I have often walked there as on classic ground. In the days of Antonio and Bassanio it was second to none. "I sotto portichi," says Sansovino, writing in 1580, "sono ogni giorno frequentati da i mercatanti Fiorentini, Genovesi, Milanesi, Spagnuoli, Turchi, e d'altre nazioni diverse del mondo, i quali vi concorrono in tanta copia, che questa piazza è annoverata fra le prime dell'universo." It was there that the Christian held discourse with the Jew ; and Shylock refers to it, when he says,
"Signor Antonio, many a time and oft,
In the Rialto, you have rated me."

"Andiamo à Rialto" — "l'ora di Rialto" — were on every tongue ; and continue so to the present day. — ROGERS.]

XXI.

But to my story. — 'T was some years ago,
It may be thirty, forty, more or less,
The carnival was at its height, and so
Were all kinds of buffoonery and dress ;
A certain lady went to see the show,
Her real name I know not, nor can guess,
And so we'll call her Laura, if you please,
Because it slips into my verse with ease.

XXII.

She was not old, nor young, nor at the years
Which certain people call a "certain age,"
Which yet the most uncertain age appears,
Because I never heard, nor could engage
A person yet by prayers, or bribes, or tears,
To name, define by speech, or write on page,
The period meant precisely by that word, —
Which surely is exceedingly absurd.

XXIII.

Laura was blooming still, had made the best
Of time, and time return'd the compliment,
And treated her genteelly, so that, dress'd,
She look'd extremely well where'er she went ;
A pretty woman is a welcome guest,
And Laura's brow a frown had rarely bent ;
Indeed she shone all smiles, and seem'd to flatter
Mankind with her black eyes for looking at her.

XXIV.

She was a married woman ; 't is convenient,
Because in Christian countries 't is a rule
To view their little slips with eyes more lenient ;
Whereas, if single ladies play the fool,
(Unless within the period intervenient
A well-timed wedding makes the scandal cool)
I don't know how they ever can get over it,
Except they manage never to discover it.

XXV.

Her husband sail'd upon the Adriatic,
And made some voyages, too, in other seas,
And when he lay in quarantine for pratique
(A forty days' precaution 'gainst disease),
His wife would mount, at times, her highest attic,
For thence she could discern the ship with ease :
He was a merchant trading to Aleppo,
His name Giuseppe, call'd more briefly, Beppo.

XXVI.

He was a man as dusky as a Spaniard,
Sunburnt with travel, yet a portly figure ;
Though colour'd, as it were, within a tanyard,
He was a person both of sense and vigour —
A better seaman never yet did man yard :
And she, although her manners show'd no rigour,
Was deem'd a woman of the strictest principle,
So much as to be thought almost invincible.¹

¹ ["The general state of morals here is much the same as in the Doges' time ; a woman is virtuous (according to the code) who limits herself to her husband and one lover ; those who have two, three, or more, are a little wild ; but it is only those who are indiscriminately diffuse, and form a low connection, who are considered as overstepping the modesty of marriage. There is no convincing a woman here, that she is in the

XXVII.

But several years elapsed since they had met ;
Some people thought the ship was lost, and some
That he had somehow blunder'd into debt,
And did not like the thoughts of steering home ;
And there were several offer'd any bet,
Or that he would, or that he would not come,
For most men (fill by losing render'd sager)
Will back their own opinions with a wager.

XXVIII.

'T is said that their last parting was pathetic,
As partings often are, or ought to be,
And their presentiment was quite prophetic
That they should never more each other see,
(A sort of morbid feeling, half poetic,
Which I have known occur in two or three,)
When kneeling on the shore upon her sad knee,
He left this Adriatic Ariadne.

XXIX.

And Laura waited long, and wept a little,
And thought of wearing weeds, as well she might ;
She almost lost all appetite for victual,
And could not sleep with ease alone at night ;
She deem'd the window-frames and shutters brittle
Against a daring housebreaker or sprite,
And so she thought it prudent to connect her
With a vice-husband, chiefly to protect her.

XXX.

She chose, (and what is there they will not choose,
If only you will but oppose their choice ?)
Till Beppo should return from his long cruise,
And bid once more her faithful heart rejoice,
A man some women like, and yet abuse —
A coxcomb was he by the public voice ;
A Count of wealth, they said, as well as quality,
And in his pleasures of great liberality.²

XXXI.

And then he was a Count, and then he knew
Music, and dancing, fiddling, French and Tuscan ;
The last not easy, be it known to you,
For few Italians speak the right Etruscan.
He was a critic upon operas, too,
And knew all niceties of the sock and buskin ;
And no Venetian audience could endure a
Song, scene, or air, when he cried "seccatura !"

XXXII.

His "bravo" was decisive, for that sound
Hush'd "Academie" sigh'd in silent awe ;
The fiddlers trembled as he look'd around,
For fear of some false note's detected flaw.
The "prima donna's" tuneful heart would bound,
Dreading the deep damnation of his "bah !"
Soprano, basso, even the contra-alto,
Wish'd him five fathom under the Rialto.

smallest degree deviating from the rule of right or the fitness of things, in having an *amoroso*. The great sin seems to lie in concealing it, or having more than one ; that is, unless such an extension of the prerogative is understood and approved of by the prior claimant." — *Byron Letters*, 1817.]

² ["A Count of wealth inferior to his quality,
Which somewhat limited his liberality." — MS.]