

A SPIRIT PASS'D BEFORE ME.

FROM JOB.

A SPIRIT pass'd before me : I beheld
The face of immortality unvell'd—
Deep sleep came down on every eye save mine—
And there it stood, — all formless — but divine :

Along my bones the creeping flesh did quake ;
And as my damp hair stiffen'd, thus it spake :

" Is man more just than God ? Is man more pure
Than he who deems even Seraphs insecure ?
Creatures of clay — vain dwellers in the dust !
The moth survives you, and are ye more just ?
Things of a day ! you wither ere the night,
Heedless and blind to Wisdom's wasted light !"¹

Domestic Pieces. — 1816.

FARE THEE WELL.²

" Alas ! they have been friends in youth ;
But whispering tongues can poison truth ;
And constancy lives in realms above ;
And life is thorny ; and youth is vain :
And to be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain ;

But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining—
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs, which had been rent asunder ;
A dreary sea now flows between,
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been."³

COLERIDGE'S *Christabel*.

FARE thee well ! and if for ever,
Still for ever, fare thee well :
Even though unforgiving, never
'Gainst thee shall my heart rebel.

Would that breast were bared before thee
Where thy head so oft hath lain,
While that placid sleep came o'er thee
Which thou ne'er canst know again :

Would that breast, by thee glanced over,
Every inmost thought could show !
Then thou wouldst at last discover
'T was not well to spurn it so.

Though the world for this commend thee —
Though it smile upon the blow,
Even its praises must offend thee,
Founded on another's woe :

Though my many faults defaced me,
Could no other arm be found,
Than the one which once embraced me,
To inflict a cureless wound ?

¹ [The Hebrew Melodies, though obviously inferior to Lord Byron's other works, display a skill in versification and a mastery in diction, which would have raised an inferior artist to the very summit of distinction. — JEFFREY.]

² [It was about the middle of April that his two celebrated copies of verses, "Fare thee well," and "A Sketch," made their appearance in the newspapers; and while the latter poem was generally, and it must be owned, justly condemned, as a sort of literary assault on an obscure female, whose situation ought to have placed her as much beneath his satire, as the undignified mode of his attack certainly raised her above it, with regard to the other poem, opinions were a good deal more divided. To many it appeared a strain of true conjugal tenderness, — a kind of appeal which no woman with a heart could resist; while, by others, on the contrary, it was considered to be a mere showy effusion of sentiment, as difficult for real feeling to have produced as it was easy for fancy and art, and altogether unworthy of the deep interests involved in

the subject. To this latter opinion I confess my own to have, at first, strongly inclined; and suspicious as I could not help thinking the sentiment that could, at such a moment, indulge in such verses, the taste that prompted or sanctioned their publication appeared to me even still more questionable. On reading, however, his own account of all the circumstances in the Memoranda, I found that on both points I had, in common with a large portion of the public, done him injustice. He there described, and in a manner whose sincerity there was no doubting, the swell of tender recollections under the influence of which, as he sat one night musing in his study, these stanzas were produced, — the tears, as he said, falling fast over the paper as he wrote them. Neither did it appear, from that account, to have been from any wish or intention of his own, but through the injudicious zeal of a friend whom he had suffered to take a copy, that the verses met the public eye. — MOORE. The appearance of the MS. confirms this account of the circumstances under which it was written. It is blotted all over with the marks of tears.]

Yet, oh yet, thyself deceive not ;
Love may sink by slow decay,
But by sudden wrench, believe not
Hearts can thus be torn away :

Still thine own life retaineth —
Still must mine, though bleeding, beat ;
And the undying thought which paineth
Is — that we no more may meet.

These are words of deeper sorrow
Than the wall above the dead ;
Both shall live, but every morrow
Wake us from a widow'd bed.

And when thou wouldst solace gather,
When our child's first accents flow,
Wilt thou teach her to say "Father !" —
Though his care she must forego ?

When her little hands shall press thee,
When her lip to thine is press'd,
Think of him whose prayer shall bless thee,
Think of him thy love had bless'd !

Should her lineaments resemble
Those thou never more may'st see,
Then thy heart will softly tremble
With a pulse yet true to me.

All my faults perchance thou knowest,
All my madness none can know ;
All my hopes, where'er thou goest,
Wither, yet with thee they go.

Every feeling hath been shaken ;
Pride, which not a world could bow,
Bows to thee — by thee forsaken,
Even my soul forsakes me now :

But 'tis done — all words are idle —
Words from me are vainer still ;
But the thoughts we cannot bridle
Force their way without the will. —
Fare thee well ! — thus disunited,
Torn from every nearer tie,
Sear'd in heart, and lone, and blighted,
More than this I scarce can die.

March 17. 1816.

A SKETCH.¹

" Honest — honest Iago !
If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee."²

SHAKESPEARE.

BORN in the garret, in the kitchen bred,
Promoted thence to deck her mistress' head ;
Next — for some gracious service unexpress'd,
And from its wages only to be guess'd —
Raised from the toilet to the table, — where
Her wondering betters wait behind her chair.
With eye unmoved, and forehead unabash'd,
She dines from off the plate she lately wash'd.
Quick with the tale, and ready with the lie —
The genial confidante, and general spy —
Who could, ye gods ! her next employment guess —
An only infant's earliest governess !
She taught the child to read, and taught so well,
That she herself, by teaching, learn'd to spell.
An adept next in penmanship she grows,
As many a nameless slander deftly shows :
What she had made the pupil of her art,
None know — but that high Soul secured the heart,
And panted for the truth it could not hear,
With longing breast and undeluded ear.
Foil'd was perversion by that youthful mind,
Which Flattery fool'd not — Baseness could not blind,
Deceit infect not — near Contagion soil —
Indulgence weaken — nor Example spoil —
Nor master'd Science tempt her to look down
On humbler talents with a pitying frown —
Nor Genius swell — nor Beauty render vain —
Nor Envy ruffle to retaliate pain —
Nor Fortune change — Pride raise — nor Passion bow,
Nor Virtue teach austerity — till now.
Serenely purest of her sex that live,
But wanting one sweet weakness — to forgive,
Too shock'd at faults her soul can never know,
She deems that all could be like her below :
Foe to all vice, yet hardly Virtue's friend,
For Virtue pardons those she would amend.

But to the theme : — now laid aside too long,
The baleful burthen of this honest song —
Though all her former functions are no more,
She rules the circle which she served before.
If mothers — none know why — before her quake ;
If daughters dread her for the mothers' sake ;
If early habits — those false links, which bind
At times the loliest to the meanest mind —

¹ [I send you my last night's dream, and request to have fifty copies struck off, for private distribution. I wish Mr. Gifford to look at them. They are from life." — Lord Byron to Mr. Murray, March 30. 1816.]

² [In first draught — "weltering." — "I doubt about 'weltering.' We say 'weltering in blood;' but do not they also

Have given her power too deeply to instil
The angry essence of her deadly will ;
If like a snake she steal within your walls,
Till the black slime betray her as she crawls ;
If like a viper to the heart she wind,
And leave the venom there she did not find ;
What marvel that this hag of hatred works
Eternal evil latent as she lurks,
To make a Pandemonium where she dwells,
And reign the Hecate of domestic shells ?
Skill'd by a touch to deepen scandal's tints
With all the kind mendacity of hints, [smiles —
While mingling truth with falsehood — sneers with
A thread of candour with a web of wiles ;
A plain blunt show of briefly-spoken seeming,
To hide her bloodless heart's soul-harden'd scheming ;
A lip of lies — a face form'd to conceal ;
And, without feeling, mock at all who feel :
With a vile mask the Gorgon would disown ;
A cheek of parchment — and an eye of stone.
Mark, how the channels of her yellow blood
Ooze to her skin, and stagnate there to mud,
Cased like the centipede in saffron mail,
Or darker greenness of the scorpion's scale —
(For drawn from reptiles only may we trace
Congenial colours in that soul or face) —
Look on her features ! and behold her mind
As in a mirror of itself defined :
Look on the picture ! deem it not o'ercharged —
There is no trait which might not be enlarged :
Yet true to "Nature's journeymen," who made
This monster when their mistress left off trade —
This female dog-star of her little sky,
Where all beneath her influence droop or die.

Oh ! wretch without a tear — without a thought,
Save joy above the ruin thou hast wrought —
The time shall come, nor long remote, when thou
Shalt feel far more than thou inflict now ;
Feel for thy vile self-loving self in vain,
And turn thee howling in unpitied pain.
May the strong curse of crush'd affections light
Back on thy bosom with reflected blight !
And make thee in thy leprosy of mind
As loathsome to thyself as to mankind !
Till all thy self-thoughts curdle into hate,
Black — as thy will for others would create :
Till thy hard heart be calcined into dust,
And thy soul welter in its hideous crust.
Oh, may thy grave be sleepless as the bed, —
The widow'd couch of fire, that thou hast spread !
Then, when thou fain wouldst weary Heaven with
prayer,
Look on thine earthly victims — and despair !
Down to the dust ! — and, as thou rott'st away,
Even worms shall perish on thy poisonous clay.
But for the love I bore, and still must bear,
To her thy malice from all ties would tear —
Thy name — thy human name — to every eye
The climax of all scorn should hang on high,
Exalted o'er thy less abhor'd compeers —
And festering in the infamy of years.

March 29. 1816.

use 'weltering in the wind,' 'weltering on a gibbet?' I have no dictionary, so look. In the mean time, I have put 'festering;' which, perhaps, in any case is the best word of the two. Shakspeare has it often, and I do not think it too strong for the figure in this thing. Quick ! quick ! quick ! quick ! — Lord Byron to Mr. Murray, April 2.]

H h 3

STANZAS TO AUGUSTA.¹

WHEN all around grew drear and dark,
And reason half withheld her ray —
And hope but shed a dying spark
Which more misled my lonely way ;

In that deep midnight of the mind,
And that internal strife of heart,
When dreading to be deem'd too kind,
The weak despair — the cold depart ;

When fortune changed — and love fled far,
And hatred's shafts flew thick and fast,
Thou wert the solitary star
Which rose, and set not to the last.

Oh ! blest be thine unbroken light !
That watch'd me as a seraph's eye,
And stood between me and the night,
For ever shining sweetly nigh.

And when the cloud upon us came,
Which strove to blacken o'er thy ray —
Then purer spread its gentle flame,
And dash'd the darkness all away.

Still may thy spirit dwell on mine,
And teach it what to brave or brook —
There's more in one soft word of thine
Than in the world's defied rebuke.

Thou stood'st, as stands a lovely tree,
That still unbroke, though gently bent,
Still waves with fond fidelity
Its boughs above a monument.

The winds might rend — the skies might pour,
But there thou wert — and still wouldst be
Devoted in the stormiest hour
To shed thy weeping leaves o'er me.

But thou and thine shall know no blight,
Whatever fate on me may fall ;
For heaven in sunshine will requite
The kind — and thee the most of all.

Then let the ties of baffled love
Be broken — thine will never break ;
Thy heart can feel — but will not move ;
Thy soul, though soft, will never shake.

And these, when all was lost beside,
Were found and still are fix'd in thee ; —
And bearing still a breast so tried,
Earth is no desert — ev'n to me.

STANZAS TO AUGUSTA.²

THOUGH the day of my destiny's over,
And the star of my fate hath declined,³

¹ [The Poet's sister, the Honourable Mrs. Leigh. — These stanzas — the parting tribute to her, whose unshaken tenderness had been the author's sole consolation during the crisis of domestic misery — were, we believe, the last verses written by Lord Byron in England. In a note to Mr. Rogers, dated April 16th, he says, — "My sister is now with me, and leaves town to-morrow: we shall not meet again for some time at all events, — if ever! and, under these circumstances, I trust to stand excused to you and Mr. Sheridan, for being unable to wait upon him this evening." On the 25th, the Poet took a last leave of his native country.]

² [These beautiful verses, so expressive of the writer's wounded feelings at the moment, were written in July, at the Campagne Diodati, near Geneva, and transmitted to England for publication, with some other pieces. "Be careful," he

Thy soft heart refused to discover
The faults which so many could find ;
Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,
It shrunk not to share it with me,
And the love which my spirit hath painted
It never hath found but in thee.

Then when nature around me is smiling,
The last smile which answers to mine,
I do not believe it beguiling,
Because it reminds me of thine ;
And when winds are at war with the ocean,
As the breasts I believed in with me,
If their billows excite an emotion,
It is that they bear me from thee.

Though the rock of my last hope is shiver'd,
And its fragments are sunk in the wave,
Though I feel that my soul is deliver'd
To pain — it shall not be its slave.
There is many a pang to pursue me :
They may crush, but they shall not contemn —
They may torture, but shall not subdue me —
'Tis of thee that I think — not of them.⁴

Though human, thou didst not deceive me,
Though woman, thou didst not forsake,
Though loved, thou forborest to grieve me,
Though slander'd, thou never couldst shake,
Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,
Though parted, it was not to fly,
Though watchful, 'twas not to defame me,
Nor, mute, that the world might belie.⁵

Yet I blame not the world, nor despise it,
Nor the war of the many with one —
If my soul was not fitted to prize it,
'Twas folly not sooner to shun :
And if dearly that error hath cost me,
And more than I once could foresee,
I have found that, whatever it lost me,
It could not deprive me of thee.

From the wreck of the past, which hath perish'd,
Thus much I at least may recall,
It hath taught me that what I most cherish'd
Deserved to be dearest of all :
In the desert a fountain is springing,
In the wide waste there still is a tree,
And a bird in the solitude singing,
Which speaks to my spirit of thee.

July 24. 1816

EPISTLE TO AUGUSTA.⁶

My sister ! my sweet sister ! if a name
Dearer and purer were, it should be thine.
Mountains and seas divide us, but I claim
No tears, but tenderness to answer mine :

says, "in printing the stanzas beginning, 'Though the day of my destiny's, &c., which I think well of as a composition.'"

³ ["Though the days of my glory are over,
And the sun of my fame hath declined." — MS.]

⁴ ["There is many a pang to pursue me,
And many a peril to stem :
They may torture, but shall not subdue me ;
They may crush, but they shall not contemn." — MS.]

⁵ ["Though watchful, 'twas but to reclaim me,
Nor, silent, to sanction a lie." — MS.]

⁶ [These stanzas — "Than which," says the Quarterly Review, for January, 1831, "there is, perhaps, nothing more mournfully and desolately beautiful in the whole range of Lord Byron's poetry" — were also written at Diodati ; and

Go where I will, to me thou art the same —
A loved regret which I would not resign.
There yet are two things in my destiny, —
A world to roam through, and a home with thee.

The first were nothing — had I still the last,
It were the haven of my happiness ;
But other claims and other ties thou hast,
And mine is not the wish to make them less.
A strange doom is thy father's son's, and past
Recalling, as it lies beyond redress ;
Reversed for him our grandsire's¹ fate of yore, —
He had no rest at sea, nor I on shore.

If my inheritance of storms hath been
In other elements, and on the rocks
Of perils, overlook'd or unforeseen,
I have sustain'd my share of worldly shocks,
The fault was mine ; nor do I seek to screen
My errors with defensive paradox ;
I have been cunning in mine overthrow,
The careful pilot of my proper woe.

Mine were my faults, and mine be their reward,
My whole life was a contest, since the day
That gave me being, gave me that which marr'd
The gift, — a fate, or will, that walk'd astray ;
And I at times have found the struggle hard,
And thought of shaking off my bonds of clay :
But now I fain would for a time survive,
If but to see what next can well arrive.

Kingdoms and empires in my little day
I have outlived, and yet I am not old ;
And when I look on this, the petty spray
Of my own years of trouble, which have roll'd
Like a wild bay of breakers, melts away :
Something — I know not what — does still uphold
A spirit of slight patience ; — not in vain,
Even for its own sake, do we purchase pain.

Perhaps the workings of defiance stir
Within me, — or perhaps a cold despair,
Brought on when ills habitually recur, —
Perhaps a kinder clime, or purer air,
(For even to this may change of soul refer,
And with light armour we may learn to bear,)
Have taught me a strange quiet, which was not
The chief companion of a calmer lot.

I feel almost at times as I have felt
In happy childhood ; trees, and flowers, and brooks
Which do remember me of where I dwelt
Ere my young mind was sacrificed to books,
Come as of yore upon me, and can melt
My heart with recognition of their looks ;
And even at moments I could think I see
Some living thing to love — but none like thee.

sent home at the time for publication, in case Mrs. Leigh should sanction it. "There is," he says, "amongst the manuscripts an Epistle to my Sister, on which I should wish her opinion to be consulted before publication ; if she objects, of course omit it." On the 5th of October he writes, — "My sister has decided on the omission of the lines. Upon this point, her option will be followed. As I have no copy of them, I request that you will preserve one for me in MS. ; for I never can remember a line of that nor any other composition of mine. God help me ! if I proceed in this scribbling, I shall have frittered away my mind before I am thirty ; but poetry is at times a real relief to me. To-morrow I am for Italy." The Epistle was first given to the world in 1830.]

¹ [Admiral Byron was remarkable for never making a voyage without a tempest. He was known to the sailors by the facetious name of "Foul-weather Jack."

Here are the Alpine landscapes which create
A fund for contemplation ; — to admire
Is a brief feeling of a trivial date ;
But something worthier do such scenes inspire :
Here to be lonely is not desolate,
For much I view which I could most desire,
And, above all, a lake I can behold
Lovelier, not dearer, than our own of old.

Oh that thou wert but with me ! — but I grow
The fool of my own wishes, and forget
The solitude which I have vaunted so
Has lost its praise in this but one regret ;
There may be others which I less may show ; —
I am not of the plaintive mood, and yet
I feel an ebb in my philosophy,
And the tide rising in my alter'd eye.

I did remind thee of our own dear Lake,²
By the old Hall which may be mine no more.
Leman's is fair ; but think not I forsake
The sweet remembrance of a dearer shore :
Sad havoc Time must with my memory make,
Ere that or thou can fade these eyes before ;
Though, like all things which I have loved, they are
Resign'd for ever, or divided far.

The world is all before me ; I but ask
Of Nature that with which she will comply —
It is but in her summer's sun to bask,
To mingle with the quiet of her sky,
To see her gentle face without a mask,
And never gaze on it with apathy.
She was my early friend, and now shall be
My sister — till I look again on thee.

I can reduce all feelings but this one ;
And that I would not ; — for at length I see
Such scenes as those wherein my life begun.
The earliest — even the only paths for me —
Had I but sooner learnt the crowd to shun,
I had been better than I now can be ;
The passions which have torn me would have slept ;
I had not suffer'd, and thou hadst not wept.

With false Ambition what had I to do ?
Little with Love, and least of all with Fame ;
And yet they came unsought, and with me grew,
And made me all which they can make — a name.
Yet this was not the end I did pursue ;
Surely I once beheld a nobler aim.
But all is over — I am one the more
To baffled millions which have gone before.

And for the future, this world's future may
From me demand but little of my care ;
I have outlived myself by many a day ;
Having survived so many things that were ;

"But, though it were tempest-toss'd,
Still his bark could not be lost."

He returned safely from the wreck of the Wager (in Anson's voyage), and circumnavigated the world, many years after, as commander of a similar expedition.]

² The Lake of Newstead Abbey. [Thus described in Don Juan : —

"Before the mansion lay a lucid lake,
Broad as transparent, deep, and freshly fed
By a river, which its soften'd way did take
In currents through the calmer water spread
Around : the wild fowl nestled in the brake
And sedges, brooding in their liquid bed ;
The woods sloped downwards to its brink, and stood
With their green faces fix'd upon the flood."]

My years have been no slumber, but the prey
Of ceaseless vigils; for I had the share
Of life which might have fill'd a century,
Before its fourth in time had pass'd me by.

And for the remnant which may be to come
I am content; and for the past I feel
Not thankless,—for within the crowded sum
Of struggles, happiness at times would steal,
And for the present, I would not benumb
My feelings farther.—Nor shall I conceal
That with all this I still can look around,
And worship Nature with a thought profound.

For thee, my own sweet sister, in thy heart
I know myself secure, as thou in mine;
We were and are—I am, even as thou art—
Beings who ne'er each other can resign;
It is the same, together or apart,
From life's commencement to its slow decline
We are entwined—let death come slow or fast,
The tie which bound the first endures the last!

LINES

ON HEARING THAT LADY BYRON WAS ILL.¹

AND thou wert sad—yet I was not with thee!
And thou wert sick, and yet I was not near;
Methought that joy and health alone could be
Where I was *not*—and pain and sorrow here.
And is it thus?—it is as I foretold,
And shall be more so; for the mind recoils
Upon itself, and the wreck'd heart lies cold,
While heaviness collects the shatter'd spoils.
It is not in the storm nor in the strife
We feel benumb'd, and wish to be no more,
But in the after-silence on the shore,
When all is lost, except a little life.

I am too well avenged!—but 't was my right;
Whate'er my sins might be, *thou* wert not sent
To be the Nemesis who should requite—
Nor did Heaven choose so near an instrument.
Mercy is for the merciful!—if thou
Hast been of such, 't will be accorded now.

¹ [These verses were written immediately after the failure of the negotiation for a reconciliation before Lord Byron left Switzerland for Italy, but were not intended for the public eye: as, however, they have recently found their way into circulation, we include them in this collection.]

² [“Lord Byron had at least this much to say for himself, that he was not the first to make his domestic differences a topic of public discussion. On the contrary, he saw himself, ere any fact but the one undisguised and tangible one was, or could be known, held up every where, and by every art of malice, as the most infamous of men,—because he had parted from his wife. He was exquisitely sensitive: he was wounded at once by a thousand arrows; and all this with the most perfect and indignant knowledge, that of all who were assailing him *not one* knew any thing of the real merits of the case. Did he right, then, in publishing those squibs and tirades? No, certainly: it would have been nobler, better, wiser far, to have utterly scorned the assaults of such enemies, and taken no notice, of any kind, of them. But, because this young, hot-blooded, proud, patrician poet did not, amidst the exacerbation of feelings which he could not control, act in precisely the most dignified and wisest of all possible manners of action,—are we entitled, is the world at large entitled, to issue a broad sentence of vituperative condemnation? Do we know all that he had suffered?—have we imagination enough to comprehend what he suffered, under circumstances such as these?—have we been tried in similar circumstances, whether we could feel the wound unflinchingly, and keep the weapon quiescent in the hand that trembled with all the excitements of insulted privacy, honour, and faith? Let people consider for a moment what it is that they demand when they insist upon a poet of Byron's class

Thy nights are banish'd from the realms of sleep!—
Yes! they may flatter thee, but thou shalt feel
A hollow agony which will not heal,
For thou art pillow'd on a curse too deep;
Thou hast sown in my sorrow, and must reap
The bitter harvest in a woe as real!
I have had many foes, but none like thee;
For 'gainst the rest myself I could defend,
And be avenged, or turn them into friend;
But thou in safe implacability
Hadst nought to dread—in thy own weakness
shielded,

And in my love, which hath but too much yielded,
And spared, for thy sake, some I should not spare—
And thus upon the world—trust in thy truth—
And the wild fame of my ungovern'd youth—
On things that were not, and on things that are—
Even upon such a basis hast thou built
A monument, whose cement hath been guilt!
The moral Clytemnestra of thy lord,
And hew'd down, with an unsuspected sword,
Fame, peace, and hope—and all the better life
Which, but for this cold treason of thy heart,
Might still have risen from out the grave of strife,
And found a nobler duty than to part.

But of thy virtues didst thou make a vice,
Trafficking with them in a purpose cold,
For present anger, and for future gold—
And buying other's grief at any price.
And thus once enter'd into crooked ways,
The early truth, which was thy proper praise,
Did not still walk beside thee—but at times,
And with a breast unknowing its own crimes,
Deceit, averments incompatible,
Equivocations, and the thoughts which dwell
In Janus-spirits—the significant eye
Which learns to lie with silence—the pretext
Of Prudence, with advantages annex'd—
The acquiescence in all things which tend,
No matter how, to the desired end—
All found a place in thy philosophy.
The means were worthy, and the end is won—
I would not do by thee as thou hast done!

September, 1816.

abstaining altogether from expressing in his works any thing of his own feelings in regard to any thing that immediately concerns his own history. We tell him in every possible form and shape, that the great and distinguishing merit of his poetry is the intense truth with which that poetry expresses his own personal feelings. We encourage him in every possible way to dissect his own heart for our entertainment—we tempt him by every bribe most likely to act powerfully on a young and imaginative man, to plunge into the darkest depths of self-knowledge; to madden his brain with eternal self-scrutinies, to find his pride and his pleasure in what others shrink from as torture—we tempt him to indulge in these dangerous exercises, until they obviously acquire the power of leading him to the very brink of frenzy—we tempt him to find, and to see in this perilous vocation, the staple of his existence, the food of his ambition, the very essence of his glory,—and the moment that, by habits of our own creating, at least of our own encouraging and confirming, he is carried one single step beyond what we happen to approve of, we turn round with all the bitterness of spleen, and reproach him with the unmanliness of entertaining the public with his feelings in regard to his separation from his wife. This was truly the conduct of a fair and liberal public! To our view of the matter, Lord Byron, treated as he had been, tempted as he had been, and tortured and insulted as he was at the moment, did no more forfeit his character by writing what he did write upon that unhappy occasion, than another man, under circumstances of the same nature, would have done, by telling something of his mind about it to an intimate friend across the fire. The public had forced him into the habits of familiarity, and they received his confidence with nothing but anger and scorn.”—LOCKHART.]

Monody

ON THE DEATH OF THE RIGHT HON. R. B. SHERIDAN.¹SPOKEN AT DRURY-LANE THEATRE.²

WHEN the last sunshine of expiring day
In summer's twilight weeps itself away,
Who hath not felt the softness of the hour
Sink on the heart, as dew along the flower?
With a pure feeling which absorbs and awes
While Nature makes that melancholy pause,
Her breathing moment on the bridge where Time
Of light and darkness forms an arch sublime,
Who hath not shared that calm so still and deep,
The voiceless thought which would not speak but weep,
A holy concord—and a bright regret,
A glorious sympathy with suns that set?
'T is not harsh sorrow—but a tenderer woe,
Nameless, but dear to gentle hearts below,
Felt without bitterness—but full and clear,
A sweet dejection—a transparent tear,
Unmix'd with worldly grief or selfish stain,
Shed without shame—and secret without pain.

Even as the tenderness that hour instils
When Summer's day declines along the hills,
So feels the fulness of our heart and eyes,
When all of Genius which can perish dies.
A mighty Spirit is eclipsed—a Power
Hath pass'd from day to darkness—to whose hour
Of light no likeness is bequeath'd—no name,
Focus at once of all the rays of Fame!
The flash of Wit—the bright Intelligence,
The beam of Song—the blaze of Eloquence,
Set with their Sun—but still have left behind
The enduring produce of immortal Mind;
Fruits of a genial morn, and glorious noon,
A deathless part of him who died too soon.

¹ [Mr. Sheridan died the 7th of July, 1816, and this monody was written at Diodati on the 17th, at the request of Mr. Douglas Kinnaird. “I did as well as I could,” says Lord Byron, “but where I have not my choice, I pretend to answer for nothing.” A proof-sheet of the poem, with the words “by request of a friend” in the titlepage, having reached him,—“I request you,” he says, “to expunge that same, unless you please to add, ‘by a person of quality,’ or ‘of wit and humour.’ It is sad trash, and must have been done to make it ridiculous.”]

² [Sheridan's own monody on Garrick was spoken from the same boards, by Mrs. Yates, in March, 1779. “One day,” says Lord Byron, “I saw him take it up. He lighted upon the dedication to the Dowager Lady Spencer. On seeing it, he flew into a rage and exclaimed, ‘that it must be a forgery, as he had never dedicated any thing of his to such a d-d canting,’ &c. &c.—and so he went on for half an hour abusing his own dedication, or at least the object of it. If all writers were equally sincere, it would be ludicrous.”—*Byron Diary*, 1821.]

³ [See Fox, Burke, and Pitt's eulogy on Mr. Sheridan's speech on the charges exhibited against Mr. Hastings in the House of Commons. Mr. Pitt entreated the House to adjourn, to give time for a calmer consideration of the question than could then occur after the immediate effect of that oration.—“Before my departure from England,” says Gibbon, “I was present at the august spectacle of Mr. Hastings's trial in Westminster Hall. It is not my province to absolve or condemn the governor of India; but Mr. Sheridan's eloquence demanded my applause; nor could I hear without emotion the personal compliment which he paid me in the presence of the British nation. This display of genius blazed four successive days,” &c. On being asked by a brother Whig, at the conclusion of the speech, how he came to compliment

But small that portion of the wondrous whole,
These sparkling segments of that circling soul,
Which all embraced—and lighten'd over all,
To cheer—to pierce—to please—or to appal.
From the charm'd council to the festive board,
Of human feelings the unbounded lord;
In whose acclaim the loftiest voices vied, [pride.
The praised—the proud—who made his praise their
When the loud cry of trampled Hindostan³
Arose to Heaven in her appeal from man,
His was the thunder—his the avenging rod,
The wrath—the delegated voice of God!
Which shook the nations through his lips—and blazed
Till vanquish'd senates trembled as they praised.⁴

And here, oh! here, where yet all young and warm,
The gay creations of his spirit charm,
The matchless dialogue—the deathless wit,
Which knew not what it was to intermit;
The glowing portraits, fresh from life, that bring
Home to our hearts the truth from which they spring;
These wondrous beings of his Fancy, wrought
To fulness by the fiat of his thought,
Here in their first abode you still may meet,
Bright with the hues of his Promethean heat;
A halo of the light of other days,
Which still the splendour of its orb betrays.

But should there be to whom the fatal blight
Of failing Wisdom yields a base delight,
Men who exult when minds of heavenly tone
Jar in the music which was born their own,
Still let them pause—ah! little do they know
That what to them seem'd Vice might be but Woe.⁵

Gibbon with the epithet “luminous,” Sheridan answered, in a half whisper, “I said ‘*voluminous*.’”]

⁴ [“I heard Sheridan only once, and that briefly; but I liked his voice, his manner, and his wit. He is the only one of them I ever wished to hear at greater length.”—*Byron Diary*, 1821.]

⁵ [“Once I saw Sheridan cry, after a splendid dinner. I had the honour of sitting next him. The occasion of his tears was some observation or other upon the subject of the sturdiness of the Whigs in resisting office and keeping to their principles. Sheridan turned round:—‘Sir, it is easy for my Lord G. or Earl G. or Marquis B. or Lord H., with thousands upon thousands a year, some of it either *presently* derived or *inherited* in sinecure or acquisitions from the public money, to boast of their patriotism and keep aloof from temptation: but they do not know from what temptation those have kept aloof who had equal pride, at least equal talents, and not unequal passions, and nevertheless knew not in the course of their lives what it was to have a shilling of their own.’ And in saying this he wept. I have more than once heard him say, ‘that he never had a shilling of his own.’ To be sure, he contrived to extract a good many of other people's. In 1815, I found him at my lawyer's. After mutual greetings, he retired. Before recurring to my own business, I could not help inquiring that of Sheridan. ‘Oh,’ replied the attorney, ‘the usual thing! to stave off an action.’—‘Well,’ said I, ‘and what do you mean to do?’—‘Nothing at all for the present,’ said he: ‘would you have us proceed against old Sherry? what would be the use of it?’ and here he began laughing, and going over Sheridan's good gifts of conversation. Such was Sheridan! he could soften an attorney! There has been nothing like it since the days of Orpheus.”—*Byron Diary*, 1821.]

Hard is his fate on whom the public gaze
Is fix'd for ever to detract or praise;
Repose denies her requiem to his name,
And Folly loves the martyrdom of Fame.
The secret enemy whose sleepless eye
Stands sentinel—accuser—judge—and spy,
The foe—the fool—the jealous—and the vain,
The envious who but breathe in others' pain,
Behold the host! delighting to deprave,
Who track the steps of Glory to the grave,
Watch every fault that daring Genius owes
Half to the ardour which its birth bestows,
Distort the truth, accumulate the lie,
And pile the pyramid of Calumny!
These are his portion—but if join'd to these
Gaunt Poverty should league with deep Disease,
If the high Spirit must forget to soar,
And stoop to strive with Misery at the door,⁴
To soothe Indignity—and face to face
Meet sordid Rage—and wrestle with Disgrace,
To find in Hope but the renew'd caress,
The serpent-fold of further Faithlessness:—
If such may be the ills which men assail,
What marvel if at last the mightiest fall?
Breasts to whom all the strength of feeling given
Bear hearts electric—charged with fire from Heaven,
Black with the rude collision, inly torn,
By clouds surrounded, and on whirlwinds borne,

Driven o'er the lowering atmosphere that nurst
Thoughts which have turn'd to thunder—scorch—
and burst.²

But far from us and from our mimic scene
Such things should be—if such have ever been;
Ours be the gentler wish, the kinder task,
To give the tribute Glory need not ask,
To mourn the vanish'd beam—and add our mite
Of praise in payment of a long delight.
Ye Orators! whom yet our councils yield,
Mourn for the veteran Hero of your field!
The worthy rival of the wondrous *Three!*³
Whose words were sparks of Immortality!
Ye Bards! to whom the Drama's Muse is dear,
He was your Master—emulate him *here!*
Ye men of wit and social eloquence!⁴
He was your brother—bear his ashes hence!
While Powers of mind almost of boundless range,⁵
Complete in kind—as various in their change,
While Eloquence—Wit—Poesy—and Mirth,
That humbler Harmonist of care on Earth,
Survive within our souls—while lives our sense
Of pride in Merit's proud pre-eminence,
Long shall we seek his likeness—long in vain,
And turn to all of him which may remain,
Sighing that Nature form'd but one such man,
And broke the die—in moulding Sheridan.

Diodati, July 17. 1816.

The Dream.⁶

I.

OUR life is twofold: Sleep hath its own world,
A boundary between the things misnamed
Death and existence: Sleep hath its own world,
And a wide realm of wild reality,
And dreams in their development have breath,
And tears, and tortures, and the touch of joy;
They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts,
They take a weight from off our waking toils,

¹ [This was not fiction. Only a few days before his death, Sheridan wrote thus to Mr. Rogers:—"I am absolutely undone and broken-hearted. They are going to put the carpets out of window, and break into Mrs. S.'s room and *take me*: 150*l.* will remove all difficulty. For God's sake let me see you!" Mr. Moore was the immediate bearer of the required sum. This was written on the 15th of May. On the 14th of July, Sheridan's remains were deposited in Westminster Abbey,—his pall-bearers being the Duke of Bedford, the Earl of Lauderdale, Earl Mulgrave, the Lord Bishop of London, Lord Holland, and Earl Spencer.]

² ["Abandon'd by the skies, whose beams have nurst
Their very thunders, lighten—scorch—and burst." MS.]

³ Fox—Pitt—Burke. ["When Fox was asked, which he thought the best speech he had ever heard, he replied, 'Sheridan's on the impeachment of Hastings in the House of Commons. When he made it, Fox advised him to speak it over again in Westminster Hall on the trial, as nothing better could be made of the subject: but Sheridan made his new speech as different as possible, and, according to the best judges, very inferior, notwithstanding the panegyric of Burke, who exclaimed during the delivery of some passages of it—'There, that is the true style—something between poetry and prose, and better than either.'"—*Byron Diary*, (from Lord Holland,) 1821.]

⁴ ["In society I have met Sheridan frequently. He was superb! I have seen him cut up Whitbread, quiz Madame de Staël, annihilate Colman, and do little less by some others of good fame and ability. I have met him at all places and parties

They do divide our being; they become
A portion of ourselves as of our time,
And look like heralds of eternity;
They pass like spirits of the past,—they speak
Like sibyls of the future; they have power—
The tyranny of pleasure and of pain;
They make us what we were not—what they will,
And shake us with the vision that's gone by,
The dread of vanish'd shadows—Are they so?

—at Whitehall with the Melbournes, at the Marquis of Tavistock's, at Robins's the auctioneers, at Sir Humphry Davy's, at Sam Rogers's—in short, in most kinds of company, and always found him convivial and delightful."—*Byron Diary*, 1821.]

⁵ ["Lord Holland told me a curious piece of sentimentality in Sheridan. The other night we were all delivering our respective and various opinions upon him and other *hommes marquans*, and mine was this:—"Whatever Sheridan has done or chosen to do has been *par excellence* always the best of its kind. He has written the best comedy (School for Scandal), the best drama (in my mind, far beyond that St. Giles's lampoon, the Beggars' Opera), the best farce (the Critic—it is only too good for a farce), and the best address (Monologue on Garrick), and, to crown all, delivered the very best oration (the famous Begum speech) ever conceived or heard in this country." Somebody told Sheridan this the next day, and, on hearing it, he burst into tears! Poor Brinsley! if it were tears of pleasure, I would rather have said these few, but most sincere, words, than have written the *Iliad*, or made his own celebrated philippic. Nay, his own comedy never gratified me more than to hear that he had derived a moment's gratification from any praise of mine."—*Byron Diary*, Dec. 17. 1813.]

⁶ [In the first draught of this poem, Lord Byron had entitled it "*The Destiny*." Mr. Moore says, "it cost him many a tear in writing," and justly characterises it as "the most mournful, as well as picturesque 'story of a wandering life' that ever came from the pen and heart of man." It was composed at Diodati, in July 1816.]

Is not the past all shadow? What are they?
Creations of the mind?—The mind can make
Substance, and people planets of its own
With beings brighter than have been, and give
A breath to forms which can outlive all flesh.
I would recall a vision which I dream'd
Perchance in sleep—for in itself a thought,
A slumbering thought, is capable of years,
And curdles a long life into one hour.

II.

I saw two beings in the hues of youth
Standing upon a hill, a gentle hill,
Green and of mild declivity, the last
As 'twere the cape of a long ridge of such,
Save that there was no sea to lave its base,
But a most living landscape, and the wave
Of woods and cornfields, and the abodes of men
Scatter'd at intervals, and wreathing smoke
Arising from such rustic roofs;—the hill
Was crown'd with a peculiar diadem
Of trees, in circular array, so fix'd,
Not by the sport of nature, but of man:
These two, a maiden and a youth, were there
Gazing—the one on all that was beneath
Fair as herself—but the boy gazed on her;
And both were young, and one was beautiful:
And both were young—yet not alike in youth.
As the sweet moon on the horizon's verge,
The maid was on the eve of womanhood;
The boy had fewer summers, but his heart
Had far outgrown his years, and to his eye
There was but one beloved face on earth,
And that was shining on him; he had look'd
Upon it till it could not pass away;
He had no breath, no being, but in hers:
She was his voice; he did not speak to her,
But trembled on her words: she was his sight,¹
For his eye follow'd hers, and saw with hers,
Which colour'd all his objects:—he had ceased
To live within himself; she was his life,
The ocean to the river of his thoughts,
Which terminated all: upon a tone,
A touch of hers, his blood would ebb and flow,
And his cheek change tempestuously—his heart
Unknowing of its cause of agony.
But she in these fond feelings had no share:
Her sighs were not for him; to her he was
Even as a brother—but no more; 'twas much,
For brotherless she was, save in the name
Her infant friendship had bestow'd on him;
Herself the solitary scion left
Of a time-honour'd race.²—It was a name [why?
Which pleased him, and yet pleased him not—and
Time taught him a deep answer—when she loved
Another; even now she loved another,
And on the summit of that hill she stood

¹ [—"she was his sight,
For never did he turn his glance until
Her own had led by gazing on an object."—MS.]

² [See *ante*, p. 384.—"Our union," said Lord Byron in 1821, "would have healed feuds in which blood had been shed by our fathers—it would have joined lands, broad and rich—it would have joined at least one heart and two persons not ill-matched in years (she is two years my elder)—and—and—and—what has been the result!"]

³ [The picture which Lord Byron has here drawn of the youthful love shows how genius and feeling can elevate the realities of this life, and give to the commonest events and objects an undying lustre. The old hall at Annesley, under the name of the "antique oratory," will long call up to fancy the "maiden and the youth" who once stood in it; while the

Looking afar if yet her lover's steed
Kept pace with her expectancy, and flew.

III.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
There was an ancient mansion, and before
Its walls there was a steed caparison'd:
Within an antique Oratory stood
The Boy of whom I spake;—he was alone,
And pale, and pacing to and fro: anon
He sat him down, and seized a pen, and traced
Words which I could not guess of; then he lean'd
His bow'd head on his hands, and shook as 'twere
With a convulsion—then arose again,
And with his teeth and quivering hands did tear
What he had written, but he shed no tears.³
And he did calm himself, and fix his brow
Into a kind of quiet: as he paused,
The Lady of his love re-enter'd there;
She was serene and smiling then, and yet
She knew she was by him beloved,—she knew,
For quickly comes such knowledge, that his heart
Was darken'd with her shadow, and she saw
That he was wretched, but she saw not all.⁴
He rose, and with a cold and gentle grasp
He took her hand; a moment o'er his face
A tablet of unutterable thoughts
Was traced, and then it faded, as it came;
He dropp'd the hand he held, and with slow steps
Retired, but not as bidding her adieu,
For they did part with mutual smiles; he pass'd
From out the massy gate of that old Hall,
And mounting on his steed he went his way;
And ne'er repass'd that hoary threshold more.

IV.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Boy was sprung to manhood: in the wilds
Of fiery climes he made himself a home,
And his Soul drank their sunbeams: he was girt
With strange and dusky aspects; he was not
Himself like what he had been; on the sea
And on the shore he was a wanderer;
There was a mass of many images
Crowded like waves upon me, but he was
A part of all; and in the last he lay
Reposing from the noontide sultriness,
Couch'd among fallen columns, in the shade
Of ruin'd walls that had survived the names
Of those who rear'd them; by his sleeping side
Stood camels grazing, and some goodly steeds
Were fasten'd near a fountain; and a man
Clad in a flowing garb did watch the while,
While many of his tribe slumber'd around:
And they were canopied by the blue sky,
So cloudless, clear, and purely beautiful,
That God alone was to be seen in Heaven.⁵

image of the "lover's steed," though suggested by the unromantic race-ground of Nottingham, will not the less conduce to the general charm of the scene, and share a portion of that light which only Genius could shed over it.—MOORE.]

⁴ ["I had long been in love with M. A. C., and never told it, though she had discovered it without. I recollect my sensations, but cannot describe them, and it is as well."—*Byron Diary*, 1822.]

⁵ [This is true *keeping*—an Eastern picture perfect in its foreground, and distance, and sky, and no part of which is so dwelt upon or laboured as to obscure the principal figure. It is often in the slight and almost imperceptible touches that the hand of the master is shown, and that a single spark, struck from his fancy, lightens with a long train of illumination that of the reader.—SIR WALTER SCOTT.]