

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 *anté*, 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.]

V.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Lady of his love was wed with One
Who did not love her better: — in her home,
A thousand leagues from his, — her native home,
She dwelt, begirt with growing Infancy,
Daughters and sons of Beauty, — but behold!
Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
The settled shadow of an inward strife,
And an unquiet drooping of the eye,
As if its lid were charged with unshed tears.
What could her grief be? — she had all she loved,
And he who had so loved her was not there
To trouble with bad hopes, or evil wish,
Or ill-repress'd affliction, her pure thoughts.
What could her grief be? — she had loved him not,
Nor given him cause to deem himself beloved,
Nor could he be a part of that which prey'd
Upon her mind — a spectre of the past.

VI.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Wanderer was return'd. — I saw him stand
Before an Altar — with a gentle bride;
Her face was fair, but was not that which made
The Starlight of his Boyhood; — as he stood
Even at the altar, o'er his brow there came
The selfsame aspect, and the quivering shock
That in the antique Oratory shook
His bosom in its solitude; and then —
As in that hour — a moment o'er his face
The tablet of unutterable thoughts
Was traced — and then it faded as it came,
And he stood calm and quiet, and he spoke
The fitting vows, but heard not his own words,
And all things reel'd around him; he could see
Not that which was, nor that which should have been —
But the old mansion, and the accustom'd hall,
And the remember'd chambers, and the place,
The day, the hour, the sunshine, and the shade,
All things pertaining to that place and hour,
And her who was his destiny, came back
And thrust themselves between him and the light:
What business had they there at such a time? ¹

VII.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Lady of his love; — Oh! she was changed,
As by the sickness of the soul; her mind
Had wander'd from its dwelling, and her eyes,
They had not their own lustre, but the look
Which is not of the earth; she was become
The queen of a fantastic realm; her thoughts
Were combinations of disjointed things;
And forms impalpable and unperceived
Of others' sight familiar were to hers.
And this the world calls frenzy; but the wise
Have a far deeper madness, and the glance
Of melancholy is a fearful gift;
What is it but the telescope of truth?
Which strips the distance of its fantasies,
And brings life near in utter nakedness,
Making the cold reality too real! ²

VIII.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The Wanderer was alone as heretofore,
The beings which surrounded him were gone,
Or were at war with him; he was a mark
For blight and desolation, compass'd round
With Hatred and Contention; Pain was mix'd
In all which was served up to him, until,
Like to the Pontic monarch of old days, ³
He fed on poisons, and they had no power,
But were a kind of nutriment; he lived
Through that which had been death to many men,
And made him friends of mountains: with the stars
And the quick Spirit of the Universe
He held his dialogues! and they did teach
To him the magic of their mysteries;
To him the book of Night was open'd wide,
And voices from the deep abyss reveal'd
A marvel and a secret — Be it so!

IX.

My dream was past; it had no further change.
It was of a strange order, that the doom
Of these two creatures should be thus traced out
Almost like a reality — the one
To end in madness — both in misery. ⁴

July, 1816.

The Lament of Tasso.

ADVERTISEMENT.

At Ferrara, in the Library, are preserved the original MSS. of Tasso's *Gierusalemme* and of Guarini's

¹ [This touching picture agrees closely, in many of its circumstances, with Lord Byron's own prose account of the wedding in his *Memoranda*; in which he describes himself as waking, on the morning of his marriage, with the most melancholy reflections, on seeing his wedding-suit spread out before him. In the same mood, he wandered about the grounds alone, till he was summoned for the ceremony, and joined, for the first time, on that day, his bride and her family. He knelt down — he repeated the words after the clergyman; but a mist was before his eyes — his thoughts were elsewhere; and he was but awakened by the congratulations of the bystanders to find that he was — married. — Moore.]

² ["For it becomes the telescope of truth,
And shows us all things naked as they are." — MS.]

³ Mithridates of Pontus.

Pastor Fido, with letters of Tasso, one from Titian to Ariosto, and the inkstand and chair, the tomb and the house, of the latter. But, as misfortune has a greater interest for posterity, and little or none for

⁴ [This poem is written with great beauty and genius — but is extremely painful. We cannot maintain our accustomed tone of levity, or even speak like calm literary judges, in the midst of these agonising traces of a wounded and disordered spirit. Even our admiration is swallowed up in a most painful feeling of pity and of wonder. It is impossible to mistake these for fictitious sorrows, conjured up for the purpose of poetical effect. There is a dreadful tone of sincerity, and an energy that cannot be counterfeited, in the expression of wretchedness, and alienation from human-kind, which occurs in every line of this poem. — JEFFREY.]

⁵ [In a moment of dissatisfaction with himself, or during some melancholy mood, when his soul felt the worthlessness of fame and glory, Lord Byron told the world that his ruse should, for a long season, shroud herself in solitude (see *anté*, p. 460.); and every true lover of genius lamented that

the cotemporary, the cell where Tasso was confined in the hospital of St. Anna attracts a more fixed attention than the residence or the monument of Ariosto — at least it had this effect on me. There are two inscriptions, one on the outer gate, the second over the cell itself, inviting, unnecessarily, the wonder and the indignation of the spectator. Ferrara is much decayed, and depopulated: the castle still exists entire; and I saw the court where Parisina and Hugo were beheaded, according to the annal of Gibbon. ¹

The Lament of Tasso.

I.

LONG years! — It tries the thrilling frame to bear
And eagle-spirit of a child of Song —

her lofty music was to cease. But there was a tide in his spirit obeying the laws of its nature, and not to be controlled by any human will. When he said that he was to be silent, he looked, perhaps, into the inner regions of his soul, and saw there a dim, hard, and cheerless waste, like the sand of the sea-shore; but the ebb waves of passion in due course returned, and the scene was restored to its former beauty and magnificence, — its foam, its splendours, and its thunder. The mind of a mighty poet cannot submit even to chains of its own imposing; when it feels most enslaved, even then, perhaps, is it about to become most free; and one sudden flash may raise it from the darkness of its despondency up to the pure air of untroubled confidence. It required, therefore, but small knowledge of human nature, to assure ourselves that the obligation under which Lord Byron had laid himself could not bind, and that the potent spirit within him would laugh to scorn whatever dared to curb the frenzy of its own inspirations.

It was not long, therefore, till he again came forth in his perfect strength, and exercised that dominion over our spirits which is truly a power too noble to be possessed without being wielded. Though all his heroes are of one family, yet are they a noble band of brothers, whose countenances and whose souls are strongly distinguished by peculiar characteristics. Each personage, as he advances before us, reminds us of some other being, whose looks, thoughts, words, and deeds had troubled us by their wild and perturbed grandeur. But though all the same, yet are they all strangely different. We hail each successive existence with a profounder sympathy; and we are lost in wonder, in fear, and in sorrow, at the infinitely varied struggles, the endless and agonising modifications of the human passions, as they drive along through every gate and avenue of the soul, darkening or brightening, elevating or laying prostrate.

From such agitating and terrific pictures, it is delightful to turn to those compositions in which Lord Byron has allowed his soul to sink down into gentler and more ordinary feelings. Many beautiful and pathetic strains have flowed from his heart, of which the tenderness is as touching as the grandeur of his nobler works is agitating and sublime. To those, indeed, who looked deeply into his poetry, there never was at any time a want of pathos; but it was a pathos so subduing and so profound, that even the poet himself seemed afraid of being delivered up unto it; nay, he seemed ashamed of being overcome by emotions, which the gloomy pride of his intellect often vainly strove to scorn; and he dashed the weakness from his heart, and the tear from his eyes, like a man suddenly assailed by feelings which he wished to hide, and which, though true to his nature, were inconsistent with the character which that mysterious nature had been forced, as in self-defence, to assume.

But there is one poem in which he has almost wholly laid aside all remembrance of the darker and stormier passions; in which the tone of his spirit and his voice at once is changed, and where he who seemed to care only for agonies, and remorse, and despair, and death, and insanity, in all their most appalling forms, shows that he has a heart that can feed on the purest sympathies of our nature, and deliver itself up to the sorrows, the sadness, and the melancholy of humbler souls. The "Prisoner of Chillon" is a poem over which Infancy has shed its first mysterious tears for sorrows so alien to its own happy innocence, — over which the gentle, pure, and pious soul of Woman has brooded with ineffable, and yearning, and bursting tenderness of affection, — and over which old Age, almost loosened from this world, has bowed his hoary head in delighted approbation of that fra-

Long years of outrage, calumny, and wrong;
Imputed madness, prison'd solitude, ²
And the mind's canker in its savage mood,
When the impatient thirst of light and air
Parches the heart; and the abhorred grate,
Marring the sunbeams with its hideous shade,
Works through the throbbing eyeball to the brain,
With a hot sense of heaviness and pain;
And bare, at once, Captivity display'd
Stands scoffing through the never-open'd gate,
Which nothing through its bars admits, save day,
And tasteless food, which I have eat alone
Till its unsocial bitterness is gone;
And I can banquet like a beast of prey,
Sullen and lonely, couching in the cave
Which is my lair, and — it may be — my grave. ³
All this hath somewhat worn me, and may wear,
But must be borne. I stoop not to despair;
For I have battled with mine agony,
And made me wings wherewith to overfly

ternal love, whose beauty and simplicity fling a radiance over the earth he is about to leave, and exhibit our fallen nature in near approximation to the glories of its ultimate destiny. The "Lament" possesses much of the tenderness and pathos of the "Prisoner of Chillon." Lord Byron has not delivered himself unto any one wild and fearful vision of the imprisoned Tasso, — he has not dared to allow himself to rush forward with headlong passion into the horrors of his dungeon, and to describe, as he could fearfully have done, the conflict and agony of his uttermost despair, — but he shows us the poet sitting in his cell, and singing there — a low, melancholy, wailing Lament, sometimes, indeed, bordering on utter wretchedness, but oftener partaking of a settled grief, occasionally subdued into mournful resignation, cheered by delightful remembrances, and elevated by the confident hope of an immortal fame. His is the gathered grief of many years, over which his soul has brooded, till she has in some measure lost the power of misery; and this soliloquy is one which we can believe he might have uttered to himself any morning, or noon, or night of his solitude, as he seemed to be half communing with his own heart, and half addressing the ear of that human nature from which he was shut out, but of which he felt the continual and abiding presence within his imagination. — PROFESSOR WILSON.]

¹ [The original MS. of this poem is dated, "The Apennines, April 20, 1817." It was written in consequence of Lord Byron having visited Ferrara, for a single day, on his way to Florence. In a letter from Rome, he says — "The 'Lament of Tasso,' which I sent from Florence, has, I trust, arrived. I look upon it as a 'These be good rhymes!' as Pope's papa said to him when he was a boy."]

² [Tasso's biographer, the Abate Serassi, has left it without doubt, that the first cause of the poet's punishment was his desire to be occasionally, or altogether, free from his servitude at the court of Alfonso. In 1575, Tasso resolved to visit Rome, and enjoy the indulgence of the jubilee; "and this error," says the Abate, "increasing the suspicion already entertained, that he was in search of another service, was the origin of his misfortunes. On his return to Ferrara, the Duke refused to admit him to an audience, and he was repulsed from the houses of all the dependants of the court; and not one of the promises which the Cardinal Albano had obtained for him were carried into effect. Then it was that Tasso — after having suffered these hardships for some time, seeing himself constantly discountenanced by the Duke and the Princesses, abandoned by his friends, and derided by his enemies — could no longer contain himself within the bounds of moderation, but, giving vent to his choleric, publicly broke forth into the most injurious expressions imaginable, both against the Duke and all the house of Este, cursing his past service, and retracting all the praises he had ever given in his verses to those princes, or to any individual connected with them, declaring that they were all a gang of poltroons, ingrates, and scoundrels (poltroni, ingrati, e ribaldi). For this offence he was arrested, conducted to the hospital of St. Anna, and confined in a solitary cell as a madman." — SERASSI, *Vita del Tasso*.]

³ [In the Hospital of St. Anna, at Ferrara, they show a cell, over the door of which is the following inscription: — "Rispettate, O posteri, la celebrità di questa stanza, dove Torquato Tasso, inferno più di tristezza che delirio, detenuto dimorò anni vii. mesi ii., scrisse verse e prose, e fù rimesso in libertà ad istanza della città di Bergamo, nel giorno vi. Luglio, 1586." — The dungeon is below the ground

The narrow circus of my dungeon wall,
And freed the Holy Sepulchre from tfrall;
And revell'd among men and things divine,
And pour'd my spirit over Palestine,
In honour of the sacred war for Him,
The God who was on earth and is in heaven,
For he has strengthen'd me in heart and limb.
That through this sufferance I might be forgiven,
I have employ'd my penance to record
How Salem's shrine was won and how adored.

II.

But this is o'er — my pleasant task is done : —
My long-sustaining friend of many years !
If I do blot thy final page with tears,
Know, that my sorrows have wrung from me none.
But thou, my young creation ! my soul's child !
Which ever playing round me came and smiled,
And woo'd me from myself with thy sweet sight,
Thou too art gone — and so is my delight :
And therefore do I weep and inly bleed
With this last bruise upon a broken reed.
Thou too art ended — what is left me now ?
For I have anguish yet to bear — and how ?
I know not that — but in the innate force
Of my own spirit shall be found resource.
I have not sunk, for I had no remorse,
Nor cause for such : they call'd me mad — and why ?
Oh Leonora ! wilt not *thou* reply ?²
I was indeed delirious in my heart,
To lift my love so lofty as thou art ;
But still my frenzy was not of the mind ;
I knew my fault, and feel my punishment
Not less because I suffer it unbent.
That thou wert beautiful, and I not blind,
Hath been the sin which shuts me from mankind ;
But let them go, or torture as they will,
My heart can multiply thine image still ;
Successful love may sate itself away,
The wretched are the faithful ; 't is their fate
To have all feeling save the one decay,
And every passion into one dilate,
As rapid rivers into ocean pour ;
But ours is fathomless, and hath no shore.

floor of the hospital, and the light penetrates through its grated window from a small yard, which seems to have been common to other cells. It is nine paces long, between five and six wide, and about seven feet high. The bedstead, so they tell, has been carried off piecemeal, and the door half cut away, by the devotion of those whom "the verse and prose" of the prisoner have brought to Ferrara. The poet was confined in this room from the middle of March 1579 to December 1580, when he was removed to a contiguous apartment much larger, in which, to use his own expressions, he could "philosophise and walk about." The inscription is incorrect as to the immediate cause of his enlargement, which was promised to the city of Bergamo, but was carried into effect at the intercession of Don Vincenzo Gonzaga, Prince of Mantua. — HOBHOUSE.]

¹ [The opening lines bring the poet before us at once, as if the door of the dungeon was thrown open. From this bitter complaint, how nobly the unconquered bard rises into calm, and serene, and dignified exultation over the beauty of "that young creation, his soul's child," the Gierusalemme Liberata. The exultation of conscious genius then dies away, and we behold him, "bound between distraction and disease," no longer in an inspired mood, but sunk into the lowest prostration of human misery. There is something terrible in this transition from divine rapture to degraded agony. — WILSON.]

² [In a letter written to his friend Scipio Gonzaga, shortly after his confinement, Tasso exclaims — "Ah, wretched me ! I had designed to write, besides two epic poems of most noble argument, four tragedies, of which I had formed the plan. I had schemed, too, many works in prose, on subjects the most lofty, and most useful to human life ; I had designed to write

III.

Above me, hark ! the long and maniac cry
Of minds and bodies in captivity.
And hark ! the lash and the increasing howl,
And the half-inarticulate blasphemy !
There be some here with worse than frenzy foul,
Some who do still goad on the o'er-labour'd mind,
And dim the little light that's left behind
With needless torture, as their tyrant will
Is wound up to the lust of doing ill :³
With these and with their victims am I class'd,
'Mid sounds and sights like these long years have pass'd ;
'Mid sights and sounds like these my life may close :
So let it be — for then I shall repose.

IV.

I have been patient, let me be so yet ;
I had forgotten half I would forget,
But it revives — Oh ! would it were my lot
To be forgetful as I am forgot ! —
Feel I not wroth with those who bade me dwell
In this vast lazar-house of many woes ?
Where laughter is not mirth, nor thought the mind,
Nor words a language, nor ev'n men mankind ;
Where cries reply to curses, shrieks to blows,
And each is tortured in his separate hell —
For we are crowded in our solitudes —
Many, but each divided by the wall,
Which echoes Madness in her babbling moods ; —
While all can hear, none heed his neighbour's call —
None ! save that One, the veriest wretch of all,⁴
Who was not made to be the mate of these,
Nor bound between Distraction and Disease.
Feel I not wroth with those who placed me here ?
Who have debased me in the minds of men,
Debarring me the usage of my own,
Blighting my life in best of its career,
Branding my thoughts as things to shun and fear ?
Would I not pay them back these pangs again,
And teach them inward Sorrow's stifled groan ?
The struggle to be calm, and cold distress,
Which undermines our Stoical success ?
No ! — still too proud to be vindictive — I
Have pardon'd princes' insults, and would die.

philosophy with eloquence, in such a manner that there might remain of me an eternal memory in the world. Alas ! I had expected to close my life with glory and renown ; but now, oppressed by the burden of so many calamities, I have lost every prospect of reputation and of honour. The fear of perpetual imprisonment increases my melancholy ; the indignities which I suffer augment it ; and the squalor of my beard, my hair, and habit, the sordidness and filth, exceedingly annoy me. Sure am I, that, if she who so little has corresponded to my attachment — if she saw me in such a state, and in such affliction — she would have some compassion on me." — *Opere*, t. x. p. 387.]

³ [For nearly the first year of his confinement Tasso endured all the horrors of a solitary cell, and was under the care of a gaoler whose chief virtue, although he was a poet and a man of letters, was a cruel obedience to the commands of his prince. His name was Agostino Mosti. Tasso says of him, in a letter to his sister, "ed usa meco ogni sorte di rigore ed inumanità." — HOBHOUSE.]

⁴ [This fearful picture is finely contrasted with that which Tasso draws of himself in youth, when nature and meditation were forming his wild, romantic, and impassioned genius. Indeed, the great excellence of the "Lament" consists in the ebbing and flowing of the noble prisoner's soul ; — his feelings often come suddenly from afar off, — sometimes gentle airs are breathing, and then all at once arise the storms and tempest, — the gloom, though black as night while it endures, gives way to frequent bursts of radiance, — and when the wild strain is closed, our pity and commiseration are blended with a sustaining and elevating sense of the grandeur and majesty of his character. — WILSON.]

Yes, Sister of my Sovereign ! for thy sake
I weed all bitterness from out my breast,
It hath no business where *thou* art a guest ;
Thy brother hates — but I can not detest ;¹
Thou pitiest not — but I can not forsake.

V.

Look on a love which knows not to despair,²
But all unquench'd is still my better part,
Dwelling deep in my shut and silent heart,
As dwells the gather'd lightning in its cloud,
Encompass'd with its dark and rolling shroud,
Till struck, — forth flies the all-etherial dart !
And thus at the collision of thy name
The vivid thought still flashes through my frame,
And for a moment all things as they were
Flit by me ; — they are gone — I am the same.
And yet my love without ambition grew ;
I knew thy state, my station, and I knew
A Princess was no love-mate for a bard ;
I told it not, I breathed it not, it was
Sufficient to itself, its own reward ;
And if my eyes reveal'd it, they, alas !
Were punish'd by the silentness of thine,
And yet I did not venture to repine.
Thou wert to me a crystal-girded shrine,
Worshipp'd at holy distance, and around
Hallow'd and meekly kiss'd the saintly ground ;
Not for thou wert a princess, but that Love
Had robed thee with a glory, and array'd
Thy lineaments in beauty that dismay'd —
Oh ! not dismay'd — but awed, like One above !
And in that sweet severity there was
A something which all softness did surpass —
I know not how — thy genius master'd mine —
My star stood still before thee : — if it were
Presumptuous thus to love without design,
That sad fatality hath cost me dear ;
But thou art dearest still, and I should be
Fit for this cell, which wrongs me — but for thee.
The very love which lock'd me to my chain
Hath lighten'd half its weight ; and for the rest,
Though heavy, lent me vigour to sustain,
And look to thee with undivided breast,
And foil the ingenuity of Pain.³

VI.

It is no marvel — from my very birth
My soul was drunk with love, — which did pervade
And mingle with whate'er I saw on earth ;
Of objects all inanimate I made
Idols, and out of wild and lonely flowers,
And rocks, whereby they grew, a paradise,

¹ [Not long after his imprisonment, Tasso appealed to the mercy of Alfonso, in a canzone of great beauty, couched in terms so respectful and pathetic, as must have moved, it might be thought, the severest bosom to relent. The heart of Alfonso was, however, impregnable to the appeal ; and Tasso, in another ode to the princesses, whose pity he invoked in the name of their own mother, who had herself known, if not the like horrors, the like solitude of imprisonment, and bitterness of soul, made a similar appeal. "Considered merely as poems," says Black, "these canzoni are extremely beautiful ; but, if we contemplate them as the productions of a mind diseased, they form important documents in the history of man." — *Life of Tasso*, vol. ii. p. 408.]

² [As to the indifference which the Princess is said to have exhibited for the misfortunes of Tasso, and the little effort she made to obtain his liberty, this is one of the negative arguments founded on a hypothesis that may be easily destroyed by a thousand others equally plausible. Was not the Princess anxious to avoid her own ruin ? In taking too warm an interest for the poet, did she not risk destroying herself, without saving him ? — FOSCOLO.]

Where I did lay me down within the shade
Of waving trees, and dream'd uncounted hours,
Though I was chid for wandering ; and the Wise
Shook their white aged heads o'er me, and said
Of such materials wretched men were made,
And such a truant boy would end in woe,
And that the only lesson was a blow ; —
And then they smote me, and I did not weep,
But cursed them in my heart, and to my haunt
Return'd and wept alone, and dream'd again
The visions which arise without a sleep.
And with my years my soul began to pant
With feelings of strange tumult and soft pain ;
And the whole heart exhaled into One Want,
But undefined and wandering, till the day
I found the thing I sought — and that was thee ;
And then I lost my being all to be
Absorb'd in thine — the world was past away —
Thou didst annihilate the earth to me !

VII.

I loved all Solitude — but little thought
To spend I know not what of life, remote
From all communion with existence, save
The maniac and his tyrant ; — had I been
Their fellow, many years ere this had seen
My mind like theirs corrupted to its grave,⁴
But who hath seen me writhe, or heard me rave ?
Perchance in such a cell we suffer more
Than the wreck'd sailor on his desert shore ;
The world is all before him — mine is here,
Scarce twice the space they must accord my bier.
What though *he* perish, he may lift his eye
And with a dying glance upbraid the sky —
I will not raise my own in such reproof,
Although 't is clouded by my dungeon roof.

VIII.

Yet do I feel at times my mind decline,⁵
But with a sense of its decay : — I see
Unwonted lights along my prison shine,
And a strange demon, who is vexing me
With pilfering pranks and petty pains, below
The feeling of the healthful and the free ;
But much to One, who long hath suffer'd so,
Sickness of heart, and narrowness of place,
And all that may be borne, or can debase.
I thought mine enemies had been but Man,
But Spirits may be leagued with them — all Earth
Abandons — Heaven forgets me ; — in the dearth
Of such defence the Powers of Evil can,
It may be, tempt me further, — and prevail
Against the outworn creature they assail.

³ [Tasso's profound and unconquerable love for Leonora, sustaining itself without hope throughout years of darkness and solitude, breathes a moral dignity over all his sentiments, and we feel the strength and power of his noble spirit in the un-upbraiding devotedness of his passion. — WILSON.]

⁴ ["My mind like theirs adapted to its grave." — MS.]

⁵ ["Nor do I lament," wrote Tasso, shortly after his confinement, "that my heart is deluged with almost constant misery, that my head is always heavy and often painful, that my sight and hearing are much impaired, and that all my frame is become spare and meagre ; but, passing all this with a short sigh, what I would bewail is the infirmity of my mind. My mind sleeps, not thinks ; my fancy is chill, and forms no pictures ; my negligent senses will no longer furnish the images of things ; my hand is sluggish in writing, and my pen seems as if it shrunk from the office. I feel as if I were chained in all my operations, and as if I were overcome by an unwonted numbness and oppressive stupor." — *Opere*, t. viii. p. 258.]

Why in this furnace is my spirit proved
Like steel in tempering fire? because I loved?
Because I loved what not to love, and see,
Was more or less than mortal, and than me.

IX.

I once was quick in feeling—that is o'er;—
My scars are callous, or I should have dash'd
My brain against these bars, as the sun flash'd
In mockery through them;—If I bear and bore
The much I have recounted, and the more
Which hath no words,—'t is that I would not die
And sanction with self-slaughter the dull lie
Which snared me here, and with the brand of shame
Stamp Madness deep into my memory,
And woo Compassion to a blighted name,
Sealing the sentence which my foes proclaim.
No—it shall be immortal!—and I make
A future temple of my present cell,
Which nations yet shall visit for my sake.¹
While thou, Ferrara! when no longer dwell
The ducal chiefs within thee, shalt fall down,
And crumbling piecemeal view thy hearthless halls,

A poet's wreath shall be thine only crown,—
A poet's dungeon thy most far renown,
While strangers wonder o'er thy unpeopled wall's!²
And thou, Leonora!—thou—who wert ashamed
That such as I could love—who blush'd to hear
To less than monarchs that thou couldst be dear,
Go! tell thy brother, that my heart, untamed
By grief, years, weariness—and it may be
A taint of that he would impute to me—
From long infection of a den like this,
Where the mind rots congenial with the abyss,
Adores thee still;—and add—that when the towers
And battlements which guard his joyous hours
Of banquet, dance, and revel, are forgot,
Or left untended in a dull repose,
This—this—shall be a consecrated spot!
But thou—when all that Birth and Beauty throws
Of magic round thee is extinct—shalt have
One half the laurel which o'ershades my grave.³
No power in death can tear our names apart,
As none in life could rend thee from my heart.
Yes, Leonora! it shall be our fate
To be entwined for ever—but too late!⁴

Ode on Venice.⁵

I.

OH Venice! Venice! when thy marble walls
Are level with the waters, there shall be
A cry of nations o'er thy sunken halls,
A loud lament along the sweeping sea!
If I, a northern wanderer, weep for thee,
What should thy sons do?—any thing but weep:
And yet they only murmur in their sleep.
In contrast with their fathers—as the slime,
The dull green ooze of the receding deep,
Is with the dashing of the spring-tide foam,
That drives the sailor shipless to his home,
Are they to those that were; and thus they creep,
Crouching and crab-like, through their sapping streets.
Oh! agony—that centuries should reap
No mellow harvest! Thirteen hundred years
Of wealth and glory turn'd to dust and tears;

¹ ["Which {nations yet} shall visit for my sake."—MS.]

² [Those who indulge in the dreams of earthly retribution will observe, that the cruelty of Alfonso was not left without its recompense, even in his own person. He survived the affection of his subjects and of his dependants, who deserted him at his death; and suffered his body to be interred without princely or decent honours. His last wishes were neglected; his testament cancelled. His kinsman, Don Caesar, shrank from the excommunication of the Vatican, and, after a short struggle, or rather suspense, Ferrara passed away for ever from the dominion of the house of Este.—HOBHOUSE.]

³ [In July, 1586, after a confinement of more than seven years, Tasso was released from his dungeon. In the hope of receiving his mother's dowry, and of again beholding his sister Cornelia, he shortly after visited Naples, where his presence was welcomed with every demonstration of esteem and admiration. Being on a visit at Mola di Gaeta, he received the following remarkable tribute of respect. Marco di Sciarra, the notorious captain of a numerous troop of banditti, hearing where the great poet was, sent to compliment him, and offered him not only a free passage, but protection by the way, and assured him that he and his followers would be proud to execute his orders. See *Manso, Vita del Tasso*, p. 219.]

⁴ [The "pleasures of imagination" have been explained

And every monument the stranger meets,
Church, palace, pillar, as a mourner greets;
And even the Lion all subdued appears,
And the harsh sound of the barbarian drum,
With dull and daily dissonance, repeats
The echo of thy tyrant's voice along
The soft waves, once all musical to song,
That heaved beneath the moonlight with the throng
Of gondolas—and to the busy hum
Of cheerful creatures, whose most sinful deeds
Were but the overbeating of the heart,
And flow of too much happiness, which needs
The aid of age to turn its course apart
From the luxuriant and voluptuous flood
Of sweet sensations, battling with the blood.
But these are better than the gloomy errors,
The weeds of nations in their last decay,

and justified by Addison in prose, and by Akenside in verse: but there are moments of real life when its miseries and its necessities seem to overpower and destroy them. The history of mankind, however, furnishes proofs that no bodily suffering, no adverse circumstances, operating on our material nature, will extinguish the spirit of imagination. Perhaps there is no instance of this so very affecting and so very sublime as the case of Tasso. They who have seen the dark, horror-striking dungeon-hole at Ferrara, in which he was confined seven years under the imputation of madness, will have had this truth impressed upon their hearts in a manner never to be erased. In this vault, of which the sight makes the hardest heart shudder, the poet employed himself in finishing and correcting his immortal epic poem. Lord Byron's "Lament" on this subject is as sublime and profound a lesson in morality, and in the pictures of the recesses of the human soul, as it is a production most eloquent, most pathetic, most vigorous, and most elevating among the gifts of the Muse. The bosom which is not touched with it—the fancy which is not warmed,—the understanding which is not enlightened and exalted by it, is not fit for human intercourse. If Lord Byron had written nothing but this, to deny him the praise of a grand poet would have been flagrant injustice or gross stupidity.—BRYDGES.]

⁵ [This Ode was transmitted from Venice, in 1819, along with "Mazeppa."]

Cities and generations—fair, when free—
For, Tyranny, there blooms no bud for thee!

III.

Glory and Empire! once upon these towers
With Freedom—godlike Triad! how ye sate!
The league of mightiest nations, in those hours
When Venice was an envy, might abate,
But did not quench, her spirit—in her fate
All were enwrapp'd: the feasted monarchs knew
And loved their hostess, nor could learn to hate,
Although they humbled—with the kingly few
The many felt, for from all days and climes
She was the voyager's worship;—even her crimes
Were of the softer order—born of Love,
She drank no blood, nor fatten'd on the dead,
But gladden'd where her harmless conquests spread;
For these restored the Cross, that from above
Hallow'd her sheltering banners, which incessant
Flew between earth and the unholy Crescent,
Which, if it waned and dwindled, Earth may thank
The city it has clothed in chains, which clank
Now, creaking in the ears of those who owe
The name of Freedom to her glorious struggles;
Yet she but shares with them a common foe,
And call'd the "kingdom" of a conquering woe,
But knows what all—and, most of all, we know—
With what set gilded terms a tyrant juggles!

IV.

The name of Commonwealth is past and gone
O'er the three fractions of the groaning globe;
Venice is crush'd, and Holland deigns to own
A sceptre, and endures the purple robe;
If the free Switzer yet bestrides alone
His chainless mountains, 'tis but for a time,
For tyranny of late is cunning grown,
And in its own good season tramples down
The sparkles of our ashes. One great clime,
Whose vigorous offspring by dividing ocean
Are kept apart and nursed in the devotion
Of Freedom, which their fathers fought for, and
Bequeath'd—a heritage of heart and hand,
And proud distinction from each other land,
Whose sons must bow them at a monarch's motion,
As if his senseless sceptre were a wand
Full of the magic of exploded science—
Still one great clime, in full and free defiance,
Yet rears her crest, unconquer'd and sublime,
Above the far Atlantic!—She has taught
Her Esau-brethren that the haughty flag,
The floating fence of Albion's feeble crag,
May strike to those whose red right hands have bought
Rights cheaply earn'd with blood.—Still, still, for ever
Better, though each man's life-blood were a river,
That it should flow, and overflow, than creep
Through thousand lazy channels in our veins,
Damm'd like the dull canal with locks and chains,
And moving, as a sick man in his sleep,
Three paces, and then faltering:—better be
Where the extinguish'd Spartans still are free,
In their proud charnel of Thermopylæ,
Than stagnate in our marsh,—or o'er the deep
Fly, and one current to the ocean add,
One spirit to the souls our fathers had,
One freeman more, America, to thee!

When Vice walks forth with her unsoften'd terrors,
And Mirth is madness, and but smiles to slay;
And Hope is nothing but a false delay,
The sick man's lightning half an hour ere death,
When Faintness, the last mortal birth of Pain,
And apathy of limb, the dull beginning
Of the cold staggering race which Death is winning,
Steals vein by vein and pulse by pulse away;
Yet so relieving the o'er-tortured clay,
To him appears renewal of his breath,
And freedom the mere numbness of his chain;—
And then he talks of life, and how again
He feels his spirits soaring—albeit weak,
And of the fresher air, which he would seek;
And as he whispers knows not that he gasps,
That his thin finger feels not what it clasps,
And so the film comes o'er him—and the dizzy
Chamber swims round and round—and shadows busy,
At which he vainly catches, fit and gleam,
Till the last rattle chokes the strangled scream,
And all is ice and blackness,—and the earth
That which it was the moment ere our birth.

II.

There is no hope for nations!—Search the page
Of many thousand years—the daily scene,
The flow and ebb of each recurring age,
The everlasting to be which hath been,
Hath taught us nought or little: still we lean
On things that rot beneath our weight, and wear
Our strength away in wrestling with the air;
For 'tis our nature strikes us down: the beasts
Slaughter'd in hourly hecatombs for feasts
Are of as high an order—they must go [slaughter.
Even where their driver goads them, though to
Ye men, who pour your blood for kings as water,
What have they given your children in return?
A heritage of servitude and woes,
A blindfold bondage, where your hire is blows.
What! do not yet the red-hot ploughshares burn,
O'er which you stumble in a false ordeal,
And deem this proof of loyalty the real;
Kissing the hand that guides you to your scars,
And glorying as you tread the glowing bars?
All that your sires have left you, all that Time
Bequeaths of free, and History of sublime,
Spring from a different theme!—Ye see and read,
Admire and sigh, and then succumb and bleed!
Save the few spirits, who, despite of all,
And worse than all, the sudden crimes engender'd
By the down-thundering of the prison-wall,
And thirst to swallow the sweet waters tender'd,
Gushing from Freedom's fountains—when the crowd,
Madden'd with centuries of drought, are loud,
And trample on each other to obtain
The cup which brings oblivion of a chain
Heavy and sore,—in which long yoked they plough'd
The sand,—or if there sprung the yellow grain,
'T was not for them, their necks were too much bow'd,
And their dead palates chew'd the cud of pain:—
Yes! the few spirits—who, despite of deeds
Which they abhor, confound not with the cause
Those momentary starts from Nature's laws,
Which, like the pestilence and earthquake, smite
But for a term, then pass, and leave the earth
With all her seasons to repair the blight
With a few summers, and again put forth