

XLII.

The English winter—ending in July,
To recommence in August—now was done.
'Tis the postillon's paradise: wheels fly;
On roads, east, south, north, west, there is a run.
But for post-horses who finds sympathy?
Man's pity's for himself, or for his son,
Always premising that said son at college
Has not contracted much more debt than knowledge.

XLIII.

The London winter's ended in July—
Sometimes a little later. I don't err
In this: whatever other blunders lie
Upon my shoulders, here I must aver
My Muse a glass of weatherology;
For parliament is our barometer:
Let radicals its other acts attack,
Its sessions form our only almanack.

XLIV.

When its quicksilver's down at zero,—lo!
Coach, chariot, luggage, baggage, equipage!
Wheels whirl from Carlton palace to Soho,
And happiest they who horses can engage;
The turnpikes glow with dust; and Rotten Row
Sleeps from the chivalry of this bright age;
And tradesmen, with long bills and longer faces,
Sigh—as the postboys fasten on the traces.

XLV.

They and their bills, "Arcadians both," are left
To the Greek kalends of another session.
Alas! to them of ready cash bereft,
What hope remains? Of hope the full possession,
Or generous draft, conceded as a gift,
At a long date—till they can get a fresh one—
Hawk'd about at a discount, small or large;
Also the solace of an overcharge.

XLVI.

But these are trifles. Downward flies my lord,
Nodding beside my lady in his carriage.
Away! away! "Fresh horses!" are the word,
And changed as quickly as hearts after marriage;
The obsequious landlord hath the change restored;
The postboys have no reason to disparage
Their fee; but ere the water'd wheels may hiss hence,
The ostler pleads too for a reminiscence.

XLVII.

'Tis granted; and the valet mounts the dickey—
That gentleman of lords and gentlemen;
Also my lady's gentlewoman, tricky,
Trick'd out, but modest more than poet's pen
Can paint,—"*Così viaggino i Ricchi!*"²
(Excuse a foreign slipslop now and then,
If but to show I've travell'd; and what's travel,
Unless it teaches one to quote and cavil?)

XLVIII.

The London winter and the country summer
Were well nigh over. 'Tis perhaps a pity,
When nature wears the gown that doth become her,
To lose those best months in a sweaty city,
And wait until the nightingale grows dumber,
Listening debates not very wise or witty,

¹ "Arcades ambo."

² ["Thus the rich travel."]

³ [Byron was too good by nature for what he wished to be—he could not drain the blood of the cavaliers out of his veins—he could not cover the coronet all over with the red

Ere patriots their true *country* can remember;—
But there's no shooting (save grouse) till September.

XLIX.

I've done with my tirade. The world was gone;
The twice two thousand, for whom earth was made,
Were vanish'd to be what they call alone—
That is, with thirty servants for parade,
As many guests, or more; before whom groan
As many covers, duly, daily laid.
Let none accuse old England's hospitality—
Its quantity is but condensed to quality.

L.

Lord Henry and the Lady Adeline
Departed like the rest of their compeers,
The peerage, to a mansion very fine;
The Gothic Babel of a thousand years.
None than themselves could boast a longer line,
Where time through heroes and through beauties
And oaks as olden as their pedigree [steers;
Told of their sires, a tomb in every tree.

LI.

A paragraph in every paper told
Of their departure: such is modern fame:
'Tis pity that it takes no farther hold
Than an advertisement, or much the same;
When, ere the ink be dry, the sound grows cold.
The Morning Post was foremost to proclaim—
"Departure, for his country seat, to-day,
Lord H. Amundeville and Lady A.

LII.

"We understand the splendid host intends
To entertain, this autumn, a select
And numerous party of his noble friends; [correct,
Midst whom we have heard, from sources quite
The Duke of D—the shooting season spends,
With many more by rank and fashion deck'd;
Also a foreigner of high condition,
The envoy of the secret Russian mission."

LIII.

And thus we see—who doubts the Morning Post?
(Whose articles are like the "Thirty-nine,"
Which those most swear to who believe them most)—
Our gay Russ Spaniard was ordain'd to shine,
Deck'd by the rays reflected from his host,
With those who, Pope says, "greatly daring dine."—
'Tis odd, but true,—last war the News abounded
More with these dinners than the kill'd or wounded;—

LIV.

As thus: "On Thursday there was a grand dinner;
Present, Lords A. B. C."—Earls, dukes, by name
Announced with no less pomp than victory's winner:
Then underneath, and in the very same
Column; date, "Falmouth. There has lately been here
The Slap-dash regiment, so well known to fame;
Whose loss in the late action we regret:
The vacancies are fill'd up—see Gazette."

LV.

To Norman Abbey whirl'd the noble pair,—
An old, old monastery once, and now
Still older mansion³,—of a rich and rare
Mix'd Gothic, such as artists all allow

night-cap:—hence that self-reproaching melancholy which
was eternally crossing and unnerving him,—hence the dark
heaving of soul with which he must have written, in his
Italian villeggiatura, this glorious description of his own lost
ancestral seat.—LOCKHART, 1824.]

Few specimens yet left us can compare
Withal¹: it lies perhaps a little low,
Because the monks prefer'd a hill behind,
To shelter their devotion from the wind.²

LVI.

It stood embosom'd in a happy valley,
Crown'd by high woodlands, where the Druid oak
Stood like Caractacus in act to rally
His host, with broad arms 'gainst the thunder-
stroke;
And from beneath his boughs were seen to sally
The dappled foresters—as day awoke,
The branching stag swept down with all his herd,
To quaff a brook which murmur'd like a bird.³

LVII.

Before the mansion lay a lucid lake,⁴
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 wildfowl 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.

LVIII.

Its outlet dash'd into a deep cascade,
Sparkling with foam, until again subsiding,
Its shriller echoes—like an infant made
Quiet—sank into softer ripples, gliding
Into a rivulet; and thus allay'd,
Pursued its course, now gleaming, and now hiding
Its windings through the woods; now clear, now blue,
According as the skies their shadows threw.

LIX.

A glorious remnant of the Gothic pile
(While yet the church was Rome's) stood half apart
In a grand arch, which once screen'd many an aisle.
These last had disappear'd—a loss to art:
The first yet frown'd superbly o'er the soil,
And kindled feelings in the roughest heart,
Which mourn'd the power of time's or tempest's
In gazing on that venerable arch. [march,

LX.

Within a niche, nigh to its pinnacle,
Twelve saints had once stood sanctified in stone;

¹ ["The front of Newstead Abbey has a most noble and majestic appearance; being built in the form of the west end of a cathedral, adorned with rich carvings and lofty pinnacles."—Art. *Newstead*, in *Beauties of England*, vol. xii.]

² ["How sweetly in front looked the transparent water, and the light of religious remains (equalled by no architecture scarcely in the kingdom, except that of York cathedral), backed by the most splendid field beauties, diversified by the swells of the earth on which they were rooted!"—THOROTON'S *Nottinghamshire*.]

³ ["The beautiful park of Newstead, which once was richly ornamented with two thousand seven hundred head of deer, and numberless fine-spreading oaks, is now divided and subdivided into farms."—*Ibid.*]

⁴ [See *anté*, p. 473.—

"I did remind thee of our own dear Lake,
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."—
Epistle to Augusta.]

⁵ [See *anté*, p. 378.]

⁶ ["In the bow-window of the Hall there are yet the arms of Newstead Priory, viz. England, with a chief azure, in

But these had fallen, not when the friars fell,
But in the war which struck Charles from his
throne,
When each house was a fortalice—as tell
The annals of full many a line undone,—
The gallant cavaliers, who fought in vain
For those who knew not to resign or reign.⁵

LXI.

But in a higher niche, alone, but crown'd,
The Virgin Mother of the God-born Child,⁶
With her Son in her blessed arms, look'd round,
Spared by some chance when all beside was spoil'd;
She made the earth below seem holy ground.
This may be superstition, weak or wild,
But even the faintest relics of a shrine
Of any worship wake some thoughts divine.

LXII.

A mighty window, hollow in the centre,
Shorn of its glass of thousand colourings,
Through which the deepen'd glories once could enter,
Streaming from off the sun like seraph's wings,
Now yawns all desolate: now loud, now fainter,
The gale sweeps through its fretwork, and oft
sings
The owl his anthem, where the silenced quire
Lie with their hallelujahs quench'd like fire.

LXIII.

But in the noontide of the moon, and when
The wind is winged from one point of heaven,
There moans a strange unearthly sound, which then
Is musical—a dying accent driven
Through the huge arch, which soars and sinks again.
Some deem it but the distant echo given
Back to the night wind by the waterfall,
And harmonised by the old choral wall:

LXIV.

Others, that some original shape, or form
Shaped by decay perchance, hath given the power
(Though less than that of Memnon's statue⁷, warm
In Egypt's rays, to harp at a fix'd hour)
To this grey ruin, with a voice to charm
Sad, but serene, it sweeps over tree or tower;
The cause I know not, nor can solve; but such
The fact:—I've heard it,—once perhaps too much⁸

the middle whereof is the Virgin Mary with Babe or."—
THOROTON.]

⁷ [The history of this wonderful statue seems to be simply this:—Herodotus, when he went into Egypt, was shown the fragments of a colossus, thrown down some years before by Cambyses. This he calls Memnon; but says not a syllable respecting its emitting a vocal sound; a prodigy which appears to have been an after-thought of the priests of Thebes. The upper part of this statue has been covered by the sand for many ages; it is that which yet remains on its pedestal which performs the wonders mentioned by so many travellers.—In a word, the whole appears to have been a trick, not ill adapted to such a place as Egypt, where men went, and still go, with a face of foolish wonderment, predisposed to swallow the grossest absurdities. The sound (for some sound there was), I incline to think, with De Pauw, proceeded from an excavation near the plinth, the sides of which might be struck, at a preconcerted moment, with a bar of sonorous metal. Even Savary, who saw nothing but prodigies in Egypt, treats this foolish affair as an artifice of the priests. So much for the harp of Memnon!—GIFFORD. See also Sir David Brewster's *Natural Magic*, p. 234.]

⁸ ["Next to the apartment called King Edward the Third's room, on account of that monarch having slept there, is the sounding gallery,—so called from a very remarkable echo which it possesses."—Art. *Newstead*, in *Beauties of England*, vol. xii.]

LXV.

Amidst the court a Gothic fountain play'd,¹
Symmetrical, but deck'd with carvings quaint —
Strange faces, like to men in masquerade,
And here perhaps a monster, there a saint :
The spring gush'd through grim mouths of granite
And sparkled into basins, where it spent [made,
Its little torrent in a thousand bubbles,
Like man's vain glory, and his vainer troubles.

LXVI.

The mansion's self was vast and venerable,
With more of the monastic than has been
Elsewhere preserved : the cloisters still were stable,
The cells, too, and refectory, I ween :
An exquisite small chapel had been able,
Still unimpair'd, to decorate the scene ;²
The rest had been reform'd, replaced, or sunk,
And spoke more of the baron than the monk.

LXVII.

Huge halls, long galleries, spacious chambers, join'd
By no quite lawful marriage of the arts,
Might shock a connoisseur ; but when combined,
Form'd a whole which, irregular in parts,
Yet left a grand impression on the mind,
At least of those whose eyes are in their hearts ;
We gaze upon a giant for his stature,
Nor judge at first if all be true to nature.

LXVIII.

Steel barons, molten the next generation
To silken rows of gay and garter'd earls,
Glanced from the walls in goodly preservation :
And Lady Marys blooming into girls,
With fair long locks, had also kept their station :
And countesses mature in robes and pearls :
Also some beauties of Sir Peter Lely,
Whose drapery hints we may admire them freely.

LXIX.

Judges in very formidable ermine
Were there, with brows that did not much invite
The accused to think their lordships would determine
His cause by leaning much from might to right :
Bishops, who had not left a single sermon ;
Attorneys-general, awful to the sight,
As hinting more (unless our judgments warp us)
Of the "Star Chamber" than of "Habeas Corpus."

LXX.

Generals, some all in armour, of the old
And iron time, ere lead had ta'en the lead ;
Others in wigs of Marlborough's martial fold,
Huger than twelve of our degenerate breed :
Lordlings, with staves of white or keys of gold :
Nimrods, whose canvass scarce contain'd the steed ;
And here and there some stern high patriot stood,
Who could not get the place for which he sued.

LXXI.

But ever and anon, to soothe your vision,
Fatigued with these hereditary glories,

¹ ["From the windows of the gallery over the cloisters, we see the cloister court, with a basin in the centre, used as a stew for fish, &c."] — Art. *Newstead*, in *Beauties of England*, vol. xii.]

² ["The cloisters exactly resemble those of Westminster Abbey, only on a smaller scale ; but possessing, if possible, a more venerable appearance. These were the cloisters of the ancient abbey, and many of its ancient tenants now lie in silent repose under the flagged pavement. The ancient

There rose a Carlo Dolce or a Titian,
Or wilder group of savage Salvatore's :³
Here danced Albano's boys, and here the sea shone
In Vernet's ocean lights ; and there the stories
Of martyrs awed, as Spagnoletto tainted
His brush with all the blood of all the sainted.

LXXII.

Here sweetly spread a landscape of Lorraine ;
There Rembrandt made his darkness equal light,
Or gloomy Caravaggio's gloomier stain
Bronzed o'er some lean and stoic anchorite : —
But, lo ! a Teniers woos, and not in vain,
Your eyes to revel in a livelier sight :
His bell-mouth'd goblet makes me feel quite Danish⁴
Or Dutch with thirst — What, ho ! a flask of Rhenish.

LXXIII.

O reader ! if that thou canst read, — and know,
'T is not enough to spell, or even to read,
To constitute a reader ; there must go
Virtues of which both you and I have need.
Firstly, begin with the beginning — (though
That clause is hard) ; and secondly, proceed ;
Thirdly, commence not with the end — or, sinning
In this sort, end at least with the beginning.

LXXIV.

But, reader, thou hast patient been of late,
While I, without remorse of rhyme, or fear,
Have built and laid out ground at such a rate,
Dan Phœbus takes me for an auctioneer.
That poets were so from their earliest date,
By Homer's "catalogue of ships" is clear ;
But a mere modern must be moderate —
I spare you then the furniture and plate.

LXXV.

The mellow autumn came, and with it came
The promised party, to enjoy its sweets.
The corn is cut, the manor full of game ;
The pointer ranges, and the sportsman beats
In russet jacket : — lynx-like is his aim ;
Full grows his bag, and wonderful his feats.
Ah, nutbrown partridges ! Ah, brilliant pheasants !
And ah, ye poachers ! — 'T is no sport for peasants.

LXXVI.

An English autumn, though it hath no vines,
Blushing with Bacchant coronals along
The paths, o'er which the far festoon entwines
The red grape in the sunny lands of song,
Hath yet a purchased choice of choicest wines ;
The claret light, and the Madeira strong.
If Britain mourn her bleakness, we can tell her,
The very best of vineyards is the cellar.

LXXVII.

Then, if she hath not that serene decline
Which makes the southern autumn's day appear
As if 't would to a second spring resign
The season, rather than to winter drear, —

chapel, too, is still entire ; its ceiling is a very handsome specimen of the Gothic style of springing arches." — Art. *Newstead*, in *Beauties of England*, vol. xii.]

³ Salvator Rosa —

["Whate'er Lorraine light touch'd with softening hue,
Or savage Rosa dash'd, or learned Poussin drew." — THOMSON'S *Castle of Indolence*.]

⁴ If I err not, "your Dane" is one of Iago's catalogue of nations "exquisite in their drinking."

Of in-door comforts still she hath a mine, —
The sea-coal fires, the "earliest of the year ;"¹
Without doors, too, she may compete in mellow,
As what is lost in green is gain'd in yellow.

LXXVIII.

And for the effeminate *villeggiatura* — [chase,
Rife with more horns than hounds — she hath the
So animated that it might allure a
Saint from his beads to join the jocund race ;
Even Nimrod's self might leave the plains of Dura,²
And wear the Melton jacket³ for a space :
If she hath no wild boars, she hath a tame
Preserve of bores, who ought to be made game.

LXXIX.

The noble guests, assembled at the Abbey,
Consisted of — we give the sex the *pas* —
The Duchess of Fitz-Fulke ; the Countess Crabby ;
The Ladies Scilly, Busey ; — Miss Eclat,
Miss Bombazeen, Miss Mackstay, Miss O'Tabby,
And Mrs. Rabbi, the rich banker's squaw :
Also the honourable Mrs. Sleep,
Who look'd a white lamb, yet was a black sheep :

LXXX.

With other Countesses of Blank — but rank ;
At once the "lie" and the "élite" of crowds ;
Who pass like water filter'd in a tank,
All purged and pious from their native clouds ;
Or paper turn'd to money by the Bank :
No matter how or why, the passport shrouds
The "passée" and the past ; for good society
Is no less famed for tolerance than piety, —

LXXXI.

That is, up to a certain point ; which point
Forms the most difficult in punctuation.
Appearances appear to form the joint
On which it hinges in a higher station ;
And so that no explosion cry "Aroint
Thee, witch !"⁴ or each Medea has her Jason ;
Or (to the point with Horace and with Pulci)
"Omne tulit punctum, quæ miscuit utile dulci."

LXXXII.

I can't exactly trace their rule of right,
Which hath a little leaning to a lottery.
I've seen a virtuous woman put down quite
By the mere combination of a coterie ;
Also a so-so matron boldly fight
Her way back to the world by dint of plottery,
And shine the very *Siria*⁵ of the spheres,
Escaping with a few slight, scarless sneers.

LXXXIII.

I have seen more than I'll say : — but we will see
How our *villeggiatura* will get on.
The party might consist of thirty-three
Of highest caste — the Brahmins of the ton.
I have named a few, not foremost in degree,
But ta'en at hazard as the rhyme may run.

¹ ["Gray's omitted stanza —

"Here scatter'd oft, the earliest of the year,
By hands unseen, are showers of violets found ;
The redbreast loves to build and warble here,
And little footsteps lightly print the ground."

is as fine as any in the Elegy. I wonder that he could have the heart to omit it." — *Byron Diary*, Feb. 1821.]

² In Assyria.

³ [For a graphic account of Melton Mowbray, the head-

By way of sprinkling, scatter'd amongst these,
There also were some Irish absentees.

LXXXIV.

There was Parolles, too, the legal bully,
Who limits all his battles to the bar
And senate : when invited elsewhere, truly,
He shows more appetite for words than war.
There was the young bard Rackrhyme, who had newly
Come out and glimmer'd as a six weeks' star.
There was Lord Pyrrho, too, the great freethinker ;
And Sir John Pottledeepe, the mighty drinker.

LXXXV.

There was the Duke of Dash, who was a — duke,
"Ay, every inch a" duke ; there were twelve peers
Like Charlemagne's — and all such peers in look
And intellect, that neither eyes nor ears
For commoners had ever them mistook.
There were the six Miss Rawbolds — pretty dears !
All song and sentiment ; whose hearts were set
Less on a convent than a coronet.

LXXXVI.

There were four Honourable Misters, whose
Honour was more before their names than after ;
There was the preux Chevalier de la Ruse, [here,
Whom France and Fortune lately deign'd to waft
Whose chiefly harmless talent was to amuse ;
But the clubs found it rather serious laughter,
Because — such was his magic power to please —
The dice seem'd charm'd, too, with his repartees.

LXXXVII.

There was Dick Dubious, the metaphysician,
Who loved philosophy and a good dinner ;
Angle, the soi-disant mathematician ;
Sir Henry Silvercup, the great race-winner.
There was the Reverend Rodomont Precisian,
Who did not hate so much the sin as sinner ;
And Lord Augustus Fitz-Plantagenet,
Good at all things, but better at a bet.

LXXXVIII.

There was Jack Jargon, the gigantic guardsman ;
And General Fireface, famous in the field,
A great tactician, and no less a swordsman,
Who ate, last war, more Yankees than he kill'd.
There was the waggish Welsh Judge, Jefferies Hards —
In his grave office so completely skill'd, [man,⁶
That when a culprit came for condemnation,
He had his judge's joke for consolation.

LXXXIX.

Good company's a chess-board — there are kings,
Queens, bishops, knights, rooks, pawns ; the world's
a game ;
Save that the puppets pull at their own strings,
Methinks gay Punch hath something of the same.
My Muse, the butterfly hath but her wings,
Not stings, and flits through ether without aim,
Alighting rarely : — were she but a hornet,
Perhaps there might be vices which would mourn it.

quarters of the English chase, see *Quarterly Review*, vol. xlvii. p. 216.]

⁴ ["Aroint thee, witch ! the rump-fed ronyon cries." — *Macbeth*.]

⁵ *Siria*, i. e. bitch-star.

⁶ [George Hardinge, Esq., M.P., one of the Welsh judges, died in 1816. His works were collected, in 1818, by Mr. Nichols.]

XC.

I had forgotten — but must not forget —
An orator, the latest of the session,
Who had deliver'd well a very set
Smooth speech, his first and maidenly transgression
Upon debate: the papers echoed yet
With his debut, which made a strong impression,
And rank'd with what is every day display'd —
"The best first speech that ever yet was made."

XCI.

Proud of his "Hear him!" proud, too, of his vote
And lost virginity of oratory,
Proud of his learning (just enough to quote),
He revell'd in his Ciceronian glory:
With memory excellent to get by rote,
With wit to hatch a pun or tell a story,
Graced with some merit, and with more effrontery,
"His country's pride," he came down to the country.

XCII.

There also were two wits by acclamation,
Longbow from Ireland, Strongbow from the Tweed,¹
Both lawyers and both men of education;
But Strongbow's wit was of more polish'd breed:
Longbow was rich in an imagination
As beautiful and bounding as a steed,
But sometimes stumbling over a potato, — [Cato.
While Strongbow's best things might have come from

XCIII.

Strongbow was like a new-tuned harpsichord;
But Longbow wild as an Æolian harp,
With which the winds of heaven can claim accord,
And make a music, whether flat or sharp.
Of Strongbow's talk you would not change a word:
At Longbow's phrases you might sometimes carp:
Both wits — one born so, and the other bred,
This by his heart — his rival by his head.

XCIV.

If all these seem an heterogeneous mass
To be assembled at a country seat,
Yet think, a specimen of every class
Is better than a humdrum tête-à-tête.
The days of Comedy are gone, alas!
When Congreve's fool could vie with Molière's *bête*:
Society is smooth'd to that excess,
That manners hardly differ more than dress.

XCV.

Our ridicules are kept in the back-ground —
Ridiculous enough, but also dull;
Professions, too, are no more to be found
Professional; and there is nought to cull
Of folly's fruit: for though your fools abound,
They're barren, and not worth the pains to pull.
Society is now one polish'd horde,
Form'd of two mighty tribes, the *Bored* and *Bored*.

XCVI.

But from being farmers, we turn gleaners, gleaning
The scanty but right-well thresh'd ears of truth;
And, gentle reader! when you gather meaning,
You may be Boaz, and I — modest Ruth.

¹ [Curran and Erskine.]

² "Mrs. Adams answered Mr. Adams, that it was blasphemous to talk of Scripture out of church." This dogma was broached to her husband — the best Christian in any book. — See *Joseph Andrews*.

Farther I'd quote, but Scripture intervening
Forbids. A great impression in my youth
Was made by Mrs. Adams, where she cries,
"That Scriptures out of church are blasphemies."

XCVII.

But what we can we glean in this vile age
Of chaff, although our gleanings be not grist.
I must not quite omit the talking sage,
Kit-Cat, the famous Conversationist,
Who, in his common-place book, had a page
Prepared each morn for evenings. "List, oh
list!" —

"Alas, poor ghost!" — What unexpected woes
Await those who have studied their bons-mots!

XCVIII.

Firstly, they must allure the conversation,
By many windings to their clever clinch;
And secondly, must let slip no occasion,
Nor *bate* (abate) their hearers of an *inch*,
But take an ell — and make a great sensation,
If possible; and thirdly, never flinch
When some smart talker puts them to the test,
But seize the last word, which no doubt's the best.

XCIX.

Lord Henry and his lady were the hosts;
The party we have touch'd on were the guests.
Their table was a board to tempt even ghosts
To pass the Styx for more substantial feasts.
I will not dwell upon ragouts or roasts,
Albeit all human history attests
That happiness for man — the hungry sinner! —
Since Eve ate apples, much depends on dinner.³

C.

Witness the lands which "flow'd with milk and honey,"
Held out unto the hungry Israelites;
To this we have added since, the love of money,
The only sort of pleasure which requites.
Youth fades, and leaves our days no longer sunny;
We tire of mistresses and parasites,
But oh, ambrosial cash! Ah! who would lose thee?
When we no more can use, or even abuse thee!

CI.

The gentlemen got up betimes to shoot,
Or hunt: the young, because they liked the sport —
The first thing boys like, after play and fruit;
The middle-aged, to make the day more short;
For *ennui* is a growth of English root,
Though nameless in our language: — we retort
The fact for words, and let the French translate
That awful yawn which sleep can not abate.

CII.

The elderly walk'd through the library,
And tumbled books, or criticised the pictures,
Or saunter'd through the gardens piteously,
And made upon the hot-house several strictures,
Or rode a nag which trotted not too high,
Or on the morning papers read their lectures,
Or on the watch their longing eyes would fix,
Longing at sixty for the hour of six.

³ ["A man seldom thinks with more earnestness of any thing than he does of his dinner; and if he cannot get that well dressed, he should be suspected of inaccuracy in other things." — JOHNSON.]

CIII.

But none were "géné:" the great hour of union
Was rung by dinner's knell; till then all were
Masters of their own time — or in communion,
Or solitary, as they chose to bear
The hours, which how to pass is but to few known.
Each rose up at his own, and had to spare
What time he chose for dress, and broke his fast
When, where, and how he chose for that repast.

CIV.

The ladies — some rouged, some a little pale —
Met the morn as they might. If fine, they rode,
Or walk'd; if foul, they read, or told a tale,
Sung, or rehearsed the last dance from abroad;
Discuss'd the fashion which might next prevail,
And settled bonnets by the newest code,
Or cramm'd twelve sheets into one little letter,
To make each correspondent a new debtor.

CV.

For some had absent lovers, all had friends.
The earth has nothing like a she epistle,
And hardly heaven — because it never ends.
I love the mystery of a female missal,
Which, like a creed, ne'er says all it intends,
But full of cunning as Ulysses' whistle,
When he allured poor Dolon: — you had better
Take care what you reply to such a letter.

CVI.

Then there were billiards; cards, too, but *no dice*; —
Save in the clubs no man of honour plays; —
Boats when 't was water, skating when 't was ice,
And the hard frost destroy'd the scenting days:
And angling, too, that solitary vice,
Whatever Izaak Walton sings or says:
The quaint, old, cruel coxcomb, in his gullet
Should have a hook, and a small trout to pull it.¹

CVII.

With evening came the banquet and the wine;
The conversazione; the duet,
Attuned by voices more or less divine
(My heart or head aches with the memory yet).
The four Miss Rawbolds in a glee would shine;
But the two youngest loved more to be set
Down to the harp — because to music's charms
They added graceful necks, white hands and arms.

CVIII.

Sometimes a dance (though rarely on field days,
For then the gentlemen were rather tired)
Display'd some sylph-like figures in its maze;
Then there was small-talk ready when required;
Flirtation — but decorous; the mere praise
Of charms that should or should not be admired.
The hunters fought their fox-hunt o'er again,
And then retreated soberly — at ten.

¹ It would have taught him humanity at least. This sentimental savage, whom it is a mode to quote (amongst the novelists) to show their sympathy for innocent sports and old songs, teaches how to sew up frogs, and break their legs by way of experiment, in addition to the art of angling, — the cruelest, the coldest, and the stupidest of pretended sports. They may talk about the beauties of nature, but the angler merely thinks of his dish of fish; he has no leisure to take his eyes from off the streams, and a single *bite* is worth to him more than all the scenery around. Besides, some fish bite best on a rainy day. The whale, the shark, and the tunny fishery

CIX.

The politicians, in a nook apart,
Discuss'd the world, and settled all the spheres:
The wits watch'd every loophole for their art,
To introduce a bon-mot head and ears;
Small is the rest of those who would be smart,
A moment's good thing may have cost them years,
Before they find an hour to introduce it;
And then, even *then*, some bore may make them lose it.

CX.

But all was gentle and aristocratic
In this our party; polish'd, smooth, and cold,
As Phidian forms cut out of marble Attic.
There now are no Squire Westerns as of old;
And our Sophias are not so emphatic,
But fair as then, or fairer to behold.
We have no accomplished blackguards, like Tom Jones,
But gentlemen in stays, as stiff as stones.

CXI.

They separated at an early hour;
That is, ere midnight — which is London's noon:
But in the country ladies seek their bower
A little earlier than the waning moon.
Peace to the slumbers of each folded flower —
May the rose call back its true colour soon!
Good hours of fair cheeks are the fairest tinters,
And lower the price of rouge — at least some winters.

Don Juan.

CANTO THE FOURTEENTH.

I.

If from great nature's or our own abyss
Of thought we could but snatch a certainty,
Perhaps mankind might find the path they miss —
But then 't would spoil much good philosophy.
One system eats another up, and this
Much as old Saturn ate his progeny;
For when his pious consort gave him stones
In lieu of sons, of these he made no bones.

II.

But System doth reverse the Titan's breakfast,
And eats her parents, albeit the digestion
Is difficult. Pray tell me, can you make fast,
After due search, your faith to any question?
Look back o'er ages, ere unto the stake fast
You bind yourself, and call some mode the best one.
Nothing more true than *not* to trust your senses;
And yet what are your other evidences?

have somewhat of noble and perilous in them; even net fishing, trawling, &c. are more humane and useful. But angling! — no angler can be a good man.

"One of the best men I ever knew, — as humane, delicate-minded, generous, and excellent a creature as any in the world, — was an angler: true, he angled with painted flies, and would have been incapable of the extravagancies of I. Walton."

The above addition was made by a friend in reading over the MS. — "Audi alteram partem." — I leave it to counter-balance my own observation.

III.

For me, I know nought; nothing I deny,
Admit, reject, condemn; and what know you,
Except perhaps that you were born to die?
And both may after all turn out untrue.
An age may come, Font of Eternity,
When nothing shall be either old or new.
Death, so call'd, is a thing which makes men weep,
And yet a third of life is pass'd in sleep.

IV.

A sleep without dreams, after a rough day
Of toil, is what we covet most; and yet
How clay shrinks back from more quiescent clay!
The very Suicide that pays his debt
At once without instalments (an old way
Of paying debts, which creditors regret)
Lets out impatiently his rushing breath,
Less from disgust of life than dread of death.

V.

'Tis round him, near him, here, there, every where;
And there's a courage which grows out of fear,
Perhaps of all most desperate, which will dare
The worst to know it:—when the mountains rear
Their peaks beneath your human foot, and there
You look down o'er the precipice, and drear
The gulf of rock yawns,—you can't gaze a minute,
Without an awful wish to plunge within it.

VI.

'Tis true, you don't—but, pale and struck with terror,
Retire: but look into your past impression!
And you will find, though shuddering at the mirror
Of your own thoughts, in all their self-confession,
The lurking bias, be it truth or error,
To the *unknown*: a secret prepossession,
To plunge with all your fears—but where? You
know not,
And that's the reason why you do—or do not.

VII.

But what's this to the purpose? you will say.
Gent. reader, nothing; a mere speculation,
For which my sole excuse is—'t is my way,
Sometimes *with* and sometimes without occasion
I write what's uppermost, without delay;
This narrative is not meant for narration,
But a mere airy and fantastic basis,
To build up common things with common places.

VIII.

You know, or don't know, that great Bacon saith,
"Fling up a straw, 't will show the way the wind
blows;"
And such a straw, borne on by human breath,
Is poesy, according as the mind glows;
A paper kite which flies 'twixt life and death,
A shadow which the onward soul behind throws:
And mine's a bubble, not blown up for praise,
But just to play with, as an infant plays.

IX.

The world is all before me—or behind;
For I have seen a portion of that same,
And quite enough for me to keep in mind;—
Of passions, too, I have proved enough to blame,
To the great pleasure of our friends, mankind,
Who like to mix some slight alloy with fame;
For I was rather famous in my time,
Until I fairly knock'd it up with rhyme.

X.

I have brought this world about my ears, and eke
The other: that's to say, the clergy—who
Upon my head have bid their thunders break
In pious libels by no means a few.
And yet I can't help scribbling once a week,
Tiring old readers, nor discovering new.
In youth I wrote because my mind was full,
And now because I feel it growing dull.

XI.

But "why then publish?"¹—There are no rewards
Of fame or profit when the world grows weary.
I ask in turn,—Why do you play at cards?
Why drink? Why read?—To make some hour
less dreary.
It occupies me to turn back regards
On what I've seen or ponder'd, sad or cheery;
And what I write I cast upon the stream,
To swim or sink—I have had at least my dream.

XII.

I think that were I *certain* of success,
I hardly could compose another line:
So long I've battled either more or less,
That no defeat can drive me from the Nine.
This feeling 't is not easy to express,
And yet 't is not affected, I opine.
In play, there are two pleasures for your choosing—
The one is winning, and the other losing.

XIII.

Besides, my Muse by no means deals in fiction:
She gathers a repertory of facts,
Of course with some reserve and slight restriction,
But mostly sings of human things and acts—
And that's one cause she meets with contradiction;
For too much truth, at first sight, ne'er attracts;
And were her object only what's call'd glory,
With more ease too she'd tell a different story.

XIV.

Love, war, a tempest—surely there's variety;
Also a seasoning slight of lubrication;
A bird's eye view, too, of that wild, Society;
A slight glance thrown on men of every station.
If you have thought else, here's at least safety,
Both in performance and in preparation;
And though these lines should only line portmanteaus,
Trade will be all the better for these Cantos.

XV.

The portion of this world which I at present
Have taken up to fill the following sermon,
Is one of which there's no description rec'd:
The reason why, is easy to determine:
Although it seems both prominent and pleasant,
There is a sameness in its gems and ermine,
A dull and family likeness through all ages,
Of no great promise for poetic pages.

XVI.

With much to excite, there's little to exalt;
Nothing that speaks to all men and all times;
A sort of varnish over every fault;
A kind of common-place, even in their crimes;
Factitious passions, wit without much salt,
A want of that true nature which sublimates
Whate'er it shows with truth; a smooth monotony
Of character, in those at least who have got any.

¹ ["But why then publish?—Granville, the polite,
And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write."
POPE.]

XVII.

Sometimes, indeed, like soldiers off parade,
They break their ranks and gladly leave the drill;
But then the roll-call draws them back afraid,
And they must be or seem what they were: still
Doubtless it is a brilliant masquerade;
But when of the first sight you have had your fill,
It palls—at least it did so upon me,
This paradise of pleasure and ennui.

XVIII.

When we have made our love, and gamed our gaming,
Drest, voted, shone, and, may be, something more;
With dandies dined; heard senators declaiming;
Seen beauties brought to market by the score,
Sad rakes to sadder husbands chastely taming;
There's little left but to be bored or bore.
Witness those "*ci-devant jeunes hommes*" who stem
The stream, nor leave the world which leaveth them.

XIX.

'Tis said—indeed a general complaint—
That no one has succeeded in describing
The monde, exactly as they ought to paint:
Some say, that authors only snatch, by bribing
The porter, some slight scandals strange and quaint,
To furnish matter for their moral gibing;
And that their books have but one style in common—
My lady's prattle, filter'd through her woman.

XX.

But this can't well be true, just now; for writers
Are grown of the beau monde a part potential:
I've seen them balance even the scale with fighters,
Especially when young, for that's essential.
Why do their sketches fail them as inditers
Of what they deem themselves most consequential,
The *real* portrait of the highest tribe?
'Tis that, in fact, there's little to describe.

XXI.

"*Haud ignara loquor*;" these are *Nugæ*, "*quarum
Pars parva fui*," but still art and part.
Now I could much more easily sketch a harem,
A battle, wreck, or history of the heart,
Than these things; and besides, I wish to spare 'em,
For reasons which I choose to keep apart.
"*Vetabo Cereris sacrum qui vulgarit*"—¹
Which means that vulgar people must not share it.

XXII.

And therefore what I throw off is ideal—
Lower'd, leaven'd, like a history of freemasons;
Which bears the same relation to the real,
As Captain Parry's voyage may do to Jason's.
The grand arcanum's not for men to see all;
My music has some mystic diapasons;
And there is much which could not be appreciated
In any manner by the uninitiated.

XXIII.

Alas! worlds fall—and woman, since she fell'd
The world (as, since that history, less polite
Than true, hath been a creed so strictly held)
Has not yet given up the practice quite.
Poor thing of usages! coerced, compell'd,
Victim when wrong, and martyr oft when right,
Condemn'd to child-bed, as men for their sins
Have shaving too entail'd upon their chins,—

¹ [Hor. Carm. l. iii. od. 2.]

XXIV.

A daily plague, which in the aggregate
May average on the whole with parturition.
But as to women, who can penetrate
The real sufferings of their she condition?
Man's very sympathy with their estate
Has much of selfishness, and more suspicion.
Their love, their virtue, beauty, education,
But form good housekeepers, to breed a nation.

XXV.

All this were very well, and can't be better;
But even this is difficult, Heaven knows,
So many troubles from her birth beset her,
Such small distinction between friends and foes,
The gilding wears so soon from off her fetter,
That—but ask any woman if she'd choose
(Take her at thirty, that is) to have been
Female or male? a schoolboy or a queen?

XXVI.

"Petticoat influence" is a great reproach,
Which even those who obey would fain be thought
To fly from, as from hungry pikes a roach;
But since beneath it upon earth we are brought,
By various joltings of life's hackney coach,
I for one venerate a petticoat—
A garment of a mystical sublimity,
No matter whether russet, silk, or dimity.

XXVII.

Much I respect, and much I have adored,
In my young days, that chaste and goodly veil,
Which holds a treasure, like a miser's hoard,
And more attracts by all it doth conceal—
A golden scabbard on a Damasque sword,
A loving letter with a mystic seal,
A cure for grief—for what can ever rankle
Before a petticoat and peeping ankle?

XXVIII.

And when upon a silent, sullen day,
With a sirocco, for example, blowing,
When even the sea looks dim with all its spray,
And sulkily the river's ripple's flowing,
And the sky shows that very ancient gray,
The sober, sad antithesis to glowing,—
'Tis pleasant, if *then* any thing is pleasant,
To catch a glimpse even of a pretty peasant.

XXIX.

We left our heroes and our heroines
In that fair clime which don't depend on climate,
Quite independent of the Zodiac's signs,
Though certainly more difficult to rhyme at,
Because the sun, and stars, and aught that shines,
Mountains, and all we can be most sublime at,
Are there oft dull and dreary as a *dun*—
Whether a sky's or tradesman's is all one.

XXX.

An in-door life is less poetical;
And out of door hath showers, and mists, and sleet,
With which I could not brew a pastoral.
But be it as it may, a bard must meet
All difficulties, whether great or small,
To spoil his undertaking or complete,
And work away like spirit upon matter,
Embarrass'd somewhat both with fire and water.