

XXXIII.

They generally have some only son,
Some heir to a large property, some friend
Of an old family, some gay Sir John, [end
Or grave Lord George, with whom perhaps might
A line, and leave posterity undone,
Unless a marriage was applied to mend
The prospect and their morals: and besides,
They have at hand a blooming glut of brides.

XXXIV.

From these they will be careful to select,
For this an heiress, and for that a beauty;
For one a songstress who hath no defect,
For t'other one who promises much duty;
For this a lady no one can reject,
Whose sole accomplishments were quite a booty;
A second for her excellent connections;
A third, because there can be no objections.

XXXV.

When Rapp the Harmonist embargo'd marriage¹
In his harmonious settlement — (which flourishes
Strangely enough as yet without miscarriage,
Because it breeds no more mouths than it nourishes,
Without those sad expenses which disparage
What Nature naturally most encourages) —
Why call'd he "Harmony" a state sans wedlock?
Now here I've got the preacher at a dead lock.

XXXVI.

Because he either meant to sneer at harmony
Or marriage, by divorcing them thus oddly.
But whether reverend Rapp learn'd this in Germany
Or no, 't is said his sect is rich and godly,
Pious and pure, beyond what I can term any
Of ours, although they propagate more broadly.
My objection 's to his title, not his ritual,
Although I wonder how it grew habitual.

XXXVII.

But Rapp is the reverse of zealous matrons,
Who favour, malgré Malthus, generation —
Professors of that genial art, and patrons
Of all the modest part of propagation;
Which after all at such a desperate rate runs,
That half its produce tends to emigration,
That sad result of passions and potatoes —
Two weeds which pose our economic Catos.

XXXVIII.

Had Adeline read Malthus? I can't tell;
I wish she had: his book 's the eleventh command-
ment,
Which says, "Thou shalt not marry," unless well.
This he (as far as I can understand) meant.
'T is not my purpose on his views to dwell,
Nor canvass what "so eminent a hand" meant;²
But certes it conducts to lives ascetic,
Or turning marriage into arithmetic.

¹ This extraordinary and flourishing German colony in America does not entirely exclude matrimony, as the "Shakers" do; but lays such restrictions upon it as prevents more than a certain quantum of births within a certain number of years; which births (as Mr. Hulme observes) generally arrive "in a little flock like those of a farmer's lambs, all within the same month perhaps." These Harmonists (so called from the name of their settlement) are represented as a remarkably flourishing, pious, and quiet people. See the various recent writers on America.

XXXIX.

But Adeline, who probably presumed
That Juan had enough of maintenance,
Or separate maintenance, in case 't was doom'd —
As on the whole it is an even chance
That bridegrooms, after they are fairly groom'd,
May retrograde a little in the dance
Of marriage — (which might form a painter's fame,
Like Holbein's "Dance of Death"³ — but 't is the same); —

XL.

But Adeline determined Juan's wedding
In her own mind, and that 's enough for woman:
But then, with whom? There was the sage Miss
Reading,
Miss Raw, Miss Flaw, Miss Showman, and Miss
Knowman,
And the two fair co-heiresses Giltbedding.
She deem'd his merits something more than com-
All these were unobjectionable matches, [mon:
And might go on, if well wound up, like watches.

XLL.

There was Miss Millpond, smooth as summer's sea,
That usual paragon, an only daughter,
Who seem'd the cream of equanimity, [water,
Till skim'd — and then there was some milk and
With a slight shade of blue too, it might be,
Beneath the surface; but what did it matter?
Love's riotous, but marriage should have quiet,
And being consumptive, live on a milk diet.

XLII.

And then there was the Miss Audacia Shoestring,
A dashing demoiselle of good estate,
Whose heart was fix'd upon a star or blue string;
But whether English dukes grew rare of late,
Or that she had not harp'd upon the true string,
By which such sirens can attract our great,
She took up with some foreign younger brother,
A Russ or Turk — the one's as good as 't other.

XLIII.

And then there was — but why should I go on,
Unless the ladies should go off? — there was
Indeed a certain fair and fairy one,
Of the best class, and better than her class, —
Aurora Raby, a young star who shone
O'er life, too sweet an image for such glass,
A lovely being, scarcely form'd or moulded,
A rose with all its sweetest leaves yet folded;

XLIV.

Rich, noble, but an orphan; left an only
Child to the care of guardians good and kind;
But still her aspect had an air so lonely!
Blood is not water; and where shall we find
Feelings of youth like those which overthrown lie
By death, when we are left, alas! behind,
To feel, in friendless palaces, a home
Is wanting, and our best ties in the tomb?

² Jacob Tonson, according to Mr. Pope, was accustomed to call his writers "able pens," "persons of honour," and especially "eminent hands." Vide Correspondence, &c. &c. — ["Perhaps I should myself be much better pleased, if I were told you called me your little friend, than if you complimented me with the title of a 'great genius,' or an 'eminent hand,' as Jacob does all his authors." — Pope to Steele.]

³ [See D'Israeli's Curiosities of Literature, New Series, vol. ii. p. 308., and the Dissertation prefixed to Mr. Douce's valuable edition of Hollar's Dance of Death.]

XLV.

Early in years, and yet more infantine
In figure, she had something of sublime
In eyes which sadly shone, as seraphs' shine.
All youth — but with an aspect beyond time;
Radiant and grave — as pitying man's decline;
Mournful — but mournful of another's crime,
She look'd as if she sat by Eden's door,
And grieved for those who could return no more.

XLVI.

She was a Catholic, too, sincere, austere,
As far as her own gentle heart allow'd,
And deem'd that fallen worship far more dear
Perhaps because 't was fallen: her sires were proud
Of deeds and days when they had fill'd the ear
Of nations, and had never bent or bow'd
To novel power; and as she was the last,
She held their old faith and old feelings fast.

XLVII.

She gazed upon a world she scarcely knew
As seeking not to know it; silent, lone,
As grows a flower, thus quietly she grew,
And kept her heart serene within its zone.
There was awe in the homage which she drew;
Her spirit seem'd as seated on a throne
Apart from the surrounding world, and strong
In its own strength — most strange in one so young!

XLVIII.

Now it so happen'd, in the catalogue
Of Adeline, Aurora was omitted,
Although her birth and wealth had given her vogue,
Beyond the charmers we have already cited;
Her beauty also seem'd to form no clog
Against her being mention'd as well fitted,
By many virtues, to be worth the trouble
Of single gentlemen who would be double.

XLIX.

And this omission, like that of the bust
Of Brutus at the pageant of Tiberius,¹
Made Juan wonder, as no doubt he must.
This he express'd half smiling and half serious;
When Adeline replied with some disgust,
And with an air, to say the least, imperious,
She marvell'd "what he saw in such a baby
As that prim, silent, cold Aurora Raby?"

L.

Juan rejoin'd — "She was a Catholic,
And therefore fittest, as of his persuasion;
Since he was sure his mother would fall sick,
And the Pope thunder excommunication,
If —" But here Adeline, who seem'd to pique
Herself extremely on the inoculation
Of others with her own opinions, stated —
As usual — the same reason which she late did.

LI.

And wherefore not? A reasonable reason,
If good, is none the worse for repetition;
If bad, the best way's certainly to tease on,
And amplify: you lose much by concision,
Whereas insisting in or out of season
Convinces all men, even a politician;
Or — what is just the same — it wears out.
So the end's gain'd, what signifies the route?

¹ See Tacitus, b. vi.

LII.

Why Adeline had this slight prejudice —
For prejudice it was — against a creature
As pure as sanctity itself from vice,
With all the added charm of form and feature,
For me appears a question far too nice,
Since Adeline was liberal by nature;
But nature's nature, and has more caprices
Than I have time, or will, to take to pieces.

LIII.

Perhaps she did not like the quiet way
With which Aurora on those baubles look'd,
Which charm most people in their earlier day:
For there are few things by mankind less brook'd,
And womankind too, if we so may say,
Than finding thus their genius stand rebuked,
Like "Anthony's by Caesar²," by the few
Who look upon them as they ought to do.

LIV.

It was not envy — Adeline had none;
Her place was far beyond it, and her mind.
It was not scorn — which could not light on one
Whose greatest fault was leaving few to find.
It was not jealousy, I think: but shun
Following the "ignes fatui" of mankind.
It was not — but 't is easier far, alas!
To say what it was not than what it was.

LV.

Little Aurora deem'd she was the theme
Of such discussion. She was there a guest;
A beauteous ripple of the brilliant stream
Of rank and youth, though purer than the rest,
Which flow'd on for a moment in the beam
Time sheds a moment o'er each sparkling crest.
Had she known this, she would have calmly smiled —
She had so much, or little, of the child.

LVI.

The dashing and proud air of Adeline
Imposed not upon her: she saw her blaze
Much as she would have seen a glow-worm shine,
Then turn'd unto the stars for loftier rays.
Juan was something she could not divine,
Being no sibyl in the new world's ways;
Yet she was nothing dazzled by the meteor
Because she did not pin her faith on feature.

LVII.

His fame too, — for he had that kind of fame
Which sometimes plays the deuce with womankind,
A heterogeneous mass of glorious blame,
Half virtues and whole vices being combined;
Faults which attract because they are not tame;
Follies trick'd out so brightly that they blind: —
These seals upon her wax made no impression,
Such was her coldness or her self-possession.

LVIII.

Juan knew nought of such a character —
High, yet resembling not his lost Haidée;
Yet each was radiant in her proper sphere:
The island girl, bred up by the lone sea,
More warm, as lovely, and not less sincere,
Was Nature's all: Aurora could not be,
Nor would be thus: — the difference in them
Was such as lies between a flower and gem.

² [—"And, under him,
My genius is rebuked; as it is said
Mark Antony's was by Caesar." — Macbeth.]

LIX.

Having wound up with this sublime comparison,
Methinks we may proceed upon our narrative,
And, as my friend Scott says, I sound my warison;¹
Scott, the superlative of my comparative—
Scott, who can paint your Christian knight or Saracen,
Serf, lord, man, with such skill as none would share
it, if
There had not been one Shakspeare and Voltaire,
Of one or both of whom he seems the heir.

LX.

I say, in my slight way I may proceed
To play upon the surface of humanity.
I write the world, nor care if the world read,
At least for this I cannot spare its vanity.
My Muse hath bred, and still perhaps may breed
More foes by this same scroll: when I began it, I
Thought that it might turn out so—*now I know it*,
But still I am, or was, a pretty poet.

LXI.

The conference or congress (for it ended
As congresses of late do) of the Lady
Adeline and Don Juan rather blended
Some acids with the sweets—for she was heady;
But, ere the matter could be marr'd or mended,
The silvery bell rang, not for "dinner ready,"
But for that hour, call'd *half-hour*, given to dress,
Though ladies' robes seem scant enough for less.

LXII.

Great things were now to be achieved at table,
With massy plate for armour, knives and forks
For weapons; but what Muse since Homer's able
(His feasts are not the worst part of his works)
To draw up in array a single day-bill
Of modern dinners? where more mystery lurks,
In soups or sauces, or a sole ragoût,
Than witches, b—ches, or physicians, brew.

LXIII.

There was a goodly "*soupe à la bonne femme*,"²
Though God knows whence it came from; there
was, too,
A turbot for relief of those who cram,
Relieved with "*dindon à la Parigaux*;"
There also was—the sinner that I am!
How shall I get this gourmand stanza through?—
"*Soupe à la Beauveau*," whose relief was dory,
Relieved itself by pork, for greater glory.

LXIV.

But I must crowd all into one grand mess
Or mass; for should I stretch into detail,
My Muse would run much more into excess,
Than when some squeamish people deem her frail;
But though a "*bonne vivante*," I must confess
Her stomach's not her peccant part; this tale
However doth require some slight refection,
Just to relieve her spirits from dejection.

¹ [*Warison*—*cri-de-guerre*—note of assault:—

"Either receive within these towers
Two hundred of my master's powers,
Or straight they sound their *warison*,
And storm and spoil this garrison."
Lay of the Last Minstrel.]

² [See *Almanach des Gourmands*, Code Gourmand, Le Cuisinier Royal, &c. &c.]

³ A dish "*à la Lucullus*." This hero, who conquered the

LXV.

Fowls "*à la Condé*," slices eke of salmon,
With "*saucés Génévoises*," and haunch of venison;
Wines too, which might again have slain young
Ammon—
A man like whom I hope we sha'n't see many soon;
They also set a glazed Westphalian ham on,
Whereon Apicius would bestow his benison;
And then there was champagne with foaming whirls,
As white as Cleopatra's melted pearls.

LXVI.

Then there was God knows what "*à l'Allemande*,"
"*à l'Espagnole*," "*timballe*," and "*salpicon*"—
With things I can't withstand or understand,
Though swallow'd with much zest upon the whole;
And "*entremets*" to piddle with at hand,
Gently to lull down the subsiding soul;
While great Lucullus' *Robe triumphal* muffles—
(*There's fame*)—young partridge fillets, deck'd with
truffles.³

LXVII.

What are the *fillets* on the victor's brow
To these? They are rags or dust. Where is the arch
Which nodded to the nation's spoils below?
Where the triumphal chariots' haughty march?
Gone to where victories must like dinners go.
Farther I shall not follow the research:
But oh! ye modern heroes with your cartridges,
When will your names lend lustre e'en to partridges?

LXVIII.

Those truffles too are no bad accessories,
Follow'd by "*petits puits d'amour*"—a dish
Of which perhaps the cookery rather varies,
So every one may dress it to his wish,
According to the best of dictionaries,
Which encyclopedize both flesh and fish;
But even sans "*confitures*," it no less true is,
There's pretty picking in those "*petits puits*."⁴

LXIX.

The mind is lost in mighty contemplation
Of intellect expanded on two courses;
And indigestion's grand multiplication
Requires arithmetic beyond my forces.
Who would suppose, from Adam's simple ration,
That cookery could have call'd forth such resources,
As form a science and a nomenclature
From out the commonest demands of nature?

LXX.

The glasses jingled, and the palates tingled;
The diners of celebrity dined well;
The ladies with more moderation mingled
In the feast, pecking less than I can tell;
Also the younger men too: for a springald
Can't, like ripe age, in gormandize excel,
But thinks less of good eating than the whisper
(When seated next him) of some pretty lisper.

East, has left his more extended celebrity to the trans-
plantation of cherries (which he first brought into Europe),
and the nomenclature of some very good dishes;—and I am
not sure that (barring indigestion) he has not done more
service to mankind by his cookery than by his conquests. A
cherry-tree may weigh against a bloody laurel; besides, he
has contrived to earn celebrity from both.

⁴ "*Petits puits d'amour garnis des confitures*,"—a clas-
sical and well known dish for part of the flank of a second
course.

LXXI.

Alas! I must leave undescribed the gibier,
The salmi, the consommé, the purée,
All which I use to make my rhymes run glibber
Than could roast beef in our rough John Bull way:
I must not introduce even a spare rib here,
"Bubble and squeak" would spoil my liquid lay,
But I have dined, and must forego, alas!
The chaste description even of a "*bécasse*;"

LXXII.

And fruits, and ice, and all that art refines
From nature for the service of the goût—
Taste or the gout,—pronounce it as inclines
Your stomach! Ere you dine, the French will do;
But *after*, there are sometimes certain signs
Which prove plain English truer of the two.
Hast ever had the *gout*? I have not had it—
But I may have, and you too, reader, dread it.

LXXIII.

The simple olives, best allies of wine,
Must I pass over in my bill of fare?
I must, although a favourite "*plat*" of mine
In Spain, and Lucca, Athens, every where:
On them and bread 't was off my luck to dine,
The grass my table-cloth, in open air,
On Sunium or Hymettus, like Diogenes,
Of whom half my philosophy the progeny is.¹

LXXIV.

Amidst this tumult of fish, flesh, and fowl,
And vegetables, all in masquerade,
The guests were placed according to their roll,
But various as the various meats display'd:
Don Juan sat next an "*à l'Espagnole*"—
No damsel, but a dish, as hath been said;
But so far like a lady, that 't was drest
Superbly, and contain'd a world of zest.

LXXV.

By some odd chance too, he was placed between
Aurora and the Lady Adeline—
A situation difficult, I ween,
For man therein, with eyes and heart, to dine.
Also the conference which we have seen
Was not such as to encourage him to shine,
For Adeline, addressing few words to him, [him.
With two transcendent eyes seem'd to look through

LXXVI.

I sometimes almost think that eyes have ears:
This much is sure, that, out of earshot, things
Are somehow echoed to the pretty dears,
Of which I can't tell whence their knowledge springs.
Like that same mystic music of the spheres,
Which no one hears, so loudly though it rings,
'T is wonderful how oft the sex have heard
Long dialogues—which pass'd without a word!

LXXVII.

Aurora sat with that indifference
Which piques a preux chevalier—as it ought:
Of all offences that's the worst offence,
Which seems to hint you are not worth a thought.
Now Juan, though no coxcomb in pretence,
Was not exactly pleased to be so caught;
Like a good ship entangled among ice,
And after so much excellent advice.

¹ ["To-day in a palace, to-morrow in a cow-house—this
day with the pacha, the next with a shepherd."—*Byron*
Letters, 1810.]

LXXVIII.

To his gay nothings, nothing was replied,
Or something which was nothing, as urbanity
Required. Aurora scarcely look'd aside,
Nor even smiled enough for any vanity.
The devil was in the girl! Could it be pride?
Or modesty, or absence, or inanity?
Heaven knows! But Adeline's malicious eyes
Sparkled with her successful prophecies,

LXXIX.

And look'd as much as if to say, "I said it;"
A kind of triumph I'll not recommend,
Because it sometimes, as I have seen or read it,
Both in the case of lover and of friend,
Will pique a gentleman, for his own credit,
To bring what was a jest to a serious end:
For all men prophesy what *is* or *was*,
And hate those who won't let them come to pass.

LXXX.

Juan was drawn thus into some attentions,
Slight but select, and just enough to express,
To females of perspicuous comprehensions,
That he would rather make them more than less.
Aurora at the last (so history mentions,
Though probably much less a fact than guess)
So far relax'd her thoughts from their sweet prison,
As once or twice to smile, if not to listen.

LXXXI.

From answering she began to question: this
With her was rare; and Adeline, who as yet
Thought her predictions went not much amiss,
Began to dread she'd thaw to a coquette—
So very difficult, they say, it is
To keep extremes from meeting, when once set
In motion; but she here too much refined—
Aurora's spirit was not of that kind.

LXXXII.

But Juan had a sort of winning way,
A proud humility, if such there be,
Which show'd such deference to what females say,
As if each charming word were a decree.
His tact, too, temper'd him from grave to gay,
And taught him when to be reserved or free:
He had the art of drawing people out,
Without their seeing what he was about.

LXXXIII.

Aurora, who in her indifference
Confounded him in common with the crowd
Of flatterers, though she deem'd he had more sense
Than whispering foplings, or than witlings loud—
Commenced (from such slight things will great com-
mence)

To feel that flattery which attracts the proud,
Rather by deference than compliment,
And wins even by a delicate dissent.

LXXXIV.

And then he had good looks;—that point was carried
Nem. con. amongst the women, which I grieve
To say leads off to *crim. con.* with the married—
A case which to the juries we may leave,
Since with digressions we too long have tarried.
Now though we know of old that looks deceive,
And always have done, somehow these good looks
Make more impression than the best of books.

LXXXV.

Aurora, who look'd more on books than faces,
Was very young, although so very sage,
Admiring more Minerva than the Graces,
Especially upon a printed page.
But Virtue's self, with all her tightest laces,
Has not the natural stays of strict old age;
And Socrates, that model of all duty,
Own'd to a penchant, though discreet, for beauty.

LXXXVI.

And girls of sixteen are thus far Socratic,
But innocently so, as Socrates;
And really, if the sage sublime and Attic
At seventy years had phantasies like these,
Which Plato in his dialogues dramatic
Has shown, I know not why they should displease
In virgins—always in a modest way,
Observe; for that with me's a "sine qua." 1

LXXXVII.

Also observe, that, like the great Lord Coke
(See Littleton), when'er I have express'd
Opinions two, which at first sight may look
Twin opposites, the second is the best.
Perhaps I have a third too, in a nook,
Or none at all—which seems a sorry jest:
But if a writer should be quite consistent,
How could he possibly show things existent?

LXXXVIII.

If people contradict themselves, can I
Help contradicting them, and every body,
Even my veracious self?—But that's a lie:
I never did so, never will—how should I?
He who doubts all things nothing can deny:
Truth's fountains may be clear—her streams are
muddy,
And cut through such canals of contradiction,
That she must often navigate o'er fiction.

LXXXIX.

Apologue, fable, poesy, and parable,
Are false, but may be render'd also true,
By those who sow them in a land that's arable.
'Tis wonderful what fable will not do!
'Tis said it makes reality more bearable:
But what's reality? Who has its clue?
Philosophy? No: she too much rejects.
Religion? *Yes*; but which of all her sects?

XC.

Some millions must be wrong, that's pretty clear;
Perhaps it may turn out that all were right.
God help us! Since we have need on our career
To keep our holy beacons always bright,
'Tis time that some new prophet should appear,
Or old indulge man with a second sight.
Opinions wear out in some thousand years,
Without a small refreshment from the spheres.

XCI.

But here again, why will I thus entangle
Myself with metaphysics? None can hate
So much as I do any kind of wrangle;
And yet, such is my folly, or my fate,

1 Subauditur "non;" omitted for the sake of euphony.

2 [John Scott, Earl of Eldon, Chancellor of England (with the interruption of fourteen months) from 1801 to 1830.]

3 Hecla is a famous hot-spring in Iceland.

4 Hamlet Act III. sc. ii.

I always knock my head against some angle
About the present, past, or future state:
Yet I wish well to Trojan and to Tyrian,
For I was bred a moderate Presbyterian.

XCII.

But though I am a temperate theologian,
And also meek as a metaphysician,
Impartial between Tyrian and Trojan
As Eldon² on a lunatic commission,—
In politics my duty is to show John
Bull something of the lower world's condition.
It makes my blood boil like the springs of Hecla,³
To see men let these scoundrel sovereigns break law.

XCIII.

But politics, and policy, and piety,
Are topics which I sometimes introduce,
Not only for the sake of their variety,
But as subservient to a moral use;
Because my business is to dress society,
And stuff with *sage* that very verdant goose.
And now, that we may furnish with some matter all
Tastes, we are going to try the supernatural.

XCIV.

And now I will give up all argument;
And positively henceforth no temptation
Shall "fool me to the top up of my bent:"—⁴
Yes, I'll begin a thorough reformation.
Indeed, I never knew what people meant
By deeming that my Muse's conversation
Was dangerous;—I think she is as harmless
As some who labour more and yet may charm less.

XCV.

Grim reader! did you ever see a ghost?
No; but you have heard—I understand—be dumb!
And don't regret the time you may have lost,
For you have got that pleasure still to come:
And do not think I mean to sneer at most
Of these things, or by ridicule benumb
That source of the sublime and the mysterious:—
For certain reasons my belief is serious.

XCVI.

Serious? You laugh;—you may: that will I not;
My smiles must be sincere or not at all.
I say I do believe a haunted spot
Exists—and where? That shall I not recall,
Because I'd rather it should be forgot,
"Shadows the soul of Richard"⁵ may appal.
In short, upon that subject I've some qualms very
Like those of the philosopher of Malmsbury.⁶

XCVII.

The night—(I sing by night—sometimes an owl,
And now and then a nightingale)—is dim,
And the loud shriek of sage Minerva's fowl
Rattles around me her discordant hymn:
Old portraits from old walls upon me scowl—
I wish to heaven they would not look so grim;
The dying embers dwindle in the grate—
I think too that I have sate up too late:

5 ["By the apostle Paul, shadows to-night
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers," &c.
Richard III.]

6 Hobbes: who, doubting of his own soul, paid that compliment to the souls of other people as to decline their visits, of which he had some apprehension.

XCVIII.

And therefore, though 'tis by no means my way
To rhyme at noon—when I have other things
To think of, if I ever think—I say
I feel some chilly midnight shudderings,
And prudently postpone, until mid-day,
Treating a topic which, alas! but brings
Shadows;—but you must be in my condition,
Before you learn to call this superstition.

XCIX.

Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
'Tis twixt night and morn, upon the horizon's verge
How little do we know that which we are!
How less what we may be! The eternal surge
Of time and tide rolls on and bears afar
Our bubbles; as the old burst, new emerge,
Lash'd from the foam of ages; while the graves
Of empires heave but like some passing waves.¹

Don Juan.

CANTO THE SIXTEENTH.

I.

THE antique Persians taught three useful things,
To draw the bow, to ride, and speak the truth.²
This was the mode of Cyrus, best of kings—
A mode adopted since by modern youth.
Bows have they, generally with two strings;
Horses they ride without remorse or ruth;
At speaking truth perhaps they are less clever,
But draw the long bow better now than ever.

II.

The cause of this effect, or this defect,—
"For this effect defective comes by cause,"—³
Is what I have not leisure to inspect;
But this I must say in my own applause,
Of all the Muses that I recollect,
Whate'er may be her follies or her flaws
In some things, mine's beyond all contradiction
The most sincere that ever dealt in fiction.

III.

And as she treats all things, and ne'er retreats
From any thing, this epic will contain
A wilderness of the most rare conceits,
Which you might elsewhere hope to find in vain.
'Tis true there be some bitters with the sweets,
Yet mix'd so slightly, that you can't complain,
But wonder they so few are, since my tale is
"De rebus cunctis et quibusdam aliis."

1 ["Man's life is like a sparrow—mighty king!
That, stealing in while by the fire you sit,
Housed with rejoicing friends, is seen to flit
Safe from the storm, in comfort tarrying.
Here did it enter—there on hasty wing
Flies out, and passes on from cold to cold;
But whence it came we know not, nor behold
Whither it goes. Even such that transient thing
The human soul: not utterly unknown
While in the body lodged, her warm abode;
But from what world she came, what woe or weal
On her departure waits, no tongue hath shown."]
WORDSWORTH.]

IV.

But of all truths which she has told, the most
True is that which she is about to tell.
I said it was a story of a ghost—
What then? I only know it so befell.
Have you explored the limits of the coast,
Where all the dwellers of the earth must dwell?
'Tis time to strike such puny doubters dumb as
The sceptics who would not believe Columbus.

V.

Some people would impose now with authority,
Turpin's or Monmouth Geoffry's Chronicle;
Men whose historical superiority
Is always greatest at a miracle.
But Saint Augustine has the great priority,
Who bids all men believe the impossible,
Because 'tis so. Who nibble, scribble, quibble, he
Quiets at once with "*quia impossibile.*"

VI.

And therefore, mortals, cavil not at all;
Believe:—if 'tis improbable, you *must*,
And if it is impossible, you *shall*:
'Tis always best to take things upon trust.
I do not speak profanely, to recall
Those holier mysteries which the wise and just
Receive as gospel, and which grow more rooted,
As all truths must, the more they are disputed:

VII.

I merely mean to say what Johnson said,
That in the course of some six thousand years,
All nations have believed that from the dead
A visitant at intervals appears;⁴
And what is strangest upon this strange head,
Is, that whatever bar the reason rears
'Gainst such belief, there's something stronger still
In its behalf, let those deny who will.

VIII.

The dinner and the soirée too were done,
The supper too discuss'd, the dames admired,
The banqueteers had dropp'd off one by one—
The song was silent, and the dance expired:
The last thin petticoats were vanish'd, gone
Like fleecy clouds into the sky retired,
And nothing brighter gleam'd through the saloon
Than dying tapers—and the peeping moon.

IX.

The evaporation of a joyous day
Is like the last glass of champagne, without
The foam which made its virgin bumper gay;
Or like a system coupled with a doubt;
Or like a soda bottle when its spray
Has sparkled and let half its spirit out;
Or like a billow left by storms behind,
Without the animation of the wind;

2 Xenophon, Cyrop. 3 Hamlet, Act II. sc. ii.

4 ["That the dead are seen no more," said Imlac, "I will not undertake to maintain, against the concurrent and unvaried testimony of all ages, and of all nations. There is no people, rude or unlearned, among whom apparitions of the dead are not related and believed. This opinion, which prevails as far as human nature is diffused, could become universal only by its truth; those that never heard of one another would not have agreed in a tale which nothing but experience can make credible. That it is doubted by single cavillers, can very little weaken the general evidence; and some, who deny it with their tongues, confess it with their fears."—*Rasselas.*]

X.

Or like an opiate, which brings troubled rest,
Or none; or like—like nothing that I know
Except itself;—such is the human breast;
A thing, of which similitudes can show
No real likeness,—like the old Tyrian vest
Dyed purple, none at present can tell how,
If from a shell-fish or from cochineal.¹
So perish every tyrant's robe piece-meal!

XI.

But next to dressing for a rout or ball,
Undressing is a woe; our robe de chambre
May sit like that of Nessus², and recall
Thoughts quite as yellow, but less clear than amber.
Titus exclaim'd, "I've lost a day!" Of all
The nights and days most people can remember,
(I have had of both, some not to be disdain'd,)
I wish they'd state how many they have gain'd.

XII.

And Juan, on retiring for the night,
Felt restless, and perplex'd, and compromised:
He thought Aurora Raby's eyes more bright
Than Adeline (such is advice) advis'd;
If he had known exactly his own plight,
He probably would have philosophis'd:
A great resource to all, and ne'er denied
Till wanted; therefore Juan only sigh'd.

XIII.

He sigh'd;—the next resource is the full moon,
Where all sighs are deposited; and now
It happen'd luckily, the chaste orb shone
As clear as such a climate will allow;
And Juan's mind was in the proper tone
To hail her with the apostrophe—"O thou!"
Of amatory egotism the *Tuism*,
Which further to explain would be a truism.

XIV.

But lover, poet, or astronomer,
Shepherd, or swain, whoever may behold,
Feel some abstraction when they gaze on her:
Great thoughts we catch from thence (besides a cold
Sometimes, unless my feelings rather err);
Deep secrets to her rolling light are told;
The ocean's tides and mortals' brains she sways,
And also hearts, if there be truth in lays.

XV.

Juan felt somewhat pensive, and disposed
For contemplation rather than his pillow:
The Gothic chamber, where he was enclosed,
Let in the rippling sound of the lake's billow,
With all the mystery by midnight caused:
Below his window waved (of course) a willow;
And he stood gazing out on the cascade
That flash'd and after darken'd in the shade.

XVI.

Upon his table or his toilet,—*which*
Of these is not exactly ascertained,—
(I state this, for I am cautious to a pitch
Of nicety, where a fact is to be gain'd,)

¹ The composition of the old Tyrian purple, whether from a shell-fish, or from cochineal, or from kermes, is still an article of dispute; and even its colour—some say purple, others scarlet: I say nothing.

A lamp burn'd high, while he leant from a niche,
Where many a Gothic ornament remain'd,
In chisell'd stone and painted glass, and all
That time has left our fathers of their hall.

XVII.

Then, as the night was clear though cold, he threw
His chamber door wide open—and went forth
Into a gallery, of a sombre hue,
Long, furnish'd with old pictures of great worth,
Of knights and dames heroic and chaste too,
As doubtless should be people of high birth.
But by dim lights the portraits of the dead
Have something ghastly, desolate, and dread.

XVIII.

The forms of the grim knight and pictured saint
Look living in the moon; and as you turn
Backward and forward to the echoes faint
Of your own footsteps—voices from the urn
Appear to wake, and shadows wild and quaint
Start from the frames which fence their aspects stern,
As if to ask how you can dare to keep
A vigil there, where all but death should sleep.

XIX.

And the pale smile of beauties in the grave,
The charms of other days, in starlight gleams,
Glimmer on high; their buried locks still wave
Along the canvass; their eyes glance like dreams
On ours, or spars within some dusky cave,
But death is imaged in their shadowy beams.
A picture is the past; even ere its frame
Be gilt, who sate hath ceased to be the same.

XX.

As Juan mused on mutability,
Or on his mistress—terms synonymous—
No sound except the echo of his sigh
Or step ran sadly through that antique house;
When suddenly he heard, or thought so, nigh,
A supernatural agent—or a mouse,
Whose little nibbling rustle will embarrass
Most people as it plays along the arras.

XXI.

It was no mouse, but lo! a monk, array'd
In cowl and beads, and dusky garb, appear'd,
Now in the moonlight, and now lapsed in shade,
With steps that trod as heavy, yet unheard;
His garments only a slight murmur made;
He moved as shadowy as the sisters weird,³
But slowly; and as he passed Juan by,
Glanced, without pausing, on him a bright eye.

XXII.

Juan was petrified; he had heard a hint
Of such a spirit in these halls of old,
But thought, like most men, there was nothing in't
Beyond the rumour which such spots unfold,
Coin'd from surviving superstition's mint,
Which passes ghosts in currency like gold,
But rarely seen, like gold compared with paper.
And did he see this? or was it a vapour?

² [See Ovid. Epist. ix.]

³ ["Shew his eyes, and grieve his heart;
Come like shadows, so depart."—*Macbeth*.]

XXIII.

Once, twice, thrice pass'd, repass'd—the thing of air,
Or earth beneath, or heaven, or t' other place:
And Juan gazed upon it with a stare,
Yet could not speak or move; but, on its base
As stands a statue, stood: he felt his hair
Twine like a knot of snakes around his face;
He tax'd his tongue for words, which were not granted,
To ask the reverend person what he wanted.

XXIV.

The third time, after a still longer pause,
The shadow pass'd away—but where? the hall
Was long, and thus far there was no great cause
To think his vanishing unnatural:
Doors there were many, through which, by the laws
Of physics, bodies whether short or tall
Might come or go; but Juan could not state
Through which the spectre seem'd to evaporate.

XXV.

He stood—how long he knew not, but it seem'd
An age—expectant, powerless, with his eyes
Strain'd on the spot where first the figure gleam'd;
Then by degrees recall'd his energies,
And would have pass'd the whole off as a dream,
But could not wake; he was, he did surmise,
Waking already, and return'd at length
Back to his chamber, shorn of half his strength.

XXVI.

All there was as he left it: still his taper
Burnt, and not *blue*, as modest tapers use,
Receiving sprites with sympathetic vapour;
He rubb'd his eyes, and they did not refuse
Their office: he took up an old newspaper;
The paper was right easy to peruse;
He read an article the king attacking,
And a long eulogy of "patent blacking."

XXVII.

This savour'd of this world; but his hand shook:
He shut his door, and after having read
A paragraph, I think about Horne Tooke,
Undrest, and rather slowly went to bed.
There, couch'd all snugly on his pillow's nook,
With what he had seen his phantasy he fed;
And though it was no opiate, slumber crept
Upon him by degrees, and so he slept.

XXVIII.

He woke betimes; and, as may be supposed,
Ponder'd upon his visitant or vision,
And whether it ought not to be disclosed,
At risk of being quizz'd for superstition.
The more he thought, the more his mind was posed:
In the mean time, his valet, whose precision
Was great, because his master brook'd no less,
Knock'd to inform him it was time to dress.

XXIX.

He dress'd; and like young people he was wont
To take some trouble with his toilet, but
This morning rather spent less time upon't;
Aside his very mirror soon was put;
His curls fell negligently o'er his front,
His clothes were not curb'd to their usual cut,
His very neckcloth's Gordian knot was tied
Almost an hair's breadth too much on one side.

¹ [During a visit to Newstead, in 1814, Lord Byron actually fancied he saw the ghost of the Black Friar, which was sup-

XXX.

And when he walk'd down into the saloon,
He sate him pensive o'er a dish of tea,
Which he perhaps had not discover'd soon,
Had it not happen'd scalding hot to be,
Which made him have recourse unto his spoon;
So much distraught he was, that all could see
That something was the matter—Adeline
The first—but *what* she could not well divine.

XXXI.

She look'd, and saw him pale, and turn'd as pale
Herself; then hastily look'd down, and mutter'd
Something, but what's not stated in my tale.
Lord Henry said, his muffin was ill butter'd;
The Duchess of Fitz-Fulke play'd with her veil,
And look'd at Juan hard, but nothing utter'd.
Aurora Raby with her large dark eyes
Survey'd him with a kind of calm surprise.

XXXII.

But seeing him all cold and silent still,
And every body wondering more or less,
Fair Adeline inquired, "If he were ill?"
He started, and said, "Yes—no—rather—yes."
The family physician had great skill,
And being present, now began to express
His readiness to feel his pulse and tell
The cause, but Juan said, "He was quite well."

XXXIII.

"Quite well; yes,—no."—These answers were
Mysterious,
And yet his looks appear'd to sanction both,
However they might savour of delirious;
Something like illness of a sudden growth
Weigh'd on his spirit, though by no means serious:
But for the rest, as he himself seem'd loth
To state the case, it might be ta'en for granted,
It was not the physician that he wanted.

XXXIV.

Lord Henry, who had now discuss'd his chocolate,
Also the muffin whereof he complain'd,
Said, Juan had not got his usual look elate,
At which he marvel'd, since it had not rain'd;
Then ask'd her Grace what news were of the duke
Of late?

Her Grace replied, his Grace was rather pain'd
With some slight, light, hereditary twinges
Of gout, which rusts aristocratic hinges.

XXXV.

Then Henry turn'd to Juan, and address'd
A few words of condolence on his state:
"You look," quoth he, "as if you had had your rest
Broke in upon by the Black Friar of late."
"What friar?" said Juan; and he did his best
To put the question with an air sedate,
Or careless; but the effort was not valid
To hinder him from growing still more pallid.

XXXVI.

"Oh! have you never heard of the Black Friar?¹
The spirit of these walls?"—"In truth not I."
"Why Fame—but Fame you know's sometimes a
Tells an odd story, of which by and by: [Liar—
Whether with time the spectre has grown shyer,
Or that our sires had a more gifted eye
For such sights, though the tale is half believed,
The friar of late has not been oft perceived.

posed to have haunted the Abbey from the time of the dissolution of the monasteries.—MOORE.]