

Lara  
A TALE

Lord Byron

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## INTRODUCTION TO *LARA*

The MS. of *Lara* is dated May 14, 1814. The opening lines, which were not prefixed to the published poem, and were first printed in *Murray's Magazine* (January, 1887), are of the nature of a Dedication. They were probably written a few days after the well-known song, "I speak not, I trace not, I breathe not thy name," which was enclosed to Moore in a letter dated May 4, 1814. There can be little doubt that both song and dedication were addressed to Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster, and that *Lara*, like the *Corsair* and the *Bride of Abydos*, was written *con amore*, and because the poet was "eating his heart away."

By the 14th of June Byron was able to announce to Moore that "*Lara* was finished, and that he had begun copying." It was written, owing to the length of the London season, "amidst balls and fooleries, and after coming home from masquerades and routs, in the summer of the sovereigns" (Letter to Moore, June 8, 1822, *Life*, p. 561).

By way of keeping his engagement—already broken by the publication of the *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte*—not to "trespass on public patience," Byron began by protesting (June 14) that *Lara* was not to be published separately, but "might be included in a third volume now collecting." A fortnight later (June 27) an interchange of unpublished poems between himself and Rogers, "two cantos of darkness and dismay" in return for a privately printed copy of *Jacqueline*, who is "all grace and softness and poetry" (Letter to Rogers, *Letters*, 1899, iii. 101), suggested another and happier solution of the difficulty, a coalescing with Rogers, and, if possible, Moore (*Life*, 1892, p. 257, note 2), "into a joint invasion of the public" (Letter to Moore, July 8, 1814, *Letters*, 1899, iii. 102). But Rogers hesitated, and Moore refused to embark on so doubtful a venture, with the result that, as late as the 3rd of August, Byron thought fit to remonstrate with Murray for "advertising *Lara and Jacqueline*," and confessed to Moore that he was "still demurring and delaying and in a fuss" (*Letters*, 1899, iii. 115, 119). Murray knew his man, and, though he waited for Byron's formal and ostensibly reluctant word of command, "Out with *Lara*, since it must be" (August 5, 1814, *Letters*, 1899, iii. 122), he admitted (August 6, *Memoir of John Murray*, 1891, i. 230) that he had "anticipated his consent," and "had done everything but actually deliver the copies

of *Lara*.” “The moment,” he adds, “I received your letter, for for it I waited, I cut the last cord of my aerial work, and at this instant 6000 copies are sold.” *Lara, a Tale; Jacqueline, a Tale*, was published on Saturday, August 6, 1814.

*Jacqueline* is a somewhat insipid pastoral, betraying the influence of the Lake School, more especially Coleridge, on a belated and irresponsible disciple, and wholly out of place as contrast or foil to the melodramatic *Lara*.

No sooner had the “lady,” as Byron was pleased to call her, played her part as decoy, than she was discharged as *emerita*. A week after publication (August 12, 1814, *Letters*, iii. 125) Byron told Moore that “Murray talks of divorcing Larry and Jacky—a bad sign for the authors, who will, I suppose, be divorced too. . . . Seriously, I don’t care a cigar about it.” The divorce was soon pronounced, and, contrary to Byron’s advice (September 2, 1814, *Letters*, iii. 131), at least four separate editions of *Lara* were published during the autumn of 1814.

The “advertisement” to *Lara and Jacqueline* contains the plain statement that “the reader . . . may probably regard it [*Lara*] as a sequel to the *Corsair*”—an admission on the author’s part which forestalls and renders nugatory any prolonged discussion on the subject. It is evident that *Lara* is Conrad, and that Kaled, the “darkly delicate” and mysterious page, whose “hand is femininely white,” is Gulnare in a transparent and temporary disguise.

If the facts which the “English Gentleman in the Greek Military Service” (*Life, Writings, etc., of Lord Byron*, 1825, i. 191–201) gives in detail with regard to the sources of the *Corsair* are not wholly imaginary, it is possible that the original Conrad’s determination to “quit so horrible a mode of life” and return to civilization may have suggested to Byron the possible adventures and fate of a *grand seigneur* who had played the pirate in his time, and resumed his ancestral dignities only to be detected and exposed by some rival or victim of his wild and lawless youth.

*Lara* was reviewed together with the *Corsair*, by George Agar Ellis in the *Quarterly Review* for July, 1814, vol. xi. p. 428; and in the *Portfolio*, vol. xiv. p. 33.



# LARA.

## CANTO THE FIRST.<sup>1</sup>

### I.

The Serfs<sup>2</sup> are glad through Lara's wide domain,<sup>3</sup>  
And Slavery half forgets her feudal chain;  
He, their unhop'd, but unforgotten lord,  
The long self-exiled Chieftain, is restored:  
There be bright faces in the busy hall,  
Bowls on the board, and banners on the wall;  
Far checkering o'er the pictured window, plays  
The unwonted faggot's hospitable blaze;  
And gay retainers gather round the hearth,  
With tongues all loudness, and with eyes all mirth. 10

### II.

The Chief of Lara is returned again:  
And why had Lara crossed the bounding main?  
Left by his Sire, too young such loss to know,<sup>4</sup>  
Lord of himself,—that heritage of woe,  
That fearful empire which the human breast  
But holds to rob the heart within of rest!—  
With none to check, and few to point in time  
The thousand paths that slope the way to crime;  
Then, when he most required commandment, then  
Had Lara's daring boyhood governed men. 20

It skills not, boots not step by step to trace  
His youth through all the mazes of its race;  
Short was the course his restlessness had run,  
But long enough to leave him half undone.

III.

And Lara left in youth his father-land;  
But from the hour he waved his parting hand  
Each trace waxed fainter of his course, till all  
Had nearly ceased his memory to recall.

His sire was dust, his vassals could declare,  
’Twas all they knew, that Lara was not there;  
Nor sent, nor came he, till conjecture grew  
Cold in the many, anxious in the few.

30

His hall scarce echoes with his wonted name,  
His portrait darkens in its fading frame,  
Another chief consoled his destined bride,  
The young forgot him, and the old had died;  
“Yet doth he live!” exclaims the impatient heir,  
And sighs for sables which he must not wear.

A hundred scutcheons deck with gloomy grace  
The Laras’ last and longest dwelling-place;  
But one is absent from the mouldering file,  
That now were welcome in that Gothic pile.

40

IV.

He comes at last in sudden loneliness,  
And whence they know not, why they need not guess;

They more might marvel, when the greeting's o'er  
Not that he came, but came not long before:  
No train is his beyond a single page,  
Of foreign aspect, and of tender age.  
Years had rolled on, and fast they speed away  
To those that wander as to those that stay;  
But lack of tidings from another clime  
Had lent a flagging wing to weary Time.  
They see, they recognise, yet almost deem  
The present dubious, or the past a dream.  
He lives, nor yet is past his Manhood's prime,  
Though seared by toil, and something touched by Time;  
His faults, whate'er they were, if scarce forgot,  
Might be untaught him by his varied lot;  
Nor good nor ill of late were known, his name  
Might yet uphold his patrimonial fame:  
His soul in youth was haughty, but his sins<sup>5</sup>  
No more than pleasure from the stripling wins;  
And such, if not yet hardened in their course,  
Might be redeemed, nor ask a long remorse.

50

60

v.

And they indeed were changed—'tis quickly seen,  
Whate'er he be, 'twas not what he had been:  
That brow in furrowed lines had fixed at last,  
And spake of passions, but of passion past:  
The pride, but not the fire, of early days,



Coldness of mien, and carelessness of praise; 70

A high demeanour, and a glance that took  
Their thoughts from others by a single look;  
And that sarcastic levity of tongue,  
The stinging of a heart the world hath stung,  
That darts in seeming playfulness around,  
And makes those feel that will not own the wound;  
All these seemed his, and something more beneath  
Than glance could well reveal, or accent breathe.

Ambition, Glory, Love, the common aim,  
That some can conquer, and that all would claim, 80

Within his breast appeared no more to strive,  
Yet seemed as lately they had been alive;  
And some deep feeling it were vain to trace  
At moments lightened o'er his livid face.

VI.

Not much he loved long question of the past,  
Nor told of wondrous wilds, and deserts vast,  
In those far lands where he had wandered lone,  
And—as himself would have it seem—unknown:

Yet these in vain his eye could scarcely scan,  
Nor glean experience from his fellow man; 90

But what he had beheld he shunned to show,  
As hardly worth a stranger's care to know;  
If still more prying such inquiry grew,  
His brow fell darker, and his words more few.

## VII.

Not unrejoiced to see him once again,  
 Warm was his welcome to the haunts of men;  
 Born of high lineage, linked in high command,  
 He mingled with the Magnates of his land;  
 Joined the carousals of the great and gay,  
 And saw them smile or sigh their hours away; 100  
 But still he only saw, and did not share,  
 The common pleasure or the general care;  
 He did not follow what they all pursued  
 With hope still baffled still to be renewed;  
 Nor shadowy Honour, nor substantial Gain,  
 Nor Beauty's preference, and the rival's pain:  
 Around him some mysterious circle thrown  
 Repelled approach, and showed him still alone;  
 Upon his eye sat something of reproof,  
 That kept at least Frivolity aloof; 110  
 And things more timid that beheld him near  
 In silence gazed, or whispered mutual fear;  
 And they the wiser, friendlier few confessed  
 They deemed him better than his air expressed.

## VIII.

Twas strange—in youth all action and all life,  
 Burning for pleasure, not averse from strife;  
 Woman—the Field—the Ocean, all that gave  
 Promise of gladness, peril of a grave,

In turn he tried—he ransacked all below,  
And found his recompense in joy or woe, 120  
No tame, trite medium; for his feelings sought  
In that intenseness an escape from thought:  
The Tempest of his Heart in scorn had gazed  
On that the feebler Elements hath raised;  
The Rapture of his Heart had looked on high,  
And asked if greater dwelt beyond the sky:  
Chained to excess, the slave of each extreme,  
How woke he from the wildness of that dream!  
Alas! he told not—but he did awake  
To curse the withered heart that would not break. 130

IX.

Books, for his volume heretofore was Man,  
With eye more curious he appeared to scan,  
And oft in sudden mood, for many a day,  
From all communion he would start away:  
And then, his rarely called attendants said,  
Through night's long hours would sound his hurried  
tread  
O'er the dark gallery, where his fathers frowned  
In rude but antique portraiture around:  
They heard, but whispered—“*that* must not be known—  
The sound of words less earthly than his own. 140  
Yes, they who chose might smile, but some had seen  
They scarce knew what, but more than should have been.

Why gazed he so upon the ghastly head<sup>6</sup>  
Which hands profane had gathered from the dead,  
That still beside his opened volume lay,  
As if to startle all save him away?  
Why slept he not when others were at rest?  
Why heard no music, and received no guest?  
All was not well, they deemed—but where the wrong?<sup>7</sup>  
Some knew perchance—but 'twere a tale too long;  
And such besides were too discreetly wise,  
To more than hint their knowledge in surmise;  
But if they would—they could”—around the board  
Thus Lara's vassals prattled of their lord.

150

x.

It was the night—and Lara's glassy stream  
The stars are studding, each with imaged beam;  
So calm, the waters scarcely seem to stray,  
And yet they glide like Happiness away;<sup>8</sup>  
Reflecting far and fairy-like from high  
The immortal lights that live along the sky:  
Its banks are fringed with many a goodly tree,  
And flowers the fairest that may feast the bee;  
Such in her chaplet infant Dian wove,  
And Innocence would offer to her love.  
These deck the shore; the waves their channel make  
In windings bright and mazy like the snake.  
All was so still, so soft in earth and air,

160

You scarce would start to meet a spirit there;  
Secure that nought of evil could delight  
To walk in such a scene, on such a night! 170  
It was a moment only for the good:  
So Lara deemed, nor longer there he stood,  
But turned in silence to his castle-gate;  
Such scene his soul no more could contemplate:  
Such scene reminded him of other days,  
Of skies more cloudless, moons of purer blaze,  
Of nights more soft and frequent, hearts that now—  
No—no—the storm may beat upon his brow,  
Unfelt, unsparing—but a night like this,  
A night of Beauty, mocked such breast as his. 180

XI.

He turned within his solitary hall,  
And his high shadow shot along the wall:  
There were the painted forms of other times,<sup>9</sup>  
'Twas all they left of virtues or of crimes,  
Save vague tradition; and the gloomy vaults  
That hid their dust, their foibles, and their faults;  
And half a column of the pompous page,  
That speeds the specious tale from age to age;  
Where History's pen its praise or blame supplies,  
And lies like Truth, and still most truly lies. 190  
He wandering mused, and as the moonbeam shone  
Through the dim lattice, o'er the floor of stone,

And the high fretted roof, and saints, that there  
O'er Gothic windows knelt in pictured prayer,  
Reflected in fantastic figures grew,  
Like life, but not like mortal life, to view;  
His bristling locks of sable, brow of gloom,  
And the wide waving of his shaken plume,  
Glanced like a spectre's attributes—and gave  
His aspect all that terror gives the grave.

200

XII.

'Twas midnight—all was slumber; the lone light  
Dimmed in the lamp, as both to break the night.  
Hark! there be murmurs heard in Lara's hall—  
A sound—a voice—a shriek—a fearful call!  
A long, loud shriek—and silence—did they hear  
That frantic echo burst the sleeping ear?  
They heard and rose, and, tremulously brave,  
Rush where the sound invoked their aid to save;  
They come with half-lit tapers in their hands,  
And snatched in startled haste unbelted brands.

210

XIII.

Cold as the marble where his length was laid,  
Pale as the beam that o'er his features played,  
Was Lara stretched; his half-drawn sabre near,  
Dropped it should seem in more than Nature's fear;  
Yet he was firm, or had been firm till now,  
And still Defiance knit his gathered brow;

Though mixed with terror, senseless as he lay,  
There lived upon his lip the wish to slay;  
Some half formed threat in utterance there had died,  
Some imprecation of despairing Pride;  
His eye was almost sealed, but not forsook,  
Even in its trance, the gladiator's look,  
That oft awake his aspect could disclose,  
And now was fixed in horrible repose.

220

They raise him—bear him;—hush! he breathes, he speaks,  
The swarthy blush recolours in his cheeks,  
His lip resumes its red, his eye, though dim,  
Rolls wide and wild, each slowly quivering limb  
Recalls its function, but his words are strung  
In terms that seem not of his native tongue;  
Distinct but strange, enough they understand  
To deem them accents of another land;  
And such they were, and meant to meet an ear  
That hears him not—alas! that cannot hear!

230

XIV.

His page approached, and he alone appeared  
To know the import of the words they heard;  
And, by the changes of his cheek and brow,  
They were not such as Lara should avow,  
Nor he interpret,—yet with less surprise  
Than those around their Chieftain's state he eyes,  
But Lara's prostrate form he bent beside,

240

And in that tongue which seemed his own replied;  
And Lara heeds those tones that gently seem  
To soothe away the horrors of his dream—  
If dream it were, that thus could overthrow  
A breast that needed not ideal woe.

XV.

Whate'er his frenzy dreamed or eye beheld,—  
If yet remembered ne'er to be revealed,—  
Rests at his heart: the custom'd morning came,  
And breathed new vigour in his shaken frame;  
And solace sought he none from priest nor leech,  
And soon the same in movement and in speech,  
As heretofore he filled the passing hours,  
Nor less he smiles, nor more his forehead lowers,  
Than these were wont; and if the coming night  
Appeared less welcome now to Lara's sight,  
He to his marvelling vassals showed it not,  
Whose shuddering proved *their* fear was less forgot.

250

In trembling pairs (alone they dared not) crawl  
The astonished slaves, and shun the fated hall;  
The waving banner, and the clapping door,  
The rustling tapestry, and the echoing floor;  
The long dim shadows of surrounding trees,  
The flapping bat, the night song of the breeze;  
Aught they behold or hear their thought appals,  
As evening saddens o'er the dark grey walls.

260



XVI.

Vain thought! that hour of ne'er unravelled gloom  
Came not again, or Lara could assume  
A seeming of forgetfulness, that made  
His vassals more amazed nor less afraid. 270  
Had Memory vanished then with sense restored?  
Since word, nor look, nor gesture of their lord  
Betrayed a feeling that recalled to these  
That fevered moment of his mind's disease.  
Was it a dream? was his the voice that spoke  
Those strange wild accents; his the cry that broke  
Their slumber? his the oppressed, o'erlaboured heart  
That ceased to beat, the look that made them start?  
Could he who thus had suffered so forget,  
When such as saw that suffering shudder yet? 280  
Or did that silence prove his memory fixed  
Too deep for words, indelible, unmixed  
In that corroding secrecy which gnaws  
The heart to show the effect, but not the cause?  
Not so in him; his breast had buried both,  
Nor common gazers could discern the growth  
Of thoughts that mortal lips must leave half told;  
They choke the feeble words that would unfold.

XVII.

In him inexplicably mixed appeared  
Much to be loved and hated, sought and feared; 290

Opinion varying o'er his hidden lot,  
In praise or railing ne'er his name forgot:  
His silence formed a theme for others' prate—  
They guessed—they gazed—they fain would know his fate.  
What had he been? what was he, thus unknown,  
Who walked their world, his lineage only known?  
A hater of his kind? yet some would say,  
With them he could seem gay amidst the gay;  
But owned that smile, if oft observed and near,  
Waned in its mirth, and withered to a sneer; 300  
That smile might reach his lip, but passed not by,  
Nor e'er could trace its laughter to his eye:  
Yet there was softness too in his regard,  
At times, a heart as not by nature hard,  
But once perceived, his Spirit seemed to chide  
Such weakness, as unworthy of its pride,  
And steeled itself, as scorning to redeem  
One doubt from others' half withheld esteem;  
In self-inflicted penance of a breast  
Which Tenderness might once have wrung from Rest; 310  
In vigilance of Grief that would compel  
The soul to hate for having loved too well.<sup>10</sup>

XVIII.

There was in him a vital scorn of all:  
As if the worst had fallen which could befall,  
He stood a stranger in this breathing world,

An erring Spirit from another hurled;  
A thing of dark imaginings, that shaped  
By choice the perils he by chance escaped;  
But 'scaped in vain, for in their memory yet  
His mind would half exult and half regret: 320

With more capacity for love than Earth  
Bestows on most of mortal mould and birth.  
His early dreams of good outstripped the truth,<sup>11</sup>  
And troubled Manhood followed baffled Youth;  
With thought of years in phantom chase misspent,  
And wasted powers for better purpose lent;  
And fiery passions that had poured their wrath  
In hurried desolation o'er his path,  
And left the better feelings all at strife

In wild reflection o'er his stormy life; 330  
But haughty still, and loth himself to blame,  
He called on Nature's self to share the shame,  
And charged all faults upon the fleshly form  
She gave to clog the soul, and feast the worm:  
Till he at last confounded good and ill,  
And half mistook for fate the acts of will:<sup>12</sup>

Too high for common selfishness, he could  
At times resign his own for others' good,  
But not in pity—not because he ought,  
But in some strange perversity of thought, 340  
That swayed him onward with a secret pride  
To do what few or none would do beside;

And this same impulse would, in tempting time,  
Mislead his spirit equally to crime;  
So much he soared beyond, or sunk beneath,  
The men with whom he felt condemned to breathe,  
And longed by good or ill to separate  
Himself from all who shared his mortal state;  
His mind abhorring this had fixed her throne  
Far from the world, in regions of her own: 350  
Thus coldly passing all that passed below,  
His blood in temperate seeming now would flow:  
Ah! happier if it ne'er with guilt had glowed,  
But ever in that icy smoothness flowed!  
'Tis true, with other men their path he walked,  
And like the rest in seeming did and talked,  
Nor outraged Reason's rules by flaw nor start,  
His Madness was not of the head, but heart;  
And rarely wandered in his speech, or drew  
His thoughts so forth as to offend the view. 360

XIX.

With all that chilling mystery of mien,  
And seeming gladness to remain unseen,  
He had (if 'twere not nature's boon) an art  
Of fixing memory on another's heart:  
It was not love perchance—nor hate—nor aught  
That words can image to express the thought;  
But they who saw him did not see in vain,

And once beheld—would ask of him again:  
And those to whom he spake remembered well,  
And on the words, however light, would dwell:  
None knew, nor how, nor why, but he entwined  
Himself perforce around the hearer's mind;  
There he was stamped, in liking, or in hate,  
If greeted once; however brief the date  
That friendship, pity, or aversion knew,  
Still there within the inmost thought he grew.  
You could not penetrate his soul, but found,  
Despite your wonder, to your own he wound;  
His presence haunted still; and from the breast  
He forced an all unwilling interest:  
Vain was the struggle in that mental net—  
His Spirit seemed to dare you to forget!

370

380

XX.

There is a festival, where knights and dames,  
And aught that wealth or lofty lineage claims,  
Appear—a high-born and a welcome guest  
To Otho's hall came Lara with the rest.  
The long carousal shakes the illumined hall,  
Well speeds alike the banquet and the ball;  
And the gay dance of bounding Beauty's train  
Links grace and harmony in happiest chain:  
Blest are the early hearts and gentle hands  
That mingle there in well according bands;

390

It is a sight the careful brow might smooth,  
And make Age smile, and dream itself to youth,  
And Youth forget such hour was past on earth,  
So springs the exulting bosom to that mirth!

XXI.

And Lara gazed on these, sedately glad,  
His brow belied him if his soul was sad;  
And his glance followed fast each fluttering fair,

Whose steps of lightness woke no echo there:

400

He leaned against the lofty pillar nigh,  
With folded arms and long attentive eye,  
Nor marked a glance so sternly fixed on his—  
Ill brooked high Lara scrutiny like this:

At length he caught it—'tis a face unknown,

But seems as searching his, and his alone;

Prying and dark, a stranger's by his mien,

Who still till now had gazed on him unseen:

At length encountering meets the mutual gaze

Of keen enquiry, and of mute amaze;

410

On Lara's glance emotion gathering grew,

As if distrusting that the stranger threw;

Along the stranger's aspect, fixed and stern,

Flashed more than thence the vulgar eye could learn.

XXII.

"'Tis he!" the stranger cried, and those that heard

Re-echoed fast and far the whispered word.

“’Tis he!”—“’Tis who?” they question far and near,  
Till louder accents rung on Lara’s ear;  
So widely spread, few bosoms well could brook  
The general marvel, or that single look:  
But Lara stirred not, changed not, the surprise  
That sprung at first to his arrested eyes  
Seemed now subsided—neither sunk nor raised  
Glanced his eye round, though still the stranger gazed;  
And drawing nigh, exclaimed, with haughty sneer,  
“’Tis he!—how came he thence?—what doth he here?”

420

XXIII.

It were too much for Lara to pass by  
Such questions, so repeated fierce and high;  
With look collected, but with accent cold,  
More mildly firm than petulantly bold,  
He turned, and met the inquisitorial tone—  
“My name is Lara—when thine own is known,  
Doubt not my fitting answer to requite  
The unlooked for courtesy of such a knight.  
’Tis Lara!—further wouldst thou mark or ask?  
I shun no question, and I wear no mask.”

430

“Thou *shunn’st* no question! Ponder—is there none  
Thy heart must answer, though thine ear would shun?  
And deem’st thou me unknown too? Gaze again!  
At least thy memory was not given in vain.  
Oh! never canst thou cancel half her debt—

440

Eternity forbids thee to forget.”

With slow and searching glance upon his face  
Grew Lara’s eyes, but nothing there could trace  
They knew, or chose to know—with dubious look  
He deigned no answer, but his head he shook,  
And half contemptuous turned to pass away;  
But the stern stranger motioned him to stay.

“A word!—I charge thee stay, and answer here  
To one, who, wert thou noble, were thy peer,  
But as thou wast and art—nay, frown not, Lord,  
If false, ’tis easy to disprove the word—  
But as thou wast and art, on thee looks down,  
Distrusts thy smiles, but shakes not at thy frown.  
Art thou not he? whose deeds——”

450

“Whate’er I be,  
Words wild as these, accusers like to thee,  
I list no further; those with whom they weigh  
May hear the rest, nor venture to gainsay  
The wondrous tale no doubt thy tongue can tell,  
Which thus begins so courteously and well.  
Let Otho cherish here his polished guest,  
To him my thanks and thoughts shall be expressed.”  
And here their wondering host hath interposed—

460

“Whate’er there be between you undisclosed,  
This is no time nor fitting place to mar  
The mirthful meeting with a wordy war.  
If thou, Sir Ezzelin, hast aught to show



Which it befits Count Lara's ear to know,  
To-morrow, here, or elsewhere, as may best  
Beseem your mutual judgment, speak the rest; 470  
I pledge myself for thee, as not unknown,  
Though, like Count Lara, now returned alone  
From other lands, almost a stranger grown;  
And if from Lara's blood and gentle birth  
I augur right of courage and of worth,  
He will not that untainted line belie,  
Nor aught that Knighthood may accord, deny."

"To-morrow be it," Ezzelin replied,  
"And here our several worth and truth be tried;  
I gage my life, my falchion to attest 480  
My words, so may I mingle with the blest!"  
What answers Lara? to its centre shrunk  
His soul, in deep abstraction sudden sunk;  
The words of many, and the eyes of all  
That there were gathered, seemed on him to fall;  
But his were silent, his appeared to stray  
In far forgetfulness away—away—  
Alas! that heedlessness of all around  
Bespoke remembrance only too profound.

XXIV.

"To-morrow!—aye, tomorrow!" further word 490  
Than those repeated none from Lara heard;  
Upon his brow no outward passion spoke;

From his large eye no flashing anger broke;  
Yet there was something fixed in that low tone,  
Which showed resolve, determined, though unknown.  
He seized his cloak—his head he slightly bowed,  
And passing Ezzelin, he left the crowd;  
And, as he passed him, smiling met the frown  
With which that Chieftain's brow would bear him down:  
It was nor smile of mirth, nor struggling pride 500  
That curbs to scorn the wrath it cannot hide;  
But that of one in his own heart secure  
Of all that he would do, or could endure.  
Could this mean peace? the calmness of the good?  
Or guilt grown old in desperate hardihood?  
Alas! too like in confidence are each,  
For man to trust to mortal look or speech;  
From deeds, and deeds alone, may he discern  
Truths which it wrings the unpractised heart to learn.

XXV.

And Lara called his page, and went his way— 510  
Well could that stripling word or sign obey:  
His only follower from those climes afar,  
Where the Soul glows beneath a brighter star:  
For Lara left the shore from whence he sprung,  
In duty patient, and sedate though young;  
Silent as him he served, his faith appears  
Above his station, and beyond his years.

Though not unknown the tongue of Lara's land,  
In such from him he rarely heard command;  
But fleet his step, and clear his tones would come, 520  
When Lara's lip breathed forth the words of home:  
Those accents, as his native mountains dear,  
Awake their absent echoes in his ear,  
Friends'—kindred's—parents'—wonted voice recall,  
Now lost, abjured, for one—his friend, his all:  
For him earth now disclosed no other guide;  
What marvel then he rarely left his side?

XXVI.

Light was his form, and darkly delicate  
That brow whereon his native sun had sate,  
But had not marred, though in his beams he grew, 530  
The cheek where oft the unbidden blush shone through;  
Yet not such blush as mounts when health would show  
All the heart's hue in that delighted glow;  
But 'twas a hectic tint of secret care  
That for a burning moment fevered there;  
And the wild sparkle of his eye seemed caught  
From high, and lightened with electric thought,  
Though its black orb those long low lashes' fringe  
Had tempered with a melancholy tinge;  
Yet less of sorrow than of pride was there, 540  
Or, if 'twere grief, a grief that none should share:  
And pleased not him the sports that please his age,

The tricks of Youth, the frolics of the Page;  
For hours on Lara he would fix his glance,  
As all-forgotten in that watchful trance;  
And from his chief withdrawn, he wandered lone,  
Brief were his answers, and his questions none;  
His walk the wood, his sport some foreign book;  
His resting-place the bank that curbs the brook:  
He seemed, like him he served, to live apart 550  
From all that lures the eye, and fills the heart;  
To know no brotherhood, and take from earth  
No gift beyond that bitter boon—our birth.

XXVII.

If aught he loved, 'twas Lara; but was shown  
His faith in reverence and in deeds alone;  
In mute attention; and his care, which guessed  
Each wish, fulfilled it ere the tongue expressed.  
Still there was haughtiness in all he did,  
A spirit deep that brooked not to be chid;  
His zeal, though more than that of servile hands, 560  
In act alone obeys, his air commands;  
As if 'twas Lara's less than *his* desire  
That thus he served, but surely not for hire.  
Slight were the tasks enjoined him by his Lord,  
To hold the stirrup, or to bear the sword;  
To tune his lute, or, if he willed it more,  
On tomes of other times and tongues to pore;

But ne'er to mingle with the menial train,  
To whom he showed nor deference nor disdain,  
But that well-worn reserve which proved he knew 570  
No sympathy with that familiar crew:  
His soul, whate'er his station or his stem,  
Could bow to Lara, not descend to them.  
Of higher birth he seemed, and better days,  
Nor mark of vulgar toil that hand betrays,  
So femininely white it might bespeak  
Another sex, when matched with that smooth cheek,  
But for his garb, and something in his gaze,  
More wild and high than Woman's eye betrays;  
A latent fierceness that far more became 580  
His fiery climate than his tender frame:  
True, in his words it broke not from his breast,  
But from his aspect might be more than guessed.  
Kaled his name, though rumour said he bore  
Another ere he left his mountain-shore;  
For sometimes he would hear, however nigh,  
That name repeated loud without reply,  
As unfamiliar—or, if roused again,  
Start to the sound, as but remembered then;  
Unless 'twas Lara's wonted voice that spake, 590  
For then—ear—eyes—and heart would all awake.

XXVIII.

He had looked down upon the festive hall,

And mark'd that sudden strife so marked of all:  
And when the crowd around and near him told  
Their wonder at the calmness of the bold,  
Their marvel how the high-born Lara bore  
Such insult from a stranger, doubly sore,  
The colour of young Kaled went and came,  
The lip of ashes, and the cheek of flame;  
And o'er his brow the dampening heart-drops threw 600  
The sickening iciness of that cold dew,  
That rises as the busy bosom sinks  
With heavy thoughts from which Reflection shrinks.  
Yes—there be things which we must dream and dare,  
And execute ere thought be half aware:<sup>13</sup>  
Whate'er might Kaled's be, it was enow  
To seal his lip, but agonise his brow.  
He gazed on Ezzelin till Lara cast  
That sidelong smile upon the knight he past;  
When Kaled saw that smile his visage fell, 610  
As if on something recognised right well:  
His memory read in such a meaning more  
Than Lara's aspect unto others wore:  
Forward he sprung—a moment, both were gone,  
And all within that hall seemed left alone;  
Each had so fixed his eye on Lara's mien,  
All had so mixed their feelings with that scene,  
That when his long dark shadow through the porch  
No more relieves the glare of yon high torch,

Each pulse beats quicker, and all bosoms seem  
To bound as doubting from too black a dream,  
Such as we know is false, yet dread in sooth,  
Because the worst is ever nearest truth.  
And they are gone—but Ezzelin is there,  
With thoughtful visage and imperious air;  
But long remained not; ere an hour expired  
He waved his hand to Otho, and retired.

620

XXIX.

The crowd are gone, the revellers at rest;  
The courteous host, and all-approving guest,  
Again to that accustomed couch must creep  
Where Joy subsides, and Sorrow sighs to sleep,  
And Man, o'erlaboured with his Being's strife,  
Shrinks to that sweet forgetfulness of life:  
There lie Love's feverish hope, and Cunning's guile,  
Hate's working brain, and lulled Ambition's wile;  
O'er each vain eye Oblivion's pinions wave,  
And quenched Existence crouches in a grave.  
What better name may Slumber's bed become?  
Night's sepulchre, the universal home,  
Where Weakness—Strength—Vice—Virtue—sunk supine,  
Alike in naked helplessness recline;  
Glad for a while to heave unconscious breath,  
Yet wake to wrestle with the dread of Death,  
And shun—though Day but dawn on ills increased—

630

640

That sleep,—the loveliest, since it dreams the least.



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<sup>1</sup> [A revised version of the following "Advertisement" was prefixed to the First Edition (Printed for J. Murray, Albemarle Street, By T. Davison, Whitefriars, 1814), which was accompanied by *Jacqueline*:—

"The Reader—if the tale of *Lara* has the fortune to meet with one—may probably regard it as a sequel to the *Corsair*;—the colouring is of a similar cast, and although the situations of the characters are changed, the stories are in some measure connected. The countenance is nearly the same—but with a different expression. To the readers' conjecture are left the name of the writer and the failure or success of his attempt—the latter are the only points upon which the author or his judges can feel interested.

"The Poem of *Jaqueline* is the production of a different author and is added at the request of the writer of the former tale, whose wish and entreaty it was that it should occupy the first pages of the following volume, and he regrets that the tenacious courtesy of his friend would not permit him to place it where the judgement of the reader concurring with his own will suggest its more appropriate station."

<sup>2</sup> The reader is apprised, that the name of *Lara* being Spanish, and no circumstance of local and natural description fixing the scene or hero of the poem to any country or age, the word "Serf," which could not be correctly applied to the lower classes in Spain, who were never vassals of the soil, has nevertheless been employed to designate the followers of our fictitious chieftain.

[Byron, writing to Murray, July 14, 1814, says, "The name only is Spanish; the country is not Spain, but the Moon" (not "Morea," as hitherto printed).—*Letters*, 1899, iii. 110. The MS. is dated May 15, 1814.]

<sup>3</sup> [For the opening lines to *Lara*, see *Murray's Magazine*, January, 1887, vol. i. p. 3.]

<sup>4</sup> [Compare *Childish Recollections*, lines 221–224—

"Can Rank, or e'en a Guardian's name supply  
The love, which glistens in a Father's eye?  
For this, can Wealth, or Title's sound atone,  
Made, by a Parent's early loss, my own?"

Compare, too, *English Bards, etc.*, lines 689–694, *Poetical Works*, 1898, i. 95, 352.]

<sup>5</sup> [The construction is harsh and obscure, but the meaning is, perhaps, that, though *Lara's* soul was haughty, his sins were due to nothing worse than pleasure, that they were the natural sins of youth.]



<sup>6</sup> ["The circumstance of his having at this time [1808–9] among the ornaments of his study, a number of skulls highly polished, and placed on light stands round the room, would seem to indicate that he rather courted than shunned such gloomy associations."—*Life*, p. 87.]

<sup>7</sup> [Compare—

"His train but deemed the favourite page  
Was left behind to spare his age,  
Or other if they deemed, none dared  
To mutter what he thought or heard."

*MARMION*, CANTO III. STANZA XV. LINES 19–22.]

<sup>8</sup> [Compare—

"Sweetly shining on the eye,  
A rivulet gliding smoothly by;  
Which shows with what an easy tide  
The moments of the happy glide."

*DYER'S COUNTRY WALK (POETICAL WORKS OF ARMSTRONG, DYER, AND GREEN, 1858, P. 221).*]

<sup>9</sup> ["He used, at first, though offered a bed at Annesley, to return every night to Newstead, to sleep; alleging as a reason that he was afraid of the family pictures of the Chaworths."—*Life*, p. 27.]

<sup>10</sup> [The MS. omits lines 313–382. Stanza xviii. is written on a loose sheet belonging to the Murray MSS.; stanza xix. on a sheet inserted in the MS. Both stanzas must have been composed after the first draft of the poem was completed.]

<sup>11</sup> [Compare Coleridge's *Lines to a Gentleman* [William Wordsworth] (written in 1807, but not published till 1817), lines 69, 70—

"Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,  
And genius given, and knowledge won in vain."]

<sup>12</sup> [For Byron's belief or half-persuasion that he was predestined to evil, compare *Childe Harold*, Canto I. stanza lxxxiii. lines 8, 9, and note. Compare, too, Canto III. stanza lxx. lines 8 and 9; and Canto IV. stanza xxxiv. line 6: *Poetical Works*, 1899, ii, 74, 260, 354.]

<sup>13</sup> [Compare—

"Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,  
Which must be acted, ere they may be scanned."

*MACBETH*, ACT III. SC. 4, LINES 139, 140.]

## CANTO THE SECOND.

### I.

Night wanes—the vapours round the mountains curled<sup>1</sup>  
Melt into morn, and Light awakes the world,  
Man has another day to swell the past,  
And lead him near to little, but his last;  
But mighty Nature bounds as from her birth, 650  
The Sun is in the heavens, and Life on earth;<sup>2</sup>  
Flowers in the valley, splendour in the beam,  
Health on the gale, and freshness in the stream.  
Immortal Man! behold her glories shine,  
And cry, exulting inly, “They are thine!”  
Gaze on, while yet thy gladdened eye may see:  
A morrow comes when they are not for thee:  
And grieve what may above thy senseless bier,  
Nor earth nor sky will yield a single tear;  
Nor cloud shall gather more, nor leaf shall fall, 660  
Nor gale breathe forth one sigh for thee, for all;<sup>3</sup>  
But creeping things shall revel in their spoil,  
And fit thy clay to fertilise the soil.

### II.

’Tis morn—’tis noon—assembled in the hall,  
The gathered Chieftains come to Otho’s call;  
’Tis now the promised hour, that must proclaim

The life or death of Lara's future fame;  
And Ezzelin his charge may here unfold,  
And whatso'er the tale, it must be told.  
His faith was pledged, and Lara's promise given,  
To meet it in the eye of Man and Heaven.  
Why comes he not? Such truths to be divulged,  
Methinks the accuser's rest is long indulged.

670

III.

The hour is past, and Lara too is there,  
With self-confiding, coldly patient air;  
Why comes not Ezzelin? The hour is past,  
And murmurs rise, and Otho's brow's o'er-cast.  
"I know my friend! his faith I cannot fear,  
If yet he be on earth, expect him here;  
The roof that held him in the valley stands  
Between my own and noble Lara's lands;  
My halls from such a guest had honour gained,  
Nor had Sir Ezzelin his host disdained,  
But that some previous proof forbade his stay,  
And urged him to prepare against today;  
The word I pledged for his I pledge again,  
Or will myself redeem his knighthood's stain."  
He ceased—and Lara answered, "I am here  
To lend at thy demand a listening ear  
To tales of evil from a stranger's tongue,  
Whose words already might my heart have wrung,

680

690

But that I deemed him scarcely less than mad,  
Or, at the worst, a foe ignobly bad.

I know him not—but me it seems he knew  
In lands where—but I must not trifle too:  
Produce this babbler—or redeem the pledge;  
Here in thy hold, and with thy falchion's edge.”  
Proud Otho on the instant, reddening, threw  
His glove on earth, and forth his sabre flew.

“The last alternative befits me best,

700

And thus I answer for mine absent guest.”

With cheek unchanging from its sallow gloom,  
However near his own or other's tomb;  
With hand, whose almost careless coolness spoke  
Its grasp well-used to deal the sabre-stroke;  
With eye, though calm, determined not to spare,  
Did Lara too his willing weapon bare.

In vain the circling Chieftains round them closed,  
For Otho's frenzy would not be opposed;

And from his lip those words of insult fell—

710

His sword is good who can maintain them well.

#### IV.

Short was the conflict; furious, blindly rash,  
Vain Otho gave his bosom to the gash:  
He bled, and fell; but not with deadly wound,  
Stretched by a dextrous sleight along the ground.  
“Demand thy life!” He answered not: and then

From that red floor he ne'er had risen again,  
For Lara's brow upon the moment grew  
Almost to blackness in its demon hue;<sup>4</sup>  
And fiercer shook his angry falchion now  
Than when his foe's was levelled at his brow;  
Then all was stern collectedness and art,  
Now rose the unleavened hatred of his heart;  
So little sparing to the foe he felled,  
That when the approaching crowd his arm withheld,  
He almost turned the thirsty point on those  
Who thus for mercy dared to interpose;  
But to a moment's thought that purpose bent;  
Yet looked he on him still with eye intent,  
As if he loathed the ineffectual strife  
That left a foe, howe'er o'erthrown, with life;  
As if to search how far the wound he gave  
Had sent its victim onward to his grave.

720

730

v.

They raised the bleeding Otho, and the Leech  
Forbade all present question, sign, and speech;  
The others met within a neighbouring hall,  
And he, incensed, and heedless of them all,  
The cause and conqueror in this sudden fray,  
In haughty silence slowly strode away;  
He backed his steed, his homeward path he took,  
Nor cast on Otho's towers a single look.

740

But where was he? that meteor of a night,  
 Who menaced but to disappear with light.  
 Where was this Ezzelin? who came and went,  
 To leave no other trace of his intent.

He left the dome of Otho long ere morn,  
 In darkness, yet so well the path was worn  
 He could not miss it: near his dwelling lay;  
 But there he was not, and with coming day  
 Came fast inquiry, which unfolded nought,  
 Except the absence of the Chief it sought.

750

A chamber tenantless, a steed at rest,  
 His host alarmed, his murmuring squires distressed:  
 Their search extends along, around the path,  
 In dread to meet the marks of prowlers' wrath:  
 But none are there, and not a brake hath borne  
 Nor gout of blood, nor shred of mantle torn;  
 Nor fall nor struggle hath defaced the grass,  
 Which still retains a mark where Murder was;  
 Nor dabbling fingers left to tell the tale,  
 The bitter print of each convulsive nail,  
 When agonised hands that cease to guard,  
 Wound in that pang the smoothness of the sword.

760

Some such had been, if here a life was reft,  
 But these were not; and doubting Hope is left;  
 And strange Suspicion, whispering Lara's name,

Now daily mutters o'er his blackened fame;  
Then sudden silent when his form appeared,  
Awaits the absence of the thing it feared  
Again its wonted wondering to renew,  
And dye conjecture with a darker hue.

770

VII.

Days roll along, and Otho's wounds are healed,  
But not his pride; and hate no more concealed:  
He was a man of power, and Lara's foe,  
The friend of all who sought to work him woe,  
And from his country's justice now demands  
Account of Ezzelin at Lara's hands.

Who else than Lara could have cause to fear  
His presence? who had made him disappear,  
If not the man on whom his menaced charge  
Had sate too deeply were he left at large?

780

The general rumour ignorantly loud,  
The mystery dearest to the curious crowd;  
The seeming friendliness of him who strove  
To win no confidence, and wake no love;  
The sweeping fierceness which his soul betrayed,  
The skill with which he wielded his keen blade;  
Where had his arm unwarlike caught that art?  
Where had that fierceness grown upon his heart?

For it was not the blind capricious rage  
A word can kindle and a word assuage;

790

But the deep working of a soul unmixed  
With aught of pity where its wrath had fixed;  
Such as long power and overgorged success  
Concentrates into all that's merciless:  
These, linked with that desire which ever sways  
Mankind, the rather to condemn than praise,  
'Gainst Lara gathering raised at length a storm,  
Such as himself might fear, and foes would form,  
And he must answer for the absent head  
Of one that haunts him still, alive or dead.

800

VIII.

Within that land was many a malcontent,  
Who cursed the tyranny to which he bent;  
That soil full many a wringing despot saw,  
Who worked his wantonness in form of law;  
Long war without and frequent broil within  
Had made a path for blood and giant sin,  
That waited but a signal to begin  
New havoc, such as civil discord blends,  
Which knows no neuter, owns but foes or friends;  
Fixed in his feudal fortress each was lord,  
In word and deed obeyed, in soul abhorred.  
Thus Lara had inherited his lands,  
And with them pining hearts and sluggish hands;  
But that long absence from his native clime  
Had left him stainless of Oppression's crime,

810



And now, diverted by his milder sway,  
All dread by slow degrees had worn away.  
The menials felt their usual awe alone,  
But more for him than them that fear was grown; 820  
They deemed him now unhappy, though at first  
Their evil judgment augured of the worst,  
And each long restless night, and silent mood,  
Was traced to sickness, fed by solitude:  
And though his lonely habits threw of late  
Gloom o'er his chamber, cheerful was his gate;  
For thence the wretched ne'er unsoothed withdrew,  
For them, at least, his soul compassion knew.  
Cold to the great, contemptuous to the high,  
The humble passed not his unheeding eye; 830  
Much he would speak not, but beneath his roof  
They found asylum oft, and ne'er reproof.  
And they who watched might mark that, day by day,  
Some new retainers gathered to his sway;  
But most of late, since Ezzelin was lost,  
He played the courteous lord and bounteous host:  
Perchance his strife with Otho made him dread  
Some snare prepared for his obnoxious head;  
Whate'er his view, his favour more obtains  
With these, the people, than his fellow thanes. 840  
If this were policy, so far 'twas sound,  
The million judged but of him as they found;  
From him by sterner chiefs to exile driven

They but required a shelter, and 'twas given.  
By him no peasant mourned his rifled cot,  
And scarce the Serf could murmur o'er his lot;  
With him old Avarice found its hoard secure,  
With him contempt forbore to mock the poor;  
Youth present cheer and promised recompense  
Detained, till all too late to part from thence:  
To Hate he offered, with the coming change,  
The deep reversion of delayed revenge;  
To Love, long baffled by the unequal match,  
The well-won charms success was sure to snatch.

850

All now was ripe, he waits but to proclaim  
That slavery nothing which was still a name.  
The moment came, the hour when Otho thought  
Secure at last the vengeance which he sought:  
His summons found the destined criminal  
Begirt by thousands in his swarming hall;  
Fresh from their feudal fetters newly riven,  
Defying earth, and confident of heaven.

860

That morning he had freed the soil-bound slaves,  
Who dig no land for tyrants but their graves!  
Such is their cry—some watchword for the fight  
Must vindicate the wrong, and warp the right;  
Religion—Freedom—Vengeance—what you will,  
A word's enough to raise Mankind to kill;  
Some factious phrase by cunning caught and spread,  
That Guilt may reign-and wolves and worms be fed!

870

Throughout that clime the feudal Chiefs had gained  
 Such sway, their infant monarch hardly reigned;  
 Now was the hour for Faction's rebel growth,  
 The Serfs contemned the one, and hated both:  
 They waited but a leader, and they found  
 One to their cause inseparably bound;  
 By circumstance compelled to plunge again,  
 In self-defence, amidst the strife of men.  
 Cut off by some mysterious fate from those  
 Whom Birth and Nature meant not for his foes,  
 Had Lara from that night, to him accurst,  
 Prepared to meet, but not alone, the worst:  
 Some reason urged, whate'er it was, to shun  
 Inquiry into deeds at distance done;  
 By mingling with his own the cause of all,  
 E'en if he failed, he still delayed his fall.  
 The sullen calm that long his bosom kept,  
 The storm that once had spent itself and slept,  
 Roused by events that seemed foredoomed to urge  
 His gloomy fortunes to their utmost verge,  
 Burst forth, and made him all he once had been,  
 And is again; he only changed the scene.  
 Light care had he for life, and less for fame,  
 But not less fitted for the desperate game:  
 He deemed himself marked out for others' hate,

880

890

And mocked at Ruin so they shared his fate.  
And cared he for the freedom of the crowd?  
He raised the humble but to bend the proud.  
He had hoped quiet in his sullen lair,  
But Man and Destiny beset him there:  
Inured to hunters, he was found at bay;  
And they must kill, they cannot snare the prey.  
Stern, unambitious, silent, he had been  
Henceforth a calm spectator of Life's scene;  
But dragged again upon the arena, stood  
A leader not unequal to the feud;  
In voice—mien—gesture—savage nature spoke,  
And from his eye the gladiator broke.

900

X.

What boots the oft-repeated tale of strife,  
The feast of vultures, and the waste of life?  
The varying fortune of each separate field,  
The fierce that vanquish, and the faint that yield?  
The smoking ruin, and the crumbled wall?  
In this the struggle was the same with all;  
Save that distempered passions lent their force  
In bitterness that banished all remorse.  
None sued, for Mercy knew her cry was vain,  
The captive died upon the battle-plain:  
In either cause, one rage alone possessed  
The empire of the alternate victor's breast;

910

920

And they that smote for freedom or for sway,  
Deemed few were slain, while more remained to slay.  
It was too late to check the wasting brand,  
And Desolation reaped the famished land;  
The torch was lighted, and the flame was spread,  
And Carnage smiled upon her daily dead.

XI.

Fresh with the nerve the new-born impulse strung,  
The first success to Lara's numbers clung:  
But that vain victory hath ruined all;  
They form no longer to their leader's call: 930  
In blind confusion on the foe they press,  
And think to snatch is to secure success.  
The lust of booty, and the thirst of hate,  
Lure on the broken brigands to their fate:  
In vain he doth whate'er a chief may do,  
To check the headlong fury of that crew;  
In vain their stubborn ardour he would tame,  
The hand that kindles cannot quench the flame;  
The wary foe alone hath turned their mood,  
And shown their rashness to that erring brood: 940  
The feigned retreat, the nightly ambuscade,  
The daily harass, and the fight delayed,  
The long privation of the hoped supply,  
The tentless rest beneath the humid sky,  
The stubborn wall that mocks the leaguer's art,

And palls the patience of his baffled art,  
Of these they had not deemed: the battle-day  
They could encounter as a veteran may;  
But more preferred the fury of the strife,  
And present death, to hourly suffering life: 950  
And Famine wrings, and Fever sweeps away  
His numbers melting fast from their array;  
Intemperate triumph fades to discontent,  
And Lara's soul alone seems still unbent;  
But few remain to aid his voice and hand,  
And thousands dwindled to a scanty band:  
Desperate, though few, the last and best remained  
To mourn the discipline they late disdained.  
One hope survives, the frontier is not far,  
And thence they may escape from native war: 960  
And bear within them to the neighbouring state  
An exile's sorrows, or an outlaw's hate:  
Hard is the task their father-land to quit,  
But harder still to perish or submit.

XII.

It is resolved—they march—consenting Night  
Guides with her star their dim and torchless flight;  
Already they perceive its tranquil beam  
Sleep on the surface of the barrier stream;  
Already they descry—Is yon the bank?  
Away! 'tis lined with many a hostile rank. 970

Return or fly!—What glitters in the rear?  
'Tis Otho's banner—the pursuer's spear!  
Are those the shepherds' fires upon the height?  
Alas! they blaze too widely for the flight:  
Cut off from hope, and compassed in the toil,  
Less blood perchance hath bought a richer spoil!

XIII.

A moment's pause—'tis but to breathe their band,  
Or shall they onward press, or here withstand?  
It matters little—if they charge the foes  
Who by their border-stream their march oppose, 980  
Some few, perchance, may break and pass the line,  
However linked to baffle such design.  
“The charge be ours! to wait for their assault  
Were fate well worthy of a coward's halt.”  
Forth flies each sabre, reined is every steed,  
And the next word shall scarce outstrip the deed:  
In the next tone of Lara's gathering breath  
How many shall but hear the voice of Death!

XIV.

His blade is bared,—in him there is an air  
As deep, but far too tranquil for despair; 990  
A something of indifference more than then  
Becomes the bravest, if they feel for men—  
He turned his eye on Kaled, ever near,  
And still too faithful to betray one fear;

Perchance 'twas but the moon's dim twilight threw  
Along his aspect an unwonted hue  
Of mournful paleness, whose deep tint expressed  
The truth, and not the terror of his breast.

This Lara marked, and laid his hand on his:

It trembled not in such an hour as this;

*1000*

His lip was silent, scarcely beat his heart,

His eye alone proclaimed, "We will not part!

Thy band may perish, or thy friends may flee,

Farewell to Life—but not Adieu to thee!"

The word hath passed his lips, and onward driven,

Pours the linked band through ranks asunder riven:

Well has each steed obeyed the arméd heel,

And flash the scimitars, and rings the steel;

Outnumbered, not outbraved, they still oppose

Despair to daring, and a front to foes;

*1010*

And blood is mingled with the dashing stream,

Which runs all redly till the morning beam.

xv.<sup>5</sup>

Commanding—aiding—animating all,<sup>6</sup>

Where foe appeared to press, or friend to fall,

Cheers Lara's voice, and waves or strikes his steel,

Inspiring hope, himself had ceased to feel.

None fled, for well they knew that flight were vain;

But those that waver turn to smite again,

While yet they find the firmest of the foe



Recoil before their leader's look and blow:

1020

Now girt with numbers, now almost alone,

He foils their ranks, or reunites his own;

Himself he spared not—once they seemed to fly—

Now was the time, he waved his hand on high,

And shook—Why sudden droops that pluméd crest?

The shaft is sped—the arrow's in his breast!

That fatal gesture left the unguarded side,

And Death has stricken down yon arm of pride.

The word of triumph fainted from his tongue;

That hand, so raised, how droopingly it hung!

1030

But yet the sword instinctively retains,

Though from its fellow shrink the falling reins;

These Kaled snatches: dizzy with the blow,

And senseless bending o'er his saddle-bow,

Perceives not Lara that his anxious page

Beguiles his charger from the combat's rage:

Meantime his followers charge, and charge again;

Too mixed the slayers now to heed the slain!

XVI.

Day glimmers on the dying and the dead,

The cloven cuirass, and the helmless head;

1040

The war-horse masterless is on the earth,<sup>7</sup>

And that last gasp hath burst his bloody girth;

And near, yet quivering with what life remained,

The heel that urged him and the hand that reined;

And some too near that rolling torrent lie,  
Whose waters mock the lip of those that die;  
That panting thirst which scorches in the breath  
Of those that die the soldier's fiery death,  
In vain impels the burning mouth to crave  
One drop—the last—to cool it for the grave; 1050  
With feeble and convulsive effort swept,  
Their limbs along the crimsoned turf have crept;  
The faint remains of life such struggles waste,  
But yet they reach the stream, and bend to taste:  
They feel its freshness, and almost partake—  
Why pause? No further thirst have they to slake—  
It is unquenched, and yet they feel it not;  
It was an agony—but now forgot!

XVII.

Beneath a lime, remoter from the scene,  
Where but for him that strife had never been, 1060  
A breathing but devoted warrior lay:  
'Twas Lara bleeding fast from life away.  
His follower once, and now his only guide,  
Kneels Kaled watchful o'er his welling side,  
And with his scarf would staunch the tides that rush,  
With each convulsion, in a blacker gush;  
And then, as his faint breathing waxes low,  
In feebler, not less fatal tricklings flow:  
He scarce can speak, but motions him 'tis vain,

And merely adds another throb to pain.

1070

He clasps the hand that pang which would assuage,  
And sadly smiles his thanks to that dark page,  
Who nothing fears—nor feels—nor heeds—nor sees—  
Save that damp brow which rests upon his knees;  
Save that pale aspect, where the eye, though dim,  
Held all the light that shone on earth for him.

XVIII.

The foe arrives, who long had searched the field,  
Their triumph nought till Lara too should yield:  
They would remove him, but they see 'twere vain,  
And he regards them with a calm disdain,  
That rose to reconcile him with his fate,  
And that escape to death from living hate:  
And Otho comes, and leaping from his steed,  
Looks on the bleeding foe that made him bleed,  
And questions of his state; he answers not,  
Scarce glances on him as on one forgot,  
And turns to Kaled:—each remaining word  
They understood not, if distinctly heard;  
His dying tones are in that other tongue,  
To which some strange remembrance wildly clung.  
They spake of other scenes, but what—is known  
To Kaled, whom their meaning reached alone;  
And he replied, though faintly, to their sound,  
While gazed the rest in dumb amazement round:

1080

1090

They seemed even then—that twain—unto the last  
To half forget the present in the past;  
To share between themselves some separate fate,  
Whose darkness none beside should penetrate.

XIX.<sup>8</sup>

Their words though faint were many—from the tone  
Their import those who heard could judge alone; 1100  
From this, you might have deemed young Kaled's death  
More near than Lara's by his voice and breath,  
So sad—so deep—and hesitating broke  
The accents his scarce-moving pale lips spoke;  
But Lara's voice, though low, at first was clear  
And calm, till murmuring Death gasped hoarsely near;  
But from his visage little could we guess,  
So unrepentant—dark—and passionless,  
Save that when struggling nearer to his last,  
Upon that page his eye was kindly cast; 1110  
And once, as Kaled's answering accents ceased,  
Rose Lara's hand, and pointed to the East:  
Whether (as then the breaking Sun from high  
Rolled back the clouds) the morrow caught his eye,  
Or that 'twas chance—or some remembered scene,  
That raised his arm to point where such had been,  
Scarce Kaled seemed to know, but turned away,  
As if his heart abhorred that coming day,  
And shrunk his glance before that morning light,

To look on Lara's brow—where all grew night. 1120

Yet sense seemed left, though better were its loss;  
For when one near displayed the absolving Cross,  
And proffered to his touch the holy bead,  
Of which his parting soul might own the need,  
He looked upon it with an eye profane,  
And smiled—Heaven pardon! if 'twere with disdain:

And Kaled, though he spoke not, nor withdrew  
From Lara's face his fixed despairing view,  
With brow repulsive, and with gesture swift,  
Flung back the hand which held the sacred gift, 1130  
As if such but disturbed the expiring man,  
Nor seemed to know his life but *then* began—  
That Life of Immortality, secure  
To none, save them whose faith in Christ is sure.

XX.

But gasping heaved the breath that Lara drew,  
And dull the film along his dim eye grew;  
His limbs stretched fluttering, and his head drooped o'er  
The weak yet still untiring knee that bore;  
He pressed the hand he held upon his heart—  
It beats no more, but Kaled will not part 1140  
With the cold grasp, but feels, and feels in vain,  
For that faint throb which answers not again.  
“It beats!”—Away, thou dreamer! he is gone—  
It once *was* Lara which thou look'st upon.

## XXI.

He gazed, as if not yet had passed away  
 The haughty spirit of that humbled clay;  
 And those around have roused him from his trance,  
 But cannot tear from thence his fixed glance;  
 And when, in raising him from where he bore  
 Within his arms the form that felt no more, 1150  
 He saw the head his breast would still sustain,  
 Roll down like earth to earth upon the plain;  
 He did not dash himself thereby, nor tear  
 The glossy tendrils of his raven hair,  
 But strove to stand and gaze, but reeled and fell,  
 Scarce breathing more than that he loved so well.  
 Than that *he* loved! Oh! never yet beneath  
 The breast of *man* such trusty love may breathe!  
 That trying moment hath at once revealed  
 The secret long and yet but half concealed; 1160  
 In baring to revive that lifeless breast,  
 Its grief seemed ended, but the sex confessed;  
 And life returned, and Kaled felt no shame—  
 What now to her was Womanhood or Fame?

## XXII.

And Lara sleeps not where his fathers sleep,  
 But where he died his grave was dug as deep;  
 Nor is his mortal slumber less profound,  
 Though priest nor blessed nor marble decked the mound,

And he was mourned by one whose quiet grief,

Less loud, outlasts a people's for their Chief.

1170

Vain was all question asked her of the past,

And vain e'en menace—silent to the last;

She told nor whence, nor why she left behind

Her all for one who seemed but little kind.

Why did she love him? Curious fool!—be still—

Is human love the growth of human will?

To her he might be gentleness; the stern

Have deeper thoughts than your dull eyes discern,

And when they love, your smilers guess not how

Beats the strong heart, though less the lips avow.

1180

They were not common links, that formed the chain

That bound to Lara Kaled's heart and brain;

But that wild tale she brooked not to unfold,

And sealed is now each lip that could have told.

XXIII.

They laid him in the earth, and on his breast,

Besides the wound that sent his soul to rest,

They found the scattered dints of many a scar,

Which were not planted there in recent war;

Where'er had passed his summer years of life,

It seems they vanished in a land of strife;

1190

But all unknown his Glory or his Guilt,

These only told that somewhere blood was spilt,

And Ezzelin, who might have spoke the past,

Returned no more—that night appeared his last.

XXIV.

Upon that night (a peasant's is the tale)

A Serf that crossed the intervening vale,<sup>9</sup>

When Cynthia's light almost gave way to morn,

And nearly veiled in mist her waning horn;

A Serf, that rose betimes to thread the wood,

And hew the bough that bought his children's food, 1200

Passed by the river that divides the plain

Of Otho's lands and Lara's broad domain:

He heard a tramp—a horse and horseman broke

From out the wood—before him was a cloak

Wrapt round some burthen at his saddle-bow,

Bent was his head, and hidden was his brow.

Roused by the sudden sight at such a time,

And some foreboding that it might be crime,

Himself unheeded watched the stranger's course,

Who reached the river, bounded from his horse, 1210

And lifting thence the burthen which he bore,

Heaved up the bank, and dashed it from the shore,

Then paused—and looked—and turned—and seemed to  
watch,

And still another hurried glance would snatch,

And follow with his step the stream that flowed,

As if even yet too much its surface showed;

At once he started—stooped—around him strown



The winter floods had scattered heaps of stone:  
Of these the heaviest thence he gathered there,  
And slung them with a more than common care. 1220

Meantime the Serf had crept to where unseen  
Himself might safely mark what this might mean;  
He caught a glimpse, as of a floating breast,  
And something glittered starlike on the vest;  
But ere he well could mark the buoyant trunk,  
A massy fragment smote it, and it sunk:

It rose again, but indistinct to view,  
And left the waters of a purple hue,  
Then deeply disappeared: the horseman gazed  
Till ebb'd the latest eddy it had raised; 1230

Then turning, vaulted on his pawing steed,  
And instant spurred him into panting speed.  
His face was masked—the features of the dead,  
If dead it were, escaped the observer's dread;  
But if in sooth a Star its bosom bore,  
Such is the badge that Knighthood ever wore,  
And such 'tis known Sir Ezzelin had worn  
Upon the night that led to such a morn.

If thus he perished, Heaven receive his soul!  
His undiscovered limbs to ocean roll; 1240  
And charity upon the hope would dwell  
It was not Lara's hand by which he fell.

And Kaled—Lara—Ezzelin, are gone,  
Alike without their monumental stone!  
The first, all efforts vainly strove to wean  
From lingering where her Chieftain's blood had been:  
Grief had so tamed a spirit once too proud,  
Her tears were few, her wailing never loud;  
But furious would you tear her from the spot  
Where yet she scarce believed that he was not,  
Her eye shot forth with all the living fire  
That haunts the tigress in her whelpless ire;  
But left to waste her weary moments there,  
She talked all idly unto shapes of air,  
Such as the busy brain of Sorrow paints,  
And woos to listen to her fond complaints:  
And she would sit beneath the very tree  
Where lay his drooping head upon her knee;  
And in that posture where she saw him fall,  
His words, his looks, his dying grasp recall;  
And she had shorn, but saved her raven hair,  
And oft would snatch it from her bosom there,  
And fold, and press it gently to the ground,  
As if she staunch'd anew some phantom's wound.  
Herself would question, and for him reply;  
Then rising, start, and beckon him to fly  
From some imagined Spectre in pursuit;  
Then seat her down upon some linden's root,  
And hide her visage with her meagre hand,

1250

1260

Or trace strange characters along the sand—

1270

This could not last—she lies by him she loved;

Her tale untold—her truth too dearly proved.

<sup>1</sup> [Compare—

“Now slowly melting into day,

Vapour and mist dissolved away.”

Sotheby’s *Constance de Castile*, Canto III. stanza v. lines 17, 18.]

<sup>2</sup> [Compare the last lines of Pippa’s song in Browning’s *Pippa Passes*—“God’s in His Heaven, all’s right with the world!”]

<sup>3</sup> [Mr. Alexander Dyce points out the resemblance between these lines and a passage in one of Pope’s letters to Steele (July 15, 1712, *Works*, 1754, viii. 226): “The morning after my exit the sun will rise as bright as ever, the flowers smell as sweet, the plants spring as green.”]

<sup>4</sup> [Compare *Mysteries of Udolpho*, by Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, 1794, ii. 279: “The Count then fell back into the arms of his servants, while Montoni held his sword over him and bade him ask his life . . . his complexion changed almost to blackness as he looked upon his fallen adversary.”]

<sup>5</sup> [Stanza XV. was added after the completion of the first draft of the poem.]

<sup>6</sup> [Compare—

“Il s’excite, il s’empresse, il inspire aux soldats

Cet espoir généreux que lui-même il n’a pas.”

VOLTAIRE, *HENRIADE*, CHANT. VIII. LINES 127, 128, *OEUVRES COMPLÊTES*,  
PARIS, 1837, II. 325.]

<sup>7</sup> [Compare—

“There lay a horse, another through the field

Ran masterless.”

TASSO’S *JERUSALEM* (TRANSLATED BY EDWARD FAIRFAX), BK. VII. STANZA CVI.  
LINES 3, 4.]

<sup>8</sup> [Stanza xix. was added after the completion of the poem. The MS. is extant.]

<sup>9</sup> The event in this section was suggested by the description of the death or rather burial of the Duke of Gandia. “The most interesting and particular account of it is

given by Burchard, and is in substance as follows:—'On the eighth day of June, the Cardinal of Valenza and the Duke of Gandia, sons of the pope, supped with their mother, Vanozza, near the church of *S. Pietro ad vincula*: several other persons being present at the entertainment. A late hour approaching, and the cardinal having reminded his brother that it was time to return to the apostolic palace, they mounted their horses or mules, with only a few attendants, and proceeded together as far as the palace of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, when the duke informed the cardinal that, before he returned home, he had to pay a visit of pleasure. Dismissing therefore all his attendants, excepting his *staffiero*, or footman, and a person in a mask, who had paid him a visit whilst at supper, and who, during the space of a month or thereabouts, previous to this time, had called upon him almost daily at the apostolic palace, he took this person behind him on his mule, and proceeded to the street of the Jews, where he quitted his servant, directing him to remain there until a certain hour; when, if he did not return, he might repair to the palace. The duke then seated the person in the mask behind him, and rode I know not whither; but in that night he was assassinated, and thrown into the river. The servant, after having been dismissed, was also assaulted and mortally wounded; and although he was attended with great care, yet such was his situation, that he could give no intelligible account of what had befallen his master. In the morning, the duke not having returned to the palace, his servants began to be alarmed; and one of them informed the pontiff of the evening excursion of his sons, and that the duke had not yet made his appearance. This gave the pope no small anxiety; but he conjectured that the duke had been attracted by some courtesan to pass the night with her, and, not choosing to quit the house in open day, had waited till the following evening to return home. When, however, the evening arrived, and he found himself disappointed in his expectations, he became deeply afflicted, and began to make inquiries from different persons, whom he ordered to attend him for that purpose. Amongst these was a man named Giorgio Schiavoni, who, having discharged some timber from a bark in the river, had remained on board the vessel to watch it; and being interrogated whether he had seen any one thrown into the river on the night preceding, he replied, that he saw two men on foot, who came down the street, and looked diligently about to observe whether any person was passing. That seeing no one, they returned, and a short time afterwards two others came, and looked around in the same manner as the former: no person still appearing, they gave a sign to their companions, when a man came, mounted on a white horse, having behind him a dead body, the head and arms of which hung on one side, and the feet on the other side of the horse; the two persons on foot supporting the body, to prevent its falling. They thus proceeded towards that part where the filth of the city is usually discharged into the river, and turning the horse, with his tail towards the water, the two persons took the dead body by the arms and feet, and with all their strength flung it into the river. The person on horseback then asked if they had thrown it in; to which they replied, *Signor, si* (yes, Sir). He then looked towards the river, and seeing a mantle floating on the stream, he enquired what it was that appeared black, to which they answered, it was a mantle; and one of them threw stones upon it, in consequence of which it sunk. The attendants of the pontiff then enquired from Giorgio, why he had not revealed this to the governor of the city; to which he replied, that he had seen in his time a hundred dead bodies thrown into the river at the same place, without any inquiry being made respecting them; and that he had not, therefore, considered it as a matter of any importance. The fishermen and

seamen were then collected, and ordered to search the river, where, on the following evening, they found the body of the duke, with his habit entire, and thirty ducats in his purse. He was pierced with nine wounds, one of which was in his throat, the others in his head, body, and limbs. No sooner was the pontiff informed of the death of his son, and that he had been thrown, like filth, into the river, than, giving way to his grief, he shut himself up in a chamber, and wept bitterly. The Cardinal of Segovia, and other attendants on the pope, went to the door, and after many hours spent in persuasions and exhortations, prevailed upon him to admit them. From the evening of Wednesday till the following Saturday the pope took no food; nor did he sleep from Thursday morning till the same hour on the ensuing day. At length, however, giving way to the entreaties of his attendants, he began to restrain his sorrow, and to consider the injury which his own health might sustain by the further indulgence of his grief."—Roscoe's *Life and Pontificate of Leo Tenth*, 1805, i. 265. [See, too, for the original in *Burchard Diar*, in *Gordon's Life of Alex. VI.*, *Append.*, "De Cæde Ducis Gandiæ," *Append.* No. xlvi.ii., *ib.*, pp. 90, 91.]