

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
 So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
 15 The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
 But tell of days in goodness spent,
 A mind at peace with all below,
 A heart whose love is innocent!

June 1814

1815

Darkness¹

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
 The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
 Did wander darkling^o in the eternal space,
 Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
 5 Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
 Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day,
 And men forgot their passions in the dread
 Of this their desolation; and all hearts
 Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:
 10 And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
 The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,
 The habitations of all things which dwell,
 Were burnt for beacons; cities were consumed,
 And men were gather'd round their blazing homes
 15 To look once more into each other's face;
 Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
 Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch:
 A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;
 Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour
 20 They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks
 Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black.
 The brows of men by the despairing light
 Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
 The flashes fell upon them; some lay down
 And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest
 25 Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smiled;
 And others hurried to and fro, and fed
 Their funeral piles with fuel, and look'd up
 With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
 The pall of a past world; and then again
 30 With curses cast them down upon the dust,
 And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild birds shriek'd,
 And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
 And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes

in the dark

1. A powerful blank-verse description of the end of life on earth. New geological sciences and an accompanying interest in what the fossil record indicated about the extinction of species made

such speculations hardly less common in Byron's time than in ours. Mary Shelley would later take up the theme in her novel *The Last Man* (1826).

35 Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd
 And twined themselves among the multitude,
 Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food:
 And War, which for a moment was no more,
 Did glut himself again;—a meal was bought
 40 With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
 Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
 All earth was but one thought—and that was death,
 Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
 Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
 45 Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
 The meagre by the meagre were devour'd,
 Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,
 And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
 The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
 50 Till hunger clung^o them, or the dropping dead
 Lured their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,
 But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
 And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
 Which answer'd not with a caress—he died.
 55 The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two
 Of an enormous city did survive,
 And they were enemies; they met beside
 The dying embers of an altar-place
 Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things
 60 For an unholy usage; they raked up,
 And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton hands
 The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
 Blew for a little life, and made a flame
 Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
 65 Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
 Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and died—
 Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
 Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
 Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,
 70 The populous and the powerful—was a lump,
 Seasonless, herbless,^o treeless, manless, lifeless— *without vegetation*
 A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
 The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,
 And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;
 75 Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
 And their masts fell down piecemeal; as they dropp'd
 They slept on the abyss without a surge—
 The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
 The moon, their mistress, had expired before;
 80 The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,
 And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need
 Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

Diodati, July, 1816

1816

So we'll go no more a roving¹

So we'll go no more a roving
So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
And the moon be still as bright.

5 For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And Love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon,
10 Yet we'll go no more a roving
By the light of the moon.

1817

1830

From Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt¹

From Canto the First

["SIN'S LONG LABYRINTH"]

1

Oh, thou! in Hellas^o deem'd of heavenly birth, Greece
Muse! form'd or fabled at the minstrel's will!
Since shamed full oft by later lyres on earth,
Mine dares not call thee from thy sacred hill:
5 Yet there I've wander'd by thy vaunted rill;
Yes! sigh'd o'er Delphi's long-deserted shrine,
Where, save that feeble fountain, all is still;
Nor mote^o my shell awake the weary Nine² may
To grace so plain a tale—this lowly lay^o of mine. song

2

10 Whilome³ in Albion's^o isle there dwelt a youth, England's
Who ne in virtue's ways did take delight;
But spent his days in riot most uncouth,
And vex'd with mirth the drowsy ear of Night.
Ah, me! in sooth he was a shameless wight,^o creature

1. Composed in the Lenten aftermath of a period of late-night carousing during the Carnival season in Venice, and included in a letter to Thomas Moore, February 28, 1817. Byron wrote, "I find 'the sword wearing out the scabbard,' though I have but just turned the corner of twenty-nine." The poem is based on the refrain of a bawdy Scottish song, "The Jolly Beggar": "And we'll gang

nae mair a roving / Sae late into the nicht."

1. A romance or narrative of adventure.

2. The Muses, whose "vaunted rill" (line 5) was the Castalian spring. "Shell": lyre. Hermes is fabled to have invented the lyre by stretching strings over the hollow of a tortoise shell.

3. Once upon a time; one of the many archaisms that Byron borrowed from Spenser.

15 Sore given to revel and ungodly glee;
 Few earthly things found favour in his sight
 Save concubines and carnal companie,
 And flaunting wassailers⁴ of high and low degree.

3

Childe Harold was he hight:^o—but whence his name *called*
 20 And lineage long, it suits me not to say;
 Suffice it, that perchance they were of fame,
 And had been glorious in another day:
 But one sad losel⁵ soils a name for aye,
 However mighty in the olden time;
 25 Nor all that heralds rake from coffin'd clay,
 Nor florid prose, nor honied lies of rhyme,
 Can blazon evil deeds, or consecrate a crime.

4

Childe Harold bask'd him in the noontide sun,
 Disporting there like any other fly;
 30 Nor deem'd before his little day was done
 One blast might chill him into misery.
 But long ere scarce a third of his pass'd by,
 Worse than adversity the Childe befell;
 He felt the fulness of satiety:
 35 Then loathed he in his native land to dwell,
 Which seem'd to him more lone than Eremite's⁶ sad cell.

5

For he through Sin's long labyrinth had run,
 Nor made atonement when he did amiss,
 Had sigh'd to many though he loved but one,
 40 And that loved one, alas! could ne'er be his.
 Ah, happy she! to 'scape from him whose kiss
 Had been pollution unto aught so chaste;
 Who soon had left her charms for vulgar bliss,
 And spoil'd her goodly lands to gild his waste,
 45 Nor calm domestic peace had ever deign'd to taste.

6

And now Childe Harold was sore sick at heart,
 And from his fellow bacchanals⁷ would flee;
 'Tis said, at times the sullen tear would start,
 But Pride congeal'd the drop within his ee:^o *eye*

4. Noisy, insolent drinkers (Byron is thought to refer to his own youthful carousing with friends at Newstead Abbey).

5. Rascal. Byron's great-uncle, the fifth Lord

Byron, had killed a kinsman in a drunken duel.

6. A religious hermit.

7. Worshipers of Bacchus, ancient Roman god of wine and revelry.