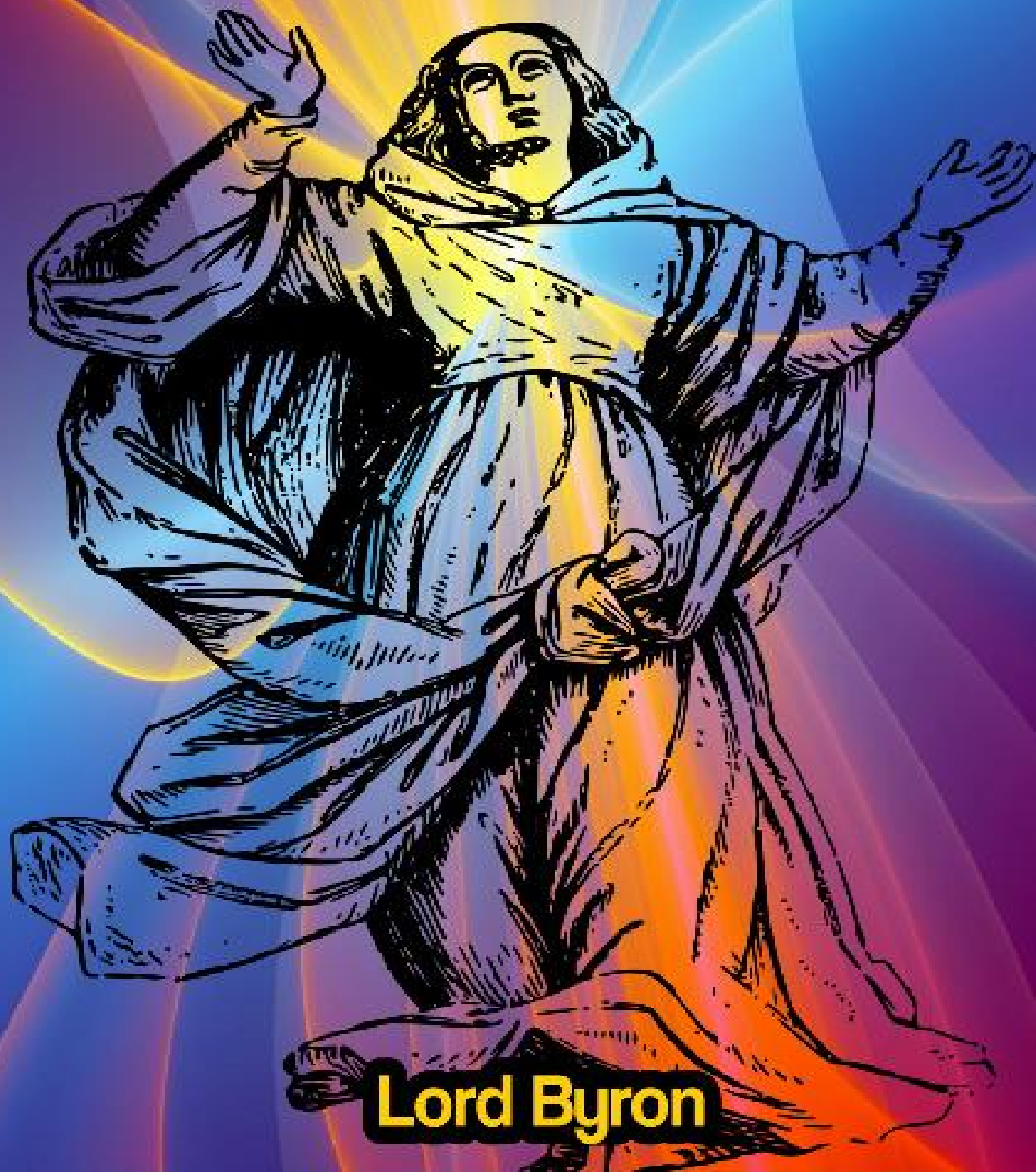


Don Juan



Lord Byron

DEDICATION

Bob Southey! You're a poet, poet laureate,
And representative of all the race.
Although 'tis true that you turned out a Tory at
Last, yours has lately been a common case.
And now my epic renegade, what are ye at
With all the lakers, in and out of place?
A nest of tuneful persons, to my eye
Like four and twenty blackbirds in a pye,

Which pye being opened they began to sing'
(This old song and new simile holds good),
'A dainty dish to set before the King'
Or Regent, who admires such kind of food.
And Coleridge too has lately taken wing,
But like a hawk encumbered with his hood,
Explaining metaphysics to the nation.
I wish he would explain his explanation.

You, Bob, are rather insolent, you know,
At being disappointed in your wish
To supersede all warblers here below,
And be the only blackbird in the dish.
And then you overstrain yourself, or so,
And tumble downward like the flying fish

Gasping on deck, because you soar too high,
Bob, And fall for lack of moisture quite a dry Bob.

And Wordsworth in a rather long Excursion
(I think the quarto holds five hundred pages)
Has given a sample from the vasty version
Of his new system to perplex the sages.
'Tis poetry, at least by his assertion,
And may appear so when the Dog Star rages,
And he who understands it would be able
To add a story to the tower of Babel.

You gentlemen, by dint of long seclusion
From better company, have kept your own
At Keswick, and through still continued fusion
Of one another's minds at last have grown
To deem, as a most logical conclusion,
That poesy has wreaths for you alone.
There is a narrowness in such a notion,
Which makes me wish you'd change your lakes for ocean.

I would not imitate the petty thought,
Nor coin my self-love to so base a vice,
For all the glory your conversion brought,
Since gold alone should not have been its price.
You have your salary; was't for that you wrought?
And Wordsworth has his place in the Excise.

You're shabby fellows—true—but poets still
And duly seated on the immortal hill.

Your bays may hide the baldness of your brows,
Perhaps some virtuous blushes; let them go.
To you I envy neither fruit nor boughs,
And for the fame you would engross below,
The field is universal and allows
Scope to all such as feel the inherent glow.
Scott, Rogers, Campbell, Moore, and Crabbe will try
'Gainst you the question with posterity.

For me, who, wandering with pedestrian Muses,
Contend not with you on the winged' steed,
I wish your fate may yield ye, when she chooses,
The fame you envy and the skill you need.
And recollect a poet nothing loses
In giving to his brethren their full meed
Of merit, and complaint of present days
Is not the certain path to future praise.

He that reserves his laurels for posterity
(Who does not often claim the bright reversion)
Has generally no great crop to spare it, he
Being only injured by his own assertion.
And although here and there some glorious rarity
Arise like Titan from the sea's immersion,

The major part of such appellants go
To—God knows where—for no one else can know.

If fallen in evil days on evil tongues,
Milton appealed to the avenger, Time,
If Time, the avenger, execrates his wrongs
And makes the word Miltonic mean sublime,
He deigned not to belie his soul in songs,
Nor turn his very talent to a crime.
He did not loathe the sire to laud the son,
But closed the tyrant-hater he begun.

Think'st thou, could he, the blind old man, arise
Like Samuel from the grave to freeze once more
The blood of monarchs with his prophecies,
Or be alive again—again all hoar
With time and trials, and those helpless eyes
And heartless daughters—worn and pale and poor,
Would he adore a sultan? He obey
The intellectual eunuch Castlereagh?

Cold-blooded, smooth-faced, placid miscreant!
Dabbling its sleek young hands in Erin's gore,
And thus for wider carnage taught to pant,
Transferred to gorge upon a sister shore,
The vulgarest tool that tyranny could want,
With just enough of talent and no more,

To lengthen fetters by another fixed
And offer poison long already mixed.

An orator of such set trash of phrase,
Ineffably, legitimately vile,
That even its grossest flatterers dare not praise,
Nor foes—all nations—condescend to smile.
Not even a sprightly blunder's spark can blaze
From that Ixion grindstone's ceaseless toil,
That turns and turns to give the world a notion
Of endless torments and perpetual motion.

A bungler even in its disgusting trade,
And botching, patching, leaving still behind
Something of which its masters are afraid,
States to be curbed and thoughts to be confined,
Conspiracy or congress to be made,
Cobbling at manacles for all mankind,
A tinkering slave-maker, who mends old chains,
With God and man's abhorrence for its gains.

If we may judge of matter by the mind,
Emasculated to the marrow, it
Hath but two objects, how to serve and bind,
Deeming the chain it wears even men may fit,
Eutropius of its many masters, blind
To worth as freedom, wisdom as to wit,

Fearless, because no feeling dwells in ice;
Its very courage stagnates to a vice.

Where shall I turn me not to view its bonds,
For I will never feel them. Italy,
Thy late reviving Roman soul desponds
Beneath the lie this state-thing breathed o'er thee.
Thy clanking chain and Erin's yet green wounds
Have voices, tongues to cry aloud for me.
Europe has slaves, allies, kings, armies still,
And Southey lives to sing them very ill.

Meantime, Sir Laureate, I proceed to dedicate
In honest simple verse this song to you.
And if in flattering strains I do not predicate,
'Tis that I still retain my buff and blue;
My politics as yet are all to educate.
Apostasy's so fashionable too,
To keep one creed's a task grown quite
Herculean Is it not so, my Tory, ultra-Julian?

CANTO THE FIRST

I want a hero: an uncommon want,
When every year and month sends forth a new one,
Till, after cloying the gazettes with cant,
The age discovers he is not the true one;
Of such as these I should not care to vaunt,
I 'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan—
We all have seen him, in the pantomime,
Sent to the devil somewhat ere his time.

Vernon, the butcher Cumberland, Wolfe, Hawke,
Prince Ferdinand, Granby, Burgoyne, Keppel, Howe,
Evil and good, have had their tithe of talk,
And fill'd their sign posts then, like Wellesley now;
Each in their turn like Banquo's monarchs stalk,
Followers of fame, 'nine farrow' of that sow:
France, too, had Buonaparte and Dumourier
Recorded in the Moniteur and Courier.

Barnave, Brissot, Condorcet, Mirabeau,
Petion, Cloutz, Danton, Marat, La Fayette,
Were French, and famous people, as we know:
And there were others, scarce forgotten yet,
Joubert, Hoche, Marceau, Lannes, Desaix, Moreau,
With many of the military set,

Exceedingly remarkable at times,
But not at all adapted to my rhymes.

Nelson was once Britannia's god of war,
And still should be so, but the tide is turn'd;
There 's no more to be said of Trafalgar,
'T is with our hero quietly inurn'd;
Because the army 's grown more popular,
At which the naval people are concern'd;
Besides, the prince is all for the land-service,
Forgetting Duncan, Nelson, Howe, and Jervis.

Brave men were living before Agamemnon
And since, exceeding valorous and sage,
A good deal like him too, though quite the same none;
But then they shone not on the poet's page,
And so have been forgotten:—I condemn none,
But can't find any in the present age
Fit for my poem (that is, for my new one);
So, as I said, I 'll take my friend Don Juan.

Most epic poets plunge 'in medias res'
(Horace makes this the heroic turnpike road),
And then your hero tells, whene'er you please,
What went before—by way of episode,
While seated after dinner at his ease,
Beside his mistress in some soft abode,

Palace, or garden, paradise, or cavern,
Which serves the happy couple for a tavern.

That is the usual method, but not mine—
My way is to begin with the beginning;
The regularity of my design
Forbids all wandering as the worst of sinning,
And therefore I shall open with a line
(Although it cost me half an hour in spinning)
Narrating somewhat of Don Juan's father,
And also of his mother, if you 'd rather.

In Seville was he born, a pleasant city,
Famous for oranges and women—he
Who has not seen it will be much to pity,
So says the proverb—and I quite agree;
Of all the Spanish towns is none more pretty,
Cadiz perhaps—but that you soon may see;
Don Juan's parents lived beside the river,
A noble stream, and call'd the Guadalquivir.

His father's name was Jose—Don, of course,—
A true Hidalgo, free from every stain
Of Moor or Hebrew blood, he traced his source
Through the most Gothic gentlemen of Spain;
A better cavalier ne'er mounted horse,
Or, being mounted, e'er got down again,

Than Jose, who begot our hero, who
Begot—but that 's to come—Well, to renew:

His mother was a learned lady, famed
For every branch of every science known
In every Christian language ever named,
With virtues equall'd by her wit alone,
She made the cleverest people quite ashamed,
And even the good with inward envy groan,
Finding themselves so very much exceeded
In their own way by all the things that she did.

Her memory was a mine: she knew by heart
All Calderon and greater part of Lope,
So that if any actor miss'd his part
She could have served him for the prompter's copy;
For her Feinagle's were an useless art,
And he himself obliged to shut up shop—he
Could never make a memory so fine as
That which adorn'd the brain of Donna Inez.

Her favourite science was the mathematical,
Her noblest virtue was her magnanimity,
Her wit (she sometimes tried at wit) was Attic all,
Her serious sayings darken'd to sublimity;
In short, in all things she was fairly what I call
A prodigy—her morning dress was dimity,

Her evening silk, or, in the summer, muslin,
And other stuffs, with which I won't stay puzzling.

She knew the Latin—that is, 'the Lord's prayer,'
And Greek—the alphabet—I 'm nearly sure;
She read some French romances here and there,
Although her mode of speaking was not pure;
For native Spanish she had no great care,
At least her conversation was obscure;
Her thoughts were theorems, her words a problem,
As if she deem'd that mystery would ennoble 'em.

She liked the English and the Hebrew tongue,
And said there was analogy between 'em;
She proved it somehow out of sacred song,
But I must leave the proofs to those who 've seen 'em;
But this I heard her say, and can't be wrong
And all may think which way their judgments lean 'em,
"T is strange—the Hebrew noun which means "I am,"
The English always use to govern d--n.'

Some women use their tongues—she look'd a lecture,
Each eye a sermon, and her brow a homily,
An all-in-all sufficient self-director,
Like the lamented late Sir Samuel Romilly,
The Law's expounder, and the State's corrector,
Whose suicide was almost an anomaly—

One sad example more, that 'All is vanity'
(The jury brought their verdict in 'Insanity').

In short, she was a walking calculation,
Miss Edgeworth's novels stepping from their covers,
Or Mrs. Trimmer's books on education,
Or 'Coelebs' Wife' set out in quest of lovers,
Morality's prim personification,
In which not Envy's self a flaw discovers;
To others' share let 'female errors fall,'
For she had not even one—the worst of all.

O! she was perfect past all parallel—
Of any modern female saint's comparison;
So far above the cunning powers of hell,
Her guardian angel had given up his garrison;
Even her minutest motions went as well
As those of the best time-piece made by Harrison:
In virtues nothing earthly could surpass her,
Save thine 'incomparable oil,' Macassar!

Perfect she was, but as perfection is
Insidious in this naughty world of ours,
Where our first parents never learn'd to kiss
Till they were exiled from their earlier bowers,
Where all was peace, and innocence, and bliss
(I wonder how they got through the twelve hours),

Don Jose, like a lineal son of Eve,
Went plucking various fruit without her leave.

He was a mortal of the careless kind,
With no great love for learning, or the learn'd,
Who chose to go where'er he had a mind,
And never dream'd his lady was concern'd;
The world, as usual, wickedly inclined
To see a kingdom or a house o'erturn'd,
Whisper'd he had a mistress, some said two—
But for domestic quarrels one will do.

Now Donna Inez had, with all her merit,
A great opinion of her own good qualities;
Neglect, indeed, requires a saint to bear it,
And such, indeed, she was in her moralities;
But then she had a devil of a spirit,
And sometimes mix'd up fancies with realities,
And let few opportunities escape
Of getting her liege lord into a scrape.

This was an easy matter with a man
Oft in the wrong, and never on his guard;
And even the wisest, do the best they can,
Have moments, hours, and days, so unprepared,
That you might 'brain them with their lady's fan;
And sometimes ladies hit exceeding hard,

And fans turn into falchions in fair hands,
And why and wherefore no one understands.

'T is pity learned virgins ever wed
With persons of no sort of education,
Or gentlemen, who, though well born and bred,
Grow tired of scientific conversation:
I don't choose to say much upon this head,
I 'm a plain man, and in a single station,
But—Oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,
Inform us truly, have they not hen-peck'd you all?

Don Jose and his lady quarrell'd—why,
Not any of the many could divine,
Though several thousand people chose to try,
'T was surely no concern of theirs nor mine;
I loathe that low vice—curiosity;
But if there 's anything in which I shine,
'T is in arranging all my friends' affairs,
Not having of my own domestic cares.

And so I interfered, and with the best
Intentions, but their treatment was not kind;
I think the foolish people were possess'd,
For neither of them could I ever find,
Although their porter afterwards confess'd—
But that 's no matter, and the worst 's behind,

For little Juan o'er me threw, down stairs,
A pail of housemaid's water unawares.

A little curly-headed, good-for-nothing,
And mischief-making monkey from his birth;
His parents ne'er agreed except in doting
Upon the most unquiet imp on earth;
Instead of quarrelling, had they been but both in
Their senses, they 'd have sent young master forth
To school, or had him soundly whipp'd at home,
To teach him manners for the time to come.

Don Jose and the Donna Inez led
For some time an unhappy sort of life,
Wishing each other, not divorced, but dead;
They lived respectably as man and wife,
Their conduct was exceedingly well-bred,
And gave no outward signs of inward strife,
Until at length the smother'd fire broke out,
And put the business past all kind of doubt.

For Inez call'd some druggists and physicians,
And tried to prove her loving lord was mad;
But as he had some lucid intermissions,
She next decided he was only bad;
Yet when they ask'd her for her depositions,
No sort of explanation could be had,

Save that her duty both to man and God
Required this conduct—which seem'd very odd.

She kept a journal, where his faults were noted,
And open'd certain trunks of books and letters,
All which might, if occasion served, be quoted;
And then she had all Seville for abettors,
Besides her good old grandmother (who doted);
The hearers of her case became repeaters,
Then advocates, inquisitors, and judges,
Some for amusement, others for old grudges.

And then this best and weakest woman bore
With such serenity her husband's woes,
Just as the Spartan ladies did of yore,
Who saw their spouses kill'd, and nobly chose
Never to say a word about them more—
Calmly she heard each calumny that rose,
And saw his agonies with such sublimity,
That all the world exclaim'd, 'What magnanimity!'

No doubt this patience, when the world is damning us,
Is philosophic in our former friends;
'T is also pleasant to be deem'd magnanimous,
The more so in obtaining our own ends;
And what the lawyers call a 'malus animus'
Conduct like this by no means comprehends;

Revenge in person 's certainly no virtue,
But then 't is not my fault, if others hurt you.

And if your quarrels should rip up old stories,
And help them with a lie or two additional,
I 'm not to blame, as you well know—no more is
Any one else—they were become traditional;
Besides, their resurrection aids our glories
By contrast, which is what we just were wishing all:
And science profits by this resurrection—
Dead scandals form good subjects for dissection.

Their friends had tried at reconciliation,
Then their relations, who made matters worse.
('T were hard to tell upon a like occasion
To whom it may be best to have recourse—
I can't say much for friend or yet relation):
The lawyers did their utmost for divorce,
But scarce a fee was paid on either side
Before, unluckily, Don Jose died.

He died: and most unluckily, because,
According to all hints I could collect
From counsel learned in those kinds of laws
(Although their talk 's obscure and circumspect),
His death contrived to spoil a charming cause;
A thousand pities also with respect

To public feeling, which on this occasion
Was manifested in a great sensation.

But, ah! he died; and buried with him lay
The public feeling and the lawyers' fees:
His house was sold, his servants sent away,
A Jew took one of his two mistresses,
A priest the other—at least so they say:
I ask'd the doctors after his disease—
He died of the slow fever call'd the tertian,
And left his widow to her own aversion.

Yet Jose was an honourable man,
That I must say who knew him very well;
Therefore his frailties I 'll no further scan
Indeed there were not many more to tell;
And if his passions now and then outran
Discretion, and were not so peaceable
As Numa's (who was also named Pompilius),
He had been ill brought up, and was born bilious.

Whate'er might be his worthlessness or worth,
Poor fellow! he had many things to wound him.
Let 's own—since it can do no good on earth—
It was a trying moment that which found him
Standing alone beside his desolate hearth,
Where all his household gods lay shiver'd round him:

No choice was left his feelings or his pride,
Save death or Doctors' Commons—so he died.

Dying intestate, Juan was sole heir
To a chancery suit, and messuages, and lands,
Which, with a long minority and care,
Promised to turn out well in proper hands:
Inez became sole guardian, which was fair,
And answer'd but to nature's just demands;
An only son left with an only mother
Is brought up much more wisely than another.

Sagest of women, even of widows, she
Resolved that Juan should be quite a paragon,
And worthy of the noblest pedigree
(His sire was of Castile, his dam from Aragon):
Then for accomplishments of chivalry,
In case our lord the king should go to war again,
He learn'd the arts of riding, fencing, gunnery,
And how to scale a fortress—or a nunnery.

But that which Donna Inez most desired,
And saw into herself each day before all
The learned tutors whom for him she hired,
Was, that his breeding should be strictly moral;
Much into all his studies she inquired,
And so they were submitted first to her, all,

Arts, sciences, no branch was made a mystery
To Juan's eyes, excepting natural history.

The languages, especially the dead,
The sciences, and most of all the abstruse,
The arts, at least all such as could be said
To be the most remote from common use,
In all these he was much and deeply read;
But not a page of any thing that 's loose,
Or hints continuation of the species,
Was ever suffer'd, lest he should grow vicious.

His classic studies made a little puzzle,
Because of filthy loves of gods and goddesses,
Who in the earlier ages raised a bustle,
But never put on pantaloons or bodices;
His reverend tutors had at times a tussle,
And for their AEneids, Iliads, and Odysseys,
Were forced to make an odd sort! of apology,
For Donna Inez dreaded the Mythology.

Ovid 's a rake, as half his verses show him,
Anacreon's morals are a still worse sample,
Catullus scarcely has a decent poem,
I don't think Sappho's Ode a good example,
Although Longinus tells us there is no hymn
Where the sublime soars forth on wings more ample:

But Virgil's songs are pure, except that horrid one
Beginning with 'Formosum Pastor Corydon.'

Lucretius' irreligion is too strong,
For early stomachs, to prove wholesome food;
I can't help thinking Juvenal was wrong,
Although no doubt his real intent was good,
For speaking out so plainly in his song,
So much indeed as to be downright rude;
And then what proper person can be partial
To all those nauseous epigrams of Martial?

Juan was taught from out the best edition,
Expurgated by learned men, who place
Judiciously, from out the schoolboy's vision,
The grosser parts; but, fearful to deface
Too much their modest bard by this omission,
And pitying sore his mutilated case,
They only add them all in an appendix,
Which saves, in fact, the trouble of an index;

For there we have them all 'at one fell swoop,'
Instead of being scatter'd through the Pages;
They stand forth marshall'd in a handsome troop,
To meet the ingenuous youth of future ages,
Till some less rigid editor shall stoop
To call them back into their separate cages,

Instead of standing staring all together,
Like garden gods—and not so decent either.

The Missal too (it was the family Missal)
Was ornamented in a sort of way
Which ancient mass-books often are, and this all
Kinds of grotesques illumined; and how they,
Who saw those figures on the margin kiss all,
Could turn their optics to the text and pray,
Is more than I know—But Don Juan's mother
Kept this herself, and gave her son another.

Sermons he read, and lectures he endured,
And homilies, and lives of all the saints;
To Jerome and to Chrysostom inured,
He did not take such studies for restraints;
But how faith is acquired, and then ensured,
So well not one of the aforesaid paints
As Saint Augustine in his fine Confessions,
Which make the reader envy his transgressions.

This, too, was a seal'd book to little Juan—
I can't but say that his mamma was right,
If such an education was the true one.
She scarcely trusted him from out her sight;
Her maids were old, and if she took a new one,
You might be sure she was a perfect fright;

She did this during even her husband's life—
I recommend as much to every wife.

Young Juan wax'd in goodliness and grace;
At six a charming child, and at eleven
With all the promise of as fine a face
As e'er to man's maturer growth was given:
He studied steadily, and grew apace,
And seem'd, at least, in the right road to heaven,
For half his days were pass'd at church, the other
Between his tutors, confessor, and mother.

At six, I said, he was a charming child,
At twelve he was a fine, but quiet boy;
Although in infancy a little wild,
They tamed him down amongst them: to destroy
His natural spirit not in vain they toil'd,
At least it seem'd so; and his mother's joy
Was to declare how sage, and still, and steady,
Her young philosopher was grown already.

I had my doubts, perhaps I have them still,
But what I say is neither here nor there:
I knew his father well, and have some skill
In character—but it would not be fair
From sire to son to augur good or ill:
He and his wife were an ill-sorted pair—

But scandal 's my aversion—I protest
Against all evil speaking, even in jest.

For my part I say nothing—nothing—but
This I will say—my reasons are my own—
That if I had an only son to put
To school (as God be praised that I have none),
'T is not with Donna Inez I would shut
Him up to learn his catechism alone,
No—no—I 'd send him out betimes to college,
For there it was I pick'd up my own knowledge.

For there one learns—'t is not for me to boast,
Though I acquired—but I pass over that,
As well as all the Greek I since have lost:
I say that there 's the place—but 'Verbum sat.'
I think I pick'd up too, as well as most,
Knowledge of matters—but no matter what—
I never married—but, I think, I know
That sons should not be educated so.

Young Juan now was sixteen years of age,
Tall, handsome, slender, but well knit: he seem'd
Active, though not so sprightly, as a page;
And everybody but his mother deem'd
Him almost man; but she flew in a rage
And bit her lips (for else she might have scream'd)

If any said so, for to be precocious
Was in her eyes a thing the most atrocious.

Amongst her numerous acquaintance, all
Selected for discretion and devotion,
There was the Donna Julia, whom to call
Pretty were but to give a feeble notion
Of many charms in her as natural
As sweetness to the flower, or salt to ocean,
Her zone to Venus, or his bow to Cupid
(But this last simile is trite and stupid).

The darkness of her Oriental eye
Accorded with her Moorish origin
(Her blood was not all Spanish, by the by;
In Spain, you know, this is a sort of sin);
When proud Granada fell, and, forced to fly,
Boabdil wept, of Donna Julia's kin
Some went to Africa, some stay'd in Spain,
Her great-great-grandmamma chose to remain.

She married (I forget the pedigree)
With an Hidalgo, who transmitted down
His blood less noble than such blood should be;
At such alliances his sires would frown,
In that point so precise in each degree
That they bred in and in, as might be shown,

Marrying their cousins—nay, their aunts, and nieces,
Which always spoils the breed, if it increases.

This heathenish cross restored the breed again,
Ruin'd its blood, but much improved its flesh;
For from a root the ugliest in Old Spain
Sprung up a branch as beautiful as fresh;
The sons no more were short, the daughters plain:
But there 's a rumour which I fain would hush,
'T is said that Donna Julia's grandmamma
Produced her Don more heirs at love than law.

However this might be, the race went on
Improving still through every generation,
Until it centred in an only son,
Who left an only daughter; my narration
May have suggested that this single one
Could be but Julia (whom on this occasion
I shall have much to speak about), and she
Was married, charming, chaste, and twenty-three.

Her eye (I 'm very fond of handsome eyes)
Was large and dark, suppressing half its fire
Until she spoke, then through its soft disguise
Flash'd an expression more of pride than ire,
And love than either; and there would arise
A something in them which was not desire,

But would have been, perhaps, but for the soul
Which struggled through and chasten'd down the whole.

Her glossy hair was cluster'd o'er a brow
Bright with intelligence, and fair, and smooth;
Her eyebrow's shape was like th' aerial bow,
Her cheek all purple with the beam of youth,
Mounting at times to a transparent glow,
As if her veins ran lightning; she, in sooth,
Possess'd an air and grace by no means common:
Her stature tall—I hate a dumpy woman.

Wedded she was some years, and to a man
Of fifty, and such husbands are in plenty;
And yet, I think, instead of such a ONE
'T were better to have TWO of five-and-twenty,
Especially in countries near the sun:
And now I think on 't, 'mi vien in mente,'
Ladies even of the most uneasy virtue
Prefer a spouse whose age is short of thirty.

'T is a sad thing, I cannot choose but say,
And all the fault of that indecent sun,
Who cannot leave alone our helpless clay,
But will keep baking, broiling, burning on,
That howsoever people fast and pray,
The flesh is frail, and so the soul undone:

What men call gallantry, and gods adultery,
Is much more common where the climate 's sultry.

Happy the nations of the moral North!
Where all is virtue, and the winter season
Sends sin, without a rag on, shivering forth
(‘T was snow that brought St. Anthony to reason);
Where juries cast up what a wife is worth,
By laying whate’er sum in mulct they please on
The lover, who must pay a handsome price,
Because it is a marketable vice.

Alfonso was the name of Julia’s lord,
A man well looking for his years, and who
Was neither much beloved nor yet abhorr’d:
They lived together, as most people do,
Suffering each other’s foibles by accord,
And not exactly either one or two;
Yet he was jealous, though he did not show it,
For jealousy dislikes the world to know it.

Julia was—yet I never could see why—
With Donna Inez quite a favourite friend;
Between their tastes there was small sympathy,
For not a line had Julia ever penn’d:
Some people whisper but no doubt they lie,
For malice still imputes some private end,

That Inez had, ere Don Alfonso's marriage,
Forgot with him her very prudent carriage;

And that still keeping up the old connection,
Which time had lately render'd much more chaste,
She took his lady also in affection,
And certainly this course was much the best:
She flatter'd Julia with her sage protection,
And complimented Don Alfonso's taste;
And if she could not (who can?) silence scandal,
At least she left it a more slender handle.

I can't tell whether Julia saw the affair
With other people's eyes, or if her own
Discoveries made, but none could be aware
Of this, at least no symptom e'er was shown;
Perhaps she did not know, or did not care,
Indifferent from the first or callous grown:
I 'm really puzzled what to think or say,
She kept her counsel in so close a way.

Juan she saw, and, as a pretty child,
Caress'd him often—such a thing might be
Quite innocently done, and harmless styled,
When she had twenty years, and thirteen he;
But I am not so sure I should have smiled
When he was sixteen, Julia twenty-three;