

**DON JUAN**  
**Canto 8**

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## DON JUAN CANTO EIGHTH

edited by Peter Cochran

1822

### 1.

Oh blood and thunder! and oh blood and Wounds!  
These are but vulgar oaths, as you may deem,  
Too gentle reader! and most shocking sounds;  
And so they are, yet thus is Glory's dream  
Unriddled, and as my true Muse expounds 5  
At present such things, since they are her theme,  
So be they her inspirers! Call them Mars,  
Bellona, what you please<sup>1</sup> – they mean but Wars.

### 2.

All was prepared – the fire, the Sword, the Men  
To wield them in their terrible array; 10  
The Army, like the Lion from his den,  
Marched forth with nerve and sinews bent to slay;  
A human Hydra, issuing from its fen<sup>2</sup>  
To breathe destruction on its winding way,  
Whose Heads were Heroes, which cut off in vain 15  
Immediately in others grew again.

### 3.

History can only take things in the Gross;  
But could we know them in detail, perchance,  
In balancing the profit and the loss,  
War's merit it by no means might Enhance, 20  
To waste so much Gold for a little dross,  
As hath been done, mere Conquest to advance;  
The drying up a single tear has more  
Of honest fame, than shedding seas of gore.<sup>3</sup>

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**1:** *Call them Mars, / Bellona, what you please:* Mars, the male god of war; Bellona, the female. See *Macbeth*, I ii 55, where the protagonist is described as *Bellona's bridegroom*

**2:** *A human Hydra, issuing from its fen:* appears to confound the many-headed monster slain by Hercules with Grendel's Mother from *Beowulf*, a work to which B. otherwise makes few references. For every mortal head of the Hydra which one cut off, two more grew. Hercules solved the problem of its removal by burning off the mortal heads and burying the immortal one.

**3:** ... *shedding seas of gore:* compare *Macbeth*, II ii 61-3: *This my hand / Will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, / Making the green one red.*

**4.**

And why? – because it brings Self-approbation; 25  
 Whereas the other, after all its glare,  
 Shouts, bridges, arches, pensions, from a Nation,<sup>4</sup>  
 Which (it may be) has not much left to spare;  
 A higher title, or a loftier Station,  
 Though they may make Corruption gape or stare, 30  
 Yet, in the end, except in Freedom's battles,  
 Are nothing but a Child of Murder's Rattles.

**5.**

And such they are – and such they will be found;  
 Not so Leonidas and Washington,  
 Whose every battle-field is Holy Ground 35  
 Which breathes of Nations saved, not Worlds undone;<sup>5</sup>  
 How sweetly on the ear such echoes sound!  
 While the mere Victor's may appal or stun  
 The servile and the vain, such names will be  
 A Watchword, till the Future shall be free. 40

**6.**<sup>6</sup>

The Night was dark, and the thick Mist allowed  
 Nought to be seen save the Artillery's flame,  
 Which arched the horizon like a fiery Cloud,  
 And in the Danube's waters shone the same,  
 A Mirrored Hell!<sup>7</sup> The volleying Roar, and loud 45  
 Long booming of each Peal on Peal, o'ercame  
 The Ear far more than Thunder, for Heaven's flashes  
 Spare or smite rarely; Man's make Millions Ashes!

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**4:** *Shouts, bridges, arches, pensions, from a Nation:* B. has Wellington in mind. He refers firstly to such things as Waterloo Bridge (original name the Strand Bridge, renamed 1816) or Waterloo Place (built 1816-18); secondly to the pensions, totalling £700,000, awarded to Wellington by the Commons in 1814 and 1815. See below, this canto, 391-2; or IX, 55-6.

**5:** ... *Leonidas and Washington, / Whose every battle-field is Holy Ground / Which breathes of Nations saved, not Worlds undone:* Leonidas led the Spartan force which held the pass at Thermopylae (480 B.C.) against the overwhelming Persian army of Xerxes. See above, III 727-30, or VII 651. George Washington did nothing quite so dramatically self-sacrificing; but he counts also as a fighter for his nation's freedom. See below, IX 60-1.

**6:** **CASTELNAU II 209, quoting the memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu:** (22 décembre 1790.) <<*La nuit était obscure, un brouillard épais ne nous permettait de distinguer autre chose que le feu de notre artillerie, dont l'horizon était embrasé de tous côtés: ce feu, partant du milieu du Danube, se réfléchissait sur les eaux, et offrait un coup d'oeil très-singulier.*

**7:** *A mirrored Hell!*: this is B.'s re-working of Castelnau's *un coup d'oeil très-singulier*.

7.<sup>8</sup>

The Column ordered on the assault, scarce passed  
 Beyond the Russian batteries a few toises,<sup>9</sup> 50  
 When up the bristling Moslem rose at last,  
 Answering the Christian thunders with like voices;  
 Then one vast fire, air, earth, and stream embraced,  
 Which rocked as 'twere beneath the mighty noises;  
 Whilst the whole Rampart blazed like Etna, when 55  
 The restless Titan hiccups in his den.<sup>10</sup>

## 8.

And one enormous shout of "Allah!" rose  
 In the same moment,<sup>11</sup> loud as even the roar  
 Of War's most mortal Engines,<sup>12</sup> to their foes \*  
 Hurling defiance; city, stream and shore 60  
 Resounded "Allah!" and the Clouds which close  
 With thickening Canopy the Conflict o'er,  
 Vibrate to the Eternal name; Hark! through  
 All sounds it pierceth, "Allah! Allah! Hu!" \*

\* Allah *Hu!* is properly the war cry of the Mussulmans, and they dwell long on the last syllable, which gives it a very wild and peculiar effect.<sup>13</sup>

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**8 CASTELNAU II 209, quoting the memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu:** *A peine eut-on parcouru l'espace de quelques toises au-delà des batteries, que les Turcs, qui n'avaient point tiré pendant toute la nuit, s'apercevant de nos mouvemens, commencèrent de leur côté un feu très-vif, qui embrasa le reste de l'horizon; mais ce fut bien autre chose lorsque, avancés davantage, le feu de la mousqueterie commença dans toute l'étendue du rempart que nous apercevions. Ce fut alors que la place parut à nos yeux comme un volcan dont le feu sortait de toutes parts.*

**9:** ... a few toises: a toise is six feet. See above, VII, 72.

**10:** ... like Etna, when / The restless Titan hiccups in his den: Zeus imprisoned Enceladus, a hundred-armed giant, inside Mount Aetna. The simile is adapted from Castelnau; see below, this canto, 1.122n, for a possible Wordsworth reference too.

**11: CASTELNAU II 209, quoting the memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu:** *Un cri universel d'allah, qui se répétait tout autour de la ville, vint encore rendre plus extraordinaire cet instant, dont il est impossible de se faire une idée.*

**12:** ... the roar / Of War's most mortal Engines: compare *Othello*, III iii 359-61: *O ye mortal engines whose rude throats / Th'immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit, farewell!*

**13:** "Allah! Allah! Hu!": not the first use by B. of this war-cry. Compare *The Giaour*, 734: *At solemn sound of "Alla Hu!"* or *The Siege of Corinth*, 668: *God and the Prophet – Alla Hu!*

The Columns were in movement one and all, 65  
 But of the portion which attacked by water,  
 Thicker than leaves the lives began to fall  
 Though led by Arseniew, that great Son of Slaughter,<sup>15</sup>  
 As brave as ever faced both bomb and ball;  
 “Carnage” (so Wordsworth tells you) “is God’s daughter;”<sup>\*</sup> 70  
 If *He* speak truth, *She* is Christ’s Sister, and  
 Just now behaved as in the Holy Land.<sup>16</sup>

\* “But *thy* † most dreaded instrument,  
 “In working out a pure intent,  
 “Is Man – arrayed for mutual slaughter, –  
 “Yea, *Carnage* is *thy daughter!*”

Wordsworth’s *Thanksgiving Ode*

† To wit, the Deity’s: this is perhaps as pretty a pedigree for Murder as ever was found by Garter King of Arms. What would have been said had any of us free-spoken people discovered such a lineage?<sup>17</sup> – – –

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**14 CASTELNAU II 209-10:** *Toutes les colonnes étaient en mouvement; celles qui attaquaient par eau, commandés par le général Arséniew, essuyèrent un feu épouvantable et perdirent avant le jour un tiers de leurs officiers. Trois cents bouches à feu vomissaient sans interruption, et trente mille fusils alimentaient sans relâche une grêle de balles.*

**15:** ... *led by Arseniew, that great Son of Slaughter*: there is no special reason (apart from the rhythm: B., here as at VII 115, insists on a bisyllable) for singling out this general.

**16:** *Just now behaved as in the Holy Land*: compare below, X 596-8.

**17:** “*Carnage*” (so Wordsworth tells you) “*is God’s daughter*”: Wordsworth, *Ode: The Morning of the Day Appointed for a General Thanksgiving. January 18, 1816* (1816 edition, p.17). Described by Wordsworth in a June 1816 letter to Southey as a *dramatised ejaculation* (*Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Hill and Moorman, III 324-5). In his introduction, Wordsworth writes, *Nor is it at the expense of rational patriotism, or in disregard of sound philosophy, that the author hath given vent to feelings tending to encourage a martial spirit in the bosoms of his countrymen, at a time when there is a general outcry against the prevalence of these dispositions* (1816 edition p.v). He waited twenty-seven years before removing the lines which B. quotes.

10.<sup>18</sup>

The Prince de Ligne was wounded in the knee<sup>19</sup> –  
Count Chapeau-Bras too had a ball between  
His Cap and head, which proves the head to be 75  
Aristocratic as was ever seen,  
Because it then received no injury  
More than the Cap; in fact the ball could mean  
No harm unto a right legitimate head<sup>20</sup> –  
“Ashes to Ashes” – why not lead to lead? 80

11.

Also the General Markow, Brigadier,  
Insisting on removal of *the Prince*  
Amidst some groaning thousands dying near,  
All common fellows, who might writhe, and wince,  
And shriek for water into a deaf ear; 85  
The General Markow, who could thus evince  
His sympathy for rank, by the same token,  
To teach him greater, had his own leg broken.

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**18 CASTELNAU II 209-10:** *Le prince de Ligne fut blessé au genou, le duc de Richelieu eut une balle entre le fond de son bonnet et sa tête ... le brigardier Markow, insistant pour qu'on emportât le prince blessé, reçut un coup de fusil qui lui fracassa le pied.*

**19:** *The Prince de Ligne was wounded in the knee:* this was the son of the Prince de Ligne to whose memoirs B. refers at VII 263-4 above. Notice that B.'s line mimics precisely the rhythm of Castelnau's prose.

**20:** ... *the ball could mean / No harm unto a right legitimate head:* for a previous ironic use of *legitimate*, see above, VI 737 *et. seq.*

12.<sup>21</sup>

Three hundred Cannon threw up their Emetic,<sup>22</sup>  
And thirty thousand Musquets<sup>23</sup> flung their pills 90  
Like hail, to make a bloody Diuretic;<sup>24</sup>  
Mortality! thou hast thy Monthly bills!  
Thy Plagues, thy Famines, thy Physicians,<sup>25</sup> yet tick  
Like the Death-Watch,<sup>26</sup> within our ears the ills  
Past, present and to come; but All may yield 95  
To the true portrait of one battle-field – – –.

13.

There the still varying pangs, which multiply  
Until their very Number makes men hard  
By the infinities of Agony,  
Which meet the Gaze whate'er it may regard – 100  
The groan, the roll in dust,<sup>27</sup> the all *white eye*  
Turned back within its socket; these reward  
Your rank and file by thousands, while the rest  
May win perhaps a ribbon at the breast!

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**21 CASTELNAU II 210:** *Trois cents bouches à feu vomissaient sans interruption, et trente mille fusils alimentaient sans relâche une grêle de balles ...*

**22: Emetic:** “Having power to cause vomiting” (O.E.D).

**23: Musquets:** commonly spelled *muskets*; the older smooth-bored, clumsier kind of rifle.

**24: Diuretic:** “Having the quality of exciting the excessive discharge of urine” (O.E.D.). B.’s use of such metaphors as “emetic” and “diuretic” to describe war reflects a general concern with digestive disorders elsewhere in *Don Juan*. See above, VII sts.36-7 and n, or below, IX 261 and n, or X st.41 and n. However, the idea here is initially from Castelnau.

**25: Thy Plagues, thy Famines, thy Physicians:** for further Byronic associations between death and doctors, see below, X 329.

**26: ... tick / Like the Death-Watch:** the death-watch beetle.

**27: ... the roll in dust:** Pushkin, writing in 1827, seems to object to B.’s inaccuracy here: *Byron said that he would never undertake to describe a country that he had not seen with his own eyes. Nonetheless in Don Juan he describes Russia, and consequently some errors in local colour are found. For example, he speaks of the dirt in the streets of Ismail ... Ismail was taken in winter, in severe frost. On the streets the bodies of the enemy were covered over by snow, and the conqueror [Suvorov] rode over them, marvelling at the tidiness of the town: “God be praised, how clean!” ... There are other mistakes which are more important ... (Pushkin on Literature, ed. Wolff, p.211). Castelnau never refers to the cold in his account of the siege, and B. only does so rarely (below, this Canto, ll.583 and 1022 ... 1030).*

**14.**

Yet I love Glory; Glory's a great thing; 105  
 Think, what it is to be in your old age  
 Maintained at the expence of your good king –  
 A moderate Pension shakes full many a Sage,  
 And heroes are but made for bards to sing,  
 Which is still better; thus in verse to wage 110  
 Your wars eternally, besides enjoying  
 Half-pay for Life, Makes Mankind worth destroying.

**15.**<sup>28</sup>

The troops, already disembarked, pushed on  
 To take a battery on the right; the others,  
 Who landed lower down, their landing done, 115  
 Had set to work as briskly as their brothers;  
 Being Grenadiers they mounted one by one,  
 Cheerful as Children climb the breasts of mothers,<sup>29</sup>  
 O'er the entrenchment and the palisade,  
 Quite Orderly, as if upon parade. 120

**16.**<sup>30</sup>

And this was admirable; for so hot  
 The fire was, that were red Vesuvius loaded,<sup>31</sup>  
 Besides its Lava, with all sorts of shot  
 And shells or Hells, it could not more have goaded;  
 Of Officers a third fell on the Spot, 125  
 A thing which Victory by no means boded  
 To Gentlemen engaged in an Assault;  
 Hounds, when the Huntsmen tumbles, are at fault.<sup>32</sup>

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**28 CASTELNAU II 210:** *Les troupes déjà débarquées se portèrent à droite pour s'emparer d'une batterie, et celles débarquées plus bas, principalement composées des grenadiers de Fanagorie, escaladaient le retranchement et la palissade.*

**29:** *Cheerful as Children climb the breasts of mothers ... Quite orderly, as if upon parade:* these are the only lines in the stanza not from Castelnau.

**30 CASTELNAU II 209-10:** *Toutes les colonnes étaient en mouvement; celles qui attaquaient par eau, commandés par le général Arséniew, essayèrent un feu épouvantable et perdirent avant le jour un tiers de leurs officiers.*

**31:** *... were red Vesuvius loaded:* though he did not need the inspiration, B. could have found it in Wordsworth's *Thanksgiving Ode* (see above, this canto, l.70, poet's note): *He [God] springs the hushed Volcano's mine, / He puts the Earthquake on her still design ...* See also above, this canto, ll.55-6.

**32:** *Hounds, when the Huntsmen tumbles, are at fault:* obvious irony. For further use of fox-hunting ideas and terms, see below, this canto, 434-5, or XIV 259, and B.'s note.



17.

But here I leave the General Concern,  
 To track our hero on his path of fame;<sup>33</sup> 130  
 He must his laurels separately earn;  
 For fifty thousand heroes, name by name,  
 Though all deserving equally to turn  
 A couplet, or an elegy to claim,  
 Would form a lengthy lexicon of Glory, 135  
 And what is worse still, a much longer story;

18.<sup>34</sup>

And therefore we must give the greater number  
 To the Gazette – which doubtless fairly dealt  
 By the deceased, who lie in famous slumber  
 In ditches, fields, or wheresoe'er they felt 140  
 Their Clay for the last time time their Souls encumber;  
 Thrice happy he whose name has been well spelt  
 In the dispatch; I knew a man whose loss  
 Was printed *Grove*, although his name was *Grose*.<sup>35</sup> \*

\* A fact – see the Waterloo Gazettes – I recollect remarking at the time to a friend “*there is fame*” – “a Man <is> {is} killed – his name is Grosse “and they <print> {call} it *Grove*. I was at College with the deceased, <Though not intimate I met him often at parties at W<sup>m</sup>. Bankes’ and elsewhere – He sang an excellent song and was a particular friend of <<Mr.>> Lord Laird & they were indeed a kind of musical Nisus and Euryalus. – He was killed at Waterloo – and I shall will be ever indebted to this rather than to the Gazette of that atrocious day. –> who was a very amiable and clever man – and his society in great request for his wit & <char> gaiety.

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**33:** *But here I leave the general concern, / To track our hero on his path of fame:* B. takes up Juan’s individual story at precisely the point where Castelnau takes over the narration of the duc de Richelieu.

**34:** This stanza, and B.’s note, are self-referential, warning the reader of the unreliability, in terms of truth, of all reports, gazettes, histories, and, by extension, poems. Compare above, I 3 and VII 636; or below, IX 644.

**35:** *I knew a man whose loss / Was printed Grove, although his name was Grose:* E.H.Coleridge tracks the entry to *The London Gazette Extraordinary* of June 22, 1815. The mistake was corrected on July 3: *1st Guards, 3d Batt. Lieut. Edward Grose*. Coleridge further reveals that Edward Grose [sic: not Grosse] matriculated St Johns, Cambridge, on December 7 1805. *MSYR XI* has “M<sup>r</sup>. Barham” as the party-giver: it is in fact “W[illia]<sup>m</sup>. Bankes”, B.’s Cambridge “pastor and master ... the father of all mischiefs” (BLJ VII 230-1). Nisus and Euryalus are the inseparable friends in *Aeneid IX*. Compare below, XIII, 19, 4.

19.<sup>36</sup>

Juan and Johnson joined a certain corps, 145  
And fought away with might and main, not knowing  
The way, which they had never trod before,  
And still less guessing where they might be going;  
But on they marched, dead bodies trampling o'er,  
Firing, and thrusting, slashing, sweating, glowing, 150  
But fighting thoughtlessly enough to win,  
To their *two Selves*, *one* whole bright Bulletin.<sup>37</sup>

20.

Thus on they wallowed in the bloody mire  
Of dead and dying thousands; sometimes gaining  
A yard or two of ground, which brought them nigher 155  
To some odd Angle<sup>38</sup> for which all were straining,  
At other times repulsed by the close fire,  
Which really poured as if all Hell were raining,  
Instead of Heaven, they stumbled backwards o'er  
A wounded Comrade, sprawling in his gore. 160

21.

Though 'twas Don Juan's first of fields, and though  
The Nightly muster and the silent march  
In the chill Dark, when Courage doth not glow  
So much as under a triumphal Arch,  
Perhaps might make him shiver, yawn, or throw 165  
A glance on the dull Clouds (as thick as Starch,  
Which stiffened Heaven) as if he wished for day –  
Yet for all this, he did not run away.

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**36 CASTELNAU II 210:** *N'apercevant plus le commandant du corps dont je faissais partie, et ignorant où je devais porter mes pas, je crus reconnaître le lieu où le rempart était situé ...*

**37:** ... *enough to win*, / *To their two Selves*, *one whole bright Bulletin*: in B.'s frame of reference, a thing of little value.

**38:** ... *some odd Angle for which all were straining*: incongruously echoes *The Tempest*, I ii 222-3: ... *cooling of the air with sighs* / *In an odd angle of the isle* ...

22.

Indeed he could not. But what if he had?  
There *have been* and *are* heroes who begun 170  
With something not much better, or as bad:  
Frederick the Great from Molwitz deigned to run,<sup>39</sup>  
For the first and last time; for, like a pad,<sup>40</sup>  
Or hawk, or bride, most mortals after one  
Warm bout are broken into their new tricks, 175  
And fight like fiends for pay or politics.

23.

He was what Erin calls, in her sublime  
Old Erse or Irish, or it may be *Punic* \*  
(The Antiquarians who can settle Time,  
Which settles all things, Roman, Greek or Runic,<sup>41</sup> 180  
Swear that Pat's language sprang from the same Clime  
With Hannibal, and wears the Tyrian tunic  
Of Dido's Alphabet, and this is rational  
As any other notion,<sup>42</sup> and not national);

\* See Major Vallency and Sir Lawrence Parsons.<sup>43</sup>

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**39:** *Frederick the Great from Molwitz deigned to run:* in April 1741, at the Battle of Mollwitz, in the First Silesian War between the Austrians and the Prussians; his troops, under Marshal Schwerin, nevertheless won the battle.

**40:** *a pad:* a foot-pad or mugger.

**41:** *Runic:* derived from cryptic signs on ancient stones.

**42:** *Hannibal ... Tyrian tunic ... Dido's Alphabet:* Hannibal, ruler of Carthage who in the second century B.C. warred against Rome, with disastrous consequences; Tyrian, coloured with dyes from Tyre, with whom the Carthaginians traded, and from whom they claimed descent; Dido, mythical Queen of Carthage, the failure of whose liaison with Aeneas (in the *Aeneid*) led to her suicide. B.'s use of the theories of Vallency and Parsons give Juan – by the remotest and most dubious association – a military pedigree traceable back to epic. It also lends support to the Irish nationalism about which he writes, without irony, above, at Dedication 90 and 125.

**43:** *Old Erse or Irish, or it may be Punic:* Punic was the language of the Carthaginians. B.'s two philologists, Major (later General) Charles Vallency (sic: 1721-1812) and Sir Laurence (sic) Parsons (later Earl of Rosse: 1758-1841) were both Irish patriots. Parsons, M.P. for Dublin University, opposed the Union with England in 1801. Their researches led them to the conclusion that the Irish had, via their contact with Carthage, a more distinguished pedigree than the English. Parsons floated the idea that the Carthaginians were descended from the Irish: Vallency asserted a resemblance between Irish and Kalmuck, Algonquin, Egyptian, Persian, and Hindustani. His *Essay on the Celtic Language*, to which B. probably refers here, was dedicated to Jacob Bryant (see above, IV 603 and n).

24.

But Juan was quite “a Broth of a Boy”, 185  
A thing of impulse and a Child of Song;  
Now swimming in the Sentiment of Joy,  
Or the *Sensation* (if that phrase seem wrong)<sup>44</sup>  
And afterwards, if he must needs destroy,  
In such good company as always throng 190  
To Battles, Sieges, and that kind of pleasure,  
No less delighted to employ his leisure.

25.

But always without malice; if he warred  
Or loved, it was with what we call “the best  
Intentions,” which form all Mankind’s *trump Card*, 195  
To be produced when brought up to the test;  
The Statesman, Hero, Harlot, Lawyer, ward  
Off each attack, when people are in quest  
Of their designs, by saying they *Mean Well*;  
'Tis pity “that such Meaning should pave Hell.” \* 200

\* The Portuguese proverb says that Hell is paved with good intentions.<sup>45</sup>

26.

I almost lately have begun to doubt  
Whether Hell’s pavement – if it be *so paved* –  
Must not have latterly been quite worn out,  
Not by the numbers Good *Intent* hath saved,  
But by the Mass who go below without 205  
Those antient good intentions, which once shaved  
And smoothed the brimstone of that Street in Hell  
Which bears the greatest likeness to Pall Mall.<sup>46</sup>

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**44:** ... *the Sentiment of joy*, / *Or the Sensation (if that phrase seem wrong)*: B. glances with similar facetiousness at the distinction between sentiments (mental processes) and sensations (physical ones) which had been current in eighteenth-century psychological writing.

**45:** 'Tis pity “that such Meaning should pave Hell”: compare TVOJ, ll.294-6: ... *other kings endued / With better sense and hearts, whom History mentions, / Who long have “paved Hell with their good intentions.”* Dr Johnson said, at or around Easter 1775, “Sir, Hell is paved with good intentions”. (Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, Oxford 1904 p.591). He was echoing a common proverb which occurs in Chapter VII of Scott’s *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), and B. quotes it in his *Ravenna Journal* (see this website) close by a reference to the same novel.

**46:** ... *that Street of Hell / Which bears the greatest likeness to Pall Mall*: Pall Mall was where many of London’s “gambling hells” were located; it was generally (and still is) a centre of club life. See below, XI 229-31 and B.’s note: *Don Juan, our young diplomatic sinner, / Pursued his path, and drove past some hotels, / St. James’s Palace, and St. James’s “Hells.”* \* - \* “Hells” – gaming houses. *What their number may be in this life I know not; before I was of age I knew them pretty accurately, both “gold” and “silver”. I was once nearly called out by an acquaintance \*, because when he asked me where I thought his Soul would be found hereafter – – I answered “in Silver Hell.”* –

27.

Juan, by some strange chance, which oft divides  
Warrior from Warrior in their grim career, 210  
Like chastest wives from constant husbands' sides  
Just at the close of the first bridal year,<sup>47</sup>  
By one of those odd turns of Fortune's tides,  
Was on a sudden rather puzzled here,  
When, after a good deal of heavy firing, 215  
He found himself alone, and friends retiring.

28.

I don't know how the thing occurred – it might  
Be that the greater part were killed or wounded,  
And that the rest had faced unto the Right  
About; a circumstance which has confounded 220  
Cæsar himself, who in the very sight  
Of his whole army, which so much abounded  
In courage, was compelled to snatch a shield  
And rally back his Romans to the field.<sup>48</sup>

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**47:** *Like chastest wives from constant husbands' sides / Just at the close of the first bridal year:* editors refer to Annabella's apparent desertion of B. after a year's marriage: but the lines are intended to have a general weight. Compare below, X 49.

**48:** *Cæsar himself... was obliged to snatch a shield / And rally back his Romans to the field:* Plutarch (*Life of Caesar*, section XX) reports that, under a surprise attack by the Belgian Nervii, Caesar rallied his forces by grabbing a shield and making one-man sortie into their ranks. This is the battle to which Antony refers at *Julius Caesar* III ii 173. See also *de Bello Gallico*, II xxi.

29.<sup>49</sup>

Juan, who had no shield to snatch, and was 225  
No Cæsar, but a fine young lad, who fought  
He knew not why, arriving at this pass,  
Stopped for a minute, as perhaps he ought  
For a much longer time; then, like an Ass  
(Start not, kind reader, since Great Homer thought 230  
This Similie enough for Ajax, Juan<sup>50</sup>  
Perhaps may find it better than a new one) –

30.

Then, like an Ass, he went upon his way,  
And, what was stranger, never looked behind;  
But seeing, flashing forward, like the Day 235  
Over the Hills, a fire enough to blind  
Those who dislike to look upon a fray,  
He stumbled on to try if he could find  
A path, to add his own slight arm and forces  
To Corps, the greater part of which were Corpses. 240

31.

Perceiving then no more the commandant  
Of his own Corps, nor even the Corps – which had  
Quite disappeared – the Gods know how! (I can't  
Account for every thing which may look bad  
In history;<sup>51</sup> but we at least may grant 245  
It was not marvellous that a mere lad,  
In search of Glory, should look on before,  
Nor care a pinch of Snuff about his Corps) –

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**49 CASTELNAU II 210:** *N'aperçevant plus le commandant du corps dont je faisais partie, et ignorant où je devais porter mes pas ...*

**50:** *Great Homer thought / This Similie enough for Ajax:* John Wilkes refers to this epic fact in a note to his parody *An Essay on Woman: Homer compares one of his Heroes, Ajax, to an Ass, in his 11th B. of the Iliad.* See *Iliad*, XI 558-65, rendered thus by Pope:

*As the slow beast, with heavy strength endued,  
In some wide field by troops of boys pursued,  
Though round his sides a wooden tempest rain,  
Crops the tall harvest, and lays waste the plain;  
Thick on his hide the hollow blows resound,  
The patient animal maintains his ground,  
Scarce from the field with all their efforts chased,  
And stirs but slowly when he comes at last ...*

Pope disdains the asinine monosyllable.

**51:** (*I can't / Account for every thing which may look bad / In history ...*: according to B., history is a grand liar anyway. See below, IX 644.

32.<sup>52</sup>

Perceiving nor Commander nor commanded  
And left at large, like a young heir, to make 250  
His way to – where he knew not – single handed;  
As travellers follow over bog and brake  
An “Ignis fatuus”;<sup>53</sup> or as sailors stranded  
Unto the nearest hut themselves betake;  
So Juan, following Honour and his Nose, 255  
Rushed where the thickest fire announced most foes.

33.

He knew not where he was, nor greatly cared,  
For he was dizzy, busy, and his Veins  
Filled as with lightning, for his Spirit shared  
The hour, as is the Case with lively Brains; 260  
And where the hottest fire was seen and heard,  
And the loud Cannon pealed his hoarsest strains,  
He rushed while Earth and Air were sadly shaken<sup>54</sup>  
By thy humane discovery, Friar Bacon!

\* Gunpowder is said to have been discovered by this Friar.<sup>55</sup>

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**52 CASTELNAU II 210 (quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richelieu):** *N'apercevant plus le commandant du corps dont je faisais partie, et ignorant où je devais porter mes pas, je crus reconnaître le lieu où le rempart était situé; on y faisait un feu assez vif ...*

**53:** *As travellers follow over bog and brake / An “Ignis fatuus”:* Eugen Kölbing, in his 1898 Weimar edition of *The Prisoner of Chillon*, lists seven other uses of this fatalistic image in B.. E.H.Coleridge, in his edition, points out one which Kölbing missed out. For students of ottava rima, the references are *TVOJ* 837, and *Don Juan* VII 365-8, XI 214-16 and XV 430.

**54:** *He rushed, where Earth and Air were sadly shaken:* reminds us of *Childe Harold* III 207: *He rushed into the field, and, foremost fighting, fell!* although the second line of the couplet would be quite out-of-place in *Childe Harold*.

**55:** *... thy humane discovery - Friar Bacon!:* Roger Bacon (c. 1214-92) an experimental scientist long before such a thing was academically respectable, was imprisoned by the church over long periods for “novelties” in his writing. Among these does seem to be a *description* of gunpowder dating from 1248; although the *invention* of gunpowder is owing to Chinese ingenuity. For another reference, see above, I 1733-34. The line heightens B.’s association of Christianity with bloodshed.

**34.**<sup>56</sup>

And as he rushed along, it came to pass he 265  
 Fell in with what was late the second Column,  
 Under the orders of the General Lascy,  
 But now reduced, as is a bulky volume  
 Into an elegant extract<sup>57</sup> (much less massy)  
 Of Heroism, and took his place with solemn 270  
 Air 'midst the rest, who kept their valiant faces  
 And levelled weapons still against the Glacis.<sup>58</sup>

**35.**

Just at this crisis up came Johnson too,  
 Who had “retreated”, as the phrase is, when  
 Men run away much rather than go through 275  
 Destruction’s jaws into the devil’s den;  
 But Johnson was a clever fellow, who  
 Knew when and how “to cut and come again”,<sup>59</sup>  
 And never ran away, except when running  
 Was nothing but a valorous kind of cunning. 280

**36.**

And so, when all his Corps were dead or dying,  
 Except Don Juan, a mere Novice, whose  
 More Virgin Valour never dreamed of flying,  
 From ignorance of danger, which endues  
 Its Votaries, like Innocence relying 285  
 On its own strength, with careless nerves and thews –  
 Johnson retired a little, just to rally  
 Those who catch cold in “Shadows of Death’s Valley.”<sup>60</sup>

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**56 CASTELNAU II 210 (quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richelieu):** ... *que je jugeai être celui de la seconde colonne de terre, aux ordres du général major de Lascy. Je me dirigeai de ce côté, et appelant ceux des chasseurs qui étaient autour de moi en assez grand nombre, je m’avançai et reconnus ne m’être points trompé dans mon calcul; c’était en effet cette colonne qui à l’instant parvenait au sommet du rempart.*

**57:** ... *now reduced, as is a bulky volume / Into an elegant extract (much less massy):* CPW points out a reference to the *Elegant Extracts* of Vicesimus Knox, which constituted the *Reader’s Digest* of their day. B. does not wish us to forget the literary status of the violence we are witnessing.

**58:** *Glacis:* in fortification, an artificially sloping parapet designed to give the defenders maximum scope for and ease of fire.

**59:** “*to cut and come again*”: DJV, DJP and CPW all point out that this is not a military phrase, but refers to cutting from a joint of meat and returning for more; hence ironical.

**60:** “*Shadows of Death’s Valley*”: from Psalm 23: *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me ...* again, in the context of Suvorov’s attack on Ismail, ironic; for no comfort, only hell, awaits those who take part.



37.<sup>61</sup>

And there, a little sheltered from the shot,  
Which rained from bastion, battery, parapet, 290  
Rampart, wall, casement, house – for there was not  
In this extensive city, sore beset  
By Christian soldiery, a single spot  
Which did not combat like the devil, as yet –  
He found a number of Chasseurs, all scattered 295  
By the resistance of the Chace they battered.<sup>62</sup>

38.

And these he called on, and what's strange, they came  
Unto his call, unlike "the Spirits from  
The vasty deep," to whom you may exclaim,  
Says Hotspur, long ere they will leave their home;<sup>63</sup> 300  
Their reasons were uncertainty, or shame  
At shrinking from a bullet or a bomb,  
And that odd Impulse, which in wars and creeds,  
Makes men, like cattle, follow him who leads.

39.

By Jove! he was a noble fellow, Johnson, 305  
And though his name than Ajax or Achilles  
Sounds less harmonious, underneath the Sun soon  
We shall not see his likeness;<sup>64</sup> he could kill his  
Man quite as quietly as blows the *Monsoon*  
Her steady breath (which some months the same *still* is); 310  
Seldom he varied feature, hue or muscle,  
And could be very busy without bustle;

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**61** CASTELNAU II 210 (quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richelieu): *Je me dirigeai de ce côté, et appelant ceux des chasseurs qui étaient autour de moi en assez grand nombre, je m'avançai et reconnus ne m'être points trompé dans mon calcul; c'était en effet cette colonne qui à l'instant parvenait au sommet du rempart.*

**62:** *He found a number of Chasseurs, all scattered / By the resistance of the Chace they battered:* a Chasseur was "a soldier equipped and trained for rapid movement" (O.E.D.); but the word clearly derives from *Chasseur* (hunter) a fact which B. here exploits.

**63:** "the Spirits from / The vasty deep," to whom you may exclaim, / Says Hotspur, long ere they will leave their home: Henry IV I III i 53-5: Glendower: *I can call spirits from the vasty deep.* Hotspur: *Why, so can I, or so can any man; / But will they come when you do call for them?*

**64:** *underneath the Sun soon / We shall not see his likeness:* editors detect an echo of Hamlet's description of his father at I ii 187-8: *He was a man; take him for all in all, / I shall not look upon his like again.* Given the quasi-paternal relationship which Johnson has towards Juan the parallel is not inapt.



43.<sup>69</sup>

They fell as thick as harvests beneath Hail,  
Grass before Scythes, or Corn before the Sickle,<sup>70</sup>  
Proving that trite old truth, that Life's as frail  
As any other boon for which Men stickle;<sup>71</sup> 340  
The Turkish Batteries thrashed them like a flail,  
Or a good boxer; into a sad pickle  
Putting the very bravest, who were knocked<sup>72</sup>  
Upon the head, before their Guns were cocked.

44.<sup>73</sup>

The Turks behind the traverses and flanks 345  
Of the next bastion, fired away like devils,  
And swept, as Gales sweep foam away, whole ranks;  
However, Heaven knows why, the Fate who levels  
Towns, nations, worlds, in her revolving pranks,  
So ordered it, amidst these sulphury revels, 350  
That Johnson and some few who had not scampered,  
Reached the interior talus<sup>74</sup> of the rampart. \*

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**69 CASTELNAU II 210-11 (quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richelieu):** *Je me dirigeai de ce côté, et appelant ceux des chasseurs qui étaient autour de moi en assez grand nombre, je m'avançai et reconnus ne m'être points trompé dans mon calcul; c'était en effet cette colonne qui à l'instant parvenait au sommet du rempart.*

**70:** *They fell as thick as harvests beneath Hail, / Grass before Scythes, or Corn before the sickle:* DJV and DJP refer to *Exodus* 9 25 ("the hail smote every herb in the field") *Deuteronomy* 16 9 ("thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn") *Psalms* 37 2 ("they shall soon be cut down like the grass") and 78 47 ("he destroyed their vines with hail") *Proverbs* 26 1 ("as rain in harvest") *Jeremiah* 1 16 ("him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest") *Joel* 3 13 ("Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe") *Mark* 4 28-9 ("For the earth bringeth forth ... full corn in the ear ... immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come") and *James* 1 10 ("The rich ... as the flower of the field he shall pass away") as evidence for the Biblical precedents upon which B. is here calling. Most use the imagery as vehicle for describing the wrath of God: evidence in favour of Wordsworth's *Thanksgiving Ode* adduction of Carnage as God's Daughter (see above, this Canto, line 70n).

**71:** ... *for which Men stickle:* in this case, for which they strive.

**72:** ... *into a sad pickle / Putting the very bravest:* all editions place a comma before this inversion, thus isolating *Putting the very bravest* syntactically.

**73 CASTELNAU II 210-11 (quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richelieu):** *Les Turcs de derrière les travers et les flancs du bastions voisins, faisaient sur elle un feu très-vif de canon et de mousqeterie. Je gravis, avec les gens qui m'avaient suivi, le talus intérieur du rempart ...*

**74:** *talus:* in fortification, the sloping side of of an earthwork which increases in thickness from summit to base. There is no clear distinction to be made between a *talus* and a *glacis* (see above, this canto, 272). However, as DJP points out, at 354 (next stanza) Johnson and his men *Came mounting quickly* up, a preposition not suited to an assault on the interior talus, which here, two lines earlier, they have already reached. DJP suggests the substitution here of *exterior*.

45.<sup>75</sup>

First one or two, then five, six, and a dozen  
Came mounting quickly up, for it was now  
All neck or nothing, as, like pitch and rosin, 355  
Flame was showered forth above as well's below,  
So that you scarce could say who best had chosen,  
The Gentlemen that were the first to show  
Their martial faces on the parapet,  
Or those who thought it brave to wait as yet. 360

46.<sup>76</sup>

But those who scaled, found out that their advance  
Was favoured by an accident or blunder;  
The Greek or Turkish Cohorn's ignorance<sup>77</sup>  
Had palisadoed in a way you'd wonder 365  
To see in forts of Netherlands or France –  
(Though these to our Gibraltar must knock under) –  
Right in the middle of the parapet  
Just named, these palisades were primly set:

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**75 CASTELNAU II 211 (quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richelieu):** *Je gravis, avec les gens qui m'avaient suivi, le talus intérieur du rempart, et ce fut dans cet instant que je reconnu combien l'ignorance du constructeur des palissades était importante pour nous; car, comme elles étaient placées au milieu du parapet, il y avait à chaque côté neuf à dix pieds sur lesquels on pouvait marcher, et les soldats après être montés avaient pu se ranger commodément sur l'espace extérieur, et enjamber ensuite les palissades, qui ne s'élevaient que d'à peu près deux pieds au-dessus du niveau de la terre.*

**76 CASTELNAU II 211 (quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richelieu):** *... ce fut dans cet instant que je reconnu combien l'ignorance du constructeur des palissades était importante pour nous; car, comme elles étaient placées au milieu du parapet, il y avait à chaque côté neuf à dix pieds sur lesquels on pouvait marcher, et les soldats après être montés avaient pu se ranger commodément sur l'espace extérieur, et enjamber ensuite les palissades, qui ne s'élevaient que d'à peu près deux pieds au-dessus du niveau de la terre.*

**77:** *The Greek or Turkish Cohorn's ignorance:* for a previous reference to the badly-designed fortifications of Ismail, see above, VII 77-80. Baron Menno van Coehoorn (1641-1704) was the Dutch equivalent of Vauban (above, VII 82). Notice the *sang-froid* with which B. mentions the possibility of Greek engineers working for the Turks (which is not in Castelnau). In fact the fortifications of Ismail had been started by a Frenchman, and finished on his sudden departure by a less gifted Turkish officer (*MSYR Byron XI pp.187-8*).

47.

So that on either side some nine or ten  
Paces were left, wheron you could contrive 370  
To march; a great convenience to our men,<sup>78</sup>  
At least to all those who were left alive,  
Who thus could form a line and fight again;  
And that which further aided them to strive  
Was, that they could kick down the palisades, 375  
Which scarcely rose much higher than Grass blades. \*

\* They were but two feet high above the level.

48.

Amongst the first – I will not say *the first*,  
For such precedence upon such occasions  
Will oftentimes make deadly quarrels burst  
Out between friends as well as allied nations – 380  
The Briton must be bold who really durst  
Put to such trial John Bull's partial patience  
As say that Wellington at Waterloo  
Was beaten – though the Prussians say so too,<sup>79</sup>

49.

And that if Blücher, Bulow, Gneisenau, 385  
And God knows who besides in “*au*” and “*ou*”,<sup>80</sup>  
Had not come up in time to cast an awe  
Into the hearts of those who fought till now,  
As Tigers combat with an empty Crow,  
The Duke of Wellington had ceased to show 390  
His Orders; also to receive his pensions,  
Which are the heaviest that our History mentions.<sup>81</sup>

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**78:** ... *a great convenience to our men*: B.'s sudden taking of sides and even implication of authorial presence reminds us of the moments in the boat of the *Trinidad*, (above, II 252, 254 and n) when he intrudes in a similar way into his own narrative.

**79:** ... *say that Wellington at Waterloo / Was beaten – though the Prussians say so too*: see note below to st.49.

**80:** ... *Blücher, Bulow, Gneisenau, / And God knows who besides in “au” and “ou”*: for B.'s affected indifference to the niceties of pronouncing foreign names, compare above, VII sts.15-17. General Gebhard Leberecht, Prince von Blücher (1742-1819) General Friedrich Wilhelm, Baron Bülow von Dennewitz (1755-1816) and August Wilhelm Anton, Count Neithardt von Gneisenau (1760-1839) all assisted Wellington in important ways at Waterloo – a fact which the British General freely acknowledged. Blücher arrived late, at a decisive moment; von Bülow, chief of Blücher's staff, commanded a Prussian corps during the battle and directed Prussian strategy; and Gneisenau pursued the defeated French afterwards, as did Blücher.

**81:** ... *his pensions, / Which are the heaviest that our History mentions*: compare below, IX 17, 47-8, and 55.

50.

But never mind – “God save the king!” – and *kings!*  
For if *he* don’t, I doubt if *Men* will longer –  
I think I hear a little bird who sings 395  
The People by and bye will be the stronger;  
The veriest Jade will wince<sup>82</sup> whose harness wrings  
So much into the raw as quite to wrong her  
Beyond the rules of posting, – and the Mob  
At last fall sick of imitating Job;<sup>83</sup> 400

51.

At first it grumbles, then it swears,<sup>84</sup> and then,  
Like David, flings smooth pebbles ’gainst a Giant;<sup>85</sup>  
At last it takes to weapons such as Men  
Snatch when Despair makes human hearts less pliant;  
Then comes “the Tug of War” – ’twill come again, 405  
I rather doubt, and I would fain say “fie on’t,”  
If I had not perceived that Revolution  
Alone can save the Earth from Hell’s pollution.<sup>86</sup>

52.

But to continue; I say not *the* first,  
But *of* the first, our little friend, Don Juan, 410  
Walked o’er the Walls of Ismail, as if Nurst  
Amidst such scenes – though this was quite a new one  
To him, and I should hope to *most*;<sup>87</sup> the thirst  
Of Glory, which so pierces through and through one,  
Pervaded him, although a generous Creature, 415  
As warm in heart as feminine in feature.<sup>88</sup>

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**82:** *The veriest Jade will wince:* from *Hamlet*, III ii, 237-8: ... *let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung.*

**83:** ... *the Mob / At last fall sick of imitating Job:* that is, in patient forbearance under impossible goading.

**84:** At first it grumbles, then it swears: *It is the Mob;* see above, 399.

**85:** *Like David, flings smooth pebbles ’gainst a Giant:* as he did at Goliath. See I Samuel, 17-18.

**86:** ... *Revolution / Alone can save all the Earth from Hell’s pollution:* given that he knew what consequences the French Revolution had had, the idea that Revolution might reverse the Fall of Man is an uncharacteristically utopian thought from B.

**87:** ... *our little friend, Don Juan, / Walked o’er the Walls of Ismail, as if Nurst / Amidst such scenes - though this was quite a new one / To him, and I should hope to most:* shows Juan already enthusiastic for this new aspect of Original Sin. Compare above, I 196.

**88:** *As warm in heart as feminine in feature:* emphasises Juan’s quasi-androgyneity even in the midst of battle.

## 53.

And here he was, who upon Woman's breast  
 Even from a Child, felt like a Child; howe'er  
 The Man in all the rest might be confest,<sup>89</sup>  
 To him it was Elysium to be there; 420  
 And he could even withstand that awkward test  
 Which Rousseau points out to the dubious fair,  
 "Observe your lover when he *leaves* your arms;"<sup>90</sup>  
 But Juan never *left* them, while they'd Charms,

## 54.

Unless compelled by Fate, or Wave, or Wind, 425  
 Or near relations,<sup>91</sup> who are much the same.  
 But *here* he was! where each tie that can bind  
 Humanity must yield to Steel and Flame;  
 And *He* whose very body was all Mind,  
 Flung here by Fate, or Circumstance, which tame 430  
 The loftiest, hurried by the Time and Place,  
 Dashed on like a spurred blood-horse in a race.

## 55.

So was his blood stirred while he found resistance,  
 As is the Hunter's at the five-bar Gate,  
 Or double post and rail,<sup>92</sup> where the existence 435  
 Of Britain's Youth depends upon their weight,  
 The lightest being the safest; at a distance  
 He hated Cruelty, as all men hate  
 Blood, until heated – and even then his own  
 At times would curdle o'er some heavy groan. 440

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**89:** *And here he was, who upon Woman's breast / Even from a Child, felt like a Child; howe'er / The Man in all the rest might be confest:* compare I Corinthians 13 11: *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* Presumably warfare does not count among childish things.

**90:** "Observe your lover when he leaves your arms": Rousseau, *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, I lettre LV, note: *Femme trop facile, voulez-vous savoir si vous êtes aimée? examinez votre amant sortant de vos bras. O amour! Si je regrette l'âge où l'on te goûte, ce n'est pas pour l'heure de la jouissance; c'est pour l'heure qui la suit.* See above, unincorporated stanzas to Canto II. The quotation would serve to place Juan on a romantically ideal plane with Rousseau's heroine.

**91:** ... *near relations:* in this case, Inez and Lambro.

**92:** ... *the Hunter's at the five-bar Gate, / Or double post and rail:* more fox-hunting imagery to accompany that above, this Canto, 1.128 and below, XIV 259.

56.<sup>93</sup>

The General Lascy, who had been hard prest,  
Seeing arrive an aid so opportune  
As were some hundred youngsters all abreast,  
Who came as if just dropped down from the Moon,  
To Juan, who was nearest him, addressed 445  
His thanks, and hopes to take the City soon,  
Not reckoning him to be a “base Bezonian,”  
(As Pistol calls it) but a young Livonian.<sup>94</sup>

57.

Juan, to whom he spoke in German, knew  
As much of German as of Sanscrit,<sup>95</sup> and 450  
In answer made an inclination to  
The General who led him in command;  
For seeing one with ribbands, black and blue,  
Stars, medals, and a bloody sword in hand,  
Addressing him in tones which seemed to thank, 455  
He recognised an Officer of rank.

58.

Short speeches pass between two men who speak  
No common language; and besides, in time  
Of war and taking towns, when many a shriek  
Rings o’er the dialogue, and many a crime 460  
Is perpetrated ere a word can break  
Upon the ear, and sounds of horror chime  
In like Church bells, with sigh, howl – groan, yell – prayer!  
There cannot be much Conversation there.

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**93 CASTELNAU (quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richelieu):** *Je rencontrai bientôt le général Lascy, et ce fut une véritable satisfaction pour moi de me réunir à un officier aussi distingué.* (Note): *Le général Lascy voyant un corps si à propos à son secours, s’avança vers l’officier qui l’avait conduit, et, le prenant pour un Livonien, lui fit, en allemand, les compliments les plus flatteurs; le jeune militaire, qui parlait parfaitement cette langue, y répondit avec sa modestie ordinaire.*

**94:** *Not reckoning him to be a “base Bezonian,” / (As Pistol calls it):* “Bezonian” is a corruption of the Italian *bisognoso*, meaning “needy rogue”. Pistol to Shallow, at *Henry IV II V* iv 112-13: *Under which King, Bezonian? Speak, or die.* Suffolk to his assassins, at *Henry VI II IV* i 134: *Great men die oft by vile bezonians.* B. is more likely to have remembered the former. Livonian: from Livonia, a Baltic province comprising in modern terms southern Estonia and northern Latvia.

**95:** *Juan, to whom he spoke in German, knew / As much of German as of Sanscrit:* Lascy supposes that Juan is descended from German settlers on the Baltic coast. Notice that where Richelieu, as would be expected of an experienced mercenary, was fluent in German, Juan still retains some cosmopolitan innocence.



59.

And therefore all we have related in 465  
Two long Octaves, passed in little Minute;  
But in the same small minute, Every Sin  
Contrived to get itself comprized within it;  
The very Cannon, deafened by the din,  
Grew dumb, for you might almost hear a linnet 470  
As soon as thunder, 'midst the general noise  
Of human Nature's agonizing voice!

60.

The town was entered. Oh, Eternity!  
"God made the Country, and man made the town,"  
So Cowper says<sup>96</sup> – and I begin to be 475  
Of his opinion, when I see cast down  
Rome, Babylon, Tyre, Carthage, Nineveh,<sup>97</sup>  
All Walls men know, and many never known;  
And pondering on the present and the past,  
To deem the Woods shall be our Home at last. 480

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**96:** "God made the Country, and man made the town," / So Cowper says: at *The Task*, I 749:

*God made the country, and man made the town.  
What wonder then that health and virtue, gifts  
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught  
That life holds out to all, should most abound  
And least be threatened in the fields and groves?*

For a covert Cowper quotation, see *Beppo*, 369.

**97:** *Rome, Babylon, Tyre, Carthage, Nineveh*: greater examples than Ismail of cities destroyed in warfare. Rome was sacked in 410, 455 and 1527, by Goths, Vandals and Protestants respectively; Babylon fell to the Assyrians in 689 B.C.; Tyre was besieged and captured by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.; Carthage was destroyed by Rome in 202 B.C.; and Nineveh fell to the Medes and Babylonians in 612 B.C.

61.

Of all men, saving Sylla the Man-slayer,<sup>98</sup>  
Who passes for in life and death most lucky,  
Of the Great Names which in our faces stare,  
The General Boone, back-woodsman of Kentucky,<sup>99</sup>  
Was happiest amongst mortals any where; 485  
For killing nothing but a bear or buck, he  
Enjoyed the lonely, vigorous, harmless days  
Of his old age in Wilds of deepest Maze.

62.

Crime came not near him – She is not the Child  
Of Solitude; Health shrank not from him – for 490  
Her home is in the rarely-trodden Wild,  
Where if men seek her not, and death be more  
Their Choice than life, forgive them, as beguiled  
By habit to what their own hearts abhor –  
In cities Caged; the present case in point I 495  
Cite, is that Boone lived hunting up to Ninety;<sup>100</sup>

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**98:** *Sylla the Man-slayer*: Lucius Cornelius Sulla, Roman general and politician (138-78 B.C.) foe of Gaius Marius, and notorious for the proscription and murder of thousands of his opponents. B. refers to him as *most lucky* because he enjoyed the fruits both of power and of retirement, and died in his bed (albeit of a perforated ulcer – see Plutarch’s Life).

**99:** *The General Boone, back-woodsman of Kentucky*: Daniel Boone (1735-1820) is to be contrasted with Wellington, and paralleled with Suvorov, as well as with Cincinnatus, Epaminondas, Washington and Pitt – all referred to below, at IX sts.7 and 8 – as types of the simple and puritanical patriot / soldier. See also the section below on Rapp the Harmonist, XV, sts.35-7, and B.’s note. The Boone Stanzas (61-7) brought into Canto VIII with wilful incongruity, represent an earlier and more sincere pastoral reflection, contrasting misanthropically with the civilised violence surrounding them. Editors have differing opinions as to where B. obtained his information on Boone. John Wright quotes Morris Birkbeck’s *Notes on America* (which B. owned: see CMP 246) and a *Quarterly Review* article, Vol. XXIX p.14 – although the latter was not published until April 1823. E.H.Coleridge refers to Boone’s supposed autobiography, appendix to *Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* (1793) by Gilbert Imlay, lover of Mary Wollstonecraft and father of her daughter Fanny. DJV refers to a conversation B. had with “An American” in Florence in 1821 (*Museum* [New York] XXVII December 1835 p.593) and to Henry Marie Brackenridge’s *Views of Louisiana* (1814). DJP changes the 1835 reference to the *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* for October and November. CPW refers merely to John Clubbe’s 1980 monograph *Byron’s Natural Man. Daniel Boone and Kentucky*. Clubbe dismisses the 1823 *Quarterly* and 1835 New York articles, and plumps for Birkbeck and Brackenridge, the latter mediated through *Views of Society and Manners in America* (1821) by Frances Wright, the radical Scots friend of Bentham and Lafayette. *MSYR Byron XI* tells the story of a siege in which Boone commanded the town of Boonesborough (named after him). He asked the attacking Indians for two days’ truce, but used it to prepare the place more thoroughly. Suvorov played the same game on the Moslem *defenders* of Ismail. It is not clear that B. knew either story.

**100:** *Ninety*: Boone was eighty-five when he died.

And what's still stranger, left behind a Name  
 For which Men vainly decimate the throng,  
 Not only famous, but of that *good* fame,  
 Without which Glory's but a tavern Song – 500  
 Simple, serene, the Antipodes of Shame,  
 Which Hate nor Envy e'er could tinge with wrong;  
 An active Hermit, even in age the Child  
 Of Nature – or the Man of Ross run wild.<sup>102</sup>

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**101 Sources for the Boone Stanzas (i):** The fine periods of the “autobiography” of Boone appended to the second (1793) edition of Gilbert Imlay’s *Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* are unlikely to be by Boone, who was only partially literate, and may not be by Imlay either: but they do contain the following: *Thus I was surrounded with plenty in the midst of want. I was happy in the midst of danger and inconveniences. In such a diversity it was impossible I should be disposed to melancholy. No populous city, with all the varieties of commerce and stately structures, could afford so much pleasure to my mind, as the beauties of nature I found here.* (p.332). It is tempting to see some germ in this picture of the Pantisocratic Ideal of Southey and Coleridge; but neither man’s letters (nor B.’s) contain any reference to Imlay’s book.

**102:** ... *the Child / Of Nature - or the Man of Ross run wild:* makes Boone into a poorer and rougher version John Kyrle, the Herefordshire landowner celebrated for his philanthropy and modest living at ll.249-97 of Pope’s *Moral Essay III. To Allen Lord Bathurst:*

*Whose Cause-way parts the vale with shady rows?  
 Whose seats the weary Traveller repose?  
 Who taught that heav'n-directed spire to rise?  
 THE MAN OF ROSS, each lisp'ing babe replies.  
 Behold the Market-place with poor o'erspread!  
 THE MAN OF ROSS divides the weekly bread:  
 Behold yon Alms-house, neat, but void of state,  
 Where Age and Want sit smiling at the gate:  
 Him portion'd maids, apprentic'd orphans blest,  
 The young who labour, and the old who rest.  
 Is any sick? The MAN OF ROSS relieves,  
 Prescribes, attends, the med'cine makes, and gives.  
 Is there a variance? Enter but his door,  
 Balk'd are the Courts, and contest is no more.  
 Despairing Quacks with curses fled the place,  
 And vile Attornies, now an useless race ... and so on.*

64.<sup>103</sup>

'Tis true, he shrank from Men even of his Nation;                   505  
    When they built up into his darling trees,  
He moved some hundred miles off, for a Station  
    Where there were fewer houses, and more ease;<sup>104</sup>  
The Inconvenience of Civilization  
    Is, that you neither can be pleased nor please;                   510  
But where he met the Individual Man  
He shewed himself as kind as Mortal can.

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**103 Sources for the Boone Stanzas (ii):** a single paragraph from Morris Birkbeck's *Notes on a Journey in America* (CMP 246) may have been another source for B.'s idea of Boone's constant removals: *The wildest solitudes are to the taste of some people. General Boon, who was chiefly instrumental in the first settlement of Kentucky, is of this turn. It is said, that he is now, at the age of seventy, pursuing the daily chase, two hundred miles to the westward of the last abode of civilized man. He had retired to a chosen spot, beyond the Missouri, which, after him is named Boon's Lick, out of the reach, as he flattered himself, of intrusion; but white men, even there, incroached upon him, and two years ago, he went back two hundred miles further* (1818 edition, p.62). In fact, Boone had bad luck registering his properties, and constant ejection suits and land title voidments were part, at least, of the cause of his seeming restlessness.

**104:** As a portrait of the real Daniel Boone this is insulting nonsense. Boone was not just a frontiersman, but a citizen, three times a member of the Virginia General Assembly. "Nothing embitters my old age," he said, like "the circulation of absurd stories that I retire as civilization advances". John Mack Faragher, *Daniel Boone, The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer* (1992), p.328.

65.<sup>105</sup>

He was not all alone; around him grew  
 A Sylvan tribe of Children of the chace,  
 Whose young, unawakened World was ever new;<sup>106</sup> 515  
 Nor Sword, nor Sorrow yet had left a trace  
 On her unwrinkled brow, nor could you view  
 A frown on Nature's, or on human face;  
 The free-born Forest found and kept them free,<sup>107</sup>  
 And fresh as is a torrent or a tree. 520

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**105 Sources for the Boone Stanzas (iii):** The following, quoted from Henry Marie Brackenridge's 1814 *Views of Louisiana* in Frances Wright's *Views of Society and Manners in America*, is reckoned by John Clubbe to be the most likely source for the Boone Stanzas: ... *in this territory there are many sterling characters. Among others I mention, with pleasure, that brave and adventurous North Carolinian, who makes so distinguished a figure in the history of Kentucky, the venerable Col. Boone. This respectable old man, in the eighty-fifth year of his age, resides on Salt River, up the Missouri. He is surrounded by about forty families, who respect him as a father, and who live under a kind of patriarchal government, ruled by his advice and example. They are not necessitous persons, who have fled for their crimes or misfortunes, like those that gathered unto David in the cave of Adullam: they all live well, and possess the necessaries and comforts of life as they could wish. They retired through choice. Perhaps they acted wisely in placing themselves at a distance from the deceit and turbulence of the world. They enjoy an uninterrupted quiet, and a real comfort in their little society, beyond the sphere of that larger society where government is necessary. Here they are truly free; exempt from the impositions and duties even of the best governments, they are assailed neither by the madness of ambition, nor tortured by the poison of party spirit. Is not this one of the most powerful incentives which impels the Anglo-American to bury himself in the midst of the wilderness?* (Quoted Clubbe pp.12-13.)

**106:** *around him grew / A Sylvan tribe of Children of the chace, / Whose young, unawakened World was ever new:* Brackenridge (quoted opposite) makes clear that these were not Boone's natural children, as B.'s phrasing might imply. Two of Boone's sons were killed in battle; a daughter was kidnapped – though he rescued her.

**107:** *The free-born forest found and kept them free:* an unavoidable echo of the words of Duke Senior at *As You Like It*, II i 1-11:

*Now, my co-mates and partners in exile,  
 Hath not old custom made these woods more sweet  
 Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods  
 More free from peril than the envious court?  
 Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,  
 The season's difference, as the icy fang  
 And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,  
 Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,  
 Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say  
 'This is no faltery; these are counsellors  
 That feelingly persuade me who I am ...' and so on.*

And tall and strong and swift of foot were they  
 Beyond the dwarfing City's pale abortions,  
 Because their thoughts had never been the prey  
 Of care or gain; the Green Woods were their portions;  
 No sinking Spirits told them they grew grey, 525  
 No Fashion made them Apes of her distortions;  
 Simple they were, not savage; and their rifles,  
 Though very true, were not yet used for trifles.

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**108 Sources for the Boone Stanzas (iv):** one last immediate American source for B.'s thought in the Boone Stanzas may be this, suffixed by Frances Wright to her quotation from Brackenridge, quoted above: *The lord of the wilderness, Daniel Boone, though his eye is now dimmed and his limbs enfeebled by a long life of adventure, can still hit the wild fowl on the wing with that dexterity which in his early years excited the envy of Indian hunters, and he now looks upon the "famous river" with feelings scarce less ardent than when he surveyed with clearer vision "the famous river Ohio." The grave of this worshipper of nature, wild adventure, and unrestrained liberty will be visited by the feebler children of future generations with such awe as the Greeks might regard those of their earlier demigods. The mind of this singular man seems best portrayed by his own simple words: "No populous city, with all the varieties of commerce and stately structure, could afford so much pleasure to my mind as the beauties of nature I found here."* (Quoted Clubbe, p.13; last quotation already quoted above, from Gilbert Imlay's 1793 appendix). Wright subsequently admitted that she had viewed America at first "under a claude-lorraine tint" (*Views*, ed. Baker, Harvard 1963, p.xi.)

William Parry – B.'s fire-master at Missolonghi – had not been impressed by Wright's book, and had caused offence to Jeremy Bentham by criticising it: *In the course of the conversation at Mr. Bentham's, he enquired of me if I had ever visited America in my travels? – I said, Yes, I had resided there for some time. – Have you read Miss Wright's book on that country? – Yes. – What do you think of it; does it give a good description of America? Here I committed another fault. "She knows no more of America," I replied, "than a cow does of a case of instruments." Such a reply was complete damper to Mr. Bentham's eloquence on the subject ... Miss Wright spoke what Mr. Jeremy Bentham and his friends wished to be true and ... she was in an especial manner a favourite of his. It was not till I was informed of these things, by Lord Byron I believe, that I discovered how very rude I had been, and how much reason Mr. Bentham would have to find fault with my want of manners* (*The Last Days of Lord Byron*, pp.202-3). Clubbe (p.10) takes this as evidence that B. had read Wright; but all Parry "believes" is that B. corrected his understanding of Bentham's attitude to Wright, not of Wright's book.

**67.**

Motion was in their days, Rest in their slumbers,  
And Cheerfulness the Handmaid of their toil; 530  
Nor yet too many nor too few their numbers;  
Corruption could not make their hearts her soil;  
The Lust which stings, the Splendour which encumbers,  
With the free foresters divide no Spoil;  
Serene, not sullen, were the Solitudes 535  
Of this unsighing people of the Woods.<sup>109</sup>

**68.**

So much for Nature, by way of Variety –  
Now back to thy great Joys, Civilization!  
And the sweet consequence of large Society,  
War, Pestilence, the Despot's desolation, 540  
The kingly scourge, the Lust of Notoriety,  
The millions slain by Soldiers for their ration,  
The Scenes like Catherine's boudoir at three-score,  
With Ismail's storm to Soften it the more.<sup>110</sup>

**69.**

The town was entered; first one column made 545  
Its sanguinary way good – then another;  
The reeking bayonet and the flashing blade  
Clashed 'gainst the Scymitar, and babe and mother  
With distant shrieks were heard Heaven to upbraid;  
Still closer Sulphury Clouds began to smother 550  
The breath of Morn and Man, where foot by foot  
The maddened Turks their City still dispute.

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**109:** *The Lust which stings, the Splendour which encumbers, / With the free foresters divide no Spoil; / Serene, not sullen, were the Solitudes / Of this unsighing people of the Woods:* further echoes of *As You Like It*.

**110:** *The scenes like Catherine's boudoir at three-score, / With Ismail's storm to soften it the more:* a reference to the arrases, depicting in realistic detail the scenes of carnage at Ismail and Otchakov, which decorated Catherine's dining-room walls. See quotation from Masson, below, IX, 433n.

70.<sup>111</sup>

Koutousow, he who afterwards beat back  
(With some assistance<sup>112</sup> from the Frost and Snow)<sup>113</sup>  
Napoleon on his bold and bloody track, 555  
It happened was Himself beat back just now;  
He was a jolly fellow, and could crack  
His Jest alike in face of friend or foe,  
Though Life, and Death, and Victory were at stake,  
But here it seems his Jokes had ceased to take; 560

71.

For having thrown himself into a ditch,  
Followed in haste by various Grenadiers,  
Whose blood the puddle greatly did enrich,  
He climbed to where the Parapet appears,  
But there his Project reached its utmost pitch; 565  
(’Mongst other deaths the General Ribaupierre’s  
Was much regretted) for the Moslem Men  
Threw them all down into the ditch again.

72.

And had it not been for some stray troops, landing  
They knew not where, being carried by the stream 570  
To some spot where they lost their understanding,  
And wandered up and down as in a dream,  
Until they reached, as Daybreak was expanding,  
That which a portal to their eyes did seem,  
The great and gay Koutousow might have lain 575  
Where three parts of his Column yet remain.

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**111 CASTELNAU (II 212):** *Parmi ces colonnes, une de celles qui souffrirent le plus était commandée par le général Koutouzow. Ce brave militaire réunit l'intrépidité à un grand nombre de connaissances acquises; il marche au feu avec la même gaîté qu'il va à une fête; il sait commander avec autant de sang froid qu'il déploie d'esprit et d'amabilité dans le commerce habituel de la vie. Ce brave Koutouzow (1) se jeta dans le fossé, fut suivi des siens (2), et ne pénétra jusqu'au haut du parapet qu'après avoir éprouver des difficultés incroyables. Les Turcs accoururent en grand nombre; cette multitude repoussa deux fois le général jusqu'au fossé, qu'il ne repassa qu'après avoir perdu presque tous ses officiers et un grand nombre de soldats. Note 1: C'est ce même général Koutouzow, aujourd'hui prince de Smolensko, maréchal de Russie, etc. / Que de victoires ce prince a remportées depuis contre les Turcs! S'il est hors de mon sujet de célébrer ces nouveaux faits d'armes, il m'est néanmoins permis de lui payer un juste tribut d'admiration. (Il est mort depuis que cette partie de l'ouvrage est écrite.) Note 2: Le brigadier de Ribaupierre perdit la vie dans cette occasion; il avait fixé l'estime générale, et sa mort occasiona beaucoup de regrets.*

**112:** B. had already mentioned the help he had in from the *Elements* in defeating the French in 1812 at *Beppo*, 481-2: *Crushed was Napoleon by the Northern Thor, / Who knocked his army down with icy hammer ...*

**113:** *Koutousow, he who afterwards beat back / (With some assistance from the frost and snow) / Napoleon on his bold and bloody track:* Mikhail Iliarionovich Kutuzov (1743-1813) named Prince of Smolensk after his defeat of Davout and Ney at the battle of Smolensk (1812). Immortalised by Tolstoy in *War and Peace* as the “victor” of Borodino (also 1812); the only character in the novel with the spiritual depth needed to see war’s (and history’s) confusions through with wise passivity.



73.<sup>114</sup>

But scrambling round the rampart, these same troops,  
 After the taking of the “Cavalier,”<sup>115</sup>  
 Just as Koutousow’s most “Forlorn” of “Hopes”<sup>116</sup>  
 Took like Camelions some slight tinge of Fear, 580  
 Opened the Gate called “Kilia”<sup>117</sup> to the Groupes  
 Of baffled heroes who stood shyly near,  
 Sliding knee-deep in lately frozen mud,<sup>118</sup>  
 Now thawed into a Marsh of human blood.

74.<sup>119</sup>

The Kozacks, or if you so please, Cossacques 585  
 (I don’t much pique myself upon Orthography,  
 So that I do not grossly err in facts,  
 Statistics, tactics, politics and Geography)<sup>120</sup>  
 Having been used to serve on horses’ backs,  
 And no great dilettanti in topography 590  
 Of Fortresses, but fighting, where it pleases  
 Their Chiefs to order, were all cut to pieces.

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**114 CASTELNAU II 213:** *Quelques troupes russes, emportées par le courant, n’ayant pu débarquer sur le terrain qu’on leur avait prescrit, longèrent le rempart après la prise du cavalier, et ouvrirent la porte dite de Kilia aux soldats du général Koutouzow.*

**115:** *the “Cavalier”:* a cavalier is in this context a huge raised gun emplacement. See above, VII 96n.

**116:** *Koutousow’s most “Forlorn” of “Hopes”:* the “Forlorn Hope” was the detachment set in the front rank of the assault force and thus the one almost certain to be wiped out. See above, VII 243, 490 and nn.

**117:** *the Gate called “Kilia”:* the phrase from Castelnau gives Ismail an epic topography similar to that of Troy: compare *Troilus and Cressida*, Prologue, 15-19: *Priam’s six-gated city, / Dardan, and Tymbria, Helias, Chetas, Troien, / And Antenorides, with massy staples / And corresponsive and fulfilling bolts, / Sperr up the sons of Troy.* The possibility of a Byronic joke (“Kill yer”) is not to be discounted.

**118:** *lately frozen mud:* one of only two references in the Canto to the wintry conditions prevailing during the siege, the only answers to Pushkin’s objections to B.’s claim to historical accuracy (see above, this Canto, 101 and n; and below, this Canto, 1022 ... 1030; also IX st.30).

**119 CASTELNAU II 213:** *Il était réservé aux Kozaks de combler de leurs corps la partie du fossé où ls combattaient; leur colonne avait été divisée entre MM. Platow et d’Orlow: la première partie, devant se joindre à la gauche du général Arséniew, fut foudroyée par le feu des batteries, et parvint néanmoins au haut du rempart. Les Turcs la laissèrent un peu s’avancer dans la ville, et firent deux sorties par les angles saillans des bastions; ...*

**120:** *(I don’t much pique myself upon Orthography, / So that I do not grossly err in facts, / Statistics, tactics, politics and Geography):* orthography is spelling, an art in which B. was certainly a greater expert than, for example, Mary Shelley. His reliance on Castelnau’s narrative, detailed on the opposite pages here, and on those of Dalyell for Canto II, and of Masson and Castéra / Tooke for Cantos IX and X, show how concerned he was for most of the local and immediate detail of Don Juan to appear historically and factually verifiable.

## 75.

Their Column, though the Turkish batteries thundered  
 Upon them, ne'ertheless had reached the rampart,  
 And naturally thought they could have plundered 595  
 The city, without being further hampered,  
 But as it happens to brave men, they blundered –  
 The Turks at first pretended to have scampered,  
 Only to draw them 'twixt two bastion Corners,  
 From whence they sallied on these Christian Scorners. 600

76.<sup>121</sup>

Then being taken by the tail, a taking  
 Fatal to bishops as to soldiers, these<sup>122</sup>  
 Cossacques were all cut off while day was breaking,  
 And found their lives were let at a short lease,  
 But perished without shivering or shaking, 605  
 Leaving as ladders their heaped Carcases,  
 O'er which Lieutenant Colonel Yesouskoi  
 Marched with the brave battalion of Polouskoi;

## 77.

This valiant Man killed all the Turks he met,  
 But could not eat them,<sup>123</sup> being in his turn 610  
 Slain by some Mussulmans, who would not yet,  
 Without resistance, see their City burn;  
 The Walls were won, but 'twas an even bet  
 Which of the armies would have cause to mourn;  
 'Twas blow for blow, disputing inch by inch, 615  
 For one would not retreat, nor t'other flinch.

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**121 CASTELNAU II 213:** ... *alors, se trouvant prise en queue, elle fut écrasée; cependant le lieutenant-colonel Yesouskoï, qui commandait la réserve composée d'un bataillon du régiment de Polozk, traversa le fossé sur les cadavres des Kozaks, et extermina tous les Turcs qu'il eut en tête: ce brave homme fut tué pendant l'action.*

**122:** *Then being taken by the tail, a taking / Fatal to bishops as to soldiers:* Mary refuses to copy 601-2, which was originally, *Fatal to warriors as to women*; and B. fills in, changing the joke from anti-women to anti-episcopal. On Friday July 19 1822, at the White Lion, St. Albans Place, off the Haymarket, London, the Hon. Percy Jocelyn, Bishop of Clogher in Ireland, was caught by law officers while *in flagrante* with Private James (or Thomas) Moverley of the first Regiment of Guards. He tried to escape, but was unable to owing to the disarrangement of his clothing. Charged with attempted sodomy, he jumped bail (as did Private Moverley) and was ever heard of again. In fact he fled to France and then to Scotland, dying there in anonymity in 1843. The scandal was a gift to radicals, reflecting as it appeared to upon the depravity of the establishment, and may have contributed to the suicide of Castlereagh, rumoured to have been frightened of a similar charge being levelled at him. The story reached B. between his writing of the rough draft and Mary Shelley's refusal of his original joke at fair copy stage. (Notice, however, that the original obscene joke is derived from the words of Castelnau.) For a reference to Jocelyn by B., see below, IX st.32, commentary. Hobhouse had met Jocelyn in Ireland in 1811.

**123:** *This valiant Man killed all the Turks he met, / But could not eat them:* echoes Beatrice's words at *Much Ado About Nothing*, I i 35-7: *How many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed? For indeed, I promised to eat all of his killing.*

78.<sup>124</sup>

Another Column also suffered much;  
 And here we may remark with the historian,  
 You should but give few Cartridges to such  
 Troops as are meant to march with greatest Glory on; 620  
 When matters must be carried by the touch  
 Of the bright bayonet, and they all should hurry on,  
 They sometimes, with a hankering for existence,  
 Keep merely firing at a foolish distance.

79.<sup>125</sup>

A Junction of the General Meknop's men 625  
 (Without their General, who had fallen some time  
 Before, being badly seconded<sup>126</sup> just then)  
 Was made at length with those who dared to climb  
 The death-disgorging rampart once again;  
 And though the Turks' resistance was sublime, 630  
 They took the bastion, which the Seraskier<sup>127</sup>  
 Defended – at a price extremely dear.

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**124 CASTELNAU II 213-14:** *L'autre partie de Kozaks, qu'Orlow commandait, souffrit de la manière la plus cruelle; elle attaqua à maintes reprises, fut souvent repoussée, et perdit les deux tiers de son monde. (NOTE: C'est ici le lieu de placer une observation que nous prenons dans les mémoires qui nous guident; elle fait remarquer combien il est mal vu de donner beaucoup de cartouches aux soldats qui doivent emporter un poste de vive force, et par conséquent où la baïonnette doit principalement agir; ils pensent ne devoir se servir de cette dernière arme que lorsque les cartouches sont épuisées: dans cette persuasion, ils retardent leur marche, et restent plus longtemps exposés au canon et à la mitraille de l'ennemi.)*

**125 CASTELNAU II 213-14:** *La jonction de la colonne de Meknop (NOTE: Meknop était un brave officier, très-intelligent et de la plus grande espérance; il fut mal secondé et tué [Wright has ... étant mal secondé fut tué]) ne put s'effectuer avec celle qui l'avoisinait que lorsque celle-ci fait la plus grande partie du chemin: une fois réunies, ces colonnes attaquèrent un bastion et éprouvèrent une résistance opiniâtre; mais bientôt des cris de victoire se font entendre des toutes parts, et le bastion est emporté: le séraskier défendait cette partie ...*

**126:** *badly seconded:* badly supported.

**127:** *the Seraskier:* according to CPW (quoting OED) the Turkish Minister of War, and – unlike his occidental counterpart – Commander-in-Chief of the Army. His name is given in Suvorov's official report to Potemkin as Aïdos Mehmet; he is, however, described as *Ismailom seraskir*: the Seraskier of Ismail. See A.V. Suvorov: *Pisma*, ed. V.S.Lopatin (Moscow 1986) p.560; also Voltaire, *Histoire de Charles XII* (1772 Basle edition) I 157: *Le commandant de Bender qui étoit en même tems Serasquier, titre qui répond à celui de General ...* Baron de Tott (see above, VI 245) reads definitively: *Serasker a Turkish word composed of SER, which in Persian means Head, and of ASKER, Soldiers; it is a military rank which admits of no superior; it can only be compared with Generalissimo, and that title is usually given to those who command on the frontier, or who are detached with a considerable body of troops. (Memoirs 1785, II 46n).*

**80.**

Juan and Johnson, and some Volunteers  
Among the foremost, offered him good quarter,  
A word which little suits with Seraskiers, 635  
Or at least suited not this valiant Tartar;<sup>128</sup>  
He died, deserving well his Country's tears,  
A savage sort of military Martyr;  
An English Naval Officer, who wished  
To make him prisoner, was also dished, 640

**81.**<sup>129</sup>

For all the answer to his proposition  
Was from a pistol shot that laid him dead,  
On which the rest, without more intermission,  
Began to lay about with steel and lead,  
The pious metals most in requisition 645  
On such occasions – not a single head  
Was spared – three thousand Moslems perished here,  
And sixteen bayonets pierced the Seraskier.

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**128:** *this valiant Tartar:* the commander of the Turkish forces at Ismail was never likely to have been a Tartar. B.'s need for a rhyme overcomes his urge to appear verifiable.

**129 CASTELNAU II 214:** ... *un officier de marine anglais veut le faire prisonnier, et reçoit un coup de pistolet qui l'étend roide mort. Les Russes passent trois milles Turcs au fil de l'épée; seize baïonnettes percent à la fois le séraskier.*

82.<sup>130</sup>

The City's taken – only part by part –  
And Death is drunk with gore – there's not a street 650  
Where fights not to the last some desperate heart  
For those for whom it soon shall cease to beat;  
Here War forgot his own destructive Art  
In more destroying Nature, and the Heat  
Of Carnage, like the Nile's Sun-sodden Slime, 655  
Engendered monstrous shapes of every Crime.<sup>131</sup>

83.

A Russian Officer, in martial tread  
Over a heap of bodies, felt his heel  
Seized fast, as if 'twere by the Serpent's head  
Whose fangs Eve taught her human seed to feel; 660  
In vain he kicked, and swore, and writhed, and bled,  
And howled for help as Wolves do for a Meal –  
The teeth still kept their gratifying hold,  
As do the subtle Snake's denounced of Old.<sup>132</sup>

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**130 CASTELNAU II 214 (presumably quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richelieu):** <<La ville est emportée; l'image de la mort et de la désolation se représente de tour côtés; le soldat furieux n'écoute plus la voix de ses officiers, il ne respire que le carnage; altéré de sang, tout est indifférent pour lui.>> ... **216:** / On égorgea indistinctement, on saccagea la place; et la rage du vainqueur, agissant en proportion de la résistance qu'il avait éprouvée, se répandit comme un torrent furieux qui a renversé les digues qui le retenait: personne n'obtint de grâce, et trente huit mille huit cent soixante Turcs périrent dans cette journée de sang. / Ici, on voit des vieillards égorgés, des femmes mutilées et dépouillées, des enfants palpitant encore sur le sein refroidi de leur mère; là, des soldats revêtus des plus beaux vêtements de Turcs; plus loin, d'autres courbés sous le poids des sabres, des pistolets garnis en or ou en argent; ailleurs, des maisons dévastées, et les propriétaires étendus et nageant dans leur sang. L'ivresse du soldat n'était pas dans ce moment le sentiment de sa gloire, mais l'acharnement forcé à satisfaire sa vengeance et sa cupidité. / Détournons nos regards du spectacle affreux dont nous n'avons donné que l'idée; passons sous silence des actes de férocité pires que la mort; tirons le rideau sur des excès dégoûtants, et des crimes impossibles à empêcher quand la fureur du soldat ne peut être contenue.

**131:** the heat / Of Carnage, like the Nile's sun-Sodden Slime, / Engendered monstrous shapes of every Crime: with a glance at Wordsworth's analysis of the pedigree of Carnage, above, this canto, l.70 and B.'s note. CPW refers to *Cain*, II ii 97-8: *Reptiles engender'd out of the subsiding / Slime of a mighty universe*

...

**132:** *The teeth still kept their gratifying hold, / As do the subtle Snake's denounced of old:* echoes God's cursing of the Serpent at Genesis 3, 15: ... *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

84.

A dying Moslem, who had felt the foot 665  
Of a foe o'er him, snatched at it, and bit  
The very tendon, which is most acute  
(That which some ancient Muse, or modern Wit,  
Named after thee, Achilles!)<sup>133</sup> and quite through't  
He made the teeth meet, nor relinquished it 670  
Even with his life – for (but they lie)<sup>134</sup> 'tis said  
To the live leg still clung the severed head.

85.

However this may be, 'tis pretty sure  
The Russian officer for life was lamed,  
For the Turk's teeth stuck faster than a Skewer, 675  
And left him 'midst the Invalid and maimed;  
The regimental Surgeon could not cure  
His patient, and perhaps was to be blamed  
More than the head of the inveterate foe,  
Which was cut off, and scarce even then let go. 680

86.

But then the fact's a fact – – and 'tis the part  
Of a true poet to escape from fiction  
Whene'er he can, for there is little art  
In leaving verse more free from the restriction  
Of truth than prose, unless to suit the Mart 685  
For what is sometimes called poetic diction,  
And that outrageous appetite for lies  
(The twigs which Satan limes for human flies.)<sup>135</sup>

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**133:** (*That which some ancient Muse or modern Wit / Named after thee, Achilles*): Achilles' mother, Thetis, dipped her son into the river Styx to make him invulnerable to injury. However, she had to hold him by the heel, and it was in this part that Paris eventually gave him his mortal wound. Compare above, IV 31-2.

**134:** (*but they lie*): B. has no source in Castelnau for this anecdote.

**135:** ... *the Mart / For what is sometimes called poetic diction, / And that outrageous appetite for lies / Which most of all doth Man characterize*: apparently a blow against Wordsworth and Southey; but B., in his own poetic diction, and by his own standards of veracity, has himself just told a lie, in the interpolated Biblical/Homeric tale (see above, this canto, 668-9 and 663-4nn) of the dying Moslem biting the Russian officer.

**87.**

The City's taken! but not rendered! No!  
There's not a Moslem that hath yielded sword; 690  
The blood may gush out as the Danube's flow  
Rolls by the City wall, but deed nor word  
Acknowledge aught of dread or death of foe;  
In vain the Yell of Victory is roared  
By the advancing Muscovite – the Groan 695  
Of the last foe is echoed by his own. –

**88.**

The Bayonet pierces and the Sabre cleaves,  
And human lives are lavished every where,  
As the Year closing whirls the scarlet leaves  
When the stript Forest bows to the bleak air, 700  
And groans; and thus the peopled City grieves,  
Shorn of its best and loveliest, and left bare;  
But still it falls with vast and awful splinters,  
As Oaks blown down with all their thousand Winters.

**89.**

It is an awful topic – but 'tis not 705  
My Cue for any time to be terrific;  
For checquered as is seen our human lot  
With good, and bad, and worse, alike prolific  
Of melancholy merriment, to quote  
Too much of one sort would be soporific; 710  
Without, or with, offence to friends or foes,  
I sketch your World exactly as it goes.<sup>136</sup>

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**136:** *Without, or with, offence to friends or foes, / I sketch your World exactly as it goes:* fearless rhetoric, given the fabrication of which B. seems to have been guilty in sts.85-7 above.

90.<sup>137</sup>

And one good action in the midst of Crimes  
Is “quite refreshing,” in the affected phrase  
Of these ambrosial, Pharisaic times,<sup>138</sup> 715  
With all their pretty milk and water ways,<sup>139</sup>  
And may serve therefore to bedew these rhymes,  
A little scorched at present with the blaze  
Of Conquest and its consequences, which  
Make Epic Poesy so rare and rich. 720

91.

Upon a taken bastion, where there lay  
Thousands of slaughtered men, a yet warm groupe<sup>140</sup>  
Of murdered women, who had found their way  
To this vain refuge, made the good heart droop  
And shudder; while, as beautiful as May,<sup>141</sup> 725  
A female child of ten years tried to stoop,  
And hide her little palpitating breast  
Amidst the bodies lulled in bloody rest.

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**137 CASTELNAU II 216-17 (note):** (1) *Un tableau plus consolant s’unit à cette scène de carnage; nous le transcrivons des mêmes memoires [that is, those of de Richelieu]. / <<Je ne puis m’empêcher, pour servir d’adoucissement au souvenirs de tant de malheurs, que je sauvai la vie à une fille de dix ans, dont l’innocence et la candeur formait un contraste bien frappant avec la rage de tout ce qui m’environnait. / En arrivant sur le bastion où le combat cessa et où commença le carnage, j’aperçus un groupe de quatre femmes égorgées, entre lesquelles cet enfant, d’une figure charmante, cherchait un asile contre la fureur de deux Kozaks ...*

**138:** “quite refreshing,” in the affected phrase / Of these ambrosial, Pharisaic times: editors refer to *The Blues*, I 24-6: Tracy: ... your friend - you know who - has just got such a threshing / That it is, as the phrase goes, extremely “refreshing”. / What a beautiful word!

**139:** *With all their pretty milk and water ways:* compare *Beppo*, 633: *Oh, Mirth and Innocence! Oh, Milk and Water!*

**140:** *groupe:* B. uses the French spelling he finds in Castelnau; but it is often, in fact, the one he favours. See, for instance, IV 925.

**141:** ... *as beautiful as May:* indicates – with how well-grounded an optimism we can’t say, as the poem is unfinished – that Leila (the Turkish girl) will represent for Juan a new life and a redemption.



92.<sup>142</sup>

Two villainous Cossacques pursued the Child  
 With flashing eyes and weapons; matched with *them*, 730  
 The rudest Brute that roams Siberia's wild  
 Has feelings pure and polished as a Gem –  
 The Bear is civilized – the Wolf is mild;  
 And *whom* at last for this must we condemn?  
 Their Natures? or their Sovereigns, who employ 735  
 All arts to teach their subjects to destroy?<sup>143</sup>

93.<sup>144</sup>

Their Sabres glittered o'er her little head,  
 Whence her fair hair rose twining with affright;  
 Her hidden face was plunged among the dead;  
 When Juan caught a glimpse of this sad sight, 740  
 I shall not say exactly what he *said*,  
 Because it might not solace "ears polite",<sup>145</sup>  
 But what he *did*, was to lay upon their backs,  
 The readiest way of reasoning with Cossacques.

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142 CASTELNAU II 217 note (quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richlieu): ... de deux Kozaks qui étaient sur le point de la massacrer.

143: And *whom* at last for this must we condemn? / Their Natures? or their Sovereigns, who employ / All arts to teach their subjects to destroy?: B.'s thought here echoes Giambattista Casti's satire on the ambitions of Catherine the Great in *Il Poema Tartaro*:

*Gloria le idee, gloria i pensier le estolle  
 Nello spirto il vigor gloria le infonde,  
 Amor, gentil costume, ed un cor molle  
 E maniere le diè dolci e gioconde.  
 Per queste due passion l'armi Mogolle  
 Muove, e i tesori a piene man diffonde  
 Tutto ella pon per appagarle in opra  
 E vada il regno, e il mondo inter sossopra. (XII, 30)*

(The idea and thought of glory inspire her spiritually, and the energy that goes with glory informs her; the gentle habits of love and of a soft heart, and a sweet and happy manner: the Mongol army [that is, the Russian] is moved by these twin passions, and distributes its treasures from a generous hand; to satisfy her, the country must be emptied, and the whole world turned upside-down.)

144 CASTELNAU II 217 note (quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richlieu): *Ce spectacle m'attira bientôt, et je n'hésitai pas, comme on peut le croire, à prendre entre mes bras cette infortunée, que les barbares voulurent y poursuivre encore. J'eus bien de la peine à me retenir et à ne pas percer ces misérables du sabre que je tenais suspendu sur leur tête; je me contentai cependant de les éloigner, non sans leur prodiguer les coups et les injures qu'ils méritaient ...*

145: I shall not say exactly what he *said*, / Because it might not solace "ears polite": echoes Pope, *Epistle to Burlington*, 149-50:

*To rest, the Cushion and soft Dean invite,  
 Who never mentions Hell to ears polite.*

94.<sup>146</sup>

One's hip he slashed, and split the other's shoulder,<sup>147</sup> 745  
 And drove them with their brutal yells to seek  
 If there might be Chirurgeons who could solder  
 The wounds they richly merited, and shriek  
 Their baffled rage and pain; while waxing colder,  
 As he turned o'er each pale and gory cheek, 750  
 Don Juan raised his little captive from  
 The heap, a moment more had made her tomb.<sup>148</sup>

95.

And she was chill as they, and on her face  
 A slender streak of blood announced how near<sup>149</sup>  
 Her fate had been to that of all her race; 755  
 For that same blow which laid her Mother here,  
 Had scarred her brow, and left its crimson trace,  
 As the last link with all she had held dear;  
 But else unhurt, she opened her large eyes,  
 And gazed on Juan with a wild surprize.<sup>150</sup> 760

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**146 CASTELNAU II 217 (note quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richelieu):** << ... je me contentai cependant de les éloigner, non sans leur prodiguer les coups et les injures qu'ils méritaient, et j'eus le plaisir d'apercevoir que ma petite prisonnière n'avait d'autre mal qu'une coupure légère que lui avait faite au visage le même fer qui avait percé sa mère.>>

**147:** *One's hip he slashed, and split the other's shoulder:* notice that B. invents the exact injuries inflicted on the Cossacks.

**148:** Mary Shelley remembered the episode of the Turkish girl whom Juan saves – she was presumably the first person, after B., ever to read it – for she imitates and inverts it in *The Last Man* (1826) Vol. 1 Chapter 11: *Two soldiers contended for a girl, whose rich dress and extreme beauty excited the brutal appetites of these wretches, who, perhaps good men among their families, were changed by the fury of the moment into incarnated devils. An old man, with a silver beard, decrepid and bald, he might be her grandfather, interposed to save her; the battle axe of one of them clove his skull. I rushed to her defence, but rage made them blind and deaf; they did not distinguish my Christian garb or heed my words – words were blunt weapons then, for while war cried 'havoc,' and murder gave fit echo, how could I –*

Turn back the tide of ills, relieving wrong  
 With mild accost of soothing eloquence?

*One of the fellows, enraged at my interference, struck me with his bayonet in the side, and I fell senseless.*

**149:** Mary Shelley refused to copy this line.

**150:** ... she opened her large eyes, / And gazed on Juan with a wild surprize: the parallel here (noted by CPW) to Keats' *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* (... and all his men / Look'd at each other with a wild surmise – / Silent, upon a peak in Darien) is presumably fortuitous. Though B. would have found Keats blameworthy in confusing Cortez with Balboa, it is hard to see how this remote echo constitutes a criticism. See also below, XVI, 13, 7-8: *Aurora Raby, with her large dark eyes, / Surveyed him with a kind of calm surprize.*

96.

Just at this instant, while their eyes were fixed  
Upon each other, with dilated glance,  
In Juan's look, pain, pleasure, hope, fear, mixed  
With joy to save, and dread of some mischance  
Unto his protégée; while hers, transfixed 765  
With infant terrors, glared as from a trance,  
A pure, transparent, pale, yet radiant face,  
Like to a lighted Alabaster vase,<sup>151</sup>

97.

Up came John Johnson (I will not say "Jack,"  
For that were vulgar, cold, and common place 770  
On great occasions, such as an attack  
On Cities, as hath been the present case);  
Up Johnson came, with hundreds at his back,  
Exclaiming, "Juan! Juan! On, boy! brace  
"Your arm, and I'll bet Moscow to a dollar 775  
"That You and I will win S<sup>t</sup>. George's collar."<sup>152</sup>

\* The Russian military order.

98.

"The Seraskier is knocked upon the head,<sup>153</sup>  
"But the *Stone* bastion still remains, wherein  
"The Old Pacha sits among some hundreds dead,  
"Smoking his pipe quite calmly 'midst the din 780  
"Of our Artillery and his own<sup>154</sup> – 'tis said  
"Our killed already piled up to the chin  
"Lie round the battery – but still it batters,  
"And Grape in Volleys, like a Vineyard, scatters.

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**151:** *A pure, transparent, pale, yet radiant face, / Like to a lighted Alabaster vase:* not unlike B.'s own. Scott (*Quarterly Review*, 1816, p.177) quotes another writer to the effect that B.'s features resembled *an Alabaster Vase lighted up within*. B. refers to this in his 1821 *Detached Thoughts*: see BLJ IX 11.

**152:** *St. George's collar:* DJP tells us that the Order of St. George the Martyr (created by Catherine the Great for extreme bravery against the enemies of Russia) did not have a collar. Johnson may, contrary to the Stoic principles he expounds on the slave market in Canto V, be getting carried away with vainglory: although see Castelnau, quoted st.124, n, for someone who *was* awarded *un ruban de Saint-Georges*.

**153:** "*The Seraskier is knocked upon the head ...*": in fact he's been bayoneted. See above, this canto, l.648.

**154:** "*The Old Pacha sits among some hundreds dead, / "Smoking his pipe quite calmly 'midst the din / "Of our Artillery and his own:* see below, this canto, sts.120-2.

99.

“Then up with me!” – But Juan answered, “Look 785  
“Upon this Child – I saved her – must not leave  
“Her life to Chance – but point me out some nook  
“Of Safety, where she less may shrink and grieve,  
“And I am with you.” – Whereupon Johnson took  
A Glance around, and shrugged, and twitched his sleeve 790  
And black-silk neckcloth, and replied, “You’re right;  
“Poor thing! What’s to be done? I’m puzzled quite.”

100.

Said Juan, “Whatsoever is to be  
“Done, I’ll not quit her till she seems secure  
“Of present life a good deal more than we.” 795  
Quoth Johnson, “*Neither* will I quite ensure;  
“But at the least *you* may die gloriously.”  
Juan replied, “At least I will endure  
“Whate’er is to be borne, but not resign  
“This child, who’s parentless, and therefore mine.”<sup>155</sup> 800

101.<sup>156</sup>

Johnson said, “Juan, we’ve no time to lose;  
“The Child’s a pretty Child – a very pretty –  
“I never saw such eyes – but, hark! now choose  
“Betwixt your fame and feelings, pride or pity –  
“Hark! how the roar increases! no excuse 805  
“Will serve, when there is plunder in a City;  
“I should be loth to march without you, but  
“By God! We’ll be too late for the first Cut.”

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**155:** “*This child, who’s parentless, and therefore mine*”: perhaps the first sign of a theme which was to have become important in the seventeenth and later cantos. See canto XVII, l.1.

**156:** The duc de Richelieu reveals that, in “real life”, the story of the Turkish infant saved from the barbarous Cossacks ends unhappily: *Je fus obligé de céder à leurs instances et à celles de l’officier qui parlementait avec eux; ... ce ne fut pas sans de grandes difficultés et sans une promesse expresse de la part de cet officier [Colonel Ribas] de me la faire rendre aussitôt que les Turcs auraient mis bas les armes. Je me séparai donc de cet enfant qui m’était déjà devenue très-cher, et même à présent, je ne puis penser à ce moment sans amertume, puisque malgré toutes les recherches et les peines que je me donnai pour la retrouver, il me fut impossible d’y réussir, et je n’ai que trop sujet de craindre qu’elle n’ait péri malheureusement.* - *Société Impériale d’Histoire de Russie*, tom. liv. p.185 [sic], quoted E.H.Coleridge, VI 359n.

**102.**

But Juan was immoveable, until  
Johnson, who really loved him in his way, 810  
Picked out amongst his followers, with some skill,  
Such as he thought the least given up to prey;  
And swearing, if the infant came to ill,  
That they should all be shot on the next day,  
But if she were delivered safe and sound,<sup>157</sup> 815  
They should at least have fifty roubles round,

**103.**

And all allowances besides of plunder  
In fair proportion with their comrades; then  
Juan consented to march on through thunder,  
Which thinned at every step their ranks of men – 820  
And yet the rest rushed eagerly – no wonder,  
For they were heated by the hope of gain,  
A thing which happens every where each day –  
No Hero trusteth wholly to half-pay.<sup>158</sup> –

**104.**<sup>159</sup>

And such is Victory, and such is Man! 825  
At least nine-tenths of what we call so; God  
May have another name for half we scan  
As human beings, or his ways are odd –  
But to our Subject: a brave Tartar Khan,  
Or “*Sultan*”, as the Author (to whose nod 830  
In prose I bend my humble verse)<sup>160</sup> doth call  
The Chieftain – somehow would not yield at all,

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**157:** *But if she were delivered safe and sound:* de Richelieu’s memoirs – in parts not quoted by Castelnau and thus not known to B. – reveal that, upon returning, he could find no sign of the girl whom he had rescued, and that he had to presume her dead.

**158:** *No Hero trusteth wholly to half-pay:* half-pay was the standard rate of an officer’s pension. B.’s friends Medwin and Trelawny were both on half-pay.

**159:** The tale, which now ensues, of the Tartar Khan and his five sons, is derived not merely from Castelnau (printed opposite) but from the story of the Christian Latinus and his sons at sts.27-39 of Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata* (Canto IX) of which I print the translation of Edward Fairfax – part of B.’s library (see CMP 253). The passage is paraphrased by Pierre Louis Ginguenè at Tome V pp.448-50 of his *Histoire Littéraire d’Italie*, one of B.’s reference books (see BLJ VII 54 and VIII 14).

**160:** ... *the Author (to whose nod / In prose I bend my humble verse):* Castelnau. A mock obeisance.

**105.**<sup>161</sup>

But flanked by *five* brave Sons<sup>162</sup> (such is Polygamy,  
 That she spawns warriors by the score, where none  
 Are prosecuted for that false crime bigamy) 835  
 He never would believe the city won  
 While Courage clung but to a single twig; am I  
 Describing Priam's, Peleus', or Jove's Son?<sup>163</sup>  
 Neither – but a good, plain, old, temperate Man,<sup>164</sup>  
 Who fought with his five Children in the Van. 840

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**161 TASSO:**

27

*Among the rest (that stroue to merit praise)  
 Was old Latinus, borne by Tibers banke,  
 To whose stout hart (in fights and bloodie fraies)  
 For all his eeld, base feare yet neuer sanke;  
 Fiue sonnes he had, the comforts of his daies,  
 That from his side in no aduenture shranke,  
 But long before their time, in iron strong  
 They clad their members, tender, soft and yong.*

**162 CASTELNAU II 215:** *Le sultan périt dans l'action en brave homme, digne d'un meilleur destin; ce fut lui qui rallia les Turcs lorsque l'ennemi pénétra dans la place; ce fut lui qui marcha contre les Russes trop avides du pillage, et qui, dans vingt occasions différentes, combattit en héros: ce sultan, d'une valeur éprouvée, surpassait en générosité les plus civilisés de sa nation; cinq de ses fils combattaient à ses côtés, il les encourageait par son exemple; tous cinq furent tués sous ses yeux; il ne cessait point de se battre, répondit par des coups de sabre aux propositions de se rendre, et ne fut atteint du coup mortel qu'après avoir abattu de sa main beaucoup de Kozaks des plus acharnés à sa prise; le reste de sa troupe fut massacré.*

**163:** *Priam's, Peleus', or Jove's Son:* Hector, Achilles, and Hercules.

**164:** *a good, plain, old, temperate Man:* a Byronic ideal. See the Daniel Boone Stanzas (this canto, stanzas 61-7 above).

106.<sup>165</sup>

To *take* him was the point. The truly brave,  
When they behold the brave opprest with odds,  
Are touched with a desire to shield and save;  
A mixture of Wild beasts and demi-gods  
Are they – now furious as the sweeping wave,  
Now moved with pity – even as sometimes nods  
The rugged tree unto the summer wind,  
Compassion breathes along the savage Mind. –

845

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165 TASSO:

28

*The bold ensample of their fathers might  
Their weapons whetted, and their wrath increast,  
'Come let vs goe (quoth he) where yonder knight  
Vpon our soldiers makes his bloodie feast,  
Let not their slaughter once your harts affright,  
Where danger most appeares, there feare it least;  
For honour dwels in hard attemptes (my sonnes)  
And greatest praise, in greatest perill, wonnes.'*

107.<sup>166</sup>

But he would *not* be *taken*, and replied  
To all the propositions to surrender 850  
By mowing Christians down on every side,  
As obstinate as Swedish Charles at Bender;<sup>167</sup>  
His five brave boys no less the foe defied,  
Whereon the Russian Pathos grew less tender,  
As being a Virtue, like terrestrial Patience, 855  
Apt to wear out on trifling provocations.

108.<sup>168</sup>

And spite of Johnson and of Juan, who  
Expended all their Eastern phraseology  
In begging him – for Godsake, just to show  
So much less fight as might form an apology 860  
For *them* in saving such a desperate foe,  
He hewed away, like doctors of Theology  
When they dispute with Sceptics; and with curses  
Struck at his friends, as Babies beat their Nurses.

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166 TASSO:

29

*Her tender brood the forrests sauage queene  
(Ere on their crestes their rugged maines appeare,  
Before their mouthes by nature armed beene,  
Or pawes haue strength a seelie lambe to teare)  
So leadeth forth to pray, and makes them keene,  
And learns by her ensample, nought to feare  
The hunter, in those desart woods that takes  
The lesser beastes, whereon his feast he makes.*

**167:** *As obstinate as Swedish Charles at Bender:* Bender is modern Bendery in the Ukraine, fifty miles inland from Odessa. After the battle of Poltava (July 8, 1709) in which he was defeated by Peter the Great, Charles XII of Sweden crossed the Dnieper and camped outside Bender, then in Turkish territory; he borrowed money, with no guarantee that he could repay it, and, given (on request) further huge sums by the Porte, to enable him to leave, refused to do so. Surrounded finally, with only three hundred men, he fought with extraordinary courage and resource (February 12, 1713) but was captured. The Tartar Khan displays a similar pig-headed and defiant indifference to the possibility of death. B. would have read these details in Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII*, Book VI (CMP 4). The phrase *Swedish Charles* is from Johnson's *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, 1.192.

168 TASSO:

30

*The noble father and his hardie crew  
Fierce Soliman on euery side inuade,  
At once all sixe vpon the Soldan flew,  
With lances sharpe, and strong encounters made,  
His broken speare the eldest boy downe threw,  
And boldly (ouer boldly) drew his blade,  
Wherewith he stroue (but stroue therewith in vaine)  
The Pagans stead (vnmarked) to haue slaine.*



**109.**<sup>169</sup>

Nay, he had wounded, though but slightly, both 865  
 Juan and Johnson; whereupon they fell,  
 The first with sighs, the second with an oath,  
 Upon his angry Sultanship, pell-mell,<sup>170</sup>  
 And all around were grown exceeding wroth  
 At such a pertinacious Infidel, 870  
 And poured upon him and his Sons like Rain,  
 Which they resisted like a sandy Plain,

**110.**<sup>171</sup>

That drinks and still is dry; at last they perished –  
 His second son was levelled by a shot;  
 His third was sabred, and the fourth, most cherished 875  
 Of all the five, on bayonets met his lot;  
 The fifth, who, by a Christian mother nourished,  
 Had been neglected, ill-used, and what not,  
 Because deformed,<sup>172</sup> yet died all game and bottom,<sup>173</sup>  
 To save a Sire, who blushed that he begot him. 880

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**169: TASSO:**

31

*But as a mountaine or a cape of land  
 Assail'd with stormes and seas on euery side,  
 Doth vnremoued, stedfast, still withstand  
 Storme, thunder, lightning, tempest, winde and tide:  
 The Soldan so withstood Latinus band,  
 And vnremou'd did all their iustes abide,  
 And of that hapless youth (who hurt his stead)  
 Downe to the chin he cleft in twaine the head.*

**170:** *pell-mell*: hand-to-hand; in a *melée*. For the word's "hellish" implications, see this canto, 207-8.

**171: TASSO:**

32

*Kinde Aramante (who saw his brother slaine)  
 To hold him vp stretcht forth his friendly arme,  
 O foolish kindnes, and O pitie vaine,  
 To adde our proper losse, to others harme!  
 The Prince let fall his sword and cut in twaine  
 (About his brother twined) the childe's weake arme,  
 Downe from their saddles both together slide,  
 Together mourn'd they, and together dide.*

**172:** *neglected, ill-used, and what not, / Because deformed*: recalls Arnold in *The Deformed Transformed*, which B. had written earlier in 1822.

**173:** *all game and bottom*: enthusiastic for the fray and energetic to the end (from prize-fighting).

111.<sup>174</sup>

The eldest was a true and tameless Tartar,  
As great a scorner of the Nazarene<sup>175</sup>  
As ever Mahomet<sup>176</sup> picked out for a Martyr,  
Who only saw the black eyed girls in green,  
That make the beds of those who won't take quarter 885  
On Earth, in Paradise; and when once seen,  
Those Houris, like all other pretty creatures,<sup>177</sup>  
Do just whate'er they please, by dint of features.

112.<sup>178</sup>

And what they pleased to do with the young Khan  
In Heaven, I know not, nor pretend to guess; 890  
But doubtless they prefer a fine young Man  
To tough old Heroes, and can do no less;  
And that's the cause, no doubt why – if we scan  
A Field of Battle's ghastly Wilderness –  
For one rough, weather-beaten Veteran body, 895  
You'll find ten thousand handsome Coxcombs bloody.

---

174 TASSO:

33

*That done, Sabinos lance with nimble force  
He cut in twaine, and gainst the stripling bold  
He spurr'd his steed, that vnderneath his horse  
The hardie infant tumbled on the mold,  
Whose soule (out squeased from his brused corse)  
With ougly painfulnes forsooke her hold,  
And deeply mourn'd, that of so sweet a cage  
She left the blisse, and ioyes of youthfull age.*

175: the Nazarene: Jesus.

176: Mahomet: a bisyllable.

177: the black eyed girls in green ... Houris: the maidens who await in Paradise those men who have died in the cause of Islam: *They shall sit with bashful, dark-eyed virgins, as chaste as the sheltered eggs of ostriches* (Qu'ran, Chapter 37); *To dark-eyed houris We shall wed them* (Chapter 52); ... *theirs shall be the dark-eyed houris, chaste as hidden pearls: a guerdon for their deeds* (Chapter 56).

178 TASSO:

34

*But Picus yet and Lawrence were on liue,  
Whom at one birth their mother fair brought out,  
A paire whose likenes made the parents striue  
Oft which was which, and ioyed in their dout:  
But what their birth did vndistinguisht giue,  
The Soldans rage made known, for Picus stout  
Headlesse at one huge blow he laid in dust,  
And through the brest his gentle brother thrust.*

113.<sup>179</sup>

Your Houris also have a natural pleasure  
In lopping off your lately married men,  
Before the Bridal Hours have danced their measure,  
And the sad, second Moon grow dim again, 900  
Or dull Repentance hath had dreary leisure  
To wish him back a bachelor now and then;  
And thus your Houri (it may be) disputes  
Of these brief blossoms the immediate fruits.<sup>180</sup>

114.<sup>181</sup>

Thus the young Khan, with Houris in his sight, 905  
Thought not upon the charms of four young brides,  
But bravely rushed on his first heavenly night;  
In short, howe'er *our* better Faith derides,  
These black-eyed Virgins make the Moslems fight,<sup>182</sup>  
As though there were one Heaven and none besides – 910  
Whereas, if all be true we hear of Heaven  
And Hell, there must at least be six or seven.

---

179 TASSO:

35

*Their father, (but no father now, alas!  
When all his noble sonnes at once were slaine)  
In their fiue deaths so often mured was,  
I know not how his life could him sustaine,  
Except his hart were forg'd of steele or bras,  
Yet still he liu'd, pardie, he saw not plaine  
Their dying lookes, although their deaths he knoes,  
It is some ease, not to behold our woes.*

**180:** *And thus your houri (it may be) disputes / Of these brief blossoms the immediate fruits:* DJV and DJP equate *these brief blossoms* with *the Bridal Hours*; CPW opts for the unjaded grooms themselves, which seems the more sensible, because more Byronic, reading; though there is no reason why the phrase should not bear both.

181 TASSO:

36

*He wept not, for the night her curtaine spread  
Betweene his cause of weeping and his eies,  
But still he mourn'd and on sharpe veng'ance fed,  
And thinks he conquers, if reueng'd he dies;  
He thirstes the Soldans heath'nish blood to shed,  
And yet his owne at lesse then nought doth prise,  
Nor can he tell whether he leifer would,  
Or die himself, or kill the Pagan bould.*

**182:** B. permits Mary's bold alteration of 909, from *These black-eyed Visions make your Moslems fight* to *These black-eyed Virgins make the Moslems fight*.

**115.**<sup>183</sup>

So fully flashed the Phantom on his eyes,  
That when the very lance was in his heart<sup>184</sup>  
He shouted “Allah!” and saw Paradise 915  
With all its Veil of Mystery drawn apart –  
And bright Eternity without disguise  
On his Soul, like a ceaseless Sunrise,<sup>185</sup> dart –  
With Prophets – Houris – Angels – Saints – descried  
In one voluptuous Blaze<sup>186</sup> – and then he died, 920

**116.**<sup>187</sup>

And with a heavenly rapture on his face;  
The good old Khan, who long had ceased to see  
Houris, or aught except his florid race,  
Who grew like Cedars round him gloriously,<sup>188</sup>  
When he beheld his latest hero grace 925  
The Earth, which he became like a felled tree,<sup>189</sup>  
Paused for a moment from the fight, and cast  
A Glance on that slain Son, his first and last.<sup>190</sup>

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**183 TASSO:**

37

*‘At last, is this right hand (quoth he) so weake,  
That thou disdainst gainst me to vse thy might?  
Can it nought doe? can this toong nothing speake  
That might prouoke thine ire, thy wrath, and spight?’  
With that he stroke (his anger great to wreake)  
A blowe, that pearst the maile and mettall bright,  
And in his flanke set ope a flood-gate wide,  
Whereat the blood out streamed from his side.*

**184:** ... *when the very lance was in his heart*: recalls the lance-thrust into Christ’s side (John 19, 34).

**185:** ... *like a ceaseless Sunrise*: recalls Tithonus’s relationship with Aurora, before he started to age.

**186:** ... *voluptuous Blaze*: implies orgasm.

**187 TASSO:**

38

*Prouoked with his crie, and with that blowe  
The Turke vpon him gan his blade discharge,  
He cleft his brest-plate, hauing first pearst throwe  
(Lined with seu’n bulles hides) his mightie targe,  
And sheath’d his weapon in his guts belowe,  
Wretched Latinus at that issue large,  
And at his mouth, powr’d out his vitall blood,  
And sprinkled with the same his murdred brood.*

**188:** ... *his florid race, / Who grew like Cedars round him gloriously*: compare the description of Daniel Boone’s “children”, above, this canto, 513-14.

**189:** *like a felled tree*: compare Tasso’s simile, st.39.

**190:** ... *that slain Son, his first and last*: compare above, II 1384.

**117.**<sup>191</sup>

The Soldiers, who beheld him drop his point,  
Stopt, as if willing once more to concede 930  
Quarter, in case he bade them not “Aroint!”<sup>192</sup>  
As he before had done. He did not heed  
Their pause nor signs; his heart was out of joint<sup>193</sup> –  
And shook (till now unshaken) like a reed,  
As he looked down upon his children gone, 935  
And felt – though done with life – he was alone.

**118.**

But ’twas a transient tremor – with a spring  
Upon the Russian Steel his breast he flung,  
As carelessly as curls the Moth her wing  
Against the light wherein she dies; he clung 940  
Closer, that all the deadlier they might wring,  
Unto the bayonets which had pierced his young,  
And throwing back a dim look on his Sons,  
In one wide wound poured forth his Soul at once.<sup>194</sup>

**119.**

’Tis strange enough – the rough, tough Soldiers, who 945  
Spared neither sex or age in their career  
Of Carnage, when this Old Man was pierced through,  
And lay before them with his Children near,  
Touched by the Heroism of him they slew,  
Were melted for a moment, though no tear 950  
Flowed from their blood-shot eyes – all red with strife,  
They honoured such determined Scorn of Life.

---

**191 TASSO:**

39

*On Appenine like as a sturdie tree,  
Against the windes that makes resistance stout,  
If with a storme it ouerturned bee,  
Falles downe and breakes the trees and plants about;  
So Latin fell, and with him felled hee  
And slew the nearest of the Pagans rout,  
A worthie end, fit for a man of fame,  
That dying, slew; and conqu’red, ouercame.*

**192:** “aroint!”: “go away!”. See *Macbeth*, I iii 6.

**193:** *his heart was out of joint*: compare *Hamlet*, I v 189; also below, IX 322.

**194:** *In one wide wound poured forth his soul at once*: CPW compares Keats, *Ode to a Nightingale*, 57-8:  
*While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad / In such an ecstasy*. Compare above, this Canto, 760n.

120.<sup>195</sup>

But the Stone bastion still kept up its fire,  
Where the chief Pacha calmly held his post;  
Some twenty times he made the Russ retire, 955  
And baffled the assaults of all their host;  
At length he condescended to enquire  
If yet the City's rest were won or lost –  
And being told the latter, sent a Bey  
To answer Ribas' Summons to give way. 960

121.

In the mean time, cross-legged, with great Sang-froid,  
Among the scorching ruins he sat smoking  
Tobacco on a little carpet; Troy  
Saw nothing like the Scene around; yet looking  
With martial Stoicism, nought seemed to annoy 965  
His stern philosophy, but gently stroking  
His beard, he puffed his Pipe's ambrosial Gales,  
As if he had three lives, as well as tails.<sup>196</sup> –

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**195 CASTELNAU II 215:** (The paragraph of Castelnau from which B. now borrows comes immediately before that from which he has just borrowed, in his passage about the Tartar Khan and his sons.) *Quoique les Russes fussent répandus dans la ville, le bastion de pierre résistait encore; il était défendu par un vieillard, pacha à trois queues et commandant les forces réunies à Ismaïl. On lui proposa une capitulation; il demanda si le reste de la ville était conquis; sur cette réponse, il autorisa quelques-uns de ses officiers à capituler avec M. de Ribas, et pendant ce colloque, il resta étendu sur des tapis placés les ruines de la forteresse, fumant sa pipe avec la même tranquillité et la même indifférence que s'il eût été étranger à tout ce qui se passait.*

**196:** *As if he had three lives, as well as tails:* a Pacha's seniority was signalled by the number of horse's tails he had attached to his standard. This one (a *pacha à trois queues*: see Castelnau, above) was one of the most senior. B. has a note on the custom at *The Bride of Abydos*, 232: *Horsetail, the standard of a Pacha.*

122.<sup>197</sup>

The town was taken – whether he might yield  
Himself or bastion, little mattered now – 970  
His stubborn Valour was no future Shield –  
Ismail's no more! The Crescent's silver bow  
Sunk, and the crimson Cross glared o'er the field,  
But red with no *redeeming* gore; the Glow  
Of burning Streets, like Moonlight on the water, 975  
Was imaged back in blood – the Sea of Slaughter.

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**197 CASTELNAU II 214 (presumably quoting the memoirs of the duc de Richelieu):** <<La ville est emportée; l'image de la mort et de la désolation se représente de tout côtés; le soldat furieux n'écoute plus la voix de ses officiers, il ne respire que le carnage; altéré de sang, tout est indifférent pour lui.>> ... **216:** / On égorgéa indistinctement, on saccagea la place; et la rage du vainqueur, agissant en proportion de la résistance qu'il avait éprouvée, se répandit comme un torrent furieux qui a renversé les digues qui le retenait: personne n'obtint de grâce, et trente huit mille huit cent soixante Turcs périrent dans cette journée de sang. / Ici, on voit des vieillards égorgés, des femmes mutilées et dépouillées, des enfants palpitant encore sur le sein refroidi de leur mère; là, des soldats revêtus des plus beaux vêtements de Turcs; plus loin, d'autres courbés sous le poids des sabres, des pistolets garnis en or ou en argent; ailleurs, des maisons dévastées, et les propriétaires étendus et nageant dans leur sang. L'ivresse du soldat n'était pas dans ce moment le sentiment de sa gloire, mais l'acharnement forcé à satisfaire sa vengeance et sa cupidité. / Détournons nos regards du spectacle affreux dont nous n'avons donné que l'idée; passons sous silence des actes de férocité pires que la mort; tirons le rideau sur des excès dégoûtants, et des crimes impossibles à empêcher quand la fureur du soldat ne peut être contenue.

123.

All that the Mind would shrink from of excesses –  
All that the body perpetrates of bad –  
All that we hear, read, dream, of Man's distresses –  
All that the Devil would do if run stark mad<sup>198</sup> – 980  
All that defies the worst which pen expresses –  
All by which Hell is peopled – or more sad  
Than Hell, mere Mortals who their power abuse –  
Was here (as heretofore and since) let loose.<sup>199</sup>

124.<sup>200</sup>

If here and there some transient trait of pity 985  
Was shown, and some more noble heart broke through  
Its bloody bond, and saved perhaps some pretty  
Child, or an aged, helpless man or two –  
What's this in one annihilated City,  
Where thousand loves, and ties, and duties grow? 990  
Cockneys of London! Muscadins of Paris!<sup>201</sup>  
Just ponder what a pious pastime war is.<sup>202</sup>

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**198:** *All that the Devil would do if run stark mad:* with a glance at the idea of the Second Fall, whereby Man, unassisted by Sathan, invents evils for which Sathan is not responsible. See *CHP* IV 97, 8-9, or *TVOJ* 324-8:

... they are grown so bad  
"That Hell has nothing better left to do  
"Than leave them to themselves, so much more mad  
"And evil by their own internal curse -  
"Heaven cannot make them better – nor I worse.

**199:** *All by which Hell is peopled – or more sad / Than hell, mere mortals who their power abuse – / Was here (as heretofore and since) let loose:* What B. in fact has in mind, at what Castelnau is too polite to name, is here described by Casti at *Il Poema Tartaro*, VI 111 (he is describing the aftermath of the Pugachev revolt):

*Or chi può dir quali empi frazi, ed adri  
Commiser quelle militar masnade?  
Scannaro i putti in braccio alle lor madri;  
Per bronchi, e selci e asprissime contrade  
Strascinar donne avvinte e vecchi padri,  
E il lasciar sventrati in sulle strade,  
O, nelle membra in pria mutili, e tronchi  
Gli appeser nudi, e capovolti ai tronchi.*

[Who now can tell the wicked deeds committed by those gangs of soldiers? They slaughtered the babes in their mothers' arms, dragged women and old men from the rebellious districts and disembowelled them in the streets; or, having first cut their limbs off, hung their trunks upside-down naked.]

**200:** CPW takes this stanza as evidence that the admiration B. expresses elsewhere for the duc de Richelieu (see Preface to Cantos VI VIII and VIII) is ironical. However, the Stanza takes the act of Richelieu (in reality his unsuccessful act) in saving the child, and comments on its isolation amidst an ocean of selfishness and cruelty: which is neither to debase Richelieu, nor his subsequent activities as Governor of Odessa – the subject of B.'s comment in the Preface.

**201:** *Muscadins of Paris!:* a muscadin was an upper-middle-class French dandy during the Revolution; B. uses it as a contrast to the lower-class *Cockneys*.

**202:** *Just ponder what a pious pastime war is:* see Castelnau, quoted on next page.



125.<sup>203</sup>

Think how the Joys of reading a Gazette<sup>204</sup>  
Are purchased with all agonies and crimes:  
Or if these do not move you, don't forget 995  
Such doom may be your own in after times.  
Meantime the taxes, Castlereagh, and Debt,  
Are hints as good as Sermons, or as rhymes;  
Read your own hearts and Ireland's present Story,  
Then feed her famine fat with Wellesley's Glory!<sup>205</sup> 1000

126.

Yet still there is unto a patriot Nation,  
Which loves so well its Country and its king,  
A Subject of sublimest exultation –  
Bear it, ye Muses, on your brightest wing!  
Howe'er the mighty Locust, Desolation, 1005  
Strip your green fields, and to your harvests cling,  
Gaunt Famine never shall approach the throne –  
Though Ireland starve, great George weighs twenty stone.<sup>206</sup>

127.

But let me put an end unto my theme –  
There was an end of Ismail – hapless town! 1010  
Far flashed her burning towers o'er Danube's stream,  
And redly ran his blushing waters down;  
The horrid War-whoop and the shriller Scream  
Rose still; but fainter were the thunders grown;  
Of forty thousand who had manned her wall, 1015  
Some hundreds breathed<sup>207</sup> – the rest were silent all!<sup>208</sup>

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**203 CASTELNAU II 218 (quoting an unnamed source):** <<Le régiment de Polozk ne dut ses succès qu'à l'heroïsme de son aumonier. Ce prêtre, voyant les soldats repoussés, passa à leur tête, le crucifix à la main, et leur promit la victoire de la part de Dieu: il se précipita au milieu des sabres des Turcs; les soldats le suivirent et entrèrent dans la ville. Le Prince Potiemkin envoya à ce brave homme une croix de diamans, et lui permit de la suspendre à un ruban de Saint-Georges.

**204:** ... the Joys of reading a Gazette: compare above, I 3, VII 636, and numerous other references.

**205:** Then feed her famine fat with Wellesley's Glory!: Wellesley is both the Duke of Wellington, and his brother, the Marquis of Wellesley. Compare below, this canto, 1007-8, and IX sts.1-10. There was a serious famine in Ireland in 1822, anticipating the disaster of 1848; both brothers were Irish landowners.

**206:** Though Ireland starve, great George weighs twenty stone: George IV was at times so obese that he could not appear in public for embarrassment; see TVOJ, 97-8: "God save the King!" It is a large economy / In God to save the like ... However, obesity was a besetting concern of B.'s, too.

**207:** the rest were silent all!: the Annual Register for 1791 quotes "an Ottoman commander of rank" as reporting 38,816 Turks to have died at Ismail: a figure which Castlenau supports.

**208 CASTELNAU II 216:** ... personne n'obtint de grâce, et trente huit mille huit cent soixante Turcs périrent dans cette journée de sang.

128.<sup>209</sup>

In one thing, ne'ertheless, 'tis fit to praise  
The Russian army upon this occasion,  
A Virtue much in fashion nowadays,  
And therefore worthy of commemoration – 1020  
The topic's tender, so shall be my phrase –  
Perhaps the Season's chill,<sup>210</sup> and their long Station \*  
In winter's depth, in want of rest and victual,  
Had made them chaste – they ravished very little.<sup>211</sup>

129.

Much did they slay, more plunder, and no less 1025  
Might here and there occur some violation  
In the other line; but not to such excess  
As when the French, that dissipated nation,  
Take towns by storm; no causes can I guess  
Except cold weather and commiseration; 1030  
But all the ladies, save some twenty score,  
Were almost as much Virgins as before.

130.

Some odd mistakes too happened in the dark,  
Which shewed a want of lanthorns, or of taste –  
Indeed the Smoke was such, they scarce could mark 1035  
Their friends from foes – besides, such things from haste  
Occur, though rarely, when there is a spark  
Of light to save the venerably chaste;  
But six old damsels, each of seventy years,  
Were all deflowered by different Grenadiers.<sup>212</sup> 1040

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**209:** These seemingly unnecessary stanzas (128-32) may be B.'s way of implying that even amidst such carnage as was seen as Ismail, the female sex drive still held its normal sway. *The Annual Register* for 1791 might have provided him with a different perspective: [Colonel Cobley, an English mercenary with the Russian force] *had the singular fortune and honour, as it may well be considered in such a scene of horror and confusion, to preserve the lives and to protect 300 beautiful Circassian ladies, belonging to the governor's haram, who were on the point of precipitating themselves into the Danube to escape the violation of the soldiers* (p.201). That B. made no use of this *Corsair*-like possibility says much. (See below, 1058n, for his use of the *Register*.)

**210:** *the season's chill ... cold weather*: further (facetious) reminders that the siege took place in winter (see above, this Canto, 583n).

**211:** *they ravished very little*: B.'s joke is also a development of Hookham Frere's *Whistlecraft*, II, LIII (with being eaten as a substitute for being raped):

*The Ladies? – They were tolerably well,  
At least as well as could have been expected:  
Many details I must forbear to tell,  
Their toilet had been very much neglected;  
But by supreme good luck it so befell  
That when the Castle's capture was effected,  
When those vile cannibals were overpower'd,  
Only two fat Duennas were devour'd.*

**212:** *But six old damsels, each of seventy years / Were all deflowered by different Grenadiers*: I have it on the authority of Judge Mindia Ugrekhelidze of the Georgian Supreme Court that this couplet is thought of in Russia as embodying the quintessence of B.'s humour. Mary Shelley refused to copy the lines. Compare below, XII, 30, 7.

131.

But on the whole their Continnence was great,  
So that some disappointment there ensued  
To those who had felt the inconvenient state  
Of “single blessedness” – and thought it good<sup>213</sup>  
(Since it was not their fault, but only fate 1045  
To bear these crosses) for each waning prude  
To make a Roman sort of Sabine wedding,<sup>214</sup>  
Without the expence and the suspense of bedding.

132.

Some voices of the buxom middle-aged  
Were also heard to wonder in the din 1050  
(Widows of forty were these birds long caged)  
“Wherefore the ravishing did not begin?”<sup>215</sup>  
But while the thirst for gore and plunder raged,  
There was small leisure for superfluous sin;  
And whether they escaped or no, lies hid 1055  
In darkness – I can only hope they did.

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**213:** “single blessedness”: from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, I i 76-8: *But earthlier happy is the rose distilled / Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn, / Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.*

**214:** *a Roman sort of Sabine wedding*: Livy (I, ix) reports that, under Romulus, the early Romans, short of breeding stock, invited the neighbouring tribes – including the Sabines – to a spectacle, and treacherously carried off their daughters, who, however, soon learned to appreciate their good fortune.

**215:** “Wherefore the ravishing did not begin?”: a joke reported twice in the journal of Sir Walter Scott: ... *the old woman at Carlisle who not doubting that the highlanders when they took the place in 1745 were to violate all the women shut herself up in a bedroom to await her fate with decency. But after a little time [when] she saw no appearance of the expected violence she pop’d out her head and asked a Rorie who was passing “Pray, Sir, is not the Ravishing going to begin?”* (*Journal*, ed. Anderson, pp.165-6: entry for June 30 1826). ... *an old woman who when Carlisle was taken by the highlanders in 1745 chose to be particularly apprehensive of personal violence and shut herself up in the closet in order that she might escape ravishment. But no one came to disturb her solitude and she began to be sensible that poor Donald was looking out for victuals or seeking for some small plunder with[out] bestowing a thought on the fair sex. She pop’d her head out of her place of refuge with the petty question “Good folks, can you tell me when the ravishing is going to begin?”* (ibid, p.225: entry for 30 October 1826). Note that both entries post-date the publication of *Don Juan VIII*. Compare also B.’s *The Devil’s Drive* (1813) 77-82:

*Then he gazed on a town by besiegers taken,  
Nor cared he who were winning;  
But he saw an old maid, for years forsaken,  
Get up and leave her spinning;  
And she looked in her glass, and to one that did pass,  
She said – “pray are the rapes beginning?”*

## 133.

Suwarrow now was a Conqueror – a Match  
 For Timour or for Zinghis in his trade;<sup>216</sup>  
 While Mosques and Streets beneath his eyes like thatch  
 Blazed, and the Cannons' roar was scarce allayed, 1060  
 With bloody hands he wrote his first dispatch;  
 And here exactly follows what he said: –  
 “Glory to *God* and to the Empress!” (*Powers*  
*Eternal!! such names mingled!*) “Ismail's ours.”<sup>217</sup> \*

\* In the original Russian –  
 “Slava bogu! slava vam!  
 Krepost Vzala, y iä tam.”  
 A kind of couplet; for he was a poet.<sup>218</sup>

**216:** *For Timour or for Zinghis in his trade:* B. refers to the two Asian conquerors Timour Leng, otherwise known as Timur the Lame or Tamburlaine the Great (1336-1405) and Zinghis Khan, or Genghis Khan, as Mary Shelley would have had him spelled (1162-1227). The former subdued most of Southern Asia and the Middle East, the latter Northern China, most of Central Asia, and all of Russia. Though skilled administrators, both are best-remembered as shedders of blood on an unparalleled scale. The two should be compared with Nadir Shah (below, IX stanza 34). B. may have borrowed his comparison from p.198 of *The Annual Register* for 1791: *It would almost seem as if that general [Suvorov] had his mind heated by newly reading the annals of those ancient ravagers and destroyers of his country (unless indeed he be himself descended from that people) Genghis Khan and Tamerlane.* Suvorov cannot be compared with them in any way except in the management of battle, for he had no ambitions other than military ones, and worked selflessly for his political masters (or, as here, mistress).

**217:** *And here exactly follows what he said: – / “Glory to God and to the Empress!”* (*Powers / Eternal! such names mingled!*) “*Ismail's ours*”: line and note constitute a bifold bluff. Suvorov did not write this in his dispatch, and the Russian in the note translates neither what B. asserts that he wrote, nor what he actually wrote. What he actually wrote (to Catherine) was, “*The haughty Ismail is at your feet*”; (to Potemkin) “*The Russian standard floats above the walls of Ismail*”; but the Russian which B. quotes was written in 1773 at the taking of a town called Turtukai in Bulgaria. It means (roughly) “*Glory to God! Glory to you! / The fortress is taken, and I'm there too,*” and is quoted at William Tooke, *Life of Catharine II* (1800: see CMP 252) III 278n, where it is dated and translated unambiguously. Suvorov's dispatch from Ismail is further reported by Tooke at III 282. For twentieth-century evidence, see *A.V.Suvorov: Dokumenty*, ed. G.P.Meshcheryakov (Moscow 1949) I 614, and *A.V.Suvorov: Pisma*, ed. V.S.Lopatin (Moscow 1986) p.27 and n1, p.492; quoted I.I.Rostunov, *Generalissimus A.V.Suvorov* (Moscow 1989) p.174.

**218:** “*Slava bogu! slava vam! / Krepost Vzala, y iä tam.*” / *A kind of couplet; for he was a poet:* Suvorov was indeed given to writing simple verse, although it is not clear where B. got his information from, or how seriously he took it. For another “poem” by Suvorov, written to Potemkin before Otchakhov in 1788, see Philip Longworth, *The Art of Victory*, p.148. It was the general's habit to parody the achievements of his professional enemies – of whom he had many – in the style of Ossian, the Russian translation of which was dedicated to him (Longworth, op. cit., p.180). For further examples of his doggerel, see *A.V.Suvorov: Pisma*, ed. V.S.Lopatin (Moscow 1986) pp.6 (in French) 8, 157, 190 (in French) 214, 220, 222, 224, 230, 261 (in French) 287 (to the poet Derzhavin) 293, 349 (in German) 378-9, and 394.

The motive behind B.'s manipulation of the facts (Tooke's *Life of Catharine II* was the standard English-language work on the subject for most of the nineteenth century) appears to be to the desire to turn Suvorov into a savage and warlike parody of himself: he has already set the general up as a charismatic and *mobile* personality (see above, VII sts.43-55, and quotations from de Richelieu, de Laverne and Masson, quoted opposite them): that he can at last add poetry to the list of his accomplishments is the crowning detail.

134.

Methinks these are the most tremendous Words 1065  
Since “Mené, Mené, Tekel,” and “Upharsin,”<sup>219</sup>  
Which Hands or Pens have ever traced of Swords;  
Heaven help me! I’m but little of a Parson –  
What Daniel read was Short-Hand of the Lord’s,<sup>220</sup>  
Severe, sublime; the Prophet wrote no farce on 1070  
The fate of Nations; but this Russ so witty  
Could rhyme like Nero o’er a burning City.<sup>221</sup>

135.

He wrote this Polar Melody, and set it,  
Duly accompanied by shrieks and groans,  
Which few will sing, I trust, but none forget it – 1075  
For I will teach, if possible, the Stones  
To rise against Earth’s Tyrants; never let it  
Be said that we still truckle unto thrones –  
But *Ye* – our Children’s Children! think how we  
Showed *what things were* before the World was free! 1080

136.

That hour is not for us, but ’tis for you;  
And as, in the great joy of your Millenium,  
You hardly will believe such things were true  
As now occur, I thought that I would pen you ’em;  
But may their very Memory perish too! 1085  
Or if perchance remembered, still disdain you ’em  
More than you scorn the Savages of yore,  
Who *painted* their *bare* limbs – but *not* with Gore.<sup>222</sup>

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**219:** “Mené, Mené, Tekel,” and “Upharsin”: See Daniel 5 25-8. “God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it ... Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting ... Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians”. The Writing on the Wall which appeared during the feast of Belshazzar, King of Babylon, foretelling his imminent downfall and the division of his kingdom. B. had written a poem about it – *Vision of Belshazzar* in *Hebrew Meoldies* of 1815.

**220:** *What Daniel read was short-hand of the Lord’s*: contrast above, I 1511-12.

**221:** ... *this Russ so witty / Could rhyme like Nero o’er a burning city*: Suetonius reports (*Life of Nero*, section 38) that the Emperor (i) set fire to Rome, destroying most of it and (ii) donned tragic garb and recited a poem of his own writing (called *The Fall of Ilium*) from beginning to end, as he stood and admired the flames. However, see above, this canto, 1062-4 and n, for evidence – available to B. – that Suvorov did *not* imitate Nero at the fall of Ismail.

**222:** ... *the Savages of yore, / Who painted their bare limbs - but not with gore*: B. refers to the Picts and Scots, whom the Romans reported to paint themselves, in part for camouflage, in part to inspire terror.

137.

And when you hear historians talk of thrones,  
And those that sate upon them, let it be 1090  
As we now gaze upon the Mammoth's bones,<sup>223</sup>  
And wonder what Old World such things could see,  
Or Hieroglyphics on Ægyptian stones,<sup>224</sup>  
The pleasant riddles of Futurity –  
Guessing at what shall happily be hid, 1095  
As the real purpose of a Pyramid.

138.

Reader! I've kept my word; at least so far  
As the first Canto promised; you have now  
Had sketches of love, tempest, travel, war –  
All very accurate, you must allow, 1100  
And *Epic*, if plain truths should prove no bar;  
For I have drawn much less with a long bow  
Than my fore-runners – carelessly I sing<sup>225</sup> –  
But Phoebus lends me now and then a string,

139.

With which I still can harp, and carp, and fiddle; 1105  
What further hath befall'n, or may befall,  
The Hero of this grand poetic riddle,  
I by and bye may tell you, if at all;  
But now I choose to break off in the middle,  
Worn out with battering Ismail's stubborn wall, 1110  
While Juan is set off with the dispatch,  
For which all Petersburg is on the watch.

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**223:** *let it be / As we now gaze upon the Mammoth's bones:* several carcasses of perfectly-preserved mammoths had been discovered on the north coast of Russia in the years 1799-1801. B. was not alone in finding the discoveries in the fossil and other records fascinating for the doubt they cast on the Bible. Compare below, IX sts.37-40 and nn.

**224:** *hieroglyphics on Ægyptian stones:* perhaps a reference to the three-languaged Rosetta stone, discovered by Napoleon's archaeologists in Egypt in 1799, and vital for the decipherment of hieroglyphs.

**225:** *I have drawn much less with a long bow / Than my fore-runners:* to draw (or "pull") with the (or "a") long bow was to make exaggerated statements (OED). For *Longbow*, see below, XIII sts.92-3. B. is comparing his achievement modestly but confidently with those of his epic predecessors, basing his confidence in part on his reliance on prose writers such as Castelnau: though see above, this Canto, line 671, sts.128-32, and ll.1062-4, nn and commentary, for his wilful departures from Castelnau and other historical sources.

**140.**

This special honour was conferred, because  
He had behaved with courage and humanity;  
Which *last*, men like, when they have time to pause 1115  
From the ferocities produced by vanity;  
His little captive gained him some applause  
For saving her amidst the wild Insanity  
Of Carnage – and I think he was more glad in her  
Safety, than his new order of Saint Vladimir.<sup>226</sup> 1120

**141.**

The Moslem Orphan went with her protector,  
For she was homeless, houseless, helpless; all  
Her friends, like the sad family of Hector,<sup>227</sup>  
Had perished in the field or by the wall;  
Her very place of birth was but a Spectre 1125  
Of what it had been; there the Muezzin's call  
To prayer was heard no more! – and Juan wept,<sup>228</sup>  
And made a vow to shield her, which he kept. –

(*rough draft*:) End of Canto 8<sup>th</sup>. J.<sup>y</sup> A – 1822

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**226:** ... *his new order of Saint Vladimir*: compare above, this canto, 775-6 and n. The Order of St. Vladimir was another creation of Catherine's, founded in 1782.

**227:** *like the sad family of Hector*: Priam and Hecuba, his parents, Andromache, his wife, and Astyanax, his son, bereaved after his death at the hands of Achilles: see *Iliad*, XXII. A last epic gesture on B.'s part before leaving Ismail for the more banal depravities of the court of Catherine the Great in the next two Cantos.

**228:** ... *there the Muezzin's call / To prayer was heard no more! – and Juan wept ...*: final evidence of B.'s sympathy with Islam. Compare above, VII 501-4 and n.