

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS

The Bride is a curious narrative in that it is dominated by a single speech – that of Selim, which goes from line 633 to line 972, that is, takes up 339 lines in a poem 1204 lines long – over a quarter of the work's length. The statistic emphasises both the hero's wordiness, and the paucity of action in the story. When the action comes, it is over quickly, and it comes as no surprise, given Selim's predilection for rhetoric over action, that he is soon dead. It is not clear that this is an effect at which Byron aims. Faulty craftsmanship may be to blame – though the long speech followed by the quick extinction may be a metaphor for Byron's own political career in the House of Lords.

The fanciful style in which the long speech depicts a life of piracy probably had much to do with the poem's success.

The Bride is the only one of the Tales which features an all-Islamic cast of characters (though Selim's mother was Greek, a fact about which Giaffir is contemptuous: see lines 81-4). The triangular nexus of relationships on which all the Tales – except *Lara* – are constructed, is here developed with ideas from *Hamlet*. Selim resents Giaffir rather in the way that Hamlet resents his uncle, and from similar motives, Giaffir having done a Cain, and killed Selim's father, his own brother. Given Hamlet's preference for talk over action, there is an aptness in the borrowing. The heroine, Zuleika, is the youngest and most seeming-innocent of the women in the Tales, in her obedience and passivity a worthy Ophelia to Selim's Hamlet.

Byron's original idea was that she and Selim should be brother and sister, rather than, as the poem has it, that the girl should imagine them to be brother and sister, but the youth know that they aren't – however, for numerous reasons he changed his idea, and started work at the less wicked incest-motiv of *Parisina*.



*Zuleika and Giaffir*¹

¹: Illustration from <<http://people.bu.edu/jwvail/byron_illustrations.html>>

The Bride of Abydos

A Turkish Tale.

“Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met – or never parted,
We had ne’er been broken-hearted.” –
BURNS.

TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
LORD HOLLAND,
THIS TALE IS INSCRIBED,
WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF REGARD AND RESPECT,
BY HIS GRATEFULLY OBLIGED AND SINCERE FRIEND,
BYRON.

CANTO THE FIRST.

1.

Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime,²
Where the rage of the vulture – the love of the turtle –
Now melt into sorrow – now madden to crime? –
Know ye the land of the cedar and vine, 5
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;
Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppressed with perfume,
Wax faint o’er the gardens of Gul in her bloom; *
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
And the voice of the nightingale never is mute; 10
Where the tints of the earth, and the hues of the sky,
In colour though varied, in beauty may vie,
And the purple of Ocean is deepest in dye;
Where the virgins are soft as the roses they twine,
And all, save the spirit of man, is divine – 15
'Tis the clime of the East – 'tis the land of the Sun –
Can he smile on such deeds as his children have done? †
Oh! wild as the accents of lovers' farewell
Are the hearts which they bear, and the tales which they tell.

* “Gul,” the rose.

† “Souls made of fire, and children of the Sun, / With whom revenge is virtue.” – YOUNG’S “REVENGE.”

2.

Begirt with many a gallant slave, 20
Apparelled as becomes the brave,
Awaiting each his Lord’s behest
To guide his steps, or guard his rest,

2: B.’s first line echoes the first line of Goethe’s *Kennst du das Land wo die citronen blühh?* B. had no German, but the line is quoted in Madame de Staël’s *Corinne* (1807), II iii: *Connaissez-vous cette terre où les orangers fleurissent, que les rayons des cieux fécondent avec amour?*

Old Giaffir sate in his Divan,
 Deep thought was in his aged eye; 25
 And though the face of Mussulman
 Not oft betrays to standers by
 The mind within, well skilled to hide
 All but unconquerable pride,
 His pensive cheek and pondering brow 30
 Did more than he was wont avow.

3.

“Let the chamber be cleared.” – the train disappeared –
 “Now call me the chief of the Haram guard –”
 With Giaffir is none but his only son,
 And the Nubian awaiting the sire’s award. 35
 “Haroun – when all the crowd that wait
 Are passed beyond the outer gate,
 (Woe to the head whose eye beheld
 My child Zuleika’s face unveiled!)
 Hence, lead my daughter from her tower – 40
 Her fate is fixed this very hour;
 Yet not to her repeat my thought –
 By me alone be duty taught!”

“Pacha! to hear is to obey. –”
 No more must slave to despot say – 45
 Then to the tower had ta’en his way,
 But here young Selim silence brake,
 First lowly rendering reverence meet;
 And downcast looked, and gently spake,
 Still standing at the Pacha’s feet. – 50
 For son of Moslem must expire,
 Ere dare to sit before his sire!

“Father! – for fear that thou shouldst chide
 My sister, or her sable guide –
 Know – for the fault, if fault there be, 55
 Was mine – then fall thy frowns on me!
 So lovelily the morning shone,
 That – let the old and weary sleep –
 I could not; and to view alone
 The fairest scenes of land and deep, 60
 With none to listen and reply
 To thoughts with which my heart beat high
 Were irksome – for whate’er my mood,
 In sooth I love not solitude;
 I on Zuleika’s slumber broke, 65
 And as thou knowest that for me
 Soon turns the Haram’s grating key,
 Before the guardian slaves awoke
 We to the cypress groves had flown,
 And made earth, main, and heaven our own! 70
 There lingered we, beguiled too long
 With Mejnoun’s tale, or Sadi’s song, *
 Till I, who heard the deep tambour

Beat thy Divan's approaching hour –
 To thee, and to my duty true, 75
 Warned by the sound, to greet thee flew:
 But there Zuleika wanders yet –
 Nay, father, rage not – nor forget
 That none can pierce that secret bower
 But those who watch the women's tower." 80

* Mejnoun and Leila, the Romeo and Juliet of the East.³ Sadi, the moral poet of Persia.⁴

† "Tambour," Turkish drum, which sounds at sunrise, none, and twilight.

4.

"Son of a slave!" – the Pacha said –
 "From unbelieving mother bred,
 Vain were a father's hope to see
 Aught that beseems a man in thee."⁵
 Thou, when thine arm should bend the bow, 85
 And hurl the dart, and curb the steed,
 Thou, Greek in soul, if not in creed,
 Must pore where babbling waters flow,
 And watch unfolding roses blow.
 Would that yon orb, whose matin glow 90
 Thy listless eyes so much admire,
 Would lend thee something of his fire!
 Thou, who would'st see this battlement
 By Christian cannon piecemeal rent –
 Nay, tamely view old Stamboul's wall 95
 Before the dogs of Moscow fall –
 Nor strike one stroke for life and death
 Against the curs of Nazareth!
 Go – let thy less than woman's hand
 Assume the distaff – not the brand. 100
 But, Haroun! – to my daughter speed –
 And hark – of thine own head take heed –
 If thus Zuleika oft takes wing –
 Thou see'st yon bow – it hath a string!"

5.

No sound from Selim's lip was heard, 105
 At least that met old Giaffir's ear,
 But every frown and every word
 Pierced keener than a Christian's sword –
 "Son of a slave! – reproached with fear! –
 Those gibes had cost another dear. 110

3: In the Persian myth, Mejnoun loved his cousin Leila, and she him; but her father forbade the match, and forced her to marry another man. Mejnoun went mad, but she remained constant in her love for him. They were buried together. See *Vathek*: These personages are esteemed among the Arabians as the most beautiful, chaste, and impassioned of lovers; and their amours have been celebrated with all the charms of verse in every Oriental language. The Mahometans regard them, and the poetical records of their love, in the same light as the Bridegroom and Spouse, and the Song of Songs are regarded by the Jews (1786 p.294: Lonsdale p.147 / 65n1).

4: Sadi (1213-92) Persian author of the *Ghulistan*, which contains the story of Mejnoun and Leila. See *Vathek* p.147 / 65n1.

5: For the contempt of the old man for the younger, compare *Parisina*, 227-8.

Son of a slave! – and *who* my sire?”
 Thus held his thoughts their dark career,
 And glances even of more than ire
 Flash forth – then faintly disappear.
 Old Giaffir gazed upon his son 115
 And started – for within his eye
 He read how much his wrath had done,
 He saw rebellion there begun –
 “Come hither, boy – what, no reply?
 I mark thee – and I know thee too; 120
 But there be deeds thou dar’st not do:
 But if thy beard had manlier length,
 And if thy hand had skill and strength,
 I’d joy to see thee break a lance,
 Albeit against my own perchance.” 125

As sneeringly these accents fell,
 On Selim’s eye he fiercely gazed –
 That eye returned him glance for glance,
 And proudly to his sire’s was raised,
 Till Giaffir’s quailed and shrunk askance – 130
 And why – he felt, but durst not tell. –
 Much I misdoubt this wayward boy
 Will one day work me more annoy –
 I never loved him from his birth,
 And – but his arm is little worth, 135
 And scarcely in the chace could cope
 With timid fawn or antelope,
 Far less would venture into strife
 Where man contends for fame and life –
 I would not trust that look or tone – 140
 No – nor the blood so near my own –
 That blood – he hath not heard – no more –
 I’ll watch him closer than before.
 He is an Arab to my sight, *
 Or Christian crouching in the fight. – 145
 But hark! – I hear Zuleika’s voice,
 Like Houris’⁶ hymn it meets mine ear;
 She is the offspring of my choice –
 Oh! more than even her mother dear,
 With all to hope, and nought to fear, 150
 My Peri! – ever welcome here!
 Sweet, as the desert-fountain’s wave,
 To lips just cooled in time to save –
 Such to my longing sight art thou;
 Nor can they waft to Mecca’s shrine 155
 More thanks for life, than I for thine
 Who blest thy birth, and bless thee now.”

* The Turks abhor the Arabs (who return the compliment a hundred-fold) even more than they hate the Christians.

6.

Fair – as the first that fell of womankind –
 When on that dread yet lovely serpent smiling,
 Whose image then was stamped upon her mind – 160
 But once beguiled – and evermore beguiling;⁷
 Dazzling – as that, oh! too transcendent vision
 To Sorrow’s phantom-peopled slumber given,
 When heart meets heart again in dreams Elysian,
 And paints the lost on Earth revived in Heaven – 165
 Soft – as the memory of buried love –
 Pure – as the prayer which Childhood wafts above –
 Was she – the daughter of that rude old Chief,
 Who met the maid with tears – but not of grief.

Who hath not proved – how feebly words essay 170
 To fix one spark of Beauty’s heavenly ray?
 Who doth not feel – until his failing sight
 Faints into dimness with its own delight –
 His changing cheek – his sinking heart confess
 The might – the majesty of Loveliness? 175
 Such was Zuleika – such around her shone
 The nameless charms unmarked by her alone –
 The light of love – the purity of grace –
 The mind – the Music breathing from her face! *
 The heart whose softness harmonised the whole – 180
 And, oh! that eye was in itself a Soul!
 Her graceful arms in meekness bending
 Across her gently-budding breast –
 At one kind word those arms extending
 To clasp the neck of him who blest 185
 His child caressing and carest,
 Zuleika came – Giaffir felt
 His purpose half within him melt;
 Not that against her fancied weal
 His heart though stern could ever feel – 190
 Affection chained her to that heart –
 Ambition tore the links apart.

* This expression has met with objections. I will not refer to “Him who hath not Music in his soul,” but merely request the reader to recollect, for ten seconds, the features of the woman whom he believes to be the most beautiful; and if he then does not comprehend fully what is feebly expressed in the above line, I shall be sorry for us both. For an eloquent passage in the latest work of the first female writer of this, perhaps of any age, on the analogy (and the immediate comparison excited by that analogy) between “painting and music,” see vol. iii. cap. 10, “De L’Allemagne.”⁸ And is not this connexion still stronger with the original than the copy? with the colouring of Nature than of Art? After all, this is rather to be felt than described; still, I think there are some who will understand it, at least they would have done had they beheld the countenance whose speaking harmony suggested the idea; for this passage is not drawn from imagination but memory, that mirror which Affliction dashes to the earth, and looking down upon the fragments, only beholds the reflection multiplied.

7: The Koran does not hold that Eve was the first person responsible for the Fall, and in fact never mentions her; both she and Adam fell together.

8: Madame de Staël’s *de l’Allemagne* had been published by Murray earlier in 1813.

7.

“Zuleika – child of gentleness!
 How dear – this very day must tell,
 When I forget my own distress 195
 In losing what I love so well
 To bid thee with another dwell,
 Another – and a braver man
 Was never seen in battle’s van.
 We Moslems reck not much of blood – 200
 But yet the line of Carasman *
 Unchanged – unchangeable hath stood,
 First of the bold Timariot bands
 That won and well can keep their lands.
 Enough – that he who comes to woo 205
 Is kinsman of the Bey Oglou –
 His years need scarce a thought employ –
 I would not have thee wed a boy –
 And thou shalt have a noble dower;⁹
 And his and my united power 210
 Will laugh to scorn the death-firman,
 Which others tremble but to scan –
 And teach the messenger what fate
 The bearer of such boon may wait. †
 And now thy know’st thy father’s will – 215
 All that thy sex hath need to know –
 ’Twas mine to teach obedience still,
 The way to love, thy lord may show.”

* Carasman Oglou, or Kara Osman Oglou, is the principle landholder in Turkey; he governs Magnesia. Those who, by a kind of feudal tenure, possess land on condition of service, are called Timariots; they serve as Spahis, according to the extent of territory, and bring a certain number into the field, generally cavalry.

† When a Pacha is sufficiently strong to resist, the single messenger, who is always the first bearer of the order for his death, is strangled instead, and sometimes five or six, one after the other, on the same errand, by command of the refractory patient; if, on the contrary, he is weak or loyal, he bows, kisses the Sultan’s respectable signature, and is bowstrung with great complacency. In 1810, several of “these presents” were exhibited in the niche of the Seraglio gate:¹⁰ among others, the head of the Pacha of Bagdad, a brave young man, cut off by treachery, after a desperate resistance.

8.

In silence bowed the virgin’s head –
 And if her eye was filled with tears 220
 That stifled feeling dare not shed,
 And changed her cheek to pale to red,
 And red to pale, as through her ears
 Those winged words like arrows sped –
 What could such be but maiden fears? 225
 So bright the tear in Beauty’s eye,
 Love half regrets to kiss it dry –

⁹: This implies that the dowry will make her more valuable; but in Islam the dowry is the bride’s property alone.

¹⁰: B. visited the Seraglio in Constantinople in 1810; he saw the severed heads on Monday May 21st.

So sweet the blush of Bashfulness,
Even Pity scarce can wish it less!

Whate'er it was the sire forgot; 230
Or if remembered, marked it not –
Thrice clapped his hands, and called his steed, *
 Resigned his gem-adorned Chibouque, †
And mounting featly for the mead,
 With Maugrabee – and Mamaluke – ‡ 235
 His way amid his Delhis took, §
To witness many an active deed
With sabre keen – or blunt jereed.
The Kislar only and his Moors
Watch well the Haram's massy doors. 240

* Clapping of the hands calls the servants.¹¹ The Turks hate a superfluous expenditure of voice, and they have no bells.

† “Chibouque,” the Turkish pipe, of which the amber mouth-piece, and sometimes the ball which contains the leaf, is adorned with precious stones, if in possession of the wealthier orders.

‡ “Maugrabee,” Moorish mercenaries.

§ “Delhis,” bravoos who form the forlorn-hope of the cavalry, and always begin the action.¹²

9.

His head was leant upon his hand,
 His eye looked o'er the dark blue water,
That swiftly glides and gently swells
Between the winding Dardanelles;
But yet he saw nor sea nor strand, 245
Nor even his Pacha's turbaned band
 Mix in the game of mimic slaughter;
Careering cleave the folded felt *
With sabre stroke right sharply dealt –
Nor marked the javelin-darting crowd, 250
Nor heard their Ollahs wild and loud – †
 He thought but of old Giaffir's daughter!

* A twisted fold of *felt* is used for scimitar practice by the Turks, and few but Mussulman arms can cut through it at a single stroke: sometimes a tough turban is used for the same purpose. The jereed is a game of blunt javelins, animated and graceful.

† “Ollahs,” *Alla il Allah*, the “Leilles,” as the Spanish poets call them; the sound is Ollah; a cry of which the Turks, for a silent people, are somewhat profuse, particularly during the jereed, or in the chase, but mostly in battle. Their animation in the field, and gravity in the chamber, with their pipes and comboloios, form an amusing contrast.

¹¹: See *Vathek*: This was the ordinary method in the East of calling the attendants in waiting (1786 p.308: Lonsdale p.150 / 71n5.

¹²: Compare *CHP* II, song, tenth stanza; *Siege*, 190-1, or *Don Juan* VII, 62, 2.

10.

No word from Selim's bosom broke –
 One sigh Zuleika's thought bespoke –
 Still gazed he through the lattice grate, 255
 Pale – mute – and mournfully sedate. –
 To him Zuleika's eye was turned,
 But little from his aspect learned;
 Equal her grief – yet not the same,
 Her heart confessed a gentler flame – 260
 But yet that heart, alarmed, or weak,
 She knew not why, forbade to speak –
 Yet speak she must – but when essay –
 “How strange he thus should turn away!
 Not thus we e'er before have met, 265
 Not thus shall be our parting yet.” –
 Thrice paced she slowly through the room,
 And watched his eye – it still was fixed –
 She snatched the urn wherein was mixed 270
 The Persian Atar-gul's perfume, *
 And sprinkled all its odours o'er
 The pictured roof and marble floor – †
 The drops, that through his glittering vest
 The playful girl's appeal addrest,
 Unheeded o'er his bosom flew, 275
 As if that breast were marble too –
 “What, sullen yet? it must not be –
 Oh! gentle Selim, this from thee!”
 She saw in curious order set
 The fairest flowers of Eastern land – 280
 “He loved them once – may touch them yet,
 If offered by Zuleika's hand.”
 The childish thought was hardly breathed
 Before the Rose was plucked and wreathed;
 The next fond moment saw her seat 285
 Her fairy form at Selim's feet –
 “This rose to calm my brother's cares
 A message from the Bulbul bears; ‡
 It says to-night he will prolong
 For Selim's ear his sweetest song – 290
 And though his note is somewhat sad,
 He'll try for once a strain more glad,
 With some faint hope his altered lay
 May sing these gloomy thoughts away.

* “Atar-gúl,” ottar of roses. The Persian is the finest.

† The ceiling and wainscots, or rather walls, of the Mussulman apartments are generally painted, in great houses, with one eternal and highly-coloured view of Constantinople, wherein the principle feature is a noble contempt of perspective; below, arms, scimitars, &c., are generally fancifully and not inelegantly disposed.

‡ It has been much doubted whether the notes of this “Lover of the rose” are sad or merry; and Mr Fox's remarks on the subject have provoked some learned controversy as to the opinions of the ancients on the

subject. I dare not venture a conjecture on the point, though a little inclined to the “errare malle,” &c., if Mr Fox was mistaken.¹³

11.

“What – not receive my foolish flower? – 295
 Nay, then I am indeed unblest –
 On me can thus thy forehead lower?
 And know’st thou not who loves thee best?
 Oh, Selim dear! – Oh, more than dearest!
 Say is it me thou hat’st or fearest? 300
 Come, lay thy head upon my breast,
 And I will kiss thee into rest,
 Since words of mine – and songs must fail,
 Even from my fabled nightingale.
 I knew our sire at times was stern, 305
 But this from thee had yet to learn –
 Too well I know he loves thee not,
 But is Zuleika’s love forgot?
 Ah! deem I right? the Pacha’s plan –
 This kinsman Bey of Carasman 310
 Perhaps may prove some foe of thine –
 If so – I swear by Mecca’s shrine,
 If shrines, that ne’er approach allow
 To woman’s step,¹⁴ admit her vow –
 Without thy free consent, command – 315
 The Sultan should not have my hand!
 Think’st though that I could bear to part
 With thee – and learn to halve my heart?
 Ah! were I severed from thy side,
 Where were thy friend – and who my guide? 320
 Years have not seen – Time shall not see
 The hour that tears my soul from thee –
 Even Azrael from his deadly quiver *
 When flies that shaft – and fly it must –
 That parts all else – shall doom for ever 325
 Our hearts to undivided dust!”

* “Azrael,” the angel of death.¹⁵

12.

He lived – he breathed – he moved – he felt –
 He raised the maid from where she knelt –
 His trance was gone – his keen eye shone
 With thoughts that long in darkness dwelt – 330
 With thoughts that burn – in rays that melt. –
 As the streams late concealed
 By the fringe of its willows –

13: The Whig politician Charles James Fox said in a letter that of all English poets, Chaucer was fondest of the nightingale; others disagreed.

14: In Islam, women have the same access to holy shrines as men. The Ka’aba is the only location where strangers of opposite sexes may touch, and where men and women pray together.

15: See *Vathek*: The name of this exterminating angel is *Azrael*, and his office is to conduct the dead to the abode assigned them; which is said by some to be near the place of their interment (1786 p.313: Lonsdale p.151 / 79n1).

When it rushes revealed
 In the light of its billows, – 335
 As the bolt bursts on high
 From the black cloud that bound it –
 Flashed the soul of that eye
 Through the long lashes round it.
 A war-horse at the trumpet's sound, 340
 A lion roused by heedless hound;
 A tyrant waked to sudden strife
 By graze of ill-directed knife,
 Starts not to more convulsive life
 Than he, who heard that vow, displayed, 345
 And all, before repressed, betrayed.
 "Now thou art mine, for ever mine,
 With life to keep, and scarce with life resign; –
 Now thou art mine, that sacred oath,
 Though sworn by one, hath bound us both. 350
 Yes, fondly, wisely hast thou done,
 That vow hath saved more heads than one: –
 But blench not thou – thy simplest tress
 Claims more from me than tenderness;
 I would not wrong the slenderest hair 355
 That clusters round thy forehead fair,
 For all the treasures buried far
 Within the caves of *Istakar*. *
 This morning clouds upon me lowered,
 Reproaches on my head were showered, 360
 And *Giaffir* almost called me coward!
 Now I have motive to be brave,
 The son of his neglected slave:
 Nay, start not, – 'twas the term he gave –
 May shew, though little apt to vaunt, 365
 A heart his words nor deeds can daunt.
His son, indeed! – yet, thanks to thee,
 Perchance I am, at least shall be!
 But let our plighted secret vow
 Be only known to us as now. 370
 I know the wretch who dares demand
 From *Giaffir* thy reluctant hand;
 More ill-got wealth, a meaner soul
 Holds not a *Musselim*'s controul; †
 Was he not bred in *Egripo*? ‡ 375
 A viler race let *Israel* show!
 But let that pass – to none be told
 Our oath – the rest let time unfold;
 To me and mine leave *Osman Bey*,
 I've partizans for peril's day; 380
 Think not I am what I appear,
 I've arms, and friends, and vengeance near."

* The treasures of the pre-Adamite Sultans. See D'HERBELOT, article *Istakar*.¹⁶

16: For the pre-Adamite Sultans, See *Vathek*: These monarchs, which were seventy-two in number, are said to have governed each a distinct species of rational Beings, prior to the existence of Adam ... (1786 p.232: Lonsdale p.131 / 36n3). For *Istakar*, see also *Vathek*: This city was the ancient Persepolis, and capital of Persia ... The origin of this city is ascribed by some to

† “Musselim,” a governor, the next in rank after a Pacha; a Waywode is the third; and then come the Agas.

‡ “Egripo” – the Negropont. According to the proverb, the Turks of Egrip, the Jews of Salonica, and the Greeks of Athens are the worst of their respective races.¹⁷

13.

“Think not thou art what thou appearest!
 My Selim, thou art sadly changed;
 This morn I saw thee gentlest, dearest, 395
 But now thou’rt from thyself estranged.
 My love thou surely knew’st before,
 It ne’er was less, nor can be more.
 To see thee, hear thee, near thee stay,
 And hate the night, I know not why, 390
 Save that we meet not but by day –
 With thee to live, with thee to die,
 I dare not to my hope deny:
 Thy cheek, thine eyes, thy lips to kiss,
 Like this – and this – no more than this; 395
 For, Alla! sure thy lips are flame –
 What fever in thy veins is flushing?
 My own have nearly caught the same,
 At least I feel my cheek too blushing.
 To soothe thy sickness, watch thy health, 400
 Partake, but never waste thy wealth,
 Or stand with smiles un murmuring by,
 And lighten half thy poverty;
 Do all but close thy dying eye,
 For that I could not live to try; 405
 To these alone my thoughts aspire –
 More can I do? or thou require?
 But, Selim, thou must answer why
 We need so much of mystery?
 The cause I cannot dream nor tell, 410
 But be it, since thou say’st ’tis well;
 Yet what thou mean’st by ‘arms’ and ‘friends,’
 Beyond my weaker sense extends –
 I mean that Giaffir should have heard
 The very vow I plighted thee; 415
 His wrath would not revoke my word –
 But surely he would leave me free;
 Can this fond wish seem strange in me,
 To be what I have ever been?
 What other hath Zuleika seen 420
 From simple childhood’s earliest hour?
 What other can she seek to see
 Than thee, companion of her bower,
 The partner of her infancy?

Giamschid, and others carry it higher; but the Persian tradition is, that it was built by the *Peris*, or Faeries, when the world was governed by Gian Ben Gian (1786 pp.230-1: Lonsdale p.155 / 106n2).

17: Hobhouse had travelled to Egripo (Negroponte, modern Chalcis) on February 8th 1810, without B.; and had not enjoyed his reception by the Turks there.

These cherished thoughts with life begun, 425
 Say, why must I no more avow?
 What change is wrought to make me shun
 The truth – my pride – and thine till now?
 To meet the gaze of strangers' eyes
 Our law, our creed, our God denies, 430
 Nor shall one wandering thought of mine
 At such, our Prophet's will, repine;
 No – happier made by that decree,
 He left me all in leaving thee.
 Deep were my anguish, thus compelled 435
 To wed with one I ne'er beheld –
 This – wherefore should I not reveal?
 Why wilt thou urge me to conceal?
 I know the Pacha's haughty mood
 To thee hath never boded good; 440
 And he so often storms at nought,
 Alla! forbid that e'er he ought!
 And why I know not, but within
 My heart concealment weighs like sin.
 If then such secrecy be crime, 445
 And such it feels while lurking here,
 Oh, Selim! tell me yet in time,
 Nor leave me thus to thoughts of fear.
 Ah! yonder see the Tchocadar, *
 My father leaves the mimic war; 450
 I tremble now to meet his eye –
 Say, Selim, canst thou tell me why?"

* "Tchocadar," one of the attendants who precedes a man of authority.

14.

"Zuleika – to thy tower's retreat
 Betake thee – Giaffir I can greet:
 And now with him I fain must prate 455
 Of firmans, imposts, levies, state;
 There's fearful news from Danube's banks,
 Our Vizier nobly thins his ranks,
 For which the Giaour may give him thanks!
 Our sultan hath a shorter way 460
 Such costly triumph to repay.
 But, mark me, when the twilight drum
 Hath warned the troops to food and sleep,
 Unto thy cell will Selim come;
 Then softly from the Haram creep 465
 Where we may wander by the deep,
 Our garden-battlements are steep:
 Nor these will rash intruder climb
 To list our words, or stint our time;
 And if he doth – I want not steel 470
 Which some have felt, and more may feel.
 Then shalt thou learn of Selim more
 Than thou hast heard or thought before:
 Trust me, Zuleika – fear not me!

Thou know'st I hold a Haram key."¹⁸ 475

"Fear thee, my Selim! ne'er till now
Did word like this –"

"Delay not thou;
I keep the key – and Haroun's guard
Have *some*, and hope of *more* reward.
To-night, Zuleika, thou shalt hear 480
My tale, my purpose, and my fear –
I am not, love! what I appear."¹⁹

END OF CANTO I.

18: But see *Vathek*: It was the office of Shaban, as Chief Eunuch, to keep the key of the Ladies' apartment (1786, pp.308-9: Lonsdale omits).

19: See Gulnare's words at *The Corsair*, 1639; but compare also *Cain*, II, i 88: *I seem that which I am*.

CANTO THE SECOND.

1.

The winds are high on Helle's wave,
 As on that night of stormy water
 When Love – who sent – forgot to save 485
 The young, the beautiful, the brave,
 The lonely hope of Sestos' daughter.
 Oh! when alone along the sky
 Her turret-torch was blazing high,
 Though rising gale, and breaking foam, 490
 And shrieking sea-birds warned him home;
 And clouds aloft and tides below,
 With signs and sounds, forbade to go,
 He could not see, he would not hear,
 Or sound or sign foreboding fear; 495
 His eye but saw the light of love,
 The only star it hailed above;
 His ear but rang with Hero's song,
 "Ye waves, divide not lovers long!" –
 That tale²⁰ is old, but love anew 500
 May nerve young hearts to prove as true.

2.

The winds are high – and Helle's tide
 Rolls darkly heaving to the main;
 And Night's descending shadows hide
 That field with blood bedewed in vain, 505
 The desert of old Priam's pride –
 The tombs – sole relics of his reign –
 All, save immortal dreams that could beguile
 The blind old man of Scio's²¹ rocky isle!

3.

Oh! yet – for there my steps have been, 510
 These feet have pressed the sacred shore,
 These limbs that buoyant wave hath borne –
 Minstrel! with thee to muse, to mourn –
 To trace again those fields of yore –
 Believing every hillock green 515
 Contains no fabled hero's ashes –
 And that around the undoubted scene
 Thine own "broad Hellespont" still dashes – *
 Be long my lot – and cold were he
 Who there could gaze denying thee! 520

* The wrangling about this epithet, "the broad Hellespont," or the "boundless Hellespont," whether it means one or the other, or what it means at all, has been beyond all possibility of detail. I have even heard it disputed on the spot; and not foreseeing a speedy conclusion to the controversy, amused myself by

²⁰: The tale is told by Ovid, at *Heroides*, XIX.

²¹: Homer.

swimming across it in the meantime,²² and probably may again, before the point is settled. Indeed, the question as to the truth of “the tale of Troy divine” still continues, much of it resting upon the word “απείρος”:²³ probably Homer had the same notion of distance that a coquette has of time, and when he talks of the boundless, means half a mile; as the latter, by a like figure, when she says *eternal* attachment, simply specifies three weeks.

4.

The night hath closed on Helle’s stream,
 Nor yet hath risen on Ida’s hill
 That moon, which shone on his high theme –
 No warrior chides her peaceful beam,
 But conscious shepherds bless it still. 525
 Their flocks are grazing on the mound
 Of him who felt the Dardan’s arrow;²⁴
 That mighty heap of gathered ground
 Which Ammon’s son²⁵ ran proudly round, *
 By nations raised, by monarchs crowned, 530
 Is now a lone and nameless barrow
 Within – thy dwelling-place how narrow!
 Without – can only strangers breathe
 The name of him that *was* beneath.
 Dust long outlasts the storied stone – 535
 But Thou – thy very dust is gone!

* Before his Persian invasion, and crowned the altar with laurel, &c. He was afterwards imitated by Caracalla²⁶ in his race. It is believed that the last also poisoned a friend, named Festus, for the sake of new Patroclan games. I have seen the sheep feeding on the tombs of Æyietes and Antilochus:²⁷ the first is in the centre of the plain.

5.

Late, late to-night will Dian cheer
 The swain, and chase the boatman’s fear;
 Till then – no beacon on the cliff
 May shape the course of struggling skiff; 540
 The scattered lights that skirt the bay,
 All, one by one, have died away;
 The only lamp of this lone hour
 Is glimmering in Zuleika’s tower.
 Yes! there is light in that lone chamber, 540
 And o’er her silken Ottoman
 Are thrown the fragrant beads of amber,
 O’er which her fairy fingers ran; *
 Near these, with emerald rays beset,
 (How could she thus that gem forget?) 550
 Her mother’s sainted amulet, †
 Whereon engraved the Koorsee text,

22: B. swam the Hellespont on May 3rd 1810. See *Don Juan* II, 105, 6-8, and B.’s note.

23: *απείρος* (*apeiros*) is Homer’s favourite word to describe the Hellespont.

24: Achilles.

25: Ammon’s son is Alexander the Great.

26: Caracalla (176-217) tyrannous Roman emperor. Assassinated.

27: See *Don Juan* IV, 77, 7-8.

Could smooth this life, and win the next;
 And by her Comboloio lies ‡
 A Koran of illumined dyes; 555
 And many a bright emblazoned rhyme
 By Persian scribes redeemed from time;
 And o'er those scrolls, not oft so mute,
 Reclines her now neglected lute;
 And round her lamp of fretted gold 560
 Bloom flowers in urns of China's mould;
 The richest work of Iran's loom,
 And Sheeraz²⁸ tribute of perfume;
 All that can eye or sense delight
 Are gathered in that gorgeous room – 565
 But yet it hath an air of gloom. –
 She, of this Peri²⁹ cell the sprite,
 What doth she hence, and on so rude a night?

* When rubbed, the amber is susceptible of a perfume, which is slight but not disagreeable.

‡ The belief in amulets engraved on gems, or enclosed in gold boxes, containing scraps from the Koran, worn round the neck, wrist, or arm, is still universal in the East. The Koorsee (throne) verse in the second cap. of the Koran describes the attributes of the Most High, and is engraved in this manner, and worn by the pious, as the most esteemed and sublime of all sentences.

‡ “Comboloio,” a Turkish rosary. The MSS., particularly those of the Persians, are richly adorned and illuminated. The Greek females are kept in utter ignorance; but many of the Turkish girls are highly accomplished, though not actually qualified for a Christian coterie.³⁰ Perhaps some of our own “blues” might not be the worse for *bleaching*.³¹

6.

Wrapt in the darkest sable vest,
 Which none save noblest Moslems wear, 570
 To guard from winds of heaven the breast
 As heaven itself to Selim dear,
 With cautious steps the thicket threading,
 And starting oft, as through the glade
 The gust its hollow moanings made, 575
 Till on the smoother pathway treading,
 More free her timid bosom beat,
 The maid pursued her silent guide;
 And though her terror urged retreat,
 How could she quit her Selim's side? 580
 How teach her tender lips to chide?

7.

They reached at length a grotto, hewn
 By nature, but enlarged by art,
 Where oft her lute she wont to tune,

28: Shiraz, capital of Fars in Persia, where carpets are woven and atar-gul (above, 270) manufactured.

29: See *Vathek*: The word *Peri*, in the Persian language, signifies that beautiful race of creatures which constitutes the link between angels and men. The Arabians call them *Ginn* ... (1786 p.292: Lonsdale p.146 / 63n1).

30: It is not clear that B. met any Turkish women, apart from prostitutes, during his time in the east.

31: “blues” – bluestockings – sneering term for intellectual women. See *Don Juan IV*, 112; or *The Blues*, *passim*.

And oft her Koran conned apart; 585
 And oft in youthful reverie
 She dreamed what Paradise might be –
 Where woman's parted soul shall go
 Her Prophet had disdained to show;³²
 But Selim's mansion was secure, 590
 Nor deemed she, could he long endure
 His bower in other worlds of bliss,
 Without *her*, most beloved in this!
 Oh! who so dear with him could dwell?
 What Houri soothe him half so well? 595

8.

Since last she visited the spot
 Some change seemed wrought within the grot –
 It might be only that the night
 Disguised things seen by better light –
 That brazen lamp but dimly threw 600
 A ray of no celestial hue;
 But in a nook within the cell
 Her eye on stranger objects fell.
 There arms were piled, not such as wield
 The turbaned Delhis in the field; 605
 But brands of foreign blade and hilt,
 And one was red – perchance with guilt –
 Ah! how without can blood be spilt?
 A cup too on the board was set
 That did not seem to hold sherbet. 610
 What may this mean – she turned to see
 Her Selim – “Oh! can this be he?”

9.

His robe of pride was thrown aside,
 His brow no high-crowned turban bore
 But in its stead a shawl of red, 615
 Wreathed lightly round, his temples wore: –
 That dagger, on whose hilt the gem
 Were worthy of a diadem,
 No longer glittered at his waist,
 Where pistols unadorned were braced. 620
 And from his belt a sabre swung,
 And from his shoulder loosely hung
 The cloak of white, the thin capote
 That decks the wandering Candiote;³³
 Beneath – his golden plated vest 625
 Clung like a cuirass to his breast –
 The greaves below his knee that wound
 With silvery scales were sheathed and bound.
 But were it not that high command
 Spake in his eye – and tone, and hand – 630

³²: The Koran leaves no doubt that women will enter paradise.

³³: A Candiote is a native of Crete.

All that a careless eye could see
In him was some young Galiongée. *

* “Galiongée,” or Galiongi, a sailor, that is, a Turkish sailor; the Greeks navigate, the Turks work the guns. Their dress is picturesque; and I have seen the Capitan Pacha more than once wearing it as a kind of incog. Their legs, however, are generally naked. The buskins described in the text as sheathed behind with silver are those of an Arnaut robber, who was my host (he had quitted the profession) at his Pyrgo, near Gastouni in the Morea; they were plated in scales one over the other, like the back of an armadillo.

10.

“I said I was not what I seemed –
And now thou see’st my words were true;
I have a tale thou hast not dreamed, 635
If sooth – its truth must others rue.
My story now ’twere vain to hide,
I must not see thee Osman’s bride:
But had not thine own lips declared
How much of that young heart I shared, 640
I could not, must not, yet have shown
The darker secret of my own. –
In this I speak not now of love –
That – let time, truth, and peril prove;
But first – Oh! never wed another – 645
Zuleika! I am not thy brother!”

11.

“Oh! not my brother! – yet unsay –
God! am I left alone on earth
To mourn – I dare not curse – the day
That saw my solitary birth? 650
Oh! thou wilt love me now no more!
My sinking heart foreboded ill;
But know *me* all I was before,
Thy sister – friend – Zuleika still.
Thou led’st me hear perchance to kill; 655
If thou hast cause for vengeance – See!
My breast is offered – take thy fill!
Far better with the dead to be
Than live thus nothing now to thee –
Perhaps far worse – for now I know 660
Why Giaffir always seemed thy foe;
And I, alas! am Giaffir’s child,
For whom thou wert contemned – reviled –
If not thy sister – wouldst thou save 665
My life – Oh! bid me be thy slave!”

12.

“My slave, Zuleika! – nay, I’m thine;
But, gentle love, this transport calm,
Thy lot shall yet be linked with mine;
I swear it by our Prophet’s shrine,
And be that thought thy sorrow’s balm. 670

So may the Koran verse displayed *
 Upon its steel direct my blade,
 In danger's hour to guard us both,
 As I preserve that awful oath!
 The name in which thy heart hath prided 675
 Must change – but, my Zuleika, know,
 That tie is widened – not divided –
 Although thy Sire's my deadliest foe.
 My father was to Giaffir all
 That Selim late was deemed to thee; 680
 That brother wrought a brother's fall,³⁴
 But spared – at least, my infancy –
 And lulled me with a vain deceit
 That yet a like return may meet.
 He reared me – not with tender help – 685
 But like the nephew of a Cain, †
 He watched me like a lion's whelp,
 That gnaws and yet may break his chain.
 My father's blood in every vein
 Is boiling! but for thy dear sake 690
 No present vengeance will I take –
 Though here I must no more remain.
 But first – beloved Zuleika! – hear
 How Giaffir wrought this deed of fear.

* The characters on all Turkish scimitars contain sometimes the name of the place of their manufacture, but more generally a text from the Koran, in letters of gold. Amongst those in my possession is one with a blade of singular construction; it is very broad, and the edge notched into serpentine curves like the ripple of water, or the wavering of flame. I asked the Armenian who sold it what possible use such a figure could add: he said, in Italian, that he did not know; but the Mussulmans had an idea that those of this form gave a severer wound; and liked it because it was “più feroce.” I did not much admire the reason, but bought it for its peculiarity.

† It is to be observed, that every allusion to anything or personage in the Old Testament, such as the Ark, or Cain, is equally the privilege of Mussulman and Jew: indeed, the former profess to be much better acquainted with the lives, true and fabulous, of the patriarchs, than is warranted by our own sacred writ; and not content with Adam, they have a biography of Pre-Adamites. Solomon is the monarch of all necromancy, and Moses a prophet inferior only to Christ and Mohammed. Zuleika is the Persian name of Potiphar's wife; and her amour with Joseph constitutes one of the finest poems in their language. It is, therefore, no violation of costume to put the names of Cain, or Noah, into the mouth of a Moslem.

13.

“How first their strife to rancour grew – 695
 If love or envy made them foes –
 It matters little if I knew;
 In fiery spirits, slights, though few
 And thoughtless, will disturb repose:
 In war Abdallah's arm was strong, 700
 Remembered yet in Bosniac song,
 And Paswan's rebel hordes attest *
 How little love they bore such guest.
 His death is all I need relate,

34: Compare the action of *Hamlet*.

The stern effect of Giaffir's hate; 705
 And how my birth disclosed to me,
 Whate'er beside it makes – hath made me – free.”

* Paswan Oglou, the rebel of Widdin,³⁵ who, for the last years of his life, set the whole power of the Porte at defiance.³⁶

14.

“When Paswan, after years of strife,
 At last for power – but first for life –
 In Widdin's walls too proudly sate – 710
 Our Pachas rallied round the state;
 Nor last nor least in high command
 Each brother led a separate band;
 They gave their horsetails to the wind, *
 And mustering in Sophia's plain 715
 Their tents were pitched – their posts assigned –
 To one, alas! assigned in vain! –
 What need of words? – the deadly bowl,
 By Giaffir's order drugged and given,
 With venom subtle as his soul, 720
 Dismissed Abdallah's hence to heaven.
 Reclined and feverish in the bath,
 He, when the hunter's sport was up,
 But little deemed a brother's wrath
 To quench his thirst had such a cup: 725
 The bowl a bribed attendant bore,
 He drank one draught – nor needed more! †
 If thou my tale, Zuleika, doubt –
 Call Haroun – he can tell it out.

* “Horse-tail,” the standard of a Pacha.

† Giaffir, Pacha of Argyro Castro, or Scutari, I am not sure which, was actually taken off by the Albanian Ali, in the manner described in the text. Ali Pacha, while I was in the country, married the daughter of his victim, some years after the event had taken place at a bath in Sophia, or Adrianople. The poison was mixed in the cup of coffee, which is presented before the sherbet by the bath-keeper, after dressing.

15.

“The deed once done – and Paswan's feud 730
 In part suppressed – though ne'er subdued –
 Abdallah's Pachalick was gained –
 (Thou know'st not what in our Divan
 Can wealth procure for worse than man);
 Abdallah's honours were obtained 735
 By him a brother's murder stained;
 'Tis true – the purchase nearly drained
 His ill-got treasure – soon replaced –
 Would'st question whence? – Survey the waste –
 And ask the squalid peasant how 740
 His gains repay his broiling brow!

³⁵: Widdin is a town in modern Bulgaria. See *Don Juan* VII, 61, 1.

³⁶: Paswan Oglou (1758-1807) beat so many Turkish armies that the Porte capitulated and made him a pasha.

Why me the stern usurper spared,
 Why thus with me the palace shared,
 I know not. Shame, regret, remorse,
 And little fear from infant's force; 745
 Besides, adoption of a son
 Of him whom Heaven accorded none,
 Or some unknown cabal – caprice –
 Preserved me thus; but not in peace;
 He cannot curb his haughty mood, 750
 Nor I forgive a father's blood!

16.

“Within thy father's house are foes;
 Not all who break his bread are true;
 To these should I my birth disclose,
 His days, his very hours, were few: 755
 They only want a heart to lead,
 A hand to point them to the deed.
 But Haroun only knows – or knew –
 This tale, whose close is almost nigh –
 He in Abdallah's palace grew, 760
 And held that post in his Serai
 Which holds he here – he saw him die;
 But what could single slavery do?
 Avenge his lord? – alas! too late –
 Or save his son from such a fate? 765
 He chose the last – and when elate
 With foes subdued, or friends betrayed,
 Proud Giaffir in high triumph sate,
 He led me helpless to his gate,
 And not in vain, it seems, essayed 770
 To save the life for which he prayed.
 The knowledge of my birth secured
 From all and each – but most from me;
 Thus Giaffir's safety was insured,
 Removed he too from Roumelie 775
 To this our Asiatic side,
 Far from our seat by Danube's tide –
 With none but Haroun, who retains
 Such knowledge – and that Nubian feels
 A Tyrant's secrets are but chains, 780
 From which the captive gladly steals,
 And this and more to me reveals.
 Such still to guilt just Allah sends –
 Slaves – tools – accomplices – no friends!

17.

“All this, Zuleika, harshly sounds; 785
 But harsher still my tale must be;
 Howe'er my tongue thy softness wounds,
 Yet I must prove all truth to thee.
 I saw thee start this garb to see,
 Yet is it one I oft have worn, 790

And long must wear – this Galiongée,
 To whom thy plighted vow is sworn,
 Is leader of those pirate hordes,
 Whose laws and lives are on their swords;
 To hear whose desolating tale 795
 Would make thy waning cheek more pale:
 Those arms thou see'st my band have brought,
 The hands that wield are not remote;
 This cup too for the rugged knaves
 Is filled – once quaffed, they ne'er repine: 800
 Our Prophet might forgive the slaves;
 They're only infidels in wine!

18.

“What could I be? – Proscribed at home,
 And taunted to a wish to roam;
 And listless left – for Giaffir's fear 805
 Denied the courser and the spear –
 Though oft – Oh, Mahomet! how oft! –
 In full Divan the despot scoffed,
 As if *my* weak unwilling hand
 Refused the bridle or the brand: 810
 He ever went to war alone,
 And pent me here untried – unknown –
 To Haroun's care with women left,
 By hope unblest, of fame bereft.
 While thou – whose softness long endeared, 815
 Though it unmanned me, still had cheered –
 To Brusa's walls for safety sent,
 Awaited'st there the field's event.
 Haroun, who saw my spirit pining
 Beneath inaction's sluggish yoke, 820
 His captive, though with dread, resigning,
 My thralldom for a season broke,
 On promise to return before
 The day when Giaffir's charge was o'er.
 'Tis vain – my tongue can not impart 825
 My almost drunkenness of heart,³⁷
 When first this liberated eye
 Surveyed Earth – Ocean – Sun and Sky!
 As if my spirit pierced them through,
 And all their inmost wonders knew! 830
 One word alone can paint to thee
 That more than feeling – I was Free!
 Ev'n for thy presence ceased to pine;
 The World – nay – Heaven itself was mine!

37: B. inserts but then erases the following note here: *I must here shelter myself with the Psalmist – is it not David that makes the “Earth reel to and fro like a Drunkard”? If the Globe can be thus lively on seeing its Creator, a liberated Captive can hardly feel less on a first view of his work.*

19.

“The shallop of a trusty Moor 835
 Conveyed me from this idle shore;
 I longed to see the isles that gem
 Old Ocean’s purple diadem:
 I sought by turns, and saw them all: *
 But when and where I joined the crew, 840
 With whom I’m pledged to rise or fall,
 When all that we design to do
 Is done, ’twill then be time more meet
 To tell thee, when the tale’s complete.

* The Turkish notions of almost all islands are confined to the Archipelago, the sea alluded to.

20.

“’Tis true, they are a lawless brood, 845
 But rough in form, nor mild in mood;
 And every creed, and every race,
 With them hath found – may find – a place:
 But open speech, and ready hand,
 Obedience to their chief’s command; 850
 A soul for every enterprise,
 That never sees with terror’s eyes;
 Friendship for each, and faith to all,
 And vengeance vowed for those who fall,
 Have made them fitting instruments 855
 For more than ev’n my own intents.
 And some – and I have studied all
 Distinguished from the vulgar rank,
 But chiefly to my council call
 The wisdom of the cautious Frank – 860
 And some to higher thoughts aspire,
 The last of Lambro’s patriots there *
 Anticipated freedom share;
 And oft around the cavern fire
 On visionary schemes debate, 865
 To snatch the Rayahs from their fate. †
 So let them ease their hearts with prate
 Of equal rights, which man ne’er knew;³⁸
 I have a love for freedom too.
 Ay! let me like the ocean-Patriarch roam, ‡ 870
 Or only known on land the Tartar’s home! §
 My tent on shore, my galley on the sea,
 Are more than cities and Serais to me:
 Borne by my steed, or wafted by my sail,
 Across the desert, or before the gale, 875
 Bound where thou wilt, my barb! or glide, my prow!
 But be the star that guides the wanderer – Thou!
 Thou, my Zuleika! share and bless my bark;
 The Dove of peace and promise to mine ark!

³⁸: B. is anxious that his audience should understand there to be no *political* threat in Selim’s dreaming.

Or, since that hope denied in worlds of strife, 880
 Be thou the rainbow to the storms of life!
 The evening beam that smiles the cloud away,
 And tints to-morrow with prophetic ray!
 Blest – as the Muezzin’s strain from Mecca’s wall
 To pilgrims pure and prostrate at his call; 885
 Soft – as the melody of youthful days,
 That steals the trembling tear of speechless praise;
 Dear – as his native song to Exile’s ears,
 Shall sound each tone thy long-loved voice endears.
 For thee in those bright isles is built a bower 890
 Blooming as Aden in its earliest hour. ||
 A thousand swords, with Selim’s heart and hand,
 Wait – wave – defend – destroy – at thy command!³⁹
 Girt by my band, Zuleika at my side,
 The spoil of nations shall bedeck my bride. 895
 The Haram’s languid years of listless ease
 Are well resigned for cares – for joys like these –
 Not blind to fate, I see, where’er I rove,
 Unnumbered perils – but one only love!
 Yet well my toils shall that fond breast repay, 900
 Though fortune frown or falser friends betray.
 How dear the dream in darkest hours of ill,
 Should all be changed, to find thee faithful still!
 Be but thy soul, like Selim’s, firmly shown;
 To thee be Selim’s tender as thine own; 905
 To soothe each sorrow, share in each delight,
 Blend every thought, do all but disunite!
 Once free, ’tis mine our horde again to guide;
 Friends to each other, foes to aught beside –
 Yet there we follow but the bent assigned 910
 By fatal Nature to man’s warring kind;
 Mark! where his carnage and his conquests cease!
 He makes a solitude – and calls it – peace!⁴⁰
 I like the rest must use my skill or strength,
 But ask no land beyond my sabre’s length: 915
 Power sways but by division – her resource
 The blest alternative of fraud or force!
 Ours be the last; in time deceit may come
 When cities cage us in a social home:
 There ev’n thy soul might err – how oft the heart 920
 Corruption shakes which Peril could not part!
 And woman, more than man, when death or woe,
 Or even Disgrace, would lay her lover low,
 Sunk in the lap of Luxury will shame –
 Away suspicion! – *not* Zuleika’s name! 925
 But life is hazard at the best; and here
 No more remains to win, and much to fear:
 Yes, fear! – the doubt, the dread of losing thee,
 By Osman’s power, and Giaffir’s stern decree.
 That dread shall vanish with the favouring gale, 930
 Which Love to-night hath promised to my sail –

³⁹: Compare *Parisina*, 158.

⁴⁰: Echoes Tacitus, *Agricola*, last sentence of section 30: *ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant* (“... they make a solitude and call it peace”).

No danger daunts the pair his smile hath blest,
 Their steps till roving, but their hearts at rest.
 With thee all toils are sweet, each clime hath charms;
 Earth – sea alike – our world within our arms! 935
 Ay – let the loud winds whistle o’er the deck,
 So that those arms cling closer round my neck –
 The deepest murmur of this lip shall be
 No sigh for safety, but a prayer for thee!⁴¹
 The war of elements no fears impart 940
 To Love, whose deadliest bane is human Art;
There lie the only rocks our course can check;
Here moments menace – *there* are years of wreck!
 But hence, ye thoughts that rise in Horror’s shape!
 This hour bestows, or ever bars escape. 945
 Few words remain of mine my tale to close –
 Of thine but *one* to waft us from our foes;
 Yea – foes – to me will Giaffir’s hate decline?
 And is not Osman, who would part us, thine?

* Lambro Canzani, a Greek, famous for his efforts in 1789-90, for the independence of his country. Abandoned by the Russians, he became a pirate, and the Archipelago was the scene of his enterprises. He is said to be still alive at St Petersburg. He and Riga are the two most celebrated of the Greek revolutionists.⁴²

† “Rayahs,” all who pay the capitation tax, called the “Haratch.”

‡ This first of voyages is one of the few with which the Mussulmans profess much acquaintance.

§ The wandering life of the Arabs, Tartars, and Turkomans, will be found well detailed in any book of Eastern travels. That it possesses a charm peculiar to itself, cannot be denied. A young French renegado confessed to Chateaubriand, that he never found himself alone, galloping in the desert, without a sensation approaching to rapture, which was indescribable.

|| “Jannat al Aden,” the perpetual abode, the Mussulman paradise.

21.

“His head and faith from doubt and death 950
 Returned in time my guard to save;
 Few heard, none told, that o’er the wave
 From isle to isle I roved the while;
 And since, though parted from my band
 Too seldom now I leave the land; 955
 No deed they’ve done, nor deed shall do,
 Ere I have heard and doomed it too;
 I form the plan, decree the spoil,
 ’Tis fit I oftener share the toil.
 But now too long I’ve held thine ear; 960
 Time presses – floats my bark – and here
 We leave behind but hate and fear.

⁴¹: Echoes the words of Medea at Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VII, 66-9: *Scylla rapax canibus Siculo latrare profundo? / nempe tenens, quod amo, gremioque in Iasonis haerens / per freta longa ferar; nihil illum amplexa verebor / aut, siquid metuam, metuam de coniuge solo.*— (Amidst these terrors, while I lye possess / Of him I love, and lean on Jason’s breast, / In tempests unconcern’d I will appear, / Or, only for my husband’s safety fear.)

⁴²: B. and Hobhouse *may* have met Lambro Canzani at Constantinople on Monday July 2nd 1810.

To-morrow Osman with his train
 Arrives – to-night must break thy chain:
 And wouldst thou save that haughty Bey, 965
 Perchance, *his* life who gave thee thine,
 With me this hour away – away!
 But yet, though thou art plighted mine,
 Wouldst thou recall thy willing vow,
 Appalled by truth imparted now, 970
 Here rest I – not to see thee wed;
 But be that peril on *my* head!”

22.

Zuleika, mute and motionless,
 Stood like that statue of distress,
 When, her last hope for ever gone, 975
 The mother hardened into stone;⁴³
 All in the maid that eye could see
 Was but a younger Niobe!
 But ere her lip, or even her eye,
 Essayed to speak, or look reply, 980
 Beneath the garden’s wicket porch
 Far flashed on high a blazing torch!
 Another – and another – and another –⁴⁴
 “Oh! fly – no more – yet now my more than brother!”
 Far, wide, through every thicket spread, 985
 The fearful lights are gleaming red;
 Nor these alone – for each right hand
 Is ready with a sheathless brand.
 They part, pursue, return, and wheel
 With searching flambeau, shining steel; 990
 And last of all, his sabre waving,
 Stern Giaffir in his fury raving:
 And now almost they touch the cave –
 Oh! must that grot be Selim’s grave?

23.

Dauntless he stood – “’Tis come – soon past – 995
 One kiss, Zuleika – ’tis my last;
 But yet my band not far from shore
 May hear this signal, see the flash;
 Yet now too few – the attempt were rash:
 No matter – yet one effort more.” 1000
 Forth to the cavern mouth he stept;
 His pistol’s echo rang on high,
 Zuleika started not nor wept,
 Despair benumbed her breast and eye! –
 “They hear me not, or if they ply 1005
 Their oars, ’tis but to see me die;
 That sound hath drawn my foes more nigh.
 Then forth my father’s scimitar,

43: Niobe: see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI.

44: The line is a precise imitation of one in Act IV of Edward Young’s 1721 tragedy *The Revenge*: see B.’s note to line 17 above.

Thou ne'er hast seen less equal war!
 Farewell, Zuleika! – Sweet! Retire – 1010
 Yet stay within – here linger safe,
 At thee his rage will only chafe.
 Stir not – lest even to thee perchance
 Some erring blade or ball should glance.
 Fear'st thou for him? – may I expire 1015
 If in this strife I seek thy sire!
 No – though by him that poison poured –
 No – though again he call me coward!
 But tamely shall I meet their steel?
 No – as each crest save *his* may feel!" 1020

24.

One bound he made, and gained the sand –
 Already at his feet hath sunk
 The foremost of the prying band –
 A gasping head, a quivering trunk;
 Another falls – but round him close 1025
 A swarming circle of his foes;
 From right to left his path he cleft,
 And almost met the meeting wave;
 His boat appears – not five oars' length –
 His comrades strain with desperate strength – 1030
 Oh! are they yet in time to save?
 His feet the foremost breakers lave;
 His band are plunging in the bay,
 Their sabres glitter through the spray;
 Wet – wild – unwearied to the strand 1035
 They struggle – now they touch the land!
 They come – 'tis but to add to slaughter –
 His heart's best blood is on the water!

25.

Escaped from shot, unharmed by steel,
 Or scarcely grazed its force to feel, 1040
 Had Selim won, betrayed, beset,
 To where the strand and billows met;
 There as his last step left the land,
 And the last death-blow dealt his hand –
 Ah! wherefore did he turn to look 1045
 For her his eye but sought in vain?
 That pause, that fatal gaze he took,
 Hath doomed his death, or fixed his chain.
 Sad proof, in peril and in pain,
 How late will Lover's hope remain! 1050
 His back was to the dashing spray;
 Behind, but close, his comrades lay –
 When, at the instant, hissed the ball –
 "So may the foes of Giaffir fall!"
 Whose voice is heard? whose carbine rang? 1055
 Whose bullet through the night-air sang,
 Too nearly, deadly aimed to err –

'Tis thine – Abdallah's Murderer!
 The father slowly rued thy hate,
 The son hath found a quicker fate; 1060
 Fast from his breast the blood is bubbling,
 The whiteness of the sea-foam troubling –
 If aught his lips essayed to groan,
 The rushing billows choked the tone!

26.

Morn slowly rolls the clouds away; 1065
 Few trophies of the fight are there:
 The shouts that shook the midnight-bay
 Are silent; but some signs of fray
 That strand of strife may bear,
 And fragments of each shivered brand; 1070
 Steps stamped; and dashed into the sand
 The print of many a struggling hand
 May there be marked; nor far remote
 A broken torch, an oarless boat;
 And tangled on the weeds that heap 1075
 The beach where shelving to the deep
 There lies a white Capote!
 'Tis rent in twain – one dark-red stain
 The wave yet ripples o'er in vain –
 But where is he who wore? 1080
 Ye! who would o'er his relics weep,
 Go, seek them where the surges sweep
 Their burthen round Sigæum's steep,
 And cast on Lemnos' shore;⁴⁵
 The sea-birds shriek above the prey, 1085
 O'er which their hungry beaks delay,
 As shaken on his restless pillow,
 His head heaves with the heaving billow;
 That hand, whose motion is not life,
 Yet feebly seems to menace strife, 1090
 Flung by the tossing tide on high,
 Then levelled with the wave –
 What recks it, though that corse shall lie
 Within a living grave?
 The bird that tears that prostrate form 1095
 Hath only robbed the meaner worm!
 The only heart, the only eye
 Had bled or wept to see him die,
 Had seen those scattered limbs composed,
 And mourned above his turban-stone, * 1100
 That heart hath burst – that eye was closed –
 Yea – closed before his own!

* A turban is carved in stone above the graves of *men* only.

27.

45: Compare *Paradise Lost*, I, 746.

By Helle's stream there is a voice of wail!
 And woman's eye is wet – man's cheek is pale:
 Zuleika! last of Giaffir's race, 1105
 Thy destined lord is come too late;
 He sees not – ne'er shall see – thy face!
 Can he not hear
 The loud Wul-wulleh warn his distant ear? *
 Thy handmaids weeping at the gate, 1110
 The Koran-chaunters of the hymn of fate,
 The silent slaves with folded arms that wait,
 Sighs in the hall, and shrieks upon the gale,
 Tell him thy tale!
 Thou didst not view thy Selim fall! 1115
 That fearful moment when he left the cave
 Thy heart grew chill:
 He was thy hope – thy joy – thy love – thine all –
 And that last thought on him thou couldst not save
 Sufficed to kill – 1120
 Burst forth in one wild cry – and all was still.
 Peace to thy broken heart, and virgin grave!
 Ah! happy! but of life to lose the worst!
 That grief – though deep – though fatal – was thy first!
 Thrice happy! ne'er to feel nor fear the force 1125
 Of absence, shame, pride, hate, revenge, remorse!
 And, oh! that pang where more than Madness lies –
 The Worm that will not sleep – and never dies;
 Thought of the gloomy day and ghastly night,
 That dreads the darkness, and yet loathes the light, 1130
 That winds around, and tears the quivering heart!
 Ah! wherefore not consume it – and depart!

 Woe to thee, rash and unrelenting chief!
 Vainly thou heap'st the dust upon thy head, 1135
 Vainly the sackcloth o'er thy limbs doth spread;
 By that same hand Abdallah – Selim – bled –
 Now let it tear thy beard in idle grief;
 Thy pride of heart, thy bride for Osman's bed,
 Thy Daughter's dead! 1140
 Hope of thine age, thy twilight's lonely beam,
 The star hath set that shone on Helle's stream.
 What quenched its ray? – the blood that thou hast shed!
 Hark! to the hurried question of Despair!
 "Where is my child?" – an Echo answers – "Where?" † 1145

* The death-song of the Turkish women. The "silent slaves" are the men, whose notions of decorum forbid complain in public.

† "I came to the place of my birth, and cried, 'The friends of my youth, where are they?' and an Echo answered, 'Where are they?'" – From an Arabic MS. The above quotation (from which the idea in the text is taken) must be already familiar to every reader – it is given in the first annotation, p. 67, of "The Pleasures of Memory;" a poem so well known as to render a reference almost superfluous; but to whose pages all will be delighted to recur.

28.

Within the place of thousand tombs
 That shine beneath, while dark above
 The sad but living cypress glooms,
 And withers not, though branch and leaf
 Are stamped with an eternal grief, 1150
 Like early unrequited Love!
 One spot exists, which ever blooms,
 Ev'n in that deadly grove –
 A single rose is shedding there
 Its lonely lustre, meek and pale, 1155
 It looks as planted by Despair –
 So white – so faint – the slightest gale
 Might whirl the leaves on high;
 And yet, though storms and blight assail,
 And hands more rude than wintry sky 1160
 May wring it from the stem – in vain –
 To-morrow sees it bloom again!
 The stalk some spirit gently rears,
 And waters with celestial tears;
 For well may maids of Helle deem 1165
 That this can be no earthly flower,
 Which mocks the tempest's withering hour,
 And buds unsheltered by a bower;
 Nor droops, though spring refuse her shower,
 Nor woos the summer beam; 1170
 To it the livelong night there sings
 A Bird unseen – but not remote:
 Invisible his airy wings,
 But soft as harp that Houri strings
 His long entrancing note! 1175
 It were the Bulbul; but his throat,
 Though mournful, pours not such a strain;
 For they who listen cannot leave
 The spot, but linger there and grieve,
 As if they loved in vain! 1180
 And yet so sweet the tears they shed,
 'Tis sorrow so unmixed with dread,
 They scarce can bear the morn to break
 That melancholy spell,
 And longer yet would weep and wake, 1185
 He sings so wild and well!
 But when the day-blush bursts from high,
 Expires that magic melody.
 And some have been who could believe,
 (So fondly youthful dreams deceive, 1190
 Yet harsh be they that blame,)
 That note so piercing and profound
 Will shape and syllable its sound
 Into Zuleika's name.*
 'Tis from her cypress' summit heard, 1195
 That melts in air the liquid word;
 'Tis from her lowly virgin earth
 That white rose takes its tender birth.

There late was laid a marble stone;
 Eve saw it placed – the Morrow gone! 1200
 It was no mortal arm that bore
 That deep-fixed pillar to the shore;
 For there, as Helle’s legends tell,
 Next morn ’twas found where Selim fell;
 Lashed by the tumbling tide, whose wave 1205
 Denied his bones a holier grave –
 And there by night, reclined, ’tis said,
 Is seen a ghastly turbaned head –
 And hence extended by the billow,
 ’Tis named the “Pirate-phantom’s pillow!” 1210
 Where first it lay, that mourning flower
 Hath flourished; flourisheth this hour,
 Alone and dewy, coldly pure and pale;
 As weeping Beauty’s cheek at Sorrow’s tale!

* “And airy tongues that syllable men’s names.” – MILTON.⁴⁶ For a belief that the souls of the dead inhabit the form of birds, we need not travel to the East. Lord Lyttleton’s ghost story, the belief of the Duchess of Kendal, that George I. flew into her window in the shape of a raven (see Orford’s “Reminiscences”), and many other instances, bring this superstition nearer home.⁴⁷ The most singular was the whim of a Worcester lady, who, believing her daughter to exist in the shape of a singing bird, literally furnished her pew in the cathedral with cages full of the kind; and as she was rich, and a benefactress in beautifying the church, no objection was made to her harmless folly. For this anecdote, see Orford’s “Letters.”

46: Milton, *Comus*, 208.

47: B. could have referred to *Twelfth Night*, IV, ii, 49-50

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