

The Giaour
and other poems

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by

Lord Byron

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CONTENTS

POEMS 1809–1813	1
<i>THE GIRL OF CADIZ</i>	1
<i>LINES WRITTEN IN AN ALBUM, AT MALTA</i>	3
<i>TO FLORENCE</i>	4
<i>STANZAS COMPOSED DURING A THUNDERSTORM</i>	6
<i>STANZAS WRITTEN IN PASSING THE AMBRACIAN GULF</i>	10
<i>WRITTEN AFTER SWIMMING FROM SESTOS TO ABYDOS</i>	11
<i>LINES IN THE TRAVELLERS' BOOK AT ORCHOMENUS</i>	13
<i>MAID OF ATHENS, ERE WE PART</i>	13
<i>FRAGMENT FROM THE "MONK OF ATHOS"</i>	15
<i>LINES WRITTEN BENEATH A PICTURE</i>	16
<i>TRANSLATION OF THE FAMOUS GREEK WAR SONG</i>	16
<i>TRANSLATION OF THE ROMAIC SONG</i>	18
<i>ON PARTING</i>	20
<i>FAREWELL TO MALTA</i>	21
<i>NEWSTEAD ABBEY</i>	23
<i>EPISTLE TO A FRIEND</i>	24
<i>TO THYRZA</i>	26
<i>AWAY, AWAY, YE NOTES OF WOE!</i>	28
<i>ONE STRUGGLE MORE, AND I AM FREE</i>	30
<i>EUTHANASIA</i>	32
<i>AND THOU ART DEAD, AS YOUNG AND FAIR</i>	34
<i>LINES TO A LADY WEEPING</i>	37
<i>IF SOMETIMES IN THE HAUNTS OF MEN</i>	38
<i>ON A CORNELIAN HEART WHICH WAS BROKEN</i>	39

<i>THE CHAIN I GAVE</i>	40
<i>LINES WRITTEN ON A BLANK LEAF OF THE PLEASURES OF MEMORY</i>	41
<i>ADDRESS, SPOKEN AT THE OPENING OF DRURY-LANE THEATRE, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1812</i>	42
<i>PARENTHETICAL ADDRESS</i>	44
<i>VERSES FOUND IN A SUMMER-HOUSE AT HALES-OWEN</i>	47
<i>REMEMBER THEE! REMEMBER THEE!</i>	47
<i>TO TIME</i>	48
<i>TRANSLATION OF A ROMAIC LOVE SONG</i>	49
<i>THOU ART NOT FALSE, BUT THOU ART FICKLE</i>	51
<i>ON BEING ASKED WHAT WAS THE "ORIGIN OF LOVE"</i>	53
<i>ON THE QUOTATION</i>	53
<i>REMEMBER HIM, WHOM PASSION'S POWER</i>	54
<i>IMPROMPTU, IN REPLY TO A FRIEND</i>	57
<i>SONNET</i>	57
<i>SONNET</i>	58
<i>FROM. THE PORTUGUESE</i>	59
THE GIAOUR: A FRAGMENT OF A TURKISH TALE	60
ADVERTISEMENT	61
THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE	113
CANTO THE FIRST	114
CANTO THE SECOND	134
THE CORSAIR: A TALE	163
CANTO THE FIRST	165
CANTO THE SECOND	188
CANTO THE THIRD	210

ODE TO NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE	238
LARA: A TALE	246
CANTO THE FIRST	246
CANTO THE SECOND	270
HEBREW MELODIES	295
ADVERTISEMENT	295
<i>SHE WALKS IN BEAUTY</i>	295
<i>THE HARP THE MONARCH MINSTREL SWEPT</i>	296
<i>IF THAT HIGH WORLD</i>	297
<i>THE WILD GAZELLE</i>	298
<i>OH! WEEP FOR THOSE</i>	299
<i>ON JORDAN'S BANKS</i>	299
<i>OH! SNATCHED AWAY IN BEAUTY'S BLOOM</i>	301
<i>MY SOUL IS DARK</i>	302
<i>I SAW THEE WEEP</i>	302
<i>THY DAYS ARE DONE</i>	303
SAUL	304
<i>SONG OF SAUL BEFORE HIS LAST BATTLE</i>	305
<i>"ALL IS VANITY, SAITH THE PREACHER"</i>	306
<i>WHEN COLDNESS WRAPS THIS SUFFERING CLAY</i>	307
<i>VISION OF BELSHAZZAR</i>	308
<i>SUN OF THE SLEEPLESS!</i>	310
<i>WERE MY BOSOM AS FALSE AS THOU DEEM'ST IT TO BE</i>	310
<i>HEROD'S LAMENT FOR MARIAMNE</i>	311
<i>ON THE DAY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM BY TITUS</i>	312
<i>BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON WE SAT DOWN AND WEPT</i>	313

<i>"BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON"</i>	314
<i>THE DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB</i>	315
<i>A SPIRIT PASSED BEFORE ME</i>	316
POEMS 1814–1816	317
<i>FAREWELL! IF EVER FONDEST PRAYER</i>	317
<i>WHEN WE TWO PARTED</i>	318
<i>[LOVE AND GOLD]</i>	319
<i>STANZAS FOR MUSIC</i>	321
<i>ADDRESS INTENDED TO BE RECITED AT THE CALEDONIAN MEETING</i>	322
<i>ELEGIAC STANZAS ON THE DEATH OF SIR PETER PARKER, BART.</i>	324
<i>JULIAN</i>	325
<i>TO BELSHAZZAR</i>	328
<i>STANZAS FOR MUSIC</i>	329
<i>ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF DORSET</i>	330
<i>STANZAS FOR MUSIC</i>	331
<i>NAPOLEON'S FAREWELL</i>	332
<i>FROM THE FRENCH</i>	333
<i>ODE FROM THE FRENCH</i>	334
<i>STANZAS FOR MUSIC</i>	338
<i>ON THE STAR OF "THE LEGION OF HONOUR"</i>	339
<i>STANZAS FOR MUSIC</i>	341
THE SIEGE OF CORINTH	342
ADVERTISEMENT	342
PARISINA	384
ADVERTISEMENT	384

POEMS OF THE SEPARATION

408

FARE THEE WELL

408

A SKETCH

410

STANZAS TO AUGUSTA

414

POEMS 1809–1813

THE GIRL OF CADIZ

1.

Oh never talk again to me
Of northern climes and British ladies;
It has not been your lot to see,
Like me, the lovely Girl of Cadiz.
Although her eye be not of blue,
Nor fair her locks, like English lasses,
How far its own expressive hue
The languid azure eye surpasses!

2.

Prometheus-like from heaven she stole
The fire that through those silken lashes
In darkest glances seems to roll,
From eyes that cannot hide their flashes:
And as along her bosom steal
In lengthened flow her raven tresses,
You'd swear each clustering lock could feel,
And curled to give her neck caresses.

3.

Our English maids are long to woo,
And frigid even in possession;
And if their charms be fair to view,
Their lips are slow at Love's confession;

But, born beneath a brighter sun,
For love ordained the Spanish maid is,
And who,—when fondly, fairly won,—
Enchants you like the Girl of Cadiz?

4.

The Spanish maid is no coquette,
Nor joys to see a lover tremble,
And if she love, or if she hate,
Alike she knows not to dissemble.
Her heart can ne'er be bought or sold—
Howe'er it beats, it beats sincerely;
And, though it will not bend to gold,
'Twill love you long and love you dearly.

5.

The Spanish girl that meets your love
Ne'er taunts you with a mock denial,
For every thought is bent to prove
Her passion in the hour of trial.
When thronging foemen menace Spain,
She dares the deed and shares the danger;
And should her lover press the plain,
She hurls the spear, her love's avenger.

6.

And when, beneath the evening star,
She mingles in the gay Bolero,
Or sings to her attuned guitar
Of Christian knight or Moorish hero,

Or counts her beads with fairy hand
 Beneath the twinkling rays of Hesper,
Or joins Devotion's choral band,
 To chaunt the sweet and hallowed vesper;—

7.

In each her charms the heart must move
 Of all who venture to behold her;
Then let not maids less fair reprove
 Because her bosom is not colder:
Through many a clime 'tis mine to roam
 Where many a soft and melting maid is,
But none abroad, and few at home,
 May match the dark-eyed Girl of Cadiz. 1809.

LINES WRITTEN IN AN ALBUM, AT MALTA

1.

As o'er the cold sepulchral stone
 Some *name* arrests the passer-by;
Thus, when thou view'st this page alone,
 May *mine* attract thy pensive eye!

2.

And when by thee that name is read,
 Perchance in some succeeding year,
Reflect on *me* as on the *dead*,
 And think my *Heart* is buried *here*. Malta, September 14, 1809.

TO FLORENCE

1.

Oh Lady! when I left the shore,
The distant shore which gave me birth,
I hardly thought to grieve once more,
To quit another spot on earth:

2.

Yet here, amidst this barren isle,
Where panting Nature, droops the head,
Where only thou art seen to smile,
I view my parting hour with dread.

3.

Though far from Albin's craggy shore,
Divided by the dark-blue main;
A few, brief, rolling seasons o'er,
Perchance I view her cliffs again:

4.

But wheresoe'er I now may roam,
Through scorching clime, and varied sea,
Though Time restore me to my home,
I ne'er shall bend mine eyes on thee:

5.

On thee, in whom at once conspire
All charms which heedless hearts can move,
Whom but to see is to admire,
And, oh! forgive the word—to love.

6.

Forgive the word, in one who ne'er
 With such a word can more offend;
And since thy heart I cannot share,
 Believe me, what I am, thy friend.

7.

And who so cold as look on thee,
 Thou lovely wand'rer, and be less?
Nor be, what man should ever be,
 The friend of Beauty in distress?

8.

Ah! who would think that form had past
 Through Danger's most destructive path,
Had braved the death-winged tempest's blast,
 And 'scaped a Tyrant's fiercer wrath?

9.

Lady! when I shall view the walls
 Where free Byzantium once arose,
And Stamboul's Oriental halls
 The Turkish tyrants now enclose;

10.

Though mightiest in the lists of fame,
 That glorious city still shall be;
On me 'twill hold a dearer claim,
 As spot of thy nativity:

11.

And though I bid thee now farewell,

When I behold that wondrous scene—

Since where thou art I may not dwell—

'Twill soothe to be where thou hast been.

September, 1809.

STANZAS COMPOSED DURING A THUNDERSTORM

Composed Oct. 11, 1809, during the night in a thunderstorm, when the guides had lost the road to Zitza, near the range of mountains formerly called Pindus, un Albania.

1.

Chill and mirk is the nightly blast,

Where Pindus' mountains rise,

And angry clouds are pouring fast

The vengeance of the skies.

2.

Our guides are gone, our hope is lost,

And lightnings, as they play,

But show where rocks our path have crost,

Or gild the torrent's spray.

3.

Is yon a cot I saw, though low?

When lightning broke the gloom—

How welcome were its shade!—ah, no!

'Tis but a Turkish tomb.

4.

Through sounds of foaming waterfalls,
I hear a voice exclaim—
My way-worn countryman, who calls
On distant England's name.

5.

A shot is fired—by foe or friend?
Another—'tis to tell
The mountain-peasants to descend,
And lead us where they dwell.

6.

Oh! who in such a night will dare
To tempt the wilderness?
And who 'mid thunder-peals can hear
Our signal of distress?

7.

And who that heard our shouts would rise
To try the dubious road?
Nor rather deem from nightly cries
That outlaws were abroad.

8.

Clouds burst, skies flash, oh, dreadful hour
More fiercely pours the storm!
Yet here one thought has still the power
To keep my bosom warm.

9.

While wandering through each broken path,
O'er brake and craggy brow;
While elements exhaust their wrath,
Sweet Florence, where art thou?

10.

Not on the sea, not on the sea—
Thy bark hath long been gone:
Oh, may the storm that pours on me,
Bow down my head alone!

11.

Full swiftly blew the swift Siroc,
When last I pressed thy lip;
And long ere now, with foaming shock,
Impelled thy gallant ship.

12.

Now thou art safe; nay, long ere now
Hast trod the shore of Spain;
'Twere hard if aught so fair as thou
Should linger on the main.

13.

And since I now remember thee
In darkness and in dread,
As in those hours of revelry
Which Mirth and Music sped;

14.

Do thou, amid the fair white walls,
If Cadiz yet be free,
At times from out her latticed halls
Look o'er the dark blue sea;

15.

Then think upon Calypso's isles,
Endeared by days gone by;
To others give a thousand smiles,
To me a single sigh.

16.

And when the admiring circle mark
The paleness of thy face,
A half-formed tear, a transient spark
Of melancholy grace,

17.

Again thou'lt smile, and blushing shun
Some coxcomb's raillery;
Nor own for once thou thought'st on one,
Who ever thinks on thee.

18.

Though smile and sigh alike are vain,
When severed hearts repine,
My spirit flies o'er Mount and Main,
And mourns in search of *thine*.

October 11, 1809.

STANZAS WRITTEN IN PASSING THE AMBRACIAN GULF

1.

Through cloudless skies, in silvery sheen,
Full beams the moon on Actium's coast:
And on these waves, for Egypt's queen,
The ancient world was won and lost.

2.

And now upon the scene I look,
The azure grave of many a Roman;
Where stern Ambition once forsook
His wavering crown to follow *Woman*.

3.

Florence! whom I will love as well
(As ever yet was said or sung,
Since Orpheus sang his spouse from Hell)
Whilst *thou* art *fair* and *I* am *young*;

4.

Sweet Florence! those were pleasant times,
When worlds were staked for Ladies' eyes:
Had bards as many realms as rhymes,
Thy charms might raise new Antonies.

5.

Though Fate forbids such things to be,
Yet, by thine eyes and ringlets curled!
I cannot *lose* a *world* for thee,
But would not lose *thee* for a *World*.

November 14, 1809.

THE SPELL IS BROKE, THE CHARM IS FLOWN!

WRITTEN AT ATHENS, JANUARY 16, 1810

The spell is broke, the charm is flown!

Thus is it with Life's fitful fever:

We madly smile when we should groan;

Delirium is our best deceiver.

Each lucid interval of thought

Recalls the woes of Nature's charter;

And *He* that acts as *wise men ought*,

But *lives*—as Saints have died—a martyr.

WRITTEN AFTER SWIMMING FROM SESTOS TO ABYDOS

On the 3rd of May, 1810, while the *Salsette* (Captain Bathurst) was lying in the Dardanelles, Lieutenant Ekenhead, of that frigate, and the writer of these rhymes, swam from the European shore to the Asiatic—by the by, from Abydos to Sestos would have been more correct. The whole distance, from the place whence we started to our landing on the other side, including the length we were carried by the current, was computed by those on board the frigate at upwards of four English miles, though the actual breadth is barely one. The rapidity of the current is such that no boat can row directly across, and it may, in some measure, be estimated from the circumstance of the whole distance being accomplished by one of the parties in an hour and five, and by the other in an hour and ten minutes. The water was extremely cold, from the melting of the mountain snows. About three weeks before, in April, we had made an attempt; but having ridden all the way from the Troad the same morning, and the water being of an icy dullness, we found it necessary to postpone the completion till the frigate anchored below the castles, when we swam the straits as just stated, entering a considerable way above the European, and landing below the Asiatic, fort. Chevalier says that a young Jew swam the same distance for his mistress; and Olivier mentions its having been done by a Neapolitan; but our consul, Tarragona, remembered neither of these circumstances, and tried to dissuade us from the attempt. A number of the *Salsette's* crew were known to have accomplished a greater distance; and the only thing that surprised me was that, as doubts had been entertained of the truth of Leander's story, no traveller had ever endeavoured to ascertain its practicability.

1.

If, in the month of dark December,
 Leander, who was nightly wont
(What maid will not the tale remember?)
 To cross thy stream, broad Hellespont!

2.

If, when the wintry tempest roared,
 He sped to Hero, nothing loth,
And thus of old thy current poured,
 Fair Venus! how I pity both!

3.

For *me*, degenerate modern wretch,
 Though in the genial month of May,
My dripping limbs I faintly stretch,
 And think I've done a feat to-day.

4.

But since he crossed the rapid tide,
 According to the doubtful story,
To woo,—and—Lord knows what beside,
 And swam for Love, as I for Glory;

5.

'Twere hard to say who fared the best:
 Sad mortals! thus the Gods still plague you!
He lost his labour, I my jest:
 For he was drowned, and I've the ague.

May 9, 1810.

LINES IN THE TRAVELLERS' BOOK AT ORCHOMENUS

IN THIS BOOK A TRAVELLER HAD WRITTEN:—

"Fair Albion, smiling, sees her son depart
To trace the birth and nursery of art:
Noble his object, glorious is his aim;
He comes to Athens, and he—writes his name."

BENEATH WHICH LORD BYRON INSERTED THE FOLLOWING:—

The modest bard, like many a bard unknown,
Rhymes on our names, but wisely hides his own;
But yet, whoe'er he be, to say no worse,
His name would bring more credit than his verse. 1810.

MAID OF ATHENS, ERE WE PART

Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ

1.

Maid of Athens, ere we part,
Give, oh give me back my heart!
Or, since that has left my breast,
Keep it now, and take the rest!
Hear my vow before I go,
Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ.ⁱ

i. Romaic expression of tenderness. If I translate it, I shall affront the gentlemen, as it may seem that I supposed they could not; and if I do not, I may affront the ladies. For fear of misconstruction on the part of the latter, I shall do so, begging pardon of the learned. It means, "My life, I love you!" which sounds very prettily in all languages, and is as much in fashion in Greece at this day as, Juvenal tells us, the two first words were amongst the Roman ladies, whose erotic expressions were all Hellenised.

2.

By those tresses unconfined,
 Wooed by each Ægean wind;
 By those lids whose jetty fringe
 Kiss thy soft cheeks' blooming tinge;
 By those wild eyes like the roe,
 Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ.

3.

By that lip I long to taste;
 By that zone-encircled waist;
 By all the token-flowersⁱ that tell
 What words can never speak so well;
 By love's alternate joy and woe,
 Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ.

i. In the East (where ladies are not taught to write, lest they should scribble assignations), flowers, cinders, pebbles, etc., convey the sentiments of the parties, by that universal deputy of Mercury—an old woman. A cinder says, "I burn for thee;" a bunch of flowers tied with hair, "Take me and fly;" but a pebble declares—what nothing else can.

4.

Maid of Athens! I am gone:
 Think of me, sweet! when alone.
 Though I fly to Istambol,
 Athens holds my heart and soul:
 Can I cease to love thee? No!
 Ζωή μου, σᾶς ἀγαπῶ.

Athens, 1810.

FRAGMENT FROM THE "MONK OF ATHOS"

1.

Beside the confines of the Ægean main,
Where northward Macedonia bounds the flood,
And views opposed the Asiatic plain,
Where once the pride of lofty Ilion stood,
Like the great Father of the giant brood,
With lowering port majestic Athos stands,
Crowned with the verdure of eternal wood,
As yet unspoiled by sacrilegious hands,
And throws his mighty shade o'er seas and distant lands.

2.

And deep embosomed in his shady groves
Full many a convent rears its glittering spire,
Mid scenes where Heavenly Contemplation loves
To kindle in her soul her hallowed fire,
Where air and sea with rocks and woods conspire
To breathe a sweet religious calm around,
Weaning the thoughts from every low desire,
And the wild waves that break with murmuring sound
Along the rocky shore proclaim it holy ground.

3.

Sequestered shades where Piety has given
A quiet refuge from each earthly care,
Whence the rapt spirit may ascend to Heaven!

Oh, ye condemned the ills of life to bear!
As with advancing age your woes increase,
What bliss amidst these solitudes to share
The happy foretaste of eternal Peace,
Till Heaven in mercy bids your pain and sorrows cease.

LINES WRITTEN BENEATH A PICTURE

1.

Dear object of defeated care!
Though now of Love and thee bereft,
To reconcile me with despair
Thine image and my tears are left.

2.

'Tis said with Sorrow Time can cope;
But this I feel can ne'er be true:
For by the death-blow of my Hope
My Memory immortal grew.

Athens, January, 1811.

TRANSLATION OF THE FAMOUS GREEK WAR SONG

"Δεϋτε παῖδες τῶν Ἑλλήνων."

The song Δεϋτε παῖδες, etc., was written by Riga, who perished in the attempt to revolutionize Greece. This translation is as literal as the author could make it in verse. It is of the same measure as that of the original.

Sons of the Greeks, arise!
The glorious hour's gone forth,
And, worthy of such ties,
Display who gave us birth.

CHORUS.

Sons of Greeks! let us go
In arms against the foe,
Till their hated blood shall flow
In a river past our feet.

Then manfully despising
The Turkish tyrant's yoke,
Let your country see you rising,
And all her chains are broke.
Brave shades of chiefs and sages,
Behold the coming strife!
Hellénes of past ages,
Oh, start again to life!
At the sound of my trumpet, breaking
Your sleep, oh, join with me!
And the seven-hilled cityⁱ seeking,
Fight, conquer, till we're free.
Sons of Greeks, etc.

i. Constantinople. "Ἐπτάλοφος."

Sparta, Sparta, why in slumbers
Lethargic dost thou lie?
Awake, and join thy numbers
With Athens, old ally!
Leonidas recalling,
That chief of ancient song,
Who saved ye once from falling,
The terrible! the strong!

Who made that bold diversion
 In old Thermopylæ,
And warring with the Persian
 To keep his country free;
With his three hundred waging
 The battle, long he stood,
And like a lion raging,
 Expired in seas of blood.
 Sons of Greeks, etc.

TRANSLATION OF THE ROMAIC SONG

"Μπένω μεσ' τὸ περιβόλι,
Ὠραιοτάτη Χαηδή," κ.τ.λ.

The song from which this is taken is a great favourite with the young girls of Athens of all classes. Their manner of singing it is by verses in rotation, the whole number present joining in the chorus. I have heard it frequently at our "χόροι" in the winter of 1810–11. The air is plaintive and pretty.

I enter thy garden of roses,
 Belovèd and fair Haidee,
Each morning where Flora reposes,
 For surely I see her in thee.
Oh, Lovely! thus low I implore thee,
 Receive this fond truth from my tongue,
Which utters its song to adore thee,
 Yet trembles for what it has sung;
As the branch, at the bidding of Nature,
 Adds fragrance and fruit to the tree,
Through her eyes, through her every feature,
 Shines the soul of the young Haidée.

But the loveliest garden grows hateful
 When Love has abandoned the bowers;
Bring me hemlock—since mine is ungrateful,
 That herb is more fragrant than flowers.
The poison, when poured from the chalice,
 Will deeply embitter the bowl;
But when drunk to escape from thy malice,
 The draught shall be sweet to my soul.
Too cruel! in vain I implore thee
 My heart from these horrors to save:
Will nought to my bosom restore thee?
 Then open the gates of the grave.

As the chief who to combat advances
 Secure of his conquest before,
Thus thou, with those eyes for thy lances,
 Hast pierced through my heart to its core.
Ah, tell me, my soul! must I perish
 By pangs which a smile would dispel?
Would the hope, which thou once bad'st me cherish,
 For torture repay me too well?
Now sad is the garden of roses,
 Beloved but false Haidée!
There Flora all withered reposes,
 And mourns o'er thine absence with me.

ON PARTING

1.

The kiss, dear maid! thy lip has left
 Shall never part from mine,
Till happier hours restore the gift
 Untainted back to thine.

2.

Thy parting glance, which fondly beams,
 An equal love may see:
The tear that from thine eyelid streams
 Can weep no change in me.

3.

I ask no pledge to make me blest
 In gazing when alone;
Nor one memorial for a breast,
 Whose thoughts are all thine own.

4.

Nor need I write—to tell the tale
 My pen were doubly weak:
Oh! what can idle words avail,
 Unless the heart could speak?

5.

By day or night, in weal or woe,
 That heart, no longer free,
Must bear the love it cannot show,
 And silent ache for thee.

March, 1811.