

# Siege of Corinth



Lord George Byron

"June 17, 1816.

"In the year 17—, having for some time determined on a journey through countries not hitherto much frequented by travellers, I set out, accompanied by a friend, whom I shall designate by the name of Augustus Darvell. He was a few years my elder, and a man of considerable fortune and ancient family, advantages which an extensive capacity prevented him alike from undervaluing and overrating. Some peculiar circumstances in his private history had rendered him to me an object of attention, of interest, and even of regard, which neither the reserve of his manners, nor occasional indication of an inquietude at times approaching to alienation of mind, could extinguish.

"I was yet young in life, which I had begun early; but my intimacy with him was of a recent date: we had been educated at the same schools and university; but his progress through these had preceded mine, and he had been deeply initiated into what is called the world, while I was yet in my novitiate. While thus engaged, I heard much both of his past and present life; and, although in these accounts there were many and irreconcilable contradictions, I could still gather from the whole that he was a being of no common order, and one who, whatever pains he might take to avoid remark, would still be remarkable. I had cultivated his acquaintance subsequently, and endeavoured to obtain his friendship, but this last appeared to be unattainable: whatever affections he might have possessed seemed now, some to have been extinguished, and others to be centred: that his feelings were acute, I had sufficient opportunities of observing; for, although he could control, he could not altogether disguise them; still he had a power of giving to one passion the appearance of another, in such a manner that it was difficult to define the nature of what was working within him; and the expressions of his features would vary so rapidly, though slightly, that it was useless to trace them to their sources.

It was evident that he was a prey to some cureless disquiet; but whether it arose from ambition, love, remorse, grief, from one or all of these, or merely from a morbid temperament akin to disease, I could not discover: there were circumstances alleged which might have justified the application to each of these causes; but, as I have before said, these were so contradictory and contradicted, that none could be fixed upon with accuracy. Where there is mystery, it is generally supposed that there must also be evil: I know not how this may be, but in him there certainly was the one, though I could not ascertain the extent of the other — and felt loth, as far as regarded himself, to believe in its existence. My advances were received with sufficient

coldness: but I was young, and not easily discouraged, and at length succeeded in obtaining, to a certain degree, that common-place intercourse and moderate confidence of common and every-day concerns, created and cemented by similarity of pursuit and frequency of meeting, which is called intimacy, or friendship, according to the ideas of him who uses those words to express them.

"Darvell had already travelled extensively; and to him I had applied for information with regard to the conduct of my intended journey. It was my secret wish that he might be prevailed on to accompany me; it was also a probable hope, founded upon the shadowy restlessness which I observed in him, and to which the animation which he appeared to feel on such subjects, and his apparent indifference to all by which he was more immediately surrounded, gave fresh strength. This wish I first hinted, and then expressed: his answer, though I had partly expected it, gave me all the pleasure of surprise — he consented; and, after the requisite arrangement, we commenced our voyages. After journeying through various countries of the south of Europe, our attention was turned towards the East, according to our original destination; and it was in my progress through these regions that the incident occurred upon which will turn what I may have to relate.

"The constitution of Darvell, which must from his appearance have been in early life more than usually robust, had been for some time gradually giving away, without the intervention of any apparent disease: he had neither cough nor hectic, yet he became daily more enfeebled; his habits were temperate, and he neither declined nor complained of fatigue; yet he was evidently wasting away: he became more and more silent and sleepless, and at length so seriously altered, that my alarm grew proportionate to what I conceived to be his danger.

"We had determined, on our arrival at Smyrna, on an excursion to the ruins of Ephesus and Sardis, from which I endeavoured to dissuade him in his present state of indisposition — but in vain: there appeared to be an oppression on his mind, and a solemnity in his manner, which ill corresponded with his eagerness to proceed on what I regarded as a mere party of pleasure little suited to a valetudinarian; but I opposed him no longer — and in a few days we set off together, accompanied only by a serrugee and a single janizary.

"We had passed halfway towards the remains of Ephesus, leaving behind us the more fertile environs of Smyrna, and were entering upon that wild and tenantless tract through the marshes and defiles which lead to the few huts yet lingering over the

broken columns of Diana — the roofless walls of expelled Christianity, and the still more recent but complete desolation of abandoned mosques — when the sudden and rapid illness of my companion obliged us to halt at a Turkish cemetery, the turbaned tombstones of which were the sole indication that human life had ever been a sojourner in this wilderness. The only caravansera we had seen was left some hours behind us, not a vestige of a town or even cottage was within sight or hope, and this 'city of the dead' appeared to be the sole refuge of my unfortunate friend, who seemed on the verge of becoming the last of its inhabitants.

"In this situation, I looked round for a place where he might most conveniently repose: contrary to the usual aspect of Mahometan burial-grounds, the cypresses were in this few in number, and these thinly scattered over its extent; the tombstones were mostly fallen, and worn with age: upon one of the most considerable of these, and beneath one of the most spreading trees, Darvell supported himself, in a half-reclining posture, with great difficulty. He asked for water. I had some doubts of our being able to find any, and prepared to go in search of it with hesitating despondency: but he desired me to remain; and turning to Suleiman, our janizary, who stood by us smoking with great tranquility, he said, 'Suleiman, verbana su,' (i.e. 'bring some water,') and went on describing the spot where it was to be found with great minuteness, at a small well for camels, a few hundred yards to the right: the janizary obeyed. I said to Darvell, 'How did you know this?' He replied, 'From our situation; you must perceive that this place was once inhabited, and could not have been so without springs: I have also been here before.'

" 'You have been here before! How came you never to mention this to me? and what could you be doing in a place where no one would remain a moment longer than they could help it?'

"To this question I received no answer. In the mean time Suleiman returned with the water, leaving the serrugee and the horses at the fountain. The quenching of his thirst had the appearance of reviving him for a moment; and I conceived hopes of his being able to proceed, or at least to return, and I urged the attempt. He was silent — and appeared to be collecting his spirits for an effort to speak. He began —

" 'This is the end of my journey, and of my life; I came here to die; but I have a request to make, a command — for such my last words must be. — You will observe it?'

" 'Most certainly; but I have better hopes.'

" 'I have no hopes, nor wishes, but this — conceal my death from every human being.'

" 'I hope there will be no occasion; that you will recover, and —'

" 'Peace! it must be so: promise this.'

" 'I do.'

" 'Swear it, by all that —' He here dictated an oath of great solemnity.

" 'There is no occasion for this. I will observe your request; and to doubt me is —'

" 'It cannot be helped, you must swear.'

"I took the oath, it appeared to relieve him. He removed a seal ring from his finger, on which were some Arabic characters, and presented it to me. He proceeded —

" 'On the ninth day of the month, at noon precisely (what month you please, but this must be the day), you must fling this ring into the salt springs which run into the Bay of Eleusis; the day after, at the same hour, you must repair to the ruins of the temple of Ceres, and wait one hour.'

" 'Why?'

" 'You will see.'

" 'The ninth day of the month, you say?'

" 'The ninth.'

"As I observed that the present was the ninth day of the month, his countenance changed, and he paused. As he sat, evidently becoming more feeble, a stork, with a snake in her beak, perched upon a tombstone near us; and, without devouring her prey, appeared to be steadfastly regarding us. I know not what impelled me to drive it away, but the attempt was useless; she made a few circles in the air, and returned exactly to the same spot. Darvell pointed to it, and smiled — he spoke — I know not whether to himself or to me — but the words were only, 'Tis well!'

" 'What is well? What do you mean?'

" 'No matter; you must bury me here this evening, and exactly where that bird is now perched. You know the rest of my injunctions.'

"He then proceeded to give me several directions as to the manner in which his death might be best concealed. After these were finished, he exclaimed, 'You perceive that bird?'

" 'Certainly.'

" 'And the serpent writhing in her beak?'

" 'Doubtless: there is nothing uncommon in it; it is her natural prey. But it is odd that she does not devour it.'

"He smiled in a ghastly manner, and said faintly. 'It is not yet time!' As he spoke, the stork flew away. My eyes followed it for a moment — it could hardly be longer than ten might be counted. I felt Darvell's weight, as it were, increase upon my shoulder, and, turning to look upon his face, perceived that he was dead!

"I was shocked with the sudden certainty which could not be mistaken — his countenance in a few minutes became nearly black. I should have attributed so rapid a change to poison, had I not been aware that he had no opportunity of receiving it unperceived. The day was declining, the body was rapidly altering, and nothing remained but to fulfil his request. With the aid of Suleiman's ataghan and my own sabre, we scooped a shallow grave upon the spot which Darvell had indicated: the earth easily gave way, having already received some Mahometan tenant. We dug as deeply as the time permitted us, and throwing the dry earth upon all that remained of the singular being so lately departed, we cut a few sods of greener turf from the less withered soil around us, and laid them upon his sepulchre.

"Between astonishment and grief, I was tearless."

1.

Many a vanished year and age,  
And tempest's breath, and battle's rage,  
Have swept o'er Corinth; yet she stands  
A fortress formed to Freedom's hands.  
The whirlwind's wrath, the earthquake's shock  
Have left untouched her hoary rock,  
The keystone of a land, which still,  
Though fall'n, looks proudly on that hill,  
The landmark to the double tide  
That purpling rolls on either side,  
As if their waters chafed to meet,  
Yet pause and crouch beneath her feet.  
But could the blood before her shed  
Since first Timoleon's brother bled,  
Or baffled Persia's despot fled,  
Arise from out the earth which drank  
The stream of slaughter as it sank,  
That sanguine ocean would o'erflow  
Her isthmus idly spread below:  
Or could the bones of all the slain,  
Who perished there, be piled again,  
That rival pyramid would rise  
More mountain-like, through those clear skies  
Than yon tower-capped Acropolis,  
Which seems the very clouds to kiss.

2.

On dun Cithæron's ridge appears  
The gleam of twice ten thousand spears;  
And downward to the Isthmian plain,  
From shore to shore of either main,  
The tent is pitched, the crescent shines  
Along the Moslem's leaguering lines;  
And the dusk Spahi's bands advance  
Beneath each bearded pasha's glance;  
And far and wide as eye can reach

The turbaned cohorts throng the beach;  
And there the Arab's camel kneels,  
And there his steed the Tartar wheels;  
The Turcoman hath left his herd,  
The sabre round his loins to gird;  
And there the volleying thunders pour,  
Till waves grow smoother to the roar.  
The trench is dug, the cannon's breath  
Wings the far hissing globe of death;  
Fast whirl the fragments from the wall,  
Which crumbles with the ponderous ball;  
And from that wall the foe replies,  
O'er dusty plain and smoky skies,  
With fires that answer fast and well  
The summons of the Infidel.

3.

But near and nearest to the wall  
Of those who wish and work its fall,  
With deeper skill in war's black art  
Than Othman's sons, and high of heart  
As any chief that ever stood  
Triumphant in the fields of blood;  
From post to post, and deed to deed,  
Fast spurring on his reeking steed,  
Where sallying ranks the trench assail,  
And make the foremost Moslem quail;  
Or where the battery, guarded well,  
Remains as yet impregnable,  
Alighting cheerly to inspire  
The soldier slackening in his fire;  
The first and freshest of the host  
Which Stamboul's Sultan there can boast,  
To guide the follower o'er the field,  
To point the tube, the lance to wield,  
Or whirl around the bickering blade –  
Was Alp, the Adrian renegade!<sup>7</sup>

4.

From Venice – once a race of worth  
His gentle sires – he drew his birth;  
But late an exile from her shore,  
Against his countrymen he bore  
The arms they taught to bear; and now  
The turban girt his shaven brow.  
Through many a change had Corinth passed  
With Greece to Venice' rule at last;  
And here, before her walls, with those  
To Greece and Venice equal foes,  
He stood a foe, with all the zeal  
Which young and fiery converts feel,  
Within whose heated bosom throngs  
The memory of a thousand wrongs.  
To him had Venice ceased to be  
Her ancient civic boast – “the Free;”  
And in the palace of St Mark  
Unnamed accusers in the dark  
Within the “Lion's mouth” had placed  
A charge against him uneffaced –  
He fled in time, and saved his life,  
To waste his future years in strife,  
That taught his land how great her loss  
In him who triumphed o'er the Cross,  
'Gainst which he reared the Crescent high,  
And battled to avenge or die.

5.

Coumourgi – he whose closing scene  
Adorned the triumph of Eugene,  
When on Carlowitz' bloody plain,  
The last and mightiest of the slain,  
He sank, regretting not to die,  
But cursed the Christian's victory –  
Coumourgi – can his glory cease,  
That latest conqueror of Greece,  
Till Christian hands to Greece restore

The freedom Venice gave of yore?  
A hundred years have rolled away  
Since he refixed the Moslem's sway,  
And now he led the Mussulman,  
And gave the guidance of the van

To Alp, who well repaid the trust  
By cities levelled with the dust;  
And proved, by many a deed of death,  
How firm his heart in novel faith.

6.

The walls grew weak; and fast and hot  
Against them poured the ceaseless shot,  
With unabating fury sent,  
From battery to battlement;  
And thunder-like the pealing din  
Rose from each heated culverin;  
And here and there some crackling dome  
Was fired before the exploding bomb;  
And as the fabric sank beneath  
The shattering shell's volcanic breath,  
In red and wreathing columns flashed  
The flame, as loud the ruin crashed,  
Or into countless meteors driven,  
Its earth-stars melted into heaven;  
Whose clouds that day grew doubly dun,  
Impervious to the hidden sun,  
With volumed smoke that slowly grew  
To one wide sky of sulphurous hue.

7.

But not for vengeance, long delayed,  
Alone, did Alp, the renegade,  
The Moslem warriors sternly teach  
His skill to pierce the promised breach –  
Within those walls a maid was pent  
His hope would win, without consent

Of that inexorable sire,  
Whose heart refused him in its ire,  
When Alp, beneath his Christian name,  
Her virgin hand aspired to claim.  
In happier mood, and earlier time,  
While unimpeached for traitorous crime,  
Gayest in gondola or hall,  
He glittered through the Carnival;  
And tuned the softest serenade

8.

And many deemed her heart was won;  
For sought by numbers, given to none,  
Had young Francesca's hand remained  
Still by the church's bond unchained:  
And when the Adriatic bore  
Lanciotto to the Paynim shore,  
Her wonted smiles were seen to fail,  
And pensive waxed the maid and pale;  
More constant at confessional,  
More rare at masque and festival;  
Or seen at such, with downcast eyes,  
Which conquered hearts they ceased to prize.  
With listless look she seems to gaze;  
With humbler care her form arrays;  
Her voice less lively in the song;  
Her step, though light, less fleet among  
The pairs, on whom the Morning's glance  
Breaks, yet unsated with the dance.

9.

Sent by the state to guard the land,  
(Which, wrested from the Moslem's hand,  
While Sobieski tamed his pride  
By Buda's wall and Danube's side,  
The chiefs of Venice wrung away  
From Patra to Eubœa's bay,)  
Minotti held in Corinth's towers

The Doge's delegated powers,  
While yet the pitying eye of Peace  
Smiled o'er her long-forgotten Greece;  
And ere that faithless truce was broke  
Which freed her from the unchristian yoke,  
With him his gentle daughter came;  
Nor there, since Menelaus' dame<sup>13</sup>  
Forsook her lord and land, to prove  
What woes await on lawless love,  
Had fairer form adorned the shore  
Than she, the matchless stranger, bore.

10.

The wall is rent, the ruins yawn,  
And, with to-morrow's earliest dawn,  
O'er the disjointed mass shall vault  
The foremost of the fierce assault.  
The bands are ranked; the chosen van  
Of Tartar and of Mussulman,  
The full of hope, misnamed "forlorn,"  
Who hold the thought of death in scorn,  
And win their way with falchions' force,  
Or pave the path with many a corse,  
O'er which the following brave may rise,  
Their stepping-stone – the last who dies!

11.

'Tis midnight: on the mountains brown  
The cold, round moon shines deeply down:  
Blue roll the waters, blue the sky  
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,  
Bespangled with those isles of light,  
So wildly, spiritually bright;  
Who ever gazed upon them shining,  
And turned to earth without repining,  
Nor wished for wings to flee away,  
And mix with their eternal ray?  
The waves on either shore lay there,

Calm, clear, and azure as the air;  
And scarce their foam the pebbles shook,  
But murmured meekly as the brook.  
The winds were pillowed on the waves;  
The banners drooped along their staves,  
And, as they fell around them furling,  
Above them shone the crescent curling;  
And that deep silence was unbroke,  
Save where the watch his signal spoke,  
Save where the steed neighed oft and shrill,  
And echo answered from the hill,  
And the wide hum of that wild host  
Rustled like leaves from coast to coast,  
As rose the Muezzin's voice in air  
In midnight call to wonted prayer;  
It rose, that chaunted mournful strain,  
Like some lone spirit's o'er the plain:  
'Twas musical, but sadly sweet,  
Such as when winds and harp-strings meet,  
And take a long-unmeasured tone,  
To mortal minstrelsy unknown.  
It seemed to those within the wall  
A cry prophetic of their fall;  
It struck even the besieger's ear  
With something ominous and drear,  
An undefined and sudden thrill,  
Which makes the heart a moment still,  
Then beat with quicker pulse, ashamed  
Of that strange sense its silence framed:  
Such as a sudden passing-bell  
Wakes though but for a stranger's knell.

12.

The tent of Alp was on the shore;  
The sound was hushed, the prayer was o'er;  
The watch was set, the night-round made,  
All mandates issued and obeyed:  
'Tis but another anxious night,

His pains the morrow may requite  
With all revenge and love can pay,  
In guerdon for their long delay.  
Few hours remain, and he hath need  
Of rest, to nerve for many a deed  
Of slaughter; but within his soul  
The thoughts like troubled waters roll.  
He stood alone among the host;  
Not his the loud fanatic boast  
To plant the Crescent o'er the Cross  
Or risk a life with little loss,  
Secure in Paradise to be  
By Hourisloved immortally;  
Nor his, what burning patriots feel,  
The stern exaltedness of zeal,  
Profuse of blood, untired in toil,  
When battling on the parent soil.  
He stood alone – a renegade  
Against the country he betrayed.  
He stood alone amidst his band,  
Without a trusted heart or hand;  
They followed him, for he was brave,  
And great the spoil he got and gave;  
They crouched to him, for he had skill  
To warp and wield the vulgar will;  
But still his Christian origin  
With them was little less than sin.  
They envied even the faithless fame  
He earned beneath a Moslem name;  
Since he, their mightiest chief had been  
In youth, a bitter Nazarene.  
They did not know how pride can stoop,  
When baffled feelings withering droop;  
They did not know how hate can burn  
In hearts once changed from soft to stern;  
Nor all the false and fatal zeal  
The convert of revenge can feel.

He ruled them – man may rule the worst  
By ever daring to be first –  
So lions o'er the jackall sway;  
The jackall points, he fells the prey,  
Then on the vulgar yelling press,  
To gorge the relics of success.

13.

His head grows fevered, and his pulse  
The quick successive throbs convulse;  
In vain from side to side he throws  
His form, in courtship of repose;  
Or if he dozed, a sound, a start  
Awoke him with a sunken heart.  
The turban on his hot brow pressed,  
The mail weighed lead-like on his breast,  
Though oft and long beneath its weight  
Upon his eyes had slumber sate,  
Without or couch or canopy,  
Except a rougher field and sky  
Than now might yield a warrior's bed,  
Than now along the heaven was spread.  
He could not rest, he could not stay  
Within his tent to wait for day,  
But walked him forth along the sand,  
Where thousand sleepers strewed the strand.  
What pillowed them? and why should he  
More wakeful than the humblest be?  
Since more their peril, worse their toil,  
And yet they fearless dream of spoil;  
While he alone, where thousands passed  
A night of sleep, perchance their last,  
In sickly vigil wandered on,  
And envied all he gazed upon.

14.

He felt his soul become more light  
Beneath the freshness of the night.

Cool was the silent sky, though calm,  
And bathed his brow with airy balm;  
Behind, the camp – before him lay,  
In many a winding creek and bay,  
Lepanto's gulf; and on the brow  
Of Delphi's hill, unshaken snow,  
High and eternal, such as shone  
Through thousand summers brightly gone.  
Along the gulf, the mount, the clime;  
It will not melt, like man, to time;  
Tyrant and slave are swept away,  
Less formed to wear the before the ray;  
But that white veil, the lightest, frailest,  
Which on the mighty mount thou hailest,  
Shines o'er its craggy battlement;  
In form a peak, in height a cloud,  
In texture like a hovering shroud,  
Thus high by parting Freedom spread,  
As from her fond abode she fled,  
And lingered on the spot, where long  
Her prophet spirit spake in song.  
Oh! still her step at moments falters  
O'er withered fields, and ruined altars,  
And fain would wake, in souls too broken,  
By pointing to each glorious token.  
But vain her voice, till better days  
Dawn in those yet remembered rays  
Which shone upon the Persian flying,  
And saw the Spartan smile in dying.

15.

Not mindless of these mighty times  
Was Alp, despite his flight and crimes;  
And through this night, as on he wandered,  
And o'er the past and present pondered,  
And thought upon the glorious dead  
Who there in better cause had bled,  
He felt how faint and feebly dim

The fame that could accrue to him,  
Who cheered the band, and waved the sword  
A traitor in a turbaned horde;  
And led them to the lawless siege,  
Whose best success were sacrilege.  
Not so had those his fancy numbered,  
The chiefs whose dust around him slumbered;  
Their phalanx marshalled on the plain,  
Whose bulwarks were not then in vain.  
They fell devoted, but undying;  
The very gale their names seemed sighing;  
The waters murmured of their name;  
The woods were peopled with their fame;  
The silent pillar, lone and gray,  
Claimed kindred with their sacred clay;  
Their spirits wrapt the dusky mountain,  
Their memory sparkled o'er the fountain,  
The meanest rill, the mightiest river,  
Rolled mingling with their fame for ever.  
Despite of every yoke she bears,  
That land is glory's still, and theirs!  
'Tis still a watch-word to the earth.  
When man would do a deed of worth  
He points to Greece, and turns to tread,  
So sanctioned, on the tyrant's head –  
He looks to her, and rushes on  
Where life is lost, or freedom won.

16.

Still by the shore Alp mutely mused,  
And wooed the freshness Night diffused.  
There shrinks no ebb in that tideless sea,  
Which changeless rolls eternally;  
So that wildest of waves, in their angriest mood,  
Scarce break on the bounds of the land for a rood;  
And the powerless moon beholds them flow,  
Heedless if she come or go –  
Calm or high, in main or bay,

On their course she hath no sway.  
The rock unworn its base doth bare,  
And looks o'er the surf, but it comes not there;  
And the fringe of the foam may be seen below,  
On the line that it left long ages ago:  
A smooth short space of yellow sand  
Between it and the greener land.  
He wandered on, along the beach,  
Till within the range of a carbine's reach  
Of the leaguered wall; but they saw him not,  
Or how could he 'scape from the hostile shot?  
Did traitors lurk in the Christians' hold?  
Were their hands grown stiff, or their hearts waxed cold?  
I know not, in sooth; but from yonder wall  
There flashed no fire, and there hissed no ball,  
Though he stood beneath the bastion's frown,  
That flanked the sea-ward gate of the town;  
Though he heard the sound, and could almost tell  
The sullen words of the sentinel,  
As his measured step on the stone below  
Clanked, as he paced it to and fro;  
And he saw the lean dogs beneath the wall  
Hold o'er the dead their carnival,  
Gorging and growling o'er carcass and limb;  
They were too busy to bark at him!  
From a Tartar's skull they had stripped the flesh,  
As ye peel the fig when its fruit is fresh;  
And their white tusks crunched o'er the whiter skull,  
As it slipped through their jaws, when their edge grew dull,  
As they lazily mumbled the bones of the dead,  
When they scarce could rise from the spot where they fed;  
So well had they broken a lingering fast  
With those who had fall'n for that night's repast.  
And Alp knew, by the turbans that rolled on the sand,  
The foremost of these were the best of his band:  
Crimson and green were the shawls of their wear,  
And each scalp had a single long tuft of hair,

All the rest was shaven and bare.  
The scalps were in the wild-dog's maw,  
The hair was tangled round his jaw.  
But close by the shore, on the edge of the gulf,

17.

Alp turned him from the sickening sight;  
Never had shaken his nerves in fight;  
But he better could brook to behold the dying,  
Deep in the tide of their warm blood lying,  
Scorched with death-thirst, and writing in vain,  
Than the perishing dead who are past all pain.  
There is something of pride in the perilous hour,  
Whate'er be the shape in which death may lower;  
For Fame is there to say who bleeds,  
And Honour's eye on daring deeds!  
But when all is past, it is humbling to tread  
O'er the weltering field of the tombless dead,  
And see worms of the earth, and fowls of the air,  
Beasts of the forest, all gathering there;  
All regarding man as their prey,  
All rejoicing in his decay.

18.

There is a temple in ruin stands,  
Fashioned by long-forgotten hands;  
Two or three columns, and many a stone,  
Marble and granite, with grass o'ergrown!  
Out upon Time! it will leave no more  
Of the things to come than the things before!  
Out upon Time! who for ever will leave  
But enough of the past for the future to grieve  
O'er that which hath been, and o'er that which must be!  
What we have seen, our sons shall see;  
Remnants of things that have passed away,  
Fragments of stone, reared by creatures of clay!

19.

He sate him down at a pillar's base,  
And passed his hand athwart his face;  
Like one in dreary musing mood,  
Declining was his attitude;  
His head was drooping on his breast,  
Fevered, throbbing, and opprest;  
And o'er his brow, so downward bent,  
Oft his beating fingers went,  
Hurriedly, as you may see  
Your own run over the ivory key,  
Ere the measured tone is taken,  
By the chords you would awaken.  
There he sate all heavily,  
As he heard the night-wind sigh.  
Was it the wind, through some hollow stone,  
Sent that soft and tender moan?  
He lifted his head, and he looked on the sea,  
But it was unrippled as glass may be;  
He looked on the long grass – it waved not a blade;  
How was that gentle sound conveyed?  
He looked to the banners – each flag lay still,  
So did the leaves on Cithæron's hill,  
And he felt not a breath come over his cheek;  
What did that sudden sound bespeak?  
He turned to the left – is he sure of sight?  
There sate a lady, youthful and bright!

20.

He started up with more of fear  
Than if an armed foe were near.  
“God of my fathers! what is here?  
Who art thou, and wherefore sent  
So near a hostile armament?”  
His trembling hands refused to sign  
The cross he deemed no more divine –  
He had resumed it in that hour,  
But conscience wrung away the power.

He gazed – he saw: he knew the face  
Of beauty, and the form of grace;  
It was Francesca by his side,  
The maid who might have been his bride!  
The rose was yet upon her cheek,  
But mellowed with a tenderer streak:  
Where was the play of her soft lips fled?  
Gone was the smile that enlivened their red.  
The ocean's calm within their view,  
Beside her eye had less of blue;  
But like that cold wave it stood still,  
And its glance, though clear, was chill.  
Around her form a thin robe twining,  
Nought concealed her bosom shining;  
Through the parting of her hair,  
Floating darkly downward there,  
Her rounded arm shewed white and bare –  
And ere yet she made reply,  
Once she raised her hand on high;  
It was so wan and transparent of hue,  
You might have seen the moon shine through.

21.

“I come from my rest to him I love best,  
That I may be happy, and he may be blest.  
I have passed the guards, the gate, the wall;  
Sought thee in safety through foes and all.  
’Tis said the lion will turn and flee  
From a maid in the pride of her purity;  
And the Power on high, that can shield the good  
Thus from the tyrant of the wood,  
Hath extended its mercy to guard me as well  
From the hands of the leaguering infidel.  
I come – and if I come in vain,  
Never, oh never, we meet again!  
Thou hast done a fearful deed  
In falling away from thy fathers’ creed –  
But dash that turban to earth, and sign

The sign of the cross, and for ever be mine;  
Wring the black drop from thy heart,

22.

The night is past, and shines the sun  
As if that morn were a jocund one.  
Lightly and brightly breaks away  
The Morning from her mantle gray,  
And the Noon will look on a sultry day.  
Hark to the trump, and the drum,  
And the mournful sound of the barbarous horn,  
And the flap of the banners, that flit as they're borne,  
And the neigh of the steed, and the multitude's hum,  
And the clash and the shout, "They come, they come!"  
The horsetails are plucked from the ground, and the sword  
From its sheath; and they form, and but wait for the word.  
Tartar, and Spahi, and Turcoman,  
Strike your tents, and throng to the van;  
Mount ye, spur ye, skirr the plain,  
That the fugitive may flee in vain,  
When he breaks from the town; and none escape,  
Aged or young, in the Christian shape;  
While your fellows on foot, in a fiery mass,  
Bloodstain the breach through which they pass.  
The steeds are all bridled, and snort to the rein;  
Curved is each neck, and flowing each main;  
White is the foam of their champ on the bit:  
The spears are uplifted; the matches are lit;  
The cannon are pointed, and ready to roar,  
And crush the wall they have crumbled before:  
Forms in his phalanx each Janizar;

23.

As the wolves, that headlong go  
On the stately buffalo,  
Though with fiery eyes, and angry roar,  
And hoofs that stamp, and horns that gore,  
He tramples on earth, or tosses on high

The foremost, who rush on his strength but to die;  
Thus against the wall they went,  
Thus the first were backward bent;  
Many a bosom, sheathed in brass,  
Strewed the earth like broken glass,  
Shivered by the shot, that tore  
The ground whereon they moved no more –  
Even as they fell, in files they lay,  
Like the mower's grass at the close of day,  
When work is done on the levelled plain;  
Such was the fall of the foremost slain.

24.

As the spring-tides, with heavy splash,  
From the cliffs invading dash  
Huge fragments, sapped by the ceaseless flow,  
Till white and thundering down they go,  
Like the avalanche's snow  
On the Alpine vales below;  
Thus at length, outbreathed and worn,  
Corinth's sons were downward borne  
By the long and oft-renewed  
Charge of the Moslem multitude.  
In firmness they stood, and in masses they fell,  
Heaped, by the host of the infidel,  
Hand to hand, and foot to foot:  
Nothing there, save death, was mute;  
Stroke, and thrust, and flash, and cry  
For quarter, or for victory,  
Mingle there with the volleying thunder,  
Which makes the distant cities wonder  
How the sounding battle goes,  
If with them, or for their foes;  
If they must mourn, or may rejoice  
In that annihilating voice,  
Which pierces the deep hills through and through  
With an echo dread and new –  
You might have heard it, on that day,

O'er Salamis and Megara;  
(We have heard the hearers say,)  
Even unto Piræus' bay.

25.

From the point of encountering blades to the hilt,  
Sabres and swords with blood were gilt –  
But the rampart is won, and the spoil begun  
And all but the after carnage done.  
Shriller shrieks now mingling come  
From within the plundered dome –  
Hark to the haste of flying feet,  
That splash in the blood of the slippery street;  
But here and there, where 'vantage ground  
Against the foe may still be found,  
Desperate groups, of twelve or ten,  
Make a pause, and turn again –  
With banded backs against the wall,  
Fiercely stand, or fighting fall.  
There stood an old man<sup>32</sup> – his hairs were white,  
But his veteran arm was full of might:  
So gallantly bore he the brunt of the fray,  
The dead before him on that day,  
In a semicircle lay;  
Still he combated unwounded,  
Though retreating, unsurrounded.  
Many a scar of former fight  
Lurked beneath his corslet bright;  
But of every wound his body bore,  
Each and all had been ta'en before;  
Though aged, he was so iron of limb,  
Few of our youth could cope with him;  
And the foes, whom he singly kept at bay,  
Outnumbered his thin hairs of silver gray.  
From right to left his sabre swept:  
Many an Othman mother wept  
Sons that were unborn, when dipped  
His weapon first in Moslem gore,

26.

Hark to the Allah shout! a band  
Of the Mussulman bravest and best is at hand:  
Their leader's nervous arm is bare,  
Swifter to smite, and never to spare –  
Unclothed to the shoulder it waves them on;  
Thus in the fight is he ever known:  
Others a gaudier garb may show,  
To them the spoil of the greedy foe;  
Many a hand's on a richer hilt,  
But none on a steel more ruddily gilt;  
Many a loftier turban may wear, –  
Alp is but known by the white arm bare;  
Look through the thick of the fight, 'tis there!  
There is not a standard on the shore  
So well advanced the ranks before;  
There is not a banner in Moslem war  
Will lure the Delhis half so far;  
It glances like a falling star!  
Where'er that mighty arm is seen,  
The bravest be, or late have been;  
There the craven cries for quarter  
Vainly to the vengeful Tartar;  
Or the hero, silent lying,  
Scorns to yield a groan in dying;  
Mustering his last feeble blow  
'Gainst the nearest levelled foe,  
Though faint beneath the mutual wound,  
Grappling on the gory ground.

27.

Still the old man stood erect,  
And Alp's career a moment checked.  
"Yield thee, Minotti; quarter take,  
For thine own, thy daughter's sake."  
"Never, renegado, never!  
Though the life of thy gift would last for ever."  
"Francesca! – Oh, my promised bride:

Must she too perish by thy pride?"  
"She is safe." – "Where? where?" – "In Heaven;  
From whence thy traitor soul is driven –  
Far from thee, and undefiled."  
Grimly then Minotti smiled  
As he saw Alp staggering bow  
Before his words, as with a blow.  
"O God! when died she?" – "Yesternight –  
Nor weep I for her spirit's flight;  
None of my pure race shall be  
Slaves to Mahomet and thee –  
Come on!" That challenge is in vain –  
Alp's already with the slain!  
While Minotti's words were wreaking  
More revenge in bitter speaking  
Than his falchion's point had found,  
Had the time allowed to wound,  
From within the neighbouring porch  
Of a long-defended church,  
Where the last and desperate few  
Would the failing fight renew,  
The sharp shot dashed Alp to the ground;  
Ere an eye could view the wound  
That crashed through the brain of the infidel,  
Round he spun, and down he fell;  
A flash like fire within his eyes  
Blazed, as he bent no more to rise,  
And then eternal darkness sunk  
Through all the palpitating trunk;  
Nought of life left, save a quivering  
Where his limbs were slightly shivering  
They turned him on his back; his breast  
And brow were stained with gore and dust,  
And through his lips the life-blood oozed,  
From its deep veins lately loosed;  
But in his pulse there was no throb,  
Nor on his lips one dying sob;

Sigh, nor word, nor struggling breath  
Heralded his way to death –  
Ere his very thought could pray,

28.

Fearfully the yell arose  
Of his followers, and his foes;  
These in joy, in fury those –  
Then again in conflict mixing,  
Clashing swords, and spears transfixing,  
Interchanged the blow and thrust,  
Hurling warriors in the dust.  
Street by street, and foot by foot,  
Still Minotti dares dispute  
The latest portion of the land  
eft beneath his high command;  
With him, aiding heart and hand,  
The remnant of his gallant band.  
Still the church is tenable,  
Whence issued the fated ball  
That half avenged the city's fall,  
When Alp, her fierce assailant, fell –  
Thither bending sternly back,  
They leave before a bloody track;  
And, with their faces to the foe,  
Dealing wounds with every blow,  
The chief, and his retreating train,  
Join to those within the fane;  
There they yet may breathe awhile,  
Sheltered by the massy pile.

29.

Brief breathing-time! the turbaned host,  
With added ranks and raging boast,  
Press onwards with such strength and heat,  
Their numbers balk their own retreat;  
For narrow the way that led to the spot  
Where still the Christians yielded not;

And the foremost, if fearful, may vainly try  
Through the massy column to turn and fly;  
They perforce must do or die.  
They die – but ere their eyes could close,  
Avengers o'er their bodies rose;  
Fresh and furious, fast they fill  
The ranks unthinned, though slaughtered still:  
And faint the weary Christians wax  
Before the still renewed attacks;  
And now the Othmans gain the gate;  
Still resists its iron weight,  
And still, all deadly aimed and hot,  
From every crevice comes the shot;

30.

Dark, sternly, and all alone,  
Minotti stood o'er the altar stone;  
Madonna's face upon him shone,  
Painted in heavenly hues above,  
With eyes of light and looks of love;  
And placed upon that holy shrine  
To fix our thoughts on things divine,  
When pictured there we kneeling see  
Her, and the boy-God on her knee,  
Smiling sweetly on each prayer  
To Heaven, as if to waft it there.  
Still she smiled; even now she smiles,  
Though slaughter streams along her aisles:  
Minotti lifted his aged eye,  
And made the sign of a cross with a sigh,  
Then seized a torch which blazed thereby;  
And still he stood, while, with steel and flame,  
Inward and onward the Mussulman came.

31.

The vaults beneath the mosaic stone  
Contained the dead of ages gone –  
Their names were on the graven floor,

But now illegible with gore;  
The carved crests, and curious hues  
The varied marble's veins diffuse,  
Were smeared, and slippery – stained, and strown  
With broken swords, and helms o'erthrown;  
There were dead above, and the dead below  
Lay cold in many a confined row;  
You might see them piled in sable state,  
By a pale light through a gloomy grate;  
But War had entered their dark caves,  
And stored along the vaulted graves  
Her sulphurous treasures, thickly spread  
In masses by the fleshless dead;  
Here, throughout the siege, had been  
The Christians' chiefest magazine;  
To these a late-formed train now led,  
Minotti's last and stern resource,  
Against the foe's o'erwhelming force.

32.

The foe came on, and few remain  
To strive, and those must strive in vain –  
For lack of further lives, to slake  
The thirst of vengeance now awake,  
With barbarous blows they gash the dead,  
And lop the already lifeless head,  
And fell the statues from their niche,  
And spoil the shrine of offerings rich,  
And from each other's rude hands wrest  
The silver vessels saints had blessed.  
To the high altar on they go;  
Oh, but it made a glorious show!  
On its table still behold  
The cup of consecrated gold;  
Massy and deep, a glittering prize,  
Brightly it sparkles to plunderers' eyes –  
That morn it held the holy wine,  
Converted by Christ to His blood so divine,

Which His worshippers drank at the break of day  
To shrive their souls ere they joined in the fray,  
    Still a few drops within it lay;  
    And round the sacred table glow  
Twelve lofty lamps, in splendid row,  
    From the purest metal cast;  
A spoil – the richest, and the last.

33.

So near they came, the nearest stretched  
To grasp the spoil he almost reached,  
    When old Minotti's hand  
    Touched with a torch the train –  
    'Tis fired!  
Spire, vaults, and shrine, the spoil, the slain,  
The turbaned victors, the Christian band,  
    All that of living or dead remain,  
Hurl'd on high with the shivered fane,  
    In one wild roar expired!  
The shattered town – the walls thrown down –  
    The waves a moment backward bent –  
    The hills that shake, although unrent,  
    As if an earthquake passed –  
The thousand shapeless things all driven  
In cloud and flame athwart the heaven,  
    By that tremendous blast –  
Proclaimed the desperate conflict o'er  
On that too long afflicted shore!  
    Up to the sky like rockets go  
All that mingled there below –