

Lord Byron's *Island*; and *Don Juan*, Cantos VI—VIII. 321

- ‘ Two villanous Cossacques pursued the child  
 With flashing eyes and weapons: matched with them,  
 The rudest brute that roams Siberia's wild  
 Has feelings pure and polished as a gem, —  
 The bear is civilized, the wolf is mild:  
 And whom for this at last must we condemn?  
 Their natures? or their sovereigns, who employ  
 All arts to teach their subjects to destroy?’
- ‘ Their sabres glittered o'er her little head,  
 Whence her fair hair rose twining with affright,  
 Her hidden face was plunged amid the dead:  
 When Juan caught a glimpse of the sad sight,  
 I shall not say exactly what he said,  
 Because it might not solace “ears polite;”  
 But what he *did* was to lay on their backs,  
 The readiest way of reasoning with Cossacques.
- ‘ One's hip he slashed, and split the other's shoulder,  
 And drove them with their brutal yells to seek  
 If there might be surgeons who could solder  
 The wounds they richly merited, and shriek  
 Their baffled rage and pain; while waxing colder  
 As he turn'd o'er each pale and gory check,  
 Don Juan raised his little captive from  
 The heap a moment more had made her tomb.
- ‘ And she was chill as they, and on her face  
 A slender streak of blood announced how near  
 Her fate had been to that of all her race;  
 For the same blow which laid her mother here  
 Had scarred her brow, and left its crimson trace  
 As the last link with all she had held dear;  
 But else unhurt, she opened her large eyes,  
 And gazed on Juan with a wild surprize.’

The sequel states that he was able to preserve her, and vowed to be her protector; an engagement which he honorably kept. We suppose, therefore, that this little fair unknown is destined to play some other part in this drama; the continuation of which seems to be promised, without specific limit or object, and without much regard to that censure of the kind of coloring, expression, hint, and allusion, in which the author indulges, that has been bestowed on this poem by the public. We are sorry to add that the present cantos are not invulnerable to such accusations.

## October 1823

[Byron] *Don Juan*, IX-XI  
 (1823); *Monthly Review*, 2nd  
 Series, CII (Oct. 1823), 217-220.

## POETRY, &amp;c.

Art. 17. *Don Juan*. Cantos IX, X, XI. 18mo. 1s. Hunt.  
 1823.

We

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We have so often characterized this singular poem, that we need not make many *general* remarks on the several continuations of it, in which the noble writer so unusually proceeds against (we believe) the voice of the public, and seems resolved to persevere as long as his own inclination prompts him. — The ninth canto opens with a long *tirade* against the Duke of Wellington, and a few strokes at the late Marquis of Londonderry: neither of whom seems to have “any business here,” except that all ingredients are admitted into this *Olla podrida*. It then exhibits Don Juan's flattering reception at Petersburg, and indicates his instalment as personal favorite of the *philanthropical* Empress Catherine. The tenth, in the usual digressive style, continues that subject, makes the young Don a little indisposed, orders him on his travels for his health, invests him with the character of a Russian envoy to the British court, and lands him in England. The eleventh initiates him somewhat in the manners of this country; first by bringing him into contact with highway robbers on Shooter's Hill, next by presenting him at court, and then by leading him into the commencement of fashionable life in London: — more particulars of which are to be recorded in future. It may be hoped, however, that Lord B.'s present much more noble occupation, in assisting the Greeks during their arduous struggle, may cause Don Juan to experience a long repose.

We shall copy the adventure with the robbers:

- ‘ Don Juan had got out on Shooter's Hill ;  
Sun-set the time, the place the same declivity  
Which looks along that vale of good and ill  
Where London streets ferment in full activity ;  
Where every thing around was calm and still,  
Except the creak of wheels, which on their pivot he  
Heard, — and that bee-like, bubbling, busy hum  
Of cities, that boils over with their scum : —
- ‘ I say, Don Juan, wrapt in contemplation,  
Walked on behind his carriage, o'er the summit,  
And lost in wonder of so great a nation,  
Gave way to't, since he could not overcome it.  
“ And here,” he cried, “ is Freedom's chosen station ;  
Here peals the people's voice, nor can entomb it  
Racks, prisons, inquisitions ; resurrection  
Awaits it, each new meeting or election.
- ‘ “ Here are chaste wives, pure lives ; here people pay  
But what they please ; and if that things be dear,  
’Tis only that they love to throw away  
Their cash, to show how much they have a-year.  
Here laws are all inviolate ; none lay  
Traps for the traveller ; every highway's clear :  
Here — ” he was interrupted by a knife,  
With, — “ Damn your eyes ! your money or your life ! ” —
- ‘ These freeborn sounds proceeded from four pads  
In ambush laid, who had perceived him loiter

Behind

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- Behind his carriage ; and, like handy lads,  
Had seized the lucky hour to reconnoitre,  
In which the heedless gentleman who gads  
Upon the road, unless he prove a fighter,  
May find himself within that isle of riches  
Exposed to lose his life as well as breeches.
- ‘ Juan, who did not understand a word  
Of English, save their shibboleth, “ God damn ! ”  
And even that he had so rarely heard,  
He sometimes thought 'twas only their “ Salām,  
Or “ God be with you ! ” — and 'tis not absurd  
To think so : for half English as I am  
(To my misfortune) never can I say  
I heard them wish “ God with you,” save that way ; —
- ‘ Juan yet quickly understood their gesture,  
And being somewhat choleric and sudden,  
Drew forth a pocket pistol from his vesture,  
And fired it into one assailant's pudding —  
Who fell, as rolls an ox o'er in his pasture,  
And roared out, as he writhed his native mud in,  
Unto his nearest follower or henchman,  
“ Oh Jack ! I'm floor'd by that ere bloody Frenchman ! ”
- ‘ On which Jack and his train set off at speed,  
And Juan's suite, late scattered at a distance,  
Came up, all marvelling at such a deed,  
And offering, as usual, late assistance.  
Juan, who saw the Moon's late minion bleed  
As if his veins would pour out his existence,  
Stood calling out for bandages and lint,  
And wished he had been less hasty with his flint.
- ‘ “ Perhaps,” thought he, “ it is the country's wont  
To welcome foreigners in this way : now  
I recollect some innkeepers who don't  
Differ, except in robbing with a bow,  
In lieu of a bare blade and brazen front,  
But what is to be done ? I can't allow  
The fellow to lie groaning on the road :  
So take him up ; I'll help you with the load.”
- ‘ But ere they could perform this pious duty,  
The dying man cried, “ Hold ! I've got my gruel !  
Oh ! for a glass of *max* ! We've missed our booty ;  
Let me die where I am ! ” And as the fuel  
Of life shrunk in his heart, and thick and sooty  
The drops fell from his death-wound, and he drew ill  
His breath, — he from his swelling throat untied  
A kerchief, crying “ Give Sal that ! ” — and died.
- ‘ The cravat stained with bloody drops fell down  
Before Don Juan's feet : he could not tell  
Exactly why it was before him thrown,  
Nor what the meaning of the man's farewell.

Poor

Poor Tom was once a kiddy upon town  
A thorough varmint, and a *real* swell,  
Full flash, all fancy, until fairly diddled,  
His pockets first and then his body riddled.

- Don Juan, having done the best he could  
In all the circumstances of the case,  
As soon as "Crown's quest" allowed, pursued  
His travels to the capital apace;—  
Esteeming it a little hard he should  
In twelve hours' time, and very little space,  
Have been obliged to slay a freeborn native  
In self-defence: this made him meditative.
- He from the world had cut off a great man,  
Who in his time had made heroic bustle.  
Who in a row like Tom could lead the van,  
Booze in the ken, or at the spellken hustle?  
Who queer a flat? Who (spite of Bow-street's ban)  
On the high toby-spice so flash the muzzle?  
Who on a lark, with black-eyed Sal (his blowing)  
So prime, so swell, so nutty, and so knowing?

It is to be feared that some readers will feel a wish that Don Juan had experienced the fate of the footpad.

### February 1824

[Byron] *Don Juan*, XII-XIV  
(1823); *Monthly Review*, 2nd  
Series, CIII (Feb. 1824),  
212-215.

#### Art. 14. *Don Juan*. Cantos XII. XIII. XIV. 12mo. 1s. Hunt.

We cannot but regret the continuance of this misapplication and degradation of Lord Byron's great talents. Don Juan is now voted a bore, and to see him figuring *ad infinitum* in these little one-shilling duodecimos, in very un-aristocratic company, is really lamentable. The writer himself appears aware that he has *lost caste*, and yet he will proceed. Among several instances, what says stanza 17., canto xii.?

• Well,

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- Well, if *I don't succeed, I have succeeded*,  
And that's enough; succeeded in my youth,  
The only time when much success is needed:  
And my success produced what I in sooth  
Cared most about; it needs not now be pleaded—  
Whate'er it was, 'twas mine; I've paid, in truth,  
Of late the penalty of such success,  
But have not learn'd to wish it any less.'

Again, canto xiv., stanzas 9, 10.

- The world is all before me, — or behind;  
For I have seen a portion of that same,  
And quite enough for me to keep in mind; —  
Of passions, too, I've prov'd enough to blame,  
To the great pleasure of our friends, mankind,  
Who like to mix some slight alloy with fame:  
For *I was rather famous in my time*,  
Until I fairly knock'd it up with rhyme.
- I've brought this world about my ears, and eke  
The other; that's to say, the clergy — who  
Upon my head have bid their thunders break  
In pious libels by no means a few.  
And yet I can't help scribbling once a week,  
Tiring old readers, nor discovering new.  
In youth I wrote because my mind was full,  
And now because I feel it growing dull.'

The poem, then, may be endless, or at least co-existent with the author: for so also he says in canto xii., stanzas 54, 55.

- But now I will *begin* my poem. 'Tis  
Perhaps a little strange, if not quite new,  
That from the first of cantos up to this  
I've not begun what we have to go through.  
These first twelve books are merely flourishes,  
Preludios, trying just a string or two  
Upon my lyre, or making the pegs sure;  
And when so, you shall have the overture.
- My muses do not care a pinch of rosin  
About what's called success, or not succeeding;  
Such thoughts are quite below the strain they've chosen;  
'Tis a great moral lesson they are reading.  
I thought, at setting off, about two dozen  
Cantos would do; but at Apollo's pleading,  
If that my Pegasus should not be foundered,  
I think to canter gently thro' a hundred.'

The sin of punning is also more grievously besetting the noble poet than formerly: for example:

- Generals, some all in armour, of the old  
And iron time, 'ere *lead* had ta'en the *lead*.' (P. 44.)

- Full grows his bag, and wonderful his feats.' (P. 45.)