

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

George Gordon, Lord Byron

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THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

George Gordon, Lord Byron

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"Had we never loved so kindly,
Had we never loved so 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.

I.

Know ye the land where cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime,
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,
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;
Where the light wings of Zephyr, oppress'd with perfume,
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gúl in her bloom;
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
And the voice of the nightingale never is mute;
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?
'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

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Are the hearts which they bear, and the tales which they tell.

II.

Begirt with many a gallant slave,
Apparell'd as becomes the brave,
Awaiting each his lord's behest
To guide his steps, or guard his rest,
Old Giaffir sate in his Divan:
 Deep thought was in his aged eye;
And though the face of Mussulman
 Not oft betrays to standers by
The mind within, well skill'd to hide
All but unconquerable pride,
His pensive cheek and pondering brow
Did more than he wont avow.

III.

"Let the chamber be clear'd." — The train disappear'd —
"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.
"Haroun — when all the crowd that wait
Are pass'd beyond the outer gate,
(Woe to the head whose eye beheld
My child Zuleika's face unveil'd!)
Hence, lead my daughter from her tower:
Her fate is fix'd 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 —
Then to the tower had ta'en his way,
But here young Selim silence brake,
 First lowly rendering reverence meet!
And downcast look'd, and gently spake,
 Still standing at the Pacha's feet:
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,

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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,
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,
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!
There linger'd we, beguil'd 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,
Warn'd 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."

IV.

"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.
Thou, when thine arm should bend the bow,
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
Thy listless eyes so much admire,
Would lend thee something of his fire!
Thou, who wouldst see this battlement
By Christian cannon piecemeal rent;
Nay, tamely view old Stamboul's wall
Before the dogs of Moscow fall,
Nor strike one stroke for life or death
Against the curs of Nazareth!
Go --- let thy less than woman's hand

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Assume the distaff --- not the brand.
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!"

V.

No sound from Selim's lip was heard,
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! --- reproach'd with fear!
Those gibes had cost another dear.
Son of a slave! and who my sire?"
Thus held his thoughts their dark career,
And glances ev'n of more than ire
Flash forth, then faintly disappear.
Old Giaffir gazed upon his son
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;
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."

As sneeringly these accents fell,
On Selim's eye he fiercely gazed:
That eye return'd him glance for glance,
And proudly to his sire's was raised,
Till Giaffir's quail'd and shrunk askance ---
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,
And scarcely in the chase 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:
No --- nor the blood so near my own.

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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 ---
But hark! --- I hear Zuleika's voice;
Like Houris' hymn it meets mine ear:
She is the offspring of my choice;
Oh! more than ev'n her mother dear,
With all to hope, and nought to fear ---
My Peri! --- ever welcome here!
Sweet, as the desert fountain's wave,
To lips just cool'd in time to save ---
Such to my longing sight art thou;
Nor can they waft to Mecca's shrine
More thanks for life, than I for thine,
Who blest thy birth, and bless thee now."

VI.

Fair, as the first that fell of womankind,
When on that dread yet lovely serpent smiling,
Whose image then was stamp'd upon her mind ---
But once beguiled --- and evermore beguiling;
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;
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
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?
Such was Zuleika --- such around her shone
The nameless charms unmark'd 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 ---
And, oh! that eye was in itself a Soul!

Her graceful arms in meekness bending
Across her gently-budding breast;

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At one kind word those arms extending
To clasp the neck of him who blest
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;
Affection chain'd her to that heart;
Ambition tore the links apart.

VII.

"Zuleika! child of gentleness!
How dear this very day must tell,
When I forget my own distress,
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;
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
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:
And his and my united power
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;
All that thy sex hath need to know:
'Twas mine to teach obedience still --
The way to love, thy lord may show."

VIII.

In silence bow'd the virgin's head;
And if her eye was fill'd with tears
That stifled feeling dare not shed,

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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?
So bright the tear in Beauty's eye,
Love half regrets to kiss it dry;
So sweet the blush of Bashfulness,
Even Pity scarce can wish it less!

Whate'er it was the sire forgot;
Or if remember'd, mark'd it not;
Thrice clapp'd his hands, and call'd his steed,
Resign'd his gem--adorn'd chibouque,
And mounting featly for the mead,
With Maugrabee and Mamaluke,
His way amid his Delis took,
To witness many an active deed
With sabre keen, or blunt jerreed.
The Kislar only and his Moors
Watch well the Haram's massy doors.

IX.

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

X.

No word from Selim's bosom broke;
One sigh Zuleika's thought bespoke:
Still gazed he through the lattice grate,
Pale, mute, and mournfully sedate.
To him Zuleika's eye was turn'd,
But little from his aspect learn'd;

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Equal her grief, yet not the same:
Her heart confess'd a gentler flame:
But yet that heart, alarm'd, 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;
Not thus shall be our parting yet."
Thrice paced she slowly through the room,
And watched his eye -- it still was fix'd:
She snatch'd the urn wherein was mix'd
The Persian Atar-gúl'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 address'd,
Unheeded o'er his bosom flew,
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 --
"He loved them once; may touch them yet
If offer'd by Zuleika's hand."
The childish thought was hardly breathed
Before the Rose was pluck'd and wreathed;
The next fond moment saw her seat
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;
And though his note is somewhat sad,
He'll try for once a strain more glad,
With some faint hope his alter'd lay
May sing these gloomy thoughts away.

XI.

"What! not receive my foolish flower?
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?
Come, lay thy head upon my breast,
And I will kiss thee into rest,

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Since words of mine, and songs must fail
Ev'n from my fabled nightingale.
I knew our sire at times was stern,
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
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 admit her vow,
Without thy free consent, command,
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 sever'd from thy side,
Where were thy friend — and who my guide?
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
Our hearts to undivided dust!"

XII.

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;
With thoughts that burn — in rays that melt.
As the streams late conceal'd
By the fringe of its willows,
When it rushes reveal'd
In the light of its billows;
As the bolt bursts on high
From the black cloud that bound it,
Flash'd the soul of that eye
Through the long lashes round it.
A war-horse at the trumpet's sound,
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, display'd,
And all, before repress'd, betray'd:

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"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.
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
That clusters round thy forehead fair,
For all the treasures buried far
Within the caves of Istakar.
This morning clouds upon me lower'd,
Reproaches on my head were shower'd,
And Giaffir almost call'd 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,
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.
I know the wretch who dares demand
From Giaffir thy reluctant hand;
More ill-got wealth, a meaner soul
Holds not a Musselim's control:
Was he not bred in Egripo?
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 partisans for peril's day:
Think not I am what I appear;
I've arms, and friends, and vengeance near."

XIII.

"Think not thou art what thou appearest!
My Selim, thou art sadly changed:
This morn I saw thee gentlest, dearest:
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,

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And hate the night, I know not why,
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;
For, Allah! 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,
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;
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,
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;
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
From simple childhood's earliest hour?
What other can she seek to see
Than thee, companion of her bower,
The partner of her infancy?
These cherish'd thoughts with life begun,
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 stranger's eyes
Our law, our creed, our God denies,
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 compell'd
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:

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And he so often storms at naught,
Allah! 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,
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:
I tremble now to meet his eye —
Say, Selim, canst thou tell me why?"

XIV.

"Zuleika — to thy tower's retreat
Betake thee — Giaffir I can greet:
And now with him I fain must prate
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
Such costly triumph to repay.
But, mark me, when the twilight drum
Hath warn'd the troops to food and sleep,
Unto thy cell will Selim come:
Then softly from the Haram creep
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
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."

"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.

Tonight, Zuleika, thou shalt hear
My tale, my purpose, and my fear:
I am not, love! what I appear."

CANTO THE SECOND.

I.

The winds are high on Helle's wave,
As on that night of stormy water,
When Love, who sent, forgot to save
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,
And shrieking sea-birds warn'd 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;
His eye but saw the light of love,
The only star it hail'd above;
His ear but rang with Hero's song,
"Ye waves, divide not lovers long!" --
That tale is old, but love anew
May nerve young hearts to prove as true.

II.

The winds are high, and Helle's tide
Rolls darkly heaving to the main;
And Night's descending shadows hide
That field with blood bedew'd in vain,
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's rocky isle!

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III.

Oh! yet — for there my steps have been!
These feet have press'd 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
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!

IV.

The night hath closed on Helle's stream,
Nor yet hath risen on Ida's hill
That moon, which shoon on his high theme:
No warrior chides her peaceful beam,
But conscious shepherds bless it still.
Their flocks are grazing on the mound
Of him who felt the Dardan's arrow;
That mighty heap of gather'd ground
Which Ammon's son ran proudly round,
By nations raised, by monarchs crown'd,
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;
But Thou — thy very dust is gone!

V.

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;
The scatter'd lights that skirt the bay,
All, one by one, have died away;
The only lamp of this lone hour

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Is glimmering in Zuleika's tower.
Yes! there is light in that lone chamber,
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?)
Her mother's sainted amulet,
Whereon engraved the Koorsee text,
Could smooth this life, and win the next;
And by her Comboloio lies
A Koran of illumined dyes;
And many a bright emblazon'd rhyme
By Persian scribes redeem'd from time;
And o'er those scrolls, not oft so mute,
Reclines her now neglected lute;
And round her lamp of fretted gold
Bloom flowers in urns of China's mould;
The richest work of Iran's loom,
And Sheeraz' tribute of perfume;
All that can eye or sense delight
Are gather'd in that gorgeous room:
But yet it hath an air of gloom.
She, of this Peri cell the sprite,
What doth she hence, and on so rude a night?

VI.

Wrapt in the darkest sable vest,
Which none save noblest Moslems wear,
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;
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?
How teach her tender lips to chide?

VII.

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

They reach'd at length a grotto, hewn
By nature, but enlarged by art,
Where oft her lute she wont to tune,
And oft her Koran conn'd apart:
And oft in youthful reverie
She dream'd what Paradise might be;
Where woman's parted soul shall go
Her Prophet had disdain'd to show;
But Selim's mansion was secure,
Nor deem'd 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?

VIII.

Since last she visited the spot
Some change seem'd wrought within the grot;
It might be only that the night
Disguised things seen by better light:
That brazen lamp but dimly threw
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 turban'd Delis in the field;
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.
What may this mean? she turn'd to see
Her Selim -- "Oh! can this be he?"

IX.

His robe of pride was thrown aside,
His brow no high-crown'd turban bore
But in its stead a shawl of red,
Wreathed lightly round, his temples wore:
That dagger, on whose hilt the gem
Were worthy of a diadem,
No longer glitter'd at his waist,

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

Where pistols unadorn'd were braced;
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:
Beneath — his golden plated vest
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,
All that a careless eye could see
In him was some young Galiongée.

X.

"I said I was not what I seem'd;
And now thou see'st my words were true:
I have a tale thou hast not dream'd,
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,
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 —
Zuleika! I am not thy brother!"

XI.

"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?
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 ledd'st me hear perchance to kill;
If thou hast cause for vengeance see
My breast is offer'd — take thy fill!

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

Far better with the dead to be
Than live thus nothing now to thee;
Perhaps far worse, for now I know
Why Giaffir always seem'd thy foe;
And I, alas! am Giaffir's child,
From whom thou wert contemn'd, reviled.
If not thy sister — wouldst thou save
My life, oh! bid me be thy slave!"

XII.

"My slave, Zuleika! — nay, I'm thine;
But, gentle love, this transport calm,
Thy lot shall yet be link'd with mine;
I swear it by our Prophet's shrine,
And be that thought thy sorrow's balm.
So may the Koran verse display'd
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
Must change; but, my Zuleika, know,
That tie is widen'd, not divided,
Although thy Sire's my deadliest foe.
My father was to Giaffir all
That Selim late was deem'd to thee;
That brother wrought a brother's fall,
But spared, at least, my infancy;
And lull'd me with a vain deceit
That yet a like return may meet.
He rear'd me, not with tender help,
But like the nephew of a Cain;
He watch'd 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
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.

XIII.

"How first their strife to rancour grew,

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

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,
Remember'd yet in Bosniac song,
And Paswan's rebel hordes attest
How little love they bore such guest:
His death is all I need relate,
The stern effect of Giaffir's hate;
And how my birth disclosed to me,
Whate'er beside it makes, hath made me free.

XIV.

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

XV.

"The deed once done, and Paswan's feud
In part suppress'd, though ne'er subdued,
Abdallah's Pachalic was gain'd: --
Thou know'st not what in our Divan

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

Can wealth procure for worse than man ---
Abdallah's honours were obtain'd
By him a brother's murder stain'd;
'Tis true, the purchase nearly drain'd
His ill got treasure, soon replaced.
Wouldst question whence? Survey the waste,
And ask the squalid peasant how
His gains repay his broiling brow! ---
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;
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,
Nor I forgive a father's blood!

XVI.

"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:
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,
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?
He chose the last, and when elate
With foes subdued, or friends betray'd,
Proud Giaffir in high triumph sate,
He led me helpless to his gate,
And not in vain it seems essay'd
To save the life for which he pray'd.
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
To this our Asiatic side,
Far from our seat by Danube's tide,

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

With none but Haroun, who retains
Such knowledge — and that Nubian feels
A tyrant's secrets are but chains,
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!

XVII.

"All this, Zuleika, harshly sounds;
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,
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
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 fill'd — once quaff'd, they ne'er repine:
Our Prophet might forgive the slaves;
They're only infidels in wine!

XVIII.

"What could I be? Proscribed at home,
And taunted to a wish to roam;
And listless left — for Giaffir's fear
Denied the courser and the spear —
Though oft — oh, Mohammed! how oft! —
In full Divan the despot scoff'd,
As if my weak unwilling hand
Refused the bridle or the brand:
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 endear'd,

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

Though it unmann'd me, still had cheer'd ---
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,
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
My almost drunkenness of heart,
When first this liberated eye
Survey'd Earth, Ocean, Sun and Sky,
As if my spirit pierced them through,
And all their inmost wonders knew!
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!

XIX.

"The shallop of a trusty Moor
Convey'd me from this idle shore;
I long'd to see the isles that gem
Old Ocean's purple diadem:
I sought by turns, and saw them all:
 But when and where I join'd the crew,
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.

XX.

"'Tis true, they are a lawless brood,
But rough in form, nor mild in mood;
With them hath found --- may find --- a place:
But open speech, and ready hand,
Obedience to their chief's command;
A soul for every enterprise,
That never sees with terror's eyes;
Friendship for each, and faith to all,
And vengeance vow'd for those who fall,

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

Have made them fitting instruments
For more than ev'n my own intents.
And some — and I have studied all
Distinguish'd from the vulgar rank,
But chiefly to my council call
The wisdom of the cautious Frank —
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,
To snatch the Rayahs from their fate.
So let them ease their hearts with prate
Of equal rights, which man ne'er knew;
I have a love of freedom too.
Ay! let me like the ocean—Patriarch roam,
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,
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!
Or, since that hope denied in worlds of strife,
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;
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
Blooming as Aden in its earliest hour.
A thousand swords, with Selim's heart and hand,
Wait — wave — defend — destroy — at thy command!
Girt by my band, Zuleika at my side,
The spoil of nations shall bedeck my bride.
The Haram's languid years of listless ease
Are well resign'd for cares — for joys like these:
Not blind to fate, I see, where'er I rove,
Unnumber'd perils — but one only love!
Yet well my toils shall that fond beast repay,
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;

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

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 assign'd
By fatal Nature to man's warring kind:
Mark! where his carnage and his conquests cease!
He makes a solitude, and calls it — peace!
I like the rest must use my skill or strength,
But ask no land beyond my sabre's length:
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
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!
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,
Which Love to-night hath promised to my sail:
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!
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!
The war of elements no fears impart
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.
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?

XXI.

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

"His head and faith from doubt and death
Return'd 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,
No deed they've done, nor deed shall do,
Ere I have heard and doom'd 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;
Time presses, floats my bark, and here
We leave behind but hate and fear.
To-morrow Osman with his train
Arrives -- to-night must break thy chain:
And wouldst thou save that haughty Bey,
Perchance, his life who gave the thine,
With me this hour away -- away!
But yet, though thou art plighted mine,
Wouldst thou recall thy willing vow,
Appall'd by truth imparted now,
Here rest I -- not to see thee wed:
But be that peril on my head!"

XXII.

Zuleika, mute and motionless,
Stood like that statue of distress,
When, her last hope for ever gone,
The mother harden'd into stone;
All in the maid that eye could see
Was but a younger Niobè.
But ere her lip, or even her eye,
Essay'd to speak, or look reply,
Beneath the garden's wicket porch
Far flash'd on high a blazing torch!
Another -- and another -- and another --
"Oh! -- no more -- yet now my more than brother!"
Far, wide, through every thicket spread,
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;
And last of all, his sabre waving,
Stern Giaffir in his fury raving:
And now almost they touch the cave --

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

Oh! must that grot be Selim's grave?

XXIII.

Dauntless he stood -- "'Tis come -- soon past --
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."
Forth to the cavern mouth he stept;
His pistol's echo rang on high,
Zuleika started not nor wept,
Despair benumb'd her breast and eye! --
"They hear me not, or if they ply
Their oars, 'tis but to see me die;
That sound hath drawn my foes more nigh.
Then forth my father's scimitar,
Thou ne'er hast seen less equal war!
Farewell, Zuleika! -- Sweet! retire:
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
If in this strife I seek thy sire!
No -- though by him that poison pour'd:
No -- though again he call me coward!
But tamely shall I meet their steel?
No -- as each crest save his may feel!"

XXIV.

One bound he made, and gain'd 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
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 --
Oh! are they yet in time to save?

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

His feet the foremost breakers lave;
His band are plunging in the bay,
Their sabres glitter through the spray;
We -- wild -- unwearied to the strand
They struggle -- now they touch the land!
They come -- 'tis but to add to slaughter --
His heart's best blood is on the water!

XXV.

Escaped from shot, unharm'd by steel,
Or scarcely grazed its force to feel,
Had Selim won, betray'd, 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
For her his eye but sought in vain?
That pause, that fatal gaze he took,
Hath doom'd his death, or fix'd his chain.
Sad proof, in peril and in pain,
How late will Lover's hope remain!
His back was to the dashing spray;
Behind, but close, his comrades lay
When, at the instant, hiss'd the ball --
"So may the foes of Giaffir fall!"
Whose voice is heard? whose carbine rang?
Whose bullet through the night-air sang,
Too nearly, deadly aim'd to err?
'Tis thine -- Abdallah's Murderer!
The father slowly rued thy hate,
The son hath found a quicker fate:
Fast from his breast the blood is bubbling,
The whiteness of the sea-foam troubling --
If aught his lips essay'd to groan,
The rushing billows choked the tone!

XXVI.

Morn slowly rolls the clouds away;
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,

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

And fragments of each shiver'd brand;
Steps stamp'd; and dash'd into the sand
The print of many a struggling hand
 May there be mark'd; nor far remote
 A broken torch, an oarless boat;
And tangled on the weeds that heap
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?
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:
The sea—birds shriek above the prey,
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,
Flung by the tossing tide on high,
 Then levell'd with the wave —
What recks it, though that corse shall lie
 Within a living grave?
The bird that tears that prostrate form
Hath only robb'd the meaner worm:
The only heart, the only eye
Had bled or wept to see him die,
Had seen those scatter'd limbs composed,
 And mourn'd above his turban—stone,
That heart hath burst — that eye was closed —
 Yea — closed before his own!

XXVII.

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,
 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,
 The Koran—chanters of the hymn of fate,
 The silent slaves with folded arms that wait,
Sighs in the hall, and shrieks upon the gale,

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

Tell him thy tale!
Thou didst not view thy Selim fall!
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;

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
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,
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,
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!
Hope of thine age, thy twilight's lonely beam,
The star hath set that shone on Helle's stream.
What quench'd its ray? --- the blood that thou hast shed!
Hark! to the hurried question of Despair:
"Where is my child?" --- an Echo answers --- "Where?"

XVIII.

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 stamp'd with an eternal grief,
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:
It looks as planted by Despair ---
So white --- so faint --- the slightest gale

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

Might whirl the leaves on high;
And yet, though storms and blight assail,
And hands more rude than wintry sky
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
That this can be no earthly flower,
Which mocks the tempest's withering hour,
And buds unshelter'd by a bower;
Nor droops, though spring refuse her shower,
Nor woos the summer beam:
To it the livelong night there sings
A bird unseen -- but not remote:
Invisible his airy wings,
But soft as harp that Houris strings
His long entrancing note!
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!
And yet so sweet the tears they shed,
'Tis sorrow so unmix'd with dread,
They scarce can bear the morn to break
That melancholy spell,
And longer yet would weep and wake,
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,
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,
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!
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;
Lash'd by the tumbling tide, whose wave
Denied his bones a holier grave:
And there by night, reclined, 'tis said,
Is seen a ghastly turban'd head:

THE BRIDE OF ABYDOS: A TURKISH TALE.

And hence extended by the billow,
'Tis named the "Pirate-phantom's pillow!"
Where first it lay that mourning flower
Hath flourish'd; flourisheth this hour,
Alone and dewy, coldly pure and pale;
As weeping Beauty's cheek at Sorrow's tale.