

THE
BRIDE OF ABYDOS.

A TURKISH TALE.

BY LORD BYRON.

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.

SEVENTH EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed by Thomas Davison, Whitefriars,
FOR JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

1814.

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.

THE
BRIDE OF ABYDOS.

CANTO I.

I.

KNOW ye the land where the 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, oppressed with perfume,
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gûl¹ in her bloom;
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
And the voice of the nightingale never is mute; 10
Where the tints of the earth, and the hues of the sky,
In colour though varied, in beauty may vie,
And the purple of Ocean is deepest in die;
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?²
 Oh! wild as the accents of lovers' farewell
 Are the hearts which they bear, and the tales which they tell.

II.

Begirt with many a gallant slave, 20
 Apparelled as becomes the brave,
 Awaiting each his Lord's behest
 To guide his steps, or guard his rest,
 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 30
 Did more than he was wont avow.

III.

"Let the chamber be cleared"—the train disappeared—
 "Now call me the chief of the Haram guard—"
 With Giaffir is none but his only son,
 And the Nubian awaiting the sire's award.

“ Haroun—when all the crowd that wait
“ Are passed beyond the outer gate, .
“ (Woe to the head whose eye beheld
“ My child Zuleika’s face unveiled !)
“ Hence, lead my daughter from her tower— 40
“ Her fate is fixed this very hour ;
“ Yet not to her repeat my thought—
“ By me alone be duty taught !”

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

“ Father !—for fear that thou should’st chide
“ My sister, or her sable guide—
“ Know—for the fault, if fault there be,
“ Was mine—then fall thy frowns on me !

“ So lovelily the morning shone,
“ That—let the old and weary sleep—
“ I could not; and to view alone
“ The fairest scenes of land and deep, 60
“ With none to listen and reply
“ To thoughts with which my heart beat high
“ Were irksome—for whate’er my mood,
“ In sooth I love not solitude:
“ I on Zuleika’s slumber broke,
“ And, as thou knowest that for me
“ Soon turns the Haram’s grating key,
“ Before the guardian slaves awoke
“ We to the cypress groves had flown,
“ And made earth, main, and heaven our own! 70
“ There lingered we, beguiled too long
“ With Mejnoun’s tale, or Sadi’s song; ²
“ Till I, who heard the deep tambour ⁴
“ 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, frown not—nor forget

“ That none can pierce that secret bower
“ But those who watch the women’s tower.” 80

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 90
“ Thy listless eyes so much admire,
“ Would lend thee something of his fire !
“ Thou, who would’st see this battlement
“ By Christian cannon piecemeal rent—
“ Nay, tamely view old Stambol’s wall
“ Before the dogs of Moscow fall—
“ Nor strike one stroke for life and death
“ Against the curs of Nazareth !

" Go—let thy less than woman's hand
 " Assume the distaff—not the brand. 100
 " But, Haroun!—to my daughter speed—
 " And hark—of thine own head take heed—
 " If thus Zuleika oft takes wing—
 " Thou see'st yon bow—it hath a string!"

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!—reproached with fear—
 " Those gibes had cost another dear. 110
 " Son of a slave!—and *who* my sire?"
 Thus held his thoughts their dark career,
 And glances even of more than ire
 Flash forth—then faintly disappear.
 Old Giaffir gazed upon his son
 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?

7

120

130

140

“ That blood—he hath not heard—no more—

“ I’ll watch him closer than before—

“ He is an Arab^s 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 even her mother dear,

“ With all to hope, and nought to fear,

150

“ My Peri ! ever welcome here !

“ Sweet, as the desert-fountain’s wave

“ To lips just cooled in time to save—

“ Such to my longing sight art thou ;

“ Nor can they waft to Mecca’s shrine

“ 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 stamped upon her mind—

160

But once beguiled—and ever more beguiling ;

Dazzling—as that, oh! too transcendant 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 170
To fix one spark of Beauty's heavenly ray?
Who doth not feel—until his failing sight
Faints into dimness with its own delight—
His changing cheek—his sinking heart confess
The might—the majesty of Loveliness?
Such was Zuleika—such around her shone
The nameless charms unmarked by her alone—
The light of love—the purity of grace—
The mind—the Music breathing from her face!⁶
The heart whose softness harmonized the whole— 180
And, oh! that eye was in itself a Soul!

Her graceful arms in meekness bending
Across her gently-budding breast—
At one kind word those arms extending
To clasp the neck of him who blest
His child caressing and carest,
Zuleika came—and Giaffir felt
His purpose half within him melt;
Not that against her fancied weal
His heart though stern could ever feel— 190
Affection chained her to that heart—
Ambition tore the links apart.

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 Moslem reck not much of blood— 200
“ But yet the line of Carasman⁷
“ 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 210
" Will laugh to scorn the death-firman,
" Which others tremble but to scan—
" And teach the messenger^s what fate
" The bearer of such boon may wait.
" And now thou 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 shew."

VIII.

- In silence bowed the virgin's head—
And if her eye was filled with tears 220
That stifled feeling dare not shed,
And changed her cheek from 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— 230
 Or if remembered, marked it not—
 Thrice clapped his hands, and called his steed,
 Resign'd his gem-adorn'd Chibouque,¹⁰
 And mounting featly for the mead,
 With Maugrabee¹¹—and Mamaluke—
 His way amid his Delis took,¹²
 To witness many an active deed
 With sabre keen—or blunt jereed.
 The Kislär only and his Moors
 Watch well the Haram's massy doors. 240

IX.

His head was leant upon his hand,
 His eye looked o'er the dark blue water,

That swiftly glides and gently swells
Between the winding Dardanelles;
But yet he saw nor sea nor strand,
Nor even his Pacha's turbaned band

Mix in the game of mimic slaughter;
Careering cleave the folded felt¹³

With sabre stroke right sharply dealt—

Nor marked the javelin-darting crowd,

250

Nor heard their Ollahs¹⁴ 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 turned,

But little from his aspect learned;

Equal her grief—yet not the same,

Her heart confessed a gentler flame—

260

But yet that heart alarmed or weak,

She knew not why, forbade to speak—

Yet speak she must—but when essay—
“How strange he thus should turn away!
“Not thus we e’er before have met,
“Not thus shall be our parting yet.”—
Thrice paced she slowly through the room,
And watched his eye—it still was fixed—
She snatched the urn wherein was mixed
The Persian Atar-gul’s¹⁵ perfume, 270
And sprinkled all it’s odours o’er
The pictured roof¹⁶ and marble floor—
The drops, that through his glittering vest
The playful girl’s appeal address,
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— 280
“He loved them once—may touch them yet,
“If offered by Zuleika’s hand.”
The childish thought was hardly breathed
Before the Rose was 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 Bulbul¹⁷ bears;

“ It says to-night he will prolong,

“ For Selim's ear his sweetest song—

290

“ And though his note is somewhat sad,

“ He'll try for once a strain more glad,

“ With some faint hope his altered lay

“ May sing these gloomy thoughts away.

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 I thou hat'st or fearest?

300

“ Come, lay thy head upon my breast,

“ And I will kiss thee into rest,

“ Since words of mine—and songs must fail,

“ Even from my fabled nightingale.

- “ I knew our sire at times was stern,
“ But this from thee had yet to learn—
“ Too well I know he loves thee not,
“ But is Zuleika’s love forgot?
“ Ah ! deem I right ? the Pacha’s plan—
“ This kinsman Bey of Carasman 310
“ Perhaps may prove some foe of thine—
“ If so—I swear by Mecca’s shrine,
“ If shrines, that ne’er approach allow
“ To woman’s step, admit her vow—
“ Without thy free consent, command—
“ The Sultan should not have my hand !
“ Think’st thou that I could bear to part
“ With thee—and learn to halve my heart ?
“ Ah ! were I severed from thy side,
“ Where were thy friend—and who my guide ? 320
“ Years have not seen—Time shall not see
“ The hour that tears my soul from thee—
“ Even Azrael ¹⁸ 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— 330
With thoughts that burn—in rays that melt.—
As the stream late concealed
By the fringe of its willows—
When it rushes revealed
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 warhorse at the trumpet's sound, 340
A lion roused by heedless hound ;
A tyrant waked to sudden strife
By graze of ill-directed knife,
Starts not to more convulsive life
Than he, who heard that vow, displayed,
And all, before repressed, betrayed.

- “ Now thou art mine, for ever mine,
“ With life to keep, and scarce with life resign ;—
“ Now thou art mine, that sacred oath,
“ Though sworn by one, hath bound us both. 350
“ Yes, fondly, wisely hast thou done,
“ That vow hath saved more heads than one :—
“ But blench not thou—thy simplest tress
“ Claims more from me than tenderness ;
“ I would not wrong the slenderest hair
“ That clusters round thy forehead fair,
“ For all the treasures buried far
“ Within the caves of Istakar.¹⁹
“ This morning clouds upon me lowered,
“ Reproaches on my head were showered, 360
“ And Giaffir almost called me coward !
“ Now I have motive to be brave,
“ The son of his neglected slave :
“ Nay, start not—’twas the term he gave—
“ May shew, though little apt to vaunt,
“ A heart his words nor deeds can daunt.
“ *His* son, indeed !—yet, thanks to thee,
“ Perchance I am, at least shall be ;

- “ But let our plighted secret vow
“ Be only known to us as now. 370
“ I know the wretch who dares demand
“ From Giaffir thy reluctant hand ;
“ More ill-got wealth, a meaner soul
“ Holds not a Musselim’s²⁰ control ;
“ Was he not bred in Egripo ?²¹
“ A viler race let Israel show !
“ But let that pass—to none be told
“ Our oath—the rest shall time unfold ;
“ To me and mine leave Osman Bey,
“ I’ve partizans for peril’s day ; 380
“ Think not I am what I appear,
“ I’ve arms, and friends, and vengeance near.”

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,
“ And hate the night I know not why, 390
“ Save that we meet not but by day—
“ With thee to live, with thee to die,
“ I dare not to my hope deny :
“ Thy cheek, thine eyes, thy lips to kiss,
“ Like this—and this—no more than this,
“ For, Alla ! sure thy lips are flame,
“ What fever in thy veins is flushing ?
“ My own have nearly caught the same,
“ At least I feel my cheek too blushing.
“ To soothe thy sickness, watch thy health, 400
“ Partake, but never waste thy wealth,
“ Or stand with smiles un murmuring by,
“ And lighten half thy poverty ;
“ Do all but close thy dying eye,
“ For that I could not live to try ;
“ To these alone my thoughts aspire—
“ More can I do ? or thou require ?
“ But, Selim, thou must answer why
“ We need so much of mystery ?

- “ The cause I cannot dream nor tell, 410
“ But be it, since thou say'st 'tis well ;
“ Yet what thou mean'st by ‘ arms’ and ‘ friends’,
“ Beyond my weaker sense extends—
“ I meant 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 420
“ From simple childhood's earliest hour ?
“ What other can she seek to see
“ Than thee, companion of her bower,
“ The partner of her infancy ?
“ These cherished 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 strangers eyes
“ Our law, our creed, our God denies ; 430
“ Nor shall one wandering thought of mine
“ At such, our Prophet's will, repine :

- “ No—happier made by that decree,
“ He left me all in leaving thee.
“ Deep were my anguish, thus compelled
“ To wed with one I ne’er beheld—
“ This—wherefore should I not reveal?
“ Why wilt thou urge me to conceal?
“ I know the Pacha’s haughty mood
“ To thee hath never boded good; 440
“ And he so often storms at nought,
“ 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 ; 450
“ I tremble now to meet his eye—
“ Say, Selim, can’st 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 Giour may give him thanks!
“ Our Sultan hath a shorter way 460
“ Such costly triumph to repay.
“ But, mark me, when the twilight drum
“ Hath warned the troops to food and sleep,
“ Unto thy cell will Selim come:
“ Then softly from the Haram creep
“ Where we may wander by the deep,
“ Our garden-battlements are steep:
“ Nor these will rash intruder climb
“ To list our words, or stint our time;
“ And if he doth—I want not steel 470
“ Which some have felt, and more may feel.
“ Then shalt thou learn of Selim more
“ Than thou hast heard or thought before;

“ Trust me, Zuleika—fear not me !

“ Thou know’st I hold a Haram key.”

“ 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.

480

“ To night, Zuleika, thou shalt hear

“ My tale, my purpose, and my fear—

“ I am not, love ! what I appear.”

END OF CANTO I.

THE
BRIDE OF ABYDOS.

CANTO II.

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 that 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 20
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!

III.

Oh! yet—for there my steps have been,
These feet have press'd the sacred shore,
These limbs that buoyant wave hath borne— 30
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"²³ 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 40
That moon, which shone 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's²⁴ son ran proudly round,
By nations rais'd, by monarchs crown'd,
Is now a lone and nameless barrow
Within—thy dwelling-place how narrow! 50
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; 60
The only lamp of this lone hour
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;²⁵
Near these, with emerald rays beset,
How could she thus that gem forget?
Her mother's sainted amulet,²⁶
Whereon engraved the Koorsee text, 70
Could smooth this life, and win the next;

And by her Comboloio ²⁷ lies
A Koran of illumin'd 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, 80
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 Moslem wear,
To guard from winds of heaven the breast
As heaven itself to Selim dear ; 90

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.

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 conned 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, 110
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
Disguis'd things seen by better light—
That brazen lamp but dimly threw
A ray of no celestial hue;
But in a nook within the cell 120
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?" 130

IX.

His robe of pride was thrown aside,
His brow no high-crown'd turban bore,
But in its stead a shawl of red,
Wreath'd lightly round, his temples wore :—
That dagger, on whose hilt the gem
Were worthy of a diadem,
No longer glitter'd at his waist,
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.²³

140

150