

**GEORGE GORDON  
BYRON BARON  
BYRON**

it's about  
way  
not about the  
destination

**CHILDE  
HAROLD'S  
PILGRIMAGE**

**George Gordon Byron Baron Byron**

# **Childe Harold's Pilgrimage**

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# CANTO THE FIRST.

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I.

Oh, thou, in Hellas deemed of heavenly birth,  
Muse, formed or fabled at the minstrel's will!  
Since shamed full oft by later lyres on earth,  
Mine dares not call thee from thy sacred hill:  
Yet there I've wandered by thy vaunted rill;  
Yes! sighed o'er Delphi's long-deserted shrine  
Where, save that feeble fountain, all is still;  
Nor mote my shell awake the weary Nine  
To grace so plain a tale—this lowly lay of mine.

II.

Whilome in Albion's isle there dwelt a youth,  
Who ne in virtue's ways did take delight;  
But spent his days in riot most uncouth,  
And vexed with mirth the drowsy ear of Night.  
Ah, me! in sooth he was a shameless wight,  
Sore given to revel and ungodly glee;  
Few earthly things found favour in his sight  
Save concubines and carnal companie,  
And flaunting wassailers of high and low degree.

III.

Childe Harold was he hight:—but whence his name  
And lineage long, it suits me not to say;  
Suffice it, that perchance they were of fame,  
And had been glorious in another day:  
But one sad losel soils a name for aye,  
However mighty in the olden time;  
Nor all that heralds rake from coffined clay,  
Nor florid prose, nor honeyed lines of rhyme,  
Can blazon evil deeds, or consecrate a crime.

IV.

Childe Harold basked him in the noontide sun,  
Disporting there like any other fly,  
Nor deemed before his little day was done  
One blast might chill him into misery.  
But long ere scarce a third of his passed by,  
Worse than adversity the Childe befell;  
He felt the fulness of satiety:  
Then loathed he in his native land to dwell,  
Which seemed to him more lone than eremite's sad cell.

V.

For he through Sin's long labyrinth had run,  
Nor made atonement when he did amiss,  
Had sighed to many, though he loved but one,  
And that loved one, alas, could ne'er be his.  
Ah, happy she! to 'scape from him whose kiss  
Had been pollution unto aught so chaste;  
Who soon had left her charms for vulgar bliss,  
And spoiled her goodly lands to gild his waste,  
Nor calm domestic peace had ever deigned to taste.

VI.

And now Childe Harold was sore sick at heart,  
And from his fellow bacchanals would flee;  
'Tis said, at times the sullen tear would start,  
But pride congealed the drop within his e'e:  
Apart he stalked in joyless reverie,  
And from his native land resolved to go,  
And visit scorching climes beyond the sea;  
With pleasure drugged, he almost longed for woe,  
And e'en for change of scene would seek the shades below.

VII.

The Childe departed from his father's hall;  
It was a vast and venerable pile;  
So old, it seemed only not to fall,  
Yet strength was pillared in each massy aisle.  
Monastic dome! condemned to uses vile!

Where superstition once had made her den,  
Now Paphian girls were known to sing and smile;  
And monks might deem their time was come agen,  
If ancient tales say true, nor wrong these holy men.

VIII.

Yet ofttimes in his maddest mirthful mood,  
Strange pangs would flash along Childe Harold's brow,  
As if the memory of some deadly feud  
Or disappointed passion lurked below:  
But this none knew, nor haply cared to know;  
For his was not that open, artless soul  
That feels relief by bidding sorrow flow;  
Nor sought he friend to counsel or condole,  
Whate'er this grief mote be, which he could not control.

IX.

And none did love him: though to hall and bower  
He gathered revellers from far and near,  
He knew them flatterers of the festal hour;  
The heartless parasites of present cheer.  
Yea, none did love him—not his lemans dear—  
But pomp and power alone are woman's care,  
And where these are light Eros finds a feere;  
Maidens, like moths, are ever caught by glare,  
And Mammon wins his way where seraphs might despair.

X.

Childe Harold had a mother—not forgot,  
Though parting from that mother he did shun;  
A sister whom he loved, but saw her not  
Before his weary pilgrimage begun:  
If friends he had, he bade adieu to none.  
Yet deem not thence his breast a breast of steel;  
Ye, who have known what 'tis to dote upon  
A few dear objects, will in sadness feel  
Such partings break the heart they fondly hope to heal.

XI.

His house, his home, his heritage, his lands,  
The laughing dames in whom he did delight,  
Whose large blue eyes, fair locks, and snowy hands,  
Might shake the saintship of an anchorite,  
And long had fed his youthful appetite;  
His goblets brimmed with every costly wine,  
And all that mote to luxury invite,  
Without a sigh he left to cross the brine,  
And traverse Paynim shores, and pass earth's central line.

XII.

The sails were filled, and fair the light winds blew  
As glad to waft him from his native home;  
And fast the white rocks faded from his view,  
And soon were lost in circumambient foam;  
And then, it may be, of his wish to roam  
Repented he, but in his bosom slept  
The silent thought, nor from his lips did come  
One word of wail, whilst others sate and wept,  
And to the reckless gales unmanly moaning kept.

XIII.

But when the sun was sinking in the sea,  
He seized his harp, which he at times could string,  
And strike, albeit with untaught melody,  
When deemed he no strange ear was listening:  
And now his fingers o'er it he did fling,  
And tuned his farewell in the dim twilight,  
While flew the vessel on her snowy wing,  
And fleeting shores receded from his sight,  
Thus to the elements he poured his last 'Good Night.'  
Adieu, adieu! my native shore  
Fades o'er the waters blue;  
The night-winds sigh, the breakers roar,  
And shrieks the wild sea-mew.  
Yon sun that sets upon the sea  
We follow in his flight;

Farewell awhile to him and thee,  
My Native Land—Good Night!  
A few short hours, and he will rise  
To give the morrow birth;  
And I shall hail the main and skies,  
But not my mother earth.  
Deserted is my own good hall,  
Its hearth is desolate;  
Wild weeds are gathering on the wall,  
My dog howls at the gate.  
'Come hither, hither, my little page:  
Why dost thou weep and wail?  
Or dost thou dread the billow's rage,  
Or tremble at the gale?  
But dash the tear-drop from thine eye,  
Our ship is swift and strong;  
Our fleetest falcon scarce can fly  
More merrily along.'  
'Let winds be shrill, let waves roll high,  
I fear not wave nor wind;  
Yet marvel not, Sir Childe, that I  
Am sorrowful in mind;  
For I have from my father gone,  
A mother whom I love,  
And have no friend, save these alone,  
But thee—and One above.  
'My father blessed me fervently,  
Yet did not much complain;  
But sorely will my mother sigh  
Till I come back again.'—  
'Enough, enough, my little lad!  
Such tears become thine eye;  
If I thy guileless bosom had,  
Mine own would not be dry.  
'Come hither, hither, my staunch yeoman,  
Why dost thou look so pale?



Or dost thou dread a French foeman,  
Or shiver at the gale?'—  
'Deem'st thou I tremble for my life?  
Sir Childe, I'm not so weak;  
But thinking on an absent wife  
Will blanch a faithful cheek.  
'My spouse and boys dwell near thy hall,  
Along the bordering lake;  
And when they on their father call,  
What answer shall she make?'—  
'Enough, enough, my yeoman good,  
Thy grief let none gainsay;  
But I, who am of lighter mood,  
Will laugh to flee away.'  
For who would trust the seeming sighs  
Of wife or paramour?  
Fresh feeres will dry the bright blue eyes  
We late saw streaming o'er.  
For pleasures past I do not grieve,  
Nor perils gathering near;  
My greatest grief is that I leave  
No thing that claims a tear.  
And now I'm in the world alone,  
Upon the wide, wide sea;  
But why should I for others groan,  
When none will sigh for me?  
Perchance my dog will whine in vain  
Till fed by stranger hands;  
But long ere I come back again  
He'd tear me where he stands.  
With thee, my bark, I'll swiftly go  
Athwart the foaming brine;  
Nor care what land thou bear'st me to,  
So not again to mine.  
Welcome, welcome, ye dark blue waves!  
And when you fail my sight,

Welcome, ye deserts, and ye caves!  
My Native Land—Good Night!

XIV.

On, on the vessel flies, the land is gone,  
And winds are rude in Biscay's sleepless bay.  
Four days are sped, but with the fifth, anon,  
New shores descried make every bosom gay;  
And Cintra's mountain greets them on their way,  
And Tagus dashing onward to the deep,  
His fabled golden tribute bent to pay;  
And soon on board the Lusian pilots leap,  
And steer 'twixt fertile shores where yet few rustics reap.

XV.

Oh, Christ! it is a goodly sight to see  
What Heaven hath done for this delicious land!  
What fruits of fragrance blush on every tree!  
What goodly prospects o'er the hills expand!  
But man would mar them with an impious hand:  
And when the Almighty lifts his fiercest scourge  
'Gainst those who most transgress his high command,  
With treble vengeance will his hot shafts urge  
Gaul's locust host, and earth from fellest foemen purge.

XVI.

What beauties doth Lisboa first unfold!  
Her image floating on that noble tide,  
Which poets vainly pave with sands of gold,  
But now whereon a thousand keels did ride  
Of mighty strength, since Albion was allied,  
And to the Lusians did her aid afford  
A nation swoll'n with ignorance and pride,  
Who lick, yet loathe, the hand that waves the sword.  
To save them from the wrath of Gaul's unsparing lord.

XVII.

But whoso entereth within this town,  
That, sheening far, celestial seems to be,

Disconsolate will wander up and down,  
Mid many things unsightly to strange e'e;  
For hut and palace show like filthily;  
The dingy denizens are reared in dirt;  
No personage of high or mean degree  
Doth care for cleanness of surtout or shirt,  
Though shent with Egypt's plague, unkempt, unwashed,  
unhurt.

XVIII.

Poor, paltry slaves! yet born midst noblest scenes—  
Why, Nature, waste thy wonders on such men?  
Lo! Cintra's glorious Eden intervenes  
In variegated maze of mount and glen.  
Ah me! what hand can pencil guide, or pen,  
To follow half on which the eye dilates  
Through views more dazzling unto mortal ken  
Than those whereof such things the bard relates,  
Who to the awe-struck world unlocked Elysium's gates?

XIX.

The horrid crags, by toppling convent crowned,  
The cork-trees hoar that clothe the shaggy steep,  
The mountain moss by scorching skies imbrowned,  
The sunken glen, whose sunless shrubs must weep,  
The tender azure of the unruffled deep,  
The orange tints that gild the greenest bough,  
The torrents that from cliff to valley leap,  
The vine on high, the willow branch below,  
Mixed in one mighty scene, with varied beauty glow.

XX.

Then slowly climb the many-winding way,  
And frequent turn to linger as you go,  
From loftier rocks new loveliness survey,  
And rest ye at 'Our Lady's House of Woe;'  
Where frugal monks their little relics show,  
And sundry legends to the stranger tell:

Here impious men have punished been; and lo,  
Deep in yon cave Honorius long did dwell,  
In hope to merit Heaven by making earth a Hell.

XXI.

And here and there, as up the crags you spring,  
Mark many rude-carved crosses near the path;  
Yet deem not these devotion's offering—  
These are memorials frail of murderous wrath;  
For wheresoe'er the shrieking victim hath  
Poured forth his blood beneath the assassin's knife,  
Some hand erects a cross of mouldering lath;  
And grove and glen with thousand such are rife  
Throughout this purple land, where law secures not life!

XXII.

On sloping mounds, or in the vale beneath,  
Are domes where whilom kings did make repair;  
But now the wild flowers round them only breathe:  
Yet ruined splendour still is lingering there.  
And yonder towers the prince's palace fair:  
There thou, too, Vathek! England's wealthiest son,  
Once formed thy Paradise, as not aware  
When wanton Wealth her mightiest deeds hath done,  
Meek Peace voluptuous lures was ever wont to shun.

XXIII.

Here didst thou dwell, here schemes of pleasure plan.  
Beneath yon mountain's ever beauteous brow;  
But now, as if a thing unblest by man,  
Thy fairy dwelling is as lone as thou!  
Here giant weeds a passage scarce allow  
To halls deserted, portals gaping wide;  
Fresh lessons to the thinking bosom, how  
Vain are the pleasaunces on earth supplied;  
Swept into wrecks anon by Time's ungentle tide.

XXIV.

Behold the hall where chiefs were late convened!  
Oh! dome displeasing unto British eye!  
With diadem high foolscap, lo! a fiend,  
A little fiend that scoffs incessantly,  
There sits in parchment robe arrayed, and by  
His side is hung a seal and sable scroll,  
Where blazoned glare names known to chivalry,  
And sundry signatures adorn the roll,  
Whereat the urchin points, and laughs with all his soul.

XXV.

Convention is the dwarfish demon styled  
That foiled the knights in Marialva's dome:  
Of brains (if brains they had) he them beguiled,  
And turned a nation's shallow joy to gloom.  
Here Folly dashed to earth the victor's plume,  
And Policy regained what Arms had lost:  
For chiefs like ours in vain may laurels bloom!  
Woe to the conquering, not the conquered host,  
Since baffled Triumph droops on Lusitania's coast.

XXVI.

And ever since that martial synod met,  
Britannia sickens, Cintra, at thy name;  
And folks in office at the mention fret,  
And fain would blush, if blush they could, for shame.  
How will posterity the deed proclaim!  
Will not our own and fellow-nations sneer,  
To view these champions cheated of their fame,  
By foes in fight o'erthrown, yet victors here,  
Where Scorn her finger points through many a coming year?

XXVII.

So deemed the Childe, as o'er the mountains he  
Did take his way in solitary guise:  
Sweet was the scene, yet soon he thought to flee,  
More restless than the swallow in the skies:  
Though here awhile he learned to moralise,

For Meditation fixed at times on him,  
And conscious Reason whispered to despise  
His early youth misspent in maddest whim;  
But as he gazed on Truth, his aching eyes grew dim.

XXVIII.

To horse! to horse! he quits, for ever quits  
A scene of peace, though soothing to his soul:  
Again he rouses from his moping fits,  
But seeks not now the harlot and the bowl.  
Onward he flies, nor fixed as yet the goal  
Where he shall rest him on his pilgrimage;  
And o'er him many changing scenes must roll,  
Ere toil his thirst for travel can assuage,  
Or he shall calm his breast, or learn experience sage.

XXIX.

Yet Mafra shall one moment claim delay,  
Where dwelt of yore the Lusians' luckless queen;  
And church and court did mingle their array,  
And mass and revel were alternate seen;  
Lordlings and freres—ill-sorted fry, I ween!  
But here the Babylonian whore had built  
A dome, where flaunts she in such glorious sheen,  
That men forget the blood which she hath spilt,  
And bow the knee to Pomp that loves to garnish guilt.

XXX.

O'er vales that teem with fruits, romantic hills,  
(Oh that such hills upheld a free-born race!)  
Whereon to gaze the eye with joyaunce fills,  
Childe Harold wends through many a pleasant place.  
Though sluggards deem it but a foolish chase,  
And marvel men should quit their easy chair,  
The toilsome way, and long, long league to trace.  
Oh, there is sweetness in the mountain air  
And life, that bloated Ease can never hope to share.

XXXI.

More bleak to view the hills at length recede,  
And, less luxuriant, smoother vales extend:  
Immense horizon-bounded plains succeed!  
Far as the eye discerns, withouten end,  
Spain's realms appear, whereon her shepherds tend  
Flocks, whose rich fleece right well the trader knows—  
Now must the pastor's arm his lambs defend:  
For Spain is compassed by unyielding foes,  
And all must shield their all, or share Subjection's woes.

XXXII.

Where Lusitania and her Sister meet,  
Deem ye what bounds the rival realms divide?  
Or e'er the jealous queens of nations greet,  
Doth Tayo interpose his mighty tide?  
Or dark sierras rise in craggy pride?  
Or fence of art, like China's vasty wall?—  
Ne barrier wall, ne river deep and wide,  
Ne horrid crags, nor mountains dark and tall  
Rise like the rocks that part Hispania's land from Gaul

XXXIII.

But these between a silver streamlet glides,  
And scarce a name distinguisheth the brook,  
Though rival kingdoms press its verdant sides.  
Here leans the idle shepherd on his crook,  
And vacant on the rippling waves doth look,  
That peaceful still 'twixt bitterest foemen flow:  
For proud each peasant as the noblest duke:  
Well doth the Spanish hind the difference know  
'Twixt him and Lusian slave, the lowest of the low.

XXXIV.

But ere the mingling bounds have far been passed,  
Dark Guadiana rolls his power along  
In sullen billows, murmuring and vast,  
So noted ancient roundelays among.  
Whilome upon his banks did legions throng