

# Lord Byron

## *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto 3, Stanzas 68 - 75*

Lake Lemman woos me with its crystal face,  
The mirror where the stars and mountains view  
The stillness of their aspect in each trace  
Its clear depth yields of their far height and hue:  
There is too much of man here, to look through  
With a fit mindt he might which I behold;  
But soon in me shall Loneliness renew  
Thoughts hid, but not less cherish'd than of old,  
Ere mingling with the herd had penn'd me in their fold.

To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind;  
All are not fit with them to stire and toil,  
Nor is it discontent to keep the mind  
Deep in its fountain, lest it overvoil  
In the hot throng, where we become the spoil  
Of our infection, till too late and long  
We may deplore and struggle with the coil,  
In wretched interchange of wrong for wrong  
'Midst a contentious world, striving where none are strong.

There, in a moment, we may plunge our years  
In fatal penitence, and in the blight  
Of our own soul, turn all our blood to tears,  
And colour things to come with hues of Night;  
The race of life becomes a hopeless flight  
To those that walk in darkness: on the sea,  
The boldest steer but where their ports invite,  
But there are wanderers o'er Eternity  
Whose bark drives on and one, and anchored ne'er shall be.

Is it not better, then, to be alone,  
And love Earth only for its earthly sake?  
By the blue rushing of the arroy Rhone,  
Or the pure bosom of its nursing lake,  
Which feeds it as a mother who doth make  
A fair but froward infant her own care,  
Kissing its cries away as these awake;--  
Is it not better thus our lives to wear,  
Than join the crushing crowd, doom'd to inflict or bear?

I live not in myself, but I become  
Portion of that around me; and to me  
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum  
Of human cities torture: I can see  
Nothing to loathe in nature, save to be  
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,  
Class'd among creatures, when the soul can flee,  
And with the sky, the peak, the heaving plain  
Of ocean, or the stars, mingle, and not in vain.

And thus I am absorb'd, and this is life:  
I look upon the peopled desert past,  
As on a place of agony and strife,  
Where, for some sin, to Sorrow I was cast,  
To act and suffer, but remount at last  
With a fresh pinion; which I feel to spring,  
Though young, yet waxing vigorous, as the blast  
Which it would cope with, on delighted wing,  
Spurning the clay-cold bonds with round our being cling.

And when, at length, the mind shall all be free  
From what it hates in this degraded form,  
Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be  
Existent happier in the fly and worm,--  
When elements to elements conform,  
And dust is as it should be, shall I note  
Feel all I see, less dazzling, but more warm?  
The bodiless thought? the Spirit of each spot?  
Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot?

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part  
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?  
Is not the love of these deep in my heart  
With a pure passion? should I not contemn  
All objects, if compared with these? and stem  
A tide of suffering, rather than forego  
Such feelings for the hard and worldly phlegm  
Of those whose eyes are only turn'd below,  
Gazing upon the ground, with thoughts which dare not glow?