

CANTO FIRST.

I.

OH, thou! in Hellas deemed of heaven 'y 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; 5
 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, 10
 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; 15
 Few earthly things found favor in his sight
 Save concubines and carnal companie,
 And flaunting wassailers of high and low degree.

CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE, Cantos I. and II., was written mostly in Albania and Greece, between 1809 and 1811. Byron adopted the Spenserian stanza on account of its flexibility, and the freedom with which it admitted of his being "droll or pathetic, descriptive or sentimental, tender or satirical," as the humor struck him. A slight sprinkling of archaic words is introduced, as in consonance with the structure of the verse.

1. HELLAS. The Greeks call their country Hellas, and themselves Hellenes, from their mythical progenitor Hellen.

3. LYRES, used figuratively for the poetic faculty.

4, 5. SACRED HILL. Mounts Helicon and Parnassus were both sacred to the Muses; from the reference to Delphi, the latter is perhaps meant.—VAUNTED RILL, the Castalian stream. See note 635-638.

6. DELPHI'S LONG-DESERTED SHRINE. The site of the famous temple of Apollo is now mostly occupied by the little village of Castri.

8. MOTE, for might, or must.—NINE. The nine Muses.—SHELL is here synonymous with lyre, which is said to have been first made by strings drawn across a tortoise shell.

10. WHILOME, O. Eng., once, at one time.—ALBION. An ancient name of the island of Great Britain.

11. NE, A.S. not, never.

14. WIGHT, A.S. fellow, man.

creed.

o less

fairy.
 elop.
 oman.