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THE DESCRIPTION OF BYRON.

[FROM POLLOK'S COURSE OF TIME.]

A man of rank, and of capacious soul ;
Who riches had, and fame beyond desire :
An heir of flattery, to titles born,
And reputation, and luxuric life.
Yet not content with ancestral name ;
Or to be known, because his fathers were.
He on this height hereditary stood,
And gazing higher, purposed in his heart
To take another step. Above him seated
Alone the mount of song—the lofty seat
Of canonized bards, and thitherward,
By nature taught, and inward melody,
In prime of youth, he bent his eagle eye.
No cost was spared. What books he wished, he read :
What sage to hear, he heard : what scenes to see,
He saw. And first in rambling school-boy days,
Brittania's mountain walks, and heath-girt lakes,
And story-telling glens, and founts and brooks,
And maids, as dew drops, pure and fair, his soul
With grandeur filled, and melody, and love.
Then travel came, and took him where he wished.
He cities saw, and courts, and princely pomp ;
And mused alone on ancient mountain brows ;
And mused on battle-fields, where valour fought
In other days ; and mused on ruins gray
With years ; and drank from old and fabulous wells ;
And plucked the vine that first-born prophets plucked,
And mused on famous tombs ; and on the wave
Of ocean mused ; and on the desert waste.
The heavens and the earth of every country saw,
Where'er the old inspiring Genii dwelt,
Ought that could rouse, expand, refine the soul,
Thither he went, and meditated there.
He touched his harp, and nations heard, entranced
As some vast river of unfailing source,
Rapid, exhaustless, deep, his members flowed,
And opened new fountains in the human heart.
Where fancy halted, weary in her flight,
In other men, his, fresh as morning rose,
And soared untrodden heights, and seemed at home
Where angels bashful looked. Others, though great,
Beneath their argument seemed struggling ; while
He from above descending, stooped to touch
The loftiest thought ; and proudly stooped, as though
It scarce deserved his verse. With nature's self,
He seemed an old acquaintance, free to jest
At will with all her glorious majesty.
He laid his hand upon "the Ocean's mane,"
And played familiar with his hoary locks.
Stood on the Alps, stood on the Apennines,
And with the thunder talked, as friend to friend,
And wove his garland of the lightning's wing,
In sportive twist—the lightning's fiery wing,
Which, as the footsteps of the dreadful God,
Marching upon the storm in vengeance, seemed ;
Then turned, and with the grasshopper, who sung
His evening song, beneath his feet, conversed.
Suns, moons, and stars, and clouds, his sisters were ;

Rocks, mountains, meteors, seas, and winds, and storms,
His brothers—younger brothers, whom he scarce
As equals deemed. All passions of all men—
The wild and tame—the gentle and severe,
All thoughts, all maxims, sacred and profane ;
All creeds ; all seasons, Time, Eternity ;
All that was hated, and all that was dear ;
All that was hoped, all that was feared by man,
He tossed about, as tempest-withered leaves.
Then, smiling, looked upon the wreck he made.
With terror now he froze the cowering blood,
And now dissolved the heart in tenderness ;
Yet would not tremble, would not weep himself ;
But back into his soul retired, alone,
Dark, sullen, proud : gazing contemptuously
On hearts and passions prostrate at his feet.
So Ocean, from the plains his waves had late
To desolation swept, retired in pride,
Exulting in the glory of his might,
And seemed to mock the ruin he had wrought.
As some fierce comet of tremendous size,
To which the stars did reverence, as it passed ;
So he through learning, and through fancy took
His flight sublime ; and on the loftiest top
Of fame's dread mountain sat ; not soiled, and worn,
As if he from the earth had laboured up ;
But as some bird of heavenly plumage fair,
He looked, which down from higher regions came,
And perched it there, to see what lay beneath.
The nations gazed, and wondered much, and praised.
Critics before him fell in humble plight ;
Confounded fell ; and made debasing signs
To catch his eye ; and stretched, and swelled themselves
To bursting sigh, to utter bulky words
Of admiration vast : and many too,
Many that aimed to imitate his flight,
With weaker wing, unearthly fluttering made,
And gave abundant sport to after days.
Great man ! the nations gazed, and wondered much,
And praised : and many called his evil good.
Wits wrote in favour of his wickedness :
And kings to do him honour took delight.
Thus full of titles, flattery, honour, fame ;
Beyond desire, beyond ambition full.
He died.—He died of what ? Of wretchedness.
Drank every cup of joy, heard every trump
Of fame ; drank early, deeply drank ; drank draughts
That common millions might have quenched—then died
Of thirst, because there was no more to drink.
His goddess, Nature, moved, embraced, enjoyed,
Fell from his arms, abhorred ; his passions died ;
Died all but dreary solitary pride ;
And all his sympathies in being died.
As some ill-guided bark, well-built and tall,
Which angry tides cast out on desert shore,
And then retiring, left it there to rot
And moulder in the winds and rains of heaven :
So he, cut from the sympathies of life,
And cast ashore from pleasure's boisterous surge—
A wandering, weary, worn, and wretched thing ;
Scorched, and desolate, and blasted soul ;