

**THE POETICAL
WORKS OF LORD
BYRON, VOL. III**

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The poetical works of Lord Byron, Vol. III by George Gordon Byron

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GEORGE GORDON BYRON

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BYRON, VOL. III**

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OF
LORD BYRON.

VOL. III.



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BEPPO.

A VENETIAN STORY.

(3)

VOL. III.

1

Rosalind. Farewell, Monsieur Traveller: Look, you lisp, and wear strange suits: disable all the benefits of your own country; be out of love with your Nativity, and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are; or I will scarce think that you have swam in a *Gondola*.

As You Like It, Act IV. Sc. 1.

Annotation of the Commentators.

That is, been at Venice, which was much visited by the young English gentlemen of these times, and was then what *Paris* is now — the seat of all dissoluteness. — S. A.*

* [Roger Ascham, Queen Elizabeth's tutor, says, in his "Schoolmaster," — "Although I was only nine days at Venice, I saw, in that little time, more liberty to sin, than ever I heard tell of in the city of London in nine years."]

INTRODUCTION TO BEPPO.

BEPPO was written at Venice, in October, 1817, and acquired great popularity immediately on its publication in the May of the following year. Byron's letters show that he attached very little importance to it at the time. He was not aware that he had opened a new vein, in which his genius was destined to work out some of his brightest triumphs. "I have written," he says to Mr. Murray, "a poem humorous, in or after the excellent manner of Mr. Whistlecraft, and founded on a Venetian anecdote which amused me. It is called *Beppo* — the short name for Giuseppe, — that is, the *Joe* of the Italian Joseph. It has politics and ferocity." Again — "Whistlecraft is my immediate model, but Berni is the father of that kind of writing; which, I think, suits our language, too, very well. We shall see by this experiment. It will, at any rate, show that I can write cheerfully, and repel the charge of monotony and mannerism." He wished Mr. Murray to accept of *Beppo* as a free gift, or, as he chose to express it, "as part of the contract for *Canto Fourth of Childe Harold*;" adding, however, — "if it pleases, you shall have more in the same mood; for

I know the Italian *way of life*, and, as for the *verse* and the *passions*, I have them still in tolerable vigor."

John Hookham Frere has the merit of having introduced the *Bernesque* style into our language; but his performance, entitled "Prospectus and Specimen of an intended National Work, by William and Robert Whistlecraft, of Stowmarket, in Suffolk, Harness and Collar Makers, intended to comprise the most interesting Particulars relating to King Arthur and his Round Table," though it delighted all elegant and learned readers, obtained at the time little notice from the public at large, and is already almost forgotten. For the causes of this failure, it appears needless to look further than the last sentence we have been quoting from the letters of the author of the more successful *Beppa*. Whistlecraft had the *verse*: it had also the humor, the wit, and even the poetry of the Italian model; but it wanted the life of actual manners, and the strength of stirring passions. Mr. Frere had forgot, or was, with all his genius, to profit by remembering, that the poets, whose unfit style he was adopting, always made their style *appear* a secondary matter. They never failed to embroider their merriment on the texture of a really interesting story. Byron perceived this; and avoiding his immediate master's one fatal error, and at least equalling him in the excellences which he did display, engaged at once the sympathy of readers of every class, and became substantially the founder of a new species of English poetry.