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The Henriade

**Voltaire** 

London, 1762

The Henriade. Canto the Eighth.

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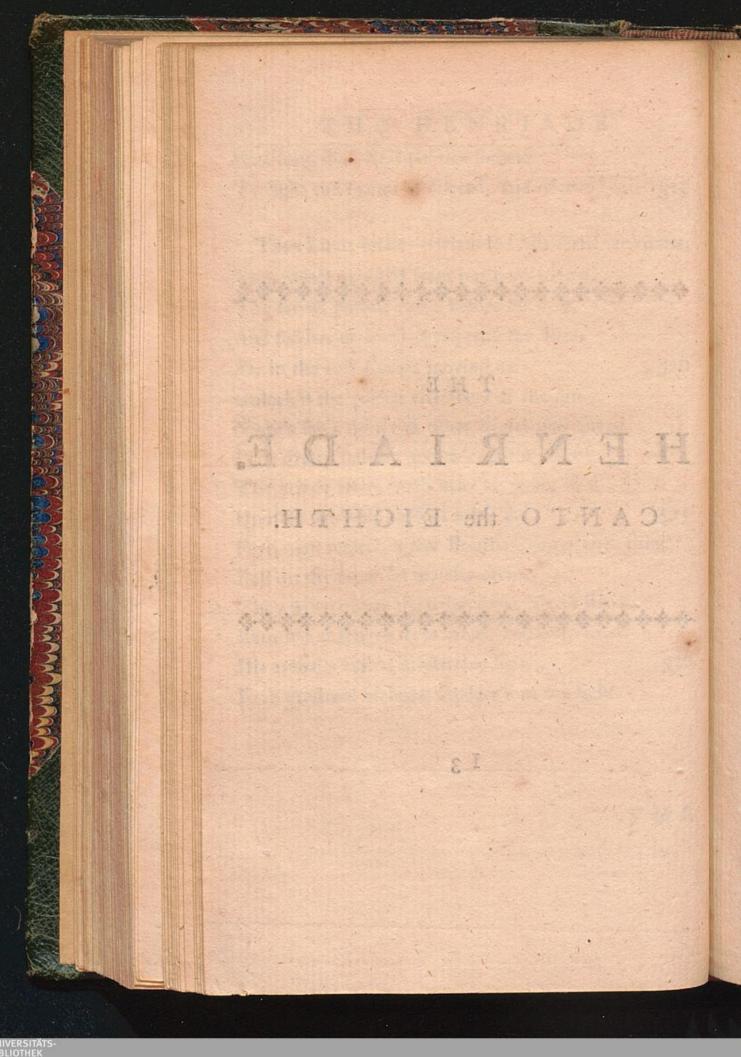
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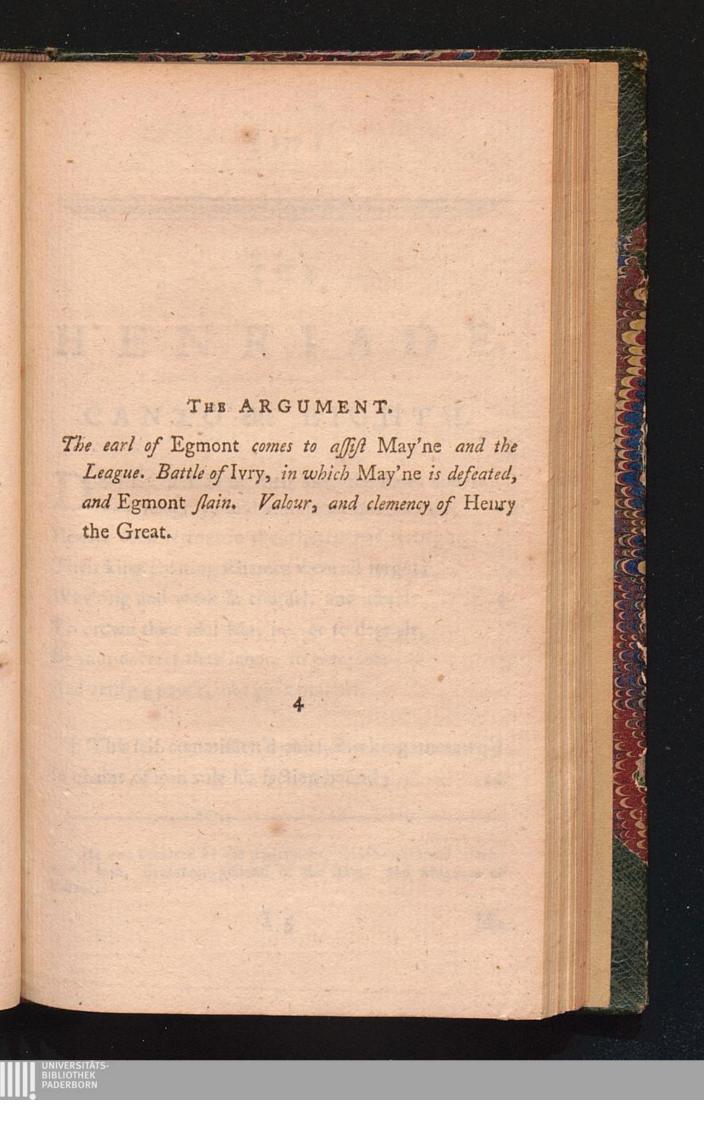
# HENRIADE.

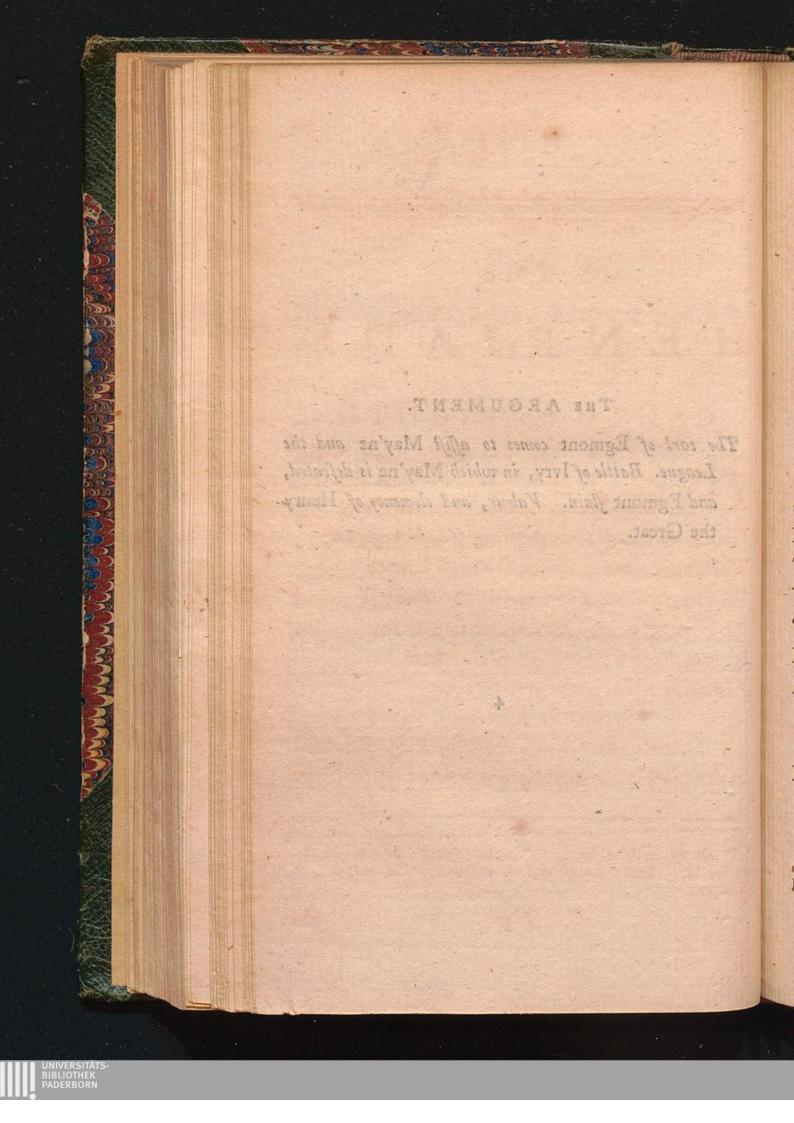
CANTO the EIGHTH.



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### THE

# HENRIADE.

# CANTO the EIGHTH.

DEJECTED by their loss, the states appear
Less haughty, and assume an humbler air,
Henry, such terrour in their hearts had wrought,
Their king creating schemes were all forgot;
Wav'ring and weak in counsel, and asraid
To crown their idol May'ne, or to degrade,
By vain decrees they labour to complete
And ratify a pow'r, not giv'n him yet.

‡ This self-commission'd chief, this king uncrown'd In chains of iron rule his faction bound;

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<sup>†</sup> He was declared by the parliament, which continued attached to him, lieutenant-general of the fate, and kingdom of France.

His willing flaves obedient to his laws, Resolve to fight and perish in his cause; Thus flush'd with hope, to council he convenes The haughty lords, on whom his fortune leans. They came: despair, and unextinguish'd hate, 15 And malice on their faded features fate; Some tremble in their pace, and feebly tread, Faint with the loss of blood in battle shed, But keen refentment prompts them to repair Their losses, and revenge the wounds they bear. Before the chief their fulien ranks they range, And grasp their shining arms, and vow revenge. So the fierce fons of earth, as fable feigns, Where Pelion overlooks Theffalia's plains, With mountains piled on mountains, vainly strove, 25 To scale the everlasting throne of Jove. When fudden on a car of radiant light Exalted, Discord flash'd upon their fight; Courage, she said, 'tis now the times demand. Your fixt refolves, lo! fuccour is at hand. First ran d'Aumale, and joyful from afar Beheld the Spanish launces gleam in air; Then cried aloud, 'tis come; th' expected aid, So oft demanded, and fo long delay'd.

War

# THE HENRIADE. Near to that hallow'd spot, where rest rever'd 35 The reliques of our kings, their march appear'd; The groves of polish'd spears, the targets bound With circling gold, the shining helms around, Against the fun with full reflection play, Rival his light and shed a second day. 40 To meet their march the roaring rabble went, And hail'd the mighty chief Madrid had fent; That chief was \* Egmont; fam'd for martial fire, Ambitious fon of an unhappy fire; At Bruffels first he drew the vital air; 45 His country's weal was all his father's care, For that, the rage of tyrants he defied, And in the cause of freedom, bravely died. The fervile fon, as base as he was proud, Fawn'd on that hand which shed his father's blood, 50 For fordid int'rest join'd his country's foes, And fought for France, regardless of her woes. Philip, on May'ne the warlike youth bestow'd, And arm'd him forth to be his guardian God; Nor doubted May'ne, but flaughter and difmay 55 Should spread to Bourbon's tent, when Egmont led the way.

With

<sup>\*</sup> The earl of Egmont, fon of admiral Egmont, who was beheaded at Bruffels together with the prince de Horn,

With heedless arrogance their march they drew, And Henry's heart exulted at the view, Gods! how his eager hopes anticipate And meet the moment that decides his fate. 60

Their streams where Iton and fair Eura lead, By nature bleft, a fertile plain is spread, in a T No wars had yet approach'd the peaceful scene, Nor warrior's footstep press'd the flow'ry green, The shepherds there, while civil rage destroy'd The regions round, their happy hours enjoy'd, Screen'd by their poverty, they feem'd fecure From lawless rapine and the soldier's pow'r, Nor heard beneath their humble roofs the jar Of arms, or clamour of the founding war. 70

Thither each hostile leader his array Directs, and defolation marks their way, A fudden horror strikes the trembling floods, The frighted shepherds seek the shelt'ring woods, The partners of their grief attend their flight, And bear their weeping infants from the fight.

Faran'd on that hand which thed his father's blood, 3 a

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Ye hapless natives of this fweet recess! Charge not at least your king with your diffress,

depairs of Bruthale concended with the prince als flora.

For

For peace he courts the combat, and his hand
Shall shed the bounteous blessing o'er the land;
He shares your forrows, and shall end your woes,
Nor seeks you, but to save you from your foes.

Along the ranks he darts his glancing eyes,

Swift as the winds his foaming courfer flies,

Proud of his load, he catches with delight

The trumpets found, and hopes the promif'd fight.

Crown'd with his laurels, at their mafter's fide,

A well distinguish'd groupe of warriors ride,

†D'Aumont, beneath five kings a chief renown'd,

\*Biron, whose name bore terrour in the sound,

†His son, whom toil nor danger could restrain,

Who soon alas! — but he was faithful then;

† John D'Aumont, marshal of France, who did wonders at the battle of Ivry, was the son of Peter d'Aumont and Frances de Sully, an heires of the ancient family of Sully. He served under Henry II. Francis II. Charles II. Henry III. and Henry IV.

\* Henry de Contand de Biron, marshal of France, and grand master of the artillery. He was a great warriour, commanded the corps de reserve at Ivry, and was very instrumental in gaining the victory.

‡ Charles Contand de Biron, son of the former. He conspired afterwards against Henry IV. and was beheaded in the court of the Bastile in 1602.

Grillion

Grillon and Sully by the guilty fear'd, Chiefs whom the League detefted, yet rever'd, § Turenne, whose virtues and unrival'd fame, 95 Won the fair honours of the Bouillon name, Ill-fated pow'r alas! and ill maintain'd, Crush'd in the birth, and lost as soon as gain'd. His crest amid the band brave Essex rears, of an aimed And like a palm beneath our fkies appears, 100 Among our elms the lofty stranger shoves His growth, as if he fcorn'd the native groves. From his bright casque with orient gems array'd And burnish'd gold, a starry lustre play'd; Dear, valued gifts! with which his mistress strove 105 Less to reward his courage, than his love, Ambitious chief! the mighty bulwark grown Of Gallia's prince, and darling of his own. Such was the monarch's train, with stedfast air And firm, they wait the fignal of the war, Glad omens from their Henry's eyes they took, And read their conquest sure in his inspiring look.

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'Twas

<sup>§</sup> Henry de la Tour d'Orliegues, viscount of Turenne, marshal of France. Henry the great married him to Charlotte de la Mark, princess of Sedan, in 1591. The marshal went on the wedding night to take Stenay by assault.

183

'Twas then, afflicted with inglorious dread,
Unhappy May'ne perceiv'd his courage fled,
Whether at length his boding heart divines
The wrath of heav'n on his unjust designs,
Whether the soul prophetic of our doom,
Foresees the dreary train of ills to come,
Whate'er the cause, he feels a chilling fear,
But veils it with a shew of seeming cheer,
I 20
Inspires his troops with ardour of renown,
And fills their hearts with hopes that dwell not in his own.

But Egmont at his side, with glory sir'd,
And the rash considence his youth inspir'd,
Flush'd for the fight, and eager to display
His prowess, chides his infamous delay.
As when the Thracian courser from afar,
Hears the shrill trumpet and the sound of war,
A martial fire informs his vivid eye,
He neighs, he snorts, he bears his head on high,
Impatient of restraint he scorns the rein,
Springs o'er the sence and scours along the plain;
Such Egmont seem'd, with beating heart he stood,
And in his eye the rage of battle glow'd.

Ev'n

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Ev'n now he ponders his approaching fame, And looks on conquest as his rightful claim; Alas! he dreams not that his pride shall gain Nought but a grave, in Ivry's fatal plain.

135

Bourbon at length drew near, and thus inspir'd His ardent warriors whom his presence fir'd? 140. Ye fons of France! your king is at your head, You fee your foes, then follow where I lead, Mark well this waving plume amid the fight, Nor let the tempest shade it from your fight, To that alone direct your constant aim, 145 Still fure to find it in the road to fame. Thus spoke the chief; his bands exulting hear, And with new fury court the glorious war; Then march'd, and as he went, his pious breaft With filent pray'rs the God of hofts address'd. 150 At once the legions rush with headlong pace Behind their chiefs, and fnatch the middle space. So where the feas with narrow Frith divide Contabria's coast from Afric's desert side, If eastern storms along the channel pour, 155 Sudden the fierce conflicting oceans roar, Earth trembles at the shock, the sheeted brine Invades the skies, the fun forgets to shine,

The

The trembling moor believes all nature hurl'd in ruin, and expects the falling world.

Now lengthen'd with the fpear the musket spread The carnage wide, and flew with double speed, That fatal engine in Bayonne defign'd, And fram'd by Discord to lay waste mankind, Strikes a twin death, and can at once afford 165 The worst effect of fire, and havock of the sword. Trembled the stedfast earth beneath their feet word? As fword to fword and lance to lance they met, From rank to rank despair and horror strode, The shame of flight and impious thirst of blood. 170 Here from his stronger fon the father flies, There by the brother's arm the brother dies, Nature was shock'd, and Eura's conscious bank Shrunk with abhorrence from the blood it drank. Bourbon his path right on to glory clears 175 Through briftly forests of portended spears, O'er many a crested helm his course he sped, Close in his rear, serene and undismay'd Went Mornay, thoughtful and intent alone On Henry's life, regardless of his own. 180 So, veil'd in human shape, the poets seign The gods engaged in arms on Phrygia's plain;

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" So when an angel by divine command,

With rifing tempests shakes a guilty land,

"Well pleas'd th'Almighty's orders to perform, 185

"He rides the whirlwind, and directs the ftorm."

The royal chief his dread commands express'd,
The prudent dictates of a hero's breast,

Mornay the mighty charge attentive caught,

And bore it where the distant leaders fought,

The distant leaders to their troops convey

The word, their troops receive it, and obey.

They part, they join, in various forms are feen,

One foul informs and guides the vast machine.

Swift thro' the field return'd in haste he seeks

The prince, accosts, and guards him while he speaks.

But still the stoic warrior kept unstain'd

With human blood, his inoffensive hand,

The king alone employ'd his gen'rous thought,

For his defence th' imbattled field he fought, 200

Detefted war, and fingularly brave

Knew boldly to face death, but never gave.

Turenne already with refiftless pow'r,

Repuls'd the shatter'd forces of Nemours;

Scarce d'Ailly fill'd the plain, with dire alarms,

Proud of his thirty years consum'd in arms;

Still

Still spite of age the vet'ran chiefs displays The well-strung vigour of his youthful days; Of all his foes, one only would prefume To match his might, a hero in the bloom; Now first indignant to the field he came, And parted eager for the goal of fame. New to the tafte of Hymen, yet he fled The chafte endearments of his bridal bed, Disdain'd the trivial praise by beauty won, And panted for a foldier's fame alone. That cruel morn, accusing heav'n in vain, And the curs'd League that call'd him to the plain, His beauteous bride with trembling fingers laced His heavy corflet on her hero's breaft, And cover'd with his helm of polish'd gold Those eyes which still she languish'd to behold.

Tow'rds d'Ailly the fierce youth, despising sear,
Spurr'd his proud steed, and couch'd his quiv'ring spear,
Their headlong courses trampled, as they sted,
225
The wounded heaps, the dying and the dead;
Poachy with blood the turf and matted grass,
Sink setlock deep beneath them as they pass.

The facel pale, and thordr'd him on the gr

Swift

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Swift to the shock they come; their shields sustain The blow, their spears well pointed but in vain, 230 In fcatter'd splinters shine upon the plain. So when two clouds with thunder fraught draw near, And join their dark encounter in mid air, Struck from their fides the light'ning quivers round, Heav'n roars, and mortals tremble at the found. 235 Now from their fleeds with unabated rage Alighting fwift, a closer war they wage; Ran Discord to the scene, and near her stood, Death's horrid spectre, pale and smear'd with blood. Already shine their fauchions in their hands, 240 No kind preventing pow'r their rage withstands, The doom is past, their destiny commands. Full at each other's heart they aim alike, Nor knows their fury at whose heart they strike; Their bucklers clash, thick strokes descend from high, 255

And flakes of fire from their hard helmets fly, Blood stains their hands, but still the temper'd plate Retards a while and disappoints their fate. Each wond'ring at the long unfinish'd fight, Esteems his rival, and admires his might; 'Till d'Ailly with a vig'rous effort found The fatal pass, and stretch'd him on the ground.

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His faded eyes for ever closed remain, And his loofe helmet rowls along the plain; Then faw the wretched chief, too furely known, 255 The kindred features, and embraced his fon. But foon with horror and remorfe oppress'd, Revers'd the guilty fteel against his breast. That just revenge his hast'ning friends oppose; When furious from the dreadful scene he rose; 260 Forth to the woods his cheerless journey sped, From arms for ever and from glory fled, And in the covert of a shaggy den, Dwell a fad exile from the ways of men. There when the dawning day falutes the fkies, 265 And when at eve the chilling vapours rife, His unexhausted grief still flows the same, Still eccho fighs around his fon's lamented name. Tender alarms, and boding terrours brought The bride enquiring to the fatal spot, 270 Uncertain of her doom, with anxious hafte And fault'ring knees between the dead she pass'd, 'Till stretch'd upon the plain her lord she spied, Then shriek'd, and funk expiring at his side. The damps of death upon her temples hung, And feeble founds scarce parted from her tongue,

Once

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Once more her eyes a last farewel assay'd,
Once more her lips upon his lips she lay'd,
Within her arms the lifeless body press'd,
Then look'd, and sigh'd, and died upon his breast. 280

Deplor'd examples of rebellious strife,

Ill-fated victims, father, son, and wife,

Oh may the sad remembrance of your woe,

Teach tears from ages, yet unborn to flow,

With wholesome forrow touch all future times, 285

And save the children from their father's crimes.

But say what chief disperses thus abroad
The flying League, what hero, or what god?
'Tis Biron, 'tis his youthful arm o'erthrows
And drives along the plain his scatter'd foes.

290
D'Aumale beheld, and madd'ning at the sight,
Stand fast he cried, and stay your coward slight;
Friends of the Guise and May'ne, their vengeance due
Rome and the church and France expect from you;
Return then, and your pristine force recall,
295
Conquest is theirs who sight beneath d'Aumale.
Fosseuse assistance and Beauvean sustain
Their part, and rally the disorder'd train,

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Before the van d'Aumale his station took,
And the closed lines caught courage from his look. 300
The chance of war now flows a backward course,
Biron in vain withstands the driving force,
Nesle and Augenne within his sight are slain,
And Parabere and Clermont press the plain,
Himself scarce liv'd, so fast the purple tide
305
Flow'd from his wounds, and happier, had he died.
A death so glorious with unfading same
For ever had adorn'd the hero's name.

Soon learn'd the royal chief to what diffress
The youth was fall'n, courageous in excess;
He lov'd him, not as monarchs condescend
To love, but well, and plainly as a friend,
Nor thought a subject's blood so mean a thing,
A smile alone o'erpaid it from a king.
Hail heav'n-born friendship! the delight alone
Of noble minds, and banish'd from the throne.
Eager he slies, the gen'rous fires that feed
His heart augment his vigour and his speed.
He came, and Biron kindling at the view,
His gather'd strength to one last effort drew,
Cheer'd by the well-known voice again he plies
The sword, all force before the monarch slies,

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The king redeems thee from th'unequal strife Rash youth, be faithful and deserve thy life.

chance of war now flows a backward Hark a loud peal comes thund'ring from afar, 325 'Tis Discord blows afresh the flames of war, To thwart the monarch's virtue, with new fires His fainting foes the beldam fiend inspires; She winds her fatal trump, the woods around And mountains tremble at th'infernal found. 330 Swift to d'Aumale the baleful notes impart Their pow'r, he feels the fummons at his heart; Bourbon alone he feeks: the boift'rous throng Close at his heels tumultuous pour along. So the well-scented pack, long train'd to blood, 335 Deep in the covert of a spacious wood, Bay the fierce boar to battle, and elate admonstra With heedless wrath rush headlong on their fate, The shrillness of the cheering horn provokes Their rage, and ecchoes from the diffant rocks. 340 Thus flood the monarch by the croud inclosed, An hoft against his fingle arm opposed, No friend at hand, no welcome aid he found, Abandon'd, and by death incompass'd round. 'Twas then his fainted fire his strength renew'd 345 With tenfold force and vigour unfubdued, Firm

Firm as a rock, pois'd on it's base he stood, That braves the blaft, and fcorns the dashing flood. Who shall relate, alas! what heroes died to A A In that dread hour on Eura's purple fide. 3501 Shade of the first of kings, do thou diffuse bowh had Thy spirit o'er my song, be thou my muse. Now from afar his gath'ring nobles came, notified to all They died for Bourbon, and he fought for them, When Egmont rush'd with yet unrival'd force, 355 To check the storm and thwart the monarch's course. I'me dinging fmatt ferr

Long had the chief, misled by martial pride, Sought Henry thro' the combat far and wide, Nor cared he, so his vent'rous arm might meet That strife, for aught of danger or defeat. 360 Bourbon, he cried, advance; behold a foe Prepar'd to plant fresh laurels on your brow; Now let your arm it's utmost might display, Ours be the strife, let us decide the day. He spoke, and lo! portentuous from on high 365 A stream of light'ning shot along the sky, Slow peals of mutt'ring thunder growl'd around, Beneath the trembling foldier shook the ground. Egmont, alas! a flatt'ring omen draws, a las las de las And dreams that heav'n shall combat in his cause, 370 K

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That partial nature in his glory shar'd, And by the thunder's voice his victory declar'd. At the first onset with full force applied His driving faulchion reach'd the monarch's fide, Fast flow'd a stream of trickling blood, tho' flight 375 The wound, and Egmont triumph'd at the fight. But Bourbon unconcern'd receiv'd the blow, And with redoubled ardour press'd his foe; Pleas'd when the field of glory could afford A conquest hardly earn'd and worthy of his sword. 380 The stinging fmart ferv'd only to provoke His rage, and add new vigour to his stroke. He fprings upon the blow; the champion reels, And the keen edge within his bosom feels, O'erthrown beneath the trampling hoof he lies, 385 And death's dim shadow skims before his eyes, He fees the dreary regions of the dead, And shrinks and shudders at his father's shade.

Then first, their leader slain, th'Iberian host
Declin'd the fight, their vaunted spirit lost, 390
Like a contagion their unwarlike fear
Siez'd all the ranks and caught from van to rear.
Gen'ral and soldier felt the same dismay,
Nor longer these command, nor those obey.

Down

I

Down fall the banners, routed and o'erthrown 395. And yelling with unmanly shrieks they run; Some bend the suppliant knee, submissive join Their hands, and to the chain their wrists resign, Some from the sierce pursuer wildly sled, And to the river stretch'd their utmost speed, 400 There plunged downright, amid the foaming tide They sink, and meet the death they would avoid. The waves incumber'd intermit their course, And the choak'd stream recoils upon it's source.

May'ne in the tumult of this troubled scene Lord of himself, afflicted yet serene, Survey'd his loss still tranquil and sedate, And ev'n in ruin hoped a better fate. D'Aumale, his eye with burning rage suffus'd, His cruel stars and dastard bands accus'd. 410 All's loft, he cried, fee where the cowards fly, Illustrious May'ne! our task then is to die. Die! faid the chief, live rather to replace Our fortune, and sustain the cause you grace, Live to regain the laurels we have loft, 415 Nor now defert us, when we need you most. Fly then, and where they straggle o'er the plain, Glean up the wreck and remnant of our train.

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He hears, reluctant fobs his passion speak,

And tears of anguish trickle down his cheek, 420

A flow compliance sullenly he pays,

And frowning stern at the command, obeys.

Thus the proud lion whom the Moor has tam'd,

And from the sierceness of his race reclaim'd,

Bows down beneath his swarthy master's hand, 425

And bends his surly front at his command,

With low'ring aspect stalks behind his lord,

And grumbles while he crouches at his word.

And close within the walls his shame he hides; 430
Prone at the monarch's feet the vanquish'd wait
From his award, the sentence of their fate;
When from the simmament's unfolded space
Appear'd the manes of the Bourbon race;
Louis in that important hour came down, 435
To gaze intent upon his godlike son,
To prove if the triumphant chief could tame
His soul to mercy, and deserve his same.
Th'assembl'd captives by their looks besought
The monarch's grace, but trembled at their lot, 440
When thus with gentle, but determin'd look,
The suppliant crowd the mighty chief bespoke.

# THE HENRIADE. 197 Be free, and use your freedom as you may, " Free to take arms against me, or obey; "On May'ne or me let your election rest, 415 " His be the sceptre who deserves it best, " Chuse your own portion, your own fate decree, " Chains from the League, or victory with me." Astonish'd that a king with glory crown'd, And lord of the subjected plains around, 450 Ev'n in the lap of triumph flould forego His right of arms, and vantage o'er the foe, His grateful captives hail him at his feet Victorious, and rejoice in their defeat. No longer hatred rankles in their minds, 455 His might fubdued them, and his bounty binds, Proudly they mingle with the monarch's train, And turn their juster vengeance upon May'ne. And doubt, and hope, and ever-boding fear, 480 Now Bourbon merciful and mild had flay'd 460

Now Bourbon merciful and mild had flay'd The carnage, and the foldier's wrath allay'd; 460 No longer thro' the ranks he cleaves his way, Fierce as the lion bearing on his prey, But feems a bounteous deity, inclin'd To quell the tempest, and to cheer mankind.

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Peace

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Peace o'er his brows had shed a milder grace, 465
And smooth'd the warlike terrours of his sace;
Snatch'd from the jaws of the devouring strife,
His captives feel themselves restor'd to life,
Their dangers he repells, their wants supplies,
And views and guards them with a parent's eyes.470

Fame, the swift messenger of false and true,
Still as she slies encreasing to the view,
O'er mountains and o'er seas, from clime to clime,
Expatiates, rapid as the slight of time.
Millions of piercing eyes to same belong,
As many mouths still ply the restless tongue,
And round with list'ning ears her miscreant form

is hung.
Where'er she roams, credulity is there,
And curiosity with craving ear,
And doubt, and hope, and ever-boding sear.
With the same speed she bears upon her wings
From far, the glory and the shame of kings,
And now unfolds them, eager to proclaim
Great Henry's deeds, and fill the nations with his name.
From Tagus swift to Po the tidings ran,
And eccho'd thro' the lofty vatican.

Joy

199

Joy to the north the spreading founds convey, To Spain, confusion, terrour and dismay. Ill-fated Paris, and thou faithless League, Ye priefts, full-fraught with malice and intrigue, 490 How trembled then your temples, and what dread Disaft'rous, hung o'er ev'ry guilty head! But fee your guardian deity appears, See May'ne returning to difpel your fears! Tho' foil'd, not loft, not hopeless tho' o'erthrown, 495 For still rebellious Paris is his own, With specious gloss he covers his defeat, Calls ruin, victory, and flight, retreat, Confirms the doubtful, and with prudent aim Seeks by concealing, to repair his shame. 500 Transient, alas! the joy that art supplies, For cruel truth foon scatter'd the disguise, The veil of falsehood from their fate withdrew, And open'd all it's horrors to their view.

Not thus the fury cried, with raging mind, 505
Shall Discord's pow'r be conquer'd, and confin'd:
'Tis not for this these wretched walls have seen
Torrents of blood, and mountains of the slain:
'Tis not for this the raging fires have shone,
That hated Bourbon might enjoy the throne. 510

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#### HENRIADE. THE 200

Henceforth by weakness be his mind affail'd, Weakness may triumph where the sword has fail'd. Force is but vain; all other hopes are gone: For Henry yields but to himself alone. This day shall beauty's charms his bosom warm; 515 Subdue his valour, and unnerve his arm.

Thus Discord spoke; and, through the fields of air, Drawn by fierce hatred on her blood-stained car, Swiftly repair'd to Cytherea's grove Affur'd of vengeance, and in fearch of love. 520 Clouds of thick darkness then obscur'd the day, Nature turned pale, and horror marked her way.

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for cruel traits then mentioned the ship re-

The veil of fall thood from their fale wichdrew,

And open'd all it's horrors to their view, were

H T thus the fury cried, with raging mind, . 503 shall Differd's pow'r be conque'd, and confin'd: Tir not for this thefe wherehed wells have been

! errents of blood, and rhountains of the flain: I is not for this the raping three have frome,

That hated Bourbon might entry the throne. 510

Henceforth