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L O R D B Y R O N :

Then say, was I or nature in the wrong,
If, yet a boy, one inclination, strong
In wayward fancies, domineered my soul,
And bade complete defiance to control? . . .
Among the yeomens' sons on my estate
A gentle boy would at my mansion wait.
And now, that time has almost blanched my hair,
Full well I know, though decency forbade
The same caresses to a rustic lad:
Love, love it was, that made my eyes delight
To have his person ever in my sight . . .
Of humble birth was he, patrician I,
And yet this youth was my idolatry.
Oh! how I loved to press his cheek to mine;
How fondly would my arms his waist entwine!
't was like a philtre poured into my veins.
. . . What lights this fire?
Maids and not boys are wont to move desire;
Else 't were illicit love? Oh, sad mishap!
But what prompts nature then to set the trap?
Why night and day does his sweet image float
Before my eyes? Or wherefore do I doat
On that dear face with ardour so intense?
Why truckles reason to concupiscence?
Though law cries «hold»: yet passion onward draws.
But nature gave us passions, man gave laws!
Whence spring these inclinations, rank and strong
And harming no one? Wherefore call them wrong?
How many captains, famed for deeds of arms
Have found their solace in a minion's arms.
Say, why, when great Epaminondas died,
Was Cephidorus buried by his side?
Or why should Plutarch with eulogiums cite
That chieftain's love for his young catamite:
And we be forced his doctrine to decry
Or drink the bitter cup of infamy!