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# Modern History Sourcebook: Lord Byron: The Isles of Greece

THE isles of Greece! the isles of Greece!  
 Where burning Sappho loved and sung,  
 Where grew the arts of war and peace,---  
 Where Delos rose and Phoebus sprung!  
 Eternal summer gilds them yet,  
 But all, except their sun, is set.The Scian and the Teian muse,  
 The hero's harp, the lover's lute,  
 Have found the fame your shores refuse;  
 Their place of birth alone is mute  
 To sounds which echo further west  
 Than your sires' "Islands of the Blest."The mountains look on Marathon---  
 And Marathon looks on the sea;  
 And musing there an hour alone,  
 I dream'd that Greece might yet be free  
 For, standing on the Persians' grave,  
 I could not deem myself a slave.A king sat on the rocky brow  
 Which looks on sea-born Salamis;  
 And ships, by thousands, lay below,  
 And men in nations;---all were his!  
 He counted them at break of day---  
 And when the sun set, where were they?And where are they? and where art thou,  
 My country? On thy voiceless shore  
 The heroic lay is tuneless now---  
 The heroic bosom beats no more!  
 And must thy lyre, so long divine,  
 Degenerate into hands like mine?'Tis something, in the dearth of fame,  
 Though link'd among a fetter'd race,  
 To feel at least a patriot's shame,  
 Even as I sing, suffuse my face;  
 For what is left the poet here?  
 For Greeks a blush---for Greece a tear.Must we but weep o'er days more blest?  
 Must we but blush?---Our fathers bled.  
 Earth! render back from out thy breast  
 A remnant of our Spartan dead!  
 Of the three hundred grant but three,  
 To make a new Thermopylae.What, silent still, and silent all?  
 Ah! no; the voices of the dead  
 Sound like a distant torrent's fall,  
 And answer, "Let one living head,  
 But one arise,---we come, we come!"  
 'Tis but the living who are dumb.In vain---in vain: strike other chords;  
 Fill high the cup of Samian wine!  
 Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,  
 And shed the blood of Scio's vine!  
 Hark! rising to the ignoble call---  
 How answers each bold bacchanal!You have the Pyrrhic dance as yet,  
 Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?  
 Of two such lessons, why forget  
 The nobler and the manlier one?  
 You have the letters Cadmus gave---  
 Think ye he meant them for a slave?Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!  
 We will not think of themes like these!  
 It made Anacreon's song divine;  
 He served---but served Polycrates---  
 A tyrant; but our masters then  
 Were still, at least, our countrymen.The tyrant of the Chersonese  
 Was freedom's best and bravest friend;  
 That tyrant was Miltiades!  
 Oh! that the present hour would lend  
 Another despot of the kind!  
 Such chains as his were sure to bind.Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!  
 On Suli's rock, and Parga's shore,  
 Exists the remnant of a line  
 Such as the Doric mothers bore;  
 And there, perhaps, some seed is sown,  
 The Heracleidan blood might own.Trust not for freedom to the Franks---  
 They have a king who buys and sells:  
 In native swords and native ranks,  
 The only hope of courage dwells:  
 But Turkish force and Latin fraud  
 Would break your shield, however broad.Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!  
 Our virgins dance beneath the shade---  
 I see their glorious black eyes shine;  
 But, gazing on each glowing maid,  
 My own the burning tear-drop laves,  
 To think such breasts must suckle slaves.Place me on Sunium's marble steep---  
 Where nothing, save the waves and I,  
 May hear our mutual murmurs sweep:  
 There, swan-like, let me sing and die;  
 A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine---  
 Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

Source:From: Eva March Tappan, ed., *The World's Story: A History of the World in Story, Song and Art*, 14 Vols., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), Vol. IV: *Greece and Rome*, pp. 228-231Scanned by Jerome S. Arkenberg, Cal. State Fullerton. The text has been modernized by Prof. Arkenberg.

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