
According to the Sanitary Laws of Malta no grave can be opened before the expiration of one year from the day of burial. When the prescribed year had elapsed, Melita's grave was opened, and in the coffin was found MY DEAD MOTHER'S MARRIAGE RING!

O.

A NOTE ON
CHILDE HAROLD
CANTO IV, STANZA XLVI.

That page is now before me, and on mine
His country's ruin added to the mass
Of perish'd states he mourn'd in their decline,
And I in desolation: all that *was*
Of then destruction *is*; and now, alas!
Rome—Rome imperial, bows her to the storm,
In the same dust and blackness, and we pass
The skeleton of her Titanic form,
Wrecks of another world, whose ashes still are warm.

The sentence, "all that *was* of then destruction *is*" (ll. 4-5), presents some difficulty.

The Oxford edition of *Childe Harold* edited by H. F. Tozer M. A. (3rd. ed. 1916) explains the passage as follows:—
"All that *was* in ruins then *is* so still.—Of then destruction *is* harshly condensed for of the destruction of that time."

This explanation, I must confess, does not seem to me to be quite satisfactory. Byron, it is well-known, was not the most careful of writers; but, I think, he would have avoided such a harshness while I am afraid that in all *Childe Harold* there is not another passage of equal harshness. Besides, the contrast between the *decline* of these states when Servius Sulpicius mourned for them, and their *desolation* when Byron mourned for them, is lost sight of,—it is hardly probable that the destruction of these states would have remained *the same* when they were in desolation as when they were merely in their decline,—and the explanation given hardly warrants the use of the italics in *was* and *is* which have evidently been so printed to bring out as clearly as possible their antithetical meaning.

On the other hand, if, instead of adopting the explanation offered, one were to regard *of* as a preposition governing *them* understood, *then* as an adverb modifying *was*, and *destruction* as a subjective complement of the verb *is*, placed before the verb for the sake of emphasis,—the meaning of the passage would be:—"All that was of them (the perished states) then (when Servius Sulpicius mourned for them) is now (understood and implied in *is*, when Byron mourned for them) destruction." This explanation, I venture to assert, makes the grammar simpler and the construction less harsh, while the contrast between *decline* and *desolation* is continued and enhanced, and the full force of the antithetical *was* and *is* is seen at a glance. (1)

P. L. F.

(1) It is just within the limits of possibility that the word *then* might be a printer's slip for *them*. If this were so, it would of course, do away with all difficulties and the meaning would be quite clear; but I cannot justify my conjecture.