

Side: Mr. Benwick, Anne

ANNE: I see you're fond of poetry, sir. Here are many handsome volumes of Scott and Byron.

MR BENWICK: Yes.

ANNE: Do you prefer one of them to the other?

MR BENWICK: I prefer Scott.

ANNE: Scott?

MR BENWICK: Yes. Don't you?

ANNE: But do you know Lord Byron's Corsair?

MR BENWICK: Of course.

ANNE: I very much admire Byron. In the Corsair, he makes a hero out of Conrad, and yet Conrad is often defeated by people and events.

MR BENWICK: You admire that?

ANNE: He fights a war against oppression, which he knows he can never win. It seems right, and true to life.

MR BENWICK: 'I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguished, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air...

Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal;
The waves were dead; the tides were in
their grave.'

ANNE: Bravo. I'm very sorry for your sad loss, Mr Benwick. Mrs Harville told me of it. It was very recent?

MR BENWICK: June this year.

ANNE: I'm truly sorry. But may I ask, do you read only poetry?

MR BENWICK: I do, Miss Elliot. Why? Would you have me read prose instead?

ANNE: Indeed. I'd venture to suggest Dr Johnson. He's particularly useful on the dangers of solitude, and the necessity of resignation and acceptance in the face of hardships.

MR BENWICK: I'm not sure books will help me mend, Miss Elliot.