

Forgotten Books

— www.forgottenbooks.com —

Copyright © 2016 FB &c Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

THE CONFESSIONS OF LORD BYRON

A COLLECTION OF HIS PRIVATE OPINIONS
OF MEN AND OF MATTERS, TAKEN FROM
THE NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION OF
HIS LETTERS AND JOURNALS

ARRANGED BY

W. A. LEWIS BETTANY

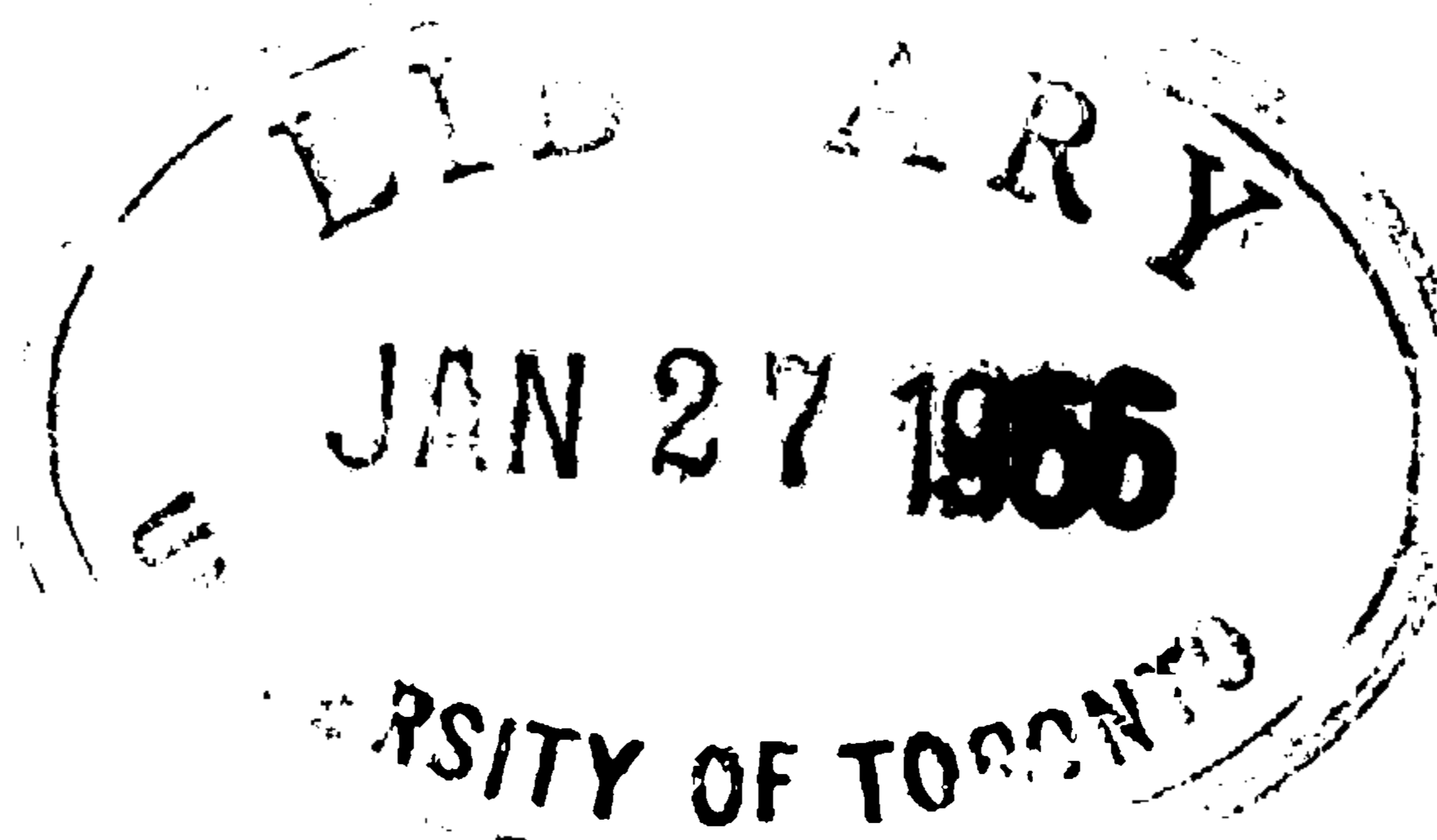
EDITOR OF "JOHNSON'S TABLE TALK"

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1905

PR
4381
A3B4



1044498

INTRODUCTION

ON BYRON'S OBLIGATION TO JOHNSON

To arrive at the real Byron in the most expeditious fashion, you must go by way of his *Letters and Journals*. You may get to your destination by another route, by the line that has Galt, Medwin, Scott, Moore, and Lady Blessington for stopping-places ; but this latter track makes so many deviations and takes so long a time, that the wonder is it ever reaches home. Or, to vary the metaphor, by dint of reading Galt, Medwin, etc., you may obtain a composite picture which yields a recognisable portrait of Byron ; but, if you would get a speaking likeness of his lordship, you must go to his correspondence, to those letters in which he reproduces his own lineaments on every page. Here you find the pungent humour which expresses itself in caustic epigrams or pasquinades, in good stories, and in apt quotations ; the allied quality of pugnacity and love of controversy which makes the poet always look as if he were “spoiling for a fight” ; the pride and haughtiness of temper which resents any diminution of his dues whether they be those of rank, of money, or of friendship ; and, overshadowing and colouring everything, that taint of the histrionic spirit

—the natural birthright, be it remembered, of a man of aristocratic race and temper—that taint, with its accompanying love of emulation and of mystifying, which is for ever provoking Byron to make Italy the centre of his stage and to let the lime-light play quite impartially on all his qualities—good, bad, or indifferent. As a consequence, Byron never seems *quite* able to explain himself; he rarely manages to utter a definitive opinion of men and of matters; he seldom succeeds in formulating a reasoned philosophy of religion or of life. He is always beset by the uneasy recollection of his Harold or of his Manfred mask; and this reluctant pose, this ineradicable self-consciousness, this self-imposed isolation, this revolt for mere revolt's sake, are among the causes that help to make Byron's *Letters and Journals* the most pathetic, as they are undoubtedly the most entertaining, of "human documents." Apart, however, from their revelations of Byron the peer and poet, apart from their interesting display of some of the raw material that their writer subsequently worked up into "Don Juan," these *Letters*—which in the present volume are digested into their main topics—are chiefly noteworthy for the extent and variety of the literary allusions which they contain. Of all the famous letter-writers—Walpole, Chesterfield, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Lamb, Stevenson, and the rest—Byron is by far the most lavish of quotations.* His

* Needless to say, Byron, generally remote from England and therefore remote from books of reference, often fails to offer the *ipsissima verba* of his author. More than once he gives the wrong words of the "Vanity of Human Wishes," and of Prior's epigram, "To John I ow'd great obligation." But the two most interesting

practice is rather unique, for he not only refers freely to such world-famous romances as Richardson's "Sir Charles Grandison," Butler's "Hudibras," Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield," Smollett's "Roderick Random" and "Humphrey Clinker," Sterne's "Tristram Shandy" and "Sentimental Journey," Fielding's "Joseph Andrews" and "Tom Jones," Voltaire's "Candide," and Le Sage's "Gil Blas;" he even levies toll on his contemporary, Scott, and treats Sir Walter's verse and prose tales with that full "liberty of quotation" which is the compliment generally paid to classics only. In his quotations again Byron exhibits most clearly his love of the stage. He cites Shakespeare in his *Letters* no

cases of misquotation which the *Letters and Journals* afford are those in which Byron unconsciously paraphrases or parodies the lines he is quoting. He commences his "Extracts from a Diary" with the sentence—placed in inverted commas—"A sudden thought strikes me," quite oblivious of the fact that he is altering a famous line of "Antony and Cleopatra":—"On the sudden a Roman thought hath struck him." And when he tells Francis Hodgson that he has been riding on "hollow, pampered jades of Asia," he is probably unaware of the fact that he is making nonsense of a speech written by that very same Marlowe whose *Faustus* he so contemptuously declares he has never read. Yet the "pampered jades" are obviously Marlowe's,—witness the following lines taken from the 4th scene of the 4th act of the 2nd part of "Tamburlaine the Great," the scene in which Tamburlaine addresses the conquered kings whom he has harnessed to his chariot:—

"Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia!
 What! can ye draw but twenty miles a day,
 And have so proud a chariot at your heels,
 And such a coachman as great Tamburlaine,
 But from Asphaltis, where I conquered you,
 To *Byron* here, where thus I honour you?"

less than one hundred and fifty-six times, either making use of stock extracts from the tragedies, or adopting from comedies, tragedies, or histories some ludicrous image or "fighting speech." To a man of his peculiar temperament—a temperament which so often oscillated between arrogance and humour, which was ever too turbulent and too generous to smile placidly at the human comedy and to "endure a while and see injustice done"—a play like the first part of "King Henry IV.," with its welcome contrast of fiery impetuosity in Hotspur, with calculating geniality in Falstaff, seems to have been peculiarly sympathetic—it is quoted on twenty-one occasions. "Macbeth" was evidently a greater favourite: the tyrant's moods of defiance and of despair find such a responsive echo in the breast of Byron, that he cites the tragedy no less than thirty-six times. But in this connection there is a circumstance even more extraordinary than this record of one hundred and fifty-six Shakespearian quotations, and that is the fact that Byron's *Letters* contain excerpts taken from twenty-two other dramatic authors. Some of these—Massinger and Otway, Farquhar and Vanbrugh, Addison and Dryden, Goldsmith and Sheridan—are legitimately connected with our literature, but the rest, even the best of them—Murphy, Hoadley, and the Colmans—are merely the popular playwrights of the time, playwrights whose works Byron must have seen in those early days in which he was interested in the stage and helped to manage Drury Lane. To obtain a possible parallel to this instance of a great poet's condescension, you must imagine Tennyson quoting

Tom Robertson or James Albery in a letter to Edward Fitzgerald, or Mr Swinburne and Mr Watts-Dunton "swopping jokes" culled from Mr Carton and Mr Jones. The parallel is, of course, quite inconceivable, and I only draw it to set in high relief that contempt of purely literary canons of taste that Byron so often delighted to express. He quotes Andrews and Kenney precisely as he quotes Cowper or Campbell, Coleridge, Southey, or Moore. He finds in their farces the particular tag he wants, and, for his own purposes of letter-writing, "Better Late Than Never" and "Raising the Wind" stand exactly on the same level with "The Ancient Mariner" and "The Pleasures of Hope." The fact is that, throughout his life, despite its pre-occupation with literature, Byron was never weary of protesting against the notion that books are as important a matter as the world with which they deal. He liked *living* romances better than writing them, and though he never succeeded in finding a career in the world of action, he always confessed — to quote Mr Chesterton's amusing dichotomy—that he preferred the society of gentlemen to that of literary men. His cry seems ever to have been what was Verlaine's cry later in the century—"Don't let's talk literature." He knew and loathed "the envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness" that are inseparably annexed to a literary life led by a member of a literary circle, and he was urgent in promulgating—and with a more downright sincerity than Stevenson's—the pestilent heresy that the world is alive and that books are dead—a heresy, by the way, which Mr Swinburne ingeniously exposes in the preface to the new and collected edition of his *Poems*.

But I have by no means counted the tale of allusions that makes the *Letters* so piquant. Himself the great champion of the Augustan school of English Poetry, Byron was bound by his theories of his art, by his love for the finished epigram, as distinct from the imaginative suggestion, of the poetic phrase to pay the due meed of reference to "the little nightingale of Twickenham." Yet, while he performs this duty most loyally, exalting Pope to the heights of Parnassus in his controversial pamphlets, and quoting from his works in the *Letters* no less than thirty-six times, it is to Johnson, the great critic in this school of verse-making wits, that he makes the most frequent appeal. Byron is for ever celebrating Johnson as literary dictator on the one hand, and as master of epigram and of retort on the other. His "Rasselas," his Drury Lane *Prologue*, his *Lives of the Poets*, and his "Vanity of Human Wishes," are all cited; indeed the great satire is quoted on several occasions, and is once the subject of an elaborate eulogy. Byron's most interesting allusions to Johnson, however, are such as take the form of quotations made from Boswell's "Life," and to an examination of these quotations I therefore propose to devote the remaining portion of my space. Now, inasmuch as most of these phrases are borrowed to accentuate some particularly truculent expression of Byron's own opinions, it is only natural that four of the most important should be taken from places in which Johnson gives his uncompromising judgment of the Fingal controversy. The scathing answer made by the Doctor to Blair's question "whether any man of a modern age could have written such poems"

as those attributed to Ossian (*The Life*, 1763, May 24th)—“Yes, sir, many men, many women, and many children,” is introduced on two occasions, once in an attack on the playwright Sotheby, again in a suggested criticism of Byron’s own verse; and the no less famous dictum (*The Life*, 1783), “Sir, a man might write such stuff for ever, if he would *abandon* his mind to it,” is twice applied to Wordsworth’s poetry. In like fashion, Johnson’s well-known letter to Macpherson is twice drawn upon. The latter half of the sentence “Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me” is quoted in an inverted form, in reference to a literary attack, and again in allusion to one of Leigh Hunt’s poems; and the concluding passage of the letter, “what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove,” is cited in a very plain-spoken letter which Byron wrote to his solicitor, Hanson, at a time when Lady Byron was suspected of an intention to take with her Ada, the sole offspring of the marriage, on a visit to the Continent. In this place I may suitably note that Johnson’s letter to Lord Chesterfield is also laid under contribution; the memorable sentence, “Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help?” being alluded to in a letter sent by Byron to the honorary secretary to the Greek Committee. Another of Johnson’s most crushing replies, his retort on Hannah More’s flattery, “Dearest lady, consider with yourself what your flattery is worth, before you

bestow it so freely" (The *Life*, 1784), is twice adopted, once in reference to some utterances of Byron's own, related with too great prolixity to Leigh Hunt, and secondly in a letter to Murray, deprecating the "insolent condescension" of English public opinion.

Sometimes Byron contrives to pack two Johnsonian quotations into a single letter. Thus, writing to Gifford, he says, "It is not for me to bandy compliments with my elders and my betters. . . . I am no Bigot to Infidelity"—the first of these confessions alluding to Johnson's account of his first interview with George III. (The *Life*, 1767), where the Doctor, repudiating the idea of replying to a compliment paid him by the king, remarks, "When the king had said it, it was to be so. It was not for me to bandy civilities with my sovereign"; the second making reference to a rebuke administered by Johnson to a Presbyterian minister, Mr Kenneth M'Aulay, who, persisting in "a rhapsody against creeds and confessions" (The *Tour*, 1773, August 27th), received the following answer, "Sir, you are a *bigot to laxness*." Similarly, in one of the few letters he addressed to the Earl of Blessington, talking of the ill effects wrought by applying caustic to a wart on his face, Byron writes, "The peccant part and its immediate environ are as black as if the printer's devil had marked me for an author. . . . 'Out, damn'd spot,' I saw that during my visit it had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished"; obviously alluding in the first place to the humorous reply which Johnson made to Boswell in a discussion of the virtues of medicated baths (The *Life*, 1769, October 26th), "Well, sir, go to Dominicetti, and get thyself fumigated; but be sure that the steam be

directed to thy *head*, for *that* is the *peccant part*”; and in the second place, to a conversation (*The Life*, 1783, May 15th), in which Johnson and Boswell quote and condemn the famous vote of the House of Commons, “That the influence of the crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished”—an opinion which Byron also mentions in his “*Detached Thoughts*” as highly applicable to his own melancholy.

Occasionally—as in the letter just spoken of—Byron quotes Johnson without making any acknowledgment of the obligation. Thus the remark he enters in his *Journal* for December 5th, 1813, on hearing that his rhymes are very popular in the United States, “These are the first tidings that have ever sounded like *Fame* to my ears—to be redde on the banks of the Ohio,” is plainly inspired by Johnson’s speech at the Essex Head Club (*The Life*, 1784, May 15th), “Oh, gentlemen, I must tell you a very great thing. The Empress of Russia has ordered ‘*The Rambler*’ to be translated into the Russian language : so I shall be read on the banks of the Wolga. Horace boasts that his fame would extend as far as the banks of the Rhone ; now the Wolga is farther from me than the Rhone was from Horace.” And when, writing on the same date in his *Journal*, he criticises Madame de Staël in the words, “She always talks of *myself* or *herself*, and I am not (except in soliloquy, as now) much enamoured of either subject,” he is merely paraphrasing Johnson’s angry reply to one of Boswell’s impertinent questions (*The Life*, 1766, May), “Sir, you have but two topics, yourself and me. I am sick of both.” Similarly Byron’s praise of Junius, “I like him ; —he was a good hater,” is a bold appropriation of

Johnson's eulogy of Dr Bathurst as related by Mrs Piozzi in her "Anecdotes": "Dear Bathurst was a man to my very heart's content: he hated a fool, and he hated a rogue, and he hated a *Whig*; he was a very good *hater*." And the advice offered to Moore, "Don't talk of decay, but put in for eighty," is an imitation of Johnson's counsel to his old college friend, Edwards of Pembroke (The *Life*, 1778, April 17th), "Come, sir, drink water, and put in for a hundred." Perhaps, too, Byron's bon-mot, "The Cardinal is at his wit's end; it is true that he had not far to go," may have been suggested by what Johnson said at General Paoli's, when Boswell affirmed that Garrick seemed to "dip deep into his mind" for a certain reflection (The *Life*, 1776, April 11th), "He had not far to dip, sir; he had said the same thing, probably, twenty times before."

Mention of Garrick reminds me that Byron's *Letters* contain two further references to what Johnson said of Davy. The first occurs in a letter—written to Moore—which gives a description of the first night of Mrs Wilmot's tragedy, "Ina." Byron says, "The fifth—what Garrick used to call (like a fool) the *concoction* of a play—the fifth act stuck fast at the King's prayer," and the corresponding passage in Boswell may be found in the account of that discussion at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, in the course of which Johnson told Garrick (The *Life*, 1778, April 9th) that a reverend gentlemen had complained to him that in rejecting a tragedy of his (that is, the clergyman's) the actor-manager had asserted that the "play was wrong in the *concoction*." The second is made in "Extracts from a Diary,"

where Byron, concerned about the threatened piratical production of *Marino Faliero*, points out that the tragedy "is too regular" for the English stage, and contains "no surprises, no starts, nor trap-doors, nor opportunities 'for tossing their heads and kicking their heels,'" thereby introducing the complaint which Johnson made of the alterations Garrick wished to effect in "Irene," in order the better to fit the tragedy for the stage (The *Life*, 1749, Feb. 6th): "The fellow wants me to make Mahomet run mad, that he may have an opportunity of tossing his hands and kicking his heels."

Sayings of Johnson which may be described as apothegms are frequently met with in these *Letters*. Thus, writing to Rogers about an attack made on himself in a book called *Sir Proteus*, Byron takes a phrase used by Johnson (The *Life*, 1780) in ridicule of a newspaper letter which abused Reynolds and himself, and asks, "Are we alive after all this censure?" (Johnson's phrase is "satire"). Byron's contention that "God will not always be a Tory, though Johnson says the first Whig was the Devil," is, of course, an allusion to the famous retort delivered by the Doctor (The *Life*, 1778, April 28th) against the definition of a Tory given by Mr Eld—the *Staffordshire Whig*. Again, in the introduction to "My Dictionary," Byron quotes Johnson's proverb, "Hell is paved with good intentions" (The *Life*, 1772), while in one sentence of a letter addressed to J. J. Coulmann—"I cannot accept what it has pleased your friends to call their *homage*, because there is no sovereign in the republic of letters"—he seems to be thinking of the remonstrance which Goldsmith made (The *Life*, 1773, May

7th) against Boswell's habit of giving Johnson "the honour of unquestionable superiority"—"Sir, you are for making a monarchy of what should be a republic."

In three or four places Byron quotes well-known anecdotes from the *Life*. Thus he tells the story of Kit Smart's ninety-nine years' contract to the *Universal Visitor* (The *Life*, 1775, April 5th) as a jocular warning to Moore against engaging himself to Murray as a magazine-editor. He invokes the passage in which Johnson returns an approving verdict on Prior's *Paulo Purgante* (The *Life*, 1777, September) in vindication of *Don Juan's* impugned morality. Protesting against the praises given to "that little dirty blackguard Keats, in the *Edinburgh*," he says (though in slightly altered language), what Johnson himself said (The *Life*, 1763) when he heard that Thomas Sheridan had been granted a pension, "What, have they given *him* a pension? Then it is time for me to give up mine." And at the commencement of his "Extracts from a Diary" he illustrates his favourite joke of the strange progress of literature—from the bookseller's shop or the reader's table to the pastry-cook's counter or the trunk-maker's linings—by telling two stories, one of a grocer, a witness in a current murder trial, who was reported to have wrapped up some bacon and cheese for the prisoner in pages torn out of *Pamela*; and the other that malicious tale, told against Richardson by Boswell and appended in a note to one of Mr Bennet Langton's "Johnsoniana," of the gentleman lately returned from Paris who refused to pander to the great author's vanity by telling for the second time how he had seen *Clarissa* lying on the king's brother's table.

But, after all, this citation of familiar stories is less interesting than certain cases in which Byron refers in his *Letters* to ~~passages~~ which are scarcely what Johnson has said ~~passages~~ rather what he has quoted. On February 18th, 1814, Byron makes the following memorandum in his *Journal*, “‘Be not solitary, be not idle’—Um!—the idleness is troublesome; but I can’t see so much to regret in the solitude.” The ultimate reference is of course to the last paragraph but one of Burton’s “Anatomy of Melancholy,” where Democritus Junior offers this concluding piece of advice to all who are threatened by the disease. But it is not unlikely that the *Journalist* may also have had in his mind a certain letter of Johnson’s (The *Life*, 1779, October 27th), in which Burton’s counsel is quoted and recommended to the author of “The Hypochondriack.”* In like

* In the winding-up of four letters addressed to John Murray, bearing the respective dates of Aug. 12th, 1817, Apr. 23rd, 1818, Aug. 12th, 1819, and Aug. 29th, 1819, Byron will be found greeting his correspondent with the phrase, “And so good-morrow to you, good Master Lieutenant”—an uncommon and a rather cryptic greeting.

I say cryptic because I was never quite satisfied with thinking this a simple reference to the “Good-morrow, good lieutenant,” of “Othello,” Act iii. Scene 1, for I could see no particular point nor humour in altering an utterly commonplace Shakespearean sentence and repeating the sentence—so altered—on no less than four occasions. I felt that it must be a burlesque quotation; and my opinion was confirmed when, reading Boswell’s letters written to the Rev. W. J. Temple, I suddenly came across the same sentence in Letter 51, dated Apr. 17th(?), 1775. Here is the passage—and the dinner it alludes to will be found described in the *Life of Johnson*, under date Apr. 11th, 1775:—

I am invited to a dinner on the banks of the Thames, at Richard Owen Cambridge’s, where are to be Reynolds, Johnson, and ‘Hermes’ Harris!

manner, when Byron, writing to John Hamilton Reynolds, the friend and collaborateur of Keats, reminds him of "a saying of Dr Johnson's, which it is as well to remember, that 'no man was ever written down except by himself,'" the well-read Boswellian will recollect that the words (*The Tour*, 1773, October 1st) are not Johnson's own, but a quotation made by him of a saying of Bentley's. The terms in which Byron describes Sotheby—"that old rotten Medlar of Rhyme," are another instance in which Johnson is only the middle-man of a striking phrase. In one of his conversations on the Ethics of Convivial

"*'Do you think so?' said he. 'Most certainly,' said I.*" Do you remember how I used to laugh at his style when we were in the Temple? He thinks himself an ancient Greek from these little peculiarities, as the imitators of Shakespeare, whom the *Spectator* mentions, thought they had done wonderfully when they had produced a line similar:—

"And so good-morrow to ye, good Master Lieutenant."

I now thought I had run my quarry to ground, and hopefully consulted the pages of *The Spectator*. But though I ran over every number, and eventually secured the kind and valuable co-operation of Mr George A. Aitken—who has so ably edited both *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*—the search went unrewarded, no such allusion could be found or remembered. So there for the present I must leave the phrase, content with the interesting discovery that Boswell and Byron—who shared with one another an enthusiasm for Scotland and a very practical sympathy with "an oppressed nation bravely struggling to be free"—both hit upon the same evasive quotation.

As to the application of the words, that Mr Murray has been good enough to explain to me. He informs me that after his grandfather—John Murray the Second—was made a Deputy-Lieutenant he came in for no little good-humoured banter from his friends when he appeared at a levée in epaulettes, cocked hat and feathers, *and a scarlet tunic*. Byron, of course, heard of the matter, and—like the humorist he was—offered the "Good Master Lieutenant" salutation as his own contribution to the gaiety of the occasion.

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

date 1822, January 12th, Byron appeals to his correspondent, "You disclaim 'jealousies'; but I would ask, as Boswell did of Johnson, 'of *whom could* you be *jealous?*'—of none of the living certainly, and (taking all and all into consideration) of which of the dead?" So far as I can see, it is what Boswell says *of* Johnson, *not* what he says *to* him, that is here alluded to. For, after recording one of the Doctor's frequent attacks on Gray, and announcing his own divergence from his master's opinions, Boswell defends him (The *Life*, 1763, June 25th) from the imputation of being "actuated by envy" of Gray, in words to which Byron probably refers in addressing Sir Walter: "Alas; ye little short-sighted critics, could Johnson be envious of the talents of any of his contemporaries?"

That this peculiar interest shown by Byron in Johnson was something more than a matter of literary affinity or of hero-worship, I, for one, do not for a moment doubt. It seems to me indeed to have been a case of intense sympathy rather than of deep interest: and I take it there can be no question that the "noble lord's" temperament and cast of mind, no less than his taste in books, were in many respects identical with those of the great moralist. Two men so virile and red-blooded, so quick-tempered and yet so patient, so masculine and robust in sense and judgment, such true "men of the world" in outlook and experience, were naturally bound to agree in certain other essential respects, and it need occasion no great surprise to discover that the qualities of ineradicable humour, of pugnacity and love of controversy, of pride and independence of spirit, of

real humanity and affection, and of hatred of injustice and oppression, were as strongly developed in Byron as in Johnson. What is really significant is the fact that when these main points of likeness are once made out, quite a number of common traits can be recalled, all subordinate, it may be, but all helping to complete the resemblance here suggested. Leniency to dependants, servants, and animals; aptness, vivacity, and variety in conversation; alternate abstinence and voracity in the use of food and of drink; indifference verging on hostility to the charms of music and of pictures; and a morbid melancholy, due in great measure to a rooted Calvinistic belief;—all these are features recognisable as clearly in Byron as in Johnson. And when I add that the younger man resembled the elder in an addiction to the use of opium, in meditating the making of a tour to the Hebrides, in studying a new and rather difficult language in order to test his mind, in having enjoyed the honour of discussing literature with his sovereign, in writing books and giving his friends the profits of them, in trying to secure the publication of a book entrusted to him by some friendly monks, and in finding his mother's precepts no very satisfactory guide to right conduct — I have drawn a parallel between Byron and Johnson which I cannot help thinking is rather remarkable. Moreover, I find the Byronic and the Johnsonian points of view often quaintly similar. Both believed in the great advantages of foreign travel; both held that it was a good thing to give a promising servant a good education; both conceived that a man of mind can do anything; both maintained that too many

books were published to allow a modern author to obtain success ; both praised London as a place which helped to knock the conceit out of a man ; both affirmed that one person had no more right to abuse another than to rob him or to knock him down ; both considered that defending a man was the worst possible way of conciliating his enemies ; both affected, more or less sincerely, to make no complaint of the world's judgment of a book of theirs ; and both, quaintly enough, deemed they had a mission for reforming the bad manners of their countrymen.

Moreover, I may remark that Byron shared with Johnson such a delight in exposing cant and shams and humbug of all kinds, that he was never weary of uttering some unpalatable truth. Thus he was wont to extol the power of money just as if he were a miser, to comment on the limitations of friendship with all the cynicism of a misanthrope, to insist on "the burden of gratitude" in a manner worthy only of Swift, to revel in such stories of his duelling propensities as made him out a veritable fire-eater,—and, in general, to commit ever and anon in epistolary correspondence that same error of mistaking insolence for insistence and rudeness for raillery which Johnson so frequently committed in conversation.

The truth is, of course, that a man may have the best intentions in the world and yet never succeed in "clearing his mind of cant." Seeking to avoid one form of it he falls into another, and the more vociferously he protests his emancipation from common prejudice, the more likely he is to succumb to a prejudice of his own creation. So it was with Byron. His abhorrence of affectation of feeling is

proclaimed a little too loudly, rather too often, somewhat too theatrically, to seem really sincere; and even his loudly vaunted indifference to English public opinion strikes too shrill and too indignant a note to sound quite true. . . . All which means that after this long digression I am returning by a short cut to the Byron I first described—the Byron who loved to pose, to “orate,” to mystify, to emulate every man’s accomplishment—Byron the aristocrat and actor! Let me, however, at this last stage of my preface, correct a possible misapprehension of my meaning. In tracing these points of correspondence between Byron and Johnson I have not the slightest wish to weigh Byron in the Johnsonian scales. I am among the first to admit that Byron’s mental, moral, social, and political outlook—to say nothing of religious views—was often diametrically divergent from that of Johnson. To lay such stress on the resemblances I have discovered as would make Byron a sort of disciple of “The Rambler,” would be not only to falsify facts but to caricature my real intentions. All I wish to show is that Byron throughout his *Letters* pays a very fitting tribute of admiration to the moral and intellectual eminence of Johnson, and that these two great authors, the leading man of letters of the latter half of the eighteenth century and the leading man of letters of the early years of the nineteenth century, are never found in such dire antagonism as precludes their meeting one another on a common platform of love of humanity and love of truth.

W. A. LEWIS BETTANY.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.—ON BYRON'S OBLIGATION TO JOHNSON .	vii
CHAP.	
I. BYRON'S REFLECTIONS ON HIMSELF—	
(1) <i>The Comparison of Himself to Rousseau</i>	5
(2) <i>His Disposition as Warped by his Mother's Violent Temper</i>	5
(3) <i>His Pride and Quickness of Spirit, as shown in a Propensity for Quarrelling and Duelling</i>	34
(4) <i>His Melancholic Temperament</i>	45
II. BYRON'S RELIGIOUS VIEWS—	
(1) <i>Superstitions</i>	71
(2) <i>Thoughts on Death and on Apparitions</i>	82
(3) <i>Theological Opinions</i>	95
III. BYRON'S OPINIONS OF THE LITERARY LIFE—	
(1) <i>The Author's Trade and the Making of a Poet</i>	122
(2) <i>The Effects of Criticism and of Attack</i>	151
(3) <i>Personal Avowals</i>	178

CHAP.

IV. BYRON'S ESTIMATE OF CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH POETS—

	PAGE
(1) <i>Keats</i>	200
(2) <i>Leigh Hunt</i>	205
(3) <i>Southey</i>	219
(4) <i>Wordsworth</i>	235
(5) <i>Coleridge</i>	247
(6) <i>Scott</i>	253

V. BYRON'S OBITER DICTA ON THE DRAMA—

(1) <i>The Drury Lane Committee</i>	271
(2) <i>Plays, Players, and Playwrights</i>	284
(3) <i>The Construction and Idea of Tragedy</i>	299

VI. BYRON'S VALUATION OF HIS FRIENDS—

(1) <i>Scrope Berdmore Davies</i>	311
(2) <i>Charles Skinner Matthews</i>	319
(3) <i>John Cam Hobhouse (subsequently Baron Broughton de Gyfford)</i>	330
(4) <i>Samuel Rogers</i>	352
(5) <i>Richard Brinsley Sheridan</i>	363
(6) <i>Madame de Staël</i>	374
(7) <i>Percy Bysshe Shelley</i>	392

 LIST OF PORTRAITS

BYRON, from the portrait by <i>T. Phillips</i>	<i>Frontispiece</i>
BYRON, from the portrait by <i>R. Westall</i> in the possession of the <i>Baroness Burdett-Coutts</i>	<i>to face p. 120</i>

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



master, Aretine"—which he composed to accompany some naturalistic "Postures" designed by Julio Romano, and engraved by Marc Antonio Raimondi]—Timon of Athens—"An Alabaster Vase lighted up within"—Satan—Shakespeare—Buonaparte—Tiberius [the Tiberius of Capreæ whose monstrous vices are described in detail by Suetonius and mentioned summarily by Tacitus in the *Annals*, Book VI. cap. i.]—Aeschylus—Sophocles—Euripides—Harlequin—The Clown—Sternhold and Hopkins [cf. Chapter VI. *Rogers*, 1814, Sept. 15]—to the Phantasmagoria—to Henry the 8th [in the supposed inconstancy of his conjugal affections]—to Chenies—to Mirabeau—to young R. Dallas (the Schoolboy)—to Michael Angelo—to Raphael—to a *petit maître*—to Diogenes [in imagined surliness and misanthropy]—to Childe Harold—to Lara—to the Count in Beppo—to Milton—to Pope—to Dryden [perhaps in the wide range of his poetic talent]—to Burns—to Savage [perhaps in respect of the affectional relations in which the poet had stood to his mother]—to Chatterton [in the precocity of his genius]—to "oft have I heard of thee my Lord Biron" in Shakespeare—to Churchill the poet [Charles Churchill, a free-living clergyman and a friend of John Wilkes, wrote the well-known satire, "The Rosciad," and along with Wilkes and Sir Francis Dashwood belonged to the society of the "Monks of Medmenham Abbey." He died in 1764, at the early age of thirty-three. In the likening of Byron to Churchill, here alluded to, a twofold resemblance is probably insinuated, of Byron as the author of a popular satire, (*English Bards, etc.*), and also as the companion of sham "monks"—the

“Abbot” of Newstead Abbey. But Byron and his friends, it need hardly be said, were never Thelemites in the sense understood and realised by the “Franciscans.”]—to Kean the actor [by M^{rs} Piozzi, possibly, who in a letter written to D^r Gray, September 1st, 1820, says of Kean and of Byron, “They seem to be kindred souls, delighting in distortion, and mistaking it for pathos”]—to Alfieri, etc., etc., etc. The likeness to Alfieri was asserted very seriously by an Italian, who had known him in his younger days: it of course related merely to our apparent personal dispositions. He did not assert it to *me* (for we were not then good friends), but in society.

The Object of so many contradictory comparisons must probably be like something different from them all; but what *that* is, is more than *I* know, or any body else. My Mother, before I was twenty, would have it that I was like Rousseau, and Madame de Staël used to say so too, in 1813, and the *Edin^h. Review* has something of the sort in its critique on the 4th Canto of *Ch^e. Ha^d.* I can't see any point of resemblance: he wrote prose, I verse: he was of the people, I of the Aristocracy: he was a philosopher, I am none: he published his first work at forty, I mine at eighteen: his first essay brought him universal applause, mine the contrary: he married his housekeeper, I could not keep house with my wife: he thought all the world in a plot against *him*, my little world seems to think *me* in a plot against it, if I may judge by their abuse in print and coterie: he liked Botany, I like flowers, and herbs, and trees, but know nothing of their pedigrees: he wrote Music,

I limit my knowledge of it to what I catch by *Ear*—I never could learn any thing by *study*, not even a language, it was all by rote and ear and memory: he had a bad memory, I *had* at least an excellent one (ask Hodgson the poet, a good judge, for he has an astonishing one): he wrote with hesitation and care, I with rapidity and rarely with pains: *he* could never ride nor swim “nor was cunning of fence,” I am an excellent swimmer, a decent though not at all a dashing rider (having staved in a rib at eighteen in the course of scampering), and was sufficient of fence—particularly of the Highland broad-sword; not a bad boxer when I could keep my temper, which was difficult, but which I strove to do ever since I knocked down M^r Purling and put his knee-pan out (with the gloves on) in Angelo's and Jackson's rooms in 1806 during the sparring; and I was besides a very fair cricketer—one of the Harrow Eleven when we play[ed] against Eton in 1805. Besides, Rousseau's way of life, his country, his manners, his whole character, were so very different, that I am at a loss to conceive how such a comparison could have arisen, as it has done three several times, and all in rather a remarkable manner. I forgot to say, that *he* was also short-sighted, and that hitherto my eyes have been the contrary to such a degree, that, in the largest theatre of Bologna, I distinguished and read some busts and inscriptions painted near the stage, from a box so distant, and so *darkly* lighted, that none of the company (composed of young and very bright-eyed people—some of them in the same box) could make out a letter, and thought it was a trick, though I had never been in the theatre before.

Altogether, I think myself justified in thinking the comparison not well-founded. I don't say this out of pique, for Rousseau was a great man, and the thing if true were flattering enough; but I have no idea of being pleased with a chimera.

(1821, October 15. Commencement of
"Detached Thoughts," Vol. V., p. 407.)

(2) *His Disposition as warped by his Mother's
violent temper*

I seize this interval of my *amiable* mother's absence this afternoon, again to inform you, or rather to desire to be informed by you, of what is going on. For my own part I can send nothing to amuse you, excepting a repetition of my complaints against my tormentor, whose *diabolical* disposition (pardon me for staining my paper with so harsh a word) seems to increase with age, and to acquire new force with Time. The more I see of her the more my dislike augments; nor can I so entirely conquer the appearance of it, as to prevent her from perceiving my opinion; this, so far from calming the Gale, blows it into a *hurricane*, which threatens to destroy everything, till exhausted by its own violence, it is lulled into a sullen torpor, which, after a short period, is again roused into fresh and revived phrenzy, to me most terrible, and to every other Spectator astonishing. She then declares that she plainly sees I hate her, that I am leagued with her bitter enemies, viz., Yourself, L^d. C[arlisle] and M^r H[anson], and, as I never Dissemble or contradict her, we are all *honoured* with a multiplicity of epithets, too *numerous*,

and some of them too *gross*, to be repeated. In this society, and in this amusing and instructive manner, have I dragged out a weary fortnight, and am condemned to pass another or three weeks as happily as the former. No captive Negro, or Prisoner of war, ever looked forward to their emancipation, and return to Liberty with more Joy, and with more lingering expectation, than I do to my escape from this maternal bondage, and this accursed place, which is the region of dullness itself, and more stupid than the banks of Lethe, though it possesses contrary qualities to the river of oblivion, as the detested scenes I now witness, make me regret the happier ones already passed, and wish their restoration.

Such, Augusta, is the happy life I now lead, such my *amusements*. I wander about hating everything I behold, and if I remained here a few months longer, I should become, what with *envy*, *spleen*, and all *uncharitableness*, a complete *misanthrope*.

(1804, August 18, Burgage Manor. Letter 11, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 30.)

I left my mother at Southwell, some time since, in a monstrous pet with you for not writing. I am sorry to say the old lady and myself don't agree like lambs in a meadow, but I believe it is all my own fault, I am rather too fidgety, which my precise mama objects to, we differ, then argue, and to my shame be it spoken, fall out a *little*, however, after a storm comes a calm.

(1804, October 25. Letter 13, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 40.)

You say that you shall write to the Dowager Soon ; her address is at Southwell, *that* I need hardly inform you. Now, Augusta, I am going to tell you a secret, perhaps I shall appear undutiful to you, but, believe me, my affection for you is founded on a more firm basis. My mother has lately behaved to me in such an eccentric manner, that so far from feeling the affection of a Son, it is with difficulty I can restrain my dislike. Not that I can complain of want of liberality ; no, She always supplies me with as much money as I can spend, and more than most boys hope for or desire. But with all this she is so hasty, so impatient, that I dread the approach of the holidays, more than most boys do their return from them. In former days she spoilt me ; now she is altered to the contrary ; for the most trifling thing, she upbraids me in a most outrageous manner, and all our disputes have been lately heightened by my one with that object of my cordial, deliberate, detestation, Lord Grey de Ruthyn. She wishes me to explain my reasons for disliking him, which I will never do ; would I do it to any one, be assured you, my dear Augusta, would be the first who would know them. She also insists on my being reconciled to him, and once she let drop such an odd expression that I was half inclined to believe that the dowager was in love with him. But I hope not, for he is the most disagreeable person (in my opinion) that exists. He called once during my last vacation ; she threatened, stormed, begged me to make it up, “he himself loved me, and wished it ;” but my reason was so excellent—that neither had effect, nor would I speak or stay in the same room, till he took his

departure. No doubt this appears odd; but was my reason known, which it never will be if I can help it, I should be justified in my conduct. Now if I am to be tormented with her and him in this style, I cannot submit to it. You, Augusta, are the only relation I have who treats me as a friend; if you too desert me, I have nobody I can love but Delawarr. If it was not for his sake, Harrow would be a desert, and I should dislike staying at it. You desire me to burn your epistles; indeed I cannot do that, but I will take care that They shall be invisible. If you burn any of mine, I shall be *monstrous angry*; take care of them till we meet.

(1804, November 2. Letter 14, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 43.)

I thought, my dear Augusta, that your opinion of my *meek mamma* would coincide with mine; her temper is so variable, and when inflamed, so furious, that I dread our meeting; not but I dare say that I am troublesome enough, but I always endeavour to be as dutiful as possible. She is so very strenuous, and so tormenting in her entreaties and commands, with regard to my reconciliation with that detestable Lord G., that I suppose she has a penchant for his Lordship; but I am confident that he does not return it, for he rather dislikes her than otherwise, at least as far as I can judge. But she has an excellent opinion of her personal attractions, sinks her age a good six years, avers that when I was born she was only eighteen, when you, my dear Sister, know as well as I know that she was of age when she married my father, and that I was not born for three years

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

me from the Shackles I now wear, and then perhaps she will govern her passion better than at present. You mistake me, if you think I dislike Lord Carlisle; I respect him, and might like him did I know him better. For him too my mother has an antipathy, why I know not. I am afraid he could be but of little use to me, in separating me from her, which she would oppose with all her might; but I dare say he would assist me if he could, so I take the will for the Deed, and am obliged to him in exactly the same manner as if he succeeded in his efforts. I am in great hopes, that at Christmas I shall be with M^r Hanson during the vacation, I shall do all I can to avoid a visit to my mother wherever she is. It is the first duty of a parent, to impress precepts of obedience in their children, but her method is so violent, so capricious, that the patience of Job, the versatility of a member of the House of Commons could not support it. I revere D^r Drury [of Harrow] much more than I do her, yet he is never violent, never outrageous: I dread offending him, not however through fear, but the respect I bear him makes me unhappy when I am under his displeasure. My mother's precepts, never convey instruction, never fix upon my mind; to be sure they are calculated to inculcate obedience, so are chains, and tortures, but though they may restrain for a time, the mind revolts from such treatment. Not that M^{rs} Byron ever injures my *sacred* person. I am rather too old for that, but her words are of that rough texture, which offend more than personal ill-usage. "A talkative woman is like an Adder's tongue," so says one of the prophets, but which I can't tell, and very

likely you don't wish to know, but he was a true one whoever he was.

(1804, November 11. Letter 15, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 45.)

My mother, you inform me, commends my *amiable disposition* and *good understanding*; if she does this to you, it is a great deal more than I ever hear myself, for the one or the other is always found fault with, and I am told to copy the *excellent pattern* which I see before me in *herself*. You have got an invitation too, you may accept it if you please, but if you value your own comfort, and like a pleasant situation, I advise you to avoid Southwell.—I thank you, my dear Augusta, for your readiness to assist me, and will in some manner avail myself of it; I do not, however, wish to be separated from *her* entirely, but not to be so much with her as I hitherto have been, for I do believe she likes me; she manifests that in many instances, particularly with regard to money, which I never want, and have as much as I desire. But her conduct is so strange, her caprices so impossible to be complied with, her passions so outrageous, that the evil quite overbalances her *agreeable qualities*. Amongst other things I forgot to mention a most *ungovernable appetite* for Scandal, which she never can govern, and employs most of her time abroad, in displaying the faults, and censuring the foibles, of her acquaintance; therefore I do not wonder that my precious Aunt comes in for her share of encomiums; this, however, is nothing to what happened when my conduct admits of animadversion; “then comes the tug of war.” My whole family

from the conquest are upbraided ! myself abused, and I am told that what little accomplishments I possess either in mind or body are derived from her and *her alone*.

(1804, November 17. Letter 16, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 48.)

There is no necessity for my mother to know anything of my intentions till the time approaches ; and when it does come, M^r H[anson] has only to write her a note saying, that, as I could not accept the invitation he gave me last holidays, he imagined I might do it now ; to this she surely can make no objections ; but, if she entertained the slightest idea of my making any complaint of her very *lenient* treatment, the scene that would ensue beggars all power of description. You may have some little idea of it, from what I have told you, and what you yourself know. . . . To Lord Carlisle make my warmest acknowledgments. I feel more gratitude, than my feelings can well express ; I am truly obliged to him for his endeavours, and am perfectly satisfied with your explanation of his reserve, though I was hitherto afraid it might proceed from personal dislike. . . . You inform me that you intend to visit my mother, then you will have an opportunity of seeing what I have described, and hearing a great *deal of Scandal*. She does not trouble me much with epistolary communications ; when I do receive them, they are very concise, and much to the purpose. However I will do her the justice to say that she behaves, or rather means, well, and is in some respects very kind, though her manners are not the most conciliating.

She likewise expresses a great deal of affection for you, but disapproves your marriage, wishes to know my opinion of it, and complains that you are negligent and do not write to her or care about her. How far her opinion of your love for her is well grounded, you best know. I again request you will return my sincere thanks to Lord Carlisle, and for the future I shall consider him as more my friend than I have hitherto been taught to think. I have more reasons than one, to wish to avoid going to Notts, for there I should be obliged to associate with Lord G. whom I detest, his manners being unlike those of a Gentleman, and the information to be derived from him but little except about shooting, which I do not intend to devote my life to. Besides I have a particular reason for not liking him.

(1804, November 21. Letter 17, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 50.)

I have contrived to pass the holidays with M^r and M^{rs} Hanson, to whom I am greatly obliged for their hospitality. You are now within a day's journey of my *amiable Mama*. If you wish your spirits *raised*, or rather *roused*, I would recommend you to pass a week or two with her. However I dare say she would behave very well to *you*, for you do not know her disposition so well as I do. I return you, my dear Girl, a thousand thanks for hinting to M^r H[anson] and Lord C[arlisle] my uncomfortable situation, I shall always remember it with gratitude, as a most *essential service*. I rather think that, if you were any time with my mother, she would bore you about

your marriage which she *disapproves* of, as much for the sake of finding fault as any thing, for that is her favourite amusement. At any rate she would be very inquisitive, for she was always tormenting me about it, and, if you told her any thing, she might very possibly divulge it; I therefore advise you, *when you see her* to say nothing, or as little, about it, as you can help.

(1805, January 30. Letter 19, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 55.)

My visit to the Dowager does not promise me all the happiness I could wish; however, it must be gone through, as it is some time since I have seen her. It shall be as short as possible.

(1805, April 4. Letter 20, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 57.)

It is hardly necessary to inform you that I am heartily tired of Southwell, for I am at this minute experiencing those delights which I have recapitulated to you and which are more entertaining to be *talked* of at a distance than enjoyed at Home. I allude to the eloquence of a *near relation* of mine, which is as remarkable as your *taciturnity*.

(1805, April 15. Letter 21, to Hargreaves Hanson, Vol. I., p. 58.)

I am sure, no unhappy mortal ever required much more consolation than I do at present. You as well as myself know the *sweet* and *amiable* temper of a

certain personage to whom I am nearly related; of *course*, the pleasure I have enjoyed during my vacation (although it has been greater than I expected), yet has not been so *superabundant* as to make me wish to stay a day longer than I can avoid. However, notwithstanding the dullness of the place, and certain *unpleasant things* that occur in a family not a hundred miles distant from Southwell, I contrived to pass my time in peace, till to-day, when unhappily, in a most inadvertent manner, I said that Southwell was not peculiarly to my taste; but, however, I merely expressed this in common conversation, without speaking disrespectfully of the *sweet* town; (which, between you and I, I wish was swallowed up by an earthquake, provided my *eloquent mother* was not in it). No sooner had the unlucky sentence, which I believe was prompted by my evil Genius, escaped my lips, than I was treated with an oration in the *ancient style*, which I have often so *pathetically* described to you, unequalled by any thing of *modern* or *antique* date; nay the *Philippics* against L^d. Melville were nothing to it; one would really imagine, to have heard the *Good Lady*, that I was a most *treasonable culprit*, but thank St Peter, after undergoing this *Purgatory* for the last hour, it is at length blown over, and I have sat down under these *pleasing impressions* to address you, so that I am afraid my epistle will not be the most entertaining. I assure you upon my *honour*, jesting apart, I have never been so *scurrilously* and *violently* abused by any person, as by that woman whom I think I am to call mother, by that being who gave me birth, to whom I ought to look up with

veneration and respect, but whom I am sorry I cannot love or admire. Within one little hour, I have not only heard myself, but have heard my *whole family*, by the father's side, *stigmatised* in terms that the *blackest malevolence* would perhaps shrink from, and that too in words you would be shocked to hear. Such, Augusta, such is my mother; *my mother!* I disclaim her from this time, and although I cannot help treating her with respect, I cannot reverence, as I ought to do, that parent who by her outrageous conduct forfeits all title to filial affection. To you, Augusta, I must look up, as my nearest relation, to you I must confide what I cannot mention to others, and I am sure you will pity me; but I entreat you to keep this a secret, nor expose that unhappy failing of this woman, which I must bear with patience. I would be very sorry to have it discovered, as I have only one week more, for the present. In the meantime you may write to me with the greatest safety, as she would not open any of my letters, even from you.

(1805, April 23. Letter 23, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 60.)

I shall certainly be most happy again to see you, notwithstanding my *wise* and *Good* mother (who is at this minute thundering against Somebody or other below in the Dining Room), has interdicted my visiting at his *Lordship's* [*i.e.* Lord Carlisle's] house, with the threat of her malediction, in case of disobedience, as she says he has behaved very ill to her; the truth of this I much doubt, nor should the orders of all the mothers (especially such mothers) in

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



mencement of our Holidays. If she does, it will be impossible for me to call on *my Sister*, previous to my leaving it, and at the same time I cannot conceive what the Deuce she can want at this season in London. I have written to tell her that my Holidays commence on the 6th of August, but however, July the 1st is the proper day.—I beg that if you cannot find some means to keep her in the Country that you at least will connive at this deception which I can palliate, and then I shall be down in the country before she knows where I am. My reasons for this are, that I do *not wish* to be detained in Town so uncomfortably as I know I shall be if I remain with her; that *I do wish* to see my Sister; and in the next place she can just as well come to Town after my return to Notts, as I don't desire to be dragged about according to her caprice, and there are some other causes I think unnecessary to be now mentioned. If you will only contrive by settling this business (if it is in your power), or if that is impossible, not mention anything about the day our Holidays commence, of which you can be easily supposed not to be informed. If, I repeat, you can by any means prevent this Mother from executing her purposes, you will greatly oblige.

(1805, July 8. Letter 29, to John Hanson,
Vol. I., p. 68.)

Well, my dearest Augusta, here I am, once more situated at my mother's house, which together with its *inmate* is as *agreeable* as ever. I am at this moment *vis-à-vis* and *tête-à-tête* with that amiable personage, who is, whilst I am writing, pouring forth

complaints against your *ingratitude*, giving me many oblique hints that I ought not to correspond with you, and concluding with an interdiction that if you ever after the expiration of my minority are invited to my residence, *she* will no longer condescend to grace it with her *Imperial* presence. You may figure to yourself, for your amusement, my solemn countenance on the occasion, and the *meek lamblike* demeanour of her Ladyship, which, contrasted with my *saintlike visage*, forms a *striking family painting*, whilst in the background, the portraits of my Great-grandfather and Grandmother, suspended in their frames, seem to look with an eye of pity on their *unfortunate descendant*, whose *worth* and *accomplishments* deserve a *milder* fate. I am to remain in this *Garden of Eden* one month, I do not indeed reside at Cambridge till October, but I set out for Hampshire in September where I shall be on a visit till the commencement of the term. In the mean time, Augusta, your *sympathetic* correspondence must be some alleviation to my sorrows, which however are too ludicrous for me to regard them very seriously; but they are *really* more *uncomfortable* than *amusing*.

(1805, August 6. Letter 31, to the Hon.
Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 72.)

I have at last succeeded, my dearest Augusta, in pacifying the dowager, and mollifying that *piece of flint* which the good Lady denominates her heart. She now has condescended to send you her *love*, although with many comments on the occasion, and many compliments to herself. But to me she still continues to be a torment, and I doubt not would

continue so till the end of my life. However, this is the last time she ever will have an opportunity, as, when I go to college, I shall employ my vacations either in town; or during the summer I intend making a tour through the Highlands, and to Visit the Hebrides with a party of my friends, whom I have engaged for the purpose. This my old preceptor Drury recommended as the most improving way of employing my Summer Vacation, and I have now an additional reason for following his advice, as I by that means will avoid the society of this woman, whose detestable temper destroys every Idea of domestic comfort. It is a happy thing that she is my mother and not my wife, so that I can rid myself of her when I please, and indeed, if she goes on in the style that she has done for this last week that I have been with her, I shall quit her before the month I was to drag out in her company, is expired, and place myself anywhere, rather than remain with such a vixen. As I am to have a very handsome allowance, which does not deprive her of a sixpence, since there is an addition made from my fortune by the Chancellor for the purpose, I shall be perfectly independent of her, and, as she has long since trampled upon, and harrowed up every affectionate tie, It is my serious determination never again to visit, or be upon any friendly terms with her. This I owe to myself, and to my own comfort, as well as Justice to the memory of my nearest relations, who have been most shamefully libelled by this female *Tisiphone*, a name which your *Ladyship* will recollect to have belonged to one of the Furies. You need not take

the precaution of writing in so enigmatical a style in your next, as, bad as the woman is, she would not dare to open any letter addressed to me from you.

(1805, August 10. Letter 32, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 75.)

As might be supposed I like a College Life extremely, especially as I have escaped the Trammels or rather *Fetters* of my domestic Tyrant M^{rs} Byron, who continued to plague me during my visit in July and September. . . . I am afraid the specimens I have lately given her of my Spirit, and determination to submit to no more unreasonable demands (or the insults which follow a refusal to obey her implicitly whether right or wrong), have given high offence, as I had a most *fiery* Letter from the *Court at Southwell* on Tuesday, because I would not turn off my Servant (whom I had not the least reason to distrust, and who had an excellent character from his last Master) at her suggestion, from some caprice she had taken into her head. I sent back to the Epistle, which was couched in *elegant* terms, a severe answer, which so nettled her Ladyship, that after reading it, she returned it in a Cover without deigning a Syllable in return.

The Letter and my answer you shall behold when you next see me, that you may judge of the Comparative merits of Each. I shall let her go on in the *Heroics*, till she cools, without taking the least notice. Her Behaviour to me for the last two years neither merits my respect, nor deserves my affection. I am comfortable here, and having one of

the best allowances in College, go on Gaily, but not extravagantly. I need scarcely inform you that I am not the least obliged to M^{rs} B. for it, as it comes off my property, and She refused to fit out a single thing for me from her own pocket; my Furniture is paid for, and she has moreover a handsome addition made to her own income, which I do not in the least regret, as I would wish her to be happy, but by *no means* to live with me in *person*. The sweets of her society I have already drunk to the last dregs, I hope we shall meet on more affectionate Terms, or meet no more.

But why do I say *meet*? her temper precludes every idea of happiness, and therefore in future I shall avoid her *hospitable* mansion, though she has the folly to suppose She is to be mistress of my house when I come of [age].

(1805, November 6. Letter 38, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 81.)

I have news for you which I bear with *Christian* Resignation and without any *violent Transports*, of *Grief*. My Mother (whose diabolical Temper you well know) has taken it into her *Sagacious* Head to quarrel with me, her *dutiful Son*. She has such a Devil of a Disposition, that she cannot be quiet, though there are fourscore miles between us, which I wish were lengthened to 400. The Cause too frivolous to require taking up your time to read or mine to write. At last, in answer to a *Furious Epistle*, I returned a *Sarcastick* Answer, which so incensed the *Amiable Dowager* that my Letter was sent back without her deigning a Line in the cover.

When I next see you, you shall behold her Letter and my Answer, which will amuse you, as they both contain fiery Philippics.

(1805, November 12. Letter 39, to Hargreaves Hanson, Vol. I., p. 83.)

My Mother and I have quarrelled, which I bear with the *patience* of a Philosopher; custom reconciles me to everything.

(1805, November 23. Letter 40, to John Hanson, Vol. I., p. 86.)

M^{rs} Byron and myself are now totally separated. . . . You hinted a probability of her appearance at Trinity; the instant I hear of her arrival I quit Cambridge; though *Rustication* or *Expulsion* be the consequence. Many a weary week of *torment* have I passed with her, nor have I forgot the insulting Epithets with which myself, my *Sister*, my *father* and my *Family* have been repeatedly reviled.

(1805, November 30. Letter 41, to John Hanson, Vol. I., p. 87.)

I know M^{rs} Byron too well to imagine that she would part with a *Sous*, and if by some *Miracle* she was prevailed upon, the *Details* of her *Generosity* in allowing me part of my *own property* would be continually *thundered* in my ears, or *launched* in the *Lightening* of her letters; so that I had rather encounter the Evils of Embarrassment than lie under an obligation to one who would continually reproach

me with her Benevolence, as if her Charity had been extended to a *Stranger*, to the Detriment of her own Fortune. My opinion is perhaps harsh for a Son, but it is justified by experience, it is confirmed by *Facts*, it was generated by oppression, it has been nourished by Injury. . . . I declare upon my honor that the Horror of entering M^{rs} Byron's House has of late years been so implanted in my Soul, that I dreaded the approach of the Vacations as the *Harbingers* of *Misery*. My letters to my Sister, written during my residence at Southwell, would prove my Assertion.

(1805, December 4. Letter 42, to John Hanson, Vol. I., p. 88.)

In your Extenuation of M^{rs} Byron's Conduct you use as a *plea*, that, by her being my Mother, greater allowance ought to be made for those *little* Traits in her Disposition, so much more *energetic* than *elegant*. I am afraid (however good your intention), that you have added to rather than diminished my Dislike, for independent of the moral Obligations she is under to *protect, cherish, and instruct* her *offspring*, what can be expected of that Man's heart and understanding who has continually (from Childhood to Maturity) beheld so pernicious an Example? His nearest relation is the first person he is taught to revere as his Guide and Instructor; the perversion of Temper before him leads to a corruption of his own, and when that is depraved, vice quickly becomes habitual, and, though timely Severity may sometimes be necessary and justifiable, surely a peevish harassing System of Torment is by no means commendable, & when

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

which is already acquired. I can now leave it with Honour, as I have paid everything, and wish to pass a couple of years abroad, where I am certain of employing my time to far more advantage and at much less expence, than at our English Seminaries. 'Tis true I cannot enter France; but Germany, and the Courts of Berlin, Vienna, and Petersburg are still open, I shall lay the Plan before Hanson & Lord C. I presume you will all agree, and if you do not, I will, if possible, get away without your Consent though I should admire it more in the regular manner and with a Tutor of your furnishing. This is my project, at present I wish *you* to be silent to Hanson about it. Let me have your Answer. I intend remaining in Town a Month longer, when perhaps I shall bring my Horses and myself down to your residence in that *execrable* Kennel. I hope you have engaged a Man Servant, else it will be impossible for me to visit you, since my Servant must attend chiefly to his horses; at the same Time you must cut an indifferent Figure with only maids in your habitation.

(1806, February 26. Letter 47, to his Mother, Vol. I., p. 95.)

Many thanks for your amusing narrative of the last proceedings of my amiable Alecto, who now begins to feel the effects of her folly. I have just received a penitential epistle, to which, apprehensive of pursuit, I have despatched a moderate answer, with a *kind* of promise to return in a fortnight;—this, however (*entre nous*), I never mean to fulfil. Her soft warblings must have delighted her auditors, her

higher notes being particularly musical, and on a calm moonlight evening would be heard to great advantage. Had I been present as a spectator, nothing would have pleased me more; but to have come forward as one of the *dramatis personæ*—St Dominic defend me from such a scene! Seriously, your mother has laid me under great obligations, and you, with the rest of your family, merit my warmest thanks for your kind connivance at my escape from “Mrs Byron-*furiosa*.”

Oh! for the pen of an Ariosto to rehearse, in epic, the scolding of that momentous eve,—or rather let me invoke the Shade of Dante to inspire me, for none but the author of the *Inferno* could properly preside over such an attempt. But, perhaps, where the pen might fail, the pencil would succeed. What a group!—Mrs B. the principal figure; you cramming your ears with cotton, as the only antidote to total deafness; Mrs ——— in vain endeavouring to mitigate the wrath of the lioness robbed of her whelp; and last, though not least, Elizabeth and *Wousky*,—wonderful to relate!—both deprived of their parts of speech, and bringing up the rear in mute astonishment. How did S. B. receive the intelligence? How many *puns* did he utter on so facetious an event? In your next inform me on this point, and what excuse you made to A. You are probably, by this time, tired of deciphering this hieroglyphical letter;—like Tony Lumpkin, you will pronounce mine to be “a damned up and down hand.” All Southwell, without doubt, is involved in amazement. *Apropos*, how does my blue-eyed nun, the fair * *? Is she “*robed in sable garb of woe?*”

Here I remain at least a week or ten days ; previous to my departure you shall receive my address, but what it will be I have not determined. My lodgings must be kept secret from M^{rs} B. You may present my compliments to her, and say any attempt to pursue me will fail, as I have taken measures to retreat immediately to Portsmouth, on the first intimation of her removal from Southwell. You may add, I have proceeded to a friend's house in the country, there to remain a fortnight.

(1806, August 9. Letter 52, to John M. B. Pigot, Vol. I., p. 100.)

As I have already troubled your brother with more than he will find pleasure in deciphering, you are the next to whom I shall assign the employment of perusing this second Epistle. You will perceive from my first, that no idea of M^{rs} B.'s arrival had disturbed me at the time it was written ; *not* so the present, since the appearance of a note from the *illustrious cause* of my *sudden decampment* has driven the "natural ruby from my cheeks," and completely blanched my woebegone countenance. This gun-powder intimation of her arrival (confound her activity !) breathes less of terror and dismay than you will probably imagine, from the volcanic temperament of her ladyship ; and concludes with the comfortable assurance of all *present motion* being prevented by the fatigue of her journey, for which my *blessings* are due to the rough roads and restive quadrupeds of his Majesty's highways. As I have not the smallest inclination to be chased round the country, I shall e'en make a merit of

necessity ; and since, like Macbeth, “they’ve tied me to the stake, I cannot fly,” I shall imitate that valorous tyrant, and “bear-like fight the course,” all escape being precluded. I can now engage with less disadvantage, having drawn the enemy from her entrenchments, though, like the *prototype* to whom I have compared myself, with an excellent chance of being knocked on the head. However, “lay on Macduff, and damned be he who first cries, Hold, enough.”

(1806, August 10. Letter 53, to Elizabeth Bridget Pigot, Vol. I., p. 103.)

I cannot exactly say with Cæsar, “Veni, vidi, vici ;” however, the most important part of his laconic account of success applies to my present situation : for though M^{rs} Byron took the *trouble* of “*coming*,” and “*seeing*,” yet your humble servant proved the *victor*. After an obstinate engagement of some hours, in which we suffered considerable damage, from the quickness of the enemy’s fire, they at length retired in confusion, leaving behind the artillery, field equipage, and some prisoners : their defeat is decisive for the present campaign. To speak more intelligibly, M^{rs} B. returns immediately, but I proceed with all my laurels to Worthing, on the Sussex coast ; to which place you will address (to be left at the post office) your next epistle.

(1806, August 15. Letter 55, to John M. B. Pigot, Vol. I., p. 105.)

I am £30,000 richer than I was at our parting, having just received intelligence from my lawyers

that a cause has been gained at Lancaster Assizes, which will be worth that sum by the time I come of age. [Byron was disappointed in his expectations. Fresh legal difficulties arose, and Newstead had to be sold before they were settled.] M^{rs} B. is, doubtless, acquainted of this acquisition, though not apprised of its exact *value*, of which she had better be ignorant; for her behaviour under any sudden piece of favourable intelligence, is, if possible, more ridiculous than her detestable conduct on the most trifling circumstances of an unpleasant nature. You may give my compliments to her, and say that her detaining my servant's things shall only lengthen my absence: for unless they are immediately despatched to 16, Piccadilly, together with those which have been so long delayed, belonging to myself, she shall never again behold my *radiant countenance* illuminating her gloomy mansion. If they are sent, I may probably appear in less than two years from the date of my present epistle.

(1806, August 26. Letter 57, to John M. B. Pigot, Vol. I., p. 107.)

I lent M^{rs} B. £60 last year; of this I have never received a Sou and in all probability never shall. I do not mention the circumstance as any Reproach on that *worthy* and *lamblike* Dame, but merely to show you how affairs stand. 'Tis true myself and two Servants lodge in the House, but my Horses, etc., and their expences are defrayed by your humble Ser^t. I quit Cambridge in July, and shall have considerable payments to make at that period; for this purpose I must sell my *Steeds*. I paid . . . £20

to a *Lawyer* for the prosecution of a Scoundrel, a late Servant.

(1807, April 19. Letter 72, to John Hanson, Vol. I., p. 128.)

I have no beds for the Hansons or any body else at present. The Hansons sleep at Mansfield. I do not know that I resemble Jean Jacques Rousseau. I have no ambition to be like so illustrious a madman—but this I know, that I shall live in my own manner, and as much alone as possible. When my rooms are ready, I shall be glad to see you; at present it would be improper, and uncomfortable to both parties. You can hardly object to my rendering my mansion habitable, notwithstanding my departure for Persia in March (or May at farthest), since *you* will be *tenant* till my return; and in case of any accident (for I have already arranged my will to be drawn up the moment I am twenty-one), I have taken care you shall have the house and manor for *life*, besides a sufficient income. So you see my improvements are not entirely selfish.

(1808, October 7, Newstead Abbey. Letter 100, to his Mother, Vol. I., p. 192.)

If you please, we will forget the things you mention. I have no desire to remember them. When my rooms are finished, I shall be happy to see you; as I tell but the truth, you will not suspect me of evasion. I am furnishing the house more for you than myself, and I shall establish you in it before I sail for India, which I expect

to do in March, if nothing particularly obstructive occurs.

(1808, November 2, Newstead Abbey. Letter 101, to his Mother, Vol. I., p. 194.)

I am living here *alone*, which suits my inclinations better than society of any kind. M^{rs} Byron I have shaken off for two years, and I shall not resume her yoke in future, I am afraid my disposition will suffer in your estimation; but I can never forgive that woman, or breathe in comfort under the same roof.

I am a very unlucky fellow, for I think I had naturally not a bad heart; but it has been so bent, twisted, and trampled on, that it has now become as hard as a Highlander's heelpiece.

(1808, November 30. Letter 105, to the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Vol. I., p. 203.)

I trust you like Newstead, and agree with your neighbours; but you know *you* are a *vixen*—is not that a dutiful appellation? Pray, take care of my books and several boxes of papers in the hands of Joseph; and pray leave me a few bottles of champagne to drink, for I am very thirsty;—but I do not insist on the last article, without you like it. I suppose you have your house full of silly women, prating scandalous things. Have you ever received my picture in oils from Sanders, London? It has been paid for these sixteen months: why do you not get it?

(1810, July 25, Athens. Letter 144, to his Mother, Vol. I., p. 291.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



than to set the question at rest, which, with the ignorant and weak-minded, might leave a wrong impression. I will have no stain on the Memory of my Mother; with a very large portion of foibles and irritability, she was without a *vice* (and in these days that is much). The laws of my country shall do her and me justice in the first instance; but, if they were deficient, the laws of modern Honour should decide. Cost what it may, Gold or blood, I will pursue to the last the cowardly calumniator of an absent man and a defenceless woman.

(1811, August 4. Letter 160, to John Hanson, Vol. I., p. 323.)

(3) *His Pride and Quickness of Temper, as shown in a Propensity for Quarrelling and Duelling*

I am concerned to be obliged again to trouble you, as I had hoped that our conversations had terminated amicably. Your good Father, it seems, has desired otherwise; he has just sent me a most *agreeable* epistle, in which I am honoured with the appellations of *unfeeling* and ungrateful. [The quarrel between Byron and the Leacroft family arose out of certain attentions paid by Byron to Miss Julia Leacroft.] But as the consequences of all this must ultimately fall on you and myself, I merely write this to apprise you that the dispute is not of my seeking, and that, if we must cut each other's throats to please our relations, you will do me the justice to say it is from no *personal* animosity between us, or from any insult on my part, that such *disagreeable* events (for I am

not so much enamoured of quarrels as to call them *pleasant*) have arisen.

(1807, February 4. Letter 64, to Captain John Leacroft, Vol. I., p. 115.)

Your letter followed me from Notts to this place, which will account for the delay of my reply. Your former letter I never had the honour to receive;—be assured in whatever part of the world it had found me, I should have deemed it my duty to return and answer it in person. [In *English Bards, etc.*, Byron had made fun of the duel between Moore and Jeffrey, which, provoked by the *Edinburgh Review's* attack on Moore's *Odes, Epistles, and other Poems* (July 1806), and frustrated by the inopportune arrival of the police, had been instrumental in bringing about a friendship between poet and critic.] . . . At the time of your meeting with M^r Jeffrey, I had recently entered College, and remember to have heard and read a number of squibs on the occasion; and from the recollection of these I derived all my knowledge on the subject, without the slightest idea of “giving the lie” to an address which I never beheld. When I put my name to the production [*i.e.* to the second edition of *English Bards, etc.*], which has occasioned this correspondence, I became responsible to all whom it might concern,—to explain where it requires explanation, and, where insufficiently or too sufficiently explicit, at all events to satisfy. My situation leaves me no choice; it rests with the injured and the angry to obtain reparation in their own way.

With regard to the passage in question, *you* were

certainly *not* the person towards whom I felt personally hostile. On the contrary, my whole thoughts were engrossed by one, whom I had reason to consider as my worst literary enemy, nor could I foresee that his former antagonist was about to become his champion. You do not specify what you would wish to have done: I can neither retract nor apologise for a charge of falsehood which I never advanced.

In the beginning of the week, I shall be at No. 8, St James's Street. . . . Your friend Mr Rogers, or any other gentleman delegated by you, will find me most ready to adopt any conciliatory proposition which shall not compromise my own honour,—or, failing in that, to make the atonement you deem it necessary to require.

(1811, October 27, Cambridge. Letter 202, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 59.)

With regard to the passage [in *English Bards, etc.*] on Mr Way's loss [of several thousand pounds at the Argyle Institution, of which Colonel Greville was manager], no unfair play was hinted at, as may be seen by referring to the book; and it is expressly added, that the *managers were ignorant* of that transaction. As to the prevalence of play at the Argyle, it cannot be denied that there were *billiards* and *dice*;—Lord B. has been a witness to the use of both at the Argyle Rooms. These, it is presumed, come under the denomination of play. If play be allowed, the President of the Institution can hardly complain of being termed the “Arbiter of Play,”—or what becomes of his authority? Lord B. has no

personal animosity to Colonel Greville. A public institution, to which he himself was a subscriber, he considered himself to have a right to notice *publicly*. Of that institution Colonel Greville was the avowed director;—it is too late to enter into a discussion of its merits or demerits.

Lord B. must leave the discussion of the reparation, for the real or supposed injury to Colonel G.'s friend and Mr Moore, the friend of Lord B.—begging them to recollect that, while they consider Colonel G.'s honour, Lord B. must also maintain his own. If the business can be settled amicably [eventually, it was so settled], Lord B. will do as much as can and ought to be done by a man of honour towards conciliation;—if not, he must satisfy Colonel G. in the manner most conducive to his further wishes.

([Undated.] Letter 229, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 109.)

In the “mail-coach copy” of the *Edinburgh*, I perceive *The Giaour* is second article. The numbers are still in the Leith smack—*pray which way is the wind?* The said article is so very mild and sentimental, that it must be written by Jeffrey *in love*;—you know he is gone to America to marry some fair one, of whom he has been, for several *quarters*, *éperdument amoureux*. [Jeffrey married, as his second wife, at New York, in October, 1813, Charlotte Wilkes, a grand-niece of John Wilkes.] Seriously—as Winifred Jenkins says of Lismahago—Mr Jeffrey (or his deputy) “has done the handsome thing by me,” and I say *nothing*. But this I will say, if you and I had knocked one another on the head in

this quarrel, how he would have laughed, and what a mighty bad figure we should have cut in our posthumous works. By the by, I was call'd *in* the other day to mediate between two gentlemen bent upon carnage, and—after a long struggle between the natural desire of destroying one's fellow-creatures, and the dislike of seeing men play the fool for nothing,—I got one to make an apology, and the other to take it, and left them to live happy ever after. One was a peer [Lord Foley], the other a friend untitled [Scrope Berdmore Davies], and both fond of high play;—and one, I can swear for, though very mild, “not fearful,” and so dead a shot, that, though the other is the thinnest of men, he would have split him like a cane. They both conducted themselves very well, and I put them out of *pain* as soon as I could.

(1813, August 22. Letter 322, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 246.)

I do not know, and have no clue but conjecture [to the authorship of a certain newspaper attack]. If discovered, and he turns out a hireling, he must be left to his wages; if a cavalier, he must “wink, and hold out his iron.”

I had some thoughts of putting the question to C * * * r [Croker], but Hobhouse, who, I am sure, would not dissuade me if it were right, advised me by all means *not*;—“that I had no right to take it upon suspicion,” etc., etc. Whether H. is correct I am not aware, but he believes himself so, and says there can be but one opinion on that subject. This I am, at least, sure of, that he would never prevent me from doing what he deemed the duty of a *preux*

chevalier. In such cases—at least, in this country—we must act according to usages. In considering this instance, I dismiss my own personal feelings. Any man will and must fight, when necessary, even without a motive. *Here*, I should take it up really without much resentment; for, unless a woman one likes is in the way, it is some years since I felt a *long* anger. But, undoubtedly, could I, or may I, trace it to a man of station, I should and shall do what is proper.

(1814, February 26. Letter 419, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 50.)

The other day, I had a squabble on the high-way, as follows:—I was riding pretty quickly from Dolo home about eight in the evening, when I passed a party of people in a hired carriage, one of whom, poking his head out of the window, began bawling to me in an inarticulate but insolent manner; I wheeled my horse round, and overtaking, stopped the coach, and said, "Signor, have you any commands for me?" He replied, impudently, as to manner, "No." I then asked him what he meant by that unseemly noise, to the discomfiture of the passers-by. He replied by some piece of impertinence, to which I answered by giving him a violent slap in the face. I then dismounted (for this passed at the window, I being on horseback still), and opening the door, desired him to walk out, or I would give him another. But the first had settled him except as to words, of which he poured forth a profusion in blasphemies, swearing that he would go to the police and avouch a battery *sans* provocation. I said he lied, and was a * * *

and if he did not hold his tongue, should be dragged out and beaten anew. He then held his tongue. I, of course, told him my name and residence, and defied him to the death, if he were a gentleman, or not a gentleman, and had the inclination to be genteel in the way of combat. He went to the police ; but there having been bystanders in the road—particularly a soldier, who had seen the business—as well as my servant, notwithstanding the oaths of the coachman and five inside besides the plaintiff, and a good deal of perjury on all sides, his complaint was dismissed, he having been the aggressor—and I was subsequently informed that, had I not given him a blow, he might have been had into durance.

So set down this,—“that in Aleppo once” I “beat a Venetian”; but I assure you that he deserved it, for I am a quiet man, like Candide, though with somewhat of his fortune in being forced to forego my natural meekness every now and then.

(1817, July 8, La Mira, near Venice. Letter 662, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 145.)

I have been in a rage these two days, and am still bilious therefrom. You shall hear. A Captain of Dragoons, Ostheid, Hanoverian by birth, in the Papal troops at present, whom I had obliged by a loan when nobody would lend him a Paul, recommended a horse to me, on sale by a Lieutenant Rossi, an officer who unites the sale of cattle to the purchase of men. I bought it. The next day, on shoeing the horse, we discovered the *thrush*—the animal being warranted sound. I sent to reclaim the contract, and the money. The Lieutenant desired to speak with

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

out roaring "help and murder" most lustily, and fell into a sort of hysteric in the arms of about fifty people, who all saw that I had no weapon of any sort or kind about me, and following him, asking him what the devil was the matter with him. Nothing would do: he ran away without his hat, and went to bed, ill of the fright. He then tried his complaint at the police, which dismissed it as frivolous. He is, I believe, gone away, or going.

The horse was warranted, but, I believe, so worded that the villain will not be obliged to refund, according to law. He endeavoured to raise up an indictment of assault and battery, but as it was in a public inn, in a frequented street, there were too many witnesses to the contrary; and, as a military man, he has not cut a martial figure, even in the opinion of the Priests. He ran off in such a hurry that he left his hat, and never missed it till he got to his hostel or inn. The facts are as I tell you: I can assure, he began by "coming Captain Grand over me," or I should never have thought of trying his "cunning in fence"; but what could I do? He talked of "honour, and satisfaction, and his commission"—he produced a military passport: there are severe punishments for *regular duels* on the continent, and trifling ones for *rencontres*, so that it is best to fight it out directly; he had robbed, and then wanted to insult me; what could I do? My patience was gone, and the weapons at hand, fair and equal: besides, it was just after dinner, when my digestion is bad, and I don't like to be disturbed. His friend Ostheid is at Forli; we shall meet on my way back to Ravenna. The Hanoverian seems the greater rogue of the two;

and if my valour does not ooze away like Acres's—“Odds flints and triggers!” if it should be a rainy morning, and my stomach in disorder, there may be something for the obituary.

Now pray, “Sir Lucius, do not you look upon me as a very ill-used gentleman?” I send my Lieutenant to match Hobhouse's Major Cartwright: “and so good-morrow to you, good Master Lieutenant.”

(1819, August 29, Bologna. Letter 750, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 350.)

I have incurred a quarrel with the Pope's carabinieri, or *gens-d'armes*, who have petitioned the Cardinal against my liveries, as resembling too nearly their own lousy uniform. They particularly object to the epaulettes, which all the world with us have on upon gala days.

I have sent a trenchant reply, as you may suppose; and have given to understand that, if any soldados of that respectable corps insult my servants, I will do likewise by their gallant commanders; and I have directed my ragamuffins, six in number, who are tolerably savage, to defend themselves in case of aggression; and, on holidays and gaudy days, I shall arm the whole set, including myself, in case of accidents or treachery. I used to play pretty well at the broad-sword, once upon a time, at Angelo's; but I should like the pistol, our national buccaneer weapon, better, though I am out of practice at present. However, *I can* “*wink and hold out mine iron.*” It makes me think (the whole thing does) of Romeo and Juliet—“now, Gregory, remember thy *swashing* blow.”

All these feuds, however, with the Cavalier for his wife, and the troopers for my liveries, are very tiresome to a quiet man, who does his best to please all the world, and longs for fellowship and good will.

(1820, June 9, Ravenna. Letter 804, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 42.)

I have been called in as Mediator or Second at least twenty times in violent quarrels, and have always contrived to settle the business without compromising the honour of the parties, or leading them to mortal consequences; and this too sometimes in very difficult and delicate circumstances, and having to deal with very hot and haughty Spirits—Irishmen, Gamesters, Guardsmen, Captains, and Cornets of horse, and the like. This was of course in my youth, when I lived in hot-headed company. I have had to carry challenges from Gentlemen to Noblemen, from Captains to Captains, from lawyers to Counsellors, and once from a clergyman to an officer in the Life-guards. It may seem strange, but I found the latter by far the most difficult.

“ . . . to compose
The bloody duel without blows.”

The business being about a woman. I must add too that I never saw a *woman* behave so ill, like a cold-blooded heartless whore as she was; but very handsome for all that. A certain Susan C. was she called. I never saw her but once, and that was to induce her but to say two words (which in no degree compromised herself), and which would have had the

effect of saving a priest or a Lieutenant of Cavalry. She would *not* say them, and neither N. or myself (the Son of Sir E. N., and a friend to one of the parties) could prevail upon her to say them, though both of us used to deal in some sort with Woman-kind. At last I managed to quiet the combatants without her talisman, and, I believe, to her great disappointment. She was the d——st b——h that I ever saw, and I have seen a great many. Though my Clergyman was sure to lose either his life or his living, he was as warlike as the Bishop of Beauvais, and would hardly be pacified: but then he was in love, and that is a martial passion.

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thought” 36, Vol. V., p. 428.)

(4) *His Melancholic Temperament*

A thousand thanks, my dear and Beloved Augusta, for your affectionate Letter, and so ready compliance with the request of a peevish and fretful Brother; it acted as a cordial on my drooping Spirits and for a while dispelled the Gloom which envelopes me in this uncomfortable place. You see what power your letters have over me, so I hope you will be liberal in your epistolary consolation.

(1804, April 9, Burgage Manor. Letter 10, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 26.)

I am afraid . . . that when I shall take up my pen, you will not be greatly *edified* or *amused*, especially at present, since, I sit down in very bad

spirits, out of humour with myself, and all the world, except *you*. . . . I hope you will excuse this *Hypochondriac* epistle, as I never was in such low spirits in my life.

(1805, April 4. Letter 20, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 56.)

Your efforts to reanimate my sinking spirits will, I am afraid, fail in their effect, for my melancholy proceeds from a very different cause to that which you assign, as, my nerves were always of the strongest texture.—I will not, however, pretend to say I possess that *Gaieté de Cœur* which formerly distinguished me, but as the diminution of it arises from what you could not alleviate, and might possibly be painful, you will excuse the Disclosure. Suffice it to know, that it cannot spring from Indisposition, as my Health was never more firmly established than now, nor from the subject on which I lately wrote, as that is in a promising Train, and even were it otherwise, the Failure would not lead to Despair. You know me too well to think it is *Love*; and I have had no quarrel or dissension with Friend or enemy, you may therefore be easy, since no unpleasant consequence will be produced from the present Sombre cast of my temper.

(1806, January 7. Letter 46, to the Hon. Augusta Byron, Vol. I., p. 93.)

It can hardly be expected the effusions of a boy (and most of these pieces have been produced at an early period) can derive much merit from the subject or composition. Many of them were written under

great depression of spirits, and during severe indisposition :—hence the gloomy turn of the ideas.

(1807, March 6. Letter 67, to William Bankes, Vol. I., p. 121.)

Hobhouse and your humble are still here. Hobhouse hunts, etc., and I do nothing; we dined the other day with a neighbouring Esquire (not Collet of Staines), and regretted your absence, as the Bouquet of Staines was scarcely to be compared to our last “feast of reason.” You know, laughing is the sign of a rational animal; so says Dr Smollett. I think so too, but unluckily my spirits don’t always keep pace with my opinions. I had not so much scope for risibility the other day as I could have wished, for I was seated near a woman, to whom, when a boy, I was as much attached as boys generally are, and more than a man should be. I knew this before I went, and was determined to be valiant, and converse with *sang froid*; but instead I forgot my valour and my nonchalance, and never opened my lips even to laugh, far less to speak, and the lady [M^{rs} Chaworth Masters] was almost as absurd as myself, which made both the object of more observation than if we had conducted ourselves with easy indifference. You will think all this great nonsense; if you had seen it, you would have thought it still more ridiculous. What fools we are! We cry for a plaything, which, like children, we are never satisfied with till we break open, though [un]like them we cannot get rid of it by putting it in the fire.

(1808, November 3. Letter 102, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. I., p. 197.)

Your letter [alluding to the deaths of M^{rs} Byron and of Matthews] gives me credit for more acute feelings than I possess; for though I feel tolerably miserable, yet I am at the same time subject to a kind of hysterical merriment, or rather laughter without merriment, which I can neither account for nor conquer, and yet I do not feel relieved by it; but an indifferent person would think me in excellent spirits. "We must forget these things," and have recourse to our old selfish comforts, or rather comfortable selfishness.

(1811, August 21. Letter 167, to R. C. Dallas, Vol. I., p. 333.)

You must excuse my being a little cynical, knowing how my temper was tried in my Non-age; the manner in which I was brought up must necessarily have broken a meek Spirit, or rendered a fiery one ungovernable; the effect it has had on mine I need not state.

However, buffeting with the World has brought me a little to reason, and two years' travel in distant and barbarous countries has accustomed me to bear privations, and consequently to laugh at many things which would have made me angry before. But I am wandering—in short, I only want to assure you that I love you, and that you must not think I am indifferent, because I don't show my affection in the usual way.

(1811, August 30. Letter 174, to the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Vol. II., p. 13.)

I am very sensible of your good wishes, and,

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



I wrote you an answer to your last, which, on reflection, pleases me as little as it probably has pleased yourself. I will not wait for your rejoinder; but proceed to tell you, that I had just then been greeted with an epistle of * * 's, full of his petty grievances, and this at the moment when (from circumstances it is not necessary to enter upon) I was bearing up against recollections to which *his* imaginary sufferings are as a scratch to a cancer. These things combined, put me out of humour with him and all mankind. The latter part of my life has been a perpetual struggle against affections which embittered the earliest portion; and though I flatter myself I have in a great measure conquered them, yet there are moments (and this was one) when I am as foolish as formerly. I never said so much before, nor had I said this now, if I did not suspect myself of having been rather savage in my letter, and wish to inform you this much of the cause. You know I am not one of your dolorous gentlemen: so now let us laugh again.

(1811, December 15. Letter 217, to William Harness, Vol. II., p. 89.)

I look upon myself as a very facetious personage and may appeal to most of my acquaintance (L^y. M. for instance) in proof of my assertion. Nobody laughs more, and though your friend Joanna Baillie says somewhere that "Laughter is the child of misery," I do not believe her (unless indeed in a hysteric), tho' I think it is sometimes the parent.

(1813, September 6. Correspondence with Miss Milbanke. Letter 2, Vol. III., p. 399.)

"Gay" but not "content"—very true. . . . You have detected a laughter "false to the heart"—allowed—yet I have been tolerably sincere with you and I fear sometimes troublesome.

(1813, September 26. Correspondence with Miss Milbanke. Letter 3, Vol. III., p. 401.)

The reputation of "gloom," if one's friends are not included in the *reputants*, is of great service; as it saves me from a legion of impertinents, in the shape of common-place acquaintance. But thou know'st I can be a right merry and conceited fellow, and rarely *larmoyant*.

(1813, October 3. Letter 339, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 273.)

I perceive by part of your last letter that you are still inclined to believe me a gloomy personage. Those who pass so much of their time entirely alone can't be always in very high spirits; yet I don't know—though I certainly do enjoy society to a certain extent, I never passed two hours in mixed company without wishing myself out of it again. Still I look upon myself as a facetious companion, well reputed by all the wits at whose jests I readily laugh, and whose repartees I take care never to incur by any kind of contest—for which I feel as little qualified as I do for the more solid pursuits of demonstration.

(1813, November 10. Correspondence with Miss Milbanke. Letter 5, Vol. III., p. 405.)

Heigho! I would I were in mine island!—I am not well; and yet I look in good health. At times, I fear, “I am not in my perfect mind;”—and yet my heart and head have stood many a crash, and what should ail them now? They prey upon themselves, and I am sick—sick—“Prithee, undo this button—why should a cat, a rat, a dog have life—and *thou* no life at all?” Six-and-twenty years, as they call them, why, I might and should have been a Pasha by this time. “I ’gin to be a-weary of the sun.”

(1814, February 27. “Journal, 1813-14,” Vol. II., p. 390.)

There is ice at both poles, north and south—all extremes are the same—misery belongs to the highest and the lowest only, to the emperor and the beggar, when unsixpenced and unthroned. There is, to be sure, a damned insipid medium—an equinoctial line—no one knows where, except upon maps and measurements.

“And all our *yesterdays* have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.”

I will keep no further journal of that same hesternal torch-light; and, to prevent me from returning, like a dog, to the vomit of memory, I tear out the remaining leaves of this volume, and write, in *Ipecacuanha*,—“that the Bourbons are restored!!”—“Hang up Philosophy.” To be sure, I have long despised myself and man, but I never spat in the face of my species before—“O fool! I shall go mad.”

(1814, April 19. “Journal, 1813-14,” Vol. II., p. 411.)

For my own part, I have *seriously* and not *whiningly* (for that is not my way—at least, it used not to be) neither hopes, nor prospects, and scarcely even wishes. I am, in some respects, happy, but not in a manner that can or ought to last—but enough of that. The worst of it is, I feel quite enervated and indifferent. I really do not know, if Jupiter were to offer me my choice of the contents of his benevolent cask, what I would pick out of it. If I was born, as the nurses say, with a “silver spoon in my mouth,” it has stuck in my throat, and spoiled my palate, so that nothing put into it is swallowed with much relish,—unless it be cayenne. However, I have grievances enough to occupy me that way too; but for fear of adding to yours by this pestilent long diatribe, I postpone the reading of them, *sine die*. . . . Don't forget my godson. You could not have fixed on a fitter porter for his sins than me, being used to carry double without inconvenience. * * *

(1814, August 3. Letter 483, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 120.)

I am very merry, and have just been writing some elegiac stanzas on the death of Sir P. Parker. He was my first cousin, but never met since boyhood. Our relations desired me, and I have scribbled and given it to Perry [of the *Morning Chronicle*], who will chronicle it to-morrow. I am as sorry for him as one could be for one I never saw since I was a child; but should not have wept melodiously, except “at the request of friends.”

(1814, October 7. Letter 503, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 150.)

I am about to be married ; and am, of course, in all the misery of a man in pursuit of happiness.

(1814, October 15. Letter 506, to Leigh Hunt, Vol. III., p. 153.)

I hope Hodgson is in a fair way on the same voyage [of matrimony]—I saw him and his idol at Hastings. I wish he would be married at the same time—I should like to make a party—like people electrified in a row, by (or rather through) the same chain, holding one another's hands, and all feeling the shock at once. I have not yet apprised him of this. He makes such a serious matter of all these things, and is so "melancholy and gentlemanlike," that it is quite overcoming to us choice spirits. * *

They say one shouldn't be married in a black coat. I won't have a blue one—that's flat. I hate it.

(1814, October 18. Letter 508, to Henry Drury, Vol. III., p. 155.)

I have just been—or rather, ought to be—very much shocked by the death of the Duke of Dorset. We were at school together, and there I was passionately attached to him. Since, we have never met—but once, I think, since 1805—and it would be a paltry affectation to pretend that I had any feeling for him worth the name. But there was a time in my life when this event would have broken my heart ; and all I can say for it now is that—it is not worth breaking.

Adieu—it is all a farce.

(1815, February 22. Letter 528, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 181.)

You need not speak of morbid feelings and vexations to me ; I have plenty ; but I must blame partly the times, and chiefly myself : but let us forget them. *I* shall be very apt to do so when I see you next. Will you come to the theatre and see our new management. . . . If not, I must come and see you.

(1815, October 30. Letter 557, to Leigh Hunt, Vol. III., p. 241.)

I shall be very glad to see you, if you like to call, as you intended, though I am at present contending with “the slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune,” some of which have struck at me from a quarter whence I did not indeed expect them.—But no matter ; “there is a world elsewhere,” and I will cut my way through this as I can ; if you write to Moore, will you tell him that I shall answer his letter the moment I can muster time and spirits ?

(1816, February 8. Letter 574, to Samuel Rogers, Vol. III., p. 261.)

In the weather for this tour (of 13 days), I have been very fortunate—fortunate in a companion (Mr H[obhouse]) — fortunate in our prospects, and exempt from even the little petty accidents and delays which often render journeys in a less wild country disappointing. I was disposed to be pleased. I am a lover of Nature and an admirer of Beauty. I can bear fatigue and welcome privation, and have seen some of the noblest views in the world. But in all this—the recollections of bitterness, and more

especially of recent and more home desolation, which must accompany me through life, have preyed upon me here; and neither the music of the Shepherd, the crashing of the Avalanche, nor the torrent, the mountain, the Glacier, the Forest, nor the Cloud, have for one moment lightened the weight upon my heart, nor enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty, and the power, and the Glory, around, above, and beneath me. I am past reproaches; and there is a time for all things. I am past the wish of vengeance, and I know of none like for what I have suffered; but the hour will come, when what I feel must be felt, and the—but enough.

To you, dearest Augusta, I send, and *for* you I have kept this record of what I have seen and felt. Love me, as you are beloved by me.

(1816, September 29. "A Journal," kept for his Sister, Vol. III., p. 364.)

Your letter of the 1st is arrived, and you have "a *hope*" for me, it seems: what "*hope*," child? my dearest Sis. I remember a Methodist preacher who, on perceiving a profane grin on the faces of part of his congregation, exclaimed "no *hopes* for them as *laughs*." And thus it is with us: we laugh too much for hopes, and so even let them go. I am sick of sorrow, and must even content myself as well as I can: so here goes—I won't be woeful again if I can help it.

My letter to my moral Clytemnestra [*i.e.* to Lady Byron] required no answer, and I would rather have none. I was wretched enough when I wrote it, and had been so for many a long day and month: at

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

I assure you what I here say and feel has nothing to do with England, either in a literary or personal point of view. All my present pleasures or plagues are as Italian as the Opera. And after all, they are but trifles, for all this arises from my *dama's* [*i.e.* the Countess Guiccioli's] being in the country for three days (at Capofuime); but as I could never live for but one human being at a time, (and, I assure you, *that one* has never been *myself*, as you may know by the consequences, for the *Selfish* are *successful* in life,) I feel alone and unhappy.

(1819, August 24. Letter 748, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 348.)

Perhaps I may take a journey to you in the Spring; but I *have* been ill, and *am* indolent and indecisive, because few things interest me. These fellows first abused me for being gloomy, and now they are wroth that I am, or attempted to be, facetious [in *Don Juan*]. I have got such a cold and headache that I can hardly see what I scrawl: the winters here are as sharp as needles.

(1819, December 10. Letter 765, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 386.)

You inquire after my health and SPIRITS in large letters: . . . As to *Spirits*, they are unequal, now high, now low, like other people's I suppose, and depending upon circumstances.

(1820, March 1. Letter 778, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 415.)

What is the reason that I have been, all my lifetime, more or less *ennuyé*? and that, if any thing, I am rather less so now than I was at twenty, as far as my recollection serves? I do not know how to answer this, but presume that it is constitutional,—as well as the waking in low spirits, which I have invariably done for many years. Temperance and exercise, which I have practised at times, and for a long time together vigorously and violently, make little or no difference. Violent passions did;—when under their immediate influence—it is odd, but—I was in agitated, but *not* in depressed, spirits.

A dose of salts has the effect of a temporary inebriation, like light champagne, upon me. But wine and spirits make me sullen and savage to ferocity—silent, however, and retiring, and not quarrelsome, if not spoken to. Swimming also raises my spirits,—but in general they are low, and get daily lower. That is *hopeless*; for I do not think I am so much *ennuyé* as I was at nineteen. The proof is, that then I must game, or drink, or be in motion of some kind, or I was miserable. At present, I can mope in quietness; and like being alone better than any company—except the lady's whom I serve. But I feel a something, which makes me think that, if I ever reach near to old age, like Swift, "I shall die at top" first. Only I do not dread idiotism or madness so much as he did. On the contrary, I think some quieter stages of both must be preferable to much of what men think the possession of their senses.

(1821, January 6. "Extracts from a Diary,"
Vol. V., p. 155.)

Read Diodorus Siculus—turned over Seneca, and some other books. Wrote some more of the tragedy [of *Sardanapalus*]. Took a glass of grog. After having ridden hard in rainy weather, and scribbled, and scribbled again, the spirits (at least mine) need a little exhilaration, and I don't like laudanum now as I used to do. So I have mixed a glass of strong waters and single waters, which I shall now proceed to empty. Therefore and thereunto I conclude this day's diary.

The effect of all wines and spirits upon me is, however, strange. It *settles*, but it makes me gloomy—gloomy at the very moment of their effect, and not gay hardly ever. But it composes for a time, though sullenly.

(1821, January 14. "Extracts from a Diary,"
Vol. V., p. 173.)

I have been considering what can be the reason why I always wake, at a certain hour in the morning, and always in very bad spirits—I may say, in actual despair and despondency, in all respects—even of that which pleased me overnight. In about an hour or two, this goes off, and I compose either to sleep again, or, at least, to quiet. In England, five years ago, I had the same kind of hypochondria, but accompanied with so violent a thirst that I have drank as many as fifteen bottles of soda-water in one night, after going to bed, and been still thirsty—calculating, however, some lost from the bursting out and effervescence and overflowing of the soda-water, in drawing the corks, or striking off the necks of the bottles from mere thirsty impatience. At present, I have *not*

the thirst; but the depression of spirits is no less violent.

I read in Edgeworth's *Memoirs* of something similar (except that his thirst expended itself on *small beer*) in the case of Sir F. B. Delaval;—but then he was, at least, twenty years older. What is it?—liver? In England, Le Man (the apothecary) cured me of the thirst in three days, and it had lasted as many years. I suppose that it is all hypochondria,

What I feel more growing upon me are laziness, and a disrelish more powerful than indifference. If I rouse, it is into fury. I presume that I shall end (if not earlier by accident, or some such termination), like Swift—"dying at top." I confess I do not contemplate this with so much horror as he apparently did for some years before it happened. But Swift had hardly *begun life* at the very period (thirty-three) when I feel quite an *old sort* of feel.

Oh! there is an organ playing in the street—a waltz, too! I must leave off to listen. They are playing a waltz which I have heard ten thousand times at the balls in London, between 1812 and 1815. Music is a strange thing.

(1821, February 2. "Extracts from a Diary,"
Vol. V., p. 198.)

I am not sure that long life is desirable for one of my temper and constitutional depression of Spirits, which, of course, I suppress in society; but which breaks out when alone, and in my writings, in spite of myself. It has been deepened, perhaps, by some long past events (I do not allude to my marriage, etc.—on the contrary, *that* raised them by the persecution

giving a fillip to my Spirits); but I call it constitutional, as I have reason to think it. You know, or you do *not* know, that my maternal Grandfather (a very clever man, and amiable, I am told) was strongly suspected of Suicide (he was found drowned in the Avon at Bath), and that another very near relative of the same branch took poison, and was merely saved by antidotes. For the first of these events there was no apparent cause, as he was rich, respected, and of considerable intellectual resources, hardly forty years of age, and not at all addicted to any unhinging vice. It was, however, but a strong suspicion, owing to the manner of his death and to his melancholy temper. The *second had* a cause, but it does not become me to touch upon it; it happened when I was far too young to be aware of it, and I never heard of it till after the death of that relative, many years afterwards. I think, then, that I may call this dejection *constitutional*. I had always been told that in *temper* I more *resembled* my maternal Grandfather than any of my *father's* family—that is, in the gloomier part of the temper, for he was what you call a good-natured man, and I am not.

(1821, September 20. Letter 937, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 370.)

My *ague* bows to me every two or three days, but we are not as yet upon intimate speaking terms. I have an intermittent generally every two years, when the climate is favourable (as it is here), but it does me no harm. What I find worse, and cannot get rid of, is the growing depression of my spirits, without sufficient cause. I ride—I am not intem-

perate in eating or drinking—and my general health is as usual, except a slight ague, which rather does good than not. It must be constitutional; for I know nothing more than usual to depress me to that degree.

How do you manage? I think you told me, at Venice, that your spirits did not keep up without a little claret. I *can* drink, and bear a good deal of wine (as you may recollect in England); but it don't exhilarate—it makes me savage and suspicious, and even quarrelsome. Laudanum has a similar effect; but I can take much of *it* without any effect at all. The thing that gives me the highest spirits (it seems absurd, but true) is a dose of *salts*—I mean in the afternoon, after their effect. But one can't take *them* like champagne.

Excuse this old woman's letter; but my *leman-choly* don't depend upon health, for it is just the same, well or ill, or here or there.

(1821, October 6. Letter 946, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 387.)

When I first went up to College, it was a new and a heavy hearted scene for me. Firstly, I so much disliked leaving Harrow, that, though it was time (I being seventeen), it broke my very rest for the last quarter with counting the days that remained. I always *hated* Harrow till the last year and a half, but then I liked it. Secondly, I wished to go to Oxford [to Christ Church] and not to Cambridge. Thirdly, I was so completely alone in this new world, that it half broke my Spirits. My companions were not unsocial, but the contrary—lively, hospitable,

of rank, and fortune, and gay far beyond my gaiety. I mingled with, and dined and supped, etc., with them ; but I know not how, it was one of the deadliest and heaviest feelings of my life to feel that I was no longer a boy. From that moment I began to grow old in my own esteem ; and in my esteem age is not estimable. I took my gradations in the vices with great promptitude, but they were not to my taste ; for my early passions, though violent in the extreme, were concentrated, and hated division or spreading abroad. I could have left or lost the world with or for that which I loved ; but though my temperament was naturally burning, I could not share in the commonplace libertinism of the place and time without disgust. And yet this very disgust, and my heart thrown back upon itself, threw me into excesses perhaps more fatal than those from which I shrunk, as fixing upon me (at a time) the passions, which, spread amongst many, would have hurt only myself.

People have wondered at the Melancholy which runs through my writings. Others have wondered at my personal gaiety ; but I recollect once, after an hour, in which I had been sincerely and particularly gay, and rather brilliant, in company, my wife replying to me when I said (upon her remarking my high spirits) “and yet, Bell, I have been called and mis-called Melancholy—you must have seen how falsely, frequently.” “No, B.” (she answered), “it is not so : at *heart* you are the most melancholy of mankind, and often when apparently gayest.”

If I could explain at length the *real* causes which have contributed to increase this perhaps *natural* temperament of mine, this Melancholy which hath

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



Lord Kames has said (if I misquote not), "that a power to call up agreeable ideas at will would be something greater for mortals than all the boons of a fairy tale."

I have found increasing upon me (without sufficient cause at times) the depression of Spirits (with few intervals), which I have some reason to believe constitutional or inherited.

Plutarch says, in his life of Lysander, that Aristotle observes, "that in general great Geniuses are of a melancholy turn, and instances Socrates, Plato, and Hercules (or Heracleitus), as examples, and Lysander, though not *while* young, yet as inclined to it when approaching towards age." Whether I am a Genius or not, I have been called such by my friends as well as enemies, and in more countries and languages than one, and also within a no very long period of existence. Of my Genius, I can say nothing, but of my melancholy, that it is "increasing and ought to be diminished"—but how?

I take it that most men are so at bottom, but that it is only remarked in the remarkable.

("Detached Thoughts," 1821-22. "Thoughts" 103, 104, 105, Vol. V., p. 459.)

I wish you would obtain from Lady B. some account of Ada's disposition, habits, studies, moral tendencies, and temper, as well as of her personal appearance, for except from the miniature drawn five years ago (and she is now double that age nearly) I have no idea of even her aspect. . . . At *her* present age I have an idea that I had many feelings and notions which people would not believe if I

stated them *now*, and therefore I may as well keep them to myself. Is she social or solitary, taciturn or talkative, fond of reading or otherwise? And what is her *tic*?—I mean her foible. Is she passionate?

(1823, October 12. Letter 1107, to the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Vol. VI., p. 263.)

His Early Love-Melancholy

I have been thinking lately a good deal of Mary Duff. How very odd that I should have been so utterly, devotedly fond of that girl, at an age when I could neither feel passion, nor know the meaning of the word. And the effect! My mother used always to rally me about this childish amour; and, at last, many years after, when I was sixteen, she told me one day, “Oh, Byron, I have had a letter from Edinburgh, from Miss Abercromby, and your old sweetheart Mary Duff is married to a Mr Co^e [Cockburn].” And what was my answer? I really cannot explain or account for my feelings at that moment; but they nearly threw me into convulsions, and alarmed my mother so much, that after I grew better, she generally avoided the subject—to *me*—and contented herself with telling it to all her acquaintance. Now, what could this be? I had never seen her since her mother’s *faux pas* at Aberdeen had been the cause of her removal to her grandmother’s at Banff; we were both the merest children. I had and have been attached fifty times since that period; yet I recollect all we said to each other, all our caresses, her features, my restlessness, sleeplessness, my tormenting my mother’s maid to write for me to her,

which she at last did, to quiet me. Poor Nancy thought I was wild, and, as I could not write for myself, became my secretary. I remember, too, our walks, and the happiness of sitting by Mary, in the children's apartment, at their house not far from the Plain-stanes at Aberdeen, while her lesser sister Helen played with the doll, and we sat gravely making love, in our way.

How the deuce did all this occur so early? where could it originate? I certainly had no sexual ideas for years afterwards; and yet my misery, my love for that girl were so violent, that I sometimes doubt if I have ever been really attached since. Be that as it may, hearing of her marriage several years after was like a thunder-stroke—it nearly choked me—to the horror of my mother and the astonishment and almost incredulity of every body. And it is a phenomenon in my existence (for I was not eight years old) which has puzzled, and will puzzle me to the latest hour of it; and lately, I know not why, the *recollection* (*not* the attachment) has recurred as forcibly as ever. I wonder if she can have the least remembrance of it or me? or remember her pitying sister Helen for not having an admirer too? How very pretty is the perfect image of her in my memory—her brown, dark hair, and hazel eyes; her very dress! I should be quite grieved to see *her now*; the reality, however beautiful, would destroy, or at least confuse, the features of the lovely Peri which then existed in her, and still lives in my imagination, at the distance of more than sixteen years. I am now twenty-five and odd months. . . .

I think my mother told the circumstances (on my

hearing of her marriage) to the Parkynses, and certainly to the Pigot family, and probably mentioned it in her answer to Miss A., who was well acquainted with my childish *penchant*, and had sent the news on purpose for *me*,—and thanks to her!

Next to the beginning, the conclusion has often occupied my reflections, in the way of investigation. That the facts are thus, others know as well as I, and my memory yet tells me so, in more than a whisper. But, the more I reflect, the more I am bewildered to assign any cause for this precocity of affection.

(1813, November 26. "Journal, 1813-14,"
Vol. II., p. 347.)

My first dash into poetry was as early as 1800. It was the ebullition of a passion for my first Cousin Margaret Parker (daughter and grand-daughter of the two Admirals Parker), one of the most beautiful of evanescent beings. I have long forgotten the verses, but it would be difficult for me to forget her. Her dark eyes! her long eye-lashes! her completely Greek cast of face and figure! I was then about twelve—She rather older, perhaps a year. She died about a year or two afterwards, in consequence of a fall which injured her spine and induced consumption. Her Sister, Augusta (by some thought still more beautiful), died of the same malady; and it was indeed in attending her that Margaret met with the accident, which occasioned her own death. My Sister told me that, when she went to see her shortly before her death, upon accidentally mentioning my name, Margaret coloured through the paleness of mortality to the eyes, to the great astonishment of

my Sister, who (residing with her Grandmother, Lady Holderness) saw at that time but little of me for family reasons, knew nothing of our attachment, nor could conceive why my name should affect her at such a time. I knew nothing of her illness (being at Harrow and in the country), till she was gone.

Some years after, I made an attempt at an Elegy. A very dull one. I do not recollect scarcely any thing equal to the *transparent* beauty of my cousin, or to the sweetness of her temper, during the short period of our intimacy. She looked as if she had been made out of a rainbow—all beauty and peace.

My passion had its usual effects upon me: I could not sleep, could not eat; I could not rest; and although I had reason to know that she loved me, it was the torture of my life to think of the time which must elapse before we could meet again—being usually about *twelve hours* of separation! But I was a fool then, and am not much wiser now.

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thought”
79, Vol. V., p. 449.)

CHAPTER II

BYRON'S RELIGIOUS VIEWS

(1) *Superstitions*: Fortune, Fate, Luck, Nemesis, Omens

NOBODY hates bustle as much as I do ; but there seems a fatality over every scene of my drama, always a row of some sort or other. No matter—Fortune is my best friend ; and as I acknowledge my obligations to her, I hope she will treat me better than she treated the Athenian, who took some merit to *himself* on some occasion, but (after that) took no more towns. In fact, *she*, that exquisite goddess, has hitherto carried me through every thing, and will, I hope, now ; since I own it will be all *her* doing.

(1814, October 7. Letter 503, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 149.)

As to her [Miss Milbanke's] virtues, etc., etc., you will hear enough of them (for she is a kind of *pattern* in the north), without my running into a display on the subject. It is well that *one* of us is of such fame, since ~~there~~ there is sad deficit in the *morale* of that article

upon my part,—all owing to my “bitch of a star,” as Captain Tranchemont says of his planet.

(1814, October 14. Letter 505, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 152.)

I am truly sorry to hear of your father's misfortune—cruel at any time, but doubly cruel in advanced life. However, you will, at least, have the satisfaction of doing your part by him, and, depend upon it, it will not be in vain. Fortune, to be sure, is a female, but not such a b * * as the rest (always excepting your wife and my sister from such sweeping terms); for she generally has some justice in the long run. I have no spite against her, though between her and Nemesis I have had some sore gauntlets to run—but then I have done my best to deserve no better. But to *you*, she is a good deal in arrear, and she will come round—mind if she don't: you have the vigour of life, of independence, of talent, spirit, and character all with you. What you can do for yourself, you have done and will do; and surely there are some others in the world who would not be sorry to be of use, if you would allow them to be useful, or at least attempt it.

(1817, January 28. Letter 626, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 48.)

For myself, I have a confidence in my Fortune, which will yet bear me through. Ταῦτόματον ἡμῶν κάλλιον βουλεύεται. The reverses, which have occurred, were what I should have expected; and, in considering you and yours merely as the instruments of my more recent adversity, it would be difficult for me to blame

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

medio de fonte leporum—in the acmé of his fame and of his happiness comes a drawback as usual.

(1818, February 20. Letter 687, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 202.)

Sir Samuel Romilly has cut his throat for the loss of his wife. It is now nearly three years since he became, in the face of his compact (by a retainer—previous, and, I believe, general), the advocate of the measures and the Approver of the proceedings, which deprived me of mine. I would not exactly, like M^r Thwackum, when Philosopher Square bit his own tongue—“saddle him with a Judgement;” but

“This even-handed Justice
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned Chalice
To our own lips.”

This man little thought, when he was lacerating my heart according to law, while he was poisoning my life at its sources, aiding and abetting in the blighting, branding, and exile that was to be the result of his counsels in their indirect effects, that in less than thirty-six moons—in the pride of his triumph as the highest candidate for the representation of the Sister-City of the mightiest of Capitals [*i.e.* Westminster]—in the fullness of his professional career—in the greenness of a healthy old age—in the radiance of fame, and the complacency of self-earned riches—that a domestic affliction would lay him in the earth, with the meanest of malefactors, in a cross-road with the stake in his body, if the verdict of insanity did not redeem his ashes from the sentence of the laws he had lived upon by interpreting or misinterpreting, and

died in violating. This man had eight children, lately deprived of their mother: could he not live? Perhaps, previous to his annihilation, he felt a portion of what he contributed his legal mite to make me feel; but I have lived—lived to see him a Sexagenary Suicide. It was not in vain that I invoked Nemesis in the midnight of Rome from the awfulest of her ruins.

(1818, November 18. Letter 720, to Lady Byron, Vol. IV., p. 268.)

Read Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*,—all the examples and mode of giving them sublime, as well as the latter part, with the exception of an occasional couplet. . . . I remember an observation of Sharpe's, (the *Conversationist*, as he was called in London, and a very clever man,) that the first line of this poem was superfluous, and that Pope (the best of poets, I think,) would have begun at once, only changing the punctuation—

“Survey mankind from China to Peru.”

The former line, “Let observation,” etc., is certainly heavy and useless. But 'tis a grand poem—and *so true!*—true as the 10th of Juvenal himself. The lapse of ages *changes* all things—time—language—the earth—the bounds of the sea—the stars of the sky, and every thing “about, around, and underneath” man, *except man himself*, who has always been, and always will be, an unlucky rascal. The infinite variety of lives conduct but to death, and the infinity of wishes lead but to disappointment. All the discoveries which have yet been made have multi-

plied little but existence. An extirpated disease is succeeded by some new pestilence; and a discovered world has brought little to the old one, except the—first and freedom afterwards—the *latter* a fine thing, particularly as they gave it to Europe in exchange for slavery. But it is doubtful whether “the Sovereigns” would not think the *first* the best present of the two to their subjects.

(1821, January 9. “Extracts from a Diary,” Vol. V., p. 161.)

Why, at the very height of desire and human pleasure,—worldly, social, amorous, ambitious, or even avaricious,—does there mingle a certain sense of doubt and sorrow—a fear of what is to come—a doubt of what *is*—a retrospect to the past, leading to a prognostication of the future? (The best of Prophets of the future is the Past.) Why is this, or these?—I know not, except that on a pinnacle we are most susceptible of giddiness, and that we never fear falling except from a precipice—the higher, the more awful, and the more sublime; and, therefore, I am not sure that Fear is not a pleasurable sensation; at least, *Hope* is; and *what Hope* is there without a deep leaven of Fear? and what sensation is so delightful as Hope? and, if it were not for Hope, where would the Future be?—in hell. It is useless to say *where* the Present is, for most of us know; and as for the Past, *what* predominates in memory?—*Hope baffled*. Ergo, in all human affairs, it is Hope—Hope—Hope. I allow sixteen minutes, though I never counted them, to any given or supposed possession. From whatever place we

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



is) I have lost a lawsuit, of great importance, on Rochdale collieries—have occasioned a divorce—have had my poesy disparaged by Murray and the critics—my fortune refused to be placed on an advantageous settlement (in Ireland) by the trustees;—my life threatened last month (they put about a paper here to excite an attempt at my assassination, on account of politics, and a notion which the priests disseminated that I was in a league against the Germans,)—and, finally, my mother-in-law recovered last fortnight, and my play was damned last week! These are like “the eight-and-twenty misfortunes of Harlequin.” But they must be borne. If I give in, it shall be after keeping up a spirit at least.

(1821, May 14. Letter 892, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 286.)

Upon Parnassus, going to the fountain of Delphi (Castrì), in 1809, I saw a flight of twelve Eagles (Hobhouse says they are Vultures—at least in conversation), and I seized the Omen. On the day before, I composed the lines to Parnassus (in *Childe Harold*), and, on beholding the birds, had a hope that Apollo had accepted my homage. I have at least had the name and fame of a Poet during the poetical period of life (from twenty to thirty): whether it will last is another matter; but I *have been* a votary of the Deity and the place, and am grateful for what he has done in my behalf, leaving the future in his hands as I left the past. Like Sylla, I have always believed that all things depend upon Fortune, and nothing upon ourselves. I am not aware of any one thought or action worthy

of being called good to myself or others, which is not to be attributed to the Good Goddess, Fortune!

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thoughts” 82 and 83, Vol. V., p. 450.)

I have been thinking of an odd circumstance. My daughter, my wife, my half-sister, my mother, my sister's mother, my natural daughter, and myself, are or were all *only* children. My sister's Mother (Lady Conyers) had only my half *sister* by that second marriage (herself too an only child), and my father had only me (an only child) by his second marriage with my Mother (an only child too). Such a complication of *only* children, all tending to *one family*, is singular enough, and looks like fatality almost. But the fiercest Animals have the rarest numbers in their litters, as Lions, tigers, and even Elephants which are mild in comparison.

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thought” 119, Vol. V., p. 467.)

I have remarked a curious coincidence, which almost looks like a fatality. My *mother*, my *wife*, my *half-sister*, my *sister's mother*, my natural daughter (as far at least as *I* am concerned), and *myself*, are all *only children*. My father, by his first marriage with Lady Conyers (an only child), had only my sister; and by his second marriage with another only child, an only child again. Lady Byron, as you know, was one also, and so is my daughter, etc. Is

not this rather odd—such a complication of only children?

(1821, December 10. Letter 965, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 492.)

I am *superstitious*, and have recollected that memorials with a *point* are of less fortunate augury; I will, therefore, request you to accept, instead of the *pin* [a small cameo of Napoleon], the enclosed chain, which is of so slight a value that you need not hesitate. As you wished for something *worn*, I can only say, that it has been worn oftener and longer than the other. It is of Venetian manufacture; and the only peculiarity about it is, that it could only be obtained at or from Venice. At Genoa they have none of the same kind. I also enclose a ring, which I would wish *Alfred* [*i.e.* Count D'Orsay] to keep; it is too large to *wear*; but is formed of *lava*, and so far adapted to the fire of his years and character. You will perhaps have the goodness to acknowledge the receipt of this note, and send back the pin (for good luck's sake), which I shall value much more for having been a night in your custody.

(1823, June 2. Letter 1090, to the Countess of Blessington, Vol. VI., p. 221.)

Facial Resemblances

Two nights ago I saw the tigers sup at Exeter 'Change. . . . There was a "hippopotamus," like Lord Liverpool in the face; and the "Ursine Sloth" had the very voice and manner of my valet.

(1813, November 14. "Journal, 1813-14," Vol. II., p. 319.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

display ; she sings and plays divinely ; but I thought she was a damned long time about it. Her likeness to Madame Flahaut (Miss Mercer that was) is something quite extraordinary.

(1819, June 6. Letter 738, to Richard Belgrave Hoppner, Vol. IV., p. 309.)

[As one of the Sub-Committee of Management of Drury Lane Theatre] I used to protect Miss Smith [the dancer], because she was like Lady Jane Harley in the face ; and likenesses go a great way with me.

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thought” 68, Vol. V., p. 443.)

(2) *Thoughts on Death and on Apparitions*

Some curse hangs over me and mine. My mother lies a corpse in this house ; one of my best friends [*i.e.* Matthews] is drowned in a ditch. What can I say, or think, or do ? I received a letter from him the day before yesterday. My dear Scrope, if you can spare a moment, do come down to me—I want a friend. Matthews' last letter was written on *Friday*,—on Saturday he was not. In ability, who was like Matthews ? How did we all shrink before him ? You do me but justice in saying, I would have risked my paltry existence to have preserved his. This very evening did I mean to write, inviting him, as I invite you, my very dear friend, to visit me. God forgive—for his apathy ! What will our poor Hobhouse feel ? His letters breathe but of Matthews. Come to me, Scrope, I am almost

desolate—left almost alone in the world—I had but you and H., and M., and let me enjoy the survivors whilst I can. Poor M., in his letter of Friday, speaks of his intended contest for Cambridge, and a speedy journey to London. Write or come, but come if you can, or one or both.

(1811, August 7. Letter 161, to Scrope Berdmore Davies, Vol. I., p. 324.)

Peace be with the dead! Regret cannot wake them. With a sigh to the departed, let us resume the dull business of life, in the certainty that we also shall have our repose. Besides her who gave me being, I have lost more than one who made that being tolerable.—The best friend of my friend Hobhouse, Matthews, a man of the first talents, and also not the worst of my narrow circle, has perished miserably in the muddy waves of the Cam, always fatal to genius:—my poor school-fellow, Wingfield, at Coimbra—within a month; and whilst I had heard from *all three*, but not seen *one*. Matthews wrote to me the very day before his death; and though I feel for his fate, I am still more anxious for Hobhouse, who, I very much fear, will hardly retain his senses: his letters to me since the event have been most incoherent. But let this pass; we shall all one day pass along with the rest—the world is too full of such things, and our very sorrow is selfish. . . . I hope your friends and family will long hold together. I shall be glad to hear from you, on business, on commonplace, or any thing, or nothing—but death—I am already too familiar with the dead. It is strange that I look on the skulls

which stand beside me (I have always had *four* in my study) without emotion, but I cannot strip the features of those I have known of their fleshly covering, even in idea, without a hideous sensation; but the worms are less ceremonious.—Surely the Romans did well when they burned the dead.

(1811, August 12. Letter 162, to R. C. Dallas, Vol. I., p. 325.)

You may have heard of the sudden death of my mother, and poor Matthews, which, with that of Wingfield (of which I was not fully aware till just before I left town, and indeed hardly believed it,) has made a sad chasm in my connections. Indeed the blows followed each other so rapidly that I am yet stupid from the shock; and though I do eat, and drink, and talk, and even laugh, at times, yet I can hardly persuade myself that I am awake, did not every morning convince me mournfully to the contrary.—I shall now wave the subject,—the dead are at rest, and none but the dead can be so. . . . You will write to me? I am solitary, and I never felt solitude irksome before.

(1811, August 22. Letter 168, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. I., p. 338.)

I have been a good deal in your company lately, for I have been reading *Juvenal* and *Lady Jane*, etc., for the first time since my return. [Hodgson wrote a *Translation of Juvenal* in 1807, and *Lady Jane Grey, a Tale; and other Poems* in 1809.] The Tenth Sat^o has always been my favourite, as I suppose indeed of everybody's. It is the finest recipe for making one

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



events prevented me. I shall only now add, that I rejoice to see you bear it so well, and that I trust time will enable M^{rs} M. to sustain it better. Every thing should be done to divert and occupy her with other thoughts and cares, and I am sure that all that can be done will.

(1815, March 27. Letter 531, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 186.)

Your letter of December 8th arrived but this day, by some delay, common but inexplicable. Your domestic calamity [*i.e.* the death of Moore's eldest little girl, Barbara, at the age of five years and six months] is very grievous, and I feel with you as much as I *dare* feel at all. Throughout life, your loss must be my loss, and your gain my gain; and, though my heart may ebb, there will always be a drop for you among the dregs.

(1818, February 2. Letter 686, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 195.)

I went to the beautiful Cimitero of Bologna, beyond the walls, and found, besides the superb Burial-ground, an original of a *Custode*, who reminded me of the grave-digger in Hamlet. He has a collection of Capuchins' skulls, labelled on the forehead, and taking down one of them, said, "This was Brother Desiderio Berro, who died at forty—one of my best friends. I begged his head of his brethren after his decease, and they gave it me. I put it in lime and then boiled it. Here it is, teeth and all, in excellent preservation. He was the merriest, cleverest fellow I ever knew. Wherever he went, he brought joy;

and when any one was melancholy, the sight of him was enough to make him cheerful again. He walked so actively, you might have taken him for a dancer—he joked—he laughed—oh! he was such a Frate as I never saw before, nor ever shall again.”

He told me that he had himself planted all the Cypresses in the Cemetery; that he had the greatest attachment to them and to his dead people; that since 1801 they had buried fifty-three thousand persons. In showing some older monuments, there was that of a Roman girl of twenty, with a bust by Bernini. She was a Princess Barberini, dead two centuries ago: he said that, on opening her grave, they had found her hair complete, and “as yellow as gold.”

Some of the epitaphs at Ferrara pleased me more than the more splendid monuments of Bologna; for instance:—

“Martini Luigi
Implora pace.”

“Lucrezia Picini
Implora eterna quiete.”

Can any thing be more full of pathos? Those few words say all that can be said or sought: the dead had had enough of life; all they wanted was rest, and this they “*implore*.” There is all the helplessness, and humble hope, and deathlike prayer, that can arise from the grave—“*implora pace*.” I hope, whoever may survive me, and shall see me put in the foreigners’ burying-ground at the Lido, within the fortress by the Adriatic, will see those two words, and no more, put over me. I trust they won’t think of “pickling, and bringing me home to Clod or Blunderbuss Hall.” I am sure my bones would not

rest in an English grave, or my clay mix with the earth of that country. I believe the thought would drive me mad on my deathbed, could I suppose that any of my friends would be base enough to convey my carcass back to your soil. I would not even feed your worms, if I could help it.

So as Shakespeare says of Mowbray, the banished Duke of Norfolk, who died at Venice (see Richard II.), that he, after fighting

“Against black pagans, Turks, and Saracens,
And toil'd with works of war, retir'd himself
To Italy; and there at *Venice*, gave
His body to that *pleasant* country's earth,
And his pure soul unto his Captain Christ,
Under whose colours he had fought so long.”

(1819, June 7. Letter 739, to John Murray,
Vol. IV., p. 313.)

I have sent for my daughter from Venice, and I ride daily, and walk in a Garden, under a purple canopy of grapes, and sit by a fountain, and talk with the Gardener of his toils, which seem greater than Adam's, and with his wife, and with his Son's wife, who is the youngest of the party, and, I think, talks best of the three. Then I revisit the Campo Santo, and my old friend, the Sexton, has two—but *one* the prettiest daughter imaginable; and I amuse myself with contrasting her beautiful and innocent face of fifteen with the skulls with which he has peopled several cells, and particularly with that of one skull dated 1766, which was once covered (the tradition goes,) by the most lovely features of Bologna—noble and rich. When I look at these, and at this girl

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

day or two after, he pointed out to his brother a person on the opposite side of the way; "there," said he, "is the man whom I took for Byron:" his brother instantly answered, "why, it *is* Byron, and no one else." But this is not all: I was *seen* by somebody to *write down my name* amongst the Enquirers after the King's health, then attacked by insanity. Now, at this very period, as nearly as I could make out, I was ill of a *strong fever* at Patras, caught in the marshes near Olympia, from the *Malaria*. If I had died there, this would have been a new Ghost Story for you. You can easily make out the accuracy of this from Peel himself, who told it in detail. I suppose you will be of the opinion of Lucretius, who (denies the immortality of the Soul, but) asserts that from the "flying off of the Surfaces of bodies perpetually, these surfaces or cases, like the Coats of an onion, are sometimes seen entire when they are separated from it, so that the shapes and shadows of both the dead and absent are frequently beheld." But if they are, are their coats and waistcoats also seen? I do not disbelieve that we may be *two* by some unconscious process, to a certain sign; but which of these two I happen at present to be, I leave you to decide. I only hope that *t'other me* behaves like a Gemman.

I wish you would get Peel asked how far I am accurate in my recollection of what he told me; for I don't like to say such things without authority. I am not sure that I was *not spoken* with; but this also you can ascertain.

(1820, October 6. Letter 834, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 87.)

The "White Lady of Avenel" [in Scott's "Monastery"] is not quite so good as a *real well-authenticated* ("Donna bianca") *White Lady of Colalto*, or spectre in the Marca Trivigiana, who has been repeatedly seen: there is a man (a huntsman) now alive who saw her also. Hoppner could tell you all about her, and so can Rose perhaps. I myself have *no doubt* of the fact, historical and spectral. She always appeared on particular occasions, before the deaths of the family, etc., etc. I heard M^o. Benzoni say that she knew a Gentleman who had seen her cross his room at Colalto Castle. Hoppner saw and spoke with the Huntsman who met her at the Chase, and never *hunted* afterwards. She was a Girl attendant, who, one day dressing the hair of a Countess Colalto, was seen by her mistress to smile upon her husband in the Glass. The Countess had her shut up in the wall at the Castle, like Constance de Beverley. Ever after, she haunted them and all the Colaltos. She is described as very beautiful and fair. It is well authenticated.

(1820, November 9. Letter 845, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 118.)

I have seen a thousand graves opened, and always perceived, that, whatever was gone, the *teeth* and *hair* remained of those who had died with them. Is not this odd? they go the very first things in *youth*, and yet last the longest in the dust, if people will but *die* to preserve them! It is a queer life, and a queer death, that of mortals.

(1820, November 18. Letter 846, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 119.)

Answered Murray's letter — read — lounged. Scrawled this additional page of life's log-book. One day more is over of it and of me :—but “which is best, life or death, the gods only know,” as Socrates said to his judges, on the breaking up of the tribunal. Two thousand years since that sage's declaration of ignorance have not enlightened us more upon this important point ; for, according to the Christian dispensation, no one can know whether he is *sure* of salvation—even the most righteous—since a single slip of faith may throw him on his back, like a skaiter, while gliding smoothly to his paradise. Now, therefore, whatever the certainty of faith in the facts may be, the certainty of the individual as to his happiness or misery is no greater than it was under Jupiter. It has been said that the immortality of the soul is a *grand peut-être*—but still it is a *grand* one. Every body clings to it—the stupidest, and dullest, and wickedest of human bipeds is still persuaded that he is immortal.

(1821, January 25. “Extracts from a Diary,” Vol. V., p. 186.)

I have got here into a famous old feudal palazzo, on the Arno, large enough for a garrison, with dungeons below and cells in the walls, and so full of *Ghosts*, that the learned Fletcher (my valet) has begged leave to change his room, and then refused to occupy his *new* room, because there were more ghosts there than in the other. It is quite true that there are most extraordinary noises (as in all old buildings), which have terrified the servants so as to incommode me extremely. There is one place

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



which instinctively leads us to a persuasion of their beatitude.

(Letter referring to Allegra's death, sold by Puttick & Simpson in April 1851, and quoted in the note to p. 50 of Vol. VI.)

The blow was stunning and unexpected; for I thought the danger over, by the long interval between her stated amelioration and the arrival of the express. But I have borne up against it as I best can, and so far successfully, that I can go about the usual business of life with the same appearance of composure, and even greater. There is nothing to prevent your coming to-morrow; but perhaps, to-day, and yester-evening, it was better not to have met. I do not know that I have any thing to reproach in my conduct, and certainly nothing in my feelings and intentions towards the dead. But it is a moment when we are apt to think that, if this or that had been done, such event might have been prevented,—though every day and hour shows us that they are the most natural and inevitable. I suppose that Time will do his usual work—Death has done his.

(1822, April 23. Letter 996, to Percy Bysshe Shelley, Vol. VI., p. 53.)

Your account of your family is very pleasing: would that I "could answer this comfort with the like!" but I have just lost my natural daughter, Allegra, by a fever. The only consolation, save time, is the reflection that she is either at rest or happy; for her few years (only five) prevented her from

having incurred any sin, except what we inherit from Adam.

“Whom the gods love die young.”

(1822, May 4. Letter 998, to Sir Walter Scott, Vol. VI., p. 55.)

It *would* be worse than idle, knowing as I do, the utter worthlessness of words on such occasions, in me to attempt to express what I ought to feel, and do feel for the loss you have sustained [that of an only son]; and I must thus dismiss the subject, for I dare not trust myself further with it *for your* sake, or for my own. I shall *endeavour* to see you as soon as it may not appear intrusive. Pray excuse the levity of my yesterday's scrawl—I little thought under what circumstances it would find you.

(1823, April 6. Letter 1068, to the Earl of Blessington, Vol. VI., p. 189.)

(3.) *Theological Opinions*

To be plain with Regard to myself. Nature stamp't me in the Die of Indifference. I consider myself as destined never to be happy, although in some instances fortunate. I am an isolated Being on the Earth, without a Tie to attach me to life, except a few School-fellows, and a *score of females*. Let me but “hear my fame on the winds” and the song of the Bards in my Norman house, I ask no more and don't expect so much. Of Religion I know nothing, at least in its *favour*. We have *fools* in all sects and Impostors in most; why should I believe mysteries no one understands, because written by men who

chose to mistake madness for Inspiration, and style themselves *Evangelicals*? However, enough on this subject. Your *piety* will be *aghast*, and I wish for no proselytes. This much I will venture to affirm, that all the virtues and pious *Deeds* performed on Earth can never entitle a man to Everlasting happiness in a future State; nor on the other hand can such a Scene as a Seat of eternal punishment exist, it is incompatible with the benign attributes of a Deity to suppose so.

I am surrounded here by parsons and methodists, but, as you will see, not infected with the mania. I have lived a *Deist*, what I shall die I know not; however, come what may, *ridens moriar*.

(1807, April 16. Letter to Ensign Long, Vol. II., p. 19, note.)

I once thought myself a philosopher, and talked nonsense with great decorum: I defied pain, and preached up equanimity. For some time this did very well, for no one was in *pain* for me but my friends, and none lost their patience but my hearers. At last, a fall from my horse convinced me bodily suffering was an evil; and the worst of an argument upset my maxims and my temper at the same moment: so I quitted Zeno for Aristippus, and conceive that pleasure constitutes the *το καλον*.

In morality, I prefer Confucius to the Ten Commandments, and Socrates to St Paul (though the two latter agree in their opinion of marriage). In religion, I favour the Catholic emancipation, but do not acknowledge the Pope; and I have refused to take the sacrament, because I do not think eating bread

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

but a good Pagan will go to heaven, and a bad Nazarene to hell; "Argal" (I argue like the grave-digger) why are not all men Christians? or why are any? If mankind may be saved who never heard or dreamt, at Timbuctoo, Otaheite, Terra Incognita, etc., of Galilee and its Prophet, Christianity is of no avail: if they cannot be saved without, why are not all orthodox? It is a little hard to send a man preaching to Judæa, and leave the rest of the world—Negers and what not—*dark* as their complexions, without a ray of light for so many years to lead them on high; and who will believe that God will damn men for not knowing what they were never taught? I hope I am sincere; I was so at least on a bed of sickness in a far-distant country, when I had neither friend, nor comforter, nor hope to sustain me. I looked to death as a relief from pain, without a wish for an after-life, but a confidence that the God who punishes in this existence had left that last asylum for the weary—*Ὁν ὁ θεὸς ἀγαπάει ἀποθνήσκει νέος.*

I am no Platonist, I am nothing at all; but I would sooner be a Paulician, Manichæan, Spinozist, Gentile, Pyrrhonian, Zoroastrian, than one of the seventy-two villainous sects who are tearing each other to pieces for the love of the Lord and hatred of each other. Talk of Galileeism? Show me the effects—are you better, wiser, kinder by your precepts? I will bring you ten Mussulmans shall shame you in all good-will towards men, prayer to God, and duty to their neighbours. And is there a Talapoin, or a Bonze, who is not superior to a fox-hunting curate? But I will say no more on this endless theme; let me live, well if possible, and die

without pain. The rest is with God, who assuredly, had He *come* or *sent*, would have made Himself manifest to nations, and intelligible to all.

(1811, September 3. Letter 177, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. II., p. 18.)

I won't dispute with you on the Arcana of your new calling; they are Bagatelles like the King of Poland's rosary. One remark, and I have done; the basis of your religion is *injustice*; the *Son of God*, the *pure*, the *immaculate*, the *innocent*, is sacrificed for the *Guilty*. This proves *His* heroism; but no more does away *man's* guilt than a schoolboy's volunteering to be flogged for another would exculpate the dunce from negligence, or preserve him from the Rod. You degrade the Creator, in the first place, by making Him a begetter of children; and in the next you convert Him into a Tyrant over an immaculate and injured Being, who is sent into existence to suffer death for the benefit of some millions of scoundrels, who, after all, seem as likely to be damned as ever. As to miracles, I agree with Hume that it is more probable men should *lie* or be *deceived*, than that things out of the course of Nature should so happen. Mahomet wrought miracles, Brothers the prophet had *proselytes*, and so would Breslaw the conjurer, had he lived in the time of Tiberius.

Besides I trust that God is not a *Jew*, but the God of all Mankind; and as you allow that a virtuous Gentile may be saved, you do away the necessity of being a Jew or a Christian.

I do not believe in any revealed religion, because

no religion is revealed : and if it pleases the Church to damn me for not allowing a *nonentity*, I throw myself on the mercy of the “*Great First Cause, least understood*,” who must do what is most proper ; though I conceive He never made anything to be tortured in another life, whatever it may in this. I will neither read *pro* nor *con*. God would have made His will known without books, considering how very few could read them when Jesus of Nazareth lived, had it been His pleasure to ratify any peculiar mode of worship. As to your immortality, if people are to live, why die ? And our carcasses, which are to rise again, are they worth raising ? I hope, if mine is, that I shall have a better *pair of legs* than I have moved on these two-and-twenty years, or I shall be sadly behind in the squeeze into Paradise. Did you ever read “*Malthus on Population*” ? If he be right, war and pestilence are our best friends, to save us from being eaten alive, in this “best of all possible Worlds.”

I will write, read, and think no more ; indeed, I do not wish to shock your prejudices by saying all I do think. Let us make the most of life and leave dreams to Emmanuel Swedenborg.

(1811, September 13. Letter 184, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. II., p. 35.)

Pray write ; you shall hear when I remove to Lancashire. I have brought you and my friend Juvenal Hodgson on my back, on the score of revelation. You are fervent, but he is quite *glowing* ; and if he take half the pains to save his own soul, which he volunteers to redeem mine, great will be his

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



The parcels contained some letters and verses, all (but one) anonymous and complimentary, and very anxious for my conversion from certain infidelities into which my good-natured correspondents conceive me to have fallen. The books were presents of a *convertible* kind also,—*Christian Knowledge* and the *Bioscope*, a religious Dial of Life explained:—to the author of the former (Cadell, publisher,) I beg you will forward my best thanks for his letter, his present, and, above all, his good intentions. The *Bioscope* contained an MS. copy of very excellent verses, from whom I know not, but evidently the composition of some one in the habit of writing, and of writing well. I do not know if he be the author of the *Bioscope* which accompanied them; but whoever he is, if you can discover him, thank him from me most heartily. The other letters were from ladies, who are welcome to convert me when they please; and if I can discover them, and they be young, as they say they are, I could convince them perhaps of my devotion.

(1812, September 14. Letter 245, to John Murray, Vol. II., p. 143.)

To your advice on Religious topics, I shall equally attend. Perhaps the best way will be by avoiding them altogether. The already published objectionable passages have been much commented upon, but certainly have been rather *strongly* interpreted. I am no Bigot to Infidelity, and did not expect that, because I doubted the immortality of Man, I should be charged with denying the existence of a God. It was the comparative insignificance of ourselves and

our world, when placed in competition with the mighty whole, of which it is an atom, that first led me to imagine that our pretensions to eternity might be over-rated. This, and being early disgusted with a Calvinistic Scotch school, where I was cudgelled to Church for the first ten years of my life, afflicted me with this malady; for, after all, it is, I believe, a disease of the mind as much as other kinds of hypochondria.

(1813, June 18. Letter 303, to W. Gifford, Vol. II., p. 221.)

I now come to a subject of your inquiry which you must have perceived I always hitherto avoided—an awful one—"Religion." I was bred in Scotland among Calvinists in the first part of my life which gave me a dislike to that persuasion. Since that period I have visited the most bigoted and credulous of countries—Spain, Greece, Turkey. As a spectacle the Catholic is more fascinating than the Greek or the Moslem; but the last is the only believer who practises the precepts of his Prophet to the last chapter of his creed. My opinions are quite undecided. I may say so sincerely, since, when given over at Patras in 1810, I rejected and ejected three Priest-loads of spiritual consolation by threatening to turn Mussulman if they did not leave me in quiet. I was in great pain and looked upon death as in that respect a relief—without much regret for the past, and few speculations on the future. Indeed so indifferent was I to my bodily situation, that, tho' I was without any attendant but a young Frenchman as ill as myself, two barbarous Arnouts, and a deaf

and desperate Greek Quack—and my English servant (a man with me) within two days' journey—I would not allow the last to be sent for—worth all the rest as he would have been in attendance at such a time, because—I really don't know why—unless it was an indifference to which I am certainly not subject when in good health. I believe doubtless in God, and should be happy to be convinced of much more. If I do not at present place implicit faith in tradition and revelation of any human creed, I hope it is not from want of reverence for the Creator but the created, and when I see a man publishing a pamphlet to prove that M^r Pitt is risen from the dead (as was done a week ago), perfectly positive in the truth of his assertion, I must be permitted to doubt more miracles equally well attested; but the moral of Christianity is perfectly beautiful—and the very sublime of virtue—yet even there we find some of its finer precepts in the earlier axioms of the Greeks—particularly “do unto others as you would they should do unto you”—the forgiveness of injuries and more which I do not remember.

(1813, September 26. Correspondence with Miss Milbanke. Letter 3, Vol. III., p. 402.)

Your opinion of my “reasoning powers” is so exactly my own, that you will not wonder if I avoid a controversy with so skilful a casuist,—particularly on a subject where I am certain to get the worst of it in this world, and perhaps incur a warmer confutation in the next. But I shall be most happy to hear your observations on the subject. If any body could do

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

wish it were over one way or the other—without any glimpses at the future. Why I came here, I know not. Where I shall go to, it is useless to inquire. In the midst of myriads of the living and the dead worlds—stars—systems—infinity—why should I be anxious about an atom?

(1814, March 3. Correspondence with Miss Milbanke. Letter 8, Vol. III., p. 408.)

I believe or rather am in *doubt*, which is the *ne plus ultra* of mortal faith.

(1813, November 27. "Journal, 1813-14," Vol. II., p. 349.)

If I valued fame, I should flatter received opinions, which have gathered strength by time, and will yet wear longer than any living works to the contrary. But, for the soul of me, I cannot and will not give the lie to my own thoughts and doubts, come what may. If I am a fool, it is, at least, a doubting one; and I envy no one the certainty of his self-approved wisdom.

All are inclined to believe what they covet, from a lottery-ticket up to a passport to Paradise,—in which, from the description, I see nothing very tempting. My restlessness tells me I have something "within that passeth show." It is for Him, who made it, to prolong that spark of celestial fire which illuminates, yet burns, this frail tenement; but I see no such horror in a "dreamless sleep," and I have no conception of any existence which duration would not render tiresome. How else "fell the angels," even

according to your creed? They were immortal, heavenly, and happy, as their *apostate Abdiel* is now by his treachery. Time must decide; and eternity won't be the less agreeable or more horrible because one did not expect it. In the mean time, I am grateful for some good, and tolerably patient under certain evils—*grace à Dieu et mon bon tempérament.*

(1813, November 27. “Journal, 1813-14,”
Vol. II., p. 351.)

I wonder how the deuce any body could make such a world; for what purpose dandies, for instance, were ordained—and kings—and fellows of colleges—and women of “a certain age”—and many men of any age—and myself, most of all!

“Divesne prisco natus ab Inacho
Nil interest, an pauper et infimâ
De gente, sub dio (*sic*) moreris,
Victima nil miserantis Orci.
Omnes eodem cogimur,” etc.

Is there anything beyond? *who* knows? *He* that can't tell. Who tells that there *is*? He who don't know. And when shall he know? perhaps, when he don't expect, and generally when he don't wish it. In this last respect, however, all are not alike: it depends a good deal upon education,—something upon nerves and habits—but most upon digestion.

(1814, February 18, Midnight. “Journal,
1813-14,” Vol. II., p. 384.)

He [the writer of a grave satire, entitled *Anti-Byron*] is wrong in one thing—I am no *Atheist*; but

if he thinks I have published principles tending to such opinions, he has a perfect right to controvert them. Pray publish it; I shall never forgive myself if I think that I have prevented you.

(1814, March 12. Letter 426, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 60.)

Be assured that I *would live* for two reasons, or more;—there are one or two people whom I have to put out of the world, and as many into it, before I can “depart in peace;” if I do so before, I have not fulfilled my mission. Besides, when I turn thirty, I will turn devout; I feel a great vocation that way in Catholic churches, and when I hear the organ.

(1817, April 9. Letter 643, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 98.)

Next week I set out for Rome. Having seen Constantinople, I should like to look at t’other fellow. Besides, I want to see the Pope, and shall take care to tell him that I vote for the Catholics and no Veto.

(1817, April 11. Letter 644, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 101.)

One certainly has a soul; but how it came to allow itself to be enclosed in a body is more than I can imagine. I only know if once mine gets out, I’ll have a bit of a tussle before I let it get in again to that or any other.

(1817, April 11. Letter 644, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 102.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



leaven of absurdity,—as there must be in all talent, let loose upon the world, without a martingale.

(1820, December 9. Letter 850, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 131.)

I remarked in my illness the complete inertion, inaction, and destruction of my chief mental faculties. I tried to rouse them, and yet could not—and this is the *Soul!!!* I should believe that it was married to the body, if they did not sympathise so much with each other. If the one rose, when the other fell, it would be a sign that they longed for the natural state of divorce. But, as it is, they seem to draw together like post-horses.

Let us hope the best—it is the grand possession.

(1821, February 27. “Extracts from a Diary,” Vol. V., p. 211.)

It is my wish that she [*i.e.* Allegra] should be a Roman Catholic, which I look upon as the best religion, as it is assuredly the oldest of the various branches of Christianity.

(1821, April 3. Letter 881, to Richard Belgrave Hoppner, Vol. V., p. 264.)

Another question. The Epistle of St Paul, which I translated from the Armenian—for what reason have you kept it back, though you published that stuff which gave rise to *The Vampire*? Is it because you are afraid to print any thing in opposition to the Cant of the *Quarterly* about “Manicheism”? Let me have a proof of that Epistle directly. I am a better

christian than those parsons of yours, though not paid for being so.

Send—Faber’s Treatise on the “Cabiri.”

Sainte-Croix’s “Mystères du Paganisme” (scarce, perhaps, but to be found, as Mitford refers to his work frequently).

A common Bible, of a good legible print (bound in Russia).

I *have* one; but as it was the last gift of my Sister (whom I shall probably never see again), I can only use it carefully, and less frequently, because I like to keep it in good order. Don’t forget this, for I am a great reader and admirer of those books, and had read them through and through before I was eight years old,—that is to say, the *Old* Testament, for the *New* struck me as a task, but the other as a pleasure. I speak as a *boy*, from the recollected impression of that period at Aberdeen in 1796.

(1821, October 9. Letter 947, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 391.)

If I had to live over again, I do not know what I would change in my life, unless it were *for not to have lived at all*. All history and experience, and the rest, teaches us that the good and evil are pretty equally balanced in this existence, and that what is most to be desired is an easy passage out of it. What can it give us but *years*? and those have little of good but their ending. Of the Immortality of the Soul, it appears to me that there can be little doubt, if we attend for a moment to the action of Mind. It is in perpetual activity, I used to doubt of it, but reflection has taught me better. It acts also so very

independent of body: in dreams for instance incoherently and madly, I grant you; but still it is *Mind*, and much more *Mind* than when we are awake. Now, that *this* should not act *separately*, as well as jointly, who can pronounce? The Stoics, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, call the present state "a Soul which drags a Carcase:" a heavy chain, to be sure; but all chains, being material, may be shaken off. How far our future life will be individual, or, rather, how far it will at all resemble our *present* existence, is another question; but that the *Mind* is *eternal*, seems as probable as that the body is not so. Of course, I have ventured upon the question without recurring to Revelation, which, however, is at least as rational a solution of it as any other.

A *material* resurrection seems strange, and even absurd, except for purposes of punishment; and all punishment, which is to *revenge* rather than *correct*, must be *morally wrong*. And *when the World is at an end*, what moral or warning purpose *can* eternal tortures answer? Human passions have probably disfigured the divine doctrines here, but the whole thing is inscrutable. It is useless to tell me *not* to *reason*, but to *believe*. You might as well tell a man not to wake but *sleep*. And then to *bully* with torments! and all that! I cannot help thinking that the *menace* of Hell makes as many devils, as the severe penal codes of inhuman humanity make villains. Man is born *passionate* of body, but with an innate though secret tendency to the love of Good in his Mainspring of Mind. But God help us all! It is at present a sad jar of atoms.

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

removed? Things must have had a beginning, and what matters it *when* or *how*? I sometimes think that *Man* may be the relic of some higher material being, wrecked in a former world, and degenerated in the hardships and struggle through Chaos into Conformity — or something like it; as we see Laplanders, Esquimaux, etc., inferior in the present state, as the Elements become more inexorable. But even then this higher pre-Adamite supposititious Creation must have had an Origin and a *Creator*; for a *Creator* is a more natural imagination than a fortuitous concourse of atoms. All things remount to a fountain, though they may flow *to* an Ocean.

What a strange thing is the propagation of life! A bubble of Seed * * * might (for aught we know) have formed a Cæsar or a Buonaparte: there is nothing remarkable recorded of their Sires, that I know of.

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thoughts” 95 to 102, inclusive, Vol. V., p. 456.)

I have received your letter. I need not say, that the extract which it contains has affected me, because it would imply a want of all feeling to have read it with indifference. Though I am not quite *sure* that it was intended by the writer for *me*, yet the date, the place where it was written, with some other circumstances that you mention, render the allusion probable. But for whomever it was meant, I have read it with all the pleasure which can arise from so melancholy a topic. I say *pleasure*—because your brief and simple picture of the life and demeanour of the excellent person whom I trust you will again

meet, cannot be contemplated without the admiration due to her virtues, and her pure and unpretending piety. Her last moments were particularly striking; and I do not know that, in the course of reading the story of mankind, and still less in my observations upon the existing portion, I ever met with any thing so unostentatiously beautiful. Indisputably, the firm believers in the Gospel have a great advantage over all others,—for this simple reason, that, if true, they will have their reward hereafter; and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope, through life, without subsequent disappointment, since (at the worst for them) “out of nothing, nothing can arise,” not even sorrow. But a man’s creed does not depend upon *himself*: *who* can say, *I will* believe this, that, or the other? and least of all, that which he least can comprehend. I have, however, observed, that those who have begun life with extreme faith, have in the end greatly narrowed it, as Chillingworth, Clarke (who ended as an Arian), Bayle, and Gibbon (once a Catholic), and some others; while, on the other hand, nothing is more common than for the early sceptic to end in a firm belief, like Maupertuis, and Henry Kirke White.

But my business is to acknowledge your letter, and not to make a dissertation. I am obliged to you for your good wishes, and more than obliged by the extract from the papers of the beloved object whose qualities you have so well described in a few words. I can assure you that all the fame which ever cheated humanity into higher notions of its own importance would never weigh in my mind against the pure and

pious interest which a virtuous being may be pleased to take in my welfare. In this point of view, I would not exchange the prayer of the deceased in my behalf for the united glory of Homer, Cæsar, and Napoleon, could such be accumulated upon a living head. Do me at least the justice to suppose, that

“Video meliora proboque,”

however the “deteriora sequor” may have been applied to my conduct. I do not know that I am addressing a clergyman; but I presume that you will not be affronted by the mistake (if it is one) on the address of this letter. One who has so well explained, and deeply felt, the doctrines of religion, will excuse the error which led me to believe him its minister.

(1821, December 8. Letter 964, to John Sheppard, Vol. V., p. 488.)

Mr Southey accuses us of attacking the religion of the country; and is he abetting it by writing lives of *Wesley*? One mode of worship is merely destroyed by another. There never was, nor ever will be, a country without a religion. We shall be told of *France* again: but it was only Paris and a frantic party, which for a moment upheld their dogmatic nonsense of theo-philanthropy. The church of England, if overthrown, will be swept away by the sectarians and not by the sceptics. People are too wise, too well informed, too certain of their own immense importance in the realms of space, ever to submit to the impiety of doubt. There may be a few such diffident speculators, like water in the pale sunbeam of human reason, but they are very few;

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



must make my characters speak as I conceive them likely to argue.

(1822, March 4. Letter 981, to Thomas Moore, Vol. VI., p. 31.)

In your last letter you say, speaking of Shelley, that you would almost prefer the "damning bigot" to the "annihilating infidel." Shelley believes in immortality, however—but this by the way. Do you remember Frederick the Great's answer to the remonstrance of the villagers whose curate preached against the eternity of hell's torments? It was thus:—"If my faithful subjects of Schrausenhausen prefer being eternally damned, let them."

Of the two, I should think the long sleep better than the agonised vigil. But men, miserable as they are, cling so to any thing *like* life, that they probably would prefer damnation to quiet. Besides, they think themselves so *important* in the creation, that nothing less can satisfy their pride—the insects!

(1822, March 6. Letter 983, to Thomas Moore, Vol. VI., p. 35.)

This war of "Church and State" has astonished me more than it disturbs; for I really thought *Cain* a speculative and hardy, but still a harmless, production. As I said before, I am really a great admirer of tangible religion; and am breeding one of my daughters a Catholic, that she may have her hands full. It is by far the most elegant worship, hardly excepting the Greek mythology. What with incense, pictures, statues, altars, shrines, relics, and the real

presence, confession, absolution,—there is something sensible to grasp at. Besides, it leaves no possibility of doubt; for those who swallow their Deity, really and truly, in transubstantiation, can hardly find any thing else otherwise than easy of digestion. I am afraid that this sounds flippant, but I don't mean it to be so; only my turn of mind is so given to taking things in the absurd point of view, that it breaks out in spite of me every now and then. Still, I do assure you that I am a very good Christian. Whether you will believe me in this, I do not know.

Taaffe dines with me and half-a-dozen English to-day; and I have not the heart to tell him how the bibliopolar world shrink from his Commentary [on Dante];—and yet it is full of the most orthodox religion and morality. In short, I make it a point that he shall be in print. He is such a good-natured, heavy * * Christian, that we must give him a shove through the press.

(1822, March 8. Letter 985, to Thomas Moore, Vol. VI., p. 38.)

They give me a very good account of you, and of your nearly Emprisoned *Angels*. But why did you change your title?—you will regret this some day. The bigots are not to be conciliated; and, if they were—are they worth it? I suspect that I am a more orthodox Christian than you are; and, whenever I see a real Christian, either in practice or in theory (for I never yet found the man who could produce either, when put to the proof,) I am his disciple. But, till then, I cannot truckle to tithe-mongers,—nor

can I imagine what has made *you* circumcise your Seraphs.

(1823, April 2. Letter 1064, to Thomas Moore, Vol. VI., p. 182.)

There is a clever but eccentric man here, a Dr Kennedy, who is very pious and tries in good earnest to make converts; but his Christianity is a queer one, for he says that the priesthood of the Church of England are no more Christians than "Mahound or Termagant" are. He has made some converts, I suspect rather to the beauty of his wife (who is pretty as well as pious) than of his theology. I like what I have seen of him, of *her* I know nothing, nor desire to know, having other things to think about. *He* says that the dozen shocks of an Earthquake we had the other day are a sign of his doctrine, or a judgement on his audience, but this opinion has not acquired proselytes.

(1823, October 12. Letter 1107, to the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Vol. VI., p. 261.)

I have recently seen something of a zealous Dr Kennedy—a very good Calvinist, who has a taste for controversy and conversion, and thinks me so nearly a tolerable Christian, that he is trying to make me a whole one. I have found, indeed, one indisputable text in St Paul's epistle to the Romans (Chapter 10th, I believe), which disposes me much to credit all the rest of the dicta of that powerful Apostle. It is this (see the Chapter)—"*For there is no difference between a JEW and a GREEK;*" tell Messrs Webb and Barker that I intend to preach from this text to Carriddi and

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

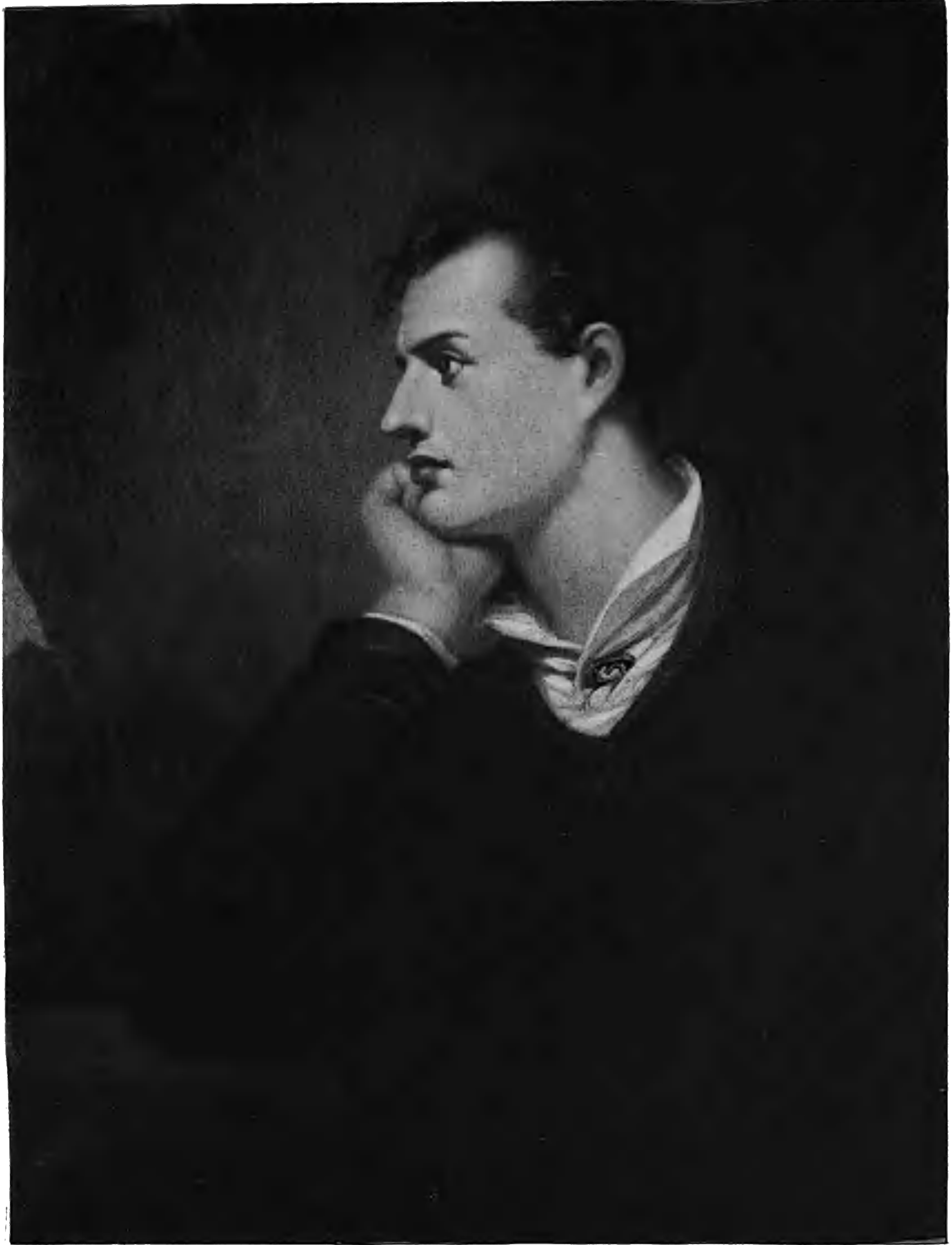
can I imagine what has made you circumcise your
 temples.

(1823, April 2. Letter 1064, to Thomas Moore, Vol. VI., p. 182.)

There is a clever but eccentric man here, a Dr Kennedy, who is very pious and tries in good earnest to make converts; but his Christianity is a queer one, for he says that the priesthood of the Church of England are no more Christians than "Mahound or Tertulian" are. He has made some converts, I suspect, rather in the beauty of his wife (who is pretty well an atheist than of her theology). I like what I hear of him, but I have nothing nor desire to know beyond what I hear of him about. He says that the danger of an Episcopate we had here is that they are a sign of his doctrine, or a judgement on his doctrine, but this opinion has not acquired prevalence.

(1823, October 12. Letter 1107, to the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Vol. VI., p. 261.)

I have recently seen something of a zealous Dr Kennedy—a very good Calvinist, who has a taste for controversy and conversion, and thinks me so nearly a miserable Christian that he is trying to make me a whole one. I have found, indeed, one admirable text in St Paul's epistle to the Romans Chapter 10th, I believe, which disposes me much to credit all the rest of the diatribe of that apostle. It is this (see the Chapter)—"*For there is no difference between a JEW and a GREEK*"—and Messrs Webb and Barker that I intend to preach from this text to Carriddi and



R. Westall R.A. pinx.

Walker & Boutall ph. sc.

Lord Byron
from a picture in the possession of the Baroness Burdett Coutts.

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



CHAPTER III

BYRON'S OPINIONS OF THE LITERARY LIFE

(1) *The Author's Trade and the Making of a Poet*

AND how does *Sir Edgar*? and your friend Bland? I suppose you are involved in some literary squabble. The only way is to despise all brothers of the quill. I suppose you won't allow me to be an author, but I contemn you all, you dogs!—I do.

You don't know Dallas, do you? He had a farce ready for the stage before I left England, and asked me for a prologue, which I promised, but sailed in such a hurry I never penned a couplet. I am afraid to ask after his drama, for fear it should be damned—Lord forgive me for using such a word! but the pit, Sir, you know the pit—they will do these things in spite of merit! I remember this farce from a curious circumstance. When Drury Lane was burnt to the ground, by which accident Sheridan and his son lost the few remaining shillings they were worth, what doth my friend Dallas do? Why, before the fire was out, he writes a note to Tom Sheridan, the manager of this combustible concern, to inquire

whether this farce was not converted into fuel with about two thousand other unactable manuscripts, which of course were in great peril, if not actually consumed. Now was not this characteristic?—the ruling passions of Pope are nothing to it. Whilst the poor distracted manager was bewailing the loss of a building only worth 300,000*l.*, together with some twenty thousand pounds of rags and tinsel in the tiring rooms, Bluebeard's elephants, and all that—in comes a note from a scorching author, requiring at his hands two acts and odd scenes of a farce!!

(1810, October 3. Letter 148, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. I., p. 299.)

Yours and Pratt's *protégé*, Blacket, the cobbler, is dead, in spite of his rhymes, and is probably one of the instances where death has saved a man from damnation. You were the ruin of that poor fellow amongst you: had it not been for his patrons, he might now have been in very good plight, shoe- (not verse-) making; but you have made him immortal with a vengeance. I write this, supposing poetry, patronage, and strong waters, to have been the death of him.

(1811, June 28. Letter 154, to R. C. Dallas, Vol. I., p. 314.)

What has *Sir Edgar* done? And the *Imitations and Translations*—where are they? I suppose you don't mean to let the public off so easily, but charge them home with a quarto. For me, I am "sick of fops, and poesy, and prate," and shall leave the "whole

Castalian state " to Bufo, or any body else. But you are a sentimental and sensibilitous person, and will rhyme to the end of the chapter. Howbeit, I have written some 4000 lines, of one kind or another, on my travels.

(1811, June 29. Letter 155, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. I., p. 317.)

How does Pratt get on, or rather get off, Joe Blacket's posthumous stock? You killed that poor man amongst you, in spite of your Ionian friend and myself, who would have saved him from Pratt, poetry, present poverty, and posthumous oblivion. Cruel patronage! to ruin a man at his calling; but then he is a divine subject for subscription and biography; and Pratt, who makes the most of his dedications, has inscribed the volume to no less than five families of distinction.

I am sorry you don't like Harry [Kirke] White: with a great deal of cant, which in him was sincere (indeed it killed him as you killed Joe Blacket), certes there is poesy and genius. I don't say this on account of my simile and rhymes; but surely he was beyond all the Bloomfields and Blackets, and their collateral cobblers, whom Lofft and Pratt have or may kidnap from their calling into the service of the trade.

(1811, August 21. Letter 167, to R. C. Dallas, Vol. I., p. 336.)

Your anxiety about the critique on * * 's book is amusing; as it was anonymous, certes it was of little consequence: I wish it had produced a little more

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

I believe, from what I observe of your mind, that you are above flattery. To come to the point, you deserve success, but we know, before Addison wrote his *Cato*, that desert does not always command it. But, suppose it attained,—

“You know what ills the author's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the *patron* and the jail.”

Do not renounce writing, but never trust entirely to authorship. If you have a possession, retain it; it will be, like Prior's fellowship, a last and sure resource. Compare M^r Rogers with other authors of the day; assuredly he is amongst the first of living poets, but is it to that he owes his station in society, and his intimacy in the best circles? No, it is to his prudence and respectability; the world (a bad one, I own) courts him because he has no occasion to court it. He is a poet, nor is he less so because he was something more. I am not sorry to hear that you are not tempted by the vicinity of Capel Lofft, Esq^{re}., though, if he had done for you what he has done for the Bloomfields, I should never have laughed at his rage for patronising. But a truly constituted mind will ever be independent.

(1812, June 1. Letter 238, to Bernard Barton, Vol. II., p. 124.)

The *plate* is *broken*? between ourselves, it was unlike the picture; and besides, upon the whole, the frontispiece of an author's visage is but a paltry exhibition.

(1812, October 23. Letter 268, to John Murray, Vol. II., p. 179.)

I by no means rank poetry or poets high in the scale of intellect. This may look like affectation, but it is my real opinion. It is the lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake. They say poets rarely or never go *mad*. Cowper and Collins are instances to the contrary (but Cowper was no poet). It is, however, to be remarked that they rarely do, but are generally so near it that I cannot help thinking rhyme is so far useful in anticipating and preventing the disorder. I prefer the talents of action—of war, or the senate, or even of science,—to all the speculations of those mere dreamers of another existence (I don't mean religiously but fancifully) and spectators of this apathy. Disgust and perhaps incapacity have rendered me now a mere spectator; but I have occasionally mixed in the active and tumultuous departments of existence, and in these alone my recollection rests with any satisfaction, though not the best parts of it.

(1813, November 10, Correspondence with Miss Milbanke. Letter 5, Vol. III., p. 405.)

Redde the *Ruminator*—a collection of Essays, by a strange, but able, old man (Sir Egerton Brydges), and a half-wild young one, author of a poem on the Highlands, called *Childe Alarique*. The word “sensitivity” (always my aversion) occurs a thousand times in these Essays; and, it seems, is to be an excuse for all kinds of discontent. This young man can know nothing of life; and, if he cherishes the disposition which runs through his papers, will become useless, and, perhaps, not even a poet, after all, which

he seems determined to be. God help him! no one should be a rhymers who could be any thing better. And this is what annoys one, to see Scott and Moore, and Campbell and Rogers, who might have all been agents and leaders, now mere spectators. For, though they may have other ostensible avocations, these last are reduced to a secondary consideration.

(1813, November 23. "Journal, 1813-1814,"
Vol. II., p. 337.)

Sharpe (a man of elegant mind, and who has lived much with the best—Fox, Horne Tooke, Windham, Fitzpatrick, and all the agitators of other times and tongues,) told us the particulars of his last interview with Windham, a few days before the fatal operation which sent "that gallant spirit to aspire the skies." Windham, — the first in one department of oratory and talent, whose only fault was his refinement beyond the intellect of half his hearers,—Windham, half his life an active participator in the events of the earth, and one of those who governed nations,—*he* regretted,—and dwelt much on that regret, that "he had not entirely devoted himself to literature and science!!!" His mind certainly would have carried him to eminence there, as elsewhere;—but I cannot comprehend what debility of that mind could suggest such a wish. I, who have heard him, cannot regret any thing but that I shall never hear him again. What! would he have been a plodder? a metaphysician? — perhaps a rhymers? a scribbler? Such an exchange must have been suggested by illness.

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



out of the other room a vessel of some composition similar to that which is used in Catholic churches, and, seeing us, he exclaimed, "Here is some *incense* for you." Campbell answered—"Carry it to Lord Byron, *he is used to it.*"

Now this comes of "bearing no brother near the throne." I, who have no throne, nor wish to have one *now*, whatever I may have done, am at perfect peace with all the poetical fraternity; or, at least, if I dislike any, it is not *poetically*, but *personally*. Surely the field of thought is infinite; what does it signify who is before or behind in a race where there is no *goal*? The temple of fame is like that of the Persians, the universe; our altar, the tops of mountains. I should be equally content with Mount Caucasus, or Mount Anything; and those who like it, may have Mount Blanc or Chimborazo, without my envy of their elevation.

(1813, December 6. "Journal, 1813-1814,"
Vol. II., p. 365.)

Redde the *Quarrels of Authors* (another sort of *sparring*)—a new work, by that most entertaining and researching writer, Israeli. They seem to be an irritable set, and I wish myself well out of it. "I'll not march through Coventry with them, that's flat." What the devil had I to do with scribbling? It is too late to inquire, and all regret is useless. But, an it were to do again,—I should write again, I suppose. Such is human nature, at least my share of it;—though I shall think better of myself, if I have sense to stop now. If I have a wife, and that wife has a son—by any body—I will bring up mine heir in the most anti-

poetical way—make him a lawyer, or a pirate, or—any thing. But, if he writes too, I shall be sure he is none of mine, and cut him off with a Bank token.

(1814, March 17. “Journal, 1813 - 1814,”
Vol. II., p. 401.)

I will answer your letter this evening ; in the mean time, it may be sufficient to say, that [in giving Dallas the copyright of *The Corsair*, with permission to dispose of the poem to any bookseller he pleased] there was no intention on my part to annoy you, but merely to *serve* Dallas, and also to rescue myself from a possible imputation that *I* had other objects than fame in writing so frequently. Whenever I avail myself of any profit arising from my pen, depend upon it, it is not for my own convenience ; at least it never has been so, and I hope never will.

(1814, January. Letter 381, to John Murray,
Vol. III., p. 2.)

I have redde *Roncesvaux* with very great pleasure, and (if I were so disposed) see very little room for criticism. . . . Only if you wish to have all the success you deserve, *never listen to friends*, and—as I am not the least troublesome of the number—least of all to me.

(1814, January. Letter 385, to J. H.
Merivale, Vol. III., p. 5.)

It doubtless gratifies me much that our *Finale* has pleased, and that the Curtain drops gracefully [on *The Corsair*]. *You* deserve it should, for your promptitude and good nature in arranging im-

mediately with M^r D[alla]s; and I can assure you that I esteem your entering so warmly into the subject, and writing me so soon upon it, as a personal obligation. We shall now part, I hope, satisfied with each other. I *was* and *am* quite in earnest in my prefatory promise not to intrude any more; and this not from any affectation, but a thorough conviction that it is the best policy, and is at least respectful to my readers, as it shows that I would not willingly run the risk of forfeiting their favour in future. Besides, I have other views and objects, and think that I shall keep *this* resolution: for, since I left London, though shut up, *snow-bound*, *thaw-bound*, and tempted with all kinds of paper, the dirtiest of ink, and the bluntest of pens, I have not even been haunted by a wish to put them to their combined uses, except in letters of business—my rhyming propensity is quite gone, and I feel much as I did at Patras on recovering from my fever—weak, but in health, and only afraid of a relapse. I do most fervently hope I never shall.

(1814, February 4. Letter 399, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 22.)

The *Courier* of this evening accuses me of having “received and pocketed” large sums for my works. I have never yet received, nor wish to receive, a farthing for any. M^r Murray offered a thousand for *The Giaour* and *Bride of Abydos*, which I said was too much, and that if he could afford it at the end of six months, I would then direct how it might be disposed of; but neither then, nor at any other period, have I ever availed myself of the profits on my own account.

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

said Scott, "he is sure, is not at his ease,—to say the best of it." Lord, Lord, if these home-keeping minstrels had crossed your Atlantic or my Mediterranean, and tasted a little open boating in a white squall—or a gale in "the Gut"—or the "Bay of Biscay," with no gale at all—how it would enliven and introduce them to a few of the sensations!—to say nothing of an illicit amour or two upon shore, in the way of essay upon the Passions, beginning with simple adultery, and compounding it as they went along.

(1814, August 3. Letter 483, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 119.)

Depend—and perpend—upon it that your opinion of Scott's poem [given in a letter to Messrs Longman, Hurst, Orme, Rees, Brown and Co.] will travel through one or other of the quintuple correspondents, till it reaches the ear, and the liver of the author. Your adventure, however, is truly laughable—but how could you be such a potatoe? You a "brother" (of the quill) too, "near the throne," to confide to a man's *own publisher* (who has "bought" or rather sold, "golden opinions" about him) such a damnatory parenthesis! "Between you and me," quotha—it reminds me of a passage in the *Heir-at-Law*—"Tête-à-tête with Lady Duberly, I suppose."—"No—tête-à-tête with *five hundred people*;" and your confidential communication [concerning *The Lord of the Isles*] will doubtless be in circulation to that amount, in a short time, with several additions, and in several letters, all signed L. H. R. O. B., etc., etc., etc.

(1815, March 8. Letter 530, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 184.)

It will give me great pleasure to comply with your request, though I hope there is still taste enough left amongst us to render it almost unnecessary, sordid and interested as, it must be admitted, many of “the trade” are, where circumstances give them an advantage. I trust you do not permit yourself to be depressed by the temporary partiality of what is called “the public” for the favourites of the moment; all experience is against the permanency of such impressions. You must have lived to see many of these pass away, and will survive many more—I mean personally, for *poetically*, I would not insult you by a comparison.

(1815, March 31. Letter 532, to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. III., p. 190.)

The paper on the Methodists [written in the *Examiner*] I redde, and agree with the writer on one point, in which you and he perhaps differ; that an addiction to poetry is very generally the result of “an uneasy mind in an uneasy body”; disease or deformity have been the attendants of many of our best. Collins mad—Chatterton, *I* think, mad—Cowper mad—Pope crooked—Milton blind—Gray (I have heard that the last was afflicted by an incurable and very grievous distemper, though not generally known) and others—I have somewhere read, however, that poets *rarely* go mad. I suppose the writer means that their insanity effervesces and evaporates in verse—may be so.

(1815, November. Letter 562, to Leigh Hunt, Vol. III., p. 247.)

I have not done a stitch of poetry since I left Switzerland, and have not, at present, the *estro* upon me: the truth is, that you are *afraid* of having a 4th Canto [of *Childe Harold*] before September, and of another copyright; but I have at present no thoughts of resuming that poem nor of beginning any other. If I write, I think of trying prose; but I dread introducing living people, or applications which might be made to living people: perhaps one day or other, I may attempt some work of fancy in prose, descriptive of Italian manners and of human passions; but at present I am preoccupied. As for poesy, mine is the *dream* of my sleeping Passions; when they are awake, I cannot speak their language, only in their Somnambulism, and just now they are not dormant.

(1817, January 2. Letter 624, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 43.)

If I live ten years longer, you will see, however, that it is not over with me—I don't mean in literature, for that is nothing; and it may seem odd enough to say, I do not think it my vocation. But you will see that I shall do something or other—the times and fortune permitting—that, “like the cosmogony, or creation of the world, will puzzle the philosophers of all ages.” But I doubt whether my constitution will hold out. I have, at intervals, exercised it most devilishly.

(1817, February 28. Letter 631, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 62.)

Some weeks ago I wrote to you my acknowledgments of W[alter] S[cott]'s article. Now I know it to be his, it cannot add to my good opinion of him,

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



Your new Canto [*Childe Harold*, Canto 4th] has expanded to one hundred and sixty-seven stanzas. It will be long, you see; and as for the notes by Hobhouse, I suspect they will be of the heroic size. You must keep M^r Hobhouse in good humour, for he is devilishly touchy yet about your Review and all which it inherits, including the Editor, the Admiralty, and its bookseller [John Murray]. I used to think that I was a good deal of an author in *amour propre* and *noli me tangere*; but these prose fellows are worst, after all, about their little comforts.

(1817, November 15. Letter 679, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 182.)

My correspondences with England are mostly on business, and chiefly with my attorney [John Hanson], who has no very exalted notion, or extensive conception, of an author's attributes; for he once took up an *Edinburgh Review*, and looking at it a minute, said to me, "So, I see you have got into the magazine,"—which is the only sentence I ever heard him utter upon literary matters, or the men thereof.

(1818, September 19. Letter 715, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 257.)

So you and M^r Foscolo [an Italian patriot and poet settled in London, contributor to the *Quarterly*], etc., want me to undertake what you call a "great work"? an Epic poem, I suppose, or some such pyramid. I'll try no such thing; I hate tasks. And then "seven or eight years!" God send us all well this day three months, let alone years. If one's years can't be better employed than in sweating

poesy, a man had better be a ditcher. And works, too!—is *Childe Harold* nothing? You have so many “*divine*” poems, is it nothing to have written a *Human* one? without any of your worn-out machinery. Why, man, I could have spun the thoughts of the four cantos of that poem into twenty, had I wanted to book-make, and its passion into as many modern tragedies. Since you want *length*, you shall have enough of *Juan*, for I’ll make 50 cantos. . . . I mean to write my best work in *Italian*, and it will take me nine years more thoroughly to master the language; and then if my fancy exist, and I exist too, I will try what I *can* do *really*. . . . Neither will I make “Ladies books” *al dilettar le femine e la plebe*. I have written from the fulness of my mind, from passion, from impulse, from many motives, but not for their “sweet voices.” I know the precise worth of popular applause, for few Scribblers have had more of it; and if I chose to swerve into their paths, I could retain it, or resume it, or increase it. But I neither love ye, nor fear ye; and though I buy with ye and sell with ye, and talk with ye, I will neither eat with ye, drink with ye, nor pray with ye.

(1819, April 6. Letter 730, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 283.)

I wrote to M^r Hobhouse the other day, and foretold that *Juan* would either fail entirely or succeed completely — there will be no medium: appearances are not favourable; but as you write the day after publication, it can hardly be decided what opinion will predominate. You seem in a fright, and doubtless with cause. Come what may, I never will

flatter the million's canting in any shape : circumstances may or may not have placed me at times in a situation to lead the public opinion, but the public opinion never led, nor ever shall lead, me. I will not sit "on a degraded throne ;" so pray put Messrs Southey, or Sotheby, or Tom Moore, or Horace Twiss upon it—they will all of them be transported with their coronation.

(1819, August 1. Letter 744, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 327.)

He [*i.e.* Murray] told me the sale [of *Don Juan*, Cantos 1st and 2nd] had not been great—1200 out of 1500 quarto I believe (which is nothing after selling 13,000 of *The Corsair* in one day) but that the "best judges, etc.," had said it was very fine, and clever, and particularly good English, and poetry, and all those consolatory things which are not, however, worth a single copy to a bookseller ;—and as to the author—of course I am in a damned passion at the bad taste of the times, and swear there is nothing like posterity, who of course must know more of the matter than their Grandfathers.

(1819, October 29. Letter 759, to Richard Belgrave Hoppner, Vol. IV., p. 371.)

You say that *one half* [of *Don Juan*] is very good : you are *wrong* ; for, if it were, it would be the finest poem in existence. *Where* is the poetry of which *one half* is good ? is it the *Æneid* ? is it *Milton's* ? is it *Dryden's* ? is it any one's except *Pope's* and *Goldsmith's*, of which *all* is good ? and yet these two last are the poets your pond poets would explode. But

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

“Rebellion lay in his way, and he found it.” I verily believe that nor you, nor any man of poetical temperament, can avoid a strong passion of some kind. It is the poetry of life. What should I have known or written, had I been a quiet, mercantile politician, or a lord in waiting? A man must travel, and turmoil, or there is no existence. Besides [in making the liaison with Countess Guiccioli] I only meant to be a Cavalier Servente, and had no idea it would turn out a romance, in the Anglo fashion.

(1821, August 31. Letter 823, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 70.)

With regard to what you say of retouching the *Juans* and the *Hints*, it is all very well; but I can't *furbish*. I am like the tyger (in poesy), if I miss my first Spring, I go growling back to my Jungle. There is no second. I can't correct; I can't, and I won't. Nobody ever succeeds in it, great or small. Tasso remade the whole of his Jerusalem; but who ever reads that version? All the world goes to the first. Pope *added* to the “*Rape of the Lock*,” but did not reduce it. You must take my things as they happen to be: if they are not likely to suit, reduce their *estimate* then accordingly. I would rather give them away than hack and hew them. I don't say that you are not right: I merely assert that I cannot better them. I must either “make a spoon, or spoil a horn.” And there's an end.

(1820, October 18. Letter 846, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 120.)

The Italian paper speaks of a “party against it”

[*i.e. Marino Faliero*]; to be sure there would be a party: can you imagine, that after having never flattered men, nor beast, nor opinion, nor politics, there would *not* be a party against a man, who is also a *popular* writer—at least a successful? why, *all parties* would be a party against.

(1821, January 20. Letter 865, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 229.)

I have been reading Grimm's *Correspondence*. He repeats frequently, in speaking of a poet, or a man of genius in any department, even in music, (Grétry, for instance,) that he must have *un ame qui se tourmente, un esprit violent*. How far this may be true, I know not; but if it were, I should be a poet "*per excellenza*;" for I have always had *un ame*, which not only tormented itself but every body else in contact with it; and an *esprit violent*, which has almost left me without any *esprit* at all. As to defining what a poet *should* be, it is not worth while, for what are *they* worth? what have they done?

(1821, January 31. "Extracts from a Diary," Vol. V., p. 196.)

And now let us be literary;—a sad falling off, but it is always a consolation. If "Othello's occupation be gone," let us take to the next best; and, if we cannot contribute to make mankind more free and wise, we may amuse ourselves and those who like it. What are you writing? I have been scribbling at intervals, and Murray will be publishing about now.

(1821, April 28. Letter 885, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 272.)

At length your two poems have been sent. I have read them over (with the notes) with great pleasure. I receive your compliments kindly and your censures temperately, which I suppose is all that can be expected among poets. Your poem is, however, excellent, and if not popular only proves that there is a *fortune* in *fame* as in every thing else in this world. Much, too, depends upon a publisher, and much upon luck; and the number of writers is such, that as the mind of a reader can only contain a certain quantum of poetry and poet's glories, he is sometimes saturated, and allows many good dishes to go away untouched (as happens at great dinners), and this not from fastidiousness but fulness.

You will have seen from my pamphlet on Bowles that our opinions are not very different. Indeed, my modesty would naturally *look* at least bashfully on being termed the "first of living minstrels" (by a brother of the art) if both our estimates of "living minstrels" in general did not leaven the praise to a sober compliment. It is something like the priority in a retreat.

(1821, May 12. Letter 890, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. V., p. 281.)

I have had a friend of your Mr Irving's—a very pretty lad—a Mr Coolidge, of Boston—only somewhat too full of poesy and "entusymusy." I was very civil to him during his few hours' stay, and talked with him much of Irving, whose writings are my delight. But I suspect that he did not take quite so much to me, from his having expected to meet a misanthropical gentleman, in wolf-skin breeches, and

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



last year, and yet it is not so difficult to give a few hours to the *Muses*. This sentence is so like * * * * that——

(1821, July 5. Letter 907, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 318.)

I am glad you are satisfied with Murray, who seems to value dead lords more than live ones. I have just sent him the . . . answer to a proposition of his. . . . The argument . . . is, that he wanted to “stint me of my sizings,” as Lear says,—that is to say, *not* to propose an extravagant price for an extravagant poem, as is becoming. Pray take his guineas, by all means—I taught him that. He made me a filthy offer of *pounds* once; but I told him that, like physicians, poets must be dealt with in guineas, as being the only advantage poets could have in the association with *them*, as votaries of Apollo.

(1821, August 24. Letter 923, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 350.)

I have no patience with the sort of trash you send me out by way of books; except Scott's novels, and three or four other things, I never saw such work or works. Campbell is lecturing, Moore idling, Southey twaddling, Wordsworth driveling, Coleridge muddling, Joanna Baillie piddling, Bowles quibbling, squabbling, and sniveling. Milman will *do*, if he don't cant too much, nor imitate Southey: the fellow has poesy in him; but he is envious and unhappy, as all the envious are. Still he is among the best of the day. Barry Cornwall will *do* better by-and-bye, I dare say, if he don't get spoilt by green tea, and the praises of

Pentonville and Paradise Row. The pity of these men is, that they never lived either in *high life*, nor in *solitude*: there is no medium for the knowledge of the *busy* or the *still* world. If admitted into high life for a season, it is merely as *spectators*—they form no part of the Mechanism thereof. Now Moore and I, the one by circumstances, and the other by birth, happened to be free of the corporation, and to have entered into its pulses and passions, *quarum partes fuimus*. Both of us have learnt by this much which nothing else could have taught us.

(1821, September 12. Letter 933, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 362.)

In general, I do not draw well with literary men: not that I dislike them, but I never know what to say to them after I have praised their last publication. There are several exceptions, to be sure; but they have either been men of the world, such as Scott, and Moore, etc., or visionaries out of it, such as Shelley, etc.: but your literary every day man and I never went well in company—especially your foreigner, whom I never could abide. Except Giordani, and—and—and—I really can't name any other) I do not remember a man amongst them, whom I ever wished to see twice, except perhaps Mezzophanti.

("Detached Thoughts," 1821 - 1822.
"Thought" 53, Vol. V., p. 435.)

The only literary news that I have heard of the plays (contrary to your friendly augury) is that the *Edinburgh R.* has attacked them all three [*Sardana-*

palus, *The Two Foscari*, and *Cain*] as well as it could. I have not seen the article. Murray writes discouragingly, and says "that nothing published this year has made the least impression" including, I presume, what he has published on my account also. You see what it is to throw pearls to swine. As long as I write the exaggerated nonsense which has corrupted the public taste, they applauded to the very echo, and, now that I have really composed, within these three or four years, some things which sh^{d.} "not willingly be let die," the whole herd snort and grumble and return to wallow in their mire. However, it is fit I sh^{d.} pay the penalty of spoiling them, as no man has contributed more than me in my earlier compositions to produce that exaggerated and false taste. It is a fit retribution that any really classical production sh^{d.} be received as these plays have been treated.

(1822, May 20. Letter - 1005, to Percy Bysshe Shelley, Vol. VI., p. 67.)

I really cannot know whether I am or am not the Genius you are pleased to call me, but I am very willing to put up with the mistake, if it be one. It is a title dearly enough bought by most men, to render it endurable, even when not quite clearly made out, which it never *can* be till the Posterity, whose decisions are merely dreams to ourselves, has sanctioned or denied it, while it can touch us no further. . . . If there are any questions which you would like to ask me as connected with your Philosophy of the literary Mind (*if* mine be a literary mind), I will answer them fairly or give a reason for *not*—good, bad, or indifferent. At present I am paying the penalty of having helped

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

attempting to trample on all thought, that their thrones shall yet be rocked to their foundations. It is Madame de Stael who says, that "all talent has a propensity to attack the strong." *I* have never flattered, whether it be or be not a proof of talent.

(1822, November. Letter 1039, to the Hon. Douglas Kinnaird (?), Vol. VI., p. 140.)

I am at this moment the most unpopular man in England, and if a whistle would call me to the pinnacle of English fame, I would not utter it. All this, however, is no reason why I should involve others in similar odium, and I have some reason to believe that "*The Liberal*" would have more success without my intervention.

(1823, March 10. Letter 1060, to John Hunt, Vol. VI., p. 171.)

Your letter, and what accompanied it, have given me the greatest pleasure. The glory and the works of the writers who have deigned to give me these volumes, bearing their names, were not unknown to me, but still it is more flattering to receive them from the authors themselves. I beg you to present my thanks to each of them in particular; and to add, how proud I am of their good opinion, and how charmed I shall be to cultivate their acquaintance, if ever the occasion should occur. The productions of M. Jouy have long been familiar to me. Who has not read and applauded *The Hermit* and *Scylla*? But I cannot accept what it has pleased your friends to call their *homage*, because there is no sovereign in the republic of letters; and

even if there were, I have never had the pretension or the power to become a usurper.

I have also to return you thanks for having honoured me with your own compositions; I thought you too young, and probably too amiable, to be an author.

(1823, July 12 (?). Letter 1100, to J. J. Coulmann, Vol. VI., p. 230.)

(2) *The Effects of Criticism and of Attack*

In town things wear a more promising aspect, and a man whose works are praised by *reviewers*, admired by *duchesses*, and sold by every bookseller of the metropolis, does not dedicate much consideration to *rustic readers*. I have now a review before me, entitled *Literary Recreations* where my *bardship* is applauded far beyond my deserts. I know nothing of the critic, but think *him* a very discerning gentleman, and *myself* a devilish *clever* fellow. His critique pleases me particularly, because it is of great length, and a proper quantum of censure is administered, just to give an agreeable *relish* to the praise. You know I hate insipid, unqualified, common-place compliment.

(1807, August 2. Letter 78, to Elizabeth Bridget Pigot, Vol. I., p. 140.)

I have been praised to the skies in the *Critical Review*, and abused greatly in another publication [*The Satirist*]. So much the better, they tell me, for

the sale of the book : it keeps up controversy, and prevents it being forgotten. Besides, the first men of all ages have had their share, nor do the humblest escape ;—so I bear it like a philosopher. It is odd two opposite critiques came out on the same day, and out of five pages of abuse, my censor only quotes *two lines* from different poems, in support of his opinion. Now, the proper way to *cut up*, is to quote long passages, and make them appear absurd, because simple allegation is no proof. On the other hand, there are seven pages of praise, and more than *my modesty* will allow said on the subject.

(1807, October 26. Letter 81, to Elizabeth Bridget Pigot, Vol. I., p. 147.)

I am of so much importance that a most violent attack is preparing for me in the next number of the *Edinburgh Review*. This I had from the authority of a friend who has seen the proof and manuscript of the critique. You know the system of the Edinburgh gentlemen is universal attack. They praise none ; and neither the public nor the author expects praise from them. It is, however, something to be noticed, as they profess to pass judgment only on works requiring the public attention. You will see this when it comes out ;—it is, I understand, of the most unmerciful description ; but I am aware of it, and hope *you* will not be hurt by its severity. Tell M^{rs} Byron not to be out of humour with them, and to prepare her mind for the greatest hostility on their part. It will do no injury whatever, and I trust her mind will not be ruffled. They defeat their object by indiscriminate abuse, and they never praise except

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



women, and *children*, could write such poetry as Ossian's."

(1808, March 28. Letter 95, to the Rev. John Becher, Vol. I., p. 186.)

Has Murray shown the work [*i.e.* *Childe Harold*] to any one? He may—but I will have no traps for applause. . . . After all, I fear he will be in a scrape with the orthodox; but I cannot help it, though I wish him well through it. As for me, "I have supped full of criticism," and I don't think that the "most dismal treatise" will stir and rouse my "fell of hair" till "Birnam wood do come to Dunsinane."

(1811, August 21. Letter 167, to R. C. Dallas, Vol. I., p. 335.)

I think the *Rejected Addresses* by far the best thing of the kind since the *Rolliad*, and wish *you* had published them. Tell the author "I forgive him, were he twenty times our satirist;" and think his imitations not at all inferior to the famous ones of Hawkins Browne. He must be a man of very lively wit, and much less scurrilous than Wits often are: altogether, I very much admire the performance, and wish it all success. The *Satirist* has taken a *new* tone as you will see: we have now, I think, finished with *C. H.*'s critics. The Editor of the *Satirist* almost ought to be thanked for his revocation; it is done handsomely, after five years' warfare.

(1812, October 19. Letter 266, to John Murray, Vol. II., p. 177.)

You say I never attempt to justify myself. You are right. At times I can't and occasionally I won't defend by explanation; life is not worth having on such terms. The only attempt I ever made at defence was in a poetical point of view—and what did it end in? not an exculpation of me, but an attack on all other persons whatsoever. I should make a prètty scene indeed if I went on defending—besides, by proving myself (supposing it possible) a good sort of quiet country gentleman, to how many people should I give more pain than pleasure? Do you think accusers like one the better for being confuted?

(1813, September 26. Correspondence with Miss Milbanke. Letter 3, Vol. III., p. 401.)

There have been some epigrams on Mr W[ard]: one I see to-day. The first I did not see, but heard yesterday. . . . I only hope that Mr W. does not believe that I had any connection with either. The Regent is the only person on whom I ever expectorated an epigram, or ever should; and even if I were disposed that way, I like and value Mr W. too well to allow my politics to contract into spleen, or to admire any thing intended to annoy him or his. I have said this much about the epigrams, because I live so much in the *opposite camp*, and, from my post as an Engineer, might be suspected as the flinger of these hand Grenadoes; but with a worthy foe I am all for open war, and not this bush-fighting, and have [not] had, nor will have, any thing to do with it. I do not know the author.

(1813, November 29. Letter 362, to John Murray, Vol. II., p. 291.)

I send you a *scratch* or *two*, the which *heal*. The *Christian Observer* is very savage [on *The Giaour*], but certainly uncommonly well written—and quite uncomfortable at the naughtiness of book and author. I rather suspect you won't much like the *present* to be more moral, if it is to share also the usual fate of your virtuous volumes.

(1813, December 3. Letter 368, to John Murray, Vol. II., p. 297.)

Some editor of some magazine has *announced* to Murray his intention of abusing the thing “*without reading it.*” So much the better; if he redde it first, he would abuse it more.

(1813, December 13. “Journal, 1813-1814,” Vol. II., p. 375.)

Of myself you speak only too highly, and you must think me strangely spoiled, or perversely peevish, even to suspect that any remarks of yours, in the spirit of candid criticism, could possibly prove unpalatable. Had they been harsh, instead of being written as they are in the indelible ink of friendly admonition, had they been the harshest—as I knew and know that you are above any personal bias, at least *against* your fellow-bards, believe me they could not have caused a remembrance, nor a moment of rankling on my part.

(1814, February 9. Letter 403, to Leigh Hunt, Vol. III., p. 28.)

The first thing a young writer must expect, and yet can least of all suffer, is *criticism*. I did not bear

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

you and I both know by experience the effect of such things upon a *young* mind, I wish *you* would take his production into dissection, and do it *gently*. I cannot, because it is inscribed to me; but I assure you this is not my motive for wishing him to be tenderly entreated, but because I know the misery, at his time of life, of untoward remarks upon first appearance.

(1814, February 28. Letter 420, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. III., p. 51.)

Silence is the only answer to the things you mention; nor should I regard that man as my friend who said a word more on the subject. I care little for attacks, but I will not submit to *defences*; and I do hope and trust that *you* have never entertained a serious thought of engaging in so foolish a controversy. Dallas's letter was, to his credit, merely as to facts which he had a right to state; I neither have nor shall take the least *public* notice, nor permit any one else to do so. If I discover the writer, then I may act in a different manner; but it will not be in writing.

An expression in your letter has induced me to write this to you, to entreat you not to interfere in any way in such a business,—it is now nearly over, and, depend upon it, *they* are much more chagrined by my silence than they could be by the best defence in the world. I do not know any thing that would vex me more than any further reply to these things.

(1814, February 28. Letter 421, to J. W. Webster, Vol. III., p. 52.)

Redde the *Edinburgh*, 44, just come out. In the

beginning of the article on Edgeworth's *Patronage*, I have gotten a high compliment, I perceive. Whether this is creditable to me, I know not; but it does honour to the editor, because he once abused me. Many a man will retract praise; none but a high-spirited mind will revoke its censure, or *can* praise the man it has once attacked. I have often, since my return to England, heard Jeffrey most highly commended by those who know him for things independent of his talents. I admire him for *this*—not because he has *praised me* (I have been so praised elsewhere and abused, alternately, that mere habit has rendered me as indifferent to both as a man at twenty-six can be to anything), but because he is, perhaps, the *only* man who, under the relations in which he and I stand, or stood, with regard to each other, would have had the liberality to act thus; none but a great soul dared hazard it. The height on which he stands has not made him giddy;—a little scribbler would have gone on cavilling to the end of the chapter. As to the justice of his panegyric, that is matter of taste. There are plenty to question it, and glad, too, of the opportunity.

(1814, March 20. "Journal, 1813-1814,"
Vol. II., p. 403.)

My dear Moore, say what you will in your preface; and quiz any thing or any body,—me if you like it. Oons! dost thou think me of the *old*, or rather *elderly* school? If one can't jest with one's friends, with whom can we be facetious.

(1814, April 9. Letter 429, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 64.)

I am sorry you should feel uneasy at what has by no means troubled me. If your editor, his correspondents, and readers are amused, I have no objection to be the theme of all the ballads he can find room for—provided his lucubrations are confined to *me* only. It is a long time since things of this kind have ceased to “fright me from my propriety”; nor do I know any similar attack which would induce me to turn again,—unless it involved those connected with me, whose qualities, I hope, are such as to exempt them in the eyes of those who bear no good-will to myself. In such a case, supposing it to occur—to *reverse* the saying of D^r Johnson,—“what the law could not do for me, I would do for myself,” be the consequences what they might.

(1815, September 25. Letter 548, to John Taylor, Vol. III., p. 220.)

Your prefatory letter to *Rimini*, I accepted as it was meant—as a public compliment and a private kindness. I am only sorry that it may, perhaps, operate against you as an inducement, and, with some, a pretext for attack, on the part of the political and personal enemies of both;—not that this can be of much consequence, for in the end the work must be judged by its merits, and, in that respect, you are well armed. Murray tells me it is going on well, and, you may depend upon it, there is a substratum of poetry, which is a foundation for solid and durable fame.

(1816, February 26. Letter 577, to Leigh Hunt, Vol. III., p. 265.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



I have lately had some news of *litteratoor*, as I heard the editor of the *Monthly* pronounce it once upon a time. I hear that W. W. has been publishing and responding to the attacks of the *Quarterly*, in the learned Perry's *Chronicle*. I read his poesies last autumn, and, amongst them found an epitaph on his bull-dog, and another on *myself*. But I beg leave to assure him (like the astrologer Partridge) that I am not only alive now, but was alive also at the time he wrote it. * * Hobhouse has (I hear, also) expectorated a letter against the *Quarterly*, addressed to me. I feel awkwardly situated between him and Gifford, both being my friends.

(1817, February 28. Letter 631, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 60.)

There was a devil of a review of him [*i.e.* Leigh Hunt] in the *Quarterly* a year ago, which he answered. All answers are imprudent: but, to be sure, poetical flesh and blood must have the last word—that's certain. I thought, and think, highly of his Poem; but I warned him of the row his favourite antique phraseology would bring him into.

(1817, April 11. Letter 644, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 104.)

I am very glad indeed that you sent me M^r Gifford's opinion [of *Manfred*] without *deduction*. Do you suppose me such a Sotheby as not to be very much obliged to him? or that in fact I was not, and am not, convinced and convicted in my conscience of this same overt act of nonsense. I shall try at it

again : in the mean time, lay it upon the shelf (the whole drama, I mean) : but pray correct your copies of the 1st and 2nd acts by the original MS.

(1817, April 14. Letter 646, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 110.)

With the Reviews I have been much entertained. It requires to be as far from England as I am to relish a periodical paper properly : it is like Soda-water in an Italian Summer.—But what cruel work you make with Lady Morgan ! You should recollect that she is a woman ; though, to be sure, they are now and then very provoking : still, as authoresses, they can do no very great harm ; and I think it a pity so much good invective should have been laid out upon her, when there is such a fine field of us Jacobin gentlemen for you to work upon. It is perhaps as bitter a Critique as ever was written, and enough to make sad work for D^r Morgan, both as a husband and an Apothecary, unless she should say as Pope did, of some attack upon him, “that it is as good for *her* as a dose of *Hartshorn*.”

(1818, February 20. Letter 687, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 201.)

Methinks I see you with a long face about *Don Juan*, anticipating the outcry and the scalping reviews that will ensue ; *all that* is my affair : do you think I do not foresee all this as well as you ? Why, Man, it will be nuts to all of them : they never had such an opportunity of being terrible ; but don't *you* be out of sorts. . . . I am particularly aware that *Don Juan* must set us all by the ears : but that is my

concern, and my beginning: there will be the *Edinburgh* and all too against it, so that, like Rob Roy, I shall have my hands full.

(1819, May 6. Letter 732, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 294.)

I am glad you think the poesy good; and as to "thinking of the effect," think *you* of the sale, and leave me to pluck the Porcupines who may point their quills at you.

(1819, June 29. Letter 741, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 320.)

Don't be alarmed. You will see me defend myself gaily—that is, if I happen to be in Spirits; and by *Spirits*, I don't mean your meaning of the word, but the spirit of a bull-dog when pinched, or a bull when pinned—it is then that they make best sport—and as my Sensations under an attack are probably a happy compound of the united energies of those amiable animals, you may perhaps see what Marrall calls "rare sport," and some good tossing and goring, in the course of the controversy. But I must be in the right cue first, and I doubt I am almost too far off to be in a sufficient fury for the purpose; and then I have effeminated and enervated myself with love and the summer in these last two months.

(1819, August 1. Letter 744, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 326.)

I should be glad to know why your *Quartering* Reviewers, at the close of *the Fall of Jerusalem*,

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

than have perished in such a manner. Poor fellow! though with such inordinate self-love he would probably have not been very happy. I read the review of *Endymion* in the *Quarterly*. It was severe,—but surely not so severe as many reviews in that and other journals upon others. I recollect the effect on me of the *Edinburgh* on my first poem; it was rage, and resistance, and redress—but not despondency nor despair. I grant that those are not amiable feelings; but in this world of bustle and broil, and especially in the career of writing, a man should calculate on his powers of *resistance* before he goes into the arena.

“Expect not life from pain nor danger free,
Nor deem the doom of man reversed for thee.”

. . . I have published a pamphlet on the Pope controversy, which you will not like. Had I known that Keats was dead—or that he was alive and so sensitive—I should have omitted some remarks upon his poetry, to which I was provoked by his *attack* upon *Pope*, and my disapprobation of *his own* style of writing.

(1821, April 26. Letter 883, to Percy Bysshe Shelley, Vol. V., p. 267.)

Is it true, what Shelley writes me, that poor John Keats died at Rome of the *Quarterly Review*? I am very sorry for it. . . . I know, by experience, that a savage review is Hemlock to a sucking author; and the one on me (which produced the *English Bards, etc.*), knocked me down—but I got up again. Instead

of bursting a blood-vessel, I drank three bottles of Claret, and began an answer, finding that there was nothing in the Article for which I could lawfully knock Jeffrey on the head, in an honourable way. However, I would not be the person who wrote the homicidal article, for all the honour and glory in the World, though I by no means approve of that School of Scribbling which it treats upon.

(1821, April 26. Letter 884, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 269.)

Did you know John Keats? They say that he was killed by a review of him in the *Quarterly*—if he be dead, which I really don't know. I don't understand that *yielding* sensitiveness. What I feel (as at this present) is an immense rage for eight-and-forty hours, and then, as usual—unless this time it should last longer.

(1821, May 14. Letter 892, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 287.)

I have just read "John Bull's letter:" it is diabolically *well* written, and full of fun and ferocity. I must forgive the dog, whoever he is, I suspect three people: one is *Hobhouse*, the other M^r Peacock (a very clever fellow), and lastly Israeli; there are parts very like Israeli; and he has a present grudge with Bowles and Southey, etc. There is something too of the author of the *Sketch-book* in the Style. Find him out.

(1821, June 29. Letter 906, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 315.)

It appears to me that there is a distinction between *native* and *foreign* criticism in the case of living authors, or at least should be; I don't speak of *Journalists* (who are the same all over the world), but where a man, with his name at length, sits down to an elaborate attempt to defame a foreigner of his acquaintance, without provocation and without legitimate object: for what can I import to the Germans? What effect can I have upon their literature? . . . I have just been turning over the homicide review of J. Keats. It is harsh certainly and contemptuous, but not more so than what I recollect of the *Edinburgh R.* of "*the Hours of Idleness*" in 1808. The Reviewer allows him "a degree of talent which deserves to be put in the right way," "rays of fancy," "gleams of Genius," and "powers of language." It is harder upon L. Hunt than upon Keats, and professes fairly to review only *one* book of his poem. Altogether, though very provoking, it was hardly so bitter as to kill, unless there was a morbid feeling previously in his system.

(1821, August 7. Letter 918, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 341.)

I have read over the poem [*i.e.* *Don Juan*, Cantos iii., iv., and v.] carefully, and I tell you, *it is poetry*. Your little envious knot of parson-poets may say what they please: time will show that I am not in this instance mistaken. . . . I see in the last two Numbers of the *Quarterly* a strong itching to assail me (see the review of the "*Etonian*"); let it, and see if they shan't have enough of it. I don't allude to Gifford, who has always been my friend, and whom I

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



would neither do good to you nor to your friends: *they* may smile *now*, and so may *you*; but if I took you all in hand, it would not be difficult to cut you up like gourds. I did as much by as powerful people at nineteen years old, and I know little as yet, in three-and-thirty, which should prevent me from making all your ribs Gridirons for your hearts, if such were my propensity. But it is *not*. Therefore let me hear none of your provocations. If any thing occurs so very *gross* as to require my notice, I shall hear of it from my personal friends. For the rest, I merely request to be left in ignorance. The same applies to opinions, *good, bad, or indifferent*, of persons in conversation or correspondence: these do not *interrupt*, but they *soil* the *current* of my *Mind*. I am sensitive enough, but *not* till I am *touched*; and *here* I am beyond the touch of the short arms of literary England, except the few feelers of the Polypus that crawl over the Channel in the way of Extract. All these precautions *in* England would be useless: the libeller or the flatterer would there reach me in spite of all; but in Italy we know little of literary England, and think less, except what reaches us through some garbled and brief extract in some miserable Gazette.

(1821, September 24. Letter 938, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 373.)

I see the way that he [*i.e.* Murray] and his *Quarterly* people are tending—they want a *row* with me, and they shall have it. I only regret that I am not in England for the *nonce*; as, here, it is hardly fair ground for me, isolated and out of the way of prompt rejoinder and information as I am. But, though

backed by all the corruption, and infamy, and patronage of their master rogues and slave renegadoes, if they do once rouse me up,

“They had better gall the devil, Salisbury.”

I have that for two or three of them, which they had better not move me to put in motion ;—and yet, after all, what a fool I am to disquiet myself about such fellows ! It was all very well ten or twelve years ago, when I was a “curled darling,” and *minded* such things. At present, I *rate* them at their true value ; but, from natural temper and bile, am not able to keep quiet.

(1821, October 28. Letter 952, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 398.)

You have received my letter (open) through M^r Kinnaird, and so, pray, send me no more reviews of any kind. I will read no more of evil or good in that line. Walter Scott has not read a review of *himself* for *thirteen years*.

(1821, November 3. Letter 954, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 472.)

Attacks upon me were to be expected ; but I perceive one upon *you* in the papers, which I confess that I did not expect. How, or in what manner, *you* can be considered responsible for what *I* publish, I am at a loss to conceive.

If *Cain* be “blasphemous,” *Paradise Lost* is blasphemous ; and the very words of the Oxford

Gentleman, "Evil, be thou my Good," are from that very poem, from the mouth of Satan; and is there anything more in that of Lucifer in the *Mystery*? *Cain* is nothing more than a drama, not a piece of argument: if Lucifer and Cain speak as the first Murderer and the first Rebel may be supposed to speak, surely all the rest of the personages talk also according to their characters—and the stronger passions have ever been permitted to the drama.

I have even avoided introducing the Deity, as in Scripture (though Milton does, and not very wisely either); but have adopted his Angel as sent to Cain instead, on purpose to avoid shocking any feelings on the subject by falling short of what all uninspired men must fall short in, viz., giving an adequate notion of the effect of the presence of Jehovah. The Old Mysteries introduced him liberally enough, and all this is avoided in the New one.

The Attempt to *bully you*, because they think it won't succeed with me, seems to me as atrocious an attempt as ever disgraced the times. What? when Gibbon's, Hume's, Priestley's, and Drummond's publishers have been allowed to rest in peace for seventy years, are *you* to be singled out for a work of *fiction*, not of history or argument? there must be something at the bottom of this—some private enemy of your own: it is otherwise incredible. I can only say, *Me, me, adsum qui feci*; that any proceedings directed against you, I beg, may be transferred to me, who am willing, and *ought*, to endure them all; that if you have lost money by the publication, I will refund any or all of the Copyright; that I desire you will say, that both *you* and *M^r Gifford* remonstrated

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

takings of every kind. I never courted it *then*, when I was young and high in blood, and one of its "curled darlings"; and do you think I would do so *now*, when I am living in a clearer atmosphere? One thing *only* might lead me back to it, and that is, to try once more if I could do any good in *politics*; but *not* in the petty politics I see now preying upon our miserable country.

Do not let me be misunderstood, however. If you speak your *own* opinions, they ever had, and will have, the greatest weight with *me*. But if you merely *echo* the *monde*, (and it is difficult not to do so, being in its favour and its ferment,) I can only regret that you should ever repeat any thing to which I cannot pay attention.

(1822, March 4. Letter 981, to Thomas Moore, Vol. VI., p. 33.)

I hear that the *Edinburgh* has attacked the three dramas, which is a bad business for *you*; and I don't wonder that it discourages you. However, *that* volume may be trusted to *Time*,—depend upon it. I read it over with some attention since it was published, and I think the time will come when it will be preferred to my other writings, though not immediately. I say this without irritation against the Critics or Criticism, whatever they may be (for I have not seen them); and nothing that has or may appear in Jeffrey's review can make me forget that he stood by me for ten good years, without any motive to do so but his own good will.

(1822, May 17. Letter 1003, to John Murray, Vol. VI., p. 64.)

The defender of *Cain* may or may not be, as you term him, "a tyro in literature:" however, I think both you and I are under great obligation to him; but I suppose *you* won't think so, unless his defence serves as an advertisement. I have read the *Edinburgh R.* in Galignani's magazine, and have not yet decided whether to answer them or not; for, if I do, it will be difficult for me not "to make sport for the Philistines" by pulling down a house or two; since, when I once take pen in hand, I *must* say what comes uppermost, or fling it away. I have not the hypocrisy to pretend impartiality, nor the temper (as it is called) to keep always from saying what may not be pleasing to the hearer or reader. What do they mean by *elaborate*? why, *you* know that they were written as fast as I could put pen to paper, and printed from the *original* MSS., and never revised but in the proofs: *look* at the *dates* and the MSS. themselves; whatever faults they have must spring from carelessness, and not from labour: they said the same of *Lara*, which I wrote while undressing after coming home from balls and masquerades, in the year of revelry 1814.

(1822, June 6. Letter 1008, to John Murray, Vol. VI., p. 76.)

I have not seen the thing you mention [*Memoirs, Historical and Critical, of the Life and Writings of Lord Byron, etc.*, London, 1822], and only heard of it casually, nor have I any desire. The price is, as I saw in some advertisements, fourteen shillings, which is too much to pay for a libel on oneself. Some one said in a letter, that it was a D^r Watkins, who deals

in the life and libel line. It must have diminished your natural pleasure, as a friend (*vide* Rochefoucault), to see yourself in it.

With regard to the Blackwood fellows, I never published any thing against them; nor, indeed, have seen their magazine (except in Galignani's extracts) for these three years past. I once wrote, a good while ago, some remarks on their review of *Don Juan*, but saying very little about themselves, and these were *not* published. If you think that I ought to follow your example (and I like to be in your company when I can) in contradicting their impudence, you may shape this declaration of mine into a similar paragraph for me. It is possible that you may have seen the little I *did* write (and never published) at Murray's:—it contained much more about Southey than about the Blacks.

If you think that I ought to do any thing about Watkins's book, I should not care much about publishing *my Memoir now*, should it be necessary to counteract the fellow. But in *that* case, I should like to look over the *press* myself. Let me know what you think, or whether I had better *not*:—at least, not the second part, which touches on the actual confines of still existing matters.

(1822, August 8. Letter 1018, to Thomas Moore, Vol. VI., p. 99.)

I had sent you back the *Quarterly*, without perusal, having resolved to read no more reviews, good, bad, or indifferent; but "who can control his fate?" Galignani, to whom my English studies are confined, has forwarded a copy of at least one half of it,

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



able than those which have happened in our time, that may reverse the present state of things—*nous verrons*.

(1823, May 17. Letter 1084, to Lady ——, Vol. VI., p. 213.)

(3) *Personal Avowals*

I. REFUSING TO IDENTIFY HIMSELF WITH HIS CHARACTERS

I much wish to avoid identifying Childe Harold's character with mine, and that, in sooth, is my second objection to my name appearing in the title-page.

(1811, August 21. Letter 167, to R. C. Dallas, Vol. I., p. 335.)

I by no means intend to identify myself with *Harold*, but to *deny* all connection with him. If in parts I may be thought to have drawn from myself, believe me it is but in parts, and I shall not own even to that. As to the *Monastic dome*, etc., I thought those circumstances would suit him as well as any other, and I could describe what I had seen better than I could invent. I would not be such a fellow as I have made my hero for all the world.

(1811, October 31. Letter 206, to R. C. Dallas, Vol. II., p. 66.)

He [*i.e.* Hobhouse] told me an odd report,—that *I* am the actual Conrad, the veritable Corsair, and that part of my travels are supposed to have passed in privacy. Um!—people sometimes hit near the truth; but never the whole truth. H. don't know

what I was about the year after he left the Levant; nor does any one—nor—nor—nor—however, it is a lie—but, “I doubt the equivocation of the fiend that lies like truth.”

(1814, March 10. “Journal, 1813-1814,” Vol. II., p. 399.)

I must here observe, and it is at once ludicrous and vexatious to be compelled so frequently to repeat the same thing,—that my case, as an author, is peculiarly hard, in being everlastingly taken, or mistaken for my own protagonist. It is unjust and particular. I never heard that my friend Moore was set down for a fire-worshipper on account of his *Guebre*; that Scott was identified with Roderick Dhu, or with Balfour of Burley; or that, notwithstanding all the magicians in *Thalaba*, any body has ever taken M^r Southey for a conjurer; whereas I have had some difficulty in extricating me even from *Manfred*, who, as M^r Southey slyly observes in one of his articles in the *Quarterly*, “met the devil on the Jungfrau and bullied him:” and I answer M^r Southey, who has apparently, in his poetical life, not been so successful against the great enemy, that, in this, *Manfred* exactly followed the sacred precept,—“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

(1820, March 15. Byron's reply to Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine* for August 1819, made in a letter to J. D. Israeli, Esq., Vol. IV., p. 475.)

What you say about Galignani's two biographies is very amusing: and, if I were not lazy, I would

certainly do what you desire [*i.e.* “write a sort of mock-heroic account of himself, outdoing, in horrors and wonders, all that had yet been related or believed of him”]. But I doubt my present stock of facetiousness—that is, of good *serious* humour, so as not to let the cat out of the bag. I wish *you* would undertake it. I will forgive and *indulge* you (like a Pope) beforehand, for any thing ludicrous, that might keep those fools in their own dear belief that a man is a *loup garou*.

I suppose I told you that the *Giaour* story had actually some foundation on facts; or, if I did not, you will one day find it in a letter of Lord Sligo's, written to me *after* the publication of the poem. I should not like marvels to rest on any account of my own, and shall say nothing about it. However, the *real* incident is still remote enough from the poetical one, being just such as, happening to a man of any imagination, might suggest such a composition. The worst of any *real* adventures is that they involve living people—else M^{rs} ——'s, ——,'s etc., are as “German to the matter” as M^r Maturin could desire for his novels.

(1821, December 12. Letter 966, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 493.)

My ideas of a character may run away with me: like all imaginative men, I, of course, embody myself with the character while I *draw* it, but not a moment after the pen is from off the paper.

(1822, March 4. Letter 981, to Thomas Moore, Vol. VI., p. 32.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

though the circumstances which are the ground-work make it * * * heigh-ho!

(1813, November 16. "Journal, 1813-1814,"
Vol. II., p. 320.)

To withdraw *myself* from *myself* (oh that cursed selfishness!) has ever been my sole, my entire, my sincere motive in scribbling at all; and publishing is also the continuance of the same object, by the action it affords to the mind, which else recoils upon itself.

(1813, November 27. "Journal, 1813-1814,"
Vol. II., p. 351.)

All convulsions end with me in rhyme; and to solace my midnights, I have scribbled another Turkish story—not a Fragment—which you will receive soon after this. It does not trench upon your kingdom in the least, and if it did, you would soon reduce me to my proper boundaries. You will think, and justly, that I run some risk of losing the little I have gained in fame, by this further experiment on public patience; but I have really ceased to care on that head. I have written this, and published it, for the sake of the *employment*,—to wring my thoughts from reality, and take refuge in "imaginings," however "horrible"; and, as to success! those who succeed will console me for a failure—excepting yourself and one or two more, whom luckily I love too well to wish one leaf of their laurels a tint yellower. This is the work of a week, and will be the reading of an hour to you, or even less,—and so, let it go.

(1813, November 30. Letter 364, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 293.)

The *Bride of Abydos* was published on Thursday the second of December; but how it is liked or disliked, I know not. Whether it succeeds or not is no fault of the public, against whom I can have no complaint. But I am much more indebted to the tale than I can ever be to the most partial reader; as it wrung my thoughts from reality to imagination—from selfish regrets to vivid recollections—and recalled me to a country replete with the *brightest* and *darkest*, but always most *lively* colours of my memory.

(1813, December 5. “Journal, 1813-1814,”
Vol. II., p. 361.)

And so you have been publishing *Margaret of Anjou* and an Assyrian tale, and refusing W[edderburn] W[ebster]’s *Waterloo*, and the *Hue and Cry*. I know not which most to admire, your rejections or acceptances. I believe that *prose* is, after all, the most reputable, for certes, if one could foresee—but I won’t go on—that is, with this sentence; but poetry is, I fear, incurable. God help me! if I proceed in this scribbling, I shall have frittered away my mind before I am thirty; but it is at times a real relief to me.

(1816, October 5. Letter 608, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 372.)

I have begun, and am proceeding in, a study of the Armenian language, which I acquire, as well as I can, at the Armenian convent, where I go every day to take lessons of a learned Friar, and have

gained some singular and not useless information with regard to the literature and customs of that oriental people. . . . I find the language (which is *twin*, the *literal* and the *vulgar*) difficult, but not invincible (at least I hope not). I shall go on. I found it necessary to twist my mind round some severer study ; and this, as being the hardest I could devise here, will be a file for the serpent.

(1816, December 4. Letter 617, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 18.)

By way of divertisement, I am studying daily, at an Armenian monastery, the Armenian language. I found that my mind wanted something craggy to break upon ; and this—as the most difficult thing I could discover here for an amusement—I have chosen, to torture me into attention. It is a rich language, however, and would amply repay any one the trouble of learning it. I try, and shall go on ;—but I answer for nothing, least of all for my intentions or my success.

(1816, December 5. Letter 615, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 9.)

I rejoice to hear of your forthcoming in February—though I tremble for the “magnificence,” which you attribute to the new *Childe Harold*. I am glad you like it ; it is a fine indistinct piece of poetical desolation, and my favourite. I was half mad during the time of its composition, between metaphysics, mountains, lakes, love unextinguishable, thoughts unutterable, and the nightmare of my own delinquencies.

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



and in very great distress of mind about some private things of my own ; but *you would* have it : so I sent it to you, and to make it lighter, *cut* it in two—but I can't piece it together again. I can't cobble : I must “either make a spoon or spoil a horn,”—and there's an end ; for there's no remeid : but I leave you free will to suppress the *whole*, if you like it.

(1820, April 23. Letter 794, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 16.)

[Your first note was queer enough ; but your two other letters, with Moore's and Gifford's opinions, set all right again. I told you before that I can never *recast* any thing. I am like the Tiger : if I miss the first spring, I go growling back to my Jungle again ; but if I *do hit*, it is crushing.

(1821, November 3. Letter 954, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 471.)]

In my last I told you of a cargo of “Poeshie,” which I had sent to M[urray] at his own impatient desire ;—and, now he has got it, he don't like it, and demurs. Perhaps he is right. I have no great opinion of any of my last shipment, except a translation from Pulci, which is word for word, and verse for verse.

I am in the third act of a Tragedy ; but whether it will be finished or not, I know not : I have, at this present, too many passions of my own on hand to do justice to those of the dead.

(1820, June 9. Letter 804, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 42.)

I feel exactly as you do about our "art," but it comes over me in a kind of rage every now and then, like * * * *, and then, if I don't write to empty my mind, I go mad. As to that regular, uninterrupted love of writing, which you describe in your friend, I do not understand it. I feel it as a torture, which I must get rid of, but never as a pleasure. On the contrary, I think composition a great pain.

(1821, January 2. Letter 858, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 214.)

For several days I have not written any thing except a few answers to letters. In momentary expectation of an explosion of some kind, it is not easy to settle down to the desk for the higher kinds of composition. I *could* do it, to be sure, for, last summer, I wrote my drama in the very bustle of Madame la Contessa G.'s divorce, and all its process of accompaniments. At the same time, I also had the news of the loss of an important lawsuit in England. But these were only private and personal business; the present is of a different nature.

I suppose it is this, but have some suspicion that it may be laziness, which prevents me from writing; especially as Rochefoucault says that "laziness often masters them all"—speaking of the *passions*. If this were true, it could hardly be said that "idleness is the root of all evil," since this is supposed to spring from the passions only: *ergo*, that which masters all the passions (laziness, to wit) would in so much be a good. Who knows?

(1821, January 31. "Extracts from a Diary," Vol. V., p. 195.)

You seem to think that I could not have written the *Vision*, etc., under the influence of low spirits; but I think there you err. A man's poetry is a distinct faculty, or soul, and has no more to do with the everyday individual than the Inspiration with the Pythoness when removed from her tripod.

(1821, November 16. Letter 959, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 479.)

With regard to what you say about publishing, I have before declared, that I cannot take it ill; it is the manner, and not the matter, of such things which can offend; and yours, in the present instance is plain—to the purpose, meant well, and, I trust, not ill taken: no one has greater right to say what he pleases to me than you, who have so much trouble and bother on my account.

But, acknowledging all this, I shall not the less continue to publish, till I have run my vein dry. You say it is not profitable—be it so; I shall do so for nothing; till, indeed, it becomes actually a loss; and this, because it is an occupation of mind, like play, or any other stimulus.

(1822, February 25. Letter 978, to the Hon. Douglas Kinnaird (?), Vol. VI., p. 24.)

I have lately been rather unwell, and out of Spirits, as you will suppose, if you have received the letter announcing the loss of one of my children. This event has driven me into some attempts at Composition, to hold off reality; but with no great success.

(1822, May 16. Letter 1001, to John Murray, Vol VI., p. 62.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

vinced that any thing I may have formerly uttered in the boyish rashness of my misplaced resentment had made as little impression as it deserved to make, I should hardly have the confidence—perhaps your Lordship may give it a stronger and more appropriate appellation—to send you a quarto of the same scribbler. But your Lordship, I am sorry to observe to-day, is troubled with the gout; if my book can produce a *laugh* against itself or the author, it will be of some service. If it can set you to *sleep*, the benefit will be yet greater; and as some facetious personage observed half a century ago, that “poetry is a mere drug,” I offer you mine as a humble assistant to the *eau medicinale*. I trust you will forgive this and all my other buffooneries, and believe me to be, with great respect, etc.

(1812, March 5. Letter 228, to Lord Holland, Vol. II., p. 106.)

I have just been honoured with your letter.—I feel sorry that you should have thought it worth while to notice the “evil works of my nonage,” as the thing is suppressed *voluntarily*, and your explanation is too kind not to give me pain. The Satire was written when I was very young and very angry, and fully bent on displaying my wrath and my wit, and now I am haunted by the ghosts of my wholesale assertions.

(1812, July 6. Letter 241, to Walter Scott, Vol. II., p. 131.)

At least tell me how far you have proceeded. Do you think me less interested about your works, or

less sincere than our friend Ruggiero? I am not—and never was. In that thing of mine, the *English Bards*, at the time when I was angry with all the world, I never “disparaged your parts,” although I did not know you personally.

(1813, August 28. Letter 324, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 254.)

I have had a most kind letter from Lord Holland on “*The Bride of Abydos*,” which he likes, and so does Lady H. This is very good-natured in both, from whom I don’t deserve any quarter. Yet I *did* think, at the time, that my cause of enmity proceeded from Holland House, and am glad I was wrong, and wish I had not been in such a hurry with that confounded satire, of which I would suppress even the memory;—but people, now they can’t get it, make a fuss, I verily believe, out of contradiction.

(1813, November 17. “Journal, 1813-1814,” Vol. II., p. 321.)

I remember the effect of the *first Edinburgh Review* on me. I heard of it six weeks before,—read it the day of its denunciation,—dined and drank three bottles of claret, (with S. B. Davies, I think,) neither ate nor slept the less, but, nevertheless, was not easy till I had vented my wrath and my rhyme, in the same pages, against every thing and every body. Like George, in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, “the fate of my paradoxes” would allow me to perceive no merit in another. I remembered only the maxim of my boxing-master, which, in my youth, was found useful

in all general riots,—“Whoever is not for you is against you—*mill* away right and left,” and so I did;—like Ishmael, my hand was against all men, and all men's anent me. I did wonder, to be sure, at my own success—

“And marvels so much wit is all his own,”

as Hobhouse sarcastically says of somebody (not unlikely myself, as we are old friends);—but were it to come over again, I would *not*. I have since redde the cause of my couplets, and it is not adequate to the effect. C * * told me that it was believed I alluded to poor Lord Carlisle's nervous disorder in one of the lines. I thank Heaven I did not know it—and would not, could not, if I had. I must naturally be the last person to be pointed on defects or maladies.

(1813, November 22. “Journal, 1813-1814,”
Vol. II., p. 330.)

To-night I went with young Henry Fox [Lord Holland's son] to see *Nourjahad*, a drama, which the *Morning Post* hath laid to my charge, but of which I cannot even guess the author. I wonder what they will next inflict upon me. They cannot well sink below a melodrama; but that is better than a satire, (at least, a personal one,) with which I stand truly arraigned, and in atonement of which I am resolved to bear silently all criticisms, abuses, and even praises, for bad pantomimes never composed by me, without even a contradictory aspect. I suppose the root of this report is my loan to the manager of my Turkish drawings for his dresses, to which he was more

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



benumb some of my friends. *I* am quite silent, and “hush’d in grim repose.” The frequency of the assaults has weakened their effects,—if ever they had any ;—and, if they had had much, I should hardly have held my tongue, or withheld my fingers. It is something quite new to attack a man for abandoning his resentments. I have heard that previous praise and subsequent vituperation were rather ungrateful, but I did not know that it was wrong to endeavour to do justice to those who did not wait till I had made some amends for former and boyish prejudices, but received me into their friendship, when I might still have been their enemy.

(1814, February 16. Letter 411, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 38.)

You mention my “Satire,” lampoon, or whatever you or others please to call it. I can only say that it was written when I was very young and very angry, and has been a thorn in my side ever since ; more particularly as almost all the persons animadverted upon became subsequently my acquaintances, and some of them my friends, which is “heaping fire upon an enemy’s head,” and forgiving me too readily to permit me to forgive myself. The part applied to you is pert, and petulant, and shallow enough ; but, although I have done every thing in my power to suppress the circulation of the whole thing, I shall always regret the wantonness or generality of many of its attempted attacks.

(1815, March 31. Letter 532, to Samuel T. Coleridge, Vol. III., p. 192.)

I send you a thing whose greatest value is its present rarity; the present copy [of *English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers*] contains some manuscript corrections previous to an edition which was printed, but not published, and, in short, all that is in the suppressed edition, the fifth, except twenty lines in addition, for which there was not room in the copy before me. There are in it *many* opinions I have altered, and some which I retain; upon the whole, I wish that it had never been written, though my sending you this copy (the only one in my possession, unless one of Lady B.'s be excepted) may seem at variance with this statement;—but my reason for this is very different; it is, however, the only gift I have made of the kind this many a day.

P.S.—You probably know that it is not in print for sale, nor ever will be (if I can help it) again.

(1815, October 15. Letter 553, to Leigh Hunt, Vol. III., p. 225.)

I am glad the book sent reached you. I forgot to tell you the story of its suppression, which shan't be longer than I can make it. My motive for writing that poem was, I fear, not so fair as you are willing to believe it; I was angry, and determined to be witty, and, fighting in a crowd, dealt about my blows against all alike, without distinction or discernment. When I came home from the East, among other new acquaintances and friends, politics and the state of the Nottingham rioters—(of which county I am a landholder, and Lord Holland Recorder of the town,)—led me by the good offices of Mr Rogers, into the society of Lord Holland, who, with Lady Holland,

was particularly kind to me ; about March, 1812, this introduction took place, when I made my first speech on the Frame Bill, in the same debate in which Lord Holland spoke. Soon after this, I was correcting the fifth edition of *E. B.* for the press, when Rogers represented to me that he knew Lord and Lady Holland would not be sorry if I suppressed any further publication of that Poem ; and I immediately acquiesced, and with great pleasure, for I had attacked them upon a fancied and false provocation, with many others ; and neither was, nor am, sorry to have done what I could to stifle that ferocious rhapsody. This was subsequent to my acquaintance with Lord Holland, and was neither expressed nor understood, as a *condition* of that acquaintance. Rogers told me, he thought I ought to suppress it ; I thought so too, and did it as far as I could, and that's all. I sent you my copy, because I consider your having it much the same as having it myself. Lady Byron has one ; I desire not to have any other ; and sent it only as a curiosity and a memento.

(1815, October 22. Letter 554, to Leigh Hunt, Vol. III., p. 227.)

With regard to the *English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers*, I have no concealments, nor desire to have any from you or yours ; the suppression occurred (I am as sure as I can be of anything) in the manner stated : I have never regretted that, but very often the composition, that is, the *humeur* of a great deal in it. As to the quotation you allude to, I have no right, nor indeed desire, to prevent it ; but, on the

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

Reviewers had been suppressed some time previously to my meeting him at M^r Rogers's. Our worthy host might indeed have told him as much, as it was at his representation that I suppressed it. A new edition of that lampoon was preparing for the press, when M^r Rogers represented to me, that "I was *now* acquainted with many of the persons mentioned in it, and with some on terms of intimacy;" and that he knew "one family in particular to whom its suppression would give pleasure." I did not hesitate one moment—it was cancelled instantly; and it is no fault of mine that it has ever been republished. When I left England, in April, 1816, with no very violent intentions of troubling that country again, and amidst scenes of various kinds to distract my attention,—almost my last act, I believe, was to sign a power of attorney, to yourself, to prevent or suppress any attempts (of which several had been made) at a republication. It is proper that I should state, that the persons with whom I was subsequently acquainted, whose names had occurred in that publication, were made my acquaintances at their own desire, or through the unsought intervention of others. I never, to the best of my knowledge, sought a personal introduction to any. Some of them to this day I know only by correspondence; and with one of those it was begun by myself, in consequence, however, of a polite verbal communication from a third person.

I have dwelt for an instant on these circumstances, because it has sometimes been made a subject of bitter reproach to me to have endeavoured to *suppress* that Satire. I never shrunk, as those who know me

know, from any personal consequences which could be attached to its publication. Of its subsequent suppression, as I possessed the copyright, I was the best judge and the sole master. The circumstances which occasioned the suppression I have now stated; of the motives, each must judge according to his candour or malignity. M^r Bowles does me the honour to talk of "noble mind," and "generous magnanimity;" and all this because "the circumstance would have been explained, had not the book been suppressed." I see no "nobility of mind" in an act of simple Justice; and I hate the word "*Magnanimity*," because I have sometimes seen it applied to the grossest of imposters by the greatest of fools; but I would have "explained the circumstance," notwithstanding "the Suppression of the book," if M^r B. had expressed any desire that I should. As the "gallant Galbraith" says to "Baillie Jarvie," "Well, the devil take the mistake, and all that occasioned it." I have had as great and greater mistakes made about me personally and poetically, once a month for these last ten years, and never cared very much about correcting one or the other, at least after the first eight and forty hours had gone over them.

(1821, February 7. Byron's first letter to Murray on the Bowles-Pope Controversy, Vol. V., pp. 538 and 539.)

CHAPTER IV

BYRON'S ESTIMATE OF CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH POETS

Keats

A YOUNG person learning to write poetry, and beginning by teaching the art, . . . a tadpole of the Lakes, a young disciple of the six or seven new schools, in which he has learnt to write such lines and such sentiments as the above. He says "easy was the task" of imitating Pope, or it may be of equalling him, I presume. I recommend him to try before he is so positive on the subject, and then compare what he will have *then* written and what he has *now* written with the humblest and earliest compositions of Pope, produced in years still more youthful than those of Mr Keats when he invented his new "Essay on Criticism," entitled *Sleep and Poetry* (an ominous title), from whence the above canons are taken.

(1820, March 15. Byron's reply to Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine* for August 1819, contained in a letter to J. D. Israeli, Esq., Vol. IV., p. 491.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



Of the praises of that little dirty blackguard Keates in the *Edinburgh*, I shall observe, as Johnson did when Sheridan the actor got a *pension*: "What! has *he* got a pension? Then it is time that I should give up *mine*." Nobody could be prouder of the praises of the *Edinburgh* than I was, or more alive to their censure, as I showed in *E[nglish] B[ards] and S[cotch] R[evue]ers*. At present *all the men* they have ever praised are degraded by that insane article. Why don't they review and praise "Solomon's Guide to Health"? it is better sense and as much poetry as Johnny Keates.

(1820, November 18. Letter 846, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 120.)

I am very sorry for it [*i.e.* Keats's death], though I think he took the wrong line as a poet, and was spoilt by Cockneyfying, and Suburbing, and versifying Tooke's Pantheon and Lempriere's Dictionary.

(1821, April 26. Letter 884, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 269.)

Are you aware that Shelley has written an elegy on Keats, and accuses the *Quarterly* of killing him?

"Who killed John Keats?"

"I," says the Quarterly,
So savage and Tartarly;
" 'Twas one of my feats."

"Who shot the arrow?"

"The poet-priest Milman
(So ready to kill man),
Or Southey or Barrow."

You know very well that I did not approve of Keats's poetry, or principles of poetry, or of his abuse of Pope; but as he is dead, omit *all* that is said *about him* in any *MSS.* of mine, or publication. His *Hyperion* is a fine monument, and will keep his name. I do not envy the man who wrote the article: your review people have no more right to kill than any other foot pads. However, he who would die of an article in a review would probably have died of something else equally trivial.

[The *Quarterly* article reviewing "Endymion"—which appeared in the number dated April 1818 and published September 1818—was written by John Wilson Croker and probably "touched-up" by William Gifford, the editor.]

(1821, July 30. Letter 914, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 331.)

I return the proofs of the 2nd pamphlet [on Bowles]. I leave it to your choice and M^r Gifford's, to publish it or not, with such omissions as he likes. You must, however, omit the whole of the observations against the *Suburban School*: they are meant against Keats, and I cannot war with the dead—particularly those already killed by Criticism. Recollect to omit all that portion *in any case*.

(1821, August 4. Letter 916, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 337.)

With the rest of his [*i.e.* Leigh Hunt's] young people

I have no acquaintance, except through some things of theirs (which have been sent out without my desire), and I confess that till I had read them I was not aware of the full extent of human absurdity. Like Garrick's "Ode to Shakspeare," *they* "*defy criticism.*" These are of the personages who decry Pope. One of them, a M^r John Ketch, has written some lines against him, of which it were better to be the subject than the author. M^r Hunt redeems himself by occasional beauties; but the rest of these poor creatures seem so far gone that I would not "march through Coventry with them, that's flat"! were I in M^r Hunt's place. To be sure, he has "led his ragamuffins where they will be well peppered"; but a system-maker must receive all sorts of proselytes. . . . It may appear harsh to accumulate passages of this kind from the work of a young man in the outset of his career. But, if he will set out with assailing the Poet whom of all others a young aspirant ought to respect and honour and study—if he will hold forth in such lines his notions on poetry, and endeavour to recommend them by terming such men as Pope, Dryden, Swift, Addison, Congreve, Young, Gay, Goldsmith, Johnson, etc., etc., "*a School of dolts,*" he must abide by the consequences of his unfortunate distortion of intellect. But like Milbourne he is "the fairest of Critics," by enabling us to compare his own compositions with those of Pope at the same age, and on a similar subject, viz. Poetry. As M^r K. does not want imagination nor industry, let those who have led him astray look to what they have done. Surely they must feel no little remorse in having so perverted the taste and feelings of this

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

please to accept it, friendship, may be permanent. I have been lucky enough to preserve some friends from a very early period, and I hope, as I do not (at least now) select them lightly, I shall not lose them capriciously. I have a thorough esteem for that independence of spirit which you have maintained with sterling talent, and at the expense of some suffering.

(1813, December 2. Letter 367, to Leigh Hunt, Vol. II., p. 296.)

To-day . . . sent to Leigh Hunt (an acquisition to my acquaintance—through Moore—of last summer) a copy of the two Turkish tales. Hunt is an extraordinary character, and not exactly of the present age. He reminds me more of the Pym and Hampden times—much talent, great independence of spirit, and an austere, yet not repulsive, aspect. If he goes on *qualis ab incepto*, I know few men who will deserve more praise or obtain it. I must go and see him again;—the rapid succession of adventure, since last summer, added to some serious uneasiness and business, have interrupted our acquaintance; but he is a man worth knowing; and though, for his own sake, I wish him out of prison, I like to study character in such situations. He has been unshaken, and will continue so. I don't think him deeply versed in life;—he is the bigot of virtue (not religion), and enamoured of the beauty of that "empty name," as the last breath of Brutus pronounced, and every day proves it. He is, perhaps, a little opinionated, as all men who are the *centre* of *circles*, wide or narrow—the Sir Oracles, in whose name two or three

are gathered together—must be, and as even Johnson was; but, withal, a valuable man, and less vain than success and even the consciousness of preferring “the right to the expedient” might excuse.

(1813, December 1. “Journal, 1813-1814,”
Vol. II., p. 357.)

Your poem [*i.e.* the *Feast of the Poets*] I read long ago in the *Reflector*, and it is not too much to say it is the best “Session” we have, and with a more difficult subject, for we are neither so good nor so bad (taking the best and worst) as the wits of the olden time. . . . You are hardly fair enough to Rogers. Why *tea*? You might surely have given him supper, if only a sandwich.

(1814, February 9. Letter 403, to Leigh
Hunt, Vol. III., p. 28.)

I send you Hunt, with his Ode [*i.e.* “Ode for the Spring of 1814”]; the thoughts are good, but the expressions *buckram* except here and there.

(1814 [undated]. Letter 435, to John
Murray, Vol. III., p. 69.)

I have not seen Hunt's sonnets nor descent of Liberty [*i.e.* *The Descent of Liberty*, a Masque, composed by Hunt in prison]: he has chosen a pretty place wherein to compose the last.

(1814, September 7. Letter 490, to John
Murray, Vol. III., p. 132.)

Thanks for the *Mask*; there is not only poetry and thought in the body, but much research and good

old reading in your prefatory matter. I hope you have not given up your narrative poem, of which I heard you speak as in progress. It rejoices me to hear of the well-doing and regeneration of the *Feast*, setting aside my own selfish reasons for wishing it success.

(1815, May-June 1. Letter 537, to Leigh Hunt, Vol. III., p. 200.)

You have excelled yourself—if not all your contemporaries—in the canto [*i.e.* *Story of Rimini*, Canto 3] which I have just finished. I think it above the former books; but this is as it should be; it rises with the subject, the conception appears to me perfect, and the execution perhaps as nearly so as verse will admit. There is more originality than I recollect to have seen elsewhere within the same compass, and frequent and great happiness of expression. In short, I must turn to the faults, or what appear to be such to me: these are not many, nor such as may not be easily altered, being almost all *verbal*;—and of the same kind as I pretended to point out in the former cantos, viz., occasional quaintness and obscurity, and a kind of a harsh and yet colloquial compounding of epithets, as if to avoid saying common things in a common way; *difficile est propriè communia dicere* seems at times to have met with in you a literal translator. . . . The Poem as a whole will give you a very high station; but where is the conclusion? Don't let it cool in the composition!

(1815, October 22. Letter 554, to Leigh Hunt, Vol. III., p. 226.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



the *E. R.* would but do it justice, and set it before the public eye, where it ought to be.

(1816, February 29. Letter 578, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 267.)

I am sorry to hear of your row with Hunt: but suppose him to be exasperated by the *Quarterly* and your refusal to *deal*; and when one is angry and edits a paper I should think the temptation too strong for literary nature, which is not always human. I can't conceive in what, and for what, he abuses you: what have you done? you are not an author—nor a politician—nor a public character; I know no scrape you have tumbled into. I am the more sorry for this, because I introduced you to Hunt, and because I believe him to be a very good man; but till I know the particulars, I can give no opinion.

(1817, June 4. Letter 654, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 129.)

Hunt's letter is probably the exact piece of vulgar coxcombry you might expect from his situation. He is a good man, with some poetical elements in his chaos; but spoilt by the Christ Church Hospital and a Sunday newspaper,—to say nothing of the Surrey gaol, which conceited him into a martyr. But he is a good man. When I saw *Rimini* in MS., I told him that I deemed it good poetry at bottom, disfigured only by a strange style. His answer was, that his style was a system, or *upon system*, or some such cant; and, when a man talks of system, his case is hopeless: so I said no more to him, and very little to any one else. He believes his trash of vulgar phrases

tortured into compound barbarisms to be *old* English ; and we may say of it as Aimwell says of Captain Gibbet's regiment, when the Captain calls it an "old corps,"—"the *oldest* in Europe, if I may judge by your uniform." He sent out his *Foliage* [*Foliage, or Poems Original and Translated*, 1818] by Percy Shelley * * *, and, of all the ineffable Centaurs that were ever begotten by Self-love upon a Night-mare, I think "this monstrous Sagittary" the most prodigious. *He* (Leigh H.) is an honest charlatan, who has persuaded himself into a belief of his own impostures, and talks Punch in pure simplicity of heart, taking himself (as poor Fitzgerald said of *himself* in the *Morning Post*) for *Vates* in both senses, or nonsenses, of the word. Did you look at the translations of his own [*i.e.* translations from Homer] which he prefers to Pope and Cowper, and says so? . . .

But Leigh Hunt is a good man, and a good father—see his Odes to all the Masters Hunt;—a good husband—see his Sonnet to M^{rs} Hunt;—a good friend—see his Epistles to different people;—and a great coxcomb and a very vulgar person in every thing about him. But that's not his fault, but of circumstances.

(1818, June 1. Letter 701, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 237.)

The most rural of these gentlemen is my friend Leigh Hunt, who lives at Hampstead. I believe that I need not disclaim any personal or poetical hostility against that gentleman. A more amiable man in society I know not ; nor (when he will allow his sense to prevail over his sectarian principles) a better writer.

When he was writing his *Rimini*, I was not the last to discover its beauties, long before it was published. Even then I remonstrated against its vulgarisms; which are the more extraordinary, because the author is any thing but a vulgar man. M^r Hunt's answer was, that he wrote them upon principle; they made part of his *system!!!* I then said no more. When a man talks of his system, it is like a woman's talking of her *virtue*. I let them talk on. Whether there are writers who could have written *Rimini*, as it might have been written, I know not; but M^r Hunt is, probably, the only poet who could have had the heart to spoil his own Capo d'Opera. . . . I would also observe to my friend Hunt, that I shall be very glad to see him at *Ravenna*, not only for my sincere pleasure in his company, and the advantage which a thousand miles or so of travel might produce to a "natural" poet, but also to point out one or two little things in "*Rimini*" which he probably would not have placed in his opening to that poem, if he had ever *seen Ravenna*;—unless, indeed, it made "part of his system!!"

I must also crave his indulgence for having spoken of his disciples—by no means an agreeable or self-sought subject. If they had said nothing of *Pope*, they might have remained "alone with their glory," for aught I should have said or thought about them or their nonsense. But if they interfere with the "little Nightingale" of Twickenham, they may find others who will bear it—I won't. . . .

The grand distinction of the under forms of the new school of poets is their *vulgarity*. By this I do not mean that they are *coarse*, but "shabby-genteel," as

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

unwell. Do, pray, answer *this* letter immediately. Do send Hunt any thing in prose or verse of yours, to start him handsomely—any lyrical, *irical*, or what you please.

(1822, July 12. Letter 1016, to Thomas Moore, Vol. VI., p. 96.)

I preferred retaining the purchased furniture, but always intended that you should have as good or better in its place. I have a particular dislike to anything of Shelley's being within the same walls with M^{rs} Hunt's children. They are dirtier and more mischievous than Yahoos. What they can't destroy with their filth they will with their fingers. . . . Poor Hunt, with his six little blackguards, are coming slowly up; as usual he turned back once—was there ever such a *kraal* out of the Hottentot country.

(1822, October 6. Letter 1028, to Mrs Shelley, Vol. VI., p. 119.)

I am afraid the Journal *is* a *bad* business, and won't do; but in it I am sacrificing *myself* for others—I can have no advantage in it. I believe the *brothers H.* to be honest men; I am sure that they are poor ones. They have not a rap: they pressed me to engage in this work, and in an evil hour I consented: still I shall not repent, if I can do them the least service. I have done all I can for Leigh Hunt since he came here; but it is almost useless: his wife is ill, his six children not very tractable, and in the affairs of this world he himself is a child. The death of Shelley left them totally aground; and I could not

see them in such a state without using the common feelings of humanity, and what means were in my power, to set them afloat again.

(1822, October 9. Letter 1029, to John Murray, Vol. VI., p. 122.)

And now to a less agreeable topic, of which *pars magna es*—you Murray of Albemarle S^t and the other Murray of Bridge Street—“Arcades Ambo” (“*Murrays both*”) “*et cant-are pares*”: ye, I say, between you, are the Causes of the prosecution of John Hunt, Esq^{re}. on account of the *Vision*. You, by sending him an incorrect copy, and the other, by his function [of solicitor to the Constitutional Association, a body formed for the purpose of prosecuting persons charged with offences against Church and State]. Egad, but H.’s Counsel will lay it on you with a trowel for your tergiversation as to the MSS. etc., whereby poor H. (and, for anything I know, myself—I am willing enough) is likely to be impounded. Now, do you see what you and your friends do by your injudicious rudeness?—actually cement a sort of connection which you strove to prevent, and which, had the H.’s *prospered*, would not in all probability have continued. As it is, I will not quit them in their adversity, though it should cost me character, fame, money, and the usual et cetera.

My original motives I already explained (in the letter which you thought proper to show): they are the *true* ones, and I abide by them, as I tell you, and I told L^h H^t. when he questioned me on the subject of that letter. He was violently hurt, and never will forgive me at bottom; but I can’t help that. I never

meant to make a parade of it; but if he chose to question me, I could only answer the plain truth: and I confess I did not see anything in the letter to hurt him, unless I said he was "a bore," which I don't remember. Had their Journal gone on well, and I could have aided to make it better for them, I should then have left them, after my safe pilotage off a lee shore, to make a prosperous voyage by themselves. As it is, I can't, and would not, if I could, leave them amidst the breakers. As to any community of feeling, thought, or opinion, between L. H. and me, there is little or none: we meet rarely, hardly ever; but I think him a good-principled and able man, and must do as I would be done by. I do not know what world he has lived in, but I have lived in three or four; and none of them like his Keats and Kangaroo *terra incognita*. Alas! poor Shelley! how he would have laughed had he lived, and how we used to laugh now and then, at various things, which are grave in the Suburbs!

(1822, December 25. Letter 1048, to John Murray, Vol. VI., p. 156.)

Of Hunt I see little—once a month or so, and then on his own business, generally. You may easily suppose that I know too little of Hampstead and his satellites to have much communion or community with him. My whole present relation to him arose from Shelley's unexpected wreck. You would not have had me leave him in the street with his family, would you? and as to the other plan you mention, you forget how it would *humiliate* him—that his writings should be supposed to be dead weight!

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



course with such scrupulous delicacy, that I have forborne intruding advice which I thought might be disagreeable, lest he should impute it to what is called "taking advantage of a man's situation."

(1823 [undated]. Letter 1062, to Mrs
[? Shelley], Vol. VI., p. 174.)

I have been far more persecuted than you, as you may judge by my present decadence,—for I take it that I am as low in popularity and bookselling as any writer can be. At least, so my friends assure me—blessings on their benevolence! This they attribute to Hunt; but they are wrong—it must be, partly at least, owing to myself; be it so. As to Hunt, I prefer *not* having turned him to starve in the streets to any personal honour which might have accrued from some genuine philanthropy. I really act upon principle in this matter, for we have nothing much in common; and I cannot describe to you the despairing sensation of trying to do something for a man who seems incapable or unwilling to do any thing further for himself,—at least, to the purpose. It is like pulling a man out of a river who directly throws himself in again. For the last three or four years Shelley assisted, and had once actually extricated him. I have since his [*i.e.* Shelley's] demise,—and even before,—done what I could: but it is not in my power to make this permanent. I want Hunt to return to England, for which I would furnish him with the means in comfort; and his situation *there*, on the whole, is bettered, by the payment of a portion of his debts, etc.; and he would be on the spot to continue his Journal, or Journals, with his brother,

who seems a sensible, plain, sturdy, and enduring person.

(1823, April 2. Letter 1064, to Thomas Moore, Vol. VI., p. 182.)

Southey

Do read mathematics.—I should think *X plus Y* at least as amusing as the *Curse of Kehama*, and much more intelligible. Master Southey's poems *are*, in fact, what parallel lines might be—viz. prolonged *ad infinitum* without meeting any thing half so absurd as themselves.

“What news, what news? Queen Oracca,
What news of scribblers five?
S[outhey], W[ordsworth], C[oleridge], L[loy]d, and L[amb](e)?
All damn'd, though yet alive.”

[Byron is parodying a stanza of Southey's “Queen Orraca and the Five Martyrs of Morocco” :—

“What news, O King Affonso,
What news of the Friars five?
Have they preached to the Miramamolin;
And are they still alive?”]

(1811, December 6. Letter 210, to William Harness, Vol. II., p. 74.)

In yesterday's paper, immediately under an advertisement on “Strictures in the Urethra,” I see—most appropriately consequent—a poem with “*strictures* on L^d. B., M^r Southey and others,” though I am afraid neither “M^r S.'s” poetical distemper,

nor "mine," nor "others," is of the suppressive or stranguary kind. You may read me the prescription of this kill or cure physician.

(1813, June 12. Letter 300, to John Murray, Vol. II., p. 216.)

Stick to the East; the oracle, Stael, told me it was the only poetical policy. The North, South, and West, have all been exhausted; but from the East, we have nothing but Southey's unsaleables,—and these he has contrived to spoil, by adopting only their most outrageous fictions. His personages don't interest us, and yours will. You will have no competitor; and, if you had, you ought to be glad of it. The little I have done in that way is merely a "voice in the wilderness" for you; and if it has had any success, that also will prove that the public are orientalising, and pave the path for you.

(1813, August 28. Letter 324, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 255.)

Yesterday, at Holland House, I was introduced to Southey—the best-looking bard I have seen for some time. To have that poet's head and shoulders, I would almost have written his Sapphics. He is certainly a prepossessing person to look on, and a man of talent, and all that, and—*there* is his eulogy.

(1813, September 27. Letter 335, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 266.)

I have been passing my time with Rogers and

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

day!—I would not take a knighthood for thy fortune.”

(1815, January 10. Letter 521, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 169.)

Southey's *Wat Tyler* [*i.e.* its unauthorised and piratical publication] is rather awkward; but the Goddess Nemesis has done well. He is—I will not say what, but I wish he was something else. I hate all intolerance, but most the intolerance of Apostacy, and the wretched vehemence with which a miserable creature, who has contradicted himself, lies to his own heart, and endeavours to establish his sincerity by proving himself a rascal—*not* for changing his opinions, but for persecuting those who are of less malleable matter. It is no disgrace to M^r Southey to have written *Wat Tyler*, and afterwards to have written his birthday or Victory odes (I speak only of their *politics*), but it is something, for which I have no words, for this man to have endeavoured to bring to the stake (for such would he do) men who think as he thought, and for no reason but because they think so still, when he has found it convenient to think otherwise. Opinions are made to be changed, or how is truth to be got at? We don't arrive at it by standing on one leg, or on the first day of our setting out, but, though we may jostle one another on the way, that is no reason why we should strike or trample. *Elbowing's* enough. I am all for moderation, which profession of faith I beg leave to conclude by wishing M^r Southey damned—not as a poet but as a politician. There is a place in Michael Angelo's last judgment in the Sistine Chapel which would

just suit him, and may the like await him in that of our Lord and (*not his*) Saviour Jesus Christ—Amen!

(1817, May 9. Letter 649, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 117.)

I have finished the first canto . . . of a poem in the style and manner of *Beppo*, encouraged by the good success of the same. It is called *Don Juan*, and is meant to be a little quietly facetious upon every thing. But I doubt whether it is not—at least, as far as it has yet gone—too free for these very modest days. However, I shall try the experiment, anonymously; and if it don't take, it will be discontinued. It is dedicated to Southey in good, simple, savage verse, upon the Laureat's politics, and the way he got them. [The *Dedication* was suppressed till after Byron's death.]

(1818, September 19. Letter 715, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 260.)

Lord Lauderdale set off from hence twelve days ago, accompanied by a cargo of poesy directed to Mr Hobhouse—all spick and span, and in MS. You will see what it is like. I have given it to Master Southey, and he shall have more before I have done with him. I understand the scoundrel said, on his return from Switzerland two years ago, that “Shelley and I were in a league of Incest, etc., etc.” He is a burning liar! for the women to whom he alludes are not sisters—one being Godwin's daughter, by Mary Wollstonecraft, and the other daughter of the *present* (second) M^{rs} Gⁿ, by a *former* husband; and in the next place, if they had even been so [*i.e.* sisters], there was no *promiscuous intercourse* whatever.

You may make what I say here as public as you please—more particularly to Southey, whom I look upon, and will say as publicly, to be a dirty, lying rascal; and will prove it in ink—or in his blood, if I did not believe him to be too much of a poet to risk it. If he had forty reviews at his back—as he has the *Quarterly*—I would have at him in his scribbling capacity, now that he has begun with me; but I will do nothing underhand. Tell him what I say from *me*, and everyone else you please. You will see what I have said if the parcel arrives safe. I understand *Coleridge* went about repeating Southey's lie with pleasure. I can believe it, for I had done him what is called a favour. I can understand Coleridge's abusing me, but how or why *Southey*—whom I had never obliged in any sort of way, or done him the remotest service—should go about fibbing and calumniating is more than I can readily comprehend. Does he think to put me down with his *canting*—not being able to do so with his poetry? We will try the question. I have read his review of Hunt, where he has attacked Shelley in an oblique and shabby manner. Does he know what that review has done? I will tell you. It has *sold* an edition of the *Revolt of Islam*, which, otherwise, nobody would have thought of reading, and few who read can understand—I for one.

Southey would have attacked me, too, there, if he durst, further than by hints about Hunt's friends in general; and some outcry about an "Epicurean system," carried on by men of the most opposite habits, tastes, and opinions in life and poetry (I believe), that ever had their names in the same

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



or not, as you think best for any reasons of your own.

(1819, April 3. Letter 729, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 281.)

The ladies are *not* sisters. One is Godwin's daughter by Mary Wollstonecraft, and the other the *present* M^{rs} Godwin's daughter by a former husband. So much for Scoundrel Southey's story of "*incest*"; neither was there *any promiscuous intercourse* whatever. Both are an invention of that execrable villain Southey, whom I will term so as publicly as he deserves.

(1819, May 15. Letter 733, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 298.)

How far this man, who, as author of *Wat Tyler*, has been maintained by the Lord Chancellor guilty of a treasonable and blasphemous libel, and denounced in the House of Commons, by the upright and able member for Norwich, as a "rancorous renegado," be fit for sitting as a judge upon others, let others judge. He has said that for this expression "he brands William Smith on the forehead as a calumniator," and that "the mark will outlast his epitaph." How long William Smith's epitaph will last, and in what words it will be written, I know not, but William Smith's words form the epitaph itself of Robert Southey. He has written *Wat Tyler*, and taken the office of poet laureate—he has, in the *Life of Henry Kirke White*, denominated reviewing "the ungentle craft," and has become a reviewer—he was one of the projectors of a scheme, called "pantisocracy,"

for having all things, including women, in common, (*query*, common women?), and he sets up as a moralist—he denounced the battle of Blenheim, and he praised the battle of Waterloo—he loved Mary Wollstoncraft, and he tried to blast the character of her daughter (one of the young females mentioned)—he wrote treason, and serves the king—he was the butt of the *Anti-Jacobin*, and he is the prop of the *Quarterly Review*; licking the hands that smote him, eating the bread of his enemies, and internally writhing beneath his own contempt,—he would fain conceal, under anonymous bluster, and a vain endeavour to obtain the esteem of others, his leprous sense of his own degradation. What is there in such a man to “envy”? Who ever envied the envious? Is it his birth, his name, his fame, or his virtues, that I am to “envy”? I was born of the aristocracy, which he abhorred; and am sprung, by my mother, from the kings who preceded those whom he has hired himself to sing. It cannot, then, be his birth. As a poet, I have, for the past eight years, had nothing to apprehend from a competition; and for the future, “that life to come in every poet’s creed,” it is open to all. I will only remind M^r Southey, in the words of a critic, who, if still living, would have annihilated Southey’s literary existence now and hereafter, as the sworn foe of charlatans and imposters, from Macpherson downwards, that “those dreams were Settle’s once and Ogilby’s”; and for my own part, I assure him, that whenever he and his sect are remembered, I shall be proud to be “forgot.” That he is not content with his success as a poet may reasonably be believed—he has been

the nine-pin of reviews; the *Edinburgh* knocked him down, and the *Quarterly* set him up; the government found him useful in the periodical line, and made a point of recommending his work to purchasers, so that he is occasionally bought (I mean his books, as well as the author), and may be found on the same shelf, if not upon the table, of most of the gentlemen employed in the different offices. With regard to his private virtues, I know nothing—of his principles, I have heard enough. As far as having been, to the best of my power, benevolent to others, I do not fear the comparison; and for the errors of the passions, was Mr Southey *always* so tranquil and stainless? Did he *never* covet his neighbour's wife? Did he never calumniate his neighbour's wife's daughter, the offspring of her he coveted? So much for the apostle of pantisocracy. . . .

Mr Southey may applaud himself to the world, but he has his own heartiest contempt; and the fury with which he foams against all who stand in the phalanx which he forsook, is, as William Smith described it, "the rancour of the renegado," the bad language of the prostitute who stands at the corner of the street, and showers her slang upon all, except those who may have bestowed upon her her "little shilling."

Hence his quarterly overflowings, political and literary, in what he has himself termed "the ungentle craft," and his especial wrath against Mr Leigh Hunt, notwithstanding that Hunt has done more for Wordsworth's reputation as a poet (such as it is), than all the Lakers could in their interchange of self-praises for the last twenty-five years. . . . A paper of the *Connoisseur* says, that "it is observed by the

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

M^r B[owles], apparently not relying entirely upon his own arguments [in the Pope controversy], has, in person or by proxy, brought forward the names of Southey and Moore. M^r Southey “agrees entirely with M^r B. in his *invariable* principles of poetry.” The least that M^r B. can do in return is to approve the “invariable principles of M^r Southey.” I should have thought that the word “*invariable*” might have stuck in Southey’s throat, like Macbeth’s “Amen.” I am sure it did in mine, and I am not the least consistent of the two, at least as a voter. [Byron’s first letter on the Bowles-Pope controversy was published at the time.]

(1821, February 7. First letter to Murray on the Bowles-Pope controversy, Vol. V., p. 558.)

By this post I have sent my nightmare to balance the incubus of Southey’s impudent anticipation of the Apotheosis of George the Third. I should like you to take a look over it, as I think there are two or three things in it which might please “our pair hill folk.”

(1821, October 6. Letter 946, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 387.)

M^r S[outhey], with a cowardly ferocity, exults over the anticipated “death-bed repentance” of the objects of his dislike; and indulges himself in a pleasant “Vision of Judgment,” in prose as well as verse, full of impious impudence. What M^r S.’s sensations or ours may be in the awful moment of leaving this state

of existence neither he nor we can pretend to decide. In common, I presume, with most men of any reflection, *I* have not waited for a “death-bed” to repent of many of my actions, notwithstanding the “diabolical pride” which this pitiful renegado in his rancour would impute to those who scorn *him*. Whether upon the whole the good or evil of my deeds may preponderate is not for me to ascertain; but, as my means and opportunities have been greater, I shall limit my present defence to an assertion (easily proved, if necessary,) that I, “in my degree,” have done more real good in any one given year, since I was twenty, than M^r Southey in the whole course of his shifting and turncoat existence. There are several actions to which I can look back with an honest pride, not to be damped by the calumnies of a hireling. There are others to which I recur with sorrow and repentance; but the only *act* of *my* life of which M^r Southey can have any real knowledge, as it was one which brought me in contact with a near connexion of his own [*i.e.* the sending of £100 to Coleridge], did no dishonour to that connexion nor to me.

I am not ignorant of M^r Southey’s calumnies on a different occasion, [he] knowing them to be such, which he scattered abroad on his return from Switzerland against me and others: they have done him no good in this world; and, if his creed be the right one, they will do him less in the next. What *his* “death-bed” may be, it is not my province to predicate: let him settle it with his Maker, as I must do with mine. There is something at once ludicrous and blasphemous in this arrogant scribbler of all work sitting down to

deal damnation and destruction upon his fellow creatures, with Wat Tyler, the Apotheosis of George the Third, and the Elegy on Martin the regicide, all shuffled together in his writing desk.

(1821, December 11. Note in the appendix to *The Two Foscari*, quoted Vol. VI., p. 388.)

I am glad that you accepted the Inscription [of *Cain*]. I meant to have inscribed *The Foscari* to you instead ; but, first, I heard that *Cain* was thought the least bad of the two as a composition ; and 2dly, I have abused Southey like a pickpocket, in a note to *The Foscari*, and I recollected that he is a friend of yours (though not of mine), and that it would not be the handsome thing to dedicate to one friend any thing containing such matters about another. However, I'll work the Laureate before I have done with him, as soon as I can muster Billingsgate therefor. I like a row, and always did from a boy, in the course of which propensity, I must needs say, that I have found it the most easy of all to be gratified, personally and poetically.

(1822, January 12. Letter 969, to Sir Walter Scott, Bart., Vol. VI., p. 3.)

I have got Southey's pretended reply [made in *The Courier* of January 5, 1822] to which I am surprised that you do not allude. What remains to be done is to call him out. The question is, would he come ? for, if he would not, the whole thing would appear ridiculous, if I were to take a long and expensive journey to no purpose.

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



Douglas K. refused to forward my message to M^r Southey—*why*, he himself can explain.

(1822, May 17. Letter 1004, to Thomas Moore, Vol. VI., p. 65.)

I hear, by the way that Rogue Southey says that he does not know what I meant by hinting that I had been kind to one of his connections. All I know is that in 1815 M^r *Sotheby* wrote to me saying that Coleridge was in great distress, and that the literary fund had given him 20—or more pounds [and] wishing me to help him, and that I immediately sent him one hundred pounds, being at a time when I could not command 150 in the world, having (as you know) duns and executions in my house daily and weekly. I also recommended him to you as a publisher. I have no wish to trumpet this; but if Rogue Southey denies it, I shall prove it to his face.

I also hear that he says his wife was not a milliner at Bath. Ask Luttrell. I have heard M^r Nugent, his friend, say twenty times that he knew both her and Coleridge's Sara at Bath, before they were married and that they were Milliners or Dressmaker's apprentices. There is no harm if they were, that I know—nor did I mean it as any.

(1822, September 11. Letter 1024, to John Murray, Vol. VI., p. 112.)

You have also withheld the publication of *Werner*, etc. *Why?* You can make no plea about *terms*—since none are settled—on that subject. If you are offended with, or affronted by, M^r J. Hunt, that is

not a reason to juggle with *me*, and I will show you that I am not disposed to permit you to take advantage of my absence in a manner which, whatever may be your motive, can do little credit to you—and less to your instigators—for I firmly believe that there is some one behind the curtain playing you off upon this occasion. I know enough of the baseness of M^r Southey and his employers to believe them capable of anything, and as for yourself, though I am very unwilling to believe you acting, *wilfully and wittingly*, as their tool, you leave me no other supposition but that, either by menaces or persuasions, they are rendering you an instrument of their purposes—personal and political. “On *fair* ground I could beat forty of them,” but not if my Armourer proves treacherous and spoils my weapons.

(1822, October 24. Letter 1032, to John Murray, Vol. VI., p. 129.)

Wordsworth

Though I have written a paper (a review of Wordsworth), which appears in the same work [*i.e.* in *Monthly Literary Recreations*], I am ignorant of every other person concerned in it—even the editor, whose name I have not heard.

(1807, August 2. Letter 78, to Elizabeth B. Pigot, Vol. I., p. 140.)

The volumes before us are by the author of Lyric Ballads, a collection which has not undeservedly met with a considerable share of public applause. The characteristics of M^r Wordsworth's muse are simple

and flowing, though occasionally inharmonious verse; strong, and sometimes irresistible appeals to the feelings, with unexceptionable sentiments. Though the present work may not equal his former efforts, many of the poems possess a native elegance, natural and unaffected, totally devoid of the tinsel embellishments and abstract hyperboles of several contemporary sonneteers. The last sonnet in the first volume, p. 152, is perhaps the best, without any novelty in the sentiments, which we hope are common to every Briton at the present crisis; the force and expression is that of a genuine poet, feeling as he writes:—

“Another year! another deadly blow!
Another mighty empire overthrown!” etc.

The song at the feast of Brougham Castle, the Seven Sisters, the Affliction of Margaret — of —, possess all the beauties, and few of the defects, of the writer: the following lines from the last are in his first style:—“Ah! little doth the young one dream,” etc.

The pieces least worthy of the author are those entitled “Moods of my own Mind.” We certainly wish these “Moods” had been less frequent, or not permitted to occupy a place near works which only make their deformity more obvious; when Mr W. ceases to please, it is by “abandoning” his mind to the most commonplace ideas, at the same time clothing them in language not simple, but puerile. What will any reader or auditor, out of the nursery, say to such namby-pamby as “Lines written at the foot of Brother’s Bridge”? “The cock is crowing,” etc. “The ploughboy is whooping anon, anon,” etc.,

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

I should think M^r Hogg, for his own sake as well as yours, would be “critical” as Iago himself, in his editorial capacity; and that such a publication [*i.e.* a publication on the lines of Dodsley’s “Collection of Poems . . . by Several Hands”] would answer his purpose and yours too, with tolerable management. You should, however, have a good number to start with—I mean *good* in *quality*; in these days, there [can] be little fear of not coming up to the mark in quantity. There must be many “fine things” in Wordsworth; but I should think it difficult to make *six* quartos (the amount of the whole) all fine, particularly the Pedlar’s portion of the poem; but there can be no doubt of his powers to do almost any thing.

(1814, September 7. Letter 490, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 131.)

Pray don’t make me an exception to the “Long live King Richard” of your bards in the “Feast.” I do allow him [*i.e.* Wordsworth] to be “the prince of the bards of his time,” upon the judgment of those who must judge more impartially than I probably do. I acknowledge him as I acknowledge the Houses of Hanover and Bourbon, the—not the “one-eyed monarch of the blind”—but the blind monarch of the one-eyed. I merely take the liberty of a free subject to vituperate certain of his edicts—and that only in private.

(1815, October 7. Letter 552, to Leigh Hunt, Vol. III., p. 225.)

I take leave to differ with you on Wordsworth, as freely as I once agreed with you; at that time I gave him credit for a promise, which is unfulfilled. I still think his capacity warrants all you say of *it* only, but that his performances since *Lyrical Ballads* are miserably inadequate to the ability which lurks within him: there is undoubtedly much natural talent spilt over the *Excursion*; but it is rain upon rocks—where it stands and stagnates, or rain upon sands—where it falls without fertilising. Who can understand him? Let those who do, make him intelligible. Jacob Behmen, Swedenborg, and Joanna Southcote, are mere types of this arch-apostle of mystery and mysticism. But I have done,—no, I have not done, for I have two petty, and perhaps unworthy objections in small matters to make to him, which, with his pretensions to accurate observation, and fury against Pope's false translation of "the Moonlight scene in Homer" [*Iliad*, VIII., lines 687-698 of Pope's version], I wonder he should have fallen into;—these be they:—He says of Greece, in the body of his book [*i.e.* in *Excursion*, Book IV.]—that it is a land of

“ *Rivers, fertile plains, and sounding shores,
Under a cope of variegated sky.*”

The rivers are dry half the year, the plains are barren, and the shores *still* and *tideless* as the Mediterranean can make them; the sky is any thing but variegated, being for months and months but “darkly, deeply, beautifully blue.”—The next is in his notes, where he talks of our “Monuments crowded together in the busy, etc., of a large town,” as compared with the

“still seclusion of a Turkish cemetery in some *remote* place.” This is pure stuff; for *one* monument in our churchyards there are *ten* in the Turkish, and so crowded, that you cannot walk between them; that is, divided merely by a path or road; and as to “*remote* places,” men never take the trouble in a barbarous country, to carry their dead very far; they must have lived near to where they were buried. There are no cemeteries in “*remote* places,” except such as have the cypress and the tombstone still left, where the olive and the habitation of the living have perished. . . . These things I was struck with, as coming peculiarly in my own way; and in both of these he is wrong; yet I should have noticed neither, but for his attack on Pope for a like blunder, and a peevish affectation about him of despising a popularity which he will never obtain. I write in great haste, and, I doubt, *not* much to the purpose; but you have it hot and hot, just as it comes, and so let it go. By-the-way, both he and you go too far against Pope’s “So when the moon,” etc.; it is no translation, I know; but it is not such false description as asserted. I have read it on the spot; there is a burst, and a lightness, and a glow about the night in the Troad, which makes the “planets vivid,” and the “pole glowing.” The moon is—at least the sky is, clearness itself; and I know no more appropriate expression for the expansion of such a heaven—o’er the scene—the plain—the sky—Ida—the Hellespont—Simois—Scamander—and the Isles—than that of a “flood of glory.”

(1815, September-October 30. Letter 557,
to Leigh Hunt, Vol. III., p. 238.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



tion might rather show his esteem for five shillings than his low estimate of D^r Southey; but considering that when he was in his need, and Southey had a shilling, Wordsworth is said to have had generally a sixpence out of it, it has an awkward sound in the way of valuation. This anecdote was told me by persons who, if quoted by name, would prove that its genealogy is poetical as well as true. I can give my authority for this.

I see nothing in these men as poets, or as individuals — little in their talents, and less in their characters—to prevent honest men from expressing for them considerable contempt, in prose or rhyme, as it may happen. M^r Southey has the *Quarterly* for his field of rejoinder, and M^r Wordsworth his postscripts to *Lyrical Ballads*, where the two great instances of the sublime are taken from himself and Milton. “Over her own sweet voice the stock-dove broods”; that is to say, she has the pleasure of listening to herself, in common with M^r Wordsworth upon most of his public appearances. “What divinity doth hedge” these persons, that we should respect them? Is it Apollo? Are they not of those who called Dryden’s *Ode* “a drunken song”? who have discovered that Gray’s *Elegy* is full of faults, (see Coleridge’s *Life*, Vol. I. *note*, for Wordsworth’s kindness in pointing this out to him,) and have published what is allowed to be the very worst prose that ever was written, to prove that Pope was no poet, and that William Wordsworth is?

In other points, are they respectable, or respected? Is it on the open avowal of apostasy, or the patronage

of government, that their claim is founded? Who is there who esteems those parricides of their own principles? They are, in fact, well aware that the reward of their change has been any thing but honour. The times have preserved a respect for political consistency, and, even though changeable, honour the unchanged.

Wordsworth was peddling his lyrical ballads, and brooding a preface, to be succeeded in due course by a postscript, both couched in such prose as must give peculiar delight to those who have read the prefaces of Pope and Dryden; scarcely less celebrated for the beauty of their prose, than for the charms of their verse. Wordsworth is the reverse of Molière's gentleman who had been "talking prose all his life, without knowing it"; for he thinks that he has been all his life writing both prose and verse, and neither of what he conceives to be such can be properly said to be either one or the other.

Goldsmith has anticipated the definition of the Lake poetry, as far as such things can be defined. "Gentlemen, the present piece is not of your *common epic poems*, which come from the press like paper kites in summer; there are none of your Tarnuses or Didos in it; *it is an historical description of nature*. I only beg you'll endeavour to make your souls in unison with mine, *and hear with the same enthusiasm with which I have written*." Would not this have made a proper proem to the *Excursion*, and the poet and his pedler? It would have answered perfectly for that

purpose, had it not unfortunately been written in good English.

I will not go as far as Wordsworth in his post-script, who pretends that *no* great poet ever had immediate fame; which being interpreted, means that William Wordsworth is not quite so much read by his cotemporaries as might be desirable. This assertion is as false as it is foolish. . . . Ariosto was permitted to pass free by the public robber who had read the *Orlando Furioso*. I would not recommend M^r Wordsworth to try the same experiment with his *Smugglers*. . . . Milton's politics kept him down. But the Epigram of Dryden, and the very sale of his work, in proportion to the less reading time of its publication, prove him to have been honoured by his cotemporaries. I will venture to assert, that the sale of the *Paradise Lost* was greater in the first four years after its publication, than that of *The Excursion* in the same number, with the difference of nearly a century and a half between them of time, and of thousands in point of general readers. Notwithstanding M^r Wordsworth's having pressed Milton into his service as one of those not presently popular, to favour his own purpose of proving that our grandchildren will read *him* (the said William Wordsworth,) I would recommend him to begin first with our grandmothers. But he need not be alarmed; he may yet live to see all the envies pass away, as Darwin and Seward, and Hoole, and Hole, and Hoyle have passed away; but their declension will not be his ascension: he is essentially a bad writer, and all the failures of others can never strengthen him. He may have a sect, but he

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

last in self-degradation, this Thraso of poetry has long been a Gnatho in Politics, and may be met in print at some booksellers and several trunkmakers, and in person at dinner at Lord Lonsdale's.

(1820, Spring. Fragment dealing with Wordsworth's poetry, Vol. VI., p. 381.)

No *more modern* poesy, I pray; neither Mrs Hewoman's, nor any female or male Tadpole of Poet Wordsworth's, nor any of his ragamuffins.

(1820, August 12. Letter 816, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 64.)

“It is owing to this neglect on the part of your German translators that you are not aware of the works of William Wordsworth, who has a baronet in London [*i.e.* Sir George Beaumont] who draws him frontispieces and leads him about to dinners and to the play; and a Lord in the country, who gave him a place in the Excise—and a cover at his table. You do not know perhaps that this Gentleman is the greatest of all poets past—present and to come—besides which he has written an ‘*Opus Magnum*’ in prose—during the late election for Westmoreland. [*Two Addresses to the Freeholders of Westmoreland, Kendal, 1818.*] His principal publication is entitled ‘*Peter Bell*’ which he has withheld from the public for ‘*one and twenty years*’—to the irreparable loss of all those who died in the interim, and will have no opportunity of reading it before the resurrection.”

(1820, October 14. For *Marino Faliero*. Dedication to Baron Goethe, etc., etc., etc., Vol. V., p. 101.)

There's an Ode for you, is it not?—worthy

“Of Wordsworth, the grand metaquizzical poet,
A man of vast merit, though few people know it;
The perusal of whom (as I told *you* at Mestri)
I owe, in great part, to my passion for pastry.”

Mestri and Fusina are the “trajects, or common ferries,” to Venice; but it was from Fusina that you and I embarked, though “the wicked necessity of rhyming” has made me press Mestri into the voyage.

(1821, January 22. Letter 866, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 230.)

Chatterton is never vulgar, nor Wordsworth, nor the higher of the Lake School, though they treat of low life in all its branches.

(1821, March 25. Second Letter of Byron's to Murray on the Bowles-Pope controversy. Further Addenda, Vol. V., p. 591.)

Coleridge

Coleridge is lecturing. “Many an old fool,” said Hannibal to some such lecturer, “but such as this, never.”

(1811, December 6. Letter 210, to William Harness, Vol. II., p. 75.)

Coleridge has been lecturing against Campbell. Rogers was present, and from him I derive the

information. We are going to make a party to hear this Manichean of poesy.

(1811, December 8. Letter 212, to William Harness, Vol. II., p. 78.)

Coleridge has attacked the *Pleasures of Hope*, and all other pleasures whatsoever. M^r Rogers was present, and heard himself indirectly *rowed* by the lecturer. We are going in a party to hear the new Art of Poetry by this reformed schismatic; and were I one of these poetical luminaries, or of sufficient consequence to be noticed by the man of lectures, I should not hear him without an answer. For you know, “an a man will be beaten with brains, he shall never keep a clean doublet.” Campbell will be desperately annoyed. I never saw a man (and of him I have seen very little) so sensitive;—what a happy temperament! I am sorry for it; what can *he* fear from criticism?

(1811, December 8. Letter 213, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. II., p. 83.)

Yesterday I went with Moore to Sydenham to visit Campbell. He was not visible, so we jogged homeward merrily enough. To-morrow I dine with Rogers, and am to hear Coleridge, who is a kind of rage at present.

(1811, December 15. Letter 217, to William Harness, Vol. II., p. 90.)

I have the *Christabelle* safe, and am glad to see it in such progress; surely a little effort would complete

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



apparition, or wraith of his mistress, to warn him of his destiny, as he sits among the ruins of an old temple.

I write to you in the greatest hurry. I know not what you may think of this. If you like, I will cut out the passage, and do as well as I can without,—or what you please.

(1815, October 27. Letter 555, to Samuel T. Coleridge, Vol. III., p. 228.)

By the way, if poor Coleridge—who is a man of wonderful talent, and in distress, and about to publish two volumes of Poesy and Biography, and who has been worse used by the critics than ever we were—will you, if he comes out, promise me to review him favourably in the *Edinburgh Review*? Praise him I think you must, but you will also praise him *well*,—of all things the most difficult. It will be the making of him. This must be a secret between you and me, as Jeffrey might not like such a project;—nor, indeed, might C[oleridge] himself like it. But I do think he only wants a pioneer and a sparkle or two to explode most gloriously.

(1815, October 28. Letter 556, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 232.)

When you have been enabled to form an opinion on M^r Coleridge's MS. [that of *Zapolya*, or, more probably, of *Christabel*] you will oblige me by returning it, as, in fact, I have no authority to let it out of my hands. I think most highly of it, and feel anxious

that you should be the publisher ; but if you are not, I do not despair of finding those who will.

(1815, November 4. Letter 561, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 246.)

"Christabel"—I won't have any one sneer at "Christabel" : it is a fine wild poem.

(1816, September 30. Letter 606, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 369.)

I introduce Coleridge and *Christabel*, and Coleridge runs away with your money ; . . . and . . . I am the innocent Isthmus (damn the word ! I can't spell it, though I have crossed that of Corinth a dozen times) of these enmities.

(1817, April 9. Letter 643, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 99.)

Have you had no new Babe of Literature sprung up to replace the dead, the distant, the tired, and the retired ? no prose, no verse, no *nothing* ?

"No infant Sotheby, whose dauntless head
Translates, misunderstood, a deal of German ;
No city Wordsworth, more admired than read,
No drunken Coleridge with a new "Lay Sermon."

(1817, July 15. Letter 665, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 151.)

Of Coleridge, I shall say nothing—*why*, he may divine.

Mr Coleridge, the future *vates*, poet and seer of the *Morning Post*, (an honour also claimed by Mr Fitzgerald, of the *Rejected Addresses*,) who ultimately prophesied the downfall of Buonaparte, to which he himself mainly contributed, by giving him the nickname of "*the Corsican*," was then employed in predicating [*sic*] the damnation of Mr Pitt, and the desolation of England, in the two very best copies of verses he ever wrote: to wit, the infernal eclogue of *Fire, Famine, and Slaughter*, and the *Ode to the departing Year*.

(1820, March 15. Byron's reply to Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine*, contained in a letter to J. D. Israeli, Esq., Vol. IV., pp. 484 and 486.)

I can understand the pretensions of the aquatic gentlemen of Windermere to what Mr Braham terms "*entusymusy*," for lakes, and mountains, and daffodils, and buttercups; but I should be glad to be apprized of the foundation of the London propensities of their imitative brethren to the same "high argument." Southey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge have rambled over half Europe, and seen Nature in most of her varieties (although I think that they have occasionally not used her very well); but what on earth—of earth, and sea, and Nature—have the others seen? Not a half, nor a tenth part so much as Pope. While they

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

with both ; so that (with the exception of the Turks and your humble servant) you were in very good company. I defy Murray to have exaggerated his Royal Highness's opinion of your powers, nor can I pretend to enumerate all he said on the subject ; but it may give you pleasure to hear that it was conveyed in language which would only suffer by my attempting to transcribe it, and with a tone and taste which gave me a very high idea of his abilities and accomplishments, which I had hitherto considered, as confined to *manners*, certainly superior to those of any living *gentleman*.

(1812, July 6. Letter 241, to Walter Scott, Vol. II., p. 134.)

Send me "*Rokeby*,"—who the deuce is he?—no matter, he has good connections, and will be well introduced.

(1812, September 5. Letter 243, to John Murray, Vol. II., p. 139.)

I thirst for Scott's *Rokeby* ; let me have y^e first-begotten copy.

(1812, September 14. Letter 245, to John Murray, Vol. II., p. 144.)

I have received and read the *British Review* [criticising *The Giaour*]. I really think the writer in most parts very right. The only mortifying thing is the accusation of imitation. *Crabbe's* passage I never saw ; and Scott I no further meant to follow

than in his *lyric* measure, which is Gray's, Milton's, and any one's who likes it.

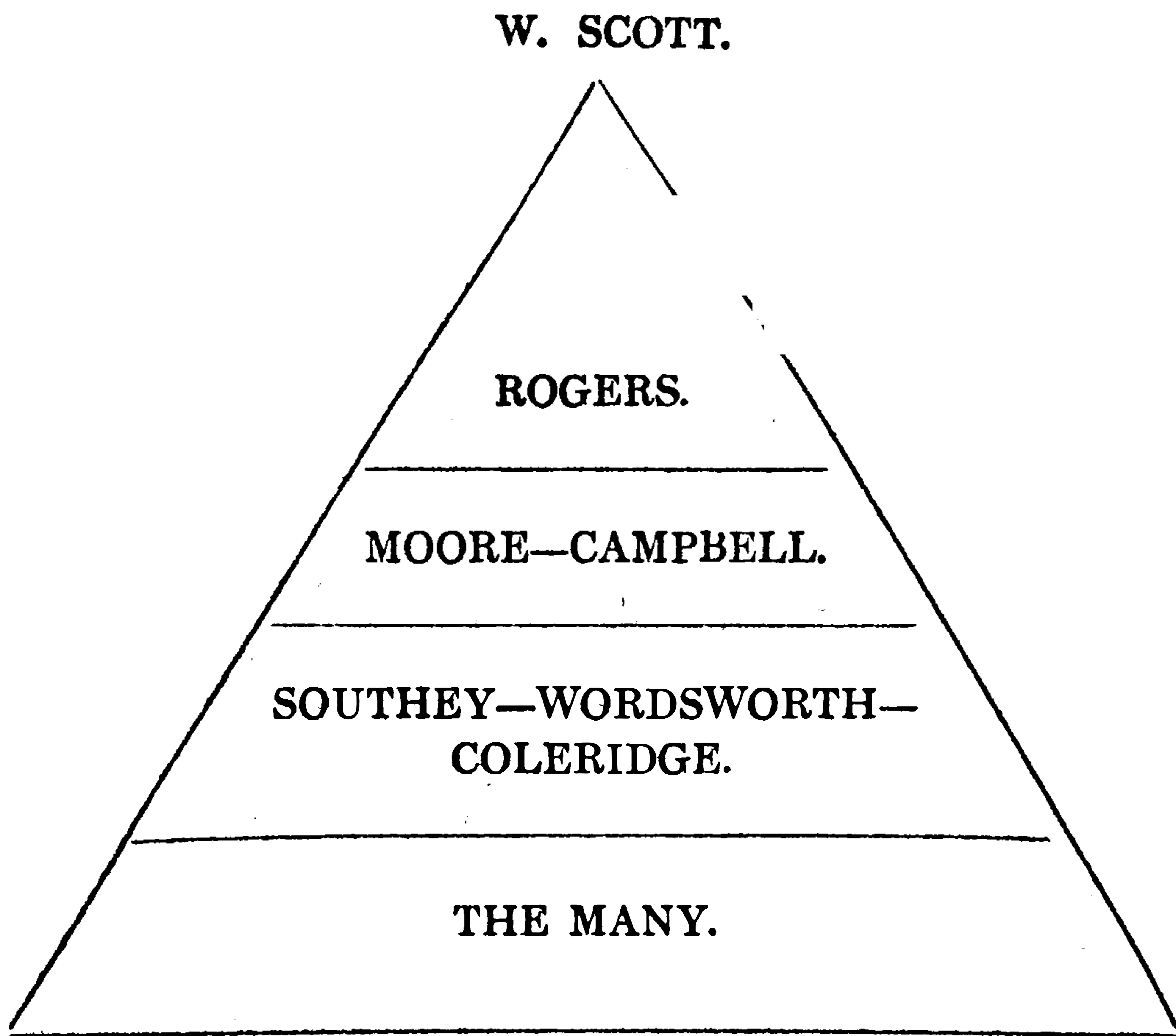
(1813, October 12. Letter 343, to John Murray, Vol. II., p. 276.)

George Ellis and Murray have been talking something about Scott and me, George *pro Scoto*,—and very right too. If they want to depose him, I only wish they would not set me up as a competitor. Even if I had my choice, I would rather be the Earl of Warwick than all the *kings* he ever made! Jeffrey and Gifford I take to be the monarch-makers in poetry and prose. The *British Critic*, in their Rokeby Review, have presupposed a comparison which I am sure my friends never thought of, and W. Scott's subjects are injudicious in descending to. I like the man—and admire his works to what M^r Braham calls *Entusymusy*. All such stuff can only vex him, and do me no good. Many hate his politics—(I hate all politics); and, here, a man's politics are like the Greek *soul*—an *εἶδωλον*, besides God knows what *other soul*; but their estimate of the two generally go together.

(1813, November 17. "Journal, 1813-1814," Vol. II., p. 322.)

I have not answered W. Scott's last letter,—but I will. I regret to hear from others, that he has lately been unfortunate in pecuniary involvements. He is undoubtedly the Monarch of Parnassus, and the most *English* of bards. I should place Rogers next in the living list (I value him more as the last of the *best* school)—Moore and Campbell both *third*—Southey

and Wordsworth and Coleridge—the rest, οἱ πολλοὶ
—t us:—



There is a triangular *Gradus ad Parnassum*!—the names are too numerous for the base of the triangle. Poor Thurlow has gone wild about the poetry of Queen Bess's reign—*c'est dommage*. I have ranked the names upon my triangle more upon what I believe popular opinion, than any decided opinion of my own. For, to me, some of Moore's last *Erin* sparks—"As a beam o'er the face of the waters"—"When he who adores thee"—"Oh blame not"—and "Oh breathe not his name"—are worth all the Epics that ever were composed.

(1813, November 24. "Journal, 1813-1814,"
Vol. II., p. 343.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



is, that it would appear *ostentatious* on my part : and of course I must send it as it is, without any alteration.

(1815, April 9. Letter 533, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 193.)

A word more ;—don't let Sir John Stevenson (as an evidence on trials for copy-right, etc.) talk about the price of your next poem, or they will come upon you for the *property tax* for it. I am serious, and have just heard a long story of the rascally tax-men making Scott pay for his. So, take care. Three hundred is a devil of a deduction out of three thousand.

(1815, June 12. Letter 538, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 206.)

I sent for *Marmion* (which I return), because it occurred to me there might be a resemblance between part of *Parisina* [stanza xiv.] and a similar scene in canto 2d [stanza xxi.] of *Marmion*. I fear there is, though I never thought of it before, and could hardly wish to imitate that which is inimitable. I wish you would ask M^r Gifford whether I ought to say any thing upon it ;—I had completed the story on the passage from Gibbon, which in fact leads to a like scene naturally, without a thought of the kind ; but it comes upon me not very comfortably.

(1816, February 3. Letter 573, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 260.)

The Antiquary is not the best of the three, but much above all the last twenty years, saving its elder brothers.

(1816, October 5. Letter 608, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 371.)

In acknowledging the arrival of the article from the *Quarterly* [written by Scott on *Childe Harold*, canto 3, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, *The Dream*, and other poems], which I received two days ago, I cannot express myself better than in the words of my sister Augusta, who (speaking of it) says, that it is written in a spirit "of the most feeling and kind nature." It is, however, something more; it seems to me (as far as the subject of it may be permitted to judge) to be *very well* written as a composition, and I think will do the journal no discredit, because even those who may condemn its partiality, must praise its generosity. The temptations to take another and less favourable view of the question have been so great and numerous, that, what with public opinion, politics, etc., he must be a gallant as well as a good man, who has ventured in that place, and at this time—to write such an article even anonymously. Such things, however, are their own reward; and I even flatter myself that the writer, whoever he may be (and I have no guess), will not regret that the perusal of this has given me as much gratification as any composition of that nature could give, and more than any other has ever given—and I have had a good many in my time of one kind or the other. It is not the mere praise, but there is a *tact* and a *delicacy* throughout, not only with regard to me, but to *others*,

which, as it had not been observed *elsewhere*, I had till now doubted whether it could be observed *anywhere*.

Perhaps some day or other you will know or tell me the writer's name. Be assured, had the article been a harsh one, I should not have asked it.

(1817, March 3. Letter 632, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 63.)

Murray has sent me the *Quarterly* and the *Edinburgh*. When I tell you that Walter Scott is the author of the article in the former, you will agree with me that such an article is still more honourable to him than to myself.

(1817, March 10. Letter 635, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 72.)

Tell me that Walter Scott is better; I would not have him ill for the world. I suppose it was by sympathy that I had my fever at the same time.

(1817, April 2. Letter 641, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 93.)

I have also heard great things of *Tales of my Landlord*, but I have not yet received them; by all accounts they beat even *Waverley*, etc., and are by the same author.

(1817, April 4. Letter 642, to Samuel Rogers, Vol. IV., p. 97.)

The *Tales of my Landlord* I have read with great pleasure, and perfectly understand now why my

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

that Ariosto's is an octave stanza, and Scott's anything but a Stanza. If you think Scott will dislike it, say so, and I expunge. I do not call him the "*Scotch Ariosto*," which would be sad *provincial* eulogy, but the "*Ariosto of the North*," meaning of all the *countries* that are *not* the *South*.

(1817, September 17. Letter 674, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 170.)

I have seen one or two late English publications which are no great things, except *Rob Roy*.

(1818, July 17. Letter 709, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 248.)

I have more of Scott's novels (for surely they are Scott's) since we met, and am more and more delighted. I think that I even prefer them to his poetry, which (by the way) I redde for the first time in my life in your rooms in Trinity College.

(1820, February 26. Letter 776, to William Bankes, Vol. IV., p. 411.)

Pray send me W. Scott's new novels. What are their names and characters? I read some of his former ones, at least once a day, for an hour or so. The last are two hurried: he forgets Ravenswood's name, and calls him *Edgar* and then *Norman*; and Girder, the Cooper, is styled now *Gilbert*, and now *John*; and he don't make enough of Montrose; but Dalgetty is excellent, and so is Lucy Ashton, and the bitch her mother. What is *Ivanhoe*? and what do you call his other? are there *two*? Pray make

him write at least two a year: I like no reading so well.

(1820, March 1. Letter 778, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 415.)

In the beginning of the year 1817, an article appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, written, I believe, by Walter Scott, doing great honour to him, and no disgrace to me, though both poetically and personally more than sufficiently favourable to the work and the author of whom it treated. It was written at a time when a selfish man would not, and a timid one dared not, have said a word in favour of either; it was written by one to whom temporary public opinion had elevated me to the rank of a rival—a proud distinction, and unmerited; but which has not prevented me from feeling as a friend, nor him from more than corresponding to that sentiment. The article in question was written upon the Third Canto of *Childe Harold*; and after many observations, which it would as ill become me to repeat as to forget, concluded with “a hope that I might yet return to England.” How this expression was received in England itself I am not acquainted, but it gave great offence at Rome to the respectable ten or twenty thousand English travellers then and there assembled.

(1820, March 15. Byron’s reply to Blackwood’s *Edinburgh Magazine*, contained in a letter addressed to J. D. Israeli, Esq., Vol. IV., p. 480.)

Scott found peculiar favour and imitation among the fair sex: there was Miss Holford, and Miss

Mitford, and Miss Francis; but, with the greatest respect be it spoken, none of his imitators did much honour to the original, except Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, until the appearance of *The Bridal of Triermain*, and *Harold the Dauntless*, which in the opinion of some equalled if not surpassed him; and lo! after three or four years they turned out to be the Master's own compositions.

(1820, March 15. Byron's reply to Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine*, contained in a letter addressed to J. D. Israeli, Esq., Vol. IV., p. 494.)

My love to Scott. I shall think higher of knight-hood ever after for his being dubbed. [The announcement of Scott's baronetage appeared in the *Gazette* for 1st April 1820.] By the way, he is the first poet titled for his talent in Britain: it has happened abroad before now; but on the continent titles are universal and worthless. Why don't you send me *Ivanhoe* and the *Monastery*? I have never written to Sir Walter, for I know he has a thousand things, and I a thousand nothings, to do; but I hope to see him at Abbotsford before very long, and I will sweat his Claret for him, though Italian abstemiousness has made my brain but a shilpit concern for a Scotch sitting *inter pocula*. I love Scott and Moore, and all the better brethren; but I hate and abhor that puddle of water-worms whom you have taken into your troop in the *history* line I see.

(1820, April 23. Letter 794, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 17.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



The Abbot has just arrived : many thanks ; as also for the *Monastery*—when you send it!!!

(1820, October 16. Letter 839, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 98.)

W. Scott's *Monastery* just arrived : many thanks for that Grand Desideratum of the last Six Months.

(1820, November 4. Letter 843, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 109.)

Read the conclusion, for the fiftieth time (I have read all W. Scott's novels at least fifty times), of the third series of *Tales of my Landlord*—grand work—Scotch Fielding, as well as great English poet—wonderful man ! I long to get drunk with him.

(1821, January 5. "Extracts from a Diary," Vol. V., p. 151.)

Read the fourth vol. of W. Scott's second series of *Tales of my Landlord*.

(1821, January 7. "Extracts from a Diary," Vol. V., p. 157.)

Before dinner had read Walter Scott's *Rob Roy*.

(1821, January 8. "Extracts from a Diary," Vol. V., p. 160.)

I have found out the seal cut on Murray's letter. It is meant for Walter Scott—or *Sir* Walter—he is the first poet knighted since Sir Richard Blackmore. But it does not do him justice. Scott's—particularly when he recites—is a very intelligent countenance,

and this seal says nothing. Scott is certainly the most wonderful writer of the day. His novels are a new literature in themselves, and his poetry as good as any—if not better (only on an erroneous system)—and only ceased to be so popular, because the vulgar learned were tired of hearing “Aristides called the Just,” and Scott the Best, and ostracised him. I like him, too, for his manliness of character, for the extreme pleasantness of his conversation, and his good-nature towards myself, personally. May he prosper!—for he deserves it. I know no reading to which I fall with such alacrity as a work of W. Scott’s. I shall give the seal, with his bust on it, to Madame la Comtesse G. this evening, who will be curious to have the effigies of a man so celebrated.

(1821, January 12. “Extracts from a Diary,” Vol. V., p. 167.)

At nine went out—at eleven returned. Beat the crow for stealing the falcon’s victuals. Read *Tales of my Landlord*—wrote a letter—and mixed a moderate beaker of water with other ingredients.

(1821, February 16. “Extracts from a Diary,” Vol. V., p. 203.)

Give my love to Sir W. Scott, and tell him to write more novels: pray send out *Waverley* and the *Guy M.*, and the *Antiquary*. It is five years since I have had a copy. I have read all the others forty times.

(1821, March 1. Letter 876, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 255.)

Send me some Soda-powders, some of "Acton's Corn-rubbers," and W. Scott's romances.

(1821, May 19. Letter 894, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 294.)

Send . . . any novels of Scott, or poetry of the same. Ditto of Crabbe, Moore and the Elect; but none of your damned commonplace trash,—unless something starts up of actual merit, which may very well be, for 'tis time it should.

(1821, October 9. Letter 947, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 391.)

You must recollect, however, that the letter, on the British review, signed *Clutterbuck*, must have a note stating that the name of *Clutterbuck* was adopted long before (a year I think) the publication of the *Monastery* and *Abbot*. If you don't do this, I shall be accused (with the usual justice) of plagiarism from Walter Scott.

(1821, November 12. Letter 956, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 473.)

I don't like to bore you about the Scotch novels, (as they call them, though two of them are wholly English, and the rest half so), but nothing can or could ever persuade me, since I was the first ten minutes in your company, that you are *not* the man. To me those novels have so much of "Auld lang syne" (I was bred a canny Scott till ten years old), that I never move without them; and when I removed from Ravenna to Pisa the other day, and sent on my library

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

regards Walter Scott. You say that “his character is little worthy of enthusiasm,” at the same time that you mention his productions in the manner they deserve. I have known Walter Scott long and well, and in occasional situations which call forth the *real* character—and I can assure you that his character *is* worthy of admiration—that of all men he is the most *open*, the most *honourable*, the most *amiable*. With his politics I have nothing to do: they differ from mine, which renders it difficult for me to speak of them. But he is *perfectly sincere* in them: and Sincerity may be humble, but she cannot be servile. I pray you, therefore, to correct or soften that passage. You may, perhaps, attribute this officiousness of mine to a false affectation of *candour*, as I happen to be a writer also. Attribute it to what motive you please, but *believe the truth*. I say that Walter Scott is as nearly a thorough good man as man can be, because I *know* it by experience to be the case.

(1823, May 29. Letter 1089, to Henri Beyle [“Stendhal”], Vol. VI., p. 220.)

CHAPTER V

BYRON'S OBITER DICTA ON THE DRAMA

(1) THE DRURY-LANE COMMITTEE

KINNAIRD, I hope, has appeased your magnanimous indignation at his blunders. I wished and wish you were in the Committee, with all my heart. It seems so hopeless a business, that the company of a friend would be quite consoling,—but more of this when we meet. In the mean time, you are entreated to prevail upon M^{rs} Esterre to engage herself. [The lady had become a celebrity of a kind through her husband, M^r J. N. d'Esterre, having been killed in a duel with Dan O'Connell in February of this year.] I believe she has been written to, but your influence, in person or proxy, would probably go further than our proposals. What they are, I know not; all *my* new function consists in listening to the despair of Cavendish Bradshaw, the hopes of Kinnaird, the wishes of Lord Essex, the complaints of Whitbread, and the calculations of Peter Moore—all of which, and whom, seem totally at variance. C. Bradshaw wants to light the theatre with *gas*, which

may, perhaps (if the vulgar be believed), poison half the audience, and all the *dramatis personæ*. Essex has endeavoured to persuade Kean not to get drunk; the consequence of which is, that he has never been sober since. Kinnaird, with equal success, would have convinced Raymond that he, the said Raymond, had too much salary. Whitbread wants us to assess the pit another sixpence,—a damned insidious proposition,—which will end in an O. P. combustion. To crown all, Robins, the auctioneer has the impudence to be displeased, because he has no dividend. The villain is a proprietor of shares, and a long-lunged orator in the meetings. I hear he has prophesied our incapacity,—“a foregone conclusion,” whereof I hope to give him signal proofs before we are done.

Will you give us an opera? No, I'll be sworn; but I wish you would. * * *

(1815, June 12. Letter 538, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 201.)

Poor Whitbread died yesterday morning,—a sudden and severe loss. His health had been wavering, but so fatal an attack was not apprehended. He dropped down, and I believe never spoke afterwards. I perceive Perry attributes his death to Drury Lane,—a consolatory encouragement to the new Committee. I have no doubt that * *, who is of a plethoric habit, will be bled immediately; as I have, since my marriage, lost much of my paleness, and—*horresco referens* (for I hate even *moderate* fat)—that happy slenderness, to which when I first knew you, I had attained, I by no means sit easy under this dispensation of the *Morning Chronicle*. Every

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



it. I return to town to-morrow, but write to the Committee before I set off, that no time may be lost; you say that you will "try to *soften* Kinnaird and George." I beg leave to say that I expect to be *softened* as well as another, and desire you will set about that process immediately, and begin with me first, as the most obdurate of the party. I believe the person on whose behalf you have applied to be the same recommended by Lady Besborough, a great point in her favour, particularly with me. You "*wish, beg, and entreat.*" I presume that these expressions are to be allotted one a piece to George [Lamb], Kinnaird, and me; pray in future let me have the *first* only, and I shall consider it as a command.

(1815, September 3. Letter 545, to the Hon. Mrs George Lamb, Vol. III, p. 215.)

Ivan is accepted, and will be put in progress on Kean's arrival. The theatrical gentlemen have a confident hope of its success. I know not that any alterations for the stage will be necessary; if any, they will be trifling, and you shall be duly apprised. I would suggest that you should not attend any except the latter rehearsals—the managers have requested me to state this to you. You can see them, viz. Dibdin and Rae, whenever you please, and I will do any thing you wish to be done on your suggestion in the mean time.

M^{rs} Mardyn is not yet out, and nothing can be determined till she has made her appearance—I mean as to her capacity for the part you mention, which I

take it for granted is not in *Ivan*—as I think *Ivan* may be performed very well without her. But of that hereafter.

You will be glad to hear that the season has begun uncommonly well—great and constant houses—the performers in much harmony with the Committee and one another, and as much good-humour as can be preserved in such complicated and extensive interests as the Drury Lane proprietary.

(1815, September 15. Letter 546, to William Sotheby, Vol III, p 216.)

I think it would be advisable for you to see the acting managers when convenient, as there must be points on which you will want to confer; the objection I stated was merely on the part of the performers, and is *general* and not *particular* to this instance. I thought it as well to mention it at once—and some of the rehearsals you will doubtless see, notwithstanding.

Rae, I rather think, has his eye on Naritzin for himself. He is a more popular performer than Bartley, and certainly the cast will be stronger with him in it; besides, he is one of the managers, and will feel doubly interested if he can act in both capacities. M^{rs} Bartley will be Petrowna;—as to the Empress, I know not what to say or think. The truth is, we are not amply furnished with tragic women; but make the best of those we have,—you can take your choice of them. We have all great hopes of the success—on which, setting aside other considerations, we are particularly anxious, as being the first tragedy to be brought out since the old Committee.

By the way—I have a charge against you. As the great M^r Dennis roared out on a similar occasion—“By G—d, *that is my* thunder!” so do I exclaim, “*This is my* lightning!” I allude to a speech of Ivan’s, in the scene with Petrowna and the Empress, where the thought and almost expression are similar to Conrad’s in the third canto of *The Corsair*. I, however, do not say this to accuse you, but to exempt myself from suspicion, as there is a priority of six months’ publication, on my part, between the appearance of that composition and of your tragedies.

George Lambe meant to have written to you. If you don’t like to confer with the managers at present, I will attend to your wishes—so state them.

(1815, September 25. Letter 547, to William Sotheby, Vol. III., p. 217.)

Will you publish the Drury Lane *Magpie*? [—one of three versions of *La Pie Voleuse* produced on the London stage in the autumn of 1815—] or, what is more, will you give fifty, or even forty, pounds for the Copyright of the said? I have undertaken to ask you this question on behalf of the translator, and wish you would. We can’t get so much for him by ten pounds from any body else, and I, knowing your magnificence, would be glad of an answer.

(1815, September 25. Letter 549, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 221.)

That’s right—and splendid, and becoming a publisher of high degree. M^r Concanen (the translator) will be delighted, and pay his washerwoman; and, in

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

should go with it ; and any little memoir of the story would do to set off the preface. I suppose we have done all for [Concanen] which we could, and have got him a decent price. You should have M^r Sotheby's tragedy in hand : it is, I think, in the committee room ; but I have let loose the author upon you ; so now shift for yourself. When will Kean be out ? I think he should be announced. I have great hopes of Downton's Shylock, and Iago, if he will take the latter.

(1815, September 28. Letter 551, to Thomas Dibdin, Vol. III., p. 224.)

You have written to * *. You have also written to Perry, who intimates hope of an Opera from you. Coleridge has promised a tragedy. Now, if you keep Perry's word, and Coleridge keeps his own, Drury Lane will be set up ; and, sooth to say, it is in grievous want of such a lift. We began at speed, and are blown already. When I say "we," I mean Kinnaird, who is the "all in all sufficient," and can count, which none of the rest of the Committee can.

It is really very good fun, as far as the daily and nightly stir of these strutters and fretters' go ; and, if the concern could be brought to pay a shilling in the pound, would do much credit to the management. M^r [Sotheby] has an accepted tragedy, [*Ivan*], whose first scene is in his sleep (I don't mean the author's). It was forwarded to us as a prodigious favourite of Kean's ; but the said Kean, upon interrogation, denies his eulogy, and protests against his part. How it will end, I know not. [It ended in the play being declined at Drury Lane.]

. . . There is a play before me from a personage who signs himself "Hibernicus." The hero is Malachi, the Irishman and king; and the villain and usurper, Turgesius, the Dane. The conclusion is fine, Turgesius is chained by the leg (*vide* stage direction) to a pillar on the stage; and King Malachi makes him a speech, not unlike Lord Castlereagh's about the balance of power and the lawfulness of legitimacy, which puts Turgesius into a frenzy—as Castlereagh's would, if his audience was chained by the leg. He draws a dagger and rushes at the orator; but, finding himself at the end of his tether, he sticks it into his own carcass, and dies, saying, he has fulfilled a prophecy. Now, this is *serious downright matter of fact*, and the gravest part of a tragedy which is not intended for burlesque. I tell it you for the honour of Ireland. The writer hopes it will be represented:—but what is Hope? nothing but the paint on the face of Existence; the least touch of Truth rubs it off, and then we see what a hollow-cheeked harlot we have got hold of. I am not sure that I have not said this last superfine reflection before. But never mind; it will do for the tragedy of *Turgesius*, to which I can append it.

(1815, October 28. Letter 556, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 230.)

Lewis is going to Jamaica to suck his sugar canes. He sails in two days; I enclose you his farewell note. I saw him last night at Drury Lane Theatre for the last time previous to his voyage. Poor fellow! he is really a good man—an excellent man—he left me his

walking-stick and a pot of preserved ginger. I shall never eat the last without tears in my eyes, it is so *hot*. We have had a devil of a row among our ballerinas. Miss Smith has been wronged about a hornpipe. The Committee have interfered ; but Byrne, the damned ballet-master, won't budge a step. *I* am furious, so is George Lamb. Kinnaird is very glad, because—he don't know why ; and I am very sorry, for the same reason. To-day I dine with Kd. — we are to have Sheridan and Colman again ; and to-morrow, once more, at Sir Gilbert Heathcote's.

(1815, November 4. Letter 559, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 244.)

In Coleridge's *Life* [the *Biographia Literaria*], I perceive an attack upon the then Committee of D. L. Theatre for acting *Bertram*, and an attack upon Maturin's *Bertram* for being acted. Considering all things, this is not very grateful nor graceful on the part of the worthy auto-biographer ; and I would answer, if I had *not* obliged him. Putting my own pains to forward the views of Coleridge out of the question, I know that there was every disposition, on the part of the Sub-Committee, to bring forward any production of his, were it feasible. The play he offered, though poetical, did not appear at all practicable, and *Bertram* did ;—and hence this long tirade, which is the last chapter of his vagabond life.

As for *Bertram*, Maturin may defend his own-begotten, if he likes it well enough ; I leave the Irish clergyman and the new orator Henley to battle

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



warmth on that of the Authour, Sotheby withdrew his play.

Sir J. B. Burgess did also present four tragedies and a farce, and I moved Green-room and S. Committee; but they would not.

Then the Scenes I had to go through! The authours and the authoresses, the Milliners, the wild Irishmen, the people from Brighton, from Blackwall, from Chatham, from Cheltenham, from Dublin, from Dundee, who came in upon me! To all of whom it was proper to give a civil answer, and a hearing, and a reading. Mrs Glover's father, an Irish dancing-Master of Sixty years, called upon me to request to play "*Archer*," drest in silk stockings on a frosty morning, to show his legs (which were certainly good and Irish for his age, and had been still better). Miss Emma Somebody, with a play entitled "*The Bandit of Bohemia*," or some such title or production. Mr O'Higgins, then resident at Richmond, with an Irish tragedy, in which the unities could not fail to be observed, for the protagonist was chained by the leg to a pillar during the chief part of the performance. He was a wild man, of a salvage [*sic*] appearance; and the difficulty of *not* laughing at him was only to be got over by reflecting upon the probable consequences of such cachinnation.

As I am really a civil and polite person, and *do* hate giving pain, when it can be avoided, I sent them up to Douglas Kinnaird, who is a man of business, and sufficiently ready with a negative, and left them to settle with him. And, as at the beginning of next year, I went abroad, I have since been little aware of the progress of the theatres.

Players are said to be an impracticable people. They are so. But I managed to steer clear of any disputes with them, and, excepting one debate with the Elder Byrne, about Miss Smith's *Pas de* (Something—I forget the technicals), I do not remember any litigation of my own. . . . Indeed, in general, I left such things to my more bustling colleagues, who used to reprove me seriously for not being able to take such things in hand without buffooning with the Histrions, and throwing things into confusion by treating light matters with levity.

Then the Committee!—then the Sub-Committee! We were but few, and never agreed! There was Peter Moore who contradicted Kinnaird, and Kinnaird who contradicted everybody: then our two managers, Rae and Dibdin, and our Secretary, Ward! And yet we were all very zealous and in earnest to do good, and so forth. Hobhouse furnished us with prologues to our revived Old English plays, but was not pleased with me for complimenting him as “the *Upton*” of our theatre (Mr Upton is or was the poet who writes the songs for Astley's), and almost gave up prologuizing in consequence.

In the Pantomime of 1815-16, there was a Representation of the Masquerade of 1814, given by “us Youth” of Watier's Club to Wellington and Co. Douglas Kinnaird, and one or two others with myself, put on Masques, and went *on* the Stage amongst the “οἱ πολλοί,” to see the effect of a theatre from the Stage. It is very grand. Douglas danced among the figuranti, too; and they were puzzled to find out who we were, as being more than

their number. It was odd enough that D. K. and I should have been both at the *real* Masquerade, and afterwards in the Mimic one of the same on the stage of D. L. Theatre.

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thoughts” 67, 68, 69, and 70, Vol. V., p. 442.)

(2) PLAYS, PLAYERS, AND PLAYWRIGHTS

The Kembles

Last night I saw Kemble in Coriolanus; he *was glorious*, and exerted himself wonderfully. By good luck I got an excellent place in the best part of the house [*i.e.* Covent Garden, Kemble as *Coriolanus*, M^{rs} Siddons as *Volumnia*], which was more than overflowing. Clare and Delawarr, who were there on the same speculation, were less fortunate. I saw them by accident,—we were not together. I wished for you, to gratify your love of Shakspeare and of fine acting to its fullest extent. Last week I saw an exhibition of a different kind in a M^r Coates, at the Haymarket, who performed Lothario [the villain of Nicholas Rowe’s tragedy, *The Fair Penitent*] in a *damned* and *damnable* manner.

(1811, December 15. Letter 217, to William Harness, Vol. II., p. 90.)

Just before I left town, Kemble paid me the compliment of desiring me to write a *tragedy*; I wish I could, but I find my scribbling mood subsiding—

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

maintain his present eminence, or to advance still higher, without the envy of his green-room fellows, and the nibbling of their admirers. But, if he don't beat them all, why then—merit hath no purchase in “these coster-monger days.”

I wish that I had a talent for the drama; I would write a tragedy *now*. But no,—it is gone. Hodgson talks of one,—he will do it well;—and I think M[oor]e should try. He has wonderful powers, and much variety; besides, he has lived and felt. To write so as to bring home to the heart, the heart must have been tried,—but, perhaps, ceased to be so. While you are under the influence of passions, you only feel, but cannot describe them,—any more than, when in action, you could turn round and tell the story to your next neighbour! When all is over,—all, all, and irrevocable,—trust to memory—she is then but too faithful.

Went out, and answered some letters, yawned now and then, and redde the *Robbers* [of Schiller]. Fine,—but *Fiesco* is better; and Alfieri, and Monti's *Aristodemo* best. They are more equal than the Tedeschi dramatists.

(1814, February 20. “Journal, 1813-1814,”
Vol. II., p. 387.)

There is a new actor named Kean come out; he is a wonder, and We are yet wise enough to admire him. He is Superior to Cooke certainly in many points, and will run Kemble hard; his Style is quite new, or rather *renewed*, being that of Nature.

(1814, February 20. Letter 415, to J. W.
Webster, Vol. III., p. 45.)

Was not Iago perfection? particularly the last look. [Kean acted "Iago" in *Othello* at Drury Lane on May 7th.] I was *close* to him (in the orchestra), and never saw an English countenance half so expressive.

I am acquainted with no *immaterial* sensuality so delightful as good acting; and, as it is fitting there should be good plays, now and then, besides Shakspeare's, I wish you or Campbell would write one:—the rest of "us youth" have not heart enough.

(1814, May 8. Letter 448, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 81.)

I have gotten a box for *Othello* to-night, and send the ticket for your friends the Rancliffes. I seriously recommend to you to recommend to them to go for half an hour, if only to see the third act—they will not easily have another opportunity. We—at least, I—cannot be there, so there will be no one in their way. Will you give or send it to them? it will come with a better grace from you than me. . . .

Will you go, at all events, to my box there [at Covent Garden, where Maria Foote made her first London appearance, on May 26th, as Amanthis, in M^{rs} Inchbald's play] to see a *début* of a young 16 in the *Child of Nature*?

(1814, May. Letter 450, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 83.)

If I may be permitted, I would suggest that there never was such an opening for tragedy. In Kean, there is an actor worthy of expressing the thoughts of the characters which you have every power of embody-

ing; and I cannot but regret that the part of Ordonio [taken by Rae in the original performance of *Remorse* given at Drury Lane, January 23rd, 1813] was disposed of before his appearance at Drury Lane. We have had nothing to be mentioned in the same breath with *Remorse* for very many years; and I should think that the reception of that play was sufficient to encourage the highest hopes of author and audience. It is to be hoped that you are proceeding in a career which could not but be successful.

(1815, March 31. Letter 532, to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Vol. III., p. 191.)

M^{rs} Wilmot's tragedy [of *Ina*, the prologue of which was written by William Lamb, afterwards Lord Melbourne, the epilogue by Thomas Moore] was last night damned. They may bring it on again, and probably will; but damned it was,—not a word of the last act audible. I went (*malgré* that I ought to have stayed at home in sackcloth for unc., but I could not resist the *first* night of any thing) to a private and quiet nook of my private box, and witnessed the whole process. The first three acts, with transient gushes of applause, oozed patiently but heavily on. I must say it was badly acted, particularly by Kean, who was groaned upon in the third act,—something about “horror—such a horror,” was the cause. Well! the fourth act became as muddy and turbid as need be; but the fifth—what Garrick used to call (like a fool) the *concoction* of a play—the fifth act stuck fast at the king's prayer. You know he says, “he never went to bed without saying them, and did not like to omit them now.”

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



private-box door—and you can go without the bore of crowding, jostling, or dressing.

(1815, June 1. Letter 537, to Leigh Hunt, Vol. III., p. 199.)

The failure of poor M[aturin]'s play [*Manuel*] will be a cordial to the aged heart of Saul [*i.e.* to Sotheby, the author of *Saul*], who has been “kicking against the pricks” of the managers so long and so vainly—they ought to act his *Ivan*; as for Kean, he is an “*infidus Scurra*,” and his conduct on this occasion is of a piece with all one ever heard of him.

(1817, April 2. Letter 641, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 95.)

The English Stage

I have seen this young Roscius [*i.e.* William Betty, the boy actor, then about fourteen years old] several times at the hazard of my life, from the *affectionate squeezes* of the surrounding crowd. I think him tolerable in some characters, but by no means equal to the ridiculous praises showered upon him by *John Bull*.

(1805, April 25. Letter 24, to the Hon. Augusta Byron; Vol. I., p. 63.)

As you are deeply theatrical, you may wish to hear of Mr Betty, whose acting is, I fear, utterly inadequate to the London engagement into which the managers of Covent Garden have lately entered. His figure is fat, his features flat, his voice unmanageable, his action ungraceful, and, as Diggory says, “I defy

him to *extort* that damned muffin face of his into madness." I was very sorry to see him in the character of the "Elephant on the slack rope;" for, when I last saw him, I was in raptures with his performance. But then I was sixteen—an age to which all London condescended to subside. After all, much better judges have admired, and may again; but I venture to "prognosticate a prophecy" (see the *Courier*) that he will not succeed.

(1812, September 10. Letter 244, to Lord Holland, Vol. II., p. 142.)

There is an American *Life* of G. F. Cooke, *Scurra* deceased, lately published. Such a book!—I believe, since *Drunken Barnaby's Journal*, nothing like it has drenched the press. All green-room and tap-room—drams and the drama—brandy, whisky-punch, and, *latterly*, toddy, overflow every page. Two things are rather marvellous,—first, that a man should live so long drunk, and, next, that he should have found a sober biographer. There are some very laughable things in it, nevertheless;—but the pints he swallowed, and the parts he performed, are too regularly registered.

(1813, August 22. Letter 322, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 249.)

Went last night with Lewis [to Covent Garden, where Shakespeare's tragedy was revived, with additions from Dryden's *All for Love*] to see the first of *Antony and Cleopatra*. It was admirably got up, and well acted [by Young as Antony, and by M^{rs} Fawcitt

as Cleopatra]—a salad of Shakspeare and Dryden. Cleopatra strikes me as the epitome of her sex—fond, lively, sad, tender, teasing, humble, haughty, beautiful, the devil!—coquettish to the last, as well with the “asp” as with Antony. . . . Cleopatra, after securing him, says, “yet go—it is your interest,” etc.—how like the sex! and the questions about Octavia—it is woman all over.

(1813, November 16. “Journal, 1813-14,”
Vol. II., p. 319.)

Saturday, I went with Harry Fox to see *Nourjahad* [at Drury Lane]; and, I believe, convinced him, by incessant yawning, that it was not mine. I wish the precious author would own it, and release me from his fame. The dresses [for which Byron lent the drawings] are pretty, but not in costume;—M^{rs} Horn’s, all but the turban, and the want of a small dagger (if she is a sultana), *perfect*. I never saw a Turkish woman with a turban in my life—nor did any one else. The sultanas have a small poniard at the waist. The dialogue is drowsy—the action heavy—the scenery fine—the actors [*i.e.* Elliston in the name-part, M^{rs} Horn as Nourjahad’s wife, Mandane] tolerable. I can’t say much for their seraglio—Teresa, Phannio, or * * *, were worth them all.

(1813, November 30. “Journal, 1813-14,”
Vol. II., p. 354.)

Went to the play [to see Sheridan’s *Trip to Scarborough*, given at Covent Garden] with Hobhouse. M^{rs} Jordan superlative in Hoyden, and Jones well

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

And Sotheby, with his damned *Orestes*,
 (Which, by the way, the old Bore's best is,)
 Has lain so very long on hand
 That I despair of all demand ;
 I've advertized,—but see my books,
 Or only watch my Shopman's looks ;—
 Still *Ivan, Ina*, and such lumber,
 My back-shop glut,—my shelves encumber.
 There's Byron too, who once did better,
 Has sent me—folded in a letter—
 A sort of—it's no more a drama
 Than *Darnley, Ivan*, or *Kehama* :
 So altered since last year his pen is,
 I think he's lost his wits at Venice,
 * * * * *
 * * * * *

In short, sir, what with one and t'other,
 I dare not venture on another.

(1817, August 21. Letter 669, to John
 Murray, Vol. IV., p. 159.)

I differ from you about the “refinement” which has banished the comedies of Congreve. Are not the comedies of *Sheridan* acted to the thinnest houses? I know (as *ex-Committed*) that *the School for Scandal* was the *worst Stock piece* upon record. I also know that Congreve gave up writing because M^{rs} Centlivre's balderdash drove his comedies off. So it is not *decency*, but Stupidity, that does all this ; for *Sheridan* is as *decent* a writer as need be, and Congreve no worse than M^{rs} Centlivre, of whom Wilks (the Actor) said, “not only her play would be damned, but She too.” He alluded to a *Bold Stroke for a Wife*.

(1820, March 29. Letter 784, to John
 Murray, Vol. IV., p. 426.)

Sotheby is a good man, rhymes well (if not wisely), but is a bore. He seizes you by the button. One night of a route at M^{rs} Hope's, he had fastened upon me (something about Agamemnon, or Orestes, or some of his plays), notwithstanding my symptoms of manifest distress (for I was in love, and had just nicked a minute, when neither mothers, nor husbands, nor rivals, nor gossips, were near my then idol, who was beautiful as the Statues of the Gallery where we stood at the time)—Sotheby I say had seized upon me by the button and the heart-strings, and spared neither. W. Spencer, who likes fun, and don't dislike mischief, saw my case, and coming up to us both, took me by the hand, and pathetically bade me farewell: "for," said he, "I see it is all over with you." Sotheby then went away. "Sic me servavit Apollo." ("Detached Thoughts," 1821-22. "Thought" 50, Vol. V., p. 433.)

When I was a youth, I was reckoned a good actor. Besides "Harrow Speeches" (in which I shone) I enacted "Penruddock" in the "Wheel of Fortune," and "Tristram Fickle" in Allingham's farce of "the Weathercock," for three nights (the duration of our compact), in some private theatricals at Southwell in 1806, with great applause. The occasional prologue for our volunteer play was also of my composition. The other performers were young ladies and gentlemen of the neighbourhood; and the whole went off with great effect upon our good-natured audience.

("Detached Thoughts," 1821-22. "Thought" 71, Vol. V., p. 445.)

The Continental Stage

The other night I saw a new play,—and the author. The subject was the sacrifice of Isaac. The play succeeded, and they called for the author—according to continental custom—and he presented himself, a noble Venetian, Mali—or Malapiero, by name. Mala was his name, and *pessima* his production,—at least, I thought so; and I ought to know, having read more or less of five hundred Drury Lane offerings, during my coadjutorship with the sub-and-super Committee.

(1816, December 24, Venice. Letter 620, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 31.)

Yesterday being the feast of St Stephen, every mouth was put in motion. There was nothing but fiddling and playing on the virginals, and all kinds of conceits and divertisements, on every canal of this aquatic city. I dined with the Countess Albrizzi and a Paduan and Venetian party, and afterwards went to the opera, at the Fenice theatre (which opens for the Carnival on that day),—the finest, by the way, I have ever seen; it beats *our* theatres hollow in beauty and scenery, and those of Milan and Brescia bow before it. The opera and its Syrens were much like all other operas and women, but the subject of the said opera was something edifying; it turned—the plot and conduct thereof—upon a fact narrated by Livy of a hundred and fifty married ladies having *poisoned* a hundred and fifty husbands in the good old times. The bachelors of Rome believed this extraordinary mortality to be merely the common

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



They have been crucifying *Othello* into an opera (*Otello*, by Rossini): the music good, but lugubrious; but as for the words, all the real scenes with Iago cut out, and the greatest nonsense inserted; the handkerchief turned into a *billet-doux*, and the first singer would not *black* his face, for some exquisite reasons assigned in the preface. Scenery, dresses, and music very good.

(1818, March 3, Venice. Letter 689, to Samuel Rogers, Vol. IV., p. 214.)

I am not very well to-day. Last night I went to the representation of Alfieri's *Mirra*, the two last acts of which threw me into convulsions. I do not mean by that word a lady's hysterics, but the agony of reluctant tears, and the choaking shudder, which I do not often undergo for fiction. This is but the second time for anything under reality; the first was on seeing Kean's Sir Giles Overreach [in Massinger's comedy *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*]. The worst was, that the "*dama*," in whose box I was, went off in the same way, I really believe more from fright than any other sympathy—at least with the players: but she has been ill, and I have been ill, and we are all languid and pathetic this morning, with great expenditure of Sal Volatile.

(1819, August 12, Bologna. Letter 746, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 339.)

Talked with Count Pietro G[amba, brother of the Countess Guiccioli] of the Italian comedian Vestris, who is now at Rome—have seen him often act in Venice — a good actor—very. Somewhat of a

mannerist; but excellent in broad comedy, as well as in the sentimental pathetic: He has made me frequently laugh and cry, neither of which is now a very easy matter—at least, for a player to produce in me.

(1821, January 6. “Extracts from a Diary,”
Vol. V., 154.)

Your Berlin drama [a spectacle founded on *Lalla Rookh*, and performed at the court of Berlin by the Tsarevitch, subsequently Tsar Nicholas I.—in the part of “Feramorz,” and by his wife, the future Empress in the part of “Lalla Rookh,”] is an honour, unknown since the days of Elkanah Settle, whose *Empress of Morocco* was represented by the Court ladies; which was, as Johnson says, “the last blast of inflammation” to poor Dryden, who could not bear it, and fell foul of Settle without mercy or moderation, on account of that and a frontispiece, which he dared to put before his play.

(1821, August 2. Letter 915, to Thomas
Moore, Vol. V., p. 332.)

(3) THE CONSTRUCTION AND IDEA OF TRAGEDY

*No Tragic action possible save through breach of the
Commandments*

I must remark from *Aristotle* and *Rymer*, that the *hero* of tragedy and (I add *meo periculo*) a tragic poem must *be guilty*, to excite “*terror and pity*,” the end of tragic poetry. But hear not *me*, but my

bettors. "The pity which the poet is to labour for is for the criminal. The terror is likewise in the punishment of the said criminal, who, if he be represented too great an offender, will *not be pitied*; if altogether *innocent* his punishment will be unjust." ["Dryden's Life," in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*.] In the Greek Tragedy innocence is unhappy often, and the offender escapes. I must also ask you is *Achilles* a good character? or is even *Aeneas* anything but a successful runaway? It is for Turnus men feel and not for the Trojan. Who is the hero of *Paradise Lost*? why Satan,—and Macbeth, and Richard, and Othello, Pierre, and Lothario, and Zanga?

(1821, May 12. Letter 890, to Francis Hodgson, Vol V., p 284)

The Restrictions imposed by Modern Taste

The first part [of *The Bride of Abydos*], where you have found a coincidence in some events within your observations on *life*, was drawn from observations of mine also, and I meant to have gone on with the story, but on second thoughts, I thought myself *two centuries* at least too late for the subject; which, though admitting of very powerful feeling and description, yet is not adapted for this age, at least this country, though the finest works of the Greeks, one of Schiller's and Alfieri's in modern times, besides several of our *old* (and best) dramatists, have been grounded on incidents of a similar cast. I therefore altered it as you perceive, and in so doing have weakened the whole, by interrupting the train of thought: and in composition I do not think *second*

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

the head conspiring against the body for refusal of redress for a real injury,—jealousy—treason, with the more fixed and inveterate passions (mixed with policy) of an old or elderly man—the devil himself could not have a finer subject, and he is your only tragic dramatist.

Voltaire has asked *why* no woman has ever written even a tolerable tragedy? “Ah (said the Patriarch) the composition of a tragedy requires * * * [a man].” If this be true, Lord knows what Joanna Baillie does; * * * * *

There is still, in the Doge's Palace, the black veil painted over Falieri's picture, and the staircase whereon he was first crowned Doge, and subsequently decapitated. This was the thing that most struck my imagination in Venice—more than the Rialto, which I visited for the sake of Shylock; and more, too, than Schiller's “*Armenian*,” a novel which took a great hold of me when a boy. It is also called the “Ghost Seer,” and I never walked down St Mark's by moonlight without thinking of it, and “*at nine o'clock he died!*” [Of Schiller's *Geisterseher* two English translations were made, *The Ghost-Seer*, by D. Boileau, in 1795, and *The Armenian*, by W. Render, in 1800.]—But I hate things *all fiction*; and therefore the *Merchant* and *Othello* have no great associations to me: but *Pierre* [one of the two heroes of *Venice Preserved*] has. There should always be some foundation of fact for the most airy fabric, and pure invention is but the talent of a liar.

(1817, April 2. Letter 641, to John Murray,
Vol. IV., p. 91.)

The tragedy [of *Marino Faliero*] is completed, but now comes the task of copy and correction. It is very long, (42 *Sheets* of long paper, of 4 pages each), and I believe must make more than 140 or 150 pages, besides many historical extracts as notes, which I mean to append. History is closely followed. D^r Moore's account [*i.e.* his *View of Society and Manners in Italy*] is in some respects false, and in all foolish and flippant. *None* of the Chronicles (and I have consulted Sanuto, Sandi, Navagero, and an anonymous Siege of Zara, besides the histories of Laugier, Daru, Sismondi, etc.) state, or even hint, that he begged his life; they merely say that he did not deny the conspiracy. He was one of their great men,—commanded at the siege of Zara, beat 80,000 Hungarians, killing 8000, and at the same time kept the town he was besieging in order. Took Capo D'Istria; was ambassador at Genoa, Rome, and finally Doge, where he fell for treason, in attempting to alter the Government, by what Sanuto calls a Judgement on him, for, many years before (when Podesta and Captain of Treviso), having knocked down a bishop, who was sluggish in carrying the host at a procession. He “saddles him,” as Thwackum did Square, “with a Judgement,” but does not mention whether he had been punished at the time for what would appear very strange even now, and must have been still more so in an age of Papal power and glory. Sanuto says, that Heaven took away his senses for this buffet in his old age, and induced him to conspire.—*Però fù permesso che il Faliero perdette l'intelletto*, etc.

I don't know what your parlour boarders will think of the drama I have founded upon this extra-

ordinary event : the only similar one in history is the story of Agis, King of Sparta, a prince *with* the Commons against the aristocracy, and losing his life therefor ; but it shall be sent when copied.

(1820, July 17. Letter 809, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 52.)

Pondered the subjects of four tragedies to be written (life and circumstances permitting), to wit, Sardanapalus, already begun ; Cain, a metaphysical subject, something in the style of Manfred, but in five *acts*, perhaps, with the chorus ; Francesca of Rimini, in five acts ; and I am not sure that I would not try Tiberius. I think that I could extract a something of *my* tragic, at least, out of the gloomy sequestration and old age of the tyrant—and even out of his sojourn at Caprea—by softening the *details*, and exhibiting the despair which must have led to those very vicious pleasures. For none but a powerful and gloomy mind overthrown would have had recourse to such solitary horrors, — being also, at the same time, *old*, and the master of the world.

(1821, January 28. “Extracts from a Diary,” Vol. V., p. 189.)

A Plea for returning to Classical Models

Many thanks for the *Edinburgh Review*, which is very kind about *Manfred*, and defends its originality, which I did not know that any body had attacked. I *never read*, and do not know that I ever saw, the

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



I just see, by the papers of Galignani, that there is a new tragedy of great expectation, by Barry Cornwall: of what I have read of his works I liked the *Dramatic Sketches*, but thought his *Sicilican Story* and *Marcian Colonna*, in rhyme, quite spoilt by I know not what affectation of Wordsworth, and Hunt, and Moore, and Myself, all mixed up into a kind of Chaos. I think him very likely to produce a good tragedy, if he keep to a natural style, and not play tricks to form Harlequinades for an audience. As he (B. C. is not his *true* name) was a school-fellow of mine, I take more than common interest in his success, and shall be glad to hear of it speedily. If I had been aware that he was in that line, I should have spoken of him in the preface to *M[arino] F[aliero]*: he will do a World's wonder if he produce a great tragedy. I am, however, persuaded, that this is not to be done by following the old dramatists, who are full of gross faults, pardoned only for the beauty of their language; but by writing naturally and *regularly*, and producing *regular* tragedies, like the *Greeks*; but not in *imitation*,—merely the outline of their conduct, adapted to our own times and circumstances, and of course *no* chorus.

You will laugh, and say, “Why don't *you* do so?” I have, you see, tried a Sketch in *Marino Faliero*; but many people think my talent “*essentially un-dramatic*,” and I am not at all clear that they are not right. If *Marino Faliero* don't fall, in the perusal, I shall, perhaps, try again (but not for the Stage); and, as I think that *love* is not the principal passion for tragedy (and yet most of ours turn upon it), you will not find me a popular writer. Unless it

is Love, *furious, criminal, and hapless*, it ought not to make a tragic subject: when it is melting and maudlin, it *does*, but it ought not to do; it is then for the Gallery and second price boxes.

If you want to have a notion of what I am trying, take up a *translation* of any of the *Greek* tragedians. If I said the original, it would be an impudent presumption of mine; but the translations are so inferior to the originals, that I think I may risk it. Then judge of the “simplicity of plot, etc.,” and do not judge me by your mad old dramatists, which is like drinking Usquebaugh and then proving a fountain: yet after all, I suppose that you do not mean that spirits is a nobler element than a clear spring babbling in the sun; and this I take to be the difference between the Greeks and those turbid mountebanks—always excepting B. Jonson, who was a Scholar and a Classic. Or, take up a translation of Alfieri, and try the interest, etc., of these my new attempts in the old line, by *him* in *English*. And then tell me fairly your opinion. But don't measure me by YOUR OWN *old* or *new* tailor's yards. Nothing so easy as intricate confusion of plot, and rant. M^{rs} Centlivre, in comedy, has *ten times the bustle of Congreve*; but are they to be compared? and yet she drove Congreve from the theatre.

(1821, January 4. Letter 859, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 217.)

You say *The Doge* will not be popular: did I ever write for *popularity*? I defy you to show a work of mine (except a tale or two) of a popular style or complexion. It appears to me that there is room for

a different style of the drama; neither a servile following of the old drama, which is a grossly erroneous one, nor yet *too French*, like those who succeeded the older writers. It appears to me, that good English, and a severer approach to the rules, might combine something not dishonorable to our literature. I have also attempted to make a play without love. And there are neither rings, nor mistakes, nor starts, nor outrageous ranting villains, nor melodrame, in it. All this will prevent its popularity, but does not persuade me that it is *therefore* faulty. Whatever faults it has will arise from deficiency in the conduct, rather than in the conception, which is simple and severe.

(1821, February 16. Letter 872, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 243.)

I read *Cenci*—but, besides that I think the *subject* essentially *undramatic*, I am not an admirer of our old dramatists *as models*. I deny that the English have hitherto had a drama at all.

(1821, April 26. Letter 883, to Percy Bysshe Shelley, Vol. V., p. 268.)

I trust that *Sardanapalus* will not be mistaken for a *political* play, which was so far from my intention, that I thought of nothing but Asiatic history. The Venetian play, too, is rigidly historical. My object has been to dramatise, like the Greeks (a *modest* phrase!) striking passages of history, as they did of history and mythology. You will find all this very *unlike* Shakespeare; and so much the better in one

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

younger productions—*not dramatic* ones, to be sure. But, as I said before, I am mortified that Gifford don't like them ; but I see no remedy, our notions on the subject being so different. How is he? well, I hope : let me know. I regret his demur the more that he has been always my grand patron, and I know no praise which would compensate me in my own mind for his censure. I do not mind *reviews*, as I can work them at their own weapons.

Hobhouse, in his preface to "*Rimini*," will probably be better able to explain my dramatic system, than I could do, as he is well acquainted with the whole thing. It is more upon the Alfieri School than the English.

(1821, September 20. Letter 937, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 371.)

CHAPTER VI

BYRON'S VALUATION OF HIS FRIENDS

Scrope Beardmore Davies

I DO not know how the *dens*-descended [*i.e.* the dentist's descendant] Davies came to mention his having received a copy of my epistle to you, but I addressed him and you on the same evening, and being much incensed at the account I had received from Wallace, I communicated the contents to the Birdmore, though without any of that malice wherewith you charge me. I shall leave my card at Batts, and hope to see you in your progress to the North. I have lately discovered Scrope's genealogy to be ennobled by a collateral tie with the Beardmore, Chirurgeon and Dentist to Royalty, and that the town of Southwell contains cousins of Scrope's, who disowned them (I grieve to speak it) on visiting that city in my society.

How I found this out I will disclose, the first time "we three meet again." But why did he conceal his lineage? "Ah, my dear H., it was *cruel*, it was *insulting*, it was *unnecessary*."

(1808, January 16. Letter 86, to John Cam Hobhouse, Vol. I., p. 163.)

We have seen every thing but the mosques, which we are to view with a firman on Tuesday next. But of these and other sundries let H[obhouse] relate, with this proviso, that *I* am to be referred to for authenticity; and I beg leave to contradict all those things whereon he lays particular stress. But if he soars at any time into wit, I give you leave to applaud, because that is necessarily stolen from his fellow-pilgrim. Tell Davies that Hobhouse has made excellent use of his best jokes in many of his Majesty's ships of war; but add, also, that I always took care to restore them to the right owner; in consequence of which he (Davies) is no less famous by water than by land, and reigns unrivalled in the cabin as in the "Cocoa Tree."

(1810, June 17. Letter 140, to Henry Drury, Vol. I., p. 278.)

Davies has been here, and has invited me to Cambridge for a week in October, so that, peradventure, we may encounter glass to glass. His gaiety (death cannot mar it) has done me service; but, after all, ours was a hollow laughter.

(1811, August 22. Letter 168, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. I., p. 339.)

I don't know what Scrope Davies meant by telling you I liked Children, I abominate the sight of them so much that I have always had the greatest respect for the character of Herod. But, as my house here is large enough for us all, we should go on very

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



knees praying to I know not what purpose or pagod. No headach, nor sickness, that night nor to-day. Got up, if any thing, earlier than usual—sparred with Jackson [*i.e.* “Gentleman Jackson,” the pugilist] *ad sudorem*, and have been much better in health than for many days. I have heard nothing more from Scrope. Yesterday paid him four thousand eight hundred p , a debt of some standing, and which I wished to have paid before. [The sum was borrowed in 1809, before Byron left England for his travels in Albania and Greece.] My mind is much relieved by the removal of that *debit*.

(1814, March 28. “Journal, 1813-14,” Vol. II., p. 407.)

I will send the pattern [*i.e.* the pattern of Byron's “olive-green coat”] to-morrow, and since you don't go to our friend (“of the *keeping* part of the town”) this evening, I shall e'en sulk at home over a solitary potation. My self-opinion rises much by your eulogy of my social qualities. As my friend Scrope is pleased to say, I believe I am very well for a “holiday drinker.”

(1814, December 14. Letter 516, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 163.)

There are some things I wanted, and want, to know; viz., whether M^r Davies, of inaccurate memory, had or had not delivered the MS. [of *Childe Harold*, canto 3] as delivered to him; because, if he has not, you will find that he will bountifully bestow extracts and transcriptions on all the curious of his acquaintance, in which case you may probably find your

publication anticipated by the “Cambridge” or other Chronicles.

(1816, December 4. Letter 617, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 17.)

So you have seen Holmes [the miniature painter]. By the way, owing to some foolery of Scrope’s, he had cut my hair in his picture (not quite so well as Blake). I desired him to restore it: pray make him do, or see that he has done so. He may send his print in a letter if he likes, unless you see it and don’t like it.

(1817, March 25. Letter 638, to the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Vol. IV., p. 82.)

You talk of “approximations to indelicacy” [made in *Don Juan*]; this reminds me of George Lamb’s quarrel at Cambridge with Scrope Davies. “Sir,” said George, “he *hinted* at my *illegitimacy*.” “Yes,” said Scrope, “I called him a damned adulterous bastard”; the approximation and the hint are not unlike.

(1819, May 20. Letter 735, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 304.)

Our friend Scrope [ruined by high play] is dished, diddled, and done up; *what* he is our mutual friends have written to me somewhat more coldly than I think our former connections with him warrant: but where he is I know not, for neither they nor he have informed me.

(1820, December 22. Letter 855, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. V., p. 141.)

Baillie (commonly called Long Baillie, a very clever man, but odd), complained in riding to our friend Scrope B. Davies, "that he had a *stitch* in his side." "I don't wonder at it" (said Scrope) "for you ride *like a tailor*." Whoever had seen B. on horseback, with his very tall figure on a small nag, would not deny the justice of the repartée.

In 1808, Scrope and myself being at Supper at Steevens's (I think Hobhouse was there too) after the Opera, young Goulburne (of the Blues and of the Blueviad) came in full of the praises of his horse, Grimaldi, who had just won a race at Newmarket. "Did he win easy?" said Scrope. "Sir," replied Goulburne, "he did not even condescend to *puff* at coming in." "No" (said Scrope) "and so *you puff* for him."

One of the cleverest men I ever knew in Conversation was Scrope Beardmore Davies. Hobhouse is also very good in that line, though it is of less consequence to a man who has other ways of showing his talents than in company. Scrope was always ready, and often witty: Hobhouse as witty, but not always so ready, being more diffident.

When Brummell was obliged (by that affair of poor Meyler, who thence acquired the name of "Dick the Dandy-killer"—it was about money and debt and all that) to retire to France, he knew no French; and having obtained a Grammar for the purposes of Study, our friend Scrope Davies was asked what progress Brummell had made in French, to which he responded, "that B. had been stopped like Buonaparte in Russia by the *Elements*." I have put this pun into "Beppo," which is "a fair exchange and no robbery"; for

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

vain intreated by his friends, one degree less intoxicated than himself, to come or go home. In despair, he was left to himself, and to the demons of the dice box. Next day, being visited, about two of the Clock, by some friends just risen with a severe headache and empty pockets (who had left him losing at four or five in the morning), he was found in a sound sleep, without a night-cap, and not particularly encumbered with bed-cloathes : a Chamber-pot stood by his bed-side, *brim-full* of——*Bank Notes!* all won, God knows how, and crammed, Scrope knew not where ; but *there* they were, all good legitimate notes, and to the amount of some thousand pounds.

At Brighthelmstone (I love orthography at length), in the year 1808, Hobhouse, Scrope Davies, Major Cooper, and myself, having dined together with Lord Delvin, Count (I forget the french Emigrant nomenclature), and others, did about the middle of the night (we *four*) proceed to a house of Gambling, being then *amongst us* possest of about *twenty guineas* of ready cash, with which we had to maintain as many of your whorson horses and servants, besides house-hold and whore-hold expenditure. We had, I say, twenty guineas or so, and we lost them, returning home in bad humour. Cooper went home. Scrope and Hobhouse and I (it being high Summer), did firstly strip and plunge into the sea, whence, after half an hour's swimming of those of us (Scrope and I) who could swim, we emerged in our dressing-gowns to discuss a bottle or two of Champaigne and Hock (according to choice) at our quarters. In course of this discussion, words arose ; Scrope seized H. by the throat ; H. seized a knife in self-defence, and stabbed

Scrope in the shoulder to avoid being throttled. Scrope fell bathed in blood and wine—for the *bottle* fell with him, being infinitely intoxicated with Gaming, Sea-bathing at two in the morning, and Supplementary Champaigne. The skirmish had past before I had time or thought to interfere. Of course I lectured against gambling—

“Pugnare Thracum est,”

and then examined Scrope's wound, which proved to be a gash long and broad, but not deep nor dangerous. Scrope was furious: first he wanted to fight, then to go away in a post-chaise, and then to *shoot* himself, which latter intention I offered to forward, provided that he did not use *my pistols*, which, in case of suicide, would become a deo-dand to the King. At length, with many oaths and some difficulty, he was gotten to bed. In the morning, Cool reflection and a Surgeon came, and, by dint of loss of blood, and sticking plaister, the quarrel (which Scrope had begun), was healed as well as the wound, and we were all friends as for years before and after.

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thoughts” 77 and 78, Vol. V., pp. 447, 448.)

Charles Skinner Matthews

You did not know Matthews: he was a man of the most astonishing powers, as he sufficiently proved at Cambridge, by carrying off more prizes and fellowships, against the ablest candidates, than any other graduate on record; but a most decided atheist, indeed noxiously so, for he proclaimed his principles

in all societies. I knew him well, and feel a loss not easily to be supplied to myself—to Hobhouse never.

(1811, August 21. Letter 167, to R. C. Dallas, Vol. I., p. 338.)

You will feel for poor Hobhouse,—Matthews was the “god of his idolatry ;” and if intellect could exalt a man above his fellows, no one could refuse him pre-eminence. I knew him most intimately, and valued him proportionably ; but I am recurring—so let us talk of life and the living.

(1811, August 22. Letter 168, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. I., p. 338.)

You have perhaps heard also of the death of poor Matthews, whom you recollect to have met at Newstead. He was one whom his friends will find it difficult to replace, nor will Cambridge ever see his equal.

(1811, August 24. Letter 170, to James Wedderburn Webster, Vol. II., p. 4.)

I was so sincere in my note on the late Charles Matthews, and do feel myself so totally unable to do justice to his talents, that the passage must stand for the very reason you bring against it. To him all the men I ever knew were pigmies. He was an intellectual giant. It is true I loved Wingfield better ; he was the earliest and the dearest, and one of the few one could never repent of having loved : but in ability—ah ! you did not know Matthews.

(1811, August 27. Letter 172, to R. C. Dallas, Vol. II., p. 8.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



laugh his in particular. The first time I ever met him was in Scrope Davies's rooms after his brother's death, and I nearly dropped, thinking that it was his Ghost. I have also dined with him in his room, at King's College. Hobhouse once purposed a similar memoir [*i.e.* a memoir of Charles Skinner Matthews]; but I am afraid that the letters of Charles's correspondence with me (which are at Whitton with my other papers) would hardly do for the public: for our lives were not over 'strict, and our letters somewhat lax upon most subjects.

His Superiority over all his cotemporaries was quite indisputable and acknowledged: none of us ever thought of being *at all near* Matthews; and yet there were some high men of his standing—Bankes, Bob Milnes, Hobhouse, Bailey, and many others—without numbering the *mere Academical* men, of whom we hear little out of the University, and whom he beat *hollow* on *their own* Ground.

His gaining the Downing Fellowship was the completest thing of the kind ever known. He carried off both declamation prizes: in short, he did whatever he chose. He was three or four years my Senior, but I lived a good deal with him latterly, and with his friends. He wrote to me the very day of his death (I believe), or at least a day before, if not the very day. He meant to have stood for the University Membership. He was a very odd and humourous fellow besides, and spared nobody: for instance, walking out in Newstead Garden, he stopped at Boatswain's monument, inscribed "Here lies Boatswain, a Dog," etc.; and then observing a *blank* marble tablet on the other side, "So (says he) there is room

for another friend, and I propose that the Inscription be 'Here lies H—bh—se, a Pig,'” etc. You may as well not let *this* transpire to the worthy member, lest he regard neither his dead friend nor his living one, with his wonted Suavity.

(1820, November 9. Letter 845, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 116.)

What you said of the late Charles Skinner Matthews has set me to my recollections; but I have not been able to turn up any thing which would do for the purposed Memoir of his brother,—even if he [*i.e.* Charles Skinner Matthews] had previously done enough during his life to sanction the introduction of anecdotes so merely personal. He was, however, a very extraordinary man, and would have been a great one. No one ever succeeded in a more surpassing degree than he did as far as he went. He was indolent, too; but whenever he stripped, he overthrew all antagonists. His conquests will be found registered at Cambridge, particularly his *Downing* one, which was hotly and highly contested, and yet easily *won*. Hobhouse was his most intimate friend, and can tell you more of him than any man. William Bankes also a great deal. I myself recollect more of his oddities than of his academical qualities, for we lived most together at a very idle period of *my* life. When I went up to Trinity, in 1805, at the age of seventeen and a half, I was miserable and untoward to a degree. I was wretched at leaving Harrow, to which I had become attached during the two last years of my stay there; wretched at going to Cambridge instead of Oxford (there were no rooms

vacant at Christchurch); wretched from some private domestic circumstances of different kinds, and consequently about as unsocial as a wolf taken from the troop. So that, although I knew Matthews, and met him often *then* at Bankes's, (who was my collegiate pastor, and master, and patron,) and at Rhode's, Milnes's, Price's, Dick's, Macnamara's, Farrell's, Gally Knight's, and others of that *set* of contemporaries, yet I was neither intimate with him nor with any one else, except my old schoolfellow Edward Long (with whom I used to pass the day in riding and swimming), and William Bankes, who was good-naturedly tolerant of my ferocities.

It was not till 1807, after I had been upwards of a year away from Cambridge, to which I had returned again to *reside* for my degree, that I became one of Matthews's familiars, by means of Hobhouse, who, after hating me for two years, because I wore a *white hat*, and a *grey coat*, and rode a *grey horse* (as he says himself), took me into his good graces because I had written some poetry. I had always lived a good deal, and got drunk occasionally, in their company—but now we became really friends in a morning. Matthews, however, was not at this period resident in College. I met *him* chiefly in London, and at uncertain periods at Cambridge. Hobhouse, in the mean time, did great things: he founded the Cambridge "Whig Club" (which he seems to have forgotten), and the "Amicable Society," which was dissolved in consequence of the members constantly quarrelling; and made himself very popular with "us youth," and no less formidable to all tutors, professors, and heads of Colleges. William Bankes was gone;

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

that the turf under it was particularly soft. Away he went.

Matthews and myself had travelled down from London together, talking all the way incessantly upon one single topic. When we got to Loughborough, I know not what chasm had made us diverge for a moment to some other subject, at which he was indignant. "Come," said he, "don't let us break through—let us go on as we began, to our journey's end"; and so he continued, and was as entertaining as ever to the very end. He had previously occupied, during my year's absence from Cambridge, my rooms in Trinity, with the furniture; and Jones, the tutor, in his odd way, had said, on putting him in, "Mr Matthews, I recommend to your attention not to damage any of the moveables; for Lord Byron, Sir, is a young man of *tumultuous passions*." Matthews was delighted with this, and whenever anybody came to visit him, begged them to handle the very door with caution; and used to repeat Jones's admonition in his tone and manner. There was a large mirror in the room, on which he remarked, "that he thought his friends were grown uncommonly assiduous in coming to *see him*, but he soon discovered that they only came to *see themselves*." Jones's phrase of "*tumultuous passions*," and the whole scene, had put him into such good humour, that I verily believe that I owed to it a portion of his good graces.

When at Newstead, somebody by accident rubbed against one of his white silk stockings, one day before dinner; of course the gentleman apologised. "Sir," answered Matthews, "it may be all very well for you, who have a great many silk stockings, to dirty other

people's ; but to me, who have only this *one pair*, which I have put on in honour of the Abbot here, no apology can compensate for such carelessness ; besides, the expense of washing." He had the same sort of droll sardonic way about every thing. A wild Irishman, named Farrell, one evening began to say something at a large supper at Cambridge, Matthews roared out "Silence !" and then, pointing to Farrel, cried out, in the words of the oracle, "*Orson is endowed with reason.*" You may easily suppose that Orson lost what reason he had acquired, on hearing this compliment. When Hobhouse published his volume of poems, the *Miscellany* (which Matthews would call the "*Miss-sell-any*"), all that could be drawn from him was, that the preface was "extremely like *Walsh*." Hobhouse thought this at first a compliment ; but we never could make out what it was, for all we know of *Walsh* is his Ode to King William, and Pope's epithet of "*knowing Walsh*." When the Newstead party broke up for London, Hobhouse and Matthews, who were the greatest friends possible, agreed, for a whim, to *walk together* to town. They quarrelled by the way, and actually walked the latter half of the journey, occasionally passing and repassing, without speaking. When Matthews had got to Highgate, he had spent all his money but three-pence halfpenny, and determined to spend that also in a pint of beer, which I believe he was drinking before a public-house, as Hobhouse passed him (still without speaking) for the last time on their route. They were reconciled in London again.

One of Matthews's passions was "the fancy ;" and he sparred uncommonly well. But he always

got beaten in rows, or combats with the bare fist. In swimming, too, he swam well; but with *effort* and *labour*, and *too high* out of the water; so that Scrope Davies and myself, of whom he was therein somewhat emulous, always told him that he would be drowned if ever he came to a difficult pass in the water. He was so; but surely Scrope and myself would have been most heartily glad that

“the Dean had lived,
And our prediction proved a lie.”

His head was uncommonly handsome, very like what *Pope's* was in his youth.

His voice, and laugh, and features, are strongly resembled by his brother Henry's, if Henry be *he* of *King's College*. His passion for boxing was so great, that he actually wanted me to match him with Dogherty (whom I had backed and made the match for against Tom Belcher), and I saw them spar together at my own lodgings with the gloves on. As he was bent upon it, I would have backed Dogherty to please him, but the match went off. It was of course to have been a private fight, in a private room.

On one occasion, being too late to go home and dress, he was equipped by a friend (Mr Baillie, I believe,) in a magnificently fashionable and somewhat exaggerated shirt and neckcloth. He proceeded to the Opera, and took his station in Fop's Alley. During the interval between the opera and the ballet, an acquaintance took his station by him and saluted him: “Come round,” said Matthews, “come round.” —“Why should I come round?” said the other; “you have only to turn your head—I am close by

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



He was also of that band of profane scoffers who, under the auspices of * - * * *, used to rouse Lort Mansel (late Bishop of Bristol) from his slumbers in the lodge of Trinity; and when he appeared at the window foaming with wrath, and crying out, "I know you, gentlemen, I know you!" were wont to reply, "We beseech thee to hear us, good *Lort!*"—"Good *Lort* deliver us!" (Lort was his Christian name.) As he was very free in his speculations upon all kinds of subjects, although by no means either dissolute or intemperate in his conduct, and as I was no less independent, our conversation and correspondence used to alarm our friend Hobhouse to a considerable degree.

(1820, November 19. Letter 847, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 121.)

John Cam Hobhouse (subsequently Baron Broughton de Gyfford)

I should like much to see your Essay upon Entrails [*i.e.* the essay on "Sacrifices" with which Hobhouse won the Hulsean Prize]: is there any honorary token of silver gilt? any cups, or pounds sterling attached to the prize, besides glory? I expect to see you with a medal suspended from your button-hole, like a Croix de St Louis.

(1808, January 16. Letter 86, to John Cam Hobhouse, Vol. I., p. 167.)

Hobhouse desires his best remembrance. We are now lingering over our evening potations. I have extended my letter further than I ought, and beg you

will excuse it ; on the opposite page I send you some stanzas ["To a Lady on being asked my Reason for Quitting England in the Spring"] I wrote off on being questioned by a former flame as to my motives for quitting this country. You are the first reader. Hobhouse hates everything of the kind, therefore I do not show them to him.

(1808, November 27. Letter 104, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. I., p. 202.)

Hobhouse has made woundy preparations for a book on his return ; 100 pens, two gallons of Japan Ink, and several volumes of best blank, is no bad provision for a discerning public. I have laid down my pen, but have promised to contribute a chapter on the state of morals, and a further treatise on the same to be intituled " . . . *Simplified, . . . or Proved to be Praiseworthy from Ancient Authors and Modern Practice.*"

Hobhouse further hopes to indemnify himself in Turkey for a life of exemplary chastity at home. Pray buy his *Missellingany*, as the Printer's Devil calls it. I suppose it is in print by this time. Providence has interposed in our favour with a fair wind to carry us out of its reach, or he would have hired a Faqui to translate it into the Turcoman lingo.

"The cock is crowing,
I must be going,
And can no more."

—*Ghost of Gaffer Thumb.*

(1809, June 25. Letter 124, to the Rev. Henry Drury, Vol. I., p. 226.)

Look to my satire at Cawthorn's, Cockspur Street, and look to the *Miscellany* of the Hobhouse. It has pleased Providence to interfere in behalf of a suffering public by giving him a sprained wrist, so that he cannot write, and there is a cessation of ink-shed.

(1809, June 25. Letter 125, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. I., p. 230.)

And so Hobhouse's *boke* is out [*Imitations and Translations from the Ancient and Modern Classics*, sixty-five pieces, nine of which were contributed by Byron], with some sentimental sing-song of my own to fill up,—and how does it take, eh? and where the devil is the second edition of my Satire, with additions? and my name on the title-page? and more lines tagged to the end, with a new exordium and what not, hot from my anvil before I cleared the Channel? . . . I am like the Jolly Miller, caring for nobody, and not cared for. All countries are much the same in my eyes. I smoke, and stare at mountains, and twirl my mustachios very independently. I miss no comforts, and the musquitoes that rack the morbid frame of H[obhouse] have, luckily for me, little effect on mine, because I live more temperately. . . . H[obhouse] greets you; he pines for his poetry,—at least, some tidings of it.

(1810, May 3. Letter 136, to Henry Drury, Vol. I., p. 267.)

Hobhouse, who will deliver this, is bound straight for these parts [*i.e.* England]; and, as he is bursting with his travels, I shall not anticipate his narratives,

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

The Marquis of Sligo, my old fellow-collegian, is here, and wishes to accompany me into the Morea. We shall go together for that purpose; but I am woefully sick of travelling companions, after a year's experience of Mr Hobhouse, who is on his way to Great Britain. Lord S. will afterwards pursue his way to the capital; and Lord B., having seen all the wonders in that quarter, will let you know what he does next, of which at present he is not quite certain.

(1810, July 25. Letter 144, to his Mother, Vol. I., p. 289.)

Sligo has very kindly proposed a union of our forces for the occasion, which will be perhaps as uncomfortable to him as to myself, judging from previous experience, which, however, may be explained by my own irritability and hurry. . . . Hobhouse is silent, and has, I suppose, not yet returned; indeed, like myself, he appears to love the world better than England, and the Devil more than either, who I regret is not present to be informed of this. Do not fail, if you see him (Hobhouse, I mean), to repeat it, and the assurance that I am to him, with yourself, ever affectionately,

BYRON.

(1810, July 27. Letter 145, to his Mother, Vol. I., p. 292.)

I saw the Lady Hester Stanhope [Pitt's favourite niece and constant companion] at Athens, and do not admire "that dangerous thing, a female wit." She told me (take her own words) that she had given you

a good set-down at Malta, in some disputation about the Navy; from this, of course, I readily inferred the contrary, or in the words of an *acquaintance* of ours, that "you had the best of it."

She evinced a similar disposition to *argufy* with me, which I avoided by either laughing or yielding. I despise the sex too much to squabble with them, and I rather wonder you should allow a woman to draw you into a contest, in which, however, I am sure you had the advantage, she abuses you so bitterly.

I have seen too little of the Lady to form any decisive opinion, but I have discovered nothing different from other she-things, except a great disregard of received notions in her conversation as well as conduct. I don't know whether this will recommend her to our sex, but I am sure it won't to her own. . . .

In my t'other letter, to which I am perpetually obliged to refer, I have offered some moving topics on the head of your *Miscellany*, the neglect of which I attribute to the half guinea annexed as the indispensable equivalent for the said volume.

Now I do hope, notwithstanding that exorbitant demand, that on your return you will find it selling, or, what is better, sold, in consequence of which you will be able to face the public with your new volume, if that intention still subsists.

My journal, did I keep one, should be yours. As it is I can only offer my sincere wishes for your success, if you will believe it possible for a brother scribbler to be sincere on such an occasion. . . . Your last letter closes pathetically with a postscript about a

nosegay ; I advise you to introduce that into your next sentimental novel. I am sure I did not suspect you of any fine feelings, and I believe you were laughing, but you are welcome.

(1810, October 4. Letter 149, to John Cam Hobhouse, Vol. I., p. 302.)

Hobhouse you have doubtless seen ; he went home in August to arrange materials for a tour he talks of publishing. You will find him well and scribbling—that is, scribbling if well, and well if scribbling.

(1810, November 14. Letter 150, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. I., p. 306.)

My friend Hobhouse's *Miscellany* has not succeeded ; but he himself writes so good-humouredly on the subject, I don't know whether to laugh or cry with him. He met with your son at Cadiz, of whom he speaks highly.

(1811, June 28. Letter 154, to R. C. Dallas, Vol. I., p. 314.)

Hobhouse is returned to England. He is my best friend, the most lively, and a man of the most sterling talents extant. . . . Hobhouse has told me ten thousand anecdotes of Napoleon, all good and true. My friend H. is the most entertaining of companions, and a fine fellow to boot. . . . Hobhouse abounds in continental anecdotes of this extraordinary man ; all in favour of his intellect and courage, but against his

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



I enclose you half a letter from H[obhouse], which will explain itself—at least the latter part—the former refers to private business of mine own. If Jeffrey will take such an article, and you will undertake the revision, or indeed, any portion of the article itself (for unless *you do*, by Phœbus, I will have nothing to do with it,) we can cook up, between us three, as pretty a dish of sourcrout as ever tipped over the tongue of a bookmaker. * * *

You can, at any rate, try Jeffrey's inclination. Your late proposal from him [that Byron should write a review] made me hint this to H[obhouse], who is a much better proser and scholar than I am, and a very superior man indeed.

(1815, February 4. Letter 526, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 177.)

Yesterday I sent off the packet and letter to Edinburgh. [This was a review of Leake's *Researches in Greece*, written by Hobhouse, and untouched by Byron. It appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* for February, 1815.] It consisted of forty-one pages, so that I have not added a line; but in my letter, I mentioned what passed between you and me in autumn, as my inducement for presuming to trouble him either with my own or H[obhouse]'s lucubrations. I am any thing but sure that it will do; but I have told Jeffrey that if there is any decent raw material in it, he may cut it into what shape he pleases, and warp it to his liking. . . . I hope J[effrey] won't think me very impudent in sending H[obhouse] only: there was not room for a syllable. I have avowed H[obhouse] as the author, and said that you thought

or said, when I met you last, that he (J.) would not be angry at the coalition, (though, alas! we have not coalesced,) and so, if I have got into a scrape, I must get out of it—Heaven knows how.

(1815, February 22. Letter 528, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 179.)

This evening, on the lake in my boat with M^r Hobhouse, the pole which sustains the mainsail slipped in tacking, and struck me so violently on one of my legs (the *worst*, luckily) so as to make me do a foolish thing, viz. to *faint*—a downright swoon; the thing must have jarred some nerve or other, for the bone is not injured, and hardly painful (it is six hours since), and cost M^r H[obhouse] some apprehension and much sprinkling of water to recover me.

(1816, September 30, Diodati, Geneva. Letter 606, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 367.)

I have many obligations to him [*i.e.* to Hobhouse], and he none to me which have not been cancelled and more than repaid. . . . It is odd enough for people so intimate, but M^r H. and I are very sparing of our literary confidences. For example, the other day he wished to have an MS. of the 3rd canto [of *Childe Harold*] to read over to his brother, etc., which was refused;—and I have never seen his journals, nor he mine—(I only kept the short one of the mountains for my sister)—nor do I think that hardly ever he or I

saw any of our own [*i.e.* one another's] productions previous to their publication.

(1817, February 15. Letter 627, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 53.)

Mr Hobhouse is at it again about indelicacy. There is *no indelicacy*; if he wants *that*, let him read Swift, his great Idol; but his Imagination must be a dunghill, with a Viper's nest in the middle, to engender such a supposition about this poem [of *Don Juan*]. For my part, I think you are all crazed. * * * Request him not "to put me in a phrenzy," as Sir Anthony Absolute says, "though he was not the indulgent father that I am."

(1819, May 15. Letter 733, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 295.)

I perceive that Mr Hobhouse has been challenged by Major Cartwright.—Is the Major "so cunning of fence?" why did not they fight?—they ought.

[The challenge arose out of the Westminster election of March 1819, when Hobhouse was defeated, owing, as he believed, to the support given by Cobbett, Hunt, and Major Cartwright to George Lamb, the official Whig candidate. The affair was eventually arranged so as to lead to a friendly acquaintance subsisting between Hobhouse and the Major.]

(1819, June 29. Letter 741, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 321.)

Pray let not these versiculi [on Cobbett and on Tom Paine] go forth with *my* name, except among

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

the company he must have lately kept (I always except Burdett, and Douglas K., and the genteel part of the reformers), was perhaps to be apprehended. I was really glad to hear it was for libel instead of larceny; for, though impossible in his own person, he might have been taken up by mistake for another at a meeting. All reflections on his present case and place are so *Nugatory*, that it would be useless to pursue the subject further. I am out of all patience to see my friends sacrifice themselves for a pack of blackguards, who disgust one with their Cause, although I have always been a friend to and a Voter for reform. If Hunt had addressed the language to me which he did to M^r H[obhouse] last election, I would not have descended to call out such a miscreant who won't fight; but have passed my sword-stick through his body, like a dog's, and then thrown myself on my Peers, who would, I hope, have weighed the provocation: at any rate, it would have been as public a Service as Walworth's chastisement of Wat. Tyler. If we must have a tyrant, let him at least be a gentleman who has been bred to the business, and let us fall by the axe and not by the butcher's cleaver.

No one can be more sick of, or indifferent to, politics than I am, if they let me alone; but if the time comes when a part must be taken one way or the other, I shall pause before I lend myself to the views of such ruffians, although I cannot but approve of a Constitutional amelioration of long abuses. Lord George Gordon, and Wilkes, and Burdett, and Horne Tooke, were all men of education and courteous deportment: so is Hobhouse; but as for these others, I am convinced that Robespierre was a Child, and

Marat a Quaker in comparison of what they would be, could they throttle their way to power.

(1820, February 21. Letter 775, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 410.)

Pray give *Hobhouse* the enclosed song, and tell him I know he will never forgive me, but I could not help it. I am so provoked with him and his ragamuffins for putting him in *quod*: he will understand that word, being now resident in the flash capital.

NEW SONG, TO THE TUNE OF

“ *Whare hae ye been a’ day,
My boy Tammy O?
Courting o’ a young thing,
Just come frae her Mammie O?* ”

1.

How came you in Hob’s pound to cool,
My boy Hobbie O?
Because I bade the people pull
The House into the Lobby O.

2.

What did the House upon this call,
My boy Hobbie O?
They voted me to Newgate all,
Which is an awkward Jobby O.

3.

Who are now the people’s men,
My boy Hobby O?
There’s I and Burdett—Gentlemen,
And blackguard Hunt and Cobby O.

4.

You hate the house—why canvass, then,
 My boy Hobbie O?
 Because I would reform the den
 As member for the Mobby O.

5.

Wherefore do you hate the Whigs,
 My boy Hobbie O?
 Because they want to run their rigs,
 As under Walpole Bobby O.

6.

But when we at Cambridge were,
 My boy Hobbie O,
 If my memory don't err,
 You founded a Whig Clubbie O.

7.

When to the mob you make a speech,
 My boy Hobbie O,
 How do you keep without their reach
 The watch within your fobby O?

8.

But never mind such petty things,
 My boy Hobbie O;
 God save the people—damn all Kings,
 So let us crown the Mobby O!

Yours truly,

(Signed) *Infidus Scurra.*

March 23rd, 1820.

(1820, March 23. Letter 782, to John
 Murray, Vol. IV., pp. 422, 423-4.)

You see the blackguards have brought in Hobhouse for Westminster. Rochfoucault says that "there is something in the misfortunes of our best friends not

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



Why do the papers call *Hobhouse young*? he is a year and a half older than I am ; and I was thirty-two last January.

(1820, October 25. Letter 842, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 107.)

Hobhouse writes me a facetious letter about my *indolence* and love of Slumber. It becomes him : he is in active life ; he writes pamphlets against Canning, to which he does not put his name ; he gets into Newgate and into Parliament—both honourable places of refuge ; and he “greatly daring dines” at all the taverns (why don't he set up a *tap* room at once), and then writes to quiz my laziness.

Why, I do like one or two vices, to be sure ; but I can back a horse and fire a pistol “without winking or blinking” like Major Sturgeon ; I have fed at times for two months together on *sheer biscuit and water* (without metaphor) ; I can get over seventy or eighty miles a day *riding* post, and *swim five* at a Stretch, taking a *piece* before and after, as at Venice, in 1818, or at least I *could do*, and have done it ONCE, and I never was ten minutes in my life over a *solitary* dinner.

Now, my friend Hobhouse, when we were way-faring men, used to complain grievously of hard beds and sharp insects, while I slept like a top, and to awaken me with his swearing at them : he used to damn his dinners daily, both quality and cookery and quantity, and reproach me for a sort of “brutal” indifference, as he called it, to these particulars ; and now he writes me facetious sneerings because I *do*

not get up early in a morning, when there is no occasion—if there were, *he* knows that I was always *out* of bed before him, though it is true that my ablutions detained me longer in dressing than his noble contempt of that “oriental scrupulosity” permitted.

Then he is still sore about “*the ballad*”—he !! why, he lampooned me at Brighton, in 1808, about Jackson the boxer and bold Webster, etc. : in 1809, he turned the death of my friend E^d *Long* into ridicule and rhyme, because his name was susceptible of a *pun* ; and, although he saw that I was distressed at it, before I left England in 1816, he wrote rhymes upon *D. Kinnaird, you, and myself* ; and at Venice he parodied the lines “Though the day of my destiny’s over” in a comfortable quizzing way : and now he harps on my ballad about his election ! Pray tell him all this, for I will have no underhand work with my “old Cronies.” If he can deny the facts, let him. I maintain that he is more *carnivorously and carnally sensual* than I am, though I am bad enough too for that matter ; but not in eating and haranguing at the Crown and Anchor, where I never was but twice—and those were at “Whore’s Hops” when I was a youngster in my teens ; and, Egad, I think them the most respectable meetings of the two. But he is a little wroth that I would not come over to the *Queen’s* trial : *lazy*, quotha ! it is so true that he should be ashamed of asserting it. He counsels me not to “get into a Scrape” ; but, as Beau Clincher says, “How [severe and] melancholy are Newgate reflections !” To be sure, his advice is worth following ; for experience teacheth : he has been in a dozen

within these last two years. *I pronounce me the more temperate of the two.*

(1820, November 9. Letter 845, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 114.)

Hobhouse is a Radical, and is doing great things in that somewhat violent line of politics. His intellect will bear him out; but, though I do not disapprove of his cause, I by no means envy him his company.

(1820, December 22. Letter 855, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. V., p. 141.)

Hobhouse has been paying back Mr Canning's assault. He was right; for Canning had been, like Addison, trying to "*cuff down new-fledged merit.*" Hobhouse has in him "something dangerous" if not let alone.

(1821, May 19. Letter 894, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 292.)

By a not very temperate letter from Mr Hobhouse, in a style which savours somewhat of the London tavern, I perceive that there has been some mistake or misunderstanding about the block of a bust. This as I do not understand—I cannot explain. I addressed it to your *care* for Mr Hobhouse, and indeed with *his* name on the direction—always understood that *all expences* were to be at *my charge*, and that the trouble would not be greater than you

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

or would he have me leave the tale for him to tell? But the best is that I happen to know *he himself* keeps—and has kept for many years a regular diary and disquisition upon all his own personal as well as public transactions—and has *he* done this with no view to posthumous publication? I will not believe it. I shall not quote his expressions because really some of them to me could only be noticed in one way—and that way neither present distance—nor past intimacy, were I nearer—would induce me to take—without some overt action accompanied the harshness of his language. I have even written him as temperate an answer as I believe ever human being did in the like circumstances. Is there anything in the MSS. that could be personally obnoxious to *himself*? I am sure I do not remember, nor intended it. M^r Kinnaird and others had read them at Paris and noticed none such.

If there were any—I can only say—that even *that* would not sanction the tone of his letter, which I showed to one or two English and *Irish* friends of mine here—who were perfectly astonished at the whole of it. I do not allude to the *opinions* (which may or may not be founded) but to the language—which seems studiously insulting. You see, Murray, what a scene you have superinduced—because the *original sin* seems to have been about this foolish bust, or I am convinced that he would have expressed his opinions less in the Election style. However I am more hurt than angry—for I cannot afford to lose an old friend for a fit of ill-humour.

(1821, November 24. Letter 962, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 483.)

By extracts in the English papers,—in your holy Ally, Galignani's *Messenger*,—I perceive that “the two greatest examples of human vanity in the present age” are, firstly, “the ex-Emperor Napoleon,” and secondly, “his Lordship, etc., the noble poet,” meaning your humble servant, “poor guiltless I.”

Poor Napoleon! he little dreamed to what “vile comparisons” the turn of the Wheel would reduce him! I cannot help thinking, however, that had our learned brother of the newspaper office seen my very moderate answer to the very scurrile epistle of my radical patron, John Hobhouse, M.P., he would have thought the thermometer of my “Vanity” reduced to a very decent temperature. By the way you do not happen to know whether M^{rs} Fry had commenced her reform of the prisoners at the time when M^r Hobhouse was in Newgate? there are some of his phrases, and much of his style (in that same letter), which led me to suspect that either she had not, or that he had profited less than the others by her instructions.

(1821, December 4. Letter 963, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 486.)

A drunken man ran against Hobhouse in the Street. A companion of the Drunkard, not much less so, cried out to Hobhouse, “*An't* you ashamed to run against a drunken man? couldn't you see that he was *drunk*?” “Damn him” (answered Hobhouse) “isn't *he* ashamed to run against *me*? couldn't he see that *I* was *sober*?”

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thought” 27, Vol. V., p. 422.)

Samuel Rogers

You never told me of the forthcoming critique on *Columbus* [written by Ward in the *Quarterly* for March 1813], which is not *too* fair; and I do not think justice quite done to the *Pleasures*, which surely entitles the author to a higher rank than that assigned to him in the *Quarterly*. But I must not cavil at the decisions of the *invisible infallibles*; and the article is very well written.

(1813, June 13. Letter 301, to John Murray, Vol. II., p. 218.)

Can't you be satisfied with the pangs of my jealousy of Rogers, without actually making me the pander of your epistolary intrigue? This is the second letter you have enclosed to my address, notwithstanding a miraculous long answer, and a subsequent short one or two of your own. If you do so again, I can't tell to what pitch my fury may soar. I shall send you verse or arsenic, as likely as any thing,—four thousand couplets on sheets beyond the privilege of franking; that privilege, sir, of which you take an undue advantage over a too susceptible senator, by forwarding your lucubrations to every one but himself. I won't frank *from* you, or *for* you, or *to* you—may I be curst if I do, unless you mend your manners. I disown you—I disclaim you—and by all the powers of Eulogy, I will write a panegyric upon you—or dedicate a quarto—if you don't make me ample amends.

(1813, July 28. Letter 316, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 239.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



arrangement was come to, whereby the business of translation was entrusted to the Rev. Francis Hodgson and to Dr Butler, Headmaster of Shrewsbury and afterwards Bishop of Lichfield. The issue of this collaboration was published in 1815.]

(1813, October 1. Letter 338, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. II., p. 270.)

Rogers is silent,—and, it is said, severe. When he does talk, he talks well; and, on all subjects of taste, his delicacy of expression is pure as his poetry. If you enter his house—his drawing-room—his library—you of yourself say, this is not the dwelling of a common mind. There is not a gem, a coin, a book thrown aside on his chimney-piece, his sofa, his table, that does not bespeak an almost fastidious elegance in the possessor. But this very delicacy must be the misery of his existence. Oh the jar-rings his disposition must have encountered through life!

(1813, November 22. "Journal, 1813-14," Vol. II., p. 331.)

Saw [Rogers] yesterday. I have not kept my appointment at Middleton, which has not pleased him, perhaps; and my projected voyage with [Ward] will, perhaps, please him less. But I wish to keep well with both. They are instruments that don't do in concert; but, surely, their separate tones are very musical, and I won't give up either.

It is well if I don't jar between these great dis-

cards. At present I stand tolerably well with all, but I cannot adopt their *dislikes*;—so many *sets*.

(1813, December 5. "Journal, 1813-14,"
Vol. II., p. 362.)

To dine to-day with Rogers and Sharpe, for which I have some appetite, not having tasted food for the preceding forty-eight hours. I wish I could leave off eating altogether.

(1813, December 10. "Journal, 1813-14,"
Vol. II., p. 373.)

Well, I *can* "judge for myself," and a pretty piece of judgement it is! You shall hear. Last night at Earl Grey's, or rather this *morning* (about 2 by the account of the said Aurora), in one of the cooler rooms, sitting in the corner of a great chair wherein was deposited Lady M., *she* talking Platonics and listening to a different doctrine, I observed Mr Rogers not far off colloquizing with your friend [Miss Milbanke]. Presently he came up and interrupted our duet, and, after different remarks, began upon her and her's. What seized me I know not, but I desired him to introduce me, at which he expressed much good humour.

I stopped him, and said he had better ask her first, and in the mean time, to give her entire option, I walked away to another part of the room separated by a great Screen, so that she had the best opportunity of getting off without the awkwardness of being overheard or seen, etc., etc.; all which I duly considered.

My Goddess of the Arm-chair in the mean time was left to a soliloquy, as she afterwards told me, wondering what Rogers and I were about. To my astonishment, in a moment up comes R. with your little friend at the *pas de charge* of introduction; the bow was made, the curtsey returned, and so far "excellent well," all except the disappearance of the said Rogers, who immediately marched off, leaving us in the middle of a huge apartment with about 20 scattered pairs all employed in their own concerns.

(1814, June 18. Letter 462, to the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Vol. III., p. 96.)

You could not have made me a more acceptable present than *Jacqueline*. She is all grace and softness and poetry; there is so much of the last, that we do not feel the want of *story*, which is simple, yet enough. I wonder that you do not oftener unbend to more of the same kind. I have some sympathy with the *softer* affections, though very little in *my* way, and no one can depict them so truly and successfully as yourself. I have half a mind to pay you in kind, or rather *unkind*, for I have just "supped full of horror" in two cantos of darkness and dismay.

(1814, June 27. Letter 466, to Samuel Rogers, Vol. III., p. 101.)

Rogers and I have almost coalesced into a joint invasion of the public. Whether it will take place or not, I do not yet know [The two poems, *Jacqueline* and *Lara*, were eventually published together by

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

Tithonus of poetry—immortal already. You and I must wait for it.

(1817, April 11. Letter 644, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 102.)

Remember me to Moore, whom I congratulate [on the success of *Lalla Rookh*]. How is Rogers? How does he look? eh? and what is become of Campbell and all t'other fellows of the Druid order?

(1817, June 18. Letter 660, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 141.)

Rogers, the Grandfather of living Poetry, is retired upon half-pay, (I don't mean as a Banker),—

Since pretty Miss Jaqueline,
With her nose aquiline,

and has done enough, unless he were to do as he did formerly.

(1817, September 15. Letter 673, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 170.)

I don't know what Murray may have been saying or quoting. I called Crabbe and Sam [Rogers] the fathers of present Poesy; and said, that I thought—except them—all of “*us youth*” were on a wrong tack. But I never said that we did not sail well. Our fame will be hurt by *admiration* and *imitation*. When I say *our*, I mean *all* (Lakers included), except the postscript of the Augustans.

(1818, February 2. Letter 686, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 196.)

What you tell me of Rogers [concerning an attack on Byron which Rogers thought of making in his *Human Life*] in your last letter is like him; but he had best let *us*, that is one of us, if not both, alone. He cannot say that I have not been a sincere and a warm friend to him, till the black drop of his liver oozed through, too palpably to be overlooked. Now, if I once catch him at any of his jugglery with me or mine, let him look to it, for, if I spare him then, write me down a good-natured gentleman; and the more that I have been deceived,—the more that I once relied upon him,—I don't mean his petty friendship (what is that to me?), but his *good* will, which I really tried to obtain, thinking him at first a good fellow,—the more will I pay off the balance; and so, if he values his quiet, let him look to it; in three months I could restore him to the Catacombs.

(1818, February 20. Letter 687, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 202.)

Can you keep a Secret? not you: you would rather keep a w——e, I believe, of the two, although a moral man and “all that, Egad,” as Bayes says.

However, I request and recommend to you to keep the enclosed one [*i.e.* the lines on Rogers beginning “Nose and chin would shame a knocker”], viz. to *give no copies*, to permit *no publication*—else you and I will be two. It was written nearly three years ago upon the doublefaced fellow: its argument—in consequence of a letter exposing some of his usual practices. You may *show* it to Gifford, Hobhouse, D. Kinnaird, and any two or three of your own

Admiralty favourites ; but don't betray *it* or me ; else you are the worst of men.

Is it like ? if not, it has no merit. Does he deserve it ? if not, burn it. He wrote to M[oore] (so M[oore] says) the other day, saying on some occasion, "what a fortunate fellow you are ! surely you were born with a rose in your lips, and a Nightingale singing on the bed-top." M. sent me this extract as an instance of the old Serpent's sentimental twaddle. I replied, that I believed that "he (the twaddler) was born with a Nettle in his *, and a Carrion Crow croaking on the bolster," a parody somewhat *undelicate* ; but such trash puts one stupid, besides the Cant of it in a fellow who hates every body. Is this good ? tell me, and I will send you one still better of that black-guard Brougham ; there is a batch of them.

(1820, September 28. Letter 831, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 80.)

In the year 1812, more than three years after the publication of *English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers*, I had the honour of meeting M^r Bowles in the house of our venerable host of *Human Life*, etc., the last Argonaut of classic English poetry, and the Nestor of our inferior race of living poets.

(1821, February 7. 1st Letter to Murray on the Bowles-Pope controversy, Vol. V., p. 537.)

I hear that Rogers is not pleased with being called "venerable"—a pretty fellow : if I had thought that he would have been so absurd, I should have spoken

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



“gone dead”, but too many of our acquaintances have taken the same path. Lady Melbourne, Grattan, Sheridan, Curran, etc., etc. — without reckoning the *οἱ πολλοί*—almost every body of much name of the old school. But “so am not I, said the foolish fat scullion;” therefore let us make the most of our remainder.

(1821, October 21. Letter 949, to Samuel Rogers, Vol. V., p. 394.)

When Sheridan was on his death-bed, Rogers aided him with purse and person: this was particularly kind in Rogers, who always spoke ill of Sheridan (to me at least); but indeed he does that of every-body to any body. Rogers is the reverse of the line “The *best good man* with the *worst natured Muse*,” being “The *worst good man* with the *best natured Muse*.” His Muse being all Sentiment and Sago and Sugar, while he himself is a venomous talker. I say “*worst good man*,” because he is (perhaps) a *good man*—at least he does good now and then, as well he may, to purchase himself a shilling's worth of Salvation for his Slanders. They are so *little* too—small talk, and old Womanny; and he is malignant too, and envious, and—he be damned!

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thought” 23, Vol. V., p. 420.)

At Bologna I met with Rogers, and we crossed the Apennines together—probably you have got him at Rome by this time. I took him to visit our old friend the sexton, at the Certosa, (where you and I met with Bianchetti), who looked at him very *hard*,

and seemed well disposed to keep him back in his skull-room [cf. Chapter II. (2) *Thoughts on Death and on Apparitions*, 1819, June 7] . . . [Rogers] looks a little black still about being called “venerable,” but he did not mention it. It was at his own request that I met him in the City of Sausages : he is not a bad traveller, but bilious.

(1821, November 20. Letter 961, to Douglas Kinnaird, Vol. V., p. 481.)

By the way, send me a copy of the MSS. lines on *Samiel* [Rogers], which were sent some years ago. I hear from M^r Hobhouse [who visited Byron at Pisa in September 1822] that he [*i.e.* Rogers] hath said something which is like him : it is time to teach him ; and, if I take him in hand, I’ll show him what he has been these sixty years.

Send me a copy of the lines.

(1822, September 23. Letter 1027, to John Murray, Vol. VI., p. 117.)

I shall not assail Rogers if he lets me alone ; but it is a sad old fellow. I have lost the original copy, which made me send for this one, of which I shall not make any use.

(1822, October 24. Letter 1032, to John Murray, Vol. VI., p. 130.)

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Was not Sheridan good upon the whole ? The “Poulterer” was the first and best.

(1813, May or June. Letter 295, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 212.)

I am in training to dinè with Sheridan and Rogers this evening. I have a little spite against R., and will shed his "Clary wines pottle-deep."

(1813, July 28. Letter 316, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 239.)

Read Burns to-day. What would he have been, if a patrician? We should have had more polish—less force—just as much verse, but no immortality—a divorce and a duel or two, the which had he survived, as his potations must have been less spirituous, he might have lived as long as Sheridan, and outlived as much as poor Brinsley. What a wreck is that man! and all from bad pilotage; for no one had ever better gales, though now and then a little too squally. Poor dear Sherry! I shall never forget the day he and Rogers and Moore and I passed together; when *he* talked, and *we* listened, without one yawn, from six till one in the morning.

(1813, November 16. "Journal, 1813-14," Vol. II., p. 320.)

I have sent an excuse to Madame de Stael. I do not feel sociable enough for dinner to-day;—and I will not go to Sheridan's on Wednesday. Not that I do not admire and prefer his unequalled conversation; but—that "*but*" must only be intelligible to thoughts I cannot write. Sheridan was in good talk at Rogers's the other night, but I only stayed till *nine*.

(1813, December 12. "Journal, 1813-14," Vol. II., p. 374.)

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

Set down Sheridan at Brookes's,—where, by the by, he could not have well set down himself, as he and I were the only drinkers. Sherry means to stand for Westminster, as Cochrane (the stock-jobbing hoaxer) must vacate. Brougham is a candidate. I fear for poor dear Sherry. Both have talents of the highest order, but the youngster has *yet* a character. We shall see, if he lives to Sherry's age, how he will pass over the red-hot ploughshares of public life. I don't know why, but I hate to see the *old* ones lose; particularly Sheridan, notwithstanding all his *méchanceté*.

(1814, March 10. "Journal, 1813-14," Vol. II., p. 396.)

Sheridan was yesterday, at first, too sober to remember your invitation, but in the dregs of the third bottle he fished up his memory, and found that he had a party at home. I left and leave any other day to him and you, save Monday, and some yet undefined dinner at Burdett's.

(1814, June. Letter 458, to Samuel Rogers, Vol. III., p. 91.)

Yesterday I dined out with a large-ish party, where were Sheridan and Colman, Harry Harris of C[ovent] G[arden], and his brother, Sir Gilbert Heathcote, Douglas Kinnaird, and others, of note and notoriety. Like other parties of the kind, it was first silent, then talky, then argumentative, then disputatious, then unintelligible, then altogethery, then inarticulate, and then drunk. When we had

reached the last step of this glorious ladder, it was difficult to get down again without stumbling; and, to crown all, Kinnaird and I had to conduct Sheridan down a damned corkscrew staircase, which had certainly been constructed before the discovery of fermented liquors, and to which no legs, however crooked, could possibly accommodate themselves. We deposited him safe at home, where his man, evidently used to the business, waited to receive him in the hall.

Both he and Colman were, as usual, very good; but I carried away much wine, and the wine had previously carried away my memory; so that all was hiccup and happiness for the last hour or so, and I am not impregnated with any of the conversation. Perhaps you heard of a late answer of Sheridan to the watchman who found him bereft of that “divine particle of air,” called reason, * * * He, the watchman, who found Sherry in the street, fuddled and bewildered, and almost insensible, “Who are *you*, sir?”—no answer. “What’s your name?”—a hiccup. “What’s your name?”—Answer, in a slow, deliberate, and impassive tone—“Wilberforce!!!” Is not that Sherry all over?—and, to my mind, excellent. Poor fellow, *his* very dregs are better than the “first sprightly runnings” of others.

(1815, October 31. Letter 558, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 242.)

The Monody [on the death of Sheridan, first spoken at Drury Lane on the occasion of the reopening of the theatre, September 7th 1816] was written by request of M^r K[innaird] for the theatre. I did as

well as I could ; but where I have not my choice I pretend to answer for nothing.

(1816, September 29. Letter 605, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 365.)

The "Monody" is in too many paragraphs, which makes it unintelligible to me ; if any one else understands it in the present form, they are wiser : however,—as it cannot be rectified till my return, and has been already published, even publish it on in the collection—it will fill up the place of the omitted epistle [*i. e.* the "Epistle to Augusta"].

(1816, October 5. Letter 608, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 371.)

I have now written to you at least six letters, or *letterets*, and all I have received in return is a note about the length you used to write from Bury Street to St James's Street, when we used to dine with Rogers, and talk laxly, and go to parties, and hear poor Sheridan now and then. Do you remember one night he was so tipsy, that I was forced to put his cocked hat on for him,—for he could not,—and I let him down at Brookes's, much as he must since have been let down into his grave. Heigh ho ! I wish I was drunk—but I have nothing but this damned barley-water before me.

(1817, March 25. Letter 637, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 80.)

I have seen Sheridan drunk, too, with all the

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



In writing the *Life* of Sheridan, never mind the angry lies of the humbug Whigs. Recollect that he was an Irishman and a clever fellow, and that *we* have had some very pleasant days with him. Don't forget that he was at school at Harrow, where, in my time, we used to show his name — R. B. Sheridan, 1765,—as an honour to the walls. Remember * * * * * Depend upon it that there were worse folks going, of that gang, than ever Sheridan was.

(1818, September 19. Letter 715, to Thomas Moore, Vol. IV., p. 261.)

Soon after the "Rejected Address" scene in 1812, I met Sheridan. In the course of dinner, he said, "L. B., did you know that, amongst the writers of addresses, was Whitbread himself?" I answered by an enquiry of what sort of an address he had made. "Of that," replied Sheridan, "I remember little, except that there was a *phoenix* in it."—"A phoenix!! Well, how did he describe it?"—"Like a *poulterer*," answered Sheridan: "It was green, and yellow, and red, and blue: he did not let us off for a single feather."

(1821, February 7. 1st Letter to Murray on the Bowles-Pope controversy, Vol. V., p. 557.)

I am filling another [MS. book] for you with little anecdotes, to my own knowledge, or well authenticated, of Sheridan, Curran, etc., and such other public men as I recollect to have been acquainted with, for

I knew most of them more or less. I will do what I can to prevent your losing by my obsequies.

(1821, October 20. Letter 948, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 393.)

In society I have met him [*i.e.* Sheridan] frequently : he was superb ! He had a sort of liking for me, and never attacked me—at least to my face, and he did every body else—high names, and wits, and orators, some of them poets also. I have seen [him] cut up Whitbread, quiz M^e de Stael, annihilate Colman, and do little less by some others (whose names as friends I set not down), of good fame and abilities. Poor fellow ! he got drunk very thoroughly and very soon. It occasionally fell to my lot to convoy him home—no sinecure, for he was so tipsy that I was obliged to put on his cock'd hat for him : to be sure it tumbled off again, and I was not myself so sober as to be able to pick it up again.

There was something odd about Sheridan. One day at a dinner he was slightly praising that pert pretender and impostor, Lyttelton (The Parliament puppy, still alive, I believe). I took the liberty of differing from him : he turned round upon me, and said, "Is that your real opinion ?" I confirmed it. Then said he, "Fortified by this concurrence, I beg leave to say that it in fact is also *my* opinion, and that he is a person whom I do absolutely and utterly despise, abhor, and detest." He then launched out into a description of his despicable qualities, at some length, and with his usual wit, and evidently in earnest (for he hated Lyttelton). His former compliment had been drawn out by some preceding one,

just as its reverse was by my hinting that it was unmerited.

Sheridan was one day offered a bet by M. G. Lewis. "I will bet you, M^r Sheridan, a very large sum : I will bet you what you *owe me* as Manager, for my 'Castle Spectre.'" "I never make *large bets*," said Sheridan : "but I will lay you a *very small* one ; I will bet you *what it is* WORTH !"

Lewis, though a kind man, hated Sheridan ; and we had some words upon that score when in Switzerland in 1816. Lewis afterwards sent me the following epigram upon Sheridan from Saint Maurice :—

"For worst abuse of finest parts
Was Misophil begotten ;
There might indeed be *blacker* hearts,
But none could be more *rotten*."

I have seen Sheridan weep two or three times : it may be that he was maudlin ; but this only renders it more impressive, for who would see—

"From Marlborough's eyes the tears of dotage flow,
And Swift expire a driveller and a show ?"

Once I saw him cry at Robins's, the Auctioneer's, after a splendid dinner full of great names and high Spirits. I had the honour of sitting next to Sheridan. The occasion of his tears was some observation or other upon the subject of the sturdiness of the Whigs in resisting Office, and keeping to their principles. Sheridan turned round—"Sir, it is easy for my Lord G., or Earl G., or Marquis B., or L^d H., with thousands upon thousands a year—some of it either

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

he come in at the moment. Such was Sheridan! He could soften an Attorney! There has been nothing like it since the days of Orpheus.

I have met George Colman occasionally, and thought him extremely pleasant and convivial. Sheridan's humour, or rather wit, was always saturnine, and sometimes savage: he never laughed (at least that *I* saw, and I watched him), but Colman did. I have got very drunk with them both; but, if I had to *choose*, and could not have both at a time, I should say, "let me begin the evening with Sheridan, and finish it with Colman." Sheridan for dinner—Colman for Supper. Sheridan for Claret or port; but Colman for every thing, from the Madeira and Champagne at dinner—the Claret with a *layer* of *port* between the Glasses—up to the Punch of the Night, and down to the Grog or Gin and water of day-break. All these I have threaded with both the same. Sheridan was a Grenadier Company of Life-Guards, but Colman a whole regiment—of *light Infantry*, to be sure, but still a *regiment*.

("Detached Thoughts," 1821-1822. "Thoughts" 5, 6, 14, 15, 57, 58, and 107, Vol. V., pp. 413, 417, 437, 438, 460.)

Madame de Staël

Yesterday I dined in company with Stael, the "Epicene," whose politics are sadly changed. She is for the Lord of Israel and the Lord of Liverpool—a vile antithesis of a Methodist and a Tory—talks of nothing but devotion and the ministry, and, I presume,

expects that God and the government will help her to a pension.

(1813, June 22. Letter 305, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 223.)

If you like to go with me to y^e Lady Davy's to-night, I *have* an invitation for you. There you will see the *Stael*, some people whom you know, and *me* whom you do *not* know,—and you can talk to which you please, and I will watch over you as if you were unmarried and in danger of always being so.

(1813, June 27. Letter 308, to the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Vol. II., p. 226.)

Rogers is out of town with Madame de Stael, who hath published an Essay against Suicide, which, I presume, will make somebody shoot himself;—as a sermon by Blenkinsop, in *proof* of Christianity, sent a hitherto most orthodox acquaintance of mine out of a chapel of ease a perfect atheist.

(1813, July 8. Letter 310, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 229.)

The Stael last night attacked me most furiously—said that I had “no right to make love—that I had used * * barbarously—that I had no feeling, and was totally *insensible* to *la belle passion*, and *had* been all my life.” I am very glad to hear it, but did not know it before.

(1813, July 13. Letter 311, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 232.)

Mad^e de Stael Holstein has lost one of her young barons, who has been carbonadoed by a vile Teutonic adjutant,—kilt and killed in a coffee-house at Scrawsenhawsen. Corinne is, of course, what all mothers must be,—but will, I venture to prophesy, do what few mothers could—write an Essay upon it. She cannot exist without a grievance—and somebody to see, or read, how much grief becomes her. I have not seen her since the event; but merely judge (not very charitably) from prior observation.

(1813, August 22. Letter 322, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 245.)

To-day I dine with Mackintosh and M^{rs} *Stale*—as John Bull may be pleased to denominate Corinne—whom I saw last night, at Covent Garden, yawning over the humour of Falstaff.

(1813, October 2. Letter 339, to Thomas Moore, Vol. II., p. 273.)

To-day received Lord Jersey's invitation to Middleton—to travel sixty miles to meet Madame de Stael! I once travelled three thousand to get among silent people; and this same lady writes octavos, and *talks* folios. I have read her books—like most of them, and delight in the last; so I won't hear it, as well as read.

(1813, November 16. "Journal, 1813-14," Vol. II., p. 320.)

Last night, at Lord H.'s—Mackintosh, the Ossulstones, Puységur, etc., there—I was trying to recollect

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



have not read it for fear the love of contradiction might lead me to a practical confutation. Do you know her? I don't ask if you have heard her?—her tongue is the perpetual motion.

(1813, November 29. Correspondence with Miss Milbanke, Letter 6, Vol. III., p. 408.)

To-day (Tuesday) a very pretty billet from M. la Baronne de Stael Holstein. She is pleased to be much pleased with my mention of her and her last work in my notes. I spoke as I thought. Her works are my delight, and so is she herself, for—half an hour. I don't like her politics—at least, her *having changed* them; had she been *qualis ab incepto*, it were nothing. But she is a woman by herself, and has done more than all the rest of them together, intellectually;—she ought to have been a man. She *flatters* me very prettily in her note;—but I *know* it. The reason that adulation is not displeasing is, that, though untrue, it shows one to be of consequence enough, in one way or other, to induce people to lie, to make us their friend:—that is their concern.

(1813, November 30. “Journal, 1813-14,” Vol. II., p. 354.)

Murray has *offered* me a thousand guineas for the *two* (*Giaour* and *Bride*), and told M^e de Stael that he has *paid* them to me!! I should be glad to be able to tell her so too. But the truth is, he would; but I thought the fair way was to decline it till May, and, at the end of 6 months, he can safely say

whether he can afford it or not—without running any risk by Speculation.

(1813, December 1. Letter 365, to Francis Hodgson, Vol. II., p. 295.)

This morning, a very pretty billet from the Stael about meeting her at L^d H.'s to-morrow. She has written, I dare say, twenty such this morning to different people, all equally flattering to each. So much the better for her and those who believe all she wishes them, or they wish to believe. She has been pleased to be pleased with my slight eulogy in the note annexed to *The Bride*. This is to be accounted for in several ways,—firstly, all women like all, or any, praise; secondly, this was unexpected, because I have never courted her; and, thirdly, as Scrub says, those who have been all their lives regularly praised, by regular critics, like a little variety, and are glad when any one goes out of his way to say a civil thing; and, fourthly, she is a very good-natured creature, which is the best reason, after all, and, perhaps, the only one.

(1813, December 7. "Journal, 1813-14," Vol. II., p. 369.)

The Stael was at the other end of the table, and less loquacious than heretofore. We are now very good friends; though she asked Lady Melbourne whether I had really any *bonhomie*. She might as well have asked that question before she told C. L. "*c'est un démon.*" True enough, but rather premature,

for *she* could not have found it out, and so—she wants me to dine there next Sunday.

(1813, December 10. “Journal, 1813-14,”
Vol. II., p. 372.)

I do not love Madame de Stael; but, depend upon it, she beats all your Natives hollow as an Authoress, in my opinion; and I would not say this if I could help it.

(1814, January 11. Letter 390, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 11.)

I saw [“Monk”] Lewis to-day, who is just returned from Oatlands, where he has been squabbling with Mad. de Stael about himself, Clarissa Harlowe, Mackintosh, and me. My homage has never been paid in that quarter, or we would have agreed still worse. I don't talk—I can't flatter, and won't listen, except to a pretty or a foolish woman. She bored Lewis with praises of himself till he sickened—found out that Clarissa was perfection, and Mackintosh the first man in England. There I agree, at least *one* of the first—but Lewis did not. As to Clarissa, I leave to those who can read it to judge and dispute. I could not do the one, and am, consequently, not qualified for the other. She told Lewis wisely, he being my friend, that I was affected, in the first place; and that, in the next place, I committed the heinous offence of sitting at dinner with my *eyes* shut, or half shut. I wonder if I really have this trick. I must cure myself of it, if true. One insensibly acquires awkward habits, which should be broken in time. If

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

that I thought it very bad for *her*, and worse than any of the others. Afterwards thought it possible Lady Donegal, being Irish, might be a patroness of Miss Edgeworth, and was rather sorry for my opinion. . . . The party went off very well, and the fish was very much to my gusto. But we got up too soon after the women; and M^{rs} Corinne always lingers so long after dinner that we wish her in—the drawing-room.

(1814, March 6. "Journal, 1813-14," Vol. II., p. 390.)

The Staël out-talked Whitbread, overwhelmed his spouse, was *ironed* by Sheridan, confounded Sir Humphry, and utterly perplexed your slave. The rest (great names in the Red-Book, nevertheless,) were mere segments of the circle. Ma'mselle [afterwards Duchesse de Broglie] danced a Russ saraband with great vigour, grace, and expression.

(1814, June. Letter 458, to Samuel Rogers, Vol. III., p. 91.)

He [*i.e.* Bonstetten, Gray's friend and correspondent] is a good deal at Copet, where I have met him a few times. All there are well except Rocca [Madame de Staël's second husband], who, I am sorry to say, looks in a very bad state of health; the Duchess seems grown taller, but as yet no rounder since her marriage. Schlegel is in high force, and Madame as brilliant as ever.

(1816, July 29. Letter 600, to Samuel Rogers, Vol. III., p. 341.)

I go out very little, except into the *air*, and on journeys, and on the water, and to Copet, where M^e de Staël has been particularly kind and friendly towards me, and (I hear) fought battles without number in my very indifferent cause. It has (they say) made quite as much noise on this as the other side of *La Manche*. Heaven knows why—but I seem destined to set people by the ears.

(1816, September 8. Letter 604, to the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Vol. III., p. 348.)

Madame de Staël was a good woman at heart and the cleverest at bottom, but spoiled by a wish to be—she knew not what. In her own house she was amiable; in any other person's, you wished her gone and in her own again.

(1816, a quotation made by Moore from Byron's (destroyed) *Memoirs*, Vol. III., p. 349.)

Madame de Stael wishes to see the *Antiquary*, and I am going to take it to her to-morrow. She has made Copet as agreeable as society and talent can make any place on earth.

(1816, September 30. Letter 606, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 369.)

I have been twice to Copet this week. Madame is very well and particularly agreeable; her daughter (the Duchess) is with child. There were the Duchess

of Ragusa and a Prince of,—I forget the name,—but it was of fifty consonants,—German of course,—there ; both very worthy and pleasing personages.

(1816, October 5. Letter 607, to John Murray, Vol. III., p. 370.)

As we only reached Milan last night I can say little about it, but will write again in a few days. The Jerseys are here. Mad^e de Staël is gone to Paris (or going) from Coppet. I was more there than elsewhere during my stay at Diodati, and she has been particularly kind and friendly towards me the whole time.

(1816, October 13. "Letteret" to the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Vol. IV., p. 2.)

Madame de Stael I saw frequently at Copet, which she renders remarkably pleasant. She has been particularly kind to me. I was for some months her neighbour, in a country-house called Diodati, which I had on the Lake of Geneva.

(1816, November 6. Letter 612, to Thomas Moore, Vol. III., p. 383.)

You should close with Madame de Stael [about her *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*]. This will be her best work, and permanently historical ; it is on her father, the Revolution, and Buonaparte, etc. Bonstetten told me in Switzerland it was *very great*. I have not seen it myself, but the

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



A party dines with me to-day,
 All clever men who make their way :
 Crabbe, Malcolm, Hamilton, and Chantrey,
 Are all partakers of my pantry.
 They're at this moment in discussion
 On poor De Staël's late dissolution.
 Her book, they say, was in advance—
 Pray Heaven ! she tell the truth of France !
 'Tis said she certainly was married
 To Rocca, and had twice miscarried,
 No—not miscarried, I opine,—
 But brought to bed at forty-nine.
 Some say she died a Papist ; Some
 Are of opinion *that's* a Hum ;
 I don't know that—the fellow, Schlegel,
 Was very likely to inveigle
 A dying person in compunction
 To try the extremity of Uction.
 But peace be with her ! for a woman
 Her talents surely were uncommon.
 Her Publisher (and Public too)
 The hour of her demise may rue.

(1817, August 21. Letter 669, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 161.)

I knew Madame de Stael well—better than she knew Italy ; but I little thought that, one day, I should *think with her thoughts*, in the country where she has laid the scene of her most attractive production. She is sometimes right, and often wrong, about Italy and England ; but almost always true in

delineating the heart, which is of but one nation, and of no country,—or, rather of all.

(1819, August 23. A note made by Byron in the Countess Guiccioli's copy of Madame de Staël's *Corinne*, Vol. III., p. 349.)

I have read this book [*i.e.* Countess Guiccioli's copy of *Corinne*, on the last page of which Byron's letter was written] in your garden;—my love, you were absent, or else I could not have read it. It is a favourite book of yours, and the writer was a friend of mine. You will not understand these English words, and *others* will not understand them—which is the reason I have not scrawled them in Italian. But you will recognise the hand-writing of him who passionately loved you, and you will divine that, over a book which was yours, he could only think of love. In that word, beautiful in all languages, but most so in yours—*Amor mio*—is comprised my existence here and hereafter.

(1819, August 25. Letter 749, to the Countess Guiccioli, Vol. IV., p. 350.)

Madame de Staël said to me in Switzerland, “You should not have warred with the world—it will not do—it is too strong always for any individual: I myself once tried it in early life, but it will not do.” I perfectly acquiesce in the truth of this remark.

(1820, March 15. Reply to Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine*, made in a letter to J. D. Israeli, Esq., Vol. IV., p. 480.)

The first part [of Byron's own *Memoirs*] I cannot consent to alter, even although Madame de S[tael]'s opinion of B. C. and my remarks upon Lady C.'s beauty (which is surely great, and I suppose that I have said so—at least, I ought) should go down to our grandchildren in unsophisticated nakedness.

As to Madame de S[tael], I am by no means bound to be her beadsman—she was always more civil to me in person than during my absence. Our dear defunct friend, Monk Lewis, who was too great a bore ever to lie, assured me upon his tiresome word of honour, that at Florence, the said Madame de S[tael] was *open-mouthed* against me; and when asked, in *Switzerland*, why she had changed her opinion, replied, with laudable sincerity, that I had named her in a sonnet [*i.e.* the *Sonnet to Lake Lemán*] with Voltaire, Rousseau, etc. and that she could not help it through decency. Now, I have not forgotten this, but I have been generous,—as mine acquaintance, the late Captain Whitby, of the navy, used to say to his seamen (when “married to the gunner's daughter”)—“two dozen and let you off easy.” The “two dozen” were with the cat-o'-nine tails;—the “let you off easy” was rather his own opinion than that of the patient.

(1821, January 2. Letter 858, to Thomas Moore, Vol. V., p. 212.)

I had been the lion of 1812: Miss Edgeworth and Madame de Stael, with “the Cossack,” towards the end of 1813, were the exhibitions of the succeeding year. . . . Altogether, they [*i.e.* the Edgeworths] were an excellent cage of the kind; and

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

nor my language having anything in common with that Country. He took a dislike to me, because I refused to flatter him in Switzerland, though Madame de Broglie begged me to do so, "because he is so fond of it. *Viola les hommes!*"

(1821, August 4. Letter 916, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 337.)

If I do not err, I mentioned to you that I had heard from Paris, that Schlegel announces a meditated abuse of me in a criticism. The disloyalty of such a proceeding towards a foreigner, who has uniformly spoken so well of M^e de Stael in his writings, and who, moreover, has nothing to do with continental literature or Schlegel's country and countrymen, is such, that I feel a strong inclination to bring the matter to a *personal* arbitrament, provided it can be done without being ridiculous or unfair. His intention, however, must be first fully ascertained, before I can proceed; and I have written for some information on the subject to M^r Moore. The Man was also my personal acquaintance; and though I refused to flatter him grossly (as M^e de B. requested me to do), yet I uniformly treated him with respect—with much more, indeed, than any one else: for his peculiarities are such, that they, one and all, laughed at him; and especially the Abbe Chevalier di Breme, who did nothing but make me laugh at him so much behind his back, that nothing but the politeness, on which I pique myself in society, could have prevented me from doing so to his face. He is just such a character as William the testy in Irving's *New York*. But I must have him out for all that,

since his proceeding (supposing it to be true), is ungentlemanly in all its bearings—at least in my opinion; but perhaps my partiality misleads me.

(1821, August 7. Letter 918, to John Murray, Vol. V., p. 339.)

Lewis was a good man, a clever man, but a bore, a damned bore, one may say. My only revenge or consolation used to be, setting him by the ears with some vivacious person who hated Bores, especially M^e de Stael, or Hobhouse, for example. But I liked Lewis: he was a Jewel of a Man had he been better set. I don't mean *personally*, but less *tiresome*; for he was tedious, as well as contradictory, to every thing and every body.

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thought” 17, Vol. V., p. 418.)

I liked the Dandies; they were always very civil to *me*, though in general they disliked literary people, and persecuted and mystified M^e de Staël, Lewis, Horace Twiss, and the like, damnably. They persuaded M^e de Staël that Alvanley had a hundred thousand a year, etc., etc., till she praised him to his *face* for his *beauty!* and made a set at him for Albertine (*Libertine*, as Brummell baptized her, though the poor Girl was and is as correct as maid or wife can be, and very amiable withal), and a hundred fooleries besides.

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thought” 29, Vol. V., p. 423.)

The Duchesse de Broglie, in reply to a remark of mine on the errors of clever people, said, "that they were not *worse* than others, only being more in view, more noted, especially in all that could reduce them to the rest, or raise the rest to them." In 1816, this was.

(“Detached Thoughts,” 1821-22. “Thought” 105, Vol. V., p. 460.)

I send you the letter [*i.e.* a letter written to Lady Byron—but never sent—acknowledging the receipt of his daughter's—Ada's—hair] which I had forgotten, and the book [Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe*], which I ought to have remembered. It contains (the book, I mean,) some melancholy truths; though I believe that it is too triste a work ever to have been popular. The first time I ever read it (not the edition I send you,—for I got it since,) was at the desire of Madame de Stael, who was supposed by the good-natured world to be the heroine;—which she was not, however, and was furious at the supposition. This occurred in Switzerland, in the summer of 1816, and the last season in which I ever saw that celebrated person.

(1823, May 6. Letter 1080, to the Countess of Blessington, Vol. VI., p. 203.)

Percy Bysshe Shelley

As to all these “mistresses,” Lord help me—I have had but one. Now don't scold; but what could I do?—a foolish girl [Clara Mary Jane Clairmont, the step-daughter of William Godwin, at this time a girl of

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



dark hair; and, although I never was attached nor pretended attachment to the mother, still in case of the eternal war and alienation which I foresee about my legitimate daughter, Ada, it may be as well to have something to repose a hope upon. I must love something in my old age, and probably circumstances will render this poor little creature a great and, perhaps, my only comfort.

(1817, May 27. Letter 652, to the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Vol. IV., p. 123.)

My little girl, Allegra (the child I spoke to you of), has been with me these three months: she is very pretty, remarkably intelligent, and a great favourite with every body; but, what is remarkable, much more like Lady Byron than her mother—so much so as to stupefy the learned Fletcher [Byron's valet] and astonish me. Is it not odd? I suppose she must also resemble her sister, Ada: she has very blue eyes, and that singular forehead, fair curly hair, and a devil of a Spirit—but that is Papa's.

(1818, August 3. Letter 710, to the Hon. Augusta Leigh, Vol. IV., p. 249.)

The story of Shelley's agitation is true. I can't tell what seized him, for he don't want courage. He was once with me in a gale of Wind, in a small boat, right under the rocks between Meillerie and St Gingo. We were five in the boat—a servant, two boatmen, and ourselves. The sail was mismanaged, and the boat was filling fast. He can't swim. I stripped off my coat—made him strip off his and take hold of an oar, telling him that I thought (being myself an

expert swimmer) I could save him, if he would not struggle when I took hold of him—unless we got smashed against the rocks, which were high and sharp, with an awkward surf on them at that minute. We were then about a hundred yards from shore, and the boat in peril. He answered me with the greatest coolness, that “he had no notion of being saved, and that I would have enough to do to save myself, and begged not to trouble me.” Luckily, the boat righted, and, baling, we got round a point into St Gingo, where the inhabitants came down and embraced the boatmen on their escape, the Wind having been high enough to tear up some huge trees from the Alps above us, as we saw next day. And yet the same Shelley, who was as cool as it was possible to be in such circumstances, (of which I am no judge myself, as the chance of swimming naturally gives self-possession when near shore,) certainly had the fit of phantasy which Polidori describes, though *not exactly* as he describes it.

[“After having given him [*i.e.* Shelley] something to refresh him, upon enquiring into the cause of his alarm, they found that his wild imagination having pictured to him the bosom of one of the ladies with eyes (which was reported of a lady in the neighbourhood where he lived), he was obliged to leave the room in order to destroy the impression.” Prefatory Letter to Polidori's *The Vampire*.]

(1819, May 15. Letter 733, to John Murray, Vol. IV., p. 296.)

About Allegra, I can only say to Claire—that I so totally disapprove of the mode of Children's treat-

ment in their [*i.e.* the Shelleys'] family, that I should look upon the Child as going into a hospital. Is it not so? Have they [*i.e.* the Shelleys] *reared* one? Her health here has hitherto been *excellent*, and her temper not bad; she is sometimes vain and obstinate, but always clean and cheerful, and as, in a year or two, I shall either send her to England, or put her in a Convent for education, these defects will be remedied as far as they can in human nature. But the Child shall not quit me again to perish of Starvation, and green fruit, or be taught to believe that there is no Deity. Whenever there is convenience of vicinity and access, her Mother can always have her with her; otherwise no. It was so stipulated from the beginning.

The Girl is not so well off as with you, but far better than with them; the fact is she is spoilt, being a great favourite with every body on account of the fairness of her Skin, which shines among their dusky children like the milky way; but there is no comparison of her situation now, and that under Elise, or with them. She has grown considerably, is very clean, and lively. She has plenty of air and exercise at home, and she goes out daily with M^o Guiccioli in her carriage to the Corso.

(1820, April 22. Letter 793, to R. B. Hoppner, Vol. V., p. 14.)

I regret that you have such a bad opinion of Shiloh [Shiloh was Byron's nickname for Shelley]; you used to have a good one. Surely he has talent and honour, but is crazy against religion and morality.

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page



HISTORY

Tens of thousands of important historical sources, many previously unobtainable, are now available for the first time with a Forgotten Books Full Membership.

Unlimited Access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies

doubt; it is just like them. You may be sure that I keep your counsel.

(1820, October 1. Letter 833, to R. B. Hoppner, Vol. V., p. 86.)

I have neither spared trouble nor expense in the care of the child [*i.e.* Allegra]; and as she was now four years old complete, and quite above the control of the servants—and as a *man* living without any woman at the head of his house cannot much attend to a nursery—I had no resource but to place her for a time (at a high pension too) in the convent of Bagna-Cavalli (twelve miles off), where the air is good, and where she will, at least, have her learning advanced, and her morals and religion inculcated. . . . It is also fit that I should add that I by no means intended, nor intend, to give a *natural* child an *English* education, because with the disadvantages of her birth, her after settlement would be doubly difficult. Abroad, with a fair foreign education and a portion of five or six thousand pounds, she might and may marry very respectably. In England such a dowry would be a pittance, while elsewhere it is a fortune.

(1821, April 3. Letter 881, to R. B. Hoppner, Vol. V., p. 262.)

You know my high opinion of your own poetry,—because it is of *no* school. Your *Cenci* . . . was a work of power, and poetry. As to *my* drama [of *Marino Faliero*], pray revenge yourself upon it, by being as free as I have been with yours.

I have not yet got your *Prometheus*, which I long to see. I have heard nothing of mine, and do not know that it is yet published.

(1821, April 26. Letter 883, to Percy Bysshe Shelley, Vol. V., p. 268.)

If I had but known your notion about Switzerland before, I should have adopted it at once. As it is, I shall let the child remain in her convent, where she seems healthy and happy, for the present; but I shall feel much obliged if you will *enquire*, when you are in the cantons, about the usual and better modes of education there for females, and let me know the result of your opinions. It is some consolation that both M^r and M^{rs} Shelley have written to approve entirely my placing the child with the nuns for the present. I can refer to my whole conduct, as having neither spared care, kindness, nor expense, since the child was sent to me. The people may say what they please, I must content myself with not deserving (in this instance) that they should speak ill.

The place is a *country* town in a good air, where there is a large establishment for education, and many children, some of considerable rank, placed in it. As a *country* town, it is less liable to objections of every kind. It has always appeared to me, that the moral defect in Italy does *not* proceed from a *conventual* education,—because, to my certain knowledge, they come out of their convents innocent even to *ignorance* of moral evil,—but to the state of society into which they are directly plunged on coming out of it. It is like educating an infant on a mountain-

top, and then taking him to the sea and throwing him into it and desiring him to swim.

(1821, May 11. Letter 889, to R. B. Hoppner, Vol. V., p. 279.)

Another charge made, I am told, in the "Literary Gazette" is, that I wrote the notes to "Queen Mab;" a work which I never saw till some time after its publication, and which I recollect showing to M^r Sotheby as a poem of great power and imagination. I never wrote a line of the notes, nor ever saw them except in their published form. No one knows better than their real author, that his opinions and mine differ materially upon the metaphysical portion of that work; though in common with all who are not blinded by baseness and bigotry, I highly admire the poetry of that and his other publications.

(1821, December 11. A note in the Appendix to *The Two Foscari*, quoted in Vol. VI., p. 387.)

As to poor Shelley, who is another bugbear to you and the world, he is, to my knowledge, the *least* selfish and the mildest of men—a man who has made more sacrifices of his fortune and feelings for others than any I ever heard of. With his speculative opinions I have nothing in common, nor desire to have.

(1822, March 4. Letter 981, to Thomas Moore, Vol. VI., p. 32.)

I presume you have heard that M^r Shelley and Capt. Williams were lost on the 7th Ul^{to} in their

THIS PAGE IS LOCKED TO FREE MEMBERS

Purchase full membership to immediately unlock this page

Get Smart

Over 2,000 years of
human knowledge in
797,885 volumes

Instant access
\$8.99/month

Continue

*Fair usage policy applies



As to friendship, it is a propensity in which my genius is very limited. I do not know the *male* human being, except Lord Clare, the friend of my infancy, for whom I feel any thing that deserves the name. All my others are men-of-the-world friendships. I did not even feel it for Shelley, however much I admired and esteemed him; so that you see not even vanity could bribe me into it, for, of all men, Shelley thought highest of my talents,—and, perhaps, of my disposition.

([Undated.] Letter 1062, to Mrs
[? Shelley], Vol. VI., p. 175.)

There was something about a legacy of two thousand pounds which he [*i.e.* Shelley] has left me. This, of course, I decline, and the more so that I hear that his will is admitted valid; and I state this distinctly, that—in case of anything happening to me—my heirs may be instructed not to claim it.

(1823, June 28. Letter 1097, to Leigh
Hunt, Vol. VI., p. 227.)