

The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction eBook

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Page 1

LORD BYRON.

Letters and journals of lord Byron, with notices of his life, by Thomas Moore, Vol. ii.

[To attempt anything like an analysis of a “great big book,” of 823 pages, like the present, and that within a sheet of 16 pages, would be an effort of condensation indeed. Besides, the very nature of the volume before us will not admit of such a task being performed with much regard to accuracy or unique character. The “Letters,” of which, the work is, in great part, composed, are especially ill adapted for such a purpose; since, many of them become interesting only from manner rather than importance of matter. Horace Walpole’s Correspondence would make but a dull book cut in “little stars” in the letter style; and Lord Byron, as a letter writer, resembles Walpole more closely than any other writer of his time. His gay, anecdotal style is delightful—his epithets and single words are always well chosen, and often convey more than one side of the letter of a common-place mind. Our sheet of Extracts is from such portions of Mr. Moore’s volume as appear to illustrate the main points of the Noble Poet’s character and habits, as the superscriptions will best explain—*currente calamo* from pages 22 to 769—within a few leaves of the Appendix.]

His sensibility.

With the following melancholy passage one of his journals concludes:—

“In the weather for this tour (of thirteen days) I have been very fortunate—fortunate in a companion (Mr. H.)—fortunate in all 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 recollection 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——.”

On his return from an excursion to Diodati, an occasion was afforded for the gratification of his jesting propensities by the avowal of the young physician (Polidori) that—he had fallen in love. On the evening of this tender confession they both appeared at Shelley’s cottage—Lord Byron, in the highest and most boyish spirits, rubbing his hands as he walked about the room, and in that utter incapacity of retention which was one of his foibles, making jesting allusions to the secret he had just heard. The brow of the doctor darkened

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as this pleasantry went on, and, at last, he angrily accused Lord Byron of hardness of heart. "I never," said he, "met with a person so unfeeling." This sally, though the poet had evidently brought it upon himself, annoyed him most deeply. "Call *me* cold-hearted—*me* insensible!" he exclaimed, with manifest emotion—"as well might you say that glass is not brittle, which has been cast down a precipice, and lies dashed to pieces at the foot!"

TO AUGUSTA.

I.

My sister! my sweet sister! if a name
Dearer and purer were, it should be thine,
Mountains and seas divide us, but I claim
No tears, but tenderness to answer mine.
Go where I will, to me thou art the same—
A loved regret which I would not resign.
There yet are two things in my destiny—
A world to roam through, and a home with thee.

II.

The first were nothing—had I still the last,
It were the haven of my happiness;
But other claims and other ties thou hast,
And mine is not the wish to make them less.
A strange doom is thy father's son's, and part
Recalling, as it lies beyond redress;
Reversed for him our grandsire's fate of yore—
He had no rest at sea, nor I on shore.

III.

If my inheritance of storms hath been
In other elements, and on the rocks
Of perils overlook'd or unforeseen,
I have sustain'd my share of worldly shocks,
The fault was mine; nor do I seek to screen
My errors with defensive paradox;
I have been cunning in mine overthrow,
The careful pilot of my proper woe.



IV.

Mine were my faults, and mine be their reward.
My whole life was a contest, since the day
That gave me being, gave me that which marr'd
The gift—a fate, or will, that walk'd astray;
And I at times have found the struggle hard,
And thought of shaking off my bonds of clay:
But now I fain would for a time survive,
If but to see what next can well arrive.

V.

Kingdoms and empires in my little day
I have outlived, and yet I am not old;
And when I look on this, the petty spray
Of my own years of trouble, which have roll'd
Like a wild bay of breakers, melts away:
Something—I know not what—does still uphold
A spirit of slight patience—not in vain,
Even for its own sake, do we purchase pain.

VI.

Perhaps the workings of defiance stir
Within me—or perhaps a cold despair,
Brought on when ills habitually recur—
Perhaps a kinder clime, or purer air,
(For even to this may change of soul refer,
And with light armour we may learn to bear,)
Have taught me a strange quiet, which was not
The chief companion of a calmer lot.

VII.



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I feel almost at times as I have felt
In happy childhood; trees, and flowers, and brooks,
Which do remember me of where I dwelt
Ere my young mind was sacrificed to books,
Come as of yore upon me, and can melt
My heart with recognition of their looks:
And even at moments I could think I see
Some living thing to love—but none like thee.

VIII.

Here are the Alpine landscapes which create
A fund for contemplation.—to admire
Is a brief feeling of a trivial date;
But something worthier do such scenes inspire:
Here to be lonely is not desolate.
For much I view which I could most desire,
And, above all, a lake I can behold
Lovelier, not dearer, than our own of old.

IX.

Oh that thou wert but with me!—but I grow
The fool of my own wishes, and forget
The solitude which I have vaunted so
Has lost its praise in this but one regret;
There may be others which I less may show;—
I am not of the plaintive mood, and yet
I feel an ebb in my philosophy
And the tide rising in my alter'd eye.

X.

I did remind thee of our own dear lake,
By the old hall which may be mine no more,
Leman's is fair; but think not I forsake
The sweet remembrance of a dearer shore:
Sad havoc Time must with my memory make
Ere *that* or *thou* can fade these eyes before;
Though, like all things which I have loved, they are
Resign'd for ever, or divided far.

XI.



The world is all before me; I but ask
Of nature that with which she will comply—
It is but in her summer sun to bask,
To mingle with the quiet of her sky,
To see her gentle fare without a mask,
And never gaze on it with apathy.
She was my early friend, and now shall be
My sister—till I look again on thee.

XII.

I can reduce all feelings but this one:
And that I would not;—for at length I see
Such scenes as those wherein my life begun.
The earliest—even the only paths for me—
Had I but sooner learnt the crowd to shun,
I had been better than I now can be:
The passions which have torn me would have slept:
I had not suffered, and *thou* hadst not wept.

XIII.

With false ambition what had I to do?
Little with love, and least of all with fame;
And yet they came unsought, and with me grew,
And made me all which they can make—a name.
Yet this was not the end I did pursue;
Surely I once beheld a nobler aim.
But all is over—I am one the more
To baffled millions which have gone before.

XIV.

And for the future, this world's future may
From me demand but little of my care;
I have outlived myself by many a day;
Having survived so many things that were;
My years have been no slumber, but the prey
Of ceaseless vigils; for I had the share
Of life that might have filled a century,
Before its fourth in time had passed me by.

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XV.

And for the remnant which may be to come
I am content; and for the past I feel
Not thankless—for within the crowded sum
Of struggles, happiness at times would steal,
And for the present I would not benumb
My feelings farther.—Nor shall I conceal,
That with all this I still can look around,
And worship Nature with a thought profound.

XVI.

For thee my own sweet sister, in thy heart
I know myself secure, as thou in mine;
We were and are—I am even as thou art—
Beings who ne'er each other can resign;
It is the same, together or apart,
From life's commencement to its slow decline
We are entwined—let death come slow or fast,
The tie which bound the first endures the last!

AMOUR AT VENICE.

Venice, November 17, 1816.

"I wrote to you from Verona the other day in my progress hither, which letter I hope you will receive. Some three years ago, or it may be more, I recollect you telling me that you had received a letter from our friend, Sam, dated "On board his gondola." My gondola is, at this present, waiting for me on the canal; but I prefer writing to you in the house, it being autumn—and rather an English autumn than otherwise. It is my intention to remain at Venice during the winter, probably, as it has always been (next to the east) the greenest island of my imagination. It has not disappointed me; though its evident decay would, perhaps, have that effect upon others. But I have been familiar with ruins too long to dislike desolation. Besides, I have fallen in love, which, next to falling into the canal (which would be of no use, as I can swim,) is the best or the worst thing I could do. I have got some extremely good apartments in the house of a "Merchant of Venice," who is a good deal occupied with business, and has a wife in her twenty-second year. Marianna (that is her name) is in her, appearance altogether like an antelope. She has the large, black, oriental eyes, with that peculiar expression in them, which is seen rarely among *Europeans*—even the Italians—and which many of the Turkish women give themselves by tinging the eyelid—an art not known out of that country, I believe. This expression she has *naturally*—and something more than this. In short, I cannot describe the effect of this kind of eye—at least upon me. Her features



are regular, and rather aquiline—mouth small—skin clear and soft, with a kind of hectic colour—forehead remarkably good; her hair is of the dark gloss, curl, and colour of Lady J——’s; her figure is light and pretty, and she is a famous songstress—scientifically so; her natural voice (in conversation, I mean,) is very sweet; and the *naivete* of the Venetian dialect is always pleasing in the mouth of a woman.

November 23.

You will perceive that my description, which was proceeding with the minuteness of a passport, has been interrupted for several days. In the meantime.

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* * * * *

December 5.

Since my former dates, I do not know that I have much to add on the subject, and, luckily, nothing to take away; for I am more pleased than ever with my Venetian, and begin to feel very serious on that point—so much so, that I shall be silent.

* * * * *

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. There are some very curious MSS. in the monastery, as well as books; translations also from Greek originals, now lost, and from Persian and Syriac, &c.; besides works of their own people. Four years ago the French instituted an Armenian professorship. Twenty pupils presented themselves on Monday morning, full of noble ardour, ingenuous youth, and impregnable industry. They persevered with a courage worthy of the nation and of universal conquest, till Thursday; when *fifteen* of the *twenty* succumbed to the six and twentieth letter of the alphabet. It is, to be sure, a Waterloo of an Alphabet—that must be said for them. But it is so like these fellows, to do by it as they did by their sovereigns—abandon both; to parody the old rhymes, “Take a thing and give a thing”—“Take a king and give a king. They are the worst of animals, except their conquerors.

I hear that that H——n is your neighbour, having a living in Derbyshire. You will find him an excellent hearted fellow, as well as one of the cleverest; a little, perhaps, too much jappanned by preferment in the church and the tuition of youth, as well as inoculated with the disease of domestic felicity, besides being overrun with fine feelings about women and *constancy* (that small change of love, which people exact so rigidly, receive in such counterfeit coin, and repay in baser metal;) but, otherwise, a very worthy man, who has lately got a pretty wife, and (I suppose) a child by this time. Pray remember me to him, and say that I know not which to envy most—his neighbourhood, him, or you.

Of Venice I shall say little. You must have seen many descriptions; and they and they are most of them like. It is a poetical place; and classical, to us, from Shakspeare and Otway. I have not yet sinned against it in verse, nor do I know that I shall do so, having been tuneless since I crossed the Alps, and feeling, as yet, no renewal of the “estro.” By the way, I suppose you have seen “Glenarvon.” Madame de Stael lent it me to read from Copet last autumn. It seems to me that, if the authoress had written the *truth*, and nothing but the truth—the whole truth—the romance would not only have been more *romantic*, but more entertaining. As for the likeness, the picture can’t be good—I did not

sit long enough. When you have leisure, let me hear from and of you, believing me ever and truly yours most affectionately.

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B.

P.S. Oh! *your Poem*—is it out? I hope Longman has paid his thousands; but don't you do as H—— T——'s father did, who, having, made money by a quarto tour, became a vinegar merchant; when, lo! his vinegar turned sweet (and be d——d to it) and ruined him. My last letter to you (from Verona) was inclosed to Murray—have you got it? Direct to me *here, poste restante*. There are no English here at present. There were several in Switzerland—some women; but, except Lady Dalrymple Hamilton, most of them as ugly as virtue—at least those that I saw."

AT VENICE.

To Mr. Moore.

"Venice, December 24th, 1816.

"I have taken a fit of writing to you, which portends postage—once from Verona—once from Venice, and again from Venice—*thrice* that is. For this you may thank yourself, for I heard that you complained of my silence—so here goes for garrulity.

"I trust that you received my other twain of letters. My 'way of life' (or 'May of life,' which is it, according to the commentators?)—my 'way of life' is fallen into great regularity. In the mornings I go over in my gondola to hobble Armenian with the friars of the convent of St. Lazarus, and to help one of them in correcting the English of an English and Armenian grammar which he is publishing. In the evenings I do one of many nothings—either at the theatres, or some of the conversaciones, which are like our routs, or rather worse, for the women sit in a semicircle by the lady of the mansion, and the men stand about the room. To be sure, there is one improvement upon ours—instead of lemonade with their ices, they hand about stiff *rum-punch—punch*, by my palate; and this they think *English*. I would not disabuse them of so agreeable an error—'no, not for Venice.'

"Last night I was at the Count Governor's, which, of course, comprises the best society, and is very much like other gregarious meetings in every country—as in ours—except that, instead of the Bishop of Winchester, you have the Patriarch of Venice; and a motley crew of Austrians, Germans, noble Venetians, foreigners, and, if you see a quiz, you may be sure he is a consul. Oh, by the way, I forgot, when I wrote from Verona, to tell you that at Milan I met with a countryman of yours—a Colonel ——, a very excellent, good-natured fellow, who knows and shows all about Milan, and is, as it were, a native there. He is particularly civil to strangers, and this is his history—at least an episode of it.



“Six-and-twenty years ago, Colonel ——, then an ensign, being in Italy, fell in love with the Marchesa ——, and she with him. The lady must be, at least, twenty years his senior. The war broke out; he returned to England, to serve—not his country, for that’s Ireland, but England, which is a different thing; and *she*, heaven knows what she did. In the year 1814, the first

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annunciation of the definitive treaty of peace (and tyranny) was developed to the astonished Milanese by the arrival of Colonel —, who flinging himself full length at the feet of Madame —, murmured forth, in half forgotten Irish Italian, eternal vows of indelible constancy. The lady screamed, and exclaimed 'Who are you?' The colonel cried, 'What, don't you know me? I am so and so,' &c. &c. &c.; till at length, the Marchesa, mounting from reminiscence, to reminiscence, through the lovers of the intermediate twenty-five years, arrived at last at the recollection of her *povero* sub-lieutenant.—She then said, 'Was there ever such virtue?' (that was her very word) and, being now a widow, gave him apartments in her palace, reinstated him in all the rights of wrong, and held him up to the admiring world as a miracle of incontinent fidelity, and the unshaken Abdiel of absence.

"Methinks this is as pretty a moral tale as any of Marmontel's. Here is another. The same lady, several years ago, made an escapade with a Swede, Count Fersen (the same whom the Stockholm mob quartered and lapidated not very long since), and they arrived at an Osteria, on the road to Rome or thereabouts. It was a summer evening, and while they were at supper, they were suddenly regaled by a symphony of fiddles in an adjacent apartment, so prettily played, that, wishing to hear them more distinctly, the count rose, and going into the musical society, said—'Gentlemen, I am sure that, as a company of gallant cavaliers, you will be delighted to show your skill to a lady, who feels anxious,' &c. &c. The men of harmony were all acquiescence—every instrument was tuned and toned, and, striking up one of their most ambrosial airs, the whole band followed the count to the lady's apartment. At their head was the first fiddler, who, bowing and fiddling at the same moment, headed his troop, and advanced up the room. Death and discord!—it was the marquess himself, who was on a serenading party in the country, while his spouse had run away from town.—The rest may be imagined; but, first of all, the lady tried to persuade him that she was there on purpose to meet him, and had chosen this method for an harmonic surprise. So much for this gossip, which amused me when I heard it, and I send it to you, in the hope it may have the like effect. Now we'll return to Venice."

"The day after to-morrow (to-morrow being Christmas-day) the Carnival begins. I dine with the Countess Albrizzi and a party, and go to the opera. On that day the Phenix (not the Insurance Office, but) the theatre of that name opens: I have got me a box there for the season, for two reasons, one of which is, that the music is remarkably good. The Contessa Albrizzi, of whom I have made mention, is the De Stael of Venice—not young, but a very learned, unaffected, good-natured woman, very polite to strangers, and, I believe, not at all dissolute, as most of the women are. She has written very well on the works of Canova, and also a volume of Characters, besides other printed matter. She is of Corfu, but married a dead Venetian—that is, dead since he married.

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“My flame (my ‘Donna,’ whom I spoke of in my former epistle, my Marianna) is still my Marianna, and I, her—what she pleases. She is by far the prettiest woman I have seen here, and the most loveable I have met with any where—as well as one of the most singular. I believe I told you the rise and progress of our *liaison* in my former letter. Lest that should not have reached you, I will merely repeat that she is a Venetian, two-and-twenty years old, married to a merchant well to do in the world, and that she has great black oriental eyes, and all the qualities which her eyes promise. Whether being in love with her has steeled me or not, I do not know; but I have not seen many other women who seem pretty. The nobility, in particular, are a sad-looking race—the gentry rather better. And now, what art *thou* doing?

“What are you doing now,
Oh Thomas Moore?
What are you doing now,
Oh Thomas Moore?
Sighing or suing now,
Rhyming or wooing now,
Billing or cooing now,
Which, Thomas Moore?

Are you not near the Luddites? By the Lord! if there’s a row, but I’ll be among ye! How go on the weavers—the breakers of frames—the Lutherans of politics—the reformers?

“As the Liberty lads o’er the sea
Bought their freedom, and cheaply, with blood,
So we, boys, we
Will *die* fighting, or *live* free,
And down with all kings but King Ludd!

“When the web that we weave is complete,
And the shuttle exchanged for the sword,
We will fling the winding-sheet
O’er the despot at our feet,
And dye it deep in the gore he has pour’d.

“Though black as his heart its hue,
Since his veins are corrupted to mud,
Yet this is the dew
Which the tree shall renew
Of Liberty, planted by Ludd!

There’s an amiable *chanson* for you—all impromptu. I have written it principally to shock your neighbour —, who is all clergy and loyalty—mirth and innocence—milk and water.



“But the Carnival’s coming,
Oh Thomas Moore,
The Carnival’s coming,
Oh Thomas Moore,
Masking and humming,
Fifing and drumming,
Guitarring and strumming,
Oh Thomas Moore.

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.

“When does your Poem of Poems come out? I hear that the E.R. has cut up Coleridge’s *Christabel*, and declared against me for praising it. I praised it, firstly, because I thought well of it; secondly, because Coleridge was in great distress, and, after doing what little I could for him in essentials, I thought that the public avowal of my good opinion might help him further, at least with the booksellers. I am very sorry that J—— has attacked him, because, poor fellow, it will hurt him in mind and pocket. As for me, he’s welcome,—I shall never think less of J—— for any thing he may say against me or mine in future.

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"I suppose Murray has sent you, or will send (for I do not know whether they are out or no) the poem, or poesies, of mine, of last summer. By the mass! they're sublime—'Ganion Coheriza'—gainsay who dares! Pray, let me hear from you, and of you, and, at least, let me know that you have received these three letters. Direct, right *here*, *poste restante*.—"Ever and ever, &c."

AN EXECUTION.

To Mr. Murray.

"Venice, May 30th, 1817.

"I returned from Rome two days ago, and have received your letter; but no sign nor tidings of the parcel sent through Sir C. Stuart, which you mention. After an interval of months, a packet of 'Tales,' &c. found me at Rome; but this is all, and may be all that ever will find me. The post seems to be the only sure conveyance, and *that only for letters*. From Florence I sent you a poem on Tasso, and from Rome the new Third Act of 'Manfred,' and by Dr. Polidori two portraits for my sister. I left Rome and made a rapid journey home. You will continue to direct here as usual. Mr. Hobhouse is gone to Naples; I should have run down there too for a week, but for the quantity of English whom I heard of there. I prefer hating them at a distance; unless an earthquake, or a good real irruption of Vesuvius, were ensured to reconcile me to their vicinity.

* * * * *

"The day before I left Rome I saw three robbers guillotined. The ceremony—including the *masqued* priests; the half-naked executioners; the bandaged criminals; the black Christ and his banner; the scaffold; the soldiery; the slow procession, and the quick rattle and heavy fall of the axe; the splash of the blood, and the ghastliness of the exposed heads—is altogether more impressive than the vulgar and ungentlemanly dirty 'new drop,' and dog-like agony of infliction upon the sufferers of the English sentence. Two of these men behaved calmly enough, but the first of the three died with great terror and reluctance. What was very horrible, he would not lie down; then his neck was too large for the aperture, and the priest was obliged to drown his exclamations by still louder exhortations. The head was off before the eye could trace the blow; but from an attempt to draw back the head, notwithstanding it was held forward by the hair, the first head was cut off close to the ears: the other two were taken off more cleanly. It is better than the oriental way, and (I should think) than the axe of our ancestors. The pain seems little, and yet the effect to the spectator, and the preparation to the criminal, is very striking and chilling. The first turned me quite hot and thirsty, and made me shake so that I could hardly hold the opera-glass, (I was close, but was determined to see, as one should see every thing, once, with attention;) the second and third (which shows

how dreadfully soon things grow indifferent,) I am ashamed to say, had no effect on me as a horror, though I would have saved them if I could.

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"Yours, &c."

PORSON.

"I remember to have seen Porson at Cambridge, in the hall of our college, and in private parties, but not frequently; and I never can recollect him except as drunk or brutal, and generally both: I mean in an evening, for in the hall, he dined at the Dean's table, and I at the Vice-master's, so that I was not near him; and he then and there appeared sober in his demeanour, nor did I ever hear of excess or outrage on his part in public,—commons, college, or chapel; but I have seen him in a private party of under-graduates, many of them freshmen and strangers, take up a poker to one of them, and heard him use language as blackguard as his action. I have seen Sheridan drunk, too, with all the world; but his intoxication was that of Bacchus, and Porson's that of Silenus. Of all the disgusting brutes, sulky, abusive, and intolerable, Porson was the most bestial, as far as the few times that I saw him went which were only at William Bankes's (the Nubian discoverer's) rooms. I saw him once go away in a rage, because nobody knew the name of the 'Cobbler of Messina,' insulting their ignorance with the most vulgar terms of reprobation. He was tolerated in this state amongst the young men for his talents, as the Turks think a madman inspired, and bear with him. He used to recite, or rather vomit pages of all languages, and could hiccup Greek like a Helot; and certainly Sparta never shocked her children with a grosser exhibition than this man's intoxication.

"I perceive, in the book you sent me, a long account of him, which is very savage. I cannot judge, as I never saw him sober, except in *hall* or combination room; and then I was never near enough to hear, and hardly to see him. Of his drunken deportment, I can be sure, because I saw it."

THE COUNTESS GUICCIOLI.

It was about the time (1819) when the foregoing letter was written, and when, like the first return of reason after intoxication, a full consciousness of some of the evils of his late libertine course of life had broken upon him, that an attachment differing altogether, both in duration and devotion, from any of those that, since the dream of his boyhood, had inspired him, gained an influence over his mind which lasted through his few remaining years; and, undeniably wrong and immoral (even allowing for the Italian estimate of such frailties) as was the nature of the connexion to which this attachment led, we can hardly perhaps,—taking into account the far worse wrong from which it rescued and preserved him,—consider it otherwise than an event fortunate both for his reputation and happiness.

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The fair object of this last, and (with one signal exception) only *real* love of his whole life, was a young Romagnese lady, the daughter of Count Gamba, of Ravenna, and married, but a short time before Lord Byron first met with her, to an old and wealthy widower, of the same city, Count Guiccioli. Her husband had in early life been the friend of Alfieri, and had distinguished himself by his zeal in promoting the establishment of a National Theatre, in which the talents of Alfieri and his own wealth were to be combined. Notwithstanding his age, and a character, as it appears, by no means reputable, his great opulence rendered him an object of ambition among the mothers of Ravenna, who, according to the too frequent maternal practice, were seen vying with each other in attracting so rich a purchaser for their daughters, and the young Teresa Gamba, then only eighteen, and just emancipated from a convent, was the selected victim.

The first time Lord Byron had ever seen this lady was in the autumn of 1818, when she made her appearance, soon after her marriage, at the house of the Countess Albrizzi, in all the gaiety of bridal array, and the first delight of exchanging a convent for the world. At this time, however, no acquaintance ensued between them;—it was not till the spring of the present year that, at an evening party of Madame Benzoni's, they were introduced to each other. The love that sprung out of this meeting was instantaneous and mutual,—though with the usual disproportion of sacrifice between the parties; such an event being, to the man, but one of the many scenes of life, while, with woman, it generally constitutes the whole drama. The young Italian found herself suddenly inspired with a passion, of which, till that moment, her mind could not have formed the least idea;—she had thought of love but as an amusement, and now became its slave. If at the outset, too, less slow to be won than an Englishwoman, no sooner did she begin to understand the full despotism of the passion than her heart shrunk from it as something terrible, and she would have escaped, but that the chain was already around her.

No words, however, can describe so simply and feelingly as her own, the strong impression which their first meeting left upon her mind:—

“I became acquainted,” says Madame Guiccioli, “with Lord Byron in the April of 1819:—he was introduced to me at Venice, by the Countess Benzoni, at one of that lady's parties. This introduction, which had so much influence over the lives of us both, took place contrary to our wishes, and had been permitted by us only from courtesy. For myself, more fatigued than usual that evening on account of the late hours they keep at Venice, I went with great repugnance to this party, and purely in obedience to Count Guiccioli. Lord Byron, too, who was averse to forming new acquaintances,—alleging that he had entirely renounced all attachments, and was unwilling any more to expose himself to their consequences,—on being requested by the Countess Benzoni to allow himself to be presented to me, refused, and, at last, only assented from a desire to oblige her.

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“His noble and exquisitely beautiful countenance, the tone of his voice, his manners, the thousand enchantments that surrounded him, rendered him so different and so superior a being to any whom I had hitherto seen, that it was impossible he should not have left the most profound impression upon me. From that evening, during the whole of my subsequent stay at Venice, we met every day.”

* * * * *

About the middle of April, Madame Guiccioli had been obliged to quit Venice with her husband. Having several houses on the road from Venice to Ravenna, it was his habit to stop at these mansions, one after the other, in his journeys between the two cities; and from all these places the enamoured young Countess now wrote to her lover, expressing, in the most passionate and pathetic terms, her despair at leaving him. So utterly, indeed, did this feeling overpower her, that three times, in the course of her first day's journey, she was seized with fainting-fits. In one of her letters, which I saw when at Venice, dated, if I recollect right, from “Ca Zen, Cavanella di Po,” she tells him that the solitude of this place, which she had before found irksome, was, now that one sole idea occupied her mind, become dear and welcome to her, and promises that, as soon as she arrives at Ravenna, “she will, according to his wish, avoid all general society, and devote herself to reading, music, domestic occupations, riding on horseback,—every thing, in short, that she knew he would most like.” What a change for a young and simple girl, who, but a few weeks before, had thought only of society and the world, but who now saw no other happiness but in the hope of becoming worthy, by seclusion and self-instruction, of the illustrious object of her love!

On leaving this place, she was attacked with a dangerous illness on the road, and arrived half dead at Ravenna; nor was it found possible to revive or comfort her till an assurance was received from Lord Byron, expressed with all the fervour of real passion, that, in the course of the ensuing month, he would pay her a visit. Symptoms of consumption, brought on by her state of mind, had already shown themselves; and, in addition to the pain which this separation had caused her, she was also suffering much grief from the loss of her mother, who, at this time, died in giving birth to her twentieth child. Towards the latter end of May she wrote to acquaint Lord Byron that, having prepared all her relatives and friends to expect him, he might now, she thought, venture to make his appearance at Ravenna. Though, on the lady's account, hesitating as to the prudence of such a step, he, in obedience to her wishes, on the 2nd of June, set out from La Mira (at which place he had again taken a villa for the summer), and proceeded towards Romagna.

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While he was lingering irresolute at Bologna, the Countess Guiccioli had been attacked with an intermittent fever, the violence of which combining with the absence of a confidential person to whom she had been in the habit of intrusting her letters, prevented her from communicating with him. At length, anxious to spare him the disappointment of finding her so ill on his arrival, she had begun a letter, requesting that he would remain at Bologna till the visit to which she looked forward should bring her there also; and was in the act of writing, when a friend came in to announce the arrival of an English lord in Ravenna. She could not doubt for an instant that it was her noble lover; and he had, in fact, notwithstanding his declaration to Mr. Hoppner that it was his intention to return to Venice immediately, wholly altered this resolution before the letter announcing it was despatched,—the following words being written on the outside cover: —“I am just setting off for Ravenna, June 8, 1819.—I changed my mind this morning, and decided to go on.”

The reader, however, shall have Madame Guiccioli's own account of these events, which, fortunately for the interest of my narration, I am enabled to communicate:—

On my departure from Venice, he had promised to come and see me at Ravenna. Dante's tomb, the classical pine wood, the relics of antiquity which are to be found in that place, afforded a sufficient pretext for me to invite him to come, and for him to accept my invitation. He came, in fact, in the month of June, arriving at Ravenna on the day of the festival of the Corpus Domini; while, I attacked by a consumptive complaint, which had its origin from the moment of my quitting Venice, appeared on the point of death. The arrival of a distinguished foreigner at Ravenna, a town so remote from the routes ordinarily followed by travellers, was an event which gave rise to a good deal of conversation. His motives for such a visit became the subject of discussion, and these he himself afterwards involuntarily divulged; for having made some inquiries with a view to paying me a visit, and being told that it was unlikely that he would ever see me again, as I was at the point of death, he replied, if such were the case, he hoped that he should die also; which circumstance, being repeated revealed the object of his journey. Count Guiccioli, having been acquainted with Lord Byron at Venice, went to visit him now, and in the hope that his presence might amuse, and be of some use to me in the state in which I then found myself, invited him to call upon me. He came the day following. It is impossible to describe the anxiety he showed,—the delicate attentions that he paid me. For a long time he had perpetually medical books in his hands; and not trusting my physicians, he obtained permission from Count Guiccioli to send for a very clever physician, a friend of his, in whom he placed great confidence. The attentions of the Professor Aglietti (for so this celebrated Italian was called), together with tranquillity, and the inexpressible happiness which I experienced in Lord Byron's society, had so good an effect on my health, that only two months afterwards I was able to accompany my husband in a tour he was obliged to make to visit his various estates.

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* * * * *

In the separation that had now taken place (1820) between Count Guiccioli and his wife, it was one of the conditions that the lady should, in future, reside under the paternal roof:—in consequence of which, Madame Guiccioli, on the 16th of July, left Ravenna and retired to a villa belonging to Count Gamba, about fifteen miles distant from that city. Here Lord Byron occasionally visited her—about once or twice, perhaps, in the month—passing the rest of his time in perfect solitude. To a mind like his, whose world was within itself, such a mode of life could have been neither new nor unwelcome; but to the woman, young and admired, whose acquaintance with the world and its pleasures had but just begun, this change was, it must be confessed, most sudden and trying. Count Guiccioli was rich, and, as a young wife, she had gained absolute power over him. She was proud, and his station placed her among the highest in Ravenna. They had talked of travelling to Naples, Florence, Paris,—and every luxury, in short, that wealth could command was at her disposal.

All this she now voluntarily and determinedly sacrificed for Byron. Her splendid home abandoned—her relations all openly at war with her—her kind father but tolerating, from fondness, what he could not approve—she was now, upon a pittance of 200_l_. a year, living apart from the world, her sole occupation the task of educating herself for her illustrious lover, and her sole reward the few brief glimpses of him which their now restricted intercourse allowed. Of the man who could inspire and keep alive so devoted a feeling, it may be pronounced with confidence that he could *not* have been such as, in the freaks of his own wayward humour, he represented himself; while, on the lady's side, the whole history of her attachment goes to prove how completely an Italian woman, whether by nature or from her social position, is led to invert the usual course of such frailties among ourselves, and, weak in resisting the first impulses of passion, to reserve the whole strength of her character for a display of constancy and devotedness afterwards.

* * * * *

MEETING OF LORD BYRON AND MR. MOORE AT VENICE.

It was my good fortune, at this period, (1819) in the course of a short and hasty tour through the north of Italy, to pass five or six days with Lord Byron at Venice. I had written to him on my way thither to announce my coming, and to say how happy it would make me could I tempt him to accompany me as far as Rome.

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Having parted, at Milan, with Lord John Russell, whom I had accompanied from England, and whom I was to rejoin, after a short visit to Rome, at Genoa, I made purchase of a small and (as it soon proved) crazy travelling carriage, and proceeded alone on my way to Venice. My time being limited, I stopped no longer at the intervening places than was sufficient to hurry over their respective wonders, and, leaving Padua at noon on the 8th of October, I found myself, about two o'clock, at the door of my friend's villa, at La Mira. He was but just up, and in his bath; but the servant having announced my arrival, he returned a message that, if I would wait till he was dressed, he would accompany me to Venice. The interval I employed in conversing with my old acquaintance, Fletcher, and in viewing, under his guidance, some of the apartments of the villa.

It was not long before Lord Byron himself made his appearance, and the delight I felt in meeting him once more, after a separation of so many years, was not a little heightened by observing that his pleasure was, to the full, as great, while it was rendered doubly touching by the evident rarity of such meetings to him of late, and the frank outbreak of cordiality and gaiety with which he gave way to his feelings. It would be impossible, indeed, to convey to those who have not, at some time or other, felt the charm of his manner, any idea of what it could be when under the influence of such pleasurable excitement as it was most flatteringly evident he experienced at this moment.

I was a good deal struck, however, by the alteration that had taken place in his personal appearance. He had grown fatter both in person and face, and the latter had most suffered by the change, having lost, by the enlargement of the features, some of that refined and spiritualized look that had, in other times, distinguished it. The addition of whiskers, too, which he had not long before been induced to adopt, from hearing that some one had said he had a "faccia di musico," as well as the length to which his hair grew down on his neck, and the rather foreign air of his coat and cap,—all combined to produce that dissimilarity to his former self I had observed in him. He was still, however, eminently handsome; and, in exchange for whatever his features might have lost of their high, romantic character, they had become more fitted for the expression of that arch, waggish wisdom, that Epicurean play of humour, which he had shown to be equally inherent in his various and prodigally gifted nature; while, by the somewhat increased roundness of the contours, the resemblance of his finely formed mouth and chin to those of the Belvedere Apollo had become still more striking.

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His breakfast, which I found he rarely took before three or four o'clock in the afternoon, was speedily despatched,—his habit being to eat it standing, and the meal in general consisting of one or two raw eggs, a cup of tea without either milk or sugar, and a bit of dry biscuit. Before we took our departure, he presented me to the Countess Guiccioli, who was at this time living under the same roof with him at La Mira; and who, with a style of beauty singular in an Italian, as being fair-complexioned and delicate, left an impression upon my mind, during this our first short interview, of intelligence and amiableness such as all that I have since known or heard of her has but served to confirm.

We now started together, Lord Byron and myself, in my little Milanese vehicle, for Fusina,—his portly gondolier Tita, in a rich livery and most redundant mustachios, having seated himself on the front of the carriage, to the no small trial of its strength, which had already once given way, even under my own weight, between Verona and Vicenza. On our arrival at Fusina, my noble friend, from his familiarity with all the details of the place, had it in his power to save me both trouble and expense in the different arrangements relative to the custom-house, remise, &c. and the good-natured assiduity with which he bustled about in despatching these matters gave me an opportunity of observing, in his use of the infirm limb, a much greater degree of activity than I had ever before, except in sparring, witnessed.

As we proceeded across the Lagoon in his gondola, the sun was just setting, and it was an evening such as Romance would have chosen for a first sight of Venice, rising “with her tiara of bright towers” above the wave; while to complete, as might be imagined, the solemn interest of the scene, I beheld it in company with him who had lately given a new life to its glories, and sung of that fair City of the Sea thus grandly:

“I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs;
A palace and a prison on each hand:
I saw from out the wave her structures rise
As from the stroke of the enchanters wand:
A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
Around me, and a dying glory smiles
O'er the far times, when many a subject land
Look'd to the winged lion's marble piles,
Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles.”

But whatever emotions the first sight of such a scene might, under other circumstances, have inspired me with, the mood of mind in which I now viewed it was altogether the very reverse of what might have been expected. The exuberant gaiety of my companion, and the recollections,—any thing but romantic,—into which our conversation wandered, put at once completely to flight all poetical and historical associations; and our course was, I am almost ashamed to say, one of uninterrupted merriment and laughter till we found ourselves at the steps of my friend's palazzo

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on the Grand Canal. All that had ever happened, of gay or ridiculous, during our London life together,—his scrapes and my lecturings,—our joint adventures with the Bores and Blues, the two great enemies, as he always called them, of London happiness,—our joyous nights together at Watier's, Kinnaird's, &c. and “that d—d supper of Ranccliffe's which *ought* to have been a dinner,”—all was passed rapidly in review between us, and with a flow of humour and hilarity, on his side, of which it would have been difficult, even for persons far graver than I can pretend to be, not to have caught the contagion.

LORD BYRON'S PARSIMONY.

It is, indeed, certain, that he had at this time (1819) taken up the whim (for it hardly deserves a more serious name) of minute and constant watchfulness over his expenditure; and, as most usually happens, it was with the increase of his means that this increased sense of the value of money came. The first symptom I saw of this new fancy of his was the exceeding joy which he manifested on my presenting to him a rouleau of twenty Napoleons, which Lord K——d, to whom he had, on some occasion, lent that sum, had entrusted me with, at Milan, to deliver into his hands. With the most joyous and diverting eagerness, he tore open the paper, and, in counting over the sum, stopped frequently to congratulate himself on the recovery of it.

Of his household frugalities I speak but on the authority of others; but it is not difficult to conceive that, with a restless spirit like his, which delighted always in having something to contend with, and which, but a short time before, “for want,” as he said, “of something craggy to break upon,” had tortured itself with the study of the Armenian language, he should, in default of all better excitement, find a sort of stir and amusement in the task of contesting, inch by inch, every encroachment of expense, and endeavouring to suppress what he himself calls

“That climax of all earthly ills,
The inflammation of our weekly bills.”

In truth, his constant recurrence to the praise of avarice in Don Juan, and the humorous zest with which he delights to dwell on it, shows how new-fangled, as well as far from serious, was his adoption of this “good old-gentlemanly vice.” In the same spirit he had, a short time before my arrival at Venice, established a hoarding-box, with a slit in the lid, into which he occasionally put sequins, and, at stated periods, opened it to contemplate his treasures. His own ascetic style of living enabled him, as far as himself was concerned, to gratify this taste for economy in no ordinary degree,—his daily bill of fare, when the Margarita was his companion, consisting, I have been assured, of but four beccafichi of which the Fornarina eat three leaving even him hungry.

HIS MEMOIRS.

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(1819)—A short time before dinner he left the room, and in a minute or two returned, carrying in his hand a white leather bag. “Look here,” he said, holding it up,—“this would be worth something to Murray, though *you*, I dare say, would not give sixpence for it.” “What is it?” I asked.—“My Life and Adventures,” he answered. On hearing this, I raised my hands in a gesture of wonder. “It is not a thing,” he continued, “that can be published during my lifetime, but you may have it if you like—there, do whatever you please with it.” In taking the bag, and thanking him most warmly, I added, “This will make a nice legacy for my little Tom, who shall astonish the latter days of the nineteenth century with it.” He then added, “You may show it to any of our friends you may think worthy of it:”—and this is nearly word for word, the whole of what passed between us on the subject.

To Mr. Moore.

“January 2nd, 1820.

“My Dear Moore,

“‘To-day it is my wedding-day,
And all the folks would stare
If wife should dine at Edmonton,
And I should dine at Ware.’

Or *thus*—

“Here’s a happy new year! but with reason
I beg you’ll permit me to say—
Wish me *many* returns of the *season*,
But as *few* as you please of the *day*.

“My this present writing is to direct you that, *if she chooses*, she may see the MS. Memoir in your possession. I wish her to have fair play, in all cases, even though it will not be published till after my decease. For this purpose, it were but just that Lady B. should know what is their said of her and hers, that she may have full power to remark on or respond to any part or parts, as may seem fitting to herself. This is fair dealing, I presume, in all events.

“To change the subject, are you in England? I send you an epitaph for Castlereagh.

* * * * *

Another for Pitt—

“With death doom’d to grapple
Beneath this cold slab, he

Who lied in the Chapel
Now lies in the Abbey.

“The gods seem to have made me poetical this day—

“In digging up your bones, Tom Paine,
Will. Cobbett has done well:
You visit him on earth again,
He'll visit you in hell.

Or—

“You come to him on earth again,
He'll go with you to hell.

“Pray let not these versiculi go forth with *my* name, except among the initiated, because my friend H. has foamed into a reformer, and, I greatly fear, will subside into Newgate; since the Honourable House, according to Galignani's Reports of Parliamentary Debates, are menacing a prosecution to a pamphlet of his. I shall be very sorry to hear of any thing but good for him, particularly in these miserable squabbles; but these are the natural effects of taking a part in them.”



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SIR HUMPHRY DAVY.

"Ravenna, May 8, 1820.

"Sir Humphry Davy was here last fortnight, and I was in his company in the house of a very pretty Italian lady of rank, who, by way of displaying her learning in presence of the great chemist, then describing his fourteenth ascension of Mount Vesuvius, asked 'if there was not a similar volcano in *Ireland*?' My only notion of an Irish volcano consisted of the lake of Killarney, which I naturally conceived her to mean; but on second thoughts I divined that she alluded to *Iceland* and to *Hecla*—and so it proved, though she sustained her volcanic topography for some time with all the amiable pertinacity of 'the feminine.' She soon after turned to me, and asked me various questions about Sir Humphry's philosophy, and I explained as well as an oracle his skill in gasen safety lamps, and ungluing the Pompeian MSS. 'But what do you call him?' said she. 'A great chemist,' quoth I. 'What can he do?' repeated the lady 'Almost any thing,' said I. 'Oh, then, mio caro, do pray beg him to give me something to dye my eyebrows black. I have tried a thousand things, and the colours all come off; and besides, they don't grow. Can't he invent something to make them grow?' All this with the greatest earnestness; and what you will be surprised at, she is neither ignorant nor a fool, but really well educated and clever. But they speak like children, when first out of their convents; and, after all, this is better than an English bluestocking."

POPE—AND OTHER MATTERS.

To Mr. Moore.

"Ravenna, July 5th, 1821.

"How could you suppose that I ever would allow any thing that *could* be said on your account to weigh with *me*? I only regret that Bowles had not *said* that you were the writer of that note until afterwards, when out he comes with it, in a private letter to Murray, which Murray sends to me. D—n the controversy!

"D—m Twizzle,
D—n the bell,
And d—n the fool who rung it—Well!
From all such plagues I'll quickly be deliver'd.

"I have had a curious letter to-day from a girl in England (I never saw her) who says she is given over of a decline, but could not go out of the world without thanking me for the delight which my poesy for several years, &c. &c. &c. It is signed simply N.N.A., and has not a word of 'cant' or preachment in it upon *any* opinions. She merely says that she is dying, and that as I had contributed so highly to her existing pleasure, she



thought that she might say so, begging me to *burn* her *letter*—which, by the way, I can *not* do, as I look upon such a letter, in such circumstances, as better than a diploma from Gottingen. I once had a letter from Drontheim, in *Norway* (but not from a dying woman) in verse, on the same score of gratulation. These are the things which make one at times believe oneself a poet. But if I must believe that —, and such fellows, are poets, also, it is better to be out of the corps.

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"I am now in the fifth act of 'Foscari,' being the third tragedy in twelve months, besides *proses*; so you perceive that I am not at all idle. And are you, too, busy? I doubt that your life at Paris draws too much upon your time, which is a pity. Can't you divide your day, so as to combine both? I have had plenty of all sorts of worldly business on my hands last year—and yet it is not so difficult to give a few hours to the *Muses*. This sentence is so like — that—

"Ever, &c."

FROM "DETACHED THOUGHTS."

"What a strange thing is life and man! Were I to present myself at the door of the house where my daughter now is, the door would be shut in my face—unless (as is not impossible) I knocked down the porter; and if I had gone in that year (and perhaps now) to Drontheim (the furthest town in Norway), or into Holstein, I should have been received with open arms into the mansion of strangers and foreigners, attached to me by no tie but by that of mind and rumour.

"As far as *fame* goes, I have had my share: it has indeed been leavened by other human contingencies, and this in a greater degree than has occurred to most literary men of a decent rank of life; but, on the whole, I take it that such equipoise is the condition of humanity."

"A young American, named Coolidge, called on me not many months ago. He was intelligent, very handsome, and not more than twenty years old, according to appearances; a little romantic, but that sits well upon youth, and mighty fond of poesy, as may be suspected from his approaching me in my cavern. He brought me a message from an old servant of my family (Joe Murray), and told me that *he* (Mr. Coolidge) had obtained a copy of my bust from Thorwaldsen, at Rome, to send to America. I confess I was more flattered by this young enthusiasm of a solitary Trans-Atlantic traveller, than if they had decreed me a statue in the Paris Pantheon (I have seen emperors and demagogues cast down from their pedestals even in my own time, and Grattan's name razed from the street called after him in Dublin); I say that I was more flattered by it, because it was *single, unpolitical*, and was without motive or ostentation—the pure and warm feeling of a boy for the poet he admired. It must have been expensive, though;—I would not pay the price of a Thorwaldsen bust for any human head and shoulders, except Napoleon's, or my children's, or some '*absurd womankind's*,' as Monkbarn's calls them—or my sister's. If asked *why*, then, I sate for my own?—Answer, that it was at the particular request of J.C. Hobhouse, Esq., and for no one else. A *picture* is a different matter;—every body sits for their picture;—but a bust looks like putting up pretensions to permanency, and smacks something of a hankering for public fame rather than private remembrance.

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“Whenever an American requests to see me (which is not unfrequently) I comply, firstly, because I respect a people who acquired their freedom by their firmness without excess; and, secondly, because these Trans-Atlantic visits, ‘few and-far between’ make me feel as if talking with posterity from the other side of the Styx. In a century or two, the new English and Spanish Atlantides will be masters of the old countries, in all probability, as Greece and Europe overcame their mother Asia in the older or earlier ages, as they are called.”

EXTRACT FROM A DIARY OF LORD BYRON, 1821.

“Ravenna, January 12th, 1821.

“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.

“January 20th, 1821.

“To-morrow is my birthday—that is to say, at twelve o’ the clock, midnight, *i.e.* in twelve minutes, I shall have completed thirty and three years of age!!!—and I go to my bed with a heaviness of heart at having lived so long, and to so little purpose.

“It is three minutes past twelve.—”Tis the middle of night by the castle clock, and I am now thirty-three!

‘Eheu, fugaces, Posthume, Posthume,
Labuntur anni;—’

but I don’t regret them so much for what I have done, as for what I might have done.

“Through life’s road, so dim and dirty,
I have dragg’d to three-and-thirty.



What have these years left to me?
Nothing—except thirty-three.

“January 22nd, 1821.

1821.
Here lies
interred in the Eternity
of the Past,
from whence there is no
Resurrection
for the Days—whatever there may be
for the Dust—
the Thirty-Third Year
of an ill-spent Life,
Which, after
a lingering disease of many months,
sunk into a lethargy,
and expired,
January 22nd, 1821, A.D.
Leaving a successor
Inconsolable
for the very loss which
occasioned its
Existence.”

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LORD CLARE.

On the road to Bologna he had met with his early and dearest friend, Lord Clare, and the following description of their short interview is given in his “Detached Thoughts.”

“Pisa, November 5th, 1821.

“There is a strange coincidence sometimes in the little things of this world, Sancho,’ says Sterne in a letter (if I mistake not,) and so I have often found it.

“Page 128, article 91, of this collection, I had alluded to my friend Lord Clare in terms such as my feelings suggested. About a week or two afterwards, I met him on the road between Imola and Bologna, after not having met for seven or eight years. He was abroad in 1814, and came home just as I set out in 1816.

“This meeting annihilated for a moment all the years between the present time and the days of *Harrow*. It was a new and inexplicable feeling, like rising from the grave, to me. Clare too was much agitated—more in *appearance* than myself; for I could feel his heart beat to his fingers’ ends, unless, indeed, it was the pulse of my own which made me think so. He told me that I should find a note from him left at Bologna. I did. We were obliged to part for our different journeys, he for Rome, I for Pisa, but with the promise to meet again in spring. We were but five minutes together, and on the public road; but I hardly recollect an hour of my existence which could be weighed against them. He had heard that I was coming on, and had left his letter for me at Bologna, because the people with whom he was travelling could not wait longer.

“Of all I have ever known, he has always been the least altered in every thing from the excellent qualities and kind affections which attached me to him so strongly at school. I should hardly have thought it possible for society (or the world, as it is called) to leave a being with so little of the leaven of bad passions.

“I do not speak from personal experience only, but from all I have ever heard of him from others, during absence and distance.”

On the subject of intimacies formed by Lord Byron, not only at the period of which we are speaking, but throughout his whole life, it would be difficult to advance any thing more judicious, or more demonstrative of a true knowledge of his character, than is to be found in the following remarks of one who had studied him with her whole heart, who had learned to regard him with the eyes of good sense, as well as of affection, and whose strong love, in short, was founded upon a basis the most creditable both to him and herself,—the being able to understand him.[1]

[1] “My poor Zimmerman, who now will understand thee?”—such was the touching speech addressed to Zimmerman by his wife, on her

deathbed, and there is implied in these few words all that a man of morbid sensibility must be dependent for upon the tender and self-forgetting tolerance of the woman with whom he is united.

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"We continued in Pisa even more rigorously to absent ourselves from society. However, as there were a good many English in Pisa, he could not avoid becoming acquainted with various friends of Shelley, among which number was Mr. Medwin. They followed him in his rides, dined with him, and felt themselves happy, of course, in the apparent intimacy in which they lived with so renowned a man; but not one of them was admitted to any part of his friendship, which, indeed, he did not easily accord. He had a great affection for Shelley, and a great esteem for his character and talents; but he was not his friend in the most extensive sense of that word. Sometimes, when speaking of his friends and of friendship, as also of love, and of every other noble emotion of the soul, his expressions might inspire doubts concerning his sentiments and the goodness of his heart. The feeling of the moment regulated his speech, and besides, he liked to play the part of singularity,—and sometimes worse, more especially with those whom he suspected of endeavouring to make discoveries as to his real character; but it was only mean minds and superficial observers that could be deceived in him. It was necessary to consider his actions to perceive the contradiction they bore to his words: it was necessary to be witness of certain moments, during which unforeseen and involuntary emotion forced him to give himself entirely up to his feelings; and whoever beheld him then, became aware of the stores of sensibility and goodness of which his noble heart was full.

"Among the many occasions I had of seeing him thus overpowered, I shall mention one relative to his feelings of friendship. A few days before leaving Pisa, we were one evening seated in the garden of the Palazzo Lanfranchi. A soft melancholy was spread over his countenance;—he recalled to mind the events of his life; compared them with his present situation and with that which it might have been if his affection for me had not caused him to remain in Italy, saying things which would have made earth a paradise for me, but that even then a presentiment that I should lose all this happiness tormented me. At this moment a servant announced Mr. Hobhouse. The slight shade of melancholy diffused over Lord Byron's face gave instant place to the liveliest joy; but it was so great, that it almost deprived him of strength. A fearful paleness came over his cheeks, and his eyes were filled with tears as he embraced his friend. His emotion was so great that he was forced to sit down.

"Lord Clare's visit also occasioned him extreme delight. He had a great affection for Lord Clare, and was very happy during the short visit that he paid him at Leghorn. The day on which they separated was a melancholy one for Lord Byron. 'I have a presentiment that I shall never see him more,' he said, and his eyes filled with tears. The same melancholy came over him during the first weeks that succeeded to Lord Clare's departure, whenever his conversation happened to fall upon this friend."

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Of his feelings on the death of his daughter Allegra, this lady gives the following account:—"On the occasion also of the death of his natural daughter, I saw in his grief the excess of paternal tenderness. His conduct towards this child was always that of a fond father; but no one would have guessed from his expressions that he felt this affection for her. He was dreadfully agitated by the first intelligence of her illness; and when afterwards that of her death arrived, I was obliged to fulfil the melancholy task of communicating it to him. The memory of that frightful moment is stamped indelibly on my mind. For several evenings he had not left his house, I therefore went to him. His first question was relative to the courier he had despatched for tidings of his daughter, and whose delay disquieted him. After a short interval of suspense, with every caution which my own sorrow suggested, I deprived him of all hope of the child's recovery. 'I understand,' said he,—'it is enough, say no more.' A mortal paleness spread itself over his face, his strength failed him, and he sunk into a seat. His look was fixed, and the expression such that I began to fear for his reason; he did not shed a tear, and his countenance manifested so hopeless, so profound, so sublime a sorrow, that at the moment he appeared a being of a nature superior to humanity. He remained immovable in the same attitude for an hour, and no consolation which I endeavoured to afford him seemed to reach his ears, far less his heart. But enough of this sad episode, on which I cannot linger, even after the lapse of so many years, without renewing in my own heart the awful wretchedness of that day. He desired to be left alone, and I was obliged to leave him. I found him on the following morning tranquillized, and with an expression of religious resignation on his features. 'She is more fortunate than we are,' he said; 'besides her position in the world would scarcely have allowed her to be happy. It is God's will—let us mention it no more.' And from that day he would never pronounce her name; but became more anxious when he spoke of Ada,—so much so as to disquiet himself when the usual accounts sent him were for a post or two delayed."

The melancholy death of poor Shelley, which happened, as we have seen, also during this period, seems to have affected Lord Byron's mind less with grief for the actual loss of his friend than with bitter indignation against those who had, through life, so grossly misrepresented him; and never certainly was there an instance where the supposed absence of all religion in an individual was assumed so eagerly as an excuse for the entire absence of truth and charity in judging him. Though never personally acquainted with Mr. Shelley, I can join freely with those who most loved him in admiring the various excellencies of his heart and genius, and lamenting the too early doom that robbed us of the mature fruits of both. His short life had been, like his poetry, a sort of

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bright, erroneous dream,—false in the general principles on which it proceeded, though beautiful and attaching in most of the details. Had full time been allowed for the “over-light” of his imagination to have been tempered down by the judgment which, in him, was still in reserve, the world at large would have been taught to pay that high homage to his genius which those only who saw what he was capable of can now be expected to accord to it.

It was about this time that Mr. Cowell, paying a visit to Lord Byron at Genoa, was told by him that some friends of Mr. Shelley, sitting together one evening, had seen that gentleman, distinctly, as they thought, walk, into a little wood at Lerici, when at the same moment, as they afterwards discovered, he was far away, in quite a different direction. “This,” added Lord Byron, in a low, awe-struck tone of voice, “was but ten days before poor Shelley died.”

HIS SERVICE IN THE GREEK CAUSE.

With that thanklessness which too often waits on disinterested actions, it has been some times tauntingly remarked, and in quarters from whence a more generous judgment might be expected, that, after all, Lord Byron effected but little for Greece: as if much *could* be effected by a single individual, and in so short a time, for a cause which, fought as it has been almost incessantly through the six years since his death, has required nothing less than the intervention of all the great powers of Europe to give it a chance of success, and, even so, has not yet succeeded. That Byron himself was under no delusion, as to the importance of his own solitary aid—that he knew, in a struggle like this, there must be the same prodigality of means towards one great end as is observable in the still grander operations of nature, where individuals are as nothing in the tide of events—that such was his, at once, philosophic and melancholy view of his own sacrifices, I have, I trust, clearly shown. But that, during this short period of action, he did not do well and wisely all that man could achieve in the time, and under the circumstances, is an assertion which the noble facts here recorded fully and triumphantly disprove. He knew that, placed as he was, his measures, to be wise, must be prospective, and from the nature of the seeds thus sown by him, the benefits that were to be expected must be judged. To reconcile the rude chiefs to the government and to each other;—to infuse a spirit of humanity, by his example, into their warfare;—to prepare the way for the employment of the expected loan, in a manner most calculated to call forth the resources of the country—to put the fortifications of Missolonghi in such a state of repair as might, and eventually *did*, render it proof against the besieger;—to prevent those infractions of neutrality, so tempting to the Greeks, which brought their government in collision with the Ionian authorities, and to restrain all such

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license of the press as might indispose the courts of Europe to their cause:—such were the important objects which he had proposed to himself to accomplish, and towards which, in this brief interval, and in the midst of such dissensions and hindrances, he had already made considerable and most promising progress. But it would be unjust to close even here the bright catalogue of his services. It is, after all, *not* with the span of mortal life that the good achieved by a name immortal ends. The charm acts into the future—it is an auxiliary through all time; and the inspiring example of Byron, as a martyr of liberty, is for ever freshly embalmed in his glory as a poet.

HIS PORTRAIT.

Of his face, the beauty may be pronounced to have been of the highest order, as combining at once regularity of features with the most varied and interesting expression.

The same facility, indeed, of change observable in the movements of his mind was seen also in the free play of his features, as the passing thoughts within darkened or shone through them. His eyes, though of a light grey, were capable of all extremes of expression, from the most joyous hilarity to the deepest sadness—from the very sunshine of benevolence to the most concentrated scorn or rage. Of this latter passion, I had once an opportunity of seeing what fiery interpreters they could be, on my telling him, thoughtlessly enough, that a friend of mine had said to me—“Beware of Lord Byron, he will, some day or other, do something very wicked.” “Was it man or woman said so?” he exclaimed, suddenly turning round upon me with a look of such intense anger as, though it lasted not an instant, could not easily be forgot, and of which no better idea can be given than in the words of one who, speaking of Chatterton’s eyes, says that “fire rolled at the bottom of them.”

But it was in the mouth and chin that the great beauty, as well as expression of his fine countenance lay. “Many pictures have been painted of him (says a fair critic of his features) with various success; but the excessive beauty of his lips escaped every painter and sculptor. In their ceaseless play they represented every emotion, whether pale with anger, curled in disdain, smiling in triumph, or dimpled with archness and love.” It would be injustice to the reader not to borrow from the same pencil a few more touches of portraiture. “This extreme facility of expression was sometimes painful, for I have seen him look absolutely ugly—I have seen him look so hard and cold, that you must hate him, and then, in a moment, brighter than the sun, with such playful softness in his look, such affectionate eagerness kindling in his eyes, and dimpling his lips into something more sweet than a smile, that you forget the man, the Lord Byron, in the picture of beauty presented to you, and gazed with intense curiosity—I had almost said—as if to satisfy yourself, that thus looked the god of poetry, the god of the Vatican, when he conversed with the sons and daughters of man.”

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His head was remarkably small—so much so as to be rather out of proportion with his face. The forehead, though a little too narrow, was high, and appeared more so from his having his hair (to preserve it, as he said) shaved over the temples; while the glossy, dark-brown curls, clustering over his head, gave the finish to its beauty. When to this is added, that his nose, though handsomely, was rather thickly shaped, that his teeth were white and regular, and his complexion colourless, as good an idea perhaps as it is in the power of mere words to convey may be conceived of his features.

In height he was, as he himself has informed us, five feet eight inches and a half, and to the length of his limbs he attributed his being such a good swimmer. His hands were very white, and—according to his own notion of the size of hands as indicating birth—aristocratically small. The lameness of his right foot, though an obstacle to grace, but little impeded the activity of his movements; and from this circumstance, as well as from the skill with which the foot was disguised by means of long trousers, it would be difficult to conceive a defect of this kind less obtruding itself as a deformity; while the diffidence which a constant consciousness of the infirmity gave to his first approach and address made, in him, even lameness a source of interest.

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