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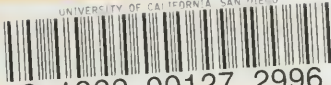
BYRON

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BYRON



Lady Byron.
from the miniature in the possession of
the Countess of Lovelace.

BYRON

BY

ETHEL COLBURN MAYNE

IN TWO VOLUMES

WITH EIGHTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME II

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BYRON

CHAPTER I

“ASTARTE”

Mystery—*Astarte*—The Lushington document—Augusta's confession—A letter to Augusta—Disagreement with Lady Byron—Byron's Memoirs—“I speak not”—1813-1814—Mrs. Beecher Stowe—Lady Byron and Augusta—Annabella's love for Byron—Her martyrdom—Augusta Leigh—Last interview with Annabella—Death of Augusta—The end of conjecture—The “Magic Voice”

FOR long the Byron Separation remained a mystery. Rumour swelled and died and swelled again; writers of every class exhausted themselves in conjecture, or maintained that they had access to irrefutable and decisive information. Serious books, frivolous books; Mrs. Beecher Stowe's revelations, followed by *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh* and *Blackwood* articles; commentaries on the poems, loading every line with a narrow personal significance; pamphlets virtuous and vicious; little filthy contraband *brochures* that purported to be “Letters from Lord to Lady Byron”, and told of things unspeakable in villainous alexandrines . . . such a rank growth of printed matter crowded about a problem with which the public had all along been made too familiar, and in the end left that problem precisely where the Separation Proceedings had found it.

And there, for that matter, we find it to-day. Conjecture, indeed, is at an end—if we hear not Lord Lovelace and *Astarte*,¹ neither will we be persuaded though one rose from the dead; but what Lord Lovelace proves in *Astarte* is precisely what rumour was murmuring, in the town alive with rumour and with rancour, all through the spring and summer of 1816.

Lord Lovelace, grandson of the poet, was the son of Ada Byron, who in 1835, aged twenty, married William, eighth Baron King—created in 1838 Earl of Lovelace. Ada's mother, dying in 1860, eight years after her daughter's death, and nine after the death of Augusta Leigh, left a mass of manuscript referring to the separation. By a paper signed in February 1850, and confirmed in her will ten years later, she consigned to friends and trustees a box holding these MSS., and mentioned 1880 as the earliest possible date for a "discretionary disclosure".

But 1880 came and passed, and still her friends hesitated. There was great reluctance to corroborate the tale "so wickedly sprung on the world" by Mrs. Beecher Stowe in 1869;² there was "want of union between executors, trustees, descendants, friends" (including the future author of *Astarte*); and not until 1905, when the last of the trustees had died, and the sole responsibility rested with Lord Lovelace, did *Astarte*, "for limited circulation only", make its appearance.³ It was compiled from the documents entrusted by Lady Byron to her friends and trustees in 1850.

Since 1830, the vital question had been: What was the communication made by Lady Byron to Dr. Lush-

¹ Privately published by the Chiswick Press in 1905.

² See Appendix I.: "Mrs. Beecher Stowe".

³ Lord Lovelace died the next year—1906—and was succeeded by his half-brother, son of the first Earl by a second marriage.

ington in February 1816, which caused him to change entirely the opinion he had till then held of the case? “I considered a reconciliation impossible. . . . If such an idea should be entertained, I could not, professionally or otherwise, take any part towards effecting it”. Ever since the circulation of Lady Byron’s Remarks, conjecture had raged round this point. The Remarks had proved that Lady Byron was *not* unduly influenced by her parents or Mrs. Clermont; they had proved, too, that Byron’s epigram: “The causes [of the separation] were too simple to be easily found out”, must be, at the least, disingenuous. Something grave, and very grave, the young wife had had to tell her lawyer.

On March 14, 1816, soon after his decisive opinion against reconciliation had been pronounced, Dr. Lushington again saw Lady Byron; and on that day he, and her friends Mr. Robert Wilmot¹ and Colonel Doyle,² induced her to draw up a document, the text of which was given for the first time to the world in Lord Lovelace’s book.

This document stated that during the time that Lady Byron lived under Lord Byron’s roof there had been incidents and suggestions which caused her to suspect that a criminal relation had once existed, and might still exist, between Lord Byron and “Mrs. L——”.³ But the incidents and suggestions were not sufficient for proof, and Lady Byron did not hold herself justified in acting upon them by at once leaving Lord Byron’s house. For this she gave, in the document, the following reasons:—

1. The causes of suspicion did not amount to proof, though they impressed her forcibly; and she held that

¹ Afterwards Sir Robert Wilmot Horton (he married an heiress); he was Byron’s second cousin.

² Afterwards Sir Francis Hastings Doyle.

³ Only the initial given in document.

while there was a "possibility of innocence", all duty forbade her to act as if guilt existed, since even a hint at so great an offence must strike at Mrs. Leigh's reputation and well-being.

2. Lady Byron could take no *via media*; she was totally unable to sequestrate Mrs. Leigh from Lord Byron, or to keep her out of his house, unless she definitely charged her with the offence in question.

3. Mrs. Leigh had always been most kind and attentive to Lady Byron, and had tried, so far as she could, to alleviate Lord Byron's "violence and cruelty" to his wife.

4. Mrs. Leigh had at times shown symptoms of profound compunction; or at any rate Lady Byron had thus read her conduct and expressions, though Lady Byron did not, by saying this, intend to declare that these were marks of compunction for the particular offence to which Lady Byron referred, or any offence so dire.

5. Lady Byron thought it conceivable that the offence, if ever perpetrated, might be profoundly regretted, and might never have been committed since Lord Byron's marriage.

These (continuing my paraphrase of the document) were the reasons why Lady Byron, while she remained under Lord Byron's roof, had never hinted at her suspicions. Since her departure from London, rumour of such a relation had sprung up; but such rumour was not set in motion, nor was it ratified, by Lady Byron. Mrs. Leigh's reputation had in some degree suffered. Lady Byron was unable to clear her own mind of the suspicions; but she was keenly desirous to avoid all possibility of harming Mrs. Leigh, and by nothing *she*

did to involve Mrs. Leigh in suspicion. She had been told that nothing could so well shield Mrs. Leigh as a resumption of friendly relations with herself (Lady Byron), and therefore she consented to that resumption.

“Now this Statement is made in order to justify Lady B. in the line of conduct she has now determined to adopt, and in order to prevent all misconstruction of her motives in case Mrs. L. should be proved hereafter to be guilty, and if any circumstances should compel or render it necessary for Lady B. to prefer the charge, in order that Lady B. may be at full liberty so to do without being prejudiced by her present conduct” (*Astarte*, p. 144).

It was pointed out that the document did not give, or set out to give, any of the causes which produced the suspicion which had arisen, and which still persisted, in Lady Byron’s mind.

Mr. Robert Wilmot, Colonel Doyle, and Dr. Lushington subscribed the paper, and stated that, in all the circumstances given therein, and from their acquaintance with the actions of every one alluded to, their opinion was that Lady Byron’s decision was “strictly right and honourable”, and fair to Mrs. Leigh, and that no matter what might happen in the future, Lady Byron ought not to be prejudiced by that decision.

The document was dated March 14, 1816, and headed “STATEMENT.—A. L.”. In case of Lady Byron’s death, it was to be given to Colonel Doyle. It is shown in facsimile in *Astarte*.

Thus the field of widest and wildest conjecture is finally closed. One fact is established, and that the vital fact. And if the mystery is replaced but by a wider, deeper problem—that of human character—*this*

can at least henceforth be investigated by the light of tangible knowledge.

It will have been noticed that in the document only "suspicion" was affirmed. Lord Lovelace states that after the Separation-deed had been signed, Lady Byron wrote and told Mrs. Leigh what she believed. Augusta made no attempt to deny it, and in fact admitted everything in her letters of June, July, and August, 1816.¹ Lord Lovelace did not consider it necessary to produce these in *Astarte* "because" (he said) "their contents were confirmed and made sufficiently clear by the correspondence of 1819"—which comprises a letter from Byron to Augusta of May 17, letters from Augusta to Lady Byron in June, and Lady Byron's answers to those letters. Byron's is, in fact, a vehement love-letter. Beginning "My dearest love," its strongest note is that of reproach for her change of conduct towards him since his marriage.

Speaking of his separation from her, he says: "Dante is more humane in his 'Hell', for he places his unfortunate lovers (Francesca of Rimini and Paolo, whose case fell a good deal short of *ours*, though sufficiently naughty) in company—and though they suffer, it is at least together. If ever I return to England it will be to see you, and recollect that in all time and place and feelings, I have never ceased to be the same to you in heart. Circumstances may have ruffled my

¹ Sir Leslie Stephen said "it made him quite uncomfortable" to read Augusta's letters of humiliation dated in 1816 (*Astarte*, pp. 74-79). Sir Leslie Stephen had written the article on Byron in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; he authorised a statement in *Astarte*, after accurate knowledge had been given him in 1887, that he "had long rejected the hypothesis of illusion on Lady Byron's part to which he gave some support in that article"; but, dying as he did before the next edition of the *D.N.B.* was published in 1908, the article (1911) remains unchanged. He gave Lord Lovelace a summary of the best way of stating the case, and in 1900 wrote that *he was convinced by the documents, i.e. the Lushington paper, Byron's letters to Augusta, and Augusta's other correspondence in 1819.* It was by his advice that her "letters of humiliation" were not displayed.

manner and hardened my spirit; you may have seen me harsh and exasperated with all things around me; grieved and tortured with your *new resolution*, and the soon after persecution of that infamous fiend who drove me from my Country and conspired against my life by endeavouring to deprive me of all that could render it precious—but remember that even then *you* were the sole object that cost me a tear—and *what tears!* do you remember our parting?”¹

Augusta, *enclosing this letter to Lady Byron*,—who all along was assigned the part of guardian angel²,—wrote on June 25, 1819, to ask advice in answering it. Lady Byron advised her either to say that she felt it her duty to break off all communication, or to take no notice whatever of *this* letter, and continue her correspondence in the same cautious style which had driven Byron to make such an appeal. She felt sure that he would never cease until he had ruined Augusta, and that Augusta could do little more, by any line of conduct, than postpone this evil day.

Augusta answered on June 28. She was divided between the two courses, and wrote in her worst and most ambiguous manner of “d——d crinkum-crankum”, as Byron used to call it. It does not appear how she actually did answer the letter; but in December there came another from him, announcing his speedy return to England,³ and at once she dispatched this to Lady

¹ *Astarte*, p. 180.

² Augusta, writing to Lady Byron on September 17, 1816, said that her intimate friend, Mrs. Villiers, called Lady Byron her (Augusta's) guardian angel, “and I am sure you are so”. Mrs. Villiers, to whom also Augusta confessed, regarded her rather as a victim than a sinner, and said to her that for Byron her (Mrs. Villiers's) “horror, detestation, and execration exceeded all expression”. Mrs. Villiers had been Augusta's friend from childhood.

³ He wrote to Murray about the same time (on December 4, 1819): “I think of setting out for England . . . in a few days, so that I could wish you to direct your next letter to Calais” (Moore, p. 429).

Byron, with the comment that she did not die easily, or she thought this would about kill her.

Hitherto, Augusta had been submissive to all her protector's counsels; but now, on the question of her attitude towards Byron should he re-appear in England, a difference of opinion arose. Lady Byron's urgent advice was *not to receive him*, and assuredly it was the only advice that any one could have given to a woman whose standing in Society had already been threatened by such rumours as Mrs. Leigh, by Lady Byron's help, had lived down. But the sister had searchings of heart—how should she explain her brother's exclusion from her house to relations, friends, husband? Hopes of that brother's reformation, too, had begun to spring, and she found it hard to relinquish the fond prospect of making some impression on his better feelings. But she added that she scarcely ever trusted to her own view of a case. . . . Lady Byron answered decisively and convincingly. Similar hopes of reformation had been indulged before, and had been deceived. She laid no compulsion on Mrs. Leigh, but if Byron was received by her, Annabella must give her up. Augusta had been made acquainted with the wife's unhappy knowledge as a measure of kindness—that of befriending her; but also as a measure of precaution, for Lady Byron had hoped to influence her in precisely the sense which was now under discussion. . . . Augusta persisted, however, in thinking that she must consent to receive her brother, though she trusted she might be spared this, to her, almost the sharpest imaginable trial. She *was* spared it, for Byron did not return; but the episode had greatly altered Lady Byron's feeling towards her. Lady Byron was "much dissatisfied", and wrote to Mrs. Villiers (with whom she had been in constant correspondence since the spring of 1816) to say that, while reluctant to

give her own impressions, she would like to hear Mrs. Villiers's opinion, on that lady's learning the facts. After this period, there was much less concert between Lady Byron and Augusta, though they had no open quarrel until 1829 (five years after Byron's death), when Mrs. Leigh wanted a new trustee to the Byron Marriage-Settlement (in which she had a contingent interest) after Douglas Kinnaird resigned his trust.

Byron wrote to his wife on December 31, 1819, from Ravenna, offering her the perusal of his Memoirs,¹ and adding: “The part you occupy is long and minute”. In the original draft of her first answer, which by Dr. Lushington's advice was not sent, she expressed surprise that *he* should wish to disclose their private relations, and added that she would endure some injustice from the world for the sake of others, but that there was a line to be drawn, and that it *was* drawn, definitely drawn, in her feeling. In this unsent letter, and in that which was sent, she firmly declined to read the Memoirs, for she considered “the publication or circulation of such a composition as prejudicial to Ada's future happiness”. “For my own sake”, she added, “I have no reason to shrink from publication; but, notwithstanding the injuries I have suffered, I should lament some of the *consequences*”.²

Later in this year (1820), Byron wrote several times, now pleadingly, now angrily, to request her to be “kind to Augusta”; and, compassionate though

¹ See Appendix II.: “The Memoirs”.

² Her letter was published in 1853, in Moore's Diary (*Memoirs*, etc., iii. 114), without her sanction; but Ada was then dead, and Lady Byron “did not regret that her reason . . . should become known”. (See *Astarte*, p. 206.)

inflexible, she answered in December that "the past" should not deter her from acting as a friend to Mrs. Leigh and her children whenever events should require it of her. She gave her word for this, and added that Augusta was in ignorance of her promise.¹

He answered from Ravenna on December 28, 1820, and his letter contained a significant passage referring to Augusta. He pointed out that Lady Byron had never had cause to complain of Mrs. Leigh, let her be what she might; that she did not, indeed, know how deeply she was indebted to her (Augusta); and added: "Her life and mine, and yours and mine, were two things perfectly distinct from each other. When one ceased, the other began—and now both are closed".¹

Certainly those words are clear, and they prove, among other things, that though he professed ignorance of his wife's "charge" against him, he was entirely aware of what it was. At the time of the separation, he could, by use of his right of citation, have brought the Noel side into court; and that a man about whom such rumours were current, should *not* take the necessary steps to disprove them (if it could be done), was a tacit confession of knowledge, if not of guilt, of the "specific charge" with which he afterwards complained that he had never been furnished. Hobhouse, both in 1869 and in the *Recollections of a Long Life*,² maintained that Byron was willing to go into court; but anybody reading his account together with *Astarte* must see that each side was playing as it were a game of bluff with the other, and that "Byron, who could have extorted a charge, allowed instead an amicable arrangement for

¹ The letter is given in facsimile in the Appendix to *Astarte*.

² Vol. ii. His "Statement" was written in May 1816, but not published till after his death.

separation to be extorted from him”.¹ Observe too that he never, in direct words, *wrote* that he did not know his wife’s *reason*.¹ He only said that he had had no “specific charge”—knowing that no such charge, in tangible shape, would be made, unless all other means of separation failed.¹ His *Blackwood* manifesto, written on March 15, 1820—a splendid piece of prose—was not published till after his death, and he himself commanded Murray not to publish it.²

From other documents in his possession—“Lady Byron’s Narratives”, numbered by the letters of the alphabet—Lord Lovelace tells us that in 1817 Augusta confessed to Lady Byron that the lines, “I speak not, I trace not”, were written to her. Byron sent them to Moore in a letter dated May 4, 1814.³

“I speak not, I trace not, I breathe not thy name,
There is grief in the sound, there is guilt in the fame :
But the tear which now burns on my cheek may impart
The deep thoughts that dwell in that silence of heart.

Too brief for our passion, too long for our peace,
Were those hours—can their joy or their bitterness cease?
We repent, we abjure, we will break from our chain—
We will part, we will fly to—unite it again !

Oh ! thine be the gladness, and mine be the guilt !
Forgive me, adored one !—forsake, if thou wilt ;—
But the heart which is thine shall expire undebased
And man shall not break it—whatever *thou* may’st.

And stern to the haughty, but humble to thee,
This soul, in its bitterest blackness, shall be :

¹ *A Vindication of Lady Byron*, published anonymously by Bentley in 1871, from articles in *Temple Bar*, 1869-70.

² *L. and J.* v. 17. “Keep them by you as documents”.

³ In the original MS. (erased but legible), stanza 5 begins thus :—

“And thine is the love which I will not forego,
Though the price which I pay be Eternity’s woe”.

(*Poems*, iii. 415 [note].) The lyric was first published in Moore’s book, 1830.

And our days seem as swift, and our moments more sweet,
With thee by my side, than with worlds at our feet.

One sigh of thy sorrow, one look of thy love,
Shall turn me or fix, shall reward or reprove ;
And the heartless may wonder at all I resign—
Thy lip shall reply not to them, but to *mine*".

It is in 1813-14 that Lord Lovelace places the intercourse with Mrs. Leigh. There was a money-crisis at Six Mile Bottom in the earlier year, and Augusta—miserably married to her first cousin, Colonel George Leigh (a selfish and troublesome spendthrift, according to Lord Lovelace)—came to Byron for an indefinite stay. He had just given up his project of going with Lady Oxford to Sicily, and now thought of taking Augusta there instead.¹ But Lady Melbourne, who strangely seems to have been in his confidence, dissuaded him, saying that it was a "crime for which there was no salvation in this world, whatever there might be in the next". He followed her advice so far as staying at home went, and she tried still to save him from this irremediable offence by encouraging him to inaugurate a fresh intrigue, giving, indeed, detailed hints towards the seduction of another woman (Lady Byron's Narrative, quoted in *Astarte*). He advanced wild arguments in public at Melbourne House with respect to the relations of brothers and sisters ; and when Caroline Lamb made him her last scene at The Albany,² "he showed me letters and told me things I cannot repeat, and all my attachment went . . . It had an effect upon me not to be conceived".³ (We have

¹ "I am going . . . as far as Sicily . . . My sister, Mrs. L., goes with me—her spouse is obliged to retrench for a few years (but he stays at home)" . . . (Letter to Wedderburn Webster, August 12, 1813 ; *L. and J.* ii. 245).

² He moved there on March 28, 1814.

³ *L. and J.* ii. App. iii. p. 453.

already seen that Caroline was held, by him and others, to be responsible for the rumours of 1816.) Among other things, he told her that a woman he adored was pregnant by him, and that if a girl were born, it was to be named Medora.¹ Caroline also asserted that he showed her a letter which contained these words: “Oh! B——, if we loved one another as we did in childhood—*then* it was innocent”. And before *Glenarvon* was published in May 1816, Caroline met “once, and once only, Lady Byron . . . What she then said to me I *may not repeat*. . . . She accused me of knowing everything, and reproached me for not having stopped the marriage. How could I!”²

But to what end does one multiply and decipher hints? While this was but an hypothesis, as for so many years it remained, the fitting of the pieces was worth the infinite trouble that many writers gave themselves. Now it is superfluous. We can read with interest such ingenious guessing;³ but the present page is from knowledge. It remains for us only to essay the reading of the enigma of character which each actor presents—and that we may the better do so, let us eliminate once for all the books, the articles, which exalt any of the three to the skies, as we eliminate also those which drag down Byron or his wife to the mud. There were plenty of both. Mrs. Beecher Stowe’s book is happily, by this procedure, put out of court. The central fact which she so disingenuously displayed was true, but never had truth so poor an advocate. . . . It all belongs to the “done with”, the obsolete—that course of invective

¹ On April 15, 1814, a daughter was born by Augusta Leigh, and was named Elizabeth Medora. For this, see Appendix III.: “Medora Leigh”.

² *L. and J.* ii. App. iii. pp. 453-54.

³ As, for instance, the articles, already twice referred to, entitled *A Vindication of Lady Byron*. The first of the series was published before Mrs. Beecher Stowe’s articles appeared.

and sanctification which she began, and many others prolonged.

The salient problem is of course that of Lady Byron's attitude towards Mrs. Leigh, whom she suspected of such guilt, yet left behind at Piccadilly Terrace, and addressed in written terms of deepest affection for many days after her own departure. The evident explanation is that she was fighting hard against the terrible ideas which had first been put into her mind so soon as during the "dismaying" honeymoon at Halmaby. There, the day after their marriage, Byron received a letter from his half-sister, wherein she addressed him as "Dearest, first, and best of human beings".¹ The effect on him was "a kind of fierce and exulting transport"; he repeated the words of love to his wife, and asked her eagerly what she thought of them. A few days afterwards, Lady Byron, reading a play by Dryden² which deals with such relations, spoke of the topic. It had a notable result; Byron broke out in singular and overwhelming anger, and she was much alarmed. Care in avoiding the subject was of no avail; *he* brought it up frequently, as if to trick or surprise her in some way, while she, young and inexperienced, walked as it were in the dark—fearful of being thought inquisitive, yet never sure of where the pitfalls lay.³

Augusta's first stay at Piccadilly Terrace was from

¹ *Astarte*, p. 160. These "Narratives" were written by Lady Byron about 1854, after the death of Ada, Countess of Lovelace (in 1852). In a kind of preface, she wrote: "And now, after the lapse of forty years, I look back on the past as a calm spectator, and *at last* can speak of it. I see what was, what *might* have been, had there been one person less amongst the living when I married. Then I might have had duties, however steeped in sorrow, more congenial with my nature than those I was compelled to adopt. Then my life would not have been the concealment of a Truth, whilst my conduct was in harmony with it" (*Astarte*, p. 35).

² *Don Sebastian*.

³ See *Astarte*, p. 151.

April to the end of June, 1815. During this period suspicion was actually forced on Annabella; allusions unmistakable were frequent from Byron; but the wife, once released from the immediate pain of his sayings, would scourge herself mentally for harbouring such thoughts. (Let me recall here in passing what we are strangely apt to forget: that she was only twenty-three.) Nevertheless, as these moments recurred, the young hostess showed increasing aloofness, which at last conveyed to Mrs. Leigh that she was desired to go; and, she once gone, Lady Byron, during the twenty weeks of her absence, could again (for the hundredth time) convince herself that her fears were a sick delusion. Statements of 1816-17 describe Annabella's misery and perplexity during the whole short period of her life with Byron, for Mrs. Leigh's real kindness and gentleness, and wish to protect her from the paroxysms of rage with which he visited them both equally,¹ made her long to believe in “Dearest Augusta”. She did believe in her for many years—and was just in so believing—as having been honestly desirous of promoting their married happiness; it was this desire, not to be mistaken, which sharpened the anguish of Annabella's struggle.

Augusta returned to Piccadilly Terrace on November 15, 1815. Byron seemed cold to her, absorbed in “women of the theatre”. During December and the

¹ Here is a letter from her to Augusta in the end of 1815: “B. speaks to me only to upbraid me with having married him when he wished not, and says he is therefore acquitted of all principle toward me, and I must consider myself only to be answerable for the vicious courses to which his despair will drive or is driving him . . . Oh, Augusta, will it ever change for me? . . . It seemed impossible to tell whether his feelings towards you or me were most completely reversed; for, as I have told you, he loves or hates us together. . . . During the paroxysm you became ‘Mrs. Leigh’, and I expected you would soon be ‘The Hon!’” (given in an article in the *Quarterly Review*, January 1870). The writer of the *Temple Bar* articles conjectures that Byron's anger arose from the “sincere and earnest repentance” of Mrs. Leigh, and Lady Byron's support of her in this attitude.

first fortnight of January (as we have seen) he appeared hardly responsible, and Augusta was more earnest than any one else to pronounce him temporarily deranged. The young, new-made mother now really believed he might be mad, and after a violent scene in her room on January 3 (when he boasted of his relations with "women of the theatre", seeming to aim more at Augusta in his desire to wound, than at his wife¹), and the curt note of dismissal on January 6, she left London on the 15th, resolute to believe in Augusta, and crush the ever-reviving, ever-sharpening suspicions.

Almost every day, the distracted girl at Kirkby Mallory wrote to and heard from the distracted woman² left behind at Piccadilly Terrace—a measure declared by Augusta to be "necessary to prevent suicide" . . . Was ever such a situation? and as we read Annabella's letters, we feel our pity gradually lose the something of disbelief with which at first it is mingled, and turn to a genuine aching of the heart. "No; if all the World had told me you were doing me an injury, I *ought not* to have believed it. . . . I *have* wronged you, and you have never wronged me". "My dearest A., it is my great comfort that you are in Piccadilly". On January 20: "Indeed I don't think you do know what I am feeling, nor all the causes I have to feel; and it makes me sicker still to write about them. . . . [I] am growing altogether a little rebellious. Oh, that I were in London, if in the coal-hole. . . . *P.S.* A little more crazy still. Nothing but conscience to comfort me, and just now it is a Job's comforter". On January 23: "You have been ever since I knew you my best comforter, and will so remain, unless you grow tired of the office, which may

¹ See *Astarte*, p. 135.

² Augusta was thirty-two at this time. She was born in 1784, according to Lord Lovelace.

well be. You cannot think how severe my father is—much more than my mother”.¹ For she did waver, and often repented the putting into words of those cruelties which had justly enraged her parents. On January 25 she wrote: “I have neither forgotten considerations of *justice* or charity—and for the latter I have done much since I saw you. My own mind has been more shaken than I thought, and is sometimes in a useless state for hours”; and again (the second letter on the same day): “Shall I still be your sister? I must resign my *right* to be so considered. . . . [The] struggle is now past; I will not renew your anxiety in the same way”. On January 28: “I dare not *feel* anything now”; and then, on February 3, the letter to Augusta, affirming that her father had acted by her desire in writing to her husband.

On February 19 she wrote to Mrs. Leigh much more coldly, on the subject of the reports which had already begun to circulate. “If they allude to anything I know to be false, I will bear testimony of its falsehood”; and on the 21st: “I must desire that you will *explicitly* state to me everything that you allude to as suppressed”. Her next letter² is undated, and declines, by Lushington’s orders, an offered interview, “since we might both be called upon to answer for words uttered in the *most private* conversation”. At the end of March, she however prayed Augusta to grant her “what *she* had refused”. “I scarcely know if I am justified in requiring your attention to so unwelcome a subject of conversation.

¹ At this time Sir Ralph and Lady Noel were unacquainted with Lady Byron’s suspicions of Augusta, except apparently through a few incoherent words to Lady Noel, when telling her that Byron had threatened to take Ada away from her, and commit the child to Augusta’s charge (*Astarte*, p. 137).

² These quotations from Lady Byron’s letters are taken, some from *Letters and Journals*, iii., Appendix to chapter xii., and some from the Appendix to Jeaffreson’s book.

I cannot give you pain without feeling yet more myself.—
Dearest Augusta, yours ever, A. I. BYRON”

Almost at the same time, she wrote to Mrs. George Lamb:¹ “I am glad that you think of *her* with the feelings of pity which prevail in my mind, and surely if in *mine* there must be some cause for them”. Mrs. George Lamb, at Melbourne House, was at the very centre of the scandal said to have been originated by Lady Caroline.

Turning for a moment from the strange relations between the wife and the sister-in-law, do not the tormented letters from Kirkby display beyond all doubt Annabella’s love for the husband who had wronged her in every way that a man can wrong his wife? “Oh that I were in London, though in the coal-hole! . . . A little more crazy still”. They add a poignancy to the reproach she made him: “I have *consistently* fulfilled my duty as your wife. It was too dear to be resigned till it became hopeless”; and sharpen the truth of what she wrote to Lady Anne Barnard: “It is not necessary to speak ill of his heart in general; it is sufficient that to me it was hard and impenetrable—that my own must have been broken before his could have been touched. . . . So long as I live, my chief struggle will probably be not to remember him too kindly”. She was not yet twenty-four—and she felt² that her life was over. Augusta had met her in the March of that agonising spring, and had written to one of Byron’s friends that it was like meeting one from the grave, and that the memory would never leave her.

¹ The Hon. Mrs. George Lamb was wife of the third son of Lord Melbourne, and sister-in-law of Lady Caroline. Her maiden name was St. Jules, and she was the adopted daughter of Elizabeth, Duchess of Devonshire.

² See *Astarte*, p. 152.

Lord Lovelace, in his brilliant analysis of her, tells us that she had the very fanaticism of self-sacrifice; she dreamed of miracles, of helping—she, the only one who could—to the purification from sin of the woman who had injured her. . . . Her letters during the two crises which arose—that of Byron’s letter of May 17, 1819, and the “return-scare” in the end of the year—are admirable; they are wholly free from the moral arrogance of which accredited guardian angels are too often guilty. Augusta is to take the line which her own feeling suggests; she must do nothing of whose rightness she is not herself persuaded, for otherwise she would not act in a consistent manner; Annabella, freely giving her requested advice and reasons, has nevertheless no desire to “enforce” them. . . . But the “sick and hunted deer of the herd, a separated wife”,¹ had her moments of lapse from sacrifice and pure reason. Not always could she look with selfless eyes upon the ruin of her life; now and again she must speak out to one or another, and most of all when in 1830 Moore’s book appeared, with its load of blame for the woman, and of insult for the girl whose crime had been to make the worst of all mistakes about Byron—the mistake of marrying him. Her Remarks were then printed and circulated; and the result was to draw upon her head more censure. “*Why did she not speak out? why did she not bravely accuse her husband?*” So they had clamoured in 1825; so again they clamoured in 1830.² She ought to speak out—and, in the same article, she ought not to have printed her Remarks! For the first time now we can cordially admire Mrs. Beecher Stowe, who, commenting

¹ Mrs. Norton’s memorable phrase, when reviewing (anonymously) the Countess Guiccioli’s book about Byron in *The Times*, February 13, 1869.

² See the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* of “Christopher North” (John Wilson) in *Blackwood*, November 1825, and May 1830.

on the *Noctes* for May 1830, exclaims: "Here is what John Stuart Mill calls the literature of slavery for Woman in length and breadth". Lady Byron might not defend even her parents against the husband who had outraged her a hundred times in prose and verse since 1816! But it was foolish work to rate her thus; for every one had heard the rumours, and every one could conjecture the motive for her obstinate silence. There were the destinies of two women at stake: Augusta's now, and the daughter Ada's (fifteen in 1830) in the future. What mother could face the telling of such a story to her girl—the putting of such knowledge into a maiden's head? . . . Let us have done with this attack upon "the sick and hunted deer of the herd"—it was, as Mrs. Stowe declares, "public persecution". "The direct implication was that she had no feelings to be hurt, no heart to be broken, and was not worthy even of the consideration which in ordinary life is to be accorded to a widow".¹ The only one who defended her was Thomas Campbell,² and he but made matters worse.

¹ *Lady Byron Vindicated: A History of the Byron Controversy from its Beginning in 1816 to the Present Time.* By Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1870.

² *New Monthly Magazine*, 1830. Lord Lovelace says: "It is right to state most distinctly that the separation papers leave no possible place for other charges besides the two common-places of adultery and cruelty, and that connected with Mrs. Leigh". Campbell was, at the time of his article, said to be the recipient of Lady Byron's confidence, though he expressly repudiated this, and displayed a letter from her in which she refused to give him any information. Here it is, as shown by him: "DEAR MR. CAMPBELL,—In taking up my pen to point out for your private information those passages in Mr. Moore's representation of my part of the story which were open to contradiction, I find them of still greater extent than I had supposed; and to deny an assertion *here and there* would virtually admit the truth of the rest. If, on the contrary, I were to enter into a full exposure of the falsehood of the views taken by Mr. Moore, I must detail various matters which, consistently with my principles and feelings, I cannot under the existing circumstances disclose. I may, perhaps, convince you better of the difficulty of the case by an example: It is not true that pecuniary embarrassments were the cause of the disturbed state of Lord Byron's mind, or

Expressing himself so ambiguously as to convey the impression of horrible knowledge quite different from that of which all the world had long whispered, he dragged her name into an infamy which is embodied in the filthy *brochure* already alluded to—and, in the end, protesting that such insinuations had never been in his mind at all, he “excused himself” for his disastrous action by saying that “he did not know what he was about when he published the paper”.

From 1830, then, to 1860, Lady Byron was, says Lord Lovelace, outlawed by public opinion; and in 1869, when she was dead, a writer in *Blackwood*¹ thus expressed himself: “The most degraded of street-walkers in the Haymarket was a worthier character than Lady Byron” —if she had known what she had known and acted as she had acted. Can we too think so, after the evidence of her grandson’s book? *He* thought she was mistaken in her mode of action, that it would have been better to let things take their course—which, in his view, would have meant the “open revolt” of the half-brother and sister. Augusta’s salvation, aided, almost wholly achieved, by Annabella, was, he thought, “an unmixed evil” to the separated wife. “If Augusta had fled to Byron in exile . . . the victory remained with Lady Byron, solid and single”. I imagine that most of us applaud her for rejecting such a “victory”. We may not love Annabella Byron, but we must respect her.

formed the chief reason for the arrangements made by him at that time. But is it reasonable for me to expect that you or any one else should believe this, unless I show you what were the causes in question? and this I cannot do.—I am, etc.,

A. I. NOEL BYRON”

Campbell, publishing this, added a note: “I had not time to ask Lady Byron’s permission to print this private letter; but it seemed to me important, and I have published it, *meo periculo*”.

¹ This article, with others, was afterwards (1874) published in a volume —*Paradoxes and Puzzles*. They were by a barrister named Paget.

To her husband, we may feel that she might have spoken out; we may even wonder that she did not . . . yet the wonder is but hesitant, knowing, as we now know, the brutality with which his speech and pen could treat not only her, but the sister who had given him so terrible a secret to hint at—nay, openly to betray.¹ . . . Possibly another type of woman might have found a kindlier manner of keeping silence; but character is unalterable, and Annabella Milbanke's had always been, as her mother wrote to her on March 3, 1816, "like *Proof Spirits*—not fit for common use". On the day that Byron left England for ever—April 25, 1816—his wife "went down into the country to break her heart". So Rogers said, and said truly. Thenceforth she secluded herself; she made her life a "sanctuary of renunciation". Writing to Augusta on February 14, 1816, she had said, "Happiness no longer enters into my views; it can never be restored";² and she acted on the words. Mirth had left her for ever. George Ticknor, the American, met her for the second time in 1835. In 1815 had come their first meeting, and he had been greatly struck by her talent—"all grace and delicacy"—and the "ingenuousness" of her face. Now he found the upper part still fresh and young, while the lower bore strong marks of suffering and sorrow. "Once or twice she was amused, and laughed, but it was plain that she has little tendency to gaiety". Châteaubriand saw her in 1840, and said she looked "as if she did not *dream* enough"; but Fanny Kemble thought her "capable of profound and fervid enthusiasm, with a mind of rather a romantic and visionary order". She held at any rate "fervidly" the theory of the unreality

¹ He had betrayed her "completely, even in writing, to two or three women" (Hon. Mrs. Villiers to Lady Byron, May 18, 1816).

² Jeaffreson, p. 479.

of evil. Everybody was innately good; evil was an illusion—much the doctrine which is preached to-day by the Christian Scientists. And if she had calamitous deficiencies—“the inversions of virtues”, Lord Lovelace¹ calls them—if she was too severe on young people, boys especially, if she lost sense of proportion in her vivid realisation of the harm that those vices which were at the same time but illusions could work, she had too her great faiths, her great beliefs in human nature, and her best side showed itself to those in grief, for her feelings were profound, and her self-command supreme. She quarrelled with the first Lord Lovelace after Ada’s death (he was the father of the author of *Astarte*), and he wrote to her that in most great qualities she “had not her equal” in the world, but added that for all her mildness, she lacked sympathy for those who did not feel precisely as she felt. . . . Putting this together with the story of her life as we already knew it, she takes shape as a woman whom all must have respected, a few have ardently loved, and many have poignantly disliked. She made herself the Martyr of Duty: few can love the man or woman to whom that title belongs. But that title, and a clear perception of the part which moral vanity—the snare of all martyrs—played in her attitude, must not rob her of our pity and respect. Her life was first one short, and then one long, heart-break. When Fletcher came to her, in 1824, with the unintelligible last message from Missolonghi, she walked about the room, her whole frame shaken with her sobs, imploring the servant to “remember” the words he had never heard.

¹ He says of Annabella: “She was the one person involved in that tragic story who was innocent of wrong, true in word and deed, generous, resourceful, courageous amidst crushing difficulties, and so she remained to the end of her life” (*Astarte*, p. 31).

Of Augusta Leigh, let us not forget that she was the daughter of "Mad Jack Byron" by his adulterous marriage with the Marchioness of Carmarthen. Vague, irresponsible, optimistic, childish, affectionate, arch; ever ready to laugh, to talk nonsense, gracefully and harmlessly malicious—such is the sum of the vivid sketch of her by Lord Lovelace, who is concerned to show, by a charming miniature,¹ that she was "very attractive, though not a regular beauty". When the Beecher Stowe war was begun in 1869, the defence of Mrs. Leigh was based upon Lady Byron's letters to her from Kirkby, and her own personal unattractiveness. Lord Stanhope, in a private letter at the time, described her as "extremely unprepossessing . . . more like a nun than anything; [she] can never have had the least pretension to beauty"; and Lady Shelley, who as a young fashionable girl had at one time been a good deal with her, stated in a letter to *The Times* that she was "like a mother to Byron" and "not at all attractive". Somewhere else the same authority spoke or wrote of her as "a Dowdy-Goody". Lord Lovelace points out that she was only four years older than her half-brother, and therefore only twenty-nine in 1813; and that none of her friends and acquaintances at the time—not Lady Melbourne, nor Caroline Lamb, nor Mrs. Villiers—ever said that she was plain.

She was a member of the innermost Court-circle—a waiting-woman to the Queen; outside the Court, she belonged to a brilliant set and was there delighted in. "Abominably married", as we have already seen, for ever in financial turmoil and for ever longing to escape

¹ The miniature is by Holmes (who did one of Byron also, "shortly before I left your country"). Byron said of Holmes that he did "inveterate likenesses". The drawing by Hayter, reproduced in this book, seems to show her as several years younger than in Holmes's miniature, where the dress evidently belongs to a later period—1825-1830.



AUGUSTA LEIGH
FROM THE SKETCH BY SIR GEORGE HAYTER

from the remembrance of it—like all Byrons!—Augusta was the product of her birth and class and time. So long as no one was unhappy, all was well, in her view; and though Lady Byron summarised this into “a kind of moral idiocy”, Augusta’s friend, Mrs. Villiers, made a more indulgent analysis: “I think I am justified in saying *very* confidently that her mind *was* purity and innocence itself, but her moral ideas were much confused”. Religious in a way, “spurious, yet not hypocritical”, the giver of Bibles and Prayer-Books to all and sundry, “with many lovable and some good qualities”, yet incessantly infuriating others by her sophistries and expedients and subterfuges; huffy and voluble, evasive yet “leaky”, overdoing gratitude as she overdid resentment . . . do we not all know the type? She had a language of her own, half-fact, half-fiction, an ambiguous mist of hints, parentheses, innuendoes, dashes—“d—d crinkumcrankum”, as Byron called it. She seems, from the little we directly know of her, to have been the “Goose” which affectionately he called her when the trio were assembled, and “he loved or hated us together”. In his unflinching manner, he said to others that “Augusta was a fool, but no one loved him as she did, or understood so well how to make him happy”. Lord Lovelace says: “She charmed him from all else, whether good or evil”; and probably the childishness and levity were the chief charms. After all, he had not been entirely mistaken in himself when he said he “hated an *esprit* in petticoats”! Certainly no other woman ever got from him (so far as we have any evidence) the kind of letters which Augusta got from Italy. Lord Lovelace gives many fragments (all that remain) of these; but there are specimens, also given by him, which depart from the attitude of adoring affection shown in most. He wrote to her bitterly à propos *Don Juan* (which she would not continue read-

ing) that he was delighted to see *her* grown "so moral". On *Manfred* he was silent for long, and then wrote to ask her if it had not caused "a pucker". She had suffered much from the comment which that "nightmare of his own delinquencies" inevitably aroused, and the reference wounded her in precisely the way that all women who had to do with Byron were wounded sooner or later.¹ Of the poems to her written abroad, she wrote to Annabella on November 6, 1816: "I heartily wish the verses in the *Red Sea*". The "Epistle" was to be published only if she permitted, and she did not permit until 1830. Her first impulse had been to withhold the "Stanzas" also, but on second thoughts she wrote to Murray that "the least objectionable line" would be to let them appear. "I am so afraid of *his* being hurt"—that was her first reason; a week later she wrote more frankly: "He might be provoked to something worse . . . and in short I hope I decide for the best".² But already for so long rumour had whispered her name! Lord Lovelace declares that when the *Bride of Abydos* was published in 1813, even schoolboys knew that it was supposed to refer to her. I retain, nevertheless, my opinion that Lady Frances Webster was the Zuleika of that poem. Byron's admission to Galt that the first part of the story (which hovers round forbidden relations: Selim and Zuleika believe themselves to be brother and sister) was "from *observation*" may be given its full weight, without necessarily dismissing

¹ In the notes to *Astarte*, Lord Lovelace says that Napoleon and Byron "inspired the like imperishable resentment in women who had known what it was to be in their power". Lady Byron, for instance, said of Byron that "his character was a labyrinth, but the clue to his *heart* could be found by none"; and Mme de Staël used almost the same words of Napoleon: "C'est un labyrinthe, mais un labyrinthe qui a un fil; l'égoïsme".

² *L. and J.* iii. 367.

the pale, dark-lashed Lady Frances from the poet's dreams.

When Augusta wrote to Hodgson in June 1816, “None can know *how much* I have suffered from this unhappy business—and indeed I have never known a moment's peace and begin to despair for the future”,¹ she wrote no more than all her friends could clearly see. The rumours were then at their worst; some of her acquaintance had dropped her definitely, and her desperation was so great that it very nearly drove her to follow Byron abroad. Mrs. Villiers believed she would, and felt that the one way to cure the “infatuation” was to prove to her how completely he had betrayed her both in speaking and writing to other women. This was done, and Augusta was completely broken-hearted; on August 5 she wrote to Annabella that she felt that Byron had not been her friend, and would never see him again—in the old way.² She also said in her “confession” that only once had she ever seen him remorseful—the night before their final farewell.

On September 17, 1816, Byron wrote and urged her to join him; and it was in September too that he wrote the *Lines on Hearing that Lady Byron was Ill*, which were not published until 1832. It has been generally supposed that they were inspired by resentment at the failure of Mme de Staël's efforts towards a reconciliation, but Mr. Coleridge thinks that it was the echoes through Shelley, from whom he heard in that September, of the still persistent rumours which “provoked him to fury”. He wrote at the same time the *Incantation* now in-

¹ It is worth recording, on Lord Lovelace's authority, that in the *Memoir of Francis Hodgson* (who died in 1852) the latter half of this passage was omitted, but was brought to light at the auction of the original letter in 1885 (*Astarte*, note to p. 158).

² *Astarte*. Letter of August 5, 1816; p. 162.

corporated with *Manfred*, but originally published alone in the *Prisoner of Chillon* volume :

“Though thy slumber may be deep,
 Yet thy Spirit shall not sleep :
 . . .
 By a Power to thee unknown,
 Thou canst never be alone ;
 Thou art wrapt as with a shroud,
 Thou art gathered in a cloud ;
 And for ever shalt thou dwell
 In the spirit of this spell.
 Though thou seest me not pass by,
 Thou shalt feel me with thine eye
 As a thing that, though unseen,
 Must be near thee, and hath been ;
 And when in that secret dread
 Thou hast turned around thy head,
 Thou shalt marvel I am not
 As thy shadow on the spot”. . . .

His summons to Augusta was answered on October 13, very frigidly, “by Lady Byron’s direction”. Byron, though he knew nothing of Augusta’s confession, at once suspected his wife’s influence ; in June 1817, he spoke of her as “that infernal fiend”, and said that he had signed the Separation-deed for Augusta’s sake alone ; then for nearly nine months he did not write, and when he did, it was to tell Augusta that his silence had been because she had annoyed him in many ways, and to ask the outrageous *Manfred* question. We have seen his letter to her of May 1819,¹ and her irresolution with regard to his threatened return in the same year. . . . Apart from their secret correspondence, she remained to the last his medium of information about Ada ; there are two letters to her from Greece—

¹ At this time, his relation with the Countess Guiccioli had begun. Lord Lovelace tells us that he taunted Augusta bitterly about this “ignominious fan-carrying bondage”, and accused her of having driven him to it.

that dated “Missolonghi, February 23, 1824”, being found, unfinished, on his writing-table after his death.¹

Augusta died on October 12, 1851. In the April of that year, she had had her last interview with Annabella. They had been more or less estranged since 1829–30; but in the February of 1851, Lady Byron wrote, suggesting a meeting. They arranged one at Reigate. Augusta had heard that Lady Byron now said of her that hers was the influence which “prevented Byron from coming to just and kindly views about his wife”.² She wished to hear this gossip denied, or to disabuse Lady Byron’s mind of its import. She was very ill, she knew indeed that she could not have long to live, and the misconception—for it *was* one—she longed to remove. She came alone from London, but Annabella, coming from Brighton, brought a witness, the Rev. Frederick Robertson. The interview was painful, and ended in bitterness. No better comment on its futility can be given than Lady Byron’s letter to her of April 12, 1851:

“Your letter of the 10th affords the last proof that during our interview, trying and painful as it was to me, I did not for a moment forget the consideration I was bound to observe by your having trusted me *unconditionally*. As I have received the communication which you have so long and anxiously desired to make—and upon which I offered no comment except ‘Is that all?’—I have done all in my power to contribute to your peace of mind. But I remain under the afflicting persuasion that it is not attained by such means as you have taken. Farewell”.³ In this letter we can see the self-righteousness of which she has often been accused; it

¹ See Chapter XI.

² Jeaffreson, p. 457.

³ *Ibid.* Appendix, p. 493.

had developed with the years, but we must remember that since their estrangement in 1829, there had come Moore's book and the publication of the *Epistle to Augusta* :

“My sister! my sweet sister”.

Those verses made hard reading for the wife, and all the more because she had been shown (by Moore) that they were written at the same time with the *Lines on Hearing that Lady Byron was Ill*.

Augusta's answer was vehement. “I had not, and never implied that I had, anything to reveal to you with which you were not previously acquainted. . . . Nor can I at all express to you the regret I have felt ever since those words escaped you, showing that you imagined I had ‘encouraged a bitterness in feeling in Lord Byron towards you’. I can as solemnly declare to you as if I were on my oath, or on my death-bed, that I never did so in any one instance, but that I invariably did the contrary”.¹ . . . Six months later, she *was* on her death-bed. She died of heart-disease and dropsy, with her hands in those of her youngest daughter, Emily. Her financial ruin was complete; for years before her death she had been painfully anxious and miserable; she looked “a sunk and aged person”, and “her heart seemed frozen”. A week before the end, Lady Byron wrote to Emily Leigh, and asked her to whisper to her mother the old word of affection: *Dearest Augusta*. The dying woman's answer could hardly be heard . . . “my greatest consolation” . . . So much was distinguished, but the rest, as on the death-bed at Missolonghi, was inarticulate murmuring.

Augusta dead, and Ada dead in the year following,

¹ Jeaffreson, Appendix, p. 493.

Lady Byron “*at last*” could speak. Even then, by her desire, the public were still to wait for thirty years. Mrs. Beecher Stowe, to whom she confided her story in 1856, betrayed her long before that time, but few believed the truth that was so untruthfully told. In 1905 came *Astarte*, and the end of conjecture. We look on one of the great problems of human relationship as we look on the three at 13 Piccadilly Terrace in December 1815. The young tormented wife and mother; the guilty, now remorseful, tender and unselfish sister—and he, “loving and hating them together”, violent and sullen by turns, outraging both with his “intentions about women of the theatre”, smashing his watch on the hearthstone, coming in drunk from Sheridan and Kinnaird dinners, and then “calling himself a monster . . . and throwing himself in agony at my feet. . . . Astonished at the return of virtue, my tears, I believe, flowed over my face, and I said, ‘Byron, all is forgotten; never, never shall you hear of it more’. He started up, and folding his arms while he looked at me, burst into laughter. ‘What do you mean?’ said I. ‘Only a philosophical experiment; that’s all’, said he. ‘I wished to ascertain the value of your resolutions’”.¹

Only pity will avail for understanding of this household; and we need but know the future of all three for pity to constrain our hearts. The two women’s we have seen; his I have to show. Let us feel *now* the anger we should feel against him—now while still, in this book, his “Word” is unspoken, and we are in some sort free to judge. Too soon we shall find ourselves incapable of judgment. His private life indeed will be no less alien to us than hitherto; but his spell as poet and as man

¹ Lady Byron’s letter to Lady Anne Barnard, written in 1816 (Lord Lovelace so corrects Lord Lindsay, who gave 1818 as the date). Cited in Lord Lindsay’s letter to *The Times*, September 3, 1869.

will be upon us. The great imprecation of *Harold* shall peal through the Colosseum :

“Dost thou not hear my heart?—Awake! thou shalt, and must” . . .

Manfred’s “pang shall find a voice” ; in Tasso, Dante, the old Doge of Venice, Cain, he shall seek and find the likeness which alone inspires him — and all our knowledge of the truth shall vainly fight against the “magic voice and verse”, for

“There is that within me that shall tire
Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire”.

CHAPTER II

THE DEPARTURE

Farewell messages—The ostracism—Byron's lack of reticence—The *Farewell Verses*—Turmoil in the Press—The *Sketch*—*Stanzas to Augusta*—Byron's state of mind—Dr. Polidori—Dover, and *Churchill's Grave*—Curiosity about Byron—Review of Work since *Lara: Hebrew Melodies* and *Lyrics of 1814-16*; the Napoleon Poems; *The Siege of Corinth*, and Coleridge's influence; *Parisina*

ON Wednesday, April 24, 1816, Byron left London.

To his wife he had sent a farewell letter; the whole import of it was "Be kind to Augusta". He wrote it immediately after parting from Mrs. Leigh—"almost the last being you have left me to part with"—and after showing, as we learnt from her confession, "the only signs of remorse she had ever seen in him". With it he sent for Ada a ring containing the hair of one of the Scottish kings from whom Mrs. Byron had claimed descent. . . . His last word from England was for his sister. Only a portion of it remains, and that is entirely colourless.

Moore, absent in Dorsetshire, was not forgotten—the opening stanza of "My boat is on the shore" was written in April 1816.

"My boat is on the shore
And my bark is on the sea;
But before I go, Tom Moore,
Here's a double health to thee!

Here's a sigh to those who love me,
 And a smile to those who hate ;
 And whatever sky's above me,
 Here's a heart for every fate".¹

"A smile to those who hate": there were many such! In London, he had not ventured to appear at the theatres; even in the streets he was insulted by the mob. In the second week of April, Lady Jersey, one of the great social "leaders", had given a party expressly for him. She hoped to reinstate him, to silence scandal: he and Augusta both appeared. It was a horrible fiasco. Mrs. George Lamb cut Augusta; every one, except Miss Mercer Elphinstone,² cut Byron. "It was done by Countesses and ladies of fashion leaving each room in crowds as he entered it".

"We know no spectacle", wrote Macaulay in 1831, reviewing Moore's book,³ "so ridiculous as the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality. . . . Once in six or seven years our virtue becomes outrageous. We cannot suffer the laws of religion and decency to be violated. Accordingly some unfortunate man . . . is singled out as an expiatory sacrifice. . . . He is cut by the higher orders, and hissed by the lower. . . . At length our anger is satiated. Our victim is ruined and heart-broken. And our virtue goes quietly to sleep for seven years more. It is clear", he continues, "that those vices which destroy domestic happiness ought to be as much as possible repressed. . . . It is good that a certain portion of disgrace should constantly attend on certain bad actions. But it is not good that the

¹ He sent the entire *jeu d'esprit* to Moore on July 10, 1817, from Venice, adding, "This should have been written fifteen months ago—the first stanza was" (Moore, p. 362).

² He sent her a little parcel from Dover by Scrope Davies, saying: "Tell her that had I been fortunate enough to marry a woman like her, I should not now be obliged to exile myself from my country".

³ *Edinburgh Review*, June 1831.

offenders should merely have to stand the risks of a lottery of infamy. . . . The obloquy which Byron had to endure was such as might well have shaken a more constant mind. . . . All those creeping things that rot in the decay of nobler natures hastened to their repast; and they were right; they did after their kind. It is not every day that the savage envy of aspiring dunces is gratified by the agonies of such a spirit, and the degradation of such a name. . . . The howl of contumely followed him across the sea, up the Rhine, over the Alps; it gradually waxed fainter; it died away. . . . His poetry became more popular than it had ever been; and his complaints were read with tears by thousands and tens of thousands who had never seen his face”.

Macaulay said there the last word on the subject of Byron's ostracism. Let us remember that forbidden relationships were in the air of the French Revolution — that upheaval of all accepted ideas. In 1789, Lord Bolingbroke had eloped with his half-sister; of Napoleon, such rumours had long been prevalent; to make a closer juxtaposition, Caroline Lamb's mother, Lady Bessborough, had been the victim of similar whisperings. In *René*, Châteaubriand had long anticipated *Manfred*.¹ Byron, always in actual conduct the mere creature of his age, became in truth (to quote

¹ “In intimate circles, [Châteaubriand] often recurred to the similarity between his nature and Lord Byron's, and to the affinity between their Muses. This caused him to regret the more vividly that there was not a single mention of his name (even in a casual allusion in *Don Juan*, where so many others are inscribed) in the works of the British poet who had been so evidently inspired by *René*” (De Marcellus, *Châteaubriand et son Temps*, p. 117). M. Edmond Estève (*Byron et le Romantisme français*) says that Châteaubriand's amour-propre suffered sensibly from this neglect. He declared that, on the appearance of *Atala*, he had received a letter from Cambridge, signed “G. Gordon. Lord Byron” (*sic*) and had replied to it. M. Estève points out that Byron did twice mention his name: in a note to *The Bride of Abydos*, and in a stanza of *The Age of Bronze* (*Byron et le Romantisme français*, p. 22; and see *Poems*, vols. iii. and v.).

Macaulay again) "a sort of whipping-boy, by whose vicarious agonies all the other transgressors of the same class are, it is supposed, sufficiently chastised".

On October 25 of that year, Goethe, conversing with George Ticknor, said of the Separation-drama that "it was so poetical in its circumstances . . . that if Byron had invented it, he could hardly have had a more fortunate subject for his genius". In *Marino Faliero*, the Doge, speaking of himself, is made to say—

". . . There was that in my spirit ever
Which shaped out for itself some great reverse";

and were it not for the cynicism implied in such a comment, we might say that with this calamity Byron for the first time found himself. All through his work, from the earliest days, this (as it were) longing for remorse declares itself. He was like a boy in that, as he was in so much else; he wanted to terrify mankind, and make them see, as in *Manfred*—

". . . A dusk and awful figure rise
Like an infernal god from out the earth".

It is worth observing that not until remorse *had* entered his soul did he ever think of keeping a Journal. On November 14, 1813, he began one. Nobody can read it and escape the conviction that its dark hintings at some extreme error were (though veracious) "written for posterity"—or at any rate for his friends to see and marvel at. Almost directly after he ceased to keep it, he gave it to Moore; he had made to the same friend half-confidences by the score about the "strange summer adventure which I don't like to think of".¹ . . . "The

¹ He ceased to keep this Journal on April 19, 1814; on June 14, wrote to Moore: "Keep the Journal . . . if it has amused you, I am glad that I kept it". For his half-confidences to Moore, see his letters in 1813, of August 22 and 28, November 30, December 8; and, in 1814, those of

thought", he wrote in the Journal, "always runs through, through—yes, through"; but it was not the thought alone that so persisted. On the point of his pen trembles incessantly the betrayal. We have seen what rumours were current of *The Bride of Abydos*, and have seen that he said to Galt—and not Galt alone, but others—that it was written "from *observation*". Such sayings, with the talk then rife, must have set in motion many tongues that else might have been silent—for vanity is peculiarly vulnerable in the matter of gossip. When others assert their knowledge, it is hard to conceal our own; and Byron, most talked-of man of his time, had friends and acquaintances in the two most scandalous, perhaps, of all circles—the ultra-fashionable and the literary. His communicativeness was swiftly punished. Had it not been for that, his wife's departure from his side might have passed comparatively unnoticed; but where everything was already hinted at, such an action was at once interpreted in the sense of scandal. The injury she did him by refusing to return was incalculable—so far he might justly name her his "moral Clytemnestra"; but it was his own speech and pen which had given the signal for the outlawry that ensued.

Speech and pen were no less active now. Already on March 17, the famous *Farewell* verses were written.

"Fare thee well! and if for ever,
Still for ever, fare *thee well*:
Even though unforgiving, never
'Gainst thee shall my heart rebel.

Would that breast were bared before thee
Where thy head so oft hath lain,
While that placid sleep came o'er thee
Which thou ne'er canst know again:

January 6 ("a strange summer adventure"), March 3 and 12, and August 3. It is clear from the letter in January that something else besides the "summer adventure" was weighing on his mind—this is the period of the apprehension about a duel which he expressly differentiates.

Would that breast, by thee glanc'd over,
 Every inmost thought could show!
 Then thou wouldst at last discover
 'Twas not well to spurn it so.

Though the world for this commend thee,
 Though it smile upon the blow,
 Even its praises must offend thee
 Founded on another's woe :

Though my many faults defaced me,
 Could no other arm be found
 Than the one which once embraced me
 To inflict a cureless wound?

Yet, oh yet, thyself deceive not—
 Love may sink by slow decay,
 But by sudden wrench, believe not,
 Hearts can thus be torn away :

Still thine own life retaineth—
 Still must mine, tho' bleeding, beat ;
 And the undying thought which paineth
 Is—that we no more may meet.

There are words of deeper sorrow
 Than the wail above the dead ;
 Both shall live—but every morrow
 Wake us from a widowed bed.

And when thou wouldst solace gather—
 When our child's first accents flow—
 Wilt thou teach her to say 'Father',
 Though his care she must forego?

When her little hands shall press thee—
 When her lip to thine is pressed—
 Think of him whose prayer shall bless thee—
 Think of him thy *love had* blessed !

Should her lineaments resemble
 Those thou never more mayst see,
 Then thy heart will softly tremble
 With a pulse yet true to me.

All my faults perchance thou knowest—
 All my madness—none can know ;
 All my hopes—where'er thou goest—
 Wither—yet with *thee* they go.

Every feeling hath been shaken ;
 Pride—which not a world could bow—
 Bows to thee—by thee forsaken,
 Even my soul forsakes me now.

But 'tis done—all words are idle—
 Words from me are vainer still ;
 But the thoughts we cannot bridle
 Force their way without the will.

Fare thee well ! thus disunited—
 Torn from every nearer tie—
 Seared in heart—and lone—and blighted—
 More than this I scarce can die.”

Tears, he said, fell fast over the paper as he wrote. Moore saw the MS., and confirms this: “It is blotted all over with the marks of tears”.¹ . . . He had not definitely meant to publish these verses. They were for the “Initiated”, as was also *A Sketch*, written twelve days later; but Murray was commissioned to print both “for private distribution”, and, through somebody’s indiscretion, both found their way into the public press. They were published on April 14 by the *Champion*, a Tory paper; and the other journals, “on the plea that the mischief was out, one after the other took up the cry”. The *Courier*, for instance, at first refused to print *A Sketch*, but, two days later, found itself compelled, “in the interest of its readers”, to follow suit. The turmoil was almost as hysterical as over the “Weeping” lines in 1814; and Wordsworth, to whom the editor of the *Champion* sent an earliest copy, was more rampantly virtuous than even the Tory journalists

¹ Mr. E. H. Coleridge (*Poems*, iii. 537) observes that there are no tear-marks on the first draft, which was sold at Sotheby’s on April 11, 1885; he thinks that Moore must have seen a fair copy. Tears would be far more likely to fall on a fair copy, as most authors can testify. In the glow of composition there is no time for self-pity; nor can the whole effect be perceived, amid the alterations and additions. With the fair copy, and the “emotion recollected in tranquillity”, and the clear view of the composition, tears, if they are germane to the matter, will for the first time fall.

—for the controversy was conducted all along on party lines. He said that “the man was insane”; that the *Sketch* was “the Billingsgate of Bedlam”, and the *Farewell*, “wretched doggerel, disgusting in sentiment, and in execution contemptible”. Madame de Staël, on the other hand, said of the *Farewell* that if her husband had written such verses to her, she must at once have run to his arms and been reconciled: “*Je n’aurais pu m’y tenir un instant*”. But even his fervents differed. Moore thought the *Sketch* was justly condemned, and of the *Farewell* he says, “I could not help regarding the sentiment that could, at such a moment, indulge in such verses” as suspicious, and the taste that prompted or sanctioned their publication appeared to him “even still more questionable”. The publication was generally thought to be owing to the injudicious zeal of a friend; there is no proof of Byron’s real intention, or feeling after the event, to confirm or contradict this theory.

The *Sketch* is best forgotten, except for the tribute to his wife’s “high soul” that “panted for the truth it could not hear”.¹ The influence of Mrs. Clermont—subject of the lines—was exaggerated beyond all reason; we may take her to have been the ordinary “confidential woman”, no worse and no better than the rest, of a hundred conjugal catastrophes. . . . The *Stanzas to Augusta*—first of the three poems addressed to her—were also of this period, and were the last verses he wrote in England. They did not appear until the *Poems* of 1816 were published, after he had gone. It is to them that Caroline Lamb’s letter of remonstrance—“You will draw ruin on your own head and hers if at this moment you show these”—must be thought to

¹ He wrote in it of Lady Byron this also :

“Serenely purest of her sex that live,
But wanting one sweet weakness—to forgive”.

refer. He wrote to Murray on April 15: "I wished to have seen you to scold you. Really you must not send anything of mine to Lady C. L. I have often sufficiently warned you on the topic—you do not know what mischief you do by this".¹ But her appeal had had its effect, for he adds: "Of the copies of things written by me—I wish more particularly the *last* not to be circulated, at present. (You know which I mean, those to A.)"

His letters to friends during the troubled period from February to April 1816 are interesting in their revelation of a variously harassed man, "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".² On February 3 (the day after receiving Sir Ralph Noel's first letter) he writes to Murray of a resemblance between part of *Parisina* and a scene in *Marmion*: "It comes upon me not very comfortably". Opinions of the two poems of this period—*The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina*—were not all favourable; he was accused of carelessness and roughness, and Moore seems to have accused him, as well, of over-writing himself. He wrote to Murray of these matters, and added: "Excuse all this damned nonsense and egotism. The fact is, that I am rather trying to think on the subject of this note, than really thinking on it". And in a postscript: "You need not be in any apprehension or grief on my account: were I to be beaten down by the world and its inheritors, I should have succumbed to many things—years ago. You must not mistake my *not* bullying for dejection; nor imagine that because I feel, I am to faint".

¹ *L. and J.* iii. 282.

² Letter to Rogers, February 8, 1816 (Moore, p. 262).

To Moore he wrote on February 29: "I don't know that in the course of a hair-breadth existence I was ever, at home or abroad, in a situation so completely uprooting of present pleasure or rational hope for the future, as this same. I say this, because I think so, and feel it. But, I shall not sink under it. . . . I have made up my mind. . . . I had a few weeks ago some things to say that would have made you laugh; but they tell me now that I must not laugh, and so I have been very serious—and am . . . In all this business, I am the sorriest for Sir Ralph. He and I are equally punished . . . I shall be separated from my wife; he will retain his". Later (March 8) he wrote again to Moore: "I do not believe—and I must say it, in the very dregs of all this bitter business—that there ever was a better, a kinder, or a more amiable and agreeable being than Lady B. I never had, nor can have, any reproach to make her while with me. Where there is blame, it belongs to myself, and, if I cannot redeem, I must bear it". (It was in this letter that the passages about Sir Ralph and Lady Noel occurred which were part of the reason for Lady Byron's Remarks in 1830.) Referring to the new poems, he says: "I agree with you . . . that I have written too much. With those countries . . . all my really poetical feelings begin and end. Were I to try, I could make nothing of any other subject, and that I have apparently exhausted".

Thus, with that dreariest judgment of having over-written himself, and a distraint for half a year's rent at 13 Piccadilly Terrace, added to all the rest, he sailed on April 25,¹ having once more, and not yet for the last time, set England by the ears.

¹ Hobhouse went to stay with him on April 3 at Piccadilly Terrace, where he was then alone. Scrope Davies and Leigh Hunt dined there during his stay. Rogers came to take leave of him on April 22.

Hobhouse and Scrope Davies accompanied him as far as Dover. He had with him three servants—including Fletcher—and a travelling physician. This was John William Polidori, M.D., a youth of twenty who had taken his doctor's degree at the early age—"I believe almost unexampled," says Mr. W. M. Rossetti¹—of nineteen. He had been recommended to Byron by Sir Henry Halford, and proved a troublesome satellite: "rather romantic-looking", touchy, vain, and sentimental—a bad parody of his employer.

Thursday was spent at Dover, "seeing the carriage packed up". This was a curiosity: "a huge coach, copied from the celebrated one of Napoleon, taken at Genappe (*sic*). . . . Besides a *lit de repos*, it contained a library, a plate-chest, and every apparatus for dining".² They visited Churchill's grave:

"I stood beside the grave of him who blazed
The Comet of a Season". . . .

The name of Charles Churchill now conveys nothing to the mind; in 1816 his repute—he died in 1764—was still considerable. The visitors found his grave neglected, and Byron asked the sexton if he knew why so many came to see this undistinguished resting-place.

"And thus he answered—'Well, I do not know
Why frequent travellers turn to pilgrims so;
He died before my day of Sextonship,
And I had not the digging of his grave'.³

¹ *The Diary of Dr. John William Polidori*, 1816, relating to Byron, Shelley, etc. Edited and Elucidated by W. M. Rossetti. 1911.

John William Polidori was the son of Gaetano Polidori, a Tuscan man of letters who, after being secretary to Alfieri, had settled in London as a teacher of Italian. He married a Miss Pierce. Mr. W. M. Rossetti is the nephew of Byron's Polidori. Polidori's picture hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.

² Pryse Gordon, *Personal Memoirs*, ii. 328.

³ The lines were not written until three months later. Byron openly said they were in imitation of Wordsworth.

The train of thought was inevitable at such a moment :

“ . . . I did dwell
 With a deep thought and with a softened eye
 On that old sexton's natural homily,
 In which there was obscurity and fame—
 The Glory and the Nothing of a name ”.

The early part of that evening—his last in England—was spent in laughing at a play written by Polidori, who had “delivered it into their hands”. The author's spirit was “ruffled”, and somebody was touched, took up the pages again, and read the better passages aloud with due solemnity. Polidori does not say which of the party this was ; but it is like Byron, and unlike either Hobhouse or Scrope Davies. . . . At nine o'clock Byron embarked for Ostend. He had walked to the boat “through a lane of spectators” ; indeed, the curiosity at Dover was so great that many ladies had dressed themselves as chambermaids, and stood about the passages and doorways at his inn. Hobhouse and Davies saw him off—the former recording the departure in his Journal with this moving comment : “God bless him for a gallant spirit and a kind one !” His destination was Geneva ; the journey thither was to be through Flanders and up the Rhine to the Lake of Geneva—or Leman, as he always preferred to call it.

While he rides the waves, let us review the work done by him since *Lara* in 1814.

After his engagement in the September of that year, he spent the autumn and winter at his chambers in the Albany, and it was probably in the late autumn that he began the *Hebrew Melodies*, so called because they were set to Hebrew airs by Isaac Nathan. Byron's friend

Douglas Kinnaird¹ (who was also an intimate of Hobhouse) brought them together, and Nathan became one of Byron's favourites.² Despite this liking, Moore's chaff on the subject of the Hebrew airs (which he did not admire) caused the composer to be "cursed" and "sunburned" during their arrangement. "Curse the Melodies and the Tribes to boot. . . . Sunburn Nathan ! . . . Have I not told you it was all Kinnaird's doing, and my own exquisite facility of temper ? . . . All I have got by it was 'a speech', and a receipt for stewed oysters".

The title, *Hebrew Melodies*, is misleading, for the collection opens with "She walks in Beauty, like the night"—which is an English love-song pure and simple, and was written in June 1814.³ Another as alien in spirit was, "Oh! snatched away in Beauty's bloom"—of which Nathan, in submitting his music, asked "in what

¹ Douglas Kinnaird, a son of the seventh Baron Kinnaird, was a partner in the bank of Ransom and Morland, and a member of the committee of management of Drury Lane. In 1829 he resigned his trusteeship for Lady Byron's marriage-settlement, thus bringing about her estrangement from Mrs. Leigh.

² Isaac Nathan was "musical historian to George IV.", and instructor in music to the Princess Charlotte. He wrote, in 1829, *Fugitive Pieces and Reminiscences of Lord Byron*, with notes of conversations and three letters from the poet; a section is also devoted to Lady Caroline Lamb, who had been very friendly with him. Nathan was with Byron "the best part of the three last days before he left London, to quit England" (*Fugitive Pieces*, p. 87). Byron gave him a fifty-pound note; and Nathan, knowing that he was particularly fond of biscuits, sent him some Passover cakes to "accompany him on his pilgrimage", and added a blessing. Byron wrote to thank him—one of the last letters from England.

³ At a party with Wedderburn Webster, Byron saw for the first time his cousin, the beautiful Mrs. Wilmot, who was in mourning, with spangles in her dress. When he and Webster returned to the Albany, Byron ordered Fletcher "to give him *a tumbler of brandy*, which he drank at once to Mrs. Wilmot's health". . . . Next day he wrote "She walks in Beauty", admittedly inspired by her. She was the wife of Mr. Robert Wilmot, who was one of Lady Byron's advisers during the separation proceedings. See Chapter I. (*note*).

manner [the lines] referred to any scriptural subject?" "He appeared for a moment affected—at last replied, 'Every mind must make its own references; there is scarcely one of us who could not imagine that the affliction belongs to himself; to me it certainly belongs'". The first and third stanzas are of great beauty: the second is one of those perplexing lapses into utter artificiality which so confound our judgment of his muse. About "My Soul is Dark" Nathan tells a droll tale. Rumours of Byron's madness were already current, and at this time the gossip amused him. "'I'll try how a *Madman* can write, Nathan!' and seizing the pen, he fixed his eyes in majestic wildness on vacancy; then, like a flash of inspiration, without erasing a single word", he wrote the verses named. They are not among his best—or worst. The real "Hebrew" songs are uninteresting, and were written mostly at Seaham. Our schooldays were brightened by "The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold"—but it is wise to leave the pleasant memory in peace.

Many of the best-known lyrics were written between 1814 and 1816. "Farewell! if ever fondest prayer" belongs to the former year; "When we two parted"—by many reckoned the finest short poem he ever wrote—to the latter. Both are believed by Lord Lovelace to have been addressed to Mrs. Leigh; but it is worth remarking that it was in February 1816 that James Wedderburn Webster brought an action against one Baldwin for a libel charging Lady Frances and the Duke of Wellington with adultery. Webster obtained £2000; and on February 16 there is an ironic letter from Byron to Murray: "I thank you for the account of Mr. and Lady F. W.'s triumph; you see by it the exceeding advantage of unimpeachable virtue and uniform correctness of conduct, etc. etc.". It is quite

legitimate (with the knowledge of his reference to the "love-letters" from him that Lady Frances had) to conjecture that the lines were inspired by this incident.

Three Napoleon poems mark this period: *Napoleon's Farewell*; "Must thou go, my glorious Chief?" and "We do not curse thee, Waterloo!"—all feigning to be from the French.¹ Byron's feeling for Napoleon ranged from extreme sympathy to angry disdain. All the world knows that he received the news of Waterloo with the exclamation, "Well, I'm d—d sorry for it".² He covered him with varying epithets: "that Anakim of anarchy"; "a bastard Attila"; "my poor little pagod"; but liked to think that he and Napoleon signed with the same initials, N. B. (after his taking of the Noel name in 1822). He had fought for a bust at Harrow against the boys, who designed to smash it; and the *Journal* of 1813-14 abounds in allusions to the Napoleonic doings and undoings. On April 9, 1814:

"I mark this day!

"Napoleon Buonaparte has abdicated the throne of the world. . . . What! wait till they were in his capital, and then talk of his readiness to give up what is already gone!! 'Sdeath—Dionysius at Corinth was yet a king to this. The 'Isle of Elba' to retire to! I am utterly bewildered and confounded. I don't know—but I think *I*, even *I* (an insect compared with this creature) have set my life on casts not a millionth part of this man's. But, after all, a crown may not be worth dying for. Yet, to outlive *Lodi* for this!!! But I won't give him up even now". And on the news of the restoration of the

¹ The *Morning Chronicle* of March 15, 1816, said: "The original [of "We do not curse thee"] is circulating in Paris, and . . . is ascribed to the Muse of M. de Châteaubriand". The verses were first published on that day in that paper. (*Poems*, iii. 431.)

² George Ticknor, *Life*, i. 60.

Bourbons :¹ "I 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'". Many a thrilling line in his verse was inspired by his "poor little pagod"; but *Byron and Napoleon* might in itself be the title of a book.

The two long works of this period are *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina*. The *Siege* was begun in January 1815, and "more than half written before the summer"; the MS. was sent to Murray at the beginning of November. Byron at first intended to publish it "quietly" in Murray's forthcoming Collected Edition; but, "Publish or not as you like", he wrote; "I don't care one *damn*. . . . I never thought or dreamed of it, except as one in the collection. If it is worth being in the fourth volume, put it there and nowhere else; and if not, put it in the fire". But Gifford, in whose hands the MS. had at once been placed, expressed "great delight", and Murray offered a thousand guineas for it and *Parisina*—which, begun before the *Siege*, was sent him at the beginning of December. (Lady Byron transcribed both MSS.) Byron at first declined the money. "I cannot consent to this separate publication. I do not like to risk any fame (whether merited or not) which I have been favoured with, upon compositions which I do not feel to be at all equal to my own notions of what they should be".² Rogers and Sir James

¹ Byron's entry is for April 19, 1814: his own death-day, ten years later, in Greece.

² In a P.S. he added: "I have inclosed your draft *torn*, for fear of accidents by the way. I wish you would not throw temptation in mine. It is not from a disdain of the universal idol, nor from a present superfluity of his treasures, I assure you, that I refuse to worship him; but what is right is right, and must not yield to circumstances".

Mackintosh then suggested to him that he might accept the sum and use it for another—William Godwin.¹ To this he yielded, proposing to himself to give £600 to Godwin, and divide the remainder between two other needy geniuses. Murray strongly protested, and Byron was very angry. “What was the difference”, he demanded, “between Godwin and Dallas?” There was much difference, as Godwin’s victims well knew; but Byron’s further point was that it was no business of any one’s how he used the money once he had accepted it. “The things”, he concluded, “shall not be published at all. . . . You will oblige me by returning the Manuscripts by the bearer immediately”. The letters give us no further information, but plainly the difference was arranged, for Byron, “hard pressed by creditors”, took the sum offered, and used it to pay some of his debts; and the two poems, in a single volume, *were* published separately on February 7, 1816.

The influence of Coleridge’s *Christabel*—“that wild and singularly original and beautiful poem”, as Byron described it—upon *The Siege of Corinth* is unmistakable. Byron felt this so strongly that, while the *Siege* was unfinished, he sent Coleridge the passage where it is most marked—stanza xix, lines 521–532; and to the lines themselves appended a note.² *Christabel* was not published until May 1816, and on the day in 1815 that Byron wrote he had for the first time seen the MS., “by the kindness of Mr. Coleridge himself”. Coleridge had begun the poem in 1797, and in 1801 a friend

¹ The soon-to-be father-in-law of Shelley, and a philosopher and novelist of renown; renowned also for his financial troubles and his various ingenious and unlovable methods of evading them. At the time of Shelley’s ostracism, Godwin accepted from him a cheque for a large sum, but desired that it should not be made out in his name—their relative positions making *that* undesirable!

² *Poems*, iii. 471.

who had read the MS., repeated the lines to Walter Scott, who in his turn recited them to Byron in the June of 1815 (when they saw one another "almost daily" in Murray's parlour)—fourteen years after he had first heard them. They influenced *him* to the irregular versification of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (as he acknowledged, though not until the 1830 edition of his Poems); and now their haunting music was echoed by Byron too. So strong was the resemblance that Byron himself proposed to Coleridge to cancel the passage, *although he had written it before he had even heard "Christabel" recited by Walter Scott.* Mr. E. H. Coleridge thinks that as the MS. "had a pretty general circulation in the literary world"¹ long before the summer of 1815, Byron "may have heard, without heeding, this or other passages quoted by privileged readers; or . . . may have caught its lilt at second-hand from the published works of Southey, or of Scott himself". Whatever the explanation, this is well-nigh the most extraordinary instance of literary coincidence that exists.

To catch the "Coleridge lilt" could leave no poetical intonation unglorified, and accordingly *The Siege of Corinth* is incomparable, among Byron's narrative poems, for music. But the reviewers were disconcerted; he was indicted for carelessness. That fault was indeed conspicuous in the historical and grammatical regions; but as Murray, defending him in a letter to Blackwood, observed, "Many can write polished lines who will never reach the name of poet".² The opening lines (1 to 45) did not appear until the edition of 1832. He had "forgotten them", and in his odd uncertainty about

¹ Medwin, *Conversations*, 1824, p. 261.

² The *Siege* was dedicated to Hobhouse, and there is an amusing entry in his Journal: "I should have liked it better if he had not dedicated *Parisina* to Scrope Davies. I told him this".

his work, said when he did send them that he was "not sure that they had not better be left out now". Murray or "his Synod" was to determine. It sheds a strange light on both that they should have determined as they did; for the lines are among the most delightful that he ever wrote. To read the poem without them is like beginning a task with no sort of exhilaration; add these lines—and we are refreshed as by a draught of bright water.

"In the year since Jesus died for men,
 Eighteen hundred years and ten,¹
 We were a gallant company,
 Riding o'er land, and sailing o'er sea.
 Oh! but we went merrily!
 We forded the river, and clomb the high hill.
 Never our steeds for a day stood still;
 Whether we lay in the cave or the shed,
 Our sleep fell soft on the hardest bed;
 Whether we couch'd in our rough capote,
 On the rougher plank of our gliding boat,
 Or stretch'd on the beach, or our saddles spread
 As a pillow beneath the resting head,
 Fresh we woke upon the morrow:
 All our thoughts and words had scope,
 We had health, and we had hope,
 Toil and travel, but no sorrow.
 We were of all tongues and creeds;—
 Some were those who counted beads,
 Some of mosque, and some of church,
 And some, or I mis-say, of neither;
 Yet through the wide world might ye search
 Nor find a motlier crew nor blither.

But some are dead, and some are gone,
 And some are scatter'd and alone,
 And some are rebels on the hills
 That look along Epirus' valleys
 Where Freedom still at moments rallies,
 And pays in blood Oppression's ills;
 And some are in a far countree,
 And some all restlessly at home;
 But never more, oh! never, we
 Shall meet to revel and to roam.

¹ The date is miscalculated from the death instead of the birth of Christ.—E. H. COLERIDGE.

But those hardy days flew cheerily !
 And when they now fall drearily,
 My thoughts, like swallows, skim the main,
 And bear my spirit back again
 Over the earth, and through the air,
 A wild bird, and a wanderer.
 'Tis this that ever wakes my strain,
 And oft, too oft, implores again
 The few who may endure my lay,
 To follow me so far away.

Stranger—wilt thou follow now,
 And sit with me on Acro-Corinth's brow?"

Gifford wrote some critical notes on pages torn from the first edition of the poem, probably with a view to an emended version in the Collected Works; but at no time were his suggestions incorporated in the text. "What vulgarism is this!" he exclaims at the use of *downs* as a transitive verb; on the phrase *human hecatombs* (repeated in *Marino Faliero*) he comments, "there can be no such thing; but the whole of this is poor, and spun out". "Despicable stuff!" he cries of lines 1030-56; draws a pen (his one error) through the great description of the dogs devouring the dead; and in the "high altar" passage in stanza xxxii. erases the line:

"Oh, but it made a glorious show!"

and appends three marks of exclamation.

Parisina deals with the love of a bastard son, Hugo, for his father's wife. This brought down the critics: "too disgusting to be rendered pleasing by any display of genius". Byron's mind was now fixed on forbidden relations,¹ but he "was aware that the delicacy or fastid-

¹ It is worth pointing out, nevertheless, that the lines, "It is not to list to the waterfall" (15-28) were written before *Lara*, and that the name "Francesca", rejected from *The Corsair*, was originally used here also. These lines were set to music by Nathan.

iousness of the reader might deem such subjects unfit for the purposes of poetry". "The Greek dramatists", he continued, "and some of the best of our old English writers, were of a different opinion; as Alfieri and Schiller have also been more recently on the Continent". Gifford was enthusiastic over *Parisina*, and Mr. E. H. Coleridge speaks highly of it; I, on reading it again for the first time since my schooldays, was much disappointed. It seems to me inferior to any of the former narratives—more equal, it is true (or more equable), but wholly lacking the authentic "Byronism", without which, after all, Byron sinks to the level of Scott in poetry.

The two poems passed (for works of his) comparatively unnoticed. They appeared at a time when public curiosity was more delightfully engaged with his private affairs, and were soon forgotten in the turmoil over *Fare Thee Well* and *A Sketch*. When this had died away, the new canto of *Childe Harold* and *The Prisoner of Chillon*, "with its brilliant and noticeable companion poems", arrived to eclipse decisively *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina*.

CHAPTER III

THE OUTLAW—1816

The "Childe" goes forth again—The Low Countries—Pictures—Waterloo—Arrival at Geneva—Claire Clairmont—Friendship with Shelley—The Rousseau, Gibbon, and Voltaire Regions—*Frankenstein*—Departure of the Shelley Party—Visitors from England—The Bernese Alps—Southey—*The Vision of Judgment*—Dismissal of Polidori—Madame de Staël—Attempt at Reconciliation with Lady Byron—Failure

"ONCE more upon the waters! yet once more!
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows his rider. Welcome to their roar!
Swift be their guidance, wheresoe'er it lead!
Though the strained mast should quiver as a reed,
And the rent canvas fluttering strew the gale,
Still must I on; for I am as a weed,
Flung from the rock, on Ocean's foam, to sail
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail.

In my youth's summer I did sing of One
The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind;
Again I seize the theme, then but begun,
And bear it with me, as the rushing wind
Bears the cloud onwards" . . .

So, frankly at last identified with his creator, did the Childe go forth again,

"With nought of Hope left—but with less of gloom";¹

¹ Compare with this: "It is odd, but agitation or contest of any kind gives a rebound to my spirit and sets me up for the time" (Letter to Moore, March 8, 1816); and the "rage and resistance and redress" in 1809, which produced *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.

while, in a travesty of the old dualism, it was neither Harold nor Byron, but Polidori, who "watched the stars" during the sixteen-hour passage "with the wind completely in our teeth".

From Ostend they passed through Bruges, Ghent, Antwerp, and Mechlin to Brussels. The Low Countries made little impression:¹ "not a rise from Ostend to Antwerp—a molehill would make the inhabitants think that the Alps had come on a visit". Churches and pictures he had stared at "till my brains are like a guide-book" (as he told Augusta in a letter of May 1, from Brussels) and he was far from enthusiastic. The pictures in especial left him cold—or, rather, hot. "The Flemish School, such as I saw it in Flanders, I utterly detested, despised, and abhorred". And a year later, to Murray from Venice: "I never was so disgusted in my life as with Rubens and his eternal wives and infernal glare of colour². . . . You must recollect however that I know nothing of painting and that I detest it". This was one of his favourite "attitudes", and was, like most of them, entirely sincere. Byron was too violent and too self-absorbed to care for the arts. Only in his rare moods of tranquillity could he suffer these abiding methods of expression—we shall see that in Florence and Rome, where he was almost really at rest, he for the first and last time wrote eagerly and passionately in praise of painting and sculpture. In the life which to him was normal—the hours of great

¹ Polidori has an apt phrase or two for their ennui: "The country is tiresomely beautiful. Fine avenues which make us yawn with admiration . . . sometimes terminated by a church or a house—the church very ugly, and both very tiresome, as they always prove much farther off than is at first expected" (*The Diary of Polidori*, pp. 44-45).

² Polidori's description of one "passage" in Rubens's *Crucifixion* at Antwerp is worth quoting: "A woman rising from the dead—surely a woman large as Guy Warwick's giant's wife . . . most hellish egregious breasts, which a child refuses with horror in its face" (p. 52).

distresses or greater dejections—his imagination, fiercely self-disdainful, fastened upon the men of “action” as the only beings worth consideration. The impulse towards poetry (in dark hours always at its most urgent) added what for him was a kind of infamy to the other tortures. Hamlet, “unpacking his heart with words” which by their vehemence lash the fury in him for his impotence in other things, is like Byron when the goad first pricked him. Once submissive to it, he found relief, and only so could find it; but that was the core of the humiliation. “[Poetry] is the lava of the imagination, whose eruption prevents an earthquake. . . . I prefer the talents of action”. So he wrote of his own art. “The lava of the imagination . . . is precisely”, says Mr. Arthur Symons, “what poetry was to Byron; and it is characteristic of him that he cannot look beyond himself even for the sake of a generalisation”.

In this mood of “rage and resistance and redress”, he visited the field of Waterloo, having come out of his way to the Rhine on purpose.¹

“Stop!—for thy tread is on an Empire’s dust!”

—but his deep intellectual sincerity quickly triumphed over the rhapsodical vein, and he became one of the band of “obstinate questioners” of the Day.

“Oh, bloody and most bootless Waterloo!

Won half by blunder, half by treachery”.²

Stanzas 17 to 21 of the third *Harold* limp clumsily in pursuit of that terse summary, not attained till 1822; and wearied in 1816 by the unavailing effort, his imagination fastened on the hours before the “first and

¹ It was not yet, I may remind my readers, a year since the battle.

² *The Age of Bronze*, v. 223. *Poems*, v. 535.

last of fields"—apt theme for the poet "for whom (like the novelists, and unlike all other poets) society exists as well as human nature".

"There was a sound of revelry by night"—

it were idle to quote the stanzas that most of us could recite as it were in the sleep of our memory!

Waterloo drew from him also the famous stanzas on "young gallant Howard":¹

"There have been tears and breaking hearts for thee,
And mine were nothing, had I such to give". . . .

He gave a more dazzling, but as unavailing a gift—"the sound of Fame". "The contrast between the continuous action of nature and the doom of the unreturning dead . . . fills Byron with a fierce desire to sum the price of victory. He flings in the face of the vain-glorious mourners the bitter reality of their abiding loss. It was this prophetic note, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness", which sounded in and through Byron's rhetoric to the men of his own generation."²

Polidori's Diary tells us that they rode over the field, "myself silent, my companion" (on a Cossack horse) "singing a Turkish riding-tune"; and in a letter to Murray, written from Ouchy in June, Byron says: "I shall be glad to hear you have received certain helms and swords, sent from Waterloo, which I rode over with pain and pleasure". A further entry in Polidori's Diary on that day (May 4) states: "My friend has written twenty-six stanzas—some on Waterloo". This, if it refers to the first twenty-six stanzas of the third canto,

¹ The Hon. Frederick Howard, third son of Lord Carlisle, fell late in the evening at Waterloo, "and died (not in the field) half-an-hour afterwards at some house not far off" (*L. and J.* iii. 286).

² Mr. E. H. Coleridge, *Poems*, ii. note to p. 235.

would leave Byron on that evening with one of his most famous lines in his brain :

“Or whispering with white lips—‘The foe! They come! they come!’”¹

From Brussels they reached the Rhine through Liège and Aix-la-Chapelle; on May 11, leaving Bonn, they passed the Drachenfels, and that day were written, “on the Rhine bank”, the lines addressed to Augusta which were among those she wished “in the *Red Sea*”.

“The castled crag of Drachenfels
Frowns o'er the wide and winding Rhine” . . .

He sent her with them (for they were at once sent to her) a bunch of lilies which a girl on the road had offered him. At Morat, in Switzerland, he brought away from the pyramid of bones on the battle-field “as much as may have made a quarter of a hero”;² and thus, and in such moods, he came to Sécheron, a suburb of Geneva. They arrived on May 25—just a month after leaving England, and alighted at Dejean’s Hôtel d’Angleterre, where Byron “put his age down as 100”, and where they found, installed ten days before, Shelley and his wife-to-be, Mary Godwin, with their travelling companion and relative, variously called Jane, Claire, and Clara Clairmont. It was Byron’s first meeting with his brother-poet; it may (or may not) have been his first meeting with Mary Godwin; it was not his first meeting with Miss Clairmont, for she was already the expectant mother of his child.

Jane Clairmont—for Clara, Claire, or Clare was a name of her own choosing—was William Godwin’s step-

¹ He wrote on May 5 or 6, in Mrs. Pryse Gordon’s album, stanzas 17 and 18 (Pryse Lockhart Gordon, *Personal Memoirs*, ii. 325).

² Mr. Murray has still in his possession the parcel of bones which Byron sent home.

daughter through his second wife, Mrs. Clairmont, of whom Charles Lamb reported that "she was a truly disgusting woman, and wore green spectacles". Jane (for in her schooldays she was contented with the homely name) was about the same age as her "sister-by-affinity", Mary Godwin, the daughter whose birth had cost the life of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, Godwin's first wife. Mary Wollstonecraft had left behind her two daughters: this Mary, and the offspring of an earlier illicit union, Fanny Imlay (for the child was called by her father's name). The three girls, thus brought up together, were all to have unusual destinies. Fanny, melancholy and sentimental, was, later in the year with which we are immediately concerned—1816—to put an end to her existence; Mary was living with Shelley in the "bonds of love", for Harriet Westbrook was still alive; and Miss Clairmont, who was to reach the age of eighty and die unmarried, was at present the mistress, quickly to be discarded, of Byron.

It was in July 1814 that Shelley had eloped with Mary Godwin, a girl of sixteen. Harriet's day as queen of his heart was over, and, in his view, the fact that she was his legal wife must exercise no restraining influence on his love for another woman. This is not a place to discuss Shelley's relations with Harriet and Mary; I am glad to restrict myself to recording mere facts. . . . When, in 1814, Mary and he fled to the Continent, they took Jane Clairmont with them—on the pretext, somewhat ambiguously reported by her, of her better acquaintance with French. She, whatever the pretext, was nothing loth to go, for she represented in the girlish trio at Skinner Street, the adventurous type. Fanny was the Sentimentalist; Mary, the Practical-Romantic; Jane, the Dare-devil and Dreamer. Tall, with a lovely lissom figure, with masses of rich black hair, dark eyes

that flashed or brooded, a fine, sensitive mouth, and a singing voice which her master, Corri, likened to a string of pearls, she was one of those women who "if not pretty, are worse"; and her character and temperament were expressed in her brilliant and eager externality. She was all for love and liberty and emancipation; disdainful of those who bowed down in the Temple of Rimmon, disdainful above all of marriage—"I can never resist the temptation of throwing a pebble at it as I pass by"; disdainful too of "masculine usurpation", yet with moments of stormy and ecstatic submission to it. The very girl, in short, to fall in love with the ardent visitor at Skinner Street,¹ who for his part had fallen in love with quiet, piquante Mary. The affection of Claire (I shall henceforth call her by the name which most belongs to her) for Shelley has been, like most things Shelleyan, the subject of keen debate. She, in her old age,² declared that he was the only man she had ever loved, and that she had loved him "with all her heart and soul"; but of her statements it is usually wise to believe but half. Of this one, we may believe that she loved Shelley's memory with all her heart and soul, and saw clearly that he was the man most worthy of a woman's affection whom she had ever known; but it is difficult to believe that she loved him in the sense which *she* attached to the word, during the time at any rate of her relations with Byron. For it was not Byron who wooed, but she: she offered him all herself before she ever exchanged a single word with him.

When Shelley and Mary returned from Switzerland in the September of 1814, Claire returned with them, but not to Godwin's house. Her mother refused to receive her there, for she had been greatly angered by

¹ The abode of William Godwin.

² William Graham, *Last Links with Byron, Shelley, Keats*.

Claire's refusal to come back when Mrs. Godwin followed the lovers to Calais (in July) and demanded at least her own daughter's restoration. The triple ménage (for Claire stayed with the Shelleys) proved the failure that it always proves. Mary was jealous, Shelley angelically tactless, Claire difficult and capricious. She would spend days without opening her lips; she was hypochondriacal, "filled with chimerical terrors"—one day gentle and cheerful, the next a detestable creature, without feeling of any sort. Mary, now *enceinte*, was difficult too; the situation soon became unbearable. But Mrs. Godwin, though in November she consented to receive her daughter for a night or two, would not again undertake her as an inmate, and the question of what to do with Claire became acute. At last a solution was found: Claire was sent to Lynmouth in Devonshire, to live with a Mrs. Bicknell, who was Mrs. Godwin's friend. On the day of her departure, in Mary's Diary we find the entry: "Clara goes. . . . I begin a new journal with our regeneration"; and the outcast wrote immediately to Fanny Imlay: "After so much discontent, such violent scenes, such a turmoil of passion and hatred, you will hardly believe how enraptured I am with this dear little quiet spot. . . . It is in solitude that the powers concentrate round the soul, and teach it the calm determined path of virtue and wisdom."

"But Quiet to quick bosoms is a Hell"—

though the line was not yet written, Claire might have quoted it by intelligent anticipation. At what date she left Lynmouth and returned to Shelley's abode, is uncertain; it is uncertain too when her intrigue with Byron began. Several letters from her to him are printed¹ in Mr. Prothero's edition of the *Letters and*

¹ The originals are among the Murray MSS.

Journals, vol. iii., Appendix vii. The first is in the feigned name of "E. Trefusis"; he is asked to answer to an address in Marylebone. (The Shelleys were at this time living in a furnished house at Bishopsgate, the eastern entrance of Windsor Park.) The letter is throughout in the third person.

"An utter stranger takes the liberty of addressing you. . . . It may seem a strange assertion, but it is not the less true that I place my happiness in your hands. . . . If a woman, whose reputation has yet remained unstained, if without either guardian or husband to control her, she should throw herself upon your mercy, if with a beating heart she should confess the love she has borne you many years, if she should secure to you secrecy and safety, if she should return your kindness with fond affection and unbounded devotion, could you betray her, or would you be silent as the grave?"

The probability is that Byron did not answer this letter; he had had many of its kind before. Her second attempt was made under the initials "G. C. B."

"Lord Byron is requested to state whether seven o'clock this Evening will be convenient to him to receive a lady to communicate with him on business of peculiar importance. She desires to be admitted alone and with the utmost privacy". He answered this. He was "unaware" of any importance which could be attached by any person to an interview with him; but he would be at home at the hour mentioned. Mr. Prothero seems to think that the appointment was not kept, for he says, in referring to a later letter from Claire, that Byron and she were still "strangers"; but either there is a lacuna in the Claire letters as printed by him, or else they must have met before her next communication (which is signed with her real name), for she says, "Remember that I have confided to

you the most important secrets. I have withheld nothing”.

This was the period of Byron's connection with the management of Drury Lane Theatre.¹ Claire in this letter says (we must suppose disingenuously) that she is desirous of entering upon a stage-career, and asks him to tell her what are the first steps to be taken. The result of her appeal was a reference from Byron to Douglas Kinnaird (also on the Sub-Committee) of which she made no use, alleging as her reason that she was “considering”, for she might not appear on the stage under her own name, and she “dared not apply to Mr. Kinnaird before she received Byron's approbation to this *change*”. It is not much wonder that Byron began to be suspicious of so vacillating an applicant, and the more, because in this letter a new ambition is disclosed. “I have written half of a novel or tale . . . I am now wavering between the adoption of a literary life or a theatrical career. Perhaps for neither am I fitted”. By this time Byron knew of her connection with Shelley; she speaks much of him and his works, and says that he is now turned three-and-twenty, which sets the possible date of this letter in August.² “One thing I am afraid of”, she proceeds; “—you rather dislike me. . . . I am often quite surprised at your gentleness and kindness”. Nothing could be clearer than Byron's reluctance, from beginning to end of this correspondence. The two next letters from Claire complain of “no

¹ He was on the Sub-Committee of Management. Samuel Whitbread was the manager.

² “Shelley had not turned three and twenty till August 4, 1815”, says Mr. Prothero, assigning the date; but Claire's accuracy is at no time remarkable, and the phrase is always a tolerably vague one. I feel sure from the internal evidence of this letter that Claire and Byron were *not* “strangers” at the time it was written. She uses the word “stranger”, but I read it in the sense that she had no claim of old friendship, or even old acquaintance, to justify her appeal to him.

answer". But he answered before Number Eight, for in it she says, "You bid me write short to you, and I have much to say". She was indeed distressingly prolix, but in this eighth, though still far from laconic, she is at last unmistakably direct. "I do not expect you to love me; I am not worthy of your love . . . yet much to my surprise, more to my happiness, you betrayed passions I had believed no longer alive in your bosom. . . . I do assure you, your future will shall be mine, and everything you say or do, I shall not question. Have you then any objection to the following plan? On Thursday evening we may go out of town together by some stage or mail about the distance of ten or twelve miles? There we shall be free and unknown; we can return early the following morning. . . . Will you admit me for two moments to settle with you *where*? Indeed I will not stay an instant after you tell me to go."

In the last of the series, she alludes to his departure for "Italy", on "Monday"; she is to go "God knows where". We have seen that she went to Geneva, where he too went, but assuredly with no desire to meet her, whether they arranged to meet or not. This concluding letter makes it clear that he was already tired of an intrigue to which he had never more than half-heartedly assented. "Do not delay our meeting after Saturday—I cannot endure the suspense. . . . When I am alone and left to my own thoughts, I become the most miserable and nervous of beings. . . . You call me 'a little fiend'. I thought it so criminal to doubt anything you said that I was much impressed by this appellation"—and she adds a certificate of character from Shelley, and thinks it "an honourable testimony of that part of my character you have accused, that the man whom I have loved, and for whom I have suffered much, should report this of me". Love was a word much used in the

Shelley circle; we may easily assign too much significance to its appearance here; for whether Claire "loved" Shelley un-platonically or not, it is quite certain that only platonically did he love her. . . . A post-script requests that "on Saturday" her letters be brought to be "committed to the flames". They were not (or at any rate not all) brought, as we have now learned.

The Shelleys had in any case intended to leave England at this time. Shelley's health was far from good—or he thought so, for he was something of a hypochondriac; his money affairs were uncomfortable; and his position as the "husband" of both a wedded and unwedded wife, made social intercourse for Mary precarious. That Geneva was chosen as the destination we may regard as owing to Claire's influence; we may also remember, however, that it has always been a city of refuge for the intellectual impoverished and persecuted. . . . After the "turmoil of passion and hatred" at Bishopsgate, it seems odd that Mary should have consented to Claire's accompanying them on the Continent; but too much may be made, and has been made, of this inconsistency. At Bishopsgate, Mary was in a state of health which places its victim at the mercy of unreasoned angers and apprehensions; and she, the sanest of women at other times, probably recognised this as soon as she was restored to her normal condition. There were to be quarrels between them in the future: Claire was a creature with whom nor man nor woman could live tranquilly; but there was not again any such "turmoil", though the Shelleys had to endure obloquy and the loss of friendship for her sake, after she became the mother of Byron's child.

It was not until May 3, 1816, that the "caravan"—comprising Mary, Shelley, Claire, and Mary's "little

Blue-eyes", William¹—left Dover for the Continent; but, going by the Paris route, they reached Geneva at least ten days before Byron. "On Saturday, May 25", says Professor Dowden, ". . . there was bustle at Dejean's, and Clara's heart must have moved quick, for Byron had entered the hotel".

Byron's account of the re-union is, as usual, stripped of all ornament. It occurs in a letter to Augusta of September 8, after the Shelley party had returned to England. "Now don't scold; but what could I do? A foolish girl, in spite of all I could say or do, would come after me, or rather went before—for I found her here—and I have had all the plague possible to persuade her to go back again; but at last she went. Now, dearest, I do most truly tell thee that I could not help this, that I did all I could to prevent it, and have at last put an end to it. I was not in love, nor have any love left for any; but I could not exactly play the Stoic with a woman who had scrambled eight hundred miles to unphilosophise me. . . . And now you know all that I know of that matter, and it's over".² We have seen that this crude version is substantially true; yet Claire must have charmed him for her hour, for I think there can be little doubt that one of his lyrics was inspired by the same voice that drew a lovelier one from Shelley—that *To Constantia singing*. Byron's was:

"There be none of Beauty's daughters
 With a magic like thee;
 And like music on the waters
 Is thy sweet voice to me:
 When, as if its sound were causing
 The charmed ocean's pausing,
 The waves lie still and gleaming,
 And the lulled winds seem dreaming:

¹ Mary's second child (the first died after a few days of life) by Shelley, born during the Bishopsgate sojourn.

² First published in Sharpe's *London Magazine*, N.S. vol. xxxiv. p. 236.

And the midnight moon is weaving
Her bright chain o'er the deep ;
Whose breast is gently heaving
As an infant's asleep :
So the spirit bows before thee
To listen and adore thee ;
With a soft but full emotion,
Like the swell of Summer's ocean".

The verses are dated March 28, 1816.

At the end of May, the Shelleys moved to the Maison Montalègre, on the southern shore of the Lake (Sécheron is on the northern shore) ; and Byron followed them on June 10, taking the Villa Diodati, within a few minutes' walk. Shelley had long desired to make acquaintance with Byron. In 1813 he had sent him one of the privately printed copies of *Queen Mab*, together with an explanatory letter. The letter had miscarried, but Byron had admired *Queen Mab* ; and now that they were both exiles, and that his relation with a member of Shelley's party¹ drew them naturally together, intercourse became a part of the daily routine. It is singular that no mention of Shelley occurs in Byron's letters until the eve of the former's return to England at the end of August ; but Shelley wrote to Peacock² in July : " Lord Byron is an exceedingly interesting person ; and as such, is it not to be regretted that he is a slave to the vilest and most vulgar prejudices, and as mad as the winds ? " This referred to Byron's private character only ; as a poet he excited the unmeasured enthusiasm to which

¹ It remains uncertain whether the Shelleys knew anything of Claire's relation with Byron, before leaving England.

² Thomas Love Peacock, poet and novelist, was a close friend of Shelley. He was long connected with the East India Company ; in 1816, became Chief-Examiner of Indian correspondence—a post in which he was succeeded, on his retirement in 1856, by John Stuart Mill. His novels are delightful—the best-known being *Crotchet Castle* and *Gryll Grange*. He wrote some very interesting memoirs of Shelley in *Fraser's Magazine*.

Shelley was so prone. This "gift for admiration" was too facile to be greatly valuable; over minds of quite mediocre quality, Shelley could rave as he had raved over that of the Miss Hitchener who, later on, became The Brown Demon—"an artful, superficial, ugly, hermaphroditical beast of a woman . . . of desperate views and dreadful passions, but of cool and undeviating revenge".¹ It was not surprising, therefore, that the outlawed and obscure Shelley should bow his head to the outlawed and dazzling Byron. The contrast, as well as the likeness, between their careers, must have struck the younger man; but it struck him to humility, not envy, in the Genevan days. Later he was to say in bitter mood: "I do not write. I have lived too long near Lord Byron, and the sun has extinguished the glow-worm"; but that was in the period of estrangement produced by many disillusionments. Despite this early humility, there is no doubt that Shelley, during the Swiss sojourn, strongly influenced Byron, as indeed he influenced, unconsciously, every one with whom he came in contact. I say "unconsciously", because when he consciously sought to sway others, he nearly always failed to do so. It was not his preaching, but his practising, that prevailed. When he preached, it was volubly and tediously, and in a high screeching voice; when he practised, it was with a sweet eagerness, a radiant spontaneity, that captured the heart and imagination of any one who possessed either. "I always go on till I am stopped, and I never am stopped". The will, in the frail bending body, was stupendous; he shot like an arrow from the bow of impulse—as impossible to hinder, once launched; and often, alas! as mistakenly launched as any bungler's shaft. Two men more

¹ 'She was, of course', says Mr. Clutton-Brock in his admirable *Shelley: the Man and the Poet*, "nothing of the sort" (p. 68).



SHELLEY

FROM THE PAINTING BY GEORGE CLINT, A.R.A., IN THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

different than Shelley and Byron can hardly be imagined: Shelley all such impulse and such activity, Byron with, in daily life, hardly any impulse at all, the well-nigh perfect type of drifter; Shelley with his eyes fixed on the peaks of heaven, Byron intent on the world he could see; Shelley loving humanity, yet bearing its decree of banishment with tranquillity, Byron scornful of all, yet goaded by *their* scorn to a too-conscious defiance—here are the very images of the Man and the Angel. And in the far greater personal spell of Byron, we find as it were the secret of fascination; for Shelley, rare and attaching as he was, was yet too single-minded to display that sensitive quiver between extremes which, in human beings, we watch with the same eager delight as in the compass.

The poets, both inordinately fond of boating, made the tour of the Lake together, starting on June 23 and visiting, with the emotions of the age, the Rousseau region. Mrs. Byron, long ago, "*would* have it" that her son was like Rousseau, and he was at pains in one of his future diaries to prove the comparison an unjust one, basing his argument, very characteristically, altogether on externalities. If he had looked within, he could have found a more essential point of difference, for not of Rousseau could it ever be said, as Swinburne said of Byron, that the power of his personality lay in "the splendid and imperishable excellence which covers all his offences and outweighs all his defects: *the excellence of sincerity and strength*".¹ Lausanne and

¹ Estève, in his *Byron et le Romantisme français*, draws an elaborate parallel between Byron and Rousseau; and Mr. Ernest Coleridge, in the Notes to Canto III. of *Childe Harold*, says that "there was a resemblance, and consequently an affinity" between them, quoting Coleridge, in *The Friend*, as his authority: "The Teacher" (said Coleridge of Rousseau) "of stoic pride in his principles, yet the victim of morbid vanity in his feelings and conduct".

Ferney, in their turn, called up the forms of Gibbon and Voltaire, and in the Gibbon stanza of *Childe Harold* occur two of the most famous lines of Byron :

“Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer ;
The lord of irony—that master-spell”.

They visited his house and found the garden neglected, but Byron gathered “a sprig of Gibbon’s acacia” and some rose-leaves, and sent them to Murray in a letter dated June 27, from Ouchy near Lausanne. Three days before, they had been nearly wrecked by a squall off Meillerie, and Shelley, describing it to Peacock, said : “My feelings would have been less painful had I been alone ; but I knew that my companion would have attempted to save me, and I was overcome with humiliation when I thought that his life might have been risked to preserve mine”. Moore tells us that Shelley seated himself on a locker, and “grasping the rings at each end firmly in his hands, declared his determination to go down in that position without a struggle”. The wind had been high enough to tear up some huge trees from the Alps above them.

They visited also the Prison of Chillon—scene of the poem, begun and finished in two days at Ouchy, where they were detained by the weather ; and on July 1 they were back at Montalègre and Diodati. The routine began again : evening after evening they would embark upon the Lake with Mary, Claire, and Polidori. Byron, one evening, sang them an Albanian song. “Now, be sentimental and give me all your attention”. “It was a strange wild howl that he gave forth”, says Mary ; “. . . laughing the while at our disappointment, who had expected a wild Eastern melody”. After this experience, the Shelleys, much addicted to *petits noms*, gave him that of “Albé”, by which Mary usually

mentions him in her diary and letters. On other evenings (for it was a very wet, inclement summer) they would talk until, as Polidori says, "the ladies' brains whizzed with giddiness". Not only the ladies'; for it was at Geneva, before the tour round the Lake, that the strange horror suddenly seized on Shelley which was the origin of the "ghost-stories" scheme, whence issued Mary Shelley's renowned *Frankenstein*. On a night in June the Shelleys were with Byron at Diodati; they had been reading and talking of ghosts and spectres, and Byron repeated the lines from *Christabel* describing the witch Geraldine's bosom. "When silence ensued", says Polidori, in his diary for June 18, "Shelley, suddenly shrieking and putting his hands to his head, ran out of the room with a candle. Threw water in his face and after gave him ether. He was looking at Mrs. Shelley, and suddenly thought of a woman he had heard of who had eyes instead of nipples, which, taking hold of his mind, horrified him". When the spasm passed and calm was restored: "We will each write a ghost-story", said Byron, and with a universal promise to try, they separated for the night. They all did try—the result being Byron's fragment of *The Vampire*;¹ Polidori's complete story on the same foundation; and Mary's *Frankenstein*. Shelley and Claire began stories, but never did anything with them. . . . On more tranquil evenings, Shelley and Byron would "maintain the nightly debate"; and Mary, soon after her husband's death, made the following entry in her diary: "I do not think that any person's voice has the same power of awakening melancholy in me as Albé's. . . .

¹ Byron sent his fragment to Murray, on the appearance of Polidori's complete story in 1819, and it is inserted in his works. Polidori was not to blame for the false attribution of his story to Byron; he wrote to the editor of *The New Monthly Magazine* explaining the circumstances. (*Diary of Polidori*. Introduction, pp. 11-23.)

When Albé ceases to speak, I expect to hear *that other voice*. . . . Since my incapacity and timidity always prevented my mingling in the nightly conversations at Diodati, they were, as it were, entirely *tête-à-tête* between my Shelley and Albé; and thus, as I have said, when Albé speaks and Shelley does not answer, it is as thunder without rain—the form of the sun without heat or light—as any familiar object might be, shorn of its best attributes; and I listen with an unspeakable melancholy that yet is not all pain”.

Claire, then, was silent like Mary. What were her relations with Byron at this time? There is said to be in existence a letter from her declaring that they were never alone together at Geneva. She transcribed the third canto of *Childe Harold*, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, and the *Monody on the Death of Sheridan*, which were among the poems written there. It is scarcely likely that they were not alone together while this work was in progress; moreover, there were urgent matters to be arranged between them which could not—in the earliest stages, at any rate—be discussed in the presence of a third person. “Before we parted at Geneva”, Claire wrote afterwards in a notebook, “he talked over with me our situation; he proposed to put the child when born in Mrs. Leigh’s care”. Claire objected. “He yielded and . . . promised, faithfully promised, never to give it until seven years of age into a stranger’s care; I was to be called the child’s aunt, and in that character I could see it and watch over it without injury to any one’s reputation”. On August 2 there is an entry in Mary’s diary: “Shelley and Claire go up to Diodati; I do not, for Lord Byron did not seem to wish it”. That is almost conclusive evidence that Shelley was then acquainted with the state of affairs: the interview *must*

have been one for discussion and confirmation of the arrangements already made with Claire. . . . Having come to know Byron better, it was assuredly with a heavy heart that she left Geneva with the Shelleys on August 29, for England.

Byron had had visitors from home. In August, Matthew Gregory Lewis¹—better known as “Monk” Lewis, from his most famous work—arrived for a stay at Diodati. They had met much in London, and Byron had liked him in an impatient, condescending fashion: “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—Mme de Staël or Hobhouse, for example. But I liked Lewis”. At Diodati they quarrelled about Sheridan, who had died in July, and on whom Byron, at Douglas Kinnaird’s request, had written on July 17 the Monody of which he said to Lady Blessington in after years that “every word came direct from his heart”. Lewis, in return for his bread and salt (as Byron said), translated Goethe’s *Faust* to him by word of mouth; and Mr. Ernest Coleridge thinks that “there can be no doubt whatever that the primary conception of the character of Manfred . . . is to be traced to the ‘Monk’s’ oral rendering”. Byron was laconic on the point: “The devil may take both the Faustuses” (for Marlowe’s was also mentioned), “German and English—I have taken neither”. . . . After Lewis and “Conversation” Sharp (from his social talents) came

¹ Lewis published *Ambrosio, or the Monk*, in 1795. It at once secured his fame, and thenceforth he devoted himself to a literary career. The book was severely criticised on the score of immorality. Lewis wrote also many songs and ballads which became very popular, and two successful plays. He died in 1818.

Hobhouse and Scrope Davies. Byron went with them and Polidori to Chamounix.

The Shelley party had made the same tour in July, and it was then that Shelley made the famous "atheist" entry in the hotel-album at Montanvert. Professor Dowden explains the proceeding thus: "Shelley's predecessor had exhaled his orthodox sentiment" (at the sight of Mont Blanc) "in some devout platitude. The golden opportunity of demonstrating that his heterodoxy stood unsubdued in presence of Mont Blanc was too tempting to be lost by Shelley, and, taking the pen, he subscribed his name to Greek words as incorrect in form as in sentiment. . . . A third comer, it is said, added a [Greek word signifying 'fool'], and Byron, on visiting Montanvert, defaced Shelley's *atheist* and his successor's 'fool'". Hobhouse said that Byron, showing him the words, observed: "Do you not think I shall do Shelley a service by scratching this out?"—and forthwith defaced the entry; but evidently not with sufficient care, for in 1817 a second poet saw it at Montanvert. This was Robert Southey, Poet Laureate; and Southey thought it worth while to "transcribe the names, the avowal, and the comment" (he says nothing of any defacement), and to speak of the circumstance on his return. Byron heard of this, and in 1818 heard too that Southey had said that he (Byron) and Shelley were, during the Genevan sojourn, in a "league of incest"—living in "promiscuous intercourse with two sisters".

To anticipate a little, in the interest of coherence:—

"He is a burning liar!" wrote Byron at once to Murray, and enclosed in a parcel of MS. sent at the same time, the Dedication ("in good, simple, savage verse") to "Bob Southey" of the first canto of *Don Juan*. Shelley, who was then living in Italy, heard

Byron read this piece, and described it in a letter to Peacock as "more like a mixture of wormwood and verdigrease [*sic*] than satire". It did not appear when *Don Juan* was published on July 15, 1819: "As the Poem is to be published anonymously, *omit* the Dedication. I won't attack the dog in the dark". Southey, who had had absolutely nothing to do with spreading the incest slander,¹ heard of the Dedication and its character; and when King George III died in January 1820, and he, as Laureate, sat down to his task of composing a Funeral Ode, he seized the occasion to compose a Preface also, in which he "repaid some of his obligations to Lord Byron by a few comments on *Don Juan*". Southey's *Vision of Judgment* was published on April 11, 1821, with its Preface; therein the Laureate described Byron and his followers as men of "diseased hearts and depraved imaginations", and launched his notorious phrase, "The Satanic School". Byron answered the challenge by a note in the Appendix to *The Two Foscari*, published December 11, 1821. He accused the Laureate of scattering abroad calumnies, "knowing them to be such", on his return from Switzerland in 1817. Southey answered in *The Courier* for January 6, 1822, giving "a direct and positive denial" to the charge of slander; and in doing so, expressed himself very caustically. He had "made no inquiry concerning Byron when he was abroad, because he felt no curiosity. . . . *He had sought for no staler subject than Saint Ursula*". As regarded the entry in the hotel-album, "the gentleman in question would not have thought himself slandered by having that recorded of him which he has so often recorded of himself". He then pointed out that these were

¹ This was afterwards generally attributed to Brougham's malignity against Byron.

side-issues; and that *his* charges of impiety, lewdness, and so forth, in *Don Juan*, "had not been answered, and were unanswerable".¹ Lord Byron had called him a scribbler of all work. "I will tell Lord Byron what I have *not* scribbled, what kind of work I have *not* done"—and it must be allowed that Southey scores heavily in this enumeration. He turned next to "the work I *have* done", and in this sort pointed with exultation to the phrase "Satanic School". "I have sent a stone from my sling which has smitten their Goliath [Byron] in the forehead. I have fastened his name upon the gibbet for reproach and ignominy as long as it shall endure. Take it down who can!"

Medwin, in the *Conversations*, describes the effect of reading this *Courier* letter on Byron. "He looked perfectly awful; his colour changed almost prismatically; his lips were as pale as death. He said not a word. He read it a second time . . . commenting on some of the passages as he went on. . . . He threw down the paper, and asked me if I thought there was anything of a personal nature . . . that demanded satisfaction; as if there was, he would instantly set off for England, and call Southey to account. . . . I said that as to personality, his own expressions² were much stronger than any in the letter before me. He paused a moment, and said, 'Perhaps you are right; but I will consider of it.'³ You have not seen *MY Vision of Judgment*. I wish I had a copy to show you; but the only one I have is in London. I had almost decided not to publish it, but it shall now go forth to the world'".

It "went forth to the world" in the first number

¹ E. H. Coleridge, *Poems*, iv. p. 477.

² In the Appendix to *The Two Foscari*.

³ He sent a challenge through Douglas Kinnaird, who never delivered it.

of *The Liberal*, issued on October 15, 1822; and the world will be for ever grateful to Bob Southey. Byron hardly deserved to win, but he did win. The undelivered challenge would have been a poor revenge, had the issue even been fatal for Southey, compared with those immortal slings and arrows. The Laureate took no public notice of the rival *Vision*—not even when, after Byron's death and in answer to Medwin's *Conversations* (1824), he reopened the Satanic School controversy in the *Courier* for December 9, 1824. He was wise in keeping silence; there was nothing to be said.

Byron had other and genuine reasons for contemning Southey; these are summed up in the epithets "turn-coat" and "renegade", with which he made such play. . . . But (returning on our steps) we cannot doubt that the cause of his exceeding bitterness was the imputed slander about the Genevan sojourn—slander of which Southey was wholly guiltless, but slander which was current, and, moreover, stamped with that "staleness" which afforded Byron's opponent so much too palpable a hit. Incest, of all crimes, must have been the most abhorrent to be again charged with, for a man who had but now incurred its punishment of social outlawry. He had, indeed, from the earliest days at Diodati, endured that blazing notoriety which seemed part of his ineludible destiny. He said to Medwin in later years: "I never led so moral a life as during my residence in Switzerland, but I gained no credit by it. . . . On the contrary, there is no story so absurd that they did not invent at my cost. I was watched by glasses on the opposite side of the Lake. . . . I was waylaid in my evening walks . . . and once [Mme de Staël] invited me to a family dinner, and I found the room full of strangers, who had come to stare at me as at some outlandish beast. . . . One of the ladies

fainted". This was a Mrs. Hervey, aged sixty-five, the author of several romances, and a sister of Beckford.¹ Polidori says that "she thought proper to faint out of the house, though her curiosity brought her back to speak with Lord Byron".

Hobhouse, on September 9, wrote to Augusta of the "telescopes of some inquisitive moralists", which were said to have "discerned certain robes and flounces on his Lordship's balcony"—but by that time the Shelley caravan was departed, and he could assure her that her "belied brother" had given no cause for scandal. He alludes to the ladies at Mont Alègre with some lack of consideration, but scorn was the tone of the time with respect to Shelley, and his womenkind suffered with him. Byron never forgot or forgave the attitude of the English at Geneva. From Venice in 1817 he wrote to Murray: "If I met with any of the race in the most beautiful parts of Switzerland, the most distant glimpse or aspect of them poisoned the whole scene. . . . This feeling may be probably owing to recent events . . . but it does not exist the less, and while it exists, I shall conceal it as little as any other".

Scrope Davies² quickly returned to England; Hobhouse remained, and he and Byron made that tour

¹ William Beckford, author of *Vathek*, succeeded at the age of eleven to a million of ready money, and £100,000 a year. He wrote *Vathek* (published in 1787) "in three days and two nights", as he said, but evidence exists to prove that this is untrue. His house at Fonthill was renowned for its magnificence, and for the more than dubious way of life pursued there by its master. Beckford died in embarrassed circumstances (Fonthill and its contents had been sold) in 1844 at Bath—where he built the tower on Lansdowne Hill.

² Davies and Hobhouse did not arrive until after the Shelley party had left for England on August 29. Davies was on his way home, and stayed only a few days.

through the Bernese Alps which was the theme of the "Journal for Augusta" and the real inspiration of *Manfred*. The day before they started, Byron had dismissed Polidori, who had been very troublesome to him during the sojourn. Their mutual discomfort had been so great that Polidori, jealous and touchy, had once been on the point of taking poison—the way in which he did actually end his tormented and tormenting young life in 1821. Byron wrote of him to Murray in 1817: "He understands his profession well, and has no want of general talents; his faults are the faults of a pardonable vanity, and youth. His remaining with us was out of the question; I have enough to do to manage my own scrapes . . . but I know no great harm of him, and some good". In this letter he strongly recommended Polidori to Murray's kindness, and that although he had encountered the young man, free of his service, at Milan, and had had an unpleasant tussle with the authorities on his account. But in a later note he spoke less mildly: "I never was much more disgusted with any human production than with the eternal nonsense, and *tracasseries*, and emptiness, and ill-humour, and vanity of that young person"; and Moore tells an anecdote which is Polidori's condemnation as a social creature. At Clarens, when Byron and Shelley were walking together, "full of emotion", through the vineyards that had once been the Bosquet de Julie, Byron exclaimed, "Thank God, Polidori is not here!" His absence, thus suddenly and ardently reckoned among the sources of joy, is a summary of his effect which no detail of grievances could rival in cogency.

On September 17, Byron and Hobhouse set off on their Bernese tour. They visited the places which Byron had already seen with Shelley, and their effect upon him was unimpaired: he again found the whole

region "beautiful as a dream". Then passing over the Dent de Jaman, towards Thun, they arrived at a lake in the very "nipple of the bosom of the mountain" and "came to some snow in patches, upon which my forehead's perspiration fell like rain, making the same dints as in a sieve". They heard the Swiss Boy playing on his pipe, and the music of the cow-bells—it "realised all that I ever heard or imagined of pastoral existence", and he enshrined the experience in *Manfred*, the entire scene of which is set in this Alpine world. They saw "a torrent *nine hundred feet* in height of visible descent" (the Staubbach), and "heard the avalanches falling every five minutes nearly—as if God was pelting the Devil down from Heaven with snow-balls". The two incidents were recorded both in *Manfred* and *Childe Harold*, the torrent inspiring the famous image (adumbrated in the Journal for Augusta) of Death on the Pale Horse, "as told in the Apocalypse", in the former poem. At Grindelwald they saw their first glacier, "like a *frozen hurricane*", and "passed whole woods of withered *pinus, all withered*. . . . Their appearance reminded me of me and my family". Once out of the mountain region, his interest flagged: it was "insipid civilisation". They regained Diodati on September 29, and he summed up the tour and its emotions in the last day's entry: "But in all this—the recollections of bitterness, and more especially of recent and 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 on 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.

¹ "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, and for you I have kept this record of what I have seen and felt. Love me as you are beloved by me".

During the Genevan sojourn he had seen a great deal of Mme de Staël, who was then living at Coppet. "She was particularly kind and friendly to me, and (I hear) fought battles without number in my indifferent cause". They had often met in London, but though he admired her works, he had never then enjoyed her society or conversation—"all snow and sophistry", he said. She, as we have seen, had been deeply moved by the *Farewell* in April; now at Coppet she "took him to task upon his matrimonial conduct—but in a way that won upon his mind, and disposed him to yield to her solicitations". He was persuaded to write to a friend in England, and he sent her the letter to do what she would with, saying: "My letter is at your disposal, but it will be useless; it contains however the truth of my wishes and my feelings on that subject, and as they have been doubted I am willing to put them to the proof".² The date of the note is August 25. The effort proved fruitless; and to its failure has been attributed the writing of *The Dream*, and of the "Incantation" in the first act of *Manfred*.³ This is not true of

¹ This paragraph was omitted by Moore. It appears in *Letters and Journals*, iii. 365.

² The original of this note to Mme de Staël is in the possession of Professor Kölbing (*Letters and Journals*, iii. 343). We have not Byron's enclosed appeal to the friend in England.

³ The "Incantation" was first published separately from *Manfred*, in *The Prisoner of Chillon and other Poems*, 1816.

The Dream, for it was written in July; it may be true of the "Incantation", of which he desired it to be thought (on its first publication) that it formed part of "A Witch Drama, begun some years ago"; it *is* true of the *Lines on Hearing that Lady Byron was Ill*, which, however, though written in September (immediately after Mme de Staël's failure) were not published until 1832. He heard too, about the same time, from Shelley that the rumour of his relations with Augusta was still alive in England, and this inspired the famous phrase (in the *Lines*) of "the significant eye which learns to lie with silence". In that piece, too, he first launched the parallel which became almost a synonym for Lady Byron with him:

"The moral Clytemnestra of thy lord"—

the phrase to which for so long his wife submitted in "silence".

CHAPTER IV

VENICE—1816—1819

Third canto of *Childe Harold*—Ada, Countess of Lovelace—*The Prisoner of Chillon* volume—Italy: Milan—Stendhal—Verona and Venice—More domestic troubles; Ada a ward in Chancery; Letter to Lady Byron—Marianna Segati—Margarita Cogni—His depravation at Venice—His letters—Venetian “Blues”—Florence and Rome—*Manfred*—Fourth canto of *Childe Harold*

BEFORE leaving Switzerland, word came from Murray of Gifford's good opinion of the MSS. which Shelley had taken to England. These were the third canto of *Childe Harold*, *The Prisoner of Chillon* and its attendant poems—*The Dream*, *Churchill's Grave*, *Prometheus*, the *Manfred* “Incantation”, and two pieces to Augusta.

“I was thrilled with delight yesterday”, wrote Murray on September 12, “by the announcement of Mr. Shelley with the MS. of *Childe Harold*.¹ I had no sooner got the quiet possession of it than, trembling with auspicious hope, I carried it to Mr. Gifford. He says that what you have hitherto published is nothing to this effort”. “I like it myself”, wrote Byron in answer; “but that must go for nothing. The feelings with which much of it was written need not be envied me”. It was published on November 18, and Murray wrote on December 13 to

¹ Murray paid for this canto “at a rate of more than 28s. a line” (Jeaffreson, p. 235).

say that at a dinner at the Albion Tavern he had sold to the assembled booksellers seven thousand of it, and the same number of its companion volume, *The Prisoner of Chillon and other Poems*, which was published on December 5. Walter Scott reviewed both volumes in the *Quarterly* for October 1816, and Byron wrote of the notice, before he knew its author, that it had "given him as much gratification as any composition of that nature could give, and more than any other has ever given". When he learnt the authorship, he said, "It cannot add to my good opinion of him, but it adds to that of myself".¹

The third canto opens with the apostrophe to "Ada! sole daughter of my house and *heart*" (usually misquoted "*home*"), which is so absurdly familiar to every ear; and ends on the same note:

"My daughter! with thy name this song begun!
My daughter! with thy name thus much shall end!"

In the concluding stanzas he made the prophecy which was so strangely and completely fulfilled:

"Yet though dull hate as duty should be taught,
I know that thou wilt love me: though my name
Should be shut from thee, as a spell still fraught
With desolation, and a broken claim:
Though the grave closed between us—'twere the same,
I know that thou wilt love me—" . . .

Lady Byron wrote of these stanzas to Lady Anne Barnard: "It is said that hatred of him will be taught

¹ In 1822, from Pisa, he wrote to Walter Scott of this article: "You went out of your way in 1817 to do me a service, when it required not merely kindness, but courage, to do so. . . . There could not be *two* who *could* and *would* have done this at the time. . . . The very tardiness of this acknowledgment will show, at least, that I have not forgotten the obligation". And then, referring to his treatment of Scott in *English Bards*, he says: "So you see you have been heaping 'coals of fire', etc., in the true gospel manner, and I can assure you that they have burnt down to my very heart".

as a lesson to his child. I might appeal to all who have ever heard me speak of him, and still more to my own heart, to witness that there has been no moment when I have remembered injury otherwise than affectionately and sorrowfully. . . . So long as I live my chief struggle will probably be not to remember him too kindly". But Annabella's was not the only influence; Lady Noel, violent and imperious, was also to be reckoned with. By *her* directions, Ada, during childhood, was kept in entire ignorance of her father; by the terms of *her* will, Ada was not to see his portrait until she had attained her twenty-first year. When, on Lady Noel's death in 1822, Byron heard of this interdiction, the stanza of *Childe Harold* can hardly have failed to recall itself—so sadly triumphant a prediction had it proved.

Ada Byron married in 1835 William King, eighth Baron King, created Earl of Lovelace in 1838.¹ She was an unusually talented and original woman. "Her genius," said a writer of an obituary notice in 1852—"for genius she possessed—was not poetic, but metaphysical and mathematical". She translated and annotated Menabrea's *Notices sur la machine analytique de Mr. Babbage* (1842)—a defence of the famous calculating-machine. She was not yet twenty-eight when she achieved that feat; but she was no pedant—"her manners, tastes, accomplishments . . . were feminine in the nicest sense of the word". Unlike her father in

¹ There were three children of the marriage: (1) Viscount Ockham, who died in 1862 (that strange young nobleman who served as a common seaman, and then worked at Millwall Docks as a ship-carpenter); (2) Anna Isabella Noel, still living, who in 1869 married Mr. Wilfred Scawen Blunt; (3) Ralph Gordon Noel Milbanke, second Earl of Lovelace, the author of *Astarte*, who died in 1906. This Lord Lovelace was an eccentric man, with a strain of the authentic family violence; in *Astarte* most of those portions which are from his own pen display this vehemence plainly. But his documents are irrefutable, and it is with those that Byron's biographers are chiefly concerned.

features, she "inherited his mental vigour and intensity of purpose". There are indications that towards the end of her life she was for a while estranged from her mother. Teresa Guiccioli, in her book about Byron,¹ told an incredible tale of Ada's "discovery" of her father. She was staying at Newstead with Colonel Wildman *about a year before her death in 1852!* One day in the library he quoted to her a passage of verse with whose beauty she was enchanted, and she asked the author's name. Her host pointed to the portrait of her father by Phillips, which hung in the room. She was overwhelmed; and from that moment a change took place in her feelings. "She shut herself up in the rooms he had occupied, and eagerly studied his works". On her departure from the Abbey, she became seriously ill, and died not long afterwards² (November 27, 1852). By her own request her coffin was placed beside Byron's in the vault at Hucknall Torkard.

All we have from Lady Byron with respect to this is in two letters (published by Jeaffreson) after Ada's death. They are both to Mrs. George Lamb. "Many falsehoods concerning Ada's last days are circulated. Pray enable me to contradict any you may hear. Some are most wicked".³ . . . *What is truth? said jesting Pilate.*

¹ *Lord Byron, jugé par les Témoins de sa Vie* (1868); translated in 1869, under the title of *My Recollections of Lord Byron*. From whom she heard this tale of Ada and the portrait remains unknown; it is plainly apocryphal.

² Disraeli used this story in his *Venetia*.

³ In Mrs. Stowe's narrative (as originally published in *The Atlantic Monthly*) the following allusion to Ada occurs: "The daughter inherited from the father not only brilliant talents, but a restlessness and morbid sensibility which might be too surely traced to the storms and agitation of the period in which she was born. It was necessary to bring her up in ignorance of the true history of her mother's life; and the consequence was that she could not fully understand that mother. During her early girlhood her career was a source of more anxiety than comfort. She married a man of fashion, ran a brilliant course as a gay woman of fashion, and died early of a painful and lingering disease. In the silence and shaded retire-

But at least, if Annabella Byron made it into her Juggernaut car, she crushed herself, no less than others, beneath it.¹

The third canto differs from the former two in being at its best when what Byron called "metaphysical". In the earlier work, Harold's causeless gloom was merely tedious; we turned from it with relief to the dioramic stanzas. Here, though the diorama passes no less vividly before our eyes, it is the traveller that we follow with our interest and sympathy. Sympathy—yes: for the magic voice has the word. "Making a public show of a very genuine misery",² he swept across Europe, in Matthew Arnold's renowned phrase, "the pageant of his bleeding heart"; and it is vain to recapitulate, as we turn the page, our knowledge of the truth. Reading him now, we are for that his thralls. He captures, and holds, our hearts at every moment that his pang finds a voice.

"Yet must I think less wildly; I *have* thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame:

ment of the sick-room, the daughter came wholly back to her mother's arms and heart. . . . To the children left by her daughter, [Lady Byron] ministered with the faithfulness of a guardian angel" (*History of the Byron Controversy*, p. 298). This is one of Mrs. Stowe's few *indubitably truthful* statements.

In a newspaper cutting (I have no means of tracing its source) I find an interesting anecdote of Ada's childhood. When she saw the sea for the first time at Brighton—that sea which her father loved—she exclaimed, "I don't like it. It is so like my governess".

¹ The second Earl of Lovelace in 1861 (after Lady Byron's death) exchanged the surname King for Milbanke, and shortly afterwards became Lord Wentworth. His father, the first Earl, had added the Noel to his own surname of King, on inheriting Lady Byron's estates. The name King *only* was chosen by the third Earl in 1906, and confirmed by licence in 1908. This Earl bears no relationship to Byron, being the child of the first Earl's (Ada's husband's) *second* marriage.

² Arthur Symons, *The Romantic Movement*.

And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poisoned" . . .

"Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;
Where rolled the ocean, thereon was his home;
He had the passion and the power to roam;
The desert, forest, cavern, breakers' foam,
Were unto him companionship; they spake
A mutual language" . . .

And the great stanzas 42 to 44 :

"But Quiet to quick bosoms is a Hell—
Their breath is agitation, and their life
A storm whereon they ride, to sink at last".

The intellectual influences of Wordsworth and Shelley were at work in this third canto; stanza 72 is Wordsworthian even in language :

"I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture" . . .

No influence, however, could long impose itself on that spirit. As Mr. Coleridge points out, "The secret of Wordsworth is acquiescence; Byron . . . is in revolt. To him Nature and Humanity are antagonists, and he cleaves to the one, yea, he would take her by violence, to mark his alienation and severance from the other".

"And thus I am absorbed, and this is life;—
I look upon the peopled desert past,
As on a place of agony and strife,
Where, for some Sin, to sorrow I was cast,
To act and suffer, but remount at last
With a fresh pinion" . . .¹

¹ Moore points out the note of Shelley's Pantheism of Love in the stanzas on the Rousseau region; it was through Shelley, moreover, that Byron was first to read with any sort of patience the works of Wordsworth. Hitherto he had vehemently disliked the "Lakers" (as he called them) with the exception of Coleridge in *Christabel*, which, as we have seen, he admired and proclaimed from the first hearing.

In stanza 92 occurs the description of the storm, with its renowned *onomatopeia* :

“ . . . Far along
From peak to peak, *the rattling crags among*
Leaps the live thunder!”

He had been in this tempest at midnight on June 13, 1816: “I have seen several more terrible, but none more beautiful”; and it gave him, besides the lines above, a definition of his own ideal of poetry :

“Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me—could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul—heart—mind—passions—feelings—strong or weak—
All that I would have sought and all I seek,
Bear, know, feel—and yet breathe—into one word,
And that one word were Lightning, I would speak”.

“And so indeed”, says Mr. Arthur Symons, “at his best he did speak, condensing the indignation of his soul, or the wrath of Europe, into one word, and that word lightning”.¹

Our ludicrous familiarity with the opening lines of *The Prisoner of Chillon*² is fatal to serious consideration

¹ Mr. Arthur Symons cites, as examples of Byron's “unparalleled justness of expression . . . perfect hitting of the mark”, some phrases (among others) from the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*: those where Napoleon is seen

“With a deaf heart that never seemed to be
A listener to itself”;

where

“France got drunk with blood to vomit crime”;

and where Cromwell

“Hewed the throne down to a block”.

“There is, in these vivid and unforgettable phrases, a heat of truth which has kindled speech into a really imaginative fervour”.

² Byron carved his name on the southern side of the third column; the Prisoner's place of durance was the fifth. “Much has been written”,

of the poem. The critics of 1816 were insistent on the Wordsworthian strain. "Lord Byron has evidently become a tardy convert"; and no doubt the charming episodes of the bird—

"A lovely bird with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
And seemed to say them all for me!"

—and the fish that swam by the castle wall,

"And they seemed joyous each and all",

—are reminiscent both in matter and manner. But, however we may value Wordsworth, it is Byron that we want from Byron. Nor could he have retained this stamp: his nature was rhetorical, and in rhetoric alone, at this period, could truly express itself.¹ Later he was to find a more perfect means of self-utterance; and that was as far removed from the Wordsworthian manner as the earth is from the skies.

Prometheus was a subject that, sooner or later, he was destined to attempt; from boyhood he had loved it, and now it struck the peculiar personal note.

"All that the proud can feel of pain,
The agony they do not show,
The suffocating sense of woe,
Which speaks but in its loneliness,
And then is jealous lest the sky
Should have a listener, nor will sigh
Unless its voice is echoless"—

that portrayal of himself, the Never-Silent, which yet had somewhere its mysterious fidelity to truth! The *Stanzas to Augusta* were parodied by Hobhouse, and says Mr. Coleridge, "for and against the authenticity of this inscription". It was, as Mr. Edgcumbe has pointed out, *in situ* as early as August 22, 1820 (*Notes and Queries*, v. xi. 487. *Poems*, iv. note to p. 15).

¹ "In his work, truth lies at the root of rhetoric . . . lifting it into a kind of powerful, naked, and undeniable poetic existence" (Arthur Symons).

indeed lend themselves generously to travesty—though Byron “thought well of them as a composition”. Mrs. Leigh at first desired to suppress these as well as the *Epistle*, but “after reflecting on every possibility and probability, *did think the least objectionable line would be to let them be published*”.¹ She wrote direct to Byron to say that the *Epistle* must be withheld, and it did not see the light until Moore’s book appeared in 1830. It is the best of his shorter pieces ; “there is nothing, perhaps”, said the *Quarterly*, reviewing Moore, “more mournfully and desolately beautiful in the whole range of his poetry”.

Leaving Diodati on October 6, Hobhouse and Byron went by the Simplon and Lago Maggiore route to Milan. They stayed there until the first week of November, visiting the Ambrosian Library, where Byron fell in love with a lock of Lucrezia Borgia’s hair, “the prettiest and fairest imaginable”, and “took one single hair of it as a relic”. Stendhal (Henri Beyle), who had been through the Russian campaign of 1812, met him here and recorded his impressions. “I idolised Napoleon, and . . . subsequently discovered that Lord Byron was at once enthusiastic in [his] favour, and jealous of his fame”. The young Frenchman’s feeling was at first decidedly unfavourable : Byron struck him as vain, snobbish, and affected. “When his personal attractions were not the subject of his consideration, his noble birth was uppermost in his thoughts”. But when neither was in the ascendant, “he again became the sublime poet and the man of sense. Never, after the example of Mme de Staël, did he indulge in the childish vanity of ‘turning a phrase’”. Stendhal proceeds,

¹ Letter to Murray (*L. and J.* iii. note to pp. 366-67).

after alluding to the poet's "remorse for some unexplained crime", to say, "It must be admitted that during nearly a third of the time we passed in the noble poet's society, he appeared to us like one labouring under an access of folly, approaching to madness". A caustic observer of all things and creatures, this critic was yet (as we saw on page 138) to be spellbound by Byron's personal beauty. "It was the supreme look of genius and power. . . . Internally I made a vow that I never would of my own accord sadden a spirit so noble".¹

Byron met some old and dear friends at Milan—the Jerseys; and Polidori, who reappeared, got himself (and as a consequence Byron and a party of friends) into a ridiculous *fracas* at the Scala Theatre. He had found his view of the stage impeded by the fur cap of an Austrian officer on guard, and had rather impolitely called upon him to remove it. This caused fiery indignation; Polidori only just escaped, by the intervention of Byron and some Milanese noblemen, from being shut up for the night in the guard-house. Next morning he received an order to quit Milan within twenty-four hours. "I left . . ." (on October 30) he records in his Diary, "with rage and grief so struggling in my breast that tears often started to my eyes".

From Milan Byron and Hobhouse went by Verona to Venice. They stayed a day or two in the former town, "to gape at the usual marvels . . . that time-tax of travel"; but despite this *blasé* attitude, he was much affected by the sight of Juliet's tomb, of whose authenticity the Veronese were "tenacious to a degree";²

¹ This version of Stendhal's account is translated by Galt from *The Foreign Literary Gazette (Life of Byron, p. 347)*.

² Mr. Prothero, in a note (*L. and J. iii. 382*), states that the authentic tomb has long been destroyed; "its substitute, said to have been originally a washing-trough, is shown in a chapel of a suppressed Franciscan monastery, in the Via Cappuccini".

and brought away a few pieces of the granite for Augusta "and the babes (at least the female part of them) and for Ada, and her mother, if she will accept it from you".¹ He had written to Lady Byron from Milan: "I feel so miserable", he explained to Augusta, "that I must write to her, however useless. . . . I have seen a good deal of Milanese society, but nothing to make me forget others, or forgive myself". But from Venice he again wrote to Augusta on December 19: "My letter to my moral Clytemnestra" (this phrase was already in working-order, and was henceforth kept incessantly at work) "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 present I am less so, for reasons expressed in my late letter (a few days ago); and as I never pretend to be what I am not, you may tell her if you please that I am recovering, and the reason also if you like it". . . . We shall shortly learn the reason, which, as Augusta wrote to Hodgson, was "only *one* among a million of melancholy anticipations" of hers.

They reached Venice before November 11. His first letter thence deals with a new grievance against the Noel family. Somebody, a little while before, had written, with no intention of making mischief, that it was said that Lady Byron intended to pass the winter abroad. Instantly Byron had dashed off, and entrusted to Augusta, "to be despatched with all speed",² a letter to the Noel family "insisting upon a promise that the child should never leave England". The answer received by Augusta was, "Lady Byron had never had

¹ This, and the immediately following quotations, are from *Letters and Journals*, iv., early pages.

² See Augusta's letter to Hodgson of March 4, 1817 (*Letters and Journals*, iv. 23-24). We have not Byron's letter.

any intention of quitting England". This had not satisfied Byron, and he now wrote to John Hanson,¹ desiring him to take immediately "the proper steps (legal, if necessary) to prevent the possibility of such an occurrence". "My daughter and *only legitimate child*",² he said, "shall not leave England with my consent. In the present state of the Continent, I would not have my child rambling over it for millions". He was much worried by this apprehension, and equivocal replies from the other side prolonged the strain until the end of January 1817, when Hanson succeeded in extracting the following document :

"KIRKBY MALLORY, *January 30, 1817*

"There never has existed, nor does there exist, the remotest intention of removing Miss Byron out of the Kingdom.

ANNE ISABELLA BYRON
RALPH NOEL" . . .

But under Sir Ralph's signature, some pregnant words were added: "*Without the leave of the Chancellor*". This was the first intimation given, either to Byron or Hanson, that Ada had been made a ward in Chancery. He was furiously angered. The bill in Chancery had been filed against him in the midst of the Separation proceedings of April 1816, and no hint whatever had been afforded him. He wrote to his wife on March 5³—directly after hearing from Hanson—a proud bitter reproof.

"Throughout the whole of this unhappy business, I

¹ *L. and J.* iv. 5-6.

² Italics mine. Claire's child was not yet born.

³ *L. and J.* iv. 66-68. Printed from draft in Murray MSS. But we must remember that the Noel family had reason to fear that, if left to any degree in Byron's power, the child might even still be transferred to Augusta's charge; and this, for many motives, they strongly deprecated.

have done my best to avoid the bitterness which, however, is yet amongst us ; and it would be as well if even you at times recollected that the man who has been sacrificed in fame, in feelings, in everything, to the convenience of your family, was he whom you once loved, and who—whatever you may imagine to the contrary—loved you. If you conceive that I could be actuated by revenge against you, you are mistaken : *I am not humble enough to be vindictive.*¹ Irritated I may have been, and may be—is it a wonder?—but upon such irritation, beyond its momentary expression, I have not acted from the hour that you quitted me to that in which I am made aware that our daughter is to be the entail of our discussion, the inheritor of our bitterness. If you think to reconcile yourself to yourself by accumulating harshness against me, you are again mistaken ; you are not happy, nor even tranquil, nor will you ever be so. . . . Time and Nemesis will do that which I would not, were it in my power remote or immediate. You will smile at this piece of prophecy—do so, but recollect it : it is justified by all human experience. No one was ever even the involuntary cause of great evils to others, without a requital : I have paid and am paying for mine—so will you ”.

“ The child of Love ! though born in bitterness,
And nurtured in Convulsion ! ”—

those words and the words of the letter above and many, many others, must have sounded in the mother’s

¹ Italics mine. Her view of him, inspired by her advisers, is indicated by a letter from her of April 1, 1816, to Mrs. George Lamb : “ In regard to the child, it appears to my advisers most advantageous that it should not be made a subject of discussion at present . . . because it is highly improbable that he would resign the power *in a formal manner* ; and, by not making any particular provision for it, if he goes abroad, he will virtually, to a certain extent, acknowledge my guardianship. *To let him know these reasons would be to defeat them* ”.

heart in 1852: there have been few more striking examples of the second-sight of poets.

He had not yet been dealt this blow when he sent the defiant message to Augusta, stating that he was no longer wretched, and that his wife might be told the reason. Our earliest information about it is in a letter to Moore, first dated November 17. "I have fallen in love. . . . Marianna (that is her name) is in her appearance altogether like an antelope. She has the large black oriental eyes. . . . I cannot describe the effect of this kind of eye—at least upon me". For the rest, her features were regular and rather aquiline, her hair "of the dark gloss, curl, and colour of Lady Jersey's"; and the letter, which was continued on November 23 and December 5, closes with the declaration that he "begins to feel very serious on that point". The woman was Marianna Segati, wife of a draper in the Frezzeria (a side-street of Venice), in whose house Byron was lodging.¹ His liaison with her—much enlarged upon in letters to Moore and Murray, and, as we have seen, confided in a measure to Augusta—certainly lasted until the winter of 1817, and may have lasted longer. During part of its course, it ran concurrently with the equally "serious" affair with Margarita Cogni (La Fornarina), wife of a baker, and Marianna's equal if not superior in vice. About *her* he wrote, in August 1819, a letter of nine printed pages to Murray. Both women shared in his sojourns at the villa of La Mira, which he used as his place of *villeggiatura* in the summer, and both ruled, at different periods, in that palace on the Grand Canal where he kept an establishment which it would be gross flattery to call a harem. The just word for his arrange-

¹ In a MS. note to Moore's life, Rawden Brown stated that "Marianna was a demon of avarice and libidinousness, who intrigued with every resident in the house, and every guest who visited it".

ments there is best left unprinted. On this wretched period I do not propose to linger. Moore, for the decenter episodes in his career so reticent, printed all his letters about these two women, and despite the vivacity of Byron's narrative, they make sad reading. Here Jeaffreson shall speak, for he speaks more frankly and more justly than any other of the biographers. "Less harm would have come to him from these creatures . . . had he possessed the cynical hardness and spiritual grossness to think of them as animals, differing from the brutes only in shape and speech. But the softness of his nature prevented him from taking so disdainful a view. . . . However dissolute she might be, the woman he regarded with passion became for a moment the object of an affection that was no less tender than transient. To call it love would be a profanation; but no less sacred word would adequately describe the fleeting sentiment of perverted sympathy and debasing admiration with which he cherished these miserable beings. . . . Hence his almost appalling delight in their exhibitions of caprice and jealousy, in the humour of their sorry jests, and in the piquancy of their vulgar persiflage. In the whole story of our literature, few things can be found more painfully humiliating".

Shelley's letter to Peacock, after meeting Byron again in 1818, is arresting. He found him deeply melancholy, filled with a dull distaste for life. "I remonstrated with him in vain on the tone of mind from which such a view of things arises. . . . The fact is that, first, the Italian women with whom he associates are perhaps the most contemptible of all who exist under the moon. . . . [He] is familiar with the lowest sort of these women, the people his *gondolieri* pick up in the streets. He associates with wretches who seem almost to have lost the gait and physiognomy of man, and who

do not scruple to avow practices which are not only not named, but I believe seldom even conceived, in England. He says he disapproves, but he endures. He is heartily and deeply discontented with himself. . . . No, I do not doubt, and for his sake I ought to hope, that his present career must end soon in some violent circumstance".¹

No more striking proof of Byron's own sense of degradation could be given than his subsequent bitter hatred for the Venice which at first he had declared to be "the greenest island of his imagination"; "as much as I expected, and I expected much. It is one of those places which I know before I see them".

"I loved her from my boyhood—she to me
Was as a fairy city of the heart";

and though he had found her in her decadence, she was

"Perchance even dearer in her day of woe,
Than when she was a boast, a marvel, and a show".

That feeling belonged to the summer of 1817, when he began and finished the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*; something of it lingered still a year later (when the *Ode to Venice* was composed), though already the prophetic note of despair for the "sea Cybele" was sounding. Two more years, and he had left the place for ever—and at Ravenna had begun his tragedy of *Marino Faliero*. That was finished in July 1820, and in the terrible dying imprecation of the discrowned Doge, we hear the last word of Byron's rage against the scene of his infamy.

"Thou den of drunkards with the blood of Princes!
Gehenna of the waters! thou Sea-Sodom!
Thus I devote thee to the Infernal Gods!
Thee and thy serpent seed!"

¹ Lord Lovelace says: "There was no foundation for the crass and egregious suggestions of Shelley"; and declares that "trustworthy contemporary information . . . disposes completely of the most repulsive abominations" (*Astarte*, p. 12). He attributes Shelley's belief to the "inventions" of Claire.



BYRON

FROM THE PAINTING BY RUCKARD IN THE POSSESSION OF HORATIO
F. BROWN, ESQ.

During this period his letters attain their highest excellence. Of the hundred and twenty-two from Venice, seventy-two are to Murray. The others are divided between Moore, Augusta, the Hansons father and son (on matters of business), and Richard Belgrave Hoppner, the British Consul at Venice, with whom he became very intimate. Hobhouse, Rogers, Hodgson,¹ Wedderburn Webster, heard once or twice. Murray got the masterpieces; it was known to Byron that these would be handed round to the "Synod", as he called the club in Murray's back-parlour at Albemarle Street, and they were written with an eye on posterity as well. But no one ever more successfully concealed his art. As the *Edinburgh* said in 1831, reviewing Moore, "If the epistolary style of Lord Byron was artificial, it was a rare and admirable instance of that highest art which cannot be distinguished from nature". And he wrote incessantly. It is pathetic to see, amid all his abandonment to the Venetian licence, how constantly his heart was fixed on the England which he rarely failed to vituperate, yet to which, in these earlier days of exile, he over and over again dreamed of returning. It is evident that he was restlessly unhappy, for he "found that his mind wanted something craggy to break upon";² and the "crag" he chose was a curious repetition of an episode in the earlier Harold tour. In 1810 he had taken quarters in the Franciscan monastery at Athens, and studied the modern Greek; now, in 1817, he

¹ Now, according to Byron, "a little too much japanned by preferment in the church and the tuition of youth, as well as inoculated with the disease of domestic felicity . . . but otherwise a very worthy man" (Letter to Moore, December 5, 1817).

² He was thinking, in saying this, of the advice given by the King of Prussia to d'Alembert, after the death of Julie de l'Espinasse, to study "*quelque problème bien difficile à résoudre*". This advice Byron had adopted as a motto to the third canto of *Childe Harold*. "To think of something else!" comments Mr. Symons. "The mockery of a remedy, and yet the only one".

studied "daily at an Armenian monastery the Armenian language". He did this with the same zest and energy that he had shown in the earlier adventure. The Armenian was "a Waterloo of an Alphabet", but he persevered; in January he sent home some sheets of an English-Armenian grammar compiled by his teacher, Father Aucher, and made eager inquiries as to the existence of Armenian type in England; and in January-February 1817, he "did into English" some passages from the Armenian version of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, together with an Armenian "prose-poem", entitled *The Pleasure-Houses of Byzantium*.

He frequented some of the private *salons*, notably those of the two Venetian "Blues", the Countesses Albrizzi and Benzoni. The Albrizzi secured him first. She was known as the de Staël of Venice; the most distinguished men of the day were her friends—Pindemonte, Alfieri, Foscolo, Canova; it was for her that Canova executed in 1814 his bust of Helen, which drew so enthusiastic a tribute from Byron when he saw it in her drawing-room. "[It] is, without exception, to my mind the most perfectly beautiful of human conceptions, and far beyond my ideas of human execution". He wrote a terrible versicle about it:

"In this beloved marble view
Above the works and thoughts of Man,
What Nature *could*, but *would not*, do,
And Beauty and Canova *can*!"

When Moore, visiting Venice in 1819, went to one of the Countess's assemblies, he thought it "much worse than one of Lydia White's";¹ but Byron endured

¹ Miss Lydia White, the "Miss Diddle" of Byron's *Blues*, was a wealthy Irishwoman, well known for her hospitality "in all the capitals of Europe". It was to her that Sydney Smith, during a time of crisis in the Whig party, made the famous remark (she was the one Whig at her own dinner-table): "We had better sacrifice a Tory Virgin". Miss White answered, "Oh, the

them for some time. They were a little absurd. The woman sat in a semicircle round the hostess, the men stood in a semicircle opposite; rum-punch and ices were the refreshments, for the Albrizzi was an Anglo-maniac.¹ She scribbled a good deal herself (her work on Canova passed through three editions in Byron's lifetime); sketched and wrote Portraits (*Ritratti*) of her famous friends, in the high-sentimental manner of the period. Byron was "done", but he declined to read the MS., and curtly advised her to burn. She did not burn; but neither did she publish until 1826, so the original never saw it. If he *had* seen it, he would certainly have burned it himself. This was the kind of thing: "What varied expression in his eyes! They were of the azure colour of the heavens, from which they seemed to derive their origin. . . . His teeth resembled pearls; but his cheeks were too delicately tinged with the hue of the pale rose". As if with a suspicion of these horrors, Byron quarrelled with the Countess towards the end, withdrew a good deal from her circle, and joined that of her rival, the Countess Marina Benzoni, "less starched", as he said—and this must have been a mild manner of describing the lady who in 1818 took La Fornarina under her protection! Moore, attending this salon in 1819 with Byron, found the evening more enjoyable than the Albrizzi one. "Thoroughly profligate. . . . Her manners very pleasant and easy". There were many English in the Benzoni circle also, and to these Byron "repeatedly refused to be introduced — of a thousand such presentations pressed upon me, I accepted two, and both were to Irish women".

Whigs would do anything to raise the wind". She died, after many years of ill-health, in February 1827.

¹ Byron wrote of this: "*Punch*, by my palate! and this they think *English*. I would not disabuse them of so agreeable an error—'no, not for Venice'".

The Carnival of 1817 had not ended before he was sickening for an attack of the type of fever that had struck him down during the Albanian tour of 1809-11. It was due in no small degree to nervous prostration, resulting from the dissipations of the "mumming"; and to the frantic scenes which he (who hated scenes more cordially even than other men) had suffered from Marianna Segati and a sister-in-law who designed to supplant her. There had been screams, boxes on the ear, torn hair, hats, and handkerchiefs, faints, smelling-bottles, and Signor Segati. But with Lent came "invalid regimen . . . abstinence, and sacred music". The varied influences produced—he scribbled it in a letter to Moore on February 28—the most beautiful little poem he ever wrote: one of those things which seem to have been blown into the world like April showers.

"So we'll go no more a-roving,
 So late into the night,
 Though the heart be still as loving,
 And the moon be still as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath,
 And the soul wears out the breast,
 And the heart must pause to breathe,
 And Love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
 And the day returns too soon,
 Yet we'll go no more a-roving
 By the light of the moon".

The last line, shortened as though a sudden sob had caught the breath, is exquisite in poignancy: an example of that identification of sound and sense which makes the undying utterances of the world. This lyric seems as if it must always have been there: it comes to us like the air about us. If Byron had written nothing else, his name must have survived through this.

In the same letter he said of himself: "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". He had England in his head: "I intend for England this spring"; but when the malarial fever¹ at last left him, he wrote to Murray on April 9: "In a few days I set off for Rome: such is my purpose. I shall change it very often before Monday next. . . . I never know what I shall do till it is done. . . . You tell me to 'take care of myself'—faith, and I will. I won't be posthumous yet, if I can help it. Notwithstanding, only think what a 'Life and Adventures', while I am in full scandal, would be worth. . . . 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'. . . . 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".²

He went to Rome by Ferrara instead of Mantua, because "I would rather see the cell where they caged Tasso" than the "birthplace of that harmonious plagiarism and miserable flatterer"—Virgil—"whose cursed hexameters were drilled into me at Harrow. . . . I go *alone*—but *alone*, because I mean to return here. I only want to see Rome. I have not the least curiosity about Florence, though I must see it for the sake of the Venus,

¹ There is a characteristic remark upon this illness: "Mine was a fever of my own, and had nothing in common with the low vulgar typhus which is at this moment decimating Venice" (Letter to Moore, March 31, 1817).

² Walter Scott had said to him in 1815 that he would look to see him (Byron) retreat upon the Catholic faith, and distinguish himself by the austerity of his penances. "He smiled gravely, and seemed to allow I might be right".

etc. etc.". But he was already more in the mood for works of art; immediately before his departure from Venice he visited the Manfrini Palace, and wrote of the Titian Ariosto: "It is the poetry of portrait, and the portrait of poetry. There was also one of some learned lady. . . . I never saw greater beauty, or sweetness, or wisdom; it is the kind of face to go mad for, because it can't walk out of its frame". Giorgione's portrait of his wife inspired a stanza in *Beppo* later on.¹ Nevertheless, he still stoutly maintained his attitude towards painting. "Depend upon it, of all the arts, it is the most artificial and unnatural. . . . I never yet saw the picture—or the statue—which came within a league of my conception or experience; but I have seen many mountains and seas and rivers and views, and two or three women who went as far beyond it—besides some horses, and a lion in the Morea, and a tiger at supper at Exeter 'Change".²

In the middle of April he left Venice, and on the 26th wrote to Murray from Foligno. He had spent but a day at Florence, and had there written the *Lament of Tasso* (inspired by the prison at Ferrara); he despatched it to England on April 23. The Florentine Galleries completed the conquest half-begun at Venice. He had "returned from them drunk with beauty. 'The Venus [de' Medici] is more for admiration than love". But the

¹ The Manfrini collection was partly dispersed in 1856; but some of the pictures are in the Accademia delle Belle Arti. Titian's Ariosto is now the property of the Earl of Rosebery. According to Vasari, Giorgione was not married.

² In his *Journal of 1813-14* there occurs, on November 14, 1813, the following: "Two nights ago, I saw the tigers sup at Exeter 'Change. . . . Such a conversazione! There was a hippopotamus, like Lord Liverpool in the face; and the Ursine Sloth had the very voice and manner of my valet—but the tiger talked too much. The handsomest animal on earth is one of the panthers; but the poor antelopes were dead. I should hate to see one *here*; the sight of the camel made me pine again for Asia Minor".

stanzas of *Childe Harold* (canto iv. 48-53) are more like love than admiration.

“We gaze and turn away, and know not where,
Dazzled and drunk with Beauty, till the heart
Reels with its fulness.

The unruffled mirror of the loveliest dream
That ever left the sky on the deep soul to beam”.

At Rome, reached on April 29, he rejoined Hobhouse, with whom he had parted company in December. The city “delighted him beyond everything, since Athens and Constantinople”. “As a whole, *ancient and modern*, it beats . . . everything—at least that I have ever seen. But I can’t describe, because my first impressions are always strong and confused, and my *memory selects* and reduces them to order. . . . There must be a sense or two more than we have as mortals”. He studied it, “bothering about its marvels”, on horseback, “as I did Constantinople. But Rome is the elder sister and the finer”. The day before he left (May 19) he “saw three robbers guillotined”, and wrote Murray a minute and gruesome description. “The first”, he added, “turned me quite hot and thirsty, and made me shake so that I could hardly hold the opera-glasses (I was close, but determined to see, as we should see everything, once, with attention); the second and third . . . I am ashamed to say, had no effect on me as a horror, though I would have saved them if I could”. While in Rome he permitted Hobhouse to write to Thorwaldsen, asking whether and when Byron could sit to him for a bust. Thorwaldsen, who was a very indolent letter-writer, probably delayed to answer, and Byron went to him without ceremony. “He placed himself opposite me” (so Thorwaldsen told Andersen), “but at once began to put on a quite different expression from that usual to him. ‘Will you not sit still?’ I said to him;

'you need not assume that look'. 'That is my expression', said Byron. 'Indeed?' said I, and I then represented him as I wished. When the bust was finished, it was universally admitted to be an excellent likeness. Byron, when he saw it, said 'It is not at all like me; my expression is more unhappy'. 'He intensely desired to be so exceedingly miserable', added Thorwaldsen with a humorous expression".¹

Byron had meant to stay in Rome till June, but his eagerness to return to Marianna was so great that he left on May 26, and by his request she travelled half-way to meet him. He was back in Venice on the 28th, and soon went to the villa La Mira, on the Brenta, about seven miles inland and close to the city. "I have determined on another year", he wrote to Murray on June 4, "and *many years* of residence if I can compass them. Marianna is with me". Hobhouse joined him early in July; Monk Lewis arrived in Venice about the same time, and stayed until the middle of August. His visit is memorable for the "La Mira Separation Document". Lewis, during his stay, reported "one of Brougham's indiscretions";² and Hobhouse, writing to Augusta in 1818, told her how he had found Byron and the Monk together, and a paper "just written and sealed". Augusta wrote to Lady Byron, reporting this, and how Byron "called upon Hobhouse to prove that he had done everything to induce you to *come into court!*"

¹ This account is taken from Karl Elze's *Life of Lord Byron* (English translation, 1872, p. 221); and there is a note to the page, pointing out that Thorwaldsen's impression agrees with that of the American painter William Edward West, who later painted Byron at Leghorn. "He assumed a countenance that did not belong to him, as if he were thinking of a frontispiece for *Childe Harold*". The bust, which was done for Hobhouse, is now in the possession of Lady Dorchester. The head of Thorwaldsen's statue in Trinity College, Cambridge, is a repetition of this bust (*L. and J.* iv. 130).

² *Astarte*, p. 245.

(The italics and exclamation are in the original letter from Augusta, and go far to prove that this statement was regarded by her, and would be regarded by her correspondent, as surprising and ludicrous.) "Hobhouse", she continues, "tried *Heaven and Earth* to persuade him not to give it to Monk Lewis . . . *in vain* . . . and only the hour after it was *gone*, B. expressed regret he had written and given it".¹ The document was found among Lewis's papers after his death in 1818, and was first published in *The Academy* for October 9, 1869. The gist of it is that Byron "had called repeatedly and in vain for a statement" of the charges against him. He added a postscript, to say that he was "utterly ignorant" of the "allegations, charges, or whatever name they have assumed". It may again be noted that he speaks all through of "charges". He knew the *reason*; the charges he could have extorted, as we have seen. This very paper "shows his consciousness that he ought to have done so, if his case had been producible";² and Lewis's suppression of it from even private circulation shows that he too recognised this. In *A Vindication of Lady Byron*, the writer says: "He boasts that he stood at bay in Venice: he should have stood at bay in London. . . . No man of the world, conscious of a common offence only, and suffering under such imputations, would have allowed his adversaries to keep back any part of the charge". But for Augusta's sake, as we now know, he could not take action.

He had written to Murray on January 2, 1817—the anniversary of his wedding-day, or "funeral",³ as he

¹ *Astarte*, p. 246.

² *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, article "Byron" (L. S.).

³ "You talk of 'marriage'—ever since my own funeral, the word makes me giddy, and throws me into a cold sweat. Pray, don't repeat it" (Letter to Murray, April 2, 1817).

called it—to say: “I have not done a stitch of poetry since I left Switzerland, and have not at present the *estro* upon me. . . . [My poesy] 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”. . . . But the great success and the many praises from friends of the *Third Harold* and the *Prisoner of Chillon* soon awakened the desire to be “forthcoming” again. On the 28th he wrote to Moore: “I am glad you like [the new *Childe Harold*]. It is a fine indistinct piece of poetic 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”.

On February 15, he gave Murray the first hint of *Manfred*: “A kind of Poem in dialogue . . . or drama, from which ‘The Incantation’ is an extract, begun last summer in Switzerland . . . of a very wild, metaphysical, and inexplicable cast”. “I have no great opinion of this piece of phantasy”, he added; “I have not even copied it off, and feel too lazy at present”; but he forwarded some pages of extracts under the same cover. He then applied himself in earnest to the third act, and on March 9 sent the MS. to Murray. “I have really and truly no notion whether it is good or bad. . . . It is too much in my old style. . . . I certainly am a devil of a mannerist, and must leave off”. To Moore, while awaiting Gifford’s verdict (for Gifford was to pronounce), he called it “a Bedlam tragedy”; and again to Murray, at the same time demanding three hundred guineas, he said, “You may put it in the fire if you like, and Gifford *don’t* like”. On March 20 Murray wrote to say that Gifford, “with a delighted countenance”, had pronounced the first act “wonderfully poetical”; but on March 28

came a further report. Gifford did not "by any means like" the third act. Byron answered at once: "The third act is certainly damned bad, and . . . has the dregs of my fever, during which it was written. It must on *no account* be published in its present state"; but he added that "the impulse was gone, and he had no chance of making anything out of it". Perplexedly he "wondered what the devil possessed him"; he would try again, perhaps—"I am not sure that I *shall*"—but "recollect *not* to publish, upon pain of I know not what".

Meanwhile he wrote at Ferrara and Florence, on the way to Rome, his *Lament of Tasso*. "These be good rhymes", he told Murray. In this poem he used again the fine phrase: "I am not humble enough to be vindictive", which stands in his letter to Lady Byron of March 5.¹ There is another of great beauty (little known) where, addressing Leonora d'Este, Tasso is made to say:

"I know not how—thy genius mastered mine—
My Star stood still before thee".

In lines 149–173 and in the whole of stanza ix., we find the self-portraiture which, whatever the subject, alone called forth the full range of the "magic voice". "Every line he writes is a reminiscence, the reminiscence of a place or a passion. His mind was a cracked mirror, in which everything reflected itself directly, but as if scarred".²

At Rome he "had at" the third act of *Manfred* and sent it home on May 5, having begun it later than April 26.³ The drama was published on June 16, 1817, before

¹ "No!—still too proud to be vindictive—I
Have pardoned Princes' insults, and would die".
(*Lament of Tasso*, line 105.)

² Arthur Symons, *The Romantic Movement*.

³ Letter to Murray, April 26: "I have done nothing at *Manfred's* third act". This re-casting is the *only example* of a second attempt in all Byron's

The Lament of Tasso, which did not see the light until July. . . . From *Manfred*, Lord Lovelace's book derives its title of *Astarte*. The "Nemesis" in Act II bears that name, and is the dead whom Manfred would question.

"Astarte! my beloved! speak to me:

I have so much endured—so much endure—

. . . Thou lovedst me

Too much, as I loved thee; we were not made

To torture thus each other—though it were

The deadliest sin to love as we have loved".

The scene is laid throughout in that Alpine world which formed the theme of the *Journal for Augusta*; "it was the Staubbach, and the Jungfrau, and *something else*" which inspired him, and though the literary influences assigned by the critics were manifold—Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, Goethe's *Faust*, Calderon's *El Magico Prodigioso*, *Christabel*, the *Prometheus* of Æschylus—it needs but to read the drama to acknowledge the authentic Byron in every line. It is worth pointing out, too, that the Germanism of *Manfred* is accounted for by the fact that now, for the first time, he had been subjected to the influence of German landscape. He had seen the Rhine and the great Rhenish cities; in the Bernese Alpine tour, had passed through German Switzerland, so different in feeling from the French region of Lausanne. No mind was ever so receptive as his for the "spirit of place", as externally expressed. The character of the scenes he saw, in every country, coloured his imagination through and through: nothing in Byron is more remarkable than his extreme sensibility to such influence, and the inveterate victory of

work. He wrote to Murray of *Don Juan*: "I am like the tiger; if I miss my first spring, I go grumbling back to my jungle. . . . I can't correct; I can't and I won't. Nobody ever succeeds in it, great or small" (Moore, p. 464).

his "Self" over it all. In this trait alone do I partially accept the hard-worked epithet of "chameleon" as applied to him. He adapted himself to the scenic—and only to the scenic—environment like a chameleon; but from the very adaptation he emerged, in the event, more triumphantly the same than before. His personality dominated even the Alps! Thus, in *Manfred*, we see Galt's "mystery in a winding-sheet, crowned with a halo" stalking from peak to peak, as in the early narrative pieces we saw the glorified pirate of the salad-days stride Eastern sands and hills and plains, and become an "old English baron" of repellent mien as soon as he was transferred, mysteriously, to "Lara's broad domain".

The motive of *Manfred* is remorse for an inexpiable crime. This had been too long the spell for Byron's imagination; now at last, with the real remorse, he wrote it out of him. "I am certainly a devil of a mannerist and must leave off", he had said in sending home the drama; and I do not think it has before been pointed out that with this work he actually *did* leave off. "My pang shall find a voice"—that cry in *Manfred* is the word, as it were, of his poetic life till then. *Then* he knew the authentic pang, then uttered it—and for the last time. Not again does the "Byronic" hero take the stage. He turned to historical and metaphysical drama, and to the Pulcian *Beppo*, *Vision of Judgment*, *Don Juan*: in a word, he left off, and was no more a devil of a mannerist. Hence, *Manfred* is of supreme importance in a review of his work. To speak for the moment as a fatalist, I feel that Byron was forced by character, which is the only destiny, to do as he had done. Remorse he *had* to know; and only by some such error of the heart could he have known it. To do spiritual murder: that was, to speak cynically, the formula for his development. Physical murder would

have left him where it found him; he would have felt too well the scenic value of a Cain. In such "murder" as he had done, there was no scenic value—only remorse and shame. Thus the pang had all its bitterness, and thus could find a voice so poignant that the final word was said, and he could feel his imagination emancipated at last by the measure of its knowledge and its suffering.

"She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
 Pity and smiles and tears—which I had not;
 And tenderness—but that I had for her;
 Humility—and that I never had.
 Her faults were mine—her virtues were her own—
 I loved her and destroyed her.
 Not with my hand, but heart, which broke her heart;
 It gazed on mine, and withered. I have shed
 Blood, but not hers—and yet her blood was shed;
 I saw—and could not stanch it".¹

"Conclusions most forbidden"—only those would serve:

"Because my nature was averse from life,
 And yet not cruel".

Already with the Fourth Harold, his emancipation is apparent. It is from an altered standpoint that he sees himself. Remorse is done with: seated by the tomb of Cecilia Metella on the Appian Way, he dreams of "a little bark of hope", wonders whither he should steer his "rude boat" if he had it, and concludes:

"There woos no home, nor hope, nor life, save what is here".

But the tone is manlier.

¹ This passage is immeasurably the best he ever wrote in blank verse.

"The thorns which I have reaped are of the tree
I planted—they have torn me—and I bleed :
I should have known what fruit would spring from such a seed".

"All suffering doth destroy, or is destroyed
Even by the sufferer—and, in each event,
Ends". . . .

—the maxim of Epicurus, which Montaigne adapted :
"*Tu ne la sentiras guère longtemps, si tu la sens trop ; elle
mettra fin à soy ou à toy*".

The feeling may return :

". . . It may be a sound—
A tone of music—summer's eve—or spring—
A flower—the wind—the ocean—which shall wound,
Striking the electric chain with which we are darkly bound";

but we shall "demand our souls back" . . . and he,
demanding his, now for the first time swept the full
chords of his intellect. Here are such phrases as Mr.
Symons cites, and let me point out that no phrase thus
cited is of earlier date than this fourth canto.

Not that the past is forgotten. It will colour his
life and work to the end—but he has found another
way to use it; "the ineradicable soul" learns a new
pang. He stands in the Colosseum, and appeals to
Nemesis—the great imprecation breaks forth.

". . . Let me not have worn
This iron in my soul in vain—shall *they* not mourn?
. . . A far hour shall wreak
The deep prophetic fulness of this verse,
And pile on human heads the mountain of my curse!
That curse shall be Forgiveness.—Have I not—
Hear me, my mother Earth! behold it, Heaven!—
Have I not had to wrestle with my lot?
Have I not suffered things to be forgiven?
Have I not had my brain seared, my heart riven,
Hopes sapped, name blighted, Life's life hid away?
But there is that within me which shall tire
Torture and Time, and breathe when I expire".

It was on July 1—having made a beginning on June 26—that he sent to Murray in a letter the opening stanza of the fourth canto. “There! there’s a brick of your new Babel for you! and now, sirrah, what say you to the sample?” On the 15th: “The stanzas of Canto Fourth have jumped to *one hundred and four*; and such stanzas! By St. Anthony . . . some of them are the right thing!”

He had had in June a lively encounter with “my Murray” about the payments for *Manfred* and *The Lament of Tasso*. For each he had demanded three hundred guineas: “I won’t take less than three hundred guineas for anything”. But Murray had demurred, and he had answered: “When you come to me with your ‘*can*’. . . . I say unto you, verily it is not so”; he threatened to desert to the “*Row*” [Paternoster] “if you come over me with your pitiful-hearted speeches about ‘*can*’ and ‘*not*’, of which, if you are not ashamed, you ought to be”.

Murray gave the six hundred guineas.

This was the first payment which Byron used for his own benefit. Henceforth, he announces, “he means to be as mercenary as possible”; he tells Murray “fairly” that it will be a convenience to him “to be paid as soon as may be”, and desires that a price be named for the fourth canto: “if you don’t, *I* will, so I advise you in time”.

Murray offered fifteen hundred guineas.

“I won’t take it. I ask two thousand five hundred guineas for it, which you will either give or not as you think proper. . . . If we do not agree, recollect that you have had the refusal”. In a later letter, before hearing, he says: “I look upon *Childe Harold* as my best; and as I begun, I think of concluding with it”; but remembers the similar intention with the *Corsair*, and

makes no resolutions: "However, I fear I shall never do better. . . . God grant me some judgment! . . . for I doubt my own exceedingly".

It was the period of transition. In this letter occurs the famous pronouncement: "Depend upon it, it is all Horace then"—alluding to the age of Pope—"and Claudian now, among us; and if I had to begin again, I would model myself accordingly". His admiration for Pope altered only from that to worship; we shall find him, later, speaking of that cult as "the Christianity of poetry", and most of his prose writings are concerned with "the little Queen Anne's man" beyond the verge of tediousness. He always regarded himself as a prodigal son from the Alexandrine mansions: "no one has done more [than myself] through negligence to corrupt the language". "We are all wrong, except Rogers, Crabbe, and Campbell", he again laments—and at the very time, was writing *Beppo*! . . . He put a sketch of the Fourth Harold into Hobhouse's hands at La Mira, and Hobhouse "made a list of objects which [Byron] had not noticed, and which he afterwards described in several magnificent stanzas". The extended work was not finished until December 1817; on January 7, 1818, Hobhouse left Venice for England,¹ carrying with him "the whole of the MSS."—including *Beppo*. *Harold* was published on April 28; *Beppo*, two months earlier—the latter anonymously at first, but a second edition was soon called for, and this bore Byron's name.

¹ On January 27, Byron wrote to Murray: "Mr. Hobhouse is, or ought to be, swimming with my Commentaries and his own Coat of Mail in his teeth and right hand, in a cork jacket, between Calais and Dover". In this passage, how like the manner is to that of Dickens in *his* letters! There is no other such example, though, in all Byron's prose writings.

CHAPTER V

REALISATION OF EXILE—1817-1819

Birth of Allegra—Allegra is brought to him at Venice—The Hoppners—Visit from John Hanson—Newstead Abbey sold—Ennui and depravation—Affection for Moore—Begins *Don Juan*—Sir Samuel Romilly—Friends advise suppression of *Don Juan*—Byron's confidence in its worth—His powerful letter

MEANWHILE at Bath, on January 12, 1817,¹ Claire Clairmont's baby had been born—a daughter, called before her baptism "Alba"; but when the ceremony took place on March 9, 1818, "[Clara] Allegra". Both names were reminiscent of the Genevan days. Alba was the feminine, as it were, of Byron's *petit nom* of "Albé"; Allegra was derived from the Villa Mont Alègre.

Claire had remained with Shelley and Mary after the return to England, passing at Bath as Mrs. Clairmont. She was cheerful in the early days of home-coming—reading the Chaworth Duel trial, and finding the Wicked Lord's behaviour "truly Albeian". "He seemed to have the family complaint of suspicion and defence where any reasonable man would have taken no offence". But soon such trouble fell upon the house-

¹ The author of *A Vindication of Lady Byron* (*Temple Bar* articles) lays much stress on this date in connection with the *Farewell*. "Ten months after they were written . . . a child . . . was born to the poet" (p. 33, in article "Lord Byron's Married Life").

hold as "stopped all smiles together". First they heard of Fanny Imlay's suicide—then of Harriet's. . . . Claire fell into low spirits—wretched, irritable brooding, and Mary felt again the strain and ennui of such society. She wrote to Shelley, away on his constant occupation of house-hunting: "Give me a garden, and *absentia* Claire, and I will thank my love for many favours". She was not yet her "sweet elf's" wife, but on December 30 in the same year she became it; and in the last week of February 1818, the Shelley household—now consisting of husband and wife and their little William, and Claire and her "Alba"—moved to Albion House, Marlow. Claire resumed the style of *Miss Clairmont*, the baby passing as the child of a friend, "Mrs. Auburn, who lived in London, and had sent her to the country for her health". But there was little hope of this fiction's gaining credence, for Claire (as she wrote to Byron in 1820) "nursed Allegra day and night during the first year of her infancy".

In September, the desirability of again leaving England became acute. Shelley's health was poor; but a more cogent reason was the embarrassment which had inevitably arisen about Alba. Already in 1816 the party had suffered under similar scandal; and in this July of 1818, Shelley had proposed to Byron that the child should be "boarded out" at Marlow. No answer had been vouchsafed. If they now went to Italy, there would be an opportunity of placing Alba in her father's hands, and Mary was unfeignedly desirous that this should be done as soon as possible. "Indeed, my love", she wrote to Shelley, "Alba's departure must not be delayed. I do not see how she is to get there unless we take her. Claire talks about promises . . . but promises with Albé! The first thing that engaged his attention would put them all out of his head. . . . Why,

it is the labour of several months to get any kind of answer”.

At last the Italian sojourn was decided on. The “caravan” left England on March 11, 1818—Shelley looking for the last time, as it was to prove, on English fields and skies. Claire was with them—Claire and her “darling”, the pretty baby whom they called “the little bright-eyed Commodore”. Two days earlier, she, with the two Shelley children, had been baptized; and thenceforth she was “Allegra”—for the first name, Clara, was entirely ignored.

They went first to Milan. From Lyons, on their way, Shelley had written to Byron (who had refused to correspond with Claire) telling him that Allegra was so far on the road to the paternal roof; he wrote again from Milan, and there came on April 21 (as Claire entered in her Journal) “a letter from Albé: nothing but discomfort”. Shortly afterwards, Shelley met a Venetian at Milan Post-Office, and this chance acquaintance gave him such tidings of Byron’s manner of life as made the project of sending Allegra seem ill-advised. But Claire was resolved: nothing ought to stand in the way of her child’s acknowledgment by “an English nobleman, the most illustrious poet of Europe”. Accordingly, on April 28, Elise, the Swiss nurse who had been with the baby from the first, started with her for Venice. “I sent my little darling”, wrote the mother in a notebook in after years. “She was the only thing I had to love . . . and I had never parted from her from her birth, not for an hour even”. Shelley pointed out the risk she was running. “Remember, Claire”, he wrote to her four years later, “when you rejected my earnest advice, and checked me with that contempt which I have not merited from you, at Milan, and how vain now is your regret!” Still, the mother felt that she “ought

not, for the sake of gratifying my own affections, to deprive [the child] of a brilliant position in life”.

Byron's first mention of the new element occurs in a letter to Augusta of May 27, 1817, while the Shelleys were still in England. “By the way, it seems that I have got another [child]—a *daughter* by that same lady, whom you will recognise . . . I mean *her* who returned to England to become a Mamma incog., and whom I pray the Gods to keep there. I am a little puzzled how to dispose of this new production, but shall probably send for and place it in a Venetian convent, to become a good Catholic and (it may be) a Nun, being a character somewhat wanted in our family. They tell me it is very pretty, with blue eyes and 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”.¹

When the “new production” arrived, he had left the Segati lodgings in the Frezzeria, and was oscillating between La Mira and the Palazzo Mocenigo on the Grand Canal—Marianna Segati and Margarita Cogni sharing the honours of *maîtresse-en-titre*. Mrs. Hoppner, wife of the English Consul-General at Venice (who was now the closest intimate Byron had there), seeing the forlorn condition of the child, and the difficulties for Elise in doing anything for her (the Mocenigo household consisted only of men-servants), soon proposed to Byron to take charge of her. He had already sent Augusta a report: “Very pretty, remarkably intelligent . . . but what is remarkable, much more like Lady Byron than her mother—so much so as to stupefy the

¹ *L. and J.* iv. 123-24.

learned Fletcher and astonish me. . . . She has very blue eyes, and that singular forehead, fair curly hair, and a devil of a spirit—but that is Papa's”.

Letters from Elise decided Claire to set out from Bagni di Lucca—where the caravan now was—with Shelley as her companion, and entreat through him for some brief intercourse with her child. On August 19 they started. Claire had at first resolved not to go so far as Venice, but remain at a little distance, “so as not to irritate Albé by entering the same city”. But at Padua she changed her mind: she would go on to Venice, but would not do more than write to Byron. Shelley would go to him, and she would wait at the Hoppners'. Arrived at Venice, their very gondolier told them “unedifying tales” of Byron; the Hoppners' account was in essence the same; and on discussion, it was resolved that Claire's presence should be kept a secret, for Hoppner confessed that Byron had said “he should instantly leave the place if she appeared in it”.

Shelley saw Byron at three o'clock, and found him “good-humoured”. He did not wish to part with Allegra for any length of time, but offered to let Claire have her for a week at Padua. “In fact”, he added, “after all I have no right over the child. If Claire likes to take it, let her take it. I do not say what most people would in such a situation, that I will refuse to provide for it, or abandon it, if she does this; but she must surely be aware herself how very imprudent such a measure would be”.

Shelley was the more inclined to agree to the Paduan plan because he had greatly liked the Hoppners—“the most amiable people I ever knew . . . Mrs. Hoppner¹”

¹ Mrs. Hoppner was of Swiss birth. Byron, writing to her husband in 1819, says: “Pray make my respects to Mrs. Hoppner, and assure her of my unalterable reverence for the singular goodness of her disposition.”

has hazel eyes, and sweet looks—rather Maryish”, he wrote to Mary. And Byron’s good-humour lasted; he took Shelley for a ride on the Lido, where they talked of many things besides Allegra. Back at the Mocenigo, he developed the Paduan plan *en prince*. He had rented from Hoppner a villa—I Cappuccini—on the Euganean Hills, near Este and within a few miles of Arquà, where Petrarch loved and died. He had not yet inhabited it himself,¹ though he had taken it for two years; now he offered to lend it to Shelley and his family, and send Allegra thither to be with Claire for a while.

Accordingly Mary hastened from Lucca to Este. One of her babies (Clara, born in the September of 1817) was taken dangerously ill on the road, and after many vicissitudes of travel, died at Venice on September 24. Claire was then at the Cappuccini Villa with little William and Allegra. Mary and Shelley stayed at Venice until the 29th, with the Hoppners—seeing Byron each day. On October 12, leaving Claire at Este, they came again to Venice. Mary was much with the Hoppners, her husband with Byron. It was now, with calmer vision, that Shelley could gauge the ruin working in “Albè’s” character. He had written, in the summer-house at the Cappuccini Villa, the opening lines of *Julian and Maddalo*, in which he draws portraits of himself and Byron. In the Introduction, “Count Maddalo”—Byron—is depicted as “a person of the most consummate genius. . . . But it is his weakness to be proud. . . . I say that Maddalo is proud, because I can find no other word to express the centred and impatient feelings which consume him; but it is on his own hopes and affections only that he seems to trample, for in social life no human being can

¹ He never did inhabit it.

be more gentle, patient and unassuming. . . . His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication". The poem opens with a description of the ride on the Lido, and of a sunset at Venice; then comes the famous picture of Allegra:

"A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made;
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being;
Graceful without design, and unforeseeing;
With eyes—Oh! speak not of her eyes! which seem
Twin mirrors of Italian heaven, yet gleam
With such deep meaning as we never see
But in the human countenance. . . ."

On October 29, the sojourn at Byron's villa ended; Shelley took Allegra to Venice, yielded her back into the Hoppners' care, and on November 5 the caravan set off again—now for Rome.

This—and for long previously—was the time of Byron's daily rides along the Lido with Hoppner,¹ of which the latter gave Moore an account for the *Life*. Byron needed a friend, for his English correspondents cruelly neglected him; during the summer of 1818 his letters are full of reproaches on this score. "When I tell you", he wrote to Murray on June 18, "that I have not heard a word from England since very early in May, I have made the eulogium of my friends, or the persons who call themselves so, since I have written so often and in the greatest anxiety. Thank God, the longer I am absent, the less cause I see for regretting the Country or its living contents. . . . Tell Mr. Hobbhouse that . . . I will never forgive him (or anybody) the atrocity of their late neglect and silence at a time when

¹ Richard Belgrave Hoppner was the second son of John Hoppner, R.A., and had inherited some of his father's talent. He was appointed English Consul at Venice in 1814. Byron said of him to Lady Blessington: "He was a good listener, and his remarks were acute and original; he is besides a thoroughly good man". Hoppner lived until 1872.

I wished particularly to hear (for every reason) from my friends".¹

Newstead had been sold for £94,500 to Colonel Wildman in 1817, and Byron had at once begun to make arrangements for the liquidation of his debts. The Rochdale business was in full swing again, but the Hansons father and son were as of old exasperating him with delays. They and Hobhouse urged upon him a return to England—or if this were too decided a step, at least to come as far as Geneva to meet and discuss proceedings. He had written in April most positively to refuse: "Every step nearer to England would be to me disgusting". Hanson or his "Messenger" must come to Venice. "I won't stir". He was particularly hurt with Hobhouse for joining in the persuasion: "Hobhouse's wish is, if possible, to force me back to England: he will not succeed; and if he did, I would not stay. I hate the country and like this; and all foolish opposition, of course, merely adds to the feeling". "Hobhouse's wish" was natural, but Byron's friends seem certainly to have treated him with a surprising lack of consideration. Apparently he *had* been half-persuaded to go to Geneva after all, for in July he wrote to Murray to say that he was still waiting for Hanson's clerk, "but luckily not at Geneva. All my good friends wrote to me to hasten there to meet him, but not one had the good sense or good-nature to write afterwards to tell me that it would be time and a journey thrown away, as he could not set off for some months after the period appointed. If I *had* taken the journey . . . I never would have spoken to one of you as long as I existed".

At last John Hanson, his son Newton, and the

¹ The words from "Tell Mr. Hobhouse" were omitted by Moore. I quote from *L. and J.* iv. 243.

solicitor for Colonel Wildman left England on October 12,¹ and reached Venice a month later. Newton Hanson's account of the visit is entertaining. His father was to have brought some packages from Murray—three large bales. "But he would only take one of them. Unfortunately, the one he selected did not contain a single book, only a few different-sized kaleidoscopes" (!), "tooth-brushes, tooth-powders, etc."² At this Lord Byron was greatly annoyed, and would not be pacified for some hours". At first meeting the youth observed "a nervous sensitiveness in his lordship, which produced a silence for some minutes. It was broken by his observing, 'Well, Hanson! I never expected you would have ventured so far'. . . . His eyes were suffused with tears. . . . Lord Byron could not have been more than thirty, but he looked forty. His face had become pale, bloated, and sallow. He had grown very fat, his shoulders broad and round, and the knuckles of his hands were lost in fat".

This was the period of Byron's deepest depravation, not only morally but physically. If it had not been for the daily gallops on the Lido, he would probably have sunk under the malaria of the canals and the enervation of his own debauchery. It was at Venice that he first realised the bitterness of banishment. In Switzerland

¹ They had expected to meet Byron at Sécheron, which they reached on October 21, but a letter from him awaited them: "The season . . . being so far advanced, I cannot possibly cross the Simplon now"—so evidently the persuasion had gone further than one could have supposed from his earlier letters.

² The tooth-powder ought to have pleased Byron. His requests for "Waite's red tooth-powders" were incessant and urgent: "by the Lord, send them!" Soda-powders were as often needed; he told Murray that he would rather have them than any "poeshies". The kaleidoscopes remain unaccounted for. He wrote to Murray of Hanson's chosen parcel: "'For what we have received, the Lord make us thankful'—for without his aid I shall not be so. . . . You may imagine his [Hanson's] reception". Newton Hanson's account of the visit is quoted from *L. and J.* iv. 266-67.

the Shelleys and Hobhouse had been his companions and fellow-voyagers; Hobhouse too had spent many months of 1817 with him at La Mira or the Mocenigo. But with the dawning of 1818, the exile found himself indeed an exile. We have read Shelley's view of his Venetian companions; outside that circle there lay indeed the Albrizzi and Benzoni salons, but to him, even at the best impatient of "Blues", these gatherings must have seemed provincial indeed compared with Holland and Melbourne Houses, and the drawing-rooms of Rogers, Lady Jersey, the Humphry Davys, and a score of others. Moreover, in those rooms he had been the idol to whom great ladies were submissively led for presentation; here, though run after, it was in a different spirit—and in a foreign speech! When he became more familiar with the Venetian language, he too soon discovered all the shallowness and ignorance which "that soft bastard Latin" covered. . . . And in this isolation and ennui, his English friends forgot him. Alone and sick at heart, he wrote oftener than they wanted; soon, with a piercing pathos, we find him—not ironically—apologising for his frequent letters. There, in London, amid all the familiar bustle and talk and preoccupations, they "meant to write" (like Rogers and many another,¹ and ourselves to our

¹ He did hear from Augusta, but her style was at no time exhilarating. He told Murray in July 1817 that he "heard from nobody who did not tell him something as disagreeable as possible"; and again, in November, "I hear nothing . . . except in a few unintelligible words from an unintelligible woman". Again, in 1821 (à propos documents for his Memoirs) he told Murray that Augusta might let him have the Swiss Journal; "but her nerves have been in such a state since 1815, that there is no knowing. Lady Byron's people, and Lady Caroline Lamb's people, and a parcel of that set, got about her and frightened her with all sorts of hints and menaces, so that she has never since been able to write *me* a *clear common letter*, and is so full of mysteries and miseries that I can only sympathise without always understanding her. All my loves, too, make a point of calling on her . . . the year before last, I think, Lady F. W. W.

own exiles); and here, in Venice, almost daily he dashed off a brilliant eager appeal—so gay for all the reproaches, so full of spirit, gusto, and affection, that even to-day, as we read, our anger burns against the hearts that could wait so long to throb into an answering word.

Chafing and fretting thus, in the pain of unacknowledged home-sickness, he fell deeper and deeper into the state we have seen. "*He had grown very fat*". To grow fat was, paradoxically, the mark of Byron's despair. He might not eat like other men—it was excess for him; at Venice in this period, he did eat like other men, and (never so abstemious with wine as with food) he drank much more than most of them. Soon he became "gross in form and visage" (Jeaffreson, from whom this account is largely taken, is always vivid and convincing on these external matters); and, far worse than in the days at Cambridge, "his flesh was pasty and flaccid, and the pallor of his countenance had the faint yellow tinge . . . of the sufferer from liver". He suffered tortures from dyspepsia — "maddening torment", sleepless nights and wretched days; his temper grew more violent and more sullen; his voice lost the music which had "made children turn from play to hear it"; his hair thinned and whitened—"anxiety

marched in upon her, and Lady O., a few years ago, spoke to her at a party; and these and such-like calamities have made her afraid of her shadow. It is a very odd fancy that they all take to her; it was only six months ago that I had some difficulty in preventing the Countess G. from invading her with an Italian letter" (*L. and J.* v. 371). This is plainly—almost confessedly—written for posterity; but Lord Lovelace gives a letter to Augusta on June 3, 1817, which bears out the description of her communications. "For the life of me I can't make out whether your disorder is a broken heart or ear-ache—or whether it is *you* that have been ill or the children—or what your melancholy and mysterious apprehensions tend to, or refer to—whether to Caroline Lamb's novels—Mrs. Clermont's evidence—Lady Byron's magnanimity, or any other piece of imposture" (*Astarte*, p. 124).

was discernible in the resoluteness of his blue eyes, whilst his countenance wore a peculiar look of apprehension and distress”.

To Moore, who alone seems to have felt and shown the sympathy he needed (and Moore had hitherto been a bad correspondent), he wrote in the early part of 1818: “I don’t much care what the wretches of the world think of me—all that’s past. But I care a good deal what *you* think of me, and so say what you like. You *know* that I am not sullen; and as to being *savage*, such things depend on circumstances. . . . Throughout life, your loss must be my loss, and your gain my gain; and though my heart may ebb, there will be always a drop for you among the dregs”. It is always in the letters to Moore that Byron as the man’s man most lovably emerges. Murray got the brilliant *tours de force*; Moore, the warm heart’s voice. Both got the *chronique scandaleuse* of the “English milord” at Venice; both, those searching analyses of Italian morality which it so fascinated him to indite—him, for whom, “unlike all other poets, society exists as well as human nature”. But if we knew Byron only through the letters, and knew not those to Moore, we should miss him at his best. Of the appearance of *Lalla Rookh*, he wrote: “Really and truly I want you to make a great hit, if only out of self-love because we happen to be old cronies; and I have no doubt you will—I am sure you *can*. But you are, I’ll be sworn, in a devil of a pucker; and *I* am *not* at your elbow, and Rogers *is*. I envy him. . . . Mind you send to me . . . the moment you are forth”. Again: “To *you*, Fortune is a good deal in arrear, and she will come round—mind if she don’t. . . . 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”. But

even Moore delayed sometimes to answer: "Death and fiends! why don't you tell me where you are, what you are, and how you are? . . . If you think of coming out for a summer or so, tell me, that I may be on the hover for you".

Moore did not visit Venice until 1819, when Byron's life had taken a different turn—one which, in the Irishman's eyes, gave no promise of lasting happiness. But before this change he had at least modified his courses. A reform was urgent, and after the Carnival of 1819 he definitely entered upon it. Disgust with his excesses had already driven him more than once to escape from his infamous "house", and spend whole nights on the water in his gondola. Hoppner too had made many a remonstrance . . . but a more powerful influence than Hoppner's, or any man's or woman's, was at work. He had begun *Don Juan*.¹ In July 1818 occurs the earliest allusion: "Two stories, one serious and one ludicrous (à la *Beppo*)"; but the energy to proceed was lacking. He had heard little from England of his last "cargo of poeshie"; Murray's silence had, indeed, been so prolonged that Byron had written to warn him that he meant to turn to the Messrs. Longman with his next productions. Over and over again he begged for news of the reception of *Manfred*,²

¹ Mr. Coleridge points out in the Introduction to *Don Juan*, that "the composition of Byron's two great poems was all but co-extensive with his poetical life. He began the first canto of *Childe Harold* in the autumn of 1809, and he did not complete the fourth canto till the spring of 1818. He began the first canto of *Don Juan* in the autumn of 1818, and he was still at work on a seventeenth canto in the spring of 1823".

² In *A Vindication of Lady Byron*, the author says: "Lord Byron was eager to learn, and Mr. Murray as eager to conceal, what the publisher thought and what the world said of *Manfred*. . . [Lord Byron] suspected a cause for the silence, and concluded his part of the correspondence [in a letter of August 12, 1817] by the assurance that he was prepared to hear, 'not of the mere paltry disappointments of an author, but things more serious'" (p. 350).

The Lament of Tasso, Beppo. "I should then know how and in what manner to proceed. I should not like to give them" (the public) "too much, which may possibly have been the case already.

"I once wrote from the fullness of my mind and the love of fame (not as an *end*, but a *means*, to obtain that influence over men's minds which is power in itself and in its consequences), and now from habit and from avarice; so that the effect may probably be as different as the inspiration. I have the same facility, and indeed necessity, of composition, to avoid idleness (though idleness in a hot country is a pleasure), but a much greater indifference to what is to become of it, after it has served my immediate purpose". He spurred himself to work, however, and in September announced to Moore: "I have finished the first Canto . . . of a poem. . . . It is called *Don Juan*, and is meant to be a little quietly facetious about everything". He added: "The bore of copying it out is intolerable; and if I had an amanuensis he would be of no use, as my writing is so difficult to decipher". Perhaps, in this dilemma, he remembered the vituperated "Blues"—Annabella and Claire—who had been so eager and so skilful in his service; perhaps this, and the other troubles, helped to urge him towards the renaissance of January 1819. . . . Not yet, though, was he ready for the *vita nuova*. In this letter to Moore we find another rhapsody on Margarita Cogni. "A face like Faustina's . . . tall and energetic as a Pythoness . . . one of those women who may be made anything. . . . I like this kind of animal, and am sure that I should have preferred Medea to any woman that ever breathed". And instantly there flashes forth a memory of his wife. "You may perhaps wonder that I don't in that case"—a long line of asterisks is all that Moore here vouchsafed

to posterity ; but the allusion is evident from the sequel. "I could have forgiven the dagger or the bowl—anything but the deliberate desolation piled upon me, when I stood alone upon my hearth with my household gods shivered around me.¹ . . . Do you suppose I have forgotten it? It has comparatively swallowed up in me every other feeling, and I am only a spectator upon earth, till a tenfold opportunity offers. It may come yet. There are others more to be blamed than *** , and it is on these that my eyes are fixed unceasingly". Soon tidings were to come from England to indulge this dream of Nemesis. On November 18 he heard of the suicide of Sir Samuel Romilly, who, on October 29, had "cut his throat for the loss of his wife".² At once he sat down and wrote to Lady Byron—a pæan of savage triumph. "It was not in vain that I invoked Nemesis in the midnight of Rome from the awfulest of her ruins". And why? Because Sir Samuel, who had a general retainer from Byron, had either (as he himself alleged) forgotten it and so allowed himself to be retained for the other side in 1816, or (as Jeaffreson distinctly states) "returned the fee³ by which Byron had retained him, on the ground that Lady Byron had a right to the privileges of separation". Not only to his wife did Byron write of this. It is horrible to read

¹ Here is an interesting instance of Byron's repetition of phrases. This of the "household gods" appears in *Don Juan*, canto i. stanza 36, and—more remarkably still—in *Marino Faliero*, the Venetian tragedy of 1820.

² Sir Samuel Romilly had been Solicitor-General in 1806-7. He was distinguished for his probity, independence, humanity, and liberality. "His moral character", said Sir James Mackintosh in 1810, "stands higher than that of any conspicuous Englishman now alive". Lord Lansdowne told Moore that Lady Romilly "was the only person in the world to whom Romilly wholly unbent and unbosomed himself; when he lost her, therefore, the very vent of his heart was stopped up".

³ "A long and general retainer" is the way in which Byron described the arrangement.

his words to Murray on the same topic:¹ "Could not the dotard wait till his drivelling did it?"—Sir Samuel was but sixty-four at the time of his death. "It may be very fine to forgive—but I would not have forgiven him living, and I will not affect to pity him dead". In a later letter: "I still loathe him—as much as we can hate dust"; and again, on Murray's remonstrance: "You ask me to spare Romilly—ask the worms. . . . You may talk to the wind . . . but *not* to me on the subject of a Villain who wronged me".

At this time his constitution was so racked by excesses that everything infuriated him. It is the time of the Dedication of *Don Juan* to Southey; of the ineffably tedious abuse of Sotheby,² an inoffensive old gentleman of letters whom he suspected of having sent him an anonymous criticism of the *Prisoner of Chillon* volume; of the long sulking with Hanson and his son; of the averted breach with Murray. But almost as soon as he and his publisher were friends again, they were to be plunged into the *Don Juan* turmoil. "Lord Lauderdale", wrote Byron on November 24, "set off from hence twelve days ago, accompanied by a cargo of poesy". The cargo was *Don Juan* (canto i.), *Mazeppa*, and the *Ode on Venice*: "all spick and span, and in MS." Soon came the word from Murray that a committee of Byron's friends—Hobhouse, Kinnaird, Scrope Davies, Moore, and Hookham Frere—"were unanimous in advising the suppression of the poem". He acquiesced at first: "But I *protest* . . . I write in

¹ In the first edition of Moore's book, he retained the passages in letters to Murray relating to Sir Samuel Romilly, "though aware of the erroneous impression under which they were written". But it was represented to him that "such an attack upon such a man ought not to be left on record", and in the second edition the passages were expunged, though a note (p. 399) alluded to them with some explicitness.

² Sotheby was attacked in *Beppo*.

a passion and a sirocco"¹ on January 25, 1819. For once—for the first time—he was sure of himself. Hitherto all adverse criticism had shaken him; now he wrote with increasing confidence, as the feeling across the water grew stronger against the design of publishing, even anonymously. Already by February 1, he was changing his mind about acquiescence in suppression. He wrote to Murray, who had "volunteered a great price"² for the poem: "We will circumvent your cursed puritanical committee on that point in the end. . . . If they had told me the poetry was bad, I would have acquiesced; but they say the contrary, and then talk to me about morality. . . . I maintain that it is the most moral of poems; but if people won't discern the moral, that is their fault, not mine". So far, though, he still half-consented to suppression: "in any case, you will print fifty for private distribution". But by February 22: "It is very probable that I shall decide on publication".

In the end of January he had at last fallen seriously ill. On April 6—after finishing the second *Juan* canto—he wrote to Murray: "About the beginning of the year, I was in a state of great exhaustion . . . and I was obliged to reform my 'way of life'. . . . I am better in health and morals, and very much yours ever.—B."

This is the concluding paragraph of the letter. Murray thus answered the whole on April 27: "Your stomach may be weak, but, upon my soul, the Intellects are in full vigour, for I never read a more powerful letter in my life than the last with which you favoured me".

Here it is, that we may end on the same note of

¹ "I have not been in bed till seven or eight in the morning these ten days past".

² *Letters of Joseph Jekyll*, p. 75.

admiration for the exile with whom our hearts have ached till now.

“You sha’n’t make *canticles* of my cantos. The poem will please, if it is lively; if it is stupid, it will fail; but I will have none of your damned cutting and slashing. If you please, you may publish *anonymously*; it will perhaps be better; but I will battle my way against them all, like a porcupine.

“So you and Mr. Foscolo, 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 fifty cantos.

“Besides, 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*. As to the estimation of the English which you talk of, let them calculate what it is worth, before they insult me with their insolent condescension.

“I have not written for their pleasure. If they are pleased, it is that they chose to be so; I have never flattered their opinions, nor their pride; nor will I. Neither will I make ‘Ladies’ books’ ‘*al diletta 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. 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. They made me, without my search, a species of popular idol; they, without reason or judgment, beyond the caprice of their good pleasure, threw down the image from its pedestal; it was not broken with the fall, and they would, it seems, again replace it,—but they shall not".

He had his compensations, as he had had in the long-ago Southwell days—as genius always has.

CHAPTER VI

TERESA GUICCIOLI—1819

The Countess Guiccioli—Letters to Hoppner and Murray—Departure for Ravenna—Byron's licence in letters—His cruelty to women—Life at Ravenna—The Guicciolis leave for Bologna—"Cavalier' serventism"—*Don Juan*—Harassments—The "Corinne" letter—Establishment with Teresa at La Mira—Moore arrives—Count Guiccioli intervenes—"I am for England"—The summons to Ravenna—Byron goes

WITH Byron's restoration to health in the spring of 1819, he began a definite reform in his way of living. The women of the Mocenigo had been banished during his illness and convalescence; and none of them ever returned. This was partly owing to Hoppner's influence. That wise friend had told him, not that Venice was "shocked", but that Venice was contemptuously amused, by his courses. It was sufficient now, as it had been in the milder Newstead days, to disgust him with his "Paphian girls"; and now, as then, he marked the change of mind and life by a return to society. He began again to frequent the salons, which he had for the last year seldom visited; and in April 1819 met at the Countess Benzoni's the young bride of an elderly nobleman—Teresa, daughter of Count Gamba of Ravenna, and wife to Count Guiccioli, aged sixty, one of the richest landowners in the Romagna.

Byron and she had been together at the Countess Albrizzi's in the autumn of 1818, three days after Teresa's marriage; but they had not been introduced.

Now, at Madame Benzoni's, they were presented to one another. Neither desired the introduction. She was tired, had "come with great repugnance to this party, purely in obedience to Count Guiccioli"; Byron, as we know, refused most new acquaintances. The Countess, to Moore, threw over this attitude, in her special case, a good deal of romantic glamour. "When I entered the room I saw what appeared to be a beautiful apparition reclining on a sofa. . . . Asked if he would be presented to me, Byron answered, 'No. I cannot know her—she is too beautiful'. . . . From that evening, during the whole of my subsequent stay at Venice, we met every day".

Teresa Gamba, born in 1802, was educated in a convent till she was fifteen, and at sixteen was married, as his third wife, to the rich and sexagenarian Count Guiccioli. Her husband was, in fact, older than her father. She was very pretty—"much prettier than the Fornarina", Byron was later on to tell Murray. Later still, in asking Murray to propose to Holmes the miniature painter (who had done both him and Augusta in 1815)¹ that he should come out to Ravenna and paint Allegra and the Countess, and "the head of a peasant girl . . . which is really superb", Byron says of Teresa: "M^{me} G. is also very handsome . . . completely blonde and fair—very uncommon in Italy; yet not an *English* fairness, but more like a Swede or Norwegian. Her figure, too, particularly the bust, is uncommonly good". Jeaffreson, describing her, uses the terrible epithet, "chumpy": "too massive everywhere for grace, she possessed . . . the proportions and development of an almost matronly attractiveness". She had, in his list of her charms, "large languishing blue eyes, singularly

¹ Holmes did not accept the offer to go to Italy, and Byron, much offended, called him, to Murray, "one rascal more"! This is not the Holmes miniature of Augusta which appears in *Astarte*.



THE COUNTESS GUICCIOLI

FROM THE ENGRAVING BY T. A. DEAN AFTER THE PAINTING BY E. C. WOOD

long brown lashes, ample white eyelids, arched eyebrows, wickedly pretty teeth", and hair "so absolutely golden that if a guinea-golden fillet of the deepest yellowness ever seen in gold, had been put about her head, the tresses and the ornament would have been precisely the same hue and quality of colour". "The prevailing air of her intelligent face was peculiarly expressive of simplicity, good-humour, and good-breeding". . . . "That shyness of the antelope which I delight in"¹ was lacking here, and the dark colouring which was Byron's ideal—though of his loves only Mary Chaworth, Augusta Leigh, and Claire Clairmont possessed it. Caroline Lamb, Lady Frances Webster, Annabella Milbanke²—all were fair women. Teresa Guiccioli, in her turn, proved to have charms sufficient without that "dark eye" of which his verse is so eloquent—for at this first meeting he "made up his mind to enslave her", and as he learned that the Guicciolis were leaving Venice in a fortnight, there was little time to lose. "At parting", she relates, "Lord Byron wrote something on a scrap of paper, and handed it to me"; thenceforth, they saw one another every day.

Byron's earliest allusion is in a letter to Murray of May 6—reticent as yet, but soon to be sadly the reverse. "About the 20th, I leave Venice, to take a journey into Romagna; but shall probably return in a month". The Guicciolis had gone in the end of April to visit the Count's Romagnese estates. He had several houses on the road from Venice to Ravenna (their ultimate destination), and from each of the halting-places Teresa wrote to Byron. "The thousand enchantments that surrounded him", the difference between him and the other men she knew—all had at once made such an impression

¹ Journal of 1813-14. See Vol. I. Chapter XV.

² Though of fair complexion, Lady Byron had brown hair and brown eyes, as had also her daughter and grandchildren.

upon the sixteen-year-old bride as more than realised the farthest-reaching desires of the "English Milord". Before she left Venice, they were lovers in the most extended sense of the term. This is painfully proved by Byron's letter to Hoppner when he did, more than a month after Teresa's departure, set forth to retrieve her. He wrote, having got as far as Padua on the way: "La G's instructions are rather calculated to produce an *éclat*—and perhaps a scene—than any decent iniquity. . . . The Charmer forgets that a man may be whistled anywhere *before*, but that *after*—a journey in an Italian June is a conscription, and therefore she should have been less liberal in Venice, or less exigent at Ravenna. If I were not the most constant of men, I should now be swimming from the Lido, instead of smoking in the dust of Padua".

The Countess had fainted three times on the first day's journey, and when she reached Ravenna was "half-dead". Though even then she managed to write, her illness was no fanciful or sentimental one, as we learn (again by a letter to Hoppner) after Byron's own arrival. "Her miscarriage has made her a good deal thinner". . . . *He*, on the way, had stopped two days at Ferrara and greatly enjoyed himself, going to a *conversazione* of which he gives this odd report to Hoppner: "Far superior to anything of the kind at Venice—the women almost all young—several pretty—and the men courteous and cleanly". "Whenever I meet", he adds, "with anything agreeable in this world, it surprises me so much and pleases me so much . . . that I go on wondering for a week to come".

He visited the Certosa Cemetery there, and found "such a pretty epitaph, or rather two; one was,

' MARTINI LUIGI
implora pace ';

the other,

‘LUCREZIA PICINI
implora eterna quiete’.

That was all; but it appears to me that those two and three words comprise and compress all that can be said on the subject—and then, in Italian, they are absolute music. They contain doubt, hope, and humility. . . . They have had enough of life—they want nothing but rest—they implore it, and *eterna quiete*. . . . Pray, if I am shovelled into the Lido churchyard in your time, let me have the *implora pace*, and nothing else, for my epitaph. I never met with any, ancient or modern, that pleased me a tenth part so much”. Writing to Murray from Bologna—where he next spent a few days—he adds to this, after an almost identical repetition of the passage: “I trust they won’t think of ‘pickling, and bringing me home’. . . . 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 death-bed, could I suppose that any of my friends would be base enough to convey my carcase back to your soil. I would not even feed your worms, if I could help it”.

From Bologna he wrote to Hoppner that he should return *thence* to Venice; but two days later, dispatching the letter, he scribbled on the outside cover: “I am just setting off for Ravenna. I changed my mind this morning, and decided to go on”. When at last he arrived, Count Guiccioli instantly called and asked him to the Palazzo. “It will distract the Countess in her illness”, said the husband. Byron went next day, and found Teresa “in bed, with a cough and spitting of blood . . . all of which” (a few days later) “have subsided, and something else has recom-

menced. . . . *She* manages very well" (here is a row of asterisks), "but if I come away with a stiletto in my gizzard some fine afternoon I shall not be astonished"—for the Count passed as the most jealous of husbands, and was said to have had two lovers of his two former wives assassinated.

During Teresa's absence from Venice, Byron had written to Murray a letter describing his intrigue with an unmarried girl ("the daughter of one of their nobles"); it is the famous one which caused Moore, on being shown it, to enter in his diary, "This is really too gross". In it, he announced his imminent departure for Ravenna! . . . One knows not how to regard this trait in him. Vanity was a factor, yet vanity is a foible from which most of us suffer, and there are no other extant letters quite like his. He had always been too free on such matters, but the degree of licence which he gives himself here is rare even with him. Of this girl he speaks as "my pretty paramour"; "we have lately been able to recommence" . . .

His freedom, as we see above, could disgust the far from prudish Moore; what Hoppner can have thought of the letters he soon received from Ravenna, it is difficult to imagine. The Italian institution of the *cicisbeat* was so accepted that there was a set code of rules and regulations for it; and that would seem to make a decent reticence part of the official attitude. Where everything was taken for granted, what need to detail arrangements? But Byron, from the letter of June 2, where he is "going to cuckold a Papal Count", to the end of the earlier stage of this liaison, detailed them without stint—and to a man who had met the Countess Guiccioli socially, and knew the whole of what "*cavalier' serventism*" implied!

On the way to Ravenna, perceiving that his "con-scription" was picturesque enough, he wrote the long sentimental poem :

"River, that rollest by the ancient walls
Where dwells the Lady of my Love" . . .

which was first published by Medwin in 1824. The verses are entitled *Stanzas to the Po*; but the Po does not run by the "ancient walls" of Ravenna. We must yield the point, and conclude that Byron thought it did, for the piece is dated June 1819, when he was on his way to join Teresa there.

"A stranger loves the Lady of the land,
Born far beyond the mountains ; but his blood
Is all meridian, as if never fanned
By the bleak wind that chills the Polar flood.

My blood is all meridian ; were it not
I had not left my clime, nor should I be,
In spite of tortures, ne'er to be forgot,
A slave again of love—at least of thee.

'Tis vain to struggle—let me perish young—
Live as I lived, and love as I have loved" . . .

It was precisely as he "had loved" that he was now to love—impatiently, half-heartedly. This poem was written at the same time as the letters to Hopper. If he was, as he said, "always flippant in prose", he might have said too that he was always flippant in love. Long ago, there had been his cry: "It is the plague of these women that we cannot live with them, or without them." "*Besoin impérieuse de la femme, et mépris de la femme*": so the incisive Frenchman, Félix Rabbe, has summed up Byron's relation to women. It is the key to that enigma in his story—the constant preoccupation with intrigue, the lack of all real feeling in it, and the void which he

for ever felt because his heart was for ever empty. Were she worthy or unworthy of him, Byron would have been happier if he could have loved a woman. His nature was not cruel, as he truly said; yet in the perversity of his disdain for the creature conquered, he was always cruel in the event. The "Medeas" of the Mocenigo, indeed, had enthralled him by their very infamy: such screaming, scratching, howling furies left him the amused, contemptuous master of the miserable situation; yet even *they* had suffered in their sort. Marianna Segati had found a sister-in-law installed; Margarita Cogni had nearly drowned herself. . . . So, too, had Caroline Lamb, had Augusta, had Annabella, been tortured; while for Claire Clairmont the worst of all woman's sorrows was soon to come. Sad as future days were to be for Teresa Guiccioli also, she had a "saving grace of stupidity" which upbore her through the evil hours: no other woman held him so long, and no other woman enshrined his memory as that of an angel.

These early days at Ravenna were happy for her. "During my illness, he was for ever near me . . . 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 friend of his". This was Aglietti, the renowned Venetian doctor, who came, and ordered "a continuance of the treatment". It consisted, apparently, in Byron's visits. "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".

"I find my situation very agreeable", wrote Byron;

“I can fix no time for my return to Venice—it may be soon or late—or not at all. . . . My coming—going—and everything depends on *her* entirely, just as Mrs. Hoppner said, in the true spirit of female prophecy. . . . I can't make *him* out at all—he visits me frequently, and takes me out . . . in a coach and six horses. The fact appears to be that he is completely *governed* by her—for that matter, so am I.¹ The people here don't know what to make of us; as he had the character of jealousy with all his wives—this is the third”. But Hoppner, already acquainted with the details, soon became insufficient as a confidant. It was judged to be full time for the Albemarle Street parlour to enjoy them. On June 29, then (with many editorial asterisks): “I have been here these four weeks. . . . I came to see my *Amica*, the Countess Guiccioli. . . . She bears up most *gallantly* in every sense of the word. . . . All this” (the content, no doubt, of the suppressed passages) “will appear strange to you, who do not understand the Meridian morality. . . . You would find it much the same in these parts. At Faenza there is Lord Kinnaird with an opera-girl; and at the inn at the same town is a Neapolitan Prince, who serves the wife of the Gonfaloniere of that city. I am on duty here—so you see ‘*Così fan tutte e tutti*’”.

He had his horses sent from Venice, and rode or drove every day in the renowned Pineta; he composed *The Prophecy of Dante* at Teresa's request; saw her every day, “at the proper (or improper) hours”—but that Albemarle Street might be reminded of the Byronic melancholy, he now began to feel seriously uneasy about

¹ Here may be appropriately quoted the valet Fletcher's famous saying, “It is very odd, but I never yet knew a lady that could not manage my Lord, *except* my Lady”. Jeaffreson contemns this, observing that a valet's opinion is not “worth a rush”; more cogently, one may point to the lack of all evidence for, say, Caroline Lamb's successful “management”!

her health. "In losing her", he wrote to Murray, "I should lose a being who has run great risks on my account, and whom I have every reason to love. . . . I do not know what I *should* do if she died, but I ought to blow my brains out—and I hope that I should. Her husband is a very polite personage, but I wish he would not carry me out in his coach and six, like Whittington and his Cat".

We must applaud the sincerity of this. "I ought to blow my brains out—and I hope that I should". Very assuredly he would not have blown his brains out, but that was by no means so clear to him as it is to us. The intrigue with Teresa Guiccioli was another of the many into which, indubitably, he was more or less forced. When, later in the year, he wrote to Hoppner, "I should like to know *who* has been carried off—except poor dear *me*. I have been more ravished myself than anybody since the Trojan war"—he wrote only a very little more than the truth. In a sense, Byron was perfectly consistent in his attitude. He recognised depravation, and he recognised marriage; the illicit "great passion" he did not recognise. A woman was either virtuous or vicious. If she was virtuous, she would yield to no man whom she could not marry; if she was vicious, she would yield to any, and make her profit from it. Such was the—largely unconscious—persuasion of the man; the poet might write of lovely lawless love, such as Haidee's in *Don Juan*, Medora's in the *Corsair*, even Astarte's in *Manfred* . . . but when real life and the circumstances of real life presented themselves, Byron could not believe in "romance". Such passions belonged to desert islands, rocky promontories, solitary Alpine heights. If a woman of the drawing-rooms or the cities yielded to her feelings, she must be an abandoned or a venal creature:

only Nature's child might hear the voice of Nature. Many another man holds, as unconsciously, the same opinion.

In all Byron's affairs we can trace this blindness to the image of "Free Love" as seen by its genuine devotees, such as Shelley, for example. The innocent boy-passion for Mary Chaworth was real, and the boy dreamed only of marriage with the girl. Then came the intrigues with Caroline Lamb and Lady Oxford. The latter was frankly profligate: from her, therefore, he could accept the oft-given gift with grace. Caroline Lamb, innocent until she came within his orbit, offered herself impetuously to him alone—and no rigour was too harsh for the woman by that sufficiently condemned. During the whole course of these two affairs, his mind was fixed, with matrimonial intentions, on the woman he later married—and the only one, except Mary Chaworth, whom he ever had to woo. Of Claire Clairmont we have seen the shameless persistency: she had still to learn the hardest lesson of all. Now, with Teresa Guiccioli, the same story was begun. "He had made up his mind to enslave her": yes, but only for the little while that she abode in Venice, and, even so, plainly not in the degree which too soon ensued. If she had left the city without being "so liberal", he would have forgotten her at once, and was ready to forget her even as it was, as the letter from Bologna testifies. "Your Blackwood", he wrote to Murray at the end of this year, "accuses me of treating women harshly: it may be so, but I have been their martyr. My whole life has been sacrificed to them and by them". . . . That is true. Scarcely in one of his affairs is any trace of real love to be found; yet almost the whole course of his life was swayed by women. It was their sex's revenge, perhaps! He who despised them was thwarted by

them. "Have you no use for us but to marry us, or tread us into the gutter?" cries a modern woman in a modern man's novel. Byron had no other uses for women.

The month of August was inaugurated by the famous letter to Murray—of nine *printed* pages—about La Fornarina. It concludes with a postscript: "The Countess Guiccioli is much better than she was". She was so much better that by the ninth, she had resumed, with her husband, the tour of his estates. They went to Bologna; and the prospect of following her there as *cavalier' servente* was detestable to Byron. He greatly liked Ravenna; he hated moving—"If I stay six days in a place, I require six months to get out of it"—and, more than all, the institution of the *cicisbeat* revolted him. After he was established in it some months later, he wrote to Hobhouse: "I can't say that I don't feel the degradation. Better be an unskilful planter, an awkward settler—better be a hunter, or anything, than a flatterer of fiddlers and fan-carrier of a woman. I like women—God he knows—but the more their system here develops upon me, the worse it seems, after Turkey too; here the polygamy is all on the female side. . . . And now I am a Cavalier' Servente—by the holy! it is a strange sensation".¹

The allusion to "an unskilful planter" is explained by the project unfolded in this letter. He had been reading newspaper puffs of "Bolivar's country"—the Venezuela territory, and had already (we have not the letter) spoken of wishing to go and settle there, to both Hobhouse and Murray. The desire had fastened on him as he endured longer "the degradation". On August 10 he had left Ravenna for Bologna. Before

¹ *L. and J.* iv. 357.

doing so, he had, in his distaste for the prospect he saw before him, actually implored Teresa to elope with him openly. But this was to her unthinkable. "To an Italian wife", says Chiarini, an Italian writer on Byron, "everything is forgiven but the actual leaving of her husband. . . . In Italy, it alone *is* the error, and from its rarity seems no less monstrous than odious". She, in her horror at such a proposal, had made an alternative one. She would represent herself as dead, like Juliet, and allow herself to be committed to the shroud and vault, thence to escape secretly to his arms, and thus save the honour of the houses of Gamba and Guiccioli!

"I hate a theatrical *mise-en-scène*": it was to the man who had said that, that this project was suggested. It is humorous only to think of Byron's face as he read—for the plan was sketched in a letter. Of course it was rejected, and he wretchedly resigned himself to the sole alternative. On August 12, we find him in the best hotel at Bologna, writing to Murray: "I am not very well to-day. Last night I went to the representation of Alfieri's *Mirra*,¹ the two last acts of which threw me into convulsions . . . the agony of reluctant tears and the choking shudder which I do not often undergo for fiction. . . . The worst was that the *dama* in whose box I was went off in the same way".

Thus, with a tactlessness surely unparalleled in the annals of woman, did Teresa Guiccioli initiate her definite reign. His description of the next morning is droll enough. "We are all languid and pathetic,

¹ *Mirra* deals with those forbidden relations on which Byron's mind had long been fixed. It was but lately emancipated, and doubtless the recall to such broodings had something to do with his seizure. *Mirra*, in the play, is the victim of a passion for her father. Matthews, in the *Diary of an Invalid*, says: "I have seldom seen a tragedy where the distress is more affecting".

with great expenditure of *Sal volatile*"; but he was in reality almost beside himself at this time with nervous strain. Ill, enervated as he had been—to a degree which had permanently undermined his constitution—he was not, and never again was to be, fit to encounter the excitements and vexations of life. The *Don Juan* worry was in full blast. The first and second cantos had been published, without author's or publisher's name, on July 15. "You seem in a fright", he had said to Murray in May; "remember you need not publish, unless you like it. . . . 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 never vex you wilfully . . . but you sometimes touch a jarring string . . . and although I think you a little spoilt by . . . wits, persons of honour about town, authors, fashionables, together with your 'I am just going to call at Carlton House: are you walking that way?' . . . you deserve and possess the esteem of those whose esteem is worth having and of none more (however useless it may be) than yours very truly—B".

But though with Murray he could be patient, Hobhouse's apprehensions and comments on the proof-sheets put him almost beside himself. "Mr. Hobhouse is at it again about indelicacy. There is *no* indelicacy. . . .¹ For my part, I think you are all crazed". But Hobhouse, in hesitating at the Donna Inez stanzas (canto i.), was certainly not crazed. "This is so very pointed", he pleads, of the famous lines about "her duty both to man and God". "*Carissimo*, do review the whole scene, and think what

¹ Yet five days later he writes: "You talk of 'approximations to indelicacy'; 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'" (*L. and J.* iv. 304-5).

you would say of it as written by another"—such is the engaging manner of his protest against the bedroom episode of canto i. In vain; he succeeded in getting one "Damn" omitted—that was all. "I am already sick of your remarks", wrote Byron to his two censors; "to which I think not the least attention ought to be paid". Finally: "I trust you have not waited for further alterations—I will make none. . . . Think *you* of the sale, and leave me to pluck the porcupines who may point their quills at you. . . . You ask me if I mean to continue *D. J.*, etc. How should I know? what encouragement do you give me with your nonsensical prudery? Publish the two Cantos, and then you will see". And a fortnight after *Don Juan* burst upon the world: "You will see me defend myself gaily—that is, if I happen to be in spirits. . . . You may perhaps see some good tossing and going. 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. . . . Come what may, I never will flatter the millions' canting in any shape. . . . 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". This letter is remarkable as the only one in which he permits himself a gibe at Moore.¹

He had heard nothing of the effect of "Donny Johnny" by August 9. "You chicken-hearted, silver-

¹ "The only one, as far as I can learn, that ever fell from [his] pen during our intimacy". Moore relates that he "made the . . . harmless little sneer a subject of raillery" with Byron when they shortly afterwards met at Venice; "but he declared boldly that he had no recollection of ever having written such words, and that if they existed, 'he must have been half-asleep when he wrote them'" (Moore, p. 403).

paper Stationer, you! . . . I never saw such a set of fellows as you are: and then the pains taken to exculpate the modest publisher—he had remonstrated, forsooth! . . . I will cut you all up (and *you* in particular) like Gourds . . . you have no more . . . blood than a water-melon! And I see there hath been asterisks and . . . ‘demned cutting and slashing’. But never mind”.

When he wrote that, he was setting out for his slavery at Bologna; and in the letter describing the seizure at the theatre, he says: “You are right, Gifford is right, Hobhouse is right—you are all right, and I am all wrong; but do pray let me have that pleasure. Cut me up root and branch . . . make me, if you will, a spectacle to men and angels; but don’t ask me to alter, for I can’t; I am obstinate and lazy—and there’s the truth”. There follows a defence of the quick succession of fun and gravity, in answer to one of his critics¹—too long for quotation, but to be read by all who care for brilliant controversy. And then: “You ask me for the plan of Donny Johnny: I *have* no plan—I *had* no plan . . . but if continued, it must be in my own way. . . . Why, Man, the soul of such writing is its licence”.

Soon he was to suffer from the public condemnation: “the cry is up”, he wrote, “and cant is up”. He was indicted for obscenity, blasphemy, “studious lewdness, laboured impiety”—his work was a “pestilent poem”, and he himself was called “this miserable man (for miserable he is, as having a soul of which he cannot get rid)”. . . That notice, which appeared in “My Grandmother’s Review—the British”, is a mild sample of the

¹ Francis Cohen, afterwards (on assuming his mother’s maiden name) Francis Palgrave, knighted in 1832. The passage occurs in a letter of August 12, 1819 (*L. and J.* iv. 341-42).

sort of thing which reached him ; and ere long he wrote to Murray : " Keep the anonymous. It helps what fun there may be ; but if the matter grows serious about *Juan* . . . own that I am the author. I will never shrink. . . . I wish that I had been in better spirits, but I am out of sorts, out of nerves, and now and then (I begin to fear) out of my senses.¹ All this Italy has done for me, and not England ; I defy all of you and your climate to boot, to make me mad "

The Guicciolis had now left Bologna on another tour of the estates. Byron remained behind, in a sort of distraction—infinately harassed about *Juan*, about his present situation, about Allegra. There had been difficulty in the beginning of July, while he was still at Ravenna. The Hoppners were about to travel in Switzerland, and Mrs. Hoppner desired, before departing, to make adequate arrangements for the little girl. She had for some time thought it unwise in Claire to insist on Allegra's remaining in Venice. " She has got as quiet and serious as a little old woman, and suffers much from the cold ". Nor did Mrs. Hoppner believe that Byron would ever restore her to the mother. Her report, in short, was as gloomy as could be, and the Shelley household at Leghorn became terribly uneasy. Then an English lady, Mrs. Vavassour, a widow, with no children of her own, offered to adopt and provide for Allegra, " if Lord Byron would consent to renounce all claim to her ". Such entire surrender he would not agree to ; and when the Hoppners started on their Swiss trip, Allegra was at first, with a maid of Mrs. Hoppner's choosing, left in the house of one of the

¹ Byron had always been addicted to saying he was mad. Scrope Davies (as Byron loved to relate) used to answer : " More like s-silliness than m-madness ". Scrope had an " irresistible " stutter.

men-servants' wives. But as soon as Byron settled down at Bologna he sent for her, and she was with him there when the Guicciolis departed on August 21. "I feel alone and unhappy", he wrote to Murray on August 24; next day he wandered up to Teresa's empty house, had her rooms opened, and sat turning over her books and writing in them. With her copy of *Corinne* he descended to the garden, and there, "as he stood looking, in a state of unconscious reverie, into one of those fountains so common in the gardens of Italy, there came suddenly into his mind such desolate fancies, such bodings of the misery he might bring on her he loved . . . that overwhelmed with his own thoughts, he burst into an agony of tears".¹ This fantastic mood of depression produced the great *Don Juan*² stanza :

"Oh, Love! what is it in this world of ours
Which makes it fatal to be loved?" . . .

—and the famous love-letter to Teresa, written in English (which she could not read) in the fly-leaf of *Corinne*.

"MY DEAREST TERESA,—I have read this book 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 handwriting 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. I feel I exist here, and I

¹ Moore, p. 407.

² Canto iii. stanza 2.

fear that I shall exist hereafter,—to *what* purpose you will decide; my destiny rests with you, and you are a woman, seventeen years of age, and two out of a convent. I wish that you had stayed there, with all my heart,—or, at least, that I had never met you in your married state.

“But all this is too late. I love you, and you love me,—at least, you *say so*, and *act* as if you *did so*, which last is a great consolation in all events. But *I* more than love you, and cannot cease to love you.

“Think of me, sometimes, when the Alps and the ocean divide us,—but they never will, unless you *wish* it.

BYRON

“BOLOGNA, August 25, 1819”

In later years, Teresa quoted the final words, and added in a note: “*On ne le voulait pas; donc ne se fut pas*”. This was the time—the very week—in which he wrote to England of the South American project; soon afterwards, Hobhouse was to have the confession: “I can’t say that I don’t feel the degradation”. He continued, “You must not talk to me of England, that is out of the question. I had a house and lands, and a wife and child, and a name there—once—but all these things are transmuted or sequestered. . . . Of the last, and best, ten years of my life, six have been passed out of it. . . . Yet I want a country and a home, and—if possible—a free one. I am not yet thirty-two years of age. I might still be a decent citizen and found a house and a family as good—or better—than the former. . . . Do not laugh at me; you will, but I assure you I am quite in earnest if the thing be practicable”.¹ He meant to take Allegra with him.

When he wrote thus to Hobhouse on October 3,

¹ *L. and J.* iv. 358.

he was back in Venice at La Mira, and Teresa was with him—definitely established there as his mistress. The Guicciolis had returned to Bologna in September; but the Count soon afterwards left again for Ravenna, and this time he did not take his wife. The consequences were immediate and remarkable: on September 18 she and Byron left Bologna for Venice. But even then it was not an “elopement”. A reason was given—the state of the Countess’s health; and the Count “consented that Lord Byron should be the companion of my journey”. “When I arrived at Venice”, writes Teresa, “the physicians ordered that I should try the country air, and Lord Byron, having a villa at La Mira, gave it up to me, and came to reside there with me”. The situation could not be more exquisitely delineated: comment would be profanation of so brilliant an epigram. . . . Byron’s first word from the villa is to Murray: “You must not mind me when I say I am ill; it merely means low spirits—and folly”. The next is the letter to Hobhouse.

Moore arrived on October 7, and at once went to La Mira. He reached it at two o’clock. “Byron was but just up and in his bath; he soon came down to me; first time we have met these five years; grown fat. . . . Found him in wild spirits and full of his usual frolicsome gaiety”. That is the entry in the diary; the book enlarges: “The addition of whiskers . . . from hearing that some one had said he had a *faccia di musica*, 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 a dissimilarity to his former self. He was still, however, eminently handsome”. They set off at once on an expedition to Venice (where Moore was to inhabit the Mocenigo Palace), but before they left, the visitor was presented to

the Countess : " She is a blonde and young ; married only about a year, but not very pretty ". On the 11th he saw her again : " looked prettier than she did the first time ". Byron, reporting on the stay to Murray when it was over, said, " Moore and I did nothing but laugh ", and Moore confirms this. " Our course was, I am almost ashamed to say, one of uninterrupted merriment and laughter. . . . All that had ever happened, of gay or ridiculous, during our London life together . . . was passed rapidly in review between us, with a flow of humour and hilarity on his side ". They spent nearly all their time together ; the *cicisbeo* was given a holiday, and rejoiced a little too frankly in his liberty. " He was obliged to return to La Mira in the evenings, but he made it a point to come to Venice every day and dine with me ". At the *salons*, whither Moore went with Byron's friend Alexander Scott, the traveller came in for Madame Benzoni's opinion of the state of affairs at La Mira. Madame Albrizzi had already refused to receive the Countess Guiccioli ; the Benzoni, less rigid (as we have seen), nevertheless pointed out to Moore that Italian views of morality were outraged. " You must really scold your friend ", she said ; " till this unfortunate affair, he had behaved so *perfectly* ! "

On October 9 there came a letter from Count Guiccioli. The Countess had been expecting it, and with some apprehension, for the La Mira arrangement can scarcely have been nominated in the bond. But so far from expressing any censure of her conduct, what the husband wrote about was to ask her to induce Lord Byron to lend him £1000—on loan, of course, at five per cent. interest ; any other course would be degrading, an "*avvilimento*". Byron showed the letter to Moore that evening, and Moore, though disgusted, strongly advised the loan, for he thought it would " materially

facilitate" the retracing of the "imprudent step" which had been taken. But Byron disagreed. He had lately, according to his friend Alexander Scott (a resident in Venice), taken up "with the good old-gentlemanly vice" of avarice; he kept a hoarding-box, and had collected about 300 sequins, greatly delighting in the contemplation of his store. He now declared that he could not pay so high as £1000 for his frolic, and laid a wager with Scott (who accepted it) that "he would manage to save the money and the lady too".

Moore left on the 11th, going on to Rome. He had been much disconcerted to find that Byron was seriously thinking of coming with him. It had been suggested between them before Moore knew anything of the situation at La Mira; now the cruelty and insult of such a step were evident, and the Irishman was horrified that his friend should still intend it. "You cannot leave the Countess in such a position; it would be most humiliating to her", he urged — and Byron sighed and acquiesced. He pleaded for at least an expedition to Arquà, but Moore, tied to time and anxious to reach Rome and if possible Naples, was not to be drawn aside, and so, a little way from Venice, they said good-bye to one another—never to meet again.

On October 29 there is a letter to Hoppner, now back in Venice after the Swiss tour.¹ "I should like to know who has been carried off except poor dear *me*"—that cry begins the epistle; further on we read: "Count G. comes to Venice next week, and I am requested to consign his wife to him, which shall be done. . . . What

¹ Hoppner, before his departure, had written to urge Byron (then at Ravenna) to "leave the place while he had a whole skin", and also to consider the "safety of a person he appeared so sincerely attached to". Byron had frankly told him that this warning "displeased him very much". 'Upon that subject we will (if you like) be silent'. Byron was "silent" only till the letter in the text of October 29.

you say of the long evenings at La Mira, or Venice, reminds me of what Curran said to Moore—‘so I hear you have married a pretty woman, and a very good creature too—an excellent creature; pray—um—*how do you pass your evenings?*’ It is a devil of a question that, and perhaps as easy to answer with a wife as with a mistress. . . . I wish you had been here when Moore was here (at Venice, I mean, not the Mira); we were very merry and tipsy”.

Count Guiccioli arrived in the first week of November, and demanded his wife. “They are in high discussion”, wrote Byron to Murray on the 8th. “I am expressly excluded in his paper of conditions which he insists on her accepting, and she persists in refusing”. Byron himself was slowly recovering from a bad attack of tertian fever, at the crisis of which he had been when the Count first arrived. He was delirious through a whole night, “and on my senses coming back, found Fletcher sobbing on one side of the bed, and La Contessa Guiccioli on the other”. During the delirium “he composed a good many verses” (so the Countess told Moore) “and ordered his servant to write them down from his dictation. . . . He preserved them for some time after he got well, and then burned them”. He was also haunted by the idea of his mother-in-law (as Moore was informed), “taking every one that came near him for her, and reproaching those about him for allowing her to enter the room”.

Thus he did not take an ardent part in the discussion. “As I tell you”, he wrote to Murray, “that the Guiccioli business is on the eve of exploding in one way or the other, I will just add that without attempting to influence the decision of the Countess, a good deal depends upon it. If she and her husband make it up, you will, perhaps, see me in England sooner

than you expect ; if not, I shall retire with her to France or America, change my name, and lead a quiet provincial life. All this may seem odd, but I have got the poor girl into a scrape, and as neither her birth, nor her rank, nor her connections by birth or marriage are inferior to my own, I am in honour bound to support her through ; besides, she is a very pretty woman—ask Moore—and not yet one-and-twenty. If she gets over this, and I get over my tertian, I will, perhaps, look in at Albemarle Street some of these days, *en passant* to Bolivar”.

The discussions lasted till the end of the month. The Countess wept and pleaded: but in the end she had to go, and to give a promise that all intercourse of any kind should cease between her and Byron. He left La Mira and returned to the Mocenigo Palace, “very much out of spirits”, as Hoppner told Moore, “and out of humour with everybody and everything about him”. They resumed their rides on the Lido, and his return to England was much discussed. But the promise not to correspond with the Countess was soon broken—plainly first by her. Byron answered on November 25, in Italian—the translation is Moore’s :

“You are, and ever will be, my first thought. But, at this moment, I am in a state most dreadful, not knowing which way to decide ;—on the one hand, fearing that I should compromise you for ever, by my return to Ravenna and the consequences of such a step, and, on the other, dreading that I shall lose both you and myself, and all that I have ever known or tasted of happiness, by never seeing you more. I pray of you, I implore you, to be comforted, and to believe that I cannot cease to love you but with my life. . . . I go to save you, and leave a country insupportable to me without you. Your letters to F * * and myself do wrong to my motives—

but you will yet see your injustice. It is not enough that I must leave you—from motives of which ere long you will be convinced—it is not enough that I must fly from Italy, with a heart deeply wounded, after having passed all my days in solitude since your departure, sick both in body and mind—but I must also have to endure your reproaches without answering and without deserving them. Farewell! in that one word is comprised the death of my happiness”.

On December 4, this is how he wrote to Murray: “I have had a tertian ague; my daughter Allegra has been ill also, and I have been almost obliged to run away with a married woman. But with some difficulty, and many internal struggles, I reconciled the lady with her lord, and cured the fever of the child with bark, and my own with cold water. I think of setting out for England by the Tyrol in a few days, so that I could wish you to direct your next letter to Calais.¹ . . . My present determination to quit Italy was unlooked for; but I have explained the reasons in letters to my sister and Douglas K. a week or two ago”. He had arranged everything, the very day for departure was fixed, when he heard alarming accounts from Ravenna of Teresa’s health. She was fretting and pining; the threatened “consumption” was again brought into play;² her father and uncle grew alarmed; they withdrew all opposition to her wishes, and obtained the husband’s sanction for renewed intercourse with Byron, who was to be invited to Ravenna. A letter detailing these plans was written by Count Gamba; and at the time it was written, this was what was happening in Venice: “He was ready dressed for the journey [to England], his gloves and cap

¹ This was the time of the Return Scare in England, which we have seen, from that side, in Vol. I. Chap. I.

² She lived until 1873.

on, and even his little cane in his hand. Nothing was now waited for but his coming downstairs—his boxes being already on board the gondola. At this moment, my Lord, by way of pretext, declares that if it should strike one o'clock before everything was in order (his arms being the one thing not ready) he would not go that day. The hour strikes—and he remains!" This account is from a letter written to Teresa by a friend of hers, "La F——", who adds: "It is evident he had not the heart to go". . . .

The next day came the summons to Ravenna. Byron wrote to Teresa, in Italian:

"F*** will already have told you, *with her accustomed sublimity*, that Love has gained the victory. I could not summon up resolution enough to leave the country where you are, without, at least, once more seeing you. On *yourself*, perhaps, it will depend, whether I ever again shall leave you. Of the rest we shall speak when we meet. You ought, by this time, to know which is most conducive to your welfare, my presence or my absence. For myself, I am a citizen of the world—all countries are alike to me. You have ever been, since our first acquaintance, *the sole object of my thoughts*. My opinion was, that the best course I could adopt, both for your peace and that of all your family, would have been to depart and go far, *far* away from you;—since to have been near and not approach you would have been, for me, impossible. You have however decided that I am to return to Ravenna. I shall accordingly return—and shall *do*—and *be* all that you wish. I cannot say more."

Then, on December 10 to Murray, the famous words: "Your Blackwood accuses me of treating women harshly: it may be so, but I have been their martyr. My whole life has been sacrificed *to* them and

by them". Yet still the dream of a return to England persisted. "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". There is a P.S.: "Pray let my sister be informed that I am not coming as I intended: I have not the courage to tell her so myself, at least as yet; but I will soon, *with the reasons*". On December 23 from Bologna, on his way to Ravenna, he did tell her; but (in the letter we are shown) without "the reasons". We have seen¹ how she regarded the prospect of his return; "Luckily, or *un-*luckily perhaps, I do not die easily, or I think this stroke would about finish me"; seen that her resolution to receive him, if he did return, was nevertheless unalterable, "though I trust I may be spared the trial—I scarcely know of any greater that could befall me"; and seen, too, that this resolution was the cause of a much-lessened intercourse between her and Lady Byron.

He reached Ravenna on December 24, 1819. Venice was done with for ever—Venice, "that now empty oyster-shell", as he wrote to Hoppner; Venice, the Gehenna of the waters, the Sea-Sodom, of *Marino Faliero*: "I hate the place and all that it inherits".

¹ In Chapter I.

CHAPTER VII

RAVENNA—1820—1821

Letters to Hoppner and Moore—Installed at the Palazzo Guiccioli—“Drilling very hard”—*Mazeppa* and *The Prophecy of Dante*—Third Canto of *Don Juan*—Translations—*Blackwood* manifesto—Allegra—A breeze with Hobhouse—Dissatisfaction—Carbonarist troubles, and separation of Count and Countess Guiccioli—Teresa leaves the City—Byron remains at the Palace—Carbonarist movement collapses—Teresa flies to Florence—Byron remains behind

THE first letter from Ravenna was to Hoppner, on December 31, 1819:

“I have been here this week, and was obliged to put on my armour and go the night after my arrival to the Marquis Cavalli’s, where there were between two and three hundred of the best company I have seen in Italy. . . . The G.’s object appeared to be to parade her foreign lover as much as possible, and, faith, if she seemed to glory in the scandal, it was not for me to be ashamed of it. Nobody seemed surprised;—all the women, on the contrary, were, as it were, delighted with the excellent example. The vice-legate, and all the other vices, were as polite as could be;—and I, who had acted on the reserve, was fairly obliged to take the lady under my arm, and look as much like a cicisbeo as I could on so short a notice,—to say nothing of the embarrassment of a cocked hat and sword, much more formidable to me than ever it will be to the enemy.

“I can understand nothing of all this ; but it seems as if the G. had been presumed to be *planted*, and was determined to show that she was not,—*plantation*, in this hemisphere, being the greatest moral misfortune. But this is mere conjecture, for I know nothing about it—except that everybody are very kind to her, and not discourteous to me. Fathers, and all relations, quite agreeable”.

On January 2 of the New Year, anniversary of his wedding-day five years before, he wrote to Moore, leading off with a rhymed epigram :

“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*”.

A shower of similar *jeux d’esprit* followed—on Lord Castlereagh, Pitt, Tom Paine : “The gods seem to have made me poetical to-day” ; and then Moore got the naked truth about the situation.

“For my own part, I had a sad scene since you went. Count Gu. came for his wife, and *none* of those consequences which Scott prophesied ensued. There was no damages, as in England, and so Scott lost his wager. But there was a great scene, for she would not, at first, go back with him—at least, she *did* go back with him ; but he insisted, reasonably enough, that all communication should be broken off between her and me. So, finding Italy very dull, and having a fever tertian, I packed up my valise, and prepared to cross the Alps ; but my daughter fell ill, and detained me.

“After her arrival at Ravenna, the Guiccioli fell ill again too ; and at last, her father (who had, all along, opposed the liaison most violently till now) wrote to me to say that she was in such a state that *he* begged me to come and see her,—and that her husband had acquiesced,

in consequence of her relapse, and that *he* (her father) would guarantee all this, and that there would be no further scenes in consequence between them, and that I should not be compromised in any way. I set out soon after, and have been here ever since. I found her a good deal altered, but getting better:—*all* this comes of reading *Corinna*”.

In the early days he put up at an hotel, but the Count, resolute to make his profit out of the English Milord's infatuation, if not in one way then in another, arranged that he should hire a suite of apartments in the Palazzo Guiccioli itself. Here are some extracts from letters to Hoppner at this time :

“RAVENNA, *January 20, 1820*

“I have not decided anything about remaining at Ravenna. I may stay a day, a week, a year, all my life ; but all this depends upon what I can neither see nor foresee. I came because I was called, and will go the moment that I perceive what may render my departure proper. My attachment has neither the blindness of the beginning, nor the microscopic accuracy of the close to such liaisons ; but ‘time and the hour’ must decide upon what I do”.

Towards the end : “Perhaps we may meet in the spring yet, if you are for England” ; but he was gradually being tamed :

“I am drilling very hard to learn how to double a shawl, and should succeed to admiration if I did not always double it the wrong side out ; and then I sometimes confuse and bring away two, so as to put all the *Serventi* out, besides keeping their *Servite* in the cold till everybody can get back their property. But it is a dreadfully moral place, for you must not look at anybody's wife except your neighbour's,—if you go to the next

door but one, you are scolded, and presumed to be perfidious. And then a *relazione* or an *amicizia* seems to be a regular affair of from five to fifteen years, at which period, if there occur a widowhood, it finishes by a *sposalizio*; and in the meantime it has so many rules of its own, that it is not much better. A man actually becomes a piece of female property,—they won't let their Serventi marry until there is a vacancy for themselves”.

Mazeppa had been published on June 28, 1819, with the *Ode on Venice* and *A Fragment*—that is, the fragment of his *Vampire* story.¹ Lady Caroline Lamb thought, of *Mazeppa*, that there was “something fine in the conception and execution . . . also something pretty”; in 1820, Byron received “some American abuse” of the volume; it was reviewed by *Blackwood*, and the *Monthly* and *Eclectic* Reviews; but on the whole it may be said to have fallen quite flat. Thus, with the outcry against *Don Juan*, he was, as he confessed to Murray, “hurt”. “I have not written *con amore* this time”, he adds of the Third *Juan*, which had been completed in early November 1819; “very decent, I believe, but do not know”. By February 1820 he did know, or thought he did. “It is very decent and as dull”. It is decent, but by no means dull, for it contains the scene which Coleridge compared to Nicolas Poussin's pictures—the return of Lambro to the island; and the

¹ Of this scrap, Byron said: “I began it in an old account-book of Miss Milbanke's, which I kept because it contains the word ‘Household’ written by her twice on the inside blank page of the cover; being the only two scraps I have in the world of her writing, except her name to the Deed of Separation”. He wrote the same thing to her in an *unsent* letter of November 17, 1821, acknowledging a lock of Ada's hair. This letter he enclosed in a note to Lady Blessington on May 6, 1823, and it is printed by Moore. Mr. Prothero thinks that possibly the date was 1822. Byron wrote his wife many letters which he did not send.

undying "Isles of Greece"—an interpolated lyric giving us the lovely stanza on Marathon.

"The mountains look on Marathon,
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dream'd that Greece might still be free;
For, standing on the Persian's grave,
I could not deem myself a slave".¹

The Prophecy of Dante, begun during his first stay at Ravenna, was sent home on March 14, 1820. It was dedicated to the Countess Guiccioli, at whose suggestion it had been begun. "These are but the first four cantos", he wrote, sending it; "if approved, I will go on like Isaiah". He liked it himself; "the best thing I ever wrote, if it be not unintelligible", and to Moore he described it as "very grand and worthy". But Murray delayed to publish, despite protests from the author. "You are losing (like a goose) the best time for publishing Dante and the Tragedy". The tragedy was *Marino Faliero*. Both were at last issued in a single volume on April 21, 1821.² "The poem", said Byron in his Preface, "may be considered as a metrical experiment". It is in the *terza rima* of Dante. The personal note, as usual, sounds in the finest passages: such as the description of the exile's doom in lines 150—

¹ The "Third Canto" of Byron's letters is the third and fourth cantos of the poem. "I have copied, and cut the third canto of *Don Juan into two*, because it was too long"; and he confessed this *coram publico* in stanza III of canto iii.:

"I feel this tediousness will never do—
'Tis being *too* epic, and I must cut down
(In copying) this long canto into two:
They'll never find it out, unless I own
The fact . . ."

Canto iv. contains the death of Haidee, the departure of Juan from the island, and his meeting with the Italian Opera troupe. "I told you long ago", wrote Byron to Murray, "that the new cantos were *not* good. . . . You may suppress them, if you like, but I can alter nothing".

² Murray paid £1000 for the tragedy and the poem.

179 of canto i., with their allusion to "that fatal She . . . the cold partner who hath brought Destruction for a dowry"; the closing lines of canto iii. ; and, again, in the last canto, where return to contemplation of the outlaw sounds, as remorse had done in earlier days, the now recurrent note of his serious work.

He occupied himself, in these initiatory days of domestication, with a mechanical task—the translation "into *cramp* English" of the first canto of Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore*. This had been begun at Venice, and now served as the desired "something craggy for his mind to break on". *Beppo*, *Don Juan* and *The Vision of Judgment* owe their existence to Pulci, and so intense was Byron's gratitude that he actually brought himself to regard the translation as his masterpiece. "It is superb . . . the best thing I ever did in my life"; "I look upon the Pulci as my grand performance"; but he never succeeded in getting Murray to publish it, and after it had been more than two years in "my Admiral's" hands, Byron transferred it to John Hunt (Leigh Hunt's brother) and it appeared in the fourth and last number of *The Liberal* on July 30, 1823. The translation is laboured and faithful—even servile, as he said; it adds nothing to Byron's reputation or our delight. One moment of amusement it does afford: when he rhymes "laurels" with "Charles"! . . . He achieved, at about the same time, a translation—"the cream of translations", he called it—of the episode of Francesca di Rimini from the *Divina Commedia*; "line for line, and rhyme for rhyme". This also left Murray cold; it did not see the light till 1830, in Moore's book.

It was now that Byron wrote the *Observations upon an Article in Blackwood's Magazine*—ostensibly a letter addressed to J. D. Israeli, Esq.; but in reality a personal manifesto. "I am framing an answer (in prose)

to the *Blackwood* article of last August ; it will set the kiln in a low . . . I must now put myself in a passion to continue [it]". By his own orders on mature consideration, and also partly because of Murray's delays, this was not published during his lifetime. The passage beginning "The man who is exiled by a faction"¹ is

¹ "The man who is exiled by a faction has the consolation of thinking that he is a martyr ; he is upheld by hope and the dignity of his cause, real or imaginary : he who withdraws from the pressure of debt may indulge in the thought that time and prudence will retrieve his circumstances : he who is condemned by the law has a term to his banishment, or a dream of its abbreviation ; or, it may be, the knowledge or the belief of some injustice of the law, or of its administration in his own particular : but he who is outlawed by general opinion, without the intervention of hostile politics, illegal judgment, or embarrassed circumstances, whether he be innocent or guilty, must undergo all the bitterness of exile, without hope, without pride, without alleviation. This case was mine. Upon what grounds the public founded their opinion, I am not aware ; but it was general, and it was decisive. Of me or of mine they knew little, except that I had written what is called poetry, was a nobleman, had married, become a father, and was involved in differences with my wife and her relatives, no one knew why, because the persons complaining refused to state their grievances. The fashionable world was divided into parties, mine consisting of a very small minority ; the reasonable world was naturally on the stronger side, which happened to be the lady's, as was most proper and polite. . . . I was accused of every monstrous vice by public rumour and private rancour ; my name, which had been a knightly or a noble one since my fathers helped to conquer the kingdom for William the Norman, was tainted. I felt that, if what was whispered, and muttered, and murmured, was true, I was unfit for England ; if false, England was unfit for me. I withdrew ; but this was not enough. In other countries, in Switzerland, in the shadow of the Alps, and by the blue depths of the lakes, I was pursued and breathed upon by the same blight. I crossed the mountains, but it was the same : so I went a little farther, and settled myself by the waves of the Adriatic, like the stag at bay, who betakes him to the waters. . . . I have heard of, and believe, that there are human beings so constituted as to be insensible to injuries ; but I believe that the best mode to avoid taking vengeance is to get out of the way of temptation. . . . I do not in this allude to the party, who might be right or wrong ; but to many who made her cause the pretext of their own bitterness. She, indeed, must long have avenged me in her own feelings, for whatever her reasons may have been (and she never adduced them, to me at least), she probably neither contemplated nor conceived to what she became the means of conducting the father of her child, and the husband of her choice".

The article in *Blackwood* was on the first and second cantos of *Don Juan*.

magnificent ; not even in his finest verse does the "rage and resistance and redress" flame forth into more consuming heat. That is the true climax ; the letter then degenerates into the too frequent personal attacks on Wordsworth and "the Lakers", and ends in the tedious vindication of "the great little Queen Anne's man", which was the King Charles's head of his critical writings.

Allegra was with him at Ravenna, and there came in the beginning of May an impassioned appeal from Claire to be allowed to see her. An application had first been made through the Hoppners, which Byron answered on April 22, in a letter which Claire characterised in her Journal as "concerning green fruit and God".¹ It contained the first hint of sending the child to a convent, and this terribly alarmed Claire. "You will inflict the greatest of all evils on my child . . . she will be equally divided from us both"—and she recalled the Bible story of Solomon's judgment. Byron answered not to her but to Shelley, who wrote condemning his harsh tone, though admitting that Claire's letters (which Shelley had not seen) might too probably be vexatious. We know no more until August 25, when Byron again wrote, declining all correspondence with Claire. Shelley answered on September 17, saying now that any of her letters which he had seen he had thought "extremely childish and absurd". "I wonder, however", he added, "at your being provoked at what Claire writes. . . . The weak and the foolish are in this respect

¹ Byron had said : "I so totally disapprove of the mode of children's treatment in [the Shelley] family that I should look upon the child as going into a hospital . . . I shall either send her to England, or put her in a convent for education. . . . But [she] shall not quit me again to perish of starvation and green fruit, or be taught to believe 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".

like kings—they can do no wrong". There the matter ends for that year. Byron sent Hoppner a report of the child: "obstinate as a mule . . . she thinks herself handsome, and will do as she pleases". In truth, Allegra was (as Hoppner told Moore) "by no means a lovable child", despite her great beauty.

In the spring of 1820 there was a little breeze with Hobhouse, who had, as Byron said, "foamed into a reformer and subsided into Newgate".¹ This incited Byron to a very dull squib, which Murray showed to Hobhouse and many others. The victim was keenly hurt, and his anger lasted—but it was nobly shown,² and the saddened entries in his Journal are convincing evidence that his deep affection was more wounded than his vanity. But Byron was annoyed by the feeling which his prank had stirred, and later in the year, finding that the strain still lasted, made through Murray what may almost be called an attack upon the friend of so many years.

The truth is that he was so profoundly dissatisfied with his way of life at this time that all the natural sweetness of his temper was soured—for though vehement and irritable sometimes, he was normally sweet-tempered, with men at any rate. Late in 1820 he wrote to Moore: "Damn your *mezzo cammin* . . ."³ Besides, it is not correct. I was born in 1788, and consequently am but thirty-two"; to Murray, a little later: "Why do

¹ In 1819, Hobhouse had published a pamphlet which was voted a breach of privilege; he was committed to Newgate, and remained there until the dissolution of Parliament in February 1820. At the ensuing election, he was chosen as one of the representatives for Westminster.

² He wrote Murray an admirable letter (*L. and J.* App. xi.).

³ Moore explains: "I had congratulated him upon arriving at what Dante calls the *mezzo cammin* of life, the age of thirty-three".

the papers call *Hobhouse young*? He is a year and a half older than I am; and I was thirty-two last January". . . For him who had "anticipated life" (as he said of himself) thirty-two was almost middle age; but, more than that, the tie by which he now was bound dejected him terribly. Such feeling as he had ever had for Teresa Guiccioli had faded, and left him in a temper towards her—first of apathy, and then of such impatience as could not easily be endured. Already in May 1820, Moore, who had seen them at La Mira in the end of 1819, could make this entry in his diary: "Davy [Sir Humphrey] went to Ravenna to see Lord Byron, who is now living domesticated with the Guiccioli and her husband after all. He was rather anxious to get off with Davy to Bologna, professedly for the purpose of seeing Lady Davy, but I have no doubt with a wish to give his *Contessa* the slip". In Byron's diary for January 23, 1821, he sums up the past year:

"The year 1820 was not a fortunate one for the individual me. . . . I lost a lawsuit,¹ after two decisions in my favour. The project of lending money on an Irish mortgage was finally rejected by my wife's trustee after a year's hope and trouble. The Rochdale lawsuit had endured fifteen years, and always prospered till I married; since which, everything has gone wrong—with me, at least. In the same year, 1820, the Countess T. G. in spite of all I said and did to prevent it, *would* separate from her husband. . . . The other little petty vexations of the year—overturns in carriages—the murder of people before one's door, and dying in one's beds—the cramp in swimming—colics—indigestions and bilious attacks, etc. etc. etc.

"Many small articles make up a sum,
And hey-ho for Caleb Quotem, oh!"

¹ Over the Rochdale coal-mines.

The stirring of the revolutionary movement of 1820-21 in Italy brought in its train the Carbonari troubles—and, incidentally, the separation of Teresa from her husband. Byron wrote to Murray in April: "There is THAT brewing in Italy which will speedily cut off all liberty of communication, and set all your Anglo-travellers flying in all directions. . . . The Spanish and French affairs¹ have set the Italians in a ferment, and no wonder: they have been too long trampled on". He was of course on the side of the insurgents against Austria, and Teresa's father and brother were of the same persuasion. But the Count Guiccioli was not—and Byron happened to be lodging under his roof. The Palace soon became the head-quarters of insurrection, for Byron was at the head of the "American" division of the Carbonari in Romagna. "The police", he wrote in April 1821, "is all on the alert, and the Cardinal glares pale through all his purple". . . . While these matters were still in embryo, the Count Guiccioli made a move. He requested his wife to dismiss her insurgent admirer. She refused. He replied by threatening her with a decree of separation. She laughed in his face, and her family and "the public" (as Byron wrote) were on her side, "particularly the women—and the men too, because they say that *he* had no business to take the business up now after a year of toleration". "I have given her", wrote Byron to Moore at the end of May, "the best advice, viz.: to stay with him, pointing out the state of a separated woman . . . and making the most exquisite moral reflections—but to no purpose. She says, 'I will stay with him, if he will let you remain

¹ After the fall of Decazes and the assassination of the Duc de Berri in 1820, the Government of France became reactionary. There were sporadic insurrections, which were suppressed. In Spain the movement was more successful, and Ferdinand III was forced to take the oath of fidelity to the free Constitution.

with me. It is hard that I should be the only woman in Romagna who is not to have her *Amico*. . . . You know how females reason on such occasions. He says he has let it go on till he can do so no longer. But he wants her to stay, and dismiss me ; for he doesn't like to pay back her dowry and to make an alimony. Her relations are rather for the separation, as they detest him,—indeed, so does everybody. . . . I should have retreated, but honour, and an erysipelas which has attacked her, prevent me,—to say nothing of love, for I love her most entirely, though not enough to persuade her to sacrifice everything to a frenzy”.

On June 1, a further report to Moore :

“The separation business still continues, and all the world are implicated, including priests and cardinals. . . . He has been trying at evidence, but can get none *sufficient* ; for what would make fifty divorces in England won't do here—there must be the *most decided* proofs.

“All her relations are furious against him. The father has challenged him—a superfluous valour, for he don't fight, though suspected of two assassinations—one of the famous Monzoni of Forli. Warning was given me not to take such long rides in the Pine Forest without being on my guard ; so I take my stiletto and a pair of pistols in my pocket during my daily rides.

“I won't stir from this place till the matter is settled one way or the other. She is as femininely firm as possible ; and the opinion is so much against him, that the *advocates* decline to undertake his cause, because they say that he is either a fool or a rogue—fool, if he did not discover the liaison till now ; and rogue, if he did know it, and waited for some bad end, to divulge it. In short, there has been nothing like it since the days of Guido di Polenta's family, in these parts.

“If the man has me taken off, like Polonius 'say, he

made a good end',—for a melodrame. The principal security is, that he has not the courage to spend twenty scudi—the average price of a clean-handed bravo—otherwise there is no want of opportunity, for I ride about the woods every evening, with one servant, and sometimes an acquaintance, who latterly looks a little queer in solitary bits of bushes”.

The final news was sent to the same correspondent on July 13 :

“The Pope has pronounced *their separation*. The decree came yesterday from Babylon,—it was *she* and *her friends* who demanded it, on the grounds of her husband's (the noble Count Cavalier's) extraordinary usage. *He* opposed it with all his might because of the alimony, which has been assigned, with all her goods, chattels, carriage, etc., to be restored by him. In Italy they can't divorce. He insisted on her giving me up, and he would forgive everything—even the adultery, which he swears he can prove. . . . But, in this country, the very courts hold such proofs in abhorrence, the Italians being as much more delicate in public than the English, as they are more passionate in private.

“It is but to let the women alone, in the way of conflict, for they are sure to win against the field. She returns to her father's house, and I can only see her under great restrictions—such is the custom of the country. The relations behave very well:—I offered any settlement, but they refused to accept it,¹ and swear she *shan't* live with G. (as he has tried to prove her faithless), but that he shall maintain her; and, in fact, a judgment to this effect came yesterday. I am, of course, in an awkward situation enough”.

¹ And refused to the end, as did the Countess herself. She even declined to allow Byron to include her name in his will.

Decidedly, Count Guiccioli had not managed well! How little sincerity there had been in the citation of Byron's traffic with the Carbonari as a cause of offence, is shown by the fact that the "English Milord" remained at the Palazzo Guiccioli all through the movement (which came to its abortive end early in 1821), and for many months afterwards.

The decree was published at Ravenna in the middle of July. Teresa left the city at once, and withdrew to her father's villa, fifteen miles outside. Byron's arrangements—awkward though the situation had been proclaimed by him—were not altered. *He remained at the Guiccioli Palace until October 29, 1821.* While Teresa was still at her father's villa, he visited her—"about once or twice, perhaps, in a month", says Moore, but Byron's diary, begun on January 4, 1821, records visits much more frequent. The odd life suited him not too ill; but for the woman who had given up riches—her alimony from the Count was but £200 a year, and the Gambas were very needy—social standing, pleasant and cultured surroundings, for love of him, it must have been a mournful period; and worse was to come. The revolutionary movement collapsed in February–March 1821. "The *plan* has missed", wrote Byron in his diary for February 24; "the chiefs are betrayed, and the Neapolitans" (it was in Naples that the first rising had been planned) "have declared to the Government . . . that they know nothing of the matter! Thus the world goes; and thus the Italians are always lost for lack of union among themselves. . . . I always had an idea that it would be *bungled*; but was willing to hope and am so still." He hoped in vain. By July, all activity was at an end, the country "in a state of proscription, and all my friends exiled or arrested—the whole family of Gamba obliged to go to Florence for the present—the

father and son¹ for politics, and the Guiccioli because menaced with a *convent*, as her father is *not* here ”.

At the same time, Teresa heard that her husband was in Rome, petitioning the authorities to insist upon her either returning to him or going into retreat. Her terror and despair were extreme. She instantly wrote to Byron (in Italian) these very moving and significant words :

“ Help me, my dear Byron, for I am in a situation most terrible ; and without you, I can resolve upon nothing. . . . I must not speak of this to any one,—I must escape by night ; for, if my project should be discovered, it will be impeded, and my passport (which the goodness of Heaven has permitted me, I know not how, to obtain) will be taken from me. Byron ! I am in despair !—If I must leave you here without knowing when I shall see you again, if it is your will that I should suffer so cruelly, I am resolved to remain. They may put me in a convent ; I shall die,—but—but then you cannot aid me, and I cannot reproach you. I know not what they tell me, for my agitation overwhelms me ;—and why ? Not because I fear my present danger, but solely, I call Heaven to witness, solely because I must leave you ”.

All her pleading, at that time, failed. He did not go to her. She left her father’s villa for Florence in the end of July, while he remained in the husband’s Palace at Ravenna. He wrote to her on her way—once or twice. . . .

The matter of the heaven-sent passport was easily and soon explained. There was no danger of her

¹ Byron had become very intimate with Teresa’s brother, Count Pietro Gamba, who had been hand-in-glove with him in all the Carbonari doings. They were together in Greece, and the Count was by the sick-bed at Missolonghi.

being forced into a convent, for the object of the authorities in banishing the Gamba family was to draw the dangerous English Milord after them. It was earnestly desired to get him out of Ravenna, where his constant benevolence among the poorer classes had made him immensely popular; moreover, he had provided money and arms for the Movement. The Countess explains: "Not daring to exact [his departure] by any direct measure, they were in hopes of being able indirectly to force him into the step". They might have been less confident had they known Byron's secret feelings; but, as before, the woman prevailed. On October 29 he left Ravenna and joined her at Pisa, writing to Moore, more than a month before he actually set off: "I am in all the sweat, dust, and blasphemy of an universal packing. . . . As I could not say, with Hamlet, 'Get thee to a nunnery', I am preparing to follow. It is awful work, this love, and prevents all a man's projects of good or glory. I wanted to go to Greece lately . . . with her brother, who is a very fine, brave fellow . . . and wild about liberty. But the tears of a woman who has left her husband for a man, and the weakness of one's own heart are paramount to these projects, and I can hardly indulge them".

To her he wrote: "I set out most unwillingly, foreseeing the most evil results for all of you, and principally for yourself"; and again: "I leave Ravenna so unwillingly, and with such a persuasion in my mind that my departure will lead from one misery to another, each greater than the former, that I have not the heart to utter another word on the subject".

She, publishing these letters in after-years, commented: "How entirely were those presentiments fulfilled by the event!" This assists us to understand the length of Byron's relation with her, and his

impatience during most of its four years. A woman at once so insensitive and so sentimental was, perhaps, the only one who could have held him to her; or for that matter have endured him herself. For she had the art of self-deception. The "event" which she regards as the "fulfilment of his presentiment" (in other words, his vexation at the prospect of rejoining her) was caused in no way by that step. Indeed, her comment is so evidently stupid that it is worth recording only as a trait of character which may help to solve the puzzle of Byron's long slavery. She was so obtuse that he could not shake her off!

CHAPTER VIII

RAVENNA: LITERARY WORK

Byron's industry—*Marino Faliero*: Anger with Murray; Encouragement; The performance at Drury Lane; Byron's anguish—Goethe: Lost dedications; *Manfred* and the German Jove; Praise of *Marino*—Analogy of the Doge's fate, with Byron's—Cursory review of the dramas—*Don Juan*: cantos iii. iv. v.; The Countess Guiccioli intervenes, and *Juan* is discontinued; The furore in England; More anger with Murray

BYRON'S industry during the Ravenna period—December 1819 to October 29, 1821—was stupendous. Besides the works already considered, he wrote *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus*,¹ *The Two Foscari*, *Cain*, *Heaven and Earth*, the fifth canto of *Don Juan*, *The Vision of Judgment*, to say nothing of *The Blues* and *The Irish Avatar*—a squib on George IV's visit to Ireland in 1821. This is a vast record of manual labour alone, and there were the diaries and many letters as well. The story of *Marino Faliero*—first of the dramas over which he was to waste many months of energy—had struck his

¹ *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, and *Cain* were published in a single volume on December 19, 1821; *Heaven and Earth* was not published by Murray, but by John Hunt in the second number of *The Liberal* on January 1, 1823; the fifth canto of *Don Juan* (Murray) appeared with cantos iii. and iv. on August 8, 1821; *The Vision of Judgment* in the first number of *The Liberal*, October 15, 1822; *The Blues* in the third number, April 26, 1823; *The Irish Avatar* was first published in Paris, under Moore's supervision (he was then living there), on September 19, 1821. Murray did not publish it in any collected edition until 1831.

imagination so long ago as the spring of 1817; but the project slumbered until the April of 1820. He spent three months in composition, and the final draft was sent to England in September or October. He had again been infuriated by Murray's delay in acknowledging the *Prophecy* and the translations, and threatened once more to desert to Paternoster Row. "You must not treat a blood-horse as you do your hacks, otherwise he'll bolt out of the course. . . . I don't promise that the tragedy will be a whit better than the rest. All I shall require will be a *positive* answer but a *speedy* one. . . . Now you have spoken out, are you any the worse for it? . . . Do you think I lay a stress on the merits of my 'poeshie'? I assure you I have many other things to think of". We discover, from a letter to Moore directly afterwards, what Murray had said. "He almost insinuated that my last productions are *dull*. Dull, sir!—damme, dull! I believe he is right".

"I don't know", he wrote to Murray, in the midst of the loathed task of copying, "what your parlour-boarders will think of it. . . . You'll write now, because you will want to keep me in a good humour, till you can see what the tragedy is fit for. I know your ways, my Admiral".¹ The whole was sent to England, with the adjuration: "None of your *damned proofs*, now *recollect*. Print, paste, plaster, and destroy—but don't let me have any of your cursed printers' trash to pore over. For the rest, I neither know nor care".² Again: "I have put my *soul* into the tragedy (as you *if* it); but you know that there are damned souls as well as tragedies". The report of the first act was favourable:

¹ Murray was publisher to the Board of Admiralty. This letter, much mutilated by Moore, is one of the most amusing that Byron wrote to Murray, particularly at the close, where a contemporary poetaster is criticised. See *L. and J.* v. 55.

² *L. and J.* v. 66.

“What Gifford says is very consolatory . . . ‘English—sterling *genuine* English’. I am glad that I have got so much left. I *hear* none but from my valet, and I *see* none but in your new publications, and theirs is no language at all, but jargon. Even your ‘New Jerusalem’ is terribly stilted and affected, with ‘*very, very*’—so soft and pamby.

“Oh! if ever I *do* come amongst you again, I will give you such a ‘Baviad and Mæviad’! not *as* good as the old, but even *better merited*. There never was such a *set* as your *ragamuffins* (I mean *not* yours only, but everybody’s). What with the Cockneys, and the Lakers, and the *followers* of Scott, and Moore, and Byron, you are in the very uttermost decline and degradation of literature. I can’t think of it without all the remorse of a murderer. I wish that Johnson were alive again to crush them!”

After more delay—“What! not a line? Well, have it your own way”—came further encouragement:

“‘Here are in all *two* worthy voices gain’d’:

Gifford says it is good ‘sterling genuine English’, and Foscolo says that the characters are right Venetian. Shakespeare and Otway had a million of advantages over me, besides the incalculable one of being *dead* for from one to two centuries, and having been both born blackguards (which ARE such attractions to the gentle living reader); let me then preserve the only one which I could possibly have—that of having been at Venice, and entered more into the local spirit of it. I claim no more”.

The suspense—he had been in great suspense about this new venture—was over; but there was something still more agonising to come. Byron had been from the first urgent in declaring his tragedy “*not* an acting play”. “It is too regular, and too simple, and of too

remote an interest"; and "I will not be exposed to the insolences of an audience without a remonstrance". "Do not let me be sacrificed in such a manner", he pleaded. He even drew up, and sent, a protest for the newspapers, in case the play was piratically produced. . . . On Saturday, April 21, Murray published *Marino*.¹ On Wednesday, April 25, the play was represented by Elliston, at Drury Lane Theatre! "The drama, sheet by sheet from the compositors' hands, was taken from the printing-office to the theatre, and the whole play, in fact, studied before publication". Half an hour after Elliston received the formal licence from the Lord Chamberlain, he was served with a writ from Murray's solicitor, announcing that the Lord Chancellor had granted an injunction against the acting of *Marino Faliero*, and that the play must be immediately withdrawn. Byron had been almost beside himself at the prospect, which in January was known to him.

"RAVENNA, January 20, 1821

"If Harris or Elliston persist, after the remonstrance which I desired you and Mr. Kinnaird to make on my behalf, and which I hope will be sufficient—but *if*, I say, they *do persist*, then I pray you to *present in person* the enclosed letter to the Lord Chamberlain: I have said *in person*, because otherwise I shall have neither answer nor knowledge that it has reached its address, owing to 'the insolence of office'.

"I wish you would speak to Lord Holland, and to all my friends and yours, to interest themselves in preventing this cursed attempt at representation.

¹ "The Doge is longer than I expected", wrote Byron on June 14; "pray why did you print the face of Margarita Cogni by way of frontispiece? It has almost caused a row between the Countess G. and myself" (*L. and J.* v. 308).

Murray had in 1819 bought Harlow's drawings of Margarita Cogni.



MARGARITA COGNI

FROM THE ENGRAVING BY E. SCRIVEN AFTER THE PAINTING BY HARLOW

“God help me! at this distance, I am treated like a corpse or a fool by the few people that I thought I could rely upon; and I *was* a fool to think any better of them than of the rest of mankind.

“Pray write.—Yours, &c.

“P.S.—I have nothing more at heart (that is, in literature) than to prevent this drama from going upon the stage: in short, rather than permit it, it must be *suppressed altogether*, and only *forty copies struck off privately* for presents to my friends. What curst fools those speculating buffoons must be *not* to see that it is unfit for their fair—or their booth!”

Elliston succeeded in getting the Lord Chancellor (Eldon) to suspend the injunction for April 25. Murray, hearing this, issued a handbill declaring the state of affairs; the play was acted that night, and fell flat; proceedings then took place before the Chancellor, “but no counsel appearing on the part of the plaintiff, the case was struck out”. *Marino Faliero* was acted again on April 30, and on five dates in May, but no enthusiasm was ever excited, and “the greatest receipt was £160”.¹

Byron’s anger was supreme—his anguish too. He saw paragraphs in the Italian papers, stating that *he* had “brought forward the play”. It was galling enough to make him appeal to Hoppner for a statement in the Venetian and Milanese papers saying that he had “*opposed* the representation; and that . . . [the play] was *not* hissed”, as had been also said. It is pathetic to follow his distress. To Murray, on May 19:² “Now I should be glad to know what com-

¹ *Memoirs of R. W. Elliston*, p. 271.

² He had by this time written nearly three acts of *Sardanapalus*, but this, with *The Two Foscari* and *Cain*—also begun and finished at Ravenna—was not published until after he had settled down at Pisa. Murray paid for these three £2710.

pensation Mr. Elliston would make me, not only for dragging my writings on the stage in *five* days, but for being the cause that I was kept for *four* days (from Sunday to Thursday morning, the only post-days) in the *belief* that the *tragedy* had been acted and ‘unanimously hissed’; and this with the addition that *I* ‘had brought it upon the stage’, and consequently that none of my friends had attended to my request to the contrary. Suppose that I had burst a blood-vessel, like John Keats, or blown my brains out in a fit of rage,—neither of which would have been unlikely a few years ago. At present I am, luckily, calmer than I used to be, and yet I would not pass those four days over again for—I know not what.

“I wrote to you to keep up your spirits, for reproach is useless always, and irritating—but my feelings were very much hurt, to be dragged like a gladiator to the fate of a gladiator by that ‘*retiaricus*,’ Mr. Elliston. As to his defence and offers of compensation, what is all this to the purpose? I would have flung it into the fire rather than have had it represented”.

Marino Faliero was dedicated to Goethe in a lengthy “letter”, but the packet containing this was delayed in transit to England; a similar fate strangely awaited the second attempt at homage in *Sardanapalus*; and it was not until *Werner* appeared in 1823 that Byron succeeded in his purpose of tribute to “the greatest literary character of the age”. Since 1816, Goethe, far away in Weimar, had been interested in him. In October 1817 he had received from a young American a copy of *Manfred*, “which he at once read and re-read”. “It seized upon him with singular force”, says Mr. E. H. Coleridge. No doubt the kinship with his own *Faust* attracted him, vague though it was; Goethe indeed explicitly repudiated the idea of imitation—and

no less warmly than Byron himself. . . . Byron first heard of his interest in May 1820, when somebody sent him some German newspapers. He did not know a word of the language,¹ and begged Hoppner to translate for him some remarks "which appear to be Goethe's on *Manfred*". He had made out the word *hypocondrisch*, and judged that the notice was unfavourable. The alarming adjective proved, however, not to be significant ; for the article (which was Goethe's review of *Manfred* in his own magazine, *Kunst und Alterthum*) was enthusiastic. "I cannot enough admire his genius. . . . We find in this tragedy the quintessence of the most astonishing talent, born to be its own tormentor". One smiles to-day at some of the sage's *obiter dicta*, such as this: "Hamlet's soliloquy appears improved on here"; but at that time Goethe reigned supreme in European criticism, and Byron's elation at his praise was unbounded. He sent the original article, Hoppner's translation, and an Italian one, to Murray: "The opinion of *the* greatest man of Germany—perhaps of Europe—upon one of the great men of your advertisements—in short, a critique of Goethe's upon *Manfred*. . . . Keep them all in your archives".

The German Jove read *Marino Faliero*, too, and said that in this piece "one quite forgets that Lord Byron or even an Englishman wrote it. We live entirely in Venice, and entirely in the time in which the actions took place. . . . The personages have none of the subjective feelings, thoughts, or opinions of the poet". Byron himself, however, declared that the play was so far subjective in treatment that "he was convinced he would have done precisely what the

¹ "Except oaths learned from postillions and officers in a squabble. . . . I like, however, their women (I was once *so desperately* in love with a German woman, Constance)".—(Ravenna Diary.)

Doge did on those provocations"; and it is clear that the analogy of Faliero's fate with his own was the attraction of the subject. "He was once crowned and afterwards decapitated" on the Giant's Staircase (as Byron believed, though history contradicts him) of the Doge's Palace in Venice: the symbolism could hardly have been closer for the homage of 1812 and the ostracism of 1816, on the "Giant's Staircase" of fame in London. Accordingly, the great moments ring with the personal note, as it now sounded: always for the downfall of the worshipped and powerful, and their brooding on the things that were and are. Striking examples are the line,

"Deep Vengeance is the daughter of deep silence"—

the True-Untrue; and, later, the prophetic cry which first had sounded in the new *Harold*. For the decree goes forth from the infamous tribunal that the place for the Doge's portrait shall be left vacant, with a black veil hung over it; and Faliero exclaims:

"The veil which blackens o'er this blighted name,
And hides, or seems to hide, these lineaments,
Shall draw more gazers than the thousand portraits
Which glitter round it in their pictured trappings".

All through the closing scenes Byron's own story emerges from the legend, his own character from that of the Doge:

"I had only one fount of quiet left,
And *that* they poisoned! My pure household gods
Were shivered on my hearth, and o'er their shrine
Sate grinning Ribaldry, and sneering Scorn"

—an almost literal paraphrase of words in a letter of 1817. In the Doge's final interview with his wife, there occurs this penetrating analysis of Byron's self:

". . . there was that in my spirit ever
Which shaped out for itself some great reverse";

and again :

“ . . . in one hour
I have uprooted all my former life,
And outlived everything”.

The play closes with the imprecation on Venice already quoted.

He said of it : “ I never wrote nor copied an *entire scene of that play* without being obliged to *break off*—to *break* a commandment, to obey a woman’s, and to forget God’s. . . . The lady always apologised for the interruption ; but you know the answer a man must make when and while he can. It happened to be the only hour I had in the four-and-twenty for composition or reading, and I was obliged to divide even it. Such are the defined duties of a *Cavalier’ servente*, or *Cavalier’ schiavo*”. Nevertheless, *Marino Faliero* is the best of the dramas in this manner ; the other three share in all its defects, but in few or none of its beauties. Those are energy and pathos ; its defects of flatness (Byron’s conversational blank verse must be some of the worst ever written) and monotony—“ a drawling story, stagnating through five boggy acts”, said the *Literary Gazette*—are intensified a hundredfold in *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, and above all, *Werner*, in which I find nothing whatever to repay perusal. Yet strangely (or not strangely), *Werner* was the only one of his dramas to attain anything like success on the stage.¹

With the extraordinary blindness to his true characteristics which marked Byron in every self-criticism except that of *Don Juan*, he was persuaded, and he earnestly sought to persuade Murray, that in the

¹ It was acted many times from 1826 to 1860, and was revived in our own day, for one performance (1887) by [Sir] Henry Irving. Macready was very successful in the part of Werner : “ the famous ‘ Macready burst’ ” being finely displayed in Act ii. sc. 2, and Act v. sc. 1 (*Poems*, v. 324).

tragedies he was doing his immortal works. Murray never was persuaded, and the opinion of posterity is on his side. Mr. E. H. Coleridge bravely breaks a lance in their defence, but though most of them, it is true (except *Werner*), contain "hidden treasures", they are on the whole so terribly defective that when Mr. Arthur Symonds dismisses them as "the lamentable attempts of the dramas", I feel no inclination to dispute his verdict.

The fifth canto of *Don Juan* was begun on October 16, 1820. The two which had been originally the third canto were still in Murray's hands; he had written to say that half the poem (as far as it then went) was good, and here is Byron's spirited reply: "You say that *one half* 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 anyone'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 if *one half* of the two new cantos be good in your opinion, what the devil would you have more? No—no; no poetry is *generally* good—only by fits and starts—and you are lucky to get a sparkle here and there. You might as well want a midnight *all stars* as rhyme all perfect".

Nevertheless, he was discouraged, and had written on October 12: "I don't feel inclined to care further about *Don Juan*. What do you think a very pretty Italian lady said to me the other day? She had read it in the French, and paid me some compliments, with due DRAWBACKS, upon it. I answered that what she said was true, but that I suspected it would live longer than *Childe Harold*."

'Ah, but (said she) I would rather have the fame of Childe Harold for three years than an IMMORTALITY of Don Juan!' The truth is that it is TOO TRUE, and the women hate everything which strips off the tinsel of sentiment; and they are right, as it would rob them of their weapons. I never knew a woman who did not hate *De Granmont's Memoirs* for the same reason: even Lady Oxford used to abuse them".

By December he had finished. "So prepare!" But he was nervous about Murray's decision—twice he wrote: "I want to know what the Devil you mean to do?" Murray was hesitant; it seems to have been a question of money, for on February 16, 1821, there is this from Byron: "I agree to your request of leaving in abeyance the terms . . . till you can ascertain the effect of publication". He gives then a sketch of his plan for "Donny Johnny".

"The fifth is so far from being the last of *Don Juan*, that it is hardly the beginning. I meant to take him the tour of Europe, with a proper mixture of siege, battle, and adventure, and to make him finish as *Anacharsis Cloots* in the French Revolution. To how many cantos this may extend, I know not, nor whether (even if I live) I shall complete it; but this was my notion: I meant to have made him a cavalier servente in Italy, and a cause for a divorce in England, and a sentimental 'Werter-faced man' in Germany, so as to show the different ridicules of the society in each of those countries, and to have displayed him gradually *gâté* and *blasé* as he grew older, as is natural. But I had not quite fixed whether to make him end in hell, or in an unhappy marriage, not knowing which would be the severest: the Spanish tradition says hell: but it is probably only an allegory of the other state. You are now in possession of my notions on the subject".

But before the existent new cantos were published, the woman had intervened.¹ Byron told Murray on July 6, in a letter concerning the fifth canto: "At the particular request of the Countess G., I have promised *not* to continue *Don Juan*. You will therefore look upon these three cantos as the last of the poem".² It is evident from the further context that La Guiccioli was "the very pretty Italian lady" of October 12, before the fifth canto was begun.

The three were published together in August, without the name of author—or publisher. "The booksellers' messengers filled the street in front of the house in Albemarle Street, and the parcels of books were given out of the window in answer to their obstreperous demands".³ . . . Byron, on getting *his* parcel, wrote to Murray:

"I have received the Juans, which are printed so *carelessly*, especially the fifth canto, as to be disgraceful to me, and not creditable to you. It really must be *gone over again* with the *manuscript*, the errors are so gross;—words added—changed—so as to make cacophony and nonsense. You have been careless of this poem because some of your squad don't approve of it; but I tell you that it will be long before you see anything half so good as poetry or writing.

¹ The Countess Guiccioli had not at this time (July 1821) left the neighbourhood of Ravenna; she was still living either at her father's villa, fifteen miles outside, or else "in Count Gamba's house in the close vicinity of the Palazzo Guiccioli" (*Shelley and his Friends in Italy*, Mrs. Rossetti Angeli, 1911).

² Moore has the following:

"In this note, so highly honourable to the fair writer, she says, 'Remember, my Byron, the promise you have made me. Never shall I be able to tell you the satisfaction I feel from it, so great are the sentiments of pleasure and confidence with which the sacrifice you have made has inspired me'. In a postscript to the note she adds, 'I am only sorry that *Don Juan* was not left in the infernal regions'".

³ *Memoir of John Murray*, i. 413.

“If you have no feeling for your own reputation, pray have some little for mine. I have read over the poem 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.

“Desire my friend Hobhouse to correct the press, especially of the last canto, from the manuscript as it is. It is enough to drive one out of one’s senses to see the infernal torture of words from the original. . . .

“No wonder the poem should fail (which, however, it won’t, you will see) with such things allowed to creep about it. Replace what is omitted, and correct what is so shamefully misprinted, and let the poem have fair play; and I fear nothing”.

He added, in a P.S., “As for *you*, you have no opinion of your own and never had, but are blown about by the last thing said to you, no matter by whom”. But in the envelope:

“The enclosed letter is written in bad humour, but not without provocation. However, let it (that is, the bad humour) go for little; but I must request your serious attention to the abuses of the printer, which ought never to have been permitted. You forget that all the fools in London (the chief purchasers of your publications) will condemn in me the stupidity of your printer. For instance, in the notes to Canto fifth, ‘the *Adriatic* shore of the Bosphorus’, instead of the *Asiatic!!* All this may seem little to you—so fine a gentleman with your ministerial connections,—but it is serious to me, who am thousands of miles off, and have no opportunity of not proving myself the fool your printer makes me, except your pleasure and leisure, forsooth.

“The gods prosper you, and forgive you, for I can’t”.

By September 4 his "wrath had subsided into sullenness". He had read over the new cantos—"which are excellent. . . . I regret that I do not go on with it". But in a final blaze of wrath, he adds: "You are so grand, and sublime, and occupied that one would think, instead of publishing for the 'Board of Longitude', that you were trying to discover it".

CHAPTER IX

THE DEATHS OF ALLEGRA AND SHELLEY— 1821-1822

Allegra sent to the Convent of Bagna Cavallo—Trouble with Claire—The Hoppner affair: scandal about Shelley in 1821—Mary's letter—Byron's baseness—Shelley at Ravenna—The move to Pisa—Allegra left behind—Meetings with Lord Clare and Rogers—Pisa: the Lanfranchi Palace—Anxiety of Claire: letters and interviews—Death of Allegra—Burial at Harrow—Lady Noel's will—Ada—*Cain* published: the outcry—Other works—Ennui and dejection—Quarrels with Murray—Leigh Hunt, and *The Liberal*—Banishment of the Gambas and Teresa Guiccioli—Death of Shelley—Byron's tributes

CLAIRE CLAIRMONT, now living at Florence as governess in the family of Professor Bojti, and just beginning to recover hope and spirits, received on March 15, 1821—"a rainy day", she wrote in her journal—letters from Shelley and Mary, "with enclosures from Ravenna. The child in the Convent of Bagna Cavallo".

Byron had *sent* Allegra there (though it was only twelve miles outside Ravenna), "by a Ravennese named Ghigi".¹ He told Hoppner that as she was now "four years old complete" and quite "above" the control of the servants, he had no resource but to place her there for a time, "at a high pension too". He added that he had never intended to give her an

¹ *La Figlia di Lord Byron*, Emilio Biondi (Faenza, 1899). (I take title and information from Mr. Prothero's note in *L. and J.* v. 279.)

"*English* education", for, being a "*natural* child", it would make "her after-settlement doubly difficult. Abroad, with a fair foreign education and a portion of 5 or £6000, she might and may marry very respectably". Moreover, he wished her to be a Roman Catholic, "which I look upon as the best religion".

Claire, on March 24, wrote him a long and angry letter—a letter to infuriate him or any one. Deeply as one feels with her in a bitter grief, there is no denying that she made her miseries worse than they need have been by the unbridled sarcasm poured upon him who had her and her child in his power. She had the folly to refer to Lady Byron, and by implication to Teresa Guiccioli—the latter suffering nothing less than contumely at her hands. She implored Byron to allow her to place Allegra "at her own expense" (which would, of course, have been Shelley's) "in one of the very best English boarding-schools"; it should be chosen by his own friends. "I will see her only so often as they decide. . . . I entreat you earnestly not to be obdurate on this point. Believe me, in putting Allegra into a convent to ease yourself of the trouble, and to hurt me in my affection for her, you have done almost a greater injury to yourself than to me or her. So blind is hatred!"

Shelley, though sympathising with Claire, defended Byron's action; but his championship did not save him from perfidy on "Albé's" part. The incident which is to develop in this connection is the worst thing we know of Byron. In all the rest there has been some saving clause; we have been able to pity, though we were obliged to condemn. Now we turn away in disdain from the kindest explanation that is offered, and from the sternest, in something near to loathing.

Sending Claire's unhappy letter to Hoppner, he

wrote across the top: "The moral part of the letter upon the Italians" (the part where Teresa was by implication maltreated) "comes with an excellent grace from the writer now living with a *man* and his *wife*¹—and having planted a child in the Fl—Foundling, etc."

This referred to a calumny against Shelley which had come to Hoppner's ears in the spring of 1820, through a pair of servants—Elise the Swiss nurse, and one Paolo Foggi, who, after having betrayed her, had been induced to marry her. Paolo was soon afterwards dismissed from Shelley's service for misconduct; and out of revenge, began to spread scandals. Byron had at first half-heartedly defended his friend, against whom Hoppner's feeling had wholly turned; but soon he wrote: "The story is true, no doubt, though Elise is but Queen's evidence. . . . Of the facts, however, there can be little doubt; *it is just like them*".²

Writing to Mary from Ravenna in August 1821 (he was there as Byron's guest), Shelley gave her an epitome. "Elise says that Claire was my mistress. . . . She then proceeds to say that Claire was with child by me; that I gave her the most violent medicines to procure abortion; that this not succeeding, she was brought to bed, and that I immediately tore the child from her and sent it to the Foundling Hospital. . . . In addition, she says that both I and Claire treated *you* in the most shameful manner; that I neglected and beat you, and that Claire never let a day pass without offering you insults of the most violent kind, in which she was abetted by me". The Hoppners had declined all intercourse; Shelley and Mary had wondered—here was the explanation. Already they had known of Paolo's schemes; there had been an attempt at blackmail, but the matter had at once

¹ Claire, as we have seen, was *not* living with the Shelleys at this time.

² Italics mine.

been placed in a lawyer's hands, and they had believed it over. "Imagine my despair of good!" cried Shelley now; and he begged Mary to write at once to the Hoppners. She at once did so. Professor Dowden well describes her letter: "the clear flame of a woman's indignant love". It is moving in the highest degree. She had tried to copy from Shelley's letter the actual accusations. . . . "Upon my word, I solemnly assure you that I cannot write the words";¹ and she enclosed Shelley's original letter instead. She sent her own to him first: "I wish also that Lord Byron may see it; he gave no credit to the tale"—for Byron had represented himself in this light, when telling Shelley the reason for the Hoppners' withdrawal. He had promised Mr. Hoppner in the spring that the accusations *should be concealed* from Shelley; but on the first night of their meeting at Ravenna (August 6, 1821), he had told all—and now, by the letter from Mary, Hoppner would learn that he had broken his word.

Shelley handed it to him, in utter trust for the future as for the past; Byron "engaged to send it, with his own comments, to the Hoppners". So Shelley told Mary on August 16. "Albé" had confessed that he had broken his word to Hoppner, and Shelley accepted this as a good reason for his wishing to send the letter, "with his own comments", himself.

The letter was found among Byron's papers after his death.

Mr. Prothero² thinks it "not impossible" that it was sent, and at Byron's request returned. "As the answer to a charge closely affecting the mother of Allegra, it would be natural that he should wish to keep the document". He also refers to "a subsequent conversa-

¹ "I think I could as soon have died", she wrote to her husband.

² *L. and J.* v. 74.

tion of Mary Shelley's with the Hoppners" as being among Lady Shelley's "recollections"; but seems to cite Professor Dowden¹ as an authority for this. I can find no such reference in the edition—that of 1886—before me as I write.² I do not attach much weight to the argument that Byron would naturally wish to keep the document, since it affected the mother of Allegra. Had not he himself been eager to underline the charge against Claire to the Hoppners? In Byron, too, the phrase "It is just like them"—of whom nothing could be more unlike—borrows a peculiar shade of baseness. It was not for him, of all men, thus to speak. Mrs. Angeli alludes to his own "sufficiently loose morals", and thinks that he might for this reason have thought "not too severely" of the alleged intrigue. But his "It is just like them" robs him of that shield. We must accept it as best we can: nothing in his life so blots his memory as this incident.

In August he had written urgently, inviting Shelley to Ravenna. This was just after the banishment of the Gamba family from the Romagna; Byron had at first determined to go to Switzerland, where they should join him later. "I shall bring Allegra with me", he

¹ *Life of Shelley*, ii. 429.

² In a recent book, *Shelley and his Friends in Italy*, by Mrs. Rossetti Angeli, I find the following: "Indeed the fact that Mary never received the letter of restored confidence which she demanded as her right from the Hoppners tends to prove that Byron . . . never sent [her letter]. Many years later, in February 1843, Mary Shelley was in Florence. 'The Hoppners are here', she then wrote to Claire. 'Mrs. and Miss go to the balls. I cut her completely'. This also suggests that the Hoppners remained in ignorance of the truth regarding the Shelley scandal. There yet remains, however, the *possibility* that Byron did send the letter and that it was returned to him". But Mrs. Angeli (the daughter of Mr. W. M. Rossetti) thinks this explanation "not very convincing in view of the Hoppners' silence" (p. 220).

told Hoppner. He had gone so far, on July 23, as to write to Hentsch, the Genevan banker, desiring him to engage a house. But again the vague hope of freedom revived: he wrote to Moore (still in Paris) on August 2: "If you went to England, I would do so still".¹ It was on the same day that he sent his summons to Shelley; he wished to talk over plans with that universal counsellor and mediator.² Shelley left the Baths of Pisa, where he and Mary then were, on August 3, paid a flying visit to Claire at Leghorn (she had gone there for her holiday) and consulted with her about Allegra; on the night of August 6 he reached the Palazzo Guiccioli at ten o'clock, and they sat up talking until five in the morning. Shelley thought Byron "greatly improved in every respect . . . in genius, in temper, in moral views, in health, in happiness". His rooms in the Palace were splendid; he had many servants, "ten horses, eight enormous dogs, three monkeys, five cats, an eagle, a crow, and a falcon". That was the first list; in a postscript Shelley added: "I have just met, on the grand staircase, five peacocks, two guinea hens, and an Egyptian crane".³ They talked much: "sit up gossiping until six in the morning" is part of Shelley's epitome of the daily life. Literature was their chief topic—Byron "silent as to *Adonais*, loud in praise of *Prometheus*, and in censure of *The Cenci*; Shelley cool

¹ Already, in December 1820, he had proposed to Moore that they should "get to London again" in the spring of 1821; and "set up jointly a newspaper . . . take an office—our names *not* announced, but suspected". In 1812 Moore had made the same proposal to Byron.

² "It seems destined", said Shelley of himself, "that I am always to have an active part in everybody's affairs whom I approach".

³ Byron's Ravenna diary is full of references to this menagerie—the oddest little details: "Gave the falcon some water"; "played with my mastiff—gave him his supper"; "crow lame of a leg . . . falcon pretty brisk"; "beat the crow for stealing the falcon's victuals". His small beer is indeed of the smallest: "Bought a blanket"; "did *not* eat two apples"; "tore a button in my new coat", etc. etc.

towards *Marino Faliero* . . . but enthusiastic over *Don Juan*". The fifth canto he thought "transcendently fine . . . every word has the stamp of immortality. I despair of rivalling Lord Byron . . . and there is no other with whom it is worth contending". *Don Juan*, he said, was "something wholly new and relative to the age, and yet surpassingly beautiful". But the domineering force of Byron's genius depressed him: "I write nothing", he told Peacock, "and shall probably write no more". To Mary he said, "The demon of mistrust and pride lurks between two persons in our situation, poisoning the freedom of our intercourse. . . . I think the fault is not on my side"; and to Leigh Hunt he spoke of "the canker of aristocracy" which, among "many generous and exalted qualities," lurked in Byron's spirit. They considered the Swiss sojourn; Shelley's counsel was strongly against it. He thought the place little fitted for Byron; the English coterie, with its gossip, had rendered it odious to him before, and would so render it again. Byron was convinced: he decided to stay in Italy, if the Countess Guiccioli and the Gambas would stay too. Shelley was induced, true to his destiny, to intervene; he wrote to Teresa and convinced her also. She added, at the end of her letter to him, that his goodness had emboldened her to ask a favour: "*Non partite da Ravenna senza Milord*". She was then at Florence, whither, on account of the large English colony there, Byron did not desire to go. He inclined towards Pisa, where Mary then was, though the Shelleys had thought of wintering in Florence. The pros and cons were long balanced; finally Pisa was decided on for all.

Shelley saw Allegra at Bagna Cavallo, and sent Mary a long and reassuring report: though still "excessively vivacious", she was more obedient and serious.

"She seemed a thing of a higher and finer order" than the other children there. Nevertheless, he considered that Byron should take her with him wherever he went. But there would be difficulties; "his own house is manifestly unfit . . . composed entirely of dissolute men-servants"; and Shelley wondered if they, among their friends in Tuscany, could find any one to undertake her. The immediate urgency, however, was to get "some person less odious and unfit" to take care of her, if she *were* brought to Pisa, "than an Italian woman whom Byron seems to have fallen upon".

Shelley did not think it incumbent on him to obey the Countess Guiccioli's request, and he left Ravenna on August 17, "*senza Milord*", who had urgently implored him to remain. Before the end of the month, Teresa and her father were in Pisa, and the Shelleys had made the acquaintance of Byron's *dama*. "A very pretty, sentimental, innocent Italian", wrote Shelley in October to his friend, Mr. Gisborne; "who has sacrificed an immense fortune for the sake of Lord Byron, and who, if I know anything of my friend, of her, and of human nature, will hereafter have plenty of opportunity to repent her rashness". He had left Ravenna under the impression that when Byron joined them in Pisa—where, soon after Shelley's return, the Palazzo Lanfranchi, "the stateliest on the Lung' Arno", had been taken for Albé—Allegra was not to be left behind, alone and friendless, in the convent of Bagna Cavallo. Claire, passionately longing for her little daughter, lingered in the neighbourhood, for they all hoped that an arrangement would be made by which she might have her, for a time at any rate, again.

Byron left Ravenna on October 29. On November 1, Claire was on her way back to Florence from Pugnano, where she had been on a visit, and "just before she

entered the narrow streets of Empoli, Byron with his travelling train passed her on the road, as he drove forward to take possession of the Lanfranchi Palace".¹ For months her diary had been filled with wonderings about her Allegra; she had dreamed of death one night, of happy reunion the next. Now the hour was near, and her heart almost stood still.

He arrived at Pisa, and Allegra was not with him.

A few days before he broke up house, Byron had written in his Ravenna journal—*Detached Thoughts*—a passage referring to the "earliest and dearest" friend, Lord Clare.² On his way across Italy, between Imola and Bologna, they met—to Byron's surprise, for he had not known that his friend was in the country. He movingly recorded the meeting in the same journal; and in 1822 Clare visited him at Leghorn, to his great delight. "I have a presentiment I shall never see him more", he then said, and his eyes filled with tears as they parted. One of the very last letters from Missolonghi was to "My dearest Clare" (in the old Harrow formula, whose omission used to cause such heartburnings!). "I hope you do not forget that I always regard you as my dearest friend, and love you as when we were Harrow boys together; and if I do not repeat this so often as I ought, it is that I may not tire you with what you so well know".

That must have been a poignant message—sad yet sweet—for Clare to receive in April (it was written on March 31) 1824—probably not until after the fatal 19th.

At Bologna another friend from England was awaiting him. This was Rogers; but the meeting, unlike

¹ Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, ii. 445.

² See Vol. I. Chap. III.

that with Clare, proved disappointing. Already in 1818, Byron had conceived himself to have cause of offence against "Samiel", the "black drop of whose liver had oozed through too palpably to be overlooked". His annoyance crystallised into the savage lines now known as *Question: Answer*. They were first published in 1833, but Byron sent them home for private circulation in 1820. Murray wrote that the side of his talent displayed in them "might prove a national service". If vulgar personal abuse be indeed a form of national service, Murray was right. The lines are horrible. Mr. E. H. Coleridge well says: "By far the best comment on satire and satirist is to be found in the noble lines in Rogers's *Italy*",¹ left unaltered by him after he had seen, in 1833, the lampoon which Lady Blessington declared "would kill him". They are these:

". . . Yes, Byron, thou art gone ;
 Gone like a star that through the firmament
 Shot and was lost, in its eccentric course
 Dazzling, perplexing. Yet thy heart, methinks,
 Was generous, noble—noble in its scorn
 Of all things low or little ; nothing there
 Sordid or servile. If imagined wrongs
 Pursued thee, urging thee sometimes to do
 Things long regretted, oft, as many know,
 None more than I, thy gratitude would build
 On slight foundations . . .
 . . . Who among us all
 . . .
 Tried as thou wert, and with thy soul of flame—
 Pleasure, while yet the down was on thy cheek
 Uplifting, pressing, and to lips like thine,
 Her charmed cup—ah, who among us all,
 Could say he had not erred as much, and more !"

¹ *Italy* was first published in 1828 ; in 1830 appeared the famous "Turner" edition ; in 1839, to another issue, Rogers prefixed the *Selbstporträt* which contains some of the most familiar of his lines :

". . . Nature denied him much,
 But gave him at his birth what most he values" . . .

The lines that Rogers read in 1833 in *Fraser's Magazine*—where they were first published—were a string of couplets containing gross personal insults. His “corpse-like aspect” was, as we have seen, a common jest among his acquaintance; these verses were concerned not only with it, but with his well-known propensity to talk scandal. Here are the most offensive passages—the *jeu d'esprit* is in the form of a “question” from one imaginary person, and the “answer” from another.

“Mouth that marks the envious Scorner,
 With a Scorpion in each corner
 Curling up his tail to sting you
 In the place that most may wring you;
 Eyes of lead-like hue and gummy,
 Carcase stolen from some mummy . . .
 Is't a Corpse stuck up for show . . .
 Vampire, Ghost, or Goul (*sic*), what is it?
 I would walk ten miles to miss it”.

The answerer says that it is “the Bard, and Beau, and Banker”:

“Yet if you could bring about
 Just to turn him inside out,
 Satan's self would seem less sooty,
 And his present aspect—Beauty . . .
 You're his foe—for that he fears you,
 And in absence blasts and sears you:
 You're his friend—for that he hates you,
 First obliges, and then baits you . . .
 He's the Cancer of his Species,
 And will eat himself to pieces”.

Other epithets are “rotten”, “sodden”, “bilious”, “devil”, and, with a startling and ludicrous flavour of slangy modernity, “blighter”!

They spent a day at Bologna, and together crossed the Apennines to Florence; it was about this trip that Rogers made the gibe already quoted.¹ On October 31

¹ See Vol. I. Chap. XI.

Byron pushed on for Pisa, and Rogers wrote home: "I wish you had seen him set off—every window of the inn was open to see him". Whether this was due to his many-sided fame, or to the travelling equipage described by Medwin, may be questioned: "Seven servants, five carriages, nine horses, a monkey, a bulldog and a mastiff, two cats, three pet fowls, and some hens". . . . Another incident of the flitting was the composition, on the road from Florence to Pisa, of the lines,

"Oh, talk not to me of a name great in story;
The days of our Youth are the days of our Glory".

The concluding stanza, with its renowned last line :

"I knew it was love, and I felt it was glory"

—was added at Pisa on November 6, in the early days of reunion with Teresa.

The Palazzo Lanfranchi was a fine sixteenth-century building with a façade attributed to Michael Angelo. Byron called it "a famous old feudal palace"—more "truthfully" than accurately; there were dank underground rooms which he loved to think of as dungeons and cells; and an old servant of his used to relate that the English Milord would descend to these basement dens—below the level of the river—on stormy nights, and order cushions to be brought down that he might sleep there. The Shelleys were installed nearly opposite in the Tre Palazzi di Chiesa—a far less gorgeous abode. The Gambas and Teresa Guiccioli had become part of the Shelley circle, and Mary described her as "a nice pretty girl, without pretensions, good-hearted, and amiable". They drove together in the afternoons, and Teresa and the young Count spent many evenings at the Shelleys' flat. There they met Edward and Jane Williams (the "Jane" who plays so

prominent a part in the later Shelley story), Medwin (Jeaffreson's "perplexing simpleton"), and the egregious "Count" Taaffe, an Irishman with a craze for Dante.

Byron's advent set Pisa by the ears. He came with this blazon: "He was said to be of royal birth; a man of great wealth, of sanguinary temperament and savage customs; a past master in all gentlemanly accomplishments; a genius of evil, but of more than human intellect".¹ One hopes he was aware of this repute—it is hard to say which item would have pleased him most.

No sooner was he arrived than trouble with Claire Clairmont began. She was by that time back in Florence, but her distress on finding that Allegra had been left behind was so great that Mr. Tighe, a member of the Shelley circle, had actually gone to Bagna Cavallo to obtain information about the child's surroundings. He sent an alarming report. In the marshes of Romagna there was a form of fever which had ere now ravaged the district; the food at the convent was meagre; there were no fires. . . . "What pangs of anguish I suffered in the winter of 1821," wrote Claire in after years, "when I saw a bright fire . . . and knew my darling never saw or felt a cheerful blaze". With Tighe's report to nerve her, she wrote again to Byron, this time using (as she afterwards declared) "not one word of reproach". If he would place Allegra with some respectable family in Pisa, Florence, Lucca, *she* would consent never to go near her—nor should even Shelley or Mary visit the child without his consent. No answer was returned. She wrote again after a month had passed—again there was no answer. In February she had some idea of going to Vienna, where her brother was; and she longed to see Allegra

¹ Helen Rossetti Angeli, *Shelley and his Friends in Italy*, p. 234.

before she went. Byron had just received the news of Lady Noel's death, which made him possessor of a considerable property;¹ Claire hoped that it might be a propitious moment for pleading. On February 18, then, she wrote again.² It was an appeal of utter despair; there is not (as we are shown it) one word that could offend or even irritate. "I assure you I can no longer resist the internal inexplicable feeling which haunts me that I shall never see her any more. I entreat you to destroy this feeling by allowing me to see her". Again no answer; and, almost distraught, Claire hurried to Pisa to consult her friends. Mr. Tighe and Lady Mountcashell (the separated wife of Earl Mountcashell, living in Italy as the wife of Mr. George Tighe—they passed as "Mr. and Mrs. Mason") were in favour of decisive measures; the Shelleys, though now convinced that Allegra ought to be taken out of Byron's hands, thought it better to temporise. With nothing decided, Claire returned to Florence on February 25, and Shelley then made an appeal to Byron's mercy on her behalf. "His only reply", says she in her later account of the proceedings, "was a shrug of impatience and the exclamation that women could not live without making scenes. He never had seen the convent; yet he confessed he had not made the smallest inquiry as to whether what I

¹ Lady Noel died at Kirkby Mallory on January 22 (Byron's birthday), 1822. He inherited the whole property by right of his wife; but one of the terms of the separation provided that it should be divided by arbitrators. Lord Dacre was arbitrator for Lady Byron; Sir F. Burdett for Byron. Half the income was allotted to the wife, and half to the husband. Lady Byron already had the £60,000 settled on her at their marriage (*L. and J.* vi. 18-19).

² Professor Dowden (ii. 484) prints the letter in full "from a copy in Claire's writing". In other such copies Claire suppressed much that had appeared in the original; it is impossible to say whether it is so with this, for no original has survived.

had stated was true or no". There is an account, in a copy by Claire (and therefore to be taken with caution) of a letter from a Miss Elizabeth Parker,¹ of Shelley's interview with Byron. "I never saw Shelley in a passion before. . . . He declared that he could with pleasure have knocked Lord Byron down"; for when he mentioned Claire's alarm and distraction and declining health, "he saw a gleam of malicious satisfaction pass over Lord Byron's countenance. 'I saw his look', said Shelley; 'I understood its meaning; I despised him, and I came away'. Afterwards he said, 'It is foolish of me to be angry with him; he can no more help being what he is than the door can help being a door'".

Mr. Tighe was less philosophical, and more human. He said, "You are quite wrong in your fatalism. If I were to horsewhip that door, it would still remain a door; but if Lord Byron were well horsewhipped, my opinion is he would become as humane as he is now inhumane. It is the feeble character or the subserviency of his friends that makes him the insolent tyrant he is".

Claire soon began to nurse wild dreams of carrying her child off by force. "Albé" had long since lost all glamour in the eyes of "The Snake", as Byron called Shelley, declaring that he was like a serpent, "walking about on the tip of its tail"²; and Shelley wrote now to Claire: "It is of vital importance to me and to yourself, to Allegra even, that I should put a period to my intimacy with Lord Byron, and that without *éclat*. . . . But for your immediate feelings, I would suddenly and irrevocably leave the country which he inhabits, nor ever enter it except as an enemy to determine our differences

¹ She was an orphan girl sent by Mrs. Godwin to live with Lady Mountcashell, and a firm friend of Claire.

² Trelawny (*Records*, i. 85) says: "His bright eyes, slim figure, and noiseless movements strengthened, if they did not suggest, the comparison".

without words". Nevertheless, he was shocked at the "thoughtless vehemence" of Claire's designs. "Lord Byron is inflexible and you are in his power. Remember, Claire, when you rejected my earnest advice . . . and how vain is now your regret! This is the second of my sibylline volumes; if you wait for the third, it may be sold at a still higher price". He invited her to come to Pisa, and join them in their *villeggiatura*; she arrived on April 15, and on the 23rd started, with Mr. and Mrs. Williams, on a search for houses at Spezzia. They had not been gone many hours when the Shelleys received from Byron the news of Allegra's death.

The fever *had* broken out in the convent; she had at once fallen a victim; Byron had been informed of her illness, but apparently had informed no one else. "A short¹ interval of silence led him to hope that she had recovered": it was a matter in which it saved trouble of more than one kind to be sanguine. On April 22 an express arrived to tell him that she had died on the 20th.² "You know Italians", wrote Mary Shelley to a friend; "if half of the convent had died of the plague they would never have written to have them removed; and so the poor child fell a sacrifice. Lord Byron" (this was written on June 2) "felt the loss at first bitterly; he also felt remorse, for he felt that he had acted against everybody's counsels and wishes, and death had stamped with truth the many and often-urged prophecies of Claire".

The search-party returned to Pisa on April 25, bringing news of but one small unfurnished house, the Casa Magni, on the Bay of Spezzia between Lerici and San Terenzo. "Met Shelley", wrote Williams in his

¹ H. R. Angeli, *Shelley and his Friends*, p. 267. Byron in his letter to Shelley says "the *long* interval".

² Some authorities say the 19th.

journal; "his face bespoke his feelings". But Shelley set himself to conceal these as far as he could, for he had resolved that Claire should not be told while she was still in Byron's near neighbourhood. She and Mary must instantly leave Pisa, and try to obtain possession of the Casa Magni. There the news should be broken to her. Trelawny¹ should be their escort . . . "Like a torrent hurrying in its course", as Mary wrote, he carried all before him; and on the 26th, Mary, Claire, and Trelawny started for Lerici. By May 1 the whole party, including Mr. and Mrs. Williams, was installed. Next day "the wind rose, and the waves began to cry and knell about the rocks". Claire, seeing the inadequacy of space, insisted that she must return to Florence: and the others, now brought to the moment of avowal, retired to talk over their best plan. While they were sitting together, Claire entered, saw that this had caused their talk to be broken off—and in an instant divined the truth. "You may judge", wrote Mary to a friend, "of what was her first burst of grief and despair". She

¹ Edward John Trelawny, who joined the Shelley circle at Pisa on January 14, 1822, had lived a tumultuous life. Tradition (contradicted by Mr. Garnett) says that he served in the Royal Navy from 1805 to 1811, when, aged nineteen, he thrashed his lieutenant and deserted his ship. In his *Adventures of a Younger Son* (1831) he described his achievements with a "wonderful and mysterious person", whom he names De Ruyter, "a cross between paladin and privateer". Trelawny's veracity is highly questionable, but the book has been pronounced by good critics to be superior to R. L. Stevenson's romances in the same vein. From 1813, when he returned to England, history loses sight of him until 1820, when his autobiographical writings begin again with the *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*, published in 1858. His acquaintance with Shelley was confined to the last six months of the poet's life, but during that time "Tre" was daily in his company, and in that of Byron. "He is six feet high", wrote Mary; "raven black hair which curls like a Moor's, dark gray expressive eyes, overhanging brows, upturned lips . . . a kind of half-Arab Englishman . . . *un giovane stravagante*".

A further note on Trelawny will be found in Chapter XI.

wrote at once to Byron, who sent the letter to Shelley. Whatever she said (and it is clear, from Shelley's letter to Byron of May 8,¹ that she said what was in her heart), we cannot but be glad that Byron had to read it. His cruelty to her is not to be forgiven, whatever his declared consciousness of having acted "for the best" as regarded her child. It was a best that had cost him very little trouble: he had never once visited the convent.² He wrote to Shelley on April 23: "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 anything 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 events 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".

The Countess Guiccioli gives a description, in her own peculiar manner, of his grief; she "saw in it the excess of paternal kindness". It had been her lot to tell him the news. "A mortal paleness spread itself over his face, his strength failed him, and he sank into a

¹ "I had no idea", he wrote, "that her letter was written in that temper"; and added that he and Mary would not have allowed it to be sent if they had suspected its contents.

² There is a legend, so characteristic of the Sentimentalist that it must be true, that, under an assumed name, he did visit it after Allegra's death. The date was probably August 1822 (*Letters and Journals*, vi. note to p. 279).

seat. His look was fixed, and the expression such that I feared 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 . . . I found him on the following morning tranquillised, 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".¹

On the day he heard the news, he wrote to Murray of his intention to send the body home for burial in Harrow Church. It was to be embalmed, and would be embarked from Leghorn. He had been "willing to let Claire's wishes regulate the funeral"—but she, her ironic spirit savouring the full bitterness of this concession, had left the matter to him, asking merely for a lock of hair and a portrait. Through Shelley both were granted her; the miniature remained with her to the day of her death.² . . . On May 21 she returned to Florence; and not again did Byron ever see her or hear from her. She lived until 1879 and never married, though, among

¹ Moore noted in his diary for June 21, 1822: "A long letter from Lord Byron to-day; he has lost his little natural daughter . . . and seems to feel it a good deal. When I was at Venice, he said, in showing me this child, 'I suppose you have some notion of what they call the parental feeling, but I confess I have not; this little thing amuses me, but that's all'. This, however, was evidently all affected; he feels much more naturally than he will allow".

² This must be the portrait to which Mrs. Angeli refers. "[It] represents the little girl at the age of about four, standing by a table with a basket of flowers. This portrait does not show Allegra to have been as pretty as I should have expected . . . but bright and vivacious, and remarkably like Lady Byron in the miniature painted by Charles Hayter in 1812" (*Shelley and his Friends*, p. 28).

many others, the picturesque Trelawny "made violent love" to her. But it was not the memory of her intrigue with Byron—forced upon him by her importunity, it is true, yet resulting in a way which should have won for her some show of kindness . . . it was not that wretched memory which kept Claire Clairmont single. To the end she ardently maintained that Shelley was "the only man she had ever loved"; and when we think of his sweet patience, his active tenderness, for her, the most difficult of women in the most nerve-wrecking of situations, we do not wonder that she enshrined him as the idol of her life.¹

Allegra's body was embarked on May 26. "I know not in what ship", wrote Byron characteristically. "I could not enter into details". The Countess Guiccioli had given all the necessary orders. "I wish it to be buried", he continued, "in Harrow Church; there is a spot in the churchyard, near the footpath, on the brow of the hill looking towards Windsor, and a tomb under a large tree . . . where I used . . . to sit for hours and hours when a boy: this was my favourite spot; but as I wish to erect a tablet to her memory, the body had better be deposited in the church. Near the door, on the left hand as you enter, there is a monument with a tablet² containing these words:—

"When Sorrow weeps o'er Virtue's sacred dust,
Our tears become us, and our grief is just;
Such were the tears she shed, who grateful pays
This last sad tribute of her love and praise".

I recollect them (after seventeen years), not from anything remarkable in them, but because from my seat

¹ Trelawny said that Claire died a fervent and bigoted Roman Catholic; and this is evident in William Graham's book, *Last Links with Byron, Shelley, Keats*.

² This tablet, on entering the church, is on the right-hand side of the south door. It is "sacred to the memory of Thomas Ryves, F.R.S."

in the gallery I had generally my eyes turned towards that monument. As near it as convenient I could wish Allegra to be buried, and on the wall a marble tablet placed, with these words:—

“ In memory of
Allegra,
Daughter of G. G. Lord Byron,
who died at Bagna Cavallo,
in Italy, April 20th, 1822,
aged five years and three months.

‘ I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me ’.

2d Samuel, xii. 23.

“ The funeral I wish to be as private as is consistent with decency; and I could hope that Henry Drury will, perhaps, read the service over her.”

Byron’s wishes were not carried out. The vicar hesitated to sanction the proposed inscription. He wrote to Murray in protest, and suggested a tablet with merely the child’s name, “ thus leaving Lord Byron to reflect upon the character of the inscription he may wish to be added ”. This letter was quickly followed by a second. The churchwardens had been urged, by “ several leading and influential persons, laymen ”, to issue their prohibition against *any* tablet; and for ex-parishioners the churchwardens’ consent was as necessary as the vicar’s. Allegra was therefore buried at the entrance to the church, but no tablet or memorial was erected.¹ . . . Byron was unable to understand what the objection to his inscription could be; and revenged

¹ On December 22, 1822, Byron wrote to Murray, referring to “ the calumnies you have allowed to circulate in the papers on the subject of Allegra’s funeral ”. “ And you also knew, or might have known, that I had not the most distant idea that Lady B. was a frequenter of Harrow Church, and to say the truth . . . I should have thought it the last place she should have frequented. . . . Had I known it, the infant would not have been buried there, nor would I myself . . . now rest in my grave if I thought this woman was to trample on it. It is enough that she has partly dug it ” (*L. and J.* vi. 152).

himself by an allusion to the Vicar of Harrow which editors convey to us in a five-lined paragraph of asterisks.

Mr. Coleridge, in a note to *The Age of Bronze*, contrasts Byron with Alexander I of Russia (whom Byron called "the Coxcomb Czar"), and says that "in one respect their destiny was alike. The greatest sorrow of their lives was the death of a natural daughter". That seems to me a great exaggeration of the truth. Byron's love for Allegra is a doubtful quantity: despite Moore's disclaimer, the remark that she "amused him: that was all" is probably an accurate statement of his feeling. The proprietary instinct of parenthood was strongly marked in him, it is true; but we may hesitate in identifying that with love. An affection which consigns an infant to the care of strangers, however admirable, without even a formal visit of inspection or supervision, is hardly one that will cause the greatest sorrow of a life.

Moreover, there is no room for doubt that the greatest sorrow of Byron's life was his outlawry. The letters from Italy prove beyond question that *that* gnawed at his spirit like the vulture at the heart of his long-loved Prometheus. Through all the six years of exile the same note sounds: "I am shortly for England" — a thousand times, it is true, angrily recanted, but in the recantation confirmed as the now most authentic "Byronic cry". And the more because with Allegra's death, his parenthood, his instinct of the Mine, was now left with that object only¹ of whom he

¹ In the early volume of poems there were some verses *To my Son*. Moore has the following, on p. 51:—

"Whether the verses are, in any degree, founded on fact, I have no accurate means of determining. Fond as he was of recording every particular of his youth, such an event, or rather era, as is here commemorated, would have been, of all others, the least likely to pass unmentioned by him; —and yet neither in conversation nor in any of his writings do I remember

had heard, just before the news from Bagna Cavallo, that her grandmother's will forbade her to be shown his portrait until she was twenty-one—"and should Lady Byron be then living, it is not to be so delivered until after her decease, unless with her Ladyship's assent".

Riding with Medwin on December 10, 1821, soon after he had settled down at Pisa, Byron was silent and melancholy; "he declined his usual amusement of pistol-shooting, without assigning a cause. . . . There was a sacredness in his melancholy", relates Medwin, "that I dared not interrupt. At length he said, 'This is Ada's birthday, and might have been the happiest day of my life: as it is—!' . . . It lasted till we came within

even an allusion to it.* On the other hand, so entirely was all that he wrote—making allowance for the embellishments of fancy—the transcript of his actual life and feeling, that it is not easy to suppose a poem, so full of natural tenderness, to have been indebted for its origin to imagination alone".

A stanza in *Don Juan* refers to having "paid parish fees" "in youth"; and, by the context, unmistakably points to illicit parenthood. He told Lady Byron that he had two natural children, whom he should provide for. One was Medora Leigh, his daughter by Augusta. Among the works cited by Mr. Prothero as sources of the text for *L. and J.* is (for three letters to J. Wedderburn Webster) *The Inedited Works of Lord Byron* . . . [by] his son, Major George Gordon Byron. "Two parts of this work appeared in New York in 1849. It was then discontinued, and the manuscripts of which Major Byron was possessed became the property of Mr. Murray" (*L. and J.* vi. p. 460).

* "The only circumstance I know, that bears even remotely on the subject of this poem, is the following. About a year or two before the date affixed to it, he wrote to his mother, from Harrow, (as I have been told by a person to whom Mrs. Byron herself communicated the circumstance), to say, that he had lately had a good deal of uneasiness on account of a young woman, whom he knew to have been a favourite of his late friend Curzon, and who, finding herself, after his death, in a state of progress towards maternity, had declared Lord Byron was the father of her child. This, he positively assured his mother, was not the case; but, believing as he did firmly, that the child belonged to Curzon, it was his wish that it should be brought up with all possible care, and he, therefore, entreated that his mother would have the kindness to take charge of it. Though such a request might well (as my informant expresses it) have discomposed a temper more mild than Mrs. Byron's, she notwithstanding answered her son in the kindest terms, saying that she would willingly receive the child as soon as it was born, and bring it up in whatever manner he desired. Happily, however, the infant died almost immediately, and was thus spared the being a tax on the good-nature of anybody.—[But see *Don Juan*, c. xvi. st. 61.]"

a mile of the Argive Gate. There our silence was all at once interrupted by shrieks that seemed to come from a cottage by the road. We pulled our horses up to inquire of a *contadino*. . . . He told us that a widow had just lost her only child . . . Lord Byron was much affected . . . 'I shall not be happy', said he, 'till I hear that my daughter is well. I have a great horror of anniversaries'". He wrote to Murray on the same day:¹ "I wonder when I shall see her again, or if ever I shall see her at all". In this letter he asked for a minitature, which was evidently sent, for Medwin, speaking of his study in the Lanfranchi, mentions among the pictures on the wall "a miniature of Ada".

Directly after his arrival at Pisa, began correspondence with Murray about *Cain*. It had been sent home on September 10: "I think that it contains some poetry"—and he wished it to be dedicated to Walter Scott. Two days later came a purple passage of three lines: "There's as pretty a piece of imprecation for you as you may wish to meet with in the course of your business". It was the concluding lines of Eve's curse of Cain in the last act: "Don't forget [them]; they are clinchers to Eve's speech". He was confident of the piece—"it is in my gay metaphysical style"; and was moreover much elated by his own facility and variety. "But no doubt you will avoid saying any good of it, for fear I should raise the price on you: that's right—stick to business! Let me know what your other ragamuffins are writing, for I suppose you don't like starting too many of your vagabonds at

¹ Not without a gibe at the mother of Allegra. In speaking of the tendency in his family to "only childism", he says: "My natural daughter (so far at least as I am concerned) [is an only child]".

once". The customary delay ensued on Murray's part—the customary invective on Byron's; indeed, before the report on *Cain* arrived, *The Vision of Judgment* had been sent home with the gibe: "It may happen that you will be afraid to publish this". By November 3 he had heard of *Cain* at last. It had not wholly pleased; but Murray was told that "the small talk between Cain and Lucifer" (as Byron called it in a letter to Moore) must remain as it was—"the passages cannot be altered without making Lucifer talk like the Bishop of Lincoln". Moreover, if it was "*nonsense*"—"so much the better, because then it can do no harm, and the sillier Satan is made the better for everybody". Meanwhile he had had praise from Moore, who saw the first proofs. "It is wonderful—terrible—never to be forgotten. . . . Talk of Æschylus and his Prometheus!" But Hobhouse, already in some disfavour, now fell far by reason of "a most violent invective upon the subject of *Cain* (not on a religious account at all, as he says)¹ and in such terms as make the grossest review in any publication that ever I read . . . moderate in comparison".

Thus incendiary already, while still in cold proof, *Cain* was to "set the kiln in a low" when on December 19, 1821, it was published with *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*. It had been announced by a separate advertisement in the *Morning Chronicle*, "so as to excite greater curiosity", and was no sooner published than it was pirated by Benbow,² of the notorious Byron

¹ The remonstrance was probably against the dialogue between Lucifer and Cain's sister Adah in Act I, where once more that forbidden relationship is the theme.

² Murray, who had paid £2710 for the three tragedies, applied for an injunction, which Lord Eldon at first refused on the ground that a jury might decide that *Cain* was blasphemous, and therefore void of copyright. The injunction was eventually granted.

Head — “one of those preparatory schools”, said Southey, “for the brothel and the gallows, where obscenity, sedition, and blasphemy are retailed in drams for the vulgar”. . . . “*Cain*”, wrote Moore on February 9, 1822, “has made a sensation”; but long before February, society was enchantedly shuddering at the newest Byron sin. “Tell dear George”, wrote Lady Granville to her sister on New Year’s Day, “that I think *Cain* most wicked, but not without feeling or passion. Parts of it are magnificent, and the effect of Granville reading it out loud to me was that I roared until I could neither hear nor see”. “Roared” seems to mean that the lady wept: it must have been exciting to assist at that “reading out loud” of the poem which now, for all its energy, leaves us shudderless and tearless. “Why, the yellow fever is not half as mischievous”, wrote Mrs. Piozzi; Crabb Robinson “came home early . . . to read *Cain*”; “the parsons preached at it from Kentish Town to Pisa”, as Byron told Moore, and it was literally true;¹ the King—His Majesty King George IV—expressed his “disapprobation of the blasphemy and licentiousness of Lord Byron’s writings”; and Byron himself, in the eleventh canto of *Don Juan*, reckoned *Cain* among the great disasters of his career:

“But Juan was my Moscow, and Faliero
My Leipsic, and my Mont Saint Jean seems Cain”.

The praise, however, was as unmeasured as the censure. From Shelley, always in extremes: “*Cain* is apocalyptic—a revelation not before communicated to man”—is hardly amazing; but similar extravagances from Goethe and Walter Scott do lift the eyebrows. Sir Walter, eagerly accepting the dedication, wrote to

¹ The Rev. Johnstone Grant at Kentish Town; Dr. Nott, the English Chaplain, at Pisa.

Murray, of the "very grand and tremendous drama of *Cain*", that Byron had "certainly matched Milton on his own ground". Goethe considered that in *Cain* he had found "his vocation . . . to dramatise the Old Testament". "Its beauty", he said, "is such as we shall not see a second time in this world". We, to-day, know how different was Byron's "vocation"; but *Cain*, though not now to be thus wildly condemned or praised, is doubtless one of the greatly characteristic works of its author. It has his energy, his sincerity—"his splendid and imperishable excellence of sincerity and strength". "All other souls, in comparison with his, seem inert", as Taine said. With its thousand errors of taste—that "barbarian insensibility", as Matthew Arnold (too convincingly citing instances) called his lack of "the true artist's fine passion for the correct use and consummate arrangement of words"¹—with all this terrible welter of "slovenliness and tunelessness", *Cain* is nevertheless a work which, once read, abides in the memory as a notable expression of the Byronic spirit, and the Byronic spirit is a phenomenon of importance in life, whatever modern criticism may deny it of importance in art. Very emphatically it *counts*—the "daring, dash, and grandiosity", as Goethe said, of that personality of Byron, which, as Goethe also said, is formative, "because everything great is formative, so soon as we apprehend it".

Cain, moreover, has this of weight—that, except the remaining eleven cantos of *Don Juan*, it is the last work of any real value done by him. *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*, which appeared with it, may be dismissed with a word of acknowledgment for two or three passages in the former, and one in the latter—Jacopo Foscari's rhapsody on the joy of swimming.

¹ An Arnoldian rendering of Scott's immortal phrase: "Managing his Byron's) pen with the careless and negligent ease of a man of quality"!

Heaven and Earth, the mystery-play of the same period—which Murray never could be brought to publish—is not to be considered seriously. Goethe said “it might have been written by a bishop”, and Crabb Robinson, to whom he said it, thought it “sounded almost like satire”. It is regrettable that Goethe did not so intend it.¹ For *Werner*, begun directly after settling down at Pisa and finished on January 20, 1822, there is, as I think, absolutely nothing to be said. Its authorship has been disputed: the Hon. F. Leveson-Gower undertook, in the *Nineteenth Century* for August 1899, to prove that not Byron wrote it, but Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and that through Caroline Lamb it came into Byron’s hands. There is something to allure in any theory which goes to prove that this, so incomparably the worst of even the dramas, was not by him.²

The Deformed Transformed, written probably between April and July 1822, has the personal interest

¹ In considering Goethe’s sayings, we should, as Matthew Arnold points out, remember that they were “uttered at the height of Byron’s vogue, when that puissant and splendid personality was exercising its full power of attraction. . . . Goethe, speaking of Byron at that moment, was not and could not be quite the same cool critic as Goethe speaking of Dante, or Molière, or Milton”.

² Mr. Leveson-Gower appealed to both external and internal evidence. The former does not take us very far—it establishes the fact that the Duchess of Devonshire dramatised the same tale, by Harriet Lee, which Byron dramatised; but that is all. In 1815 he had already tried his hand at the subject; in 1821 he asked for this draft from England; it was not then forthcoming, but did in the end emerge, and is published in *Poems*, vol. v. The internal evidence is stronger, in my view. The inferiority to which Mr. Leveson-Gower made appeal, does, in spite of Mr. E. H. Coleridge’s loyal denial (“There is no such inferiority”), very markedly appear. In *Werner* there is not a line that the most tenacious memory can even dimly retain. But far more weighty than any other evidence is that of Byron’s whole character. Nobody—and certainly not he—ever did a thing so “unlike”; for Byron to *copy*, to say nothing of publishing, another creature’s work is so unthinkable that it needs merely the statement to convince us (reluctantly, in my case) that *Werner* is his own fault.

of being a drama of natural disability. Arnold, the hero, is lame and has a cruel mother. An incident of childhood forms the opening scene of the drama :

“*Bertha* : Out, hunchback !

Arnold : I was born so, mother !”

Moore quotes, in connection with these lines, a passage from Byron's Memoranda where he describes the “feeling of horror and humiliation that came over him when his mother, in one of her fits of passion, called him a *lame brat*”. . . . “It may be questioned”, says Moore, “whether that whole drama was not indebted for its origin to that single recollection”. Mary Shelley wrote on the fly-leaf of her copy : “No action of Lord Byron's life—scarce a line he has written—but was influenced by his personal defect”. That has all the Shelleyan fervour of statement ; the truth lies somewhere between it and as flat a contradiction. *The Deformed Transformed*, condemned by Shelley as “a bad imitation of *Faust*”, depends for its interest on this personal note, and on the fact that it produced from a reviewer in the *London Magazine* for March 1824, this exquisite gem of humility : “Lord Byron”, says the author, “may write below himself, but he can never write below us”.

The Age of Bronze, composed at Genoa (December 1822-January 10, 1823), “in my early *English Bards* style, but a little more stilted”, has many fine passages of satire, a noble tribute to the “poor little pagod”, Napoleon (now—May 5, 1821—dead), a prophetic rhapsody on Greece and Liberty, and the great *tour de force* on the “uncountry gentlemen” of England, where “rent” is seven times rhymed, each time with increasing scorn in the application. This is by far the most notable of his inferior works.

He finished the first canto of *The Island*, his last complete poem, on the same day that he finished *The Age of Bronze*. It is a narrative of the mutiny on board H.M.S. *Bounty* in 1789, and serves as framework for a description of the Friendly Islands, of which he had been delightedly reading in Mariner's report.¹ He felt that he was in danger of "running foul of my own *Corsair*"; but hoped (in a letter to Leigh Hunt of January 1823) that it would at least be "above the usual run of periodical poesy".² It is on the whole a terribly dull piece. The passage in canto ii. (lines 280-297) on the Highlands contains the famous couplet:

"The infant rapture still survived the boy,
And Loch-na-gar with Ida looked o'er Troy";

there is an interesting line here and there; but it would be sad if we had to accept in this the last word from Byron. Fortunately that is not the truth: he wrote the fifteenth and sixteenth cantos of *Don Juan* after *The Island* was finished.

To my thinking, the dullness of these Pisan and Genoese labours is but reflected from the life he led in the two places. True, that his social circle was at Pisa more interesting than it had ever been, including as it did the Shelleys and Trelawny, and for comedy, Tom Medwin and the absurd "Count" Taaffe. But the ennui of which in his Ravenna Journal he had complained: "What is the reason that I have been, all my lifetime, more or less *ennuyé*?"—had now settled down into a "moping in quietness" very different

¹ *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands*, compiled and arranged from . . . Mr. William Mariner, by John Martin, 1817.

² It was designed for *The Liberal*; but John Hunt published it separately in June 1823.

from the passionate and dramatic revolt of the earlier Byronism. It is as if his spirit had lost power to soar like an eagle above the dull monotonous day-by-day preoccupations—rides, pistol-shooting, work, “going out to make love”. The dyer’s hand was subdued to what it worked in: Gifford, writing to Murray in the early days of the drama-making, and during the tedious prose controversy with Bowles about the Alexandrine religion, had longed that “Lord Byron should resume his majestic march”. “I *have* resumed my majestic march”, wrote Byron—most pathetically when we realise that the announcement was made in sending home *Sardanapalus*. But after the death of Allegra, either as a solace for his grief or a measure of precaution against his growing restlessness, he obtained permission from Teresa to continue *Don Juan*—“provided always”, he told Murray, “that it was to be most guarded and decorous and sentimental”. “I have been as decent as need be”, he wrote to Moore, when four new cantos were done. In the tenth canto Juan comes to England:

“Bold Britons, we are now on Shooter’s Hill!”

He warned Murray of the step: “How do you like that? I have no wish to break off our connection, but if you are to be blown about with every wind, what can I do?¹ You are wrong, for there will be a *reaction*—you will see that by and bye”. But Murray had suffered much by the dramas; and the Hunt connection, which had now begun, was not calculated to add to his confidence in the future. Incessant sarcasms from the author henceforth embittered the relations between Byron and “my Admiral”. It is saddening to read

¹ Cantos vi. to xvi. of *Don Juan* were published not by Murray, but by John Hunt.

the angry letters from Pisa, Leghorn, and Genoa—to realise the apprehension that Murray could not but feel in risking anything on works which were almost unreadable, or when not unreadable, actionable;¹ and at the same time to realise so acutely as any knowledge of Byron must enable us to do, how bitter to his proud soul was the loss of that vogue which, easily disdained, is by no means easily forgone. All was lost—and this with the rest. To me the Pisan period is the most poignantly saddening of his career. There is nothing to struggle with, nothing to resign: weariness is really come at last—and now that, long-sung in fancy, it *is* come, he finds it, in drear truth, unsingable. It has “folded such pinions on the heart, As will not fly away”: only by flying himself will he dislodge it; and we know—and our hearts ache beforehand with the knowing—how, in that dislodging, he was to “outsoar the shadow of our night”.

In his letters to Murray during the *Cain* outcry we retrieve the generous, quick-hearted “Man’s Man”, to whose word our hearts beat faster. “I can only say, *Me, me, adsum qui feci*; . . . I alone occasioned it, and I alone am the person who, either legally or otherwise, should bear the burthen. If they prosecute I will come to England. . . . Let me know; you shan’t suffer for me, if I can help it. . . . You will now perceive that it was as well for you that I have decided upon changing my publisher; though that was not my motive, but dissatisfaction at one or two things in your conduct, of no great moment perhaps even then. But now, all such things disappear in my regret. . . . They may do what

¹ E.g. *The Vision of Judgment*, for the publication of which John Hunt was fined £100 in 1824—after Byron’s death. The first number of *The Liberal*, which contained the *Vision*, was published on October 15, 1822.

they like with me, so that I can get you out of it; but cheer up. . . . I write to you about all this row of bad passions and absurdities with the *summer* moon (for here our winter is clearer than your dog-days) lighting the winding Arno, with all her buildings and bridges—so quiet and still!—What nothings are we before the least of these stars!”

It was at this time that the connection with Leigh Hunt and his brother John began to take shape. Leigh Hunt had fallen on evil days. In 1820 he had had a serious illness, and had been obliged to give up his work on *The Examiner*; his wife had next year written to Mary Shelley, entreating that the whole family should be transplanted to Italy: “Ask Mr. Shelley to *urge it to him*”. Shelley had written in July, but Hunt had refused; then at Ravenna, in August, Byron had himself proposed that he should come to Italy. Shelley wrote, after his return to Pisa, to tell Hunt of this plan. “He proposes that you should come and go shares with him and me in a periodical work to be conducted here: in which each of the contracting parties should publish all their original compositions, and share the profits”. Shelley frankly said that he was not joining the coalition: “nothing would induce me to share in the profits, and still less in the borrowed splendour, of such a partnership”.

Byron and Leigh Hunt had met in 1813, and had been mutually attracted. Hunt was indeed at that time completely fascinated. Their acquaintance began in his famous “*picciol' orto*” at the Surrey Gaol—it was the period of his imprisonment for libelling the Prince Regent—and he tells, in his unfortunate Byron Recollections¹ of 1828, how “his Lordship” would “enter with a couple of quartos under his arm, and give you to understand that he was prouder of being a friend and

¹ *Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries*, 1828.

a man of letters than a lord. It was thus", continues Hunt, in one of those confessions which make his autobiographical writings so almost absurdly engaging, "that by flattering one's vanity, he persuaded me of his own freedom from it; for he could see very well that I had more value for lords than I supposed". They had seen much of one another just after the troubles of 1816, and Hunt's sympathy was with Byron, although he thought him "incapable of real love for a woman". Nevertheless at that time he seemed "a generous nature . . . candid, sensitive, extremely to be pitied and if a woman knew how . . . extremely to be loved". They had lost touch with one another after the exile, and Hunt was surprised to find that Byron remembered him so warmly as this proposal seemed to indicate. It indicated perhaps a little more than the truth. Already in 1818 Byron's good opinion was modified. Writing to Moore in that year, he spoke of Hunt's "vulgar coxcombry". "He is a good man, but spoilt by the Christchurch Hospital and a Sunday newspaper—to say nothing of the Surrey gaol, which conceited him into a martyr. . . . He is an honest charlatan, who has persuaded himself into a belief of his own impostures, and talks Punch in pure simplicity of heart. . . . But a good man and a good father . . . a good husband . . . a good friend . . . and a great coxcomb and a very vulgar person in everything about him. But that is not his fault, but of circumstances". His Journal of 1813 had given a higher form of praise to Hunt. "He reminds me of the Pym and Hampden times—much talent, great independence of spirit . . . a man worth knowing. . . . I don't think him deeply versed in life—he is the bigot of virtue . . . withal, a valuable man, and less vain than success and even the consciousness of preferring 'the right to the expedient'

might excuse". To put these two appreciations together is to obtain both an illuminating stereoscopic view of the perplexing, charming, irritating creature who was to be immortalised in *Bleak House*—and a perception of the reasons favourable to Byron for the utter *fiasco* of their intercourse in Italy.

Moreover, if there had been nothing else, the facts that Moore exerted all his influence against Hunt, and that the Hunt family contained seven children ("little blackguards . . . dirtier and more mischievous than Yahoos. . . . Was there ever such a *kraal* out of the Hottentot country?" wrote Byron at various times of these appendages), would be sufficient to account for the personal failure, while the disastrous career of *The Liberal* aggravated all other grievances. Hunt's earlier book—*Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries*—is a deplorable revelation of his own worst side; the *Autobiography* of later years gives a better impression of both antagonists. There were grave faults in Byron's treatment, and they showed at their worst by contrast with the exquisite conduct of Shelley. *He*, whose death one might almost assign to the fact of Hunt's arrival, had, for the few days that he survived it, proved himself the "beautiful and" (*pace* Matthew Arnold) "effectual angel" that he always did prove himself in everybody's affairs but his own.

Hunt's journey to Italy is one of the most renowned tragi-comedies of literary history, and, in my view, one of the most delightful morsels of autobiography in the world. It was unimaginably uncomfortable, and his manner of recounting it is at once so simple, so gay, and so affecting that we know not whether to laugh or cry. He, Mrs. Hunt, and the seven children started three times—first on November 16, 1821. Within four days, stress of weather obliged the captain to put in at

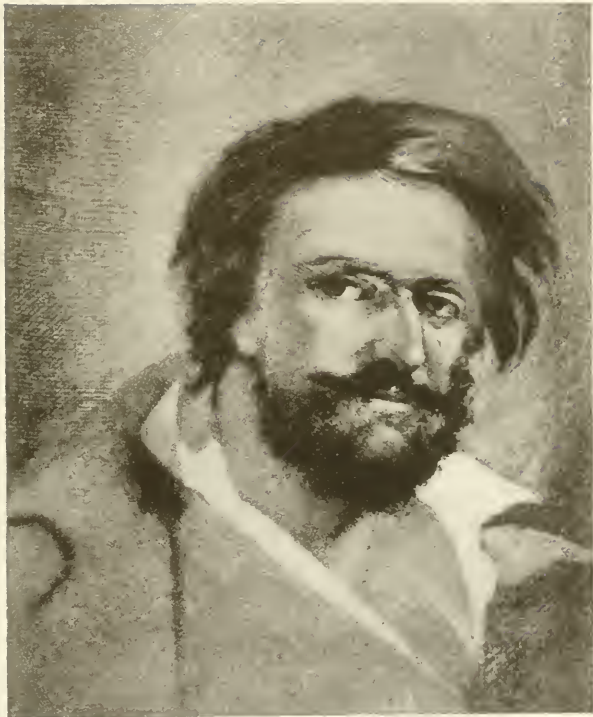
Ramsgate. There they waited three weeks, and on December 11 set forth again: Mrs Hunt so ill that she had to be carried down to the pier in a sedan-chair. After one day on board, there broke upon them "such continuity and vehemence of bad weather as rendered the winter of 1821 memorable in the shipping annals".¹ They were in very genuine peril—one gale lasted fifty-six hours, the "most tremendous", said the captain, "that he had ever witnessed"; and on December 22 they again put in to land, this time at Dartmouth, "a pretty, forlorn place", whence the Hunts soon removed to Plymouth. They stayed there until on May 13, 1822, they started again, "in a fresh vessel, on our new summer voyage, a very different one from the last". On June 13 they sailed up the Gulf of Genoa; and after a stay there, set sail for Leghorn on June 28. In Leghorn harbour they found Trelawny, standing on board Byron's brand-new yacht, the *Bolivar*, "with his knight-errant aspect, dark, handsome and mustachio'd". Byron had told this true aristocrat of birth and mind—this inestimable Trelawny, who has given us the best portraits that exist of Shelley, whom he adored, and Byron, whom he shrewdly criticised—that he "would find Leigh Hunt a gentleman in dress and address". "I found him", says Trelawny,² "that, and something more. . . . He was in high spirits, and disposed to be pleased with others. . . . But alas! all those things which seemed so certain,

'. . . Those juggling fiends
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope',

so kept—and so broke—it with Leigh Hunt".

¹ "Next year", says Hunt, "there were between fourteen and fifteen thousand less sail upon Lloyd's books. . . . Fifteen hundred sail were wrecked upon the single coast of Jutland".

² *Recollections*, p. 71 (1906). First published in 1858; in 1878, there



TRELAWNY

FROM THE MEZZOTINT BY D. LUCAS

In a day or two, Hunt went out to Byron's country villa, at Montenero, a suburb of Leghorn. "The day was very hot; the road . . . was very hot . . . and when I got there, I found the hottest-looking house I ever saw . . . a salmon-colour. Think of this, flaring over the country in a hot Italian sun!" His reception was as fiery as the house. He came right into the middle of a characteristic Byronic row. "I found myself pitched" (a very Hunt-esque word, by the bye) "into one of the scenes in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. . . . Everything was new, foreign, and violent".

There had been a quarrel among the servants, and young Gamba had been stabbed; one insurgent was lying in wait for the next person that should issue forth, with the avowed intention of stabbing *him* also. "I looked out of window", says Hunt, "and met his eye, glaring upward, like a tiger". But the hour for Byron's evening ride was come, and "the thing was to be put an end to somehow". Byron, grown so fat that Hunt hardly knew him, was in "a loose riding coat of mazarin blue and a velvet cap . . . trying to damp all this fire with his cool tones, and an air of voluptuous indolence"; the Countess Guiccioli was earnestly entreating him to keep back, and Pietro Gamba, "wounded and threatening", was angrily holding forth. They all squeezed to the door, each anxious to be the boldest, when a sudden end was put to the tragedy by the servant's throwing himself down and bursting into tears. "This blessed figure . . . more squalid and miserable than an Englishman would think it possible to find in such an establishment . . . reclined weeping

appeared an issue in enlarged form and with an altered title: *Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author*. (Preface to *Recollections*, 1906, by Edward Dowden.)

and wailing, and asking pardon for his offence, and to crown all, he requested Lord Byron to kiss him". At this Byron demurred, but he permitted the man to kiss his hand—and soon Pietro Gamba was warmly shaking the culprit's, and Teresa was looking "in relenting sort, as if the pitying state of excitement would be just as good as the other".¹

This absurd affray had immediate and troublesome consequences. It was the cause of the Gambas' final banishment from Tuscany. They were only on sufferance there—having already, as we have seen, been expelled from their native region, Romagna. The Austrian Government had given Byron to understand that they, and he, might reside in Tuscany, "provided as little was heard of them as possible". But at the Villa Dupuy, according to an account furnished to Mrs. Rossetti Angeli from the Historical Archives of Leghorn,² "disputes and domestic disturbances were continually occurring". (Byron managed always to acquire turbulent servants.) Nor was this the sum of his offences. His pistol-shooting "caused alarm to the inhabitants around"; he had made inconvenient requests in connection with the *Bolivar*; and its crew wore the name on bands round their caps, which, being contrary to the custom for private boats, was regarded by the authorities as "dangerous and defiant".³ Above all, there was the memory of an affray at Pisa on March 24—the notorious Masi row, when a sergeant-major of the dragoons was wounded by one of Byron's ragamuffin tribe of servants; mortally, as was at first supposed. It was not mortally; nevertheless Masi had been rendered

¹ The servant was dismissed, and, leaving the region, "called in his way on Mr. Shelley, who gave him some money out of his own disgust, for he thought nobody would help such a fellow if he did not". (*Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries*, i. 19. Galignani, Paris, 1828.)

² *Shelley and his Friends in Italy*, p. 291.

³ *Ibid.* p. 300.

incapable of further military service. Many pages are devoted to this shindy in most of the Byron and Shelley books, but it seems to me unimportant; its interest resides only in the fact that the Gambas were *then*—in the early spring—informed that their presence in Pisa was “disagreeable to the Government”. As a result, the Villa Dupuy had been hired for the summer season of 1822. There, on the day of Leigh Hunt’s visit, the scuffle between the servants broke out, and was the cause of the second and definite decree of banishment from Tuscany. The Gambas were ordered to leave within three days; but Byron obtained for them a respite. The two Counts went early in July; not until the end of September did Teresa follow them. She remained at the Lanfranchi—whither the party removed on July 2nd or 3rd—with Byron; she was there on the 13th, when Mary Shelley and Jane Williams arrived from Lerici on that most terrible quest in history. All unconscious, she came smiling amid her golden curls to encounter Mary’s gasping cry: “*Sapete alcuna cosa di Shelley?*”

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“ . . . If you can’t swim
Beware of Providence ! ”

So, in 1819, Shelley’s Count Maddalo, who stood for Byron, had mockingly warned the “rather serious” Julian, who stood for Shelley. “Did no unearthly *dixisti* sound in his ears as he wrote it?” asks Francis Thompson in the great essay. “But a brief while, and Shelley, who could not swim, was weltering in the waters of Lerici”.

He had come to Pisa to welcome the Hunts. Thornton Hunt "remembered after many years the cry with which Shelley rushed into his father's arms: 'I am inexpressibly delighted; you cannot think how inexpressibly happy it makes me'". That was on July 2, 1822; the days until the 7th were spent in settling the newcomers in their ground-floor rooms at the Lanfranchi; in cheering Leigh Hunt, who had been told by the renowned Italian surgeon, Vaccà, that his wife could not live a year;¹ and in striving to bring Byron and Hunt to a happier view of the projected co-operation in journalism. Byron's purpose was wavering. Moore and Murray had been at work, and to the indecision produced by their urgent arguments was now added the anger and suspicion inevitably aroused by the state of Hunt's personal affairs. Byron has been censured for his attitude in this crisis; but few of his biographers seem to have even tried to realise in what a vexatious position he was. Instead of arriving in Italy as the editor of a journal—*The Examiner*—renowned for its independence, probity, and brilliancy, Leigh Hunt arrived as an "out-of-work". *The Examiner* editorship had passed from his hands; he had made no arrangements of any kind for work in England. In short, he arrived avowedly—but, be it remembered, not until *then* avowedly—as the pensioner of Byron and Shelley. Byron had been counting on the aid of *The Examiner* to float *The Liberal*; with that, he saw much hope for the new and striking idea of a journal edited from overseas, and supported by such names as his, Leigh Hunt's, and Shelley's—the last controversial indeed, but destined, as no one could fail to see, to break through prejudice to high renown. He greeted, instead, a frank hanger-on, with an ailing wife

¹ Mrs. Hunt lived until 1857.

who was profoundly hostile to himself, and seven "intractable children". Even Shelley was dismayed when he learnt from Hunt's lips what ought to have been told before the family left England. But, characteristically, *he* kept faith and courage, and, as so often before, achieved his end. This was to keep the disconcerted Byron in something approaching good humour and good heart. Shelley obtained from him the promise of the *Vision of Judgment* copyright for the first number of *The Liberal*,—and that before July 6. It was to be published "serially" or separately, as John Hunt¹ thought best. "This offer", wrote Shelley to Mary, "is *more* than enough to set up the journal".

With such a triumph, his spirits rose; and on Sunday, July 7, his work done, he took Leigh Hunt to see the sights of Pisa. "We talked of a thousand things; we anticipated a thousand pleasures". But though he looked unusually well, Hunt thought that he had "less hope" than in the old days in London. "If I die to-morrow", he said to Mrs. Hunt, "I have lived to be older than my father; I am ninety years of age". Almost their last words to him were a prayer to remain on shore if the weather were violent next day. He borrowed, for reading on the transit, Keats's newest publication, which contained *Hyperion*. "Keep it till you give it to me with your own hands", said Hunt.

There had been a long drought—Monday dawned in leaden heat. But soon clouds gathered, rain, much hoped and prayed for, began to fall; nevertheless Shelley and Williams set off boldly from Leghorn in the *Ariel*. Trelawny, for some technical omission forbidden to accompany them into the offing, watched them from the deck of the *Bolivar*. Ere long a sea-fog enveloped

¹ John Hunt, Leigh's brother, was printer, publisher, and part proprietor of *The Liberal*.

the boat; "we saw nothing more of her". Then came great gusts of wind, oily drops of rain, "rebounding [from the surface of the sea] as if they could not penetrate it" . . . and, suddenly, "the crashing voice of the thunder-squall" that burst right over the *Bolivar* in Leghorn harbour. Its fury lasted only twenty minutes; but in that twenty minutes the *Ariel* went down with all on board.

For days nothing was known. On the morning of the 11th, Trelawny rode to the Lanfranchi, and spoke to Byron and Hunt of his fears. "When I told [Byron], his lip quivered and his voice faltered as he questioned me".¹ . . . At Casa Magni, in the desolate house, amid the beauty that from the first had "made her weep and shudder", Mary, not yet wholly recovered from the miscarriage (on June 16) wherein Shelley had saved her life by his promptitude and decision—Mary and Jane Williams passed the "fatal Monday" in tranquillity of mind. "We did not at all suppose that they could have put to sea". Gradually apprehension dawned. . . . But in truth the imagination refuses to consider the hours and days from Wednesday, July 10, when a felucca from Leghorn brought word that "they had sailed on Monday". In the following month, Mary recounted that experience. One word shall suffice: in her recounting, she, though writing with a minuteness which she believed to be exact to every hour, *erred by an entire week*. She had lost sense of time. It is enough; and we, reading now the awful narrative, lose sense of larger time, and push the book aside with a shudder that might belong to anguish heard to-day of near and dear.

¹ There are no letters from Byron between July 12 and August 3—an unusually long silence for him. We may conclude that, like the rest, he could think of nothing else, do nothing else but think, and wildly search, conjecture, inquire.

Williams's body was washed ashore on July 16 or 17; Shelley's on the 18th. Hunt's copy of Keats, doubled back (it has been stated) at *The Eve of St. Agnes*, was found in one pocket; a volume of Sophocles in another.¹ It was not till August 16 that Trelawny, with Byron and Leigh Hunt and some officials, burned the body, "throwing on it frankincense, salt, and wine", as they had done for Williams's the day before. "Even Byron", says Trelawny, "was silent and thoughtful". Yesterday, in watching the disburial and destruction of Williams's body: "Don't repeat this with me", he had cried. "Let my body rot where it falls" To-day, he could not face the scene; "he withdrew, and swam off to the *Bolivar*". Leigh Hunt remained in the carriage which had brought them from Pisa. "Byron", says Trelawny, "asked me to preserve the skull for him; but remembering that he had formerly used one as a drinking-cup, I was determined Shelley's should not be thus profaned". The heart would not burn; Trelawny plunged his hand into the fiery furnace, and snatched it out. He then collected the ashes into a box and took them on board the *Bolivar*. . . . The day was one of autumnal tranquillity and beauty—"the Mediterranean", says Leigh Hunt, "kissed the shore as if to make peace with it". He tells a frightful little anecdote of the return to Pisa. He and Byron went together. "The barouche drove rapidly through the forest. . . . We sang, we laughed, we shouted. I even felt a gaiety the more shocking because it was real and a relief. . . . I wish to have no such waking dream again. It was worthy of a German ballad".²

¹ The Keats, of which only the binding remained after the burial of the body—from July 19 to August 16—was burned on the funeral pyre; the Sophocles is preserved in the Bodleian Library.

² Shelley's ashes were buried by Trelawny in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome. Leigh Hunt suggested the words "Cor Cordium" which appear

"Shelley's dying", says Francis Thompson, "seems a myth, a figure of his living; the material shipwreck a figure of the immaterial. . . . Mighty meat for little guests, when the heart of Shelley was laid in the cemetery of Caius Cestius! Beauty, music, sweetness, tears—the mouth of the worm has fed of them all".

Byron's tributes to that exquisite nature are familiar. He wrote to Murray on August 3: "You were all brutally mistaken about Shelley, who was without exception the *best* and least selfish man I ever knew. I never knew one that was not a beast in comparison". And to Moore, on the 8th: "There is another man gone about whom the world was ill-naturedly, and ignorantly, and brutally mistaken. It will perhaps do him justice *now*, when he can be no more better for it". Again, to Murray in December: "You are all mistaken about Shelley. You do not know how mild, how tolerant, how good he was in Society; and as perfect a gentleman as ever crossed a drawing-room, when he liked and where he liked". That last certificate, which makes us smile, was, we must remember, one that Byron, the whilom Dandy, would have reckoned an important one.

To Lady Blessington at Genoa in 1823, he spoke still more feelingly. "He was the most gentle, most amiable, and *least* worldly-minded person I ever met; full of delicacy, disinterested beyond all other men, and possessing a degree of genius, joined to a simplicity, as rare as it is admirable. He had formed to himself a
below the name; it was Trelawny who added the consummately chosen lines from *The Tempest* which come below the dates of birth and death:

"Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange".

beau idéal of all that is fine, high-minded, and noble, and he acted up to this ideal even to the very letter. . . . I have seen nothing like him, and never shall again, I am certain”.

But Trelawny, citing Byron's written tributes, has something to add. “What Byron says of the world . . . is far more applicable to himself. If the world erred, they did so in ignorance; Shelley was a myth to them. Byron had no such plea to offer, but he was neither just nor generous, and never drew his weapon to redress any wrongs but his own”. He is alluding to a hint from himself that Byron might do Shelley a great service by a friendly word or two in his next work.

“Assuming a knowing look, [Byron] said, ‘If we puffed the Snake’ (as he called Shelley) ‘it might not turn out a profitable investment. . . . If we introduced Shelley to our readers, they might draw comparisons, and they are *odorous*’”.

Byron, on his side, said of Trelawny that “to save his life, he could not tell the truth”. We may allow ourselves then to hope that the cited remarks were not made; yet at the best, biographers of Byron must recall the suppressed letter from Mary to Mrs. Hoppner, the abominable “*It is just like them*”—and bow their heads in shame.

CHAPTER X

RESTLESSNESS

The Hunt family: Byron as patron—The Shelley circle degenerates: days at Genoa—*The Liberal*—Tom Medwin—Restless again—Portraits and painters—American and European tributes—*The Vision of Judgment*—Quarrel and reconciliation with Murray—Lady Blessington—Byroniana—Fresh efforts at renewal of intercourse with Lady Byron—Teresa and Byron—Greek adventure in the air—The Blessingtons leave Genoa

LEIGH HUNT, now indeed at Byron's mercy, felt his "heart die within him". "Lord Byron requested me to look upon him as standing in Mr. Shelley's place, and said that I should find him the same friend as the other had been. . . . I made the proper acknowledgment; but I knew what he meant, and I more than ever doubted whether even in that, the most trivial part of friendship, he could resemble Mr. Shelley even if he would". He continues: "I had reason to fear: I was compelled to try: and things turned out as I dreaded. The public have been given to understand that Lord Byron's purse was at my command, and that I used it according to the spirit with which it was offered. *I did so*".

Byron gave him—exclusive of £200 for which he held Shelley's bond—£300. He paid for the "good and respectable" furniture which Shelley bought for the family; gave Hunt £70 at Pisa; defrayed the expenses of the move from Pisa to Genoa, and supplied

another £30 for the move from Genoa to Florence in the summer of 1823. "The sum", says Jeaffreson, "probably did not altogether exceed £500". Besides this, he gave John Hunt the copyright of *The Vision of Judgment*; surrendered his share of the profits in *The Liberal* until the brothers were in comfortable circumstances again; gave them the MSS. of the Pulci translation (which he fervently believed in himself as not only "the best thing I ever did", but "the best translation that ever was or will be") and *Heaven and Earth*;¹ and gave John Hunt for publication, retaining the copyrights, *The Age of Bronze*, *The Island*, and nine cantos of *Don Juan*. "In these publications he asked for no share in the profits."² And when John Hunt was first prosecuted for publishing *The Vision of Judgment*, Byron paid for his defence.

Thus in act there can be no question of his generosity—unlavish, but unniggardly. Hunt's cool acceptance of money obligations in which he was always the beneficiary made him a difficult man to deal with prudently. A prudent patron was at once condemned. Thus we get in the *Recollections* an indignant accusation of Byron's manner of giving. "During our residence at Pisa I had from him, or rather from his steward, to whom he always sent me for the money, and who doled it out to me as if my disgraces were being counted, the sum of £70". Certainly it would have been kinder in Byron to pay over the money himself; but Hunt was all-too perfect a specimen of the "sponger" who will have it both ways. On one page he proclaims his "peculiar notions on the subject of money"—he has not "that horror of receiving obliga-

¹ The Pulci was published in the fourth and last, *Heaven and Earth* in the second, number of *The Liberal*.

² *L. and J.* vi. note to p. 123.

tions", *et cetera*; on the next, his "disgraces are doled out". Evidently the attitude was agreeable to him only when all the generosity was on one side. Despite his charm as man and writer, Leigh Hunt comes worse out of this affair than Byron does.

The patron's personal demeanour towards the "kraal" is perhaps more blameworthy, but here again in his excuse we should remember that Mrs. Hunt and he had been from the first antipathetic. Nine years before in London, she had spied out all his faults, and his faults only—and had been solicitous to direct her husband's attention on them; even from that husband's pages, she emerges, towards Byron, as a type of the Equalitarian who can never for a moment forget inequalities. But his accost of her at the Lanfranchi infuriated Williams. "She came into his house sick and exhausted, and he scarcely deigned to notice her; was silent, and scarcely bowed. This conduct cut Hunt to the soul." He said to his big bull-dog, in Trelawny's hearing, before the Hunts had been forty-eight hours in the house: "Don't let the Cockneys pass our way!"—and turning to Trelawny, added gloomily, "I offered *you* those rooms. Why did you not take them?" The children he frankly loathed. After the Pisan circle was broken up, he wrote to Mary Shelley of a sofa which had been in her husband's room: "I have a particular dislike to anything of Shelley's being within the same walls as Mrs. Hunt's children. . . . What they can't destroy with their filth, they will with their fingers". His dislike of the mother pierces plainly there! We can hardly wonder when we read Hunt's admiring description of her *agaceries*. She adopted from the first a "British Matron" attitude towards Teresa Guiccioli. They met in silence—that was not strange, for neither could speak a word of the other's language; but it is plain

even from Hunt's rather hypocritical statement, that the connection was made a pretext for "unpleasantness" from Mrs. Hunt. Her husband's excuse is that "it was clear there was no real love on either side". True; but that was no business of theirs. Nothing could be less convincing than Hunt's defence of his wife's attitude, as offered in the *Recollections*; and this was made the more intolerable by her impertinence to Byron. He seldom visited the Hunts' quarters, and, as we read, we find that not surprising. He said to "Marianne" one day (it is Leigh who narrates): "What do you think, Mrs. Hunt? Trelawny has been speaking against my morals! What do you think of that?"

"It is the first time," said Mrs. Hunt, "that I ever heard of them".

Byron received the answer in silence. For this, Leigh Hunt acclaims his wife as triumphant! Such obtuseness is almost the justification for Byron's epithet of "vulgar coxcomb". A man who could thus interpret so well-merited a rebuke shows himself incapable of association with a class in any degree removed from his own, for Mrs. Hunt's speech, coming from a woman who was not affectionately intimate, was an unqualifiable impertinence. But her husband learned nothing from the incident. Some time afterwards he asked Byron "if he knew what Mrs. Hunt had said of his picture by Harlow to the Shelleys?" Byron expressed curiosity, whereupon he was told how Marianne had observed that "it resembled a great school-boy who had had a plain bun given him instead of a plum one". Hunt adds that he did not tell Byron that the Shelleys "shook with laughter" over this sally, because it was "so like". That is almost the one thing we know of the Shelleys which gives us a poor opinion of their intelligence. The

portrait is certainly a little amusing in its scorn, but as certainly Mrs. Hunt's wit leaves us unshaken with laughter.

Not much wonder that Byron mildly described her as "no great things"! We smile irresistibly at the comicality of this patron, of all patrons, with such hangers-on; but what is fun to us must have been very irksome to him—with his impatience, his caprice, his moods, his worries, above all, his vanity. A too-independent dependent, and a dowdy disagreeable woman, and a kraal—was this what the Childe, Manfred, Juan, had come to? Insolence from Marianne, noise and "dirt" from the seven children—and from the author of *Rimini*¹ (now cured for ever of "My dear Byron"!) such My Lording as drove the victim to begin a letter "Dear Lord Hunt". . . . Byron was not a Shelley (and even Shelley's radiancy might have been dimmed by these cloudlets), he was very "human"; probably he *was* detestable to the Hunts. Let us put ourselves in his place, and speculate on our own potential demeanour during two years of such patronship.

It was all part of the life that now he wearily detested. Hunt saw that his affection for Teresa Guiccioli was gone; he saw too that she "did not in the least know how to manage him when he was wrong". There was jealousy to reckon with, for at the farm outside Pisa where Byron's pistol-club was established, there lived a pretty peasant-girl who enjoys the distinction of being his "last recorded flame".² Teresa, according to Hunt, was "very anxious" about her, but "could

¹ Hunt had, some years before, dedicated *Rimini* to Byron in a fulsome letter beginning, "My dear Byron".

² A sketch of this girl, Maria Castinelli, is preserved in Pisa; it was made in 1822 by a relative of hers, Paolo Folini (*Shelley and his Friends*, p. 247).

get no information"; and she now began to "indulge in vehement complaints of [Byron] to his acquaintances". Hunt neither much liked nor at all admired her. "Madame Guiccioli was a kind of buxom parlour-boarder, compressing herself artificially into dignity and elegance, and fancying she walked, in the eyes of the whole world, a heroine by the side of a poet. . . . She could both smile very sweetly and look intelligently, when Lord Byron said something kind to her". That last phrase, so carelessly thrown off, is significant. When Hunt first saw her at Montenero, she "had really something" of the heroine look: "At that time also she looked no older than she really was; in which respect a rapid and very singular change took place, to the surprise of everybody. In the course of a few months she seemed to have lived as many years. It was most likely that in that interval she discovered that she had no real hold on the affection of her companion".

It was in the days at Genoa that this alteration began. After Shelley's death, the Pisan circle broke up, and all that was left of it established themselves at Albaro, a suburb of Genoa. "The fine spirit", says Trelawny, "that had animated and held us together was gone. Left to ourselves we degenerated apace. Shelley's solidity had checked Byron's flippancy, and induced him occasionally to act justly and talk seriously; now he seemed more sordid and selfish than ever. He behaved shabbily to Mrs. Shelley: I might use a harsher epithet". That, alas! is an instance in which Trelawny told the truth. After Shelley's death, Byron made frequent offers of money to his widow. On June 9, 1823, wishing to return to England, she for the first time did ask him for help. "But", she wrote to Trelawny, "he gave such an air of unwillingness and sense of the obligation he conferred", that she refused

his aid, and obtained the sum she needed from Trelawny. "He regretted this when too late", records the Cornish great gentleman; "for in our voyage to Genoa he alluded to Shelley, saying, 'Tre, you did what I should have done; let us square accounts tomorrow; I must pay my debts'". Trelawny put the subject by, and heard no more about it from Byron. For it was true that Byron had, as he said jestingly of himself in *Juan*, temporarily taken up with "the good old-gentlemanly vice" of avarice. Parsimony had been growing upon him ever since the early days of reform at Venice; he would at that time lose his temper "once every seven days" over his weekly bills. The "kraal" aggravated this new susceptibility; and moreover (to find him an excuse) he did, for his Greek dreams, now dawning, need all the money that he had, or could save, or could procure.

The Liberal was from the first hopeless: its initial number was issued on October 15, 1822, and the fourth and last on July 30, 1823. Byron's early patience under this disappointment was admirable. Let us read a letter to Moore in February 1823, when the failure was seen to be imminent. Moore had again, as from the beginning, besought him "to emerge out of *The Liberal*"; and Byron answered: "You forget how it would humiliate [Hunt]. . . . Think a moment—he is perhaps the vainest man on earth If he were in other circumstances I might be tempted to take him down a peg; but not now—it would be cruel. It is a cursed business; but neither the motive nor the means rest on my conscience, and it happens that he and his brother *have* been so far benefited by the publication in a pecuniary point of view". But by March his attitude had changed. He told John Hunt plainly that "he craved permission to withdraw". "I am not at all

sure", he added, "that this failure does not spring much more from *me* than any other connection of the work. I am at this moment the most unpopular man in England, and if a whistle would call me to the utmost pinnacle of English fame, I would not utter it. . . . However this may be, I am willing to do anything I can for your brother or any member of his family". He added that no secession should take place on his part without serious consideration with Leigh Hunt. Again, a week later, he wrote urging his own idea of himself as a Jonah. "It is not so much against *you* as against me that the hatred is directed; and, I confess, I would rather stand *alone*, and grapple with it as I may. . . . Every publication of mine has latterly failed; I am not discouraged by this, because writing and composition are habits of my mind, with which Success and Publication are objects of remoter reference—not *causes* but *effects*, like those of any other pursuit. . . . I continue to compose for the same reason that I ride, or read, or bathe, or travel—it is a habit". To Mary Shelley he wrote in the same strain,¹ less ingenuously, it is true, for he represents himself as having entered upon *The Liberal* scheme chiefly for Hunt's sake. Shelley had, at Ravenna, depicted forcibly the distressed condition of Hunt, and doubtless this influenced him in some degree, but it was certainly not his only or even his principal reason for becoming a "proprietor". Already in 1817 he had suggested a similar arrangement—except that he was to return to England—for himself and Moore.

I cannot see what blame attaches to Byron in this matter of *The Liberal*. Why should he have done what no one does? Why should he, more than another man, persist in a ruinous adventure? In April he told

¹ In an undated letter, not certainly, but very probably, addressed to her.

Moore: "I take it that I am as low in popularity and book-selling as any writer can be. . . . This [my friends] 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 anything further for himself—at least, to the purpose. It is like pulling a man out of a river who directly throws himself in again".

Hunt saw the matter differently. "Lord Byron was alarmed for his credit among his fashionable friends. . . . This man wrote to him, and that wrote, and another came. Mr. Hobhouse rushed over the Alps, not knowing which was the more awful, the mountains or the magazine. Mr. Murray wondered, Mr. Gifford smiled (a lofty symptom!), and Mr. Moore . . . said that *The Liberal* had a 'taint' in it". He then adds, as if it were a reproach, that Byron "expected very large returns from *The Liberal*". It passes comprehension to imagine for what other reason *he*, of all men, should have entered upon the scheme. He had never been a coterie-writer; he was "out" for resounding fame, or nothing. Quite sincerely he told himself and his friends that he had never *written* for popularity. No; but he had published for it, and he had obtained it. As sincerely he could now let it go; but preferred, as he told John Hunt, to grapple with the change "*alone*". Few more characteristic words were ever written, even by him. Alone: it might be in a crowd, or on the sea, or on Alpine heights, or amid the whole wide world of men—but alone he had ever dreamed himself. As well blame

Byron for breathing as for this. Friends were with him, or ready to be with him, in all the crises of his life, and he summoned or accepted them; nevertheless, with his instinct for the limelight, he must be *seen* alone, like the hero at the crisis of a melodrama. For life was to him just that—a melodrama. He must be haloed (in scarlet or in gold!), the audience must gape and wonder, the curtain go up and down, claps and hisses contend in the theatre. . . . Not the dream of a lofty nature—no; but we did not make him, and we want to see him. We cannot change the play on the boards—and as he, watching it himself, might have exclaimed: “By the gods, it is a fine entertainment!”

The Hunts did not live under his roof at Albaro. Mary, true to the Shelleyan tradition of being everybody's house-agent, had preceded the rest of the Pisan circle to Genoa, and had there taken for Byron the Casa Saluzzi; for herself and the Hunts, Casa Negroto, at a little distance. Trelawny stayed in the city of Genoa until December, when he “made a cruise into the interior”. Tom Medwin—Jeaffreson's “well-mannered noodle”, “amiable absurdity”, “perplexing simpleton”; Mary Shelley's “*seccatura*”, which is the Italian term for a paralysing bore—Tom Medwin, with his notes of Byron's conversations, “when tipsy” (by Mary's account), had long ago left Pisa. He had returned at the time of Shelley's death, and was present at the cremation on August 16; on the 28th he left again, parting from Byron “with a sadness that looked like presentiment”.

It was at the end of September that Byron and Teresa Guiccioli moved from Pisa. Byron's *déménagement* was a troublous business, of which Trelawny gives

a vivid account. "The hubbub, din, and confusion" were "frightful". "If the Lanfranchi had been on fire at midnight, it would not have been worse". Trelawny escaped to Leghorn; at Lerici the Hunts, Byron, Teresa Guiccioli, and he met again. Byron was taken ill after a swim, and Trelawny went to see him. "I am always bedevilled for a week after moving", said he. "No wonder", answered the other, "if you always make such dire commotion before it. . . . How do you feel?"

"Feel!" and he vividly compared himself to "that damned obstreperous fellow", Prometheus. "Luckily", adds Trelawny, "the medico of Lerici was absent, so in two or three days the patient was well".

It is generally stated that during his stay at Genoa, which lasted about ten months, Byron was more tranquil and happy than at any other period of his life. "He appeared to . . . his occasional visitors, who knew him in London, to have become more agreeable and manly".¹ His discontent was increasing, nevertheless. He was "tired of Italy". Twice already he had seriously thought and written of emigrating to "Bolivar's country"; in 1822 he had contemplated taking up residence at Nice; now, in this autumn of the same year, an old and darling dream began again. From Ravenna he had written to Moore, à propos the earliest outbreak of the Greek Revolution: "The Greeks! What think you? They are my old acquaintances". . . . And from Pisa in August, just before the move to Genoa, he wrote to the same correspondent that he was "fluctuating" between South America and Greece. "I should have gone long ago to one of them but for my *liaison* with the Countess G. . . . *She* would be delighted to go too, but I do not choose to expose her to a long voyage and a residence in an unsettled country".

¹ Galt, p. 268.

The American artist, West, who painted him at the request of some transatlantic Byronians for the Academy of Fine Arts at New York, perceived this restlessness. It was during the Leghorn sojourn that his two or three reluctant sittings from Byron were secured. Byron had been, earlier in the year, mortified by the result of another portrait. This was a bust for which he had sat, at the sculptor's own request, to the fashionable Bertolini of Pisa. "It may be like", he wrote to Murray, "for aught I know, as it exactly resembles a superannuated Jesuit. . . . I assure you [it] is dreadful, though my mind misgives me that it is hideously like. If it is, I cannot be long for this world, for it overlooks seventy". West's painting is, according to Teresa Guiccioli, "a frightful caricature", the worst portrait of Byron that was ever done—and she was dissatisfied with them all, except Thorwaldsen's bust.¹ But if the American artist failed to represent Byron on canvas, he made one observation of him which strikes me as among the most arresting we have :

"I was by this time sufficiently intimate with him to answer his question as to what I thought of him before I had seen him. He laughed much at the idea which I had formed of him, and said, 'Well, you find me like other people, do you not?' He often afterwards repeated, 'And so you thought me a finer fellow, did you?' I remember once telling him, that notwithstanding his vivacity, I thought myself correct in at least one estimate which I had made of him, for I still conceived that he was not a happy man. He inquired earnestly what reason I had for thinking so ; and I asked him if he had

¹ She says that Sanders represents him with thick lips, whereas his lips "were harmoniously perfect"; Holmes (whose picture Byron preferred to all others) gives him too large a head; Phillips, "an expression of haughtiness and affected dignity", which was not true to life. Sir Walter Scott said: "No picture is like him".

never observed in little children, after a paroxysm of grief, that they had at intervals a convulsive or tremulous manner of drawing in a long breath. Wherever I had observed this, in persons of whatever age, I had always found that it came from sorrow”.

West's commission was the climax of a series of American honours. On Ravenna in 1821 there had fallen from the skies, as it were, a young Mr. Coolidge of Boston—"a very pretty lad, only somewhat too full of poesy and 'entusymusy'". This ardent boy announced that he had bought a copy of Thorwaldsen's bust at Rome to send to America; and Byron wrote in his journal: "I confess I was more flattered by this . . . than if they had decreed me a statue in the Paris Pantheon . . . because it was *single, unpolitical*, and without motive or ostentation—the pure and warm feeling of a boy for the poet he admired. . . . *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*', . . . or my sister's. . . . A *picture* is a different matter—everybody sits for their picture; but a bust looks like putting up pretensions to permanency".¹

He told Moore that he feared young Coolidge was disappointed in him, in the same way as West had been—"thinking him a finer fellow". "I can never get people to understand that poetry is the expression of *excited passion*, and that there is no such thing as a life of passion any more than a continuous earthquake. . . . Besides, who would ever *shave* themselves in such a state?" Continuing, he recounts other evidences of immortality. That day (July 5, 1821) had come a letter from a dying girl in England, who "could not go out of the world without thanking me for the delight

¹ He had sat for the Thorwaldsen bust only at the request of Hobhouse.

which my poesy for several years, etc". She begged him to burn her letter, "which . . . I can *not* do, as I look upon such a letter in such circumstances as better than a diploma from Göttingen". Then, alluding to a similar tribute from Norway which had come in 1819, he adds: "These are the things which make one at times believe one's self a poet".

He mused on "these things" in his journal.

"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,¹ I should have been received with open arms into the mansion of strangers and foreigners, attached to me by no tie but 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 in life; but, on the whole, I take it that such equipoise is the condition of humanity".

But it was the homage of America which peculiarly charmed his imagination. In 1813, we have seen that an American edition of *English Bards* had given him "a kind of posthumous feel"; now the same glamour played round transatlantic visitors. "They make me feel as if talking with Posterity on the other side of the Styx". Germany, too, told a flattering tale. Goethe was now "my professed patron and protector . . . he and the Germans are particularly fond of *Don Juan*, which they judge of as a work of art". And at the

¹ He had received an invitation to Holstein from a gentleman of Hamburg whom he had never seen.

Leipsic University, the highest prize had that year been offered for a translation of two cantos of *Childe Harold*. A travelling American, George Bancroft (afterwards the historian of the United States), had told him this—so the Styx was bridged indeed! “All this”, he wrote to Murray, “is some compensation for your English native brutality”.

When the first *Liberal* was issued on October 15, and the notices began to come in, such compensation was badly needed. He suffered then perhaps the most violent of all the “brutalities”. Read this from *The Courier* of October 26: “With a brain from heaven and a heart from hell—with a pen that can write as angels speak and yet that riots in thoughts that fiends might envy . . . this compound of rottenness and beauty—this unsexed Circe, who gems the poisoned cup he offers us . . . while the soul sickens at the draught within—seems to have lived only that the world might learn from his example how worthless and how pernicious a thing is genius, when divorced from religion, from morals, and from humanity”.

Prodigious! “Who would have thought that the old man had so much blood in him?”—the old man of hypocrisy. For it was at the *Vision of Judgment* that our friend thus shuddered and sputtered—the *Vision of Judgment*, which one refuses to believe that any human being can read without delight.

In January 1823, there was another European tribute. A young Swiss, Monsieur J.-J. Coulmann, arrived at Genoa and requested an interview. They met; and in July of the same year, Coulmann sent him the autographed volumes of several French writers, and Pichot’s *Essai sur le génie et le caractère de Lord Byron*, which had been added to the fourth edition of a translation of the works. Apropos some errors of fact and

deduction which this essay contained, Byron wrote Coulmann a long and renowned letter, making, among other things, the defence of his father which was alluded to in an early chapter. He begged Coulmann to have these errors publicly rectified: "I cannot bear to have [my father] unjustly spoken of".¹ Such homage cheered him; he could now write to Murray (more vacillating than ever), "I care but little for the opinions of the English, as I have long had Europe and America for a Public". His relations with "my Admiral" continued to be stormy. In October 1822, there was a very angry letter; but one from Murray crossed it, "and as I am a 'pitiful-hearted negro', and can't keep resentment, it hath melted my flint". The diatribe went, all the same; and ere long was reinforced by one still fiercer, and supplemented by a line to John Hunt, assigning or transferring to him (through Douglas Kinnaird) all unprinted MSS.—the six new cantos of *Don Juan*, *Werner*, and *Heaven and Earth*. But again in November, Murray "melted" him; and though "I shall withdraw from you as a publisher, on every account, even your own", Murray in the event obtained permission to keep and publish *Werner*, which accordingly was issued from Albemarle Street at the end of the month—the last of Byron's works to bear that imprint on its first edition. Alas! this—"our concluding transaction"—led to renewed displeasure. *Werner* was "so full of gross misprints that a publisher might be ashamed of himself", and the inscription to Goethe was omitted. As that had already occurred with the earlier dedication to him of *Sardanapalus*, Byron was incensed. "Is this courteous? is it even politic? I repeat to you that no

¹ Byron's German biographer, Dr. Elze, regards this letter as "self-delusion, or deliberate falsehood", with respect particularly to Byron's statements about the Wicked Lord, his grand-uncle.

publisher has a right to be negligent upon such subjects. . . . Do not force me to do disagreeable things. But in case of your non-attention I must not only write to Goethe—but publish a statement of what has passed between us on such subjects”. And delightfully he adds, à propos the Bertolini busts of himself and Teresa, which he had promised to present to Murray: “The busts are finished: are you worthy of them?”

On April 1, 1823, he met the last woman in his life—enchancing Lady Blessington. She and the Earl, with Count Alfred d’Orsay, reached Genoa on March 31. In her diary for that day she wrote: “And am I indeed in the same town with Byron? Tomorrow I may perhaps behold him. I never before felt the same impatient longing to see anyone known to me only by his own works. I hope he may not be as fat as Moore described him”. He was “like a skeleton”, as he told Hoppner at this time—so one disillusion was spared her when, the very next day, she *did* “behold” him, at his own house. Her diary for April 1 contained the entry: “Saw Lord Byron for the first time.

“The impression of the first few minutes disappointed me, as I had, both from the portraits and descriptions given, conceived a different idea of him. I had fancied him taller, with a more dignified and commanding air; and I looked in vain for the hero-looking sort of person, with whom I had so long identified him in imagination. His appearance is, however, highly prepossessing. His head is finely shaped, and his forehead open, high, and noble; his eyes are grey and full of expression, but one is visibly larger than the other. The nose is large and well shaped, but, from being a little *too thick*, it looks better in profile than in front-face; his mouth is the most remarkable feature in his face, the upper lip of



THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON

FROM THE PAINTING BY SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE P.R.A., IN THE WALLACE COLLECTION

Grecian shortness, and the corners descending ; the lips full, and finely cut.

“ In speaking, he shows his teeth very much, and they are white and even ; but I observed that even in his smile—and he smiles frequently—there is something of a scornful expression in his mouth, that is evidently natural, and not, as many suppose, affected. This particularly struck me. His chin is large and well shaped, and finishes well the oval of his face. He is extremely thin—indeed, so much so that his figure has almost a boyish air. His face is peculiarly pale, but not the paleness of ill-health, as its character is that of fairness, the fairness of a dark-haired person ; and his hair (which is getting rapidly grey) is of a very dark brown, and curls naturally : he uses a good deal of oil in it, which makes it look still darker. His countenance is full of expression, and changes with the subject of conversation ; it gains on the beholder the more it is seen, and leaves an agreeable impression. . . . His whole appearance is remarkably gentlemanlike, and he owes nothing of this to his toilet, as his coat appears to have been many years made, is much too large—and all his garments convey the idea of having been purchased ready-made, so ill do they fit him. There is a *gaucherie* in his movements, which evidently proceeds from the perpetual consciousness of his lameness, that appears to haunt him ; for he tries to conceal his foot when seated, and when walking has a nervous rapidity in his manner. He is very slightly lame, and the deformity of his foot is so little remarkable, that I am not now aware which foot it is.

“ His voice and accent are peculiarly agreeable, but effeminate—clear, harmonious, and so distinct, that though his general tone in speaking is rather low than high, not a word is lost. His manners are as unlike

my preconceived notions of them as is his appearance. I had expected to find him a dignified, cold, reserved, and haughty person, but nothing can be more different; for were I to point out the prominent defect of Lord Byron, I should say it was flippancy, and a total want of that natural self-possession and dignity, which ought to characterise a man of birth and education”.

That quotation gives an idea of her excellent quality. There is no comparison between her book,¹ so far as it goes, and any other except Galt's for the early days. Taking these together, we get a convincing impression which the longer biographies scarcely do more than impair. This impression is not wholly favourable, as it is in Moore's quasi-caricature of one of the most *ondoyant et divers* of human beings; nor does it, like Jeaffreson's hard, unpleasant photograph, betray by its very fidelity to mere externals. Jeaffreson's book is like the work of the camera: only in *one* light did Byron look like that—and there were so many lights! Lady Blessington and Galt alone perceived that he was both more, and less, than “met the eye”.

For the two months from April 1 to June 3 (when the Blessingtons left Genoa), Byron and they met almost daily. They rode together; he and she exchanged keepsakes and verses, talked of “everything and afterwards”, and parted in tears. One of the most delightful women that have ever lived, and just one year and a half younger than himself—yet with a sad and varied experience, ever since her sixteenth summer,² to make her,

¹ *Journal of the Conversations with Lord Byron*, published in volume form, 1834.

² Marguerite Power, daughter of a small Irish landowner of Co. Waterford, was forcibly married in 1804 to a Captain Farmer, whom she left at the end of three months, returning to her father's house. From 1807 to 1813 she lived under the protection of a Captain Jenkins at Stidmanton, in Hampshire. There she met Lord Mountjoy, created in 1816 first Earl of

in everything but freshness of feeling, many years older—Byron opened his heart to her, as he did for that matter to all and sundry; but she, unlike the rest, saw deep into his true nature, and exercised a charm upon him which must, had he lived and their friendship prospered, have helped him to a kind of happiness that he had never known before. To quote all her admirable *aperçus* of him would be to quote nearly her whole book. Let me give the most epigrammatic, which indeed sums up her impression: "*He never did himself justice*". She is guilty of the overworked epithet *chameleon*, which, in my view, has no pertinence, for to me all Byron is implied in each manifestation. She dwells much in this connection upon his swervings from sentiment to sarcasm: "He had both sentiment and romance in his nature; but, from the love of displaying his wit and astonishing his hearers, he affected to despise and ridicule them". Surely neither sentiment nor romance need exclude from a nature vanity or wit. Indeed, the too fiercely serious Romantic is often no true Romantic, but a Sentimentalist. Byron, on one side, was of the authentic brand—a sentimentalist about women, he was a romantic about almost everything else. Shelley, it is true, could be serious without alleviation, and still be the "real thing"; but how rare is

Blessington. Captain Farmer died from a fall out of window, when drunk, in 1817, and four months later (February 16, 1818) Mrs. Farmer married the Earl of Blessington. She became one of the most renowned of London hostesses: the "Most Gorgeous Lady Blessington". After the Earl's death in 1829, she and Count d'Orsay, who had devoted his life to her since 1822, entertained with "lavish splendour", at Seamore Place, and Gore House, Kensington. In 1849, financial ruin overtook them, and in June of that year, in Paris, Lady Blessington died. Count d'Orsay died in 1852, and is buried beside her at Chambourcy. He was married in 1827 to Lord Blessington's daughter by his first wife; but owing to his conduct, the marriage ended in a separation. Lady Blessington was much blamed for this union; it was said that she promoted it in order to obtain the daughter's dowry for her lover, d'Orsay.

Shelley! He is pinnaced almost alone in his seraphic gravity. Byron, on the contrary, touched humanity at every point; everything in him answered to that magnet—and this was, as I have said before, the secret of his vast popularity. . . . Again, the chameleon takes protectively the colour of its surroundings. When did Byron do that? He took, not their colour on himself to hide himself, but *from* their colour all that he needed to display himself.

It is not, then, that obsession which makes Lady Blessington so admirable; but her abounding sympathy with him amid all the psychological perplexities that he made for her. She was, as compared with most of the other women in his life, in an immensely advantageous position; for she was not at all in love with him, yet was aware that, had she willed it, he could at any moment have been deeply in love with her. And she had experience behind her; love of both kinds—marital and lover-like—beside her; while within her was a fund of that light-hearted gaiety and “innocence” which, in some natures, survives the most complicated set of circumstances. So fortunately dowered a woman is every man’s potential conqueror; and the more so when the man is what Byron was—*ennuyé* yet curious, vain yet enthralled by others’ charm, cynical yet idealistic, solitary yet warmly affectionate. . . . In the *Conversations*, there are sayings of his which wonderfully reveal the man beneath, and above, the poet; for to Lady Blessington he spoke with more real sincerity, and more aphoristically, than was his wont. A collection of Byroniana might be made from her book alone; I shall set down a few at random.

“It is as though I had the faculty of discovering error, without the power of avoiding it”.

“Society and genius are incompatible. . . . If I

have any genius, all I can say is that I have always found it fade away, like snow before the sun, when I have been living long in the world”.

“I can so well understand the lover leaving his mistress to write to her! I should leave mine, not to write to, but to think of, her”.

“I am of opinion that poets do not require great beauty in the objects of their affection”.

“Clever men make a great mistake in selecting wives who are destitute of abilities. . . . My *beau idéal* would be a woman with talent enough to be able to understand and value mine, but not sufficient to be able to shine herself. All men with pretensions desire this; though few, if any, have courage to avow it”.

“I wonder that no one has thought of writing ‘Pleasures of Fear’. It surely is a poetical subject. . . . Cowardice is, I believe, the only charge that has not yet been brought against me”.

“I have always found more difficulty in hitting on a subject than in filling it up . . . and I have remarked that I never could make much of a subject suggested to me by another”.

“After a season in London, one doubted one’s own identity”.

“*Au fond*, I have no malice”.¹

“No man dislikes being lectured by a woman, provided she be not his wife, sister, mother, or mistress”.

“How different do the same people appear in London and in the country! They are hardly to be recognised”.

“Vanity is the prime mover in most, if not all, of us. *None* will own to this passion, yet it influences *all*”.

“The English are very envious; they are, *au fond*, conscious that they are dreadfully dull”.

¹ Lady Blessington comments: “Never was there a more true observation”.

“Nothing so completely serves to demoralise a man as the certainty that he has lost the sympathy of his fellow-creatures”.

“Mathews’s¹ imitation of Curran can hardly be so called : it is a *continuation*”.

“Cleverness and cunning are incompatible—I never saw them united”.²

“I have not quite made up my mind that women have souls”.

“A successful work makes a man a wretch for life”.

“You see, I am modest in my desires with regard to women : I only wish for perfection”.

“Experience, that dull monitress, who always comes too late!”

“It is my respect for morals that makes me so indignant against its vile substitute, cant ; with this I wage war, and this the good-natured world chooses to consider as a sign of my wickedness”.

“There are some natures that have a predisposition to grief, as others have to disease ; and such was my case. The causes that have made me wretched would not have discomposed, or, at least, more than discomposed, another”.

“My besetting sin is a want of that self-respect which Lady Byron has in *excess* ; and that want has produced much unhappiness to us both”.

“He who has known vice can never truly describe woman as she ought to be described”.

“I maintain that more than half our maladies are produced by accustoming ourselves to more sustenance than is required for the support of nature”.

“When I recommend solitude . . . I mean a regular

¹ Charles Mathews, the actor.

² This is a striking example of the gradual debasement of the word “clever”. We could not say the same thing in the same words to-day.

retirement with a woman that one loves, and interrupted only by correspondence with a man that one esteems. . . . We are all better in solitude; we grow better, because we believe ourselves better”.

“I am of a jealous nature, and should wish to call slumbering sentiment into life in the woman I love, instead of finding that I was chosen, from its excess and activity rendering a partner in the firm indispensable”.

“I flatter myself I shall have more than one biographer”.

“If I know myself, I have no character at all”.

“I do not recollect”, says Lady Blessington, “ever having met him that he did not, in some way, introduce the subject of Lady Byron. The impression left upon my mind was that she continually occupied his thoughts, and that he most anxiously desired a reconciliation with her”. Elsewhere, she reflects: “Whatever may be the sufferings of Lady Byron, they are more than avenged by what her husband feels”. Early in their acquaintance, Byron learned that a friend of the Blessingtons, who had arrived in Genoa, was also a friend of Lady Byron, and that his sister was an intimate. He asked Lady Blessington to use her influence with this Colonel M—— to make his sister write to Lady Byron for her portrait, which he had long wished to possess. Colonel M—— desired that Byron should specify on paper his exact wishes. Accordingly he wrote:

May 3, 1823

“DEAR LADY BLESSINGTON,—My request would be for a copy of the miniature of Lady B. which I have seen in possession of the late Lady Noel, as I have no picture, or indeed memorial of any kind of Lady B.,

as all her letters were in her own possession before I left England, and we have had no correspondence since—at least on her part.

“My message, with regard to the infant, is simply to this effect—that in the event of any accident occurring to the mother, and my remaining the survivor, it would be my wish to have her plans carried into effect, both with regard to the education of the child, and the person or persons under whose care Lady B. might be desirous that she should be placed. It is not my intention to interfere with her in any way on the subject during her life; and I presume that it would be some consolation to her to know (if she is in ill-health, as I am given to understand) that in *no* case would anything be done, as far as I am concerned, but in strict conformity with Lady B.’s own wishes and intentions—left in what manner she thought proper”.

He confessed to her that he was “in the habit” of writing to his wife. “Some of these letters I have sent, and others I did not, simply because I despaired of their being any good”. In a day or two, he sent Lady Blessington one of these withheld letters—that already referred to, written in 1821 or 1822, where he had acknowledged the receipt of a lock of Ada’s hair, and had spoken of having kept his wife’s old “Household” account-book. He had continued :

“The time which has elapsed since the separation has been considerably more than the whole brief period of our union, and the not much longer one of our prior acquaintance. We both made a bitter mistake; but now it is over, and irrevocably so. For, at thirty-three on my part, and a few years less on yours, though it is no very extended period of life, still it is one when the habits and thought are generally so formed as to admit

of no modification; and as we could not agree when younger, we should with difficulty do so now.

“I say all this, because I own to you, that, notwithstanding everything, I considered our reunion as not impossible for more than a year after the separation;—but then I gave up the hope entirely and for ever. But this very impossibility of reunion seems to me at least a reason why, on all the few points of discussion which can arise between us, we should preserve the courtesies of life, and as much of its kindness as people who are never to meet may preserve perhaps more easily than nearer connections. For my own part, I am violent, but not malignant; for only fresh provocations can awaken my resentments. To you, who are colder and more concentrated, I would just hint, that you may sometimes mistake the depth of a cold anger for dignity, and a worse feeling for duty. I assure you that I bear you *now* (whatever I may have done) no resentment whatever. Remember, that *if you have injured me* in aught, this forgiveness is something; and that, if I have *injured you*, it is something more still, if it be true, as the moralists say, that the most offending are the least forgiving.

“Whether the offence has been solely on my side, or reciprocal, or on yours chiefly, I have ceased to reflect upon any but two things—namely, that you are the mother of my child, and that we shall never meet again. I think if you also consider the two corresponding points with reference to myself, it will be better for all three.—
Yours ever, NOEL BYRON”¹

If anything resulted from Colonel M——’s negotiation, or if it was ever attempted, none of the biographies informs us.

¹ *L. and J.* v. 480-1.

It does not appear from her book that Lady Blessington met Teresa Guiccioli at this time ; but their later correspondence seems to prove that they had known and liked one another at some period of the Blessingtons' stay in Italy, which lasted for several years. Byron spoke much of her, "confessing that he was not happy, but admitting that it was his own fault". Teresa had, he said, "all the qualities to render a reasonable being happy". Lady Blessington, *en revanche*, observed that she "feared the Countess Guiccioli had little reason to be satisfied with her lot". He answered, "Perhaps you are right ; yet she must know that I am sincerely attached to her. But the truth is my habits are not those requisite to form the happiness of any woman. I am worn out in feelings. . . . I like solitude . . . am fond of shutting myself up for hours, and, when with the person I like, am often *distract* and gloomy". He added on another occasion that if he and Teresa were married, "they would, he was sure, be cited as an example of conjugal happiness". How much irony there may have been in this, it is difficult to guess ; Leigh Hunt's story leads us to believe that there was some. But Byron spoke tenderly, if remotely, of the girl who had given him all she had to give. "Of the Guiccioli I could not, if I would, speak ill ; her conduct towards me has been faultless, and there are few examples of such complete and disinterested affection as she has shown me all through our attachment".¹

It is significant that Teresa was eager to affirm that Byron saw Lady Blessington only "five or six times" in two months, and that his feelings of friendship towards

¹ Her disinterestedness is fully attested. When Byron went to Greece, he gave his banker, Mr. Barry, orders to advance her money ; but she never would consent to receive any. He had also intended to bequeath £10,000 to her, but she had dissuaded him from fulfilling this purpose. Moore, Hobhouse, and Barry all testify to her refusal of any settlement.

her were not of an ardent nature. That she deluded herself, or desired to delude posterity, in this respect, is evident from Byron's notes to the Blessingtons during their Genoese sojourn: from them we gather that he saw the Earl and Countess nearly every day.

Before they left, the Greek adventure was almost decided on; but Lady Blessington thought it "extraordinary to see a man engage in a chivalrous . . . undertaking, for which his habits peculiarly unfit him, without any indication of enthusiasm". She found his mockery on this subject disheartening: "the action loses all its charms". He declared that as the moment approached for undertaking it, he almost wished he had never thought of it. "This", he said, "is one of the many scrapes into which my poetical temperament has led me. . . . It appears now only fit for a travesty. . . . Well, *if I do* . . . outlive the campaign, I shall write two poems on the subject—one an epic, and the other a burlesque in which none shall be spared, and myself least of all".

The Blessingtons left Genoa on June 3. Byron was with them on the evening before their departure—in very low spirits. "I have a sort of boding that we see each other for the last time; something tells me I shall never return from Greece". He then leaned his head on the arm of the sofa where he and Lady Blessington were seated, and broke into uncontrollable tears. On his recovery, he tried "to turn off attention by some ironical remark, spoken with a sort of hysterical laugh, upon the effects of nervousness". He begged Lady Blessington to give him some trifle that she had worn as a keepsake; she gave him one of her rings, and he took a pin from his breast containing a small cameo of Napoleon which he said he had worn for long, and presented it to her. But next morning she received a

note saying that he was superstitious, and had recollected that memorials "with a *point*" are of evil augury; he therefore begged her to accept instead a chain which he enclosed, and which had "been worn oftener and longer than the other".



BYRON

AFTER THE SKETCH BY COUNT D'ORSAY, 1823

CHAPTER XI

GREECE: THE END

The Greek Revolution—Greek Committee formed in London: Byron elected a member—Teresa Guiccioli—The departure—Dr. Bruno—A letter from Goethe—The transit—Cephalonia—Illness—Byron's tactics—Arrival of Stanhope—Disappointments—Dr. Kennedy—Missolonghi—Despair—Last verses—A seizure—Hatadjé—Ada—Last words to Teresa—Her subsequent history—Ambitions in Greece—Suicidal abstinence—Troubles increase—Last days—The "Confusion of Tongues"—Incompetence of doctors—Fletcher, and the message to Lady Byron—Byron's death—Funeral honours—Trelawny's betrayal—Byron's body embarked for England—Hobhouse—Burial in the Abbey refused—The funeral—Hucknall Torkard, and the grave—Lady Byron's last word—Summing-up

IN 1821, during the Italian insurrectionary movement, Byron had written in the Ravenna Journal: "What signifies Self, if a single spark of that which would be worthy of the past can be bequeathed unquenchedly to the future? . . . It is a grand object—the very *poetry* of politics. Only think—a free Italy!" It would be almost true to say that from the time of the Carbonarist fiasco, Italy became distasteful to him. Not long after the movement had collapsed, his attention fixed itself on Greece, where a revolution had broken out at about the same time. One of its first stages ended with the defeat of Hypsilantes in Wallachia on June 19, 1821. In the Morea the insurgents were more successful, and soon the movement spread over the country south of Thermopylæ and Actium. Military successes against the Turks were frequent; but political affairs

fell into a state of anarchy. There was no real leader; all parties pursued their own interests alone. At the end of 1822, Odysseus (whom Byron called Ulysses) was undisputed master of Eastern Hellas; in the Peloponnesus, Kolokotronos was the star; in Western Hellas, Mavrocordatos, long since foremost in fame but discredited by his political action during the year, was now regaining prestige by his defence of Missolonghi against the Turkish forces. The siege was raised on January 12, 1823; and the Senate of the National Assembly—constituted in January of the year before—elected Mavrocordatos their President. But he, in fear of his life from Kolokotronos—the popular leader, “a brigand by lineage and profession, and a cattle-dealer by trade”—did not dare to take office. The Senate summoned him, threatened him, and forced him to accept; he, too prudent in matters of personal safety, more of the ambitious statesman than of the soldier, eventually fled to Hydra. That was in August 1823, the time of Byron’s arrival at Cephalonia; and thenceforth the state of parties in Greece grew ever more complicated. “Every corner of the peninsula was torn to pieces by obscure civil contests”.¹

In January 1823, one Andreas Luriottis had arrived in England to plead the cause of the Greeks. A Greek Committee was formed, and was joined by many distinguished men, among whom were Sir J. Mackintosh (whom Byron had known and greatly liked), Jeremy Bentham, and Hobhouse. At the first meeting, Edward Blaquiere, author of several books on Spain, offered to return with Luriottis to Greece and collect information. He saw Byron on the way at about the beginning of April, and Byron then learnt for the first time that in March he had been unanimously elected a member of

¹ Gordon, *History of the Greek Revolution*, ii. 72.

the Committee, and that "his name was a tower of strength". This had been brought about by Trelawny, who had written to Blaquiére, mentioning Byron's interest in the cause. "The proposition", says the Cornishman, "came at the right moment: the Pilgrim¹ was dissatisfied with himself and his position. Greece and its memories warmed him, a new career opened before him. His first impulses were always ardent, but if not acted on instantly, they cooled. . . . The negotiations with the Committee occupied some months before Byron, perplexed in the extreme, finally committed himself". Trelawny was away at this time; but he heard from Captain Roberts² and Mary Shelley of Byron's vacillations. "'Well, Captain', said the Pilgrim, 'if we do not go to Greece, I am determined to go somewhere . . . as I am tired of this place, the shore, and all the people on it'". But already in May, Mrs. Shelley had perceived the reason for these vacillations. "The G—— is an obstacle, and certainly her situation is rather a difficult one. But he does not seem disposed to make a mountain of her resistance, and he is far more able to take a decided than a petty step in contradiction to the wishes of those about him".

Jeaffreson points out that Byron could well have taken Teresa to the Ionian Islands (then under the protection of England), whither he intended first to go, "had not his passion completely burnt itself out". "He wished" (knowing that his every movement would be chronicled in the English newspapers) "to figure in the

¹ Byron was thus designated by the Shelley circle after the stanza in *Adonais*, where he is called "the Pilgrim of Eternity".

² Captain Daniel Roberts, R.N., was a friend of Trelawny and Edward Williams. Byron had seen much of him during the Pisan sojourn, and Roberts had superintended the building of Shelley's *Ariel* and Byron's *Bolivar*.

way that might dispose Lady Byron to send him the miniature he had so recently solicited". Jeaffreson's insistent harshness in all allusions to the Countess Guiccioli must be remembered in considering his view. It is evident, indeed, that not only in this matter but in all others, the ruling idea of Byron's mind—once the Greek expedition was decided on—was to "clean the slate". But it is evident too that, whatever safety and ease might be reckoned on at Zante or Cephalonia, the moment for departure to the mainland would be greatly embarrassed by the presence of a woman. If Byron was to go at all, Teresa must be left behind: he saw that clearly, and in May had written to John Bowring, Hon. Secretary to the Greek Committee: "To this project the only objection is of a domestic nature, and I shall try to get over it; if I fail in this, I must do what I can where I am".

There was no poesy on hand—the fifteenth and sixteenth cantos of *Don Juan* had been sent home in the spring;¹ he had made another definite effort to approach his wife; he had set the Hunts on their feet by the abandonment of his share in *The Liberal* and by the gift of his latter works, and had arranged for the expenses of their removal to Florence; Teresa Guiccioli, Byron once departed, would rejoin her father at Bologna, whither the old Count had gone some little time ago. . . . It was precisely the situation to inspire him; and, so soon as he really escaped from Italy, it did inspire him. Like a child, he regarded his clean slate—resolute, like the child, to write on it *this* time only what should gain him credit. And the credit was to arrive through

¹ Trelawny tells us, on Murray's authority, that on reading the later cantos of *Juan*, Gifford said: "Upon my word, I do not know where to place Byron. I think we can't find a niche for him unless we go back and place him after Shakespere and Milton . . . there is no other place for him" (*Recollections*, p. 106).

and for Greece: "the only place I was ever contented in".

No wonder he could disregard the omens! He, who would do nothing even of the most trivial on a Friday, started on Friday the 13th—and when the fabled day asserted itself, and first they could not sail for the calm, and next had to put back for the storm, he, of all men the most apprehensively superstitious, "appeared thoughtful" only for a moment, and then remarked that "he considered a bad beginning a favourable omen". But he had strange forewarnings. Already we have heard him say to the Blessingtons: "I shall never return from Greece"; now, while waiting to re-embark, he said to young Pietro Gamba, "Where shall we be in a year?" Gamba comments: "On the same day of the same month in the next year, he was carried to the tomb of his ancestors".

In the evening of that day, July 16, 1823, they finally set sail. Their ship was the *Hercules*, chartered by Byron at the end of June without expert advice. On June 15, he had written to Trelawny at Rome: "You must have heard that I am going to Greece—why do you not come to me? I want your aid, and I am exceedingly anxious to see you. Pray, come, for I am at last determined to go to Greece:—it is the only place I was ever contented in. I am serious; and did not write before, as I might have given you a journey for nothing. They all say I can be of use to Greece; I do not know how—nor do they; but, at all events, let us go".

Trelawny comments: "Knowing him, I took no heed nor made any preparations until he wrote that he had chartered a vessel". But this—the *Hercules*—was in Trelawny's view most unsatisfactory. "A collier-built tub of 120 tons, round-bottomed, bluff-bowed, and

of course a dull sailer". He expressed his disgust. "Why, then", Byron retorted, "did you not come here sooner? I had no one to help me".

"You had Captain Roberts, the very man. . . . We might as well have built a raft, and chanced it".

But Byron smiled. "They say I have got her on very easy terms".

He had in another matter practised the same bad economy. A travelling physician was necessary to such an adventure, and Byron had engaged "an unfledged medical student", Dr. Bruno.¹ He proved as bad a choice, though for different reasons, as Polidori had been; and Trelawny again protested. "If he knows little," answered Byron, "I pay little, and we will find him plenty of work".

Thus equipped, he embarked on a "Friday the 13th" with Pietro Gamba and Trelawny; Fletcher, Tita, and six other servants attended the party. They re-landed on the 14th in a dead calm; weighed anchor on the 15th and were towed out to the offing by some American ship's boats, sent in compliment to Byron; that night were forced, by a gale which frightened the horses (there were five—four of Byron's, one of Trelawny's) and caused them to kick down their badly built boxes, to put into port again—and finally started on the Monday evening. The passage to Leghorn took five days; "Byron unusually quiet and serious". There they took on board two Greeks, who were said (by friends attending them) to be Russian and Turkish spies. Trelawny received this confidence, and imparted it as a "sample of the morality of the modern Greeks". But on that score

¹ Bruno afterwards confessed that for the first fortnight of the voyage he lived in perpetual terror, having been told that if he committed the slightest fault, Lord Byron would have him torn to pieces by his dogs, which he kept for that purpose. Count Gamba tells this tale in his *Narrative*. It gives us the measure of Bruno's intelligence.

Byron had no illusions whatever. All along, it was in the abstract cause of freedom that he sang and worked for Greece. Since the first *Harold*, he had known and judged the people; he now went there better prepared to deal with them than any of the "practical" men who were sent out in other capacities.

At Leghorn, on July 24, he received a letter from Goethe—the first and only one he ever had from him—enclosing some lines¹ composed by the great man himself. Moore's comment is interesting:

"It would have been the wish of Lord Byron, in the new path he had now marked out for himself, to disconnect from his name, if possible, all those poetical associations which, by throwing a character of romance over the step he was now taking, might have a tendency, as he feared, to impair its practical utility; and it is, perhaps, hardly saying too much for his sincere zeal in the cause to assert that he would willingly at this moment have sacrificed his whole fame, as poet, for even the prospect of an equivalent renown, as philanthropist and liberator. How vain, however, was the thought that he could thus supersede his own glory, or cause the fame of the lyre to be forgotten in that of the sword, was made manifest to him by a mark of homage which reached him, while at Leghorn, from the hands of one of the only two men of the age who could contend with him in the universality of his literary fame".

There joined them at Leghorn, besides the suspect

¹ These lines:

"Ein freundlich Wort kommt eines nach dem andern":

are translated in the appreciation of Byron which Goethe contributed to Medwin's *Conversations*. Byron wrote at once in acknowledgment, and Goethe preserved the letter "among my most precious papers", in "the famous red portfolio", and cut a small cardboard box to protect the seal with its motto: *Crede Biron*.

Greek gentlemen, Mr. Hamilton Browne, a Scotchman who "knew a good deal of the Greeks", and who induced the party to change their original intention of going to Zante. He recommended Cephalonia instead, because Colonel Napier, the English Resident there, was a known Philhellenist. . . . Thus at last, all was in train; they put to sea in perfect weather, and Byron said to Trelawny: "*I am better now than I have been for years*". "I never was", says this keen critic of the Pilgrim, "on shipboard with a better companion. He was generally cheerful, gave no trouble, assumed no authority, uttered no complaints. When appealed to, he always answered, 'Do as you like'".

Passing Stromboli, Byron sat up all night, hoping for an eruption; as he went down to his cabin at daybreak, he said, "If I live another year, you will see this scene in a fifth canto of *Childe Harold*". Such a speech contrasts interestingly with his avowed—and perfectly genuine—impatience at being regarded in this expedition as in any sense a literary pilgrim. Somebody proposed to him, during a visit to Ithaca, the inspection of some of the Homeric localities. "He turned peevishly away, saying to [Trelawny], 'Do I look like one of those emasculated fogies? Let's have a swim. I detest antiquarian twaddle. Do people think I have no lucid intervals, that I came to Greece to scribble more nonsense? I will show them I can do something better: I wish I had never written a line, to have it cast in my teeth at every turn'. Hardly a writer in the world but will sympathise with this ebullition. Byron sub-consciously knew that he was "accumulating material"; but, like all creative artists, he was at the moment absorbed in the outward event alone. Even Moore, on this subject, suffered rebuke. Very late in the adventure, Byron wrote to him

(March 4, 1824): "I have not been 'quiet' in an Ionian Island" (this was in defence of his sojourn in Cephalonia) . . . "neither have I continued *Don Juan*¹ nor any other poem. You go, I suppose, by some newspaper report or another". Moore comments :

"Proceeding, as he here rightly supposes, upon newspaper authority, I had in my letter made some allusion to his imputed occupations, which, in his present sensitiveness on the subject of authorship, did not at all please him. To this circumstance Count Gamba alludes in a passage of his Narrative; where, after mentioning a remark of Byron's, that 'Poetry should only occupy the idle, and that in more serious affairs it would be ridiculous', he adds—'Mr. Moore, at this time writing to him, said, that he had heard that "instead of pursuing heroic and warlike adventures, he was residing in a delightful villa, continuing *Don Juan*". This offended him for the moment, and he was sorry that such a mistaken judgment had been formed of him'.

"It is amusing to observe that, while thus anxious, and from a highly noble motive, to throw his authorship into the shade while engaged in so much more serious pursuits, it was yet an author's mode of revenge that always occurred to him, when under the influence of any of these passing resentments. Thus, when a little angry with Colonel Stanhope one day, he exclaimed, 'I will libel you in your own Chronicle'; and in this brief burst of humour I was myself the means of provoking in him, I have been told, on the authority

¹ The seventeenth canto is unfinished; on May 8, 1823, Byron began it, and took the MS. with him to Greece. Trelawny found "15 stanzas" in the room at Missolonghi. The fourteen (not fifteen) were printed and published for the first time in Mr. Coleridge's edition of the Poems.

of Count Gamba, that he swore to 'write a satire' upon me.

"Though [his] letter shows how momentary was any little spleen he may have felt, there not unfrequently, I own, comes over me a short pang of regret to think that a feeling of displeasure, however slight, should have been among the latest I awakened in him".

His spirits, as the ship progressed towards Cephalonia, grew higher and higher. He and Trelawny swam every day at noon; he practised with his pistols; he played a practical joke on their captain, one Scott, who, when he wished to be very ceremonious, wore a bright scarlet waistcoat. Scott was immensely stout, and Byron, curious to know if the sacred garment would not button round both himself and Trelawny, one day persuaded the cabin-boy to bring it up to them during the captain's siesta. "Now", he cried, standing on the gangway with one arm in the waistcoat, "put your arm in, Tre; we'll jump overboard and take the shine out of it". And so they did, to the great anger of Scott, who accused them of inciting the crew to mutiny. . . . Fletcher, hero of the thunder-storm at Zitza those many years ago, had preserved all his old character. "My master can't be right in his mind", he confided to Trelawny. "Why, sir, there is nothing to eat in Greece, or to drink; there is nothing but rocks, robbers, and vermin. I defy my Lord to deny it". Byron, unexpectedly arriving, overheard. "I don't deny it", said he. "What he says is quite true to those who take a hog's eye view of things. But this I know, I have never been so happy as I was there". On August 2, Cephalonia and Zante were in sight, and pointing out the line of the Morea, he said: "I don't know why it is, but I feel as if the eleven

long years I have passed through since I was there, were taken off my shoulders".¹

Next day they anchored in the harbour of Argostoli, chief town of Cephalonia. It was here that the first of the long series of vexations occurred. Byron heard from the Secretary that Edward Blaquiere, who was to have awaited his arrival, was on his way back to England, and had left no message of any kind for him. He at once declared to Trelawny that he saw he had been used merely as a decoy by the Greek Committee in London. "Now they have got me thus far, they think I must go on. . . . They are deceived; I won't budge a foot farther till I see my way. We will stay here". But his anger quickly vanished before the "lively sensation" that his presence in Argostoli excited. He "was greeted with a welcome so cordial and respectful as not only surprised and flattered him" (accustomed as he now was to accept himself as an outlaw in his countrymen's eyes), "but, it was evident, sensibly touched him". His health was drunk at the mess, and he made a short speech: "he was much pleased when he had delivered it, and frequently asked the Colonel if he had acquitted himself properly, as he was so little in practice". Serious business, however, was not forgotten. Directly he heard of Blaquiere's departure, he sent a message after him to Corfu; the messenger could nowhere fall in with him, nor even at Corfu had he left any message for Byron. Another envoy was sent to Marco Bozzaris at Missolonghi. Bozzaris, a Suliot chief, was fighting on the Greek side, and was then endeavouring to check the Turkish advance on Anatolikon. He received Byron's letter

¹ All through the voyage, as they passed hills and sheltered coves, he would point to some serene nook, and exclaim: "There I could be happy!" (Trelawny, *Records*, p. 126).

on August 18, and answered without delay: "Your Excellency is exactly the person of whom we stand in need. Let nothing prevent you from coming into this part of Greece. . . . Do not delay". Within a few hours after signing this, he was killed in battle. "Thus", comments Mr. Prothero, "of the two Greek leaders to whom Byron had been recommended, one was dead, and the other, Mavrocordatos, was a fugitive". Before long, too, he heard from the defaulting Blaquiere, "requesting me (contrary to his former opinion) not to proceed to Greece *yet*". For the first month after his arrival he remained on board the *Hercules*; then he paid off the vessel, and took a house for himself, Gamba, and Bruno at Metaxata, a pleasant village about four miles and a half from Argostoli. There he remained until December 28, when he embarked for Missolonghi.

The stay at Argostoli and Metaxata was marked by many incidents, all of which have been recorded at length by various writers. The most engaging of these narratives is that by an Englishman, one Mr. S— (later to be connected closely with the miserable "Medora Leigh"¹ scandal), who was completely fascinated by him. They met on the island of Ithaca, which Byron visited directly after his arrival, with Gamba, Bruno, Trelawny, and Hamilton Browne. Mr. S— had much talk with him, and found him so delightfully different from what he had heard that "my faculties were visibly affected by my amazement". He spoke freely of literature—Pope and Walter Scott² (whom he

¹ See Appendix, "Medora Leigh". Mr. S—'s narrative was first published in Mackay's *Medora Leigh*, 1869.

² Byron's delight in the Waverley Novels was so great that he never travelled without his copies of them, and *Quentin Durward* was one of the last books he read. Dr. Henry Muir, a resident of Cephalonia, happened to receive a copy, and at once lent it to Byron, knowing that he had not read

called "Watty") being the principal themes; and of his hopes and fears for the cause. "I find but one opinion . . . that no good is to be done for these rascally Greeks, that I am sure to be deceived, disgusted, and all the rest of it. It may be so; but it is chiefly to satisfy myself upon these points that I am going. I go prepared for anything, expecting a deal of roguery and imposition, but hoping to do some good". He then led the conversation to his private affairs, and especially the separation, ending with: "I dare say it will turn out that I have been terribly in the wrong, *but I always want to know what I did*". . . . Mr. S—— "had not courage to touch on this delicate topic"; and the incident must have come back to him, with even increased "amazement", when in process of time, he engaged himself in the interests of the girl who was so tragically fathered and mothered.

Next morning, when Mr. S—— again beheld Byron :

"I never saw and could not conceive the possibility of such a change in the appearance of a human being as had taken place since the previous night. He looked like a man under sentence of death, or returning from the funeral of all that he held dear on earth. His person seemed shrunk, his face was pale, and his eyes languid and fixed on the ground. He was leaning upon a stick, and had changed his dark camlet-caped surtout of the preceding evening for a nankeen jacket embroidered like a hussar's—an attempt at dandyism, or dash, to which the look and demeanour of the wearer formed a sad contrast".

He recovered looks and spirits; they all went on an

it. "He immediately shut himself in his room", refused dinner, and "merely came out once or twice to say how much he was entertained, returning to his room with a plate of figs in his hand". This was the day before he left for Missolonghi, and, not having finished the book, he took it with him.

excursion to the Fountain of Arethusa—but this, the first indication of his shattered state, is a note which recurs twice in a narrative comprising the events of one week only. His suicidal imprudence is here also deeply marked. When counselled not to eat fresh-gathered grapes, as not having had the “first rain”, he deliberately chose them in preference to the riper figs and nectarines—“in order to accustom myself to any and all things that a man may be compelled to take where I am going”. He drank twice in one afternoon of “gin-swizzle”, and then of various Greek wines. Next morning, Bruno reported that he had spent many hours at Byron’s bedside during the night, and when his employer appeared “after bathing and boating”, the young doctor “wrung his hands and tore his hair with alarm and vexation”. That same afternoon, at Saint Euphemia, he ate largely at a luxurious feast given to the party by the English Resident. “Verily”, said Byron, “I cannot abstain”. They slept at a monastery on the hill of Samos, across the bay. Almost directly they reached it, Byron retired; in a few minutes the rest were alarmed by the entrance of Bruno, again wringing his hands and tearing his hair—“a practice much too frequent with him”, mildly remarks Mr. S—of this incompetent young man. He announced that Byron had been seized with violent spasms, and that his brain was excited to “dangerous excess, so that he would not tolerate the presence of any person in his room. He refused all medicine, and stamped and tore all his clothes and bedding like a maniac. We could hear him rattling and ejaculating. Poor Dr. Bruno . . . implored one or more of the company to go to his lordship and induce him, if possible, to save his life by taking the necessary medicine. Trelawny at once proceeded to the room, but soon returned, saying that it would require ten such

as he to hold his lordship for a minute, adding that Lord Byron would not leave an unbroken article in the room. The doctor again essayed an entrance, but without success. The monks were becoming alarmed, and so, in truth, were all present. The doctor asked me to try to bring his lordship to reason; 'he will thank you when he is well', he said, 'but get him to take this one pill, and he will be safe'. It seemed a very easy undertaking, and I went. There being no lock on the door, entry was obtained in spite of a barricade of chairs and a table within. His lordship was half-undressed, standing in a far corner like a hunted animal at bay. As I looked determined to advance in spite of his imprecations of 'Back! out, out of my sight! fiends, can I have no peace, no relief from this hell! Leave me, I say!' he lifted the chair nearest to him, and hurled it direct at my head; I escaped as I best could, and returned to the *sala*. . . . Mr. Hamilton Browne, one of our party, now volunteered an attempt, and the silence that succeeded his entrance augured well for his success. He returned much sooner than expected, telling the doctor that he might go to sleep; Lord Byron had taken both the pills, and had lain down on my mattress and bedding, prepared for him by my servant, the only regular bed in the company, the others being trunks and portable tressels, with such softening as might be procured for the occasion".

Trelawny gives an account of some very strange behaviour from Byron during this stay, to which Mr. S— does not allude. The Abbot had been told of their coming, and he prepared a great reception for the English nobleman. Monks were ranged along the terrace, "chanting a hymn of glorification and welcome"; the Abbot, clad in sacerdotal robes, received him at the porch. A vast hall was illuminated;

“boys swung censers . . . under the poet’s nose”; and then the Abbot proceeded to intone “a turgid and interminable eulogium on my ‘Lordo Inglese’, in a polyglot of tongues. . . . Byron had not spoken a word since we entered. . . . Suddenly he burst into a paroxysm of rage . . . a torrent of Italian execrations . . . then, turning to us with flashing eyes, he vehemently exclaimed: ‘Will no one release me from the presence of these pestilential idiots? they drive me mad’. Seizing a lamp, he left the room”. The Abbot was struck to stone for some moments; then, “in a low tremulous voice said . . . ‘*Eccolo, é matto, poveretto!*’” (Poor fellow, he is mad). Byron did not reappear. Next morning they left. “However”, says Trelawny, “we might have doubted the sincerity of their ovation on receiving us, we did not question the relief they felt, and expressed by their looks, on our departure”.

It is worth pointing out that while Mr. S— does not mention this episode, Trelawny does not mention that of the attack of illness. I imagine that the Cornishman, who “could not tell the truth to save his life”, is here guilty of embroidery, and that the far more credible story of momentary dementia is the true one. Byron had brought on himself a veritable crisis of dyspepsia: the next night, back at Argostoli and on board the *Hercules*, he had a terrible nightmare from which Trelawny waked him. He stared wildly at his visitor: “I have had such a dream! I am not fit to go to Greece. I am trembling with fear. If you had come to strangle me, I could have done nothing”. “Who could, against a nightmare?” was Trelawny’s sage answer.

But Trelawny soon grew irritated by what he calls Byron’s “old routine of dawdling habits, plotting, planning, shilly-shallying, and doing nothing”. He and

Hamilton Browne resolved to start at once for the Morea, and ascertain the real state of affairs, for the daily-conflicting accounts distracted them all. They accordingly left Cephalonia on September 29, with letters to the Greek Government at Tripolitza. . . . But this lingering of Byron's at Cephalonia had its well-chosen reason. Trelawny was unchangeably the adventurer pure and simple—the somewhat obvious firebrand and swashbuckler; Byron, not naturally any more cautious, yet showed himself now to be admirably restrained and far-sighted. By this time, he had settled himself at Metaxata, having refused Colonel Napier's invitation to take up quarters with him. His reason was the fear of embroiling the British authorities with their Government; and in every arrangement at this time he practised the same prudent reserve. From all sides came letters, urging him to attach himself to one or other of the factions. He replied in the same sense to all: "Make up your differences. . . . I have come to help none of you as a partisan, but all of you as a common friend".

News now arrived: it was hoped that the Greek Loan would immediately be floated in London. In November, Hamilton Browne returned with letters from the Greek Government, asking Byron to advance £6000 for the payment of the fleet. Byron had carried with him from Italy 10,000 Spanish dollars in ready money, with bills of exchange for 40,000 more; and he now advanced to the Greek Government £4000—the first of the large sums of money he devoted to the cause. . . . At about the same time, Colonel the Hon. Leicester Stanhope (afterwards fifth Earl of Harrington) arrived at Cephalonia, having been deputed by the London Committee to act with Byron.

From this time onward, nothing but disappointment

awaited him. Soon after his instalment, he had taken into his pay a body-guard of forty Suliots,¹ had almost at once learned his error, given them two months' pay, and sent them to Missolonghi. He soon wrote, in the diary he kept for a short time: "One should not despair, though all the foreigners that I have hitherto met with . . . are going or gone back disgusted. . . . The worst of [the Greeks] is, they are such damned liars, . . . but they may be mended by and by". Writing to Colonel Napier, he said: "I can hardly be disappointed, for I believed myself on a fool's errand from the outset. . . . But I like the Cause at least, and will stick by it".

Colonel Stanhope had been much hoped for, but proved an acute disillusion. He was the perfect type of *doctrinaire*; Byron said of him to Parry (who arrived in February 1824), "He is a mere schemer and talker, more of a saint than a soldier; and, with a great deal of pretended plainness, a mere politician, and no patriot. . . . [He] begins at the wrong end . . . and like all political jobbers, mistakes the accessories of civilisation for its cause. . . . I thought, being a soldier, [he] would have shown himself differently". Stanhope's plan for establishing newspapers was the grand absurdity of his scheme for Greece. Byron and he pulled well at first; but the newspaper project, and Stanhope's idolisation of Jeremy Bentham, soon caused a breach. Moreover, Stanhope, as a Benthamite, of course advocated a republican form of Government; while Byron saw that in the then degraded state of the country, a republic was out of the question. Though they thus differed, however, each respected the other, and Stan-

¹ The Suliots were a military caste of orthodox Christian Albanians, fighting on the Greek side. They were a turbulent and mercenary race; Byron had learned something of them during the first *Harold* tour.

hope, in his book,¹ paid many a generous tribute to Byron—while Byron, though he spoke bitterly to and of the *doctrinaire*, nevertheless bore with him in extraordinarily good-humoured fashion.

It was at Metaxata that the renowned “conversations” with Dr. Kennedy took place. This was a Scottish medical man, methodistically inclined, who undertook to “convert” Byron. Mr. S— speaks disdainfully of him. “He was very weak in mind and body, ignorant of the most common controversial arguments even on his own side. He was a shallow and ill-informed man. His book showed the results, but it did not, and could not, show the quizzing that he excited in the garrison”. The “conversations” often lasted five or six hours, and Byron told Parry² that, “even though unprepared, I had very often the best of the argument. . . . He was not a very skilful disputant”. The knowledge of the Bible displayed by his “sceptic” perplexed the methodistical doctor; Byron had always been, and still was, a student of it (“I read a chapter every day”, he told Parry), and with his prodigious memory for all reading, he must indeed have made a formidable adversary.

In December the call to Missolonghi became urgent. Mavrocordatos was there; he and Stanhope (who had gone in November) wrote to beg Byron to come as soon as possible. “It is right and necessary to tell you”, said Stanhope, “that a great deal is expected of you, both in the way of counsel and money. . . . All are eager to see you. . . . Your further delay . . . will be attended with serious consequences”. On December 28, 1823, Byron embarked. After many adventures—with the weather and with the Turkish fleet—he arrived at Missolonghi on January 5, 1824, and was received with

¹ *Greece, 1823-1824.*

² *Last Days of Lord Byron*, p. 209.

military honours¹ and popular applause. "I cannot describe the emotion", wrote Pietro Gamba. "Hope and content were pictured on every countenance". . . . Thus did he land from his last voyage on earth; thus, "greeted as a Messiah", did he set foot in the poisonous place that killed him.

To recapitulate the long mental and physical torture of Missolonghi would make sad writing and reading. From the day of his arrival it began, with Gamba's foolish overstepping of a commission entrusted to him for red cloth and oilskin: "the whole", wrote Byron, "could not have amounted to 50 dollars. The account is 645!" He had an odd superstition about the young Italian—that he was one of those ill-starred people with whom everything goes wrong. Speaking of Stanhope's newspaper to Parry, he said: "I have subscribed to it to get rid of importunity, and, it may be, to keep Gamba out of mischief. At any rate, he can mar nothing that is of less importance". He was very angry over this matter of the exceeded commission, and told Stanhope, with customary exaggeration, that "he never would, to the last moment of his existence, forgive Gamba for having squandered away what would have maintained an excellent corps of ragamuffins with arms in their hands".

But that was only the beginning of the vexations. The incompetence, indolence, and rapacity all around soon reduced him to rage and despair; when Parry—one-time firemaster in the Royal Navy, and now clerk in the Ordnance Department at Woolwich—arrived as "artificer" from the London Committee in February 1824, and showed himself to be a really practical man, he was at once entrusted with an extraordinary degree of

¹ He landed in a British uniform, borrowed from Colonel Duffie, of the garrison at Cephalonia.

confidence by Byron, who took to him from the first. Here is Parry's impression of *him*. "He seemed almost to despair of success, but said he would see the contest out. . . . I have since thought that his fate was sealed before my arrival . . . and that even then he was, so to speak, on his death-bed. . . . There was a restlessness about him . . . he seemed weary of himself and others. . . . It was evident to me, from the very commencement of our acquaintance, that he felt himself deceived and abandoned—I had almost said betrayed. . . . He might put a good face upon it to others . . . he might even be, as in fact he sometimes was, the first to laugh at his own difficulties . . . but in his heart he felt that he was forlorn and forsaken".

All through Parry's book the same note sounds, and his impression is borne out by the facts. There was no kind of trouble that did not overwhelm Byron. First, the place was most unhealthy, scarcely above the level of the waters; the soil consisted of "decomposed seaweed and dried mud". It was insanitary to a revolting degree; his own dwelling was on the verge of a dismal swamp, "which might be called the belt of death". The weather was bad; he could seldom get the horse-back exercise that was so necessary to him, and he was pursuing, in that miasmatic region, the debilitating starvation system of so many years. Fresh vexations came with every day that dawned. The English mechanics who had come out with Parry grumbled, finally deserted; so did the German officers who had been sent from England to assist. Parry's appointment by Byron to be Major of the Artillery Brigade—his one foolish action in the adventure—brought about this latter trouble. "From the day Parry was appointed", says Millingen,¹ "all the hopes which the rapid progress

¹ *Memoirs*, p. 94.

of that corps had excited were at an end. The best officers gave in resignations". "The result was not surprising", comments Mr. Prothero, "as Parry drilled his men in an apron, with a hammer in his hand".¹

Disagreement with Stanhope increased. He and Trelawny (who had left Missolonghi) inclined to the Odysseus party; Byron thought Mavrocordatos the one hope of Greece—"an honest man, and a man of talent", though somewhat lacking in energy and industry, with a disposition to make too many promises.² But Mavrocordatos, like every one else, was pressing him for money. The Greek Loan was not yet floated in London. Byron now had the £34,000 for which, late in 1823, Rochdale had at last been sold, and he devoted this entire sum to the cause; but even so, he felt that his resources were not to be regarded as inexhaustible. Some time before this, the Suliots in Missolonghi, among whom were Byron's former body-guard of forty, had turned mutinous again. It had been agreed that 600 of them should be taken into his pay, and act under his orders. His expenses amounted (according to Parry, whom he made his paymaster and steward) to two thousand dollars a week *in rations alone*. Moreover, there was difficulty in obtaining money; "bills could not be cashed on any terms"; and now that he had a small army to maintain, Parry saw that he was "fretted and teased" beyond endurance. Soon it was made clear to all that Parry had seen aright.

Byron had been twice disappointed of actual military work. In January there had been great hopes of an expedition against Lepanto, an important Turkish fortress.

¹ Trelawny speaks severely of Parry. "A rough, burly fellow, never quite sober, but he was no fool. He was three months in Greece, returned to England, talked the Committee out of £400 for his services, and drank himself into a madhouse". Parry did die in the asylum at Hanwell.

² Parry called him "an old gentlewoman".

It was then that he took the 600 Suliots into his pay, and, in Stanhope's words, "he burns with military ardour and chivalry, and will proceed to Lepanto". But ere long these projects were seen to be doomed; the mutiny among the Suliots, and the disaffection caused by Parry's peculiar methods of drilling, deferred indefinitely all hopes of an expedition. Again in the same month, however, the "military ardour" burned. The Turks blockaded Missolonghi on the 21st, and the only chance against them seemed to be a night-attack in boats manned by the European volunteers. "Byron took the matter in hand, and insisted on joining personally in the expedition". From this he was dissuaded by Mavrocordatos and others, who thought his life too valuable to be risked in such an adventure; and in the end it happened that the Turks suddenly abandoned the blockade. This was on the day before his birthday, January 22; he had hoped, no doubt, to celebrate it by wearing one of the famous helmets of which Moore tells us. "Among other preparations for his expedition, he ordered three splendid helmets to be made,—with his never forgotten crest engraved upon them,—for himself and the two friends¹ who were to accompany him. In this little circumstance, which in England (where the ridiculous is so much better understood than the heroic) excited some sneers at the time, we have one of the many instances that occur amusingly through his life, to confirm the quaint, but, as applied to him, true observation, that 'the child is father to the man';—the characteristics of these two periods of life being in him so anomalously transposed, that while the passions and ripened views of the man developed themselves in his boyhood, so the easily pleased fancies and vanities of the boy were for ever breaking out among the most

¹ Trelawny and Pietro Gamba.

serious moments of his manhood. The same schoolboy whom we found, at the beginning of [Moore's] volume, boasting of his intention to raise, at some future time, a troop of horse in black armour, to be called Byron's Blacks, was now seen trying on with delight his fine crested helmet, and anticipating the deeds of glory he was to achieve under its plumes". . . . Instead, he composed those verses, the last he was to write, which he read to Stanhope and other friends on the evening of his thirty-sixth birthday. The concluding stanza runs :

"Seek out—less often sought than found—
A soldier's grave, for thee the best ;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest".

He said to Tita at this time: "No, Tita, I shall never go back from Greece—either the Turks, or the Greeks, or the climate, will prevent that".

A period of dreadful weather ensued; for days he could not get out at all. On February 15 he felt ill, but in the evening seemed to regain spirits, and "laughed and joked with Parry and the Colonel".¹ Parry then takes up the tale, Gamba and Stanhope having left the room:—

"Lord Byron began joking with me about Colonel Stanhope's occupations, and said he thought the author would have his brigade of artillery ready before the soldier got his printing-press fixed. There was evidently a constrained manner about Lord Byron, and he complained of thirst. He ordered his servant to bring him some cider, which I entreated him not to drink in that state. . . . He had scarcely drunk the cider, when he complained of a very strange sensation, and I noticed a great change in his countenance. He rose from his seat,

¹ Gamba's *Narrative*.

but could not walk, staggered a step or two, and fell into my arms.

"I had no other stimulant than brandy at hand, and having before seen it administered in similar cases with considerable benefit, I succeeded in making him swallow a small quantity. In another minute his teeth were closed, his speech and senses gone, and he was in strong convulsions. I laid him down on the settee, and with the assistance of his servant kept him quiet.

"When he fell into my arms, his countenance was very much distorted, his mouth being drawn on one side. After a short time his medical attendant came, and he speedily recovered his senses and his speech".

He had scarcely done so, when word was brought to him that the Suliots had risen, and were about to attack the Arsenal. This was not true, but what *was* true is that the mutineers broke into his room, brandishing their arms and loudly demanding their "rights". Stanhope, relating this, says: "Lord Byron, electrified by this act, seemed to recover from his sickness; and the more the Suliots raged, the more his calm courage triumphed. The scene was truly sublime".

Next day he was better, but very pale and weak, and he complained of a "weight on the fore part of his head". Bruno applied eight leeches to his temples; "the blood flowed copiously, but when the leeches were removed, the doctor was so unskilful that he could not stop the blood". The temples bled so as almost to bring on syncope; they sent for Millingen,¹ who applied lunar caustic, and this was efficacious. Byron, writing to Murray on the 25th, said amusingly, "They had

¹ Julius Millingen opened a dispensary at Missolonghi in January 1824. He attended Byron in his last illness. In 1831 he published his *Memoirs*. Trelawny spoke of him very scornfully (*Letters*, edited by H. Buxton Forman. 1910).

gone too near the temporal artery for my temporal safety"; but this light allusion concealed a very serious view of his case. He wrote in an interrupted diary: "Had it lasted a minute longer, it must have extinguished my mortality"; and on hearing from the doctors that the attack had a strong appearance of epilepsy, "he fell into a state of melancholy from which", says Millingen, "none of our arguments could relieve him". In Millingen's opinion, he "was never the same man again: a change took place in his bodily and mental functions". "Would to Heaven", he said to this narrator, "the day were arrived on which, rushing sword in hand on a body of Turks, and fighting like one weary of existence, I shall meet immediate, painless death—the object of my wishes!" His great dread was that he should lose his senses: "end my days like Swift—a grinning idiot". . . . But he rallied to some extent; "went out in boats or on horseback" every day, and lived "as temperately as can be, without any liquid but water, and without any animal food". This régime, advised by Bruno, was in Parry's opinion a great contributing cause of his death.

Worries began again on the 19th, when he was barely recovered. Lieutenant Sass, a Swedish officer, was murdered by a Suliot chief at the Arsenal; the English mechanics finally demanded their passage home, and were sent by Byron to Zante, where, during their quarantine, he advanced them "*not more* than a dollar a day . . . to purchase some little extras as comforts"; to crown all, an alarm of plague spread through the filthy town, and on February 20 they had a "very smart earthquake", the second since his arrival in Greece.¹ It was at this time that he procured the release of twenty-four Turkish women and children,

¹ The first was in Cephalonia, in October 1823.

who were to have been dispersed as slaves among the Greek householders. One woman, the wife of Hussein Aga, with her daughter, Hatadjé, implored English help. The Greeks had murdered all her relatives ; she had seen the brains of her youngest boy dashed out against the walls of the dispensary. (When she applied to Millingen, the marks still remained on the wall.) Little Hatadjé, nine years old, had alone been spared. She was a lovely child : " her large, beautiful eyes . . . looked at me now and then, hardly daring to implore pity ". Millingen spoke of this incident to Byron, and he asked to see the mother and daughter, who were now under Millingen's roof. Hatadjé's beauty and spirit struck him so deeply that he decided on adopting her ; he arranged for the rest of the Turkish prisoners to be sent to Prevesa, while she and her mother were to be placed under Dr. Kennedy's care at Cephalonia, unless Byron could induce Lady Byron (through Augusta) to let her go to England as a companion for Ada. He wrote to Augusta of this matter and others on February 23 ; but the unfinished letter was found on his table after his death.¹ Hatadjé was never sent to Cephalonia. She and her mother remained at Missolonghi until Byron's death ; then they went in the *Florida*, his funeral-ship, to Zante. Thither came an application from Usouff Pasha to give them up ; the little girl was consulted, and said that now his lordship was dead, she preferred to go back to her country. Her mother agreed, and they were sent to Patras.

The letter to Augusta of February 23 is in answer to one from her, containing a " minute mental and physical account " of Ada, inscribed by Lady Byron.

¹ It is endorsed, in Augusta's writing, with the words, " His last letter ". It was his last to *her* ; but there are several of later date to other correspondents.

It was addressed to Augusta, but written for him, and, together with the fact that it contained a profile of Ada, may be regarded as the one sign of relenting towards him that his wife ever showed. It may have been the result of the overtures through Lady Blessington's friends; at any rate, it must have served to lessen for her some of the pain she was so soon to know.¹

What of Teresa Guiccioli? The only words we have from him to her are three extracts from letters in October from Cephalonia. She herself provided Moore with these.

Let us read them; they are highly significant, as having been chosen from the rest for publication.

“October 7

“Pietro has told you all the gossip of the island,—our earthquakes, our politics, and present abode in a pretty village. As his opinions and mine on the Greeks are nearly similar, I need say little on that subject. I was a fool to come here; but, being here, I must see what is to be done”.

“October —

“We are still in Cephalonia, waiting for news of a more accurate description; for all is contradiction and division in the reports of the state of the Greeks. I shall fulfil the object of my mission from the Committee, and then return into Italy; for it does not seem likely that, as an individual, I can be of use to them;—at least no other foreigner has yet appeared to be so, nor does it seem likely that any will be at present.

“Pray be as cheerful and tranquil as you can; and be

¹ Lady Byron's letter was dated “Hastings, December 1823”, and was in answer to one from him to Augusta (we have not the letter) of December 8, from Metaxata.

assured that there is nothing here that can excite anything but a wish to be with you again,—though we are very kindly treated by the English here of all descriptions. Of the Greeks, I can't say much good hitherto, and I do not like to speak ill of them, though they do of one another”.

“ October 29

“ You may be sure that the moment I can join you again, will be as welcome to me as at any period of our recollection. There is nothing very attractive here to divide my attention ; but I must attend to the Greek cause, both from honour and inclination. Messrs. B. and T. are both in the Morea, where they have been very well received, and both of them write in good spirits and hopes. I am anxious to hear how the Spanish cause will be arranged, as I think it may have an influence on the Greek contest. I wish that both were fairly and favourably settled, that I might return to Italy, and talk over with you *our*, or rather Pietro's adventures, some of which are rather amusing, as also some of the incidents of our voyages and travels. But I reserve them, in the hope that we may laugh over them together at no very distant period”.

The wonder is that she should ever have permitted the world to know that he could address her in such unloverlike fashion ; and moreover, such as they were, they (and all his other letters to her) were written in English, which she could not read without the help of a dictionary.¹ Now and then he would put a few words

¹ Mr. Prothero tells us that Morandi, a friend of Pietro Gamba, told Maxime du Camp that Byron wrote to her in English, and that she replied in Italian, “ writing her answers in red ink between the lines in his letters ”—an inexplicable arrangement. Pietro Gamba died in Morandi's arms in Metana, a small peninsula in the Morea, in 1827, (?) from the effects of a chill. On his death-bed he gave Morandi a packet to deliver to Teresa ; it

into Gamba's letters to her.¹ There is a tradition, which rests on Gamba's evidence alone and is not mentioned by those who were present, that among the broken utterances of the last hours was this in Italian: "*Io lascio qualche cosa di caro nel mondo*" (I leave something dear in the world). Gamba was not at the death-bed; he was so overcome by emotion that he was unable to revisit the room when Byron awoke after his last sleep. "I wished to go to him", he says, "but I had not the

contained about forty letters, "some in Italian, some in English, a few in French, and two or three in a mixture of all three languages". Morandi lost the packet, and it was never recovered (*L. and J.* vi. 276).

¹The subsequent history of Teresa Guiccioli was as follows: After Byron's death, she is said to have returned to her husband's protection. Lord Malmesbury met her at a ball in Rome in 1829; "she showed" (he says) "splendid teeth when she laughed, which she was doing heartily at the time I remarked her". He became friends with her and found her "full of fun". She came to England in 1832-33. ["With Pietro Gamba": *sic* in Mr. Prothero's note upon her in vol. iv. of *Letters and Journals*, pp. 289-94; but in the note quoted *ante* from vol. vi. pp. 275-76, he says that Pietro Gamba died in 1827.]* There she saw and corresponded much with Lady Blessington; among her letters is one expressing reluctance to "publish *now* any of Lord Byron's letters to me". [She had a brother with her. Byron in 1821 spoke of the "whole Gamba family", and enumerated the old Count, Count Pietro, and Teresa; in 1835 there is a letter from Lady Blessington, condoling with her on the death of this brother.] She dined with the Drurys at Harrow on one of her visits to England, and spent a day with Augusta Leigh, "speaking always of Lord Byron". In 1851 (but the date is uncertain)† she married as her second husband another elderly nobleman, the Marquis Hilaire de Boissy, of the new nobility of France.‡ He was very rich, and highly eccentric. Byron's portrait hung in her *salon* at Paris; and it is generally said that the Marquis always introduced her as "Madame la Marquise de Boissy, ma femme, ci-devant maîtresse de Lord Byron". After his death in 1866 she returned to Florence; in 1868, published her book on Byron (translated into English by Hubert Jerningham in 1869), and died in March 1873.

"Ah Love, what is it, in this world of ours,
Which makes it fatal to be loved?" . . .

Byron need not have wept, with foreboding for her fate, by the garden-fountain at Ravenna in 1819.

* My edition is that of 1904.

† Given in *Dict. Nat. Biog.* as above.

heart". . . . Thus the last authentic records we have of Byron's feeling for Teresa Guiccioli are the letters from Cephalonia, and a phrase which occurs in a curious confession to Barry, his Genoese banker, in September 1823. He is writing of the possible intrigues of the Greek Government: "If these gentlemen *have* any undue interest, and discover my weak side, viz. a propensity to be governed, and were to set a pretty woman, or a clever woman, about me . . . why, they would make a fool of me. . . . But if I can keep passion, or at least that passion, out of the question (which may be the more easy, as I left my heart in Italy), they will not weather me with quite so much facility".¹

In March, he was offered by the Greek Government the post of Governor-General of Greece—"that is", says Moore, "of the enfranchised part of the continent, with the exception of the Morea and the Islands". He answered that he was first going to the Congress at Salona, and that "afterwards he would be at their commands". This is the place to speak of the ambitions attributed to him in Greece. Trelawny says distinctly that if he had lived to reach the Congress of Salona, "the dispenser of a million silver crowns would have been offered a golden one". He says too that Byron spoke of the possibility to him, during the voyage from Leghorn. The two Greek passengers—suspected of being Turkish and Russian spies—had declared that the Greeks favoured monarchical government; and he, already summoned so urgently, already told that "his name was a tower of strength", now heard that the country needed and wished for a king! In Parry's book we find an anecdote which almost definitely states that overtures had been made to him: "I have had

¹ *L. and J.* vi. 269.

offers that would surprise you . . . and which would turn the head of any man less satiated than I am". Parry insists that they *were* made (they could of course have had no high validity, in the divided state of parties) and rejected. "He never wished to possess political power in Greece"; "he might have been the head man of the country, had he chosen to oppose the Government".

Long since, in 1813, he had written in his Journal: "To be the first man—not the Dictator—not the Sylla, but the Washington or the Aristides—the leader in talent and truth—is next to the Divinity!" The Greek adventure, fruitless as it proved, placed Byron, for the hour it lasted, in that coveted position. In that hour, he was brilliant, wise, and brave; superbly generous of gold; genial, unselfish, compassionate. Every noble trait in him was liberated, and showed itself as the real stuff of his being. "His conduct seems to have come as a revelation to his contemporaries", says Mr. Richard Edgcumbe;¹ but "his contemporaries", not wholly by their own fault, had all along been blinded to the real Byron. It is easier for us to judge: we see him whole, as it were. Brilliant always; wise not often hitherto in the practical affairs of life—though wise sometimes, and eminently so in the acceptance of travellers' hardships, as he had well shown in the earlier Greek adventure; brave unchangingly in all but social matters; generous but prudent (his "avarice"² was a mere passing whim), genial with companions who

¹ *Byron, The Last Phase*, 1909.

² It must be recorded, in this connection, that in June 1823—after he had engaged the *Hercules*, and knew that he should need all the money he could come by—he refused a legacy of £2000 left to him by Shelley. This is attested by a letter to Leigh Hunt, dated June 28. "I state this distinctly that—in case of anything happening to me—my heirs may be instructed not to claim it" (Leigh Hunt, *Correspondence*, i. 203).

pleased him, compassionate, he had always been. Unselfish? Selfish only with women—and there were no women at Missolonghi. With men, in later life at all events, he was rarely anything but admirable. Everything that Byron showed himself in Greece, he genuinely was at heart; and there, despite the mental and physical ravage of the days at Missolonghi, he was, for almost the first time in his maturer life, doing something that he really wanted to do. To win fame for deeds, not words, had long been his wilful dream. "If I live ten years longer", he had written, "you will see 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 so—I do not think it was my vocation". If, then, he dreamed for a moment of kingship—he would not have been Byron if he had not: he would scarcely, indeed, have been a human being. To exchange a coronet for a crown, the laurels of a poet for those of a ruler! On such an imagination, such a dream must fasten; yet on Byron's it fastened with no illusions. His ironic humour, often directed on kings, was directed no less on himself in such an office. "The Dream and the Business": he was like us all, as he ever was—he saw the gulf between those two conceptions, yet dreamed on.

His spirit was superb. Not all the discouragements could wholly damp him. Through the miserable February and March, he worked and played; helped Parry, helped every one; wrote countless letters, gay, brave, and wise; even played his practical jokes on Parry and the immortal butt, Fletcher; rode, fenced, practised with the beloved pistols, talked, read. But all the while he persisted in his suicidal abstinence—not now from fear of "getting fat", but from fear of another

epileptic seizure. He took meat in no form but that of weak broth, he refused to touch fish, one of the few things eatable in Missolonghi; he lived on tea, toast, and vegetables, and, in that pestilential fever-hole, surrounded by every trouble that can attack the nerves and spirits, he dosed himself more drastically than ever with the violent medicines which had already worked havoc in his system.

Let me set forth, from Parry's quasi-diary, the tale of the last days in Greece.

February 19. Murder of the Swedish officer, Sass, by the Suliots.

February 20. Contract of the English mechanics who had come with Parry, broken, and the men sent to Zante.

February 21. Mutiny of the Suliots, and a "smart shock" of earthquake.

February 23. Mutiny of German officers; trouble in the Ionian Islands about Stanhope's newspaper, and its circulation stopped at Zante.

Then, about the middle of March, came the plague-scare—luckily unfounded; then urgent appeals from the Peloponnesus, and from Kolokotronos, to join the parties there; while at Missolonghi, suspicions of Mavrocordatos arose among the Englishmen, who sought to colour Byron's mind with the same mistrust. At the end of the month, he was informed of a plot to seize and confine his own person, and murder Mavrocordatos. At the same time came the formal invitation from Odysseus to the Congress at Salona. He and Mavrocordatos arranged to go thither, but then arrived news of the appearance of the Turkish fleet before Missolonghi, and they resolved to remain. Next, applications were made to Byron for money to the amount of 50,000 dollars in one day: "the Greeks seemed to think he

was a mine from which they could extract gold at their pleasure”.

At length, on April 9, came the first good news he had had since his arrival. The Greek Loan had been floated. “I may almost say that this revived for a moment a spirit that was already faint and weary, and slumbering in the arms of death”. He rode out, and was caught in heavy rain. When he came back, he complained of pain and fever, and Bruno proposed to bleed him. He refused to permit it, and Parry was of the same mind. “I was convinced that to bleed him would be to kill him”. Next day, he rode again—the last ride of his life.

On the 11th he was very ill. “He talked a great deal . . . in rather a wandering manner”; Parry became alarmed for his safety, and earnestly begged him to go immediately to Zante for change of air and scene. He unwillingly consented, and vessels were prepared for his conveyance. But the 12th had to be spent in bed. On the 13th, all was ready for departure; but “the pestilent sirocco wind” began to blow; torrents of rain fell, the region was flooded, and “Missolonghi became a complete prison. . . . It seemed as if the elements had combined with man to ensure Lord Byron’s death”.

Hitherto he had got up during the day, but after going to bed on April 14, he “came out no more”. He clung pathetically to Parry—but Parry (called “artificer”; in reality man-of-all-work) was obliged to be much away from him. So early as this 14th of April, he was occasionally half-delirious. “I . . . deny”, writes Parry, “that the delirium arose from inflammation; it was that alienation of the mind which is so frequently the consequence of excessive debility”. On the 15th he was alarmingly ill, but the doctors (Millingen had

now been called in) declared that there was no danger. Parry was convinced that there *was*, and that Byron knew it. "He spoke of death with great composure, and, though he did not believe that his end was so very near, there was something about him so serious and so firm, so resigned and composed, so different from anything I had ever before seen in him, that my mind misgave me". But Byron still had hopes of recovery, "and of retirement in England with my wife and Ada. [It] gives me an idea of happiness I have never experienced before". Then, speaking of those immediately around him, he begged Parry to be with him as much as possible: "you may prevent me from being jaded to death".

Outside, the dread sirocco was blowing, and rain was falling with tropical violence. Inside . . . but our hearts contract to a present impulse of sorrow and of anger as we seek to realise that interior. Let Parry's striking words present it: "Lord Byron's apartment was such a picture of distress, and even anguish, during the last two or three days of his life, as I never before beheld, and wish never again to witness". The incompetence of Bruno, the lack of self-control displayed both by him and Millingen—Bruno "so much agitated" that he became incapable of using whatever knowledge he might possess; Millingen "unable to restrain his tears, and therefore walking out of the room"; nobody invested with any authority, "neither method, nor order, nor quiet"; no comforts, few necessaries; and, above all, the ghastly confusion of tongues! Bruno's English, in his agitation, unintelligible; Fletcher's Italian equally bad; Parry speaking nothing but English, Tita nothing but Italian, and the lower Greek servants incomprehensible to all. . . . The imagination turns in torment from the scene.

On the 16th he was almost constantly delirious. The doctors now began again the old quarrel about bleeding. Yesterday Byron had angrily refused; to-day Millingen spoke out. Unless he would consent, neither of the doctors would answer for the consequences; and not only life was in question. His life might persist, but his reason too was endangered. Millingen adds: "I had now touched the sensible chord, for, partly annoyed by our unceasing importunities, and partly convinced, casting at us both the fiercest glance of vexation, he threw out his arm, and said in the most angry tone: 'Come; you are, I see, a d—d set of butchers. Take away as much blood as you will, but have done with it'".

On the 17th he was much worse, but notwithstanding "was again bled twice, and both times fainted". Parry and Fletcher had the strongest doubts that the doctors understood the nature of the disease. Three days before, Fletcher had begged to be allowed to send to Zante for Dr. Thomas, but Byron had refused, though "he repeatedly said that he was sure the doctors did not know what was the matter with him".¹ On the 18th he at last consented to send for Dr. Thomas; and on Fletcher's informing Messrs Bruno and Millingen of this, "they said it was very right, as they now began to be afraid themselves". Gamba saw Byron at noon on that day, when he actually did some business—translating a French letter into English without hesitation, and, though with more difficulty, making out some passages in Modern Greek. This was Easter Sunday. About four o'clock, there stood round his bed

¹ Fletcher's account of Byron's last moments is reprinted (from the *Westminster Review* for July 1824) in Medwin's *Conversations*, 1824. He brought his master's body to England; visited Lady Byron, as we have seen, and was witness of her overwhelming emotion.

Tita,¹ Fletcher, and Millingen—*all weeping*. “Oh! this is a fine scene!” he exclaimed, in Italian. “He then seemed to reflect a moment, and said, ‘Call Parry’”; but directly afterwards became delirious, crying, “as if he were mounting a breach in an assault . . . half in English, half in Italian: ‘Forwards—forwards—follow my example—don’t be afraid!’” When he came to himself, Fletcher was with him. He began to talk of doing something for his servants; but Fletcher cried, “For God’s sake, my lord, never mind that now; talk of something of more importance”. He answered: “It is now nearly over. I must tell you all without losing a moment”. Fletcher begged that he might be allowed to fetch pen and paper. “Oh, my God! no; you will lose too much time—mind you execute my orders”. He then continued, “Oh, my poor dear child—my poor Ada! My God! could I but have seen her. Give her my blessing—and my dear sister Augusta, and her children; and you will go to Lady Byron, and say—Tell her everything; you are friends with her”.

Here his voice failed him, so that Fletcher could only catch a word at intervals; but he continued muttering something very earnestly “for nearly twenty minutes, and would often raise his voice and say, ‘Fletcher, if you do not execute every order which I

¹ After Byron’s death, Tita was appointed to command a regiment of Albanians. In 1830–31 he travelled with Benjamin Disraeli in Greece, Turkey, and Egypt; came to England in 1832, and became house-steward to Isaac Disraeli, remaining till his master’s death in 1848. Benjamin Disraeli asked Hobhouse, then a member of the Government, for a messengership for Byron’s old servant. Tita was by Hobhouse’s influence appointed a messenger to the Board of Control. This Board was four years later abolished, and Tita, at Disraeli’s request (the Conservatives were then in power) was made chief messenger at the India Office. He died in 1874, aged 76, and his widow received a pension from Lord Beaconsfield. Tita figures in *Contarini Fleming*.

have given you, I will torment you hereafter if possible'''.¹ The valet could only distinguish a word here and there: "Augusta", "Ada", "Hobhouse", "Kinnaird". He then said, "Now I have told you all".

"Here I told his lordship, in a state of the greatest perplexity, that I had not understood a word of what he said; to which he replied, 'Oh, my God! then all is lost, for it is now too late. Can it be possible you have not understood me?' 'No, my lord', said I; 'but I pray you try and inform me once more'". . . . He then made several efforts to speak, but could only say two or three words at a time, such as "My wife—my child—my sister! You must say all, you know my wishes"—the rest was unintelligible.

Two more doctors—one a German, to add to the confusion of tongues—had been called in; yet when Parry returned, he found Byron in great pain, "gnashing his teeth, and saying *Ah, Christi!*" The bandage round his head was causing this; Parry loosened it, and this simple device brought instant relief. "After it was loosened, he shed tears." Parry, with a tenderness which even now dims our eyes, said: "My lord, I thank God. I hope you will be better now. Shed as many tears as you can; you will then sleep and find ease". He sighed faintly, took Parry's hand, "uttered a faint Good-night, and sank into a slumber".

They thought he would awake no more; but he did awake at half-past five on this Sunday afternoon. "He tried to utter his wishes, but he was incapable"; there came only a few incoherent words. His eyes soon closed again; he murmured "I must sleep now". Life did not leave him until six o'clock in the evening of

¹ Galt says of this: "It cannot be questioned that the threat was the last feeble flash of his prankfulness" (p. 316).

April 19, 1824 (Easter Monday), when "he opened his eyes once, and then closed them"—for ever.¹

So Byron died. In Parry's stern arraignment: "He was worried, and starved, to death". "But though in my opinion", Parry continues, "the primary cause of Lord Byron's death was the serious disappointment he suffered, I must not be understood to say that no art could have saved him. . . . He cannot now be recalled; anger would only disturb his ashes; but in proportion as we loved and valued him, must we be displeased at those whose conduct hastened his dissolution".

The words were written in 1825; they echo in our hearts to-day. A thousand times we read the story of that room of anguish; a thousand times utter the same outraged groan. But "he cannot now be recalled": it happened thus, and we must bear it.

On the day of his death, Mavrocordatos issued a proclamation to the Provisional Government of Greece, and decreed that seven-and-thirty funeral shots should be fired from the grand battery, "to-morrow morning, at daylight"; that all the public offices, even the tribunals, should be closed for three days; that shops should be shut, all Easter festivities suspended, and a general mourning observed for twenty-one days. Prayers and a funeral service were to be offered up in all churches. Similar honours were paid to his memory at many other places in Greece, notably at Salona, where the Congress he was to have attended had assembled. Stanhope, at Salona, wrote to John Bowring: "England has lost her brightest genius—

¹ "At the very moment he died there was," says Parry, "one of the most awful thunderstorms I ever witnessed". The Greeks immediately cried (waiting for news as the whole town was): "The great man is dead!"

Greece her noblest friend. . . . Had I the disposal of his ashes, I would place them in the Temple of Theseus, or in the Parthenon at Athens". Byron himself, writing to Lord Blessington in April 1823, had said: "I should prefer a grey Greek stone over me to Westminster Abbey"; but Parry had his last word on the subject. "If I die in Greece, and you survive me", he had several times said, "do you see that my body be sent to England". We have read long since how he wrote to Murray: *I would not even feed your worms*. Is this inconsistency? No: but the very expression of him, all anger with and love for England as he was! If such traits be inconsistency, let us give up the search for that undesired attribute. Men feel two things at once, *are* two things at once, with every day that dawns—and Byron was (it cannot be too often repeated) the quintessence of humanity.

On April 22, deferred thus long by the continuous rain, a funeral ceremony took place at Missolonghi. His body had been embalmed; the coffin, says Gamba, "was a rude chest of wood; a black mantle served for a pall, and over it we placed a helmet and a sword, and a crown of laurel. But no funeral pomp could have left the impression, nor spoken the feelings, of this simple ceremony. The wretchedness and desolation of the place itself; the wild and half-civilised warriors around us; their deep-felt, unaffected grief; the fond recollections; the disappointed hopes; the anxieties and sad presentiments which might be read on every countenance;—all contributed to form a scene more moving, more truly affecting, than perhaps was ever before witnessed round the grave of a great man.

"When the funeral service was over, we left the bier in the middle of the church, where it remained until the evening of the next day, and was guarded by a

detachment of his own brigade. The church was crowded without cessation by those who came to honour and to regret the benefactor of Greece. In the evening of the 23rd the bier was privately carried back by his officers to his own house. The coffin was not closed till the 29th of the month. Immediately after his death, his countenance had an air of calmness, mingled with a severity that seemed gradually to soften; for when I took a last look of him, the expression, at least to my eyes, was truly sublime”.

Parry, at last broken down after his manifold exertions, had been obliged to leave Missolonghi on April 21, and was now lying in hospital at Zante. Trelawny arrived four days after Byron's death from the Congress at Salona, which he had left on the 17th, carrying with him a letter from Stanhope to Byron: “Once more I implore you to quit Missolonghi, and not to sacrifice your health, and perhaps your life, in that bog”. . . . There, “in that bog”, Trelawny heard the tidings of April 19. Fletcher at once led him up the stairs into a narrow room, “with nothing in it but a coffin standing on trestles. No word was spoken by either of us; he withdrew the black pall and the white shroud, and there lay the embalmed body of the Pilgrim—more beautiful in death than in life. . . . Few marble busts could have matched its stainless white, the harmony of its proportions, and perfect finish. Yet he had been dissatisfied with that body. . . . How often had I heard him curse it! . . . Where had he seen the face or form worthy to excite his envy?” But after the first look, sending Fletcher for a glass of water, Trelawny fell from his estate as the great gentleman. He turned back the sheet, and uncovered Byron's feet: “I was answered—the great mystery was solved. Both his feet were clubbed, and his legs withered to the knee”.

It is not even true.¹ Let us put this away, as one of the least admirable things we know of any man—put it away as the poor valet did, when, returning, “without making any remark, he drew the shroud carefully over the feet of his master’s corpse”.²

¹ The quotation is from the *Recollections*, published in 1858. In the *Records* of twenty years later (an enlarged form of the earlier work) the description of the feet is different. “I uncovered the Pilgrim’s feet, and was answered—it was caused by the contraction of the back sinews . . . that prevented his heels from resting on the ground. . . Except this defect, his feet were perfect”.

Mr. Richard Edgcumbe stated, in an article in *Temple Bar* of May 1890, that the second account of Byron’s form of lameness was supplied to Trelawny by him (Mr. Edgcumbe). This information is given by Professor Dowden in his Introduction to the edition of the *Recollections* published by Henry Frowde in 1906. But see Trelawny’s *Letters*, pp. 265–7.

² Trelawny wrote of Byron on April 28 to Stanhope :

“With all his faults, I loved him truly ; he is connected with every event of the most interesting years of my wandering life. His everyday companion, we lived in ships, boats, and in houses, together ; we had no secrets, no reserve, and though we often differed in opinion, we never quarrelled. If it gave me pain witnessing his frailties, he only wanted a little excitement to awaken and put forth *virtues* that redeemed them all. . . This is no private grief ; the world has lost its greatest man, I my best friend”.

The same day he wrote again to Stanhope :

“I think Byron’s name was the great means of getting the loan. A Mr. Marshall with £8000 per annum was as far as Corfu, and turned back on hearing of Byron’s death.” And on April 29 : “The greatest man in the world has resigned his mortality in favour of this sublime cause ; for had he remained . . . in Italy he had lived !”

Four months later (when Trelawny was prisoner in a cave on Mount Parnassus, and his friend Odysseus was persecuted by a Government which they both thought to be inspired by Mavrocordatos), the Cornishman wrote thus to Mary Shelley, who had known and liked Mavrocordatos at Pisa : “[Byron] took part with, and became the paltry tool of, the weak, imbecile, cowardly being calling himself Prince Mavrocordato. Five months he [Byron] dozed away. By the gods ! the lies that are said in his praise urge one to speak the truth. It is well for his name, and better for Greece, that he is dead. . . . I now feel my face burn with shame that so weak and ignoble a soul could so long have influenced me. It is a degrading reflection, and ever will be”. Trelawny was violently irritated at the moment, as he confesses later in the letter ; and, like all the Pisan circle, he was extreme in his expressions of anger. Byron had never joined the faction of Mavrocordatos, or any other faction ; Trelawny had made the mistake of joining that of Odysseus. In the books published by him—the *Recollections*, which is the earlier, did

On April 24, Blaquiere arrived at Zante in the *Florida*, bringing the first instalment of the long-looked-for Greek Loan. . . . Byron's body was embarked for Zante on May 2, under a mournful salute from the guns of Missolonghi. There it was finally decided to send it to England in the *Florida*, by which ship Stanhope (recalled to England by the military authorities) was sailing. The coffin was embarked at Zante on May 25; the *Florida* reached England on June 29. Stanhope at once addressed a letter to Byron's executors—Hobhouse and John Hanson; it contained the following passage:

“With respect to the funeral ceremony, I am of opinion that his Lordship's family should be immediately consulted, and that sanction should be obtained for the public burial of his body either in the great Abbey or Cathedral of London”.

I now turn to Hobhouse's statement, first printed in the *Edinburgh Review* for April 1871:

“On Thursday, July 1, I heard that the *Florida* had arrived in the Downs, and I went the same evening to Rochester. The next morning I went on board the vessel. There I found Colonel Leicester Stanhope, Dr. Bruno, and Fletcher, Byron's valet, with three others of his servants. Three dogs that had belonged to my

not appear until thirty-four years after Byron's death (1858)—he wrote of “the Pilgrim” in the strain of his letters to Stanhope in April 1824.

Trelawny died in his 89th year, at Sompting, on August 13, 1881. His body was cremated, and the ashes laid in a grave beside Shelley's at Rome. He is the old sailor in Millais' picture of “The North-West Passage” (Tate Gallery). “In the ashen colour of the face, the rough grey hair and beard, the hard, clear, aquiline profile, and the strong, masterful, searching grey eye, there was something both more distinguished and more formidable than is seen [in the likeness of the picture]—a likeness with which he himself was much dissatisfied” (“A Reminiscence of Trelawny”, *Pall Mall Gazette*, August 19, 1881).

Mary Shelley, in the Pisan days, had called him “a superb, half-Arab Englishman”.

friend were playing about the deck. I could hardly bring myself to look at them. We beat up the river to Gravesend. I cannot describe what I felt during the five or six hours of our passage. I was the last person who shook hands with Byron when he left England in 1816. I recollected his waving his cap to me as the packet bounded off on a curling wave from the pier-head at Dover, and here I was now coming back to England with his corpse.

“On the following Monday I went to Doctors’ Commons and proved Byron’s will. Mr. Hanson did so likewise. Thence I went to . . . London Docks Buoy, where the *Florida* was anchored. . . . After the removal of the corpse into the coffin, I accompanied the undertaker in the barge with the coffin. There were many boats round the ship at the time, and the shore was crowded with spectators. We passed quietly up the river, and landed at Palace Yard stairs. Thence the coffin and the small chest containing the heart were carried to the house in George Street,¹ and deposited in the room prepared for their reception. The room was decently hung with black, but there was no other decoration than an escutcheon of the Byron arms, roughly daubed on a deal board.

“On reaching my rooms at the Albany, I found a note from Mr. Murray, telling me that he had received a letter from Dr. Ireland, politely declining to allow the burial of Byron in Westminster Abbey; but it was not until the next day that, to my great surprise, I learnt, on reading the doctor’s note, that Mr. Murray had made the request to the Dean in my name. I thought that it had been settled that Mr. Gifford should

¹ The house of Sir Edward Knatchbull-Hugessen, in Great George Street, Westminster.

sound the Dean of Westminster previously to any formal request being made. I wrote to Mr. Murray, asking him to inform the Dean that I had not made the request. Whether he did so, I never inquired".¹ . . . Hobhouse learnt from Augusta that it was wished that the burial should be in the family vault at Hucknall Torkard.

The eagerness shown to "get sight of anything connected with Byron" was remarkable. General Lafayette sent a note requesting a sight of the dead poet for a young Frenchman who came over from Havre. The coffin had been closed, and the prayer had to be refused. Another young man "in very moving terms" made the same petition; Hobhouse gave him a piece of the cotton in which the body had been wrapped: "he took it with much devotion, and placed it in his pocket-book". Phillips, the Academician, who had often painted Byron, applied for permission to take a likeness; but "the features had been so disfigured by the means used to preserve the remains" that Augusta, when she saw them (Hobhouse writes confusingly here), "scarcely recognised them". Hobhouse says: "This was the fact: for I had summoned courage to look at my dead friend. So completely was he altered that the sight did not affect me so much as looking at his handwriting, or anything that I knew had belonged to him".

The body lay in state during Friday and Saturday,

¹ Jeaffreson well sums up this vexed question, saying that so long as the Deans of Westminster are required to decide on the award of the honour of burial in the Abbey, it will be unjust to accuse them of dull prejudice because their decisions are made with reference to matters which they are bound by their very office to think of paramount importance. "Byron's writings had not been uniformly favourable to religion and morality". There was as much intolerance (he says) in the Byronic enthusiasts as in the Dean, by them accused of bigotry.

July 9 and 10; on the following Monday the funeral procession took place. It left Westminster at 11 a.m. Passing up Highgate Hill, on the way to Nottingham, it passed a modest house, in the windows of which stood Jane Williams and Mary Shelley. Outside the gate of Bocket Park came that unbelievable meeting with Caroline Lamb—the meeting which has made her story immortal. If Byron could have known of it, what a wonder would it have made to his imagination!

In the afternoon of July 16—a Friday—he was laid in the family vault in the village church of Hucknall Torkard.¹ On a white marble tablet in the chancel is this inscription:

IN THE VAULT BENEATH,
WHERE MANY OF HIS ANCESTORS AND HIS MOTHER ARE
BURIED,
LIE THE REMAINS OF
GEORGE GORDON NOEL BYRON,
LORD BYRON, OF ROCHDALE,
IN THE COUNTY OF LANCASTER,
THE AUTHOR OF "CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE."
HE WAS BORN IN LONDON ON THE
22ND OF JANUARY 1788.
HE DIED AT MISSOLONGI,² IN WESTERN GREECE, ON THE
19TH OF APRIL 1824,
ENGAGED IN THE GLORIOUS ATTEMPT TO RESTORE THAT
COUNTRY TO HER ANCIENT FREEDOM AND RENOWN.

HIS SISTER, THE HONOURABLE
AUGUSTA MARIA³ LEIGH,
PLACED THIS TABLET TO HIS MEMORY.

Thus, even in death half-betrayed by one who loved him and whom he loved, the author of *Don Juan* rests

¹ Hobhouse said that the church was so crowded that it was difficult to follow the coffin up the aisle; and he was told that it was still as full up to a late hour in the evening, so that the vault was not closed until next morning.

² So spelt in Moore.

³ So in Moore; but the actual inscription has Mary, not "Maria".

—beside the mother who tortured his childhood and the daughter who never knew him, yet who came to love him as he prophesied, and to desire in her death that nearness which life had denied her. . . . Lady Byron was asked if she had any wishes with regard to the funeral ; her answer was that “it might be left to Mr. Hobhouse”. No message from her ever came to the grave at Hucknall Torkard—but what message could have come?

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Byron's tragedy resided in being so like, yet so much more than, the rest of us. It was almost impossible, we may say in defence of his world, for his world to understand him. Living in the blaze of his personality, they confused the aspects he presented to them : they thought him more than themselves when he was not more, and less when he was. Idolised when he was merely finding himself, he was persecuted when he *had* found himself. He suffered apotheosis when, except for the accident of genius, he was like the rest ; he suffered outlawry when, except for the accident of publicity added to that of genius, he was like them still ; and when the outlawry had done its work, and he was *not* like them, but more than they, and showed them to themselves in that great World-Poem,¹ his

¹ Dr. Brandès, the Danish critic, justly says that *Don Juan* is the only work of the nineteenth century which bears comparison with Goethe's *Faust*. Swinburne wrote of it : “Across the stanzas . . . we swim forward as over the ‘broad backs of the sea’ ; they break and glitter, hiss and laugh, murmur and move like waves that sound or that subside. . . . There is about them a wide wholesome air, full of vivid light and constant wind, which is only felt at sea. Life undulates and death palpitates in the splendid verse. . . . This gift of life and variety is the supreme quality of Byron's chief poem”.

ironic *apologia pro vita sua*, which stands in our literature beside the works of Shakespere and of Milton . . . why then, more vehemently than man was ever told before, they told him that he was less! Glory and shame hung over him from the first, and descended upon him at the last. Only thirty-six! "He could never have lived to be old", they tell us—and that is true, but in a deeper sense than the surface one. To whatever age he had lived, he would not have been old. Weary and *ennuyé* as he thought himself, discouraged and worn as he was, Byron was the imperishable youth. Always something fresh sprang forth from him, always the spirit renewed its strength. When he died at Missolonghi, there began for him an immortality quite different from that which hitherto had seemed the obvious one. "I do not mean in literature, for that is nothing, and I do not think it was my vocation". His vocation was greater than either of these, may we say? It was to be the most splendid example we have of the struggling, winning and losing, enjoying and scorning, aspiring and falling, loving and hating, human spirit.

*"Es irrt der Mensch,
So lang er strebt":—*

no other human being has incarnated that saying as Byron has.

The poet who was to be his only rival in wide popularity during life in the whole poetical history of England—Alfred Tennyson—was, at the time of Byron's death, a boy of fourteen. He heard the tidings from Missolonghi, and fled from his father's house to a favourite solitude. There, with head in hands, and heart oppressed with sense of loss, he found himself over and over again repeating inwardly: "Byron is dead—

Byron". . . . What is it that makes in us, even now, as passionate and as present a sorrow, when we read of those last hours? Other poets' deaths have been, in reality, sadder—Keats's death, Shelley's death. To them the world had given little, to him nearly all of what it has to give; yet neither wakes in us that quick emotion. Is it his fame, his beauty, his heroism, his youth? None of these. It is his enthralling humanity. We are mourning for ourselves.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

MRS. BEECHER STOWE

IN 1856, Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, still in the blaze of her fame as the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (which had been published in 1850), visited England for the second time. She had already, during her first visit in 1853, made Lady Byron's acquaintance, and they had had some conversation and correspondence; now in 1856, Lady Byron, who was ill and believed herself to be dying, requested Mrs. Stowe to give her a private interview on a subject of great importance. (She was then living on Ham Common, near Richmond.) A cheap edition of Byron's works was in view; and Lady Byron, fearful of the wider circulation of his writings, doubted whether she "had not a responsibility to society for the truth". It was on this point that she consulted Mrs. Stowe, for whom she had great affection and admiration. She wished to learn from "an unprejudiced person" what her duty appeared to be: Ought she to declare, at last, the truth? (Augusta Leigh and Ada, Countess of Lovelace, were both at this time dead.) Lady Byron in this interview imparted to Mrs. Stowe the secret of Byron's relations with his half-sister. She gave Mrs. Stowe "a brief memorandum of the whole, with the dates affixed"; and Mrs. Stowe, after two or three days' consideration, decided that "Lady Byron would be entirely justifiable in leaving the truth to be disclosed after her death, and recommended that all the facts necessary should be put in the hands of some person, to be so published".

We have seen in Chapter I., *supra*, that in 1850 (six years

previously) Lady Byron had done this, and had mentioned 1880 as the earliest possible date for "a discretionary disclosure". She now acquiesced in Mrs. Stowe's opinion, but made *no sort of mention of regarding Mrs. Stowe as the "person" empowered to make the disclosure*. She did not die until 1860, and her will then contained the same provision as the document of 1850.

In 1869, there appeared in England the translation of the Countess Guiccioli's book about Byron, which was reviewed very favourably in *Blackwood's* for July 1869. The book contained nothing that the world did not already know; but Mrs. Stowe cited it—and it alone—as her reason for the action which she now immediately took. She published in *Macmillan's* for September 1869, and simultaneously in *The Atlantic Monthly* (an American magazine), an article entitled "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life", in which she disclosed to the world what Lady Byron had told her in 1856.

The article brought down a storm of abuse upon Lady Byron's memory, notably in *Blackwood's*, to a less degree in the *Quarterly*; and Mrs. Stowe then wrote her *History of the Byron Controversy*, published in 1870 by Sampson Low. In this book, which contained as an Appendix the original *Macmillan's* article, the author gave as her reason for breaking silence in September 1869, the article in *Blackwood's* for July, reviewing the Guiccioli volumes. This article had not once been alluded to in the original piece; and the author of *A Vindication of Lady Byron* (Bentley, 1870) proves by the chronology of the two articles that Mrs. Stowe could have had no thought of *Blackwood's* when she wrote for *Macmillan's*. Yet she now declared that it was the *Blackwood's* "frantic slanders" (in the Guiccioli article) on Lady Byron, *remaining unrefuted by Lady Byron's relatives*, which had driven her—Mrs. Stowe—into print. She had not given those relations "one little day, not an hour", in which to refute those slanders!

Writing thus, a book to defend the publication of an article, Mrs. Stowe did Lady Byron's memory more injury than all the enemies had done it. Her story is related with such carelessness as almost amounts to disingenuousness; she weaves together in one narrative (for her book) Lady Byron's own

statement, and things before and since heard from others, or read, or conjectured—the result being a maze of contradictions, vague inferences, and false premisses. She may almost be said to have constructed a new story. To give one instance:—In the book *Lady Byron* is made to say *that the incest was the cause of separation*; in the earlier article, she had not been made to say any such thing.

It may be observed that the author of *A Vindication of Lady Byron* takes the attitude with respect to the incest charge which most contemporary writers took: viz. that it was true, but that it was not the reason given to Dr. Lushington which caused him to declare that a reconciliation was impossible. That reason (it is clearly to be read between the lines) was, by the author of those papers and by many others, believed to be the offence apparently indicated in Campbell's unhappy article of 1830 in defence of Lady Byron. Apropos this point, there is in *Notes and Queries* for June 15, 1867 (Third Series), an allusion to a suppressed poem by Byron, entitled *Don Leon*, which was bound up with an *Epistle from Lord Byron to Lady Byron*. (A copy I possess bears the date 1866 for *Don Leon*, and 1865 for the *Epistle*.) This was advertised in "several penny papers" (reputable newspapers at that time cost always more than a penny), and then suddenly withdrawn. "A friend" wrote to one "S. Jackson" (who asked in *N. & Q.* if the poem were authentic) that "it was owing to some interference of the Byron family that the poem had been burked". . . . This is one of the *brochures* to which I refer in the opening paragraph of Chapter I., *supra*. I do not for a moment believe it to be genuine; but it has the interest of showing the forms which rumour had taken. It was in reviewing Mrs. Beecher Stowe's article that the *Blackwood's* writer made the infamous parallel between Lady Byron and "the lowest prostitute that ever haunted the night-houses of the Haymarket". (See Chapter I., *supra*.) This was in reference to the forbearance she had shown to Mrs. Leigh.

Astarte has since borne out the story told by Mrs. Beecher Stowe, but the two great errors committed by her remain. She told her tale without warrant, and she told it disingenuously.

Penny books, displaying a portrait on the cover of "Lord Byron's half-sister, Augusta", were hawked in the streets of London in 1869. The "portrait" had already, on similar productions, done duty as Manon Lescaut, Lola Montès, and Madeline Smith.

APPENDIX II

THE MEMOIRS

IN 1819-21, Byron wrote these Memoirs. They related particularly to his life in London after the publication of *Childe Harold* in 1812, and to his marriage and separation. He gave the first portion to Moore in October 1819 at La Mira, Venice, and continually added to the MS. during 1820-21. He authorised Moore to show the papers to "the Elect"; and Moore did show them to many persons, both in Paris and at home. Byron wrote from Ravenna in December 1820 that if Moore could "make anything of them *now* in the way of *reversion* . . . I should be very glad". They were absolutely Moore's property, by Byron's own desire. When Moore fell into pecuniary difficulties in 1821, an arrangement was made, at Byron's suggestion, whereby Murray bought from Moore these Memoirs for the sum of two thousand guineas, binding himself not to publish until after Byron's death. Moore, who had employed a person to copy them, gave Murray the copy as well as the original MS., when this agreement was made in November 1821. There was a stipulation that Moore should edit these papers, *and* supply an account of subsequent events in Byron's life as well; so that the two thousand guineas paid by Murray was really, as Murray afterwards said, "a simple loan". *This agreement gave neither Byron nor Moore any powers of redemption.*

Before long, Byron began to vacillate; and when Lady Noel died in January 1822, and he had hopes of a reconciliation with his wife, he felt that he should like to be in a position to redeem the Memoirs from Murray. He had already, in January 1820, offered the perusal of the MS. to Lady Byron, and she had (in March) very decisively refused it. (See

Chapter I., *supra*.) The upshot of Byron's desire for a different position with regard to the MS. was that Murray consented to execute, and did execute on May 6, 1822, a deed giving Byron and Moore, or either of them, the power of redeeming the MS. *during Byron's life*.

In March 1824, Murray for the first time obtained possession of the original agreement of 1821 from Douglas Kinnaird. Kinnaird had thought the transaction an odd one, and had detained the paper "until he should receive from Lord Byron positive orders as to whom he wished it to be delivered to". This ambiguous conduct had made Murray anxious to know where he stood, and on obtaining the original agreement, he at once requested Moore either to exercise the power of redemption accorded by the second paper of 1822, or to cancel that paper. Moore declared that both he and Byron wished to redeem the MS., and that, by insuring his life, he intended to procure the sum necessary for doing so. He promised to come to town in a few days, and take all the necessary steps. He came to town, but he took none of the necessary steps; he did not even call on Murray; and before anything was done, there arrived, on May 14, 1824, the news of Byron's death.

By that event, the MS. of the Memoirs became the absolute property of Murray, for the deed of 1822 empowered Moore to redeem them *only during Byron's life*.

In the *Temple Bar* articles of 1869-70,¹ there is a long attack upon Moore's conduct with reference to these tidings. No sooner had he heard them than he hastened to Murray's (his own diary is the authority for his movements) and, failing to see the publisher, left a note urging him to "complete the arrangement agreed upon while I was last in town". The *Temple Bar* writer continues: "Then he rushed up and down to Rogers, Kinnaird, Brougham, Hobhouse, Wilmot Horton, etc., striving to persuade them all that Murray ought to return the Memoirs to him".

Meanwhile, Hobhouse was already in consultation with Sir Francis Burdett as to the best means of preventing the Memoirs from being published, for Hobhouse had from the first considered them "foolish documents". On the same day that Hobhouse got the news from Missolonghi (May 14, 1824)

¹ Collected under the title *A Vindication of Lady Byron* (Bentley, 1870).

Augusta Leigh also got it, and also on that day Captain George Byron (then seventh Lord) went down to Beckenham in Kent to inform Lady Byron.¹ Hobhouse, calling on Augusta that day, urged upon her the importance of this question of the Memoirs; on Saturday, May 15, he called again and told her that he had seen Moore, and that Moore had resolved to place the Memoirs at her disposal. Murray had already volunteered to do this. There was some uncertainty in everybody's mind as to the actual property in the Memoirs. Moore believed that he still retained some right in them; he declared that he would deliver the MS. to Mrs. Leigh with his own hands; "he would have the grace of this sacrifice himself". But the Memoirs were now, in reality, Murray's sole property.

It was proposed that Moore should meet Murray—Hobhouse and Wilmot Horton to be also present—at Augusta's house, and in her presence repay the two thousand guineas, receive the MS., and hand it over to her to be absolutely at her disposal. She, who had never read a word of the Memoirs, had by this time been convinced by Hobhouse that the right way to dispose of them was to burn them. He had been urgent on that from the first. All this was arranged between Friday and Saturday, May 14 and 15.

On Sunday, May 16, Moore and Kinnaird called on Hobhouse, Moore announcing that he had obtained the two thousand guineas. (He had got it from Messrs. Longmans.) On that day he for the first time intimated to Hobhouse his dislike to burning the Memoirs; he said that "he would not be present at the destruction". Next day there came from him a letter, saying that "his friends", who were Mr. Luttrell, Samuel Rogers, and Lord Lansdowne, had suggested "a modification". The Memoirs were to be redeemed by him, and he was to peruse them, and make extracts for publication. Wilmot Horton later suggested another compromise: they should be sealed and sent to the bank, so that at some future time they might be discreetly edited.² Hobhouse

¹ Captain Byron told Hobhouse and Augusta that Lady Byron was "in a distressing state". "She said she had no right to be considered, but she had her feelings, and would wish to see any accounts that had come of his last moments". Hobhouse sent his letters to her by Captain Byron.

² Lord Lovelace thought this the course that should have been taken.

repudiated firmly both these plans, and Murray ultimately joined with him in protesting that the MS. should at once be burned. *All* were still under the impression that Moore still retained some property in them.

There was a heated discussion in Murray's room at Albemarle Street, where all the parties, except Augusta, assembled on the Monday, May 17. Colonel Doyle, representing Lady Byron, was also present.¹ Every one but Moore acquiesced in the destruction of the MS.; and Wilmot Horton declared that they need not adjourn to Augusta's house, for she had given him her authority to see it burned. Moore protested against the burning, "as contrary to Lord Byron's wishes, and unjust to himself".

By this time, the agreement of 1821 and the deed of 1822 had been re-perused, and the MS. was at last perceived to be *Murray's property alone*. Colonel Doyle¹ and Mr. Horton then tore up the MS. and Moore's copy of it, and put them both on the fire. Moore then placed the two thousand guineas on the table. Murray refused to take the money, saying that he had destroyed not Mr. Moore's property but his own: "he would take no money for that". Moore insisted; Murray then consented to take the money; but, retaining Hobhouse after the others had left, urged upon him the propriety of Lord Byron's family reimbursing Moore. Hobhouse, Horton, Luttrell, and Doyle all agreed with Murray. Augusta, who agreed on the main point, was emphatic in declaring that Lady Byron could not be asked to contribute: "*nothing was being done for her sake*".

¹ Though Colonel Doyle had been requested by Lady Byron to act for her, if necessary, in the matter, his presence at this meeting was accidental; Wilmot Horton had called upon him, and asked him to go. Moore had told Colonel Doyle that he [Moore], in delivering the MS. to "Lord Byron's family", must be understood not to mean Lady Byron, or to include her. At this meeting, the point in debate was what Mrs. Leigh might be disposed to do with the MS.; the question of its destruction had not been discussed between, or even thought of by, Lady Byron and Colonel Doyle; *their* debate had been as to whether the MS. "should be suppressed—or partially published". "Lady Byron", says Colonel Doyle in a letter to Wilmot Horton of May 18, 1825, "certainly gave no consent to the destruction of the manuscript, either directly or indirectly". At this meeting, Colonel Doyle, finding an entirely new point under discussion, "regarded himself" (when the MS. *was* destroyed) "only as a witness, and not as a party to the proceeding" (*Astarte*, App. A, p. 217).

It will be noticed that in Hobhouse's narrative, from which my text derives, Colonel Doyle is said to have been one of those who actually put the MS. on the fire.

But Lady Byron had been already approached on the subject (by whom we know not), and, on finding later that no member of the Byron family except Augusta would pay, she "consented to a proposal that she and Augusta should each provide one thousand guineas for the purpose".¹

But this arrangement in the end fell through; and it was not until 1828 that any kind of reimbursement to Moore was made. In that year, Leigh Hunt's book came out, and John Murray became convinced that a Life of Byron must be written. He therefore arranged with Moore to prepare the biography which was published in 1830. For this commission, Moore was paid £1600; but over and above that sum, Murray discharged Moore's bond with his creditors (the Messrs. Longman) for the two thousand guineas, together with the interest thereon and other charges, amounting to £1020 more. The total sum paid by Murray was £4620. Jeaffreson thinks that Murray should be regarded as having discharged Moore's bond, with the interest and costs, "with money placed in his hands for that purpose".

Though the loss of any prose writings from Byron's hand must be reckoned as acute, it is doubtful if in other respects the world has lost much by losing the Memoirs. That part of them which related to the early London life was, in so far as it was fit for general circulation at all, transferred by memory from Byron's MS. to Moore's Life—or so at any rate Moore tells his readers. He says that "on the mysterious cause of the separation, [the MS.] afforded no light whatever". Byron himself, while assuring Moore and Murray that his statement of this case was written "with the fullest intention to be faithful and true", admitted that it was nevertheless "not *impartial*"; and he added passionately: "No, by the Lord! I cannot pretend to be that while I feel".

As to the grossness, there are conflicting voices. Murray attributed to Gifford the opinion that "the Memoirs were of such a low, *Pot-house* description" that a bookseller of repute could not possibly publish them. Lord Lovelace, in *Astarte*, declares that "at most four or five pages in the latter part were indelicate, and they could perfectly have been spared". He cites as authorities for this opinion Lord John Russell, Lady

¹ Jeaffreson, p. 429.

Holland, and "other readers". But again, Lord Rancliffe, who had been among "the Elect", told Hobhouse that "no one, having read the MS., could have any excuse for wishing to publish it", and that no decent person could have "any wish but for its destruction. The flames were the fit place for it".

Was Augusta implicated? Lord John Russell said in 1869 that she *was not*; Lady Holland in 1843 (by no means so crucial a date)¹ said she *was*. Augusta never read, or heard read, a single word of the MS.; and I can find no proof that she showed any eagerness to have it destroyed—indeed, only the urgency of Hobhouse induced her "very decidedly" to sanction the burning. Hobhouse's attitude was based on the fact that Byron had expressed to him in 1822 a desire that the Memoirs should not be published.

Lady Byron had been from the first (see Chapter I., *supra*) strongly opposed to publication; but she took no part whatever in the destruction; "and did not approve when she heard of it" (*Astarte*, p. 11).

Moore, who has been universally blamed for the burning, very urgently protested against it; Jeaffreson declares that John Murray did so too, but this does not appear either from Hobhouse's very detailed narrative in vol. iii. of the *Recollections of a Long Life*, or from John Murray's letter of May 19, 1824, to Wilmot Horton, to be found in the Appendix to the English translation of Elze's *Life of Byron*.

It must be added that at the time, and ever afterwards, Moore assumed an attitude of magnanimity and sacrifice in the matter of allowing the Memoirs to be destroyed which was wholly unsanctioned by the facts. He had no property whatever in the MS. at the time of its destruction, and it was through his own deliberate dilatoriness that he had lost that property. In December of the same year (1824) he told Hobhouse, in writing, that he had "become a convert to [Hobhouse's] opinion about the propriety of the destruction, and of not making extracts for publication" (*Recollections of a Long Life*, vol. iii.).

¹ It was, however, to some extent crucial. Medora Leigh—see Appendix III.—was then in England, and there were rumours in the air of blackmail by her servants.

APPENDIX III:

||MEDORA LEIGH

ON April 15, 1814, a daughter (the fourth) was born by Augusta Leigh, and was named Elizabeth Medora.

In the summer of 1843—nineteen years after Byron's death—there arrived in London from the South of France, "a young lady with a pretty little daughter of nine or ten years old".¹ She said that she was the fourth daughter of the Hon. Mrs Leigh, and had come to England "to urge a claim on Lady Byron", who had "long treated her with affection, but had suddenly withdrawn her favour". This lady was Medora Leigh. During her stay in England, she wrote out and placed in the hands of a friend an account of "all the circumstances of her life from her fifteenth year, painful and discreditable to herself as they were". It was this narrative, and the friend's narrative of her proceedings in London, which the editor² of *Medora Leigh*, "after long doubt and hesitation", decided to produce, and did produce through Messrs. Bentley in 1869, in the full tide of the Beecher Stowe revelations. The following notes are from Medora's autobiographical narrative.

When Medora was fifteen years old (1829) she was on a visit to her married sister, Georgiana, who was awaiting a confinement. The girl was much thrown into her brother-in-law's society—he was a distant cousin of the Byron family, a Mr. Henry Trevanion³—and he seduced her. She bore a child (1830) which died; her sister knew the whole story, but her

¹ *Medora Leigh: A History and an Autobiography*. Edited by Charles Mackay. Bentley, 1869.

² This was Charles Mackay, a well-known literary man of the period.

³ In 1748, our Byron's grandfather, Admiral Byron, married his first cousin, Sophia Trevanion of Carhays in Cornwall.

mother did not ; and she returned to her mother's house three months after the birth. She represents herself as having much disliked Henry Trevanion ; yet after her return home, he came "very often" to see her, and his visits were not discouraged. Early in 1831, she found herself pregnant for the second time. Trevanion urged her to confide in her mother ; she did so ; and Augusta "was at first very kind to me, though she afterwards became cruel". It was arranged between Mrs. Leigh and Georgiana Trevanion that Medora *should again go with the Trevanions into the country*. "This was in March 1831". The child seems to have been still-born. In June, Colonel Leigh, Medora's supposed father,¹ heard the story (which had been kept from him by Medora's express desire ; she was his favourite child, though "we were never, any of us, taught to love and honour him"), and went to the house in the country. (Medora "did not know in what part of the country this house was situated".) He carried away the girl, and placed her in what seems to have been a private lunatic asylum. At the end of a month, she, by the connivance of Trevanion *and his wife* (who had "promised me to procure a divorce, so that then I could marry Henry if disposed to do so"), escaped from the asylum and went with Trevanion to Normandy.

In 1833, after living with Trevanion for two years (under the assumed names of M. and Mme Aubin), Medora wrote to Augusta, begging to be enabled to go as a boarder to a convent in Lower Brittany. Augusta, after long delay, engaged to allow her £60 a year, and she entered the convent. But after a month's residence (August 1833), finding that for the third time she was about to become a mother, she left, without her mother's knowledge, but with the consent of the Abbess. About April 1834, the daughter—Marie²—with whom she appeared in London, was born ; *where* born she says not, but "Trevanion was not under the same roof with me". Clearly, however, they did rejoin one another, for she goes on : "We (Trevanion and I) continued to live in an old château in a secret and unfrequented spot, in great poverty, but as brother and sister". Thus, with one absence of Trevanion's, passed five

¹ At this time she believed, though the Trevanions had told her the contrary, that Colonel Leigh was her father.

² I do not think it is known what became of this daughter.

years "of misery"; and in the spring of 1838, "the hardships I had endured caused me to fall dangerously ill". She then wrote to her mother, and to her mother's half-sister, Lady Chichester,¹ imploring them to enable her to escape from Trevanion's cruelty. The means were given, and she went to a neighbouring town. For two years she received affectionate letters from her mother (1838 to 1840), who promised to allow her £120 a year; but this allowance did not, Medora says, continue. Early in 1840, she found herself in want, and was advised to sell her reversionary interest in a Deed of Appointment which—probably about 1839, but the date is nowhere afforded—Mrs. Leigh had given her. This was a document whereby £3000 was to be payable to Medora on the deaths of Mrs. Leigh and Lady Byron. She applied for advice about the sale to Sir George Stephen, Lady Byron's solicitor. He must have told her that she could not sell until the Deed was in her possession. It was not, for Mrs. Leigh had kept it, to prevent the very thing which Medora now proposed to do.

Medora then, through Sir George Stephen, appealed to Lady Byron to use her influence with Mrs. Leigh to give up the Deed. (This was a period of estrangement between Lady Byron and Augusta.) Medora received "a most kind letter from Lady Byron, and money, with offers of protection for her and Marie". This was in August 1840. A meeting was arranged at Tours. Thence they went together to Paris, where the Countess of Lovelace and her husband were; and Ada received Medora "as a sister". "At Fontainebleau . . . Lady Byron informed me of the cause of the deep interest she felt, and must ever feel, for me. Her husband had been my father. . . . Her only wish, she said, was to provide for me according to Lord Byron's intentions respecting me, and according to my rank in life".

While Lady Byron, with Medora Leigh, was still in Paris, a Chancery suit was begun against Augusta to obtain possession of the Deed. In May 1842, this was concluded, and Medora obtained possession. By that time she was established in England with Lady Byron. No sooner had she obtained the

¹ It will be remembered that Augusta's mother was originally the wife of the Marquis of Carmarthen, later fifth Duke of Leeds. Lady Mary Osborne, Augusta's half-sister by the mother's side, was married to the Earl of Chichester.

Deed than she seems to have inaugurated a kind of blackmail upon Lady Byron. She complained that the Chancery suit had been concluded without consulting her, and that "she had been sacrificed to her mother's interest". She determined to leave England, and asked for the means to do so. Lady Byron spoke of the necessity of her having a lady to live with her abroad; this she rejected: "I would not submit to any such restraint". In July 1842, she left, attended by a female servant, whose husband Lady Byron permitted to accompany them. They were to live at Hyères, and Lady Byron was to allow Medora £150 a year, and pay the wages of the female servant. *To the two servants Medora told the secret of her birth.* Lady Byron, who was evidently growing distrustful, arranged that the allowance should be paid to the maid, and that from the maid an account of the way the money was spent would be expected. The Deed was left in the care of Lord Lovelace; and in the care of Lady Byron's housekeeper was left a box of letters and papers belonging to Medora.

On their arrival at Hyères, already short of money (though Lady Byron had given them £40 for the journey), the maid's husband refused to leave, and prepared to profit by the secret that Medora had entrusted to him. Soon, too, Medora grew discontented with the amount of her allowance, and went to Paris to consult the famous advocate, M. Berryer, as to how she might obtain "a more certain and suitable arrangement". This was in March 1843. Berryer did nothing. In May, a Dr. King arrived, deputed by Lady Byron to offer Medora £300 a year on condition that she should resign "all control over myself and child" to Lady Byron. This Medora refused to do; and Dr. King said, "Sign, sign, you great fool!" She still refused, and Dr. King left Paris next morning.

A Captain de Bathe, R.N., whom Medora had known in the "Mme Aubin" days, now appeared: "he came to Paris, and called upon me". Apparently he found her in a state of destitution; he interested himself in her case, and, by his and Berryer's advice, and with means supplied by de Bathe, Medora came to London, as we have seen, in the summer of 1843.¹

¹ Captain de Bathe maintained her there for three months. He was never reimbursed for his assistance to her, the Byron family regarding his intervention as "wholly uninitiated by Lady Noel Byron and Lord Lovelace".

Medora's "claim" on Lady Byron was at this early stage confined to one for some valuable family papers (see p. 330) which had been stolen from Lady Byron's house by a valet—the servant who had accompanied Medora to Hyères in 1842, and who was now in London, blackmailing Lord and Lady Lovelace by threatening to reveal the secret of Medora's birth.

Captain de Bathe introduced Medora to a firm of solicitors, one of whom, Mr. S——,¹ specially interested himself in the case. He approached Dr. Lushington, who "received his statement as to Medora's parentage as an understood fact". Dr. Lushington wrote to Lady Byron, and heard from her that "she would have no further intercourse with Miss Leigh; she was sorry for her, but could not renew intercourse".

Miss Leigh was in great need, and Captain de Bathe could not support her any longer. Dr. Lushington, in an interview with Mr. S——, advised him to apply to Sir George Stephen, saying: "There may be others of the family to whom he has access—I cannot say more". Mr. S—— then had several interviews with Sir George Stephen, who made three conditions to his helping Miss Leigh:

- I. She must surrender the Deed of Appointment, "as a sacred provision to trustees—for her child".²
- II. She must send a written expression of her sincere contrition for her conduct to Lady Byron.
- III. She must return to seclusion in France.

Miss Leigh consented to II. and III., but refused to surrender the Deed. All negotiations proved fruitless; and it was then that Medora wrote, and placed in the hands of Mr. S——, her autobiographical narrative.

Lady Byron's anger was caused by Medora's ingratitude and by the way in which she had spread abroad the story of her birth: she had told not only her servants, but M. Berryer, Mr. Bulwer of the British Embassy in Paris, Captain de Bathe, and Mr. S——. Her refusal to surrender the Deed was another reason for distrust; moreover, her blackmailing intentions were now evident. Already she had sent and was sending letter upon letter to the Leeds family, forcing her story upon them, and

¹ Only initials given. This was the Mr. S—— who had met Byron in Greece.

² Sir George Stephen had delivered it to Medora, from Lord Lovelace's keeping, upon her arrival in London.

appealing for small sums of money. She wrote also to her mother, who had refused to see her; but the editor of *Medora Leigh* felt that this letter was "so haughty, unfilial, and cruel" that he could not admit it into his pages.

This was in August 1843. Captain de Bathe and Mr. S—— now began to meditate extreme measures; but while they were consulting on these, Medora Leigh disappeared, bearing with her little Marie and the Deed.

Nothing more was heard of her (she did not sell her reversionary interest) until in 1849 she died in France, having been married there some three or four years.¹ She was supported during these years by a "maternal relative". Lady Byron held no further direct communication with her, but it is quite possible, and even (with what we know of Lady Byron) probable, that she was not unconcerned in the benevolence of the "maternal relative".

This story was, like everything else, used in 1869-70 to defame Lady Byron, the *Quarterly Review* being particularly active.² In our own day, Byron's paternity of Medora Leigh is not questioned; but there has arisen since 1909 a new theory as to her mother's identity. Mr. Richard Edgcumbe published in that year a book entitled *Byron: The Last Phase*, wherein, desiring to refute *Astarte*, he promulgated the following ideas:

1. Byron's boyish love for Mary Chaworth was the cause of his unhappiness with Lady Byron, and the reason for the cruel conduct which made her leave him.
2. In 1813-14, this passion had been renewed, and had resulted in the birth of the girl Medora.
3. Mrs. Leigh willingly inculpated herself in the manner shown in Chapter I. of this volume, and pretended that the girl Medora was her own child—all to save the good name of Mary Chaworth.
4. Byron and Mrs. Leigh conspired together, for years after the separation, to persuade Lady Byron of the fact of their incestuous relations with one another—for the same purpose.

¹ *Astarte*, p. 260.

² See *A Vindication of Lady Byron*; article on Mrs. Stowe's book, pp. 206-336.

I reviewed Mr. Edgcumbe's book at the time of its publication, and said then what I still think—that only the strongest proofs could convince any reader of *Astarte* of so wild an assumption. Mr. Edgcumbe produced no proofs of any kind; he merely said that he “regretted being unable more precisely to indicate the source of the information embodied in the concluding portion of his work”, adding that “the reader might test the value of his statements by the light of citations which *seem* (!) amply to confirm them”—an ambiguous phrase if ever there was one; and the more so because his “citations” are peculiarly ineffective. “At all events”, Mr. Edgcumbe continued, “I claim to have shown by analogy that Lord Lovelace's accusation against Mrs. Leigh is groundless”—a phrase still feebler than that already quoted. Mr. Edgcumbe sought to persuade his readers by the annotation of Byron's poems; so far as I was and am concerned, his failure is absolute. But the mere adoption of such a method, though it should be infinitely better carried out, is sufficient to annihilate such a case. Only documents—and irrefutable ones—will satisfy the student of these matters; and those Lord Lovelace did produce. Here are some specimens of Mr. Edgcumbe's dealing with the *Astarte* documents, which have been displayed, as fully as need be, in Chapter I. of this volume.

“Augusta Leigh . . . assisted her brother to place the pack on a false scent”. “Augusta avenged herself upon Lady Byron by heightening her jealousy”. Byron's letter of May 1819 was, according to Mr. Edgcumbe's theory, in reality written to Mary Chaworth, but *sent through Augusta*, and by Augusta sent to Lady Byron for the purpose of “heightening her jealousy”. “Augusta wished Lady Byron to believe that her brother was still making love to her”. “Mrs. Leigh seems to have enjoyed the wriggings of her victim on the hook. . .”. Yet this part of Mr. Edgcumbe's book is written in avowed championship of the woman—“the selfless martyr”—who could “enjoy” herself by means of such ugly malice!

To take another point. Compare the degrees of “social ruin” in the two cases. Mary Chaworth was a married woman already at odds with a flagrantly unfaithful husband; and the morals of the age regarded adultery as the normal occupation of all men and most women. Augusta Leigh was Byron's

half-sister ; and Lady Melbourne, who was very far from prudish, had told Byron in 1813 that incest was “ a crime for which there was no salvation in this world, whatever there might be in the next”. Yet Augusta Leigh takes upon herself this crime, as well as that of adultery, to save the reputation of a woman who, if discovered, would have suffered merely the degree of ostracism which the world then assigned to adultery alone !

Mr. Edgcumbe is, on details of Byron and Shelley biography, something of an “ expert ” ; otherwise I should not have wasted words on a theory so manifestly untenable.

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