

Letters and Journals

Vol. III

Letters and Journals

Vol. III

by

Lord Byron

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CHAPTER IX. JANUARY, 1814—MAY, 1814.

521.—*To John Murray.*

Sunday, Jan. 2, 1814.

DEAR SIR,—

Excuse this dirty paper—it is the *pen*-ultimate half-sheet of a quire. Thanks for your books and the *L^{dn}. Chron.*, which I return. *The Corsair* is copied, and now at Lord H[ollan]d's; but I wish Mr. Gifford to have it to-night.

Mr. D[alla]s is very *perverse*; so that I have offended both him and you, when I really meant to do good, at least to one, and certainly not to annoy either. But I shall manage him, I hope.—I am pretty confident of the *tale* itself; but one cannot be sure. If I get it from Lord H., it shall be sent.

Yours ever, etc.,

B.

522.—*To John Murray.*

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

P.S.—I shall answer this evening, and will set all right about Dallas. I thank you for your expressions of personal regard which I can assure you I do not lightly value.

523.—*To John Murray.*

1814, Jan.

DEAR SIR,—

If you will look over the loose MSS. (*not The Corsair* MS.) I think you will find there is another stanza in the song which I have inserted in Canto *Ist*; if so copy, and send it in its right place to the press with the proof I am now correcting.

Yours truly,

B.

P.S.—You recollect *this* song was sent some time ago for *Childe Harold*. Correct the *punctuation* of this by Mr. G[ifford]'s proof—*this* must be for the press—because I have added and altered. There were some *sad* printer's blunders "lovely" for "lonely"—"lifeless" for "listless," etc., etc. I wish one could find one *infallible* printer. I shall send the *Deds* to Mr. Moore to-morrow—and if I do not insert one of them, depend upon it *you* shall have it in a note. I shall state my intentions, your exquisite tory reasons, and my gentle compliance.

524.—*To John Murray.*

1814, Jan. 4.

DEAR SIR,—

From Mr. G[ifford] every comma is an obligation for which thank him in my name and behalf.

I am at a loss to guess to what "*remarks*" he alludes in the note which I retain; *none* were in any of y^e proofs, and the *MS.* *you* sent y^e printers without shewing it to *me since*. They are (if any) probably there. But pray explain this to Mr. G., and tell him that, of course, I should have attended to them, and will *now* if I can find them.

Yours ever,

B^N.

525.—*To Thomas Ashe.*

January 5, 1814.

SIR,—

When you accuse a stranger of neglect, you forget that it is possible business or absence from London may have interfered to delay his answer, as has actually occurred in the present instance. But to the point. What is the sum you think will be of service to you? I am willing to do what I can to extricate you from your situation. Your first scheme I was considering; but your own impatience appears to have rendered it abortive, if not irretrievable. I will deposit in Mr. Murray's hands (with his consent) the sum you mentioned, to be advanced for the time at ten pounds per month.

P.S.—I write in the greatest hurry, which may make my letter a little abrupt; but, as I said before, I have no wish to distress your feelings.

526.—*To J. H. Merivale.*

January, 1814.

MY DEAR MERIVALE,—

I have redde *Roncesvaux* with very great pleasure, and (if I were so disposed) see very little room for criticism. There is a choice of two lines in one of the last cantos,—I think "Live and protect" better, because "Oh who?" implies a doubt of Roland's power or inclination. I would allow the—but that point you yourself must determine on—I mean the doubt as to where to place a part of the Poem, whether between the actions or no. Only if you wish to have all the success you deserve, *never listen to friends*, and—as I am not the least troublesome of the number—least of all to me.

I hope you will be out soon. *March*, sir, *March* is the month for the *trade*, and they must be considered. You have written a very noble Poem, and nothing but the detestable taste of the day can do you harm—but I think you will beat it. Your measure is uncommonly well-chosen and wielded.

527.—*To Thomas Moore.*

January 6, 1814.

I have got a devil of a long story in the press, entitled "*The Corsair*," in the regular heroic measure. It is a pirate's isle, peopled with my own creatures, and you may easily suppose they do a world of mischief through the three cantos. Now for your dedication—if you will accept it. This is positively my last experiment on public *literary* opinion, till I turn my thirtieth year,—if so be I flourish until that downhill period. I have a confidence for you—a perplexing one to me, and, just at present, in a state of abeyance in itself. * * * * However, we shall see. In the mean time, you may amuse yourself with my suspense, and put all the justices of peace in requisition, in case I come into your county with "hackbut bent."

Seriously, whether I am to hear from her or him, it is a *pause*, which I shall fill up with as few thoughts of my own as I can borrow from other people. Any thing is better than stagnation; and now, in the interregnum of my autumn and a strange summer adventure, which I don't like to think of, (I don't mean * *'s, however, which is laughable only), the antithetical state of my lucubrations makes me alive, and Macbeth can "sleep no more:"—he was lucky in getting rid of the drowsy sensation of waking again.

Pray write to me. I must send you a copy of the letter of dedication. When do you come out? I am sure we don't *clash* this time, for I am all at sea, and in action,—and a wife, and a mistress, etc.

Thomas, thou art a happy fellow; but if you wish us to be so, you must come up to town, as you did last year; and we shall have a world to say, and to see, and to hear. Let me hear from you.

P.S.—Of course you will keep my secret, and don't even talk in your sleep of it. Happen what may, your dedication is ensured, being already written; and I shall copy it out fair to-night, in case business or amusement—*Amant alterna Camæna*.

528.—*To the Hon. Augusta Leigh.*

MY DEAREST A.,—

I shall write tomorrow—but did *not* go to L^y M.'s twelfth cake banquet.—M. has written again—*all friendship*—and really very simple and pathetic—*bad usage—paleness—ill health—old friendship—once—good motive—virtue—and so forth.*

You shall hear from me tomorrow.

Ever, dearest Augusta, Yours,

B.

529.—*To John Murray.*

Jan. 7, 1814.

DEAR SIR—

You don't like the dedication—very well—there is another; but you will send the other to Mr. Moore, that he may know I *had* written it. I send also mottos for the cantos. I think you will allow that an elephant may be more sagacious, but cannot be more docile.

Yours,

Bⁿ.

The *name* is again altered to *Medora*.

530.—*To Thomas Moore.*

January 8, 1814.

As it would not be fair to press you into a dedication, without previous notice, I send you *two*, and I will tell you *why two*. The first, Mr. M., who sometimes takes upon him the critic (and I bear it from *astonishment*), says, may do you *harm*—God forbid!—this alone makes me listen to him. The fact is, he is a damned Tory,

and has, I dare swear, something of *self*, which I cannot divine, at the bottom of his objection, as it is the allusion to Ireland to which he objects. But he be damned—though a good fellow enough (your sinner would not be worth a damn).

Take your choice;—no one, save he and Mr. Dallas, has seen either, and D. is quite on my side, and for the first. If I can but testify to you and the world how truly I admire and esteem you, I shall be quite satisfied. As to *prose*, I don't know Addison's from Johnson's; but I will try to mend my cacology. Pray perpend, pronounce, and don't be offended with either.

My last epistle would probably put you in a fidget. But the devil, who *ought* to be civil on such occasions, proved so, and took my letter to the right place. * * * Is it not odd?—the very fate I said she had escaped from * *, she has now undergone from the worthy * *. Like Mr. Fitzgerald, shall I not lay claim to the character of "Vates?"—as he did in the *Morning Herald* for prophesying the fall of Buonaparte—who, by the by, I don't think is yet fallen. I wish he would rally and rout your legitimate sovereigns, having a mortal hate to all royal entails.—But I am scrawling a treatise. Good night.

Ever, etc.

531.—*To Lady Melbourne.*

January 8th, 1814.

MY DEAR L^y M^e,—

I have had too much in my head to write ; but don't think my silence capricious.

C. is quite out—in y^e first place *she* was not under the same roof, but first with my old friends the H[arrowby]'s in B[erkele]y Square, and afterwards at her friends the V[illiers]'s, nearer me. The separation and the express are utterly false, and without even a shadow of foundation; so you see her spies are ill paid, or badly informed. But if she had been in ye same house, it is less singular than C.'s *coming* to it; the house was a very decent house, till that illustrious person thought proper to render it otherwise.

As to M^e de Staël, I never go near her; her books are very delightful, but in society I see nothing but a plain woman forcing one to listen, and look at her, with her pen behind her ear, and her mouth full of ink—so much for her.

Now for a confidence—my old love of all loves—Mrs. — (whom somebody told you knew nothing about me) has written to me *twice*—no *love*, but she wants to see me; and though it will be a melancholy interview, I shall go; we have hardly met, and never been on any intimate terms since her marriage. *He* has been playing the Devil with all kinds of vulgar mistresses; and behaving ill enough, in every respect.

I enclose you the *last*, which pray return immediately with your *opinion*, whether I *ought* to see her, or not—you see she is unhappy; she was a spoilt heiress; but has seen little or nothing of the world—very pretty, and once simple in character, and clever, but with no peculiar accomplishments, but endeared to me by a thousand childish, and singular recollections—you know her estate joined mine; and we were as children very much together; but no matter; *this* was a love match, they are *separated*.

I have heard from Ph. who seems embarrassed with constancy. Her *date* is the *Grampian* hills, to be sure. With that latitude, and her precious *époux*, it must be a shuddering kind of existence.

C. may do as she pleases, thanks to your good-nature, rather than my merits, or prudence; there is little to dread from her love, and I forgive her hatred. L^y H.'s second son is in Notts, and *she* has been guessing, and asking about Mrs. C.; no matter; so that I keep her from all other conjectures. I wrote to you in a tone which nothing but hurry can excuse. Don't think me impertinent, or peevish, but merely confused; *consider* one moment *all things*, and do not wonder. By-the-bye, I lately passed my time very *happily*.

By-the-bye, this letter will prove to you that we were at least friends, and that the mother-in-law erred when she told you that it was quite a *dream*. You will believe me another time. Adieu, ever y^{rs}. Pray write and believe me

Most affect^y y^{rs}.,

B.

532.—To Lady Melbourne.

January 10th, 1814.

MY DEAR L^y M^e,—

The "beloved friend" was always a *she dogstar*, and had an ascendancy over her which I have felt to my cost; and, depend upon it, whatever point she has to carry will be carried. But I hear (not from *either*), that they are to be reconciled immediately; if so, I shall not journey 150 miles to be a witness of y^e re-union; and though I have no feelings beyond esteem, etc., now to spare, and she still fewer for me, in *that case* her wishing to see me was rather premature, because evidently she does not desire him to know anything of the matter. "Like C."! no more than I am like Wm., and as far her superior as I say, most sincerely (with "*an air*," you will say), and believe, Wm. is to me in every good and praiseworthy quality. As for C., don't talk of her, for I am really advancing fast to an utter detestation; which I try to curb, and which I must curb, for it is most ungenerous to allow it to get the better of me, because there are sacrifices which, once made, no provocation can quite cancel.

"My Confession" did not begin till I was *alone*, and has therefore nothing to do with the question of happiness; and as to "abandon," none but the greatest of sinners can have any idea of it; but *that* depends entirely on the persons themselves; however, there is no *comparison*, and there is an end of my theoretical observations.

I cannot conceive why the D—I should angle with so many baits for one whom, all the world will tell you, belonged to him probably before he was born. But when they give me a character for "Art," it is surely most mistaken; no one was ever more heedless. Moore, in a letter to me on a *different subject, you may suppose*, says, "the only chance of salvation for you —(I never look for any from yourself) —is the, &c. &c." Now, what he wishes me to avoid, *you* would call "my salvation." No matter; nothing can deprive one of the past; and as to the *future*, what promise did it ever keep to any human being? Besides, "there is a world beyond Rome," and, though you will not believe me, nothing but this confounded delay of Newstead, &c, could have prevented me from being long ago in my isles of the East. Why should I remain or care? I am not, never was, nor can be popular; and you will own I do not deserve nor indeed strive to be so. I never *won* the world; and what it has awarded me has always been owing from its caprice. My life here is frittered away; there I was always in action, or, at least, in motion; and, except during night, always on or in the sea, and on horseback. I am sadly sick of my present sluggishness, and I hate civilization.

Pray why the *Parenthesis*? Do you not know that *shyness* is really and truly y^e family appendage? it may look like modesty (but few see the likeness); it is very often contempt of others, and no great liking to oneself.

As to *loud* talking and shining, as it is called, I leave it to your wits; my only object in society is to see some *one* person, to whom it is generally expedient to talk rather in a low voice; and if they listen and don't look uncomfortable (as *you* always do with me), it is all I hope; and when they are gone, I look about me, and see what proselytes my master is making, and interrupt nobody. Perhaps I shall go into Notts, but if they are together. I do not see how even friendship (on such a foundation as ours) would be much to the purpose.

Ever yours,

B.

P.S.—Lady Mount was seized with a sudden penchant for [Augusta Leigh] and called on her at the Vil^{ts} [Villiers] and asked her to some party, in gratitude, I presume, for the *Aston* summer, of which I suppose the *elder* informed her. I am sure she could not refrain from saying something of the Sr. Ph., as both she and I saw that she was vigilant to plague us. That business will never be renewed, or rather never completed. I *heard* from *Ph.* the other day as usual, but we shall not meet till spring. By that time it is impossible she should not be altered; and even if not, I shall not fool away my time on *theories*, and that stupid speculative reverie of Platonics, in which I was obliged to humour her fears, or her coquetry. She will

fall eventually (probably soon) into some less indulgent instructor's precepts, for whom I have been merely paving the way; it was not my fault that this will be the case, but *she*—no, *I*—was the fool of her whimsical romance.

533.—*To John Murray.*

January 11, 1814.

Correct this proof by Mr. G.'s (and from the MSS.), particularly as to the *pointing*. I have added a section for *Gulnare*, to fill up the parting, and dismiss her more ceremoniously. If Mr. G. or you dislike, 'tis but a *sponge* and another midnight better employed than in yawning over Miss Edgeworth; who, by the bye, may soon return the compliment.

Ever yours,

Bⁿ.

Wednesday or Thursday.

P.S.—I have redde *Patronage*. It is full of praises of Lord Ellenborough!!!—from which I infer near and dear relations at the bar, and has much of her heartlessness and little of her humours (wit she has none), and she must live more than 3 weeks in London to describe *good* or (if you will) high society; the *ton* of her book is as vulgar as her father—and no more attractive than her eyes.

I do not love Madame de Stael; but, depend upon it, she beats all your Natives hollow as an Authoress, in my opinion; and I would not say this if I could help it.

P.S.—Pray report my best acknowledgments to Mr. G^d in any words that may best express how truly his kindness obliges me. I won't bore him with *lip* thanks or *notes*.

534.—*To Lady Melbourne.*

January 11th, 1814.

My dear Lady M[elbourne],—

I have heard from (what new initial shall we fix upon?) M. again, and am at a loss. You must advise me. I will tell you why. It is impossible I should now feel anything beyond friendship for her or anyone else in present circumstances; and the kind of feeling which has lately absorbed me has a mixture of the terrible, which renders all other, even passion (*pour les autres*) insipid to a degree; in short, one of its effects has been like the habit of Mithridates, who by using himself

gradually to poison of the strongest kind, at last rendered all others ineffectual when he sought them as a remedy for all evils, and a release from existence.

In my answer to M. I touched very slightly on my past feelings towards her, and explained what they *now* were ; hers I conceive to be much the same, as she says as much ; but I am not quite so sure that seeing her again, and being on the terms of intimacy we once were, would not bring on the *old attack* on *me*, and the recollection of the former is not sufficiently agreeable to make me wish to risk another.

She is much governed by "dear friend" [Miss Radford], and "dear friend" and I, for certain reasons, am not very likely to agree on that subject, if on any other. I only wonder how she came to allow her to write to me at all. "Dear friend" is the elder by several years, was never handsome, but not unwilling to be thought so. I don't know how to manage her, even if I wish to preserve this same sickly friendship which is reviving between M. and me. I must try my hand at dissimulation; and shall probably over-act my part if I get interested in the business; in the meantime it must take its course. She talks of coming to town in spring; in that case I might have at least turned her friendship to some account, by playing it off against *Ph.*, which, from the disposition of the latter, would have ensured *her*; but I have quite resigned my pretensions in that quarter, and in every other.

I have just received the enclosed from C[aroline Lamb]; she seems to wish to alarm by some idea of my being hated by somebody I like; to whom, or what she alludes I do not know, nor much conjecture. I shall not answer, and you will have the goodness to throw it, C.'s, into the fire.

You will read the other enclosure; favour me with your counsel, and return it. We shall perhaps not correspond much longer; but as long as I can I shall not cease occasionally to sign myself

Ever yours,

B.

P.S.—If C. has taken *anything* into her head (which, by-the-bye, she *would* probably have done, at all events), it is all over; she will never rest till she has destroyed me in some way or other. When it comes to that point, and through her (yet I hardly know how, for I have neither written nor held any conversation of any kind with C. since our summer fracas), if it comes to that point, she will regret it. I have neither weapon nor defence against herself, but some of her instruments or connections (I mean *maternal* ones, with yours I can have nothing to do), will probably be invoked by her, and if but one, it will be good company in whatever journey I may wish to set out upon.

535.—*To the Hon. Augusta Leigh.*

Jan^{ry}. 12th, 1814.

MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—

On Sunday or Monday next, with leave of your lord and president, you will be *well* and ready to accompany me to Newstead, which you *should* see, and I will endeavour to render as comfortable as I can, for both our sakes; as to time to stay there—suit your own convenience. I am at your disposal.

Claughton is, I believe, inclined to settle; if so, I shall be able to do something further for *yours* and *you*, which I need not say will give me ye greatest pleasure. More news from Mrs.—*all friendship*; you shall see her.

Excuse haste and evil penmanship.

Ever yours,

B.

536.—*To Lady Melbourne.*

January 12th, 1814.

MY DEAR LADY M^{de},—

More letters, one, two, three, from C., who wants pictures, forgiveness, praise for forbearance, promise of future confidence, and God knows what beside, with leave to show some elderly gentleman of wit and discretion the "Curse of Minerva." She may show him the "Curse of Caroline Lamb," or whatever she pleases! and may tell him the same long story she did to Sheridan the other day. I really believe her shortest and best way would be to print it, as her recitations are endless; and I really think she never will rest, till she or M^{de} de Stael have it circulated through regenerated Germany, where she may enjoy the honours of suicide till a happy old age. But a truce with these fooleries. I *must not*, and *cannot* write; and as to pictures, I have no time to sit for a sign-post. Just as I had got her quite out of my head, and she was quietly disposed with you and everyone else, here she comes again. It is too late, and never was a more unlucky moment, as it happens that the least additional drop will make my cup run over, and any irritation revenge her amply, but certainly at the same time separate her, and you, and me beyond y^e possibility of re-union for the remainder of our lives.

I don't think mine will be a long one (this you will think like her, but I don't allude to suicide; *that* is weak, and if I were inclined that way, it would never be from the pressure of pain, but satiety of pleasure), because from mere common causes and effects it cannot last. I began very early and very violently, and alternate extremes

of excess and abstinence have utterly destroyed—oh, unsentimental word!—my stomach, and, as Lady Oxford used seriously to say, a broken heart means nothing but bad digestion. I am one day in high health, and the next on fire, or ices—in short, I shall turn hypochondriacal, or dropsical; whimsical I am already, but don't let me get tragical.

The last dangerous illness I had was a fever in the Morea in 1811, this very month; and what do you suppose was the effect? I really can't tell you, but it is perfectly true, that at the time when I myself thought, and everyone else thought I was dying, I had very nearly made my exit like some "Just man," whom a King of Poland envied. You will not believe this, but pray confine your scepticism to any *good* you may hear of me. I think you have seen that in my statements to you truth has been the basis. You do not know how uncomfortable the doubts (not yours) about M. had made me; you have now perceived that we were "inmates of the same house," and I think you may also see that she was not ignorant that I was attached to her. I never said that it was returned; however, in a boyish and girlish way I might fancy it, heigh ho! Well, it does not much matter; but if I could begin life again there is much of it I would pass in the same manner.

I leave town on Sunday or Monday next, and will write to you from Newstead; if you can pacify C. and keep her in good resolutions you will do her a service; as for me, I am not worth serving, nor preserving. By-the-bye, don't you pity poor Napoleon? and are these your heroes? Commend me to the Romans, or Macbeth, or Richard III. This man's spirit seems broken; it is but a bastard devil at last, and a sad whining example to your future conquerors; it will work a moral revolution. He must *feel*, doubtless; if he did not, there would be little merit in insensibility. But why show it to the world? A thorough mind would either rise from the rebound, or at least go out "with harness on its back."

Ever yours,

B.

537.—*To Thomas Moore.*

January 13, 1814.

I have but a moment to write, but all is as it should be. I have said really far short of my opinion, but if you think enough, I am content. Will you return the proof by the post, as I leave town on Sunday, and have no other corrected copy? I put "servant," as being less familiar before the public; because I don't like presuming upon our friendship to infringe upon forms. As to the other *word*, you may be sure it is one I cannot hear or repeat too often.

I write in an agony of haste and confusion.—*Perdonate.*

538.—*To Lady Melbourne.*

January 13th, 1814.

MY DEAR L^y M^e,—

I do not see how you could well have said less, and that I am not angry may be proved by my saying a word more on y^e subject.

You are quite mistaken, however, as to *her*, and it must be from some misrepresentation of mine, that you throw the blame so completely on the side least deserving, and least able to bear it. I dare say I made the best of my own story, as one always does from natural selfishness without intending it, but it was not her fault, but my own *folly* (give it what name may suit it better) and her weakness, for the intentions of both were very different, and for some time adhered to, and when not, it was entirely my own—in short, I know no name for my conduct.

Pray do not speak so harshly of her to me—the cause of all. I wrote to you yesterday on other subjects, and particularly C. As to *manner*, mine is the same to anyone I know and like, and I am almost sure less marked to her than to *you*, besides any constraint, or reserve would appear much more extraordinary than the reverse, until something more than manner is ascertainable. Nevertheless, I heartily wish M^e de Staël at the devil with her observations. I am certain I did not see her, and she might as well have had something else to do with her eyes than to observe people at so respectful a distance.

So "Ph. is out of my thoughts"—in the first place, if she were out of them, she had probably not found a place in my words, and in the next, she has no *claim*. If people will stop at the first tense of the verb "aimer," they must not be surprised if one finishes the conjugation with somebody else—"How soon I get the better of —" in the name of St. Francis and his wife of snow, and Pygmalion and his statue—what was there here to get the better of? A few kisses, for which she was no worse, and I no better. Had the event been different, so would my subsequent resolutions, and feelings—for I am neither ungrateful, nor at all disposed to be disappointed; on the contrary, I do firmly believe that I have often begun to *love*, at the very time I have heard people say that some dispositions become indifferent. Besides, her fool of a husband, and my own recent good resolutions, and a mixture of different piques and mental stimulants, together with something not unlike encouragement on her part, led me into that foolish business, out of which the way is quite easy; and I really do not see that I have much to reproach myself with on her account. If you think differently pray say so.

As to Mrs. C., I will go; but I don't see any good that can result from it, certainly none to me—but I have no right to consider myself. When I say this, I merely allude to uncomfortable *feelings*, for there is neither chance, nor fear of anything else; for she is a very good girl, and I am too much dispirited to rise, even to