CHAPTER XVIII.

RETURN TO FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH LORD BYRON AND THOMAS MOORE.

First sight of Lord Byron.—Jackson the prize-fighter.—Bathing at Westminster.—Sympathy with early poems.—More prison recollections.—Lord Byron and the House of Peers.—Thomas Moore and the Liberal.—Mistaken conclusions of his.—His appearance, manners, and opinions.—Letters of Lord Byron.

Lord Byron was at Leghorn; the bad weather has disappeared; the vessel is about to enter port; and as everything concerning the noble lord is interesting, and the like may be said of his brother wit and poet, Thomas Moore, who introduced me to him, I will take this opportunity of doing what had better, perhaps, been done when I first made his lordship's acquaintance; namely, state when it was that I first saw the one, and how I became acquainted with the other. My intimacy with Lord Byron is about to become closer; the results of it are connected both with him and his friend, and as these results are on the eve of commencing, my own
interest in the subject is strengthened, and I call things to mind which I had suffered to escape me.

The first time I saw Lord Byron, he was rehearsing the part of Leander, under the auspices of Mr. Jackson the prize-fighter. It was in the river Thames, before he went to Greece. There used to be a bathing-machine stationed on the eastern side of Westminster Bridge; and I had been bathing, and was standing on this machine adjusting my clothes, when I noticed a respectable-looking manly person, who was eyeing something at a distance. This was Mr. Jackson waiting for his pupil. The latter was swimming with somebody for a wager. I forgot what his tutor said of him; but he spoke in terms of praise. I saw nothing in Lord Byron at that time, but a young man who, like myself, had written a bad volume of poems; and though I had a sympathy with him on this account, and more respect for his rank than I was willing to suppose, my sympathy was not an agreeable one; so, contenting myself with seeing his lordship's head bob up and down in the water, like a buoy, I came away.

Lord Byron, when he afterwards came to see me in prison, was pleased to regret that I had not stayed. He told me, that the sight of my volume at Harrow had been one of his incentives to write verses, and that he had had the same passion for friendship which I had displayed in it. To my
astonishment he quoted some of the lines, and would not hear me speak ill of them. His harbinger in the visit was Moore. Moore told me, that, besides liking my politics, his lordship liked the *Feast of the Poets*, and would be glad to make my acquaintance. I said I felt myself highly flattered, and should be proud to entertain his lordship as well as a poor patriot could. He was accordingly invited to dinner. His friend only stipulated that there should be "fish and vegetables for the noble bard;" his lordship at that time being anti-carnivorous in his eating. He came, and we passed a very pleasant afternoon, talking of books, and school, and of their friend and brother poet the late Rev. Mr. Bowles; whose sonnets were among the early inspirations of Coleridge.

Lord Byron, as the reader has seen, subsequently called on me in the prison several times. He used to bring books for the *Story of Rimini*, which I was then writing. He would not let the footman bring them in. He would enter with a couple of quartos under his arm; and give you to understand that he was prouder of being a friend and a man of letters, than a lord. It was thus that by flattering one's vanity he persuaded us of his own freedom from it; for he could see very well that I had more value for lords than I supposed.

In the correspondence which closes the present
volume, the reader will find some letters addressed to me at this period by Lord Byron. The noble poet was a warm politician, earnest in the cause of liberty. His failure in the House of Lords is well known. He was very candid about it; said he was much frightened, and should never be able to do anything that way. Lords of all parties came about him; and consoled him. He particularly mentioned Lord Sidmoutb, as being unexpectedly kind.

It was very pleasant to see Lord Byron and Moore together. They harmonized admirably: though their knowledge of one another began in talking of a duel, in consequence of his lordship attacking the license of certain early verses. Moore's acquaintance with myself (as far as concerned correspondence by letter), originated in the mention of him in the Feast of the Poets. He subsequently wrote an opera, called the Blue Stocking, respecting which he sent me a letter, at once deprecating and warranting objection to it. I was then editor of the Examiner; I did object to it, though with all acknowledgment of his genius. He came to see me, saying I was very much in the right; and an intercourse took place, which was never ostensibly interrupted till I thought myself aggrieved by his opposition to the periodical work proposed to me by his noble friend. I say "thought myself aggrieved," because I have long since acquitted him of any intention
towards me, more hostile than that of zeal in behalf of what he supposed best for his lordship. He was desirous of preventing him from coming before the Tory critics under a new and irritating aspect, at a time when it might be considered prudent to keep quiet, and propitiate objections already existing. The only thing which remained for me to complain of, was his not telling me so frankly; for this would have been a confidence which I deserved; and it would either have made me, of my own accord, object to the project at once, without the least hesitation, or, at all events, have been met by me with such a hearty sense of the plain dealing, and in so friendly a spirit of difference, that no ill-will, I think, could have remained on either side. Moore, at least, was of too generous a spirit for it; and I was of too grateful a one.

Unfortunately, this plan was not adopted by his lordship's friends; and hence a series of bitter feelings on both sides, which, as I was the first to express them, so I did not hesitate to be the first to regret publicly, when on both sides they had tacitly been done away.

Moore fancied, among other things, that I meant to pain him by speaking of his small stature; and perhaps it was wrong to hazard a remark on so delicate a subject, however inoffensively meant; especially as it led to other personal characteristics, which might
have seemed of less doubtful intention. But I felt only a painter's pleasure in taking the portrait; and I flattered myself that, as far as externals went, I abundantly evinced my good-will, not only by doing justice to all that was handsome and poetical in his aspect, and by noticing the beauty reported of his childhood, but by the things which I said of the greatness observable in so many little men in history, especially as recorded by Clarendon. In fact, this had been such a favourite subject with me, that some journalists concluded I must be short myself, which, I am bound to say, is not the case. Men of great action, I suspect, including the most heroical soldiers, have been for the most part of short stature, from the fabulous Tydeus, to Alexander and Agesilaus, and so downwards to Wellington and Napoleon. Nor have sages and poets, or any kind of genius, been wanting to the list; from the ancient philosopher who was obliged to carry lead in his pockets lest he should be blown away, down to Michael Angelo, and Montaigne, and Barrow, and Spenser himself, and the Falklands and Haleses of Clarendon, and Pope, and Steele, and Reynolds, and Mozart.

Moore's forehead was bony and full of character, with "bumps" of wit, large and radiant enough to transport a phrenologist. Sterne had such another. His eyes were as dark and fine as you would
wish to see under a set of vine-leaves; his mouth generous and good-humoured, with dimples; and his manner as bright as his talk, full of the wish to please and be pleased. He sang and played with great taste on the pianoforte, as might be supposed from his musical compositions. His voice, which was a little hoarse in speaking (at least I used to think so), softened into a breath, like that of the flute, when singing. In speaking, he was emphatic in rolling the letter r, perhaps out of a despair of being able to get rid of the national peculiarity. The structure of his versification, when I knew him, was more artificial than it was afterwards; and in his serious compositions it suited him better. He had hardly faith enough to give way to his impulses in writing, except when they were festive and witty; and artificial thoughts demand a similar embodiment. Both patriotism and personal experience, however, occasionally inspired him with lyric pathos; and in his naturally musical perception of the right principles of versification, he contemplated the fine, easy-playing, muscular style of Dryden, with a sort of perilous pleasure. I remember his quoting with delight a couplet of Dryden's, which came with a particular grace out of his mouth:

"Let honour and preferment go for gold;  
But glorious beauty is n't to be sold."

Beside the pleasure I took in Moore's society
as a man of wit, I had a great esteem for him as a man of candour and independence. His letters* were full of all that was pleasant in him. As I was a critic at that time, and in the habit of giving my opinion of his works in the *Examiner*, he would write me his opinion of the opinion, with a mixture of good-humour, admission, and deprecation, so truly delightful, and a sincerity of criticism on my own writings so extraordinary for so courteous a man, though with abundance of balm and eulogy, that never any subtlety of compliment could surpass it; and with all my self-confidence I never ceased to think that the honour was on my side, and that I could only deserve such candour of intercourse by being as ingenuous as himself. This admiring regard for him he completed by his behaviour to an old patron of his, who, not thinking it politic to retain him openly by his side, proposed to facilitate his acceptance of a place under the Tories; an accommodation which Moore rejected as an indignity. I thought, afterwards, that a man of such a spirit should not have condescended to attack Rousseau and poor foolish Madame de Warens, out of a desire to right himself with polite life and with the memory of some thoughtless productions of his own. Polite life was only too happy to possess

* Some of them are given at the end of Vol. III.
him in his graver days; and the thoughtless productions, however to be regretted on reflection, were reconcilable to reflection itself on the same grounds on which Nature herself and all her exuberance is to be reconciled. At least, without presuming to judge nature in the abstract, an ultra-sensitive and enjoying poet is himself a production of nature; and we may rest assured, that she will no more judge him with harshness ultimately, than she will condemn the excess of her own vines and fig-trees.

I will now lay before the reader the letters which I had received from Lord Byron during the period of my first acquaintance with him. Other circumstances originally called for their publication; but they are of a nature not to go counter to new feelings, or rather to the renewal of the oldest and best; and they furnish also, I think, the most appropriate introduction to the resumption of my intercourse with his lordship.

LETTER I.

[Lord Byron's Domestic Affairs and Friendships.]

4, Bennet-street, Dec. 2nd, 1813.

My dear Sir,—Few things could be more welcome than your note; and on Saturday morning I will avail myself of your permission to thank you for it in person. My time has not been passed, since we met, either profitably or agreeably. A very short period after my last visit, an incident occurred with which, I fear, you are not unacquainted, as report in
many mouths and more than one paper was busy with the topic. That naturally gave me much uneasiness. Then, I nearly incurred a lawsuit on the sale of an estate; but that is now arranged: next—but why should I go on with a series of selfish and silly details? I merely wish to assure you, that it was not the frivolous forgetfulness of a mind occupied by what is called pleasure (not in the true sense of Epicurus) that kept me away; but a perception of my then unfitness to share the society of those whom I value and wish not to displease. I hate being larmoyant, and making a serious face among those who are cheerful.

It is my wish that our acquaintance, or, if you please to accept it, friendship, may be permanent. I have been lucky enough to preserve some friends from a very early period, and I hope, as I do not (at least now) select them lightly, I shall not lose them capriciously. I have a thorough esteem for that independence of spirit which you have maintained with sterling talent, and at the expense of some suffering. You have not, I trust, abandoned the poem you were composing when Moore and I partook of your hospitality in the summer? I hope a time will come, when he and I may be able to repay you in kind for the latter;—for the rhyme, at least in quantity, you are in arrear to both.

Believe me very truly and affectionately yours,

Byron.

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LETTER II.

[Debts of the Regent—Mrs. Leigh—Mr. Brougham—
Mr. Moore.]

Dec. 22nd, 1813.

My dear Sir,—I am, indeed, "in your debt,"—and, what is still worse, am obliged to follow royal example (he has just
apprised his creditors that they must wait till the meeting), and
entreat your indulgence for, I hope, a very short time. The
nearest relation, and almost the only friend I possess, has been
in London for a week, and leaves it to-morrow with me for her
own residence.—I return immediately; but we meet so seldom,
and are so minuted when we meet at all, that I give up all
engagements till now, without reluctance. On my return, I
must see you to console myself for my past disappointments. I
should feel highly honoured in Mr. B———'s* permission to
make his acquaintance, and there you are in my debt—for it is a
promise of last summer which I still hope to see performed.
Yesterday I had a letter from Moore:—you have probably
heard from him lately; but if not, you will be glad to learn
that he is the same in heart, head, and health.

LETTER III.

[Notes to the Feast of the Poets—Italian School of Poetry
—Attacks on Lord Byron in the Newspapers.

Feb. 9th, 1814.

My dear Sir,—I have been snow-bound and thaw-swamped
(two compound epithets for you) in the "valley of the shadow"
of Newstead Abbey for nearly a month, and have not been four
hours returned to London. Nearly the first use I make of my
benumbed fingers, is to thank you for your very handsome note
in the volume you have just put forth; only, I trust, to be
followed by others on subjects more worthy your notice than
the works of contemporaries. Of myself, you speak only too

* The noble poet and Lord Brougham not long afterwards met in
my rooms, and seemed mutually pleased.
highly—and you must think me strangely spoiled, or perversely peevish, even to suspect that any remarks of yours, in the spirit of candid criticism, could possibly prove unpalatable. Had they been harsh, instead of being written as they are in the indelible ink of good sense and friendly admiration—had they been the harshest—as I knew and know that you are above any personal bias, at least against your fellow-bards—believe me, they would not have caused a word of remonstrance, nor a moment of rankling on my part. Your poem* I reddet† long ago in the Reflector, and it is not much to say it is the best "Session" we have—and with a more difficult subject—for we are neither so good nor so bad (taking the best and worst) as the wits of the olden time.

To your smaller pieces I have not yet had time to do justice by perusal—and I have a quantity of unanswered, and, I hope, unanswerable letters to wade through, before I sleep; but tomorrow will see me through your volume. I am glad to see you have tracked Gray among the Italians. You will, perhaps, find a friend or two of yours there also, though not to the same extent; but I have always thought the Italians the only poetical moderns:—our Milton, and Spenser, and Shakspeare (the last through translations of their tales), are very Tuscan, and surely it is far superior to the French school. * * * Murray has, I hope, sent you my last banterling, The Corsair. I have been regaled at every inn on the road by lampoons and other merry conceits on myself in the ministerial gazettes, occasioned by the republication of two stanzas inserted in 1812, in Perry’s paper.† The hysterics of the Morning Post are quite interesting; and I hear (but have not seen) of something

* The Feast of the Poets.  † Sic in MS.
‡ Morning Chronicle.
terrific in a last week's Courier—all which I take with "the calm indifference" of Sir Fretful Plagiary. The Morning Post has one copy of devices upon my deformity, which certainly will admit of no "historic doubts," like "Dickon my master's"—another upon my Atheism, which is not quite so clear—and another, very downrightly, says I am the devil (boiteux they might have added), and a rebel and what not:—possibly my accuser of diabolism may be Rosa Matilda; and if so, it would not be difficult to convince her I am a mere man. I shall break in upon you in a day or two—distance has hitherto detained me; and I hope to find you well and myself welcome.

Ever your obliged and sincere,

Byron.

P.S.—Since this letter was written, I have been at your text, which has much good humour in every sense of the word. Your notes are of a very high order indeed, particularly on Wordsworth.

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LETTER IV.

[Lord Byron's approaching Marriage.]

October 15th, 1814.

My dear Hunt,—I send you some game, of which I beg your acceptance. I specify the quantity as a security against the porter; a hare, a pheasant, and two brace of partridges, which, I hope, are fresh. My stay in town has not been long, and I am in all the agonies of quitting it again next week on business, preparatory to "a change of condition," as it is called by the talkers on such matters. I am about to be married: and am, of course, in all the misery of a man in pursuit of happiness. My intended is two hundred miles off; and the efforts I am making with lawyers, &c. &c. to join my future connections,
are, for a personage of my single and inveterate habits—to say nothing of indolence—quite prodigious! I sincerely hope you are better than your paper intimated lately; and that your approaching freedom will find you in full health to enjoy it.

Yours, ever,

BYRON.

LETTER V.

[Drury Lane Theatre—Parisian Correspondence—Lady Byron—The Descent of Liberty—Lara.]

13, Piccadilly-terrace, May—June 1st, 1815.

My dear Hunt,—I am as glad to hear from, as I shall be to see you. We came to town, what is called late in the season; and since that time, the death of Lady Byron's uncle (in the first place), and her own delicate state of health, have prevented either of us from going out much; however, she is now better, and in a fair way of going credibly through the whole process of beginning a family.

I have the alternate weeks of a private box at Drury Lane Theatre: this is my week, and I send you an admission to it for Kean's nights, Friday and Saturday next, in case you should like to see him quietly:—it is close to the stage—the entrance by the private box-door—and you can go without the bore of crowding, jostling, or dressing. I also inclose you a parcel of recent letters from Paris; perhaps you may find some extracts that may amuse yourself or your readers. I have only to beg you will prevent your copyist, or printer, from mixing up any of the English names, or private matter contained therein, which might lead to a discovery of the writer; and, as the Examiner is sure to travel back to Paris, might get him into a scrape, to say nothing of his correspondent at home. At any
rate, I hope and think the perusal will amuse you. Whenever you come this way, I shall be happy to make you acquainted with Lady Byron, whom you will find anything but a fine lady—a species of animal which you probably do not affect more than myself. Thanks for the *Mask*;—there is not only poetry and thought in the body, but much research and good old reading in your prefatory matter. I hope you have not given up your narrative poem, of which I heard you speak as in progress. It rejoices me to hear of the well doing and regeneration of the *Feast*, setting aside my own selfish reasons for wishing it success. I fear you stand almost single in your liking of *Lara*: it is natural that I should, as being my last and most unpopular effervescence:—passing by its other sins, it is too little narrative, and too metaphysical to please the greater number of readers. I have, however, much consolation in the exception with which you furnish me. From Moore I have not heard very lately. I fear he is a little humorous, because I am a lazy correspondent; but that shall be mended.

Ever your obliged and very sincere friend,

Byron.

P.S.—"Politics!" The barking of the war-dogs for their carrion has sickened me of them for the present.

LETTER VI.

[*Twopenny Post—Lord Byron’s opinion of Wordsworth.*]

13, Terrace, Piccadilly, Oct. 7th, 1815.

My dear Hunt,—I had written a long answer to your last, which I put into the fire; partly, because it was a repetition of what I have already said—and next, because I considered what
my opinions are worth, before I made you pay double postage, as your proximity lays you within the jaws of the tremendous "Twopenny," and beyond the verge of franking—the only parliamentary privilege (saving one other) of much avail in these "costermonger days."

Pray don't make me an exception to the "Long live King Richard" of your bards in the Feast. I do allow him to be "prince of the bards of his time," upon the judgment of those who must judge more impartially than I probably do. I acknowledge him as I acknowledge the Houses of Hanover and Bourbon—the—not the "one-eyed monarch of the blind," but the blind monarch of the one-eyed. I merely take the liberty of a free subject to vituperate certain of his edicts—and that only in private.

I shall be very glad to see you, or your remaining canto; if both together, so much the better.

I am interrupted——

LETTER VII.

["English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.."]

Oct. 15th, 1815.

Dear Hunt,—I send you a thing whose greatest value is its present rarity;* the present copy contains some manuscript corrections previous to an edition which was printed, but not published; and in short, all that is in the suppressed edition, the fifth, except twenty lines in addition, for which there was not room in the copy before me. There are in it many opinions I have altered, and some which I retain; upon the whole, I wish that it had never been written, though my sending you

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*A copy of English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.
this copy (the only one in my possession, unless one of Lady B.'s be excepted) may seem at variance with this statement:—
but my reason for this is very different: it is, however, the only gift I have made of the kind this many a day.*

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

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LETTER VIII.

[The Story of Rimini—History of English Bards and Scotch Reviewers—Lord and Lady Holland.]

Oct. 22, 1815.

My dear Hunt,—You have excelled yourself—if not all your cotemporaries, in the canto † which I have just finished. I think it above the former books; but that is as it should be; it rises with the subject, the conception appears to me perfect, and the execution perhaps as nearly so as verse will admit. There is more originality than I recollect to have seen elsewhere within the same compass, and frequent and great happiness of expression. In short, I must turn to the faults, or what appear such to me: these are not many, nor such as may not be easily altered, being almost all verbal:—and of the same kind as I pretended to point out in the former cantos, viz., occasional quaintness and obscurity, and a kind of a harsh and yet colloquial compounding of epithets, as if to avoid saying common things in the common way; difficile est proprié com-

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* The absence of the signature to this letter, as to others, is owing to my having given it away. Letters have been given away also, or I should have had more for the reader's amusement.

† One of the cantos of the story of Rimini,—I believe, the third.
*English Bards, &c.*
acquaintance with Lord Holland, and was neither expressed nor understood as a condition of that acquaintance. Rogers told me, he thought I ought to suppress it; I thought so, too, and did it as far as I could, and that's all. I sent you my copy, because I consider your having it much the same as having it myself. Lady Byron has one; I desire not to have any other; and sent it only as a curiosity and a memento.

LETTER IX.

[Subject of Wordsworth resumed—His Mistakes about Greece—Pope's Smile of the Moon from Homer—Morbid Feelings—Drury Lane Theatre—Story of Rimini.]

13, Terrace, Piccadilly, Sept.—Oct.* 30th, 1815.

My dear Hunt,—Many thanks for your books, of which you already know my opinion. Their external splendour should not disturb you as inappropriate—they have still more within than without.

I take leave to differ from you on Wordsworth, as freely as I once agreed with you; at that time I gave him credit for a promise, which is unfulfilled. I still think his capacity warrants all you say of it only—but that his performances since Lyrical Ballads, are miserably inadequate to the ability which lurks within him: there is undoubtedly much natural talent spilt over the Excursion; but it is rain upon rocks—where it stands and stagnates, or rain upon sands—where it falls without fertilizing. Who can understand him? Let those who do, make him intelligible. Jacob Behmen, Swedenborg, and Joanna

* Sic in MS.
Southcote, are mere types of this arch-apostle of mystery and mysticism; but I have done—no, I have not done, for I have two petty, and perhaps unworthy objections in small matters to make to him, which, with his pretensions to accurate observation, and fury against Pope's false translation of the "Moonlight scene in Homer," I wonder he should have fallen into:—these be they;—He says of Greece in the body of his book—that it is a land of

"Rivers, fertile plains, and sounding shores,
Under a cope of variegated sky."

The rivers are dry half the year, the plains are barren, and the shores still and tideless as the Mediterranean can make them; the sky is anything but variegated, being for months and months but "darkly, deeply, beautifully blue."—The next is in his notes, where he talks of our "Monuments crowded together in the busy, &c. of a large town," as compared with the "still seclusion of a Turkish cemetery in some remote place." This is pure stuff: for one monument in our churchyards there are ten in the Turkish, and so crowded, that you cannot walk between them; they are always close to the walls of the towns, that is, merely divided by a path or road; and as to "remote places," men never take the trouble, in a barbarous country, to carry their dead very far; they must have lived near to where they are buried. There are no cemeteries in "remote places," except such as have the cypress and the tombstone still left, where the olive and the habitation of the living have perished.

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These things I was struck with, as coming peculiarly in my own way; and in both of these he is wrong; yet I should have noticed neither but for his attack on Pope for a like blunder, and a peevish affectation about him, of despising a popularity which he will never obtain. I write in great haste, and, I
doubt, not much to the purpose; but you have it hot and hot, just as it comes, and so let it go.

By the way, both he and you go too far against Pope's "So when the moon," &c.; it is no translation, I know; but it is not such false description as asserted. I have read it on the spot: there is a burst, and a lightness, and a glow about the night in the Troad, which makes the "planets vivid," and the "pole glowing:" the moon is—at least the sky, is clearness itself; and I know no more appropriate expression for the expansion of such a heaven—o'er the scene—the plain—the sea—the sky—Ida—the Hellespont—Simois—Scamander—and the Isles,—than that of a "flood of glory." I am getting horribly lengthy, and must stop: to the whole of your letter I say "ditto to Mr. Burke," as the Bristol candidate cried by way of electioneering harangue. You need not speak of morbid feelings and vexations to me; I have plenty; for which I must blame partly the times, and chiefly myself: but let us forget them. I shall be very apt to do so when I see you next. Will you come to the theatre and see our new management? You shall cut it up to your heart's content, root and branch, afterwards, if you like; but come and see it! If not, I must come and see you.

Ever yours, very truly and affectionately,

Byron.

P.S.—Not a word from Moore for these two months. Pray let me have the rest of Rimini. You have two excellent points in that poem—originality and Italianism. I will back you as a bard against half the fellows on whom you have thrown away much good criticism and eulogy: but don't let your bookseller publish in quarto; it is the worst size possible for circulation. I say this on bibliopolical authority.

Again, yours ever,

B.
LETTER X.

[Story of Rimini—Murray—House of Lords—Lord Byron's Politics.

January 20th, 1816.

Dear Hunt,—I return your extract with thanks for the perusal, and hope you are by this time on the verge of publication. My pencil-marks on the margin of your former MSS. I never thought worth the trouble of decyphering, but I had no such meaning as you imagine for their being withheld from Murray, from whom I differ entirely as to the terms of your agreement; nor do I think you asked a piastre too much for the poem. However, I doubt not he will deal fairly by you on the whole: he is really a very good fellow, and his faults are merely the leaven of his “trade”—“the trade!” the slave-trade of many an unlucky writer.

The said Murray and I are just at present in no good humour with each other; but he is not the worse for that. I feel sure that he will give your work as fair or a fairer chance in every way than your late publishers; and what he can't do for it, it will do for itself.

Continual laziness and occasional indisposition have been the causes of my negligence (for I deny neglect) in not writing to you immediately. These are excuses: I wish they may be more satisfactory to you than they are to me. I opened my eyes yesterday morning on your compliment of Sunday. If you knew what a hopeless and lethargic den of dulness and drawling our hospital is* during a debate, and what a mass of corruption in its patients, you would wonder, not that I very seldom speak, but that I ever attempted it, feeling, as I trust I do, indepen-

* The House of Lords.
dently. However, when a proper spirit is manifested “without doors,” I will endeavour not to be idle within. Do you think such a time is coming? Methinks there are gleams of it. My forefathers were of the other side of the question in Charles’s days, and the fruit of it was a title and the loss of an enormous property.

If the old struggle comes on, I may lose the one, and shall never regain the other; but no matter; there are things, even in this world, better than either.

Very truly, ever yours,

B.

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LETTER XI.

[Domestic Affairs.—Dedication of the Story of Rimini.—Pamphlets.]

Feb. 20th, 1816.

Dear Hunt,—Your letter would have been answered before, had I not thought it probable that, as you were in town for a day or so, I should have seen you. I don’t mean this as a hint at reproach for not calling, but merely that of course I should have been very glad if you had called in your way home or abroad, as I always would have been, and always shall be.* With regard to the circumstance to which you allude, there is no reason why you should not speak openly to me on a subject already sufficiently rife in the mouths and minds of what is called “the world.” Of the “fifty reports,” it follows that forty-nine must have more or less error and exaggeration; but I am sorry to say, that on the main and essential point of an

* I was never in town “for a day or two;”—never for a longer time than I could help. I was too ill.
intended, and, it may be, an inevitable separation, I can contradict none. At present I shall say no more—but this is not from want of confidence; in the mean time, I shall merely request a suspension of opinion. Your prefatory letter to Rimini, I accepted as it was meant—as a public compliment and a private kindness. I am only sorry that it may, perhaps, operate against you as an inducement, and, with some, a pretext, for attack on the part of the political and personal enemies of both:—not that this can be of much consequence, for in the end the work must be judged by its merits, and in that respect you are well armed. Murray tells me it is going on well, and, you may depend upon it, there is a substratum of poetry, which is a foundation for solid and durable fame. The objections (if there be objections, for this is a presumption, and not an assumption) will be merely as to the mechanical part, and such, as I stated before, the usual consequence of either novelty or revival. I desired Murray to forward to you a pamphlet with two things of mine in it, the most part of both of them, and of one in particular, written before others of my composing, which have preceded them in publication: they are neither of them of much pretension, nor intended for it. You will, perhaps, wonder at my dwelling so much and so frequently on former subjects and scenes; but the fact is, that I found them fading fast from my memory; and I was, at the same time, so partial to their place (and events connected with it), that I have stamped them, while I could, in such colours as I could trust to now, but might have confused and misapplied hereafter, had I longer delayed the attempted delineation.*

* I forget what these pamphlets were. In all probability, some of the poems connected with Greece and the Levant.
LETTER XII.

[Drury Lane Theatre.]

March 14th, 1816.

Dear Hunt,—I send you six orchestra tickets for Drury Lane, countersigned by me, which makes the admission free—which I explain, that the door-keeper may not impose upon you; they are for the best place in the house, but can only be used one at a time. I have left the dates unfilled, and you can take your own nights, which I should suppose would be Kean’s: the seat is in the orchestra. I have inserted the name of Mr. H——,* a friend of yours, in case you like to transfer to him—do not forget to fill’up the dates for such days as you choose to select.

Yours, ever truly,

Byron.

FRAGMENTS OF LETTERS,

The rest of which has been mutilated or lost.

Fragment I.

[Story of Rimini—Sir Henry Englefield—Mrs. Leigh and the present Lord Byron—Hookham Frere.]

——— good of Rimini—Sir Henry Englefield, a mighty man in the blue circles, and a very clever man anywhere, sent to Murray, in terms of the highest eulogy; and with regard to the common reader, my sister and cousin (who are now all my family, and the last since gone away to be married) were in

* I think this was Hazlitt.
fixed perusal and delight with it, and they are "not critical," but fair, natural, unaffected, and understanding persons.

Frere, and all the arch-literati, I hear, are also unanimous in a high opinion of the poem. "I hear this by the way—but I will send."

**Fragment II.**

[English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.—*Hazlitt on Methodism—Diseases of Poets.*]

With regard to the *E. B.* I have no concealments, nor desire to have any, from you or yours: the suppression occurred (I am as sure as I can be of anything) in the manner stated: I have never regretted that, but very often the composition—that is the *humeur* of a great deal in it. As to the quotation you allude to, I have no right, nor indeed desire, to prevent it; but, on the contrary, in common with all other writers, I do and ought to take it as a compliment.

The paper on the Methodists† was sure to raise the bristles of the godly. I *redd* it, and agree with the writer on one point in which you and he perhaps differ; that an addiction to poetry is very generally the result of "an uneasy mind in an uneasy body;" disease or deformity have been the attendants of many of our best. Collins mad—Chatterton, I think, mad—Cowper mad—Pope crooked—Milton blind—Gray (I have heard that the last was afflicted by an incurable and very gervious distemper, though not generally known)—and others——. I have somewhere *redd*; however; that poets *rarely* go mad. I suppose

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* By Hazlitt, in the *Round Table*; which was first published in the *Examiner.*
the writer means that their insanity effervescs and evaporates in verse—may be so.*

I have not had time nor paper to attack your system, which ought to be done, were it only because it is a system. So, by-and-by, have at you.

Yours, ever,

Byron.

* I know not who the writer was that is here alluded to; perhaps myself, probably Hazlitt, or one of many others; for I suspect the remark to have been as often made as it seems well-founded. Genius may require some delicacies of organization to refine the natural faculty; but if it were a disease, it should be oftener found to accompany disease. Hospitals, indeed, ought to be its nursery-beds, and odes and elegies traceable to fever and jaundice. A pleasant corresponding list might be drawn up on such an assumption. Madness in men of genius must originate in causes common to their fellow-creatures,—otherwise, the greater the genius the greater would be the mental aberration; which has never yet been found to be the case. Hazlitt observed, that the most mechanical understandings were more liable to such a calamity than others, because they are less accustomed to the regions of wonder and emotion, and therefore can make less allowance for the surprises they meet there.

END OF VOL. II.

London:—Printed by Stewart and Murray, Old Bailey.
Preparing for Publication,

IN ONE VOLUME,

TABLE TALK,

BY

LEIGH HUNT.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.