

# From Family to Philosophy

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Letter-Writers from  
the Pastons to  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

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Henry Summerfield



# **FROM FAMILY TO PHILOSOPHY**



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**LETTER-WRITERS FROM THE PASTONS TO  
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING**

**Henry Summerfield**



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“... the Three Regions immense  
Of Childhood, Manhood & Old Age”

William Blake, *Jerusalem* 98:32-33

“And catch the Manners living as they rise”

Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, I, 14



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## PREFACE

**I**t is a truism that writing letters is talking on paper, and millennia before the invention of the telephone, literate people learnt to assuage their need to exchange information, thoughts and feelings through written messages carried by travellers. The illiterate could, as they still can, engage the services of amanuenses.

Letters transcend the distance between correspondents, and when they are preserved, they transcend time, carrying to posterity the experience of earlier generations with an immediacy that is not often shared with other forms of literature except the diary.

While a diary is usually kept for perusal by the writer's future self, a letter is addressed to a contemporary and is written from the perspective of one who cannot certainly know what the morrow will bring. This relation to time can be complemented, in the case of a chronologically arranged collection of one writer's letters, by the way that the collection follows the arc of the writer's development from youth through maturity to old age.

The study of epistolary literature invites the reader to make a tentative judgment as to whether there is truth in either Dr. Johnson's view (expressed through his character Imlac) that "Human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed" or Horace Walpole's assertion, "I firmly believe, notwithstanding all our complaints, that almost every person upon earth tastes upon the totality more happiness than misery."

The composition of letters equal to Walpole's is not an easily won accomplishment. From the fifteenth through the late seventeenth centuries, English letter-writing goes through what may be regarded as an apprenticeship during which no correspondences to match the best bequeathed by ancient Rome appear. Earlier chapters of this book highlight both the merits and limitations of letters written during this period. The more detailed chapters that follow are devoted to the productions of British epistolary art in its maturity, when they are no longer surpassed by those of antiquity.

Walpole maintains that news and anecdotes are the soul of a letter, and from the point of view of the immediate recipient this may be true, but for letters to constitute a distinguished category of literature, more is required. In the most satisfying correspondences, all the elements of a self-portrait are accompanied by lively observation of the writer's social and material environment, and by a record of his or her quest for fulfilment. This fulfilment may be sought, to cite some examples, through romantic love,

family, arts, sciences, worldly advancement, religion, politics, philanthropy, or patriotism. The play of emotions and the unrolling of events in relation to the quest for fulfilment is what letters, at their richest, reveal.

The body of distinguished British letters is too large to be surveyed in one book of moderate size, so a choice must be made. Some of the writers almost select themselves: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Horace Walpole, Lord Byron, and John Keats could hardly be omitted. Others, both well and little known, help to demonstrate the range of content and style to be found within a great literature's epistolary heritage.

For reasons of copyright, all quotations of any length are taken from older editions. The dates given are in certain cases the products of later research.

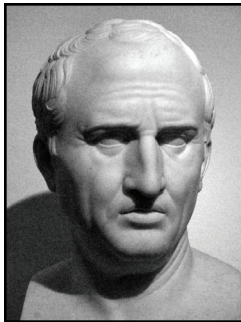
In some quotations, the spelling and capitalization have been modernized. It should also be noted that Elizabeth Barrett Browning frequently uses a sequence of two periods as a punctuation mark.

I would like to acknowledge the help and encouragement I have received from Patrick Grant, who has listened most patiently while I have talked about the progress of this book and has offered useful advice.

## **PROLOGUE**



**A PHILOSOPHER IN INTERESTING TIMES  
AND AN EMPEROR'S BENEVOLENT  
SERVANT  
CICERO AND PLINY THE YOUNGER (106-43  
BCE AND C. 61-C. 113 CE)**



**M**ore than two thousand years ago, before the nations of modern Europe existed, the upper class citizens of a highly civilized empire sustained their friendships and advanced their careers through the art of letter writing. Friends, servants, and slaves carried missives between Rome's imperial provinces and the country villas and urban mansions of Italy. Two major bodies of correspondence from Roman antiquity have survived: the letters of Cicero and those of Pliny the Younger. Reading Cicero's effusions and following the course of his rending emotions through turbulent times, one can readily understand how Renaissance scholars found his society had a strong appeal for their own changing world. Europe, moving on from the fading civilization of the Middle Ages, was ready to learn from the architecture, landscape gardening, legal system, political constitution, and love (for a time) of liberty of ancient Rome.

Cicero is renowned as the great orator of his era. Often he is torn between the pride he feels in his triumphant pleading in difficult cases in the law courts and his desire for a retired life devoted to literature. In his correspondence, the personal and the political intermingle. We learn of his family relationships, his difficulties with debtors and creditors, and his delight in buildings, sculpture, books, friendship, and dinner parties. His professed allegiance to Stoicism and contempt for Epicureanism clash with his pride, with his enjoyment of wealth, and with his disproportionate wailing when the machinations of the blasphemer and demagogue Publius

Clodius force him into temporary exile. They run counter even to his sorrow when the Senate compels him to leave the pleasures of Rome to govern the province of Cilicia in what is now southern Turkey, yet, once there, he finds himself committed to just and compassionate government and the conscientious conduct of military operations, even while pleading that his term of office not be extended. He is no more stoical and equally human when the counsel of his friend Atticus eases his tormented conscience as he must give his allegiance to one of two power-hungry leaders, Pompey or Caesar, either of whom presents a deadly threat to the Roman Republic. In the end, gratitude compels him to side with Pompey, who promotes his return from exile, despite the latter's faltering leadership.

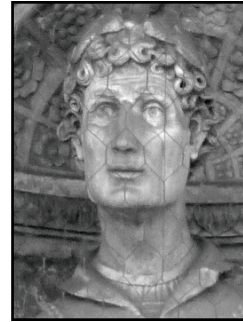
After Caesar defeats Pompey and replaces constitutional government with one-man rule, Cicero advises his intellectual friends to follow his example by taking refuge in literary pursuits, though he still tries to believe in the Stoic doctrine – that true happiness lies in a virtuous life and is independent of external circumstances.

Cicero's grief after the death of his daughter Tullia in childbirth is compounded by his desolation at the destruction of the Republic; he attempts to find solace in literary composition and the study of philosophy while he desperately urges Atticus, the most intimate of his many friends, to arrange the purchase of gardens in which to build a temple to commemorate his daughter for all time. Anxiety about his son's expenditure is accompanied by horror that his nephew should slander him to the all-powerful Caesar. For a short time, he rejoices at the assassination of Caesar (who has treated him generously, and has even sent him a letter of condolence on Tullia's death), before he realizes that it has left Antony, a man more tyrannical than his predecessor, as his immediate successor. By re-entering public life with all his eloquence, he seeks to promote the resurrection of the Republic, an enterprise in which the youth Octavian, Caesar's adopted son, seems at first to participate. His rollercoaster emotions as he writes of the day-to-day fortunes of the war against Antony, along with his defence of Octavian against the contention of his dear friend Brutus that another despotism is in the making pervade his last letters. In the end, it seems that, deprived of his daughter and the Republic, he makes little attempt to resist his murder carried out on Antony's orders.

In Cicero's letters, we meet characters known from history, Brutus seems as haughty, sincere and judgmental as in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, but Antony in Cicero's view, is no more than a debauched gladiator detested by all but hirelings. Yet, while the correspondence reveals much about human character, it conveys little of the texture of daily experience. It does not picture the rooms these Romans lived in, the furniture they used, the clothes they wore or the kind of life an expatriate encountered in a prov-

ince like Cilicia, all that a novelist is expected to conjure up.

The other upper class wealthy Roman famous for his letters is Pliny the Younger. Like Cicero, whom he takes for his model, Pliny wins distinction as a lawyer, holds a series of public offices, and acquires a great love for literature. Though less vain than Cicero, he longs for posthumous fame and carefully revises many of his legal and political speeches to be published along with his poems and nine books of letters. He is well aware that Cicero's correspondence has



gained interest from the events of the last years of the Republic and that, except for Domitian's three-year reign of terror, the memory of which remains an ever-present shadow in his mind, his own life passes in a period of imperial calm. This, indeed, suits his temperament, which is more tranquil than passionate. Rational and sensitive, he possesses a discriminating judgment, which the Emperor Trajan recognizes and which pervades his letters. In these epistles we find an appreciation of the return of liberty and freedom of speech after the assassination of Domitian; an enjoyment of fine houses, landscapes, and the arts; an admission that slaves, too, are humans; and contempt for the multitudes' childish enjoyment of chariot races. It is characteristic of Pliny that while he laments that the simple living, sound morality, and widespread love of literature that Rome once knew have passed away, he rejoices that the art of rhetoric has been revived and refuses to allow his adoration of old authors to blind him to living merit. Similarly, on the death of the unscrupulous and superstitious rival lawyer Regulus, he admits that the man at least valued oratory.

In the first nine books of Pliny's collection, we have a pioneer example of letters selected and probably edited by the writer for publication. His correspondence with the just Emperor Trajan, who sends him at the end of his life as legate to Bithynia and Pontus in what is now northern Turkey, is added as a posthumous tenth volume. His amiable personality, high intelligence and good sense win the reader's regard and affection. Yet to the modern mind it is astonishing that, like his master Trajan, he can be totally deceived by the widespread belief that Christianity is a "contagious superstition" whose adherents are committed to a life of evildoing; he totally disbelieves those accused who tell him that Christians swear to abstain from theft, fraud and adultery and that the food they take together is innocent.

Pliny has a power of description denied to Cicero which adds an extra dimension to his letters. It enables him to create concrete pictures of every-



thing from the construction of a breakwater to treatment for his inflamed eyes and the eruption of Vesuvius:

My house, although at the foot of a hill, commands as good a view as if it stood on its brow, yet you approach by so gentle and gradual a rise that you find yourself on high ground without perceiving you have been making an ascent. Behind, but at a great distance, is the Apennine range. In the calmest days we get cool breezes from that quarter, not sharp and cutting at all, being spent and broken by the long distance they have travelled. The greater part of the house has a southern aspect, and seems to invite the afternoon sun in summer (but rather earlier in the winter) into a broad and proportionately long portico, consisting of several rooms, particularly a court of antique fashion.

# **PRELUDE**



## NAKED AMBITION THE PASTONS (15TH CENTURY)

**T**he first notable collection of English correspondence, the Paston letters, emerges from the distinctly un-Roman 15th century world of the Wars of the Roses. Although Latin was, in the late Middle Ages, the international language of learning, and Paston boys studied it at school and university, the writers' English is devoid of literary grace, their spelling so irregular that "died" can be spelled "deyid," "dyeid," and "dyid" on the same page, and their minds are little touched by literature or philosophy and only superficially by religion.

The politics of their society is as rough as its culture. While the adherents of the Lancastrians and Yorkists manoeuvre and fight over possession of the kingdom, the throne is occupied first by the pious, ineffective Henry VI, then by the capable usurper Edward IV. An incoherent mixture of law and lawlessness prevails—"A man's death is little set by nowadays," Margaret Paston warns her vulnerable second son, and a duke who claims an estate owned by the Pastons dispatches men to sack its church and force the tenants to help demolish buildings.

From the mass of documents, though they are primarily raw material for historians, a skilful editor can disentangle by judicious selection the gripping, but certainly not exemplary story of three generations of a hard-headed family that is hacking out for itself a place among the upper classes.

Reading the Paston letters is a very different experience from reading the correspondence of Cicero or Pliny the Younger. Legal phrases—English and Latin—that only a lawyer could be expected to understand bespatter the pages, and allusions to persons and events that remain mysterious mingle with accounts of characters and activities that become familiar. Intermittently, passion erupts through the interminable sequences of orders, rebukes and expressions of financial woe. A man of pleasure, Sir John Paston tries to break through the hostility of the man of business who is his father, while his mother pleads for leniency to her errant son. Sir John Fastolf, owner of a castle at Caister, vindictively seeks the identity of the men who spoke ill of him at a Norwich dinner, and he will "with God's

grace so purvey for them as they shall not all be well pleased." Those whose love for a Paston woman or man threatens to frustrate the worldly ambitions behind the arranged marriages that are the norm among them need no literary sophistication to convey their yearning and anguish: Richard Calle, the family bailiff, marries his Margery Paston, but the bride remains in perpetual disgrace; Margery Brews, the daughter of Sir Thomas Brews, weds Sir John's younger brother despite her father's inability to provide the dowry the bridegroom's family calls for.

In the Paston letters, outbursts of personal feeling—especially hostility between generations and between siblings—can be fierce, but the art of evoking a scene is for the most part absent. We learn who was killed in a battle, not what it felt like to be on the field. However, Sir John's younger brother has some success in describing the magnificent wedding of Edward IV's sister Margaret to the Duke of Burgundy (of the Duke's court, he says, "I heard never of none like to it save King Arthur's court"), and, less remarkably, the occasional vivid phrase is sparked by an outburst of emotion. James Gloys, the chaplain who sets Margaret against her two elder sons, is, in the eyes of one, "the proud, peevish, and evil-disposed priest to us all"; the same writer has enough religion to exclaim to his hedonistic brother Sir John, "God keep you this Lent from lollardy [i.e., heresy] of flesh" Piers Waryn, a rival landowner's agent, is "a flickering fellow and a busy"; sick Sir John describes how, "in Westminster Hall and in other place, I have gone with a staff as a ghost, as men said, more like that I rose out of the earth than out of a fair lady's bed."

Moreover, snatches of conversation are happily preserved. We hear Edward IV's furious outburst when John Paston the elder ignores his summons to the court: "We have sent two privy seals to Paston by two yeomen of our chamber, and he disobeyeth them; but we will send him another to-morrow, and by God's mercy, and if he come not, then he shall die for it." The formidable matriarch Agnes Paston records a woman's curse at what she supposes is Agnes's interference with a right of way: "All the devils of hell draw her soul to hell for the way that she hath made!"

Although literary gems like these are rare in the correspondence, the patient reader meets an assortment of unconscious self-portraits augmented by occasional observations from the subjects' friends and relatives. The old soldier Sir John Fastolf is intent on increasing his enormous fortune and also on setting up a college of priests to pray for his and others' souls. Though prickly and grasping, he appreciates loyalty in a chaplain or a friend and is not altogether unreasonable. Old Agnes Paston is a stubborn fighter and a harsh woman who can beat her daughter Elizabeth for refusing an advantageous match and demand that his tutor "truly belash" her son Clement if it is necessary to make him study. Yet, in an uncharac-

teristic fit of piety, she urges her firstborn, John, principal founder of the family's near greatness, "dispose yourself as much as ye may to have less to do in the world.... This world is but a thoroughfare, and full of woe; and when we depart therefrom, right nought bear with us but our good deeds and ill." This man, in his attempt to obtain possession of the late Fastolf's estates, suffers violent seizures of his property, much litigation, and three imprisonments. His wife, Margaret informs him that "My Lord of Norwich said to me that he would not abide the sorrow and trouble that ye have abiden to win all Sir John Fastolf's goods."

Margaret Paston is first seen as an attractive character who compliments her future husband on their first introduction by telling him he is "verily" his father's son and years afterwards laments, when business is to keep him away at Christmas, "I shall think myself half a widow, because ye shall not be at home." In time, though gratitude can make her insist her sons refrain from suing the attorney James Gresham, who has suffered losses through his loyalty to the family, danger makes her less amiable. She is intolerant of her single daughters Anne and Margery, who stay at home too long, and disowns the one who marries beneath her for love.

As a widow, she berates the lackadaisical ways of her eldest son, Sir John, and even interprets the deaths of two men in the Pastons' service as God's punishment of him – but then asks this bachelor to return home to live with her. Sir John himself, who prefers watching a tourney, collecting books or pursuing a lady to attending to the family's business, is variously estimated by scholars. John Warrington accuses him of "hypocrisy and cowardice"; Colin Richmond asserts, "if anyone was a gentleman among the Paston menfolk it was Sir John. His collected, cool but uncalculating demeanour throughout all his vexations comes as a relief"; Norman Davis persuasively describes him as "easy-going and likeable, well-meaning but often ineffectual." His younger brother, also crazily called John, who becomes head of the family on Sir John's death, is another determined seeker of wealth and prestige. He seems, however, honourable and it is a pleasure to see him fall in love with tender Margery Brews in response to the latter's passion for him – even though he bargains hard with her father for a larger dowry before he marries her.



## VICTIMS OF POWER

### THE LISLES (16TH CENTURY)



Very different from the chaotic era of the Pastons, during which a nobleman can send a private army to seize an estate, is the era of the Lisles, to which the first two Tudors have brought something like stability. The violence that now threatens the upper class is the stroke of the headsman's axe, which awaits those who earn the King's disfavour. Like a modern dictator, Henry VIII can pursue his political and personal goals with paranoid fanaticism regardless of the claims of friendship, gratitude or justice.

The Lisle letters cover only seven years, but these are the years in which this King, using Thomas Cromwell as his instrument, repudiates the Pope's authority, establishes himself as ruler of the English Church, abolishes the monasteries, and makes martyrs to control the religious life of his subjects. Retaining Catholic theology and ritual, he puts to death Protestant reformers and papal zealots alike.

Hence, the letters are invaluable to historians, and many of them provide glimpses into the lives and daily needs of the upper classes, as well as a notion of the fear visited on them by those in authority. We learn of the clothes a young boy or a maid of honour requires; of the wines, foodstuffs, hawks and hounds given to those in a position to confer benefits in return; of the ornamentation of a horse's harness; of the friendly relations between the English Lord Deputy of Calais and his French neighbour, the Seneschal of Boulogne; of the lives of children educated away from their families; and of how Henry VIII debates theology with a heretic. Yet it is glimpses we are given rather than the fuller pictures of scenes and events created by Pliny the Younger.

Although the time span of the letters is too short for the succession of generations and the accompanying clash of close relatives that is such a memorable feature of the Paston correspondence, a number of characters portray themselves and each other with memorable clarity, and the cor-



respondence conveys the atmosphere of terror that prevails. It consists of the personal papers of Viscount Lisle, governor of Calais, England's only possession in France. These are seized when Thomas Cromwell, who has ruthlessly imposed the King's will on the religious practices of his subjects, has endangered himself by manoeuvring to promote the Lutheran creed. In a vain attempt to save his neck, he tries to frame Lisle as a traitor who wishes to restore the Pope's authority in England. Cromwell is executed, but after two years' imprisonment in the Tower of London, Lisle receives news of his release; only a few hours later he dies a natural death.

The central characters of the letters are Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle; Honor Grenville, his second wife; John Husee, their principal agent; and Thomas Cromwell, the King's right-hand man. Lord Lisle, an illegitimate son of Edward IV, is an improvident man who hopes through petitions and lawsuits to rescue himself from chronic indebtedness. Too easygoing to be sufficiently cautious, he receives advice from Husee to be more careful about the company he keeps and even to be his own secretary to escape the attention of informers. His amiability in the face of all the jockeying around him for posts in the colony is such that one is surprised by the note of indignation in his letter to a Flemish commander strenuously objecting to the detention of an English subject and to the confiscation of the man's papers. More characteristic of his manner is the dignified tone in which he complains when he has been unjustly criticized.

The marriage of Lord Lisle and Honor Grenville is a second marriage for both partners, and each has children by an earlier spouse. Their friend Sir Francis Bryan writes one letter to both Lisle and his wife "because ye be both but one soul though ye be two bodies," and indeed the tenderness of Lady Lisle's letters to her absent husband (even a short parting is painful for her) is more memorable than her earnest concern for her daughter's advancement at court.

Without the untiring services of their devoted retainer John Husee, the Lisles would fare ill much sooner in these dangerous times, when a nobleman can keep a "fee'd man" in a fellow peer's household. Husee labours unceasingly for his employers, attempting to borrow money for Lord Lisle, promoting his acquisition of a dissolved abbey, forwarding his lawsuits over disputed estates, and even having garments, spices and dishes sent to him in Calais. Writing from England, he knows how to hold back news more safely delivered by word of mouth "considering that this world is queasy"; he explains, "if I should write it might chance that I thereby might put myself in danger of my life ... there is divers here that hath been punished for reading and copying with publishing abroad of news; yea, some of them are at this hour in the Tower and like to suffer therefor." The manner of Husee's letters is usually neat, clear and factual, but strong emotion

can break through, as when either of the Lisles accuses him of neglecting their business and when he condoles with Lady Lisle on the discovery that her longed for pregnancy is an illusion. Once he admonishes the debt-ridden Lord Lisle, "Alas, that your lordship, which can so well exhort other and give them as good and as wholesome counsel as any man living ... should now fall in this sudden agony, to the discouraging of those which bear you their entire wit! What will there be said when your lordship, being ever called the pleasantest-witted in the world, should so suddenly be changed?" Occasionally he risks a barb in his exasperation at the prevarication of a powerful man: Sir Richard Riche, the lawyer whose perjury probably brought Sir Thomas More to the block, "is full of dissimulation," and the mighty Cromwell is one who will do Lisle "little good" though he "promise much."

The shadow of Thomas Cromwell's cunning broods over the Lisle letters. As the decade advances, the reader sees how he keeps the Viscount in thrall, using the latter's neediness to hold him like a fish on a line. In 1533 he rebukes Lisle for bothering the King with minor matters; by 1536 his accusation that Lisle has failed in his duty to his sovereign elicits the Viscount's lament that this "is the greatest heaviness that ever fortun'd unto me"; a year later, he writes kindly, almost apologizing for the harsh tone of his letter of the previous week addressed to the whole Calais Council. That letter concerns papistical tendencies in the colony, but Cromwell himself needs to tread cautiously in the area of religion, for he favours the new Protestant heresies that the King likes no more than papal authority. However, he does not tread cautiously enough, and in 1540 he is beheaded. Lady Lisle, more devout than her husband, has a strong attachment to the old religion, and Husee guardedly warns her against "long prayers and offering of candles" and too much outspokenness in matters of faith. Cromwell is distinctly misogynist, and when he thinks that Honor's influence is the source of "papistical fashion" in Calais, he upbraids Lisle for heeding the "fond flickerings" of women.

The Lisles' children and their education in England, France and Flanders figure much in the correspondence. Mary Basset falls so in love with France that she exclaims, "I should be right well content, if that I could often see my lady my mother, never to return to England"; her brother John, reports Husee, is commendably economical, and her brother James ambitious and demanding. Other notable characters include Lady Lisle's stepdaughter, Jane Basset, who, like a Dickensian poor relation, utters muted complaints while dependent on others for her shelter; the mariner John Cheriton, who pleads as he relates his recurrent misfortunes stemming from wars and roguery; and the priest Gregory Botolf, who concocts a foolish plot to seize Calais for the French.

One letter that stands out for the ease and polish of its style is written to Lord Lisle by Antony Barker, an Oxford scholar engaged to instruct young James Basset. Its smooth continuity and unusual conciseness are accompanied by a sensitivity to language that allows him to write differently yet respectfully of a child: where others can refer to "Mr. James" and "my master, your son," Barker can speak of "little Mr. James Basset" and "that sweet babe." Sadly, however, there is a less congenial side to Antony Barker. After praising his pupil, he prays that, "God continue" the French in their "very sharp execution of heretics," a sentiment which allies him with his contemporary More, author of some of the most famous letters of the time.

## BLINKERED NOBLENESS

### SIR THOMAS MORE (1477-1535)



To the modern mind, Sir Thomas More is a paradoxical character. For him, William Tyndale—pioneer translator of the Bible into English—is the Devil’s darling; Muslims, and the Protestants for whom, in his *Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation* they stand, are God’s enemies, and, notoriously, the burning of heretics “is lawful, necessary, and well done.” Such a bigoted view of any religion—Spenser’s extreme anti-Catholicism is an example on the other side—is the kind of blind passion that can lead to massacre and war. In this respect, More compares unfavourably with his more tolerant friend Erasmus, who declares, “I prefer a true Turk to a false Christian.” Yet More is a many-sided man who can write business letters to Wolsey advising on the conduct of the King’s Scottish and Continental wars as readily as the noble missive he sends his wife when their barns have burnt down: going far beyond counselling resignation to God’s will, he urges her, “we must and are bounden not only to be content, but also to be glad of His visitation” and presses her to enquire “what my poor neighbours have lost, and bid them take no thought therefor; for and I should not leave myself a spoon, there shall no poor neighbour of mine bear no loss by any chance happened in my house.”

When More is taking precautions not to be tainted by his slight connection with Elizabeth Barton, the Nun of Kent, whose accounts of her visions include denunciation of the King’s divorce and lead to her execution, he comes into his own as a narrator. In a long, carefully worded epistle of 1534, he gives Thomas Cromwell full details of all his conversations with and about the nun, describing how, like many others, he was delighted by her seeming goodness until her turpitude became apparent, but emphasizing that he has always refused to listen to any purported revelations concerning “the King’s Grace.” Little touches of concrete detail conjure up pictures within this rational, cautious believer’s account of false appear-

ances: “Father Resbye ... lodged one night at mine house, where, after supper, a little before he went to his chamber, he fell in communication with me of the nun, giving her high commendation of holiness.”

Several similar touches appear in several of More’s most renowned letters, those he writes to his daughter Margaret Roper from his prison in the Tower of London, where he faces death—possibly agonizing death by hanging, drawing and quartering—for refusing to endorse the lawfulness of the annulment of the King’s first marriage and his assumption of supremacy over the Church of England. In solemn, sedate language, he describes to his grieving daughter the course of his questioning by Thomas Cromwell and other high officers. Insisting that he judges no other man and seeks to influence no one, he declares, “But as for myself, in good faith my conscience so moved me in the matter that, though I would not deny to swear to the succession, yet unto the oath that there was offered me I could not swear without the jeopardizing of my soul to perpetual damnation.” His steadfastness is hard won:

albeit I am of nature so shrinking from pain that I am almost  
afear of a fillip, yet in all the agonies that I have had ...  
forecasting all such perils and painful deaths, as by any manner  
of possibility might after fall unto me, and in such thought lain  
long restless and waking, while my wife had weened I had slept,  
yet in any such fear and heavy pensiveness, I thank the mighty  
mercy of God, I never in my mind intended to consent that I  
would for the enduring of the uttermost do any such thing as ...  
should damnably cast me in the displeasure of God.

No pressure can make him specify what it is in the oath or the statute of royal supremacy that he objects to—“it were a very hard thing,” he protests to his inquisitors, “to compel me to say either precisely with it against my conscience to the loss of my soul, or precisely against it to the destruction of my body”—but his restraint does not save him. In his last letter before his beheading, he tells Margaret, “I never liked your manner toward me better than when you kissed me last, for I love when daughterly love and dear charity hath no leisure to look to worldly courtesy.” More’s loving tenderness shines out even as his conscience compels him to face the doom that Lord Lisle escapes.

## A SCHOLAR ABROAD

### ROGER ASCHAM (1515-1568)



Roger Ascham, like his fellow scholar Sir Thomas More, conducts most of his correspondence in Latin, which in his time is the international language of Europe, but while he is in Germany he switches to the vernacular often enough to give English literature its earliest distinguished letters of travel. In particular, the first and much the longest of these missives introduces the genre of the journal letter composed over many days, a genre which is to culminate in Swift's *Journal to Stella*.

A Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge and a Protestant, Ascham delights in the Greek and Roman studies of the Renaissance Christian humanists. In 1550, however, he is pulled away from his academic life when he is sent to Germany as secretary to Sir Richard Morison, Edward VI's Ambassador to the Emperor Charles V. In the letters by which he sustains his friendships with Edward Raven and other colleagues at Cambridge, his delight in observing foreign cities and societies accompanies a concern about the fortunes of the reformed religion in a Christendom threatened by its own disunity as well as by the Turkish Empire. He also includes sufficient personal matter to provide a self-portrait.

The reader of Ascham's letters is treated to observations of scenes and buildings:

The palatine of Rhene is also a great lord on this river, and hath his name of a castle standing in the midst of Rhene [the Rhine] on a rock. There be also goodly isles in Rhene, so full of walnut trees that they cannot be spent with eating, but they make vile of them. In some of these isles stand fair abbeyes and nunneries wonderfully pleasant. The stones that hang so high over Rhene be very much of that stone that you use to write on in tables; every poor man's house there is covered with them.

Writing of a city recently burnt by the Emperor, Ascham describes how

the Duke of Cleves is building it anew, enlarging the town three hundred feet round about from the old walls ... is building a castle, so fair and large as the Emperor might dwell in; so strong to repulse the Great Turk.

Ascham has no doubt about the strength of his own nation and writes from Augsburg:

England need fear no outward enemies. The lusty lads surely be in England. I have seen on a Sunday more likely men walking in Paul's church than I ever yet saw in Augusta, where lieth an Emperor with a garrison, three kings, a queen, three princes, a number of dukes, &c.

Ascham's patriotism includes his love of his national drink; but after he discovers "this wine of Rhene ... so good, so natural, so temperate," he confesses, "I was afraid when I came out of England to miss beer; but I am more afraid when I shall come into England, that I cannot lack this wine."

At Tillemont, in the Low Countries, Ascham moralizes:

I saw nuns and papists dance in the middle of the town at a bridal. These be news to you, but olds to that country, where it is leful [lawful] to that Babylonian papistry to serve BACCHUS.... The stark papist in England would spew up his papistry and become a whole Christian at the sight of these dregs of Rome.

Being shown relics of St. Ursula, this Protestant declares, "If these things were left as monuments of antiquity, not as allurements of papistry ... I would delight both to see them myself, and praise them to other."

Ascham's continued exploration of the classical world is an important part of his life on the Continent. "Five days in the week," he says, "my lord [the Ambassador] and I continually do study the Greek tongue"; he scours goldsmiths' shops for ancient coins; and he is eager to learn of new scholarly undertakings. At Augsburg, he meets Jeronimus Wolfius, a translator of Demosthenes and Isocrates, and rejoices to learn from him "that one BORRHEUS ... hath even now in printing goodly commentaries upon ARISTOTLE's Rhetoric."

Mindful of his own uncertain future—if the ailing boy Edward VI dies, a Catholic Queen Mary will succeed him—Ascham is torn between desire for advancement in the King's service and his love of the retired life of a university scholar. He adjures Edward Raven, "Purpose, my Edward,

to live in godliness and learning; for that is life only. I see emperors, kings, princes, &c. live not, but play their lives upon stages” and wistfully declares, “He that is able to maintain his life in learning at Cambridge, knoweth not what a felicity he hath.”

It is instructive to compare Ascham’s travel letters with the *Report and Discourse of the Affairs and State of Germany* he writes for his friend and fellow scholar John Astley. This *Report*, in which he lights on very unkind behaviour by the powerful, as opposed to religious differences or desire for liberty, as the primary cause of the current wars, contains much lively characterization and some moralizing but little of the news about his doings and feelings that seasons the letters.

Of his English letters, those from Germany are easily the most interesting, though Ascham later writes movingly of his widowed mother-in-law’s poverty and of his own depression at the prospect of leaving his wife and children (during his time in Germany he is still a bachelor) without means after his death. A letter to the Earl of Leicester hints that it is his extraordinary ability in the role that allows him, a known Protestant, to serve as Mary Tudor’s Latin Secretary; he declines a minor ecclesiastical position under the Catholic Mary, but accepts one under the Protestant Elizabeth.





## JACOBEAN GOSSIP

### JOHN CHAMBERLAIN (c. 1554-1568)

**A**lthough he lives in times as turbulent and fear-ridden as those of More and Ascham, John Chamberlain passes through them as an amiable and easygoing observer, distressed, it is true, by the deaths of friends, but troubled more by the difficulties of winter travel, occasional want of company, and fear of Roman Catholic infiltration, than by any peril of imprisonment or execution. He does, however, ask Dudley Carleton to keep his thoughts secret, “and then there is no danger,” and once, late in James I’s reign, he expresses reservations about what he commits to paper, for “the times are dangerous and the world grows tender and jealous of free speech.” Four years earlier, he has dared to report, “I am sorry to hear that he [the King] grows every day more froward, and with such a kind of morosity that doth either argue a great discontent in mind, or a distemper of humours in his body, yet he is never so out of tune but the very sight of my Lord of Buckingham doth settle and quiet all.”

The great majority of Chamberlains’s surviving letters are written to his friend Dudley Carleton, most of them during the latter’s service as Ambassador in Venice and the Hague. Though they support a friendship and involve good turns, for the most part they consist of matter we would today find in a newspaper—in the local, national, foreign and business news, the society pages, and the gossip columns. Alluding to a death that Carleton may already know about, he admits, “no doubt you have heard of that before, as perhaps of all or most part of the rest, but I love to leave nothing that comes to my knowledge or remembrance.” A lifelong bachelor, despite his reference to Anna Bray as “mine ancient valentine,” Chamberlain passes his life as an observer of men and manners who enriches his information with occasional touches of moralizing and irony, but gives us only brief glimpses of the material details of his life and a few snatches of the conversations in which he takes part. His surviving correspondence with Carleton and his mostly lost correspondence with others make him seem something like a lesser Horace Walpole of the seventeenth century.

Despite their historical fascination, it has to be admitted that long passages of Chamberlains’s letters are devoted to lists of actual and hoped

for appointments; of M.P.s elected; arrivals and departures of ships; births, deaths, marriages and sicknesses; sums of money that change hands; and other matters of more interest to researchers than to general readers. But as one peruses Chamberlain's Jacobean chronicles — they also cover events in the last years of Elizabeth — one can be caught up in the suspense of the writer: will his friend Winwood become King James's principal secretary? will public fears avert Prince Charles's Spanish marriage? — and one becomes fond of this gossipy, companionable man while noticing his conservative bent. When a marriage takes place in a private house, he objects that "holy things should be solemnised in holy places." He opposes the application of the Earl and Countess of Essex for a divorce, "for if such a gap be once let open, it will not be so easily stopped but that infinite inconveniences will follow." To him, tobacco is "that filthy weed." He endorses James I's and the Bishop of London's censure of "the insolency of our women, and their wearing of broad brimmed hats, pointed doublets, their hair cut short or shorn, and some of them stilettos or poignards." He complains "this is the age of *il mondo riverso*, wherein parents observe their children more than children the parents." Admitting that Dean John Donne's "Hymn to the Saints and to Marquis Hamilton" is "reasonable witty and well done," he adds, "yet I could wish a man of his years and place to give over versifying," and when George Abbott, Archbishop of Canterbury, accidentally shoots and kills a keeper while hunting deer, he asks, "what should a man of his place and profession be meddling with such edge-tools?"

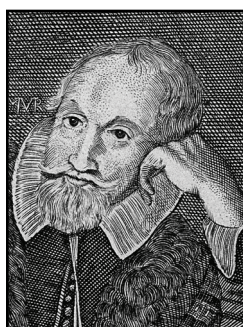
For all his moralizing and his fear of a resurgent Catholicism, Chamberlain is a moderate and kindly man, who will spend days waiting for access to those in high places to help a friend, and who continues to visit a house he has long frequented to comfort a survivor after the master or mistress has died. He speaks harshly of Lord Chief Justice Sir John Popham, who in campaigning against prostitution "persecutes poor pretty wenches out of all pity and mercy." When a congregation of Catholics has dared to meet in a house next to the French Ambassador's and an upper floor collapses with disastrous results, he is indignant that "our people" have "grown so savage and barbarous that they refused to assist [the injured] with drink, *aqua vitae*, or any other cordials, but rather insulted upon them with taunts and jibes in their affliction" and that "as good order [had to be] taken as might be on the sudden, to repress the insolency and inhumanity of the multitude, and for relief of the distressed."

Alongside less momentous matters, Chamberlain chronicles such events as the Earl of Essex's rebellion against Queen Elizabeth, the Gunpowder Plot, the invidious granting of monopolies, and the execution of Sir Walter Raleigh. Disappointingly, however, he is oblivious to the great literature being created in his time. To him, William Shakespeare is invis-

ible, Ben Jonson is an author of court masques and verses, and the recently ordained John Donne is a man given the reversion of the deanery of Canterbury over the heads of more deserving churchmen. One reference to the death of Edmund Spenser, "our principal poet," cannot compensate for such a blind spot in this educated man, who is a friend of the great preacher Lancelot Andrewes and an acquaintance of Sir Francis Bacon, and who reads political pamphlets, history and sermons and takes great delight in John Barclay's Latin romance *Argenis*.



## SPYMASTER, POET, PROVOST OF ETON SIR HENRY WOTTON (1568-1639)



A more complicated character than John Chamberlain is Sir Henry Wotton, a professional diplomat and occasional poet and author. He spends the greatest part of his life in public service while wishing he could enjoy the quiet career of a scholar: he once describes himself as “a poor student in philosophy” who has been put “into civil practice.” However, during his last years, which, as Provost of Eton, he passes among other “cloistered men,” he is not sure that the hankering he feels for domestic and foreign news is commendable: to his friend Sir Gervase Clifton, he confesses, “there still hangs upon me, since my foreign vacations, I know not how, a little concupiscence of novelty.”

Wotton’s surviving correspondence begins when he leaves for Germany in 1589 at the age of twenty-one, eager to travel and to study civil law under renowned professors, but it soon becomes apparent that he is sending foreign intelligence home. Thus, he can write from Vienna to his friend Lord Zouche, “I have herewith sent your Honour a letter of Sleydan’s to the French King ... no man is privy to my sending of it but myself, in which respect it requires the greater secrecy.” By the time James I appoints him Ambassador to Venice in 1604, he is ready to serve as a spy-master, dispensing money to agents in diverse cities and arranging to have mail intercepted.

In 1623, thinking he has discovered who has authored “that filthy false libel *de Corona Regia*,” a satire on James I, Wotton proposes that James “send hither a pardon in Latin, under his royal hand and seal ... containing likewise some promise of maintenance” wherewith it should be “no hard matter” to seize the culprit “and to convey him against his will in a covered boat down the Rhene to the confines of the States, and so into England” — or, if he comes willingly, he “may have some appearance of violence for his excuse.”

Since Wotton has a strong religious commitment (he consoles himself and others for painful bereavements by thoughts of resignation to God's will), it is not surprising to find him uneasily arguing, in relation to such devious practices, "so unchristian an art is perchance civil wisdom, if it were well examined."

Wotton is engaged in a lifelong struggle on behalf of the Reformed Religion. In a long letter to James I, he urges that "the common Christian good" is "worthy of a secret room in your zealous and royal heart," and he enthuses over an upcoming opportunity to promote Protestantism in Venice, "when fear shall cease (which is it that now only upholdeth the Pope)." He has a special animus against the Jesuits, whom he calls "the caterpillars of Christendom," and after watching elaborate papal rituals in Italy, he declares, "Of Rome, in short, this is my opinion, or rather indeed my most assured knowledge, that her delights on earth are sweet, and her judgements in heaven heavy."

While Wotton's letters make clear his great pleasure in the company of his intellectual peers as well as his increasingly uncertain health and chronic indebtedness, much of his correspondence is devoted to European politics preceding and during the Thirty Years War, in which Protestant-Catholic hostility looms so large. Mingled with his expressions of hope and fear, however, are brief views of events in his personal life and illuminating character sketches. Of his early companionship with his fellow citizens engaged in trade, friends who must not know of his real work, his letters say nothing. His skill in disguising his mission is visible in the account he sends to Lord Zouche of his arrival at the centre of the Catholic world in 1592:

I entered Rome with a mighty blue feather in a black hat; which, though in itself it were a slight matter, yet surely did it work in the imaginations of men three great effects. First, I was by it taken for no English, upon which depended the ground of all. Secondly, I was reputed as light in my mind as in my apparel (they are not dangerous men that are so). And thirdly, no man could think that I desired to be unknown ...

We are given glimpses of the house Wotton occupies in Venice. At the end of 1617, fire breaks out in a room under the kitchen, "where certain boards and other old dry materials were locked up by the landlord," and the flames engulf the table where the key to the street door lies—"by which mishap," he explains, "we could neither get out ourselves to the channel, nor let in others, till by main force we had broken the bars of the gate." Similarly startling is the occasion in 1635 when the almost sixty-sev-

en-year-old Wotton is arrested in London for debt, his payments from the Crown being in arrears, Six days after the event, he sends a plea for help to Sir Francis Windebank, whom he knew in Venice:

On Friday of the last week, coming homewards from Wallingford House, where I had been to attend my Lord Treasurer's leisure and health, I was, in the midst of St. Martin's Lane, arrested on the way in my coach, like a stroke of thunder, by a number of Westminster bailiffs.... They would have carried me immediately to the Gatehouse, or to some alehouse, but being too stubborn to yield to that, I got them to attend me gently to my lodging, where I have lived ever since under the custody of some of those rude and costly inmates.

Among the characters who stand out, an early example is the Catholic Baron of Berloc, whose company Wotton enjoys as he travels for the first time to Rome: "I found him by conversation to be very indiscreet, soon led, much given to women, careless of religion (qualities notably serving my purpose), for while a man is held in exercise with his own vices, he hath little leisure to observe others." No lightweight like the Baron is the crafty Duke of Lorraine, who, being "cumbered ... with the German troubles on the one side, and the French on the other," is "therefore bound to study the passages of both." Having delivered a message from James I and spoken of the latter's desire to work for peace in Protestant Bohemia, which is revolting against the rule of Catholic Austria, Wotton reports back to James:

The Duke's answer was more tender than free, lamenting much the present condition of things, commending as much your Majesty's good mind, proclaiming his own, remitting the whole to those great and wise Kings that had it in hand, and concluding (with a voice, me thought, lower than before, as if he had doubted to be overheard, though in his private chamber) that the Princes of the Union would tell me what his affections were in the cause.

In Europe, Wotton has one idol, the Venetian theologian Paolo Sarpi, whom he regards not only as "a sound Protestant, as yet in the habit of a friar," but also as "the most deep and general scholar of the world." He notes that Sarpi is "of a quiet and settled temper, which made him prompt in his counsels and answers" and that he is a man whose "life is the most irreprehensible and exemplar that hath ever been known."



Sir Henry Wotton is a letter-writer of some distinction and he has a modest place in history, but he is also a fine occasional poet and is perhaps best remembered for two or three frequently anthologized pieces. He is a lifelong friend of John Donne, whose life Izaak Walton asks him to write, and in his old age he enjoys the acquaintance of the young John Milton. He especially appreciates the latter's masque *Comus*, writing, "I should much commend the tragical part if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Dorique delicacy in your songs and odes; whereunto I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language, *ipsa mollities* [softness itself]."

## A TROUBLED LIFE

### JOHN DONNE (1572-1631)



While Sir Henry Wotton is a diplomat and a minor poet, his friend John Donne is a major poet who also becomes a superb preacher and a master of eloquent prose. Among the great Elizabethan writers, Donne is the only one who leaves a large body of letters for the perusal of posterity, but the critic George Saintsbury justifiably complains that unlike Sir Thomas Browne, another master of the period's ornate prose, Donne cannot shed his learned eloquence to talk in an unbuttoned fashion to his correspondents. Whereas Wotton, whose own epistolary style is less than easy and familiar, can talk, in a letter to his brother, of "being in the lively imagination of your presence while I thus speak with you," Donne can write to his friend Sir Thomas Lucy, "I make account that this writing of letters, when it is with any seriousness, is a kind of ecstasy, and a departure and secession and suspension of the soul, which doth then communicate itself to two bodies." Several times Donne confesses that he meant to write a letter but instead has written a homily.

Despite their stateliness, the letters of Donne are more varied than Saintsbury's observation may perhaps suggest, and without the homilies they would not mirror as they do the interweaving of worldly struggle, family cares, deeply rooted friendships, bodily afflictions, and devout thought that constitute the life of this passionate man.

In his youth, during which he passes his startlingly original, often erotic poems around in manuscript, Donne moves from the Catholicism of his birth to the middle way of the Anglican Church, and after returning from a military expedition to the Azores, obtains a post as secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. At this point, passion overwhelms him, and in 1601 he torpedoes what seems like a brilliant prospect by illegally and secretly marrying a minor and a probable heiress, Lady Egerton's niece Ann More. After a short period of imprisonment

that follows, he finds himself without employment, in troubled health, and responsible for the support of a growing family. Forced to depend on his wife's relatives and on literary patrons, he shows himself to be a graceful flatterer – or eulogizer, for the objects of his attention are often worthy.

Now that Donne has the responsibility of a family, painful mentions of sickness, poverty and debt mingle in his letters with professions of friendship (his "second religion"), appeals for assistance and employment, and religious cogitations. Characteristic of his usually rather stilted manner is an address to Sir Robert Carre, later Earl of Somerset, a favourite of James I:

I amend to no purpose, nor have any use of this inchoation of health, which I find, except I preserve my room, and station in you. I begin to be past hope of dying: And I feel that a little rag of *Monte Magor* [George de Montemayor's *Shepherdess Felismena*], which I read last time I was in your Chamber, hath wrought prophetically upon me, which is, that Death came so fast towards me, that the over-joy of that recovered me.

Surprisingly, Donne seems to have a real esteem for this disreputable courtier, since in 1619, when he is about to go abroad on a mission, he entrusts to his care the manuscript of his unpublished *Biathanatos*, a daring argument that suicide is not always unlawful. "Reserve it for me," he asks, "if I live, and if I die, I only forbid it the Press, and the Fire: publish it not, but yet burn it not."

Despite his elevated, often cumbrous language, Donne sometimes gives his correspondent an image of himself, his surroundings, and his literary activity. To his close friend Sir Henry Goodyer, he writes:

This letter hath more merit, than one of more diligence, for I wrote it in my bed, and with much pain. I have occasion to sit late some nights in my study, (which your books make a pretty library) and now I find that that room hath a wholesome emblematic use: for having under it a vault, I make that promise me, that I shall die reading, since my book and a grave are so near. But it hath another unwholesomeness, that by raw vapours rising from thence, (for I can impute it to nothing else) I have contracted a sickness which I cannot name nor describe.

Later in the letter, he adds, "Since my imprisonment in my bed, I have made a meditation in verse, which I call a Litany."

The introspective religious musings in the letters of Donne, and especially his abundant thoughts on death, recall the learning and piety of Sir

Thomas More, but are free from the latter's strain of bigotry. When, after much hesitation, he finds a way out of his predicament by taking holy orders and proves to be an outstanding preacher, he holds that the Roman, Lutheran and Calvinist churches are all "virtual beams of one Sun" and "not so contrary as the North and South Poles" but "connatural pieces of one circle." Yet while he believes "that in all Christian professions there is way to salvation," he does not regard one's denomination as a matter of "indifferency," and he is critical of "the inobedient Puritans" and "the over obedient Papists": "The channels of God's mercies run through both fields; and they are sister teats of his graces, yet both diseased and infected, but not both alike." Dissuading Sir Henry Goodyer from any thoughts of conversion, he argues, "As some bodies are as wholesomely nourished as ours, with Acorns, and endure nakedness, both which would be dangerous to us, if we for them should leave our former habits, though theirs were the Primitive diet and custom: so are many souls well fed with such forms, and dressings of Religion, as would distemper and misbecome us."

Donne frequently experiences a longing for "the next life," which longing, he writes in 1608, "is not merely out of a weariness of this, because I had the same desires when I went with the tide, and enjoyed fairer hopes than now." Although he admits that "thirst and inhiation after the next life" can become excessive and "stray into a corrupt disease," he, like More, is a Renaissance man who retains a large streak of the widespread mediaeval contempt for this world. In his sometimes beautiful letters of condolence to the bereaved, his tender yet urgent pleadings that the sufferer admit the rightness of God's will are far more heartfelt than Wotton's similar counsel of resignation, which usually seems to be offered with a sigh of reluctance. Given his profound Christian commitment, his formidable learning, and his eloquence, James I appears to show good judgment when he insists that the poet become a churchman if he wants advancement. Being appointed Dean of St. Paul's in 1621, he becomes the supreme preacher of his age, and his letters make an interesting complement to his masterly sermons. While the letters include political news that overlaps with Wotton's, we cannot go to them for character sketches, reported dialogue, or concrete scenes such as we sometimes get from More; what they offer is a memorable self-portrait.



## IN TIME OF CIVIL WAR JAMES HOWELL (C. 1594-1666)



Far richer in social scenes and short narratives than those of John Donne are the letters collected in the *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae* of James Howell, an Anglo-Welshman, in what purports to be his familiar correspondence under this title and achieves great literary success. To his first installment, issued in 1645, he adds three more, which appear in 1647, 1650, and 1655. The whole collection was frequently reprinted well into the following century.

Until 1959 it was widely suspected that Howell's supposed letters were clever fabrications mostly concocted while he was being held as a political prisoner in the Fleet. In that year, however, Verona M. Hirst was able to point to an actual letter from Howell to Lord Conway, half of which is incorporated in one piece in the *Epistolae*. Referring to his methods of composition in his other books, Hirst provides strong evidence that at least a very large part of the one for which he is remembered consists of material drawn from his real correspondence, passages from different letters being combined to produce the printed texts. I agree with Hirst and others that the longer pieces on set subjects, like the history of religions, are essays written to fill out the book for publication, and I recognize the strength of W. H. Bennett's earlier argument that many of the published texts "were possibly compiled from notes, or even re-written from memory." It should be noted that the dating of the letters, first introduced in the second edition of the whole collection, is erratic and often appears to be the product of guesswork. Thus what he speaks of as "That black tragedy which was lately acted here" and which "hath filled most hearts among us with consternation and horror" is recorded in a letter dated 20 March 1648; Charles I was executed on 30 January 1649. I regard *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae* as a volume of heavily edited correspondence supplemented with a sprinkling of essays.

Writing to Carew Raleigh, the son of Sir Walter, Howell describes his published letters as “a legend of the cumbersome life and various fortunes of a *cadet*.” As a younger brother with fourteen siblings, Howell grows up to become responsible for his own livelihood, but an education at Oxford and a gift for languages are among his assets. He travels widely on the Continent, first as an agent for the glass manufacturer Sir Robert Maunsell, than on an unsuccessful mission to obtain the release of the *Vineyard*, a British merchant vessel seized, apparently on the flimsiest grounds, by the Spanish Viceroy of Sardinia. Later he serves on diplomatic missions to Spain and Denmark. In 1642, when he is about to take up his new post as Clerk to the Privy Council, he is abruptly arrested by officers of the Parliament, which is at war with King Charles I, and imprisoned in the Fleet for about nine years. The last letters in the *Epistolae* are written after his release in 1651 but well before the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and his appointment the following year as Historiographer Royal.

James Howell is a man of scholarly inclination, omnivorous curiosity, and religious faith. Possessing the European consciousness of Ascham and Wotton, he is a Christian before he is a Protestant and a citizen of Christendom before he is a Briton. Well aware that the power of Spain, with her vast empire extending to the Philippines, looms over Europe, he remembers that she is a Christian nation, and he longs for peace in Christendom and a united front against the threat of Turkish expansion. For this reason he supports the project of a Spanish match for the future Charles I, a project vastly unpopular in England, and deplores the widespread hostility among his countrymen towards the Spanish Ambassador, who is working to promote the marriage:

Count *Gondomar* hath also helped to free some *English* that were in the *Inquisition* in *Toledo* and *Seville*; and I could allege many instances how ready and cheerful he is to assist any *Englishman* whatsoever, notwithstanding the base affronts he hath often received of the *London Boys*, as he calls them.

While Howell has little knowledge of Islam and regards it as “this poison” and “this black religion,” he declares:

Difference in opinion may work a *disaffection* in me, but not a *detestation*; I rather pity than hate *Turk* or *Infidel*, for they are of the same metal, and bear the same stamp as I do, tho’ the inscriptions differ: If I hate any, ’tis those schismatics that puzzle the sweet peace of our Church, so that I could be content to see an *Anabaptist* go to Hell on a *Brownist*’s back.

In the troubles and uncertainties of life, Howell finds that his stay is his faith. For him, it is the very mysteriousness of such doctrines as those of the Incarnation, Resurrection and Trinity, which “*are bones to philosophy, but milk to faith*,” along with its ethical imperatives that give his religion a unique sublimity and authority. While Thackeray, who loved to dip into the *Epistolae*, is too severe in calling Howell “priggish,” he is a serious moralist who rebukes such failings as seasoning one’s discourse with “deep, far-fetched oaths” and urges a young man who has set off on his travels, “you must not suffer any melting tenderness of thoughts, or longing desires, to distract or interrupt you in that fair road you are in to virtue.” He reports, that the servants at the Danish court inform him “without any appearance of shame,” that last night’s drunkenness keeps their masters late abed.

As a traveller, Howell informs himself about the histories of the places he visits and comments on the characters of their peoples: “The *Spaniard* is not so smooth and oily in his compliment as the *Italian*; and tho’ he will make strong protestations, yet he will not swear out compliments like the *French* and *English*.” National character interests him more than fine scenes, but he is duly impressed by the sight of Venice:

I protest to you, at my first landing I was for some days ravished with the high beauty of this maid, with her lovely countenance. I admired her magnificent buildings, her marvellous situation, her dainty smooth neat streets, whereon you may walk most days in the year in a silk stocking and satin slippers, without soiling them.

Politically, as well as morally, Howell is conservative, and he is a strong monarchist who defends Charles I’s legally dubious exaction of ship money, that does so much to bring on the Civil War:

Whether we are in danger or no at present, ‘twere presumption in me to judge, that belongs to his Majesty and his Privy-Council ... yet one with half an eye may see, we cannot be secure, while such huge fleets of men-of-war, both *Spanish, French, Dutch,* and *Dunkirkers* ... do daily sail on our seas.

Howell regrets the spread of learning to the lower class through free schools and commends the Chinese policy “*That the son is always of the father’s trade*.” Hints of his royalist sympathies in his first volume are followed in succeeding collections by denunciations of the Puritans akin to those of Swift in *A Tale of a Tub*:



There's a strange maggot hath got into their brains, which possesseth them with a kind of vertigo; and it reigns in the pulpit more than any where else, for some of our preachers are grown dog-mad, there's a worm got into their tongues, as well as their heads.

An assault of this nature speaks of a commitment to rationality, something also found when Howell argues that there is support for the belief that Dover and Boulogne were once joined: "For if one do well observe the rocks of the one, and the cliffs of the other, he will judge them to be one homogeneous piece, and that they were cut and shivered asunder by some act of violence." He is aware, too, that Galileo "hath brought us to a nearer commerce with Heaven." In view of this affinity with the modern world, it is as disturbing to find him outraged that anyone should doubt the reality of witchcraft as it is to find Pliny the Younger convinced of the diabolical nature of Christianity.

The *Epistolae* is not remarkable for vivid or trenchant sketches of character any more than for scenic descriptions, but, besides a wealth of historical material, it provides a feast of anecdotes delivered in an easy, familiar style, which accords with its author's view that in letters "we should write as we speak." Howell tells, for example, how a Spanish Viceroy of Naples was summoned to the court at Madrid to give an account of his rule:

being troubled with the gout, he carried his sword in his hand instead of a staff; the King misliking of the manner of his posture, turned his back to him, and so went away: Thereupon he was over-heard to mutter, *Esto es para server muchachos*; This it is to serve boys.

The King was told of this insult, and the Viceroy was confined in a monastery for several years.

In 1623, when Prince Charles visits Spain to court the Infanta, he goes one morning to surprise that princess but finds there is an obstacle between himself and the orchard where she is walking. Howell writes, "The Prince got on the top of the wall, and sprung down a great height, and so made towards her; but she spying him first of all the rest, gave a shriek and ran back." At the plea of the terrified old Marquis who guarded her, the Prince made a dignified retreat.

James Howell seems to be a companionable man and an enthusiastic raconteur. When he becomes a prisoner, he is forced, instead of travelling over Europe, to travel in what he calls "this little world, which I have carried about me and within me so many years":

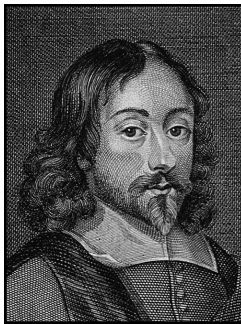
This travelling o'er of one's self is one of the paths that leads a man to Paradise: It is true, that 'tis a dirty and dangerous one, for it is thick set with extravagant desires, irregular affections and concupiscences, which are but odd comrades, and oftentimes do lie in ambush to cut our throats: There are also some melancholy companions in the way, which are our thoughts, but they turn many times to be good fellows, and the best company.

For the reader, the letters of this lifelong bachelor — he once discloses, “Had I been disposed to have married for wealth without affection, or for affection without wealth, I had been in bonds before now” — have an unusual advantage. Because they have been selected and edited by Howell himself, their glimpses of history and view of the writer's life and personality are not weighed down by the longueurs and repetitions that are apt to be found in a complete collection of an author's correspondence.



## ON THE CUSP OF MODERNITY

### SIR THOMAS BROWNE (1605-1682)



The first extant letter of Sir Thomas Browne, the great mid-seventeenth century master of ornate prose, is his response to a report—perhaps one should say a rumour—that Sir Kenelm Digby is writing a refutation of his treatise *Religio Medici*. In long, winding sentences that contrast with Howell's, he asserts that Digby is being unjust:

Worthy Sir, permit your servant to affirm there is contained therein nothing that can deserve the reason of your contradictions, much less the candour of your animadversions; and to certify the truth thereof, that book (whereof I do acknowledge myself the author) was penned many years past, and (what cannot escape your apprehension) with no intention for the press, or the least desire to oblige the faith of any man to its assertions.

About seventeen years later, in 1660, we find Browne writing the first of a series of letters to his second son, Thomas, who is in Bordeaux, in the more modern style of prose that is coming into widespread use:

It were good you had a map of France that you might not be unacquainted with the several parts, and to resort unto upon occasion for your information; view and understand all notable buildings and places in Bordeaux or near it, and take a draught thereof, as also the ruined Amphitheatre, but these at your leisure.

Browne's movement to simpler language is also seen in his letters on scientific matters. In 1659 he writes to his fellow physician Dr. Henry Power:

As for the higher original of seeds, before they come to sprout in or out of the ground, though it be not easy to demonstrate it from the first spermatizing of the plant, till a little time hath made some discovery and the seed be under some degree of germination, yet is it not improbable that the plant is delineated from the beginning; that a lineal draught beginneth upon the first separation, and that these unto the eye of nature are but so many young ones hanging upon the mother plant ...

By 1668 he is sending information in a different style to Dr. Christopher Merrett, who is compiling a natural history of Great Britain:

*Ophidion*, or, at least, *ophidion nostras*, commonly called a sting-fish, having a small prickly fin running all along the back, and another a good way on the belly, with little black spots at the bottom of the back fin. If the fishermen's hands be touched or scratched with this venomous fish, they grow painful and swell. The figure hereof I send you in colours.

The most interesting of Browne's surviving correspondences are those with his two sons. In both cases the style is modern. Thomas, the younger, born in 1647, is sent in his early teens to study in France. His father's letters give a picture of an easy relationship between a scholarly physician with antiquarian interests, who is a pious Protestant and staunch Royalist, and a sober-minded, trustworthy boy. The father counsels his son to see Roman antiquities, attend a Huguenot church, study French and Latin, and observe the practices of the apothecary with whom he lodges. On his part, he sends news of the return of traditional ways in religion, monarchy, and politics. When the boy decides on a naval career, he advises him to continue with Latin and ancient literature, but to extend his studies to great marine battles, practical mathematics, navigation, geography, and the parts of a ship. In a most moving letter, he warns his seagoing son against suicidal stubbornness:

He that goes to war must patiently submit unto the various accidents thereof. To be made prisoner by an unequal and overruling power, after a due resistance, is no disparagement; but upon a careless surprisal or faint opposition; and you have so

good a memory that you cannot forget many examples thereof, even of the worthiest commanders, in your beloved Plutarch.

Characteristically, Browne asks his son to observe the plants on the Spanish and African coasts. Young Thomas earns the praise of many acquainted with his prowess at sea and has every reason to expect advancement, but his life is cut short in 1667, and henceforward Browne's notable family correspondence is with his elder son, Edward. The latter becomes a prominent London doctor, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and a Lecturer at Chirurgeon's Hall. For the rest of his life, Browne sends Edward fatherly advice, urging him to preserve his health by temperate living, warning him to be economical, and discouraging him from imprudent ventures:

I should be glad if you could escape a journey to Venice, but rather thither than any further eastward, either to Poland, Hungary, or Turkey; which both myself and all your friends do heartily wish you would not so much as think of.

Edward does visit Venice and Hungary, but stays away from Turkey. Being a learned physician, Browne helps his son with the composition of his lectures, as well as with the preparation of his writings—*A Brief Account of Some Travels* (1673) and translations from ancient literature—for publication. While the bulk of the letters to Edward is occupied by scientific observations and details of medical practice, a universal curiosity is visible in them. Browne asks Edward to note in his travels the proportions of Lutherans, Calvinists, Catholics and Jews in Germany and where the best High Dutch is spoken, and asks many questions about the properties and uses of minerals. Though Browne's religious preoccupation is most prominent in his published works, his Christian commitment appears now and again in his letters to Edward:

I hope you do not forget to carry a Greek testament always to church, you have also the Greek or septuagint translation of the other parts of scripture; in reading those books, a man learns two good things together, and profiteth doubly, in the language and the subject.

The scientific element in Browne's thinking is evident in some of his counsel to Edward:

Weigh the head of a man, brains, skull, and other parts, and the skull and brain distinctly; that you may know what proportion it

hath to the body, at least with some latitude, although you do not weigh the trunk.

Nevertheless, Browne, like Howell, believes in the reality of witchcraft and he is convinced that base metal can be transmuted into gold by alchemy. He wishes that Edward had taken the opportunity at Amsterdam to enquire “after Dr. Helvetius, who writ *Vitulus aureus*, and saw projection made, and had pieces of gold to show of it.”

Although it illustrates an important step in the development of the modern world, the general reader is unlikely to be interested in the greater part of Browne’s correspondence. Despite the fascinating power struggles in Britain after the return to monarchy in 1660, references to politics have a very subordinate place in the letters. They contain little in the way of character sketches, and such passages as the vivid description of a highway robbery, the tale of a lady’s drinking ink in mistake for beer and being cured of her fever, and the account of the charring by torchlight of victorious candidates in an election are as rare as they are welcome.

# **FORETASTE**





## AN EARLY CHARMER DOROTHY OSBORNE (1627-1695)



In Dorothy Osborne, we meet another royalist, and though we can only follow her thoughts and experiences during the years 1653 and 1654, when England is under the rule of the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell, we come to know her more intimately than we do any earlier English letter-writer. Corresponding with the handsome young William Temple, the man she longs to marry but can only write to secretly, she declares, “I am apt to speak what I think; and to you have so accustomed myself to discover all my heart, that I do not believe ’twill ever be in my power to conceal a thought from you.” In most of her letters, she writes of her struggles to put off the far richer suitors that her relations press on her. William’s father, too, Sir John Temple, the Master of the Rolls in Ireland, has an eye for a much wealthier bride for his son. When she inwardly mourns the apparent futility of their hopes, Dorothy insists, “I do not know that ever I desired any thing (earnestly) in my life but ’twas denied me, and I am many times afraid to wish a thing merely lest my fortune should take that occasion to use me ill.” She considers that,

This world is composed of nothing but contrarities and sudden accidents, only the proportions are not at all equal, for to a great measure of trouble it allows so small a quantity of joy that one may see ’tis merely intended to keep us alive withal.

Such passages recall the voice of Dr. Johnson’s spokesman in the eleventh chapter of his *Rasselas*: “Human life is everywhere a state in which much is to be endured, and little to be enjoyed.”

The strongest opponent of Dorothy’s wishes is her elder brother Henry, a bachelor who continually warns her that love matches never prove happy. She tells William,

You are altogether in the right that my B[rother] will never be at quiet till he sees me disposed of, but he does not mean to lose me by it, he knows that if I were married at this present, I should not be persuaded to leave my father, as long as he lives, and when this house breaks up, he is resolved to follow me if he can, which he thinks he might better do to a house where I had some power, than where I am but upon courtesy my self.

In their strange relationship, Henry's letters seem to her more like a lover's than a brother's — "I cannot but tell him sometimes," she complains, "that sure he mistakes and sends me letters that were meant to his mistress." It is difficult not to believe that he is jealous of William.

Early in 1654, Dorothy reports the outbreak of a furious quarrel with her brother:

I drove him up so close t'other night that for want of a better gap to get out at, he was fain to say that he feared as much your having a fortune as your having none, for he saw you held my Lord L[isle]'s principles, that religion or honour were things you did not consider at all, and that he was confident you would take any engagement, serve in any employment or do any thing to advance yourself.

When brother and sister are reconciled, Henry promises not to raise the subject of Dorothy's obstinacy again, but this does not prevent him from spreading scandalous stories about her passion and painting her conduct, she says, "in such colours as will amaze all people that know me, and do not know him enough to discern his malice to me."

At one point, Dorothy, unwilling to bear the reproach of all who know her for a hopelessly imprudent match, tells William they will never be able to marry, but declares that her love for him will be lifelong and pledges, "I shall never change my condition but with my life." Something in the reply she receives — probably a threat of suicide — makes her renounce her resolution, even as she warns William,

for the love of God consider seriously with your self what can enter into comparison with the safety of your soul, are a thousand women or ten thousand worlds worth it?

Eventually Sir John Temple yields to his son's importunity and after the death of Dorothy's father, Sir Peter Osborne, in March 1654, he negotiates with her kindly brother-in-law, Sir John Peyton, and her still reluctant brother Henry, and the couple are married on Christmas Day, 1654. It is

to be hoped that Dorothy's relatives recognize their mistake: William becomes Sir William, a distinguished diplomat and essayist and a confidant of King William III.

A reserved and handsome young woman of a serious turn of mind, Dorothy despises the frivolity of most men and women of her own class and generation. "'Tis strange," she protests, "to see the folly that possesses the young people of this age, and the liberties they take to themselves"; she regrets that even the restraining influence of a court, which is admittedly "no perfect school of virtue," is absent. Her remark suggests that beneath the frowning face of Puritanism the libertine ways of the Restoration are already present in the germ.

Though she is a gifted writer, Dorothy Osborne is no feminist. She shares the widespread contempt for the delightfully eccentric author Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, and exclaims, "Sure the poor woman is a little distracted, she could never be so ridiculous else as to venture at writing books and in verse too." Dorothy is conformist enough to tell William that it is her duty not to marry without her father's consent; she adds, "if I should do otherwise, 'twould make me unworthy of your esteem." She insists he owes a similar deference to his own "very indulgent Father," and writes, "if you have not much more than an ordinary obedience for him, I shall never believe you have more than an ordinary kindness for me."

For all her melancholy, Dorothy, resident in the country, has a healthy appetite for news from the city, and is not above relishing a little scandal. She loves reading and is passionately fond of French romances (having spent years of exile across the Channel, she knows the language well). She takes pleasure in collecting engraved seals and is fond of big dogs: she is ready to let Oliver Cromwell's son Henry, who is among her suitors, seek a suitable one for her, and William's father sends her one from Ireland.

In her letters, Dorothy maintains a satisfying balance between fact and opinion and between observation and introspection. She informs William of her daily routine:

I rise in the morning reasonably early, and before I am ready [i.e. dressed] I go round the house till I am weary of that, and then into the garden till it grows too hot for me. About ten o'clock I think of making me ready, and when that's done I go into my father's chamber, from thence to dinner, where my Cousin Molle and I sit in great state, in a room and at a table that would hold a great many more. After dinner we sit and talk till Mr. B. comes in question and then I am gone. The heat of the day is spent in reading or working and about six or seven o'clock, I walk out into a common that lies hard by the house.

(Mr. B. is Levinus Bennet, Sheriff of Cambridgeshire, whom her cousin Henry Molle wants her to marry.) Dorothy relishes a quiet country life, but feels stifled when, after the death of her father, she finds herself in the always crowded house of a kindly brother-in-law and too sociable sister; here she is compelled to “go abroad all day and play all night.”

Among the pleasures the letters offer are caustic observations in the character sketches with which Dorothy entertains William. We meet Lady Sunderland, who says she has married Mr. Smith “out of pity” eliciting the comment “it was the pitifull’st saying that ever I heard, and made him so contemptible that I should not have married him for that very reason.” Henry Molle is a don and a hypochondriac whose “imagination took him one morning that he was falling into a dropsy, and made him in such haste to go back to Cambridge to his doctor, that he never remembered any thing he had to ask of me, but the coach to carry him away” — which Dorothy was only too happy to lend. Her elderly suitor Sir Justinian Isham, whom she nicknames “the Emperor Justinian,” is a scholarly fool who keeps his daughters “prisoners to a vile house he has in Northampton shire,” so that, had she become their stepmother and “let them loose[,] they and his learning would have been sufficient to have made him mad.” With her eye for the ridiculous, Dorothy Osborne is a forerunner of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Jane Carlyle,

Though the letters are devoted to the private life that continues under the Commonwealth, there are scornful references to such current events as Oliver Cromwell’s dismissal of the Rump — the meagre remnant of Parliament that is still sitting — and the marriage of General Monk to a woman far beneath him, who, however, “will suit well enough with the rest of the great ladies of the times.” In keeping with the spirit of the interregnum, Dorothy can pull herself up short with the caution, “I shall talk treason by and by if I do not look to my self, ’tis safer talking of the orange flower water you sent me.” When she hears that “my poor Lady Vavasor,” though pregnant, is taken to the Tower of London, she remarks, “the less one knows of state affairs I find it is the better.”

It is hardly surprising that this gifted, witty woman captivated William Temple, and it is highly regrettable that we do not have other writings from her hand. Yet her few extant letters to William after their marriage deserve attention. Her love for him appears to endure. While remarking that he is “concluded the arrantest gadder in the country,” she assures him, “I love you for all that so you will make haste home again.” He wishes she would write him the kind of letter she sent him during their courtship, but she says she has not the power — just before giving him a lively account of a quarrel between her aunt and the local Mayor.

Tragically, the couple's sufferings do not end with their marriage. One child after another dies, and the only one to survive into adulthood drowns himself, though not before leaving his parents two granddaughters. Replying to a nephew's letter of condolence after the suicide, Dorothy speaks much as she spoke when she thought she had renounced William forever. She maintained then that such chastisements are sent to show that too much affection, though it seems innocent, can be "greater than is allowable for things of this world." To her nephew, thirty-five years later, she admits her affliction "truly is very great" but concedes that "it seems necessary that I should have a near example of the uncertainty of all human blessings, that so having no tie to the world I may the better prepare myself to leave it."



## **INTERLUDE**





## THE SELF AND THE MODERN WORLD

Osborne is the first of the classic English letter-writers. The intimacy and introspection that complement her powers of observation and judgment exemplify a new element that is modifying modes of self-expression in her time. According to Lawrence Stone, "From the seventeenth century onwards there bursts onto paper a torrent of words about intimate thoughts and feelings set down by large numbers of quite ordinary English men and women, most of them now increasingly secular in orientation." He notes that the separation of close relations caused by the Civil War and their need to communicate by letter was a contributory factor, but he also points out that the phenomenon was rooted in the rise of European individualism that characterizes the Renaissance. Among other cultural heroes, he refers to the author whose example did most to free writers private and public from their inhibitions, namely Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), who admits in his *Essays* that the world may complain, "I speak too much of myself." Erich Auerbach observes that Montaigne composed "the first work of lay introspection," and thus Charles Taylor can see him as the distant heir of St. Augustine, the ancient author famous for his introspective *Confessions*. Michael Levy associates the *Essays* with the rise of the artist's self-portrait, rare before the sixteenth century.

Montaigne's achievement required the availability of a prose style that was familiar without being awkward or vulgar. The development of such a style involves a switch of models among educated writers from Cicero's oratory to the manner of Seneca. For Montaigne, explains James Sutherland, "what is most admirable in Seneca ... is the absence of a formal and artificial balance, and the suggestion in his apparently loose and desultory prose of a mind in the act of thinking." After reading a great deal of Montaigne, Auerbach even thought he "could hear him speak and see his gestures." Only a few years after the pioneer essayist's death, Jean-Pierre Camus held up his work as the perfect model for the letter-writer.

Critics recognize that the effects of prose like Montaigne's are only seemingly artless. While unaffected, spontaneous utterance can result in vivid or moving passages in such correspondences as the Paston and Lisle letters, these are usually written to inform or persuade, not for the sake of

self-expression. The nearest earlier approach to the intimacy of the Osborne letters comes in some of the missives, always dignified and formal, of Sir Thomas More.

The emergence in the seventeenth century of a familiar yet easy and graceful prose among well-educated English writers is ascribed to a number of causes: the need for effective pamphleteering and for the rapid dissemination of news in the Civil War, the efforts of Puritan preachers to spread their message and their belief in the moral rightness of a plain style, the demand of scientists for clear expression, admiration for the contemporary neoclassical French prose, and the influence of the conversation of cultured gentlemen in the Renaissance. The new prose was happily available to Osborne, her contemporaries, and her successors.

# **FRUITION**



## HE LOVES HIS FRIENDS JONATHAN SWIFT (1667-1745)



As the seventeenth century nears its end, the great age of English letter writing is beginning. Practitioners of the art who are the peers of Cicero and Pliny the Younger enrich the literature of the century that follows.

Shortly after Lady Temple, formerly Dorothy Osborne, loses her last surviving child to suicide, a young scholar of genius who is to become the author of *Gulliver's Travels* comes to serve as her husband's resident assistant. In this man, Jonathan Swift, there is a fundamental unhappiness. He laments rather than celebrates his birthday and marks it by reading the third chapter of Job: "Let the day perish wherein I was born ... " The savage indignation that lacerates, as he says, his heart, predominates over the merriment that his friend Dr. Arbuthnot perceptively sees in *Gulliver's Travels* and that finds expression in *The Bickerstaff Papers* and in *A Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation*. Yet while relaxing, dining and exchanging puns with friends, riding his horse, and enjoying the loving companionship of Esther Johnson and Rebecca Dingley, he is often happy. These twin facets of his life give him an affinity with another great letter-writer, William Cowper, who finds temporary relief from his fear of eternal damnation in pleasant and innocent occupations like gardening and keeping pets.

It is much to be regretted that Swift is not able to have a normal married life with Esther Johnson, whom he calls Stella and who is, he writes, "as welcome as my blood to every farthing I have in the world." Perhaps at first he prudently fears marrying without an adequate income, but ultimately his abnormal horror of the body's need to excrete and its subjection to decay may be responsible. In his *Journal to Stella*, he mentions his hatred of the word "bowels" and how his visit to a woman who has just given birth and was "pale, dead, old and yellow, for want of her paint" turned his stomach. This is of a piece with the poems such as "Cassinus and Peter"

and “A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed” that were once called his unprintables as well as with Gulliver’s disgust at the bodies of the maids of honour in the land of the giants. Although at the end of the poem “The Lady’s Dressing Room” he seems to be trying to argue himself out of his paralyzing obsession, he does not succeed.

A learned young Anglo-Irishman, Swift serves in England as secretary to the retired diplomat Sir William Temple, whom he comes to venerate. At the same time he acts as tutor to Esther Johnson, who is the daughter of Temple’s housekeeper; his pupil is eight years old. This child grows up to become a highly intelligent, well-read woman and the great love of Swift’s life, though he will only be in her company when her older companion, the unmarried Rebecca Dingley, is also present.

After Temple’s death in 1699, Swift, who has taken holy orders in the (Anglican) Church of Ireland, follows a clerical career. In 1707, he is commissioned to negotiate with the Whig Government in London for the remission of the First Fruits, a tax on the Irish clergy. He shares the firm Whig commitment to a Protestant succession to the throne, but finds that as the price of remission the Government wants the Irish Church’s support for the repeal of the Test Acts, which exclude non-Anglicans from public service, the English universities, and political life. To Swift, whose unsigned book *A Tale of a Tub* presents a vigorous argument for the reasonableness of the Anglican Middle Way, this is totally unacceptable and a recipe for a relapse into social conflict akin to that of the Civil War. He returns to Ireland without success, but in 1710, he goes back to London for a second attempt just before an election which brings a Tory ministry to power. Though the Tories may waver in their commitment to a Protestant succession, they are resolute in their support of the national church. Moreover, their leaders, the Lord Treasurer, Robert Harley, and the Secretary of State, Henry St. John, are eager to recruit a writer as gifted as Swift to win over public opinion in their campaign to end the War of the Spanish Succession against Louis XIV’s France.

During the three and three-quarter years before he returns to Ireland, Swift conducts a remarkable correspondence. In the tradition of the journal letter that goes back to Roger Ascham, Swift sends to Stella and Dingley, who are now living in Dublin, sixty-four instalments of a daily diary combined with answers to the letters they send him in reply. Living before the invention of the telephone, he feels he is talking to them as he writes and will even wish them goodnight or good morrow when he lays down his pen:

I think I am bewitched to write so much in a morning to you, little MD. Let me go, will you? and I’ll come again to-night in a

fine clean sheet of paper; but I can nor will stay no longer now;  
no, I won't, for all your wheedling: no, no, look off, don't smile at  
me, and say, Pray, pray, Presto, write a little more.

The *Journal to Stella*, as the printed book is called, shows how, amidst all the excitements of the metropolis, he does not forget Irish pleasures. He feels some nostalgia for his grounds in his country parish of Laracor with their willows, fruit trees and canal, and he remembers social evenings in Dublin even as he is part of a society—"it must not be called a Club"—of eminent, witty men who dine together and also promote the careers of the deserving. His straitened circumstances figure as he seeks dinner invitations to eke out his meagre resources and complains about the rain and snow that put him to the expense of hiring a coach or chair. His troubles include his bouts of giddiness, which he mentions alongside his anxiety about Stella's eyesight, and the way he offends some and is offended by others, as well as his difficulties with his drunken servant Patrick. Literature figures as he discloses his authorship of unsigned poems and talks of his project for an academy to guard against the corruption of the language. The regular sequence of events is occasionally interrupted by a startling occurrence. Swift and his servant separate a drunken parson and a sailor who are fighting in the street. The aged Bishop of Worcester announces to Queen Anne that in four years Louis XIV will turn Protestant and the Papedom will be overthrown. At the peril of his life, Swift spots and dismantles the booby trap—two pistols set to discharge—in a parcel delivered to Harley and in retrospect wonders at his unaccustomed presence of mind.

The *Journal* reveals much about Swift's pride. When Harley offers him a fifty pound bank note, he returns it and refuses to see that Minister for three days. On 29 September 1711, he is at court, where, he admits, "I am so proud I make all the lords come up to me." But in spite of his prickliness and his harsh judgments—Sir Andrew Fountaine's brother is "an ignorant, worthless, scoundrel rake" and the Bishop of Raphoe "an old, doting, perverse coxcomb"—he is far from heartless. For all Dr. Johnson's denunciation of him as one who "relieved without pity, and assisted without kindness," Swift is capable of admirable compassion for the unfortunate. After the Duke of Hamilton is treacherously stabbed, he spends two hours with the bereaved Duchess and confides in his journal-letter, "She has moved my very soul." When his servant disrupts his plan for an early meeting with the Secretary of State by admitting a petitioner, he observes, "I think indeed his case is hard; but Gd knows whether I shall be able to do him any service."

Swift's judgments of people are apt to run to extremes. Sometimes, having built them up in his imagination, he suffers when his illusion is



cracked or even shattered. The fictional bookseller – in modern terms, publisher – who in 1704 appends a dedication to *A Tale of a Tub* is made to praise the unmatched virtues of the Whig Lord Somers. Seven years later Swift denounces him to Stella and Dingley as “a false deceitful rascal.” Dazzled in 1710 by the political brilliance and personal amiability of Lord Treasurer Harley and Secretary of State St. John and their early admission of him to their inner circle, he writes, “indeed it is hard to see these great men use me like one who was their betters, and the puppies with you in Ireland hardly regarding me.” In time he finds that though the restoration of peace in Europe depends on their efforts, both men can be distracted from their duty. “The Devil’s in this secretary,” he exclaims, and laments that Harley is “the greatest procrastinator in the world” and that his “great fault” is that he “cannot do all himself; and will not employ others.”

At times Swift does not scruple to lie: he promises Lord Shelburn to receive him when he calls knowing that he will do no such thing, and he tells Lord Radnor he is devoted to him when in truth he would “not care if he were hanged.” Otherwise, however, he is a strict moralist: “I give no man liberty to swear or talk b–dy,” he writes, explaining why he made an early departure from the company at St. John’s, and in his pamphlet “A Letter to a Young Clergyman Lately Entered into Holy Orders,” he asserts that the real purpose of freethinking is to excuse the “universal corruption of morals.” Nevertheless, he is free enough from self-righteousness to admit transgressors to his affection and companionship and to admire their good qualities. The Duchess of Orkney, mistress of the late William III, he terms the “wisest woman I ever saw,” and he discovers she is “perfectly kind.” He recognizes that St. John has been “a thorough rake” and is still a heavy drinker; on one occasion, Swift suspects that he (a married man) “stole away ... to pick up some wench.”

More complicated than admiration or friendship, though it includes both, is Swift’s relationship with his most intimate correspondent. Something of a father, a lover, and a tutor to Stella, he tells her that he loves her “infinitely above all earthly things.” He corrects her spelling and urges her to continue cultivating her mind by reading or being read to and to improve her health by walking. He remembers how she chides him “for meddling in othr peoples affairs” and reveals what a strong willed woman she is, for St. John, “when he is well ... is like Stella, and will not be governed” and once, when liable to sickness, “would needs drink champagne ... because I advised him against it, and now he pays for it; Stella used to do such tricks formerly; he put me in mind of her.”

As the *Journal* advances, a new element of suspense enters into it. Hazards threaten the signing of peace with France. The Ministry has to negotiate with the allies, especially the Dutch, who rely on a chain of for-

tresses to protect them from French aggression and who want economic concessions. Swift has to dampen a rising power struggle between St. John and Harley; the opposition fears Louis XIV cannot be trusted to keep any agreement; the sick Queen Anne has to be persuaded to create new peers to obtain a slender majority for peace in the House of Lords—her own sympathies are uncertain, and her life, on which the survival of the Ministry depends, is fragile. As the wished for Treaty of Utrecht comes nearer, Swift's anxiety about his own future increases. Now forty-five years of age, he has disdained to work for pay and would be ashamed to return to Ireland as a humble country clergyman. Moreover, he got used to being one of the most influential men in Britain and has acquired a circle of prized literary friends. England is where he wants to stay—as a dean or a bishop. The *Journal* records his anxiety and humiliation. He has made enemies as well as friends—and some of those enemies have the Queen's ear. He has obtained positions for others, and as early as March 1712 he notes, "this is te 7th I have now provided for since I came, & can do nothing for my self." Nine months later, sending a stop order to his printer, he resolves, "I will contract no more enemies, at least I will not imbitter worse than I have already, till I have got under shelter." In April 1713, three English deaneries become vacant, but the Queen will allow him none of them. Her confidante Lady Masham is in tears as she tells her friend Swift the Queen is immovable. The tension is unbroken as Anne concedes that the deanery of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin may be given to Swift—it is the utmost she will permit. On 21 April she agrees, but next day decides not to sign the document till the 23 April. Though mortified at the prospect of spending his life in Ireland, Swift is on tenterhooks: "while it is delayd I am not sure of te Qu— my enemies being busy." But the 23rd arrives, and now only the consent of his friend the Duke of Ormonde is needed, and of that Swift has no doubt.

It is instructive to read the *Journal* alongside the other extant letters that Swift writes at the same time. Most of these are admirably clear reports of the negotiations and of English politics dispatched to William King, Archbishop of Dublin. Sometimes he and King argue tactfully about the cases for and against peace. To other correspondents there are occasional playful and charming letters: he tells General John Hill how hard it is to hold on to the wonderful French snuffbox he has sent him, and he teases the Duchess of Ormonde, who sends him the Duke's portrait along with her own, that she is such a prude that she will not allow even her picture to be alone with a man other than her husband. But the texture of the journal-letters to Stella and Dingley is altogether different: "you must have chat," he exclaims, "and I must say every sorry thing that comes into my head." Having answered one of their letters, he adds, "O Lord, I am

in a high vein of silliness; methought I was speaking to dearest little MD face to face." "MD" is part of the system of pet abbreviations and childish pronunciation—"don't you remember Madam" becomes "dont oo lemembre Maram"—found in what he calls "our little language." "Do you know what?" he asks; "when I am writing in our language I make up my mouth just as if I was speaking it." The letters of the *Journal to Stella* give us a remarkable picture of Swift's consciousness. The cluster of thoughts and feelings recorded there is the matrix from which arise the well-ordered letters to William King and the political pamphlets and poems supporting the cause of peace.

On 15 December 1711, Swift confides to Stella and Dingley that if the Tory Government falls he will go into hiding for some months. There is widespread fear that men suspected, rightly or wrongly, of defying the Act of Settlement of 1701 by intriguing to bring James II's Roman Catholic son to the throne will suffer imprisonment or even execution, and, after the Peace and the fall of the Tory Government, Robert Harley, now Lord Oxford, is charged with treason and held in the Tower of London, though he is eventually acquitted, and Henry St. John, now Lord Bolingbroke, evades arrest by fleeing to France, where for a while he joins the Pretender's court. Returning permanently to Ireland in August 1714, Swift is suspect, but being in fact a staunch supporter of the Protestant succession is only vulnerable to guilt by association. When Archbishop King, near the end of a distinctly friendly letter, refers to a rumour that Bolingbroke will be allowed to return and adds, "I hope he can tell no ill story of you," the remark could be casual and almost flippant, but Swift is prickly enough to protest:

I am surprised to think your grace could talk, or act, or correspond with me for some years past, while you must needs believe me a most false and vile man, declaring to you on all occasions my abhorrence of the pretender and yet privately engaged with a ministry to bring him in; and therefore warning me to look to myself and prepare my defence against a false brother coming over to discover such secrets as would hang me.

Being subject to investigation—his mail is sometimes intercepted—is only one of the causes of Swift's unhappiness during his first years back in Ireland. His letters reveal that it is a time when nothing seems to go right for him. His ecclesiastical chores seem petty and irksome, and he is forced to argue about the claims of applicants for clerical posts. He struggles to promote his view that the Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral is more than *primus inter pares* in its governing Chapter. Archbishop King schemes

to limit his power, and his choir defies his authority. His bitterness is the greater for his having been given an office that leaves him for a year or two in debt—the thousand pounds he expected for his services in England is never paid.

In the comfortless deanery, Swift finds the servants are clumsy and ill behaved. To his great friend, the much younger English poet Alexander Pope, Swift describes how,

I live in the corner of a vast unfurnished house: my family consists of a steward, a groom, a helper in the stable, a footman, and an old maid, who are all at board-wages; and when I do not dine abroad or make an entertainment (which last is very rare), I eat a mutton-pie and drink half a pint of wine.

Swift hates Dublin, but discovers that his fine grounds at Laracor have been allowed to fall into ruin, and his failure to find a reliable horse deprives him of much of the riding that is so important both for his duties and his health: “Everybody,” he writes to a friend, “can get horses but I.” The Irish Parliament he despises and shuns, and he suffers from the lack of the brilliant friends and the formidable respect that surrounded him in London. In May 1719, he laments to the exiled Bolingbroke, “I have an ill head and an aching heart.”

Having little alternative, Swift concentrates on his work as Dean, but spends as much time out of Dublin as he can. He purchases additional land at Laracor, where he conducts a programme of improvement and building. As he explains to Charles Ford, a fellow Irishman whom he has seen much of in London, he declines to revisit England because he would only sink into deeper gloom on his return.

A further trouble has followed him back from London. In his journal-letters to Stella he is not afraid to tell her of the safely inaccessible society ladies in whose company he delights. Lady Ashburton, the Duchess of Shrewsbury, Lady Kerry and the wife of St. John are all dignified with the phrase “a great favourite of mine.” Yet there is one young woman who was to figure largely in his life who is hardly mentioned to Stella.

In London, Swift often dines at the house of his neighbour Mrs. Vanhomrigh, where he begins to act as tutor to her elder daughter, Hester, whom he nicknames Vanessa. This high spirited young woman has the misfortune to fall in love with the worldly, learned and witty clergyman who is by two decades her senior, so much so that after her mother’s death she takes up residence in Ireland to pursue him. Before she dies in 1723, some painful correspondence is to pass between them.

A fetching breathlessness in some of Vanessa's letters shows something of the attractiveness this vivacious but not very studious girl: Swift wonders "how a brat that cannot read can possibly write so well." By calling on her, others beside himself, he explains, are becoming objects of "the tattle of this nasty town." He is ready enough to help with the legal and financial difficulties that follow her mother's death, but his poem "Cadenus and Vanessa" fails to persuade her that her tutor will never be her lover. In Dublin, he shies away from the woman who gushes, "I was born with violent passions, which terminate all in one, that inexpressible passion I have for you." The native wit, high spirits and beauty of Vanessa cannot compete with the more substantial virtues of Stella, and after the former dies in June 1723, the embarrassed Dean finds it prudent to retreat for some months from Dublin and its gossip.

In many of the letters Swift writes in the earlier years of his deanship, he pours out his undying indignation at his banishment from his British friends and power base, as well as from the fertile landscape of prosperous England. He reserves his deepest disgust for Dublin: "the most disagreeable place in Europe," he dubs the city where he had once enjoyed a comfortable social life in a clerical circle of which Stella and Dingley were part. Bitterly he complains, too, of the increasing attacks of what is now diagnosed as Menière's disease, attacks that rob him of his hearing and afflict him with fits of giddiness. "As to myself," he informs his London printer, John Barber, in 1735,

I am grown leaner than you were when we parted last and am never wholly free from giddiness and weakness, and sickness in my stomach.... I ride a dozen miles as often as I can, and always walk the streets, except in the night, which my head will not suffer me to do.... My chief support is French wine, which, although not equal to yours, I drink a bottle to myself every day. I keep three horses, two men, and an old woman, in a large empty house, and dine half the week, like a king, by myself.

The darkness of the rage and resentment in Swift is relieved by gleams of consolation. He emerges from debt: "next to health," he tells a friend, "a man's fortune is the tenderest point." If the city he is doomed to live in is a place "which it is a shame for any man of worth to call his home," he finds a pleasure in fleeing to the estates of wealthy friends. He even discovers some joy in borrowing the dilapidated and badly staffed house his friend Thomas Sheridan owns in the wilderness of Quilca, and he exclaims in delight that the well-cultivated land at Lough-Gall makes him think he is in England. A considerable solace he lights on is landscape gardening,

primarily in "Naboth's vineyard," an enclosure which he has walled near his Cathedral at the enormous cost of £600: he tells his friend Knightly Chetwode, "I am as busy in my little spot of a town garden as ever I was in the *grand monde*."

In 1724, angered even more than hitherto by the discriminatory rulings of the Westminster Government and the absence of Irish self-help, Swift publishes his anonymous Drapier's Letters to thwart a British attempt to impose a debased currency on Ireland. Although his surviving correspondence makes only meagre reference to the campaign, one of his letters to Harley's son shows that he triumphs in the unanimous acclaim his struggle brings him. The authorship of the Letters is an open secret, but no one in Dublin is willing to name him to the authorities to make a prosecution possible, and he especially rejoices that his call to arms unites Irish Whigs and Tories, whose mutual animosity is even more ferocious than that of their English counterparts. Political hatred of this kind he lambasts as he writes his greatest book, *Gulliver's Travels*. Sailing back to England at last in 1726 to arrange its publication, he thinks how the pleasure the visit brings will increase the pain of living in Ireland, but returning to Britain again the following year, he seems briefly to re-enter the feverish political life he enjoyed under Harley as he aids Bolingbroke, who, with his periodical *The Craftsman*, is vainly trying to end the rule of the Whig Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole. Standing back from the fray, as he does when he writes *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift shows his wisdom by telling Pope that his book is intended to demonstrate "the falsity of that definition *animal rationale*," which "should be only *rationis capax*." All history confirms that the human species is indeed not a rational animal but only an animal capable of reason.

Happily, the playful side of Swift, the punster and the wit, is not extinguished, and there are a handful of delightful letters to Mrs. Howard, waiting woman to the Princess of Wales and the Prince's mistress: in one he impersonates Gulliver and in another claims to have been bitten by a houyhnhm, one of the wise horses in the last book of *Gulliver's Travels*. He can even write to her of his deafness and giddiness as "two friends," who, "being old acquaintances have now thought fit to come together," and in the same letter assert that if he makes such slips of the pen as "knights of a share for knights of a shire; monster for minister" and "sneaker" for "speaker," it "cannot be helped, while I have a hundred oceans rolling in my ears."

Just before the publication of *Gulliver's Travels* in October 1726, Swift becomes distraught at the news that Stella, now on the other side of the Irish Sea, may be dying. Reading his confession to friends that he is about to be deprived of what is most precious in his life, one may be reminded of

Dorothy Osborne's despair at the prospect of losing William Temple. Stella and Dingley, he tells the Reverend James Stopford, are "the two oldest and dearest friends I have in the world," and he bursts out to Thomas Sheridan,

I have been long weary of the world and shall for my small remainder of years be weary of life, having for ever lost that conversation which could only make it tolerable.

Another year and a half, however, pass before Swift suffers the dreaded bereavement. He has confessed to Sheridan that he will not be able to bear it "like a philosopher nor altogether like a Christian," but in the event he rallies, and a month after Stella's decease he writes a playful, affectionate letter to his and Pope's friend Martha Blount. "Dear Patty," he begins, "I am told you have a mind to receive a letter from me, which is a very indecent declaration in a young lady."

As Swift ages and suffers increasing bouts of deafness and giddiness, he adjusts his lifestyle to his affliction, curbing his travels and deciding that his companions will be of "a middle kind both for understanding and fortune, who are perfectly easy, never impertinent, complying in everything." Such people he can freely see and dismiss. A happy find is the learned but feckless and unhappily married schoolmaster Dr. Thomas Sheridan, whose portrait is the most vivid to emerge from Swift's later letters. With him, he exchanges verses and engages in playful language games. One letter to Sheridan begins:

I suppose you are now angle ling with your tack ling in a purr ling stream, or pad ling and say ling in a boat, or sad ling your stum ling horse with a sap ling in your hands, and snare ling at your groom, or set ling your affairs, or tick ling your cat, or tat ling with your neighbour Price.

Among his own relatives Swift is fond only of Mrs. Whiteway, whose letters testify to her intelligence and wit.

Swift continues to deplore his banishment to Ireland, where he feels "an obscure exile in a most obscure and enslaved country." With good reason, he continues to rage at Britain's refusing Ireland the right to import and export freely and her filling Irish civil and ecclesiastical posts with interlopers of English birth. Feeling more and more solitary but awake to his well-earned reputation as an Irish patriot, he declares, "My English friends are all either dead or in exile.... And as to this country, I am only a favourite of my old friends the rabble, and I return their love because I know none

else who deserve it." His excuse for the length of a letter concludes, "my solitary way of life is apt to make me talkative upon paper."

In 1732, when the possibility of a clerical post in England eventually opens up, Swift declines it on two grounds. Given the higher cost of living there, he would not be able to afford the large house, servants, horses and good wine that his ill health makes necessary – though the rents and tithes are hard to collect in Ireland, and he is perpetually anxious about his finances. In addition, he would suffer a decline in rank and lose his independence. He would prefer "to be a freeman among slaves rather than a slave among freemen." He explains to Pope:

I am one of the governors of all the hackney coaches, carts, and carriages, round this town, who dare not insult me like your rascally waggons or coachmen, but give me the way; nor is there one lord or squire for a hundred of yours to turn me out of the road or run over me with their coaches and six.

As the 1730s advance, Swift becomes disillusioned also with England feeling that Sir Robert Walpole is establishing arbitrary power which will lead to absolute monarchy. In a letter to Walpole's opponent William Pulteney, he argues:

It is altogether impossible for any nation to preserve its liberty long under a tenth part of the present luxury, infidelity, and a million of corruptions. We see the Gothic system of limited monarchy is extinguished in all the nations of Europe. It is utterly extirpated in this wretched kingdom, and yours must be the next.

Swift refers to infidelity, for he believes there cannot be stability without a national church, and he remains convinced that the Test Acts, which restrict public life to Anglicans, must be retained. In 1736 he observes that it has invariably been the maxim "of all wise Christian governments" to have "some established religion, leaving at best a toleration to others."

The condition of Ireland, which suffers grievously from absentee landlords and other evils, looms large in Swift's correspondence as in his published writings. Pope is invited to

Imagine a nation, the two-thirds of whose revenues are spent out of it, and who are not permitted to trade with the other third, and where the pride of women will not suffer them to wear their own manufactures, even where they excel what come from abroad.



Cut off from his best friends, the companions of his glory days, especially Pope and Bolingbroke, Swift is convinced that God “never intended anything like perfect happiness in the present life” and prizing friendship as its dearest treasure, he confides to Pope that he envies but does not love an amiable and popular man who is not troubled by the death of one of his many companions: “he gets another or takes up with the rest, and is no more moved than at the loss of his cat.” Swift is especially cast down by the loss of the poet John Gay and the physician Dr. Arbuthnot. About the latter he exclaims, “O if the world had but a dozen Arbuthnots in it, I would burn my *Travels*.” Gay is among the younger men and women whom Swift is pleased to admonish for their failings as he used to admonish Stella and Vanessa. They include his country hostess Lady Acheson, his Irish friend of London days Charles Ford, Gay’s patron the Duchess of Queensbury, and his cousin Mrs. Whiteway. When Mrs. Pilkington complains at his scolding, he warns her, “If you cannot keep a secret and take a chiding you will quickly be out of my sphere. Corrigible people are to be chid; those who are otherwise may be very safe from any lectures of mine.”

For the older Swift, the value of friendship far outweighs the value of fame. But though in one mood he recollects that in youth he longed for fame, in another, written half a year later, he dismisses desire of posthumous fame as a youthful folly but says that he still desires it: “because I cannot be a great lord I would acquire what is a kind of *subsidium*, I would endeavour that my betters should seek me by the merit of something distinguishable, instead of my seeking them.”

During this decade, Swift’s complaints of deafness and giddiness come to be accompanied more and more by laments that his memory is fading away and with it his power to compose verse. In 1735 he tells Mrs. Whiteway, “Earthly ladies forsake us at forty, and the muses discard us at fifty-five,” and early in 1736 he admits to Pope, “I can as easily write a poem in the Chinese language as in my own.” Two years further on, he refers to “my memory almost entirely gone, except what I retain of former times and friends.” When he finds he needs to employ Mrs. Whiteway to write to Pope on his behalf, it is clear that the end approaches, and his short last letters to Mrs. Whiteway, penned in May and July 1740, are the agonized final cries of this man of genius disintegrating in mind and body.

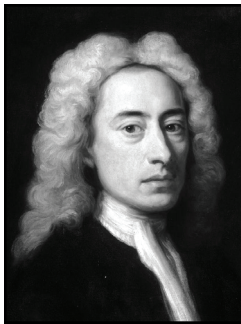
Reading Swift’s letters alongside his other writings, one comes close to this author, who is reputed to be so enigmatic. A proud, irascible, worrying man, he belongs to the more traditional wing of those who contribute to the work of the Age of Reason. Conscious of his mental powers but inheriting no fortune, he is compelled to make his own way in the world. From the letters he receives in his Irish exile, it is apparent that he is a delightful companion and a great humourist among his intimates, but all too

*JONATHAN SWIFT*

often his anger, contempt and exasperated compassion are excited by the suffering that springs from human folly, vice and tyranny. In his belief, the only stay against these horrors is constitutional government with a balance of powers supported by a steady, unfanatical, established religion typified by the Anglican Middle Way.



## PUTTING A SPIN ON IT ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744)



Like Jonathan Swift, his younger friend Alexander Pope is a man of extraordinary gifts who has to struggle against heavy obstacles to make them fruitful. While Swift is fatherless, poor and Anglo-Irish, Pope is crippled, chronically ill, and a Roman Catholic. As a Catholic, he can neither attend a university nor take part in public life, but he wins his way as the leading poet of his age, and by laboring for years over his collaborative translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, he eventually attains financial security.

financial security.

Scrutinising a soon-to-be published collection of Pope's and Swift's correspondence, their mutual friend Lord Orrery sees nothing in Pope's letters that need be omitted, but notes that "In the dean's are some sharp sayings of a very high nature, and what may give room for his enemies to alarm, if not to molest him." Orrery here pinpoints the essential difference between the letters of the two satirists. Swift, often driven by a cold fury at humankind's self-inflicted suffering, can pour his whole self into his letters, while Pope, who in his poems can bite at his enemies like a ferocious dog, creates through his correspondence a sanitized self-portrait.

In the eighteenth-century press, literary controversy is pursued in a spirit that would hardly be tolerated today. Not content with assailing his views and denigrating his poetic abilities, Pope's enemies provoke his rage by mocking his stunted body and making unjustified attacks on his character. On his part, Pope acts with a deviousness for which he cannot escape blame. Thus he deceives—or tries to deceive—even his most cherished friends into thinking that he has had no part in allowing the disreputable publisher Edmund Curll to get possession of his letters, that he bears no responsibility for the printing of correspondence between himself and Swift, and that he is not the author of the risqué poem "Sober Advice to Horace." He is equally unscrupulous in denying that his treacherous

attacks on Lady Mary Wortley Montagu under the name of Sappho are directed at her.

In manoeuvring Curll into issuing a volume of his supposedly purloined letters, Pope's aim is to have an excuse to publish, in 1737, his own "authentic" collection—which is not, in fact, authentic. It is designed to reinforce the effect of his 1735 poem "An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot" in painting a well-laundered self-portrait. Through his letters, he seeks to persuade others—and himself—that he is a better man than he is. Though he will not face up to his vices, the virtues that he claims he really does possess. He is a devoted son, a charitable man, with rare exceptions a loyal friend, and a faithful if rationalistic Roman Catholic for whom the disabilities of Protestants in Italy are as loathsome as those of Catholics in England. Repeatedly, Pope asserts that it is better to be a good man than a good poet, though when his lifelong friend John Caryll sends him his grandson's verses, he maintains that a young man's being a good poet "is no small thing, and, I believe, no small earnest of his being a good man." On his own part, he tries hard to believe that his only serious ambition is to be a virtuous human being. To Caryll he writes in 1716:

As for myself, who am a single, unconcerned, and independent creature in the world, who have no interests at my heart but those of mankind, — a general good-will to all men of good-will, — I shall be content to wear away a life of no importance in any safe obscurity.

In 1741 he tells the Earl of Marchmont, "I am determined to publish no more in my lifetime ... I never had any uneasy desire of fame or keen resentment of injuries." Yet while he is ready to boast to the poet Aaron Hill, "I do know certainly, my moral life is superior to that of most of the wits of these days," he is aware he is no saint and looks up to the purer virtue of his co-religionists and dear friends John Caryll and Hugh Bethel. Other friends with whom he conducts notable correspondences are the distinguished lawyer William Fortescue; the handsome Roman Catholic sisters Teresa and Martha Blount; the businessman and philanthropist Ralph Allen; his fellow writers Jonathan Swift, John Gay and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu; the statesman and Deist philosopher Lord Bolingbroke; his patron the second Earl of Oxford; and the great builders and landscape gardeners Lord Burlington and Lord Bathurst. As Maynard Mack observes, Pope has "an unusual talent for friendship." The most prized of all his friends are Swift, Gay and Bolingbroke.

Of the poet's letters to most of these correspondents, we happily possess either the manuscripts or posthumous printed texts, but some—espe-

cially most of those to Swift – survive only in the versions in his purportedly “authentic” collections. Enough manuscripts of letters in these volumes are extant to show that Pope heavily doctored those he published, frequently combining portions from different ones, ascribing some to the wrong addressee, and less culpably making stylistic revisions. He is a James Howell caught in the act.

Yet in an age of great letter-writers, Pope has a worthy place among the lesser practitioners of the art, and as he ages, his skill increases. Many of his early letters expound his thoughts on a subject and hardly seem to be addressing a specific individual: with very little trimming they could stand as periodical essays. His later letters chronicle most of his major preoccupations and do much to create a picture of his daily life. In times of political crisis, he fears the implementation of harsher measures against Roman Catholics, and he long nurses a fierce resentment at the Government’s banishment of his friend Bishop Atterbury on account of the latter’s Jacobite sympathies. The burden of translating Homer and of editing Shakespeare haunts him for years as he feels he has “become, by due gradation of dulness, from a poet, a translator, and from a translator, a mere editor.”

Pope’s tender and slightly flirtatious friendship with the sisters Teresa and Martha Blount, women of his own generation, survives his falling passionately in love with the married Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. When the latter leaves England in 1716 to accompany her husband to Turkey, he is terrified for her safety, and he even has thoughts of travelling to Italy when she is there. After she returns to Britain, the friendship between them is broken – a plausible story is that she bursts into laughter when the stunted little man makes an open declaration of love – and he swings from adulation to abuse. In time Pope is also alienated from Teresa Blount, who seems, after the death of her father, to start acting the tyrant over her aged mother and her younger sister while conducting a relationship with a married man. The younger sister, Martha, remains the poet’s closest female friend; there are even rumours that they are secretly married although Pope is almost an invalid, as the many references in his letters to his fevers, headaches, and troubled stomach remind the reader. Writing to Caryll, the godfather of Martha, he laments that her loyalty to her family prevents her from escaping from her sufferings.

During the fifteen years from 1718 to 1733, Pope lives in dread of losing his mother, and he tends her with the utmost care, which involves curtailing his journeys to stay in friends’ houses. In the correspondence, we follow the ups and downs of his emotion as she repeatedly sinks and rallies: he watches her, he writes as early as 1718, “with such a solemn pious kind of officiousness as a melancholy recluse watches the last risings and fallings of a dying taper.” By the time she expires, he is also grieving over

the poet Gay's decease and Swift's continued exile in Ireland and is longing for the temporary residence of Lord Bolingbroke – "the greatest man I ever knew," he assures Ralph Allen, "and one of the best friends" – to become permanent.

While Pope sorrows over the absence of those he loves, he shows a good-humoured resignation to the infirmity of what he can call "my own carcase (very little suited to my soul) my worst enemy." His fragility makes travelling over uneven roads a grave hardship, and without a companion an impossibility. It does not, happily, suppress his ardour for practising the art of landscape gardening in the five acres he rents beside the Thames at Twickenham. Referring to his recent counsel to Lord Bathurst, he writes to Ralph Allen in the autumn of 1736,

I am now as busy in planting for myself as I was lately in planting for another; and I thank God for every wet day and for every fog that gives me the headache, but prospers my works.

Pope especially delights in the famous Grotto that he constructs under the road bisecting his land and that he adorns with glittering minerals and an alabaster lamp. Here he can retreat and imagine that he has withdrawn from the degeneration that he likes to insist has overtaken the present age. To the statesman James Craggs, he complains in 1715 that "the spirit of dissension is gone forth among us ... old England is no longer old England, that region of hospitality, society, and good humour. Party affects us all." Nine years later, he informs a son of Baron Digby that in London, "Instead of the four cardinal virtues, now reign four courtly ones: we have cunning for prudence, rapine for justice, time-serving for fortitude, and luxury for temperance."

Besides bereavements and his ill health, the experience of aging probably helps to sour Pope's later outlook on the world. To Swift he laments:

You ask me if I have got any supply of new friends to make up for those that are gone? I think that impossible, for not our friends only, but so much of ourselves is gone by the mere flux and course of years, that were the same friends to be restored to us, we could not be restored to ourselves to enjoy them.

Pope seems also to be vexed by his need to reply to attacks on his religious orthodoxy following the publication of his ambitious poem *An Essay on Man*. To one ardent admirer, the writer Henry Brooke, he declares in 1739:

I sincerely worship God, believe in his revelations, resign to his dispensations, love all his creatures, am in charity with all denominations of Christians, however violently they treat each other, and detest none so much as that profligate race who would loosen the bands of morality, either under the pretence of religion or free-thinking. I hate no man as a man, but I but I hate vice in any man; I hate no sect, but I hate uncharitableness in any sect.

When Bishop Attenbury vainly suggests he become a Protestant and advises him to read “the best controversies between the churches,” Pope replies:

Shall I tell you a secret? I did so at fourteen years old (for I loved reading, and my father had no other books) ... and the consequence was, that I found myself a Papist and a Protestant by turns, according to the last book I read. I am afraid most seekers are in the same case, and when they stop, they are not so properly converted, as outwitted.

Scattered through Pope’s correspondence are memorable individual letters enriched by his touches of humour and power of description. As might be expected from the poet of *The Rape of the Lock*, he can strike a playful note. Wishing the Blount sisters good Catholic husbands, he reminds them of the pleasures of an allowance for their personal needs and pleasures:

O pin-money! dear, desirable pin-money! in thee are included all the blessings of woman! In thee are comprised fine clothes, fine lodgings, fine operas, fine masquerades, fine fellows. Foh! Says Mrs. Teresa, at this last article—and so I hold my tongue.

Many of the letters concern the publishing of his works, and to entertain the Earl of Burlington, Pope skewers his publisher Bernard Lintot in an imaginary dialogue between Lintot and himself when they meet on horseback in Windsor Forest. “My Lord,” Pope begins his letter, “if your mare could speak, she would give you an account of what extraordinary company she had on the road; which since she cannot do, I will.” After asking Pope to translate an ode of Horace into English verse, Lintot complains he is too slow, and when Pope asks him how he manages the translators he employs, he replies:

Sir, those are the saddest pack of rogues in the world: in a hungry fit, they’ll swear they understand all the languages in the universe. I have known one of them take down a Greek book



upon my counter, and cry, Ah, this is Hebrew, I must read it from the latter end. By G-d, I can never be sure in these fellows, for I neither understand Greek, Latin, French, nor Italian myself.

Pope can also convey his real experience of travel, as he does when he writes to Teresa and Martha Blount of his journey to Oxford in 1717:

having passed through my favourite woods in the forest, with a thousand reveries of past pleasures, I rid over hanging hills, whose tops were edged with groves, and whose feet watered with winding rivers, listening to the falls of cataracts below, and the murmuring of the winds above ... About a mile before I reached Oxford, all the bells tolled in different notes; the clocks of every college answered one another, and sounded forth (some in deeper, some in softer tone) that it was eleven at night.

Very different from Oxford, with its “old walls, venerable galleries, stone porticoes, studious walks, and solitary scenes,” is the city of Bath. In 1714 Pope admits to Martha:

I have slid, I cannot tell how, into all the amusements of this place: my whole day is shared by the pump-assemblies, the walks, the chocolate-houses, raffling-shops, plays, medleys, &c.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is also a beneficiary of the poet’s descriptive skill when Pope sends her his observations on “a genuine ancient country seat eighty miles from London”:

You must expect nothing regular in my description of a house that seems to be built before rules were in fashion.... A stranger would be grievously disappointed who should ever think to get into this house the right way; one would expect after entering through the porch to be let into the hall; alas! nothing less; you find yourself in a brewhouse. From the parlour you think to step into the drawing-room; but upon opening the iron-nailed door, you are convinced by a flight of birds about your ears, and a cloud of dust in your eyes, that it is the pigeon-house.... Over the parlour window hangs a sloping balcony, which time has turned to a very convenient penthouse. The top is crowned with a very venerable tower, so like that of the church just by, that the jackdaws build in it as if it were the true steeple.

Despite Pope’s later feud with Lady Mary, his letters show his capacity for love and for friendship, his pleasure in travel, and his delight in land-

scape gardening. They embody his concern for his reputation and reveal his sometimes devious literary conduct. His way of coping with his physical disability and his suffering from bereavements also have a place in them. However, for a picture of the whole man, so rich in virtues and vices, we must turn to his poetry. There we find in full measure his loyalties and his waspishness, his faith and his scatology, and above all his vision of the perpetual struggle of civilization – material, intellectual, and moral – to sustain itself against the encroachment of barbarism and depravity.



**NO ONE'S OBEDIENT SERVANT**  
**LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU (1689-**  
**1762)**



**T**o pass from Alexander Pope to his friend, later his enemy, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, is to pass from a major poet and minor letter-writer to a major letter-writer and minor poet. For a lover of epistolary literature, to arrive from earlier examples at the letters of Lady Mary is like emerging from the confines of a river—even a broad one—to the open sea. Here is a correspondent who mingles pictures of people and places with passages of introspection, scathing wit with reflections on destiny, political comment with literary criticism, and talk of children with outbursts against superstition.

The eldest child of Evelyn Pierrepont, who inherits the earldom of Kingston the year after her birth, is only three when her mother dies and leaves her, her two sisters, and her brother to the care of their pleasure-loving aristocratic father. As a young girl, Lady Mary Pierrepont loves to study and by assiduous application to grammar and dictionary learns enough Latin to read the Roman poets—no mean achievement—but she also takes pleasure in the company of her more conventional contemporaries.

In February 1710, when her friend Anne Wortley dies suddenly, Lady Mary enters on a correspondence with Anne's handsome brother, eleven years older than herself; he is a Member of Parliament and a close friend of the prominent writers Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. Edward Wortley, with whom she has already had some acquaintance, is dazzled, as well he might be, by her wit, intellect and learning, as well as her beauty. (At this time, few women learn Latin.) She is ready to marry him if her father consents, but Wortley rejects the latter's demand that he entail his estate—that is, settle it inalienably—on their eldest son: however his grandson turns out, he is not going to have him a beggar. The courtship

continues in a clandestine but stormy fashion. Wortley, probably misinterpreting Lady Mary's liveliness, seems to fear she may be a flirt who is trifling with him, and his accusations arouse her anger. On her part, failing to recognize that his passion is what makes him fearful, she charges him with deceiving her into wrongly imagining that he loves her. Admitting that she feels great esteem and liking for him rather than romantic ardour, she confesses that there are some aspects of his temperament she could wish were different. The unhappy pair are like swimmers trapped under water but occasionally reaching the surface for a welcome gasp of air. Eventually stalemate degenerates into crisis when the Earl decides he can browbeat his twenty-three-year-old daughter into marrying the Honourable Clotworthy Skeffington, an heir to wealth and title, but a man she detests. In a memorable letter, which seems to belong to the world of Restoration comedy, she tells Wortley how, at her father's suggestion, she has consulted all her closest relatives and is dismayed to find they view her as "a little romantic" who would be altogether "unreasonable" to reject her father's choice. She finds herself tottering, poised between the anguish of being yoked to Skeffington and the fear of losing her father's affection as well as the fortune she should inherit. In terror, she warns Wortley that his love and their happiness will not survive unless they settle on a congenial lifestyle, and that he must not expect her father to "come to terms" after an elopement. Prudently, this "little romantic" confesses:

Tis something odd for a woman that brings nothing to expect any thing; but after the way of my education, I dare not pretend to live but in some degree suitable to it. I had rather die than return to a dependancy upon relations I have disobliged.

To read the subsequent letters is to be caught up in the suspense that engulfs both Wortley and Lady Mary as her father begins to suspect she has a secret suitor and she finds she is not strong enough to stand firm but confesses her attachment and makes a promise she has no intention of keeping. Closely watched, she is dispatched to the family house at West Dean in Wiltshire; Wortley shadows the coach and is suspected at one point of being a highwayman. Although he fails to snatch her away in mid-journey, she succeeds in eloping with him from West Dean, and they are married at Salisbury in August 1712, just under a month after she has reported that her relatives side with her father.

The young women in Lady Mary's immediate circle speak of marriage to one's true love as Paradise, marriage to a man one hates as Hell, and a marriage that falls between these extremes as Limbo. If her sister Lady Francis Pierrepont is to be relied on, Lady Mary, having expected her

elopement to lead to Limbo, finds herself in Paradise. Her letters indeed confirm that she now feels an intense love for her husband. A few weeks after the elopement, when he is away tending to his father's business (happily, *his* family accepts the match) and neglects to write, she tells him, "'Tis the most cruel thing in the world, to think one has reason to complain of what one loves" and a year later she laments, "I had rather be quite alone and hear sometimes from you, than in any company and not have that satisfaction. Your silence makes me more melancholy than any solitude, and I can think on nothing so dismal as that you forget me." When their son, born in May 1713, is still a baby, she is sad that his father never asks about him when he writes to her. Does paternal neglect bear some responsibility for the boy's turning out badly?

Though twenty-seven years are to elapse between the marriage and the couple's separation, there are early signs in the correspondence that once Wortley wins the elusive prize, his passion begins to wane and his suspicions of Lady Mary start to revive. Less than four months into their wedded life, she writes of how a friendly robin has kept her company for nearly a whole afternoon, only to be told that she must have been enjoying a different kind of company than the bird's to prevent her from writing sooner.

Lord Pierrepont becomes reconciled to his disobedient daughter and new son-in-law, but not to the extent of helping them financially, and though Wortley's father is wealthy, Wortley himself is not. However, Lady Mary helps him to live economically and in 1713 dutifully house-hunts in the provinces while he attends to his parliamentary career. By 1714 she is firmly advising him how to obtain advancement in the political world. Only one of her letters survives from 1715, when husband and wife are together in London and Lady Mary enjoys a friendship with Pope and writes her *Town Eclogues* (among her contemporaries, her poetry is much admired). At the year's end, she succumbs to the dreaded smallpox and just escapes death but loses her eyelashes and is left with a pock-marked face. It must be some consolation when, in the following spring, she is able to start preparing for the greatest adventure of her life. In April she is looking for a new nursemaid for her infant son, Edward Wortley Montagu Junior, for the boy will need to get used to her before the family's journey begins. Wortley has been appointed Britain's Ambassador to Turkey, and his wife courageously decides to accompany him.

Lady Mary is about to write her most famous letters, but at this point we find ourselves back in the territory of James Howell and Alexander Pope. These letters survive imperfectly in a manuscript she herself prepared, probably with posthumous publication in mind. As Robert Halsband shows, she freely combines passages from letters of different dates and to

different recipients and cuts out most of the personal messages and domestic details. Exceptionally, she once has an amanuensis copy three letters into the manuscript with little or no alteration and, at the opposite extreme, takes the accounts of her travel across Hungary and her Mediterranean voyage from a journal. Three letters to Wortley and two written in French survive independently of the manuscript.

The collection of Turkish letters, which was rapturously received in 1763, on its first publication, falls neatly into two parts. The first narrates the family's six-month progression—they left London in August 1716—across Christian Europe; the second records the discovery of an alien world in Turkish territory and covers the journey home.

Though shorn of much that seemed ephemeral, the letters are by no means impersonal. Lady Mary executes Lady Bristol's commission to seek out desirable fabrics, wonders whether she should take "the fine things" Pope writes to her for "wit and raillery," and disagrees with her husband as to whether Constantinople or London is the larger. She takes great pleasure in contrasts, sometimes comparing what she finds abroad with what her correspondents know at home. Prosperous Rotterdam is cleaner and neater than London, and Nijmegen is a Nottingham with fortifications added. Observing the contrast within Germany between the flourishing free towns and the run-down princely states, she writes,

I cannot help fancying one under the figure of a handsome clean Dutch citizen's wife, and the other like a poor town lady of pleasure, painted and ribboned out in her head-dress, with tarnished silver-laced shoes and a ragged under-petticoat, a miserable mixture of vice and poverty.

Equally striking if less serious is the contrast she finds at Vienna between a delightful opera with "a great variety of machines" and changes of scene "performed with a suprising swiftness" and an absurd comedy larded with "such gross words as I don't think our mob would suffer from a moun-tebank." Something of the sprightliness that makes her so welcome at Hanover and Vienna comes out in the zest with which she retails what she observes. In Ratisbon she deplores the preoccupation of the envoys and their wives with small-minded disputes over precedence, an unfortunate obsession "in a town where there are so few diversions." Equally notable is the behaviour of married ladies in Vienna:

Here are neither coquettes nor prudes. No woman dares appear coquette enough to encourage two lovers at a time. And I have not seen any such prudes as to pretend fidelity to their husbands,

who are certainly the best natured set of people in the world, and they look upon their wives' gallants as favourably as men do upon their deputies, that take the troublesome part of their business off of their hands; though they have not the less to do; for they are generally deputies in another place themselves.

Like Swift, whom, sadly, she despises, Lady Mary can be scathing in her accounts of Calvinist and Roman Catholic practices. A Huguenot minister in Nijmegen with his "extraordinary antic gestures" seems to her exactly like Lanthorn Leatherhead, a Puritan preacher in Ben Jonson's comedy *Bartholomew Fair*, and the magnificence of a Jesuit church at Cologne sits strangely in her eyes with the "rotten teeth, dirty rags, &c." that are adorned with a "profusion of pearls, diamonds, and rubies" to be venerated as sacred relics. Worse still is her finding "the only beautiful young woman" she has seen in Vienna "buried alive in a convent." The sight provokes her to declare:

I never in my life had so little charity for the Roman-catholic religion, as since I see the misery it occasions; so many poor unhappy women! and the gross superstition of the common people, who are, some or other of them, day and night offering bits of candle to the wooden figures that are set up almost in every street.

Mischievously, Lady Mary confesses to Pope, "I have so far wandered from the discipline of the Church of England, to have been last Sunday at the opera," but she is enough of a Christian — if a rationalistic, eighteenth-century one — to be

very much scandalised at a large silver image of the Trinity, where the Father is represented under the figure of a decrepit old man, with a beard down to his knees, and a triple crown on his head, holding in his arms the Son, fixed on the cross, and the Holy Ghost, in the shape of a dove, hovering over him.

Doubtless the papal triple crown contributes to Lady Mary's disgust.

Having come from Hanover, Wortley has to present a letter from George I (who reigns over that German state as well as over Britain) to the Austrian Emperor at Vienna; after trying to persuade the Emperor to make peace with Turkey, he must then take his party back on its tracks to Hanover to receive another commission from King George. This leaves the party, which includes Wortley's three-year-old son, to face a formidable winter journey through eastern Europe to Constantinople, a journey



requiring armed escorts both in Christian lands and, after the crossing at Belgrade, in Turkish territory.

In letters written after the crossing, we begin to be taken into the homes, bathhouses, mosques and gardens of a new culture; to meet Muslim soldiers, scholars and ladies; and to share the excitement of a young English wife and mother whose girlhood dream of travel is being superbly fulfilled. Unlike most Western women in Constantinople, Lady Mary is ready to don the Turkish robe and veil and to learn the language well enough to converse in it. More open-minded than many travellers of her own and other ages, she finds a mingling of barbarism and high civilization. As a daughter of the Enlightenment, she has a high regard for the Greco-Roman world, and she writes to Pope about her recognition of customs, dress and musical instruments described in the epics of Homer and the pastorals of Theocritus. She delightedly exclaims to an unnamed lady, "I am now got into a new world, where every thing I see appears to me a change of scene." She describes the view of the Turkish capital from the sea:

for twenty miles together, down the Bosphorus, the most beautiful variety of prospects present themselves. The Asian side is covered with fruit-trees, villages, and the most delightful landscapes in nature; on the European side, stands Constantinople situate on seven hills. The unequal heights make it seem as large again as it is (though one of the largest cities in the world), shewing an agreeable mixture of gardens, pine and cypress-trees, palaces, mosques, and public buildings, raised one above another.

The architecture, too, gives Lady Mary exquisite pleasure, and she enthuses over the Mosque of Selim II at Adrianople (now Edirne):

It is situated very advantageously in the midst of the city, and in the highest part, making a very noble show. The first court has four gates, and the innermost three. They are both of them surrounded with cloisters, with marble pillars of the Ionic order, finely polished and of very lively colours; the whole pavement being white marble, the roof of the cloisters being divided into several cupolas or domes, leaded, with gilt balls on the top.

The Turkish way of life fascinates Lady Mary as long as Wortley's commission keeps the family in the country. She watches a procession of tradesmen's organisations on their way to give the "present" exacted from them to support a military campaign: "It was preceded by an *effendi* mounted on a camel, richly furnished, reading aloud the Alcoran, finely bound, laid

upon a cushion." After visiting the baths at Sofia, she confesses, "I know no European court where the ladies would have behaved themselves in so polite a manner to a stranger." She is glad to disabuse a correspondent of a false notion: the Greek Christians, she explains, "are subjects, and not slaves." Famously, she discovers the Turkish practice of inoculation against smallpox and adopts it to protect her son. "The boy was engrafted last Tuesday," she writes to her husband, "and is at this time singing and playing, and very impatient for his supper." (Seventeen days later, we find that Wortley is still giving her cause to complain that he does not ask about his son.)

In the Turkish legal system, too, Lady Mary finds elements to admire, for "many points of the Turkish law," are, she admits, "better designed and better executed than ours; particularly, the punishment of convicted liars (triumphant criminals in our country, God knows): They are burnt in the forehead with a hot iron, being proved the authors of any notorious falsehood." With her Enlightenment contempt for superstition, and even a leaning towards Deism or completely rational religion, she is glad when her conversations with a Muslim scholar convince her that the essence of Islam "is plain deism," but that this core is tricked out with "mysteries and novelties," for which humans have a "natural inclination," and it is these that cause the formation of antagonistic sects.

Combating the idea that Turkish ladies, though oppressed, are chast-er than their European counterparts, Lady Mary reports that their concealing robes and veils hide their identities and protect them from prying eyes. So disguised, those minded to do so carry on illicit amours; while an adulteress who is caught is sometimes killed, more often her relations "compound the matter for money." The great function of Turkish wives is childbearing, and in January 1718, eleven months after entering the Turkish Empire, Lady Mary earns additional respect as she is about to give birth to a daughter. The ordeal, she finds,

is not half so mortifying here as in England.... Nobody keeps their house a month for lying in; and I am not so fond of any of our customs to retain them when they are not necessary. I returned my visits at three weeks' end.

The daughter is christened Mary Stuart.

Lady Mary is equally outspoken about the defects of Turkish society and government. As her party passes through Serbia, the sufferings of the peasants from the depredations of the janissaries leave her daily "almost in tears," and when the Cadi, or chief official of a town, proves unable to obtain the pigeons she has ordered for her supper, her military atten-

dant offers to bring the man's head (how seriously is in doubt). Inheriting the Whig tradition of guarding liberty by strictly limiting the power of the crown, Lady Mary contemplates with some horror the phenomenon of a Sultan who is "the most absolute monarch upon earth, who owns no *law* but his *will*," yet is powerless to save the life of a minister who antagonizes his soldiers: "it is hard to judge," she concludes, "whether the prince, people, or ministers, are most miserable."

Although Lady Mary finds evil here as well as good, the seventeen months she spends in this land of wonders have a strong claim to be the happiest period of her life. The gracious hospitality, the beauty of land and sea, the architecture and gardens, the congenial climate, and the gratification of her curiosity about an exotic yet advanced civilization make her reluctant to leave when Wortley is unexpectedly recalled to London and the couple have to depart by sea in July 1718. Contemplating what she is leaving behind, Lady Mary even asks whether, "Considering what short-lived weak animals men are, is there any study so beneficial as the study of present pleasure?" She carefully distinguishes pleasure from vice but also from intellectual pursuits like Newton's quest for knowledge. Her protest to Pope that in England she will have to suffer "a thousand disagreeable impertinents ... receive and pay visits, make courtesies, and assist at tea-tables" carries a faint suggestion that she may not spend the rest of her life in her native land. With the advantage of hindsight, one can see a further foreshadowing of the future in her effusions over the art and palaces she discovers in Italy on her way home. "The street called Strada Nova," she writes in Genoa, "is perhaps the most beautiful line of building in the world." Contrasting Raphael, Veronese and other Renaissance artists who depict reality with the portrayers of gruesome, tormented Christs, she exclaims, "These, my beloved painters, shew nature, and shew it in the most charming light." Back at last in London, she writes to the Italian scholar the Abbé Conti, "I pray God ... since I must be contented with our scanty allowance of daylight, that I may forget the enlivening sun of Constantinople."

After the brilliance of the Turkish letters, what is to be expected from those composed at home? Robert Halsband gives the preference to the series Lady Mary writes from 1721 through 1727 to cheer her depressed sister Lady Mar, who is living at Paris—missives "spiced ... with wit to amuse and cynicism to console." While he exaggerates their merits, Isobel Grundy goes to the opposite extreme, claiming that Lady Mary is here "at her most flippant and brittle." In the best of these letters, barbed sentences puncture social vanity looking back to the gentle mockery of Dorothy Osborne and forward to the sharp-edged wit of Jane Carlyle. We hear that "B[ridget] Noel is come out Lady Milsington to the encouragement and consolation

of all the coquettes about town," while "Lady Hervey makes the top figure in town, and is so good to show twice a week at the drawing-room, and twice more at the opera, for the entertainment of the public." When Lady Mary declares, "I own I enjoy vast delight in the folly of mankind," she speaks in the spirit of Jane Austen's heroine Elizabeth Bennet, who confesses, "Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies *do* divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can."

The letters also convey family news and reports of notable happenings. In 1721, Wortley's jealous temperament and society's prurient nose for scandal cause Lady Mary nearly a year of terror. Nicolas-François Rémond, a French intellectual, threatens to publish her letters to him if she does not remit the whole of a large sum she invested at his request, although the investment has failed. After ten months of begging Lady Mar to use her good offices with him in Paris, she apparently confesses her imprudence to her husband without her fears of being made "for ever miserable" being realized. Rémond's surviving letters bear Wortley's endorsement and show, as Halsband observes, that the two were not lovers.

At times Lady Mary is able to take some pleasure in high society. Writing of the Prince of Wales's birthday celebration in 1723, she is happy to inform Lady Mar, "First you must know that I led up the ball, which you'll stare at; but what is more, I believe in my conscience I made one of the best figures there." More often, however, she grumbles about her unsatisfying life, and, at the age of thirty-six, already wishes herself ten years younger. "The coldness of this vile climate" features in her complaints as does "this sinful seacoal town" – namely London. She is glad to retreat intermittently to the comparative solitude of the house Wortley has bought at Twickenham, where she takes much pleasure in riding. Unlike the inoculation she has brought back from Turkey, her writings in prose and verse, all published anonymously or circulated in manuscript, receive only oblique mention in these letters. "Virtue in Danger," a ballad which is probably hers, turns her good friend Griselda Murray into a dangerous enemy: the poem describes a much discussed attempted rape of the lady in mocking terms, and in revenge Murray rails on the supposed author in public, once assailing her "in very Billingsgate at a masquerade." Another friend with whom Lady Mary quarrels furiously is Alexander Pope. As they print libels against each other, their venom reflects credit on neither: Lady Mary must know the falsehood of her assertion "that nobody will buy his verses except their curiosity is piqued to it, to see what is said of their acquaintance." At least, when he dies, nine years later, she writes of his will, "on the whole, it appears to me more reasonable and less vain than I expected from him."

By the later 1720s, when this verbal war is in full bloom, Lady Mary has realized that her son is the sort of boy no parent would desire. His second flight from Westminster School – he is fourteen at the time – provokes his mother into writing to Lady Mar, “My girl gives me great prospect of satisfaction, but my young rogue of a son is the most ungovernable little rake that ever played truant.”

Few of Lady Mary’s surviving letters belong to the period from 1728 through 1735, but suddenly, in 1736, a new emotion fills her with unappeasable longing. In middle age, she is overcome by a passion for a young, charming, bisexual Italian intellectual who is visiting England. Francesco Algarotti, a friend of Voltaire and a popularizer of Newton, is more than twenty years younger than her. Writing to him in French, she confesses that her philosophical equanimity has vanished, and about the time of Algarotti’s departure from England in September, she declares that her reason condemns her heart in vain. Her anguish recalls that of Racine’s Phèdre and Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina; her own comparison is with Virgil’s Dido. By December she is assuring Algarotti that if he cannot return to her country, she will devise a way to join him in Italy. Her correspondence, however, does not reveal that a year later, while still pouring out her pain to him, she retains enough interest in politics and social questions, especially the position of women, to publish anonymously a weekly cultural and political paper, *The Nonsense of Common-Sense*, which runs, with some interruptions, from December 1737 to March 1738. (*Common Sense* is the title of an anti-Walpole periodical.) Moreover, her letters at this time to her friend Lady Pomfret, have much the same wit and vivacity as her earlier letters to Lady Mar, and they show that she still relishes the tinkle of mocking laughter. While she assures Algarotti that he is the only thing in the world that pleases her, she tells Lady Pomfret, now in Paris, how she longs for her conversation.

A telltale remark in a letter of May 1739 to this lady speaks of a hankering to leave behind an England of rain, sickness and deaths for the pleasure of her ladyship’s company and the delights of Italy. Lady Mary is beginning to plan her flight. Driven by her unsated passion, she acquires the cunning she needs to disguise her scheme from all but her confidant, Lord Hervey, as a leisurely journey through France and Italy in search of a place of residence where her health will mend. For a long time, only Hervey, a man of doubtful sexuality, who shares her obsession with Algarotti, knows that she is from the first aiming at Venice. It is fascinating to watch in her letters exactly how she deceives all others, including her husband. Arriving in Venice in September 1739, two months after her departure from London, she writes to Wortley that she wishes it had been her original destination.

Algarotti, unsurprisingly, does not return his middle-aged adorer's passion, but month after month, as he, absorbed in his pursuit of a profitable career, avoids the city, Lady Mary becomes more and more impatient with him while she finds increasing satisfaction in a new life. Treated as a celebrity, she is visited by ambassadors and honoured by the Doge, and her residence becomes a centre for the literati. By May 1741, she at last succeeds in meeting Algarotti – at Turin – and her passion finally evaporates. In an angry letter, she denounces his indifference to her and reveals that what ensnared her was his connoisseurship in manuscripts, statues, pictures, poetry, and wine and his refined conversation. Meanwhile the charm of her letters to Wortley describing her travels shows that a warm friendship still survives between the spouses, though warmer on her side than on his. In later letters to their daughter, she praises his healthy lifestyle, generous disposition, and patriotism, and says that she will especially value the china jars he is sending because they are his gift.

By now Lady Mary is well into the creation of her second great series of letters, which describes her life and adventures in France, Switzerland and Italy from 1739 through 1761. For many years, she writes diligently to Wortley, not only telling him of her movements, but feeding him historical and political information and news of antiquities. The most confidential letters have to be carried by private travellers; one bears intelligence of the coming invasion of James II's grandson, the Young Pretender, in 1745. Less happily, the couple correspond about the misdeeds of their improvident, lying son, who, though a talented linguist, is a weak man easily misled by bad companions and addicted to promising reform of which he is incapable. One letter to Wortley begins, "I am sorry to trouble you on so disagreeable a subject as our son." For a time, Lady Mary displays some anger with her daughter, who insists on marrying, against her parents' wishes, the poor Scottish peer Lord Bute. Eventually she and Wortley grant their very reluctant consent, but the latter bestows no dowry and gives no wedding dinner.

When Lady Mary writes from Italy, her letters, she discovers, are suspected of being written in code, and whomever they are written to, they are frequently stopped by the authorities, delayed due to wartime conditions, or lost in the mail. Likewise, some written to her she does not receive. Wortley, still distrustful, protests that none of his other letters from abroad fail to arrive, though he does not say whether any of them originate in Italy.

By the time she meets and breaks with Algarotti, Lady Mary has resided in Rome and Naples; after the break, she proceeds to Genoa. But in October 1741, driven by fear of invading Spanish troops, she crosses the Swiss border to live first in Geneva and then in the healthier Chambéry. Six months later, under the threat of a French invasion, she withdraws to

Avignon, a papal enclave within France. After a few pleasant months here, she finds the conversation empty and the obsession with card games an irritant. Nostalgic for Venice, she finds solace for her loneliness in correspondence. She eagerly awaits the uncertain mails to bring letters from her husband, her old friend the Countess of Oxford, and her adored Venetian Chiara Michiel, who must have been a lady of singular perfection. Unfortunately, Avignon is a refuge for expatriate Jacobites, some of whom decide that Lady Mary is a Hanoverian spy. Eventually a flood of refugees from the failed Stuart invasion of 1745 overruns the city, so that she can go nowhere “without hearing a conversation that is improper to be listened to, and dangerous to contradict.” Under such pressure, she dares in August 1746 to escape under the protection of Count Ugolino Palazzi, who is in the service of the Prince of Saxony. Travelling in the guise of a Venetian lady, she passes unmolested by fleeing Spanish or victorious German troops and arrives at the Venetian city of Brescia.

For the next ten years, Lady Mary resides mainly in the village of Gottolengo, near Brescia, with excursions – some of them months long – to drink the waters and mend her health at Lovere. At Gottolengo, she lives in a rundown house but also buys a large riverbank garden and farmhouse in the neighbourhood. Here we find Lady Mary in a new role – the role of businesswoman. With weakening eyesight restricting her hours of reading and needlework, she enthusiastically takes up landscaping, market gardening, and even the raising of silkworms. She has hopes of doubling her capital and several times asks her daughter for the price of silk in London as well as for books on architecture and gardening. Finding companionship, however, proves a problem. “I do not desire much company,” she once writes to Wortley, “but would not confine myself to a place where I could get none.” One letter describes her daily routine:

I generally rise at six, and as soon as I have breakfasted, put myself at the head of my weeder women and work with them till nine. I then inspect my dairy, and take a turn among my poultry, which is a very large inquiry.... At eleven o'clock I retire to my books: I dare not indulge myself in that pleasure above an hour. At twelve I constantly dine, and sleep after dinner till about three. I then send for some of my old priests, and either play at piquet or whist, till 'tis cool enough to go out. One evening I walk in my wood, where I often sup, take the air on horseback the next, and go on the water the third.

Another letter tells of the pleasure she gives her neighbours by baking bread and churning butter and “by the introduction of custards, cheese-

cakes, and minced pies, which were entirely unknown to these parts and are received with universal applause."

One thing missing from the letters is the sad story of how Count Palazzi turns from hero to villain, preying on her credulity and her sympathy to cheat her out of a large segment of her fortune. As his depredations increase, he manages for a time to prevent her from leaving the province of Brescia, but in August 1756, fearing even for her life, she makes a second escape, this time to Venice. Eventually she writes out the whole story in Italian with a view to prosecuting the man, but never does. The Count, who is also guilty of other crimes, is later imprisoned.

From 1756 through 1761, Lady Mary divides her time between Venice and Padua. As age eats away at her vitality, she finds large social assemblies too tiring to attend more than rarely, and though she occasionally goes to an opera or musical party at Venice or watches the Carnival, she is glad to retreat to the quiet of Padua, where she rides, walks, reads, continues to bake and churn, and writes to her correspondents. From September 1758, these include her new friends the Jacobite exile and political philosopher Sir James Steuart and his wife, Lady Frances. At Venice, the British Resident John Murray,—"a scandalous fellow ... despised by this government for his smuggling, which was his original profession"—stops most English travellers from calling on her. He seems to resent her support for the leading English politician William Pitt (later Lord Chatham) and to suspect her of Jacobite sympathies. His persecution embitters her last years in Italy.

Memorable passages of description, narrative, and reflection enrich the letters that chronicle Lady Mary's life on the Continent. They show how the carnivals, palladian palaces and ostentatious carriages of Catholic Italy contrast with the simplicity of Calvinist Geneva, where food and drink are plentiful but the architecture is plain and equipages are non-existent. Lady Mary treats her correspondents to pictures of the waterborne parade at the Venice Regatta, and the old tower with a view over four provinces that is given to her by the Town Council at Avignon. She describes her riverside gardens at Gottolengo and the paradise of hills, waters and villages at the hardly accessible Lovere—"a place," she says, "the most beautifully romantic I ever saw in my life"; here she can enjoy operas and lakeside music. There is also a vast palace on the shore of Lake Garda with an estate that "you must turn to the fairy tales to give you any idea of." At Lovere, she is treated by Dr. Baglioni, an amazingly skilful physician who "will climb three or four miles in the mountains, in the hottest sun, or heaviest rain," to treat even the poorest patient. During her last sojourn here, she buys a decayed mansion for "but one hundred pounds," and her purchase



includes “a very pretty garden in terraces down to the water, and a court behind the house.” Of the dwelling itself she writes:

It is founded on a rock, and the walls so thick, they will probably remain as long as the earth. It is true the apartments are in most tattered circumstances, without doors or windows. The beauty of the great saloon gained my affection: it is forty-two feet in length by twenty-five, proportionably high, opening into a balcony of the same length, with marble balusters: the ceiling and flooring are in good repair, but I have been forced to the expense of covering the wall with new stucco.

Lady Mary’s skill as a storyteller does not falter whether she is narrating sensational events like her escape from Avignon through warring armies or her rescue of an adulteress from death at her husband’s hands or quieter happenings like a Cardinal’s refusing to believe that she has not published any books and therefore cannot give them to him and the rise of a pauper’s daughter who, like the novelist Richardson’s Pamela, resists seducers until an upper class man, in this case Count Jeronimo Sosi, marries her.

In many of the letters of her Continental years, Lady Mary is alleviating her loneliness by talking to her loved ones with her pen. She tells her daughter, now Lady Bute, “I shall for the future indulge myself in thinking upon paper when I write to you.” The reflections she pours out constitute a self-portrait in which we see emotion engaging with rationality, resentment outweighed by affection, and vivacity at war with aging.

Lady Mary is ready to disclose intimate feelings to a very few close friends as well as to her daughter. She admits to Chiara Michiel that she is in the habit of thinking too much and that she squelches dark thoughts at birth before they can gain a hold over her mind. To Sir James and Lady Frances Steuart, she confides her conviction that the inhabitants of “this vile planet” are not free and have little chance of happiness.

Lady Mary has a strong affection for both Steuarts, but most of her letters are written to Sir James, a fellow intellectual, whose *Inquiry into the Principles of Political Economy* she eagerly reads in manuscript. She spurns any notion that the female mind is inferior, and she responds to Lady Bute’s request for advice on the education of her daughters by recommending that they get all the learning they want, but that, on account of society’s prejudice, they are careful to conceal their knowledge. Wisely, she observes that reading is a pleasure that outlasts most others—it could even provide an occupation for her reprobate son. “I wish your daughters,” she tells Lady

Bute, “to resemble me in nothing but the love of reading, knowing, by experience, how far it is capable of softening the cruellest accidents of life.”

For a long time, Lady Mary doubts whether her granddaughters, who are reputed to be plain, will find husbands. Her view of marriage as “a lottery, where there are (at the lowest computation) ten thousand blanks to a prize” is clearly influenced by her own experience. She almost envies Lady Steuart’s happiness with her husband and is astonished, as well as delighted, to find that her son-in-law, Lord Bute, in no way tires of his bargain. “What I think extraordinary,” she writes to her husband in 1748, “is my daughter’s continuing so many years agreeable to Lord Bute.” She blames novels such as Fielding’s *Tom Jones* and *Amelia* for encouraging “extravagant passions” and regards Richardson’s reputedly moral *Pamela* and *Clarissa* as “two books that will do more general mischief than the works of [the libertine poet] Lord Rochester.”

In several letters, Lady Mary treats her daughter to critiques of these and other contemporary books. She has some appreciation of the literary merit of Fielding and reads Richardson with a mixture of fascination and disapproval. She herself has been in *Clarissa*’s position as a young woman ordered to marry a man she cannot endure, but she finds the author’s representation of high society completely unconvincing.

Swift she despises, being insensible to the genius of either *Gulliver’s Travels* or *A Tale of a Tub*, and she is glad that Wortley shares her low opinion of his *History of the Four Last Years of the Queen*.

It is disappointing to find Lady Mary misreading *A Tale of a Tub* in the same manner as Queen Anne. She deems it an anti-religious book, whereas it is an attack on Roman Catholicism and Calvinism and a defence of Anglican Christianity. Her view of religion is in reality close to Swift’s, and he would have endorsed her vigorous defence of Protestantism that silences her Catholic challengers in Italy, a defence she recounts to Lady Bute:

I always, if possible, avoid controversial disputes: whenever I cannot do it, they are very short. I ask my adversary if he believes the Scripture? when that is answered affirmatively.... My second question is, if they think St. Peter and St. Paul knew the true Christian religion? The constant reply is, O yes. Then say I, purgatory, transubstantiation, invocation of saints, adoration of the Virgin, relics (of which they might have had a cartload), and observation of Lent, is no part of it, since they neither taught nor practised any of these things.

Lady Mary is able to assure her daughter, “I have never been attacked a second time in any of the towns where I have resided.” When her adversaries, she reports, cite Church Fathers and ecclesiastical Councils, “they

are surprised to find me as well (often better) acquainted with them than themselves." She is similarly set against Methodism, with its emphasis on seeking personal spiritual experience, classifying it with belief in witches and hobgoblins, and on encountering the Moravians, she protests, "I imagined after three thousand years' working at creeds and theological whimsies, there remained nothing new to be invented." Again resembling Swift, she scorns free thought, holding that "Nobody can deny but religion is a comfort to the distressed, a cordial to the sick, and sometimes a restraint on the wicked." Religion, she believes, is "necessary in all civilized governments," but it should be confined within boundaries: she is sorry to learn that the Prince of Wales, the future George III, "has an episcopal education."

Her circumspect approach to religion is one of the traits that mark Lady Mary as a woman of the Enlightenment. Similarly, with her opposition to absolute rule, she prefers republican Venice to royalist Naples, and she tells Lady Oxford, "I wish every Englishman was as sensible as I am of the terrible effects of arbitrary government." Easy credulity earns her scorn; she is convinced that the "the universal inclination of humankind is to be led by the ears." Empiricism, not cleaving to ancient authority, is for her the way to the "very small proportion of knowledge" that "is allowed us in this world," and she acclaims Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* as "the best dissection of the human mind of any author I have ever read." In medicine, likewise, she recommends the work of the seventeenth century physician Thomas Sydenham, who relied on observation and experience as the basis for diagnosis and treatment, as opposed to the application of a theory like the supposed government of the body by the four humours.

The last letters of Lady Mary, following the death of Wortley early in 1761, record her escape from Murray's persecution and her return to her daughter in London a few months later. After dragging herself and her entourage painfully across Western Europe, she is held up in Rotterdam, a place where she finds "neither amusement nor conversation." Nevertheless, she strikes up an acquaintance with Benjamin Sowden, the scholarly minister of the English Church, and entrusts him with the manuscript she has compiled from her records of her expedition to Turkey: her written permission entitling him to treat it as he pleases indicates that she intends to keep it out of her family's hands and allow its publication.

Once in London, lodged in a rented house, Lady Mary finds herself oppressed by the necessity of receiving and making visits as well as troubled by the bad air. Writing to her dear friend Chiara Michiel, she raises the possibility of mustering enough strength to return to Venice, but that lady advises her to remain with her family. Her last letter reassures Lady

Frances Steuart that she still labours to obtain a pardon for the Jacobite Sir James.

Among the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, two series stand out: those from the period of the Turkish embassy and those from her expatriate years on the Continent. These literary achievements are a happy consequence of her defiant marriage. Although the couple eventually separates, she is surely right to escape the prison of wedlock to a man whom her father chooses and whom she loathes. She enjoys a few months of bliss before the neglect of Wortley, who is perhaps sated with the prize he has won, begins to blemish her happiness, and through her marriage she fulfils her longstanding ambition to travel. Boldly crossing Europe with her infant son to reside in exotic Turkey, she brings inoculation back to Britain. Here she bears the daughter whom she dearly loves and who looms so large in her later years.

Lady Mary lives a life of mingled joy and pain, but underlying her more transient thoughts and feelings is a sad belief that she and the rest of the world are the victims of a destiny that excludes the possibility of a happy existence. From the days before her marriage, when she can make such a claim as "I am not born to have anything I have a mind to," a conviction of the essential misery of the human lot and the absence of any real freedom intermittently intrudes into her letters. In this world, she once suggests, we must be in a "state of punishment" for sins committed "in some pre-existent state." "I am afraid," she tells Sir James Steuart, that "we are little better than straws upon the water: we may flatter ourselves that we swim, when the current carries us along." "I am not born to be happy," she asserts in another letter, adding "perhaps nobody can be so without great allays, — all philosophers, ancient and modern, agree in that sentiment."



## WANDERING DOWN BYWAYS

### JOHN BYROM (1691-1763)



A different kind of intellectual and a different kind of Protestant from Lady Mary Wortley Montagu is her contemporary John Byrom, an amiable Jacobite and a minor (occasionally good) poet. Byrom is a friend of William Law and an acquaintance of John and Charles Wesley. Precluded from his preferred career as an academic by his conscientious objection to the oaths of allegiance to the new royal house of Hanover, he makes his major activity the teaching of his own method of shorthand. This skill is

of great value before the invention of recording devices.

How seriously Byrom regards his invention appears in a letter he writes in middle age:

It is not quite right that thy father having invented the best thing of this kind, thou shouldst only be a stander by whilst others exert the use of it. I have a greater desire, and with greater reason, for the preservation of a thing that may be useful to posterity, that my only son, whom I love most entirely, may be able, if he be willing, to transmit the invention down to future times.

However, his need to recruit students beyond his home city of Manchester condemns him to long periods of absence from his beloved wife and children. Happily, he finds some compensation for this in conviviality at coffee houses and taverns. In one letter to his wife, he reminds her, "I love good company."

Byrom, however, is much more than a boon companion. Early and late, he is a serious Christian, but his religion is very different from the largely political churchmanship of Swift and the easygoing if informed and intelligent creed of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. He seizes happily on

the work of the philosopher-priest Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715), who finds a way to live with Descartes's teaching that matter and spirit are completely separate and do not interact. This teaching seems to distance God and grant Him only the status of a remote First Cause, but Malebranche's Occasionalism posits that it is God's intervention that makes contact between our sense organs and material objects produce images in our minds. This reassurance that the Creator is everywhere active in His world so pleases Byrom that in 1727 he can write to his wife, "My dear, I have made a purchase – what d'ye think it is? – Father Malebranche's picture."

An enthusiast for the work of Malebranche is William Law. Like John and Charles Wesley, and unlike many eighteenth century clergy and lay people, Law is convinced that biblical morality is not nearly enough to make a person a Christian and that inner experience of the Spirit is of the essence of religion. The brothers Wesley respect Law until he dares to wrestle honestly, with the help of the abstruse writings of the mystic Jakob Boehme, with the Problem of Evil, the question of how a world full of pain and suffering can be the work of a good Creator. Law concludes that all suffering comes from the rebellion of the fallen angels and the sin of Adam and that there is no wrath at all in God Himself. John Wesley protests that this leaves no room for the reconciliation of transgressing man through Christ. In 1739, Byrom gives a message for his brother-in-law to his son:

tell him that Mr. Charles Wesley is in London but that I very seldom see him, not being quite agreed in all our opinions ... his brother has been preaching at Bath and thereabouts as I was told. They have both together printed a book of hymns... They have introduced them by a preface against what they call mystic writers (not naming any particular author), for whom they had once a great veneration.

Eighteen years later, when John Wesley has published an open attack on Law's teachings, Byrom maintains that only Law, who "shows that nature unbeautified by the God of love is and must be a state of torment and disquiet," has provided an effective answer to a Deist argument against Christianity.

In Byrom, there is a delicate balance between, on the one hand, the man who tells his friend Leycester that "True Religion, Ralph, is the plainest thing in the world" and another correspondent that Christians should live their faith, not argue about it, and, on the other hand, the follower of Nicolas Malebranche and William Law. The cautious element in him predominates when, in 1736, he writes a series of letters to the twenty-one-year-old Fanny Henshaw, gently warning her against following the promptings of spiri-

tual visitations driving her towards Quakerism, a creed, he remarks in his personal journal, that dispenses with baptism and the Lord's Prayer. In firmer language, he asks William Law to disabuse the "bequakered" and "infatuated" woman. Law thinks that her visitations are not to be trusted but fails to prevent her conversion.

Along with many passages devoted to shorthand and religion, Byrom's letters contain some lively accounts of his experiences and observations. His family and his friend John Stansfield are given glimpses of his undergraduate life at Cambridge, where he glories in the prospect of becoming a Bachelor of Arts: "how great it sounds! the Great Mogul is nothing to it." His wife is probably entertained as well as alarmed by his account of an incident on his journey from London to Cambridge in January 1728:

for about half a mile or less of Epping, a highwayman in a red rug upon a black horse came out of the bushes up to the coach, and presenting a pistol, first at the coachman and then at the corporation within, with a volley of oaths demanded our money ... one of the gentlemen who rode backwards flung a guinea into his hat; Mr. Collier, who sat backwards over against me, threw another.... It happened that Mr. Collier's guinea fell upon the road, upon which he made the coachman light and take it him up, and then came round to the other side, from whence he rid into the wood without calling for any second payments.

In 1742, welcoming the Act of Parliament that grants him exclusive rights for twenty-one years to his method of shorthand, he tells his sister of the obstacles he had to overcome for the Act to pass.

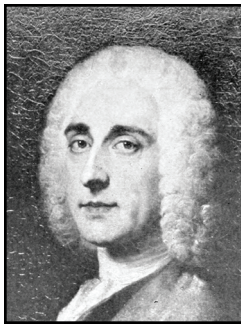
Four years later, after the Young Pretender, in the course of his thwarted attempt to reclaim his grandfather's throne for the House of Stuart, has passed through Manchester with his Highland army, Byrom treats his Quaker friend William Vigor to an account of their three-day occupation. After referring to the way "a great many" of his fellow citizens left Manchester and "sent away their effects" on the approach of the Highlanders, he observes that the Prince "rode through the streets the day after his coming, and to do justice to his person, whatever his pretensions may be, he makes a very graceful and amiable appearance" and that "the ladies, smitten with the charms of the young gentlemen, say that he takes after his mother." As the defeated invaders reappeared in Manchester on their way back to Scotland, "the foolish mob clodded them with dirt or stones" and "The good folks who deserted the town upon their return home grew rather too valiant when the enemy was gone, and too angry at their neighbours who stayed." Although Byrom, for all his Jacobite sym-



pathy, keeps out of danger himself, he indirectly brings his student Lord Moreton into peril. French officials, mistaking the shorthand in his possession for ciphers, give Moreton and his family a spell in the Bastille. During their confinement, Lady Moreton and his sister “were not used so well as might be expected from French politeness and English quality.”

Despite the very considerable interest of his correspondence, Byrom is not in the front rank of letter-writers. When he describes the passage of his Act through Parliament, he fails to follow the chronological order necessary to recreate the suspense involved. His scenes can be vivid—his account of the aftermath of a fire in London that destroys perhaps a hundred houses is sufficiently horrifying—but he does not paint characters with the skill and delight of a Dorothy Osborne or discuss ideas with the trenchancy of a Swift.

## ALL-ACCOMPLISHED GENTLEMAN LORD CHESTERFIELD (1694-1773)



While John Byrom, with his enthusiasm for Malebranche and his engagement with Christian mysticism, meanders on a by-road of eighteenth century culture, Lord Chesterfield marches staunchly up the highway and strives mightily to draw his son after him. By a stroke of good fortune for posterity, his widowed daughter-in-law's straitened circumstances eventually lead her to publish the letters Chesterfield has written to her husband from the time of the latter's early childhood to his death about three decades later. Unwittingly, in seeking to guide and educate his son, the father has created the work of literature for which he is mainly remembered. But while this collection is the jewel which keeps Lord Chesterfield's memory shining, every gem is the better for a fine setting, and the perfect setting for this gem would be a selection of Chesterfield's letters to other correspondents. Not only is Saintsbury right in saying that to know the man we need to read his missives to such friends as Mme de Monconseil and Solomon Dayrolles, we need to read them to enlarge our perspective on the relationship between father and son.

In 1731, the Earl of Chesterfield, Britain's twenty-seven-year-old Ambassador to Holland, seduces in the Hague a governess named Elizabeth du Bouchet. A year later, he finds himself captivated by their seven-week-old son, a "gaillard" or energetic young fellow, who already shows signs of future merit. The baby has been given his father's name of Philip, and he and his mother soon settle in London, where the Earl can occasionally see his son and attempt, largely through letters, to mould him into a phenomenon.

Chesterfield decides that his son will not only become a gentleman of known probity and a scholar furnished with all the knowledge appropriate for a European statesman, but a person whose bearing, manners, dress and speech immediately charm all who meet him. To the challenge that such a

paragon is an impossibility, he replies that he has known one example – Lord Bolingbroke, though he admits that Bolingbroke, who was notoriously a rake and a secret negotiator with James II's son, the Old Pretender, lacked impeccable morals. Chesterfield is certain that the good opinion of all but the rarest of people is to be won by outward appearances, and only when their eyes and ears have been pleased will they attend to the reasonings of a good mind. All that he desires for Philip, he keeps insisting, he or nearly any man can acquire by making sufficient effort, for everything can be learnt except how to be a good poet.

When Philip is no older than five, and is still living with his mother, Chesterfield begins the long process of his education. At the start, he urges the importance of moral character and sound learning: being just, compassionate and true to one's word, as well as free from cruelty, arrogance and avarice, is a necessity if one is to enjoy a clear conscience and the respect of others. Writing to his little boy in French, he makes sure that he studies Latin, Greek, ancient and modern history, and the geography of Europe. He assures him that distinction lies ahead, partly because "Everybody knows Latin, but few people know Greek well." When Philip is nine years old, Chesterfield lays out the history which has led to the much talked about Maria Theresa's becoming ruler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and explains why France has sent an army into Bulgaria. Later he will add German and Italian to the list of his son's necessary accomplishments. He is at times a stern taskmaster accompanying the promise of glory that achievement will bring with threats to withdraw his love if the boy falls short in his studies. Philip, it will turn out, is an honest boy and a natural scholar who loves books and reading. But very early, soon after he reaches the age of seven, his father introduces his third requirement, the acquisition of the easy, polite manners common in the French upper classes but uncommon in England. This demand leads to years of struggle for the tormented father and harassed son.

At the age of fourteen, Philip is sent to travel in Europe with his scholarly tutor, Walter Harte. The latter is instructed to perfect his charge's linguistic skills and augment his geographical knowledge in preparation for his entry into the Foreign Service. Most young English travellers, Chesterfield has observed, wallow in pleasure and learn little, and the result is that the British Foreign Service is full of ignorant, incompetent officials. But once abroad, his son is to study under renowned legal scholars and to mix with fashionable society, partly to perfect his French, German and Italian, but also to acquire, especially from ladies of fashion, the social graces his father finds in woefully short supply west of the English Channel. "There is hardly a French cook," he laments, "that is not better bred than most Englishmen of quality."

It is at this point that a notorious element enters the letters. Chesterfield warns Philip—as he also warns his protégé the young Lord Huntingdon, who is four years older—against relations with low class women, who can impoverish a man and infect him with disease. However, a relationship with a woman of the upper class, a class which is rife with (in Byron’s words) “What men call gallantry and gods adultery” —can add the missing gloss to his manners and bearing. When Philip is two months short of his eighteenth birthday, his father instructs him that “The gallantry of high life, though not strictly justifiable, carries, at least, no external marks of infamy about it. Neither the heart nor the constitution is corrupted by it; neither nose nor character lost by it; manners, possibly, improved.” With less restraint, he tells Huntingdon, “As for mistresses, I do not presume to stint you, the more the better, provided they are such as neither endanger your health nor your character.” When Huntingdon falls for a Parisian dancing girl, Chesterfield comments to Philip, “I should have thought Lord Huntingdon, at his age, and with his parts and address, need not have been reduced to keep an opera whore, in such a place as Paris, where so many women of fashion generously serve as volunteers.” In 1751, he is even to make the odious suggestion that his son seduce Mme de Blot, who has been married for less than a year and “has as yet been scrupulously constant to her husband.” More commendably, he gives him fatherly warnings against the perils of “gaming,” (gambling for high stakes) and admonishes him to enjoy wine sparingly and remain “infinitely short of drunkenness.”

At the beginning of 1750, when Philip is seventeen, Chesterfield ceases to open his letters with “Dear Boy” and starts to address him as “Dear Friend.” At the end of the year, Harte returns to England alone and Chesterfield hands his son over to his Parisian friend Mme de Monconseil, rather as parents used to send their daughters to a finishing school: the lady is commissioned to give him the social veneer he lacks. His Lordship’s wish is that people, unprompted, should exclaim about his son, “*Ah qu’il est aimable! Quelles manières, quelles graces, quel art de plaire!*” Philip, alas, stoops, is absent-minded in company, speaks indistinctly, and for all his linguistic prowess, expresses himself inelegantly in English. To encourage him to mend these faults, his father tells him of great deeds accomplished simply through the power to please. The Duke of Marlborough, whom he knew well, had, he says, no genius, nothing more than “an excellent good plain understanding with sound judgment,” but “his manner was irresistible, by either man or woman,” and it was this that enabled him “to connect the various and jarring powers of the Grand Alliance, and to carry them on to the main object of the war.” Julius Caesar had graces that “made him beloved, even by his enemies” and enabled him to subvert “the liberties of Rome.” Chesterfield himself, when he was determined to make Britain

adopt the corrected calendar already in use in most of Europe, got lawyers and astronomers to draw up the appropriate Bill. This, he writes,

was necessarily composed of law jargon and astronomical calculations, to both of which I am an utter stranger. However, it was absolutely necessary to make the House of Lords think that I knew something of the matter; and also to make them believe that they knew something of it themselves ... I gave them, therefore, only an historical account of calendars ... but I was particularly attentive to the choice of my words, to the harmony and roundness of my periods, to my elocution, to my action. This succeeded, and ever will succeed; they thought I informed because I pleased them; and many of them said that I had made the whole very clear to them.

To Mme du Boccage, Chesterfield confides his fear that Philip's manner may have been infected by "German stiffness and Italian buffoonery," and six weeks later, on receiving Mme de Monconseil's frank report of his son, he expresses his dismay at the boy's defects, which she alone has a chance of curing. He makes the mistake, his father tells Solomon Dayrolles, a minor diplomat, of thinking that "knowledge is all." When an unnamed acquaintance protests that "It is not in his character; that gentleness, that *douceur*, those attentions which you wish him to have, are not in his nature," Chesterfield argues that "those exterior accomplishments" can be acquired if one has sufficient determination.

In June 1752, when Philip is about to make his entrance into public life at George II's German court in Hanover, his father writes, "I confess that I am more anxious about it, than ever bride was on her wedding night ... the character which you will acquire there will, more or less, be that which will abide by you for the rest of your life." Three months later, he announces that the time has come for him to relinquish the role of authority in the young man's life and replace it with that of adviser. His counsel continues to be much needed, for, though Philip learns to dance well, he never acquires the art of pleasing or becomes an effective public speaker. Chesterfield, at considerable expense, has him elected to Parliament in 1754, but the young man's first and only speech is marred by stumbling and confusion. Uncharacteristically, his usually critical father writes him a comforting letter and recommends participation in committee work as a preparation for better success.

About ten months afterwards, Chesterfield tells his old friend the Bishop of Waterford, "I have placed my boy in a situation to push himself forwards when I am gone." Events, however, are to turn out very differently from the way he imagines.

During this period, Chesterfield is writing to friends of long-standing of the increasing infirmity and hereditary deafness that have driven him into retirement, and, while giving the subject less emphasis, he does not hide the facts from Philip: "I look upon myself now," he admits, "to be *emeritus* in business.... My only remaining ambition is to be the counsellor and minister of your rising ambition. Let me see my own youth revived in you."

In 1746, Philip is appointed Resident at Hamburg, and from September 1757 to May 1758 his father's letters express an understandable and affectionate wish to hear details of his son's life in his off-duty hours, but his pleas meet with continual excuses. While Chesterfield has long warned Philip against low class sirens and urged the advantages of relationships with ladies of fashion, it seems not to have occurred to him that the young man may be attracted to a woman who is neither a social star nor a strumpet. It seems probable that the time has already arrived when he has fallen in love with and secretly married Eugenia Peters, the plain but musical illegitimate daughter of a rich Irishman and has not dared to tell his father of his deed. His domestic life, however, has not impaired his professional efficiency, for he is writing official letters which please the Duke of Newcastle and even the King: his father is happy enough to exclaim, "Go on so, with diligence, and you will be, what I began to despair of your ever being, SOMEBODY." About a year later, he remarks on Lord Titchfield's good report of the civilities Philip showed him at Hamburg and teases him, "At this rate, if you do not take care, you will get the unmanly reputation of a well-bred man."

From 1756 to 1763, Britain is engaged in the Seven Years War, during which she fights against France in India, West Africa, the West Indies and North America. In this period, Chesterfield's letters to Philip, like those to his other correspondents, record his fear of a disastrous outcome for England, as well as for her ally and his idol, Frederick the Great of Prussia. He writes, too, of his personal life—of growing fruit at his estate at Blackheath and of taking the waters, with very limited benefit, at Bath. Once he confesses that the excesses of his youth are responsible for his pains: "I cannot accuse Nature, for I abused her; and it is reasonable I should suffer for it." In 1764 he seems to sum up his final opinion of his son when he laments to Mme de Monconseil, "He has excellent merchandise in his shop, but he does not have the ability to display it." Nevertheless, he continues to advise him on his career, and when he is content not to seek re-election to the House of Commons, he admonishes him, "I am of a very different opinion from you, about being in parliament, as no man can be of consequence in this country, who is not in it; and, though one may not

“speak like a Lord Mansfield or a Lord Chatham, one may make a very good figure in a second rank.”

Chesterfield’s resignation to the prospect of a second rank status for his son may be made easier by the appearance in his life of a new child in whom to invest his emotional energy. Because Philip is illegitimate, the heir to the earldom is a distantly related small boy, also called Philip Stanhope. Since this child’s parents cannot afford to educate him appropriately, they allow Lord Chesterfield to take over his upbringing. The literary result is a second series of letters designed to guide a boy towards the acquisition of moral probity, scholarly learning and captivating manners. This enterprise – ultimately unsuccessful – begins in 1761 and ends in 1770, when the recipient is only fourteen. It repeats the lessons of the earlier part of the first series, again offering conditional love, but this time Chesterfield is able to spur his charge to extra effort by threatening that the boy’s sister, who is all that the boy should be and who loves him now, will come to despise him if he fails to improve.

By 1764, Chesterfield is becoming seriously anxious about the health of his own son. He consults a physician and also offers advice based on his personal experience, but his efforts are ineffectual. His worry increases, and he eventually receives the dreadful news of Philip’s death in November 1768. How he must be startled to learn also that his son has left behind a widow and two small boys! His hundreds of letters to Philip are gracefully complemented by nine written to his daughter-in-law and one to his grandsons, whose care and education he at once undertakes. He addresses the widow, as “Madam” (“Madame” is his term of address even for his dear friend Mme de Monconseil) but seems to establish an amiable enough relationship with her. In one letter he assures her that he likes her and in another refers to some pains she is prepared to take over some “pine” plants (?pineapples) he might like to grow. She shows an interest in his life and health, and he pays her the compliment of saying she is a most uncharacteristic widow in her willingness to assume “perpetual shackles” for her children’s sake. At an early meeting, he becomes so absorbed in playing with his grandsons that he forgets to discuss how soon their mother wants them sent to school. He is more discriminating in planning for them than he was in planning for their father. “Charles,” he writes, “will be a scholar, if you please; but our little Philip, without being one, will be something or other as good, though I do not yet guess what.” In October 1771, at the end of the series of letters, he thanks the boys for “two of the best written letters that ever I saw in my life,” and expresses astonishment that Phil, being an “idle rogue,” has written as well as his painstaking brother.

Meanwhile, Chesterfield continues the epistolary nurture of his godson. He is happy with the child’s progress, but in mid-1770 he writes of his

fear: "The more I love you now the more I dread the snares and dangers that await you the next six or seven years of your life from ill company and bad examples." Two years later, Huntingdon must be abroad, for he seeks through Solomon Dayrolles a confidential report "of his faults as well as of his perfections (if he has any)." By this time, the Earl is so weak that he has to dictate his letter.

Although the education and guidance of his son is the major subject of Chesterfield's famous letters to Philip, the contents are much richer and more various than this suggests. While the son's life is in the foreground, the father's is present in the background. We glimpse him holding a levy as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; resigning as Secretary of State (to enjoy the quiet befitting his age, he tells Philip; even more, he tells Dayrolles, because he is not free to do what he thinks right); taking pride in his fine new neoclassical mansion; grieving over the death of his brother John; seeking melon seeds and fig cuttings to plant on the estate at Blackheath that he inherits from that brother; and succumbing to deafness, weakened eyesight, headaches, stomach disorders, and the loss of flesh and function in his legs. The beliefs he expresses and the tastes he discloses are thoroughly characteristic of his time.

Lord Chesterfield's self-portrait is vivid and detailed. The portrait of Philip that emerges from his father's letters, though less detailed, is clear. Young Philip is a lover of literature with a healthy curiosity about different countries and their societies. He is attracted neither to the vices his father deplors nor the high society his father wishes him to frequent. Obediently, he takes lessons in dancing, riding and fencing. His spare money goes not on frivolous ornaments—"Have one handsome snuff-box," Chesterfield concedes, "(if you take snuff), and one handsome sword; but then no more pretty and useless things"); he prefers to accumulate a large collection of books. When his mother moves, Chesterfield houses the huge library of rare volumes she can no longer accommodate. The young man's emotions impel him not to illicit amours but to a marriage and a home where he is not constrained to a kind of behaviour alien to his temperament. His nature also disposes him to a certain love of ease: about the time he is elected to the House of Commons, his father confesses, "I own I fear but one thing for you, and that is what one has generally the least reason to fear from one of your age; I mean your laziness; which, if you indulge, will make you stagnate in a contemptible obscurity all your life."

The vices that Chesterfield warns Philip against are mostly those that blighted his own youth—heavy drinking, gambling for high stakes, and, for a short time, swearing; he confined his sexual activity, however, to willing and respectable women. The many passages in the letters that refer to his earlier life paint a picture of a young man who leaves Cambridge



University every bit as uncertain of himself as his son is to be later. Lacking a father either able or willing to guide him, he adopts what he considers to be modish vices but is lucky enough to find a lady of fashion who teaches him how to behave in society – that is, what he calls the art of pleasing. For all his self-indulgence, he does not forsake his studies, and when he embarks on his career he learns that pleasure and business, when mixed, sweeten each other. In order to succeed in the political world, he pays great attention to the language in which he expresses his thoughts and trains himself in the art of public speaking. Once he obtains a post, he is very methodical in fulfilling his duties: strict adherence to method, he says, eluded the Duke of Newcastle but made possible the success of Sir Robert Walpole, “who had ten times the business to do” yet “was never seen in a hurry.”

A principle that sustains Chesterfield in public life, he tells Lord Huntingdon, is the belief that human beings “have natural and inherent rights which no power upon earth can legally deprive them of” and that guarding “The natural rights and liberty of mankind” is the *raison d’être* of the Whig party, to which they both belong. Very reasonably, Chesterfield sees an absolute monarchy as the antithesis of a free people’s government, and he exclaims:

I know of no brute so fierce, nor no criminal so guilty, as the creature called a Sovereign ... who thinks himself, either by divine or human right, vested with an absolute power of destroying his fellow-creatures; or who, without inquiring into his right, lawlessly exerts that power.

Despite his scorn for their destructive hostility to “arts, sciences, and learning,” Chesterfield respects the Goths’ freedom from one-man rule. “The Gothic form of government,” he instructs Philip, “was a wise one ... their kings were little more than generals in time of war ... and could do nothing without the consent of the principal people, who had regular assemblies for that purpose: from whence our parliaments are derived.” As a British citizen, he contrasts the “fixed laws and constitutional barriers for the security of our liberties and properties” with the lack of any counterpart in the royal dictatorship of France. Underlying this Lockean view is the conviction that wealth and social status are determined by chance, not merit. “We are all of the same species,” he tells young Philip,

and no distinction whatever is between us, except that which arises from fortune. For example, your footman and Lisette would be your equals were they as rich as you. Being poor, they are obliged to serve you. Therefore, you must not add to their misfortune by insulting or by ill treating them.

Thirty-three years later, he admonishes his godson in similar fashion, telling him, "The lowest and the poorest in the world ... are by nature your equals." While this egalitarian strain does not prevent him from referring aristocratically, when he is old and ailing, to the "great crowd of trifling and unknown people" that frequent the public rooms in Bath, he maintains that the Corsicans, though they are "a parcel of cruel and perfidious rascals," become "asserters of their natural rights" in rising against their Genoan overlords. At home, he is indignant that an Act allowing Jews to be naturalized should be withdrawn in response to "the absurd and groundless clamors of the mob." Writing to the Irish publisher George Faulkner, he refers to the Habeus Corpus Act and asserts "were nobody wiser than I, you should have one to-day; for I think every human creature has a right to liberty, which cannot with justice be taken from him, unless he forfeits it by some crime." Reacting to the slaying of Whiteboys – Irish peasants violently resisting rapacious landlords – he suggests "that if the military force had killed half as many landlords, it would have contributed more effectively to restore quiet. The poor people in Ireland are used worse than negroes by their Lords and Masters, and their Deputies of Deputies of Deputies."

Disappointingly, for all his enthusiasm about the rights of "every human creature," Chesterfield can express a low opinion of women. While he points out to his son that "men have done much more mischief in the world than women," he also teaches him that the latter are "only children of a larger growth." Recommending Lord Huntingdon to cultivate the acquaintance of his Parisian friends Mme de Monconseil and Mme du Boccage, he says that they compensate for their plain looks by their good sense – but adds, "I mean good female sense." When, in the Seven Years War, his hero Frederick II of Prussia is threatened by the Empress Elizabeth's Russia and Maria Theresa's Austria as well as by Louis XV's France, he remarks that under female government "whim and humour commonly prevail, reason very seldom, and then only by a lucky mistake."

In a manner typical of his age, Chesterfield allows his fidelity to reason to dominate his view of religion. While, unlike Dr. Johnson, he recognizes the wickedness of the Crusades, he lets his perception of the evil caused by the clashing of sects and creeds blind him to the better sides of the great religious figures: in Luther and Fénelon he can only see self-seeking ambition, in St. Ignatius Loyola a madman, and in the prophet Mohammed an impostor. At the opposite extreme, he despises atheists and is satisfied, in the spirit of the Deists, who disbelieve in revelation, that the existence of the universe bears witness to the existence of a Creator. Though he can pay lip service to Christianity – and even writes to his small godson of the Bible, "which you will and ought to believe every word of, as it was dictated by the Spirit of Truth" – to Lord Huntingdon he confesses that Moses

is not the man for him, and he enquires of his eight-year-old son, “do you still put the bad English of the Psalms into bad Latin?” Using the kind of language that the devout Johnson mocks in *Rasselas*, he insists on the imperative of “conforming all our actions to the rule of right reason, which is the great law of nature,” and upholds “the native beauty and simplicity of true natural religion.” Essentially, Chesterfield is indeed a Deist. He scorns priests and tells Mme du Boccage, “The most tyrannical kings only desire power over the bodies and goods of men; but all clergy, from the Great Lama of Tibet to His Holiness at Rome, and the Archbishop of Canterbury at London, claim power over their souls.” In keeping with this position, he despises Roman Catholicism as superstition, but is a strong and consistent proponent of religious toleration. Reacting to Philip’s surprise at the credulity of the Catholics at Einsiedlen in Switzerland, he admonishes him:

remember ... that errors and mistakes, however gross, in matters of opinion, if they are sincere, are to be pitied, but not punished nor laughed at. The blindness of the understanding is as much to be pitied as the blindness of the eye; and there is neither jest nor guilt in a man’s losing his way in either case. Charity bids us set him right if we can, by arguments and persuasions; but charity, at the same time, forbids, either to punish or ridicule his misfortune.

Failure to be ruled by reason is by no means, Chesterfield believes, confined to women and the superstitious. He warns Philip:

The herd of mankind can hardly be said to think; their notions are almost all adoptive; and, in general, I believe it is better that it should be so, as such common prejudices contribute more to order and quiet than their own separate reasonings would do, uncultivated and unimproved as they are.

Accordingly, although he adores Voltaire above all other contemporary writers, he tells Mme de Monconseil that he regrets his work is larded with impiety, “which he would do better wisely to suppress, since in the last analysis one should not disturb the established order.”

France is, at this time, half a century ahead of Britain in creating a neo-classical literature, a literature that is closely modelled on those of ancient Greece and Rome. As a man of the Enlightenment who despises Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, the crown of mediaeval literature, as impossibly obscure, Chesterfield cultivates a firmly neoclassical taste. He adores the literature of France’s *Grand Siècle* and takes sides in the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns that erupted in the late seventeenth century. Champions of

the Ancients hold that the great works of the Greek and Roman classical ages have never been equalled; their opponents argue that the Moderns have, in fact, equalled or surpassed the Ancients. Instructing Philip on the importance of thinking for oneself, Chesterfield records how books and his teachers instilled in him a youthful prejudice that "Homer and Virgil could have no faults, because they were ancient; Milton and Tasso could have no merit, because they were modern," but he has come to see that French authors such as "Corneille, Racine, Molière, Boileau, and La Fontaine" equal those of Rome's Augustan Age. Later, his praise becomes even more lavish as he asserts that "There is not, nor ever was, any theatre comparable to the French" (and he writes to Baron Kreuningen that the French drama far surpasses the Greek and Roman). The choruses in the ancient Greek drama he finds absurd. In typical neoclassical fashion, he writes of Shakespeare that if his "genius had been cultivated, those beauties, which we so justly admire in him, would have been undisciplined by those extravagancies, and that nonsense, with which they are frequently accompanied." He rejoices that "The reign of King Charles II. (meritorious in no other respect) banished false taste out of England, and proscribed puns, quibbles, acrostics, etc.," and that since then, following in the same tradition, "Addison, Pope, and Swift, have vigorously defended the rights of good sense." (The neoclassical argument is that false wit operates on the chance resemblances between words, true wit on the resemblances between what the words signify.)

Besides the portraits of father and son, the letters to Philip yield glimpses, sometimes intriguing, of other characters. The boy's mother remains a shadowy figure, though she is obviously devoted to her son, as Chesterfield often reminds him, nudging him, for example, "to bring your mother some little presents" and urging him to write to her frequently, "if it be but three words, to prove your existence; for, when she does not hear from you, she knows to a demonstration that you are dead, if not buried."

A woman more clearly seen is Lady Hervey, who "has been bred all her life at courts; of which she has acquired all the easy good-breeding and politeness, without the frivolousness ... she understands Latin perfectly well, though she wisely conceals it." She is perceptive enough to warn his father that Philip is very well as he is and cannot be expected to become perfect. After she returns from France to London, Chesterfield reports to Mme de Monconseil, "We have here the body of Lady Hervey, but without the heart or spirit. She languishes, she wearies, she breathes indeed, but she only lives, she says, in Paris."

Sadder is the case of Sir Charles Williams, a friend of Chesterfield and a man who takes a liking to Philip. Chesterfield has to cross-question him rigorously to elicit the information that the young man, though of good

character and full of learning, is absent-minded in company, clumsy at table, and negligent in his dress. Tragically, in 1758, Williams becomes infatuated with an adventuress in Germany, falls temporarily into insanity, and has to be confined.

The most memorable of all the characters in the letters after the two principals is Walter Harte, the amiable scholar who serves as Philip's tutor and becomes exceedingly fond of his charge. We follow Harte as he returns alone to England in 1751, holidays in Cornwall, and takes up the clerical post Chesterfield has obtained for him as a prebend at Windsor. As the years pass, he regrets that Philip seldom writes and he has to rely on Lord Chesterfield for news of him. In 1759 he publishes his biography of Gustavus Adolphus, which Chesterfield finds is "full of good matter" but marred by "a bad style, of a new and singular kind; it is full of Latinisms, Gallicisms, Germanisms, and all *isms* but Anglicisms." Unsurprisingly, the book does not take, and Chesterfield blames its failure for the breakdown of Harte's health, but notes that after some time he becomes "extremely devout, which ... is always a comfort to the afflicted." He does not regain his health, but at the end of 1763 he is an historian luxuriating in the access he has been given to the papers of Lord Craven, who intervened in the Thirty Years War in defence of Charles I's sister Elizabeth, who was briefly Queen of Bohemia. However, his final production is neither a history nor his collection of verse moral tales but a book on agriculture, of which the surprised Chesterfield writes, "This work is not only in English, but good and elegant English; he has even scattered graces upon his subject; and in prose, has come very near Virgil's 'Georgics' in verse." Harte's illness grows worse, and Chesterfield, in his last letter to Philip, tells how "he has entirely lost the use of his left side, and can hardly speak intelligibly," but retains his fondness for his former pupil and is greatly distressed to learn that he, too, is sick.

The self-portrait and the impressions of other characters are embedded in a book that owes its unplanned form to the great good luck of its contents extending from Philip's sixth to his thirty-sixth year. Beginning by guiding a very small boy in the fields of morals, French, Latin and ancient history and mythology, the correspondence opens out like a funnel, taking in more and more of Chesterfield's world. It comes to include the lessons, negative and positive, Chesterfield has learnt from his youthful dissipation; the countries and courts that Philip visits; observations on people's ruling passions and principal weaknesses; the adroit uses of flattery; the value of civility to rivals and enemies (but not simulated friendship—that crosses an ethical boundary); the rights of man, which absolute rule violates; the greatness of French literature of the time of Louis XIV; the power struggles between Britain and France culminating in the Seven Years

War with its mortal danger to the philosopher-king Frederick the Great of Prussia; the puzzling manoeuvres in Parliament that follow that War; and Chesterfield's last years.

To some of his correspondents, however, Lord Chesterfield sends more news of his later life than he is willing to burden Philip with. As his body decays, he starts to think more about death and judgment, and writes to the Bishop of Waterford of his sufferings being just recompense for his youthful pleasures, of his admiration for the very rationalistic Archbishop of Canterbury John Tillotson, and of his reliance on God's mercy tempered a little with some fear of His wrath.

Chesterfield contributes to the Bishop's charity that resettles in Ireland refugees driven out of France by "the rage and fury of the Clergy," while he several times recommends kinder treatment of Ireland's own Roman Catholic population. He retains a strong affection for the country where he served as Lord Lieutenant and writes to Swift's publisher George Faulkner of the damage done there by "party feuds and animosities." To the Irish soldier Major Irvine, he observes that excessive drinking bars the population from "a degree of quiet and plenty that it has never yet known." He keeps his Dutch friend Solomon Dayrolles informed about his last interventions in public life: in 1755, despite his increasing deafness, he blocks an "indecent, ungenerous, and malignant" motion in the House of Lords urging George II not to visit his German possessions, and a few months later he speaks in the same chamber for nearly an hour to press for a precautionary treaty with Russia as the possibility of what becomes the Seven Years War looms. That war causes a long gap in his correspondence with Mme de Monconseil, a correspondence rooted in affectionate esteem based on shared tastes. In 1748 he invites her to visit his new house, which he is decking out in the French manner, and where, "with the exception of the good cheer, the good company, and all the pleasures of the society, you would think yourself still at Paris." While he writes solemnly to her of his son's need to acquire the graces and his inability to obtain the pardon she wishes for a Jacobite exile, he can banter about a supposed rival in her affections, and when she gives birth to a girl, he teases her that she is confining her beneficence to the Amazons. He can even show himself capable of playful fantasy, imagining how they might fly with the wings of time, of the wind, of love, of friendship, but then lamenting how the poets lie with their metaphors and speaking of a journey to the moon to regain his lost hearing.

Although Lord Chesterfield, in comparison with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, has a limited experience of contrasting countries, his correspondence, though very different, is nearly as rich as hers. While he lacks her descriptive powers, both discuss literature, both are interested in ideas,

and both are plentifully gifted with wit. Humour and expressions of delight give a sparkle to many of Lady Mary's letters, while others seem to sigh and sob with passion. Chesterfield, however afflicted with troubles, never loses his dignity, but continues to craft sentences with all the elegance of Georgian architecture. This does not prevent him from enlivening his instruction of Philip with many entertaining accounts of how not to behave. Among his best satirical passages, some are devoted to the misconduct of rich young Englishmen abroad, some describe the mishaps of ungainly, awkward men, and some take the form of highly convincing and very instructive dialogues. The most famous is an account of a man "whose moral character, deep learning, and superior parts elicit Chesterfield's deep respect, but whose bodily movements and behaviour in society excite his repulsion and ridicule. It now seems that the man in question is Lord Lyttleton, but for long it was believed to be Dr. Johnson.

## HE FEARS MADNESS SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709-1784)



Unlike the letters of Lord Chesterfield to his son, the letters of Dr. Johnson do not, by themselves constitute a work of literature. They contain no gallery of characters, no full conspectus of an adult life, no nearly complete self-portrait. In 1965, Professor David Littlejohn published *Dr. Johnson: His Life in Letters*, a useful compilation, but one that lacks too much of the life for the title to be justified.

Among the aspects of Johnson absent from the letters are the aggressive, bullying conversationalist; the believer struggling against his own doubts; the conservative, Anglican anti-egalitarian who holds slavery to be an abomination and is indignant at the Protestant suppression of the Catholic majority in Ireland; the lexicographer who detects minute semantic distinctions; the poet of "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes"; and the critical genius who is able to advance Shakespearean scholarship and trace the course of English poetry from Donne to Gray.

In spite of these limitations, however, the letters of Johnson have much to offer the reader who has succumbed to the fascination of Boswell's *Life*, a book that takes one into the very presence of this mountain of a man, this huge personality who can untie Shakespeare's tangled syntax as readily as he can expose our comforting self-deceptions. While many of the letters deal with such matters as his debts, the mortgage of his mother's house, and the publication of his writings, others yield much more than dry facts.

As a correspondent, Johnson is an inveterate dispenser of advice. He counsels Boswell, whose law practice is in Edinburgh, to accede to his wife's pleading that he forgo one of his annual visits to London, to realise that he need not be in the English capital to be happy, and to try to please the father he does not much like so as to "add no pain to his last years." He guides many in their course of study; urges Francis Barber, his young black servant, to cultivate a love of reading; discourages his stepdaughter, Lucy



Porter, from pouring out money on building; tells his close friend Mrs. Thrale that her husband should buy land and recommends her daughter to advance far in arithmetic. Above all, drawing on his own experience, he has wise words for anyone labouring under a burden of melancholy.

At the end of 1729, twenty-year-old Johnson is compelled by poverty to leave Oxford without a degree. Writing after his subject's death, Boswell tells us in a frequently quoted passage that from this time,

he felt himself overwhelmed with an horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience; and with a dejection, gloom, and despair, which made existence misery. From this dismal malady he never afterwards was perfectly relieved.

When his friends complain of a comparable affliction, or suffer a devastating bereavement, he presses them to shun solitude and take up some activity to occupy their minds. Such is his repeated advice to Boswell and to the clergyman and farmer John Taylor, and he suggests that Mrs. Thrale, soon after her husband's death, resort to some "lawful business" as this will leave her mind "little room for useless regret."

Boswell's account of Johnson's first descent into melancholia is matched by a letter in which Johnson himself recalls his desolate state when he becomes a widower. In 1745, two and a half years after his bereavement, he tells his scholar friend Thomas Warton:

You know poor Mr. Dodsley has lost his wife.... I hope he will not suffer so much as I yet suffer for the loss of mine.... I have ever since seemed to myself broken off from mankind; a kind of solitary wanderer in the wild of life, without any direction, or fixed point of view: a gloomy gazer on a world to which I have little relation.

Letters Johnson writes after the death of his mother allow us to compare the impact of this later bereavement. While research has revealed that Boswell exaggerates the happiness of his friend's marriage, the friction that disturbs it pales before the stresses in his tormented relationship with his mother. The love that he thinks he bears her is, as George Irwin demonstrates, a protective mask for an unconscious hatred for this parent who does not know how to show affection to her elder boy. (Johnson has a younger brother, Nathanael, with whom he is on uneasy terms). Irwin points out that in the nineteen years before his mother's death in January 1759, he does not once visit his native city of Lichfield, where she lives, but in his remaining twenty-five years he visits it twelve times. In 1755,

a telltale turn of phrase appears in his letter of 6 May to his friend Bennet Langton: "When the duty that calls me to Lichfield is discharged, my inclination will carry me to Langton." Much of his grief at his mother's death must be the product of guilt, and to Lucy Porter, who is his confidante as he mourns, he writes, "If she were to live again, surely I should behave better to her."

His curious marriage to a woman twenty years older than himself brings Johnson a stepdaughter who is his junior by only nine years. Lucy Porter is one of a number of women who rank among Johnson's dearest friends. Probably most revered is the devout and learned Hill Boothby, with whom he is clearly in love. He addresses her as "my Dearest" and "My sweet Angel" and declares there is "none but you on whom my heart reposes." But the lady to whom he writes most copiously is Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale.

Johnson's letters to Mrs. Thrale, her husband, and her daughters constitute the centrepiece of his correspondence: the most vivid chronicle the greatest adventure of his life; the remainder disclose the complexity of his relationship with the Thrale family.

In the summer of 1773, thirty-two-year old James Boswell at last induces his sixty-three-year-old friend Samuel Johnson to accompany him on a daring journey into the Scottish Highlands and the Hebrides. Week by week, his letters to Mrs. Thrale record discoveries that enthral Johnson and portray the characters he meets. These range from a blind poet who is read to in Greek, Latin, and French to Flora Macdonald, who managed the escape of Bonnie Prince Charlie, the Young Pretender, in 1746 after the defeat of his army. As Johnson advances from the Scottish cities, with their cathedrals and universities, into remote regions, he encounters an archaic, pre-capitalist society where tenants live in feudal dependence on their lairds and chiefs. From the Isle of Skie, he writes:

The Laird of Raarsa has sometimes disputed the chieftaincy of the clan with Macleod of Skie, but being much inferior in extent of possessions, has, I suppose, been forced to desist. Raarsa and its provinces have descended to its present possessor through a succession of four hundred years, without any increase or diminution.

Although the landscape and society are to him new and strange, Johnson encounters there learned men, educated women, books, and imported foods—patches of the familiar such as can add an extra charm to the experience of an exotic society.

Several weeks of hard travelling on foot and horseback bring observations on rock formations, watercourses and mountainsides. Johnson notices the presence and absence of trees on the earth and of shoes on the people, along with the kinds and quantities of crops and garden produce. Castles, houses, and cottages figure in the letters to Mrs. Thrale, along with the structure of sod huts. The discomfort of clambering over rocks, rough riding, and dirty accommodation in some places is balanced by the pleasures of sublime scenery and liberal hospitality in others:

On the 13th [of September], travelling partly on horseback where we could not row, and partly on foot where we could not ride, we came to Dunvegan.... Here, though poor Macleod had been left by his grandfather overwhelmed with debts, we had another exhibition of feudal hospitality. There were two stags in the house, and venison came to the table every day in its various forms.

A romantic vein in Johnson is touched by the spectacle of Macbeth's heath, while his piety is stirred by the sight of the spot where St. Columba built his church and monastery on Iona. Seeing the barrenness of great areas, he comments on the supposed blissfulness of pastoral and primitive life praised by some poets and philosophers: "The use of travelling is to regulate imagination by reality." His endurance is equal to being imprisoned on islands by dangerous winds, and near the end of his adventure he writes to Henry Thrale:

About ten miles of this day's journey were uncommonly amusing. We travelled with very little light, in a storm of wind and rain; we passed about fifty-five streams that crossed our way, and fell into a river that, for a very great part of our road, foamed and roared beside us; all the rougher powers of nature, except thunder, were in motion, but there was no danger. I should have been sorry to have missed any of the inconveniences, to have had more light or less rain, for their co-operation crowded the scene and filled the mind.

How much Johnson's expedition meant to him can be gauged by his anxiety, visible in his letters, that his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* should be well received. In this fine volume, the descriptions and reflections in the letters to the Thrales are greatly expanded at the cost of some of their lively immediacy.

On his return to London in 1773, Johnson continues to take frequent refuge at the house of Henry and Hester Thrale, whom he calls his Master

and Mistress. "I love the Thrales and the Thralites," he writes to Hester; childless himself, he delights in their children, especially the eldest, Hester Maria, known as "Queeney," to whom he teaches Latin. Mrs. Thrale is an intellectual and fashionable lady who keeps a salon in the family house at Streatham, where she sets aside a room for Johnson. As early as 1767, he writes to her of "that place which your kindness and Mr. Thrale's allows me to call my *home*." It allows this famous Londoner to make frequent escapes from his own house at Bolt Court, where he charitably accommodates some unfortunate persons who are all too ready to quarrel with each other.

In his letters to Mrs. Thrale, Johnson can be playful, but is more often full of grave advice. At one point she is his Mistress who can "lie abed hatching suspicions," and information about the tempting invitations she receives brings the charge, "You will become such a gadder, that you will not care a penny for me." However, when she finds her uncle has unexpectedly left his estate to someone else, Johnson reminds her, "The event is irrevocable, it remains only to bear it," and he counsels, "Remit yourself solemnly into the hands of God, and then turn your mind upon the business and amusements which lie before you." In another mood, he rebukes her for her "despicable dread" of living in the unfashionable Borough of Southwark, where her husband's brewery is situated, and he can admonish her, "do not think to be young beyond the time." Other advice helps the Thrales to overcome a financial crisis that threatens their brewery: this scholar and man of letters recognizes that Henry Thrale is too apt to delegate important work.

A miscellany of subjects enriches the letters to Mrs. Thrale. Johnson's awe as he crosses the Staffordshire Canal, "one of the great efforts of human labour, and human contrivance," foreshadows his powerful emotions on his Scottish expedition. There are many remarks on John Taylor's notable successes at breeding cattle. When Samuel Plumbe and his wife vigorously object to their daughter's marrying John Rice, though John's father is ready to accept a daughter-in-law without a dowry and set his son up in trade, the couple elope, and Mrs. Thrale is much surprised when Johnson, a famously rigorous moralist, argues in their defence:

Unlimited obedience is due only to the Universal Father of Heaven and Earth. My parents may be mad or foolish; may be wicked and malicious; may be erroneously religious, or absurdly scrupulous. I am not bound to compliance with mandates either positive or negative, which either religion condemns, or reason rejects.

There are concise reports of the quarrels among the unfortunates whom Johnson allows to share his home—principally the poor physician Robert Levet, the blind poet Anna Williams, and his godfather's widowed daughter, Elizabeth Desmoulins. A late addition is named Poll Carmichael. In November 1778, Mrs. Thrale learns that "We have tolerable concord at home, but no love. Williams hates every body. Levet hates Desmoulins, and does not love Williams. Desmoulins hates them both. Poll loves none of them." There are comments on people known to both writer and reader: when Lucy Porter manages to keep Johnson at Lichfield longer than he wishes, she is "a very peremptory maiden." Weightier matters, which include his ailments and prescriptions, are seasoned with a little gossip: referring to the purchase of the Drury Lane Theatre, Johnson reports, "They pay [for the theatre] neither principle nor interest; and poor Garrick's funeral expences are yet unpaid, though the undertaker is broken. Could you have a better purveyor for a little scandal?" Before concluding his letter, Johnson offers Mrs. Thrale the prospect of "more mischief."

Sadly, Johnson suffers from masochistic urges, which he does not understand: he is terrified that they portend madness. Their existence must reinforce fears stemming from his nervous breakdown when he has to leave Oxford, fears strengthened by the response of his godfather, the physician Dr. Swinfen, to his written account of his symptoms. Swinfen tells him that much care is necessary to prevent his lapsing into insanity. In an undated letter to Mrs. Thrale—written in French to protect its secrets from plebeian eyes—he begs her to keep him locked up while she makes him feel her authority and to hold him in a slavery which she knows how to make happy. She may also have shackled him since she refers in a notebook not only to the great Dr. Johnson on his knees kissing her hands and feet, but also to the fetters and padlocks which will reveal all to posterity. Johnson himself writes in his diary in Latin, "Insane thoughts of fetters and handcuffs." In what appears to be her reply to the letter just cited, Mrs. Thrale gives him advice the first part of which could well have come from his own mouth—not to brood on hateful thoughts and to rely on his best doctor, Mr. Boswell, for "Dissipation" [i.e., diversion] is to him "a glorious medicine," but she agrees to play her part in the uneasy game and to impose strict confinement on him, except when there are visitors.

Despite his failure to understand his masochistic impulses, Johnson is gifted with considerable psychological insights, usually linked to his passion for moral conduct, and these frequently appear in his letters to Mrs. Thrale. Commending her for not having failed to travel to Brighton to be with her dying infant son, he observes, "We can hardly be confident of the state of our own minds, but as it stands attested by some external action; we are seldom sure that we sincerely meant what we omitted to do." As he

affirms the rightness of her decision not to make a small boy bathe in the sea since he is terrified of the water, he warns her against entrusting children to nursemaids: "A nurse made of common mould will have a pride in overpowering a child's reluctance. There are few minds to which tyranny is not delightful." The second wife of the music historian Charles Burney (father of the novelist Frances Burney) takes great pride in the superiority of her wealthy daughter, Elizabeth Allen, to Mr. Burney's own girls, and when this daughter elopes with an adventurer, Johnson feels for her mother's pain:

Poor Mrs. [Burney]! One cannot think on her but with great compassion. But it is impossible for her husband's daughters not to triumph; and the husband will feel, as Rochefoucauld says, *something that does not displease him*. You and I, who are neutral, whom her happiness could not have depressed, may be honestly sorry.

Johnson himself suffers an agonizing blow when Henry Thrale, who has ignored medical warnings to cease gormandizing, expires on 4 April 1781. "No death since that of my wife," he writes to the widow next day, "has ever oppressed me like this." Nearly a year later, he laments to Bennet Langton:

Of my life, from the time we parted, the history is mournful. The spring of last year deprived me of Thrale, a man whose eye for fifteen years had scarcely been turned upon me but with respect or tenderness; for such another friend, the general course of human things will not suffer me to hope. I passed the summer at Streatham, but there was no Thrale.

The letters Johnson writes in his remaining years make sad and often monotonous reading. Afflicted with illnesses that leave him hardly able to walk, to sleep at night, or even to breathe easily, he fills sheets of paper with medical details for his physicians. To friends he sends apologies for not writing sooner since a solitary sick old man has nothing but complaints with which to fill his pages. The English climate aggravates his ailments, and he confesses to Charles Burney, "I am now reduced to think, and am at last content to talk of the weather. Pride must have a fall." He grieves over the death of one old friend after another, and in March 1782, he complains to Lucy Porter of his dwindling household (which still includes his black servant Francis Barber): "My dwelling is but melancholy; both Williams, and Desmoulins, and myself, are very sickly: Frank is not well; and poor Levett died in his bed the other day, by a sudden stroke." Twenty months

later, he writes to the same lady, "Last month died Mrs. Williams, who had been to me for thirty years in the place of a sister: her knowledge was great, and her conversation pleasing. I now live in cheerless solitude."

In his happier hours, Johnson can still emerge from his dwelling to enjoy company, and he is alert enough to ponder a spectacular new invention, the hot-air balloon. Its first trial, he writes to his physician, Dr. Brocklesby, "was bold and deserved applause and reward," but he decides:

In amusement, mere amusement, I am afraid it must end, for I do not find that its course can be directed so as that it should serve any purposes of communication; and it can give no new intelligence of the state of the air at different heights, till they have ascended above the height of mountains, which they seem never likely to do.

Devouring luxurious food is a pleasure he can still relish, though he admits in one of his last letters to Mrs. Thrale, "there are other things, how different! which ought to predominate in the mind of such a man as I: but in this world the body will have its part; and my hope is, that it shall have no more." Yet however great his pain and his loneliness, he never ceases to write letters soliciting funds and employment for the needy.

A final wound to Johnson's spirit comes five months before his death. A letter from Mrs. Thrale informs him that his beloved friend, to the indignation of her daughters, who have fled the house, is about to marry the Roman Catholic Italian music teacher Gabriel Piozzi. With uncontrolled fury, Johnson replies, "If you have abandoned your children and your religion, God forgive your wickedness; if you have forfeited your fame and your country, may your folly do no further mischief." It takes him nearly a week to regain his self-possession and to concede, in his last letter to the lady, "What you have done, however I may lament it, I have no pretence to resent, as it has not been injurious to me," and in a kind of repayment for "that kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched," he urges her to persuade Mr. Piozzi to settle in England, although he adds, "I am afraid however that my counsel is vain." A month later, he writes to Mrs. Thrale's daughter Queeney, "I love you, I loved your father, and I loved your Mother as long as I could." The Piozzis, after travelling on the Continent, return to live in Britain, and despite Johnson's fears, Mrs. Piozzi does not change her religion.

That Johnson speaks of his life as "radically wretched" accords with his other complaints. When he writes to Mrs. Thrale from Scotland that on his sixty-fourth birthday he "can now look back upon threescore and four years, in which little has been done, and little has been enjoyed," he reveals

the depths of his melancholy delusion. While he has suffered grievously from poverty (by this time, happily, an affliction of the past) as well as continuous ill health in body and mind, his literary achievements are extraordinary and his charitable actions exceptional. He is, however, troubled not only by the possibility of madness but also by fear of damnation. Boswell's claim, sometimes doubted, that he was at one time lured into sexual irregularities and his guilt about lapsing into periods of idleness between his bursts of productive energy help to explain his terror of posthumous judgment, several times expressed in his letters. In March 1784, nine months before his death, he rebukes Mrs. Thrale: "Write to me no more about *dying with a grace*; when you feel what I have felt in approaching eternity—in fear of soon hearing the sentence of which there is no revocation, you will know the folly." In April, he declares to the Reverend John Taylor, "O! my friend, the approach of death is very dreadful. I am afraid to think on that which I know I cannot avoid." In his last months, nevertheless, the terror falls away, and Johnson dies peacefully on 13 December 1784. Eight days earlier he has written a prayer containing the plea "forgive and accept my late conversion"; perhaps it is in the light of these words that we should read such a passage as occurs in a letter of 6 October to his merchant friend John Ryland:

My mind, however, is calmer than in the beginning of the year, and I comfort myself with hopes of every kind, neither despairing of ease in this world, nor of happiness in another.





## LOCKEAN SENTIMENTALIST LAURENCE STERNE (1713-1768)



Dr. Johnson is a guilt-haunted Christian who fills his life with good works; the Reverend Laurence Sterne is a sentimental Christian and a laughing philosopher. Sending his works to his illicit beloved, he explains, “The sermons came all hot from the heart.... The others [the nine books of *Tristram Shandy*] came from the head.”

Some of Sterne’s early letters are cloyingly sentimental effusions to Elizabeth Lumley, whom he goes on to marry; others concern quarrels with his uncle, the Reverend Jacques Sterne, and with his mother, whom he finds difficult and untruthful. Ecclesiastical business and work on his own, and his friends’ farms also have a place. Writing near the end of his life, he remembers its turning point: “Curse on farming (said I) I will try if the pen will not succeed better than the spade.” With the publication in December 1759 of the first two volumes of his great novel, this obscure Yorkshire vicar becomes, at the age of forty-six, a famous author.

In *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne writes fiction in a new mode—too odd, says Dr. Johnson, to last, though he acknowledges the author is no dullard. Abrupt transitions, frequent digressions, and playful ways of addressing the reader are accompanied by lively dialogue. His favourite punctuation mark is the dash. Taking his cue from Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Sterne plays with the way in which our consciousness leaps from thought to thought not logically but as ideas have happened to become associated with each other in our minds, and he raises awareness of the difference between time as the clock measures it and time as we experience it. His narrative implicitly comments on the often untraceable chains of cause and effect in our lives, and he luxuriates in the bawdy allusion and the *double entendre* to emphasize how, like it or not, we are sexual animals. To cap it all, he presents life thus portrayed as a humorous spectacle.

Although Sterne writes to his Parisian banker Robert Foly of “the volume I am now fabricating for the laughing part of the world,” he elsewhere drops hints that its philosophical foundation is little understood: “in using the [walking] stick,” he tells his American admirer Dr. John Eustace, “every one will take the handle which suits his convenience. In *Tristram Shandy* the handle is taken which suits their passions, their ignorance or their sensibility.” Another aspect of the book embodies Sterne’s response to human goodness, which is most clearly seen in the portrayal of Tristram’s loving and lovable Uncle Toby: “so much am I delighted with my uncle Toby’s imaginary character,” he informs a lady, “that I am become an enthusiast.” (In the language of the eighteenth century, enthusiasm signifies going, in a greater or lesser degree, beyond the bounds of reason.)

Despite the widespread applause, puritanical moralists disapprove of the sexual content of the novel and denounce its author as unworthy of his church. Mr. Fothergill, he tells an unidentified correspondent, repeatedly counsels him, “Get your preferment first, Lory! and then write and welcome.” “But suppose,” he reasons with his friend, “preferment is long a-coming – and, for aught I know, I may not be preferred till the resurrection of the just – and am all that time in labour, how must I bear my pains?” He notes that “Swift has said a hundred things I durst not say, unless I was dean of St. Patrick’s.” When William Warburton, the scholarly Bishop of Gloucester, urges him to avoid indecency, he responds, “I may find it very hard, in writing such a book as *Tristram Shandy*, to mutilate everything in it down to the prudish humour of every particular. I will, however, do my best – though laugh, my Lord, I will, and as loud as I can too.”

Inevitably, the reader of *Tristram Shandy* who turns to the letters will ask, “Does the Shandean style appear there?” In a minority of them it does. Thus Sterne begins a letter to the great actor David Garrick:

Dear Sir, – ‘Twas for all the world like a cut across my finger with a sharp penknife. I saw the blood – gave it a suck, – wrapt it up – and thought no more about it.

But there is more goes to the healing of a wound than this comes to: – a wound (unless ‘tis a wound not worth talking of, but by the bye mine is) must give you some pain after. – Nature will take her own way with it – it must ferment – it must digest.

The wound has been inflicted by the rumour that Sterne intends to ridicule Bishop Warburton by portraying him as Tristram’s tutor.

Sterne delights many friends and acquaintances, both old and new, by playing the humorist in company as well as on paper. He later writes

to Garrick from Paris, “I Shandy it away fifty times more than I was ever wont, talk more nonsense than ever you heard me talk in your days—and to all sorts of people.”

The popularity of the first instalment of his novel brings Sterne to London, where he relishes being lionised, even by the bishops, and despite his friend Fothergill’s fears, he is presented with the living of Coxwold by Lord Fauconberg. Writing back to people in Yorkshire, he enthuses to the singer Catherine Fourmantel, his current inamorata, over his round of visits in the capital, and he informs the squire Stephen Croft of changes in government and of the fierce controversy over whether to abandon Britain’s alliance with Prussia, which seems on the verge of defeat in the Seven Years War. On his return, after hobnobbing with the noble and the famous, he finds it hard at first to adjust to the quiet of his new Yorkshire parish. To his friend John Hall-Stevenson, he suggests, “I should have walked about the streets of York ten days, as a proper medium to have passed through, before I entered upon my rest.” Hall-Stevenson is a fellow humorist and author whose pleasure it is to make merry with like-minded companions in his mediaeval home, Skelton Castle. The building has the nickname Crazy Castle, derived from the owner’s book *Crazy Tales*, and Sterne often writes to Hall-Stevenson of his desire to be there once again.

Contentment seems to prevail for about a year in the Coxwold cottage soon known as Shandy Hall. Sterne, however, suffers from consumption—he often spits blood—and he obtains leave to travel to France for his health; his wife and daughter are to follow later. In Paris, where he arrives in January 1762, he rejoices to find he is as much of a lion as in London, and he composes delightful letters to his wife, Lord Fauconberg, and David Garrick. He writes of the great men who welcome him, of how “the whole city of Paris is *bewitch’d* with the comic opera,” and of the vigorous campaign to eject the Jesuits from France—a campaign which preoccupies Parisians more than their country’s fortune in the current Seven Years War. In one letter to his wife, he pictures the tragic fire that has destroyed the great fair of St. Germain depriving hundreds of people, many of them skilled craftsmen, of their property and livelihood: “I could have found in my heart,” he exclaims, “to have cried over the perishable and uncertain tenure of every good in this life.” The same letter shows the Reverend Laurence Sterne’s professional fascination with the preaching of the theologian Denis-Xavier Clément, which he finds,

most excellent indeed! his matter solid, and to the purpose; his manner, more than theatrical, and greater, both in his action and delivery, than Madame Clairon, who, you must know, is the Garrick of the stage here; he has infinite variety, and keeps up the

attention by it wonderfully; his pulpit, oblong, with three seats in it, into which he occasionally casts himself; goes on, then rises, by a gradation of four steps, each of which he profits by, as his discourse inclines him; in short 'tis a stage, and the variety of his tones would make you imagine there were no less than five or six actors on it together.

By April, physicians advise Sterne that he needs to spend a winter further south to strengthen his lungs, and his wife writes that their daughter, Lydia, requires a similar sojourn as her asthma worsens. He takes a house in Toulouse and sends Mrs. Sterne instructions for travel which paint a picture of the journey facing her and Lydia almost as vivid as the pictures of the market and the preacher in Paris:

For God's sake rise early and gallop away in the cool—and always see that you have not forgot your baggage in changing post-chaises—You will find good tea upon the road from York to Dover—only bring a little to carry you from Calais to Paris—give the Custom-House officers what I told you—at Calais give more, if you have much Scotch snuff.

Although he is soon enjoying “the prettiest situation in Toulouse, with near two acres of garden” and a well furnished house, Sterne finds life in the south of France very different from life in Paris, and writes to Hall-Stevenson, “Oh! how I envy you all at Crazy Castle!” After the society of *philosophes*, he complains of “the eternal platitude of the [provincial] French characters—little variety, no originality” and associates mainly with other British expatriates. By October 1763, he announces, “I shall set out in February for England, where my heart has been fled these six months.” His wife and daughter are to remain in Toulouse.

Back at Coxwold, Sterne struggles to finish volumes seven and eight of *Tristram Shandy* in the face of alarming encroachments on his time by church business, negotiations on the enclosure of Stillington Common, and irresistible temptations: “There is no sitting, and cudgeling one's brains whilst the sun shines bright,” he confesses to Hall-Stevenson on 4 September 1764, and by the end of the month he has taken a three-week excursion to the coastal resort of Scarborough. In mid-November, he complains, “I have been *Miss-ridden* this last week by a couple of romping girls (*bien mises et comme il faut*) who might as well have been in the house with me (tho' perhaps not, my retreat here is too quiet for them) but they have taken up all my time, and have given my judgment and fancy more airings than they wanted.” This statement Hall-Stevenson is left to interpret as he wishes.

For a long time, Laurence and Elizabeth Sterne have endured an uneasy marriage. Laurence's clerical vocation does not prevent his affections from straying to a succession of attractive women whose presence in his life leaves traces in his correspondence. To Catherine Fourmantel he writes in 1760, "God will open a door when we shall sometime be much more together, and enjoy our desires without fear or interruption." Four years later, he confides to Hall-Stevenson from Paris:

I have been for eight weeks smitten with the tenderest passion that ever tender wight underwent. I wish, dear cousin, thou couldst conceive (perhaps thou can'st without my wishing it) how deliciously I canter'd away with it the first month, two up, two down, always upon my hanches along the streets from my hôtel to hers, at first, once — then twice, then three times a day, till at length I was within an ace of setting up my hobby horse in her stable for good an all.

Next year, he teases Lady Warkworth for making him into "a dish clout of a soul" and asks,

Would not any man in his senses run diametrically from you — and as far as his legs would carry him, rather than thus causelessly, foolishly, and foolhardily expose himself afresh — and afresh, where his heart and his reason tells him he shall be sure to come off loser, if not totally undone?

In spite of his inconstancy and what is said by witnesses to be their frequent quarrels, the feelings of Sterne and his wife to each other remain ambivalent: a strong undercurrent of affection seems to survive beneath their feuding. His claim in 1761, made to the famous bluestocking Mrs. Montagu, a cousin of Elizabeth, that their disputes are over is to prove wishful thinking, but he always ensures that his wife is well provided for. When he sails to France at the beginning of 1762, he leaves prudent advice for her in case he should die — it includes the caution not to give their daughter so much on her marriage that she would forfeit her own independence. A letter already quoted shows him eager to share with her some of his experience of Paris, and there is no reason to doubt his assertion there, "I send to Mr. Foley's every mail-day, to inquire for a letter from you; and if I do not get one in a post or two, I shall be greatly surprised and disappointed." When he is about to go back alone to England, he writes to Robert Foley:

My wife returns to Toulouse and purposes to spend the summer at Bagnieres—I on the contrary go and visit my wife the church in Yorkshire.— We all live the longer—at least the happier,— for having things our own way.— This is my conjugal maxim—I own 'tis not the best of maxims—but I maintain 'tis not the worst.

If this reflects the unsteady affection that Sterne maintains for his wife, there is no doubt that he nourishes a rooted love for their daughter. When the two women arrive in France, he writes of Lydia, “I wish she may ever remain a child of Nature—I hate children of art.” On the point of returning to England, he declares, “except a tear at parting with my little slut, I shall be in high spirits.” Back in his own country, he takes care to write to her giving advice on her reading and adding:

I hope you have not forgot my last request, to make no friendships with the French-women—not that I think ill of them all, but sometimes women of the best principles are the most *insinuating*—nay I am so jealous of you that I should be miserable were I to see you had the least grain of coquetry in your composition.

The English winters continue to aggravate Sterne's complaint—his lungs still bleed intermittently—and in 1765, after publishing the seventh and eighth volumes of *Tristram Shandy*, he announces his intention to “seek a kindlier climate,” for “This plaguy cough of mine seems to gain ground, and will bring me to my grave in spite of me—but while I have strength to run away from it I will.” He sets off for Naples, and a series of letters to the Paris banker Isaac Panchoard gives descriptions of his pleasing and unpleasing experiences as he is imprisoned by floods, received with honours, delighted by spring-like weather on the plains of Lombardy, and depressed by heavy snow in the Appenines. The climate of Naples he does find helpful, and he treats Hall-Stevenson to a brief account of the entertainments at its Carnival. Subsequently he tells the same friend,

Never man has been such a wild-goose chase after a wife as I have been—after having sought her in five or six different towns, I found her at last in *Franche-Comté*—Poor woman! she was very cordial, &c. and begs to stay another year or so—my Lydia pleases me much—I found her greatly improved in everything I wish'd her.

Back in England again by June 1766, Sterne works on the ninth volume of *Tristram Shandy*. Hearing, however, that his wife is ill, he decides in

September that if she grows worse he will return to the Continent to comfort her and Lydia. When a fever defeats his hope of completing a tenth volume of *Tristram*, he leaves for London in January 1767 to publish the ninth, and sends Lord Fauconberg accounts of the crippling blizzard that make the journey only just possible and of a London paralyzed by snow four inches deep. "It has," he complains, "set in now with the most intense cold. I could scarce lay in bed for it, and this morning more snow again." A few days later, he reports, "It was so intensely cold on Sunday, that there were few either at the church or court, but last night it thaw'd; the concert at Soho top full—and was (this is for the ladies) the best assembly and the best concert I ever had the honour to be at."

Sterne is still of as amorous a disposition as ever; a passage in a letter to a friend may give some insight into his susceptibility. Pleased that his correspondent is in love, he writes:

I myself must ever have some dulcinea in my head—it harmonises the soul—and in those cases I first endeavour to make the lady believe so, or rather I begin first to make myself believe that I am in love—but I carry on my affairs quite in the French way, sentimentally,—'l'amour' (say they) 'n'est rien sans sentiment.'

Early in 1767, after his wintry journey to London, Sterne conceives there a passion which leads to a dramatic portion of his correspondence. With his wife and daughter still in France, he falls in love with an aspiring young bluestocking named Eliza Draper. She has two young children in boarding school and a husband working in India. When a "busy fool" tittle tattles to his wife about his attentions to Mrs. Draper, he writes to Lydia that "'tis true I have a friendship for her, but not to infatuation." To Eliza herself, he declares in the following month, "I will live for thee, and my Lydia," and he is obsessed enough to praise her volubly when he dines with Lord Bathurst.

To his distress, Sterne is not permitted to enjoy his beloved's presence for more than a few weeks. Her husband orders her to join him in India; probably he fears she is piling up debts. Because she is sickly at the time, Sterne imagines that her husband will be willing to rescind his command, and he is besotted enough to propose,

I will send for my wife and daughter, and they shall carry you, in pursuit of health, to Montpellier, the wells of Bancois, the Spa, or whither thou wilt... We shall fish upon the banks of Arno, and lose ourselves in the sweet labyrinths of its vallies.



In the same letter, he informs Eliza that he expects soon to be widower, and that should her husband die, he hopes to marry her. He dubs her, “my wife elect!”

After Eliza’s departure, Sterne has the comfort of talking about her with Anne and William James, a London couple who are her and his close friends and for whom he has an intense admiration. One of his letters refers to lessons in painting that he gives to Mrs. James. At this time, he begins a daily journal to be sent to Eliza in instalments. A lengthy portion of this gushing document – much inferior to his letters – was apparently not sent and survives.

With his return in May to Coxwold, where he works on a new book, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, his health temporarily improves. He is soon proclaiming to a friend:

I am as happy as a prince, at Coxwold – and I wish you could see in how princely a manner I live – ’tis a land of plenty. I sit down alone to venison, fish and wild fowl, or a couple of fowls or ducks, with curds, and strawberries, and cream, and all the simple plenty which a rich valley ... can produce.

His luscious diet is complemented by daily rides in his post-chaise, and though he refers to his “love-sick heart,” he admits he is “in high spirits.”

A letter extant in draft form tells of Sterne’s excursions to the neighbourhood ruins of Byland Abbey, where he indulges in imaginary conversations about Eliza with the spirits of long dead nuns. Disturbingly, the draft seems to have been originally addressed to a Countess and subsequently adjusted to be sent to Mrs. Draper. This suggests that at some level Sterne’s daydreams of a blissful life with Eliza that figure in his Journal may be in effect part of a play he is creating with himself as its main audience.

On the last day of June 1767, Sterne informs a friend:

I ought now to be busy from sun rise to sun set, for I have a book to write – a wife to receive – an estate to sell – a parish to superintend, and, what is worst of all, a disquieted heart to reason with.

The wife who is soon to visit, he tells the Jameses, “takes back sixteen hundred pds into France with her – and will do me the honour likewise to strip me of every thing I have – except Eliza’s picture.” As sometimes happens when an event is dreaded, the reality proves much less terrible than it seemed in prospect. He is enraptured with his elegant daughter and enthuses to Isaac Panchard:

my Lydia seems transported with the sight of me. — Nature, dear P, breathes in all her composition; and except a little vivacity — which is a fault in the world we live in — I am fully content with her mother's care of her.

His wife agrees to a moderate settlement, and of Lydia he writes to the Jameses that “she is all heaven could give me in a daughter,” but he has to add that “her mother loves France — and this dear part of me must be torn from my arms, to follow her mother.”

Time, the reunion with his family, or both seem to make Sterne's obsession with Eliza fade, and in November we find him counselling a friend who suffers from an infatuation with a woman he can never win to make his addresses elsewhere: “time,” he assures him, “will wear off an attachment which has taken so deep a root in your heart.”

Sterne's real trouble at this time is not persecution by his wife, but the frequent recurrence of his illness. At one point it attacks his genitals, and the doctors diagnose venereal disease. Sterne denies it, insisting he has had no sexual contact, even with his wife, for fifteen years; his disclaimer is often disbelieved, but the correct diagnosis appears to be “tuberculosis of the fibrocaceous type,” which can attack many parts of the body. Fortunately, he is well enough at the turn of the year to return to London for the publication of *A Sentimental Journey*. For a few weeks at the beginning of 1768, he is again lionised and enjoying visiting Mr. and Mrs. James, but he soon finds himself bedridden and on the verge of death. Realising this, he hopes he will be among those who have died with a jest on their lips. In case Lydia should lose her mother, too, he commends her to the care not of Eliza, as his wife fears he will, but of the worthy Jameses. He dies on 18 March 1768.

How sincere, one may wonder, are the religious beliefs of this inconstant man who is a minister of the Church and publishes four volumes of sermons, and what is his philosophy of life? We have already seen that in 1760 he assures Catherine Fourmandel that God will open a door for them to be together. In 1767, two of his letters to Eliza embody prayers to God to protect her, and one of these closes with the repetition of his “fervent ejaculation, ‘that we may be happy, and meet again; if not in this world, in the next.’” Having instructed his wife and daughter how to manage their first journey to France, he continues, “Now, my dears, once more pluck up your spirits — trust in God — in me — and in yourselves.” Six months before he dies, he tells a friend:

my *Sentimental Journey* will, I dare say, convince you that my feelings are from the heart, and that that heart is not of the worst of molds — praised be God for my sensibility! Though it has

often made me wretched, yet I would not exchange it for all the pleasures the grossest sensualist ever felt.

The purpose of *A Sentimental Journey* is, he tells Mrs. James, “to teach us to love the world and our fellow creatures better than we do – so it runs most upon those gentler passions and affections, which aid so much to it.” And it is upon the benevolent feelings of the human heart that the Reverend Mr. Sterne likes to preach. His religion is genuine although of a dilute, untheological kind.

Beyond this simple creed, Sterne sometimes counsels that we must seek our happiness within our own minds. He tells Robert Foley that “we must be happy within – and then few things without us make much difference – This is my Shandean philosophy.” That he tries, at least intermittently, to live by this conviction, although his sensibility can make him wretched, is confirmed by his comment on life at Coxwold after his return from the delights of Italy:

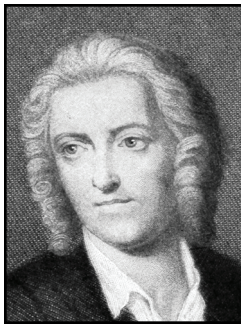
What a difference of scene here! But with a disposition to be happy, 'tis neither this place, nor t'other that renders us the reverse. – In short each man's happiness depends upon himself – he is a fool if he does not enjoy it.

Writing to his black admirer Ignatius Sancho, the ailing author elaborates on the cast of mind necessary to put this demanding belief into practice:

But I am a resigned being, Sancho, and take health and sickness as I do light and darkness, or the vicissitudes of seasons – that is, just as it pleases GOD to send them – and accommodate myself to their periodical returns, as well as I can – only taking care, whatever befalls me in this silly world – not to lose my temper at it. – This I believe, friend Sancho, to be the truest philosophy – for this we must be indebted to ourselves, but not to our fortunes.

In his masterpiece *Tristram Shandy*, the laughing intellect and the sentimental heart of Sterne work together harmoniously, but in his correspondence, as in his life, they can sit uneasily side by side. In his letters, while he can describe scenes and circumstances with a novelist's skill, more pervasive is his emotional engagement with them. Tossed to and fro between high spirits and discomfiting fears, he relies on humour and self-dependence to save him from foundering.

## NOT QUITE A RECLUSE THOMAS GRAY (1716-1771)



There could hardly be a greater contrast to the gregarious, philosophical, bawdy, tender-hearted and usually happy novelist Laurence Sterne than the austere, solitary, brooding, forlorn poet Thomas Gray. Yet despite his melancholy temperament, there are two joyous high points in Gray's correspondence as well as a final low point of emotional desolation.

As a youth, Gray is a member of a "Quadruple Alliance" of intimate friends at Eton; the other three are Thomas Ashton, Richard West, and the Prime Minister's son, Horace Walpole. Gray and West go up to Cambridge in 1734, a year before the younger Walpole. In letters to the latter touched with the humour of bantering schoolfellows yet shot through with melancholy, Gray castigates a university where "The Masters of Colleges are twelve grey-haired gentlefolks, who are all mad with pride; the Fellows are sleepy, drunken, dull, illiterate things; the Fellow-Commoners are imitators of the Fellows, or else beaux, or else nothing."

To his dismay, the instruction is not in the Greek and Roman poetry Gray has learnt at Eton to love, but in philosophy and mathematics. "I have made such a wonderful progress in philosophy," he announces, "that I begin to be quite persuaded that black is white, & that fire will not burn ... they tell me too, that I am nothing in the world, & that I only fancy, I exist." Proceeding to Oxford, West finds himself in no better plight, his university being "a country flowing with syllogisms and ale, where Horace and Virgil are equally unknown." Gray's social discomfort is acute: "do but imagine me," he adjures Walpole, "pent up in a room hired for the purpose, & none of the largest, from 7 o'clock at night, till 4 in the morning! 'midst hogsheads of liquor & quantities of tobacco, surrounded by 30 of these creatures infinitely below the meanest people you could even form an idea of." He yearns for Walpole to join him and enviously reads the account of plays, operas and masquerades his friend enjoys during a visit to London.

In the summer of 1736, holidaying with his horse- and dog-loving Uncle Rogers, who despises his nephew's taste for walking and books, Gray delights to think of himself as "Il Penseroso" – "the Melancholy Man" – of Milton's poem of that name, while he wanders alone down "a green lane" and through "a little chaos of mountains & precipices," and reads Virgil under a tree.

After two years at Cambridge, Gray decides to abandon the degree programme but remain at the University. He informs Walpole, "I swing from chapel or hall home, and from home to chapel or hall." When he has passed three and a half years in the place, he finds that he suffers from inertia: "'tis true," he confesses to Walpole, "Cambridge is very ugly, she is very dirty, & very dull; but I'm like a cabbage, where I'm stuck, I love to grow." Nevertheless, six months later, in September 1738, he leaves for London intending to study law. Luckily, the wealthy Horace Walpole is about to embark on a tour of the Continent, and Gray happily accepts an invitation to accompany him. Dyspeptic letters describing life at University are about to give way to passionate ones recording the writer's encounter with alien landscapes and the people who inhabit them.

Many people travel with preconceptions about the superiority – or less often the inferiority – of their own country. Gray, however, starts on his two-year tour at the end of March 1739 with an open and discriminating mind and a healthy supply of curiosity. Writing of Calais, he tells his mother, "we hardly saw anything there that was not so new and so different from England, that it surprized us agreeably." He notices the good roads and the bad inns, and at Amiens the Cathedral seems to him to be what Canterbury's must have been before the Reformation. In Paris, he finds the streets themselves and the people in them an entertainment, and besides theatrical pleasures, the city possesses "perhaps as handsome buildings, as any in the world." The palace at Versailles he dismisses as "a huge heap of littleness" disfigured by hues of "black, dirty red, and yellow," but in the vast gardens – enriched with "copies of all the famous antique statues in white marble" – "the case is indeed altered," despite an excess of such artificialities as "sugar-loaves and minced-pies of yew, scrawl-work of box, and little squirting jets-d'eau." In Rheims, he finds society is more formal than in Paris and less pleasant than in Dijon. Lyons disappoints him with its high houses over-shadowing narrow streets, but in its environs is a beautiful mountain landscape. Unfortunately the priests have little regard for the Roman remains.

Travelling further, Gray enlarges on the contrast between the prosperous republic of Geneva and the fertile yet poverty-stricken Savoy, which is misgoverned by the King of Sardinia. He happily records that Sir Robert Walpole has asked Horace to proceed to Italy. Gray, in love with the

Roman classics, reassures his father, "You may imagine I am not sorry to have the opportunity of seeing the place in the world that best deserves it."

To pass from France to Italy over land requires the party to traverse the Alps. Gray writes to his mother of their "eight days tiresome journey" and of their chaise's running along a road "not two yards broad at most" and bordering a precipice fifty fathoms deep. To West, he reveals the ecstasy that overtakes him on the ascent to the famous monastery La Grande Chartreuse:

I do not remember to have gone ten paces without an exclamation, that there was no restraining: Not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry. There are certain scenes that would awe an atheist into belief, without the help of other argument. One need not have a very fantastic imagination to see spirits there at noon-day: You have Death perpetually before your eyes, only so far removed, as to compose the mind without frightening it.

This encounter with dangerous magnificence marks Gray's initiation into the Sublime, that awe-inspiring aesthetic category that the eighteenth century loves to contrast with the harmonious Beautiful. The impact is to lead years later to his attempt at poetic sublimity in his two Pindaric odes. Less welcome in his account of the mountains is the assertion that "The creatures that inhabit there are, in all respects, below humanity."

Arriving at Genoa, Gray is enchanted by the beauty of the palaces and churches rising against the background of the Mediterranean and is dazzled by the sacred ceremonies on a festival day. "I believe I forgot to tell you," he teases West, "that we have been sometime converts to the holy Catholic church." In a similar vein he confesses to "cursing French music and architecture" while "singing the praises of Italy." For twelve days in Bologna, the party finds private houses inaccessible and sees "therefore, churches, palaces, and pictures from morning to night." Crossing the well cultivated Appenines, they luxuriate in the Uffizi Gallery and the architecture of Florence, but the climax of the Italian tour comes when Gray is wonderstruck by Rome. He exclaims, "As high as my expectation was raised, I confess, the magnificence of this city infinitely surpasses it." On the Good Friday of 1740, he is overwhelmed by the spectacle at St. Peter's, where he watches thirty processions and at night beholds "thousands of little crystal lamps, disposed in the figure of a huge cross at the high altar, and seeming to hang alone in the air." There is disdain, however, in his description in the same letter of alleged sacred relics of the Crucifixion displayed to worshippers and horror in his account of the blood-bespattered

flagellants in a side-chapel. At Tivoli, he and Walpole are fascinated by Roman remains, and back at Rome, Gray delightfully treats West to an account of an imaginary ancient dinner party he has enjoyed at Pompey's villa. The discordant element in the city is the squabbling Conclave unable to complete the election of a new pope, something that "gives great scandal to all good catholics."

Traversing "the most beautiful part of the finest country in the world," the friends reach Naples, which Gray finds full of hard working, music-loving people as well as classical remains, including the recent excavations at Herculaneum. Back in Florence, he begins to grow weary of its splendours but finds a new friend and future correspondent in the English expatriate John Chute. Thinking of his return, he writes to West, whom he has been encouraging to continue in his law studies, "This I feel, that you are the principal pleasure I have to hope for in my own country." Tragically, West is to die eight months after his friend's return.

At Reggio, Gray and Walpole quarrel, and Gray is left to make his way with one attendant to Venice and then home via France. Though he sends letters to reassure his parents he is safe and well, this part of his adventure is not described in his correspondence.

Home in England, Gray feels like a foreigner. He writes to Chute:

The boys laugh at the depth of my ruffles, the immensity of my bag[-wig], and the length of my sword. I am as an alien in my native land.... If my pockets had anything in them, I should be afraid of every body I met. Look in their face, they knock you down; speak to them, they bite off your nose. I am no longer ashamed in public, but extremely afraid ... as to politics, every body is extreme angry with all that has been, or shall be done ... now I have been at home, & seen how things go there, would I were with you again.

In his discomfort, Gray makes a desultory effort to study the law, but soon abandons it and takes rooms at Peterhouse, a Cambridge College. His letters give the impression that he sinks into a life of private study, melancholy, and dull ordinariness, relieved only by a few such incidents as his attendance at the trial of the Scottish peers who joined the Young Pretender's army in 1745, and his purchase of a rope ladder to escape from his chamber should drunken students cause a fire. In March 1756, when disturbances at Peterhouse become too alarming, he moves to Pembroke College, where one of the Fellows, James Brown, is his good friend.

Gray's correspondents, who soon include the reconciled Horace Walpole, learn a good deal about College and University politics, but they know the personalities involved, while we, his posthumous readers, do

not. Only gradually, as we read on, does it become clear that this quiet little man (he once alludes to himself as small and waddling) combats his habitual melancholy and occasional deep depression by maintaining wide ranging interests and amassing knowledge in several fields and by indulging his vein of humour. Harking back, not quite accurately, to the time of his quarrel with Walpole, he refers to himself at the end of 1746 as “a solitary of six years standing,” and he calls himself “an anchorite.” Four years later he is of the same mind and reports, “I have been this month in town ... and return to my cell with so much the more pleasure.” Although he has a handful of dear friends, this anchorite is a shy man who is terrified when the publisher Dodsley wants to use his engraved portrait as a frontispiece to his “Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard.” There is probably, however, a touch of humorous exaggeration in his confession to his physician friend Thomas Wharton, “as to humanity you know my aversion to it; which is barbarous & inhuman, but I can not help it” – even though he adds, “God forgive me.”

Gray’s mischievous sense of fun adds a spice of playfulness to his correspondence. Writing to Wharton from Cambridge, he admits, “The Spirit of Laziness (the Spirit of the Place), begins to possess even me, that have so long declaimed against it,” and he foretells, “brandy will finish what port begun; & a month after the time you will see in some corner of a London Evening Post, Yesterday, died the Reverend Mr. John Grey ... his death is supposed to have been occasion’d by a fit of an apoplexy, being found fall’n out of bed with his head in the chamber-pot.” When his friend William Mason is appointed Precentor (director of the choir) at York Minster, Gray jocularly upbraids him for withholding the news and also passes on Wharton’s congratulations: “Here, take them, you miserable Precentor! I wish all your choir may mutiny, & sing you to death.” But Gray’s principal relief from depression, as he well knows, lies in finding occupations to fill his time. He is glad to hear that Bishop Hurd is preparing work for the press because, as he tells him, “to be employed is to be happy.”

Gray’s best known employment is the composition of poetry, and his greatest interest is literature. In his student days, he once seeks relief from mental vacancy by translating a passage from the Roman epic poet Statius into heroic couplets, which he then sends to West. Poems of his own and passages from his poems in progress occasionally appear in his letters. Sometimes he discusses arrangements for their publication. He keeps up to date with current books, devouring poetry, history, memoirs and letters. When James Macpherson brings out what he falsely alleges are translations of ancient Gaelic poems orally preserved, Gray is enchanted by them and passionately seeks assurance of their authenticity. He eagerly awaits



new volumes from France, especially instalments of the *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné, des sciences, des arts et des métiers* and of Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle, Générale et Particulière*. Natural history is as much an object of his study as human history. He greatly admires his contemporary Linnaeus, the great pioneer of biological classification, and seems to become expert in the identification of plant and animal species.

His research into literature leads him into serious contemplation of language. As a Latinist, he regrets that English "is too diffuse, & daily grows more and more enervate"; he looks back nostalgically to the more concrete language of the Elizabethan age, quoting eight lines from the opening speech of *Richard III* with the comment "To me they appear untranslatable," for "Every word in him [Shakespeare] is a picture." He counsels against an English translation of the Italian writings of Count Algarotti (the object of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's passion): "the justness of thought & good sense might remain; but the graces of elocution (which make a great part of Algarotti's merit) would be entirely lost, & that merely from the very different genius and complexion of the two languages." When it comes to the translation of his masterpiece, "Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard," into Latin, he endorses the translator's omission of certain phrases, for "Every language has its idiom, not only of words and phrases, but of customs and manners, which cannot be represented in the tongue of another nation."

Although Gray can be impatient for books from France, he is no friend of the French nation. His letters, which constantly comment on changes in the ministry, show his interest in public affairs, and he trembles for the fate of Britain and her Prussian ally, Frederick the Great, in the Seven Years War against France, Austria, and Russia. He is horrified when William Pitt the Elder, the great British leader in the War, deserts the House of Commons to accept a peerage and a pension. Six years after peace is signed, he gloats: "The only good thing I hear is that France is on the brink of a general bankruptcy, & their fleet (the only thing they have laid out money on of late) in no condition of service." As a Whig, he supports the repeal of the Stamp Act to mollify the American colonists, observes that the Spitalfield weavers demonstrating for protection against imported silks "neither appear'd insolent, nor intimidated," and sympathizes with the over boisterous and libertine Wilkes in his brave campaign against the abuse of royal privilege and government power. As a patriot, he is able to convince Algarotti that though the English are laggards in painting and sculpture, they have invented one art: landscape gardening. As an Englishman and an anti-Gallican, he does not scruple to write of the French, "I rejoice at their dulness and their nastiness," but the main charge he levels against them is of irreligion and atheism. Conventionally pious,

Gray encourages Wharton to continue reading evening prayers in his household, and on a visit to Mason is happy to accompany him twice a day to church. He detests the anti-Christian Voltaire, and when he cannot help applauding the latter's success in having an unjust conviction for murder reversed, he writes of "that inexhaustible, eternal, entertaining scribbler Voltaire, who at last (I fear) will go to heaven." He is similarly hostile to the sceptical philosopher David Hume, foolishly dismissing his writings as "a turbid and shallow stream," himself as "all his days an infant," and his "vogue" to the influence of "That childish nation, the French." Unable to come to grips with philosophy outside the field of ethics, Gray is unlikely to have read *A Treatise of Human Nature* or any other major works of this great thinker.

Gray's piety sits easily with his romantic love of old churches and ruined abbeys. He builds up an impressive knowledge of architecture, tracing, for example, the history of various parts of York Minster and making a detailed critique of a manuscript section of James Bentham's study of Ely Cathedral. His indignation is very justly aroused by innovators and their "rage of repairing, beautifying, painting, and gilding, and (above all) the mixture of Greek (or Roman) ornaments in Gothic edifices."

The taste for Gothic design, rare at the beginning of the century, is now becoming widespread, and when Thomas Wharton wants to decorate the house on his newly inherited estate in the north of England in Gothic style, Gray advises him on the design of wallpaper and the production of painted glass and helps him to procure them. At the same time, he warns,

it is mere pedantry in Gothicism to stick to nothing but altars & tombs, & there is no end of it, if we are to sit upon nothing but coronation-chairs, nor drink out of nothing but chalices & flagons. The idea is sufficiently kept up, if we live in an ancient house, but with modern conveniences about us.

This helpfulness to Wharton is matched by equal kindness to others. Gray undertakes research to assist Walpole with his *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, his *Historic Doubts on Richard III*, and his edition (the first) of Lord Herbert of Cherbury's autobiography. When Mason submits manuscripts of his poems and plays, Gray compiles very detailed critiques. Similarly, he advises the Scottish James Beattie on a section of his long poem *The Minstrel*.

There is, too, a less serious component to Gray's letters. He is not averse to a little scandal and seems to take a particular interest in marriages. "This very night," he writes of a Fellow of St. John's College, "Billy Robinson consummates his good fortune; she has £10,000 in her pocket,

and a brother unmarried with at least as much more." After Lady Harriet Wentworth, "not a young or a beautiful maiden," marries her Irish footman, instead of becoming Mrs. Sturgeon, she retains her name and title. When "the world" says of his friend Henrietta Speed that she has done "a very foolish thing" in marrying the Sardinian Minister's son, the Baron de la Perrière, who is ten years her junior, Gray observes that her bridegroom is "a very sober man, good-natured & honest, & no conjurer [i.e., no fool]." Four years later, her husband is himself the Minister in Britain, and Gray reports:

I sat a morning with her before I left London. She is a prodigious fine lady, & a Catholic (tho' she did not expressly own it to me) not fatter than she was: she had a cage of foreign birds & a piping bullfinch at her elbow, two little dogs on a cushion in her lap, a cockatoo on her shoulder, & a slight suspicion of rouge on her cheeks.

Glimpses of many characters appear in Gray's letters. In his first months at Cambridge, he is much comforted by the mince pies of

an old gentlewoman ... in whose favour [he reports], I have made no small progress.... I make my addresses to her by calling her, Grandmother; in so much, that she sends her niece every day to know how I do: N.B.: the other day she was dying, as every one thought, but herself: and when the physician told her how dangerous her case was; she fell into a violent passion with him: marry come up! she die! no, indeed would'nt she; die quotha! she'd as soon be hang'd: in short she was so resolutely bent upon not dying, that she really did live.

At Florence, the Countess Suarez, a favourite of the late Grand Duke and a lady who "gives the first movement to every thing gay that is going forward," contrasts with the Electress Palatine Dowager, the same ruler's sister, to whom Walpole is presented. The Electress is

a stately old lady, that never goes out but to church, and then she has guards, and eight horses to her coach. She received him [Walpole] with much ceremony, standing under a huge black canopy, and, after a few minutes talking, she assured him of her good will, and dismissed him: she never sees any body but thus in form; and so she passes her life.

Very different is Jane Oliffe, the aunt with whom Gray is co-executor of another aunt's legacy. "I am agreeably employ'd here," he writes from Stoke Poges, the family's village, "in dividing *nothing* with an old *harridan*, who is the spawn of Cerberus & the Dragon of Wantley." More than a decade later, when he is pitying her in her dying agony, he finds, "she is just as sensible & as impatient of pain, & as intractable as she was 60 years ago." Harsh sentiment is not entirely uncharacteristic of this gentleman, who can write of the Reverend Henry Etough, "it is his constant practice twice in a year to import a cargo of lies, & scandalous truths mix'd" and advises, "There are three methods of taking him properly to task, the cudgel, the blanket, and the horse-pond."

The most memorable portraits that emerge from Gray's letters are of some of his correspondents. There is James Brown, a scholar fond of gardening, who leads the Fellows of Pembroke College in a revolt against the Master and long after becomes the Master himself. Another College Fellow is William Mason, who leaves academe to serve as a clergyman and is also an ambitious poet and dramatist, a proud amateur designer of gardens, a hero-worshipper of Gray, the forty-year-old bridegroom of a woman he calls "this gentle this innocent creature," and, after eighteen months of marriage, a grieving widower. The physician Thomas Wharton, who takes up the fashion for things Gothic, shares Gray's fascination with natural history – the latter's observations sometimes feature in his letters. Younger than the others is Norton Nicholls, a lover of poetry and Gray's junior by about a quarter of a century, who follows the latter's advice to take holy orders and settles down in his country parish but longs to experience the glory of the Alps.

In 1765, at the age of forty-eight, Gray himself makes a second foray into mountains when he travels in Scotland and is astonished to rediscover in the Highlands the sublimity he encountered in the Alps twenty-six years before. These Highlands, he writes to Brown on his return, "would be Italy, if they had but a climate," and he treats Mason to an implicit contrast between "those monstrous creatures of God" that "join so much beauty with so much horror" and the mild prettiness of "bowling-greens, flowering shrubs, horse-ponds, Fleet-ditches, shell-grottoes, & Chinée-rails." In a journal-letter for Wharton, Gray describes the forests, rivers, lakes, churches, towers, and towns that feed his appetite for the exotic but do not prevent him from responding happily to the southern beauty of Kent the following year. Despite his hopes, he is never able to return to Scotland, but in 1769 he has the joy of exploring the mountains of the Lake District, which draw from him a second journal-letter for Wharton. Of Gowder-crag, with its rock-strewn road, he declares,

The place reminds one of those passes in the Alps, where the guides tell you to move on with speed, & say nothing, lest the agitation of the air should loosen the snows above, & bring down a mass that would overwhelm a caravan.

Well might Johnson say, "He that reads his epistolary narration wishes that to travel, and to tell his travels, had been more of his employment."

By this time, Gray has less than two years to live, but there is one more surprise waiting for him. In November 1769, Norton Nicholls recommends to his attention a young Swiss man who seems "vastly better than anything English (of the same age)." The young man, Charles Victor de Bonstetten, studies for a few weeks with Gray, who assures Nicholl, "I never saw such a boy: our breed is not made on this model. He is busy from morning to night, has no other amusement, than that of changing one study for another." But the happy situation is not to last, for by March Gray is informing Nicholls, "His cursed Father will have him home in the autumn, & he must pass thro' France to improve his talents & morals. . . . He gives me too much pleasure, & at least *an equal share* of inquietude." Gray soon asks Nicholls to burn the letter just quoted. Like Nicholls, Gray fears that Bonstetten's perfection may crumble under the stress of temptation; as he tells the young man, he sees in him the potential of Plato's Philosopher-King, a potential that, Plato admits in Book Six of *The Republic*, may be corrupted by society. In his infatuation, Gray discloses to the departed Bonstetten, "My life now is but a perpetual conversation with your shadow — The known sound of your voice still rings in my ears. — There, on the corner of the fender you are standing, or tinkling on the pianoforte, or stretch'd at length on the sofa." Tremblingly, he warns him against "the jargon of French sophists, the allurements of painted women *comme il faut*, or the vulgar caresses of prostitute beauty." Returning from a trip to Suffolk, he writes, "The thought, that you might have been with me there, has embittered all my hours." Two months after Bonstetten has sailed, Gray laments to Nicholls that "he seems at present to give in to all the French nonsense & to be employ'd much like an English boy broke loose from his governor." The mirage of human perfection has vanished.

One matter of conscience adds to the misery that burdens Gray in his last days. Since 1768, he has been Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge — to his delight the post was bestowed on him unsolicited. Two years, then almost three, have passed since, and he has performed no duties. Nicholls is probably right in reassuring him, "For God's sake how can you neglect a duty which never existed but in your own imagination . . . ? It never yet was performed, nor I believe expected." Nevertheless, it is hard

to believe that the audience would not have benefited greatly from lectures by a man of his learning and his command of the English language.

Gray's letters portray the lifestyle, emotions and friendships of a retired scholar and poet who emerged from his seclusion to experience first the Alps, secondly the Scottish Highlands, and thirdly the English Lake District. The posthumous publication of his epistolary descriptions of these regions did much to teach his compatriots to regard mountains as scenic splendours to be visited rather than inconvenient obstacles to travel.



## HE GATHERS IT ALL IN HORACE WALPOLE (1717-1797)

### (I) THE EARLIER YEARS



Horace Walpole gives exaggerated praise to Thomas Gray when he says of his late friend, "Nobody yet ever wrote letters so well." In their youth, the two of them set out together to explore France and Italy, and it is Gray who sends home the finer account of their travels: he is a serious scholar, Walpole a collector of art and historical curiosities. Gray remains an outstanding letter-writer till he dies at the age of fifty-four having led a very sheltered existence. Walpole lives a long life and has many

activities and achievements to his credit. He sits in the House of Commons for twenty-seven years, develops into a respected antiquarian, invents the British Gothic novel, builds a house that draws sightseers from home and abroad, runs an esteemed private press, saves a nephew from a madhouse, and composes the greatest body of letters in the English language. His correspondence is like a rich landscape with a satisfying fullness of hill and plain, forest and savannah, foliage and blossom. It displays his country's politics and society from the fall of his father, Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole, to the time of Napoleon's Italian campaign and portrays himself from early manhood to painful decrepitude.

While Horace Walpole is still a student, his gift for letter-writing becomes apparent as he complains about the transition from studying Classical literature at Eton to being tormented by philosophy and mathematics at Cambridge. Both Cambridge and Oxford he stigmatizes as "two barbarous towns o'er-run with rusticity and mathematics," and he makes it clear that his taste runs to old monuments, fine pictures, and rural landscapes. In 1737, his much loved mother dies, and he has to suffer his father's remarriage to his longstanding mistress, Maria Skerret.



On the Grand Tour with Gray that follows his time of study, he sends back to Britain letters as well written as his companion's, but less informative. Although he can quote Roman poetry, his imagination, unlike Gray's, has not entered deeply into the ancient world: he only sees what is before his eyes—a succession of masterly paintings, imposing buildings, and splendid ceremonies. He complains that at the funeral of the Duc de Tresmes, Governor of Paris and Marshal of France, there are “no plumes, trophies, banners, led horses, scutcheons, or open chariots.” In Florence, he revels in the way that “all the morn one makes parties in masque to the shops and coffee-houses, and all the evening to the operas and balls.” From Rome, however, he writes to his beloved cousin Henry Conway, “I am far gone in medals, lamps, idols, prints, &c.... I would buy the Coliseum if I could.”

After landing at Dover in September 1741, Walpole is glad to reside in London, much preferring it to Houghton, his father's palatial house in Norfolk. His frequent letters to his expatriate friend Horace Mann in Florence give an impression of the England he finds and of the balls, masquerades, and *ridottos* he attends. Mann enthusiastically accepts commissions to make further purchases for his friend's collections. “You can't think what a closet I have fitted up,” Walpole boasts, “such a mixture of French gaiety and Roman virtù,” but his assertion to Conway soon after—“For virtù ... it is my sole pleasure” —hardly rings true in the face of his accounts of Sir Thomas Robinson's balls.

In Parliament, Horace's father, Sir Robert, who has been Prime Minister for two decades, is under siege. It gives the son no pleasure to sit in the Chamber till four in the morning, wearied to the point of exhaustion, while his parent, who is forty years older, speaks “with as much spirit as ever.” Horace writes animated, partisan letters recording the unrelenting attacks on the administration, which could culminate in impeachment, and is glad his deceased mother is spared the prospect of the family's ruin. At this time, he can declare, “Trust me, if we fall, all the grandeur, the envied grandeur of our house, will not cost me a sigh ... liberty, my ease, and choice of my own friends and company, will sufficiently counterbalance the crowds of Downing Street.”

In February 1742, after an election, the administration no longer has a clear majority; Sir Robert resigns and is immediately created Earl of Orford. “When,” Mann is told, “he kissed the King's hand to take his first leave, the King fell on his neck, wept and kissed him, and begged to see him frequently.” During the coming months, Horace writes of the formidable Secret Committee set up by the Commons to investigate his father. After describing how its members are chosen, he adds, “Lord Orford returns tomorrow from Houghton to Chelsea, from whence my uncle went in

a great fright to fetch him." In July, Parliament is prorogued, and the Secret Committee dies harmlessly.

As the twenty-seven-year-old son of a statesman with an overpowering personality, Horace Walpole needs to establish an independent identity; it is not surprising that he wants to move into his own accommodation. His father wishes otherwise: "he is for my living with him; but then I shall be cooped – and besides, I never found that people loved one another the less for living asunder."

"Italy," Horace explains to Conway, "is pleasanter than London," but he declares, "Dull as London is in summer, there is always more company in it than in any one place in the country. I hate the country." At the paternal estate of Houghton, he finds himself "prisoner in a melancholy, barren province," and when he feels he cannot refuse his father's request for help in setting up a picture gallery in the great house, he exclaims, "I can't help wishing that I had never known a Guido from a Teniers."

For twenty-six years after his father's removal to the House of Lords, Walpole continues to sit in the Commons. He confesses that he "loves to write history better than to act in it," and he observes more than he participates, relishing speeches of high quality on either side of an issue. Alluding to his love of mediaeval arts, he reminds George Montagu, his friend from his schooldays, "I have another Gothic passion, which is for squabbles in the Wittenagemot." (His admission nine years later, while referring to the Court party, that "Nothing appears to me more ridiculous in my life than my having ever loved their squabbles" is made to the same correspondent.) Despite his pleasure in fine speeches, the strain of serving in the Commons while leading an active social life is considerable. In January 1744, he finds himself "every day more hooked into politics and company," and he sometimes sits in committee till midnight. The years do not make his service easier. In 1755 he writes, "I was from two at noon till ten at night at the House: I came home, dined, new-dressed myself entirely, went to a ball at Lord Holderness's, and stayed till five in the morning." Looking back three years after giving up his seat, he wonders how he endured his "former agitated and turbulent life." Meanwhile, to the great advantage of historians, he sends lively, detailed reports of the House's proceedings to Mann. Thus, he writes in February 1764, referring to William Pitt the Elder (later Lord Chatham):

Pitt, with less modesty than ever he showed, pronounced a panegyric on his own administration, and from thence broke out on the *dismission of officers*. This increased the roar from us. Grenville replied, and very finely, very pathetically, very

animated. He painted Wilkes and faction, and, with very little truth, denied the charge of menaces to officers.

Walpole afterwards recalls, "How often, when in Parliament, did I hear questions called 'the most important that had ever come before the House,' which a twelvemonth after no mortal remembered."

While Horace is in Parliament, Britain is embroiled in the War of the Austrian succession. In 1740, on the death of Charles V, his daughter Maria Theresa, already Queen of Hungary, inherits the throne of Austria, which is promptly invaded by Prussia, Bavaria, and France. Following the fall of Sir Robert Walpole, who has kept the country out of war, Britain intervenes on the side of Austria by sending troops to Flanders in order to protect the Royal Family's territory of Hanover from Prussia and to guard against French plans to restore the Catholic House of Stuart. Merchant ships are in sufficient danger for Horace Walpole to beg Mann to dispatch the precious first century Roman eagle he is sending him in a man-of-war. In the coming months of 1744, Walpole conveys to Mann the rising anxiety and increasing suspense as France prepares an invasion of Britain to instal the Young Pretender on the throne. Though he is resigned to bear "the worst that can happen," he realizes, "I never knew how little I was a Jacobite till it was almost my interest to be one." A week later, he reports, "Attempts have been made to raise the clans in Scotland, but unsuccessfully." Though a great storm disables the French fleet, Walpole still fears conquest by the huge French army and foresees some possibility of himself and his friends becoming "refugee heretics" at his beloved Florence.

There is a respite till July of the following year, when the Young Pretender himself, Charles Edward, James II's grandson, secretly lands in Scotland and does raise the clans. By 6 September, Walpole is fearful. He warns Mann:

The confusion I have found, and the danger we are in, prevent my talking of anything else. The young Pretender, at the head of three thousand men, has got a march on General Cope, who is not eighteen hundred strong.... We have sent for ten regiments from Flanders, which may be here in a week, and we have fifteen men-of-war in the Downs. I am grieved to tell you all this; but when it is so, how can I avoid telling you?

On the 20th, no French troops having landed and English Jacobites remaining quiescent, Walpole is reassuring Mann and himself, "But, sure, banditti can never conquer a kingdom!" However, the advance south continues, Cope suffers a defeat at Prestonpans, and on the 27th Walpole admits, "we

are sadly convinced that they are not such raw ragamuffins as they were represented," and he is indignant that "my Lord Granville still buoys up the King's spirits, and persuades him it is nothing." "I have so trained myself to expect this ruin," he confides to Mann, "that I see it approach without any emotion."

In December, the rebels reach Derby, but then start to retreat. Walpole declares, "We dread them no longer"; in his eyes, the rebel troops are again "banditti," and with unaccustomed harshness he hopes that the Duke of Cumberland will lead his army into Scotland not "with that sword of mercy with which the present family have governed those people." Cumberland's treatment of the Highlanders is to earn him the sobriquet of "Butcher," and Walpole's accounts of the trials of the rebel lords and the executions of some are among the most famous passages in his letters.

About a year and a half after his fears subside, a new passion enters the life of Horace Walpole. This confirmed city-lover informs Mann that he has discovered a "little rural *bijou*," a small farm outside Twickenham, and is delighted to take over the lease from its present occupant, Mrs. Chevenix. (The actual owners are three minors, and about a year later he is able to have the necessary private Act of Parliament passed so that he can buy it.)

The house [he reports] is so small, that I can send it you in a letter to look at: the prospect is as delightful as possible, commanding the river, the town, and Richmond Park; and being situated on a hill descends to the Thames through two or three little meadows, where I have some Turkish sheep and two cows, all studied in their colours for becoming the view.

A year further on, he finds that the old name for the property is Strawberry Hill.

In his country residence, Walpole discovers the pleasures of planting and begins to add the eighteenth century art of landscape gardening to his pursuits. The lilacs and nightingales have a special appeal for him. In July 1755, he writes to Montagu, "Having done with building and planting, I have taken to farming," and in a few months he sends him detailed information on the selection and cultivation of trees. Complaints about rain interfering with haymaking start to appear in his letters – and the parsons make matters more difficult by stopping Sunday work.

Walpole also begins to travel extensively in England to scrutinize ancient buildings within and without, and though he has protested to Sir Charles Williams, "I hate writing travels," he sends several friends superb accounts of his journeys. In these he mingles descriptions of castles, great houses, and pictures with details of people he meets and such hardships as

bad roads, being thrown from an overturned chaise into the mud, and inns so full that he has to drive on through the darkness. When he becomes too old for such expeditions, he recalls how “It was always death to me, when I did travel England, to have lords and ladies receive me and show me their castles, instead of turning me over to their housekeeper: it hindered my seeing anything, and I was the whole time meditating my escape.”

Two and a half years after taking over the lease of his property, Walpole casually informs Mann of an undertaking that will loom large in his life and correspondence and add a dimension to his lasting fame. “I am going,” he states, “to build a little gothic castle at Strawberry Hill.” In the mid-eighteenth century, aesthetic taste is expanding: in architecture, an appreciation of Gothic intricacy with its mediaeval pinnacles and tracery is beginning to complement the well-established esteem for neo-classical elegance with its domes, pediments, and Grecian columns. Over close to two decades, always delaying the next stage till he has saved enough to avoid going into debt, Walpole adds successively to the initial building a chapel, a gallery, and a tower of fourteenth century design, as well as instalments of stained glass and interior ornament. So many visitors clamour for a tour that, like some other owners of renowned homes, he takes to issuing tickets of admission. Royalty from home and abroad are among the admirers of what he refers to as “my child Strawberry” and “my little Jerusalem.” On one occasion, the Kingston Fencibles pass by on a barge, and next day he writes, “They saluted my castle with three guns—unluckily I had no cannon mounted on my battlements to return it.” Since the dampness at Twickenham frequently drives him into temporary refuge in the healthier climate of London, it is pleasant to see that so many of his letters are written at Strawberry Hill.

In his travels, Walpole is able to collect historical portraits and antique treasures to enlarge the collection at his Gothic castle. He is an enthusiastic purchaser of engraved portraits of historical figures, both English and French. For years, he tries to complete a set of prints of all the persons mentioned in his favourite letter-writer, Mme de Sévigné, whom he calls “my divinity” and “my saint.” In 1786, a lady who has “seen a good half century” exclaims, “Well, I must live another *forty* years to have time to see all the curiosities of this house.” Nine years later, he complains to the Rev. Daniel Lysons that the latter’s *Environs of London* discloses the existence of too many of the articles in his collection, including “several that are never shown to miscellaneous customers.”

Although Walpole keeps protesting that printed references to himself as “the learned gentleman” are unjustified, his letters show that he does have a scholarly concern about the provenance and attribution of artworks and the authenticity of supposed facts. Ancient authors, he notes, were not

very critical in assessing their sources and are especially unreliable when writing about countries other than their own. Of county histories he observes, "It is unpardonable to be inaccurate in a work in which one nor expects nor demands anything but fidelity." His researching fascinates him, and by 1749 his skill in genealogy impresses some. "I am the first antiquary of my race," he tells the Rev. William Cole, a fellow devotee:

People don't know how entertaining a study it is. Who begot whom is a most amusing kind of hunting; one recovers a grandfather instead of breaking one's own neck – and then one grows so pious to the memory of a thousand persons one never heard of before.

Walpole's antiquarianism leads him into authorship, but as the decades pass he becomes weary of public attention, and recollects with sorrow what induced him to publish: "Youth, great spirits, vanity, some flattery (for I was a Prime Minister's son) had made me believe I had some parts, and perhaps I had some, and on that rock I split; for how vast the difference between some parts and genius." His major antiquarian works, *A Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England* (1758) and *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1762-63), figure largely in his correspondence, along with the operation of his Press. He does not expect his writings to last, and he fears that his darling Strawberry Hill will "probably be condemned and pulled to pieces by whomever I shall give it to," but he thinks the products of another of his undertakings, the books from his famous private press, may perhaps preserve his memory.

Dr. Johnson remarks to Boswell that Horace Walpole "got together a great many curious little things and told them in an elegant manner." This praise should have pleased Walpole, who complains to Cole, who does not publish his own researches, "I love antiquities; but I scarce ever knew an antiquary who knew how to write upon them." His reputation in this field is sufficient to earn him the sobriquet "Time-honoured Lancaster" and a pleasing compliment in an anonymous poem:

What means (O! for a Walpole's antique skill!)  
What means the milk-white cross on yonder hill!

The Bishop of Ely seeks his help in planning the painted glass for the east window of his Cathedral, Lord Rochester asks him for a design for an altarpiece for Westminster Abbey, and the Earl of Leicester consults him on the repair of Tamworth Castle.

Better known today than his antiquarian books, is his mediaeval horror story *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Inspired by an image left behind by an otherwise forgotten dream, this tale, which Walpole describes to the scholar Joseph Warton as “an attempt to blend the marvellous of old story with the natural of modern novels,” marks the invention of the Gothic novel. He is diffident about publishing the book and initially withholds his name from it, but is happily surprised by its popularity. He tells his friend Mme du Deffand that of all his works it is the only one that really pleases him, and later relates how, two or three years after its composition, he visits a Cambridge College and finds he must have retained an unconscious memory of it from a previous visit since it is the Castle of Otranto in every detail.

His letters, however, also show that Walpole has serious limitations as a mediaevalist and a student of literature and history. Offered an early black letter edition of Chaucer, he confesses to the poet William Mason, “I am, too, though a Goth, so modern a Goth that I hate the black letter, and I love Chaucer better in Dryden and Baskerville than in his own language and dress.” He also refers to Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* as “a lump of mineral from which Dryden [in his retellings] extracted all the gold.” Dante he amazingly rejects as “extravagant, absurd, disgusting, in short a Methodist Parson in Bedlam,” and he obstinately persists in his defence of Richard III against the well-founded charge of having the little sons of Edward IV murdered.

For all his love of mediaeval arts, there is a narrowness in Walpole’s total lack of interest in Roman Britain and in the Anglo-Saxons, whom he stigmatizes as a people “who never invented anything but a barbarous mode of corrupting language.” He will not buy Captain Cook’s *Travels* because he is repulsed by pictures of ugly savages, and though he admires the achievements of the Spanish Moors and abhors “the knave Ferdinand and his bigoted Queen for destroying them,” he despises Indian and Byzantine art and dismisses on totally inadequate grounds Sanskrit literature and Arabic poetry.

When his discovery of Strawberry Hill dissolves his distaste for the country, the War of the Austrian Succession is not yet ended, and Walpole is still reporting news of its progress to Mann. A year and a half after the defeat of the Young Pretender and his Highland army, he informs Mann that the country is still in a war mood. A few months later, when peace comes, he is able to reassure the expatriate that the terms include, on France’s part, “The Pretender to be renounced with all his descendants, male and female.”

Despite the peace sealed by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, Britain and France remain competitors for colonial territory in North America, the West Indies, and India. Friction mounts, and by the summer

of 1754, along with news of British politics and personalities, Walpole is alerting Mann to the possibility of another war. As fear mounts, he declares the following March, that he was frightened enough in '45 and he refuses to be frightened again. He notes the *rapprochement* with a former enemy, Protestant Prussia, and in January 1756 announces to Mann, "Fight we must, France says; but when she said so last, she knew nothing of our cordiality with the court of Berlin."

In September, the Prussian King Frederick II's invasion of Saxony brings on his small country an onslaught from France, Sweden, Russia, and Austria, and the Seven Years War begins. In letters from April through June 1757, Walpole captures the suspense over the formation of a new government while the country is at war. Fears that France will try to knock out her rival for an empire by invading her island homeland persist. Walpole writes of the militias being raised—many of the officers, he tells Montagu, "have never shot anything but woodcocks"—and he informs Mann in August 1759, "Nothing is talked of here, as you may imagine, but the invasion." He rejoices, however, in October over victories in the West Indies and on the American mainland and maintains, "Poetic justice could not have been executed with more rigour than it has been on the perjury, treachery, and usurpations of the French." Yet the dread of facing foreign troops on home ground remains until Admiral Hawke wrecks the French fleet at Quiberon in November, and Walpole is able to reassure Mann, "I think our sixteen years of fears of invasion are over."

In Britain, Frederick II has become a hero. "All England," records Walpole, "has kept his birthday.... We had bonfires and processions, illuminations and French horns playing out of windows all night," and he tells how "as I was walking by the river the other night, a bargeman asked me for something to drink the King of Prussia's health." The situation of that monarch, beset as he is by such powerful foes, becomes perilous, and only the Czarina Elizabeth's death on 25 December 1761 followed by Russia's withdrawal from the war saves Prussia from collapse.

Although the Treaty of Paris in 1763 leaves Britain instead of France with an empire in North America and India, English opinion on the peace is divided. A majority in the Commons is for it, but Walpole finds "the Nation against it," and Pitt, the great leader who has led the country to victory, "says it is inadequate to our successes, and inglorious for our Allies." Pitt's dissatisfaction with the terms and his acceptance of a barony (for his wife, for the time being, so that he can stay in the House of Commons) repulses Walpole, who has hitherto bowed down before his oratory and even hailed him as Sir Robert's long awaited successor. "Am not I an old fool?" he confesses to Mann, "at my years to be a dupe to virtue and patriotism ... I adored Mr. Pitt, as if I was just come from school and reading Livy's lies



of Brutus and Camillus, and Fabius." He goes on to suggest that Pitt's aggressiveness may have conjured up a similar spirit in France, but a month later he justifies his previous admiration, claiming, "he changed, not I."

As soon as the War ends, the other pole of the age-old love-hate relationship between England and France comes alive. The English papers call the craze for visiting Paris "the *French disease*," and Walpole's friend George Selwyn comes home across the Channel with the news that "our passion for everything French is nothing to theirs for everything English."

During the Seven Years War, George II dies to be succeeded by his grandson, George III, who begins his reign by seeming anxious to please. Walpole reports to Montagu:

For the King himself, he seems all good-nature, and wishing to satisfy everybody; all his speeches are obliging. I saw him again yesterday, and was surprised to find the levee-room had lost so entirely the air of the lion's den. This sovereign don't stand in one spot, with his eyes fixed royally on the ground, and dropping bits of German news; he walks about, and speaks to everybody.

There is one ominous sign, apparently little noticed, that all may not be as it seems with "this charming young King," who makes Walpole unwilling to "forgive anybody being a Jacobite now." At the start of his reign, "It is intimated that he means to employ the same Ministers, but with reserve to himself of more authority than has lately been in fashion." Being so informed, perhaps Mann should not be surprised when this monarch, in the months following his accession in October 1760, transforms the face of government. "Here are changes enough," Walpole writes to him in March 1761, "to amount to a revolution." Power shifts from Pitt to Lord Bute (son-in-law of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu). Just over two years later, when Earl Waldegrave, the husband of a favourite niece of Walpole's, suddenly dies, and Lord Bute as suddenly resigns, Walpole is offended that the King fails to show the appropriate sorrow for the loss of the Earl, who was once his tutor, and sneers, "I suppose his childish mind is too much occupied with the loss of his last governor."

In the same month, April 1762, John Wilkes, M.P., whose periodical *The North Briton* campaigns against the increase of royal power, finds himself briefly held in the Tower of London and his papers seized. Walpole observes:

This hero is as bad a fellow as ever hero was, abominable in private life, dull in Parliament, but, they say, very entertaining in a room, and certainly no bad writer, besides having had the honour of contributing a great deal to Lord Bute's fall.

He here sides with Wilkes because he fears the King is enlarging his authority and undoing the Revolution of 1688-89, which divided power between the monarch and the parliament. In letters to his cousin the Earl of Hertford and to Mann, Walpole records, with comments, the subsequent career of Wilkes, which involves his unsavoury support by a London mob, a duel with an opponent, flight to France, return, and re-election. Neither Mann nor Hertford shares Walpole's enthusiasm for the rebellious gentleman's cause, though Hertford's younger brother Lieutenant-General Conway does.

Wilkes's imprisonment gives rise to a fierce debate in Parliament on the legality of general warrants, which allow people to be arrested without the issue of a warrant bearing their names. When the King not only dismisses Conway from his court post, but viciously deprives him of his regiment for voting in the House of Commons against the legality of general warrants, Walpole offers to share his savings with him. Happily, this seems to prove unnecessary, but Walpole continues to fear the extinction of liberty in England. "You see I write in despair," he laments to Conway in October 1764, and speaks of going into exile in "a pleasant corner" of Europe: "while there is a free spot of earth upon the globe, that shall be my country. I am sorry it will not be this." Eight months later, when Count Schuwalof visits Britain, he concedes, "As we have still liberty enough left to dazzle a Russian, he seems charmed with England."

Instead of going into melancholy exile, Walpole retreats from long days in the House of Commons, too much whirling in the social dance, and a protracted attack of gout by paying his first visit to France in twenty-four years. The Paris of 1765 welcomes him. "I receive the greatest civilities," he writes to his old friend Lady Suffolk, and he assures Conway, "I avoid all politics." His visit is marred by a further attack of gout, during which Wilkes visits him and is "very civil," but talks "the grossest bawdy." Walpole finds most of the Frenchmen "disagreeable enough" but strikes up a friendship with the English Lord Ossory, whom he describes as "the man I have liked the best in Paris." Many Frenchwomen please him, and in one of his most vivid letters, which is written to Gray, he brings a parade of them before his reader's inner eye and ear. Despite his imperfect French, he enjoys much social life, but is disturbed by the way so much of the conversation is full of earnest irreligion:

Good folks, they have no time to laugh. There is God and the King to be pulled down first; and men and women, one and all, are devoutly employed in the demolition. They think me quite profane, for having any belief left.

He is also uncomfortable at the indelicate talk even in mixed company and at table. He tells how it was announced that the Dauphin “had had *une évacuation foetide*,” whereupon, “The old lady of the house (who by the way is quite blind, was the Regent’s mistress for a fortnight, and is very agreeable) called out, ‘Oh! they have forgot to mention that he threw down his chamber-pot, and was forced to change his bed.’”

The lady of the house is Mme du Deffand, who, blind since 1752, conducts a literary life with the aid of her secretary, and hosts a salon. In spite of her occasionally coarse speech, Walpole soon finds this woman, twenty years older than himself, “charming.” Being closely familiar with modern French history, literature and theatre, he discovers that her memory, when he can pry it open, is a gateway to an enchanted past. She conceives an unassuageable passion for this foreigner, whose French is the worst she has heard any Englishman speak. He develops an intense attachment to her, and about a year after they have met, he describes her to Montagu as “this best and sincerest of friends, who loves me as much as my mother did!”

Walpole arrives back in England in April 1766 and starts to correspond in French with Mme du Deffand. Afterwards he becomes extremely anxious to recover his letters to her, and he ensures that all the later ones are destroyed. This may be because of his self-consciousness about his imperfect French or because they contain intimate remarks like the one about his mother’s love. Enough of them survive, however, to illuminate the relationship.

Walpole does have sufficient French to enable him to write to Mme du Deffand on many topics: his family members; Strawberry Hill; his printing ventures; his gout; news of mutual acquaintances; British politics; liberty of the press; the wickedness of Catherine II of Russia, Frederick II of Prussia, and Joseph II of Austria; the vanity and paranoia of Rousseau; Voltaire’s wrongheaded attack on Shakespeare; the badness of human nature; and her religious doubts. Frequently they argue about people and books, and he observes that *The Castle of Otranto*, in which he removed the curb of reason from his imagination, is alien to her cast of mind. He scolds her for her over passionate letters and complaints of boredom. He urges her by no means to visit the exiled Duc de Choiseul (she does) and not to seek refuge from her monotonous life in a convent (she does not). She wants to make him her heir, and only with great difficulty does the horrified Walpole, fearful of having his strange attachment thought mercenary, dissuade her. Sometimes they quarrel, and once she briefly loses all desire to continue the correspondence. He successfully solicits her help for an English single mother in danger of losing her residence at Calais, and when her pension is halved, he strives in vain to let him replace the loss. His eagerness to see his “dear old woman,” as he repeatedly calls her, takes

him across the English Channel four times more. In August 1769, he writes home to his old friend John Chute that “She and I went to the Boulevard last night after supper, and drove about there till two in the morning. We are going to sup in the country this evening, and are to go tomorrow night at eleven to the puppet-show.” After Mme du Deffand’s death in 1780, he does not visit France again.

## (II) MATURITY

The antiquary, author, printer and parliamentarian (though he withdraws from Parliament in 1767) whom Mme du Deffand meets is very different from the young connoisseur who returned from the Continent in 1741 eager to escape from his father’s shadow. In later life, he regrets that he learnt so little from Sir Robert in the remaining four years the latter had to live: “to my shame,” he realizes, “I was so idle, and young, and thoughtless, that I by no means profited of his leisure as I might have done.” The man who revisits France in 1765 has a well formed character and clear outlook. “I have often said,” he writes to Mann, “and oftener think, *that this world is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel*—a solution of why Democritus laughed and Heraclitus wept.” Thinking and feeling are both in evidence when he tells Montagu:

I desire to die when I have nobody left to laugh with me. I have never yet seen or heard anything serious, that was not ridiculous. Jesuits, Methodists, philosophers, politicians, the hypocrite Rousseau, the scoffer Voltaire, the encyclopedists, the Humes, the Lyttletons, the Grenvilles, the atheist tyrant of Prussia, and the mountebank of History, Mr. Pitt, all are to me but impostors in their various ways. Fame or interest is their object.

This Swift-like diatribe comes from one who shares Swift’s commitment to the system of government based on the Revolution settlement of 1689. Walpole maintains that “the excellence of our constitution, above all others, consists in the balance established between the three powers of King, Lords, and Commons.” Wisely holding that no person or body of persons is to be entrusted with absolute power, he describes himself as “neither a royalist nor a republican.” When vigorous attempts are being made to eject Wilkes, elected by the voters of Middlesex, from the House of Commons, he remembers the Civil War of the previous century and exclaims, “so nearly do we tread in the steps of 1641!... What hopes has liberty, whether Charles or Oliver prevail.” For years, he dreads the enlargement of the

Royal Prerogative and even regards the assassination of a king as “the least bad of all murders.” Disappointingly, he defends the execution of Charles I: a copy of the death warrant for that beheading hangs beside his bed opposite a copy of Magna Carta. Trial by jury, *habeas corpus*, and publication without prior censorship he singles out as major guarantees of British freedom.

Walpole so venerates the constitution that any suggestion of tampering with it, such as the younger Pitt’s proposal to reform the franchise, awakens the conservative element in his temperament. His liberal strain, on the other hand, is fiercely active in his loathing of slavery and colonialism: “conquest, unless by necessity,” he stigmatizes as “an odious glory.” When a cyclone devastates Barbados, he comments to Mann:

Were I a poet, I would paint hosts of Mexicans and Peruvians crowding the shores of Styx, and insulting the multitudes of the usurpers of their continent that have been sending themselves thither for these five or six years. The poor Africans, too, have no call to be merciful to European ghosts. Those miserable slaves have just now seen whole crews of men-of-war swallowed by the late hurricane.

Denouncing the depredations of Robert Clive, he finds the House of Commons “so ungenerous as to have a mind to punish him for assassination, forgery, treachery, and plunder,” and he asks, “who but Machiavel can pretend that we have a shadow of title to a foot of land in India?” He grieves that “Kings have left no ties between one another” and that “Grotius [the seventeenth century pioneer of international law] is obsolete.” When Britain takes possession of Oude in northern India, he accuses his country of acting “by the new law of nations; by the law by which Poland was divided.”

Walpole’s liberalism can conflict with his patriotism. His intense pride in his father’s having kept the kingdom at peace for twenty years does not prevent him from admitting to Mann in 1766, when a new administration is being formed:

You know I love to have the majesty of the people of England dictate to all Europe. Nothing would have diverted me more than to have been at Paris at this moment. Their panic at Mr. Pitt’s name is not to be described. Whenever they were impertinent, I used to drop, as by chance, that he would be Minister in a few days, and it never failed to occasion a dead silence.

Three years later, visiting France again, Walpole encounters a seething hatred of Britain, and, disturbed at his own reaction, makes Mann his confessor: "Paris revived in me that natural passion, the love of my country's glory; I must put it out; it is a wicked passion, and breathes war." When war does come, his conscience repeatedly smites him for wishing ill to his country's enemies. In 1781, he reports to Lady Ossory that a French and Spanish fleet supporting the Americans has withdrawn, and adds, "it is hoped they have suffered by a storm — this is war! One sits at home coolly *hoping* that five or six vessels full of many hundreds of men are gone to the bottom of the deep!" Such a well-founded scruple can detract from his pleasure in keeping Mann up to date with events: "I detest a correspondence now; it lives like a vampire upon dead bodies!"

The conservative aspect of Walpole's outlook dictates his view of the role of religion in society. From Paris, he writes to Montagu, "I dined today with a dozen *savans*, and though all the servants were waiting, the conversation was much more unrestrained, even on the Old Testament, than I would suffer at my own table in England, if a single footman was present." Among his equals, however, he feels at liberty to express his far-reaching scepticism and deeply rooted anti-clericalism. "Freethinking," he holds, "is for one's self, surely not for society." However, like many of his contemporaries, he deplores the form of religious excess known as "enthusiasm," a belief that one enjoys divine communication or revelation such as was claimed by many of the Puritans blamed for the Civil War. The supposed outbreak of enthusiasm that most provokes his hostility is Methodism. "I expect soon that I shall keep Saints' days," he teases Mann, "for enthusiasm is growing into fashion too; and while they are cancelling holidays at Rome, the Methodists are reviving them here." Christian dogma he has no use for, dismissing the Thirty-nine Articles as "that summary of impertinent folly" and Athanasius as the apostle of "a jargon that means nothing." Religions, in his view, "are but graver fashions ... and some mantua-maker or priest, that wants business, invents a new mode, which takes the faster, the more it inverts its predecessor." "In physicians," he asserts, "I believe no more than in divines," and he tells the Rev. Stephen Cole, "Church and presbytery are human nonsense, invented by knaves to govern fools.... There is nothing sublime but the Divinity. Nothing is sacred but His work."

Though nominally an Anglican, Walpole, like Chesterfield, is in reality a Deist, one who believes that reason, which cannot but deduce that the universe is the work of a beneficent being, is the true source of religion. Bolingbroke's posthumously published Deist "metaphysical divinity," anathema to Christian believers, strikes him as the author's best work. Encountering at Paris the talk of militant atheists, he recoils in some horror. "Gods of stone, or kings of flesh," he affirms, "are my derision; but of all

gods that were ever invented, the most ridiculous is that old lumpish god of the Grecian sophists, whom the modern literati want to reinstate – the god Matter.” When Mme du Deffand, nearer the grave than him, appeals for spiritual comfort, he offers her the reassurance that the creator of so much beauty and goodness must be pleased by virtue and cannot require perfection; he is convinced there is an afterlife – but that it is impossible to know the least detail of it. Yet he has, as he discloses to Mann, “no doubt but the real miseries of life – I mean those that are unmerited and unavoidable, – will be compensated to the sufferers. Tyrants are a proof of an hereafter. Millions of men cannot be formed for the sport of a cruel child.” “I have an odd system,” he confides to Lady Ossory, “that what is called *chance* is the instrument of Providence and the secret agent that counteracts what men call wisdom, and preserves order and regularity.”

Theological terms, in Walpole’s eyes, are not only meaningless but also dangerous. With some justice, he points out to Hannah More, a passionately devout friend of his last years, that they “set people together by the ears,” and warns her, “don’t muddle your charming simplicity with controversial distinctions, that will sour your sweet piety. Sects are the bane of charity, and have deluged the world with blood.” Walpole likes to remember how he once shocked the republican historian Mrs. Macaulay by telling her, “that had I been Luther and could have foreseen the woes I should occasion, I should have asked myself, whether I was authorized to cause the deaths of three or four hundred thousand persons, that future millions might be advantaged.” “No man,” Walpole persuasively argues, “was ever yet so great as to build that system in which other men could not discover flaws. All our reasoning, therefore, is very imperfect, and this is *my* reason for being so seldom serious, and for never disputing.” Knowingly or unknowingly, Walpole is following in the tracks of the philosopher John Locke, a foundational thinker of the Enlightenment, who hopes that his great work *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

may be of use to prevail with the busy mind of man to be more cautious in meddling with things exceeding its comprehension.... We should not then perhaps be so forward, out of an affectation of an universal knowledge, to raise questions, and perplex ourselves and others with disputes about things to which our understandings are not suited.

Walpole claims that he has no aptitude for philosophy and “no curiosity about the anatomy of Nature.” While expressing his enthusiasm for “original genius” in the arts, he refers to his “sovereign contempt for Euclid, and Newton, and Locke,” but on another occasion, he argues that the French,

“till they have excelled Newton, and come near to Shakespeare,” cannot sustain their “airs of superiority.” When he criticises Locke, he has in mind the latter’s intricate analysis of the human mind’s development and operation. From another viewpoint, he admires Bacon and Locke as careful students of the world we all experience through our five senses: they “were almost the first philosophers who introduced common sense into their writings, and were as clear as Plato was unintelligible – because he did not understand himself.”

In his political writings, Locke is the great philosopher of liberty and religious toleration, but there are two classes to whom he will not grant equal rights – atheists, because they acknowledge no power by whom they can swear an oath, and Roman Catholics, because they owe allegiance to a foreign prince. When Ireland is given its own Parliament in 1782, Walpole, who shares the common Protestant contempt for “Romish superstition,” is firmly against the extension of political rights to the Catholic population, being convinced that “No change of times or persons, no heterogeneous commixture of the partisans that lead factions, can authorise or justify an adoption of Catholics into civil Government.... Papists and liberty are contradictions.” (Interestingly, the openly Deist Thomas Paine holds that in America, because it has no established church, a Catholic priest or an Episcopalian minister is a good citizen and neighbour.)

Walpole is well aware that however strongly he opposes the theology and politics of the Roman Church, he owes to it the glories of the mediaeval vaulting, stained glass and statuary that he loves. He tells his High Church friend William Cole:

I like Popery as well as you, and have shown I do. I like it as I like chivalry and romance. They all furnish one with ideas and visions, which Presbyterianism does not ... but for the mysterious, the Church in the abstract, it is a jargon that means nothing.

The Middle Ages and Renaissance are Walpole’s special delight. Among the greatest treasures at Strawberry Hill are a monk’s chair dating from the thirteenth century and the armour of the sixteenth century French King Francis I. Yet however accomplished as a connoisseur of art old and new – he is an early admirer of the pioneer Renaissance painter Masaccio – as a judge of contemporary literature, Walpole, like Johnson, is found wanting. The poets of his own time he most esteems are Robert Jephson, Hannah More, Sir Charles Williams, Erasmus Darwin, William Mason, and Thomas Gray – and in the case of Gray he prefers “The Bard,” “The Progress of Poesy” and “Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College” to “An Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard.” However, he recognises the quality



of "The Village" by the young George Crabbe, who "writes lines that one can remember," and conversely makes an acute criticism of Macpherson's *Ossian*, the purported translation of an ancient Gaelic epic: "It tires me to death to read how many ways a warrior is like the moon, or the sun, or a rock, or a lion, or the ocean." He realises that the poems Thomas Chatterton tries to pass off as fifteenth century compositions are his own work and has to defend himself against unfair charges of responsibility for the young man's suicide. While he quickly spots that Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* is "a truly classic work," he fails to appreciate most of the major fiction of his time. He finds Fielding's *Tom Jones* vulgar and tasteless, Richardson's enormous epistolary novels "deplorably tedious lamentations," and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* trivial. In Frances Burney's first two novels, he does see merit, but ranks *Evelina* above its much richer successor, *Cecilia*. Regretting the literary poverty of "this our Augustan age," he dismisses "indolent Smollett! trifling Johnson! piddling Goldsmith!" Against Johnson he has a special animus, and, at his most outrageous, writes, "How little will Dr. Johnson be remembered, when confounded with the mass of authors of his own calibre!" When Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* is published, Walpole comments that Johnson is a mixture "of strong sense, of the lowest bigotry and prejudices, of pride, brutality, fretfulness, and vanity; and Boswell is the ape of most of his faults, without a grain of his sense." For once, he shows real insight into Johnson the man when he observes that, "though he was good-natured at bottom, he was very ill-natured at top."

Looking back to the poetry of the earlier part of the century, we find that Walpole admires Pope but dismisses *The Seasons* of James Thomson, though he detects "innumerable fine things" in Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*. Further back, he adores Shakespeare, in whom he finds "texts out of the book of nature, in comparison of which," he insists, "the works of all other writers in every language that I understand are to me apocryphal." In Montaigne he can perceive only "the twaddle of a pedant."

Among the Roman poets (he admits he has forgotten the little Greek he ever knew), Walpole prefers *Pharsalia*, Lucan's epic of civil war, to Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which he regrets that the beautiful language is yoked to an absurd plot. He tries to persuade the poet Mason that "Epic poetry is the art of being as long as possible in telling an uninteresting story; and an Epic poem is a mixture of History without truth, and of Romance without imagination"; he adds that in *Paradise Lost* Milton, "all imagination, and a thousand times more sublime and spirited [than Virgil], has produced a monster." However purblind his response to epic, Walpole makes a vigorous counter-attack when Sir John Hawkins tries to put down comedy: "Now I hold a perfect comedy to be the perfection of human composition,

and believe firmly that fifty Iliads and Aeneids could be written sooner than such a character as Falstaff's."

Responding to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Walpole confesses to Lady Ossory, "I am apt to have strong prejudices both when I like and dislike." These prejudices, however, are not all literary. From being "so unfortunate as to love that unfashionable people" — he refers to the Scots — in the mid-seventeen fifties and insisting that his high opinion of them is "formed on fact," he takes to blaming them not only for the Young Pretender's frighteningly real threat to the House of Hanover in 1745 but, largely through Lord Bute's influence on George III, for the disastrous war with the American colonies three decades later. He even traces the influence of Scottish Jacobites back through seven earlier reigns, telling Mann they are "the authors of the present, as they have been of every, civil war, — since the days of Queen Elizabeth." So conscious is he of the obsessive nature of this prejudice that it contributes to his retention of an aging and incompetent Scottish gardener — "I will not be unjust," he determines, "even to that odious nation ... I know how strong my prejudices are, and am always afraid of them." Eventually, after years of sniping at Scottish ministers in English government and nicknaming England Nova Scotia, he welcomes the news that the centenary of the Glorious Revolution that thrust James II and his descendants from power is being celebrated in Scotland. No such leavening relieves his denunciations of the people of France when they murder their King and Queen and mount the Reign of Terror, denunciations which rise to such a pitch that he can write, "I begin to think that our hatred of them is not national prejudice, but natural instinct."

In many of his judgments on religious leaders and ecclesiastics, Walpole shows equal bias. Blindly he declares, "Calvin and Wesley had just the same views as the Pope; power and wealth their objects." The admittedly controversial figure of the Bishop of Derry — the Earl-Bishop he sarcastically calls him, after the cleric inherits the Earldom of Bristol from a brother — earns his opprobrium, apparently because he has been anti-American and favours Catholic emancipation. When his purchase of a London house causes him legal difficulties with Colonel and Ned Bisshop, he refers to his lawsuit "against the Bishops, an odious race whether clerical or laic."

Walpole can make equally black-and-white judgments about individuals. It is impossible to credit his assertion that the statesman George Grenville is "the falsest and most contemptible of mankind" or that in 1773 Lord Mansfield "hopes the Chancellor of France has courage and villainy enough to assist him in enslaving us, as the French Chancellor has enslaved his own country!" Whatever the degree of her complicity in her husband's

murder, Catherine the Great is more than the Catherine Slay-Czar and oppressor of Poland of the letters.

Equally exaggerated are the panegyrics that Walpole lavishes on his idols. He is probably just in crediting his father for two decades of national stability and peace, and he has the grace to admit, "with all the veneration I feel for his memory I never thought him perfect." On a different plane, however, are his claims that Sir Robert was "the best and wisest of men" and "the glory of human nature," that he possessed "the greatest understanding in the world," and that, although he was called "the Father of Corruption," he acted "on one great plan of honesty from the beginning of his life to the end ... and was as incapable of fear as of doing wrong." Perhaps, however, the difficulties of governing should be taken into account in considering the great letter-writer's rhetorical question "Was it a capital crime to bribe those *on sale* to promote the happiness of themselves and others, to bribe them to preserve the constitution and make the commerce of their country flourish?"

Almost as laudatory is his view of his greatest and lifelong friend, his cousin Henry Conway, who appears to be an able soldier and an unusually honourable politician, as brave in the debating chamber as on the battlefield, perhaps even a man "whom nature always designed for a hero of romance," but does he really deserve the apostrophe Walpole addresses to him when the elder William Pitt disappoints many by accepting a pension for himself and a title for his wife: "Oh, my dear Harry! I beg you on my knees, keep your virtue: do let me think there is still one man upon earth who despises money." He lets Conway know that "Mme du Deffand says, I love you better than anything in the world."

Similarly idealised are his estimates of Sir Horace Mann, who never returns from Florence, and Sir Horace's brother Gal, who suffers an early death in 1757, but whose friendship Walpole is able to enjoy for a decade in London. Occasionally, however, he suffers a disillusion. In 1770 he describes Mme de Choiseul, whom he has met in France, as "the most perfect being I know of either sex" and four years later recommends her acquaintance to Conway claiming, "She has more sense and more virtues than almost any human being." A decade further on, he is greatly disappointed by the way she extracts her letters from the deceased Mme du Deffand's papers, which have been bequeathed to him, instead of waiting for him to have them returned, and by her failure to write to him, "though," he says, "she had professed so much friendship for me."

While Walpole is capable of making hair-raising statements about people he abominates, his temperament is predominantly compassionate, and he usually behaves kindly to man, woman, child, and beast. Despite his recent fear at the threat to the House of Hanover, he finds the spectacle

of the Highland leaders of the rebellion on trial and in peril of the headsman's axe "the greatest and most melancholy scene I ever yet saw." Indeed, he shudders whenever he reads of a person awaiting execution, "for it is shocking to reflect that there is a human being at this moment in so deplorable a situation." In old age, he confides to Lady Ossory, "I hate to read or hear of miseries that one knows it is out of one's power to remedy." When he can try to help the wretched by giving to charity or using his influence, he does so — whether it means donating £50 towards potatoes for the poor, contributing to a fund for French prisoners of war, or urging better treatment for injured British soldiers or children doomed to sweep chimneys. He is outraged to learn that the Duke of Northumberland's much disliked steward "has beaten a poor woman that he found gleaning on his field unmercifully," and when the carpenters working at Strawberry Hill strike for higher wages, he asks, "how can one complain? The poor fellows, whose all the labour is, see their masters advance their prices every day, and think it reasonable to touch their share."

Sensitive, too, to emotional suffering, Walpole is repulsed by Lady Isabelle Finch's refusal to present at the Palace an illegitimate female relative. "Lady Bel," he protests, "called it publishing a bastard at Court ... think on the poor girl." (Happily, the prude's niece Lady Charlotte Fermor does present the young woman, who is received by the Royal Family.) When his father, Sir Robert, is raised to the peerage, Horace expresses pity for his humiliated half-sister, who, being born out of wedlock, must have a patent passed before she can take her rank as an earl's daughter.

The dying and their families also excite Walpole's compassion. Finding George Montagu, an intimate friend, and his sisters grieving for the loss of their brother — "in the extremest distress," he says, "I ever saw" — he explains to the Secretary at War, Henry Fox, that he must remain at Windsor to comfort them. When Mrs. Leneve, long a member of his father's household, is near her end, he travels almost daily to London to attend her. Still closer to him is his young niece Maria; he spends his days at her house while her much cherished husband, Earl Waldegrave, is dying at the age of forty-eight.

Walpole is fond of children and is pleased to accommodate the three-year-old daughter of Conway and his wife at Strawberry Hill, along with her nursemaid, while her parents are in Ireland, where Conway is serving as Secretary of State. On a later occasion, he cannot visit Conway because he is playing host to his sister and her sick child. Once, his liking for children leads to an amusing scene. At Ragley, the estate of Conway's brother, the Earl of Hertford, the Rev. Mr. Seward sees Walpole, a man unknown to him, on the floor of a dirt-filled lumber room, then inscribing a

painting, subsequently playing with the children and dogs, and finally, to his astonishment, formally dressed at the dinner table.

Animals, too, arouse his sympathy. He dislikes hunting both as “a persecution of animals” and “an image of war.” When there is a panic about mad dogs and the animals are being killed in the London streets amidst fierce controversy, he writes, “the streets are a very picture of the murder of the innocents – one drives over nothing but poor dead dogs! The dear, good-natured, honest, sensible creatures! Christ! how can anybody hurt them?” A new edition of *The Compleat Angler* of Izaak Walton leads him to deny that angling is “so very *innocent* an amusement.” He goes on to say, “We cannot live without destroying animals, but shall we torture them for our sport?” and he continues by relating how,

I met a rough officer ... t’other day, who said he knew such a person was turning Methodist; for, in the middle of conversation, he rose, and opened the window to let out a moth. I told him that I did not know that the Methodists had any principle so good, and that I, who am certainly not on the point of becoming one, always did so too.

For all his kindness, Walpole can on occasion display some cruelty, whether activated by indignation, high spirits that get out of hand, or a vein of malice that overcomes his better nature. When Sir Horace Mann’s neglectful father complains that his son writes to Walpole but not to him, Walpole’s response, “Sir, I write him kind answers; pray do you do so?” elicits a blush and a muttered “Perhaps I have lived too long for him!” “Perhaps,” replies Walpole, “you have.” Hearing that Lord Bath and Lord Sandys have had their pockets picked, Walpole comments, “I fancy it was no bad scene, the avarice and jealousy of their peeresses on their return.” At George Pitt’s ball, when Lord and Lady Coventry begin to quarrel publicly over the biblical books attributed to Solomon, he begs the ladies “to take my Lord out and make him dance so continually that the quarrel might not be made up when they went home,” and the ladies act accordingly, “delighted with the thought of depriving the Countess of that night’s perquisites of her beauty.” During a supper party at Paris, he plays an unkind joke on Sir Gilbert Elliot, misinforming the company that this gentleman does a marvellous imitation of William Pitt the Elder’s speech. At a bluestocking party, the hostess, Lady Lucan, finds she has made a mistake in inviting both Mrs. Montagu and Dr. Johnson, who form hostile circles at opposite ends of the room. She angrily tells Walpole she will never invite Johnson again. He describes how, “I took her side, and fomented the quarrel, and wished I could have made Dagon and Ashtaroth scold in Coptic.”

Despite his faults, Walpole deserves respect for maintaining a high degree of integrity in a corrupt age. Most of his income comes from sinecures given to him by his father. As he makes clear to Grosvenor Bedford, his deputy in the Exchequer, he will not tolerate any pilfering of the public purse. He prides himself on never having asked favours from ministers, even those who were his friends, and, to avoid incurring obligations, he twice rejects an offer of lifetime tenure of the remunerative public post he holds jointly with his brother Sir Edward till the latter's decease in 1784. When Lieutenant-General Conway is deprived of his regiment for voting in Parliament against the legality of general warrants, he ignores a warning that "as a subaltern of the Exchequer" he must defend the Government and instead supports his cousin at some risk of having his income cut off. Later, Conway, restored to royal favour and a full General, is appointed Commander-in-Chief, and Walpole, knowing he will be pressed to solicit favours from him, requests his cousin in advance to grant only those applications which are "perfectly just and reasonable."

In the early years of his absorption in Strawberry Hill, antiquarianism, and Parliament (he says, "Nature, that gave me a statesman's head, forgot to give me ambition"), Walpole has an uneasy relationship with his family. In 1748, he writes to Mann of a nephew, son of his eldest brother, who is travelling to Florence: "I, who am not troubled with partiality to my family, admire him much." He turns against his father's brother when he holds the latter responsible for that nephew's rejection, despite his being free from any other attachment, of a match with the wealthy Margaret Nicholl. That match would, he believes, have "saved Houghton and all our glory!" (That "He had made Houghton much too magnificent for the moderate estate which he left to support it" is one of the rare faults he finds in his father.) Subsequently, he accuses the same relative of depriving Sir Robert's grandchildren of their rightful inheritance, and when the man is ennobled as Baron Wolterton, he informs Mann, "My uncle's ambition and dirt are crowned at last."

Horace Walpole has two older brothers, Robert, the second Lord Orford and father of his nephew, and Edward, later Sir Edward, who has a son and three daughters by a beautiful mistress. In 1751, Robert dies in debt, leaving Horace "much to forgive" and the fear, as he laments, that "Houghton and all the remains of my father's glory will be pulled to pieces!" Robert's estranged wife, and then widow, Lady Orford, figures largely in Walpole's correspondence, first as a figure of fun in Florence, where she consorts with two other learned women, Lady Pomfret and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and then as a kind of vampire sucking up the family wealth, and taking and discarding husbands and lovers while living in Italy totally indifferent to the welfare or existence of her son. The one miti-

gating factor Walpole notes is that she was “forced into our family against her will.”

For some years, Horace is at odds with his brother Edward, quarrelling with him over the disposition of a parliamentary borough and accusing him of unfriendliness and envy: he ends one letter to him, “Yours or not, as you please, HOR. WALPOLE.” Later their relationship softens, and Horace develops much affection for Edward’s three daughters—Laura, Maria, and Charlotte.

Although Walpole is most at home among people of his own class, he has, at least theoretically, egalitarian views, and, in his own words to Lady Ossory, is “not apt to be intoxicated with Royalty.” Even when he is recoiling from the French Revolution, he tells her, “I am not grown a whit more in love with princes and princesses than I ever was ... I do not dislike kings, or nobility, or people, but as human creatures that, when possessed of full power, scarce ever fail to abuse it.” Moving in the highest circles, he must comply with conventions that sometimes irritate him. He is always careful to be correct in kissing the hands of royalty, and he is capable of expelling a party with tickets of admission to Strawberry Hill to accommodate the visit of a Polish princess (who never appears). After obeying the command of his friend Princess Amelia, daughter of George II, to attend a party in her honour at Stowe, he returns home and complains to Mme du Deffand that to wait on princes one must be false, submissive, and flattering. Polite and politic hypocrisy is part of the social game: he can write to Pitt the Elder’s nephew of “my real regard to Mr. Grenville,” a politician he abominates, and can pretend that his deliberate failure to answer Lady Craven’s letters is due to ignorance of her address as she travels. He confesses to hating “ceremonious customs” as opposed to heartfelt observances, and applies the term “puppet-show” to George III’s coronation and Lord Chatham’s funeral, neither of which he will attend.

With humbler people who share his antiquarian interests, however, Walpole can be fully at ease. He assures the Yorkshire vicar Henry Zouch that “though, in the common intercourse of the world, rank and birth have their proper distinctions, there is certainly no occasion for them between men whose studies and inclinations are the same.” More surprisingly, so intense is his feeling for Mme du Deffand that when her servant Wiart apologises for presuming to write to him after her death, his response is “that his attachment to his mistress levelled all distinctions.”

Walpole has much satisfaction in never allowing a different kind of obstacle to disrupt his affectionate relationship with his fellow antiquarian William Cole, a High Church clergyman and Tory royalist whose politics are antithetical to his own. “Indeed, our old and unalterable friendship is creditable to us both,” he points out, “and very uncommon between two

persons who differ so much in their opinions relative to Church and State." To oblige his friend, Walpole agrees to write the life of the Rev. Thomas Baker, observing, "he was what you and I are, a party-man from principle, not from interest"; harmony between two people of opposite views is possible, he reasons, "when both are sincere in their opinions, as we are."

Given his lifestyle and temperament, it would have taken a most unusual woman, probably one who shared his passions for antiquarianism and Strawberry Hill, to enter into a happy marriage with Horace Walpole. He does appear to be tempted by a pretty widow and writes to her speaking of himself as her lover: he describes to Montagu how "Prince Edward asked me at the Opera t'other night, when I was to marry Lady Mary Coke: I answered, as soon as I got a regiment." Four days later, he sends the lady a mock proposal supplemented by verses addressed to William Pitt asking for command of "a Troop or Company." But he seems to make it clear that among the ladies he has "two sovereigns" – Lady Mary Coke and the Duchess of Grafton (after her divorce and remarriage, Countess of Upper Ossory). In 1764, he writes to Conway, "I am heartily glad the Duchess of Bedford does not set her heart on marrying me to anybody; I am sure she would bring it about."

It is difficult to tell whether he feels a lack in his life. When Conway and Lady Ailesbury leave their infant daughter at Strawberry Hill in 1752, he sends them news speaking playfully of the child as his wife, and keeps up the whimsy when she is reunited with her parents. Long afterwards, when he spends much time with Lady Browne, his neighbour at Strawberry Hill, he refers to her as "my nominal wife," and writes that they qualify for the Dunmow Fitch, proverbially awarded to a married couple who have lived together in unbroken harmony for twelve months and a day. In his last years, he calls his young friends the Berry sisters his two wives and prettily declares, "I am not less in love with my wife Rachel than with my wife Leah."

Walpole's views on marriage are marked by good sense and kindness. Where there is no serious objection, he favours letting the young have their own way, especially in the case of women, "whose happiness really does depend, for some time at least, on the accomplishment of their wishes." He is glad to receive felicitations on a nephew's match that is "suitable enough in age, rank, fortune, and good nature," and considers an adequate income, but not great wealth, as one of the elements usually requisite to marital success. His great-niece Lady Maria Waldegrave earns his commendation for breaking off her engagement with the handsome and exceedingly rich Lord Egremont when that love-smitten man proves to be "a most worthless young fellow ... weak and irresolute."



Walpole dislikes elopements but does not regard them all with equal severity. When Lady Susan Fox-Strangways, Lord Ilchester's daughter, does not scruple to break a solemn promise and run off with the actor William O'Brien, his sympathy is with the father: he exclaims, "I could not have believed that Lady Susan would have stooped so low." A few months later, he hears that the plain Lady Harriot, youngest sister of Lord Rockingham, "has stooped even lower than a theatric swain, and married her footman," and is intrigued to hear that she "has mixed a wonderful degree of prudence with her potion" by settling a hundred pounds per annum on her bridegroom and entailing her fortune on their children, or, in the absence of children, on her own family. His reaction to the runaway marriage of his great-niece Laura Keppel with George Fitzroy, heir of Baron Southampton, is that "For such an exploit her choice is not a very bad one," but he cannot altogether blame the irreconcilable Lady Southampton, who has thirteen other children and wanted a fortune for her son. He is distinctly happier when he can report in the similar case of his half-sister's admirable but penniless daughter Sophia, "the father, who is good-natured, has at last given his consent." When another of his great-nieces, Lady Maria Waldegrave, and the Duke of Grafton's son Lord Euston, both of whom he has advised to the contrary, marry against the Duke's wishes, he comments next day, "I am not fond of matches where any proper consent is wanting," but the deed being done, he hopes Lady Ossory and her mother will not condemn the couple. On his part, "it was no effort to exchange prudence for kind wishes." The bride has been the victim of "absurd stories" spread by women who "are hags of high rank; they bestow Sunday mornings on church, and the rest of the year on scandal, malice, envy, and lies of their neighbours." Thirteen months after the marriage, the Duke, who has continued his son's allowance, recognizes his daughter-in-law's merit.

Sometimes Walpole realises that his judgment about the prospects of a marriage has been wrong. When his half-sister accepts a proposal from the soldier Charles Churchill, he describes it to Mann as "a foolish match" (both are illegitimate and neither is rich), but the two prosper, and he remains on excellent terms with them both, and on the death of his nephew Lord Malpas, he remarks on the widow's grief, "As his father's profusion called for his restoring the estate, we lamented this match; but it proved a blessing."

### (III) THE LATER YEARS

The man who enters on a strange friendship with Mme du Deffand is diligently curious in matters antiquarian; devoted to his little Gothic castle;

highly selective in his appreciation of literature; implacably hostile to absolute power; humane and just in his opposition to aggressive war and imperial conquest; incapable of comprehending profoundly religious minds; conservative in his belief in the social usefulness of Christianity; intolerant of Roman Catholicism and the Scots; upright in money matters; prejudiced in many of his personal judgments; at loggerheads with some relatives and protective of others.

After he returns from France in the spring of 1766, two new topics become prominent in Walpole's letters—the marriage of a favourite niece and the quarrel between Britain and America. His much-cherished niece Maria, widow of Lord Waldegrave, who has left her with three daughters, catches the eye of the Duke of Gloucester, a favourite brother of George III. Walpole advises her against the connection. In September 1766, however, they secretly marry, but then appear to the world to be living together unwed. More than five years later, Maria's father, Sir Edward, reveals the secret to Horace, who replies:

Though entirely out of the secret of the match, I never doubted it, from the long conviction I have had of Lady Waldegrave's strict virtue and many excellent qualities.... For her sake I did not approve the connection; for my own I could take no part in it, without being sure of the marriage.... Your daughter, I think, has too nice a sense of honour herself to blame me.

He immediately writes also to Maria. Nineteen months afterwards, he suspects, as he warns Mason, that his correspondence is being opened in transit on account of his niece's "relation to Royalty."

Unfortunately for all concerned, another brother of the King, the young Duke of Cumberland, has also married surreptitiously. Walpole describes his bride as a coquette "artful as Cleopatra." The King is furious. Feeling that he must treat both brothers in the same way, he forbids them the court.

Gingerly, Walpole establishes correct, even cordial relations with the Duke of Gloucester and advises him, at his request, on the best way to seek a reconciliation with the King. Suffering from weak health, and several times in danger of his life, the Duke finds refuge from the English winter in Italy. In mid-1777, he seems once again on the verge of expiring. His estrangement from his brother has preyed on his mind, and, when he rallies, Walpole reports to Lady Ossory, "The Duke of Gloucester is risen from the dead.... Probably a kind message from the King by Colonel Jennings wrought the miracle." The Duke relapses, but after the King has sent "a most kind and brotherly letter" saying that "his affection never had al-

tered, never should," he recovers once more. By mid-1780, Walpole can inform Mann that both the errant Dukes are reconciled with the monarch, though he does not receive their wives.

The end of Walpole's relationship with the Gloucesters is less happy. For a long time he remains their friend, and he is involved in the engagements and marriages of his niece's Waldegrave daughters while reflecting that he is one "whose plan it certainly never was to be included in any royal drama. It was one of Fortune's caprices, who loves to throw her vanities into the lap of one who never stirred an inch to seek or meet them." However, in 1791, he learns that the Duke is betraying his niece with the society lady Mrs. Buller, of whom he writes, "I huffed her ... for her bad taste in sending for *double Glo'ster cheese* in an evening and vowed I will never enter her doors, if smelling of it." In future, he visits with the Duchess but not her husband.

While Walpole is still in France, Parliament takes an—alas, temporary—step backwards from imposing taxes on the American colonies, which have no representation at Westminster. As mutual hostility increases, a scruple about aiding merchants who deal in slaves briefly troubles him, but he soon decides, like many fellow countrymen, that the Americans' cause is just. Confronted with an administration that backs George III's assertion of his rights over the inflamed colonies and a quiescent opposition, Walpole sees a people and a parliament riding blindly towards their own destruction, and decides, after war breaks out, that the Americans are the real English and are fighting for the rights of Britons too. England, moreover, is pouring men and money into a distant war, destroying her own trade with her colonies, and tempting France and Spain to intervene—the French may invade—and complete her ruin. He entertains French visitors at his celebrated castle and quips that he does so "that they may not burn poor Strawberry."

As the two sides win and lose battles, Walpole foresees that his island home will complete a cycle: having grown under the leadership of Pitt, now Lord Chatham, who opposes the war with America, into a great empire, it will relapse into "an insignificant solitude under a Bashaw." Moreover, its culture is etiolated—few new books are worth reading, few new plays worth seeing. The rage is for ruinous, deep gambling and newspapers full of "personal scurrilities ... especially on young and handsome women." In 1779, he is sure his country's greatness "was buried last year, with Lord Chatham"; his consolation is that "Liberty has still a continent to exist in." The future will be in the Americas, where nature will provide exotic sights for poets and a new Thucydides, a new Virgil, a new Newton may arise. He insists also that the colonists "are as much my countrymen as those born in

the parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields; and, when my countrymen quarrel, I think I am free to wish better to the sufferers than to the aggressors."

In November 1781, when reports reach the mother country that Cornwallis has surrendered at Yorktown, as Burgoyne did at Saratoga in 1777, Walpole is torn between rejoicing that the bloodshed and vain expense will end and shame at his nation's humiliation. "When," he asks, "did England see two whole armies lay down their arms and surrender themselves prisoners?" In his subsequent letters before the Peace Treaty is signed, there is a dizzying alternation between antithetical pronouncements: Britain is irretrievably ruined; Britain may possibly revive. On the one hand, his nation seems to be a losing player that has gambled away both the prosperity it enjoyed under his father and the imperial glory it gained under Pitt. On the other, his hope intermittently returns that the Court's politicians, who are leading the country towards royal despotism, will be overthrown by the Opposition Whigs, if only their two factions, led by Lord Rockingham and Lord Shelburne, can avoid a fatal rupture. The Whigs' first Prime Minister, Lord Rockingham, dies suddenly in office, and Walpole's fears reawaken. Shelburne succeeds, and his behaviour is "improper in every light," but he supports the peace. The terms, which allow Britain to keep Gibraltar, are better than Walpole has for several years thought attainable, yet many in Britain are discontented. Shelburne's government is defeated by his opponents. "The triumphant party," Mann is informed, "declare for adherence to the Peace, though they condemn it."

In 1773, the year of the Boston Tea Party, another family affliction strikes. Walpole learns that his nephew Lord Orford is overtaken by insanity. In subsequent letters, he describes how, while Lady Orford remains in Italy indifferent to her son's plight, he withdraws from all the delights of his connoisseurship and antiquarianism to exhaust himself in caring for the forty-two-year-old wastrel. Accounts of the latter's sullen silences, furious rages, suicide attempts, and intermittent failures to recognize his familiars mingle with expressions of Walpole's bewilderment as he deals with the debt-ridden estate of the incapacitated prodigal. "Think of me," he appeals to Lady Ossory, "putting queries to lawyers, up to the ears in mortgages, wills, settlements, and contingent remainders." At the same time, as he explains to Mann, he is most concerned "to watch over my Lord's person and to take care that every attention of humanity and tenderness be paid to him, and that his unfortunate life may be made as comfortable as possible." Compelled to sell his horses and dogs, he worries how his nephew will react if he regains his senses. Meanwhile, Horace and his brother Sir Edward, who shows some concern but will never leave his house, refuse "the horrid extremity of taking out a commission of lunacy": as well as the possible loss of his government places, "Compassion, humanity, tenderness, pride,

hope, all make us dread such a step." While Walpole tends his nephew, his beloved dog Rosette, who has accompanied him on travels to English mansions and to Paris, takes fatally ill, and he declares to Lady Ossory, "In truth, I know nothing, think of nothing but my poor nephew's affairs and Rosette." After about a year, Lord Orford regains his senses to the surprise of his physicians, who now expect him to recover completely and order his release. Walpole is relieved to hear him say "that he is convinced all that has been done is right; that it is what he wished done, but could not undertake," and to be able to return to the pleasures of Strawberry Hill. Later Lord Orford goes back to his disreputable companions, and his uncle informs Mann, "My late ward has fairly washed his hands of me on some very necessary remonstrances on his health and affairs."

For the next three years, Walpole lives in dread of "an express from Norfolk," and in April 1777 the message comes. He hastens back to find the younger man, as he notifies Sir Edward, living in a parsonage "of lath and plaster" with "low wretches" and forty-year-old Mrs. Turk, "red-faced, and with black teeth ... with whom he has lived these twenty years." After dark, Walpole is compelled to retreat to an inn, for "The single chamber without a bed is a parlour seven feet high, directly under my Lord's bed-chamber, without shutters, and so smoky that there is no sitting in it, unless the door is open." Seeking relief from attending, along with two doctors, the sometimes suicidal patient, he meets the antiquary William Cole for dinner at Cambridge. Afterwards he writes to him, "the beauty of King's College Chapel, now it is restored, penetrated me with a visionary longing to be a monk in it," but then reflects, "I hope doing one's duty is the best preparation for death." This time he resolutely refuses to have anything to do with his nephew's business affairs, despite a request from Mr. Sharpe, the British lawyer of the perennially suspicious Lady Orford. In a letter to Mann, he asserts, "I have a little too much spirit to bear being distrusted, then accused, and still applied to." By June, he has largely returned to his normal life, and in March 1778 there comes a report that Lord Orford has again recovered. Walpole believes, however, that his nephew never completely regains his sanity. A piece of evidence he cites is the way the man marches his county militia to Norwich only to "write in the orderly book there, that if the French should land on any part of the coast, the magistrates were to burn the suburbs of that city, which would then be impregnable." If he has recovered, he has recovered only to commit what is in Walpole's eyes the worst crime he could commit against the family: he sells the glory of the family, Sir Robert's great collection of old masters, which are bought by Catherine II of Russia. "Well! adieu to Houghton!" is Walpole's cry to Mann; "about its mad master I shall never trouble myself more." However, twelve years later he can still say that "if ever I had merit

in any part of my life, it has been in my care of Lord Orford." In 1781, when Lady Orford dies, Walpole forwards a copy of her will to her son, and comments to Mann, "My Lord has now and then a just thought: but his infamous crew divert him from pursuing it." Lord Orford's return for all the devotion Walpole has shown him is to send him a box of plover's eggs once a year — "the only notice," he observes, "he ever takes of me."

Lady Orford has left a large part of her estate, which includes plate and jewels of doubtful ownership she took from England, to her Italian lover, Cavaliere Mozzi. Lord Orford disputes the will but, instead of going to law, seeks mediation and asks Walpole to serve as one of the referees. The latter informs Mann that he agreed to do so "provided I were allowed to act handsomely and like a gentleman, and not like a lawyer." The negotiations involve four referees and two lawyers and encounter delays due to illnesses and a suicide, but after three years there is an agreement. The details are reported week by week to Mann, who gets in touch with Mozzi. A happy result of Walpole's labours is his stumbling across a letter from his nephew to Lady Orford attributing the great improvement of both their estates to his care. "This," he admits, "is a satisfaction I never expected to see under his hand."

At one point Walpole predicts that should he unexpectedly outlive his nephew, his determination not to see Mozzi unfairly treated will have led that nephew to disinherit him, though he professes not to care. When a settlement is reached without entirely contenting either party, Walpole, to his surprise, receives from Lord Orford a letter of thanks followed seven months later by £4,000 left him by his father but withheld for forty years.

At the beginning of December 1782, Walpole is temporarily incapable of negotiating because of an attack of gout. Although he has relied on a temperate lifestyle to protect him from this hereditary disease, as he grows older it afflicts him with increasing frequency and severity. From the summer of 1760 onwards, it is a recurrent topic in his letters, and in 1770, in the sixth week of suffering, he writes to Montagu, "The gate of painful age seems open to me, and I must travel through it as I may!" Sometimes the pain pins him to his bed or couch; often it makes holding a pen impossible so that he has to dictate his letters. At its worst, it delivers him over to spells of agony and deprives him of sleep. He describes how, "I am still lifted out of bed by two servants; and by their help travel from my bedchamber down to the couch in my Blue Room." "For eight days," he wails to Mann, "I underwent the humiliation of being fed." By February 1779, he fears the next attack may bring permanent confinement.

When his friends suffer from the same affliction, as many of them do, he ardently recommends the bootikins he wears overnight on his hands and feet as a means of reducing the length and frequency of visitations.

Occasionally the pain is mild, but when his friend Lady Blandford playfully congratulates him on having the disease, he protests, "If I could wish her any harm it should be that she might feel for one quarter of an hour a taste of the mortifications that I suffered from eleven last night till four this morning, and I am sure she would never dare to have a spark of courage again." Ten months later, however, in the middle of another attack, he confesses, "I should be ashamed of complaining with such an exemplar of fortitude hard by, as my poor old friend, Lady Blandford." This woman, so tormented for nearly three weeks by a bowel disease that she wanted to die, "would take nothing to assist nature" but only begged for laudanum. Walpole consoles himself for his agonies – he can write of "the red-hot bars of the gridiron on which I lie" – with a belief that gout protects one from other ailments and the thought of his good fortune in having servants and luxuries denied to the majority: "so much a bitterer cup," he admits, "is brewed for men as good as myself in every quarter of the globe!... I reflect on the million of my fellow creatures that have no one happiness, no one comfort!" – moreover, for the few who enjoy such privileges as his, "chance, not merit, drew the prize out of the wheel."

Age and disease can attack nerves as well as flesh: Walpole complains to Lady Ossory that "the clapping of a door makes me quiver like a poplar." Yet for all his weakness he can rise to an occasion. In June 1780, mobs incited by Lord George Gordon's fanatical hostility to Catholicism take possession of the London streets, plunder, kill, burn buildings, and besiege the Houses of Parliament, and it takes the authorities several days to regain control with the aid of soldiers. Walpole, too worried about friends and relatives to remain in safety at Strawberry Hill, sends first-hand accounts of the outrages to Mann and Lady Ossory. During the anarchy, he hastens from friend to friend, bringing news and comfort to the Duchess of Beaufort, the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, Conway and Lady Ailesbury, and Conway's brother and sister-in-law, the Earl and Countess of Hertford. On the seventh he writes, "I ... am heartily tired with so many expeditions, for which I little imagined I had youth enough left." After two more days, he announces, "I have certainly been on my feet longer these last eight-and-forty hours than in forty days before." Back at Strawberry Hill, he reports to Mason:

I went to town on Wednesday, and though the night was the most horrible I ever beheld, I would not take millions not to have been present; and should I have seen the conflagration as I must from these windows, I should have been distracted for my friends.

At nine at night, on notice of fire, I went with the Duchess and her daughters to the top of Gloucester House, and thence beheld the King's Bench, which was a little town, and at a distance the New Prison in flames.... Yesterday was some slaughter in Fleet-street by the Horse-Guards, and more in St. George's Fields by the Protestant Association, who fell on the rioters, who appear to have been chiefly apprentices, convicts, and all kinds of desperadoes; for Popery is already out of the question, and plunder all the object. They have exacted sums from many houses to avoid being burnt as Popish.

Eleven years later, some of his stamina has survived, for he visits Windsor Castle, one of his great enthusiasms, with Conway and is able to stand for two and a half hours, and in 1795, two years before his death, he faces a severe ordeal when Queen Charlotte brings seven princesses and the Duchess of York to Strawberry Hill. He wears a sword and is afraid he may fall. A few days after the visit, he writes to Conway, "I am not dead of fatigue with my Royal visitors, as I expected to be, though I was on my poor lame feet three whole hours."

In his old age, Walpole still finds himself constrained by the painful demands of court etiquette, notwithstanding the transformation of England that he tells the expatriate Mann in 1775 has taken place in the forty years since the latter's departure. Because his letters refer to many of the changes in life and society, they contribute to social as well as political history. They comment on the modern invention of good roads; the swelling population and novel degree of traffic congestion in London; the inflation raising the prices of books, prints, paintings, coins, and antiquities, as well as the cost of engraving; the fashions for pyramids of feathers on ladies' headdresses; the extravagance and especially the heavy gaming impoverishing members of the aristocracy and driving some into exile; the rage for pleasure distracting a nation at war from its danger; the campaigns of the bishops against masquerades and adultery; and the great increase in robberies, probably aggravated by moral corruption spreading downwards from the upper class.

The demands of royalty and the need to care for the mad Lord Orford are not the only obstacles Walpole faces to the fulfilling of his dream of a tranquil old age at Strawberry Hill. A letter to Mann in 1777 speaks of the keeping of late hours now customary in society—dinner not served till close to 6 p.m. and the evening starting at 10 p.m., so that "If one does not conform, one must live alone; and that is more disagreeable and more difficult in town than in the country." The same letter discloses his discovery that the dampness at Twickenham is liable to bring on his gout, which drives him back to the dryer atmosphere of London.



At the beginning of 1779, Walpole writes to Lady Ossory of his flight, while still ill, from the city house in Arlington Street his father left him to Strawberry Hill. He complains that while enduring a scarcity of visitors in the capital, "I had no books or papers, or dogs or cats to amuse me." At this time, he has begun to negotiate the purchase of a house in Berkeley Square that he can make into a London home. The transaction is completed in August. He has his new dwelling "painted and papered" to his taste and exults, "I would not change my two pretty mansions for any in England." On returning there from Twickenham, he exclaims about his new residence, "It is so cheerful, that when I came back, I thought even Strawberry less brilliant than it was wont to be – am not I an old simpleton with a young wife!"

Among the afflictions of old age is what Walpole calls "the heavy tax one pays for living long." In 1776, the death of John Chute, who became his friend in Italy, draws from him the tribute that their principles, tastes, and memories were so completely shared that Chute was his "other self." Four years later, George Montagu, an intimate since their schooldays, completes his withdrawal into a solitary, incommunicative life; Walpole has written to him in 1764, "I cannot, as you do, bring myself to be content without variety, without events." The loss of Princess Amelia in October 1786 is followed, before the end of the year, by the death of Sir Horace Mann, still at Florence, leaving Lady Ossory as his principal epistolary confidante. Seventeen ninety-one robs him of the wit George Selwyn and his Twickenham neighbour Lord Strafford. Worst of all must be his discovery in July 1795 that he has outlived his beloved Henry Conway, who reached the rank of Field Marshal.

Difficulty in making young friends aggravates what Walpole suffers from the loss of his contemporaries. As early as 1761, when he is not quite forty-four, he begins to grieve that he has outlived the world that he knows, and in 1766 he declares, "When I reflect on how prodigious a quantity of events I have been witness to or engaged in, my life seems equal to Methusaleh's." Unlike Bertrand Russell, who, in his helpful little essay "How to Grow Old" advises against "undue absorption in the past" and urges, "One's thoughts must be directed to the future, and to things about which there is something to be done," Walpole admits that he cannot share the interests of the young or make them his companions. When his nieces come and talk about the current competition to be maids of honour, he confesses to Conway, "I cannot attend to what concerns them – Not that their trifles are less important than those of one's own time ... I, that was so impatient at all their chat, the moment they were gone, flew to my Lady Suffolk, and heard her talk with great satisfaction of the late Queen's coronation-petticoat."

Though incapable of intimacy with his young relatives, Walpole, who dutifully attends family functions, is not debarred from a lesser friendship with some of them. When his niece the Duchess of Gloucester goes with the ailing Duke to Italy, she leaves behind her three teenage daughters by her first husband, Lord Waldegrave, and asks Walpole to take a part in their care. Although “They can only think and talk of what is, or is to come,” he admits, “I do love my nieces, nay like them,” and he finds pleasure in giving pleasure to these obviously delightful young ladies. His letters include accounts of going boating with them on the Thames, holding an elaborate fête for them at Strawberry Hill, and driving them round London to show them the night-time illuminations. A few years later, he concludes:

I believe my nieces love me as much as they can love an old obsolete uncle, for I am always in good humour with them and never preach; but I do not wonder that they do not run to me with their histories, who never interfere in them, nor give my advice unless they ask it.

Walpole, much concerned with what people think of him, has a great fear of being laughed at. He has “always had a horror for juvenile ancients” and discloses to Lady Ossory:

I am strangely afraid of being too young of my age. If everybody was an hundred, and I was only ninety, I would play at marbles, if I liked it, because my seniors would say, *That poor young creature!* but the sound of *That old fool!* is too dreadful.

When faro, once his favourite card game, is revived, he reports, “I have played but thrice, and not all night, as I used to do; it is not decent to end where one began, nor to sit up with a generation by two descents my juniors.” By 1782, he has resolved to stop travelling, saying, “I have not philosophy enough to stand stranger servants staring at my broken fingers at dinner,” and three years later when he goes to the theatre he does so only reluctantly with the comment, “I do not like exhibiting my antiquity in public: it looks as if I forgot it.” Yet in 1781, he sets his fears aside long enough to join in the dancing at Hertford’s house, to which he takes his Waldegrave great-nieces. “Oh! my Lady, my Lady,” the Countess of Ossory reads, “what will you say, when the next thing you hear of me after my last letter is, that I have danced three country-dances with a whole set, forty years younger than myself.” He confides to Conway:

I am continually tempted to retire entirely; and should, if I did not see how very unfit English tempers are for living quite out of the world. We grow abominable peevish and severe on others, if we are not constantly rubbed against and polished by them.

He has not forgotten the wisdom of his earlier warning to Montagu, "We are not made for solitude."

Walpole's last years would be bleak indeed were it not for the birth of a friendship as incongruous and as ardent as that with Mme du Deffand. After sadly reiterating for seventeen years that he cannot form close friendships with the young since the gap between their interests and his is unbridgeable, chance brings him in 1788 an unforeseeable companionship with two handsome, serious-minded women in their mid-twenties, the Misses Berry, who are not interested in cards or scandal. The elder sister, Mary, knows French and Latin; the younger, Agnes, has a gift for drawing. After the death of their mother, their father refused his rich maternal uncle's demand that he remarry and try to beget a male heir. The result is that the uncle has disinherited him in favour of his younger brother, who makes him a small allowance of eight hundred pounds a year.

Walpole describes the sisters as "two charming beings, whom everybody likes and approves, and who yet can be pleased with the company and conversation and old stories of a Methusalem." He likes to call them his wives, and assures them that while to be in love with one would be a cause of shame, to be in love with both is innocent. To compensate for the wrong that has been done them, he decides to make over to the family Little Strawberry Hill, a house that he let to his late friend the actress Mrs. Clive and dubbed Cliveden. The Duchess of Gloucester praises this act of "justice to injured merit." Walpole's devotion to the sisters is such that he can prefer staying at home and "conversing" with them by writing a letter to going out into company. When they are away in Yorkshire, he is ready to share them, saying, "Of all your visits ... I grudge the least that to your grandmother and aunt, as I can judge how happy you make them." Whenever the family is travelling, he is torn between his longing for their return and guilt at any feeling he is constraining them.

In his letters to the Berrys, Walpole writes of his social and family engagements, of local news, and of new books; he introduces as intimate a matter as the Duke of Gloucester's infidelity; he includes political news for Robert, the sisters' father; and for all three he sends the latest intelligence of the tumultuous events in France, where the Revolution erupts in the summer of 1789. When Robert decides he must take his daughters to Italy for their health, Walpole is in terror at the prospect of their facing the perils of winter storms on the English Channel and unpredictable dangers in rev-

olutionary France. At one point, he feels the sisters are more his children than his wives.

When Walpole has just returned to England after first meeting Mme du Deffand, he writes to her that he is glad he left Paris in time to avoid the horror of the crowd's clapping at the execution of the shamefully treated defeated general the Comte de Lally. The French, he asserts, are crueller than the English. He must remember this barbarity when he recoils from the outrages of the French Revolution.

In the early years of Louis XVI's reign, Walpole is pleased by his encouragement of liberal reforms, though these are liable to be thwarted by a *Parlement* dedicated to preserving the privileges of the aristocracy and higher clergy. As the years pass, the threat of revolution grows, and when the mob storms the Bastille—a prison he has always hated to drive by, “knowing the miseries it contained”—he writes, “I adore liberty, but I would bestow it as honestly as I could; and a civil war, besides being a game of chance, is paying a very dear price for it.” Even before the publication of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in November 1790, he predicts that the uprising will issue in rule by an emperor and laments that the cause of liberty will suffer an enduring setback. He perceptively blames the National Assembly for not drawing on experience to design a sound constitution, which the King would certainly have accepted, but instead relying on abstract theory and trying to “new-model the world with metaphysical compasses.” He concedes to a correspondent, when discussing the belief that all men are equal, “We are all born so, no doubt, abstractedly; and physically capable of being kept so, were it possible to establish a perfect government, and give the same education to all men.” Admiring both the language and the content of Burke's *Reflections*, he advises Mary Berry, “the whole is wise, though in some points he goes too far.” To Lady Ossory, he writes, “Mr. Burke, with Solomon's seal, has put the evil spirits to flight ... though his talisman, I confess, will remain and be serviceable to Pharaoh's priests here-after.” Disappointingly, when the first part of *The Rights of Man*, Thomas Paine's answer to Burke, appears in 1791, Walpole is less discriminating and ferociously denounces its entire argument failing to see the possibility that neither writer is entirely right nor entirely wrong.

Massacres multiply and upper class and clerical exiles stream into Britain. As the guillotine does its grisly work, Walpole confesses to Conway that “their horrific proceedings ... have given me what I call the French disease; that is, a barbarity that I abhor, for I cannot help wishing destruction to thousands of human creatures whom I never saw.” Both the French atrocities and the indignation and anger that overcome Walpole make for some painful reading. He alternates between finding a unique cruelty in the French people that has been loosed in past times as well as at present

and deciding that human nature is more deeply depraved than he could ever have imagined. Although he repeatedly acknowledges that France had an appalling government, he has to be hard pressed by the more temperate Lady Ossory before he will admit “*How long* the French remained in the right at the beginning of the Revolution, may be a question.” A little earlier, he has told her, “though I detest tyranny, I never should have ventured to act against it at the expense of blood.... Sure I am that the electors of the *États* gave them (and who but the whole nation could give?) no authority to shed a drop!” Very reasonably, he contrasts both the American Revolution and the recent Polish Revolution, which have produced balanced constitutions, with the bloodstained uprising in France. However, one of Walpole’s *bêtes noires*, Catherine of Russia, quickly swept away the Polish regime; he wishes that she, instead of Marie Antoinette, could have been Queen of France: far fewer French would have been killed under her tyranny, while Poland would have remained free.

In August 1792, when it has become clear that an invasion by the Duke of Brunswick is not prospering and is unlikely to save the French Royal Family, Walpole declares, “But of all their barbarities the most inhuman has been their *not* putting the poor wretched King and Queen to death three years ago!... Louis and his Queen have suffered daily deaths in apprehension for themselves and their children.” Thinking of their earlier monarchs and recognizing that no one should be entrusted with absolute power, Walpole finds causes of the French people’s fall into savagery in their “servility and gross adulation” that “persuaded their kings that they were all-wise and omnipotent” as well as “their known vanity and insolence, which grew from Europe aping their trifling fashions, manners, and language.” Rightly, he several times observes that Louis XVI, unlike his grandfather Louis XV and his contemporary Joseph II of Austria, is no tyrant, but one of the mildest of French kings. Ironically, he here agrees with Paine, who judges Louis XVI as being a far better person than most kings and “a man of a good heart.” Did Walpole ever know that Paine argued against his execution and nearly went to the guillotine for doing so? When Louis is finally put to death in 1793, Walpole is further horrified by the National Assembly’s simultaneous proclamation of atheism. Again, Paine and he agree: Paine wrote his attack on the Bible, *The Age of Reason*, as a defence of Deism when “the people of France were running headlong into atheism” and had it translated in the hope of stemming this disaster. Walpole is amazed when France can still field successful armies against many foreign enemies of the Revolution after much internal devastation and with “the extirpation of the usual root of enthusiasm, religion.”

Louis’ execution is followed nine months later by that of Marie Antoinette, who has been treated with great cruelty. Learning of her brave

and dignified deportment at her trial, Walpole, who has defended the beheading of his own country's Charles I, becomes obsessed with her fate and writes of her in his letters as though she were a saint and the noblest of all martyrs. "The last days of that unparalleled Princess," he claims, "were so superior to any death exhibited or recorded," and he asks, "What hero, philosopher, or martyr had equal possession of himself in similar moments?" and answers, "None, none, not one!" Ignoring her past follies and the youthful extravagance that even her mother, Maria Theresa, warned her against, he will concede no more than that "She herself as a mortal, might to God have accused herself of past errors, but I think no one else has a right to tax her with errors, which no man now can substantiate." Sadly, he discloses to Mary Berry, "I cannot open a French book, as it would keep alive ideas that I want to banish from my thoughts." He has long tired of the French exiles, finding that they stupidly imagine that foreign invasions of France will restore the old regime and they will return home. Seven months after Marie Antoinette's execution, he draws up a proposal to have the incomparable value of the tripartite institution of Monarch, Lords and Commons universally taught in all educational institutions, but "without punishments annexed," so that all would come to love this constitution and become immune to "monarchic or republican doctrines."

In November 1791, when Walpole is already shaken by the French abandonment of civilized constraint, he is jolted by news that his nephew has had a third attack of insanity together with a fever; the report comes from Lord Cadogan as Lord Orford's companions and servants have not notified his steward, his lawyer, or his uncle. Less than two weeks later, on 5 December, the third Lord Orford is dead, and Horace Walpole is his successor. He believes that had his nephew been committed to his care, he would have lived.

Walpole, now the fourth Lord Orford, finds himself in possession of his father's Norfolk estate and compelled to spend long hours on business he is ill fitted to understand in order to deal with its tangled affairs. "I, who could never learn the multiplication table," he complains, "was not intended to transact leases, direct repairs of farmhouses, settle fines for church lands, negotiate for lowering interest on mortgages, &c." The stress brings on a few weeks of illness. His letters of this period mingle denunciations of the French Revolution; complaints about the burden of the estate, which is robbing him of his peace; discussions with the Berrys about their friendship (briefly troubled by a slur in a newspaper charging the Berrys with a mercenary motive); and literary matters.

In order to reduce the pressure on him, Walpole renounces everything he could contest and tolerates "the vast injustice" he has suffered by the actions of lawyers. With his old prudence, he refrains from drawing on

the estate as long as he is not certain that it has enriched him. He is especially determined to protect his existing fortune and, as soon as possible, to wrest back his way of life from a plague of business correspondence and meetings with lawyers. At one point, however, he has the pleasure of informing Conway how he has tried to protect his tenants from an avaricious clergyman who oppresses them over his tithes. "I took up the character of parson myself," he boasts, "and preached to him as pastor of a flock which it did not become him to lead into the paths of law, instead of those of peace." Yet in spite of the harassment that disrupts his life and his earlier claim that he does not care how his nephew disposes of the estate, he writes to Lady Ossory:

He has given me the whole Norfolk estate, heavily charged, I believe, but that is indifferent. I had reason to think that he had disgraced, by totally omitting me—but unhappy as his intellects often were, and beset as he was by miscreants, he has restored me to my birthright, and I shall call myself obliged to him, and be grateful to his memory.

A little less than six weeks after this expression of gratitude, he is able to inform the same lady he has found that his nephew "had principles" but that his rogue companions had exploited his "having never been sound in his senses" to try to persuade him that that uncle intended to subject him to the very fate he had worked so hard to save him from, namely confinement, and to make disinheritance his revenge. Worse still, he learns, "under pretence of removing him from the reach of my talons, they hurried him, in the height of a putrid fever, to Houghton, though he complained and begged to stop on the road," but he does not "suspect them of killing him intentionally, which was not their interest."

His new title of Lord Orford, which is all he would have inherited had his nephew withheld the estate, is only a burden, and he peremptorily rejects Lady Ossory's plea that he take his seat in the House of Lords. "I am never called *My Lord*," he assures her, "but I fancy I have got a bunch on my back." He would have preferred to remain what he had been "for above forty years, a burgess of Twickenham."

Walpole lives long enough to be aware of French victories in northern Italy in 1796 and the looting of Italian art, but he does not recognize that the triumphant general, Napoleon Bonaparte, is to be the emperor he predicted six years before. On 4 January 1797, when he tells Lady Ossory that, though free of pain, "walk again I never shall," he adds, "I may last a little longer—if to see France humbled, I shall be glad." Two months later he dies, leaving his works to be edited by Mary Berry.

## (IV) THE LETTERS' EXCELLENCES

The letters of Horace Walpole, which deal with so many weighty as well as lighter matters, are shot through with strokes of wit—both his own and those of other people that he loves to report; they are enriched by his appetite for anecdotes and his power to evoke a scene; and they bring into view a multitude of characters. His wit sometimes serves as an instrument of criticism. Lamenting the recent craze for whist, then called whisk, he alludes to chapter seventeen of Revelation as he adjures Mann, “But do you conceive that the kingdom of the Dull is come upon earth ... the only token of this new kingdom is a woman riding on a beast, which is the mother of abominations, and the name in the forehead is *whist*: and the four-and-twenty elders, and the women, and the whole town, do nothing but play with this beast.” In December 1774, “all North America is in a flame” and any measures taken by British politicians “will be new barrels of oil.”

Walpole likes to invest contemporaries with the names of appropriate characters from the Greco-Roman and biblical worlds. Catherine the Great, on seizing the Russian throne, becomes “This northern Athaliah,” and George III, facing Wilkes’s attack on royal power, is Xerxes. In a more amiable mood, Walpole scolds his ardently devout friend Hannah More, a campaigner against slavery, for not circulating her poem “Bonner’s Ghost”:

Madame Hannah, You are an errant reprobate, and grow  
wicked and wicked every day. You deserve to be treated like  
a *negre*; and your favourite Sunday, to which you are so partial,  
that you treat the other poor six days of the week as if they had  
no souls to be saved, should, if I could have my will, ‘shine no  
Sabbath-day for you.’

Walpole enjoys embroidering his humour with invented words. He speaks of his “Antiquarianility” and of looking forward to being “teadrunk-with’d.” After mentioning his dying dog Rosette to Lady Ossory, he breaks off with “However, you have so little dogmanity, that I will say no more about her.” On the border of wit and poetry, he writes of the English landscape blossoming in a summer such as he never remembers, “It is Italy in a green gown.”

There can be occasions when, as Walpole states to the artist Richard Bentley, “The times produce nothing: there is neither party, nor controversy, nor gallantry, nor fashion, nor literature.” Then, as Gray notes, although he has little love for letters “where all the materials are drawn out of oneself,” he sometimes sets his fancy to work to produce what he calls



or miscalls “nonsense.” Thus he treats Henry Conway to the mock-prophecy that invention and improvements will lead to people’s “having whole groves of humming-birds, tame tigers taught to fetch and carry, pocket spying-glasses to see all that is doing in China” – and comments, “I have here set you the example of writing nonsense when one has nothing to say.” For the clerical poet William Mason’s benefit, he considers the possibility of human beings with all their organs multiplied fourfold and suggests, “How much more execution a fine woman would do with two pair of *piercers!* or four!”; he is satisfied that while Dryden would have plunged into indecency at the thought, “you are too good a divine ... to treat my quadruple love but platonically.”

In the field of wit and humour, Walpole does not shun the risqué. Referring to a term in fortification, he writes to Lady Ossory, “Have you heard that Mrs. St. Jack has declared that if the Colonel goes to America, she will accompany him? G. Selwyn says she will make an excellent *breastwork*.” Alluding to a satirical observation about him by Mr. Courtney, Walpole writes of a celebration of his recent recovery from illness in a poem by Mr. May. In the poem, Jove calls on Chiron, Esculapius and Hermes for medical assistance, and Walpole remarks in a letter to the Berry sisters, “it is lucky for my reputation, as Mr. Courtney talks of *the fire of my old age*, that he did not call Mercury.”

The greatest entertainment that Walpole offers his correspondents and leaves to posterity is probably his ever-flowing stream of irresistible anecdotes. He writes of Lord Bathurst pursued from seat to seat in church by a creditor calling loudly for “My money” during a sermon on avarice, and paints a comic picture of David Garrick at the Duke of Richmond’s fireworks “ogling and sighing” at a distance over his future wife, a French dancer as yet fiercely guarded by Lady Burlington. The Duchess of Newcastle’s favourite, for whom the Lord of the Treasury has to open and close the door continually, turns out to be “a common pig, that she brought from Hanover.” Walpole’s rare heroic subjects include the French Catholic servant who hastily finds a priest to confess to and then returns, against orders, to his wounded British master, Lord Crawford, expecting to be killed with him (both survive), and the Duke of Cumberland holding the candle himself as he silently endures the pain of an operation on his knee without being tied down. As absurd as these are brave is the compulsive gambler Miss Pelham, who beats her head as she loses hundreds of pounds to two aged peers and protests that “It was terrible to play with *boys!*” An example of malice is Lady Harrington’s saying, “in a soft voice, and very slowly,” to a woman who wonders she will let her daughter go to an opera but not a ball, “Mrs. St. John, if you *could* have a child, I am sure you would think as I do.”

As noteworthy as his anecdotes are the scenes that Walpole evokes. He can render for Lady Ossory the extravagant magnificence of Lord Stanley's ball:

The dome of the staircase was beautifully illuminated with coloured glass lanthorns; in the anteroom was a bevy of vestals in white habits, making tea; in the next, a drapery of sarcenet, that with a very funereal air crossed the chimney, and depended in vast festoons over the sconces. The third chamber's doors were heightened with candles in gilt vases, and the ballroom was formed into an oval with benches above each other, not unlike pews.

More endearing is the setting of Walpole's mock-Gothic castle at Strawberry Hill as described for Horace Mann in Italy:

the scene without ... is very different from every side, and almost from every chamber ... my little hill, and diminutive enough it is, gazes up to Royal Richmond; and Twickenham on the left, and Kingston Wick on the right, are seen across bends of the river, which on each hand appears like a Lilliputian seaport. Swans, cows, sheep, coaches, post-chaises, carts, horsemen, and foot-passengers are continually in view. The fourth scene is a large common-field, a constant prospect of harvest and its stages, traversed under my windows by the great road to Hampton Court.

Discomfort figures in the letters, alongside elegance and beauty. Explaining to Lady Ossory that he goes occasionally, but only occasionally, to church services, Walpole observes that it is "most unpleasant to crawl through a churchyard full of staring footmen and apprentices, clamber a ladder to a hard pew to hear the dullest of all things, a sermon, and croaking and squalling of psalms to a hand-organ by journeymen brewers and charity children."

Besides creating a very rich self-portrait, Walpole's letters admit their reader into a vast gallery exhibiting diverse characters. A few of the pictures can be classified as sketches, in which a person is skewered, justly or unjustly, in a few words. Thus, Lord Edgcumbe "thinks nothing important that is not to be decided by dice," and Admiral Thomas Matthews "remains in the light of a hot, brave, imperious, dull, confused fellow." Travelling in secular France, Lord Findlater appears "as starched as an old-fashioned plaited neckcloth" which has "come to suck wisdom from this curious school of philosophy." The ladies are not let off any more lightly. When

Georgiana Spencer, Duchess of Devonshire, gives birth to a daughter, she “probably will stuff her poor babe into her knittingbag when she wants to play at macao, and forget it,” and Walpole regrets that in the absence of congenial company, “I should be reduced to have recourse to Mrs. Wright at Hampton Court, to learn what all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood have had for dinner every day this week.”

Probably the most prominent of the full-length portraits are those of the Duke of Newcastle, Lady Townshend, and Lady Mary Coke. Walpole joins in the widespread mockery of Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle, an immensely rich, hardworking politician with a capacious memory through whom Sir Robert Walpole used to maintain much of his control of the country and about whose ability or lack thereof historians still disagree. We see this man with “hands that are always groping and sprawling, and fluttering, and hurrying on the rest of his precipitous person” as a figure of fun who yet “can overturn ministries” and whom Queen Charlotte finds in the privy set up for her behind the altar at her husband’s coronation. We also see him standing shunned at a ball at Bedford House while Walpole and his friends whisper loudly within his hearing, “Lord, how he is broke! how old he looks!” Five years later, time has “abated his ridicules” and he is with a friendly Walpole when news arrives of the death of the Duchess of Leeds, his sister.

Brought to life, too, is Lady Ethelreda Harrison Towshend, the mother of a field marshal and of a chancellor of the exchequer, and a celebrated wit. Walpole tells how “My Lady Townshend has been to see the Hermaphrodite, and says, ‘it is the only happy couple she ever saw.’” One can hear the very sound of her voice as, challenged for proof of another woman’s adultery, she remonstrates, “Lord, child, she was all over proof.” The same voice is present when she is described climbing the stairs of the original dwelling at Strawberry Hill: “Lord God! Jesus! what a house! It is just such a house as a parson’s, where the children lie at the feet of the bed!” She is notorious for her libertinism. Walpole warns two men about to wear fine robes, “you will both look so abominably pink and blooming; I would not advise you to show yourselves to my Lady Townshend!” On the back of a print of her portrait, he writes:

■ This is the staple of the world’s great trade;  
On this soft bosom all mankind has laid.

Nevertheless he is her steadfast friend, and when she will only be reconciled to his niece Maria’s marrying Lord Waldegrave if she may choose his clothes for the occasion, he agrees to wear fabric of “a white ground with purple and green flowers,” unseemly as he finds these “juvenile colours.”

No happier in marriage than Lady Townshend is Lady Mary Coke, whose maiden name is Campbell. She makes a dramatic entrance into the letters when she "cries her eyes to scarlet" after accepting, under great duress, Lord Coke's proposal: "She objects his loving none of her sex but the four queens in a pack of cards." When his gambling and drinking continue, she is reported to have told him "that she hates him, that she always did, and that she always will," and he has to fight a duel with pistols against Sir Harry Bellenden, whom her family has sent to challenge him. She appeals to a law court for protection, and six years after their marriage his death frees her. Walpole is long enchanted by "the youngest, handsomest, and wittiest widow in England," but in time she succumbs to a delusionary pride claiming to have been married to the deceased Duke of York, brother of George III, and travels around Europe seeking royal company and honours before returning to England and re-entering Walpole's social circle.

For many years a woman more notorious than Lady Townshend or Lady Mary Coke figures largely in the correspondence. In 1749, Walpole encounters Elizabeth Chudleigh, whom he has known since she was five years old, at a masquerade where she was supposed to be Iphigenia but was "so naked that you would have taken her for Andromeda." At a breakfast party at her house, he finds that "Every favour she has bestowed is registered by a bit of Dresden china," and he observes "the *conveniences* in every bedchamber: great mahogany projections, as big as her own bobbies, with the holes, with brass handles, and cocks, &c." Years later, having become the wife and then the widow of the Duke of Kingston, she attains unwelcome fame when the Duke's nephews, eyeing his vast bequest to her, seek to prove that her marriage to their uncle was bigamous. In 1776, the multitude watch in fascination as she is tried by the House of Lords in Westminster Hall and convicted, but she is excused any penalty beyond the payment of her fees, although "the Attorney-General laboured to have her burnt in the hand." Her real husband, Augustus Hervey, is now Earl of Bristol, leaving her the title of Countess.

Worse than Elizabeth Chudleigh is the young Earl of Pembroke, who deserts his beautiful wife, only son, and great estate to elope with Kitty Hunter, the daughter of a Lord of the Admiralty, in a packet-boat while requesting the King to let him keep his rank of major-general. When the runaways are intercepted and brought back, they leave again. This time the Earl invites his wife to accompany them, and her tenderness is such that she is only "with difficulty withheld from acting as mad a part from goodness, as he had done from guilt and folly." Later, however, she declares that "he should have retrieved his character" before approaching her, but eventually he makes a settlement on Miss Hunter and her child and a rec-

conciliation takes place. In middle age, the Earl is notable for “his profligacy, counteracting his avarice.”

Quite free from Pembroke’s viciousness but marked by his own eccentricity is George Selwyn. This famous wit quips, when a waiter at his club is convicted of robbery, “What a horrid idea he will give of us to the people in Newgate!” and calls Charles James Fox and the younger William Pitt “the idle and the industrious apprentices.” He is a lifelong friend of Walpole, who informs Mann that Selwyn’s “passion is to see coffins and corpses, and executions.... With this strange and dismal turn, he has infinite fun and humour in him.” In middle age, he adopts Maria Fagniani (“Mimie”), an eight-year-old French girl and brings her back from Paris with Signora Madre, her governess. He has the pleasure of taking them to visit Strawberry Hill. When Selwyn is dying, Walpole writes to the Berrys, “him I really loved, not only for his infinite wit, but for a thousand good qualities” and mourns him for “the goodness of his heart and nature.”

Goodness is also a notable element in the character of Miss Boyle, whom Walpole credits with “real genius” when he sees how she “has carved three tablets in marble with boys, designed by herself” and “is painting panels in grotesque for the library, with pilasters of glass in black and gold.” This woman, who, “to the last moment of her mother’s life never relaxed one moment in attention,” after that lady’s death “is intoxicated with her release, and laughs and talks and gallops and drives and dances from night to morning, and from one end of the isle to t’other.” Walpole is afraid she may become the prey of a fortune hunter, but when she accepts Lord Henry Fitzgerald, he comments, “I think they have both chosen well,” and he takes Lady Clifden, the bride’s old aunt, to visit them at their farm.

Although not all the pictures are equally clear and bright, the riches of this epistolary portrait gallery sometimes seem inexhaustible. The fullest portrait of all, the self-portrait, exhibits human nature with all its tantalizing contradictions. Walpole is addicted to his pleasures, yet compassionate and helpful to those in distress; abundant in kindness, yet sometimes gleefully cruel; punctilious in observing court etiquette, yet contemptuous of elaborate ceremonial; apt to take extreme views of others’ moral character, yet ready to offer polite, insincere compliments to people he despises; utterly intolerant of peculation in his own Customs Department, yet always ready to defend his father’s corruption.

In Horace Walpole, the talents required to make a great letter-writer meet with circumstances that lead to those talents being exercised to the full. He can describe, narrate, expound, tease, rebuke, wittily delight, and (occasionally to his own embarrassment) allow free play to his fancy. Living in London and the nearby Twickenham, he has friends who reside on country estates or abroad – the expatriate minister Sir Horace Mann, the

soldier and politician Henry Conway, the increasingly reclusive George Montagu, the divorced Lady Ossory inadmissible at court—who rely on him for news and entertainment, and he makes them his confidants.

At one point, Walpole offers Lady Ossory his reflections on himself:

I can but laugh at my own party-coloured life—sometimes at Paris, and an editor of *Grammont*; sometimes playing all night at pharaoh with Madame de Mirepoix, or at loo with a greater favourite; now writing fables for Lady Anne, and verses for the Graces; then accused as a plotting republican.

As a childless bachelor and a lifelong civilian, Horace Walpole is not “a complete man,” a designation James Joyce bestows on Ulysses, seeing that wanderer as son, husband, lover, war dodger, military companion, hero, and inventor; but by adding what he personally experiences to what he experiences vicariously, Walpole creates in his letters a satisfyingly comprehensive panorama of human life.



## HE HAS ESCAPED FROM SLAVERY IGNATIUS SANCHO (c. 1729-1780)



Whereas Horace Walpole's birth gives him a place in the highest rank of society, his contemporary Ignatius Sancho is fortunate that his origin does not doom him to an existence barely human. Born into slavery on the Atlantic passage about 1729, he is carried in boyhood to England by his owner and given to three spinster sisters in Greenwich, who desire to keep him ignorant and subservient. By great good luck, he encounters the second Duke of Montagu, who recognizes his high intelligence and promotes his education. Eventually he flees from the Greenwich sisters and enters the service of the Montagu family as their butler. While there, he marries, in 1748, a black woman named Ann Osborne, who bears him seven children. He also has his portrait painted by Gainsborough. By 1773, he has become too corpulent and too gout-stricken to perform his duties, so the new Duke, the son-in-law of his first patron, helps to establish him as a retail grocer in London, a role in which he remains till his death in 1780. As a city ratepayer, he is in the enfranchised minority, and one day in the year of his death, he spends four and a half hours at the hustings, where Charles James Fox personally thanks him for his vote. A few of his surviving letters belong to the time he is still in service, but the great majority come from his last seven years.

Kindness and piety are the outstanding characteristics of this sweet-natured man, but beneath the rather bland surface is a passion for good literature and the theatre and for fine preaching, and a mind that can venture into irony and satire. At times, he writes pleasing verse and composes music. Among his many friends and acquaintances are John Meheux, a young man with literary and artistic ambitions; the actors David Garrick and John Henderson; the bookbinder John Wingrave and his son Jack; the artist John Hamilton Mortimer; and his former fellow servants—Charles Browne, James Kisbee, Mrs. H—, and Roger Rush—with whom he always remains



in close contact. He corresponds with Laurence Sterne, who responds to his request for an exposure of West Indian slavery by introducing a once persecuted black girl into the last volume of *Tristram Shandy*.

As a black man in England, Sancho encounters both good will and prejudice. He is delighted with John Meheux's answer to an ugly appeal in the *Morning Chronicle* asking the Prime Minister to reduce or end the presence of blacks in London, and when he receives anti-slavery books from Philadelphia, he longs for every Member of Parliament and the King himself to read just one of them. "Commerce," he says, "was meant by the goodness of the Deity to diffuse the various goods of the earth into every part," but it has been perverted to create this abominable institution. Praising compassionate treatment of his "poor black brethren," he declares, "my soul melts at kindness – but the contrary – I own with shame – makes me almost a savage." Yet he is magnanimous enough to be understanding when the young Jack Wingrave fears he may forfeit his respect because European society in India will not allow him to associate openly with the two Africans Sancho has recommended to his attention. He idolises Sterne for the latter's exaltation of the benevolent heart both in *Tristram Shandy* and in his sermons, and he picks up from this author the habit of punctuating his writing mostly with dashes.

People who suffer from belonging to a sometimes despised minority are not immune from the troubles to which everyone is vulnerable. In addition to his race, Sancho suffers in the 1770s from the deaths of three of his children and from agonizing attacks of gout. Having "a large family and small finances," he is never able to escape from painful poverty. During the American war, his business, like many others, does not prosper. "Trade," he tells Mrs. H–, "is at so low an ebb, the greatest are glad to see ready money." A number of letters express grateful thanks for presents of flesh, fruit, wine, and, in one case, snuff.

Presents are pleasing, but what upholds Sancho throughout all his troubles is his sustaining faith. Many times he casts his mind forward "from corruptible pleasure – to immortal and incorruptible life – happiness without end – and past all human comprehension." Though he is convinced that in this world Providence rules and "nothing happens by chance," he is eager to transcend the realm of daily life through prayers and sermons. After he listens several times to the preaching of Erasmus Middleton, "one of those five who were expelled from Oxford," he deems himself "half a Methodist." Equally moved by one of the letters of Cardinal Valenti (later Pope Clement XIV) that has "every thing in it which St. Paul had in his heart," he feels it "would almost turn me to the Romish." The Anglican Church, however, remains his spiritual home. After praising the Rev. Richard Harrison for the "animated strength of devotion in his Litany,"

which “almost carries the heart to the gates of Heaven,” he declares, “if H[arrison] reads prayers, and D[odd] preaches at the same church—I should suppose greater perfection could not be found in England.” Not surprisingly, he is for complete religious toleration, and, in keeping with this, he believes “Heaven big enough for all the race of man” and exults that there “We will mix ... with all countries, colours, faiths.” He doubts the doctrine of “eternal Damnation.”

Despite his piety, he is alert to the perversions of religion, and he observes “among the modern Saints—who profess to pray without ceasing—that they are so fully taken up with pious meditations—and so wholly absorbed in the love of God—that they have little if any room for the love of man.” Conscience he regards as “the high chancellor of the human breast,” and he asserts, “One ounce of practical religion is worth all that ever the Stoics wrote.” In a letter to Miss Lydia Leach, the godmother of his son Billy, he addresses her as, “You, who believe in the true essence of the gospel—who visit the sick, cover the naked, and withdraw not your ear from the unfortunate.”

Sancho’s faith finds an outlet in moralizing, especially to men, both black and white, and younger than himself. He ladles out generous portions of his counsel to a number of these: John Meheux, an amateur artist; Jack Wingrave, who is working in India; Julius Soubise, a black protégé of the Duchess of Queensberry; and Charles Lincoln, a black musician. His main admonitions are to avoid bad company, shun temptation, achieve respect and prosperity through honesty and hard work, and improve mind and morals by reading the Bible and good secular literature.

When Sancho ventures to write to Sterne, the living author he most admires, he informs him, “My chief pleasure has been books.” Fiction, poetry, and history are his delight. Unlike Johnson, he appreciates both Richardson and Fielding. Defending Sterne from a charge of stealing from Fielding, he instructs John Meheux—calling him “thou criticizing jack ape”—that “Fielding and Sterne both copied Nature—their pallettes stored with proper colours of the brightest dye.” Although “Human Nature” was their common subject, “their colouring was widely different” and at the most, “*here* and there some features in each might bear a little resemblance.” A lover of poetry, he constantly quotes Pope and recommends to young readers whose “stomachs are strong enough for such intellectual food” Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Young’s *Night Thoughts*, and *The Seasons* of James Thomson; these books, he tells Jack Wingrave, have been his “summer companions for near twenty years.” Recommending *The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V* by William Robertson to a former fellow servant, he advises him to read the demanding first volume very attentively as it will make the second more intelligible.

His devotion to British literature is an important strand in one-half of the twofold identity that Sancho experiences, as do most members of ethnic and religious minorities. Writing of how five English warships, badly outnumbered by French vessels, eventually withdrew, he proudly claims, “We fought like Englishmen”; in the same letter, he concedes, “I am only a lodger.” Despite this reservation, he is fiercely loyal to the Royal Family crediting the monarch and his consort with “every virtue” and grieving that George III is “beset with friends – which he ought to fear.” The King’s popular opponent John Wilkes he stigmatizes in 1778 as “the late great Dagon of the people.”

During the conflict with the American colonies, Sancho’s views resemble those of Horace Walpole. It is “a detestable Brother’s [*sic*] war – where the right hand is hacking and hewing the left” and “their madness” matches “our cruelty and injustice.” When peace prevails, “America will be the grand patron of genius”; meanwhile “the eyes of our rulers are shut – and their judgements stone-blind.” In 1780, when Charleston falls to Sir Henry Clinton, no scruples prevent Sancho from sharing in the patriotic rejoicing over the victory as he records how “the Tower and Park guns confirmed it – the guards encamped in the parks fired each a grand *feu de joye*” even as he recognizes that “tonight we blaze in illuminations – and to-morrow get up as poor and discontented as ever.”

Like Walpole, Sancho grieves over what he sees as a nation in decline – an England whose empire is disintegrating while its newspapers print lies and even its church is sick. “Oh, this poor ruined country!” he laments, judging it to be “ruined by victories – arts – arms – and unbounded commerce – for pride accompanied those blessings.” He looks back fondly to “the glorious time of George II and a Pitt’s administration,” when Britain triumphed in the Seven Years War. Now,

religion and morality are vanished with our prosperity – every good principle seems to be leaving us: – as our means lessen, luxury and every sort of expensive pleasure increases. – The blessed Sabbath-day is used by the trader for country excursions – tavern-dinners – rural walks – and then whipping and galloping through dust and over turnpikes drunk home. – The poorer sort do any thing – but go to church.... And for the upper tiptop high life – cards and music are called in to dissipate the chagrin of a tiresome, tedious Sunday’s evening.

Nevertheless Sancho hopes that with a return to peace a restored Britain will be “as heretofore the nurse of freedom!” He does not live to see the end of the American war, but he witnesses from his shop door part of the

anti-Catholic Gordon riots. “There is at this present moment,” he reports to his banker friend John Spink of Bury St. Edmunds,

at least a hundred thousand poor, miserable, ragged rabble, from twelve to sixty years of age, with blue cockades in their hats—besides half as many women and children—all parading the streets—the bridge—the park—ready for any and every mischief.—Gracious God! what’s the matter now? I was obliged to leave off—the shouts of the mob—the horrid clashing of swords—and the clutter of a multitude in swiftest motion—drew me to the door—when every one in the street was employed in shutting up shop.—It is now just five o’clock.

Subsequent letters retail what Sancho learns at secondhand, and his conclusion about the eight tragic days is that “our religion has swallowed up our charity—and the fell demon Persecution is become the sacred idol of the once free, enlightened, generous Britons.”

Long after Sancho’s death, his now aged friend the bookseller William Stevenson remarks that in his letters there is “a playfulness ... which seldom accompanies the writings of a Moralist.” Referring to his own address in Charles Street and to the Greenwich Hospital for disabled seamen, Sancho exclaims:

trust me, my M[eheux], I am resolved upon a reform.—Truth, fair Truth, I give thee to the wind!—Affection, get thee hence! Friendship, be it the idol of such silly chaps, with aching heads, strong passions, warm hearts, and happy talents, as of old used to visit Charles Street, and now abideth in fair “G[reenwich] House.

A consequence of the Wingrave family’s being “leavened with all the obsolete goodness of old times” is “that a man runs some hazard in being seen in the W[ingrave]’s society of being biassed to Christianity.”

Sancho is at home in the satirical mode in which the eighteenth century excels. Quoting a couplet of Pope’s, he asks Meheux,

how comes it that—without the advantages of a twentieth generationship of noble blood flowing uncontaminated in your veins—without the customary three years dissipation at college—and the (nothing-to-be-done without) four years perambulation on the Continent—without all these needful appendages—with little more than plain sense—sheer good nature—and a right honest heart—thou canst—

*Like low-born Allen, with an awkward shame,  
Do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame.*

His ironic proposal that the shortfall in army recruitment should be made good by drafting hairdressers, “happily half-trained already for the service of their country – by being – *powder proof*,” is printed in a letter signed Africanus in the *General Advertiser* of 29 April 1778. The advantages are to be domestic, too, for

the ladies, by once more getting the management of their heads into their own hands, might possibly regain their native reason and economy – and the gentlemen might be induced by mere necessity to comb and care for their own heads – those (I mean) who have heads to care for.

Although Sancho’s letters contain only a few lively anecdotes like his account of a stagecoach journey, they introduce his readers to a range of characters. Among his correspondents, in addition to those already mentioned, are two beautiful women. Mrs. Cocksedge, who rides, walks and dances, is “lovely even in sickness,” and whose “humanity – humility – and good-will” outlast even her good looks. She is companion to “the little Syren Miss C[rewe],” to whom Sancho writes, “I want to know what conquests you have made – what savages converted – whom you have smiled into felicity, or killed by rejection.”

If the letters have a villain, it is Julius Soubise, a black man whose patron, the Duchess of Queensberry, has him trained as a riding and fencing instructor. An ill behaved youth, he sets in motion Sancho’s propensity for moralizing. At one point, he welcomes Soubise’s claim of reformation, but is shrewd enough to tell Meheux he doubts whether it will last. When Soubise is accused of raping one of her maids, the Duchess quickly has him shipped to India. Writing to Jack Wingrave, who is also there, Sancho invites him to be helpful to Soubise but warns him against “lending him money upon any account.” A few months later, a letter from Madras persuades Sancho it is the product of “a mind purged from its follies.” Another two years, however, are enough to elicit a warning to Wingrave “not to know him,” for “’tis not in the power of friendship to serve a man who will in no one instance care for himself.”

A perfect foil to Soubise is another young African, Charles Lincoln, whose career we follow as he seeks to return to England, probably from France, sails to India as a musician in the Captain’s band, and eventually returns to his native island of St. Kitts in the West Indies, where he enlists in the militia. Deeming Lincoln “honest, trusty, good-natured, and civil,” Sancho hopes his influence can benefit Soubise, whom he exhorts to cultivate the friendship of one who “will not flatter or fear you.”

Publicly talked of characters who briefly appear in Sancho's letters include the bigamous Duchess of Kingston—"tho' a bad woman," he says, "she is entitled to pity"—and Dr. Dodd, the clergyman condemned to hang for forging a signature on a bond. Joining the campaign for a reprieve, Sancho thinks Dodd, whose preaching he has loved, should be sentenced to serve as chaplain to convicts on prison ships as their fellow sinner. In the case of Jane Butterfield, accused of murdering the man who first seduced her, then lived with her, and finally cut her out of his will thinking she was poisoning him, Sancho is delighted by her acquittal. He considers she deserves substantial damages and asserts, "In my opinion, the D[uchess] of K[ingston] is honored to be mentioned in the same paper with Miss Butterfield."

A particularly endearing character in the letters is Anne Sancho, a literate woman whom her husband can take to the theatre. He writes of how her smile "twenty years ago almost bewitched me" and how even now he is apt to "assume a gaiety" to see it again. It pleases him to imagine her delight when she leaves him at the shop to enjoy a visit with their friends at Bury St. Edmunds, and he never tires of praising her goodness. On 11 March 1779, after she has sat up at night for a whole month with their dying daughter Kitty, he writes, "she has the rare felicity of possessing true virtue without arrogance—softness without weakness—and dignity without pride." Less than two years afterwards, she is tending her husband in his last illness. He dies on 14 December 1780.

Compassion and magnanimity are Sancho's outstanding qualities. His sympathies extend to the oppressed people of India (he hopes Jack Wingrave will return with "a decent competence," but not "clogged with the tears and blood of the poor natives"), to the Irish, whose trade is stifled by Britain, and to the asses he sees cruelly treated at the daily market. However, as the case of Soubise shows, he is not naively credulous about human goodness. When a woman fails to keep her promise to leave him a legacy, he is not disappointed because he never believed her. He counsels Meheux to guard his friend Nancy "from the traitor in her own fair breast, which, while it is the seat of purity and unsullied honor—fancies its neighbours to be the same." In the last year of his life, he writes of people in general, "the majority, who are composed chiefly of the narrow-minded or contracted hearts, and of selfish avidity, cannot comprehend the delight in doing as they would be done by." Seven months later, he informs Charles Lincoln, "Your friend D— tries expedients, and gets nothing;—he is very deep in my debt; but as he has nothing, I can expect nothing—for I never will consent to do that to others, I would not they should do unto me."



## HEAVEN IS NOT FOR HIM

### WILLIAM COWPER (1731-1800)



**F**or Ignatius Sancho, religion is a blessing, which bestows comfort and support; for William Cowper, it turns into a curse. During a few years of his early adulthood, Cowper is indeed happy in his faith until he falls victim to unending nightmares that convince him he is among the damned. They infect him with a soul-destroying melancholy as deep as Johnson's, and more than once he sinks into the madness that Johnson only fears.

In spite of his evil fate, generations of readers have found delight in the letters describing the rural retreat, gentle occupations, and pleasing friendships in which this unfortunate man takes solace. However, a full appreciation of his correspondence requires equal attention to his disclosure of his sufferings: his letters, like his life, are full of stark contrasts.

The first blow to Cowper's psyche strikes in 1737, when his mother dies just before his sixth birthday. His father, however, ensures that he gets a good classical education at Westminster School. Enrolment at the Middle Temple and apprenticeship to a lawyer follow, but the future poet neglects his law studies preferring to make merry with other young men of literary bent, to compare Pope's translations of Homer's epics with the original Greek, and to giggle with his first cousins Theodora and Harriet Cowper. About 1756 Ashley Cowper forbids his daughter Theodora to marry the unpromising law student, and in this year, his father dies. Ashley obtains an appointment for the young man as Clerk of the Journals for the House of Lords. Disastrously, this entails his appearance before the Bar of the House for interrogation about his qualifications. So extreme is his nervousness that he has a fit of insanity and attempts suicide.

William Cowper's younger brother John now takes over his care and has the sufferer admitted to Dr. Cotton's asylum at St. Albans, where he regains his sanity. Deciding that he has previously only thought himself a



Christian, he acquires an ardent evangelical faith, and he emerges from the asylum to settle into a retired life, financed by relations, at the country town of Huntingdon. Here he forms an intimate acquaintance with the Unwin family, with whom he is soon lodging. Mrs. Unwin, though only six years older than himself, is, he writes to a cousin, “so excellent a person, and regards me with a friendship so truly Christian, that I could almost fancy my own mother restored to life again.” A few months later, he declares, “her son and I are brothers.” When in 1767 her husband, the Rev. Morley Unwin, falls from his horse and dies, there is gossip, and his widow and Cowper move to Olney, another small town. Its Calvinist vicar, a reformed slave trader named John Newton, becomes a lifelong friend and spiritual counsellor of the poet, who is especially pleased when Newton publishes a tract arguing that an evangelical clergyman can conscientiously serve in the Church of England. Cowper and Newton compose between them the famous *Olney Hymns*, of which sixty-seven are Cowper’s and two hundred and eighty-one are Newton’s.

At this stage, Cowper believes that during the mental illness that removed him so painfully from an unregenerate life, he was granted “grace and mercy” and “received ... into favour.” Then, in January 1773, in one night, everything changes. In a life-rending dream, he hears his doom pronounced: “*Actum est de te, periisti!*” (“It is all over with thee, thou hast perished!”) Henceforward he believes that God has banished him from his presence, forbidding him to attend church, and dooming him to everlasting perdition. Not all the arguments of Newton, Mrs. Unwin, her son William (himself now an evangelical clergyman), Samuel Teedon (an Olney schoolmaster who believes he receives divine communications), and his cousin Harriet (now Lady Hesketh) can persuade him otherwise. His nights are often turned into torture by further soul-tormenting dreams, and each year the approach of January is a terror. In the later months of 1773, he has another mental breakdown and again tries to kill himself. On his recovery, he takes such refuge as he can in mild pursuits—gardening, carpentry, drawing, keeping pets, writing poems and letters, and cultivating a few selected friendships, including one with the vivacious Lady Austen, whose suggestion that he write a poem on the sofa leads him to compose *The Task*. But, always under the surface of his mind cruelly lurks the consciousness of his present and future fate. Eventually he finds that the composition of verse, and only that, becomes so absorbing that it can temporarily blot out this horror, and while ensconced in his village refuge he becomes the outstanding poet of his time.

The publication of his didactic *Poems* in 1782 and his masterpiece *The Task* (supplemented by the comic “John Gilpin” and other pieces) in 1785 brings Cowper a revival of his relationship with Lady Hesketh as well as

several new friendships, especially with the law student Samuel Rose and with his young cousin John Johnson. After completing *The Task*, at a loss for another subject to write on, he undertakes the translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and the quest for an English equivalent of Homer's Greek becomes an obsession.

Soon after he has begun work on his translation, Cowper moves from Olney, with Mrs. Unwin, to rent a pleasant house from his amiable friends the Throckmortons at the nearby town of Weston. Here, except for a memorable visit to the seaside home of the then esteemed poetaster William Hayley in 1792, he remains for close to nine years. In 1787 and 1794, he suffers further breakdowns, and in 1795 John Johnson, now a clergyman, removes him and Mrs. Unwin to Norfolk, where they reside sometimes on the coast and sometimes in Johnson's home at East Dereham. Mrs. Unwin dies in December 1796 and Cowper in April 1800. During his last years, he is still making revisions to his Homer for a new edition.

As one reads through the letters — many delightful, many tragic — that emerge from this life, one meets with clues to the course that it has taken. Remarking on a common belief that the English nation is peculiarly prone to melancholy, Cowper tells his friend Mrs. King that he was born in "a house more than commonly subject to it." How deeply his early bereavement cut into him is most clearly visible in his filial relationship with Mrs. Unwin, but he can still declare, when congratulating Rose on his mother's recovery from a dangerous illness, "The loss of a good mother is irreparable; no friend can supply her place."

Cowper reveals another aspect of his mental fragility when he counsels the young Samuel Rose to make every effort to overcome the shyness — the "vicious fear" — that keeps him from associating with respectable people of "good sense and good breeding." "It is," he urges, "the worst enemy that can attack a man destined to the forum; — it ruined me." Doubtless, he is thinking of his own fear of appearing before the Bar of the House of Lords and the consequent collapse of his worldly prospects, his sanity, and ultimately his spiritual hopes. Later, he gives similar advice to John Johnson, who is "shy as a bird" and takes "always two or three days to open his mouth before a stranger." Unlike Rose, who is famously to defend the poet William Blake successfully against a charge of sedition, and Johnson, who is to have a clerical career, Cowper never subdues his bashfulness, and during his happy days at Huntingdon decides not to take holy orders, explaining, "they who have the least idea of what I have suffered from the dread of public exhibitions, will readily excuse my never attempting them hereafter."

While Cowper's shyness is common to all phases of his life, the evangelical Christian who emerges from the hell of madness to settle at

Huntingdon in June 1765 is very different from the playful young man who takes his law studies too lightly. He now shuns the London that he once loved and does not care that there would be widespread contempt among professing Christians for his belief that God has guided him to the Unwin family and that by refusing to play cards or dance, he and the Unwins “have acquired the name of Methodists.” At this time, those who dominate the Anglican Church, still influenced by memories of the Civil War with its armies of Puritans who claimed to receive divine inspiration, are suspicious of any assertions of religious experience beyond an awed response to the majesty of creation. They lay little stress on the theology of the Atonement and view a personal belief, characteristic of the Evangelicals that one’s repentance has been accepted and the burden of one’s sins lifted as a dangerous venture into the irrational.

On the secular plane, as he writes to his relations, this ardent Christian has found in “beloved retirement” at Huntingdon a haven where he enjoys congenial company, books, health, leisure, and swimming, and learns to ride. A pleasant letter describes the mixture of Bible and sermon reading, church attendance and religious conversation with music, walking and gardening that he relishes in the Unwin family. The tenor of their lives is glimpsed when he describes a visit from his brother, a Cambridge don whose eyes are not “opened to the things that concern his peace”: “He is with us, and his presence necessarily gives a turn to the conversation that we have not been used to. So much said about nothing, and so little said about Jesus, is very painful to us, but what can be done?”

Cowper describes Huntingdon as a place “agreeable to me in all respects,” but every paradise has its serpent, and one problem nags at his mind. As a mentally frail man, he is dependent on the bounty of his relatives, to whom, he acknowledges, he has usually been “a disappointment and a vexation.” Luckily Joseph Hill, formerly his fellow law student and the only friend he retains from his days at the Temple, manages his finances and also lends him money, perhaps with little hope of repayment. “More debts than money,” he confesses in one of the many letters he addresses to Hill, “has been my distress this many a day, and is likely to continue so.”

In his early years at Olney, Cowper continues in his devout path and is happy to be able to write to Joseph Hill of the deathbed conversion of his Cambridge brother to the evangelical view that human nature is utterly corrupt: “he ... learnt to renounce his righteousness, and his own most amiable character, and to submit himself to the righteousness which is of God by faith.” After the nightmare of 1773 that convinces him that God has rejected him, he continues to cling to this dismal theology. Examining himself in his wretchedness, he writes to Newton:

as the bright beams of the sun seem to impart a beauty to the foulest objects, and can make even a dunghill smile, so the light of God's countenance, vouchsafed to a fallen creature, so sweetens him and softens him for the time, that he seems, both to others and to himself, to have nothing savage or sordid about him. But the heart is a nest of serpents, and will be such while it continues to beat.... This I always professed to believe from the time that I had embraced the truth, but never knew it as I know it now.

It is from suffering, Cowper tells the Rev. James Hurdis, who is grieving over his sister's dangerous illness, "that we must learn, if we ever truly learn it, the natural depravity of the human heart, and of our own in particular" and hence "our indispensable need of atonement" since we are incapable of earning salvation for ourselves." So impressed is he with Calvin's emphasis on this doctrine that when he urges John Johnson to let his divinity be "the divinity of the glorious Reformation," he adds, "The divinity of the Reformation is called Calvinism, but injuriously. It has been that of the Church of Christ in all ages."

His evangelical faith leaves Cowper no room for broad-mindedness. While his cavalier dismissal of the freethought that substitutes Chance for Providence is no surprise, it is disappointing to find him convinced "that the Roman Catholic is the apostate and antichristian Church."

Such narrow views are characteristic, too, of John Newton, and after this clergyman exchanges the living of Olney for that of St. Mary Woolnoth in London in January 1780, Cowper embarks on a lifelong correspondence with him. In letter after letter, alongside much pleasanter matter, his woes pour out like lava from a volcano. He laments that "Nature revives again; but a soul once slain lives no more," and in 1785 he reminds his friend that "I had a dream twelve years ago, before the recollection of which all consolation vanishes, and as it seems to me, must always vanish." Fifteen months later, he explains how his work on Homer "has served at least to divert my attention, in some degree, from such terrible tempests as I believe have seldom been permitted to beat upon a human mind." When he thanks Mrs. Newton for a present of the fish that he loves, he declares that he would rejoice to exchange "A good fireside and a well-spread table" for "the rags and unsatisfied hunger of the poorest creature that looks forward with hope to a better world."

Other intimate friends are allowed to know of Cowper's plight. The Rev. William Unwin learns how he envies those "that have found a God, and are permitted to worship Him," while he, "having enjoyed the privilege some years, has been deprived of it more, and has no hope that he shall live to recover it." As a poet, he finds it necessary to plead with the

Rev. William Bull, “ask not hymns from a man suffering by despair as I do ... banished as I am, not to a strange land, but to a remoteness from His presence.” Consoling Hill on his aged mother’s death, Cowper remembers his own early bereavement and observes, “when I reflect on the pangs she would have suffered, had she been a witness of all mine, I see more cause to rejoice than to mourn, that she was hidden in the grave so soon.” To his fellow writer Hayley, he discloses, “I am hunted by spiritual hounds in the night season.” During his last decade, his fullest communications about his affliction are with the schoolmaster Teedon, to whom he writes especially of terrifying sentences he hears spoken in dreams or just as he emerges from sleep. “I never wake,” he exclaims, “without words that are a poignard in my bosom, and the pain of which I feel all the day.” On 16 November, 1792, he records how “I have had a terrible night—such a one as I believe I may say God knows no man ever had”: he had found himself being prepared for execution in about four days, after which he was “destined to suffer everlasting martyrdom in the fire.” Soon after, he insists, “For though all things are possible to God, it is not possible that He should save whom He has declared He will destroy.” He does not hide his wretchedness from Lady Hesketh, though he evidently describes it with more restraint, as when he writes to her from Hayley’s beautiful home at Eartham in Sussex, “As to that gloominess of mind, which I have had these twenty years, it cleaves to me even here.” However, he discloses to her his disordered mental condition of 1773 from which it derives:

I was suddenly reduced from my wonted rate of understanding to an almost childish imbecility.... This state of mind was accompanied ... with misapprehension of things and persons that made me a very untractable patient. I believed that every body hated me, and that Mrs. Unwin hated me most of all; was convinced that all my food was poisoned, together with ten thousand megrims of the same stamp.

Cowper’s intimates do not believe that he is damned, but the assurances and arguments even of the most devout and evangelical are defeated by the nocturnal battery of his assailants. “Your sentiments with respect to me,” he writes to Newton, “are exactly Mrs. Unwin’s. She, like you, is perfectly sure of my deliverance, and often tells me so. I make but one answer, and sometimes none at all.” To Bull’s counsel, he replies, “Prove to me that I have a right to pray, and I will pray without ceasing; yes, and praise too, even in the belly of this hell, compared with which Jonah’s was a palace, a temple of the living God.” When Newton urges him to think “more rationally and scripturally,” he replies that he knows not when he will have

the power. No more effective are Teedon's confidence that it is Satan, not God, who makes his nights a torture, or Lady Hesketh's recommendation that he pay heed to Elizabeth Carter's argument that dreams are not to be believed.

Brooding over his suffering, Cowper sometimes concedes that it is indeed Satan who invades his nights, but not without God's implicit concurrence. In 1782, addressing Bull, he mysteriously attributes his fate to a sin which "you would account no sin, you would even tell me that it was a duty." In 1794 he refers to a twenty-year-old sin which he has told Teedon of and which is the origin of all his misery. (This suggests some connection with his attempted suicide of 1773.) He is convinced, he insists to Teedon, that he has "unpardonably offended" God, and he informs Lady Hesketh, "He who made me, regrets that ever He did." Equally characteristic are his assertions to Newton that he finds his doom a complete mystery: "The dealings of God with me," he protests, "are to myself utterly unintelligible. I have never met, either in books or in conversation, with an experience at all similar to my own."

Cowper does, however, enjoy occasional brief interludes of spiritual hope, and once even the belief he has permission to pray, but such relief is always followed by relapse into his former misery. Typical is his confession to Newton, "Indeed, since I told you that I had hope, I have never ceased to despair; and have repented that I made my boast so soon." At his most desperate, he writes to Newton of such happier moments, "God gave them to me in derision, and took them away in vengeance." He concludes, as Teedon is told, "no terms are to be kept with me whom God I fear considers as a traitor." Again, this hints at attempted suicide.

A sentence in a letter to Joseph Hill clarifies the relation between Cowper's unconquerable, underlying misery and the pleasures to which the poet has recourse as a refuge: "My mind has always a melancholy cast, and is like some pools I have seen, which, though filled with a black and putrid water, will nevertheless, in a bright day, reflect the sunbeams from the surface." The gardening on which he embarks while he is still a happy man continues to soothe him. Excusing himself to William Unwin for not writing at greater length, he explains, "I like very well to write; but then I am fond of gardening too, and can find but little leisure for the pen, except when the weather forbids me to employ myself among my plants." One January, he informs Hill, "The cold is excessive; but I have a little greenhouse, which by the help of a little fire is as blooming and as green as May." The time comes when he turns this greenhouse into a summer parlour and writes to Newton, "The walls hung with garden mats, and the floor covered with a carpet, the sun too in a great measure excluded, by an awning of mats which forbids him to shine any where except upon the carpet, it

affords us by far the pleasantest retreat in Olney." As summer turns to autumn, it gives him a different pleasure:

I sit with all the windows and the door wide open, and am regaled with the scent of every flower in a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it. We keep no bees, but if I lived in a hive I should hardly hear more of their music. All the bees in the neighbourhood resort to a bed of mignonette, opposite to the window, and pay me for the honey they get out of it by a hum, which, though rather monotonous, is as agreeable to my ear as the whistling of my linnets.

The letters contain many references to heat, cold, rain, floods and thunderstorms as well as to the writer's physical complaints—rheumatism, disordered stomach, and inflamed eyes. Cowper writes of the gravel paths where he and Mrs. Unwin take exercise in bad weather. When it is fine, they walk into the countryside. "O!" he exclaims to Newton, "I could spend whole days and moonlight nights in feeding upon a lovely prospect! My eyes drink the rivers as they flow." To William Unwin, he describes how "Every thing I see in the fields is to me an object, and I can look at the same rivulet, or at a handsome tree, every day of my life, with new pleasure."

Besides plants, Cowper likes for a time to work with wood making such articles as stools and rabbit hutches, and with glass to make garden frames and mend windows: he asks William Unwin to buy him a glazier's diamond pencil. Animals have a cherished place in his life, and his correspondents hear about his kitten's antics, of his hare who gives him the slip and runs through the town, of his caged linnet who occasionally flies round the room, of a goldfinch who escapes from captivity but will not leave his still imprisoned comrade, and of his brave dog Mungo who barks loudly at each thunderclap. His loving and loved spaniel Beau, who once swims to fetch a water lily that his master cannot reach with his cane, accompanies him to Hayley's home at Eartham and later to Norfolk. This dog cuts a pleasing figure in a letter to Lady Hesketh:

I forgot to tell you that my dog is spotted liver-colour and white, or rather white and chestnut. He is at present my pupil as well as dog, and just before I sat down to write I gave him a lesson in the science of fetch and carry.... To teach him is necessary, in order that he may take the water, and *that* is necessary in order that he may be sweet in summer.

Although Cowper gives Lady Hesketh, without qualms, a detailed account of the triumphant end of a foxhunt, he can protest, "All the notice that we

lords of the creation vouchsafe to bestow on the creatures, is generally to abuse them."

Cowper's capacity for enjoyment extends to food and drink. Living inland, he especially appreciates gifts of fish and shellfish, and Hill, Unwin, Newton and their wives, and later Rose and Lady Hesketh, often receive thanks for these.

Eventually Cowper finds that only one activity can subdue what preys on his mind: "so totally absorbed have I sometimes been in my rhyming occupation, that neither the past nor the future (those themes which to me are so fruitful in regret at other times), had any longer a share in my contemplation." When in 1780 he begins to compose a series of lengthy didactic poems in heroic couplets, Cowper is turning from an amateur versifier into a serious poet. He is a rigorous critic of his own and others' work. "I never," he writes, "suffer a line to pass till I have made it as good as I can," and he cautions Newton, "I am sure you would not suffer me unadmonished to add myself to the multitude of insipid rhymers, with whose productions the world is already too much pestered." In the work of most contemporary writers, he finds that either "the style is affected, or the matter is disgusting," and when he tells Hill about his reading, he explains, "Poetry, English poetry, I never touch, being pretty much addicted to the writing of it, and knowing that much intercourse with those gentlemen betrays us unavoidably into a habit of imitation, which I hate and despise most cordially."

The bulk of his short poems Cowper writes for his own pleasure, but when he composes "The Progress of Error," "Truth," and their companion works, he has a serious intent. He informs a cousin,

My sole drift is to be useful; a point which, however, I knew I should in vain aim at, unless I could be likewise entertaining. I have therefore fixed these two strings upon my bow, and by the help of both have done my best to send my arrow to the mark. My readers will hardly have begun to laugh before they will be called upon to correct that levity, and peruse me with a more serious air.

Those readers, he tells the Rev. Bull, "are children: if we give them physic, we must sweeten the rim of the cup with honey."

Cowper's publisher is Joseph Johnson, an intellectual as well as a businessman, and the patron of such advanced thinkers as Mary Wollstonecraft and Thomas Paine. In 1785, he goes on to publish the poet's next work, *The Task*, the best poem in blank verse between Milton's last volume and Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey."



Cowper finds Johnson unusually liberal, but repeatedly complains that he and his printers are infuriatingly dilatory. Some of their negotiations, which are carried out through intermediaries—Joseph Hill and later Samuel Rose—loom large in the correspondence.

Cowper finds blank verse harder to write than couplets. He explains to Newton:

Not having the music of rhyme, it requires so close an attention to the pause and the cadence, and such a peculiar mode of expression, as render it, to me at least, the most difficult species of poetry that I have ever meddled with.

The punctuation, he points out to William Unwin, is especially important in blank verse, where it must “direct the voice” of the reader.

After completing *The Task*, Cowper is at a loss for a new subject and decides to give the public a more accurate translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* than Pope’s and one far closer to the spirit of the original. “It is a pretty poem,” the classical scholar Richard Bentley had said to Pope about his version of the *Iliad*, “but you must not call it Homer.” Cowper finds it necessary to defend his labour on a pagan author to Newton, observing that “Homer, in point of purity, is a most blameless writer; and, though he was not an enlightened man, has interspersed many great and valuable truths throughout both his poems.” Six years later, he is happy to be able to write to his friend, “You oblige me by saying, that you will read him for my sake” and adds, “He may suggest reflections that may not be unserviceable even in a sermon.”

From many letters written while he is working on Homer, we learn how Cowper thinks poetry should be translated, about his readiness to make use of helpful criticisms, including those of Joseph Johnson and of Johnson’s associate the Swiss artist Fuseli. In time, he finds that for some passages he needs help from ancient commentators and modern editors. He resents the reading public’s intolerance of inversions and elisions such as Milton employs in *Paradise Lost*, and he blames Pope for training the modern ear to demand an emasculating smoothness in verse. (He complains that Pope’s modern imitators cannot recapture “the closeness and compactness of his expression” which are needed to complement this smoothness.) Greek, he holds, is “the finest language that ever man uttered,” and he regrets that no perfect translation is possible.

To complete and publish his version, Cowper needs help. Making a fair copy of his work from the much corrected manuscript he describes as “slavish work, and of all occupations that which I dislike the most.” Luckily, friends and relatives volunteer to transcribe for him. His pub-

lisher is still Joseph Johnson, and the method of publication is by advance subscription. In letters requesting correspondents to seek subscribers and thanking them for doing so, a new Cowper emerges: Cowper the businessman. Among those whom the reclusive poet induces to recruit subscribers are the landed gentleman John Throckmorton, the lawyer Joseph Hill and his wife, the evangelical clergyman John Newton, the Irish parliamentarian Clotworthy Rowley, the law student Samuel Rose, the Cambridge undergraduate John Johnson, and the socialite Lady Hesketh.

Even after his translation of the two epics is published, Cowper continues to make revisions, but he reluctantly accepts Joseph Johnson's request that he serve as editor of a deluxe illustrated edition of the works of Milton. Before committing himself, he is "clearly persuaded by Mr. Teedon's experiences and gracious notices that he is called to it," and he feels some satisfaction in being able to state, "when I have finished it, I shall have run through all the degrees of my profession, as author, translator, and editor." Owing to his ailments, including inflammation of the eyes, and further breakdowns, he is unable to complete his editorial task.

In one letter, Cowper declares that his veneration for John Milton, "this first of poets," equals his veneration for Homer, and that *Paradise Lost* is "the finest poem in the world," though in another he allows first place to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Milton himself he regards as "spotless ... as a man and a citizen," and he has great difficulty in fairly judging Dr. Johnson, who, in his opinion, has basely traduced him in his *Lives of the Poets*. "Oh! I could thresh his old jacket," he ejaculates, as he denounces Johnson, "till I made his pension jingle in his pocket." Yet he recognizes that Johnson "writes, indeed, like a man that thinks a great deal, and that sometimes thinks religiously" and is pleased to learn that the lexicographer approves of his own first volume of poems.

Cowper is glad that he has turned out to be a poet and not a musician, for "A poet may, if he pleases, be of a little use in the world, while a musician, the most skilful, can only divert himself and a few others." In his letters, as in his poems, Cowper denounces his countrymen for their defects and wickedness. Near the end of the war with the American colonies, he declares to Newton, "The country indeed cannot be saved in its present state of profligacy and profaneness." He has a special horror of what he judges to be the corruption of most of the clergy, now "an order which the laity retain but little respect for." He knows seven or eight in his own district "who have shaken hands with sobriety, and who would rather suppress the Church, were it not for the emoluments annexed, than discourage the sale of strong beer in a single instance." The bishops earn his censure for failing to impose discipline on their inferiors, though he is pleased to acknowledge that there are exceptions. That the Duke of Gloucester should

hold a rout on a Sunday appals him, but he sadly declines to join William Unwin in a campaign against perjury, Sabbath travel, and the multiplication of public houses since it would be ineffective.

While it is hardly surprising that Cowper does not welcome Lord Peterborough's living openly in his neighbourhood with a mistress, Lady Anne Foley, his indignation at a church service being held in honour of Handel is a different matter. Beneath some of his views can be heard the faint rumble of an ugly puritanism, though he himself is too humane to play the religious tyrant. He has, for example, the good sense to recognize the difference between the vice of drunkenness and the moderate consumption of wine—he enjoys port—and he warns that a minister should not harangue his congregants. "I believe no man," he tells Newton, "was ever scolded out of his sins," and goes on to give an acute analysis of the angry preacher:

There is no grace that the spirit of self can counterfeit with more success than a religious zeal. A man thinks he is fighting for Christ, and he is fighting for his own notions. He thinks that he is skilfully searching the hearts of others, when he is only gratifying the malignity of his own, and charitably supposes his hearers destitute of all grace, that he may shine the more in his own eyes by comparison. When he has performed this notable task, he wonders that they are not converted.

Among Britain's sins are conquests in India and the abomination of slavery. Referring to "This contention about East Indian patronage," he asserts, "I would abandon all territorial interest in a country to which we can have no right, and which we cannot govern with any security to the happiness of the inhabitants." More prominent than his protest against colonialism is his denunciation of slavery, an atrocity that so impresses itself on his mind that he cannot help asking, in a letter to Newton, "Is it essential to the perfection of a plan concerted by infinite wisdom, that such wretches should exist at all, who from the beginning of their being, through all its endless duration, can experience nothing for which they should say, It is good for us that we were created?" He sees a parallel between their plight and his own. "The day hardly ever comes," he confesses years later to Teedon, "in which I do not utter a wish that I had never been born."

The defence of liberty is a sacred duty to Cowper, who was raised by his father as a Whig, and holds that power should be equally divided between the King, the Lords, and the Commons. When the poor at Weston are subjected to compulsory inoculation against smallpox, he observes indignantly to Lady Hesketh, "We talk of our freedom, and some of us are

free enough, but not the poor": such impositions, he suggests, "perhaps in France itself could hardly be paralleled."

Politics is never more than peripheral in the life and the letters of Cowper. When he believes he enjoys divine favour, he mentions to Hill his near indifference to them, but sixteen years afterwards he asks the same friend to send him news and his opinions about it to supplement what he learns from the papers in his rural retreat. In 1791, while the French Revolution rages, he informs Lady Hesketh, "As for politics, I reckon not, having no room in my head for anything but the Slave Bill." While he considers that George III is sometimes unwise, he is always loyal to the King and fears rebellion as much as royal despotism. He believes that there can be reform without revolution, but for him politics is always subordinate to religion: the sins of London bring on the Gordon Riots, and Parliament cannot mend itself, for "Man never was reformed by man; nor ever can be."

Though they are both Whigs, Cowper is more conservative than Horace Walpole and ardently opposes the Americans in their War of Independence. He maintains that,

the King is bound, both by the duty he owes to himself and to his people, to consider himself with respect to every inch of his territories, as a trustee deriving his interest in them from God, and invested with them by divine authority for the benefit of his subjects. As he may not sell them or waste them, so he may not resign them to an enemy, or transfer his right to govern them to any, not even to themselves, so long as it is possible for him to keep it.

Cowper holds that the hidden motive of the French in aiding the rebellious American colonies is to seize them for themselves—a view in keeping with his low regard for that people. They are, Cowper considers, of a "restless and meddling temper," and they "pay little regard to treaties that clash with their convenience." Moreover, their superior refinement goes with "profligacy of principle" and they corrupt Britain as the Greeks corrupted the originally noble and heroic Romans. When the French Revolution breaks out, he sympathises with the aspirations of the people and characteristically proposes, "That nations so long contentedly slaves should on a sudden become enamoured of liberty ... seems difficult to account for from natural causes." After the mob invades the palace of the Tuileries in August 1792, he hopes the French can attain freedom while abandoning "their sanguinary proceedings." "My daily toast," he states, "is, Sobriety and Freedom to the French." Not till the execution of Louis XVI does he repudiate the Revolution, admitting to Hayley, "I will tell you what the

French have done. They have made me weep for a king of France, which I never thought to do, and they have made me sick of the very name of liberty, which I never thought to be.”

In July 1790, a year after the Revolution begins, Cowper is already wary of an egalitarianism that would abolish the social classes. “Differences of rank and subordination,” he asserts, “are, I believe, of God’s appointment, and consequently essential to the well-being of society.” Though he passes through life in a cocoon of woe—a cocoon invisible except to his intimates—because he believes that God spurns him, he cares about the figure he cuts before his fellow humans. It is strange to find this obsessively religious man anxious to obtain “a genteelish toothpick case” and a hat “furnished *à la mode*” and enquiring whether the stocks with which he would like to replace his worn out neckcloths are fashionable. A strong class consciousness underlies an observation on his publisher Joseph Johnson: “I verily believe that though a bookseller, he has in him the soul of a gentleman. Such strange combinations sometimes happen, and such a one may have happened in his instance.” In 1785 Cowper explains to Lady Hesketh how his income, had it not been combined with Mrs. Unwin’s larger one, “would not have enabled me to live as my connections demanded that I should.” One purpose of his translation of Homer is to augment his funds. Bitterly he complains about the “enormous taxation” in 1793, when Britain is soon to be at war with France, an imposition “which makes it impossible for a man of small means like me, to live at all like a gentleman upon his income.”

While Cowper resents the impact of heavy taxes on his own lifestyle, he is even more indignant at the way they increase the burden of the poor. A new tax on candles, which will send them to bed in the dark, makes him especially angry. It is luxuries, he justifiably maintains, that should be taxed, and wishes that the minister “would visit the miserable huts of our lace-makers at Olney, and see them working in the winter months, by the light of a farthing candle, from four in the afternoon till midnight.” In the “mud-wall cottages of our poor at Olney,” he finds “assembled in one individual, the miseries of age, sickness, and the extremist penury.” When he declines an opportunity to read Thomas Paine’s *The Rights of Man*, insisting, “No man shall convince me that I am improperly governed, while I feel the contrary,” it does not seem to occur to him that the poor he has compassion for may not feel as properly governed as he does.

Alongside enticing descriptions of life in countryside and garden, Cowper sends his correspondents accounts of the misery and degradation he witnesses. Commending a proposal to start a Sunday school, he laments, “Heathenish parents can only bring up heathenish children; an assertion no where oftener or more clearly illustrated than at Olney; where children

seven years of age, infest the streets every evening with curses and with songs, to which it would be unseemly to give their proper epithet." The Sabbath, he grieves, is "a day of more turbulence and riot than any other."

Cowper and Mrs. Unwin extend what charity they can to alleviate the suffering of the local poor and also distribute donations received from others, especially Robert Smith (later Lord Carrington). They pass on Smith's largesse only to the deserving: "The profane are so profane, so drunken, dissolute, and in every respect worthless, that to make them partakers of his bounty would be to abuse it."

Although Cowper likes to say that little happens at Olney, scattered sparingly through his letters are anecdotes that give some notion of life in a small country town. Mr. Raban lends him and Mrs. Unwin a room from which to watch a military exercise, in which the defenders of a bridge, after much resistance, are "obliged to quit it and run" and eventually "surrender prisoners of war." When a fire breaks out at night, there is looting, and people in fear for their homes pile goods in safer houses, including Cowper's. To his discomfort, Curate Scott finds himself marrying a profane, drunken, insolent bridegroom to a pregnant bride. A thief is supposedly being whipped by the beadle at the cart's tail, but the beadle keeps pulling the lash through red ochre in his left hand and spares the culprit's skin. On being visited by the parliamentary candidate William Wyndham Greville, who seems "a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman," Cowper, who has no vote, is surprised to hear from a local draper that he nevertheless has much influence. A dissenting minister soliciting donations to meet his congregation's debt is seen "leading a female companion into a wood." Visited by the soldier Corporal East, who professes to be an earnest Christian, Cowper is at first taken in and lends him money. On discovering the man is a hypocrite, he declares, "The Word is a flaming sword; and he that touches it with unhallowed fingers, thinking to make a tool of it, will find that he has burnt them."

Olney's own church politics are troubled. Curate Scott feuds with Mr. Raban, a carpenter and preacher, who wants to be his deputy, and Curate Page leaves the town having "quarrelled with most of his acquaintance" and "neither left admirers behind him, nor taken any with him: unless perhaps his wife be one, which admits some doubt."

Several of the incidents Cowper recounts are comical. A beggar given vermicelli soup stirs it about with the spoon for a while, before saying, "I am a poor man it is true, and I am very hungry, but yet I cannot eat broth with maggots in it." Fearing that a letter to Mrs. Throckmorton from her chaplain may not have reached her, Cowper explains that it was entrusted to a boy who had never before been more than four miles from home:

“when the Doctor gave him his direction to Bucklands, he asked, very naturally, if that place was in England.”

His humour, one of the weapons with which Cowper contends against his despair, enriches his letters. “If you find many blots, and my writing illegible,” he excuses himself to Newton, “you must pardon them in consideration of the cause. Lady Hesketh and Mrs. Unwin are both talking as if they designed to make themselves amends for the silence they are enjoined while I sit translating Homer. Mrs. Unwin is preparing the breakfast, and not having seen each other since they parted to go to bed, they have consequently a deal to communicate.” To the young clergyman John Johnson, he writes, “You have done well to leave off visiting, and being visited. Visits are insatiable devourers of time, and fit only for those who, if they did not that, would do nothing.” On one occasion, Cowper is more merry than kind. Having sent a set of mock-queries to the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, he gleefully reports to Mrs. Throckmorton, that these “are at last censured, censured severely, and censured by the man of all the world whom I should have most wished to censure them, a grave, fusty, worm-eaten antiquarian. I have already sent up a reply in which I have given him a good dressing, and should it but make him as angry as I think it cannot fail to do, we shall have rare sport all the summer.”

At the centre of Cowper’s letters is the self-portrait of a man who turns to friendship, humour, gardening, pets, rural walks, and the composition of poetry to make his life as endurable as it can be despite the terror smouldering beneath the surface of his consciousness. Closely associated with the much esteemed poet are a few memorable men and women. Foremost among these is Mrs. Unwin, a soft-hearted, intelligent person, who “would not set her foot over the threshold, unless she had, or thought she had, God’s permission.” She shares his walks and his charities, enjoys the company of his friends and relatives, critiques his writings before they are published, knits his stockings, and attends to all his comforts. He takes great pleasure in reading histories and travel books to her in the evenings. When he is deranged for six months in 1787, she is the only person he can bear near him. About a year and a half after his recovery, Mrs. Unwin falls on the ice, and her decline begins. The fall is followed by two strokes, leaving her unable to use needles or read. A smitten Cowper willingly repays her devotion, remembering, “She has been my faithful and affectionate nurse for many years.” He has described their routine at different periods, making it clear how his work fitted into their day. Now, engaged to edit Milton’s writings, he informs Teedon, “My work is all of a stand, and I have written to tell Johnson that in all appearance it will be impossible for me to be ready at the time.” To Samuel Rose, he explains, “I cannot sit with my pen in my hand, and my books before me, while she is in effect

in solitude, silent, and looking at the fire." The kindness and compassion which make her, when devoid of rags, "ready to beg them on her knees for the use of two miserable women on the point of producing," survives into her years of decrepitude. After her second stroke, she will not let Cowper, in spite of the expense, thwart the heartfelt ambition of his servant Sam Roberts and the carpenter he is working with who are building a much too elaborate garden shed.

Mrs. Unwin's tenderness extends to her son, the Rev. William Unwin, to whom she forbids the poet to send his "mournful" pieces. This man, whom he is afterwards to remember as "learned, polite, and amiable," combines the qualities of the perfect gentleman, which Lady Austen finds him to be, with those of the devout Christian and the congenial companion. Cowper praises him as one of the few "that can do good, and keep their own secret," and Lady Hesketh notices, when he has just ended a visit to Olney, that the remaining company has "spent near half an hour together without laughing." Cowper finds it necessary, however, to scold him a little for his lack of assertiveness: he is too forbearing to a delinquent curate, and he needs to realise that, despite superficial appearances, neither Jesus nor Paul opposes recourse to a law court to defend oneself against a wrongdoer.

Charged with failing to send John Newton some minor poems he has not withheld from William Unwin, Cowper explains to the former how he regards him with some awe: "If I walked the streets with a fiddle under my arm, I should never think of performing before the window of a Privy Councillor, or a Chief Justice, but should rather make free with ears more likely to be open to such amusement." Newton is sternly puritanical in his outlook and puts his literary abilities to the service of his creed. He and Cowper are collaborators. Cowper not only contributes largely to the *Olney Hymns*, but also sometimes receives Newton's help in dealing with his publisher, makes corrections in a Latin manuscript of Newton's, and translates a book of Latin letters by a Dutch minister who has been converted by reading Newton's *Cardiphonia*. A puritanical creed does not preclude kindness. Newton gives Cowper and Mrs. Unwin great delight when he visits Olney. Usually Newton tries, in vain, to persuade Cowper that spiritual despair invariably gives way to hope. Once, however, hearing rumours that he and Mrs. Unwin "have both deviated into forbidden paths, and lead a life unbecoming the Gospel" by associating too freely with "people of the world," he declares that he has never before so much doubted Cowper's redemption. However, he accepts the explanation that their social inferiors have drawn false conclusions from often seeing them climb into Lady Hesketh's carriage. Newton remains faithful to Cowper till



the end: in April 1799, the afflicted poet sends thanks to him from Norfolk for a letter and a book.

A clergyman whose visits give Cowper much solace at Olney is the Congregationalist minister William Bull, a learned, meditative, slightly melancholy man, who introduces him to the poems of the French Quietist Mme Guyon. This minister's one imperfection is that he smokes, but the affection he inspires is such that Cowper can write to him, "My greenhouse, fronted with myrtles, and where I hear nothing but the pattering of a fine shower and the sound of distant thunder, wants only the fumes of your pipe to make it perfectly delightful." In 1786, Cowper tells Joseph Johnson that Bull "is the only neighbour of mine with whom I can converse at all."

The clergyman who plays the largest part in Cowper's last years is his cousin John Johnson. When they first become acquainted, Johnson is a shy but good-humoured and entertaining youth studying mathematics at Cambridge and planning to enter the Anglican ministry. Cowper is rapidly captivated by his guileless personality, but successfully encourages him to switch his subject of study, to the indignation of his University tutor, away from mathematics; he selects civil law. Playing music, a pastime of Johnson's, Cowper allows is praiseworthy, provided it is only an avocation, and he observes, "I have known very good performers on the violin very learned also." In 1792, as the young graduate prepares for ordination, Cowper applauds his scruples about his own inclination to levity, and a year later praises his willingness to follow the evangelical path despite the prejudice against it even in the Church: "The quarrel that the world has with evangelic men and doctrines, they would have with a host of angels in the human form: for it is the quarrel of owls with sunshine; of ignorance with divine illumination." When Cowper enters his fragile last period, Johnson spends as much time caring for him as his clerical duties permit. He treats the aging poet with great kindness but also firmness, and the man Cowper has first referred to as "the wild boy Johnson" and then as "Johnny" he now speaks of as "Mr. Johnson."

One of Olney's inhabitants is a poverty-stricken, pedantic, well-meaning schoolmaster named Samuel Teedon, who believes he enjoys divine communications. Like his relationship with John Johnson, Cowper's relationship with Samuel Teedon undergoes a transformation. At first, the behaviour of this civil but tedious man is an irritant. He can make a wearisome long story out of "facts that might have been compressed into a much smaller compass" and can keep the poet and Mrs. Unwin standing in a cold wind in peril of sore throats while he pours out verbose thanks for a donation from John Newton. The time comes when Cowper confesses to Lady Hesketh, "I blame myself often for finding him tiresome, but cannot help it. My only comfort is that I should be more weary of thousands

who have all the cleverness that has been denied to Teedon.” Eventually Cowper does start to believe that his less than brilliant friend does receive messages from on high. He writes to him that he would not have ventured to take the ailing Mrs. Unwin on a journey to visit Hayley “Without an answer from God as explicit and satisfactory as that which you have obtained for me.” It is, unhappily, another story when Teedon believes his messages mean that Cowper is not doomed: “I get no comfort,” the latter admits, “from the words you sent me yesterday, which comfort you so much. On the contrary, they filled me with alarm and terror the moment I saw them.” He even has the goodness to caution his would-be helper, “I ... am not a little concerned lest your own bodily health at least should suffer by the frequent mortifications and disappointments which you receive from me.”

Opposite to Teedon in personality, fortune, and their effect on Cowper’s life are the gracious and elegant Throckmortons, wealthy landowners of Weston. Although as Roman Catholics they suffer civil disabilities, they are patriotic enough to hold a public celebration with illuminations, rockets, a bonfire and flowing beer to celebrate one of George III’s periods of recovery from madness. When Mr. Wright has a bad fall from his horse during a foxhunt, John Throckmorton and his brother-in-law are the only riders who stop to help him. To his credit, his hostility to the theology of the Roman Church and to the papacy does not prejudice Cowper against individual Catholics. He writes to Newton that the lives of the brothers John and George Throckmorton “though they have but little of what we call evangelical light, are ornaments to a Christian country.” When the Throckmortons invite him to an attempted launch of a balloon, he informs Newton, “They have lately received many gross affronts from the people of this place, on account of their religion. We thought it, therefore, the more necessary to treat them with respect.” As the reserve wears off on both sides, a friendship slowly develops between the poet and this cultured, generous-spirited family who have given him the run of their grounds and free use of their vegetable garden. Mrs. Throckmorton plays the harpsichord and in 1786 can recite more of his recently published *Poems* than Cowper himself can. He discovers an unsuspected gift in John and George when they show him the massive portfolio of their architectural drawings. The days when he could have congenial conversations only with Mrs. Unwin and the Rev. Bull are behind him. Though they avoid debating religion or politics—the Throckmortons favour the most left-wing Whigs led by Charles James Fox—they often dine together, usually but not always at the family’s Hall. Lady Hesketh meets them when she visits, though Cowper finds that her suspicions make it necessary for him to defend his friendship with their chaplain, Dr. Greyson. He asserts:

I do not at all suspect that his kindness to Protestants has any thing insidious in it, any more than I suspect that he transcribes Homer for me with a view for my conversion. He would find me a tough piece of business, I can tell him; for when I had no religion at all, I had yet a terrible dread of the Pope. How much more now!

In his friendship with the Throckmortons, Cowper sympathises with the desire of Roman Catholics and Nonconformists for equal citizenship with Anglicans. He declares to Joseph Hill:

The dissenters, I think, Catholics, and others, have all a right to the privileges of all other Englishmen, because to deprive them is persecution; and persecution on any account, but especially on a religious one, is abomination.

In 1798, John Throckmorton, now Sir John, visits Cowper in Norfolk.

The kindness and affection of another wealthy friend of Cowper's later years, William Hayley, earn his lasting devotion. Hayley first contacts Cowper to reassure him that there will be no clash between the biography of Milton he is writing and Joseph Johnson's edition of that poet's works. Hailing a defence of John Milton the man against what he deems the libel against him in Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Cowper soon succeeds in hosting Hayley at Weston. The latter takes the opportunity his journey offers to call on Lady Hesketh in London, and Cowper triumphantly claims, "I knew that you would fall in love with Hayley. Every body here has done so, and wherever he goes, every body must." Hayley happens to be at Weston when Mrs. Unwin has her second stroke, and his ministrations—he has some medical knowledge—are so helpful that Cowper finds it difficult, despite his wrenching fears, to refuse him a return visit. As a result, he, who regrets having never seen mountains, soon finds himself "a little daunted by the tremendous height of the Sussex hills," as a carriage carries him and an untroubled Mrs. Unwin across them by moonlight. His letters describe how he and Hayley work on each other's verse and prose, both at the latter's "elegant mansion," where he meets the writer Charlotte Smith and the artist George Romney, and at his humbler home in Weston. However, he sees William Hayley as an equal—"Whether you or I have the most genius I know not, nor care a fig," he asserts—and in his oblivion to the superiority of his own poetic gift, he is never irritated, as William Blake later is, by the lesser writer's limitations.

Two ladies who belong to fashionable society rather than the intellectual milieu of Hayley do much at different times to brighten Cowper's life: Lady Austen, who injects a temporary sparkle into it, and Lady Hesketh,

the Harriet Cowper of his youth, who brings a steady light. From mid-1781 for about three years, with a short break, the staid hermitage of Cowper and Mrs. Unwin is cheered for much of the time by the presence of a woman who “laughs and makes laugh, and keeps up a conversation without seeming to labour at it.” Soon after her arrival, Cowper reports to William Unwin that Lady Austen “has fallen in love with your mother and me” and describes how,

We did not want company, but when it came, we found it agreeable. A person that has seen much of the world, and understands it well, has high spirits, a lively fancy, and great readiness of conversation, introduces a sprightliness into such a scene as this, which, if it was peaceful before, is not the worse for being a little enlivened.

Some letters make it clear that she combines her vivacity with a “sense of religion, and seriousness of mind” and is of a charitable disposition, but we learn from other sources that she makes the mistake of thinking that the poet means to marry her—such verses as “The star that beams on Anna’s breast” do seem to be written by a lover—and she breaks off all connection.

Two years after the departure of the misguided woman, Cowper is overjoyed to receive a letter from Lady Hesketh, sister of the Theodora Cowper he had once desired for his wife and now a rich widow. When he moves to Olney, he thinks their separation is permanent, but the publication of his poems, especially “John Gilpin,” wins him the renewal of their dear friendship. She arranges to visit, and his letters convey his mounting excitement, as well as Mrs. Unwin’s, at the prospect. When she arrives with her carriage, servants, cheerful conversation, and sweet temper, Cowper’s high expectations are fulfilled. Mrs. Unwin shares the poet’s delight in her companionship, and she carries them about in her carriage to make new acquaintances in their own district. A strong Tory, Lady Hesketh sees John Throckmorton’s brother, who is a Whig, as a Jacobin, and Cowper teases her, quipping, “all the Tories now-a-days call all the Whigs Republicans. How the deuce you came to be a Tory is best known to yourself; you have to answer for this novelty to the shades of your ancestors, who were always Whigs ever since we had any.” Cowper does not hide his spiritual plight from her, but so great is the impact of her presence that he is able to write to Newton, “Lady Hesketh is here, and in her company even I, except now and then for a moment, forget my sorrows.” However, though she helps him in every way she can—by her society, by transcribing passages of his Homer, by procuring subscribers, and by contributing to his income and soliciting others to contribute—she has another life, and, as a society lady,

she does not leave London till Parliament is prorogued, for that is when the season ends.

Read in chronological order, as letters usually should be, Cowper's portray the transformations he undergoes: from an easy-going, pleasure-loving (though not vicious) and neglectful law student to a strict moralist and dedicated evangelical who looks back regretfully to a time when he only thought himself a Christian; from a Londoner to a city-hating country dweller who resolves never to revisit the capital; from a youth who judges a man by the extent of his classical scholarship to a man who judges others primarily by their devoutness; from a Christian who hopes for salvation to a Christian who believes himself utterly and everlastingly rejected by God; from an amateur versifier to a serious poet and professional man of letters; from a sequestered inhabitant of Olney to a member of a social circle at Weston; and from that happier state to a victim of senility in the care of his cousin John Johnson in Norfolk.

## A MARRIAGE FAILS IN INDIA ELIZA FAY (1756-1816)



William Cowper perceives a journey from Buckinghamshire to Sussex as a fearful undertaking; his younger contemporary Eliza Fay travels four times from Britain to India and once to the newly independent United States of America. In 1779, she accompanies her husband, Anthony, on a perilous journey through France (with which Britain is at war), Italy, and Egypt to India. Here Mr. Fay, who has been called to the bar in London, seeks a legal career in the colony established by the East India Company.

He fails, they separate, and in 1781 she sails back to England. The bulk of her surviving letters comes from this period of her life.

Fay is neither learned nor illiterate—she speaks French, alludes to a passage in Shakespeare’s *Othello*, quotes Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard,” and has read sonnets of Petrarch in the original Italian, but she thinks that to cross the Alps, she only needs to traverse a single mountain. In matters of manners and morals, she is conventional and respectable: she deplors swearing and drunkenness, and in 1784 carefully chaperones four young women, rarely allowing them on deck during a voyage from England to Bombay. Though little interested in politics—she says nothing about the American war—she is patriotic enough to feel the humiliation when French privateers pin English ships in an Italian harbour and British naval vessels in the Mediterranean prove uninsurable. She writes from France of how the exultant display of “the sword of our illustrious Talbot”—a hero of the Hundred Years War—sends “a pang ... across my heart,” but is fair-minded enough to regret Edward III’s “barbarous sentence” on the citizens of Calais.

In religion, Fay is a conventional Protestant, who dismisses the “sacred relics” on display at the Abbey of St. Denis as “absurdities.” When she visits a convent of Ursulines at Madeira, she contemplates the ways in which they occupy their mortal span: “Surely,” she writes, “to consume

it in supine indolence or 'vain repetitions' can never render us more acceptable to Him, who is the fountain of light and knowledge." Her regard for the Reformation is evident in her disappointment at seeing Luther represented in his portrait at Turin as "a homely, and rather vulgar looking man."

In Egypt, the precarious position of the Christian minority is sufficient to make Fay dismiss the Muslims there as "bigotted wretches," and in India she is revolted by temples dedicated to idol worship and by the self-torturing practices of Hindu ascetics. These far exceed, she notes, the austerities of "the holy fathers" of the Church, and she concludes, "Well may we say that, 'life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel.'" However, she vaguely recognizes that Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, the deities of the Hindu Trinity, are "the representations or types of the great spirit Brahma[n] (the Supreme God) whom they also call the spirit of wisdom, and the principle of Truth." Atheism she regards as the creed of the wicked, and her own religious feeling is awakened by the grandeur of the Alps, which, she says, "seemed to communicate new powers of perception to my mind, and if I may so express it, to expand my soul, and raise it nearer to its Creator."

Eliza Fay is assertive for herself and her sex as well as for her country and her religion. At Lyons, she summons a cook to berate him for smothering his asparagus in unnecessary sauce and reduces him to beg in vain to be allowed just a drop of vinegar. She is the driving force behind her husband's quest for success, and after their separation each of her voyages is undertaken in a search for independence. When European men praise Hindu wives for their submissiveness, she protests that husbands "have not failed in most countries to invent a sufficient number of rules to render the weaker sex totally subservient to their authority" and goes on to praise the heroism of the wife

who wages war with a naturally petulant temper, who practises a rigid self-denial, endures without complaining the unkindness, infidelity, extravagance, meanness or scorn, of the man to whom she has given a tender and confiding heart, and for whose happiness and well being in life all the powers of her mind are engaged.

Fay claims that she ventures on the journey to India to watch over her husband, who, she is convinced, would otherwise be undone by "his extravagance and dissipated habits" as well as "the violence of his temper." However, she later admits "curiosity was ever with me a predominant feeling," and curiosity may be as strong or a stronger motive for her journey-

ing. When she first leaves Europe, she is downcast to find that Cairo is not a city invested with all the glamour and opulence of the world of the *Arabian Nights*. Happily, she is able to acknowledge that what she sought in Cairo she finds at Madras. Here, she rejoices,

The free exercise of all religions being allowed; the different sects seem to vie with each other in ornamenting their places of worship, which are in general well built, and from their great variety, and novel forms afford much gratification, particularly when viewed from the country, as the beautiful groups of trees intermingle their tall forms and majestic foliage, with the white chunam and rising spires, communicating such harmony, softness and elegance to the scene, as to be altogether delightful.

In the streets, the visitor has the pleasure of “seeing Asiatic splendour, combined with European taste exhibited ... under the forms of flowing drapery, stately palanquins, elegant carriages, innumerable servants, and all the pomp and circumstance of luxurious ease, and unbounded wealth.”

Fay’s appetite for viewing new peoples, places, and sights issues in pleasing snapshots of far-flung landscapes and communities ranging from Guernsey and Turin to Madeira and the Cape of Good Hope. She describes wonders ranging from the giant theatre at Turin with a stage that can accommodate “fifty or sixty horses ... with triumphal cars” to “those prodigies of human labour, the Pyramids of Egypt.” Especially intriguing, as the future place of Napoleon’s exile, is her account of the “romantic Island” of St. Helena:

its appearance from the sea is very unpromising, — inaccessible rocks, and stupendous crags frowning every side but one, nor is there any anchorage except at that point — The town is literally an ascending valley between two hills, just wide enough to admit of one street. The houses are in the English style, with sashed windows, and small doors ... but when you once ascend *Ladder Hill* the scene changes, and all seems enchantment. The most exquisite prospects you can conceive burst suddenly on the eye — fruitful vallies, — cultivated hills and diversified scenery of every description.

There is, however, as much hardship as pleasure in Fay’s experience of a checkerboard of scenes. Her first journey to India involves an arduous trek across the desert from Cairo to Suez followed by a voyage to Calicut, where she and her fellow passengers suffer for fifteen weeks as prisoners of Hyder Ali, a Muslim warlord who is trying to make himself master of



southern India. Eliza and Anthony find themselves watched over by sepoys in a house without a chair or mattress, confined in a rat-haunted cell, and only slightly relieved to find their way through a trapdoor into the refuge of a pirate's lumber room. They sometimes go without food and fear for their lives if Hyder Ali, who associates with the French, should enter into open war with the English. Their attempt to bribe their way to freedom by engaging a smuggler fails, but they are released just before the feared war erupts, and from nearby Cochin they sail to Madras and then Calcutta. Mrs. Fay writes nothing of all this to her family until their captivity is about to end.

Unlike Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in Turkey, Eliza Fay makes no serious attempt to explore an alien civilization. While she is distressed by the rigours of the caste system and admits that "the Eastern dresses have infinitely the advantage over ours," the focus of her letters from Calcutta is on the lives of her compatriots. They provide a picture of the British expatriates attempting, like colonists and settlers from ancient Greeks to modern Chinese, to re-create the society and lifestyle of their home country. Alongside complaints about dishonest and uncooperative servants—the Muslims refuse to touch a plate that has held pork—Fay writes of the formal visits, tea-drinking, cards, evening rides, and public balls. The community has even built a theatre for amateur performances; she has good words for a production of Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*. There is an equivalent to the London season, and Fay complains that Calcutta is dull as well as oppressed by heat and insects from which most foreigners have retreated. She has a comfortable residence and enjoys good food and wine, but observes how many of her compatriots fall into the trap of the easy credit extended by Indian moneylenders and European shopkeepers.

People as well as places engage Fay's pen, and her husband is the most prominent of the many characters her letters portray. It slowly becomes apparent that the man has serious defects. On the journey out, after much delay, involving days in an unsalubrious district of Paris, the couple manages to obtain the passports necessary to complete their journey through France, with which Britain is at war, but despite Eliza's remonstrances, Anthony insists on fastening them to a book he carries on horseback; when they are found to have dropped off, he has to retrace their path and luckily recovers them. Although he tries to ease Eliza's pains during their travel and captivity, at Cochin he delays boarding the *St. Helena* that is to carry them to Madras until it is almost too late and then endangers several lives by having the two of them rowed out to the vessel in a high wind. Eliza classes him among those people "who seek to regain by obstinacy, what they have lost through folly." During the ensuing voyage, he quarrels with two amiable gentlemen "about the *merest* trifles" and is, moreover,

“palpably in the wrong.” He challenges them both, and Eliza has to find a mediator to make peace.

On the couple’s arrival at Calcutta, where the legal system is independent of the East India Company, Anthony is welcomed by the judge Sir Robert Chambers, a friend of Dr. Johnson and formerly Vinerian Professor of Law at Oxford, and by the Chief Justice, Sir Elijah Impey. Soon he is well supplied with briefs, and on 29 May 1780, Eliza assures those at home, “as his abilities have never been questioned, I flatter myself that he has every reason to look forward to ultimate success.” Five months later, she is less confident: “Mr. Fay has no reason to complain of business falling off; if *he* fall not from it, all will be well.”

Unfortunately, dissension rages in Calcutta between the party of Warren Hastings, Governor-General of Bengal, who seeks to put government on a sound footing, and the party of Philip Francis, the author, in all probability, of the verbal assault on George III in *The Letters of Junius*. Hastings and Francis even fight with pistols eliciting Mrs. Fay’s protest, “What a shocking custom is that of duelling!” To Eliza’s distress, Anthony not only fails to pay “the necessary attention to persons in power,” but, despite her upbraidings, ostentatiously allies himself with the opposition until “The attorneys are positively afraid to employ him.” By mid-July, he is engaged to carry a document to England to promote the impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey. “The duty of a wife,” Eliza laments, “which is paramount to all other civil obligations, compels me silently to witness what is beyond my power to counteract.” A month later, she admits that her husband’s extravagance and reckless borrowing have led to the repossession of articles unpaid for and goods pledged as collateral, and she is left with nothing but her clothes and the legal separation she has requested. Luckily, she has a kind patroness in Lady Chambers. There is a further blow that she seems to disclose only many years afterwards: Anthony has fathered an illegitimate son, for whom, in 1786, she arranges an education in England, though he perishes in a shipwreck on the way. “I could not,” she writes, “abandon him, though he was deserted by his natural protector.”

During the course of the letters, the picture of Anthony is filled out like that of no other character but the writer herself. However, she has a distinct gift for sharing her perception of the people she meets. Thus a Franciscan friar on the ship to Egypt tries to convert her; she admires his handsome figure and regrets “that so noble a mind, should be warped by the belief of such ridiculous superstitions, as disgrace the Romish creed” — until she complains about the excessive heat, when his face assumes “a most malignant expression” and he exclaims, “aye you will find it ten thousand times hotter in the Devil’s House.”

Differently vicious is Captain Ayres, one of the European adventurers entering the service of Indian leaders who are carving out principalities from the disintegrating Moghul Empire. The Fays encounter this English former highwayman as a willing tool of Hyder Ali, whose prisoners they then are. Eliza believes him responsible for such atrocities as having noses and ears of his employer's enemies cut off, and hears that he planned the murder and plunder of wealthy natives. She sees his face as the countenance of a thieving crow and describes his ugly triumph after he slaughters a cow that trespassed in his garden: "You cannot imagine said he, how *sweetly* the sword did the business." While bribes induce him to let the other prisoners walk in comparative freedom, he advises that a diet of dry rice in a remote place will persuade the well-built Anthony to enlist in Hyder Ali's army. Meanwhile, he is not above using the prospective soldier as a drinking companion.

The man who advises Ayres that Mr. Fay is an insignificant fellow whose abduction will bring no response from the British Government is among the passengers who have sailed from Suez to Calicut. This ugly little barrister, John Hare, is a snob who disdains the world of commerce and "would faint at the thought of any thing Plebeian." Eliza accuses him of ingratiating himself with her and her husband early in the voyage to disguise his intention of stirring up a faction against them. When the ship reaches Calicut, he hails Ayres as a fellow countryman and is unfeeling enough to make witty remarks to the Fays about their close confinement. However, his boasting about his "property, *valuable* property" soon leads him to share their fate, and Eliza writes, "I must own, (blame me if you will) that for a short time I *did* feel satisfaction in this stroke of retributive justice."

Not all the memorable characters in the letters are villainous. The Fays' suffering in captivity is eased by the kindness of Mr. Isaac, a rich old Jewish merchant in the good graces of Sudder Khan, Governor of Calicut. A letter of introduction the Fays have received from a co-religionist of Isaac, Franco of Leghorn, earns the goodwill of this aged man. With his long white beard and "countenance benign yet majestic," he seems to possess, but for his bright eyes, an exact resemblance to "the Patriarch whose name he bears." His negotiations with the authorities eventually procure the release of the Fays, and at his house, they enjoy his hospitality and that of his two talkative, lavishly adorned wives. Fortunately, during the voyage to Calicut Eliza has studied some Portuguese, the only language in which these women can converse. "The name of *Isaac the Jew*," she exclaims, "will ever be associated with the happiest recollections of my life," and she grieves to think how "the name of this once distinguished people should have become a term of reproach." It is no wonder, she feels, if con-

tempt and separation have led many modern Israelites to “evinced more acuteness than delicacy in their transactions.”

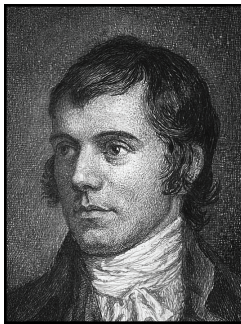
More fully portrayed than the lightly sketched wives of Isaac is a woman to whom Eliza takes a strong dislike early in the voyage from Suez. The supposed wife of Mr. Tulloh, Eliza is “credibly informed,” is “one of the very lowest creatures taken off the streets in London,” and “her supreme delight consists in rendering everybody around her miserable.” Mrs. Fay feels “repeatedly compelled (for the Honour of the Sex) to censure her swearing, and indecent behaviour.” Later, when Isaac sends the Fays a tea set in their captivity, she seizes the kettle and refuses to release it, leaving Eliza to boil water in her teapot. Another side to this woman becomes visible when apparently hostile vessels approach their ship near Calicut. The Captain determines on at least “a *shew* of engaging,” and while Eliza takes refuge below, Mrs. Tulloh, who nourishes “a passion for some romantic danger,” insists on sitting on deck deeming the spectacle “the next best thing to escaping from shipwreck.” Months afterwards a letter from her husband describing the extreme hardships his party has endured since leaving the Fays behind at Calicut elicits the comment, “Mrs. Tulloh has now seen enough poor woman to satisfy her taste for adventures.” How far prejudice contributes to this and other pen portraits is impossible to determine, but it is worth noting that Mr. Tulloh, whom Eliza stigmatizes as being as malicious as his partner, does plead for the Fays’ release when their late fellow passengers leave Calicut, and does so again to Hyder Ali himself.

The short Part II of *Original Letters from India* concerns Mrs. Fay’s life during the first fifteen years after her separation from her husband. Apart from the opening remarks addressed to Mrs. L—, it reads more like a journal than a series of letters as it records the writer’s painful struggle to attain through a series of business ventures the prosperity that eluded Anthony.

In time, Mrs. Fay becomes prosperous enough to acquire the ownership of an ocean-going vessel, but she then suffers a series of misfortunes: a levy of £60 to free and return to Bengal a badly behaved servant girl whom she had left with a woman on St. Helena and who, contrary to a promise given, has been sold into slavery; liability for a man’s goods damaged on board her ship when the Captain, who is primarily responsible, is unable to pay; a delay in reaching port till the good time for marketing is past; and the destruction of her own fine muslins when water floods a cabin in heavy seas. The culmination comes in 1796, when she arrives in the United States to find it in a deep depression: “I approached,” she states, “another people and another world, which was eventually the grave of that property, for which I had toiled so long.”

Little is known of Mrs. Fay's later years, but her last venture is to repair her fortune by reclaiming and publishing her letters, which have been kept by her sister. She dies insolvent before her preparation of the volume is complete, and her heirs cannot or will not add to what she has left. At the heart of the book, with its array of scenes from across half the world and its passing parade of rogues, bullies and kindly folks, is the slow uncovering of Anthony Fay's capacity for vice and folly and the spirit of his wife, who refuses to be cowed by cruel hardship or repeated ill luck.

## FARMER, POET, LOVER, EXCISEMAN ROBERT BURNS (1759-1796)



Eliza Fay discovers to her chagrin that her husband is devoid of both good sense and fidelity; Robert Burns, though unable to wed a woman who satisfies his intellectual as well as his emotional and physical needs, finds in marriage a happiness he does not expect.

Luckily for Burns, the son of a poor tenant farmer in Ayrshire, education is more valued and more widespread in Scotland than in England, and his father sends him to a country schoolmaster, who introduces him to English and Scots literature and teaches him French, though not the Latin drilled into the sons of gentlemen. He goes on to win a local reputation, and then national fame, for poems written in Scots, some of them directed against the reactionary party in the Presbyterian Kirk, while he creates a record of his life in letters written, and well written, in standard English.

A few of the letters sketch characters like the “flesh-disciplining godly matron” who fears Burns is but “a rough an’ roun’ Christian” and picture scenes like the drinking party at which all knelt while the poet “as priest, repeated some rhyming nonsense.” However, his principal achievement as a correspondent is to share his wide-ranging emotions, which are usually strong and often stormy. From passages often enriched by literary allusions and a wealth of metaphor and simile, we learn of his conviviality, his amorousness, his oscillating feelings about human nature, his esteem for personal honesty and independence of mind, his love of liberty, his Scottish patriotism, his fury against the bigotry of some (not all) of the clergy, and his love of poetry. Burns endures a tussle between his sceptical reason and his needy heart, and between his amorous passions and his painful guilt for impregnating a number of women.

At the age of twenty-two, the young farmer writes to his father, William Burns, “I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me,” and he thanks that devout man for his “lessons of virtue and piety.” The

turning point in his life comes in 1786, when, in despair at losing Jean Armour, a girl of Mauchline in Ayrshire, he accepts a post as overseer on a Jamaican estate. Before leaving, he decides that he will have his verse published in the provincial town of Kilmarnoch. Surprised by the applause his *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* receives, he rides to Edinburgh on a borrowed pony and is acclaimed as a wonder, a supposed “Heaven-taught ploughman” as the man of letters Henry Mackenzie dubs him. In the capital, he enjoys a lavish social life and mixes with aristocrats and intellectuals, but writes to the physician and author John Moore, “I know very well the novelty of my character has by far the greatest share in the learned and polite notice I have lately had.”

Burns has a lively awareness that fame is no guarantee of a livelihood, and while he has the opportunity of a post in the Excise, he speaks of agriculture as “the only thing of which I know anything,” and after much hesitation, he leases a farm in a picturesque area near Dumfries from one of his admirers, Patrick Miller. In 1787, before occupying it, he goes on expeditions in both the Highlands and the Lowlands and ventures into the north of England. His love of his country appears in his letters. From Stirling, he writes to an Ayrshire friend:

This morning I knelt at the tomb of Sir John the Graham, the gallant friend of the immortal Wallace; and two hours ago I said a fervent prayer for old Caledonia over the hole in a blue whinstone, where Robert de Bruce fixed his royal standard on the banks of Bannockburn; and just now, from Stirling Castle, I have seen by the setting sun the glorious prospect of the windings of Forth through the rich carse of Stirling, and skirting the equally rich carse of Falkirk.

Unfortunately, Robert Burns uses much of the earnings from his book to prop up his brother Gilbert, who is still farming in Ayrshire, leaving himself with insufficient funds to stock his own ground. For this reason, among others, his farm fails. He has prudently taken the precaution of studying to qualify as an Excise officer: “I thought,” he explains, referring to the modest salary, “five-and-thirty pounds a-year was no bad *dernier ressort* for a poor poet, if Fortune in her jade tricks should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up.”

In September 1789, Burns begins to work as a revenue officer on a part-time basis. In this incongruous role, the poet can display both compassion and severity. He writes of “rascally creatures” who are “nearly ruined, as all smugglers deserve, by fines and forfeitures,” but on another occasion he observes, “I recorded every defaulter, but at the court I myself begged

off every poor body that was unable to pay." He can also "wish and pray that the goddess of justice herself would appear tomorrow among our hon. gentlemen, merely to give them a word in their ear that mercy to the thief is injustice to the honest man." The diligence he brings to his office is evident in suggestions he makes for the improvement of the service. Thus, he has a loophole closed by which liquor imported into his division is exempt from duty diminishing the revenue and facing local brewers with unfair competition. In 1791, as a full-time Excise officer, he is able to surrender the lease on his farm and move to Dumfries, where his cultural life extends to enjoyment of professional theatre.

While Burns is still living in Edinburgh, he is charmed to meet refined and educated ladies, especially Mrs. Agnes M'Lehose, who is separated from her husband and whom he poetically nicknames Clarinda. In February 1788, after visiting Jean Armour the master mason's daughter of Mauchline who is about to bear his twins, he writes to this lady:

I, this morning, as I came home, called for a certain woman. I am disgusted with her. I cannot endure her. I, while my heart smote me for the prophanity, tried to compare her with my Clarinda: 'twas setting the expiring glimmer of a farthing taper beside the cloudless glory of the meridian sun. Here was tasteless insipidity, vulgarity of soul, and mercenary fawning; there polished good sense, heaven-born genius, and the most generous, the most delicate, the most tender Passion. I have done with her, and she with me.

But Jean, pregnant by Burns for the second time, is cast out by her family, and by the end of April a letter to his old Ayrshire friend James Smith jovially discloses his marriage to this "clean-limbed, handsome, bewitching young hussy of your acquaintance." From now on, he refers to her as Mrs. Burns.

In several letters, he alludes to Jean Armour's plight, his own conduct in rising to the occasion, and his unanticipated reward:

I had a long and much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a deposit. Nor have I any cause to repent it. If I have not got polite tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the county.



Although she reads only the Bible, her husband's poems, and Scottish ballads, she is an excellent singer. Guilt-stricken, as he well might be, by the illicit pregnancies he is responsible for, Burns finds to his relief that he seems to have left fornication behind, and he hopes that "the little poetic licences of former days will of course fall under the oblivious influence of some good-natured statute of celestial prescription." Tragically, he has at least one lapse when Jean is away from home, and his victim, a barmaid at a local inn, dies in childbirth. The incident does not figure in the extant correspondence, but from other sources, it is known that Jean was so forgiving and compassionate as to raise the newborn girl with her own children. She is said to have once exclaimed, "Robert needs two wives."

While Burns remains devoted to his plebeian spouse, he continues to be emotionally excited by ladies who are out of reach. To his upper class friend Mrs. Dunlop, he defends "the sacred purity" of his attachment to her neighbour Miss Lesley Baillie, even as he exclaims, "do you not know that I am almost in love with an acquaintance of yours? – Almost! said I – I am in love, souse! over head and ears, deep as the most unfathomable abyss of the boundless ocean." Sending his poem "Craigieburn Wood" to the anthologist George Thompson, he confesses: "The lady on whom it was made [Miss Jean Lorimer] is one of the finest women in Scotland; and, in fact (*entre nous*), is in a manner to me what Sterne's Eliza was to him – a mistress, a friend, or what you will, in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love."

After Burns withdraws from Edinburgh in 1788, he complains to one of the friends he has left behind:

I am here on my farm, busy with my harvest; but for all that most pleasurable part of life called SOCIAL COMMUNICATION, I am here at the very elbow of existence. The only things that are to be found in this country, in any degree of perfection, are stupidity and canting.

Before leaving the capital, he expresses his fear of loneliness to John Moore: "I have formed many intimacies and friendships here, but I am afraid they are all of too tender a construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles." In the event, the prophecy proves unduly pessimistic as he remains in permanent contact with several of his new companions, mostly fellow members of the Crochallan Fencibles, a drinking club whose members share Burns's pleasure in bawdy. In May 1789, he writes to one of these recent companions, the lawyer John Cunningham:

Cruikshank [correctly, Cleghorn] is a glorious production of the author of man. You, he, and the noble Colonel of the Crochallan

Fencibles are to me  
Dear as the ruddy drops which warm my heart.

Robert Cleghorn is a farmer, and the “Colonel,” William Dunbar, is another lawyer. The printer William Smellie—“old sinful Smellie”—and Robert Cleghorn, to both of whom he sends unpublishable poems, correspond with him for years, as does the Edinburgh bookseller Peter Hill, whose customer he is. Sadly, most of his letters to Smellie have been destroyed, but the pages on which he pours out his thoughts and feelings to Hill and Cunningham survive.

Burns is capable of hostility as well as friendship, but he can quarrel without being irreconcilable. Finding it difficult to extract money he is owed from his Edinburgh publisher John Creech, he describes the latter to Mrs. M’Lehose as “that arch-rascal” and speaks of “forming ideal schemes of vengeance” against him, namely withholding his new productions from the publisher’s third edition of his poems. A few months after this resolution, he is offering Creech his new work together with a careful revision of the old.

Less deserving of Burns’s resentment is the well intentioned landlord of his farm, Patrick Miller, whose kindness, he at one point asserts, “has been just such another as Creech’s was,” but about eighteen months later he presents Miller with his new edition as a mark of gratitude, and being no longer his dependent, feels free to praise him as a man distinguished for “benevolence of heart” and “a patriot who, in a venal, sliding age, stands forth the champion of the liberties of my country.”

Far more serious are Burns’s quarrels with Mrs. M’Lehose and the Riddells and his estrangement from Mrs. Dunlop. Infatuated with Mrs. M’Lehose, a lady who seems to be smitten with him, he fends off her accusation that he is making immoral addresses to a married woman, but in a series of gushing letters expresses his ardour: “O what a fool I am in love!” he exclaims, “What an extraordinary prodigal of affection! Why are your sex called the tender sex, when I have never met with one who can repay me in passion?” After offending her, he pleads, “If in the moment of tender endearment I perhaps trespassed against the letter of decorum’s law I appeal even to you whether I ever sinned in the very least degree against the spirit of her strictest statute.” When her spiritual adviser objects to her familiarity with the poet, he bursts out, “the half-inch soul of an unfeeling, cold-blooded, pitiful presbyterian bigot, cannot forgive anything above his dungeon bosom and foggy head.” The real crisis comes when, after his unfortunate claims of everlasting fidelity, he abruptly marries Jean Armour. Answering her charge that he is a villain, he protests that, “at the time alluded to, I was not under the smallest moral tie to Mrs. Burns; nor did I, nor

could I, then know all the powerful circumstances that omnipotent necessity was busy laying in wait for me." Moreover, he boasts of "preserving untainted honour" with her "in situations where the austerest virtue would have forgiven a fall." Five years later their correspondence resumes, and even then Burns calls on her to avoid "cold language" in favour of "such sentiments" as she knows will delight him.

Burns's rupture with Robert Liddell and his sister-in-law Maria Riddell is of a different nature. Riddell is a politically liberal country landowner with an interest in Scottish folk song who likes to have Burns among his guests. He and the poet run a lending library, for which Peter Hill supplies the books. Maria, the wife of Robert Liddell's brother Walter, is a travel writer and composer of verse with whom Burns establishes a close friendship while her husband is temporarily absent in the West Indies. One day in December 1793, at a dinner given by Robert Liddell, Burns and other male guests, under the influence of alcohol, become so rambunctious – they are reported to have acted out the rape of the Sabines too realistically – that the host breaks off his friendship with the poet, and his sister-in-law follows suit. Burns's remorseful letter of apology to Robert's wife, which includes the claim "Your husband, who insisted on my drinking more than I chose, has no right to blame me" – is not accepted. When Burns next meets Maria, her reception of him is such that he can write, "'Tis true, madam, I saw you once since I was at Woodley; and that once froze the very life-blood of my heart." Four months later, unreconciled with Burns, Robert Riddell dies, and the stricken poet composes what he calls "a small but heart-felt tribute to the memory of the *man I loved*." When Maria, with whom in the past he has been on such familiar terms that he can tease her for her caprice, refuses to pardon him, he abuses her to Mrs. M'Lehose, accusing her of "some scandalous conduct" to himself and other men and tells how he has pinned to her carriage the lines

If you rattle along like your mistress's tongue,  
Your speed will outrival the dart;  
But, a fly for your load you'll break down on the road,  
If your stuff be as rotten's her heart.

About a year after the rupture, Maria relents, and Burns is soon critiquing her verses, telling her of his own literary labours, and advising her how to promote the career of a young male protégé.

It is fortunate the friendship with Maria Riddell is restored, for a correspondence which Burns has described as "one of the most supreme of my sublunary enjoyments" is about to come to a sudden end. From Ayrshire, from Edinburgh, from his farm, from Dumfries, he exchanges letters with

Mrs. Frances Dunlop for eight years. They discuss poetry, religion, and the vicissitudes of their lives and families and commiserate with each other over their misfortunes. Burns names one of his sons Francis Wallace, Wallace being Mrs. Dunlop's maiden name. But in January 1795, mindless of her two French émigré sons-in-law and the soldiers in her family, he belittles a denunciation of the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Going to the opposite extreme from Horace Walpole's, he charges Louis with stupidity (hardly a capital offence) and perjury and stigmatizes his Queen as a prostitute devoid of principles. To Burns's sorrow – he protests, "what sin of ignorance I have committed against so highly valued a friend I am utterly at a loss to guess" – Mrs. Dunlop breaks off relations and he hears no more from her until, in 1796, she sends him a kindly message as he is dying.

Like most liberals who sympathize with the American rebels – he sees them as re-enacting the role of those who brought about the Glorious Revolution against James II in 1688 – Burns goes on to welcome the initial uprising of the downtrodden French people in 1789. He is living, however, in a time of repressive government and soon has to defend himself against the charge of siding with the violent extremists across the English Channel. As a public employee in the Excise, he is vulnerable to political accusations that can take away the livelihood on which his family depends. At the beginning of 1793, he excoriates, in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, "the miscreant who can deliberately plot the destruction of an honest man that never offended him; and with a grin of satisfaction see the unfortunate being, his faithful wife and prattling innocents, turned over to beggary and ruin." A few days later, referring to events of the previous November, he writes to his patron Robert Graham, "As to France, I was her enthusiastic votary in the beginning of the business. When she came to shew her old avidity for conquest by annexing Savoy and invading the rights of Holland, I altered my sentiments." His letter explains that the reform he supports for Britain is a return to the principles of the Glorious Revolution, now perverted, especially by "an alarming system of corruption" that "has pervaded the connection between the Executive and the House of Commons." When the revolutionary regime threatens to invade Britain, he joins the Dumfries Volunteers and furnishes them with the defiant chant "Does Haughty Gaul Invasion Threat?" It includes the lines

For never but by British hands  
Maun British wrangs be righted!

As a democrat, Burns expresses indignation throughout his life at the arrogance displayed by many – by no means all – of the upper class. From

his farm, he writes with disgust to Mrs. Dunlop of one aspect of Edinburgh life:

When I must skulk into a corner, lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead, contemptible puppy, or detestable scoundrel should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim – “What merits have these wretches had, or what demerits have I had, in some state of Pre-existence, that they are ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule and the key of riches in their puny fists; and I am kicked into the world, the sport of their folly or the victim of their pride?”

Burns repeatedly insists that he will not make his way by flattering the great, and he despises the servility of those – including Jean Armour’s father – who humbly pay court to him when he first returns from Edinburgh to Mauchline as a famous man. He may be slightly open to Dr. Johnson’s charge that egalitarians want to be on the level of their superiors but are unwilling to treat their inferiors as equals. “I have ever looked on Mankind in the lump,” he declares to Mrs. Dunlop, “to be nothing better than a foolish, headstrong, credulous, unthinking mob.” He is at his best when he refers to “a just idea of that respect that man owes to man, and has a right in his turn to exact.” He is at his worst when he claims that the wellbeing and happiness of the beloved is his first concern in an amour, but that this may not be so when its object belongs to the common mass of women, who lack the capacity for that divine love which “has powers equal to all the intellectual Modulations of the Human Soul.”

It is evident that Mrs. Dunlop is a pious woman, and Burns several times writes to her, as to others, about his own view of religion. Although he is at war with the orthodox party in the Presbyterian Kirk, he admires its more moderate and modern clergy and insists that religion is necessary to him and others, and that it is rooted in the reverential and benevolent feelings of the heart, not in the intellect. “I hate,” he insists to Mrs. M’Lehose, “the very idea of a controversial divinity; as I firmly believe that every honest upright man, of whatever sect, will be accepted of the Deity.” When William McGill, one of the Ayrshire clergymen he esteems, is charged by his colleagues with heresy, the poet announces to Mrs. Dunlop his intention of deploying his satirical powers against “those ghostly beasts of prey who foul the hallowed ground of Religion with their nocturnal prowlings.” It is characteristic of the struggle between his religious feelings – strengthened by the “elevation of soul” the seasonal phenomena of nature bring him – and the sceptical thoughts his reason induces that he wavers on whether there is an afterlife. On 6 September 1789, he admits to Mrs. Dunlop that

he has been shocked by the thought of his own past temerity in doubting its reality, but on 13 December following, he confesses to the same lady: “If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the benevolent, the amiable and the humane; what a flattering idea, then, is a world to come! Would to God I as firmly believed it, as I ardently wish it.”

In spite of his vices – excessive drinking (for which he is apt to blame the “savage hospitality” to which he is subject), occasional vindictiveness, and philandering – Burns prides himself on his honesty and independence. He rejects the orthodox clergy’s Calvinist belief in the thoroughgoing corruption of human nature and holds that the benevolence nearly all are born with is ground down by hard experience:

Mankind are by nature benevolent creatures, except in a few scoundrelly instances. I do not think that avarice of the good things we chance to have, is born with us; but we are placed here amid so much nakedness, and hunger, and poverty, and want, that we are under a cursed necessity of studying selfishness, in order that we may exist!

Burns’s letters sometimes show his own benevolence in action. He urgently solicits help for James Clarke, a schoolmaster he believes has been quite unjustly accused of excessive severity and lends him money. When the remuneration of a labourer is in question, he insists that he cannot see a poor man suffer at his hand. The callous and illegal shooting of a hare out of season excites his indignation and compassion. Pity as well as guilt plays some part in the urgency with which he begs his friend Robert Ainslie to take immediate help to a servant girl who is carrying his child and may be starving.

Although he believes that religion springs from the heart, Burns brings reason to bear in his criticism of Presbyterian orthodoxy. He especially deplores the teaching that only faith contributes to the individual’s salvation since human depravity makes it impossible to earn it by the merits of one’s life. With delicious irony, he writes to his Mauchline friend the lawyer Gavin Hamilton:

Above all things, as I understand you are in the habits of intimacy with that Boanerges of gospel powers, Father Auld, be earnest with him that he will wrestle in prayer for you, that you may see the vanity of vanities in trusting to, or even practising, the carnal moral works of charity, humanity, generosity, and forgiveness.

Here Burns is unfair, at least to the official theology of the Kirk, according to which a virtuous life is one necessary sign that a person possesses the faith that saves.

In the course of his struggle against the adversities of life that, he holds, weigh down inborn goodness, Burns is animated by his two most enduring passions—for his family and for poetry. His own taste in literature is formed early and is characteristic of the period into which he is born. As the eighteenth century advances, there is a shift away from stress on rationality and adherence to the neoclassical rules deduced by Renaissance scholars from works by Aristotle and Horace. Instead, there is a focus on introspection, the benevolent element in human nature, primitive societies, the supernatural, and powerful emotions such as the awe evoked by sublime scenery and noble works of art. When Mrs. Dunlop sends Dryden's translation of Virgil's works to Burns, he is delighted by the former's poem on agriculture, the *Georgics*, but finds in the *Aeneid* the dullness of "Faultless correctness" and sees its author as all too often "a servile copier of Homer." Alongside the English neo-classical masters Pope and Addison, he likes to cite such exhibitors of the new trends as Edward Young, Thomas Gray, William Collins, Laurence Sterne, and William Cowper, as well as his countrymen James Thomson, Henry Mackenzie, and James Beattie. Pleasingly, he acclaims Cowper's blank verse masterpiece *The Task* as "a glorious poem" and even finds its religion, "bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity," to be "the religion of God and Nature—the religion that exalts, that ennobles man." His respect for his immediate precursors in the composition of Scots poems, Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson, approaches adoration.

A major strand of Burns's correspondence concerns his aspirations and practice as a poet and as a preserver of the heritage of Scottish song. In letters written over fourteen years, he records his feelings as he matures from an amateur versifier into the successor of Ramsay and Fergusson and a national figure who is welcome at the tables of landowners and noblemen.

In his early days in Edinburgh, Burns is sure his new fame exceeds what his talent deserves. While still farming, he writes to his early admirer John Moore:

The character and employment of a poet were formerly my pleasure, but are now my pride.... I have not a doubt but the knack, the aptitude, to learn the Muses' trade, is a gift bestowed by Him "who forms the secret bias of the soul"; but I as firmly believe that *excellence* in the profession is the fruit of industry, labour, attention, and pains ... poesy I am determined to prosecute with all my vigour.

Ten months later, he declares to the sister of his loyal patron the Earl of Glencairn, "to be a poet is my highest Ambition, my dearest Wish, and my unwearied study."

In 1787, Burns meets the engraver James Johnson in Edinburgh and rejoices to become a contributor to his *Scots Musical Museum*, for which he begins to collect, revise, and compose poems. Later he adds to his labours by fitting lyrics, his own and others', to music for *A Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs*, which is being compiled by George Thomson, a government clerk, who proves a more argumentative editor than Johnson. In his disagreements with Thomson, Burns asserts, "Of the poetry I speak with confidence; but the music is a business where I hint my ideas with the utmost diffidence." He warns Thomson that the demands of the tune will not allow all the lyrics to be first class poetry: "There is a peculiar rhythmus in many of our airs, and a necessity of adapting syllables to the emphasis, or what I would call the *feature-notes* of the tune, that cramp the poet, and lay him under almost insuperable difficulties." Motivated by a zealous patriotism, Burns feels that to accept payment for his contributions to the two anthologies would be "downright *sodomy of soul*." His love of his country is rooted in a childhood devotion to the memory of the national hero William Wallace, whose story, he says, "poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins which will boil along there, till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest."

Burns is very anxious that, in his words, "our national music preserve its native features." He delightedly claims: "There is a *naïveté*, a pastoral simplicity, in a slight intermixture of Scots words and phraseology, which is more in unison ... with the simple pathos or rustic sprightliness of our native music, than any English verses whatever." Thomson, he complains, is too inclined to sacrifice simplicity.

One charming passage describes Burns's manner of composing verses to fit a tune:

My way is: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression, then choose my theme, begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around me that are in unison or harmony with the cogitations of my fancy, and workings of my bosom; humming every now and then the air, with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fireside of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper; swinging at intervals on the hind legs of my elbow chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures, as my pen goes on.



How closely Burns works over his verse is evident from his caution that “by the time one has finished a piece, it has been so often viewed and reviewed before the mental eye, that one loses in a good measure the powers of critical discrimination.” He is anxious that inferior verse should not appear under his name and early laments to Mrs. Dunlop that “my success has encouraged such a shoal of ill-spawned monsters to crawl into public notice under the title of Scots Poets that the very term, Scots Poetry, borders on the burlesque.”

Burns’s many letters to James Johnson and George Thomson contrast pleasantly with letters that tell of his periods of depression, his illnesses and accidents, his quarrels and debts, his grief at the death of his only legitimate daughter, and his fear that he himself will perish and leave his wife and sons penniless. He does die early, in July 1796, at the age of thirty-seven, not knowing that his admirers will raise a subscription to support his family.

Robert Burns recognizes that he is a man driven by his emotions. He writes to Margaret Chalmers, one of the cultured ladies whose friendship he cherishes:

I lie so miserably open to the inroads and incursions of a mischievous, light-armed, well-mounted banditti, under the banners of imagination, whim, caprice, and passion; and the heavy-armed veteran regulars of wisdom, prudence, and forethought move so very, very slow, that I am almost in a state of perpetual warfare, and, alas! frequent defeat.

Although the occasion of this confession is only a belated letter, Burns is not entirely joking when he complains to a London editor about the uncomfortableness of conscience:

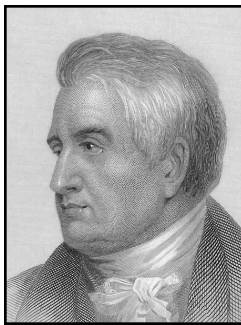
Had the troublesome yelping cur powers efficient to prevent a mischief, he might be of use; but at the beginning of the business, his feeble efforts are, to the workings of passion, as the infant frosts of an autumnal morning to the unclouded fervour of the rising sun; and no sooner are the tumultuous doings of the wicked deed over, than amidst the bitter native consequences of folly in the very vortex of our horrors, up starts conscience, and harrows us with the feelings of the damned.

Yet if his emotions constitute the most powerful element in his makeup, and he can complain that “the poetic mind finds itself miserably deranged in, and unfit for the walks of business,” he is able to master the mathematics and mensuration he needs to qualify as an Excise officer and then serve

efficiently in the role. The complexity of this writer enriches his epistolary self-portrait, in which his figure stands out against the background of a divided Kirk, a repressive government, and a heroic if often tragic national history.



**HE LOVES LIBERTY—BUT NOT TOO  
MUCH OF IT**  
**SYDNEY SMITH (1771-1845)**



While strong emotions flood many of Robert Burns's letters, a cool wit gives life and charm to most of Sydney Smith's. Their attractiveness increases as he advances from obscurity as a young curate and tutor to fame as a polemicist and a renowned wit. His collected correspondence has the structure of a funnel. Beginning with his reports on the two sons of the parliamentarian Michael Hicks Beach, whom he successively lives with and instructs in Edinburgh, it expands to cover, first, his

engagement with figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, and then his close involvement with the English Whig aristocracy and the causes they promote, and his public foray into the politics of the Anglican Church.

During his residence in Edinburgh from 1798 to 1803, Smith forms friendships with Francis Jeffrey and other intellectuals: together they found the *Edinburgh Review*, which becomes the leading liberal journal in Britain, a kingdom that still suffers from a paranoid fear that even mild reforms can lead in time to atrocities akin to those of the French Revolution. In 1803, as a recently married man and a new father, he reluctantly leaves the Scottish capital in search of support for his growing family, and moves to London. Here he preaches, gives highly popular lectures on moral philosophy, and is soon in demand as a captivating guest at dinner parties. Before long, he is intimate at Holland House, the social centre of the Whigs, whose reformist zeal he shares. Late in the decade, Lord Grey, the future Whig Prime Minister, and his wife come to be among his closest friends. Soon after Smith publishes anonymously in 1807 and 1808 his *Peter Plimley Letters*, in which he marshals reason and ridicule to oppose the civil disabilities imposed on Roman Catholics, his authorship is an open secret. He continues to contribute unsigned articles to the *Edinburgh Review*.

Besides the satisfaction of his work and social life, Smith is blessed with happiness in his family: he seems, indeed, to have found his niche. Then something very like tragedy strikes. Having been endowed with the living of Foston in Yorkshire in 1806, he employs a curate to serve that northern parish. In 1808, however, a new Archbishop of York insists he must make his home there. For the rest of his life, his letters are dotted with complaints about the monotony of rural existence and his lack of companions who can converse on his own level. Yet he is resilient enough to develop an interest in agriculture, to continue writing on behalf of liberal causes, and to make the most of his annual three months' leave of absence to visit friends and relatives in London and elsewhere as far as his income allows.

Although Smith likes to complain that he is a poor man—"I thank God," he writes, "who has made me poor, that he has made me merry"—when his pleas for a more congenial clerical post have proved fruitless for about three years, he has a house built under his personal supervision, and he feels he has succeeded in "making a snug parsonage." This dwelling, he reassures Lord and Lady Grey, who are about to visit, has already accommodated the four Leycesters, with their five servants and five horses. While liking the house itself, he complains to Francis Jeffrey in December 1814, "the expense of it will keep me a very poor man, a close prisoner here for my life." But in January 1828, just after Emily, his younger daughter, marries the promising lawyer George Hibbert, he is given a prebend at Bristol. As a member of the chapter responsible for the Cathedral, he now enjoys the benefit of "an extremely comfortable" house, where he can rejoice in the "masts of West-Indiamen seen from the windows." He plans to spend every winter in the city.

In April 1829, the fragile health of his greatly cherished elder son, Douglas, whose acquisition of a love of books has delighted him, finally gives way. "It is the first real misfortune," he declares to his friend Mrs. Meynell, "which ever befell me." He writes this from Combe Florey in Somersetshire, having been able to exchange Foston for this southern parish.

After Catholic Emancipation is achieved in 1829, Smith turns his attention to his friend Lord Grey's campaign to extend and rationalize Parliamentary representation. Before the Reform Bill is passed in 1832, Smith is advanced to a much richer and more prestigious prebend at St. Paul's Cathedral. His happiness increases in 1834 when Saba, his elder daughter, marries a widower with three children, the much esteemed physician and travel writer Henry Holland. The new prebend allows Smith to spend much more time in his beloved London, where he is able to buy a house in 1835 and a superior one—"the essence of all that is comfortable" he calls it—four years after. The later causes he takes up are the claim of the Roman Catholic priests of Ireland to public funding, the defence of the

lower clergy of his own Church against the bullying of bishops, opposition to voting by secret ballot, and the denunciation of several American states that are defaulting on their debts. In 1839, he publishes his *Works*, including many fine articles from the *Edinburgh Review*, in three volumes. "The Liberal journals praise me to the skies," he tells one correspondent; "the Tories are silent, grateful for my attack upon the Ballot." (He argues that there is far less intimidation of voters than is supposed, and he is writing before a method is devised to combine a ballot with an opportunity for a recount.) Two years before his own decease in February 1845, his estranged younger brother Courtenay dies and leaves a large fortune, of which he rejoices to inherit a third.

The playful strand in Smith's letters reflects the element in his personality that makes his presence in company so valued. His famous wit erupts in wordplay. In his early days at Combe Florey, he writes to a Yorkshire friend, "The only acquaintance I have made here is the clerk of the parish, a very sensible man, with great *amenity of disposition*"; and when Emily, now Mrs. Holland, visits with her family, he informs Mrs. Grote, "My house is, as I tell my daughter, as full of Hollands as a gin-shop." Less innocently, he points out to Lord Holland that if Samuel Rogers's given name is considered as a noun and its surname as a verb, it takes on a bawdy meaning. That he could suggest Lady Holland pass on to her husband his observation that despite her commendable personality Lady Louis Petty lacks the fine legs of Lady Elizabeth Fielding suggests that prudery was not allowed to cramp the friends' humour.

Humour, indeed, is everywhere in Smith's letters. Readers meet it in his turns of phrase, his observations, and the incidents he narrates. From London he will send his book of sermons to Lady Grey in Northumberland "conceiving that in so remote a part of England, theology is not to be had so pure as here." A London rout (a large evening party) is a "scene of simplicity, truth, and nature." When Mrs. Grote decides to attend one of his services in St. Paul's, he warns her, "Do not flatter yourself with the delusive hope of a slumber; I preach violently, and there is a strong smell of sulphur in my sermons." In this and other instances, he delights to tease his correspondents. Notified that his son-in-law Dr. Holland is about to visit, he assures him there is plenty of illness in the neighbourhood, so he has bought a new doorknocker, and just before his daughter Saba's wedding, he announces to Lady Grey, "We are all well, and mean to be in town by the 19th of next month. There is a report that we are going to be married, but I know nothing about it." On the death of the Vicar of Edmonton in 1843, Smith, by virtue of his office in St. Paul's, has the right to take or give away the living. The late Vicar's family is extremely needy and in terror of being ejected from the Vicarage. Smith describes to his wife how he has vis-

ited them, told them he has disposed of the living, and only very gradually revealed that the person he has bestowed it on is the deceased Vicar's son.

Alongside his humour, Smith exercises in his letters the capacity for lucid reasoning and clear argument that distinguishes his polemics. When the former Lord Chief Justice, Lord Denman, introduces a Bill to allow an affirmation to be accepted in the law courts as an alternative to an oath, Smith writes to him:

All that the Legislature ought to inquire is whether this scruple is now become so common as to cause the frequent interruption of justice. This admitted, the remedy ought to follow as a matter of course. We are to get the best evidence for establishing truth, — not the best evidence *we can imagine*, but the best evidence *we can procure*; and if you cannot get oath, you must put up with affirmation, as far better than no evidence at all.

One of Smith's favourite words in his letters is "agreeable": books, meals, events, and above all people can be "agreeable." An easy-going "agreeable" life would certainly have appealed to the Rev. Sydney Smith. "Nobody, I assure you," he writes to Lord Holland, "is more desirous of living at ease than I am," and he holds that Seneca's preaching on the contempt of wealth is "intolerable nonsense." However, his compassion and sense of justice, as well as a reasonableness more characteristic of the eighteenth than the nineteenth century, make him consciously sacrifice his hopes of preferment by championing liberal causes in a reactionary period.

As a conscientious young clergyman, Smith is struck on his arrival in Edinburgh by the seriousness of its religious life. He informs his student's mother:

In Scotland the clergy are extremely active in the discharge of their functions, and are, from the hold they have on the minds of the people, a very important body of men. The common people are extremely conversant with the Scriptures; are really not so much pupils as formidable critics to their preachers: many of them are well read in controversial divinity.

He notes a contrasting situation in the country he has come from: "In England I maintain (except amongst ladies in the middle class of life) there is no religion at all."

In spite of these remarks, Smith throughout his life has no use for "controversial divinity." One of his complaints against bishops is that they are addicted to "useless Theology." In 1837, he protests that there is not an unorthodox passage in all his writings: "I have always avoided specula-

tive, and preached practical, religion." He shuns both irrational intrusions into the faith and the notion that God is cruel or bullying. Those clergy who discover in the Prophets forecasts of events in the French Revolution he denounces for driving reasonable men away from religion, and he chides some acquaintances who are becoming "a little more Methodistical":

I endeavour in vain to give them more cheerful ideas of religion; to teach them that God is not a jealous, childish, merciless tyrant; that he is best served by a regular tenour of good actions, — not by bad singing, ill-composed prayers, and eternal apprehensions. But the luxury of false religion is, to be unhappy.

Abstract theology seems to Smith a net in which he prefers not to be caught. Similarly, an element of northern life that disturbs him is the addiction to theoretical speculation. To Francis Jeffrey, he objects that Scottish philosophers

pursue truth, without caring if it be *useful* truth. They are more fond of disputing on mind and matter than on anything which can have a reference to the real world, inhabited by real men, women, and children; a philosopher that descends to the present state of things is debased in their estimation.

His aversion to abstraction does not prevent Smith in his later years from taking pleasure in inviting men and women to what he calls "a philosophical breakfast": "Nothing taken for granted! Everything (except the Thirty-nine Articles) called in question — real philosophers!"

When his concentration on "practical religion" leads to the accusation that he is a Socinian, his distaste for its Unitarianism oozes out onto the page as he owns to Lady Grey that he has an instinctive attachment to the Trinity. If he adheres to religious tradition, however, it is largely to the heavily rational eighteenth century tradition exemplified by Swift and Montagu. Accordingly, in his last years, he is a zealous opponent of the Puseyite movement to promote more ceremonial forms of worship and bring the Church of England closer to the highly authoritarian Church of Rome. Fearing that her prolonged residence at Rome may lead his friend Lady Davy to succumb to Catholic proselytizers, he adjures her, "Only promise me that you will not give up, till you have subjected their arguments to my examination, and given me a chance of reply." To the author Harriet Martineau, he writes in 1842:

I am just now come from London, where I have been doing duty at St. Paul's, and preaching against the Puseyites — I. Because



they lessen the aversion to the Catholic faith, and the admiration of Protestantism, which I think one of the greatest improvements the world ever made. II. They inculcate the preposterous surrender of the understanding to bishops. III. They make religion an affair of trifles, of postures, and of garments.

Hostile as he is to the doctrines and practices of Dissenters and Catholics, he is also a fierce enemy of the dark cloud which the law spreads over their lives, and he strives for its dispersion. He protests that Dissenters are prevented from being married except by Anglican clergymen in a ceremony in which they are compelled to repeat and appear to accept doctrines they believe to be unbiblical. Although he classifies Methodists among “fanatics and bigots,” he promises his editor, Francis Jeffrey, an article in which he will attack the legal cruelty imposed on them. He is horrified that the number of offices from which Catholics are excluded amounts to “thirty-five or forty thousand.”

Some of the most stubborn opposition to Catholic emancipation comes from the Anglican Church. Smith finds many of his fellow clerics viciously illiberal. “We have had meetings of the clergy here,” he informs Lady Holland in 1813, “upon the subject of the Catholic question, but none in my district; if there be, I shall certainly give my solitary voice in favour of religious liberty, and shall probably be tossed in a blanket for my pains.” He observes how uncommon in the Church is the sacrifice he has reluctantly made, namely relinquishing the prospect of advancement in order to be faithful to a principle. To Lord Holland, he remarks how hard it is for a priest to remain true to his conscience – as few do – and still support his children. Perhaps most damning is his confession to his friend Lady Mary Bennet concerning the prison reformer Elizabeth Fry: “She is very unpopular with the clergy: examples of living, active virtue disturb our repose, and give birth to distressing comparisons: we long to burn her alive.”

Such an opinion of the lower clergy pales before the majestic scorn that Smith bestows on the majority of bishops. In 1820, when most of them oppose George IV’s attempt to divorce his Queen, he writes to Francis Jeffrey of the strange appearance of honesty and principle among them, and in 1837 he declares, “Pretended heterodoxy is the plea with which Bishops endeavoured to keep off the bench every man of spirit and independence.” On the death of William Otter, Bishop of Chichester, he commends the deceased for being “as liberal as a bishop is permitted to be.” Waging ecclesiastical class warfare, he defends the lower clergy against the oppression of the Bench in his *Letter to Archdeacon Singleton*, and in an open letter to *The Times*, a masterpiece of bitter argument, he assails Charles Blomfield, Bishop of London. When Blomfield is impudent enough

to contrast the comparative poverty of the lower clergy with the far worse poverty that surrounds them, Smith is able to point to the lavish fortunes and residences enjoyed by bishops. Afterwards he admits to Mary Berry, "I was sorry to be forced to give [Blomfield] such a beating, but he was very saucy and deserved it."

Politically, from first to last, Sydney Smith is firmly in the liberal tradition followed by Horace Walpole. Moreover, his pessimism during the conflict with Napoleon mirrors Walpole's pessimism during the Seven Years War and the American War of Independence. Even when Wellington is winning battles in Spain, Smith feels sure his successes are bringing only a temporary respite. In 1809, he prophesies to Francis Jeffrey, "though the struggle will be long, the greater chance surely is that this country will at length be involved in the general ruin." Two years further on, he laments to the same friend, "Can any sensible man, — any human being but a little trumpery parson, — believe that we shall not be swallowed up? It is folly not to gather up a little, while it is yet possible, and to go to America."

Like Walpole and so many other Britons, Smith prizes his country as the home of liberty. At the beginning of 1813, he confides to the Scottish physician John Allen his fear that "everything is fast setting in for arbitrary power. The Court will grow bolder and bolder." Later, while admitting to the prominent Whig John Wisham that "Church and King in moderation are very good things," he adds, "but we have too much of both." In 1817, when the prosecution of a group of radicals for High Treason fails, he informs Lord Grey that he is pleased, though his Yorkshire neighbours are not, and in the same year he firmly agrees with Lord Holland's opposition to the suspension of Habeas Corpus. Not surprisingly, he is indignant at "the enormity of the outrage" on learning of the deaths of eleven people in the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 when the Manchester magistrates provoke resistance from a mass meeting at St. Peter's Fields by having the radical speaker Henry Hunt arrested. Smith is a vocal opponent of the Game Laws, by which "men of large fortune put men of no fortune in prison on account of partridges."

Part of the unrest in the new industrial cities like Manchester and Birmingham arises from the outdated electoral pattern, which leaves them unrepresented. There are fifty-seven "rotten boroughs" — constituencies with few voters, who are often easily influenced or intimidated — but so angry is much of the population and so resistant is the House of Lords to Lord Grey's attempt at reform, that there is much fear of rebellion. Early in 1831, Smith writes to Lord Holland's son, "I see nobody between Lord Grey and revolution," and he tells another correspondent that some peers, fearful of the mob, are boarding up their windows. Lord Holland learns how an audience in Somerset was delighted by his "glowing harangue"

in March in support of Lord Grey's Reform Bill; in October he delivers another on the same subject in the same place and is astonished at the result: "I had no idea Mrs. Partington [nickname of the harangue in question] would make such a fortune; I sent my speech to nobody, but it was copied into the 'Times.'" He believes that Britain should restrict her efforts to her own reform, and in 1823 disagrees with those who want to give military aid to Spaniards rising against an oppressive government: "Why are the English," he asks, "to be the sole vindicators of the human race?"

Staunch Whig as he is, Smith is ready to mix with supporters of other parties. After staying with Lord Ashburton, he writes, "To be in a Tory house is like being in another planet," and he observes of his very left wing friends the Grotes, "She is very clever and very odd. Grote is a reasonable and reasoning Radical, with manners a little formal but very polished." Yet Smith, driven partly by his compassion for the poor and his sense of justice, partly by fear of revolution and mob violence, detests the Radical programme as heartily as he deplores Tory resistance to change. To him, William Cobbett (who has, indeed, many reprehensible prejudices) is "that consummate villain" and Daniel O'Connell, who seeks the repeal of the Act of Union of 1800 that deprived Ireland of its own Parliament, is "that Scoundrel." The doctrine that all men are equal he denounces as "pernicious cant." In 1842, encountering the Chartists' campaign for something like twentieth century democracy, he almost splutters on paper as he writes to Lady Grey, "the mob have got hold, under the name of Chartism, of some plan for political innovation; but that plan is so foolish, that I do not think it will be long-lived." He cannot help, however, admitting "that a considerable portion of what these rascals say, is so very true." In keeping with his distinction between Catholicism and Catholics and between Dissent and Dissenters, he commends his friend Sir George Philips, a Manchester cotton magnate, for behaviour "very manly and respectable, in advocating the cause of the poor democrats, who by their knavery and folly are very contemptible, but are not therefore to be abandoned to their oppressors." As a distant observer, he is fascinated by the United States of America's experiment of living without an established church, a monarchy, or an aristocracy. "I doubt," he states to Francis Jeffrey in 1818, "if there ever was an instance of a new people conducting their affairs with so much wisdom, or if there ever was such an extensive scene of human happiness and prosperity."

That Smith instinctively recoils from the thought of the gallows is evident from his report to Lady Holland: "Conceive the horror of fourteen men hung yesterday! And yet it is difficult to blame the Judges for it, though it would be some relief to be able to blame them." The sentence is for a murder that arose from Luddite attacks on machinery that put men

out of work. But faced with mob violence, Smith can be severe. When there is rioting in Bristol during the struggle to pass the Reform Bill, he counsels Lady Grey:

Pray do not be good-natured about Bristol. I must have ten people hanged, and twenty transported, and thirty imprisoned; it is absolutely necessary to give the multitude a severe blow, for their conduct at Bristol has been most atrocious. You will save lives by it in the end. There is no plea of want, as there was in the agricultural riots.

Smith seems to have no more sympathy with Luddites than with Chartists. Surprisingly, he takes an illiberal stand when a Factory Act to limit working hours is proposed. He admits that there may be a case for regulating the conditions under which children are employed, but protests to Lady Grey: "it does seem to be absurd to hinder a woman of thirty from working as long as she pleases; but mankind are getting mad with humanity and Samaritanism." The provision for a ten-hour day draws from him the response, "I am a decided duodecimalist." How well informed is he about working conditions in the factories?

Though he is an ardent advocate of the 1832 Reform Bill, which greatly extends the franchise, Smith admits to a little nervousness at the prospect of "such extensive changes," and after the Act is passed, he declares, "I am for no more movements." While he rejoices at Lord Grey's success, he points out, "the consequences of giving so much power to the people have not yet been tried at a period of bad harvest and checked manufactures." "I love liberty," he admits to the Scottish judge J. A. Murray, "but hope it can be so managed that I shall have soft beds, good dinners, fine linen, etc. for the rest of my life."

The Factory Act of 1847 is carried under the Prime Ministership of the Tory Sir Robert Peel. In 1844, Smith has announced, "Sir Robert Peel and I have made friends." This is not very surprising since less than two years before he has declared, "I believe Peel to be a philosopher disguised in a Tory fool's-cap, who will do everything by slow degrees which the Whigs proposed to do at once." Moreover, Smith is a convivial man who makes many friends and whose company is much prized. His conversation is evidently as memorable as his letters, but there is one kind of person he is loath to meet. Declining an invitation, he objects to the presence of a killjoy:

At the sight of —, away fly gaiety, ease, carelessness, happiness. Effusions are checked, faces are puckered up; coldness, formality, and reserve are diffused over the room, and the social temperature falls down to zero.

Smith discloses more than once that he is liable to depression and that loneliness is to him a poison. When he is with others, however, he spreads good cheer. His small daughter Saba tells her mother (as the lady records in a letter to Francis Jeffrey), "you are so melancholy and so dull because papa is away; he is so merry, that he makes us all gay." There is every indication in his letters that his marriage is happy, and his many female friendships and observations on good-looking women appear to be innocent. On one occasion, he writes to Lady Morley, "Mrs. Sydney allows me to accept the present you sent me." He depends much on company both within and outside his family. After his daughter Emily marries, he laments to Lady Grey, "I feel as if I had lost a Limb and was walking about with one Leg," and when her sister follows suit six years later he teases the same correspondent, "I shall advertise for a daughter; I cannot possibly get on without a daughter." But his sons-in-law become his good friends, and their visits, along with their wives and children, alleviate the privations of his life in the country.

After he is banished from London to Yorkshire, Smith writes to his correspondents about his struggle to reconcile himself to rural life. He tells how he begins to include agricultural books in his reading and to take an interest in gardening. He is appointed a Justice of the Peace, and in 1820 he details his many activities to Lord Holland: "I have also played my part in the usual manner, as doctor, justice, pacifier, preacher, farmer, neighbour, and diner-out." Yet he cannot help pining for the clash of minds, play of wit, and good dinners to be enjoyed among the Whig luminaries and city intelligentsia. He remembers "that there was a Metropolis; that there were wits, chemists, poets, splendid feasts, and captivating women." Although for the rest of his life his letters from the country mention with some concern the state of the harvest along with droughts, downpours and heat-waves, his complaint "I am losing my life and time in thinking and talking of bulls, cows, horses, and sheep" is characteristic.

With his move to Combe Florey, Smith does find some improvement. Here, he is forced to admit, the country has an amazing beauty – so much so that he can refer to the "little paradise" he and his wife are blessed with. Even so, it is a grievance that "there is no man within twenty miles who knows anything of history, of angles, or of the mind." When his son-in-law Hibbert ends a visit, he has "no one to argue with." After three months' residence, even the natural splendours of Combe Florey fade, and eventually he feels he is condemned to survive on "commonplaces and truisms" until he can escape back to London. His efforts to transform his taste are in vain. "I do all I can," he confides to Lady Holland, "to love the country, and endeavour to believe those poetical lies which I read in [Samuel] Rogers and

others, on the subject; which said deviations from truth were, by Rogers, all written in St. James's-place."

Although he reads extensively, Smith devotes little time to poetry and is completely oblivious to the greatness of the Romantic movement which buds and blossoms in his lifetime. He endorses Francis Jeffrey's critical demolition of Wordsworth and Coleridge, but feels that once the job has been done the victims should be spared further assaults. "I have not read the review of Wordsworth," he informs Jeffrey in 1814, "because the subject is to me so very uninteresting; but, may I ask, was it worth while to take any more notice of a man respecting whom the public opinion is completely made up? do not such repeated attacks upon a man wear in some little degree the shape of persecution?" Similarly, he observes to Murray, "Jeffrey has thrashed [Coleridge] happily and deservedly;—but is it not time now to lay up his cudgel?"

Smith, who loves to recommend books to his friends, is readily drawn to history, biography, and accounts of travel. He reads a little fiction, principally the novels of Scott, which he seems to arrange on a scale according to merit. "When I get hold of one of these novels," he confesses, "turnips, sermons, and justice-business are all forgotten." His view of fiction is seen in his comment that *The Bride of Lammermoor* is superior to the work of other novelists though not up to Scott's usual standard. Dickens he takes to with the appearance of that author's third novel, *Nicholas Nickleby*, admitting to Sir George Philips, "I stood out against Mr. Dickens as long as I could, but he has conquered me." He makes the acquaintance of this new luminary and enjoys accepting an invitation from him, unless "I am invited by any man of greater genius than yourself."

Late in life, Smith states, "I have no imagination myself, but am deeply in admiration of those who have." Perhaps he is thinking of Scott and Dickens. Notable correspondent as he is, he has little power of evoking scenes in his reader's mind. However, when in 1826 he can at last afford to fulfil his long thwarted ambition to visit Paris, the letters that he writes daily to his wife convey an idea of the spaciousness of the streets and the splendour of the buildings. After beholding the Duke of Orleans's palace, he decides that "*magnificence* must be scratched out of our dictionary." What seems to impress him equally is the superior manners of the French. "I have not seen a cobbler," he asserts, echoing Lord Chesterfield, "who is not better bred than an English gentleman." He has criticisms as well as praise—the street lighting is poor at night, there are sharp stones in the pavements, and the carrying of supposed holy relics in procession is "absurd, disgraceful, and ridiculous." He longs to show the city to his wife and in 1835 does so.

While Smith's descriptive skill is limited, his thumbnail sketches of characters can be trenchant. He depicts the Bishop of Exeter as "hiding shyness, awkwardness and barrenness, by an appearance of bustle, but very good-natured and civil." The American statesman Daniel Webster impresses him as "grand, simple, cold, slow, wise, and good." A lady's eyes "express every soft and amiable virtue, with just as much of wickedness as is necessary to prevent insipidity."

There are numerous characters of whom we are afforded many, if sometimes less revealing, glimpses. The early letters paint comprehensive portraits of Smith's pupils, the brothers Michael and William Beach. Michael is somewhat vain and moody, insubordinate on occasion but well meaning and soon repentant. He has some interest in science but none in literature, and, being free of vices, will, Smith tells his parents, make "a very respectable country gentleman." His younger brother, on the contrary, appears to be an exemplary young man—good humoured, an excellent student, and universally liked. His only fault is a vein of shyness, and Smith assures his mother that her fears of his being led astray when he goes to a university are without foundation.

Of Sydney Smith's own relatives, we hear most of his father and his elder brother Robert, known as Bobus. The former appears to be a difficult man with whom Sydney is in time happily reconciled. Eventually he is able to write to Francis Jeffrey, "My father is one of the very few people I have ever seen improved by age. He is become careless, indulgent, and anacreontic." (The allusion is to Anacreon, an ancient Greek poet who celebrated the pleasures life offers.) To Robert, for whom Sydney has great affection, there are many references, but no clear portrait of him emerges.

Among Smith's friends, it is interesting to find Mary and Agnes Berry, formerly the young friends of the old Horace Walpole, now in their maturity. They are among the bluestockings, a class of women that appeals to Smith, and at their request he arranges for them to meet Dickens. He commends their intelligence and sense, which are apt to be hidden by their restless demeanour, which reminds him of seabirds when a storm is imminent.

In two cases, Smith changes his view of a person prominent in his correspondence. The abilities of Henry Brougham, a young lawyer, a Whig, and a writer who is to contribute to the *Edinburgh Review*, impress him as early as 1803. An ardent opponent of slavery and advocate of widespread education, Brougham goes on to have a notable career in Parliament and serves as Lord Chancellor in Whig governments, but he eventually becomes so unpredictable and unreliable that he antagonizes his colleagues and after 1835 is left out of office. Smith notes in 1818 his capacity for lasting hatreds. In 1825, he is still on good enough terms with Brougham to enjoy staying with him, but a decade later, he terms his conduct insane as he

describes how the ex-Lord Chancellor blabbed inside stories of European politics in a Marseilles restaurant to the astonishment of diners and waiters. He becomes also too radical for Smith, who, while sharing his abhorrence of slavery, accuses him of publishing “democratical” writings and suggests to Lady Grey that if the Devil wanted a vacation he could safely allow Brougham to stand in for him.

The young Smith and the young Brougham are both habitués of Holland House, where Smith develops a strong affection for Lady Holland as well as her husband. He finds her both handsome and clever. In 1810 he declares that he has spent some of his happiest times in her house, and five years later, when she has been long abroad, he pleads with her to return:

Now pray do settle in England, and remain quiet; depend upon it, it is the most agreeable place. I have heard five hundred travelled people assent that there is no such agreeable house in Europe as Holland House: why should you be the last person to be convinced of this, and the first to make it true?

But it gradually becomes apparent that the lady has some defects. She has a distaste for serious articles such as Smith contributes to the *Edinburgh Review*, and she dislikes his much loved brother Bobus and does not hide the fact. In the 1830s, she becomes irrationally terrified of death from heart failure, and after the eminent doctor Sir Benjamin Brodie, following a careful examination, assures her that her circulation is flawless, Smith reports to Lady Grey that he finds the disappointed patient in despair; she begs him to guide her towards the discovery of some alternative ailment, but he steadfastly refuses.

Although Smith retains much affection for Lady Holland, Lady Grey becomes the confidante to whom he discloses her shortcomings. The worst emerges after she becomes a widow in 1840. On one occasion, she insists that Smith give her a dinner when he is alone in London without even a cook, and next month he writes of leaving her complaining to seventeen dinner guests that all her friends have abandoned her. Three months before he dies, while he is receiving medical treatment in London, he regales Lady Grey with a description of how he amuses himself by replying to Lady Holland’s endless questions with ridiculous accounts of his symptoms leading her to pride herself on foreseeing his imminent demise.

The most obvious attraction of Sydney Smith’s letters is the wit and humour he can infuse even into a reply to a dinner invitation or a reference to the upcoming marriage of a daughter. But this sparkling surface that reflects the personality which makes him so prized as a friend and a guest coexists with the earnestness of a clear thinker and liberal crusader ever



*FROM FAMILY TO PHILOSOPHY*

ready to combat the abuses of his age. In his correspondence, as in his daily life, the laughter-loving merrymaker shows himself to be also a loyal clergyman, a dedicated reformer, and a loving husband and father.

## OFTEN DOWN, BUT NEVER OUT SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834)



In his quest for a livelihood, in his family life, and in his response to the Enlightenment, the poet and critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge is the contrary of the lesser writer Sydney Smith. His giant weeping willow overshadows Smith's modest hawthorn, and his letters, unlike Smith's, are the letters of an unhappy man.

Coleridge's troubles begin in childhood. In 1781, on the threshold of his ninth year, the death of his father, the Vicar of Ottery in Devon, leaves him in the charge of his brother George. After being schooled at Christ's Hospital, he goes up to Jesus College, Cambridge, where he distinguishes himself as a scholar; falls in love with Mary Evans, whose mother tends him with maternal affection when he is ill; and indulges in enough wayward behaviour to pile up debts he cannot pay. During a three-year period beginning when he is eighteen, he lapses from chastity in his association with loose women. In despair and shame, resisting the temptation of suicide, he enlists in the dragoons, or light cavalry, under the name Silas Tomkyn Comberbache. His friends and family succeed in tracing him, and after much difficulty his brothers George and James procure his discharge, ostensibly on the grounds of his insanity.

Soon after returning to Cambridge, Coleridge meets Robert Southey, and the two young poets, both radicals, concoct a scheme only a little less hare-brained than the flight into the military. With other enthusiasts, they will found a Utopian colony in the United States of America to practise pantisocracy (the rule of all as equals) and aspheterism (commonality of property). Southey has visions of cutting down trees while talking philosophy and of discussing poetry while hunting buffaloes. The dream of pantisocracy, however, leads to the first of the two great tragedies of Coleridge's life. In 1795, Coleridge and Southey wed two sisters in order to have both men and women in their colony. However, friction erupts between the two newly wed men, and they never leave for America. At the

end of 1796, Coleridge rents a cottage in Somerset beside the home of his friend Thomas Poole, who shares his very liberal political views. During the next two years, he composes his greatest poems: "This Lime-tree Bower My Prison," "Frost at Midnight," "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and "Kubla Khan."

Poetry, however, does not provide a livelihood. Coleridge, having jettisoned his family's Anglicanism, has won popularity as a Unitarian preacher and is about to accept the offer of a ministry at Shrewsbury when the porcelain manufacturer Josiah Wedgwood and his brother Thomas grant him an annuity to enable him to devote himself to literature.

Coleridge's great poems are written while he enjoys an intense friendship with the siblings William and Dorothy Wordsworth and falls in love with their native landscape in the English Lake District. The publication in 1798 of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's joint collection *Lyrical Ballads* ushers in the Romantic Revival thereby marking a turning point in English literature. In the year of this publication, Coleridge visits Germany in the company of the Wordsworths, but soon leaves them to concentrate on mastering the German language and to study at the University of Göttingen.

About 1801, Coleridge suffers the second great tragedy of his life: he becomes enslaved to opium. Henceforward he has great difficulty in supporting himself, his wife, and their three children.

Besides his addiction, Coleridge suffers from the notorious English winter, and in April 1804 sails for Malta, where he remains till September 1805. Back in England in 1806, having nearly been trapped in Italy by Napoleon's army, he works as a journalist writing topical articles for Daniel Stuart's paper, the *Courier*, and begins a long career of intermittent public lecturing on literature and philosophy. His place of residence varies, and he sometimes has his son Hartley with him. In 1810, he moves to London and quarrels with Wordsworth, after his friend Basil Montagu tells him the Wordsworth family have complained of him as an "absolute nuisance" in the house. Next year Josiah Wedgwood, faced by the collapse of his business, withdraws his half of the poet's annuity. Dogged for years by financial exigency, Coleridge has a happy but brief change of fortune in 1813 when his verse play *Remorse*, supported by a strong cast and ingenious visual effects, becomes a hit on the London stage. However, good luck seldom comes Coleridge's way. From 1810 to 1816, he usually forms part of the household of his admirer John Morgan, and when Morgan loses his fortune, Coleridge feels bound to use what he has earned in the theatre to see his friend through his crisis.

In 1816, Coleridge finds a new family to adopt him: Dr. James Gillman, his wife, Ann, and their children, James and Henry, live at Highgate on the outskirts of London. In his later years, the poet, known as "the sage

of Highgate," holds weekly conversation evenings for invited guests. He continues to suffer from appalling health, though it is slightly alleviated by seaside holidays at Ramsgate with members of his host family.

Worldly prosperity still eludes Coleridge. The Gillmans, themselves not well off, shoulder his expenses beyond what he can pay, and he has to rely on relatives and friends to fund his sons' university education.

The quarrel with Wordsworth in 1810, bitter as it is, is not irreparable. As late as 1828, the two poets, together with Wordsworth's daughter Dora, tour the Rhineland for six weeks. This is to be a last foreign excursion before Coleridge becomes a prisoner of his broken health. In 1834, still living in the Gillmans' house, he dies.

Coleridge does not season his letters with gossip, and he gives only scattered snapshots of the society in which he lives. Against a swirling background of family quarrels, travels, business tangles and medical ordeals, he unwittingly builds up a self-portrait of a man struggling, like Dr. Johnson, against obstacles external and internal. He is not among the very few addicts saved from the worst effects of opium by exceptional willpower—addicts like the poet George Crabbe, who, introduced to the drug by a misguided physician about 1789, manages to pass the more than four decades remaining to him with only a very slight increase in his dose. By 1814, Coleridge is writing to his friend and early publisher Joseph Cottle of an account in a medical journal of how laudanum (opium in wine) cured knees as crippled as his then were. In his case, the remedy proves temporary and the effects life destroying. To Southey he declares in 1803:

I am tolerably well, meaning the day. My last night was not such a noisy night of horrors as three nights out of four are with me. O God! when a man blesses the loud screams of agony that awake him night after night, night after night, and when a man's repeated night screams have made him a nuisance in his own house, it is better to die than to live.

Visiting Eton in 1825, he wakes sleepers in other rooms with screams of which he has no recollection in the morning. "While I am awake and retain my reasoning powers, the pang is gnawing," he confides to his much cherished young friend Thomas Allsop, "but I am, except for a fitful moment or two, tranquil; it is the howling wilderness of sleep that I dread." To communicate the nature of his sufferings, he sometimes quotes to his correspondents his own poem "The Pains of Sleep."

Physical pain, Coleridge finds, he can bear "like an Indian," but opium, while leaving his intellect untouched, saps his will, and "in all things that affect my moral feelings," he confesses to Josiah Wedgwood, "I have

sunk under such a strange cowardice of Pain that I have not unfrequently kept Letters from persons dear to me for weeks together unopened." Coleridge frequently apologises to his correspondents for his belated replies. His addiction fills him with a torturing guilt for this and greater vices. He admits to Joseph Cottle: "I have prayed, with drops of agony on my brow, trembling not only before the justice of my Maker, but even before the mercy of my Redeemer. 'I gave thee so many talents, what hast thou done with them?'" To his Bristol friend Josiah Wade, he imparts a broader self-accusation: "In the one crime of OPIUM, what crime have I not made myself guilty of! — Ingratitude to my Maker! and to my benefactors — injustice! and *unnatural cruelty to my poor children!* — self-contempt for my repeated promise-breach, nay, too often, actual falsehood!"

Disabling as his addiction is, Coleridge never ceases to exercise his linguistic gift. After mastering German, he goes on to study Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Hebrew. Nor does his suffering prevent him from occasionally intervening in public life. In a lecture on 3 May 1808, he defends Andrew Bell's educational programme against Joseph Lancaster's. Bell advocates state education, while Lancaster not only favours independent schools but also supports humiliating punishments like tying a boy's leg to a log. Three days later, Coleridge writes to his wife of a dinner party at which he has received the worst insult of his life from a titled admirer of Lancaster. So deep is his esteem for his hero, that he refers to Bell as "the man who beyond all competition is entitled to the name of the greatest Benefactor of the Race of all now living Individuals."

Equally concerned when the Government introduces in 1815 a Corn Bill to prohibit the importation of wheat till the price rises to eighty shillings a quarter, Coleridge reports that he is loudly cheered when he attacks this assault on the poor at a public meeting in the market at Calne in Wiltshire. "You cannot conceive," he writes to a friend, "how this Corn Bill haunts me, and so it would you, if you had seen the pale faces and heard the conversation of the hundred poor creatures that came to sign the petition." The Bill becomes law later in the year.

In 1818, Sir Robert Peel, father of the future Prime Minister of the same name, introduces a Bill in Parliament to improve the conditions of child workers in the cotton factories. Coleridge tries to publish an article in its support, and when it passes in the Commons but is threatened in the Lords, he raises the question of "Whether some half-score of rich capitalists are to be prevented from suborning suicide and perpetuating infanticide and soul-murder." Seeking help in the cause from his friend the lawyer and diarist Henry Crabb Robinson, he declares, "Though Heaven knows that I am seriously hurting myself by devoting my days daily in this my best harvest-tide as a lecture-monger ... I should have bid farewell to all ease of

conscience if I had returned an excuse to the request made for my humble assistance." On 7 May, he writes that, in order to support this Bill, he has spent a night away from home for the first time in over two years. Passed in 1819, the Act prohibits the employment of children under nine and limits the working day to twelve hours.

In 1821, Coleridge's emotions are caught up in a local quarrel over an Elizabethan charitable foundation. The Governors of Highgate Free Grammar School want to use the funds of the chapel trust to pull down the old school chapel and build a larger one which will serve the whole neighbourhood; this requires an Act of Parliament. "Highgate," Coleridge writes to Thomas Allsop, "is in high feuds with the factious stir against the governors of the chapel." The feud is to last nine years. Coleridge is convinced that Highgate needs the chapel and is indignant that opponents want a more prestigious school than one that educates supposedly unkempt poor boys. He tries in 1830 to channel accurate information to the main parliamentary opponent. The necessary Act is passed in the same year.

Although Coleridge never allows his sufferings from his addiction and his intermittent agonising ailments to blunt his deep-seated compassion, they necessarily impinge on his career, resulting in postponed lectures and missed deadlines. Moreover, his gift is for writing, not business. He belongs to the class of persons who perform excellently in their chosen field but who should work for an employer. His residence at Malta constitutes a happy interlude in his troubled career. Here the Governor, Sir Alexander Ball, quickly discovers his talent for pouring out the riches of his mind in his talk as well as his potential as an administrator. Ball appoints him first as his Confidential Secretary and then as Acting Public Secretary. His health improves, and, in spite of his grumbling, he appears to thrive with regular employment and the companionship of the admiring Governor. This happy isolation contrasts with his plight when he attempts from 1809 to 1810 to support himself by publishing his periodical essay *The Friend*. His clumsiness in such matters as buying the necessary paper, arranging its distribution, dealing with the tax, and collecting payment figures largely in his letters. Similarly, he writes of his difficulty in hiring suitable lecture rooms in acceptable neighbourhoods at rates that will leave him with a profit. By 1819, he confesses that he is "utterly unfit to arrange any pecuniary matters." His constant remedy for want of money is to borrow, and he is not shy about admitting his embarrassment at asking for loans. He will borrow from one friend to repay another. From 1824 to 1834, he writes a series of letters to Thomas H. Dunn, the Highgate pharmacist who supplies him with opium, explaining why he needs a little longer to settle his bill. When he applies to his brother George for a loan to buy paper to continue publishing *The Friend* till it is time for the subscribers to pay, he receives

an indignant refusal. It is not difficult to sympathize with both parties, but how can Coleridge maintain in his reply that he has never been in debt?

There is little change through the years. Coleridge remains a sponger, even though there is some truth in his claim to the author William Sotheby that his friends benefit from his writings and conversation. Like a gambler looking for a big win, he thinks his next venture will succeed. At Malta, while he is working successfully for Sir Alexander Ball, he writes to Southey, "I live in a perfect palace and have all my meals with the Governor; but my profits will be much less than if I had employed my time and efforts in my own literary pursuits." He will not stray, he insists, from his great task, which is no less, as will become clear, than to reverse the course of the Enlightenment, nor will he stoop to cater to the depraved taste of the contemporary reader.

Early in his life, it is otherwise. Coleridge remembers how, to entertain Dorothy Wordsworth, he read aloud a slashing review he had composed and elicited a response very different from the applause he expected. He rapidly came to consider the whole business of reviewing in periodicals as immoral. The business is, he assures the political thinker William Godwin, "unjust to the author of the books reviewed, injurious in its effects on the public taste and morality, and still more injurious in its influences on the head and heart of the reviewer himself." What Coleridge is condemning are bad reviews. There seems no reason why he should not write informative and just reviews, and review essays, and use them to promulgate his own values. Many of Sydney Smith's long review articles remain well worth reading today. In 1820 Coleridge declines to compose a commentary to prints illustrating Goethe's *Faust* and mentions that he has recently refused two requests for remunerative work in the form of critical essays on works of his own choosing. In the same year, he complains to Allsop, "I must abrogate the name of philosopher and poet, and scribble as fast as I can, and with as little thought as I can for Blackwood's Magazine." He publishes one article in *Blackwood's*.

A source of income which Coleridge taps for many years is newspaper journalism. While he often finds it irksome, he consoles himself with the thought that what he writes at midnight will have thousands of readers in the morning and that in discussing the momentous events of the Napoleonic age, he can relate them to universal principles. His profile in 1800 of Prime Minister William Pitt is, to his great delight, hailed as masterly, but it is characteristic of him that he never writes the profile of Bonaparte that he promises will follow. By 1811, however, he informs his friend and admirer the art collector Sir George Beaumont:

I have not been at the *Courier* office for some months past. I detest writing politics, even on the right side, and when I discovered that the *Courier* was not the independent paper I had been led to believe, and had myself over and over again asserted, I wrote no more for it.

Four years later, he complains to its former editor Daniel Stuart:

since the *Courier* is so entirely devoted to the Government for the time being there is no Paper in which I could write without offence to my own mind; in other words, there does not exist a single London Paper conducted on determined principles, or that would admit a series of articles conducted on principles.

Next to the fulfilment of what he considers his great duty—to overthrow the dominant philosophy of the Enlightenment and defend Trinitarian Christianity—Coleridge worries most about the support of his family. While he is issuing *The Watchman*, he writes to Poole:

I am perfectly callous to disapprobation, except when it tends to lessen profit. Then indeed I am all one tremble of sensibility, marriage having taught me the wonderful uses of that vulgar commodity, yclept Bread.

From the beginning, Coleridge's family life is ill-omened. Sara Fricker, whom Southey induces him to court for the sake of their pantisocracy, rejects two other suitors, one wealthy, in favour of the young idealist. When Coleridge realises that his real passion is still for Mary Evans, with whom he fell in love in his student days, he nevertheless feels honour-bound to marry Sara. He writes to Southey, grieving that Mary Evans is now engaged to another:

To lose her! I can rise above that selfish pang. But to marry another. O Southey! bear with my weakness. Love makes all things pure and heavenly like itself,—but to marry a woman whom I do *not* love, to degrade her whom I call my wife by making her the instrument of low desire, and on the removal of a desultory appetite to be perhaps not displeased with her absence! Enough! These refinements are the wildering fires that lead me into vice. Mark you, Southey! *I will do my duty.*

Despite this ill start, the newly wedded couple appear to settle down happily. During his residence in Germany, Coleridge sends affectionate letters



to his wife sharing his experiences, noting that Wordsworth “seems to have employed more time in writing English than in studying German,” and being unafraid to mention that Countess Kilmansig, a beautiful lady with two small children, is much taken with him. He can write intimately to his spouse of how longing for his family affects his mind:

I have thought and thought of you, and pictured you and the little ones so often and so often that my imagination is tired down, flat and powerless, and I languish after home for hours together in vacancy, my feelings almost wholly unqualified by thoughts.

However, two months after his return to England, signs of friction start to appear in his letters. He writes to Southey:

the wife of a man of genius who sympathises effectively with her husband in his habits and feelings is a *rara avis* [rare bird] with me; though a vast majority of her own sex and too many of ours will scout her for a *rara piscis* [odd fish].

Two years later, in October 1801, he tells the same confidant that he is convinced marriage is indissoluble and that he will try to overcome their incompatibility, but if the attempt fails it will be best for them to separate and for him to strive mightily to save his wife from want or discomfort. “For what is life,” he asks Southey soon after, “gangrened, as it is with me, in its very vitals, domestic tranquillity?” From his letters, a picture emerges of an introverted husband who pays little attention to appearances and is disrespectful to his wife, both in private and before others, and of an extraverted wife who screams at her husband, makes his friends unwelcome, and is psychologically dependent on what people think of her. Yet it is hard to see how he can blame her for her jealousy when he is so close to William and Dorothy Wordsworth that he is later able to write to Godwin, “for though we were three persons, there was but one God.” This is also the case when he attempts to persuade her and himself that his passion for Sara Hutchinson is no more than one of many ardent friendships. To the latter he sends an early version of the poem “Dejection: an Ode,” in which he expresses his misery, and which he quotes in subsequent letters to communicate his mental state.

The couple reconcile, but the arrangement proves to be only a truce. Although they separate, Coleridge usually recognizes his wife’s estimable qualities as well as her faults; in moments of exasperation, however, he calls her unfeeling, lacking in womanly sympathy, and ungrateful for his

efforts, despite his ill health, to support her. “Mrs. Coleridge’s mind,” he observes to Southey,

has very little that is *bad* in it; it is an innocent mind; but it is light and *unimpressible*, warm in anger, cold in sympathy, and in all disputes uniformly *projects itself forth* to recriminate, instead of turning itself inward with a silent self-questioning.

In 1803, Coleridge takes out a life insurance policy for £1,000 and appoints Thomas Poole as the trustee; henceforward he always ensures the premium is paid, and likes to reassure his wife of the fact. In the years to come, he writes to several young people, including his son Derwent, warning about the importance of taking great care in choosing one’s partner in life.

Coleridge is devoted to his children. He asserts, “Next to the Bible, Shakespeare, and Milton, *they* are the three books from which I have learned the most, and the most important and with the greatest delight.” Portraits of Hartley and Derwent appear in his letters. Hartley is a boisterous and fanciful boy, who can see a cloud cover first the moon and then some stars and exclaim, “Pretty creatures! they are going to see after their mother moon.” “That child,” Coleridge writes to Southey, “is a poet, spite of the forehead, ‘villainously *low*,’ which his mother smuggled into his face.” Hartley takes after his father, perhaps too much, as the latter realises when he sends the ten-year-old boy a kindly but solemn warning:

mere natural qualities, however pleasing and delightful, must not be deemed virtues until they are broken in and yoked to the plough of *Reason*. Now to apply this to your own case—I could equally apply it to myself.... Nothing that gives you pain dwells long enough upon your mind to do you any good, just as in some diseases the medicines pass so quickly through the stomach and bowels as to be able to exert none of their healing qualities. In like manner, this power which you possess of shoving aside all disagreeable reflections, or losing them in a labyrinth of daydreams, which saves you from some present pain, has, on the other hand, interwoven with your nature habits of procrastination, which, unless you correct them in time (and it will require all your best exertions to do it effectually), must lead you into lasting unhappiness.

Derwent, whose qualities are characteristic of the highly successful members of the Coleridge family, recognizes how different his brother is. In a letter to John Morgan, his father reports that he

has complained to me (having no other possible grievance) 'that Mr. Dawes does not *love* him, because he can't help crying when he is scolded, and because he ain't such a genius as Hartley – and that though Hartley should have done the same thing, yet all the others are punished, and Mr. Dawes only *looks* at Hartley and never scolds *him*, and that *all* the boys think it very unfair – he *is* a genius.'

Hartley grows into a fine scholar but an eccentric and improvident man, who forfeits his Fellowship at Oriel College, Oxford, for unseemly behaviour. With difficulty, Coleridge obtains a teaching post for him at Ambleside, in the Lake District, but though he functions well, the school folds. Hartley falls back on the world of letters, but is never able to support himself.

Derwent arrives at Cambridge as a competent student but soon strays into the frivolity of trying to shine as a beau. Coleridge points to the shallowness of seeking distinction from the fineness of one's dress and laments his son's neglect of his studies. Even more distressful to his father is Derwent's lapse into atheism under the influence of his fellow students Charles Austin, a future lawyer of some fame, and Thomas Babington Macaulay, the budding essayist and historian. In discussion with him, Coleridge finds that he cannot define the philosophical terms he bandies about. Neglecting his studies, Derwent earns only a pass degree, but he soon returns to the Church and takes holy orders.

When his daughter, Sara, is eleven months old, Coleridge writes, "Our girl is a darling little thing, with large blue eyes, a quiet creature that, as I have often said, seems to bask in a sunshine as mild as moonlight, of her own happiness." Visiting Keswick in 1812, when she is nine, he finds that

little Sara does honour to her mother's anxieties, reads French tolerably, and Italian fluently, and I was astonished at her acquaintance with her native language ... she is such a sweet-tempered, meek, blue-eyed fairy and so affectionate, trustworthy, and really serviceable!

While Hartley and Derwent visit their father from time to time, Sara remains at Keswick, though Coleridge longs to see her. He writes of how, when the artist Charles Leslie, who has never met Sara, shows him a portrait in 1818, he is confident he has never seen the subject but thinks her just such a young woman as his daughter might have become. Leslie then reveals that not he himself but William Collins is the painter and the subject is indeed the poet's daughter.

It is not till 1823 that Mrs. Coleridge brings their daughter to see her father. The precociously clever, charming little girl he knew is now a young scholar whose only weakness is her uncertain health. She has had her translation of a Latin book published by John Murray, and her beauty is a magnet for young men. Among these is her cousin and fellow scholar Henry Nelson Coleridge, a son of the poet's brother Colonel James Coleridge. When her father discovers to his surprise that the attachment is serious, he worries about a marriage between first cousins and writes to ask Daniel Stuart's and Mrs. Stuart's opinion of such unions. He is unwilling, however, to visit heartbreak on an "only Daughter — & *such* a daughter." Colonel Coleridge, on his part, regards the improvident drug addict as a family disgrace. It takes Henry more than six years to establish himself in the legal profession and to overcome the Colonel's objections, but in 1829 the couple marry and are content to live frugally for a time. On 9 August 1832, the ailing Coleridge stands beside his estranged wife at the christening of their daughter's baby.

Coleridge's unhappy experiences leave him with a craving for family affection. Often he looks on young men as his sons and women as his sisters. To young men, he can be an intellectual guide. The letters about how and what to study that he writes to children and youths such as the junior James Gillman, his host's son, and his own Derwent suggest that he is a born teacher. He sends six-year-old Derwent a beginner's lesson in Greek and details of the common metrical feet; is ready to give Daniel Stuart an assessment of his son's academic standing and potential; and counsels the young James Gillman on the best ways to translate between English and Latin. He impresses on James the importance of mastering principles as well as memorising facts, but takes a balanced view: when the youth, fresh at university, wants to explore metaphysical questions, he cautions him that a good grounding in the chronology of ancient history and the social and legal practices of the ancient world (such as Coleridge and his fellows acquired at Christ's Hospital) should precede metaphysical enquiries; if, however, he persists in looking into them now, he could turn to the essays on Method in *The Friend* and the Appendix to *The Statesman's Manual*. He reluctantly transcribes a passage from one of his notebooks that young Gillman asks for, even as he emphasises the great importance of lucidity and orderliness in his studies.

Long before the younger James Gillman enters the University, Coleridge has switched his main interest from poetry to metaphysics. Insofar as he has any regret for this, feeling as he sometimes does that his inspiration has deserted him, he is inclined to suspect that his marital unhappiness and devastating ill health have driven him to philosophy, which

has suppressed his poetic inspiration. In 1802, he explains to William Sotheby why he undertook to translate Gesner's poem *Erste Schiffer*:

I wished to force myself out of metaphysical trains of thought, which, when I wished to write a poem, beat up game of far other kind. Instead of a covey of poetic partridges with whirring wings of music, or wild ducks *shaping* their rapid flight in forms always regular (a still better image of verse), up came a metaphysical bustard, urging its slow, heavy, laborious, earth-skimming flight over dreary and level wastes.

His especial concern is with metaphysics as a firm foundation for Protestant Trinitarian Christianity.

At the beginning of his career, Coleridge is a Unitarian denying the divinity of Christ, a determinist holding that external circumstances determine mental processes, and a follower of the eighteenth century Christian necessitarian David Hartley. This thinker maintains that the way an idea in the consciousness calls up another idea that has become associated with it (as a thought of the sea might call up a thought about swimming) can be used in education to lead the mind upwards; starting with sensory experience, the ascent should culminate in the love of God and the acquisition of a moral sense. His admiration for Hartley is such that, in September 1796 Coleridge gives that philosopher's name to his firstborn son, observing to Poole, "I hope that ere he be a man, if God destines him for continuance in this life, his head will be convinced of, and his heart saturated with, the truths so ably supported by that great master of *Christian Philosophy*."

Slowly Coleridge weans himself away from this position. The turning point is recorded in two letters. On 3 February 1801, he writes to his friend the scientist Humphry Davy:

I have been *thinking* vigorously during my illness, so that I cannot say that my long, long wakeful nights have been all lost to me. The subject of my meditations has been the relations of thoughts to things; in the language of Hume, of ideas to impressions.

His reveals his conclusions to Thomas Poole in a letter of 16 March:

The interval since my last letter has been filled up by me in the most intense study. If I do not greatly delude myself, I have not only *completely extricated the notions of time and space*, but have overthrown the doctrine of association, as taught by Hartley, and with it all the irreligious metaphysics of modern infidels—especially the doctrine of necessity. This I have *done*; but I trust

that I am about to do more—namely, that I shall be able to evolve all the five senses, that is, to deduce them from one sense, and to state their growth and the causes of their difference, and in this evolvment to solve the process of life and consciousness.

Coleridge goes on to announce:

My German Book I have suffered to remain suspended chiefly because the thoughts which had employed my sleepless nights during my illness were imperious over me; and though poverty was staring me in the face, yet I dared behold my image miniatured in the pupil of her hollow eye, so steadily did I look her in the face; for it seemed to me a suicide of my very soul to divert my attention from truths so important, which came to me almost as a revelation.

In place of the travel book he intended to write, Coleridge now plans “a work on the originality and merits of Locke, Hobbes, and Hume,” which will prepare for the reception of his “greater work.” He adds, “I am confident that I can prove that the reputation of these three men has been wholly unmerited.” A week later, he stigmatizes Newton, despite “the beauty and neatness of his experiments” and his powers of deduction, as a materialist, in whose system “*Mind ... is always passive.*”

Coleridge is here making the first sortie in his long war to overthrow the values of the Enlightenment and replace its rational, scientific approach to the natural world and society with a philosophy that combines elements from ancients like Heraclitus and Plato, sixteenth century thinkers like Giordano Bruno and Jakob Boehme, and modern Germans like Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schelling. Most of the abstruse letters he writes on this topic are addressed to the surgeon Joseph Henry Green and the Swedenborgian Charles Augustus Tulk. In this correspondence, he refers to his defence against one of the several charges of plagiarism made against him, but his defence has not been found convincing. As ardent a modern admirer as Owen Barfield writes, “there is not much doubt that, as the law now stands, Schelling could have sued Coleridge in respect of one or two pages in the *Biographia Literaria.*”

Central to Coleridge’s outlook is his lack of interest in facts unless they contribute to a large picture or conception, an attitude that can be traced back to his early years. In one of several letters to Poole about his childhood, the poet recollects:

from my early reading of fairy tales and genii, etc., etc., my mind has been habituated *to the Vast*, and I never regarded *my senses*

in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my *sight*, even at that age. Should children be permitted to read romances, and relations of giants and magicians and genii? I know all that has been said against it; but I have formed my faith in the affirmative. I know no other way of giving the mind a love of the Great and the Whole.

By the time he launches his assault on the Enlightenment, Coleridge has come to believe that the universe is governed by the law of polarity, or interaction between opposites, rather than by the cause and effect of the natural and social sciences. A pair of opposites may be in conflict or in balance or move towards a synthesis. The product of this synthesis will enter into a polar relation with another opposite. In his essay “The Theory of Life,” Coleridge includes among opposites Time and Space; their synthesis makes existence possible. When Time predominates, the product is Line; when Space predominates, the product is Surface. The synthesis of Line and Surface is the Circle.

Coleridge informs Tulk that Creation begins with the emergence of the opposites Light and Gravitation, Gravitation being the “darkness” of the second verse of Genesis. These opposites interact, he tells the German man of letters Ludwig Tieck, to produce sound when the predominant partner is Gravitation, colour when it is Light. To Coleridge, the world is an organism, not a machine. The corpuscular or atomic theory is, in his eyes, a mischievous error, which can be disproved by logic, and he scathingly dismisses the achievements of John Dalton, who calculates the relative weight of atoms of different elements. To Dr. Green, he expresses his hope of finding evidence for the principle of polarity in current studies of the formation of minerals. He informs Tulk that carbon, azote (nitrogen), oxygen and hydrogen correspond to the classical four elements — earth, air, fire, and water, and in a long missive to him lays out what amounts to a theory of the material world and its generation, a theory full of correspondences such as are found in the mediaeval and Hindu world-pictures: thus, sensibility, irritability, and reproduction are parallel to magnetism, electricity and galvanism, these to attraction, repulsion and gravitation, and these in turn to length, breadth and depth.

In Coleridge’s opinion, the moderns with whom he contends confound reason with understanding. The latter is the faculty that draws conclusions from what the senses perceive; the former is the higher faculty that applies universal truths embedded in the mind independently of anything perceived by the senses. Understanding enables Newton to draw accurate conclusions from his experimental findings; Reason is responsible

for Euclid's laying out the universal laws of mathematics and for the moral truths of Scripture.

It is difficult to believe that the faculty with which Euclid deduces the properties of geometrical figures is different in kind from the faculty with which Newton makes scientific deductions. An odious consequence of this obscurantism is the opposition which Coleridge displays to Lord Erskine's Bill for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; this, he says, is "extending PERSONALITY to *things*," probably because, as he maintains in *Aids to Reflection*, beasts can have understanding but not reason.

Discussing the question of the human soul's immortality in a letter to Sir George Beaumont, Coleridge asks, "Are we not a union of reason, understanding, and sense [i.e. the senses]?" and adds that these need respectively principles, rules, and perceptions. "It is a whim of modern date," he continues, "to consider Christianity as a mere code of ethics. It is an offer of redemption from moral evil and its consequences, with a declaration of the conditions of acceptance." It has taken time for him to come to this position.

In his Unitarian phase, Coleridge explains to his anti-Christian friend the radical John Thelwall:

the religion which Christ taught is simply, first, that there is an omnipresent Father of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, in whom we all of us move and have our being; and, secondly, that when we appear to men to die we do not utterly perish, but after this life shall continue to enjoy or suffer the consequences and natural effects of the habits we have formed here, whether good or evil. This is the Christian *religion*, and all of the Christian *religion*.

When Coleridge repudiates Locke and Hartley, he turns to a more inward faith. He becomes convinced, partly by his close study of the Greek text of the New Testament, that the Unitarians have adopted an impossible position by denying Christ's divinity and regarding him simply as the supreme moral teacher. This view the Unitarians inherit from the Socinians of the sixteenth century, and henceforward Coleridge abominates Socinianism with all but inquisitorial zeal. Now convinced that a propensity to evil is one element in human nature (and what thoughtful person can deny this?), he is satisfied that redemption from its consequences comes in some way he does not understand, but feels in the depths of his spiritual need, from the Crucifixion. His sense of guilt floods into some passages of his letters. To Joseph Cottle, he exclaims:



if to feel how infinitely worthless I am, how poor a wretch, with just free-will enough to be deserving of wrath, and of my own contempt, and of none to merit a moment's peace, can make a part of a Christian's creed; so far I am a Christian.

Coleridge has now returned to the Church of his family, the Church of England, and as one who relies on inner experience as the foundation of his faith, he identifies with its Evangelical wing. However, he laments to his friend Dr. Brabant that the institution is full of "sober-in-the-way-of-preferment churchmen, who hold the doctrines of Athanasius in the spirit of Socinus," while "the Evangelical clergy, who are really saving the Church, are too generally deficient in learning, both historical and metaphysical."

Metaphysical learning is of great concern to Coleridge. As a sinner who throws himself on Christ's mercy, he broods over the way in which, through the Trinity, the Infinite and Eternal communicates with mortals. He cautions Joseph Cottle that human understanding of the Trinity is limited, but observes that the Father and Son can be compared to two bodies governed by a single mind and jointly emanating the Holy Spirit: the Trinity, he insists, is "the foundation of the whole Christian system."

Coleridge insists on historical as well as metaphysical knowledge, for he holds that, while they are subsidiary, biblical narrative and ecclesiastical history are a necessary complement to personal religious experience. However, exclusive or primary reliance on these—and especially on reports of miracles—he regards as likely to lead to unbelief.

For all his evangelical fervour, Coleridge steers clear of moral tyranny. He is no killjoy. When his brother-in-law George Fricker has scruples about spending a Sunday evening with him, he replies that he can find no biblical prohibition against "cheerful and innocent social intercourse on the Lord's Day." Indeed he deplores a gloomy, puritanical Christianity and declares:

a numerous and stirring faction there is, in the so called Religious Public, whose actual and activating principles, with whatever vehemence they may disclaim it in words, is ... that instead of the Apostolic command, *Rejoice, and again I say unto you, rejoice;* baptized Christians are to be put on sackcloth and ashes, and try, by torturing themselves and others, to procure a rescue from the devil.

He can recognise good qualities in people with conspicuous vices. At Portsmouth, when he is about to sail to Malta, he finds himself

among men, kind-hearted indeed, and absolutely eager to serve me, and to express a liking to me that from such men quite astonished me; but among loose livers and loose talkers, with oaths and dirt rattling about my ears, like grape-shot, and whistling by me like so many perforated bullets. For at Portsmouth all are mock tars.

While he deplores the common adulteries of husbands and wives that he encounters in Germany, he feels that women whose chastity is limited to their bodies have no business casting aspersions on the memory of Mary Robinson, the actress and poet who was once the mistress of the Prince of Wales but whose later life was unstained.

Coleridge continues to fear he himself is the object of divine wrath for wasting his intellectual gift. Doubting his Unitarian friend Dr. Estlin's doctrine that God's punishment is always remedial, he declares, "I believe, that punishment is essentially *vindictive*, i.e. expressive of abhorrence of sin for its own exceeding sinfulness," and therefore, "without a miraculous intervention of Omnipotence the Punishment must continue as long as the soul, which I believe imperishable. God has promised no such miracle.... It *may* be so, but wo to me! if I presume on it."

Although Coleridge's Christianity is usually liberal, it is sometimes stained by outbursts of bigotry. Idolising Luther, whom he never tires of praising, he accuses the Roman Catholic Church of polytheism and, defending the Crusades, denounces Islam to the young James Gillman as a violent, fanatical and barbarous creed. In view of his low opinion of Hinduism—he refers in *Aids to Reflection* to "the tyranny of Papal or Brahmin superstition"—it is surprising that in the same book Coleridge enthusiastically welcomes a report that a man is striving to be "the Luther of Brahminism." (An obvious candidate is Raja Rammohun Roy.)

Much better disposed towards Judaism, Coleridge successfully recommends that his orthodox Jewish friend, the scholar Hyman Hurwitz, be appointed as the first Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature at the new University of London, though he tries to persuade him that the Talmud is to the Hebrew Bible as a candle is to the sun. He argues that the only essential—though admittedly important—difference between Judaism and Christianity is that the latter teaches that a first coming of the Messiah has already occurred, and informs Cary, the translator of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, that Hurwitz is a Christian "of the Jewish Persuasion."

It is pleasing that Coleridge, like his correspondent Joseph Blanco White, a Spanish convert from Catholicism to Protestantism, can see through the "current illiberal dogma, that infidelity always arises from vice or corrupt affections." Far better than Unitarianism, he feels, are some

forms of atheism, and to the mathematician William Rowan Hamilton he speaks gently of “the Atheism of Spinoza – whose pure spirit may it be my lot to meet, with St. John and St. Paul smiling on him and loving him.” In the same letter, he makes it clear that his disdain for some creeds does not extend to their adherents.

Familiar with German investigations of the different strands that have gone to the composition of certain books of the Bible, Coleridge is modern in his approach to Scripture. He carefully distinguishes between divine inspiration and divine dictation, expressing some contempt for the idea of a prophet being reduced to an automaton. An attempt to coordinate the findings of geology with the account of creation in Genesis he regards as misguided, since the Bible’s truths are moral and spiritual. Pointing out to Cary that scientific laws make infallible predictions possible, he asserts that the prophecies of Scripture are always conditional. He wrestles with certain doubts about the sacred canon, and anxiously asks Tulk whether he thinks all its books are equally inspired. The Apocalypse (Revelation) makes him uneasy: he finds it uncertain whether its prophecies refer to past or future events and in 1826 writes to Basil Montagu, “for myself I am not ashamed to say that a single chapter of St. Paul’s Epistles or St. John’s Gospel is of more value to me in light and in life, in love and in comfort, than the books of the Apocalypse, Daniel, and Zachariah, all put together.”

With his Protestant enthusiasm for the Bible and his antipathy to Catholicism, Coleridge long dreads Catholic Emancipation, fearing Roman infiltration into the Church of England. Rather than acceding to it to pacify Ireland, he would let Ireland secede. But when the Emancipation Bill, which is passed in 1829, is brought before Parliament, he finds it much better drafted than earlier bills and experiences limited relief.

Coleridge seems to return to his country’s national Church as a result of thoughts prompted by his revulsion from Napoleon’s Concordat with Pope Pius VII in 1801. After the French Revolution collapses into a fever of bloodshed, he loses all sympathy with it, though as late as 1817, he assures Daniel Stuart that he still thinks Britain’s early war against Revolutionary France was an error. Jacobinism, however, never has his endorsement, and he acutely comes to perceive that it combines “abstract reason” with “bestial passion.” In 1798, looking back on his former sympathy with the Revolution, he confesses to his clerical brother, “I have snapped my squeaking baby-trumpet of sedition, and the fragments lie scattered in the lumber-room of penitence. I wish to be a good man and a Christian, but I am no Whig, no Reformist, no Republican.”

Coleridge attributes much of the evil behaviour of the French to their attachment to what he calls the modern “Psalosophy” – the Greek roots give the meaning “slender wisdom.” This consists of the Enlightenment

world-view embracing Locke's doctrine that our knowledge of reality derives ultimately from sense perception, the investigation of nature by scientific method, and the undermining of reliance on inner spiritual experience. In a long letter to the Prime Minister Lord Liverpool, he claims that the effects of this outlook, which "degrades the Deity into a blank hypothesis, and that the hypothesis of a clockwork-maker," have pervaded and corrupted society, and he associates the supposed equality of atoms with the political egalitarianism of the French Revolution and of English radicals like Thomas Paine.

The conservatism of the older Coleridge extends beyond ecclesiastical matters to the class structure of society. America, he tells Stuart, needs a gentry and a learned class, and he insists, in his letter to Lord Liverpool, that as long as these classes in Britain "are grounded in a false philosophy, which retains but the name of logic, and has succeeded in rendering metaphysics a term of opprobrium," the corruption will percolate down to the lower strata of society.

At the same time, Coleridge believes that an untrammelled as distinct from a healthy commercial spirit is corroding British society, and he makes this the theme of his second *Lay Sermon* (1817). In 1801, he writes to Poole, "it is our pestilent commerce, our unnatural crowding together of men in cities, and our government by rich men, that are bringing about the manifestations of offended Deity." Twenty years later, he longingly describes to the publisher William Blackwood what he thinks of as the happier age of Elizabeth Tudor, "when trade, the nurse of freedom, was the enlivening counterpoise of agriculture, not its alien and usurping spirit." What would he say about today's international corporations and factory farms?

Coleridge sees no hope in recent developments in what is now called economics, and he indignantly dismisses the work of Adam Smith, Daniel Ricardo, and Thomas Malthus. "I dare affirm," he protests, "that few superstitions in religion have been so extensively pernicious to the intellectual and moral sanity of this country and France, as those of (so called) Political Economy."

While Coleridge would banish this new science from the parliamentary arena, his fundamental complaint about public affairs is that decisions are not made on the basis of principles. This criticism is of a piece with his lack of interest in facts for their own sake. He complains to Tulk, who is a Member of Parliament that in public life decisions are made with a view to "their next consequences or immediate occasions."

In 1806, during his service in Malta, Coleridge writes to Daniel Stuart, "I have learnt the INSIDE character of many eminent living men, and know by heart the awkward and wicked machinery, by which all our affairs *abroad* are carried on." In the coming decades, back in England, he can re-

spect neither Government nor Opposition. Referring to the radical William Cobbett, he laments to young Thomas Allsop:

One deep, most deep, impression of melancholy, did Cobbett's letter to Lord Liverpool leave on my mind, — the conviction that, wretch as he is, he is an overmatch in intellect for those, in whose hands Providence, in its retributive justice, seems to place the destinies of our country; and who yet rise into respectability, when we compare them with their parliamentary opponents.

Like a liberal, Coleridge abominates the prospect of ministers becoming "absolute menials of the Royal *Person*"; at his most conservative, he asserts that if government is not in the hands of an aristocracy, it will be in the hands of fools and knaves. Yet facing the hungry opponents of the Corn Bill, which, for the benefit of landowners will restrict the import of grain, he slightly modifies his opposition to the "so-called Parliament Reformers." He explains to Dr. Brabant:

I have not altered my principles, yet now I must join in pleading for Reform. I assumed as the ideal of a legislature that in which all the great component interests of the State are adequately represented, so that no one should have the power of oppressing the others ... I now see that this is not the case.

The reform that Coleridge wants—or will tolerate—is very limited. He is utterly hostile to the Reform Bill of 1832 that extends the franchise to the middle class, dubbing it "Catilinarian" (Catiline attempted to overthrow the constitution of the ancient Roman Republic). To Dr. Green, he declares that Lord Grey and his allies, as despoilers of the Church, belong in Hell.

Coleridge says much in his letters about the series of prose works from *The Friend* to *On the Constitution of Church and State* in which he labours to bring the nation's life back to a foundation of sound principles. The charges of obscurity that he meets with lead him to condemn the taste of "the present illogical age, which has, in imitation of the French, rejected all the *cements* of language." He writes to Poole:

Of parentheses I may be too fond, and will be on my guard in this respect. But I am certain that no work of impassioned and eloquent reasoning ever did or could subsist without them. They are the *drama* of reason and present the thought growing, instead of a mere *Hortus siccus* [dry garden]. The aversion to them is one of the numberless symptoms of a feeble Frenchified Public.

Unappreciative of French clarity and its English admirers, and deploring the public's craze for personalities, what is now called the cult of celebrity, he baits his demanding exposition of his literary principles with chunks of autobiography to produce *Biographia Literaria*, which will come to be his best known book. He regards it as a prelude to the six-part work of Christian philosophy, which is to be his greatest achievement. This work he never completes, but he believes that most of its content already exists in scattered fragments in his notebooks and marginalia.

As a judge of contemporary literature, Coleridge performs unevenly. He reads and even rereads Scott's novels but comments to Allsop that they "amuse without requiring any effort of thought, and without exciting any deep emotion," whereas in the previous century popular fiction by Richardson, Fielding, Sterne and Smollett required a "higher degree of intellectual activity" for its appreciation. His contemporary poetic idol is Wordsworth, for whose work he is a brilliant advocate, and he secures the republication of Cary's translation, long a classic, of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, but is satisfied that *Madoc* will bring Southey enduring fame, though he recognizes that poet's undue facility. In the early days of their friendship, his letters to Southey include detailed critiques of the latter's poems, and in later years he gives similar treatment to others' published and unpublished works, sometimes earnestly advising against reliance on literature for a livelihood. The virtually unknown William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* fascinates him, but he can hail William Sotheby's *Saul* as needing only a few revisions to become "the best epic poem in our language," and he tells Charles Lamb that he *knows* that *Odes and Addresses to Great People* is his, when none of the poems in it are by Lamb.

Coleridge's letters say much about his affections and resentments, his ill health and ill usage, and his intellectual adventures in philosophy, religion, politics and literature, but they also contain many memorable examples of what George Saintsbury calls "letter stuff" (which is also found in novels): descriptions of places and experiences, accounts of the writer's daily life, lively dialogue, and silhouettes of characters.

Oddly, Coleridge writes to his wife from Germany that he will do his best to give her an idea of what he sees at Ratzeburg, but that he is "a wretched describer." This is as much a delusion as his notion that he could earn more with his pen in England than he is paid for his work at Malta. He can render the scene of the German town's lake with something of a painter's eye:

when first the ice fell on the lake, and the whole lake was frozen  
 one large piece of thick transparent glass—O my God! what  
 sublime scenery I have beheld. Of a morning I have seen the little

lake covered with mist; when the sun peeped over the hills the mist broke in the middle, and at last stood as the waters of the Red Sea are said to have done when the Israelites passed; and between these two walls of mist the sunlight burst upon the ice in a straight road of golden fire.

Observing the cruel persecution of Jews in Germany, which he never forgets, Coleridge tells how he and his companion are led into a dark room at an inn near Einbeck:

At length and suddenly the lamp came, and we saw ourselves in a room thirteen strides in length, strew'd with straw, and lying by the side of each other on the straw twelve Jews. I assure you it was curious. Their dogs lay at their feet. There was one very beautiful boy among them, fast asleep, with the softest conceivable opening of the mouth, with the white beard of his grandfather upon his cheek – a fair, rosy cheek.

A formidable climber, Coleridge can recapture the experience of being caught in a storm in the English Lake District:

I am no novice in mountain mischiefs, but such a storm as this was I never witnessed.... The raindrops were pelted or, rather, slung against my face by the gusts, just like splinters of flint, and I felt as if every drop *cut* my flesh. My hands were all shrivelled up like a washerwoman's, and so benumbed that I was obliged to carry my stick under my arm.

We learn of the lifestyles that Coleridge falls into at different periods. In 1797, he writes to John Estlin of what he finds at Nether Stowey when he takes his family and his pupil Charles Lloyd to live beside Thomas Poole's residence:

Our house is better than we expected – there is a comfortable bedroom and sitting-room for C. Lloyd, and another for us, a room for Nanny, a kitchen, and outhouse. Before our door a clear brook runs of very soft water; and in the back yard is a nice *well* of fine spring water. We have a very pretty garden, and large enough to find us vegetables and employment, and I am already an expert gardener, and both my hands can exhibit a callum as testimonials of their industry.

His life in Malta, as he describes it to Southey in 1805, is very different:

I awoke some half hour ago from so vivid a dream that the work of sleep had completely destroyed all sleepiness. I got up, went to my office-room, rekindled the wood-fire for the purpose of writing to you, having been so employed from morn till eve in writing public letters, some as long as memorials, from the hour that this opportunity was first announced to me, that for once in my life, at least, I can with strict truth affirm that I have had *no time* to write to you, if by time be understood the moments of life in which our powers are alive.

In September 1814, after grievous illness, Coleridge tells Daniel Stuart that he and John Morgan are joint tenants of a country cottage:

I breakfast every morning before nine; work till one, and walk or read till three. Thence, till tea-time, chat or read some lounge book, or correct what I have written. From six to eight work again; from eight till bed-time, play whist, or the little mock billiard called bagatelle, and then sup, and go to bed.

When he wishes, Coleridge can record or reproduce the spoken word. He describes what he hears from the lower class patrons when he enters a public house just after the assassination of the repressive Prime Minister Spencer Percival in 1812. (The talkers refer to Sir Francis Burdett, a Radical Member of Parliament.)

It was really shocking, nothing but exultation! Burdett's health drunk with a clatter of pots and a sentiment given to at least fifty men and women — "May Burdett soon be the man to have sway over us!" These were the very words. "This is but the beginning." "More of these damned scoundrels must go the same way, and then poor people may live." "Every man might maintain his family decent and comfortable, if the money were not picked out of our pockets by these damned placemen." "God is above the devil, I say, and down to Hell with him and all his brood, the Ministers, men of Parliament fellows." "They won't hear Burdett; no! he is a Christian man and speaks for the poor."

Although one should not come to Coleridge's letters expecting a gallery of characters such as one finds in those of Dorothy Osborne and Horace Walpole, occasionally a picture worthy of a novelist springs up amidst matter of a different kind. Of outstanding interest is William Wordsworth, whose taciturn figure stalks through the pages. When they are touring in Scotland in 1803, together with William's sister Dorothy, Coleridge observes to his wife, "Wordsworth's hypochondriacal feelings keep him si-



lent and self-centred,” but only a few months later he comments to the banker Richard Sharp, “In spite of Wordsworth’s occasional fits of hypochondriacal uncomfortableness ... his is the happiest family I ever saw.” In view of his friend’s austere nature, it is not entirely surprising that Coleridge should compare Wordsworth with Milton and his fine pamphlet *The Convention of Cintra*, which assails the British Government for deserting Britain’s ally Portugal, with Milton’s Latin *Defence of the English People*.

Coleridge has a special love for Charles Lamb and his much cherished sister Mary. Writing to Charles, he speaks of “some evening when we are quite comfortable at your fire-side—and oh! where shall I ever be, if I am not so there.” Mary, in a fit of insanity years before, fatally stabbed her mother and was committed to an asylum. Having recovered, she is able to live with her brother, but whenever a relapse is imminent, she has to return to confinement till the attack is over. Coleridge gives an account of such an occasion:

The Thursday before last she met at Rickman’s a Mr. Babb, an old friend and admirer of her mother. The next day she *smiled* in an ominous way; on Sunday she told her brother that she was getting bad, with great agony. On Tuesday morning she laid hold of me with violent agitation and talked wildly about George Dyer. I told Charles there was not a moment to lose; and I did not lose a moment, but went for a hackney-coach and took her to the private madhouse at Hugsden. She was quite calm, and said it was the best to do so. But she wept bitterly two or three times, yet all in a calm way.

Charles Lamb’s fellow essayist William Hazlitt appears in the letters as a young man with an original mind and unpleasant manners who visits Wordsworth and Coleridge in the Lake District, and whose sexual proclivities are such that Coleridge and Southey find themselves rescuing him from a possible lynching and a criminal charge. Subsequently Coleridge protests to several correspondents at the ingratitude with which Hazlitt attacks him in print. A third essayist, Thomas De Quincey, two years after he has anonymously given the struggling Coleridge three hundred pounds, supervises the printing of *The Convention of Cintra* for Wordsworth. Coleridge writes to Daniel Stuart:

I both respect and have an affection for Mr. De Quincey; but saw too much of his turn of mind, anxious yet dilatory, confused from over accuracy, and at once systematic and labyrinthine, not fully to understand how great a plague he might easily be to a London

Printer; his natural tediousness made yet greater by his zeal and fear of not discharging his trust.

Not all the remarkable characters who appear in the letters are authors. Dr. Green is treated to an account of one of Coleridge's dinner guests:

Mr. Thomas Hill, quondam drysalter of Thames Street, whom I remember twenty-five years ago with exactly the same look, person, and manners as now. Mathews calls him the Immutable. He is a seemingly always good-natured fellow who knows nothing and about everything, no person, and about and all about everybody – a complete parasite, in the old sense of a dinner-hunter, at the tables of all who entertain public men, authors, players, fiddlers, booksellers, etc., for more than thirty years.

Hill's antithesis, a young Calvinist clergyman whom Coleridge and Green encounter on a country visit, will read only the Bible. "On being invited to dine with us," Coleridge informs Mrs. Gillman, "the sad and modest youth returned for answer, that if Mr. Green and I should be here when he visited the house, he should have no objection to enter into the state of our souls with us."

One of the most memorable characters in the correspondence is a boy. Coleridge makes some repayment to his hosts James and Ann Gillman by helping them deal with their son Henry. In letters to his nephew Edward, an assistant master at Eton College, and in letters written from Ramsgate and Eton to his desperately anxious parents, readers can follow Coleridge as he tutors the boy in Greek grammar and the composition of Latin verses, escorts him to Eton, worries over his poor performance there, and, subsequent to much heart-searching on his own part and the Gillmans', oversees his withdrawal. After a local headmaster rejects him lest his pupils be corrupted by a boy from Eton, he obtains a place in the Free Grammar School at Shrewsbury, but only after a certificate arrives from Eton testifying that he has not been expelled. A picture emerges of an intelligent, sensitive, and honest but rather thoughtless boy, who lacks the concern for his future his parents want him to have and whose health suffers from his grief at being removed from Eton. If a book entertains him, he reads it fast and remembers what he has read, but he is an idle student with a great interest in shells and minerals and very little in Latin and Greek.

Working through the six fat volumes of Coleridge's collected letters, one realises the rightness of George Saintsbury's warning to editors that for the general reader "a certain amount of selection is not only justifiable but almost imperative." Reading page after page on the illnesses that prostrate

Coleridge is rather like eating a great deal of food that lies heavy on the stomach.

It is easy to have mixed feelings about this poet, scholar, religious thinker, and social critic. William Blake's crisp and forthright denunciations of major features of the Enlightenment, denunciations untainted by reactionary politics, contrast with the less pleasant polemics of Coleridge. The latter's arguments are apt to slither along in sentences oozing prejudice, though his prejudices coexist with humane concerns. Coleridge is an obscurantist, but an enlightened and rational interpreter of the Bible; a scholar blind to the cultural and moral riches of Roman Catholicism, rabbinic Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and the Enlightenment, but a European as opposed to an insular man of letters; an opponent of a Bill to reduce the suffering of animals and a reactionary fearful of power in the hands of the lower classes, but a supporter of the Factory Bill, an opponent of the Corn Law, and an enemy of conscienceless commercialism.

## SHE OBEYS THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT MARY RUSSELL MITFORD (1787-1855)



Among the writers whom Coleridge encourages, is the young woman Mary Russell Mitford, who is in many respects his contrary. A reformer in politics, an admirer of Napoleon, and an essentially non-denominational Christian, she has no interest in the intricacies of theology and philosophy, and despises natural science; she greatly prefers French literature to German, esteems clarity and simplicity in language, and prefers poetry and fiction that treat the actions of believable human characters. When

*The Prelude*, Wordsworth's introspective blank verse epic, is posthumously published, she dismisses it as a worthless production. The love of nature, however, is a passion she does share with its author and with Coleridge. "I cannot understand," she asserts, "how any one can live in a town." Rural scenes, trees, and wild and cultivated flowers are among her special delights. Yet her life, blighted by her father's folly and lack of self-control, is less than a happy one. Reading her letters is like listening to a bird's joyous song interrupted by long, plaintive cries.

As Mary Mitford—"the clever Mary Mitford," a cousin calls her, to distinguish her from several namesakes—moves from her schooldays into early adult life in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the letters she writes show how odd is the intensity of her attachment to her parents. When she enjoys an excursion to London with her father, Dr. George Mitford, after a few days she writes home to her mother, "I am dying to pet and kiss and love my own dear, dear granny." Her father is not only her "papa," but is also "my best beloved darling," "my own dear boy," "my little boy," and even "my lovyer." Despite an occasional humorous overtone, she seems to be pushing him into the roles of lover and son as well as parent. She declares her aversion to dancing and dislike of balls, and asserts several times that she will not marry. "I must never marry, that is certain," she writes to her mother, "for I never should be able to support

an absence of three months from my beloved parents"; six years later she informs her penfriend Sir William Elford, "I intend to die an old maid." In one letter, she comments on the folly of a young woman who throws away the happiness she is blessed with by marrying "one of the most disagreeable men in the world, apparently from no other motive than to be called Mrs. instead of Miss."

George Mitford, supposedly a physician, who excites such devotion in his daughter, is a wastrel, a reckless gambler, and an easy target for purveyors of speculative investments. His young daughter, who is level-headed and his often unheeded adviser, is so distraught when they have to leave their fine residence named Bertram House that she declares to a friend that, had he not had a wife already, she would have married their evictor, Mr. Elliott, "a little mean-looking Bond Street shopkeeper of sixty-five, with a methodist face, all bile, and wrinkles, and sadness," to remain in her home. However, leave she must, and when the family has settled in its new cottage, she finds herself near enough to her former dwelling to take her old walks and still be within easy reach of the city of Reading. She soon develops a strong attachment to her new, humbler residence and its garden, and she takes great pleasure in exchanging seeds and roots of flowering plants with some of her correspondents. In September 1835, she informs a friend, "I have above seventy sorts of seed done up in little packets."

As a young woman, Mary Mitford publishes her poems with some success. When her father reduces the family to serious straits, she turns to her pen to support it and develops into a versatile woman of letters. Contributing articles to magazines, editing the annual *Finden's Tableaux*, compiling an anthology of American literature, and writing an opera libretto and blank verse tragedies for the stage, she discovers she is trapped in a desperate attempt to keep her parents and herself solvent. Her correspondence tells of sometimes heartbreaking but occasionally triumphant negotiations with the actor-managers John and Charles Kemble and William Charles Macready. In the spring of 1823, a new note of despair enters her letters as she protests that she is being forced into the male role of breadwinner and wearing down her modest stock of health. At the same time, she is becoming a celebrity and is more and more fêted during her visits to London. After her mother dies in 1830, she still has to support the improvident father who is now her only relative and whom she is terrified of losing. During his decline, she nurses him and caters to his every wish at formidable cost to her own wellbeing and earning power. In December 1842, he dies.

By this time, Mitford is a woman famous not only as a dramatist but as the author of the spirited sketches collected in *Our Village*, and her admirers raise a subscription which enables her to clear the heavy debts her

father has left. Queen Victoria herself contributes, stipulating that the fact be kept private lest she be swamped with appeals.

After such a drawn-out ordeal, Mitford finds her own health is gravely undermined. Her letters describe the lameness and rheumatism that make a pony and chaise a near necessity. Fortunately, Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister, is persuaded to grant her a small pension. For some years, she is able to stop writing professionally, but about 1849, in spite of her ailments, her friend Henry Chorley, a versatile man of letters, persuades her to contribute to his *Ladies' Companion*, and in 1852 she publishes her widely read *Recollections of a Literary Life*, which combines personal reminiscences with selections from some of her favourite old and current authors. The spinal injury that cripples her in December 1852, when her chaise overturns, and the agonising pains that follow do not prevent her from completing her novel *Atherton*, from collecting her plays and furnishing them with a long Preface, and from sustaining a very extensive correspondence. She dies on 10 January 1855 in the presence of her friend and neighbour Lady Russell.

Many of the places in which Mitford finds herself evoke her powers of description. She loves to picture rural landscapes for Sir William Elford, a distinguished amateur artist:

a long string of meadows, irregularly divided by a shallow winding stream, swollen by the late rains to unusual beauty, and bounded on the one side by a ragged copse, of which the outline is perpetually broken by sheep walks and more beaten paths, which here and there admit a glimpse of low white cottages, and on the other by tall hedgerows, abounding in timber, and strewn like a carpet with white violets, primroses, and oxlips. Except that occasionally over the simple gates you catch a view of the soft and woody valleys, the village churches and the fine seats which distinguish this part of Berkshire, excepting this short and unfrequent peep at the world, you seem quite shut into these smiling meads.

Flowers, of which Mitford has much knowledge, excite her raptures. One evening in the summer of 1841, she follows the example of some neighbours by climbing on a ladder to look at her cottage garden from above, and describes the view to Elizabeth Barrett:

Masses of the Siberian larkspur, and sweet Williams, mostly double, the still brighter new larkspur (*Delphinium Chinensis*), rich as an oriental butterfly – such a size and such a blue! amongst roses in millions, with the blue and white Canterbury

bells (also double), and the white foxglove, and the variegated monkshood, the carmine pea, in its stalwart beauty, the nemophila, like the sky above its head, the new erysimum, with its gay orange tufts, hundreds of lesser annuals, and fuchsias, zinnias, salvias, geraniums past compt; so bright are the flowers that the green really does not predominate amongst them!

Justifying her claim that her reputation for gentleness is undeserved, Mitford can give a severe touch to her pen. Of Colonel Beaumont's renovated home in Northumberland, she writes to her mother:

It was a fine specimen of the Saxon Gothic architecture; but he has built upon the same foundation, retained all the inconveniences of the ancient style, and lost all its grandeur. It has on the outside an appearance of a manufactory, and the inside conveys the exact idea of an inn. I should have thought it absolutely impossible to construct so bad a house with so many rooms.

The social scene also can engage her attention. Is Sir William Elford, Mitford wonders, acquainted with "the almost inconceivable *mélange* of a true female gossip; where dress and music, dancing and preaching, pelisses and beaux, flowers and scandal, all meet together, like the oil and vinegar of a salad?" To her Irish friend Emily Jephson, an intimate of the novelist Maria Edgeworth, she explains what she enjoys and what she endures when she visits London in the summer of 1834 for the production of her play *Charles the First*:

For the first ten days I spent on an average from four to six hours every morning in the Victoria Theatre, at hard scolding, for the play has been entirely got up by me; then I dined out amongst twenty or thirty eminent strangers every evening. Since that, I have been to operas and pictures, and held a sort of drawing-room every morning; so that I am so worn out, as to have, for three days out of the last four, fainted dead away between four and five o'clock, a fine-lady trick which I never played before.

London, where she mixes with fellow writers, is the only city other than historic Bristol that gives Mitford any pleasure. Reading, which is within easy reach of her home, she somewhat haughtily denounces to Elford as having "no trees — no flowers — no green fields — no wit — no literature — no elegance! Neither the society of London nor the freedom of the country";

Bath she finds “cold, monotonous, bald, poor, and dead”; but she can write to Elford from the capital:

How splendidly beautiful London is! I had been there two or three times lately in the winter, but not for some years in the height of the season—when the bright sun throws those magnificent streets into strong light and shadow, and when there are brilliant crowds of gay carriages and well-dressed people to animate the scene.

In 1810, she confesses to him that it was only during the later part of her recent stay in the city, when she was deeply moved by the sight of flowers and trees, that she was sure her “fondness for rural scenery” was real and not part of “the prevailing cant.” Nevertheless, she can admit to her friend Mrs. Hofland, a children’s writer, “I do sometimes envy that delightful sunning water of London society, where you have all the drops bright and sparkling from the spring head. The stream gets muddy before it reaches us.” Later, on hearing of the success of Coleridge’s play *Remorse*, she feels, “It would be quite refreshing to have a little of his conversation, after being condemned to keep company with the people hereabouts.”

On her earlier excursions to London, Mitford is usually in the company of her father, the foremost among the many characters who stand out in her correspondence. Clearly, a pleasant companion, he has estimable and noteworthy friends ranging from Sir William Elford, a Conservative Member of Parliament and supporter of Pitt, to Coleridge’s *bête noire* William Cobbett, the radical author and journalist. As a popular magistrate, he chairs the bench at Reading. His daughter constantly expresses her devotion to her disastrously unthrifty parent, whose liberal politics, love of dogs, and passion for coursing she shares. Once the much-loved dog Dash pursues a rabbit and gets stuck in a burrow. Guided by his cries, her father, with the help of two men and a boy, find him and dig for more than two hours in heavy rain to complete the rescue. “My father,” Mitford tells Emily Jephson, “was wet to the skin; but I am sure he would have dug till this time rather than any living creature, much less his own favourite dog, should have perished so miserably.” Though her cherished animal companions figure frequently in her letters, she has no qualms about the suffering of the hares their dogs run down, but takes great pride in their hunting prowess.

In spite of her devotion to her father, scattered through the letters Mitford sends him when he is away from home—often enough in London negotiating on her behalf—are warnings about his behaviour with money and, much less often, outbursts at his callous disregard of her welfare.



When she is eighteen, he is taking her on a tour to see relations and family connections in the north of England, when she suddenly finds he has abandoned her without even a farewell, leaving her in the hands of a cousin: he has allowed her to feel betrayed, and also offended an old friend, in order to rush home and help a recent acquaintance campaign in an election in which the man is already a certain winner. “It is surely a very odd thing,” she protests to her mother, “for a young woman to be left in this strange manner. I hope you will be able to prevail upon papa to return immediately, or he will lose a very excellent and very attached *old friend*, and do no material service to the *new one*, for whose sake he seems to forget all other things and persons.” Four months later, she warns him against gambling with strangers:

my advice has always been, that you should stick to Graham’s, where, if you have not an equal advantage, you have at least no trouble, and know your society. You have always gained more there, on an average, than with chance players like the Baron, or at inferior clubs, like the one you now frequent.

Her warnings about paying bills, compounding for taxes, recovering money from an investment, and even not buying her an unnecessary fur cap fail to save her “beloved darling” from being steadily sucked into a maelstrom of debt from which he can never escape, no matter how hard his daughter toils. In May 1823, she writes to Elford, “My father has at last resolved – partly, I believe, instigated by the effect which the terrible feeling of responsibility and want of power has had on my health and spirits – to try if he can himself obtain any employment that may lighten the burthen.” He does not keep his resolve.

The literary labour he imposes on his daughter is the principal but not the only blight that George Mitford casts on her life. She feels that she must decline an invitation to stay with Mrs. Hofland because he has far-flung engagements – one is to a christening – which he will not keep unless she is with him. While he takes pride in her fame, his snobbery causes her to complain to her lifelong friend William Harness:

My father – very kind to me in many respects, very attentive if I’m ill, very solicitous that my garden should be nicely kept, that I should go out with him, and be amused – is yet, so far as art, literature, and the drama are concerned, of a temper infinitely difficult to deal with. He hates and despises them, and all their professors – looks on them with hatred and scorn; and is constantly taunting me with my ‘friends’ and my ‘people’ (as he calls them), reproaching me if I hold the slightest intercourse

with author, editor, artist, or actor, and treating with frank contempt every one not of a certain station in the county.

After her mother's death, her father's health deteriorates and he demands more and more of her time. This makes it impossible for her to write enough to prevent his sinking deeper and deeper into debt. She describes her plight to Harness:

His eyesight fails him now so completely that he cannot even read the leading articles in the newspaper. Accordingly, I have not only every day gone through the daily paper, debates and all, which forms a sort of necessity to one who has so long taken an interest in everything that passes, but, after that, I have read to him from dark till bedtime, and then have often (generally) sat at his bedside almost till morning, sometimes reading, sometimes answering letters as he slept, expecting the terrible attacks of cramp, three or four of a night, during which he gets out of bed to walk the room, unable to get in again without my assistance.

George Mitford's extravagance continues. His daughter refers, in a letter to Emily Jephson, to "this poor cottage, where, to say a truth which I tell to few, I stay principally, because it is only the fewness and smallness of our closets here which could restrain my dear, dear father from the exercise of that too large and liberal hospitality, which, added to other causes, drove him through *three* good fortunes." When he is eighty years old, she reports to another friend, the aspiring writer Henrietta Harrison:

the things that weigh upon me are not an occasional bottle or two of port or claret or champagne, but the keeping two horses instead of one, the turning half a dozen people for months into the garden, which ought to be cultivated by one person, and even the building—as I see he is now meditating—a new carriage, when we have already two, but too expensive ... in short, I have to provide for expenses over which I have no more control than my own dog, Flush.

As oblivious to the damage he is inflicting on his daughter as to the ruin he brings on his own finances, he attributes her failing health to her walks and drives in the countryside and urges her not to go beyond the garden. "Is not this," she protests to Elizabeth Barrett, "the perfection of self-deception? And yet I would not awaken him from this dream." Like a bird paralyzed by the sight of a rearing snake, she submits to his "excessive irritability" and his prolonged moaning—more a habit than anything else, his physi-

cian says – while she reads to him or they play at cribbage. In one of her moments of clear sightedness, Mitford writes to Harness of “a destiny that is wearing down my health and mind and spirits and strength – a life spent in efforts above my powers, and which will end in the workhouse or in a Bedlam, as the body or the mind shall sink first.” Referring to her father, she adds, “He ought to feel this; but he does not.”

A friend of Mitford as hapless as her father is Benjamin Haydon, an artist probably remembered more for his autobiography and diary than his paintings. At first, she has high hopes he is a genius whose history paintings of biblical subjects will bring him great renown. “Is he likely,” she asks Elford, “to obtain employment in his own high sphere, or will he – like Sir Joshua [Reynolds] – sink into portrait-painting?” His personality, as a later letter to Elford shows, dazzles her:

He is a most admirable person, whose very faults spring from that excess of brilliancy and life with which, more than any creature that ever lived, he is gifted. I never see him without thinking of the description of the Dauphin’s horse in *Henry the Fifth* – all air and fire – the duller elements have no share in his composition.

From the beginning, she does see tell-tale signs of his limitations – his King Solomon, she admits, “is Queen Anne with beauty, with intellect, with majesty, with penetration; but still it is Queen Anne.” Even when she is in a fury at his landing himself in debtors’ prison in 1823, she can hail him as an “admirable character” and a “great artist,” but she warns him about this time that his “peculiar talent” is for portraits and “humorous pictures.” However, his ambition is too strong; he spends too much time on heroic subjects and cannot support his family. On 20 June 1846, without warning signs, he fatally shoots himself. Mitford’s final verdict on him is found in a letter of 1852 referring to Peel’s grant of a pension to his widow and explaining why she declines to edit his autobiography:

He was a most brilliant talker – racy, bold, original, and vigorous; and his early pictures were full of promise; but a vanity, that amounted to self-idolatry, and a terrible carelessness, unjustifiable in many matters, degraded his mind, and even impaired his talent in art. I was always certain that his suicide proceeded from a desire to provide for his family. And, thanks to Sir Robert Peel’s benevolence, it succeeded.

As distressed as Mitford by Haydon's suicide is the female friend she most admires. In May 1836, John Kenyon, a wealthy habitué of the literary world, takes her to see giraffes and a diorama, and she reports to her father:

A sweet young woman, whom we called for in Gloucester Place, went with us—a Miss Barrett—who reads Greek as I do French, and has published some translations from Aeschylus, and some most striking poems. She is a delightful young creature; shy and timid and modest. Nothing but her desire to see me got her out at all.

Only what she sees as an indulgence in obscurity and a preference for "mysticism" as opposed to the activities of lifelike people cause her to have any reservations about this scholarly prodigy who lives the life of a hermitess, and whose health is so fragile that the terrible prospect of her imminent death hovers before Mitford's eyes. The older woman goes so far as to deem her new friend "the most remarkable person now alive" and meets her father, which, as she tells her, she is eager to do "to be better authorized to love you and to take a pride in your successes." After her favourite brother accompanies her to Torquay so that she can escape the London winter and in 1840 is drowned there, the shock reduces Miss Barrett to an invalid. This heightens the fears of Mitford, so that, on the death of another of her friends, Lady Sidmouth, in 1841, she writes to the ailing young poet, "Everybody that loves me does die! Oh! take care of yourself, my very dearest!" In February 1842, she happily reports that "Miss Barrett says that she is quite well (for her), and walks to the sofa," but in the early autumn of 1846, when the astonishing news arrives that Miss Barrett is now Mrs. Browning and is on her way across France to take up residence in Italy, she believes doom has struck. "I felt just exactly," she confesses to the translator Charles Boner, "as if I had heard that Dr. Chambers had given her over when I got the letter announcing her marriage, and found that she was about to cross to France. I never had an idea of her reaching Pisa alive." After the Brownings revisit London, she observes to Boner, "A strange thing it seemed to see her walking about like other people." Her admiration of the younger woman continues, though she criticises her belief in homeopathy, the medical use of hypnotism, and spiritualism: discussing the rappings in séances, she declares, "Mrs. Browning believes in them. She would have believed in the Cock Lane ghost."

An author Mitford adores almost as much as she adores Miss Barrett is a writer on art and society, the young John Ruskin. She is equally enchanted by the nobility of his prose and the charm of his personality. To Mrs. Partridge, the daughter of an art collector, she asserts that "there are

passages in *The Modern Painters*, that Hooker or Jeremy Taylor might be glad to have written,” and when she warns her Irish correspondent Digby Starkey, “You would soon get tired of authors if you saw much of them,” she allows that Ruskin is an exception.

Another famous Victorian who becomes a friend of Mitford is Charles Kingsley – novelist, clergyman, and Christian Socialist. Ambivalent about his books, she comments several times that though he lives not far from her, they have not met. When they do, she informs her Tory friend Mrs. Jennings:

I have never seen a man of letters the least like him. . . . Mr. Kingsley is not only a high-bred gentleman, but has the most charming admixture of softness and gentleness, with spirit, manliness, and frankness – a frankness quite transparent – and a cordiality and courtesy that would win any heart. He did win his own sweet wife entirely by this charm of character. She was a girl of family, fortune, fashion, and beauty; he a young curate, without distinction of any sort . . . they lived down and loved down a pretty strong family opposition and were married.

Mrs. Kingsley, she later observes to Boner, is “the only realization of my idea of a poet’s wife that I have ever seen.”

Also a clergyman is William Harness, a childhood friend of Mitford, who remains her friend till she dies, and then begins the task of editing a selection of her letters. Despite his literary inclinations – he edits Shakespeare and has a play of his own printed – he does not achieve great literary distinction. In a late letter, Mitford tells Boner how Harness, sharing a house in happy bachelorhood with his sister and hosting much appreciated dinners, “has lived more than forty years with all that was best and highest in art and literature in London”; she admits, however, that “William Harness, incurably indolent, has never by any great work vindicated his own high talents but is accepted . . . purely on the ground of delightful conversation and high personal character.”

A clergyman who makes a late entry into Mitford’s life is Hugh Pearson, Rector of Sonning, who assiduously attends her during her last months. She declares to her wealthy friend Francis Bennoch that Pearson “has been to me, spiritually, a comfort such as none can conceive,” and to Mrs. Tindal (the former Miss Harrison) she writes more expansively, “He is a most admirable young man – not an author, but the chosen friend of many of the greatest, and the man of the finest taste that I have ever known. As a clergyman, he is unrivalled for largeness, tenderness, and charity – just exactly a younger Dr. Arnold.” Contrasting him with other much loved visitors, she confides to him, “Mr. Harness will demand all my

strength. He is a most charming person, but requires a great deal from his companion; so does that other most delightful person, Mr. Ruskin.... Your conversation is a spring that never fails, never overflows. You've never tired me mind or body."

Eight weeks before she dies, Mitford informs Pearson that Mr. Bennoch will meet him in Reading and bring him to her house. This man, she adds, is excellent company and a useful man for a clergyman concerned about the future of school leavers to know, for "few persons in England have so much the will and the power to push merit forward." Bennoch is a prominent businessman, a friend of many writers, and the author of *The Storm and Other Poems*, published in 1841. Mitford enthuses about him to Emily Jephson:

He is the head of a great Manchester house, a man with a very large fortune, with a sweet wife, and no children. He is a leading man in the Common Council, intending, I suppose, one day or other to represent the city, being, I am told, a very fine speaker. But his residence is at Blackheath, where he exercises an almost boundless hospitality, and does more good than anybody I know. His conversation is most brilliant. He has travelled over the greater part of Europe and America, and I need hardly tell you that, as a poet, he is equalled by very few.

Reading about evidence that Bennoch has given to the London Corporation, Mitford feels, "The life that he has put into those figures is something wonderful," and she marvels at the way "life may be put into an apparently dry subject by the mind and the earnestness of the writer." His pamphlet on the currency she finds remarkable for its clarity and happily writes, "It got nearer to making me understand the question than anything has ever done yet." He even finds time to design a chair that will allow her, despite her crippled condition, to sit and write in her garden. At the beginning of 1853, she prophesies that Bennoch will be "a great poet soon," but seven months later concedes that he "has 'the faculty divine,' but not time to put it on paper."

When Mitford is near death, she writes in a letter to Bennoch, "Pray for me, my dear friends! We are of different forms, but surely of one religion—that which is found between the two covers of the Gospel." One of the friends of her last years is of a 'form' further removed from hers than that of the Scottish Bennoch. Anna Maria Goldsmid, whose father, Sir Isaac Goldsmid, is a Jewish baronet and financier, seems to enrapture her almost in the manner of Elizabeth Barrett and John Ruskin. "The most splendid woman that I have known," she informs Mrs. Partridge, "Sir Isaac Goldsmid's daughter, never dreams of writing; but she is one of those en-

lightened readers to whose appropriation [?appreciation] all writers look.”  
To Miss Jephson, she declares:

I wish you knew Miss Goldsmid. She is by far the greatest woman that I have ever known. Even her appearance is a complete triumph of mind over body, for she would be absolutely plain in face if it were not for the fine intellectual expression and the sweetness of the eyes; and clumsy in figure but for the noble and dignified carriage, which would beseem a queen.... I wish I could show you her only literary effort—a translation of ... Jewish sermons from the German of Dr. Solomons—worthy to be Christian discourses in their spirit of charity and brotherly love.

Two of the most engaging characters who feature in the letters are the servants Ms. Kerrenhappuk—usually referred to as K. or her “little maid”—and Sam Sweetman. In 1844, she counsels Mrs. Partridge, who is having difficulties with her domestic staff:

Above all, disregard tittle-tattle and interference. I should have escaped infinite torment and loss if I had not been driven, by the tongues of the neighbourhood, into parting with K., of whom Mr. May [the family physician] says that she is the most judicious and intelligent attendant that he ever met in a sick room, and whose affectionate attention to me at all times makes one of the chief comforts of my life.

K. has a small son who lives in the house and who may have been born out of wedlock. Happily, by the time of the letter of advice to Mrs. Partridge, she has left “a better place” to return to her former mistress. When Mitford needs a pony and chaise, if she is not to be housebound, a young man named Sam Sweetman, the son of Sir John Cope’s highly respected dog-keeper, comes to act as driver for three weeks. He takes to his new employer and at least as much to her “little maid,” marries the latter, and helps her to care for the mistress they both love.

The letters provide much detail about this happy pair. Being very strong and very gentle, Sam is an ideal person to lift the pain-racked Mitford. Unlike K., who has “a certain contempt for books,” with which the cottage is crammed, he is a great reader of both books and newspapers. On newspaper matters, Mitford notes, “He and I often ask questions of what the one is ignorant of, and he is far more frequently able to answer me than I to answer him.” When Bennoch sends his design for a garden chair, Mitford tells him what will happen if it is presented to the young man:

Sam is objector-general in this house; he never assents to any proposition. If one gives him his choice of half-a-dozen ways of doing a thing, which he himself has declared must be done, he finds fault with them all.... K. treats his objections with sublime contempt, and takes her own way in spite of them. *She* has a great turn for carpentry, and is never so happy as when walking about the house with a hammer in her hand. If she had but a proper tool-chest, and strength of arm equal to her constructive faculty, I make no doubt but she would set her husband at defiance, and work out your diagram this very day.

In November 1852, Mitford informs Hugh Pearson, "I am this winter paying the penalty annexed to married servants, and my good little K. is in no state to travel; and even if I could go to London without her, would not let me." The child is born on 2 January 1853, and her presence in the house brightens Mitford's last days. To Emily Jephson, she describes how,

She comes to my door knocking with her little clenched fist every time she can escape from her father and mother and the maid, and in imitation, we suppose, of her brother, folds her little hands every night and says, "Bless papa and mamma and poor *Ba*," the hideous name (nobody can guess why) she will call me. She knows all my things for use or wearing, and is furiously angry if anything she has been accustomed to see in my room meets her eye out of it.

The letters record several occasions when Mitford is in serious danger. Once, in the winter of 1847 to 1848, the vehicle she is sitting in is kicked to pieces by its pony; K., she afterwards recalls, "got off (we neither of us knew how) and flew to the head of the furious animal, holding on to the bit and bridle, at the peril of life and limb for many minutes." Having saved her mistress's life, K. goes on to cosset her in her last illness much as she herself had cosseted her father. "K. and Sam," she acknowledges to Mrs. Tindal, "nurse me just as if I were their mother." They are ably guided by George May of Reading, who had been Mitford's father's physician. In October 1854, she extols his devotion:

My death was expected from week to week, from day to day, from hour to hour. Mr. May, however, in spite of his immense practice, of my distance from Reading, and of his bad opinion of the case, did not abandon the stranded ship, but continued to watch the symptoms, and to exhaust every resource of diet and medicine, as if his fame and fortune depended on the result. This



union of friendship and skill has prolonged my life, and I am certainly better than a month ago.

Mr. May reluctantly allows his patient to write letters, but nothing else, and sometimes, enduring great pain, she produces as many as ten in a single day. Those that survive chronicle her prolonged ordeal in great detail as well as its ameliorating factors, of which her constitutional high spirits are the most remarkable. Shortly before she is thrown out of her chaise in December 1852, she explains to Emily Jephson:

It is next to impossible for me to be visible before two o'clock, and by eight I am wholly exhausted. I can hardly crawl from room to room, and never expect to walk the length of my little garden again—am lifted in and out of a very low pony-carriage, and from step to step upstairs to bed. Then, in bed, I cannot stir, and have all the length of the spinal column, all round the loins, and across the shoulders, a soreness which renders every position painful. It is just as if I had been soundly beaten, so that, after a little interrupted sleep, I am more fatigued in the morning than when I went to bed at night.

Even after the accident, her high spirits persist, as she tells Digby Starkey:

Mr. May complains that he never can tell how I am, because my conversation is so deceiving. My maid K. orders people away, because, so long as I have company, I wear myself out with my good spirits. High animal spirits, that great gift of God, have sustained me through a life of anxiety and labor, hardly perhaps to be paralleled in the long list of poor authors.

She goes on to make clear the result of the damage to “the principal nerves of the principal joints”:

For about a month my left arm was tied up in one shawl slingwise, and bound lightly to my body with another, to prevent the terrible pain which the slightest motion sent upward and downward through the limb and the whole side.

While she does not conceal her sufferings, Mitford constantly reverts to her thankfulness for what has been left to her. In addition to appreciating the ministrations of Hugh Pearson, George May, K., and Sam and the daily visits of her widowed neighbour Lady Russell, she observes:

It has pleased God to spare not only such faculties as were originally vouchsafed to me, but my affections, my sympathies, and my cheerfulness—nay, even the interest in daily trifles, which adds so much to the healthy joy of life. I still love books and flowers, and look with pleasure on the tall elms waving across the calm blue sky.

In another of the letters written after her last injury, she describes how she is sitting at an open window “looking on blue sky and green waving trees, with a bit of road and some cottages in the distance, and K.’s little girl’s merry voice calling [the dog] Fanchon in the court.”

Mitford is convinced that her sufferings have a divine origin. To Harness, she declares:

I fully believe that this long visitation has been the greatest mercy of the gracious God, who has been very good to me all through life. I firmly believe that it was sent to draw me to Him. May He give me grace not to throw away the opportunity.

The keynotes of her religious outlook are a call for broadminded tolerance of all churches, opposition to anything she regards as extremism, and faith in redemption through Christ. She is as critical of Methodism as Horace Walpole and of Puseyites as Sydney Smith. Overhearing Methodist preaching in 1812, she describes it to Elford as “a sermon, which, if I had not known it must be a sermon, I should undoubtedly have taken for the violent swearing of a man in a passion”; the puritanical Jansenists of the Roman Church she denounces as “Catholic Methodists.” Puseyism she defines as “nothing more nor less than popery in black and white—without the poetry, without the painting, without the music, without the architecture—without the exquisite beauty which wins the imagination in the ancient faith”; she adds, “For my own part, I hold too firmly to the true Protestant doctrine (which so many Protestants forget) of freedom of thought—complete liberty of conscience—for others as well as myself—ever to become a Roman Catholic.” Though she finds the Catholic Bishop Baines “the very incarnation of taste, combined with an intelligence, a liberality, a gracious indulgence most rare among Protestant clergymen,” K.’s fear that her mistress will be converted is needless.

Mitford has a strong dislike of religious conversions. She believes that a soul torn from its moorings is likely to remain adrift, and that “There is enough for salvation in the Gospels, under whatever form of Christianity we may worship.” She deplores “the unchristian intolerance against Unitarianism” and favours Jewish emancipation, insisting, “I, for my part, think that every one has a claim to the enjoyment of civil rights, were he

Hindoo or Mahomedan." In a letter to Mrs. Ouvry, an Anglican clergyman's wife, she alludes to the outrage caused by Pope Pius IX's establishment of a Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy in England and protests, "All that Protestant bigotry last year was enough – not quite enough (I like freedom of thought too well), but almost enough – to make one turn Catholic."

That Mitford holds to freedom of thought is evident in her letter of thanks when Harness, her lifelong friend, sends her a book of his sermons. One of them, she judges, "would have done honour to Shakespeare"; she also feels that in all honesty she should admit something she never talks about:

I do not, or rather cannot, believe all that the Church requires. I humbly hope that it is not necessary to do so, and that a devout sense of the mercy of God, and an endeavour, however imperfectly and feebly, to obey the great precepts of justice and kindness, may be accepted in lieu of that entire faith which, in me, *will not* be commanded.

Harness's own sectarian fervour may be gauged from his publishing in 1851, the year after the re-establishment of a Catholic hierarchy in England, *The Errors of the Roman Creed Considered in Six Sermons*.

When her father is dying, Mitford finds comfort in St. John's Gospel, and as she feels her own death approaching, she reads the whole of the New Testament once, but the Gospels several times. She has always been, she tells Mrs. Ouvry, "a firm believer in the great redemption," but she used to worry "about reconciling this and that"; now, as an unlearned woman, she no longer questions the "Divine history." However, she finds that her intellectual submission to "the whole of the holy mystery" does not bring "the lively and vivifying illumination" others talk of, and she has to be content with Pearson's being untroubled by her misgivings and Harness's assurance that "rapturous assurance of acceptance" is not necessary.

Whatever her theological reservations may be, Mitford believes in the social and moral value of the Anglican Church, "the most large and liberal of the many English sects," but she opposes rigid puritanism and self-righteous judgments. She considers that Sunday should be marked by communion with nature as well as by worship, and that Sunday evening cricket is acceptable. Education, she holds, "should be based upon religion," but not restricted to it, and overdosing schoolchildren with too many visits to church will set them against religion or make them hypocrites. Beer-houses she regards as "the bane of England." When she joins a party at the performance of her friend Thomas Telford's *Ion*, she observes without censure, "All the naughty ladies were at our play," but she repre-

hends a plan to train an immoral woman as an actress: "Now *can* such a person as that think and feel as a high tragic actress ought to do? Honour, virtue, fidelity, love must be worse than words to her; she must have been used to consider them as things to spurn and laugh at." When people are taking sides in George IV's quarrel with his consort, she deems that the turbulence excited by the Queen's conduct "threatens to injure the taste, the purity, the moral character of the nation" and that the King's libertinism sets a deplorable example "to his court and country." Commenting on the death of Lady Blessington, widely believed to be Count D'Orsay's mistress, she declares, "I would not have been one of those strict ladies who drove the poor woman in her poverty and old age to die." As an enthusiast for the novels of George Sand, some of which, along with the authoress's lifestyle, she cannot approve of, she has to deal with her own conflicted feelings. In 1852, she is glad to know that Sand

has reformed her bad ways, lives quietly with her children ... and puts her genius (for it is more than talent) to its proper use. Her later stories, and, above all, her rustic dramas, give token of a greatly altered moral sense. In short, she is now a person whom I should not object to meet, although I should not go in search of her.

In her position on one moral issue, Mitford disappoints. As a young woman, she applauds the speeches at a meeting to oppose the slave trade, and she honours Sir William Elford for his contribution to the cause, but her zeal is not proof against her admiration for the American lawyer and statesman Daniel Webster, who visits her home and argues against emancipation as fatal to the unity of his country. Moral indignation against slavery can bring conservatives like Dr. Johnson and William Cowper, centrists like Horace Walpole and Sydney Smith, and radicals like William Blake and Thomas Paine onto the same side, but Mary Mitford goes over to the opposition. When Harriet Beecher Stowe raises international anger with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Mitford denounces the book as "one-sided, exaggerated, false" and refuses to read beyond the first hundred pages. At best, she shows a little more perceptiveness when she admits, "That slavery is the great difficulty of a great nation," but the second half of her sentence — "and it must not be treated by appeals to the passions" — is not accompanied by any suggestion that the least disruptive method of abolition needs to be sought.

Mitford's defence of Webster's position is out of keeping with most of her political views. Raised in the era of repression that follows the French Revolution, she inherits her Whig father's liberal outlook. Her early political heroes are Charles James Fox and the radical Sir Francis Burdett.

William Cobbett appeals to her, too, until she finds his temper and heart corrupted by his imprisonment and “his head blown up like an air-balloon by the vanity which has so completely carried him off his feet.” Despising both the Government and its Whig opponents, she declares, “One thing is certain, if not a Reformer I am nothing.” When Peel introduces progressive measures with Conservative caution, she praises him as “in his heart the greatest reformer in the country.” With admirable self-knowledge, she recognizes, “I am an inconsistent politician ... with my aristocratic prejudices and my radical opinions.” She is proud of the ancient pedigree of the Mitford family and, in one letter, refers to “that best class in the whole world ... the affluent and cultivated gentry of England.” In 1831, faced with Harness’s opposition to the extension of the franchise, she urges that it is preferable to the alternative, which is revolution. Seventeen years later, when a further extension threatens, she reports to Charles Boner, who lives in Germany, “I myself should like an educational test, but it will probably end in household suffrage and the ballot.” Late in life, she describes herself to her Irish penfriend Mrs. Hoare as “midway between dear Mrs. Browning, who is a furious Radical, and dear Mrs. Jennings, who is an equally furious Tory.”

Sir William Elford, a staunch Conservative and a supporter of Pitt’s repressive measures, likes to tease Mitford about her liberal opinions calling her (in spite of her plainness, of which she is fully conscious) “Belle Démocrate” and accusing her of being no friend to monarchy. To this charge, she replies:

What made you think me a Republican? Much as I adore the arts of Greece, I see nothing to admire in their governments.... Rome always seemed to me the most disagreeable subject, and the Romans the most outrageous, strutting, boasting barbarians on the face of the earth.... Venice, too, was nothing very charming.... England’s trial of a republic ended in a very wise and very glorious king called Oliver; and France’s bloody experiment had the same conclusion. You will hardly venture again to doubt my being a very orthodox lover of a limited monarchy – the best and the freest mode of government that ever was devised by human wisdom.

The strangest of Mitford’s political passions is her lifelong adoration of Napoleon. Blinded by his sunlike genius, she is too often oblivious to the way in which that genius scorched the earth and devoured vast numbers of lives. She proclaims to Haydon, “Everything about that great man has for me a charm absolutely inexpressible” and utters to her correspondent Lucy Anderdon the wish that Miss Barrett would compose a narrative

poem “doing justice to that great man, Napoleon, to whom no justice has yet been done in any English work.” To Charles Boner, she exclaims, “Oh how I should have liked to see that mask of Napoleon! His face is the very ideal of beauty in all the prints and paintings: the upper part all power, the lower all sweetness. The greatest sin ever committed by a nation was ours in letting that great man perish at St. Helena.”

In her last years, when she has extended her idolatry to the original object’s nephew, Mitford asserts to Mrs. Ouvry:

My admiration of the antique Napoleon did not spring from his being a great warrior, but a great restorer, a great legislator, and a great man ... moreover, in four or five hundred volumes of Memoirs about him that I read once I found all, from the prince to the valet, agreeing in loving him for his *bonhomie* and kindness.

The nephew, Louis Napoleon, having been elected President of France in December 1848, stages a *coup d’état* on 2 December 1851 to break a political deadlock and makes himself sole ruler. Admitting, “He has not, of course, the genius of his uncle,” Mitford praises his freedom from “the instability and trickery of the French character,” and assails the attacks against him in the English press. When Mrs. Ouvry questions her judgment, she exclaims, “Ah, my dear friend! do not lecture me for loving and admiring! It is the last green branch on the old tree, the lingering touch of life and youth.” Disturbingly, misled by the irritation that nearly all feel at times with their government and probably by Daniel Webster’s loss of an election for opposing the abolition of slavery, she suggests that that elusive phenomenon “a mild despotism” is preferable to almost endless debate and “miserable compromise.” In 1852, when the French despotism becomes less mild, she writes:

Truly, of all the fine things that Louis Napoleon is doing for France, none, to my mind, is so valuable as the putting down of journalism!!! That vile engine, the press, is to genius of modern times what the rack was of old. I abhor it, not on my own account – for to me it is civil enough – but on the score of my betters.

In the politics of her own country, Mitford takes the liberal side, but she is no feminist. She announces to Mrs. Ouvry, “I have no faith in women’s colleges or woman’s rights. We have our own duties in our own sphere.” “A woman who could paint history,” she argues, “must first have renounced her sex,” and the “old Quakeress, a sort of combination of Mary Wollstonecraft and Harriet Martineau, who made a harangue from a wag-

on on the rights, or rather wrongs, of women" is a speaker from whom she would have fled. She accuses Hannah More of writing "like a man in petticoats, or a woman in breeches" and objects, "All her books have a loud voice, and a stern frown, and a long stride with them." She is indignant at Florence Nightingale's intrusion into the treatment of the wounded in the Crimean War: "I have no faith in the lady nurses.... Men are required.... But those ladies wanted excitement and notoriety, and they have got them." The collapse of her own health she attributes to her having been thrust into a male role. In 1829, she protests to Haydon, "Women were not meant to earn the bread of a family—I am sure of that—there is a want of strength"; twenty-four years later, she laments to Mrs. Browning, "for above thirty years I had perpetual anxieties to encounter—my parents to support and for a long time to nurse—and generally an amount of labour and of worry and of care of every sort, such as has seldom fallen to the lot of woman."

In spite of her antifeminism, Mitford does not like shallow women obsessed with their appearance. She regales Elford with an account of the conduct of a young girl who was listening to her reading one of her long poems: this "*gentille demoiselle* ... suddenly inquired, in the very middle of my first pathetic harangue, where I got the pattern of that sweet morning cap." In old age, she applauds the way in which Lady Russell's daughters have been "brought up by a most accomplished father, in the midst of the best books, and the best society" so that "they have nothing of the young lady about them." Her great complaint is that "in this educating age everything is taught to women except that which is perhaps worth all the rest—the power and the habit of thinking."

In 1847, Mitford works with a Reading bookseller named Lovejoy to compile a much needed list of secular books to be stocked in lending libraries for the poor. Sending the list to Mrs. Ouvry, who had suggested the project, she mentions that "Mr. Lovejoy smuggled in *Our Village*" and comments, "I think this selection a little too didactic, and yet many of the dry-sounding books are very amusing." Soon the Inspector of Education and the Poor Law Commissioners (one of the latter is Mrs. Ouvry's father) adopt the list, and Mitford rejoices that "we shall have more than common chance of being useful."

As a critic, Mitford can be rigorous. When she takes on the editorship of *Finden's Tableaux*, she is proud of obtaining poems much superior to "the most vague and purposeless description" that characterises the verse in most other annuals. She claims that "the very great nobility, the real leaders of fashion, always delight in the simple and the true, and leave the trash called fashionable novels to their would-be imitators." Counselling her friend Henrietta Harrison, who is to publish poetry and novels, she

recalls, "I remember being struck, two years ago, with your corrections, they were all such essential improvements; whereas the various readings of nine-tenths of your young lady versifiers are mere alterations, neither better nor worse." She draws Elizabeth Barrett's attention to the novelist G. P. R. James's mistake about a body hanging in chains, remarking, "an author like Mr. James ought to take care to be right. Scott did always. It is a part of *truth*, which in art as in everything, is a grace above all graces." She gives scrupulous advice to several friends. She counsels Charles Boner, who has lived in Germany so long that his English is no longer quite idiomatic, that he should not have written a chapter "that talks about nothing," a task that demands a command of the language that comes from its constant use, and that he should try to give all his prose the pace and variety she finds in the last fifty pages of his *Chamois Hunting in the Mountains of Bavaria*.

The publication of Boner's book in 1853 gives Mitford great pleasure. Her preference is for literature, which deals with the concrete as opposed to the abstract and with human life as opposed to the supernatural. She relishes biography, narrative history, the ballad, realistic fiction, and especially the drama. In the Old Testament, she finds "more of variety, of splendour, of human feeling and passion" than in the New. Discussing Milton in her exchanges with Elizabeth Barrett, she asserts that "the want of distinctive character causes much of the heaviness, of character, individuality, the power of identification, which is the salt of all literature from Horace to Scott. It is the one great merit of your own Chaucer, the glory of Shakespeare."

To Mitford, the Elizabethan age is "the real Augustan age of English poetry." Enquiring of Miss Barrett, "Are you a great reader of the old English drama?" she states, "I am—preferring it to every other sort of reading." Outside Shakespeare, she has a special liking for Beaumont and Fletcher, whose female characters she delights in even more than in Shakespeare's. Among British novelists, her favourites are Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott. In 1852, she writes to Harness:

Look at the great novelists of the day, Dickens and Thackeray (although it is some injustice to Thackeray to class them together, for he can write good English when he chooses, and produce a striking and consistent character); but look at their books, so thoroughly false and unhealthy in different ways; Thackeray's so world-stained and so cynical, Dickens's so meretricious in sentiment and so full of caricature. Compare them with Scott and Miss Austen, and then say if they can live.



She sees the merit in Mrs. Gaskell's first novel, *Mary Barton*, but is ambivalent about Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, remarking, "There is cleverness in the manner in which she makes both her heroine and her readers prefer the sinner to the saint."

A similar uneasiness marks the ways in which Mitford responds to contemporary fiction and to contemporary poetry. Wordsworth's early work has a lasting appeal for her, but when his great autobiographical epic is issued posthumously, she protests, "I have seen *The Prelude*, and should be sorry that anything so wordy and so disappointing had been published, only that, by a most just law, the bad dies, and the good remains"; she is satisfied that "quite enough of very fine will be left to maintain the fame of William Wordsworth." Having disliked the wild emotions of *Childe Harold* and relished the narrative of *The Corsair*, she recognizes Byron's happy discovery of *ottava rima* when she recommends his *Beppo* to Elford as "not at all Byronish, but light and gay, and graceful and short." (*Ottava rima* is the eight-line stanza that will make possible Byron's masterpiece, *Don Juan*.) At the time of her father's death, she tells Miss Barrett, "even in all my affliction, Tennyson has had a power over my imagination which I could not have believed possible. You love the great and the deep—I, the bright and the beautiful, and therefore, each loving those delicious poems, we prefer the different ones, according to our several fancies." Reverting to the subject three days later, she asks, "What do we not owe to such a poet?"

Not surprisingly, Mitford hails the historical work of Lord Macaulay, and at one point is ready to enthrone him as "our greatest living writer," though later she charges him with modelling his prose on that of a superior writer—Lord Bolingbroke. The attraction Carlyle has for a woman with her own inclination for hero-worship subsides when she finds the English in his *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* stranger than Cromwell's own. To Mrs. Hoare, she confesses:

I am, for my sins, so fidgety respecting style, that I have the bad habit of expecting a book which pretends to be written in our language to be English; therefore I cannot read Miss Strickland, or the Howitts, or Thomas Carlyle, or Emerson, or the serious part of Dickens, although liking very heartily the fun of *Pickwick*.

The publication of her books and the production of her plays in the United States bring Mitford into contact with some of that country's writers. Her enthusiasm extends to Longfellow, Whittier, Poe, Hawthorne and Holmes, but she has an even greater passion for French literature. French history, biography and memoirs—especially if they concern either Napoleon—are her delight. Among living novelists, she far prefers the French to

the British, Balzac being her favourite and George Sand a close second. Praising Hawthorne, she maintains, "Nothing can exceed the beauty of his style. It reminds me of the French of that greatest of novelists, Balzac, the same power of subtle analysis and of minute description."

When Elizabeth Barrett publishes "The Romaunt of the Page," Mitford beseeches her, "write more ballads or tragedies ... that is to say, poems of human feelings and human actions." Describing her own practice to Elford, she professes, "I never say one word more than appears to me to be true. To be sure, there is an atmosphere of love—a sunshine of fancy—in which objects appear clearer and brighter; and from such I may sometimes paint." This is an admirable description of her achievement in her most lasting book, *Our Village*.

A major strand in the correspondence concerns the creation and marketing of articles, books and plays, and the terrible burden authorship imposes on Mitford. In 1823, she laments to Elford, "I am now chained to a desk, eight, ten, twelve hours a day, at mere drudgery. All my thoughts of writing are for hard money." Yet it is difficult to believe that once she overcomes the initial inertia and settles down to work, she does not find pleasure in composing the delightful sketches of nature and people in *Our Village*. She must find enjoyment, too, in drawing attention to then neglected writers ranging from the seventeenth century Andrew Marvell and Robert Herrick to her own contemporary John Clare when she includes selections from them in her *Recollections of a Literary Life*. She records that a number of older books are being reprinted as a result of her efforts, and that she is extending the readership of American literature. To Boner, she reports, "Whittier and Hawthorne both say that I have done more for their reputation than all the rest of the critics put together—and that not only in England but in America."

As her health deteriorates, writing becomes for Mitford a harder task. While working on her tragedy *Inez de Castro*, she also has to produce articles for annuals, "of which," she grieves, "a new one seems to start every week for my torment." After she must agree to deliver a novel to the publisher Henry Colburn in order to obtain from him the only copies of three of her plays for a collected edition, her literary conscience makes her fight severe pain to make the new book, *Atherton*, as perfect as she can.

Many of the letters deal with the difficulties Mitford and her father confront in negotiating contracts with publishers and in collecting money owing, but their worst ordeals in this area are connected with the theatre. In 1852, she warns Digby Starkey:

I would never recommend any friend to write for the stage, because it nearly killed me with its unspeakable worries and

anxieties, and I am certainly ten years older for having so written; but of all forms of poetry it is the one I prefer, and I would always advise the writing with a view to the production of the piece upon the boards, because it avoids the danger of interminable dialogues of coldness and of languor.... Write for the stage, but don't bring the play out—that is my advice. If you wish to know my reasons, you may find some of them in the fact that one of my tragedies had seven last acts, and that two others fought each other during a whole season at Covent Garden Theatre; Mr. Macready insisting upon producing one, Charles Kemble equally bent upon the other.... Both were read in the green-room, both advertised—and just think of the poor author in the country all the time, while the money was earnestly wanted, and the non-production fell upon her like a sin.

In mid-career, when the first volume of *Our Village* has unexpected success, she confides to Elford, "I believe that if I could conquer my own predilection for the drama I should do wisely to adhere to the booksellers." Nevertheless, she persists in asking her well-read friends if they can suggest subjects for tragedies.

Introduced to theatregoing early in life, Mitford has her own idea of what gives plays a tight grip on an audience. Rating those of Emily Jephson's father higher than Harness does, she suggests to him that it is

perhaps because I prefer *eloquence* in the drama to poetry, and because I set a higher value on situation and effect. Just look at the effects of Shakespeare, the great master of dramatic situation, and tell me if they be not the finest parts of the plays in which they occur; the play scene in *Hamlet*—the banquet scene in *Macbeth*—the quarrel in *Julius Caesar*—the trial in the *Merchant of Venice*; what are these but effects?

At the end of her life, writing to Boner about her newly published *Dramatic Works*, Mitford observes, "The fact was that, by the terrible uncertainty of the acted drama, and other circumstances, I was driven to a *trade* when I longed to devote myself to an *art*. Read those plays attentively and study their construction, and you will, I think, see that *that* was my vocation." However, her plays have not returned to the stage, although their blank verse is competently written, the plots are dramatic, and the passions find effective expression. Unfortunately, the men and women who express those passions lack the individuality of the less exalted characters to be found in *Our Village* and in her letters.

## WHAT IS HIS VOCATION? LORD BYRON (1788-1824)



Mary Russell Mitford is remembered as an author, but to speak of Lord Byron as a great poet is to refer to only one of his roles. He is also a distinguished traveller, a phenomenal swimmer, and a hero of the Greek struggle for freedom from Turkish rule. In Bertrand Russell's eyes, he is the archetypal "aristocratic rebel" who gives a great impetus to revolutionary movements in nineteenth century Europe. Although he dies at the age of thirty-six, his letters seem to record the events of a long and full

life, and that life is to a great extent the life of a tragic hero whose fatal flaw is his vulnerability to the charms of a half-sister to whom he does not relate as a brother since they have not been raised together. In a vain attempt to escape from his entanglement, he enters on a disastrous marriage and falls victim to what Macaulay calls "the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality."

As the son of a charming wastrel and the woman — his second wife — whose fortune he squanders before he deserts her, Byron begins his life inauspiciously. He also suffers from the birth defect of a deformed foot, and self-consciousness about his lameness casts an ugly shadow over his mind throughout his life. Besides growing up in a fatherless home, he is subjected to dismal religious teaching by two Calvinist nursemaids, one of whom also sexually abuses him. His mother sends him to day schools in Aberdeen, and in 1798, at the age of ten, he inherits the title Baron of Rochdale, together with the heavily encumbered estate of Newstead Abbey. Three years later, the family solicitor, John Hanson, arranges his enrolment at the great public school of Harrow. His early dislike for it melts away, and he acquires a love of the institution, where he makes lifelong friends. At home, he is less happy, for his mother has outbursts of raging temper, and he sometimes hates her.

From Harrow, Byron proceeds in 1805 to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he enjoys the freedom to engage in debauchery. Borrowing large sums from moneylenders, he sets sail on a sea of debt from which he never returns, though he sometimes comes within sight of land. He drops out of college, returns, and in 1808 manages, to his own surprise, to graduate with an A.M. Already he has published a volume of poems under the title *Hours of Idleness* (two earlier collections he has had privately printed) and has announced in the Preface that he expects to publish no more verse. The following year, goaded by the sneers of a writer in the *Edinburgh Review*, he fires off a vigorous but savage and indiscriminate satire named *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* and leaves for the Continent with his Cambridge friend John Cam Hobhouse. During a stay at Malta, he becomes infatuated with Constance Spencer Smith, the Austrian wife of a British diplomat, and later claims that only a peace agreement involving the transfer of the island to France prevented their elopement. Resuming their travels, the two young men eschew the conventional tour of France and Italy, choosing instead to visit Spain and Portugal before entering the Ottoman Empire. There they not only explore Greece and Turkey but venture into Albania, a country of warlords where few Englishmen have been. Byron's letters from these regions rival the Turkish letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

In 1811, still in love with the sunny skies and blue seas of Greece, and attached to its people although he can see their shortcomings, the poet returns to the grey damps of England, his creditors, and the termagant mother to whom he has written long, informative letters from abroad. Shortly after his return, this lady falls ill, and, about to visit her, he finds he has instead to go to her funeral.

When Byron returns to England, he brings with him two cantos of a poem he has written during his travels—*Childe Harold*. After early rejections, he finds a hesitant publisher in John Murray (there is religious scepticism as well as suspect politics in the poem), and with its appearance in March 1812, he discovers that this story in Spenserian stanzas about a misanthropic young man's travels in the East is a bestseller and he himself is famous. He follows up his success with a number of oriental verse tales. His political liberalism, which he never relinquishes, becomes apparent when he takes his seat in the House of Lords, where he pleads for relief for Roman Catholics and defends despairing weavers who are destroying the new machines that are depriving them of employment. He takes the trouble to visit the area where the weavers live and writes to Lord Holland, "I have seen the state of these miserable men, and it is a disgrace to a civilized country."

Byron is now a popular guest in high society, and in the spring of 1812 he enters into a rapturous love affair with Lady Caroline Lamb, who

is an Earl's daughter, a wife, a mother, and a vain, self-dramatizing woman. After about two months of what he admits was "delirium," he tries to break loose, but the lady pursues her conquest mercilessly for two and a half years. Byron thinks of marrying a wealthy woman as an escape from both Lady Caroline and debt, yet sends a proposal to the comparatively poor but intellectual Annabella Milbanke and is turned down. By this time, persecuted by Lady Caroline, recoiling from the English climate and its effect on his health, and harassed by creditors, he discloses to his friend, confidante and correspondent Lady Melbourne that he is in a worse scrape than any he has been in before. His letters do not specify what this is, but we know that he and Mrs. Augusta Leigh, who have the same father but different mothers, have fallen overwhelmingly in love. Byron tries to overcome temptation by a liaison with Lady Oxford, which makes him happy till she goes abroad, and then by a (just) platonic pursuit of Lady Frances Webster. Whether the love between himself and his half-sister was ever consummated is not absolutely certain—Byron's biographer Leslie Marchand concludes that the evidence falls slightly short of what a law court would require—but he is convicted by public opinion. Incest not then being illegal, the condemnation is moral and social.

At this juncture, Byron receives an unexpected letter from Annabella Milbanke, who is Lady Melbourne's niece. Although devout, Annabella is sufficiently fascinated by this rakish poet to enter into a correspondence with him, while she keeps the fact secret from all but her indulgent parents. An attraction of opposites is at work, and on the second day of 1815 they marry. For a year, they remain together. While Byron finds a new interest as an active member of the Sub-Committee of the Drury Lane Theatre, his financial plight becomes critical and his health suffers. He falls into rages, subjecting his wife to terrifying verbal abuse and behaving violently (though never striking her), so that his wife and even his sister fear that he may be mad. In January 1816, Lady Byron takes their newborn baby, Ada, on a visit to her parents, and the poet is soon astounded to learn that they are not returning. In conjunction with her parents and legal advisers, Annabella obtains a formal separation. There is a public scandal: society sides with Annabella, and rumours of sodomy and incest abound.

In April 1816, after having had a coach built on the model of the one used by his hero Napoleon, the overthrewer of reactionary monarchies, Byron again leaves Britain for the Continent. His entourage includes his servant William Fletcher, who was with him on his earlier travels, and the young physician John Polidori. Although he tries to grow a carapace over his pain, his underlying misery persists even as he finds pleasure in sight-seeing—he is especially moved by his visit to the field of Waterloo—and he longs, as he continues to do for the rest of his life, for news of his daughter,

Ada. A thwarted affection for Annabella conflicts with his raging hostility against her. To her parents and advisers, his hostility is unmixed. Making his way to Switzerland, he enjoys there the friendship and hospitality of Madame de Staël, a woman for whom he had some scorn in London, though he admired her writings. He sails on Lake Geneva, adds a third canto to *Childe Harold*, and relishes the company of Shelley and his partner, Mary Godwin, who writes *Frankenstein*. Present with them is the young Claire Clairmont, William Godwin's stepdaughter, whose pursuit of him in London has led to her pregnancy.

In Switzerland, despite his pleasures, Byron still suffers. Only when he has crossed the Alps into Italy in October and reached Venice in November does his new life begin. He now takes up the study of the very difficult Armenian language and settles down to a regime of writing, swimming, riding, relishing the Carnival, and attending the conversazioni or salons of Countess Benzoni and Countess Albrizzi. Additionally, he plays the philanderer with many lower and middle class women, whom he finds handsomer than their aristocratic counterparts. In the spring of 1818, he has Allegra Byron, his infant daughter by Claire Clairmont, brought to Venice and three years later places her in a convent, where, to his astonishment and horror, she contracts a fever and dies.

After Byron leaves England, his friend Douglas Kinnaird looks diligently after his financial and literary interests. Once the family estate of Newstead is sold, Kinnaird invests most of the money that is not used to reduce the poet's debts in the Government Funds, which never mature but pay interest in perpetuity. To the last months of his life, Byron urges Kinnaird to find a securer investment. The terms of the marriage settlement apparently make this too difficult.

In 1819, Byron begins a liaison with Countess Teresa Guiccioli and exchanges sexual promiscuity for what he likes to call "strictest adultery." When they meet, she is the nineteen-year-old third wife of the fifty-eight-year-old Count. This man is of a bullying disposition, and when he eventually rebels against the situation, the Pope, in July 1820, grants the Countess a formal separation and an allowance from her husband, but decrees that she must live either with her father or in a convent. To be near her, Byron moves to the historical inland city of Ravenna, where his social pursuits are similar to those he followed in Venice, though he finds the people superior to the Venetians. On excellent terms with Teresa's father, Count Gamba, and with her younger brother, Pietra, he becomes involved, alongside them, with the Carbonari, who are plotting a rebellion against the stranglehold that Austria has on the states into which Italy is divided. To his indignation, in the spring of 1821 a countrywide rising is aborted when the Austrians easily subdue its beginnings in Naples.

The authorities in the Papal States, where Ravenna is situated, become sufficiently suspicious of Count Gamba and his son to banish them. They and Teresa take up residence in Pisa, whither Byron, after a little time, follows them. Here they all remain till the poet and some companions have an encounter in March 1822 with a party of soldiers and find themselves involved in an affray in which a sergeant-major named Masi is dangerously wounded. Although this man recovers, distrust of Byron increases, and eventually he and the Gambas are driven out of the state of Tuscany and take refuge in Genoa.

During his years in Italy, Byron, despite his other activities, writes the fourth canto of *Childe Harold* and composes his greatest work, *Don Juan*. The latter's risqué scenes, political passages, and obvious allusions to its author's marriage worry his friends, including his publisher, John Murray. For all his misgivings, Murray publishes the first five cantos, but Teresa, on reading a French translation of the first two, is offended by its unromantic treatment of love and extracts from Byron a promise to abandon the poem. He may yield the more easily because his interest is straying to the creation of an English neoclassical drama which will outmatch the more loosely constructed Elizabethan. After a time, his enthusiasm for *Don Juan* revives, and he persuades the lady to withdraw her prohibition. He completes another eleven cantos.

While Byron works on Cantos Six through Sixteen, his thoughts turn more and more towards Greece, which is in revolt against its imperial master, Turkey. Prompted by a visit from Captain Edward Blaquiere of the London Greek Committee, he decides to both fund and take an active part in the campaign for independence. Urging Kinnaird to arrange as much credit for him as possible, he sails in July 1823 to the island of Cephalonia and at the end of the year proceeds to Missolonghi on the mainland coast. Among those with him are Pietra Gamba and William Fletcher. Recruiting and paying a band of Suliotes—warlike Albanians exiled from their own country—he works with Prince Mavrocordatos and comes to find himself in command of the forces of Western Greece with volunteer officers from several nations serving under him. To their own detriment, the Greeks are badly divided, undisciplined, and passionate about lining their own pockets. Fully aware of their faults, Byron finances their revolt lavishly, imposes order, and labours to overcome their divisions. He agrees to march onto the field with his Suliotes, prepared if necessary to die in battle, but instead succumbs to increasing pressure on his health. In February 1824, he has a fit during which strong men cannot restrain him and he is unable to speak. Physicians advise rest, but he is too devoted to the cause, and on 9 April, while riding with Pietra Gamba, he gets drenched once too often. Ten days later, he dies.



Byron's letters give vivid pictures of his life in the three countries in which he for the most part dwells – Britain, Greece, and Italy. From Athens he writes in 1811:

I am living in the Capuchin Convent, Hymettus before me, the Acropolis behind, the Temple of Jove to my right, the Stadium in front, the town to the left; eh, Sir, there's a situation, there's your picturesque! nothing like that, Sir, in Lunnun, no not even the Mansion House. And I feed upon Woodcocks and Red Mullet every day, and I have three horses (one a present from the Pasha of the Morea), and I ride to Piraeus, and Phalerum, and Munychia.

In January 1814, two and a half years after his return to England, he finds himself comfortably snowbound at Newstead Abbey:

I am much at my ease.... Our coals are excellent, our fire-places large, my cellar full, and my head empty; and I have not yet recovered my joy at leaving London.... The books I have brought with me are a great consolation for the confinement, and I bought more as we came along.

Very different are the delights of Venice in 1817:

The Carnival closed last night, and I have been up all night at the masked ball of the Fenice, and am rather tired or so. It was a fine sight – the theatre illuminated, and all the world buffooning. I had my box full of visitors – masks of all kinds, and afterwards (as is the custom) went down to promenade the pit, which was boarded over level with the stage.

Satisfying as his descriptions of scenes are, people loom larger than places in Byron's letters. His mother is the earliest of the many memorable characters prominent in them. The long succession that follows includes, among many others, Byron's fellow students at Cambridge, Lady Caroline Lamb, the Websters, Byron's half-sister Augusta, Lady Melbourne, Lady Byron, Shelley, Leigh Hunt, Byron's Italian mistresses, and the servant William Fletcher.

While still a young boy, Byron notes his mother's "*ungovernable appetite for scandal*" and considers that "finding fault" is "her favourite amusement." In later life he recalls how she was "as haughty as Lucifer with her descent from the Stuarts, and her right line, from the *old* Gordons not the *Seyton Gordons*, as she disdainfully termed the Ducal branch"; she insists on

“how superior *her* Gordons were to the southron Byrons, notwithstanding our Norman, and always direct masculine descent.” The behaviour of the husband who ruined and deserted her is reflected in her aspersions against his whole family. On holiday from Harrow, the young lord protests to his sister that, while generous enough with money, his mother habitually

flies into a fit of phrenzy, upbraids me as if I was the most undutiful wretch in existence, rakes up the ashes of my *father*, abuses him, says I will be a true Byrrone, which is the worst epithet she can invent. Am I to call this woman mother? Because by nature’s law she has authority over me, am I to be trampled upon in this manner? am I to be goaded with insult, loaded with obloquy, and suffer my feelings to be outraged on the most trivial occasions? I owe her respect as a Son. But I renounce her as a Friend.

Although he cannot endure her company and she quarrels furiously with him, on a deep level there is affection between them. Before he leaves the country in 1809, he carefully prepares Newstead Abbey for her residence in his absence, he sends her long letters describing his travels, and he writes to his lawyer Hanson from Constantinople to make sure she will not want for anything should he perish.

Almost at the same time as the pain of his mother’s death, Byron suffers the loss by drowning of Charles Skinner Matthews, one of the group of Cambridge friends to which his travel companion John Cam Hobhouse and the dashing Scrope Davies also belong. “To him,” he writes of Matthews, “all the men I ever knew were pigmies. He was an intellectual giant.” The survivors are afflicted, writes Byron, each in his own way:

For my own part, I am bewildered. To me he was much, to Hobhouse every thing. My poor Hobhouse doted on Matthews. For me, I did not love quite so much as I honoured him; I was indeed so sensible of his infinite superiority, that though I did not envy, I stood in awe of it... Davies is a wit and man of the world, and feels as much as such a character can do; but not as Hobhouse has been affected. Davies, who is not a scribbler, has always beaten us all in the war of words, and by his colloquial powers at once delighted and kept us in order. Hobhouse and myself always had the worst of it with the other two; and even Matthews yielded to the dashing vivacity of Scrope Davies.

In the early letters, Davies shines out as a wit, a mocker at religion, and an enthusiastic drinker. When the project of limiting intake of liquor to a

pint arises, Byron informs Hobhouse, “I have about the same conception of Scrope’s company and a *pint* (of anything but brandy) that the close reflection of many years enables me to entertain of the Trinity.” Davies, however, has a vice that proves his downfall. At the news that he has suffered heavy losses, Byron writes to Hobhouse from Venice that “such a man’s destiny ought not to be in a dice box, or a horse’s hoof, or a gambler’s hand.” Davies has to take refuge on the Continent, and Byron exclaims, “*what* is he to do? He can’t *play*, and without *play* he is wretched.”

Almost the antithesis of Davies is another Cambridge friend of the poet, a man who is himself a poet, Francis Hodgson. After some less than impeccable behaviour—Byron warns him in 1811, “You will never give up wine.... You drink and repent; you repent and drink”—Hodgson settles down as a respectable married clergyman and tries to persuade Byron to overcome his disbelief in revealed religion. Byron advises his intimate friend the poet Thomas Moore, who has just acquired a new neighbour in Hodgson:

You will find him an excellent-hearted fellow, as well as one of the cleverest; a little, perhaps, too much jupanned by preferment in the church and the tuition of youth, as well as inoculated with the disease of domestic felicity, besides being overrun with fine feelings about woman and *constancy* ... but, otherwise, a very worthy man.

In 1821, Byron recommends his own publisher, John Murray, to reissue two “excellent” long poems by Hodgson.

Literary fame can have penalties as well as rewards. Soon after *Childe Harold* is published in March 1812, the volatile wife of the staid William Lamb (later Lord Melbourne) throws herself at the new literary lion. For a few weeks, he is flattered and dazzled, but Caroline defies the rules of the social circle in which they both move, a circle that tolerates discreet and decorous adultery. Much of her delight lies in ostentatiously parading her conquest and her passion, and Byron is soon writing to her guardedly: “I never knew a woman with greater or more pleasing talents, *general* as in a woman they should be, something of everything, and too much of nothing. But these are unfortunately coupled with a total want of common conduct.” He goes on to refer to the hold she has over him: “Then your heart, my poor Caro (what a little volcano!), that pours *lava* through your veins ... you know I have always thought you the cleverest, most agreeable, absurd, amiable, perplexing, dangerous, fascinating little being that lives now, or ought to have lived 2000 years ago.”

By November, Byron has taken refuge in the welcoming arms of Lady Oxford, who soon receives a letter from the relentless Caroline. He persuades her not to answer the questions it contains, and bursts out to his friend Lady Melbourne, who is also Caroline's mother-in-law, "Is everyone to be embroiled by C.? Is she mad, or mischievous only?" When Caroline refuses to return his letters but demands her own, which "would '*ruin her*,'" as well as the trinkets she has given him, he informs Lady Melbourne that he has given the trinkets away but adds, "her *letters* I give up because she has a *child*." He treats the same friend to his version of what happened when Caroline stabbed herself with broken glass at a ball to publish her indignation at Byron's deserting her. Not until he is engaged to Annabella Milbanke does her persecution cease. While both parties lack moral restraint, it is not difficult to sympathise with Byron's proposal in 1814: "So if C. were fairly shut up, and bread and watered into common sense and some regard to truth, no one would be the worse, and she herself much the better for the process."

Whereas Lady Caroline matches today's Hollywood celebrities in her appetite for publicity, the sweet tempered Lady Oxford, whose children are known as the Harleian Miscellany because of the number of their fathers, is content to be with her lover of the moment without creating a disturbance. Byron enjoys life on the Oxford estate of Eywood and gives Lady Melbourne a glimpse of its mistress's behaviour when he alludes to the current controversy over the behaviour of the Prince Regent's wife: "She insists always upon the P[rincess]'s innocence, but then, as she sometimes reads me somewhat a tedious homily upon her *own*, I look upon it in much the same point of view as I should on Mary Magdalen's vindication of Mrs. Joseph, or any other *immaculate riddle*."

At one point, Byron briefly fears that he has made Lady Oxford pregnant: there can be no such suspicion in his subsequent dalliance with Lady Frances Webster, a woman who, her brother has told him, married to escape from an unpleasant family. A delicious comedy unrolls in a series of letters to Lady Melbourne. The lady in question, Byron says, is "very handsome, and very gentle, though sometimes decisive; fearfully romantic, and singularly warm in her *affections*"; she is also clever and only surpassed in good temper by Lady Oxford. Lady Frances's bumptious husband, James Wedderburn Webster, nicknamed "Bold Webster," invites Byron to join a party at Aston Hall, where he warns his host against his too obvious pursuit of a female guest:

what do you think [he writes] was his answer? 'I think any woman fair game, because I can *depend* upon Ly F.'s principles – she can't go wrong, and therefore I may.' 'Then, why are you

jealous of her?' 'Because – because – zounds! I am not jealous. Why the devil do you suppose I am?' I then enumerated some very gross symptoms which he had displayed, even before her face, and his servants, which he could not deny; but persisted in his determination to add to his '*bonnes fortunes*.'

Webster is anxious that his wife should not see the books in Italian, including Dante, that Byron has brought into the house, "because, forsooth, it is a language which doth infinite damage!" Byron's letter continues: "Because I enquired after the Stanhopes, our mutual acquaintance, he *answers* me by another *question*, 'Pray, do you enquire after *my* wife of others in the same way?'" Provoked by the jealous husband, Byron makes advances to Lady Frances in the billiard room and later passes a note to her, aware of the risks involved:

It was received, however, and deposited not very far from the heart which I wished it to reach when, who should enter the room but the person who ought at that moment to have been in the Red Sea, if Satan had any civility. But *she* kept her countenance, and the paper; and I my composure as well as I could.

Lady Frances's answer makes it clear the attraction is mutual, but she wishes their relationship to remain platonic. Byron reports that, even as he is writing, Webster "has brought me a political pamphlet in MS. to decypher and applaud, I shall content myself with the last." He soon agrees to lend the man £1,000 to keep him away from moneylenders and advises him what to do when a former tutor who has helped him to carry on his adulteries threatens blackmail: "I have told him that if the discovery is inevitable, his best way is to anticipate it, and sue for an act of indemnity: if she likes him she will forgive, and if she don't like him, it don't matter whether she does or no."

The climax shows Byron at his best:

One day, left entirely to ourselves, was nearly fatal ... it came to this. 'I am entirely at your *mercy*. I own it. I give myself up to you. I am not *cold* – whatever I seem to others; but I know that I cannot bear the reflection hereafter. Do not imagine that these are mere words. I tell you the truth – now act as you will.' Was I wrong? I spared her ... yet I sacrificed much – the hour *two* in the morning – away – the Devil whispering that it was mere *verbiage*, etc. And yet I know not whether I can regret it – she seems so very thankful for my forbearance.

Lady Melbourne's response draws the comment, "Your approbation of my Ethics on *the* subject gratifies me much."

In Genoa, at the end of 1822, Webster re-enters Byron's life. He has not redeemed any of his £1,000 loan nor paid any interest on it. He is in pursuit of Lady Hardy, a friend and cousin of Byron, who writes to her, "The Chevalier persisted in declaring himself an ill-used gentleman, and describing you as a kind of cold Calypso, who had led astray people of an amatory disposition without giving them any sort of compensation." Soon "that little and insane James Wedderburn Webster" persuades a reluctant Byron (who appreciates the irony) to write to Lady Frances in an attempt to reconcile her to her husband. Webster is in debt and has no credit; his bills are not accepted unless endorsed by someone who has. Having resisted his pleas to endorse a £70 bill, Byron gives way in the case of two others and has to make good the money. Webster, he informs Lady Hardy, two months before he embarks to aid the Greeks in their struggle for independence, has absconded at Paris with one of Lady Frances's children, has been arrested, and has escaped from custody.

When Byron ends his relationship with Lady Frances Webster towards the end of 1813, he is left to cope with his dangerous passion for his half-sister, who is married to a military man whose reckless gambling brings hardship to her and her children. "Anything, you will allow," he has written to Lady Melbourne about his pursuit of Webster's wife, "is better than the *last*; and I cannot exist without some object of attachment." Augusta is not intellectual, and there is a glimpse of their relationship in a letter to Lady Melbourne written when the siblings are snowbound at Newstead in January 1814: "we never yawn or disagree; and laugh much more than is suitable to so solid a mansion; and the family shyness makes us more amusing companions to each other than we could be to any one else." His sister, he soon informs his fiancée, is "like a frightened hare with new acquaintances" but "the least selfish and gentlest creature in being." To Lady Melbourne, he asserts, "I know her to be in point of temper and goodness of heart almost unequalled," and he insists that she is all but blameless for their guilty passion, for "She was not aware of her own peril till it was too late." In exile, he remains devoted to Augusta, but the letters he receives from her in Italy do not contain the news from England that he wants and, worse still, are so cryptic – full of "paraphrase, parenthesis, initials, dashes, hints" – that he cannot understand what she is getting at. When she writes that she has a hope for him, he asks, "what '*hope*,' child?" What he does not know is that she is being terrorized by his devout wife, who persuades her that she has a chance of redemption by repentance for her sin and that she is being made to show his letters to his wife, letters in

which her husband refers to her as “one formed for my destruction” and “that infamous fiend.”

The lady whom Byron makes his confidante even in as delicate a matter as his incestuous passion is his elder by thirty-eight years. In her early sixties Lady Melbourne, no model of chastity in her youth, is wise in the ways of the world and still attractive. Byron relishes her company, her correspondence, and her counsel. The mischievous eyes and “wicked laughs” of his “dear Machiavel” serve as a garnish to the fine insight into men and women that qualifies her as his guide in the moral and social maze in which he finds himself. “I never,” he writes to her, “saw such traits of discernment, observation of character, knowledge of your *own sex* and sly concealment of your *knowledge* of the *foibles* of *ours*,” and he tells her that compared to the talk at Lady Oxford’s, “your conversation is really *champagne*.” When she gives him a ring, he is eager to bestow one on her, and when her niece Annabella accepts his proposal, he confides, “You can’t conceive how I long to call you Aunt.” He always acts as she recommends, or, as he puts it, “I have obeyed you in everything.” After the breakdown of his marriage, their friendship cannot continue, but on learning of her death in 1818, he recalls that she was “the best, and kindest, and ablest female I ever knew – old or young.”

Very different from Lady Melbourne is her intellectual niece, Annabella Milbanke, whom Byron first regards with great respect and who surprises him by concealing some poetic talent under what seems her placid exterior. He judges her pretty enough, though not “glaringly beautiful,” and learning that she is also a mathematician, refers to her as “my Princess of Parallelograms.” They share a contempt for the frivolities of fashionable society, but she is a devout Christian and a rigid moralist, while he, though not an atheist, is a spurner of revealed religion and a rake. He informs Lady Melbourne, “Somebody or other has been seized with a fit of amazement at her correspondence with so naughty a personage, and this has naturally given a fillip of contradiction in my favour which was much wanted.” Invited to stay with her family, he cannot trust himself not to fall in love with this “very superior woman, a little encumbered with Virtue.” On her part, she continues to correspond with this fascinating man, who advises her what ancient historians to read, pointing out that she already knows the best modern ones. Amused that she finds the highest good to be repose, he reminds her that this is Epicurean doctrine, perhaps himself forgetting that for the supposedly irreligious Epicurus elements of that repose are a temperate lifestyle and a clear conscience.

When he is unexpectedly accepted by Annabella in September 1814, Byron is flushed with happiness, vows to reform, and promises to listen to any arguments she puts and read any books she wishes in favour of re-

ligion. "I would," he soon assures Lady Melbourne, "do almost anything rather than lose her now." He does not care whether she has any fortune (she has only expectations from an uncle) but is satisfied he can support them both when he sells Newstead. He has no notion of the great difficulty he will have in selling it and the disastrous effect this will have on his marriage. After about a month, however, he begins to have doubts. "I have every disposition," he writes to Lady Melbourne, "to do her all possible justice, but I fear she won't govern me; and if she don't it will not do at all; but perhaps she may mend of that fault." At Annabella's home early in November, he finds her,

the most *silent* woman I ever encountered; which perplexes me extremely. I like them to talk, because then they *think* less. Much cogitation will not be in my favour.... I am studying her, but can't boast of my progress in getting at her disposition.

Her "agitations upon slight occasions" trouble him. By this time, lawyers are in the house working on marriage settlements, and Byron declares, "the die is cast; neither party can recede."

Annabella is aware that her notorious bridegroom has some little publicised virtues. In explanatory letters to her dumbfounded friends, she justifiably refers to his generous, charitable nature and his kind and dutiful treatment of his tenants. From his works and letters, she knows of his intellect and learning. However, while she is aware that he suffers from depression, she is ignorant of his furious temper, which often erupts in wild mood swings. Biographers relate how he dismays his wife on their honeymoon and later by veering between affection and dejection, endearment and abuse, and how he prowls the corridors at night with pistols and a dagger and makes mysterious self-accusations. When Annabella travels to the Milbanke house at Seaham with their newborn baby and refuses to return, her parents no doubt support her. Byron writes to her father admitting his irritable temper, attacks of despondency, and occasional acts of violence (though not against his wife). He asserts that she knows this is due to an unfortunate element in his constitution, not to anything she has done, and in a pleading letter to her asks whether she has never experienced any happiness with him and whether they have not enjoyed great reciprocal affection. From their letters, in which they used their pet names—she is Pip, he Dear Duck—it is clear that they have. It is difficult not to sympathise with both parties in this ill-judged marriage.

For about a year, as he later recalls, Byron does not give up hope of reconciliation. He is especially aggrieved that Annabella and her parents persistently refuse to reply to his reasonable request to be told what they



accuse him of, probably because the most serious charge of all is the charge of incest, for which there is no proof.

After the separation, Byron's attitude to his estranged wife varies between detestation and gentler emotions. She can be "that evil Genius of a woman, Ly. Byron (who was born for my desolation)," but at times he can realise that she did not set out to injure him. Very occasionally, he recognises that she, too, has suffered. "My Clytemnestra," he tells Hobhouse, "stipulated for the security of her jointure; it was delicately done, considering that the poor woman will only have ten thousand a year, more or less, for life, on the death of her mother." Thanking her for one of her rare concessions – agreeing to concern herself with the welfare of Augusta and her children after his death – he writes:

Yours has been a bitter connection to me in every sense, it would have been better for me never to have been born than to have ever seen you. This sounds harsh, but is it not true? and recollect that I do not mean that you were my *intentional* evil Genius but an Instrument for my destruction – and you yourself have suffered too (poor thing) in the agency, as the lightning perishes in the instant with the Oak which it strikes.

He is capable of writing to her civilly on practical matters such as investments, and he urges her to be quite sure that the maid she dismisses without a character (the wife his servant Fletcher has left behind) really is guilty of bearing false witness. Accompanying this plea is an account of the city of Ravenna and his life there. The specimen of the famous Italian poet Monti's handwriting that he sends to Augusta he suggests she might pass on to Annabella "as she is fond of collecting such things." In 1821, when the latter sends him a specimen of their daughter Ada's hair, he thanks her especially for the inscription because it is the only specimen of her handwriting (apart from a single word in an old account book) that he possesses.

In Venice, Byron compiles memoirs for posthumous publication by Murray. When Annabella declines his offer to let her read his account of their marriage and add comments, which he promises not to erase, he replies, "My offer was an honest one, and surely could be only construed such even by the most malignant Casuistry." He himself later rejects Murray's request that he reread his memoirs and perhaps make changes: "the pain of writing them was enough; you may spare me that of a perusal."

When Byron leaves Annabella and Lady Melbourne behind and takes up residence in Switzerland, he renews an old acquaintance. In London, he has written to Lady Melbourne, "As to Me de Staël, I never go near her; her books are very delightful, but in society I see nothing but a plain wom-

an forcing one to listen, and look at her with her pen behind her ear, and her mouth full of ink"; charging her with a craving for admiration, he has stigmatized her as "in many things a sort of C[aroline Lamb] in her senses, for *she is sane*." Now, in Switzerland, he discovers that the ugly duckling has turned into a swan, for not only does she try to promote the marital reconciliation Byron so much desires, but she gives him hospitality, companionship and introductions. "She has," he tells Murray, "made Copet as agreeable as society and talent can make any place on earth."

In Switzerland, Byron also meets Percy Bysshe Shelley, whose hostility to Christianity and to conventional morals, he finds as remarkable as his poetic gift, though less welcome. While disputing his high estimate of Keats's verse on the ground that it belongs to a "*secondhand* school of poetry," he reassures Shelley, "You also know my high opinion of your own poetry, — because it is of *no* school." In a letter to Murray, he confirms a report of how Shelley became mysteriously agitated one evening when ghost stories were followed by a recital of Coleridge's "Christabel"; to show that his friend has nevertheless great physical courage, he goes on to describe his behaviour as a non-swimmer when they were together in a boat that seemed likely to founder in a gale:

I stripped off my coat — made him strip off his and take hold of an oar, telling him that I thought (being myself an expert swimmer) I could save him, if he would not struggle when I took hold of him.... He answered me with the greatest coolness, that 'he had no notion of being saved, and that I would have enough to do to save myself, and begged not to trouble me.

Although Byron is disturbed by Shelley's profession of atheism, apparently not realising that it is only the anthropomorphic God of popular religion that Shelley disbelieves in, he is impressed by his fine character. "I regret that you have such a bad opinion of Shiloh [Shelley]," he writes to Richard Hoppner, the British Consul in Venice; "you used to have a good one. Surely he has talent and honour, but is crazy against religion and morality." To Thomas Moore, he protests:

As to poor Shelley, who is another bugbear to you and the world, he is, to my knowledge, the *least* selfish and the mildest of men — a man who has made more sacrifices of his fortune and feelings for others than any I ever heard of. With his speculative opinions I have nothing in common, nor desire to have.

Shelley, like Byron, has literary genius and a gentleman's deportment. Leigh Hunt, poet and essayist, has literary talent and a slovenly lifestyle.

All three are enthusiasts for liberty. Hunt's two-year sentence for an article expressing contempt for the Prince Regent wins him a prison visit from Byron followed by a letter of praise: "I have a thorough esteem for that independence of spirit which you have maintained with sterling talent, and at the expense of some suffering." Watching the growth of Hunt's poem "The Story of Rimini," which he praises for its "originality and Italianism," he warns him against his addiction to "antique phraseology." However, Hunt proves stubborn, and Byron later complains, "He believes his trash of vulgar phrases tortured into compound barbarisms to be *old English*." The man himself he sees as degraded by unfortunate experiences, so that he has become "a great coxcomb and a very vulgar person in every thing about him."

In 1822 Byron gives Hunt sufficient money to enable him to bring his family to Italy, where he is to edit *The Liberal*, a periodical to which Byron himself contributes and which Leigh's brother John publishes in England. For a time, Byron has the experience of lodging the Hunts in his villa, and he writes to Mary Shelley of the six children: "They are dirtier and more mischievous than Yahoos. What they can't destroy with their filth they will with their fingers." When Murray is indiscreet enough to show John Hunt a letter in which Byron criticises Leigh and his children, Byron writes to the grievously offended Hunt, admitting he made some, though not, he thinks, all of the alleged criticisms, but mildly warns the negligent father that if he does not improve his parenting his children will not bring him any happiness. He soon admits to Murray, "As to any community of feeling, thought, or opinion, between L. H. and me, there is little or none: we meet rarely, hardly ever; but I think him a good principled and able man, and must do as I would be done by." *The Liberal* is not a success, but Byron feels responsible for the support of Leigh Hunt and his family. To Kinnaid, he defends his loan of £250 to Hunt on the grounds that the latter stood by him in 1816, when so few did, and after Shelley's death leaves the burden on him alone, he defies Moore's objection to his contributing to *The Liberal* alongside inferior writers:

as to the other plan you mention, you forget how it would *humiliate* him – that his writings should be supposed to be dead weight! Think a moment – he is perhaps the vainest man on earth, at least his own friends say so pretty loudly; and if he were in other circumstances, I might be tempted to take him down a peg; but not now – it would be cruel.

Byron has no need to exercise such generosity to Samuel Rogers, whom he begins by admiring as "the Grandfather of living Poetry," but who seems

to become “a fellow who hates every body.” When the older poet decides to travel in Italy, the younger one is not eager for a reunion. He confides to Murray, “I hope that we shall not have Mr. Rogers here: there is a mean minuteness in his mind and tittle-tattle that I dislike, ever since I *found him out* (which was but slowly)”; this uneasiness does not stop him from relishing an exchange of outrageous scandal with his visitor as they cross the Appenines in a post-chaise.

When Rogers visits Italy late in 1821, Byron has become faithful to Countess Guiccioli, but his path to constancy has been long and eventful. On leaving England, he loses no time in seeking sexual encounters. At Cologne, he engages with a chambermaid at an inn while the innkeeper stands swearing outside the room, thinking that it is his wife who is with the traveller. His first serious liaison, however, is with the twenty-one-year-old Marianna Segati, the spouse of the Venetian merchant in whose house he lodges. In November 1816, he writes to Thomas Moore:

I have fallen in love, which, next to falling into the canal, (which would be of no use, as I can swim,) is the best or the worst thing I could do.... Marianna (that is her name) is in her appearance altogether like an antelope. She has the large, black, oriental eyes, with that peculiar expression in them which is seen rarely among *Europeans* ... I cannot describe the effect of this kind of eye, — at least upon me ... her figure is light and pretty, and she is a famous songstress.

To Augusta he declares, “We have formed and sworn an eternal attachment, which has already lasted a lunar month”; to Hobhouse he exults, “She plagues me less than any woman I ever met with.” The undemanding charm he finds in her is made clear in a letter to Murray: “I fell in love the first week with Madame Segati, and I have continued so ever since, because she is very pretty and pleasing, and talks Venetian, which amuses me, and is naïve, and I can besides see her, and make love with her at all or any hours, which is convenient with my temperament.” Nevertheless, faced with a rival she can fight. One night when Marianna and her husband are out at a *conversazione*, her sister-in-law calls on Byron, and he is talking with her — nothing more — when in walks his mistress. Her reaction he describes to Moore:

Marianna Segati ... after making a most polite courtesy to her sister-in-law and to me, without a single word seizes her said sister-in-law by the hair, and bestows upon her some sixteen slaps, which would have made your ear ache only to hear their echo. I need not describe the screaming which ensued. The

luckless visitor took flight. I seized Marianna, who, after several vain efforts to get away in pursuit of the enemy, fairly went into fits in my arms; and, in spite of reasoning, eau de Cologne, vinegar, half a pint of water, and God knows what other waters beside, continued so till past midnight.

Byron reassures Moore that male jealousy is unfashionable in Venice, where husbands do not fight duels.

Far more formidable than the thoroughly feminine Marianna Segati is the object of the poet's next serious attachment, the fierce, handsome Margarita Cogni, the wife of a baker. Early in their acquaintance, Byron describes her as "a Venetian girl, with large black eyes, a face like Faustina's, and the figure of a Juno – tall and energetic as a Pythoness, with eyes flashing, and her dark hair streaming." On 1 August 1819, he writes a long retrospective letter to Murray telling their story. Meeting in public with threats from Marianna Segati, Margarita Cogni declares: "You are not his wife: I am not his wife: you are his *Donna*, and I am his *Donna*: your husband is a cuckold, and mine is another. For the rest, what right have you to reproach me? if he prefers what is mine to what is yours, is it my fault?" On another day, Byron recalls:

when she had made me very angry with beating somebody or other, I called her a *Cow* (*Cow*, in Italian, is a sad affront and tantamount to the feminine of dog in English). I called her 'Vacca.' She turned round, curtsied, and answered, 'Vacca tua, Celenza (i.e. *Eccellenza*).' 'Your Cow, please your Excellency.'

Eventually she leaves her husband, who has already retrieved her from Byron once, to install herself in the latter's house, where she assumes command, intimidates his servants, and reduces his domestic expenses by more than half. In time her wild behaviour – she can tear off the mask of a noblewoman who is leaning on the poet's arm at the Carnival – causes Byron to turn her out. Before she leaves, she threatens to take her revenge on him with a knife. "I told her," he reports, "that I had seen knives drawn before her time, and that if she chose to begin, there was a knife, and fork also, at her service on the table." Next night, in the dark and cold, she, a non-swimmer, overcomes her dread of deep water and jumps into the canal. She is rescued, and Byron sends her home.

She was always [he tells Murray] in extremes, either crying or laughing; and so fierce when angered, that she was the terror of men, women, and children – for she had the strength of an Amazon, with the temper of Medea. She was a fine animal, but

quite untameable. *I* was the only person that could at all keep her in any order, and when she saw me really angry (which they tell me is rather a savage sight), she subsided.

For all her ferocity, Margarita Cogni shows great fondness for Allegra, the poet's infant daughter by Claire Clairmont. Passages on this sprightly child enliven his correspondence from May 1818 to April 1822.

He is most grateful to his friend Richard Hoppner and his wife for providing "a whole treasure of toys" and, when he moves to Ravenna, is eager to have the furniture prepared for the child transported to his new domicile. When she is ill, he is not reticent about expressing his anxiety. He is not to be moved from his refusal to allow Claire to raise their daughter in the Shelleys' vegetarian and supposedly atheistic household: "the Child shall not quit me again to perish of Starvation and green fruit, or be taught to believe that there is no Deity." He will allow her mother to see her, but "If Clare thinks that she shall ever interfere with the child's morals or education, she mistakes; she never shall. The girl shall be a Christian and a married woman, if possible." He leaves this daughter £5,000 in his will, observing that her illegitimacy and such a small sum would be a bar to a good marriage in England, while "Abroad, with a fair foreign education and a portion of five or six thousand pounds, she might and may marry very respectably."

From the time that she and her nursemaid arrive at Venice, as Byron tells Hobhouse, Allegra is "much admired in the gardens and on the Piazza — and greatly caressed by the Venetians from the Governatrice downwards." Augusta learns that the eighteen-month-old child

is very pretty, remarkably intelligent, and a great favourite with every body; but, what is remarkable, much more like Lady Byron than her mother — so much so as to stupefy the learned Fletcher 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.

By the age of four, her Byronic temper is more evident than ever — she has long been "obstinate as a mule, and as ravenous as a vulture" — and she is now "quite above the control of the servants." For her education, Byron places her in a convent, where, he reports, she is very happy though she longs for a visit from him. Confiding to Moore that he has a natural as well as a legitimate daughter, he says, "I look forward to one of these as the pillar of my old age, supposing that I ever reach — which I hope I never

shall – that desolating period.” All his hopes collapse in April 1822, when he learns that Allegra has caught a fever and died.

Two years before the tragedy, Byron writes of Allegra, “She has plenty of air and exercise at home, and she goes out daily with M[adam]e Guiccioli in her carriage to the Corso.” This young woman, who marries her much older husband soon after completing her convent education, is a famous beauty, “the great Belle of the four Legations.” She has the femininity and libido of Marianna Segati combined with an aristocratic refinement and an educated mind. She is “reckoned a very cultivated young lady,” Byron informs Murray, as he explains why he has consulted her about the meaning of a doubtful word used by the fifteenth century Italian poet Pulci. He teaches her French and mentions to Augusta that she has “that turn for ridicule” found in all the Byrons. She amuses him by composing a sonnet in which she swears eternal fidelity to her husband.

Teresa Guiccioli’s faults are tactlessness and an over romantic disposition. Early in their acquaintance, he describes how she “horrified a correct company at the Benzona’s by calling out to me ‘*mio Byron*’ in an audible key, during a dead silence of pause in the other prattlers, who stared and whispered their respective *serventi*.” When he follows her to Ravenna, they go to a high society gathering at the Marquis Cavalli’s, where, he writes, “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.” Pride in her conquest co-exists with an excessively romantic view of love, which Byron attributes to her having devoured Madame de Staël’s novel *Corinna*, in which a British nobleman travels to Italy and has a passionate affair with a brilliant Italian lady. When the Count issues an ultimatum – Teresa must choose between himself and her lover – she urges Byron to elope with her. He has extreme difficulty in persuading her that this step – almost unknown in Italy, where it is accepted practice for a married but not a single lady to take a lover – would bring irremediable social ruin on herself as well as on her unmarried sisters. Eventually, the Pope grants her a formal separation from her husband on condition that she live either with her father or in a convent; Byron then has a similar difficulty in making her leave the Papal States, where the awful doom of confinement threatens her, and temporarily put a distance between himself and her while she joins her father in his exile in Florence. Reading his poem “Fare Thee Well,” the Countess marvels that it could have failed to bring Lady Byron back to him, and after perusing a French translation of the first two cantos of *Don Juan*, she stops him for about a year from continuing the poem since it treats love with so little feeling.

For all her romantic notions, the young Countess seems to have an appetite for physical love to match her lover’s, and their escapades belong

to the realm of Restoration Comedy. Byron discloses some of the scandalous truth to Hoppner:

By the aid of a Priest, a Chambermaid, a young Negro-boy, and a female friend, we are enabled to carry on our unlawful loves, as far as they can well go, though generally with some peril, especially as the female friend and priest are at present out of town for some days, so that some of the precautions devolve upon the Maid and Negro.

A letter to Hobhouse refers to “some awkward evidence about sleeping together, and doors locked – which like a goose had been locked, and then afterwards forgotten to be re-opened; so that he [her husband] knocked his horns against the doors of his own drawing-room.” Nevertheless, unable to provide the watertight proof of adultery required in Italy, the Count finds himself compelled by the Pope to refund Teresa’s dowry and pay alimony. His fury puts Byron in some danger of assassination, but he restricts his precautions to riding armed.

Byron recalls how, when he began his liaison with the Countess, “I only meant to be a Cavalier Servente, and had no idea it would turn out a romance, in the Anglo fashion.” He abandons what he terms “promiscuous concubinage,” and practises fidelity. “As to libertinism,” he assures Hoppner, “I have sickened myself of that, as was natural in the way I went on, and I have at least derived that advantage from vice, to *love* in the better sense of the word.” In 1819, he writes to Augusta about the possibility of a Scottish divorce as he wants to remarry, but by 1822 he is acknowledging that he is indebted to his wife for saving him from this mistake; marriage, he has decided, is “the way to hate each other – for all people whatsoever.”

Teresa’s younger brother Pietra is a great friend of Byron, whose zeal for promoting freedom he shares, but in the summer of 1821, when the two men propose to go to Greece to aid in the armed struggle against Turkish rule, Teresa weeps, and Byron writes to Moore:

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 (I have seen him put to the proof), 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.

About this time, Byron writes to Augusta about his feeling for Teresa, “I can say that, without being so *furiously* in love as at first, I am more attached to her than I thought it possible to be to any woman after three years.” By



May 1823, when he has been elected to the London Greek Committee, he informs its Secretary that he wishes to go to Greece but must first overcome an obstacle “of a domestic nature.” When he and Pietra get their way, he expects, as he intimates to his friend Lady Hardy, either to return to Teresa in Italy, or, should Greece become settled enough, to send for her.

Pietra is an affectionate enough brother to write often to Teresa, and Byron adds his own message to Pietra’s. He speaks of a hoped for return in the spring and notes that he is treasuring up things to tell her that will make her smile, including stories about her brother’s adventures—some of them, he hints, of an amorous nature, including one that brought him a venereal infection.

While Byron’s life during his last four years in Italy centres on Countess Guiccioli, he frequently writes to several men who continue to have important roles in it. The one whose portrait emerges most clearly from his letters is his fellow scholar, author and liberal John Cam Hobhouse.

Hobhouse is never afraid to challenge Byron when he thinks—not always judiciously—the latter to be wrong. He opposes the publication of *Don Juan* and the composition of the memoir to be posthumously printed, and he is unpersuaded by his friend’s defence of his drama *Cain*. Perhaps his pugnaciousness, as well as his limited hardiness, contributes to his returning home alone from Turkey in 1810. Byron, recalling their Continental travels, remembers how “my friend Hobhouse, when we were wayfaring men, used to complain grievously of hard beds and sharp insects, while I slept like a top, and to awaken me with his swearing at them.” When their environment is less challenging, they enjoy an easy, bickering companionship. Longing for his friend’s company in London in 1811, Byron observes, “here there are so many things we should laugh at together, and support each other when laughed at ourselves.” He praises Hobhouse to Lady Melbourne as “a cynic after my own heart,” and boasts to Kinnaird, “I have fallen in love, and with a very pretty woman [Marianna Segati]—so much so as to obtain the approbation of the not easily approving H[obhouse], who is, in general, rather tardy in his applause of the fairer part of the creation.”

When Hobhouse embarks on a political career, fighting fiercely for the radical cause, one of his pamphlets, published before he has any immunity as a Member of Parliament, lands him in Newgate Jail. “You used to be thought a prudent man,” Byron upbraids him, “at least by me, whom you favoured with so much good counsel ... get into the House of Commons; and then abuse it as much as you please.” But he applauds his friend for owning up to the authorship to save the printer from prison, and, seeing an amusing side to the situation, composes a mocking ballad beginning,

How came you in Hob's pound to cool,  
 My boy Hobbie O?  
 Because I bade the people pull  
 The House into the Lobby O.

Although this is not written to be printed, the subject is much offended. However, he emerges from Newgate to enjoy a distinguished parliamentary career. Byron reads reports of his speeches in the Continental English-language newspaper *Galignani's Messenger* and endorses his reformist aims, but he believes necessary reform should be carried out soberly by gentlemen like Hobhouse himself and Sir Francis Burdett. He warns him against the agitators Henry Hunt and William Cobbett, insisting, "I can understand and enter into the feelings of Mirabeau and La Fayette, but I have no sympathy with Robespierre and Marat, whom I look upon as in no respect worse than those two English ruffians if they once had the power."

The Irish poet Thomas Moore is also among Byron's closest friends. The two meet in curious circumstances. Back from the Continent in 1811, Byron receives a challenge from Moore, who takes offence at a passage in the former's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. An explanation soon convinces Moore that no insult was intended, a duel is averted, and Byron is delighted to meet his challenger on friendly terms. He rapidly decides that Moore is "the epitome of all that is exquisite in poetical or personal accomplishments," and over the years he encourages him to publish copiously. While the two poets can laugh and drink together, on a more serious plane Byron confesses to Moore in 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." Perhaps his highest praise of the author of *Irish Melodies* comes when he tells him, "Of all authors, you are the only really *modest* one I ever met with."

No very clear picture of the Honourable Douglas Kinnaird emerges from Byron's many letters to him. A friend of the poet at Cambridge and a fellow member of the Drury Lane Sub-Committee, Kinnaird is for a few years a Member of Parliament and one of the gentleman radicals that Byron thinks should reform that institution. He becomes a banker and, with exemplary dedication, oversees his friend's financial affairs and negotiates on his behalf with Murray and other publishers. The brusqueness of which Murray complains seems to accompany his efficiency and honesty. Indeed, when he is elected to the House of Commons, Byron cautions him, "you have not hypocrisy enough for a politician."

Whereas Hobhouse and Kinnaird are born into the aristocracy and Moore is a fellow poet, John Murray, who follows his father into publish-

ing, is a man of the middle class. Byron describes him to Moore as “fair, liberal, and attentive,” and, always anxious not to cause him any losses, often proposes that the royalties he pays be dependent on sales. He comes to think of his publisher as “really a very good fellow” whose defects “are merely the leaven of his ‘trade.’” During their uneasy negotiations over the first instalment of *Don Juan*, Byron writes, “Don’t suppose I want to put you out of humour: I have a great respect for your good and gentlemanly qualities, and return your personal friendship towards me.” He long remembers how, in November 1815, with his marriage in peril and a financial crisis tormenting him, he receives a gift from Murray to save him from having to sell his library; though he returns the bills, he declares, “Your present offer is a favour which I would accept from you, if I accepted such from any man.” From Italy, he sends him letters as personal, informative and intimate as those he sends to Hobhouse, Moore and Kinnaid, as well as requests for such comforts as tooth powder, magnesia and corn-rubbers.

Murray does not seem to mind that after sending him his manuscripts, Byron habitually bombards him with a stream of revised readings and additional passages and frequently asks for help with punctuating his work. The two differ, however, in their politics. As an inducement to publish the Tory John Taffe’s commentary on Dante, which “appears a desideratum in literature (especially in English literature),” he states, “His politics and religion are all in your own damned way.” He is less forgiving of Murray’s increasing delay over his decisions, his failure to acknowledge the receipt of manuscripts that have made the dangerous transit across Western Europe, and his failure to answer letters. The twofold nature of their relationship underlies the statement, “When I write to you as a friend, you will of course take your own time and leisure to reply; but when I address you as a publisher, I expect an answer.”

The letters Byron writes to Murray about his expatriate life lead the latter to ask for a “volume of manners, etc., on Italy,” but having lived intimately with families, he does not feel “authorized in making a book of them,” nor does he know how to make British readers “comprehend a people, who are at once temperate and profligate, serious in their character and buffoons in their amusements, capable of impressions and passions, which are at once *sudden* and *durable* (what you find in no other nation), and who actually have *no society* (what we would call so).”

Eventually Murray gets more and more nervous about his illustrious poet’s work—his *Cain* is suspected to be blasphemous and his *Vision of Judgment*, which ridicules royalty, is open to a charge of sedition. This leads Byron to transfer his allegiance to the less cautious John Hunt, brother of Leigh. In November 1822, believing that Murray is withholding one of his

manuscripts from Hunt, he breaks off relations with his long-time publisher and friend, writing,

I shall withdraw from you as a publisher, on every account, even on your own, and I wish you good luck elsewhere; but if you can make out that you treated H[unt] fairly, you may reckon me, in other respects, as

Yours very truly,  
N[oel] B[yron]

Happily, one of his last letters is a missive to Murray from Greece, carrying news of his experiences there.

One professional man with whom Byron has a lifelong correspondence is John Hanson, the family solicitor who arranges his schooling and entertains him as a guest in his own family during some of the holidays. In 1811, he writes to him from Athens that he looks forward to sharing a bottle of port with him on his return. When he has been back in England for about three years, Hanson asks him one evening to rise early next morning, come to his daughter's wedding, and give away the bride. This ambitious lawyer is marrying his young daughter Mary Anne to the unstable and recently widowed Lord Portsmouth, one of whose trustees he is. (Later, Portsmouth's younger brother tries to have him certified insane and his marriage invalid; Byron testifies that he saw no sign of madness in the man.) In October 1814, Hanson infuriates Byron by his delay in accompanying him to the Milbankes' home to arrange the marriage settlement. The poet reminds the solicitor how "*I got up earlier for one of your marriages than you seem disposed to allow me to do for my own*" and warns him, "I can never look upon any one again as my friend, who has even been the innocent cause of destroying my happiness."

Despite some friendship, there is limited sympathy between the two men. Byron informs Moore that Hanson "has no very exalted notion, or extensive conception, of an author's attributes; for he once took up an *Edinburgh Review*, and, looking at it a minute, said to me, 'So, I see you have got into the magazine,' – which is the only sentence I ever heard him utter upon literary matters, or the men thereof." When Hanson visits him in Venice and, along with legal documents, brings, instead of the books he asked for, a kaleidoscope, Byron rages in a letter to Hobhouse:

I'll be revenged on Spooney – five men died of the plague the other day, in the Lazaretto – I shall take him to ride at the Lido; he hath a reverend care and fear of his health. I will show him the Lazaretto; which is not far off, you know, and looks nearer than it is. I will tell him of the five men.

Byron continues to chafe bitterly at Hanson's dilatoriness, and from early 1821, the letters he writes to him, though not hostile, concern only legal matters.

One character who is present throughout the letters belongs to a lower social class than Murray and Hanson. William Fletcher, Byron's valet, figures in the poet's story both as comic foil to its hero and as loyal retainer. Shortly before Byron leaves England in 1809, he reveals in a letter to his mother that Fletcher has corrupted the morals of Robert Rushton, a young boy committed to his care, by taking him to a prostitute. He resolves to dispense with the man's personal attendance, but to provide him with a farm or other means of livelihood for his wife's sake. A month later, he reports, "Fletcher begged so hard, that I have continued him in my service. If he does not behave well abroad, I will send him back in a *transport*." Fletcher proves to be a timorous individual and a traveller impossible to please. Mrs. Byron hears from her son: "We were one night lost for nine hours in the mountains in a thunderstorm, and since nearly wrecked. In both cases Fletcher was sorely bewildered, from apprehensions of famine and banditti in the first, and drowning in the second instance." Packing him off home after a year and a half, Byron complains of "the perpetual lamentations after beef and beer, the stupid, bigoted contempt for every thing foreign, and insurmountable incapacity of acquiring even a few words of any language." In fairness, he adds, "After all, the man is honest enough, and, in Christendom, capable enough."

When Byron marries Annabella Milbanke, Fletcher, now presumably a widower, marries Annabella's maid and in 1816 leaves her behind to accompany his master back to the Continent. From Brussels, that master writes to Hobhouse, "the learned Fletcher ... seems to thrive upon his present expedition; and is full of comparisons and preferences of the present to the last." In Italy, Fletcher is sometimes careless but can render valuable service. When the recently dismissed Margarita Cogni returns and snatches a knife, it is he who grabs her arms and takes her weapon. He reads in *Galignani's Messenger* about the political career of Hobhouse. At the news of the latter's imprisonment, Byron, writing to console his friend, protests, "I did not 'laugh' as you supposed I would; no more did Fletcher; but we looked both as grave as if we had got to have been your bail." Addressing Hobhouse on his parliamentary war of words with Canning, Byron writes, "Fletcher respects, and *expects* that you and Canning will *fight*, but *hopes not*." In Italy, duelling is not the custom, but assassination, to Fletcher's horror, is common. Less commendable are his superstitious fears in the old palazza Byron rents at Pisa: "the learned Fletcher (my valet) has begged leave to change his room, and then refused to occupy his *new* room, because there were more ghosts there than in the other." For all his limita-

tions, Fletcher is devoted to his master, who emerges from a delirium caused by fever to find his valet and Teresa in tears on opposite sides of the bed. The letters disclose little about how Fletcher behaves during Byron's participation in the Greek freedom struggle, but he is in attendance at his master's deathbed.

By far the richest portrait to be found in the poet's letters is his self-portrait. Although Fletcher is the one English servant who accompanies him throughout his exile, he does not allow his debts to deprive him of an aristocratic lifestyle, which is dependent on a crew of attendants. In August 1813, he is about to escape from his troubles in England, but, as he explains to Webster, "My passage in the *Boyne* was only for one Servant, and would not do, of course."

Byron accumulates debt in his university days, when he borrows heavily from moneylenders—one even warns him about his imprudence. On the eve of his departure from England in 1809, he announces to his mother, "As to money matters, I am ruined—at least till Rochdale [an inherited estate] is sold; and if that does not turn out well, I shall enter into the Austrian or Russian service—perhaps the Turkish, if I like their manners."

Until his return from Greece, Byron clings stubbornly to his ancestral property of Newstead Abbey, but eventually concedes that it must go. At the end of 1817, after years of contention with Thomas Claughton, who pays a deposit but fails to complete the purchase, he is happy to sell it for a price "much better than could be expected, considering the times," to Major Thomas Wildman, his "old schoolfellow and a man of honour."

Part of the money from the sale Byron uses to pay off a major part of his debts; part is tied up through his marriage settlement and this Kinnaird invests in the Funds, from which, despite his much reiterated distrust in their safety, he receives large interest payments twice yearly. But should he return to England, he points out to Hobhouse, he would have to "live like a beggar with an income which in any other country would suffice for all the decencies of a gentleman." A letter of 1818 to Webster gives a notion of what Byron's idea of these decencies is, at least in an Italian setting:

You may suppose that in *two years*, with a large establishment, horses, house, box at the opera, gondola, journeys, women, and Charity (for I have not laid out all upon my pleasures, but have bought occasionally a shilling's worth of salvation), villas in the country, another carriage and horses purchased for the country, books bought, etc., etc.,—in short everything I wanted, and *more* than I ought to have wanted, that the sum of five thousand pounds sterling is no great deal.

In his later years in Italy, Byron takes gleeful pleasure in declaring to his correspondents that he has a great love of money, but at one point he explains that he wants it to travel to Greece or America to do good with. Having decided on Greece, he amasses as large a sum and obtains as much credit as he can to fund the rebellion against Turkish rule.

When Byron publishes *Hours of Idleness* in 1807, he has no thought of earning money by his poetry. His letters, however, show that he gradually becomes, in effect, a professional author, though he is never satisfied that poetry is, or should be, his vocation. He believes, moreover, that the most prominent poets of his time are heretics who have strayed from the neo-classical literary faith of the eighteenth century.

A violent attack in the *Edinburgh Review* on *Hours of Idleness* sets the young poet flailing out in too many directions in his powerful and bitter satire *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. Even before he arrives home from Greece, he writes to a friend, "At this period, when I can think and act more coolly, I regret that I have written it, though I shall probably find it forgotten by all except those whom it has offended." Some of those he has attacked, like Sir Walter Scott, in whose novels he is to delight, become his friends, and in 1817 he forbids Murray to include "this foolish lampoon" in a collection of his poems.

The two cantos of *Childe Harold* that Byron brings back from his travels contain "political and metaphysical parts" expressing an unpopular attitude to the Peninsular War as well as religious doubt—but, after some hesitation, Murray publishes the poem. After its appearance, Byron writes to Lord Holland that his mind is still full of eastern names and scenes. He composes a series of oriental verse tales, and for these, he explains, he has abandoned the Spenserian stanza he has fallen in love with and succumbed to the too easy measure of the octosyllabic couplet because it is the only one that the market accepts. Disclosing to Moore that he wrote *The Bride of Abydos* in just four days and *The Corsair* in ten, he observes, "it proves my own want of judgment in publishing and the public's in reading things, which cannot have stamina for permanent attention."

Byron tells his correspondents of his scorn for those who cater to fashion by writing about the East without having been there, and he protests to Murray, "I don't care one lump of Sugar for my *poetry*; but for my *costume*, and my *correctness* ... I will combat lustily." Misprints infuriate him: "I do believe," he chides Murray, "that the Devil never created or perverted such a fiend as the fool of a printer...there is an ingenuity in his blunders peculiar to himself."

On his return to Europe after the breakdown of his marriage, Byron resumes writing eloquent Spenserian stanzas to add the fine third and fourth cantos to *Childe Harold*, but in Venice he tries a new experiment.

Inspired by Italian poets and their recent English imitator, “Whistlecraft” (John Hookham Frere), he composes *Beppo: A Venetian Story*. Alluding to Francesco Berni (1490-1536), he explains to Murray, “the style is not English, it is Italian...Whistlecraft was *my* immediate *model*!... Berni is the father of that kind of writing, which, I think, suits our language, too, very well;—we shall see by the experiment. If it does, I’ll send you a volume in a year or two.” Beppo proves to be an admirable trial run for Byron’s greatest work, the comic epic *Don Juan* with its flexible *ottava rima* stanza that allows for expression in every kind of tone and mood. Comment on its composition and publication is prominent in his letters.

At first, not only is Murray doubtful about accepting the new work, but close friends like Hobhouse and Scrope Davies oppose its release. The risqué situations it depicts and the ridicule of the lady Donna Inez, who has obvious similarities to Lady Byron, make them most uneasy. Byron points to the sexual encounters in Fielding and Smollett and asks, “Are we more moral than when Prior wrote? Is there anything in *Don Juan* so strong as in Ariosto, or Voltaire, or Chaucer?” As for the ridicule of his wife, Byron insists, rather irrelevantly, that while the two may have something in common, Donna Inez is a foolish woman and not Lady Byron. In the event, the latter reads much of the opening cantos and confesses that the character made her smile at herself—and if others laugh she has no objection.

Early in the poem’s history, Byron defends its unusual variations in tone against the criticism of Francis Cohen (later the anthologist Sir Francis Palgrave):

I will answer your friend C—, who objects to the quick succession of fun and gravity, as if in that case the gravity did not (in intention, at least) heighten the fun. His metaphor is, that ‘we are never scorched and drenched at the same time.’ Blessings on his experience! Ask him these questions about ‘scorching and drenching.’ Did he never play at Cricket, or walk a mile in hot weather? Did he never spill a dish of tea over himself in handing the cup to his charmer, to the great shame of his nankeen breeches? Did he never swim in the sea at Noonday with the Sun in his eyes and on his head, which all the foam of Ocean could not cool?

In the same letter, Byron replies to Murray’s enquiry about what cantos he is to expect in the future:

You ask me for the plan of Donny Johnny: I *have* no plan—I *had* no plan; but I had or have materials.... Why, Man, the Soul of such writing is its licence...But a truce with these reflections.



You are too earnest and eager about a work never intended to be serious. Do you suppose that I could have any intention but to giggle and make giggle?—a playful satire, with as little poetry as could be helped, was what I meant.

A year and a half later, in February 1821, when he has written three more cantos, he informs Murray, alluding to the guillotining of Baron Clootz in 1794:

The 5th is so far from being the last of *D. J.*, 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.... I meant to have made him a *Cavalier Servente* in Italy, and a cause for a divorce in England, and a Sentimental 'Werther-faced man' in Germany, so as to show the different ridicules of the society in each of those countries.... 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.

Byron proudly claims that the poem is true to life—even that “Almost all *Don Juan* is *real* life, either my own, or from people I knew.” “You have so many ‘*divine*’ poems,” he tells Murray, and asks, “is it nothing to have written a *Human* one?”

While he is working on *Don Juan*, Byron conceives a new but less fruitful project. A devotee of theatre since early youth, he writes to Moore, “I am acquainted with no *immaterial* sensuality so delightful as good acting” and he enthuses over the great actors of his day. “Last night,” he reports to William Harness, “I saw Kemble in *Coriolanus*;—he *was glorious*,” and he acclaims Mrs. Siddons as Edmund Kean’s only equal in expressing the passions. In his work on the Sub-Committee at Drury Lane, as he afterwards recalls, he reads about five hundred plays.

During his residence in Rome, Byron labours to fill what he considers a gap in English literature by creating a drama which will be “neither a servile following of the old drama, which is a grossly erroneous one, nor yet *too French*, like those who succeeded the older writers.” Deeming the Elizabethan and Jacobean plays “pardoned only for the beauty of their language,” he denounces their flouting of the unities—the spreading of the action from place to place and its extension in time beyond a day as well as its dilution by the inclusion of a subplot. He writes a series of verse plays conforming to the unities, not wanting them to be produced “in the present state of the English stage” but confident that “the time will come when they will be preferred to any I have before written.” Unfortunately, he fails

to master the blank verse line as he has mastered the Spenserian stanza of *Childe Harold* and the *ottava rima* of *Don Juan*.

After his thorough education at Harrow in the ancient Greek and Roman classics, his favourite period in English literature is its most classical century, the eighteenth. Though highly appreciative of Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel," he feels that with *The Excursion* Wordsworth, like Coleridge in his criticism, has strayed into unintelligibility. The work of Keats, except for *Hyperion*, his most classical production, he considers forced and of little worth. The poet he never tires of praising is the eighteenth century's most pre-eminent, Alexander Pope. At this time, enthusiasm for the Romantic Revival, headed by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, has led to the unjust denigration of Pope, and Byron mounts a counterattack. With Pope, Byron couples Dr. Johnson, the great critic of the eighteenth century, whose *Lives of the English Poets* he regards as "the type of perfection." Referring to these two predecessors, he maintains, "had they lived now, I would not have published a line of anything I have ever written." Although his mind is saturated in Shakespeare, whom he frequently quotes in his letters, and although he once claims that the first two books of *Paradise Lost* are the world's finest poetry, he assures Moore that his preference is for the Augustan master:

As to Pope, I have always regarded him as the greatest name in our poetry. Depend upon it, the rest are barbarians. He is a Greek Temple, with a Gothic Cathedral on one hand, and a Turkish Mosque and all sorts of fantastic pagodas and conventicles about him. You may call Shakespeare and Milton pyramids, if you please, but I prefer the Temple of Theseus or the Parthenon to a mountain of burnt brick-work.

Byron scolds Murray, saying, "You are taken in by that false stilted trashy style, which is a mixture of all the styles of the day, which are *all bombastic* (I don't except my *own*—no one has done more through negligence to corrupt the language); but it is neither English nor poetry." (He has already published two cantos of *Don Juan* when he writes this.)

Byron clings to the neoclassical view upheld by Pope and Johnson that it is the business of the arts—Byron includes acting along with poetry, painting, and sculpture—to represent "nature" in the eighteenth century sense: that is, life as human beings experience it in every age. Occasionally, an observation in one of his letters reveals how he stores up memories and insights that may contribute to his rendering of "nature" in his poetry. Telling Lady Melbourne that he is glad the Websters amaze her, he adds, "anything that confirms, or extends one's observations on life and char-

acter delights me, even when I don't know people." Years later, a young Italian girl, "a little, pretty, sweet-tempered, quiet feminine being," wants to marry him and asks if he cannot rid himself of his wife. "You would not have me *poison her*?" he asks, and, he exclaims to Murray, "Would you believe it? She made me *no answer*." He comments: "I am not sure that my pretty paramour was herself fully aware of the inference to be drawn from her dead Silence, but even the unconsciousness of the latent idea was striking to an observer of the Passions; and I never strike out a thought of another or of my own without trying to trace it to its Source."

Passages in his letters early and late indicate that a range of compulsions and goals stimulate Byron to write poetry. He confides to his fellow poet Thomas Moore, "I feel exactly as you do about our 'art,' but it comes over me in a kind of rage every now and then, like \*\*\*\*, and then, if I don't write to empty my mind, I go mad." (The expurgation is Moore's.) When he is severely stressed by Shelley's death, financial anxiety, and difficult negotiations with Murray, he informs Kinnaird that to distract himself from his troubles, he has written nearly three additional cantos of *Don Juan*. At another time, he feels that his writing is simply a regular part of his life. "Every publication of mine has latterly failed," he tells John Hunt; "I am not discouraged by this ... I continue to compose for the same reason that I ride, or read, or bathe, or travel — it is a habit."

Although in the English-speaking world Byron is remembered primarily for his poetry, he is never fully satisfied that poetry is his vocation and at intervals he speaks of giving it up. He expresses his reservations about the art to Annabella Milbanke in 1813, when he has published two cantos of *Childe Harold* and *The Giaour*: "I by no means rank poetry or poets high in the scale of intellect. This may look like affectation, but it is my real opinion. It is the lava of the imagination whose eruption prevents an earthquake. They say poets never or rarely go mad."

The eighteenth century spirit so prominent in Byron's literary judgments is also at work in his Deist-like engagement with faith and doubt. He denies he is an atheist, but when his clerical friend Francis Hodgson tries to draw him to Christianity, he meets with the rejoinder, "I do not believe in any revealed religion, because no religion is revealed." When he alerts Kinnaird to the reader's need to dig beneath the surface of *Don Juan*, he is probably drawing attention to the vein of philosophical scepticism that runs through it. His doubt does not prevent him from finding much that is attractive in Roman Catholicism; declaring himself "a great admirer of tangible religion," he tells Moore that the Catholic "is by far the most elegant worship, hardly excepting the Greek mythology. What with incense, pictures, statues, altars, shrines, relics, and the real presence, confession, absolution, — there is something sensible to grasp at."

One thing Byron seems not to doubt is that a moral government is at work in the world. When Thomas Moore is appointed Registrar to the Admiralty in Bermuda and his deputy embezzles a large sum, which Moore must repay, Byron, though deeply sympathetic with his friend, observes, "It seems his Claimants are *American* merchants? *There goes Nemesis!* Moore abused America. It is always thus in the long run:—Time, the Avenger.... It is an odd World, but the Watch has its mainspring, after all." He finds the same force at work behind the suicide in 1818 of the lawyer Sir Samuel Romilly, who, having accepted a retainer from Byron, acted against him on Lady Byron's behalf. From Venice, he writes to Annabella: "Sir Samuel Romilly has cut his throat for the loss of his wife. It is now nearly three years since he became, in the face of his compact ... the advocate of the measures and the Approver of the proceedings, which deprived me of mine." Reporting Romilly's fate to Murray, he asserts, "I was yet young and might have reformed what might be wrong in my conduct, and retrieved what was perplexing in my affairs."

Byron often gives way to spasms of fury and occasionally conceives an implacable hatred—perhaps most intensely against Henry Brougham, for slandering him and urging Madame de Staël not to promote a reconciliation between him and Annabella. Nevertheless, the large element of compassion in his nature is frequently a blessing to the needy and unfortunate. In 1813 he gives—nominally lends—his friend Francis Hodgson a large sum to enable him to pay his late father's debts and marry, and long afterwards recalls how he also "travelled all night to beg his mother-in-law ... to let him marry her daughter." A few of his many charitable donations are mentioned in his letters, and in 1821, when he is planning his departure from Ravenna, he reports to Murray, "What you will *not* be sorry to hear is, that the *poor* of the place, hearing that I meant to go, got together a petition to the Cardinal to request that *he* would request me to *remain*."

At times Byron requires courage and magnanimity to act as his compassion prompts him. In Italy, he assists the Carbonari, the underground movement struggling for liberation from Austrian rule. When "a poor devil of a Neapolitan" involved in the movement comes to him "without breeches, and consequently without pockets for halfpence," he gives him charity and is interrogated (though "civilly and politely") for his pains.

A particularly alarming incident occurs one night when the local military commandant, an enemy of the Carbonari, ends up on his back in the street with five bullet wounds and none of the onlookers, who include a surgeon and a priest, will assist him. Byron has him taken into his house and placed him on Fletcher's bed, where, however, he soon dies. After the event, Byron tells Murray: "It seems that, if I had not had him taken into my house, he might have lain in the Streets till morning; as here nobody

meddles with such things, for fear of the consequences—either of public suspicion, or private revenge on the part of the Slayers.... He was a brave officer, but an unpopular man.”

No assessment of Byron’s correspondence can ignore the moral aspect of his relations with women, and especially his many sexual escapades in Venice. He is capable of boasting in one sentence of his riding, his swimming, and his sexual prowess: “I can,” he assures Murray, “get over seventy or eighty miles a day *riding* post, and *swim five* at a Stretch, taking a *piece* before and after, as at Venice, in 1818.” He is, however, not totally without doubts and scruples, as is seen in the case of Lady Frances Webster. In May 1810, he writes to Hodgson from the Dardanelles, “I am tolerably sick of vice,” but his resolution to reform does not last. Sixteen years later, when he is in command of troops in Greece, he has the decency to warn a British officer, who has recommended a poor washerwoman to the camp, that she should stop sending her daughter alone among the soldiers to save her from becoming a thief and a prostitute. To some extent, Byron accepts the sexual code of his time and his class. On learning that the son of a tenant has impregnated a girl of his own class, he tells his mother that the culprit should marry her: “if she were his inferior, a sum of money and provision for the child would be some, though a poor, compensation.” In connection with the Countess Guiccioli, he writes to Augusta, “when a woman is separated from her husband for her *Amant*, he is bound both by honour (and inclination at least I am), to live with her all his days; as long as there is no misconduct.”

In spite of his scruples, Byron is aware of his own moral fragility. When he returns to Greece to contribute to its uprising, he confesses to his banker, Charles F. Barry, that with his “propensity to be governed” there is the danger an opponent of his programme will undermine his fine intentions with the aid of “a pretty woman, or a clever woman ... with a turn for political or any other sort of intrigue.”

Byron sails to Greece knowing, as he confides to Kinnaird, that he may not return, but his moral values inform his actions as he strives, by bringing order and discipline to the fight for independence, to fulfil the duty he has assumed. To Hobhouse, he declares:

It is my duty and business to conceal nothing, either of my own impressions, or of the general belief upon the score of the Greeks, from the Committee. When I add that I do not despair, but think still that every exertion should be made on their behalf, in the hope that time and freedom will revive for them what tyranny has kept under, but perhaps not extinguished; I conceive that you will not despond, nor believe me desponding, because I state things as they really are.

The great enemy of the Greeks is their own disunity, and Byron labours mightily to unite the factions. His difficulties include lack of information and the appetite for money, which seems to be the chief driving force of many of the recruits. He informs Charles Hancock, an English merchant on the island of Cephalonia, how he behaved when the Greeks at first refused to help unload materials sent out by the London Greek Committee: "I turned out in person, and made such a row as set them in motion, blaspheming at them all from the Government downwards, till they actually did *some* part of what they ought to have done several days before, and this is esteemed, as it deserves to be, a wonder." The sole worthy Greek leader, Byron believes, is Prince Mavrocordatos, "the only civilised person (*on dit*) amongst the liberators" and a man notable for "not only talents but integrity." Writing to John Bowring, Secretary to the Greek Committee, Byron praises Colonel Napier, Governor of Cephalonia, one of the Ionian Islands, a British Protectorate. He feels that four men—Napier, Mavrocordatos, himself, and Colonel Stanhope, who has been sent out by the Committee, are in such agreement that they "should all pull together—an indispensable, as well as a rare point, especially in Greece at present."

Not all the foreigners who come to support the cause are as admirable as the English naval firemaster William Parry, "a sort of hardworking Hercules" who arrives with a military laboratory and a crew of artificers and is given the rank of Captain. Particularly troublesome among the foreign fighters are a number of German officers. In a letter to one, Byron explains why he had him arrested for terrifying the family with whom he lodged: "You ought to recollect that entering into the auxiliary Greek corps, now under my orders, at your own sole request and positive desire, you incurred the obligation of obeying the laws of the country, as well as those of the service." Some of the Germans want to flog a man for thieving, but Byron will not allow it; he hands the culprit over to the civilian police.

Byron declares that one of his aims in coming to Greece is "to alleviate as much as possible the miseries incident to a warfare so cruel as the present," and in this he has some small success. Among his acts of kindness to refugees and prisoners on both sides, one stands out for the letter that accompanies the released captives. At the end of 1823, his party sails from Cephalonia to Missolonghi in two vessels. Byron's own narrowly escapes being taken, but the other, which carries Pietra Gamba, as well as horses, a printing press and eight thousand dollars, does not. To Byron's astonishment, the captured ship is returned intact—by a strange chance its captain happened to have saved the life of the opposing vessel's captain in the Black Sea. In appreciation, Byron releases four Turkish prisoners with a letter in Italian saying:

These prisoners are liberated without any conditions: but should the circumstance find a place in your recollection, I venture to beg, that your Highness will treat such Greeks as may henceforth fall into your hands with humanity; more especially since the horrors of war are sufficiently great in themselves, without being aggravated by wanton cruelties on either side.

Byron's misgivings about the marshy terrain and unsalubrious climate prove all too prescient. On 19 April 1824, after it has plunged him into periods of delirium, a fever carries him off.

In Byron's letters, so rich in narrative, wit, characters, and description, contradictions common in human nature are writ large. Here is a man of humane feelings and humane principles liable to fits of ungovernable rage and capable of conceiving an implacable enmity. His aristocratic pride co-exists with his commitment to democratic reform. He is a great poet but unsure of his vocation. To Murray, he protests in 1819, "Your Blackwood [*Blackwood's Magazine*] 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 he has already enjoyed nourishing friendships with Lady Melbourne, Madame de Staël, and Countess Benzoni. He can write to Lady Melbourne on one day of "the laughing turn of 'our philosophy,'" and on the next of Augusta's innocence, which he swears to "by that God who made me for my own misery, and not much for the good of others." While rejecting revelation, he is attracted by the "tangible religion" he finds in Roman Catholicism. For years, he can express utter hatred of England to his correspondents and then write to Count D'Orsay, "though I love my country, I do not love my countrymen—at least, such as they now are." Aware of how his mind fluctuates and changes, he confesses to Murray, "I never was consistent in any thing but my politics." On a foundation of moral weakness and moral strength, of profligacy and literary industry, of a failed marriage and zeal for liberty, Byron builds a life of extraordinary achievement.

**SEEKER OF BEAUTY, VICTIM OF  
PASSION  
JOHN KEATS (1795-1821)**



Comparing himself with Byron, Keats writes, "There is this great difference between us: he describes what he sees—I describe what I imagine." Byron sees a great deal of life and of nature; Keats, in contrast, has a narrowly circumscribed existence.

John Keats, who is born on 31 October 1795, has an unsettled childhood. In 1804, when he is eight years old, his father, who works in an inn, is killed in a riding accident. John's brothers, George and Tom, are then seven and five respectively, and his sister, Fanny, is not yet one. Two months after the fatal accident, his mother remarries, and the children are soon transferred to the care of her parents, John and Alice Jennings. The bond between the four siblings remains extremely strong.

After being educated, like his brothers, at a school run by the humane and liberal John Clarke, Keats is apprenticed in 1810 to a surgeon. In 1816, in spite of the high failure rate, he passes the necessary examination and becomes a Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries. However, he is already writing poetry and does not take the expected next step to train as a surgeon. He publishes a book entitled *Poems* in 1817 and the long poem *Endymion* next year. By this time, he is part of a literary and artistic circle which includes Leigh Hunt, William Hazlitt, and Benjamin Haydon. His desire is to study, travel and write, but most of his legacy from his maternal grandparents has gone to fund his medical education.

In June 1818, just after his brother George, accompanied by his new wife, Georgiana, leaves for America, Keats goes with his friend Charles Armitage Brown on a strenuous walking tour through the Lake District, Scotland, and north eastern Ireland. He falls ill and returns to London prematurely in August to find Tom stricken with tuberculosis. His attendance



on this dying brother seems to have resulted in his contracting the disease, but after Tom's death on 1 December and before he himself becomes dangerously ill on 3 February 1820, he falls frantically in love with a young woman named Fanny Brawne, to whom he becomes engaged. In 1820, his greatest work is published in the volume *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*, and in September, he sails to Italy in a vain attempt to avoid being killed by the approaching English winter. Death comes to him in Rome on 23 February 1821, leaving his fiancée and his sister to become close friends as they mourn him together.

Keats's surviving letters date from 1816, when he is about to enter the literary world. They are most remarkable for his theory of the poetic mind, his concern with the prevalence of suffering in the world, his account of his travels in 1818, and the self-portrait they create. They show him in four interconnected roles – as poet, moralist, brother, and lover.

As a poet, Keats shows surprising confidence in his own gift. Early in 1818, he informs his two brothers, "I sat down to write to you with a grateful heart, in that I had not a Brother who did not feel and credit me for a deeper feeling and devotion for his uprightness, than for any marks of genius however splendid." As a young man of twenty-two, he has already worked out his theory of poetry and the poet. Critical of much contemporary verse (though he reveres about half of Wordsworth's), he is opposed to an ostentatiously original style and holds that "Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle it or amaze it with itself – but with its subject." Seeming to echo Pope's "What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd," he writes, "I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess, and not by singularity; It should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance." He declares, too, "That if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all."

In letters to different correspondents, Keats expounds his theory that the true poet has no fixed identity. In November 1817, he maintains to Benjamin Bailey, a theological student, that "Men of Genius are great as certain ethereal Chemicals operating on the Mass of neutral intellect – but they have not any individuality, any determined Character." Nearly a year later, alluding to the meditative, introspective verse of Wordsworth, he expounds his conception to Richard Woodhouse, a lawyer with literary interests:

As to the poetical Character itself (I mean that sort, of which, if I am anything, I am a member; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian, or egotistical Sublime; which is a thing per se, and stands alone,) it is not itself – it has no self – It is everything

and nothing – It has no character.... A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no Identity – he is continually in for and filling some other body. The Sun, – the Moon, – the Sea, and men and women, who are creatures of impulse, are poetical, and have about them an unchangeable attribute; the poet has none, no identity.... When I am in a room with people, if I ever am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then, not myself goes home to myself, but the identity of every one in the room begins to press upon me, so that I am in a very little time annihilated.

Elsewhere, in a famous sentence, Keats informs Bailey, “if a Sparrow come before my Window, I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel.” Mental experiences, of which this is an example, he calls “sensations,” and he exclaims, “O for a life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!” In typical Romantic fashion, he ranks “consecutive reasoning” far below imagination. The faculty he thus disparages is not apt to be content with the state he terms “*Negative Capability*”: “that is,” he tells his brothers, “when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.” Shakespeare, he makes it clear, is an author blessed with this capability, while Coleridge is not.

As a poet, Keats is engaged in a quest for Beauty, and he is convinced that in perceiving it he perceives Truth. He asserts to Bailey, whose Christian faith he does not share:

I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart’s affections, and the truth of Imagination. What the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth – whether it existed before or not, – for I have the same idea of all our passions as of Love: they are all, in their sublime, creative of essential Beauty.

In Adam’s dream of Eve in *Paradise Lost*, before she is bestowed on him, Keats finds a representation of this exalted illumination, commenting, “he awoke and found it truth.” To George and Georgiana, he admits, “I can never feel certain of any truth but from a clear perception of its Beauty.”

Keats believes that the beauty of a fully achieved work of art suffuses itself through the entire production and takes the sting out of any ugly elements it may contain. “The excellence of every art,” he explains to his brothers, “is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth – Examine *King Lear*, and you will find this exemplified throughout.” This is not the case, he observes, in Benjamin West’s painting *Death on the Pale Horse*.

Keats celebrates beauty in nature so rapturously that it is surprising he should complain that the splendour of the Devonshire Hills is not satisfying since the Devonshire people are contemptible. "Scenery," he declares, "is fine – but human nature is finer – the sward is richer for the tread of a real nervous English foot." On a later occasion, he recognizes that the demand of the time is for marvels, and he protests, "Wonders are no wonders to me. I am more at home amongst men and women. I would rather read Chaucer than Ariosto."

In April 1818, on the threshold of *Endymion's* publication, its twenty-two-year-old author is not afraid to confide to his friend and fellow poet John Hamilton Reynolds, "I have not the slightest feel of humility towards the public – or to anything in existence, – but the eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of great Men." He is, however, a rigorous judge of his own production and is well aware that his first long poem is prentice work from which he can expect to rise to higher things. During the next two years, his letters comment on his labour over maturer works. In August 1819, he enthuses, "Shakespeare and the *Paradise Lost* every day become greater wonders to me," but after writing three books of a second long poem, *Hyperion*, he abandons it as too Miltonic. He has decided, much in accordance with Dr. Johnson's opinion, that Milton's epic, "though so fine in itself, is a corruption of our language." He makes a number of references to his masterly shorter narrative poems – "Lamia," "Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil," and "The Eve of St. Agnes" – justly claiming that there is a wealth of life in the first. Sadly, he seems oblivious of his exceedingly high achievement in his "Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and "Ode on Melancholy."

Keats's confidence in his own genius is not accompanied by any adequate plan to earn a living. The reader of his letters becomes used to his complaints that Richard Abbey, the trustee of his maternal grandmother's estate, is most reluctant to release money from his legacy, partly because his mother's widowed sister threatens to bring a suit in Chancery; his sister's being below the age of majority is also a factor. In mid-1819 he considers taking a post as surgeon on a vessel making return voyages to India. When a young Devonshire woman he knows proposes that the occupation would destroy his "energies of Mind," he replies:

on the contrary it would be the finest thing in the world to strengthen them – To be thrown among people who care not for you, with whom you have no sympathies forces the Mind upon its own resources, and leaves it free to make its speculations of the differences of human character and to class them with the calmness of a Botanist. An Indiaman is a little world.

A few days later, he writes to his sister, "I was preparing to enquire for a situation with an apothecary, but Mr. Brown persuades me to try the press once more; so I will with all my industry and ability," and he soon talks of asking Hazlitt which periodicals he should aim at. It is regrettable that he does not follow this plan as a volume of his articles would make a valuable addition to his works. In the event, he continues to rely reluctantly on loans from friends, none of them rich.

Keats claims that he can endure poverty, and in September 1819 he writes to George and Georgiana, "I am becoming accustomed to the privations of the pleasures of sense. In the midst of the world I live like a hermit. I have forgot how to lay plans for the enjoyment of any pleasure." More reluctantly, he concedes to Reynolds, "however I should like to enjoy what the competencies of life procure, I am in no wise dashed at a different prospect." There is no question that Keats has a lively appreciation of the sensuous pleasures that "the competencies of life procure." His praise of claret is a poet's laudation:

For really 'tis so fine – if fills one's mouth with a gushing  
freshness – then goes down cool and feverless – then you do not  
feel it quarrelling with your liver – no, it is rather a Peacemaker,  
and lies as quiet as it did in the grape; then it is as fragrant as  
the Queen Bee, and the more ethereal Part of it mounts into the  
brain, not assaulting the cerebral apartments like a bully in a  
bad-house looking for his trull and hurrying from door to door  
bouncing against the wainst-coat [wainscot], but rather walks  
like Aladdin about his own enchanted palace so gently that you  
do not feel his step.

Almost as seductive is his description of eating a nectarine:

Talking of Pleasure, this moment I was writing with one hand,  
and with the other holding to my Mouth a Nectarine – good God  
how fine. It went down soft, pulpy, slushy, oozy – all its delicious  
embonpoint melted down my throat like a large beatified  
Strawberry.

Pleasures like these are not characteristic of the northern tour which Keats takes with his friend Brown in 1818. He explains to Haydon why he is about to start on this spartan adventure:

I purpose within a month to put my knapsack at my back and  
make a pedestrian tour through the north of England, and part  
of Scotland – to make a sort of Prologue to the Life I intend to

pursue – that is to write, to study and to see all Europe at the lowest expence. I will clamber through the Clouds and exist. I will get such an accumulation of stupendous recollections that as I walk through the suburbs of London I may not see them.

Before and after this walking tour, Keats treats his correspondents to memorable accounts of places he stays in. To Bailey, he writes:

you may say what you will of Devonshire, the truth is it is a splashy, rainy, misty, snowy, foggy, haily, floody, muddy, slipshod county. The hills are very beautiful, when you get a sight of 'em – the primroses are out, but then you are in – the Cliffs are of a fine deep colour, but then the Clouds are continually vieing with them.

Having moved from the Isle of Wight to Winchester in a vain search for a library, he describes this ancient city to his sister:

it is the pleasantest Town I ever was in, and has the most recommendations of any. There is a fine Cathedral which to me is always a source of amusement, part of it built 1400 years ago.... The whole town is beautifully wooded. From the Hill at the eastern extremity you see a prospect of Streets, and old Buildings mixed up with Trees. Then there are the most beautiful streams about I ever saw – full of Trout.

However, it is in letters from the Lake District, Scotland, and the northeast corner of Ireland that Keats shows what enrichment he can find from travel. He writes to his brother Tom of Lake Winander or Windermere:

the two views we have had of it are of the most noble tenderness – they can never fade away – they make us forget the divisions of life; age, youth, poverty and riches; and refine one's sensual vision into a sort of north star which can never cease to be open lidded and stedfast over the wonders of the great Power.

He discovers, "I have an amazing partiality for mountains in the clouds. There is nothing in Devon like this, and Brown says there is nothing in Wales to be compared to it." After describing the diverse patterns in a waterfall, he alludes to his self-consciousness about his shortness when he concludes, "I cannot think with Hazlitt that these scenes make man appear little. I never forgot my stature so completely – I live in the eye; and my imagination, surpassed, is at rest." Only a few days later, in another letter

to Tom, he describes the energy of children at a country-dancing school and comments, "This is what I like better than scenery. I fear our continued moving from place to place will prevent our becoming learned in village affairs: we are mere creatures of Rivers, Lakes, and Mountains." On a brief foray into Ireland, he is appalled to discover the poverty:

we had too much opportunity to see the worse than nakedness, the rags, the dirt and misery, of the poor common Irish – A Scotch cottage, though in that sometimes the smoke has no exit but at the door, is a palace to an Irish one.... We had the pleasure of finding our way through a Peat-bog, three miles long at least – dreary, flat, dank, black, and spongy – here and there were poor dirty Creatures, and a few strong men cutting or carting Peat.

Back in Scotland, Keats is happily surprised by the beauty of the home district of his adored Robert Burns. The approach to Ayr, he confesses,

is extremely fine – quite outwent my expectations – richly meadowed, wooded, heathed and rivuleted – with a grand Sea view terminated by the black Mountains of the isle of Arran.... The bonny Doon is the sweetest river I ever saw – overhung with fine trees as far as we could see – We stood some time on the Brig across it, over which Tam o' Shanter fled.

Before he visits Burns's country and cottage, Keats has taken careful note of the differences between Scotch and Irish life. Writing to Tom from Ireland, he describes how,

The dialects on the neighbouring shores of Scotland and Ireland are much the same, yet I can perceive a great difference in the nations, from the chamber-maid at this *nate toone* kept by Mr. Kelly. She is fair, kind, and ready to laugh, because she is out of the horrible dominion of the Scotch Kirk. A Scotch girl stands in terrible awe of the Elders – poor little Susannahs, they will scarcely laugh, and their Kirk is greatly to be damned.

Keats goes on to remind Tom

of the fate of Burns – poor unfortunate fellow, his disposition was Southern – how sad it is when a luxurious imagination is obliged, in self-defence, to deaden its delicacy in vulgarity, and rot in things attainable, that it may not have leisure to go mad after things which are not. No man, in such matters, will be content with the experience of others.

In his horror of ecclesiastical tyranny, Keats claims, "I would sooner be a wild deer, than a girl under the dominion of the Kirk; and I would sooner be a wild hog, than be the occasion of a poor Creature's penance before those execrable elders."

For all his absorption in his quest for beauty, Keats does not lack strong moral feelings. When Bailey enquires after his health and spirits, he replies, "Health and spirits can only belong unalloyed to the selfish man—the man who thinks much of his fellows can never be in spirits." Half a year later, discussing Wordsworth's insight into the human condition, he writes:

I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many apartments....  
The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber,  
in which we remain as long as we do not think ... we no sooner  
get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of  
Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and  
the atmosphere; we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think  
of delaying there for ever in delight: However among the effects  
this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening  
one's vision into the heart and nature of Man—of convincing  
one's nerves that the world is full of Misery and Heartbreak,  
Pain, Sickness, and oppression

Declaring elsewhere that he is "ambitious of doing the world some good," Keats anxiously observes, "The faint conceptions I have of poems to come bring the blood frequently into my forehead—All I hope is, that I may not lose all interest in human affairs."

Keats is not a Christian, and he reminds Bailey, who is on the road to ordination, "You know my ideas about Religion. I do not think myself more in the right than other people, and that nothing in this world is proveable." On one occasion, he appeals to Fanny Brawne "by the blood of that Christ you believe in," and he confesses to her, "I long to believe in immortality." In the course of a long, meandering letter to George and Georgiana, he claims that he can think of only two human beings (though he acknowledges there must have been many others) whose hearts have been untainted by self-interest: Socrates and Jesus. He adds, "It is to be lamented that the history of the latter was written and revised by Men interested in the pious frauds of Religion."

Although he rejects Christian theology and wavers on the question of personal immortality, Keats is not an atheist or agnostic, and he searches for a meaning behind human suffering. In one of his journal-letters to George and his wife, he assumes, for the sake of argument, the truth of immortality and expounds a theory of "intelligences or sparks of the divin-

ity" embodied in human beings. These, he posits, "are not Souls till they acquire identities, till each one is personally itself." Describing intelligences as "atoms of perception," and asserting that "they know and they see and they are pure, in short they are God," he asks how they are to be transmuted into Souls "so as ever to possess a bliss peculiar to each one's individual existence"; his answer is "by the medium of a world like this," where experience works on the human heart and makes it suffer, a world he terms "The vale of Soul-making." He considers he has put forward "a grander system of salvation than the Christian religion."

Keats lives in the England of post-Napoleonic repression, where any proposal of reform is all too apt to evoke memories of the French Reign of Terror and of the threat of invasion. His moral feelings are such that, insofar as he has an interest in politics, his sympathies are on the liberal side. He despises the reactionary Castlereagh and the anti-progressive Duke of Wellington, admires William Cobbett, and sides with the Richard Carlile who is prosecuted for republishing works by Thomas Paine. His most interesting political statement comes in another letter to his expatriate brother and sister-in-law. Writing of radicals, he rather unfairly claims:

There are many Madmen in the Country I have no doubt, who would like to be beheaded on tower Hill merely for the sake of éclat, there are many Men like [Leigh] Hunt who from a principle of taste would like to see things go on better, there are many like Sir F[rancis] Burdett who like to sit at the head of political dinners, — but there are none prepared to suffer in obscurity for their Country.

He has no good words for the Ministry:

All the departments of Government have strayed far from Simplicity which is the greatest of Strength[;] there is as much difference in this respect between the present Government and Oliver Cromwell's as there is between the 12 Tables of Rome and the volumes of Civil Law which were digested by Justinian.

One-sided as his view of Cromwell is, he displays good sense in his estimation of Bonaparte and of the sovereigns restored to power after that Emperor's fall:

Notwithstanding the part which the Liberals take in the Cause of Napoleon, I cannot but think he has done more harm to the life of Liberty than any one else could have done: not that the divine right Gentlemen have done or intend to do any good — no they



have taken a Lesson of him, and will do all the further harm he would have done without any of the good.

Fortunately for posterity, Keats records much of his life, as well as of his thought, in letters to his brothers. His intense devotion to them and his sister never falters. In October 1818, he has to disclose to George and Georgiana, who are still in the United States, that Tom is dying. Day after day, he has postponed writing:

I could not bring myself to say the truth, that he is no better but much worse – However, it must be told; and you must my dear Brother and Sister take example from me and bear up against any Calamity for my sake as I do for yours. Our's are ties which independent of their own Sentiment are sent us by providence to prevent the deleterious effects of one great solitary grief. I have Fanny and I have you – three people whose Happiness to me is sacred – and it does annul that selfish sorrow which I should otherwise fall into.

Keats's anxious affection for his sister Fanny, seven years younger than himself, is one of his most endearing traits. While she is a minor, she is in the power of her trustees, Richard and Eleanor Abbey, who are often deficient in kindness. Keats has to wring permission from Mr. Abbey for them to meet, and he once reports to his brothers how "Mrs. Abbey was saying that the Keatses were ever indolent, that they would ever be so, and that it is born in them" – an insult that draws from Fanny the whispered retort, "Well, if it is born with us, how can we help it?" This woman deprives Fanny of her spaniel and so berates her that Keats advises, "You must pay no attention to Mrs. Abbey's unfeeling and ignorant gabble.... Many people live opposite a Blacksmith's till they cannot hear the hammer."

Not many characters are as clearly delineated in Keats's letters as Mrs. Abbey, though there are lively glimpses of Leigh Hunt's courage, thriftlessness and vanity, and one passage seems to capture the tone of his speech. Asked when his *Pocket-Book* is to be published, Hunt replies, "Such a thing was very much wanting – people think of nothing but money-getting – now for me I am rather inclined to the liberal side of things. I am reckoned lax in my Christian principles." The most vivid portrait is probably that of Keats's friend Charles Wentworth Dilke, brother-in-law of the man who gives a home to Fanny's dog. This public servant, by avocation a literary scholar, is at one time absorbed in Horace Walpole's letters and at another in "Greek histories and antiquities," but in the spring of 1819 he becomes obsessed with the upbringing of his son and moves the family to be near the boy, whom he enrolls at Westminster School. "I cannot help thinking,"

Keats observes, "what a shame it is that poor Dilke should give up his comfortable house and garden for his Son, whom he will certainly ruin with too much care. The boy has nothing in his ears all day but himself and the importance of his education. Dilke has continually in his mouth 'My Boy.' This is what spoils princes."

Keats's friends are usually men. He confesses to Bailey:

I am certain I have not a right feeling towards women.... Is it because they fall so far beneath my boyish Imagination? When I was a schoolboy I thought a fair woman a pure Goddess ... when among men, I have no evil thoughts, no malice, no spleen—I feel free to speak or to be silent—I can listen, and from every one I can learn.... When I am among women, I have evil thoughts, malice, spleen—I cannot speak, or be silent—I am full of suspicions and therefore listen to nothing—I am in a hurry to be gone.

Occasionally he becomes acquainted with a woman before whom his usual discomfort melts away. Such a woman is Jane Cox, a cousin of Reynolds:

She has a rich Eastern look; she has fine eyes and fine manners. When she comes into a room she makes an impression the same as the Beauty of a Leopardess.... I always find myself more at ease with such a woman; the picture before me always gives me a life and animation which I cannot possibly feel with anything inferior. I am at such times too much occupied in admiring to be awkward or in a tremble. I forget myself entirely because I live in her.

He is indignant when Reynolds's sisters sneer at their cousin: "She walks across a room in such a manner that a Man is drawn towards her with a magnetic Power. This they call flirting!"

A woman does not require qualities additional to beauty to give Keats pleasure. After meeting at a rout (a large evening party) one of the most beautiful girls he has ever seen, he remarks, "She gave a remarkable prettiness to all those commonplaces which most women who talk must utter." However, to George and Georgiana (he admires the latter without reservation) he declares: "Notwithstanding your Happiness and your recommendation I hope I shall never marry. Though the most beautiful Creature were waiting for me at the end of a Journey or a Walk ... my Happiness would not be so fine, as my Solitude is sublime." In single life, he asserts, "there is a sublimity to welcome me home—The roaring of the wind is my wife and the Stars through the window pane are my Children. The mighty abstract

Idea I have of Beauty in all things stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness." Like many a man who exults in bachelorhood, he suffers an unexpected blow.

In the first instalment of a journal-letter begun on 16 December 1818, Keats informs George and Georgiana that Tom's expected death has occurred. He also mentions Mrs. Brawne, who has rented Brown's house for the summer, observing, "She is a very nice woman, and her daughter senior is I think beautiful and elegant, graceful, silly, fashionable and strange. We have a little tiff now and then – and she behaves a little better, or I must have sheered off." On the 25th of the month, he writes of the young woman (she is, in fact, eighteen):

She is not seventeen – but she is ignorant – monstrous in her behaviour, flying out in all directions – calling people such names that I was forced lately to make use of the term *Minx* – this is I think not from any innate vice, but from a penchant she has for acting stylishly – I am however tired of such style and shall decline any more of it.

By the 1 July, Keats, who is now in the Isle of Wight, has decided, as he tells this "minx," "The morning is the only proper time for me to write to a beautiful Girl whom I love so much" and he requests, "Ask yourself my love whether you are not very cruel to have so entrammelled me, so destroyed my freedom."

The concluding phase of the poet's life has now begun. Keats has fallen victim to a consuming love, but he is without the means to support a wife. The couple become engaged, and it seems as though his passion and his tuberculosis work together to kill him.

Keats's letters give only a general impression of Fanny Brawne, and this has allowed commentators to conceive very different opinions of her. She appears to be a handsome (not phenomenally beautiful) young woman who enjoys parties and male admiration. She has a strong feeling for Keats and is a reader: he marks "the most beautiful passages in Spenser" for her, and in later life she makes some literary translations from German. The poet's friends, however, do not share his clearly inflated esteem of her, and Keats resents their criticism. In some ways, he seems to see her as the embodiment of the ideal beauty he has always sought: "All my thoughts," he discloses, "my unhappiest days and nights, have I find not at all cured me of my love of Beauty, but made it so intense that I am miserable that you are not with me." In the letters he writes from the summer of 1818 onwards, his twin passions are his craving for Fanny Brawne and his longing

for lasting poetic fame. We hear no more of Negative Capability or of the Vale of Soul-making.

Keats is a challenging lover. While he is glad Fanny does not love him just for his writings—he remarks, “I have met with women whom I really think would like to be married to a Poem and to be given away by a Novel” — he is continually praising her beauty. When she suggests that he loves her for that alone, he protests from his sickbed, “Have I nothing else to love in you but that? Do not I see a heart naturally furnish’d with wings imprison itself with me?” But the Keats who hoped never to marry has not undergone a complete metamorphosis. He warns Fanny, “I tremble at domestic cares” and exclaims:

God forbid we should what people call, *settle* — turn into a pond, a stagnant Lethe — a vile crescent, row or buildings. Better be imprudent moveables than prudent fixtures. Open my Mouth at the Street door like the Lion’s head at Venice to receive hateful cards, letters, messages. Go out and wither at tea parties; freeze at dinners; bake at dances; simmer at routs.

Reduced, at least intermittently, to an invalid, Keats is conscientious enough to alert Fanny to her limited prospects with him and rejoices when she does not falter in her constancy, though it would be “very reasonable” in her to do so. He is grateful that she has so long confined herself to her own neighbourhood for his sake, and is not displeased when she does make an excursion into Town — until the information that she has been taking pleasure at a party given by Mrs. Dilke kindles in him a furious jealousy:

I wish you to see how unhappy I am for love of you, and endeavour as much as I can to entice you to give up your whole heart to me whose whole existence hangs upon you.... I am greedy of you. Do not think of anything but me.... If you would really what is call’d enjoy yourself at a Party — if you can smile in people’s faces, and wish them to admire you *now* — you never have nor ever will love me.... If we love we must not live as other men and women do — I cannot brook the wolfsbane of fashion and foppery and tattle — you must be mine to die upon the rack if I want you.

In another letter, he charges, “You do not feel as I do — you do not know what it is to love — one day you may — your time is not come.”

The demands he makes on Fanny Brawne constitute one of a number of disturbing traits in the self-portrait that emerges from Keats’s letters. The man who can write, “I admire Human Nature but I do not like *Men*” is

not free from misanthropy, and many would not applaud his pronouncement, "Upon the whole I dislike mankind. Whatever people on the other side of the question may advance, they cannot deny that they are always surprised at hearing of a good action, and never of a bad one." A strain of misogyny also disfigures Keats's outlook: most women, he says, "appear to me as children to whom I would rather give a sugar Plum than my time."

Keats is all too ready to condemn whole classes of people. He comes to "look with hate and contempt upon the literary world" with its "common-place crowd of the little famous – who are each individually lost in a throng made up of themselves." "What a set of barren asses," he exclaims, "are actors!" Parsons kindle in him an irrational wrath:

The notions of Society will not permit a parson to give way to his temper in any shape – So he festers in himself – his features get a peculiar, diabolical, self-sufficient, iron stupid expression. He is continually acting – his mind is against every man, and every man's mind is against him, – He is a hypocrite to the Believer and a coward to the unbeliever.

Even tourists make him sneer: "It is astonishing how they raven down scenery like children do sweetmeats."

As his raging against parsons suggests, Keats is also capable of reacting to abuses with outbursts of extreme anger. When he investigates the malicious practical joke played on his late brother Tom by Charles Wells, who faked a set of letters from a non-existent woman who claimed to be in love with him, he concludes:

It was no thoughtless hoax – but a cruel deception on a sanguine Temperament, with every show of friendship. I do not think death too bad for the villain.... I will hang over his head like a sword by a hair. I will be opium to his vanity – if I cannot injure his interests – He is a rat and he shall have ratsbane to his vanity – I will harm him all I possibly can.

Referring to a member of Richard Abbey's firm whom he considers an enemy of his brother George, he exults to his sister, "No one can regret Mr. Hodgkinson's ill fortune: I must own illness has not made such a Saint of me as to prevent my rejoicing at his reverse." Less virulent but more surprising is Keats's reaction when Fanny Brawne and his friend Brown show some signs of mutual attraction:

When you were in the habit of flirting with Brown you would have left off, could your own heart have felt one half of one pang

mine did. Brown is a good sort of Man—he did not know he was doing me to death by inches. I feel the effect of every one of those hours in my side now; and for that cause, though he has done me many services, though I know his love and friendship for me, though at this moment I should be without pence were it not for his assistance, I will never see or speak to him until we are both old men, if we are to be.

Keats does not retain his anger against Brown: he wants his company when he sails to Italy, and it is to him that he writes his last two letters.

Against these shadows should be set the lighthearted passages — some containing bawdy allusions — with which Keats entertains his correspondents. A letter to two young women concludes:

P.S. has many significations — here it signifies Post Script — on the corner of a Handkerchief Polly Saunders — Upon a Garter Pretty Secret — Upon a Band Box Pink Sattin — At the Theatre Princes Side — on a Pulpit Parson's Snuffle — and at a Country Ale House Pail Sider.

Writing to George and Georgiana, he suggests what the wife can do for the husband:

While you are hovering with your dinner in prospect you may do a thousand things — put a hedgehog into George's hat — pour a little water into his rifle — soak his boots in a pail of water — cut his jacket round into shreds like a Roman kilt or the back of my grandmother's stays — Sew *off* his buttons.

In his short life, Keats has some fun, much pleasure, and spots of real happiness; nevertheless, that life is more tragedy than comedy. Early in his career, he argues that “a long poem is a test of invention, which I take to be the Polar star of Poetry,” and, on seeing that the mountains of the Isle of Arran are visible from Burns's native place, he asks himself, “How is it they did not beckon Burns to some grand attempt at Epic?” When he falls seriously ill in February 1820, he confides a great sorrow to Fanny Brawne: “‘If I should die,’ said I to myself, ‘I have left no immortal work behind me — nothing to make my friends proud of my memory — but I have lov'd the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remember'd.’” He does not know that for him the road to greatness lay through the ode, the sonnet, and the shorter narrative, that he has already travelled it, and that he has become a great poet by virtue of work that is already safely in print.



## A SHARP TONGUE AND A HUNGRY HEART

JANE WELSH CARLYLE (1801-1866)



In certain respects, the life of Jane Welsh Carlyle is even more limited than that of John Keats: she has no career, publishes nothing, and never travels outside of Great Britain. Yet her correspondence, which centres first on her courtship by Thomas Carlyle and later on their much discussed marriage, presents a cross section of Victorian society while criticising it from the standpoint of values that Jane shares with Thomas. This cross section extends from the aristocracy to the destitute. Jane takes, on the other hand, only a slender interest in nature – enjoying it she classifies as “very hard work” – and little more in politics. Where she excels is in depicting characters, narrating anecdotes, deploying her wit, and recording dialogue. Her letters, especially those to Thomas, are peppered with coterie speech in quotation marks; that is, phrases common in the mouths of people ranging from her father-in-law to the Carlyle’s servant Helen Mitchell and their friend the Italian patriot Mazzini. In the latter’s English, for example, “thanks to God” becomes “thanks God” and the things that must be attended to in daily life become “cares of bread.”

Born in 1801, Jane Welsh grows up in the Scottish Lowland town of Haddington, where her boldness and agility earn her a reputation as “a sticket callant” – a child who begins to grow up as a boy but gets stuck. Free from domestic tasks in her prosperous home, she is urged by her physician father to distinguish herself as a scholar, and she finds study congenial both for its own sake and as a means of gratifying the parent she idolises. When she is eighteen, he dies, and for a time her spirit is killed. Slowly she revives, and as a young woman to whom any man would give a second glance, she delights in the admiration of her male contemporaries while remaining devoted to her books. Elegance in a suitor has a great attraction



for her, but she longs also for genius. Unable to find a lover with both, she opts for genius and in 1826 marries the as yet poor Thomas Carlyle.

After beginning married life with a nineteen months' residence in Edinburgh, the couple move to Craigenputtock, an isolated farm inherited from Dr. Welsh, whose undomesticated daughter has to learn to cook, bake, and keep house while Thomas toils at his writing. Their lonely existence, relieved by occasional appearances of friends, rare visits to Edinburgh, and one excursion to London, continues until June 1834. At this point, they move permanently to the English capital and establish themselves at 5, Cheyne Row, a house that becomes famous in literature. With such books as *Sartor Resartus* (1836), *The French Revolution* (1837), *Heroes and Hero-Worship* (1841), and *Past and Present* (1843), Thomas wins fame and veneration as a critic of his age and an enemy to materialism, democracy, and faith in progress. The couple become well integrated into London's literary life and are admitted into the company of aristocrats who patronise intellectuals. While Jane suffers from sometimes crippling attacks of illness, an even worse evil begins to afflict her about 1843 when Thomas starts to become besotted with the admiration of the cultured, witty and imperious Harriet Baring, later Lady Ashburton, who likes to be surrounded by a court of brilliant men; there are periods when Thomas's neglect plunges Jane into soul-destroying despair, though she occasionally finds some relief in travelling to visit cousins in Liverpool and the scenes of her youth in Scotland.

In 1857 Lady Ashburton dies. Next year the widower remarries, and Jane is surprised to find in the second Lady Ashburton an intimate and loving friend. The Carlyles' life, however, is now blighted by the enormous task which Thomas, to his subsequent regret, has set himself – namely, to compile an immense biography of Frederick the Great, a task he only completes in 1865. Next year, while he is in Scotland, where he has just been installed as Rector of the University of Glasgow, Jane dies. Realising how much she has suffered from his neglect and his excessive household demands as well as her own ill health, Thomas assembles a large body of her brilliant letters, adds clarifying observations, and entrusts the manuscript to his friend the historian J. A. Froude. The latter publishes it in 1883, two years after Thomas, too, has died.

Except for one childhood note, Jane's surviving correspondence begins with expressions of her and her mother's overwhelming grief at her father's early death in September 1819. To her Edinburgh friend Eliza Stodart, she writes of their first venture out of doors after the bereavement, an excursion to attend church: "the very sight of the street was hateful to me.... I have no wish to live, except for two purposes – to be a comfort to my poor mother, and to make myself worthy of being reunited to my

adored father." Within a few months, however, she reassures Eliza she has honoured her father by resuming her studies and is again taking some interest in attractive youths. "I dare say," she adds, "you are a little curious to know the state of my *affairs* at present" and refers to Benjamin Bell as "one of the most frank, unaffected young men I have seen."

During the ensuing six years, Jane finds an outlet in her letters for the frustrations of a restricted life. Like the heroine of a traditional comedy of manners, she complains of the intolerable dullness of life in a country town, namely her native Haddington. She bewails the hardship of being dragged from her cherished studies to listen to the tedious talk of neighbours and to accompany her mother on visits to out-of-town relatives. In 1823, she declares to Eliza:

I must dwell in the open world, live amid life; but *here* is no life, no motion, no variety. It is the dimmest, dearest spot (I verily believe) in the Creator's universe; to look round in it, one might imagine that time had made a stand: the shopkeepers are to be seen standing at the doors of their shops, in the very same postures in which they have stood there ever since I was born.

Eliza also learns that "A tea-party, a quarrel, or a *report* of a marriage now and then, are the only excitements this precious little borough affords."

Family visits bring no ease. Carried off unwillingly for a three-week stay at her maternal grandfather's house, Templand, in Dumfriesshire, she protests:

If ever my excellent Mother gets me wheedled here again!... Oh my beloved German, my precious, precious time!... We have got my Uncle from Liverpool, his wife, the most horrid woman on the face of the earth, and five such children! in addition to our *family-party*; and what with the mother's scolding and the children's squalling, and my Uncle's fighting and my Grandfather fidgetting, I am half-demented.

While Jane aches to return to her books, and especially to her German studies, the pleasure she takes in them does not prevent her from relishing the attentions of suitors. In her letters, she unawares bequeaths to posterity a record of the antics of a number of disappointed young men. One of these is the young Dr. Fyffe, whom Jane thinks for a time she has disposed of as a lover but retained as a friend. When he is about to leave the district, she admits she will miss him, and then, as she later writes to Thomas,

He swore I made him weaker than any child; stormed through the room, talking with violence on the most trivial matters, and completed my dismay with a fit of laughter that made every drop of blood in me stand still.... Forgetful of everything but pity and terror, I threw my arms about his neck and besought him to be himself.

Among the shortcomings of this “little gunpowder man of medicine” is his jealousy of another suitor who is no more welcome to the lady than he is. She laments to Thomas that her Evil Genius prompted her in the summer of 1824 at Musselburgh Races to attract male eyes by a display of horsemanship and a “pretty riding-dress,” and especially the eyes of Dugald Gilchrist, a young man whose silken locks, sweet eyes, and musical voice do not compensate for his deficiencies of fire, wit and elegance. Unfortunately, his attractions take her mother’s fancy, and he and his young sister Catherine receive an invitation to visit. He proposes, she rejects him, and, to prevent a renewal of his offer, pretends to be engaged. He weeps himself into a feverish condition, and Jane’s mother persuades her to walk with him in the cool evening air. Suddenly, she tells Thomas,

he gave a sort of cry and fell down at my side. I shut my eyes and stood motionless: I could not stir to assist him; I thought he was dead. Fortunately my Mother had more presence of mind; she ran up to us when she saw him fall, and lifted him off his face. God! how he looked! He was as white as ashes, and his eyes were wide open and fixed.

Jane makes a fortunate escape when she avoids marrying her mother’s cousin Captain James Baillie. As they become closely acquainted in 1824, Jane enthuses about him both to Eliza and to Thomas. She teases the former:

‘You were sure that he was not a person at all to *my* taste.’ *Lord help your simplicity!* how you mistook the matter! He is my very *beau-idéal* in all respects but one. His nature is the most affectionate I ever knew, his spirit the most magnificent; he has a clear, quick intellect, a lively fancy: with beauty, brilliance, sensibility, native gracefulness, and courtly polish, he wants but *genius* to be — the destiny of my life.

Thomas has to read her description of Baillie as “the handsomest, most fascinating young man in England,” but in time he is reassured that this resplendent officer, who arrives “in a fine emblazoned chariot with four horses; and all glittering in jewels, from the gold pendant of his rose-coloured

cap, to the ruby buckles of his slippers" compares to himself as "A mere painted butterfly, fluttering over the flowery surface of the Earth,—the creature of a sun-shiny day!" compares to "the royal Eagle, who soars aloft thro' the regions of ether, and feasts his eye on the glories of the sun."

Alas! Captain Baillie, like the George Wickham of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, is all fine looks and outward polish. By 1842, Jane is informing her cousin Jeannie Welsh that she has just written to him "four pages of passionate remonstrance against the folly—not to say infamy—of his past and present course of life!" In 1844, she reports that he attempts to beg two sovereigns from her, ostensibly to redeem a portrait of his illegitimate son from a pawnshop. Soon afterwards, he writes to her from prison.

On 24 July 1825, Jane sends Thomas, who has advanced from friend to lover, that she has concealed from him her former passion for the preacher Edward Irving, though that passion did not stop her from persuading Irving to honour his prior engagement to Isabella Martin, the daughter of a fellow clergyman. It is Irving who, four years earlier, took Thomas Carlyle to call on the Welshes at Haddington. A few days after this visit, Thomas writes to Jane about her studies, and the long correspondence which is the medium of their courtship begins. Since her adored father's death more than a year and a half before, there has been a gap in her life. Slowly Thomas, a young scholar and thinker belonging to a rural family of a lower social class, and as yet poor, begins to fill it. Jane, who is romantic enough to adore genius not only in Byron and Rousseau but even in Napoleon, is soon satisfied she has an intimate friend who possesses it. "When will your genius," she asks in the summer of 1823, "burst through all obstructions and find its proper place?" As her father had done, Thomas encourages her in her scholarly pursuits, and he holds up a lure before her, claiming, when they have known each other less than a year, "I see a niche in the Temple of Fame—still vacant or but poorly filled—which I imagine your powers will yet enable you, if so cultivated, to occupy with glory to yourself and profit to others."

Seven months after Jane and Thomas begin to correspond, a warning sign appears. She cautions him:

Now Sir, once for all, I beg you to understand that I dislike as much as my Mother disapproves your somewhat too ardent expressions of Friendship towards me ... if you cannot write to me as if—as if you were married, you need never waste ink or paper on me more.... I will be to you a true, a constant, and devoted *Friend*—but not a *Mistress*, a *Sister* but not a *Wife*.

At this time, Jane is declaring to Eliza that she will never marry because she will never find a husband equal to the creations of Rousseau's imagination in *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Thomas she compares with that author's St. Preux:

He has *his* talents, *his* vast and cultivated mind, *his* vivid imagination, *his* independence of soul, and *his* high-souled principles of honour. But then – Ah, these *buts!* – St. Preux never kicked the fire-irons, nor made puddings in his teacup. Want of Elegance! Want of Elegance, Rousseau says, is a defect which no woman can overlook.

By the end of 1822, Thomas cannot hide the fact that he is deeply in love with Jane. In September of the next year, he announces that his love for her will never cease, but that he will not be able to continue their correspondence after she marries. Her alarm is immediate: "Do you think I will ever marry at such a cost?... If 'Mrs. –' is to be estranged from your affections, I am Jane Welsh for life." Remembering her prostration at her father's death, she exclaims:

Were I again to lose the friend of my soul, again to be left alone in the midst of society, – loving no one and yet possessing the faculty to love, perceiving nothing but the blackness of death in the universe around me; in the bustle and glitter and grandeur of the earth, nothing but the parade of a funeral, – Great God, how wretched, how ruined I should be!

About a year later, she quotes one of his own letters back at him when she welcomes his return from France:

Well, I am flattering myself that your *residence on the Continent* will have made you a bit of a Dandy. At least you will not speak Annandale, surely, after having *travelled* – Apollo and the Nine Muses forbid! It would be so delightful, when I go South, to find you about a hundredth-part as 'elegant' as my amiable Cousin [Captain James Baillie]! I am quite sure that I should fall in love with you if I were, and then – 'Oh Heavens what a thing it might be *if it prospered*' – surely you will own no man had ever such inducement to study the Graces.

Her adoration of the genius does not prevent her from teasing the man. Learning that he has actually received a letter from the great Goethe, she chides him, "I expect to find you grown monstrous vain when we meet," and she is not afraid to confront him with a firm order: nine months before

their marriage, his proposal to rent a cottage and have two of his sisters care for it draws the retort, "Indeed you will do no such thing; for this project you will find, on reflection, to be none of the wisest."

In February 1825, Jane feels she is "half-engaged" to Thomas, and in September, duly warned about his mother's anxiety about her "rude irregular *ménage*," she visits his home, Hoddam Hill, and charms his family, which is so much poorer than her own. Looking back on this interlude in her life, she writes:

I must not keep house with you in Salisbury Street, as I did at Hoddam Hill – dear delightful *Hill*, where we lived together so happily – so married-like! Oh! when shall we have such Sabbath weeks again? Not, I suppose, till we are married in good earnest.

Jane has already made it clear to Thomas that her love for him "is deep and calm, more like the quiet river, which refreshes and beautifies where it flows, than the torrent which bears down and destroys." What she demands of him materially is far from extravagant: "I merely wish to see you earning a *certain* livelihood, and exercising the profession of a gentleman. For the rest, it is a matter of great indifference to me whether you have hundreds or thousands a-year, whether you are a Mr. or a Duke." In view of their subsequent history, one assurance of Thomas should be remembered: "I tell you I have firmly resolved that your mind *shall* not run to waste, but come forth in its native beauty, before all is done, and let the world behold it."

The wedding takes place on 17 October 1826. In marrying Thomas, Jane espouses a man whose values she shares and whose puncturing of nineteenth century society's widespread self-satisfaction she approves of. Though in later life he seems to be on the way to doctrines uncomfortably akin to fascism, the young Carlyle, like Dickens, aims some much needed moral barbs at his complacent contemporaries. He believes that all humans should strive to develop strong convictions about their relationship to the mystery of their existence in this universe and that their lives, whatever social class they belong to, should be anchored in purposeful work. Observing the society around him, he complains that the aristocracy devotes itself to such frivolous activities as shooting partridges, that the middle class is devoted to making money, and that the lower class is misguidedly demanding democracy. He likes to express contempt for what he calls "gigmanity" – the cult of respectability, which involves attaching supreme importance to such signs of superiority as owning a gig. Jane's letters, in keeping with Thomas's views, denounce those who devote their

lives to trivialities. From the home of her female cousins in Liverpool, she writes to Thomas:

Here sufficient for the day is the marketing, and eating, and dressing thereof! And a new satin dress can diffuse perfect beatitude through an immortal soul! The circulating library satisfies all their intellectual wants, and flirtation all the wants of their hearts ... somehow 'I as one solitary individual' would rather remain in Hell – the Hell I make for myself with my restless *digging* – than accept this drowsy placidity.

Writing to her friend Mrs. Russell in Scotland, Jane is equally scathing about London society:

[Sir Robert] Peel's death came like a black cloud over this scene of so-called 'gaieties,' for a few days – but only for a few days. Nothing leaves a long impression here. People dare not let themselves think or feel in this centre of frivolity and folly; they would go mad if they did, and universally commit suicide; for to 'take a thocht and mend' is far from their intention.

Like her husband, Jane rejects the Christian doctrine of Incarnation and Atonement, but her references to God, Providence and Destiny show that she shares his deeply rooted belief in an overarching power. She is also convinced, as are Dr. Johnson and Keats, that the world is not a place made for joy: "who in a world like this," she asks her cousin Jeannie Welsh in 1843, "that has any more reflection than the Brutes can be what they call *happy* at my age? – but I am better than happy in having learnt to do without happiness." The easy doctrine that virtue brings happiness she despises, along with the Unitarians who notably espouse it, though she does strike up something of a friendship with the Unitarian minister James Martineau (brother of the famous Harriet), whose mind she respects. Once, in Liverpool, to reduce the friction with her churchgoing relatives, she agrees to attend the chapel where Martineau is preaching:

The poor man had got something to say which he did not believe, and could not conceal the difficulty he found in *conforming*. Flowers of rhetoric world without end, to cover over the barrenness of the soil! I felt quite *wae* for him; he looked such a picture of conscientious anguish while he was overlaying his *Christ* with similes and metaphors, that people might not see what a wooden puppet he had made of him to himself, – in great

need of getting *flung overboard* after the Virgin Mary, ‘*Madame sa Mère.*’

Jane has only contempt for “the emotionalness of the Wesleyan Methodist, — having its home in the senses rather than in the soul”: she asks, “Was not Christ Himself, on the cross, calm, simple?... Was there ever in the whole history of His life a trace of excitement?” When she and Thomas visit Edward Irving in London and find that he takes the uttering of meaningless gibberish by some of his followers as the speaking in tongues of Pentecost, she is appropriately distressed at his folly. Contrariwise, the pious who bear their religion lightly while believing fervently earn her respect: “to you I may safely confess,” she confides to the Rev. John Sterling, “that I care almost nothing about what a man believes in comparison with how he believes” and she honours an Irish clergyman who “has refused two bishoprics in the course of his life, for conscience sake.” She is satisfied that God has “planted in our hearts a sense of *justice* and of self-preservation,” and worrying over the question of immortality, she quotes Thomas back to himself:

‘My dear, you really ought not to go on with that sort of thing — all that questioning leads to nothing. We know nothing about it and cannot know, and what better should we be if we did?’  
 ‘All very true, Mr. Carlyle, but’ — at least one cannot accept such solution on the authority of others, even of the wisest — one must have worked it out for oneself. And the working of it out is a sore business, very sore; especially with ‘a body apt to fall into holes.’

In an illness of 1864 that racks her body and makes her fear for her sanity, she exclaims, “Nobody can help me! Only God: and can I wonder if God take no heed of me when I have all my life taken so little heed of Him?” She holds that only “the exceptional natures” can be improved by suffering — most deteriorate.

Jane encounters her first great trial in May 1828, when she and Thomas move from Edinburgh, where they have lived comfortably enough, to Craigenputtock, a farm which she has described to Thomas before their marriage as “the most barren spot in the county of Dumfriesshire.” At the end of July, she informs Eliza Stodart:

Craigenputtock is no such frightful place as the people call it.... The solitude is not so irksome as one might think. If we are cut off from good society, we are also delivered from bad; the roads are less pleasant to walk on than the pavement of Princes Street, but we have horses to ride, and instead of shopping and making



calls, I have bread to bake and chickens to hatch. I read and work, and talk with my Husband, and never weary.

Looking back long after, she remembers how bitterly she, “who had been so petted at home, whose comfort had been studied by everybody in the house,” resented her new chores until she recognized “that it is not the greatness or littleness of ‘the duty nearest hand,’ but the spirit in which one does it, that makes one’s doing noble or mean!”

Even though her kindly mother-in-law sends supplies and Eliza Stodart makes purchases for her in Edinburgh, her life at Craigenputtock remains exceedingly hard. A visiting pedlar describes this lonely place as “altogether *heathenish*.” The worst ordeal is a severe winter. “Oh for a sight of the green fields again,” she moans to Eliza, “or even the black *peat-moss*—anything rather than this wide waste of blinding snow.”

In June 1834, the couple escape from their solitude, but not from all their troubles, when they move to London, accompanied by a maidservant, Bessy Barnet, and establish the home in which they are to remain for the rest of their difficult lives together. The London climate makes constant assaults on Jane’s health, and her own wifely conscience increases the burden that her husband’s heavy demands impose on her. After eighteen months in the city, she suggests to Thomas’s mother:

You are to look upon it as the most positive proof of my regard that I write to you in my present circumstances; that is to say, with the blood all frozen in my brains, and my brains turned to a solid mass of ice; for such has, for several days, been the too cruel lot of your poor little daughter-in-law at *Lunnon*.

The summer heat—like “no other heat I ever experienced”—and “the dark dismal fog” are other seasonal torments.

Besides the unhealthy climate, Jane endures much from Thomas’s self-absorption. On the one hand, she takes great pride in his achievements and growing fame; on the other, she suffers often from his neglect and at times from his domestic tyranny. The composition of the books that make him famous and fill her with pride—she considers *Sartor Resartus* “a real ‘*work of Genius*’” and believes *Past and Present* is “calculated to waken up the Soul of England”—imposes an almost intolerable burden on her. She describes her fate as she lies in bed with influenza while Thomas works on *Oliver Cromwell’s Letters and Speeches*:

About *thrice* a day—on the average—Carlyle pops in his head between the curtains and asks firstly ‘how are you now, Jane?’

Secondly; 'have you had anything to eat?' Thirdly, 'you are not thinking of getting up yet?' – then off to his Cromwell in which he lives, moves, and has his being at present – as is always the way with him when he is writing a book.

(Jane always calls her husband Carlyle (or occasionally Mr. C.), even in her letters to his mother – perhaps a sign of the awe in which she holds his genius.)

Most often Thomas is almost oblivious to his sick wife's condition, but when his eyes do open he shows a real concern. She describes how one day,

from six in the morning till six at night I carried on one incessant alternation of fainting, retching, screaming, even Cromwell had to give place to me! – and Carlyle was out and in fifty times during the day – not with the usual 'how are you now Jane' – but – 'merciful heaven what *is* this? – what *can* I do for you?'

For her part, Jane is early dedicated to the daily care of Thomas. From Craigenputtock, she writes to Eliza Stodart that she will not be visiting the city without him: "It would be poor entertainment for one in Edinburgh or anywhere else to think one's husband was here in the desert *alone*, his stockings get[ting] all into holes, and perhaps even his tea running down." In London, his demands multiply. She can be afraid to enter his room for more writing paper, looks forward to his reception of his dinner "with a sort of panic, which the event for most part justifies," and negotiates with neighbours to put an end to the animal noises and piano music which disturb him. Her endurance of the construction of a silent room proves futile as the room proves not to be silent. A strain of meanness in Thomas becomes visible in one of her complaints: "Decidedly I begin to be weary of *doing* all the *bores* – while if ever perchance an exceptional human being drops in *that one* is carried off to smoke in the garden or talk tête à tête in the Library." The man's unhealthy habits add to her stress: she often warns him against his late hours, unwise eating, and excessive consumption of tea.

When Thomas is away from home, Jane undertakes radical cleaning and alterations to the house. She herself paints and glazes and supervises renovations. A passage in a letter of 1843 to her cousin Jeannie Welsh constitutes an indictment of her taskmaster together with a confession of her own share of responsibility for his behaviour:

I caught a fine rheumatism in the back of my head and shoulders – in consequence of spending a whole forenoon in

papering the broken parts of the plaster and all the afternoon of the same day in nailing carpets—*that* is a thing that Helen [her servant] *can not* do—and the hands of me are absolutely blackened and coarsified with the quantity of it I have had to transact this season.... The fact is I have spoiled Mr. C.—I have accustomed him to have all wants supplied ‘without visible means’.... When one had not any money—it was all well—I never grudged my work—but now that we have enough to live on it would be good sense in him to say ‘get in a carpenter to nail your carpets’ and a few other such considerate suggestions.

In 1858 she upbraids Thomas, who is on a visit to Scotland:

to see you constantly discontented, and as much so with me, apparently, as with all other things, when I have neither the strength and spirits to bear up against your discontent, nor the obtuseness to be indifferent to it—that has done me more harm than you have the least notion of. You have not the least notion what a killing thought it is to have put into one’s heart, gnawing there day and night, that one ought to be dead, since one can no longer make the same exertions as formerly.

Elsewhere she argues:

C. should have had ‘a strong-minded woman’ for wife, with a perfectly sound liver, plenty of *solid fat*, and mirth and good-humour world without end—men do best with their opposites. *I* am too like himself in some things—especially as to the state of our livers, and so we aggravate one another’s tendencies to despair!

Jane is quite capable of lecturing Thomas on his shortcomings. When he writes home complaining of the discomfort his Scottish host is subjecting him to, she is appropriately sceptical:

When you go to any house, one knows it is because you choose to go; and when you stay, it is because you choose to stay. You don’t, as weakly amiable people do, sacrifice yourself for the pleasure of ‘others.’ So pray do not think it necessary to be wishing yourself at home, and ‘all that sort of thing,’ on paper.

A review of G. M. Trevelyan’s 1953 publication *Carlyle: An Anthology* is headed “The Forgotten Thunder of an Angry Prophet,” and the man Jane forsakes her comfortable home to marry is indeed a formidable character—

in society as well as domestically. The couple has been resident in London for less than three months when Jane writes to his mother that he “seems to be regarded with a feeling of mingled terror and love in all companies.” She has a vision of him at the head of his table facing people he has been unwilling to invite and there “brandishing the carving knife and ordering his guests to ‘vanish in God or the Devil’s name lest a worse thing befall them!’”

In view of such an uneasy relationship, one should perhaps not be surprised to find Jane writing to her cherished Jeannie Welsh in 1851:

Oh Babbie! how I wish it had not been your *idea* to pitch your tent in this ‘valley of the shadow of *marriage*’ —it is a very *relaxing air* I am sure and peculiarly unsuitable to *your* constitution. But certainly I am not the best authorized person to tell people how they should manage their lives under that head of Method — having made such a mess of my own life — God help me!

Yet alongside the anger and resentment, a strong affection flows both ways between this demanding man and his protesting wife. On Thomas’s side, it is evident in the letters he writes to her whenever they are apart and the careful attention he pays her after she is stricken by her mother’s death in 1842 as well as his purchase of a one-horse brougham for her when she is “old and frail.” Affection can even shine through his playful teasing in 1846 when two jealous wives conceive they are in danger from her: “This morning as I was sitting very half-awake over my coffee, he suddenly exclaimed — ‘just to look at you there, looking as if butter would not melt in your mouth, and think of the profligate life you lead!’” For her part, Jane depends on the letters they write each other daily when they are apart. In 1850, she describes his, which comfort her during her frenetic house cleaning, as “my only comfort thro’ this *black* business,” and when, the previous year, she steels herself to revisit Scotland for the first time since her mother’s death, it is with him that she feels she must share her feelings on returning to her native town of Haddington: “to no other mortal would I, or indeed could I, write from this place at this moment; but it comes natural to me to direct a letter to you here, and that is still something, is it not?”

The plaintive note here may be related to one of the greatest of the trials that scar Jane’s life, her husband’s obsessive adoration of Lady Harriet Baring (from her father-in-law’s death in May 1848, Lady Ashburton). This gifted aristocrat has a passion for being surrounded by distinguished men ready to attend her at her bidding. Jane pours out her fluctuating feelings about this woman in letters to her Liverpool cousins — her mother’s nieces Helen, Margaret, and Jeannie Welsh.

Both propriety and curiosity spur Lady Harriet to become acquainted with her venerator's wife. In May 1843, when Jane first meets her rival, Thomas has already succumbed to her witchery and the phrase "Lady Harriet Baring's love-making to my husband" has appeared in a letter to Jeannie Welsh. By August 1844, she can declare, "I begin to have a real *admiration* for that woman—her *fascination* of Carlyle proves her to be the most masterly coquette of Modern Times!" Eventually Jane finds that waves of anger and jealousy corrode her peace of mind, and she loathes the way in which Thomas subjects himself and her to the lady's queen-like demands. In November 1846, she protests to Helen that after Christmas they must stay with the Barings for a month: "So the Lady Harriet wills *at present*—and her Ladyship's will is become the law of this house!"

As the years pass, Jane's increasing anguish at the alienation of her husband's affection is most fully expressed in her private journals but is far from absent from her letters. In October 1851, after Thomas has just spent time with Lady Harriet and her husband in Paris, she writes to Jeannie:

She [Lady Harriet] brought me a woollen scarf of *her own knitting* during their stay in Switzerland and a cornelian bracelet and—a similar scarf only smaller for Mr. C.—in fact I believe the dear woman would never have done all that knitting for *me* unless as a handsome preparation for doing the comforter for Mr. C.

Particularly dismaying is her *cri de coeur* to Thomas in October 1850 when Lady Harriet wants her to prolong her visit: "Who cares one doit for me here, that I should stay here, when you, who still care a little for me, more anyhow than any other person living does, are again at home?"

In spite of all the hurt and rivalry, the unsteady relationship between the two devotees of Carlyle's genius does have some rewards for them both. Lady Harriet is able to call on Jane to keep company with her mother, Lady Sandwich, whom Jane much likes but whom she herself "can hardly endure"; to entertain Thackeray's children when they, along with their father, are her guests; to help her with "flirting young Ladies and gentlemen"; to serve as a human dictionary when she is learning German; and to play chess with her "in her private sitting-room—which is the beautifullest room you can imagine"—when she is unwell. Sometimes Jane stays with Lady Harriet when Thomas is away from home, and on one such occasion she sends him an account of her venture into the Barings' kitchen to instruct the cook how to make orange marmalade. Referring to an episode in the Italians' struggle to expel their Austrian overlords, she writes:

that is one job 'got thro' with an honourable throughbearing,' — a *Savoy's Expedition*, in its own way, *not* turned back by a toll-bar! For I assure you I would rather lead a 'few brave men' against the Austrians than present myself alone in that kitchen amidst the scowls of women in pinafores, and suppressed cries of '*à bas la systême*,' — to give orders and see them obeyed. Mrs. Achison, however, is fairly *got under* now, and the kitchen-maid would go thro' boiling sugar for me.

The woman named, indeed, thanks her next morning "for having taught her such a good and beautiful thing!"

For her part, Lady Harriet enlarges Jane's experience by introducing her to the highest rank of society and the lifestyle of the very rich. She includes her among the guests at Bath House in London, at Bay House on the south coast, at the Grange — her parents-in-laws' magnificent home in Hampshire — and at the Ashburton estate at Addiscombe in Surrey. In September 1845, Jane makes her first visit to the London residence, when Lady Harriet, being indisposed, sends a brougham for her. She describes her arrival to Thomas:

I was rather surprised to be set down at a great Unknown House, and conducted thro' large Halls and staircases by unknown servants. If it had not been for the indubitability of the brougham, I should have begun to fancy myself kidnapped, or in a Fairy Tale.

Five years later, at his urging, she reluctantly accompanies Thomas to the Bath House Ball and discovers,

it is an additional idea for life to have seen such a party — all the Duchesses one ever heard tell of blazing in diamonds, all the young beauties of the season, all the distinguished statesmen &c., &c. were to be seen among the six or seven hundred people present — and the rooms all hung with artificial roses looked like an Arabian Nights entertainment ... Lady Ashburton receiving all these people with her grand-Lady airs was also a sight worth seeing.

On many occasions, however mixed her motives may be, Lady Harriet shows kindness to Jane, breaking convention, for example, to order her "some hot soup — *before dinner*" when she arrives at Bay House in a "*weak state*," recommending remedies for her chronic headaches, and offering

her a refuge from the paint fumes during renovations at 5, Cheyne Row when Thomas is travelling.

Occasionally a snatch of Lady Harriet's talk is preserved in a letter of Jane's. On the latter's claiming that "it greatly took away from one's sympathy with a man's religious scruples to find that they were merely symptoms of a diseased liver," Lady Harriet replies, that "until the dominion of the liver was precisely ascertained, it were safer to speak respectfully of it." She is, Jane reports, "the woman of largest intellect I have ever seen" and also a "gay hearted, high spirited woman ... the enemy of *cant* and lover of all mirthful things." She despises sentiment and wields the phrase "all about feelings" as a favourite term of censure.

In her judgment of Lady Harriet, Jane wavers. Quite early in their acquaintance, she remarks, "I have an unconquerable persuasion that she does not and never can like me!" While giving her credit for her "good sense and perfect good breeding," she feels there will never be "warm affection" on either side. As their intercourse continues, she finds that Lady Harriet is sometimes very kind to her and sometimes neglectful. When her hostess leaves her sick in bed unvisited, she concludes that "in great Houses ... the aim of existence is to *ignore* as much as possible that there is such a thing as human suffering in any form," and she notices how quickly Lady Harriet casts off her initial grief at the death of their mutual friend Charles Buller. She comes to feel "a certain sorrow" that wealth and high rank have condemned such a gifted woman to a merely decorative life: when the subject arises, Lady Harriet explains that to live more productively, "one would have to begin by quarrelling with all one's husband's relations and one's own."

On one of the rare occasions when Jane seems really at ease in aristocratic company, she, Lady Harriet, and Lady Sandwich are dressing dolls for charity. The servants refuse to have anything to do with the dolls – footmen told to bring them "simply disappear." Jane records:

I remarked on this with some impatience yesterday, and Lady A[shburton] answered, 'Perfectly true, Mrs. Carlyle – they *won't bring the doll!* – I know it as well as you do – but what would you have me do? – turn all the servants men and women out of the house.... Perhaps it would be the right thing to do – but then what should we do next week without servants when all the company come?' Such is the slavery the grandest people live under *to what they call* their '*inferiors*.'

A woman as prominent in the letters as Lady Harriet is Geraldine Jewsbury; Jane sees in these two females "the opposite poles of woman-nature."

Though there is a rebellious side to Jane's character—she smokes, climbs over a locked churchyard wall at Haddington at the age of forty-eight, and is the only member of her family to acknowledge the existence of her “unlawful cousin” Jackie Welsh—her boldness has quite stringent limits. She opposes the publication of her friend Miss Jewsbury's first novel, *Zoe: the History of Two Lives*, because it exposes “whole minds naked as before the fall” and refuses the dedication of a later book by this author as she does not wish to promenade herself “as an ‘emancipated’ woman.”

Over the years, Jane's feeling for Geraldine Jewsbury seesaws between love and contempt. Faced with the manuscript of *Zoe*, she begins to think of its unmarried author's need for financial security in her old age, and takes the work to Chapman and Hall, who, to her astonishment, publish it in 1845, despite subsequent qualms at its feminist questioning of the sacredness of marriage, motherhood, and religious faith. Jane is similarly critical of her friend's second novel, *The Half Sisters* (1848). Only with the third, *Marian Withers* (1851), does she decide that Geraldine “has made an immense progress in common-sense and common decency.”

A plain woman, Geraldine is assiduous in her pursuit of men. When Jane assures Jeannie Welsh she need not apologise for a preoccupation with her domestic staff, she observes, “I think, talk, and write about my own servant as much as Geraldine does about her lovers.” Jane, however, turns out to be right when she remarks:

On the whole I rather imagine no man will ever be found so constituted as to fall in love with Geraldine and think of her as a Wife — which is a pity — as her heart seems to me set on being married to any sort of a male biped who could maintain her — at all risks!

In keeping with her emotional makeup, Geraldine also has intense friendships with women. Jane describes her surprise at finding herself the object of her friend's “mad, lover-like jealousy” and tells how,

I set the whole company into fits of laughter, the other day, by publicly saying to her after she had been flirting with a certain Mr. [Telo] that “I wondered she should expect me to behave decently to her after she had for a whole evening been making love before my very face to *another man!*”

Once, when she is sufficiently exasperated by her temperamental friend's behaviour, she bursts out, “Geraldine, until you can behave like a gentle-



woman, if not like a woman of common-sense, I cannot possibly remain in the same room with you."

As wearing as her erratic behaviour and hysterics can be, Geraldine has a real devotion to Jane. Although she "can't cook or make a bed" and is unable to help out in the absence of a competent servant, she and her brother prove attentive and thoughtful hosts when the convalescent Jane stays in their Manchester home. She can be "very teasing and absurd—but let one be ill—suffering—especially *morbidly* suffering—and then one knows what Geraldine is."

The letters of Jane Carlyle portray such a wealth of characters that in this respect they rival Horace Walpole's. They show that she wins the respect and even the devotion of many people. Among them, Erasmus Darwin, the cultured, bachelor elder sibling of Charles, who continually drives her in his carriage and is, she says, "the likeliest thing to a brother I ever had in the world." She is pleasantly surprised when this perfect "*English gentleman*" is capable of enjoying her rebellious friend's *Zoe*. With Erasmus, Jane seems always at ease, whereas her friendship with the daughter of Lord and Lady Stanley is tinged with embarrassment. "Blanche," she writes to Thomas, "has confided to me all the secrets of her heart—her ideas about her father and mother and sisters and lovers." Once she throws herself on Jane's neck and exclaims, "Oh! does not everyone love you?" As a married woman, she is no more restrained: Jane complains that "the young Countess ... continues to send me letters *so* confidential, that I feel as if I were being constituted *dry nurse* to her soul!—without having been 'trained to the business.'"

Very different from Blanche Stanley is Amely Bölte, a German governess and translator who is apt to sit in company staring at people silently, but Jane acknowledges that she has brought about a "miraculous improvement" in the mischievous Theresa Reviss (a probable model for Becky Sharp in Thackeray's novel *Vanity Fair*), a protégée of Mrs. Buller. This lady according to Jane, "had tired of parties, of politics, of most things in heaven and earth" and decided that taking on this pretty, clever daughter of a disreputable woman would bring her "the excitement of making a scandal and braving public opinion, and of educating a flesh and blood girl into the heroine of the three-volume novel, which she had for years been trying to write, but wanted perseverance to elaborate." The Bullers, whose two boys Thomas tutors in his bachelor days, are good friends of Jane. "Mrs. Buller," she writes, while staying at their son Reginald's rectory in Troston, Suffolk, "is kind to me beyond expression—not as people are kind to their visitors generally, but as if I were the daughter of the house. She speaks to me so *out of her heart* as women of the world rarely speak at all—and hardly ever to a person so much younger than themselves." When the other son, Charles, a most promising young politician, dies suddenly in

1848, it is for Jane his mother sends, and Jane, though racked by insomnia and discouraged by Thomas, feels, as she afterwards explains, "I could do no otherwise than go."

When she is with the family, Jane partners Mr. Buller at chess. She describes how, challenged "in the most provokingly slighting tone" to play more skilfully, "I felt myself injured—he should see I was determined that I *could* play if I liked—and so I *beat* him the next game and the next—and he has had sore thrashing of his brains for any game he has won from me since."

Among other players Jane faces at the chessboard is Edward Sterling, editor of *The Times*, whose leading articles earn him the nickname of the Thunderer. When she has resided in London for little more than a year, she writes to one of Thomas's sisters about the friends she has made including the Sterlings, who, she enthuses, "from the master of the house down to the footman, are devoted to me body and soul." In the summer of 1837, Edward Sterling and his wife take Jane with them on a tour in the south of England. They refer to her as the young lady (she is thirty-six) and seem to regard her accompanying them as a favour, despite some moments of friction on political grounds. She disturbs Mrs. Sterling by asking why Oliver Cromwell's portrait is not in the Bodleian Picture Gallery along with those of so many of his contemporaries. Shortly afterwards, apropos of the stupid stubbornness of donkeys being useful on dangerous ground, she remarks, "Now for the first time in my life I perceive why Conservatives are so stupidly stubborn; stubbornness, it seems, is a succedaneum for *sense*"; the Thunderer retorts, "Do you know, Mrs. Carlyle, you would be a vast deal more amiable, if you were not so damnably clever!"

Mrs. Sterling's great kindness to Jane has already led the latter to write to her mother-in-law, "I feel to her as to a third mother," and when the irascible Edward Sterling becomes a widower, he leans on Jane, whom he refers to as "that Angel of Consolation and Mercy," even though friction between them erupts intermittently. She details her reaction when he comes out with "the most monstrous impertinences" concerning Thomas's *Past and Present*, which she knows he has not read: "I gave him of course as *good* or a pretty deal *better* than he brought and came away—abruptly—telling him that he must learn good manners before I visited his house or received him into mine again." Two days later he delivers a letter of apology.

The Sterlings' sons—John, who is a clergyman, and Anthony, who is a captain in the army—also have a strong attachment to Jane, who expresses her puzzlement to Jeannie Welsh: "I wonder what strange attraction lies in me for all of the blood of Sterling? For Father and Mother and *both* sons I have been more than any other woman—not married to them."

While Jane is ready enough to travel in England, as she does with the Sterlings, for seven years after her mother's death she cannot bring herself to revisit Scotland. As a young girl, she is often at loggerheads with her mother, and when, thirteen years after her marriage, she spends time with her at Ayr, she writes to Thomas: "My Mother continues the worst-natured of women; but I let her be doing, and keep 'never minding.' Once a day, generally after breakfast, she tries a fall with me. And in three words I give her to understand that I will not be snubbed." When the day of bereavement comes, however, in February 1842, Jane can find no consolation. After four months have passed, she laments to her Edinburgh friend Eliza Stodart, now Mrs. Aitken:

I feel as helpless and desolate as a little child turned adrift in the world! I who have so many friends! But what are friends? What is a husband even, compared with one's Mother?... I do not think I shall ever have the heart to set foot in Scotland any more. Alas! alas! what a changed Scotland for me — a place of graves!

Not till 1849, can Jane bring herself to revisit her native land, but once having done so, she returns seven more times.

Apart from her and her mother's old friend Mary Russell, whose husband was Mrs. Welsh's physician during her last illness, the people in Scotland whom Jane most loves are the aged Misses Donaldson — Catherine, Jane's godmother, and Jess, who watches over the now blind Catherine — and Betty Braid, a maid to the Welsh household from the time of Jane's childhood. A letter to Thomas conveys the fervour of the Donaldson sisters' welcome in 1857:

Miss Jess, tumbling into my arms on the threshold, 'faintly ejaculating' (as a novelist would say), 'Our Precious!' 'Our Beloved!' and beyond her my godmother, advancing with her hands stretched out, groping the air, and calling out in an excited way, "Is that my bairn?"

Explaining that she does not yet know the date of her return, Jane tells Thomas:

At the least allusion to my departure, my dear old friends fall to *fluttering* on their chairs like birds frightened in their nests; and utter such plaintive, almost sobbing protests, that I haven't the heart to pursue the subject.

Thomas also learns that Betty Braid, long married and now dedicated to the care of her adult invalid son, displays an equal devotion to the middle-aged lady whose childhood days she remembers so well:

how she does love me, that woman, and how good and pious-hearted she is! While I sat on her knee, with my arms about her neck, and she called me her 'dear bairn,' and looked at me as if she would have made me welcome to her 'skin,' I felt, as nearly as possible, perfectly happy – just fancy that!

Told that the strange object on Jane's head in a photograph is a bonnet and that it would be "a shame" for a woman of her age to go bareheaded, Betty responds, "Ay, ay, I dar' say, it's no very richt; but ye ken, bairn, ye wasna brocht up to dae just like ither folk."

On Jane's visits to Scotland, three sisters of her late father constitute a second tier of hostesses. These evangelical Edinburgh spinsters – Anne, Elizabeth and Grace – long to convert their infidel niece; if one of them writes to her, the letter is liable to be accompanied by tracts. In September 1849, following their first reunion, Jane reports to Thomas:

My heart was opened by their kindness to tell them that it was nothing but apprehension of their bothering me about my soul which had estranged me from them so entirely. Anne's reply, given with an arch look and tone, was very nice, 'Indeed, Jeannie, you need not have been afraid of our setting ourselves to reform you; it is plain enough that nothing short of God's own grace can do that.'

On subsequent visits, Jane recognizes their earnest care to make her as comfortable as their religious practice allows:

But on Sundays it is the rule of the house to have *no* dinner! only *tea* two hours earlier than usual; along with which *I*, as a stranger still in the bonds of the flesh, was permitted to have *one* egg. Then, to compensate to the soul for the exigence of the body, *five* sermons were read to me in the course of the day!

Jane explains to Mrs. Russell that she reacts against "the religiosity" as opposed to "the religion" of her aunts' home, and she tells Thomas that she speaks about their "fuss of religion" to the devout but acute Betty Braid, who replies, "My dear! they were idle – plenty to live on, and nocht to do for't; they might hae ta'en to waur; so we maun just thole them, and no compleen."

Dearer to Jane than her Edinburgh aunts is her Liverpool uncle, her mother's brother John. Her strong affection for him survives his "detestable politics," namely the Toryism which is strong enough to make him denounce the Italian patriot Mazzini as "a beggarly refugee turned out of his own country for misconduct." Jane declares that at this outburst, "the only alternative was to hold my peace altogether, or produce a collision that must have ended in my calling a coach." Politics is not the only subject on which they clash:

My uncle at the last minute came to me in the room where I had fortified myself (morally), and asked with a certain enthusiasm, 'Are you not going to church?' 'No, I have no thought of it.' 'And why not?' (crescendo.) 'Because your minister is a ranting jackass, that cracks the drum of one's ears.' 'Who told you that?' (stamping like my grandfather.) 'I do not choose to compromise anyone by naming my authority.' 'And what has that to do with going to a place of worship?' 'Nothing whatever; but it has a great deal to do with staying away from a place that is not of worship.'... The girls [her uncle's two daughters], who came in fear and trembling to pick up my fragments, were astonished to find that I had carried the day. We get on famously, my uncle and I, and by dint of defiance, tempered with kisses, I can manage him better than anyone else does.

Two-sided as it is, Jane's relationship with her Liverpool uncle seems easy and simple when set beside the story of her connection with her brother-in-law. The figure of Dr. John Carlyle is forever popping up in the correspondence as he takes on roles ranging from underminer of all household order to helper in time of need. In the summer of 1825, her first visit to the Carlyle family leaves Jane with "a real affection" for John, who goes on to study medicine at Edinburgh and Munich and then takes a post as travelling physician to Lady Clare. This restless young man finds great difficulty in settling down as a London doctor and in the spring of 1843 parks himself in Thomas's house. Here Jane has to endure the disruption of her daily routine:

now the question presses itself on me with some emphasis 'what will he do or attempt to do next? Above all how long will he stay *here?*—running up and down stairs—fretting me with distracted queries and remarks—making the house—what he has on so many former occasions made it—a scene of *worry* world without end!

When he sends a present of books to Jeannie Welsh, Jane warns her cousin not to take it as “a love-token” for “he does not *love* you the least bit—loves no woman—never did, and never will—not tho’ Trojan Helen should return from the shades to tempt him.” In 1852, however, John marries Phoebe Watts, a widow with three young sons. Jane visits the family and reports to Thomas: “The three boys are as clever, well-behaved boys as I ever saw, and seem excessively fond of ‘the Doctor,’” but their mother gives the impression of being “formal and cold” though she appears “very content with John” and “to suit him entirely.” Two years after the marriage, Phoebe dies.

For all her resentment of his behaviour in her house, Jane does not doubt John’s ability and moral integrity. That ability is both medical and literary. John undertakes the daunting task of translating Dante, and in 1848 she observes that “He is much *subsidied* and improved since he got his *Book* under weigh—especially in regard for *me* he is singularly improved.” As a doctor, he gives sensible advice on diet to Thomas and Jane. The latter’s attitude towards him fluctuates, and it is characteristic of her reservations that when he is to accompany her on her return from Scotland in 1864, she should write to Thomas, “I . . . must be thankful for his escort, the best that offers.”

Friends and relatives are not the only people Jane seeks out in Scotland. When she needs a new servant, she often thinks of her native country as the best place in which to look for one. In the long line of her domestics, Helen Mitchell from Kirkcaldy stands out as the foremost character: she looms almost as large in her employer’s letters as Lady Harriet and Geraldine Jewsbury. Her story begins as a comedy and ends as a tragedy.

Helen’s speech is broad Scots, and her turns of phrase intrigue Jane. If the weather is in an unsettled state, she terms it “dilatatory,” and when she is much impressed by something—such as a fine painting of the Virgin and Child—she exclaims, “Oh, how expensive!” On one occasion, she remarks that men nowadays remarry soon after losing their wives, resumes her dusting, and then observes, “But I *do* think Mr. Carlyle *will be* a very *desultory* widow! he is so *easily put about*—and seems to take no pleasure *in new females!*” Jane decides this woman is “the strangest mixture of philosopher and perfect idiot that I have met with in my life.”

Helen takes up her position with the Carlyles in 1837, and next year Jane decides that she is “very kind.” By September 1839, however, she is confiding to Helen Welsh, “I only pray that she may not bethink her some fine day that her *‘resolution deserves a dram.’*” The fine day comes next summer, when Helen Mitchell is found lying “*dead drunk* on the kitchen floor, amid a chaos of upset chairs, broken crockery, and heaven knows what besides.” Desperate pleadings follow: “what would become of you I should

just like to know; fancy you ill and me not there to take proper care of you!" Jane rescinds the sentence of dismissal.

All goes well for the next six years. Then, in the summer of 1846, Helen's brother, who has all but ignored her while he has made his fortune as a manufacturer in Ireland, invites her to join him and keep his house. Jane feels she cannot properly voice her misgivings:

Helen cries about leaving me; but to be made a Lady of all on a sudden, does not fall in one's way every day!—For myself, I am far from feeling the confidence *she* does in this Brother's promises and prospects; still I can do no other under the circumstances than encourage her to try this opportunity of providing herself an independent home.

Though Helen can write for a time "about her 'servants,' and 'country house,' and 'housefuls of visitors,'" her happiness does not last, and the little shop she resorts to in her native town after her brother abandons her does not succeed. Jane re-engages her, but only a few weeks pass before the Carlyles return from a visit to encounter, when their door is eventually opened, "Helen—her mouth all over blood, her brow and cheeks white with chalk from the kitchen floor—like an excessively *ill got up* stage ghost!" She has held "*drinking parties*" in her employers' absence, manages to obtain more liquor that afternoon, and faces her final dismissal next morning. Jane deposits the woman at the house of a friend in Camden Town. When this friend calls next year, after Helen has served three months for attempted suicide, to obtain a reference for her, Jane recommends "the Chelsea Workhouse, where they would take care to keep drink from her, and *force* her to work."

Almost as memorable a servant as Helen Mitchell is Charlotte Southam, who comes to the Carlyle household in mid-1858 at the age of fifteen. From the beginning, a strong affection springs up between this cheerful girl, so eager to please, and her childless employer. In August, when Charlotte has only been engaged for a few months, Jane goes on a visit to the Ashburtons while Thomas is in Scotland. She leaves 5, Cheyne Row in the care of Charlotte, whose mother comes to sleep in the house each night. Jane writes to her young servant, "Oh, little woman! little woman! I wonder how you get on there, all by yourself, in that 'highly *genteel* seven-roomed House' (as the retired Cheesemonger would describe it) ... I can't help making myself anxious about you." On receiving a reply, she responds:

Good little woman! It was a nice thought in you to write to me, and nicely carried into effect! There was both *consideration* and

energy in the small action, and I am glad to see these qualities in my little woman, as they will be very useful to her in Life, if she give them fair play!

Late in September, Jane returns from a visit to Scotland and reports, "My house was all right; indeed, I never found it as thoroughly cleaned, or the general aspect of things as satisfactory. She is a perfect jewel, that young girl." To Mrs. Russell, she exults that Charlotte is "Far more like an adopted child than a London maid-of-all-work."

In time, Jane's enthusiasm evaporates, and praise gives way to complaints that Charlotte is unmethodical and untidy—complaints that lead to her dismissal. The servants that succeed her all prove less than satisfactory—even "big Charlotte," who serves efficiently but without affection. With "big Charlotte" and her teenage assistant, Sarah, Jane feels she has "taken in *Lodgers* for down-stairs." "With *one* servant," she recalls, "especially with *one Charlotte*, we were *one* family in the House." She refers to "the ever-recurring 'we,' which in little Charlotte's mouth meant Master and Mistress and self; but in the mouth of the new tall Charlotte means,—most decidedly 'I and Sarah.'" In November 1860, Jane re-engages the young Charlotte and finds that she and Sarah, who, she discovers, detested "big Charlotte," make friends in half an hour. To her Liverpool cousin Margaret Welsh, she writes:

if the work of the house does not get done with as much order and method as under the tall Charlotte, it is done with more thoroughness, and infinitely more heartiness and pleasantness; and the 'bread-puddings' are first rate. Sarah's tidiness and method are just what were wanted to correct little Charlotte's born tendency to muddle; while little Charlotte's willingness and affectionateness warm up Sarah's drier, more selfish nature.

Sadly, in the spring of 1861, Jane and the young Charlotte quarrel. It appears that because some friends of the latter persuade her that she should seek advancement, she ceases to be the happy, willing servant she has been. Jane, perhaps confusing getting on in society, "the aim of so much female aspiration and effort," with progressing in one's line of work and making provision for the future, decides that the Devil has got into her favourite and resolves on irrevocable dismissal. When asked for a reference, she testifies that Charlotte is honest, sober and industrious but will say no more in her favour.

The affection between mistress and maid, however, is not so easily dissolved. More than a year later, Jane receives a present of violets from Charlotte, now third housemaid to the Marquis of Camden, and opens her



heart in a letter of thanks: "Oh child! child! you have no idea of the disappointment, the heart-sorrow you caused me." The two remain in touch, and in December 1865 Jane writes to her former maid:

I brought with me from Dumfriesshire, a capital housemaid – whose mother and grandfather were servants to my mother and grandfather.... But with all her cleverness, and nice looks, I have none of the *love* for Jessy I had for *you*! No servant has ever been for me the sort of *adopted* child that *you* were!

Soon after Jane's death, Charlotte marries a carpenter named Mills. She cherishes her mementoes of Jane and remains in friendly contact with Thomas.

Jane is indebted to Mrs. Southam, Charlotte's mother, for the exposure of her very worst servant, an apparently devoted cook named Mary, who has stolen objects from the house and even given birth to an illegitimate child in the Carlyles' kitchen.

There has been some discussion of the difficulties Jane encounters with her servants. Bad luck seems to be as responsible as bad judgment. She may also be a difficult employer as she is something of a perfectionist and eschews "the 'no-interference' principle" of leaving servants to do their work on their own. Her domestic Anne "wondered where there was another lady that could stuff chair-cushions, and do anything that was needed, and be a lady too!"

In 1865, Jane engages her last new servant, Jessie Hiddleston. Their relationship follows a familiar pattern. In July, the newcomer is "So quick, so willing, so intelligent; never needs to be told a thing twice; and so warmly human!" By October, she is a "*vixen*" and not very truthful. January finds her "only amenable to good sharp snubbing," and "she shall have it!"

At the opposite extreme to the shock and grief that follow disillusion about a servant, is the astonishment Jane experiences in August 1862. While she is staying with Mrs. Russell in Scotland, Thomas sends her news about a former maid. Her reply explains her reaction:

Nothing in this Bessy Barnet romance surprises me so much as the cool manner in which you seem to have taken the fact of her being alive! I at this distance *screamed* to hear of her being *alive*! And *you*, having a Bessy announced to you, calmly ask was it Bessy Barnet! after she had been dead and buried (according to Tom Holcroft) for a quarter of a century!

Bessy Barnet was the highly valued first servant of the Carlyles in London.

Several months after receiving Thomas's letter, Jane describes to Mrs. Russell how the maid Mary brings her a message that "Mrs. Blackett wished to know if she could see me for a few minutes?" But she quickly sees that the woman is not Mrs. Blackett:

when she turned round, she showed me a pale beautiful face, that was perfectly strange to me! But I was no stranger to her seemingly, for she glided swiftly up to me like a dream, and took my head softly between her hands and kissed my brow again and again, saying in a low dreamlike voice, 'Oh, you dear! you dear! you dear! Don't you know me?' I looked into her eyes in supreme bewilderment. At last light dawned on me, and I said one word – 'Bessy?' 'Yes, it is Bessy!' And then the kissing wasn't all on one side, you may fancy.

Bessy's husband, the physician Dr. Blakiston, is brought in from the coach outside to talk to Thomas. Bessy was formerly a servant to the Doctor and his first wife, and after the latter's death has married the widower to the displeasure of his relatives: her husband is the son of a baronet.

In a week or two, Bessy returns, having been haunted by the ghastly appearance of Jane, who, she confides, "looked just as Mrs. B[lakiston] had looked when she was dying of cancer!!" She persuades Jane to come and stay at their home in St. Leonard's on the south coast, a home Jane is to visit several times. She reports to Mrs. Russell:

the Blakistons' house is situated within a stonecast of the sea, and is a fine airy, lofty house, handsomely but plainly furnished; and Bessy looked very natural, gliding about as Mistress of it! Dr. Blakiston is a clever, energetic, kindhearted man, – very vain, rather egotistic, and as excitable and impatient as my Grandfather Walter! But Bessy understands him entirely.... They live the quietest life, except for his Practice. She will visit nowhere; 'does not choose to be patronised.'

Bessy, Jane adds, "was never so pleased as when we talked of the things that happened when she was my servant. Dr. Blakiston, too, talked of all that so frankly that there was no awkwardness in my changed position towards her."

Bessy Barnet is someone Jane never seems to misjudge, although her early impressions of people often prove wrong. She discovers that her paternal Uncle Robert, who in 1820 seems to come nearer than anyone else to taking her late father's place, loses all interest in her; that the poverty-stricken boy genius she thinks she has found and encouraged at Haddington turns

out to be dirty, greedy, untruthful and ungrateful; that the “noble lady” Mrs. Montague, Thomas’s admirer who sends her wise advice, is acting a part; and that her cousin Jeannie Welsh, now Mrs. Chrystal, to whom she has entrusted her private thoughts and feelings, has become “an affected, bedizened, caricature of a *fine-lady*.”

In one instance, it is the initial judgment of a character that is unfair. On hearing that Louisa Mackenzie has agreed to become Lord Ashburton’s second wife, Jane comments that this woman has been in quest of an illustrious marriage for a decade. The marriage takes place, and she finds in the second Lady Ashburton “kindness’s self” and a confidante as trustworthy as the younger Jeannie Welsh and Mary Russell.

To fill out the survey of Jane’s self-portrait, it is necessary to turn to other aspects of her character and experience on view in her letters. Most prominent is her appalling ill health. For most of her life, Jane suffers from chronic headaches, influenza-like infections, and extreme insomnia. The long walks, the wines and spirits, the morphine, the Scotch porridge, and the cold showers to which she resorts do not cure her sleeplessness, which is aggravated whenever she indulges in the excitement of the animated conversation that is London’s main attraction for her. Describing a successful dinner party, she writes:

the whole thing went off like a sort of firework—crackers of wit exploding in every direction—[Erasmus] Darwin spoke only in epigrams—Carlyle in flights of genius—Milnes in poetical paradoxes—Helps in witticisms, rather small, but perfectly well turned—and John Carlyle did his best to resemble *Solomon*. As for myself ... every opening of my lips was sensibly felt—and Miss Jessie [a Scottish friend] must have gone away with the feeling that she had seen for the first time in her life a woman of superhuman intelligence! Pity that one can only be superhumanly intelligent in *dadding* one’s nerves *a-abreed!*—I went to bed feeling a decided tendency to fly—and lay *the whole night thro’* without *once* closing my eyes.

Added to Jane’s continuous afflictions are periodic attacks of toothache, neuralgia, rheumatism and, in later life, several agonizing injuries. Her sufferings may equal Coleridge’s. However, she seems to realize, as some of her doctors certainly do, that there is a crucial psychological element in her condition. Dr. Blakiston, after assiduous attention to her in his south coast home, concludes he can “do nothing against hysterical mania!”

Late in 1849, Jane finds some alleviation of her pains in the acquisition of a small mongrel named Nero. She is able to assure John Forster that,

Mr. C. has accepted it with an amiability. To be sure, when he comes down gloomy in the morning, or comes in wearied from his walk, the infatuated little beast dances round him on its hind legs as I ought to do and can't; and he feels flattered and surprised by such unwonted capers to his honour and glory.

Nero rapidly becomes, she tells Jeannie Welsh, "the chief comfort of my life," and in a spirit with which any lover of that species will sympathize, she confesses to her sister-in-law Jane Aitken, "I have a little dog that I make more fuss about than beseems a sensible woman." For the next decade, the adventures of Nero, at home and abroad, are threaded through the letters: he narrowly escapes being kidnapped for ransom, is smuggled onto a train in a basket, jealously flies at a cat when Jane strokes it—then flees the house, conceives a passion for Mrs. Todhunter's spaniel at Willesden, and goes bathing with Thomas on the Scottish coast. Tragically, in October 1859, Nero is run over by a butcher's cart, and after a few weeks of futile struggle to recover is mercifully euthanized. The whole household is stricken, Jane most of all, but she writes to Mrs. Russell, "Mr. C. couldn't have reproached me, for he himself was in tears at the poor little thing's end! and his own heart was (as he phrased it) 'unexpectedly and distractedly torn to pieces with it!'"

For other animals, too, Jane displays much feeling. When Thomas can no longer ride his beloved horse Fritz, for which he paid fifty pounds, the couple sell him for nine pounds to an apothecary who can and will ride him and not try to whip him into drawing a vehicle, which he hates. Sending a pheasant to her young friend Miss Barnes, Jane accompanies it with a letter describing her reaction to the "massacre of feathered innocents":

from seven hundred to a thousand pheasants shot in one day!  
The firing made me perfectly sick. Think of the bodily and mental state of the surviving birds when the day's sport was ended!  
Decidedly, men can be very great brutes when they like!

Jane is fond of alluding, with a mixture of affection and humour, to Nero's possessiveness. From her Scottish friend Mrs. Pringle's opulent home, she writes to Charlotte Southam, "It is a beautiful place this, and the kindest Hostess that ever was seen—and there are three charming little boys of whom Nero would be dreadfully jealous if he saw how much I make of them." Though there are some other references in the letters to likeable children, Jane is not always so well disposed to the young of the human species. In her courtship days, she asks Thomas to kiss Edward Irving's baby for her, commenting, "I would not do it myself for five guineas.

Young children are such nasty little beasts!" Years afterwards, as a guest at a house party at Addiscombe, she informs Thomas that the Brookfields' baby was "a 'bit of fascination' seemingly for everyone but me."

One baby that does touch Jane is first encountered by Thomas in the arms of a sad-looking but dignified woman sitting in the street. The Carlyles listen to her story and give her some relief, only to discover that she is a fraud who carries "a borrowed baby!"

It is not at all unusual for Jane to assist the poor and the troubled. From her early years, she is of a compassionate disposition and follows her mother's example of trying to ease the way of the unfortunate. At Craigenputtock, where she is regarded as "a skilful Doctor," she rises from her bed at night to answer a call from one John Carr. In 1843, when others withdraw from assisting the destitute Mrs. Mudie because "she *may* have been tempted to take more drink than was lady-like," she obtains, with some help from Geraldine Jewsbury, domestic employment for the widow's two grown daughters. Though one proves prone to tantrums and is dismissed, the other becomes a good servant.

Something far worse than a tantrum confronts Jane in the case of her German friend Richard Plattnaeur. In 1844, this man lapses into madness, and his violent behaviour causes him to be committed to Wandsworth Lunatic Asylum. Here Jane visits him and his physician; she reports that she found "my poor friend had fallen into excellent hands." When he is ready to be discharged provided a friend can be found to escort him, she and Thomas readily accommodate him in their home, though Mrs. Buller thinks this puts her life in danger: Jane protests, "no madman will ever hurt a hair of *my* head. I have too much *affinity* with them."

The stimulus Jane finds in London company never makes her forget her old associates. All her life, she sends annual gifts to Mary Mills and Margaret Hiddlestone, her mother's servants, and tries to make sure they have some comforts. Her own domestics have a demanding but a caring mistress. In 1861, the cook Matilda, who "is such a good creature, and hasn't a relation in the world to depend upon," has to go into St. George's hospital with a strangled hernia. In spite of the extra work she has in caring for Thomas, Jane goes two miles to visit Matilda nearly every day.

Jane's compassion, however, can have disconcerting limitations. In 1865, when Governor Eyre puts down a rebellion in Jamaica with an orgy of executions, floggings, and house burnings, a fierce controversy over his actions erupts in Britain. At a party, a man who argues that women are "naturally cruel" and may well support Eyre, but that no man could draw from Jane the ugly reply, "I hope Mr. Carlyle does. I haven't had an opportunity of asking him; but I should be surprised and grieved if I found him sentimentalising over a pack of black brutes!"

Such an ill-considered outburst is not typical of Jane, but sharp comments and bitter judgments are. She describes Mrs. Christie, a fellow guest at a dinner, as “some dozen years younger than I, – and a hundred years stupider.” When her uncle Robert Welsh’s son John imposes himself on the Carlyle household, she writes of him to Jeannie Welsh:

He is a long sprawling ill-put together youth – with a low brow, a long nose and hanging jaw [.] a sort of cross betwixt a man and a greyhound! – He never *sits* – and his boots always creak as if they had a Devil. He is argumentative and self-complacent beyond anything that one can conceive out of Edin.

Sir James Graham, a Home Secretary who orders Mazzini’s letters to be opened, Jane describes as “a *dirty* animal” who “does things which a street sweeper would not stoop to!” Among her tart observations is the statement that “People who are so dreadfully ‘devoted’ to their wives are so apt, from mere habit, to get devoted to other people’s wives as well.”

Such passages help to explain a view of the celebrated Mrs. Carlyle that she herself finds hard to understand:

What on earth puts it in people’s heads to call *me* formidable? There is not a creature alive that is more unwilling to hurt the feelings of others, and I grow more *compatible* every year that I live. I can’t count the people who have said to me first and last, ‘I was so afraid of you! I had been told you were so sarcastic!’

In one condemnation, as Mitford’s and Byron’s letters bear witness, Jane is fully justified. At a dinner at Dickens’s, she is set on by Samuel Rogers, who, she asserts, “ought to have been buried long ago, so old and ill-natured he is grown.” The aged poet cross-questions her about her husband’s infatuation with Lady Ashburton and the report that “he spends all his evenings with her,” but she succeeds in disappointing him by praising the Lady’s kindness to herself and the observation that on this evening Thomas is here: “‘Yes,’ he said in a tone of vexation, ‘I *see* he is here *this* evening – and *hear* him too – for he has done nothing but talk across the room since he came in.’”

In the age of Tennyson and Dickens, Rogers’s poetic lustre has faded, and Jane does not discuss literature with him. She has remained, however, an avid consumer of books in at least three languages. In her early years, she idealizes the Rousseau of *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and the Madame de Staël of *Corinne*. She is devoted to the work of Schiller, and on Byron’s death in 1824 she feels that there is an “awful and dreary blank in the creation.” A

little later, she starts to enthuse over the novels of George Sand. Living on into the great age of Victorian literature, she early recognizes Tennyson's genius, but has reservations about Dickens, classifying him as "the cleverest *popular* writer we have just now." She reads Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* during the course of its publication in monthly numbers judging that it "beats Dickens out of the world." She is not impressed by Charlotte Brontë but appreciates George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, and finds all Trollope's novels charming. When she is kept furiously busy by a house renovation, she can write, "I shall get my hands kept clean and put into mitts for a time so soon as I have patched together a carpet for the new bedroom—and will lie on the sofa by heaven for two weeks and read French novels!"

Jane lacks any interest in the great scientific advances of her time, has a limited fondness for nature, and is little concerned with politics, though she shares Thomas's opposition to the extension of the franchise in 1832 and sympathises with her friend Mazzini's campaign for a free, united Italy. While she appreciates some of the inventions of her century—she compares the railway to a flying carpet and sees photography, which overcomes time and distance, as an even greater blessing than chloroform—her serious interests are her household, literature, and people. With her reservations about the idle rich who are conditioned by the rarefied society in which they live, she is drawn to those engaged in the workaday world. On a visit to Geraldine Jewsbury in Manchester in 1846, she writes to Thomas of how much she is learning:

Geraldine no sooner perceived that I took interest in the practical activity of this place than she applied herself to getting me admission into all sorts of Factories; and day after day has passed for me in going up and down in 'hoists' and thro' forests of machinery for every conceivable purpose. I have seen more of the condition of my fellow-creatures in these two weeks than in any dozen years of my previous existence.

The people here, she finds, are superior to London people in that they do not reply to a question with "God knows!" but give a straightforward answer. Talking to the inventor Whitworth, she says, "one feels to be talking with a *real live man*, to my taste worth any number of the Wits 'that go about.'"

In 1852, Jane writes to Thomas that the publisher Chapman "made me again the offer of 'very advantageous terms' for a novel of my own." Why, with her literary talent, steady interest in human character, capacity for empathy, and appetite for spearing people's frailties, does Jane not become the novelist she should have been? Dickens thinks she would sur-

pass all the women then writing. Thomas remarks to his brother Alick that she needs an occupation since her necessary domestic work occupies but a small part of her day. Her friend Geraldine urges her to write, but she protests that one author in the house is sufficient. Ill health must play some part, and it is probably unfortunate that her ambition in youth is focused on scholarship rather than fiction. Later, as she watches closely over renovations, she feels, as she informs John Carlyle, that she has found an alternative vocation: "in superintending all these men I begin to find myself 'in the career open to my particular talents'" and she boasts to Thomas, "I have prevented so many mistakes being made, and afforded so many capital suggestions, that I begin to be rather proud of myself, and to suspect I must have been a builder in some previous state of existence."

When renovations in progress prevent the house being securely locked, Jane decides to sleep with loaded pistols beside her. A painter says to her maid, "I shouldn't like to be a thief within twenty feet of your mistress, with one of these pistols in her hand. I shouldn't give much for my life; she has such a devil of a straight eye!" Jane comments, "The workmen have all had to suffer a good deal from my 'eye,' which has often proved their foot rules and leads in error."

In spite of her reservations, Jane does seem to have found a further vocation, or perhaps an avocation, as a much appreciated if sometimes feared wit and raconteuse. On a trip to Liverpool in 1841, she finds herself denied the rest she needs because she is "forcibly made a Lion of!!" After a dinner at Charles Buller's in 1843, his mother, she complains, "insisted on my telling *three* long stories which I had told to her at Troston." During her last visit to Scotland, a housemaid tells her, "when Mr. Morison (the minister of Durrisddeer) 'cam' to his dinner yesterday, the first word oot o' his heed, on the very door-steps, was: 'Is Mrs. Carlyle still here?'" The quality of her mind and society is reflected in one of her memorable anecdotes. Tennyson, up from the country, happens to call when Thomas is out:

Alfred is dreadfully embarrassed with women alone.... The only chance of my getting any right good of him was to make him forget my womanness — so I did just as Carlyle would have done, had he been there; got out *pipes* and *tobacco* — and *brandy* and *water* — with a deluge of *tea* over and above. — The effect of these accessories was miraculous — he *professed* to be *ashamed* of polluting my room, 'felt,' he said 'as if he were stealing cups and sacred vessels in the Temple' — but he smoked on all the same — for *three* mortal hours! — talking like an angel — only exactly as if he were talking with a clever *man* — which — being a thing I am not used to — men always *adapting* their conversation to what



they *take to be* a woman's taste—strained me to a terrible pitch of intellectuality.

One evening eight months later, a cab arrives at the house. Who, Jane asks herself, is it?

Mr. Strachey? No. Alfred Tennyson alone! Actually, by a superhuman effort of volition he had put himself into a cab, nay, brought himself away from a dinner party, and was there to smoke and talk with me!—by myself—me!

The expectation which Thomas Carlyle held up before young Jane Carlyle of “a niche in the Temple of Fame” and his assurance that her mind would shine before the world remain at her death a hope and a promise unfulfilled. Instead, the literary fame is all his, while she has become something of a social celebrity. However, unlike most celebrities, she has unawares left the materials for a lasting record in which her voice, her personality and her judgments will be preserved. A bereaved and remorseful Thomas gathers the first harvest of these materials, which appears in print after he, too, dies, as *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*.

## NOT AN ELOPEMENT—JUST A PRIVATE MARRIAGE

**ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING  
(1806-1861)**



**L**ike the young Jane Welsh, the young Elizabeth Barrett is a woman of scholarly disposition who adores her father and is devoted to the study of a difficult language. She is also a poet with a steadily increasing reputation, and after she becomes an invalid she expects to spend the rest of her life with her family and has no thought of marriage.

When Jane Welsh receives a proposal from Thomas Carlyle, her difficulty in saying Yes is due to his poverty and lower social standing. When Elizabeth Barrett and her fellow poet Robert Browning, who have both planned to remain single, are overtaken by a mutual passion, Elizabeth for a time holds back, partly for fear of stifling Robert's genius by burdening him with a woman of fragile health six years his senior, and partly from her terror of defying her beloved father's extreme antipathy to the marriage of any of his nine surviving children: she knows that he will disown her.

Why Edward Barrett Moulton-Barrett (usually referred to as Mr. Barrett) tries to prevent his daughters and sons from marrying has been much discussed. Although he strictly governs their lives, he is not the monstrous tyrant of later legend. He is a loving father who plays cricket with his boys, is proud of his eldest daughter's poems, and sends three sons to Universities. The Reform Bill of 1832 wins his favour, and he discusses his liberal political views with his family. He is a devout Low Church Protestant but supports Catholic Emancipation. When his admired Edward Irving's invocation of the Holy Spirit draws from the mouths of some worshippers terrifying noises that send congregants rushing for the exit, he has the good sense to jump on a bench and warn them that their panic could

cause them to be crushed. In 1832, a decline in his fortunes compels him to sell his Herefordshire home, and his departure is a cause of great sorrow to the local cottagers. Why should such a man, who has himself married and fathered twelve children, so loathe the idea of the latter having their own families?

Before and after her marriage, Elizabeth refers to a certain “peculiar-ity” in her father. In a letter to Robert (all her letters to him precede their union), she asks him “to comprehend how there may be an eccentricity and obliquity in certain relations and on certain subjects, while the general character stands up worthily of esteem and regard—even of yours.” Their cousin John Kenyon, a man of Mr. Barrett’s own generation, asserts, she says, “that it is monomania—neither more nor less.” Her father insists that “the law and the gospel” inculcate “passive filial obedience,” and she tells how,

Only the other day, there was a setting forth of the whole doctrine, I hear, down stairs—‘passive obedience, and particularly in respect to marriage.’ One after the other, my brothers all walked out of the room.

In a later letter, she refers to the position of her sister Henrietta, the willing object of their cousin Surtees Cook’s courtship:

Yesterday Henrietta told me that Lady Carmichael, a cousin of ours, met her at the Royal Academy and took her aside to ‘speak seriously to her’ ... to observe that she looked thin and *worried*, and to urge her to act for herself..to say too, that Mrs. Bayford, an old hereditary friend of ours, respected by us all for her serene, clear-headed views of most things,—and ‘of the strictest sect,’ too, for all domestic duties,—‘did not like, as a mother, to give direct advice, but was of opinion that the case admitted certainly and plainly of the daughter’s acting for herself.’

Mr. Edward Moulton-Barrett, the great-grandson of Elizabeth’s brother Alfred, concludes that, in addition to his shrinking from any diminution of his family circle, “in his religious belief the doctrine of original sin had become equivalent to procreation.” There is evidence to support this view. Shortly before they marry, Elizabeth writes to Robert, “Once I heard of his saying of me that I was ‘the purest woman he ever knew,’ and she adds, “I understood perfectly what he meant by *that*—viz.—that I had not troubled him with the iniquity of love affairs, or any impropriety of seeming to think about being married.” After he has discovered his mistake, he tells

the pleading John Kenyon, "I have no objection to the young man, but my daughter should have been thinking of another world."

The course of Elizabeth's extraordinary life can be followed in her voluminous correspondence, which is as remarkable for the expression of emotions and convictions as for the evocation of scenes and portrayal of characters. Elizabeth Barrett Barrett, her parents' first child, is born in 1806 and nicknamed "Ba," short for "Baby," but pronounced to rhyme with "Papa." For the rest of her life, this remains her name in the family and with close friends, and it forms the signature of many of her letters. The Barretts' second child, Edward, is born in 1807 and is known as "Bro." In due course, his father engages a tutor to start him on the study of Latin and Greek, and Elizabeth decides to learn with him. When he goes away to school at Charterhouse, she continues her studies alone. She remains devoted to Bro, the only member of the household who shares her classical preoccupation, and apparently loves him at least as passionately as she loves her father.

Elizabeth is also a precocious poet, and, to celebrate her fourteenth birthday, her father proudly has fifty copies printed of her epic in heroic couplets, *The Battle of Marathon*. Six years later, this is followed by the publication of another long poem, *An Essay on Mind*, which draws the attention of two Greek scholars, the famous Uvedale (later Sir Uvedale) Price and the blind Hugh Stuart Boyd. With both of them, she enters into correspondence.

The first serious sign that Elizabeth suffers from fragile health comes in 1821, when she is the only one of the three Barrett sisters who fails to recover from a painful and rather mysterious indisposition. The shock of her mother's premature death in the succeeding year may have aggravated her condition. Henceforward, she is always liable to lapse into an invalid state and is especially vulnerable to winter cold and wet. It is possible that she suffers from tuberculosis, and there may well be a psychological dimension to her ill health. Her fragility, however, does not prevent her from making frequent neighbourhood excursions, and, on one of these, in March 1828, she overcomes her shyness sufficiently to take advantage of a lucky opportunity to meet the blind Mr. Boyd. He is a married man twenty-five years her senior, and he has a daughter who becomes a friend of her sister Arabella, whose name is usually shortened to Arabel. The acquaintance between the young woman and the older man develops into an ardent friendship as they read and discuss the Greek classics and the poetry of the Greek Church Fathers, so much so that for some years her meetings and correspondence with Mr. Boyd constitute one pole of her existence, while her happy home life with her father and siblings constitutes the other.

Mr. Barrett is a businessman whose fortune centres on the family's estate in Jamaica. In 1832, financial stress compels him to sell his palatial house, Hope End, and in August of that year he moves the family to Sidmouth on the south coast of Devonshire. Here Elizabeth delights in the "thatched cottages with verandas and shrubberies, and sounds from the harp or piano coming through the windows." She discovers that,

When you stand upon any of the hills which stand round Sidmouth, the whole valley seems to be thickly wooded down to the very verge of the sea, and these pretty villas to be springing from the ground almost as thickly and quite as naturally as the trees themselves.

Although she takes pleasure in the quiet charm of the countryside as well as the contrasting "grandeur" which "is concentrated upon the ocean," Elizabeth finds little congenial, intellectual company at Sidmouth. The only exception is that of the Congregationalist clergyman George Barrett Hunter, whose preaching appeals to both her and her father and who enriches his piety with literary interests. After three years on the coast, Mr. Barrett moves his family again, this time to London, where their cousin John Kenyon, a kind and wealthy man, who moves in the literary world, introduces the thirty-year-old Elizabeth, despite her nervousness, to the fifty-one-year-old authoress Mary Russell Mitford, who becomes a much loved friend.

In May 1838, the Barretts at last move into the large London house which is to be their permanent home and is consequently to become famous in literature as 50, Wimpole Street. In the same year, Elizabeth brings out *The Seraphim, and Other Poems*, the first volume which her father allows her to have published under her own name. It is widely reviewed and establishes her reputation as an important poet. Unfortunately, however, exchanging the mild climate of Sidmouth for the challenging weather of London, with its scorching summers and damp, freezing winters, has a corrosive effect on her lungs. When the spring and summer of 1838 bring no improvement, the eminent Dr. Chambers who attends her insists she needs a gentler winter than the capital's. After only three months in Wimpole Street, Elizabeth, accompanied by her siblings Bro and George, goes to sojourn in Torquay, which, like Sidmouth, is on the south coast of Devon. Also in attendance is her personal servant, Elizabeth Crow, whom she can engage because in 1830 she receives a legacy from her paternal grandmother, which allows her, unlike the rest of the Barrett children, to have the blessing of a private income. After the end of 1837, this income is

augmented by a further legacy, this time from her much cherished paternal uncle, Samuel.

On first arriving at Torquay, Elizabeth stays with her maternal aunt, Jane Hedley, and the latter's husband, Robert. Her health continues to be fragile enough for London winters to be a peril, and her father reluctantly gives in to her pleas to keep Bro with her. The unforeseeable result is that Bro is drowned and Elizabeth suffers the greatest sorrow of her life. Why Bro and his friends, who seem to have been sailing in perfectly safe conditions, should perish remains unknown, but it appears that the shock and the illusion of her own guilt (but for her pleading, Bro would not have stayed in Torquay) so prostrate Elizabeth that she nearly dies. As she slowly returns into life, a literary correspondence with the well-known poet Richard Hengist Horne and Miss Mitford's present of the six-month-old spaniel Flush help her recovery. By the end of August 1841, her physicians and her father decide she is just well enough to risk the journey back to London before the cold season. In the following March, she is able to write to Mr. Boyd, "Once I wished *not* to live, but the faculty of life seems to have sprung up in me again, from under the crushing foot of heavy grief."

For the next few years, Elizabeth has a reclusive existence in her upper floor room at 50 Wimpole Street, where she is attended by a new maid, Elizabeth Wilson. Throughout the winter, she remains in that room, guarding her lungs from the east wind. During the warm seasons, her brothers sometimes carry her up and down the stairs to join other members of the family in a sitting room, and when the temperature allows, her maid sometimes takes her outside in a wheelchair. In May 1843, she describes her own room in a letter to Mrs. Martin, who, along with her husband, has been a friend of the Barretts since their days at Hope End:

The bed, like a sofa and no bed; the large table placed out in the room, towards the wardrobe end of it; the sofa rolled where a sofa should be rolled — opposite the arm-chair: the drawers crowned with a coronal of shelves fashioned by Sette and Co. [*i.e.* her brothers] (of papered deal and crimson merino) to carry my books; the washing table opposite turned into a cabinet with another coronal of shelves; and Chaucer's and Homer's busts in guard over these two departments of English and Greek poetry.

Elizabeth continues her literary work, contributing verse to periodicals and annuals, writing a series of papers on the Greek Christian poets for the prestigious periodical the *Athenaeum*, and in 1844 publishing her *Poems* in two volumes. Each night her father visits her in her room and prays with her. As a now famous poet, she is much sought after, but she shuns

meeting with strangers. However, Anna Jameson, a refugee from a failed marriage who has found success writing on art, literature and her travels, by dint of persistence gains access to Elizabeth and becomes her friend. Another frequent caller is Mr. Kenyon, whom Elizabeth is soon to praise for his “tenderness and sensibility” while classifying him as “a Sybarite of letters” and a stranger to “mental labour” and “mental inspiration.” (He has published two books of verse and is to publish a third.)

In January 1845, Elizabeth is excited to receive a letter from a poet six years younger than herself, namely Robert Browning, who is a friend of Kenyon and whose genius she has long admired. She is quite unaware that this simple event will lead to the last fifteen years of her life being as different from what has gone before as a butterfly’s existence is from its cocoon’s.

As the two poets begin a regular correspondence, the brilliant composer of monologues explains the root of his admiration for the work of Elizabeth: “you *do* what I always wanted.... You speak out, *you*, – I only make men and women speak.” At first, they address each other as Mr. Browning and Miss Barrett and write of poetry, the poetic vocation, and their admiration for each other’s productions. After about two months, Elizabeth starts to disclose her discomfort with the restricted, sometimes grief-stricken life she has led even before the illness that now largely confines her to her room, and hints that she needs to escape from such narrow limits to fulfil her potential as a poet. Two months more pass before she tremblingly allows Browning to call on her. Their meeting is a success, and he becomes a regular visitor as well as correspondent; her father occasionally refers to him as “the poet.” In August, Elizabeth writes him a long letter that explains how Mr. Barrett controls his family and what her own place is in his domestic kingdom:

the word ‘literature’ has, with me, covered a good deal of liberty as you must see ... real liberty which is never enquired into – and it has happened throughout my life by an accident (as far as anything is an accident) that my own sense of right and happiness on any important point of overt action, has never run contrariwise to the way of obedience required of me.

Less happy is the position of her brothers,

constrained *bodily* into submission ... apparent submission at least..by that worst and most dishonouring of necessities, the necessity of *living*, everyone of them all, except myself, being dependent in money-matters on the inflexible will ... do you see?

She goes on to insist,

But what you do *not* see, what you *cannot* see, is the deep tender affection behind and below all those patriarchal ideas of governing grown up children 'in the way they *must* go!' and there never was (under the strata) a truer affection in a father's heart..no, nor a worthier heart in itself.... The evil is in the system – and he simply takes it to be his duty to rule, and to make happy according to his own views of the propriety of happiness.... But he loves us through and through it – and *I*, for one, love *him!*

The following September and October are marked by some friction between father and daughter. Dr. Chambers urges the necessity of a warm winter climate for Elizabeth and recommends that of Pisa. Mr. Kenyon counsels her to go there, and her brother George pleads on her behalf, but Mr. Barrett resists, and after a period of uncertainty she informs Robert there is no hope of his meeting her there: "What passed between George and Papa there is no need of telling: only the latter said that I 'might go if I pleased, but that going it would be under his heaviest displeasure.'" This she would endure but she cannot travel without siblings and she will not, she insists, "run the risk of exposing my sister and brother to that same displeasure." She laments that "The bitterest 'fact' of all is, that I had believed Papa to have loved me more than he obviously does."

Having fallen deeply in love, Elizabeth can hardly have presented a completely unchanged appearance to those about her. With some unconscious exaggeration, she thanks Robert for reviving her spirit, claiming, "I had done *living*, I thought, when you came and sought me out!" Alluding later to her drowned brother, she declares, "I, who had my warmest affections on the other side of the grave, feel that it is other wise with me now – quite otherwise."

In their letters, each expresses much anxiety about the other's health. Robert suffers from incapacitating headaches, and when he acknowledges his indebtedness to her comments on his manuscript poems, she becomes anxious that these are driving him back to work when he should be resting. They discuss books, Robert writes of his social life, and Elizabeth warns him that "from the moment of a suspicion entering *one* mind, we should be able to meet never again in this room" and "letters of yours, addressed to me here, would infallibly be stopped and destroyed." Her sister Henrietta is in a plight similar to her own. Henrietta's suitor, their military cousin Surtees Cook, is allowed to visit as a relative, but her father has no notion that he comes to woo.



Robert's weekly visits to Elizabeth have become an accepted feature of life at the house, but when these cease to satisfy the lovers, they must make their increased frequency inconspicuous. Robert receives letters warning that some friend or relative is about to visit and that he may be seen; readers have the pleasure of following the anxious manoeuvres of the two poets as they plot, like an illicit couple in a comedy, how to secure another meeting. Discussing, on 3 July 1846, the possible time of some relatives' arrival, Elizabeth calculates,

If at one ... Papa will be in the house and likely to stay in it all day after..which would be a complication of disadvantages for us, and if at three ... why even so, my aunt would 'admire' a little the reason of my not seeing her at once, and there would be questions and answers à faire frémir. So dearest dearest, I must try to live these two days more without seeing you.

At times she feels guilty for resenting visitors who keep them apart—even Mr. Kenyon, who peers at her through “his all-scrutinizing spectacles.”

By great good luck, the London winter of 1845-1846 is exceptionally mild, and in January, when Elizabeth surprises the family by walking down the stairs instead of being carried, she agrees, in spite of her fears of burdening Robert and blocking his genius from coming to full fruition, that should she still be as well in the summer she will marry him and they will go to Italy. As the year advances, her strength increases, and she is able to undertake excursions. In June she brings Robert dog-roses from Hampstead Heath, and in August Mr. Kenyon takes her and her sister Arabel to observe the arrival of the Birmingham train drawn by its giant locomotive: a “great roaring, grinding Thing..a great blind mole, it looked for blackness.”

As the return of the cold approaches, rising suspense pervades the letters. Preparations must be made for marriage and flight, and any fore-knowledge that could lay family or friends open to a charge of complicity must be avoided. Mr. Kenyon seems to suspect that there is more than friendship here, and Aunt Jane Hedley thinks her niece has some unrevealed plan, but contents herself with saying, “Only *don't be rash*—that is my only advice to you.” Any meeting between Elizabeth and her future parents-in-law is too dangerous, but Robert assures her he has been open with his family: “I spoke the simple truth about your heart—of your mind they knew something already—I explained your position with respect to your father.” Elizabeth later writes to her sisters, “His father considered him of age to judge, and never thought of interfering.”

Elizabeth must continue to dissuade Robert, who is no lover of subterfuge, from approaching Mr. Barrett. His coming to know of their engagement is her greatest fear: "Remember that I shall be *killed*—it will be so infinitely worse than you can have an idea." She has already disclosed what happened "years ago" when the far robuster Henrietta admitted merely to a romantic attachment:

how she was made to suffer. Oh, the dreadful scenes! and only because she had seemed to feel a little.... I hear how her knees were made to ring upon the floor, now! she was carried out of the room in strong hysterics, and I, who rose up to follow her, though I was quite well at that time and suffered only by sympathy, fell flat down upon my face in a fainting-fit.

As the time for the execution of the plan nears, it is threatened by Mr. Barrett's sudden decision to move the family temporarily to the country, where they will be far from the needed railway, while the Wimpole Street house is cleaned and painted. This leaves a narrow window for escape. A year earlier, Wilson, Elizabeth's maid, seemed disappointed when the plan for travelling to Pisa was abandoned; consolation is now at hand. On the eve of her wedding, Elizabeth reveals what she is about to do, and next day, 12 September 1846, Wilson accompanies her to St. Marylebone Church and serves as one of the two witnesses at the ceremony. Robert brings his cousin James Silverthorne to serve as the other. After the service, the groom lets the bride go with Wilson to the home of the approving Mr. Boyd, the only friend she has confided in, to recover her self-possession. From there, she is collected by her unknowing sisters and brought back to spend a final week at Wimpole Street, during which she and Robert have some fear that a notice of their marriage may appear in a newspaper.

Happily, the newlywed couple have not transgressed against any rule of Victorian propriety, but Mrs. Jameson has recently joked that an elopement—that is, a flight together preceding marriage—would be her best means of escape, and this draws from Elizabeth the comment, "But, dearest, nobody will use such a word surely to the *event* ... surely nobody will use such a word." To her sisters, she points out, "There was no elopement in the case, but simply a private marriage."

On the day after her wedding, Elizabeth writes to her husband:

Beseech for me the indulgence of your father and mother, and ask your sister to love me. I feel so as if I had slipped down over the wall into somebody's garden—I feel ashamed. To be grateful and affectionate to them all, while I live, is all that I can do.

She adds, "I did hate so, to have to take off the ring!"

Exactly a week after the wedding day, having deposited letters to her family in the mail, Elizabeth slips out of the house unseen with Wilson and with her spaniel, Flush. They meet Robert, who takes them by train to Southampton, where they board a vessel that sets sail that evening for Le Havre.

From this point on, husband and wife are never apart for long enough for them to write to each other, but a portrait of Robert and a chronicle of their marriage is present in the letters Elizabeth sends to friends and relatives. Her nervous exaltation and excitement at having escaped from her father's rule flashes out in what she writes to Arabel from Paris. In the diligence, that carries them from Le Havre to Rouen, she says,

we had the coupé to ourselves..we three..and it was as comfortable and easy as any carriage I have been in for years — now five horses, now seven ... all looking wild and loosely harnessed ... some of them white, some brown, some black, with the manes leaping as they galloped, and the white reins dripping down over their heads..such a fantastic scene it was in the moonlight! and I who was a little feverish with the fatigue and the violence done to myself, in the self control of the last few days, began to see it all as in a vision and to doubt whether I was in or out of the body.

When they arrive at Paris, they have the good fortune to encounter Mrs. Jameson:

She came with her hands stretched out and eyes opened wide as Flush's ... 'Can it be possible? Is it possible? You wild dear creatures! You dear abominable poets! Why what a *ménage* you will make!... But he is a wise man in choosing so and you are a wise woman, let the world say as it pleases!'

As Mrs. Jameson is going to Italy, she undertakes to accompany them and help Robert and Wilson care for Elizabeth. The party diverges from its planned route so that Mrs. Jameson can visit the cathedral at Chartres, which she needs to examine for her current project, the book *Sacred and Legendary Art*. By the time they reach Pisa, this lady observes that Elizabeth is no longer the ghostly figure she was at Paris. Writing in November to the Barrett family's friend Mrs. Martin, the latter is able to report:

As to our domestic affairs. it is not to *my* honour and glory that the 'bills' are made up every week and paid more regularly 'than

bard beseems,' while dear Mrs. Jameson laughs outright at our miraculous prudence and economy, and declares that it is past belief and precedent that we should not burn the candles at both ends.

Mrs. Jameson has hinted at Paris that a bit of prose might be useful in the two poets' lives, but her caution has proved unnecessary. Before leaving Pisa, that true friend promises to come to Elizabeth from anywhere in Italy should she fall ill.

As the Brownings travel, the new wife has her first sight of her husband in a social setting. When the party reaches Roanne, in central France, she writes of him to her sisters, "he encases us from morning till night—thinks of everybody's feelings ... is witty and wise..(and foolish too in the right place) charms cross old women who cry out in the diligence 'mais, madame, mes jambes!' talks Latin to the priests." She observes that "He has won Wilson's heart."

Robert, who was "in a fit of terror" about his wife's condition at Paris and very thankful for Mrs. Jameson's help, does not falter in his care of his fragile bride. At Orleans, where she receives her father's letter accusing her of selling her soul for genius and announcing that in his eyes she is dead, he assures her, "Our Father who is in Heaven will judge us more gently." She finds herself, she says, "carried up and down stairs against my will," and when they disembark at Genoa, and she is too tired to visit the cathedral, he refuses to go without her. Despite her fatigue, however, she has proved on the voyage to be a better sailor than her husband, her maid, or Mrs. Jameson.

Her father's hateful denunciation is what Elizabeth has expected and dreaded, while the kindly letters from her sisters are what she has foreseen and longed for. What both astonishes and dismays her is the angry rejection by her six brothers, who rashly and wrongly assume that Robert has married her for her meagre income and roundly condemn her for acting secretly. They cannot see the vulnerability that she explains to Arabel: "Oh, in any position except my own peculiar one, I would have asked.. of course..but in my state of nervous weakness, I had not fortitude for the dreadful scenes and the resolute courage—I could not have held out, I am certain." Henrietta, who relishes visits and parties and takes advantage of Mr. Barrett's absence to polka, and Arabel, who is to dedicate her mature years to such good works as the education of pauper children in her Ragged School, now engage in loving correspondence with Elizabeth. But of her six brothers, not one fails to break off contact: not shy, awkward "Stormie" (Charles), who "naturally takes the part of every party or person attacked by others"; not staid George, who practises as a barrister and

who begged her father to let her winter in Pisa; not Alfred, who is capable of angering his father, or Henry, who can risk paternal wrath by an unannounced absence from home; not "Sette" (Septimus), who just before his sister's departure recovers Flush from dog-snatchers holding him for ransom; not "Occy" (Octavius), who has himself artistic leanings and practises architectural drawing under Sir Charles Barry.

Outside the Barrett household, some people are kinder. She transcribes for her sisters Mr. Kenyon's defence of her conduct: "the very peculiar circumstances of your case have transmuted what might otherwise have been called 'Imprudence' into 'Prudence,' and apparent wilfulness into real necessity." To Elizabeth's relief, her intimate friend Mary Russell Mitford, a middle-aged spinster, also takes her side, as does her beloved "Trippy" (Mary Trepsack), a woman of mixed race who was formerly her paternal grandmother's companion and now "has the privilege of scolding everybody in the house when she is out of humour." In the case of the highly critical "Bummy" (her maternal aunt Arabella Sarah Graham-Clarke), it is Elizabeth's turn to make allowances because "she has lived too long in a different mould." Mr. and Mrs. Martin, however, approve of the marriage and are rewarded with a long letter about the courtship, flight, and arrival in Italy.

Even on the Continent, where the Brownings live during the fifteen years remaining to Elizabeth, the cold season can bring hardship, and she is sometimes confined within doors for weeks at a time. Their first winter, which they spend in Pisa, brings unexpectedly low temperatures—the city has its first snow in five years. Next spring, the Brownings, taking Wilson, move to Florence, where they soon take a commodious apartment in the stately Palazzo Guidi, an apartment which, during all their travels, Elizabeth thinks of as home. It is the Casa Guidi of her 1851 collection *Casa Guidi Windows*. The winters of 1851-52 and 1855-56 the family spends in Paris; for those of 1853-54, 1858-59 and 1860-61, they seek warmth further south in Rome. Much as Elizabeth loves Florence, to which they always return, she cannot endure its summer heat, so they take refuge in cooler places. Three times, they make uneasy visits to England, where they see Elizabeth's sisters and her now reconciled brothers, and Robert's sister and father.

The fifteen Continental years yield the richest part of the correspondence. During this period, the couple have a son called Wiedeman or more often Penini, Wilson has a remarkable life of her own, and the Brownings, like Byron before them, side with the Italians in their struggle for freedom from the mixture of direct and indirect bondage to Austria imposed on their constituent states after the defeat of the Emperor Napoleon. Elizabeth is passionate, too, about the potential of that Emperor's nephew,

Louis-Napoleon (later Napoleon III), ruler of France and supporter of Italy. Less happily, she is swept up in the craze for spiritualism, which sweeps across the United States and Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century. Amongst all their other concerns, husband and wife continue to be productive poets. “We neither of us,” Elizabeth informs Henry Chorley, “show our work to one another till it is finished.” While he composes his masterly collection *Men and Women*, she enjoys the triumph of *Aurora Leigh*.

For a long time after their arrival in Italy, Elizabeth finds she has to “drive Robert out for his hour’s solitary exercise,” so diligent is he in his care of her. From Florence, she writes to Miss Mitford, “I can’t make Robert go out a single evening, not even to a concert, nor to hear a play of Alfieri’s, yet we fill up our days with books and music (and a little writing has its share), and wonder at the clock for galloping.” When their well-travelled Italian manservant Alessandro lectures Wilson on the immorality of the British, he

bids her ‘not to take her ideas of English domestic life from the Signor and the Signora – who were quite exceptions – he never saw anything like *their* way of living together certainly, though he had been to Paris, and been in London, and been in Germany ... for a Signor to be always sitting with his wife in that way, was most extraordinary.’

When the Brownings reside in Paris, which has a cultural life Italy cannot match, Robert does go into company and visitors call on Elizabeth, as they do later in Rome. In Paris, Elizabeth finds kinds of pleasure that differ from the comfortable calm that makes her happy in Florence. Coming back to the French capital from Venice during Louis-Napoleon’s presidency, she reflects:

Well, now we are in Paris and have to forget the ‘*belle chiese* [beautiful churches];’ we have beautiful shops instead, false teeth grinning at the corners of the streets, and disreputable prints, and fascinating hats and caps, and brilliant restaurants, and *M. le Président* in a cocked hat and with a train of cavalry, passing like a rocket along the boulevards to an occasional yell from the Red.

The city of canals she has left enraptures her as it has so many:

Venice is quite exquisite; it wrapt me round with a spell at first sight, and I longed to live and die there – never to go away. The gondolas, and the glory they swim through, and the silence of the population, drifted over one’s head across the bridges, and the

fantastic architecture and the coffee-drinking and music in the Piazza San Marco.

Florence, in contrast, has its limitations:

I love my Florence. I love that 'hole of a place,' as Father Prout called it lately – with all its dust, its cobwebs, its spiders even, I love it, and with somewhat of the kind of blind, stupid, respectable, obstinate love which people feel when they talk of 'beloved native lands.' I feel this for Italy, by mistake for England.

(Father Prout is the pseudonym of the Irish journalist Francis Mahoney.)

The Brownings' experience of Rome is marred at the outset. In November 1853, they arrive in high spirits ready to explore the centre of the Classical world only to find themselves called to the deathbed of a little boy, the son of their friend the American sculptor William Wetmore Story. Elizabeth admits to Miss Mitford,

I am horribly weak about such things. I can't look on the earth-side of death; I flinch from corpses and graves ... all this has blackened Rome to me. I can't think about the Caesars in the old strain of thought; the antique words get muddled and blurred with warm dashes of modern everyday tears and fresh grave-clay. Rome is spoiled to me.

With his characteristic eagerness to ease others' suffering, Robert helps the bereaved parents with the preparation of the body and the arrangement of the funeral.

Five years later the Brownings return to Rome but experience periods of exceptional cold. Elizabeth mentions "Fountains frozen" and the north wind but happily reports to Ruskin, "I was able to go out on Christmas morning (a wonderful event for me) and hear the silver trumpets in St. Peter's.... I enjoyed it both aesthetically and devotionally, putting my own words to the music."

The third visit coincides with the people's successful uprising against Austrian domination, and the romance of the city's past is overshadowed by the consequences of Pope Pius IX's fear of loss of papal power. The Brownings are able to get a forbidden newspaper through the diplomat Odo Russell, the unofficial British representative at the Vatican. Elizabeth writes to the expatriate novelist Isa Blagden mentioning their Florentine servant Ferdinando:

not only we ourselves, but half a dozen Tuscan exiles here in Rome who are not allowed to read a freely breathed word, come to us for that paper, friends of Ferdinando's living in Rome. First he lent them the paper, then they got frightened for fear of being convicted through some spy of reading such a thing, and prayed to come to this house to read it.

Elizabeth treats her correspondents to images of Italy's landscapes as well as its cities. Miss Mitford learns of

the exquisite, almost visionary scenery of the Appenines, the wonderful variety of shape and colour, the sudden transitions and vital individuality of those mountains, the chestnut forests dropping by their own weight into the deep ravines, the rocks cloven and clawed by the living torrents, and the hills, hill above hill, piling up their grand existences as if they did it themselves, changing colour in the effort.

Wherever Robert and Elizabeth travel, Wilson and Flush go with them; later they delight to take Penini, too. There are so many descriptions of Flush's behaviour and misbehaviour that in time to come Virginia Woolf, in her book *Flush*, is able to extract his biography from his mistress's letters. At Wimpole Street, when he decides Robert comes courting too often, he bites him out of jealousy and briefly falls out of favour with Elizabeth. By the time they reach Pisa, however, she accuses her husband of spoiling her dog and reports, "Robert declares that the said Flush considers him, my husband, to be created for the special purpose of doing him service, and really it looks rather like it." When they move to Florence, the position is that "Robert never goes anywhere except to take a walk with Flush." On the couple's first wedding anniversary, their dog spoils the day by absconding, and after he returns next morning, Elizabeth recalls, "As it grew darker and darker the tears could scarcely be kept out of my eyes, for Flush has a new collar and I feared that he might be stolen by one of the forty thousand visitors, and so farewell to poor Flush." When the family has crossed the Appenines, she tells how,

Never was there so good a dog in a carriage before his time!... He has a supreme contempt for trees and hills or anything of that kind, and, in the intervals of natural scenery, he drew in his head from the window and didn't consider it worth looking at; but when the population thickened, and when a village or a town was to be passed through, then his eyes were starting out of his head with eagerness.



In 1849, after her son is born, she writes to Miss Mitford:

Flush's jealousy of the baby would amuse you. For a whole fortnight he fell into deep melancholy and was proof against all attentions lavished on him. Now he begins to be consoled a little and even condescends to patronise the cradle.

As might be expected, the child and the dog soon become good friends. Flush lives on till 1854, when one day in June a scream is heard from Penini, who has just discovered the animal's body. Elizabeth informs Arabel:

He died quietly ... there was no pain ... our grief for him is the less that his infirmities had become so great that he lost no joy in losing life ... In spite of all however, it has been quite a shock to me and a sadness. A dear dog he was.

While Wilson seems not to play a major part in the care of Flush, she faithfully attends on Elizabeth in Italy as in London. About four months after the flight to the Continent, she falls ill and is unable to function. Elizabeth soon takes a certain satisfaction in managing to cope:

I have acquired a heap of practical philosophy, and have learnt how it is possible (in certain conditions of the human frame) to comb out and twist up one's own hair, and lace one's very own stays, and cause hooks and eyes to meet behind one's very own back, besides making toast and water for Wilson – which last miracle, it is only just to say, was considerably assisted by Robert's counsels 'not quite to set fire to the bread' while one was toasting it.

Although the Brownings buy their three cooked dinners daily from a trattoria, there is still some shopping to be done, and before they leave Pisa, Elizabeth learns a useful lesson:

They have cheated us in weights and measures, besides the prices of every single thing.... It was that kind Mrs. Turner who set us right in these things, and took Wilson round with her to some shops and showed her how to do some small marketings.

In Florence, domestic life becomes more elegant, with "real cups instead of the famous mugs of Pisa" and "decanters and champagne glasses," and Wilson exclaims, "*it is something like!*" She quickly acquires some Italian

and takes to the city but recoils from the nude statues and paintings and finds it difficult to visit the Uffizi Gallery. Elizabeth writes to Henrietta:

Wilson has at last ... ventured into the gallery: but she only went to the door of the Tribune, being struck back by the indecency of the Venus. I laughed—laughed when she told me. She thinks she shall try again, and the troublesome modesty may subside—who knows?

Some months later, Wilson is not too bashful to accept a proposal from a respectable, handsome, educated soldier of the Grand Duke's Guard named Righi. The Brownings are somewhat uneasy, but Righi promises not to interfere with her exercise of her religion—"for his part, he believed that a christian was a christian"—and Elizabeth reports to Henrietta that "even Robert, who began by disliking the whole matter on account of the difference in religion and country, confesses that he appears to be very good and superior." In February 1850, however, Righi has broken off the match, and Henrietta is told that Wilson "is *over it* completely, which does the greatest credit to her good sense and rectitude of character."

This is not the end of Wilson's marital prospects. In the summer of 1853, the Brownings engage a new manservant, Ferdinando Romagnoli, who is a fine cook and who is soon to become a great friend of their small son. About two years later, Wilson announces her engagement to him. Asking Arabel to reassure Wilson's sister about her prospects, Elizabeth writes, "Happy I believe she will be. A better man, more upright and of a more tender nature, it would be difficult to find than Ferdinando." The great problem is the religious obstacle and especially the Church's usual insistence that the children of a mixed marriage be raised as Catholics. On 10 July 1855, Wilson and Ferdinando are married at the British Embassy in Florence by an English clergyman. Penini, who loves and is loved by them both, joins his parents as a witness, and Elizabeth reflects on how she is doing for Wilson what Wilson did for her.

Ferdinando is very anticlerical and, contrary to Church law, possesses an Italian Bible he will later be afraid to take to Rome; he wants to seal the marriage bond by becoming a Protestant. Elizabeth insists, "He may turn Protestant when he pleases afterwards, but it's our duty *first* to make his marriage legal in his own country." In June the household stops over in Paris on the way to London, and with great difficulty involving an extension of their stay in the French capital, they find a Roman Catholic priest who only demands that Wilson comply with her husband's wishes as regards the children.

During the three months the Brownings remain in England, Elizabeth suffers the shock of discovering that Wilson was pregnant before her marriage. After her first recoil, she rightly thinks of her servant's loyalty and devotion as well as the frailty of human nature, and she hires a temporary maid to serve while the baby is delivered. When the Brownings are back on the Continent, Wilson's failure to write to her husband as diligently as he does to her leads him to claim that a woman's feelings are not as deep as a man's.

Next summer Robert, Elizabeth and Penini again visit England, and Wilson, leaving her son, Orestes, with her sister, goes back to Italy with them. In Florence, with the Brownings' encouragement and financial support, Wilson and Ferdinando take a lease on a house in order to let rooms. Near the end of 1857, Wilson bears a second son, who is named Pylades. Early in 1859, the Brownings are wintering in Rome and have taken Ferdinando with them together with a cheerful, hardworking maid named Annunziata, who is a great friend of Penini. Elizabeth receives an alarming letter from Wilson, who wants Ferdinando back in Florence: she has been told that Annunziata has a bad reputation and is likely to seduce her husband. On being questioned, Annunziata blames the gossip of a Parisian cook with a prejudice against Italian women. Wilson is apparently satisfied, but when the Brownings return to Florence at the end of May, they find that, though no longer jealous, she is a prey to delusions. She has been studying the Book of Revelation and thinks that the world is about to end, that her sons are the product of the First Resurrection, and that there is going to be another virgin birth. While Elizabeth struggles to persuade her she is deceived, Ferdinando is gentle with her. After a few weeks, the attacks of mania stop recurring.

On 2 April 1850, when Penini is almost a year old, Elizabeth writes to Mrs. Jameson, "Dear kind Wilson is doatingly fond of the child." To Mrs. Martin she has already passed on Wilson's report that the boy is "universally admired in various tongues" and expressed her wonder at the health of her offspring: "My child you never would believe to be *my child*, from the evidence of his immense cheeks and chins—for pray don't suppose that he has only one chin ... 'a robust' child I may tell you that he is with a sufficient modesty." When he begins to talk, he distorts his Christian name, Wiedeman (the maiden name of Robert's mother) into "Penini," and this becomes the name by which he is usually known.

Penini grows up bilingual in English and Italian, being "equally ungrammatical everywhere." Elizabeth peppers her letters to her sisters with his childish pronunciations. In his desire for a "brozer," the four-year-old pleads, "Dear papa—I want a baby velly mush" and seeing grownups dancing, he describes the spectacle as "velly funny! just lite playing!" Not

content with his English and Italian, Elizabeth teaches him French and when he is eight starts him on German, while admitting that he knows no arithmetic and observing, "At present, music swallows up most of his time. Not that I grudge it—the faculty is too obviously there to be cultivated. You can't think how the child's face lights up while he plays." Robert, who instructs him every day at the piano, insists he read the notes and not rely only on his extraordinary musical memory.

As Penini approaches the age of eleven, his parents decide it is time to start him on arithmetic and Latin, so he and fifteen-year-old Edith Story, the sister of the boy who died in Rome, take lessons together from the Abbé Venturi, a young and liberal priest who is eager for his country's freedom though sorry that the Pope is unhappy at the prospect. Elizabeth is glad that her boy has a teacher outside the family. She recognizes that she and Robert have closeted him and that, despite his gifts, he is young for his age. She confesses to Henrietta that he "wants more independence and self-reliance than he has attained to by our process—only we trust to the future for that."

While Elizabeth prizes Penini's linguistic and musical endowments and his gift for drawing, she also dotes on his outward beauty. She declares to the young novelist Dinah Mulock, "I shall like to show you my child, as you like children, and as I am vain—oh, past endurance vain, about him." In the autumn of 1858, the Scottish sculptor Alexander Munro is so captivated by Penini's appearance that he asks to be permitted to fashion a clay bust of him. Enchanted by the result, Elizabeth feels, "The likeness, the poetry, the ideal grace and infantile reality are all there." Since he "would not appear to have laid a trap for an order," he allows the Brownings to buy a marble version, after it has been exhibited, for half the usual price.

The attention paid to Penini outside the family greatly expands as he sheds his infant shyness and total dependence on his caregivers. In London, at the age of three and a half, he has to endure the absence of Wilson while she stays with her family for two weeks. Elizabeth reports to Miss Mitford, "I wash and dress him, and have him to sleep with me, and Robert is the only other helper he will allow of." By the time he is five, Elizabeth is able to write happily from Rome to her sister-in-law, Sarianna:

Penini is overwhelmed with attentions and gifts of all kinds, and generally acknowledged as the king of the children here.... You never saw a child so changed in point of shyness. He will go anywhere with anybody, and talk, and want none of us to back him.

In October 1852, witnessing Louis-Napoleon in a procession in Paris is an intoxicating experience for Penini:

Little Wiedeman was in a state of ecstasy, and has been recounting ever since how he called “Vive Napoleon!” *molto molto duro*, meaning *very loud* ... and how Napoleon took off his hat to him directly.

Sixteen months later, Elizabeth describes the boy’s pleasure in the Roman Carnival: “Penini has been several days in the best places throwing bonbons into carriages with great adroitness and having them thrown at him to his immense glory.” When he is ten, rural Siena proves an equally happy place for her son, who, Elizabeth relates, has

made friends with the *contadini* [peasants], has helped to keep the sheep, to run after straggling cows ... and to pick the grapes at the vintage – driving in the grape-carts (exactly of the shape of the Greek chariots), with the grapes heaped up round him.

Here his father buys him a pony – and his mother protests, “Robert never spoils him; no, not he, it is only *I* who do that!” – and two years later he is riding the animal in Rome behind the carriage of the exiled young Queen of Naples, who smiles at him. “When charged with a love affair,” Robert’s sister learns, “Pen answered gravely, that he ‘did feel a kind of *interest*.’”

This tender-hearted boy has a love of animals and hates to hear of any being killed. Told that there is a rabbit for dinner, he is unwilling to eat it, and when the family embarks on a steamboat to sail to Lyons, he is terrified lest Flush fall from the gangway. He hankers for more close human companionship, too, and when Wilson has her second child, Pen looks on him as a brother. Elizabeth is not sure that Wilson is wise in letting him hold the baby.

As Penini grows older, his mother’s letters show how his awareness of reality increases. Even at the age of two and a half he astonishes his parents’ friend Madame Mohl, who presides over a Paris salon: when the conversation turns to revolution, he utters the ejaculation “Boum!” By the time he is seven, he realises that his mother’s father is alienated. Elizabeth relates how, during a London visit, “Once he came up to me earnestly and said, ‘Mama, if you’ve been very, very naughty – if you’ve *broken china!*’ (his idea of the heinous in crime) – ‘I advise you to go into the room and say, ‘*Papa, I’ll be dood.*’”

Late in October 1859, Elizabeth having been dangerously ill, her trusted physician, Dr. Grisanowsky, counsels her to spend the winter in Rome.

She agrees, but because a nationalist uprising is expected there, Penini pleads that “for mama to have cold air in her chest would be better than to have a cannon-ball in her stomach.”

Fortunately, Robert’s father adores Penini at first sight, and the affection between the boy and Elizabeth’s siblings is mutual. In the summer of 1855, learning that his eldest daughter is in London, Mr. Barrett moves his whole family temporarily to Eastbourne, and since Arabel is brave enough to slip back to the city to visit her, Elizabeth feels that she cannot refuse to let the unexpectedly willing Penini spend a few days with his aunt on the coast. She is sure the news will surprise her other sister, now herself married to Surtees Cook and disowned: “What will you say to me when I tell you, Henrietta, that I have let this precious child go away from me to Eastbourne with Arabel! Am I an unnatural mother?”

When the Brownings return next year, Mr. Barrett makes the mistake of banishing his family to the Isle of Wight, the very place where Robert and Elizabeth are about to visit the ailing Mr. Kenyon. Elizabeth is pleased her brothers have taken to their nephew but is not quite easy about everything they teach the seven-year-old, who has been, she informs Mrs. Martin,

carried on their backs up and down hills, and taught the ways of ‘English boys,’ with so much success that he makes pretensions to ‘pluck,’ and has left a good reputation behind him. On one occasion he went up to a boy of twelve who took liberties, and exclaimed, ‘Don’t be impertinent, sir’ (doubling his small fist), ‘or I will show you that *I’m a boy.*’

In 1850, Mr. Barrett has faced an open act of domestic defiance. Henrietta, still trapped at 50 Wimpole Street and fearful of marrying the man she loves, has asked her elder sister’s advice. Unperturbed by Surtees Cook’s High Church commitment, Elizabeth points out that his “tried and faithful attachment has a claim on you” and cautiously counsels against prolonging “this long dreary waiting and waiting.” Henrietta marries Surtees on 6 April, and Mr. Barrett announces he “will never again let her name be mentioned in his hearing.” In 1855, her brother Alfred follows the example of two of his sisters by committing the sin of matrimony, but Elizabeth is not quite so pleased this time because there is madness in the family of the cousin he marries, and because she fears that the lady’s looks may be the main attraction. She writes to Mrs. Martin, “Of course, he makes the third exile from Wimpole Street, the course of true love running remarkably rough in our house.”

As Mrs. Cook, Henrietta continues to indulge her taste for social life. Elizabeth teases her, "That's the way you live a retired life, is it? Giving sylvan routs, conciliatory routs between town and county, balls and supper parties!" After her sister gives birth to her son, Altham, Elizabeth is lavish with advice about his education. When she goes on to bear a girl, Mary, Elizabeth makes it clear how much she, too, wants a daughter.

Several incentives lie behind the Brownings' four emotionally difficult visits to England: the duty and desire to see Elizabeth's sisters and Robert's sister and father, the opportunity for Penini to meet his relatives, the chance for his parents to mix with other writers, and the need to see first Robert's *Men and Women* and later Elizabeth's *Aurora Leigh* through the press.

In Paris in 1851, on the way to England for the first of these visits, they meet Alfred Tennyson, whom Elizabeth has venerated from her youth. He invites the Brownings to tea, and soon they meet him and his wife again:

He had Robert's poems with him, and had been reading them aloud the previous evening. We were all friends at once; and really he was more than a friend, for he pressed on us the use of his house and two servants at Twickenham as long as we stayed in England, and even wrote a note (insisting that we should take it) to his servants.

Mrs. Tennyson kisses Elizabeth when they part, but the Brownings take lodgings in London.

Among other authors they meet are Samuel Rogers and the Carlyles. They find that the malice of the once esteemed banker-poet Rogers, which is highlighted in Byron's and Jane Carlyle's letters, has evaporated, and the eighty-eight-year-old man talks and talks, bringing the past to life. Jane Carlyle, Elizabeth describes a year later as "a great favourite of mine: full of thought, and feeling, and character." Thomas Carlyle, whom she long ago termed "the great teacher of the age," she finds she likes "as a man" more than she expected to; she decides, "his bitterness is only melancholy, and his scorn sensibility." He accompanies them back to Paris, where he is to visit Lord Ashburton, and he is glad to leave all the arrangements to Robert: "you should have heard him talk," Elizabeth writes to Arabel, "when Robert was doing our business at the Custom House, &c. — 'Ah, it's a triumph for these fellows to have a poet to do just their will and pleasure. That's the way in this world. The earth-born order about the heaven-born and think it's only as it should be.'"

Arabel's loss of female companionship at 50 Wimpole Street touches the heart and conscience of Elizabeth. Three and a half weeks after Henrietta's

marriage, she writes to Miss Mitford, "I earnestly hope for her [Arabel's] sake that we may be able to get to England this year." The financial exigencies which curb the Brownings' travel figure in the letters, and without the annuity of one hundred pounds that Mr. Kenyon gives them, it would be extremely hard for them to get by. Only after his death in December 1856 are they free from serious financial worry, thanks to his bequest of £11,000.

In October 1851, Elizabeth expresses her gratitude to her brother-in-law for allowing Henrietta and her son to come to London to see her, writing, "I think still gratefully of the vision I had of you (through the supernaturalism of Surtees' kindness.)" The freedom she has in her own marriage is enough to puzzle some of her relatives. Robert's respect for his wife's autonomy is neatly illustrated by her Aunt Jane Hedley's indignation when Elizabeth enjoys seeing in Paris the younger Dumas's play *La Dame aux camélias*, a play widely regarded in England as immoral. Her aunt wonders "'how Mr. Browning could allow such a thing,' not comprehending that Mr. Browning never, or scarcely ever, does think of restraining his wife from anything she much pleases to do."

Probably the most notable instance of Robert's tolerance is to be found in the couple's association with George Sand, as the writer Aurora Dudevant calls herself. This ostentatiously rebellious woman, who smokes in public and sometimes wears men's clothes, is separated from her husband and has taken a series of lovers. Elizabeth regrets that "the poor woman's private character stinks so in the nostrils of French and English accustomed to rose-water perfumed handkerchiefs." The Brownings, to the indignation of Uncle Robert Hedley, visit her more than once. Elizabeth describes the notorious authoress:

She sate, like a priestess, the other morning in a circle of eight or nine men, giving no oracles, except with her splendid eyes, sitting at the corner of the fire, and warming her feet quietly, in a general silence of the most profound deference. There was something in the calm disdain of it which pleased me, and struck me as characteristic. She was George Sand, that was enough: you wanted no proof of it. Robert observed that 'if any other mistress of a house had behaved so, he would have walked out of the room' — but, as it was, no sort of incivility was meant.

Both the Brownings, in their lives and writings, are strict moralists — Robert, his wife writes, "wouldn't sleep, I think, if an unpaid bill dragged itself by any chance into another week" — but they are ready to see, in Elizabeth's words, "A noble woman under the mud." On another subject, however, they are unable to reach agreement. A wave of enthusiasm over the supposed power of mediums to channel messages from the dead sweeps



across North America and Europe, and Elizabeth is fascinated by the proof it seems to offer of the soul's immortality, though she is unimpressed by the spirits' messages and insists: "I certainly wouldn't set about building a system of theology out of their oracles. God forbid. They seem abundantly foolish, one must admit." In true Protestant fashion, she relies on the Bible as the source of religious doctrine, but disappointingly dismisses as "insolent and arrogant" Faraday's shrewd suggestion that the medium's personality may be the source of the phenomena at séances and the movement of tables may be caused by bodily muscles operating unconsciously. Robert, for his part, is staunchly sceptical, and while "He would give much to find it true," he "promises never to believe till he has experience by his own senses." By the time the couple attend a séance in London in 1855, sufficient friction has developed for Elizabeth to warn Henrietta that when she writes she must not "say a word on the subject—because it's a *tabooed* subject in this house." Ten months later, she is able to reassure her sister that while Robert still abhors the notorious medium Daniel Home, "On the subject of spirits generally we are at peace."

When the Brownings are in Paris in December 1851, a different disagreement erupts. France is paralyzed by a parliamentary deadlock, and President Louis-Napoleon resolves the impasse by the shortcut of a *coup d'état* involving considerable loss of life. Because he holds a plebiscite to endorse his seizure of dictatorial power, Elizabeth claims he is acting democratically; Robert wisely holds a contrary view. Eleven months later, the President metamorphoses into the Emperor Napoleon III.

On the cause of Italian freedom, Elizabeth and Robert think and feel alike. In 1854, there is a prospect of Napoleon III's intervening on behalf of the Italians, and Elizabeth reports that "Robert and I clapped our hands yesterday when we heard this; we couldn't refrain." Five years further on, when the Emperor does intervene, the English press is violently hostile to him, and the British Government is no ally. Elizabeth deplors "the disgrace with which the English name has covered itself lately among thinkers of all nations" and adds, "Robert and I are of one mind on the subject." A letter to Arabel records how "a Priest came to our door to ask for contributions this morning. Robert told Ferdinando to tell him that we 'kept all our money for the War of Independence.'" While Elizabeth's belief that Napoleon III is acting purely altruistically is erroneous (France acquires Nice and Savoy as a reward), he probably has substantial sympathy with the Italians as he was associated with the Carbonari (fighters for independence) in his youth.

Robert and Elizabeth can have serious disagreements or tease each other playfully; she can find her choice of headdress rarely satisfies him and can demand he regrow the facial hair he has shaved off; but Robert

remains for Elizabeth, her “Husband, lover, nurse.” Once, however, the dynamic of their relationship is reversed, and for a few weeks Elizabeth has to be the stronger partner. Penini’s birth on 9 March 1849 is rapidly followed by the news that Robert’s mother has died. In spite of his joy at the successful delivery (Elizabeth has already suffered two miscarriages), the new father subsides into convulsive fits of weeping and even stops eating. Elizabeth laments to Miss Mitford:

My husband has been in the deepest anguish, and indeed, except for the courageous consideration of his sister, who wrote two letters of preparation saying that ‘she was not well,’ and she ‘was very ill,’ when in fact all was over, I am frightened to think what the result would have been to him. He has loved his mother as such passionate natures only can love, and I never saw a man so bowed down in an extremity of sorrow – never.

Eventually, Elizabeth persuades Robert to resort to a change of scene, as a result of which they discover the pleasures of the Baths of Lucca, and Robert recovers his self-possession.

At this period, both the Brownings are still writing, but Elizabeth has not yet begun her greatest work. In a very early letter to Robert, she refers to one of his own poems as she announces,

my chief *intention* just now is the writing of a sort of novel-poem—a poem as completely modern as ‘Geraldine’s Courtship,’ running into the midst of our conventions, and rushing into drawing-rooms and the like ‘where angels fear to tread;’ and so, meeting face to face and without mask the Humanity of the age, and speaking the truth as I conceive of it out plainly.

By 1853, Elizabeth is at work on the poem, and over the next three years her letters record the completion of *Aurora Leigh’s* nine books. By the time the volume is published in November 1856, the Brownings, having seen it through the press in London, have been back in Florence for about a fortnight. Elizabeth has been in some trepidation, primarily because the poem touches on prostitution in British cities and portrays a woman whose child is born of a rape. Even Robert, she fears as she is writing the poem, may disapprove, but he applauds it as her finest work. Some readers, on the other hand, are not as broad-minded as her husband: her friend Mrs. Ogilvy reports that English mothers keep *Aurora Leigh* from their daughters, and Elizabeth writes to Mrs. Jameson of “ladies of sixty, who had ‘never felt themselves pure since reading it.’” Mrs. Martin, however, reads and ap-

proves, and Elizabeth, who sees that evils are not mended by being hidden, is relieved that it pleases the devout Arabel, as it does Robert's sister, Sarianna, whom she has found to be "highly accomplished, with a heart to suit the head."

Although the literary and moral assessments are mixed, the book quickly becomes a bestseller. The publishers, Chapman and Hall, bring out four more editions, including one with revisions, in Elizabeth's lifetime. The poem, after being overrated in its own age, has been underrated since. While most of the author's shorter pieces have faded, *Aurora Leigh* is still a most enjoyable and interesting long poem of the second rank comparable in merit to *The Seasons* of James Thomson, *The Task* of William Cowper, and William Morris's *Sigurd the Volsung*. Professor Christopher Ricks regrets that he has not room to include the whole of Book I in *The New Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*.

During her years on the Continent, Mrs. Browning enjoys periods of health amazing to those who knew her as Miss Barrett. The high point comes in the summer of 1849, when she can climb a mountain path near the Baths of Lucca. Reports of her vigour reach Henrietta, to whom she observes:

I don't wonder at your dear visitors being astonished at my prowess. I assure you I astonish myself still more, when I wake suddenly and find myself on the peaks of mountains—or at least more than half way up to their peaks.

That autumn, Elizabeth becomes dangerously ill and suffers a miscarriage. On 1 December, she writes to Miss Mitford, "I am well again now, only obliged to keep quiet and give up my grand walking excursions, which poor Robert used to be so boastful of." In May 1852, "an attack after the ancient fashion" forces the family to delay a visit to England. Four years later, in Paris, she informs Mrs. Martin that the later part of the winter there is unusually mild "and for the last month there has been no return of the splitting of blood, and no extravagance of cough." In July 1859, her health relapses after a political shock: the French Emperor Napoleon III (formerly President Louis-Napoleon), who has intervened to help the Italians against Austria, after winning a victory at Salferino settles for a compromise, the Truce of Villafranca. Not yet knowing there were good reasons for this, Elizabeth succumbs to what she describes as "Violent palpitations and cough; in fact, the worst attack on the chest I ever had in Italy." Nursing her keeps Robert from his sleep for three weeks. In the autumn comes an even worse relapse that causes her to write to Robert's old friend Miss Haworth, "As for me, I have been nearly as ill as possible.... All the Italians who came

near me gave me up as a lost life." She still has nearly twenty months to live.

A little less than fifteen years of married life complete one of the world's great romances. About six weeks before their wedding, Elizabeth writes to her husband-to-be:

My programme is, to let you try me for one winter, and if you are tired (as I shall know without any confession on your side) why then I shall set the mule on a canter and leave you in La Cava, and go and live in Greece somewhere all alone, taking enough with me for bread and salt. Is it a jest, do you think? Indeed it is not.... We could not lead the abominable lives of 'married people' all round – you *know* we could not – I at least know that I could not, and just because I love you so entirely.

As a wife of three months, Elizabeth reminds Miss Mitford of her former "loathing dread of marriage as a loveless state, and absolute contentment with single life as the alternative to the great majorities of marriages." "To see the marriages which are made every day!" she exclaims in one of her courtship letters to Robert, "worse than solitudes and more desolate!" Fearful as she has been that Robert has really fallen in love with her poetry rather than her, she believes that both men and women are lamentably "apt to mistake their own feelings," and the result is often a wretched union in which the partners "virtually hate one another through the tyranny of the stronger and the hypocrisy of the weaker party."

As time passes, Elizabeth's view softens. In May 1847, she tells Mrs. Jameson, "Women generally *lose* by marriage, but I have gained the world by mine." Three months later, commenting to Miss Mitford on Richard Hengist Horne's engagement, she remarks:

Men risk a good deal in marriage, though not as much as women do; and on the other hand, the singleness of a man when his youth is over is a sadder thing than the saddest which an unmarried woman can suffer.

By July 1850, she rejoices to hear that Tennyson now has a wife, and declares, "I believe in the happiness of marriage, for men especially."

On the basis of her own experience, Elizabeth likes to testify that a substantial fortune is not necessary for a happy union (this opinion may owe something to her experience on the Continent, where English money goes a long way). She does, however, feel that before venturing on matrimony a woman needs to "find some one to hold in reverence as well as love." Perhaps she wavers a little on this point when an acquaintance she

is fond of, the radical American feminist writer Margaret Fuller, emerges in 1849 from the siege of Rome as Madame Ossoli. Elizabeth describes how in Florence “her American friends stood in mute astonishment before this apparition of them here” and goes on to say:

The husband is a Roman marquis, appearing amiable and gentlemanly, and having fought well, they say, at the siege, but with no pretention to cope with his wife on any ground appertaining to the intellect. She talks, and he listens. I always wonder at that species of marriage; but people are so different in their matrimonial ideals that it may answer sometimes.

At least this marriage is not open to the criticism which Elizabeth believes is widely applicable to unequal couples:

I cannot but think ... when women are chosen for wives, they are not chosen for companions.... Men like to come home and find a blazing fire and a smiling face and an hour of relaxation. Their serious thoughts, and earnest aims in life, they like to keep on one side. And this is the carrying out of love and marriage almost everywhere in the world – and this, the degrading of women by both.

Elizabeth Barrett feels insulted if not degraded when her Sidmouth friend the Rev. George Barrett Hunter considers it unbecoming for a young woman to publish poetry which receives public notice and charges her with being spoilt by critical praise. All her life, she feels that creative women are entitled to have their work assessed without regard to their gender. In 1841, when she is collaborating with Richard Hengist Horne on a poetic drama, she remarks that everyone will ascribe the weaker parts to the female partner.

It is in the arts, Elizabeth thinks, that women have been most prevented from achieving what it is in them to achieve. While she meets and honours Florence Nightingale, she asserts to Mrs. Jameson:

At the same time, I confess myself to be at a loss to see any new position for the sex, or the most imperfect solution of the ‘woman’s question,’ in this step of hers.... Since the siege of Troy and earlier, we have had princesses binding wounds with their hands.... Every man is on his knees before ladies carrying lint, calling them ‘angelic she’s,’ whereas, if they stir an inch as thinkers or artists from the beaten line (involving more good to general humanity than is involved in lint), the very same men

would curse the impudence of the very same women and stop there.

One creative woman who earns Elizabeth's admiration and affection is the American expatriate Hatty Hosmer, who, she says in 1854,

emancipates the eccentric life of a perfectly 'emancipated female' from all shadow of blame by the purity of hers. She lives here all alone (at twenty-two); dines and breakfasts at the *cafés* precisely as a young man would; works from six o'clock in the morning till night, as a great artist must, and this with an absence of pretension and simplicity of manners which accord rather with the childish dimples in her rosy cheeks than with her broad forehead and high aims.

It is a great leap from a sculptress to a woman who can write on political economy. Harriet Martineau, who is such a woman, is a feminist who holds that women should be in Parliament. Elizabeth disagrees. There are definite limits to her feminism. She believes that women and men have different strengths, that women's "apprehension is quicker than that of men, but their defect lies for the most part in the logical faculty and in the higher mental activities." Not so dogmatic as to deny there are exceptions, she describes Harriet Martineau as "the profoundest woman thinker in England" and as "the most manlike woman in the three kingdoms—in the best sense of man—a woman gifted with admirable fortitude, as well as exercised in high logic."

Regarding a woman like Martineau as a phenomenal exception, Elizabeth has no desire to emulate her. On the one hand, she is outraged when, at Vallombrosa in the summer of 1847, the Abbot of the monastery will not permit a woman to enter the precincts and is unmoved by the disclosure that she is a scholar who has published work on the poetry of the Greek Church Fathers. He "said or implied," she rages to Miss Mitford, "that Wilson and I stank in his nostrils, being women, and San Gualberto, the establisher of their order, had enjoined on them only the mortification of cleaning out pigsties without fork or shovel." On the other hand, she ranks herself among "those weak women who reverence strong men," and she complains to Robert between their marriage and their departure, "you have acted throughout too much 'the woman's part' .... You are to do everything I like, instead of my doing what *you* like..and to 'honour and obey' *me*, in spite of what was in the vows last Saturday."

In March 1856, Elizabeth is feminist enough to support a petition to the Westminster Parliament for a Married Women's Property Bill. She has taken an interest in the proceedings of Parliament from an early age, and

her political views probably germinate from the liberal seed planted by her father. Theoretically egalitarian and republican in her sympathies, she opposes hereditary titles, inherited estates, and Britain's empire in India, but insists on a polity which does not try to suppress the differences between persons. Distressed that Richard Hengist Horne seems to be turning too far leftwards, she refers to Charles Fourier, an advocate of communal living, as she protests:

I love liberty so intensely that I hate Socialism. I hold it to be the most desecrating and dishonouring to humanity of all creeds. I would rather (for *me*) live under the absolutism of Nicholas of Russia than in a Fourier machine, with my individuality sucked out of me by a social air-pump.

Her love of liberty is strong enough to make Elizabeth oppose slavery even when its abolition in 1833 seriously reduces her father's wealth. In 1855, she sharply scolds Ruskin, whom she otherwise greatly admires, for his defence of African servitude:

In regard to the slaves, no, no, no; I belong to a family of West Indian slaveholders, and if I believed in curses, I should be afraid. I can at least thank God that I am not an American. How you look serenely at slavery, I cannot understand, and I distrust your power to explain.

Elizabeth's egalitarianism is qualified by her conception of the free and equal citizen as a citizen who has been prepared for the role: "I would have the government educate the people absolutely, and *then* give room for the individual to develop himself into life freely." Unfortunately she does not apply this insight when she affirms the validity of the plebiscite Louis-Napoleon relies on to justify his *coup d'état* of December 1851. Declaring she is neither a Bonapartist nor a Socialist, she claims, "I am a Democrat," and she writes from Paris in May 1852, "The masses are satisfied and hopeful," and later observes that the President is unafraid to walk on the boulevard without a bodyguard and that in a procession he shows "his usual tact and courage by riding on horseback quite alone, at least ten paces between himself and his nearest escort." Though her claim that his Government is democratic cannot be sustained, there is some truth in her assertion that he is working to improve the lives of the poor and that he seeks "the liberation of Italy without the confusion of a general war."

Britain, too, is no model of democracy at this time, and over the years Elizabeth brings a formidable series of charges against its oligarchic mode

of functioning, its rigid class divisions, and its lack of *joie de vivre*. As early as 1838, she complains to Mr. Kenyon:

We, in this England here, are just social barbarians, to my mind — that is, we know how to read and write and think, and even talk on occasion; but we carry the old rings in our noses, and are proud of the flowers pricked into our cuticles. By so much are they better than we on the Continent, I always think. Life has a thinner rind, and so a livelier sap.

In Florence, especially, Elizabeth finds a happiness she never quite matches elsewhere:

For what helps to charm here is the innocent gaiety of the people, who, for ever at feast day and holiday celebrations, come and go along the streets, the women in elegant dresses and with glittering fans, shining away every thought of Northern cares and taxes, such as make people grave in England. No little orphan on a house step but seems to inherit naturally his slice of watermelon and bunch of purple grapes, and the rich fraternise with the poor as we are unaccustomed to see them, listening to the same music and walking in the same gardens, and looking at the same Raphaels even!

Praising the Carnival, she exudes:

Think of the refinement and gentleness — yes, I must call it *superiority* — of this people, when no excess, no quarrelling, no rudeness nor coarseness can be observed in the course of such wild masked liberty. Not a touch of licence anywhere. And perfect social equality! Ferdinando side by side in the same ballroom with the Grand Duke, and no class's delicacy offended against!

"The mixture of classes," which is "one of the most delicious features of the South," Elizabeth finds also in Paris, along with the high development of the "science of material life"; the latter covers everything "from cutlets to costumes." The codes of conduct are less stifling in this city than in London: "young and pretty women walk in the streets without any sort of chaperonage — while both men and women are more independent of conventions of every sort." Here, above all, one is nourished by "a brilliant civilization."



These countries, however, do have their limitations. After the *coup d'état* in France, "The clash of speculative opinions is dreadful." In Italy, when it comes to fighting for freedom,

One thing is certain—that the Italians won't spoil their best surtouts by venturing out in a shower of rain through whatever burst of revolutionary ardour, nor will they forget to take their ices through loading of their guns.

Moreover, the political and literary censorship in the various Italian states is extremely irksome, and the nation's contemporary literature has lost all vigour: "the roots of thought, here in Italy, seem dead in the ground. It is well that they have great memories—nothing else lives."

For all its faults, Britain still has its national glory, "a nobler, a fuller, a more abounding and various literature" than all but the Greek. Chaucer and Shakespeare, Elizabeth acclaims as "the great fathers" of English poetry. As Miss Barrett, however, she laments that "we have no such romance-writer as Victor Hugo" and later recalls that "When I was a prisoner, my other mania for imaginative literature used to be ministered to through the prison bars by Balzac, George Sand, and the like immortal improprieties." As the works of the great Victorian novelists begin to appear, she proves an enthusiastic reader. She rebukes Robert for disclosing the end of Dickens's *David Copperfield*, and when *Vanity Fair* is published she confesses, "I certainly had no idea that Mr. Thackeray had intellectual force for such a book." George Eliot's *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss* make her decide, that although the author has an adulterous union with George Henry Lewes, "There is a great good in that woman, I am certain—in spite of everything—great good besides great genius." She comes to admire Bulwer Lytton and, near the end of her life, Anthony Trollope.

As a young woman, she advances from her devotion to the eighteenth century heroic couplet to an appreciation of Wordsworth, whom she ardently defends against his disparagement by the Greek scholar Mr. Boyd, whose taste remains fixed in the older mould. In a letter of 1843 to the American writer Thomas Wentwood, she sums up her view of four of the major Romantic poets:

He [Wordsworth] took the initiative in a great poetic movement, and is not only to be praised for what he has done, but for what he has helped his age to do. For the rest, Byron has more passion and intensity, Shelley more fancy and music, Coleridge could see further into the unseen.

Among the American poets, Emerson interests her for his thought, and she writes of Edgar Allan Poe, "There is poetry in the man ... now and then, seen between the great gaps of bathos."

Elizabeth can be a sharp critic when she feels sharp criticism is called for. She warns Mary Russell Mitford, "that your generosity and excess of kindness may run the risk of lowering the ideal of poetry in England by lifting above the mark the names of some poetasters." To her, "all the Arts are mediators between the soul and the Infinite ... shifting always like a mist, between the Breath on this side, and the Light on that side." When Mr. Kenyon complains that her poetry leans too much towards religion, she replies, "poetry without religion will gradually lose its elevation."

During one period of her childhood, Elizabeth can pray, "O God, if there be a God, save my soul if I have a soul." Once such doubt is behind her, neither her father's perversion of religion nor the arguments of sceptics like Hume, Bolingbroke and Voltaire can undermine her Christian faith. Suffering she regards as necessary teaching ordained by God. The agony she endures after Bro is drowned may be due, she suspects, to her having been too reliant on human love. Tolerant of unbelief while regretting its existence, she writes to Robert of his friend Miss Bayley:

She told me with a frankness for which I did not like her less, that she was a materialist of the strictest order, and believed in no soul and no future state. In the face of those conclusions, she said, she was calm and resigned. It is more than *I* could be, as I confessed.

Elizabeth's faith in a spiritual world is independent of sectarian allegiance. Though she remains firmly Protestant, she views theological controversy as both distasteful and useless. "The command," she reminds Mr. Boyd, "is not 'argue with one another,' but 'love one another.'" She admires the simple worship she often finds among Nonconformists but sometimes recoils from "an arid, grey Puritanism in the clefts of their souls." She spurns any narrowness that excludes appreciation of God's external creation, that has no use for the arts, or that prefers gloom to joy, and she disbelieves in eternal punishment. Five-year-old Penini has never heard the word "Hell."

In Italy, Elizabeth responds to the beauty and devoutness of Roman Catholic services. In 1853, she reports to Henrietta:

I was at S. Peter's on Christmas morning, and having the 'costume de rigueur' — black gown, no bonnet, and a black veil on my head — was admitted to the reserve seats, and saw pope and cardinals and all. The music was sublime, which, with the influence of the place and the sight of the crowding multitudes,

carried me over everything I could otherwise have been schismatical upon.

Elizabeth rejects, on the one hand, Roman Catholic “Madonnaism” and, on the other, Calvinist Predestination, and Protestant opposition to praying for the dead.

The broad-minded eclecticism and spiritual questing of Elizabeth is as different from the High Church zeal of Surtees Cook as from the Puritan Protestantism of Arabel. The latter shares their father’s rejection of the theatre and needlessly fears that Penini may be converted if the Abbé who tutors him is allowed to be in a room with him alone. The two sisters conduct epistolary arguments about religion, but Elizabeth has great reverence for the self-sacrificing spirit in which Arabel devotes her life to serving those on society’s fringes. She writes of her to Henrietta, “Never was there diviner Christian self-abnegation than glorifies her inner and outward life!” but she cautions Arabel against joyless religion and a semi-monastic lifestyle, and tries to persuade her that there are indeed spirits who communicate through mediums.

Elizabeth becomes convinced that each church has some portion of the truth but none has put all the portions together to make a whole. Like Coleridge and Emerson, she is impressed by Emanuel Swedenborg, an eighteenth century scientist turned Christian teacher and biblical interpreter, who maintains that all the features of the natural world correspond to parallel features in two higher worlds, the outer and the inner heaven, and that God’s love and wisdom emanate through all three worlds and are accessible to humans. She urges Arabel and others to look favourably on this sage, asserting, “There are deep truths in him, I cannot doubt, though I can’t receive *everything*, which may be my fault.” She sees in his work a foreshadowing of the spiritualist movement, which, though disfigured by fraud and by failure to distinguish between different categories of spirit, is a manifestation of Divine Providence meant to counter unbelief and to point the way to an advance, through “a Reformation far more interior than Luther’s,” from the reign of the existing churches, which are burdened with fossilized theological formulae, to a new stage of Christianity.

In the Dedication of *Aurora Leigh*, Elizabeth describes it as “the most mature of my works, and the one into which my highest convictions upon Life and Art have entered.” In the four and a half years that remain to her after its publication, she suffers three grievous bereavements and experiences one deep if imperfect satisfaction. Mr. Kenyon lives just long enough to express his appreciation of her masterpiece, which is dedicated to him. He dies on 3 December 1856, and on Boxing Day Elizabeth writes to Mrs. Jameson:

It has been a sad, sad Christmas to me. A great gap is left among friends, and the void catches the eyes of the soul, whichever way it turns. He has been to me in much what my father might have been, and now the place is empty twice over.

If Mr. Kenyon's death brings Elizabeth grief, her father's death the following April brings her emotional desolation. Penini, like Robert, tries to comfort her, and by July she is able to write to Mrs. Martin:

Of the past I cannot speak.... There has been great bitterness—great bitterness, which is natural; and some recoil against myself, more, perhaps, than is quite rational. Now I am much better, calm, and not despondingly calm (as, off and on, I have been), able to read and talk, and keep from vexing my poor husband, who has been a good deal tried in all these things.

Almost as soul-searing as her father's death is her sister Henrietta's, following a prolonged and painful illness. At the end of November 1860, the news of that death reaches her in Rome. Elizabeth wonders that, with all her faith, strengthened by spiritualism, in the soul's immortality, she suffers so much when its material covering perishes. After a little, she again reassures Mrs. Martin of her emotional recovery.

For a time, Elizabeth has twin obsessions: Henrietta's affliction and the perils still facing Italy on its path to freedom. Of the three most prominent Italian leaders, she has very different opinions. Cavour she adores as a noble, far-seeing statesman. Mazzini, the prophet or propagandist, she begins by regarding as a "hero and patriot" who "has not wisdom," but by 1859 she is damning him as a fanatical republican "of a narrow-head and unscrupulous conscience." Garibaldi, the warrior on whom the fate of the South depends, she assesses as "heroic" but "not a man of much brain," and in May 1860 she watches in terror as he leads his "forlorn hope"—a thousand ill equipped volunteers—into Sicily and against the odds defeats the army of the Bourbon monarch Francis. Elizabeth informs Sarianna:

We are all talking and dreaming Garibaldi just now in great anxiety. Scarcely since the world was a world has there been such a feat of arms.... If it had not been success it would have been an evil beyond failure. The enterprise was forlornner than a forlorn hope.

On 19 August, Garibaldi crosses the Strait of Messina to Naples, where he soon puts King Francis to flight and finds himself master of South Italy. Elizabeth, fearing he may have been corrupted by followers of the repub-

lican Mazzini, is much relieved in October, when he hands over his conquests to King Victor Emmanuel, who is, thanks to the statesmanship of Cavour and the military help of Napoleon III, the sovereign of the rest of Italy, except for Venice and the city of Rome. The Pope retains the latter, but the other Papal States have risen and, with the seal of a plebiscite, have joined Victor Emmanuel's kingdom.

Elizabeth's esteem for Cavour is seen in her reaction when he dies on 6 June 1861. She seems to feel it almost as another personal bereavement and confesses to Sarianna:

I can scarcely command voice or hand to name *Cavour*. That great soul, which meditated and made Italy, has gone to the Divine country. If tears or blood could have saved him to us, he should have had mine. I feel yet as if I could scarcely comprehend the greatness of the vacancy. A hundred Garibaldis for such a man.

Twenty-three days after Cavour's passing, Elizabeth at last succumbs to her bodily weakness and herself dies.

In his compilation of 1906, *Elizabeth Barrett Browning in Her Letters*, Percy Lubbock makes an incomprehensible statement about the letters he is editing: "No one will read them for their literary merit." Elizabeth provides her posthumous readers with a rich smorgasbord of news, characters and opinions. They become acquainted with the Barrett and Browning families and many of their friends and servants. They are presented with contrasting pictures of life at 50 Wimpole Street and at Casa Guidi, of the societies of Paris and Venice, of mountain scenes and stormy seas. They see how the united Italy's birth pangs are contemporary with France's search for steady government, and how an ardent Christian faith co-exists with a liberal spirit of tolerance. Uniting and harmonizing all the strands in the letters, and in the life the letters portray, is the enduring love between Elizabeth and Robert that blesses their son and strengthens their creativity.

## **EPILOGUE**



## WHAT A LITERATURE IS HERE!

Prolonged solitary confinement is regarded as an extremely severe punishment for offenders and is sometimes said to amount to torture. Human beings are social creatures who need to share their experiences and discuss their concerns: letters have long enabled those separated by distance to do so.

Occasionally a memorable single letter can stand alone as an independent achievement comparable to a short, self-contained poem. On the eve of his *Dictionary's* publication, Dr. Johnson's letter rebuking Lord Chesterfield for withholding his assistance till it is too late to be of use puts on display the often uneasy relationship between writer and patron in the eighteenth century. When the agnostic T. H. Huxley is grieving for the death of his small son, he explains, in his reply to a message of condolence from the Reverend Charles Kingsley, that he refuses to take refuge in the hope of an afterlife, since he sees no evidence that there is one.

Usually, however, letters can best claim a place in literature when a collection covering the writer's life has been given a chronological arrangement. The great epistolary compilations span a youth, a maturity and an old age, and, necessary as the work of an editor is, the foremost shaping hand is that of mortality. The productions of the major letter writers are in effect biographies which are free from an autobiographer's retrospective thoughts and distortions, and in which there is no third party, other than an unobtrusive editor, to come between the subject and the reader.

Besides creating self-portraits, the most accomplished letter-writers draw character sketches of contemporaries, leave a record of their engagement with the events of their time, and disclose their relationship with the spirit of their age. Their missives deal with the great issues of private and public life: relations between parent and child; views of marriage; struggle against sickness; endurance of bereavement; grappling with financial exigency; dedication to an art; religious faith and allegiance; the quest for liberty and the need for order; questions of war and peace. Such topics are treated in innumerable novels, plays and poems; letters, well selected and edited, constitute a branch of literature of equal worth.



When they survive from past ages, letters can bring the reader face to face with scenes from history. Sometimes, as in the cases of the Paston and Lisle collections, they are themselves part of the action. More often the writers are observers. British letter-writers especially record the attraction continental Europe held and holds for Anglo-Saxondom, and most particularly the centuries of magnetism exerted by Italy, the country where the Renaissance is born and a great artistic civilization with its city states and country houses is supported by a sunny Mediterranean climate. Its classic ground was anciently the centre of the Empire which provides to a great extent a model for the British Empire, and it possesses the capital of the faith which both attracts and repels so many inheritors of the Reformed Religion, while its great maritime republic of Venice dazzles travellers and expatriates from Sir Henry Wotton to Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

It is difficult to study a considerable number of letter-writers without thinking of ranking them. At the head, I place Horace Walpole for his combination of a many-faceted self-portrait with a panorama of his age. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Lord Byron may tie for second place; both lead bold, adventurous lives, experience stormy personal relations, undertake exotic and less exotic travels, and show a passionate interest in the literature to which they contribute. Lady Mary's judgments of people, places and books are revealingly coloured by the Augustan values of her time; in Byron there is an intriguing mixture of pride, anger, resentment, courage and compassion. Next comes Elizabeth Barrett Browning, with her unforeseen romance, her joyful parenthood, her religious quest, her tender heart, her liberal politics, and her poetic achievement.

Only a little below these stand the proud, ambitious Swift, whose penetrating intellect co-exists with a companionable playfulness in the absence of which he would be a lesser Swift; the ever dignified Lord Chesterfield, who expresses his Augustan views, a few surprisingly liberal, with great force and clarity; the tragic Cowper, whose life is blighted by a misguided faith; the much tried Mary Russell Mitford, who suffers much and enjoys much; the polymath Coleridge, who can be almost unintelligible in his most abstruse passages, but has great powers of description and narration; and the restless minded Jane Carlyle, whose painful marriage so contrasts with that of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Will we see again letter-writers equal to these? It is impossible to tell whether electronic communications will kill the epistolary art, which goes back to antiquity. Emails can be printed and preserved, and it is to be hoped that future centuries will continue to provide readers with a mode of literature that has merits and delights all its own.

# NOTES

The page number is followed by the initial words (or word) of the passage identified; a phrase not part of a direct quotation is underlined. U stands for "University," P for "Press," and n.d. for "no date."

## PREFACE

- ix *Human life*: Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, chap. xi.  
*I firmly*: Mrs. Paget, ed., *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, 16 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1903), X, 5 to Lady Ossory, 19 Jan. 1777).

## 1. CICERO AND PLINY THE YOUNGER

- 3 Thorvaldsen, Bertel. *Marcus Tullius Cicero*. 1799-1800. As a copy from roman original, in Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen. Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:M-T-Cicero.jpg. Public domain.
- 5 *Statue of Plinius Minor on the Duomo (Como)*. Pre-1480. Possibly the work of Giovanni Rodari, Como, Italy. Shared by JoJan on Wikimedia Commons, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Como\_015.jpg. CC-BY 3.0.  
*contagious superstition*: Project Gutenberg EBook, *Letters of Pliny*, trans. William Melmoth, Letter XCVII (Book X, Letter xcvi).
- 6 *My house, although*: *ibid.*, Letter LII (Book V, Letter vi).

## 2. THE PASTON LETTERS

All the quotations from the letters are taken from *The Paston Letters*, ed., John Warrington, 2 vols. (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1956).

- 9 *a man's death*: II, 123 (?1 Dec. 1471).
- 10 *with God's grace so purvey*: I, 99 (1455).  
*I heard never*: II, 50 (8 July 1468).  
*the proud, peevish*: II, 132 (1472).  
*God keep you this Lent*: II, 60 (?1468-69).  
*a flickering fellow*: II, 4 (1465).  
*in Westminster Hall*: II, 104 (15 Nov. 1470).  
*We have sent two*: I, 192 (1461).  
*All the devils*: I, 62 (n.d.).  
*truly belash*: I, 127 (28 Jan. 1457).
- 11 *dispose yourself*: I, 128 (1458).  
*My Lord of Norwich*: II, 8 (1465).  
*verily*: I, 2 (before 1440).  
*I shall think myself*: II, 236.  
*the deaths of two men*: II, 86-87 (23-30 Sep. 1469).  
*hypocrisy and cowardice*: II, 83n.  
*if anyone was a gentleman*: Colin Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: The first phase* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), pp. 187-88.  
*easy-going and likeable*: Norman Davis, ed., *Paston Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1958), p. xii.

## 3. THE LISLE LETTERS

All the quotations are from *The Lisle Letters: An Abridgement*, ed., Muriel St. Clare Byrne and Brigid Boland (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1983).

- 13 *Garter stall-plate of Arthur Plantagenet, 1st Viscount Lisle (d.1542)*. circa 1499. From

- original in the Royal Collection Trust. Wikimedia Commons, [wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GarterPlateArthurPlantagenet1stViscountLisle1524.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:GarterPlateArthurPlantagenet1stViscountLisle1524.png). Public domain.
- 14 *because ye be both*: p. 148 (20 Jan. 1534).  
*fee'd man*: p. 362 (John Husee to Lord Lisle, 27 May 1539).  
*considering that this world*: p. 174 (to Lord Lisle, 1 Dec. 1536).  
*if I should write*: pp. 175-76 (11 Dec. 1536).
- 15 *Alas, that your lordship*: p. 346 (18 Oct. 1538).  
*is full of dissimulation*: p. 216 (to Lady Lisle, 10 Aug. 1536).  
*little good*: p. 167 (to Lord Lisle, 24 May 1536).  
*is the greatest heaviness*: p. 189 (Lord Lisle to Cromwell, 27 Jun. 1536).  
*long prayers*: p. 301 (9 Mar. 1538).  
*papistical fashion/fond flickerings*: p. 290 (Cromwell to the Council of Calais, 17 Jul. 1537).  
*I should be right well content*: p. 118 (to Philippa Basset, 13 Mar. 1536).
- 16 *Mr. James*: p. 103 (Alexander Aylmer to Lady Lisle, 4 Nov. 1533).  
*my master, your son*: p. 105 (Thomas Rainolde to Lady Lisle, 19 April 1535).  
*little Mr. James Basset/that sweet babe*: p. 104 (12 Dec. 1534).
- 4. SIR THOMAS MORE**
- 17 Holbein, Hans the Younger. *Sir Thomas More*. 1527. From original in the Frick Collection, New York, NY. Wikimedia Commons, [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hans\\_Holbein,\\_the\\_Younger\\_-\\_Sir\\_Thomas\\_More\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hans_Holbein,_the_Younger_-_Sir_Thomas_More_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg). Public domain.
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*I prefer a true Turk: Against War*, 1523 edition, cited Robert P. Adams, *The Better Part of Valor* (Seattle: U of Washington P, 1962), p. 209.  
*We must and are bounden: More, Selections from His English Works and from the Lives by Erasmus and Roper* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1924), p. 162 (3 Sep. 1528).  
*the King's Grace/Father Resbye: The Essential Thomas More*, ed. James P. Greene and John P. Dolan (New York and Toronto: New American Library, 1967), p. 245 (c. Mar. 1534).
- 18 *But as for myself: ibid.*, p. 263 (Apr. 1534).  
*albeit I am of nature: ibid.*, p. 272 (1534).  
*it were a very hard: ibid.*, p. 278 (Jun. 1535).  
*I never liked: ibid.*, p. 280 (5 Jul. 1535).
- 5. ROGER ASCHAM**
- All the references are to *The Whole Works of Roger Ascham*, ed. Rev. Dr. Giles, 3 vols. (1864; New York: AMS Press, 1965), and all the quotations are from Ascham's letters to Edward Raven.
- 19 *Roger Ascham*. From original in Charles Dudley Warner, "Library Of The World's Best Literature, Ancient And Modern," Vol. 2. 1896. Wikimedia Commons, [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roger\\_Ascham\\_-\\_Project\\_Gutenberg\\_](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roger_Ascham_-_Project_Gutenberg_)

- eText\_12788.png. Public domain.
- The palatine of Rhene*: I, 257 (14 Oct. 1551).
- 20 *the Duke of Cleves*: I, 251 (10 Oct. 1551).
- England need fear*: I, 279 (23 Feb. 1551).
- this wine of Rhene*: I, 256 (14 Oct. 1551).
- I saw nuns*: I, 249 (6 Oct. 1551).
- If these things*: I, 253-54 (11 Oct. 1551).
- Five days*: I, 265 (3 Jan. 1552).
- that one BORRHEUS*: I, 284 (14-18 May 1551).
- Purpose, my Edward*: I, 282 (same date).
- 21 *He that is able*: I, 271 (20 Jan. 1551).
- a letter to the Earl*: II, 124-32 (14 Apr. 1566).

#### 6. JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

- All the references are to *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939). All the quotations are from Chamberlain's letters to Dudley (later Sir Dudley) Carleton.
- 23 *and then there is no danger*: I, 59 (20 Dec. 1598).
- the times are dangerous*: II, 423 (16 Feb. 1622).
- I am sorry to hear*: II, 121 (20 Dec. 1617).
- no doubt you have*: II, 99 (11 Oct. 1617).
- mine ancient valentine*: II, 495 (3 May 1623).
- 24 *holy things*: I, 273 (9 Dec. 1608).
- for if such a gap*: I, 461 (23 Jun. 1613).
- that filthy weed*: II, 311 (8 Jul. 1620).
- the insolency*: II, 286-87 (25 Jan. 1620).
- this is the age*: I, 472 (1 Aug. 1613).

- reasonable witty*: II, 613 (23 Apr. 1625).
- what should a man*: II, 395 (4 Aug. 1621).
- persecutes poor*: I, 48 (20 Oct. 1598).
- our people*: II, 520, 521 (8 Nov. 1623).
- 25 *our principal poet*: I, 64-65 (17 Jan. 1599).

#### 7. SIR HENRY WOTTON

All the references are to *The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith, 2 vols. (1907; Oxford: Clarendon P, 1966).

- 27 Dolle, William. *Sir Henry Wotton*. Circa 1670. Courtesy of The Wellcome Collection, wellcomecollection.org/works/ceuzmusb. CC\_BY 4.0.
- a poor student*: II, 264 (to the Earl of Holderness, Jan. 1623).
- cloistered men*: II, 306 (to Sir Thomas Wentworth, 8 Apr. 1628).
- there still hangs*: II, 352 (6 Jun. 1635).
- I have herewith*: I, 259 (19 Feb. 1591).
- that filthy false libel*: II, 280 (to Sir George Calvert, 5 Nov. 1623).
- send hither a pardon*: II, 281 (same letter).
- 28 *so unchristian*: II, 208 (to Sir George Calvert, 2/12 Mar. 1621).
- the common Christian good/when fear*: I, 423, 424 (24 Apr. 1608).
- the caterpillars*: II, 218 (to Sir Dudley Carleton, 9 Oct. 1621).
- Of Rome*: , 274 (to Lord Zouche, 8 May 1592).
- I entered Rome*: I, 272 (8 May 1592).
- where certain boards*: II, 125 (to Sir Thomas Lake, 1 Jan. 1618).
- 29 *On Friday of the last week*: II, 351 (12 Mar. 635).
- I found him by conversation*: I, 271 (to Lord Zouche, 8 May 1592).

- cumbered ... with the German troubles*: II, 182 (to James I, 8/18 Aug. 1620).  
*The Duke's answer*: II, 183 (same date).  
*a sound Protestant*: I, 399 (to the Earl of Salisbury, 13 Sep. 1607).  
*the most deep and general scholar*: I, 400 (same letter).  
*of a quiet and settled temper*: II, 372 (to Samuel Collins, 17 Jan. 1638).  
*life is the most irreprehensible*: I, 400 (to the Earl of Salisbury, 13 Sep. 1607).
- 30 *I should much commend*: II, 381 (to John Milton, 13 April 1638).
- 8. JOHN DONNE**
- The quotations from Donne's letters are taken from his *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*, ed. Charles Edmund Merrill, Jr. (New York: Sturgis and Walton, 1910). Most of the letters are of uncertain date.
- 31 Marshall, William. *Portrait engraving of John Donne*. From original in "Poems, by J.D. With elegies on the authors death." 1639. Original sourced from the British Library, 1076.a.37. Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait\_engraving\_of\_John\_Donne\_by\_William\_Marshall.jpg. Public domain.
- justifiably complains*: Saintsbury, *A Letter Book* (London: G. Bell; New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922), p. 129.  
*being in the lively*: Wotton, *Life and Letters*, I, 231 (I Nov. 1589). See headnote to Notes to previous chapter.  
*I make account*: p. 10 (?1607).
- 32 *second religion*: p. 74 (to Sir Henry Goodyer, ?1607).  
*I amend*: p. 254 (?1614).  
*Reserve it for me*: p. 19 (Apr. 1619).  
*This letter hath*: p. 27 (c. 1608).
- 33 *virtual beams*: p. 25 (to Sir Henry Goodyer, not after 1610).  
*that in all Christian*: p. 87 (?Apr. 1615).  
*The channels/As some bodies*: pp. 87-88 (?Apr. 1615).  
*is not merely out of/thirst and inhiation*: p. 43 (to Sir Henry Goodyer, (Sep. 1608).
- 9. JAMES HOWELL**
- The quotations from Howell's letters are from his *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae: Familiar Letters Domestick and Foreign, Divided into Four Books*, 10th ed. (London, 1737). The numbers of the book and letter are given in parentheses. In the case of quotations from Book I, which is subdivided into sections within which the letters are independently numbered, the figures refer to book, section, and letter.
- 35 *James Howell*. Circa 1640. From original in the Framed Works of Art collection at the National Library of Wales. Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:James\_Howell.jpg. Public domain.  
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*were possibly compiled*: W. H. Bennett, ed., *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae: The Familiar Letters of James Howell* (London: David Stott, 1890), I, xxxviii.  
*That black tragedy*: p. 441 (III, 24).
- 36 *a legend of*: p. 387 (II, 61).  
*Count Gondomar hath*: p. 138 (I, iii. 20).

- this poison/this black religion*: p. 316 (II. 10).  
*Difference in opinion*: p. 270 (I. vi. 32).  
 37 *are bones to philosophy*: p. 310 (II. 9).  
*priggish*: W. M. Thackeray, "On Two Children in Black," in his *Roundabout Papers*.  
*deep, far-fetched oaths*: p. 207 (I. v. 11).  
*you must not suffer*: p. 117 (I. iii. 2).  
*without any appearance*: p. 237 (I. vi. 2).  
*The Spaniard is not*: p. 161 (I. iii. 32).  
*I protest to you*: p. 57 (I. i. 30).  
*Whether we are in danger*: p. 249 (I. vi. 11).  
*That the son*: p. 419 (III. 8).  
 38 *There's a strange maggot*: p. 342 (II. 33).  
*For if one do well*: p. 379 (II. 59).  
*hath brought us to a nearer*: p. 425 (III. 9).  
*witchcraft*: pp. 438-41 (III. 23).  
*we should write*: p. 17 (I. i. 1).  
*being troubled*: p. 167 (I. iii. 37).  
*The Prince got*: p. 136 (I. iii. 18).  
*this little world*: p. 406 (II. 77).  
 39 *Had I been disposed*: p. 298 (I. vi. 60).

#### 10. SIR THOMAS BROWNE

- All the quotations are from *Sir Thomas Browne's Works Including His Life and Correspondence*, ed. Simon Wilkin, 4 vols. (1835-1836; New York: AMS P, 1968).
- 41 Trotter, T. *Sir Thomas Browne* M.D. 1798. Courtesy of The Wellcome Collection, [wellcomecollection.org/works/u9hmfywz](http://wellcomecollection.org/works/u9hmfywz). CC\_BY 4.0.  
*Worthy Sir*: II, xxvii (3 Mar. 1643).  
*It were good*: I, 3 (22 Dec. (1660)).  
 42 *As for the higher*: III, 407n. (8 Jun. 1659).

- Ophidion, or*: I, 398 (13 or 16 Sep. (1668)).  
*He that goes*: I, 144 (Feb. 1667).  
 43 *I should be glad*: I, 163 (15 Dec. 1668).  
*I hope you do not forget*: I, 209 (25 Feb. ?1676).  
*Weigh the head*: I, 212 (16 Jun. 1676).  
 44 *after Dr. Helvetius*: I, 157 (22 Sep. 1668).  
*a highway robbery*: I, 290 (to Edward Browne, 1 Nov. 1680).  
*a lady's drinking*: I, 267 (to the same, 17 Nov. 1679).  
*an election*: I, 240 (to the same, 7 May 1679).

#### 11. DOROTHY OSBORNE

- All quotations except the last one are from *The Letters of Dorothy Osborne to William Temple*, ed. G. C. Moore Smith (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1928).
- 47 *Portrait engraving of Dorothy Osborne*. From original in "Letters from Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple 1652-54." 1888. Original sourced from the University of California Libraries. Internet Archive, [archive.org/details/lettersfromdorot00tempiala/page/n7](http://archive.org/details/lettersfromdorot00tempiala/page/n7). Public domain.  
*I am apt to speak*: p. 173 (15 Jul. 1654).  
*I do not know that*: pp. 14-15 (29 Jan. 1653).  
*This world is composed*: p. 161 (25 May 1654).  
 48 *You are altogether*: p. 47 (22 May 1653).  
*I cannot but tell*: pp. 47-48 (same date).  
*I drove him up*: p. 139 (4 Feb. 1654).  
*in such colours*: p. 156 (18 Mar. 1653 [1654]).

- I shall never change*: p. 123 (31 Dec. 1653).  
*for the love of God*: p. 126 (7 Jan. 1654).  
 49 *'Tis strange*: p. 143 (11 Feb. 1654).  
*Sure the poor woman*: p. 37 (14 Apr. 1653).  
*if I should do otherwise*: p. 34 (29 Mar. 1653).  
*very indulgent Father/if you have not*: p. 163 (25 May 1654).  
*I rise in the morning*: p. 51 (2-4 Jun. 1653).  
 50 *go abroad all day*: p. 174 (22 Jul. 1654).  
*out of pity*: p. 16 (29 Jan. 1653).  
*imagination took him*: p. 43 (14 May 1653).  
*the Emperor Justinian*: p. 55 (11 Jun. 1653).  
*prisoners to a vile house*: p. 9 (15 Jan. 1653).  
*will suit well enough*: p. 81 (3 Sep. 1653).  
*I shall talk treason*: p. 39 (23 Apr. 1653).  
*my poor Lady*: p. 168 (15 Jun. 1654).  
*concluded the arrantest*: p. 206 (Feb. 1656 or 1657).  
 51 *greater than is allowable*: p. 115 (8-10 Dec. 1653).  
*truly is very great: The Love Letters of Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple 1652-1654*, ed. Edward Abbott Parry (Toronto: The Publishers' Syndicate, 1901), p. 348 (6 May 1689).

## 12. THE SELF AND THE MODERN WORLD

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*I speak too much of myself: The Essayes of Montaigne*, trans. John

- Florio (New York: Modern Library, 1933), p. 726 (Book III, Essay ii).  
*the first work of lay introspection*: Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (1953; Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1957), p. 270.  
*Charles Taylor*: Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1989), pp. 177-78.  
*Michael Levy*: Levy, *High Renaissance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p. 68.  
*For Montaigne*: James Sutherland, *On English Prose* (1957; [Toronto]: U of Toronto P, 1965), pp. 52-53.  
*could hear him speak*: Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 254.  
*Jean-Pierre Camus*: Ian J. Winter, *Montaigne's Self-Portrait and Its Influence in France, 1580-1630* (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum Publishers, 1976), p. 99.

## 13. JONATHAN SWIFT

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 J = Jonathan Swift, *Journal to Stella*, ed. J. K. Moorhead (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, n.d.).  
 Unp = *Unpublished Letters of Dean Swift*, ed. George Birbeck Hill (London: Fisher Unwin, 1899).  
 W = *The Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Thomas Roscoe, 2 vols. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853).  
 59 Jonathan Swift. 1909. Image from page 464 of "Historical

- portraits ... the lives of C.R.L. Fletcher". Internet Archive (source University of California Libraries) on flickr, flic.kr/p/odQg2C. No known copyright restrictions.
- that lacerates, as he says*: In his self-composed Latin epitaph. David Nokes, *Jonathan Swift: A Hyocrite Reversed* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1987), p. 412.
- As welcome*: J, p.172.
- the word "bowels": J, p. 158.
- pale, dead, old*: J, p. 289.
- 60 *I think I am bewitched*: J, 90.
- 61 *it must not be called*: J, p. 188.
- drunken parson*: J, p. 163.
- Bishop of Worcester*: J, pp. 356-57.
- booby trap*: J, p. 374.
- I am so proud*: J, p. 205.
- an ignorant, worthless*: J, p. 91.
- an old, doting*: J, p. 227.
- relieved without pity*: Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, 2 vols. (London: Dent; New York, Dutton, 1950), II, 270.
- She has moved*: J, p. 374.
- I think indeed*: J, p. 338.
- 62 *a false deceitful*: J, p. 103.
- indeed it is hard*: J, p. 51.
- The Devil's in*: J, p. 258.
- the greatest procrastinator*: J, p. 259.
- great Fault*: J, p. 331.
- not care if*: J, p. 295.
- I give no man*: J, p. 171.
- universal corruption*: W, II, 205.
- wisest woman*: J, p. 364.
- a thorough rake*: J, p. 96.
- stole away*: J, p. 216.
- infinitely above*: J, p. 269.
- for meddling in*: J, p. 378.
- when he is well*: J, p. 147.
- would needs drink*: J, p. 312.
- 63 *this is te 7th*: J, p. 339.
- I will contract*: J, p. 387.
- while it is delayd*: J, p. 439.
- French snuffbox*: W, II, 481 (12 Aug. 1712).
- Duchess of Ormonde*: C, I, 326-27 (20 Dec. 1712).
- you must have chat*: J, p. 371.
- O Lord, I am*: J, p. 277.
- 64 *dont oo lemembre*: J, 381.
- our little language*: J, 61.
- Do you know what*: J, p. 127.
- I hope he can tell*: W, II, 533 (22 Nov. 1716).
- I am surprised: ibid.*, (22 Dec. 1716).
- 65 *I live in the corner: ibid.*, 526 (28 Jun. 1715).
- Everybody can get: Unp*, p. 94 (to Knightley Chetwode, 10 Jun. 1721).
- I have an ill head*: W, II, 544 (19 Dec. 1719).
- explains to Charles Ford*: C, II, 330 (8 Dec. 1719).
- 66 *how a brat*: W, II, 548 (to Hester Vanhomrigh, ?1720).
- the tattle*: W, II, 549 (to the same, n.d.).
- I was born*: W, II, 549 (15 Oct. 1720).
- the most disagreeable: Unp*, p. 212 (to Knightley Chetwode, 23 Nov. 1727).
- As to myself*: W, II, 733 (to Alderman Barber, 1 Mar. 1735).
- next to health: Unp*, p. 173 (to Knightley Chetwode, 27 May 1725).
- which it is a shame*: W, II, 582 (to Dr. Stopford, 26 Nov. 1725).
- think he is in England*: C, II, 430-32 (22 Jul. 1722).
- 67 *I am as busy: Unp*, p. 129 (12 Feb. 1723).
- the falsity of*: W, II, 579 (29 Sep. 1725).
- two friends*: W, II, 605-06 (19 Aug. 1727).



- 68 *the two oldest*: W, II, 587 (20 Jul. 1726).  
*I have been long/like a philosopher*: W, II, 588 (27 Jul. 1726).  
*Dear Patty*: W, II, 613 (29 Feb. 1728).  
*a middle kind*: W, II, 615 (to Alexander Pope, 10 May 1728).  
*I suppose you*: W, II, 743 (Jun. 1735).  
*an obscure exile*: W, II, 744 (to Sir Charles Wogan, ?Mar. 1736).  
*My English friends*: W, II, 780 (to Sir John Stanley, 30 Oct. 1736).
- 69 *my solitary way*: W, II, 681 (to the Rev. Henry Jenny, 8 Jun. 1732).  
*to be a freeman/I am one*: W, II, 707 (to Alexander Pope, 8 Jul. 1733).  
*It is altogether*: W, II, 733 (8 Mar. 1735).  
*of all wise*: W, II, 764 (to Alexander Pope, 7 Feb. 1736).  
*Imagine a nation*: W, II, 629 (11 Aug. 1729).
- 70 *never intended*: W, II, 765 (to Mrs. Whiteway, 25 Feb. 1736).  
*he gets another*: W, II, 622 (13 Feb. 1729).  
*O if the world*: W, II, 579 (to Alexander Pope, 29 Sep. 1725).  
*If you cannot*: W, II, 717 (Oct. 1732).  
*because I cannot*: W, II, 631-32 (to Lord Bolingbroke, 31 Oct. 1729).  
*Earthly ladies*: W, II, 760 (25 Nov. 1735).  
*I can as easily*: W, II, 764 (7 Feb. 1736).  
*my memory*: W, II, 803 (to Alderman Barber, 9 Mar. 1738).
- 14. ALEXANDER POPE**
- All the quotations from Pope's letters are from *The Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. Whitwell Elwin, 10 vols. (London: Murray, 1871-1886).
- 73 Richardson, Jonathan (attributed).  
*Portrait of Alexander Pope*.  
 Circa 1736. Courtesy of the  
 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA. Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alexander\_Pope\_circa\_1736.jpeg. Public domain.
- In the dean's*: VIII, 443 (12 Nov. 1740).
- 74 *is no small thing*: VI, 336 (Jan. 1733).  
*As for myself*: VI, 236 (10 Jan. 1716).  
*I am determined*: X, 166 (10 Oct. 1741).  
*I do know certainly*: VIII, 325 (26 Jan. 1731).  
*an unusual talent*: Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope, A Life* (New York and London: Norton in association with Yale UP, 1985), p. 186.
- 75 *become, by due gradation*: VI, 281 (to John Caryll, 26 Oct. 1722).  
*with such a solemn*: IX, 394 (to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, n.d.).
- 76 *the greatest man*: IX, 202 (17 Apr. 1739).  
*my own carcass*: VIII, 379 (to Lord Orrery, 10 May 1736).  
*I am now as busy*: IX, 190 (6 Nov. 1736).  
*the spirit of dissension*: X, 171 (15 Jul. 1715).  
*Instead of the four*: IX, 91 (to Robert Digby 28 Dec. 1724).  
*You ask me*: VII, 351 (30 Dec. 1736).
- 77 *I sincerely worship*: X, 223 (1 Dec. 1739).  
*the best controversies/Shall I tell*: IX, 11 (20 Nov. 1717).  
*O pin-money*: IX, 268 (17 Sep. 1718).  
*My Lord*: X, 205.  
*Sir, those are*: X, 208 (Nov. 1716).
- 78 *having passed through/old walls*: IX, 275-76 (Sep. 1717).  
*I have slid*: IX, 251 (6 Oct. 1714).  
*a genuine ancient*: IX, 401 Sep. (1718).

## 15. LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU

- All quotations from Lady Mary's letters are from *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, with additions by W. Moy Thomas*, 2 vols. (London: Swan Sonnenschein; New York: Macmillan, 1893).
- 81 Watson, Caroline. *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* [née Pierrepont], 1710. 1803. Image originally published by Richard Phillips, London. Courtesy of The Wellcome Collection, wellcomecollection.org/works/bw9udahc. CC\_BY 4.0.
- 82 *a little romantic*: I, 187 (c. 26 Jul. 1712).  
*come to terms*: I, 187 (12 Aug. 1712).  
*'Tis something odd*: I, 192 (16 Aug. 1712).
- 83 *'Tis the most cruel*: I, 198 (Oct. 1712).  
*I had rather*: I, 205 (25 Jul. 1713).  
 as *Robert Halsband*: Halsband, ed., *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1965-1967), I, xiv-xvii.
- 84 *the fine things*: I, 237 (14 Sep. 1716).  
*Prosperous Rotterdam*: I, 226 (to Lady Mar, 3 Aug. 1716).  
*Nijmegen is*: I, 228 (to Sarah Chiswell, 13 Aug 1716).  
*I cannot help*: I, 231 (to Lady Bristol, 22 Aug. 1716).  
*a great variety*: I, 238-39 (to Alexander Pope, 14 Sep. 1716).  
*in a town where*: I, 233 (to Anne Thistlewayte, 30 Aug. 1716).  
*Here are neither*: I, 244 (to Lady Rich, 20 Sep. 1716).
- 85 *extraordinary antic*: I, 299 (to Sarah Chiswell, 13 Aug. 1716),  
*rotten teeth*: I, 230 (to Lady —, 16 Aug. 1716).
- the only beautiful*: I, 250-51 (to Lady —, 1 Oct. 1716).  
*I have so far wandered*: I, 237-78 (14 Sep. 1716).  
*very much scandalised*: I, 234 (to Anne Thistlewayte, 30 Aug. 1716).
- 86 *I am now got*: I, 283 (1 Apr. 1717).  
*for twenty miles*: I, 354 (to Lady Bristol, 10 Apr. 1718).  
*It is situated*: I, 324 (to the Abbé Conti, 17 May 1717).  
*it was preceded*: I, 323 (same letter).
- 87 *I know no European*: I, 285 (to Lady —, 1 Apr. 1717).  
*are subjects*: I, 333 (to Lady —, 17 Jun. 1717).  
*The boy was engrafted*: I, 352-53 (to Wortley Montagu, 23 Mar. 1718).  
*many points of the Turkish*: I, 341-42 (to Anne Thistlewayte, 4 Jan. 1718).  
*is plain deism*: I, 289 (to the Abbé Conti, 1 Apr. 1717).  
*Compound the matter*: I, 363 (to the Countess of —, May 1718).  
*is not half so mortifying*: I, 342-43 (to Lady Mar, 10 Mar. 1718).  
*almost in tears*: I, 282 (to the Princess of Wales, 1 Apr. 1717).
- 88 *the most absolute*: I, 294 (to Lady Bristol, 1 Apr. 1717).  
*Considering what short-lived*: I, 370 (to the Abbé Conti, 19 May 1718).  
*a thousand disagreeable*: I, 391 (Sep. 1718).  
*The street called/These my beloved*: I, 387 (to Lady Mar, 28 Aug. 1718).  
*I pray God*: I, 402 (31 Oct. [Sept.] 1718).  
*spiced ... with wit*: Robert Halsband, ed., *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, 3 vols.

- (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1965-1967), II, ix.  
*at her most flippant*: Isobel Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), p. 223.  
*B[ridget] Noel*: I, 481 (Feb. 1725).
- 89 *Lady Herveoy*: I, 485 (Mar. or Apr. 1725).  
*I own I enjoy*: I, 490 (Sep. 1725).  
*Follies and nonsense*: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Chap. 11 (some editions, Vol. I, Chap. 11).  
*for ever miserable*: I, 455 (Jul. 1721).  
*as Halsband observes*: Robert Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (1956; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1961), p. 108.  
*First you must know*: I, 473 (31 Oct. 1723).  
*the coldness*: I, 472 (Oct. 1723).  
*this sinful seacoal*: I, 478 (Dec. 1724).  
*in very Billingsgate*: I, 495 (to Lady Mar, (22 Apr. 1726).  
*that nobody will buy*: II, 21 (to Dr. Arbuthnot, 3 Jan. 1735).  
*on the whole*: II, 138 (to Lady Oxford, 15 Oct. 1744).
- 90 *My girl*: I, 508 (Jul. 1727).  
 91 *I am sorry*: II, 92 (15 Aug. 1741).  
 92 *without hearing*: II, 148 (to Wortley Montagu, 23 Aug. 1746).  
*I do not desire*: II, 76 (11 Sep. 1740).  
*I generally rise*: II, 166-67 (to Lady Bute, 10 Jul. 1748).  
*by the introduction*: II, 245 (to the same, 27 Nov. 1753 [correctly, 1749]).
- 93 *a scandalous fellow*: II, 307 (to the same, 30 May 1757).  
*a place the most beautifully*: II, 153 (to the same, 24 Jul. ?1749).  
*you must turn to*: II, 198 (to the same, 17 Oct. 1750).  
*will climb three*: II, 250 (to the same, 23 Jun. 1754).
- but one hundred pounds/It is founded*: (to the same, 23 Jun. 1754).  
 94 *I shall for the future*: II, 194 (22 Jun. 1752).  
*this vile planet*: II, 353 (13 Jan. 1759).  
*I wish your daughters*: II, 317 (3 May 1758).
- 95 *a lottery, where*: II, 228 (to Lady Bute, 28 Jan. 1753).  
*what I think extraordinary*: II, 168 (17 Jul. 1748).  
*extravagant passions*: II, 280 (to Lady Bute, 23 Jul. 1754).  
*two books that will*: II, 222 (to the same, 1 Mar. 1752).  
*I always, if possible/I have never been/ they are surprised*: II, 286 (to the same, 20 Oct. 1755).
- 96 *I imagined that*: II, 343 (to Sir James Steuart, 18 Oct. 1758).  
*Nobody can deny*: II, 253 (to Lady Bute, 23 Jun. 1754).  
*necessary in all*: II, 207 (to Wortley Montagu, 20 Jun. 1751).  
*has an episcopal*: II, 233 (to Lady Bute, 2 Apr. 1753).  
*I wish every Englishman*: II, 152 (1 Mar. 1747).  
*the universal inclination*: II, 223 (to Lady Bute, 1 Mar. 1752).  
*very small proportion/the best dissection*: II, 377 (to Sir James Steuart, 7 Apr. 1760).  
*neither amusement*: II, 388 (to Sir James Steuart, 26 Dec. 1761).
- 97 *I am not born*: I, 147 (to Mrs. Hewet, 12 Nov. 1709).  
*a state of*: I, 512 (to Lady Mar, Sep. 1727).  
*I am afraid*: II, 362 (19 Jul. 1759).  
*I am not born*: II, 322 (to Sir James and Lady Steuart, Jun. 1758)

## 16. JOHN BYROM

- P* = *The Private Journal and Literary Remains of John Byrom*, ed. Richard Parkinson, 2 vols. (Manchester: The Chetham Society, 1854-1857).
- 99 Cook, H. *John Byrom, M.A.-F.A.S.* Circa 1750. Courtesy of The Wellcome Collection, [wellcomecollection.org/works/z38f8vc3](http://wellcomecollection.org/works/z38f8vc3). CC\_BY 4.0.
- It is not quite right: P*, II, ii, 350-51 (21 Apr. 1743).
- I love: P*, I, ii, 390 (7 Dec. 1719).
- 100 *My dear: P*, I, ii, 237 (Mar. 1727).  
*tell him: P*, II, i, 241-43 (26 Apr. 1739).  
*shows that nature: P*, II, ii, 599 (to Bishop Hildesley, 8 Oct. 1757).  
*True Religion: Adolphus William Ward*, ed., *The Poems of John Byrom*, 3 vols. (Manchester: The Chetham Society, 1895), II, 600 (Oct.? 1730).
- 101 *bequakered: Stephen Hobhouse, William Law and Eighteenth Century Quakerism Including Some Unpublished Letters and Fragments of William Law and John Byrom* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1927), pp. 121-38.  
*how great it sounds: P*, I, i, 17 (to John Stansfield).  
*for about half: P*, I, i, 288-90 (18 Jan. 1728).  
*a great many: P*, II, ii, 411-14 (1 Mar. 1746).
- 102 *were not used: P*, II, ii, 434 (to Elizabeth Byrom, his wife, 7 Apr. 1748).
17. LORD CHESTERFIELD
- L* = *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, with the Characters*, ed. John Bradshaw, 3 vols. (London: Sonnenschein, 1893).
- LG* = *Letters of Philip Dormer, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield, to His Godson and Successor*, ed. Earl of Carnarvon (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1890).
- LH* = *Letters of Lord Chesterfield to Lord Huntingdon*, ed. A. Francis Steuart (London: The Medici Society, 1923).
- LS* = *The Earl of Chesterfield, Letters to His Son*, introduction by Oliver H. G. Leigh, 2 vols. in one (New York: Dingwall-Rock, 1927).
- 103 Hoare, W. *Philip, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield*. 1909. Image from page 7 of "Life of Lord Chesterfield; an account of the ancestry, personal character & public services of the fourth Earl of Chesterfield." Courtesy of Internet Archive (source University of California Libraries) on flickr, <https://flickr.kr/p/otQhid>. No known copyright restrictions.  
*Saintsbury: George Saintsbury, The Peace of the Augustans* (1916; London, New York, Toronto: Oxford UP, 1951), p. 225.
- 104 *Lord Bolingbroke: LS*, I, 244 (n.d.).  
*Everybody knows: LS*, II, 423 (16 Jul. 1743).  
*There is hardly: LS*, II, 421 (n.d.).
- 105 *What men call: Byron, Don Juan*, Canto I, stanza 63.  
*The gallantry: LS*, I, 299 (8 Mar. 1750).  
*As for mistresses: LH*, p. 26 (29 Sep. 1750).  
*I should have thought: LS*, II, 19 (6 Jun. 1751).

- has as yet been*: LS, I, 404 (15 Apr. 1751).  
*infinitely short*: LS, I, 197 (7 Aug. 1749).  
*Ah qu'il*: LS, II, 147 (14 Jan. 1753).  
*an excellent good*: LS, I, 139 (18 Nov. 1748).  
*made him beloved*: LS, I, 269-70 (n.d.).  
106 *was necessarily*: LS, I, 394 (18 Mar. 1751).  
*German stiffness*: translated from L, III, 979 (14 Jan. 1751).  
*knowledge is all*: LS, III, 995 (5 Oct. 1751).  
*It is not in his character*: LS, II, 98 (Jun. 1752).  
*I confess*: LS, II, 103 (26 Jun. 1752).  
*a comforting letter*: LS, 196-98 (27 Nov. 1754 [correctly 17 Nov. 1755]).  
*I have placed*: L, III, 1159 (21 Nov. 1756).  
107 *I look upon*: LS, II, 184 (26 Feb. 1764).  
*Go on so*: LS, II, 213 (26 Oct. 1757).  
*At this rate*: LS, 249 (18 Oct. 1758).  
*I cannot accuse*: LS, II, 231 (25 Apr. 1758).  
*He has excellent*: translated from L, III, 1307 (5 Jun. 1764).  
*I am of a very different opinion*: LS, II, 329 (12 Mar. 1768).  
108 *perpetual shackles*: LS, II, 336 (5 Nov. 1769).  
*Charles will be/two of the best*: LS, II, 339 (27 Oct. 1771).  
109 *The more I love*: LG, p. 308 (19 Jun. 1770).  
*of his faults*: L, III, 1400 (10 Sep. 1772).  
*tells Philip*: LS, I, 46 (Feb. 1748).  
*tells Dayrolles*: L, II, 845-47 (26 Jan. 1748).  
*neoclassical mansion*: LS, I, 93 (20 Jul. 1748).  
*his brother John*: LS, I, 142 (6 Dec. 1748).  
*melon seeds*: LS, I, 333 (Jul. 1750).  
*Have one handsome snuff-box*: LS, I, 345 (8 Nov. 1750).  
*I own I fear*: LS, II, 184 (26 Feb. 1754).  
110 *who had ten times*: LS, II, 182 (26 Feb. 1754).  
*have natural and inherent*: LH, p. 54 (25 Nov. 1751).  
*The natural rights*: LH, p. 9 (26 Mar. 1750).  
*I know of*: LS, II, 162 (19 Oct. 1753).  
*arts, sciences*: LS, II, 407 (n.d.).  
*fixed laws*: LS, I, 327 (11 Jun. 1750).  
*We are all*: LS, II, 370-71 (n.d.).  
111 *The lowest*: LG, p. 14 (1762).  
*great crowd*: LS, II, 315 (Dec. 1766).  
*a parcel of*: LS, 207-08 (30 Sep. 1757).  
*the absurd and groundless*: LS, II, 165 (26 Nov. 1753).  
*were nobody wiser*: L, III, 1338 (22 May 1776).  
*that if the military*: L, III, 1313-14 (1 Oct. 1764).  
*men have done*: LS, II, 432 (5 Apr. 1746).  
*only children*: LS, I, 107 (5 Sep. 1748).  
*I mean good*: LH, p. 20 (24 Sep. 1750).  
*whim and humour*: LS, II, 255 (2 Feb. 1759).  
*Luther*: LS, I, 67 (26 Apr. 1748).  
*Fénelon*: II, 141-42 (28 Nov. 1752).  
*St. Ignatius*: LS, I, 264 (16 Dec. 1749) and II, 52-53 (6 Jan. 1752).  
*the prophet Mohammed*: LS, II, 412 (n.d.).  
*which you will and ought*: LG, p. 129 (n.d.).  
*Moses is not*: LH, p. 127 (6 Dec. 1765).  
112 *do you still put*: LS, II, 425 (25 Jan. 1745).  
*conforming all our actions*: LS, I, 106 (5 Sep. 1748).  
*the native beauty*: LS, I, 51 (6 Jan. 1752).

- the most tyrannical kings*: translated from *L*, III, 973 (26 Nov. 1750).  
*remember ... that errors*: *LS*, I, 20 (21 Sep. 1747).  
*the herd of mankind*: *LS*, I, 161 (7 Feb. 1749).  
*which he would do better*: translated from *L*, III, 1376-77 (14 Jun. 1768).
- 113 *Homer and Virgil*: *LS*, I, 159 (7 Feb. 1749).  
*Corneille, Racine*: *LS*, I, 163 (same date).  
*There is not, nor ever was*: *LS*, I, 348 (n.d.).  
*to Baron Kreuningen*: *L*, III, 1030 (7 Jul. 1752).  
*genius had been cultivated*: *LS*, I, 65 (1 Apr. 1748).  
*The reign of King Charles II*: *LS*, I, 296 (8 Feb. 1750).  
*to bring your mother*: *LS*, II, 37 (8 Jul. 1751).  
*if it be but three words*: *LS*, II, 275 (14 Jul. 1763).  
*has been bred*: *LS*, I, 337 (22 Oct. 1750).  
*We have here*: translated from *L*, III, 1016 (2 Apr. 1752).
- 114 *full of good matter*: *LS*, II, 261-62 (16 Apr. 1759).  
*extremely devout*: *LS*, II, 302 (28 Nov. 1765).  
*This work is not only*: *LS*, 287 (3 Sep. 1764).  
*he has entirely lost*: *LS*, II, 332 (17 Oct. 1768).
- 115 *John Tillotson*: *L*, III, 1126 (26 Jun. 1725).  
*reliance on God's mercy*: *L*, III, 1263 (22 Jan. 1760).  
*the rage and fury*: *L*, III, 1026 (22 May 1752).  
*party feuds*: *L*, III, 1104 (13 Apr. 1754).
- a degree of quiet*: *L*, III, 1087 (7 Mar. 1754).  
*indecent, ungenerous*: *L*, III, 1123 (2 May 1755).  
*with the exception of*: translated from *L*, II, 878 (30 Jul. 1848).  
*a Jacobite exile*: *L*, III, 964-65 (16 Aug. 1750).  
*a supposed rival*: *L*, II, 835 (8 Sep. 1747).  
*to the Amazons*: *L*, II, 950 (19 Apr. 1750).  
*playful fantasy*: *L*, III, 1076-77 (12 Nov. 1753).
- 116 *whose moral character*: *LS*, I, 383-84 (28 Feb. 1751).

## 18. SAMUEL JOHNSON

- LJ* = James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 2 vols. in 1 (London: Oxford UP, 1922).  
*LS* = *Letters of Samuel Johnson*, LL. D. ed. George Birbeck Hill, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1892).  
*Qu* = *The Queeney Letters*, ed. Marquis of Lansdowne (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1934).
- 117 Fry, W.J. *Samuel Johnson, L.L.D.* 1816. Image originally published by T. Cadell and W. Davies Strand. Courtesy of The Wellcome Collection, [wellcomecollection.org/works/jbcf5gw6](http://wellcomecollection.org/works/jbcf5gw6). CC BY 4.0.  
*add no pain*: *LJ*, II, 314 (13 Nov. 1779).  
*love of reading*: *LJ*, I, 411 (25 Sep. 1770).
- 118 *money on building*: *LS*, I, 99-100 (12 Jul. 1763).  
*buy land*: *LS*, II, 32 (15 Sep. 1777).  
*in arithmetic*: *Qu*, p. 30 (24 Jul. 1783).  
*he felt himself*: *LJ*, I, 43.  
*lawful business*: *LS*, II, 210 (5 Apr. 1781).

- You know poor Mr. Dodsley:* LJ, I, 184 (21 Dec. 1754).
- George Irwin demonstrates:* in his article "Dr. Johnson's Troubled Mind" in *Samuel Johnson: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Donald J. Greene (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 22-29.
- 119 *When the duty:* LJ, I, 193 (6 May 1755).
- If she were to live:* Ls, I, 81 (23 Jan. 1759).
- my Dearest:* Ls, I, 47 (30 Dec. 1755).
- My sweet Angel:* Ls, I, 48 (31 Dec. 1755).
- none but you:* LJ, II, 375n (Jan. 1755).
- The Laird of Raarsa:* Ls, I, 258 (24 Sep. 1773).
- 120 *On the 13th:* Ls, I, 266 (30 Sep. 1773).
- Macbeth's heath:* Ls, I, 239 (6 Sep. 1773).
- St. Columba:* Ls, I, 283 (23 Oct. 1773).
- The use of travelling:* Ls, I, 254 (21 Sep. 1773).
- About ten miles:* Ls, I, 283 (23 Oct. 1773).
- 121 *I love the Thrales:* Ls, I, 339 (23 Jun. 1775).
- that place which:* Ls, I, 129 (20 Jul. 1767).
- lie abed:* Ls, I, 315 (12 May 1775).
- You will become:* Ls, II, 10 (19 May 1777).
- The event is:* Ls, I, 292-93 (12 Nov. 1773).
- despicable dread:* Ls, II, 127 (16 Nov. 1779).
- do not think:* Ls, II, 51 (25 Oct. 1777).
- one of the great efforts:* Ls, I, 175 (3 Jul. 1771).
- Unlimited obedience:* Ls, I, 217 (17 May 1773).
- 122 *We have tolerable concord:* Ls, II, 77 (14 Nov. 1778).
- a very peremptory:* Ls, I, 184 (3 Aug. 1771).
- They pay [for the theatre]:* Ls, II, 252-53
- an undated letter:* Richard Ingrams, *Dr. Johnson by Mrs. Thrale* (London: Chatto and Windus, Hogarth Press, 1984), p. 115n.
- Insane thoughts:* David Littlejohn, ed., *Dr. Johnson: His Life in Letters* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), p. 94.
- her reply:* *ibid.*
- We can hardly be confident:* Ls, I, 353 (20 Jul. 1775).
- 123 *A nurse made of:* Ls, II, 110 (21 Oct. 1779).
- Poor Mrs. [Burney]:* Ls, II, 54 (22 Oct. 1777).
- No death since:* Ls, II, 209 (5 Apr. 1781).
- Of my life, from:* LJ, II, 442 (20 Mar. 1782).
- I am now reduced:* LJ, II, 600 (2 Aug. 1784).
- My dwelling:* LJ, II, 439 (2 Mar. 1782).
- 124 *Last month died:* Ls, II, 348 (10 Nov. 1783).
- was bold, and deserved:* LJ, II, 598-99 (6 Oct. 1784).
- in amusement:* *ibid.* (29 Sep. 1784).
- there are other things:* Ls, II, 389 (15 Apr. 1784).
- If you have abandoned:* Ls, II, 406 (2 Jul. 1784).
- What you have done:* Ls, II, 407-08 (8 Jul. 1784).
- I love you:* Qu, p. 51 (12 Aug. 1784).
- can now look back:* Ls, I, 250 (21 Sep. 1773).
- 125 *Boswell's claim:* LJ, II, 630-31.
- Write to me no more:* Ls, II, 384 (20 Mar. 1784).
- O! my friend:* LJ, II, 534 (12 Apr. 1784).

*forgive and accept*: Christopher Hibbert, *The Personal History of Samuel Johnson* (London: Longman, 1971), p. 312.  
*My mind, however*: *Ls*, II, 423 (6 Oct. 1784).

#### 19. LAURENCE STERNE

All the quotations from Sterne's letters are taken from *The Complete Works and Life of Laurence Sterne*, 5 vols., (New York and London: The Clonmel Society, 1899). Each volume consists of 2 volumes in 1. Vol. III is divided between *A Sentimental Journey* and *Letters, Vol. I*; Vol. IV is divided into *Letters, Vol. II* and *Letters, Vol. III*. References are to these sub-volumes—*Letters, I, II, and III*.)

- 127 *Laurence Sterne*. 1912. Image from page 234 of "The life and letters of Laurence Sterne". Courtesy of Internet Archive (source New York Public Library) on flickr, flic.kr/p/odQfZL. No known copyright restrictions.  
*The sermons came*: III, 15 (to Mrs. Draper, ?late Jan. 1767).  
*Curse on farming*: II, 180 (to ?Sir William Stanhope, 19 Sep. 1767).
- 128 *the volume I am*: II, 17 (9 Nov. 1762).  
*in using the [walking] stick*: II, 215 (9 Feb. 1768).  
*so much am I delighted*: I, 207 (21 Sep. 1761).  
*Get your preferment first*: I, 182-83 (summer 1759).  
*I may find it*: I, 173 (19 Jun. 1760).  
*Dear Sir, - 'Twas*: I, 157 (6 Mar. 1760).
- 129 *I Shandy it*: I, 218 (19 Mar. 1762).  
*I should have walked*: I, 201 (Jun. 1761).  
*the whole city of Paris*: I, 219 (to David Garrick, 19 Mar. 1762).

- I could have found*: I, 215-16 (15 Mar. 1762).
- 130 *For God's sake*: I, 236 (16 May 1762)  
*the prettiest situation/Oh! how I envy*: II, 4-6 (to John Hall-Stevenson, 12 Aug. 1762).  
*the eternal platitude*: II, 14 (to the same, 19 Oct. 1762).  
*I shall set out*: II, 41-42 (to Robert Foley, 5 Oct. 1763).  
*There is no sitting*: II, 59.  
*I have been Miss-ridden*: II, 70 (to John Hall-Stevenson, 13 Nov. 1764).
- 131 *God will open*: I, 153 (1 Apr. 1760).  
*I have been for*: II, 52-53 (19 May 1764).  
*a dish clout*: II, 82-85 (23 Apr. 1765).  
*His claim in 1761*: I, 214 (15 Mar. 1762).
- 132 *my wife returns*: II, 46 (20 Jan. 1764).  
*I wish she may*: I, 250 (to Lady D., 9 Jul. 1762).  
*except a tear*: II, 48 (to Mrs. F., 1 Feb. 1764).  
*I hope you have not*: II, 50 (15 May 1764).  
*seek a kindlier*: II, 91 (to Mrs. Meadows, 21 Jul. 1765).  
*at its Carnival*: II, 103 (5 Feb. 1766).  
*Never man has been*: II, 110-11 (24 May 1766).
- 133 *It has set in*: II, 132 (?9 Jan. 1767).  
*It was so intensely*: II, 134 (16 Jan. 1767).  
*I myself must*: II, 86 (23 ?Aug. 1765).  
*busy fool/'tis true I have*: II, 138 (23 Feb. 1767).  
*I will live for thee*: III, 38 (Mar. 1767).  
*I will send*: III, 41 (Mar. 1767).
- 134 *lessons in painting*: II, 218 (to L. Selwin, ?17 Feb. 1768).  
*I am as happy/love-sick heart*: II, 155, 156 (to A. L—E, Esq., 7 Jun. 1767).



- A letter extant in draft form*: Lewis Perry Curtis, ed. *Letters of Laurence Sterne* (1935; Oxford: Clarendon P, 1965), pp. 360-62.
- I ought now*: II, 158 (to A. L—E, Esq., 30 Jun. 1767).
- takes back sixteen hundred*: II, 172 (10 Aug. 1767).
- 135 *my Lydia seems*: II, 183 (1 Oct. 1767).
- she is all heaven*: II, 190-91 (12 Nov. 1767).
- time will wear off*: II, 196 (to A. L—E, Esq., 19 Nov. 1767).
- tuberculosis of*: Arthur H. Cash, *Laurence Sterne: The Later Years* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 290.
- died with a jest on their lips*: Reginald Blunt, *Mrs. Montagu, "Queen of the Blues"* (London: Constable, 1923), 2 vols., I, 192-93 (to Mrs. Montagu, ?Mar. 1768).
- fervent ejaculation*: III, 39 (Mar. 1767).
- Now, my dears*: I, 246 (17 Jun. 1762).
- my Sentimental Journey*: II, 181-82 (to ? Sir William Stanhope, 27 Sep. 1767).
- 136 *to teach us to love*: II, 191-92 (12 Nov. 1767).
- we must be happy within*: II, 72 (16 Nov. 1764).
- What a difference*: II, 115-16 (to Mr. S., 23 Jul. 1766).
- But I am a resigned being*: II, 159-60 (30 Jun. 1767).
- Internet Archive (source Library of Congress) on flickr, [flic.kr/p/odPSx8](http://flic.kr/p/odPSx8). No known copyright restrictions.
- The Masters of Colleges*: I, 3 (31 Oct. 1734).
- I have made*: I, 18 (to Horace Walpole, 14 Jan. 1735).
- a country flowing*: I, 33 (Richard West to Gray, 14 Nov. 1735).
- do but imagine me*: I, 7 (17 Nov. 1734).
- the account of plays*: I, 16-17 (to Horace Walpole, 12 Jan. 1735).
- 138 *a green lane*: I, 47-48 (to the same, Aug. 1736).
- I swing from chapel or hall*: I, 65 (Jul. 1737).
- 'tis true*: I, 82 (20 Mar. 1738).
- we hardly saw anything*: I, 99 (1 Apr. 1739).
- at Amiens the Cathedral*: I, 99-100 (to his mother, 1 Apr. 1739).
- perhaps as handsome buildings*: I, 104 (to Thomas Ashton, 21 Apr. 1739).
- a huge heap of littleness/copies of all*: I, 107-08 (to Richard West, 22 May 1739).
- republic of Geneva/You may imagine*: I, 123-24 (to his father, 29 Oct. 1739).
- 139 *eight days tiresome journey*: I, 125-27 (7 Nov. 1739).
- I do not remember/The creatures that inhabit*: I, 128, 129 (16 Nov. 1739).
- I believe I forgot/cursing French music*: I, 130, 131 (21 Nov. 1739).
- therefore, churches*: I, 134 (to his mother, 19 Dec. 1739).
- As high as my expectation*: I, 146 (to his mother, 2 Apr. 1740).
- thousands of little*: I, 147 (to the same, 15 Apr. 1740).
- 140 *treats West to an account*: I, 158-62 (May 1740).

## 20. THOMAS GRAY

All the quotations from Gray's letters are taken from *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, ed. Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley, 3 vols., (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1935).

- 137 *Thomas Gray*. 1912. Image from page 5 of "English lyrics from Dryden to Burns". Courtesy of

- gives great scandal*: I, 166 (to his father, 10 Jul. 1740).
- the most beautiful part*: I, 162 (to his mother, 14 Jun. 1740).
- Naples, which Gray finds*: I, 162-64 (the same).
- This I feel*: I, 181 (21 Apr. 1741).
- The boys laugh*: I, 186-87 (7 Sep. 1741).
- the trial of the Scottish peers*: I, 232-39 (to Thomas Wharton, 10 Aug. 1746).
- purchase of a rope ladder*: II, 455-57 (to the same, 9 Jan. 1756).
- 141 *small and waddling*: I, 22 (to Horace Walpole, 27 Jan. 1735).
- a solitary of six years*: I, 255 (to Thomas Wharton, 11 Dec. 1746).
- I have been this month*: I, 335 (to the same, 18 Dec. 1750).
- when the publisher Dodsley*: I, 372 (to Horace Walpole, 13 Feb. 1753).
- as to humanity*: I, 420 (9 Mar. 1755).
- The Spirit of Laziness/brandy will finish*: I, 317-18 (25 Apr. 1749).
- Here, take them*: II, 773-74 (5 Feb. 1761 [correctly, 1762]).
- to be employed*: II, 520 (25 Aug. 1757).
- he then sends to West*: I, 38-41 (8 May 1736).
- 142 *is too diffuse*: I, 196 (to Richard West, 23 Apr. 1742).
- To me they appear*: I, 193 (to Richard West, 8 Apr. 1742).
- the justness of thought*: III, 995-96 (to William Taylor How, 12 Jan. 1768).
- Every language has*: II, 748 (to Christopher Anstey, ?Sep. 1761).
- The only good thing I hear*: III, 1057-58 (to Thomas Wharton, 20 Apr. 1769).
- neither appear'd insolent*: II, 876 (to James Brown, 20 May 1765).
- laggards in painting and sculpture*: II, 812 (to Count Algarotti, 9 Sep. 1763); II, 814, (to William Taylor How, 10 Sep. 1763).
- I rejoice at their dulness*: II, 907 (to Horace Walpole, 13 Dec. 1765).
- 143 *encourages Wharton to continue*: II, 806 (to Thomas Wharton, 5 Aug. 1763).
- twice a day to church*: II, 781 (to James Brown, 19 Jul. 1762).
- that inexhaustible, eternal*: II, 840 (to Thomas Wharton, 10 Jul. 1764).
- a turbid and shallow stream*: III, 1141 (to James Beattie, 2 Jul. 1770).
- various parts of York Minster*: II, 795-96 (to the Rev. William Mason, 8 Feb. 1763).
- a detailed critique*: II, 862-66 (to James Bentham, ?Mar. 1765).
- rage of repairing*: II, 865-66 (same letter).
- It is mere pedantry*: II, 765 (to Thomas Wharton, 13 Nov. 1761).
- advises the Scottish James Beattie*: III, 1140 (2 Jul. 1770).
- This very night*: II, 687 (to James Brown, 26 Jul. 1760).
- 144 *Lady Harriet Wentworth*: II, 848, 850 (to James Brown, 25 and 29 Oct. 1764).
- the world ... a very foolish thing*: II, 770 (to Thomas Wharton, 11 Jan. 1761 [correctly 1762]).
- I sat a morning*: III, 923 (to Thomas Wharton, 5 Mar. 1766).
- an old gentlewoman*: I, 20 (to Horace Walpole, 21 [correctly, 19] Jan. 1735).
- gives the first movement*: I, 135 (to his mother, 19 Dec. 1739).
- a stately old lady*: I, 136 (same letter).
- 145 *I am agreeably employ'd*: II, 592 (to Thomas Wharton, 9 Nov. 1758).
- she is just as sensible*: III, 1151 (to Norton Nicholls, 25 Nov. 1770).

- it is his constant practice*: I, 355 (to Horace Walpole, 26 Nov. 1751).  
*this gentle this innocent*: III, 950 (from the Rev. William Mason to Gray, 2 Feb, 1767).  
*would be Italy*: II, 897 (2 Nov. 1765).  
*those monstrous creatures*: II, 899 (8 Nov. 1765).  
*journal-letter*: II, 887-95 (Sep. 1765).  
*the southern beauty of Kent*: III, 929-30 (to Thomas Wharton, 26 Aug. 1766).  
*a second journal-letter*: III, 1074-81, 1087-91, 1094-1110 (Sep.-Oct. 1769). Quoted passage, p. 1080.
- 146 *He that reads*: Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*, 2 vols. (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1950), II, 386.  
*vastly better than*: III, 1086 (from Norton Nicholls to Gray, 27 Nov. 1769).  
*I never saw such a boy*: III, 1112 (6 Jan. 1770).  
*His cursed Father*: III, 1114 (20 Mar. 1770).  
*asks Nicholls to burn*: III, 1115-16 (4 Apr. 1770).  
*under the stress of temptation*: III, 1121 (to Norton Nicholls, 14 Apr. 1770).  
*Plato's Philosopher-King*: III, 1118-19 (to Victor de Bonstetten, 12 Apr. 1770).  
*My life now*: III, 1127 (19 Apr. 1770).  
*The thought, that you might*: III, 1132 (9 May 1770).  
*he seems at present*: III, 1133 (22 May 1770).  
*For God's sake how*: III, 1190 (from Norton Nicholls to Gray, 17 May 1771).
- 21. HORACE WALPOLE**
- C = Peter Cunningham, ed., *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford*, 9 vols. (London: H. G. Bohn, 1861-1866).  
T = Mrs. Paget Toynbee, ed., *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Fourth Earl of Orford, Chronologically Arranged*, 16 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1903) and Paget [Jackson] Toynbee, ed., *Supplement to the Letters of Horace Walpole, Fourth Earl of Oxford, Chronologically Arranged*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1918-1925).
- 149 Eccardt, John Giles. *Sir Horace Walpole*. 1754. Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Horace\_Walpole\_by\_John\_Giles\_Eccardt.jpg. Public domain.  
*Nobody yet*: T, X, 50 (to the Rev. William Mason, 16 May (1777)).  
*two barbarous towns*: C, I, 2 (to Richard West, 9 Nov. 1735).
- 150 *no plumes, trophies*: C, I, 16 (to the same, 21 Apr. 1739).  
*all the morn*: C, I, 36 (to the same, 27 Feb. 1740).  
*I am far gone*: C, I, 45-46 (23 Apr. 1740).  
*You can't think*: C, I, 93 (to Horace Mann, 26 Nov. 1741).  
*For virtù*: T, I, 132-33 (1741).  
*with as much spirit*: C, I, 106 (to Horace Mann, 24 Dec. 1741).  
*Trust me*: T, I, 145 (to the same, 1741).  
*When he kissed*: C, I, 124 (to the same, 4 Feb. 1742).  
*Lord Orford returns*: C, I, 151 (to the same, 1 Apr. 1742).

- 151 *he is for my living*: C, I, 181 (to the same, 30 Jun. 1742).  
*Italy is pleasanter*: C, I, 74 (1741).  
*Dull as London is*: C, I, 240 (to Horace Mann, 14 Apr. 1743).  
*prisoner in*: C, I, 196 (to the same, 20 Aug. 1742).  
*I can't help wishing*: C, I, 241 (to the same, 25 Apr. 1743).  
*loves to write history*: C, II, 375 (to the same, 7 Mar. 1754).  
*I have another Gothic*: C, II, 336 (11 Jun. 1753).  
*Nothing appears*: C, IV, 48 (20 Dec. 1762).  
*every day more hooked*: C, I, 286 (to Horace Mann, 24 Jan. 1744).  
*I was from two*: C, II, 426 (to Richard Bentley, 6 Mar. 1755).  
*former agitated*: C, V, 350 (to Horace Mann, 18 Nov. 1771).  
*Pitt, with less*: C, IV, 186 (to the Earl of Hertford, 15 Feb. 1764).
- 152 *How often, when*: C, VIII, 330 (to Horace Mann, 3 Feb. 1783).  
*the worst that can happen*: C, I, 290-91 (to the same, 16 Feb. 1744).  
*Attempts have been made*: C, I, 291 (to the same, 23 Feb. 1744).  
*refugee heretics*: C, I, 305 (to the same, 11 Jun. 1744).  
*The confusion I have found*: C, I, 385-86 (6 Sep. 1745).  
*But, sure, banditti*: C, I, 390 (to Horace Mann, 20 Sep. 1745).  
*we are sadly convinced/my Lord Granville*: C, I, 392, 393 (to the same, 27 Sep. 1745).
- 153 *I have so trained*: C, I, 393 (same letter).  
*We dread them*: C, I, 409 (to Horace Mann, 9 Dec. 1745).  
*with that sword*: C, I, 414 (to the same, 3 Jan. 1746).  
*little rural bijou/The house*: C, II, 85-86 (5 Jun. 1747).
- Having done with building*: C, II, 452 (17 Jul. 1755).  
*and the parsons*: T, V, 68 (to George Montagu, 18 Jun. 1761).  
*I hate writing travels*: T, Supp., III, 386 (7 Sep. 1745).
- 154 *It was always death*: C, IX, 23 (to Henry Conway, 6 Oct. 1785).  
*I am going to build*: C, II, 190 (10 Jan. 1750).  
*my child Strawberry*: C, VI, 232 (to Lady Ossory, 23 Jul. 1775).  
*my little Jerusalem*: C, VII, 215 (to the same, 22 Jun. 1779).  
*They saluted my castle*: T, XV, 353 (to Mary Berry, 22 Aug. 1795).  
*my divinity*: C, II, 413 (to Richard Bentley, 24 Dec. 1754).  
*my saint*: C, IV, 439 (to Lady Hervey, 21 Nov. 1765).  
*seen a good half century*: C, IX 63 (to Lady Ossory, 2 Aug. 1786).  
*several that are never*: T, Supp., III, 78 (27 Sep. 1795).
- 155 *countries other than their own*: T, XV, 159 (to the Rev. William Beloe, 2 Nov. 1792).  
*It is unpardonable*: C, VII 178 (to the Rev. William Cole, 18 Feb. 1779).  
*I am the first*: C, VI, 221 (6 Jun. 1775).  
*Youth, great spirits*: T, XV, 334-35 (to the Rev. William Beloe, c. 1795).  
*probably be condemned*: C, VI, 102 (to Horace Mann, 3 Aug. 1774).  
*got together a great many*: James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, 2 vols. in 1, (London: Oxford UP, 1922), II, 566.  
*I love antiquities*: C, V, 425 (8 Jan. 1773).  
*time-honoured Lancaster*: C, IX, 135 (to Lady Ossory, 22 Jul. 1788).  
*What means*: quoted C, VI, 351 (to the same, 25 Jun. 1776).

- Bishop of Ely*: T, VII, 283 (to the Rev. William Cole, 14 Jun. 1769).
- Lord Rochester*: T, IX, 219 (to the Rev. William Mason, 10 Jul. 1775).
- Earl of Leicester*: T, X, 381 (to the Rev. William Cole, 18 Feb. 1779).
- 156 *an attempt to blend*: C, IV, 331 (16 Mar. 1765).
- that of all his works*: T, Supp., I, 152 (13 Mar. 1767).
- an unconscious memory*: IX, 157 (27 Jan. 1775).
- I am too, though a Goth*: C, VIII, 108 (to the Rev. William Mason, 13 Nov. 1781).
- a lump of mineral*: C, VI, 201 (to the same, 14 Apr. 1775).
- extravagant, absurd, disgusting*: C, VIII, 235 (to the same, 25 Jun. 1782).
- who never invented*: T, XIV, 346 (to Joseph Cooper Walker, 21 Dec. 1790).
- the knave Ferdinand*: C, VII, 187 (to the Rev. William Cole, 28 Mar. 1779).
- Indian and Byzantine art*: T, XV, 79 (to Mary Berry, 9 Oct. 1791).
- Sanskrit literature*: T, XV, 383-84 (to the same, 22 Nov. 1795).
- Arabic poetry*: T, XV, 415-16 (to the same, 16 Aug. 1796).
- The Pretender to be renounced*: C, II, 108 (29 Apr. 1748).
- 157 *he declares the following March*: T, III, 292 (to Horace Mann, 10 Mar. 1755).
- Fight we must*: C, II, 502 (25 Jan. 1756).
- have never shot*: C, III, 237 (17 Jul. 1759).
- Nothing is talked of*: C, III, 239 (1 Aug. 1759).
- Poetic justice*: C, III, 258 (to Horace Mann, 19 Oct. 1759).
- I think our sixteen*: C, III, 269 (30 Nov. 1759).
- All England has kept*: C, III, 124 (to Horace Mann, 9 Feb. 1758).
- as I was walking*: C, III, 168 (to the same, 9 Sep. 1758).
- the Nation against it*: C, IV, 50 (to the same, 30 Nov. 1762).
- says it is inadequate*: C, IV, 42 (to the same, 9 Nov. 1762).
- Sir Robert's long awaited*: T, IV, 325 (to William Pitt the Elder, 19 Nov. 1759).
- Am not I*: C, III, 449 (10 Oct. 1761).
- 158 *he changed, not I*: C, III, 460 (to Horace Mann, 14 Nov. 1761).
- the French disease*: C, IV, 118 (to the same, 17 Oct. 1763).
- our passion for everything*: C, IV, 51 (to the same, 30 Nov. 1762).
- For the King himself*: C, III, 360 (13 Nov. 1760).
- this charming young King*: C, III, 368-69 (to Horace Mann, 5 Dec. 1760).
- It is intimated*: C, III, 354 (to the same, 28 Oct. 1760).
- Here are changes*: C, III, 383 (17 Mar. 1761).
- I suppose his childish mind*: C, IV, 68 (to George Montagu, 14 Apr. 1763).
- This hero is*: C, IV, 73 (to Horace Mann, 30 Apr. 1763).
- 159 *share his savings with him*: T, VI, 59-61 (to Henry Conway, 21 Apr. 1764).
- You see I write*: C, IV, 278-79 (5 Oct. 1764).
- As we have still liberty*: C, IV, 375 (to George Montagu, 10 Jun. 1765).
- I receive the greatest*: C, IX, 489 (20 Sep. 1765).
- I avoid all politics*: C, IV, 419 (6 Oct. 1765).

- very civil*: C, IV, 421 (to George Montagu, 16 Oct. 1765).
- disagreeable enough*: T, VI, 298 (to the Countess of Suffolk, 20 Sep. 1765).
- the man I have like the best*: C, IV, 426 (to Thomas Brand, 19 Oct. 1765).
- written to Gray*: T, VI, 402-10 (25 Jan. 1766).
- Good folks*: C, IV, 425 (to Thomas Brand, 19 Oct. 1765).
- 160 *had had une évacuation*: C, IV, 435 (to Thomas Gray, 19 Nov. 1765).
- charming*: C, IV, 453 (to Lady Hervey, 2 Jan. 1766).
- whose French is the worst*: T, VIII, 303 (to the Rev. William Mason, 5 Jul. 1773).
- this best and sincerest*: C, V, 186 (7 Sep. 1769).
- the vanity and paranoia of Rousseau*: T, VII, 18-22 (16 Jul. 1766).
- observes that The Castle of Otranto*: T, Supp., I, 151-52 (13 Mar. 1767).
- urges her by no means*: T, Supp., I, 206-07 (Apr. 1772).
- in a convent*: T, Supp., I, 238-39 (Apr. 1774).
- solicits her help*: T, Supp., I, 216-18 (Jun. and 1 Jul. 1773).
- he strives in vain*: T, Supp., I, 185-86 (9 Feb. 1770).
- 161 *She and I went*: C, V, 183 (30 Aug. 1769).
- to my shame*: C, III, 185 (to the Rev. Henry Zouch, 21 Oct. 1758).
- I have often said*: C, V, 212 (31 Dec. 1769).
- I desire to die*: C, IV, 441 (21 Nov. 1765).
- the excellence of our constitution*: C, VIII, 430 (to the Earl of Strafford, 10 Nov. 1783).
- neither a royalist*: C, IX, 399 (to Lady Ossory, 7 Dec. 1792).
- so nearly do we tread*: C, V, 215 (to Horace Mann, 10 Jan. 1770).
- 162 *the least bad*: C, III, 72 (to the same, 20 Apr. 1757).
- a copy of the death warrant*: T, IV, 1 (to George Montagu, 14 Oct. 1756).
- conquest, unless*: C, IV, 33 (to Horace Mann, 3 Oct. 1762).
- Were I a poet*: C, VII, 482 (31 Dec. 1780).
- so ungenerous*: C, V, 463 (to the Rev. William Mason, 15 May 1773).
- who but Machiavel*: C, IX, 50 (to Horace Mann, 30 Apr. 1786).
- Kings have left/Grotius*: C, VII, 92 (to Henry Conway, 8 Jul. 1778).
- by the new law of nations*: C, VII, 329 (to Horace Mann, 6 Feb. 1780).
- You know I love*: C, V, 6 (23 Jul. 1766).
- 163 *Paris revived in me*: C, V, 195-96 (8 Oct. 1769).
- it is hoped*: C, VIII, 79 (12 Sep. 1781).
- I detest a correspondence*: C, III, 247 (29 Aug. 1759).
- I dined today*: C, IV, 408 (22 Sep. 1765).
- Freethinking is for one's self*: *ibid.*, 407.
- I expect soon*: C, III, 497 (22 Mar. 1762).
- that summary of*: T, X, 281 (to the Rev. William Cole, 12 Jul. 1778).
- are but graver fashions*: C, VIII, 520 (to Horace Mann, 8 Nov. 1784).
- In physicians I believe*: C, V, 10 (to the same, 9 Sep. 1766).
- Church and presbytery*: T, X, 280-81 (12 Jul. 1778).
- metaphysical divinity*: C, II, 409 (to Horace Mann, 1 Dec. 1754).
- Gods of stone*: C, IV, 491 (to the same, 21 Mar. 1766).
- 164 *impossible to know*: T, Supp., I, 155-56 (2 Jun. 1767).

- no doubt but the real*: C, VI, 215 (17 May 1775).
- I have an odd*: C, VI, 405 (19 Jan. 1777).
- set people together*: C, IX, 232 (4 Nov. 1789).
- that had I been Luther*: C, VII, 393 (to the Rev. William Mason, 9 Jun. 1780).
- No man*: C, VI, 406 (to Lady Ossory, 19 Jan. 1777).
- may be of use to prevail*: Introduction, Section 4.
- no curiosity about*: T, Supp., III, 22 (to Sir William Hamilton, 18 Feb. 1776).
- original genius*: C, VI, 493 (to the Rev. William Mason, 5 Oct. 1777).
- 165 *till they have excelled*: C, IX, 116 (to Hannah More, 14 Oct. 1787).
- were almost the first*: C, IX, 237 (to Lady Ossory, 26 Nov. 1789).
- Romish superstition*: C, I, 40 (to Richard West, 22 Mar. 1740).
- No change of times*: C, VIII, 426 (to the Rev. William Mason, 8 Nov. 1783).
- that in America*: Moncure Daniel Conway, ed., *The Writings of Thomas Paine Paine*, 4 vols. in 2 (1902; New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), II, 327 (*The Rights of Man*).
- I like Popery*: C, VII, 94 (12 Jul. 1778).
- 166 *writes lines that*: C, VIII, 377 (to the Rev. William Mason, 9 Jun. 1783).
- a truly classic work*: C, VI, 310 (to the same, 18 Feb. 1776).
- It tires me to death*: C, III, 466 (to George Montagu, 8 Dec. 1761).
- Tom Jones*: T, Supp., I, 219 (to Mme. du Deffand, Aug. 1773).
- deplorably tedious lamentations*: C, IV, 305 (to Horace Mann, 20 Dec. 1764).
- Tristram Shandy*: T, IV, 369-70 (to Sir David Dalrymple, 4 Apr. 1760).
- Evelina/Cecilia*: T, XII, 339 (to Lady Ossory, 1 Oct. 1782).
- this our Augustan age*: C, V, 400 (to the Rev. William Mason, 21 Jul. 1772).
- How little will Dr. Johnson*: C, VIII, 571 (to Lady Ossory, 9 Jul. 1785).
- of strong sense*: C, IX, 25 (to Henry Conway, 6 Oct. 1785).
- though he was good-natured*: C, IX, 319 (to Mary Berry, 26 May 1791).
- The Seasons*: T, XV, 59-60 (to Mary and Agnes Berry, 16 Sep. 1791).
- innumerable fine things*: C, III, 89 (to the Earl of Strafford, 4 Jul. 1757).
- texts out of the book of nature*: T, X, 155 (to Robert Jephson, 8 Nov. 1777).
- the twaddle of a pedant*: translated from T, Supp., I, 144 (to Mme. du Deffand, 10 Oct. 1766).
- the little Greek*: T, III, 246 (to Horace Mann, 5 Jul. 1754).
- Pharsalia/Aeneid*: T, IV, 220 (to the Rev. Henry Zouch, 9 Dec. 1758).
- Epic poetry is*: C, VIII, 235 (25 Jun. 1782).
- Now I hold*: C, VI, 395 (to Lady Ossory, 3 Dec. 1776).
- 167 *I am apt to have*: T, XIV, 332 (9 Feb. 1790).
- so unfortunate as to love*: T, IV, 116 (to Lady Mary Coke, c. 1757).
- formed on fact*: C, III, 217 (to Sir David Dalrymple, 25 Mar. 1759).
- the authors of the present*: C, VI, 250 (7 Sep. 1775).
- I will not be unjust*: C, VI, 501-02 (to the Earl of Harcourt, 18 Oct. 1777).
- welcomes the news*: T, XIV, 67 (to John Pinkerton, 14 Aug. 1788).

- I begin to think*: C, IX, 248 (to Mary Berry, 3 Jul. 1790).
- Calvin and Wesley*: C, VII, 94 (to the Rev. William Cole, 12 Jul. 1778).
- against the Bishops*: C, VII, 219 (to George Hardinge, 4 Jul. 1779).
- the falsest and*: C, IV, 167 (to the Earl of Hertford, 22 Jan. 1764).
- hopes the Chancellor*: T, VIII, 258 (to the Rev. William Mason, 27 Mar. 1773).
- 168 *with all the veneration*: T, VI, 107 (to Christopher Wren, 9 Aug. 1764).
- the best and wisest*: T, VIII, 289 (to Horace Mann, 15 Jun. 1773).
- the glory of human nature*: C, VII, 132 (to the Earl of Orford, 5 Oct. 1778).
- the greatest understanding*: C, I, 343 (to Horace Mann, 28 Feb. 1745).
- the Father of Corruption*: C, VIII, 337 (to Lady Ossory, 18 Feb. 1783).
- on one great plan*: C, V, 509 (to Horace Mann, 4 Oct. 1773).
- Was it a capital crime*: C, VIII, 337 (to Lady Ossory, 18 Feb. 1783).
- whom nature always designed*: C, II, 91 (to George Montagu, 2 Jul. 1747).
- Oh, my dear Harry*: C, III, 453 (12 Oct. 1761).
- Mme du Deffand says*: C, VI, 265 (6 Oct. 1775).
- the most perfect being*: C, V, 275 (to Horace Mann, 29 Dec. 1770).
- She has more sense*: C, VI, 128 (28 Sep. 1774).
- though she had professed*: T, XIII, 111 (to the Hon. Thomas Walpole, 3 Jan. 1784).
- 169 *the greatest and most melancholy*: C, II, 38 (to Horace Mann, 1 Aug. 1746).
- for it is shocking*: C, VII, 194 (to the same, 17 Apr. 1779).
- I hate to read*: C, VIII, 501 (to Lady Ossory, 26 Aug. 1784).
- donating £50*: T, XV, 383 (to Mary Berry, 22 Nov. 1795).
- contributing to a fund*: T, XV, 437 (to Lady Ossory, n.d.).
- urging better treatment*: T, V, 320 (to Sir David Dalrymple, 2 May 1763).
- children doomed to sweep*: T, XIII, 220 (to Henry Conway, 28 Nov. 1784).
- has beaten a poor woman*: T, XV, 377 (to Mary Berry, 18 Sep. 1795).
- how can one complain*: C, IV, 4 (to Horace Mann, 1 Jul. 1762).
- Lady Bel called it*: C, II, 79 (to the same, 10 Apr. 1747).
- his humiliated half-sister*: T, I, 172 (to the same, 4 Feb. 1742).
- in the extremest distress*: T, Supp., I, 59 (9 Oct. 1746).
- When Mrs. Leneve*: T, IV, 288 (to Horace Mann, 8 Aug. 1759).
- spends his days at her house*: T, V, 298-301 (to George Montagu, 6 Apr. and 8 Apr. 1763).
- three-year-old daughter*: T, III, 89-90 (to Henry Conway, 5 May 1752).
- the Rev. Mr. Seward*: T, IV, 176 (to George Montagu, 20 Aug. 1758).
- 170 *a persecution of animals*: C, IX, 64-65 (to the Earl of Strafford, 29 Aug. 1786).
- the streets are a very picture*: C, III, 341 (to the same, 4 Sep. 1760).
- so very innocent*: C, III, 320 (to Sir David Dalrymple, 20 Jun. 1760).
- Sir, I write him kind answers*: C, I, 248 (to Horace Mann, 4 Jun. 1743).
- I fancy it was*: C, II, 32 (to George Montagu, 24 Jun. 1746).
- to take my Lord out*: T, III, 149 (to Horace Mann, 27 Mar. 1753).



- Sir Gilbert Elliot*: T, VI, 313 (to Henry Conway, 6 Oct. 1765).  
*I took her side*: C, VIII, 16 (to the Rev. William Mason, 3 Mar. 1781).
- 171 *he will not tolerate*: T, VII, 262 (24 Mar. 1769).  
*he twice rejects*: T, IX, 431 (to Henry Conway, 31 Oct. 1776).  
*as a subaltern*: C, IV, 246 (to the same, 5 Jun. 1764).  
*perfectly just and reasonable*: C, VIII, 373 (to the Rev. William Mason, 31 May 1783).  
*Nature, that gave me*: C, V, 62 (to Horace Mann, 18 Aug. 1767).  
*I who am not troubled*: C, II, 134 (to the same, 24 Oct. 1748).  
*saved Houghton*: C, II, 254 (to the same, 30 May 1751).  
*He had made Houghton*: C, VIII, 423 (to Governor Pownall, 27 Oct. 1783).  
*their rightful inheritance*: T, IV, 33 (to Horace Mann, 30 Jan. 1757).  
*My uncle's ambition*: C, III, 14 (to the same, 27 May 1756).  
*much to forgive*: C, II, 246 (to the same, 1 Apr. 1751).
- 172 *forced into our family*: T, VIII, 289 (to the same, 15 Jun. 1773).  
*Yours or not*: T, II, 95 (May 1745).  
*not apt to be intoxicated*: C, VIII, 387 (15 Jul. 1783).  
*I am not grown a whit*: C, IX, 362 (21 Nov. 1791).  
*expelling a party*: T, XIV, 7 (to Henry Conway, 17 Jun. 1787).  
*that to wait on princes*: T, Supp., I, 189 (8 Jul. 1770).  
*my real regard*: C, IV, 242 (to Thomas Pitt, 5 Jun. 1764).  
*Lady Craven's letters*: T, XIII, 392, 418-19 (to Horace Mann, 22 Jun. 1786; to Lady Craven, 27 Nov. 1786).
- ceremonious customs*: C, IV, 306 (to George Montagu, 24 Dec. 1764).  
*puppet-show*: C, III, 443 (to the Countess of Ailesbury, 27 Sep. 1761); C, VII, 72 (to the Rev. William Mason, 31 May 1778).  
*though, in the common intercourse*: C, III, 159 (12 Aug. 1758).  
*that his attachment*: T, XI, 326 (to the Hon. Thomas Walpole, 29 Nov. 1780).  
*Indeed, our old*: C, VII, 77 (3 Jun. 1778).
- 173 *he was what you and I*: C, VII, 78 (10 Jun. 1778).  
*when both are sincere*: T, X, 135 (to the Rev. William Cole, 15 Oct. 1777).  
*Prince Edward asked*: C, III, 272 (23 Dec. 1759).  
*a Troop*: T, IV, 335-36 (27 Dec. 1759).  
*two sovereigns*: C, IV, 20 (to Henry Conway, 9 Sep. 1762).  
*I am heartily glad*: C, IV, 246 (5 Jun. 1764).  
*my nominal wife*: C, VIII, 295 (to Lady Ossory, 3 Nov. 1782).  
*I am not less in love*: T, XIV, 122 (to Mary Berry, 25 Mar. 1789).  
*whose happiness really does*: C, VIII, 390 (to Horace Mann, 30 Jul. 1783).  
*suitable enough in age*: C, IX, 309 (to Lady Ossory, 30 Apr. 1791).  
*a most worthless*: C, VII, 421 (to Horace Mann, 24 Jul. 1780).
- 174 *I could not have believed*: C, IV, 221 (to the Earl of Hertford, 12 Apr. 1764).  
*has stooped even lower*: C, IV, 284 (to the same, 1 Nov. 1764).  
*For such an exploit*: C, VIII, 487 (to Horace Mann, 8 Jul. 1784).  
*the father, who is good-natured*: C, VIII, 12 (to the same, 26 Feb. 1781).

- I am not fond*: C, VIII, 525 (to Lady Ossory, 17 Nov. 1784).
- it was no effort to exchange*: C, VIII, 527 (to the same, 20 Nov. 1784).
- absurd stories*: C, VIII, 451 (to the same, 13 Jan. 1784 [correctly, 1785]).
- a foolish match*: C, I, 386 (to Horace Mann, 6 Sep. 1745).
- As his father's profusion*: C, IV, 205 (to the same, 18 Mar. 1764).
- 175 *Though entirely out of the secret*: T, VIII, 167 (20 May 1772).
- relation to Royalty*: C, VI, 31 (14 Dec. 1773).
- artful as Cleopatra*: C, V, 347 (to Horace Mann, 7 Nov. 1771).
- The Duke of Gloucester is risen*: C, VI, 469 (24 Aug. 1777).
- a most kind and brotherly*: C, VI, 479 (to Horace Mann, 18 Sep. 1777).
- his affection never*: C, VI, 482 (to Lady Ossory, 20 Sep. 1777).
- 176 *can inform Mann*: T, XI, 223 (14 Jun. 1780).
- whose plan it certainly*: C, VII, 415 (to Horace Mann, 6 Jul. 1780).
- I huffed her*: T, XIV, 392 (to Mary Berry, 19 Mar. 1791).
- aiding merchants who deal*: T, VIII, 423 (to the Rev. William Mason, 14 Feb. 1774).
- are the real English*: T, X, 207 (to the same, 16 Mar. 1778).
- the rights of Britons too*: T, X, 10 (to Lady Ossory, 26 Jan. 1777).
- the French may invade*: T, IX, 386-87 (to the same, 10 Jul. 1776).
- that they may not burn*: C, VI, 443 (to the same, 10 Jun. 1777).
- an insignificant solitude*: C, VII, 404 (to the same, 16 Jun. 1780).
- personal scurrilities*: C, VI, 394 (to Horace Mann, 1 Dec. 1776).
- was buried last year*: C, VII, 171 (to Lady Ossory, 1 Feb. 1779).
- Liberty has still a continent*: C, VII, 176 (to the same, 17 Feb. 1779).
- exotic sights for poets*: T, XII, 171 (to the Rev. William Mason, (? May 1744).
- a new Thucydides*: T, IX, 100 (to Horace Mann, 24 Nov. 1774).
- are as much my countrymen*: C, VIII, 95 (to Lady Ossory, 26 Oct. 1781).
- 177 *When did England see*: C, VIII, 117 (to the Earl of Strafford, 27 Nov. 1781).
- improper in every light/the triumphant party*: C, VIII, 341 (to Horace Mann, 24 Feb. 1783).
- Think of me*: C, V, 471 (11 Jun. 1773).
- to watch over/the horrent extremity*: T, VIII, 287-88 (15 Jun. 1773).
- Compassion, humanity*: T, VIII, 297 (to Horace Mann, Jun. 1773).
- 178 *In truth, I know nothing*: C, VI, 3 (26 Oct. 1773).
- that he is convinced*: T, VIII, 414 (to Lady Ossory, 29 Jan. 1774).
- My late ward*: C, VI, 84 (15 May 1774).
- an express from Norfolk*: C, VI, 95 (to Henry Conway, 23 Jun. 1774).
- of lath and plaster*: T, Supp., I, 262 (to Sir Edward Walpole, 21 Apr. 1777).
- low wretches/red-faced/The single chamber*: C, VI, 433, 435 (to Horace Mann, 28 Apr. 1777).
- the beauty of King's*: C, VI, 441 (22 May 1777).
- I have a little too much*: T, X, 64 (18 Jun. 1777).
- write in the orderly book*: C, IX, 175 (to Lady Ossory, 28 Feb. 1789).
- Well! adieu to Houghton*: C, VII, 235 (4 Aug. 1779).
- if ever I had merit*: C, IX, 360 (to Lady Ossory, 23 Nov. 1791).

- 179 *My Lord has*: T, XI, 443-44 (6 May 1781).  
*the only notice*: T, XI, 421 (to Horace Mann, 30 Mar. 1781).  
*provided I were allowed*: T, XII, 8 (8 Jun. 1781).  
*This is a satisfaction*: T, XII, 34 (to the Hon. Thomas Walpole, 31 Jul. 1781).  
*Walpole predicts*: T, XIII, 94 (to Horace Mann, 21 Nov. 1783).  
*professes not to care*: T, XIII, 134 (to the same, 12 Mar. 1784).  
*left him by his father*: T, XIII, 374 (to the same, 28 Mar. 1785).  
*The gate of painful age/I am still lifted*: C, V, 257-58 (3 Oct. 1770).  
*For eight days*: C, VI, 408 (24 Jan. 1777).
- 180 *If I could wish her*: C, VII, 148 (to Lady Browne, 5 Nov. 1778).  
*I should be ashamed*: C, VII, 246 (to Lady Ossory, 5 Sep. 1779).  
*the red-hot bars*: C, VIII, 534 (to the same, 27 Dec. 1784).  
*so much a bitterer cup*: T, VIII, 241 (to Horace Mann, 17 Feb. 1773).  
*chance, not merit*: C, IX, 36 (to the same, 8 Jan. 1786).  
*the clapping of a door*: C, VII, 307 (8 Jan. 1780).  
*I ... am heartily tired*: C, VII, 387 (to Lady Ossory, 7 Jun. 1780).  
*I have certainly*: C, VII, 390 (to the same, 9 Jun. 1780).  
*I went to town*: C, VII, 390-91 (9 Jun. 1780).
- 181 *I am not dead of fatigue*: C, IX, 457 (7 Jul. 1895).  
*good roads*: T, XIII, 406 (to Lady Ossory, 30 Aug. 1786).  
*traffic congestion*: T, XIV, 415-16 (to Mary Berry, 15 Apr. 1791).  
*ladies' headdresses*: T, IX, 387 (to Lady Ossory, 13 Jul. 1776).  
*driving some into exile*: T, XIII, 354-55 (to Horace Mann, 8 Jan. 1786).  
*adultery*: T, X, 392 (to the same, 22 Mar. 1779).  
*moral corruption*: T, XII, 330-31 (to the same, 8 Sep. 1882).  
*If one does not conform*: C, VI, 410 (6 Feb. 1777).
- 182 *I had no books*: C, VII, 160 (3 Jan. 1779).  
*painted and papered*: C, VII, 254 (to Lady Ossory, 24 Sep. 1779).  
*I would not change*: C, VII, 258 (to Horace Mann, 11 Oct. 1779).  
*It is so cheerful*: T, Supp., I, 278 (to the Countess of Ailesbury, (28 Oct. 1779)).  
*the heavy tax*: T, XIV, 390 (to Mary Berry, 11 Mar. 1791).  
*other self*: C, VI, 340 (to Horace Mann, 27 May 1776).  
*I cannot, as you do*: C, IV, 253 (16 Jul. 1764).  
*When I reflect*: C, IV, 498 (to Horace Mann, 20 Apr. 1766).  
*"How to Grow Old"*: Russell, *Portraits from Memory and Other Essays* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1956), pp. 50-52.  
*I cannot attend*: C, III, 426 (5 Aug. 1761).
- 183 *take a part in their care*: T, X, 101 (to the Rev. William Cole, 31 Aug. 1777).  
*They can only think*: C, VI, 492 (to Henry Conway, 5 Oct. 1777).  
*I believe my nieces*: C, VIII, 500 (to Lady Ossory, 26 Aug. 1784).  
*always had a horror*: C, VII, 507 (to the same, 31 Jan. 1781).  
*I am strangely afraid*: C, VI, 378 (22 Sep. 1776).  
*I have played but thrice*: C, VIII, 41 (to Horace Mann, 16 May 1781).

- I have not philosophy enough*: C, VIII, 296 (to Lady Ossory, 3 Nov. 1782).
- I do not like exhibiting*: T, XV, 270 (to Mary Berry, 6 Dec. 1793).
- Oh! my Lady*: C, VIII, 67 (25 Jul. 1781).
- 184 *I am continually*: C, VIII, 47 (28 May 1781)
- We are not made*: C, V, 133-34 (15 Nov. 1768).
- two charming beings*: T, XIV, 186 (to Mary Berry, 13 Aug. 1789).
- to be in love with one*: T, XIV, 132 (to Mary and Agnes Berry, 23 Jun. 1789).
- justice to injured merit*: T, XV, 94 (to Mary Berry, 13 Dec. 1791).
- conversing*: T, XV, 226-27 (to Agnes Berry, 17 Oct. 1793).
- Of all your visits*: T, XIV, 183-84 (to Mary Berry, 6 Aug. 1789).
- the Duke of Gloucester's infidelity*: T, XIV, 392 (to the same, 19 Mar. 1791).
- 185 *more his children than his wives*: T, XIV, 299-300 (to the same, 16 Oct. 1790).
- crueller than the English*: T, Supp., I, 130 (May 1766).
- knowing the miseries*: C, IX, 219 (to Hannah More, Sep. 1789).
- I adore liberty*: C, IX, 193 (to Henry Conway, 15 Jul. 1789).
- rule by an emperor*: T, XIV, 255 (to the same, Jul. 1790).
- new-model the world*: C, IX, 245 (to the Earl of Strafford, 26 Jun. 1790).
- We are all born so*: C, IX, 255 (to Sir David Dalrymple, 21 Sep. 1790).
- the whole is wise*: C, IX, 260 (8 Nov. 1790).
- Mr. Burke*: T, XIV, 333 (9 Feb. 1790).
- ferociously denounces*: T, XIV, 405 (to Mary Berry, 3 Apr. 1891).
- their horrific proceedings*: C, IX, 386 (31 Aug. 1792).
- 186 *How long the French*: C, IX, 390 (10 Sep. 1792).
- though I detest tyranny*: C, IX, 338 (22 Aug. 1791).
- he wishes that she*: T, XV, 127-28 (to Lady Ossory, 18 Aug. 1792).
- But of all their barbarities*: C, IX, 382 (to the same).
- servility and gross adulation*: C, IX, 399 (to Lady Ossory, 7 Dec. 1792).
- their known vanity*: T, XV, 171 (to the Rev. Robert Nares, 14 Dec. 1792).
- a man of a good heart*: Moncure Daniel Conway, ed. *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, 4 vols. in 2 (1902; New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), II, 89 (*The Rights of Man*).
- the people of France were running*: *ibid.*, IV, 205 (letter to Samuel Adams, 1 Jan. 1803).
- the extirpation of the usual root*: C, IX, 428 (to Mary Berry, 13 Dec. 1793).
- 187 *The last days/what hero*: T, XV, 238 (to the same, 29 Oct. 1793).
- She herself, as a mortal*: C, IX, 431 (to the Earl of Harcourt, 7 Jan. 1794).
- I cannot open*: C, IX, 421 (7 Nov. 1793).
- without punishments annexed*: T, XV, 291-93 (27 May 1794).
- He believes that had his nephew*: T, Supp., II, 245-46 (to the Marquis of Townshend, 2 Dec. 1791).
- I, who could never learn*: C, IX, 387 (to Henry Conway, 31 Aug. 1792).
- a slur in a newspaper*: T, XV, 93-94 (to Mary Berry, 11 Dec. 1791).
- the vast injustice*: T, XV, 116 (to

- Thomas Walpole the Younger,  
26 Jun. 1792).
- 188 *I took up the character*: C, IX, 387 (31 Aug. 1792).  
*He has given me*: C, IX, 363 (10 Dec. 1791).  
*had principles/under pretence*: C, IX, 368 (18 Jan. 1792).  
*I am never called*: C, IX, 363 (26 Dec. 1791).  
*for above forty years*: C, IX, 378 (to Lady Ossory, 7 Jul. 1792).  
*walk again I never shall*: C, IX, 479 (4 Jan. 1797).
- 189 *But do you conceive*: C, I, 220 (23 Dec. 1742).  
*all North America*: T, IX, 109 (to Horace Mann, 23 Dec. 1774).  
*This northern Athaliah*: C, IV, 13 (to the same, 12 Aug. 1762).  
*is Xerxes*: T, VI, 1 (to the Earl of Hertford, 15 Feb. 1764).  
*Madame Hannah*: C, IX, 182 (23 Jun. 1789).  
*shine no Sabbath-day*: Walpole alludes to Pope's "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," l. 12.  
*Antiquarianility*: C, VIII, 108 (to the Rev. William Mason, 13 Nov. 1781).  
*teadrunkwith'd*: C, VIII, 447 (to Lady Ossory, 30 Dec. 1783).  
*However, you have so little*: C, V, 493 (13 Aug. 1773).  
*It is Italy*: C, VII, 95 (to the Rev. William Mason, 16 Jul. 1778).  
*The times produce*: C, II, 384 (18 May 1754).  
*where all the materials*: Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley, ed., *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1935), I, 231 (letter of 7 Jul. 1746).
- 190 *having whole groves*: C, II, 125-26, 336 (29 Aug. 1748).
- How much more execution*: T, XII, 172 (c. May 1774; has also been dated ? 1782).  
*Have you heard that Mrs. St. Jack*: T, IX, 233 (10 Aug. 1775).  
*it is lucky for my reputation*: T, XV, 287 (21 Apr. 1794).  
*"My money"*: C, I, 362 (to Horace Mann, 24 May 1745).  
*ogling and sighing*: C, II, 161 (to George Montagu, 18 May 1749).  
*a common pig*: C, II, 167-68 (to Horace Mann, 25 Jun. 1749).  
*the French Catholic servant*: T, II, 421-22 (to the same, 10 Jan. 1750).  
*the Duke of Cumberland*: T, VI, 136 (to the Earl of Hertford, 1 Nov. 1764).  
*It was terrible*: C, VI, 406 (to Lady Ossory, 19 Jan. 1777).  
*in a soft voice*: C, VII, 73 (to the Rev. William Mason, 31 May 1778).
- 191 *The dome of the staircase*: C, V, 459 (30 Apr. 1773).  
*the scene without*: C, VIII, 507 (30 Sep. 1784).  
*most unpleasant to crawl*: C, IX, 334-35 (8 Aug. 1791).  
*thinks nothing important*: C, II, 412 (to Richard Bentley, 13 Dec. 1754).  
*remains in the light*: C, I, 350 (to Horace Mann, 15 Apr. 1745).  
*as starched as*: C, V, 315 (to John Chute, 9 Jul. 1771).
- 192 *probably will stuff*: C, VIII, 388 (to Lady Ossory, 23 Jul. 1783).  
*I should be reduced*: T, XV, 377-78 (to Mary Berry, 18 Sep. 1795).  
*hands that are always groping*: C, I, 381 (to George Montagu, 1 Aug. 1745).  
*can overturn ministries*: C, I, 340 (to Horace Mann, 1 Feb. 1745).  
*finds in the privy*: T, V, 116 (to Henry Conway, 25 Sep. 1761).

- Lord, how he is broke*: C, III, 220 (to George Montagu, 26 Apr. 1759).  
*abated his ridicules*: C, IV, 261 (to the Earl of Hertford, 3 Aug. 1764).  
*My Lady Townshend has been*: T, I, 392 (to Horace Mann, 17 Nov. 1743).  
*Lord, child, she was all over*: C, V, 211 (to the same, 31 Dec. 1769).  
*Lord God! Jesus*: C, II, 402 (to Richard Bentley, 3 Nov. 1754).  
*you will both look so abominably*: T, Supp., III, 375 (to Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, 19 Sep. 1744).  
*This is the staple*: T, II, 41 (to Mann, 22 Jul. 1744).  
*a white ground*: C, III, 220 (to George Montagu, 26 Apr. 1759).
- 193 *cries her eyes/she objects his loving*: C, II, 33-34 (to the same, 3 Jul. 1746).  
*that she hates him*: C, II, 114 (to Henry Conway, 27 Jun. 1748).  
*Sir Harry Bellender*: T, II, 320-22 (to George Montagu, 14 Jul. 1748).  
*the youngest, handsomest, and wittiest*: C, III, 167 (to Henry Conway, 2 Sep. 1758).  
*so naked that you would*: C, II, 153 (to Horace Mann, 3 May 1749).  
*Every favour she has bestowed*: T, IV, 367 (to George Montagu, 27 Mar. 1760).  
*the Attorney-General laboured*: C, VI, 332 (to Horace Mann, 24 Apr. 1776).  
*the young Earl of Pembroke*: T, V, 177, 181-82, 184 (to George Montagu, 22 Feb. 1762; to Horace Mann, 25 Feb. 1762; to George Montagu, 25 Feb. 1762).  
*with difficulty withheld*: C, III, 497 (to Horace Mann, 22 Mar. 1762).  
*he should have retrieved*: C, III, 504 (to the same, 30 Apr. 1762).
- 194 *his profligacy*: C, VIII, 473 (to the same, 29 Apr. 1784).  
*What a horrid idea*: C, III, 263 (to George Montagu, 8 Nov. 1759).  
*the idle and the industrious*: C, VIII, 349 (to Lady Ossory, 11 Mar. 1783).  
*passion is to see coffins*: C, II, 222-23 (to Horace Mann, 1 Sep. 1750).  
*him I really loved*: C, IX, 276 (22 Jan. 1791).  
*the goodness of his heart and nature*: C, IX, 277 (to Lady Ossory, 28 Jan. 1791).  
*real genius*: C, IX, 102 (to the Earl of Strafford, 28 Jul. 1787).  
*to the last moment of*: T, XIV, 285-86 (to Mrs. Dickenson, 25 Aug. 1790).  
*I think they have both*: C, IX, 314 (to Mary Berry, 12 May 1791).  
*takes Lady Clifden*: T, XV, 35 (to the same, 8 Aug. 1791).
- 195 *I can but laugh*: C, VI, 351 (25 Jun. 1776).  
*a complete man*: Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce* (Oxford, New York, Toronto: Oxford UP, 1983), pp. 435-36.

## 22. IGNATIUS SANCHO

All the quotations from Sancho's letters are taken from *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African* (1782; ed. Vincent Carretta [Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1998]).

- 197 Gainsborough, Thomas.  
*Ignatius Sancho*. 1768. From original in the National Gallery of Canada. Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ignatius\_Sancho,\_1768.jpg. Public domain.  
*Charles James Fox*: p. 235 (to J[ohn] S[pink], 9 Sep. 1780).

- 198 *his request for an exposure*: pp. 73-74 (July 1776 [21 Jul. 1766]).  
*John Miheux's answer*: pp. 29-30, 259-60 (to Mr. M[iheux], 7 Aug. 1768 [1777]).  
*longs for every member*: pp. 111-12 (to Mr. F[isher], 27 Jan. 1778).  
*Commerce was meant*: p. 131 (to Mr. J[ack] W[ingrave], 1778).  
*poor black brethren*: p. 45 (to Mr. B[rowne], 18 Jul. 1772).  
*when the young Jack*: p. 205 (to Mr. J[ack] W[ingrave], 5 Jan. 1780).  
*a large family and small finances*: p. 72 (to Mr. M[eheux], 4 Jan. 1776).  
*Trade is at so low an ebb*: p. 215 (to Mrs. H—, 20 May 1780).  
*in one case, snuff*: p. 198 (25 Dec. 1779).  
*from corruptible pleasure*: p. 50 (to Mrs. H—, 9 Feb. 1774).  
*nothing happens by chance*: p. 158 (to Mr. L[incoln], 4 May 1779).  
*half a Methodist*: p. 42 (to Mr. S[imon], 15 Sep. 1770).  
*every thing in it*: p. 150 (to Mr. I[reland], 1 Jan. 1779).  
*animated strength of devotion*: pp. 66-67 (to Miss L[each], 4 Oct. 1775).
- 199 *Heaven big enough*: p. 111 (to Mr. F[isher], 27 Jan. 1778).  
*We will mix*: p. 86 (to Mr. M[eheux], 23 Jul. 1777).  
*eternal Damnation*: p. 93 (to the same, 25 Aug. 1777).  
*among the modern Saints*: p. 83 (to the same, 27 Jul. 1777).  
*the high chancellor*: p. 70 (to Miss L[each], 14 Dec. 1775).  
*One ounce of practical religion*: p. 67 (to the same, 16 Oct. 1775).  
*You, who believe*: p. 66 (4 Oct. 1775).  
*My chief pleasure*: p. 73 (Jul. 1776 [21 Jul. 1766]).
- thou criticizing jack ape/Human Nature*: p. 124 (10 Jun. 1778).  
*stomachs are strong enough*: p. 206 (to Mr. J[ack] W[ingrave], 5 Jan. 1780).  
*summer companions*: p. 133 (1778).  
*Recommending The History*: p. 137 (to Mr. K[isbee], 23 Jul. 1778).
- 200 *We fought like Englishmen/I am only a lodger*: pp. 176, 177 (to Mr. R[ush], 7 Sep. 1779).  
*every virtue*: p. 221 (to J[ohn] S[pink], 9 Jun. 1780).  
*beset with friends*: p. 153 (to Mrs. H—, 9 Feb. 1779).  
*the late great Dagon*: p. 27 (to J[ack] W[ingrave], 14 Feb., 1768 [1778]).  
*a detestable Brother's war*: pp. 131-32 (to the same, 1778).  
*their madness/America will be/the eyes of our rulers*: pp. 109, 107 (to Mr. S[tevenson], 20 Dec. 1777).  
*the Tower and Park guns*: p. 225 (to J[ohn] S[pink], 15 Jun. 1780).  
*Oh, this poor ruined country*: p. 185 (to Mr. R[ush], 20 Oct. 1779).  
*the glorious time*: p. 220 (to J[ohn] S[pink], 9 Jun. 1780).  
*religion and morality*: pp. 215-16 (to Mrs. H—, 20 May 1780).  
*as heretofore the nurse*: p. 227 (to J[ohn] S[pink], 16 Jun. 1780).
- 201 *There is at this present*: p. 218 (6 Jun. 1780).  
*our religion has swallowed*: p. 229 (to J[ack] W[ingrave], 23 Jun. 1780).  
*a playfulness*: p. 269 (to ?, 14 Sep. 1814).  
*trust me, my M[eheux]*: p. 29 (7 Aug. 1768 [1777]).  
*that a man runs some hazard*: p. 129 (to J[ack] W[ingrave], 1778).  
*how comes it that*: p. 77 (1 Sep. 1776).  
*Like low-born Allen*: see Alexander Pope, "Epilogue to the Satires," I, 135-36.

- 202 *happily half-trained*: p. 214.  
*account of a stagecoach journey*: pp. 166-68 (to Mr. M[eheux], 20 Aug. 1779).  
*lovely even in sickness*: p. 138 (to Mr. R[ush], 31 Jul. 1778).  
*humanity—humility/the little Syren*: p. 94 (to the same, 27 Aug. 1777).  
*I want to know*: p. 91 (to Miss C[rewe], 15 Aug. 1777).  
*claim of reformation*: p. 47 (to Mr. S[oubise], 11 Oct. 1772).  
*whether it will last*: p. 48 (8 Nov. 1772).  
*lending him money*: p. 28 (14 Feb. 1768 [1778]).  
*a mind purged*: p. 147 (to Mr. S[oubise], 29 Nov. 1778).  
*not to know him*: p. 229 (23 Jun. 1780).  
*honest, trusty, good-natured*: p. 28 (to J[ack] W[ingrav]e, 14 Feb. 1768 [1778]).  
*will not flatter*: p. 148 (29 Nov. 1778).
- 203 *tho' a bad woman*: p. 70 (to Miss L[each], 14 Dec. 1775).  
*whose preaching he has loved*: pp. 66-67 (to the same, 4 Oct. 1775).  
*Sancho thinks Dodd*: pp. 114-15 (to Mr. W[ingrav]e, 12 Mar. 1778).  
*In my opinion*: p. 63 (to Miss L[each], 27 Aug. 1775).  
*twenty years ago/assume a gaiety*: p. 103 (to Mr. S[tevenson], 24 Oct. 1777).  
*to enjoy a visit with their friends*: p. 168 (to Mrs. Cocksedge, 25 Aug. 1779).  
*she has the rare felicity*: p. 155 (to Mr. S[tevenson], 11 Mar. 1779).  
*a decent competence*: p. 116 (to Mr. J[ack] W[ingrav]e, 4 May 1778).  
*the Irish, whose trade*: p. 185 (to Mr. R[ush], 20 Oct. 1779).
- the asses he sees*: pp. 91-92 (to Mr. M[eheux], 25 Aug. 1777).  
*When a woman fails*: p. 76 (to Mr. K[isbee], 28 Aug. 1776).  
*from the traitor*: p. 80 (9 Feb. 1777).  
*the majority, who are composed*: p. 213 (to Mrs. H—, 23 Mar. 1780).  
*Your friend D—*: p. 240 (25 Oct. 1780).

### 23. WILLIAM COWPER

All the quotations from Cowper's letters are taken from *The Correspondence of William Cowper Arranged in Chronological Order, with Annotations*, ed. Thomas Wright, 4 vols. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1904).

- 205 Smith, J. *William Cowper*. 1698. Courtesy of The Wellcome Collection, wellcomecollection.org/works/s5heeark. CC\_BY 4.0.  
*only thought himself a Christian*: I, 29 (to Lady Hesketh, 4 Jul. 1765).  
 206 *so excellent a person*: I, 62 (to Mrs. Cowper, 11 Mar. 1766).  
*her son and I*: I, 81 (to the same, 20 Oct. 1766).  
*grace and mercy*: I, 42 (to Lady Hesketh, 4 Sep. 1765).  
*Actum est*: I, 343 (to the Rev. John Newton, 21 Aug. 1781).  
*the approach of January*: III, 428 (to the same, 5 Feb. 1790).  
*finds that the composition*: I, 445 (to the same, 16 Feb. 1782).  
 207 *a house more than commonly*: IV, 104-05, (4 Aug. 1791).  
*The loss of*: III, 355 (19 Feb. 1789).  
*vicious fear/It is the worst*: III, 315 (11 Sep. 1788).  
*shy as a bird*: IV, 222 (to William Hayley, 7 Jun. 1792).  
*they who have the least idea*: I, 81 (to Mrs. Cowper, 20 Oct. 1766).



- 208 *widespread contempt*: I, 59 (to Lady Hesketh, 6 Mar. 1766).  
*have acquired the name*: I, 80 (to Mrs. Cowper, 20 Oct. 1766).  
*beloved retirement*: I, 45 (to Lady Hesketh, 4 Sep. 1765).  
*A pleasant letter*: I, 79-81 (to Mrs. Cowper, 20 Oct. 1766).  
*opened to the things*: I, 103-04 (to Mrs. Madan, 28 Jun. 1768).  
*agreeable to me*: I, 51 (to Major Cowper, 18 Oct. 1765).  
*a disappointment*: I, 36 (to Lady Hesketh, 1 Aug. 1765).  
*More debts than money*: I, 61 (10 Mar. 1766).  
*he ... learnt*: I, 123 (8 May 1770).
- 209 *as the bright beams*: II, 344-45 (to the Rev. John Newton, 6 Aug. 1785).  
*that we must learn*: IV, 353 (6 Jan. 1793).  
*the divinity of*: III, 464 (7 Jun. 1790).  
*that the Roman Catholic*: I, 34 (to Lady Hesketh, 12 Jul. 1765).  
*Nature revives again*: II, 147 (13 Jan. 1784).  
*I had a dream*: II, 366 (16 Oct. 1785).  
*has served at least*: III, 140 (13 Jan. 1787).  
*A good fireside*: II, 28 (to Mrs. Newton, 23 Nov. 1782).  
*that have found a God*: II, 66 (12 May 1783).
- 210 *ask not hymns*: III, 271 (25 May 1788).  
*when I reflect*: II, 268 (Nov. 1784).  
*I am hunted*: IV, 263 (29 Jul. 1792).  
*I never wake*: IV, 301 (3 Oct. 1792).  
*I have had a terrible night*: IV, 324.  
*For though all things*: IV, 367 (8 Feb. 1793).  
*As to that gloominess*: IV, 280 (26 Aug. 1792).  
*I was suddenly reduced*: II, 442 (16 Jan. 1786).
- Your sentiments*: I, 247 (21 Dec. 1780).  
*Prove to me*: II, 15 (27 Oct. 1782).  
*more rationally*: III, 75 (5 Aug. 1786).
- 211 *Satan, not God*: IV, 148-49 (to Samuel Teedon, 10 Feb. 1792).  
*Elizabeth Carter's argument*: III, 143 (to Lady Hesketh, 14 Jan. 1787).  
*you would account*: II, 15 (27 Oct. 1782).  
*a twenty-year-old sin*: IV, 486 (to Samuel Teedon, 10 Jan. 1794).  
*unpardonably offended*: IV, 361 (25 Jan. 1793).  
*He who made me*: IV, 498 (19 Feb. 1796).  
*The dealings of God*: III, 74 (5 Aug. 1786).  
*permission to pray*: IV, 307 (to Samuel Teedon, 16 Oct. 1792).  
*Indeed, since I told you*: II, 323 (4 Jun. 1785).  
*God gave them to me*: III, 75 (5 Aug. 1786).  
*no terms are to be kept*: IV, 486 (10 Jan. 1794).  
*My mind has always*: I, 165-166 (14 Nov. 1779).  
*I like very well*: I, 159 (17 Aug. 1779).  
*The cold is excessive*: I, 140 (5 Jan. 1777).  
*The walls hung*: I, 339 (16 Aug. 1781).
- 212 *I sit with all*: II, 243-44 (to the Rev. John Newton, 18 Sep. 1784).  
*O! I could spend*: I, 185 (3 May 1980).  
*Every thing I see*: II, 121 (10 Nov. 1783).  
*a glazier's diamond pencil*: I, 161 (21 Sep. 1779).  
*his kitten's antics*: III, 177-78 (to Lady Hesketh, 10 Nov. 1787).  
*his hare*: I, 225-26 (to the Rev. John Newton, 21 Aug. 1780).  
*his caged linnet*: I, 172 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 27 Feb. 1780).

- a goldfinch*: II, 93 (to the same, 4 Aug. 1783).
- his brave dog*: II, 339-40 (to the same, 27 Jul. 1785).
- fetch a water lily*: III, 293 (to Lady Hesketh, 27 Jun. 1788).
- I forgot to tell you*: III, 198 (24 Dec. 1787).
- end of a foxhunt*: III, 239-41 (3 Mar. 1788).
- All the notice*: IV, 74 (to the Rev. James Hurdis, 13 Jun. 1791).
- 213 *so totally absorbed*: I, 445 (to the Rev. John Newton, 16 Feb. 1782).
- I never suffer*: I, 356 (to the same, 18 Sep. 1781).
- I am sure you would not*: I, 293 (23 Apr. 1781).
- the style is affected*: II, 61 (to the Rev. John Newton, 20 Apr. 1783).
- Poetry, English poetry*: II, 127 (23 Nov. 1783).
- My sole drift*: I, 368-69 (to Mrs. Cowper, 19 Oct. 1781).
- are children*: I, 468 (24 Mar. 1782).
- 214 *Not having the music*: II, 274 (27 Nov. 1784).
- direct the voice*: II, 245 (2 Oct. 1784).
- Homer, in point of*: II, 393-94 (3 Dec. 1785).
- You oblige me*: IV, 86 (24 Jun. 1791).
- the closeness and compactness*: II, 286 (to Joseph Johnson, n.d.).
- the finest language*: II, 329 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 12 Jun. 1785).
- slavish work*: II, 240 (to the same, 11 Sep. 1784).
- 215 *clearly persuaded*: IV, 122 (to Samuel Teedon, n.d.)
- when I have finished it*: IV, 128-29 (to Mrs. King, 21 Oct. 1791).
- this first of poets*: IV, 473 (to the Rev. James Hurdis, 24 Nov. 1793).
- the finest poem*: IV, 201 (to William Hayley, 9 May 1792).
- allows first place*: III, 208 (to Lady Hesketh, 19 Jan. 1788).
- spotless ... as a man*: IV, 477 (to William Hayley, 8 Dec. 1793).
- Oh! I could thresh*: I, 165 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 31 Oct. 1779).
- writes, indeed, like a man*: I, 356 (to the Rev. John Newton, 18 Sep. 1781).
- that the lexicographer*: II, 206-07 (to the same, 22 May 1784).
- A poet may*: II, 443 (to Lady Hesketh, 16 Jan. 1786).
- The country indeed*: I, 413 (17 Dec. 1781).
- an order which/who have shaken hands*: I, 311 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 23 May 1781).
- The bishops earn his censure*: II, 74 (to the same, 8 Jun. 1783).
- the Duke of Gloucester*: I, 459-60 (to the same, 7 Mar. 1782).
- 216 *sadly declines*: III, 84-86 (to the same, n.d.)
- Lord Peterborough's*: II, 351 (to the Rev. John Newton, 27 Aug. 1785).
- in honour of Handel*: II, 213-14 (to the same, 21 Jun. 1784).
- I believe no man*: II, 79 (17 Jun. 1783).
- This contention*: II, 153 (to the Rev. John Newton, 25 Jan. 1784).
- Is it essential*: III, 229 (19 Feb. 1788).
- The day hardly ever*: IV, 450 (13 Sep. 1793).
- We talk of our freedom*: III, 201 (1 Jan. 1788).
- 217 *mentions to Hill*: I, 103 (16 Jun. 1768).
- asks the same friend*: II, 144 (8 Jan. 1784).
- As for politics*: IV, 72 (27 May 1791).
- reform without revolution*: IV, 343-44 (to Joseph Hill, 16 Dec. 1792).
- the Gordon Riots*: I, 204 (to the Rev. John Newton, 23 Jun. 1780).

- Man never was reformed*: I, 160 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 17 Aug. 1779).
- the King is bound*: I, 426 (to the Rev. John Newton, 13 Jan. 1782).
- restless and meddling temper*: I, 201 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 18 Jun. 1780).
- pay little regard to treaties*: I, 418 (to the Rev. John Newton, 31 Dec. 1781).
- profligacy of principle*: I, 259 (to the same, 30 Oct. 1784).
- That nations so long*: III, 411 (to Joseph Hill, 18 Dec. 1789).
- their sanguinary proceedings/My daily toast*: IV, 289 (to Mrs. Courtenay, 10 Sep. 1792).
- I will tell you*: IV, 363-64 (29 Jan. 1793).
- 218 *Differences of rank*: IV, 474 (to Lady Hesketh, 7 Jul. 1790).
- a genteelish toothpick case*: I, 472 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 1 Apr. 1782).
- furnished à la mode*: III, 79 (to the same, 24 Aug. 1786).
- his worn out neckcloths*: I, 309 (to the same, 23 May 1781).
- I verily believe*: IV, 87 (to Lady Hesketh, 26 Jun. 1791).
- would not have enabled me*: II, 380 (9 Nov. 1785).
- enormous taxation*: IV, 359 (to Lady Hesketh, 19 Jan. 1793).
- A new tax on candles/would visit*: II, 220-21 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 3 Jul. 1784).
- mud-wall cottages*: II, 300 (to the Rev. John Newton, 19 Feb. 1785).
- No man shall convince me*: IV, 73 (to Lady Hesketh, 27 May 1791).
- Heathenish parents*: II, 358 (to the Rev. John Newton, 24 Sep. 1785).
- 219 *a day of more turbulence*: III, 290 (to the same, 24 Jun. 1788).
- The profane are so profane*: II, 25 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 18 Nov. 1782).
- obliged to quit it/surrender prisoners*: I, 283, 286 (to the Rev. John Newton, 18 Mar. 1781).
- When a fire breaks out*: II, 117-19 (to the same, 3 Nov. 1783).
- Curate Scott*: I, 346-47 (to the same, 25 Aug. 1781).
- A thief is supposedly*: II, 123-24 (to the same, 17 Nov. 1783).
- a most loving, kissing*: II, 182-84 (to the same, 29 Mar. 1784).
- leading a female*: II, 324-25 (to the same, 4 Jun. 1785).
- The Word is a flaming sword*: II, 187 (to the same, Apr. 1784).
- quarrelled with most*: II, 290 (to the same, 5 Jan. 1785).
- I am a poor man*: III, 185 (to Lady Hesketh, 27 Nov. 1787).
- 220 *when the Doctor*: III, 456-57 (to Mrs. Throckmorton, 10 May 1790).
- If you find many blots*: III, 330-31 (29 Nov. 1788).
- You have done well*: IV, 455 (29 Sep. 1793).
- are at last censured*: IV, 43 (15 Mar. 1791).
- would not set her foot*: IV, 238 (to William Hayley, 19 Jun. 1792).
- She has been my faithful*: IV, 143 (to Samuel Rose, 21 Dec. 1791).
- My work is all of a stand*: IV, 211 (? Jun. 1792).
- I cannot sit*: IV, 318 (9 Sep. [Nov.] 1792).
- 221 *ready to beg them*: III 459 (to Lady Hesketh, 11 May 1790).
- will not let Cowper*: IV, 429-30 (to William Hayley, 5 Feb. 1790).
- send his "mournful" pieces*: III, 81 (to the Rev. William Unwin, n.d.).

- learned, polite, and amiable*: III, 136 (to the Rev. Walter Bagot, 3 Jan. 1787).
- that can do good*: II, 152 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 22 Jan. 1784).
- spent near half an hour*: III, 76 (to the same, 9 Aug. 1786).
- Cowper finds it necessary*: I, 288 (to the same, 2 Apr. 1781).
- neither Jesus nor Paul*: I, 333-34 (to the same, 29 Jul. 1781).
- If I walked the streets*: I, 220 (to the Rev. John Newton, 30 Jul. 1780).
- makes corrections*: III, 337 (to the same, 9 Dec. 1788).
- translates a book*: III, 466-67 (to Mrs. King, 14 Jun. 1790).
- have both deviated*: III, 96 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 24 Sep. 1786).
- accepts the explanation*: III, 99 (to the Rev. John Newton, 30 Sep. 1786).
- 222 *The afflicted poet*: IV, 506 (11 Apr. 1799).
- The French Quietist Mme Guyon*: II, 5-6 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 3 Aug. 1782).
- This minister's one imperfection*: II, 74 (to the same, 8 Jun. 1783).
- My greenhouse, fronted with*: II, 72 (to the Rev. William Bull, 3 Jun. 1783).
- is the only neighbour*: II, 483 (8 Mar. 1786).
- I have known very good performers*: III, 475 (to John Johnson, 8 Jul. 1790).
- his own inclination to levity*: IV, 205 (to the same, 20 May 1792).
- The quarrel that the world*: IV, 394 (to the same, 11 Apr. 1793).
- the wild boy Johnson*: III, 421 (to Lady Hesketh, 23 Jan. 1790).
- facts that might have*: I, 274 (to the Rev. John Newton, 25 Feb. 1781).
- a donation from John Newton*: I, 229 (to the same, Aug. 1780).
- I blame myself often*: III, 166 (5 Oct. 1787).
- 223 *Without an answer from God*: IV, 258 (22 Jul. 1792).
- I get no comfort*: IV, 224-25 (8 Jun. 1792).
- I ... am not a little*: IV, 367 (8 Feb. 1793).
- a public celebration*: III, 366-67 (to Lady Hesketh, 14 Apr. 1789).
- When Mr. Wright*: III, 175-76 (to the same, 3 Nov. 1787).
- though they have but little*: III, 43 (20 May 1786).
- They have lately received*: II, 206 (10 May 1784).
- his recently published Poems*: III, 52 (to Lady Hesketh, 4-5 Jun. 1786).
- Though they avoid debating*: III, 360 (to the same, 25 Feb. 1789).
- Charles James Fox*: III, 152 (to the same, 8 Sep. 1787).
- 224 *I do not at all suspect*: III, 129 (to the same, 21 Dec. 1786).
- The dissenters, I think*: IV, 344 (to Joseph Hill, 16 Dec. 1792).
- I knew that you would*: IV, 220 (6 Jun. 1792).
- to refuse him a return visit*: IV, 317 (to the Rev. Walter Bagot, 8 Nov. 1792).
- having never seen mountains*: IV, 139 (to the Rev. John Newton, 16 Nov. 1791).
- a little daunted*: IV, 266 (to Samuel Teedon, 5 Aug. 1792).
- elegant mansion*: IV, 267 (to the Rev. Samuel Greatheed, 6 Aug. 1792).
- Whether you or I*: IV, 185 (15 Apr. 1792).
- 225 *laughs and makes laugh*: I, 326 (to the Rev. John Newton, 7 Jul. 1781).
- has fallen in love with*: I, 335 (29 Jul. 1781).

- We did not want company*: I, 350 (to the Rev. William Unwin, 25 Aug. 1781).  
*sense of religion*: I, 443 (to the same, 9 Feb. 1782).  
*as a Jacobin*: IV, 386 (to Lady Hesketh, ? Mar. 1793).  
*all the Tories now-a-days*: IV, 368 (10 Feb. 1793).  
*Lady Hesketh is here*: III, 493 (26 Oct. 1790).
- 226 *resolves never to revisit*: III, 483 (to Mrs. Bodham, 9 Sep. 1790).  
*the extent of his classical scholarship*: I, 271 (to the Rev. John Newton, 18 Feb. 1781).
- 24. ELIZA FAY**
- All the quotations are from Eliza Fay, *Original Letters from India (1779-1815)* (1817; London: Hogarth Press, 1986). In many cases, there is no information about the addressees of the letters, which often begin, "My Dear Friends."
- 227 Alais, I. *Eliza Fay*. 1821. Image taken from page 7 of "Original Letters from India; containing a narrative of a journey through Egypt, and the author's imprisonment at Calicut by Hyder Ally". Shared by British Library on flickr, flic.kr/p/hLtVzW/. No known copyright restrictions.  
*Shakespeare's Othello*: p. 174 (29 May 1780).  
*Gray's "Elegy ..."*: p. 136 (1 Dec. 1779).  
*sonnets of Petrarch*: p. 56 (to her sister, 26 Jun. 1779).  
*to traverse a single mountain*: p. 48 (to the same, 17 Jun. 1779).  
*chaperones four young women*: pp.229, 231 (to Mrs. L—, 12 and 15 Feb. 1815).
- when French privateers*: p. 64 (2 Jul. 1779).  
*the sword of/barbarous sentence/sacred relics*: pp. 35, 33, 35 (18 Apr. 1779).  
*Surely, to consume it*: p. 251 (25 Feb. 1815).
- 228 *a homely, and rather vulgar*: p. 55 (to her sister, 26 Jun. 1779).  
*bigotted wretches*: p. 72 (24 Jul. 1779).  
*the holy fathers*: p. 204 (to her sister, 5 Sep. 1781).  
*Well may we say*: p. 171 (22 May 1780).  
*the representations or types*: p. 204 (to her sister, 5 Sep. 1781).  
*Atheism she regards*: p. 62 (to the same, 28 Jun. 1779).  
*seemed to communicate*: p. 51 (to the same, 17 Jun. 1779).  
*At Lyons*: pp. 47-48 (same letter).  
*have not failed in most countries*: p. 203 (to the same, 5 Sep. 1781).  
*his extravagance/the violence*: p. 175 (29 May 1780).  
*curiosity was ever*: p. 230 (to Mrs. L—, 15 Feb. 1815).
- 229 *The free exercise*: pp. 161-62 (13 Apr. 1780).  
*seeing Asiatic splendour*: p. 162 (same date).  
*fifty or sixty horses*: p. 57 (to her sister, 26 Jun. 1779).  
*those prodigies of human labour*: p. 76 (27 Aug. 1779).  
*romantic island*: p. 220 (to her sister, 24 Sep. 1782).  
*prisoners of Hyder Ali*: p. 110ff. (12 Feb. 1780).
- 230 *a house without a chair*: p. 120 (same date).  
*a pirate's lumber room*: p. 135 (1 Dec. 1779).  
*Their attempt to bribe*: pp. 145-46 (12-19 Jan. 1780).

- the Eastern dresses*: p. 153 (19 Feb. 1780).
- the Muslims refuse*: p. 186 (27 Sep. 1780).
- Otway's Venice Preserv'd*: p. 194 (to her sister, 26 Mar. 1781).
- the easy credit*: p. 182 (29 Aug. 1780).
- Anthony insists on fastening*: pp. 49-50 (to her sister, 17 Jun. 1779).
- delays boarding*: pp. 156-57 (19 Feb. 1780).
- who seek to regain*: p. 156 (same date).
- about the merest trifles*: p. 168 (17 Apr. 1780).
- 231 *Sir Robert Chambers*: p. 173 (22 May 1780).
- Sir Elijah Impey/as his abilities*: pp. 176, 177 (29 May 1780).
- Mr. Fay has no reason*: p. 188 (3 Nov. 1780).
- What a shocking custom*: p. 185 (27 Sep. 1780).
- the necessary attention*: p. 190 (19 Dec. 1780).
- The attorneys are*: p. 198 (to her sister, 24 Jun. 1781).
- The duty of a wife*: p. 199 (to the same, 17 Jul. 1781).
- her husband's extravagance*: pp. 200-01 (to the same, 28 Aug. 1781).
- I could not abandon*: p. 239 (to Mrs. L—, 19 Feb. 1815).
- that so noble a mind*: pp. 68-69 (20 Jul. 1779).
- a most malignant*: p. 70 (23 Jul. 1779).
- 232 *such atrocities*: p. 116 (12 Feb. 1780).
- the murder and plunder*: p. 187 (27 Sep. 1780).
- the countenance of*: p. 132 (14 Nov. 1779).
- "You cannot imagine ..."*: pp. 144-45 (11 Jan. 1780).
- advises that a diet*: pp. 123-24 (12 Feb. 1780).
- a drinking companion*: p. 147 (5 Feb. 1780).
- would faint at the thought*: p. 105 (28 Oct. 1779).
- accuses him of*: p. 106 (same date).
- property, valuable property/I must own*: p. 127 (12 Feb. 1780).
- countenance benign*: p. 149 (14 Feb. 1780).
- at his house they enjoy*: pp. 153-55 (19 Feb. 1780).
- Portuguese, the only/the name of Isaac/evinced more acuteness*: pp. 152-53 (same date).
- 233 *credibly informed/repeatedly compelled*: pp. 104, 106-07 (28 Oct. 1779).
- seizes the kettle*: p. 131 (12 Feb. 1780).
- a shew of engaging/a passion for some romantic*: p. 111 (same date).
- Mrs. Tulloh has now*: p. 150 (15 Feb. 1780).
- does plead for the Fays' release*: pp. 140, 150 (16 Dec. 1779, 15 Feb. 1780).
- I approached another people*: p. 271 (to Mrs. L—, 3 Mar. 1815).

## 25. ROBERT BURNS

C = *The Life and Works of Robert Burns*, ed. Robert Chambers, 4 vols. (London and Edinburgh: William and Robert Chambers, 1860).

CW = *The Complete Works of Robert Burns (Self-Interpreting)*, 6 vols. (Philadelphia: Gebbie & Co., 1886-87).

F = *The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. J. de Lancey Ferguson, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1931).

R = *The Letters of Robert Burns*, selected by J. Logie Robertson (London: Walter Scott, 1887).

- W = *Burns and Mrs. Dunlop*, ed.  
William Wallace (London:  
Hodder and Stoughton, 1898).
- 235 Robert Burns. From etching portrait  
in "The Poetry of Burns,  
Centenary Edition," William  
Hole R.S.A. 1896. Wikimedia  
Commons, commons.  
wikimedia.org/wiki/Robert\_  
Burns#/media/File:Burns\_  
Hole.jpg. Public domain.  
*flesh-disciplining godly*: R, p. 46 (to  
John Ballantine, 14 Jan. 1787).  
*as priest, repeated*: R, p. 62 (to James  
Smith, 30 Jun. 1787).  
*I foresee that poverty*: R, p. 9 (27 Dec.  
1781).
- 236 *I know very well*: R, p. 49 (Jan. 1787).  
*the only thing of which*: C, II, 97 (to  
James Smith, 11 Jun. 1787).  
*This morning I knelt*: R, pp. 80-81 (to  
Robert Muir, 26 Aug. 1787).  
*I thought five-and-thirty*: R, p. 159 (to  
Mrs. Dunlop, 28 Apr. 1788).  
*rascally creatures*: CW, IV, 383 (to  
Robert Graham, 7 Jan. 1794).  
*I recorded every defaulter*: CW, III,  
369 (to the same, 4 Sep. 1790).
- 237 *wish and pray that*: C, III, 149 (to  
John Mitchel, 1790).  
*I, this morning*: *Scottish Notes and  
Queries*, VII (Mar. 1894), 145 (23  
Feb. 1788).  
*clean-limbed, handsome*: R, p. 160 (28  
Apr. 1788).  
*I had a long and much-loved*: R, pp.  
181-82 (to Margaret Chalmers,  
16 Sep. 1788).
- 238 *the little poetic licences*: C, III, 47 (to  
John M'Auley, 4 Jun. 1789).  
*the sacred purity*: W, p. 358 (22 Aug.  
1792).  
*The lady on whom*: R, 340 (19 Oct.  
1794).  
*I am here on my farm*: R, p. 178 (to  
John Beugo, 9 Sep. 1788).
- I have formed many intimacies*: R, p.  
57 (23 Apr. 1787).  
*Cruikshank is*: R, p. 214 (4 May  
1789).
- 239 *old sinful Smellie*: C, IV, 14 (to Peter  
Hill, Apr. 1793).  
*that arch-rascal*: C, II, 246 (19 Mar.  
1788).  
*has been just such another*: C, III, 184  
(to Peter Hill, ?Oct. 1791).  
*benevolence of heart*: C, III, 291 (to  
Patrick Miller, Mar. or Apr.  
1793).  
*O what a fool*: R, pp. 133-34 (21 Jan.  
1788).  
*If in the moment*: R, p. 135 (25 Jan.  
1788).  
*the half-inch soul*: R, p. 142 (13 Feb.  
1788).  
*at the time alluded to*: R, pp. 207-08  
(9 Mar. 1789).
- 240 *cold language*: C, III, 285-86 (?Mar.  
1793).  
*Your husband, who insisted*: C, IV, 59  
(n.d.).  
*'Tis true, madam*: C, IV, 60 (Jan.  
1794).  
*a small but heart-felt*: *Burns Chronicle  
and Club Directory*, Second  
Series, XI (1927), 7.  
*some scandalous conduct*: C, IV, 84  
(25 ?Jun. 1794).  
*one of the most supreme*: W, p. 187 (7  
Jul. 1789).
- 241 *belittles a denunciation*: F, II, 281-82  
(to Mrs. Dunlop, 20 Dec. 1794).  
*what sin of ignorance*: W, p. 420 (31  
Jan. 1796).  
*the miscreant*: W, p. 377 (31 Dec.  
1792-5 Jan. 1793).  
*As to France*: R, p. 292 (5 Jan. 1793).
- 242 *When I must skulk*: W, p. 151 (4 Mar.  
1789).  
*I have ever looked*: W, p. 129 (1 Jan.  
1789).

- a just idea of that respect*: R, p. 82 (to Gavin Hamilton, 28 Aug. 1787).
- his powers equal*: F, II, 271 (to George Thomson, Nov. 1794).
- I hate the very idea*: R, p. 124 (12 Jan. 1788).
- those ghostly beasts*: W, p. 37 (4 Nov. 1787).
- elevation of soul*: W, p. 129 (to Mrs. Dunlop, 1 Jan. 1789).
- 243 *If there is another life*: W, p. 230.
- savage hospitality*: R, p. 101 (to William Cruikshank, 3 Mar. 1788).
- Mankind are by nature*: R, p. 247 (to Peter Hill, 2 Mar. 1790).
- James Clarke*: F, II, 77-79 (to Alexander Cunningham, 11 Jun. 1791) *et al.*
- When the remuneration*: F, II, 20 (to David Nevall, ?spring 1790).
- The callous and illegal*: F, I, 324 (to Mrs. Dunlop, 21 Apr. 1789) *et al.*
- Pity as well as guilt*: F, I, 226 (to Robert Ainslie, c. 1 Jun. 1787 or 1788).
- Above all things*: C, II, 171 (Dec. 1787).
- 244 *Faultless correctness*: R, p. 162 (to Mrs. Dunlop, 4 May 1788).
- a glorious poem*: C, IV, 180 (to the same, 15 Dec. 1793).
- The character and*: R, p. 197 (4 Jan. 1789).
- 245 *to be a poet*: *Burnsiana: A Collection of Literary Odds and Ends Relating to Robert Burns*, ed. John D. Ross, IV (Paisley and London: Alexander Gardner, [1894], 28 (to Lady Elizabeth Cunningham, 23 Dec. 1789).
- Of the poetry*: R, p. 338 (15 Sep. 1793).
- There is a peculiar*: R, p. 322 (8 Nov. 1792).
- downright sodomy of soul*: R, p. 320 (16 Sep. 1792).
- poured a Scottish prejudice*: R, p. 68 (to John Moore, 2 Aug. 1787).
- our national music*: C, III, 305 (to George Thomson, 26 Apr. 1793).
- There is a naïveté*: R, p. 324 (to the same, 26 Jan. 1793).
- My way*: R, p. 335 (to the same, Sep. 1793).
- 246 *by the time one has*: R, p. 197 (to John Moore, 4 Jan. 1789).
- my success has*: W, p. 151 (4 Mar. 1789).
- I lie so miserably*: R, p. 95 (19 Dec. 1787).
- Had the troublesome*: R, p. 54 (to Peter Stuart, (?Feb. ?1787).
- the poetic mind*: R, p. 61 (to William Nicol, 18 Jun. 1787).

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- 249 *Sydney Smith*. From original in "Cyclopedia of Wit and Humor" edited by William E. Burton. 1896. Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sydney\\_smith.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sydney_smith.jpg). Public domain.



- 250 *I thank God*: A, II, 227 (to Lady Mary Bennet, Aug. 1822).  
*making a snug*: A, II, 118 (to John Allen, 2 Apr. 1814).  
*he reassures Lord Grey*: A, II, 243 (23 Oct. 1824 [1825]).  
*the expense of it*: A, II, 120-21 (30 Dec. 1814).  
*an extremely comfortable*: A, II, 272 (to Lady Grey, 4 Jan. 1828).  
*It is the first real*: A, II, 303 (summer 1829).  
*the essence of all*: A, II, 426 (to Mrs. [?Austin], 4 Nov. 1839).
- 251 *The Liberal journals*: A, II, 428 (to Mrs. Catherine Crowe, 6 Jan. 1840).  
*The only acquaintance*: R, p. 273 (to Philip Henry Howard, 13 Aug. 1829).  
*My house is*: A, II, 496 (31 Aug. 1843).  
*Less innocently*: S, I, 451 (8 Aug. 1826).  
*That he could suggest*: S, I, 135 (13 Jun. 1808).  
*Conceiving that in so remote*: A, II, 46 (to Lord Grey, 21 Dec. 1808).  
*scene of simplicity*: A, II, 430 (to Mrs. [?Austin], 8 Apr. 1840).  
*Do not flatter*: A, II, 420 (24 Jun. 1839).  
*there is plenty of illness*: S, II, 616 (8 Jun. 1835).  
*We are all well*: A, II, 353 (1 Jan. 1834).  
*describes to his wife*: S, II, 803-04 (23 Oct. 1843).
- 252 *All that the Legislature*: S, II, 476 (Oct. 1842).  
*Nobody, I assure you*: A, II, 137-38 (13 Mar. 1817).  
*intolerable nonsense*: A, II, 489 (to J. A. Murray, 4 Jun. 1843).
- In Scotland the clergy/In England I maintain*: A, I, 30 (to Mrs. Beach, 15 Jul. 1798).  
*useless Theology*: John Gore, *Nelson's Hardy and His Wife* (London: Murray, 1935), p. 199 (to Mrs. Hardy, 26 Mar. 1839).
- 253 *I have always avoided*: A, II, 384 (to Lord John Russell, 3 Apr. 1837).  
*Those clergy who discover*: S, I, 51 (to Mrs. Beach, Nov. 1799).  
*a little more Methodistical*: A, II, 132 (to Francis Horner, 25 Nov. 1816).  
*pursue truth without*: A, II, 3 9 (Jun. 1801).  
*a philosophical breakfast*: A, II, 429 (to Mrs. [?Austin], 8 Apr. 1840).  
*an instinctive attachment*: S, I, 171 (early Nov. 1809).  
*Only promise me*: A, II, 451 (31 Aug. 1841).  
*I am just now*: R, pp. 358-59 (11 Dec. 1842).
- 254 *that Dissenters are prohibited*: S, I, 371 (to the Rev. C. Wellbeloved, 29 Dec. 1820).  
*fanatics and bigots*: A, II, 213 (to Francis Jeffrey, 2 Feb. 1821).  
*thirty-five or forty*: A, II, 87 (to the same, 19 Feb. 1811).  
*We have had meetings*: A, II, 100 (17 Jan. 1813).  
*how hard it is for a priest*: S, I, 413 (14 Jul. 1825).  
*She is very unpopular*: A, II, 229 (Oct. or Nov. 1821).  
*the strange appearance*: S, I, 365 (1 Oct. 1820).  
*Pretended heterodoxy*: A, II, 399 (to Lord John Russell, 3 Apr. 1837).  
*as liberal as a bishop*: A, II, 431-32 (to John Wishaw, 26 Aug. 1840).  
*an open letter*: S, II, 706-10 (in *The Times*, 5 Sep. 1840).
- 255 *I was sorry*: A, II, 499 (Sep. 1840).

- though the struggle: A, II, 50 (20 Feb. 1809).*
- Can any sensible man: A, II, 88 (19 Feb. 1811).*
- everything is fast setting: A, II, 98 (1 Jan. 1813).*
- Church and King: A, II, 150 (7 Jan. 1818).*
- In 1817, when the prosecution: S, I, 276 (22 Jun. 1817).*
- the suspension of Habeas Corpus: S, I, 274 (to Lord Holland, 13 Mar. 1817).*
- the enormity of: A, II, 185 (to Lord Grey, 3 Nov. 1819).*
- men of large fortune: Lord John Russell, ed., *Memoirs, Journal, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1860). p. 540 (to Thomas Moore, 11 Aug. 1831).*
- I see nobody: A, II, 316 (to Col. Charles Fox, 19 Feb. 1831).*
- some peers, fearful of the mob: S, II, 541-42 (to Lady Morley, Oct. 1831).*
- glowing harangue: A, II, 320 (10 Mar. 1831).*
- 256 *I had no idea Mrs. Partington: A, II, 331-32 (to Mrs. Meynell, Dec. 1831).*
- Why are the English: A, II, 235 (to the same, 18 Feb. 1823).*
- To be in a Tory house: A, II, 395 (to Sir George Philips, 22 Dec. 1836).*
- She is very clever: R, p. 377 (to Lady Holland, 9 Oct. 1843).*
- that consummate villain: A, II, 168 (to Lady Grey, 12 Jan. 1819).*
- that Scoundrel: S, II, 552 (to Lady Grey, 7 Jan. 1832).*
- pernicious cant: A, II, 107-08 (to Francis Jeffrey, 17 Apr. 1810).*
- the mob have got hold: A, II, 469 (26 Aug. 1842).*
- that a considerable portion: A, II, 187 (to Lord Grey, 3 Dec. 1819).*
- very manly and respectable: A, II, 154 (to John Wishaw, 13 Apr. 1818).*
- I doubt if there ever: A, II, 166 (23 Nov. 1818).*
- Conceive the horror: A, II, 100 (17 Jan. 1813).*
- 257 *Pray do not be good-natured: A, II, 329 (Nov. 1831).*
- it does seem absurd: A, II, 522 (19 Mar. 1844).*
- I am a decided: A, II, 529 (to Lady Grey, between 13 and 22 Apr. 1844).*
- such extensive changes: A, II, 320 (to Lord Holland, 10 Mar. 1831).*
- I am for no more movements: A, II, 351 (to Lady Grey, 12 Oct. 1834).*
- the consequences of giving: A, II, 386 (to the same, 1 Feb. 1836).*
- I love liberty: A, II, 305 (3 Jan. 1830).*
- Sir Robert Peel and I: A, II, 539 (to Lady Carlisle, early July 1844).*
- I believe Peel: R, p. 359 (to Miss Martineau, 11 Dec. 1842).*
- At the sight of—: A, II, 444-45 (to Mrs. Austin, 5 Mar. 1841).*
- 258 *you are so melancholy: A, II, 71 (April 1810).*
- Mrs. Sydney allows: A, II, 345 (Jan. 1833).*
- I feel as if I had lost: A, II, 284 (4 Jan. 1828).*
- I shall advertise: A, II, 353-54 (1 Jan. 1834).*
- I have also played: A, II, 199 (1 Jun. 1820).*
- that there was a metropolis: A, II, 92 (to Mrs. Apreece, 29 Dec. 1811).*
- I am losing my life: A, II, 152 (to Lady Mary Bennet, Feb. 1818).*
- little paradise: A, II, 369 (to Mrs. Austin, 28 Aug. 1835).*

- there is no man*: A, II, 341 (to J. A. Murray, 21 Nov. 1832).
- no one to argue with*: A, II, 461 (to Sir George Philips, 6 Feb. 1842).
- commonplaces and truisms*: A, II, 523 (to Lady Grey, 27 Feb. 1844).
- I do all I can*: A, II, 440-41 (3 Jan. 1841).
- 259 *I have not read*: A, II, 120 (30 Dec. 1814).
- Jeffrey has thrashed*: A, II, 143 (3 Oct. 1817).
- When I get hold*: Thomas Constable, *Archibald Constable and His Literary Correspondents* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1873), III, 133 (to Archibald Constable, 28 Jun. 1819).
- his comment that*: S, I, 334 (to Lady Grey, 15 Aug. 1819).
- I stood out against*: A, II, 411 (Sep. 1838).
- I am invited*: A, II, 464 (14 May 1842).
- I have no imagination*: A, II, 441 (to Mrs. Meynell, 25 Jan. 1841).
- magnificence must*: A, II, 259 (23 Apr. 1826).
- I have not seen*: A, II, 254 (18 Apr. 1826).
- absurd, disgraceful*: A, II, 263 (4 May 1826).
- 260 *hiding shyness*: S, II, 498 (the Archbishop of York, 22 Aug. 1829).
- grand, simple*: A, II, 419 (to Mrs. Grote, 24 Jun. 1839).
- express every soft*: A, II, 135 (to Lady Mary Bennet, Nov. 1816).
- a very respectable*: Mrs. William Hicks Beach, *A Cotswold Family* (London: Heinemann, 1909), p. 323 (10 Sep. 1798).
- My father*: A, II, 217 (7 Aug. 1821).
- reminds him of seabirds*: S, I, 324 (to Lady Holland, 20 Apr. 1819).
- notes in 1818*: S, I, 289 (to John Wishaw, 13 Apr. 1818).
- 261 *blabbed inside stories*: S, II, 607-08 (to Lady Grey, 7 Feb. 1835).
- democratical*: S, II, 628 (to the same, 3 Oct. 1835).
- if the Devil*: S, II, 672 (Sep. 1838).
- some of his happiest*: S, I, 181 (to Lady Holland, 27 Jan. 1810).
- Now pray do settle*: A, II, 124 (Aug. 1815).
- reports to Lady Grey*: S, II, 600-01 (14 Jan. 1835).
- she insists that Smith*: S, II, 808 (8 Nov. 1843).
- complaining to seventeen*: S, II, 811 (10 Dec. 1843).

27. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

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- Y = Charles Duke Yonge, *The Life and Administration of Robert Banks, Second Earl of Liverpool* (London: Macmillan, 1868).
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- lapses from chastity: G, II, 734 (to Humphry Davy, 20 May 1801).
- Southey has visions: Kenneth Curry, ed., *New Letters of Robert Southey*, 2 vols. (New York and London: Columbia UP, 1965), I, 72.
- 264 *absolute nuisance*: C, II, 578 (to John Morgan, 23 [28] Feb. 1812).
- 265 an account in a medical journal: C, II, 618 (26 April 1814).
- I am tolerably well*: C, I, 440 (13 Sep. 1803).
- screams of which: G, V, 487 (to James and Ann Gillman, c. 24 Jul. 1825).
- while I am awake*: A, p. 42 (1 Jul. 1820).
- like an Indian*: C, I, 440 (to Robert Southey, 13 Sep. 1803).
- while leaving his intellect: G, IV, 626 (to Lord Byron, 10 Apr. 1816).
- in all things that affect*: Eliza Meteyard, *A Group of Englishmen (1795-1815). Being Records of the Younger Wedgwoods and Their Friends* (London: Longmans, Green, 1871), p. 324 (25 Jun. 1807).
- 266 *I have prayed*: C, II, 617 (26 Apr. 1814).
- In the one crime*: C, II, 624 (26 Jun. 1814).
- a dinner party: G, III, 98 (5 May 1808).
- the man who beyond*: John Drinkwater, *A Book for Bookmen Being Edited Manuscripts and Marginalia* (New York: Doran, 1927), p. 254 (to Mrs. George Frere, 2 Apr. ?1821).
- You cannot conceive*: *Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review*, Apr. 1870, p. 355 (to R. H. Brabant, 21 Mar. 1815).
- Whether some half-score*: C, II, 689 (to J. H. Green, 2 May 1818).
- Though Heaven knows*: Thomas Sadler, ed., *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1869), II, 94 (3 May 1818).
- 267 in order to support this Bill: G, IV, 857 (to Hugh J. Rose, 7 May 1818).
- Highgate is in high feuds*: A, p. 162 (3 Dec. 1821).
- In 1821/He tries in 1830: G, V, 237 and VI, 833-35 (to ? , 19 Jun. 1822 and to Basil Montagu, 10 May 1830).
- utterly unfit to arrange*: *The Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, &c.*, 13 Sep. 1834, p. 628 (to J. Britton, 28 Feb. 1819).

- applies to his brother George*: G, III, 236-40 (9 Oct. 1809).
- 268 *maintain in his reply*: G, III, 251 (18 Oct. 1809).
- his claim to the author*: G, VI, 865-66 (3 Jun. 1831).
- I live in a perfect palace*: C, II, 491 (2 Feb. 1805).
- to entertain Dorothy Wordsworth*: G, VI, 733-35 (to the Editor of the *Quarterly Review*, Apr. 1828).
- unjust to the author*: P, II, 226 (29 Mar. 1811).
- declines to compose*: G, V, 42-43 (to Thomas Boosey, 10 May 1820).
- I must abrogate*: A, p. 85 (3 Mar. 1820).
- consoles himself*: G, I, 569 (to Josiah Wedgwood, 4 Feb. 1800).
- 269 *I have not been*: C, II, 574 (7 Dec. 1811).
- since the Courier*: L, p. 247 (7 Oct. 1815).
- I am perfectly callous*: S, III, 633 (30 Mar. 1796).
- To lose her*: C, I, 126 (29 Dec. 1794).
- 270 *seems to have employed*: C, I, 272 (14 Jan. 1799).
- Countess Kilmansig*: C, I, 262-63 (20 Oct. 1798).
- I have thought and thought*: C, I, 278 (12 [10] Mar. 1799).
- the wife of a man*: C, I, 309-10 (15 Oct. 1799).
- tells the same confidant*: G, II, 767 (21 Oct. 1801).
- For what is life*: C, I, 366 (31 Dec. 1801).
- for though we were three*: P, II, 83 (19 Nov. 1801).
- To the latter*: G, II, 790 (4 Apr. 1802).
- 271 *Mrs. Coleridge's mind*: C, I, 389 (29 Jul. 1802).
- Next to the Bible*: C, I, 433-34 (to Sir George and Lady Beaumont, 1 Oct. 1803).
- Pretty creatures*: C, I, 342-43 (to Humphry Davy, 2 Dec. 1800).
- That child is a poet*: C, I, 395 (9 Aug. 1802). The allusion is to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Act IV, Scene I.
- mere natural qualities*: C, II, 512 (3 Apr. 1807).
- 272 *has complained to me*: C, II, 577 (23 Feb. 1812).
- Even more distressful*: G, V, 330-31 (to George Skinner, 17 Feb. 1824).
- Our girl is a darling*: C, I, 443 (to Sir George and Lady Beaumont, 1 Oct. 1803).
- little Sara does honour*: C, II, 575-76 (to John Morgan, 28 Feb. 1812).
- when the artist Charles Leslie*: G, IV, 878-79 (to Charlotte Brent, 4 Nov. 1818).
- 273 *writes to ask Daniel Stuart's*: G, VI, 604 (28 Jul. 1826).
- only Daughter—and such a daughter*: G, VI, 591 (to Edward Coleridge, 27 Jul. 1826).
- He sends six-year-old Derwent*: G, III, 2-3 and 5-6 (7 Feb. and 3 Mar. 1807).
- ready to give Daniel Stuart*: G, VI, 601-02 (28 Jul. 1826).
- counsels the young James Gillman*: G, VI, 1047-48 (24 Feb. 1819).
- the importance of mastering*: G, VI, 628-31 (22 Oct. 1826).
- he cautions him*: G, VI, 842-44 (11 Aug. 1830).
- 274 *I wished to force*: C, I, 378 (19 Jul. 1802).
- I hope that ere*: C, I, 169 (24 Sep. 1796).
- I have been thinking*: C, I, 347.
- The interval since/My German Book/a work on the originality*: C, I, 348, 349.

- 275 *the beauty and neatness*: C, I, 352 (to Thomas Poole, 23 Mar. 1801).  
*there is not much doubt*: Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 1971), p. 6.  
*from my early reading*: C, I, 16 (16 Oct. 1797).
- 276 *Coleridge informs Tulk*: G, IV, 771 (Sep. 1817).  
*These opposites interact*: G, IV, 750-51 (4 Jul. 1817).  
*The corpuscular or atomic*: Y, p. 304 (to Lord Liverpool, 28 Jul. 1817).  
*John Dalton*: G, IV, 806-07 (to Charles Tulk, 12 Jan. 1818).  
*To Dr. Green*: G, VI, 828 (12 Feb. 1830).  
*he informs Tulk*: G, IV, 809 (12 Jan. 1818).  
*a long missive*: G, IV, 767-76 (Sep. 1817).
- 277 *extending PERSONALITY*: C, II, 635-36 (to Daniel Stuart, 30 Oct. 1814).  
*beasts can have understanding*: S, I, 242-43.  
*Are we not a union*: K, II, 70 (c. 30 Dec. 1808).  
*the religion which Christ taught*: C, I, 199 (17 Dec. 1796).
- 278 *if to feel how infinitely*: JC, II, 160 (26 Apr. 1814).  
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*the foundation of the whole*: JC, II, 85 (late Apr. 1814).  
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*a numerous and stirring*: James Gillman, *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London: Pickering, 1838), pp. 343-44 (to?, ?1816).
- 279 *among men, kind-hearted*: K, I, 60 (to Sir George Beaumont, 6 Apr. 1804).  
*the common adulteries*: G, I, 458 (to Thomas Poole, 4 Jan. 1799).  
*no business casting aspersions*: G, II, 904-05 to Mary Robinson, Junior, 27 Dec. 1802).  
*I believe that punishment*:  
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*denounces Islam*: G, VI, 626-27 (Oct. 1826?).  
*the tyranny of Papal or Brahmin*: S, I, 124.  
*the Luther of Brahminism*: G, IV, 917 (to Robert Southey, 31 Jan. 1819).  
*the Talmud is*: G, VI, 773 (to Hyman Hurwitz, 21 Nov. 1828).  
*the only essential*: G, V, 3-4 (to the same, 4 Jan. 1820).  
*of the Jewish Persuasion*: G, V, 131 (31 Dec. 1820).  
*current illiberal dogma*: *The Life of the Rev. Joseph Blanco White Written by Himself*, ed. John Hamilton Thom, 3 vols. (London: Chapman, 1845), I, 419 (to White, 20 Jul. 1825).
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- An attempt to co-ordinate*: G, V, 372 (to Mrs. William Lorance Rogers, Jul. 1824).
- that scientific laws*: G, VI, 685 (25 or 26 May 1827).
- anxiously asks Tulk*: G, VI, 611 (8 Sep. 1826).
- its prophecies refer*: G, VI, 550 (to Basil Montagu, 1 Feb. 1826).
- for myself I am not ashamed*: Alois Brandl, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the English Romantic School*, trans. Lady Eastlake (London: Murray, 1887), p. 374 (1 Feb. 1826).
- Rather than acceding*: G, V, 228 (to Robert Southey, 16 May 1822).
- But when the Bill*: G, VI, 787-88n3.
- he assures Daniel Stuart*: G, IV, 719 (c. 2 Apr. 1817).
- abstract reason*: L, p. 277 (to Daniel Stuart, 15 Mar. 1817).
- I have snapped*: C, I, 243 (to the Rev. George Coleridge, c. 10 Mar. 1798).
- 281 *degrades the Deity*: Y, pp. 302-05 (28 Jul. 1817).
- needs a gentry*: G, III, 544 (23 Nov. 1814).
- are grounded in*: Y, p. 306 (28 Jul. 1817).
- it is our pestilent*: C, I, 353 (23 Mar. 1801).
- when trade, the nurse*: S, IV, 421 (c. 19 Sep. 1821).
- indignantly dismisses*: G, V, 442 (to John Taylor Coleridge, 8 May 1825).
- I dare affirm*: *Canterbury Magazine*, Sep. 1834, p. 129 (to William Mudford, early May 1818).
- their next consequences*: C, II, 712 (12 Feb. 1821).
- I have learnt the INSIDE*: L, pp. 59-60 (22 Aug. 1806).
- 282 *One deep, most deep*: A, p. 11 (to Thomas Allsop, 13 Dec. 1819).
- absolute menials*: L, p. 97 (to T. G. Street, 7 Dec. 1808).
- not in the hands of*: G, IV, 714 (to the same, 22 Mar. 1817).
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- Catilinarian*: C, II, 760 (to H. F. Cary, 22 Apr. 1832).
- Lord Grey and his allies*: G, VI, 916 (26 Jul. 1832).
- the present illogical age*: C, II, 551 (to Thomas Poole, 9 Oct. 1809).
- Of parentheses*: C, II, 558-59 (28 Jan. 1810).
- 283 *a prelude to the six-part*: G, IV, 584-85 (to John M. Gutch, 17 Sep. 1815).
- he believes that most*: G, V, 18 (to Charles Tulk, 20 Jan. 1820).
- amuse without requiring*: A, p. 79 (30 Mar. 1820).
- higher degree of intellectual*: A, p. 27 (8 Apr. 1820).
- Madoc will bring*: C, II, 489-90 (to Robert Southey, 2 Feb. 1805).
- The virtually unknown William Blake's*: G, IV, 834 (to H. F. Cary, 6 Feb. 1818).
- the best epic poem*: G, III, 12 (to William Sotheby, 18 Apr. 1807).
- he tells Charles Lamb*: G, V, 472-73 (30 Jun. 1825).
- a wretched describer/when first the ice*: C, I, 273-75 (14 Jan. 1799).
- 284 *At length and suddenly*: C, I, 280 (to his wife, 12 [10] Mar. 1799).
- I am no novice*: C, I, 419 (to Thomas Wedgwood, 9 Jan. 1803).
- Our house is better*: C, I, 213 (1797).
- 285 *I awoke*: C, II, 487 (2 Feb. 1805).

- I breakfast*: C, II, 631 (12 Sep. 1814).  
*It was really shocking*: C, II, 598 (to Robert Southey, 12 May 1812).  
*Wordsworth's hypochondriacal feelings*: C, I, 431 (1 [2] Sep. 1803).
- 286 *In spite of Wordsworth's*: C, II, 448 (15 Jan. 1804).  
*that Coleridge should compare*: G, III, 273 (to Thomas Poole, 12 Jan. 1810).  
*some evening when we are*: *Notes and Queries*, 7 Aug. 1852, p. 118 (9 Feb. 1808).  
*The Thursday before*: C, I, 422 (to his wife, 4 Apr. 1803).  
*Coleridge and Southey find*: G, IV, 670 (to Hugh J. Rose, 17 Sep. 1816).  
*I both respect*: L, p. 155 (2 May 1809).
- 287 *Mr. Thomas Hill*: C, II, 705 (14 Jan. 1820).  
*On being invited*: C, II, 691 (19 Jul. 1818).  
*After a local headmaster*: G, VI, 645 (to Edward Coleridge, 19 Nov. 1826).  
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- despises natural science*: E, III, 59-60 (to Emily Jephson, 20 Sep. 1836).  
*I cannot understand*: K, I, 140 (24 Sep. 1848).
- When The Prelude*: C, II, 152 (to Mrs. Ouvry, n.d.).  
*the clever Mary Mitford*: E, I, 82 (to her mother, 29 May 1809).  
*I am dying to pet*: E, I, 286 (27 Jun. 1814).  
*I must never marry*: E, I, 55 (26 Oct. 1806).
- 290 *I intend to die*: E, I, 188 (22 Apr. 1812).  
*One of the most disagreeable*: C, I, 137-38 (to Mrs. Hofland, 24 Sep. 1829).  
*a little mean-looking*: C, I, 72-73 (to Mrs. Hofland, n.d.).  
*I have above seventy*: E, III, 36 (to Emily Jephson, 20 Sep. 1835).
- 291 *a long string of meadows*: E, I, 181 (5 Apr. 1812).



- Masses of the Siberian larkspur: E, III, 120 (28 Jun. 1841).*
- 292 *Justifying her claim: C, I, 55 (to Mrs. Hofland, 18 Mar. 1819).*  
*It was a fine specimen: E, I, 57-58 (2 Nov. 1806).*  
*the almost inconceivable: E, I, 190 (22 Apr. 1812).*  
*For the first ten days: E, III, 16 (8 Jul. 1834).*  
*no trees – no flowers: E, II, 72 (26 Sep. 1819).*
- 293 *cold, monotonous, bald: E, III, 177 (to Emily Jephson, Jun. 1843).*  
*How splendidly: E, III, 17 (8 Aug. 1834).*  
*fondness for rural: E, I, 106 (3 Jul. 1810).*  
*I do sometimes envy: C, I, 129 (25 May 1825).*  
*It would be quite refreshing: E, I, 221 (to her father, 1 Jan. 1813).*  
*My father was wet: E, II, 276 (3 Oct. 1829).*
- 294 *It is surely a very odd: E, I, 53 (24 Oct. 1806).*  
*my advice has always: E, I, 62 (11 Feb. 1807).*  
*an unnecessary: E, I, 62-63 (15 Feb. 1807).*  
*My father has: E, II, 163 (13 May 1823).*  
*My father – very kind: E, II, 269-70 (20 Jun. 1829).*
- 295 *His eyesight: E, III, 136-37 (Feb. 1842).*  
*this poor cottage: E, III, 90 (20 Aug. 1838).*  
*the things that weigh: C, I, 290 (May 1842).*  
*Is not this the perfection: E, III, 145 (9 Apr. 1842).*  
*excessive irritability: E, III, 137 (to the Rev. William Harness, Feb. 1842).*
- his prolonged moaning: C, I, 203-04 (to Lucy Anderdon, 10 Apr. 1842).*
- 296 *a destiny that is: E, II, 270 (20 Jun. 1829).*  
*Is he likely: E, I, 288 (5 Jul. 1814).*  
*He is a most admirable: E, II, 206 (21 May 1825).*  
*is Queen Anne: E, I, 287 (to Sir William Elford, 5 Jul. 1814).*  
*admirable character: E, II, 165 (to Benjamin Haydon, 29 May 1823).*  
*peculiar talent/humorous pictures: E, II, 170 (to the same, Oct. 1823)*  
*He was a most brilliant: E, III, 248 (to Anna Goldsmid, 1 Dec. 1852).*
- 297 *A sweet young woman: E, III, 46 (27 May 1836).*  
*the most remarkable person: C, I, 268 (to Henrietta Harrison, 31 Jul. 1837).*  
*to be better authorized: E, III, 55 (Jun. 1836).*  
*Everybody that loves me: E, III, 115 (20 Apr. 1841).*  
*Miss Barrett says: C, I, 195 (to Lucy Anderdon, 23 Feb. 1842).*  
*I felt just exactly: K, I, 105 (Feb. 1847).*  
*A strange thing: K, I, 214 (27 Sep. 1851).*  
*Mrs. Browning believes: F, p. 425 (to Digby Starkey, 18 Aug. 1853).*  
*there are passages: C, I, 233 (n.d.).*
- 298 *You would soon: F, p. 426 (18 Aug. 1853).*  
*I have never seen: E, III, 223-24 (31 Dec. 1850).*  
*the only realization: K, I, 277 (Jun. 1854).*  
*has lived more than: K, I, 293-94 (25 Dec. 1854).*  
*has been to me: C, II, 251 (23 Aug. 1854).*

- He is a most admirable*: C, II, 72 (24 Aug. 1854).
- Mr. Harness will*: C, II, 220 (20 Oct. 1854).
- 299 *few persons in England*: C, II, 222 (13 Nov. 1854).
- He is the head*: F, pp. 400-01 (6 Nov. 1852).
- The life that he has put*: C, II, 209 (to Hugh Pearson, 27 Nov. 1853).
- It got nearer to*: C, II, 245 (to Francis Bennoch, 21 Sep. 1853).
- to design a chair*: C, II, 241-42 (to the same, 18 Aug. 1853).
- a great poet soon*: C, II, 57 (to Mrs. Tindal, née Harrison, 29 Jan. 1853).
- has 'the faculty divine'*: F, p. 426 (to Digby Starkey, 18 Aug. 1853).
- Pray for me*: C, II, 251 (23 Aug. 1854).
- The most splendid woman*: C, I, 246 (27 Jan. 1849).
- 300 *I wish you knew*: F, p. 400 (6 Nov. 1852).
- Above all, disregard tittle-tattle*: C, I, 244-45 (23 Oct. 1848).
- a better place*: C, II, 97 (to Mrs. Ouvry, Dec. 1848).
- a certain contempt*: F, p. 430 (to Emily Jephson, 23 Jun. 1854).
- He and I often ask*: C, II, 222 (to Hugh Pearson, 11 Nov. 1854).
- 301 *Sam is objector-general*: C, II, 242 (18 Aug. 1853).
- I am this winter*: C, II, 204 (25 Nov. 1852).
- She comes to my door*: F, p. 430 (23 Jun. 1854).
- got off (we neither of us knew how)*: E, III, 215 (to Mrs. Browning, 11 Mar. 1849).
- K. and Sam nurse me*: C, II, 77 (2 Oct. 1854).
- My death was expected*: K, I, 286 (2 Oct. 1854).
- 302 *Mr. May reluctantly*: C, II, 57 (to Mrs. Tindal, 29 Jan. 1853).
- It is next to impossible*: F, p. 388 (23 Aug. 1852).
- Mr. May complains/For about a month*: F, pp. 413-14 (31 Jan. 1853).
- 303 *It has pleased God*: C, II, 76-77 (to Mrs. Tindal, 2 Oct. 1854).
- looking on blue sky*: E, III, 284 (to Mrs. Jennings, 22 May 1854).
- I fully believe*: E, III, 286 (25 Aug. 1854).
- a sermon, which*: E, I, 206 (12 Jul. 1812).
- Catholic Methodists*: C, I, 68 (to Mrs. Hofland, n.d.).
- nothing more nor less than popery*: E, III, 271 (to Mrs. Hoare, autumn, 1853).
- the very incarnation*: E, III, 175 (to Emily Jephson, May 1843).
- There is enough for salvation*: E, III, 208 (to the same, n.d.).
- the unchristian intolerance*: C, II, 98 (to Mrs. Ouvry, Dec. 1848).
- I, for my part*: E, III, 257 (to the Rev. William Harness, Jan. 1853).
- 304 *All that Protestant*: C, II, 123 (20 Feb. 1852).
- would have done honour to Shakespeare/I do not*: E, II, 264 (19 Jan. 1829).
- finds comfort in St. John's*: E, III, 162 (to Emily Jephson, Nov. 1842).
- a firm believer*: C, II, 141 (25 Sep. 1854).
- the whole of the holy*: E, III, 289 (to the Rev. William Harness, 4 Sep. 1854).
- the most large and liberal*: E, III, 286 (to the same, 25 Aug. 1854).
- marked by communion with nature*: L, p. 307 (to John Ruskin, 24 Dec. 1854).

- Sunday evening cricket*: E, III, 12 (to the Rev. William Harness, 2 May 1834).
- should be based upon religion*: E, III, 206 (to Emily Jephson, spring 1846).
- the bane of England*: C, II, 155 (to Mrs. Ouvry, n.d.).
- All the naughty ladies*: E, III, 47 (to her father, 27 May 1836).
- 305 *Now can such a person*: E, II, 249-50 (to the Rev. William Harness, 31 Mar. 1828).
- threatens to injure*: E, II, 102 (to Sir William Elford, 5 Jul. 1820).
- to his court*: C, I, 95 (to Mrs. Hofland, 6 Oct. 1820).
- I would not have been*: C, II, 52 (to Mrs. Tindal, 23 Aug. 1852).
- has reformed*: C, II, 128 (to Mrs. Ouvry, 7 Apr. 1852).
- honours Sir William*: E, II, 78 (to Sir William Elford, 28 Dec. 1819).
- one-sided, exaggerated*: E, III, 245 (to the Rev. William Harness, 10 Nov. 1852).
- That slavery*: E, III, 254 (to Mrs. Jennings, 3 Jan. 1853).
- 306 *his head blown up*: E, II, 37 (to Sir William Elford, 6 Sep. 1818).
- One thing is certain*: E, I, 229 (to the same, 11 Apr. 1813.)
- in his heart*: C, II, 156 (to Mrs. Ouvry, n.d.).
- I am an inconsistent*: E, III, 143 (to Elizabeth Barrett, 4 Apr. 1842).
- that best class*: C, I, 184 (to Lucy Anderdon, n.d.).
- the alternative*: E, II, 317 (31 Mar. 1831).
- I myself should like*: K, I, 131 (9 May 1848).
- midway between*: E, III, 264 (spring 1853).
- Belle Démocrate*: E, I, 212 (to Sir William Elford, 27 Oct. 1812).
- What made you think*: E, II, 46 (8 Dec. 1818).
- Everything about*: E, II, 203 (3 Mar. 1825).
- 307 *doing justice to that*: C, I, 181-82 (n.d.).
- Oh how I should*: K, I, 181 (7 Apr. 1850).
- My admiration of*: C, II, 128 (23 Mar. 1852).
- He has not*: K, I, 150-51 (15 Jan. 1849).
- the instability and trickery*: K, I, 202 (to Charles Boner, 28 Feb. 1851).
- Ah, my dear friend*: C, II, 131 (9 Jul. 1852).
- a mild despotism*: C, II, 237 (to Francis Bennoch, 23 Mar. 1853).
- Truly, of all the fine things*: F, p. 396 (to Emily Jephson, 25 Oct. 1852).
- I have no faith in women's*: C, II, 138 (early 1853).
- A woman who could paint*: C, I, 107 (to Mrs. Hofland, 8 Jun. 1821).
- old Quakeress*: F, p. 391 (to Emily Jephson, 23 Aug. 1852).
- 308 *like a man in petticoats*: C, I, 95-96 (to Mrs. Hofland, 6 Oct. 1820).
- I have no faith in the lady*: E, III, 297-98 (to Mrs. Jennings, 29 Nov. 1854).
- Women were not*: E, II, 284 (12 Dec. 1829).
- for above thirty years*: E, III, 277-78 (10 Nov. 1853).
- gentille demoiselle ... suddenly*: E, I, 156 (15 Oct. 1811).
- brought up by*: C, II, 48 (to Mrs. Tindal, 2 Aug. 1852).
- in this educating age*: E, I, 174 (to Sir William Elford, 28 Jan. 1812).
- Mr. Lovejoy smuggled*: C, II, 94-95 (c. Mar. 1848).
- we shall have more than*: C, II, 20 (to Mrs. Tindal, 13 Apr. 1848).

- the most vague*: C, I, 159 (to Lucy Anderdon, 5 Nov. 1838).
- the very great nobility*: E, III, 26 (to Emily Jephson, 18 May 1835).
- 309 *I remember being*: C, I, 238 (c. Dec. 1841).
- an author like Mr. James*: E, III, 134 (13 Jan. 1842).
- that talks about nothing*: K, I, 196 (11 Feb. 1851).
- more of variety*: E, I, 303-04 (to Sir William Elford, 13 Feb. 1815).
- the want of distinctive*: E, III, 157-58 (18 Aug. 1842).
- the real Augustan age*: E, I, 200 (to Sir William Elford, 1 Jul. 1812).
- Are you a great reader*: E, III, 60 (13 Oct. 1836).
- whose female characters*: C, I, 107-08 (to Mrs. Hofland, 8 Jun. 1821).
- Look at the great novelists*: E, III, 245-46 (10 Nov. 1852).
- 310 *Mrs. Gaskell's first novel*: C, I, 250 (to Mrs. Partridge, 11 Apr. 1849).
- There is cleverness*: C, I, 253 (to the same, 2 Nov. 1849).
- I have seen The Prelude*: C, II, 152 (to Mrs. Ouvry, n.d.).
- not at all Byronish*: E, II, 32 (14 Jun. 1818).
- even in all my affliction*: E, III, 167 (12 Dec. 1842).
- What do we not*: E, III, 169 (to Elizabeth Barrett, 15 Dec. 1842).
- our greatest living*: K, I, 146 (to Charles Boner, n.d.).
- modelling his prose*: E, III, 252 (to the Rev. Hugh Pearson, 1 Jan. 1853).
- The attraction Carlyle has*: K, I, 90 (to Charles Boner, 12 Dec. 1845).
- I am, for my sins*: E, III, 230 (summer 1852).
- 311 *Nothing can exceed*: F, p. 386 (to Digby Starkey, 29 Jul. 1852).
- write more ballads*: E, III, 63-64 (17 Oct. 1836).
- I never say*: E, II, 21 (19 Jan. 1818).
- I am now chained*: E, II, 162 (25 Apr. 1823).
- Andrew Marvell/John Clare*: C, II, 194 (to Albinus Martin, c. Dec. 1843).
- She records that*: L, p. 250 (to Charles Boner, 20 Mar. 1853).
- Whittier and*: K, I, 250 (20 Mar. 1853).
- of which a new one*: C, I, 127-28 (to Mrs. Hofland, 1824).
- I would never*: F, p. 360 (25 Feb. 1852).
- 312 *I believe that*: E, II, 198 (19 Feb. 1825).
- perhaps because I prefer*: E, II, 274 (9 Sep. 1829).
- The fact was*: K, I, 282 (5 Sep. 1854).

## 29. LORD BYRON

- L = Earl of Lovelace, *Astarte*: A  
*Fragment of Truth Concerning George Gordon Byron, Sixth Lord Byron*, ed. Mary, Countess of Lovelace (London: Christophers, 1921).
- LJ = Leslie A. Marchand, ed., *Byron's Letters and Journals*, 11 vols. (London: John Murray, 1973-1981).
- M = John Murray, ed., *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, 2 vols. (Toronto: F. D. Goodchild, 1922).
- P = Rowland E. Prothero, ed., *The Works of Lord Byron: Letters and Journals*, 6 vols. (London: John Murray; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898-1901).
- 313 Finden, E., and G. Sanders. *Lord Byron*. Circa 1845. Image taken from page 12 of "The Poetical Works of Lord Byron", collected and arranged, with illustrative notes by Thomas Moore, Lord

- Jeffrey, Sir Walter Scott ... &c.". Courtesy of British Library on flickr, flic.kr/p/hNbUby. No known copyright restrictions.
- aristocratic rebel*: Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, 2nd imp. (London: Allen and Unwin, 1947), p. 774.
- the British public*: Lady Trevelyan, ed. *The Works of Lord Macaulay Complete*, 8 Vols. (London: Longmans, Green: 1871), V, 391 ("Moore's Life of Lord Byron").
- two Calvinist nursemaids*: Leslie A. Marchand, *Byron: A Portrait* (1971; London: Futura Publications, 1976), pp. 10, 20.
- 314 *Constance Spencer Smith*: M, I, 77 (to Lady Melbourne, 15 Sep. 1812).  
*I have seen*: P, II, 103 (25 Feb. 1812).
- 315 *delirium*: LJ, II, 177 (to Lady Caroline Lamb, 19 May 1812?).  
Leslie Marchand: Marchand, *Byron: A Portrait* (London: Futura, 1976), p. 148n.
- 316 *strictest adultery*: P, IV, 371 (to Richard Hoppner, 29 Oct. 1819), et al.
- 317 *In February 1824*: P, VI, 333 (to John Murray, 25 Feb. 1824).
- 318 *I am living in*: M, I, 29-30 (to Francis Hodgson, 20 Jan. 1811).  
*I am much at my ease*: P, III, 16 (to John Murray, 22 Jan. 1814).  
*The Carnival closed*: P, IV, 55-56 (to Augusta Leigh, 19 Feb. 1817).  
*ungovernable appetite for scandal*: I, 49 (to Augusta Leigh, 17 Nov. 1804).  
*finding fault*: P, I, 55 (to the same, 30 Jan. 1805).  
*as haughty as Lucifer*: P, V, 99 (to John Murray, 16 Oct. 1820).
- 319 *flies into a fit*: P, I, 46-47 (11 Nov. 1804).
- To him all the men*: P, II, 8 (to Robert Charles Dallas, 27 Aug. 1811).  
*For my own part*: P, II, 29 (to the same, 7 Sep. 1811).
- 320 *I have about the same conception*: M, II, 70 (25 Mar. 1818).  
*such a man's destiny*: M, II, 79 (24 Apr. 1818).  
*what is he to do*: Murray, II, 148 (to John Cam Hobhouse, 11 May 1820).  
*You will never give up*: P, II, 86 (8 Dec. 1811).  
*You will find him*: P, IV, 11 (17 Nov. 1816).  
Byron recommends: LJ, VIII, 112 (10 May 1821).  
*I never knew*: P, II, 116-17 (? Apr. 1812).
- 321 *Is everyone*: M, I, 104 (10 Nov. 1812).  
*would "ruin her"*: M, I, 116 (14 Dec. 1812).  
When Caroline: M, I, 163 (6 Jul. 1813).  
*So if C.*: M, I, 257 (16 May 1814).  
*She insists always*: M, I, 122 (27 Dec. 1812).  
*very handsome*: M, I, 199 (13 Oct. 1813).
- 322 *what do you think/because, forsooth*: M, I, 188 (30 Sep.-1 Oct. 1813).  
*It was received/has brought me*: M, I, 191 (8 Oct. 1813).  
*I have told him*: M, I, 196 (11 Oct. 1813).  
*One day, left entirely*: M, I, 203-04 (17 Oct. 1813).
- 323 *Your approbation*: M, I, 211 (23 Oct. 1813).  
*The Chevalier*: P, VI, 136 (1 Dec. 1822).  
*that little and insane*: M, II, 237 (to John Cam Hobhouse, 14 Dec. 1822).  
he informs Lady Hardy: LJ, X, 172-74 (17 May 1823).

- Anything, you will allow: M, I, 198* (13 Oct. 1813).
- we never yawn: M, I, 241* (29 Jan. 1814).
- like a frightened hare: P, III, 160* (22 Oct. 1814).
- I know her to be: M, I, 256* (Apr.-1 May 1814).
- She was not aware: M, I, 254* (30 Apr. 1814).
- paraphrase, parenthesis: M, II, 61* (to Douglas Kinnaird, 19 Nov. 1817).
- What 'hope': P, IV, 23* (19 Dec. 1816).
- 324 *one formed for my destruction: L, p. 277* (28 Oct. 1816).
- that infamous fiend: L, p. 82* (17 May 1819).
- mischievous eyes: M, I, 285* (20 Oct. 1814).
- wicked laughs/dear Machiavel: M, I, 94-95* (20 Oct. 1812).
- I never saw: M, I, 92* (18 Oct. 1812).
- your conversation: M, I, 155* (14 May 1813).
- You can't conceive: M, I, 277* (7 Oct. 1814).
- I have obeyed you: M, I, 121* (23 Dec. 1812).
- the best, and kindest: P, IV, 228* (to John Murray, 23 Apr. 1818).
- glaringly beautiful: M, I, 79* (to Lady Melbourne, 18 Sep. 1812).
- my Princess of Parallelograms: M, I, 94* (to Lady Melbourne, 18 Oct. 1812).
- Somebody or other: Murray, I, 260-61* (21 Jun. 1814).
- very superior woman: M, I, 253-54* (to Lady Melbourne, 29 Apr. 1814).
- what ancient historians: LJ, IV, 161* (25 Aug. 1814).
- Epicurean doctrine: LJ, IV, 168* (7 Sep. 1814).
- promises to listen: LJ, IV, 177* (20 Sep. 1814).
- 325 *I would do almost: M, I, 269* (23 Sep. 1814).
- I have every disposition: M, I, 287* (4 Nov. 1814).
- the most silent woman: M, I, 287*, to Lady Melbourne, 4 Nov. 1814).
- agitations upon: M, I, 290* (to the same, 13 Nov. 1814).
- the die is cast: M, I, 287* (to the same, 4 Nov. 1814).
- Byron writes to: LJ, V, 20-21* (2 Feb. 1816).
- a pleading letter: LJ, V, 24-25* (8 Feb. 1816).
- 326 *that evil Genius: P, V, 232* (to John Murray, 27 Jan. 1821).
- My Clytemnestra: M, II, 136* (3 Mar. 1820).
- Yours has been: L, p. 304* (11 Jan. 1821).
- sure that the maid: L, p. 292* (20 Jul. 1819).
- as she is fond of: P, IV, 38* (2 Jan. 1817).
- their daughter: P, V, 479* (17 Nov. 1821).
- his offer to let her: LJ, VI, 261* (31 Dec. 1819).
- My offer was: P, V, 1-2* (3 Apr. 1820).
- the pain of writing: P, V, 472* (9 Nov. 1821).
- As to Me de Staël: M, I, 223* (8 Jan. 1814).
- 327 *in many things: M, I, 169* (8 Aug. 1813).
- She has made Copet: P, III, 369* (30 Sep. 1816).
- second-hand school: P, V, 267-68* (26 Apr. 1821).
- I stripped off: P, IV, 296-97* (15 May 1819).
- I regret that: P, V, 73-74* (10 Sep. 1820).

- As to poor Shelley: P, VI, 32-33 (4 Mar. 1822).*
- 328 *I have a thorough esteem: P, II, 296-97 (2 Dec. 1813).*  
*originality and Italianism: P, III, 242 (to Leigh Hunt, 30 Oct. 1815).*  
*antique phraseology: P, IV, 104 (to Thomas Moore, 11 Apr. 1817).*  
*He believes/a great coxcomb: P, IV, 237, 239 (to John Cam Hobhouse, Jun. 1818).*  
*They are dirtier: P, VI, 119 (4 Oct. 1822).*  
*writes to the grievously: LJ, X, 32-33 (11 Nov. 1822).*  
*As to any community: P, VI, 157 (25 Oct. 1822).*  
*To Kinnaird: M, II, 217 (23 Feb. 1822).*  
*as to the other: P, VI, 167-68 (20 Feb. 1823).*  
*the Grandfather: P, IV, 170 (to John Murray, 15 Sep. 1817).*
- 329 *a fellow who hates: P, V, 80 (to the same, 28 Sep. 1820).*  
*I hope that: P, V, 372 (20 Sep. 1821).*  
*relishing an exchange: LJ, IX, 53 (to John Murray, ? Nov. 1821).*  
*At Cologne, he engages: LJ, V, 76-77 (to John Cam Hobhouse, 2 May 1816).*  
*I have fallen in love: P, IV, 7-8 (17 Nov. 1816).*  
*We have formed: L, p. 279 (18 Dec. 1816).*  
*She plagues me less: M, II, 27 (19 Dec. 1816).*  
*I fell in love: P, IV, 86-87 (25 Mar. 1817).*  
*Marianna Segati: P, IV, 50 (28 Jan. 1817).*
- 330 *a Venetian girl: P, IV, 262 (to Thomas Moore, 19 Sep. 1818).*  
*You are not/when she had/I told her that/She was always: P, IV, 326-36 (1 Aug. 1819).*
- 331 *a whole treasure of toys: P, IV, 399 (to Richard Hoppner, 10 Jan. 1820).*  
*the Child shall not: P, V, 15 (to the same, 22 Apr. 1820).*  
*If Clare thinks: P, V, 75 (to the same, 10 Sep. 1820).*  
*Abroad, with a fair foreign: P, V, 264 (to the same, 3 Apr. 1821).*  
*much admired: M, II, 83 (27 May 1818).*  
*is very pretty: P, IV, 250 (3 Aug. 1818).*  
*obstinate as a mule: P, IV, 428 (to Richard Hoppner, 31 Mar. 1820).*  
*quite above the control: P, V, 263 (to the same, 3 Apr. 1821).*  
*where, he reports: LJ, VIII, 138 (to Countess Benzoni, 16 Jun. 1821).*  
*longs for a visit: LJ, VIII, 226 (to Richard Hoppner, (28 ?Sep. 1821).*  
*I look forward: P, IV, 196 (2 Feb. 1818).*
- 332 *She has plenty: P, V, 15 (to Richard Hoppner, 22 Apr. 1820).*  
*the great Belle: L, p. 307 (to Augusta Leigh, 5 Oct. 1821).*  
*reckoned a very cultivated: P, IV, 413-14 (to John Murray, 1 Mar. 1820).*  
*that turn for ridicule: L, p. 308 (5 Oct. 1821).*  
*composing a sonnet: LJ, VI, 186 (to Augusta Leigh, 26 Jul. 1819).*  
*horrified a correct company: M, II, 107 (to John Cam Hobhouse, 6 Apr. 1819).*  
*The G.'s object: P, IV, 393 (to Richard Hoppner, 31 Dec. 1819).*  
*Reading his poem: LJ, VII, 198-99 (to Countess Guiccioli, 12 Oct. 1820).*
- 333 *By the aid: P, IV, 319 (20 Jun, 1819).*  
*some awkward: M, II, 129 (20 Nov. 1819).*  
*the watertight proof: P, V, 35 (to Thomas Moore, 1 Jun. 1820).*

- I only meant: P, V, 70 (to the same, 31 Aug. 1820).*
- promiscuous concubinage: M, II, 107 (to John Cam Hobhouse, 6 Apr. 1819).*
- As to libertinism: P, IV, 326 (2 Jul. 1819).*
- a Scottish divorce: LJ, IV, 171 (? Jul. 1819).*
- indebted to his wife: M, II, 220 (to John Cam Hobhouse, 11 Apr. 1822).*
- the way to hate each other: L, p. 308 (to Augusta Leigh, 5 Oct. 1821).*
- It is awful work: P, V, 365 (19 Sep. 1821).*
- I can say that: L, pp. 307-08 (to Augusta Leigh, 5 Oct. 1821).*
- 334 *of a domestic nature: P, VI, 206 (to John Bowring, 12 May 1823).*
- his friend Lady Hardy: LJ, X, 197-98 (10 Jun. 1823).*
- my friend Hobhouse: P, V, 115 (to John Murray, 9 Nov. 1820).*
- here there are so many: M, I, 56 (to John Cam Hobhouse, 3 Nov. 1811).*
- a cynic after: M, I, 154 (7 May 1813).*
- I have fallen in love: M, II, 22 (27 Nov. 1816).*
- one that brought him: LJ, XI, 43 (7 Oct. 1823).*
- You used to be: M, II, 134-35 (3 Mar. 1820).*
- 335 *Sir Francis Burdett: P, IV, 411 (21 Feb. 1820).*
- I can understand: M, II, 143 (22 Apr. 1820).*
- An explanation: LJ, II, 120, 121 (to Thomas Moore, 29 Oct. and 30 Oct. 1811).*
- the epitome of all: P, II, 77-78 (to the Rev. William Harness, 8 Dec. 1811).*
- I don't much care: P, IV, 196 (2 Feb. 1818).*
- Of all authors: P, IV, 62 (28 Feb. 1817).*
- You have not: M, II, 35 (3 Feb. 1817).*
- 336 *fair, liberal, and attentive: P, II, 263 (9 Sep. 1813).*
- really a very good fellow: P, III, 259 (to Leigh Hunt, 29 Jan. 1816).*
- Don't suppose: P, IV, 294 (6 May 1819).*
- Your present offer: P, III, 249 (14 Nov. 1815).*
- appears a desideratum: P, VI, 7 (22 Jan. 1822).*
- When I write: P, VI, 61 (16 May 1822).*
- volume of manners/authorized in making: P, IV, 407-08 (21 Feb. 1820).*
- 337 *I shall withdraw: P, VI, 138 (18 Nov. 1822).*
- one of his last: P, VI, 333-35 (25 Feb. 1824).*
- looks forward to: LJ, II, 36 (18 Jan. 1811).*
- I got up earlier for: P, III, 158 (to John Hanson, 21 Oct. 1814).*
- I can never look: P, III, 162 (25 Oct. 1814).*
- So, I see you have: P, IV, 257 (19 Sep. 1818).*
- I'll be revenged: M, II, 90-91 (11 Nov. 1818).*
- 338 *a letter to his mother: LJ, I, 203-04 (19 May 1809).*
- Fletcher begged: P, I, 224 (to his mother, 22 Jun. 1809).*
- We were one night: P, I, 254 (12 Nov. 1809).*
- the perpetual lamentations: P, I, 308 (to his mother, 14 Jan. 1811).*
- the learned Fletcher seems to thrive: M, II, 7 (16 May 1816).*
- he who grabs her arms: P, IV, 334 (to John Murray, 1 Aug. 1819).*
- I did not 'laugh': M, II, 135 (3 Mar. 1820).*



- Fletcher respects*: M, II, 176 (20 May 1821).  
*the learned Fletcher (my valet)*: P, V, 487 (to John Murray, 4 Dec. 1821).
- 339 *his valet and Teresa*: P, IV, 375-76 (to the same, 8 Nov. 1819).  
*My passage*: P, II, 259 (2 Sep. 1813).  
*One even warns him*: LJ, II, 154 (to John Hanson, 16 Jan. 1812).  
*As to money*: P, I, 225 (22 Jun. 1809).  
*much better than could/old schoolfellow*: P, IV, 186-87 (to John Hanson, 11 Dec. 1817).  
*live like a beggar*: M, II, 170 (26 Apr. 1821).  
*You may suppose*: P, IV, 255-56 (8 Sep. 1818).
- 340 *at one point he explains*: LJ, IX, 207-08 (to Douglas Kinnaird, 12 Sep. 1822).  
*At this period*: P, I, 314 (to Robert Charles Dallas, 28 Jun. 1811).  
*this foolish lampoon*: P, IV, 177 (to John Murray, 23 Oct. 1817).  
*political and metaphysical*: P, II, 25 (to the same, 5 Sep. 1811).  
*writes to Lord Holland*: LJ, III, 168 (17 Nov. 1813).  
*it proves my own*: P, III, 56 (3 Mar. 1814).  
*I don't care*: P, II, 283 (14 Nov. 1813).  
*I do believe*: P, III, 14 (16 Jan. 1814).
- 341 *the style is not*: P, IV, 217 (25 Mar. 1818).  
*Are we more moral*: M, II, 97 (to John Cam Hobhouse and Douglas Kinnaird, 19 Jan. 1819).  
*Byron insists*: LJ, VII, 208 (to Augusta Leigh, 18? Aug. 1820).  
*confesses that the character*: Phyllis Grosskurth, *Byron: The Flawed Angel* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), p. 338.
- I will answer/You ask me*: P, IV, 341-42 (to John Murray, 12 Aug. 1819).
- 342 *The 5th is*: P, V, 242 (16 Feb. 1821).  
*Almost all Don Juan*: P, V, 346 (to John Murray, 23 Aug. 1821).  
*You have so many*: P, IV, 284 (6 Apr. 1819).  
*I am acquainted*: P, III, 81 (8? May 1814).  
*Last night I saw*: P, II, 90 (15 Dec. 1811).  
*acclaims Mrs. Siddons*: LJ, IV, 216 (to Annabella Milbanke, 19 Oct. 1814).  
*reads about five hundred*: P, IV, 31 (to Thomas Moore, 24 Dec. 1816).  
*neither a servile/pardoned only*: P, V, 217 (to John Murray, 4 Jan. 1821).  
*in the present state*: LJ, II, 198 (to Douglas Kinnaird, 13 Sep. 1821).  
*the time will come*: P, VI, 25 (to the same, 23 Jan. 1822).
- 343 *the type of perfection*: LJ, II, 88 (to John Cam Hobhouse, 30 Sep. 1818).  
*had they lived now*: LJ, II, 205 (to the same, 23 Nov. 1821).  
*the first two books*: LJ, IV, 84 (to James Hogg, 24 Mar. 1814).  
*As to Pope*: P, V, 274 (3 May 1821).  
*You are taken in*: P, V, 82 (28 Sep. 1820).  
*anything that confirms*: M, I, 187 (30 Sep.—1 Oct. 1813).
- 344 *a little, pretty*: P, IV, 302-03 (18 May 1819).  
*I feel exactly*: P, V, 214-15 (2 Jan. 1821).  
*When he is severely*: LJ, IX, 187 (24 Jul. 1822).  
*Every publication*: P, VI, 173 (17 Mar. 1823).  
*I by no means*: P, III, 405 (29 Nov. 1813).

- He denies he is an atheist*: P, III, 60 (to John Murray, 12 Mar. 1814).  
*I do not believe*: P, II, 35 (13 Sep. 1811).  
*beneath the surface*: LJ, IX, 55 (4 Nov. 1821).  
*a great admirer*: P, VI, 38-39 (8 Mar. 1822).
- 345 *It seems his Claimants*: P, IV, 344-45 (to John Murray, 12 Aug. 1819).  
*Sir Samuel Romilly has*: P, IV, 268 (18 Nov. 1818).  
*I was yet young*: P, IV, 316 (7 Jun. 1819).  
*against Henry Brougham*: LJ, VII, 95-96 (to Henry Brougham, 6 May 1820).  
*travelled all night/What you will not*: P, V, 325-26 (to John Murray, 22 Jul. 1821).  
*a poor devil/civilly and politely*: P, V, 303 (to Richard Hoppner, 31 May 1821).  
*It seems that, if*: P, V, 136-37 (9 Dec. 1820).
- 346 *I can get over*: P, V, 115 (9 Nov. 1820).  
*I am tolerably sick*: P, I, 272 (5 May 1810).  
*to warn a British officer*: LJ, IX, 48 (to Captain Hill, 13 Oct. 1823).  
*if she were his inferior*: P, I, 283 (28 Jun. 1810).  
*when a woman is*: L, p. 307 (5 Oct. 1821).  
*propensity to be*: P, VI, 269 (25 Oct. 1823).  
*as he confides*: LJ, X, 153 (19 Apr. 1823).  
*It is my duty*: M, II, 279 (6 Oct. 1823).
- 347 *I turned out*: P, VI, 315 (5 Feb. 1824).  
*the only civilised person*: M, II, 274 (to John Cam Hobhouse, 11 Sep. 1823).  
*not only talents*: P, VI, 291 (to Charles F. Barry, 23 Dec. 1823).  
*should all pull*: P, VI, 282 (10 Dec. 1823).  
*a sort of hardworking Hercules*: P, VI, 363 (to Douglas Kinnaird, 30 Mar. 1824).  
*You ought to recollect*: P, VI, 368 (to a Prussian officer, 1 Apr. 1824).  
*Byron will not allow it*: P, VI, 364-65 (to Douglas Kinnaird, 30 Mar. 1824).  
*to alleviate as much*: P, VI, 328 (to Mr. Mayer, ?21 Feb. 1824).
- 348 *These prisoners are liberated*: P, VI, 312-13n (to Yusuf Pasha, 23 Jul. 1824).  
*Your Blackwood*: P, IV, 386 (10 Dec. 1819).  
*the laughing turn*: M, I, 254 (29 Apr. 1814).  
*by that God*: M, I, 254 (30 Apr. 1814).  
*though I love my country*: P, VI, 194 (22 Apr. 1823).  
*I never was consistent*: P, II, 312 (27 Dec. 1813).

### 30. JOHN KEATS

- C = Sidney Colvin, ed., *Letters of John Keats to His Family and Friends* (London: Macmillan, 1928).  
 CW = H. Buxton Forman, ed., *The Complete Works of Keats in Five Volumes* (Glasgow: Gowans and Gray, 1900-1901).  
 F = Maurice Buxton Forman, ed., *The Letters of John Keats*, 4th ed. (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford UP, 1952).
- 349 Wass, C.W. *John Keats*. 1841. Courtesy of The Wellcome Collection, wellcomecollection.org/works/gb5uydec. CC\_BY 4.0.  
*There is this great difference*: C, p. 301 (to George and Georgiana

- Keats, 17-27 Sep. 1819 [18 Sep. segment]).
- 350 *I sat down*: C, pp. 54-55 (13 Jan. 1818).
- Poetry should be*: C, p. 68 (to John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 Feb. 1818).
- What oft was thought*: Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, l. 298.
- I think poetry should/That if poetry comes*: C, p. 77 (to John Taylor, 27 Feb. 1818).
- Men of Genius*: C, p. 41 (22 Nov. 1817).
- As to the poetical Character*: C, pp. 184-85 (27 Oct. 1818).
- 351 *if a Sparrow/O for a life/consecutive reasoning*: C, p. 43 (22 Nov. 1817).
- Negative Capability*: C, p. 48 (21 Dec. 1817).
- I am certain of/he awoke*: C, pp. 41-42 (22 Nov. 1817).
- I can never feel*: C, p. 201 (16 Dec. 1818-4 Jan. 1819).
- The excellence of/Benjamin West's*: C, p. 47 (21 Dec. 1817).
- 352 *Scenery is fine*: C, p. 80 (to Benjamin Bailey, 13 Mar. 1818).
- Wonders are no wonders*: C, p. 333 (to John Taylor, 17 Nov. 1819).
- I have not*: C, p. 96 (9 Apr. 1818).
- Shakespeare and*: C, p. 281 (to Benjamin Bailey, 14 Aug. 1819).
- though so fine*: C, p. 313 (to George and Georgiana Keats, 17-27 Sep. 1819 [22 Sep. segment]).
- a wealth of life*: F, p. 391 (to Richard Woodhouse, 21 Sep. 1819).
- energies of Mind/on the contrary*: CW, V, 62 (to Miss Jeffry, 9 Jun. 1819).
- 353 *I was preparing*: C, p. 273 (17 Jun. 1819).
- talks of asking Hazlitt*: F, p. 390 (to Richard Woodhouse, 21 Sep. 1819).
- I am becoming*: C, p. 291 (17-27 Sep. 1819 [17 Sep. segment]).
- however I should*: C, p. 277 (12 Jul. 1819).
- For really 'tis*: C, pp. 222-23 (to George and Georgiana Keats, 14 Feb.-13 May 1819 [18 Feb. segment]).
- Talking of Pleasure*: C, p. 324 (to Charles Dilke, 22 Sep. 1819).
- I purpose within*: C, p. 94 (8 Apr. 1818).
- 354 ... *you may say*: C, p. 79 (13 Mar. 1818).
- ... *it is the pleasantest*: C, pp. 283-84 (28 Aug. 1819).
- ... *the two views/I have an amazing*: *The Western Messenger*, I (Jun. 1836), 755-56 (25-27 Jun. 1818).
- 355 *This is what*: C, p. 117 (29 Jun. 1818).
- ... *we had too much*: C, p. 126 (to Tom Keats, 3 Jul. 1818).
- is extremely fine*: C, p. 130 (to the same, 10-14 July 1818).
- The dialects on/I would sooner be*: C, p. 124- 25 (to the same, 3 Jul. 1818).
- 356 *Health and spirits*: C, pp. 38-39 (Oct. 1817).
- I compare human life*: C, p. 107 (to John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 May 1818).
- ambitious of doing/The faint conceptions*: C, p. 185 (to Richard Woodhouse, 27 Oct. 1818).
- You know my ideas*: C, p. 81 (13 Mar. 1818).
- by the blood*: CW, V, 181 (? 5 Jul. 1820).
- I long to believe*: CW, V, 184 (Jul. 1820).
- It is to be lamented*: C, p. 236 (14 Feb. -13 May 1819 [19 Mar. segment]).

- intelligences or sparks*: C, pp. 255-56 (the same [segment after 19 Mar.]).
- 357 *sides with the Richard*: C, p. 299 (to George and Georgiana Keats, 17-27 Sep. 1819 [17 Sep. segment]).
- There are many/All the departments/Notwithstanding the part*: C, p. 174 (14-31 Oct. 1818).
- 358 *I could not bring myself*: C, pp. 168-69 (the same).
- Mrs. Abbey was saying*: C, p. 51 (5 Jan. 1818).
- You must pay*: C, p. 262 (27 Feb. 1819).
- Such a thing was*: C, p. 197 (to George and Georgiana Keats, 16 Dec. 1818-4 Jan. 1819 [18 Dec. segment]).
- Walpole's letters*: C, pp. 207-08 (the same letter [3 Jan. segment]).
- Greek histories*: C, p. 222 (to the same, 14 Feb.-13 May 1819 [18 Feb. segment]).
- I cannot help thinking*: C, p. 240 (the same letter [15 Apr. segment]).
- 359 *I am certain*: C, p. 143 (18-22 Jul. 1818).
- She has a rich Eastern/she walks across*: C, pp. 172-73 (to the same, 14-31 Oct. 1818 [14 or 15 Oct. segment]).
- She gave a remarkable*: C, pp. 238-39 (to the same, 14 Feb.-13 May 1819 [15 Apr. segment]).
- Notwithstanding your/there is a sublimity*: C, p. 180 (14-31 Oct. 1818 [16 Oct. segment]).
- 360 *She is a very nice woman*: C, p. 191.
- She is not seventeen*: C, p. 196.
- The morning is*: CW, V, 68 (1 Jul. 1819).
- the most beautiful*: CW, V, 174 (? 4 Jul. 1820).
- All my thoughts*: CW, V, 71 (8 Jul. 1819).
- 361 *I have met*: CW, 72 (same date).
- Have I nothing*: CW, V, 162 (? Mar. 1820).
- I tremble at*: CW, V, 76 (25 Jul. 1819).
- God forbid*: CW, V, 80 (5-6 Aug. 1819).
- very reasonable*: CW, 150 (? Feb. 1820).
- I wish you*: CW, V, 175-76 (May 1820).
- You do not feel*: CW, V, 181 (? May 1820).
- I admire Human Nature*: C, p. 212 (to Benjamin Haydon, 22 Dec. 1818).
- 362 *Upon the whole*: C, p. 342 (to Georgiana Keats, 13-28 Jan. 1820 [15 Jan. segment]).
- appear to me as*: C, p. 180 (to George and Georgiana Keats, 14-31 Oct. 1818 [21 Oct. segment]).
- look with hate*: C, p. 282 (to John Taylor, 23 Aug. 1819).
- What a set*: C, p. 285 (to Fanny Keats, 28 Aug. 1819).
- The notions of*: C, pp. 221-22 (to George and Georgiana Keats, 14 Feb.-13 May 1819 [14 Feb. segment]).
- It is astonishing*: CW, V, 75 (to Fanny Brawne, 15 Jul. 1819).
- It was no thoughtless*: C, pp. 245-46 (to George and Georgiana Keats, 14 Feb.-13 May 1819 [15 Apr. segment]).
- No one can regret*: C, p. 363 (5 Jul. 1820).
- When you were*: CW, V, 180 (to Fanny Brawne, ? May 1820).
- 363 *P.S. has many*: CW, IV, 114 (to the Misses M. and S. Jeffry, 4 Jun. 1818).
- While you are*: C, p. 248 (14 Feb.-13 May 1819 [15 Apr. segment]).

- a long poem*: C, p. 34 (to Benjamin Bailey, 8 Oct. 1817).  
*How is it*: C, p. 130 (to Tom Keats, 10-14 Jul. 1818).  
*If I should die*: CW, V, 156 (? Feb. 1820).
- 31. JANE WELSH CARLYLE**
- C = Alexander Carlyle, ed., *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, 2 vols. (London and New York: John Lane, the Bodley Head, 1903).
- EN = Alexander Carlyle, ed., "Eight New Love Letters of Jane Welsh," *The Nineteenth Century* (Jan. 1914), pp. 86-113.
- F = James Anthony Froude, ed., *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle Prepared for Publication by Thomas Carlyle*, 3 vols. (1883; New York: AMS P, n.d.).
- H = Leonard Huxley, ed., *Jane Welsh Carlyle: Letters to Her Family* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page, 1924).
- LL = Alexander Carlyle, ed., *The Love Letters of Thomas Carlyle and Jane Welsh*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (London: John Lane, 1909).
- R = David G. Ritchie, ed., *Early Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle* (1889; [Florence]: Nabu Public Domain Reprints, n.d.).
- RB = "Mrs. Carlyle and Her Little Charlotte" in Reginald Blunt, *The Wonderful Village: A Record of Some Famous Folk and Places by Chelsea Reach* (London: Mills and Boon, 1918), pp. 191-255.
- TB = Trudy Bliss, ed., *Jane Welsh Carlyle: A New Selection of Her Letters* (London: Gollancz, 1950).
- 365 Paulet, Mrs. *Jane Welsh Carlyle*. Circa 1856. Courtesy of The Public Catalogue Foundation. Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jane\_Welsh\_Carlyle,\_ca.\_1856.jpg. Public domain.
- very hard work*: C, I, 168-69 (to Thomas Carlyle, 25 Aug. 1845).
- a sticket callant*: R, p. 21 (to Eliza Stodart, 8 Mar. 1823).
- 366 *the very sight*: R, pp. 1-2 (to the same, autumn 1819).
- 367 *I dare say/one of the most frank*: R, pp. 12, 11 (to the same, early 1820).  
*I must dwell*: R, pp. 19-20 (8 Mar. 1823).  
*A tea-party, a quarrel*: R, p. 77 (to Eliza Stodart, 31 Mar. 1823).  
*If ever my excellent*: R, p. 61 (to the same, 22 Jul. 1823).
- 368 *He swore I made*: EN, p. 95 (6 Jun. 1823).  
*little gunpowder man*: R, p. 87 (to Eliza Stodart, 18 Apr. 1824).  
*pretty riding-dress/he gave*: LL, I, 389, 391 (11 Aug. 1824).  
*You were sure*: R, p. 92 (27 Sep. 1824).  
*the handsomest*: EN, p. 105 (3 Jan. 1825).  
*in a fine emblazoned*: LL, II, 182 (25 Oct. 1825).
- 369 *four pages*: H, p. 16 (7 Sep. 1842).  
*he attempts to beg*: H, p. 183 (to Jeannie Welsh, 27 Jan. 1844).  
*he writes to her*: H, p. 199 (to the same, 23 Apr. 1844).  
*When will your genius*: LL, I, 267 (19 Aug. 1823).  
*I see a niche*: LL, I, 67 (Thomas Carlyle to Jane Welsh, 13 Jul. 1822).  
*Now Sir*: LL, I, 21-22 (Jan. 1822).

- 370 *He has his talents: R*, p. 34 (Jan. 1822).  
*will not be able: LL*, I, 279 (Thomas Carlyle to Jane Welsh, 18 Sep. 1823).  
*Do you think: EN*, p. 98 (6 Oct. 1823).  
*Well, I am flattering: EN*, p. 101 (10 Nov. 1824).  
*I expect to find: EN*, p. 105 (3 Jan. 1825).
- 371 *Indeed you will do: LL*, II, 215 (15 Jan. 1826).  
*half-engaged: LL*, II, 96 (14 Feb. 1825).  
*rude irregular: LL*, II, 130 (Thomas Carlyle to Jane Welsh, 24 Jun. 1825).  
*I must not keep: A*, Carlyle, ed., "More New Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle," *The Nineteenth Century* (Aug. 1914), pp. 317-49 (p. 323, 9 Jan. 1826).  
*is deep and calm/I merely wish: LL*, II, 82,83 (29 Jan. 1825).  
*I tell you: LL*, I, 398 (12 Aug. 1824).
- 372 *Here sufficient: F*, I, 315-16 (25 Jul. 1845).  
*[Sir Robert] Peel's death: F*, II, 109 (15 Jul. 1850).  
*who in a world: H*, p. 136 (before 30 Jun. 1843).  
*The poor man had got: C*, I, 213 (to Thomas Carlyle, 31 Aug. 1846).
- 373 *the emotionalness: C*, II, 267 (to Mary Russell, 15 Sep. 1862).  
*Was not Christ: F*, III, 186 (to the same, 26 Oct. 1863).  
*When she and Thomas: TB*, p. 39 (to Helen Welsh, 26 Oct. 1831).  
*to you I may: F*, I, 19 (15 Jun. 1835).  
*has refused two: F*, I, 27 (to Jane [or Jean] Aitken, Aug. 1835).  
*planted in our: H*, p. 70 (to Jeannie Welsh, 1 Jan. 1843).  
*My dear, you really: F*, I, 320-21 (27 Jul. 1845).
- Nobody can help: F*, III, 211 (to Thomas Carlyle, 23 Jul. 1864).  
*the exceptional natures: F*, II, 123 (to the same, 30 Aug. 1850).  
*the most barren: LL*, II, 70 (13 Jan. 1825).  
*Craigenputtock is: R*, pp. 129-30 (29 Jul. 1828).
- 374 *who had been: The Autobiography of Mary Smith, Schoolmistress and Nonconformist* (London: Bemrose; Carlisle: Wordsworth Press, 1892), pp. 309-10 (to Mary Smith, 11 Jan. 1857).  
*altogether heathenish: R*, pp. 174-75 (to Eliza Stodart, late Dec. 1830).  
*Oh for a sight: R*, p. 171 (to the same, 5 Feb. 1830).  
*You are to look: F*, I, 48-49 (23 Dec. 1835).  
*no other heat: F*, II, 350 (to Mary Russell, 27 Jun. 1858).  
*the dark dismal fog: The Last Words of Thomas Carlyle* (New York: D. Appleton, 1892), pp. 369-70 (to Amely Bölte, 23 Dec. 1843).  
*a real 'work of Genius': H*, p. 194 (to Jeannie Welsh, 16 Mar. 1844).  
*calculated to waken: H*, p. 98 (to the same, 12 Mar. 1843).  
*About thrice a day: H*, p. 164 (to Helen Welsh, early Dec. 1843).
- 375 *from six in the morning: H*, p. 192 (to Jeannie Welsh, end of Feb. 1844).  
*it would be poor: R*, p. 140 (21 Nov. 1828).  
*She can be afraid: H*, p. 341 (to Jeannie Welsh, 13 Apr. 1850).  
*with a sort of panic: F*, III, 140 (to Mary Austin, Nov. 1862).  
*Decidedly I begin: H*, p. 195 (to Jeannie Welsh, 13 Apr. 1844).  
*I caught: H*, pp. 157-58 (25 Oct. 1843).

- 376 ... to see you constantly: F, II, 348 (25 Jun. 1858).  
*C. should have had*: H, p. 282 (to Helen Welsh, Sep. 1846).  
*When you go*: F, II, 299 (18 Sep. 1856).  
*A review of*: *Sunday Times*, 15 Mar. 1953.
- 377 *seems to be regarded*: F, I, 6-7 (1 Sep. 1834).  
*brandishing the carving knife*: H, p. 264 (to Jeannie Welsh, 5 Mar. 1846).  
*Oh Babbie*: H, p. 349 (11 May 1851).  
*old and frail*: F, II (to Mary Russell, 30 Dec. 1858).  
*This morning as I was sitting*: H, p. 287 (to Helen Welsh, 12 Nov. 1844).  
*my only comfort*: C, II, 18 (to Thomas Carlyle, 20 Aug. 1850).  
*to no other mortal*: F, II, 51 (26 Jul. 1849).  
*Lady Harriet*: H, p. 81 (18 Jan. 1843).
- 378 *I begin to have*: H, p. 211 (to Jeannie Welsh, 1 Aug. 1844).  
*So the Lady Harriet*: H, p. 290 (7 Nov. 1846).  
*She brought me*: H, pp. 351-52 (15 Oct. 1851).  
*Who cares one doit*: F, II, 137-38 (3 Oct. 1850).  
*can hardly endure*: H, p. 311 (to Jeannie Welsh, 28 Sep. 1848).  
*entertain Thackeray's children*: H, p. 355 (to Helen Welsh, 27 Dec. 1851).  
*flirting young Ladies*: H, p. 343 (to Helen Welsh, 4 Jul. 1850).  
*serve as a human dictionary*: H, pp. 258-59 (to Jeannie Welsh, 4 Dec. 1845).  
*in her private*: H, p. 311 (to Jeannie Welsh, 28 Sep. 1848).
- 379 *that is one job/for having taught*: C, I, 247-48 (7 Apr. 1848).  
*I was rather*: C, I, 175 (28 Sep. 1845).  
*it is an additional*: H, p. 343 (to Helen Welsh, 4 Jul. 1850).  
*some hot soup*: H, p. 294 (to the same, 27 Jan. 1847).
- 380 *it greatly took*: C, I, 176-77 (to Thomas Carlyle, 28 Sep. 1845).  
*the woman of largest*: H, p. 276 (to Helen Welsh, 26 Jun. 1846).  
*gay hearted, high spirited*: H, p. 319 (to Jeannie Welsh, 5 Feb. 1849).  
*all about feelings*: F, II, 389 (to Mary Russell, 1 Nov. 1858).  
*I have an unconquerable*: H, p. 254 (to Jeannie Welsh, 30 Sep. 1845).  
*good sense and*: H, p. 257 (to the same, 16 Nov. 1845).  
*in great Houses*: C, I, 224 (to Mary Russell, 6 Mar. 1847).  
*a certain sorrow/one would have to*: H, pp. 276-77 (to Helen Welsh, 26 Jun. 1846).  
*simply disappear/I remarked*: H, p. 354 to the same, 6 Dec. 1851).  
*the opposite poles*: H, p. 278 (to the same, 26 Jun. 1846).
- 381 *climbs over*: C, I, 266 -67 (to John Carlyle, 28 Jul. 1849).  
*unlawful cousin*: F, II, 315 (to Thomas Carlyle, 14 Jul. 1857).  
*whole minds naked*: H, p. 66 (to Jeannie Welsh, 25 Dec. 1842).  
*as an 'emancipated' woman*: F, II, 31 (to John Forster, Feb. 1848).  
*its unmarried author's*: H, p. 193 (to Jeannie Welsh, 16 Mar. 1844).  
*has made an immense*: C, II, 9 (to John Carlyle, Dec. 1849).  
*I think, talk, and write*: H, p. 104 (to Jeannie Welsh, 27 Mar. 1843).  
*On the whole*: H, p. 305 (to Helen Welsh, 15 Jun. 1847).  
*mad, lover-like jealousy*: C, I, 143 (to Thomas Carlyle, 12 Jul. 1844).  
*I set the whole*: C, I, 145-46 (to the same, 15 Jul. 1844).

- Geraldine, until*: C, I, 163-64 (to the same, 20 Aug. 1845).
- 382 *can't cook*: F, II, 116 (to the same, 22 Aug. 1850).
- very teasing*: H, p. 281 (to Helen Welsh, 19 Aug. 1846).
- the likest thing*: R, p. 310 (to Miss Scot of Haddington, late Mar. 1841).
- English gentleman*: H, p. 234 (to Jeannie Welsh, 6 Feb. 1845).
- Blanche has confided*: F, II, 42 (2 Jul. 1849).
- Oh! does not everyone*: F, II, 44-45 (to Thomas Carlyle, 5 Jul. 1849).
- the young Countess*: H, p. 357 (to Helen Welsh, 27 Dec. 1851).
- miraculous improvement*: H, p. 205 (to Jeannie Welsh, 31 May 1844).
- had tired of parties*: F, II, p. 145 (to John Welsh, 7 Jan. 1851).
- Mrs. Buller is kind*: H, p. 15 (to Jeannie Welsh, 2 Sep. 1842).
- 383 *I could do no otherwise*: H, p. 314 (to the same, 23 Dec. 1848).
- in the most provokingly*: H, p. 10 (to the same, 18 Aug. 1842).
- from the master*: F, I, 26 (to Jane [or Jean] Aitken, Aug. 1835).
- why Oliver Cromwell's*: TB, p. 69 (to Thomas Carlyle, 11 Aug. 1837).
- Now for the first*: C, I, 64 (to the same, 29 Aug. 1837).
- I feel to her*: F, I, 51 (23 Dec. 1835).
- that Angel of Consolation*: H, p. 141 (to Jeannie Welsh, 7 Jul. 1843).
- the most monstrous/I gave him*: H, p. 125 (to the same, 9 May 1843).
- I wonder what*: H, p. 315 (23 Dec. 1848).
- 384 *My Mother continues*: C, I, 84 (18 Aug. 1839).
- I feel as helpless*: R, pp. 320-21 (3 Jun. 1842).
- Miss Jess, tumbling*: F, II, 336 (28 Aug. 1857).
- At the least*: C, II, 142 (18 Jul. 1857).
- 385 *how she does*: F, II, 78 (5 Sep. 1849).
- a shame/Ay, ay*: F, II, 285 (to Thomas Carlyle, 9 Aug. 1856).
- My heart was opened*: F, II, 79 (5 Sep. 1849).
- But on Sundays*: C, II, 151 (to Thomas Carlyle, 25 Aug. 1857).
- the religiosity*: F, III, 121 (8 Sep. 1862).
- fuss of religion*: F, II, 291-92 (23 Aug. 1856).
- 386 *detestable politics*: F, I, 319 (to Thomas Carlyle, 27 Jul. 1845).
- a beggarly refugee*: F, I, 288 (to the same, 5 Jul. 1844).
- My uncle*: F, I, 318 (to the same, 27 Jul. 1845).
- a real affection*: LL, II, 183 (to the same, 25 Oct. 1825).
- now the question*: H, pp. 112-13 (to Jeannie Welsh, early Apr. 1843).
- 387 *a love-token*: H, p. 68 (28 Dec. 1842).
- The three boys*: F, II, 218 (8 Jul. 1853).
- He is much subsided*: H, p. 307 (to Jeannie Welsh, 12 Feb. 1848).
- I ... must be thankful*: F, III, 211 (26 Sep. 1864).
- dilatory*: F, I, 237 (to Thomas Carlyle, 18 Aug. 1843).
- Oh, how expensive*: F, I, 340 (to the same, 23 Sep. 1845).
- But I do think*: H, p. 127 (to Jeannie Welsh, 28 May 1843).
- the strangest mixture*: F, I, 265 (to Jane [or Jean] Aitken, Oct. 1843).
- very kind*: F, I, 103 (to Thomas Carlyle, 30 Aug. 1838).
- I only pray*: H, p. 3 (22 Sep. 1839).
- dead drunk on the kitchen floor*: C, I, 87 (to John Forster, Aug. 1840).
- what would become*: C, I, 102 (to Mary Russell, Apr. 1843).
- 388 *Helen cries about*: C, I, 218 (to the same, 24 Sep. 1846).



- about her 'servants': C, I, 237 (to Mrs. Carlyle [Thomas's mother], Dec. 1847).
- Helen—her mouth all over blood/ drinking parties*: H, pp. 323-24 (to Jeannie Welsh, 27 Feb. 1849).
- the Chelsea Workhouse*: C, II, 17 (to John Carlyle, 13 May 1850).
- Oh, little woman*: RB, pp. 198-99 (5 Aug. 1858).
- Good little woman*: RB, p. 201 (11 Aug. 1858).
- 389 *My house*: F, II, 384 (to James Austin, 30 Sep. 1858).
- Far more like*: F, II, 387 (1 Oct. 1858).
- taken in Lodgers/With one servant/ the ever recurring 'we'*: C, II, 237 (to Mary Russell, 22 Oct. 1860).
- if the work*: F, III, 67 (to Margaret Welsh, 8 Dec. 1860).
- the aim of*: F, II, 107 (Jane [or Jean] Aitken, Apr. 1850).
- 390 *Oh child*: RB, p. 238 (29 Mar. 1863).
- I brought with me*: RB, p. 251 (26 Dec. 1865).
- the 'no-interference' principle*: F, II, 117 (to Thomas Carlyle, 22 Aug. 1850).
- wondered where*: F, II, 14 (to the same, 9 Oct. 1847).
- So quick, so willing*: F, III, 274 (to the same, 27 Jul. 1865).
- a vixen*: F, III, 292 (to Mary Austin, 11 Oct. 1865).
- only amenable*: F, III, 310 (to Mary Russell, 29 Jan. 1866).
- Nothing in this*: C, II, 256 (22 Aug. 1862).
- 391 *Mrs. Blackett wished/when she turned/looked just as*: F, III, 167-68 (to Mary Russell, 3 Jun. 1863).
- ... the Blakistons' house/was never so pleased*: C, II, 290 (9 Jul. 1863).
- her paternal Uncle*: R, pp. 16, 71 (to Eliza Stodart, 14 Oct. 1820 and 21 Jan. 1823).
- the poverty-stricken*: LL, I, 181 (to Thomas Carlyle, 24 Mar. 1823).
- 392 *noble lady*: LL, II, 103 (to the same, 28 Feb. 1825).
- acting a part*: TB, p. 40 (to Jane Carlyle [Thomas's sister], Dec. 1831).
- an affected, bedizened, caricature*: C, II, 161 (to Mary Russell, 2 Oct. 1857).
- an illustrious marriage*: *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Carlyle* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 1970- ), XXXIV, 231 (to Mary Russell, 30 Oct. 1858).
- kindness's self*: C, II, 222 (to Mary Austin, Jan. 1860).
- the whole thing*: H, p. 182 (to Jeannie Welsh, 20 Jan. 1844).
- do nothing against*: F, III, 259 (to Thomas Carlyle, 27 May 1865).
- 393 *Mr. C. has accepted*: F, II, 93 (11 Dec. 1849).
- the chief comfort*: H, p. 339 (4 Mar. 1850).
- I have a little dog*: F, II, 107 (Apr. 1850).
- Mr. C. couldn't*: C, II, 224 (24 Feb. 1860).
- his beloved horse*: C, II, 286-87, (to Jane Austin, 20 Mar. 1863).
- ... from seven*: F, III, 22 (14 Jan. 1860).
- It is a beautiful*: RB, p. 206 (30 Aug. 1858).
- I would not*: LL, II, 25 (14 Oct. 1824).
- 394 *a 'bit of fascination'*: F, II, 182 (Sep. 1852).
- a borrowed baby*: H, p. 73 (to Jeannie Welsh, 1-7 Jan. 1843).
- a skilful Doctor*: C, II, 21 (to Thomas Carlyle, 8 Sep. 1850).
- she may have been*: H, pp. 133-34 (to Jeannie Welsh, 15 Jun. 1843).
- my poor friend*: H, p. 217 (to the same, 12 Aug. 1844).

- no madman*: H, p. 221 (to the same, after 22 Aug. 1844).
- is such a good creature*: F, III, 75 (to Mary Russell, 3 Jul. 1861).
- naturally cruel*: F, III, 325 (to Thomas Carlyle, 10 Apr. 1866).
- 395 *some dozen years*: C, I, 180 (to the same, 5 Oct. 1845).
- He is a long*: H, p. 242 (10 Jun. 1845).
- a dirty animal*: H, p. 241 (to Jeannie Welsh, 5 Apr. 1845).
- People who are*: F, I, 101 (to Thomas Carlyle, 30 Aug. 1838).
- What on earth*: C, II, 46 (to John Carlyle, 15 Sep. 1852).
- ought to have been*: H, pp. 326-27 (to Jeannie Welsh, Holy Thursday 1849).
- awful and dreary*: LL, I, 369 (to Thomas Carlyle, 20 May 1824).
- 396 *the cleverest popular writer*: C, I, 250 (to Mary Russell, 29 Dec. 1848).
- beats Dickens*: F, II 3 (to Thomas Carlyle, 16 Sep. 1847).
- I shall get my hands*: H, p. 158 (to Jeannie Welsh, 25 Oct. 1843).
- compares the railway*: F, II, 347 (to Thomas Carlyle, 25 Jun. 1858).
- an even greater*: F, III, 15-16 (to Susan Stirling, 21 Oct. 1859).
- Geraldine no sooner/God knows/one feels to be talking*: C, I, 208-09 (23 Aug. 1846).
- made me again*: F, II, 188 (13 Sep. 1852).
- Dickens thinks*: Alan and Mary McQueen, ed., *I Too Am Here: Selections from the Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977), p. 20.
- 397 *Thomas remarks*: Edwin W. Marrs, Jr., ed., *The Letters of Thomas Carlyle to His Brother Alexander* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap P, 1968), p. 538.
- one author in the house*: Virginia Surtees, *Jane Welsh Carlyle* (Wilton, Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1986), p. 162.
- in superintending*: C, II, 37 (27 Jul. 1852).
- I have prevented*: F, II, 175 (10 Aug. 1852).
- I shouldn't like*: F, II, 208 (to John Carlyle, 18 Oct. 1852).
- forcibly made a Lion of*: TB, p. 90 (to John Forster, 25 Jul. 1841).
- insisted on my telling*: H, p. 125 (to Jeannie Welsh, 9 May 1843).
- when Mr. Morison*: F, III, 272 (to Thomas Carlyle, summer 1865).
- Alfred is dreadfully*: H, p. 230 (to Helen Welsh, 31 Jan. 1845).
- 398 *Mr. Strachey? No*: F, I, 343 (to Thomas Carlyle, 23 Sep. 1845).
- a niche in the Temple*: LL, I, 67 (Thomas Carlyle to Jane Welsh, 13 Jul. 1822).
- his assurance*: LL, I, 398 (12 Aug. 1824).

### 32. ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

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H = Leonard Huxley, ed., *Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Letters to Her Sister, 1846-1859* (1929; London: John Murray, 1931).

K = Frederic G. Kenyon, ed., *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, 2 vols. in 1 (1897; New York and London: Macmillan, 1910).

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- Reprints, n.d.; Vol. II Miami: HardPress Publishing, n.d.).
- PK = Philip Kelley, ed., "A Reprint of the Sotheby Moulton-Barrett Catalogue [1937], pp. 105-85," *Browning Institute Studies*, V, ed. William S. Peterson (New York: Browning Institute, 1977), 136-63.
- PL = Paul Landis, ed., *Letters of the Brownings to George Barrett* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1958).
- RS = Meredith B. Raymond and Mary Rose Sullivan, *Women of Letters: Selected Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning & Mary Russell Mitford* (Boston: Twayne, 1987).
- SL = Scott Lewis, ed., *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Her Sister Arabella*, 2 vols. (Waco: Texas: Wedgestone P, 2002).
- TT = *Twenty-two Unpublished Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning Addressed to Henrietta and Arabella Moulton-Barrett* (1935; [Norwood, PA]: Norwood Editions, 1977).
- 399 *Portrait of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*. 1916. Originally from "Little Journeys to the Homes of Famous Women", by The Roycrofters. Wikimedia Commons, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth\_Barrett\_Browning#/media/File:Elizabeth\_Barrett\_Browning\_2.jpg. Public domain.
- 400 *to comprehend how/that it is monomania/the law and the gospel/Only the other day*: BB, I, 421 (22 Jan. 1846).  
*Yesterday Henrietta*: BB, II, 140 (to Robert Browning, 11 May 1846).  
*in his religious belief*: Edward Moulton-Barrett, "New Light on Edward Barrett Moulton-Barrett," *Browning Society Notes*, XVIII (1988-89), 14-28 (p. 26).  
*Once I heard*: BB, II, 547 (15 Sep. 1846).
- 401 *I have no objection*: Mrs. Sutherland Orr, *Life and Letters of Robert Browning* (London: Smith Elder, 1891), p. 145.
- 402 *thatched cottages/When you stand*: K, I, 14 (to Mrs. Martin, 27 Sep. 1832).  
*grandeur*: K, I, 27 (to Miss Commeline, 22 Sep. 1834).
- 403 *Once I wished*: K, I, 100 (2 Mar. 1842).  
*The bed, like a sofa*: K, I, 143 (26 May 1843).  
*Each night her father*: RS, p. 110 (27-28 Oct. 1842).
- 404 *tenderness and sensibility*: BB, I, 239-40 (to Robert Browning, 14 Oct. 1845).  
*Elizabeth is excited*: K, I, 236 (to Mrs. Martin, Jan. 1845).  
*you do what I always*: BB, I, 6 (13 Jan. 1845).  
*the word 'literature'/constrained bodily*: K, I, 174-75 (25 Aug. 1845).
- 405 *Dr. Chambers urges*: PL, p. 136 (to George Barrett, 3 Sep. 1845).  
*What passed between*: BB, I, 241-42 (14 Oct. 1845).  
*I had done living*: BB, I, 211 (18 Sep. 1845).  
*I, who had*: BB, I, 350 (24 Dec. 1845).  
*from the moment of*: BB, I, 405 (17 Jan. 1846).
- 406 *If at one ... Papa*: BB, II, 292-93.  
*his all-scrutinizing*: BB, I, 360 (30 Dec. 1845).  
*she agrees, in spite*: BB, I, 440 (31 Jan. 1846).

- brings Robert dog-roses*: BB, II, 217 (9 Jun. 1846).
- great roaring, grinding*: BB, II, 432 (17 Aug. 1846).
- Only don't be rash*: BB, II, 487 (29 Aug. 1846).
- I spoke*: BB, II, 485 (28 Aug. 1846).
- His father considered*: TT, p. 7.
- 407 *Remember that I shall*: BB, II, 545 (14 Sep. 1846).
- years ago/how she was made*: BB, I, 405 (17 Jan. 1846).
- Mr. Barrett's sudden decision*: BB, II, 531-32 (10 Sep. 1846).
- seemed disappointed*: BB, II, 354 (to Robert Browning, 23 Jul. 1846).
- But, dearest, nobody*: BB, II, 454 (22 Aug. 1846).
- There was no elopement*: TT, p. 4 (2 Oct. 1846).
- Beseech for me*: BB, II, 540.
- 408 *we had the coupé/She came with*: PK, p. 137 (26 Sep. 1846).
- no longer the ghostly*: SL, I, 23 (to Arabella, 16-19 Oct. 1846).
- As to our domestic/that true friend*: K, I, 301 (5 Nov. 1846).
- 409 *he encases us/He has won*: TT, p. 8 (2 Oct. 1846).
- in a fit of terror*: K, I, 296 (22 Oct. 1846).
- Our Father*: PK, p. 138 (16-19 Oct. 1846).
- carried up and down*: TT, p. 10 (to Henrietta and Arabella Barrett, 2 Oct. 1846).
- Oh, in any position*: PK, p. 138 (16-19 Oct. 1846).
- takes advantage*: K, I, 202 (5 Oct 1844).
- naturally takes the part*: TT, p. 22 (to Henrietta Barrett, 7 Jan. 1847).
- 410 *begged her father*: BB, I, 241 (to Robert Browning, 14 Oct. 1845).
- capable of angering*: TT, p. 22 (to Henrietta Barrett, 7 Jan. 1847).
- an unannounced absence*: PL, p. 109 (to George Barrett, 1 Aug. 1843).
- recovers Flush*: BB, II, 524 (to Robert Browning, 7 Sep. 1846).
- under Sir Charles Barry*: SL, I, 75 (to Arabella Barrett, 12 Apr. 1847).
- the very peculiar*: TT, p. 5 (2 Oct. 1846).
- has the privilege*: BB, II, 200 (3 Jun. 1846).
- she has lived too long*: TT, p. 21 (to Henrietta Barrett, 7 Jan. 1847).
- a long letter*: K, I, 286-97 (22 Oct. 1846).
- 411 *We neither of us*: K, II, 131 (10 Aug. 1853).
- drive Robert out*: H, p. 12 (to Henrietta Barrett, 19 Dec. 1846).
- I can't make Robert*: K, I, 352 (8 Dec. 1847).
- bids her 'not to take*: H, p. 97 (to Henrietta Barrett, 19 Nov. 1848).
- Well, now we are in Paris/Venice is quite*: K, II, 11, 8 (to John Kenyon, 7 Jul. 1851).
- 412 *I love my Florence*: K, II, 285 (to Fanny Haworth, 23 Jul. 1858).
- I am horribly weak*: K, II, 153-54 (7 Jan. 1854).
- Fountains frozen*: K, II, 302 (to Isa Blagden, 7 Jan. 1859).
- I was able to go out*: K, II, 300 (1 Jan. 1859).
- a forbidden newspaper*: K, II, 366 (to Isa Blagden, late Mar. 1860).
- 413 *not only we ourselves*: K, II, 371 (Apr. 1860).
- the exquisite*: K, I, 382 (24 Aug. 1848).
- Robert declares that*: K, I, 324 (to Thomas Westwood, 10 Mar. 1847).
- Robert never goes*: K, I, 355 (to Mrs. Jameson, Dec. 1847).
- As it grew darker*: H, p. 47 (to Henrietta Barrett, 13 Sep. 1847).

- Never was there so good: K, I, 382-83*  
(to Mary Russell Mitford, 24  
Aug. 1848).
- 414 *Flush's jealousy: K, I, 402* (30 Apr.  
1849).  
*He died quietly: PK, p. 154* (17-18  
Jun. 1854).  
*I have acquired: K, I, 319-20* (to Mary  
Russell Mitford, 8 Feb. 1847).  
*They have cheated us: H, p. 17* (to  
Henrietta Barrett, 31 Mar. 1847).  
*real cups: H, p. 20* (to the same, Apr.  
1847).
- 415 *Wilson has at last: H, p. 39* (9 Jul.  
1847).  
*for his part, he believed/even Robert:*  
*H, pp. 95, 96* (19 Nov. 1848).  
*is over it completely: H, p. 119* (20  
Feb. 1850).  
*Happy I believe: PK, p. 156* (15 May  
1855).  
*Elizabeth reflects: SL, II, 152* (11 Jun.  
1855).  
*an Italian Bible: SL, II, 63* (to  
Arabella Barrett, 2 Feb. 1854).  
*He may turn Protestant: PK, p. 156*  
(to the same, 8 Jul. 1855).  
*A Roman Catholic priest: SL, II, 164*  
(to the same, 10 Jul. 1855).
- 416 *after her first recoil: The Brownings'*  
*Correspondence: Online Edition*  
(www.brownings  
correspondence.com) (to  
Henrietta Cook, née Barrett, 7  
Sep. 1855).  
*Wilson's failure to write: PK, II, 191*  
(to Arabella Barrett, 22 Nov.  
1855).  
*financial support: SL, II, 306-07* (to  
the same, 3 Jul. 1857).  
*an alarming letter: SL, II, 385* (to the  
same, 4 Jan. 1859).  
*Annunziata blames: SL, II, 388* (to  
the same, 22 Jan. 1859).  
*a prey to delusions: SL, II, 412* (to the  
same, 3 Jun. 1859).
- Dear kind Wilson: K, I, 443.*  
*universally admired/My child: K, I,*  
*405* (14 May 1849).  
*equally ungrammatical: H, p. 189* (to  
Henrietta Cook, née Barrett, 26  
Jul. 1853).  
*brozer: H, p. 183* (to the same, 14  
May 1853).  
*Dear papa—: H, p. 189* (to the same,  
26 Jul. 1853).  
*velly funny: H, p. 196* (to the same,  
30 Dec. 1853).
- 417 *At present, music: H, p. 289* (to the  
same, 4 Mar. 1858).  
*insists he read: SL, II, 332* (to  
Arabella Barrett, 25 Jan. 1858).  
*the Abbé Venturi: SL, II, 438-39* (to  
the same, 25-26 Dec. 1859).  
*sorry that the Pope: SL, II, 457* (to the  
same, 5 Apr. 1860).  
*wants more independence: TT, p. 85*  
(28 Mar. 1860).  
*I shall like to show: K, II, 73* (2 Jun,  
1852).  
*The likeness, the poetry/would not*  
*appear: K, II, 294, 295* (12 or 13  
Nov. 1858).  
*I wash and dress: K, II, 85* (14 Sep.  
1852).  
*Penini is overwhelmed: K, II, 163*  
(early Apr. 1854).
- 418 *Little Wiedeman was: K, II, 90* (to  
John Kenyon, 21 Oct. 1852).  
*Penini has been: PK, p. 153* (to  
Arabella Barret, 28 Feb. 1854).  
*made friends with/Robert never: K,*  
*II, 337* (to Henry Chorley, Sep-  
Oct. 1859).  
*When charged with: K, II, 442* (11  
May 1861).  
*Told that there is: H, p. 169* (to  
Henrietta Cook, née Barrett, 25  
Sep. 1852).  
*terrified lest Flush: SL, I, 510* (to  
Arabella Barrett, (25 Oct. 1852).

- looks on him as a brother/Elizabeth is not sure*: SL, II, 328 (to the same, 22 Nov. 1857).
- Boum!*: SL, I, 422 (to the same, 31 Oct-2 Nov. 1851).
- Mama, if you've been*: K, II, 237 (to Mrs. Martin, 9 Sep. 1856).
- 419 *for mama to have*: K, II, 353 (to Sarianna Browning, Dec. 1859).
- What will you say*: H, p. 229 (3 Oct. 1855).
- carried on their backs*: K, II, 238 (9 Sep. 1856).
- tried and faithful*: TT, pp. 72-73 (?15 Mar. 1848).
- will never again let*: K, I, 444 (to Mary Russell Mitford, end of Apr. 1850).
- Of course, he makes*: K, II, 207 (Jul.-Aug. 1855).
- 420 *That's the way*: H, p. 182 (14 May 1853).
- He had Robert's poems*: H, p. 136 (to Henrietta Cook, née Barrett, 21 Jul. 1851).
- banker-poet Rogers*: Peter N. Heydon and Philip Kelley, ed., *Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Letters to Mrs. David Ogilvy 1849-1861* (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co, 1973), pp. 54-55 (to Mrs. Ogilvy, 17 Oct. 1851).
- a great favourite*: K, II, 78 (to Mary Russell Mitford, 31 Jul. 1852).
- the great teacher*: BB, I, 30 (to Robert Browning, 27 Feb. 1845).
- as a man*: PK, p. 147 (to Arabella Barrett, 28-29 Sep. 1851).
- his bitterness*: K, II 27 (to Mary Russell Mitford, 22 Oct. 1851).
- you should have heard*: PK, p. 147 (28-29 Sep. 1851).
- 421 *I earnestly hope*: K, I, 445 (30 Apr. 1850).
- I think still*: H, p. 142 (6 Oct. 1851).
- the poor woman's*: PK, p. 150 (to Arabella Barrett, 28 Apr. 1852).
- She sate*: K, II, 59-60 (26 Feb. 1852).
- wouldn't sleep*: K, I, 338 (to Mrs. Martin, 7 Aug. 1847).
- A noble woman*: K, II, 63 (to Mary Russell Mitford, 7 Apr. 1852).
- 422 *I certainly wouldn't*: K, II, 104 (to Isa Blagden, 3 Mar. 1853).
- insolent and arrogant*: PL, p. 190 (to George Barrett, 16-18 Jul. 1853).
- He would give much*: K, II, 138 (to Fanny Haworth, 30 Aug. 1853).
- say a word*: H, p. 219 (17 Aug. 1855).
- On the subject*: H, p. 248 (12 Jun. 1856).
- acting democratically*: K, II, 51 (to Mary Russell Mitford, 15 Feb. 1852).
- Robert and I*: K, II, 182 (to Mrs. Martin, Nov. 1854).
- the disgrace*: H, p. 314 (to Henrietta Cook, née Barrett, 27 May 1859).
- a Priest came*: PK, p. 162 (30 Apr. 1859).
- her choice of*: PK, p. 148 (to Arabella Barrett, 12-14 Oct. 1851).
- facial hair*: K, II, 168 (to Sarianna Browning, end of May 1854).
- 423 *Husband, lover, nurse*: K, II, 15 (to Mrs. Martin, c. Aug. 1851).
- My husband has*: K, I, 399 (30 Apr. 1849).
- my chief intention*: BB, I, 32 (27 Feb. 1845).
- even Robert, she fears*: SL, II, 219 (to Arabella Barrett, 13 Mar. 1856).
- Mrs. Ogilvy reports*: SL, II, 279 (to the same, 25 Jan. 1857).
- ladies of sixty*: K, II, 364 (early 1860).
- 424 *highly accomplished*: II, 16 (to Mrs. Martin, 6 Aug. 1851).
- I don't wonder*: H, p. 109 (to Henrietta Barrett, 20 Jul. 1849).
- I am well again*: K, I, 427 (1 Dec. 1849).

- an attack after: H*, p. 162 (to Henrietta Cook, née Barrett, 10-18 Jun. 1852).
- and for the last: K*, II, 225 (21 Feb. 1856).
- Violent palpitations: K*, II, 325 (to Mrs. Jameson, 26 Aug. 1859).
- As for me: K*, II, 348 (2 Nov. 1859).
- 425 *My programme: BB*, II, 291 (3 Jul. 1846).
- loathing dread: K*, I, 312 (19 Dec. 1846).
- To see the marriages/apt to mistake: BB*, I, 351 (24 Dec. 1845).
- virtually hate: BB*, I, 545 (to Robert Browning, 11 Mar. 1846).
- Women generally lose: K*, I, 330 (12 May 1847).
- Men risk a good deal: K*, p. 339 (20 Aug. 1847).
- I believe in: K*, I, 456 (to Mary Russell Mitford, 8 Jul. 1850).
- find some one: H*, p. 71 (to Henrietta Barrett, 4-6 Jan. 1848).
- 426 *her American friends: K*, I, 428 (to Mary Russell Mitford, 1 Dec. 1849).
- I cannot but think: BB*, II, 421-22 (to Robert Browning, 13 Aug. 1846).
- Elizabeth Barrett feels insulted: RS*, p. 174 (to Mary Russell Mitford, 26 Feb. 1845).
- she remarks that everyone: RS*, p. 57 (to the same, 25 Jul. 1841).
- At the same time: K*, II, 189 (24 Feb. 1845).
- 427 *emancipates the eccentric life: K*, II, 166 (to Mary Russell Mitford, 10 May 1854).
- Elizabeth disagrees: BB*, II, 282 (to Robert Browning, 1 Jul. 1846).
- apprehension is quicker: K*, I, 261 (to Miss Thomson, 16 May 1845).
- the profoundest woman: K*, I, 154 (to Hugh Stuart Boyd, 8 Sep, 1843).
- the most manlike: K*, I, 196-97 (to Mrs. Martin, c. Sep. 1844).
- said or implied: K*, I, 340 (20 Aug. 1847).
- those weak women: K*, I, 291 (to Mrs. Martin, (22 Oct. 1846).
- you have acted: BB*, II, 548 (15 Sep. 1846).
- to support a petition: SL*, II, 218-19 (to Arabella Barrett, 13 Mar. 1856).
- 428 *hereditary titles: BB*, II, 29-30 (to Robert Browning, 4 Apr. 1846).
- Britain's empire in India: PL*, p. 138 (to George Barrett, 1 Apr. 1846).
- I love liberty: K*, I, 452 (to Mary Russell Mitford, 15 Jun. 1850).
- In regard to the slaves: K*, II, 220 (5 Nov. 1855).
- I would have: K*, I, 363 (to John Kenyon, 1 May 1848).
- I am a Democrat: K*, II, 73 (to Dinah Mulock, 2 Jun. 1852).
- The masses are satisfied: K*, II, 70 (to Mary Russell Mitford, 9 May 1852).
- his usual tact: K*, II, 90 (to John Kenyon, Nov. 1852).
- the liberation of Italy: K*, II, 389 (to Isa Blagden, c. May 1860).
- 429 *We, in this England: K*, I, 59 (to John Kenyon, 1838).
- For what helps: K*, I, 343-44 (to Thomas Westwood, Sep. 1847).
- Think of the refinement: K*, II, 257 (to Sarianna Browning, Feb. 1857).
- The mixture of classes: K*, II, 65 (to Mrs. Jameson, 12 Apr. 1852).
- science of material life: K*, I, 341 (to Mary Russell Mitford, 20 Aug. 1847).
- from cutlets to costumes: K*, II, 282 (to Fanny Haworth, 8 Jul. 1858).
- young and pretty women: H*, p. 69 (to Henrietta Barrett, 4-6 Jan. 1848).
- a brilliant civilization: H*, p. 118 (to the same, 20 Feb. 1850).

- 430 *The clash of speculative opinions*: K, II, 61 (to Mrs. Martin, 27 Feb. 1852).  
*One thing is certain*: M, II, 190-91 (to Richard Hengist Horne, Dec. 1848).  
*the roots of thought*: K, I, 309 (to Mrs. Jameson, 23 Nov. 1846).  
*a nobler, a fuller*: M, II, 33 (to Richard Hengist Horne, 1 May 1843).  
*the great fathers*: M, I, 182-83 (to the same, 27 Nov. 1843).  
*we have no such*: M, I, 243 (to the same, 20 Feb. 1844).  
*When I was a prisoner*: K, I, 363 (to John Kenyon, 1 May 1848).  
*She rebukes Robert*: H, p. 130 (to Henrietta Cook, née Barrett, 15 Nov. 1850).  
*I certainly had no idea*: K, I, 401 (to Mary Russell Mitford, 30 Apr. 1849).  
*There is a great good*: PK, p. 163 (to Arabella Barrett, 11 Jun. 1860).  
*whom she ardently*: K, I, 110 (14 Sep. 1842).  
*He [Wordsworth] took the initiative*: K, I, 160 (31 Dec. 1843).
- 431 *Emerson interests her*: SL, I, 83 (to Arabella Barrett, 6 May 1847).  
*There is poetry*: BB, I, 429 (to Robert Browning, 26 Jan. 1846).  
*that your generosity*: K, I, 464 (13 Nov. 1850).  
*all the Arts*: BB, I, 542 (to Robert Browning, 10 Mar. 1846).  
*poetry without religion*: K, I, 128 (25 Mar. 1843).  
*O God, if there be a God*: BB, I, 404 (to Robert Browning, 17 Jan. 1846).  
*The agony she endures*: Barbara P. McCarthy, ed., *Elizabeth Barrett to Mr. Boyd* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1955), p. 240 (to Hugh Stuart Boyd, 10 May 1841).  
*She told me*: BB, II, 136 (7 May 1846).  
*The command*: K, I, 25 (14 Sep. 1834).  
*an arid, grey Puritanism*: BB, I, 145 (to Robert Browning, 2 Aug. 1845).  
*the word "Hell"*: SL, II, 90 (to Arabella Barrett, 22 Aug. 1854).  
*I was at S. Peter's*: H, p. 198 (to Henrietta Cook, née Barrett, 30 Dec. 1853).
- 432 *Madonnaism*: SL, II, 449 (to Arabella Barrett, 7 Feb. 1860).  
*opposition to praying*: SL, II, 462 (to the same, 7 May 1860).  
*Never was there*: H, p. 142 (6 Oct. 1851).  
*cautions Arabel*: SL, I, 454 (11-12 Feb. 1852).  
*that each church*: SL, II, 331 (25 Jan. 1858).  
*There are deep Truths*: K, II, 145 (to Isa Blagden, c. Oct. 1853).  
*a foreshadowing/a Reformation*: K, II, 425-26 (to Fanny Haworth, c. Jan. 1861).
- 433 *It has been a sad*: K, II, 247.  
*Of the past*: K, II, 264-65 (1 Jul. 1857).  
*Elizabeth wonders*: SL, II, 502 (5 Dec. 1860).  
*reassures Mrs. Martin*: K, II, 415 (c. Dec. 1860).  
*hero and patriot*: H, p. 105 (to Henrietta Barrett, 2-5 May 1849).  
*narrow-head and unscrupulous*: H, p. 316 (to the same, 27 May 1859).  
*heroic/but not a man/forlorn hope*: K, II, 386 (to John Forster, May 1860).  
*We are all talking*: K, II, 398 (c. Jun. 1860).
- 434 *I can scarcely*: K, II, 449 (7 Jun. 1861).



434 *No one will read*: (London: Smith and Elder, 1906), p. 3.

**33. WHAT A LITERATURE IS HERE!**

437 *Dr. Johnson's letter*: M. Lincoln Schuster, ed., *A Treasury of the World's Great Letters* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), pp. 129-31.

*T. H. Huxley, in his reply: ibid.*, pp. 340-47.

## FURTHER READING

Editions and selections of letters designed for the general reader go in and out of print. Older copies can frequently be located online at [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com) and [alibris.com](http://alibris.com), as well as, of course, in libraries.

Many of the writers that feature in this book have left a vast corpus of correspondence, but the surviving letters of Dorothy Osborne, of Ignatius Sancho and of Eliza Fay each fill one modest volume and can be read in any convenient edition, including those specified in the Notes.

Among the subjects of the earlier chapters, the most significant contributors to English epistolary literature are the Pastons, the Lisles, John Chamberlain and James Howell. Highly recommended are the two volumes of *The Paston Letters* edited by John Warrington for Everyman's Library (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1956) and *The Lisle Letters: An Abridgement* edited by Muriel St. Clare Byrne and selected by Bridget Boland (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). *The Chamberlain Letters* edited by Elizabeth McLure Thomson (London: Murray, 1965) is a manageable selection from the writer's wordy legacy. James Howell's *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae*, once a popular work, has been reprinted by Forgotten Books of London and is listed online.

Oxford University Press has published valuable selections from the letters of Pope, Chesterfield, Johnson, Burns and Keats. These are *Letters of Alexander Pope*, edited by John Butts (1960); *Lord Chesterfield, Letters*, edited by David Roberts; *Selected Letters of Samuel Johnson* (1925), introduced by R. W. C[hapman]; *Selected Letters of Robert Burns*, edited by DeLancey Ferguson (1953); and John Keats, *Selected Letters*, edited by Robert Gittings, revised by John Mee (2002).

Much to be desired is a more substantial selection than we have from the letters of Horace Walpole, a volume comparable with *The Shorter Pepys* of Robert Latham. However, Walpole's *Selected Letters*, edited by William Hadley for Everyman's Library (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1926) covers a large part of the writer's life and interests, though the arrangement is unfortunately thematic, not chronological.

No selection of Coleridge's letters known to me does justice to the arresting descriptions he writes of his hikes and travels. However, the close on two hundred pages of his correspondence included in his *Select Poetry and Prose* edited by Stephen Potter (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1933) is well worth reading. For Byron, excellent choices are *The Letters of George Gordon 6<sup>th</sup> Lord Byron*, edited by R. G. Howarth, in Everyman's

Library (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1936) and, for unexpurgated texts, Lord Byron, *Selected Letters and Journals*, edited by Leslie A. Marchand (Cambridge, Mass.: the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press; London: John Murray, 1982).

There is no collected or scholarly edition of Mary Russell Mitford's letters, but R. Brimley Johnson's selection, *The Letters of Mary Russell Mitford* (New York: The Dial Press, 1925), was reprinted by Folcroft Library editions in 1977. In *Jane Welsh Carlyle: A New Selection of Her Letters* (London: Gollancz, 1950), Trudy Bliss usefully adopts a chronological order. Alan and Mary McQueen Simpson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), in *I Too Am Here: Selections from the Letters of Jane Welsh Carlyle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), compensate for what is lost or disguised by the arrangement according to dominant subject matter with their fine introductions and notes. In the case of Mrs. Browning, Frederic G. Kenyon (no relation of her cousin John Kenyon) compiled an admirable collection, *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, which came out in 1897 in two volumes; these were reprinted between one pair of covers two years later.

A cultural change in the Renaissance freed talented European writers to compose letters rivalling the finest that survived from ancient Rome. This book traces the lives and outlooks of distinguished Britons as revealed in their correspondence. The subjects range from the fierce satirist Jonathan Swift to the long-lived, all-observing Horace Walpole and from the poet and freedom fighter Lord Byron to the tormented but brilliant Jane Carlyle. Accompanying the self-portraits these writers unwittingly create are their many sketches of their contemporaries. Moreover, the views they express on forms of government, feminism, literature, theology, religious toleration, and other topics serve to relate their lives to the progression from the Age of Reason through the Romantic period to the Victorian era.



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