

mixture of pleasure, and regret, the hours we once passed together, and I assure you most sincerely they are numbered among the happiest of my brief chronicle of enjoyment.—I am now *getting into years*, that is to say, I was *twenty* a month ago, and another year will send me into the World to run my career of Folly with the Rest.—I was *then* just fourteen, you were almost the first of my Harrow friends, certainly the *first* in my esteem,<sup>1</sup> if not in Date, but an absence from Harrow for some time, shortly after, and new Connections on your side, with the difference in our conduct (an advantage decidedly in your favour) from that turbulent and riotous disposition of mine, which impelled me into every species of mischief;—all these circumstances combined to destroy an Intimacy, which Affection urged me to continue, and Memory compels me to regret.—But there is not a circumstance attending that period, hardly a sentence we exchanged, which is not impressed on my mind at this moment, I need not say more, this assurance only must convince you, had I considered them as trivial, they would have been less indelible.—How well I recollect the perusal of your "*first flights*," there is another circumstance you do not know, the *first Lines* I ever attempted at Harrow were addressed to *you*, you were to have seen them, but Sinclair<sup>2</sup> had the copy in his possession when we went home, and on our return *we* were *strangers*, they were destroyed, and certainly no great loss, but you will perceive from this circumstance my opinions at an age, when we cannot be Hypocrites.—I have dwelt longer on this theme, than I intended, and I shall now conclude with what I ought to have begun;—we were once friends, nay, we have always been so, for our Separation was the effect of Chance, not of Disposition, I do not know how far our Destinations in life may throw us together, but if opportunity and Inclination allow you to waste a thought on such a hairbrained being as myself, you will find me at least sincere, & not so bigotted to my faults, as to involve others in the Consequence.—Will you sometimes write to me? I do not ask it often, and when we meet, let us be, what we *should* be, and what we *were*. Believe me, my dear William—

yours most truly

BYRON

<sup>1</sup> Several of Byron's younger favourites at Harrow were "first in my esteem" at varying times. Almost all of these friendships were marred by sensitivities and suspected slights.

<sup>2</sup> George Sinclair, son of Sir John Sinclair, was, Byron wrote in his "Detached Thoughts" (No. 89), the "prodigy of our school days", who did some of Byron's exercises, "he was pacific, and I savage; so I fought for him, or thrashed others for him".

My dear Becher,—Just rising from my Bed, having been up till six at a Masquerade, I find your Letter, and in the midst of this dissipated Chaos it is no small pleasure to discover I have some *distant* friends in their Senses, though mine are rather out of repair.—Indeed, I am worse than ever, to give you some idea of my late life, I have this moment received a prescription from Pearson, not for any *complaint* but from *debility*, and literally *too much Love*.—You know my devotion to woman, but indeed Southwell was much mistaken in conceiving my adorations were paid to any Shrine there, no, my Paphian Goddesses are elsewhere, and I have sacrificed at their altar rather too liberally.—

In fact, my blue eyed Caroline,<sup>1</sup> who is only sixteen, has been lately so *charming*, that though we are both in perfect health, we are at present commanded to *repose*, being nearly worn out.—So much for Venus, now for Apollo,—I am happy you still retain your predilection, and that the public allow me some share of praise, I am of so much importance, that a most violent attack is preparing for me in the next number of the Edinburgh Review,<sup>2</sup> this I have from the authority of a friend who has seen the proof and manuscript of the Critique, you know the System of the Edinburgh Gentlemen is universal attack, they praise none, and neither the public or the author expects praise from them, it is however something to be noticed, as they profess to pass judgment only on works requiring the public attention.—You will see this when it comes out, it is I understand of the most unmerciful description, but I am aware of it, and I hope *you* will not be hurt by its severity.—Tell Mrs. Byron not to be out of humour with them, and to prepare her mind for the greatest hostility on their part, it will do no injury however, and I trust her mind will not be ruffled.—They defeat their object by indiscriminate abuse, and they never praise except the partisans of Ld. Holland & Co.<sup>3</sup>—It is nothing to be abused, when

<sup>1</sup> The blue-eyed Caroline has not been identified, but it is probable that some verses he wrote three days before this letter were addressed to her in a tone that shows that Byron's sentiments are not always to be judged by the seeming callousness of his letters. See "Song", *Poetry*, I, 262-68.

<sup>2</sup> The January number of the *Edinburgh Review*, which appeared in late February, contained the cutting and sarcastic review of *Hours of Idleness* by Henry Brougham.

<sup>3</sup> Byron assumed that the *Edinburgh Review* praised only Whigs such as Lord Holland, leader of the Moderate Whigs in the House of Lords. And in fact many of its reviews were politically inspired, just as were those of the Tory *Quarterly Review*. But as a member of the Cambridge Whig Club, Byron felt it unjust that he should be attacked by a Whig periodical. He brought it on himself, however, by the "lordly" tone of his preface, made worse by juvenile and maawkish humility.

Southey, Moore, Lauderdale, Strangford, and Payne Knight share the same fate.—I am sorry, but C— Recollections must be suppressed during this edition, I have altered at your Suggestion the *obnoxious allusions* in the 6th Stanza of my last ode.—And now, Becher I must return my best acknowledgments for the interest you have taken in me and my poetical Bantlings, and I shall ever be proud to show how much I esteem the *advice* and the *Adviser*.—Believe me

most truly yours  
BYRON

P.S.—Write soon.

[TO JOHN CAM HOBHOUSE]

*Dorant's, February 27th. 1808*

Dear Hobhouse,—I write to you to explain a foolish circumstance, which has arisen from some words uttered by me before Pearce and Brown,<sup>1</sup> when I was devoured with Chagrin, and almost insane with the fumes of, not "last night's Punch" but that evening's wine.—[In consequence of a misconception of something on my part, I mentioned an intention of withdrawing my name from the Whig Club,<sup>2</sup> this I hear has been broached, and perhaps in a moment of Intoxication and passion such might be my idea, but *soberly* I have no such design, particularly as I could not abandon my principles, even if I renounced the society with whom I have the honour to be united in sentiments which I never will disavow.—This I beg you will explain to the members as publicly as possible, but should this not be sufficient, and they think proper to erase my name, be it so, I only request that in this case they will recollect, I shall become a *Tory of their own making*. I shall expect your answer on this point with some impatience, now a few words on the subject of my own conduct.—I am buried in an abyss of Sensuality, I have renounced *hazard* however, but I am given to Harlots, and live in a state of Concubinage, I am at this moment under a course of restoration by Pearson's prescription, for a debility occasioned by too frequent Connection.—Pearson sayeth, I have done sufficient with[in] this last ten days, to undermine my Constitution, I hope however all will soon be well.—As an author, I am

<sup>1</sup> Henry Pearce and Dominick Browne were two of the original members of the Cambridge Whig Club. (*LJ*, IV, 500.)

<sup>2</sup> Byron in his cups no doubt gave voice to his indignation at the Whigs in general because he had been attacked in the Whig *Edinburgh Review*, in which he had just seen the review of his poems.

cut to atoms by the E[dmunburgh] Review,<sup>3</sup> it is just out, and has completely demolished my little fabric of fame, this is rather scurvy treatment from a Whig Review, but politics and poetry are different things, & I am no adept in either, I therefore submit in Silence.—Scrope Davies is meandering about London feeding upon Leg of Beef Soup, and frequenting the British Forum, he has given up hazard, as also a considerable sum at the same time.—Altamont is a good deal with me, last night at the Opera Masquerade, we supped with seven whores, a *Barad* and a *Ballet-master*, in Madame Catalani's<sup>4</sup> apartment behind the Scenes, (of course Catalani was *not* there) I have some thoughts of purchasing D'egville's<sup>5</sup> pupils, they would fill a glorious Harem.—I do not write often, but I like to receive letters, when therefore you are disposed to philosophize, no one standeth more in need of precepts of all sorts than

yours very truly  
BYRON

[TO JOHN CAM HOBHOUSE] *Dorant's, February 29th. 1808*

Dear Hobhouse,—Upon my *honour* I do not recollect to have spoken of you and any friend of yours in the manner you state, and to the Club itself I am certain I never applied the epithets mentioned, or any terms of disrespect whatever.—As it is however possible I may have spoken of the very extraordinary state of Intoxication in which I have seen you and another, not conceiving it to be a secret as never having been looked upon to make a part of the *mysteris* of the meeting, I cannot altogether deny the charge, though I do deny and disclaim all malice in the statement.—Besides I do not exactly see, how "your sacrifice to the God of Wine" as you classically term it, can possibly involve the interests or reputation of the Club, or by what sophistry my mention of such a circumstance can be tortured into an "*attack* on the society

<sup>3</sup> The criticism that cut Byron to the quick was the critic's ridicule of the vanities in his preface which he thought he had concealed. The reviewer concludes: "We are well off to have got so much from a man of this lord's station, who does not live in a garret, but 'has the sway' of Newstead Abbey."

<sup>4</sup> Madame Angelica Catalani, the popular Italian Opera singer, came to London in 1806, and was then singing at Covent Garden.

<sup>5</sup> James d'Egville (the name he assumed as a ballet and dancing master—his family name was Harvey) had studied dancing with Gaetano Vestris, dancing master at the court of Frederick the Great, and with Gardel, the court teacher of Marie Antoinette. Byron became a familiar of the theatrical and demi-monde people of his circle.

[TO JOHN JACKSON<sup>1</sup>]

March 27th. 1808

Dear Jack,—I shall take your advice, and remain in town till the fights are over, but my *Valet* must proceed to Cambridge for my Plate &c.—I will take the *same* twice over on Belcher's Battle,<sup>2</sup> but Cropley's<sup>3</sup> will surely be the principal combat, I heard nothing on the subject before the delivery of your note, how the Devil should I confined to the house with my Disorder.—If Sir H. Smith's<sup>4</sup> expedition takes place after Wednesday, I shall be happy to avail myself of his polite invitation, I am afraid I must not stir before.—At all events make my acknowledgements to the Baronet;—my Compts to your little woman,<sup>5</sup> and believe me, dear Jack

yours very truly

BYRON

[TO THE REV. JOHN BECHER]

Dorant's, March 28, 1808

I have lately received a copy of the new edition<sup>1</sup> from Ridge, and it is high time for me to return my best thanks to you for the trouble you have taken in the superintendence. This I do most sincerely, and only regret that Ridge has not seconded you as I could wish,—at least, in the bindings, paper, & c. of the copy he sent to me. Perhaps those for the public may be more respectable in such articles.

You have seen the Edinburgh Review, of course. I regret that Mrs. Byron is so much annoyed. For my own part, these "paper bullets of the brain"<sup>2</sup> have only taught me to stand fire; and, as I have been lucky enough upon the whole, my repose and appetite are not decomposed.

<sup>1</sup> John ("Gentleman") Jackson was boxing champion of England from 1795 to 1808, when he retired from the ring. His rooms at 13 Bond Street became headquarters for the Pugilistic Club. His activities included fostering boxing matches and teaching "the art of self-defence". His gentlemanly manners and his dandified dress won him his nickname. He shared rooms with Henry Angelo, the fencing-master. Byron took fencing lessons from the one and boxing lessons from the other. He invited Jackson to Cambridge, to Brighton, and to Newstead, and paid tribute to him in a note to *Don Juan* (Canto XI, stanza 19).

<sup>2</sup> With Jackson's encouragement Byron arranged in April, 1808, a bout between Tom Belcher and the Irish champion Dan Doherty, whom he backed. Belcher won.

<sup>3</sup> On May 10, 1808, Bill Cropley fought Dutch Sam and lost. On that same day Byron accompanied another pugilist to John Sebright's Park in Hertfordshire to see a bout between the champion John Gully and Bob Gregson. (*LJ*, V, 579.)

<sup>4</sup> Unidentified. Possibly another fight promoter.  
<sup>5</sup> See May 27, 1812, to Clarke.

<sup>1</sup> The second edition of *Hours of Idleness* (with deletions and additions) bore the title *Poems Original and Translated*.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict in *Much Ado About Nothing* (II, iii, 220).

Pratt, the gleaner, author, poet, & c. & c. addressed a long rhyming epistle to me on the subject, by way of consolation; but it was not well done, so I do not send it, though the name of the man might make it go down. The E[dinburgh] R[evueur]s have not performed their task well; at least, the literati tell me this, and I think I could write a more sarcastic critique on *myself* than any yet published. For instance, instead of the remark,—ill-natured enough, but not keen,—about Macpherson, I (quoad reviewers) could have said, "Alas, this imitation only proves the assertion of Dr. Johnson, that many men, women, and children, could have written such poetry as Ossian's."<sup>3</sup>

I am still in or rather near town residing with a nymph, who is now on the sofa vis-a-vis, whilst I am scribbling. . . .<sup>4</sup> I have three females (attendants included) in my custody. They accompany me of course.<sup>5</sup>

I am *thin* and in exercise. During the spring or summer I trust we shall meet. I hear Lord Ruthyn leaves Newstead in April. \* \* \* As soon as he quits it for ever, I wish much you would take a ride over, survey the mansion, and give me your candid opinion on the most advisable mode of proceeding with regard to the *house*. *Entre nous*, I am cursedly dipped; my debts, *every* thing inclusive, will be nine or ten thousand before I am twenty-one. But I have reason to think my property will turn out better than general expectation may conceive. Of Newstead I have little hope or care; but Hanson, my agent, intimidated my Lancashire property was worth three Newsteads. I believe we have it hollow; though the defendants are protracting the surrender, if possible, till after my majority, for the purpose of forming some arrangement with me, thinking I shall probably prefer a sum in hand to a reversion. Newstead I may *sell*;—perhaps I will not,—though of that more anon. I will come down in May or June. \* \* \* \*

Yours most truly, &c.

[TO WILLIAM HARNESS]

Dorant's, March 29th. 1808

My dear Harness,—My Valet who has just arrived from Cambridge, brought me your Letter of the 9th. I have not revisited in person my Alma Mater since our last meeting, having been confined to my room

<sup>3</sup> A reference to the well-known reply of Dr. Johnson when asked whether any man of the modern age could have written *Ossian*: "Yes, Sir, many men, many women, and many children". (Boswell, 1763.)

<sup>4</sup> This sentence is from the Bangs catalogue, Jan. 24, 1902.

<sup>5</sup> This sentence is quoted in the H. B. Smith sale catalogue, American Art, Anderson Galleries, April 8, 1986.