

P.S.—I will not levy a tax on your Time, by requiring an answer, lest you say, as Butler said to Tattersall (when I had written his reverence an impudent epistle on the expression before mentioned) viz, “that I wanted to draw him into a correspondence.”—

[TO ROBERT CHARLES DALLAS]

*Dorant's Hotel. Albemarle St.
January 20th. 1808*

Sir,—Your Letter was not received till this morning. I presume it was addressed to me in Nott's, where I have not resided since last June, and as the Date is on the 6th. you will excuse the Delay of my answer for the above reason.— If the little volume¹ you mention has given pleasure in the perusal to the Author of *Perceval* and *Aubrey*,² I am sufficiently repaid by his praise, though our periodical Censors have been uncommonly lenient, I confess a tribute from a man of acknowledged Genius is still more flattering.—But I am afraid I should forfeit all claim to Candour, if I did not decline such praise as I do not deserve, and this is, I am sorry to say, the case in the present Instance.—The Compositions speak for themselves, and must stand or fall by their own worth or Demerit, *thus far*, I feel highly gratified by your favourable opinion.—But, my pretensions to virtue are unluckily so few, that though I should be happy to merit, I cannot accept your applause in that respect.—One passage in your Letter struck me forcibly; you mention the two Lords Lyttleton³ in the manner they respectively deserve, and will be surprised to hear the person who is now addressing you, has been frequently compared to the *Latter*.—I know I am injuring myself in your esteem by this avowal, but the circumstance was so remarkable from your observation, that I cannot help relating the fact.—The events of my short life have been of so singular a nature, that though the pride, commonly called honour, has, and I trust ever will prevent me from disgracing my name by a mean or cowardly action, I have been already held up as the votary of Licentiousness, and the Disciple of Infidelity.—How far Justice may have dictated this accusation, I cannot pretend to say, but like the *Gentleman*,⁴ to whom my

¹ *Hours of Idleness*.

² *Perceval, or Nature Vindicated* (1801) and *Aubrey* (1804) are two of Dallas's novels.

³ In Dallas's letter of January 6, 1808, he had in flattering Byron compared him to George, first Baron Lyttelton (1708–1772), friend of Pope and patron of literature. Byron saw himself as more nearly resembling his son, the profligate Thomas, second Baron Lyttelton (1744–1779), commonly called the wicked Lord Lyttelton.

⁴ See *King Lear*, III, iv, 140: “The prince of darkness is a gentleman”.

religious friends in the warmth of their Charity have already [devoted?] me, I am made worse, than I really am.— — —However to quit myself (the worst theme I could pitch upon) and return to my poems, I cannot sufficiently express my thanks, and hope I shall some day have an opportunity of rendering them in person.—A second Edition is now in the press, with some additions and considerable omissions, you will allow me to present you with a Copy.—Our Critical,⁵ Monthly,⁶ and Antijacobin Reviewers⁷ have been very indulgent, but the Eclectic⁸ have pronounced a furious Philippic, not against the *Book*, but the *Author*, where you will find all I have mentioned, asserted by a Reverend Divine, who wrote the Critique.—Your name and connection with our family have been long known to me, and I hope your person will be not less so, you will find me an excellent compound of a “Brainless” and a “Stanhope.”⁹—I am afraid you will hardly be able to read this, for my hand is almost as bad, as my Character, but you will find me as legibly as possible

your obliged and obedt. Servt.

BYRON

[TO ROBERT CHARLES DALLAS]

*Dorant's. Albemarle St.
January 21st. 1808*

Sir,—Whenever Leisure and Inclination permit me the pleasure of a visit, I shall feel truly gratified in a personal acquaintance with one, whose mind has been long known to me in his Writings.—You are so far correct in your conjecture, that I am a member of the University of Cambridge, where I shall take my degree of A. M. this term, but were Reasoning, Eloquence or Virtue the objects of my search, Granta is not their metropolis, nor is the place of her Situation an “El Dorado” far less an Utopia, the Intellects of her children are as stagnant as her Cam, and their pursuits limited to the Church,—not of Christ, but of the nearest Benefice.—As to my reading, I believe I may aver without

⁵ The *Critical Review* of September, 1807, found in *Hours of Idleness* “ample evidence of a correct taste, a warm imagination, and a feeling heart”. The reviewer quoted “On Leaving Newstead Abbey” with approval, but concluded that “it is in tenderness and pathos that his real excellence, as a poet, will consist”, and his highest praise went to “Childish Recollections”.

⁶ See Dec. 22, 1807, to Crosby, note 1.

⁷ See Jan. 12 [1808], to Ridge, note 2.

⁸ The *Eclectic Review* of November, 1807, pronounced Byron's poems “a collection of juvenile pieces, some of very moderate merit, and others of very questionable morality”, and then proceeded to castigate the young lord for his “pagan” attitudes.

⁹ Characters in Dallas's novel *Perceval*.