

the oldest upon record who have written so well at that advanced period.—His age is a credit to him.—I wonder what you mean.—Don't forget the recipe.—

[To JOHN MURRAY]

[*Ravenna*] *April 26th. 1821*

Dear Moray—I sent you by last *postis* a large packet—which will not do for publication (I suspect) being as the Apprentices say—“damned *low*”.—I put off also for a week or two sending the Italian Scrawl which will form a Note to it.—The reason is that letters being opened I wish to “bide a wee”.—Well have you published the trag[edy]? and does the letter take?<sup>1</sup>—Is it true—what Shelley writes me that poor John Keats died at Rome of the Quarterly Review? I am very sorry for it—though I think he took the wrong line as a poet—and was spoiled by Cockneyfying and Surburbing—and versifying Tooke's Pantheon and Lempriere's Dictionary.—I know by experience that a savage review is Hemlock to a sucking author—and the one on me—(which produced the English Bards &c.) knocked me down—but I got up again.—Instead of bursting a blood-vessel—I drank three bottles of Claret—and began an answer—finding that there was nothing in the Article for which I could lawfully knock Jeffrey on the head in an honourable way.—However I would not be the person who wrote the homicidal article—for all the honour & glory in the World.—though I by no means approve of that School of Scribbling—which it treats upon.—

You see the Italians here made a sad business of it.—All owing to treachery and disunion amongst themselves.—It has given me great vexation.—The Execrations heaped upon the Neapolitans by the other Italians are quite in unison with those of the rest of Europe.—Mrs. Leigh writes that Lady *No-ill* is getting *well* again.—See what it is to have luck in this world.—I hear that Rogers is not pleased with being called “venerable”—a pretty fellow—if I had thought that he would have been so absurd—I should have spoken of him as defunct—as he really is.—Why betwixt the years he really lived—and those he has been dead.—Rogers has been upon the Earth seventy three years and upwards as I have proved in a postscript of my letter by this post to Mr. Kinnaird.—Let me hear from you—and send me some Soda-powders for the Summer dilution.—Write soon.—

yours ever & truly  
B

<sup>1</sup> The first letter on Bowles.

P.S.—Your latest packet of books is on its way here but not arrived. Kenilworth excellent.—Thanks for the pocket-books of which I have made presents—to those ladies who like cuts—and landscapes and all that; I have got an Italian book or two which I should like to send you if I had an opportunity.—I am not at present in the very highest health. Spring probably—so I have lowered my diet—and taken to Epsom Salts. As you say my “*prose*” is good—why don't you treat with *Moore* for the reversion of the *Memoirs—conditionally—recollect*—not to be published before decease.—*He* has the permission to dispose of them and I advised him to do so.—

[To PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY]

*Ravenna, April 26th, 1821*

The child continues doing well, and the accounts are regular and favourable. It is gratifying to me that you and Mrs. Shelley do not disapprove of the step which I have taken, which is merely temporary.

I am very sorry to hear what you say of Keats—is it *actually* true? I did not think criticism had been so killing. Though I differ from you essentially in your estimate of his performances, I so much abhor all unnecessary pain, that I would rather he had been seated on the highest peak of Parnassus than have perished in such a manner. Poor fellow! though with such inordinate self-love he would probably have not been very happy. I read the review of “*Endymion*” in the Quarterly. It was severe—but surely not so severe as many reviews in that and other journals upon others.

I recollect the effect on me of the Edinburgh on my first poem; it was rage, and resistance, and redress—but not despondency nor despair. I grant that those are not amiable feelings; but, in this world of bustle and broil, and especially in the career of writing, a man should calculate upon his powers of *resistance* before he goes into the arena.

“Expect not life from pain nor danger free,

Nor deem the doom of man reversed for thee.”<sup>1</sup>

You know my opinion of that *second-hand* school of poetry. You also know my high opinion of your own poetry,—because it is of *no* school. I read Cenci—but, besides that I think the *subject* essentially *undramatic*, I am not an admirer of our old dramatists *as models*. I deny that the English have hitherto had a drama at all. Your Cenci, however, was a work of power, and poetry. As to *my* drama, pray revenge yourself upon it, by being as free as I have been with yours.

<sup>1</sup> Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*, lines 155–156.

I have not yet got your Prometheus,<sup>2</sup> which I long to see. I have heard nothing of mine, and do not know that it is yet published. I have published a pamphlet on the Pope controversy, which you will not like. Had I known that Keats was dead—or that he was alive and so sensitive—I should have omitted some remarks upon his poetry, to which I was provoked by his *attack* upon *Pope*,<sup>3</sup> and my disapprobation of *his own* style of writing.

You want me to undertake a great Poem—I have not the inclination nor the power. As I grow older, the indifference—*not* to life, for we love it by instinct—but to the stimuli of life, increases. Besides, this late failure of the Italians has latterly disappointed me for many reasons,—some public, some personal. My respects to Mrs. S.

Yours ever,  
B

P.S.—Could not you and I contrive to meet this summer? Could not you take a run *alone*?

[TO THOMAS MOORE]

Ravenna, April 28th, 1821

You cannot have been more disappointed than myself, nor so much deceived. I have been so at some personal risk also, which is not yet done away with. However, no time nor circumstances shall alter my tone nor my feelings of indignation against tyranny triumphant. The present business has been as much a work of treachery as of cowardice,—though both may have done their part. If ever you and I meet again, I will have a talk with you upon the subject. At present, for obvious reasons, I can write but little, as all letters are opened. In *mine* they shall always find *my* sentiments, but nothing that can lead to the oppression of others.

You will please to recollect that the Neapolitans are nowhere now more execrated than in Italy, and not blame a whole people for the vices of a province. That would be like condemning Great Britain because they plunder wrecks in Cornwall.

And now let us be literary;—a sad falling off, but it is always a consolation. If "Othello's occupation be gone," let us take to the next

<sup>2</sup> Shelley's *Cenci* was published at Leghorn in 1818; his *Prometheus Unbound* in London in 1820.

<sup>3</sup> Keats attacked the school of Pope in *Sleep and Poetry*, lines 193–206.

best; and, if we cannot contribute to make mankind more free and wise, we may amuse ourselves and those who like it. What are you writing? I have been scribbling at intervals, and Murray will be publishing about now.

Lady Noel has, as you say, been dangerously ill; but it may console you to learn that she is dangerously well again.

I have written a sheet or two more of Memoranda for you; and I kept a little Journal for about a month or two, till I had filled the paper-book. I then left it off, as things grew busy and, afterwards, too gloomy to set down without a painful feeling. This I should be glad to send you, if I had an opportunity; but a volume, however small, don't go well by such posts as exist in this Inquisition of a country.

I have no news. As a very pretty woman said to me a few nights ago, with the tears in her eyes, as she sat at the harpsichord, "Alas! the Italians must now return to making operas." I fear *that* and macaroni are their forte, and "motley their only wear."<sup>1</sup> However, there are some high spirits among them still. Pray write.

And believe me &c.

[To ?]

[May ? 1821]

These lines are by Moore & in his very best vein.<sup>1</sup>—You must distinguish however between these Lazzaroni of Neapolitans—and the other Italians—who now execrate and despise them with the rest of Europe.—Galigiani was afraid to publish & only dared to print them.—

["MY DICTIONARY" (journal)]<sup>1</sup>

Ravenna May 1st. 1821

Amongst various journals—memoranda—diaries &c. which I have kept in the course of my living—I began one about three months ago—& carried it on till I had filled one paper-book (thinnish) and two sheets or so of another.—I then left off partly—because I thought we

<sup>1</sup> *As You Like It*, Act II, scene 7.

<sup>1</sup> This note by Byron was attached to a printed poem by Moore on the Neapolitan surrender to the Austrians. See May 3, 1821, to Moore, note 1.

<sup>1</sup> Byron began this journal in May and probably left off because of the turmoil connected with the exile of the Gambas. He resumed it on October 15 as "Detached Thoughts" and continued it intermittently until May 18, 1822.