

**THE BOOK WAS
DRENCHED**

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OU_216558

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No.

Accession No.

Author

Title

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below.

THE BYRON MYSTERY



THE
BYRON MYSTERY

BY

SIR JOHN C. FOX

*Late Senior Master of the Supreme
Court, Chancery Division*

LONDON

GRANT RICHARDS LTD

8 ST MARTIN'S STREET

MDCCCXXIV

TO THE MEMORY OF
THE WRITER OF THE ARTICLES
IN
"TEMPLE BAR"

PREFACE

IF, as it seems, the last piece of evidence has been produced and the whole story can be told, it may be of interest to recall the arguments put forward in the Byron controversy of 1869-1871 and to see how far they are supported by facts since brought to light

The question is sometimes asked, Why is it necessary to discuss the subject of Lord and Lady Byron's separation in public, at all? The answer is, For the reason that applies when private affairs are discussed in the Law Courts. The character of Lord Byron was attacked; had he discovered one of his assailants and prosecuted him for libel, the question would have been submitted to the verdict of twelve men and the case might have found a place in a volume of the State Trials. Now, Lady Byron's character is impugned. Attack and defence have been conducted in the Press instead of in the Courts, and the case, after arguments of great length, has been submitted to the verdict of the public. It is clear that all the facts, some of them of a distressing nature, must be disclosed, but more than a century has elapsed since the events occurred and they must now be looked upon as borne forward into the region of history.

Apart from the general proposition that any one whose character has been publicly defamed is entitled to claim a public vindication, there are three special reasons for a full disclosure of evidence and a decision in the present case. One is, that Lord Byron was an illustrious poet whose life-history has been written at large and the circumstances of his separation from his wife are part of the history. If the supporters of Lady Byron are right, there is no escape from the conclusion that a stain is fixed upon her husband's character; if they are wrong, his reputation should be cleared. The second reason follows from the

first. If Lady Byron knowingly made or sanctioned a false charge against her husband, she must go down to posterity with the stigma of downright wickedness ; if she carelessly made a charge, or allowed it to be made, upon insufficient evidence, she will be condemned as one who was too willing to destroy her husband's character for her own ends. If Lady Byron was free from blame, she should be exonerated. The third reason is that the enquiry involves a charge against another person which should be substantiated or withdrawn.

The main charge against Lord Byron, the subject of rumour only in 1816, was revived by Mrs. Beecher Stowe in 1869. By the unauthorised disclosure, unsupported by evidence, of a confidential communication made by Lady Byron thirteen years before, Mrs. Stowe compelled an answer from Lord Byron's supporters. Naturally, they disbelieved the charge and, as might have been anticipated, accused Lady Byron of inventing it. Thus, to prove that the charge was true, became the most important element in Lady Byron's defence.

The "Byron Mystery," as it is called, was thoroughly explored in the controversy of 1869-1871 upon the materials then within reach of the public. The facts and arguments brought forward at that time are to be found in numerous publications, some of them not easily accessible. The substance of these publications is reproduced in a condensed form as the basis of the present volume. First, the facts about which there is no dispute are related (Chapter I). This is followed by an account of the controversy of 1869-1871 (Chapters II to VIII). In Chapters IX to XIV is presented the story of the separation, including documents, not before published, from the collection of the second Earl of Lovelace. Chapter XV is intended to show how the question of the custody of the child bears upon the subject of the

separation. In Chapter XVI the arguments unfavourable to Lady Byron are stated and answered. The remaining chapters deal with two incidental points and the ultimate conclusions on the whole matter. The purpose is to verify the result of the contest of 1869-1871 by the facts subsequently disclosed, and to preserve a record of a remarkable controversy•

The writer's father, the late Mr. John Fox (1800-1880), who remembered the popular outburst at the time of the separation of Lord and Lady Byron, was the writer of the articles in *Temple Bar* in 1869 and of the *Vindication of Lady Byron*, written in 1870 and published in 1871. Apropos of the last-mentioned publication, it may be recorded as a literary curiosity (for which the author was not responsible) that the artist designed the cover of the book without regarding its contents, for it displays the Byron arms with the motto "Crede Biron."

The fact that the book appears in the centenary year of Byron's death is accidental. The later edition of *Astarte* (1921), the *Correspondence* edited by Mr. Murray (1922), and the reviews of those works completed the story and led to the present undertaking. Publication was withheld until after the 100th anniversary of the death, that the issue of the book might not seem inconsistent with the respect due to the memory of a brilliant genius.

The kindness of Mary, Countess of Lovelace, in granting access to the papers of the late Earl of Lovelace, is gratefully acknowledged.

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. THE ADMITTED FACTS OF THE SEPARATION	1
II. THE CONTROVERSY OF 1869-1871	14
III. REFLECTIONS ON LADY BYRON IN BYRON'S POEMS AND HIS LIFE BY MOORE	17
IV. REVIEW OF COUNTESS GUICCIOLI'S "RECOLLECTIONS" IN "BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE"	20
V. MRS. BEECHER STOWE'S DISCLOSURES	23
VI. MRS. BEECHER STOWE'S DISCLOSURES —CONTINUED	42 48
VII. MEDORA LEIGH	48
VIII. SUMMARY OF THE CONTROVERSY OF 1869-1871	54
IX. THE COMMUNICATION TO DR. LUSHINGTON	57
X. WAS THE CHARGE REPORTED BY MRS. STOWE TRUE ?	71
XI. FURTHER LETTERS, JOURNALS AND POEMS	83
XII. THE STORY OF THE SEPARATION	95
XIII. THE CORRESPONDENCE WITH MRS. LEIGH	11
XIV. THE LETTER OF MAY 17, 1819	137
XV. THE CUSTODY OF THE CHILD	144
XVI. THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST LADY BYRON	152
XVII. THE EFFECT OF MRS. STOWE'S DISCLOSURES	203
XVIII. LADY BYRON'S REASONS FOR BREAKING SILENCE	207
XIX. CONCLUSION	210
APPENDIX I. GEORGE, THE COUNT JOANNES	213
APPENDIX II. THE LETTER OF MAY 17, 1819	234

ABBREVIATED TITLES OF WORKS CITED

- Astarte* ; by Ralph, Earl of Lovelace (1905). (The references are to the 2nd edition, by Mary, Countess of Lovelace, 1921.)
- Lady Blessington* ; Conversations of Lord Byron, by the Countess of Blessington, 1834.
- Briscoe* ; Byron the Poet, by Walter A. Briscoe, 1924.
- Lord Broughton* ; Recollections of a long life, edited by Lady Dorchester, 6 volumes, 1909-1911.
- Lord Byron and his Detractors* ; by John Murray, Rowland Edmund Prothero (Lord Ernie), and another. Printed for the Roxburghe Club, 1906.
- Chew* ; Byron in England. His Fame and After-fame, by Professor Samuel C. Chew, 1924.
- Coleridge* ; Poetry of Lord Byron, edited by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 7 volumes, 1898-1904.
- Countess Guiccioli* ; My recollections of Lord Byron and those of eye-witnesses, by La Contessa Teresa Guiccioli (translation), 1869.
- Moore* ; Letters and Journals of Lord Byron with notices of his life, by Thomas Moore, 3rd edition, 3 volumes 8vo, 1833 (also cited as *Life of Lord Byron*).
- Murray* ; Lord Byron's Correspondence, edited by John Murray, 2 volumes, 1922.
- Prothero* ; Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, edited by Rowland Edmund Prothero (Lord Ernie), 6 volumes, 1898-1901.
- Mrs. Stowe's History* ; Lady Byron vindicated, a History of the Byron controversy, by Mrs. Beecher Stowe, 1870.
- Mrs. Stowe's True Story* ; The True Story of Lady Byron's life, by Mrs. Beecher Stowe, *Macmillari's Magazine*, September, 1869 (the references are to the pages of the article as quoted in Mrs. Stowe's *History*).
- Vindication* ; Vindication of Lady Byron (Bentley & Son), 1871, including three articles from *Temple Bar*. (The articles are referred to by the pages in the *Vindication*.)

CHAPTER I

THE ADMITTED FACTS OF THE SEPARATION

IT will be convenient to note the dates of the following events :

1779. Captain John Byron married the Baroness Conyers.
- 1784, January 26. Their daughter, the Hon. Augusta Mary Byron, was born, the mother dying in giving birth to her.
1785. Captain John Byron married Catherine Gordon.
- 1788, January 22. Their son, George Gordon Byron, was born.
1791. Captain John Byron died.
- 1792, May 17. Anne Isabella Milbanke, afterwards Lady Byron, daughter of Sir Ralph and the Hon. Lady Milbanke, was born.
1798. George Gordon Byron succeeded to the title of (6th) Baron Byron.
- 1807, August 17. The Hon. Augusta Mary Byron was married to Lieut.-Colonel George Leigh.
- 1811, August 1. Catherine Byron died.
- 1814, April 15. Elizabeth Medora Leigh was born.
- 1815, January 2. George Gordon, Lord Byron, was married to Anne Isabella (Annabella) Milbanke.
- 1815, April 17. Lord Wentworth, brother to the Hon. Lady Milbanke, died. Sir Ralph and Lady Milbanke took the name of Noel.
- 1815, December 10. The Hon. Augusta Ada Byron (afterwards Countess of Lovelace), daughter of Lord and Lady Byron, was born.
- 1816, January 15. Lady Byron saw her husband for the last time.

The principal authority for this statement of events is *Astarte*,
Appendix K.

- 1816, April 22. A deed of separation between Lord and Lady Byron was executed.
- 1816, April 25. Lord Byron left England.
- 1822, January 28. The Hon. Lady Noel (formerly Milbanke), Lady Byron's mother, died. Lord and Lady Byron assumed the additional name of Noel.
- 1824, April 19. Lord Noel Byron died.
- 1850, May 3. Colonel George Leigh died.
- 1851, October 12. The Hon. Mrs. Leigh (Augusta Mary Byron) died.
- 1852, November 27. Augusta Ada, Countess of Lovelace, died.
- 1860, May 16. Anne Isabella, Lady Noel Byron, died.

In March, 1815, three months after their marriage, Lord and Lady Byron went to live at 13, Piccadilly Terrace, London, and continued to live there until their final parting on January 15, 1816. During the latter part of this period Lord Byron was in financial difficulties and in ill-health. His creditors, encouraged by the fact of his having married an heiress, as was believed, pressed their claims, and several executions were levied at his dwelling-house.

On December 10, 1815, Lady Byron gave birth to a daughter ; on January 15, 1816, she left London with her child and went to her parents at Kirkby Mallory, writing affectionate letters to her husband on January 15 and 16.* On or shortly before January 17, her mother, Lady Noel, wrote to Lord Byron inviting him to Kirkby.f

In a letter of January 16 to her sister-in-law, Mrs. Leigh, who was staying at 13, Piccadilly Terrace, Lady Byron expressed the belief that Lord Byron intended

* *Lord Broughton*, ii, 202, 238. The letters are quoted at pp. 98-9, below, t *Lady Byron's Remarks* (pp. 6-9, below). As to the date of Lady Noel's invitation, see p. 100, below.

to join her at Kirkby, and suggested that he should be encouraged to do so.* On or about January 18 Lady Byron consulted her parents as to her position, and on January 20-21 her mother went to London with Lady Byron's written statement to obtain medical and legal advice. Lady Byron had informed her parents that if she were to consider Lord Byron's past conduct as that of a person of sound mind, nothing could induce her to return to him.f By January 25 Lady Byron had decided to insist upon a separation.J On February 2 Lady Byron's father, Sir Ralph Noel, wrote to Lord Byron announcing that his wife would not return to him, and proposing a separation by agreement.§ On February 22|| Lady Byron went to London, and at an interview with Dr. Lushington, her professional adviser, informed him of facts not previously communicated to him. Dr. Lushington, who had before advised that though the circumstances were such as justified separation, a reconciliation was desirable, now changed his opinion and declared that a reconciliation was impossible, and that if the idea were entertained he could not, either professionally, or otherwise, take any part towards effecting it.¶ What the purport of this communication to Dr. Lushington was, has not hitherto been disclosed.

In the early part of the year 1816 a report was in public circulation that a guilty connection had existed between Lord Byron and his half sister, the Honourable Mrs. Leigh.** Mrs. Leigh had stayed with Lord and Lady Byron in Piccadilly Terrace from November 15, 1815, until the date of Lady Byron's departure, and stayed on with Lord Byron until March 16 following.ff

* *Prothero*, iii, 295.

f *Ibid.* 289.

‡ *Ibid.* 295-300.

§ *Lord Broughton*, ii, 209.

|| *Astarte*, 43.

¶ Dr. Lushington's letter of January 31, 1830, p. 8, below.

** Letter, September 29, x8x6, Shelley to Byron; *Quarterly Review*, January, 1870, p. 230.

†† *Prothero*, iii, 281 w, is incorrect as to the date.

From Kirkby Mallory Lady Byron wrote (January 16-February 21, 1816)[#] affectionate letters to Mrs. Leigh. The letters express gratitude for uniform kindness experienced, and state that Mrs. Leigh has been the writer's "best comforter ever since she knew her." In the previous July Lord Byron, having upon his marriage settled £2,000 a year on Lady Byron after his death, had, with her approval, made a will leaving all that he had power to dispose of for the benefit of Mrs. Leigh and her children.! Lady Byron's child, baptized November 1, 1816, received, as her first Christian name, Mrs. Leigh's name, Augusta. ‡

The Hon. Mrs. Villiers, a friend of Mrs. Leigh's, wrote to Lady Byron on the subject of the report referred to above, and Lady Byron replied on February 26, 1816, that she deeply regretted the reports which had been circulated relative to the cause of the separation, and especially that which reflected on Mrs. Leigh's character, but none of the reports had been sanctioned by her or her friends; that all her friends had heard her express gratitude to and affection for Mrs. Leigh; that in accordance with advice she had received she must abstain from any further disclosure; that her legal advisers insisted she should have no further communication with Piccadilly.§ Correspondence between Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh was nevertheless renewed in the following month and continued until the year 1830, when it ceased.

In the course of the negotiations for the separation, John Cam Hobhouse (afterwards Lord Broughton), acting for Lord Byron, required that two specific charges circulated against Lord Byron should be dis-

* *Prothero*, iii, 294-315.

‡ Letter, Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh, August, 1815 (*Prothero*, iii, 210 n).

§ The child was privately baptized soon after her birth and Mrs. Leigh was named as god-mother. At the later ceremony in November, 1816, Mrs. Leigh's name was omitted as god-mother. (*Astarte* 67; Letter, Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh, Jan. 23, 1816. *Prothero*, iii, 299.)

§ *Quarterly Review*, Jan. 1870, p. 232,

avowed on the part of Lady Byron, who thereupon gave her sanction to a statement that neither of the two charges (one of which was that affecting Mrs. Leigh) would have made part of her case if a separation by agreement had not taken place.*

A deed of separation was executed on April 22, 1816, and Lord Byron left England, never to return, on April 25.

Lady Byron explained her letters to her husband of January 15 and 16, 1816, in one which she addressed to him on February 13:

It can be fully and clearly proved that I left your house under the persuasion of your having a complaint of so dangerous a nature that any agitation might bring on a fatal crisis. My entreaties before I quitted you that you would take medical advice, repeated in my letter of January 15th, must convince you of such an impression on my mind. My absence, if it had not been rendered necessary by other causes, was medically recommended on that ground, as removing an object of irritation. I should have acted inconsistently with my unchanged affection for you, or indeed with the common principles of humanity, by urging my wrongs at that moment. From subsequent accounts I found that these particular apprehensions, which I and others had entertained, were groundless. Till they were ascertained to be so, it was my intention to induce you to come to this place, where, at every hazard, I would have devoted myself to the alleviation of *your* sufferings and should not then have reminded you of *my own*, as believing you, from physical causes, not to be *accountable* for them. My parents, under the same impression communicated to me, felt the kindest anxiety to promote my wishes and your recovery by receiving you here. Of all this my letter of Jan. 16th is a testimony. . . . †

In the same letter Lady Byron intimated that her resolution to insist on a separation could not be changed.

Lady Byron's account of the circumstances attend-

* *Lord Br ought on*, ii, 300-306. And see pp. -12, below II,

† *Prothero*, iii, 309.

ing the separation is contained in her *Remarks on Moore's Life of Byron*. After declaring that her statement is not made for self-vindication but to justify her parents from false imputations appearing in the *Life*, Lady Byron states the facts as follows :

I left London for Kirkby Mallory, the residence of my father and mother, on the 15th of January, 1816. Lord Byron had signified to me in writing (Jan. 6th) his absolute desire that I should leave London on the earliest day that I could conveniently fix. It was not safe for me to undertake the fatigue of a journey sooner than the 15th. Previously to my departure, it had been strongly impressed on my mind that Lord Byron was under the influence of insanity. This opinion was derived in a great measure from the communications made to me by his nearest relatives and personal attendant, who had more opportunities than myself of observing him during the latter part of my stay in town. It was even represented to me that he was in danger of destroying himself. *With the concurrence of his family* I had consulted Dr. Baillie as a friend (Jan. 8th) respecting this supposed malady. On acquainting him with the state of the case, and with Lord Byron's desire that I should leave London, Dr. Baillie thought that my absence might be advisable as an experiment, *assuming* the fact of mental derangement; for Dr. Baillie, not having had access to Lord Byron, could not pronounce a positive opinion on that point. He enjoined that in correspondence with Lord Byron I should avoid all but light and soothing topics. Under these impressions I left London, determined to follow the advice given by Dr. Baillie. Whatever might have been the nature of Lord Byron's conduct towards me from the time of my marriage, yet, supposing him to be in a state of mental alienation, it was not for *me*, nor for any person of common humanity, to manifest, at that moment, a sense of injury. On the day of my departure, and again on my arrival at Kirkby, Jan. 16th, I wrote to Lord Byron in a kind and cheerful tone, according to those medical directions. The last letter was circulated, and employed as a pretext for the charge of my having been subsequently *influenced* to "desert" my husband. It has been argued that I parted from Lord Byron in perfect

THE FACTS OF THE SEPARATION 7

harmony ; that feelings, incompatible with any deep sense of injury, had dictated the letter which I addressed to him ; and that my sentiments must have been changed by persuasion and interference when I was under the roof of my parents. These assertions and inferences are wholly destitute of foundation. When I arrived at Kirkby Mallory, my parents were unacquainted with the existence of any causes likely to destroy my prospects of happiness ; and when I communicated to them the opinion which had been formed concerning Lord Byron's state of mind, they were most anxious to promote his restoration by every means in their power. They assured those relations who were with him in London that " they would devote their whole care and attention to the alleviation of his malady " and hoped to make the best arrangements for his comfort if he could be induced to visit them. With these intentions, my mother wrote on the 17th to Lord Byron, inviting him to Kirkby Mallory. She had always treated him with an affectionate consideration and indulgence which extended to every little peculiarity of his feelings. Never did an irritating word escape her lips in her whole intercourse with him. The accounts given me after I left Lord Byron by the persons in constant intercourse with him, added to those doubts which had before transiently occurred to my mind as to the reality of the alleged disease and the reports of his medical attendant, were far from establishing the existence of anything like lunacy. Under this uncertainty, I deemed it right to communicate to my parents that if I were to consider Lord Byron's past conduct as that of a person of sound mind, nothing could induce me to return to him. It therefore appeared expedient, both to them and myself, to consult the ablest advisers. For that object, and also to obtain still further information respecting the appearances which seemed to indicate mental derangement, my mother determined to go to London. She was empowered by me to take legal opinions on a written statement of mine, though I had then reasons for reserving a part of the case from the knowledge even of my father and mother. Being convinced by the result of these enquiries and by the tenor of Lord Byron's proceedings, that the notion of insanity was an illusion, I no longer hesitated to authorise such measures as were necessary in order to secure **me from being**

ever again placed in his power. Conformably with this resolution, my father wrote to him on the 2nd of February to propose an amicable separation. Lord Byron at first rejected this proposal, but when it was distinctly notified to him that if he persisted in his refusal, recourse must be had to legal measures, he agreed to sign a deed of separation. Upon applying to Dr. Lushington, who was intimately acquainted with all the circumstances, to state in writing what he recollected upon this subject, I received from him the following letter, by which it will be manifest that my mother cannot have been actuated by any hostile or ungenerous motives towards Lord Byron.

" My dear Lady Byron,—I can rely upon the accuracy of my memory for the following statement. I was originally consulted by Lady Noel on your behalf, whilst you were in the country ; the circumstances detailed by her were such as justified a separation but they were not of that aggravated description as to render such a measure indispensable. On Lady Noel's representation, I deemed a reconciliation with Lord Byron practicable, and felt most sincerely a wish to aid in effecting it. There was not on Lady Noel's part any exaggeration of the facts ; nor, so far as I could perceive, any determination to prevent a return to Lord Byron : certainly none was expressed when I spoke of a reconciliation. When you came to town, about a fortnight or perhaps more after my first interview with Lady Noel, I was for the first time informed by you of facts utterly unknown, as I have no doubt, to Sir Ralph and Lady Noel. On receiving this additional information, my opinion was entirely changed : I considered a reconciliation impossible. I declared my opinion and added that if such an idea should be entertained I could not, either professionally or otherwise, take any part towards effecting it.—Believe me, very faithfully yours,
Steph. Lushington, Great George Street, Jan. 31, 1830."

I have only to observe that if the statements on which my legal advisers (the late Sir Samuel Romilly and Dr. Lushington) formed their opinions were false, the responsibility and odium should rest with *me only*. I trust that the facts which I have here briefly recapitulated will absolve my father and mother from all accusations with regard to the

part they took in the separation between Lord Byron and myself. They neither originated, instigated, nor advised that separation ; and they cannot be condemned for having afforded to their daughter the assistance and protection which she claimed. There is no other near relative to vindicate their memory from insult. I am therefore compelled to break the silence which I had hoped always to observe, and to solicit from the readers of Lord Byron's life an impartial consideration of the testimony extorted from me.—A. I Noel Byron, Hanger Hill, Feb. 19, 1830,*

In a letter to Thomas Campbell, dated in 1830 and quoted in his *Observations* on Lady Byron's *Remarks*, Lady Byron sent the following reply to Campbell's request for information :

In taking up my pen to point out for your private information those passages in Mr. Moore's representation of my part of the story which were open to contradiction, I find them of still greater extent than I had supposed ; and to deny an assertion *here and there* would virtually admit the truth of the rest. If, on the contrary, I were to enter into a full exposure of the falsehood of the views taken by Mr. Moore, I must detail various matters which, consistently with my principles and feelings, I cannot under the existing circumstances disclose. I may perhaps convince you better of the difficulty of the case by an example. It is not true that pecuniary embarrassments were the cause of the disturbed state of Lord Byron's mind or formed the chief reason for the arrangement made by him at that time. But is it reasonable for me to expect that you or any one else should believe this unless I show you what were the causes in question ? and this I cannot do.†

In advocating Lord Byron's cause, Lord Broughton quotes a statement made about March, 1816, in reply to the enquiries of intimate friends. Lord Byron admits he may have been harsh and rude, perhaps

* *Prothero*, iii, 287.

† The letter was published, as Campbell acknowledged, without Lady Byron's permission.

% *New Monthly Magazine*, April, 1830.

occasionally insulting, to his wife. His pecuniary distress, and ill-health, increased by excesses, might have made him appear halffrantic, but his violence was never directed against his wife. He made no secret of hating marriage but avowed his love for his wife. If he said or did something each day to give her pain he always appeared, at least, to afford her satisfaction. If she saw him sullen, silent or morose, she had often been surprised, sitting on his knee with her arm round his neck. If he was often neglectful he was more often fond. He might have been indiscreet in pouring out his confessions, telling her of all his failings and never committing a fault without making her his confidant. These errors, most offensive to her, were communicated with an unreserve which may have been taken for insult, though not meant so. His respect for her character and confidence in her veracity almost made him think that the allegations at which she hinted must have had some foundation. He was inclined to believe that he might at times have been deprived of reason, for, as he solemnly protested, he was unconscious of committing any enormity which could have prompted Lady Byron to desert him, thus suddenly, thus cruelly.*

In August, 1817, while in Venice, Lord Byron drew up the following statement and gave it to his friend Matthew Gregory Lewis for circulation among friends in England :f

It has been intimated to me that the persons understood to be the legal advisers of Lady Byron had declared " their lips to be sealed up " on the cause of the separation between her and myself. If their lips are sealed up, they are not sealed up by me, and the greatest favour *they* can confer on me will be to open them. From the first hour in which I was apprized of the intentions of the Noel family to the last communication between Lady Byron and myself in the

* *Lord Broughton*, ii, 277.

† *Pr other o*, hi, 329. The statement was first published in the *Academy* of Oct. 9, 1869.

THE FACTS OF THE SEPARATION II

character of wife and husband (a period of some months), I called repeatedly and in vain for a statement of their or her charges, and it was chiefly in consequence of Lady Byron's claiming (in a letter still existing) a promise on my part to consent to a separation, if such was *really* her wish, that I consented at all; this claim and the exasperating and inexplicable manner in which their object was pursued, which rendered it next to an impossibility that two persons so divided could ever be reunited, induced me reluctantly then, and repentantly still, to sign the deed, which I shall be happy, most happy, to cancel, and go before any tribunal which may discuss the business in the most public manner.

Mr. Hobhouse made the proposition on my part, viz.: to abrogate all prior intentions and go into Court, the very day before the separation was signed, and it was declined by the other party, as also the publication of the correspondence during the previous discussion. Those propositions I beg here to repeat and to call upon her and hers to say their worst, pledging myself to meet their allegations—whatever they may be—and only too happy to be informed at last of their real nature.

P.S.—I have been and am now utterly ignorant of what description her allegations, charges, or whatever name they may have assumed, are; and am as little aware for what purpose they have been kept back—unless it was to sanction the most infamous calumnies by silence.

In a pamphlet* written by Lord Byron in the year 1820, but not published in his lifetime, he gives an answer to strictures on his matrimonial conduct which had appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*:

He does not know of what he is accused; and has never had any specific charge, in a tangible shape, submitted to him, unless the atrocities of public rumour and the mysterious silence of his wife's legal advisers might be deemed such. Had not "the general voice of his countrymen," he asks, long ago pronounced upon the subject—sentence without trial and condemnation without a charge? Upon what

* *Prothero*, iv, 478,

THE BYRON MYSTERY

grounds the public founded their opinion he is not aware ; but it was general and it was decisive. He retired from the country, perceiving that he was the object of general obloquy and had become personally obnoxious in England, perhaps through his own fault, but the fact was indisputable. He was a little surprised to find himself condemned without being favoured with the act of accusation and to perceive in the absence of this portentous charge or charges, whatever it or they were to be, that every possible or impossible crime was rumoured to supply its place and taken for granted. He believed that the best mode to avoid taking vengeance was to get out of the way of temptation, and hoped that he might never have the opportunity, having derived from his mother something of the *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum*. He had not sought and should not seek it. He did not in this allude to the party, who might be right or wrong, but to many who made her cause the pretext of their own bitterness. She must have long avenged him in her own feelings, for whatever her reasons might have been (and she never adduced them to him at least), she probably neither contemplated nor conceived to what she became the means of conducting the father of her child and the husband of her choice.

It will be understood that the above statements of Lord and Lady Byron are inserted as expressing their views, and that for the present purpose the only admitted fact with regard to the statements is that they were made.

Lady Byron's *Remarks* were written to justify the character of her parents. Her own defence was not made in her lifetime. Lord Byron's justification of himself is found in his Statements of 1816, 1817, and 1820, cited above, which were not published in his lifetime.

Upon the facts, when the truth is ascertained, the

THE FACTS OF THE SEPARATION 13

question has to be determined: Did Lady Byron do right in insisting upon a separation? She took this responsibility on herself, and if she is to be justified it must be proved that she had sufficient reason.

CHAPTER II

THE CONTROVERSY OF 1869-1871

WHETHER Lord Byron or his wife was to blame for the break-up of their married life, was a subject of dispute from the month of January, 1816, when they separated. The world was interested, and it may be gathered from Lord Byron's statements quoted in the last chapter that at the time of the separation the general opinion was against him. In the year 1818 it veered round in his favour. In 1830 Thomas Moore edited the *Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, with Notices of His Life*, and in the second volume included, without comment—merely describing it as "an extraordinary paper"—*Remarks* written by Lady Byron in answer to the reflections on her parents in the first volume. It is clear that Moore did not regard Lady Byron with a friendly eye. Her defence was attempted by Thomas Campbell in the *New Monthly Magazine* of April, 1830, but his endeavour was cried down and Campbell afterwards apologised for it to Moore. No further serious attempt was made to answer the strictures on Lady Byron, express or implied, published by Moore and by Lord Byron in his poems, until the appearance of an article entitled *Lord Byron's Married Life*, in *Temple Bar* of June, 1869.* This article formed part of Lady Byron's case in the controversy which afterwards arose.

By a pure coincidence and in no way connected with the article in *Temple Bar*, Mrs. Beecher Stowe's paper, *The True Story of Lady Byron's Life*, was published in *Macmillan's Magazine* of September, 1869. Mrs. Stowe relates that in the year 1856 Lady Byron informed her that Lord Byron had carried, on an

* This and later articles in *Temple Bar*, with additions, were reproduced in the *Vindication of Lady Byron* (1871), the pages of which will be referred to in quoting from the articles. The late Mr. John Fox (1800-1880) was the writer of these articles and of the *Vindication*.

adulterous intrigue with a near relation. The announcement was disapproved by Lady Byron's friends, and the truth of the charge was disbelieved by her opponents. Though written in defence of Lady Byron, it was thought by her supporters that the disclosure was ill-advised and unnecessary, and, owing to the careless manner in which the facts were stated, that Mrs. Stowe's attempt had only served to prejudice Lady Byron's case. It was perfectly clear that the "near relation" was the Honourable Augusta Mary Leigh, the wife of Colonel Leigh and Byron's half-sister. In January, 1870, after much correspondence in the newspapers and further articles in magazines and reviews, Mrs. Stowe, produced, in book form, *Lady Byron Vindicated, a History of the Byron Controversy*, by way of reply to the criticisms on her article in *Macmillan*. In this book she states for the first time (p. 233) that Lady Byron informed her that the offence disclosed in the *True Story* was the cause of the separation.

Before the intervention of Mrs. Beecher Stowe—viz., in July, 1869—*Blackwood's Magazine* had published a review of Countess Guiccioli's *Recollections*. Lady Byron's character was assailed both in the book and in the review, and *Blackwood* was answered by *Temple Bar* in October of the same year in an article, *The Character of Lady Byron*.

At the end of the year 1869 was published *Medora Leigh : a History and Autobiography*. The subject of the book was a daughter of Mrs. Leigh's, and her story is interwoven with that related by Mrs. Stowe.

The heat of the controversy died down in 1870, and the arguments for Lady Byron, based on the facts then known, were completed by the publication of the *Vindication of Lady Byron* (Bentley and Son) in 1871. The case was not, and could not be, conducted according to the rules of a modern court of law, where

the plaintiff puts forward his case first, the defendant answers and the plaintiff replies. The procedure resembled rather the course of a trial in earlier times where the parties were constantly interrupting one another to answer the argument of the opposite side on a particular point. To make the discussion intelligible, it is proposed, reserving comment till the end, to give a short account of the various publications from 1869 to 1871 under four heads :

1. Reflections on Lady Byron in Byron's poems and his life by Moore.
2. Review of Countess Guiccioli's *Recollections* in *Blackwood's Magazine*.
3. Mrs. Beecher Stowe's disclosures.
4. *Medora Leigh*.

CHAPTER III

REFLECTIONS ON LADY BYRON IN BYRON'S POEMS AND HIS LIFE BY MOORE

IN the *Temple Bar* article of June, 1869,* the writer thus expresses the reasons which led to its publication :

From the year 1818 down to the year 1869 it had been commonly supposed that because Lady Byron would not return to her husband, she must have been a cold, precise, Pharisical, unloving, unforgiving woman ; and that in their separation, faults were to be found on both sides. It seemed hard that one generation after another should be taught to believe such things of a woman, pure and true and bright and amiable, to whom riches, rank, graces and understanding had been given as though to deck her for sacrifice ; who had suffered so much, had borne her sufferings so nobly and had done so much to soften the sufferings of others.f

The object of the article was—

to show, by proofs drawn wholly from Thomas Moore's *Life of Lord Byron* and Lord Byron's poems themselves, that, in the judgment of Dr. Lushington, Lady Byron could not have returned to her husband after their separation without a violation of her duty both to God and man ‡ • • •

. . • That which had been long a mystery was revealed through the cruel indiscretion of Thomas Moore. Though the particular offence is *not*, the class to which it belongs is known. It was not neglect, nor bitter words, nor adultery, that made the separation final. The cause was this—Lady Byron, to use the words of her husband, had been taught that duty both to God and man forbade her to return to him ;

" No sort of explanation could be had,
Save that her duty both to man and God,
Required this conduct."§

* Reproduced in the *Vindication of Lady Byron*, p. i.

† *Vindication*, p. vii.

‡ *Ibid.* § *Ibid.*, 2.

The writer argues that as the existence of a sufficient cause of separation had been proved it was useless to speculate upon the precise offence.*

The circumstances are related in which for the second time Lord Byron proposed to Miss Milbanke—his habits and letters to his friends immediately before his marriage and during his married life. Lady Byron's character is told from the mouth of her husband. Being charged by public rumour with every monstrous vice and having declared he would not consent to a separation unless the charges against him were specified, Lord Byron consented unconditionally. " Instead of extorting the charge, he suffered the separation to be extorted."† The passages in Moore's *Life of Byron* complained of as reflecting on Lady Byron and her parents are quoted.‡ Passages from Byron's poems bearing on the subject are also referred to.

The writer in *Temple Bar* thinks that Byron was unhappy in his choice of a biographer.

Mr. Moore was unable to perceive the injury that he inflicted upon Lord Byron in giving a fixed habitation to his changing fancies of anger and remorse without repentance, or the danger which, in the very whirlwind of his passion, he had always avoided, of enforcing Lady Byron to break silence. If Sir Walter Scott could have undertaken the task *he* would not have called up his friend to tell from the grave, with a joyous note, the foul sensuality of Venice ; he would not have collected darts, which lay scattered abroad and harmless, to pierce a woman's heart. Such were not the messages which the husband, if God had given him utterance, would have sent from his death-bed. It is difficult to believe that Moore had not personal resentment against Lady Byron, and as difficult to understand how the utmost degree of resentment could persuade any man to insult any woman so daringly. §

In a later passage the same writer in *Temple Bar*

Vindication, 69. † *Ibid* 28. ‡ *Ibid.* 56-65. § *Ibid.* 49, 50.

sums up the position of those who, like Moore, think to advance Lord Byron's fame by heaping reproach upon his wife :

We are now bidden to sacrifice to his fame the memory of the stainless woman who strove to reclaim him. . . . Lord Byron's intellectual power is universally acknowledged, and with no faint praise. Beyond that acknowledgment, what more than pity can be offered, in the words of the greater poet who has told us that the most eloquent of fallen spirits was the most ignoble ? We applaud his art, but the man we deplore, and, far above him, honour those who display sublime and pure thoughts without transgression.*

- *Vindication*, 352.

CHAPTER IV

REVIEW OF COUNTESS GUICCIOLI'S "RECOLLECTIONS" IN "BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE"

IN July, 1869, there appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* a review of Countess Guiccioli's *My Recollections of Byron and those of Eye-witnesses* * In the *Recollections* the unfitness of Lady Byron to be the helpmeet of a man of genius is insisted on, and she is charged with deserting her husband's abode and the company of bailiffs for the attainment of more favourable conditions at Kirkby Mallory. Lord Byron had called her his "moral Clytemnestra," but the comparison was in favour of the guilty one of antiquity.† The book was condemned by a long review in the *Times* of February 13, 1869, written by the Hon. Mrs. Norton.‡

The reviewer in *Blackwood* censures Lady Byron for her conduct in the matter of the separation, especially for making, while in conference with Counsel, a charge against her husband on which she was advised that reconciliation was impossible, and for sanctioning by her silence the fabrications which were circulated about Lord Byron. The reviewer considers that "the moral Brinvilliers" would have been a truer designation of Lady Byron than "the moral Clytemnestra." He concludes by saying that the imputations upon Lord Byron rest on the vaguest conjecture, and that whatever vague or fancied wrongs Lady Byron may have endured are shrouded in a poisonous miasma in which she enveloped the character of her husband:

"She dies and makes no sign—O God forgive her!"

* This and a later article in *Blackwood* were by John Paget, Metropolitan Police Magistrate, and were reproduced in his *Paradoxes and Puzzles* (1874).

† Countess Guiccioli, ii, 230, 236, 240, 241, 270, 271.

‡ See *Astarte*, 143.

The number of *Temple Bar* for October, 1869, contains an article entitled *The Character of Lady Byron** in answer to *Blackwood* of the previous July.

Remarking that it has been thought strange that the tale of the separation should be revived, the writer proceeds :

The story will not die, nor will it sleep, until, by common consent, the truth of the facts which would seem to have been established beyond the power of contradiction shall be acknowledged ; nor, further, until it be agreed that the conduct of men of the higher order of mind must be judged by ordinary standards—at least, so far as may be necessary to do justice to their fellow mortals of ordinary clay. Lord Byron did more than any man to confound the colours of good and evil. To him, both were alike subjects for mockery. There was no real good on this earth and nothing beyond it. Intellectual might was alone to be worshipped and that did but bring misery to its possessor. Those who hold such doctrines to be false and fatal, may reasonably inquire in what way of life they were learned, and will not be frightened from the inquiry though they be represented as creeping things rioting on the decay of noble natures ; aspiring dunces, whose savage envy is gratified by the agonies of a noble spirit and the degradation of a great name ; herded wolves, obscene ravens and vultures—dullards who would indict the Sultan for bigamy before a Middlesex Grand Jury.f

The purpose of the article was threefold—to tell Lady Byron's character by the mouth of her husband ; to justify her refusal of reconciliation, by the judgment of Dr. Lushington; and to prove by the evidence of Lord Byron that she spoke the truth to Dr. Lushington.

The character of Lady Byron is summed up in words taken from the letters and poems of her husband and from his *Life* by Thomas Moore:

As a girl, she was a pattern in her own country. During

* Reproduced in the *Vindication*, p. 69. A note prefixed shows that the article was sent for publication in August and accidentally mislaid.

† *Vindication*, 71, 72 ; and see *Blackwood*, July 1869, and Macaulay's Essay on *Moore's Life of Byron*.

her one year of married life she was good, bright, kind, amiable and agreeable—free from deceit and of child-like purity. She concealed from her father and mother, and from the world, the wrongs that she suffered during that year ; not a murmur escaped her. When she discovered that duty called her to separate from her husband, and for ever, she obeyed ; and, notwithstanding provocation very hard to bear, kept unbroken silence. Four faults only are to be found in her whole life. She concealed her misery at home ; she concealed the cause of separation, the discovery of which would have destroyed her husband ; she set up a Sunday School ; and she was the patroness of a charity ball. And this woman is held up as an example of domestic malice, a poisonous slanderer, a moral Brinvilliers, whose life was monstrous and her death, the death of Cardinal Beaufort.*

* *Vindication*, 134, 135. Cf. *The Second Part of King Henry VI*, Act III, Scene iii.

CHAPTER V

MRS. BEECHER STOWE'S DISCLOSURES

IN *Macmillan's Magazine* of September, 1869, appeared Mrs. Stowe's article *The True Story of Lady Byron's Life*. The editor tells us in a prefatory note that this is Lady Byron's own statement of the reasons which forced her to the separation she so long resisted, and on which, out of regard for her husband and child, she maintained silence up to the day of her death.*

Referring to Countess Guiccioli's *Recollections*, Mrs. Stowe says that had the melancholy history been allowed to sleep, no public use would have been made of the true facts which were at one time placed in her hands, "leaving to her judgment the use which should be made of them."†

On the refusal of Lord Byron's first offer of marriage to Miss Milbanke—

he fell into the depths of a secret adulterous intrigue with a blood relation, so near in consanguinity that discovery must have been utter ruin and expulsion from civilised society. From henceforth this damning, guilty secret became the ruling force in his life, holding him with a morbid fascination, yet filling him with remorse and anguish and insane dread of detection. Two years after his refusal by Miss Milbanke, his various friends, seeing that for some cause he was wretched, pressed marriage upon him ‡

* It should be observed that nowhere in the article does Mrs. Stowe say specifically what the reasons which forced Lady Byron to the separation were. Certainly she does not say that the "adulterous intrigue with a blood relation" was the reason. Later, in her *History* (p. 233), Mrs. Stowe alleges for the first time that incest was the cause.

† In the *Atlantic Monthly*, in which the article was also published a few days earlier, the corresponding words are "with authority to make such use of them as she should judge best" (Mrs. Stowe's *History*, p. 281). The references in the text are to the article as published in the *History*, pp. 274-304-

‡ Mrs. Stowe, *History*, 285, 286.

Miss Milbanke accepted Byron's second offer and the marriage took place.

She knew vaguely from the wild avowals of the first hours of their marriage, that there was a dreadful secret of guilt . . . But there came an hour of revelation—an hour when, in a manner which left no kind of room for doubt, Lady Byron saw the full depth of the abyss of infamy which her marriage was expected to cover, and understood that she was expected to be the cloak and the accomplice of this infamy. . . • She would neither leave her husband nor betray him, nor yet would she for one moment justify his sin ; and hence came two years of convulsive struggle, in which, sometimes, for a while his good angel seemed to gain ground, and then the evil one returned with sevenfold vehemence. Lord Byron argued his case with himself and with her with all the sophistries of his powerful mind. He repudiated Christianity as authority ; asserted the right of every human being to follow out what he called " the impulses of nature." Subsequently he introduced into one of his dramas the reasoning by which he justified himself in incest.* . . . These two years in which Lady Byron was, with all her soul, struggling to bring her husband back to his better self were a series of passionate convulsions. . . . He had tried his strength with her fully. The first attempt had been to make her an accomplice by sophistry; by destroying her faith in Christianity and confusing her sense of right and wrong, to bring her into the ranks of those convenient women who regard the marriage tie only as a friendly alliance to cover licence on both sides. . . . When Lord Byron found that he had to do with one who would not yield . . . he determined to rid himself of her altogether. . . . She regarded him as, if not insane, at least so nearly approaching the boundaries of insanity as to be a subject of forbearance and tender pity.f

The circumstances under which the facts were communicated by Lady Byron to Mrs. Stowe in the year 1856 are narrated :

Some of Lady Byron's friends had proposed the question to her, *whether she had not a responsibility to Society for the*

* Mrs. Stowe, *History*, 288, 289. † *Ibid.* 291, 292.

truth ; whether *she did right* to allow these writings to gain influence over the popular mind by giving a silent consent to what she knew to be utter falsehoods. . . . It was her desire to recount the whole history to a person of another country and entirely out of the sphere of personal and local feelings which might be supposed to influence those in the country and station in life where the events really happened, in order that she might be helped by such a person's views to form an opinion as to her own duty.*

Mrs. Stowe's advice was " That Lady Byron would be entirely justifiable in leaving the truth to be disclosed after her death, and recommended that all the facts necessary should be put in the hands of some person to be so published."f

A letter from Messrs. Wharton and Fords, solicitors for Lady Byron's representatives, in the *Times* of September 2, 1869, denies that Mrs. Stowe's *True Story* is a complete or authentic statement of the facts connected with the separation, or that it can be regarded as Lady Byron's own statement. The article is characterised as a gross breach of the trust and confidence stated to have been reposed in Mrs. Stowe. It is said further, that Lady Byron had by her will appointed three trustees (of whom Mrs. Stowe was not one) to take charge of her manuscripts which were to be sealed up and made use of by the trustees alone as they might judge best for the interests of the testatrix's grand-children, and that if the world was ever to learn the true story of Lady Byron's life it would learn it from the trustees.

An article in the *Times* of September 3 calls attention to Mrs. Stowe's *True Story*. It is pointed out that Messrs. Wharton and Fords, while manifesting anxiety to discredit the story, do not altogether contradict it, and it is suggested that Lady Byron may have been the victim of delusion.

* Mrs. Stowe, *History*, 301.

† *Ibid.* 303.

The *Saturday Review* contains a series of articles upon the subject extending from September, 1869, to January, 1870.* The general conclusions of the reviewer are : that the charge disclosed by Mrs. Stowe was true, while she was greatly to blame for the breach of confidence in making it and for inaccuracies in the details of her statement; that Lady Byron was not under hallucination, and that her conduct in regard to the separation was inexplicable and in any case not to be commended ; that the main difficulty in the case was the group of affectionate letters from Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh, written in January and February, 1816, of which no sufficient explanation had been given.

The *Spectator* of September 4, 1869, thinks that whether Mrs. Beecher Stowe's paper is, or is not, the true story, the world can only learn authoritatively from Lady Byron's own manuscripts. The following deductions are drawn from that paper : (1) that Mrs. Stowe writes without authority ; (2) that for her story she has no written testimony ; (3) that in publishing this article she has departed from the letter of her own recommendation, which was that " the necessary facts should be placed in the hands of some persons, to be so published " ; (4) that she has either written a narrative as fictitious as it is sensational, or she has been guilty of a breach of confidence. In conclusion, the writer cannot but reckon it as an assumption of authority when the editor of *Macmillan* endorses Mrs. Stowe's paper as a " *complete* and *authentic* account " of Lady Byron's married life. It is neither the one nor the other. It is at most the recollections of what Mrs. Stowe alleges was told her or read by her thirteen years ago ; the recollections, moreover, of

* The dates of these articles are Sept. 4, 1869 ; Oct. 16, 23 ; Dec. 25, 1869 ; and Jan. 29, 1870. They were written by the Rev. William Scott (1813-1872). Extracts from them, except that of Jan. 29, are contained in *Astarte*, Appendices I and J,

a writer who speaks of the *few* years of Lady Byron's widowhood, who makes her live with her husband for two years instead of thirteen months, and who cannot even spell properly Lady Byron's maiden surname.*

On the same day, September 4, there was an article in the *Standard* by Alfred Austin, afterwards Poet-Laureate, which was issued shortly after as a separate publication. The writer attributes the separation to incompatibility of temper, a perhaps imperfect fidelity on the part of the husband and a virtuous jealousy on the part of the wife. Mrs. Stowe's *True Story* is described as "the most preposterous fable that has ever been attempted to be foisted by mingled hallucination and credulity on the curiosity of the public." The writer concludes that Lady Byron persuaded herself of the truth of the horrible story under an hallucination, which grew up in the interval between her resolution never to live with her husband again and her discovery that her reasons for this decision were insufficient.

On the same day, September 4, in the *Daily News* is a letter from William Howitt (1792-1879) who had known Lady Byron for some years and visited at her house. He describes her as a woman of the most honourable and conscientious intentions, but he declares her to have been subject to a constitutional idiosyncrasy of a most peculiar kind, which rendered her, when under its influence, absolutely and persistently unjust. . . . The writer believes that Byron urged his wife to go to her father for the purpose of obtaining money to pay his debts. On her father representing that Byron would run through her fortune, backed up by some such odious story by Lady Noel and her woman, Mrs. Charlemont (*sic*), as Mrs. Stowe gives, Lady Byron decided on a separation, refusing to assign a reason.

* In the *MacmiUan* article the name was spelt "Mill bank."

On Byron's death his widow never ceased her exertions till she had procured the destruction of her husband's own carefully prepared defence. No sooner was this accomplished, than, if we are to believe Mrs. Stowe, she proceeds to blast his character to all posterity, by charges of the most damning and revolting nature.

In the *Times* of September 7 is a letter from Lord Lindsay, quoting the following passages from the private family memoirs of Lady Anne Barnard (the authoress of "Auld Robin Gray"), including a letter from Lady Byron to her, dated December 2, 1816 :*

The separation of Lord and Lady Byron astonished the world, which believed him a reformed man as to his habits and a becalmed man as to his remorse. He had written nothing that appeared after his marriage till the famous * Fare thee well/ which had the power of compelling those to pity the writer who were not well aware that he was not the unhappy person he affected to be. Lady Byron's misery was whispered soon after her marriage, and his ill-usage, but no word transpired, no sign escaped, from her. She gave birth, shortly, to a daughter ; and when she went, as soon as she was recovered, on a visit to her father's, taking her little Ada with her, no one knew that it was to return to her lord no more. At that period, a severe fit of illness had confined me to bed for two months. I heard of Lady Byron's distress ; of the pains he took to give a harsh impression of her character to the world. I wrote to her, and entreated her to come and let me see and hear her, if she conceived my sympathy or counsel could be any comfort to her. She came ; but what a tale was unfolded by this interesting young creature, who had so fondly hoped to have made a young man of genius and romance (as she supposed) happy ! They had not been an hour in the carriage which conveyed them from the church, when, breaking into a malignant sneer, " Oh ! what a dupe you have been to your imagination ! How is it possible a woman of your sense could form the wild hope of reforming me ? Many are the tears you will have to shed ere that plan

* See *Astarte*, 343.

MRS. BEECHER STOWE'S DISCLOSURES 29

is accomplished. It is enough for me that you are my wife for me to hate you ! If you were the wife of any other man, I own you might have charms," etc* I who listened was astonished. " How could you go on after this," said I, " my dear ? Why did you not return to your father's ? " " Because I had not a conception he was in earnest; because I reckoned it a bad jest, and told him so—that my opinions of him were very different from his of himself, otherwise he would not find me by his side. He laughed it over when he saw me appear hurt : and I forgot what had passed, till forced to remember it. I believe he was pleased with me, too, for a little while. I suppose it had escaped his memory that I was his wife." But she described the happiness they enjoyed to have been unequal and perturbed. Her situation, in a short time, might have entitled her to some tenderness ; but she made no claim on him for any. He sometimes reproached her for the motives that had induced her to marry him : all was " vanity, the vanity of Miss Milbanke carrying the point of reforming Lord Byron ! He always knew her inducements ; her pride shut her eyes to his : he wished to build up his character and his fortunes ; both were somewhat deranged : she had a high name, and would have a fortune worth his attention—let her look to that for his motives ! " " O Byron, Byron ! " she said, " how you desolate me ! " He would then accuse himself of being mad, and throw himself on the ground in a frenzy, which she believed was affected to conceal the coldness and malignity of his heart—an affectation which at that time never failed to meet with the tenderest commiseration. I could find by some implications, not followed up by me, lest she might have condemned herself afterwards for her involuntary disclosures, that he soon attempted to corrupt her principles, both with respect to her own conduct and her latitude for his. She saw the precipice on which she stood, and kept his sister with her as much as possible. He returned in the evenings from the haunts of vice, where he made her understand he had been, with manners so profligate ! " O the wretch ! " said II, and had he no moments of remorse ? " " Sometimes he appeared to have them. One night, coming home from one of his lawless parties, he saw me so indignantly collected, and bearing all with such a determined calmness, that a rush of

remorse seemed to come over him. He called himself a monster, though his sister was present, and threw himself in agony at my feet. I could not—no—I could not forgive him such injuries. He had lost me for ever ! Astonished at the return of virtue, my tears, I believe, flowed over his face, and I said, ' Byron, all is forgotten : never, never shall you hear of it more ! ' He started up, and, folding his arms while he looked at me, burst into laughter, ' What do you mean ? ' said I. ' Only a philosophical experiment ; that's all/ said he. ' I wished to ascertain the value of your resolutions.' " I need not say more of this prince of duplicity, except that varied were his methods of rendering her wretched, even to the last. When her lovely little child was born, and it was laid beside its mother on the bed, and he was informed he might see his daughter, after gazing at it with an exulting smile, this was the ejaculation that broke from him : " Oh, what an implement of torture have I acquired in you ! " Such he rendered it by his eyes and manner, keeping her in a perpetual alarm for its safety when in his presence. All this reads madder than I believe he was : but she had not then made up her mind to disbelieve his pretended insanity, and conceived it best to intrust her secret with the excellent Dr. Baillie ; telling him all that seemed to regard the state of her husband's mind, and letting his advice regulate her conduct. Baillie doubted of his derangement ; but, as he did not reckon his own opinion infallible, he wished her to take precautions as if her husband were so. He recommended her going to the country, but to give him no suspicion of her intention of remaining there, and, for a short time to show no coldness in her letters, till she could better ascertain his state. She went, regretting, as she told me, to wear any semblance but the truth. A short time disclosed the story to the world. He acted the part of a man driven to despair by her inflexible resentment and by the arts of a governess (once a servant in the family) who hated him. " I will give you," proceeds Lady Anne, " a few paragraphs transcribed from one of Lady Byron's own letters to me. It is sorrowful to think, that, in a very little time, this young and amiable creature, wise, patient, and feeling, will have her character mistaken by every one who reads Byron's works. To rescue her from this, I preserved her letters ; and, when she afterwards expressed a fear

MRS. BEECHER STOWE'S DISCLOSURES 31

that anything of her writings should ever fall into hands to injure him (I suppose she meant by publication), I safely assured her that it never should. But here this letter shall be placed, a sacred record in her favour, unknown to herself :

" ' I am a very incompetent judge of the impression which the last canto of ' Childe Harold ' may produce on the minds of indifferent readers. It contains the usual trace of a conscience restlessly awake ; though his object has been too long to aggravate its burden, as if it could thus be oppressed to eternal stupor. I will hope, as you do, that it survives for his ultimate good. It was the acuteness of his remorse, impenitent in its character, which so long seemed to demand from my compassion to spare every resemblance of reproach, every look of grief, which might have said to his conscience, " You have made me wretched." I am decidedly of opinion that he is responsible. He has wished to be thought partially deranged, or on the brink of it, to perplex observers, and prevent them from tracing effects to their real causes through all the intricacies of his conduct. I was, as I told you, at one time the dupe of his acted insanity, and clung to the former delusions in regard to the motives that concerned me personally, till the whole system was laid bare. He is the absolute monarch of words, and uses them, as Bonaparte did lives, for conquest, without more regard to their intrinsic value, considering them only as ciphers, which must derive all their import from the situation in which he places them, and the ends to which he adapts them with such consummate skill. Why then, you will say, does he not employ them to give a better colour to his own character ? Because he is too good an actor to over-act, or to assume a moral garb which it would be easy to strip off. In regard to his poetry, egotism is the vital principle of his imagination, which it is difficult for him to kindle on any subject with which his own character and interests are not identified ; but by the introduction of fictitious incidents by change of scene or time, he has enveloped his poetical disclosures in a system impenetrable except to a very few ; and his constant desire of creating a sensation makes him not averse to be the object of wonder and curiosity, even though accompanied by some dark and vague suspicions. Nothing has contributed more to the misunderstanding of his real character than the lonely

grandeur in which he shrouds it, and his affectation of being above mankind, when he exists almost in their voice. The romance of his sentiments is another feature of this mask of state. I know no one more habitually destitute of that enthusiasm he so beautifully expresses, and to which he can work up his fancy chiefly by contagion. I had heard he was the best of brothers, the most generous of friends ; and I thought such feelings only required to be warmed and cherished into more diffusive benevolence. Though these opinions are eradicated, and could never return but with the decay of my memory, you will not wonder if there are still moments when the association of feelings which arose from them soften and sadden my thoughts. But I have not thanked you, dearest Lady Anne, for your kindness in regard to a principal object—that of rectifying false impressions. I trust you understand my wishes, which never were to injure Lord Byron in any way ; for, though he would not suffer me to remain his wife, he cannot prevent me from continuing his friend ; and it was from considering myself as such that I silenced the accusations by which my own conduct might have been more fully justified. It is not necessary to speak ill of his heart in general ; it is sufficient that to me it was hard and impenetrable ; that my own must have been broken before his could have been touched. I would rather represent this as my misfortune than as his guilt ; but surely that misfortune is not to be made my crime ! Such are my feelings : you will judge how to act. His allusions to me in 'Childe Harold' are cruel and cold, but with such a semblance as to make me appear so, and to attract all sympathy to himself. It is said in this poem that hatred of him will be taught as a lesson to his child. I might appeal to all who have ever heard me speak of him, and still more to my own heart, to witness that there has been no moment when I have remembered injury otherwise than affectionately and sorrowfully. It is not my duty to give way to hopeless and wholly unrequited affection ; but, so long as I live, my chief struggle will probably be not to remember him too kindly. I do not seek the sympathy of the world ; but I wish to be known by those whose opinion is valuable, and whose kindness is dear to me. Among such, my dear Lady Anne, you will ever be remembered by your truly affectionate,

A. BYRON.

In a letter to the *Standard* dated September 8, Dr. Forbes Winslow expresses the opinion that the theory of mental aberration in the case of Lady Byron cannot be maintained for a moment :

If we accept the hypothesis of hallucination, we are bound to view the whole of Lady Byron's conversations with Mrs. Stowe and the written statement laid before her, as the wild and incoherent representations of a lunatic. . . . It is quite inconsistent with the theory of Lady Byron's insanity to imagine that her delusion was restricted to the idea of her husband having committed incest. . . . Lunatics do for a time, and for some special purpose, most cunningly conceal their delusions ; but they have not the capacity to struggle for thirty-six years with a frightful hallucination, similar to the one Lady Byron is alleged to have had, without the insane state of mind becoming obvious to those with whom they are daily associating. Neither is it consistent with experience to suppose that, if Lady Byron had been a monomaniac, her state of disordered understanding would have been restricted to one hallucination.

On September 18 appeared in *The Times* a letter from ' A Reader of Byron's Letters.' It alleges that the accusation of incest was known to Byron and his intimate associates ; that it was not Mrs. Stowe, but Countess Guiccioli, who disturbed the slumber of reconciliation. Two facts remain, says the writer. It was not Lady Byron but Lushington and Romilly who decided that Lady Byron's return to her husband was impossible. Lord Byron affected fine and tender sentiments. Whatever he has done will find defenders on account of his genius, his charm and his exile.

In October, 1869, the *Quarterly Review* intervened with an article, *The Byron Mystery* ' in answer to Mrs. Stowe's *True Story* and the *Temple Bar* article of the previous June. The writer raises a new point

' Vol. 127, p. 400. This and a subsequent article in the *Quarterly* were by Abraham Hayward Q.C. (*Astarte*, 146). A postscript to the October article appeared in a second edition of the *Review* for that month.

by the production of letters written in affectionate terms by Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh in January and February, 1816, then (October, 1869) published for the first time, which are said to be inconsistent with the truth of the charge against Mrs. Leigh related by Mrs. Beecher Stowe.

In a postscript the reviewer deals with some further points. The *Quarterly* has been incorrectly understood to admit that the crime specified by Mrs. Stowe was the substance of Lady Byron's communication to Dr. Lushington. The inclination of its opinion is the other way :'

There is one particular in which all the published versions, including Mrs. Beecher Stowe's, agree : namely, that Lady Byron declared the guilty connection to be *the* cause of the separation : that she virtually therefore declared it to be the substance of her communication to Dr. Lushington. Yet before, during and long after the separation, she continued to all outward seeming on a footing of affectionate confidence with Mrs. Leigh. . . . If we assume the charge to be false, we at all events clear Mrs. Leigh. But if the charge was well founded, or even if Lady Byron believed it to be well founded, we do not clear *her*. She still stands self-convicted of a long course of dissimulation and hypocrisy.^f

The reviewer is of opinion that the charge against Lord Byron has been tested and found wanting in every element of probability and truth ‡

Temple Bar of December, 1869, contained an article, *The Bride of Abydos*§ answering the *Quarterly Review* of the previous October. The object was to show that what Lady Byron told to Mrs. Stowe was true, that it was not *the* cause of separation told to Dr. Lushington and that the letters of January and February were consistent with Lady Byron's knowledge, in a time past, of the offence published to the world by Mrs. Stowe.^{ll}

' *Quarterly*, 563. † *Ibid-* 565, 566. ‡ *Ibid.* 443.
§ *Vindication*, 137, *Ibid.* xv.

With regard to Lady Byron's affectionate letters to Mrs. Leigh, the writer of the article says :

The letters of January and February, 1816, written to Mrs. Leigh in words of sisterly affection, though they startle, will not astound reasoning men into belief of a moral impossibility. Those letters cannot be explained until *the whole truth* is sent forth. Meanwhile, Lady Byron shall be justified ; and in her husband's private journal and letters, and in his poems (in one of his poems especially) shall be shown acknowledgment of the very crime that Mrs. Stowe's story has imputed to him.!

The excuse, repeated until it has become an accepted truth, that Lord Byron was afflicted with a monomania, showing itself in the confession of impossible sins, shall be set aside. Something of his life and conversation in and before and after the year 1813 shall be related to show that he was not likely to be stung by the memory of common guilt. Last of all, his own words shall tell the agony of remorse which convulsed him in November, 1813, until conscience took refuge with imagination and he wrote *The Bride of Abydos*[^]

With regard to the cause of the separation the writer thinks there is scarcely room even for reasonable conjecture, and adds: " If it concerned Lord Byron only, it might be supposed that there had been guilt before the marriage and that it had been confessed to Lady Byron and bitterly repented of and abhorred, though not by him."

The rest of the article is principally occupied with the condition of mind in which Byron was in 1813-14. The article concludes as follows :

The subject is left to those who have power to give light to the dark mystery. In leaving the controversy, the friends of Lady Byron are counselled, so long as her good name is henceforward suffered to rest in peace, to be for the present time content. It cannot avail her memory to discover what was the cause of irrevocable separation. It is enough that there was a sufficient cause. The new calumny will not

touch her. If nothing more can be offered than repetitions of what she herself said, these will but provoke new contradiction and slander. . . . If the friends of Mrs. Leigh believe that there are doubts which may be removed, let them bring forth *all* the proof that can be found, searching to the very depth with honest and true hearts ; nothing else will avail. If the result be as they desire, all just men will rejoice. If they want confidence or patience to do this, they too should be silent. For Lord Byron—his condemnation is written with his own hand.*

Mrs. Beecher Stowe's book *Lady Byron Vindicated, a History of the Byron Controversy*, published in January, 1870, and purporting to be a confirmation, with additions, of the *True Story* of the previous September, retells the tale and answers the criticisms of the last four months. Like the *True Story*, it is severely commented on by both parties to the controversy. While Lord Byron's supporters contended that the inconsistency and inaccuracy of the *History* rendered it altogether unworthy of credence, those who argued for Lady Byron, admitting the general inaccuracy of Mrs. Stowe's evidence, distinguished between her unsupported statements and those which might be accepted because confirmed by independent testimony. Neither side suggested that Mrs. Stowe was designedly untruthful.

The reason given by the authoress for making her disclosure is that she considered it a duty in defence of a friend whose memory stood charged with the most repulsive crimes. She claims that the facts were given to her unguarded by any promise or seal of secrecy, expressed or implied.f

In Part I of her book Mrs. Stowe deals with the attacks on Lady Byron, beginning with that of Lord Byron at the time of the separation, and ending with *Blackwood* of 1869. The authoress contends, in effect, that Byron, while admitting openly **with an**

* *Vindication*, 205.

†

Mrs. Stowe, *History*, i, 2.

assumed expression of generosity, that his wife was not responsible for the separation, and laying the blame on her friends, was actuated by a design to injure her reputation. This design is apparent in his reflections on Lady Byron in his poetry, privately circulated amongst his intimate friends.* Mrs. Stowe dwells at length on the slur, direct and indirect, cast upon Lady Byron by Moore's *Life* of her husband.f She quotes and comments upon Countess Guiccioli's *Recollections*, and the article in *Blackwood* of July, 1869, which, she alleges, induced her to make the disclosure of the following September.‡

In Part II Mrs. Stowe gives an account of her introduction to and subsequent interviews and correspondence with Lady Byron down to the time of her death, including a particular account of the interview at which the disclosure was made.§ She states the sources of information which formed the basis of her *True Story* and replies to the charge of inaccuracy in some of the details.|| She describes the circumstances of the separation and compares Byron's practice of mystification and want of veracity with his wife's character for truth.'[[

Chapter V**' is directed to the proof of incest. Mrs. Stowe " testifies " that Lady Byron for a proper purpose, and at a proper time, stated to her, amongst other things " That the crime which separated her from Lord Byron was incest, "†† There is a chapter on the physiological side of the matter in which the circumstances of Byron's birth and early and later life are related, and the predisposition to mental disease is discussed.J! The authoress thinks that the analytical mind of the philosopher, which Lady Byron possessed, was the one mind capable of estimating her husband both with justice and mercy and no one more com-

' Mrs. Stowe, *History*, 6-56. † *Ibid.* 57-101. J *Ibid.* 102-131.
 § *Ibid.* 132-170. II *Ibid.* 171-198. If *Ibid.* 199-216. " *Ibid.* 217-246.
 ft *Ibid.* 233. †† *Ibid.* 247-261.

pletely sympathised with what was pure and exalted in his writings. In later years Lady Byron had the heart for him, not of the wife but of the mother—the love that searches everywhere for extenuation of the guilt it is forced to confess. Byron had been brought up in the gloomiest doctrines of Calvinism, and his wife believed that all her efforts for his amendment were broken on the rock of predestination.* In a concluding chapter Mrs. Stowe justifies her intervention and recurs several times to the fact, as alleged, that the *Blackwood* article of July, 1869, was the justification for her disclosure.f

Part III of the book contains *Miscellaneous Documents*, including the *True Story* as published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and (as slightly altered) in *Mac-mi Han*.

The *Quarterly Review* of January, 1870,‡ answers Mrs. Stowe's *History*. It is contended that the inaccuracies of detail in the *True Story* were sufficient to justify distrust apart from its inherent improbability and that the *History* is open to the same objections with the additional one of being in many points contradictory of the *True Story*.§ The reviewer quotes further letters from Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh (November, 1815, to February, 1816),|| written in terms of affection, in one of which she complains of Lord Byron's conduct and hopes for change, adding "but it is incurable pride and madness."¶ In a letter to Mrs. Leigh of February 24, 1816, Lady Byron says her resolution is such that if her father and mother were to implore her by every duty to them to return to her husband, she would not. She says that she left London (January 15) impressed with the idea of a fatal disease and an insanity which might

* Mrs. Stowe, *History*, 262-268, † *Ibid.* 269-273. ‡ Vol. 127, p. 218.

§ *Quarterly*, p. 219.

¶ *Ibid.* 222-228.

|| This letter is undated. It must have been written shortly before Nov. 15, when Mrs. Leigh went to stay with the Byrons.

admit control, but this proved unfounded when Mr. Lettsom[#] had personal opportunities of judging. In that case, she adds, she had foreseen that separation was the only course she could pursue. The reviewer alleges that the relations between the sisters-in-law continued unaltered by the separation and that from Lord Byron's leaving England until his death his sister was the recognised medium of communication between him and Lady Byron.

In none of the family papers which the reviewer has seen does he find any reference to the charge put forward by Mrs. Stowe, which was circulated and brought to Byron's notice before he left England, and fell stillborn from contempt. In February, 1816, Mrs. Leigh writes to Lady Byron that a calumnious report has just reached her brother under which he declared existence to be no longer endurable, and in reply Lady Byron (February 19) writes that on the mysterious subject, of which she is ignorant, she can only say that if the report alludes to anything which she knows to be false, she will bear testimony to its falsehood.^f The letter of February 26, 1816,^J from Lady Byron to Mrs. Villiers is understood by the reviewer to be an unequivocal denial of "the report," and Lady Byron, he says, meant and knew it to be so understood.[§]

Before the separation, Wilmot Horton on Lady Byron's behalf disclaimed the calumny affecting Mrs. Leigh without qualification or reserve.||

The inconsistency between Mrs. Stowe's allegation that the guilty connection was paraded up to the very hour of Lady Byron's leaving her husband and the affectionate letters from Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh is pointed out. Either Lady Byron told Dr. Lushington

* This is an error for JLe Mann. John Coakley Lettsom, the physician, died November 1, 1815 (D. N. B.). † *Quarterly*, 230, 231.

[‡] See p. 115, below. The *Quarterly* reviewer is mistaken in the date, which he gives as Feb. 20.

[§] *Quarterly*, 232.

!) *Ibid.* 233.

a story she did not believe, or, believing it, wrote to Mrs. Leigh in affectionate terms and encouraged her to continue the guilty connection ; in the latter case she was an accomplice in the crime and (the reviewer repeats) was guilty of a prolonged course of dissimulation and hypocrisy.*

In the same month of January, 1870, there appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* an article entitled *Lord Byron and his Calumniators*, in answer to Mrs. Beecher Stowe. The writer of the article argues that a woman who lived for two years with a husband who to her knowledge was carrying on an incestuous intercourse with his sister, and who did not denounce her husband, would be a participant in his crime. If she maintained the appearance of the utmost cordiality to the partner of her husband's guilt, received her as a guest, named her child after her and addressed to her letters of the fondest affection—such a woman would be held in contempt and abhorrence. Mrs. Stowe is blamed for giving such a story to the world, not being prepared with conclusive evidence to prove it, and her inaccuracies of detail are pointed out. Lady Byron's statement to Lady Anne Barnard is contradictory of Mrs. Stowe's story. Lady Byron at various times, and ultimately to Mrs. Stowe, asserted that incest with his sister was the cause of separation from her husband. Did she state this or some other reason to Dr. Lushington ? If she gave this reason her letters to Mrs. Leigh, her statement to Lady Anne Barnard and her course of conduct subsequently, prove, either that she stated to Dr. Lushington what she knew to be false or that she was guilty of duplicity which would deprive her of the right to be treated as a witness worthy of belief. On the other hand, if she assigned a different cause to Dr. Lushington, she either spoke falsely to him or to Mrs. Stowe and other confidants.

* *Quarterly*, 243, 244.

In reply to the argument that if Byron had been ignorant of the offence imputed to him, he would have taken proceedings for restitution of conjugal rights, two answers are given. First, such proceedings are revolting to every man who has risen above the ranks of a savage. Secondly, Byron might be conscious of such irregularities as would have barred such a suit. The article concludes : " With regard to Lady Byron, who shall read the riddle which her conduct now presents ? Did she believe the hideous tale she told ? Was she the wilful fabricator of the monstrous calumny or was she herself the victim of insane delusions ? Is her memory to be regarded with the deepest horror or the most profound compassion ? "

An article in the *Times* of January 20, 1870, sums up the position: The writer believes Mrs. Stowe to be truthful and her report to be substantially correct, but blames her for bringing forward a story she cannot prove. Lady Byron might only have been aware of conduct she attributed to insanity which Dr. Lushington afterwards explained to her. As to the letters of January and February, 1816, we want the whole correspondence. The black charge may have been kept from Wilmot Horton. Lady Byron was not under hallucination ; the probability is that she was deceived by Lord Byron into believing an imaginary offence. There is no doubt that Lady Byron meant to assert the cause of the separation to be an incestuous intrigue between her husband and his half sister.

CHAPTER VI

MRS. BEECHER STOWE'S DISCLOSURES—CONTINUED

THE *Vindication of Lady Byron* (Richard Bentley and Son, written early in 1870 and published in 1871) comprises the three articles in *Temple Bar* already noticed and two additional papers in reply to Mrs. Beecher Stowe's *History* and the *Quarterly and Blackwood* of January, 1870. With regard to the *History* the author of the *Vindication* purports to show that, by her breach of faith and inaccuracy, Mrs. Stowe has done an injury to Lady Byron in the attempt to vindicate her character. He says :

Mrs. Stowe may claim from the world, not only the gentleness due to every woman, but special favour as the woman who dealt a brave and staggering blow to slavery before Emancipation walked in the sunshine. Gentleness and kind regard need not be forgotten, in showing that Lady Byron has suffered more wrong from the good intentions of her friend than from the malice of her enemies—that a tale, every word of which should have been well weighed, has been related with extreme carelessness—that it ought not to have been told—that it could not do good and was sure to do evil. Instead of setting down exactly, and always keeping in view, what had been said by Lady Byron some twelve years before, distinguishing what had been inferred from what had been affirmed, and what had been learned from her, from what had been gathered elsewhere, Mrs. Stowe collected, and read, and then wrote what would commonly be called * A story founded upon fact,' weaving together in one narrative Lady Byron's statement and things heard from other persons, or read, and her own conclusion and conjectures. " The main fact on which the story turns " being, as she afterwards declared, " one which could not possibly be misunderstood," the circumstances were worked according to her fancy. The instance often noticed, in itself not important, may be taken as an example. She had been misinformed by Miss Martineau that Lord and Lady Byron lived together two years, and not,

MRS. BEECHER STOWE'S DISCLOSURES 43

as was the fact, one year only. Innocent of any intention to deceive, she concludes that Lady Byron must have told her, and imagines she did tell her, that she had suffered two years of agony. This is repeated three times over.* . . .

Mrs. Stowe has used the freedom of the novelist in the performance of a task which required the rigour of the historian. . . . The publication of the *True Story* brought down, as might have been foreseen, a storm of invective and abuse upon the author and upon Lady Byron. . . . (Mrs. Stowe) is incapable of falsehood, but she has no faith in her own memory. If what she learns to-day seem inconsistent with what she heard yesterday, she imagines she did not hear what she did hear and that she heard what she did not hear. To vindicate Lady Byron, it is necessary not only to supply proof of the crime which Mrs. Stowe has published to the world, but also to prove that Lady Byron did not, though Mrs. Stowe believes and testifies that she did, state to her that it was the cause of separation.! . . .

It would be impossible to justify a heedless breach of good faith, though committed with the best intentions and because it was thought needful ; but how had it become needful ? The Countess Guiccioli's book contained nothing worse than a repetition of the old accustomed scandal which Lady Byron had borne in patience for forty years. Her friends said well that they disdained to answer the railing of the mistress against the wife. After Mrs. Stowe had published her *Story* she perceived that the *Recollections* of the Countess did not supply the shadow of a sufficient cause. Therefore a cause was sought for and was found in the frantic slander of *Blackwood's Magazine*, which was thus brought forward in the *History* as the main cause of the publication of the *True Story* (Mrs. Stowe's *History*, pp. 2, 4, 5, 6, 124-128, 269, 271)‡ . . .

" The statements of the Guiccioli book " says Mrs. Stowe " with those of the *Blackwood*, *Pall Mall Gazette* and other English periodicals, were being propagated through all the young reading and writing world of America. I was meeting them advertised in *dailies* and made up into articles in magazines ; and thus the generation of to-day, who had no means of judging Lady Byron but by these fables of her

* *Vindication*, 206, 207. ‡ *Ibidd.* 209, 210. † *Ibid.* 212, 213.

slanderers, were being foully deceived. The friends who knew her personally were a small select circle in England, whom death is every day reducing. They were few in number, compared with the great world, and were *silent*. I saw these foul slanders crystallizing into history, uncontradicted by friends who knew her personally, who, firm in their own knowledge of her virtues, and, limited in view as aristocratic circles generally are, had no idea of the width of the world they were living in and the exigency of the crisis. When time passed on and no voice was raised, I spoke ! "

How much time (asks the author of the *Vindication*) was given for remonstrance, for protest, for the utterance of the voice before which Mrs. Stowe would gladly have kept silence ? Not one little month, not an hour. In July the offending paper appeared in *Blackwood*. It is hardly possible that the English magazines for August—and an earlier answer could not be expected—should have arrived at New^T York until after Mrs. Stowe had finished and sent away the manuscript of the *True Story* published in London on the 1st of September.* To all appearance, when she wrote, she had neither seen nor heard of the article in *Blackwood* ; certainly it was not in her thoughts. The *History* is full of *Blackwood* ; the *True Story* does not contain the faintest allusion to that magazine, but begins and ends with a declaration that it was written to refute the slanders of the Countess Guiccioli (Mrs. Stowe's *History*, pp. 274, 275, 281, 303, 304.)! . . .

The internal evidence that Mrs. Stowe wrote the *Story* without having *Blackwood* in her thoughts is unanswerable. When she betook herself to write the *History* she did not find in the *Recollections* of the Countess Guiccioli any sufficient excuse for her former work and persuaded herself that the magazine, which was before her at that time (holding up her friend as an abandoned woman), had compelled her to begin to write. . . The interval between the middle of July and the beginning of August surely did not allow time for the republication of *Blackwood's* slander in the *Living Age*—its spread through all the young reading and writing world of

* Mrs. Stowe's article was printed in a Western American paper early in August and was reprinted in the *New York Tribune* of August 18 (*Standard* Sept. 4, 1869, p. 3, col. 6).

† *Vindication*, 214, 215.

MRS. BEECHER STOWE'S DISCLOSURES 45

America—the retailing it in magazines—the remonstrance of the literary friend not long after—the collecting and reading the various articles and the Countess Guiccioli's book—the perceiving that the slander was crystallizing into history—the lapse of time for reasonable assurance that no voice would be raised in England—last of all, for writing the refutation ; therefore the *Blackwood* of July, 1869, was not the cause of the manuscript sent to England in August and the excuse for revealing the secret fails.

It is almost an affront to Mrs. Stowe to say that she is incapable of designed untruth. If she had been untrue, she would have persisted in the notion that she had Lady Byron's authority to publish, and might have so constructed her *History* as to justify herself at her friend's cost. The witnesses who ruin a good cause are not always untruthful. They are often among those who listen for what passes around ; and, instead of holding sternly to their own recollections, unconsciously correct them by the testimony and opinions of other people.

And, supposing that Mrs. Stowe had been impelled to write by the slander in *Blackwood* and had the discretionary power which she claimed, it is plain that the discovery could not possibly have done any good. If Lady Byron's word were believed, the *Story* was superfluous ; if disbelieved, worthless. If the truth of what she said to Dr. Lushington were acknowledged, she had been absolved forty years ago by his judgment declaring that some offence committed by her husband—an offence of *facts** not of words, as the *Quarterly Review* would imply—made reconciliation impossible. To tell the precise offence signified nothing. Enough for her vindication that duty to God and man forbade her to return. But, if her truth were denied, to what purpose was it to publish a specific accusation depending wholly upon her word ? To declare, in effect, ' You say that you do not believe Lady Byron—that she was a foul slanderer, the poisoner of her husband's reputation ; but I tell you that I have repeated her own story as I had it from her own lips. I cannot give proof that it was true ; she said that she had letters and documents to prove its truth, but she did not show

* See Lushington's letter of Jan. 31, 1830, quoted in Lady Byron's *Remarks* p. 8, above.

them to me.' And while the discovery could not work good it was fraught with certain evil. Why, without any possible benefit to the living or to the memory of the dead, was a foul offence of fifty years past laid to the charge of one acknowledged to have been repentant and a truly good woman? And the injury to Lady Byron was almost irreparable.* . . .

Mrs. Stowe believes the letters of January and February to be authentic because they confirm Lady Byron's *Remarks*. She is right. However they may *seem*, the two must needs *be* consistent, for the *Remarks* are true and the letters are genuine. But the letters appear to be hardly consistent with the *Story* and they contradict the *History*. It has been made necessary for Lady Byron's vindication, not only to prove the truth of the new charge but to prove also that she did not declare that it was, and that in fact it was not, the cause of separation. By averring that it was, occasion has been given to the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine* to maintain that Lady Byron either falsely accused her husband of an infamous crime, her own invention, or laying a trap for him, connived at it and was guilty of a long course of dissimulation and hypocrisy. Mrs. Stowe herself, despairing to make the *Story* agree with the letters, at last arrives at the conclusion that perhaps Lady Byron did not look upon the offence with any great horror or indignation; and, surveying the course of things, may have thought the criminals no more corrupt than the whole British public. Such is the evil which has followed the publication of the *True Story*. The *Quarterly Review* has said, with too little gravity and too much truth: "In racing language Mrs. Beecher Stowe has made so bad a book for Lady Byron, that her departed friend must lose in any event or in whatever aspect she is regarded by posterity," †

The most memorable instance of Mrs. Stowe's wavering memory, memorable in itself and in the consequence, is found in her imagination that the offence which she has made known to the world was affirmed by Lady Byron to have been the cause of separation. This delusion had led her on to maintain that the wife had resolved to separate from her husband before she knew the cause and was writing words of tender affection

* *Vindication*, 216-220.

†

Ibid. 222, 223.

to the sister, whose good name at the very time she was preparing to destroy.* . . .

The truth to be gathered from the relation, as well in the *True Story* as in the *History*, of what was said by Lady Byron is this : That soon after her marriage she discovered that there had been guilt in a time past ; that it was boldly avowed by Lord Byron as a thing which had existed and should be continued in time to come ; and that it was not continued. The truth to be gathered from the letters of January and February is that, on the other side, the past guilt had been confessed with shame and repentance, that every temptation to relapse had been resisted with steadfast abhorrence, and that it was forgiven . †

The above passages from the *Vindication* will serve to show the difficulty in which an advocate of Lady Byron was placed. That Mrs. Stowe had invented the story of incest, was out of the question and no one suggested it. That Lady Byron had made the statement must be accepted as a fact, and therefore it was necessary to prove that she spoke the truth. But it was impossible that that offence could have been the cause of the separation because this would have rendered Lady Byron open to the accusation of inventing the charge or of laying a trap for her husband by conniving at the offence—either position being absolutely inconsistent with what was known of her life and character. Therefore Lady Byron must have alleged another fact upon which Dr. Lushington advised that reconciliation was impossible. But Mrs. Stowe said that the incest was the cause of the separation and that Lady Byron had told her so. It was necessary therefore to prove that Mrs. Stowe, while right in the main fact which she alleged, was inaccurate in the details of her story. Beyond this, the affectionate relations between Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh required explanation if the charge of incest were true.

* *Vindication*, 227.]

† *Ibid.* 236, 237.

CHAPTER VII

MEDORA LEIGH

THE story of Elizabeth Medora Leigh, though it relates to events many years subsequent to the separation of Lord and Lady Byron, must be given here, as bearing on Lady Byron's character and her relations with Mrs. Leigh. The story was made public in the midst of the controversy which raged over Mrs. Stowe's disclosures, and was considered by the *Quarterly Review* (January, 1870) to reflect unfavourably on Lady Byron. The *Quarterly* was answered by the *Vindication of Lady Byron*.

Towards the end of the year 1869 was published *Medora Leigh, a History and Autobiography*, edited by C. Mackay. This lady was thus introduced by Mrs. Stowe in the *True Story* of the previous September: "There was an unfortunate child of sin, born with the curse upon her, over whose wayward nature Lady Byron watched with a mother's tenderness."*

On December 25, 1869, the *Saturday Review* described the *Autobiography* as contemptible from a literary point of view, valueless as a controversial work, immoral and offensive in the extreme. Though unnecessary to bring Medora Leigh into the controversy, her story was consistent with Mrs. Stowe's. Medora's story was told to Dr. Lushington, Sir G. Stephen, the Duke of Leeds, Lady Chichester and others, who received it as true. The *Autobiography*, if true, proved that Lady Byron acted towards her incestuous and adulterous niece much as we are told that it is impossible that she could have acted in a previous case of incest. The fact of this second instance of the display of Lady Byron's peculiar character, announced by Medora Leigh, raised a pre-

* Quoted in Mrs. Stowe, *History*, 298 ; and see p. 162 of that work

sumption that the alleged first instance of its exercise in the husband's case announced by Mrs. Beecher Stowe, was, after all, not so wildly improbable.

Upon the story told in the *Autobiography*, the *Quarterly Review* (January, 1870, pp. 235, 236) founded the following charges against Lady Byron : (1) that she neglected Medora ; (2) that she repeated, as coming from Medora, the statement that Mrs. Leigh had co-operated for Medora's ruin by her brother-in-law ; (3) that she told Medora the story of her alleged paternity without any justifiable motive ; (4) that she submitted to Medora's overbearing conduct because she feared the revelation of the fact that she was Medora's informant.

The following account is based upon the story as told in the *Vindication of Lady Byron* (pp. 264-299), corrected by letters and papers of the late Earl of Lovelace.

Elizabeth Medora Leigh, Lady Byron's niece by marriage, born April 15, 1814,* was the fourth child of Mrs. Leigh. She was seduced by her brother-in-law, Mr. Trevanion, and bore a child when she was under the age of sixteen. This fact was unknown to Mrs. Leigh until early in the following year (1831), when Medora confessed to her that she was again to become a mother. In March, Medora accompanied her sister and brother-in-law to Bath with her mother's consent. According to the evidence of a relation of Mrs. Leigh's, this consent was obtained under the pressure of (1) a threat by Medora to take poison, (2) the married daughter's strong desire to have her sister's protection from the violence of her own husband, and (3) the fear that Colonel Leigh would discover the secret. In June the married daughter wrote to her mother that her husband's

* *Astarte*, Appendix K. In the *Autobiography* the year of birth is assumed to be 1815.

treatment of her was unbearable. Colonel Leigh then learnt the facts from a friend who made the communication at Mrs. Leigh's request, and in June, 1831, the Colonel removed Medora to a house in London, from which a month later she eloped with her brother-in-law to France. After living with him for two years she wrote to her mother expressing a desire to enter a convent in Brittany. To this Mrs. Leigh assented and agreed to allow her £60 a year. After a month's residence, and finding that she was likely to become a mother for the third time, she left the convent without her mother's knowledge, but with the consent of the Abbess, who enabled her to deceive Mrs. Leigh by permitting her letters to be addressed to the convent. For five years Medora lived in France under the same roof with her brother-in-law, but apart from him, as she said. In 1834 her daughter Marie was born and Mrs. Leigh discovered that Medora was no longer in the convent. For four years onwards the mother and daughter did not correspond. In the spring of 1838 Medora was ill and wrote to her mother and to an aunt (not Lady Byron) begging them to enable her to escape from the cruelty of her seducer. Money was sent, and in the following autumn, she left his house for a neighbouring town. For two years she received affectionate letters from her mother, who promised to allow her £120 a year, but the amount was not regularly paid. On March 28, 1839, Mrs. Leigh, under a power in Lord Byron's will to appoint in favour of children, appointed £3,000, subject to the life interests of Lady Byron and herself, in favour of Medora, though the amount was intended to be a provision for the daughter Marie.* Mrs. Leigh retained the deed of appointment. Medora being in poverty and ill health, wished to sell her reversion

It may be noted that £3,000 is the amount which Lord Byron presented to Mrs. Leigh within a month after the birth of Medora. (*Prothero* iii. 84, 99.)

under the deed. She applied to a solicitor in London, Sir George Stephen, who sent her letter to Lady Byron. Lady Byron went to France, took Medora and the child under her protection and maintained them there from August, 1840, until June, 1841, when they all three came to England. Medora and the child lived in Lady Byron's house in England, and were maintained by her until July, 1842, when, at Medora's wish but against Lady Byron's, the former returned to France, taking the child with her. During the period of Medora's stay in England, Ada Countess of Lovelace treated her as a sister.

On March 28, 1840, Medora filed a bill in Chancery against Colonel and Mrs. Leigh claiming delivery up of the deed of 1839.* The deed was delivered up by consent of the defendant's counsel when the case came on for hearing in June, 1842. On Medora's departure for France in July, Lady Byron defrayed the expenses of the journey and promised to allow her [^]150 a year and pay the wages of the female servant who accompanied her and whose husband at Medora's request was allowed to go with them as courier. The deed was left with Lady Byron's son-in-law, Lord Lovelace.

Medora had complained that her interests had been sacrificed in the settlement of the Chancery suit, and seems to have supposed that better terms could have been extorted from her mother and that further advantages could still be extorted from Lady Byron. Lady Byron had admitted to Medora that Lord Byron was her father, a fact of which Medora had been previously informed by others.^f On arriving at her destination at Hyeres, the courier, to whom as well as his wife Medora had disclosed the secret of her birth, began to be troublesome and refused to leave her.

Medora, in company with her child, and the two

* Pub. Rec. Office, Chancery Bill Books, 1840-1842, Leigh v. Leigh,

† Evidence of this will be adduced later. See p. 208, below.

servants, against Lady Byron's wish, travelled to Paris (March, 1843) to consult an avocat and informed Lady Byron that she had made the journey.

A friend of Lady Byron's interviewed Medora in Paris, and offered her on that lady's behalf £300 a year upon conditions which she refused. Accompanied, or closely followed, by a Captain de B., whose acquaintance she had made in the South of France, Medora came to London. The deed was delivered to her. Lady Byron refused to see her and wrote to Dr. Lushington that she declined to resume the character of a protector to Medora, " a person guilty of such *parricidal* conduct," but was determined to contribute to her support. Lady Byron was not moved by the veiled threats of Captain de B. and Mr. S., a London correspondent of his, who stated that the courier had threatened to assault Lord Lovelace in order to be arrested and taken to Bow Street, when the whole story would appear in the newspapers. Medora appealed to the Duke of Leeds (Mrs. Leigh's nephew), who advised her " not to reject Lady Byron's kindness, liberality and generosity," and Sir George Stephen wrote, " I *personally* know the motive as well as the extent of the kindness that she (Lady Byron) has shown to Miss Leigh, and there are very few, certainly not more than three, who know it as well." Medora wrote a cruel letter to her mother, which the editor of the *Autobiography* thought it better not to publish. Then Mr. S. and Captain de B., the latter of whom had expended money on Medora's account, prepared to pay a visit to Bow Street. While they were consulting Medora disappeared. This was in 1843. Nothing more is known of Medora than that she went to Aveyron in the south of France, probably in **1844**, that in May of that year she borrowed £500 on the security of her reversionary interest in the ^3,000, that she was married to a soldier retired **from the**

service, and bore him a son in 1845, and that she died in September, 1849.

The above account confirms the statement in Trelawny's letter of February 1, 1870, to Jane Clairmont, quoted by Professor Chew* : " Mary (Mrs. Shelley) did not tell me about Mrs. Leigh—it leaked out through Mrs. Trevanion. I knew Mrs. Leigh and Mrs. Trevanion and her husband, and Medora. The book published about her is true."

* *Byron in England* (1924), p. 278, quoting *The Relations of Lord Byron and Augusta Leigh*, being four letters from E. J. Trelawny to Clara Jane Clairmont, privately printed, 1920.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY OF THE CONTROVERSY OF 1869-1871

THE following summary represents the main conclusions with regard to Lady Byron's conduct, arrived at on either side in the controversy of 1869-1871,

The *Quarterly Review* (October, 1869, p. 566) was satisfied that whether the charge of incest was true or false, or even if Lady Byron believed it to be true, she stood convicted of a prolonged course of dissimulation and hypocrisy. This allegation is repeated in the issue of January, 1870 (p. 244).

Blackwood's Magazine (January, 1870, p. 138), having in a previous article (July, 1869) called Lady Byron "the moral Brinvilliers," finally concluded that she was either the fabricator of the charge of incest or the victim of insane delusion.

The *Times* (January 20, 1870) suggested that Lady Byron asserted the alleged incest was the cause of the separation ; that she was not under hallucination ; that she was deceived by Lord Byron into believing that incest had been committed, when in fact it had not.

The *Saturday Review* (January 29, 1870) adopted the following position : that Lady Byron meant to assert that the alleged incest was the cause of the separation ; that this offence was the substance of her additional communication to Dr. Lushington ; that she was not under hallucination ; that the charge of incest was true ; that Lady Byron may have felt no great horror or indignation at the crime ; that her letters to Mrs. Leigh of January and February, 1816, were *the* difficulty.

When the heat of the controversy died down in January, 1870, the supporters of Lady Byron were left at a disadvantage. In the previous month the

writer in *Temple Bar* had counselled the friends of Lady Byron to be for the present content, pointing out that if nothing more could be offered than repetitions of what Lady Byron had said, these would but provoke new contradiction and slander. But at the end of January the position was this. The trenchant articles of that month in the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood* remained unanswered ; the *Saturday Review*, pronouncing against Lord Byron on the charge of incest, declared that it was not a partisan of Lady Byron's and had no sympathy with her character, and admitted that the popular verdict was with Lord Byron. The reviewer, unable to suggest any explanation of Lady Byron's letters of January and February, 1816, assumed as a fact that the cause of the separation was the incestuous intrigue, and that this was the substance of Lady Byron's communication to Dr. Lushington ; the *Times* had come to the unsatisfying conclusion that Lady Byron was deceived by her husband into believing in an imaginary offence.

It seemed that no explanation of the letters of January and February favourable to Lady Byron was possible if the charge of incest was the substance of her communication to Lushington, and a fact on which he relied as a ground for separation. If, while writing affectionate letters to Mrs. Leigh, Lady Byron was accusing her to Lushington she must apparently be guilty of the duplicity which her opponents asserted and her friends denied. There was, however, the possibility, that, strongly suspecting that the offence had been committed before Lord Byron's marriage, his wife believed that Mrs. Leigh was repentant, and had successfully resisted all attempts to renew the offence after his marriage. If this were the case, and if Lady Byron had received great kindness from Mrs. Leigh, as the fact was, the letters were explained. *Temple Bar*, in the articles of October and December,

1869, alone contended that the charge of incest was not the charge on which Dr. Lushington relied. In January, 1870, Mrs. Stowe in her *History* alleged for the first time that Lady Byron told her the charge of incest was the cause of the separation, but perceiving the inconsistency between this allegation and the letters of January and February, Mrs. Stowe was reduced to the argument, adopted also by the *Saturday Review*, that perhaps Lady Byron did not look upon the offence with any great horror or indignation. Thus, between the extenuation of uncertain friends, the bitter attacks of certain foes, the inaccuracies of Mrs. Stowe, and the absence of documents which were known to exist, yet were not produced, the success of the attempt to justify Lady Byron seemed doubtful at the end of January, 1870. The final answer on her side, upon the facts then known, appeared in the *Vindication of Lady Byron*, written early in 1870, but not published until the following year, when much of the general interest in the subject had evaporated.

The conclusions of the author of that work were that the offence reported by Mrs. Stowe was not the cause of separation (*Vindication*, 304) ; that " after the marriage, Lady Byron, having learned the guilty secret, learned at the same time and believed in the sincere and earnest repentance of one of the offenders who was again tempted and stood fast and strove to turn the tempter from evil." (*Ibid.* 320.)

CHAPTER IX

THE COMMUNICATION TO DR. LUSHINGTON

IN justifying Lady Byron the vital questions to be determined are these :

- (1) *What was the additional communication made by Lady Byron to Dr. Lushington at her first interview with him in February, 1816, and was it true ?*
- (2) *Was the charge of incest true ?*

Less prominent questions will come up for discussion in considering these two.

On the first question the following document, not before published, is material. The writer of it was Mr. Henry Allen Bathurst, Registrar of the Admiralty Court from 1879 to 1890, the surviving trustee of Lady Noel Byron's sealed papers.

Mem. of conversation with the Rt. Hon. Stephen Lushington, D.C.L., by Hy. Allen Bathurst.

PRIVATE. On Thursday, 27 Jan., 1870, after dining with Dr. Lushington at 18 Eaton Place I had some conversation with him respecting Lady Byron and the circumstances attending her separation.

After what had passed in the papers and Reviews of late he said it would be some relief to tell me what follows :—

That he was first consulted by Lady Noel, Lady Byron's mother, and that she did not know all or the most serious of the causes of Lady Byron's complaints against her husband. He (Dr. L.) only learnt them at a subsequent period from Lady Byron herself (referred to his letter in the *Remarks*).

He considers that the real cause of Lady Byron's separation, when it was ascertained that there was no adequate ground in the opinion of the medical men for supposing him insane, was his brutally indecent conduct and language to her. . . .*

Dr. L., speaking with much feeling and emotion, described Lord B.'s conduct as most foul and gross, but of this there

* A specific instance is referred to, in no way connected with the charge of incest.

could hardly have been any evidence ; and I gathered that Lady B. would have been most reluctant or positively unwilling to charge him with such offences if legal proceedings became necessary—she would naturally shrink from doing so.

At the time of her leaving his house she was not convinced of any incest having taken place.

Suspicion had been aroused, but at first she was naturally disposed to discredit such a crime and to attribute to insanity any misconduct she witnessed and any wild self-accusations of his. Afterwards Mrs. Leigh confessed the crime. Dr. Lushington never saw her after the separation but once, he forgets on what occasion.

It is not true that he (Dr. L.) ever saw Lord B. with Dr. Bailey * or on any other occasion after the breach between Lord and Lady B., as has been asserted in some paper recently.

Dr. L., anticipating that legal proceedings might ensue, recommended a Proctor to Lady Byron, and a libel for the contemplated divorce suit was actually prepared. He believes that when the separation was arranged the papers were destroyed.

Dr. L. mentioned an interview at Mivart's Hotel with Mr. Hanson and others when enquiry was made as to the charges against Lord Byron. Dr. L. said he declined to show his cards and name anything, for obvious reasons. The libel was then ready . . . f

On my suggesting it, Dr. L. confirmed my belief that it would have been very difficult to get any legal evidence of Lord B.'s incest or conduct to Lady B. She could not have given evidence, and, in case of hostile proceedings and the graver charges failing for want of proof, the father would have had the control over the infant daughter. This possibility naturally influenced Lady B. in the whole transaction.

(Signed) H. A. BATHURST,
22 Chapel St., Belgrave Square.‡

In his letter of January 31, 1830, Dr. Lushington§ points out that at their first interview in February,

* The correct spelling is " Baillie."

f A passage reflecting on Hanson, Byron's solicitor, is omitted.

j Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

§ In Lady Byron's *Remarks*, p. 8, above.

COMMUNICATION TO DR. LUSHINGTON 59

1816, Lady Byron had informed him of facts, which he believed to be unknown to her parents, and that on receiving this information his opinion was changed, and he considered reconciliation impossible. In his statement of January, 1870, he says that when he was first consulted by Lady Noel, " she did not know all or the most serious of the causes of Lady Byron's complaint against her husband. He, Dr. L., only learnt them at a subsequent period from Lady Byron herself." The statement (January 18, 1816), prepared by Lady Byron and given to her mother to take to London,* alleges acts of adultery and cruelty on the part of Lord Byron, but contains no reference to incest or to the specific instance of misbehaviour referred to in Lushington's statement of 1870. It does contain the following paragraph : " His conversation has also (particularly of late) turned on images of the most indelicate nature."!

In 1870 Lushington told Bathurst that the real cause of the separation, when it was ascertained that Byron was not insane, was his " brutally indecent conduct and language " to his wife, and that at the time of leaving his house she was not convinced of incest having taken place.

Lady Byron's interview with Dr. Lushington took place on February 22, 1816. By March 14 we know that Lushington was aware of Lady Byron's suspicion regarding Mrs. Leigh. (See the statement of that date, p. 113, below.) It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that on February 22, Lady Byron informed Lushington of the circumstances which excited her suspicion with regard to Mrs. Leigh, and told him she conceived it possible that the guilty connection might not have existed since her marriage, and if before the marriage might have been repented of by Mrs. Leigh though

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's Papers,

† *Ibid.*

Lord Byron had appeared to wish to renew it.* At the same time it is clear that Lady Byron informed Lushington of acts of cruelty and indecency, with more particularity than she had used in her statement of January 18.

Remembering the difficulty of proving that incest had been committed, the law then in force precluding Lady Byron's own evidence, and bearing in mind that if the offence had been committed it might have been only before Lord Byron's marriage, we can understand Lushington's statement (January 27, 1870) that the "real cause" of the separation was "brutally indecent conduct and language to his wife." This would include Byron's behaviour to his sister in his wife's presence, though it would exclude incest as a cause of separation. Lushington's opinion as to the necessity for a separation was not and could not be based on a charge of incest, but it might be and no doubt was based on the whole course of Lord Byron's treatment of his wife.

It is submitted that Bathurst's statement proves that incest was not the charge upon which Dr. Lushington formed his opinion that reconciliation was impossible, and that thereby Lady Byron's letters to Mrs. Leigh of January and February, 1816, are cleared from any element of mystery. The fault now lay with Lord Byron, not with Mrs. Leigh; but the facts could not be stated to Lushington without bringing forward the offence, or supposed offence, of Mrs. Leigh, which had been forgiven. This solution is consistent with these letters, with Dr. Lushington's letter of January 31, 1830, with his statement to Mr. Bathurst in 1870, and with the statement of March 14, 1816. It also explains Mr. Murray's difficulty with regard to *Astarte*.] Mr. Murray thinks Lord Lovelace has attempted to prove that

* Statement of Mar. 14, 1816 (p. 113, below) ; *Astarte*, 163, 164.

† *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, ed. Murray, Introduction.

the guilty relations with Mrs. Leigh were the cause of the separation, whereas all the evidence in *Astarte* is to the contrary. What Lord Lovelace says is that there must have been some potent necessity for the separation if three such men as Wilmot, Doyle and Lushington agreed about it, and that there is no place in the separation papers for other charges besides "the two commonplace ones of adultery and cruelty, and that connected with Mrs. Leigh."* In another passage Lord Lovelace says :

The article in the *Atlantic Monthly* stated (not untruly) that the mystery of *Astarte* in *Manfred* was founded on fact, and (erroneously) that those circumstances had continued and been the direct cause of the separation.!

If the motives which influenced Lushington were those that are here suggested there is no difficulty in reconciling these two passages in *Astarte*. It was impossible for Lady Byron to return to her husband's house so long as Mrs. Leigh remained on terms which permitted her to visit there, having regard not to her conduct but to Lord Byron's. This conduct and the other acts of cruelty constituted the "potent necessity" for the separation, and were the "direct cause" of it—the crime of incest was not the cause. That crime, even if confined to the period before Lord Byron's marriage, was sufficiently "heinous or repulsive," to use Lord Lovelace's expression, but if so confined had been repented of by one of the parties and relinquished.

It is submitted that the substance of Lady Byron's communication to Dr. Lushington, which weighed with him when he expressed the opinion that reconciliation was impossible, being Lord Byron's "brutally

* *Astarte*, 181,182.

† *Ibid.* 144. See also p. 36. Mrs. Stowe's statement that the crime which separated Lady Byron from her husband was incest, was in fact made, not in the *Atlantic Monthly* nor in *Macmillan*, but in her book, the *History of the Byron Controversy*, p. 233.

indecent conduct and language," it is more than probable that this included his attempts to corrupt Mrs. Leigh after his marriage.

After seeing Lady Lovelace's edition of *Astarte*, Lord Ernie thinks that it is less easy to maintain the innocence of Byron and Augusta Leigh, and that the charge of incest previous to the marriage is materially strengthened by Byron's letters to Lady Melbourne.* As regards the proved facts, Lord Ernie seems to agree with the view submitted here, but still his statement of the case is unfavourable to Lady Byron. He says that Lady Byron's suspicion put reconciliation out of the question. This does not agree with Dr. Lushington's statement in his letter to Lady Byron of January 31, 1830 (p. 8, above), where he says that his changed opinion was based on new "facts." In his statement of 1870, Dr. Lushington says that when he first saw Lady Noel she did not know the most serious of the causes of Lady Byron's complaint against her husband, but he learnt them later from Lady Byron herself. It was not suspicion that made reconciliation impossible, but the new facts to which Dr. Lushington refers, including the facts on which Lady Byron's suspicion was founded. That Lady Byron should entertain a suspicion was no fault, if there were good ground for it. Certainly, Lord Byron endeavoured to make his wife believe that there was good ground. Mrs. Leigh, speaking to Lady Byron of the visit to Piccadilly Terrace in the summer of 1815, said she had often told Lord Byron he said such things before his wife as would have led any other woman to suspect.f On the authority of Lady Byron's written statements, Lord Lovelace tells us :

The impressions of Mrs. Leigh's guilt had been forced into Lady Byron's mind chiefly by incidents and conversations which occurred while they were all under one roof. Lord

* *Nineteenth Century*, August, 1921, p. 207. † *Astarte** 65.

COMMUNICATION TO DR. LUSHINGTON 63

Byron never then long abstained from allusions that could not be otherwise interpreted, and Mrs. Leigh was unaccountably passive under his hardly-veiled hints. But as soon as Mrs. Leigh was out of the way and there was sensible relief from the frenzy excited in Lord Byron by her presence, Lady Byron began to reproach herself for her involuntary suspicions and resolved to quell and repudiate them. These suspicions flowed and ebbed with the feelings that burst from Lord Byron and Mrs. Leigh's manner. It was in the earlier half of 1815 that his inclination towards her was most violent, and there were moments when Lady Byron felt nearly certain of the past and had even a strong apprehension of a renewal. . . . When Mrs. Leigh came back on November 15th before Lady Byron's confinement, he seemed much alienated from Mrs. Leigh and entirely occupied with women at the theatre. During the confinement he resumed familiar talk with her, and she used to sit up with him till late in the night to keep him quiet. After Lady Byron's recovery he now and then dropped references to past intercourse in very crude terms—and before Mrs. Leigh, who passed over such speeches with well-acted indifference ; but he seemed to have no inclination for a renewal.*

There was no medium (says Lady Byron). I must either have treated her as guilty or innocent. My *instinct* too strongly dictated the former, but the *evidence then* rested chiefly on his (Byron's) words and manners and her *otherwise* unaccountable assent and submission to both. If you regret that I did not attach more weight to my own wretched doubts, you will not dislike the feeling which rejected them as long as possible (Lady Byron to Mrs. Villiers, May 12, 1816, *Astarte*, 203).

It would be neither convenient nor seemly to publish Lady Byron's written statements in full, and Lord Lovelace has told us in *Astarte* all that it is essential to know. Nevertheless, it may be well to add the following extracts to show that Lady Byron's suspicion was not without reason :

His [Byron's] identification of the Bride of A[bydos] with

* *Astarte*, 163, 164.

her [Augusta] *were (sic)* frequent in her presence.* He use to taunt his sister scornfully : " We must fly, we must pan to unite it again—you remember when I wrote those line to you ! " Then he would calculate the time of Colone Leigh's absence and prove M. could not be his child.f

The lines referred to are meant to be quoted from the *Song* of May 4, 1814, which is here given in full

I speak not, I trace not, I breathe not thy name,
There is grief in the sound, there is guilt in the fame :
But the tear which now burns on my cheek may impart
The deep thoughts that dwell in that silence of heart.

Too brief for our passion, too long for our peace,
Were those hours—can their joy or their bitterness cease ?
We repent, we adjure, we will break from our chain,—
We will part, we will fly to—unite it again !

Oh ! thine be the gladness and mine be the guilt !
Forgive me, adored one !—forsake, if thou wilt ;—
For the heart which is thine shall expire undebased
And *man* shall not break it—whatever *thou* may'st.

And stern to the haughty, but humble to thee,
This soul in its bitterest blackness shall be :
And our days seem as swift, and our moments more sweet,
With thee by my side, than with worlds at our feet.

One sigh of thy sorrow, one look of thy love,
Shall turn me or fix, shall reward or reprove ;
And the heartless may wonder at all I resign—
Thy lip shall reply, not to them, but to *mine*. †

If, as presently will be shown out of the mouths of Lady Byron's enemies, she was incapable of lying, it is submitted that her statements must be taken for truth. The suggestion that Lady Byron brooded over the suspicion until she made the facts agree with

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers. The bearing of *The Bride of Abydos* is shown at pp. 83-6, below.

f Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers. † Coleridge, iii, 413.

it, must fail, as based on conjecture without evidence to support it, and as opposed to evidence which is produced.

The next question is *Was the communication true?* To answer this, we must enquire whether it is probable that Lady Byron spoke the truth. Some of her critics have accused her of making statements which she knew to be false. If it is proved that Lady Byron was capable of lying, her whole evidence is tainted and no statement of hers is to be trusted. On the other hand, if it is shown that she was invariably truthful, statements made by her of facts, on the face of them within her own knowledge, will be good evidence. It was said in 1869, when the case for Lady Byron had been stated from the facts so far as they were then disclosed, that if nothing more could be offered than repetitions of what she herself said, these would but provoke new contradiction and slander.* It is true they may, but it is submitted that to arrive at the truth, all the material evidence of a truthful witness ought to be brought forward, and against it contradiction and slander will not prevail.

Lord Broughton tells us that Lord Byron's friends "thought they saw and could prove, even from (Lady Byron's) own letters, such signs of weakness and perversion and even of duplicity, to say nothing of inveterate attachment to her own opinions, as would invalidate all she should say from her own knowledge only." This general accusation does not carry the matter very far. It is more to the purpose to enquire whether independent evidence of Lady Byron's character is to be found which will justify us in believing her statements. No stronger evidence of this kind is needed, or could be given, than the admissions of her adversaries. To quote instances :

The truth of what is thus stated may be easily ascertained

* *Vindication*, 205. † *Lord Broughton*, ii, 348.

by reference to Lady B. who is Truth itself. (Lord Byron to Sir Ralph Noel, Feb. 2nd, 1816.)

I do not believe—and I must say it in the very dregs of all this bitter business—that there ever was a better or even a brighter, a kinder, or a more amiable and agreeable being than Lady B. I never had, nor can have, any reproach to make her while with me. Where there is blame it belongs to myself, and if I cannot redeem, I must bear it. (Byron to Moore, March 8, 1816.)

In the *Sketch* (March, 1816) Lord Byron contrasts the character of his wife with that of her governess, Mrs. Clermont, the subject of his wrath :

Quick with the tale, and ready with the lie,
 The genial confidante and general spy,—
 Who could, ye gods ! her next employment guess—*
 An only infant's earliest governess !
 She taught the child to read, and taught so well,
 That she herself, by teaching, learned to spell,
 An adept next in penmanship she grows,
 As many a nameless slander deftly shows :
 What she had made the pupil of her art,
 None know—but that high soul secured the heart,
 And panted for the truth it could not hear,
 With longing breast and undeluded ear.
 Foil'd was Perversion by that youthful mind,
 Which Flattery fool'd not, Baseness could not blind,
 Deceit infect not, near Contagion soil,
 Indulgence weaken, nor Example spoil,
 Nor master'd science tempt her to look down
 On humbler talents with a pitying frown,
 Nor Genius swell, nor Beauty render vain,
 Nor Envy ruffle to retaliate pain,
 Nor Fortune change, Pride raise, nor Passion bow,
 Nor Virtue teach austerity—till now,
 Serenely purest of her sex that live,
 But wanting one sweet weakness—to forgive ;
 Too shocked at faults her soul can never know,
 She deems that all could be like her below :
 Foe to all vice, yet hardly Virtue's friend,
For virtue pardons those she would amend.

The Lines on Hearing that Lady Byron was III, written in the following September, are not forgotten. In these, Lord Byron pours curses and abuse upon his wife, saying that truth has forsaken her. As there was no material alteration of circumstances between March and September, the *Lines* can only be attributed to a mere outburst of temper caused by Lord Byron's failure to induce his wife to accept the offer of reconciliation made in September at the suggestion of Madame de Stael.* Mr. Coleridge suggests that it was the rumour of the calumny of Shelley's letter of September 29, 1816,^f which provoked him to fury, but Byron knew of the rumour in March, for it was one of those of which Hobhouse demanded a disavowal in that month.! The *Lines* were not published in Byron's lifetime.

Proof is also found in the Memorandum Lord Byron gave to his friends during the negotiations in March, 1816, in which he expresses his "respect for [Lady Byron's] character and confidence in her veracity."§ In reply to a letter from Byron enquiring whether there was any truth in the charge that he had encouraged his friends to abuse Lady Byron, Lord Holland writes (March 6, 1816) : "In short you spoke of her judgment, her veracity, her character and her conduct with much respect."|| Rogers and Kinnaird wrote to the same effect.¶ Thomas Moore, though no friend to Lady Byron, printed her *Remarks* in his book without questioning their truth, and Lord Holland signified his approval. Moore suggests that the cause of the separation was nothing more than some imposition, "some dimly hinted confession of

* See *Coleridge*, iv, 63, n.

† The letter in which Shelley expresses satisfaction that Lady Byron was living with Mrs. Leigh as affording a decisive contradiction to the only important calumny advanced against Byron. See *Quarterly Review*, January, 1870, p. 230, n.

‡ *Ibid.* 112, below.

¶ *Ibid.* 319.

§ *Lord Broughton*, 11, 277.

Ibid. 319-321.

now established—caused him to withdraw his promise in aid of a reconciliation, and to say, not only that such an arrangement was impossible but that if the idea were entertained he would not, professionally or otherwise, take any part towards effecting it.

CHAPTER X

WAS THE CHARGE REPORTED BY MRS. STOWE TRUE ?

PROCEEDING to the question *Was the charge of incest true?*—the subject of this question, whatever the answer may be, cast its shadow over almost every incident in the subsequent lives of three persons. It was the wreck of those lives, and the separation was part of the wreckage. It is true that, assuming the answer to the question to be in the affirmative, the offence was not the cause of the separation—there was other sufficient cause—yet part of the real cause had its origin in the offence. It was Lord Byron's conduct, following upon and arising out of the offence, that contributed to the cause of the separation. It was never proved that the offence had continued after his marriage—Lady Byron was convinced that it had not—and it was not therefore a matrimonial offence so far as he was concerned ; but the fear of its being renewed remained as long as Lord Byron lived, and left its mark on the lives of the two survivors.

To answer the question, introducing some new evidence, it will be necessary to enter upon the history at length.

It will have been noticed that the answer is partly involved in that already submitted to the question whether Lady Byron's statement to Dr. Lushington was true. To justify the suspicion communicated to Lushington it was necessary to show that the facts on which it was based were true, such facts being the speaking of certain words and the doing of certain acts by Lord Byron in his wife's presence. The argument already put forward is relied on here, but the present question goes deeper. It is necessary to prove not only that Lord Byron himself hinted that the offence had been committed, but that, in fact, it had

been, for it has been suggested that the hint had no foundation in fact and was made use of to torture his wife.* The degradation of the sister, *ex hypothesi* innocent, has not been sufficiently emphasised.

By the admission of the anonymous writer in *Lord Byron and His Detractors* that it is within the bounds of possibility that Lord Byron tempted his sister, though more in mockery than in aught else, in which admission Mr. Murray, as editor, must be taken to concur,^f and by Lord Ernie's admission that, after reading Lady Lovelace's edition of *Astarte*, it is less easy to maintain the innocence of Byron and Augusta Leigh, and that the charge of incest is materially strengthened by Byron's letters to Lady Melbourne, ;£ the foundation of the belief in Byron's innocence is seriously shaken.

We shall find the earlier part of the story in *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, edited by Mr. Murray (1922). If the unnamed person, referred to in Byron's letters to Lady Melbourne,§ at first by the letter A and afterwards by the terms " my A," " X," and " A X," can be identified, the answer to the question, Was the charge of incest true ? will be known. If Mrs. Leigh is the person, the answer will be in the affirmative.

The first sign of a new trouble is found in Byron's letter to Lady Melbourne of August 11, 1813, in which he says : " The few things I wished to have said to you did not at all concern her [Lady Caroline Lamb] nor hers, nor you, nor yours, daughters nor *nieces*. I should have been glad of your advice how to untie two or three ' Gordian knots ' tied round me. I shall cut them without consulting any one, though some are rather closely twisted round my *heart*." On August 5

* Lord Ernie, in *Lord Byron and His Detractors*, 93.

† *Ibid.* 52.

‡ *Nineteenth Century*, August, 1021, p. 207.

§ Elizabeth Viscountess Melbourne, *ister to Sir Ralph Noel, died April 6, 1818.

Byron had written : " My sister, who is going abroad with me, is now in town, where she returned with me from Newmarket. Under the existing circumstances of her lord's embarrassments, she could not well do otherwise, and she appears to have still less reluctance at leaving this country than even myself/' On August 21 Byron writes that his sister wanted to go with him to Sicily, or elsewhere, and he wished it also. Before August 31, apparently, Lady Melbourne had written him a letter which is lost, but part of the contents of which is known from a memorandum of Lady Byron's dated in 1817. In this letter Lady Melbourne endeavours to dissuade Byron from the commission of some " atrocious crime," saying it was worse than she had ever heard or known of. " It is a crime for which there is no salvation in this world, whatever there may be in the next." She warns him that his character will be utterly destroyed and remonstrates with him on the injury to a woman who had hitherto, whether deservedly or not, maintained a good reputation. She adds, " You are on the brink of a precipice, and if you do not retreat you are lost for ever." In reading portions of this letter to his wife in 1815, Byron expresses admiration of Lady Melbourne for having written it and his sense of her friendliness ;* on August 31, 1813, he writes to Lady Melbourne : " Your kind letter is *unanswerable* ; no one but yourself would have taken the trouble ; no one but me would have been in a situation to require it. I am still in town, so that it has as yet had all the effect you wish." (*Murray*, i, 177.)

What the atrocious crime is—worse than Lady Melbourne has ever heard or known of, for which there is no salvation in this world—is known from the letters to be an unlawful passion for a woman. Knowing this, Lady Melbourne's expressions seem

to point to a guilty connection within the prohibited degrees, though some other explanation is just possible. Is there anything in the letters that gives a clue to the identity of the partner in crime ?

In a letter to Lady Melbourne, dated October 31, 1814, Byron writes from Newark : " I am thus far on my way to S[eaham]. On Saturday I got to X's and stayed till late on Sunday, and here I am. Last night I slept at the inn (Wansford) . . ." (*Murray*, i, 285.) There is evidence in the late Lord Lovelace's papers that Byron arrived late at Six M[ile Bottom] on Saturday, October 29, 1814, and left the following day ; passing through Cambridge, he slept at Wansford. Mr. Murray's note to the phrase " I got to X's," is " The Leighs', at Newmarket." To quote again from the same letter : " I don't think *he* [note by Murray: * Colonel Leigh'] much admires my marriage. He knows that I have made X my heiress."

We know that Byron made a will in August, 1811, entailing Newstead on his cousin George, with a provision that if the testator's body should be removed from the vault at Newstead the estate should go to his sister, Mrs. Leigh.* This can hardly be the will Byron had in mind in writing that he had made X his heiress. He made another will on September 29, 1813 [*Murray*, i, 185]. In his journal, under date November 30-December 1, 1813, Byron writes : " I like George much more than most people like their heirs. . . . If he would but marry I would engage never to marry myself or cut him out of the heirship " (*Moore*, i, 566, 569). It seems probable that Byron had cut his cousin out of the " heirship " and substituted Mrs. Leigh by the will of September 29, 1813, and that the entry in the journal expresses an intention, if George Byron should marry, to make a new will in his favour. It can only be Mrs. Leigh whom Byron has made his " heiress."

* *Moore's Life of Byron* (8vo. ed.), i, 354, 358.

He left everything to her and her children by a will of July 29, 1815, subject to the charge on Newstead created by his marriage settlement. The will of September 29, 1813, was revoked by the testator's marriage.

On September 18, 1814, Byron's offer of marriage was accepted by Miss Milbanke (*Murray*, i, 267). On October 4 he writes to Lady Melbourne that before Miss Milbanke accepted him X had been negotiating on his behalf another matrimonial project which was unsuccessful. He also says : " X has written to A to express how much all my relations are pleased by the event, etc., etc." (*Murray*, i, 275).*

On October 1, 1814, Mrs. Leigh writes from Six Mile Bottom :

My dear Miss Milbanke,—I am afraid I have no better excuse to offer for this *self-introduction* than that of feeling unable any longer to reconcile myself to the idea of being *quite* a *stranger* to one—whom I hope *soon* to call *my sister*—and one, may I be allowed to add, whom I already love as such. If I could possibly express how deservedly dear my Brother is to me, you might in some degree imagine the joy I have felt in the anticipation of an event which promises to secure his happiness. Grateful as I am—I feel that I can never be sufficiently so—for the blessings bestowed upon him in the possession of esteem and affection such as yours, for which I justly consider him (as he does himself) the most fortunate of human beings.

I have been most anxious to write to you for the last fortnight—but delayed it from day to day in the hope that my Brother would be at Seaham to *chaperon* the arrival of my letter and make my excuse for the writer who is but too sensible of her inability to express her feelings on this occasion—but, on finding he is still provokingly detained in

* There is an error in the opening words of this letter as printed by Mr. Murray : " I never threw obstacles in the way," etc. It should read : " X never threw obstacles in the way ; on the contrary, she has been more urgent than even you, that I should go to S[eaham] and wished me to set out from Nfewstead] instead of London. She wished me much to marry, because it was the only chance of redemption for *two* persons . . ." (Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.)

town on business and unable to fix a day for his departure, I have resolved not to wait any longer, and trust entirely to your indulgence for forgiveness.

May I beg of you to present my best regards to Sir Ralph and L^y Milbanke and to allow me to subscribe myself—Y^{rs} very truly and affectionately, Augusta Leigh.*

On October 7 Byron writes to Lady Melbourne : " Augusta tells me that G[eorge Leigh] says they are *betting* away at Newmarket whether I am to be married or not. She has had a very kind answer from A." (*Murray*, i, 279.)

On October 3 Miss Milbanke writes to Lord Byron : " I was disappointed by the last post. I received some compensation in a letter from your Sister—*mine*—so cordially kind that I cannot say how I thank her—I have replied—but not much to my own satisfaction, for I can't find expressions when I want them most." f

There is here further evidence to identify X with Mrs. Leigh.

On October 9 Byron sends for Lady Melbourne's perusal a letter from A and one from A X, and says : " I wish to convince you of the disposition of the one X." This suggests that the initial A belonged to both correspondents and that X was added to distinguish Mrs. Leigh after the engagement to Annabella Milbanke (*Murray*, i, 279).

On May 1, 1814, Byron had written to Lady Melbourne : " I remember when a child reading the Roman history about a *marriage* I will tell you of when we meet, asking *ma mere* why I should not marry X." (*Murray*, i, 257.) This points to the marriage of some historical person at Rome, the circumstances of which are better not related in a letter. If the reference is to the union of Caligula, ‡ the relationship of brother and sister is indicated and X is Augusta. In this letter the symbol " X " is used for

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

†

Ibid.

‡ *Suetonius* † *Caligula*, xxiv.

the first time, and apparently "A " stands for " Annabella." In the same letter X appears to be identified with "———" who " married a fool," etc., and with " she " with whom Byron had been guilty of " one tremendous fault."

The previous day, April 30, Byron, in writing to Lady Melbourne, speaks of " My A " and " Your A " (*Murray*, 1,254).

In writing to Lady Melbourne on September 28, 1813, Byron refers to " the epistles of your mathematician (A would now be ambiguous) " (*Ibid.* 184) ; on November 10, 1813, he writes to Miss Milbanke that she is " a mistress of the practise (*sic*) as well as theory of that benevolent science (which I take to be even better than your *mathematics*)."*

It is submitted that the chain of evidence connecting the words " she " and " my A " and the symbols " A, " X,, ,, Ax, " and " and identifying them with Augusta Leigh is a strong one.

The evidence of guilt will now be considered, taking the letters (in Mr. Murray's *Correspondence* where not otherwise specified) in order of date.

Reference has already been made to Lady Melbourne's letter of August, 1813, dissuading Byron from committing an atrocious crime.

" The fact is I am at this moment in a far more serious and entirely new scrape than any of the last twelve months and that is saying a good deal " (Byron to Moore, August 22, 1813 ; *Prothero*, ii, 250).

September 9, 1813 (in reply to Lady Melbourne's request that he will write) : " Depend upon it, I will, till the moment arrives (if it does arrive) when I feel that you ought not to acknowledge me as a correspondent."

September 28. Lady Melbourne, who knows how his thoughts were occupied when he wrote the addi-

* *Prothero*, iii, 404. Other letters from Byron to Miss Milbanke are in *Prothero* fiii, 397-409.

tions to *The Giaour* * may perceive in parts a coincidence in his own state of mind with that of his hero ; if so, she will give him credit for feeling, though, on the other hand, he loses in her esteem. He has tried, and hardly too, to vanquish his demon, but to very little purpose ; his seldom failing resource of transferring his regards to another has failed him now—* " and here I am—*What* I am, you know already." He speaks of *his* lecturing Webster and forgetting the tremendous beam in his own eye !

November 25. Speaking of the result to his lady-loves if he should be killed in a duel with Webster : " C. [Lady Caroline Lamb] would go wild with grief that it did not happen about her, L^y O[xford] would say I deserved it for not coming to Cagliari, and poor —, she would be really uncomfortable. Do you know I am much afraid that that perverse passion was my deepest after all. My new Turkish tale [*The Bride of Abydos*] will be out directly . . . it will for some reasons interest you more than anybody. . . . I want to see whether you think my writings are *me* or *not*."

January 11, 1814. "The kind of feeling which has lately absorbed me has a mixture of the terrible which renders all other, even passion (pour les autres), insipid to a degree."

January 13. Lady Melbourne is mistaken as to *her*. It was not her fault but *his own folly* and her weakness, for the intentions of both were very different and for some time adhered to, and when not, it was entirely his own—in short he knows no name for his conduct. He begs Lady Melbourne not to speak so harshly of her to him, the cause of all. He goes on to discuss as fresh subjects, C[aroline Lamb], Ph [Lady Frances Webster] and Mrs. C[haworth], making it clear that the previous paragraph does not refer to them.

February 21. Byron excuses himself for his not

* The additions are lines 1,131-1,256, and they first appeared in the 5th edition issued in September, 1913 (*Coleridge*, iii, 80, 137 n).

having been where he ought. He knows no reason unless it was to punish himself or——. " You will easily suppose that, twined as she is round my heart in every possible manner, dearest and deepest in my hope and my memory, still, I am not easy. . . . It is the misery of my situation to see it as you see it and to *feel* it as I feel it, on *her* account and that of others."

April 8. Byron visited Mrs. Leigh at Newmarket, remaining from April 2 to 7 (*Murray*, i, 249).

April 15. Elizabeth Medora Leigh was born (*Astarte*, Appendix K).

April 25. Byron to Lady Melbourne; " Oh ! but it is worth while, I can't tell you why, and it is *not* an ' Ape,' and if it is, that must be my fault. . . . But positively she and I will grow good and all that, and so we are *now* and shall be these three weeks and more too."

April 30. " *You*, or rather I, have done *my* A much injustice . . . as I hope mercy and happiness for her —by that God who made me for my own misery and not much for the good of others, *she* was not to blame one thousandth part in comparison. She was not aware of her own peril till it was too late. As for *your* A, I don't know what to make of her. . . . As for *my* A, my feelings towards her are a mixture of good and diabolical. I hardly know one passion which has not some share in them."

May 1. Her [Augusta's ?] expressions about " A^a " [Annabella] are exactly those of Lady Melbourne, and " excepting our one *tremendous* fault," he knows her to be in temper and goodness of heart almost unequalled, and adds : " Now grant me this, that she is in truth a very loveable woman and I will try and not love any longer. . . . It is indeed a very *triste* and extraordinary business, and what is to become of us, I know not and I won't think just now. . . . It indeed puzzles me to account f o r ; it is true she married

a fool,* but she *would* have him ; they agreed and agree very well, and I never heard a complaint but many vindications of him. As for me, brought up as I was, and sent into the world as I was, both physically and morally, † nothing better could be expected, and it is odd that I always had a foreboding, and I remember, when a child, reading the Roman history about a *marriage* I will tell you of when we meet, asking *ma mere* why I should not marry X."

June 10. Who supposed that Lady Melbourne was not shocked ? She had done everything in her power for him, but " whom the gods wish to destroy they first madden ! " He is as mad as C. [Lady Caroline Lamb] on a different topic and in a different way. He will, however, not persuade *her* [Augusta ?] into any *fugitive* piece of absurdity, % more he cannot promise.

October 7. X is the least selfish person in the world though Lady Melbourne won't believe that " either of us " can have any right feeling. He won't deny this as regards himself, but " You don't know what a being she is " ; her only error has been his fault entirely and he can plead no excuse but passion, which is none.

October 19. Regrets that Annabella did not give him a distant hope on his first proposal, and he would have acted with a view to it. As it was, in his pursuit of strong emotions and mental *drams*, he found them, to be sure, and intoxicated himself accordingly—but now he is sobered, his head aches, and his heart too.

January 2, 1815. Lord Byron and Miss Milbanke were married.

January 31. Lady Melbourne willingly accepts

* " That very helpless gentleman your cousin." (Letter, Byron to Mrs. Leigh, Sept. 17, 1816. *Astarte*, 271.)

† A copy of this letter with the late Lord Lovelace's papers, has " mentally " instead of " morally."

‡ An elopement ?

THE CHARGE REPORTED BY MRS. STOWE 81

the office in which Byron has installed her (his good genius) and hopes always to be his *corbeau blanc* (recalling Voltaire's tale),[#] wishing that he may hit as justly on the *corbeau noir* and avoid him. She warns him that, though he has no *corbeau noir*, actually *noir*, he may have one flying about with *many* black feathers in her plumage.

February 2. Byron replies that he supposes Lady Melbourne's *corbeau noir* is X, but if X were a raven or a griffin he must still take omens from her flight. He can't help *loving* her, though he has quite enough at home to prevent him loving any one essentially for some time to come.

February 8. Lady Melbourne writes: " I am laughing now at your ' essentially/ Was that word ever made use of before in such a sense ? . . . You wrong me about——. On one subject they are as black and hideous as any Phantasm of a distempered brain can imagine. But, that *essential* out of the way, I do not know any one more fitted for your *corbeau blanc* from cleverness, good humour, and a thousand agreeable qualities—not forgetting the interest they take in you, and the knowledge that they have of you, which renders them more able to manage and advise. Does this satisfy you ? "

Byron looks upon Lady Melbourne as his good genius. She accepts the office, but bids him beware of and avoid his evil genius. There may be a *corbeau noir* flying about, at least, a bird with many black feathers in her plumage. Byron supposes that she means X ; from her flight, whatever she is, he must still take omens and continue to love her. Lady Melbourne replies, using the plural number to conceal the identity of the person referred to or to make her remarks less unpalatable. On one subject *they* are as black and hideous as any phantasm of a distempered brain. Apart from this, she knows no one more fitted

* *Short Prose Tales of Voltaire, Le Blanc et le Noir.*

to act as the good genius of Voltaire's fable. Besides many good qualities, the interest *they* take in him and the knowledge *they* have of him make *them* more able to manage and advise. In this last letter Lady Melbourne seems ready to resign her office of " good genius " in favour of X, and, so far as appears, Byron acquiesced. The correspondence closes for the time with a letter to Lady Melbourne of April 22, 1815, and the next is one from her (February 5, 1816) enquiring whether Byron and his wife are parted.

It is submitted that the letters, standing alone, furnish sufficient proof that the charge of incest was true, but it will be necessary to consider whether the evidence of the letters is confirmed or contradicted by any other known facts.

CHAPTER XI

FURTHER LETTERS, JOURNALS AND POEMS

THE following condensed account of some of Lord Byron's letters, journals and poems is taken from the *Vindication of Lady Byron* :

It was no common guilt that shook Lord Byron with an agony of remorse in November, 1813. Adultery—aggravated adultery, an accumulation of adulteries—were but a jest (P- 177)-

Something of his life and conversation in and before and after the year 1813 shall be related, to show that he was not likely to be stung by the memory of common guilt. Last of all, his own words shall tell the agony of remorse which convulsed him in November, 1813, until conscience took refuge with imagination, and he wrote *The Bride of Abydos* (pp. 143, 144).

In the month of November, 1813, Lord Byron was trembling under the great horror of some reality, which concerned also another person, whom he apostrophises as " Dear, sacred name ! "—not daring to write it, even in the record of his most secret thoughts. His nights were sleepless and the terror was upon him in the daytime. He must speak, or die, or go mad, eating his own heart. With him all convulsions ended in rhyme, and he wrote *The Bride of Abydos*. It was a story of real life, drawn from *existence*, from things which at that very time had happened to himself. He burned a comedy which he had begun because the scene ran into reality, and a novel for the same reason. He wrote his mystery in verse, because, as he says :—" In rhyme I can keep more away from facts ; but the thought always runs through—through . . . yes, yes, through."

In January, 1814, he visited Newstead for a month,* saying to himself before he went that a wife would be his salvation. He returned to London on the 9th of February. His friends saw that he was " much out of spirits." He confessed to himself that he was sick at head and heart—" aweary of the sun." At times he feared he was not in his perfect

Mrs. Leigh accompanied him (*Prothero*, iii, 13, 20, 24).

mind ; he was bowed down by that perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart—it was better that his friends should believe his melancholy to be the effect of disease, than that they should suspect the true cause. Some fearful secret was gnawing his conscience, and he could not resolve to tell it to the friend to whom he was wont to confide flagrant iniquities, as things for jest and laughter ; he would tell it, not now, but some day or other when they were " veterans."

At the end of March his heart began " to eat itself again." He went into the country for six days, as it would seem, from the 1st to the 6th of April.* On his return he did not stir out of his chamber for four days, recording in his journal that he was never long in the society of *her* he loved (" God knows too well, and the devil probably too ") without longing for his lamp and library. He resolved to buy up the copyrights of his works, to destroy all the copies, and to leave England.

On the 4th of May he wrote the *Song*, in which he addressed his partner in some great guilt, and told of resolutions to renounce it, often made and as often broken.

At various times in June, July, August and September (1814) he was at Newstead. In August, being at Hastings, J he was in some respects happy, but not in a way that could or ought to last. Having repeatedly invited Mr. Moore to Newstead, he wrote to him on the 15th of September saying that when they met he would tell why he had not asked him to come to the abbey.

On the 20th of September he was the accepted lover of Miss Milbanke. If she had not accepted him he would have left England for Italy.

What was the thought that ran " through, through—yes, yes, through " *The Bride of Abydos*—the story that he wrote because he must pour forth his soul or die, and wrote in verse, because he could keep away from facts ?

The Bride of Abydos is written in two cantos. The first canto (from stanza x to xiii) tells the love of Selim and

* Byron left London on April 2 and stayed with Mrs. Leigh at Newmarket, returning to London on April 7 (*Murray*, i, 249).

† " I speak not, I trace not, I breathe not, thy name." See p. 64, above.

‡ Lady Byron states on the authority of George Byron that Lord Byron, Augusta and Captain G. Byron were at Hastings together (Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers ; and see *Murray*, i, 286).

FURTHER LETTERS, JOURNALS, POEMS 85

Zuleika. It was not fraternal love. The motto from Burns affixed to this poem is singularly inappropriate to their story ; but not so to the dark secret which was to be sent forth shrouded in rhyme:

Had we never loved so kindly,
Had we never loved so blindly,
Never met or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

In the second canto we learn that Selim and Zuleika are cousins, not brother and sister. Yet, since she had believed throughout the action of the first canto, that the nearer relation subsisted, this device to keep away from facts does not affect the conclusion to be drawn from the published poem. But it is not necessary to consider that question, for we know that Lord Byron wrote the poem as a tale of impious love and altered it because the subject was not adapted to this age—at least, to this country. Here, again, is his unanswerable testimony against himself :

"December nth 1813—My dear Gait—There was no offence ; there *could* be none. I thought it by no means impossible that we might have hit on something similar, particularly as you are a dramatist, and was anxious to assure you of the truth—viz., that I had not wittingly seized upon plot, sentiment or incident, and I am very glad that I have not in any respect trenched upon your subjects. Something still more singular is that the *first* part, where you have found a coincidence in some events within your observations on *life*, was *drawn* from *observation* of mine also' ; and I meant to have gone on with the story. But, on *second* thoughts, I thought myself *two centuries*, at least, too late for the subject, which though admitting of very powerful feeling and description yet is not adapted for this age, at least this country ; though the finest works of the Greeks, one of Schiller's and Alfieri's in modern times, besides several of our *old* (and best) dramatists, have been grounded on incidents of a similar cast. I therefore altered it, as you perceive, and in so doing have weakened the whole, by interrupting the train of thought ; and in composition I do not think *second* thoughts

• Compare Byron's letter to Lady Melbourne, November 25, 1813, p. 78, above.

are the best, though *second* expressions may improve the first ideas. . . .

" Ever yours sincerely—B." (*Vindication*, pp. 201-205.)

In verses which, through an oversight, were not struck out when he changed the story, Lord Byron, recounting the misery from which Zuleika had been saved by an early death, tells the agony of his own remorse in the words of his journal and letters :

Thrice happy, ne'er to feel nor fear the force
Of absence, shame, pride, hate, revenge, remorse !
And oh ! that pang where more than madness lies I
The worm that will not sleep—and never dies ;
Thought of the gloomy day and ghastly night
That dreads the darkness, and yet loathes the light,
That winds around and tears the quivering heart I
Ah ! wherefore not consume it—and depart !

(*Vindication*, pp. 337, 338.)

January, 1814. *The Corsair*, part of which was written in Colonel Leigh's house near Newmarket, as Mrs. Leigh told Shelley at the time. Conrad is a full-grown Selim. He, too, is captain of a company of pirates in the Archipelago, and reigns with Medora in one of the bright islands there. This poem is connected with the history of Francesca di Rimini, by the name Francesca, changed to Medora, and by the three mottoes from Dante. In mentioning a report that he was the actual Conrad, Lord Byron seems to point to two distinct sources from which the tale " written *con amore* and much from *existence* " had been taken. One was plainly in the East. Perhaps the other may be traced with the help of his journal and letters in November, 1813. Conrad is high-born and self-exiled. Sir Walter Scott tells us that those who had looked on Lord Byron would recognise some likeness in Conrad, and Jeffrey's remark that Medora has more soul and delicacy and reflection than belong to the women of the East, is justified and superseded by the fact that in *her* the poet was delineating one of his acquaintance. It appears from the journal that in November and December, 1813, beside the herd of married and unmarried, the " perplexities " whom he changed from time to time, and beside his sister, there was one peculiar object of his regard, one who would have cared

FURTHER LETTERS, JOURNALS, POEMS 87

if he had gone to Holland and had not returned, and would have been annoyed if he had not been too lazy to shoot himself. There was a Gulnare as well as a Medora. We are told in the poem that until the Corsair had seen Gulnare he had never asked if others were as fair as Medora, and that Medora would have forgiven his tenderness to Gulnare in her desolation. In the course of his everyday life Lord Byron had learned how to free himself from such perplexities when they were substantial. In poetry there was but one way of escape, and so Medora died. Nothing is told of her history or Conrad's before they came to the pirate's isle. He too suffers the sleepless agony of which the journal tells :

The hurried tread, the upward eye,
The clenched hand, the pause of agony.

* * * * *

With feelings loosed to strengthen—not depart,
That rise, convulse —contend—that freeze or glow.

* * * * *

Behold his soul—the rest that soothes his lot.

The crimes for which this agony of remorse was suffered were not such as might be looked for in the life of a pirate, but things which, in the doing, seemed light or lovely, concealed evil which did not canker the less because it was hidden :

Deeds, thoughts and words, perhaps remembered not
So keenly till that hour, but ne'er forgot;
Things light or lovely in their acted time,
But now to stern reflection each a crime ;
The withering sense of evil unreveal'd
Not cankering less because the more conceal'd.

And the gentle Medora, judging from her song, is a partaker of the same guilt; cherishing one fatal secret in the darkness of despair, having no hope but in death, for, while she lived, virtue denied her even the tenderness of pity :

Deep in my soul that tender secret dwells,
Lonely and lost to sight for evermore,
Save when to thine my heart responsive swells,
Then trembles into silence as before*

There, in its centre, a sepulchral lamp
 Burns the slow flame, eternal—but unseen ;
 Which not the darkness of despair can damp,
 Though vain its ray as it had never been.

Remember me—Oh ! pass not thou my grave
 Without one thought whose relics there recline :
 The only pang my bosom does not brave
 Must be to find forgetfulness in thine.

My fondest—faintest—latest accents hear—
 Grief for the dead not Virtue can reprove ;
 Then give me all I ever ask'd—a tear,
 The first—last—sole reward of so much love !
 (Vindication. pp. 338-341.)

* * * * *

The *Song of the 4th of May* (1814).* The guilt plucked out of *The Bride of Abydos* and shrouded in *The Corsair*, is here almost unveiled. Looking at Lord Byron's life from January to April, it is impossible to believe that such bitterness of grief as this song expresses should have been pretended for the daily sin which ended in satiety, not in sorrow. He is now ready to renounce the world and to retort scorn for scorn if his secret should be discovered. A thought upon which the poet dwells in these verses, and which breaks forth in *Parisina* and *Manfred*, is thus repeated in the *Stanzas to Augusta*:

They may crush, but they shall not contemn—
 They may torture, but shall not subdue me—
 'Tis of *thee* that I think—not of them.

Mrs. Leigh prevented Lord Byron from printing the *Epistle to Augusta* and wrote to Lady Byron that she wished the *Stanzas* at the bottom of the sea. Such a letter would not have been written if the brother had been driven into banishment, with a tainted name, without just cause. (*Vindication*, pp. 341-342.)

It has been said there can be little doubt that *The Song of the 4th of May* and the *Dedication to Lara* were addressed to Lady Frances Wedderburn Webster, and, apparently, it is suggested that *Lara*, *The Corsair*

* See p. 64, above.

FURTHER LETTERS, JOURNALS, POEMS 89

and *The Bride of Abydos* were written under the influence of a passion for that lady.^{3*} But we know that when Byron visited the Wedderburn Websters at Aston in 1813 his relations with Lady Frances fell short of consummated guilt; and though the two corresponded afterwards, there is no reason to believe that the attachment was ever personally renewed. *The Song of the 4th of May* is inapplicable to their case, and, for the reasons given above, *The Bride of Abydos* and *The Corsair* point to remorse for more than ordinary guilt. Beyond this, we have the unanswerable fact that Byron, frequently, in the presence of his wife and sister, identified the sister with the Bride of Abydos and with the person addressed in *The Song of the 4th of May*.†

The manuscript of *Lara* is dated May 14, 1814.§ The opening lines, which are not included in Mr Coleridge's edition of the *Poems*, suggest the same object of devotion as the *Song* of ten days before :

" Whose name, too dearly cherished to impart,
Dies on the lip but trembles in the heart " ;

* * * *

" Oh best—and dearest—thou whose thrilling name
My heart adores too deeply to proclaim——"

The *Vindication* continues :

1815, July. The *Siege of Corinth*, the poem copied by Lady Byron for the printer, and the first written after the marriage. Whatever may have been that guilt of November, 1813, and May, 1814, which had been repented, and abjured, and renewed, it can be well supposed that it ceased with the marriage engagement. Lord Byron's journal and letters will hardly be read without leaving the impression that one motive for his marriage was to break the chain once and for ever ; and there is no reason to believe that it was united

* Coleridge, iii, 319. † Murray, i, 203, 204, 232.

‡ See pp. 63-4, above. § Coleridge, iii, 319.

II Astarte, 329.

again. The stern will and fierce passions of Conrad are given to Alp, and the tenderness of Medora to Francesca ; for that name erased from the *Corsair* is restored in the *Siege of Corinth*. There is no taint of impious love in this poem. Perhaps the earnest, the pathetic, the long, the last appeal of Francesca to Alp, upon their final separation in this life, her entreaty that he would not cast away the hope of heaven, and his desperate answer that it was too late to change, were drawn from what Lord Byron calls " *existence*."

* * * *

The gift of the Bible, mentioned in the *Quarterly Review* for October (1869)—and it was the last gift that he received from his sister's hands—is consistent with all that Lady Byron is reported to have said and written, and may serve to explain how anything in the character of Balfour of Burley could have helped to lead Mrs. Leigh into the erroneous persuasion that Lord Byron was the author of *Tales of My Landlord** It is not improbable that when the parting gift was made, words had passed which were called to mind by Burley's cry : " Come in all thy terrors—come with mine own evil deeds which make thee most terrible of all—there is enough between the boards of this book to rescue me." It may be stranger than fiction, but is not incredible, that these two women, of whom one had forgiven, and the other had been forgiven, much, should strive in concert to soften the proud heart which could breathe such thoughts as these :—

. . . the spirit burning but unbent,
May writhe—rebel—the weak alone repent !

* * * *

I have no thought to mock his throne with prayer,
Wrung from the coward crouching of despair.

{*The Corsair*}

That notwithstanding something which had kept them apart, they united and worked together to turn him from evil, may be gathered from his words : " My wife and sister, when they joined parties, sent me prayer-books." One thing is certain, Lady Byron had undoubting faith that a

* Her opinion was partly founded on passages in the *Black Dwarf*. Doubtless she was thinking of Byron's sensitiveness on the subject of his deformed foot. (Note by the author of the *Vindication*.)

FURTHER LETTERS, JOURNALS, POEMS 91

weaker will had found strength to overcome a stronger, and that the presence of the person to whom the letters of January and February were written would be for good and not for evil. Upon what ground that faith rested cannot be known without the evidence which is withheld.

In *Parisina*, the other poem written in the year of married life, in the autumn, Lord Byron returns to the old theme. He had grown bolder. In 1813 he took away the offence out of regard to the opinion of his age and country. In January, 1814, he withdrew the name "Francesca" and veiled his mystery in words of doubtful meaning and mottoes. In the *Song* of May, 1814, he made ready to retort scorn for scorn if his guilt should be discovered; but now the private apology to Gait was turned into a vindication to the world, with a rebuke to the fastidiousness of his readers; and, without warrant from history, his hero was presented with erect head, standing before the judgment seat to avow and extenuate his crime. "I am aware," said Lord Byron, in the advertisement to *Parisina*, "that in modern times the delicacy or fastidiousness of the reader may deem such subjects unfit for the purposes of poetry. The Greek dramatists, and some of the best of our old English writers, were of a different opinion; as Alfieri and Schiller have also been, more recently, upon the continent." The *Quarterly Review* makes merry with the notion that it is lucky he had no stepmother, or he would certainly have been identified with Hugo. Is it nothing that one odious crime should have taken such fast hold of his imagination, and that he should have striven—and, in spite of subtle excuses, he did strive—to take the horror from the guilt and lay it on the punishment?

And what unto them is the world beside,
With all its change of time and tide ?

* * * *

Of guilt, of peril, do they deem
In that tumultuous tender dream ?
Who that hath felt that passion's power,
Or paus'd, or feared, in such an hour ?

There are verses in *Parisina* which connect that poem with the *Song* of the 4th of May :

THE BYRON MYSTERY

The Song.

Oh ! thine be the gladness and mine be the guilt,

* * * *

—the heart which is thine shall expire undebased,
 And *man* shall not break it—whatever thou mayst,
 And stern to the haughty, but humble to thee,
 This soul in its bitterest blackness shall be.

Parisina.

With many a lingering look they leave
 The spot of guilty gladness past.

* * * *

And he for her had also wept,
 But for the eyes that on him gazed :
 His sorrow, if he felt it, slept :
 Stern, and erect his brow was raised.
 Whate'er the grief his soul avowed,
 He would not shrink before the crowd ;
 But yet he dared not look on her :
 Remembrance of the hours that were—
 His guilt—his love—his present state—
 His father's wrath—all good men's hate—
 His earthly, his eternal fate—
 And hers—oh hers !—he dared not throw
 One look upon that death-like brow !
 Else had his rising heart betray'd
 Remorse for all the wreck it made.

Pride overcame remorse, and before his father, and the nobles of the court, Hugo weighed, in a doubtful balance, his own crime against the wrongs which had been done to his mother and to himself :

Nor are my mother's wrongs forgot,
 Her slighted love and ruin'd name,
 The offspring's heritage of shame ;

* * * *

As err'd the sire, so err'd the son,
 And thou must punish both in one,
 My crime seems worst to human view,
 But God must judge between us too !

FURTHER LETTERS, JOURNALS, POEMS 93

In the preface to *Parisina*, the editor of Lord Byron's works says that most of the critical journals of the time " were content to record, generally, their regret that so great a poet should have permitted himself, by awakening sympathy for a pair of incestuous lovers, to become, in some sort, the apologist of their sin." He answers the critics by citing the opinion of a nameless writer in *Blackwood's Magazine*, who had suggested that we should not " rashly class Byron with those poetical offenders who have bent their powers to divest incest of its hereditary horrors." The Editor concludes : " We shall have occasion to recur to this subject when we reach our author's *Manfred*" He reached *Manfred* but did not recur to the subject.

January 15th was the day of the separation.

In the summer (1816) was begun, in May (1817) was finished, *Manfred*. This last poem of the series had its origin in something more of *existence* than was found among the Alps. Lord Byron wrote to Mr. Murray : " It was the Steinbach and the Jungfrau, and something else, much more than Faustus, that made me write *Manfred*." And again : " Send me the rest ; and also page 270, where there is ' an account of the supposed origin of this dreadful story ' ; in which, by the way, whatever it may be, the conjecturer is out, and knows nothing of the matter. I had a better origin than he can devise or divine, for the soul of him." Is it possible to doubt that the " dreadful story " of the *Bride of Abydos*, of the *Corsair*, of the *Song of May*, 1814, and of *Manfred* had one common origin in that event which the poet with, what Lord Broughton calls, " his dangerous sincerity," told, darkly, in his journal and letters, beginning in November, 1813 ? Astarte has the gentle powers of Zuleika, Medora and Francesca, the " soft heart," the " soul though soft," the " soft, word," the " fond fidelity " of which the domestic pieces tell. Her love for Manfred has destroyed her ; and, in the world of spirits, she has become a thing he dared not think upon.

—What is she ?

What is she now ? a sufferer for my sins—

A thing I dare not think upon—

Say that thou loath'st me not—that I do bear

This punishment for both—that thou wilt be

One of the blessed.

There is a passage in *Manfred* which, compared with a couplet in the *Epistle to Augusta*, seems to unveil the thought that ran through—through—

—her whom of all earthly things
That lived, the only thing he seemed to love—
As he, indeed, by blood was bound to do,
The lady Astarte, his

And even at moments I could think I see
Some living thing to love—but none like thee.

Manfred is the Corsair, with supernatural power and pride, and contempt of the creatures of clay that gird him. With affected scorn of the beings of whom he is one, hating to be so, he anticipates the judgment which would have driven him forth to range with the bestial herds; and, having thus precluded the censure of his fellows, the sin blotted out of the *Bride of Ahydos*, concealed in Conrad, and avowed by Hugo, only because it had been discovered, is told shamelessly—not in shameless words, but with an audacious spirit which, at the hour of death, finds comfort in the boast that the crime was of his own determinate resolution, and not a suggestion of the devil—

Thou didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not tempt me ;
I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey—
But was my own destroyer, and will be
My own, hereafter.—Back ye baffled fiends !

{*Vindication*, 342-350}.

Lord Byron's statement to Lady Melbourne, " I want to see whether you think my *writings* are *me* or *not* " (see page 78, above), is a pregnant one in connection with the question whether he did not make a regular practice of weaving into his poetry incidents of his own life and experience.*

• And see pp. 185-6, below.

CHAPTER XII

THE STORY OF THE SEPARATION

Astarte is a guide to the documents set apart by Lady Noel Byron to be disposed of by her trustees at a future time according to their judgment " for the interests of truth and justice and with due regard to the feelings of whoever may then be the representative of my family " (*Astarte*, 158-159).

In February, 1850, Lady Byron signed a paper of directions to trustees as to the disposal of the documents which were to be unsealed at the end of thirty years and then disposed of as stated above (*Ibid.*, 158). These directions were, in effect, confirmed by Lady Byron's will, proved August 1, 1860. In October, 1868, certain documents were delivered by the trustees to the second Earl of Lovelace, then Lord Wentworth, the grandson of Lord and Lady Byron and the author of *Astarte*. In March, 1869, Lord Wentworth obtained possession, in addition, of many important letters written to Mrs. Villiers in and after 1816.* In September, 1869, Mrs. Beecher Stowe's *True Story* appeared. It was not until the year 1893 that the second Earl of Lovelace, as he had now become, obtained possession of a number of other important letters which had gone astray,^f and was thus in a position to supply the information withheld in 1869-1871, according to the terms of the trust. In 1905 *Astarte* was privately printed by Lord Lovelace, and a second edition, edited by Mary, Countess of Lovelace, was issued to the public in 1921.‡ From the documents in *Astarte* and some others, now published for the first time, together with the letters already published, may be learnt the true relations between Lord and

* *Memoir of Ralph Earl of Lovelace*, by Mary Countess of Lovelace (1920), pp. 16, 22.

† *Ibid.* 40.

‡ The references to *Astarte* are to the later edition.

Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh, from the arrival of Mrs. Leigh in Piccadilly Terrace in November, 1815.

Lady Noel had intended to be with her daughter during her confinement, but on coming to London was taken ill and was unable to leave her room. Lady Byron sent for Mrs. Leigh, who arrived at Piccadilly Terrace on November 15. Here domestic affairs were in a wretched plight. Creditors were putting in executions, Lord Byron was drinking to excess and Lady Byron was having a very unhappy time. Byron declaimed against the married state, and in his worst moods seemed to be doing all he could, without resorting to actual violence, to make his wife's life unbearable.' Lady Byron turned to Mrs. Leigh as a protector, and her confidence was justified, as her later letters prove.^f There seems to have been a natural bond of affection between the sisters-in-law, perhaps the stronger from the fact that neither had a sister of her own. In the following apology for her letters to Mrs. Leigh of January and February, 1816, Lady Byron thus expresses her affection for her:

I feel that I am liable to the censure of some for having continued to address her in terms of affection. My answer is that to support her in the recovered path of Innocence and to save her children was my first object, that I conceived she was to be governed by feelings of kindness—that I had 1,000 times received the consolation of her devoted attention—that we had suffered together—and for each other—all this has made her dear to me, and for her sake I believe it right that I should treat her as if she were so, at the risk of being deemed too lax a moralist by those with whom

Every fault a tear can claim
Except an erring sister's shame ‡

¹ See Lord Byron's statement (*Lord Broughlon*, ii, 277 ; and see pp. 2, 9, 10, above).

[†] See *ProtherOyhi*, 292-301, 311.

[‡] Statement, 1817, with Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers. The concluding lines are quoted from *The Giaour*,

The child was born on December 10, 1815, and on January 6 following, Lord Byron sent a written request to his wife to leave London as soon as she conveniently could. Before leaving, Lady Byron, acting in conjunction with Mrs. Leigh and Captain George Byron, consulted Doctors Baillie and Le Mann as to the state of Lord Byron's health. The question of his sanity had been under consideration before the birth of Lady Byron's child. On February 11, 1816, Lady Byron writes to Dr. Lushington :

If it should be necessary to prove my sense of extreme wrongs as existing before I came here (Kirkby), Serjt. Heywood' can witness that I consulted him on the subject *the day before my delivery* and proposed the question if I should not then leave the house—this, too, by the desire, or at least full concurrence, of Mrs. Leigh—which, of course, I would not unnecessarily reveal to commit her with her brother. I also stated to Serjt. Heywood the supposition of insanity as embarrassing my conduct.^f

At the time Lady Byron left Piccadilly Terrace Mrs. Leigh and Captain Byron had formed the opinion that Lord Byron was insane. Lady Byron had recently seen so little of her husband that she was less able at that time to form an opinion,^g but was anxious to be guided by medical advice. In the event of insanity being proved, she proposed that her husband should be removed to the home of her parents at Kirkby Mallory, where the change of surroundings might effect a cure. Dr. Baillie, who had not had an opportunity of examining the patient, advised that Lady Byron's temporary absence was desirable and that she should correspond with her husband on light and soothing topics. Lady Byron left London with her child on January 15, and, stopping that night at Woburn, wrote to Lord Byron from there, and again

^g Samuel Heywood, Serjeant-at-law (1753-1828) : Diet. Nat. Biog.

^h Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

ⁱ *Remarks*, p. 6, above.

the next day from Kirkby, in terms according with the doctor's advice. The importance of these two letters justifies their reproduction here. The first has not before been printed at length.

LADY BYRON TO LORD BYRON.

Dearest B.

The child is quite well and the best of travellers. I hope you are *good* and remember my medical prayers and injunctions. Don't give yourself up to the abominable trade of versifying—nor to brandy—nor to anything or anybody that is not *lawful* and *right*.

Though / disobey in writing to you, let me hear of *your* obedience at Kirkby.

Ada's love to you with mine,

PIP.

Jan. 15, 1816.

Woburn.*

Apropos of "the abominable trade of versifying/" Lord Broughton says (ii, 239): "In justice to her Ladyship it should be mentioned that she had seen from experience that the periods in which her husband was bargaining with the Muses for their poetical commodities were those in which his health and temperament seemed more painfully affected than at other intervals." Lord Broughton seems to take the words too literally. Lady Byron was writing, according to the doctor's advice, on "light and soothing topics," and the expression is obviously to be understood in a jocular sense. It sounds like a phrase which Byron had himself invented.

LADY BYRON TO LORD BYRON.

Kirkby, Jan. 16, 1816.

Dearest Duck,

We got here quite well last night and were ushered into the kitchen instead of drawing-room by a mistake that might have been agreeable enough to hungry people . . . Of this and other incidents Dad wants to write you a jocose account and both he and Mam long to have the family party com-

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

THE STORY OF THE SEPARATION 99

pleted. . . Such . . . and such a *sitting-room* or *sulking-room* all to yourself. If I were not always looking about for B. I should be a great deal better already for country air. Miss finds her provisions increased and fattens thereon. It is a good thing she can't understand all the flattery bestowed upon her—"Little Angel" and I know not what. . . Love to the good goose and everybody's love to you both from hence.

Ever thy most loving

The Lord Byron, PIPPIN . . . PIP . . . IP.
13, Piccadilly Terrace, London.'

Comparing these letters with that dated February 2 from Sir Ralph Noel to Lord Byron, f announcing that Lady Byron would not return to him, it is perhaps not surprising that Lord Broughton should write: "The fact may be perpetually repeated: *Lady Byron* when *she left Lord Byron* had no notion whatever of a separation." J But he was mistaken. The natural inference was that Lady Byron had acted under the influence of others in determining upon a separation. The fact is that a day or two after her arrival at Kirkby, Lady Byron informed her parents that, assuming Lord Byron was proved to be sane, she would not return to him, and she had so decided before she left London. § The cause was deeper than Lord Byron's friends could see from the surface. Nevertheless, Lady Byron's desire to do all that could be done for her husband, if he should be proved irresponsible for his actions, was a genuine one. On January 12 she had written from Piccadilly Terrace to Mr. Hanson, Lord Byron's solicitor:

I enclose the pamphlet (see page 478). Mr. Le Mann has made some remarks which you will judge if it be advisable to leave. The symptoms correspond too well not only with those in the first, but also in the second stage of the Disease, when

' This copy, from Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers, differs slightly from that in Lord Broughton's *Recollections*, ii, 203,

† *Lord Broughton*, ii, 209. ‡ *Ibid*, ii, 209, 216.

§ Lady Byron's proposed letter of July 6, 1816, p. 103, below.

THE BYRON MYSTERY

an effusion may take place from any act of excess. Not a moment must be lost, and the best medical advice must be insisted on.*

On January 17, the day after she reached Kirkby, Lady Byron wrote to Captain George Byron :

My father and mother unite with me in opinion that it would be most desirable for the Patient to be removed to this place, where he might pursue a medical regimen according to the London advice—with the additional advantages of air and exercise, which he cannot be induced to take in town. They will devote their whole care and attention to the alleviation of his malady and the best arrangements can be formed here with great ease. I wish you or Augusta to communicate with Mr, Le Mann as to the time and manner of effecting this measure, which, if not considered injurious to the object of our endeavours, must be more consolatory to me than any other ; and to suggest to Mr. Le Mann that the intended course of medicine might be better commenced in the country, as the removal would probably interfere with its execution. / deem the change of scene of the greatest consequence, and this place particularly eligible as one with which no diseased associations are connected. I have some reasons for thinking that my being in Town would rather impede than forward his journey hither, but should there be any cause to change this opinion, I will return on the shortest notice.

I request you to acquaint Mr. H[anso]n with the contents of this letter.f

Reference may also be made to Lady Byron's letter to Mrs, Leigh of January 16 (*Prothero*, iii, 295).

Lady Noel had sent Lord Byron an invitation to Kirkby on December 28, 1815, in the following terms :

Dear Lord Byron,

I am so shaken by my recent illness that I am too nervous to enter into any subject that interests me without being more

* *Prothero*, iii, 293. The conjecture as to the identity of Le Mann is not correct. Lady Byron's letter to him of January 17, next referred to, is addressed " Francis Le Mann, Esq., Orchard Street, Portman Square."

† Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

agitated than is good for me or pleasant to those I speak to. Let me therefore tell you in writing that Sir Ra: and myself have set our hearts on seeing *You*, our *Daughter* and *Grand-daughter* at Kirkby. I think you would see them both benefit by country air. We have no neighbours to molest us, the place is quiet and we can give you all much more spacious accommodation than Seaham allowed us to do—and surely I trust *you* would not think yourself under any constraint but do exactly what you like at Kirkby. Reflect on the happiness it will afford *me* in particular to watch the growth and improvement of the lovely child, and the mortification I have already endured by seeing so little of her and Annabella, from my long illness. Take compassion on poor grandmama and believe me, dear Lord Byron,

Your ever most truly and affectionately
IU NOEL*

A communication received by Lady Byron on January 17 after her letter to Captain Byron was despatched, caused her to write to Le Mann the same day suggesting that Lord Byron's removal to Kirkby should be postponed :

I had written before the last post came, requesting that my decided opinion in favour of removing the Patient should be communicated to you—but from the particulars I have since learned, I conceive that some time must be allowed for you to acquire the necessary ascendancy. . • There is no medical person in this neighbourhood whom I could venture to consult. I shall thank you very much for any accounts which you will have the goodness to send me—and I remain ignorant of the bodily disease which you are now led to suppose.

It would seem that it was on or about January 18 that Lady Byron informed her parents that if Lord Byron proved to be sane, nothing would induce her to return to him. January 18 is the date of the statement which Lady Byron prepared and her mother took to London on the 20th. On the 18th Lady Byron writes to Mrs. Leigh :

I am rather glad of my mother's journey to town—anything

* **Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.** † *Ibid*,

is better for the anxious than to be stationary. . . . Having placed myself at present under the protection of my parents, it is of course my duty to allow them to take such measures as they deem requisite for my welfare, provided they are not such as can injure others. My father is urgent that I should have some confidential advice, which I believe my mother will be able to procure.'

The parents were no doubt shocked at their daughter's account of her married life. On January 23 Lady Byron writes to Mrs. Leigh: "You cannot think how severe my father is, much more than my mother."| Lady Noel's journey to London was apparently taken on the initiative of the parents, but no action was to ensue without Lady Byron's sanction. This is made clear by a letter from Lady Noel to her daughter, dated January 24: "I hope you want no more assurance that I shall not *act* till I see you. I made *that promise* before I left Kirkby, and you might have relied on it—I am half angry *you do not.*"[†]

In a letter written, but not sent, by Lady Byron on July 6, 1816, she answers the imputation that the separation was the act of her parents and Mrs. Clermont:

The only fact that has been at all plausibly assumed to support the imputation of influence, is that of my having written two affectionate letters to Lord B. immediately after I left his house, ordered by him to do so,[§] and recommended by medical persons to be absent on account of the *dangerous* character of his irritation against me, which for his sake it was necessary to let subside by a temporary removal. At the same time Captain Byron declared he would not suffer me to remain any longer in the house without himself informing my parents. Upon the supposition of insanity which I had then been led to adopt (and I thanked God for it, as acquitting

[†] *Pr other o, hi, 296. † Ibid. 299.*

[‡] Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

[§] That is, to leave his house, not to write the letters. Lady Byron's letter of Jan. 15 (p. 98) shows that he had forbidden her to write.

THE STORY OF THE SEPARATION 103

my husband of a most awful responsibility) everything conspired to make it my duty to go to Kirkby. Mr. Le Mann expected that a few days would decide the nature of the malady and probably fix it, so that Lord B. might be removed to Kirkby *under* medical treatment, and, unchanged as my affection still was, it was my greatest consolation to think I might then attend on, and perhaps alleviate this visitation. I was advised to avoid everything that could irritate—my own feelings naturally prompted the kindest expressions towards one who might soon become incapable of understanding them and I could not bear that, with such a prospect, the last words should do injustice to such a heart which suffering had not detached. I left London on the 15th and wrote on that day and the 16th, waiting, with agony you may faintly imagine, the event of those strange appearances by which I and others had been deceived. They ceased with my departure—the real motive, to drive me from him, was developed in all his measures—and so impatient was he of the delay that he was himself preparing to propose a separation. . . .

I am supposed to have been influenced after I arrived at Kirkby. I have explained the appearances which gave rise to it—the *acted* insanity and the *systematic* persecution. The proofs that I did not conceive an impression *after* I left my husband are these—that I consulted Serjt. Heywood before I quitted the house and at a time when my conviction of the *insanity* was not so strong as subsequently, respecting *my zvrongs*, and then spoke of them, though without resentment, as being carried to the utmost extent of injury and outrage—that I made a similar representation to Dr. Baillie and Mr. Le Mann a few days before I quitted the house, as forming a part of the case on the supposition of insanity—and in regard to Mrs. Clermont, she did not go with me to Kirkby nor was with me when my resolution to separate was taken and first executed.

In regard to the *superficial* view of the subject, it is desirable that these two letters had not been written but when all is explained they form the strongest proofs of attachment—and how much must have been required to determine my reason in opposition to it! The distraction of my mind when I knew not whether to pity him as a sufferer or to condemn him as an accountable agent was beyond all that I had ever

imagined. There were moments when resignation yielded to frenzy—and I would have forgotten myself, my child, my principles, to devote myself to that being who had cast me off. But this reprehensible state has long ceased.

I have spoken of the *remorse* which I witnessed constantly—it was most horrible as being far from *repentance* and prompting added impiety towards Heaven and rage against man. Nothing *in the past* would have estranged me, if there had not been a systematic and practical determination to violate again all the ties which *had* been violated before. All the eloquence of persuasion and the arts of familiarising a mind with what it ought to shrink from were employed to reconcile me to immorality—even innocence and virtue were made the *colours* of crime—such are the powers of imagination—and all the beau-ideal of that imagination is on the side of vice.'

In the *Remarks* Lady Byron says that her parents "neither originated, instigated, nor advised that separation ; and they cannot be condemned for having afforded to their daughter the assistance and protection which she claimed."f

On January 20, as stated above, Lady Noel went to London to obtain further medical and legal advice, taking with her the statement of facts prepared by Lady Byron. On the following day Lady Byron received a letter from Le Mann, dated January 20, which helped to convince her, as the event proved, that her husband was sane and therefore responsible for his actions. Le Mann writes :

With regard to the state of my patient's mind, I must say that I have discovered nothing like settled lunacy. There is an irritability of temper (probably depending upon irregular action of the liver and other organs of digestion) that might by improper management be driven into a state of distraction very soon ; but I think that may be easily overcome 4

' Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers. See also Lady Byron's letter to Lord Byron of February 13, 1816, p. 5, above.

Page 9, above.

Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

Lady Byron saw that a separation was inevitable. On January 22 she writes to her mother :

For Heaven's sake don't let a whisper of my wrongs get abroad. After some very calm deliberation, I come to these results. Legal measures ought certainly to be *subsequent* to some direct application to him—and from his regard to appearances, as well as from a strange, though uncertain generosity of character, / *am convinced* that, if he had no reason to suppose harsher measures were in preparation (which would drive him to fury), he would make every requisite acknowledgment of my unexceptionable conduct, and give every security for the child and a due provision. It would be a death-blow to me to be obliged to come forward publicly—and depend upon it the public will take my part warmly under any circumstances—I should *die* of such a measure if I *could* carry it through—which I doubt—and it would be better to avoid an enterprise for which I doubt my strength. If you love me, impose silence on all whom we consult.'

Mrs. Leigh, perhaps naturally, having witnessed his behaviour, clung to the idea that her brother was insane. On January 22 she writes to Lady Byron :

B. stayed at home yesterday evening—no brandy and took his medicines. He was well the beginning of the evening but towards the end grew *fractious*, and in reply to a question from George (apropos of his own wish to see Bosworth House) of when he thought of going to Kirkby—he said—after a vacant stare : " I go there ? not at all ! I've no thought of it if I can help it ! " From that moment he talked all sorts of strange things—fell on *me* as usual—abused my spouse—my children—in short, all, as you know and have heard before.

He talked of you quite coolly and of his intention of going into a lodging by himself—with that total absence of feeling that it would *look strange* or *be so*—what is my greatest horror, as being so totally unlike himself—in short, looked black and gloomy, nobody could tell why or wherefore, the rest of the night. One of the things he did and said last night was

¹ Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

desiring George to go and live at Seaham, exactly as if it were his own ; and even before our dinner he said he considered himself " the greatest man existing." G. said, laughing, " except Bonaparte." The answer was, " God, I don't know that I do except even him." I was struck previously with a wildness in his eyes.'

Sir Samuel Romilly advised that Lord Byron should not be allowed to visit Kirkby, that Sir Ralph Noel should take up the matter on behalf of Lady Byron, and that a civilian should be consulted. This brought in Dr. Lushington, and the result of Lady Noel's first conference with him is stated in her letter to Lady Byron at Kirkby, dated January 24 :

I would not but have seen Lushington for the world—he seems the most *gentlemanlike*, clear-headed and clever man I ever met with—and agrees with all others that a proposal should be sent by your Father for a *quiet adjustment*. In consequence of Sir Samuel Romilly's advice I had drawn up the Sketch of a Letter for Sir Ralph to write. I find Lushington concurs with Sir Samuel and I have left the Sketch with Lushington that he may *consider it fully* as well as consider the situation in *every respect*, and I am to see him again tomorrow night at ten o'clock.

But observe—that he insists on Lord B.'s not being allowed to remain an *instant* at Kirkby, should he go there—and he says *You* must not see him on *any account*—and that your father should remain in the room with you. If you see him voluntarily or he is suffered to remain, you are wholly in his power and he may apply to the Spiritual court for a restoration of *Conjugal Rights*, as they term it, and oblige you to return—neither must you answer any letter he writes. He was surprised to find I had given this advice before I left Kirkby—he said it was the best possible.

I have a great persuasion that Ld. B. will not oppose *the arrangement* and I hope he will not ; but if he does, Lushington thinks that the Spiritual Court will grant a Separation on the ground of *cruelty* and *temper*.

He thinks also there is sufficient and ample ground to Swear the Peace against him, either as a Person *occasionally*

' Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

f *Ibid.*

deranged on particular subjects or from what he had already done. He also is of opinion that you will not be interrupted in retaining the Child—and is happy you have now possession of it. Lord B. may move for a Writ that the Child should be brought into Court, but he *does not* think that in this case it would (be) granted ; at all events, the Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench could *not decree* without hearing the Situations of the respective Parties—which in this case would be highly advantageous to the Mother—as his habits of life and acknowledged *partial* derangement at least, would be proved even by his nearest Connections. . . .

I am to see Haywood [*sic*] again to-morrow morning and will send Romilly a copy of the letter he advised.

Now I hope that Lord B. did not write by to-day's Post, or if he did that you have not answered it—for God's sake, do not.

Consider of someone to be appointed by Sir Ralph to meet the person who Lord B. may fix on, to confer on Articles of Separation. I dare say *he* will appoint *Hanson*, tho' at present he will not see him.'

Lady Noel made a note of the result of her consultations with Dr. Baillic, Mr. Le Mann and Mrs. Leigh. In it she says :

On the 20th of January when Lady Noel came to London, she saw Mr. Le Mann who was *then* even more fully persuaded of *Malady* than ever, and took much pains to impress Lady Noel with the same idea. She asked him if he thought he was capable of judging between right and wrong and was conscious of his actions and words ? He said he *certainly was*. She asked again if he was called on in Court to say whether he was Insane, what would be his Answer ? He replied he could not depose he was Insane for *he* had never *seen* any proofs of it, but he *believed* him to be so, from what he had heard from Mrs. Leigh and others, and that he had been told of his doings—things at the Theatre, which made people think so. Mrs. Leigh also wished to impress this opinion on Lady Noel, adding, I had rather think it *Malady* than *depravity of heart*. Lady Noel also asked Mrs. Leigh if she

' Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

thought him capable of transacting business. She allowed she thought him *perfectly competent*—indeed, particularly *acute* in business.'

There was another conference with Lushington on January 25. Miss Selina Doyle, sister to Colonel Doyle, both in the confidence of Lady Noel, wrote to Lady Byron on January 26, on the result of the conference. The letter to Lord Byron was to be written by Sir Ralph. Should negotiation fail, there was to be a suit *in* the Ecclesiastical Court for a Divorce from bed and board, on the pleas of cruelty and adultery:

The question of the retaining the child is the least clear. You ought to keep (what is most essential you have) the possession of it till the law obliges you to give it up. If Ld. B. should claim it legally your reasons for withholding it will be put forward and Mr. L. thinks under the existing circumstances that no Judge would sentence you to give it up; though had you been the person to claim it, the same Judge might not have thought it right to infringe the Law by taking it from the Father. I think that is the substance of the conference. If the negotiation fail, I do not think it will be either from anger or tenderness or from a wish to recover the child, which I am convinced of, he wishes it well and would rather you had it when in his sober senses—but I sometimes think the Love of Excitement would make him Glory in bringing upon himself the odium of the world. It broke out when G. B. threatened him with your Parents taking up your defence. He interrupted him with the most animated expressions of exultation and said " Let them come forward, I'll Glory in it ! " That feeling will I hope have worn itself out by the time he receives Your Father's letter, or at least the first Paroxysm of it, for I dare say, Should he yield to negotiation, he will often regret not having made the world wonder at his wickedness. Moderation in anything is intolerable to his Nature—he has courage to rush upon perdition but not that which is necessary to pursue the rugged path of repentance which he feels must be his road to Virtue—" I cannot be positively good, but what prevents me from being

' Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

positively bad ? Nothing—Well I'll show the World I'm fit for great things.'"'

On January 25 Lady Byron writes to her mother :

I have been comforted and confirmed as usual by one of Mrs. Leigh's kind letters. She has been the truest of friends to me and I hope you so regard her and *seem* to regard her as such, for I very much fear that she may be supposed the cause of separation by many, and it would be a cruel injustice.!

This letter, written to her mother, may be thought to express Lady Byron's true feeling of affection for her sister-in-law, and it corresponds with the letters of January and February to Mrs. Leigh. Lady Byron has excluded the suspicion of incest committed since her marriage. Whether the offence existed before the marriage she is not certain; but if it did, it has been renounced by Mrs. Leigh, who has testified her affection for Lady Byron by resisting Lord Byron's attempts to renew the offence, by protecting her from his cruelty and by unvaried kindness during the year of married life. Mrs. Leigh is not the cause of separation.

Lady Noel returned to Kirkby on January 28. On or about that day a letter from Sir Ralph Noel to Lord Byron proposing a separation was despatched, but it was intercepted and returned by Mrs. Leigh who wished to delay the final decision. Sir Ralph Noel then went to London, and his letter to Lord Byron, dated February 2, † was delivered by a messenger. The negotiations for a separation proceeded. On this subject the reader is referred to the correspondence already published. §

On February 14 Lady Byron writes to Dr. Lushington : " I could add many facts to my written statement, in which I do not find any exaggeration

' Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers † *Ibid.*

‡ *Lord Broughton*, ii, 209.

§ See *Prothro*, iii, 302, 322 ; *Lord Broughton*, ii, 191-366 ; *Quarterly Review*, October, 1869, p. 400 • January, 1870, p. 218.

no

THE BYRON MYSTERY

on the calmest reপরusal, but I hope it will not be *necessary* to record them.*

On the following day Lady Byron writes to Lushington again: "I have thought of Terms, as you desired, and should feel so very happy to be screened from molestation with the child, that I can scarcely think of any other advantages—nor do I know at all what the law might allow. I by no means wish to take those advantages in their full extent. I have, however, some views of comfort which could perhaps be reconciled with the offers most tempting to Lord B. I shall certainly resign my jointure altogether."f

On February 15 Lord Byron, having so far refused to agree to a separation, wrote to his wife: "I have requested to know with what I am charged; it is refused. Is this mercy or justice? We shall see." Further on in the same letter he says: "I have hitherto avoided naming my child, but this was a feeling you never doubted in me. I must ask of its welfare."! It is probable that Lady Byron took alarm at this letter, particularly as Lushington had expressed a doubt about her right to retain the custody of the child. She had not hitherto told the whole story of her married life, and she resolved to go to London and see Lushington herself.

On February 17 Lady Byron writes to propose an interview with Lushington, saying: "There are things which I, and I only, could explain to you in conversation that may be of great importance to the thorough understanding of the case."§

On February 22 Lady Byron arrived in London and the same day had a conference with Lushington and communicated additional facts which caused him to say that a reconciliation was impossible.

The line of Lord Byron's defence was prepared, if proceedings had been taken. Hanson told Captain

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers, t *Ibid.*

‡ *Lord Broughton*, ii, 258.

§ Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

THE STORY OF THE SEPARATION III

Byron that the cruelty before Lady Byron left Piccadilly Terrace was admitted, but the contention would be that it was condoned by Lady Byron's letter of January 16. It was not expected that the charge of adultery would be made.' Perhaps it was considered that that also was condoned.

In the course of the negotiations for separation, Hobhouse, on Byron's behalf, required that Lady Byron should disavow certain offences which rumour attributed to her husband as the cause of the wife's refusal to return to him. j Hobhouse drew up a paper containing the substance of the disavowal he demanded in the following terms :

Hobhouse's Propositions—March 7th, 1816.

Lady — solemnly affirms that her only motive or pretext in applying for a separation from Lord Byron is the conviction that from diversity of habits and opinions, their mental happiness is not likely to be insured by any further continuance of matrimonial intercourse.

She positively disclaims altogether any implied or actual charge against his Lordship—either as having menaced her at any time or times with any personal violence, or as having treated her during their living together with any *systematic cruelty* or uninterrupted neglect, or as having practised any infidelities within their own house.

She in the same manner most solemnly and without the least reserve disclaims for herself and her family any participation or belief in the several [*sic*] scandalous and calumnious rumours tending to the total destruction of his Lordship's character which have been propagated since the first intimation of her Ladyship's wish to separate from Lord Byron, and she repeats that she has never made, nor has now to make, ‡ against his Lordship not included in that of any habitual demonstration of what she considered the signs of a wayward disposition and an irritable temper, disqualifying him, in her opinion, for feeling or contributing to their comforts in the married state. §

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

‡ ? " any charge " omitted.

† *Lord Broughton*, ii, 299-301.

§ Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

THE BYRON MYSTERY

This demand was refused by Lady Byron's advisers and was not insisted upon by Lord Byron. Instead, he accepted a simple 'Disavowal' by Lady Byron in the terms which follow. The document was approved, but not signed, by Lady Byron. It was accepted by Hobhouse, but retained by Wilmot pending the negotiations on the other terms of the separation. On Wilmot's retirement from the office of mediator the Disavowal was kept by him, and Lord Broughton supposed that it was destroyed. The separation ultimately took place unfettered by any disavowal on the part of Lady Byron.

The document is in Lady Byron's handwriting :

Mivart's Hotel,
March 9, 1816.

In reference to a paper communicated by Mr. Wilmot, Lady Byron declares that she does not consider herself in any way responsible for the various reports injurious to Lord Byron's character and conduct which may be circulated in the world. They certainly have not originated with or been spread by herself or those most nearly connected with her. And the two reports specifically mentioned by Mr. Wilmot do not form any part of the charges which, in the event of a Separation by agreement not taking place, she should have been compelled to make against Lord Byron.

[In Mr. Wilmot's handwriting]

Written in my presence by Lady Byron.

(Signed) ROB. J. WILMOT.f

Lord Broughton tells us that one of " the two reports specifically mentioned by Mr. Wilmot " was that which concerned Mrs. Leigh. ‡ It will be observed that the disavowal is not a denial of the commission of the offence, which Lady Byron could not truthfully have given, but, in effect, merely an undertaking not to bring forward either of the two charges if proceedings are taken.

* *Lord Broughton*, ii, 303-315, 351. † Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.
‡ *Lord Broughton*, ii, 300. With regard to the other report, the subject of which Lord Broughton describes as "a crime more enormous," see p. 139, below.

Lady Byron prepared a memorandum of her motives of conduct in regard to Mrs. Leigh. The following is a copy :

Memorandum by Lady Byron. March, 1816.

My principles of conduct in regard to Mrs. Leigh were these. When I could not help perceiving things which must suggest dreadful suspicions, I considered that in proportion to the heinous nature of the crime, a stronger evidence was necessary. I could not adopt a middle line of conduct. I must either have quitted my husband at once upon such a supposition, by which I should have injured her character irreparably—or I must repel the idea as much as possible and act in direct opposition to it. The last alternative, however difficult and painful, appeared to be my duty ; and had I adopted the former without *absolute proof* to confirm my *opinion*, which has scarcely varied, I should have ever reproached myself for the *possibility* of having slandered the Innocent. I preferred any sufferings to such a risk.

But my belief has been so strong that *any* further corroborating evidence would fix it unchangeably.'

The above memorandum was probably the basis of a statement, signed by Wilmot, Doyle, Lushington and Lady Byron, and dated March 14, 1816, which records that during the year of her married life Lady Byron had reason to suspect that an improper connection had previously existed and might still exist between Lord Byron and Mrs. Leigh, but that Lady Byron had not immediately quitted the house for the following reasons : Because in the absence of positive proof, principles of duty and humanity forbade her to act as if Mrs. Leigh were guilty: Because she could not remove Mrs. Leigh except by a direct accusation—there was no middle course : Because Mrs. Leigh had shown her the utmost kindness and attention and had endeavoured to mitigate the violence and cruelty of Lord Byron : Because Mrs. Leigh at times exhibited signs of deep remorse, and Lady Byron

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

thought it possible that the crime, if committed, might have been repented of and not have been perpetrated since Lord Byron's marriage. The statement purports to be made to justify Lady Byron in renewing her intercourse with Mrs. Leigh, that being the most effectual method of protecting Mrs. Leigh's character." It will be remembered that Dr. Lushington had forbidden any further personal intercourse between Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh.^f The statement was not "merely a legal device for writing 'without prejudice' over all Lady Byron's manifestations of warm affection towards her half-sister-in-law."! It was more than this; it was a device for the protection of Mrs. Leigh's character.

On April 14 Lord Byron wrote a farewell letter to his wife requesting her to be kind to Augusta.[§]

On April 22 the deed of separation was executed, and on the 25th Lord Byron left England.

' *Astarte*, 46-48. † See *Prothero*, iii, 322, Letter 59.

X Lord Ernie in *Lord Byron and His Detractors*, 97.

§ *Astarte*, 51.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CORRESPONDENCE WITH MRS. LEIGH

ON February 26, 1816, the Honourable Mrs. Villiers, a friend of Mrs. Leigh's, wrote to Lady Byron that a report had been circulated in London respecting the separation which was in the highest degree prejudicial to Mrs. Leigh's character, and the writer had been assured that the report was confirmed by Lady Byron's refusal to assign a reason for the separation. Mrs. Villiers suggested that Lady Byron should contradict the report by making known to her friends the confidence, esteem and affection which she felt for Mrs. Leigh. It was hoped that the rumour might not reach Mrs. Leigh, but, should it continue to circulate, her friends would have to insist on her leaving London.[#]

Lady Byron replied on the same day, expressing regret at the circumstance mentioned by Mrs. Villiers, but stating that the writer was in no way responsible for the reports that had been circulated, that she had expressed to her friends her gratitude to and affection for Mrs. Leigh, and that, under advice, she must abstain from disclosing the *real* grounds of difference between Lord Byron and herself.^f

The underlining of the word *real* seems intended to indicate that the subject of the rumour affecting Mrs. Leigh was not the cause of the separation. Short of denying that the charge was true, Lady Byron could not have taken means so sure to silence the world as by continuing in affectionate intercourse with Mrs. Leigh.

On April 27th Lady Byron writes to Mrs. Villiers :
Since you so kindly approve my conduct from the *partial*

[#] Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

[†] *Quarterly Review*, Jan., 1870, p. 232, where the date of the letter is given as Feb. 20.

knowledge of its real grounds which one conversation could afford, I can feel no doubt that, if more fully explained, *you* would *enter* into those motives which the World would call romantic or insane. . . .

I must again repeat my caution against the mention of *opinions* on particular subjects on *my* authority. Perhaps in this respect you will feel inclined to lessen your encomiums of my friendly exertions, if you did not perfectly apprehend what I meant to convey, that I had done *everything* for Augusta but *giving precisely such an authority*. . . . You will admit that whilst imputations are countenanced directly against my friends, and obliquely against me, I *have* stepped beyond the bounds of mere justice, and it is only most painful that I am *not able* to do more.*

In other words, Lady Byron would not authorise the expression of an opinion that Mrs. Leigh was guiltless, though she was prepared to do everything short of this to allay suspicion. She could not permit unjust imputations against her friends and had stepped beyond the bounds of mere justice to prevent this (and would do so in Mrs. Leigh's case), but she could not do more.

Lady Byron having explained her position in relation to Mrs. Leigh to Mrs. Villiers, the latter, with Mr. Wilmot, urged her to inform Mrs. Leigh of the knowledge she possessed. Dr. Lushington and Colonel Doyle saw no necessity for this step and would have preferred that all intercourse with Mrs. Leigh should cease.^f

Lady Byron would not consent to sacrifice Mrs. Leigh, but she determined to come to an understanding with her. The position had become impossible without an explanation of Lady Byron's suspicions. Mrs. Villiers was in favour of an unequivocal communication ; to this Lady Byron objected that it is easier for the injured than the guilty to pardon, and doubted whether any woman would forgive to another such

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers. † *Astarte*, 58.

an avowal. Lady Byron had sometimes thought that a tacit understanding existed between Mrs. Leigh and herself—"particularly when she (Mrs. Leigh) believed him acquitted by Insanity and seemed herself sinking under the most dreadful remorse—but her tone has since changed from penitence to pride. . . I do not conceive that the repetition of his words to me in private could make a change in her feelings, if what passed in her presence did not." Lady Byron's idea was to exercise patience and that moral principle could be revived with the help of Time—Absence—and Solitude.' In the same letter Lady Byron explains her letters to Mrs. Leigh of January and February f :

There are parts of my conduct I wish to explain to you—particularly how I came to express satisfaction in her remaining in London during my first visit here (Kirkby)‡—though before I left it I had strongly advised her removal for her own sake. I had even told her what Dr. Baillie said, upon the presumption of insanity, that *he* ought not to be left with *any* young woman after my departure. My anxiety to prevent her continuing in the house was such, that I thought it my duty to confide to Mrs. Byron [Mrs. Sophia Byron] only, the horrible desires he had entertained, and have her permission to communicate them to A i f absolutely necessary, to save her from imprudence about him. I afterwards wrote to Mrs. B. from hence, saying that my apprehensions were relieved by Captain B.'s residence in the House. A's letters to me here also weakened these impressions of *existing* danger, which I was always struggling to repel. Still it was only when my enfeebled and distracted state of mind was worked upon by the representations of hazard to Lord B. if left alone, that I uttered those expressions, which almost all her letters were calculated to *extort*—and before I left this place, I decidedly expressed to her my conviction that those

' Lady Byron to Mrs. Villiers, May 6, 1816 ; *Astarte*, 199-200.

† *Prothero*, iii, 294-315.

‡ Lord Lovelace suggests that this refers to a visit in April, 1815 (*Astarte*, 200, note), but I think that this letter and those that follow clearly refer to Lady Byron's visit of January, 1816. She returned to London on Feb. 22, and paid her second visit to Kirkby, according to her reckoning, on April 25.

fears which were the *alleged* causes of her stay were groundless.

In reply, Mrs. Villiers writes on May 9 of Mrs. Leigh's attitude : " Her expressions of conscious innocence to me are certainly wonderful." Mrs. Villiers ventures to ask why Lady Byron had urged Augusta to come to town during her confinement. This circumstance had been mentioned to her by Augusta in consequence of Augusta having heard both from the Wilmots and Mrs. Villiers that Lord Byron had allowed himself to advance opinions publicly which could not but create the reports that had been circulated. Augusta said, if Lady Byron had ever heard such reports, or if she had not treated them with the contempt they deserved, would she have invited Augusta to come ?[#] Lady Byron replies on May 12 that at that time her suspicions had not been corroborated and could not have been acted on without risking a cruel injury to Mrs. Leigh. Lady Byron must have treated her as guilty or innocent ; there was no medium. The evidence then rested on Lord Byron's words and manners and Mrs. Leigh's assent and submission. Besides, at that time Lady Byron believed there was no danger because her husband's inclinations were absorbed in another direction ; she believed that the residence of any human being in the house would be the means of saving herself and her child, and she had but Mrs. Leigh to look to. Yet before she allowed her to come, for she had many times offered it, she seriously urged her to reflect on the consequences that might ensue to herself. During this visit Lady Byron's suspicions as to *previous* circumstances were most strongly corroborated—above all, by Mrs. Leigh's confessions and admissions when in a state of despair and distraction. They were of the most unequivocal nature possible, unless she had expressly named the subject

* *Astarte*, 201.

of her remorse and horror. Lady Byron had urged that *everything* was expiable by repentance and felt more bound to be the support of one whom she thought broken-hearted, when her sister-in-law repeatedly said she had forfeited all hope of salvation. "When I tell you," continues Lady Byron, "that Ld. B. made two, and I believe three of the worst women in London his confidantes on this subject, even in detail, and even on paper, you will not wonder at the report. I have been the means of silencing its principal sources."

Writing on May 18, Mrs. Villiers expresses regret to find how frequently she has been induced from Augusta's partial statements to give the very worst advice possible. Augusta had frequently written to Mrs. Villiers in the autumn, stating Lady Byron's urgent requests to her to go to town, omitting to mention her own offers of going and Lady Byron's admonitions to her to reflect on the consequences, and Mrs. Villiers advised her to go. Mrs. Villiers suggests that Mr. Wilmot should convey to Mrs. Leigh the knowledge that Lady Byron possesses, which would avoid the possibility of her consenting to join Lord Byron abroad.^f

There is another statement in this letter which deserves attention. Mrs. Villiers relates that Mrs. Leigh has told her *the* reports were circulated by Lady Caroline Lamb. Mrs. Villiers replied that though this might be true, yet that Lord B. had by his imprudent way of talking given ample ground for such reports. Mrs. Leigh assured Mrs. Villiers, with warmth, that she had been misinformed, for he had given her (Mrs. Leigh) his solemn word of honour that he had never said anything that could give rise to any report of the kind. Mrs. Villiers replied that he had advanced the most extraordinary theory upon such subjects at Holland House. When Mrs.

* *Astarte*, 202.

†

Ibid. 204.

Leigh found that Mrs. Villiers alluded to things said in general terms and not any direct allusion to her, she softened, said it was a pity he would say such things, that she had often remonstrated in vain, that he only said these things to surprise people, and that his words did him more harm than his actions.

On May 23 Lady Byron states her objections to a full and immediate communication. It might render Mrs. Leigh desperate and so force Lady Byron to countenance the report, while the plan Lady Byron proposed would leave Mrs. Leigh the power of profiting by her forbearance without compelling the utterly degrading confession of her own guilt.*

Accordingly, on June 3 Lady Byron writes to Mrs. Leigh the letter of that date quoted in *Astarte* (p. 210), announcing that "there are reasons founded on such circumstances in your conduct, as (though thoroughly convinced they have existed) I am most anxious to bury in silence, which indispensably impose the duty of *limiting* my intercourse with you." To this Mrs. Leigh replies on June 6 (*Ibid.* 213) :

To general accusations I must answer in general terms—and if I were on my death-bed I could affirm, as I *now* do, that I have uniformly considered you and consulted your happiness before and above anything in this world. . . . I have been assured that the tide of public opinion has been so turned against my brother that the least appearance of coolness on your part towards me would injure me most seriously—and I am therefore *for the sake of my children* compelled to accept from your *compassion* the "limited intercourse" which is all you can grant to me whom you pronounce no longer worthy of your esteem and affection ! But the time may come when your present convictions and opinions will change—in the interim I feel how hopeless would be every attempt to defend myself. The only person whose testimony could avail me in proving how strictly and

* *Astarte*, 207,

invariably I have done my duty by you—I have heard from your own lips you consider unworthy of belief.

With regard to this letter, it is difficult to understand how Mrs. Leigh's unconditional acceptance of the position could be consistent with innocence. The charge is : " Circumstances in your conduct, which I am anxious to bury in silence, compel me to limit my intercourse with you." The answer is : " In the present state of public opinion, the appearance of coolness towards me on your part would injure me seriously. I am therefore compelled to accept from your compassion the limited intercourse you offer. Some day I hope your opinion will change." This is a tacit admission by Mrs. Leigh that something in her conduct is only fit to be buried in silence. Would not an innocent person say, at least : " You are under some mistake ; give me an opportunity to explain by telling me what is in your mind, and there will be no need to limit our intercourse " ? There was something that could not be denied and Mrs. Leigh dared not ask what it was. The " conduct " referred to is apparently connected with the subject of the rumour which has caused public opinion to turn against Lord Byron. If so, and if, as seems certain, the witness on the general charge whose testimony Lady Byron will not accept, is Lord Byron, then the meaning is clear : the offence has not been repeated since Lord Byron's marriage. During the period of the marriage Mrs. Leigh has considered Lady Byron and consulted her happiness before and above anything in the world.

Another letter from Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh followed, but it has not been preserved. Mrs. Leigh writes in answer on June 22 :

Your letter is very acceptable—and more like comfort than *anything* in *any shape* I have had this long time—for *one* word of kindness from *you* is I assure you of more value than

many from others. . . . I intended to have dispatched [a letter] to-day if only to say that I was persuaded you thought you were acting right by me and that even *considering what you must think of me*, I owe you gratitude—putting the present out of the question—your past kindness can never be forgotten—perhaps—and I earnestly hope it—that as I have often told you, you once thought *too well* of me, you may some day discover you now think *too ill*—God bless you, my dear A.*

On June 30 Lady Byron writes in reply :

I thought that expressions of kindness might be offensive with such a communication, and for that reason I forbore to say much of what was in my heart towards you—I must disclaim all acknowledgments for feelings I *cannot* resign—there is nothing to wound your pride in accepting them—and it will be some consolation to *me* if you really value them—and if they lead you to forgive the sincerity of my avowal. Do not pain me by recurring to obligations. If I could think you owed me any, it would be only for the endurance of trials of which I endeavoured to keep you ignorant—'though you were their cause—I was not the less anxious to spare your feelings—to hope and trust for the future, even when I could not but have the strongest doubts of the past. Yet I rejected suspicion and threw myself on your generosity. You need not regret the want of *other* testimonies to the personal kindness and attention by which, notwithstanding the unhappy impression on my mind, you have alleviated my other misery. For this I am still grateful—and shall always express myself so. You express a desire to see me. If I might think only of myself I would go to you this moment—but I may not sacrifice others—and it is due to the future welfare of my child, perhaps eventually to your own, that I should at present act on principles contrary to my inclinations. From *these* considerations our personal intercourse must be suspended—though I will never *appear* to avoid you. In time, circumstances, and above all, your own conduct, may lessen or increase the objections which now appear—and it will indeed be a moment of comfort to me, that you ever have real comfort in meeting me as your friend and sister'†

* *Astarte*, 219.

†

Ibid

221.

Only a penitent sinner, humiliated, and anxious to make amends by doing penance, could have submitted without protest to such a communication, whether from old or young, and Mrs. Leigh was thirty-two and Lady Byron twenty-four. Sir Leslie Stephen well said that it made him quite uncomfortable to read Mrs. Leigh's letters of humiliation dated in 1816.' There was nothing of protest in Mrs. Leigh's reply of July 3 :

All I hear from you only serves to increase my sense of the obligations I owe you. . . . I only wish that *every past and present* thought could be open to you—you would *then* think *less* ill of me than you do now. I declare—after the strictest examination of my own heart, there is not *one act or thought towards yourself* I would not wish you acquainted with. You say my dear A. / *have been the cause of your sufferings*—if I have it has been *innocently*—this must be my only consolation. Had I even entertained the *slightest* suspicions of any " *doubts* " of yours—I never could or would have entered your house—perhaps I did wrong, as it was, to do so—but I was under delusion certainly—(I don't mean *mad*). The little portion of peace now remaining is in the reflexion that I *endeavoured* to do right. . . . Dearest A. / *have not wronged you, I have not abused your generosity* . . . one ray of comfort and hope suggested itself in the thought that *we may meet again*—that *my future conduct* may conduce to it. Tell me—pray—of anything in that which could by possibility atone for the past--in pity—tell it me dearest A. that I may have one more chance of happiness. †

These letters may be interpreted as follows :

Lady Byron suspends personal intercourse as due to the welfare of her child. She holds out hope of a renewal which will depend upon circumstances, especially upon Mrs. Leigh's own conduct. This implies some great cause of offence. Mrs. Leigh replies that all she hears from Lady Byron only serves to increase her sense of obligation. She is grateful for

' *Astarte*, 58, n.

†

Ibid. 223.

absolution and submits to her punishment. Her one ray of hope and comfort is that they may meet again and that her future conduct may conduce to this. There has been no offence connected with Lady Byron's household, but Mrs. Leigh would have kept away from the house had she supposed Lady Byron had doubts that it might be so connected. Mrs. Leigh does not suggest that the doubts were unreasonable, but, rather, that she herself was to blame for not seeing that they existed. She declares that she cannot charge herself with one act or thought towards Lady Byron that she would not wish her acquainted with. She had not wronged her or abused her generosity. The offence then, was not against Lady Byron personally and yet her forgiveness is gratefully accepted. It must have been a sin, if not a crime, involving great disgrace, that the offender should write, "*considering what you must think of me*"

Mrs. Leigh's letter continues :

" In respect to the '*recent parts of my conduct openly unfavourable to you*'—will you at a convenient opportunity explain *what* they were ? for I really cannot guess." Mrs. Leigh expresses no doubt on the meaning of the earlier portion of the letter.

In writing to Mrs. Leigh on July n, Lady Byron comes nearer to the plain facts.

In the last part of the time we were under the same roof you will now remember some things by which I intimated that I knew more than you thought, and almost offered myself to your confidence—not to betray it, as *it has been betrayed*—but that I might have more power to befriend you, if you were sincerely desirous to "*atone for the past*" As you do not and never have attempted to deceive me respecting previous facts, of which my conviction is unalterable, I rely the more on your simple assertion of having "*never wronged me*" intentionally—/*believe it implicitly*', and I lament that you *misjudgingly* pursued a line of conduct so difficult for yourself—so dangerous and I believe so preju-

dicial to the ungoverned feelings of another—and inevitably tending to continue or renew *his* criminal recollections. Pardon a word I will never repeat . . . Dearest Augusta—You will think, perhaps justly, that I erred in encouraging you myself—but my situation was most extraordinary. I could not till a late period, *hear to admit things to myself* sufficiently to act upon them—and resisted what would have brought absolute conviction to any other person—and you were to me the kindest friend and comforter. . . . When I speak of the necessity of confidence, do not suppose I wish to exact any confession. Let the past be *understood* now, to be buried in future—and whenever we do meet, I hope you will not imagine I am under the influence of any feeling that could distress you, for I have often felt in your presence, under much more painful circumstances, all that I *could* now feel—and it has had no effect on me but that of rendering me more tenderly fearful of adding to the pain and oppression I believed you already felt. From this motive I have appeared unconscious of a thousand allusions, as intelligible to me as to you. To my husband I had another motive for assuming ignorance, having *had reason* to think that my life and every hope might depend upon it. You will feel that it was impossible to go on thus—and it would alone have formed a sufficient ground for the step I took.'

The last sentence must mean that although Lady Byron had ignored her husband's allusions for fear of adding to the pain and oppression she believed Mrs. Leigh felt, it was impossible for that state of things to continue, and that alone would have formed a sufficient ground for claiming a separation.

Mrs. Leigh replied on July 15, thanking Lady Byron for all the kindness contained in her letter :

The *delusion* to which I alluded was an *entire unsuspection* that *you even suspected*—that I caused or added to you misery—which *every* thing on *your* part and many on that of *another* tended to confirm—as I now remember " some things " to which you allude—you may also some which could not but deceive me—it is still like a *horrid dream* to me my dearest A—that I caused your sufferings, whose whole anxiety was at least

to mitigate them—I felt it as my only consolation to do *all* I could, and indeed to the best of my judgment I *did it*. Many a time I should have felt it one to have confided unreservedly in you—but concealment appeared a duty under such circumstances—and you know I am of a sanguine disposition and to the very last had hopes of better for you—and for him. I lament from my heart all the unintentional errors to which you allude. I can never accuse you of *injustice*—but I am not sure even now if on *one* point you are not mistaken—and I don't know how to explain myself. What *can* I say to you of my present and past feelings except that I wish my heart were open to you that you might judge of its weaknesses and point out the remedy. I hope it is not presumption in me to say that *some* of its feelings would be such as to give you consolation. My dear A—I am perfectly unable to decide *how* to act for the best respecting *him* and his knowledge of what has passed between us—if only I was concerned in the consequences I should care less. *Certainly* it is desirable he should have no ground to imagine you unkind towards me—but as yet—I have had positive injunctions never to mention anybody or anything except the little girl—of whom I've transmitted the bulletins. I have now a safer opportunity than the post of sending any particular communication as his friend H is to set out to join him next Sunday. I wish you to reflect on what I had better do—I really *must now* entirely mistrust my own judgment there are dangers to be apprehended *both* ways—at least I see many from his ignorance. . . . If you mean by my representation of circumstances that I have mentioned the idea of *insanity*—I certainly did dear A—but *always* at the same time that you were the particular object of *irritation and aversion*. . . . When I talk of difficulties I've had to encounter don't think I mean to *complain* of them—I'm sensible of their original cause—and am and have been most anxious to atone for *that*. Your friendship and kindness is the greatest comfort I have—my dear A—Heaven will reward for all—I never can express myself as I wish towards you.*

This letter identifies the unnamed person with Lord Byron. On September 8, 1816, he writes to Mrs. Leigh from Geneva: "I have sent answers to

your letter delivered by Mr. H."* Hobhouse was with him.

On April 22, 1816, the day Lord Byron executed the deed of separation, he wrote to Mrs. Leigh :

The deeds are signed, so that is done. All I have to beg or desire on the subject is—that you will never mention or allude to Lady Byron's name again in any shape—or on any occasion except indispensable business. Of the child you will inform me and write about poor little dear *Da*—and see it whenever you can.j

Mrs. Leigh is sensible of the original cause of her difficulties and is anxious to atone for that. She mentions *insanity*, the idea of which she had impressed on Lady Byron as affecting her brother's conduct at the time of the separation.

The " *one point* " on which she thinks Lady Byron may still be mistaken is explained by the following letters. Mrs. Leigh fears that Lady Byron may still be under the impression that the offence had been continued after Lord Byron's marriage. To the injunction, " Do not suppose I wish to exact any confession," the answer is, " I wish my heart were open to you—that you might judge of its weaknesses and point out the remedy."

On July 17 Lady Byron writes to Mrs. Leigh :

I hope I understand you as well as any human being can another. Will you still think me mistaken " on one point " when I say I am now thoroughly convinced that if from the hour we first met, *all* your conduct had been open to me, I could not have found in it anything to reproach you with—for that your errors of judgment, how'ever to be regretted were *perfectly innocent*—God knows what satisfaction I have in making this acknowledgment—and in resigning doubts as to *those* parts of your conduct which have but transiently existed and will never return to wrong you. Tell me if this is satisfactory ? . . . It seems to me that you dwell too much on the pain you involuntarily occasioned me, and not enough

' *Astarte*, 265. † British Museum, Add. MS. 31057, fo. 37.

on the irreparable injury you did *him* by the voluntary sacrifices (for to principles and feelings like yours they must have been *entirely* sacrifices) which you once made to his immediate indulgences. Perhaps with you he has not given way to the frantic agonies of Remorse—alas ! far from repentance—which I have seen awakened by anything in connection with that fatal remembrance. I know there were other causes for his Despair, but I believe this to have been as baneful as any—and it made *all succeeding* intimacy unavoidably injurious.*

In the earlier part of this letter Lady Byron has succeeded in an attempt to be obscure though her correspondent can have had no difficulty in understanding her. Lady Byron implies a conviction in her own mind that before her first meeting with Mrs. Leigh the offence had been repented of and was not renewed, therefore it could not be a ground of reproach by her. The " errors of judgment " refer to " *all succeeding* intimacy " which was "unavoidably injurious." This was the conduct which had but transiently existed and had caused Lady Byron to doubt whether the offence had not been renewed, a doubt which she now resigned. In the later portion of the letter the writer speaks plainly. In a letter to Mrs. Villiers of July 17, Lady Byron writes :

I have an answer—*all* that it ought to be or that I could desire. It thoroughly convinces me of her innocence in regard to all the period with which I was concerned—and that every error towards me has not been of the *heart* but the *judgment*. I feel most thankful for this conviction and these feelings.f

To the letter of July 17 Mrs. Leigh replies on July 20 :

Don't I pray reproach yourself—any indecision in *your* conduct was caused I am convinced by kindness and consideration which no other human being would have shown in similar circumstances. What you say my dear A on the

* *Astarte*, 235.

†

Ibid. 237.

" one point " is indeed " satisfactory " in ye GREATEST degree to me.'

On July 23 Mrs. Leigh writes again to Lady Byron :

You(r) last letter my dearest A. was such a comfort to me—ye greatest I can at present receive—since I think from it you *do* understand me as well as any human being can another and I have suffered a great deal from the idea that you might and did mistake me *on one point*, . . . Thank you my dear A—for complying with my request—and offering your thoughts—I am certain they are right and I assure you I always mistrust *my own* and endeavour to examine into every motive. . . . I never witnessed anything like what you have, alas ! and describe to have been *his* Agonies—and whatever I have suffered I have always carefully concealed from him, altho' could I have hoped for any good effect, it might have been greater kindness not to have done so.f

On July 30 Lady Byron writes to Mrs. Leigh giving reasons against any future personal intercourse between her and Lord Byron :

What has passed *on his part* since my marriage, in my presence as well as in my absence, must on reconsideration, convince you they [associations prejudicial to good influence] were in no degree done away—*Our* visit to S.M.B. [Six Mile Bottom]—even the first night of it, will make you sensible of this. He then made me most cruelly sensible of what engrossed his thoughts and actuated his conduct. His visit to you afterwards, when his resentment was excited by the blameless principle of your opposition, in short many more facts I shall not recall, lead to the same conclusion. . . . The only time when I believe he was really on the brink of suicide, was on an occasion relating to his remorse about you. If I think you have something to atone for to him, much more do I think he owes *you* atonement. Till you feel in reality that he has been your worst friend—indeed, *not* your friend—you cannot altogether think rightly—yet I am far from thinking any uncharitable feelings are to follow—forgive him—desire his welfare—but resign the pernicious view of being his friend more nearly.!

**Astarte*, 241., † *Ibid.* 242. ‡ *Ibid.* 246.

Mrs. Leigh replies to this letter on August 5 that she has considered all the reasons against future personal intercourse, and while agreeing that it is most desirable to avoid it, thinks it might lead to consequences injurious to more than the writer, to make any open declarations. At present there seems little prospect of any difficulty arising as there is no idea of his returning. She has *long* felt that he has *not* been her friend, but from her heart she forgives him and prays God to forgive him and change his heart. She would do anything consistently with her duty to God and to others to contribute to his good, but whether she may be able, it is impossible to foresee. Supposing he returns "nothing should induce me to see him again so frequently or in the way I have done—but that merely I see difficulties in saying / *will never see you again.*"

The expression "consequences injurious to more than the writer" no doubt alludes to the fact that Mrs. Leigh and her children were named as legatees in Lord Byron's will.

On August 6 Mrs. Leigh writes that she hopes to spin out her stay in London until Lady Byron's arrival, that she wishes to see her, there is so much she has to say which it would be endless to write.^f

Lady Byron came to London on August 31, and Mrs. Leigh made a verbal confession to her that the offence had been committed, but not subsequently to Lord Byron's marriage.[†]

Towards the middle of September, 1816, it was arranged between Lady Byron and Mrs. Villiers that the former should write to Mrs. Leigh telling her that the report had become known to Mrs. Villiers from information which originated with Lord B., that she was horrified at Lord Byron's conduct, while wishing to befriend Mrs. Leigh and willing to see her. The letter was written accordingly about September 12. In

* *Astarte*, 249.

†

Ibid. 250.

% *Ibid.* 65.

a postscript Lady Byron adds : " I have read the lines to you—and think they ought not to be seen by anyone." The lines referred to are the *Epistle to Augusta*.

Mrs. Leigh replies the same day expressing gratitude to Lady Byron and Mrs. Villiers. f

In writing to Mrs. Villiers (September 13 ?) Lady Byron says : " She has shown me of her own accord *his* letters to her—having only suppressed them because of the bitterness towards me—they are *absolute love letters*—and she wants to know how she can stop them." †

In another letter to Mrs. Villiers (September 14) Lady Byron writes that A has consulted her upon the point whether she did not owe it to Mrs. Villiers *voluntarily* to renounce all connection with her. The knowledge that Mrs. Villiers could and would forgive her only seemed to humble her more. The effect of knowing that she was still further betrayed made her determine at first " never to write to him again," but a violent resolution is not to be desired. §

On September 15, Mrs. Villiers quotes in a letter to Lady Byron one she has written to Mrs. Leigh, assuring the latter that as her (Mrs. Villiers's) compassion had been excited and her affection not alienated when she first heard for truth all that she had so long rejected with scorn, it was not likely to be so *now* that Augusta was all that she and Lady Byron could wish :

I told her that I considered her the victim to the most infernal plot that had ever entered the heart of man to conceive, that I wish'd I could think the Plot was over, but I was positive it was not—that I warn'd her to be on her guard and that the best precaution she could take was unbounded, unreserved confidence in you—that not a letter—a note—a word, should pass between her and him without being submitted to you—that you were her Guardian Angel and the only

' *Astarte*, 255. † *Ibid.* 256, ‡ *Ibid.* 257. § *Ibid.* 258.

person who could assist her to counteract the execrable villany of the other. I told her that my horror, my detestation, my execration of the person who had beguiled and betrayed her exceeded all my powers of expression and that with the exception of forgiveness, no other feelings than those I described *could, should, or ought* to exist in her mind towards him.'

On September 17 Mrs. Leigh writes to Lady Byron from Six Mile Bottom :

I shall be glad that you see Mrs. V. again ; I have a *very* great dread of *her* thinking me a perfect *sto?ie*, and perhaps she will believe you that I am not—I feel I can't undeceive her—for the more *anxious* I am—the less I am able. She terms you my *Guardian Angel* and I am sure you are so. Towards *another* person—she is *very* violent in her expressions of resentment—and it is I dare say very natural, but I think it better not to say a word in answer—tho' in fact I am the one *much* the most to blame—and quite inexcusable. You know—I trust—that I am anxious to make every atonement—and will assist me. Your suspicions—Do they particularly allude to *my own* maid ? I have thought of that but can't perceive any cause for them there ; the great partiality always manifested towards him I think would prove that—but my blindness about other things, as you say, ought to make me more watchful. . . . When I write to B. it will be as you advise. Do not show the letter I sent you to Mrs. V. I should think it wrong to any but you—My Guardian Angel !‡

It will not be disputed that in September, 1816, Lady Byron was convinced that the offence in question had been committed before Lord Byron's marriage and not after. It is submitted that the above correspondence proves that this view⁷ of the facts was communicated by Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh and that Mrs. Leigh understood that this view was held by Lady Byron and was the purport of her communication, and moreover that Mrs. Leigh admitted that this view was correct. The confession had this good

' *Astarte*, 259.

†

Ibid. 261,

result. The doubt and suspicion no longer remained and it was proved that Mrs. Leigh had not been unfaithful to her sister-in-law.

But if it be said that Lord Byron cannot be convicted by the admissions of Mrs. Leigh, we must examine his later letters, though the case against him founded on the earlier letters and journals and poems, is also relied on. With one or two exceptions, none of Mrs. Leigh's letters to him have been preserved.* The only one quoted in *Astarte* (p. 37) is dated December 15, 1814, on the eve of Byron's marriage. It is remarkable for the tenderness of its expressions and the symbol + is freely interspersed. "Mignonne" [Medora, born April 15, 1814] is very good humoured because a visitor has found out a likeness to her in Byron's picture. It is a striking fact, pointed out by the author of the *Vindication* (p. xi), that among more than six hundred letters of Lord Byron published by Moore, there is not one to Mrs. Leigh.

Astarte contains a series of letters from Lord Byron to his sister from August, 1816, to October, 1823[^] The following passages have been selected, as appearing strangely in such a correspondence :

Aug. 27, 1816. Do not be uneasy—and do not "hate yourself." If you hate either let it be *me*—but do not—it would kill me—we are the last persons in the world—who ought—or could cease to love one another. Ever dearest thine -f B.

(Same letter). Still I think all these apprehensions very groundless. Who can care for such a wretch as C. [Lady Caroline Lamb] or believe such a seventy times convicted liar? And in the next place whatever she may suppose or assert—I never "committed" any one to her but *myself*.

Sept. 8, 1816. As to all these "mistresses"—Lord help me—I have had but one. Now don't scold—but, what could I do? A foolish girl . . . etc., etc⁴

* *Astarte*, 36.

†

Ibid. 264-313.

‡ This refers to Jane Clairmont, mother of Byron's daughter Allegra. See *Prothero*, iii, 347.

Sept. 14, 1816. This country (Switzerland) is altogether the Paradise of Wilderness—I wish you were in it with me—and every one else out of it—Love me, A, ever thine—B.

Oct. 15, 1816 (referring to a manuscript collection at Milan containing the original love letters and verses of Lucretia de Borgia and Cardinal Bembo): And pray what do you think is one of her *signatures*? Why this + a Cross, which she says is to stand for her name, etc. Is not this amusing? I suppose you know that she was a famous beauty and famous for the use she made of it; and that she was the love of this same Cardinal Bembo (beside a story about her papa Pope Alexander, and her brother Caesar Borgia—which some people don't believe—and others do) . . .

A *thousand loves* to you from me—which is very generous for I only ask *one* in return. Ever dearest thine B.

Oct. 28, 1816. I really do not and cannot understand all the mysteries and alarms in your letters and more particularly in the last. All I know is—that no human power short of destruction—shall prevent me from seeing you when—where and how—I may please—according to time and circumstance . . . anything which is to divide us would drive me quite out of my senses. . . . Direct as usual to Geneva—hope the best—and love me the most—as I ever must love you. B.

December 18, 1816. I have fallen in love with a very pretty Venetian of two and twenty, with great black eyes. She is married—and so am I—which is very much to the purpose. . . . Her spouse is a very good kind of man who occupies himself elsewhere. . . . I forgot to tell you—• that the *Demoiselle* [Jane Clairmont]—who returned to England from Geneva—went there to produce a new baby B, who is now about to make his appearance. . . .

June 3, 1817. The last city (Bologna) you know—or do not know—is celebrated for the production of Popes—Cardinals—painters—and sausages—besides a female Professor of anatomy, who has left there many models of the art in waxwork, some of them not the most decent. I have received all your letters I believe, which are full of woes, megrims and mysteries; but my sympathies remain in suspense, for, for the life of me, I can't make out whether your disorder is a broken heart or the earache—or whether

it is *you* that have been ill or the children—or what your melancholy and mysterious apprehensions tend to, or refer to, whether to Caroline Lamb's novels—Mrs. Clermont's evidence—Lady Byron's magnanimity—or any other piece of imposture ; I know nothing of what you are in the doldrums about at present. I should think that all that could affect *you* must have been over long ago ; and as for me—leave me to take care of myself.

June 19, 1817. I repeat to you again and again—that it would be much better at once to explain your mysteries—than to go on with this absurd obscure hinting mode of writing. What do you mean ? What is there known ? or can be known ? which *you* and I do not know much better ? and what concealment can you have from me ? I never shrank—and it was on your account principally that I gave way at all—for I thought they would endeavour to drag you into it—although they had no business with anything previous to my marriage with that infernal fiend whose destruction I shall yet see.

Sept. 21, 1818. (Allegra's mother had " come prancing over the Appenines " to see her child.) I declined seeing her for fear that the consequence might be an addition to the family. . . . As troubles don't come single, here is another confusion. The chaste wife of a baker—having quarrelled with her tyrannical husband—has run away *to me* (God knows without being invited) . . . and swears she won't give up her unlawful love (myself) for anybody or anything. . . . As the morals of this place are very lax, all the women commend her and say she had done right—especially her own relations. You need not be alarmed—I know how to manage her—and can deal with anything but a cold-blooded animal such as Miss Milbanke. The worst is that she won't let a woman come into the house unless she is as old and frightful as possible. . . . You see Goose that there is no quiet in this world—so be a good woman—and repent of your sins.

Nov. 28, 1819. (Describes his *liaison* with Countess Guiccioli.)

Aug. 19, 1820. My dearest Augusta—I always loved you better than any earthly existence and I always shall unless I go mad.

Oct. 5, 1821. (Further description of the *liaison* with Countess Guiccioli, who is now living with Byron.) So that you see that I have closed as *papa begun* . . . 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—(except *one, and who was she, can you guess?*).*

On December 10, 1820, Lady Byron wrote to her husband in reply to requests from him that she would be kind to Augusta :

The past shall not prevent me from befriending Augusta Leigh and her children in any future circumstances which may call for my assistance—I promise to do so. She knows nothing of this.

Lord Byron replied on December 28 :

I acknowledge your note which is on the whole satisfactory—the style a little harsh—but that was to be expected—it would have been too great a peace-offering after nearly five years—to have been gracious in the manner, as well as in the matter. Yet you might have been so—for, communications between *us*—are like " Dialogues of the Dead "—or " Letters between this world and the next." You have alluded to the " past " and I to the future. As to Augusta—she knows as little of my request as of your answer. Whatever she is or may have been—you have never had reason to complain of her—on the contrary—you are not aware of the obligations under which you have been to her. Her life and mine—and yours and mine—were two things perfectly distinct from each other—when one ceased the other began—and now both are closed. . . . P.S. Excuse haste—I have scribbled in great quickness—and do not attribute it to ill-humour—but to matters which are on hand—and which must be attended to—I am really obliged by your attention to my request. You could not have sent me anything half so acceptable but I have *burnt* your note that you may be under no restraint but your internal feeling. It is a comfort to me *now*—beyond all comforts, that A and her children will be thought of—after I am nothing. . . . She and two others were the only things I ever really loved—I may say it now for we are young no longer .†

* See *Astarte*, 308, note 1.

† *Ibid.* 110-113.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LETTER OF MAY 17, 1819

IT remains to examine the letter of May 17, 1819, Mrs. Leigh being the person to whom it is addressed, according to *Astarte*, and to discover whether the writer and recipient can be identified by the contents. The full text of the letter will be found in Appendix II.'

Lord Lovelace states that the signature of the writer of the letter is erased.^f It should be noted that the letter is printed from the copy in Lady Byron's handwriting, made from the original submitted for her perusal and returned to Mrs. Leigh.⁴ On examination, it seems probable that the scrawl which stands for a signature in Lady Byron's copy is roughly copied from Byron's signature in the original and represents the letter 'B.'[§] There is nothing to suggest an erasure. The point is mentioned because it has been suggested that the letter was not written by Byron,^{||} but there is sufficient evidence, if the signature were erased, to prove the letter to be his.

The letter is dated from Venice, May 17, 1819, and is addressed : " To (name effaced by Mrs. Leigh)^[to the care of Jno. Murray, Esq., 50, Albermarle Street, London, Angleterre."

Byron was at Venice at this date and we know that he wrote to Mrs. Leigh on May 17, 1819. This is proved by a letter from Venice addressed to Murray on May 18, in which Byron says : " Tell Augusta that

* See also *Astarte*, 81-83.

† *Ibid.* 83.

‡ *Ibid.* 85, 198, confirmed by the *Quarterly Review* (July 1883, P. 129) ; " all Lord Byron's letters to his sister were handed over to be copied by the wife. The copies (which we have seen) in her handwriting are in the possession of her family."

§ See facsimile of Byron's signature, *Astarte*, 286.

|| *Lord Byron and His Detractors*, 53.

¶ The words in brackets, as well as the rest, are in Lady Byron's handwriting.

I wrote to her by yesterday's post addressed to your care."*

Nearly all Byron's letters to Mrs. Leigh of this period are addressed to the care of Mr. Murray.^f If the name of a correspondent, other than Mrs. Leigh, to whom the letter might have been addressed, could have been suggested, surely the present Mr. Murray would have done so.

It might have been possible to arrive at some conclusion with regard to the sign xxxx, which appears twice in the letter, if the original had been accessible. But the letter being printed from a copy, any attempt to discover the word or the number of its letters must be pure guessing.

The love expressed in this letter is passionate love. The writer has never ceased to feel that perfect and boundless attachment which binds him to the person addressed—which renders him utterly incapable of *real* love for any other human being. " My own xxxx we may have been very wrong—but I repent nothing except that cursed marriage—and your refusing to continue to love me as you had loved me—I can neither forget nor *quite forgive* you for that precious piece of reformation." Putting aside conjecture, is there evidence pointing to any person to whom these words may apply? We may find the answer further on: " It is heart-breaking to think of our long separation—and I am sure more than punishment enough for all our sins—Dante is more humane in his ' Hell,' for he places his unfortunate lovers (Francesca of Rimini and Paolo, whose case fell a good deal short of *ours*—though sufficiently naughty) in company—and though they suffer—it is at least together."

Paolo and Francesca were not blood relations; they were brother and sister-in-law.

" Grieved and tortured with *your new resolutions* " the writer continues "and the soon after persecution

* *Prothero*, iv, 301.

†

Astarte, 81, n.

of that infamous fiend who drove me from my country," etc.

Byron also exhibits to Ilobhouse his feelings towards his wife at this time. In reply to the suggestion that " Donna Inez/' represented Lady Byron, he writes from Venice on the same day, May 17, 1819 (it may be an accident that it was Lady Byron's birthday) : " Why are you anxious about Donna Inez ? She is not meant for Clytemnestra, and if she were, would you protect the friend,' of whom I may say like Jacopo Rusticucci in Dante :

' e ' certo.

La fiera Moglie pin ch' allro mi Nuoce,'

and was it not owing to [her] that they tried to expose me upon earth to the same stigma, which the said Jacopo is saddled with in hell ? †

What ! Is a ludicrous character of a tiresome woman in a burlesque poem to be suppressed, or altered, because a contemptible and hypocritical wretch may be supposed to be pointed at ? Do you suppose that I will ever forgive or forget, or lose sight of her, or hers, till I am nothing ? ‡

The letter of May 17, 1819, was the subject of correspondence between Mrs. Leigh and Lady Byron.§

Mrs. Leigh to Lady Byron, June 25, 1819 :

I felt greatly annoyed at not seeing you again *alone* before you left, as I had made up my mind to what I am now doing. . . . I really must enclose the last letter I spoke to you of—for I have endeavoured in vain, in *thought and deed*, to reply to it—

' ? ' fiend.' Compare " that infamous fiend," above, and " that infernal fiend " in the letter of June 19, 1817, p. 135, above.

† The stigma was never suggested by Lady Byron or her advisers. The letter points to the nature of the second of the two reports mentioned in the " Disavowal " (see p. 112). Murray refers to Dante's *Inferno*, Cantos xvi, 45, vi, 80-89. Byron quotes the same line in his letter to Lady Byron of April 3, 1820. (*Astarte* 109.) No evidence in support of the charge indicated, which, it will be observed, was only based on rumour, has ever been put forward.

‡ *Murray*, ii, no.

§ *Astarte* 83-89.

I am *so afraid* of saying what might do harm—or omitting any possible good—burn it—and tell me you have and answer me as soon as you can—I shall be *anxious*—and my unusually long silence *may* cause agitation—which I always avoid—in short, he is surely to be considered a *Maniac*—/ do not believe any feelings expressed are by any means permanent—only occasioned by the passing and present reflection and occupation of writing to the unfortunate Being to whom they are addressed. Pray pardon me if you think me wrong—for I do not mean it to be so—tho' I am convinced there are many would condemn the act as an *insult* but it is your advice and superior judgment that is wished for. Independent of this misery I have plenty of *Home* ones.

Can any reasonable suggestion be made to avoid the conclusion that Byron's correspondent is suffering misery and anxiety from being addressed as an accomplice in a worse crime than that of Francesca and Paolo? It is plain that it is Mrs. Leigh who suffers misery from receiving the letter. That it is addressed to her and to no one else is proved by her statement that she has endeavoured to reply to it, and that her unusually long silence may cause agitation. Mrs. Leigh would hardly have requested Lady Byron to burn a letter addressed to a third person.

On June 27 Lady Byron acknowledges and returns to Mrs. Leigh the letter of May 17, saying she prefers to return rather than to burn it. She describes it as a fresh proof of the continuance of that passion which Mrs. Leigh most wishes to be extinguished. The letter, Lady Byron says, is ample testimony that the recipient has avoided expressions encouraging tenderness, as well as of the prior " reformation " which was sufficiently evidenced to Lady Byron by Mrs. Leigh's own assertion and the agreement of circumstances with it. In case of a more unequivocal disclosure on Byron's part than has yet been made, the letter would confute false accusations to which Mrs. Leigh would be subjected from others. As to the reply to be sent, Lady Byron suggests alternatives. The first is to

reply " that after so unequivocal a proof that the idea of you was associated with the most guilty feelings, you considered it your duty to break off all communication. " The other alternative is to take no notice of the letter but to continue the correspondence in a guarded style.

What is the "reformation" quoted here from Byron's letter ? The words of that letter are : " I repent of nothing except that cursed marriage—and your refusing to continue to love me as you had loved me—I can neither forget nor *quite forgive* you for that precious piece of reformation—but I can never be other than I have been . . . grieved and tortured with *your new resolution*."

According to the plain meaning of the words, the " reformation " must include the person addressed if it does not apply to her exclusively.

The " false accusations " are those which alleged the offence had been continued after Lord Byron's marriage. " After so unequivocal a proof that the idea of you was associated with the most guilty feelings," etc. When it is known that the letter of May 17, 1819, is the " unequivocal proof " and that " you " (the person Lady Byron was writing to) is Mrs. Leigh, can there be any further question as to the person to whom the letter of May 17 was addressed ?

No statement, express or implied, in Lady Byron's letter is repudiated by Mrs. Leigh, who writes on June 28 : " Your letter, etc., has arrived safely, my dearest A and a million thanks for your kindness." Mrs. Leigh discusses the question of the reply to be sent to Lord Byron's letter. She refers to " the unfortunate Object " of his passion. On July 3 she writes again to Lady Byron : " No one can be more fully aware of the *Precipice* on which I stand than I am." On July 4 Lady Byron writes to Mrs. Villiers a letter which has not before been published.:

I am in some anxiety lest our unhappy friend should be

implicated in the poem* which is to appear about the 15th, and respecting the contents of which, Murray observes to her a mysterious silence, only requesting that *she will never read it . . .* She [the "unhappy friend"] sent me his last letter to her, which she had hesitated about shewing me when I was in London—fearing that I should consider it an insult. It is the most open avowal of unextinguishable passion—which he says will drive him mad—that *she* was throughout the only object which cost him a tear—etc., etc. . . . It absolutely confirms what I have always believed—viz., her reformation as far as [*a*]cts were concerned, after my marriage—he says he will never quite forgive her for having ceased to love him as she had loved him—and other things to the same purpose—whilst it proves the *past*†

Some correspondence took place between Mrs. Leigh and Lady Byron in December, 1819, and January, 1820, on the expected return of Lord Byron to England⁴ There was a difference of opinion between them, Lady Byron considering that Mrs. Leigh should have no personal intercourse with her brother and the latter disagreeing on this point. On December 23 Lady Byron writes: "Anxious as I feel to support and comfort you in the recovered path of virtue, I could not hope to do so by an attempt to impose my own opinion."§ So far from protesting against this reflection on her character, Mrs. Leigh, in her reply of December 29, says: "My dearest A. . . . the impression of your kindness remains—and ever will remain the same on my heart—I have not words to thank you—but I *do* hope that I *do* not, *may* not, appear ungrateful in your eyes. . . . God bless you—and thank you my dearest A for *all your great kindness*. Believe me always grateful—⁵j|

Lord Byron changed his plans and did not return, and from this time there was less concert between Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh.[^]|

' *Don Juan*, Cantos i and 2.

‡ *As tarte*, 89-99.

|| *Ibid.* 94, 96.

† Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

§ *Ibid.* 9-1.

¶ *Ibid.* 99.

It is submitted that every part of the evidence points to the same conclusion—namely, that the charge of incest was true. Taken as a whole, the evidence is overwhelming. The charge was true of a period before the marriage. Lord Byron sought to renew the offence after the marriage and Mrs. Leigh successfully resisted the attempt. At the date of Lady Byron's first interview with Dr. Lushington she had no certain proof that the offence had been committed at all, and assuming it had been, she could not tell whether it had continued after the marriage. The proof was completed by Mrs. Leigh's confession and confirmed by Lord Byron's letter of May 17, 1819.

CHAPTER XV

THE CUSTODY OF THE CHILD

THE question of the custody of the child was naturally Lady Byron's first consideration while the separation was under discussion. Perhaps this fact has hardly received the attention it deserves. Lady Byron's anxiety on this point is shown by many of the letters already quoted, and by Dr. Lushington's statement of January, 1870, Apparently the main object of Lady Byron's first interview with Lushington was to protect herself from being deprived of the child. Her position was a difficult one. She did not perceive how her right to the custody of the child was endangered by the affectionate intercourse with Mrs. Leigh, until this was pointed out to her on February 22, 1816, and yet the intercourse could not have been broken off without sacrificing her sister-in-law. Her letters to Mrs. Leigh of January and February, 1816, prove that she spoke out her mind and gave praise and affection where she thought them to be due. The letters are proof that she did not act, as alleged, with the design of making the facts correspond with her suspicions.

Incidentally, this question of the child introduces Mrs. Clermont, the trusted companion and friend of Lady Noel and Lady Byron. She was certainly no friend to Lord Byron during the negotiations, though she did not repay insult with insult. The charge made against her of breaking open his desk is not supported by any trustworthy evidence.' Lord Byron's abuse of her in the *Sketch* probably exceeds both in quantity and quality any that has ever been heaped upon a woman of respectable character. The abuse is thus summed up by the author of the *Vindication*:

What would be done to a man of the lower order of mind

* See pp. 154-5, below.

who should seek out a lady, his wife's friend, with whom he had lived on equal terms in the house of his wife's father, to tell her that she had been born in the garret and bred in the kitchen—raised to the table to dine off the plate she had lately washed while her wondering betters waited behind her chair—that she was a liar and a spy, a viper, a hag of hatred and a Hecate—a hideous crust with a cheek of parchment in which her muddy and yellow blood stagnated—a centipede—a female dog-star—a wretch without a tear—a loathsome leper, doomed, while she wearied Heaven with supplications, to go down to the dust in despair, poisoning the worms that fed upon her ? All this Lord Byron said to Mrs. Clermont aloud, before the whole world, and he said it deliberately. On the day after his verses were written he sent a second draft to Mr. Murray that they might be printed for private distribution, and, three days afterwards, desired him to make a correction for the press. Moore owns that the *Sketch* was justly condemned, and he himself condemns it *because* it was *undignified* and *exalted* an obscure female whose situation ought to have placed her beneath my lord's satire. These "men of the higher order of mind" claim high privileges. Sex is so far from being a defence against them that it seems to invite assault.'

Thomas Campbell in his *Observations* on Lady Byron's *Remarks* refers to a letter from Mrs. Leigh acquitting Mrs. Clermont of the charge of being a spy. . . . The following appears to be the letter from which Campbell quotes. It is written by Mrs. Leigh to Mrs. Clermont and dated from St. James's Palace, June 1, 1824. It is in reply to a complaint by Mrs. Clermont that she has been again shamefully traduced in various newspapers and a request that Mrs. Leigh will give her a "simple Declaration of my being entirely innocent of the charges brought against me in **the** affair of the separation."

My dear Mrs. Clermont.—In answer to the letter I have this morning received from you, I must beg to assure you how very sorry I am for the annoyance you are now feeling,

* *Vindication*, 116, 117. † *New Monthly Magazine*, April, 1830.

owing to the calumnies revived against your character in the Newspapers.

I have—whenever any opportunity has presented itself—not only contradicted them, but also done justice to the kind forbearance I have invariably observed in you—upon occasions most trying to any friend of Lady Byron's—and you may depend upon my continuing to do so.

You are quite at liberty to show this letter to any of your friends and to express my entire conviction of your being perfectly innocent of the charges brought against you—in any way satisfactory to yourself, *except through the channel of a Newspaper*, in which it would on every account be extremely painful and unpleasant to me to be brought forward.

You are perhaps not aware (nor was I so myself till this day) that two days after the paragraph to which you probably allude—and which was copied into the English from an *Irish Newspaper*—it was contradicted *from Authority* in ye same paper—if I can get the paper I will cut it out and send it you. Ever my dear Mrs. Clermont, Yours very truly, Augusta Leigh.'

During Lady Byron's confinement Mrs. Leigh was alarmed at Lord Byron's conduct and summoned Mrs. Clermont to come and sleep in the house, saying: "If he continues in this way, God knows what he may do."†

It has been shown that Mrs. Clermont did not accompany Lady Byron to Kirkby on January 15, 1816, nor was she with her when Lady Byron's resolution to separate was taken.‡

Mrs. Clermont must have been a valuable assistant to Lady Byron during the negotiations, if her intelligence may be judged from the following report by her to Lady Noel dated February 29, 1816, on the subject of the custody of the child :

Dr. Lushington advised that the child should be made a Ward of Chancery and Lady B. saw Sir S. Romilly last night about it; he is of the same opinion and this it seems can be

' Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

‡ Lady Lovelace's Note on Mary Anne Clermont, *Astarte*, 322.

‡ Lady Byron's proposed letter of July 6, 1816, p. 103, above.

done by giving it any little property. Sir S. said she had only to let her father's solicitor draw up the common deed for that purpose which he would know how to do. Wharton comes to-morrow about it. Dr. Lushington named two hundred Pounds as being sufficient, but Wharton they say will know how to do it ; but you must observe this transaction is desired to be kept a *profound secret*, as it might have an ill-effect if *he* knew it, and is only a precaution to keep it out of the Court of King's Bench, which is more determined as to paternal right than Chancery.'

On March 2 Sir Samuel Romilly writes to Lady Byron : " If the child were made a Ward of the Court of Chancery I have no doubt that the Lord Chancellor would not suffer her to be removed from you. Neither at present nor I think at any future time." j

On March 9 Mrs. Clermont writes to Lady Noel :

I think all Lady Byron has suffered will be overpaid by having a child if it please the Almighty to spare her that; you know it is in my estimation the greatest of all Blessings ; and *in* regard to Mrs. Leigh you have I think been very unjust, as I am confident, however maliciously he may act, it never has been her wish to take it from A nor ever will be, although I fear she must have felt herself much hurt of late by a change of manner on this side. I know she has acted weakly but I do firmly believe her intentions have been good—nor can I ever forget the kindness A experienced from her the latter part of the time she was in Piccadilly ; even for her life, I believe we may thank Mrs. Leigh.‡

On the same day Lady Byron writes to Dr. Lushington :

My greatest embarrassment (*sic*) is about Mrs. L. Mr. Wilmot was very urgent on that point and wanted me to see her to-night, which I declined on account of fatigue—Now I *know* it is still the intention to give the Child to her, and I must not compromise any power to oppose such a proceeding. This

' Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

Ibid.,

‡ *Ibid.* See, further, Lady Lovelace's Note on Mary Anne Clermont, *Astarte*, 322-5.

seems to be of great moment. Could such a paper as you proposed be drawn up immediately ?'

On March 10 Lady Byron writes to Dr. Lushington:

My situation in relation to Mrs. Leigh becomes everyday more distressing and cannot remain without change, or my own character as well as hers must sink—for as I cannot give *sufficient* reasons, the imputation of malice would be cast upon me by her numerous connections.

An expedient occurs by which I may be relieved from this extreme embarrassment (*sic*) and surely no time should be lost (if it can answer the purpose) in adopting it.

From different causes I am convinced that Mrs. Leigh would give me the most secure promise in writing that could be required, never to accept the care of the child whilst I lived, without my consent—would not this obviate all difficulties and prevent the cruel necessity of stigmatising her either directly or indirectly ? I could obtain this promise without Lord B.'s knowledge.^f

The embarrassment to which Lady Byron refers was caused by Dr. Lushington having forbidden any further communication between her and Mrs. Leigh.[‡] The suggestion for removing the difficulty was not approved by Dr. Lushington, who knew that such a promise would have no binding effect, although Mrs. Leigh might consider herself bound. It would, in effect, be an attempt to fetter the discretion of the Chancellor with regard to the control of his ward, and might prejudice Lady Byron's position if the case came before him. Dr. Lushington writes to Lady Byron the same day (March 10) that he cannot acquiesce in her expedient at present and will explain his reasons when they meet. He adds :

I do think it would be extremely improper to renew any intercourse with Mrs. L. until the separation is put past all doubt, and not even then, until means have been taken to obviate any injurious effect in future. . . . I can only repeat

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers. †
‡ *Prothero*, iii, 322, Letter 59.

Ibid.

my opinion that an interview with Mrs. L. should be avoided and if you think that avowing you do so under my advice will save you any disagreeable solicitation, pray use my name to that effect. It would not be right for any one to press you for reasons when you have so done, but, if further urged, you may add that until the separation be finally concluded, I have advised you to have no intercourse *with anyone* living under Lord B.'s roof.'

On March 14 Lady Byron writes to her mother :

I am very well and very secure as to the child. I find its nurse corresponds with Mrs. Fletcher about it. Perhaps you might as well tell her quietly not to say more than is needful. You don't know what machinations are going on—and by Heaven, if they persecute me on this point, I will have revenge.I

Lady Byron felt secure because the child had been made a ward of Court and she knew that the mother's rights were safer under the protection of the Chancellor than they would have been if the father had applied to the King's Bench for a writ of *Habeas corpus*. Mrs. Clermont's account of the situation, as expressed in her report to Lady Noel, was perfectly accurate.

A bill in Chancery, praying to have the trusts of Lady Byron's marriage settlement executed by the Court, was filed on March 8, 1816, in which the infant Augusta Ada Byron was named as Plaintiff, and Douglas Kinnaird and others, trustees of the settlement, and Lord Byron were defendants‡. The mere fact of filing the bill made the infant plaintiff a ward of Court so that she could not be removed from the mother's custody without an order of the Court. Lord Byron did not hear of the suit till nearly a year after it was begun (see his letter to Lady Byron dated

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers. † *Ibid.*

‡ The defendants were Douglas Kinnaird, Thomas Davison Bland, Sir Ralph Noel, Geo. Baker Cuthbert Ellison, Sir Thomas Henry Liddell, John Cam Hobhouse and Lord Byron (P.R.O., Six Clerks' Cause Book 19, Chancery Proceedings 1800-1842, No. 3016).

March 5, 1817).¹ Later, Lady Byron found that her husband contemplated an assertion of his paternal rights. In December, 1816, and again in March, 1817, he instructed his solicitor to file a bill for this purpose, see his letters to Hanson, December 26, 1816, and March 25, 1817! ; and see Byron's letter to Murray, December 4, 1819, on the subject of a proposed application to the Chancellor to restrain the unauthorised publication of a part of *Don Juan*, where he writes : " You may do as you please, but recollect, if it is pronounced blasphemous or indecent, I shall lose all right of guardianship, etc., etc., in the education of my daughter."²; Lord Byron's threatened application for the custody of the child was not made.

On March 29, 1816, Lady Byron writes to Dr. Lushington :

Will you at your leisure consider if an application ought not to be made to Lord B. before he goes abroad respecting the Child ? The consequence of such an application I foresee to be, first, if he resigned his paternal power, I should be *entirely* relieved from the future possibility of adducing painful evidence against him. Secondly, if he refused my request I should have cause and justification for seeking the means of security in that respect.§

Dr. Lushington did not approve of the proposed application, as appears from a letter of Lady Byron's written to the Hon. Mrs. George Lamb on April i. || The separation deed contained no stipulation as to the custody of the child. It was still open to Lord Byron, subject to the control of the Court of Chancery, to exercise his paternal rights. This fact helps to explain Lady Byron's endeavour, after the separation, to come to an understanding with Mrs. Leigh with regard to the charge which had become the subject of public rumour and of repressed suspicion on the part of Lady Byron. Sir Samuel Romilly knew that though Lady

* *Prothero*, iv. 66. † *Ibid'* IV-33' 75-

‡ *Ibid.* iv. 380.

§ Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

|| *Prothero*, iii, 327.

Byron's evidence was not admissible in divorce proceedings, yet on an application to the Court of Chancery with regard to the custody of the infant, not only would such evidence be received, but even proof of Lord Byron's conduct before his marriage might be admitted.

To understand the circumstances of the separation, the distinction between the two objects which Lady Byron sought should be considered: the right to retain possession of her child and her own protection.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST LADY BYRON

SOME arguments unfavourable to Lady Byron remain to be noticed.

The allegation that, *whether the charge of incest was true or false, or even if Lady Byron believed it to be true, she stands convicted of a prolonged course of dissimulation and hypocrisy*, was made by the *Quarterly Review*, in October 1869 and January 1870, when no explanation of the affectionate letters to Mrs. Leigh of January and February 1816 had been given. With the explanation now obtained (see Chapter IX) the charge falls to the ground.

That Lady Byron was either the fabricator of the charge of incest or the victim of insane delusion (*Blackwood*, January 1870) is refuted by proof that the charge was true and that Lady Byron was of sound mind. Proof that the charge was true has been given above. See Chapters IX to XIV.

In 1869 Dr- Forbes Winslow proved that hallucination was impossible (p. 33, above). If further evidence of Lady Byron's soundness of mind is required it will be found in Dr. Lushington's letter written at the time of her daughter's last illness in 1852 to Frances Carr:

If there be a wonderful person in this world it is Lady N.B. Her energy of mind, her bodily exertions, the strength of her affection, the cool decision of her judgment, all increase instead of diminishing by the continued severity of the trial—I am *in* boundless admiration of her—of her heart—intellect and governed mind. Most brightly she shines in this dark shade of Affliction.'

Mr. Montgomery, who knew Lady Byron intimately in his youth, confirms Dr. Lushington's opinion, in the *National Review* of June 1922, and in

* *Astarte*, 195.

the July number of that periodical Mr. Edgcumbe tells us that those who know the true story of the separation do not now contend that Lady Byron was the victim of hallucination.

Lord Byron never suggested that his wife was mentally afflicted, though a doubt on the question, had it been possible to suggest a doubt, would have provided a complete defence to the charges upon which her claim to a separation was based.

The fact that hallucination has been suggested is not unfavourable to Lady Byron. Apart from the question of the separation, no reason, or even a shadow of a reason, is given for supposing her to have been insane. Those who put forward the hallucination theory must argue thus : Lady Byron made a false charge against her husband ; her life was so free from fault in other respects—the inconsistency of her conduct in making the charge was so great—that the fact of making it can only be attributed to hallucination. But if Lady Byron's general character was so free from fault, it is the strongest argument to prove that she did not make a false charge. Lord Byron went further, for he told his friends that, while unconscious of having committed any enormity which could have caused Lady Byron to desert him, he was inclined to believe that he might at times have been deprived of reason, for his respect for her character and confidence in her veracity almost made him think that the allegations at which she hinted must have had some foundation.*

That Lady Byron asserted that the alleged incest was the cause of the separation {*Times*, January 20, 1870) is disproved by the Statement of March 14, 1816 (p. 113, above), by the Statement of Dr. Lushington to Mr. Bathurst of January 27, 1870 (p. 57, above), by the fact that Lady Byron had no certain proof of the incest at the date of the separation, and by the

* *Lord Broughton*, ii, 277.

course of her conduct as disclosed by the letters that have been quoted, especially her letter to Lady Noel of January 25, 1816 (p. 109, above). The same evidence bears upon the allegation that *the charge of incest was the substance of Lady Byron's additional communication to Dr. Lushington* (*Sat. Rev.*, Jan. 29, 1870), which should be limited to this, that the communication included, amongst other things, Lady Byron's suspicion of incest and the words and acts of her husband on which the suspicion was based.

That Lady Byron was deceived by her husband into believing that incest had been committed, when in fact it had not (*Times*, Jan. 20, 1870). This contention is disposed of by proof that incest had been committed.

That Lady Byron may have felt no great horror or indignation at the crime (*Sat. Rev.*, Jan. 29, 1870). The evidence of her character disproves this. Lady Byron's view of the offence is thus expressed in her letter to Mrs. Villiers of July 11, 1816 : " Whilst my strongest moral reprobation is attached to his conduct, I have only a sad and forgiving recollection of the misery which engrosses his existence." *

The charge that *Lady Byron broke open and searched her husband's writing desk* (Elze's *Byron* 187) is a mere allegation, unsupported by any credible evidence. It was denied by Lady Byron and the evidence of her character alone is sufficient to disprove it. Elze quotes as authority Medwin's report which attributes the act to Mrs. Clermont. Elze's translator describes Medwin's authority as very questionable (Elze, p. 187, note). Mrs. Beecher Stowe in her *History* (p. 208) confirms the translator's view ; and see the *Dictionary of National Biography*, article ' Thomas Medwin.' Some light is thrown on the point by Lord Byron's letter to Mrs. Leigh of Sept. 14, 1816 (*Astarte*, 269), in which he writes : " You know, I suppose, that Lady Byron *secretly opened my letter trunks before she left*

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers. Part of this letter is in *Astarte*, 22

Town ? " Lady Byron writes on this point to Mrs. Leigh on October 2nd, 1816, attributing " his adoption (if not invention) of my being a *picklock* " to persecution, " for such a suspicion of my means of information would entirely discredit my testimony " (*Ibid.* 270). Mrs. Leigh calls the charge " a vile calumny " (*Ibid.*). In 1854 Lady Byron wrote :

I have certainly been acquitted, equally without proof, by those on whom I had no claim, of the charges of listening to informers against Lord Byron, sanctioning treacherous practices, etc. Let me observe with reference to them, that there can be no *media via* as to such accusations, and the woman who could be guilty of any one of them could not be a trustworthy witness in matters relating to the husband she had injured and betrayed. (*Ibid.* 140.)

BYRON in the ENGLISH MEN OF LETTERS SERIES, by John Nichol (1880), as an educational work which has been highly commended,¹ requires special refutation, if any of its statements are incorrect. Amongst those which are open to question, the following are noted :

Byron loved his sister in the highest and purest sense of the word (p. 93).

This will depend upon whether the question " Was the charge of incest true ? " is correctly answered above (Chapters IX to XIV).

The wife was inveterately bent on a separation, of the causes of which the husband alleged he was never informed, and with regard to which, as long as he lived, she preserved a rigid silence (p. 96).

Lord Byron had no reason to complain that he could not obtain particulars of the charges against him. His advisers knew and must have told him that he certainly would not obtain them unless he put himself in a position to demand them. If he had refused to consent to a separation, Lady Byron must have taken proceedings and then the charges would have been

¹ A. C. Swinburne, *Miscellanies* (1886), 80 ; Professor Chew, *Byron in England* (1924), 302, 303.

disclosed. He was content to remain in ignorance, with the advantage, such as it was, of being able to say that he did not know what the charges were, that he had asked for them and that they had been refused. Again and again he expresses the wish to know what the charges are or complains that he has not received them and that his wife's silence has sanctioned the most infamous calumnies against him. Lord Byron cannot be blamed for taking every lawful advantage to which he was entitled, but his complaint was only a grievance. Let it be assumed that the refusal to publish the charges, for nothing less than publication would have been effectual, gave sanction to the calumnious rumour. What if the charges confirmed the rumour? One of the charges, as Byron might certainly anticipate, would be cruelty to his wife by words and acts regarding Mrs. Leigh—not incest, but words and acts during the period of marriage, to which the guilty relations before marriage had given rise. The grievance was a sham grievance. Lord Byron knew that the particulars for which he asked would not be given and the last thing he wished was that they should be given. In August, 1817, for instance, he calls upon Lady Byron's advisers to name the cause of the separation and says that he will be happy to cancel the deed of separation and go before any public tribunal. But the paper which contained this demand and offer was given by Lord Byron to a friend to be circulated amongst other friends; it was not communicated to Lady Byron or her advisers, and it was first made public in the year 1869 (see p. 10, n., above). In the pamphlet of 1820 (p. 11, above) he repeats that no specific charge was ever submitted to him, but he never published the pamphlet or submitted it to Lady Byron's advisers.

The playfid letter on leaving her husband, Lady Byron seems to defend on the ground of the fear of personal violence (p. 97).

Lady Byron has explained that the letter was written under the fear that her husband was of unsound mind, and upon medical advice (pp. 5, 6, above).

" *The then Puritanic precisian* " [Lady Byron] sent a message of relenting to Mrs, Leigh on her death-bed (p. 97).

A week before Mrs. Leigh's death, Lady Byron wrote to Miss Leigh requesting her to whisper the words " Dearest Augusta " to her mother, as from Lady Byron. Mrs. Leigh said those words were her greatest consolation. (*Astarte* 32.)

" *Charges which, during her husband's life, Lady Byron, from magnanimity or other motive, reserved* " but delivered after his death with important modifications to various persons (pp. 97, 98).

The reasons for keeping silence in regard to the charges are given at pp. 69, 118, above ; the reasons for speaking out at a later period, in Chapter XVIII, below. There is no evidence of important modifications.

The grounds of the reckless charge put forward by Mrs. Stowe have been found wanting (p. 98).

Whether this is so, depends upon the correctness of the answer given above to the question " Was the charge of incest true ? " See Chapters IX to XIV, above.

Lady Byron was the victim of hallucinations (p. 98).

This is disproved by the evidence given at pp. 33, 152-3, above.

Some of Lady Byron's recently printed letters, as that to Lady Anne Barnard, and reports of her character, as that of William Howitt, detract from the earlier tributes to her constant amiability (p. 99).

Those who believe that Lady Byron was guilty of " a prolonged course of dissimulation and hypocrisy " may read the letter to Lady Anne Barnard (see above, pp. 31, 32), as confirming their view. Those who read

it as an honest expression of opinion will not find it wanting in amiability. With regard to Howitt's report of Lady Byron's character, see pp. 195-8, below.

It was trying to a poet to be asked by his wife when he was going to leave off writing verses, to be told he had no real enthusiasm, and to have his desk broken open and its compromising contents sent to the persons for whom they were least intended (pp. 99 and 100).

The request to leave off writing verses is commented on at p. 98, above. Evidence of the next statement has not been traced. Perhaps the writer was thinking of Lady Byron's statement in a private letter to Lady Anne Barnard, written after the separation : " I know no one more habitually destitute of that enthusiasm he so beautifully expresses, and to which he can work up his fancy chiefly by contagion " (see p. 32, above). The alleged breaking open of the desk is discussed at pp. 154-5, above.

Lady Byron believed some story, and acting on this belief, her legal advisers came to the conclusion that reconciliation was impossible ; her inveterate obstinacy made her cling to her first impressions (p. 100).

If the story was true, no apology seems to be necessary.

In an article on BYRON in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (1886), Sir Leslie Stephen writes on the cause of the separation :

Examination proves this hideous story (the charge of incest) to be absolutely incredible. It can only be surmised that Lady Byron had become jealous of Byron's public and pointed expressions of love for his sister, contrasted so forcibly with his utterances about his wife, and in brooding over her wrongs had developed the hateful suspicion communicated to Mrs. Stowe, and, as it seems, to others.

In the year 1887 Sir Leslie Stephen perused Lord

Wentworth's papers afterwards disclosed in *Astarte*' with the result that he altered his views. He writes to Lord Wentworth that the papers shown to him "entirely refute the hypothesis of such an illusion as I had suggested. They prove that Lady Byron's conduct was thoroughly honourable, that it was dictated by conscientious motives and by convictions not due to resentment or illusion." It was too late to revise the article but Sir Leslie drew up for the use of Lord Wentworth an outline of the case, of the truth of which he had convinced himself.^f

In a letter dated Nov. 7, 1869, addressed to Hayward, the writer of the articles in the *Quarterly Review*, the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Alexander Cockburn, says :—

Lady Byron had an ill-conditioned mind, preying on itself till morbid delusion was the result ; or she was aft accomplished hypocrite, regardless of truth, to whose statements no credit whatever ought to be attached.[‡]

The opinion of so eminent an authority would have great weight but for the absence of three conditions : (1). We do not know the reasons on which the Chief Justice based his conclusions. (2). We do not know what evidence was laid before him. (3). The Chief Justice had not seen the later evidence.

The conclusion, so far as appears, was based on the *ex parte* statement of Mr. Hayward, who bitterly attacked Lady Byron in the *Quarterly Review*. If the Chief Justice had seen the papers laid before Sir Leslie Stephen in 1887, he also might have found reason to change his opinion.

Jeaffreson, THE REAL LORD BYRON (ed. 1884) :

The liaison with Jane Clairmont was the cause of the separation. (Jeaffreson, 207-209.)

This suggestion is based on conjecture and is unsupported by evidence, even on the author's own

¹ Lord Wentworth succeeded to the Earldom of Lovelace in 1893.

[†] *Astarte*, 178-181.

[‡]

Ibid. 156.

showing. It is believed that no other writer has maintained this view.

LETTERS AND JOURNALS OF LORD BYRON, edited by Rowland Edmund Prothero (now Lord Ernie), 1898-1901 :

No evidence exists to prove the precise nature of the charges on which Lady Byron separated from her husband (iii. 287).

See Dr. Lushington's statement to Mr. Bathurst of January, 1870 (p. 57, above).

LORD BYRON AND HIS DETRACTORS, by John Murray and others, printed for the Roxburghe Club, 1906. This work includes :

(1). An anonymous paper entitled *Astarte'* purporting to answer Lord Lovelace's work under the same title (pp. 3-61).

(2), Reprint of an article by Mr. Murray in the *Monthly Review*, entitled *Lord Byron and Lord Lovelace* (pp. 65-88).

(3). Reprint of an article by Mr. Prothero (now Lord Ernie) in the same Review, entitled *Lord Lovelace on the Separation of Lord and Lady Byron* (pp. 91-98).

I. The Anonymous Author:

The charge against Lord Byron and Mrs. Leigh has not been substantiated (p. 61).

It is submitted that the charge has now been fully substantiated. See Chapters IX to XIV, above.

Lady Byron did not seriously suspect her husband of incest, but when she found that some of her friends were inclined to temporise in the matter of the separation {it seems doubtful whether her father was in favour of it}, she went off to Dr. Lushington and told him her suspicions. It was the rumour that gave confirmation to the commission of the offence in Lady Byron's mind. To this extent the accusation was an after-thought. It was not

* " By a gentleman eminent in legal and literary circles " (preface), believed to be the late Mr. E. H. Pember, K.C.

quite an invention, still less a dishonest invention. Lady Byron's conviction of the truth of the charge was achieved slowly, long after the separation (pp. 48-51).

The author makes a series of allegations based on facts of which he offers no proof. Apparently he assumes that the facts are undisputed, whereas every one of them is in dispute. In the absence of proof, or attempted proof, the allegations must be met by a simple denial and a reference to the foregoing pages of this work. Apart from the groundlessness of the statements, it should be pointed out that the argument is based on the assumption that incest was the cause of the separation. It was urged in 1869-1871 and is proved to be the fact by all the later evidence that incest was not and could not have been the cause of the separation.

It is within the bounds of possibility that Byron tempted his sister, though more in mockery than aught else (p. 52).

Even with the qualification, this admission is important.

The letter of May 17, 1819, may not have been written to Mrs. Leigh (p. 53).

The evidence to prove that Mrs. Leigh was the person addressed will be found in Chapter XIV, above.

Byron's confession is no evidence against Mrs. Leigh (P- 53)- The answer is that we have not only the letters that connect Mrs. Leigh with Byron's confession but also Mrs. Leigh's independent confession.

The " reformation " spoken of in Lady Byron's letter of 27 June, 1819,' most probably means Byron's reformation. If it refers to Mrs. Leigh it refers only to a consciousness of inclination to yield, not to the final criminal act (PP. 55-58).

The word " reformation " is quoted by Lady Byron from the letter of May 17, 1819. The plain meaning of it is that Mrs. Leigh, against Lord Byron's will,

**As tar le, 85.*

had broken off the guilty relations, upon Byron's marriage. This agrees with Byron's letter to Mrs. Leigh of June 19, 1817 (p. 135, above). The evidence of guilt in the letters to Lady Melbourne does not admit of the possibility that the offence was the mere inclination to yield.

Up to 1829 Lady Byron cannot have known or thought more than that Mrs. Leigh had been tempted to the point of danger and that after this date her suspicion developed into the actuality of crime (p. 60).

This is disproved by the statement of March 14, 1816, and by the subsequent correspondence of Lady Byron, Mrs. Leigh and Mrs. Villiers in that year.

The evidence of Mrs. Leigh's confession, resting on the uncorroborated statement of Lady Byron, is valueless (pp. 21, 22).

The statement of an interested person proved to be of good character, is of value, standing by itself, but Lady Byron's statement is corroborated by the correspondence of June-Sept. 1816 and of 1819.

The anonymous author does not believe that Dr. Lushington made a statement in 1870 (pp. 22, 23).

The doubt is set at rest by Dr. Lushington's statement to Mr. Bathurst of Jan. 27, 1870 (p. 57, above).

Can Lord Lovelace bring forward a single accusation against Lady Byron or unkind reference to her between 1817 and 1869 ? (p. 10).

Why should the accusation and unkind references in Lord Byron's poems and letters of 1816 and 1817 be excluded ? A search through Encyclopaedias and minor publications from 1818 to 1868 would no doubt disclose others, but this is unnecessary, because we have more than sufficient in Moore's Life of Byron. For proof we may refer to the article in *Temple Bar* of June 1869, "Lord Byron's Married Life." * The anonymous contributor to *Lord Byron and his detractors* does not mention, amongst the publications

* *Vindication, I.*

of 1869, the *Blackwood* article of July, in which Lady Byron is described as "the moral Brinvilliers," or the *Quarterly Review* of October,* accusing Lady Byron of "a prolonged course of dissimulation and hypocrisy," but tells us (p. 11) that Lady Byron's honour has never been questioned.

The charge of incest was repudiated by the representatives of Lady Byron at the time of the separation (pp. 16-18).

We know now by the *Disavowal* of March 9, 1816, that this was not the case (see p. 112, above).

Shelley alleged in Sept. 1816 that Lady Byron was living with Mrs. Leigh and considered this fact a decisive contradiction to the only important calumny ever advanced against Byron (p. 17).

As a fact, Lady Byron never lived with Mrs. Leigh after the separation,! but Shelley's statement proves that no surer plan for saving Mrs. Leigh's reputation could have been adopted than the continuance of friendly intercourse with Lady Byron.

LORD BYRON AND HIS DETRACTORS.

III. R. E. Prothero (now Lord Ernie) :

There is no proof that the letters {which Byron was capable of writing to his half-sister for the pleasure of torturing Lady Byron with suspicion} ever reached Mrs. Leigh (p. 93).

Full copies of the letters are inserted in the later edition of *Astarte*. We know that Mrs. Leigh was in the habit of sending the letters to Lady Byron for perusal, and are therefore justified in presuming that they did reach Mrs. Leigh. The villainy of imputing guilt to the sister by a false accusation of himself has been pointed out (p. 72, above).

The Memorandum of March 14, 1816, was merely a legal device for writing¹ without prejudice 'over all Lady

¹ *Quarterly*, October, 1869, p. 566 ; repeated in the number of January, 1870, p. 244.

Byron's manifestations of warm affection towards her sister-in-law (p. 97).

This has already been answered. See p. 114, above.

Lord Lovelace does not say on what evidence Lady Byron's advisers relied, nor whether Lady Byron charged her husband with misconduct after, as well as before, marriage (p. 98).

The evidence is set out in the pages of *Astarte*. Lord Lovelace tells us that the article in the *Atlantic Monthly* by Mrs. Stowe stated (not untruly) that the mystery of *Astarte* in *Manfred* was founded on fact, "and (erroneously) that those circumstances had continued and been the direct cause of the separation." See p. 61, above.

The resentment of Lady Byron's parents towards Mrs. Leigh for, as they considered, sacrificing their daughter by promoting the marriage, may have had an influence on the separation (p. 98).

On the other hand we have the direct statement of Lady Byron that her parents "neither originated, instigated, nor advised the separation." (See her *Remarks*, p. 9, above.)

Lord Broughton's RECOLLECTIONS OF A LONG LIFE, edited by Lady Dorchester (1909-1911): *Lord and Lady Byron were an ill-assorted couple* (ii, 283).

From Lord Byron's expressed distaste for married life, while admitting he had no fault to find with Lady Byron and acknowledging her good qualities, it may be assumed as probable that no marriage he could have contracted would have contented him. He truly described himself in the question to Lady Melbourne: "Was there ever such a slave to impulse?" (*Murray*, i, 196). But it was something more than the absence of self-control that caused the final breach. Lady Byron strove during the twelve months of her married life to bring out her husband's better nature—and failed. The victory was with

him. His resolve to be wicked, and thus to make union impossible, was not to be shaken.

Sir Ralph Noel's demand for a separation was based on something which his daughter told him that Lord Byron had said to her (ii, 215).

The separation was by Lady Byron's demand which was partly based on what Lord Byron had said to her and to others in her presence.

When Lady Byron left her husband's house she had no notion of a separation (ii, 216).

This is incorrect. See p. 99, above.

That on discovering, after she had left her husband, that he was not mad as she had thought possible, she came to the conclusion that he was wicked and that it was impossible she should live with him (ii, 247).

There was ample evidence of wickedness long before Lady Byron left her husband. There is evidence in her letter to Hodgson of Feb. 15, 1816:

I may give you a general idea of what I have experienced by saying that he married me with the deepest determination of revenge, avowed on the day of my marriage and executed ever since with systematic and increasing cruelty which no affection could change. My security depended on the total abandonment of every moral and religious principle, against which (though I trust they were never intruded) his hatred and endeavours were uniformly directed. The circumstances, which are of too convincing a nature, shall not be generally known while Lord Byron allows me to spare him.'

That in insisting upon a separation Lady Byron was acting under the influence of her parents (ii, 268).

This is incorrect (see above, p. 164).

Lord Byron had been guilty of some inexcusable indiscretions but of no enormity or anything to render him amenable to the law (ii, 283).

Apart from the question of incest before his marriage, Lord Byron had been guilty of offences

entitling his wife to a divorce. (See Lushington's Statement to Bathurst, January, 1870, p. 57, above.)

Lady Byron disavowed in writing that two rumours, one of which had reference to Byron's alleged relations with his half sister, would have made part of her allegations if she had come into court (ii, 303-306, 351).

The Disavowal is produced and speaks for itself. See p. 112, above.

Hobhouse offered on Byron's behalf to go into Court if Lady Byron so desired (ii, 342).

Lord Byron knew that his wife's object was to obtain a separation privately. She told him so in her letter of March 5, 1816.' He made an offer, knowing beforehand that it would be refused. He should have himself insisted on going into Court if he wished to know the charges against him. In agreeing to the separation he proved either that he knew the charges or that he did not wish to know them. (See pp. 155-6, above.)

Lady Byron's unconfirmed statements were not to be trusted (ii, 348).

The answer to this is the evidence of Lady Byron's character (see pp. 65-8, above).

BYRON—THE LAST PHASE, by Richard Edgcumbe (1909) •

Mr. Edgcumbe alleges : *That Medora Leigh was not the daughter of Mrs. Leigh but of Mary Chaworth-Musters and that Lord Byron was her father ; that Lady Byron suspected that Mrs. Leigh was the mother of Medora ; that Mrs. Leigh and Lord Byron acted in a manner most certain to confirm that suspicion and that Mrs. Leigh acted throughout as a shield to Mrs. Chaworth-Musters ; that Byron's letter of May 17, 1819, was addressed to Mrs. Chaworth-Musters ;*

The *Quarterly Review* (January, 1910) agrees with Mr. Edgcumbe that there was a liaison between Byron and Mrs. Chaworth-Musters (p. 30), but repudiates

¹ Lord Broughton ii, 296.

the idea that Medora Leigh was the offspring of that connection (p. 31). The Reviewer agrees that the letter of May, 1819, was addressed to Mrs. Chaworth-Musters (p. 28).

Mr. Edgcumbe's theory is the subject of a note by Mary Countess of Lovelace, the Editor of the later edition of *Astarte*, who points out (p. 314) that there is no evidence to prove that Mrs. Leigh ever knew Mrs. Chaworth-Musters. The theory is that Mrs. Leigh, a married woman surrounded by family and friends and servants, contrived to go through a bogus confinement and introduce a make-believe child into her house without detection. That Mrs. Leigh corresponded with Lady Byron for years, sending letters to her to read which she pretended had been addressed by Byron to herself, when in fact they had been sent for transmission to Mrs. Chaworth-Musters ; that in doing so she avowed that she had been guilty of incest and acknowledged Byron's fatherhood of her child Medora. All this, for the sake of a comparative stranger, whose guilt, if she had been guilty, would have been as nothing compared to that assumed by Mrs. Leigh. Lady Lovelace shows from Byron's letters to Lady Melbourne what his movements were from the end of June, 1813, when Mrs. Leigh joined him in London; that Lady Melbourne remonstrated against his going abroad with his sister in August. The first mention of Mrs. Chaworth-Musters occurs in January, 1814, when Byron tells Lady Melbourne of his boyish adoration for that lady, and says that they had hardly met since her marriage and that " she is a good girl."

The late Andrew Lang, in the *Fortnightly Review* of August, 1910 (p. 268), points out that without the story of " Mrs. Leigh's merely simulated motherhood and warming-pan baby," which the *Quarterly Review* rejects, Mr. Edgcumbe's solution of the mystery falls to pieces. If Mrs. Leigh did not in January-April,

1814, simulate approaching motherhood and by aid of the historic warming-pan, or otherwise, add a little alien to her large family, then in 1816 Mrs. Chaworth-Musters, even if guilty with the absent Byron in June, 1813, was in no danger of discovery and needed no help from falsehoods told by Mrs. Leigh. The "Mystery" is connected with Byron's desire to leave England at any risk or loss to escape "ruin and misery"; with "the strange summer adventure which I don't like to think of"; with his "black" and "scorching" mood in July; with the "entirely new" and most serious scrape of July.

Mr. Edgcumbe's theory is criticised by Miss Mayne (*Byron*, ii, 333, 334), who points out the absence of proof of any kind to support the theory, while only the strongest proof by documentary evidence would be sufficient. But, apart from proof, it is an improbable story. Mary Chaworth was a married woman already at odds with a flagrantly unfaithful husband. The theory is that, to save her from the consequences of adultery, Mrs. Leigh branded herself with the crime of incest.

To the above reasons for disbelief in the alleged liaison with Mrs. Chaworth-Musters, we may add Moore's statement that Byron met that lady for the last time in the year 1808 (*Moore*, i, 228). In January, 1814, Byron wrote of her to Lady Melbourne: "But though pretty (at least, she was so)" (*Murray*, i, 240). It is true that Moore's statement is inconsistent with one which Medwin attributes to Byron, but the latter, if accurate, shows that a liaison was improbable. Byron, as quoted by Medwin (*Conversations*, 69), says:

She (Mrs. Chaworth-Musters) was at length separated from Mr. M— and proposed an interview with me, but by the advice of my sister I declined it. I remember meeting her after my return from Greece, but pride had conquered my love; and yet it was not with perfect indifference I saw her.

The following verse is quoted by Medwin (in a note) from one of the *Occasional Pieces*, "Well! thou art happy," written in November, 1808 :

Yet I was calm. I knew the time
My heart would swell but at thy look ;
But now, to tremble were a crime ;
We met, and not a nerve was shook.

Byron had declined an interview after his return from Greece and the meeting referred to was evidently before the journey to Greece in 1809.

In Byron's letter to J. J. Coulmann, July, 1823 (*Prothero*, vi, 230), he says he had not met Mary Chaworth for many years before his marriage.

In his letter to Miss Milbanke, of October 22, 1814, Byron excuses his sister from accepting Sir Ralph Milbanke's invitation because "she is now nursing" (*Prothero*, iii, 159). This disproves the allegation of a simulated confinement.' See, further, pp. 189-90, below.

QUARTERLY REVIEW, January, 1910, p. 14 :

Lady Byron, because she thought her jr lends in favour of a reconciliation, adopted the false charge of incest for the purpose of strengthening her case ; the statement of March 14, 1816, untruly alleges that the suspicion of incest existed through Lady Byron's married life, that is, before any outside rumours of it existed (p. 14).

Lady Byron's own statements are sufficient refutation of these charges and the only evidence of what was in her mind. She confided her thoughts on the subject to no one until she had decided to seek a separation. Probably, the suspicion and the facts that supported it were communicated to Dr. Lushington to prevent her child being taken from her.

* This point is made by Mrs. Masterman in the *Review of Reviews*, March, 1922, p. 271.

BYRON, by Ethel Colburn Mayne (1912) :

While justifying Lady Byron in the matter of the separation, Miss Mayne does not consider her exempt from criticism. *Perhaps Lady Byron might have found a kindlier manner of keeping silence* (ii, 22). *Lady Byron was a woman whom . . . many must have poignantly disliked* (ii, 23).

Towards Byron and his friends, who were endeavouring to obtain admissions when her legal advisers told her that for her own protection and that of her child she ought to keep silence, we should hardly look for a kindly manner. To Byron, after the separation, having regard to the attacks in his poems and to his mode of life, a kindly manner would have been out of place. If Lady Byron exhibited a cold and reserved manner in later life we must remember that, as Miss Mayne tells us, " her life was first one short, and then one long, heart-break " (ii, 23). We have an instance of the kind of attack to which she was subjected in the letter of William Howitt (p. 27, above). If examples are required to prove her real nature, we may point to her kindness to Mrs. Leigh and her daughter Medora, and to Dr. Lushington's letter of 1852 (p. 152, above).

Lord Ernie, THE END OF THE BYRON MYSTERY (*Nineteenth Century*, August, 1921) :

Lord Byron agreed to the separation because Lady Byron claimed a fulfilment of his promise to agree if it was really her wish (p. 209).

For answer, see p. 190, below.

Lady Byron's suspicion originated in two circumstances of her early married life—the letter from Augusta beginning " Dearest first and best of human beings " and the reference to Dry den's "Don Sebastian" Lady Byron brooded over the suspicion until she made the facts agree with it. Afterwards she recognised that the

most revolting of the accusations she had made to her legal adviser were unfounded (p. 210).

For answer see Chapter IX, above.

Was not the letter of May 17, 1819, placed in Mr. Leigh's hands to be forwarded to some third person? (p. 212).

This suggestion is mere conjecture. No evidence to support it has been produced. The evidence to connect the letter with Mrs. Leigh has already been given. See Chapter XIV, above.

The Melbourne letters show that Lady Melbourne must have had strong suspicion of Lord Byron's guilt, yet she was Lady Byron's aunt and she made the match (p. 212).

Lord Byron's first offer of marriage was conveyed to Miss Milbanke by Lady Melbourne in October, 1812.* The offer was refused and Lady Melbourne was not aware of the second offer (in September, 1814) until after it was accepted,† though she may have anticipated and, apparently did not discourage it. From August, 1813, when she first became aware of the incestuous intrigue, Lady Melbourne never ceased to remonstrate with Byron, as we can see from his letters. In the letter of September 18, 1814, announcing his engagement, he says: "I mean to reform most thoroughly." Lady Melbourne was much attached to Byron and no doubt believed in his promise of reform. According to the phrase which Byron learnt from her,‡ and made use of in his Journal (January 16, 1814), she thought that a marriage would be his salvation. And yet, when all is said that can be said for Lady Melbourne, the conclusion must be that, had she thought less about Byron's happiness and more about her niece's, she had proved a better friend to both. She wished to be Byron's "corbeau blanc" and unwittingly proved to be a "corbeau noir."

* Murray, i, 89.

† Byron to Lady Melbourne, September 18, 1814 (Murray, i, 267).

‡ See his letter to Lady Melbourne, January 16, 1814 (Murray, i, 236).

BYRON IN ENGLAND, by Professor J. A. Strahan (*Edinburgh Review*, October, 1921) :

Byron accused himself of incest to Caroline Lamb, only to shock her. Probably he never thought of the reaction on his partner in crime (p. 338).

On the point of Byron's self-accusations the author of the *Vindication of Lady Byron* may be quoted :

We are told that Lord Byron had an inveterate " habit of mystification " ; that he would sacrifice " anything for a sensation " ; had " fits of self-accusation " and a " monomania of being an impossible sinner " ; that in his mad moods he did his best to blacken his own reputation ; that he had a fancy for self-defamation. Perhaps the friends of a braggart of pretended crime would have no good cause to murmur if the claim to be an atrocious sinner were allowed. The man who makes such boasts cannot have any abhorrence of crime. The safety of his neighbours depends on his lack of opportunity.'

Evidence founded on self-accusation may be rebutted by evidence of general good character, but where independent proof of guilt exists, self-accusation only serves to confirm the guilt. It is impossible that any one should so accuse himself without appreciating the effect on his alleged partner in guilt.

Miss Milbanke is described as " plain " (p. 339 and again on p. 340).

If this were the case, it would not palliate her husband's misconduct. Lady Byron's portraits do not confirm Professor Strahan's view, nor does Lord Byron himself : " She is quite pretty enough to be loved by her husband without being so glaringly beautiful as to attract too many rivals." † " When young, she was described as ' pretty, not beautiful, the prevalent expression of her countenance is ingenuousness . . . What she may have lost in regular beauty, she made up in variety and expression

* *Vindication*, 167, citing *Quarterly*, October, 1869, pp. 419, 420, 442. See also *Vindication*, 167-177.

† *Murray*, i, 79.

of countenance during conversation.' "" In 1817 Sir Walter Scott describes her as " beautiful." † Possibly, Professor Strahan was deceived by the misnamed portrait referred to in the Editor's note to *Astarte*, p. 318.

Lady Byron had a tight fist. When she was a wealthy woman, independently of the settlement, while Augusta was in miserable circumstances. Lady Byron stuck fiercely to the settled funds and quarrelled with Augusta because she wished to have some influence in their management. If her marriage was a matrimonial failure, it was a pecuniary success (p. 341).

The fact is that from the date of the separation in 1816, until the death of Lady Noel in 1822, Lady Byron's income, out of which she supported her child was £500^a a year. Lady Byron brought £20,000 into settlement on her marriage; out of £1,000 a year, the income of this sum, Lady Byron took £300 a year pin-money and £700 a year went to Lord Byron for his life. Upon the separation, Lord Byron gave up £200 a year, raising his wife's income to £500. Except for this sum of £200 a year, derived from the income of his wife's property, Lord Byron contributed nothing towards the maintenance of his wife and child for the rest of his life, and during that period he received the whole income of his own property, amounting probably to between £3,000 and £4,000 a year. ‡ If a statement in the *Fortnightly Review* of January, 1924 (p. 62), is correct, in the five years of his Italian residence Byron made from his works more than £12,000. Upon the death of Lady Noel in 1822, property to the value of about £6,500 a year § devolved to Lady Byron from the estate of her uncle Lord Wentworth. The income was not given to Lady Byron for her separate use and therefore, in law, Lord Byron was entitled to receive it during the

^a Mabell, Countess of Airlie, *In Whig Society*, 135, 136.

† Lockhart, *Life of Scott*, v, 255. ‡ See *Prothero*, iii, 319. § *Ibid.*

joint lives of his wife and himself. Under the terms of the separation it was decided by arbitrators that this sum should be divided equally between husband and wife. Thereby Lord Byron became entitled to a further sum of over $\text{^}3,000$ a year during his life out of property coming from his wife's uncle. Upon Lord Byron's death in 1824, his share of the $\text{^}6,500$ a year passed to his wife who also became entitled to a jointure of $\text{^}2,000$ a year from her husband's estate. This latter sum she made over to her husband's cousin and heir, Captain George Byron, who succeeded to the title, but was unprovided for by Lord Byron's will. Lord Byron, by his will, left the whole of his estate which included, subject to the jointure of $\text{^}2,000$ a year, the sum of $\text{^}60,000$ set apart to secure the jointure, and amounted in all to more than $\text{^}100,000$, to Mrs. Leigh and her children. Of the $\text{^}20,000$ brought into settlement by Lady Byron, $\text{^}4,000$ passed to Lord Byron and was disposed of by his will and $\text{^}16,000$ went to the daughter of the marriage. This was the only provision for the daughter, who took no interest whatever in her father's estate.' It is true that on the death of Lady Noel in January, 1822, Byron requested Kinnaird to insure Lady Byron's life for $\text{^}10,000$, or if the expense were too great, for $\text{^}6,000$, to compensate for diminution of income in case of Lady Byron's death, and provide for his children; but within a day or two he had decided to apply the amount in paying his creditors.!

The quarrel between Mrs. Leigh and Lady Byron was caused by the former wishing to control the exercise by Lady Byron of the power vested in her of appointing new trustees of her own marriage settlement, and to nominate solicitors to the trustees. This was in 1829 when by the death of Lord Byron Mrs. Leigh had become entitled to a reversionary interest

' Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

† See letters to Kinnaird, February 17, 19 and 23, 1822 (*Murray*, ii, 212-217).

in the trust funds. It was Mrs. Leigh who refused to be reconciled.'

Without imputing wilful falsehood to Lady Byron, she was one of those persons who can persuade themselves that anything is true which they wish to believe (P.341)-

This doubtful compliment seems to convey the following meaning : It would be impolite to charge Lady Byron with falsehood but nevertheless the only excuse we can offer for her is one which is adopted when allowance is made in favour of any perverter of the truth. Has the reviewer forgotten Byron's testimony " My wife is truth itself " ?

Lady Byron's additional disclosure to her legal advisers, rendering reconciliation impossible, could not have caused the separation, which would not have taken place if the doctors had declared Byron insane ; it only prevented the reconciliation which Lady Byron had resolved she could not have. The reviewer's hypothesis is that the disclosure was the story which Byron told to Lady Caroline Lamb (p. 343).

There is no dispute that at the time Lady Byron made the additional disclosure, she had resolved on a separation and therefore that there could be no reconciliation ; she had formed that resolution a month before. It is now clear that the disclosure consisted of additional details of " cruelty " in a legal sense, including Byron's behaviour, during the year of married life, in regard to Mrs. Leigh. Byron had been declared sane a month before Lady Byron met Dr. Lushington. She had contemplated the possibility of separation, in case her husband should prove to be responsible for his actions, long before this. See pp. 97, 103, above.

" *Astarte* " contains a number of letters which prove nothing. One is not even evidence since the name of the lady to whom it was addressed is obliterated. So

The statement that Mrs. Leigh when handing over Byron's letters to her, to Lady Byron, erased words which might show that undue intimacy had existed, is irreconcilable with there having already been a confession (p. 221). Lord Lovelace's contention involves the absurdity that in 1819 Mrs. Leigh should obliterate references to herself when she had confessed in 1816 (p. 222).

It was natural that Mrs. Leigh, when entrusting the letters to the post, should erase portions of a compromising nature.

It is said that the letters to Augusta show more than a brotherly affection. This may be a matter of the custom of the time in which they were written (p. 221). Extracts from Byron's letters to his sister are set out above (pp. 133-136). The suggestion that those letters were in the ordinary form of communication between brother and sister at that time or any other cannot be accepted.

Mrs. Leigh's letters of March 31, 1815 (Hodgson), July 3, 1816 (to Lady Byron), and her correspondence with Hodgson after Sir Ralph Noel's letter to Byron of February 2, 1816, are inconsistent with the "Astarte" charge. "Astarte" (p. 134) contains the admission that "no incriminating evidence against Mrs. Leigh has turned up out of her own documents," which really disposes of the whole case, so far as it rests upon Mrs. Leigh's letters. Lady Byron could not have believed in the charge when she left her husband's house. She wrote him and Augusta affectionate letters immediately after. Neither Sir Ralph nor Lady Byron gave a hint of any misconduct such as charged in "Astarte." After matters had been talked over and re-talked over between Lady Byron and her parents and advisers, the idea of that charge seems to have been entertained (pp. 223-226).

Mrs. Leigh's letter to Hodgson of March 31, 1815, has not been traced. The letter of July 3, 1816, must be read in connection with the rest of the

correspondence which is set out above (Chapter XIII V). In Mrs. Leigh's letters to Hodgson, her brother's friend, we should not expect to find any incriminating evidence. It may be remarked that Mrs. Leigh's letters would not, in the ordinary course, be found amongst her own documents. It is true that Lord Lovelace says that all the information her papers contained existed in duplicate in Lord or Lady Byron's documents (*Astarte*, 134), but it is possible that documents unknown to Lord Lovelace have been destroyed. It is remarkable that only two communications from Mrs. Leigh to her brother have been produced (*Astarte*, 37, 263), and it is clear from *Astarte* 36, 37, that Lord Lovelace had not seen more than one or two of Mrs. Leigh's letters to Byron. Apparently, Mrs. Leigh's letters were returned to her on Lord Byron's death. In a letter of May 14, 1851, from the Rev. Frederick William Robertson to Lady Byron, he refers to one he has received from Mrs. Leigh, in which "she expresses a desire to see me and afford me documentary proofs, in letters from Lord Byron and letters of her own returned to her since his death, that she never influenced his mind against you." Lady Byron's condition of doubt when she left her husband's house and the affectionate letters to him and to Mrs. Leigh have already been discussed. It is not surprising that Sir Ralph Noel and Lady Byron should give no hint of the misconduct, when it was only a subject of suspicion, and when Lady Byron's advisers had imposed silence upon them with regard to the charges against Lord Byron. It has already been pointed out that grounds for the suspicion had existed throughout Lady Byron's married life. Certainly, the suspicion was not entertained for the first time, as seems to be implied, after Lady Byron had conferred with her parents on the subject. (*See, e.g., pp. 103, 124, 125, above.*)

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

The admission ("Astarte," 36) that the misconduct (if any) took place before and not after Byron's marriage is practically conclusive, with the opportunities afforded, that it never took place at all. This contention is strengthened by the fact that Byron's inclination was most violent in the earlier half of 1815 (pp. 226, 227).

This conclusion leaves out of account the fact that, besides the opportunity, the will to do wrong of two persons was required to constitute the offence. One of them stood firm after the marriage and therefore no misconduct took place. The passage referred to at p. 36 of *Astarte* is confirmed by another at p. 144.

It is incredible that Byron's Memoirs which he desired his wife to peruse would have supported the "Astarte" charge (p. 228).

The history of the destruction of the *Memoirs* is told at length in the *Vindication of Lady Byron* (pp. 93-107), and in Lord Broughton's *Recollections* (iii, 329-362). It is certain that the *Memoirs* furnished no defence of Lord Byron, or Hobhouse would not have witnessed their destruction, for which he disclaimed responsibility, without a protest. They were burnt, he says, by the desire of Mrs. Leigh, but he advised Mrs. Leigh that they ought to be destroyed.' So urgent was the matter considered by Lord Byron's friends, that Hobhouse, Kinnaird and Sir Francis Burdett met together in the afternoon of the day on which news of Lord Byron's death reached London, to consult on the best means of procuring the manuscript,†

The facts are made clear by the following extract from a letter from Hobhouse to Wilmot Horton, which has not hitherto been published :

6, Albany, November 23, 1824. I learn from Mr. Murray that you have a copy of the contradictions of Medwin's book which I thought of publishing. As they will not be used in

¹ Lord Broughton, iii, 341, 342 ; Earl Russell, *Life of Moore*, iv, 188.

† Lord Broughton, iii, 332.

that shape, I should be obliged if you would either burn your copy or return it to me.

In the note you were good enough to send me the other day I saw a slight misconception on your part respecting those plaguy Memoirs which I think it as well to rectify. I did not *inforce*, as you hint, the *burning* of the said memoirs. What I did *inforce*, as far as I could, was the performance of Mr. Moore's written engagement to put them "into Mrs. Leigh's hands for her absolute disposal" I think Mrs. Leigh was perfectly right to burn them and I told her so—but so far from *inforcing* the burning, I refused to put them into the fire when some one desired me to aid in that pious work, as being no part of my business. But I strongly approved of the burning and do so still.

After all, it is very idle enquiring who did the deed or who advised or who approved, for the MSS. were in Murray's hands and he declared he would not give them up except to Mrs. Leigh; and moreover it was afterwards, as you know, discovered that he, Murray, was the owner of the said MSS. and might have done what he chose with them.

Pray never think it necessary to apologise or hint at any doubts as to the propriety of the execution at Murray's. The thing was right—that's enough—and never mind the scoundrel world that lives only on newspaper puff paste. Here's young parson Dallas accuses me of perjury, and yet I live and move as usual; and if I notice his nonsense 'twill only be in joke. I wonder that you official men, who are so accustomed to the paper bullets of the brain, should not totally disregard their whistling; and yet I see by something in your notes to me that some ignorant or malicious fellow has had it in his power to annoy you by chattering about the Memoirs. If you could but get up a counter-revolution in South America, now, there would be a stop put to all this idle gabble on the private affairs of the dead and of those who are half dead with squabbling about them.'

Byron's friend, William John Bankes, approved of the destruction of the *Memoirs* and remarked to Hobhouse that Byron's best friends could always recur to his poetry and conceal his life. Hobhouse agreed.f

' Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers,

† *Lord Broughton*, iii, 92.

Hobhouse conjured Murray to look over the large collection of letters and papers of Lord Byron in his possession, and to destroy whatever might be unfit afterwards to get abroad.'

In 1827 Moore wrote to Hobhouse asking for materials for his life of Byron and adding that he must see Byron's letters to Lady Melbourne. Hobhouse replied that he could not be a coadjutor in Moore's work, and that Moore could not consult the letters to Lady Melbourne, † These are the letters published in 1922. (See p. 72, above.) It is probable that the *Memoirs* recorded facts which at least indirectly supported the charge against Mrs. Leigh. In 1843, Lady Holland, who had perused the *Memoirs*, told the Hon. Mrs. George Lamb that " they were full of the attachment "X

The statement, frequently made, that Lady Byron procured the destruction of the *Memoirs* is disposed of by the correspondence and a memorandum in Mrs. Leigh's handwriting quoted by Jeaffreson. § Mrs. Leigh says :

On Saturday, the 15th of May [1824] Mr. H. [Hobhouse] called again upon me and announced that he had seen Mr. Moore, who had expressed his determination of placing the *Memoirs* at my disposal, and added that his, Mr. H.'s, own advice was that he recommended me to put them on the fire as a duty which I owed to the Fame and Memory of my Brother. . . . Mr. H. replied that it was absolutely necessary I should accept Mr. M.'s offer and destroy the MSS. as he would not resign it (*sic*) to any other person and repeated how much my Brother's fame would be involved in the publication.

That Mrs. Leigh was convinced by Hobhouse's arguments appears by a letter from her to Wilmot Horton of May 16, 1824, in which she says:

¹ *Lord Broughton*, iii, 334.

†

Ibid., 227.

[‡] Letter, the Hon. Mrs. George Lamb to Lady Noel Byron, August 1, 1843, Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

§ *Athenaum*, August 18, 1883.

" It is my *very* decided opinion the *Memoirs ought* to be *burnt* and I think the sooner the better."* Colonel Doyle wrote to Wilmot Horton, May 18, 1825 : " Lady Byron certainly gave no consent to the *destruction* of the manuscript either directly or indirectly—she never could have known that it was intended to destroy it, because I believe that intention was communicated for the first time at the meeting in question " {i.e., the meeting at which the manuscript was burnt).f

On June 1, 1824, Lady Byron wrote to Mrs. Leigh : ^UI do concur *now* in the expediency and propriety of the destruction, but had the question *then* been submitted to me, they certainly would not have been consumed by my decision." (The *Memoirs* were burnt on May 17.) This letter is published in the *Athenaeum* of May 24, 1884. From other letters appearing in the same number may be gathered the facts with regard to Lady Byron's offer to contribute to the compensation of Murray for loss suffered by the destruction of the *Memoirs*. Lady Byron was willing to contribute £1,000, to be supplemented by £1,000 advanced by Wilmot Horton on behalf of Mrs. Leigh. Not being responsible for the act of destruction, Lady Byron wished to guard herself from making a payment which might be construed as the consideration for that act. Murray had received his two thousand guineas, but the burning of the manuscript had deprived him of the right to profit by its publication. Lady Byron was willing to compensate Murray, but not to reimburse Moore the two thousand guineas he had paid to Murray. It appears from Wilmot Horton's letter of " Thursday morning " in reply to one from Mrs. Leigh of March 2, 1825, that Mrs. Leigh wished the money to be paid to *Murray*—" I wanted no repetition of your expressed

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers. † *Astarte*, 328.

J There was a misunderstanding about this. The amount of Murray's payment to Moore was two thousand guineas.

anxiety that this money should be paid to Murray." It may be suggested that in the copy, perhaps in the original, " Murray " is written for " Moore." The rest of the correspondence indicates that Mrs. Leigh wished the money to be applied in the reimbursement of Moore. Wilmot Horton advised Mrs. Leigh that Murray could not as an honourable man consent to receive any further payment. Hobhouse thought that no further payment should be made at all. Mrs. Leigh cannot have been anxious to borrow a thousand pounds (or guineas) for the payment of what she was advised was not even a debt of honour. Lady Byron proposed to place her contribution in the hands of Lushington and Hobhouse,' and wrote to Lushington to this effect. Moore refused to receive any payment† and so the matter ended.

Lady Byron's disavowal (pp. 228, 229) :

The document speaks for itself (p. 112, above). It is not correctly recited in the *National Review*.

It is repugnant to our law that a man should be tried for an offence after his death (p. 229). This applies with equal force to the case of Lady Byron. If necessary it could be truly said that it is Lady Byron who has been put on her trial and the allegations against Lord Byron are part of her defence. But the argument is fallacious, for, if acceded to, it would prevent any testimony against a person whose life has passed into the stage of history.

LADY BYRON AND AUGUSTA LEIGH, by Harold Child (*National Review*, January, 1922) :

Mr. Child replies to the arguments of Professor Strahan in the *Edinburgh Review* of October, 1921, and Mr. Hewitt in the *National Review* of the same month. One sentence only in Mr. Child's article will be questioned here :

* Wilmot Horton supposed that he and Lushington were to be the depositaries.

† John Murray III., in the *Academy*, October 9, 1869, Vol. I, p. 8.

Argument from Byron's poetry is to be distrusted (p. 648).

On September 28, 1813, Byron writes to Lady Melbourne : " Your opinion of *The Giaour*, or rather, the additions, honours me highly ; you, who know how my thoughts were occupied when these last w^rere written, will perhaps perceive in parts a coincidence in my own state of mind with that of my hero " (*Murray*, i, 183). On November 25 he writes to the same lady : " My new Turkish tale (*The Bride of Abydos*) will be out directly . . . it will for some *reasons interest you* more than anybody. These I leave you to discover . . . You know me better than most people, and are the only person who can trace, and I want to see whether you think my *writings* are *me* or not . . . When I speak of this *tale* and the *author*, I merely mean *feelings* . . . This, no one *but you* can tell" (*Ibid.* 219). On November 17, 1813, Byron writes in his Journal : " In rhyme I can keep more away from facts ; but the thought always runs through—through . . . yes, yes, through." Moore, who was in the best position to judge, writes thus of Byron's poetry : " So entirely was all that he wrote—making allowance for the embellishments of fancy—the transcript of his actual life and feelings " ; though why, *in a later passage*, Moore should exclude from the category the *Bride of Abydos*, the *Corsair*, *Lara*, " and all the other beautiful fictions, that followed," it is hard to understand.' We have just seen what Byron himself says of the *Bride of Abydos*. Moore's dictum would exclude, amongst " the other beautiful fictions," *Don Juan*, the third and fourth Cantos of *Childe Harold*, the *Dream* and *Manfred*. Of the last piece Lord Ernie has lately written : " His cry of remorse in *Manfred* is genuine . . . his own individuality is everywhere stamped on the poem."† The reviewer of the later edition of *Astarte*, in the

* *Moore*, i, 134, 590.

†

Quarterly, April, 1924, pp. 244, 249.

Nation and Athenteum of August 6, 1921, points out that Byron realised so acutely that he was publishing half his secret by publishing his poetry, that at one time he wished to withdraw his works from publication (see letter, Lord Byron to Murray, April 29, 1814). See also "Further Letters, Journals, and Poems," Chapter XI, above. We should not disregard the evidence of the poems.

LADY BYRON AND AUGUSTA LEIGH, AN ANSWER, by E. P. Hewitt, K.C. (*National Review*, March, 1922) :

Lady Byron's son-in-law, the first Earl of Lovelace, writing to Lady Byron in 1853 ("Astarte," p. 195), refers to her "severity and coldness" and her "want of sympathy" with those who did not feel exactly as she felt (p. 126).

The whole passage should be read. The Earl writes to Lady Byron :

And yet with all your severity and coldness which drives (*sic*) me into these indignant remonstrances with you, the last page of your letter is too true for me not to re-echo and confirm it. You have been too noble and generous (in some things), self-denying in all, for me not to bear ready testimony to it. In most fine qualities you have not your equal on earth, and my love for you is as ardent as ever, however you may repel it. I hold you in respect and admiration more than ever—but your want of sympathy (in spite of all your gentleness) with those who do not feel exactly as you do, has cruelly destroyed what of certainty, hope and comfort remained to me.

Mrs. Villiers was a friend of Lady Byron's rather than of Mrs. Leigh's (p. 126).

Mrs. Villiers was an intimate friend of Mrs. Leigh's "from very early days," and a recent acquaintance of Lady Byron's in February, 1816.*

Lady Byron's statement in May, 1816, that her conviction of the truth of the charge against Mrs. Leigh

* *Astarte*, 57 ; Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

was " not till lately fixed " is inconsistent with her statement of the following July that Byron's behaviour in the early days of their married life made her " most cruelly sensible of what engrossed his thoughts and actuated his conduct " (p. 127). The inconsistency is not apparent. The passage probably means that in the early days of married life Byron was endeavouring to corrupt Mrs. Leigh, and at the later date Lady Byron was convinced that at some period guilty relations had existed.

How do Lady Byron's affectionate letters to Mrs. Leigh of Jan. and Feb., 1816, agree with the statement in Lady Byron's letter of May 12, 1816, that her suspicions relative to previous misconduct were " most strongly corroborated" during Mrs. Leigh's stay in Piccadilly Terrace? (Nov.-Dec, 1815) (p. 128).

The question is answered by the letter of May 12, 1816 (p. 118, above). Lady Byron says that at the period of her confinement (Dec. 1815) suspicion was not " sufficiently corroborated to have been made a principle of conduct, without risking a cruel injury to one who professed herself most affectionately and disinterestedly devoted to my welfare." At the same time Lady Byron's suspicion as to *previous* circumstances [that is, before her marriage] were most strongly corroborated by Mrs. Leigh's attitude of despair and distraction. But the old offence might have been repented of by Mrs. Leigh. Under those circumstances, Lady Byron must either have remained on affectionate terms with her or broken off relations altogether, at the risk of ruin to Mrs. Leigh's reputation.

How could Mrs. Leigh say in June, 1816, that she had uniformly consulted Lady Byron's happiness if it was the fact that she had borne a child to Byron and allowed the marriage to take place with this secret kept back? (p. 128).

The correspondence from June to September, 1816,

shows Mrs. Leigh wished to make Lady Byron understand that the guilty relations had ceased before the Byron marriage and that she (Mrs. Leigh) had done everything in her power to promote Lady Byron's happiness after the marriage. Mrs. Leigh thought that the most effectual way of breaking off the relations was to induce Byron to marry, though she afterwards disclaimed the promotion of the union with Miss Milbanke. From the correspondence it is evident she considered that Lady Byron would not be injured if the guilty connection ceased before the marriage.

The evidence of Mrs. Leigh's confession consists only of deductions from correspondence and written statements of Lady Byron (pp. 128-129).

The suggestion seems to be that the evidence must be insufficient without a written confession signed by Mrs. Leigh. In her letter to Mrs. Villiers of May 23, 1816, Lady Byron gives reasons for approaching Mrs. Leigh "without compelling the utterly degrading confession of her own guilt" (p. 120, above). In her letter to Mrs. Leigh of July 11, 1816, Lady Byron writes: "When I speak of the necessity of confidence, do not suppose I wish to exact any confession. Let the past be *understood* now, to be buried in future" (p. 125, above). She would not put Mrs. Leigh to the ordeal of signing a confession. The absence of a written confession being thus accounted for, the evidence consists of deductions from correspondence and written statements of Lady Byron. If the deductions are sound, no better evidence could be wished for than the written statements of a truthful witness, corroborated by correspondence. That the deductions are sound has been submitted above (p. 132).

It is acknowledged by Mr. Child that the possibility must be fairly faced that Mrs. Leigh was hoaxing her two friends (p. 129).

It should be added that Mr. Child, after discussing the evidence, rejects the possibility. We prefer to say that what has to be faced is the *prima facie* impossibility that there was any hoax. There is no evidence to suggest such a thing. A serious story, as this is, based on documentary evidence, is not lightly to be brushed aside as founded on a hoax ; mere conjecture will not be sufficient. The hoax suggested would involve such a "course of dissimulation and hypocrisy" as would inevitably betray itself at some point.

The real point brought out by such letters as that of May 17, 1819, is that Byron had a passionate devotion for a certain lady—not Mrs. Leigh. A letter from Beau Brummell is referred to in support. It is practically impossible that the letter of May 17 was intended for Mrs. Leigh (p. 129).

"Such letters as that of May 17, 1819," is too vague to enable us to understand what letters are specially relied on, but, looking at the whole correspondence, it is submitted that there is ample evidence to show that the letter was addressed to Mrs. Leigh. The reasons are given above (Chap. XIV). Beau Brummell's letter is no doubt the one which is quoted in Mr. Edgcumbe's letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* of September 22, 1921. Brummell, writing in 1835 from "Caen, In prison," said he had frequently heard Byron romanticise for hours about Mary Chaworth. The last time Byron was in England matters seem to have been very well arranged between them. Mr. Musters left his wife abruptly and went to Paris. At Calais, where Brummell met him, Mr. Musters said he had separated from his wife for life and that Byron was the cause of the desertion, but on account of the children he should not prosecute the affair further. On this letter alone the evidence of a liaison between Byron and Mrs. Chaworth-Musters rests. Whether Byron was likely to romanticise

about Mary Chaworth for hours, frequently or at all, in Brummell's presence, may be doubted. At the end of his life Brummell used to hold phantom receptions of the beauties and magnates of former days. He died in a lunatic asylum at Caen in March, 1840.' But assuming that Brummell gave an accurate account of what he had heard, it was based on the unsupported statement of Mr. Musters, of whom Byron wrote : " He has been playing the Devil with all kinds of vulgar mistresses and behaving ill enough in every respect " (*Murray*, i, 223). In any case a liaison would not prove that the letter of May 17, 1819, was addressed to Mrs. Chaworth-Musters. Byron's relations with that lady cannot have been more wicked than those of Paolo and Francesca. Byron's letters to Lady Melbourne of January 11, 12, 13 and 29, 1814,¹ finally dispel the notion of a liaison. ‡

Lord Ernie, THE NEW LETTERS OF BYRON (*Quarterly Review*, April, 1922) :

Byron stated, and so far as is known the statement has never been disputed, that he only agreed to the separation because his wife appealed to his promise that, if she wished it, he would not oppose her wish (p. 447).

That Lord Byron made the statement is not disputed, but that the statement is true certainly is disputed. Lord Byron complains that he did not know what the charges against him were. If he did know what the charges were, the promise implied an admission that they were true ; if he did not know, the promise provided an excuse for not enquiring further into the truth of facts which he dared not face. If the promise was given without sufficient consideration of the consequences, why did not Lord Byron say so when its fulfilment was claimed ? The answer is that he was only too willing to take advantage

¹ *Diet. Nat. Biog.* † *Murray*, i, 227, 229, 239.

‡ See also pp. 166-9, above.

of the excuse. It is to be observed also, that he told his sister that it was on her account, principally, that he gave way at all on the subject of the separation.' This was probably true.

Edgcumbe, THE BYRON CONTROVERSY {*National Review*, July, 1922) :

Lord Lovelace misdirected the public judgment by reviving a baseless and forgotten scandal against Mrs. Leigh (p789).

The scandal was revived by Mrs. Stowe in 1869, with the result that Lady Byron was accused of inventing the story. Lord Lovelace's object was to prove that Lady Byron spoke the truth. Though the charge against Mrs. Leigh was not the cause of the separation, it was necessary for Lady Byron's vindication to prove the truth of the charge.

The scandal was by no means generally known. Frances Lady Shelley, though on intimate terms with Mrs. Leigh, had not heard the accusation until it was published by Mrs. Stowe (p. 789).

The accusation was generally known in 1816 when Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote to Byron that the information that Lady Byron was living with Mrs. Leigh gave him pleasure, for he considered it afforded a decisive contradiction to the only important calumny that ever was advanced against Lord Byron,†j

THE NEW BYRON LETTERS, AN ANSWER, by E. P. Hewitt, K.C. (*Fortnightly Review*, November, 1922) :

How can Lady Melbourne's promotion of Byron's marriage to her niece be consistent with the fact of the guilty relations with Mrs. Leigh, of which Lady Melbourne was aware ? (p. 878).

The answer will be found above, at p. 171.

The charge is of supposed misconduct before marriage, but it is clear from Lady Byron's letters that she is com-

¹ Letter, Lord Byron to Mrs. Leigh, June 19, 1817, p. 135, above,

† *Quarterly Review*, January, 1870, 230, n.

plaining of Byron's behaviour after the marriage (p. 878).

True, of his *behaviour* after the marriage, but not of behaviour involving *the charge*.

Lady Byron, when she left, had no notion of a separation, and it had been agreed that Byron should join her at Kirkby (p. 879).

For answer, see pp. 97, 99, 103, above.

Of the publications which issued in connection with the Byron Centenary in April, 1924, the following are noted as bearing on the question of the separation.

BYRON IN ENGLAND : His FAME AND AFTER-FAME, by Professor Samuel C. Chew (1924).

Referring to Lord Byron's letters to Mrs. Leigh, quoted in *Astarte*, the author says : *Save one sentence in one letter {an allusion to Lucretia Borgia}, there is not a line in them capable of being perverted by the most unhealthy imagination into evidence against Byron and Mrs. Leigh* (p. 336).

The answer has already been written in Chapters IX to XIV. It is to be observed that the author makes no attempt to explain the one sentence which he excepts.

Professor Chew's summary (p. 282, n.) of the arguments contained in the *Vindication of Lady Byron* requires some correction :

The statement that the work " supports Mrs. Stowe " is subject to qualification. It should rather be said that the *Vindication* supports the charge brought forward by Mrs. Stowe, while condemning, not only her inaccuracies of detail, but her bringing forward the charge at all. " Lady Byron," says the author of the *Vindication*, "has suffered more wrong from the good intentions of her friend than from **the** malice of her enemies/'

It is nowhere alleged in the *Vindication* that "Byron confessed to Miss Milbanke" or that she "forgave both parties." Forgiveness, as regarded Lord Byron, was out of the question while he remained obdurate.

Dr. Lushington's denial that incest was the cause of the separation could not, as the Professor suggests it did, influence the author of the *Vindication*. That work was published in 1871 and evidence of Dr. Lushington's denial first appeared in *Astarte* in 1905.'

BYRON IN PERSPECTIVE, by J. D. Symon (1924).

During these convulsions it seems as if Byron's reason tottered. Lady Byron dared hardly entertain the thought, but—was Byron mad?

The suggestion refused to be stilled. It grew insistent, it hardened to a chilling conviction. If it were true, her life—the child's life, was in danger. At length, she saw but one way—separation. But how propose it? Escape she must, but with craft—announce a visit to her parents, take little Ada, depart with affectionate farewells, and a happy letter written on the journey—then home to Kirkby Mallory—confess all the misery and terror of those thirteen unhappy months to her father, and leave the rest to him.

So it was planned, and so it fell out. Dismal mismanagement on the part of advisers and the whisperings of scandalmongers completed the debacle, with its legacy of endless unedifying mystifications to those who sought for causes.

"The causes, my dear sir," said Byron in exile, to a

'The following minor corrections may be noted. Chew, p. 281 : The ai tides in the *Saturday Review* of 1869-70 were by the Rev. William Scott, not by Mrs. Lynn Linton (see *Astarte*, 338, n.). The *Saturday Review* "supported" Mrs. Stowe only in the sense indicated above in connection with the *Vindication* ; page 279 : In the list of articles, note (1), "Lord Byron's married life" of June, 1869, is quoted as from the *Argosy* ; this should be *Temple Bar*. The *Temple Bar* article, "The character of Lady Byron" (October, 1869), is quoted as "The character of Lord Byron." Page 282, n. : The *Vindication* contains three, not five, papers reprinted from *Temple Bar*.

friend, " the causes were too simple to be easily discovered " (p. 205).

Gliding too skilfully over the unpleasing facts of the separation, Mr. Symon has fallen into error in his endeavour to find the true cause. His account is plausible, but is not based upon fact. Lady Byron resolved upon separation only when it was proved that her husband was *not* mad. She left Lord Byron by his written request. The " happy letter " was written in pursuance of the doctors' advice before the supposition of madness was dispelled. The true facts, it is submitted, have been proved in the course of the story as related above.

In one sense Lord Byron spoke truly when he said the causes of the separation were too simple to be easily found out. We now know that cruelty, which made it impossible for Lady Byron to return to her husband, was the reason which caused Dr. Lushington to say that if the idea of a reconciliation should be entertained, he could not, either professionally or otherwise, take any part towards effecting it.

THE PERSONALITY OF BYRON, by C. E. Lawrence (*Edinburgh Review*, April, 1924).

" *Astarte* " need not be regarded here because it is not true . . . , In spite of her enormous powers of self-deception, it is difficult to believe that Lady Byron would have written to Augusta such letters as she did write at the time of the separation if she had believed in her guilt (p. 342).

The attack on Lady Byron has taken a new form here. Usually, her enemies have brought forward her alleged belief in Mrs. Leigh's guilt as the evidence of her self-deception. This is now given up. The suggestion is that Lady Byron did not believe in Mrs. Leigh's guilt but exercised " her enormous powers of self-deception " in other directions which are not specified.

The answer is given in the foregoing pages. *Astarte* is true ; Lady Byron did not exercise powers of self-deception ; she wrote the letters to Mrs. Leigh, believing her to have been repentant of the past and innocent since Lord Byron's marriage.

BYRON THE POET, by Walter A. Briscoe (1924).

In a chapter headed " The Byron Mystery," Mr. Briscoe has revived William Howitt's letters to the *Daily News* of September 4 and 13, 1869, the earlier of which is cited at pp. 27,28, above. Howitt does not appear to advantage in these letters. Nine years after Lady Byron's death he writes to the newspaper, acrimoniously proclaiming her alleged faults, yet showing that he had not been averse to accept her hospitality while living. From the *Daily News*, September 4, 1869 :

I knew Lady Byron for some years and visited at her house in town, at her summer residence at Richmond, at Eton, and met her at her son-in-law, Lord Lovelace's, at Ockham . . .

No sooner was Byron dead, having left a carefully written memoir in his own justification, than Lady Byron sought to buy this up. She in fact never ceased her exertions till she had procured the destruction of her husband's own carefully prepared defence. No sooner was this accomplished, no sooner had she stifled his posthumous cries for a fair hearing by the public, than, if we are to believe Mrs. Stowe, she proceeds to blast his character to all posterity, by not merely whispering into the ear charges of the most damning and revolting nature, but she puts these into writing.

From Howitt's letter to the *Daily News*, September 13, 1869 :

The great fundamental fact is, that all the dark and revolting charges against Lord Byron are avowed to proceed from the very person who, before making

them, took care to destroy the evidence of the person against whom they are made. . . . 2 beg to ask once more whether it be the opinion of the justice-loving British public that this style of conduct can for a moment receive its sanction ?

The writer's vehemence has led to inaccuracy. "No sooner was this accomplished" — if Howitt had weighed his words, he would have remembered that thirty-two years elapsed between the destruction of the *Memoirs* and Lady Byron's interview with Mrs. Stowe.

With regard to the "charges," a charge was made by Lady Byron, not for the information of posterity, as Howitt's language implies, but in confidence to a friend whose advice she sought, and who, in breach of confidence, published the story to the world. Lady Byron being thereupon accused of inventing the charge, it was essential for her vindication to prove that it was true. The circumstances of the communication to Mrs. Stowe and the justification of Lady Byron in making it will be summed up in a later chapter (Chapter XVIII). But the force of Howitt's argument lies in the allegation that Lady Byron kept silence until she had procured the destruction of her husband's defence. The burning of the *Memoirs* has already been discussed. Not only did Lady Byron take no part in this act, but her opinion was not asked before the *Memoirs* were destroyed. It has been shown that they were burnt by the desire of Mrs. Leigh, upon Hobhouse's advice (see pp. 180-4, above).

Howitt complains of Lady Byron's asking him to luncheon to discuss a matter of business and after the meal, when he wished to enter upon the subject, of saying she felt unable to go into it. It is quite plain from Howitt's account that Lady Byron was ill.

In his letter to the *Daily News* of September 13, T#60. Howitt says it is clear from the letters of Lady

Anne Barnard and Lady Byron, quoted by Lord Lindsay (*Times*, September 7, 1869),[•] and the statements of " An American Citizen " (*Times*, September 8, 1869)[†] *that for years after the separation Lady Byron had no idea of any such crime as Mrs. Stowe makes her allege against Lord Byron.*

The correspondence already quoted proves this assumption to be unfounded and proves, moreover, that the absence of any reference to the charge against Mrs. Leigh in the letter to Lady Anne Barnard was consistent with the course pursued by Lady Byron after the separation. It was her object to confine the knowledge of the most serious charge to the smallest possible number of people. So long as her child was not interfered with she withheld the charge which would have been necessary for the protection of her maternal rights, but would have ruined Mrs. Leigh.

In the same letter, in a passage reproduced by Mr. Briscoe (p. 252), Howitt draws Lady Byron's daughter into the controversy :

The writers, English and American, who claim for Mrs. Stowe the peculiar and almost exclusive confidence of Lady Byron on this subject, are dealing in mere fudge. It is well known to a certain number of persons that Lady Byron, with all her affected strength of character, had the weakness to make such confidantes of most of her lady friends of long standing. Most of these ladies are now dead, and prudently " died and made no sign." But there is one, at least, still living who possesses a series of letters from Lady Byron, containing, not horrors of the Beecher Stowe type, but heavy charges, not only against her husband, but against her own daughter.

Howitt shows no justification for bringing Lady

• See pp. 28-32 above.

† " A citizen of the United States " writes in the *Times* of September 8 that he knew Moore, Rogers and Luttrell, and is convinced they knew nothing of the charge reported by Mrs. Stowe.

Lovelace into the discussion, and it was unnecessary for the purpose of his argument. What is meant by "heavy charges," he does not explain. The phrase is believed to refer to financial difficulties in which the daughter became involved and from which she was ultimately relieved by Lady Byron. No other serious differences between the mother and daughter are known to have existed and it is clear from Dr. Lushington's letter of 1852 (see p. 152, above) that at the date of Lady Lovelace's death she was on the most affectionate terms with her mother.

Lady Byron is charged with condemning her husband by her silence ; Howitt, on the other hand, accuses her of making confidantes of her lady friends. It was said by Lady Byron's enemies, as if it were something to her discredit, that she was "governed by fixed principles." When it comes to the question whether the evidence of a witness is to be believed, one element at least in the value of fixed principles is apparent ; they supply the weight which is found wanting in the testimony of those who despise them. It is alleged by the friends of Lady Byron, and is made a subject of reproach by most of her foes, that one of her principles was to keep silence on the cause of the separation. To that principle she adhered. We know that thirty-two years after her husband's death she consulted Mrs. Stowe in confidence, as to whether she ought to remain silent any longer. Lady Byron was the last person likely to babble to her female friends upon a subject on which she had made up her mind to be silent. Medora Leigh is not forgotten. The subject was necessarily discussed between her and Lady Byron, but Medora did not learn the secret from Lady Byron ; she had been previously informed. The reasons for speaking out to Medora Leigh and confiding in Mrs. Stowe are given in Chapter XVIII. When it is asked

how the story was spread abroad, it will be remembered that Medora had disclosed the secret to several people, including the two servants, one of whom had threatened to reveal it for the purpose of extorting money (Chapter VII). We have seen that the story was known to Trelawny, who says that it leaked out through Mrs. Trevanion (see p. 53).

There remain the statements of Mr. John Robertson in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the Rev. Francis Trench in the *Times*, quoted by the *Quarterly Review* of October, 1869, pp. 426, 427. It is not disputed that Lady Byron consulted her friend and adviser, the Rev. Frederick William Robertson, of Brighton, on her family troubles, in contemplation of her meeting with Mrs. Leigh in April, 1851. That this was Lady Byron's object in confiding in him is proved by the following letter' :

Lady Noel Byron to the Revd. F. W. Robertson, Ockham Park, Ripley, Surrey, January 8th [1851].

I sent you yesterday some thoughts which were in fact the sequel of our conversation. I direct my mind that way whenever I am alone, that I may be enabled to recall more of the past at our next meeting. You will find as I go deeper that the difference in my statements to you at different times is from this cause. At first I touched only on the surface—what I said was true to *that*—but there was another truth beneath, which I reserved. Upon that question of reserve I have reflected sufficiently to decide. A hope has risen in my mind that through your ministry good might yet be done to that Survivor for whom I am so deeply interested. It may seem very remote—next to impossible, but if it *could* !

You shall know then—if you recollect in our last conversation I said there was one whom I had not seen for years, but hoped before death to see again—That was the person whose *guilt* made a great part (*not* the whole) of my wretchedness—to whom, since that one impulse which I acknowledged to you, I have never had any feeling but one of—I can't get a right word. . . .

' From the papers of Ralph, Earl of Lovelace, who has inserted the year.

THE BYRON MYSTERY

But for the mention of the Rev. F. W. Robertson as a person whom Lady Byron consulted, the statements of John Robertson and Trench (which hint at vague charges, other than those now known, supposed to have been made by Lady Byron against her husband and accuse her of making confidential communications to various unnamed persons) are too general to be of any value as evidence.

Mr. Briscoe quotes at considerable length allegations by *one who professed to have had an intimate acquaintanceship with the family details and "whose statements are here recorded in his actual words"* (p. 264). The name of the informant is not given, but the omission can be supplied. The statements form part of a letter which appeared in the *New York Herald* on September 1, 1869, over the signature "George, the Count Johannes, of the Supreme Court of New York." The Count tells us that *Byron denied the truth of the imputation against himself and Mrs. Leigh to the Countess Guiccioli, the Countess of Blessington, Viscount Canterbury, the Count D'Orsay and the Cornwall Trelawney (sic), and from them the Count Johannes received the denial in solemn conversation. He also received a solemn denial of the slander from Mrs. Leigh at St. James' Palace* (Briscoe, 269).

Some of the statements in the letter, which occupies two or three columns of the newspaper, appear to be founded on gossip or to be the product of the writer's imagination. For example, the Count says that Lady Byron was jealous of Mrs. Leigh and that *a criminal suspicion was instigated by Mrs. Clermont, who urged the natural fact to convey belief, viz., that the Hon. Mrs. Leigh was only the half-sister of the poet. . . . It was the first week of July, 1815, in a scene of quarrel, that Lord Byron was indirectly accused by Lady Byron with being over-fond of his half-sister, Augusta, and that "the suspicions of my governess are not without foundation" . . . The brother and sister confronted their*

accusers ; they were abashed and silent, and Lady Byron cast the responsibility entirely upon the governess. (Ibid. 267.)

Apart from the evidence already produced of the affectionate relations that existed between Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh from the date of the poet's marriage until some years after his death, the above account may be contrasted with Mrs. Leigh's letter to Mrs. Clermont, written in 1824 :

I must beg to assure you how very sorry I am for the annoyance you are now feeling, owing to the calumnies revived against your character in the newspapers. I have—whenever any opportunity has presented itself—not only contradicted them, but also done justice to the kind forbearance I have invariably observed in you, upon occasions most trying to any friend of Lady Byron's—and you may depend upon my continuing to do so.'

It will be remembered that in 1816 Mrs. Clermont, thinking Lady Noel had been unjust to Mrs. Leigh, said she could never forget the kindness Lady Byron had received from Mrs. Leigh during the latter part of the time in Piccadilly ; " even for her life " Mrs. Clermont adds " I believe we may thank Mrs. Leigh." †

The Count Johannes, while professing intimate acquaintance with Lord Byron's family and friends, is so far out as to suppose that the poet had a brother and that the Hon. Mrs. Leigh (whose personal acquaintance and friendship the Count says he enjoyed for more than seven years),% was dignified in society by the title of " The Lady Augusta." (*Briscoe*, 266.)

The record of the Count Johannes, so far as it is known, is set forth in Appendix I. Judging by

' Letter, June 1, 1824, Mrs. Leigh to Mrs. Clermont, pp. 145-6, above.

† Letter, March 9, 1816, Mrs. Clermont to Lady Noel, p. 147, above.

‡ This appears from a passage not quoted by Mr, Briscoe.

seemed to prevail with him occasioned him to say—as he has often said—that if I had married him two years before, I should have spared him that for which he could never forgive himself. He said he could tell it me but it was another person's secret. I asked, most innocently of any intention to discover what had only once for a few minutes entered my mind, if——knew it. He appeared terrified and agitated, and said, "O, for God's sake don't ask her." He told me . . . if I would ask him in the morning, he would tell me. After breakfast, accordingly, I reminded him of it—he wanted to pass it off, but I pressed him to trust me unreservedly. He seemed torn by conflicting feelings—his eyes filled with tears, but none over-flowed—he resisted my affection and, rising from the sofa where he had been sitting, with his pistols and dagger on it as usual, he stood before the fire, and, with that terrible blackness of countenance which he has described in Lara and which I have ever seen associated with particular recollections—told me that I might know his secret if I would, but bade me remember Caleb Williams and threatened me that I should be miserable for life, and the victim of another Falkland. In such a temper of mind it was clear that I could have done no good—on the contrary should have forfeited the chance of doing it by extorting that confidence ; I expressed no fears, but let the subject drop.'

Mrs. Stowe connects the reference to *Caleb Williams* with a discussion between Lord and Lady Byron on the subject of incest (not an unnamed subject as related by Lady Byron) and Byron saying that the horror and crime were the very attraction. Mrs. Stowe writes :

She set before him the dread of detection, and then he became furious. *She* would never be the means of his detection, he said ; . . . " The world will believe me and it will *not* believe you. The world has made up its mind that 'By' is a glorious boy, and the world will go for 'By,' right or wrong. Besides I shall make it my life's object to discredit you. I shall use all my powers. Read *Caleb*

* Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

Astarte and Mrs. Leigh's name would not have been drawn into the controversy .

On the other hand, Mrs. Stowe's indiscretion has not been without advantage in the result. In the absence of her story, the cause of the separation must have remained a mystery which was almost certain to be brought forward for solution at a future time. Lord Broughton's account of the circumstances of the separation, prepared in 1816 and first published *in* 1909, would have required an answer which could not be perfect without a disclosure of all the facts, and in 1909 Lord Lovelace, who knew more from personal knowledge than any other living person, had passed away. It was better that the whole truth, though it apparently introduced difficulties in Lady Byron's way, should be known, and that the difficulties should be met and overcome. But Mrs. Stowe's inaccuracies have caused much obloquy to be heaped upon Lady Byron and needless trouble and complication in defending her character.

CHAPTER XVIII

LADY BYRON'S REASONS FOR BREAKING SILENCE

THOSE who say that, after keeping silence so long, Lady Byron might have allowed the subject to rest, without confiding in Mrs. Stowe, have not perhaps given sufficient consideration to the fact that Thomas Moore had plainly accused Lady Byron of being responsible for the break up of her husband's married life, and that charge had never been answered. Lady Byron would not speak as long as Mrs. Leigh lived nor during the lifetime of the daughter Ada. Assuming that the tale of incest was true and that the statements made to Dr. Lushington were true, was the wrong done to Lady Byron never to be righted? Was her reputation to be subject for all time, without denial, to the imputations expressed and implied, in Moore's book and in Lord Byron's poems? "Her name must live in after times" says the author of the *Vindication*. "Perhaps those only are careless of reputation after death who are conscious that they shall leave none worthy of care." We may read Lady Byron's reasons for breaking silence in her own words :

I have allowed the misrepresentations made to the Public with respect to Lord B. and myself to remain uncontradicted, till by the mere force of repetition they have become established. He pleaded his cause before the World—I did not; nor is it my intention ever to do so. But, as the chief reason for absolute silence has ceased with my daughter's life, the question forces itself upon my consideration whether there are not some facts engraved on my memory which ought to survive me. . . . I naturally desire to leave a few counter-statements for the information of my grand-children, for I own that on that point the opinion formed of me does touch me.

' *Vindication*, 238.

† Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers; statement partly quoted in *Astarte*, 140, 141, being part of an unfinished narrative, drawn up by Lady Byron about 1854.

The story of Medora Leigh has been told in Chapter VII. Lady Byron has been blamed for telling her the secret of her birth. The *Quarterly Review* suggested that Lady Byron was actuated by no good or justifiable motive in making the communication, and that she submitted to Medora's haughty and overbearing conduct from fear that she might disclose that Lady Byron was her informant.' Those who believe the evidence of character which Lady Byron has received, even from her enemies, will not believe that she spoke without good reason or that she was capable of inflicting unnecessary pain on Medora Leigh, and their confidence can be justified. In a letter to Miss Doyle of April 4, 1843, Lady Byron writes on this point :

She [Medora] was unfortunately in possession of that fact [the circumstance of her birth] before she was connected with me, and after much embarrassment from her allusions to it, I determined on admitting it, as it materially influenced the course to be pursued in the Suit,| and by communicating the danger of disclosure, I hoped to prevent the necessity of it in Court—and have succeeded ; but had I known her better, the contrary course might have been more expedient. Of *late* she has appeared, as you imagine, desirous of being pointed at as a monument of Infamy ; but, besides this, she thinks it a *power*. I can never be acted upon in that way, whatever may be the consequences.!

On the course pursued by Lady Byron in relation to her niece, the author of the *Vindication* writes :

Lady Byron might well have stood aloof. There was no tie of kindred between them and the ties of marriage and friendship had been severed by the separation and the quarrel. Medora's guilt might have been thought a bar, not easy to be surmounted, between her and the woman who is allowed to have been the purest of the pure. There was yet

' *Quarterly Review*, January, 1870, 236.

‡ Probably the suit brought by Medora to obtain possession of the deed of 1839 (see p. 51). Medora was living with Lady Byron while the suit was pending.

% Ralph, Earl of Lovelace's papers.

another bar which seemed absolutely insurmountable. Lady Byron knew—in controversy it may be more fit to say she believed without doubt—that Medora Leigh was the daughter of Lord Byron. It might have been expected that his wife would turn from her with aversion and horror. But Lady Byron's way was not the way of the world. Her overflowing and unwearied bounty, her patience and forbearance, notwithstanding the astounding ingratitude of Medora, may help to interpret the letters of January and February. Medora had been guilty of an offence, the same in kind, though less hideous, than that which Mrs. Stowe imputes to her mother. Lady Byron believed in the hateful parentage. Yet her conduct towards the daughter displayed the same pity and affection which, in the letters, are assumed to be inconsistent with a knowledge of the repented guilt of a past time.*

* *Vindication*, 271, 272.

CHAPTER XIX

CONCLUSION

WHEN the controversy of 1869-1871 came to an end, the answer to the question, whether Lady Byron's affectionate letters of January and February, 1816, could be consistent with her belief in Mrs. Leigh's guilt, was still doubtful. Lady Byron's reputation could not be cleared unless a satisfactory explanation on the point was forthcoming. This involved the enquiry what was Lady Byron's communication to Dr. Lushington of February, 1816, whether this was connected with the charge against Mrs. Leigh and whether that charge was true. The answer is that the charge was true, but only of the period before Lord Byron's marriage—that in January and February, 1816, Lady Byron had reason, from her husband's conduct, to suspect that the offence had been committed after, as well as before, the marriage, but this suspicion could not be acted on, if at all, without injuring Mrs. Leigh, who might be innocent of the later offence and have repented of the earlier one. Lady Byron was under special obligation to Mrs. Leigh for kindness during the year of her married life. As the facts proved, Lady Byron's conduct was not only justified, but any other course would have led to the mischief she had feared. The offence existed before the marriage and Lord Byron had unsuccessfully attempted to renew it after the marriage. Mrs. Leigh had therefore been faithful to Lady Byron. Lord Byron's conduct in connection with his attempt to renew the offence must have been alleged as part of the cruelty relied on, if the case had gone into Court, though the offence itself before marriage could not be a ground of separation.

The author of the *Vindication* was right in his main conclusions :

That the crime published to the world had been forsaken before the marriage ; that it was discovered, and, being deeply repented, was forgiven after the marriage ; that Lord Byron would have renewed it but did not prevail ; and that it was not the real cause of separation, although Mrs. Stowe has testified that Lady Byron declared to her that it was.'

The author of the *Vindication* believed that the cause of the separation was some undisclosed offence apart from the grave charge alleged. Literally, this was the case ; the two offences were distinct. The later evidence shows that the cause of the separation was a form of cruelty in the legal sense, namely, conduct in Lady Byron's presence in relation to the sister which made it impossible that the wife should return to the husband.

When Dr. Lushington advised that a separation was imperative, there was no certain proof of the crime of incest, or of its extent if the offence had been committed. Of the other offence—the cruelty of which Lady Byron could speak from personal knowledge—there could be no possible doubt.

Lady Byron's case rests on the documents : on Lord Byron's letters and journals of 1813, 1814, and especially the letters to Lady Melbourne ; on the poems of 1813-1817 ; on the letters of Lord Byron, Lady Byron, Mrs. Leigh, the doctors and the lawyers of December, 1815-April, 1816 ; on the statement of March 14, 1816 ; on Dr. Lushington's statement of January 27, 1870 ; on the letters of Lady Byron, Mrs. Leigh and Mrs. Villiers, April-September, 1816 ; on the letters of Lady Byron and Mrs. Leigh, June, 1819, to January, 1820 ; on Lord Byron's letters to Mrs. Leigh, 1816-1823, including under that description the letter of May 17, 1819 ; on the proof

* From a review by the author of the *Vindication of Elze's Byron*, in the *Saturday Review* of March 2, 1872.

that Lady Byron is a truthful witness ; on her written statements ; and, lastly, on the admissions of Lord Ernie, Mr. Murray and their anonymous *collaborates*. Relying upon this evidence, it is claimed that Lady Byron is justified.

Perhaps no woman could pass through the crisis which Lady Byron was compelled to face, at the age of 23, without some trace of the misery of that time being impressed upon her character and opinions. In later life, Lady Byron superintended the education of her grandson, who was not allowed to mix with boys and girls of his own age, and whose studies were directed by tutors, that he might be preserved from the influence which was believed to have corrupted Lord Byron as a boy. Beyond this, Lady Byron was interested in educational and philanthropic schemes which were thought by some to be eccentric and unpractical.[#] There can be no doubt that Lady Byron's opinions were honestly held and acted upon. It this be the case, and if her speech, and writing, and action, during the year of her married life, and in and after the period of the separation, have been proved to be consistently truthful and honest, the attacks of her defamers must fail.

In the words of Sir Leslie Stephen, " Lady Byron's conduct was thoroughly honourable ; it was dictated by conscientious motives and by convictions not due to resentment or illusion."

Lady Byron was not a " moral Brinvilliers," she was not guilty of a " prolonged course of dissimulation and hypocrisy." On the contrary, Lady Byron had good reason when she kept silence and good reason when she spoke out. Her life to the end was a life of generous and constant self-sacrifice •

* *Memoir of Ralph, Earl of Lovelace*, pp. 2—6.

APPENDIX I

GEORGE, THE COUNT JOANNES'

(See p. 200)

THE COUNT JOANNES has been quoted as "one who professed to have had an intimate acquaintance with the (Byron) family details"; whose statements furnish "an important contribution to the story of Lord Byron's life" (see pp. 200, 202). The Count's statements do furnish an important contribution to the story, if they prove to be correct.

It has been shown (p. 200, above) that the statements referred to are quoted from a letter appearing in the *New York Herald* of September 1, 1869, over the signature "George, The Count Johannes," of the Supreme Court of New York." The letter, so far as material, is as follows :

To libel the living is at all times a cowardly crime, but it is doubly so, and in its mendacity and malice tenfold, when the dead are the objects of the slander. The law protects the reputation of the dead as well as the living, and for the reason that if it did not, then revenge of the living would fall upon the libellers of the dead. But the "law's delay" is too slow to meet some cases and were the writer of the libel now engrossing public attention not a woman, it is possible that there is one man at least in this community that would personally resent it. No reader can doubt the talents of Mrs. Stowe as a fiction writer, and as proved by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* but she has now eclipsed herself by this atrocious libel upon one of her own sex, in connection with Lord Byron. I claim the privilege of establishing the falsity of the incestuous charge, and my knowledge is founded upon personal acquaintance and friendship with the Hon. Mrs. Augusta Leigh herself for more than seven years, also with the Countess Guiccioli and with the Earl of Harrington, formerly Colonel the Hon. Leicester Stanhope, and Byron's intimate friend, and mine for more than twenty years, and 'Except in the letter to the *Herald*, the Count spelt his name "Joannes."

who had a conversation upon the very theme with Lord Byron scarcely an hour before the poet died, and which was about to be renewed with Mr. William Fletcher, his lordship's *valet en chef*, when death permitted only broken sentences. These accumulated incidents form part of my MS. autobiography, but the present occasion demands from my friendship to the just memory of the dead that I anticipate the truth at this time, inasmuch as the subject has suddenly been published in such libellous form as to be the theme of society throughout America, and must be in Europe.

* * * *

Mrs. Stowe charges the Lady Augusta with the triple moral sins of fornication, adultery and incest—even to maternity. The triple-headed Cerberus of hell alone is the proper emblem of this demoniac and atrocious libel. Of course, I never personally knew Lord Byron, the poet—he died when I was a child ; but I have intimately known several of his intimate friends, and I select (as subjoined) from the number those with whom I have conversed upon this very subject, and who had the indignant denial from Lord Byron himself, and as I had it from the Lady Augusta ; and superadded is the death-bed declaration of the poet to his intimate and heroic friend at Missolonghi, Colonel the Honourable Leicester Stanhope, afterwards the Earl of Harrington, who had the distinguished charge of the dead body of Byron to England. Also I cite Queen Victoria in defence of the calumniated lady, with which testimony I shall conclude this letter.

It is a well known fact in human history that there is nothing so quickly creates a hatred of another as to taunt any person with his physical deformity, especially if the person is of a quick and nervous temperament, as was notoriously George Gordon Byron. At the time of his birth, an accident caused the malformation of one of his feet and legs, of this he was feverishly sensitive, and any allusion to it would drive him into a furious rage ; and even as a child of only four years, he resented it by striking his nurse's friend with a whip for alluding to it—contrasting as she did the beauty of his face with the deformity of his leg and foot, which to him throughout his life was a hideous contrast. It was the same to him as was the withered arm and deformed

legs to Richard III, and my readers will remember Gloster's soliloquy, viz., " To shrink my arm up like a withered shrub ; to shape my legs of an unequal size, that the dogs bark at me as I halt by them." Now, when Lord Byron said to his bride " You will find that you have married a devil "—as cited by Mrs. Stowe, but as if he really meant Satan—he simply alluded in bitter sarcasm to his deformed foot—more resembling the devil's than man's. And through his life he took the utmost trouble by his costume, etc., to conceal the deformity ; but what in that respect can you conceal from your wife or your valet ? Thence it was that Lord Byron, on the day of his dying, commanded that no person but his faithful valet, William Fletcher, should see his naked body for the lavatory rites—a command broken by " Trelawney the Terrible," who " at one view beheld an Apollo and Satyr," as he told me as we stood together at the burial of William Godwin. Byron was well read in Shakespeare, and that prince of poets says of women, " The eye must be fed, and what delight can she have to look upon the devil ? " It was that very thought which caused his remark to his newly-married wife, and in due time she found out that truth, and regarded with shuddering all marital rights.

Two years before his marriage with Miss Milbanke, Lord Byron had been rejected by her—a circumstance never forgotten by man. In a reckless, inebriated moment, incited by wine and Sheridan—who regarded his poet friend (one of the committee of Drury Lane Theatre) as a species of Sir Charles Surface—Byron wrote for a wife, and addressed two ladies, half in jest, half in earnest, proposing marriage, and to his amazement he was accepted, and by Miss Milbanke. Never were united two beings more anti-sympathetic. He a volcano of poetic fire ; she a frozen fountain of the ice brook temper. He, from his beauty, genius and generosity, having no jealousy ; she, comparatively plain in features, viewed with hatred the admiration of handsome women for her husband, and thence she became mentally " bound into saucy doubts and fears " ; and the jealous are not jealous for a cause, but jealous because they are jealous, as says Shakespeare.

It is generally called the " honeymoon "—the first four weeks of marriage ; but Byron called his the " treacle-moon,"

and certainly it was a "brimstone and treacle matrimony." They were married on January 2, 1815, he being twenty-seven and she twenty-three years of age, respectively, having been born in 1788 and 1792, and they separated for ever on January 15, 1816, having been married only one year and thirteen days.

* * * *

What then, caused the separation ? Here is the true secret, and the "curse" was the chief cause. In the sixth week of their marriage, and during a jealous mood, Lady Byron fearfully resented a remark of a love-memory of Lord Byron's, who said "I deeply regret to know that my beloved Mary Chaworth was very unhappy in her marriage. Ah ! it might have been different had we married !" Upon this sighing remark—Lady Byron instantly arose, and in great anger uttered these fatal words : "Mary Chaworth rejected you for your deformity, as I did once, and it had been better if I had still rejected a man with a devil's foot" ; and with those terrible words, she left the apartment. To Lord Byron, sensitive as the quivering aspen leaf upon that very fact of his deformity—his "curse of life," as he once said to Trelawney—those fearful words were as daggers in the breast of love, esteem or respect, and from that moment ceased all sexual knowledge of his wife, and as the woman he never knew her more. Each kept their own apartments ; and thus in solitude each sought those friends best entitled to advise. Lady Byron, in another evil moment, as if destiny was driving her to marital desolation, sent for her former governess—the human being who was the cause why Miss Milbanke had formerly rejected Lord Byron. She came, and, of course, took sides with her former pupil, over whose mind she had great influence, and sanctioned even the brutal remarks upon the deformity of the husband, and this was quickly communicated to his lordship. Then it was that the wounded poet's brother sent for the faithful and devoted Augusta, his half-sister. She was his senior by five years—she having been born in 1783 ; married in 1807—and at this time (1815) the eight years' wife of Colonel George Leigh, of the British Army, and the mother of a child born of that marriage ; and Augusta at this time was thirty-two years of age and Lady Byron only twenty-three

years. Except at about the marriage period, this was the first time that Lady Byron had seen the Honourable Mrs. Leigh, and with the indignation from the savage insult and wrong her brother had received, well might the slight fragile form and features of Lady Byron shrink abashed before the majestic figure, the queenly dignity, the intellectual and mild look of sisterly reproach from the Lady Augusta, dignified by that title in society—less in courtesy than to her character as a *gentilissima*—a very "lady of ladies," and as such was finally honoured by the Queen of Great Britain, as I will prove. The ancient governess arrived in the latter part of the month of February, and the Honourable Mrs. Colonel Leigh in the middle of March, 1815; and what followed established that the former became the "damned lagoon" of the family, and worse, being a female; and the latter, the Lady Augusta, a species of innocent Desdemona; the poet, an equally innocent Cassio, while Lady Byron became a self-consuming jealous Othello. The first resolution of the brother upon the arrival of his sister was that he would separate from his wife, and by a legal document to that effect. This resolution was successfully resisted by the Honourable Mrs. Leigh, upon the paternal ground that as Lady Byron was *enceinte* and in a few months would become a mother, should the husband separate by a legal document, or otherwise, before the birth, it would cast a lasting reproach upon the child as to the true father. This argument was conclusive with Lord Byron; for he never doubted the chastity of his wife, and would endure his wrongs, rather than injure her reputation, or that of their future unborn innocent child. He therefore concluded to remain domiciled until after the birth, and then, upon the convalescence of the mother, to separate, at least for a time; but an event soon took place from the malice of "the female lagoon," which made Byron finally determine to be separated for ever. I have already shown the dignified character of the beauty of Lady Augusta; it formed a perfect contrast with Lady Byron's, and as the latter was prone to be jealous it was no difficult matter to create that feeling towards Augusta, and finally of a criminal suspicion, instigated by the fiendish governess, who urged the natural fact to convey belief, viz., that the Hon' Mrs. Leigh was only the half-sister of the poet. This

poisonous suggestion having entered the brain of Lady Byron, created from the serpent shrine of slander, it fatally permeated her intellect until she became upon the false idea a monomaniac, and thence she lived and so she died. It was the first week of July, 1815, in a scene of quarrel, that Lord Byron was indirectly accused by Lady Byron with being "over fond of his half-sister Augusta, and that the suspicions of my governess are not without foundation." This false and indignant aspersion upon his sister and the wife of Colonel Leigh, conjoined with the previous insult regarding his deformity, determined Lord Byron that, after the *accouchement* of Lady Byron, they should separate for ever. The brother and sister confronted their accusers ; they were abashed and silent, and Lady Byron cast the responsibility entirely upon the governess, whom the poet has immortalized in the sketch—

" Born in a garret, in the kitchen bred,
Promoted thence to deck her mistress' head," etc.

it being the most powerful invective from the pen of man, and could only emanate against a woman upon the ground of false, malignant and demoniac wrong received by the author, and also his true and irreproachable sister.

* * * *

On December 10, 1815, the only child of Lord and Lady Byron was born. Some time previous to this event the mother had sought reconciliation with her husband ; but he was firm in his resolution to separate. She expressed contrition, atonement and entire disbelief in the criminal suggestion ; and as a public confession of her injustice to the injured sister, Lady Byron herself proposed (mark this, Mrs. Stowe) that the unborn child, if a girl, should not only be named Ada, the father's selection, but also Augusta, impressing that innocent name as a seal of purity upon the virgin jewel yet within the casket of human nature. By the justice of God it was so ; and the child was baptised "Ada Augusta," and as she grew to womanhood, and was married, she used that name in preference to Ada, in justice to her father and his sister, and thence she became alienated from her mother. Lady Byron had the lingering hope of preventing her husband leaving England and "madness" was

suggested as a means to an end, but this only expedited the issue ; for they separated within six weeks after Ada Augusta's birth.

The day of separation came (January 15, 1816), but the statement by Mrs. Stowe of that final interview is entirely false and unnatural, and also malignant in its criminal assertion. The authoress writes that " Lady Byron went into her husband's room, where he and the partner of his sins (the Hon. Mrs. Leigh) were sitting together, and said ' Byron, I come to say good-bye,' " etc. There is falsity in the very phrase " Byron." The ignorance of Mrs. Stowe as to the domestic phraseology of high society in England has betrayed her. Ladies and gentlemen of rank in married life—and even of royalty, as I know personally—as among the more humble classes, address each other by their baptismal names, as George, and Mary, etc., when in the domestic circle and friendly. If otherwise, the address would be " My Lord " or " Lord Byron." Noblemen, bachelors, and most intimate gentlemen friends of rank alone address each other by their title or family surnames. Now, the facts of the " farewell " are these :—Lord Byron left his own room and went into that of Lady Byron's to take farewell of his wife and daughter, and he had sent word to that effect. There were present the father, mother and infant child (the nurse left upon his entrance). The husband received into his arms Ada Augusta, kissed her with deep emotion and wept. He took the hand of his weeping wife, and while thus situated (a group for the painter or sculptor) he said with a deep sigh, the words of his favourite author, Shakespeare, " When shall we three meet again ? " to which the wife responded " On earth, I hope." Lord Byron replied " In heaven, I trust " ; and those were his last words to her, as he gave back the infant to its mother and silently and slowly left the chamber, and, with royal etiquette, face to face. So " Lady Byron caressing the spaniel," etc., is another fiction ; and well it might be, since the spaniel was a large dog of the Mont St. Bernard breed, and always at night guarded his master's door, as formerly when at Newstead. Then in the daytime the noble dog was the playful companion of the wolf and bear that guarded right and left the monastic staircase of the ancient abbey.

THE BYRON MYSTERY

On April 25, 1816, Lord Byron left England for ever, and never again saw his wife, child or sister. The poet died at the early age of thirty-five years, and the marble tablet to his memory over his grave in the village church near Newstead Abbey was erected by that faithful sister, of whom he had written :

" Thou stood'st, as stands a lovely tree,
That still unbroke, though gently bent,
Still waves with fond fidelity
Its boughs above a monument."

The foregoing narrative and solemn denial of the slander I received from the Hon. Mrs. Augusta Leigh, personally at her residence in St. James's Palace, London. Ay ! Madame Stowe, at St. James' Palace, as I will prove.

The wife having failed to retain her husband, resolved, with the Iago governess, to bring up and educate the daughter in total ignorance of her father, and especially as to his talents as an author. Consequently, she had no knowledge of his poetry until after her marriage, when one day, in her husband's library, she first saw a volume entitled " Byron's Works." Lord Byron believed that his wife would " bring up " his daughter correctly and justly ; for in 1823, when she was eight years old, he wrote to Lady Blessington that he should not interfere with the education of his daughter, having full faith in Lady Byron's justice in that respect, and trusted her entirely. I have seen and read the original letter by the courtesy of Lady Blessington. Now, see how Lady Byron fulfilled her duty and its results. The daughter, by her marriage, became Lady King, and subsequently the Countess of Lovelace, by her husband's inheriting the earldom. At one period the daughter was very ill and had not seen her mother for a long time, and would not, in resentment of the wrongs and insults to her father. Lady Byron tried every persuasion by friends, but failed. At last the daughter, as if to settle the question, in resolution said, and knowing her mother's fondness for money, " By a vow fulfilled, Lady Godiva took off a tax ; I make a vow and will keep it, but to put on a tax ; I vow not to see Lady Byron until she first pays off my own private debts." When the mother received this message she remonstrated, but of no avail.

" I am my father's child," Ada said, and finally Lady Byron did pay the debts, amounting to several thousand pounds sterling, and then hastened to the bedside of her daughter, to her amazement and almost danger to her life. The above is true, and narrated to me by the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, and also by the mother of the Countess of Harrington, sister of the Duchess of Bedford.

* * * * *

In a conversation I had with the late Field-Marshal, the Duke of Wellington—the warrior of Waterloo—and having read my " Biography of General President Harrison," he was pleased to say that he wished such a pen would do him justice after his death in regard to the only event of his life in which justice had not been done—viz., " It is said that I could have saved the life of the brave Marshal Ney. I could not. I tried. But King Louis XVIII was inexorable." The Duke of Wellington then told me circumstances of proof which are now in my manuscript autobiography. In a similar manner Lord Byron wished justice upon one theme—viz., that in regard to his sister, and he besought a friend, to whom he wrote : " not to suffer unmerited censure to rest upon his name after death." To the Countess Guiccioli, the Countess of Blessington, Viscount Canterbury (formerly Speaker of the House of Commons), the Count D'Orsay and the Cornwall Trelawney, he solemnly denied the truth of the imputation, and from those personages I received that denial in solemn conversation. There is, however, another proof more solemn. When a man is assassinated, and in his dying moments he proclaims his murderer, it is proof of the criminal, and all other dying confessions are received with equal reverential solemnity. I now transfer the reader to the death-bed of Lord Byron at Missolonghi, on April 19, A.D. 1824. There were present, among others, Count Pietro Gamba, the brother of the Countess Guiccioli ; Trelawney of Cornwall ; William Fletcher, the valet; and Colonel the Honourable Leicester Stanhope, afterwards the Earl of Harrington. This gentleman honoured me with his friendship to the day of his death, extending over a period from 1834 for more than twenty years. I was intimate with him and in his confidence, and often was his invited guest in London and at Ashburnham House, his country residence.

THE BYRON MYSTERY

This was the democratic nobleman who introduced the free press in India, and was the patriotic champion, with his friend and democrat, Lord Byron, for the freedom of the classic land of Marathon and Miltiades, and towards that noble cause advanced from his own purse the sum of £16,000 (80,000 doll.). Within the dying hour of the great poet Lord Byron requested all to leave the chamber except Colonel the Honourable Leicester Stanhope. The poet then knew that he was dying, and said to his friend : " Stanhope, I wish you to take charge of my dead body to England. See that it is buried in the grave of my mother." (Both these dying wishes were fulfilled by the friend.) " Stanhope, I declare to you, at this solemn moment, that the former accusation by Lady Byron against me and my faithful sister was—

A lie, an odious damned lie !
Upon my soul, a wicked lie !

and so defend us when again assailed."

Colonel Stanhope took the hand of his dying friend and said : " Byron, the name of Augusta being added to that of Ada at the baptism of your daughter, and at the request of Lady Byron, as told me by your sister, dispersed that slander for ever ; but if you would be happier, send your dying declaration by your confidential valet Fletcher, and order him to see Lady Byron with your death denial." " I will do so," said the young poet, " send Fletcher to me. God bless you, Stanhope. Of all men you I best love. You will live to see the freedom of this classic land when I shall be no more. Adieu ! "

With many tears, Colonel Stanhope bade adieu to his friend for ever, and within half an hour thereafter Fletcher was at the bedside of his dying master. Then took place the oft-repeated broken sentences cited by Mrs. Stowe and others, but now explained by the previous interview with Colonel Stanhope : " Go to my sister—tell her—go to Lady Byron—you will see her and say"—then his voice failed from exhaustion. But, had he power, who can doubt but the dying man would have repeated to his faithful valet what he had already declared to his faithful friend !

I was at Ashburnham House on the Sunday following the evening I passed with the Honourable Mrs. Leigh at

St. James' Palace, when she related what I have recited ; and speaking of the subject to the Earl of Harrington (the former Colonel Stanhope), he narrated to me the dying declaration to him by his dying friend Lord Byron, at Missolonghi, and authorised me, should the occasion call for it, to repeat his words, as the sister had her narrative ; and the present libellous occasion does call for it, and I have done my duty.

In conclusion, I now produce a proof of innocence which, if Mrs. Stowe knew and concealed from the public, is in itself a crime upon the dead ; if she did not know it, then she is unfit to be the writer of history, being ignorant of facts.

It is the custom of the Queens of England when any lady of rank has been overtaken by comparative poverty, by misfortune, or any honourable cause, to present gratuitously to the distressed lady a suite of furnished apartments, cuisine, etc., in one of her Majesty's palaces, either at Hampton Court, Holyrood or, a greater compliment still, in the Royal Palace of St. James', London. Need I add that personal chastity and the matronly virtues are the conditions precedent with Queen Victoria ? She herself the model wife, widow and Queen, to all posterity ! I say to the libellous authoress, " O shame, where is thy blush ? " to conceal from the public the great moral fact which here follows :—

The Queen of Great Britain, Victoria the Good ! God bless her !—in sympathy to the monetary misfortunes of a lady of rank (from the improvidence of her husband), and that lady having the right of *entree* to Her Majesty's drawing-room, even upon State occasions, the Queen gave to that lady for life a suite of regal apartments at St. James' Palace, and that lady's name was engraved on a silver plate and placed on the front door of those apartments, publicly seen at all times, in the royal banner square of the palace. Who was that lady who the Queen delighted to honour ? Does the reader ask ? Do the poisonous publishers of the libel ask ? Then thus I answer to them and to all the world, and dare denial of its truth—that lady was this very slandered Augusta, the Hon. Mrs. Colonel Leigh, the half-sister of Lord Byron, the poet, and this royal honour was publicly enjoyed by Lady Augusta while Lady Byron lived !

In that palace, in her own apartments, I repeatedly saw the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, received her hospitality, passed even—

ings with her and freely conversed of her poet brother and his eventful life, and each of us without reserve. And she also honoured me by accepting my friendship, and which I again prove, though she is in her grave with her brother, by thus publicly defending her reputation ; and were I in France, I would do so even to the death. My brother editors who have published the libel from the *Atlantic Monthly*—though they nobly scorned it—will, in justice to the dead, copy this refutation of the irreligious, fiendish and cowardly calumny. The spirit of Byron whispers to me these lines upon the original slanderer of himself and sister, and a new couplet of verses upon the renewal of the libel :

" Oh ! may thy grave be sleepless as the bed,
 The widow'd couch of fire, that thou hast spread I
 Down to the dust ! and as thou rott'st away,
 Even worms shall perish on thy poisonous clay!
 Ten thousand depths in Dante's hell, below,
 Be hurl'd to infamy the novels of Stowe."

It will be seen that the Count's letter contains inaccuracies on the face of it. Some of the most prominent errors of fact have been pointed out (see p. 201).

The *New York Nation*, in an article on Mrs. Stowe's disclosures (September 9, 1869), thus dismisses the Count's letter :

" The Count Joannes " writes a long letter to the *Herald*, the exact value of which is not ascertainable through purely human agency, owing to the Count's mental peculiarities.

Recent enquiry in the United States has brought the following reply :

" George, the Count Joannes " was the title adopted by an eccentric individual who, many years ago, was a familiar figure upon the stage, enacting leading roles in Shakespearean and perhaps other plays. While apparently a man of serious purpose and of some histrionic ability, his performances seem to have appealed to the comic rather than to the serious approbation of his audiences, who responded to his efforts with uproarious applause accompanied by volleys of vegetables

and other missiles ; insomuch that he adopted the precaution of performing behind a protective net His titular connexion with the New York Supreme Court was no doubt inspired by his litigious experiences before that tribunal and his desire to advertise himself as a legal practitioner.

Mr. W. H. Rapley, the President of the National Theatre, Washington, writes :

I can recall the appearance of " Count Joannes/" who gave freak performances of the standard dramas behind a wire screen, about 1870. His methods of advertising, wherein he encouraged the throwing of vegetables and other missiles, obtained for him much publicity, and he was greeted with crowded houses. Despite his peculiar methods, he is reputed to have possessed a bright intellect.

In an obituary notice in the *New York Tribune* of December 31, 1879, it is said :

The Count has long been one of the quaintest figures in New York life, and was far more widely known for his eccentricities than he would have been for his talents if he had been a really great lawyer. He was of Welsh descent and received a good education. His career was erratic. For many years he was on the stage, and at one time enjoyed a good reputation as an actor, both in England and this country. During another part of his life he occupied himself with historical studies, and Longman and Co., of London, published his *Original History of Ancient America*. He claimed that he received the title of " Count Joannes " for merit as a historian, but found few believers.

The later years of his life were spent by the Count in the attendance upon the courts of this city and his active participation in cases was not infrequent, but he had himself for a client in the majority of his suits. Among the well-known actions brought by him were suits for alleged libel against persons who had denied the genuineness of his title, and his proceedings against Mr. Sothern, who, he alleged, had wrought him great damage by what he conceived to be a caricature of himself in Sothern's part of *The Crushed Tragedian*. . . . After an absence of some years from the stage, *the Count* appeared in 1876 at the New York Academy

of Music as *Hamlet*, and he afterwards played repeatedly at the old Lyceum Theatre (now Haverly's), the Olympic and other places of amusement in this city, and made short turns in this state, New England, and other parts of the country. While the novelty lasted his audiences were large and his receipts were considerable, but the number of his hearers soon dwindled.

The Count was tall and large' and had a scholarly stoop. His face was long and showed his age, although he evidently tried to repair the ravages of years by colouring his heavy moustache. That he wore a wig was painfully apparent. A carefully arranged lock fell over his brow and the hair was worn long on his coat collar. The Count prided himself upon his marked resemblance to ex-Governor Hoffman. When he first saw Mr. Sothern as *The Crushed Tragedian*, Count Joannes was nothing, he said, beside the ex-Governor. He turned to the latter and exclaimed, "Heavens ! Hoffman, is that you or I or our third ? "

The Count was not neat in his dress and was an excellent specimen of the shabby-genteel man. He wore a heavy felt hat and black broadcloth clothes, always very bright in spots. For a cravat he generally used a red ribbon to which was attached his " Order." He often carried easily in one hand a pair of aged black kid gloves, while the other was thrust into his bosom. His attitudes were always studied and tragic. He was never frivolous and resented the least attempt to trifle with his dignity.

In an " editorial " (January 4, 1880), the *Tribune* writes :

Poor old George Jones, or the Count Joannes as he called himself and everybody called him, was a solemn person to be so much laughed at. He seems to have been much in earnest and to have thoroughly believed in himself, his histrionic abilities, his antiquarian and literary talents, his qualifications as a lawyer and his good breeding as a gentleman . . . It is hardly worth while to say more of him ; he is dead and gone and will be speedily forgotten ;

* Another account says that he was " rather small of stature " (*New York Herald*, April 7, 1864, p. 4, col. 5). The inference seems to be that he was of medium height.

but it may do no harm to suggest the doubtful morality of the treatment to which he was subjected.

A characteristic story of the Count appears in the *Tribune* of November 11-12, 1879.

Speaking of Honest Counts, Judge Brady relates that on one occasion, some years ago, at a hearing before him in a disputed election case, after considerable squabbling between the lawyers, the Judge himself interposed with : " Well, gentlemen, let us get to the merits of the case. I suppose that all that either party desires is an honest count." At which there rose before the Judge on the instant a wild and strange figure, not unfamiliar to the courts nor yet to the footlights, which with hand upon its heart bowed low and uttered in sepulchral tones : " May it please the Court—*Ecce homo !* " It was the Count Joannes.

Next day the Count wrote to the *Tribune* giving an enlarged account of his speech and declaring that the dramatic scene had been copied throughout America and England, with great praise for the impromptu wit.

Some of the Count's experiences, as recorded in his letter, seem to correspond with incidents in the life of " Colonel George Gordon Byron," who claimed to be a son of the poet, and who left England for New York under a cloud in December, 1848, and visited this country again in the autumn of 1869. According to the Colonel's story, he arrived in England in or about the year 1834, the same year in which the Count says his acquaintance with the Hon. Leicester Stanhope began. The Colonel, according to his account, was given a commission in the Indian native army, and served in the East. Later, he " again crossed the Atlantic " and returned to his adopted home in the mountains of Virginia. In a libel action brought by the Count against the *New York Tribune*, in 1865, he says that he lived three years in Virginia (*New York Herald*, Feb. 16, 1865, p. 8, col. 4).

In January, 1844, the Colonel sailed from America for England ; this was rather more than seven years before the death of Mrs. Leigh. The Count claims to have enjoyed the acquaintance and friendship of Mrs. Leigh " for more than seven years." In 1846 the Colonel was making application to many of Lord Byron's relatives and friends for information to help him in a projected book, the *Inedited Works of Lord Byron*. In 1848 an advertisement of the book contained the statement that much of the author's material came from Mrs. Leigh, who had permitted him to have access to her papers. In the *Athenaeum* of April 1, 1848, is a letter from Mrs. Leigh's solicitors to the effect that that lady had never permitted Mr. George Gordon Byron to see or make use of manuscripts in her possession, and that the gentleman was much better known to the Society of Guardians for the Protection of Trade than to Lord Byron's family. The publication was stopped, and in December, 1848, the Colonel left England in financial difficulties. In 1849 he settled in New York, the home of the Count in later years, and published in that city two monthly parts of *The Inedited Works*.

While in England the Colonel had disposed of a number of autograph letters of Lord Byron, which afterwards proved to be forgeries. The fraud was exposed in 1852. The Count, like the Colonel, brought a wife and a daughter to America (*New York Herald*, Feb. 16, 1865, p. 8, col. 4). The Count alleged he had travelled extensively in Europe (*ibid.*); the Colonel, that he had visited all the scenes of Lord Byron's travels, collecting relics and documents.

The Count's literary tastes are apparent from his letter to the *Herald* of September 1, 1869. That letter is dated from New York, and it is known that the Colonel left America for England in the latter part of the year 1869.

There is no direct evidence to prove that " George,

the Count Joannes," otherwise Mr. George Jones from Wales, was the same person as " Colonel George Gordon Byron," and the difficulty of proof is increased by this, that, if they were the same person, the Count was living in disguise and doing his best to conceal the identity. The most that can be said is that some circumstances point to the identity. For the present purpose it is sufficient to show that no reliance can be placed upon the Count's statements in his letter to the *Herald*. The fact that he does not explain the origin of his acquaintance with Lord Byron's family and friends suggests that there was a reason for concealing his identity and casts suspicion on his story. But it does more—it makes the whole story worthless as evidence, for want of a foundation ; the Count fails to supply information essential to establish his credibility. Further, it is impossible to believe, if the story were genuine, that either the Count Joannes or George Jones would not be discoverable somewhere in the numerous publications relating to the poet. As a fact, not a trace of either name is to be found in all that has been published on this side of the Atlantic about Lord Byron and his family. Beyond this, the Count's statements are discredited by the inaccuracies in the letter, already pointed out.

On the assumption that the identity is not established, the conclusion must be that, in his letter, the Count is employing his histrionic powers to absorb the experiences of another person and to pose as the intimate friend of Mrs. Leigh and of Lord Byron's friends.

If the identity of the Count with the Colonel should be established hereafter, as seems possible, the Count's statements on the subject of the separation of Lord and Lady Byron will be no better authenticated than they now are, for what is known of the Colonel's career does not justify the belief

that truth was one of his regular pursuits. In his *Principia Typographica*, Sotheby tells us that the Colonel read everything relating to Lord Byron that came in his way, and that "in extracting from the works of those who were known to Lord Byron, or related particulars respecting his life, Mr, Byron [the Colonel], as it were, occasionally individualized himself." If this is correctly understood to mean that the Colonel assumed the characters of the people he read about, and related their experiences as his own, it may have helped him to qualify for the role of Count-actor at a later date, and to indite the letter to the *Herald* of September 1, 1869.'

ADDENDUM.—Since the above remarks were written, some further particulars respecting the Count Joannes have come to light, including the only piece of direct evidence, so far, which would help to prove his identity with the Colonel.

In the course of litigation in New York, the Count deposes that he does not know when or where he was born, but believes he has seen the record of his christening in London. (According to the inscription on his coffin plate, he was born in London, March 10, 1810, and died in New York, December 30, 1879.) The honour of knighthood (*sic*) was conferred upon him in London, in the year 1847, by "His Excellency Count Sartario," whom another witness describes as "one of those seedy adventurers whom you frequently meet in the streets of London/' Phineas T. Barnum deposes that he has heard of the Count Joannes in London, where his reputation was that of an impostor. The Count claims that his title was

* For the full story of "Colonel George Gordon Byron," see *Chew*, p. 187 *et seq.*; Sotheby, *Principia Typographica*, ii, 104-115; Sabin and Sons' *American Biblioplist*, ii, 74; *The Phitobiblion*, New York (1862-3), i, 139; *The Athenteum*, 1848, pp. 318, 341; 1852, pp. 214, 278, 301, 325, 355, 381, 43'; *Wheildon Byron-Stowe Scrap-Book* (in the Boston, Mass., Public Library), Shelf-mark 6540-11.

granted as a reward for literary talents. His original name was George Jones, and on assuming the title he did not change his name ; " I only Latinised it " he says " from Jones to Joannes, which is the Latin for Jones." Among the Count's literary works are to be found *The Life and History of General Harrison* (1844), which he mentions in his letter to the *Herald* of September 1, 1869, and *The Original History of Ancient America* (1843), both appearing under the authorship of George Jones. The Colonel's claim to be the son of Lord Byron was supported by his personal resemblance to the poet. Sotheby (*Principia Typographical* ii, no) speaks of the Colonel's " extraordinarily striking likeness to Lord Byron." Bound up in *The Original History of Ancient America* is a medallion portrait of the author, George Jones, whose resemblance to Lord Byron is unmistakable. (*British Museum*, press-mark 1447. K.4.)

One point at which the proof of identity fails, on the present evidence, is the date of arrival of the Colonel in England, if he wrote, as Professor Chew tells us (p. 187), to John Murray III from Wilkesbarre, Pennsylvania, in July, 1843 ; and if his statement that he left America for England January 13, 1844, is accepted. There is evidence that the Count, under the name of George Jones, came to England from America early in 1841,! and in 1843 and 1844 the above-mentioned books, of which he was the author, were published in London. It appears from the contents of these works that George Jones had some acquaintance with prominent persons in this country in 1841, and if in 1846-1848 he put forward a claim, in the name of George Gordon Byron, to be Lord Byron's son, he might be in danger of recognition and exposure. To establish the

* *New York Herald*, February 16, 1865, p. 8, col. 4 ; *Ibid.*, January 5, 1880, p. 2, col. 4.

† *Life of President Harrison*, by George Jones (1844), pp. 167, 185.

identity under these circumstances, it might be necessary to show that George Jones returned to America before July, 1843, and came back in January, 1844, or that being in England in 1843, he caused the letter of July 1843, to be sent to Murray from an American address and invented the statement that he sailed for England on January 13, 1844.' These are suggested as possible solutions, but if either of them be the true one, proof would be difficult at this distance of time. It may be pointed out, however, that the Colonel was living in concealment in the summer of 1848, when he was unearthed by White, the London bookseller, to whom he had sold the forged letters. The Count says he visited Mrs. Leigh at St. James's Palace, and the Colonel boasts that he obtained that lady's permission to make use of her manuscripts. Mrs. Leigh's solicitors, in repudiating the latter statement, do not say that their client denies all knowledge of the Colonel, but only that she has never permitted him to see or make use of her manuscripts. (*Athenceum*, March 25 and April 1, 1848.) It is probable, therefore, that the Colonel did visit Mrs. Leigh, and, if so, it was most likely while he was living in concealment, for her repudiation of his boast was in March, 1848.

It remains also to explain, if it was the fact, how the Count assumed the character of the Colonel, from time to time, without detection, after his return to America in 1849. Upon these points further information is required, and it can only be obtained by research on the other side of the Atlantic.

According to the Count's statement, he entertained the Emperor Napoleon III, then Prince Louis Napoleon, on his sojourn in the United States in 1837. (*New York Herald*, May 13, 1859, p. 7, col. 4.) On September 19, 1869, the Count addresses from New York a letter to the Emperor,

' See *The Philobiblion*, New York, 1862-3, i, 139.

enclosing a copy of his letter to the *Herald* of September 1, 1869, quoted above, and suggesting that, in consideration of his defence of an injured lady, the Legion of Honour should be conferred upon him. (*Ibid.*, July 20, 1871, p. 6, col. 4.)

If an incident related by the Count is authentic, his character was very well summed up by the Emperor at a personal interview on a previous occasion : " Count Joannes, you are the most magnificently audacious man I ever met." " Sire," the Count replied, " I shall be sorry to take precedence of your Excellency in anything." (*Ibid.*, March 30, 1864, p. 4, col. 6.)

APPENDIX II

THE LETTER OF MAY 17, 1819

(See p. 137)

To [name effaced by Mrs. Leigh]
to the care of Jn^o Murray Esq^r
50 Albemarle St
London
Angleterre

Venice, May 17^h 1819.

MY DEAREST LOVE,—

I have been negligent in not writing, but what can I say Three years absence—& the total change of scene and habit make such a difference—that we have now nothing in common but our affections & our relationship.—

But I have never ceased nor can cease to feel for a moment that perfect & boundless attachment which bound & binds me to you—which renders me utterly incapable of *real* love for any other human being—for what could they be to me after *you* ? My own x x x x we may have been very wrong—but I repent of nothing except that cursed marriage —& your refusing to continue to love me as you had loved me—I can neither forget nor *quite forgive* you for that precious piece of reformation.—but I can never be other than I have been—and whenever I love anything it is because it reminds me in some way or other of yourself—for instance I not long ago attached myself to a Venetian for no earthly reason (although a pretty woman) but because she was called x x x x and she often remarked (without knowing the reason) how fond I was of the name.—It is heart-breaking to think of our long separation—and I am sure more than punishment enough for all our sins—Dante is more humane in his " Hell " for he places his unfortunate lovers (Francesca of Rimini &

Paolo whose case fell a good deal short of *ours*—though sufficiently naughty) in company—and though they suffer—it is at least together.—If ever I return to England—it will be to see you—and recollect that in all time—& place—and feelings—I have never ceased to be the same to you in heart—circumstances may have ruffled my manner—& hardened my spirit—you may have seen me harsh & exasperated with all things around me; grieved & tortured with *your new resolution*,—& the soon after persecution of that infamous fiend who drove me from my country & conspired against my life—by endeavouring to deprive me of all that could render it precious—but remember that even then *you* were the sole object that cost me a tear ? and *what tears !* do you remember *our* parting ? I have not spirits now to write to you upon other subjects—I am well in health—and have no cause of grief but the reflection that we are not together—when you write to me speak to me of yourself—& say that you love me—never mind common-place people & topics—which can be in no degree interesting—to me who see nothing in England but the country which holds *you*—or around it but the sea which divides us.—They say absence destroys weak passions—& confirms strong ones—Alas ! *mine* for you is the union of all passions & of all affections—Has strengthened itself but will destroy me—I do not speak of *physical* destruction—for I have endured and can endure much—but of the annihilation of all thoughts feelings or hopes—which have not more or less a reference to you & to *our recollections*—

Ever dearest

B.

INDEX

A

- Academy, The* (October 9, 1869), 10n, 184 n
- Admitted facts of the separation, 1-13
- Airlie, Countess of, *In Whig Society* : Lady Byron's personal appearance 173 n
- Ailegra, daughter of Byron and Jane Clairrnon, 133 n, 135
- Anonymous writer in *Lord Byron and his Detractors* (E. H. Pember, K.C. ?) : admission by, 72, 161 : his arguments replied to, 160-3
- Astarte*, by Ralph, Earl of Lovelace : 1 st edition (1905), 2nd edition (1921), 95 : Mr. Murray's difficulty explained, 60-1 : a guide to Lady Byron's documents, 95
- Astarte*, a reply to Lord Lovelace's book *Astarte*, by E. H. Pember, K.C. (?), 160-3
- Athenaum, The* (August 18, 1883), 182 n
- Austic Monthly*, 23 n, 38, 61
- Austin, Alfred, article in the *Standard* (September 4, 1869), 27

B

- B., CAPTAIN DE, 52
- Baillie, Dr. Matthew, 6, 58, 97, 103, 107, 117
- Banks, William John, approves of the destruction of the *Memoirs*, 181
- Barnard, Lady Anne, extract from her memoirs, 28-32, 40, 157, 158, 196-7
- Bathurst, Henry Allen, Dr. Lushington's statement to, 57-8, 59, 60, 62, 144, 153
- Black Dwarf, The*, 90 n
- Blackwood's Magazine*, strictures on Lord Byron in, 11 : nameless writer in, 93 : and see "Paget, John "
- Bride of Abydos* (the poem), 64 n, 78, 83, 84-6, 88, 89, 93, 94, 185 : Mrs. Leigh identified with the subject of, 63-4
- Bride of Abydos* (article in *Temple Bar*), see *Temple Bar*
- Briscoe, Walter A., in *Byron the Poet*, his arguments replied to, 195-202 : cites Howitt's letters to the *Daily News*, 195-9 : cites " George, the Count Johannes," 200-202
- Broughton, Baron (John Cam Hobhouse), demands a disavowal of charges against Lord Byron, 4-5, 67, 111-12 : charges Lady Byron with untruthfulness, 65, 166 : reports Byron's testimony to his wife's character, 68 : alleges that no separation was contemplated by Lady Byron when she left her husband, 99 : on the two reports concerning Byron, 112 : his arguments replied to, 164-6 : his letter to Wilmot Horton, November 23, 1824, 180-1 : advises the destruction of Byron's *Memoirs*, 180-4, 196 : refuses help to Moore in his *Life of Byron*, 182
- Brummell, George Bryan (" Beau " Brummell), on the alleged liaison between Byron and Mrs. Chaworth-Musters, 189-90
- Burdett, Sir Francis, aids in the destruction of Byron's *Memoirs*, 180
- Byron, Lady (afterwards Noel Byron), Anne Isabella (Annabella) Milbanke : birth, marriage, separation, death, 1, 2 : assumes the name of Noel, 2 : at Piccadilly Terrace, 2 : her daughter born, 1, 97 : goes to Kirkby Mallory (January 15, 1816), 2, 6, 97 : consults her parents, 3, 7, 99 : decides upon a separation, 3, 7, 99, 101-104 : consults Dr. Lushington, 3, 8, 57-^2, 69-70, 71, 109-10, 116, 205, 210, 211 (and see below "Byron, Lady, Letters to Dr.

Byron, Lady:

Lushington"): Mrs. Leigh's kindness to, 4, 96, 109, 113, 115, 125, 201, 210: disavowal of charges, 5, 39, m-12, 166, 184: executes deed of separation, 5: *Remarks on Moore's Life of Byron*, 6-9, 12, 14, 46, 104, 145, 164: reflections on, in Byron's poems and his *Life*, by Moore, 17-19, 162: Byron's offers of marriage to, 18, 23, 24, 75, 84: designated in *Blackwood* "the moral Brinvilliers," 20, 68, 212: her character summed up, 21-2, 152, 212: first year of married life, 24, 165: her communication to Mrs. Stowe, 24-5, 47, 158, 196, 207-9: alleged hallucination of, 25, 26, 33, 152-3, 157: William Liowitt on, 27-8, 170, 195-8: charged by the *Quarterly* with dissimulation and hypocrisy, 34, 40, 46, 54, 152, 163, 212: relations with Medora Leigh, 48-53, 170, 198, 208-9: her Statement of January 18, 1816, 59, 60, 101, 109-10: her Statement of March 14, 1816, 59, 60, 113-14, 153, 162, 163-4, 169: her direction as to the sealed papers, 95, 203: her memorandum of "March, 1816," 113: her cause for suspicion, 62-4, 113, 118-9, 124-5, 179, 210: unpublished statements of, 62-4, 96, 155, 177, 186-7, 207: Was she truthful?, 65-8, 71, 160-1, 162, 166, 175: her reasons for silence, 69, 118, 155-6, 157, 170, 179, 196, 197, 198, 207: directions as to the disposal of her documents, 95: the story of the separation, 95-114: sends for Mrs. Leigh in November, 1815, 96, 118, 119: her affection for Mrs. Leigh, 96: "the abominable trade of versifying," 98, 158: acts independently of her parents on the separation, 99, 102, 103, 104, 164, 165, 179: distraction of, at the separation, 103-4, 117: says Mrs. Leigh is not the cause of the separation, 109: supposed tacit understanding with Mrs. Leigh, 113-4, 117: will not sacrifice

Mrs. Leigh, 116, 170: effect and result of the correspondence with Mrs. Leigh, 132-3, 143: Lushington forbids her to communicate with Mrs. Leigh, 148-9: reasons for a complete understanding with Mrs. Leigh, 150-1: arguments against, replied to, 152-202: accused of breaking open her husband's desk, 154-5, 158: her message to Mrs. Leigh on her death-bed, 157, 177: her reasons for breaking silence, 157, 198, 199, 200, 207-9: alleged want of amiability, 157-8: alleged obstinacy, 158: alleged course of action to procure a separation, 160-1, 165, 169, 170-1, 175, 178: never lived with Mrs. Leigh after the separation, 163: Miss Mayne on Lady Byron's character, 170: incorrectly described as "plain," 172-3: misnamed portrait of, 173: accused of avarice, 173-4: quarrel with Mrs. Leigh, 173-5: interview with Mrs. Leigh in 1851, 176-7, 199: her statements said to be inconsistent with Mrs. Leigh's confession, 176-7, 186-7: her action with regard to the destruction of the *Memoirs*, 180-4: allegations against Lord Byron part of her defence, 184: her alleged severity, coldness and want of sympathy, 186: her relations with her daughter, 197-8: consults the Rev. F. W. Robertson, 199: allegation that she "was governed by fixed principles," 198: summary of the evidence for her defence, 211-12: "George, the Count Joannes" on, 200-1, Appendix I.
Letters of,

to Lord Byron, 2, 5, 6, 76, 98-9, 102, 103, 104 *n*, in, 136, 156-7, 166, 178, 179: to Mrs. Leigh (January and February, 1816), 2, 4, 26, 34, 35, 38, 39, 41, 46, 55, 56, 60, 91, 96, 100, 101, 102, 109, 117, 144, 152, 178, 179, 187, 194-5, 209, 210: other letters to Mrs. Leigh, 4, 38, 120, 121, 122-3, 124-5, 127-8, 129, 130-1, 142, 155, 161, 162, 183, 188: to Lady

- Byron, Lady:
 Anne Barnard, 28, 31-2, 157, 158, 196-7 : to Captain George Byron, 100 : to Mrs. Sophia Byron, 117 : to Thomas Campbell, 9 : to Miss Doyle, 208 : to Hanson, 99 : to Hodgson, 165 : to the Hon. Mrs. George Lamb, 150 : to Miss Emily Leigh, 157 : to Le Mann, 101 : to Dr. Lushington, 52, 97, 109, no., 147, 148, 150, 184 : to Lady Noel, 105, 109, 149, 154 : to the Rev. F. W. Robertson, 199 : unsent letter of July 6, 1816, 99 *n*, 102, 146 *n*
- Byron, The Hon. Augusta Ada, see " Lovelace, Countess of "
- Byron, The Hon. Augusta Mary, see " Leigh, The Hon. Mrs. "
- Byron, Catherine (Catherine Gordon), marriage and death, 1
- Byron, George, 7th Baron Byron (Captain George Byron), 84 *n*, 97, 100, 101, 105, 106, 110-11, 117, 174 : his testimony to Lady Byron's character, 68 : concurs in consulting Drs. Baillie and Le Mann, 97 : considers Lord Byron insane, 97 : will not allow Lady Byron to remain in her husband's house, 102 : threatens Lord Byron with the intervention of Lady Byron's parents, 108 : informed of the substance of Lord Byron's case, 110-11 : residence with Byron a protection to Mrs. Leigh, 117
- Byron, George Gordon (afterwards Noel Byron), 6th Baron Byron : admitted facts of the separation, 1-13 : birth, succession to the title, marriage, separation, death, 1, 2 : assumes the name of Noel, 2 : at Piccadilly Terrace, 2 : financial difficulties and ill-health, 2, 9, 96 : rumours respecting Mrs. Leigh and, 3, 39, 67, *m*, 112, 115, 119, 163, 191 : wills of, 4, 74-5, 174 : executes deed of separation and leaves England, 5, 114 : requests Lady Byron to leave London, 6, 97 : supposed insanity of, 5, 6-7, 10, 24, 35, 57, 58, 97, 99, 101, 102-3, 104, 105, 107-8 117, 126, 127, 153, 175, 193-4- his statement of March, 1816, 9, 12, 67 : his statement of August, 1817, 10-11, 12, 156 : his pamphlet of 1820, *n*-12, 156 : unrepentant remorse of, 18, 104, 128, 129 : his offers of marriage, 18, 23, 24, 75, 84 : his present of £3,000 to Mrs. Leigh, 50 *n* : difficulty of proof against, in the Ecclesiastical Court, 58, 60 : self-accusation of, 62-3, 71, 172 : his references to Colonel Leigh, 64, 73, 74, 76, 79-80 : his testimony to Lady Byron's character, 65-8, 153, 164 : abuses Mrs. Clermont in *A Sketch*, 66, 144-5 : attacks his wife in *Lines on hearing that Lady Byron was ill*, 67 : his offer of reconciliation in September, 1816, 67 : suggestion that his letters to Mrs. Leigh were written to torture Lady Byron with suspicion, 72, 163 : identifies himself with the subject of his poetry, 78, 83-94, 185-6 : evidence from his letters, journals and poems, 83-94 : his treatment of Lady Byron in November, 1815, 96 : compares himself with Bonaparte, 106 : his attitude on hearing that Lady Byron's parents would take up her defence, 108-9 : his line of defence, 110-11 : advances opinions inducing suspicion, 119 : assures Mrs. Leigh he is not responsible for reports, 119 : the main charge true of a period before his marriage, 121, 143, 164, 210, and see " Incest, the charge of " : desires Mrs. Leigh not to mention Lady Byron, 126, 127 : sneers at Lady Byron's magnanimity, 135 : tells Mrs. Leigh it was on her account that he agreed to the separation, 135, 191 : refers to the second report mentioned in the " Disavowal," 139 : threatens to assert his paternal rights, 150 : fears loss of paternal rights by publication of *Don Juan*, 150 : his affection for his sister, 178 : complaint that he is not informed of the charges against him, 155-6 : offers to go into Court, 156, 166 : liaison with Jane Clairmont said to have

- Byron, Lord:
 been the cause of the separation, 159-60: his confession said to be no evidence against Mrs. Leigh, 161: his accusation of, and unkind references to, Lady Byron, 162-3: allegation of want of proof that his letters to Mrs. Leigh reached her, 163: his relations with Mrs. Chaworth-Musters, 166-9, 189-90: allegation that the nature of his letters to Mrs. Leigh is to be attributed to the custom of the time, 178: destruction of his *Memoirs*, 180-4: argument that he should not be tried after his death, 184: alleges that he only agreed to the separation because he promised to do so if it was his wife's wish, 190-1: unsuccessful attempt to renew the offence after his marriage, see "Leigh, The Hon. Mrs., accusation of," etc.: the "Count Joannes" on, 200-1, Appendix I. *Letters of*,
 to Lady Byron, 77, no. 114, 136, 169: to Mrs. Leigh, 80 n, 126, 127, 133-6, 154-5, 102, 177, 192: letter of May 17, 1819, 137-142, and Appendix II: to Coulmann, 169: to John Gait, 85-6: to Hanson, 150: to Hobhouse, 139: to Lord Holland, 67: to Kinnaird, 67: to Lady Melbourne, 72-82, 94, 162, 168, 171, 185, 190: to Thomas Moore, 66, 77: to Murray, 137-8, 150: to Sir Ralph Noel, 65-6: to Samuel Rogers, 67
- Byron, "Colonel" George Gordon, Appendix I, 227-233
- Byron, Captain John, marriages and death, 1
- Byron, Mrs. Sophia (Aunt Sophy), 117
- Byron, by Ethel Colburn Mayne, 170
- Byron in England, his fame and after-fame*; See "Chew, Professor Samuel C."
- Byron in perspective, see "Symon, J.D."
- Byron—the last phase, see "Edgumbe, Richard"
- Byron the Poet*, see "Briscoe, Walter A."
- Caleb Williams*, 203-5
- Campbell, Thomas, his attempted defence of Lady Byron, 9, 14, 145
- Centenary of Byron's death, publications of, 192-202
- Chaworth, Mary, see "Chaworth-Musters, Mrs."
- Chaworth-Musters, Mrs., incidentally referred to, 78: Mr. Edgumbe's theory regarding her and Byron, 166-9, 189-90: no evidence of liaison with Byron, 167-9, 189-90: last met Byron in 1808, according to Moore, 168
- Chew, Professor Samuel C, *Byron in England, his fame and after-fame*, 53, 192-3: on Nichol's *Byron*, 155 n.
- Chichester, Lady, 48
- Child, Harold, on the argument from Byron's poetry, 184-6
- Childe Harold*, 31, 32, 185
- "Citizen of the United States," letter to *The Times* (September 8, 1869), 197
- Clairmont, Jane, 53, 133 n, 134, 135: Byron's liaison with, alleged to be the cause of the separation, 159-60.
- Clermont, Mrs., 102, 144-7, '49 •' abused by Byron, 66, 135, 144-5, 200-1: not with Lady Byron when she decided upon separation, 103, 146: accused of breaking open Byron's desk, 144, 154: her character cleared by Mrs. Leigh's letter of June 1, 1824, 145-6, 201: summoned by Mrs. Leigh to Piccadilly Terrace, 146: assisted in the negotiations for the separation, 146-7: her letter to Lady Noel, 147, 201,
- Cockburn, Sir Alexander (Lord Chief Justice), his letter reflecting on Lady Byron, 159

- Controversy of 1869-1871, 14-56 :
summary of, 54-56
- Conyers, The Baroness, marriage
and death of, 1
- " Cor beau blanc " and " Corbeau
noir," 81-2, 171
- Corsair, The*, 86-8, 89, 90, 93, 185
- Cruelty, the cause of the separation,
57, 59-60
- Custody of the child, 144-151, and
see " Lovelace, Countess of (The
Hon. Augusta Ada Byron) "

D

- Daily News*, see " Howitt, William "
- Deed of separation executed, 2, 5,
114
- Dictionary of National Biography*,
article " Thomas Medwin," 154 :
article " Byron " by Sir Leslie
Stephen, 158-9 : article " George
Bryan Brummell," 190 n
- " Disavowal," *The*, 5, 39, 111-12,
166, 184 : first report referred to
in, 112: second report referred
to in, 112, 139 n
- Don Juan*, 150, 185
- Doyle, Sir Francis Hastings, Bart.
(Colonel Doyle), 61, 108, 113, 116,
183
- Doyle, Selina, her letter to Lady
Byron, 108
- Dream, The*, 185

E

- EDGUMBE, Richard: Lady Byron
not under hallucination, 153 : his
theory regarding Mrs. Chaworth-
Musters and Medora Leigh,
166-9, 189-90 : cites " Beau "
Brummell's letter, 189 : asserts
that Lord Lovelace revived a for-
gotten scandal, 191
- Edinburgh Review*, see " Strahan,
Professor " and " Lawrence, C.
E."
- Elze, Karl, *Lord Byron*, 154

S

English Men of Letters Series—
Byron, see " Nichol, John,"

Epistle to Augusta, 88, 94, 131

Ernie, Baron (Rowland Edmund
Prothero) : admissions by, 62, 72 :
his statement of the case unfavour-
able to Lady Byron, 62 : his
statement in Byron's *Letters and*
Journals replied to, 160 : in *Lord*
Byron and his detractors, 163-4 :
in the *Nineteenth Century*
(August, 1921), 170-1 : in the
Quarterly Review (April, 1922),
190-1.

F

- Fortnightly Review*, see " Hewitt,
E. P." ; " Lang, Andrew " ;
" Roberts, Cecil "
- Fox, John : writer in *Temple Bar*
and of the *Vindication of Lady*
Byron, 14 n : his conclusions, 47,
56, 211

G

- GALT, John, 85, 91
- " George the Count Joannes," see
" Joannes "
- Giaour, The*, 78, 96 w, 185
- Gordon, Catherine, see " Byron,
Catherine "
- Guiccioli, Countess, *Recollections of*,
15, 20-2, 23, 37, 43, 44, 45

H

- HANSON, John, 58, 99, 100, 107,
110-11
- Hayward, Abraham (Q.C.) : 33 n :
in the *Quarterly Review* (October,
1869), 33-4, 45, 46, 54, 90, 91,
152, 163, 172 n : (January, 1870),
38-40, 42, 48, 49, 54, 55, 67 71,
152, 163 n, 175 n : Lord Chief
Justice Cockburn's letter to, 159
- Herald* (New York), September 1,
1869, " George, the Count
Joannes " in, 200-2, Appendix I.

- Hewitt, E. P. (K.C.), (*National Review* and *Fortnightly Review*) his arguments replied to, 177-84, 186-90, 191-2
- Heywood, Serjeant, 97, 103, 107
- Hobhouse, John Cam, see "Broughton, Baron "
- Holland, Lord (Henry Richard Vassall Fox, 3rd Baron): approves of the publication of Lady Byron's *Remarks*, 67; acknowledges Byron's testimony to his wife's veracity, 67
- Holland, Lady, on Byron's *Memoirs*, 182
- Horton, the Right Hon. Sir Robert John Wilmot, 39, 41, 61, 112, 113, 116, 118, 119, 147, 180, 182-4
- Howitt, William, his letters to the *Daily News* of September, 1869, 27-8, 157-8, 170: cited by Briscoe, 195-9

I

INCEST, the charge of: the rumour in 1816, 3, 39, 67, in, 112, 115, 119, 163, 191: the subject of Lady Byron's communication to Mrs. Stowe, 37, 40, 41, 47, 61, 62: not the cause of the separation, 43, 47, 57-8, 59-61, 109, 153, 154, 161, 164, 191, 211: limited to the period before Byron's marriage, 55, 56, 59-62, 71, 109, 114, 121, 127-9, 132, 140, 142, 143, 161-2, 164, 180, 187-8, 191-2, 195, 210, 211: was it true? 57-143, 155, 157, 158, 160, 164, 169, 192, 210: difficulty of proving in the Ecclesiastical Court, 58, 60: admission by Lord Ernie regarding, 62, 72: admission by Mr. Murray and the anonymous writer in *Lord Byron and his detractors* regarding, 72: confession of, by Mrs. Leigh, 118-9, 130, 132-3, 143, 161-2, 176-8, 188: not repudiated by the "Disavowal," 163: is the key to the mystery, 203: Mrs. Stowe's account of Lord Byron's reference to, 204-5

In Whig Society, 173 n

I speak not, I trace not, I breathe not thy name" (song of the 4th of May, 1814), identification of Mrs. Leigh with the person to whom the poem is addressed, 64, 84, 88-9, 91-2, 93

JEAFFRESON, John Cordy, in *The Real Lord Byron*, 159-60

Jeffrey, Francis (Lord Jeffrey), 86

"Joannes, George the Count": cited by Mr. Briscoe, 200-2: his statement of the cause of the separation, 200-1: his history, Appendix I

"Johannes, George the Count," see "Joannes "

Jones, George, see "Joannes, George the Count "

K

KINNAIRD, the Hon. Douglas: acknowledges Byron's testimony to his wife's veracity, 67: aids in the destruction of the *Memoirs*, 180

LAMB, Lady Caroline, 72, 78, 8Q, 119, 135, 172, 175

Lamb, the Hon. Mrs. George, her letter to Lady Byron regarding the *Memoirs*, 182

Lang, Andrew, on Mr. Edgcumbe's theory, 167-9

Lara, 88, 89, 185

Lawrence, C. E. (*Edinburgh Review*), his arguments replied to, 194-5

Leeds, the Duke of, 48, 52

Leigh, the Hon. Mrs. (Augusta Mary Byron): birth, marriage, death, 1, 2: visits Piccadilly Terrace, 3, 62, 96, 115: rumour respecting, 3, 39, 67, in, 112, 115, 119, 163, 191: godmother to Lady Byron's daughter, 4: her kindness to Lady Byron,

- Leigh, the Hon. Mrs. :
 4, 96, 109, 113, 115, 125, 201 :
 reference to, by Mrs. Stowe in
Macmillan's Magazine (Septem-
 ber, 1869), 15 : and her daughter
 Medora, 48-53, 133 : accusation
 of, limited to the period before
 Byron's marriage, 55, 56, 59-62,
 71, 109, 114, 121, 127-9, 132,
 140, 142, 143, 161-2, 164, 180,
 187-8, 191-2, 195, 210, 211 : not
 the cause of the separation, 60,
 109 : admission by Lord Ernie
 regarding, 62, 72 : on Byron's
 self-accusation, 62, 119-20 : can-
 not defend Byron in the matter of
 the separation, 68 : her testimony
 to Lady Byron's character, 68 : on
 Byron's engagement, see "Mel-
 bourne, Elizabeth, Viscountess," :
 identified with "X" etc., 72-77 :
 her statement as to *The Corsair*,
 86 : Lady Byron's affection for,
 96 : concurs in consulting Drs.
 Baillie and Le Mann and Serjeant
 Heywood, 97 : considers Byron
 insane, yet capable of transacting
 business, 97, 105, 107-8 : inter-
 cepts Sir Ralph Noel's letter to
 Byron, 109 : supposed tacit under-
 standing with Lady Byron, 113^M
 14, 117 : her correspondence with
 Lady Byron after the separation,
 115-143 : confession by, 118-19,
 130, 132-3, 143, 161, 162, 176-7,
 177, 178, 188 : accuses Lady
 Caroline Lamb of circulating
 reports, 119 : possibility of her
 joining Byron abroad after the
 separation, 119 : remonstrates
 with Byron about advancing ex-
 traordinary opinions, 120 : ad-
 dresses Lady Byron as her
 "guardian angel," 132 : effect
 and result of her correspondence
 with Lady Byron, 132-3, 143,
 187-8 : Moore published none
 of Byron's letters to, 133 : sum-
 mons Mrs. Clermont to Picca-
 dilly Terrace, 146 : on Byron's
 statement that his wife opened his
 letter trunks, 155 : consoled on
 her death-bed by Lady Byron's
 message, 157 : and Mrs. Cha-
 worth-Musters, 166-7 : quarrel
 with Lady Byron, 173-5 :
likened to "a bewildered bird in
 the toils of a snake," 176 : inter-
 view with Lady Byron in 1851,
 176-7, 199 : Lady Byron's state-
 ments said to be inconsistent with
 Mrs. Leigh's confession, 176-7 :
 erasures in letter of May 17, 1819,
 said to be irreconcilable with her
 confession, 178 : her letters to
 Byron returned to her after his
 death, 179 : desires the destruc-
 tion of Byron's *Memoirs*, 180-4 :
 suggestion that she was hoaxing
 Lady Byron and Mrs. Villiers,
 188-9 : "the Count Joannes"
 on, 200—1, and Appendix I. :
 "Colonel" Byron alleges that
 much of the material for his
 projected book came from her,
 Appendix I, 228
- Letters of,*
 to Lady Byron, 39, 75, 105, 120,
 121, 123-4, 125-6, 128, 129, 130,
 131, 139-40, 141, 142, 178, 187 :
 to Lord Byron, 133, 179 : to
 Mrs. Clermont, 145-6, 201 : to
 Hodgson, 178-9 : to Wilmot Hor-
 ton, 68, 182, 183 : to F. W.
 Robertson, 179
- Leigh, Elizabeth Medora, 48-53 :
 birth, 1, 49, 64, 79 : publication
 of *Medora Leigh*, 48 : Mrs. Stowe's
 reference to, 48 : *Quarterly Re-
 view* (January, 1870) on, 48 :
Saturday Review (December 25,
 1869) on, 48 : her relations with
 Lady Byron, 48-53, 170, 177,
 198-9, 208-9 : files a bill in
 Chancery against Colonel and
 Mrs. Leigh, 51 : discloses the
 secret of her birth, 51, 199 :
 marriage and death of, 52-3 :
 not the child of Colonel Leigh,
 according to Byron, 64 : Byron's
 reference to, in his letter to Lady
 Melbourne of April 25, 1814, 79 :
 Mrs. Leigh's reference to, in a
 letter to Byron, 133 : Mr. Edg-
 cumbe's theory regarding, 166-9
- Leigh, Colonel George, 1, 2, 49, 50,
 76, 79-80, 86 : not the father of
 Medora, according to Byron, 64 :
 Byron's references to, 64, 73, 74,
 76, 79-80
- Le Mann, Francis, 39, 97, 99, 100,
 101, 103, 104, 107

- Letter of May 17, 1819 : 137-143 and Appendix II. : signed by Byron, 137 : evidence that Byron wrote to Mrs. Leigh on that day, 137-8 : printed from a copy made by Lady Byron, 137 : expresses passionate love, 138 : the writer repents of nothing but his marriage, 138 : reproaches the person addressed with refusing to love the writer as she had loved him, 138 : the case of Francesca and Paolo of Rimini fell a good deal short of "ours," 138 : refers to the "infamous fiend" who drove the writer from his country, 139 : Byron writes to Hobhouse the same day abusing his wife and referring to her as the "friend" (? fiend), 139 : correspondence between Mrs. Leigh and Lady Byron respecting, 139-41 : suggestion that it was sent to Mrs. Leigh to be forwarded to a third person, 140, 161, 171, 189-90 : meaning of the word "reformation" in, 141, 161-2 : alleged to be addressed to Mrs. Chaworth-Musters, 166, 190 : suggestion that the letter is not evidence, 175-6 : erasures in the letter said to be irreconcilable with Mrs. Leigh's confession, 178
- Letters and Journals of Lord Byron*, see "Ernie, Baron"
- Lettsom, Mr., error for Le Mann, 39 *n*
- Lindsay, Earl of, letter to the *Times* (September 7, 1869), 28-32, 197
- Lines on hearing that Lady Byron was illy* 67
- Living Age*, 44
- Lord Byron and his detractors*, arguments in, replied to, 160-4 : and see "Anonymous writer in," "Ernie, Baron," "Murray, John IV."
- Lovelace, Countess of (The Hon. Augusta Ada Byron) : birth, baptism, death, 1, 2, 4, 97 : relations with Medora Leigh, 51 : custody of, while under age, 58, 105, 107, 108, no, 123, 144-51, 169, 193 : Byron enquires about, no, 126, 127 : made a Ward of Court, 146-7, 149 : Byron threatens to assert his paternal rights over, 150 : no provision for, by her father, 174 : her relations with her mother, 197-8
- Lovelace, Mary, Countess of: edits *Astarte* (1921), 95 : note by, on Mrs. Clermont, 146 *n* : note by, on Mr. Edgcumbe's theory regarding Medora Leigh, 167 : note by, on the misnamed portrait of Lady Byron, 173
- Lovelace, Ralph, second Earl of (Baron Wentworth) : 60, 61 : on the cause of the separation, 60-1, 164 : receives Lady Byron's documents, 95, 179 : author of *Astarte*, 95 : charge against, of reviving a forgotten scandal, 191 : his object, to prove that Lady Byron spoke the truth, 191
- Lovelace, William King Noel, first Earl of : Medora's deed left with, 51 : letter to Lady Byron, 186
- Lushington, the Right Hon. Stephen, D.C.L. : Lady Byron's communication to him of February 22, 1816, 3, 8, 21, 34, 39, 40, 41, 45, 54, 55, 56, 57-70, 110, 143, 160, 169, 175, 194, 205, 207, 210, 211 : in regard to Medora Leigh, 48, 52 : his statement to Mr. Bathurst, January 27, 1870, 57-8, 59, 60, 62, 144, 153, 160, 162, 166 : on the cause of the separation, see "his statement to Mr. Bathurst," above : allegation of his visit to Lord Byron untrue, 58 : declines to "show his cards," 58 : his interview with Hanson, 58 : Statement of March 14, 1816, 59, 60, 113-14, 169 : advises Lady Noel, see "Noel, the Hon. Lady" : advises Lady Byron, see "Byron, Lady" : opposed to Lady Byron's communicating with Mrs. Leigh, 114, 116, 148-9 : on making Byron's daughter a Ward of Court, 146, 147, 148, 150-1 : his account of Lady Byron in 1852, 152, 170, 198 : in regard to the destruction of the *Memoirs*, 184 : his denial that incest was the cause of the

- Lushington, the Right Hon. S.:
separation first published in 1905,
193
Letters of,
to Lady Byron, March 10, 1816,
148-9 : to Lady Byron, January
31, 1830, 8, 45, 57, 58-9, 60, 62 :
to Frances Carr, 152, 170, 198
- Luttrell, Henry, cited by a "Citi-
zen of the United States," 197 *n*
- M
- MACAULAY, Lord, *Essay on Moore's
Life of Byron*, 21 *n*
- Mackay, Charles, edits the *Auto-
biography of Medora Leigh*, 48
- Macmillan's Magazine*, September,
1869, see "Stowe, Mrs. Beecher"
- Manfred*, 61, 88, 93-4, 164, 185
- Masterman, Mrs., in the *Review of
Reviews*, 169 *n*
- Mayne, Ethel Colburn, *Byron*; her
criticism of Mr. Edgcombe's
theory, 168 : on Lady Byron's
character, 170
- Medora Leigh*, see "Leigh, Eliza-
beth Medora"
- Medwin, Thomas, *Conversations of
Byron*, 154, 168-9, ^x^o
- Melbourne, Elizabeth, Viscountess :
her correspondence with Byron,
62, 72-82, 94, 162, 164, 167, 171,
185, 190 : died April, 1818, 72 *n* :
Byron's engagement to her niece,
75-6, 80, 171, 191 : Hobhouse
refuses to produce to Moore her
correspondence with Byron, 182
- Memoirs*, Lord Byron's, 180-4, 196
- Milbanke, Anne Isabella, see
"Byron, Lady": Sir Ralph, see
"Noel": Lady, see "Noel"
- Montgomery, Hugh de F., on Lady
Byron's character, 152
- Monthly Review*, 160
- Moore, Thomas : his *Life of Lord
Byron*, 17-19, 21, 37, 67, 68 :
publishes Lady Byron's *Remarks*,
14, 67 : summary of his reflec-
tions on Lady Byron, 17-19, 68,
207 : his suggestion of the cause
of the separation, 67-8 : pub-
lishes no letters from Byron to
Mrs. Leigh, 133 : alleges that
Byron and Mrs. Chaworth-Mus-
ters last met in 1808, 168 : *Life*
of, by Earl Russell, 180, *n* :
applies to Hobhouse for help in
writing *Byron's Life*, 182 : repays
Murray amount advanced on the
Memoirs, 183-4 : refuses to be
repaid the amount, 184 : his
statement that Byron's poetry is
the transcript of his actual life,
185 : cited by a "Citizen of the
United States," 197 *n* : accuses
Lady Byron of responsibility for
the break-up of her husband's
married life, 207
- Murray, John I L., and Byron's
Memoirs, 181-4 : letters and
papers of Lord Byron in his
possession, 182
- Murray, John H I. in the *Academy*
(October 9, 1869), 184 *n*
- Murray, John I V. : his comment on
Astarte, 60-1 : contributes to
Lord Byron and his detractors,
160 : edits *Lord Byron's Corre-
spondence* (1922), 72 : admission
by, 72
- N
- Nation and Athenaeum*, August 6,
1921, 186
- National Review*, see "Child,
Harold," "Edgcombe, Richard,"
"Hewitt, E. P.," "Montgomery,
Hugh de F."
- New Monthly Magazine*, 14, 145 *n*
- Nichol, John, his arguments on the
separation replied to, 155-8
- Nineteenth Century*, see "Ernie,
Baron"
- Noel, Sir Ralph (formerly Mil-
banke) : father of Lady Byron,
1 : his letters to Lord Byron, 3,
8, 99, 109, 178 : proposes a
separation on Lady Byron's be-
half, 99, 107, 109, 165 : gives no
hint of the charge of incest,
178, 179

Noel, The Hon. Lady (formerly Milbanke) : i, 2, 3, 7, 102, 104, 109 : unable through illness to be with Lady Byron during her confinement, 96 : consults Dr. Lushington, 106, 108 : her memorandum of consultations with Dr. Baillie, Mr. Le Mann and Mrs. Leigh, 107

Letters of,
to Lord Byron, 2, 7, 100-1 : to Lady Byron, 102, 106-7

Norton, The Hon. Mrs., review of Countess Guiccioli's *Recollections* (*Times*, February 13, 1869), 20

O

Occasional Pieces, 169

Oxford, Countess of, 78

P

PAGET, John, in *Blackwood's Magazine* : 20 n: (July, 1869), 15, 20-22, 36-38, 43, 44, 45, 46, 54, 163 : (January, 1870), 40-1, 42, 54, 55, 68-9, 152

Pall Mall Gazette, see "Robertson, John "

Parisina, 88, 91-3

Pember, E. H. (K.C.) : 160 n : see "Anonymous writer in *Lord Byron and his detractors* "

Prothero, Rowland Edmund, see "Ernie, Baron "

Q

Quarterly Review : (July, 1883), 137 n : (January, 1910), 166, 167, 169 : and see "Ernie, Baron," "Hay ward, Abraham "

R

"READER of Byron's Letters, A," letter to the *Times*, 33

Review of Reviews, see "Masterman, Mrs."

Roberts, Cecil, in *Fortnightly Review*, 173

Robertson, The Rev. F. W., 177, 179, 199-200

Robertson, John, in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 199-200

Rogers, Samuel : acknowledges Byron's testimony to Lady Byron's veracity, 67 : cited by a "Citizen of the United States," 197 n

Romilly, Sir Samuel, advises Lady Byron, 8, 69, 106, 146-7, 150-1

Russell, Earl, his *Life of Moore*, 180 n

S

S., MR., 52

Saturday Review ; articles by the Revd. William Scott in (September, 1869, to January, 1870), 26, 54, 55, 56, 154 : article by John Fox in (March 2, 1872), 211 n: on *Medora Leigh*, 48

Scott, Sir Walter, 86 : describes Lady Byron as "beautiful," 173

Scott, The Revd. William, see *Saturday Review*

Separation of Lord and Lady Byron, story of the, 95-114

Shelley, Frances, Lady, 191

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, letter to Byron, September 29, 1816, 67, 163, 191

Siege of Corinth, 89-90

Sketch, A, 66, 144-5

Song of the 4th of May, 1814, see "I speak not," etc.

Spectator, article in the (September 4, 1869), 26-7

Stael, Madame de, 67

Standard, letters to the, See "Austin, Alfred," and "Winslow, Dr. Forbes "

Stanzas to Augusta, 88

Stephen, Sir George, 48, 51, 52

- Stephen, Sir Leslie : on Mrs. Leigh's letters to Lady Byron, 123 : his article *Byron* in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, 158-9 ; changes his opinion on seeing Lord Lovelace's documents, 158-9, 2T2
- Stowe, Mrs. Beecher : her disclosures, 23-47 : *True Story of Lady Byron's Life* {*Macmillans Magazine*, September, 1869), 14-15, 23, 25, 26-7, 36-38, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 69, 95, 164 : *History of the Byron Controversy* (1870), 15, 23, 36-8, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 56, 61 w, 154 : Lady Byron's communication to, 24-5, 47, 158, 196, 207-9 : was the charge true ? see "Incest, the charge of," : criticised by the author of the *Vindication*, 42-7, 192 : Lady Byron's cause injured by Mrs. Stowe's disclosures, 42-7 : necessary to prove the truth of Lady Byron's statement to her, 47, 191, 196 : on *Medwin's Conversations*, 154 : the effect of her disclosures, 203-6, committed a breach of confidence as well as of Lady Byron's conditions, 203 : her account of Byron's reference to *Caleb Williams* compared with Lady Byron's account, 203-5 : suggested course of events if her disclosures had not been made, 205-6
- Strahan, Professor J. A., his arguments replied to, 172-7, 184
- Swinburne, A. C., on *Nichol's Byron*, 155 n
- Symon, J. D., *Byron in perspective*, his arguments replied to, 193-4
- Tales of my Landlord*, 90
- Temple Bar* articles by John Fox : *Lord Byron's married life* (June, 1869), 14, 17-19, 162, 205 : *The character of Lady Byron* (October, 1869), 15, 21-2, 55-6 : *The Bride of Abydos* (December, 1869), 34-6, 55-6 : reproduced in the *Vindication of Lady Byron*, 42
- Times*, The : review of Countess Guiccioli's *Recollections* by the Hon. Mrs. Norton, 20 : review of Mrs. Stowe's *True Story*, 25 : article, January 20, 1870, 41, 54, 55, 153, 154 : letters to : see "Citizen of the United States" ; "Lindsay, Earl of" ; "Reader of Byron's letters" ; "Trench, Revd. Francis" ; "Wharton and Fords"
- Times Literary Supplement* (September 22, 1921), letter of "Beau" Brummell, 189
- Trelawny, Edward John, 53, 199
- Trench, Revd. Francis, letter to the *Times*, 199-200
- Trevelyan, Mr. and Mrs., 49-50, 53, 199
- Tribune* (New York), Mrs. Stowe's *True Story* printed in, 44 n
- True Story of Lady Byron's Life*, see "Stowe, Mrs. Beecher"
- VILLIERS, The Hon. Mrs., urges Lady Byron to inform Mrs. Leigh of the knowledge she possesses, 116, 119 : an old friend of Mrs. Leigh's, more recent of Lady Byron's, 186
- Letters of*, to Lady Byron, 4, 115, 118, 119, 131-2 : to Mrs. Leigh, 131
- Vindication of Lady Byron* : 42-7, 56, 133, 193 : authorship and publication of, 14 n, 15, 42, 56 : reproduces the articles in *Temple Bar*, 14 n, 42 : answers Mrs. Stowe, 42-7 : conclusions arrived at in, 35, 47, 56, 211 : on *Medora Leigh*, 48-53, 208-9 : cites extracts from Byron's letters, journals and poems, 83-94 : on Byron's self-accusation, 172 : on Byron's *Memoirs*, 180 : Professor Chew on, 192-3

W

- WEBSTER, Lady Frances Wedderburn, 78, 88-9
- Webster, James Wedderburn, 78
- Wentworth, Ralph, Baron, see " Lovelace, Ralph, second Earl of "
- Wentworth, Thomas Noel, Viscount, brother to Lady Milbanke, 1, 173
- Wharton and Fords' letter to the *Times* (September 2, 1869), 25 ; and see p. 147
- Wilmot, Robert John, see " Horton, The Right Hon. Sir Robert John Wilmot "
- Winslow, Dr. Forbes, letter to the *Standard* (September 8, 1869), 33, 152

