

London, February 22nd-December 31st 1812

London, with and without Byron

February 22nd – December 31st 1812

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On **February 22nd** Hobhouse calls “on Pater” and on Byron, and has what he describes as “a most unpleasant first meeting” over dinner with David Baillie at the Grecian. He finds that his friend Atthil is dead, a fact which he writes in heavy letters with two horizontals above and below, and with the Latin “eripuere, jocos, animum, convivium, ludos” next to it. He is in bed “by four” – presumably the next morning, though how he fills up the intervening time he does not say. On **February 23rd** he brings his diary up-to-date, and dines with Byron at the St Albans.

February 24th finds him dining “with the *Athenians*” at the Crown and Anchor. He meets a Lord Crawford who is intent on converting the Jews, and whom a friendly rabbi has offered to circumcise gratis. On **February 25th** he visits Englebrecht, the painter, and Westmacott, the sculptor, who has done sculptures of Pitt and Fox. Hobhouse dines with his brother Henry at Reilly’s Parliament Coffee House. On **February 26th** he dines at the New Hummums Coffee House, and then takes tea at the Old Hummums, where he sees “a meeting between a father and a son who had returned from the East Indies – Captain Gubbins”.

On **February 27th** he sits next to Admiral Sir Richard Bickerton (Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth and MP for Poole) who says, “coolly”, “You were at Cambridge – you know Atthil – a good fellow – he is dead. He was my nephew.” Later Hobhouse hears a paper being at the Royal Society, which proves that snakes move by the use of their ribs.

However, his interest in snakes makes him miss an opportunity, for he adds later in the entry for this date, “Lord Byron made his maiden speech – on Nottingham Riot Bill.”

Byron’s best friend is thus absent when Byron makes his most famous public utterance; but he does dine with him at the St Albans next day, **February 28th**. We are, however, disappointed here as so often, for no mention is made of the previous night’s speech. Tom Moore is present – Hobhouse meets him for the first time – and he recounts an obscure joke of John Philpott Curran, which is about a louse, and is in Latin.

On this day Hobhouse moves into number 4, Manchester Buildings (thirty shillings a week plus seven shillings for coal).

At dinner on **February 29th** with “Mr H. Hobhouse” – Home Office Hobhouse, presumably – he meets “Heber who stood for Oxford and is vastly agreeable”. He is told an anecdote of Frederick North, the future Lord Guilford, the famous Hellenist. North was at Algiers, and asked the Dey if he could see his women. The Dey responded, “He is so ugly, let him see them all”. The Dey

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responded, after nearly everything North said, with “Kedab!” which was ultimately translated for North as “Damned lie!”

Lord Portsmouth and the Duke of Grafton were going to Wimbledon Common to fight a duel. They met an empty hearse. Portsmouth stopped it and said, “Wait there a minute or two and I will give you a fare”.

On **March 1st** Hobhouse is given twenty pounds by his father. He has spent seven pounds on sundries during the last week, so we may guess that his father is pleased with him.

He opens his Athenian marbles on **March 2nd**; on **March 3rd** he dines at Reilly’s, and then goes to the Lyceum to see a play called *A Bull in a China Shop*.

March 4th sees two dramatic developments, which Hobhouse records calmly. He finishes the first volume of *Journey*; and is told by Byron, who sits with him in the evening at home, that Byron’s “work” is “out”. He suffixes the statement with three long dashes: the work is *Child Harold’s Pilgrimage*, Cantos I and II – which is not officially published till March 10th, so Hobhouse must get (if he does, for he doesn’t say) a preview copy. Byron tells him that when a Turk’s death is proclaimed from the Mosque, the Greeks exclaim, “A dog is gone to hell”, and will sing, in the presence of a Turk, the *Δευτε παιδες* – Riga’s version of the *Marseillaise*, about which they first heard from Andreas Londos at Vostitza on December 9th 1809. Whether these things are said in an excited Philhellenic mood, or just part of the conversation, is impossible to fathom.

The publication of *Childe Harold* leads to Byron’s entanglement with Lady Caroline Lamb.

Also on the 4th, Hobhouse requests an extension of his leave of absence from the militia.

Between **March 5th** and **8th** he records little other than dining at Reilly’s. On March 8th he walks in the park – St. James’s, I expect, across the road from his new lodging – and “meets with a thousand vexations” the nature of which he doesn’t divulge. Baillie stays with him that night. On **March 9th** he dines at Mrs Benyon’s, and then goes to see another, unnamed play. There is a performance of *Julius Caesar* on **March 10th**, by which he, Byron, Moore, and “two others” are “much disappointed”. Returning home with Baillie, he sees some of the people of Polito, the menagerie manager, having great difficulty with an elephant, who won’t go into a caravan, but “struggled and *kicked* long”. It is an anticipation of the much more dramatic Venetian elephant of April 1819, of which Byron writes him an account.

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On **March 11th** Richard Westmacott, the sculptor (later Professor at the Royal Academy) dines with Hobhouse at Whitton. He inspects Hobhouse's Athenian marbles and pronounces them to be of the third class. Hobhouse stays at Whitton on **March 12th**, "making out errata" for *Journey*. He writes to Byron (BB 101) in terms which show that he had been in Byron's company the previous day. On **March 13th** two officers from Benjamin's regiment, the 57th, arrive at Whitton, saying they "despair of Spain". The war in the Peninsula is going temporarily in the French favour.

On **March 14th** he goes to Hampton Court, and ...

... saw cartoons – nothing in the world more impressive – Mr Holloway, the engraver, expounded them to us – his labour has been immense – he has been twelve years at six of the cartoons. His *finished* sketches in French crayons, from which the engraving is finished, are superior to the engravings. A *nobleman* asked him if these crayon pictures could be purchased and offered a *thousand* pounds for the seven – Holloway said he would take that sum if he had made up his mind to starve the remainder of his life in a garret – the seven are worth £10,000. Holloway is assisted by two nephews-in-law. Garrick said he should produce a masterpiece if he could die like Ananias. The cartoons were found by Reubens in Flanders.

March 15th is a Sunday, and Hobhouse walks with a Mr Dix from Whitton to Richmond Hill. Mr Dix tells some more jokes from John Philpott Curran, which are, however, just as obscure as those Hobhouse hears on February 28th.

On **March 16th** he returns to London, and dines at Sastres', Covent Garden, with the Marquis of Tavistock (son of the Duke of Bedford, and a member of his Cambridge Whig Club). Tavistock invites him to Oakley, and tells him anecdotes about Dr Johnson. Johnson was asked why his friend Dr Levett did not prosper as a medical man. "Why, sir, he disgusts the rich and frightens the poor!"

On **March 17th** he dines with his brother Benjamin, and two men called Smith and Seton. Also, he borrows £1,323 from his father, "the sum I owe Lord Byron and another three hundred owed to Lord Louth" (he had promised Byron as much in his March 12th letter – BB 101).

March 18th sees him dining with the Literary Fund, and hearing, from "Salt the Abyssinian" (Henry Salt, who had been to Abyssinia in 1809), how religion is out of fashion in that country, even though one old Christian priest is thought of condescendingly as "the best old fellow in the world." On **March 19th** he dines at Whitton.

On **March 20th** he dines in very select company, but does not say where. Present are Byron, James Wedderburn Webster, Lord Valentia (who had travelled to

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India with Henry Salt, and who, as we know from September 11th 1809, had caught “the shitten pox” there), and Lord Mountnorris. Valentia provides him with a role model, by boasting that he made three thousand guineas from the books he wrote about his tour. There is a “disgusting scene” between Valentia and Webster, and they go to a ball at Mountnorris’s. Hobhouse concludes with, “Nothing more dull than the beau monde”. He adds, “Got a copy of *Albania*” but does not identify the book (*Journey* is not published till next year).

Between **March 21st** and **April 3rd** he is mostly at Whitton, “writing hard”, though he does dine in London with the Athenians on the 23rd, and meets “Russian Tooke” – author of the standard biography of Catherine the Great, much to be used by Byron in the Russian cantos of *Don Juan*. All Tooke tells him, however, is “a good story of Hugh Kelly the stay-maker”. It may be that it is while he is at Whitton that he writes an undated Letter to Byron in which he says that he told “a large party of women a tremendous lie on your behalf” as to the identity of “Florence” in *Childe Harold* (BB 99). The women would have been his thirteen half-sisters. On **March 22nd** he goes to church: on **March 29th** he hears that his request for an extension of his leave from the militia has been refused. This does not, however, have any effect on him, for he never rejoins them.

Henry Hobhouse leaves for the East Indies on **April 4th**. Hobhouse bids him farewell as he steps into the Portsmouth mail. Hobhouse records himself as having spent two pounds on prostitutes. Between **April 5th** and **10th** he to’s and fro’s between London and Whitton. He dines with Byron at the St Albans on the 7th, sees *The Provok’d Wife* on the 9th, and with Baillie sees another play called *The Manager’s Last Kick* on the 10th, after which he spends another pound on a prostitute.

April 11th finds him breakfasting with the Marquis of Sligo – soon to be jailed for abducting sailors – and dining with Lord Glenbervie, with Byron, Lady Sheffield, and a host of cognate worthies. Also present seems to be Benjamin Constant – though his presence in England while the war is still raging is improbable. Either he or Hobhouse “cuts butter with a spoon from excess of delicacy – horrid work”. On **April 12th** and **13th** he dines with Baillie at the Grecian, is given twenty pounds by his father, and spends five shillings of it on a prostitute. On **April 14th** he goes to Whitton. The entry for **April 15th** reads:

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Dined with Kinnaird, Douglass, at 11, Half Moon Street – met a Mr Murray there, an Edinburgh Reviewer – son of Lord Henderland – betrayed into some impertinences respecting a certain Lord – Kinnaird’s girl – a nice one.

The “certain Lord” is Byron, but we are not told of what Hobhouse’s “impertinences” consist. “Kinnaird’s girl” is probably Maria Keppel – for Hobhouse to praise her even in such implicitly lewd terms is a rare compliment. On **April 16th** he breakfasts with the newly-knighted Sir Joseph Banks, and, in the British Museum, inspects the original manuscripts of Pope’s *Iliad* and “*Odysee*”, which are “chiefly on the backs of letters”. He confesses to being “tired to death of staring at so many things”; though we have to assume that he is still working at *Journey*. He dines at Reilly’s.

He walks in St James’s Park on **April 17th** with Byron, who tells him that the Princess of Wales “calls MacMahon not the Prince’s privy purse but his ridicule”. [“Ridicule” – “reticule”.] On **April 18th** he accepts a dinner engagement even though he had intended to go out to Whitton. He has “a very pleasant day meeting a Lady Howard”. **April 19th** finds him walking to Whitton; but on **April 20th** he is back again, seeing *Julius Caesar* for the second time; he goes afterwards to Lady Jersey’s, and “came out again”, whether for reasons of shyness is not clear.

Byron’s second speech – the one on the Roman Catholic Claims – is given in the Lords on **April 21st**, and Hobhouse, as if making up for his dereliction over the Framebreakers speech on February 27th, attends:

Dined at Reilly’s – Baillie with me. Stayed up all night at the House of Lords – debate on the Catholic question. Heard Byron, who kept the house in a roar of laughter – Lord Grenville the best. Lord Hollesby mentioned as a fact that the first resistance at Cadiz to Buonaparte had been made by the Pope’s nuncio.

Few modern commentators read the Roman Catholic Claims Speech as comic. Grenville had resigned over Catholic Emancipation in 1801.

On **April 22nd** Hobhouse dines at the Exchequer Coffee House; on **April 23rd**, at Reilly’s. On **April 24th** he dines with Lord Lansdowne, the leading Whig, and another mass of great people, but records himself as having “learnt not one thing”.

By now we are used to the idea that Hobhouse goes into society not to make friends, not to enjoy himself, but to accumulate information to record in his diary,

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which will be useful to him at some later date. He seems a veritable Spectre at the Feast.

April 25th brings the news that the Catholic motion has been defeated by 300 votes to 215. He is still writing *Journey*, and is surprised by a visit from George Bankes, perhaps a relation of William, Byron's "father of all mischiefs". On **April 26th** he goes to Whitton where he is busy "sorting old books – and burning nonsensical old verses". He does not say which verses: perhaps the Mss. of his Horace version, or of *The Wonders of a Week at Bath*, go up in smoke on this date.

Hobhouse must by now have registered that, while it was all right to co-operate with Byron in the undergraduate *Miscellany*, and even, perhaps, to contribute lines to *English Bards*, there is now no competition possible with the author of *Childe Harold*. All he can aspire to is the role of prose commentator.

On **April 27th** he leaves Whitton – relinquishing, as we may conjecture, his dreams of poetic fame – dines at the Bedford, and sees, as he writes, "Falstaff", by which we may understand *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. On **April 28th** and **30th** he dines at the Grecian diner, on **April 29th** and **May 1st**, at Reilly's. Also on May 1st, he attends a ball.

On **May 2nd** Byron writes to Lady Melbourne, "The illness of Mr. Hobhouse's stepmother has spoiled our party" (BLJ III 44). Hobhouse says nothing about this. He dines at Stephen's Coffee House, where he learns much about his future idol, Sir Francis Burdett. Here is the whole entry, which is long for this part of the diary:

Dined with Greaves at Stephen's Coffee House. Sir Francis Burdett, Clifford, Northmore, Charlton, Baillie. All went away but Sir Francis Burdett, Baillie, and myself, who kept it up till past three in the morning. Burdett said some strong things. "It was disgraceful to be an Englishman" – confessed he was a Tory and hated the damned Whigs – could not give support to them even when he wished, for fear of losing his popularity – but could do his bit to turn Perceval out. He was very unreserved, and bore Clifford's drunken sallies very well. He talked with admiration of Tooke: said, however, that he was not a deep scholar, could not read Greek with facility – told us that Tooke, when advised to take a wife, said, "With all my heart; whose wife shall it be?"

On the whole this was a most delightful night, though nothing particular said by the patriot, or any of the party.

Burdett eventually became a Tory, as did the other Whig with whom Hobhouse later tangles, Sir Robert Wilson. At least we see that Hobhouse can – albeit unwillingly – party for partying's sake.

May 3rd brings forth another longer-than-average entry:

Dined at Lord Lansdowne's. Met Sir Samuel and Lady Romilly, also Rogers and Dr Davy. Sir Samuel Romilly speaks but little. Rogers, always trying to shine, told a story of Kneller's ear, which belongs to Jervas. Romilly mentioned of Lord Kenyon, that he was caught in the height of his grief by a friend, when he had lost his eldest son, but talking of his second, said, "There's my next boy

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at my death, to be sure he will get a good thing, £60,000 at least, more than sixty, much more than sixty –”

He told us that old Liverpool, talking with Calonne on finance, began thus: “Je suppose que mon *vit* est plus long que le votre”; to which the other replied, “La supposition est une peu forte, my lord”. The same lord would find as much humour in a finance report as others in a jest book. He was often surprised laughing heartily at tens, hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands, &c. He was once overheard soliloquising, “Yes, I am rich – very rich – much richer than the world supposes me to be”.

Pleasant day on the whole. A good deal of talk about the Prince of Wales, of whom he asked to Carlton House, and of whom he did not, of whom he spoke and did not speak to, and all the world the same. Went in the evening to Lady C. Howard’s.

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May 4th, 5th and 6th record three dinners at Reilly’s, and meetings with Lady Crawford, George O’Callaghan, Lord Barrymore (“and his boy Tiger – a prodigy”), someone called Smith (perhaps William Smith, the future foe of Southey), and Lady Lansdowne. Another lady of the night is in receipt of the Hobhousean bounty, to the tune of approximately £1 19s 6d, on May 5th (such a large sum may indicate more than one payment).

May 7th is a catalogue of Scots infirmity:

Dined at William Smith’s. Met a Mr Mackenzie, son of Lord Seaforth’s. The chief of the Macleods has been lame – one of the Macdonalds blind – and now (Lord Seaforth) one of the Mackenzies deaf – according to prophecy great things are to happen now in Scotland.

Went to Kinnaird’s.

Dinners on **May 8th, 9th and 10th** are with Lady Howard, at Reilly’s, and with Dominick Browne. On the 9th the prostitute is paid either four or eleven shillings (one hopes the latter) and on the 10th Hobhouse meets Lord Lauderdale, uncle of his future (a long way into the future!) wife; “he wore a great many rings”.

High drama occurs on **May 11th**, when the Prime Minister is assassinated:

Just heard (half past six) that Perceval has been shot on the steps going into the House of Commons by a man who stepped up to him and said “I am John James Bellingham, a merchant of Liverpool”, and shot him through the heart. William Smith was there and said “We have got a pistol among us! – at that moment a man whom he took to be Wilberforce reeled up to him, and fell at his feet, just calling out “Murder!” Smith picked him up and took him into the vote office, where he died in two minutes. Heard the news first from Meickle in Cawthorne’s shop, then from Cockerell, then from C. Murray, lastly from

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Charles Grant, who had it from William Smith. Heard since (Wednesday May 13th) that Smith was standing near the second pillar next to the stop door of the lobby, that the assassin said nothing to Perceval when he shot, but lifted his arm over a member, walking with him – he told his name afterwards it was the little room next to the vote office, into which he was taken.

Strangely perturbed by this incident.

Dined at Cavendish's – Henry – his wife – and sister-in-law – Mrs Cavendish fell into hysterics after tea, on the Lord Walpole's detailing the circumstances of the murder – called on my father at half after eleven. Found him in bed at number 11, and asleep. Old people certainly feeling nothing – and yet he lost more than I by this event.

Perceval had been Prime Minister since October 1809. Bellingham was a bankrupt, who resented the fact that when he had been arrested for debt in Archangel, the English Ambassador had refused to help him. He had petitioned endlessly, but fruitlessly, for redress – eventually he had lost control, and taken his revenge on the leader of the government which had ruined him. The assassination creates a power vacuum and a political crisis. It brings out all Hobhouse's latent – and covert – republicanism; though he is to find Perceval's son an excellent travelling companion on his 1814 European tour.

On **May 12th** the entry goes,

Dined at Reilly's – went at eight to 23 Russell Square, Dr Moncet's, where saw a French play (*Mithridate*) acted, and a proverbe, the farce, to my mind, much best. Monime an English woman, but spoke well. Amazingly struck with the ease and elegance of the French comedy and acting in the farce. Lady Crewe sat next to me, she said two or three things good. Foxe's Lady Crewe.

Mithridate is the tragedy by Racine. Monime is a large role in it; and Frances Anne, Lady Crewe, had assisted Fox in the 1784 Westminster election by "kissing butchers."

On **May 13th** all Hobhouse records is writing the journal "from Monday week last".

The entry for **May 14th** contains nothing but the date, and enough empty space for at least a two-line entry. On Friday **May 15th** Hobhouse dines with Baillie, Seton and Chambers at the Grecian, but the party is spoiled for Hobhouse by the

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news that Bellingham has been convicted. On **May 16th** Hobhouse dines with Byron at the Clarendon, and meets the Rev. Robert Bland, whose highly-regarded translation of the Greek Anthology is published this year. On **May 17th** he walks to Whitton, where he meets further worthies. On **May 18th** all he writes at first is,

Went to London and returned with my father to Whitton..

But he adds later,

Bellingham hanged at eight this morning – Newgate. Died like a hero. His answer to the sheriff – “I hope I feel as a man ought to do.” Noble –

Bellingham, who had no political motive, only a personal one (his plea of insanity was rejected), was hardly a republican martyr, as was Ludlow the Regicide, by whose grave in Switzerland Hobhouse tries without success to write a poem on September 18th 1816.

Byron booked a window in order the better to see Bellingham hanged, but Hobhouse was not with him. Byron was also mocked by an ancient woman on the way to Newgate, on the score of his limp. Hobhouse appears not to attend the execution.

On **May 19th** Hobhouse returns to London and dines at Reilly’s – with whom, he doesn’t say.

Hobhouse’s interest in the fracas which now supervenes on the question of the new ministry is shown in the **May 20th** entry:

Went to House of Commons – strange bustle about the formation of a new ministry – Liverpool to be the man – negotiations with Wellesley unsuccessful – Stuart Wortley, the same who abashed Ponsonby the other day, gives notice he shall move to address the Prince to form a strong and efficient ministry!!! All astounded.

Dined at Reilly’s, but took wine at the Literary Fund – everything betrays the anxiety of a near relation of mine respecting the sticking of the *old* ministry – such is human nature – and I can’t help joining with him – worse again!! Bellingham has shot off *his* Boot . . . – at Mrs Dillons Pater gave me £15.0.0.

The “near relation” is Benjamin, Hobhouse’s father, who sees the assassination as a chance to further his own career.

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For **May 21st**, Hobhouse writes,

Dine at Reilly's – Wortley's motion carried by four – ministry turned out owing to mismanagement – Vansittart has vacated his seat to become Chancellor of the Exchequer, and can't come in again owing to the rascality of Sir Edward Buller, who promised to make Van der Heyden vacate and then together with V voted against the ministry – instead of moving for a division on the main question – they divided on the point of whether the Privy Councillors should take up the address – and gained against it by *two* – the same majority would have stopped the address altogether – Bathurst was at *dinner* in the coffee room during the first division –

In the entries from **May 22nd** to **June 3rd**, the question of who will form the post-Perceval ministry weaves in and out obsessively of what narrative the diary possesses. On the 22nd, "Lord Wellesley [is] ordered to form an administration". On **May 24th**, Benjamin Hobhouse dines with Castlereagh – "Hope travels nor quits us till we die" is his son's comment. On **May 26th** the record states "Wellesley can do nothing – neither Liverpool nor Grenville will listen – old ministers in – interregnum – report they will stay in". On **May 27th**, "Lord Moira sent for – Whigs coming in at last!!!!" But by **June 2nd** the tone changes to "Whigs not coming in".

Hobhouse's social life winds on, full of event but without direction (though as usual we have to assume that *Journey* is being written). On **May 23rd** he records with surprise meeting his sister-in-law, Henry's wife, at Whitton: it's as though he'd forgotten she existed. He dines at Reilly's with Baillie; meets "old friend Miss Fox" (this could be "Pox", but probability is against the reading); meets Ned Ellice, and "a Colonel l'Estrange from Portugal, who like everyone else despairs of Spanish affairs". On **May 30th** he buys a lady's carnal favours for twelve shillings; on **June 3rd** he sees *Cymbeline*.

Then there is, at last, a pastoral idyll. Here is all the evidence we have from which to reconstruct the last trip which Hobhouse took to Newstead Abbey in Byron's lifetime:

Thursday June 4th: Set out with Byron and Captain George Byron, his heir, to Newstead – slept at Market Harborough.

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Friday June 5th: Arrived at Newstead -----

Saturday June 6th: At Newstead – took sweating walk –

Sunday June 7th: At Newstead ---

Monday June 8th: At Newstead ---

Tuesday June 9th: At Newstead – two letters from Pater – one telling me Moira was minister – the other that Liverpool had, after all, come in –

Wednesday June 10th: At Newstead – a page came from Lady Caroline Lamb with letters for Byron – dreadful body –

Thursday June 11th: At Newstead – sailed on the lake –

Friday June 12th: Set off from Newstead at eight. Slept at Woburn –

House-maid at Newstead 0 – 11 – 0 5

This whole week passed in a delirium of sensuality –

The entries are sketchy, but pregnant with implicit significance. First of all, they signify the start of the premiership of Lord Liverpool, the Tory who will remain in power for the rest of Byron's life (he doesn't die until 1828, when an apoplexy takes him off). He will, with Castlereagh, create the obscurantist and oppressive political ethos which will in turn, by reaction, encourage the matter and style of Byron's great satirical works. Secondly, although Byron may speak of Lady Caroline Lamb's "dreadful body" (Hobhouse later refers to her as "the mad skeleton"), we know that her reign has also started, and that it will, though much shorter than Liverpool's, be almost as cataclysmic in its effect on Byron. Lastly, what are we to understand happened to put Hobhouse in a "delirium of sensuality"? If all he paid the willing housemaid was eleven and fivepence, she wasn't much of a substitute for his usual nocturnal companions of Piccadilly and Covent Garden. Perhaps she was merely, like Mrs Tiggywinkle, "an excellent clear-starcher", and it is for her laundering skills that she gets paid. In which case the delirium was one of drink only.

We shall never know.

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On Wednesday **June 24th** Napoleon invades Russia, but no-one in England knows that at the time. Hobhouse's diary reads,

Dined at Lord Oxford's. Met Sir Francis Burdett, Rogers, Matthew Lewis, &c. Lady Jane Harley a delightful creature but *un peu libre*. She said that Paget was quite the *coq de village* at Vienna. Lady Oxford most uncommon in her talk, and licentious – uncommonly civil. [It] needs a push to get me into the Hampden Club: for the first time in my life knew how to put a question, and civilly say no – evening concluded ill, recollect the coach.

“The peerless Lady Jane”, as Hobhouse described her to Byron (BB 108) was Lady Oxford's eldest daughter, and thus in all probability Lord Oxford's daughter as well. It's clear from the second paragraph of his birthday entry (see below, June 27th,) that Hobhouse would like to marry her (she was thirteen in 1812) but has not the money. She eventually (in 1835) married Henry Bickersteth. Her sister Charlotte was Byron's “Ianthé” in *Childe Harold*. Henry William Paget, Lord Uxbridge, led the cavalry at Waterloo, where he had his leg blown off (**Uxbridge**: My God, Sir, I believe I've lost my leg. – **Wellington**: My God, Sir, believe you have!) and was made Marquis of Anglesey. The Hampden Club was a club for the Radical Whigs, patronised by Lady Oxford. It was founded by Burdett and Major Cartwright, and Hobhouse's problem was that to qualify for membership one needed an income of £300 p.a. or more from landed property: the property qualification for M.P.s. Byron was a member, but found the company uncongenial.

On **June 25th** and **26th** Hobhouse dines at Reilly's but is otherwise home all day at Manchester Buildings.

Saturday **June 27th** is his birthday, and he does his usual annual self-assessment:

Dies Natalis – twenty-six years of age. Looking at the past year, find I have done nothing but make a *gros volume* for which I may be damned – as to Ethic, have rather gone backwards than forwards – but now on the face of this my journal I do most solemnly promise myself to avoid *forever* for the future the rock upon which I have hitherto split – ita me Deus adjuv: — — —

What to do or what not to do about my commission in the miners may the gods confound me worse than I am daily confounded if I know. *Meus Pater*

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wants me off with all speed – but, feeling convinced of the truth of the old adage “out of sight out of mind,” and seeing that the same person did the other day leave unread for some time a letter from his son abroad, about whom he did once so much talk, I will not if possible consent to be absent from the spot where I may keep the recollection of others alive – everything I see confirms me in my opinion of aged persons – as to myself, I should certainly be in love with one of the *miscellany* if I had £5,000 a year – life might then be a little tolerable but, as it is, without any affectation or deceit (for why be affected or deceitful to myself?) *mihi tarda fluunt ingrataque tempora.*

I have lost all relish even for books that used once to delight me – what is the use of either reading or writing? You labour and labour on, and then you die without being yourself benefited by all your pains, and if you benefit others, without hearing of the little good you have done – nothing but praise – [], or the expectation of gaining it one day or the other, ever makes me happy – yet what is the use of being praised? It does not make me wiser or better – it is after all only one man’s opinion about another, which is obtained oftener by interested or good luck than by real merit – and if by real merit, what then? Does my real merit make me richer, or taller? Does it prevent me from rotting partially while above ground and rotting altogether when underneath it? Does it exempt me from any of the conditions of humanity? Or leave me anything but what it found me – a mere grub, whose annihilation would have a ten thousand millionth less effect on the system of the world, and be less perceived than the evaporation of a single drop of water from the surface of the ocean – aye, the extinction of whose globe and of all the heavens in which it revolves would be absolutely unknown and unfelt except by one small spot, in the boundless regions of the universe.

Herschel’s reflector has shown him stars whose light has been two millions of years reaching this earth – what can the Nazarenes say to this? Yet even these reflections on the unimportance of men, show a man’s importance to himself – for why should such an insignificant being think so much about himself as to make all these remarks?

To this I reply that if all worldly things and the world itself is comparatively so trifling a consideration, it is as well to think about myself, in whom I know that I am interested, as about any other mundane object which may not at all concern me – if the whole creation is a speck, all that I need think

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of it is that on that speck I am found, and must do the best I can for myself as long as this fact shall exist.

Dined with Sir Francis Burdett, a very large party, and not at all a pleasant party – <walked down to Whitton>

χαμαί 1. 0. 0.

The first Latin tag means “As God is my judge”: there being no room for God in Hobhouse’s universe, irony may be suspected. The second is from Horace, *Epistles* I i 23: *The hours postponing my hopes flow slowly and ungratefully*. The line refers to the frustration of civic ambition. Notice that Hobhouse, having made the birthday resolution about sexual continence, he breaks it at once – perhaps convinced by his own Falstaffian / Epicurean rhetoric.

On **June 28th** he walks to Whitton; on **June 29th** he walks half-way back, but travels the second part of the journey by coach, which costs two shillings. That evening, he sees Sarah Siddons give her last Lady Macbeth:

She made a poetical farewell speech, written by Horace Twiss – play stopped after her last scene, pit waved hats – I went in to the Pit – almost killed getting in. House filled from top to Bottom with all the rank of London – Sheridan in the orchestra – Mrs Siddons affected – but Kemble more so – never go in pit again.

It had not been planned to finish the performance at Act V scene i (the Sleepwalking scene); but, after Siddons’ farewell address, Kemble (her brother) stepped forward weeping and asked the house whether it wanted the show to go on, and the house indicated that it didn’t.

On **June 30th** Hobhouse dines with someone called Blackburn, and with Baillie, who is sulky, but whom he puts “in a decent humour”.

Then trouble starts:

Heard bad news of Byron this day about his o o – came home and found an odd note from Lady Bessborough – –

Lady Bessborough is the mother of Caroline Lamb (“Byron’s o o”). On **July 1st** Hobhouse dines at Reilly’s, and walks about with Baillie, who seems to be sulky still; and on **July 2nd** he has a “very curious scene” with Lady Bessborough. (He

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also receives 18s 7d in regimental pay: evidence that he's still officially in the militia). On **July 3rd** he receives a note from Lady Bessborough, and records "went to Byron who agrees to go out of Town"; we must presume, to get out of Caroline's way.

Lady Bessborough seems to see Hobhouse as Byron's keeper.

Saturday **July 4th** has a weekend party, with Hobhouse, Baillie, Seton and Chambers, all rowing up the Thames to Hampton Court: it's not stated whether they row or are rowed. They see the Palace, then dine and sleep at an inn called either the Joy, or the Toy. They continue their excursion on **July 5th**, when they reach Windsor at six, and see Eton, dining and sleeping at a good cheap inn. The entry for **July 6th** goes:

Saw the Princess of Wales – a pretty fat woman – going to ride in Windsor Park – a picturesque cavalcade. Saw Windsor Castle. The banner by which the Duke of Marlborough holds Blenheim is furnished annually by a mercer at Eton!! Set out from Windsor at half-past one; arrived in London at a little past eleven, all by water.

Found on my table most strange letters from Melbourne House.

Hobhouse does not tell us what is in the letters. On **July 7th** he dines at the Grecian, and goes to the opera; he does not say what opera is showing. There he meets Lady Bessborough and Caroline Lamb ("wicked wretch" is what he calls her, with no further comment).

On **July 8th** he dines at Reilly's, and

Called this day on Hanson and had a full account of Lord Byron's affairs – find things bad in that quarter and lament my incapacity – poor Newstead. Went to Vauxhall.

On **July 9th**, the day on which he records "Cobbett's imprisonment up", he goes to Whitton with Byron. In June 1810, William Cobbett had been imprisoned for two years and fined a thousand pounds for an article on flogging in the army. On **July 10th**, Byron leaves Whitton, and, as it seems, returns to London, his promise to "go out of town" having been kept!

Baillie visits Whitton on **July 11th**. The two friends visit Osterly on **July 12th**, and walk on **July 13th** back to London, where on **July 14th** they dine at Reilly's

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and visit the play. They dine again at Reilly's on **July 15th**, on which day Hobhouse describes himself as being "at work".

The entry for **July 16th** reads

Walked by desire to Lady Bessborough's Cavendish Square. In midst of our conversation in comes Lady Caroline Lamb, who talked of Lady Bessborough and myself looking *guilty* – here's a pass for the world to come to – dined at Reilly's – at work –

We gather later that Lady Bessborough asks Hobhouse to keep her in touch with events between her daughter and Byron. On **July 17th** the Caroline drama seems in abeyance. Hobhouse works, dines at Reilly's, and goes to the Surrey Theatre, casually recording two pounds' expenditure on prostitutes over the previous fortnight.

Hobhouse walks to Whitton with Baillie on **July 18th**. Although he complains elsewhere about his legs, all this walking between London and Whitton (which is at Hounslow, near modern Heathrow) shows that they can't be that bad.

Baillie and Hobhouse are joined at Whitton by George Sinclair, who was with Napoleon at Alma (he had been arrested as a spy, but Napoleon had had him released). The entry for **July 19th** reminds us forcibly that the war is still in progress (although no-one yet appears to know that Napoleon has invaded Russia):

Walked about Hounslow Heath with Baillie. Sinclair after dinner told his story of his interview with Bonaparte at Alma at five in the morning, a few days before the battle of Jena. [Napoleon] was standing in his nightcap and nightgown with a cup of tea in his right hand, resting on his left arm. Count Froberg, who had accompanied Lind and Berthier, were with Bonaparte. Bonaparte, on hearing from Sinclair that the Prussians did not expect the French in that quarter, said, "Ces sont des perruques, ces Bronswickes – ils seront furieusement trompés". Bonaparte enquired where Maréchal Mullendorf was, more than once, as had also *Murat*, to whom Sinclair had been first sent.

Sinclair observed a pointed incivility in all the Germans, and a totally opposite behaviour for the French. He fell in with the advance of the French army as they were breaking open a train of baggage waggons left by the Prussians – they and the country people were plundering as fast as possible, the

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French encouraging the peasants – “Prenez tout, mes enfants, – exceptez seulement le vin et l’argent!”

It is Sinclair’s son who causes to be created the astonishing golden bas-relievo of Byron, copies of which are at the Murray Archive, Trinity College Cambridge, and at St Mary Magdalene, Hucknall Torkard.

Hobhouse and Baillie drive back to London on **July 20th**, in a chaise, which costs £1 2s. They dine at Reilly’s, and “The old story of the —— [is] revived”: we are told no more. On **July 21st** Hobhouse dines at Reilly’s, calls on Byron, and is “at work hard” on *Journey*. On **July 22nd** he dines yet again at Reilly’s, and brings the journal up to date. He records himself as having spent 2s 3d on a watch ribbon, 2s on gloves, and 2s 6d on braces.

On **July 23rd** occurs a high-society party, at the Oxfords’. Sir Francis Burdett, Dudley Ward, Westall the painter, Lady Heathcote (at whose ball in 1813 Caroline is to cut herself with a piece of glass), Lord Archibald Hamilton, and young Lady Jane Harley, are among those present. Lady Jane has caught Hobhouse’s imagination, for she “told me she could say all Shakespeare by heart – she is a most surprising girl – and is a good instance of the Flexibility of female abilities ...” In a letter to Byron written in December (BB 107-8) he says that, “when I was last at Mortimer House,” she

... condescended to sing some silly verses which I had sent with a Greek song, and I like an infatuated booby was so completely taken up with looking at & hearing her that I had not wit enough to repeat to her at the close of her performance either Waller’s or your lines on the eagle who was shot with a dart feathered from his own wing.

Despite such dents Lady Jane makes in his misogyny, the party is “very dull.”

“Vaux and Lord John Russell” call on Hobhouse on **July 24th**; he says that he gives “the latter a copy of Albanian tour”; what document that is, is not clear. He dines at the Royal Institution Club. He spends nine shillings on a prostitute and one shilling on tea.

July 25th sees more anecdotes from George Sinclair, anecdotes of the kind we now realise that Hobhouse collects:

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Walked and coached to Whitton. Went fishing with Sinclair, George. He told me that Horne Tooke said he long doubted that Tom Paine was the author of *The Age of Reason*, until one day, someone observing of Burke that he rose like a rocket, Paine continued, "Aye, and fell like the stick", and Tooke lost all suspicion.

Sinclair said likewise that three Frenchmen were dining with some Prince in Germany at his court, and there being no-one but the Prince in the room, one of the French said, "Ah, il n'y a d'étrangère que Monsieur le Prince".

On **July 26th** Hobhouse and Sinclair go fishing at Tunbury. On **July 27th** Hobhouse walks to London and dines with Baillie, and meets Seton. On **July 28th** he dines at Reilly's and works all day. The business of Byron, Caroline Lamb, and Lady Bessborough's fretting, seems in terminal abeyance. But the calm is illusory.

The eruption of **Wednesday July 29th 1812** is one of the diary's most famous passages, and illustrates, as does no other, the delight Hobhouse takes in separating Byron from the women in his life (those that thrust themselves upon his attention, that is: on this very morning, Byron writes a friendly letter to Mercer Elphinstone (BLJ II 183-4). That William Lamb would have been able to sue Byron for enticement if Hobhouse had not worked so hard, that the scandal would have been terrific, and the personal consequences for both Byron and Caroline disastrous, cannot be denied; but the moral high ground Hobhouse thus inhabits doubles the pleasurable conviction he derives both from performing the task, and from recording it the following day.

Caroline had sent a note to Fletcher, trying to facilitate her plan:

FLETCHER, – Will you come and see me here some evening at 9, and no one will know of it. You may say you bring a letter, and wait the answer. I will send for you in. But I will let you know first, for I wish to speak with you. I also want you to take the little Foreign Page I shall send in to see Lord Byron. Do not tell him before-hand, but, when he comes with flowers, shew him in. I shall not come myself, unless just before he goes away; so do not think it is me. Besides, you will see this is quite a child, only I wish him to see my Lord if you can contrive it, which, if you tell me what hour is most convenient, will be very easy. I go out of Town to-morrow for a day or two, and I am now quite well – at least much better (LJ II 116n).

Hobhouse takes up the tale:

Went to Byron's – No 8 St James's Street – in expectation of going to Harrow, a scheme he had resolved on to avoid the threatened visit of a lady. At twelve o'clock, just as we were going, several thundering raps were heard at the door,

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and we saw a crowd collected about the door, and opposite to it. Immediately, a person in a most strange disguise walked upstairs. It turned out to be the lady in question, from Brocket. She, seeing me, ran up the garret stairs, on which I went down into Mr Dollman's shop and ordered a hat. Coming up again to take my hat and stick and go away, I did think that to leave my friend in such a situation, when, as Mr Dollman told me, every soul in the house, servants and all, knew of the person in disguise, and not to prevent the catastrophe of an elopement which seemed inevitable, would be unjustifiable. Accordingly I stayed in the sitting-room, whilst the lady was in the bedroom pulling off her disguise, under which she had a page's dress. Lord Byron was with her, but repeatedly came out to me, so that nothing could possibly have happened; besides which, both parties were too much agitated to admit a doubt of their conduct at that time.

Mr Dollman saw me twice at Byron's desire, and pressed upon me the necessity of "the lady's going out" of the house. I sent in by Byron several proposals for her quitting the place, but she said positively she would not go. At last she was prevailed upon to put on a habit, bonnet, and shoes belonging to a servant of the house, and, after much entreaty, did come out into the sitting room, in Byron's presence. I pressed upon her the necessity of instantly leaving the place – she said she would not. – "Then," said Byron, "we must go off together, there is no alternative". – "Indeed", said I, "but there is, you shall not go off this time". – The lady said she would not go off. I continued to urge upon her the absolute necessity of leaving the house. She said, "There will be blood spilt <first>". – "That", returned I, "there will be indeed, unless you go away". To this Byron assented. – "It shall be mine then", said the lady.

She then began to look quite wild, and to struggle, and, seeing a court sword lying on the sofa, back made a snatch to get at it, but was held back by Byron. To appease her I went out of the room for five minutes to speak to Mr Dollman, and obtain of him that no violent measures might be taken, but whilst absent I desired Fletcher, Byron's valet, to go into the bedroom to prevent the possibility of anything criminal happening, or anything which might be construed into a possibility of the thing to be dreaded taking place.

Returning into the room I found her more tranquil. She said she would go away on the condition of seeing Byron once more before Friday. She was told she should – she should do anything she pleased if she would be content to go away now.

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Here was a difficulty – she must change her clothes before she went to her carriage, and this she could not do at Byron's, for fear of being known. When she came out of his lodgings, after some reflection I told her she might go in a hackney coach (one had been standing at the door by my order some time) to my lodgings, where she might put on her own clothes, which she had in a bundle with her, and thence go in another hackney coach to her carriage, or to the house of some friend. She said she would do this if Byron went with her. I said, "I cannot consent to let you and Byron be in my rooms together – such a conduct would not be consistent with what I owe to both of you, to your mother (Lady Bessborough) and to myself". She entreated me very hard for some time that I would permit her and Byron to be together in my rooms, but I flatly denied, and Byron said – "Indeed it would be wrong to expect it of you – I do not expect it".

At last she consented to leave Byron's, dressed up in the servant's habit &c., and go in a hackney coach to Manchester Buildings, on condition that Byron might go in the coach with her as far as my lodgings. On this I left the house and went to the bottom of St James's Street. In a minute or two I saw them (Byron and the lady) step into the coach, and drive down the street.

At that instant I ran across the park to my lodgings, and, having got my door opened, stood at the corner of the buildings. The hackney coach soon came. I stopped it at the corner before it turned to the buildings, and desired Byron to get out, at which he did. The hackney coach then drove with the lady to my lodgings. I handed her out, took her upstairs, and, showing her my rooms, went away immediately, that she might dress herself, desiring her to lock the doors.

I went into the street to Byron, whom I found at the corner of the buildings, and walked with him to Bailly's coffee-house, where I left him, and came back to my lodgings. The lady had dressed herself in her own clothes when I came into my sitting-room, and I immediately began to impress the necessity of her getting to her carriage or to some friends.

In a short time a note came to her from Byron enclosed to me. It stated he wished to see her before she left London. She wrote an answer which she gave to me <not> <appointing some time & place, but saying she would contrive it> At last she settled to go to a Mrs Conyers, N^o 5 Grosvenor Gate – a friend of hers – and begged I would go with her. To this I consented, and she left my lodgings in a hackney coach with me, taking a little basket with her containing

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some of her clothes, shoes, &c. We ordered the coach to stop a hundred yards from the house, and then got out – I took her <hand/>arm and walked towards No 5. A servant in livery offered to carry the basket, and followed with it behind. When at Mrs Conyers we knocked, and the servant said his mistress was at home. After a short parley in the passage, and her requesting me a thousand times to call on her at Melbourne House the next day, and asking me to send her carriage from Moore's livery stables to her at No 5 Grosvenor Gate, I took leave of her – she was very much affected.

Before I went she made me promise I would not prevent Byron from meeting her once before she left London – she mentioned Barnet or Highgate – on her way back, and, knowing that all apparent opposition would make her as extravagant as before, and cause a scene, I consented to speak to him on the subject.

God knows that from the very beginning I have done my best to keep my friend out of the scrape. My first wish was that he should give this lady, who by the common consent of all London has made a dead set at him, no power over him by consenting to any serious folly, and when I knew that everything had passed between them, my next desire was to prevent a public disclosure and an elopement – this latter event would, as Byron assured me and assures me, have certainly taken place but for the part I played in the transactions of yesterday, which I have here noted down, twenty-four hours only after they took place, in case it should ever be necessary to defend myself from any misrepresentations, and for the purpose of keeping by me a correct statement of these facts, which together with a thousand others would prove that the seduction has not been on the side of my friend.

I have letters from the lady's mother, and the lady, thanking me for what I [had] done before this event; and at the time Lady Bessborough first begged me to interfere, I knew interference was too late, except to prevent an elopement, but this I could not tell her, for my friend Byron had trusted me with the secret, and to him I owed a paramount and prior duty. All my endeavours have certainly tended to what I thought his good. I have not cared for the others, nor have consulted anything in my transactions with them but his advantage and my own honour. The prayers and entreaties of the mother did indeed prompt me to the same conduct, which I should have pursued solely for the benefit of my friend, but it was much against my will, and only after repeated applications,

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that I had any communication with her. I did tell her that the fault was more on the side of the woman than the man, and that if she could answer for the forbearance of her daughter I could engage for the prudence of my friend. In all communications with the lady I have insisted on the propriety of being prudent, and of taking no step which might produce an *éclaircissement*. I knew it was useless to talk about that virtue which she had *not*, but I could not tell her I knew her case. There again my duty to my friend interfered.

As to Byron, I have nothing to accuse [him] of except the having told me his secret, and having talked about me to the family. It was not strange he should not take my advice, when the lady was so *exigéante*, seeing that, after many efforts, I could neither get him away from London nor prevent him from writing to the lady. I gave up speaking to him on the subject for ten days, and never should have mentioned the topic again, had not the departure of the lady from London, and his talk, made me think there was no dread of an elopement. Lady Bessborough, on the 16th, requested I would write to her and tell her how affairs went on between the parties: my knowledge of the real fact, and my resolution of not identifying myself with any of the family, have rendered it very difficult for me to do this without running the chance of misleading Lady Bessborough – so I have not written at all as yet – but now shall give her a few lines, expressing my complete persuasion that nothing but the detention of her daughter from London will prevent some catastrophe – it is my duty to tell her this.

I cannot tell her what happened yesterday – there would be no use in giving her such a detail, nor would such a disclosure help at all to prevent what is alone now to be prevented, *an elopement* – yet, should that transaction ever come to her ears, she may think that I was aiding and abetting, and mistake all that was ever done by me to get her daughter out of the scrape for an endeavour to forward her views to get into it. I cannot help it, and if I should suffer from the misfortune of having been obliged to interfere in this <transaction> delicate affair, I shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing that my motives have been honourable and my conduct such as anyone in similar circumstances would have most probably been forced to pursue.

Written Thursday July <29> 30th.

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Dined at Reilly's – went to the play in the evening – *Such Things Are*, and *The Sleepwalker*.

Such Things Are is by Mrs Elizabeth Inchbald, and *La Somnambule* is by Antoine de Feriol, comte de Pont-de-Veyse – the latter the source for Bellini's *La Sonnambula*.

The day following the drama, **July 30th**, Benjamin Hobhouse appears, and tells his son that he has been appointed commissioner to survey the jails in Lancashire and Cheshire. “The letter sent to him yesterday by Lord Sidmouth” [*the Home Secretary*] “referred to this and not as we apprehended to another affair of vast importance”. It seems that the fifty-five-year-old father is ambitious for a job in government. Father and son dine with Sinclair at the Royal Society; son then spends 9s 6d on relieving his sexual tension.

On **July 31st** Hobhouse walks with Sinclair to Hounslow, and dines with Sir Joseph Banks at Spring Grove. The Whig litterateur John Wilbraham and others are there. Hobhouse merely records himself as being at Whitton on **August 1st, 2nd,** and **3rd**. He comes to London on **August 4th** in a coach, and walks back on **August 5th**. On **August 6th** he returns to London. On that day he dines at the Royal Society; on **August 7th**, at the Grecian, and spends the evening with Baillie.

August 8th is a longer entry.

Wrote journal from Thursday July 30th.

Another long letter from Lady Bessborough. Went by foot to Whitton. A party there. A Mr Campbell there, who had lived much in Spain, mentioned that the great grandees were not allowed to go more than a certain distance from Madrid without the King's leave, which was part of the system pursued by all the Bourbon Princes to depress the nobility. He said that in La Mancha at a paltry posada he did not pay his bill, because the landlord waited to have the money brought to him, and would not break through etiquette and go for it.

Archdeacon Cambridge there, the son of Owen Cambridge the Poet – a gentlemanly, spare man.

Hobhouse spends Sunday **August 9th** at Whitton, then goes in a coach to London on **August 10th**, the fare costing half a crown. He has a dental crisis:

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Walked to Thompson and Sons, dentists, in George's Street Hanover Square, to have a tooth that has plagued me two years out, but walked round the square before I could make up my mind to knock – did knock, and found Thompson not at home, for which silly [factor] I was glad – but appointed to call next day at two –

Dined at Reilly's. χαμπατυπη 0. 10. 6.

Engaging with a lady of the night when you have a bad tooth can't be very enjoyable.

On **August 11th** he summons up courage:

Got up at nine – walked to Thompson's and had tooth out like a hero, although it hurt me worse than my last extraction by the Jew at Constantinople.

His last extraction – with the dentist who had once pulled a tooth for the Grand Signor – had been on May 15th 1810. That evening he dines at Reilly's, and goes to Astley's, the circus near Westminster, for two shillings.

On **August 12th** he dines with Baillie and "Scroope" Davies, who gets "abusive," despite which they stay up till five. On Thursday **August 13th** he dines alone (as it seems) at Reilly's, and says he has "got into a habit of working at letters at night".

August 14th sees his loyalty to Byron tested in the most practical way:

Went to Garroway's Coffee House to the sale of Newstead Abbey by auction by a Mr Farebrother – where having first secured myself with Byron, I bid twelve times and left off at 113,000 guineas – for the large lot – which was brought in at 115,000 guineas – Byron having fixed £120,000 as the price. The second was brought in at 13000 guineas. Never having done the like before, I was, before the thing began, in a complete fever – but was told by Hanson, Byron's solicitor, that I came off most admirably – I had just then only one pound one shilling and sixpence in the world.

He is at Whitton on **August 15th, 16th and 17th**. On **August 18th** he "came from Whitton early with sisters three". Given the huge number of half-sisters he has, we feel a bit cheated at the distance he keeps between us and them. His dental ordeal is not over:

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Went to Thompson, dentist – had teeth cleaned and fined. Very dreadful pain.

Did his “sisters three” hold his hand as the dentist worked on him, we wonder? The whole operation costs him £2 5s 6d. On **August 19th** he dines with Baillie at George’s French coffee house, and spends nine shillings on a prostitute. On **August 20th** he dines at Reilly’s and reads “Wood on Homer”. On **August 21st** he dines at George’s again.

His father returns from his Lancashire commission. He sits two hours with Hobhouse, discussing political situation, and the and the following cryptic entry is the result:

... a kitch has taken place. This is a most complete exemplification of the old proverb “slip between cup and lip”, for everything was ready for Tuesday last: the damned —— wants to make a man who would disgrace his ministers; they, rather than this, drop it altogether – so it is better that ten just men should suffer than that one rogue should succeed.

What might have happened on Tuesday last – who the ten just men might be, and who the one rogue – remains mysterious; but evidently Benjamin Hobhouse’s political dreams are over. On November 4th of this year he is made a baronet, and from then on appears to live vicariously through John Cam.

On **August 23rd** father and son dine at Reilly’s, and father tells son about the politics of the Lancashire and Cheshire correctional systems. **August 24th** sees Hobhouse with a “violent cold”, and he cannot go to Oxford as planned, with Baillie, Seton, and Chambers.

He is still writing *Journey*. On **August 25th** he reads Strabo on the Troas. On **August 26th** he dines at Reilly’s; dines on **August 27th** at George’s, and writes a letter to his sister Charlotte. On **August 28th, 29th, and 30th** he dines at Reilly’s; on the 29th he pays his Manchester Buildings lodgings bill. On **August 31st** he dines at George’s “with B and C”. On **September 1st** he dines at Reilly’s. On **September 2nd** he tells us a bit more:

Letters. Dined at Reilly’s. Spent the night with Baillie and a Mr Bartomière, a Frenchman. Payne Knight called on me today, a civil, fluent man, like his picture. Told me about finding the bronzes in Paramythia – all got into Russia, five lost – – – –

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Mr Bartolière is a French teacher at Eton. Richard Payne Knight is a famous numismatist and antiquarian. The entry for **September 3rd** records an adventure less academic and more lurid:

Went with Baillie to Bartholomew's Fair in Smithfield – such a sight – a man with a salt box and pestel imitating a priapism – the whole one large το δάσμος – saw a pretty girl swinging [*singing?*] absolutely pamée [?] – dined at Dolly's – 0.5.0. Evening at Baillie's – χαματ. 0. 13. 6.

Founded by Henry I's court jester, Bartholomew Fair was a cattle- and cloth-fair which throughout the centuries attracted the kinds of entertainment which Hobhouse so guardedly records – though higher-quality culture was also available. Ben Jonson's play uses the Fair as a metaphor for the ungovernable powers of the human psyche. If only Hobhouse had written more. It was closed down in 1855.

Richard Payne Knight is a new star in Hobhouse's firmament, and he is frustrated when, on both **September 4th and 5th**, Payne Knight is not at home when he has said he will be: "very foolish, this unpunctuality," is Hobhouse's comment.

On **September 6th** he walks to Chiswick and visits the gardens of the Duke of Devonshire: "the late Duke – the late Duchess – the Lady Harriet Cavendish – the first the best" is his economical way of summing-up the famous family. On **September 7th** he walks up to London with Baillie, dines at Reilly's, and writes till late.

The Battle of Borodino starts on this date.

September 8th brings a letter from Charlotte, "who tells me she danced with her father at a public ball at Ramsgate".

On **September 9th** Hobhouse sees *The Beggars' Opera*, but, with typical Hobhousean philistinism, says nothing about it. Music is not his forte (a word he would probably pronounce as a monosyllable): see his lack of reaction to Haydn's *Creation* on December 18th 1814. On **September 10th** he dines "with Chambers at 4, Upper Bedford Place," and spends £1 on a prostitute. On **September 11th** he dines at Anderton's, and on **September 12th**, announces that he is preparing to go with Baillie "into Wales".

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[The diary of the Wales trip in 56530 is a digest of a longer one written by Baillie and Hobhouse together, which is now BL.Add.Mss. 56531. The dates in it are one day ahead of those in 56530 until October 9th. I shall add any interesting details from this, referring to the volume as "56531".]

Hobhouse pays for his lodgings, receives thirty pounds from his father, buys some stockings for £1 10s, and they set off for Oxford, where they put up at The Ship, "a good cheap inn". There they stay for **September 13th**. On **September 14th** they take a coach to Birmingham, stopping at Stratford-upon-Avon for thirty minutes:

... visited Shakespeare's house, where lives one Hornsby a butcher. Several relics of disputed antiquity and a room scribbled all over with names – Prince of Wales – Lucien Bonaparte. A gentleman of Stratford told us that he knew Malone when Malone lived in the town and that he doubted the relics.

Near Hockley, ten miles from Birmingham, lives a besom-maker [*a besom is a birch or broom*] whose ancestors have been in possession of the spot two hundred years and have all been besom-makers. At the Swan Inn at Birmingham, well-treated.

So much for Stratford, which was not in 1812 the tourist-trap it is now. Birmingham, with its industries, is of as great a fascination. On **September 15th**, Hobhouse records:

Tried to see Soho Bolton's manufactory, but though Baillie had a letter from Coutts in London, could not. Saw a pin- whip- and button-manufactory. Baillie, calling at a bank, found a Mr Lloyd, a Quaker, past sixty, who has translated the Epistles of Horace and part of the Odyssey, and presented his versions, not published, to Baillie. Part very well done, especially the Homer.

September 16th takes them "to within a mile of Wolverhampton, when the Union Coach from the Dog Inn took us up". They get to Shrewsbury, which is "full of races", and walk from there to Nescliff, ten miles away, where "slept in a pot house". In 56531 Hobhouse adds, "... a pot house called the New Inn. Baillie slept in a double-bedded room with a strange companion who rose at four the next

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morning after playing a voluntary on the Welsh bagpipes". There are of course no Welsh bagpipes: early morning flatulence may be suspected.

On **September 17th** they enter Wales. First they walk the nine miles to Oswestry, and

... thence, by Chirk and the grand aqueduct of Pontysyllty, to Llangollen, about fourteen miles – most beautiful evening walk. The Hand Inn Philips at Llangollen quite full, as always, they said. We lodged at a chandler's.

They explore the environs of Llangollen on **September 18th**, seeing a bridge built by the Bishop of St Asaph, the ruin of Dinas Bran, or Crow Castle. They view Valle Crucis Abbey and the pillar of Eliseg ("a great British antiquity"), and go over some mountains and back to Llangollen. As for the town's most famous inhabitants:

Went through Lady Elizabeth Butler and Miss Ponsonby's grounds, but did not see that ancient pair.

They walk through the rain on **September 19th**, to Corwen, where they look at Glendower's sword. At six in the evening they arrive at "Dyfpurs," and put up at a "large bad inn". In 56531 Baillie adds, "Waiter at Corwen, when asked whether he understood Welsh, said that he did not like it enough to learn it; that he heard nothing else; that his fellow servants were always at it, i.e., talking their own language, and that he therefore kept out of their way as much as he could". On **September 20th** they walk to Capel Cerig, where they look at Llewellyn's tombstone,

... which we were shown by a peasant who told us that neither Walter Davies, his father, "who was a poet and kept a shop", nor the Bishop of St Asaph, could make anything of the scratched inscription – neither could we.

In 56531 Baillie adds,

We inquired about the Sect of Jumpers, and were informed that a chapel which we had passed on the left of the road a little before we tried off to P[] Voelas was occasionally frequented by persons of that persuasion and more particularly

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by an old woman, who although on other occasions was scarcely able to walk, always vied with the most vigorous in jumping.

They see the Falls of Conwy, and Rhaidwr Falls. The latter is the highest waterfall in the United Kingdom, but Hobhouse passes no comment on it. At Capel Cerig they put up at the inn, which is large and uncomfortable, and is kept by Parson Hughes. Hobhouse sleeps in his breeches.

In fact, in 56531 Baillie reveals that the place is so damp that both sleep in their breeches *and* waistcoats. He writes, “We ate everything which was set before us: fish, roast duck, mutton chops and port”. The following morning, writes Hobhouse in 56531,

Whilst we were dressing this morning and Baillie was almost in a state of nature, the chambermaid entering was told that we had been forced to sleep in our clothes on account of the dampness of the beds, to which she retorted by averring that it must be a joke, that Baillie had nothing on and that I had not *buttoned* my breeches. N.B. the chambermaid was a pretty black-eyed girl, very well made, and I had been previously alarmed lest she should have been shocked at seeing Baillie without his stocking. Ditto Baillie.

On **September 21st** they navigate valleys and hills, seeing, on the summit of Glyder Bach, “the stupendous stones mentioned by Pennant”. Their guide book seems to be Thomas Pennant’s *Tours in Wales*, 1780-3. In 56531 Hobhouse adds,

The view on every side was extensive and each single object was lost in the boundless expanse of the whole prospect. The Irish Channel, the Straits, and whole island of Anglesey, the Bay of Cardigan, the nearer view of Snowdon and all her sons, the clouded top of Moël Siabod, a succession of heights towering farther to the south, and the immense surface of the counties Denbigh, Flint, Chester, and Salop, stretching afar to the east, were the surrounding limits of our horizon.”

They leave “a metrical memorial of our own making, on a flat stone just below the top”, and return to Parson Hughes’ inn, where, Hobhouse records in 56531, they “dined with a vigour that did not disgrace our former feats. In the evening had the harper into our room – modest and intelligent perhaps, and skilful”. On **September**

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22nd they walk to Bangor, turning off at points, “to see,” for example, “Cwm Idwal, a desolate hollow in the hills under the Glyder, filled by a black lake ... well worth walking to this spot”. The inn at which they stay is, it seems, unworthy of mention.

In 56531 Baillie records,

Met a drunken woman on the road who asked us if it was not like the deserts of Arabia. She said that she had been thirty years in America and had seen nothing similar ... Scarcely a cottage or human being to be met with in this tract, and Hobhouse observed that he had met with ten times as many travellers in the most desolate part of his route through Albania.

On **September 23rd** (56531 has **September 24th**) they ascend Snowdon, which takes them two hours forty minutes, there being, in 1811, neither paved path, mountain railway, nor cafeteria at the summit. From the Wydffa, the summit, with “not a cloud to be seen”, the ever-particular Hobhouse counts thirty-three lakes, and can see the Wicklow Mountains (“faint”) and the Isle of Man (“plain”).

“Sir R. Williams’ mine” is just under the Wydffa, “a strange habitation for man”. As they move down from the summit,

... we saw a large raven sail towards it in expectation of the remnants of a luncheon. Evan Jones [*identified in 56531 as the harper in Parson Hughes’ inn at Capel Cerig, who is their guide*] told us that the lower classes in Wales do not take their father’s surname unless they are christened by it.

The Goat Inn at the “pretty village of Bedgellert” is “full almost”, but it seems there is room for the two friends. The diarist records that “goats in this country all destroyed, especially by D[rummond]. Burrel”. 56531 explains that the move is occasioned by “the havoc which these animals make among the plantations in the winter, when they come down from the mountains in search of food”.

September 24th takes them to Ffestiniog, the vale of which (“called by Pennant ‘the Tempe of Wales’”) they cross. 56531 records their admiration for the pleasure grounds of Mr Oakley at Tan-y-Bwlch. Stopping at “Mrs Owen’s little inn”, which is “vastly cheap”, they find that “she has books – Gwillim’s *Heraldry* and the *Criminal Recorder* – Guthrie’s *Quintilian*” (56531 says the books had been left by lodgers). In 56531 Baillie records that they

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Drank tea and went to bed about eleven in a perturbation of mind caused by the *Criminal Recorder*. I heard Hobhouse cry out in his sleep, “Dru! Dru!”

Kept in by the mist and rain which descend on **September 25th** (to their “chagrin and ennui” – 56531), all they manage to see is the Ffestiniog churchyard,

... where saw that longevity is common at Ffestiniog – I think Lord Lyttleton says eighty.

That night they eat “a leg of mutton, a large duck, and a pint-sized apple pie”; but their spirits are “still powerfully affected by the *Criminal Recorder*” (56531).

They are accompanied by “a deaf guide” on **September 26th** and visit to “Pulpit Hugh and the Falls of the Cynfael”, and are shown

... on the opposite hill the house of Hugh Lloyd, “the conjuror and poet”, who lived in James I’s reign, and whose conjurations are still known in the Vale of Ffestiniog. On Pulpit Hugh our guide said “he made his sermons and rhymes”. ’Tis a rock in the water amidst deep woods. Walked over the mountains and in five hours and five minutes reached Capel Cerig. Saw Ffestiniog Spa, and Dolwydellan Castle on the route – rain all day. – – –

That evening they gorge as never before. Hobhouse records, in 56531:

Modesty would prevent me from recording my own exploits on this occasion if I had not been far surpassed by my fellow-traveller. As it is, I shall and must say that salmon, mutton, and partridges disappeared in succession before me and left no vestiges of what they were. The interval between dinner and bedtime was well filled up with muffins and honey, so that the last four hours of our yesterday’s existence might be said to be one continued meal. Never did Baillie so shine, and I, though at a distance, did things worthy of my great prototype – to bed at ten.

The rain forces them, on **September 27th** (**September 28th** according to 56531), to hire

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... a post-chaise, determining if weather did not better to return home by Chester. Went to Llanrwst, ten miles. Saw the church and Inigo Jones' bridge, which a man shook for sixpence. In the chapel is the EOPOΣ of Llewellyn the Great – an inscription on a Mrs Hughes says, “she was what all Christians should be – an Israelite indeed”; [56531 adds, “and another of a Mrs Price, noted for her ‘commemorable cohabitation’ with her husband”.] Left Llanrwst in a chaise, but our horses would not be whipped further than eight miles [56531 refers to the “cruel flagellation” of the horses]. Caer Hen, the Convivium of the Romans, four miles from Conway, so we walked in the dark to Conway town, after stopping in a cottage an hour [“very much to the apparent disgust of the only person within would could talk Saxon” – 56531].

Conway is a “dirty pestiferous town”, and on **September 28th** they “wander about the ruins of” its “noble castle”, noting that “two arches in the hall” have fallen “since Tennant’s time”. The Plas Mawr, “built in 1585 by Robert Wynne of Guedir”, is “the residence of stinking paupers” [56531 has that it “stinks aloud”].

On the page previous to these entries Hobhouse pencils two figures kilted and armed like Albanians, striding through hilly country. One has a prominent nose, like Hobhouse, but they are of equal height, so they do not seem self-representations, for “Long” Baillie was very tall. The outline of the hills continues beneath the entries for the 26th to the 29th, so that the two figures would have been dwarfed, in the original, by the landscape. In fact the outlines go on for several pages, and may be Lady Dorchester’s way of saying, “delete” (she was Hobhouse’s daughter, and his first editor).

They rise at twenty past six on **September 29th**, and, having sent Baillie’s valise on in a trap, leave Conway for Bangor at ten past ten. As so often, we wonder how they passed the time between rising and departing, or rather, why they had to get up so early. 56531 explains that they didn’t get breakfast till eight-thirty, and adds, “The map arrived from Kinnaird”.

They pass down the coast towards Bangor, passing, Baillie writes in 56531,

...a little pot-house with this inscription under the sign of the Cross Keys written upon the shoulder-blade of a whale, “Good ale sold here by Robert Williams”.

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and as Hobhouse writes in 56530, passing

... round the side of Penmaenmawr – still a frightful precipice. (Simon Humphries, on his way to meet Anne Thomas, of Creyddy on the other side of the Conwy River, fell over Penmaenmawr. Anne Thomas was upset crossing the ferry – all were lost but Anne – Humphries was unhurt – they married – she died aged 116 on April 11th 1744 – he survived her by five years – buried at Llanfair Vechan near Penmaenmawr.)

“Lanfair Vechan” has, in this pre-Stephenson age, yet to get the railway station which inspired its lengthy re-naming, and entry in the record books.

The country to the south of the Menai Straits is “full of small neat houses, raised by the neighbouring quarries”. At Bangor they see the cathedral (“the meanest of its kind” – 56531), and “the tomb of that great prince, Owen Gwynedd”.

Telford’s Menai Bridge is not yet built (it is finished in 1825); nor is the monument to the Marquis of Anglesey erected, for Waterloo is as yet unheard-of, and Uxbridge (as he still is) has both legs intact. Baillie and Hobhouse take the ferry over “in company with two Houyhnhms and two Yahoos” according to 56531, which adds,

The former animals as well as one of the latter were rather uneasy at the swell of the current of the Menai, and we with a wise foresight projected many schemes in case of an event which, we learned afterwards, was physically impossible. The approved of our plans was one according to which I [*Baillie*] was to swim off, until every one except Hobhouse was fairly drowned, and then return and save this gentleman, who was to wait for that event on a plank.

They land in Anglesey, and walk the four-and-a-half miles to Beaumaris, from whence they have a “beautiful view of the Straits, equal to Hellespont”. At Beaumaris they stay at the Bull (“good inn – bad waiter”: 56531 adds, “the people &c are only half civilised”). They inspect “Edward I’s castle”, which 56531 informs us “has a good fives wall, resorted to by the citizens of Beaumaris”, and which is far more interesting than Pennant had led them to expect.

They rise at eight on the morning of **September 30th**, and proceed in an anti-clockwise direction around Anglesey, to Amwlch. They observe numerous ancient stones – one a “cromlech”, one called “Arthur’s Round Table”. They “cross the vast

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sands of Traethcock” – see more stones – and at Amwlch, where they find a “small decent inn”,

Their guide, from Beaumaris, is

... a very smart little fellow ... who bore our burden, not a light one, with great cheer and spirit ...

He tells them that

... the practise of Bundling, or Caru-ar-y-ywely, courting *on* the bed, obtained universally in Caernavonshire, in Anglesey, and [was] found in other parts of Wales. At Liverpool the Welsh traffickers tried to continue the practise but have been stopped by English decency. Cæsar accuses the Britons of Vagus Concubitus.

They leave Amwlch at ten on **October 1st**, and move towards Holyhead. They observe numerous pits (seeming copper mines) made by the Paris company. Baillie compares them to similar pits in Cornwall. They put up at a “grimy sordid inn” at Holyhead, and see the churchyard, named by Pennant as Roman, though Hobhouse has his doubts. One of the tombstones has “verses of no ordinary cast” according to 56531, but none are quoted.

On **October 2nd** they find their “smart little” Beaumaris guide “dead drunk”, so they “saddle another biped” (56531), that is, they hire another man to carry their valises. They circumnavigate the rest of Anglesey in one day, ending up at the Bangor ferry, where “Mitre would not take us in so went to the Crown – good inn”.

On **October 3rd** they re-cross the Menai straits (the ferry, which, 56531 tells us, also carries Lord Kirkwall, costs a shilling), leave two trunks at the post office to be forwarded to London, and “coasted along the shore to Plas Newydd, Lord Uxbridge’s home, and see two cromlechs behind the stables, mentioned by Pennant. They toss a coin to decide whether or not to go to Trer Dryw and find the “great Druidical consistory” there. The Druids win, but when they get to the spot they find nothing identifiable as Druidical, and “not a soul in the neighbourhood knows anything about the matter”. They then make their way, via the Moel y don ferry, south-west to Caernavon, where they put up at the Sportsman Inn: “no great things – evil landlord”.

Hobhouse’s entry for **October 4th** (in 56530) reads:

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Walked round the terrace under Caernavon walls and visited the castle built by Edward – the English Justinian. The room in which Edward II was born has no floor. It is as a stage of one of the towers. Walked through a wild romantic country, thirteen miles, to Beddgellert – put up at Goat.

Baillie, however (in 56531), perhaps gives us a clue as to how they so often pass the long hours between rising and departure:

Rose at nine, and breakfasted from ten till twelve. A most copious and varied repast. A ham, which would do honour to a hog of Westphalia, honey, muffins, white bread, and toast delighted us for two full hours and are still the subject of pleasurable recollections. Our landlord, Mr Bettifs, a civil obliging man ... showed himself no friend to the Uxbridge interest, of which he spoke with a spiteful liveliness, and pretended to be ignorant which of that family represented the town.

They quit the Beddgellert Goat at eleven on **October 5th** (56531 reveals that they had the previous evening “disjointed a leg of mutton” there) and are soon in country familiar to students of Shelley:

... walked seven and twenty miles to Barnmouth, going over the great Tremadoc embankment. Tremadoc a neat town, raised by Mr Maddox – passed with difficulty over the sands of Traeth-Bach – saw Harlech Castle sixteen miles from Beddgellert – less than others of Edward’s castles – at Barnmouth, a wretched town buried in sands, lodged at the Corsy gedol arms – not the head but a good inn.

Hobhouse, it may be seen, the embryonic imperialist, is an admirer of Edward I, the Hammer of the Scots. It would not mean anything to them in 1812, but Shelley (of whom Hobhouse will be extremely chary in years to come) might have been (but is not) lodged at this time at Tan-y-rallt, Mr Maddox’s country house. He has his strange encounter with the perhaps imaginary assassin there the following February. 56531 mentions Maddox’s embankment on September 25th, but they do not see it until October 5th (October 6th according to 56531).

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Hobhouse, in 56531, gives more details about their difficult passage across Traeth-Bach:

... we crossed over a high point of land to the great bay of Traeth-Bach, whose extensive sands we endeavoured, and for some time in vain, to cross. The Boor who had come with us from Beddgelert to carry the valise, not knowing the route, led us astray; we paddled over one fresh stream, I on Taffy's back and Baillie shoe-, stocking- and breechless, but soon arrived at a second river, which, after due experiment, made by the guide in person, it was judged expedient not to attempt. Some time was spent in debate on the sands, until our Welshman procured the ferry-boat, in which we crossed the Cymfael, and Baillie readjusted his dress under the immediate inspection of two damsels, and really very much confused by their presence.

That night, at "the miserable town of Barmouth" (56531), they put up at the Corsy gedol Arms, having been assured by a local that it is the best in town. The local turns out to be its landlord. Hobhouse calculates with pride that they've now walked 346 miles.

On **October 6th** they walk to Dolgelley ("dirty town") and lodge at the "decent" Ship Tavern. **October 7th** sees them walking twelve miles through the valley of Dolgelley to Malwyd ("Cader Idris on left" – 56530: "on our right" – 56531). In Malwyd churchyard they find this inscription:

Unto my wife this praise is due
She proved at least this maxim true
The richest portion with a wife
Is prudence and a virtuous life.

On **October 8th** they "mounted a coach but got down again", determined to walk some more. They go to Llanfair, and "have a sordid lodging at the Cross Foxes" (55631) for five and fourpence. Here 56531 further reveals that they have "a good dinner of roast beef and gooseberry cream".

From **October 9th** onwards the dates in 56531 are correct. On that date (taking no breakfast!) they walk to Montgomery, and breakfast there. Thence they go to Bishop's Castle, then to Ludlow, where they put up at the Angel.

There is a general election, and "Lord and Mr Clive's election ball" is on.

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On **October 10th** they view Ludlow Castle, walk on to Tenbury, and lodge at a “most pretty” inn kept by a man called Tith, “whose monosyllabic name made a greater impression on us than his sign, which we have forgotten” (56531).

With only £2 19s left, they walk the twenty-four miles to Worcester on **October 11th**. 56530 has, “A little way beyond Hundred House were stopped by a soldier and asked for our passports – election at Worcester. Unicorn Inn. ‘Deerhurst and Independence for ever!’”

In 56531, Hobhouse elaborates dramatically:

At the Hundred House Inn we stopped a short time and then proceeded on our route, which we had not followed for more than three-quarters of a mile when we were overtaken by a soldier of the 49th, who, with expressions of civility and of great regret at being put upon so unpleasant a duty, requested us to return and show our passes to a gentleman at the Hundred House, who had sent him upon this mission after us. A stout refusal being immediately returned to this requisition, our soldier asked us if we had not come from Bishop’s Castle, and seeming to think that our answer in the affirmative was a full proof of the justice of his employer’s suspicions, whatever they were, relative to our real character, began to be somewhat more urgent, and backed his further demand by a declaration of the obligation he was under to perform the commission entrusted to him by the Gentleman of the Inn, to whom, however, he was owing to our different view of the subject, obliged to carry back, not our bodies, but an assurance “that he might be damned, and that if he touched our valise, or impeded its progress by the hands of our Tenbury follower, it would be at his peril”. The redcoat giving up his bootless errand and dropping off behind to a pothouse, apparently to detail and lament his unavailing efforts for the service of his King and Country, we trudged on, brandishing our bludgeons, and vowing resistance even unto death against any but a justice of the peace.

At Worcester they put up at the Unicorn, “not without some difficulty”.

October 12th brings them to Borton-on-the-Hill, where they sleep at a pothouse.

By now Hobhouse has only a shilling in his pocket. They leave Borton on **October 13th** and arrive at Chipping Norton, where a letter, presumably from his

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father, awaits him with another ten pounds. They walk the nineteen miles to Oxford, and put up at the Ship, where they'd started on September 12th.

On **October 14th** it rains hard. They "hear Lockhart speak", and eat Stubble Goose.

It is the tall, striding Baillie, not the diminutive Hobhouse, who finally collapses. In 56531 for **October 15th** Baillie writes, "Walked or rather waded through the mud to High Wycombe, twenty-four miles, beyond which I was unable to walk. Hobhouse was kind enough to sympathise with my weakness in a pothouse, and we slept at Beaconsfield". In 56530 his friend writes, "There Baillie knocked up, and we took a chaise to Beaconsfield, where we slept." On **October 16th** they take a post-chaise to London,

... and thus terminated our tour, the account of which I have this day (October 25th) extracted from a journal kept by Baillie and me. Went to lodgings.

56531 ends here.

On **October 17th** Hobhouse walks to Whitton, where he

... hear[s] from Pater that the thing he has in view is to come certainly
in the course of next week -----

The row of dashes signify "his baronetcy."

Hobhouse stays at Whitton on **October 18th**; goes to London in a phaeton on **October 19th** and dines with Baillie at the Grecian. Also on the 19th he writes to Byron (BB 103) in which he makes the only reference he ever makes about the French invading Russia. He stays in London from **October 20th** to **25th**, when he returns to Whitton by foot. On **October 21st** he begins *Journey* again, and on **October 22nd** his new hat is stolen. He hires the services of a sex worker for what seems to be 8s 4d (a strange sum) on **October 23rd**. He invests in another for the meaner sum of five shillings on **November 3rd**, between which date and the previous one he has commuted almost daily between Manchester Buildings and Hounslow, dining regularly with Baillie, though on **November 2nd** Seton joins them.

He has not mentioned Byron since he tried to bid for Newstead at Garroway's on August 14th. The lack of Byron's influence is perhaps palpable in the pedantic

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entry for **November 4th**, which says volumes about Hobhouse's attitude to the classics and to literature in general:

This morning my father came in as I was going to shave and showed me a letter from Henry Hobhouse directed to him as "Baronet," and this moment he, my father, tells me that he is gazetted as such.

[I] forgot to mention in Thursday's journal [*Thursday October 29th has "royal society" added later*] that the Rev. Mr Weston told me that the *Cobbler of Messina* is mentioned in vol. I page 57 of the *Oxford Magazine*, and that Porson, who mentioned this cobbler to a string of us in Bankes's rooms at college and pretended to be angry at our not knowing who he was, used to propound the same question to others, and sent this Mr Weston to look for it, first in Athænæus and afterwards in Pausanias. Home the surgeon mentioned that Porson, dining with him and Beloe, he (Home) asked Porson for a motto to a book on caustics, and that out of Virgil. "There is but one," said Porson, "in Virgil that will answer your purpose, and here it is: *omne per ignem / Excoquitur vitium* – it is in the *Georgics*." Beloe took down his Virgil and found there was not another. It was Porson who gave the Surgeons the motto, "Collegium Chirurgorum."

You don't, according to this approach, enjoy Virgil, or learn from him: you use your total recall of him to show superiority. For Hobhouse, as for Porson, learning means power. (To prove my point, Porson's reference is to Strabo (1.2.15) who is quoting Eratosthenes: "You will find the scene of the wanderings of Odysseus when you find the cobbler who sewed up the bag of the winds.")

That night, Hobhouse dines with Baillie at the Grecian. He recalls that on **November 3rd** his father had given him forty pounds, £2 2d of which he had spent on his lodging, and 16s 6d on a prostitute.

From **November 5th** to **9th** he commutes between his lodgings and his home, dining when in London with Baillie. On the 9th he writes to brother Benjamin in Spain. On **November 10th** he gives us a peep into a prelapsarian America:

Dined at Reilly's. Saw Graves, who mentioned several curious things about the Falls of Niagra, and said that when Jefferson was Vice-President of the United States and Speaker of the Senate, he used to ride into Washington and hitch up his horse by the bridle at the Congress House door whilst he went inside.

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In Sweden, where Graves has been, if you don't take an English carriage with you, you must travel in a cart. You need not take a carriage to America.

Hobhouse never travels to America; but he goes to Sweden next year.

On **November 11th** he dines with Baillie at the Grecian for 5s 6d. On **November 12th** he dines at the Royal Society Club, "an unpleasant day on account of my sitting at the top." Hobhouse is only relaxed as a spectral guest: sitting at the top, you must be a member of the group. Conversation runs from wine-growing in the middle ages, via Holinshed, to Sir Joseph Banks, who claims never ("with only one short exception") to have been unhappy in his life. He had "enjoyed his fortune, coming into it at twenty." On **November 13th** Hobhouse works at *Journey* all day. He has been doing the section on Troy for three weeks, but "can make little of it." He dines at Reilly's.

The entry for **November 14th** has several uncharacteristically excellent anecdotes, and is worth reading in full:

Wrote Journal from November 5th. On Thursday night at Reilly's, a drunken fellow, one Fonblanque, a King's Counsel, addressed himself to my father and me with several impertinencies. I find him to have gone half-distracted with poverty [*John de Grenier Fonblanque was a friend of the Prince of Wales. He was the father of the journalist Albany Fonblanque*]. He met Dr Johnson once in a post-coach going to Oxford. Johnson was reading a little Æschylus, great part of the way. Johnson complained that a gentleman who had sat opposite him and had left the coach, had not spoken to him, which, said he, it was his place to do. "Perhaps," said Fonblanque (then a boy), "he was more modest than I, and after seeing that you did not answer me freely, was abashed." – "Sir," said Johnson, "I stand corrected."

A fellow who got into the coach near Oxford was swearing all the way purposely to annoy Johnson, and said as he entered, "Let's quiz the Doctor."

Fonblanque, at the inn where they dined, went out to the larder in order to get something nice for Johnson, which he determined to pay himself. He divided the bill after dinner on this plan, but Johnson, casting his eye over it, said, "I am sorry to see so accomplished a young man deficient in that which is of the utmost importance, and that daily – arithmetical calculation." Fonblanque reasoned with him. "It is true," said Johnson, "I drunk no wine, but that is the

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very reason I ought to pay for it." At last it was agreed that, instead of dividing, they should toss up for the payment of sixpence. Fonblanque tossed up – Johnson called tails – it came up heads. "Now," said Fonblanque, "I will have it recorded that I won threepence of Dr Johnson." The Doctor was highly pleased at this youthful frolic of his, and said he had not tossed up for sixty years before.

Went down to Whitton. Met at dinner Roger Wilbraham, who though at first forbidding, was very entertaining at dinner. He knew Gibbon very well. The historian said one day in a large party, "Sir F. Molyneux told me the other day there were many faulty points in Cicero. I, who thought that Molyneux would hardly find out what Middleton was unable to discover, stared a good deal and asked a question or two, when judge of my surprise, Madam, at finding that Cicero was a *racehorse*."

Another time he was talking blasphemy at Boodles, [and] a man from the other end of the table said, to abash him, "But pray, Mr Gibbon, what do you think the greatest miracle in the Bible?" – "When Balaam's ass spoke, sir."

A lady once asked him if he ever hunted. "Indeed, Madam, not I: I never killed anything bigger than a wasp in my life."

Mr Wilbraham told a thing or two of Dutens. The Prince and Lady Hartford were disputing on some theological point. The Prince asked Dutens to decide, who said, "I must confess her Ladyship is right." – "Good God," said His Royal Highness, "that woman is right in everything!"

Dutens would not own he was a Frenchman, and said to someone, "Because I am born in stable, am I therefore a horse?" – "No," answered his friend, "you may be either an ox or an ass."

He was so absent that one day at Devonshire House he told the present Mrs George Lamb, in presence of everybody, "Mlle. Julie – do you hear your mother?" (Lady Elizabeth Forster) – "Go to your Mama, Mlle. Julie ..."

Hobhouse is at Whitton on **November 15th**. On **November 16th** he hears a practical call on his political commitment:

Came to London. Called on Mr Lambert, and saw his Wiltshire pottery, from the barrows. Received a visit from Mr Gilly, asking me to go down to Cambridge to vote for the Catholics, against the petition from the University.

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Took a place immediately at the White Horse, Fetter Lane, by the telegraph. Dined at Reilly's – wrote a letter to Lord Tavistock asking him to come down to vote. Put a paragraph in the paper, Morning Chronicle.

As a Cambridge M.A., Hobhouse can record his vote in favour of Catholic Emancipation – the subject Byron spoke on in the Lords on April 21st.

The fare to Cambridge on **November 17th** is fifteen shillings, plus a shilling tip. He puts up at Perry's, and sups in King's College with "Hart, now Senior Proctor." The vote is on **November 18th**. Despite the efforts of Hobhouse and others, the University's petition against the enfranchisement of the Catholics is carried. Black Hoods: 39 against, 51 for; White Hoods: 36 against, 54 for. The Bishop of Bristol (formerly Master of Trinity, and an admirer of Hobhouse: see June 1811) and Edward Daniel Clarke ("the Traveller") are the only men of note on the side of the Catholics.

That night Hobhouse dines with Scrope Davies in Davies's rooms, with Kinnaird and Hodgson. On **November 19th** he, Davies, and Kinnaird, come up to London in a hired chaise, which costs them six pounds! That night he dines with Kinnaird, but calls on Baillie too. On the evening of **November 20th** he dines with Roger Wilbraham at Twickenham. From **November 21st** to **23rd** he is at Whitton, and on **November 24th** he comes to London, where he is still "writing hard." On **November 25th** he dines at Reilly's, and on **26th** at the Grecian with Baillie. Reilly's sees him dine on **November 27th**, when he sees "half play," but does not say which one. Does he notice? we wonder. He does say which play he sees on **November 28th**: it is *Alexander the Great*, with young Master Betty, which Hobhouse pronounces "intolerable." Byron would agree: see BLJ II 192 and 193, where he describes Betty as looking like a hippopotamus.

At about this time Hobhouse receives a letter from Byron (BLJ II 251-2) saying that his liaison with Caroline is definitively off; wishing that Hobhouse might get into parliament; commenting on *Rejected* (and *Dejected*) *Addresses*; and referring to the baronetcy of Hobhouse Sr. Byron later writes to Lady Melbourne (BLJ II 258) confiding that he and Hobhouse have discussed "Levanting" again. Hobhouse does not mention the plan, and nothing comes of it.

Hobhouse, Baillie, Seton, and Kinnaird are "up all night fooling" at Kinnaird's on **November 29th**. On **November 30th**,

Saw the Prince Regent passing from opening the Parliament. No-one clapped or took off hats. The Prince Caroline of Wales was hurrah'd. Dined at Grecian, 5s 6d.

Journey must be making progress, for Hobhouse works all day at it on **December 1st**, before dining at Reilly's. On **December 2nd** he dines with Kinnaird, and meets Henry Brougham (not referred to since February 2nd 1811) and Sir Francis Burdett. With them he is "up all night," which is probably more than he can say about his meeting with the lady to whom he pays nine shillings on the same

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date. Perhaps in a consequent depression, he does nothing on **December 3rd**, and forgets what he did on **December 4th**. He is at Whitton on **December 5th** and **6th**, and comes back to London on **December 7th**.

At last, on **December 8th**, he meets Byron again (see BLJ II 254 for confirmation). He calls on him at Batt's Hotel, Dover Street (he promises to do so in an undated letter – BB 106), and together they go to a play and sup at the St Albans. They sup again there – with Baillie – on **December 9th**. A new line of business starts for Hobhouse on **December 10th**, when he records himself “engaged to write an epilogue for a tragedy of Dallas.” He doesn't name Dallas's tragedy, and we may doubt of its ever being put on; but occasional theatre writing becomes for Hobhouse a kind of hobby, which climaxes with his prologue to Maturin's *Bertram* in 1816. It was probably Byron who recommended him to Dallas – to avoid writing the epilogue himself.

Also on December 10th Hobhouse writes, “took leave of Byron.”

Sir Benjamin – as he now is – gives his son twenty pounds at Whitton on **December 11th**. Without this paternal generosity, Hobhouse would be broke, and obliged either to return to the militia or to start a career; for the first he has no appetite, for the second, no qualification. The writing of *Journey* – as he must think, his one way to salvation and fame, now that he has given up on poetry other than prologues and epilogues – must involve a considerable effort of will. He is hard at work on the book at Whitton on **December 12th** and **13th**.

Life takes another new turn for him on **December 14th**, when he has a real taste of things-to-come:

Returned to London – dined with the electors of Westminster, being taken by Sir Francis Burdett at the Crown and Anchor – heard some poor speaking.

Little does he imagine that Westminster, and, indeed, the Crown and Anchor, will see some of the most triumphant moments of his life. The suspicion may lie behind an aspiration voiced on **December 15th**:

Dined at the Grecian with Baillie; at night, with Bickersteth, Senior Wrangler, and Baillie, formed a plan for a paper!

(The exclamation mark is conjectural). On **December 16th** he dines at the Grecian; on **December 17th**, at Reilly's. On the latter date he catches a cold and doses himself. On **December 18th** he is “correcting” a “map” for *Journey*. On **December 19th** he is “lodging hunting” – though why he is dissatisfied with Manchester Buildings, or they with him, is not made clear. The hunt continues into **December 20th**, when he also goes to Baillie's, and finds “him and Kinnaird playing chess – like a fool, interposed, and blundered.” On **December 21st** he dines at Reilly's, and “passed all night with Bickersteth and Kinnaird, arranging the purpose of Tuesday last” – that is, the plan for a newspaper.

Preparations for Christmas start on **December 22nd**. His friends Baillie, Eden, Shepperd, Kinnaird, and Vaux, are all to stay at Whitton – the first three having, as it

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seems, no families to go to. There is a ball that night, at which Hobhouse becomes “acquainted with Francis Horner, late M.P., a man of most multifarious and correct information, with the true modesty of manner.” (Horner was one of the founders of the *Edinburgh Review*). Kinnaird and Vaux leave on **December 24th**; Baillie and Eden after Christmas on **December 27th**, only to return on **December 29th**.

Hobhouse stays with his enormous family at Whitton Park until **January 5th 1813**. He gives no details of the overwhelmingly female event, which must have been dominated, nay, organised, by his thirteen step-sisters, but reports “all kinds of masking and buffoonery” on New Year’s Eve, and “laughing talking and carousing” all the way through, “only disturbed by Lady M. S., a bold, bad woman on a visit here.”

We never learn who Lady M.S. is.