Among Lord Byron's many charms and talents is the offhand eloquence that makes him one of the greatest letter-writers of all time and certainly the liveliest correspondent a nineteenth-century Englishman or woman could wish for. What Byron calls mobility, that emotional and intellectual versatility which is the principal genius and chief limitation of his friendship, is the distinctive quality of his letters. Whereas most of his peers in the epistolary empyrean—Lord Chesterfield, for instance, or Madame de Sévigné—were at their best writing to one or two particular correspondents, Byron played to a wide audience. His catholic tastes and mutable temperament decreed that few people stood utterly outside the circle of his sympathy; but because of his complex mind and character, no one resided entirely within it. Needing and welcoming variety, he wrote comfortably and well to all sorts—beaux and bankers, liberators and literati, publishers and paramours. He even (and especially) was at ease writing to the urbane and tolerant lady whose son he cuckolded and whose heiress niece he married. Byron's very richest letters are those directed to the people who could savor his broad mind and miscellaneous interests, who thought, felt, read, and went out in society. One such kindred spirit was John Cam Hobhouse, the ever-loyal companion, partisan, critic, and expeditor whose correspondence with Byron from 1808 until 1824 is the longest sustained and one of the most interesting of the poet's letter-borne conversations.

Hobhouse (1786–1869), son of a Whig M.P. later made a baronet and himself a Radical politician who became, as Baron Broughton de Gyfford, an eminent Victorian, met Byron at Trinity College Cambridge, where common interests in satirical verse and Whig politics brought the two young men together. He accompanied Byron on his famous journey to Greece, Albania, and Asia Minor (1809–11), saw him often during the years of fame when Byron was the literary lion of the West End, stood by him as groomsman at his ill-fated marriage to Anne Isabella Milbanke and as ally during the painful and scandalous
breakup of the marriage, and helped him off to exile on the Con-
tinent. Hobhouse kept in close touch with the expatriate. He spent
the latter part of the summer of 1816 with Byron at Geneva and
accompanied him south to Italy, where the poet collected impressions
for the fourth canto of Childe Harold while Hobhouse compiled
historical notes for the canto. Returning home in January 1818,
Hobhouse continued to promote Byron's literary and personal in-
terests in England. He relayed messages, read galleys, wrangled with
lawyers, negotiated with publishers, and gauged the public pulse for
his absent friend. Hobhouse visited Byron for the last time at Pisa in
September 1822. Back in England, he busied himself with various
liberal causes, among them the campaigns for Spanish and Greek
independence. As a member of the London Greek Committee, he
encouraged Byron to return to the East, where the poet's charisma and
clear-eyed realism permitted him to aid the revolution almost as
effectively as his dying for the cause would ultimately do.

Byron described Hobhouse to Thomas Medwin as "my best and
dearest friend" (though at other times and to other people he valued
the relation less highly); and while the poet lived, he was the person
whom Hobhouse loved most dearly. But the course of their friendship
was seldom smooth. The ever variable Byron enjoyed chaffing Hob-
house, who in his turn tended to speak his mind with a sincerity that
the much-flattered poet respected but found hard to like. Envy and
jealousy must have clouded the waters as well. When they became
friends at Cambridge, the two young men were pure potential; after
the acclaim of Childe Harold, it must have been irksome as well as
gratifying for Hobhouse, toiling industriously and intelligently to
cultivate the garden of his mind, to watch his friend reap with such
seeming nonchalance the fruits of genius and accept so casually the
laurels. If Byron's literary productions were more widely appreciated,
so were his social endowments. A fervent friend and in his youth a
man more or less at loose ends, Hobhouse sometimes resented Byron's
other attachments. He could not bring himself to rejoice in what
others—most notably Annabella, Shelley, and Thomas Moore—
could offer Byron. The separate lives that the Byron-Hobhouse letters
chronicle were likewise often complicated by misunderstandings. For
instance, when Hobhouse stood as a Radical candidate for Parliament
in the elections of 1819 and 1820, Byron, at long distance, mis-
interpreted his political alliance and twitted Hobhouse—who after brief imprisonment for Reform agitation won a parliamentary seat in the election of March 1820—as a mobocrat. Similarly, Hobhouse offended the absent Byron by his candid appraisals of Don Juan and Cain.

The critical eye welcomes contrasts, of course, and reducing the friendship of Byron and Hobhouse to a simple conjunction of opposites—whether poet and pedant, libertine and moralist, Hamlet and Polonius, or damned archangel and mediocre mortal—is understandable but nonetheless erroneous. For all their differences and disagreements, Byron and Hobhouse were drawn together and held together by affinities, not polarities. However antithetical each one of them might have felt the other to be at various times, an outsider who endeavors to see things as they really were is struck by resemblances: even the significant differences tend to be matters of degree, not kind. As heir to an ill-preserved barony and eldest son of a rich and influential but heterodox Wiltshire gentleman, the two friends began life in privileged if not preeminent social circumstances. Byron's and Hobhouse's young minds, tempered and polished (or left unburnished, depending on how one views the late-eighteenth-century curriculum) at Harrow and Westminster respectively and then at Cambridge, and first pitted against the world in their joint pilgrimage to the East, were of much the same steel. A stream of shared favorite tags and allusions drawn from the classics, the Bible, Shakespeare, the eighteenth-century poets and dramatists, and above all The Vicar of Wakefield flows through their letters to one another. From Cambridge days on, they inclined toward liberal politics and the cult of Napoleon. Though they often disagreed over particular issues or positions, the long view shows that both could be politically shrewd, both naïve. Byron, viewing Hobhouse's Westminster activities from Italy, could for all his theoretical devotion to Reform display prejudice against Reformers. On the other hand, when Hobhouse at home in England could wax idealistic about the Greek cause, Byron could see that the modern Greeks needed liberation not merely from the Turks but from their own baseness, engendered by centuries of enslavement, and seeing this still could fight with and for them. In the province of love, Byron's and Hobhouse's thoughts and deeds were more similar than might be imagined. Conquering hero though he may have been in
many a salon and many a boudoir, Byron retained more than a dram of his Scottish Calvinism; in his own eyes at least, the pale, slender *homme fatal* never completely supplanted the plump, lame, gauche boy he once had been. The young Hobhouse could be prim and awkward, prevented by deficiencies of gallantry or income from winning Lady Jane Harley or Susannah Burdett. Yet his amusement at the romantic adventures of regency society is evident in his letters; and in his unpublished diaries, we find evidence showing that he, like Byron, could give free rein to dalliance. Although he warned Byron to beware of nymphs, Hobhouse himself was beguiled by the siren charms of the ladies of the town, as his journal entries reveal; indeed, "Corinnae Concubitus," his unpublished metrical account of the favors won from his own Maid of Athens in 1809, reads with its arch biblical echoes very much like a Byronic *jeu d'esprit*. Even the contrast of dispositions, the stereotype of the flippant lord and his sober confidant, is essentially a false one. The tone of Byron and Hobhouse's friendship was set during their Cambridge days when, like their colleagues Scrope Davies, C. S. Matthews, and William Bankes, they became proficient in the roles of cynic, skeptic, wit, and gadfly. Once established, the emotional boundaries of their relations were seldom transgressed. Both could lapse from habitual levity—Hobhouse into mawkishness, martyrdom, or pomposity, Byron into morbid introspection or romantic posturing; but the expression of such moods was the exception rather than the rule in a friendship that both parties tended to keep on the "man of the world" level.

In essence, Hobhouse's letters, like his tastes and attitudes, are much like Byron's. Though less brilliant than his titled correspondent's, Hobhouse's missives are entertaining and sensible, packed with concrete information and commentary. Like Byron, Hobhouse is an apt and chronic quoter (and intentional misquoter) in English standard and dialectal, Latin, Greek, Italian, and French. An amused and amusing observer of the social biped called man, Hobhouse fills his letters with society gossip, literary intelligence, political analysis, and on more than one occasion firsthand description of history in the making. Above all, Hobhouse's letters engage posterity as they must have done Byron by frankly mirroring their writer's character and preoccupations. Hobhouse's letters to Byron are charming, boorish, bawdy, didactic, tiresome, indignant, generous, acute, outrageous,
and affectionate. They present the qualities Byron loved, and the ones he endured, in his friend.

II

Although Hobhouse's letters have been quoted, cited, and extracted at various times, most have not previously been published in full. The manuscripts of the letters here collected now repose in the archives of John Murray Publishers Ltd., at 50 Albemarle Street, London. I have used microfilms of the letters in preparing a text that I subsequently checked against the originals at John Murray. Letters for which proofs exist were also compared with the partial set of galleys for an edition of the correspondence planned but not completed by Hobhouse's daughter, Lady Dorchester. These galleys, shelf-marked C.131.k.2, are in the collection of the British Library's Department of Printed Books.

Evidence from Hobhouse's and Byron's surviving letters, Hobhouse's published extracts from his journals (Recollections of a Long Life), and his unpublished diaries and correspondence indicates that the John Murray archives contain approximately eighty percent of the letters Hobhouse actually wrote to Byron; I have not succeeded in locating additional letters. Few letters seem to be missing from the sequence written prior to Byron's departure from England in April 1816. After Hobhouse, having visited Byron at Diodati and traveled with him to Venice, embarked on his own Italian tour, a gap in the correspondence appears. Between August 1816, when Hobhouse and Scrope Davies were progressing toward Byron's headquarters on Lake Geneva, and June 1818, by which time Hobhouse had returned to England, none of his letters to Byron at Venice and La Mira seem to have survived, though Byron's existing letters of that period indicate the receipt of at least nine. A number of letters written between 1819 and Byron's death are likewise missing. In this last period, perhaps the most regrettable absence is that of Hobhouse's "strong criticism" of Cain, written on 6 November 1821 and received by Byron seventeen days later. Byron's mild reply survives, but the fact that his complaint against Hobhouse to Douglas Kinnaird (a letter both Hobhouse and Byron mention) is also missing raises the possibility that Hobhouse or someone else may have destroyed the less temperate missive. As his role in the burning of Byron's memoir tends to suggest, Hobhouse was
no great believer in preserving for posterity over-candid documents that he may have felt reflected badly on his friend—or himself. Lady Dorchester, whose edition of extracts from her father's journals presents Hobhouse in his mostly stately postures, would also have been capable of culling the Cain criticism.

The first of Hobhouse's extant letters, written in 1808, are full for the most part of the ironical banter that Cambridge friends might be expected to exchange. Even this early, though, Hobhouse's solicitous concern for Byron's welfare peeps out from the facetious inquiries about Byron's London diversions: gambling, boxing, his "Misses two."

By the next phase of the correspondence (July 1810–August 1811), many months of shared travels under the Eastern sun have ripened the casual friendship into a deep and lasting bond. Hobhouse, having parted from Byron in Greece and turned homeward, writes from Malta with news of their acquaintances there, literary intelligence, a word portrait of Lucien Bonaparte (then fleeing his brother's wrath), and sentimental regrets at parting: "I kept the half of your little nosegay till it withered entirely and even then I could not bear to throw it away." He writes again from Spain with news of the Cortes; from Bath, where, on arriving in England, he has the good fortune to see Robert Coates, that incomparable ass of an amateur actor, play Romeo; and from Dover, whence Sir Benjamin Hobhouse, ill pleased with his expensive and apparently aimless son, has sent him "prancing into the militia." In all these letters, Hobhouse's eagerness for a reunion with his friend equals his delight in reporting the news in the witty, worldly style both he and Byron prefer.

With the coming of August 1811, a darker tone is added to the emotional spectrum of the correspondence. Hobhouse, on the point of embarking with his regiment for Ireland, shares with Byron the first of many sorrows: the death of Mrs. Byron only days before she would have seen her wandering son again is followed directly by the drowning of their wry and brilliant comrade C. S. Matthews, who perished in the waterweeds of the Cam. Hobhouse's propensity for moping and moralizing is evident in the letters written during the months following the tragic accident. So are his great gift for friendship—shaken by the loss of Matthews he turns for mutual consolation to his fellow survivor and sufferer Byron—and his ambition. Even as Byron was about to bring forth Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Hobhouse was hard at
work on his own travel book *A Journey through Albania*. Deprecating his “scribbling labors,” he writes from Ireland: “What I do is done under every disadvantage, without the assistance of books or of men—an occasional letter from you is all I have to cheer me through many a dreary page. In the mornings I write; I go to dinner, meet a set of unelastic dogs, go home, drink tea, write again, ‘sleepless myself, that all the world may sleep.’” As eager for his book’s success as he is fearful of its failure, Hobhouse besieges Byron and his Greek servant Demetrius with questions on Balkan geography, politics, religion, language, and spellings. Mixed with anxiety for his literary progeny is Hobhouse’s competitive desire to gain some ground on his friend, a goal shortly to become impossible. With the publication of *Childe Harold*, Byron was to “wake up famous”; and while he lived, his glamour would obscure Hobhouse’s more modest, but real, achievements.

Hobhouse returned from his isle of exile in February 1812, just in time to applaud and envy the sunburst of Byron’s success and to witness his first speeches at the House of Lords, where he joined the ranks of the opposition, and his entry at those other lordly houses—Holland, Devonshire, Mortimer, and the like—where he mingled with his Whig associates and their ladies. During this phase of their correspondence, from spring 1812 through autumn 1814, Hobhouse’s letters to Byron contain all the ingredients of a “silver fork” novel. Contemporary sayings and doings jostle with apt quotations from his reading. There are serious and jocular remarks on Byron’s Eastern tales and their public reception, at home and abroad. Of *Lara*, for instance, he writes: “... All are scandalised at the possibility that such a fine fellow as Conrad could be thought to terminate in such a devil’s tail as your present hero. Sic itur. I do believe that the women are angry, that a man with a black eye and curly hair who is faithful to one of their sex whom he keeps in a tower until he finds another whom he likes better than she should be supposed capable of any one crime under heaven.” There is love. Hobhouse congratulates Byron on his escape from Lady Caroline, “one who certainly was not the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world,” and pays rather more deference to the poet’s next amour, the fascinating if autumnal Lady Oxford, who played Armida to Byron’s Rinaldo and whose eldest daughter, clever, lovely, but *un peu libre*, made the bachelor Hob-
Hobhouse sincerely regret that he had not £5,000 a year. There is travel: narratives from the "rag covered plains of Saxony," which Hobhouse traversed on an itinerary that took him over the battlefields of continental Europe between June 1813 and February 1814, and two months later bulletins from Paris. Curious at seeing the French capital for the first time and saddened by the fall of Napoleon, Hobhouse nonetheless labors to cultivate a philosopher's detachment and in his reportage shows a sharp eye for significant details: "Marbles & stuc­coes, temples and chambers, insides and outsides, ceilings & floors, domes and chair bottoms all bear the redoubtable N or did bear them, for I can assure you that the enemies of tyranny have made a very laudable progress in eradicating these signs of subjection—. . . . The workmen at their task were as seriously occupied and as perfectly indifferent as if they had been erasing on some tomb the prolix titles of a defunct in order to make way for the name of his wife." With autumn come plans for yet another tour, an "unsentimental journey" to Italy proposed by Byron, but travels and mistresses give way as in novels: there is an engagement. Hobhouse, hearing that Byron is "to marry and to be given in marriage," sends cordial, somewhat ponderous congratulations to his friend and the worthy Miss Milbanke, agrees to accompany Byron north to the ceremony at year's end, and plays an affable, conscientious role in the nuptial business and pleasantry.

Hobhouse's instincts may have warned him that Byron's marriage was not one made in heaven—"Never was lover less in haste," he wrote rather ominously of the journey to Seaham in his diary—but he did all he could to see that the worldly details of the alliance were properly arranged. Throughout the winter and spring of 1815, his frequent messages to Byron report his grappling with the muddled finances of Byron's estates, Newstead Abbey and Rochdale, and the increasing evidence that these properties were being mismanaged by the family solicitor, John Hanson, whose probity Hobhouse had begun to doubt. Hobhouse's meticulous examination of accounts, zealous searches for good legal help, and officious insistences that Byron dispatch "peremptory orders" to the shuffling Hanson clearly demonstrate his attachment—and heartily bored his friend, we may suspect. But by the end of March, events in France had Hobhouse again on his way across the Channel, and mundane business letters subside as one of the most dramatic phases of the correspondence opens.
Hobhouse’s account of the historic Hundred Days comes first from Dover, at that time a “dirty port de mer” swarming with French and English alike, then from Ostend, where he hears his first news from the Continent of the advance of Napoleon and also of the wanderings of another notorious exile, Caroline Princess of Wales. In Brussels, Hobhouse collects anecdotes of the Emigrés from his brother Captain Benjamin Hobhouse, soon to die at Quatre Bras. Against Wellington’s advice, he pushes on to Paris, where in the company of his friends Lord and Lady Kinnaird he witnesses the triumphant return of Napoleon, as he had observed the emperor’s unseemly departure a year before. Later revised and published as The substance of some Letters written by an Englishman resident in Paris during the last Reign of the Emperor Napoleon, Hobhouse’s bulletins join descriptions of Napoleon, his entourage, and the public ceremonies in which they took part with perceptive analysis of the political situation. Although Tory reviewers were to label Hobhouse’s thoughts on British policy and French response as downright seditious, his position is one that Byron and many of his fellow Whigs would applaud: the broad-minded objectivity of a friend of liberty. Early in the Hundred Days, Hobhouse recognizes, and convincingly argues to Byron, that the English government’s hostility to Napoleon, far from thwarting his advance, will impel the French to renew his despotic powers: “As long as there remained any hopes of England retaining her friendly demonstrations in favour of France, no one dared to oppose the cry of liberty, or to advance any other demand as a requisite preliminary, but since the majority of 273 in support of war or rather against peace, increasing alarm has suggested the necessity of confiding supreme power in the hands in which it has been, by the fortune & predominance of a great man, already placed.”

Deeply saddened by the widespread destruction and his own personal bereavement brought about by “the most wicked cause for which brave men have ever died,” Hobhouse returned to England in the summer of 1815. Back in London, he reentered the world of Whig society, where he saw a great deal of Byron during the winter of 1815–16. Indeed, for some months Hobhouse’s principal occupation was the poet’s affairs, as Byroniana, his memoir of the Byron marriage and separation, reveals. There are no surviving letters from this period, however, and when Hobhouse next writes to Byron, in the spring and summer of 1816, it is in a new role, the one that will
dominate the duration of their friendship and correspondence. As the expatriate's man in London, Hobhouse executes commissions, relays literary intelligence, and passes on the news of the day, particularly when it relates to Byron, about whom there was, thanks to Caroline Lamb's novel Glenarvon and the tales brought back from Switzerland by English tourists, a good deal of sensational and inaccurate talk.

"... For God's sake," writes Hobhouse on the verge of joining Byron at the Villa Diodati, "do not think of cooling yourself in the Genfer See of which report says there is considerable danger during the course of your Argonautics upon the lake—Nothing of that or any other curious kind is to be done until we come up with you to see fair play and a proper record thereof—for be assured that whatever you do now comes so distorted through the prism of prattling ignorance & the fogs of the Jura that it will require some efforts of credible eye witnesses to put it into the straight line of truth & reason."

On setting out for Switzerland in the company of Scrope Davies, Hobhouse embarked upon his longest period of residence abroad. Having enjoyed the lake, the mountains, and Madame de Staël's salon at Coppet until October, Byron and Hobhouse went to Milan and then to Venice, where the "Italian de Staël," Madame Albrizzi, welcomed them to her conversazione. With the New Year, Hobhouse continued his journey south. The unflagging sightseer thoroughly explored Rome (where Byron joined him), Naples, and their environs before returning through Tuscany and Piedmont to Venice at the end of July. There he remained with Byron until 8 January. The fruits of this period in Byron and Hobhouse's friendship are the fourth canto of Childe Harold, dedicated to Hobhouse, and Historical Illustrations of the Fourth Canto of Childe Harold, originally planned to be notes appended to the poem but inflated by Hobhouse's industry and scholarship to a bulky independent volume.

When Hobhouse's correspondence resumes, in the summer of 1818, his life and letters have taken a turn toward politics. Hobhouse had realized that he would be no Byron—"plain prose is to be my fate," he had put it—and with the completion of the Historical Illustrations and the announcement of a general election, his considerable energies found vent in the tumult of Radical politics in Westminster, one of the few places where a young man without the influence or money to secure a pocket borough stood a fair chance of getting into Parliament.
At first Hobhouse helped the campaign of his friend Douglas Kinnaird. When Kinnaird withdrew, Hobhouse worked for the Radical baronet Sir Francis Burdett. Hobhouse’s letters of this period to Byron give the twentieth-century reader a vivid picture of the raree-show that was a pre-Reform election. For instance, speaking of the Tory candidate for Westminster, Hobhouse reports, “Captain [Sir Murray] Maxwell’s face is daily covered with saliva from the patriot mob—Scrope says it reminds him of Spit-Head!!”

Hobhouse’s political activities, engrossing though they may have been, did not preclude his finding time for Byron’s concerns. He continued to act in the Hanson affair and, at the poet’s request, canvassed opinions of Don Juan’s first canto. Hobhouse’s long and important letter of 5 January 1819, which presents the collective verdict arrived at by Hobhouse, Davies, Kinnaird, and John Hookham Frere, is the first critique of Byron’s satirical masterpiece and a remarkably accurate prediction of the outrage the poem was to provoke in some quarters. Granted, Hobhouse tells Byron, Don Juan has proved “that you were as superior in the burlesque as in the heroic to all competitors and even perhaps had found your real forte in this singular style.” But, he goes on to say, expediency demands that the poem should not be published, “particularly as the objectionable parts are in point of wit, humour & poetry the very best beyond all doubt of the whole poem.” The domestica facta, notably the thinly veiled portrait of Annabella in the priggish hypocrite Donna Inez, will repulse public opinion, which had begun to shift in Byron’s favor. The half-real rake of a hero will confirm, in the eyes of the credulous masses, the exaggerated rumors of Byron’s dissipations at Venice. The earthy and irreverent passages will harm Byron’s position as a liberal satirist, a certain strictness as to appearances being necessary for friends of liberty lest they be taken for advocates of license. The attacks on Southey and the “Lakers” will seem wanton and pointless—for why should the first poet of the age descend to do battle with antagonists so infinitely below him?

Having given his opinion honestly but tactfully, Hobhouse refuses to quarrel with the offended Byron and lends a hand in the business of publication, imprudent though he deems it: “The lord’s will be done—You are resolved that the pomes shall be printed; and printed the pomes shall be; aye, and published too.” But the rejection of his
literary advice does not keep him from offering counsel in love to Byron, who had recently commenced his affair with the Contessa Guiccioli: “But then, to be sure, if you are making love to a Romagnuola and she only nineteen you will have some jobs on your hands which will leave you few spare moments. Don’t you go after that terra firma lady: they are very vixens, in those parts especially, . . . take a fool’s advice for once and be content with your Naiads—your amphibious fry—you make a very pretty splashing with them in the Lagune and I recommend constancy to the neighbourhood.”

Meanwhile Hobhouse had offered himself as a Radical candidate for the Westminster seat made vacant by the suicide of Sir Samuel Romilly. By opposing Lady Melbourne’s younger son, George Lamb, in the election, he completed the alienation of most of his former Whig friends and allies begun earlier by his work for Burdett: “. . . We are at open warfare which is the only safe intercourse with such treacherous rascals as the modern Whigs,” he informs Byron. The form this “open warfare” took after Hobhouse lost the election to Lamb was an exchange of paper bullets with Lord Erskine. Although it spilled ink instead of blood, pamphleteering could be a dangerous and culpable business; and in December 1819, Hobhouse found that his wit or patriotism had brought him into a filthy puddle. Without benefit of a trial, Parliament had committed him to Newgate Prison for breach of privilege. His “jail eclogue” of 18 January 1820 describes the complicated affair to Byron, who from Italy had tended to deplore Hobhouse’s Radical activities, misconstruing them as an unsuitable association with such rabble-rousers as Cobbett and Orator Hunt. Hobhouse’s explanatory letter was not enough to stave off a metrical jab from the mischief-loving Byron, who enclosed “My boy Hobbie O,” a doggerel ballad to the political prisoner, in a letter to John Murray, whose sympathies were with the Tories. Hobhouse’s correspondence registers both his indignation and his ability to rise above it. Having gained his first knowledge of the “filthy ballad” from an inaccurate copy printed in the Morning Post, Hobhouse begins a fiery remonstrance to Byron: “Oh you shabby fellow—so you strike a man when he is down do you?” The letter closes more calmly: “I wish you would write oftener (in prose) to me—say once a week if you will, and do let me hint that this would be better than writing letters to be
hawked about all the public offices amongst fellows who would perspire with delight if they could have an apocalypse of you in Hell or on a Holborn stall.” Hobhouse’s magnanimity was, at least in part, due to the fact that public sympathy generated by his imprisonment had secured him a parliamentary seat in the election of March 1820. Indeed, an epigram of Byron’s devising represents more accurately than his ballad had done the politician’s progress in Westminster of those days:

Would you go to the House by the true gate—
Much faster than ever Whig Charlie went.
Let the Parliament send you to Newgate,
And Newgate will send you to Parliament.

There would be one more major quarrel in Byron and Hobhouse’s friendship, the misunderstanding over Cain, alluded to in Hobhouse’s angry letter of 3 January 1822, and one more reunion, at Pisa in September 1822. But Hobhouse’s letters to Byron during 1823 and 1824 combine the serenity of a long-standing and much-tested comradeship with the fervency of alliance in a common cause. Despite their differences over Westminster, Hobhouse and Byron were now united in support of the Greek struggle against the Ottoman Empire. Hobhouse, a founding member of the London Greek Committee, was delighted to hear Byron’s thought of traveling to Greece to aid the revolutionaries: “It will be a very grand & glorious exploit,” he writes, “and under care and discretion, will, I doubt not, be of the highest utility to the cause.” Enthusiastic and less intimately acquainted with the Greek character than was Byron, Hobhouse nonetheless avoided the blind idealism of some British Philhellenes. His last letters, relaying intelligence from the committee, show his awareness that, noble though the cause might be, the individuals involved were too seldom free from the venality that chronic oppression had fostered. He sends, for example, an amused account of a charlatan trying to profit from English generosity by “pretending his whole family have been massacred first & then sent him to negotiate a loan of a million of scudi, to bury them I suppose.” Hobhouse cherished the highest opinion of Byron’s motives and actions, though, and the valediction of his final letter is for posterity doubly touching because of its heartfelt sincerity and because the friend it would have so gratified
died without having read it: "All friends make many enquiries after you & hope you will take care of yourself in Greece & return here after the good fight has been foughten. I have not heard of your daughter lately, but hope hearing nothing is a good sign. Your monied matters, Kinnaird will tell you, are going on swimmingly. You will have, indeed, you have, a very handsome fortune—and if you have health, I do not see what earthly advantage you can wish for that you have not got. Your present endeavour is certainly the most glorious ever undertaken by man..."

Friendship with Byron was the chief event of Hobhouse’s youth, and when the poet’s life ended at marshy Missolonghi, a phase of Hobhouse’s existence ended also. The impact of the loss on Hobhouse—on all who knew Byron as something more than a phenomenon—is evident in the epilogue to their correspondence, Hobhouse’s valediction “To Lord Byron from His Friends”:

I.
What was the charm that bound us all?
What was the magic of thy spell?
What pleasing traits does time recall
To make and mourn our fond farewell?

II.
Was it that power of wondrous force
That all the nerves of thought could bare—
That traced the passions to their source
And showed vile man his image there?

III.
Was it the whirl of fashion’s pool
That drew us in and dragg’d us down
Companions of each airy fool
That swims the bubble of the town?

IV.
Not so—to us who know thy soul
In all the turns of fortune tried,
Still pointing towards the only pole,
Unvaried by distress or pride.

1. The manuscript of Hobhouse’s poem is housed in the John Murray archives. In preparing this text, I have corrected the grieving author’s slips of the pen.
V.
To us—who more have felt & seen
Than hate or admiration can—
Who long have stood within the screen
That veils the poet from the man

VI.
To us—whom not one feverish year
Of fondness clos'd, alas! in strife—
But all the scenes of youth endear
With hopes of friendship fixed for life

VII.
To us each feature nobly bold
Thy pencil drew—each speaking line,
Served but [to] show our hearts foretold
That fame which surely would be thine

VIII.
Served but to show thy generous breast
With each familiar feeling warm
Where kindness finds her genial rest
And confidence her mutual charm

IX.
That breast its glowing rays could pour
Beyond affection’s narrow round
And tones that charm’d our social hour
Enchant a nation with their sound

X.
Each noble or each tender thought
Was but a brilliant of that mine
Explored and prized whilst yet unwrought
And precious ere it learnt to shine

XI.
And hence though all who love the Muse
To thee their lingering looks shall bend
’Tis we lament—tis we that lose
The gay companion & the friend

XII.
We lose that voice of candid praise
That feeling sympathy of tone
And all the courteous winning ways
That made each heart at once thy own
III

Although it would be a mistake for anyone to reduce Hobhouse, so complex and influential a person in his own right, to a mere Byronic appendage, most readers will be principally interested in the recipient rather than the writer of these letters. Hence I have designed this edition in such a way that those who wish to do so can use it as a complement to the collected letters of Byron. But even though the Byron-Hobhouse letters are best read as a continuing long-distance dialogue, it still seems desirable to offer in this volume a coherent overview of the whole correspondence; so I have supplied footnotes directing readers of the Hobhouse letters to pertinent passages in Byron's correspondence and where necessary have quoted, paraphrased, or summarized crucial points from Byron's letters.

Byron's and Hobhouse's comments to one another range far beyond the personal sphere, though. To guide the twentieth-century reader through the various milieux vividly evoked in Hobhouse's accounts—colonial Malta, Whig society, Napoleonic Paris, electioneering Westminster—I have provided brief identifications of people and places, short explanations of situations and events, citations for literary allusions, and translations of foreign phrases. When these annotations are conjectural, I say so. A certain amount of dust settles with the passage of centuries, and my best efforts at excavation have failed to locate certain facts that need retrieving. For instance, some of Hobhouse's quotations have proved especially elusive: an omnivorous and retentive reader, he employs obscure tags as well as obviously quotable ones, misremembers, intentionally alters, parodies, and invents. Where a matter that most particularly seems to
need annotation has baffled me, I mention the fact and hope that learned readers will share their erudition.

In determining a format for the Hobhouse letters, I am indebted to the many editors, particularly Professor Marchand, from whose work I have learned. The principles employed in editing the Hobhouse letters appear below.

**Date.** For readers’ convenience I have positioned the date of each letter (along with day and place, when supplied) in the upper right-hand corner. A date derived from a postmark, internal evidence, Hobhouse’s journals, or Byron’s correspondence appears in brackets. When conjectural, such a supplied date is followed by a question mark.

**Salutation.** The salutation appears on a separate line. Hobhouse interchangeably employs the dash and the comma after his “Dear Byron”: when the punctuation is ambiguous, I have chosen the former, which is somewhat more habitual with Hobhouse.

**Paragraphing.** Hobhouse’s letters sometimes run on continuously. I let them do so. Similarly, when Hobhouse ends a paragraph and begins a new line without indenting, his spacing is preserved.

**Closing.** Following the fashion of his day, Hobhouse often spaces his complimentary close in a series of leisurely stairsteps down the end of the letter. I have consolidated such sprawling phrases on one or more continuous lines. When this change in spacing has required changes in punctuation, I have made additions or deletions without noting them.

**Signature.** Hobhouse’s signature, whether name or initials, appears in italics. Where no signature exists, I neither supply one nor comment on the absence.

**Postscripts.** Hobhouse’s postscripts were added where space best permitted—at the ends of letters, in margins, on outside covers. I have placed all appended comments, whatever their original positions, after the signature.

**Punctuation.** Hobhouse, like Byron and many other of his contemporaries, is by our standards both unorthodox and unsystematic in punctuating. My basic principle has been to preserve his punctuation, however eccentric, except when to do so would obscure the sense of a passage. Specific decisions as to punctuation are enumerated below.

1. In some of Hobhouse’s letters, the mark we think of as a period usually (but not always) appears where a comma would be
expected; a dash may stand in a period's place, and a somewhat longer horizontal mark represent a dash. I have punctuated such letters in what twentieth-century readers would see as the customary way.

2. Relative length has been my criterion in distinguishing between Hobhouse's periods and his dashes. Thus —, a punctuation mark of a certain magnitude, is interpreted as a period in a letter where it is the shorter of two similar sorts of horizontal lines and as a dash in a letter where it is the longer.

3. If a dash closes a clause no space precedes the first letter of the following word. If, on the other hand, Hobhouse closes a sentence with a dash, I have left space between the dash and the first letter of the next word.

4. Hobhouse characteristically uses a colon after an abbreviation. This habit is preserved.

5. Apostrophes used to form possessives or plurals are retained when present in the original letters but never supplied.

6. Hobhouse is arbitrary in scattering quotation marks, which he often fails to use in pairs. I have modified his use of quotation marks with an eye toward clarity, especially in punctuating passages of reported dialogue. Inserted punctuation marks appear in brackets; subtracted ones are excised without remark.

Capitalization. I have preserved Hobhouse's capitalization except in the rare cases where clarity demanded a change; for instance, in sentences Hobhouse begins with lower-case letters. In such situations I have made changes without using brackets, which would seem to indicate the addition of a letter rather than the change of case.

Abbreviations. I have lowered the superior letters ending Hobhouse's abbreviations and have supplied periods. Thus "Lᵈⁿ" becomes "Lᵈ"). Hobhouse's "&" and "&c" have been retained.

In the annotations I have for brevity employed the following abbreviations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Byron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Hobhouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LJ</td>
<td>Byron's Letters and Journals, ed. Leslie A. Marchand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Spellings. Hobhouse’s spellings appear as they stand in the manuscript. I have added *sic* sparingly, and only when an unnoted misspelling would lead to ambiguity.

* Doubtful readings and conjectures. The text of Hobhouse’s letters is generally legible, but there are a few tears, holes, faded spots, and scrawled words. Missing passages that are obvious from context appear bracketed, as do completions of abbreviated names and additions of words necessary to sense or grammar that Hobhouse may have inadvertently left out. When such words are conjectural, a question mark appears within the brackets. I have also had to guess at some words and phrases that are present in the text but hard to decipher. In such cases a bracketed question mark follows the dubious reading.

* Cross-outs. Slips of the pen made and eradicated by Hobhouse are omitted without comment, even when they remain legible: it seems uncharitable to perpetuate blunders the writer himself caught and corrected. When Hobhouse’s alterations add significance or emphasis—for example, when he crosses out “lady” to write “actress” or when in the letter of 3 January 1822 he carefully revises the intricate rhetoric of a rebuttal to charges made by Byron—I have placed the excised variant in angle brackets before the phrase that replaced it, in this fashion: “I told you how sorry I should be if that advice *<annoyed you>* gave you any pain.” When long passages or whole paragraphs are crossed out, the fact is noted.

* Revisions. Hobhouse revised some of his letters to Byron, notably the ones written from Paris when history was brewing, for publication. Such letters are presented as Byron would have received them, with Hobhouse’s later editorial improvements omitted.

* Consistency. My first goal in preparing this edition has been to offer the reader a lucid but faithful text. In the few cases when the pursuit of this objective has conflicted with one of the principles announced above, I have broken the rule without regret or comment.