In essence, Hobhouse's letters resemble Byron's, much as many of his tastes and attitudes did. Like Byron, who has been acknowledged as one of the masters of English letter-writing, Hobhouse wrote vastly entertaining and eminently sensible letters packed with concrete information and wry commentary, society gossip, literary intelligence, political analysis, and philosophizing on the absurdities of the biped called man. Though amusing, the Hobhouse letters are far from being mere bagatelles. On more than one occasion Hobhouse delineates history in the making for the absent Byron: his firsthand observations bring alive Napoleonic Paris during the Hundred Days and electioneering Westminster in the era of Reform agitation. Hobhouse's commentary on *Don Juan* is the first literary criticism that masterpiece received and proved a remarkably accurate prophecy of the public sensation the poem provoked. His letters relaying intelligence from the London Greek Committee to Byron, who, as the Committee's representative in Greece, sacrificed his energies, fortune, and ultimately his life to the revolutionary cause, are deeply moving.

But whether their concerns are momentous or trivial, Hobhouse's letters will engage posterity as they must have Byron himself, for they frankly and faithfully mirror their author's character and preoccupations. In turn charming, boorish, bawdy, didactic, tiresome, indignant, generous, acute, outrageous, and affectionate, they show us what Byron cherished, and what he endured, in his friend.

Peter W. Graham is associate professor of English at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University at Blacksburg.
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