A SELECTION FROM
TOM MOORE'S DIARY

August 24. Arrived at my cottage. Always glad to return to it, and the dear girl who makes it so happy for me. Found heaps of letters, some of them from poets and authors, who are the pest of my life:—one sending me a “Serio-Comic Drama of Invasion, in Three Acts, including the Vision and the Battle,” and referring me for his poetic credentials to three admirals and “the late comptroller of the navy.” Another begging to know whether I was acquainted with “any man or woman to whom money was for a time useless,” who would venture £100 upon a literary speculation he had in hand.

September 1. My Sheridan task in the morning: interrupted by Bowles¹, who never comes amiss; the mixture of talent and simplicity in him delightful. His parsonage-house at Brenhill is beautifully situated; but he has a good deal frittered away its beauty with grottoes, hermitages, and Shenstonian inscriptions: when company is coming he cries, “Here, John, run with the crucifix and missal to the hermitage, and set the fountain going.” His sheep bells are tuned in thirds and fifths; but he is an excellent fellow notwithstanding; and, if the waters of his inspiration be not those of Helicon, they are at

¹ Rev. William Bowles, 1762-1850. Poet and antiquary. His sonnets, published in 1789, greatly influenced Coleridge and marked the change in poetical taste. The preface to his Life of Pope (1807) drew Byron, Campbell and others into a long and very spirited controversy.
least very sweet waters, and to my taste pleasanter than some that are more strongly impregnated.

October 3 Sheridan, the first time he met Tom, after the marriage of the latter, seriously angry with him; told him he had made his will, and had cut him off with a shilling. Tom said he was, indeed, very sorry, and immediately added, “You don’t happen to have the shilling about you now, sir, do you?” Old S. burst out laughing, and they became friends again. The day that Dog Dent was to bring forward the motion (that gave him that name) about a tax upon dogs, S. came early to the house, and saw no one but Dent sitting in a contemplative posture in one corner. S. stole round to him unobserved, and putting his hand under the seat to Dent’s legs, mimicked the barking of a dog, at which Dent started up alarmed, as if his conscience really dreaded some attack from the race he was plotting against. Sheridan angry with his servant for lighting a fire in a little room off his hall, because it tempted the duns to stay, by making them so comfortable. Mrs Sheridan wrote an entertainment called the “Haunted Village,” which she gave S. to add some touches to, but never could get from him again. Linley seemed to think he suppressed it from jealousy. Leeves, a clergyman, was the author of the words of “Auld Robin Gray”: I already knew Lady Anne Lindsay composed the music. Morel wrote some of the sweetest words in Handel’s oratorio—“Tears such as tender fathers shed,” &c. &c.; very sweet English this “for joy to think.” We read to-night passages out of Lewesdon Hill; some of them of the highest
order. Parr, when asked by Madame Madalina Palmer, how he liked Crowe, said, “Madam, I love him; he is the very brandy of genius, mixed with the stinking water of absurdity.” To-day Bowles showed me a part of his library, in which was collected, he told me, all the books illustrative of the divines of the times of Charles I, and the theology of that period. The first book I put my hand on in this sacred corner was a volume of Tom Brown’s works, &c. Bowles was amused in the midst of all his gravity by this detection. What with his genius, his blunders, his absences, &c., he is the most delightful of all existing Parsons or poets. In talking of Miss Gayton, the pretty little dancer, marrying Murray, a clergyman, Joy applied two lines well, saying they might now, in their different capacities

Teach men for heaven or money’s sake,
What steps they were through life to take.

October 7 The company at Bowood, besides those there on Sunday, the Hollands, Allen, Marsh, Henry Fox, Wellesley; and Charles Fox and Fazakerley arrived in the evening. Sat near Lady Holland at dinner; very gracious; has really shown a sincere anxiety about my Bermuda misfortune. They talked much about Brougham’s “Letter on the Public Charities”; all seemed to condemn his strictures upon Eton and Winchester: an

1 Lord and Lady Holland. Lord Holland (1773–1840) was the nephew of Charles James Fox and a fervent Whig; but his actual political career was insignificant compared with the part he played as a patron of literature. Lady Holland (1770–1845) was the most famous hostess of her time, and her dinner-table was the centre of Whig political and literary world.
answer to it coming out, got up by the Government, in a letter to Sir William Scott. Talked of poor Monk Lewis: his death was occasioned by taking emetics for sea-sickness, in spite of the advice of those about him. He died lying on the deck. When he was told all hope was over, he sent his man down below for pen, ink, and paper; asked him to lend him his hat; and upon that, as he lay, wrote a codicil to his will. Few men, once so talked of, have ever produced so little sensation by their death. He was ruining his Negroes in Jamaica, they say, by indulgence, for which they suffered severely as soon as his back was turned; but he has enjoined it to his heirs, as one of the conditions of holding his estate, that the Negroes were to have three additional holidays in the year; and has left a sort of programme of the way those holidays are to be celebrated—the hour when the overseer is to sound his shell to summon them together, the toasts, &c.: the first toast to be “the Lady Frederica, Duchess of York”; so like poor Lewis. Had a good deal of conversation with Lord Holland in the evening about Sheridan. Told me that one remarkable characteristic of S., and which accounted for many of his inconsistencies, was the high, ideal system he had formed of a sort of impracticable perfection in honour, virtue, &c., anything short of which he seemed to think not worth aiming at; and thus consoled himself for the extreme laxity of his practice by the impossibility of satisfying or coming up to the sublime theory he had formed. Hence the most romantic professions of honour and independence were coupled with conduct of the meanest and most swindling kind; hence, too, prudery
and morality were always on his lips, while his actions were one series of debauchery and libertinism. A proof of this mixture was, after the Prince became Regent, he offered to bring S. into parliament, and said, at the same time, that he by no means meant to fetter him in his political conduct by doing so; but S. refused, because, as he told Lord Holland, “he had no idea of risking the high independence of character which he had always sustained, by putting it in the power of any man, by any possibility whatever, to dictate to him.” Yet, in the very same conversation in which he paraded all this fine flourish of high-mindedness, he told Lord H. of an intrigue he had set on foot for inducing the Prince to lend him £4000 to purchase a borough. From his habit of considering money as nothing, he considered his 

**owing** the Prince £4000 as no slavery whatever: “I shall then (he said) only owe him £4000. which will leave me as free as air.”—Sheridan’s high opinion of his own powers of management, which made him often stand aloof from his party and friends. He was the means, said Lord H., of bringing Sidmouth in with us in 1806, and of bringing Ellenborough into the Cabinet. He was also the primary cause of the defection of the Prince from the Whigs, when he became Regent. On that event taking place, the Prince wrote to Lords Grey and Grenville to take measures for forming an administration. Their answer was shown by the Prince to Sheridan, who pointed out some things in it he thought objectionable. The Prince represented these to the two lords, who very imprudently returned a high-toned re-

monstrance to him for having shown their answer to S.
The latter was nettled, and, with equal impropriety, made such comments on the sort of tyranny to which these lords seemed already to aspire over the Prince, and let out so many other opinions with respect to them, that his Royal Highness became alarmed, and threw himself into the arms of the Tories. "These," said Lord Holland, "are secrets of too cabinet a nature, and too recent to be made use of by you." I said I believed that not only S., but Lord Moira, had never forgiven Lords G. and G. for the way in which they themselves (and, in their person, the Prince) were, as they thought, treated by them after the death of Mr Fox. I remember Lord Moira saying, "They actually pushed us from our stools; never consulted us about anything." Mentioned this. "I cannot think what he meant by that," said Lord Holland, "Moira is certainly the oddest mixture of romance and the reverse that ever existed. As to not consulting him, he always sat silent, and did not seem to attend to anything. As to our making no report to the Prince of what we were doing, we looked upon Moira as his organ there, and thought it would be officious of any one else to be the medium of communication." The fact is, Lord M.'s silence was evidently from pique at thinking himself neglected, and the only communication, of course, he made to the Prince was, to tell him that they never troubled their heads about him. All this accounts most satisfactorily for the defection of the Regent; and if anything could justify his duplicity and apostasy, it would be their arrogance and folly. Sheridan was jealous of Mr Fox, and showed it in ways that produced, at last, great coolness between
them. He envied him particularly his being member for Westminster, and, in 1802, had nearly persuaded him to retire from parliament, in order that he might himself succeed to that honour. But it was Burke chiefly that S. hated and envied. Being both Irishmen, both adventurers, they had every possible incentive to envy. On Hastings’ trial particularly it went to Sheridan’s heart to see Burke in the place set apart for privy councillors, and himself excluded. This was all very amusing, and I was rather sorry I had arranged to return home at night. Everybody pressed me to stay, and I was very near having reason to repent my going; for, when we were about a mile from the house, Joy’s coachman drove off the road down a bank, and overset the carriage. The crash was tremendous, for three of the glasses were up; but none of us were hurt, except Joy’s man a little bruised in the hip, and my arm slightly strained. Lord Lansdowne’s keeper happened luckily to be passing, and helped us to raise the carriage. I walked home, and did not arrive till past one o’clock.

In speaking of Sheridan’s eloquence, Lord H. said that the over-strained notions he had of perfection were very favourable to his style of oratory in giving it a certain elevation of tone and dignity of thought. Mr Fox thought his Westminster Hall speech, trumpery, and used to say it spoiled the style of Burke, who was delighted with it. Certainly in the report I have read of it, it seems most trashy bombast.

October 9 Received a long letter from Lord Byron, in which he sends me two stanzas of the Beppo-ish poem
A SELECTION FROM 1818

he is about, called *Don Juan*. In the evening read Colman’s little comedy of *Ways and Means* to Bessy¹ and Mary D. Some comical things in it: “Curse Cupid, he has not a halfpenny to buy breeches;” “Always threatening to break my neck; one would think we servants had a neck to spare, like the Swan in Lad Lane.” Read some of S.’s speeches.

**October 18** As the morning was fine, set out to Bowood to see Rogers²; caught him in the garden, on the way to Bowles’s; walked with him; talked much about Sheridan. Sheridan once told Rogers of a scene that occurred in a French theatre in 1772, where two French officers stared a good deal at his wife, and S., not knowing a word of French, could do nothing but put his arms a-kimbo and look bluff and defying them, which they, not knowing a word of English, could only reply to by the very same attitude and look. He once mentioned to Rogers that he was aware he ought to have made a love scene between Charles and Maria in the *School for Scandal*; and would have done it, but that the actors who played the parts were not able to do such a scene justice. Talked of Hastings and the impeachment. Asked Rogers whether it was not now looked upon, even by the Opposition themselves, as a sort of dramatic piece of display, got up by the Whigs of that day from private pique, vanity, &c. &c.;

¹ Elizabeth Moore, the poet’s wife.
² Samuel Rogers (1763–1855). Poet and wealthy banker. He had a bitter tongue but was a good friend to less fortunate men of letters and had a real affection for Moore.
Francis, first urging them on from his hostility to Hastings; Burke running headlong into it from impetuosity of temper; and Sheridan seizing with avidity the first great opportunity that offered of showing off his talent. He said it was so considered now; and in addition to all this, Mr Pitt gave in to the prosecution with much satisfaction, because it turned away the embattled talent of the time from himself and his measures, and concentrated it all against this one individual, whom he was most happy to sacrifice, so he could thereby keep them employed. Burke’s admiration of S.’s second speech on the Begums; said, “That is the true style; something neither prose nor poetry, but better than either.” It was the opinion of Mr Fox that Burke’s style altered after he heard this speech; that it spoiled him, and that to the taste he acquired from it we owe the extreme floridness of his writings afterwards—the passage about the Queen of France, &c. &c. Lord Holland had told me this before; but there seems to me but little in it. It was natural for the Whigs to think Burke’s style much altered for the worse when he wrote on the other side. Remarked to R. the forced and extravagant combinations by which S. so often laboured to produce effect both in his serious and his comic. The description of Bonaparte an instance: “Kings his sentinels, kingdoms his martello-towers, crowns and sceptres his pallisadoes,” &c. Talked of the letter from Dr Chalmers to Lord Byron in the Scot’s Magazine: in mentioning the great publicity Byron has given to his private sorrows, he says “you have waited on the house-top.” This is excellent. Showed me Crowe’s verses
written for the installation of the Duke of Portland; never saw them before; noble poetry! Found Bowles at home; wants to have a statue of Melanchthon executed from the fine woodcut, to put up in his projected library; anxious to consult me about some prose he is writing. Left Bowles's at half-past two. In passing through Bowood for home I was caught by Lady Lansdowne, Lord Auckland, &c. &c. She begged me to stay for dinner; said Lady Bath (who was going next day) wished very much to know me. Party at dinner—Lady Bath, her unmarried daughter, Lady Louisa, and the married one, Lady Elizabeth Campbell and her husband; Lord Auckland and his two sisters; Mrs Frankland Lewis. Miss Eden's name Dulcibella. Talked of strange names: I mentioned a little child, born in Italy of English parents, christened Allegra. (N.B. a natural child of Lord Byron's, mentioned in his last letter to me.) Some traveller in America mentions having met a man called Romulus Riggs: whether true or not, very like their mixture of the classical and the low. Talked of the alterations at the late Dublin city dinners; about the toast of the "Glorious Memory"; mentioned that about the middle of the last century the usual adjunct to this toast was, "and a fig for the Bishop of Cork"; the Bishop, who was a strong Tory, having written a book against drinking Memories, pronouncing it to be idolatrous, &c. &c. Burke's bad manner of speaking, and the effect it had in quite nullifying the effect of his speeches. F. Lewis said he had heard Lord Grenville mention that once, after a speech of Burke's, himself and Pitt consulted with each other whether it