

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-05896-4 - Memoirs, Journal, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore: Volume 5

Edited by John Russell

Excerpt

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JOURNAL, AND CORRESPONDENCE  
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THOMAS MOORE.

VOL. V.

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DIARY  
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1825—*continued.*

NOVEMBER 1st. Scott proposed to take me to-day to the castle of Newark, a place of the Duke of Buccleugh's. Sat with him some time in his study: saw a copy of the "Moniteur" there, which he said he meant to give to the Advocates' Library when he was done with it. I said that what astonished foreigners most was the extent of his knowledge. "Ah, that sort of knowledge (he answered) is very superficial." I remarked that the manual labour alone of copying out his works seemed enough to have occupied all the time he had taken in producing them. "I write," he answered, "very quick; that comes of being brought up under an attorney." Writes chiefly in the morning, from seven till breakfast time: told me the number of pages he could generally produce in the day, but I do not accurately remember how much it was. Mentioned to him that Lord Byron repeated to me the first hundred and twenty lines of "Lara" immediately after they were written, and said he had done them either that morning or the evening before, I forgot which. Went out at twelve in the open carriage, he and I and Miss

Scott; the day very lowering. Showed me where the Ettrick and Yarrow join. The Yarrow grows beautiful near the gate of the Duke, and the walk by it through the grounds is charming. Lunched in a little summer-house beyond the bridge. Showed me a deep part of the river into which he found Mungo Park once throwing stones: Park said it reminded him of what he used to do in Africa to try the depth of the rivers. After his return from Africa he opened an apothecary's shop in Selkirk, but the passion for wandering would not allow him to remain quiet. Day cleared up as we returned home. Saw the place where Montrose was defeated; four hundred Irishmen shot near it after the battle. In talking of his ignorance of music, Scott said he had been once employed in a case where a purchaser of a fiddle had been imposed on as to its value. He found it necessary to prepare himself by reading all about fiddles in the Encyclopædias, &c., and having got the names of Straduerius, Amati, &c. glibly on his tongue, got swimmingly through his cause. Not long after this, dining at the Duke of Hamilton's, he found himself left alone after dinner with the Duke, who had but two subjects he could talk of, hunting and music. Having exhausted hunting, Scott thought he would bring forward his lately acquired learning in fiddles; upon which the Duke grew quite animated, and immediately whispered some orders to the butler, in consequence of which there soon entered the room about half a dozen tall servants all in red, each bearing a fiddle case; and Scott found his knowledge brought to no less a test than that of telling by the tones of each fiddle, as the Duke played it, by what artist it was made. "By guessing and management," he said, "I got on pretty well till we were, to my great relief, summoned to

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coffee." Mentioned an anecdote which he had heard from Lady Swinton of her seeing, when a child, a strange young lady in the room whom she took for a spirit, from her vanishing the moment she turned her head. It was a person whom her mother kept concealed, from some cause, within the panel: this evidently suggested the circumstance in one of his novels. On our return home found that two gentlemen were waiting to see Sir Walter; proved to be young Demidoff, son of the rich Russian, who has been sent to Edinburgh for his education, and, with his tutor, was now come to pay a visit to Sir Walter.\* Much talk with the young man, who is very intelligent, about Russian literature. I mentioned the "Fables" of Kriloff, of which I had seen a translation in French, and in one of which he talks of Voltaire being roasted in hell *à petit feu*. This translation, Demidoff said, was a very bad one. Sung in the evening; much pressed by Scott to defer my departure for a day or two.

2nd. While I was dressing, Mr. Gordon (a presbyterian clergyman, whom I found at Abbotsford, and who is employed making a catalogue of the library) came into my room, and requested, as a great favour, a lock of my hair: told him to be careful how he cut it, as Mrs. Moore would be sure to detect the "rape." The carriage being ordered immediately after breakfast, to take me to the coach and young Demidoff and his tutor to Melrose Abbey, I took leave of Scott, who seemed (as my companions afterwards remarked) to feel much regret at parting with me. Finding a place in the Jedburgh coach, I set off for

\* A gentleman who was at Abbotsford at the time, declares that it was Count Orloff, a nephew of the Count Orloff who holds a high station at the Russian Court, who was Sir Walter Scott's guest, and not M. Demidoff. — Ed.

Edinburgh. Some talk among the people in the coach about Scott; said he was "a very peculiar man," and seemed all to agree that he had chosen a very bad situation for his house. Went outside for the last two or three stages, in order to see the country, but it was all dreary and barren. The entrance, however, into Edinburgh most striking; the deep ravine between the two towns, the picturesque sites of the buildings on the heights and in the depths, the grand openings to the sea, all is magnificent and unlike every thing else. By the by, talking with the guard about Abbotsford, he told me Lady Scott had said that "it was quite an hotel in every thing but pay." Took a hackney coach and drove to William Murray's (husband to Bessy's sister), having received a letter from him at Abbotsford, entreating me to take a bed at his house. Found Anne not so much altered (though it is fourteen years since we last met) as Bessy led me to expect. A note while we were at dinner from Murray's sister, Mrs. Siddons, to ask me, if not too fatigued, to drink tea there. We went; none but herself and daughters; sung a little, though very hoarse; one of the Miss S.'s also sung. Had written to Jeffrey after dinner to say I was come, and would be out with him at Craighcrook to-morrow; an answer from him to say, "Why not to-night?"

3rd. Went out with Murray and a Mr. Bridges to see the town; the day, though it looked dull, very clear, and favourable for seeing the distant hills. Went up to the Castle, thence through some of the old town to Calton Hill. Was quite enchanted with the views of the Forth; could see the Isle of May and the snow on Ben Lomond. Had soup at a restaurant on Calton Hill: returned home to meet Jeffrey, who came and proposed that I should call

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upon him at his town-house in a coach at half-past four. Did so; Craigcrook about three miles off; no one at dinner but Mrs. Jeffrey, a Mrs. Miller, and Cockburn, the celebrated barrister. Cockburn very reserved and silent; but full, as I understand, of excellent fun and mimicry when he chooses. A good deal of chat with Jeffrey before going to bed; cannot bear to stir without his wife and child; requires something living and breathing near him, and is miserable when alone. Slept in a curious bedroom, with two turrets for dressing-rooms. This house was once a madhouse, and it was a common saying of any one that was flighty, "He is only fit for Craigcrook."

4th. After breakfast, sitting with Jeffrey in his beautiful little Gothic study (from which he looks out on grounds sloping up to a high-wooded hill), he told me, at much length, his opinion of my life of Sheridan. Thinks it a work of great importance to my fame: people inclined to depreciate my talents have always said, "Yes, Moore can, it is true, write pretty songs, and launch a smart epigram, but there is nothing solid in him." Even of Captain Rock they said, "A lively, flashy work, but the style not fit for the subject." "Here, however," added Jeffrey, "is a convincing proof that you can think and reason solidly and manfully, and treat the gravest and most important subjects in a manner worthy of them. I look upon the part of your book that relates to Sheridan himself as comparatively worthless; it is for the historical and political views that I value it; and am, indeed, of opinion, that you have given us the only clear, fair, and manly account of the public transactions of the last fifty years that we possess." Walked up to the wooded hill opposite the house, and caught some beautiful views of the Forth and its islands, as well as of Edinburgh. Went

into town in a hackney coach with Jeffrey and Mrs. Miller: walked about with Jeffrey: called upon Lady Keith. Flahault in Edinburgh, but not at home: promised she would make him come to dinner at Jeffrey's to-day, if he could. Called at Black's the bookseller, at Constable's, at Sir Henry Moncrieff's: sat some time with this fine old man, who seems to be much looked up to. Returned to Craigmackintosh at half past four with Thomson (Mackintosh's friend), John Murray, and Jeffrey. A large party to dinner: Lord Mackenzie (son of the "Man of Feeling"), Mr. and Mrs. Kay, my old friend Shannon, &c. &c. Sung in the evening, Jeffrey having had a pianoforte sent expressly for the purpose. Have seldom seen people more pleased: obliged to repeat "Ship, ahoy!" "The Watchman," &c.

5th. After breakfast, young Stoddart grandson to Sir H. Moncrieff) came out to beg I would fix a day to dine with Sir Henry: fixed for next Tuesday. Set off to walk to town, but, near the house, met the "Man of Feeling" coming out to call upon me. Jeffrey put me into the carriage to him, and he carried me into town. Told me that what put him upon writing "Julia de Roubigny," was a wish expressed by Lord Kaimes for a novel without love in it. Dosed me with old stories and civility; and having stopped his carriage half way down a hill, in order to introduce me to his daughter, who was coming up it, left me at last at Murray's house. Walked out with Murray, and went to see Holyrood House: felt, as I looked at the wretched lodgings around it for the privileged, how much better I had been within the rules of the Allée des Veuves, in 1820. Dined at Mrs. Siddons's, with Murray and Anne: company, the Lord Provoost, Shannon, &c. &c. A party in the evening: Miss

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Gibson Craig, a pretty girl; two other nice girls, Miss Wilsons, very good musicians, rather a rare thing, it appears, in Scotland. Sung with them some Italian duets and trios: one of them sung my own "Say what shall be our sport to-day?" The evening agreeable.

6th. Went off with Murray, in a hackney coach, to see Roslyn Castle; the day clear and sunny, and, considering the time of the year, very favourable for the purpose. The colouring of the leaves, rocks, and water brought out beautifully by the sunshine. Did not go on to Hawthornden: the chapel very curious. Lunched at the inn, well and cheaply. Company to dinner at Murray's, John Wilson, the professor of Moral Philosophy (author of the novels, *Blackwood*, &c.), Ballantyne the printer (Scott's friend, and, as Scott told me, the only critic he had for his novels), and Shannon. Wilson an odd person, but amusing; his imitation of Wordsworth's monologues excellent. Spoke of my Sheridan; thinks the *bon mots* I have reported of his very poor; told him I agreed with him in this, but was obliged to put them in, both from the outcry there would have been, had I not given anecdotes, and the value in which most of those I have given are held by Rogers, Lord Holland, &c., particularly the reply to Tarleton about the mule and the ass, which I saw no great merit in myself, but which Lord H. and Rogers always quote with praise. All agreed in thinking it not only poor, but hardly intelligible.\* Wilson praised

\* Sheridan's joke to Tarleton. Any one might think the wit poor (although I do not agree with them), but the joke is clear enough. "I was on a horse, and now I'm on an elephant," *i.e.* "I was high above others, but now I am much higher." "You were on an ass, and now you're on a mule," said Sheridan; *i.e.* "You were stupid and now you're obstinate." For quick repartee in conversation, there are few things better. — J. R.

my book warmly, and said that it was only so far unfair that the biographer had in every page outshone his subject. Seemed not to think very highly of Sheridan's genius; and in speaking of his great unreported speech, said it appeared to him utterly impossible that, with such powers as his, he should ever have produced any thing deserving of such high praises. In comparing prose with poetry, remarked, in order to prove the inferiority of the former, that there have been great schools of poetry, but no school of prose. Sat drinking till rather late, and sat again with Wilson after supper, till past one. Not being able to dine with him any day before I go, fixed to sup at his house next Tuesday.

7th. Walked about with John Murray: went with him to the Advocates' Library; rather too gay and ornamented; fitter for ladies than lawyers. Called at Black's, the bookseller, who showed me a letter from the Longmans, saying the demand for the "Life" was "prodigious," and that they were bringing out the third edition. Called on Lady Keith; her children at dinner; lunched with them; fixed to dine with her on Wednesday. Proved to me that I could perform all my visits to my Scotch friends in ten days, going to Lord Dunmore's on Monday, thence on Tuesday to her, where I should be saved the trouble of going to the Gwydir's by seeing them with her; and so on she traced the route for me, to Lord Belhaven's, the Dalrymple-Hamiltons', &c. &c. Should like it much, but too late in the season, and cannot, at all events, spare the time. Went to John Murray's at five to be taken out to Jeffrey's. M'Culloch, the political economist, went with us. Said he was very much pleased with the remarks I had made in the "Life," relative to the debates on the commercial treaty with France, and the Irish propositions: Lord Lansdowne's speech on the latter measure, one, he said, of con-