

**JOURNAL OF CORRESPONDENCE  
AND CONVERSATIONS  
BETWEEN LORD BYRON AND  
THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON**

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Journal of Correspondence and Conversations Between Lord Byron and the Countess of Blessington by Various

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JOURNAL



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CORRESPONDENCE AND CONVERSATIONS

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AND THE

COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

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Wo du das Genie erblickst,  
Erblickst du auch zugleich die Marterkrone.  
Goethe.

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## P R E F A C E .

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THE deep and general interest with which every detail connected with Lord Byron has been received by the public, induced the writer to publish her Conversations with him. She was, for a long time, undecided as to adopting this measure, fearful that, by the invidious, it might be considered as a breach of confidence; but, as Boswell's and Mrs. Piozzi's disclosures, relative to Dr. Johnson, were never viewed in this light, and as Lord Byron never gave, or implied, the slightest injunction to secrecy, she hopes that she may equally escape such an imputation.

The many pages suppressed, filled with poems, epigrams, and sallies of Lord Byron, in which piquancy and wit are more evident than good-nature, bear testimony, that a wish to avoid wounding the feelings of the *living*, or to cast a darker shade over the reputation of the *dead*, has influenced the writer much more than the desire to make an amusing book; and she trusts that in portraying Lord Byron, if she has proved herself an unskillful, she incurs not the censure of being considered an unfaithful, limner.

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## CONVERSATIONS WITH LORD BYRON.

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*Genoa, April 1st, 1823.*—Saw Lord Byron for the first time. The impression for the first few minutes disappointed me, as I had both from the portraits and descriptions given, conceived a different idea of him. I had fancied him taller, with a more dignified and commanding air; and I looked in vain for the hero-looking sort of person with whom I had so long identified him in imagination. His appearance is, however, highly prepossessing; his head is finely shaped, and the forehead open, high, and noble; his eyes are gray and full of expression, but one is visibly larger than the other; the nose is large and well shaped, but from being a little *too thick*, it looks better in profile than in front-face: his mouth is the most remarkable feature in his face, the upper lip of Grecian shortness, and the corners descending; the lips full, and finely cut. In speaking, he shows his teeth very much, and they are white and even; but I observed that even in his smile—and he smiles frequently—there is something of a scornful expression in his mouth that is evidently natural, and not, as many suppose, affected. This particularly struck me. His chin is large and well shaped, and finishes well the oval of his face. He is extremely thin, indeed so much so, that his figure has almost a boyish air; his face is peculiarly pale, but not the paleness of ill health, as its character is that of fairness, the fairness of a dark-haired person—and his hair (which is getting rapidly gray) is of a very dark brown, and curls naturally: he uses a good deal of oil in it, which makes it look still darker. His countenance is full of expression, and changes with the subject of conversa-

tion; it gains on the beholder the more it is seen, and leaves an agreeable impression. I should say that melancholy was its prevailing character, as I observed that when any observation elicited a smile—and they were many, as the conversation was gay and playful—it appeared to linger but for a moment on his lip, which instantly resumed its former expression of seriousness. His whole appearance is remarkably gentleman-like, and he owes nothing of this to his toilet, as his coat appears to have been many years made, is much too large—and all his garments convey the idea of having been purchased ready-made, so ill do they fit him. There is a *gaucherie* in his movements, which evidently proceeds from the perpetual consciousness of his lameness, that appears to haunt him; for he tries to conceal his foot when seated, and when walking, has a nervous rapidity in his manner. He is very slightly lame, and the deformity of his foot is so little remarkable that I am not now aware which foot it is. His voice and accent are peculiarly agreeable, but effeminate—clear, harmonious, and so distinct, that though his general tone in speaking is rather low than high, not a word is lost. His manners are as unlike my preconceived notions of them as is his appearance. I had expected to find him a dignified, cold, reserved, and haughty person, resembling those mysterious personages he so loves to paint in his works, and with whom he has been so often identified by the good-natured world; but nothing can be more different; for were I to point out the prominent defect of Lord Byron, I should say it was flippancy, and a total want of that natural self-possession and dignity which ought to characterize a man of birth and education.

Albaro, the village in which the Casa Saluzzo, where he lives, is situated, is about a mile and a half distant from Genoa; it is a fine old palazzo, commanding an extensive view, and with spacious apartments, the front looking into a courtyard and the back into the garden. The room in which Lord Byron received us was large, and plainly furnished. A small portrait of his daughter Ada, with an engraved portrait of

himself, taken from one of his works, struck my eye. Observing that I remarked that of his daughter, he took it down, and seemed much gratified when I discovered the strong resemblance it bore to him. While holding it in his hand, he said, "I am told she is clever—I hope not; and above all, I hope she is not poetical: the price paid for such advantages, if advantages they be, is such as to make me pray that my child may escape them."

The conversation during our first interview was chiefly about our mutual English friends, some of whom he spoke of with kind interest. T. Moore, D. Kinnaird, and Mr. E. Ellice were among those whom he most distinguished. He expressed himself greatly annoyed by the number of traveling English who pestered him with visits, the greater part of whom he had never known, or was but slightly acquainted with, which obliged him to refuse receiving any but those he particularly wished to see: "But," added he, smiling, "they avenge themselves by attacking me in every sort of way, and there is no story too improbable for the craving appetites of our slander-loving countrymen."

Before taking leave, he proposed paying us a visit next day; and he handed me into the carriage with many flattering expressions of the pleasure our visit had procured him.

*April 2d.*—We had scarcely finished our *déjeuné à la fourchette* this day, when Lord Byron was announced: he sent up two printed cards in an envelope addressed to us, and soon followed them. He appeared still more gay and cheerful than the day before—made various inquiries about all our mutual friends in England—spoke of them with affectionate interest, mixed with a badinage in which none of their little defects were spared; indeed, candor obliges me to own that their defects seemed to have made a deeper impression on his mind than their good qualities (though he allowed all the latter), by the *gusto* with which he entered into them.

He talked of our mutual friend Moore, and of his "Lalla Rookh," which he said, though very beautiful, had disap-