

MS. 16087/1 Letter from Maria Edgeworth to Henry Holland, 25 Feb 1820

[f1r]

John Ruxton Esqr
Black Castle
Navan
Feb^y 25th 1820

The having been absent from home must be my apology my dear Sir for my delay in answering your most friendly and most interesting letter – Your patient M^{rs} Charlotte Sneyd has quite recovered, thanks to your kind and judicious counsels. She has taken care of herself during the cold weather and has not suffered by it. Before I left home, nearly three weeks ago she has joined the rest of the family in the evening. I hear that she now confines herself only during the mornings to her dressing room, dines with the family, and in short is quite herself again. Fanny though not strong is well, or I should never have left her at home as I have done, while I came here to pay a long promised visit to a beloved Aunt – with whom I shall stay till the 17th of next month. In the mean M^{rs}. Edgeworth is paying a visit to her father & mother & brother near Cork – and she has taken with her my little brother Pakenham and one of her younger daughters, Sophy Who has just recovered from a fit of the jaundice

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And are these dull domestic details
all I can tell D^r. Holland who is living
in the middle of all that is gay & fashion
able and learned and wise, in the
scientific, literary, political, and great
world in London? – In truth if I had
not full as high an opinion of his heart
as of his head, and if I had not still
more confidence in his friendship
than admiration for ... all that others
admire in him, I should be a fool to
write to him as I do. – ——— Enjoy my dear
Sir the pleasure of knowing that your
last letter has been a delight to all our
family and all my friends and they
all feel the great kindness of your
taking the trouble of telling us every
thing that is worth knowing – How you
can find time to put so much know
ledge and so much of all that is en=
tertaining in so small a compass &
in such happy proportion amazes
us – We completely agree with
your opinion of Ivanhoe. It is a great
proof of Walter Scott's talents – & as such
a greater proof perhaps than any of
his Scotch tales – but mankind do
not estimate an authors performances
by the difficulties conquered by the
writer but by the positive amusement
or utility to be derived from the work

[f2r]

– To the present age and to posterity the Scotch novels must be /most\ valuable, because they give exact pictures from the life of national manners, drawn by a masters hand – & those books contain much that cannot be found in any other records, & that has never been produced by any other mind – Ivanhoe has not this characteristic & transcendent merit – and for the want of this not even tilt or tournament or jew or jewess, sublime & beautiful as she is can compensate –

I have not your intrepid industry nor your art of making eight & forty hours out of the day, – I shall never read Daru's¹ 5 quartos And am quite content without that theory of his which is to overturn the good established, /Venetian\ conspiracy – I quite agree with you in not liking to have long venerated traditions disturbed by fantastic historic doubts – more especially as the doubters ~~xxx~~ with all their parade of learning & ingenuity seldom end by putting any one certainty in the place of all they overturn.

The /Edⁿ\ review of the French and English industry – art & science is as you say excellent and is as you guess written by M^r. Chenevix – he is an acquaintance of ours & brother to one of our near neighbors & a friend we love much (– a M^{rs}. Tuite –) she has the pleasure of collecting for him some of the facts for that review & I gave her the satisfaction of hearing what you said of it

¹ Pierre-Antoine Daru, military administrator (1767-1839) in Napoleonic France. In 1819 he published the seven-volume *Histoire de la République de Venise* (*History of the Republic of Venice*).

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M^r. Watt tells me that the character which appeared in the papers & in the Ed Rev^w of the late M^r. Watt was written, by Jeffrey² who is a friend & connexion of his family. It was admirably written – M^r. W. is preparing a life of his father – It may be made very instructive and interesting.

By a letter from my brother Sneyd who is at Paris we hear that the Duc de Berri's assassination has created much less sensation there than we could imagine – If they restrict the press I think it will fly and in its explosion overturn the throne – In these days the press /is\ in an over match for cannon – ~~and~~ It is an engine far more dangerous to meddle with than any of the cannon that are "laying about" —

If there be not an explosion or a revolution in Paris before the end of next month I shall be there with two of my sisters Fanny & Harriet /by\ the 2d week in April – provided always that Hunters finishes printing my father's mems. by that time. Till I have corrected the last proof sheet I shall never stir — I do not speak to you of my anxiety about that book – it is too deep down in my mind to talk much about –

I feel that I owe you much entertainment and many a new idea – but /not\ one new idea have I, nor one scrap of

² Francis Jeffrey, Editor of the Edinburgh Review.

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literary or scientific or even gossiping
intelligence to give –

Yes I can tell you, – what probably
you have long since found out, – that the
M. Fabre d'Olivet who has published a
pamphlet called Notions sur le sens
de l'ouïe³. And who pretends that he cured
7 dumb youths & that he was persecuted
by Bonaparte & lectured upon
morality, is a complete charlatan.
— Of which I am convince not only by
the internal evidence of his book but
by a letter I have just seen of his to
a relation of ours who wrote to consult
him – and further by the testimony
of a swiss friend & relation of M Grivel's
[torn page] one of the 7 youths whom he [pretends?]
to have cured – who is as I am ~~xxx~~
not the least the better for his Hebrew
characters – mysterious operations.

Are you ~~an~~ antiquarian suffici
ent to value a /one of the\ small rude unbaked
/or sunbaked\ urns which are found in tumuli in
Ireland, containing bones &c — I have
one bones & all much at your service
/I w^d rather you had it than any one else\
– perfectly authenticated – But don't

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³ *Notions sur le sens de l'ouïe en général, et en particulier sur la guérison de Rodolphe Grivel, sourd-muet de naissance en une série de lettres écrites par Fabre d'Olivet* (1811).

[f3v]

Remember me most kindly to your
family when you write to Knutsford
& let them never do me the injustice
to doubt my regard because I do not
write to them – If they knew how much
I write & what weak eyes I have they w^d
forgive me

[Address]

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