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## JOHN HOLROYD IN ITALY

In the first three letters which Holroyd received from Gibbon, and which he kept, his friend addressed him as « Dear Leger ».<sup>1</sup> This nickname, possibly invented by Gibbon himself and perhaps in common use at the de Mézerys' pension where they both lived with other Englishmen in the winter of 1763-64, seemed so offensive to Lord Sheffield in 1796, when he published these letters, that he replaced it by « Dear Holroyd ».<sup>2</sup> The sober Irish peer, the worthy M. P.<sup>3</sup>, the author of widely read pamphlets on questions of trade and agriculture, the model gentleman that Lord Sheffield was then in the eyes of his countrymen did not want it to be known that, thirty years earlier, such an epithet as « léger » had been applied to him. If « léger » he ever was, he had at any rate long ceased to be so. The way in which he edited the papers left by his friend is enough to prove it : he carefully removed from the text all he thought improper or lacking in respect for religious institutions.<sup>4</sup> But the epithet is not inappropriate to the demobilized officer of cavalry<sup>5</sup> who, on July 1, 1763, left London for the continent, as any one must feel who happens to

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<sup>1</sup> *The Letters of Edward Gibbon*, edited by J. E. Norton, London 1956, N° 58, 70, 74 — vol. i, pp. 173, 199, 213.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters to and from Edward Gibbon, Esq.* in *The Miscellaneous Works*, New Edition, London 1814, vol. ii, pp. 56, 61, 65.

<sup>3</sup> Holroyd was M. P. (for Coventry and Bristol) until 1802 when he was raised to the peerage of the United Kingdom. He had been raised to the Irish peerage in 1781. (*D. N. B.*)

<sup>4</sup> See J. E. Norton, *A Bibliography of the Works of Edward Gibbon*, Oxford 1940, p. 185.

<sup>5</sup> Holroyd had entered the army in 1760 and became captain in the regiment of light dragoons known as the Royal Foresters. (*D. N. B.*)

read the letters he wrote to his mother, uncle and aunts in the course of his travels.<sup>1</sup>

Gibbon's early judgment of Holroyd's character is not all contained in the nickname he used when writing those first letters to him. A few days before leaving Lausanne for Italy in April 1764, eight months after they had first met, he wrote in his Journal: «J'ai conçu une véritable amitié pour Holroyd. Il a beaucoup de raison et de sentimens d'honneur avec un cœur des mieux placés.»<sup>2</sup> For a young man on the Grand Tour to send every three weeks or so long letters to his family is evidence enough of his having his heart in the right place. But reading them, one is soon aware of his strong affection for his friends at home, as well as of the place he must have held in their hearts. His being a favourite child and nephew might of course be explained by the fact that, since his brother had been killed in the last war, he was the heir of the family on both sides. His character, as his letters reveal it, accounts for it much better.

Lively and high-spirited, of a merry disposition, witty and ironical but without the least malice, fond of joking at his own and others' expense, he could assume towards his elders, even towards his mother, a familiarly impudent manner which was never resented because it never hurt. In the midst of friends of his own age, he must have been a delightful companion, and that among them he should have been called «Léger» at first is quite natural.

With such qualities he might have turned out an extremely pleasant letter-writer, had he ever cared «to cultivate the arts of composition,» which he never did, as Gibbon remarked.<sup>3</sup> None the less, spontaneous and unstudied as they are, his letters from the Continent are valuable for the light they throw on his character as a young man, and also for the impressions and observations they contain of an average Englishman in foreign parts. This and their being from the pen of him whom Gibbon came to regard as «the man in the world whom I love and esteem the most»<sup>4</sup> may justify the publication of some extracts taken from those he wrote in Italy.

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<sup>1</sup> British Museum, *Add. Mss.* 34887, for photostats of which I am indebted to Sir Gavin de Beer.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Journal de Gibbon à Lausanne*, publié par G. Bonnard, Lausanne 1945, p. 259.

<sup>3</sup> *Memoirs of my Life and Writings* [Autobiography] in *The Miscellaneous Works*, 1814, vol. i, p. 257.

<sup>4</sup> *The Letters of Edward Gibbon*, vol. i, p. 323.

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In the company of two friends<sup>1</sup> who had been staying with him at the Mézery's, Holroyd left Lausanne in the middle of July 1764, stayed a fortnight at Turin, three weeks at Genoa, five at Florence and arrived at Rome late in October. He passed the winter at Rome and, in March, resumed his travels, going to Naples whence early in June he sailed back to Genoa.

At Turin, he was presented to King Charles-Emmanuel III and his family, and was not particularly impressed : « *The King is a miserable, sneaking, creeping, sore-eyed little fellow & is considered as a dismal bigot... a disposition to bigotry runs in his blood. His forefathers, especially his Papa have been much addicted that way in their latter days... The Duke of Savoy has a most amiable character &... a very agreeable appearance... The Duchess is a yellow, skinny, crooked Spaniard without a sound tooth in her head... The three Princesses have been handsome & are very affable & good humoured notwithstanding they are past 30 years old & have little chance of husbands.* » (f<sup>os</sup> 156<sup>v</sup>-157). There were other English gentlemen, most of them quite young, staying at Turin at that time. « *Five of them are of the Academy. The only use of which place for the English is to breed fine gentlemen. They acquire a thorough knowledge of dress, & make the Academy life extremely expensive which in itself is surprizingly cheap. All but one keep<sup>2</sup> a fine equipage & runn[ing] footmen, and that one is followed by his chair wherever he goes, without going into it according to the fashion of the country* » (f<sup>o</sup> 157). Holroyd and his companions freely availed themselves of the welcome extended to British visitors by the local society, which gave him the opportunity of observing Italian manners and the behaviour of his countrymen : « *The women are extremely easy & free, by which means every Englishmen fancies he has a deep intrigue on his hands. There are about half a dozen ladies of doubtful character at Turin who furnish flirtations for English travellers.*

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Ridley and Theophilus Bolton. Ridley had come to Lausanne in January (*Le Journal de Gibbon à Lausanne*, p. 203), Bolton after Gibbon had left Lausanne (*Gibbon's Journey from Geneva to Rome, His Journal from 20 April to 2 October 1764*, ed. by G. A. Bonnard (in the press), July 1, 1764).

<sup>2</sup> Keeps in MS.

*Cicizbeoism is much the fashion... Every married lady chuses a gentleman who... attends on her to all publick places & wherever she goes, sits in her box at the playhouse, attends her in her coach, and the husband never thinks it necessary to be jealous. The Italians are supposed to be the most jealous animals in the creation but to judge from what I have seen... they are not the least so.* » (f° 157).

Of Genoa Holroyd has not much to say, though he was « well entertained there ». From Leghorn, on September 4, he writes : « *The day before yesterday, we arrived here in a Felucca from Genoa, 120 miles in thirty two hours. A Felucca is a large sort of open boat which makes use of sails & oars. There was an awning to protect us from the sun & I had a good bench for a bed during the night. The expedition was very pleasant as we went close to the coast, our Genoese boatmen having a very becoming bashfulness as to meeting the corsairs at Sea.* » (f° 156).

On their way to Florence they stopped four days at Lucca, « it being the time of the races & many other amusements ». The races took place in an amphitheatre about a quarter of a mile round, where riders without boots « who did not understand riding so well as English boys of 3 years old » (f° 159) rode horses without any saddle.

As an irreverent young protestant, Holroyd expatiates with relish on what he saw the day after his arrival at Florence : « *Florence is a most agreeable place. However the day after my arrival here I went to see two nuns take the habit, the most melancholy spectacle I have ever seen. Two very fine girls, sisters, one 17, the other 16 years old, yet as full grown & in as fine order as English girls at 18 or 20, beautiful and gracefull persons with very fine faces, when I first saw them they stood at the large folding doors of the convent which opened into a sort of antichamber where their acquaintance assembled in their best attire, but are not permitted to go further than the threshold where the smile forcing victims stood. The two beautiful animals were dressed to the greatest advantage in gold & silver tissues with their extraordinary fine hair flowing down their backs elegantly curled. All the family diamonds were exhibited on the occasion. Behind them were the Mother Abbess & all the nuns cloathed in their black uniforms infernally ugly except two, & of consequence proper furniture for a convent. During this ceremony of receiving their friends, chocolate was offered to us as strangers & to the visitors. The association of religion & vice was drolly conspicuous on the occasion. The lover of the mother (who had been the handsomest*

woman in Florence & seemed only the eldest sister of her daughters) doing the honours, a grey headed Abbot had mentioned to me who he was, not with an intention to satyrize, because it is as regular here for a married woman to have a lover as it is for her to have an husband, but only to explain the company, in the same manner as if he had met with me at the playhouse he might have told me the characters of the performance. The said lover took pains to assure us that the two angels were not forced into the convent, that even every means were taken to perswade them from it. However he observed that the Florentines make bad husbands &c. The father of the girls was an humble spectator. When they had received<sup>1</sup> the compliments of their friends about an hour, they went in a sort of procession to the convent chapel. After some religious operations they were led up to the altar, kneeled at the feet of the priest who was seated in an armchair. After certain questions two ladies, who attended, stript them of their rich cloaths still kneeling before the altar, till they appeared all white in their stays & under petticoats. The nearer they approached to their birth suit the more I was affected. They were then cloathed in the black uniform of the nuns & Crowns put on their heads. After some other ceremonies they returned each with a lighted wax candle in their hands to the gates of the convent, which were shut. They knocked, kneeled down & sung, or rather attempted to sing an hymn. One of them was so much affected she could not utter, but her lovely eyes glazed with tears appeared to me sufficiently expressive to make a certain fiery place gape for the instituters of convents... When the gates opened we discovered the Mother Abbess & nuns drawn up in a sort of long cone before the entrance, also with wax tapers in their hands. After further hymning by the whole corps of nuns, the nuns elect entered & kissed them all round. The operation seeming finished I went away more uncomfortable than if I had seen a dozen rascals hanged.» (f° 159).

Florence gave Holroyd further information on cicizbeoism, and he writes to his bachelor uncle, Rev. Dr. Baker, « One might fancy that the Italian system of using other people's wives wou'd be particularly agreeable to persons that have shewn a dislike to matrimony. Therefore entirely for your sake I wish Cizisbeism to be introduced into England with the Italian way of thinking on the occasion. I am the

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<sup>1</sup> Rec<sup>d</sup> in MS.



more favourable to it, is I find so far from prejudicing society it makes it flourish. Neither husband nor relations are made uneasy by it, nor are the childrens characters in the least affected or the lady scandalous in old age. Italian ladies cramp their genius for some time after marriage untill they have had one or two children & then the family being stocked with heirs, they think themselves at liberty. However I must acknowledge that I do not beleive the Ladies are quite so extensively obliging as strangers generally imagine, nor do they surrender to every assault & [I believe] that many cizisbeos do not perform all the duties of the husband. A cizisbeo is as necessary furniture for a lady, to attend her when she goes abroad, as a footman is in England... (f° 160). There are also some ladies who have two attendants. One, content with the honour, does all the menial duties, the other is the favourite, & you may imagine has all the fun... This & the not drinking of health at dinner time are the only foreign customs I wish introduced into England. The last I do not so much [insist] upon as too many innovations are not approved in a cou[ntry o]f liberty, property & a little excise. The first I cannot give up... As the women are married immediately from the convents it is no great loss that they are made no other use of except to breed for the two first years. During that time they acquire some knowledge of the world, polish, learn to dance, &c. &c. A lady of the first family assured me that she had never heard of her going to be married till the contracts were ready for signing. She told me she made no difficulties; she had scarce seen her husband but was very glad to leave the convent, as after the marriage is the season for sporting in thois country. The ladies practice being very agreable, pay great attention to their persons & of consequence are much longer fit for service than in certain islands, which is contrary to the common recieved notion in England. You must not imagine that the husbands are idle all this time. They generally cizisbeo a friends wife & all goes very comfortably & socially. » (f° 161).

Holroyd was, he says, « a most abandoned vagabond during [his] stay at Florence »... and « never failed one evening at an opera, play or assembly », operas and plays being very cheap, and « the women intolerably agreable ». Though he passed « several mornings » in the Gallery he mentions it once only in his letters, and merely because he felt his people expected from him an account of the Venus, which he admired for « the plumpness & delicacy of the flesh, the elegance & turn of the whole figure » (f° 161). Clearly neither the Uffizi, nor for that matter any work of art, had anything to do with his reluc-

tance to leave « the amiable city of Florence, of which to express my approbation let it suffice to say that, in comparison of it, I never was sorry to leave any place, & that if I had only my own amusement to consider I shou'd at least have passed the winter there, but such is my virtue & resolution that I even instigated my companions to a departure. » (f° 160).

At Sienna, « famous for being the residence of St. Catherine », they were shown the window « by which Jesus Christ entered when he visited her », and told her story which, most irreverently, he repeats for the edification of his family : « *It is as follows. Jesus Christ after a considerable courtship married her with great form & ceremony. The Virgin Mary, St. John & some others were present & King David was brought from heaven to play on the harp during the feast. This history is really elegantly wrote in Italian & mentions many other circumstances full as extraordinary, such as the Devil disturbing them on all occasions, &c. These nuptials are supposed to have happened only about 400 year ago. The ring with which Jesus Christ wedded her is preserved with great care.* » There follows a disquisition on relics and miracles in Italy : « *There are several choice collections of curiosities in Italy commonly called relicks, among which are a peice of Noah's rainbow, a finger of the Holy Ghost which is always fresh, a ray of the star that directed the Wise Men, Moses's Horn &c. As to a tear of Jesus Christ & some of the Virgin Mary's milk, so many collections have them that they are scarce worth mentioning. The study of these antiquities is only cultivated by the priests, common people & travellers... The principal advantage Italy has over England is in the number of these curiosities & miracles which are very frequent here, notwithstanding they have long ceased in that heretick country, Great Britain. One of the best attested of the latter that I met with, was at Lucca. A soldier had lost his money & in his bad humour threw a stone at an image of the Virgin with the Infant Jesus in her lap, which coming directly towards the head of the infant, he jumped from her right to her left arm to avoid it & has remained there ever since. The earth immediately opened for the soldier, swallowed him up, flames issuing from thence. I saw the hole. It goes directly to Hell. It is covered by an old trap door & padlocked. It is in a church. An horrible noise is heard there annually on the nativity of the Virgin & when a Dog is let down by a chain & dragged up again he is singed. There is only one objection to the story, viz. that it is contrary in an essential particular to the universal opinion of divines who hold that the way to the above mentioned place is very*



*wide whereas the aforesaid is so narrow that a lady cou'd not conveniently descend with an hoop.* » (f<sup>os</sup> 162-3).

Coming to Rome a month earlier, Gibbon wrote in his journal <sup>1</sup>: « depuis le Pont Milvius j'ai été dans un songe d'antiquité » and every one knows the famous lines of the Autobiography : « After a sleepless night, I trod, with a lofty step, the ruins of the Forum ; each memorable spot where Romulus stood, or Tully spoke, or Caesar fell, was at once present to my eye. » <sup>2</sup> Holroyd's account of his impressions reads like a parody of Gibbon's : « There is not paper enough in the Pope's Dominions to contain an account of my extacies on visiting this town. I stroll about the ruins in hopes of seeing Scipio's, Cesar's & some other ghosts, but as yet have not met one of them. » (f<sup>o</sup> 160). No doubt he had already met Gibbon, — « there is a very rational set of English here » —, though he never speaks of him, not so much as mentions his name in all his letters home. Is he thinking of him busily running about, seeing everything under the tireless guidance of his energetic antiquarian ? « We are wonderfully busy... We shall be monstrous antiquarians. » (f<sup>o</sup> 163 v). Possibly. His pursuit of antiquities was more leisurely : « We are tolerably tranquil. To morrow we intend to wait on Horace at Tibur & the Cascade of the Praeeps Anio <sup>3</sup>. We intend also to call on Cicero at Fesculum very soon & for old acquaintance go to Alba longa &c. &c. » (f<sup>o</sup> 161 v). For contemporary Rome he certainly felt more interest. « *I have had the honour of seeing the Pope & Cardinals more than once. They are really very like other people, except the Pope who is so overwhelmed with vestments that he much resembles a tortoise with a little head standing out* » (f<sup>o</sup> 163), he wrote in December, and in January : « *The Pope is a good kind of man but what disrespectfull young men call an old lady. The most glorious transactions of his pontificate are an order forbidding the wicked sex to appear in Church without veils, & prohibitions of more naughty immodest books than were thought worthy of notice by his predecessors.* » (f<sup>o</sup> 164). Late in February or early in March he was invited, a favour he had solicited, to go and kiss the Pope's toe : « *As most English of distinction have of late years been introduced*

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon's *Journey from Geneva to Rome*, October 2, 1764.

<sup>2</sup> *The Miscellaneous Work*, vol. i, p. 196.

<sup>3</sup> *Carm.*, I, vii, l. 13.

*to the Pope's toe I thought it necessary to perform the humiliating operation, or rather curiosity induced me. The old gentleman was extremely gracious, rubbed his face & head, smiled, attempted to laugh, uttered great respect & esteem for the English nation, acquainted me that England had produced many great men, finally assured me he shou'd be very glad to be of any service to me or give me any assistance in his territories. The ceremonial is to kneel on one knee soon after entering his room, when arrived about the middle to kneel a second time, & having approached him, kneel on both knees, & salute his foot. He makes certain significant gestures as if sorry to give so much trouble, but keeps his foot flat on the ground. On retiring, the foot is rekissed & the same quantity of kneeling performed. He was sitting at a writing table without a single attendant in the room. » (f<sup>os</sup> 168 v-169).*

The Old Pretender, James III for the Jacobites, had been living at Rome ever since Clement XI had invited him to his Dominions, but in 1764 he had long been an invalid, never leaving his palace and even his bed. He had been dying time and again, but did not actually die until 1766. The English at Rome felt some curiosity towards him and his sons, and Holroyd wrote on the 5th of December : « *Great will be the disappointment to many if the Pretender does not die soon. We have been flattered that he cannot hold out long. A most superb funeral is expected. Considerable preparations were made about two years ago when it was thought he cou'd not live, which are now all in readiness. He has been given over since my arrival & continues very ill.* » (f<sup>o</sup> 163). But a month later : « *The Pretender will not be so good as to indulge us with a fine funeral. I consider it as very disobliging, especially as it must be the same thing to him whose principal amusement is moving from one bed to another. Cardinal Stewart is better provided for than probably he wou'd have been if son of a real King of Great Britain. He has a very great income. He has great employments. His abilities are far from being troublesome to him, so that he is free from the anxieties & inconveniences of a man of consequence.* » (f<sup>o</sup> 164 v).

One of Holroyd's aunts had expressed the desire of possessing his portrait. Rome was the place for it and he wrote her brother : « *I have been painted since my arrival here. It is a full length & so well done that it has gained the painter great credit. It is a capital performance & am told it is impossible for a picture to be more like. My first design was to be drawn in regimentals full accoutred, with a troop of the Foresters attacking Hell to be represented at a distance,*

*the Devils in the shapes of Dragons, &c. sallying out, Royal Foresters leaping down their throats & some, having cut their way thro' the body, issuing out just under the tail. But I dropt that scheme recollecting [that if] my Aunts cou'd suppose such a probability of defeating the devils there wou'd be no possibility of keeping them in order. As it is a principal beauty in portraiture to have the figure properly employed my second intention was to be represented whistling but somebody objected that I shou'd not be heard. Finally I have been drawn standing on one leg, which has an exceeding good effect, the figure being well employed.* » (f° 169).

John Wilkes, who had gone to Paris after the duel with Samuel Martin in which he had been severely wounded, was living at Naples now. Expelled from the House of Commons in January 1764, found guilty of reissuing N° 45 of the *North Briton*, he thought it inadvisable to return to England for the moment. From Naples he came for a few days to Rome and Holroyd wrote to his uncle : « *On Wilkes's arrival here all the British travellers visited him except Lord Mountstuart<sup>1</sup>, the gentleman that travels with him & another Scotch gentleman. He brought with him a most exquisits female, an Italian that he collected at Paris. He is gone to Naples & intends to remain a year there. He is preparing to publish Churchill's works with notes & an History of England from the Revolution ; a considerable part of the latter is already finished. He says he found Paris so agreeable that he shou'd never have been able to do any business there, therefore retired to Naples remarkable for the best climate & situation & most disagreeable inhabitants. He is well & in great spirits & finds no inconvenience from his wound, except on change of weather. The second day after his arrival I dined with him at Lord Abing[don's]<sup>2</sup>. He staid but a few days. I was in his company four or five times, & was m[uch] entertained. He is a charming, wicked, honest, jolly, candid sort of fello[w]. I shou'd be glad your sisters had an opportunity of drinking a bottle wi[th] him. They wou'd be very happy together. There is no foundation for the repo[rt] of his being obliged*

<sup>1</sup> The Earl of Bute's son was then travelling in Italy, with P. H. Mallet (the historian of Denmark) for his tutor, and Boswell. See *Boswell on the Grand Tour*, ed. by F. Brady and F. A. Pottle, New York..., 1955, passim.

<sup>2</sup> Willoughbie Bertie, 4th Earl of Abingdon (1740-99). See *Miscellaneous Works*, 1814, vol. i., p. 200, Lord Sheffield's note.

to leave France. The D. of Choiseuil sent to acquaint him that he might remain there as long as he pleased & sh<sup>d</sup> not be molested. — N. B. I do not mean to become a Jacobite or rebel by having been in his compa[ny] [any] more than I intended to acknowledge the Pope's supremacy by kissing the cross embro[idered] on his slipper. » (f<sup>o</sup> 169).

It was a rainy winter and though « the Pope had prayed hard to convert the bad weather », he had met with « little success ». Early in February, however, there was a change for the better. Just in time for the races, the great event with which the Carnival opened. « *The Church is vastly gay at present. Their races are begun, but neither the Pope, Pretender, or cardinals are able to ride & no other persons are permitted. The horses carry nothing but a certain quantity of spurs bouncing about their sides. The course is not altogether the same as that at York. The horses run upwards of an English mile along a paved & the most publick street not wider than Drury Lane of glorious memory, a row of coaches being drawn up on both sides. Most of the company in coaches, chaises, on foot, servants, rabble &c. are in masquerade. This pleases me much. The handsome women are cautious not to keep their masks on too long & the homely are as obliging by never taking theirs off. By which means I can fancy such as are well made & smart, to be good peices & the fantastical dresses of the others are more entertaining than their faces wou'd be. Here you may see Christian women, princesses &c. &c. in mens cloaths, & Christian men in womens. These without masks. A man in womens cloaths driving a coach has a sweet effect. The ladies have a merry custom of throwing small white balls rather larger than peas by handfulls at the gentlemen they mean to favour... The best coaches are exhibited, many of which for taste are worthy of a place at a Lord Majors shew. Liveries are very rich, if the servants are not in masquerade. Each coach horse has not only trappings and harness sufficient for a squadron but also a large quantity of little bells dispersed about him, even round his legs in the form of bracelets, altogether charming. The coaches move up and down the street except during the few moments that the horses run, affording the company an opportunity of reviewing itself. This operation continues about three hours.* » (f<sup>os</sup> 166<sup>v</sup>-167).

Holroyd and another Englishman were not mere spectators of the amusements of the carnival, but contributed their own little frolic : « *As my dearest bitch Lady Mary has had a very melancholy winter I thought it necessary to indulge her once with a view of these fine*

things, therefore proposed to — <sup>1</sup>, who also has a beloved bitch, that they shou'd go together in a coach to the masquerade. We permitted them to invite two dogs of their acquaintance to fill the coach. Not depending upon the discretion and sedateness of the four friends we were obliged to tye them upon the seats to their proper places where they behaved very becomingly & from whence they had a very good view of the company & sports, as the sides of the coaches in this country can be let down. Our faithfull favourites having often attended us, we thought we cou'd not do less than once wait upon them. Therefore masked, rolling ourselves up in skins, an humble imitation of bears, we stationed ourselves on the top of the coach from whence had an opportunity conformable to our bearish characters of pelting all our acquaintance to whom we were at that time utterly incog: with the white composition shaped like peas, according to the Roman custom. As it wou'd not have been decorous for anything like Christians to attend beasts, our coachman & servants were equipt as devils. The Romans were so rude as to astonish by their general acclamations & applause the amiable brutes who performed the procession with the utmost dignity & solemnity & notwithstanding they preserved the most respectable gravity throughout the whole, yet they innocently occasioned more boisterous laughing & merriment than is usual. N. B. It is reported & I fear not without foundation that the two gentlemen dogs (who had not been accustomed to ride in a coach) were so contemptuous as frequently to put out their tongues at the company. » (f<sup>o</sup> 168 v).

The carnival over, it was time to leave Rome for Naples, all the more so that the climate might do some good to one of the three companions, Bolton, who was consumptive and clearly getting worse every day. « We departed from Rome the 15th of last month & after a journey ornamented by the most execrable roads & inns you can imagine we arrived here well content that our bones were not broke or carcasses devoured by the myriads of vermin. There is nothing in which Italy exceeds England more than in its fine breed of bugs & it is charming to see how familiar & tame they are, creeping about on all sides. There are some people so extravagant as to dislike them but I suppose they apprehend it wou'd be an endless work to destroy them or are fearfull that a plague wou'd be the consequence arising from the putrefaction of so many bodies. » (f<sup>o</sup> 170 v).

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<sup>1</sup> The name here has been obliterated.



At first, their stay at Naples was quite pleasant and interesting. They had taken apartments overlooking the bay and harbour. There was an excursion to the ruins of Capua, another to the summit of Vesuvius, and a presentation at court. « *Soon after my arrival I was presented to the King at his residence fifteen miles from this town. His Majesty is past fourteen. It is a little puny white thing with a very good natured countenance. He is very clever as to managing little puppet shews. I do not hear that he is taught anything else, not even French, which is thought a necessary part of education for all other princes. At sixteen he is to be of age & rule over many thousand miserable subjects.* » (f° 171). On the way from Rome, Holroyd had been struck by the contrast between the richness and fertility of the country and the universal misery. « *Wretchedness seems to be in perfection in the towns thro' which we passed.* » This wretchedness gradually came to prey upon his spirits. « *I have no where seen more misery in the streets.* » « *This charming country is in the possession of the vilest animals.* » And most of these animals are thieves and murderers. « *Thievery is practised to the utmost perfection ... it is not an uncommon sight to see a person stabbed in the street even in the day time.* » Living in the midst of such a population was unpleasant. Bolton's increasing weakness added to Holroyd's discomfort. He was now alone with him ; Ridley had gone to Ischia with his rheumatism. The country air might do good to the poor consumptive. They found lodgings at some little distance from the villa which Wilkes had let, where he was living « *very retired* ». Holroyd and Wilkes had taken to each other at Rome. They gladly resumed their acquaintance and met every day. Some time in May, Holroyd and Bolton had to find another place : « *My invalid friend [and I] have been obliged to quit our country mansion and, [as] it was not proper for him to be in the town, were necessitated to accept the friendly offer of part of the Outlaw's house. He does not brag of being a Christian but he has some of the principles, which induced him to invite a sick man to his house where he has exhibited great benevolence.* » (f° 175). But Wilkes's kindness, his enchanting conversation could not remove the gloom to which Holroyd was now a prey, profoundly affected as he was by Bolton's approaching end. Writing to his mother on the 4th of June, he concludes his letter : « *Thus goes the world sometimes unpleasantly & I find myself in such an unpleasant humour at present that I shou'd not have epistolized you but to avoid the appearance of neglect & apprehensive I might not have an opportunity of writing again for some time. I have attempted to squeeze out some gaiety but I find the dismal has prevailed.* »



(f° 175 v). Two days later, Holroyd and his « invalid friend » left Naples on board the *Centurion*, the man of war under Commodore Harrison, who, according to Boswell<sup>1</sup>, commanded the British squadron in the Mediterranean. But, far from benefiting from the sea-air, as had been hoped, Bolton continued to get worse and died two days after their landing at Genoa.<sup>2</sup>

Holroyd's next letter was addressed from Marseilles at the beginning of August, but it seems to have got lost. What he did between the death of his friend at Genoa, and August when he was in the south of France, is therefore unknown. From Marseilles he returned to Genoa, went on to Milan, Parma, Bologna, Ferrara, Padua and Venice, where his Italian travels came to an end. After twelve days in the last place, he hurried on to Vienna and Germany. Not until he got to Vienna did he recover some of his accustomed gaiety and give any account of his doings. But he was now travelling alone. The best part of his Grand Tour belonged to the past.

G. BONNARD.

N. B. In all the quotations Holroyd's spelling has been preserved, but neither his punctuation nor his use of capitals. Words or parts of words which were torn away on opening the letters have been placed within square brackets.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Journal of a Tour to Corsica*, ed. by M. Bishop, London 1951, pp. 53-4.

<sup>2</sup> See Lord Sheffield's note in *Miscellaneous Works*, 1814, vol. ii., pp. 64-5.