Giraud at their head, who had made him forget his English inhibitions.

We do not know what became of Giraud, who at this point disappears from the purview of Byron scholarship. A good knowledge of Italian, English, and Greek would have prepared him for a responsible position in some trading company. He seems to have been a spirited lad: the boy who complained that the priests "troubled his head" had earlier (in 1810) been "taken up by the guard, perhaps for some mimicry of the Turkish authorities."\(^{113}\) It seems a shame to lose sight of him. Perhaps the annals of Valletta or Naples or Athens will one day yield information. Did he ever come to identify his patron-lover with the famous poet and leader of the struggle for Greek independence? We do not know. But he may have remembered his liaison with the English lord as the happiest and most notable adventure of his boyhood. And Byron, who later managed to make the lives of so many women miserable, must have looked back on the affair with a certain satisfaction.

\(^{113}\) February 14, 1810, BB, 1:231.
England and "Thyrza"

Byron proceeded home in a dejected mood, sorry to leave Greece and plagued by a variety of maladies. His fever returned; he had hemorrhoids and gonorrhea contracted from womanizing with Greek and Turkish paramours. He was much concerned for the literary and worldly affairs of his friend Hobhouse and filled his letters with advice on his friend's writing and military career. There is also much mention of Matthews, whom he calls the "Citoyen" because of his atheistic radicalism. The idea of returning to England seems to have cast a pall over Byron's spirits. This must have been due in part to his awareness of how unwelcome bisexuals were in that realm.

It may, in fact, be plausibly argued that homophobia had reached a zenith in the British Isles in 1810 while Byron was abroad. The year saw a constitutional crisis: George III was now irremediably mad, and the Prince of Wales was declared Regent. The war with Napoleon dragged on, with no end in sight. Reaction, in the person of Lord Castlereagh, was firmly in the saddle both at home and in foreign affairs. In the two preceding decades only one notable liberal measure had been passed: the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. But the Wilberforce who had led that effort had also, as we have seen, founded the Society for the Suppression of Vice, and England's moral climate had become increasingly puritan. The Society, as it was popularly called, attacked cruel sports such as bear or bull baiting, but the pillory still survived, long after it had passed out of use in the more enlightened states of the Continent. Through it, all classes, rich or poor, pious or profane, could
vent their hostility to homosexuals, and their anger went publicly unrebuked either by conservative editors or liberal reformers.

We have seen how high a level homophobia rose in eighteenth-century England, both among the populace and the learned. Nevertheless, though the Society for the Reformation of Manners was successful in its campaign to have the death penalty revived, hangings remained sporadic in this period, apparently averaging only one or two per decade during the last half of the century. But after 1805 a change took place, and the statistics for the next thirty years show an average of about two hangings each year. What brought about this dramatic increase?

Unfortunately, in our present state of knowledge we can only speculate. There seems no doubt that public opinion in England was ready to accept an increase in hangings. Antihomosexual feeling and the fear of opposing it assured that there would be no protest. Most likely the restraining influences previously had been administrative and judicial. But political events at the opening of the nineteenth century had a tendency to counteract these. For one thing, England in 1800 was ruled by a government that, in reaction to the French Revolution, had turned away from the law reform sentiment that had gathered force in the 1780s. Then, when England renewed its war with Napoleon in 1803, after the brief Peace of Amiens, a panic swept the country as it became obvious that the French were massing

2. The Report of the Select Committee on Criminal Laws for 1819 gives statistics for executions for all crimes, including sodomy, for the eighteenth century. They are, however, incomplete; the figures for London and Middlesex cover the years 1699–1804, for the Home Circuit (another assize circuit with its center in London) 1689–1803. But many of the other circuits have no figures for the early eighteenth century, and some have none before 1800. No executions are listed for areas outside of London before 1800, and we may assume they were rare. The London and Middlesex Circuit hangings are listed as 1723–26, 2; 1727–28, 1; 1729–30, 1; 1776, 2; and 1796, 1; in the Home Circuit single hangings took place in 1761, 1764, 1776, 1786, and 1799 (British Sessional Papers, 1809, 8: 143–63, 168–73). See above, chap. 1, n. 12, for the nineteenth-century figures.
troops for an invasion. This popular hysteria strengthened the government and turned the country in a still more conservative direction. England's blockade of the Continent and Napoleon's counterblockade of England hurt trade and caused much economic suffering. Cotton strikes broke out in 1808, and pauperism spread. In 1810, the year the Regency was declared, riots took place in London when Sir Francis Burdett, a radical member of Parliament, was arrested in connection with a freedom-of-the-press issue. Next year Luddite riots erupted in Byron's Nottinghamshire; men were killed and mills burned; eventually seventeen men were hanged at York. In the midst of this civil unrest, the government no doubt found the hangings and pilloryings of men belonging to an unpopular minority a safe diversion for the rough energies of London's impoverished mobs. But executions were not simply a wartime phenomenon limited to the decade of the Regency, though feeling probably reached its height in that period. Hangings continued after Waterloo; indeed, more men were hanged in the twenty years following the Congress of Vienna than during the war.

Byron and his circle were keenly aware of these sentiments. This is amply attested by a second, much longer, letter from Matthews that survives in the Murray collection. Dated from Trinity College, Cambridge, on January 13, 1811, and addressed to Byron in Malta, it answered a letter (now apparently lost) that had reached Matthews in England. Previously unpublished and uncited, it throws a flood of light on the personal interests within Byron's coterie. The letter opens in the vein of Matthews's Falmouth greeting:

I am very happy to hear that you have been so well amused in Greece; and your plans for the future are so promising that I have no doubt your amusement will be progressive. A thousand thanks for your letter, of which I had given up all hopes. Cam did me great injustice when he said I was particular. Two would be the height of impudence in me, who am so indulgent towards myself. In one sense of the word, I would you
were a little more particular; that is to say, minute. In some of your passages I desiderate volumes of commentary. Not that there is any obscurity—the commentary I should require would be illustrative not explanatory. I ought to recollect, however, as you justly remind me, that Cam will prove a living commentary. And what he cannot fill up of your outline I shall hope for from you yourself when you gratify my eyes by your return.

In other words, Matthews has had no trouble deciphering Byron's code, but he wants more details. He tells Byron he has been amusing himself at Cambridge with feasting, card playing, and reading:

But no quoits [i.e., "coils" or coitus], the lack of we* I feel acutely. However, the sports I have mentioned, the tranquillity of academic bowers, & the congeniality of old scenes eke me out a tolerable existence. Quant à ma methode, my botanical studies have been sadly at a stand. I have however added a specimen or two to my anthology, but I have contemplated them only at a distance. So you can see I am still as ignorant as when you left me.

Then after an account of the king's madness, the new Regency, and a good deal about boxing, Matthews goes on to summarize the "gay news" of the day, mocking the stereotyped contemporary expressions of horror:

But the grand feature, I take it, in the last year of our history, is the enormous increase of Παίδερατία [paiderastia] (that damn'd vice). Good God! were the good old times of Sodom & Gomorrah to return, fire not water we* be the Englishman's element. At no place or time, I suppose, since the creation of the world, has Sodomy been so rife. With your friends the Turcomans to be sure, it's value (compared with fornication) is as 5 to 2. But that we* you get for £5 we must risque our necks for; and are content to risque them.

Your Lordship's delicacy we* I know be shocked by the pilloration (in the Hay M.) of a club of gents who were wont to meet in Vere Street (St. Clement's)—how all London was in an uproar on that day, & how the said gents were bemedled and beordured. . . . Every Newsp that one casts one's eye upon, presents one with some instance. Take a few that just occur to my recollection. A sandman for pedicating one of his boys.
A sailor at Falmouth for forcible ditto of a boy. John Cary Cole, usher of a school, for ditto with some of his pupils, some of the "victims to his brutish passion" being under age of admis-
sibility to take an oath. An officer was s' to have cut his throat on
a charge of this kind.

Obviously, Matthews meant to inform and titillate Byron
with this account of pederasty in England, the topic to
which he devoted by far the most space in his letter. He
pokes fun at the rhetoric of the day—"damn'd vice," "will
be shocked"—and tries to maintain a light tone. There is,
however, a grim touch in his calligraphy. The initial capital
"II" at the beginning of "pideraslia" is enlarged to form a
gallows, from which a man dangles. His statement that
 sodomy has increased enormously was a standard jour-
nalistic cliché of the day. What he and the newspapers in
fact reported was an upsurge of police surveillance and ac-
tivity. The census of 1811 numbered over 12 million in
Great Britain, 1 million of whom lived in London. If we ac-
cept Kinsey's estimate of 10 percent, this would mean there
would have been about 400,000 adult male homosexuals in
the country and over 30,000 in London. Given the Draco-
nian laws, there may have been less actual sexual behavior,
but the number of self-identified homosexuals may have
approximated to these figures. Undoubtedly the score or
so of arrests in 1810 could have been multiplied a hundred-
fold had the authorities pursued their policy of entrapment
vigorously enough. Living a quiet life in a university town,
Matthews followed the metropolitan police news with obvi-
ous avidity. In the days before gay liberation, this was al-
most the only way an isolated homosexual could assure
himself that he and his friends were not alone in the world.
To be in the public eye meant to be the object of scandal
or of criminal proceedings threatening jail, the pillory, or
the gallows. It was chiefly through a sense of common
danger —"we risque our necks"—that homosexuals like
Matthews affirmed a sense of what would today be called
gay solidarity.
The most notable of the episodes Matthews refers to was the Vere Street case, which probably attracted more publicity than any trial for homosexuality before Oscar Wilde. On July 8, 1810, the police had raided the White Swan in Vere Street, a popular gay tavern. The *Alfred and Westminster Evening Gazette* gave details that throw light on police methods and show how dangerous it was for homosexuals to congregate socially, even in a private club. Plain-clothes officers had “gained admittance by some finesse, into the back parlour, which was the principal rendezvous of these miscreants; and after being at first a little suspected of coming there as spies, they were at last considered as persons of the same propensity, and treated without reserve.” Most of the men were charged with “assault with the intention to commit sodomy,” and six were sentenced to stand in the pillory.

Another pillorying before the Lord Mayor’s residence at Cornhill on September 25 gave some hint of what was to follow two days later. So great was the crowd that the balustrades of the Mansion House collapsed, and six or seven spectators broke their legs. The “unfortunate sufferers,” an anonymous contemporary account tells us, “were taken into the Mansion-house by the Lord Mayor’s private door, where they received personally from his Lordship every kind attention.” Of Joshua Vigerus, the man who was pelted, the journalist noted in conclusion: “The head of this wretch when he reached Newgate, was compared to a swallow’s nest. It took three buckets of hot water to restore it to any thing like a human shape. Though much bruised and battered, the fellow is in no danger, but he is at present totally blind.”

In Regency London, the news that a homosexual suspect had been apprehended was enough to bring a hostile

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mob to the scene. Repeatedly, press accounts stress that arrested men were in danger of their lives. Large bodies of police were required to escort them to the courts. The same journalist tells us that when the occasion of the Vere Street arrests was known, it was with "the utmost difficulty the prisoners could be saved from destruction." Those dismissed without conviction were immediately attacked: "A numerous crowd of people, who had collected at the door, assailed them with sticks and stones, which the constables could not completely prevent, though they were about forty in number."

On September 27 the pillorying of the Vere Street "miscreants" attracted an enormous crowd in London, variously estimated at from thirty to fifty thousand. The center of the city was paralyzed for a day; shops were shut from Newgate to the Haymarket, where the men were to be exposed. The fullest account of the event is given in a pamphlet entitled The Trying and Pilloring of the Vere Street Club. Since this book is rare and no copy exists at the British Library, I shall quote it at some length. It describes in unique detail the ritual of degradation.

At an early hour, the Old Bailey was completely blockaded, and the increase of the mob about 12 o'clock put a stop to the business of the Sessions. . . . Shortly after 12, the ammunition wagons from the neighbouring markets appeared in motion. These consisted of a number of carts which were driven by butchers' boys, who had previously taken care to fill them with the offal, dung, &c. appertaining to their several slaughter-houses. A number of hucksters were also put in requisition, who carried on their heads baskets of apples, potatoes, turnips, cabbage-stalks, and other vegetables, together with the remains of divers dogs and cats. The whole of these were sold to the public at a high price, who spared no expense to provide themselves with the necessary articles of assault.

A number of fishwomen attended with stinking flounders and the entrails of other fish, which had been in preparation several days. These articles however were not to be sold, as

4. Ibid., p. 6.
5. Ibid., pp. 13-14.
their proprietors, hearty in the cause, declared they wanted them for their own use.  

The occasion was attended with a good deal of ceremony, much of it protective and intended to constrain the mob's violence within the prescribed limits:

The Sheriffs and City-Marshal arrived about half-past 12, with more than 100 constables, mounted and armed with pistols, and more than 100 on foot. This force was ordered to rendezvous in the Old Bailey Yard, where a caravan, used occasionally for the purpose of conveying prisoners from the gaols of London to the hulks, waited to receive the culprits. The caravan was drawn by two shaft-horses, led by two men, armed with a brace of pistols. The gates of the Old Bailey Yard were shut, and all strangers turned out, after which the miscreants were all brought out, and placed in the caravan. Ames began a laugh, which induced his vile companions to reprove him, and they all sat upright, apparently in a composed state; but, having cast their eyes upwards, the sight of the spectators on the tops of the houses operated strongly on their fears, and they soon appeared to feel terror and dismay. Directly the church-clock went half-past 12, the gates were thrown open, the mob at the same time attempting to force their way in, but they were repulsed. A grand sortie of the police was then made, and about 60 officers, armed and mounted as before described, went forward with the City-Marshal. The caravan went next, followed by about 40 officers and the Sheriffs. The first salute received by the offenders was a volley of mud, and a serenade of hisses, hootings and execration, which compelled them to fall flat on their faces in the caravan. The mob, and particularly the women, had piled up balls of mud, to afford the objects of their indignation a warm reception; indeed, the depots in many places appeared like pyramids of shot on a gun-wharf. These were soon exhausted, and, when the caravan passed the old house which once belonged to the notorious Jonathan Wild, the prisoners resembled bears dipped in a stagnant pool.  

What is striking is the way in which the authorities, in effect, facilitated the expression of popular rancor. Foreign visitors were reminded, when they saw streetwomen tor-

6. Ibid., pp. 15-16.
7. Ibid., pp. 16-18.
menting the prisoners, of the women of the French Revo-
ination. Here, however, the police organized the semilyynch-
ing, which was supposed to stop short of killing, though it
was never certain that the exposed men would survive
their ordeal.

It is impossible for language to convey an adequate idea of the
universal expressions of execration which accompanied these
monsters on their journey. It was fortunate for them that the
weather was dry; had it been otherwise they would have been
smothered. From the moment the cart was in motion, the fury
of the mob began to display itself in showers of mud and filth of
every kind. Before the cart reached Temple-bar, the wretches
were so thickly covered with filth, that a vestige of the human
figure was scarcely discernible. They were chained, and placed
in such a manner, that they could not lie down in the cart, and
could only hide and shelter their heads from the storm by
stooping, which, however, could afford but little protection.—
Some of them were cut in the head with brickbats, and bled
profusely; and the streets, as they passed, resounded with the
universal shouts and execrations of the populace. . . .

Before any of them reached the place of punishment, their
faces were completely disfigured by blows and mud; and be-
fore they mounted, their whole persons appeared one heap of
filth. Upwards of fifty women were permitted to stand in the
ring, who assailed them incessantly with mud, dead cats,
rotten eggs, potatoes, and buckets filled with blood, offal,
and dung, which were brought by a number of butchers' men
from St. James's market. These criminals were very roughly
handled.8

The unprecedented sensation caused by the Vere Street
pillorying tempted newspapers to discuss a topic usually
reported only tersely in the crime columns. Almost every
London paper had a substantial report. Many felt the need
to editorialize, and their comments provide a rare survey
of opinion on a matter not often openly discussed. Some
antiwar papers, like the Morning Chronicle, tried to exploit
English xenophobia by ascribing homosexual conduct to
foreign influence, calling it a crime "horrible to the nature

8. Ibid., pp. 21–22, 19.
of Englishmen, the prevalence of which we fear we must ascribe, among other calamities, to the unnecessary war in which we have been so long involved. It is not merely the favour which has been shewn to foreigners, to foreign servants, to foreign troops, but the sending our own troops to associate with foreigners, that may truly be regarded as the sources of the evil."9 (Nearly all the Vere Street men, in fact, belonged to the English working class.) None of the papers expressed any sympathy with the battered men. Two thought "some of them . . . cannot survive the punishment; and should it prove their death, they will not only die unpitied, but justly execrated by every moral mind throughout the universe,"10 the last phrase demonstrating the difficulty Regency England had in imagining standards different from its own. When editors did comment on the severity of the ordeal, it was to complain that it had not been sufficiently harsh. The *Morning Advertiser* thought "the annals of the pillory never furnished an instance in which popular vengeance was carried to greater extent." But this was not enough: it hoped "to see an Act passed in the ensuing Session [of Parliament] to make the attempt of this abominable offence capital."11 In effect, this would have made any homosexual who responded to a stranger's advances liable to hanging, should the stranger be a masquerading officer. The call for the extension of the death penalty was echoed by the *Morning Post*, the *Observer*, the *Statesman*, the *News*, and *Bell's Weekly Messenger*.

The anonymous author of *Trying and Pillory* pleaded for a change in the law on religious grounds:

> In the name of decency and of morality, for the sake of offended Heaven itself, we exhort our Legislators to take this

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subject into their most serious consideration in the ensuing Session. The monsters must be crushed, or the vengeance of Heaven will fall upon the land. Annihilation to so detestable a race can no otherwise be effected than by making every attempt of this abominable offence punishable with instant death, without benefit of Clergy. The present punishment cannot surely be deemed commensurate to an offence so abhorrent, and shocking to human nature; besides, is it not dreadful to have female delicacy and manly feeling shocked, and the infant mind perhaps polluted by such disgusting spectacles, and the conversation to which they unavoidably give rise?\textsuperscript{11}

The call for “annihilation” suggests the spirit behind such persecutions as the killing of early Christians in Rome, or anti-Semitic pogroms, or Hitler’s genocidal measures. Liberal papers such as the \textit{Examiner} uttered no protest, describing the occasion without comment. If they had any doubts, they were not willing to voice them in the face of popular hostility.

The \textit{Morning Chronicle}, at the end of its editorial, informed its readers that some unidentified “illustrious personages,” presumably legislative leaders or jurists, had at first objected to the proposed extension of the death penalty as “liberal.” But these men were apparently not able to withstand the hysteria of the times, for the writer boasts that they are “now convinced of the right view” and are “zealously disposed to stemming a torrent of corruption that threatens to involve us in the gulph of infamy as well as ruin.”\textsuperscript{13}

Though no public protest was heard, some misgivings were voiced in private. Foreign observers who did not share English prejudices were appalled, rather after the fashion of the Western press reporting Islamic severity in our own day. Louis Simond, a French visitor who learned of the event while visiting Southey and Coleridge in the Lake District, wrote in his journal:

\begin{list}{\footnotesize}{\itemsep -0.2ex}
\item 12. P. 22.
\item 13. September 28, 1810. p. 3, col. 5.
\end{list}
We have just read in all the newspapers a full and disgusting account of the public and cruel punishment on the pillory of certain wretches convicted of vile indecencies. I can conceive of nothing more dangerous, offensive, and unwise, than the brutality and unrestrained publicity of such infliction. The imagination itself is sullied by the exposition of enormities, that ought never to be supposed to exist; and what are we to think of a people, and women too, who can for hours indulge in the cowardly and ferocious amusement of bruising and maiming men tied to the stake, and perfectly defenceless!  

A month later when Simond was in Edinburgh, "one of the Scotch judges (Lords of Session) expressed his marked disapprobation of the prosecution and punishment, and declared their courts would not countenance any such proceedings." Simond complained that such prosecutions strengthened the hands of blackmailers and noted that "several persons of distinction were mentioned, now prosecuted in England, or threatened with vexatious charges of the same nature; which, false or true, inflict provisionally shame, ridicule and exile." We shall identify one shortly.

The Vere Street prosecutions led to more serious sentences for a man and a boy. Matthews had visited the pair, accompanied by another member of Byron’s Cambridge circle, Scrope Davies, and described the occasion for Byron near the end of his long letter of January 13:

Lastly I will mention a lieutenant Hepburn, for amusing himself with Thomas White (16), a drummer boy. These two last I saw in Newgate, where they lie under sentence of death. Davies, who accompanied me, agreed with me that the lieutenant’s piece was scarcely worth hanging for. There are a few curious circumstances relating to this last affair. The lieut. was first smitten in the Park, employed another drummer boy to bring T. W. to him. T. W., who appears to have been a practised cined (ready made to his hand) answered him "that if he wished to do anything with him he had better meet him at

15. November 17, 1810, ibid., p. 494.
a house in Vere Street." And the constupration actually appears to have taken place in the very room where the above-mentioned friends were dining, nor does s't Hep", appear to have at all regarded them. We also saw Pol Fox and Pol Lane [two of the Vere St. coterie]. Such is the depraved state of our island. Nay, I am even informed, & yr lordship will hear with horror, that even the women rival our sex in irregularity of passion & that there are many among them, in the higher classes, who find in their own gender all that they wish for. A Lady of very high rank is mentioned to be very strongly thus addicted. By the way I should mention a report current this last day or two that Lt. Courtenay has set sail on his Yacht for America. His Devonshire exploits have become so notorious that the magistrates have intimated to him that he is in considerable danger.

No doubt Matthews's jaunty style was intended to bolster and to maintain his morale (and Byron's) by refusing to be intimidated. Nevertheless, his man-of-the-world pose is chilling. He has no word of pity for Hepburn and White, who were hanged two months later. And his cold-blooded reference to the boy as the older man's "piece" reflects the same cynicism Regency bucks showed in speaking of one another's mistresses.

The two victims were executed on March 7, 1811. The system required that persecuted men confirm its justice by showing contrition and remorse on the scaffold. The account in the Morning Chronicle was calculated to achieve this effect:

Yesterday morning, about five minutes before 8 o'clock, Ensign Hepburn, and ——— White, the drummer, a lad, only 16 years of age, for the perpetration of an unnatural crime, were brought on the scaffold, in front of the Debtor[s'] door, Newgate, and executed pursuant to their sentence. Their conduct since condemnation has been such as to evince a sincere contrition, and a just sense of the heinousness of their offence. They behaved in a manner becoming their unhappy situation; and after spending a few moments in fervent prayer and devotion, with the Rev. Dr. Ford, the Ordinary of Newgate, were launched into eternity amidst a vast concourse of spectators.16

Clearly, the *Morning Chronicle* reporter thought it his duty to extract all of the edification he could from the hangings, which he may not have witnessed. It was no doubt gratifying for readers to hear that homosexuals recognized the justice of society and could be brought to a desirable mental state by the noose. The less stereotyped *Times* account rings truer:

Yesterday morning, *Hepburn* (late an Ensign), and *White*, the drummer, for an abominable offence, were executed before the Debtors’ door, Newgate. *White* came out first; he seemed perfectly indifferent to his awful fate, and continued adjusting the frill of his shirt while he was viewing the surrounding populace. About two minutes after, *Hepburn* made his appearance, but was immediately surrounded by the clergyman, the executioner, his man, and others, in attendance. The executioner, at the same time, put the cap over Hepburn’s face, which of course, prevented the people from having a view of him. *White* seemed to fix his eyes repeatedly on Hepburn. After a few moments prayer the miserable wretches were launched into eternity. A vast concourse of spectators attended, The duke of Cumberland, Lord Seton, Lord Yarmouth, and several other noblemen were in the Press-yard.  

The *Times* report that the Duke of Cumberland was in the crowd is interesting. He was a younger brother of the Regent, who would have inherited the English throne (as he did that of Hanover) if the Duke of Kent had not been recalled from Quebec to marry and sire Victoria. Nine months earlier, his valet had been found murdered; in later years the radical press insinuated that the duke had killed him to hush up a homosexual intrigue with another servant.  

18. On the night of May 31, 1820, the duke had been found badly bloodied in his apartments at St. James’s Palace. His valet, Sells, was shortly after discovered in his room with his throat slit. One theory was that the valet had known of the duke’s “unnatural propensities” and had been killed to silence him. An investigating jury, led by the radical Francis Place, exonerated the duke of any guilt; the evidence pointed to the valet’s having committed suicide. However, rumors persisted for decades and led to a libel suit (which the duke won) in 1833 when a radical editor ac-
Hearing of these events in Malta, Byron can scarcely have felt encouraged on his homeward voyage. We know he received Matthews's letter from some lines he wrote to Hobhouse. It may have inspired the whimsical musings on the subject of suicide Byron jotted down on May 22 as "Four or Five Reasons in Favour of a Change," which begin:

1st At twenty three the best of life is over and its bitters double.  
2ndly I have seen mankind in various Countries and find them equally despicable, if anything the Balance is rather in favour of the Turks. 3rdly I am sick at heart.

Me jam nec faemina . . .  
Nec Spes animi credula mutui  
Nec certare juvat Mero.

[Neither maid . . .  
Nor the credulous hope of mutual hearts  
Nor drinking bout delights me now.] 19

And so on, through not four or five but seven half-serious reasons. The abbreviated line from Horace's "Prayer to Venus" reads in the original: "Neither maid nor youth . . .  
delights me now." By the ellipsis Byron emphasized what he omitted.

At sea three weeks later, Byron recounted to Hobhouse a startling experience he had had in Athens with Michael Bruce, a young Englishman who was traveling in the East with William Pitt's eccentric niece, Lady Hester Stanhope: "He made me a profession of Friendship, on the extremity of the Piraeus, the only one I ever received in my life, and certainly very unexpected . . . [But] I am too old for a Friend, at least a new one. Tell M I have bade adieu to every species of affection, and may say with Horace 'Me jam nec faemina' &c—he will finish the lines." Was Bruce's praised him of having been "surprised in an improper and unnatural situation with this Neale [another servant] by . . . Sellis" and of having murdered Sellis out of fear of exposure (Annual Register [1833], p. 92).

19. BLJ, 2:47.
emotional outburst a veiled declaration of love? Byron explained that "he is a little chivalrous & romantic and is smitten with unimaginable fantasies ever since his connection with Lady H. Stanhope.—However both her Ladyship & He were very polite, and asked me to go with them a 2d. time to Constantinople, but having been there once, and preferring philosophy at Athens, I said in my Convent."\textsuperscript{20} For "philosophy" we are no doubt meant to understand something else.

Hobhouse had left Byron in July 1810 and had arrived home just in time to encounter what Matthews called the "uproar" over the Vere Street scandal. He must have been appalled at the mood of the country. When Byron returned a year later, Hobhouse wrote to warn him the day after he landed, knowing how keen Byron was to share details of his life abroad with his close friends: "I sent a letter to you a month ago—in that I told you to keep the Mendel Monastery story and every thing entirely to yourself. I have not opened my mouth to Charles Skinner on any of those branches of learning. I will give you a good reason when we meet."\textsuperscript{21} What was the reason? Was Byron's name still linked with the compromised Edleston?

Byron's long-looked-for reunion with Matthews never took place. On the first of August Byron's mother died. Two days later Matthews was drowned. He had been swimming in the river at Cambridge, dived beneath some weeds, surfaced struggling among them, and was pulled down to his death. On the tenth Byron wrote to console Hobhouse, and on the twelfth, shaken by these intimations of mortality, made a will leaving "to Nicolo Giraud of Athens, subject of France, but born in Greece, the sum of seven thousand pounds sterling."\textsuperscript{22} He asked R. C. Dallas, his literary agent, to delay publishing Cantos I and II of Childe

\textsuperscript{21} July 15, 1811, \textit{LLB}, p. 90, n. 2.
\textsuperscript{22} "Directions for the Contents of a Will." August 12, 1811, \textit{BLJ}, 2:71.
*Harold* so that he could add a memorial note on Matthews. Perhaps Byron felt some debt to Matthews for helping him arrive at whatever degree of self-acceptance was possible in his day and age. Entertaining a high estimate of Matthews's intellectual attainments, he naturally took an interest in his literary remains. But, he reported to Hobhouse: "Not a scrap of paper has been found, at Cambridge, which is singular." When, eight years later, Byron wrote a long letter to John Murray from Ravenna, proposing some kind of memoir, he again took note of this mystery: "What became of his papers (and he certainly had many), at the time of his death, was never known. I mention this by the way, fearing to slip it over, and as he wrote remarkably well, both in Latin and English." Did some disapproving relative destroy his work? Byron himself was edgy about using their letters in any sketch: "I am afraid that the letters of Charles's correspondence with me... would hardly do for the public—for our lives were not over strict—and our letters somewhat lax upon most subjects." Given Regency attitudes toward homosexuality, Byron was putting the matter mildly. The memoir was never written.

On his return to England Byron took Hobhouse's cautions seriously and tried to repress his pederastic side. The evidence suggests this cost him some struggle. What his intentions were in the case of Edlestone is unclear. He seems to have acquiesced to the view that it would be imprudent to see him again since the mysterious scandal of 1810 had set whispers circulating. Then, three months after his return, Byron received another shock. On September 22, Ann Edlestone wrote that her brother had died of consumption in May and assured Byron of his continuing place in the young man's affections. Byron read her letter on October 9 and the next day wrote veiledly to his