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Charles Lewis Meryon  
Excerpt  
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CHAPTER I.

Introductory Remarks—Correspondence.

VOL. I.

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MEMOIRS  
OF  
LADY HESTER STANHOPE.

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CHAPTER I.

When Lady Hester Stanhope commenced her travels, in 1810, I accompanied her in the capacity of physician, until, after many wanderings in the East, I saw her finally settled on Mount Lebanon; when, being obliged to return to England for the purpose of taking my medical degrees at Oxford and London, after having passed seven years uninterruptedly in her service, I took leave of her. My successor, an English surgeon, disliking an Oriental life, left her, however, at the end of a year or two, and, at Lady Hester's request, I again revisited Syria. But I found that her ladyship had in the meanwhile completely familiarized herself with the usages of the East, conducting her establishment entirely in the

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Turkish manner, and adopting even much of their medical empiricism. Under these circumstances, and at her own suggestion, I again bade her adieu, as I then believed, for the last time.

It was my intention to have cultivated my professional pursuits in London ; but there were great difficulties to be overcome—difficulties which have been ably depicted in the graphic pages of a recent publication. I did not wait, however, to try the issue of this slow career ; years of travel had inspired me with other views ; and it was with much secret satisfaction that I resolved to avail myself of an opportunity which Lady Hester voluntarily threw open to me, of once more traversing the mountain solitudes of Syria. It is not altogether an idle tribute of respect and admiration for her character to say, that the prospect of resuming my former position afforded me real pleasure. Long habit had reconciled me to her eccentricities, and even to her violent and overbearing temper. I had a profound sense of her exalted nature, and I felt that her oddities and peculiarities weighed only with those who knew her merely by common report, and that they in no respect affected her intrinsic worth in the estimation of such as were intimately acquainted with the sterling qualities of her heart and understanding.

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I had been honoured with letters from her, in which she gave me reason to understand that she should be gratified by my presence in Syria; and I promptly expressed my readiness, in reply, to resume my situation near her person. The long intervals, however, which elapsed in the transmission of letters, (sometimes as much as four months) added to the uncertainty of what I should do, and the absolute necessity of doing something, induced me, while the correspondence was pending, to enter into a professional engagement with a gentleman of rank. When her anxiety to receive me, therefore, was definitively conveyed to me, I was placed in the painful dilemma of being obliged to apologize to her for not being able at that time to join her. This apology naturally generated a feeling of distrust in a mind so sensitive and impulsive—a feeling abundantly exhibited, in her own peculiar way, in the following extracts from letters received from her at this period. Some of these letters were written by herself, and some by her *protégée* Miss Williams,<sup>1</sup> at her dictation.

<sup>1</sup> Miss Williams was a young Englishwoman, who had been brought up in Mr. Pitt's family, and who had all along resided with Lady Hester Stanhope, as her humble companion. It is necessary to observe that it was a common custom with Lady

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*Extract of a letter from Lady Hester Stanhope to  
Dr. M.*

July 30, 1823.

\* \* \* \*

I shall not either scold or reproach you ; I only hope that the line you have taken will turn out in the end to your advantage. I confess I am sorry and mortified that, after having rendered me several services, you are still in a situation so little independent. Were I inclined to be angry, it would be with — ; for, had he been like the chevaliers of former times, he would have said, “ Doctor, however it may be inconvenient for me to part with you at present, I so much respect your motives, and so much admire your fidelity, that, so far from opposing, allow me to promote your views ; and I beg you will accept of this purse for your little wants. When you have finished with it, I trust you will consider me as your next

Hester, when she had any particular object in view, to write one version of the subject with her own hand, and to dictate another, which was to be considered as the expression of the opinions of the writer, but which to me, long habituated to the secrets of her cabinet, was easily recognised as emanating from one and the same source.

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friend ; and I flatter myself I may expect from you the same proofs of attachment."

But the world is spoilt ; no good feeling exists ; all is egotism. Had ——'s mind been as elegant as his horses, carriages, and servants were, when I saw them, years ago, he would not have acted thus, and taken advantage of a man's circumstances, to have made him act against his inclination.<sup>1</sup>

I have no right to demand permanent sacrifices of you or others. The time will come when you will see with deep regret whether or not I had taken into consideration your interests as well as my own present convenience. I was surprised at your offer, so often repeated, and less surprised at your conduct ; as a doubt often had occurred in my own mind, if temptations of any kind happened to be thrown in your way, whether or not you would have strength of mind to refuse present advantage and comfort. You have acted as you judged best, and as you thought circumstances authorized you to do ; but you never can persuade me that General Grenville, the soul of honour

<sup>1</sup> In justice to the honourable individual here alluded to, it is necessary to state that he was wholly ignorant of the correspondence going on between Lady Hester Stanhope and myself.

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and feeling, could ever have recommended a man to break his word. Had you simply asked him, before you had made up your mind, "Shall I keep my word and go, or accept of those offers? Give me, I do entreat, your candid opinion"—I know what it would have been. But, having decided, what would you have him say? that I should be angry? No: he knew me too well not to be aware that no sacrifice, which I did not believe to be a voluntary one, could have any value in my estimation.

I cannot explain my feelings without seeming to praise myself. I make one rule for my own line of conduct, and one for that of others, and have two separate judgments; I mean, one regulated by truth and feeling, and one after the fashion of what is thought right in the world. I never judge myself and those I really love by the latter. I wish them to be pure and highminded, and to have confidence in God's mercy, if they act from true principle. But you worldly slaves of *bon ton* must not be tried by such a test. Mr. Murray<sup>1</sup> was right—"She will not be angry,"—no, because she thinks you all children: I mean, the gay world, of which you now make a part.

<sup>1</sup> The late Mr. Alexander Murray, solicitor, of Symond's Inn.



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I need not have said all this, but it is a hint as to the future, when the folly and uselessness of modern ideas and calculations will be at an end. I have been thought mad—ridiculed and abused; but it is out of the power of man to change my way of thinking upon any subject. Without a true faith, there can be no true system of action. All the learned of the East pronounce me to be an *Ulema min Allah*,<sup>1</sup> as I can neither write nor read; but my reasoning is profound according to the laws of Nature.

I shall say nothing of this part of the world, where I had latterly announced your speedy arrival to some of my particular friends and to my family.<sup>2</sup> Your

<sup>1</sup> A heaven-born sage.

<sup>2</sup> Lady Hester does not here mean her relations in England. She had another family, adopted by her, in Arabia—the tribe of Arabs called the *Koreysh*. And, as many individuals, both among the green-turbaned Mussulmans, or *Sheryfs*, as they are called, the recognised descendants of Mahomet, and among the gentry of Syria who claim alliance with the noble tribes of the desert, were in the habit of frequent intercourse with her, it is to these she probably had announced my expected coming. She had a notion, founded on a very doubtful etymology, that the first Lord Chatham was descended from an Arabian stock, there being a tribe somewhat similar in name still existing among the Bedouins. How she could forget that Pitt was the family name, and Chatham a title of dignity,

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interest about matters here must now be at an end; and it fatigues me so to write, that, without it is a case of absolute necessity, I must give it up. I have no assistance. My two dragomans are low-minded, curious, vulgar men, in whom I can put no confidence. In short, they can only be called very bad, idle servants, having no one property of a gentleman belonging to them.

James's loss,<sup>1</sup> the general's death—all has afflicted me beyond description. I heard of James's affliction six months after. To write, not to write—no proper conveyance—what to say—after a year, perhaps, to open the wounds of his heart without being able to pour in one drop of the balm of consolation! What I say would be vain. He considers me as a sort of

superimposed, is not clear. But from this tribe of Arabs sprung Melek Seyf, a great conqueror; and, reasoning in this way, Melek Seyf was her ancestor, as tribes, like clans, are all one blood. This story, repeated over and over again, became current among the servants and in the villages; and the maids were accustomed to say, "Yes, my lady, they may be princes or emperors who come to see you, but your descent is higher than theirs—your ancestors were Melek Seyf, and the seven kings."

<sup>1</sup> The Hon. J. Stanhope's loss of his wife, Lady Frederica Murray, daughter of the Earl of Mansfield.