

# PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

A

Signed Autograph Letter  
from the Poet in Italy  
to his friend,  
Jefferson Hogg,

which marks the development of the Poet's style  
and convictions, from the passionate impulsiveness  
and ardent preoccupation with religion and politics  
of his youth, to the serenity permeated with classical  
feeling of this, his last letter from Pisa.

In the following month of July, Shelley was  
drowned in the Bay of Spezzia.

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October

1821

Copy

Bagni di Pisa.

October 22. 1821.

My dear friend

Horace Smith has just sent me your letter from Paris, where his wife has persuaded a physician to assure her that the climate of Italy would destroy her. You have perhaps already heard of my iniquity in seducing Hunt over to Italy. He is coming with all his children, to Pisa. What pleasure it would give me and him and all of us if you would follow his example. But law, that disease inherited from generation to generation, that canker in the birthright of our nation, that sieve through which our thoughts flow as fast as we pour them in, pens you in London at least for the greater part of the year.

I addict myself but little to walks of any length, but wander about the edges of the hills sometimes with my book, and live in a total intellectual solitude. I knew a very interesting Italian lady last winter, but she is now married, which to quote our friend Peacock, is you know, the same as being dead. I have employed Greek in large doses, and I consider it the only sure remedy for diseases of the mind. I read the tragedian Homer and,

Plato perpetually, and have translated the Symposium, the Ion, and part of the Phaedon. I selected the first piece on account of the surpassing graces of the composition, but I have no intention of publishing it. The Gorgias is now open before me, and I shall read it with double interest from the views which you suggest about it. Do you know the ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ and especially the sixth book of it? It is speculations on civil society and surely the foundations of true politics, and if ever the world is to be arranged upon another system than that of the several members of it destroying and tormenting one another for the sake of the pleasures of sense, or from the force of habit and imitation; it must start from some such principles. I congratulate you on your Demosthenic energy - to me the feat appears to require the OBEYOS of an entire DYNOS. I have tried a philippic; I find it horribly difficult - but I shall gather up my courage and assail him again.

I receive with delight your Milkwort - it reposes between the leaves of a folio Plato, whose incredible contractions and abominable inaccuracy torment me to death, as I have only 3 vols. of my own edition as yet here. I send you a flower which grows on the mountains,

“perche i Pisani veder Lucca non ponno,” and which when alive is very beautiful. I shall herborize myself and send you as I find them, whatever plants are rarest or peculiar to this country. I saw a great number of the Cryptogamia genus the other day which I had never remarked in England — ferns especially. There are also peculiar fleshy flowers and one that runs blood and that the peasants say is alive. You see the Gisbornes of course. I read Gothe's Faust with Mr. G. I advise you to read it — it has passages of surpassing excellence though there are some scenes which the fastidiousness of our taste would wish erased — as to Botany how much more profitable and innocent an occupation it is than that absurd and unphilosophical diversion of killing birds. Besides the ill task of giving pain to sensitive and beautiful animals this amusement of shooting familiarises people with the society of inferiors and the gross and harsh habits belonging to those sort of pursuits. How much I envy your walks — though I find my health would hardly allow me to share in them. I am glad to hear that you do not neglect the rites of the true religion. Your letter awakened my sleeping devotion, and the same evening I ascended alone the high mountains behind.

my house, and suspended a garland and raised a small turf altar to the mountain-walking Pan.

My health in the main, is much better than when I left England, but I am weak and with much nervous irritability. My spirits also are by no means good and I feel sensibly - *la noia e l'affanno della passata vita* - I have some thoughts, if I could get a respectable appointment, of going to India, as anywhere where I might be compelled to active exertion, and at the same time enter into an entirely new sphere of action. But this I dare say is a mere dream - I shall probably have no opportunity of making it a reality but finish as I have begun. Have you seen a poem I wrote on the death of Keats, a young writer of bad taste, but wonderful powers and promise. It is called *Adonais*. When you pass Olliers you may tell him I desired you to call for one. It is perhaps the least imperfect of my pieces. I do not write to Peacock who has something better to do than read scrawls, in the persuasion that you will tell him my news: and be so kind as to say he would oblige me very much in dispatching instantly all my books to me to the care of Messrs. Guebhard & Co, of

Leghorn. Gisborne will tell him how to send them if  
he finds any difficulty. Of course if he or you should  
wish to retain any of them they are much at your  
service.

Shall I see you ever in Italy? With what pleasure  
I should welcome you here I need not say - but both you  
and Peacock are bound to the oar - not like me by the  
chains of your sins.

Ever most sincerely yours

P. B. Shelley.

Jefferson Hogg, Esq<sup>r</sup>,  
N<sup>o</sup> 1. Garden Court,  
Temple,  
London.  
Angleterre.

will try to send them, if he finds any difficulty. If either  
of you or he should wish to obtain any of them they are  
much at your service. —

Shall I see you ever in Italy? With what pleasure  
I should welcome you here I need not say — but both  
you & Peacock are bound to the east — not like me  
by the chain of your sins — I am most sincerely yours  
P. B. Shelly

My dear friend

Yagni di Pisa, Oct. 20, 1871.

Arrau Smith has just sent me your letter  
from Paris, where his wife has persuaded a physician  
to assure her that the climate of Italy would <sup>be</sup> better  
for her. You have perhaps already heard of my iniquity  
in seducing Hunt over to Italy: he is coming with  
all his children to Pisa. What pleasure it would give  
me & him & all of us if you would follow his example.  
But how, — that disease inherited from generation to  
generation — that cancer in the birthright of our  
nation — that sieve through which our thoughts flow as  
fast as we pour them in, pervades you in London at least  
for the greater part of the year. —

I addict myself but little to walks of any length, — but  
wander about the edges of the hills some times with my birds,  
and live in a sort of intellectual solitude. I know a  
very interesting Italian lady last winter, but she is now  
married & I wish to quote one friend Peacock, as you  
know, the same as being dead. — I have an unpaid  
Greek in large boxes, & I consider it the only

some remedy for diseases of the mind. I read the *Tragedies*,  
Homer, & Plato perpetually; & have translated the  
Symposium, the Ion, & the part of the Phaedon.  
I selected the first piece on account of the  
surprising grandeur of the composition, but I had no  
intention of publishing it. The Gorgias is now  
open before me, and I shall read it with double  
interest from the view which you suggest about  
it. Do you know the <sup>Republic</sup> ~~Republic~~ & especially the  
last book of it? Its speculations on civil  
society are smothered the foundations of the ~~philosophy~~  
& if ever the world is to be arranged upon another  
system than that of the several members of it  
destroying & tormenting one another for the sake  
of the pleasures of sense, or from the force of  
habit & imitation, it must start from some  
new principles. I congratulate you on your  
Demosthenic energy - to me the feat appears to  
require the services of an entire *depos* - I have tried  
a philippic; I find it peculiarly difficult, - but  
I shall gather up my courage & assault him again.

I receive with delight your brickwort. It appears between  
the leaves of a folio Plato, whose incredible contractions  
& admirable inaccuracy torment me to death, as I have  
only 3 vols. of my own edition as yet. I send you  
a flower which grows on the mountain "perche" Pizani  
vedes Lucca non homo, & which when alive is very beautiful.

I shall bestir myself, & will send you as I find them  
whate'er plants are rarest or peculiar to this country.  
I saw a great number of the *Cryptogamia* genus  
the other day which I had never remarked in England -  
ferns especially. There are also curious fleshy *Polypus*,  
& one that runs blood & that the peasants say  
is alive. - You see the gibbous of course. I read  
Goethe's Faust with Mr. G. - and was a sad man you  
to read it - it has passages of surpassing excellence,  
though there are ~~some~~ <sup>some</sup> ~~parts~~ <sup>parts</sup> - which the fastidious  
-ness of our taste would wish erased. - As to being  
how much more profitable & innocent an occupation  
is it than that absurd & plain amphibological  
diversion of killing birds. Besides the ill taste of  
giving pain to sensitive & beautiful animals, the  
amusement of shooting furnishes people with the  
society of in persons of the gross & harsh habits belonging  
to that sort of pursuit. - How much I envy you  
Walker - though I for my health would hardly allow  
me to share in them. I am glad to hear that you  
do not neglect the rites of the true religion. You  
other awakened my sleeping devotion, & the same evening  
I ascended alone, the high mountain behind my house  
& suspended a garland, & raised a small turf altar  
to the mountain-walking Pan. (Hæc oves, ovibus & ovibus) -  
My health, in the main, is much better than when I  
left England, but I am weak & with much nervous irritability.  
My spirits also are by no means good, & I feel sensibly  
la noja e l'affanno della passata vita. - I have



some thoughts, if I could get a respectable appointment of going  
to India, or any when I might be compelled to  
active exertion, & at the same time enter into an entirely  
new sphere of action. — But this I dare say is a mere  
dream, & that I shall probably have no opportunity of  
making it a reality but finish as I have begun. — How  
you seem a poor I write on the death of Heath, & your

Dear

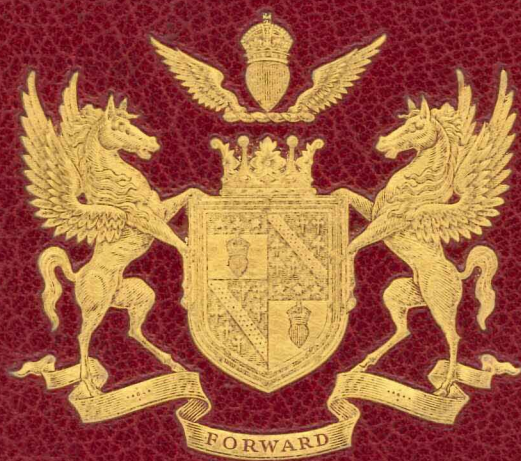
Jefferson Hogg Esq.

No. 1. Garden Court

Temple London  
England.



Water of bad taste, but wonderful power & perfume. It is called  
Sassafras when you pass through you may tell him I desired  
you to call for me. It is perhaps the best perfume of my species.  
I do not write to Pearson who has something better to do than  
write servants, in the persuasion that you will tell him any more.  
Do be so kind as to say, he would oblige me very much in  
dispatching instantly all my books to Peter me, in the  
care of Messrs. Gutterbar & Co. Leghorn. Give love will





P. B.  
SHELLEY

A. L. S.  
TO  
JEFFER-  
SON  
HOGG



1821

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, A. L. S., 22 October 1821,  
to Thomas Jefferson Hogg.

Bagni di Pisa, Oct. 22. 1821.

My dear friend

Horace Smith has just sent me your letter from Paris, where his wife has persuaded a physician to assure her that the climate of Italy would destroy her. You have perhaps already heard of my iniquity in seducing Hunt over to Italy: he is coming with all his children to Pisa. What pleasure it would give me & him & all of us if you could follow his example. But law,—that disease inherited from generation to generation—that canker in the birthright of our nature—that sieve through which our thoughts flow as fast as we pour them in, pens you in London at least for the greater part of the year.—

I addict myself but little to walks of any length,—but wander about the edges of the hills sometimes with my book, and live in a total intellectual solitude. I knew a very interesting Italian lady last winter, but she is now married; which, to quote our friend Peacock, is you know, the same as being dead.—I have employed Greek in large doses, & I consider it the only [p. 2] sure remedy for diseases of the mind. I read the tragedians, Homer, & Plato perpetually; & have translated the Symposium, the Ion, & the [deleted] part of the Phædon. I selected the first piece on account of the surpassing graces of the composition, but I have no intention of publishing it. The Gorgias is now open before me, and I shall read it with double interest from the views which you suggest about it. Do you know the republic [deleted] πολιτεία & especially the sixth book of it? His speculations on civil

society are surely the foundations of true politics, & if ever the world is to be arranged upon another system than that of the several members of it destroying & tormenting one another for the sake of the pleasures of sense, or from the force of habit & imitation; it must start from some such principles. I congratulate you upon your Demosthenic energy—to me the feat appears to require *σθεως* [strength] of an entire *δημος* [people]—I have tried a philippic; I find it horribly difficult,—but I shall gather up my courage & assail him again.

I recieve with delight your Milkwort—It reposes between the leaves of a folio Plato whose incredible contractions & abominable inaccuracy torment me to death, as I have only [indistinguishable letter deleted] 3 vols. of my own edition as yet here. I send you a flower which grows on the mountain “perchè i Pisani veder Lucca non ponno”, & which when alive is very beautiful. [p. 3] I shall herborize myself, & will send you as I find them whatever plants are rarest or peculiar to this country. I saw a great number of the *Cryptogamia* genus the other day which I had never remarked in England—ferns especially. There are also curious fleshy flowers, & one that has blood & that the peasants say is alive.—You see the Gisbornes of course.—I read Goethe’s *Faust* with Mr. G.—I advise you to read it—it has passages of surpassing excellence, though there are many [deleted] some scenes—which the fastidiousness of our taste would wish erased.—As to Botany how much more profitable & innocent an occupation is it than that absurd & [a word deleted] unphilosophical diversion of killing birds—besides the ill taste of giving pain to sensitive & beautiful animals, this amusement of shooting familiarises people with the society of inferiours & the gross & harsh habits belonging to those sort of pursuits.—How much I envy your walks—though I fear my health would hardly allow me to share in them. I am glad to hear that you do not neglect the rites of the true religion. Your letter awakened my sleeping devotion, & the same evening I ascended alone, the high mountain behind my house, & suspended a garland & raised a small turf altar to the mountain-walking Pan (*παν ορεισιβατος*)—

My health, in the main, is much better than when I left England, but I am weak & with much nervous irritability. My spirits also are by no means good, & I feel sensibly *la noia e l'affanno della passata vita*.—I have [p. 4] some thoughts, if I could get a respectable appointment, of going to India, or any where where I might be compelled to active exertion, & at the same time enter into an entirely new sphere of

action.—But this I dare say is a mere dream, & that [deleted] I shall probably have no opportunity of making it a reality, but finish as I have begun.—Have you seen a poem I wrote on the death of Keats, a young writer of bad taste, but wonderful powers & promise. It is called Adonais—when you pass Ollier's you may tell him I desired you to call for one. It is perhaps the least imperfect of my pieces. I do not write to Peacock who has something better to do than read scrawls, in the persuasion that you will tell him my news; & be so kind as to say, he would oblige me very much in dispatching instantly all my books to Pisa [deleted] me, to the care of Mess<sup>rs</sup>. Guebhard & Co. Leghorn. Gisborne will [top of p. 1] him how to send them, if he finds any difficulty. Of course—if you or he should wish to retain any of them they are much at your service.[long dash].

Shall I see you ever in Italy? With what pleasure I should welcome you here I need not say—but both you & Peacock are bound to the oar—not like me by the chain of your sins— Ever most sincerely yours

P. B. Shelley.

ALS, 4 pages. Double sheet, 24.6 x 18.4 cm.

Laid paper. Watermark: flowerpot.

Seal removed.

Postmarks: Pisa; FPO | NO · 8 | 1821. Postal fee: 1/11.

Address: Jefferson Hogg Esq<sup>r</sup>. | No. 1. Garden Court | Temple | Angleterre. [space] London | Inghilt [deleted].

Provenance: Hogg sale, Sotheby, 30 Jun 1948; *ex libris* Marquess of Queensberry; Sotheby, 11 Mar 1952. In a crimson full morocco binder (extra), with the Queensberry arms in gold on upper cover and in gold on spine: P. B. | SHELLEY | A. L. S. | TO JEFFER- | SON | HOGG | 1821. Listed in De Ricci, p. 136 (without number).

Published in *Shelley-Leigh Hunt*, ed. R. Brimley Johnson (London, 1928), pp. 333–335; Ingpen and Peck, VII, 311–313; Scott, 131–133; Jones, II, 359–362 (no. 667), with 5 substantive and 8 accidental variations from the Lewis MS.

Notes: 1. White (II, 454) refers to this letter as "Bod. Lib., MS. Shelley Adds d. 4"—a copy by Mary (as is that used by Johnson and owned by R. H. Bath), the error being pointed out, without reference to White, by Jones.

2. See Jones, II, 359–360, for Hogg's letter, 15 June, prompting Shelley's

reply. Hogg uses 25 Greek words—accounting for Shelley's deletion of *republic* in English.

3. Here published by permission of Frederick L. Jones and The Clarendon Press, Oxford.

From page 127 of Kendall, 1970