13 Lipson Grove Parthe Poteton 13. 1817. In I send you the 4 fait sheets If my brem, intitted "Laon V Esthon, or the Frevolution of the Golden City" I he him this commencement affords A Vafficient specimen of the worth. I Am conscious man that some of The conclusing cantes when "the plat trickens of human pupiron an brought han soon coitical situations of leverthing an written with mon mergy & chearness, of that to su a work of which worth is om of the gardification aims at by the Author, in a obsjointh state, is

in a certain degree improvements by work to speak to the common A the general im purpion. delementory im others of the human Wo werer you submit it to M. heart, so that, the it is the drong Morris fin dyment, in will make the of ticlena & worthing, it is when by mider premier of friender hip Attrama for the circumstances. Kow & natural affections. The whole from, with In sach The sam of in support to he land - two of the pist canto & part of the in Canotan trough of morten Guer, last is a men human stong withing In smallest in termix tim of Juper. hat without much attempt at haten of in ter femmer. In poor Cant much delineation of mahrmitan En anners. It is on fact a take is ander, in som measure a miting Muntation of July a herolution as brem, the very necessary to the might to supposed to take place in whoknep of the work. I say they, an European nation, actes when by because if it was all water with mainer of the first lant, I contract The opinion of what has been cathe / enoneously as Stanta / the modern so put that it should be interesting To any great number of freth philosoph, of contending with antint Actions of the Improsed advantage I have after fit in the progrep of deriver from them to thon who

Support them. It is a Berohitm of then him, that is, the hear interes as it were of the trench the volution, but produced by the influence of in dividual genies & out of general apposed to be, my here & heroim where names applar in the title. The friends have sa pupo To ma very high, & therefore Ich not don't a ray erreneous ju dymans Com words. So overer of the can leter min neither viny. I have section by in it a fair chence, & my wish then for is part, to town beheath you would purchase ony interest in the copy night, an anangement which if the

he my hith in the opinions of my friend Low byun to for aligh Kent of on power cample he. No an vanlager to you, & in In decon plan how for you an withing to be the pulli how of it will on my from account if such an arrangement Which I should in finitely preper, Cannot be made. July horren on you having the good nip it last to sen the shut to M. Moon i ask his opinion of the month formers Oraglis Milly

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, A. L. S., 13 October 1817, to [a publisher].

13 Lisson Grove North October 13, 1817.

Sir

I send you the 4 first sheets of my Poem, entitled "Laon & Cythna, or the Revolution of the Golden City."

I believe this commencement affords a sufficient specimen of the work. I am conscious indeed that some of the concluding cantos when "the plot thickens" & human passions are brought into more critical situations of development are written with more energy & clearness, & that to see a work of which *unity* is one of the qualifications aimed at by the author, in a disjointed state, is [p. 2] in a certain degree unfavourable to the general impression. If, however, you submit it to Mr. Moore's judgement, he will make due allowance for these circumstances.

The whole poem, with the exception of the first canto & part of the last is a mere human story without the smallest intermixture of supernatural interference. The first Canto is indeed, in some measure a distinct poem, tho' very necessary to the wholeness of the work. I say this, because, if it were all written in the manner of the first Canto, I could not expect that it should be interesting to any great number of people—

I have attempted in the progress of [p. 3] my work to speak to the common & elementary emotions of the human heart, so that, tho it is the story of violence & revolution, it is relieved by milder pictures

of friendship & love & natural affections.

The scene of [deleted] is supposed to be laid in Constantinople & modern Greece, but without much attempt at minute delineation of Mahometan manners. It is in fact a tale illustrative of such a Revolution as might be supposed to take place in an European nation, acted upon by the opinions of what has been called (erroneously as I think) the modern philosophy, & contending with antient notions & the sup-

posed advantage derived from them to those who [p. 4] support them. It is a Revolution of this kind, that is, the *beau ideal* as it were of the French Revolution, but produced by the influence of individual genius, & out of general knowledge. The authors of it are supposed to be, my hero & heroine whose names appear in the title.

My private friends have expressed to me a very high, & therefore I do not doubt a very erroneous judgement of my work. However of this I can determine neither way. I have resolved to give it a fair chance, & my wish therefore is first, to know whether you would purchase my interest in the copyright, an arrangement which if there [p. 5] be any truth in the opinions of my friends Lord Byron & Mr. Leigh Hunt of my powers cannot be disadvantageous to you, & in the second place how far you are willing to be the publisher of it on my own account, if such an arrangement, which I should infinitely prefer, cannot be made. —

I rely however on your having the goodness at least to send the sheets to Mr. Moore & ask his opinion of their merits.

I have the honor to be

Sir

Your very obed^t Ser Percy B Shelley [flourish]

ALS, 5 pages. Double and single sheet, 18.2×11.5 cm. Wove paper. No watermarks.

Provenance: Maggs, n.d. (lot 916 on p. 30 of sale catalogue) Listed in De Ricci ("Belonged in 1872 and 1886 to R. E. Egerton-Warburton, of Arley Hall, Northwich, Cheshire"), p. 290 (no. 340), as perhaps written to Longman & Co.

Published in Edward Dowden, *The Life of P. B. Shelley* (2 vols.; London 1886), II, 161–162; Ingpen, II, 558–559; Ingpen and Peck, IX, 250–251; Jones, I, 563–564 (no. 417), with 10 accidental variations from the Lewis MS.

Notes: 1. De Ricci's surmise about the recipient has substance, for Longman had in 1817 published Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh. But the letter may have been sent to Charles and James Ollier. For a review of Laon and Cythna's career see White, I, 547–552.

2. Here published by permission of Frederick L. Jones and the Clarendon

Press, Oxford.

13 Lisson Grove North
October 13. 1817.

Sir.

I send you the 4 first sheets of my Poem, entitled "Laon & Cythna, or the Revolution of the Golden City."

I believe this commencement affords a sufficient specimen of the work. I am conscious indeed that some of the concluding cantos when "the plot thickens" & human passions are brought into more critical situations of development, are written with more energy & clearness, and that to see a work of which unity is one of the qualifications aimed at by the author, in a disjointed state, is in a certain degree unfavourable to the general impression. If, however, you submit it to Mr. Moore's judgment, he will make due allowance for these circumstances.

The whole poem, with the exception of the first canto & part of the last is a mere human story without the smallest intermixture of supernatural interference. The first canto is indeed in some measure a distinct poem, tho' very necessary to the wholeness of the work. I say this, because, if it were all written in the manner of the first canto, I could not expect that it should be interesting to any great number of people.

I have attempted in the progress of my work to speak to the common & elementary emotions of the human heart, so that the it is the story of violence & revolution, it is relieved by milder pictures of friendship & love & natural affections.

The scene is supposed to be laid in Constantinople & modern Greece, but without much attempt at minute delineation of Mahometan

manners. It is in fact a tale illustrative of such a Revolution as might be supposed to take place in an European nation, acted upon by the opinions of what has been called (erroneously, as I think), the modern philosophy, and contending with antient notions & the supposed advantage derived from them to those who support them. It is a Revolution of this kind, that is, the beau ideal, as it were of the French Revolution, but produced by the influence of individual genius, & out of general knowledge. The authors of it are supposed to be my hero & heroine whose names appear in the title.

My private friends have expressed to me a very high, & therefore I do not doubt, a very erroneous judgment of my work. However, of this I can determine neither way. I have resolved to give it a fair chance, & my wish therefore, is first, to know whether you would purchase any interest in the copyright, an arrangement which, if there be any truth in the opinions of my friends Lord Byron & Mr. Leigh Hunt of my powers cannot be disadvantageous to you & in the second place, how far are you willing to be the publisher of it on my own account, if such an arrangement, which I should infinitely prefer, cannot be made.

I rely however on your having the goodness at least to send this sheet to Mr. Moore & ask his opinion of their merits.

I have the honor to be Sir Your very obed. Ser.

PERCY B. SHELLEY

A MAGNIFICENT LETTER OF FIVE PAGES TO HIS PUBLISHER DESCRIBING IN FULL HIS LONGEST WORK, "LAON AND CYTHNA."

[916] SHELLEY (PERCY BYSSHE, 1792-1822). Poet. A.L.S. to a Publisher. 5 pp., 8vo. 13, Lisson Grove North, 13 October, 1817. £375

One of the finest and most interesting letters written by Shelley in which he offers for publication his longest work "Laon and Cythna," of which he gives a long account. As Ollier accepted the publication of the book, this letter was evidently written to him.

"I send you the 4 first sheets of my Poem, entitled 'Laon & Cythna, or the

Revolution of the Golden City.'

"I believe this commencement affords a sufficient specimen of the work. I am conscious indeed that some of the concluding cantos, when 'the plot thickens' & human passions are brought into more critical situations of development, are written with more energy & clearness; and that to see a work of which unity is one of the qualifications aimed at by the author, in a disjointed state, is in a certain degree, unfavourable to the general impression. If, however, you submit it to Mr. Moore's judgment, he will make due allowance for these circumstances.

"The whole poem, with the exception of the first canto & part of the last, is a mere human story without the smallest intermixture of supernatural interference, The first canto is indeed in some measure a distinct poem, tho' very necessary to the wholeness of the work. I say this, because, if it were all written in the manner of the first canto, I would not expect that it should be interesting to any great

number of people.

"I have attempted in the progress of my work to speak to the common & elementary emotions of the human heart, so that tho' it is the story of violence & revolution, it is relieved by milder pictures of friendship & love & natural affections.

"The scene is supposed to be laid in Constantinople & modern Greece, but without much attempt at minute delineation of Mahometan manners. It is in fact, a tale illustrative of such a Revolution as might be supposed to take place in a European nation, acted upon by the opinions of what has been called (erroneously, as I think) the modern philosophy, and contending with antient notions & the supposed advantage derived from them to those who support them. It is a Revolution of this kind, that is, the beau ideal, as it were, of the French Revolution, but produced by the influence of individual genius, & out of general knowledge. The authors of it are supposed to be my hero & heroine whose names appear in the title.

"My private friends have expressed to me a very high, and therefore I do not doubt, a very erroneous judgment of my work. However, of this I can determine neither way. I have resolved to give it a fair chance, & my wish, therefore is first, to know whether you would purchase any interest in the copyright, an arrangement which, if there be any truth in the opinions of my friends Lord Byron & Mr. Leigh Hunt of my powers, cannot be disadvantageous to you; in the second place, how far are you willing to be the publisher of it on my own account, if such an arrangement, which I should infinitely prefer, cannot be made." Etc.

Peacock gives an interesting account of the publication of Shelley's long poem.

"This work, when completed, was printed under the title of Laon & Cythna. In this poem he had carried the expression of his opinions, moral, political & theological, beyond the bounds of discretion. The terror which, in those days of persecution of the press, the perusal of the book inspired in Mr. Ollier, the publisher, inducing him to solicit the alteration of many passages which he had marked. Shelley was for some time inflexible; but Mr. Ollier's refusal to publish the poem as it was, backed by the advice of all his friends, induced him to submit to the required changes. Many leaves were cancelled, and it was finally published as The Revolt of Islam. Of Laon & Cvthna, only three copies had gone forth.