

# Byron's Travels

Following his failed marriage and the scurrilous rumours of his inappropriate relationship with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh, Byron exiled himself to Europe in 1816. While there, he travelled extensively, never to return to Britain again. His travels included a stay in

Switzerland, on the banks of Lake Geneva. Whilst there, he formed close bonds with the radical poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, and his future wife, Mary Shelley. The latter was to become renowned in her own right as the author of *Frankenstein* (1818), a work conceived during this fruitful period. After further travels in Italy, Byron joined the movement for Greek independence against the Ottoman Empire in 1823. His military involvement halted his poetical output and ultimately led to his untimely death of a fever in Missolonghi, Greece in 1824.

## DISSECTION OF LORD BYRON'S BODY.

We have received a series of the *Telegraphe Grec*, published at Missolonghi, to the 16th May. The articles of chief interest which they contain are the following, relative to the late Lord Byron:—

"MISSOLOGHI, MAY 2.—The Clergy proceeded in a body this day to the house where the remains of Lord Byron laid, in order to take into their keeping, and remove it to the Church of San Spiridion, the heart, brains, &c. of the deceased, which had been left to the care of the City of Missolonghi. The city made a solemn request to Count Gamba (the friend of Lord Byron) for permission to erect a monument to their benefactor and illustrious fellow-citizen. His Lordship had already accepted the freedom of the city. Count Gamba felt it his duty to deposit his noble friend's remains in the care of the city until they might be reclaimed by his relatives.

"Two chests were prepared for the occasion, and after being examined were sealed by the Magistrates. In one of them was contained the body, and in the other the heart and brains of the noble defunct. They were removed by four officers of his brigade to the bark which transported them to Basiladi, and thence into a larger vessel to be conveyed to Zante. The whole of the Noble Lord's brigade was drawn out in front of his late residence, and along the shore of the sea. The convoy was accompanied by the Prince A. Maurocordati; the Primates, the Military Commandants, and an immense concourse of people, whose countenances and manner bore testimony to their sorrow at taking this last farewell of their benefactor and fellow citizen. As soon as the corpse was removed to the bark, it was saluted by discharges of musketry and artillery. The cannon of his brigade, drawn up along the coast, saluted with twenty-five minute guns: nine were discharged from the battery; and three from the fort of Basiladi; making in all thirty-seven, the number of years the noble defunct had lived. What a melancholy contrast to the joyous salutes which four months previous had hailed his arrival in Missolonghi! One consolation, however, remains; the good he has effected will not be lost; the seeds he has sown with such alacrity and industry for the benefit of Greece, will yet produce a noble harvest. The most glorious monument which can be raised to him, will be the feelings of gratitude and love, which remain stamped in the heart of every Greek, and every friend of humanity.

"In the bark which transported the Noble Lord's remains to Zante were his friend Count Gamba, two other officers of his brigade, Capt. and Adjutant Hesketh, Lieut. Winter, his private physician Dr. Brown, his faithful valet Fletcher, who had served him more than twenty years, and his domestic Batista Fulciere. In two other barks followed his horses and all his effects, under the care of his secretary Signor Lega Zambelli. The Government sent likewise two gunboats to accompany them.

"The following account of the opening of Lord Byron's body, and the appearances it exhibited, is given by the professional gentleman to whom that office was entrusted:—

"1. The bones of the head were found to be excessively hard, and the skull was without the slightest sign of *suturæ*, like that of an octogenarian. It might have been said to consist of a single bone without *deposits*.

"2. The *dura meninge* was so firmly attached to the internal surface of the cranium, that it required the repeated exertions of two strong men to separate the outer bones from it. The vessels of this membrane were greatly distended and completely full, and it was united to the *pia mater* in different parts, by some membranous filaments.

"3. Between the *pia meninge* and the furrows of the brain, a great many bubbles of air were found, with drops of lymph adhering in several places to the *pia meninge*.

"4. The grand *falc* of the brain was crossed with membranous filaments, which attached it firmly to both the hemispheres; it was likewise extremely full of blood.

"5. The cerebral medulla was full of minute blood-vessels of a bright red colour, and very much swollen. Under the *pons varolii* at the base of the hemisphere, in the two superior or lateral ventricles, there was found an extravasation of about two ounces of bloody serum; and at the bottom of the *cerebellum* there was a similar expansion, the effects of a severe inflammation of the brain.

"6. The medullary substance was in much greater proportion than is common in the *cortex*, and was very firm and consistent. The *cerebrum* and *cerebellum*, without any of the integuments, weighed about six medical pounds.

"7. The impressions or furrows of the blood-vessels, in the internal part of the skull bones, though small, were much more numerous than usual.

"8. The lungs were very fine, perfectly sound but large, to a size almost gigantic.

"9. Between the *pericardium* and the heart there was an ounce of lymphatic water. The heart was more ample and voluminous than ordinary, but its muscular substance was very relaxed and fibreless.

"10. The liver was smaller than the natural size, as were likewise the biliary vessels, which, instead of bile, contained air. The intestines were distended with air, and of a deep yellow colour.

"11. The veins were very large and healthy, and the urinary vessels comparatively small."

From this examination it was unanimously concluded by the medical gentlemen who attended it, that if Lord Byron, from the commencement of his illness had consented to a little loss of blood, as his private physician repeatedly advised, or even if at a more advanced stage of the disorder he had yielded to the pressing solicitations of his medical advisers, to allow a copious bleeding, his Lordship would not have fallen a victim to this attack. From the statements marked 1, 8, 9, it may be confidently asserted that his Lordship could not have lived many years, from his extreme susceptibility of disease, either through the strength of his passions, his excessive occupations, or even through his utter disregard of all the necessary means to prevent the effects of constipation.

Dissection of Lord Byron's Body. Article published in *The Morning Chronicle*, London, 14 July 1824  
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