THE JOURNALS OF GEORGE GREY, 1835–1838: BOOK ONE

[**fo. 1**] **St. Petersburg, October 1835.**

My ship safely anchored in Kronstadt[338] and myself quietly established in my sister's house, I take advantage of this first comparatively quiet moment to relate to you the events of the last two months […] On the 14th August [1835], I was appointed to the command of the *Cleopatra*;[339] a small frigate of twenty-six guns, newly launched and constructed on the principle of Sir. W. Symonds, viz, that of immense room and capacity (beam and breadth), and a form adapted to fast sailing. I reached Sheerness on the 17th and, during my stay there, received the greatest kindness from Admiral Fleming,[340] the Port Admiral [**fo. 2**] […] My first destination was to be St. Petersburg to which capital I was ordered to convey Lady Durham and her family, Lord Durham having started six weeks previously, taking the route of Constantinople and the Black Sea. As the Admiral wished me to be ready by the 10th September, I had little time to fit and man my ship, but assisted by most active Officers […] I was enabled to report ready on the day desired.

On the 11th, my passengers arrived at the Admiralty House […] Lady Durham, Lady M. Lambton, Lady E. Lambton, Lady A. Lambton, [and] Lord Lambton.[341]

[W]e weighed from the Nore, towed by the *Lightening*[342] steamer, whose commander had instructions to assist us, so far as the Pilot thought it requisite […] My first day was occupied in making my sister as comfortable as possible, for a woman on board a ship (a place where she should never be if it can be avoided) and in the necessary

[338] The fortified naval base on Kotlin Island, some 20 miles west of St Petersburg in the Gulf of Finland.

[339] HMS *Cleopatra* (1835), built at Pembroke, was a 26-gun sixth-rate *Vestal*-class frigate. Grey took command of her on 12 August 1835.

[340] Admiral Charles Elphinstone Fleeming (1774–1840), who saw action at Finisterre in 1805, was commander-in-chief of the West Indies (1828–1829) and the Nore (1834–1837) stations, and Portsmouth (April–November 1839).

[341] The children of Lambton and Grey's sister, Louisa: Mary (1819–1898), Emily (1823–1886), Alice (1831–1907), and George (1828–1879).

[342] HMS *Lightning* (1823), one of the first steam-powered ships in the Royal Navy.

arrangements, and attendant on first going to sea in a newly commanded ship; before things have had time to shake into their place.

[**fo. 3**] [A]fter two days beating about in the North Sea, I had every reason to be satisfied. I found I had the makings of a good ship's company, a gentlemanlike set of Officers and Midshipmen and as for the ship herself her sailing and behaviour were the admiration of all on board […]

On the 17th September, we anchored under the Skaw,[343] the northern point of Denmark and the entrance to the Kattergat,[344] opposite Gottenborg. It was blowing a strong breeze, with heavy squalls from the South, which was directly contrary and I thought it better to spare my passengers the annoyance of facing the short and confused sea we should have encountered on opening the Kattergat; we found upwards of 100 sail had already formed the same opinion and like ourselves bound to the Baltic had anchored here to wait for more moderate weather. On the evening of the following day, the 18th, the wind having subsided to a moderate breeze and having changed a point or two, we weighed [**fo. 4**] and during the night worked up on the Swedish shore against a disagreeable hard sea; this night I was forced to send the principal pilot (of three appointed for this trip by the Trinity Board)[345] off deck, finding him, when he came up to take charge, so drunk, that he was nearly mad, indeed the Surgeon had him on the sick list for a fortnight, owing to a sort of delirium tremens brought on by drinking[. O]f the other two, one was a poor inoffensive old man, frightened with the responsibility of having to pilot a man-o-war, the remaining one was […] young, active and attentive, but as it was afterwards proved, sent more to learn by experience than himself to take charge. The chief one, had he not been a drunkard, was an excellent pilot, but upwards of 70 […] and, when not violent, as well able to pilot a vessel when in his cups as sober, but to us he was useless […] [**fos 5–12**]

[**fo. 13**] **September 21st. Anchored at Elsinore**.[346]

The morning and most of the fore noon of the 21st were taken up in receiving different articles from the Danish boats [**fo. 14**] and the Galiot in recovering anchors, etc, but finding too much sea to

[343] Known in Danish as 'Skagen Odde', the sandy promontory which is the northernmost point of Jutland.

[344] The Kattegat, the strait between north-eastern Jutland and south-western Sweden.

[345] The governing board of Trinity House, the Deptford-based institution which was – and is – responsible for the maintenance of British lighthouses, buoys, beacons, and pilotage.

[346] The romantic name for the Danish city of Helsingør which sits across the Øresund from Swedish Helsingborg.

allow us to take on board the guns, we weighed at one o'clock in company with the Dutchman and steered for Elsinore, where we anchored together the following evening and the next morning while the ship was being settled and arranged I went on shore with my sister and her children and spent some hours in seeing the sights which however were not many[. T]he Consul having provided us with a carriage, we drove to a country house and park called 'Hamlet's Garden'.[347] [I]t belongs, I believe[,] to the King, is about three miles from the town and is a very pretty spot[. O]f course we were shown Cronenborg Castle[348] and a room where the unfortunate Queen Matilda[349] was confined for a long time; from the top of the Castle you have a good view of the Sound covered with shipping, the Swedish shore and the country surrounding Elsinore, which is itself situated on a point at the narrowest entrance from the North to the Sound[. W]ith its bay full of shipping, the old Castle and the woods to its rear, Elsinore is seen to its advantage at this time of year[. E]very vessel, except [the] Man-o-war, is obliged to heave to, both on entering and leaving the sound, and to pay a very heavy toll,[350] which is one of the principal sources of revenue for His Danish Majesty;[351] this detention is a great inconvenience in a narrow sea where every slant of wind is of consequence, and the heaving to for the guard boat often causes a merchant vessel to lose twenty-four hours in her passage, which twenty-four hours in some cases may make a difference of weeks.

From shore to shore the distance is about four miles, Helsingborg the small Swedish town on the opposite side, [and] in these days of steam a fleet would care little for the [**fo. 15**] Battery at Elsinore […] On the morning of the 24th the weather was fine when we weighed and ran through the Sound, passing vessels innumerable of all nations and rigs, [and] nothing could be prettier on a clear day than the sail of twenty miles from Elsinore to Copenhagen, the Danish shore well wooded and the town Copenhagen rising as it were out of the water. The Swedish coast is uninteresting […] [I]t was near sunset when we anchored and I should have liked to

[347] Marienlyst Castle, north-west of Kronborg, 'the favourite promenade of the inhabitants of Elsinore': Andreas Andersen Feldborg, *Denmark Delineated* (London, 1824), 14.

[348] Kronborg Castle, the site of so much of *Hamlet*.

[349] Caroline Matilda (1751–1775), the youngest daughter of Frederick, prince of Wales (1707–1751). In 1766 she married the Danish king Christian VII (1749–1808), who divorced her in 1772 following an adulterous scandal (and the execution of Matilda's lover). Exiled to Celle Castle in Hanover at the suggestion of George III (1738–1820, r.1760–1820), she died of scarlet fever.

[350] The 'Sound Dues', which ships paid between 1429 and 1857.

[351] At the time the Danish king was Frederick VI (1768–1839, r.1808–1839).

have stopped a day, especially to have seen the Crown Batteries attacked by Lord Nelson[352] […] Without losing time and after saluting the Danish flag with twenty-one guns we soon left Copenhagen behind and in a couple of hours its spires and shipping had sunk in the horizon; at sunset we were fairly in the Baltic steering our course at the rate of eleven miles an hour.

Once in the Baltic our passage to Kronstadt was short, although rough. On the 29th at sunset, we were obliged to anchor owing to the thickness of the weather off the small Island of Sisku[353] and on the following day the 30th September we brought our voyage to a happy conclusion by mooring the vessel safely in the harbour at Kronstadt.

The Consul, Mr. Booker,[354] having come off, civilly undertook to procure a steamboat for Lady Durham and also arrange about landing [**fo. 16**] the baggage next day. It was nearly dark when we reached the English Quay at St. Petersburg; the steamboat having taken nearly four hours to steam twenty miles, [and] here we found carriages waiting to take us to the house engaged for Lord Durham. Dinner we found none, and it was not until after a long expectation that we at last procured some tea and cutlets; we all soon went to bed and in the morning I never saw any thing like the first appearance of the children, who had been bitten most awfully by bugs, of which these magnificently furnished houses are full; I had escaped for, having been forewarned, I had my coxswain put up my own travelling iron bedstead in the middle of the room, the mahogany frames and damask curtains of the bed not tempting me […]

Gulf of Finland, 16th October 1835.

We weighed yesterday morning from Kronstadt; the weather was boisterous and unsettled: we found, about twenty miles from the harbour, a division of [the Russian] fleet returning from Dantzig,[355] where they had been with troops for the review, held this year by the Emperors of Russia and Austria at Kalish;[356] this division

[352] The First Battle of Copenhagen of 2 April 1801.

[353] Probably the island of Seskar, approximately 45 miles west of Kronstadt.

[354] John Booker (n.d.–1848), British vice-consul at Kronstadt from the 1830s until his death.

[355] Present-day Gdańsk, Poland.

[356] Grey is mistaken about Austrian involvement. The Kalisch Review of 12–22 September 1835, which took place in Russia's Kalish province (present-day Poland), involved 60,000 soldiers, 7,000 horses, and 136 artillery pieces belonging to Prussia (led by the future William I of Germany, 1797–1888) and Russia (led by Nicholas I, 1796–1855).

consisted of five sail of the line and some frigates; they were in the act of getting under weigh when we ran through among them, saluting the Vice Admiral's flag. As far as I could judge, they appeared to be in that state of confusion you may expect in [**fo. 17**] all Russian men of war, except in fine weather […]

We remained exactly a fortnight [in St Petersburg], during which time I saw of what I suppose every person who goes to Russia sees: Columns, Churches, Palaces, Colleges, Schools, etc., and in short, nothing I ever want to see again. I do not deny that this Capital is both magnificent and wonderful considering where it is built and how short a time [ago][357] the ground it now stands upon was a morass, but this very cause make[s] it a place that does not interest me; all is forced, there is nothing natural in the country; the town, with its splendid streets, most of them without movement, show[s] you that it was not built as other towns according to the gradual increase of its inhabitants, but that it was built on a regular plan to be populated by compulsion, not by its own merits to attract a free people; in the course of my sea life I think I have never before seen the place I did not leave with some sort of regret, but on the contrary, beyond parting with my sister and her family, there is nothing that I look back [upon] with pleasure; people, country and climate are all equally detestable to me[. O]n the former you will naturally accuse me of passing a hasty and probably unfair judgment as I could not have had opportunity enough to form a correct opinion of a people whose language I don't understand one word of and with whom beyond meeting some of their Naval Officers I have never mixed. I grant this, and I do not pretend to be just; I only say what my own feeling is, to me, in the whole character of the Nation there is what I have heard so justly called 'a plated barbarity', perfectly disgusting; there is no medium, nothing [**fo. 18**] like an independent class, all are slaves, whether in cocked hats or epaulets or in sheep skin; the only rank is military.

There are many beautiful things to be seen in the Palaces and some of the public buildings are supposed to be the finest in the world, but for a description of these I refer you to the latest book whatever it may be written on the subject. The Naval and Military schools are admirably conducted and when one is pleased by arrangements and establishments uniquely for promoting the power of one man without the least regard to the happiness of the people, I say, go to St. Petersburg, [for] everything [that] can tend to make a Nation of slaves powerful in war has there been done. I

[357] The construction of St Petersburg began in 1703; it became the Russian capital in 1712.

should have liked to have gone to Moscow, there they say, there is more nationality,[358] at St. Petersburg I should say there was none, all is forced and foreign […]

I was curious, however, to examine the Dockyard and Kronstad especially as so much has been said lately about the formidable fleet [with] which Russia could at any moment during the summer pay us a visit within the Thames, burning Sheerness and landing some 40,000 troops.

The Dockyard is well arranged and I saw some fine ships, although most of the fleet was at sea […] [T]he endeavours of the Emperor to form a Navy against insurmountable obstacles are wonderful and to a certain degree he has succeeded and at immense expense he has now twenty-seven Sail of the Line, about the same number of Frigates, besides Corvettes and Brigs, all of which can be sent to sea, during the summer months, at very short notice, for a very simple reason, that to [**fo. 19**] be effective at all they are kept manned by regiments of half soldiers and half sailors who are exercised in stove warmed barracks during the winter; this Fleet might fight an action, but once dispersed would soon be destroyed; but imposing as this force may appear at first sight, it is in truth little to be feared as there is no Naval population in the country, in short, nothing to fall back upon. Let England have every ship and Dockyard burnt, in less than six months from your Merchant Navy alone you would have a force to laugh at this result of years on the part of Russia; a person who has been at sea, sees at once those are not sailors, but enough of Russia, thank Heaven we are leaving it behind […] for a more Christian country […]

[**fo. 20**] **Howick, November 15th, 1835**

To resume where I left off […] on the 25th October we made the land near Sunderland and stood off shore with the wind South and West […] I went to bed a little before eleven, but before I did so, seeing that the barometer was falling, I ordered the sail to be considerably reduced and had not been in my cot such above two hours when the Officer of the Watch came down to inform me that the wind had increased suddenly and that he thought it looked like a gale coming [**fo. 21**] on […] [**fo. 22**] At three p.m. […] the look out man reported a sail on the lee-bow which we were nearing rapidly; I soon made out with my glass a vessel in distress and accordingly kept the ship away to go to her; she proved to be a brig,

[358] Moscow in the 1830s was the fount of the Russian Slavophile movement, and this was the heyday of Nicholas I's philosophy of 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality', whereas St Petersburg was intended to be an explicitly European city.

apparently a collier, & she had lost her main-mast by the board, her foremost was standing, [and] the fore sail and fore top-sail or rather what remained of these two sails were blowing loose in ribbons; she was even with the water, what we call 'water-logged'; the sea was making a clean breach over her as she floated nearly unmanageable, & *Fisher of Sunderland* was painted on her quarter.[359] Of the six men on her deck, one was at the wheel and the other five at the pumps at which, poor fellows, they were straining to little purpose; what must have been their delight at seeing us come to their rescue, as we passed down to her stern, they waved for assistance and we could hear the cry of 'we are sinking', 'we are sinking'; still, in this sea, I considered it an almost certain destruction to put a boat in water. A second time we passed to him so close as the weather would allow, hailing him, that he would desire to put before the wind, and we would keep with them until the sea went down sufficiently to allow us to lower a boat. The cry that they were sinking was the only answer; with earnest gestures to come to their rescue […] [**fo. 23**] Never do I remember to have found myself in a situation in which it was so difficult to act[. N]aturally inclined to risk a great deal to save those poor fellows, still I felt that I had no right with so little chance of succeeding to endanger the lives of an equal number. Had it not been getting dark, I should have decided waiting until the last moment, but it was now five o'clock, the sun was setting and in a short time it would have been totally impossible to do more than wait for the sea going down; while I was in the state of doubt, I saw from the faces of some of the men collected in the gang-way that there were a few volunteers ready to make the attempt […] noble fellows, who stood forward from the crowd in the gang-way, touching their hats and showing their wish to be allowed to risk their own lives to save the crew of the brig […]

[**fo. 24**] Having consulted a moment with Leardet[360] and trying to persuade myself that the sea had really subsided considerably, I gave the necessary permission […] My judgment told me I was wrong, but having resolved there was nothing for it but to take every precaution and to avail ourselves of the little daylight that remained. Having impressed upon Leardet in the way I wished him to act, the order was given to lower amidst a breathless silence on the crew […]

[359] The *Sun* of 9 November 1835 reports the loss of the *Strachan*, with all hands, some 90 miles off Tynemouth on 26 October that year. 'Fisher of Sunderland' was in fact the owner of the *Strachan*.

[360] Francis Liardet (1798–1863), Grey's first lieutenant and effective guardian during his time on the *Cleopatra*. Later an agent for the New Zealand Company at Taranaki, Liardet was blinded during a skirmish with Maori fighters and, upon retiring as a captain to the Greenwich Hospital, wrote several tracts on seamanship.

[S]he was not twice her own length from the ship's side when, as I dreaded, a sea struck her and to make a long story short, her crew were struggling in the water, the boat swamped and upset was disappearing under the bottom of the ship as she drifted down upon her, and fortunately she did so as with men slung in ropes, we by the greatest mercy saved the whole crew, not without, however, some of them being seriously hurt [**fo. 25**] and all more or less bruised […]

When I have thought of the boat upsetting […] I am convinced that […] had she succeeded in ever getting to the *Fisher* with the additional number of men she would have taken in, she never would have returned, but the crew on board again, I was glad that the attempt had been made; the men on board the brig had witnessed our efforts and the only course now left was the hope that she would remain afloat until the weather should moderate sufficiently to allow us to hoist a boat out […] [W]e had the greatest difficulty to keep a position near her, the more so it was now quite dark […] [**fo. 26**] I remained on deck superintending this manoeuvre for an hour and a half and I then went below to get something to eat […] when all of a sudden the brig, which I had [had] my eyes fixed upon, suddenly disappeared; all I could then make out was a white foam where I had last seen her, at the same time there was a cry […] that she had sunk, and so it proved.

I should have consoled myself with the idea that we had done all in our power to save those poor fellows and that their rescue was impossible from the first […] [**fo. 27**] [I]n the morning it proved too true, as there was a slight mark on the stem of the ship, evidently caused by grazing against the wreck […] This event annoyed me more than I can describe and so determined was I that no ill-natured person should take advantage of it, that I reported it to the Admiralty, in my letter concealing nothing but on the contrary, against the advice of Admiral Fleming, giving my opinion that the sinking of the vessel might have been hastened by the coming in contact. God knows whether it was so or not, the Admiralty was perfectly satisfied and the Owner of the vessel came down on Sheerness on purpose to thank Lieut. Leardet and the boat's crew for their gallant exertions […] [**fos 28–30**]

[**fo. 31**] *Cleopatra* at Sea, December 10th 1835

From Howick I returned to Sheerness and on the 21st of November sailed for Portsmouth, and after having been detained for two days in the Downs, reached Spithead on the 25th, where I found orders to go the Brazils […] [W]e weighed on the 30th November and the

following night owing to having carried a great press of sail we anchored in Plymouth Sound […] On Sunday the 6th we weighed, in company with the *Pearl*[361] and *Nimrod*,[362] the former bound to the coast of Spain and the latter to the West Indies. We soon left them out of sight and we have already made considerable progress towards Madeira where I intended to stay for a day or two.

[**fo. 32**] **Begun December 20th 1835**

On the 14th, we made the small island of Porto Santo,[363] and on the following day anchored at Madeira in Funchal Roads; we had enjoyed fine weather the whole of this passage; the ship being anchored close in, I went on shore to dine with Mr. Veitch,[364] the Consul, who offered me a bed, which I accepted as there is always some trouble in going off from here at night […] The day after our arrival I made up a party of Officers and Midshipmen to go to the Consul's country house, situated about 14 miles from the town and near a place called 'the Coral', which is an immense valley or ravine which intersects the whole island and contains some magnificent scenery[365] […] [**fos 33–34**] The English Merchants are always very civil here and on this occasion they gave us a ball at which there were a great number officers as another Man-o-war (the *Lark* schooner surveying vessel)[366] and a Packet, bound for Rio de Janeiro also arrived in the bay after the *Nimrod*, while hove to outside, was the *Delaware*[367] an American 90 gun ship, Commodore Patterson,[368] whom I had known formerly came on shore to the ball. On the 19th we weighed, and […] as the *Delaware* was still hove to off the anchorage, we ran down close to her and saluted the Commodore's flag. I then went on board and found the

[361] HMS *Pearl* (1828), built at Wivenhoe, Essex, a 20-gun sloop which captured Spanish and Portuguese slave ships during its service.

[362] HMS *Nimrod* (1828), built as the *Andromeda* at Deptford in 1817, was relaunched as a 20-gun sloop then served as a coal hulk from 1853.

[363] The second-largest of archipelago's islands, some 30 miles north-east of Madeira.

[364] Henry Veitch (1781–1857), British consul-general at Madeira from (probably) 1812 until his death, co-founded the 'English Church' on the island; his former residence is now the Royal Savoy Hotel at Funchal.

[365] Sir Charles Lyell (1797–1875) would later conduct geological inquiries into Madeira's great ravine.

[366] HMS *Lark* (1830), a 2-gun cutter.

[367] USS *Delaware* (1828), built at Norfolk, Virginia, was a 74-gun third-rate ship that Union forces burned at Norfolk Navy Yard on 20 April 1861 to prevent her falling into Confederate hands.

[368] Daniel Todd Patterson (1786–1839), who saw action at the battles of Tripoli Harbour (1804) and New Orleans (1815), was commander of the US Mediterranean Squadron (1832–1836).

Captain (Nicholson)[369] was an old acquaintance of mine from the Mediterranean […] [**fo. 35**]

[**fo. 36**] **January 1st, 1836**

After leaving Madeira we had for the first day or two light winds and calms, succeeded by unsettled weather […] I never remember to have been so long in getting into the N.E. Trades which we only did the day before yesterday in Latitude 20 N […] We had just caught our present breeze, it was about nine o'clock in the forenoon, when a vessel was reported from the mast-head which appeared to puzzle the signal midshipman so much, that taking my glass I went to the fore-topmast head and at first could see nothing but a low black hull and two long plain spars, but in a few minutes up went two large schooner sails and the Captain of the vessel to whom it belonged, having made us out, steered away to the S.E. making by degrees all sail possible, and a more rakish, wicked looking rig as seen from where I was, cannot be imagined. I immediately supposed that she was a Slaver, but even for a Slaver it was suspicious to be lying in the open sea without any sail […] I had heard instances of Slavers robbing each other and don't doubt that a Merchant vessel falling in their way would induce them to become pirates in good earnest. From the deck we could see half way down her sails and [**fo. 37**] immediately hauled up in chase, bringing the wind a little abaft the beam and cracking on all sail; on this point of sailing, the schooner is not yet built that could escape from us, still a stern chase is a long chase, and although we soon rose his hull, and were evidently gaining on her fast, yet it was two o'clock before we were near enough to give a hint to heave to, which we did by firing one of our long fo'cs'le[370] guns with a high elevation. The shot, which was a 32 pounder, apparently fell close enough to induce him not to risk another, for he immediately shortened sail and hove to for us to come up […] I sent Liardet to examine, who soon returned with the report that the schooner was, as we supposed, a Slaver, but he doubted whether we should be able to find [the evidence] which was requisite by the treaty to condemn her. I returned with him; she hoisted Spanish colours and I should have said, as we pulled towards her, was about 100 tons, & a low black hull and long tapering spars gave her a most wicked appearance, I have seldom seen so beautiful a vessel; on finding myself on her deck, I was thunderstruck, a vessel of 100 tons, in a moment, had become more than double;

[369] John B. Nicholson (1803–1846), who later served on the US Navy Board of Commissioners (1840–1841).

[370] The forecastle.

her great beam gave her a capacity that one could have no idea of. I ordered a strict search, but could find none of the slave irons, water-butts, slave decks etc., required to authorise me in seizing her.

Her crew consisted of 22 villainous looking fellows and among these ruffians the Captain was prominent. I think I never saw a more ferocious looking dog[. H]e had regular papers, was last from Havana, & bound to one of the Cape Verde Islands. In searching, we turned up the boat stowed in the middle of the vessel and under it [**fo. 38**] found a long 12 pounder gun, with a travelling carriage and in all in very good condition; she also had a very good supply of small arms and two small carronades. Vessels of this sort when unlucky when procuring their human cargo often turn pirates; having returned on board the ship we resumed our course, the schooner standing away to the south-east, [and] no doubt those on board congratulating themselves on having escaped so well. I almost regretted afterwards that I had not taken the law into my own hands and thrown the 12 pounder gun overboard.

If I am not very much mistaken, [this was] as mischievous a barque as one could well meet; few of our men-o-war would catch her and I doubt, if on a wind, if any [could]; on arriving on her coast she will dispose of her cargo, find waiting for her all the fittings necessary to turn her into a regular slaver and having taken on board between three and four hundred poor negroes,[371] and [if she does] not lose above 30 per cent of her live cargo, [they will have] made a most prosperous voyage, the profit when successful being quite enormous […]

[**fo. 39**] Rio de Janeiro, 26th January 1836

From our chase of the Slaver and until our arrival here on the 20th of this month all was most prosperous […] I have been twice before in Rio de Janeiro, but it is a place that appears to one more beautiful every time it is seen. I have never met any person having seen it [who] does not place it above the Bay of Naples, Constantinople, or in short any of the most famous parts of the world for fine scenery. I know nothing that can in any way compare to it; its spacious harbour, islands, numerous bays, the magnificent Ojan mountains in the distance;[372] the situation of the town and shipping […] It comprises every style of beauty and the lights and shades vary so continually one is never tired of admiring it. I often, in the cool of the morning and evening go on an exploring expedition and always find

[371] Despite the provisions of the treaty, the Slave Voyages database (https://www.slavevoyages.org/) estimates that as many as 26,495 enslaved people were disembarked at Havana in 1836 alone.

[372] Probably the *Serra dos Órgãos*, the 'Organ Range'.

something new, some beautiful bay hid from the ship by the numerous bluff points and rocks which stand out from all parts of the shore[. I]n these bays the sea is like a lake and rich tropical vegetation with palm and banana trees overhang[ing] the sandy beaches. Rio is much too beautiful [**fo. 40**] to be described by anybody.

You will be surprised to hear me say that in spite of all my admiration that I do not like the place; on the contrary, it is to me intolerable; the heat is suffocating, the average of the thermometer at this time of year is 90 degrees, & the day we arrived it was 96 degrees; I seldom go on shore. I know few of the English Merchants and have dined once with Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton (he is the English Minister)[373] who appear very nice people. In the morning at about 5 or 6 I go on shore on the side opposite the town, where I bathe and walk for an hour or so; at 7 the sun is already burning and when not required by the Admiral, I remain on board all the day, and when I do not dine on board the Flag Ship, I usually take another trip to some sheltered bay in the evening, my only companion being my latest dog 'Pilot' […]

[**fo. 41**] On our arrival we found the *Dublin* (50)[374] gun frigate with the Flag of Commander-in-chief, Sir Graham Hamond, one or two other small men of war, also the French Admiral […] in the *Sirene* (60).[375] [Hamond] I knew before, he has the reputation of being very fidgety, but I found him so far very kind to me; when I was under him eleven years ago as a Mid, we did not agree quite so well, but I daresay it was a good deal my own fault […]

We are anchored near the *Dublin*, and have under our charge a slave brig lately captured by the *Satellite*,[376] one of the men-of-war belonging to this station; she was sent in here a few days ago as a prize and is now waiting the decision of the mixed commission[.[377] I]n the meantime her prize crew would not be sufficient to defend her from the Brazilians who have lately made one or two attempts to carry off the slaves from other vessels and in one case succeeded; they have threatened in this instance which obliges me to

[373] Hamilton James Charles Hamilton (1779–1856) was British ambassador to the United Provinces of Rio de la Plata (1834–1836) and then Brazil (1836–1846).

[374] HMS *Dublin* (1812), a 74-gun third-rate ship built at Rotherhithe, reduced to 40 guns in 1826.

[375] The *Sirène* (1823), or *Syrène*, a frigate built at Toulon that was the French flagship at Navarino.

[376] HMS *Satellite* (1826), an 18-gun sloop built at Pembroke as the name ship of her class.

[377] The courts that the British government established with the Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese to determine the fates of ships, their crews, and their 'cargoes' – that is, enslaved Africans – in circumstances where national navies, but primarily the Royal Navy, had seized them on suspicion of engaging illegally in the slave trade.

keep a guard boat rowing around her every night and another armed ready alongside the ship, to shove off on the first alarm; they will know better, when they see these precautions than to make any attempt; all the Brazilians look upon our taking their slaves as private robbery and, in consequence it is not safe to walk in the streets after dark.

[**fo. 42**] The day after this brig was put under my charge, I went on board, having never been on a slaver with slaves in before. Figure to yourself a small vessel of 120 tons (that is to say about the size of a Cowes yacht); when captured this vessel had in upwards of 300 Negroes, men, women and children, on a moderate calculation we will suppose she sailed from the coast of Africa with 50 more;[378] when taken she was close to the mouth of the harbour, her crew consisted of 14 Portuguese and Brazilians. I had heard frequent descriptions of the manner in which the Negroes are packed, but I could not have believed it; when I went on board most of the slaves were on deck with an awning spread to protect them from the sun and the difference of treatment is such, since the Captain and crew saw their case was hopeless; no doubt they would have been thrown overboard long ago had their vessel not fallen in with the *Satellite*.

The slave deck laid for the occasion is a space taken off the ship's hold and extends the whole length of the vessel, in this one, the height less than four feet; on this deck the Negroes of all ages and sexes and stowed in rows and so close that the second line are placed with their backs resting between the legs of the first and so on until the whole of these 300 are disposed of in something like the manner you pack a barrel of herrings; over them lay a thin plank only to protect them from the vertical sun; the stench, the heat, the agony of this place are to be imagined and it is no wonder many of them die raving mad; some of the least patient of these poor creatures were chained together on this very vessel; there was a case of the captors finding a dead body and a living one ironed together.

[**fo. 43**] During the voyage when the weather is fine they are brought on deck by turns and such is their dread of returning to between decks, many try and a few happy ones succeed in ending their misery by jumping overboard; to add to what I have already described, the brutal crew armed with thick knotted pieces of ropes, a sort of knout, called a chicote, inflict the most frightful

[378] By those '50 more' Grey means the victims of the Middle Passage, where dreadful conditions and disease killed roughly 1.8 million of the 12.5 million Africans who were embarked on European slave ships; accordingly, Grey's estimate that one-seventh of the original cohort might have died is eminently reasonable.

punishment upon those who are most refractory, some even are killed in a moment of rage, but this did not often happen as their value is too great to permit the Captains to carry their revenge so far; such as I have endeavoured to describe to you is the ordinary state of a slaver, [and] upon my honour I exaggerate nothing, but on the contrary, I spare you many disgusting details. Much worse is their lot when chased by a man-of-war; in bad weather especially in the latter case when these vessels, badly built, are obliged to close their hatches to prevent the sea getting below. A few months ago 200 men, women, and children were found dead in the hold of a small schooner when the hatches were removed, not above 20 or 30 out of the cargo were still living, this I know to have been the case; can one conceive man so brutified. Yet the Portuguese look upon these sins as coolly and more so than I should upon a vessel crowded with cattle.

The horrid smell on board was such that I could scarcely remain on board ten minutes; on deck the slaves were huddled together and were expressing their astonishment at objects so new to them, men, women and children talking, singing and screaming at the same time, such a set of miserable wretches I never beheld, most of them worn to skeletons, very many of them still bearing marks of the chicote, but the general look of stupid wonder and even [**fo. 44**] mirth expressed by most of them disgusted me more than I can tell you […] I felt so relieved to find myself once more in my own boat and in the fine air of sea breezes; I wish that our Government, I mean the Cabinet Ministers, could have to pass one night in one of these vessels, we might then hope for some effectual means to put an end to this infernal traffic;[379] at present our Cruisers only add to the misery of the slave, and the trade was never carried on to a greater extent or more openly than at this moment[380] and so it will continue to be until it is declared piracy and summary punishment inflicted upon the Captains and crews of the captured vessels.

In the present instance, we will suppose this brig condemned, which is […] by no means certain, [what with] fears of being assassinated experienced by the judges of the mixed commission being very likely to cause her being declared no prize. However, we will suppose her condemned, the Captain and crew are put into prison,

[379] The Grey ministry had passed the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833, but there was no great warmth between the Greys and the subsequent Melbourne government (see pp. **278–291**).

[380] According to the Slave Voyages Database, the 'busiest' five-year period for the Spanish-American slave trade was 1836–40 (109,320 enslaved people disembarked), and for Brazil the 'busiest' periods were 1826–1830 (303,766) and 1836–1840 (254,856).

from which they are released on paying a bribe, in less than a week the vessel is sold by auction for half her value, and in a month runs past the English Flag-ship, notoriously bound again to the coast; the slaves of course cannot be sent back, but are apprenticed a certain time according to treaty.[381] What is the result? Their masters take them to the interior and of course the first negro that dies on his estate is declared by the rascally magistrate of the district, who signs a certificate to this effect, to be the poor apprentice who in all probability, for fear of being recognised, is working at the bottom of some mine; for years we go on [**fo. 45**] hearing speeches in the House of Commons on this subject, we emancipate our own slaves,[382] we pay hundreds of thousands of pounds every year to keep up our Cruisers on the coast of Africa and after all, what have we done? Nothing; except that which is certainly highly honourable to us, cleared ourselves of the disgrace of participating in this diabolic trade and at any rate shown our wish to put it down altogether, although nothing can be worse directed than our efforts hitherto.

[**fo. 46**] **Bahia, April 2nd 1836.**

[**fo. 47**] [T]he bay of San Salvador with the town of the same name, but more commonly called Bahia[,] is the second town of importance in Brazil […] There is a great deal of trade here and a number of English Merchants. I have been to one or two of their dinners and have had several of them to dine with me; it appears there is no native society and that of the merchants I don't much like […] We are expecting the arrival of the English Packet every day and the moment I have received my letters I intend to go to sea as it is necessary [that] I visit the different harbours belonging to my station, after which I shall cruise for slavers.[383] The merchants here are anxious for me to remain as they are in dread of the slave population, there having been a revolution last year[384] in which the blacks [would] have

[381] 'Apprenticing' former slaves, often referred to as 'liberated Negroes', had been common practice since the abolition of the British slave trade in 1808. Here, Africans rescued from slave ships were apprenticed to European masters – often at Sierra Leone or on Caribbean islands such as Tortola – where they would undertake agricultural labour for up to 14 years. These apprenticeships were designed to test whether Africans could work effectively in circumstances other than enslavement.

[382] Emancipation had occurred in most British colonies on 1 August 1834, although apprenticeship would persist in those colonies – except Antigua, which did not institute it at all – until 1838.

[383] The responsibility for prosecuting the international slave trade did not lie exclusively with the West Africa Squadron; it was incumbent on all relevant stations of the Navy.

[384] The Malê Revolt, often known as the Great Revolt, of January 1835, where more than 600 Muslim slaves in Salvador da Bahia rose up in deliberate imitation of the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804.

certainly had possession of the town had they not been betrayed the night before the execution of their plan[. A]s it was, although only a small part actually took arms, it was with great difficulty that they were put down, since which, the authorities take every precaution to prevent a second attempt. The slaves are severely treated and, by a law passed lately they are all locked up at sunset. The black population of Bahia is [**fo. 48**] very different from that of Rio. The slaves mostly come from the same part of Africa,[385] a remarkably fine race of men, and as they all speak the same language they are in consequence more dangerous. I have little doubt that before many years the blacks and Mulattoes will have possession of this province and I can't say that I shall be sorry for it.

Since our arrival we have had no great heat but a great quantity of rain as we are now in the very middle of the rainy season. I have made a few excursions in my boat, but I have had my time very much occupied with a dispute between the Consul and the whole body of English Merchants which has forced me into a long correspondence;[386] they are, as it generally happens, both in the wrong, but the Consul is a very unfit man for his situation. One of my principal amusements here is watching the slavers[. T]here are five or six fitting out at the moment, two ready to sail in a few days, one of which is the most beautiful of vessels I have ever seen; I met the Captain of her the other day in the shop of an Englishman who supplies naval stores, [and] he made no secret of where he was going and hoped he might have the luck to escape our Cruisers on the coast[. H]e said 'I have no fear on this side, as the chances are so many against my falling in with the only man-of-war on so long a coast'. Besides, as he told me, they had signals everywhere and he was sure to hear before [his] where-abouts [could be discovered by] the cruiser […]; unlike the Captain of the vessel I had searched off the Cape de Verde[,] this man was quite a decent looking sort of man, but when you talked to him about the horror of the traffic, he could not comprehend you and like all the Portuguese considered the blacks as being of an inferior species;[387] we have no treaty as yet to

[385] Although most Africans trafficked by the Portuguese and Brazilians in this period came from present-day Angola, the rebels of 1835 were largely Yoruba (i.e. from today's south-western Nigeria, Benin, and Togo), speaking the same language and sharing an Islamic religion.

[386] Already, Grey is adopting the quasi-diplomatic responsibilities which attached to naval officers at this time.

[387] Grey's reference to Portuguese belief in 'an inferior species' underscores the difference between British and European racial theories in this period: most Britons were monogenist, meaning they regarded all 'races' of humankind, regardless of how 'civilised' they

allow us to retain [**fo. 49**] Portuguese vessels[388] unless with slaves actually on board; we have one to that effect with Brazil and Spain and if we can prove that the fittings necessary for the traffic are on board, the vessel, is a good prize, in consequence all the trade to this place is carried on in Portuguese bottoms and I cannot touch one of them.

[**fo. 50**] **July 10th 1836.**

I have been on the Bahia station and am now returning to rejoin the Admiral at Rio […] At Pernambuco I never anchored, calling off there only occasionally to communicate with the Consul, the same at Maceio. At Bahia I was forced to anchor every now and then for a few days and when there, usually took the opportunity of making an excursion for a day or two up the hills. On one occasion I was absent from the ship three days, having made a party with the Consul and several Officers[. W]e started in two boats to visit a sugar estate belonging to the greatest slave owner in Bahia, situated on a small island inside the great island of Taporica[389] which forms one side of the bay of San Salvador […] On landing the Consul presented a letter from the Owner to the Overseer who showed us every attention and conducted us to the country house about a couple of miles from the beach; on our road we passed through a very large negro village – huts into which one would not have put a dog in England. I was much struck with the squalid and miserable look of these poor slaves, so different from their countrymen at Bahia.

[**fo. 51**] This estate which comprises the whole of the small island on which we were is about four miles in circumference and the sugar cane is grown in great quantity. The number of slaves, including women and children[,] was four hundred. I could not have believed it[,] had I not seen it, the very wretched condition in which these poor devils were, [for] I should have conceived it against the owner's interest to starve his negroes in this manner; when I remarked upon it to the Overseer, he agreed that it was very bad and said that he had represented it very often to his master. The scale of food depended

were, as belonging to the same species; many more Europeans were 'polygenist', meaning they believed in the existence of separate human species.

[388] Failure to agree such a treaty with Portugal led to Parliament unilaterally passing the Suppression of the Slave Trade (Portugal) Act 1839, which extended the provisions concerning Spanish and Brazilian ships to those sailing under the Portuguese flag. British captains were thus authorized to seize and detain Portuguese ships if they found even the paraphernalia of the slave trade such as 'a Boiler of an unusual Size' and an 'extraordinary quantity … of Rice'. It was not until 1842 that Portugal agreed to these terms by treaty and to the establishment of a mixed commission court at Luanda.

[389] Itaparica in the south-west of Todos os Santos Bay.

on the price of negroes in the market and that he was ordered by this monster (Pedrosa) (a man who is worth a couple of million of dollars) to regulate the nourishment of the slaves accordingly. I must own that when I sailed away next morning from this disgusting place, the slave population had my good wishes for their success in case of another revolution[. S]hould they succeed no doubt they would revenge themselves by the massacre of all the whites, but who can blame them and still one is told they are better off as when slaves in their own country.

[**fo. 52**] […] The whole of the month of May I kept to sea without once letting go anchor, chasing vessels innumerable, but never falling in with a full slaver; two that I had searched had evidently only landed their slaves a day or two before, but being under the Portuguese Flag I could not touch them.

I never was on a station which I disliked so much as this, especially when in harbour; cruising I passed my time very pleasantly by having always some occupation, but the Brazilian towns were to me disgusting from the slave and mixed population and the dirt; Society there is none, and latterly, except when obliged, I seldom went on shore on the town side of Bahia. The English Merchants were disposed to be civil but their tastes are very different from mine and an evening passed in smoking cigars and drinking brandy and water had no charms for me[;] […] I enjoyed my own cabin and quiet dinner much more than anything the shore could offer me. [**fo. 53**]

[…] When the Packet brought us our orders to return to the Admiral, the joy was universal, [and] we now look forward to be sent to the River Plate; the agreeable part of the station is to begin. Buenos Ayres is very popular and the Pacific more so, to which latter place we may expect to be sent in about four months more.

[**fo. 54**] **August 8th, 1836.**

On the 14th of July we anchored in Rio harbour [and] to my great delight, I found the *Dublin* absent and in consequence there being only a small man-of-war brig in the harbour, I was Senior Officer. I immediately accepted Mr. Hamilton's offer to take up my quarters at this house and by doing so saw what was best of Rio de Janeiro society […] [E]verything was continuing to go on as I could wish on board my ship; I have nothing to annoy me; I have lost a few men by desertion as happens to every vessel on this station, where the temptations are so great, however very few that I care about have left me and the moment there was a vacancy I have no difficulty in filling it […]

From the 15th of July to the 2nd of August, I was living with Mr. Hamilton[. H]aving hired a horse, I took a ride every morning

[…] [and] frequently met Mr. Hesketh,[390] our Consul, who is an excellent fellow[.] I always went on board to breakfast and followed my usual occupations until three or four o'clock in the afternoon at which hour I joined Mrs. Hamilton in her evening ride; our dinners were agreeable and some of the Corps Diplomatique dropped in every evening.

[**fo. 55**] The Admiral arriving on the 2^{d} of August gave me orders to prepare to sail for Monte Video to relieve the *Harrier*[391] in the regular routine of the station and to take her place in the River Plate for the next three months […]

We sailed on the 6th, that is to say, two days ago and are progressing (as the Yankees say), famously. I have a passenger, who from the little I have seen of him, I like exceedingly; he is a Pole and calls himself Count Streleski; I was introduced to him at Mr. Hamilton's[. H]e has been some months in Brazil travelling in the interior and is now going to cross the Pampas to Chili [i.e. Chile]; hearing that he was going on the Packet which sailed nearly a week before us, I offered him a passage and considered myself very much the gainer by having done so.

He was one of those engaged in the unfortunate revolution of 1830[392] and having saved sufficiently from the wreck of a considerable fortune, now passed his time in travelling[. H]e has been all through the United States, [and] from England he brings numbers of letters of introduction, [and] he appears to have no fixed plan but follows [in] his travels the route which at the moment has most attraction for him. He is a man of about 40, remarkably handsome, full of vivacity and as far as one can judge from so short an acquaintance a most agreeable and well informed person. He has shown me today a number of sketches he has made of Rio de Janeiro and of places in the interior of Brazil; he is not the least sea sick although there was a good deal of motion; in short I think I shall be very sorry to part with him when we arrive at Buenos Ayres.

[**fo. 56**] During my late stay at Rio I took a great deal of trouble in informing myself about the slave trade. Vessels were coming in and out which were notorious; I have collected a good deal of detail upon

[390] Robert Hesketh (1789–1868), the son of a wine merchant, received his first diplomatic commission at Maranhas in 1812. Appointed British consul at Rio de Janeiro in 1832, he served there until retirement in 1852.

[391] HMS *Harrier* (1829), an 18-gun sloop built at Pembroke in the *Fly*-class of ships.

[392] The November Uprising of 1830 saw cadet officers at Warsaw's military academy attack the Belweder Palace, the residence of the Russian viceroy of the Congress Kingdom of Poland. The uprising escalated into the Russo-Polish War of 1831, with Russia re-establishing control by the autumn. Strelecki was also a friend of John Franklin, whom he met during the latter's governorship of Van Diemen's Land.

this subject and if I were not too lazy I would endeavour to put it together and send it to some person in England [for] really the ignorance at home was quite extraordinary.

[**fo. 57**] **Buenos Ayres, 7th October 1836**

[**fo. 58**] […] [O]n my landing at Monte Video, accompanied by Carew[393] and Streleski, I found the town in a great commotion[.] I had forgotten to mention that before I left Rio I had heard there was a civil war going on in the Republic of the Banda Oriental[394] of which this is the Capital.

I knew thus little of the River Plate politics; the Consul Mr. Hood,[395] to whose house we first went, explained to me at some length the state of the country, which left me with this conclusion that the whole dispute lies in the ambition of two rival chiefs – one Don Manuel Oribe,[396] the actual President, and the other, Don Frutus Rivera,[397] who wishes to turn him out; the partisans of these two candidates are called, of the one, Federalles[398] and that of the other Unitarios-Oribe[399] […] The party that wish for a Federal Government [wish for] a constitution copied from that of the United States; the Unitarians are in favour of a Central Government which should vest the whole executive power in the hands of the President. It signifies very little what form of government they have at present, as it is sure to be attacked by the first man who considers that he has a party strong enough to place him at the head of affairs, but what can one expect in these petty republics? The whole population of this Independent Nation is under 200,000. The Capital, Monte Video, containing about 30,000, formerly [**fo. 59**] belonged to Buenos Ayres but since the independence of the Colonies from Spain it has changed hands several times and in 1828 after a war of two or three years between Buenos Ayreians and Brazilians it was under the mediation of

[393] Possibly Charles Hallowell Carew (*c.*1805–1848), the son of Admiral Sir Benjamin Hallowell Carew (1761–1834), one of Nelson's 'Band of Brothers' at the Battle of the Nile, and who presented Nelson with what became his coffin, made from the mainmast of the French battleship *L'Orient*.

[394] Present-day Uruguay, which had secured independence from Brazil in 1828.

[395] Thomas Samuel Hood (n.d.), British consul to Uruguay, who had served there since the Uruguayan declaration of independence in 1824, and who worked for the Foreign Office as late as 1846.

[396] Manuel Oribe (1792–1857), the second president of Uruguay (1835–1838).

[397] Fructuoso Rivera (1783–1854), a leading general during the Uruguayan War of Independence, also known as the Cisplatine War, and a three-time president of Uruguay (1830–1834, 1838–1843, and 1853–1854).

[398] The extant conservative Partido Nacional, known as *los Blancos* ('the Whites').

[399] The extant liberal Partido Colorado, known as *los Colorados* ('the Reds').

England[400] declared an independent state, since which time, to follow it in its internal commotions, would be neither easy nor interesting; situated most advantageously for trade, possessing an excellent climate and fertile soil, a strong government is alone wanting for it to become a flourishing little state […] it is to be hoped that by degrees the people will become more civilised and learn [that] more [is] to be gained by [commerce] than by cutting each other's throats.

The 14th of August the *Harrier* sails for Rio de Janeiro and the following day and night, [the] Oribe party expected to be attacked by their adversaries, but nothing comes of it and Mr. Hood was quite of my opinion that there is no danger for the English Merchants and that the war may go on as it has done for the last two months,[401] for any number of months longer, one party holding the town and the other the country[. S]uch being the case, on the 16th after sunset, we weigh for Buenos Ayres. The navigation between Monte Video and Buenos Ayres is intricate and for a ship drawing as much water as the *Cleopatra* [it] is very difficult […]

[**fo. 60**] It was the 18th August about two in the afternoon, when accompanied by Streleski and Pilot I shoved off from the ship, [and] the breeze was strong from the land; we tried sailing for some time but, owing to the disagreeably short and confused sea, we shipped so much water that we were forced to let go the anchor to bale the boat out, and it was eight o'clock in the evening before we reached the shore; the boat could not approach to within two hundred yards, but we found a cart ready to take us out; in this extraordinary way you always land at Buenos Ayres, a sort of 'curricle cart' driven by a postilion with two horses comes rattling and racing out to you and it is astonishing how well the boys manage their horses, backing the cart close up to [**fo. 61**] the gunwale of the boat. [Y]ou are raised well out of the water as the wheels are high, [and] if they were not, you would get very wet […]

We were besieged by hundreds of people to know the news from Monte Video, but having found a person waiting to show us the way to the Consul's house, I was in no humour to answer any

[400] Grey had a family interest here. The mediator of the Treaty of Montevideo (1828), by which Brazil recognised Uruguayan independence, was John, 1st Viscount Ponsonby (1770–1855), Grey's maternal uncle. Ponsonby had been MP in the Irish parliament for Tallow (1793–1798), Banagher (1797–1798), and Dungarvan (1798–1801) and then for Galway Borough (1801–1802) at Westminster. An exceptionally handsome man, Ponsonby had been sent to South America, first as British minister at Buenos Aires (1826–1828) then Brazil (1828–1832), because of George IV's jealousy. He later led missions to Naples (1832–1833), Constantinople (1833–1837), and Vienna (1846–1850).

[401] Hostilities ceased soon after Grey's departure, with Rivera's defeat at the Battle of Carpinteria in September 1836.

questions[. B]ut taking hold of Streleski's arm we made the best of our way until we found ourselves by a fire in Mr. Griffith's[402] house, a person of whom I have seen a good deal since, and whom I like very much. He sent his servant to order our dinner and beds at the Inn which, he told us was the best, kept by an English woman.

[**fo. 62**] The town, the capital of the Argentine Republic, is situated on the right side of the River Plate […] about 130 miles from Monte Video. The bank is not raised above twenty feet from the river to which the town approaches within a hundred yards, a sandy beach extending along the front; the town contains numerous Churches (and formerly Convents) [and] it is remarkably well built upon a regular plan, the streets running at right angles to each other & all the openings being at equal distances of about two-hundred yards, called 'Cuardras'; the streets have all been paved and are very clean […] I must now endeavour to carry my description to the houses, particularly [**fo. 63**] the insides of them. Most of the houses of Buenos Ayres are of one story high, a few are of two; they are all flat roofed, square built around an interior court; to the street there is a large door, on each side of which there is a window provided with strong iron bars; the principal rooms look onto the 'Patio or Court'.

In the summer time there is generally an awning spread over this court which is always very pretty, [and] many of them have fountains in the middle and all of them are well stocked with flowers in pots; the furniture of a Buenos Ayres drawing room is pretty and simple – it consists of a pianoforte, two or three sofas [or] chairs, generally very much ornamented, ranged against the walls, a round table in the middle with some vases of flowers; the door and windows, looking to the Patio, open, with blinds which keep the room darkened; there is generally a guitar lying on the table; this room is not much inhabited unless there are visitors[;] the lady of the house generally inhabits the adjoining rooms and when a visit is announced, has time to take her place on the sofa from which she never rises to receive you, but offers you a place by her side […] [I]n the morning, except on Sundays, and fast days, it is not the custom to make visits unless you know people very well indeed[;] the ladies never dress until it is time to go out to the Patio or public walk in [the] evening, and when they return about sunset, society begins, and at half past ten it is all over.

The day after our arrival I called upon Mr. Mandeville,[403] the English Minister, who lives in the suburbs, nearly two miles from

[402] Charles Griffiths (n.d.), British vice-consul at Buenos Aires.

[403] John Henry Mandeville (1773–1861), a former sailor and soldier who served in various unpaid diplomatic positions before becoming an attaché at Paris in 1824. Thereafter

my lodgings[;] nothing can exceed the kindness he has shown me since my arrival here […] [**fo. 64**] [T]he routine of my life is very regular[.] I get up early and crossing this street there is a sort of Club or Reading Room of which I am a member[. T]his room overlooks the river, [and] here there are glasses[404] and signal posts, by which means I can communicate with the ship whenever I please[;] I breakfast about nine, after which I have a Spanish master for an hour, [and] at twelve I go regularly to see Streleski […] [A]bout three I join Mandeville and […] his attaché, to ride or shoot[.] I have my things to dress at his house where I dine and return early in the evening, either to go to the Play, which, though bad, is a good lesson [in Spanish], or to attend some 'tertulia',[405] the most agreeable [of which] is the one in the house in which Streleski is living, and he contributes much to make it so […]

The population in the country is very different from that of the town, but I am sure you must have read numerous descriptions of these Gauchos, men who live on the Pampas, seldom off a horse and really many of them [are] hardly able to walk; the town contains 60,000 inhabitants of which, I daresay, 6000 are foreigners, [and] there are upwards of 2,000 English.[406] The shops are good, trade is active and, with good government, the Republic of the River Plate could soon become rich and thriving.

[**fo. 65**] From my first arrival until the 23rd of September my life was pretty much what I have described above, [and] on that day we got under weigh and ran down to Monte Video […] The whole beach is lined with English Public Houses, the boats are manned by Englishmen, the climate is liked by English sailors, living is cheaper than anything you can conceive, beef being here a penny a pound, and to add to this the price of labour very high, even to my boat's crew[. M]y coxswain has told me that they have come down and offered ten or twelve dollars a piece to induce them to run away; when a man does desert, it is next [to] impossible to recover him, [for] everybody assists him in his concealment and[,] getting on a horse, he gallops off into the Pampas, where you have no track to trace him by, [since] it is a sea of clover.

he was secretary to the embassy at Lisbon, then at Constantinople, before his appointment as British minister at Buenos Aires from October 1835. Mandeville later endured fierce criticism for allegedly failing to protect British commercial interests in the region.

[404] That is, binoculars.

[405] A social gathering comparable to the French *salon*.

[406] The 'English' nature of Buenos Aires reflects the British mania for investing in South America, especially in Argentinian silver, during the early 1820s; an eventual downturn in conditions led to the financial panic of 1825.

From the 25th of September to the 5th of October, we remained at anchor off Monte Video; [**fo. 66**] I found little society here, [and] indeed, should seldom have landed at the town if it had not been for [th]at one house where Capt. Carew had introduced me on my first arrival, [where] there was [a] 'tertulia' every night […] I used to go every night from eight until ten taking with me some of the Officers and Midshipmen; our music was a jingling pianoforte, lights, a few tallow candles and refreshments when we wanted it, a glass of water, but a hearty welcome we were always sure of […] At these tertulias the old ladies were always drinking or sucking 'mata'[407] which I daresay you have never heard of before[. M]ata is itself a sort of tea called 'Paraguay' tea from being found in that country; a quantity of the dried leaves are put into a cup in the shape, and almost the size, of a cocoanut, upon which boiling water is poured and a top is closed over it, leaving only a small hole for a tube a little larger than the stem of a common tobacco pipe […] [T]he mata cup is highly ornamented with silver and the tube is often made entirely of that metal. This machine, after being erected by all the old women, is always offered round the company; besides being particularly nasty, [**fo. 67**] if you are not very careful you are sure, by taking too long a draw, to burn your mouth most horribly and then all the old ladies and the young ones too have a good laugh at your expense […] I was shown by Mr. Hood the bastion which was breached in 1807 and the place where the town was taken by assault by the troops under Sir Samuel Auchmutty;[408] the conduct of the General and his troops, on this occasion, raised the English character very much with the Monte Vidarians, but the disgraced behaviour of Whitlock[409] a few months afterwards quite effaced their good opinion of us […]

[**fo. 68**] It matters little the exact time of the discovery of Buenos Ayres, but [it] was about the middle of the 16th Century,[410] while the Spaniards were at the height of their power and were over-running Peru, Mexico and taking possession of the New World[.] Buenos

[407] Meaning 'mate', the caffeinated herbal drink made from the dried leaves of the yerba mate plant.

[408] Sir Samuel Auchmuty (1758–1822), the New York-born soldier who was a loyalist during the American Revolutionary War before duty in Egypt (including the capture of Alexandria in 1801), the East Indies (including the invasion of Java), and Ireland.

[409] John Whitelocke (1757–1833), an army officer who had served in Jamaica and the attempted British conquest of Saint Domingue in the 1790s, before the River Plate expeditions terminated his career (see pp. **100–102**).

[410] Buenos Aires had been founded twice, first by Pedro de Mendoza (*c.*1499–1537) in 1536 and then again, following its abandonment in 1542, by Juan de Garay (1528–1583) in 1580.

Ayres, from the richness of its productions and from its commodious situation became the capital of a Vice Royalty which extended to the Cordillera passing over 300 leagues of Pampas […] Buenos Ayres itself has no mines, but during the Spanish rule it was a port of shipment for the metal brought from Patossa[411] and other mines of Upper Peru which is now the independent Republic of Bolivia.

The principal riches of these provinces have always consisted in the immense herds of horses and cattle bred on the extensive plains called Pampas, which are deserts of pasture, without a house or a tree to be seen except here and there the detached huts of the Gauchos who guard the cattle. The Arabs of Algiers are not more ignorant than these inhabitants of the Pampas, men living constantly in the open air, a small number of them only having a hut to shelter themselves in; his saddle for a bed; his poncho, [a] sort of cloak or blanket with a hole in the middle through which the head is put for a covering (and with beef for his food, a Gaucho is content). [**fo. 69**] From his childhood he is taught the use of the lasso and as soon as he can sit upon a horse he is put to assisting guarding herds of cattle, and his only food is beef, [and] when I say only beef, I mean, that he has neither bread nor vegetables and seldom salt.

[…] Under the guidance of a great cattle proprietor, I went to a distant place belonging to him, [and] here I found a large circular enclosure about half a mile round, made of turf and stones[,] and a few huts belonging to the Gauchos[;] there were about ten or twelve of these, the chief among them called the Capataz, [and] the enclosure is called a 'Corral'.

The cattle having been, we will suppose, collected at the Corral, are allowed to graze at what distance they please for about 24 hours and in that time, splitting into smaller flocks, they stray to a great distance in a country where there are no enclosures. The duty of the Gauchos is to perform what is called a 'Rodeo', or round, once every day and most arduous work it is […] [**fo. 70**] [T]o witness the last hour of the Rodeo as I did, is very exciting; when they have collected all the cattle close to the Corral, they pick out those that have to be either marked or killed, and, separating these from the others, drive them into the enclosure; three or four men also ride in and swinging their lassos around their heads throw them with the greatest certainty around the animal's horns and legs, tripping the poor beast in a moment; if [it is] to be marked, a hot iron is applied to his quarter and in less than two minutes he returns astonished to his companions; if his hide is wanted, one of

[411] The Bolivian city of Potosi, the centre of the Spanish colonial silver-mining industry.

the Gauchos, dismounting, goes behind him and, striking behind the horns with a sharp instrument, he is dead in a moment.

The manner of taming a horse is very well described by Capt. Head in his amusing gallop across the Pampas[412] […] The animal is thrown down with lassos, a saddle of the country put upon him, a most cruel bit in his mouth, and then a Gaucho, with a tremendous pair of spurs – the rowels of which are nearly two inches long – and a whip made of bull's hide, goes and stands over him […] These men, with their swarthy complexion are the wildest living people you can imagine; their dress consists of a short jacket in winter [**fo. 71**] made out of untanned hide, and a pair of loose trousers, no shoes, but a spur attached with [a] thong to the bare foot; on the head they wear a common coloured handkerchief, with long black hair hanging down behind, [and] over this in the summer, a straw hat is worn, a red sash around the loins, with a most murderous knife carried behind. Over the dress comes the Poncho […] [T]hese men, if living a life of blood, if not of men, of animals, are exposed to constant attacks from the different tribes of Indians who roam the Pampas, between whom and the Spaniards there is a constant war of the knife. They are a mixed race and from what I have described, and when excited, I imagine a very savage one.

Such being the inhabitants of the country, those of the towns consist of the proprietors of estates, of a large class of small shopkeepers, and, during the Spanish rule, a host of employees, besides an army of priests with their inquisition convents and all the abuses of the mother country; to add to this, a lower class consisting of a mixed race and a great proportion of Negro slaves. The great object of the mother country was to keep up the superstition of the lower orders[,] to encourage them in the hatred of foreigners and above all to prevent any means of education.

To keep the people contented, bull fights and shows tended to foster the passions of the populace were provided at the expense of the government. Assassinations were of constant occurrence, [and] for nearly 300 years the Spanish Colonies were preserved in this state of moral degradation, [for] in few or none of the extensive possessions of Spain had [**fo. 72**] any serious attempts been made to resist the authorities. After the French revolution a small class beg[a]n to show itself and to struggle, although weakly, with the restrictions of the Colonial Government.

Such was the state of Buenos Ayres, the mass of the population was as ignorant of the events that were taking place in Europe as those of

[412] F.B. Head, *Rough Notes Taken during Some Rapid Journeys across the Pampas and among the Andes* (Boston, MA, 1827).

China, when on [a night in the summer of] 1806, the Viceroy[,] being at the Play, accompanied by the principal authorities[,] received the intelligence that 2000 English soldiers under the command of General Beresford[413] were advancing against the City, having landed only twelve miles off, and such was the case.[414] The Viceroy, taking no precautions for the defence of the Capital containing 60,000 inhabitants, cowardly fled before daylight to Cordova, and Beresford marched into Buenos Ayres and took quiet possession; the people, astonished, hardly knew what an English soldier was, [yet] they found the whole country invaded by a small force of 2000 men. This expedition, planned by Sir Howard Popham,[415] and carried into execution with the assistance of the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope,[416] equally surprised the Ministry at home as it did the Viceroy of Buenos Ayres.

Beresford having possession of this citadel, a small fortification commanding the principal square of the town, for a short time found himself undisturbed. It was now that some plan should have been followed, as it was ridiculous to suppose that a garrison of sixteen hundred men, the amount of Beresford's party under arms, [**fo. 73**] could keep possession of so large a town which depended upon the country for supplies and which country, a perfect flat, was inhabited by a million of men, such as I have described the Gauchos to be; the only advantage to be derived from this momentary success would have been to have declared that the English force had come to assist the patriot party to throw off the yoke of Spain, [but] even then it is probable that the said party would have been found too inconsiderable to have ventured to declare itself […]

The Viceroy having fled from his post, a Frenchman in the Spanish service[,] Linones,[417] seeing the small number of invaders, excited the population to take up arms, & in a very short time

[413] William Carr Beresford, 1st viscount Beresford (1768–1854), who served in the Peninsular War and was created marquis of Campo Maior. He was later master-general of the Ordnance under Wellington (1828–1830) and a Tory MP for County Waterford (1830–1831).

[414] The first of the two British invasions of the River Plate, undertaken to deprive Spain – then a French ally – of colonial revenues and to develop commercial opportunities in the region.

[415] The architect of the River Plate Expedition was in fact Admiral Sir Home Riggs Popham (1762–1820), the British naval commander at the Cape. Popham was the author of the signal code adopted by the Navy in 1803 and an independent MP for Yarmouth (1804–1806), Shaftesbury (1806–1807), and Ipswich (1807–1812).

[416] General Sir David Baird, 1st baronet of Newbyth (1757–1829), was acting military governor at the Cape.

[417] Not 'Linones' but Santiago de Liniers y Bremond, 1st count of Buenos Aires (1753–1810), a French nobleman who had long served the Spanish crown.

Beresford found himself blockaded in the small citadel, the surrounding houses filled by thousands of wild Gauchos […] the result was that Beresford capitulated on the understanding that his troops were to be allowed to embark for England, but on marching out of the citadel, the Governor, Linones, had the greatest difficulty in protecting the lives of Beresford and his men from the infuriated populace, [and] had not the conduct of the General and his troops been such as to have a procured a feeling in their favour, of the more respectable classes, they would all probably have been murdered by the Gauchos. The capitulation was disregarded and Beresford and all his troops marched to the interior from which few of them ever returned […] most preferring to settle in the country.

In 1807, Monte Video was taken by Sir Samuel Auchmutty. In February of the same year, General Whitlock on the 28th of June [**fo. 74**] […] at the head of 8,000 English picked soldiers landed at Buenos Ayres, [and] on the following day he drove in the small force opposed to him and on the 4th of July took possession of the suburb of the town called 'the Recolita'[;][418] Linones, who was now Viceroy[,] retired to the further side of the small river situated about three miles from Buenos Ayres [and] here he was joined by thousands of Gauchos; had Whitlock marched into the town at once, he would have met with no opposition; the inhabitants were prepared to receive the English troops, [and] the recollection also that private property had been respected by Beresford induced them to trust to the mercy of the English General, and in short, there was no general enthusiasm, which is alone capable of enabling the inhabitants to defend an open town. If such was the state of affairs at sunset, very different was it a few hours later[.] Whitlock[,] instead of advancing, bivouacked for the night in a large open space between the Recolita and the town; for some hours the inhabitants, as it was described to me by an old lady who remembered it all, were in a state of suspense[;] by degrees it became known that the town was not to be taken possession of that night, [and] fires were soon lit in the enemy's camp, where, unfortunately, discipline was not what it should have been.

Linones having been informed of the halt of Whitlock, [he] returned to the town with about 7,000 men[;] the noise from the encampment and the story circulated had communicated a general determination among the inhabitants to defend themselves. Linones was a man capable of turning to account this enthusiasm and for the rest of the night, men, women and children were busily

[418] Recoleta, a suburb of present-day Buenos Aires.

employed with the [**fo. 75**] unanimous feeling to prepare in the defence of their houses. Streets were unpaved, trenches cut across the principal thoroughfares, and every old gun that could be found [was] mounted under the direction of Linones and his Officers […] The houses were now hastily barricaded, the doors strongly secured […] the town was all fortress.

On the 5th of July Whitlock sent an Officer to Linones calling upon him to surrender – this communication was seized upon by the latter as a means of gaining time, but of course led to nothing. The British troops, upwards of 7,000[,] advanced to the attack with their muskets unloaded[. T]he different Generals were ordered to push forward and seize certain points, and entering the town in separate divisions, were assailed from the windows and housetops with an overwhelming fire of musketry and hand grenades, while the guns played down the streets upon the advancing troops[. T]he confusion that ensued was inevitable, [and] most of the divisions, unprepared with instruments to force open the doors, were obliged to surrender […] General Crawford,[419] cut off from all the other columns[,] was obliged to surrender to save his men who were being [**fo. 76**] shot down without the power of touching an enemy […] Whitlock occupied an advanced post, but the loss was already 2,500 men in killed, wounded and prisoners[. T]herefore, discontinuing his action[,] he renewed the conference with Linones, which ended as is too well known with his accepting terms which caused the disgrace of our flag, and the sentence of a Court Martial, cashiering Whitlock on his return to England.[420] By this capitulation we agreed to withdraw all our forces from the River Plate, and even to give up Monte Video. With an effective force of 5,000 men and in possession of the most commanding positions in the town, a communication open also to the fleet, General Whitlock in thus conceding every thing acted with a weakness that deserved some more severe sentence than that inflicted upon him […] [**fo. 77**] [S]uch was the end of our expedition, and the Buenos Ayreians are not a little proud of the several English flags which are suspended as trophys in the Church of San Domingo.[421]

In 1808, the invasion of the [Iberian] peninsula was known in the Spanish Colonies and for a moment excited a feeling in favour for

[419] Major General Robert Craufurd (1764–1812), a student of the Prussian military, a veteran of campaigns in India (1790–1792) and Ireland (1798), and an MP for the corrupt borough of East Retford (1802–1806), who died of wounds sustained during the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo.

[420] Court-martialled at Chelsea in 1808 and cashiered for incompetence, Whitelocke was mocked in cartoon by Samuel William Fores (1761–1838) and retired to Bristol.

[421] The Santo Domingo Convent which still stands in the neighbourhood of Monserrat.

the Mother Country, and America during this year and in 1809 willingly furnished her treasure to assist in the struggle against Napoleon, but the impatience which had for some time been growing up at the mis-rule of the Colonial authorities was daily becoming more difficult to restrain[;] the weakness of the Viceroy upon the first landing of the English, the short possession of the Capital by Beresford, the subsequent successful defence against Whitlock, the calls upon the people and the excitement caused by the invasion of Spain by the French Armies,[422] all assisted to hasten that cry for independence [which] not alone in Buenos Ayres alone but in Spanish America, generally[,] broke out by concert in all the different colonies in 1810. The people had been awoke from the lethargy and those who argue that this or that cause was the immediate one are, in my opinion searching for causes where none are needed; the emancipation of Spanish America [was] inevitable whenever the people [were] called upon to judge for themselves. The non-intercourse system being broken through the authority of the mother country, already weakened by the dissension of the Ministry of Godoy,[423] in the first commotion the natives rose as one man, claimed and achieved their independence. [**fo. 78**] The English expedition coming to conquer the country, instead of assisting to declare its freedom, united the Americans for a moment to the cause of Spain, but when the cry was raised of '*Viva la Independencia*', from that moment the colony of the River Plate was lost to Spain […]

The war so called of Independence lasted until 1814 in the Provinces bordering the Cordillera, the Spaniards from Upper Peru feebly endeavouring to suppress the revolution. Buenos Ayreians, subsequently under General San Martin,[424] contributed to the liberation of Chile and Peru. Monte Video was maintained by a Spanish garrison until 1818. At the commencement of the revolution, troops were sent to Paraguay to raise the standard of revolt in that country; but on the Buenos Ayreians approaching the frontier they found a considerable native army drawn up to oppose their further progress and were civilly told that their assistance was not

[422] Having invaded Portugal through Spain in late 1807, France invaded Spain in February 1808, leading to the abdication of Charles IV (1748–1819, r.1788–1808) and the outbreak of the Peninsular War.

[423] Manuel Godoy, 1st duke of Alcudia (1767–1851) was the pre-eminent Spanish minister from 1792 until 1808. Upon Charles IV's abdication, Godoy and his family lived in exile in France then Italy; in the 1840s, he was allowed to return to Spain and to regain part of his estate.

[424] José de San Martín (1778–1850), born in Buenos Aires, served in the Spanish army in Africa and fought in the Peninsular War before returning to Argentina, where he was made a colonel in the revolutionary army.

wanted and requested to retrace their steps. The Paraguayians, having asserted their independence from Spain, submitted to the despotism of a Doctor Francise[425] who [has] ruled over them with a rod of iron for the last thirty years and allows neither egress or ingress to his dominions. The country is represented as being the most perfect with regard to climate and productions and in itself supplied all the wants of its inhabitants[. H]owever, [**fo. 79**] little is known about it[. S]ome English Merchants who had been kept prisoner for several years by Francise, were at last released in 1825 and these men speak of the country as a sort of paradise.[426] The population are kept in a most degraded state and from what one heard of Francise his conduct could only be accounted for by ascribing it to madness[;] if he is still living he must be 80 years old and upwards; his reign has always been a reign of terror, but, in short, all was conjecture about the country; in reality not so much is known of its interior as of China or Japan.

It would be useless to follow the Buenos Ayreians in all their petty civil wars and commotions since they have been an independent nation […] For many years the different military leaders were struggling for the Presidency and in the course of about 15 years, I think there were about twenty nominal Presidents.[427]

All the Spanish American Republics were acknowledged by Mr. Canning in 1825,[428] and it is to be regretted that this acknowledgment had not been accompanied with some conditions.

After […] the many parties that agitated, Buenos Ayreians settled down into the two contending ones of Federals and Unitarians; the Chief of the latter, Donigo, was shot by the [**fo.80**] former in 1834,[429] since which time the Federals have kept possession of the

[425] José Rodriguez de Francia (1766–1840), the lawyer and theologian who was 'Supreme and Perpetual Dictator of Paraguay' from 1814 until his death.

[426] Francia had 'a penchant for arbitrary detention': Alex Middleton, 'Britain and the Paraguayan dictatorship, *c.*1820–1840', *Historical Journal*, 65 (2022), 371–392. *The Times* of 18 June 1825 gives the names of 12 'British Subjects released from Paraguay through the interference of the British Consul-General resident at Buenos-Ayres'.

[427] Establishing just who led Argentina in this period is problematic. By one reckoning, there were 26 supreme dictators, governors, and presidents (not including the interim junta of April 1815) between the ascent of Gervasio Antonio de Posadas (1757–1833) in January 1814 and the establishment of the Argentine Confederation in 1831.

[428] Canning was foreign secretary under Portland (1807–1809) and Liverpool (1822–1827), concluding treaties by which Britain recognised the independence and sovereignty of Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia.

[429] This is incorrect. Manuel Dorrego (1787–1828) was the interim governor of Buenos Aires from June to September 1820, then its recognised governor from August 1827. He was ousted in a coup led by Juan Lavalle (1797–1841) and executed in December 1828 and not, as Grey suggests, in 1834.

Government, the whole power of which devolved upon the actual President 'Rosas', as great a tyrant and despot as ever existed; this man, originally a great proprietor of Pampa and cattle[,] has immense influence with the Gauchos and by them is maintained in position […] [H]e would banish all foreigners and it is only by constant threats that the English Minister, assisted by the presence of a man-of-war[,] obliges him to conform to the customs of other nations[;] otherwise the English inhabitants here would be robbed and shot in the same manner as the Buenos Ayreians; hardly a week passes without some execution. A short time ago he put to death 70 Indians caught in the Pampas, [and] they were all shot the same morning […]

I have never seen Rosas, as he is afraid to appear much in public and [because] I have no business with him [I] refuse Mr. Mandeville's offer to be presented; to give you an idea of the freedom of this country, every person who goes into the street without a piece of red ribbon in their button hole, the device of Federals, is sure to be insulted; the fronts of public offices are ornamented by bright red pillars and at the head of all official documents under the National Arms are these words: – 'Viva la Federacion! Mueran los Unitarios!'[430]

The government of Rosas had but one thing to recommend, that I know of, which is, that a good police force is maintained in the town, which force although used in an oppressive manner towards those who are not suspected of being friends to the Government is a great comfort to strangers, who are in no danger walking the streets at night. [**fo. 81**] Mandeville and myself who constantly took long rides alone into the Pampa have never met with any insult[;] Upton,[431] however, nearly got lassoed the other day by some drunken Gauchos, but it was from what I could learn his own fault.

[430] Rather than federalism, this was *Rosismo*, a totalitarian ideology rooted in the personal cult of Rosas, and preserved through censorship and paramilitary violence. As Grey notes, the colour red – and the obligation to demonstrate loyalty to Rosas by wearing red – was essential to the regime.

[431] The British diplomatic attaché serving under Mandeville.