

R.B. Sheridan to H.R.H.

41094 - 5

Saturday  
July 23 1808

Sir,

It is matter of surprise to myself as well as of deep regret that I should have incurred the appearance of ungrateful neglect & disrespect towards the Person to whom I am most obliged on earth, to whom I feel the most ardent dutiful & affectionate attachment and in whose service I would readily sacrifice my life - yet so it is - and to nothing but a perverse combination of circumstances, which would form but a feeble excuse were I to detail them, can I attribute a conduct so strange seemingly on my Part and from nothing but your Royal Highness' kindness & benignity can I expect



an indulgent allowance and oblivion  
of that conduct. Nor could I ever hope  
for this were I not conscious of the  
unshaken & unalterable devotion to your  
R. H. which lives in my heart and will  
ever continue to be its pride & boast.

But I should ill deserve the  
indulgence I request did I not frankly  
state what has pass'd in my mind, of  
which tho' it may not justify, must in  
some degree extenuate apparent neglect.

Previous to your R. H. having actually  
restored me to the office I had resign'd  
I was mortified & hurt in the meanest  
manner by having repeated to me from  
an authority which I then trusted some  
expressions of your Royal Highness's respecting  
me which it was impossible I could have  
deserved. Tho' I was most solemnly pledg'd



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41095

never to reveal the source from which the communication came I did for some time intend to unburthen my mind to my most honourable & sincere Friend and your O.H. most attack'd & excellent Servant Mr Mahon. but I suddenly discover'd beyond a doubt that I had been grossly deceived and that there had not exist'd the slightest foundation for the tale that had been impos'd on me. and Sir, I do humbly ask your Pardon for having for a moment credited a fiction suggested by mischief & malice.

yet extraordinary as it may seem I had so long under that false impression neglect'd the course which Duty and gratitude required from me that I felt an unaccountable shyness & reserve in acknowledging & repairing my error.



To this Procrastination other circumstances  
unluckily contributed. One Day when I  
had the honor of accidentally meeting your  
Rt. H on Horseback in Oxford! tho' your  
manner was as usual gracious & kind  
to me, yet you said that I appear'd  
to have deserted you privately and  
politically. I had long before been  
appeared, tho' falsely I am convinced, that  
your Rt. H had promised to make a point  
that I should neither speak nor vote  
upon L. Wilberlys case - my view  
of this subject & my knowledge of the  
delicate situation in which your Rt. H.  
stood in respect to the Catholic Question  
tho' perhaps inadequate motives yet  
encouraged the continuance of that reserve  
which my original error had commenced



41096-7

These Topics being once pass'd (and  
sure I am that your R. H. would never  
deliberately have ask'd me to abase myself  
and forfeit all that is the worth of my  
public character, and all that can  
ever create a chance to render me  
useful to your R. H. I mean the  
unpurchasable consistency and severity  
of my political Principles) it was my  
hope fully & frankly to have taken  
that opportunity of explaining myself  
when I was inform'd that a circumstance  
which occur'd at Burlington - House  
& which must have been heinously  
misrepresented had greatly offended  
you, and soon after it was stated  
to me by an authority which I have  
no objection to disclose that your R. H.  
had quoted with mark'd disapprobation words



supposed to have been spoken by me on  
the Spanish Question, but of which words  
I solemnly protest I never uttered one  
syllable, at the same time reserving  
to myself the right to say that I should  
not be ashamed of the sentiment if  
I had uttered it, nor could your  
R.H. if I am convinced have condemned it.

Most justly may your R.H.  
answer to all I have stated by a single  
question - namely why have I not  
sooner explain'd myself and confided  
in that uniform Friendship & Protection  
which I have so long experienced at  
your hands - to this I have nothing  
to plead but a nervous prostrating  
nature, urged & disturbed by great &  
unpleasant private embarrassments and  
a feeling of I trust no false Pride which



41097

however I may blame myself unpardonably  
 me involuntarily to fly from the view  
 of even a cold look from the quarter  
 to which I ~~owe~~ <sup>owe so</sup> much, & by whom to  
 be esteem'd in the glory & consolation  
 of my private & Public Life.

One Point only remains for me  
 to intrude on your consideration  
 but it is of a nature fit only  
 for personal communication & -  
 I know you will grant me  
 that opportunity. - As to my office  
 in the Duchy it would be insinuity  
 and disguise in me not to see  
 that your R. H. wishes some different  
 disposition of it - tho' my Patent is  
 for Life the surrender shall be at



your feet tomorrow, only Sir let  
me implore you to respect me enough  
to give me credit for the scorn with  
which I should reject any remuneration  
for the sacrifice. —

you have the Truth & my  
Heart before you — you cannot be  
on half terms with me — if I have  
seriously offended you, I have lost  
what I never will attempt to repair  
or recover the Prince & future <sup>to forgive a</sup> ~~service~~  
and you Sir will have lost <sup>with</sup> ~~what~~  
I trust & hope to God you will  
repair the next hour the <sup>Service</sup> ~~service~~  
& honest devotion of a man not  
a professing Symplicant to your  
Station & Power, but a sincere  
& affectionate servant & friend to  
your Happiness & Glory

I have the honor to be with  
every sentiment of gratitude & devotion  
your M<sup>th</sup> dutiful servant  
1711