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Sommario/riassunto	The private letters of a statesman are always inviting material for historians and when he has claim to literary fame as well the correspondence assumes a double significance. Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) belonged to an age that gave pride of place to the written word as an instrument of both business and pleasure. This volume includes 363 letters (many previously unpublished) from his school boy days to his establishment in the Tory camp under the patronage of Lord Lyndhurst. Most prominent are Disraeli's letters to his sister, Sarah, with whom he corresponded frequently over several decades. To her he confided his hopes, interspersed with his observations and descriptions of social, literary and political events. The letters to Sarah supply a skeleton around which Disraeli's young manhood can be reconstructed

and shed valuable light on the remaining documents in the volume. The correspondence also includes accounts of his tour of the Low Countries and the Rhine in 1824, his adventurous trip to Spain, Greece, the Near East and Egypt in 1830, his tense negotiations with publishers and his campaign to shine as a member of aristocratic society and win political patronage. The letters demonstrate the fine eye for detail and the capacity for self-dramatization and literary conceits which mark his novels. With their annotations they also provide a remarkably detailed account of life in the upper reaches of English society as viewed from below, and of Disraeli's ambitions to enter that life.

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