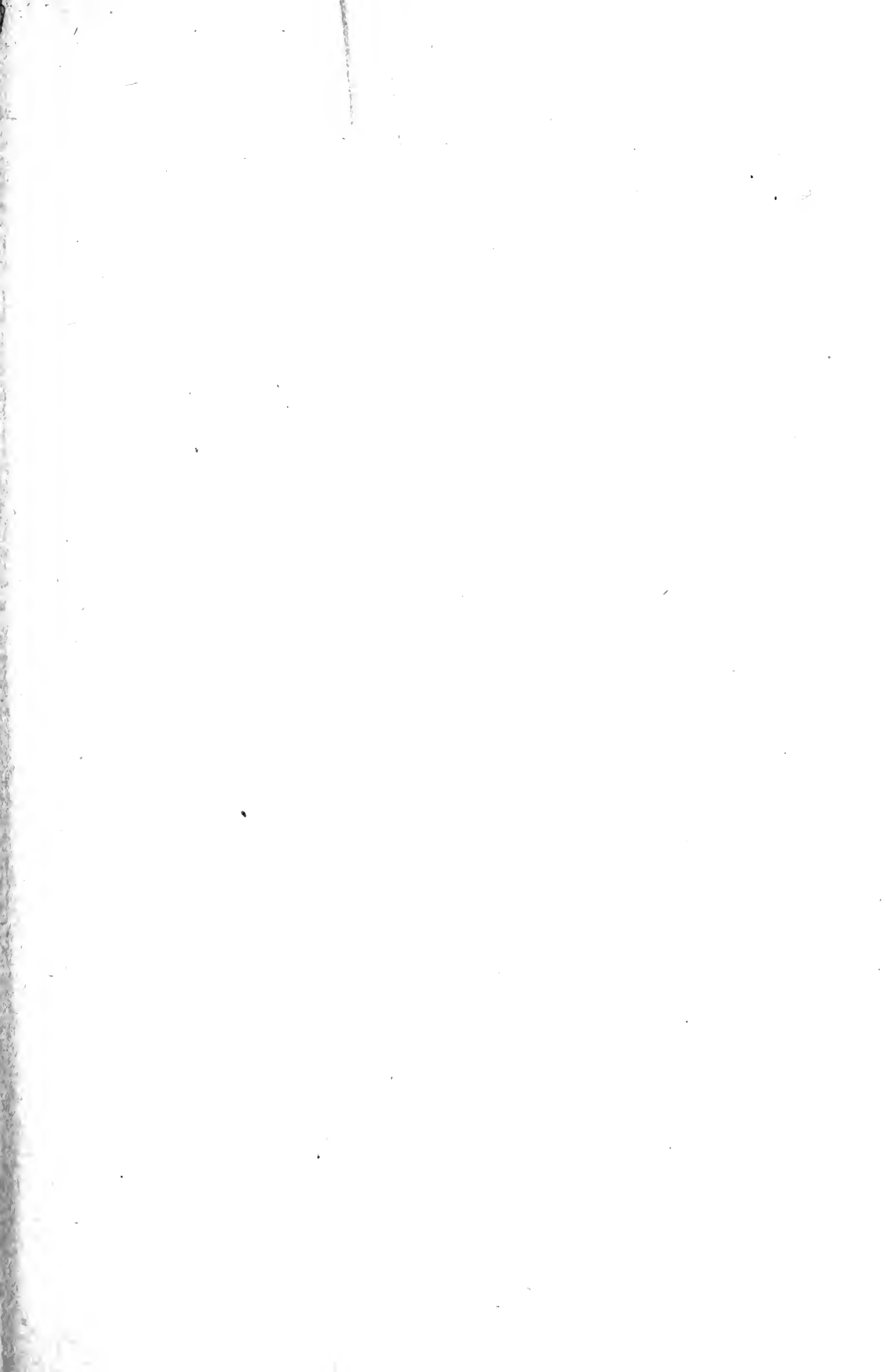


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SOUTHEY

BY

E. DOWDEN

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

NOTE.

I AM indebted throughout to *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, edited by the Rev. C. C. Southey, six volumes, 1850, and to *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, edited by J. W. Warton, B.D., four volumes, 1856. Many other sources have been consulted. I thank Mr. W. J. Craig for help given in examining Southey manuscripts, and Mr. T. W. Lyster for many valuable suggestions.

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SOUTHEY.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD.

No one of his generation lived so completely in and for literature as did Southey. "He is," said Byron, "the only existing entire man of letters." With him literature served the needs both of the material life and of the life of the intellect and imagination; it was his means of earning daily bread, and also the means of satisfying his highest ambitions and desires. This, which was true of Southey at five-and-twenty years of age, was equally true at forty, fifty, sixty. During all that time he was actively at work accumulating, arranging, and distributing knowledge; no one among his contemporaries gathered so large a store from the records of the past; no one toiled with such steadfast devotion to enrich his age; no one occupied so honourable a place in so many provinces of literature. There is not, perhaps, any single work of Southey's the loss of which would be felt by us as a capital misfortune. But the more we consider his total work, its mass, its variety, its high excellence, the more we come to regard it as a memorable, an extraordinary achievement.

Southey himself, however, stands above his works. In subject they are disconnected, and some of them appear like huge fragments. It is the presence of one mind, one character in all, easily recognizable by him who knows Southey, which gives them a vital unity. We could lose the *History of Brazil*, or the *Peninsular War*, or the *Life of Wesley*, and feel that if our possessions were diminished, we ourselves in our inmost being had undergone no loss which might not easily be endured. But he who has once come to know Southey's voice as the voice of a friend, so clear, so brave, so honest, so full of boyish glee, so full of manly tenderness, feels that if he heard that voice no more a portion of his life were gone. To make acquaintance with the man is better than to study the subjects of his books. In such a memoir as the present, to glance over the contents of a hundred volumes, dealing with matters widely remote, would be to wander upon a vast circumference when we ought to strike for the centre. If the reader come to know Southey as he read and wrote in his library, as he rejoiced and sorrowed among his children, as he held hands with good old friends, as he walked by the lake-side, or lingered to muse near some mountain stream, as he hoped and feared for England, as he thought of life and death and a future beyond the grave, the end of this small book will have been attained.

At the age of forty-six Robert Southey wrote the first of a series of autobiographic sketches; his spirit was courageous, and life had been good to him; but it needed more than his courage to live again in remembrance with so many of the dead; having told the story of his boyhood, he had not the heart to go farther. The autobiography rambles pleasantly into by-ways of old Bath and Bristol life; at Westminster School it leaves him. So far

we shall go along with it ; for what lies beyond, a record of Southey's career must be brought together from a multitude of letters, published or still remaining in manuscript, and from many and massy volumes in prose and verse, which show how the industrious hours sped by.

Southey's father was a linen-draper of Bristol. He had left his native fields under the Quantock hills to take service in a London shop, but his heart suffered in its exile. The tears were in his eyes one day when a porter went by carrying a hare, and the remembrance suddenly came to him of his rural sports. On his master's death he took a place behind the counter of Britton's shop in Wine Street, Bristol ; and when, twelve years later, he opened a shop for himself in the same business, he had, with tender reminiscence, a hare painted for a device upon his windows. He kept his grandfather's sword which had been borne in Monmouth's rebellion ; he loved the chimes and quarter-boys of Christ Church, Bristol, and tried, as church-warden, to preserve them. What else of poetry there may have been in the life of Robert Southey the elder is lost among the buried epics of prosaic lives. We cannot suppose that as a man of business he was sharp and shrewd ; he certainly was not successful. When the draper's work was done, he whiled away the hours over Felix Farley's Bristol Journal, his only reading. For library some score of books shared with his wine-glasses the small cupboard in the back parlour ; its chief treasures were the *Spectator*, the *Guardian*, some eighteenth-century poems, dead even then, and one or two immortal plays.

On Sundays Mr. Southey, then a bachelor, would stroll to Bedminster to dine at the pleasant house of Mrs. Hill—a substantial house to which Edward Hill, gentleman, brought his second wife, herself a widow ; a house rich in

old English comfort, with its diamond-tiled garden-way and jessamine-covered porch, its wainscoted "best kitchen," its blue room and green room and yellow room, its grapes and greengages and nectarines, its sweet-williams and stocks and syringas. Among these pleasant surroundings the young draper found it natural, on Sabbath afternoons, to make love to pleasant Margaret Hill. "Never," writes her son Robert Southey—"never was any human being blessed with a sweeter temper or a happier disposition." Her face had been marred by the seams of small-pox, but its brightness and kindness remained; there was a charm in her clear hazel eyes, so good a temper and so alert an understanding were to be read in them. She had not gone to any school except one for dancing, and "her state," declares Southey, "was the more gracious;" her father had, however, given her lessons in the art of whistling; she could turn a tune like a blackbird. From a mother, able to see a fact swiftly and surely, and who knew both to whistle and to dance, Southey inherited that alertness of intellect and that joyous temper, without which he could not have accomplished his huge task-work, never yielding to a mood of rebellion or *ennui*.

After the courtship on Sunday afternoons came the wedding, and before long a beautiful boy was born, who died in infancy. On the 12th of August, 1774, Mrs. Southey was again in the pain of childbirth. "Is it a boy?" she asked the nurse. "Ay, a great ugly boy!" With such salutation from his earliest critic the future poet-laureate entered this world. "God forgive me," his mother exclaimed afterwards, in relating the event, "when I saw what a great red creature it was, covered with rolls of fat, I thought I should never be able to love him." In due time the red creature proved to be a distinctively

human child, whose curly hair and sensitive feelings made him a mother's darling. He had not yet heard of sentiment or of Rousseau, but he wept at the pathos of romantic literature, at the tragic fate of the "Children sliding on the ice all on a summer's day," or the too early death of "Billy Pringle's pig," and he would beg the reciters not to proceed. His mother's household cares multiplied, and Southey, an unbreeched boy of three years, was borne away one morning by his faithful foster-mother Patty to be handed over to the tender mercies of a schoolmistress. Ma'am Powell was old and grim, and with her lashless eyes gorgonized the new pupil; on the seizure of her hand he woke to rebellion, kicking lustily, and crying, "Take me to Pat! I don't like ye! you've got ugly eyes! take me to Pat, I say!" But soft-hearted Pat had gone home, sobbing.

Mrs. Southey's one weakness was that of submitting too meekly to the tyranny of an imperious half-sister, Miss Tyler, the daughter of Grandmother Hill by her first marriage. For this weakness there were excuses; Miss Tyler was an elder sister by many years; she had property of her own; she passed for a person of fashion, and was still held to be a beauty; above all, she had the advantage of a temper so capricious and violent that to quarrel with her at all might be to lose her sisterly regard for ever. Her struggling sister's eldest son took Aunt Tyler's fancy; it was a part of her imperious kindness to adopt or half-adopt the boy. Aunt Tyler lived in Bath; in no other city could a gentlewoman better preserve health and good looks, or enjoy so much society of distinction on easy but not too ample means; it possessed a charming theatre, and Miss Tyler was a patron of the drama. To Bath, then, she had brought her portrait by Gainsborough, her inlaid cabi-

net of ebony, her cherry-wood arm-chair, her mezzotints after Angelica Kaufmann, her old-maid hoards of this and of that, the woman servant she had saved from the toils of matrimony, and the old man, harmless as one of the crickets which he nightly fed until he died. To Bath Miss Tyler also brought her nephew; and she purchased a copy of the new gospel of education, Rousseau's *Emilius*, in order to ascertain how Nature should have her perfect work with a boy in petticoats. Here the little victim, without companions, without play, without the child's beatitudes of dirt and din, was carefully swathed in the odds and ends of habits and humours which belonged to a maiden lady of a whimsical, irrational, and self-indulgent temper. Miss Tyler, when not prepared for company, wandered about the house—a faded beauty—in the most faded and fluttering of costumes; but in her rags she was spotless. To preserve herself and her worldly gear from the dust, for ever floating and gathering in this our sordid atmosphere, was the business of her life. Her acquaintances she divided into the clean and the unclean—the latter class being much the more numerous. Did one of the unclean take a seat in her best room, the infected chair must be removed to the garden to be aired. But did he seat himself in Miss Tyler's own arm-chair, pressing his abominable person into Miss Tyler's own cushion, then passionate were her dismay and despair. To her favourites she was gracious and high-bred, regaling them with reminiscences of Lady Bateman, and with her views on taste, Shakspeare, and the musical glasses. For her little nephew she invented the pretty recreation of pricking playbills; all capital letters were to be illuminated with pin-holes; it was not a boisterous nor an ungentle sport. At other times the boy would beguile the hours in the garden, making friends with flowers and

insects, or looking wistfully towards that sham castle on Claverton Hill, seat of romantic mystery, but, alas! two miles away, and therefore beyond the climbing powers of a refined gentlewoman. Southey's hardest daily trial was the luxurious morning captivity of his aunt's bed; still at nine, at ten that lady lay in slumber; the small urchin, long perked up and broad awake, feared by sound or stir to rouse her, and would nearly wear his little wits away in plotting re-arrangements of the curtain-pattern, or studying the motes at mazy play in the slant sunbeam. His happiest season was when all other little boys were fast asleep; then, splendid in his gayest "jam," he sat beside Miss Tyler in a front row of the best part of the theatre; when the yawning fits had passed, he was as open-eyed as the oldest, and stared on, filling his soul with the spectacle, till the curtain fell.

The "great red creature," Robert Southey, had now grown into the lean greyhound of his after-life; his long legs wanted to be stirring, and there were childish ambitions already at work in his head. Freedom became dearer to him than the daintiest cage, and when at six he returned to his father's house in Wine Street, it was with rejoicing. Now, too, his aunt issued an edict that the long-legged lad should be breeched; an epoch of life was complete. Wine Street, with its freedom, seemed good; but best of all was a visit to Grandmother Hill's pleasant house at Bedminster. "Here I had all wholesome liberty, all wholesome indulgence, all wholesome enjoyments; and the delight which I there learnt to take in rural sights and sounds has grown up with me, and continues unabated to this day." And now that scrambling process called education was to begin. A year was spent by Southey as a day-scholar with old Mr. Foot, a dissenting minister, whose

unorthodoxy as to the doctrine of the Trinity was in some measure compensated by sound traditional views as to the uses of the cane. Mr. Foot, having given proof on the back of his last and his least pupil of steadfastness in the faith according to Busby, died; and it was decided that the boy should be placed under Thomas Flower, who kept school at Corston, nine miles from Bristol. To a tender mother's heart nine miles seemed a breadth of severance cruel as an Atlantic. Mrs. Southey, born to be happy herself, and to make others happy, had always heretofore met her son with a smile; now he found her weeping in her chamber; with an effort, such as Southey, man and boy, always knew how to make on like occasions, he gulped down his own rising sob, and tried to brighten her sorrow with a smile.

A boy's first night at school is usually not a time of mirth. The heart of the solitary little lad at Corston sank within him. A melancholy hung about the decayed mansion which had once known better days; the broken gateways, the summer-houses falling in ruins, the grass-grown court, the bleakness of the schoolroom, ill-disguised by its faded tapestry, depressed the spirits. Southey's pillow was wet with tears before he fell asleep. The master was at one with his surroundings; he, too, was a piece of worthy old humanity now decayed; he, too, was falling in untimely ruins. From the memory of happier days, from the troubles of his broken fortune, from the vexations of the drunken maid-servant who was now his wife, he took refuge in contemplating the order and motions of the stars. "When he came into his desk, even there he was thinking of the stars, and looked as if he were out of humour, not from ill-nature, but because his calculations were interrupted." Naturally the work of the school, such as

it was, fell, for the most part, into the hands of Charley, Thomas Flower's son. Both father and son knew the mystery of that flamboyant penmanship admired by our ancestors, but Southey's handwriting had not yet advanced from the early rounded to the decorated style. His spelling he could look back upon with pride: on one occasion a grand spelling tournament between the boys took place; and little Southey can hardly have failed to overthrow his taller adversaries with the posers, "crystallization" and "coterie." The household arrangements at Corston, as may be supposed, were not of the most perfect kind; Mrs. Flower had so deep an interest in her bottle, and poor Thomas Flower in his planets. The boys each morning washed themselves, or did not, in the brook ankle-deep which ran through the yard. In autumn the brook grew deeper and more swift, and after a gale it would bring within bounds a tribute of floating apples from the neighbouring orchard. That was a merry day, also in autumn, when the boys were employed to pelt the master's walnut-trees; Southey, too small to bear his part in the battery, would glean among the fallen leaves and twigs, inhaling the penetrating fragrance which ever after called up a vision of the brook, the hillside, and its trees. One school-boy sport—that of "conquering" with snail-shells—seems to have been the special invention of Corston. The snail-shells, not tenantless, were pressed point against point until one was broken in. A great conqueror was prodigiously prized, was treated with honourable distinction, and was not exposed to danger save in great emergencies. One who had slain his hundreds might rank with Rodney, to see whom the boys had marched down to the Globe inn, and for whom they had cheered and waved their Sunday cocked hats as he passed by. So, on the whole, life at

Corston had its pleasures. Chief among its pains was the misery of Sunday evenings in winter; then the pupils were assembled in the hall to hear the master read a sermon, or a portion of Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*. "Here," writes Southey, "I sat at the end of a long form, in sight but not within feeling of the fire, my feet cold, my eyelids heavy as lead, and yet not daring to close them—kept awake by fear alone, in total inaction, and under the operation of a lecture more soporific than the strongest sleeping dose." While the boys' souls were thus provided for, there was a certain negligence in matters unspiritual; an alarm got abroad that infection was among them. This hastened the downfall of the school. One night disputing was heard between Charley and his father; in the morning poor Flower was not to be seen, and Charley appeared with a black eye. So came to an end the year at Corston. Southey, aged eight, was brought home, and underwent "a three days' purgatory in brimstone."¹

What Southey had gained of book-lore by his two years' schooling was as little as could be; but he was already a lover of literature after a fashion of his own. A friend of Miss Tyler had presented him, as soon as he could read, with a series of Newbery's sixpenny books for children—*Goody Twoshoes*, *Giles Gingerbread*, and the rest—delectable histories, resplendent in Dutch-gilt paper. The true masters of his imagination, however, were the players and playwrights who provided amusement for the pleasure-loving people of Bath. Miss Tyler was acquainted with Colman, and Sheridan, and Cumberland, and Holcroft; her talk

¹ Recollections of Corston, somewhat in the manner of Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, will be found in Southey's early poem, *The Retrospect*.

was of actors and authors, and her nephew soon perceived that, honoured as were both classes, the authors were awarded the higher place. His first dreams of literary fame, accordingly, were connected with the drama. “‘It is the easiest thing in the world to write a play,’ said I to Miss Palmer (a friend of Aunt Tyler’s), as we were in a carriage on Redcliffe Hill one day, returning from Bristol to Bedminster. ‘Is it, my dear?’ was her reply. ‘Yes,’ I continued, ‘for you know you have only to think what you would say if you were in the place of the characters, and to make them say it.’” With such a canon of dramatic authorship Southey began a play on the continence of Scipio, and actually completed an act and a half. Shakespeare he read and read again; Beaumont and Fletcher he had gone through before he was eight years old. Were they not great theatrical names, Miss Tyler reasoned, and therefore improving writers for her nephew? and Southey had read them unharmed. When he visited his aunt from Corston, she was a guest with Miss Palmer at Bath; a covered passage led to the playhouse, and every evening the delighted child, seated between the two lady-patronesses of the stage, saw the pageantry and heard the poetry. A little later he persuaded a schoolfellow to write a tragedy; Ballard liked the suggestion, but could not invent a plot. Southey gave him a story; Ballard approved, but found a difficulty in devising names for the *dramatis personæ*. Southey supplied a list of heroic names: they were just what Ballard wanted—but he was at a loss to know what the characters should say. “I made the same attempt,” continued Southey, “with another schoolfellow, and with no better success. It seemed to me very odd that they should not be able to write plays as well as to do their lessons.”

The ingenious Ballard was an ornament of the school of William Williams, whither Southey was sent as a day-boarder after the catastrophe of Corston. Under the care of this kindly, irascible, little, bewigged old Welshman, Southey remained during four years. Williams was not a model schoolmaster, but he was a man of character and of a certain humorous originality. In two things he believed with all the energy of his nature—in his own spelling-book printed for his own school, and in the Church Catechism. Latin was left to the curate; when Southey reached Virgil, old Williams, delighted with classical attainments rare among his pupils, thought of taking the boy into his own hands, but his little Latin had faded from his brain; and the curate himself seemed to have reached his term in the *Tityre tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi*, so that to Southey, driven round and round the pastoral paddock, the names of Tityrus and Melibœus became for ever after symbols of *ennui*. No prosody was taught: “I am,” said Southey, “at this day as liable to make a false quantity as any Scotchman.” The credit, however, is due to Williams of having discovered in his favourite pupil a writer of English prose. One day each boy of a certain standing was called upon to write a letter on any subject he pleased: never had Southey written a letter except the formal one dictated at Corston which began with “Honoured Parents.” He cried for perplexity and vexation; but Williams encouraged him, and presently a description of Stonehenge filled his slate. The old man was surprised and delighted. A less amiable feeling possessed Southey’s schoolfellows: a plan was forthwith laid for his humiliation—could he tell them, fine scholar that he was, what the letters *i. e.* stand for? Southey,

never lacking in courage, drew a bow at a venture: for John the Evangelist.

The old Welshman, an original himself, had an odd following of friends and poor retainers. There was the crazy rhymester known as "Dr. Jones;" tradition darkly related that a dose of cantharides administered by waggish boys of a former generation had robbed him of his wits. "The most celebrated *improvisatore* was never half so vain of his talent as this queer creature, whose little figure of some five-feet-two I can perfectly call to mind, with his suit of rusty black, his more rusty wig, and his old cocked hat. Whenever he entered the schoolroom he was greeted with a shout of welcome." There was also Pullen, the breeches-maker—a glorious fellow, brimful of vulgarity, prosperity, and boisterous good-nature; above all, an excellent hand at demanding a half-holiday. A more graceful presence, but a more fleeting, was that of Mrs. Estan, the actress, who came to learn from the dancing-master her *minuet de la cour* in *The Belle's Stratagem*. Southey himself had to submit to lessons in dancing. Tom Madge, his constant partner, had limbs that went every way; Southey's limbs would go no way: the spectacle presented by their joint endeavours was one designed for the pencil of Cruikshank. In the art of reading aloud Miss Tyler had herself instructed her nephew, probably after the manner of the most approved tragedy queens. The grand style did not please honest Williams. "Who taught you to read?" he asked, scornfully. "My aunt," answered Southey. "Then give my compliments to your aunt, and tell her that my old horse, that has been dead these twenty years, could have taught you as well"—a message which her nephew, with the appalling frankness of youth, delivered, and which was never forgotten.

While Southey was at Corston, his grandmother died; the old lady with the large, clear, brown, bright eyes, seated in her garden, was no more to be seen, and the Bedminster house, after a brief occupation by Miss Tyler, was sold. Miss Tyler spoke of Bristol society with a disdainful sniff; it was her choice to wander for a while from one genteel watering-place to another. When Williams gave Southey his first summer holidays, he visited his aunt at Weymouth. The hours spent there upon the beach were the most spiritual hours of Southey's boyhood; he was for the first time in face of the sea—the sea vast, voiceful, and mysterious. Another epoch-making event occurred about the same time; good Mrs. Dolignon, his aunt's friend, gave him a book—the first which became his very own since that present of the toy-books of Newbery. It was Hoole's translation of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*; in it a world of poetical adventure was opened to the boy. The notes to Tasso made frequent reference to Ariosto; Bull's Circulating Library at Bath—a Bodleian to Southey—supplied him with the version, also by Hoole, of the *Orlando Furioso*; here was a forest of old romance in which to lose himself. But a greater discovery was to come; searching the notes again, Southey found mention made of Spenser, and certain stanzas of Spenser's chief poem were quoted. "Was the *Faerie Queene* on Bull's shelves?" "Yes," was the answer; "they had it, but it was in obsolete language, and the young gentleman would not understand it." The young gentleman, who had already gone through Beaumont and Fletcher, was not daunted; he fell to with the keenest relish, feeling in Spenser the presence of something which was lacking in the monotonous couplets of Hoole, and charming himself unaware with the music of

the stanza. Spenser, "not more sweet than pure, and not more pure than wise,"

"High-priest of all the Muses' mysteries,"²

was henceforth accepted by Southey as his master.

When Miss Tyler had exhausted her friends' hospitality, and had grown tired of lodgings, she settled in a pleasant suburban nook at Bristol; but having a standing quarrel with Thomas Southey, her sister's brother-in-law, she would never set foot in the house in Wine Street, and she tried to estrange her nephew, as far as possible, from his natural home. Her own brother William, a half-witted creature, she brought to live with her. "The Squire," as he was called, was hardly a responsible being, yet he had a sort of *half-saved* shrewdness, and a memory stored with old saws, which, says Southey, "would have qualified him, had he been born two centuries earlier, to have worn motley, and figured with a cap and bells and a bauble in some baron's hall." A saying of his, "Curses are like young chickens, they always come home to roost," was remembered by Southey in after-years; and when it was turned into Greek by Coleridge, to serve as motto to *The Curse of Kehamā*, a mysterious reference was given—*Αποφθ. Ανεκ. του Γυλιελ. του Μητ.* With much beer-swilling and tobacco-chewing, premature old age came upon him. He would sit for hours by the kitchen fire, or, on warm days, in the summer-house, his eyes intently following the movements of the neighbours. He loved to play at marbles with his nephew, and at loo with Miss Tyler; most of all, he loved to be taken to the theatre. The poor Squire had an affectionate heart; he would fondle children with tenderness, and at

² *Carmen Nuptiale*: Proem, 18.

his mother's funeral his grief was overwhelming. A companion of his own age Southey found in Shadrach Weekes, the boy of all work, a brother of Miss Tyler's maid. Shad and his young master would scour the country in search of violet and cowslip roots, and the bee and fly orchis, until wood and rock by the side of the Avon had grown familiar and had grown dear; and now, instead of solitary pricking of play-bills, Southey set to work, with the help of Shad, to make and fit up such a theatre for puppets as would have been the pride even of Wilhelm Meister.

But fate had already pronounced that Southey was to be poet, and not player. Tasso and Ariosto and Spenser claimed him, or so he dreamed. By this time he had added to his epic cycle Pope's *Homer* and Mickle's *Lusiad*. That prose romance, embroidered with sixteenth-century affectations, but with a true chivalric sentiment at its heart, Sidney's *Arcadia*, was also known to him. He had read Arabian and mock-Arabian tales; he had spent the pocket-money of many weeks on a Josephus, and he had picked up from Goldsmith something of Greek and Roman history. So breathed upon by poetry, and so furnished with erudition, Southey, at twelve years old, found it the most natural thing in the world to become an epic poet. His removal from the old Welshman's school having been hastened by that terrible message which Miss Tyler could not forgive, Southey, before proceeding to Westminster, was placed for a year under a clergyman, believed to be competent to carry his pupils beyond Tityrus and Melibœus. But, except some skill in writing English themes, little was gained from this new tutor. The year, however, was not lost. "I do not remember," Southey writes, "in any part of my life to have been so conscious of intellectual improvement. . . an improve-

ment derived not from books or instruction, but from constantly exercising myself in English verse." "Arcadia" was the title of his first dream-poem; it was to be grafted upon the *Orlando Furioso*, with a new hero, and in a new scene; this dated from his ninth or tenth year, and some verses were actually composed. The epic of the Trojan Brutus and that of King Richard III. were soon laid aside, but several folio sheets of an *Egbert* came to be written. The boy's pride and ambition were solitary and shy. One day he found a lady, a visitor of Miss Tyler's, with the sacred sheets of *Egbert* in her hand; her compliments on his poem were deeply resented; and he determined henceforth to write his epics in a private cipher. Heroic epistles, translations from Latin poetry, satires, descriptive and moral pieces, a poem in dialogue exhibiting the story of the Trojan war, followed in rapid succession; last, a "Cassibelan," of which three books were completed. Southey, looking back on these attempts, notices their deficiency in plan, in construction. "It was long before I acquired this power—not fairly, indeed, till I was about five or six and thirty; and it was gained by practice, in the course of which I learnt to perceive wherein I was deficient."

One day in February, 1788, a carriage rumbled out of Bath, containing Miss Palmer, Miss Tyler, and Robert Southey, now a tall, lank boy with high-poised head, brown curling hair, bright hazel eyes, and an expression of ardour and energy about the lips and chin. The ladies were on their way to London for some weeks' diversion, and Robert Southey was on his way to school at Westminster. For a while he remained an inconvenient appendage of his aunt's, wearying of the great city, longing for Shad and the carpentry, and the Gloucester meadows and the

Avon cliffs, and the honest eyes and joyous bark of poor Phillis. April the first — ominous morning — arrived; Southey was driven to Dean's Yard; his name was duly entered; his boarding-house determined; his tutor chosen; farewells were said, and he found himself in a strange world, alone.

CHAPTER II.

WESTMINSTER, OXFORD, PANTISOCRACY, AND MARRIAGE.

OF Southey during his four years at Westminster we know little; his fragment of autobiography, having brought him to the school, soon comes to an untimely close; and for this period we possess no letters. But we know that these were years which contributed much to form his intellect and character; we know that they were years of ardour and of toil; and it is certain that now, as heretofore, his advance was less dependent on what pastors and masters did for him than on what he did for himself. The highest scholarship—that which unites precision with breadth, and linguistic science with literary feeling—Southey never attained in any foreign tongue, except perhaps in the Portuguese and the Spanish. Whenever the choice lay between pausing to trace out a law of language, or pushing forward to secure a good armful of miscellaneous facts, Southey preferred the latter. With so many huge structures of his own in contemplation, he could not gather too much material, nor gather it too quickly. Such fortitude as goes to make great scholars he possessed; his store of patience was inexhaustible; but he could be patient only in pursuit of his proper objects. He could never learn a language in regular fashion; the best grammar, he said, was always the

shortest. Southey's acquaintance with Greek never got beyond that stage at which Greek, like fairy gold, is apt to slip away of a sudden unless kept steadfastly in view; nearly all the Greek he had learnt at Westminster he forgot at Oxford. A monkish legend in Latin of the Church or a mediæval Latin chronicle he could follow with the run of the eye; but had he at any season of his manhood been called on to write a page of Latin prose, it would probably have resembled the French in which he sometimes sportively addressed his friends by letter, and in which he uttered himself valiantly while travelling abroad.

Southey brought to Westminster an imagination stored with the marvels and the beauty of old romance. He left it skilled in the new sentiment of the time—a sentiment which found in Werther and Eloisa its dialect, high-pitched, self-conscious, rhapsodical, and not wholly real. His bias for history was already marked before he entered the school; but his knowledge consisted of a few clusters of historical facts grouped around the subjects of various projected epics, and dotting at wide distances and almost at random the vast expanse of time. Now he made acquaintance with that book which, more than any other, displays the breadth, the variety, and the independence of the visible lives of nations. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* leaves a reader cold who cares only to quicken his own inmost being by contact with what is most precious in man's spiritual history; one chapter of Augustine's *Confessions*, one sentence of the *Imitation*—each a live coal from off the altar—will be of more worth to such an one than all the mass and laboured majesty of Gibbon. But one who can gaze with a certain impersonal regard on the spectacle of the world will find the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, more than almost any other single book, replenish and

dilate the mind. In it Southey viewed for the first time the sweep, the splendour, the coils, the mighty movement, of the stream of human affairs.

Southey's ambition on entering Westminster was to have the friendship of the youths who had acted in the last Westminster play, and whose names he had seen in the newspaper. Vain hope! for they, already preparing to tie their hair in tails, were looking onward to the great world, and had no glance to cast on the unnoted figures of the under-fourth. The new-comer, according to a custom of the school, was for a time effaced, ceasing to exist as an individual entity, and being known only as "shadow" of the senior boy chosen to be "substance" to him during his noviciate. Southey accepted his effacement the more willingly because George Strachey, his substance, had a good face and a kindly heart; unluckily—Strachey boarding at home—they were parted each night. A mild young aristocrat, joining little with the others, was head of the house; and Southey, unprotected by his chief, stood exposed to the tyranny of a fellow-boarder bigger and brawnier than himself, who would souse the ears of his sleeping victim with water, or on occasions let fly the porter-pot or the poker at his head. Aspiring beyond these sallies to a larger and freer style of humour, he attempted one day to hang Southey out of an upper window by the leg; the pleasantry was taken ill by the smaller boy, who offered an effectual resistance, and soon obtained his remove to another chamber. Southey's mature judgment of boarding-school life was not, on the whole, favourable; yet to Westminster he owed two of his best and dearest possessions—the friendship of C. W. W. Wynn, whose generous loyalty alone made it possible for Southey to pursue literature as his profession, and the friendship, no less precious, of Gros-

venor Bedford, lasting green and fresh from boyhood until both were white-haired, venerable men.

Southey's interest in boyish sports was too slight to beguile him from the solitude needful for the growth of a poet's mind. He had thoughts of continuing Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; he planned six books to complete the *Faery Queen*, and actually wrote some cantos; already the subject of *Madoc* was chosen. And now a gigantic conception, which at a later time was to bear fruit in such poems as *Thalaba* and *Kehama*, formed itself in his mind. "When I was a schoolboy at Westminster," he writes, "I frequented the house of a schoolfellow who has continued till this day to be one of my most intimate and dearest friends. The house was so near Dean's Yard that it was hardly considered as being out of our prescribed bounds; and I had free access to the library, a well-stored and pleasant room . . . looking over the river. There many of my truant hours were delightfully spent in reading Picart's *Religious Ceremonies*. The book impressed my imagination strongly; and before I left school I had formed the intention of exhibiting all the more prominent and poetical forms of mythology, which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the groundwork of an heroic poem." Southey's huge design was begotten upon his *pia mater* by a folio in a library. A few years earlier Wordsworth, a boy of fourteen, walking between Hawkshead and Ambleside, noticed the boughs and leaves of an oak-tree intensely outlined in black against a bright western sky. "That moment," he says, "was important in my poetical history, for I date from it my consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poets of any age or country, so far as I was acquainted with them; and I

made a resolution to supply in some degree the deficiency." Two remarkable incidents in the history of English poetry, and each with something in it of a typical character.

At Westminster Southey obtained his first literary profits—the guerdon of the silver penny to which Cōwper alludes in his *Table-Talk*. Southey's penny—exchanged for current coin in the proportion of six to one by the mistress of the boarding-house—was always awarded for English composition. But his fame among his schoolfellows was not of an early or sudden growth. In the year of Southey's entrance, some of the senior boys commenced a weekly paper called *The Trifler*. It imitates, with some skill, the periodical essay of the post-Johnsonian period: there is the wide-ranging discussion on the Influence of Liberty on Genius; there is the sprightly sketch of Amelia, a learned Lady; there is the moral diatribe on Deists, a Sect of Infidels most dangerous to Mankind; there are the letters from Numa and from Infelix; there is the Eastern apologue, beginning, "In the city of Bassora lived Zaydor, the son of Al-Zored." Southey lost no time in sending to the editor his latest verses; a baby sister, Margaretta, had just died, and Southey expressed in elegy a grief which was real and keen. "The Elegy signed B. is received"—so Mr. Timothy Touchstone announced on the Saturday after the manuscript had been dropped into the penny post. The following Saturday—anxiously expected—brought no poem, but another announcement: "The Elegy by B. must undergo some Alterations; a Liberty I must request all my Correspondents to permit me to take." "After this," says Southey, "I looked for its appearance anxiously, but in vain." Happily no one sought to discover B., or supposed that he was one with the curly-headed boy of the under-fourth.

If authorship has its hours of disappointment, it has compensating moments of glory and of joy. *The Trifler*, having lived to the age of ten months, deceased. In 1792 Southey, now a great boy, with Strachey, his sometime "substance," and his friends Wynn and Bedford, planned a new periodical of ill-omened name, *The Flagellant*. "I well remember my feelings," he writes, "when the first number appeared. . . . It was Bedford's writing, but that circumstance did not prevent me from feeling that I was that day borne into the world as an author; and if ever my head touched the stars while I walked upon the earth, it was then. . . . In all London there was not so vain, so happy, so elated a creature as I was that day." From that starry altitude he soon descended. The subject of an early number of *The Flagellant* was flogging; the writer was Robert Southey. He was full of Gibbon at the time, and had caught some of Voltaire's manner of poignant irony. Rather for disport of his wits than in the character of a reformer, the writer of number five undertook to prove from the ancients and the Fathers that flogging was an invention of the devil. During Southey's life the devil received many insults at his hands; his horns, his hoofs, his teeth, his tail, his moral character, were painfully referred to; and the devil took it, like a sensible fiend, in good part. Not so Dr. Vincent; the preceptorial dignity was impugned by some unmannerly brat; a bulwark of the British Constitution was at stake. Dr. Vincent made haste to prosecute the publisher for libel. Matters having taken unexpectedly so serious a turn, Southey came forward, avowed himself the writer, and, with some sense of shame in yielding to resentment so unwarranted and so dull, he offered his apology. The head-master's wrath still held on its way, and Southey was privately expelled.

All Southey's truant hours were not passed among folios adorned with strange sculptures. In those days even St. Peter's College, Westminster, could be no little landlocked bay—silent, secure, and dull. To be in London was to be among the tides and breakers of the world. Every post brought news of some startling or significant event. Now it was that George Washington had been elected first President of the American Republic; now that the States-General were assembled at Versailles; now that Paris, delivered from her nightmare towers of the Bastille, breathed free; now that Brissot was petitioning for dethronement. The main issues of the time were such as to try the spirits. Southey, who was aspiring, hopeful, and courageous, did not hesitate in choosing a side; a new dawn was opening for the world, and should not his heart have its portion in that dawn?

The love of our own household which surrounds us like the air, and which seems inevitable as our daily meat and drink, acquires a strange preciousness when we find that the world can be harsh. The expelled Westminster boy returned to Bristol, and faithful Aunt Tyler welcomed him home; Shad did not avert his face, and Phillis looked up at him with her soft spaniel eyes. But Bristol also had its troubles; the world had been too strong for the poor linen-draper in Wine Street; he had struggled to maintain his business, but without success; his fortune was now broken, and his heart broke with it. In some respects it was well for Southey that his father's affairs gave him definite realities to attend to; for, in the quiet and vacancy of the days in Miss Tyler's house, his heart took unusual heats and chills, and even his eager verse-writing could not allay the excitement nor avert the despondent fit. When Michaelmas came, Southey went up to Oxford to matriculate;

it was intended that he should enter at Christ Church, but the dean had heard of the escapade at Westminster; there was a laying of big-wigs together over that adventure, and the young rebel was rejected; to be received, however, by Balliol College. But to Southey it mattered little at the time whether he were of this college or of that; a summons had reached him to hasten to Bristol that he might follow his father's body to the grave, and now his thoughts could not but cling to his mother in her sorrow and her need.

“I left Westminster,” says Southey, “in a perilous state—a heart full of poetry and feeling, a head full of Rousseau and Werther, and my religious principles shaken by Gibbon: many circumstances tended to give me a wrong bias, none to lead me right, except adversity, the wholesomest of all discipline.” The young republican went up to chambers in Rat Castle—since departed—near the head of Balliol Grove, prepared to find in Oxford the seat of pedantry, prejudice, and aristocracy; an airy sense of his own enlightenment and emancipation possessed him. He has to learn to pay respect to men “remarkable only for great wigs and little wisdom.” He finds it “rather disgraceful at the moment when Europe is on fire with freedom—when man and monarch are contending—to sit and study Euclid and Hugo Grotius.” Beside the enthusiasm proper in Southey's nature, there was at this time an enthusiasm preense. He had learnt from his foreign masters the language of hyper-sensibility; his temperament was nervous and easily wrought upon; his spirit was generous and ardent. Like other youths with a facile literary talent before finding his true self, he created a number of artificial selves, who uttered for him his moralizings and philosophizings, who declaimed for him on liberty, who dictated

long letters of sentimental platitudes, and who built up dream-fabrics of social and political reforms, chiefly for the pleasure of seeing how things might look in "the brilliant colours of fancy, nature, and Rousseau." In this there was no insincerity, though there was some unreality. "For life," he says, "I have really a very strong predilection," and the buoyant energy within him delayed the discovery of the bare facts of existence; it was so easy and enjoyable to become in turn sage, reformer, and enthusiast. Or perhaps we ought to say that all this time there was a real Robert Southey, strong, upright, ardent, simple; and although this was quite too plain a person to serve the purposes of epistolary literature, it was he who gave their cues to the various ideal personages. This, at least, may be affirmed—all Southey's unrealities were of a pure and generous cast; never was his life emptied of truth and meaning, and made in the deepest degree phantasmal by a secret shame lurking under a fair show. The youth Milton, with his grave upbringing, was happily not in the way of catching the trick of sentimental phrases; but even Milton at Cambridge, the lady of his College, was not more clean from spot or blemish than was Southey amid the vulgar riot and animalisms of young Oxford.

Two influences came to the aid of Southey's instinctive modesty, and confirmed him in all that was good. One was his friendship with Edmund Seward, too soon taken from him by death. The other was his discipleship to a great master of conduct. One in our own day has acknowledged the largeness of his debt to

"That halting slave, who in Nicopolis
Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son
Clear'd Rome of what most shamed him."

Epictetus came to Southey precisely when such a master was needed; other writers had affected him through his imagination, through his nervous sensibility; they had raised around him a luminous haze; they had plunged him deeper in illusion. Now was heard the voice of a conscience speaking to a conscience; the manner of speech was grave, unfigured, calm; above all, it was real, and the words bore in upon the hearer's soul with a quiet resistlessness. He had allowed his sensitiveness to set up what excitements it might please in his whole moral frame; he had been squandering his emotions; he had been indulging in a luxury and waste of passion. Here was a tonic and a styptic. Had Southey been declamatory about freedom? The bondsman Epictetus spoke of freedom also, and of how it might be obtained. Epictetus, like Rousseau, told of a life according to nature; he commended simplicity of manners. But Rousseau's simplicity, notwithstanding that homage which he paid to the will, seemed to heat the atmosphere with strange passion, seemed to give rise to new curiosities and refinements of self-conscious emotion. Epictetus showed how life could be simplified, indeed, by bringing it into obedience to a perfect law. Instead of a quietism haunted by feverish dreams—duty, action, co-operation with God. "Twelve years ago," wrote Southey in 1806, "I carried Epictetus in my pocket till my very heart was ingrained with it, as a pig's bones become red by feeding him upon madder. And the longer I live, and the more I learn, the more am I convinced that Stoicism, properly understood, is the best and noblest of systems." Much that Southey gained from Stoicism he kept throughout his whole life, tempered, indeed, by the influences of a Christian faith, but not lost. He was no metaphysician, and a master who had placed

metaphysics first and morals after would hardly have won him for a disciple; but a lofty ethical doctrine spoke to what was deepest and most real in his nature. To trust in an over-ruling Providence, to accept the disposal of events not in our own power with a strenuous loyalty to our Supreme Ruler, to hold loose by all earthly possessions even the dearest, to hold loose by life itself while putting it to fullest use—these lessons he first learnt from the Stoic slave, and he forgot none of them. But his chief lesson was the large one of self-regulation, that it is a man's prerogative to apply the reason and the will to the government of conduct and to the formation of character.

By the routine of lectures and examinations Southey profited little; he was not driven into active revolt, and that was all. His tutor, half a democrat, surprised him by praising America, and asserting the right of every country to model its own forms of government. He added, with a pleasing frankness which deserves to be imitated, "Mr. Southey, you won't learn anything by my lectures, sir; so, if you have any studies of your own, you had better pursue them." Of all the months of his life, those passed at Oxford, Southey declared, were the most unprofitable. "All I learnt was a little swimming . . . and a little boating. . . . I never remember to have dreamt of Oxford—a sure proof how little it entered into my moral being; of school, on the contrary, I dream perpetually." The miscellaneous society of workers, idlers, dunces, bucks, men of muscle and men of money, did not please him; he lacked what Wordsworth calls "the congregating temper that pervades our unripe years." One or two friends he chose, and grappled them to his heart; above all, Seward, who abridged his hours of sleep for sake of study—whose drink was water, whose breakfast was dry bread; then,

Wynn and Lightfoot. With Seward he sallied forth, in the Easter vacation, 1793, for a holiday excursion; passed, with "the stupidity of a democratic philosopher," the very walls of Blenheim, without turning from the road to view the ducal palace; lingered at Evesham, and wandered through its ruined Abbey, indulging in some passable mediæval romancing; reached Worcester and Kidderminster. "We returned by Bewdley. There is an old mansion, once Lord Herbert's, now mouldering away, in so romantic a situation, that I soon lost myself in dreams of days of yore: the tapestried room—the listed fight—the vassal-filled hall—the hospitable fire—the old baron and his young daughter—these formed a most delightful day-dream." The youthful democrat did not suspect that such day-dreams were treasonable—a hazardous caressing of the wily enchantress of the past; in his pocket he carried Milton's *Defence*, which may have been his amulet of salvation. Many and various elements could mingle in young brains a-seethe with revolution and romanticism. The fresh air and quickened blood at least put Southey into excellent spirits. "We must walk over Scotland; it will be an adventure to delight us all the remainder of our lives: we will wander over the hills of Morven, and mark the driving blast, perchance bestrodden by the spirit of Ossian!"

Among visitors to the Wye, in July, 1793, were William Wordsworth, recently returned from France, and Robert Southey, holiday-making from Oxford; they were probably unacquainted with each other at that time even by name. Wordsworth has left an undying memorial of his tour in the poem written near Tintern Abbey, five years later. Southey was drawing a long breath before he uttered himself in some thousands of blank verses. The

father of his friend Bedford resided at Brixton Causeway, about four miles on the Surrey side of London; the smoke of the great city hung heavily beyond an intervening breadth of country; shady lanes led to the neighbouring villages; the garden was a sunny solitude where flowers opened and fruit grew mellow, and bees and birds were happy. Here Southey visited his friend; his nineteenth birthday came; on the following morning he planted himself at the desk in the garden summer-house; morning after morning quickly passed; and by the end of six weeks *Joan of Arc*, an epic poem in twelve books, was written. To the subject Southey was attracted primarily by the exalted character of his heroine; but apart from this it possessed a twofold interest for him: England, in 1793, was engaged in a war against France—a war hateful to all who sympathized with the Republic; Southey's epic was a celebration of the glories of French patriotism, a narrative of victory over the invader. It was also chivalric and mediæval; the sentiment which was transforming the word Gothic, from a term of reproach to a word of vague yet mastering fascination, found expression in the young poet's treatment of the story of Joan of Arc. Knight and hermit, prince and prelate, doctors seraphic and irrefragable with their pupils, meet in it; the castle and the cathedral confront one another: windows gleam with many-coloured light streaming through the rich robes of saint and prophet; a miracle of carven tracery branches overhead; upon the altar burns the mystic lamp.

The rough draft of *Joan* was hardly laid aside when Southey's sympathies with the revolutionary movement in France, strained already to the utmost point of tension, were fatally rent. All his faith, all his hope, were given to the Girondin party; and from the Girondins he had

singled out Brissot as his ideal of political courage, purity, and wisdom. Brissot, like himself, was a disciple of Jean Jacques; his life was austere; he had suffered on behalf of freedom. On the day when the Bastille was stormed, its keys were placed in Brissot's hands; it was Brissot who had determined that war should be declared against the foreign foes of the Republic. But now the Girondins—following hard upon Marie Antoinette—were in the death-carts; they chanted their last hymn of liberty, ever growing fainter while the axe lopped head after head; and Brissot was among the martyrs (October 31, 1793). Probably no other public event so deeply affected Southey. "I am sick of the world," he writes, "and discontented with every one in it. The murder of Brissot has completely harrowed up my faculties. . . . I look round the world, and everywhere find the same spectacle—the strong tyrannizing over the weak, man and beast. . . . There is no place for virtue."

After this, though Southey did not lose faith in democratic principles, he averted his eyes for a time from France: how could he look to butchers who had shed blood which was the very life of liberty, for the realization of his dreams? And whither should he look? Had he but ten thousand republicans like himself, they might repeople Greece and expel the Turk. Being but one, might not Cowley's fancy, a cottage in America, be transformed into a fact: "three rooms . . . and my only companion some poor negro whom I have bought on purpose to emancipate?" Meanwhile he occupied a room in Aunt Tyler's house, and, instead of swinging the axe in some forest primeval, amused himself with splitting a wedge of oak in company with Shad, who might, perhaps, serve for the emancipated negro. Moreover, he was very

diligently driving his quill: "I have finished transcribing *Joan*, and have bound her in marble paper with green ribbons, and am now copying all my remainables to carry to Oxford. Then once more a clear field, and then another epic poem, and then another." Appalling announcement! "I have accomplished a most arduous task, transcribing all my verses that appear worth the trouble, except letters. Of these I took one list—another of my pile of stuff and nonsense—and a third of what I have burnt and lost; upon an average 10,000 verses are burnt and lost; the same number preserved, and 15,000 worthless." Such sad mechanic exercise dulled the ache in Southey's heart; still "the visions of futurity," he finds, "are dark and gloomy, and the only ray that enlivens the scene beams on America."

To Balliol Southey returned; and if the future of the world seemed perplexing, so also did his individual future. His school and college expenses were borne by Mrs. Southey's brother, the Rev. Herbert Hill, chaplain to the British Factory at Lisbon. In him the fatherless youth found one who was both a friend and a father. Holbein's portrait of Sir Thomas More in his best years might have passed for that of Mr. Hill; there was the same benign thoughtfulness in his aspect, the same earnest calm, the same brightness and quietness, the same serene and cheerful strength. He was generous and judicious, learned and modest, and his goodness carried authority with it. Uncle Hill's plan had been that Southey, like himself, should become an English clergyman. But though he might have preached from an Unitarian pulpit, Southey could not take upon himself the vows of a minister of the Church of England. It would have instantly relieved his mother had he entered into orders. He longed that this were possible,

and went through many conflicts of mind; and not a little anguish. "God knows I would exchange every intellectual gift which He has blessed me with, for implicit faith to have been able to do this;" but it could not be. To bear the reproaches, gentle yet grave, of his uncle was hard; to grieve his mother was harder. Southey resolved to go to the anatomy school, and fit himself to be a doctor. But he could not overcome his strong repugnance to the dissecting-room; it expelled him whether he would or no; and all the time literature, with still yet audible voice, was summoning him. Might he not obtain some official employment in London, and also pursue his true calling? Beside the desire of pleasing his uncle and of aiding his mother, the Stoic of twenty had now a stronger motive for seeking some immediate livelihood. "I shall joyfully bid adieu to Oxford," he writes, ". . . and, when I know my situation, unite myself to a woman whom I have long esteemed as a sister, and for whom I now indulge a warmer sentiment." But Southey's reputation as a dangerous Jacobin stood in his way; how could his Oxford overseers answer for the good behaviour of a youth who spoke scornfully of Pitt?

The shuttles of the fates now began to fly faster, and the threads to twist and twine. It was June of the year 1794. A visitor from Cambridge was one day introduced to Southey; he seemed to be of an age near his own; his hair, parted in the middle, fell wavy upon his neck; his face, when the brooding cloud was not upon him, was bright with an abundant promise—a promise vaguely told in lines of the sweet full lips, in the luminous eyes, and the forehead that was like a god's. This meeting of Southey and Coleridge was an event which decided much in the careers of both. In the summer days and in youth, the

meeting-time of spirits, they were drawn close to one another. Both had confessions to make, with many points in common; both were poets; both were democrats; both had hoped largely from France, and the hopes of both had been darkened; both were uncertain what part to take in life. We do not know whether Coleridge quickly grew so confidential as to tell of his recent adventure as Silas Titus Comberbatch of the 15th Light Dragoons. But we know that Coleridge had a lively admiration for the tall Oxford student—a person of distinction, so dignified, so courteous, so quick of apprehension, so full of knowledge, with a glance so rapid and piercing, with a smile so good and kind. And we know that Coleridge lost no time in communicating to Southey the hopes that were nearest to his heart.

Pantisocracy, word of magic, summed up these hopes. Was it not possible for a number of men like themselves, whose way of thinking was liberal, whose characters were tried and incorruptible, to join together and leave this old world of falling thrones and rival anarchies, for the woods and wilds of the young republic? One could wield an axe, another could guide a plough. Their wants would be simple and natural; their toil need not be such as the slaves of luxury endure; where possessions were held in common, each would work for all; in their cottages the best books would have a place; literature and science, bathed anew in the invigorating stream of life and nature, could not but rise reanimated and purified. Each young man should take to himself a mild and lovely woman for his wife; it would be her part to prepare their innocent food, and tend their hardy and beautiful race. So they would bring back the patriarchal age, and in the sober evening of life they would behold “colonies of indepen-

dence in the undivided dale of industry." All the arguments in favour of such a scheme could not be set forth in a conversation, but Coleridge, to silence objectors, would publish a quarto volume on Pantisocracy and Aspheterism.

Southey heartily assented; his own thoughts had, with a vague forefeeling, been pointing to America; the unpublished epic would serve to buy a spade, a plough, a few acres of ground; he could assuredly split timber; he knew a mild and lovely woman for whom he indulged a warmer sentiment than that of a brother. Robert Lovell, a Quaker, an enthusiast, a poet, married to the sister of Southey's Edith, would surely join them; so would Burnett, his college friend; so, perhaps, would the admirable Seward. The long vacation was at hand. Being unable to take orders, or to endure the horrors of the dissecting-room, Southey must no longer remain a burden upon his uncle; he would quit the university and prepare for the voyage.

Coleridge departed to tramp it through the romantic valleys and mountains of Wales. Southey joined his mother, who now lived at Bath, and her he soon persuaded—as a handsome and eloquent son can persuade a loving mother—that the plan of emigration was feasible; she even consented to accompany her boy. But his aunt—an *esprit borné*—was not to hear a breath of Pantisocracy; still less would it be prudent to confess to her his engagement to Miss Edith Frieker. His Edith was penniless, and therefore all the dearer to Southey; her father had been an unsuccessful manufacturer of sugar-pans. What would Miss Tyler, the friend of Lady Bateman, feel? What words, what gestures, what acts, would give her feelings relief?

When Coleridge, after his Welsh wanderings, arrived in Bristol, he was introduced to Lovell, to Mrs. Lovell, to Mrs.

Lovell's sisters, Edith and Sarah, and Martha and Elizabeth. Mrs. Lovell was doubtless already a pantisocrat; Southey had probably not found it difficult to convert Edith; Sarah, the elder sister, who was wont to look a mild reproof on over-daring speculations, seriously inclined to hear of pantisocracy from the lips of Coleridge. All members of the community were to be married. Coleridge now more than ever saw the propriety of that rule; he was prepared to yield obedience to it with the least possible delay. Burnett, also a pantisocrat, must also marry. Would Miss Martha Fricke join the community as Mrs. George Burnett? The lively little woman refused him scornfully; if he wanted a wife in a hurry, let him go elsewhere. The prospects of the reformers, this misadventure notwithstanding, from day to day grew brighter. "This Pantisocratic scheme," so writes Southey, "has given me new life, new hope, new energy; all the faculties of my mind are dilated." Coleridge met a friend of Priestley's. But a few days since he had toasted the great doctor at Bala, thereby calling forth a sentiment from the loyal parish apothecary: "I gives a sentiment, gemmen! May all republicans be gullo-teened!" The friend of Priestley's said that without doubt the doctor would join them. An American land-agent told them that for twelve men 2000*l.* would do. "He recommends the Susquehanna, from its excessive beauty and its security from hostile Indians." The very name—Susquehanna—sounded as if it were the sweetest of rippling rivers. Money, it is true, as Southey admits, "is a huge evil;" but now they are twenty-seven, and by resolute men this difficulty can be overcome.

It was evening of the 17th of October, a dark and gusty evening of falling rain and miry ways. Within Aunt Tyler's house in College Green, Bristol, a storm was burst-

ing; she had heard it all at last—Pantisocracy, America, Miss Fricker. Out of the house he must march; there was the door; let her never see his face again. Southey took his hat, looked for the last time in his life at his aunt, then stepped out into the darkness and the rain. “Why, sir, you ben’t going to Bath at this time of night and in this weather?” remonstrated poor Shadrach. Even so; and with a friendly whisper master and man parted. Southey had not a penny in his pocket, and was lightly clad. At Lovell’s he luckily found his father’s great-coat; he swallowed a glass of brandy and set off on foot. Misery makes one acquainted with strange road-fellows. On the way he came upon an old man, drunk, and hardly able to stumble forward through the night: the young pantisocrat, mindful of his fellow-man, dragged him along nine miles amid rain and mire. Then, with weary feet, he reached Bath, and there was his mother to greet him with surprise, and to ask for explanations. “Oh, Patience, Patience, thou hast often helped poor Robert Southey, but never didst thou stand him in more need than on Friday, the 17th of October, 1794.”

For a little longer the bow of hope shone in the West, somewhere over the Susquehanna, and then it gradually grew faint and faded. Money, that huge evil, sneered its cold negations. The chiefs consulted, and Southey proposed that a house and farm should be taken in Wales, where their principles might be acted out until better days enabled them to start upon their voyage. One pantisocrat, at least, could be happy with Edith, brown bread, and wild Welsh raspberries. But Coleridge objected; their principles could not be fairly tested under the disadvantage of an effete and adverse social state surrounding them; besides, where was the purchase-money to come from? how

were they to live until the gathering of their first crops? It became clear that the realization of their plan must be postponed. The immediate problem was, How to raise 150*l.*? With such a sum they might both qualify by marriage for membership in the pantisocratical community. After that, the rest would somehow follow.

How, then, to raise 150*l.*? Might they not start a new magazine and become joint editors? The *Telegraph* had offered employment to Southey. "Hireling writer to a newspaper! 'Sdeath! 'tis an ugly title; but *n'importe*. I shall write truth, and only truth." The offer, however, turned out to be that of a reporter's place; and his troublesome guest, honesty, prevented his contributing to *The True Briton*. But he and Coleridge could at least write poetry, and perhaps publish it with advantage to themselves; and they could lecture to a Bristol audience. With some skirmishing lectures on various political subjects of immediate interest, Coleridge began; many came to hear them, and the applause was loud. Thus encouraged, he announced and delivered two remarkable courses of lectures—one, *A Comparative View of the English Rebellion under Charles I. and the French Revolution*; the other, *On Revealed Religion: its Corruptions and its Political Views*. Southey did not feel tempted to discuss the origin of evil or the principles of revolution. He chose as his subject a view of the course of European history from Solon and Lyeurgus to the American War. His hearers were pleased by the graceful delivery and unassuming self-possession of the young lecturer, and were quick to recognize the unusual range of his knowledge, his just perception of facts, his ardour and energy of conviction. One lecture Coleridge begged permission to deliver in Southey's place—that on the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Roman

Empire. Southey consented, and the room was thronged; but no lecturer appeared; they waited; still no lecturer. Southey offered an apology, and the crowd dispersed in no happy temper. It is likely, adds that good old gossip Cottle, who tells the story, "that at this very moment Mr. Coleridge might have been found at No. 48 College Street, composedly smoking his pipe, and lost in profound musings on his divine Susquehanna."

The good Cottle—young in 1795, a publisher, and unhappily a poet—rendered more important service to the two young men than that of smoothing down their ruffled tempers after this incident. Southey, in conjunction with Lovell, had already published a slender volume of verse. The pieces by Southey recall his schoolboy joys and sorrows, and tell of his mother's tears, his father's death, his friendship with "Urban," his love of "Ariste," lovely maid! his delight in old romance, his discipleship to Rousseau. They are chiefly of interest as exhibiting the diverse literary influences to which a young writer of genius was exposed in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Here the couplet of Pope reappears, and hard by the irregular ode as practised by Akenside, the elegy as written by Gray, the unrhymed stanza which Collins's *Evening* made a fashion, the sonnet to which Bowles had lent a meditative grace, and the rhymeless measures imitated by Southey from Sayers, and afterwards made popular by his *Thalaba*. On the last page of this volume appear "Proposals for publishing by subscription *Joan of Arc*;" but subscriptions came slowly in. One evening Southey read for Cottle some books of *Joan*. "It can rarely happen," he writes, "that a young author should meet with a bookseller as inexperienced and as ardent as himself." Cottle offered to publish the poem in quarto, to make it the handsomest

book ever printed in Bristol, to give the author fifty copies for his subscribers, and fifty pounds to put forthwith into his purse. Some dramatic attempts had recently been made by Southey, *Wat Tyler*, of which we shall hear more at a later date, and the *Fall of Robespierre*, undertaken by Coleridge, Lovell, and Southey, half in sport—each being pledged to produce an act in twenty-four hours. These were now forgotten, and all his energies were given to revising and in part recasting *Joan*. In six weeks his epic had been written; its revision occupied six months.

With summer came a great sorrow, and in the end of autumn a measureless joy. "He is dead," Southey writes, "my dear Edmund Seward! after six weeks' suffering. . . . You know not, Grosvenor, how I loved poor Edmund: he taught me all that I have of good. . . . There is a strange vacancy in my heart. . . . I have lost a friend, and such a one!" And then characteristically come the words: "I will try, by assiduous employment, to get rid of very melancholy thoughts." Another consolation Southey possessed: during his whole life he steadfastly believed that death is but the removal of a spirit from earth to heaven; and heaven for him meant a place where cheerful familiarity was natural, where, perhaps, he himself would write more epics and purchase more folios. As Baxter expected to meet among the saints above Mr. Hampden and Mr. Pym, so Southey counted upon the pleasure of having long talks with friends, of obtaining introductions to eminent strangers; above all, he looked forward to the joy of again embracing his beloved ones:

"Often together have we talked of death;

How sweet it were to see

All doubtful things made clear;

How sweet it were with powers
Such as the Cherubim
To view the depth of Heaven!
O Edmund! thou hast first
Begun the travel of eternity."

Autumn brought its happiness pure and deep. Mr. Hill had arrived from Lisbon; once again he urged his nephew to enter the church; but for one of Southey's opinions the church-gate "is perjury," nor does he even find church-going the best mode of spending his Sunday. He proposed to choose the law as his profession. But his uncle had heard of Pantisocracy, Aspheterism, and Miss Fricker, and said the law could wait; he should go abroad for six months, see Spain and Portugal, learn foreign languages, read foreign poetry and history, rummage among the books and manuscripts his uncle had collected in Lisbon, and afterwards return to his Blackstone. Southey, straightforward in all else, in love became a Machiavel. To Spain and Portugal he would go; his mother wished it; Cottle expected from him a volume of travels; his uncle had but to name the day. Then he sought Edith, and asked her to promise that before he departed she would become his wife: she wept to think that he was going, and yet persuaded him to go; consented, finally, to all that he proposed. But how was he to pay the marriage fees and buy the wedding-ring? Often this autumn he had walked the streets dinnerless, no pence in his pocket, no bread and cheese at his lodgings, thinking little, however, of dinner, for his head was full of poetry and his heart of love. Cottle lent him money for the ring and the license—and Southey in after-years never forgot the kindness of his honest friend. He was to accompany his uncle, but Edith was first to be his own; so she may honourably accept

from him whatever means he can furnish for her support. It was arranged with Cottle's sisters that she should live with them, and still call herself by her maiden name. On the morning of the 14th of November, 1795—a day sad, yet with happiness underlying all sadness—Robert Southey was married in Redcliffe Church, Bristol, to Edith Fricker. At the church door there was a pressure of hands, and they parted with full hearts, silently—Mrs. Southey to take up her abode in Bristol, with the wedding-ring upon her breast, her husband to cross the sea. Never did woman put her happiness in more loyal keeping.

So by love and by poetry, by Edith Fricker and by Joan of Arc, Southey's life was being shaped. Powers most benign leaned forward to brood over the coming years and to bless them. It was decreed that his heart should be no homeless wanderer; that, as seasons went by, children should be in his arms and upon his knees: it was also decreed that he should become a strong toiler among books. Now Pantisocracy looked faint and far; the facts plain and enduring of the actual world took hold of his adult spirit. And Coleridge complained of this, and did not come to bid his friend farewell.

CHAPTER III.

WANDERINGS, 1795—1803.

THROUGH pastoral Somerset, through Devon amid falling leaves, then over rough Cornish roads, the coach brought Southey—cold, hungry, and dispirited—to Falmouth. No packet there for Corunna; no packet starting before December 1st. The gap of time looked colourless and dreary, nor could even the philosophy of Epictetus lift him quite above “the things independent of the will.” After a comfortless and stormy voyage, on the fifth morning the sun shone, and through a mist the barren cliffs of Galicia, with breakers tumbling at their feet, rose in sight. Who has not experienced, when first he has touched a foreign soil, how nature purges the visual nerve with lucky euphrasy? The shadowy streets, the latticed houses, the fountains, the fragments of Moorish architecture, the Jewish faces of the men, the lustrous eyes of girls, the children gaily bedizened, the old witch-like women with brown shrivelled parchment for skin, told Southey that he was far from home. Nor at night was he permitted to forget his whereabouts; out of doors cats were uttering soft things in most vile Spanish; beneath his blanket, familiars, blood-thirsty as those of the Inquisition, made him their own. He was not sorry when the crazy coach, drawn by six mules, received him and his uncle, and the journey east-

ward began to the shout of the muleteers and the clink of a hundred bells.

Some eighteen days were spent upon the road to Madrid. Had Southey not left half his life behind him in Bristol, those December days would have been almost wholly pleasurable. As it was, they yielded a large possession for the inner eye, and gave his heart a hold upon this new land which, in a certain sense, became for ever after the land of his adoption. It was pleasant when, having gone forward on foot, he reached the crest of some mountain road, to look down on broken waters in the glen, and across to the little white-walled convent amid its chestnuts, and back to the dim ocean; there, on the summit, to rest with the odour of furze blossoms and the tinkle of goats in the air, and, while the mules wound up the long ascent, to turn all this into hasty rhymes, ending with the thought of peace, and love, and Edith. Then the bells audibly approaching, and the loud-voiced muleteer consigning his struggling team to Saint Michael and three hundred devils; and then on to remoter hills, or moor and swamp, or the bridge flung across a ravine, or the path above a precipice, with mist and moonlight below. And next day some walled city, with its decaying towers and dim piazza; some church, with its balcony of ghastly skulls; some abandoned castle, or jasper-pillared Moorish gateway and gallery. Nor were the little inns and baiting-houses without compensations for their manifold discomforts. The Spanish country-folk were dirty and ignorant, but they had a courtesy unknown to English peasants; Southey would join the group around the kitchen fire, and be, as far as his imperfect speech allowed, one with the rustics, the carriers, the hostess, the children, the village barber, the familiar priest, and the familiar pigs. When chambermaid Jo-

sepha took hold of his hair and gravely advised him never to tie it or to wear powder, she meant simple friendliness, no more. In his recoil from the dream of human perfectibility, Southey allowed himself at times to square accounts with common-sense by a cynical outbreak; but, in truth, he was a warm-hearted lover of his kind. Even feudalism and Catholicism had not utterly degraded the Spaniard. Southey thanks God that the pride of chivalry is extinguished; his Protestant zeal becomes deep-dyed in presence of our Lady of Seven Sorrows and the Holy Napkin. "Here, in the words of Mary Wollstonecraft," he writes, "'the serious folly of Superstition stares every man of sense in the face.'" Yet Spain has inherited tender and glorious memories; by the river Ezla he recalls Montemayor's wooing of his Diana; at Tordesillas he muses on the spot where Queen Joanna watched by her husband's corpse, and where Padilla, Martyr of Freedom, triumphed and endured. At length the travellers, accompanied by Manuel, the most vivacious and accomplished of barbers, drew near Madrid, passed the miles of kneeling washerwomen and outspread clothes on the river banks, entered the city, put up at the Cruz de Malta, and were not ill-content to procure once more a well-cooked supper and a clean bed.

Southey pursued with ardour his study of the Spanish language, and could soon talk learnedly of its great writers. The national theatres, and the sorry spectacle of bullock-teasing, made a slighter impression upon him than did the cloisters of the new Franciscan Convent. He had been meditating his design of a series of poems to illustrate the mythologies of the world; here the whole portentous history of St. Francis was displayed upon the walls. "Do they believe all this, sir?" he asked Mr. Hill. "Yes, and

a great deal more of the same kind," was the reply. "My first thought was . . . here is a mythology not less wild and fanciful than any of those upon which my imagination was employed, and one which ought to be included in my ambitious design." Thus Southey's attention was drawn for the first time to the legendary and monastic history of the Church.

His Majesty of Spain, with his courtesans and his courtiers, possibly also with the Queen and her gallants, had gone westward to meet the Portuguese court upon the borders. As a matter of course, therefore, no traveller could hope to leave Madrid, every carriage, cart, horse, mule, and ass being embargoed for the royal service. The followers of the father of his people numbered seven thousand, and they advanced, devouring all before them, neither paying nor promising to pay, leaving a broad track behind as bare as that stripped by an army of locusts, with here a weeping cottager, and there a smoking cork-tree, for a memorial of their march. Ten days after the king's departure, Mr. Hill and his nephew succeeded in finding a buggy with two mules, and made their escape, taking with them their own larder. Their destination was Lisbon, and as they drew towards the royal party, the risk of embargo added a zest to travel hardly less piquant than that imparted by the neighbourhood of bandits. It was mid-January; the mountains shone with snow; but olive-gathering had begun in the plains; violets were in blossom, and in the air was a genial warmth. As they drove south and west, the younger traveller noted for his diary the first appearance of orange-trees, the first myrtle, the first fence of aloes. A pressure was on their spirits till Lisbon should be reached; they would not linger to watch the sad procession attending a body uncovered upon its bier; they

left behind the pilgrims to our Lady's Shrine, pious bacchanals half naked and half drunk, advancing to the tune of bagpipe and drum; then the gleam of waters before them, a rough two hours' passage, and the weary heads were on their pillows, to be roused before morning by an earthquake, with its sudden trembling and cracking.

Life at Lisbon was not altogether after Southey's heart. His uncle's books and manuscripts were indeed a treasure to explore, but Mr. Hill lived in society as well as in his study, and thought it right to give his nephew the advantage of new acquaintances. What had the author of *Joan of Arc*, the husband of Edith Southey, the disciple of Rousseau, of Godwin, the Stoic, the tall, dark-eyed young man with a certain wildness of expression in his face, standing alone or discoursing earnestly on Industrial Communities of Women—what had he to do with the *inania regna* of the drawing-room? He cared not for cards nor for dancing; he possessed no gift for turning the leaves on the harpsichord, and saying the happy word at the right moment. Southey, indeed, knew as little as possible of music; and all through his life acted on the principle that the worthiest use of sound without sense had been long ago discovered by schoolboys let loose from their tasks; he loved to create a chaos of sheer noise after those hours during which silence had been interrupted only by the scraping of his pen. For the rest, the sallies of glee from a mountain brook, the piping of a thrush from the orchard-bough, would have delighted him more than all the trills of Sontag or the finest rapture of Malibran. It was with some of the superiority and seriousness of a philosopher just out of his teens that he unbent to the frivolities of the Lisbon drawing-rooms.

But if Lisbon had its vexations, the country, the climate,

the mountains with their streams and coolness, the odorous gardens, Tagus flashing in the sunlight, the rough bar glittering with white breakers, and the Atlantic, made amends. When April came, Mr. Hill moved to his house at Cintra, and the memories and sensations "felt in the blood and felt along the heart," which Southey brought with him to England, were especially associated with this delightful retreat. "Never was a house more completely secluded than my uncle's: it is so surrounded with lemon-trees and laurels as nowhere to be visible at the distance of ten yards. . . . A little stream of water runs down the hill before the door, another door opens into a lemon-garden, and from the sitting-room we have just such a prospect over lemon-trees and laurels to an opposite hill as, by promising a better, invites us to walk. . . . On one of the mountain eminences stands the Penha Convent, visible from the hills near Lisbon. On another are the ruins of a Moorish castle, and a cistern, within its boundaries, kept always full by a spring of purest water that rises in it. From this elevation the eye stretches over a bare and melancholy country to Lisbon on the one side, and on the other to the distant Convent of Mafra, the Atlantic bounding the greater part of the prospect. I never beheld a view that so effectually checked the wish of wandering."

"Lisbon, from which God grant me a speedy deliverance," is the heading of one of Southey's letters; but when the day came to look on Lisbon perhaps for the last time, his heart grew heavy with happy recollection. It was with no regretful feeling, however, that he leaped ashore, glad, after all, to exchange the sparkling Tagus and the lemon groves of Portugal for the mud-encumbered tide of Avon and a glimpse of British smoke. "I intend to write a hymn," he says, "to the Dii Penates." His joy

in reunion with his wife was made more rare and tender by finding her in sorrow; the grief was also peculiarly his own—Lovell was dead. He had been taken ill at Salisbury, and by his haste to reach his fireside had heightened the fever which hung upon him. Coleridge, writing to his friend Poole at this time, expresses himself with amiable but inactive piety: “The widow is calm, and amused with her beautiful infant. We are all become more religious than we were. God be ever praised for all things.” Southey also writes characteristically: “Poor Lovell! I am in hopes of raising something for his widow by publishing his best pieces, if only enough to buy her a harpsichord. . . . Will you procure me some subscribers?” No idle conceit of serving her; for Mrs. Lovell with her child, as well as Mrs. Coleridge with her children, at a later time became members of the Southey household. Already—though Coleridge might resent it—Southey was willing to part with some vague enthusiasms which wandered in the inane of a young man’s fancy, for the sake of simple loyalties and manly tendernesses. No one was more boyish-hearted than Southey at fifty; but even at twenty-two it would not have been surprising to find grey hairs sprinkling the dark. “How does time mellow down our opinions! Little of that ardent enthusiasm which so lately fevered my whole character remains. I have contracted my sphere of action within the little circle of my own friends, and even my wishes seldom stray beyond it. . . . I want a little room to arrange my books in, and some Lares of my own.” This domestic feeling was not a besotted contentment in narrow interests; no man was more deeply moved by the political changes in his own country, by the national uprising in the Spanish peninsula, than Southey. While seated at his desk, his intellect ranged

through dim centuries of the past. But his heart needed an abiding-place, and he yielded to the bonds—strict and dear—of duty and of love which bound his own life to the lives of others.

The ambitious quarto on which Cottle prided himself not a little was now published (1796). To assign its true place to *Joan of Arc*, we must remember that narrative poetry in the eighteenth century was of the slenderest dimensions and the most modest temper. Poems of description and sentiment seemed to leave no place for poems of action and passion. Delicately finished cabinet pictures, like Shenstone's *Schoolmistress* and Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, had superseded fresco. The only great English epic of that century is the prose *Odyssey* of which Mr. Tom Jones is the hero. That estimable London merchant, Glover, had indeed written an heroic poem containing the correct number of Books; its subject was a lofty one; the sentiments were generous, the language dignified; and inasmuch as Leonidas was a patriot and a Whig, true Whigs and patriots bought and praised the poem. But Glover's poetry lacks the informing breath of life. His second poem, *The Athenaid*, appeared after his death, and its thirty books fell plumb into the water of oblivion. It looked as if the narrative poem *à longue haleine* was dead in English literature. Cowper had given breadth, with a mingled gaiety and gravity, to the poetry of description and sentiment; Burns had made the air tremulous with snatches of pure and thrilling song; the *Lyrical Ballads* were not yet. At this moment, from a provincial press, *Joan of Arc* was issued. As a piece of romantic narrative it belongs to the new age of poetry; in sentiment it is revolutionary and republican; its garment of style is of the eighteenth century. Nowhere, except it be

in the verses which hail "Inoculation, lovely Maid!" does the personified abstraction, galvanized into life by printer's type and poet's epithet, stalk more at large than in the unfortunate ninth book, the *Vision of the Maid*, which William Taylor, of Norwich, pronounced worthy of Dante. The critical reviews of the time were liberal in politics, and the poem was praised and bought. "Brissot murdered" was good, and "the blameless wife of Roland" atoned for some offences against taste; there was also that notable reference to the "Almighty people" who "from their tyrant's hand dashed down the iron rod." The delegated maid is a creature overflowing with Rousseauish sensibility; virtue, innocence, the peaceful cot, stand over against the wars and tyranny of kings, and the superstition and cruelty of prelates. Southey himself soon disrelished the youthful heats and violences of the poem; he valued it as the work which first lifted him into public view; and, partly out of a kind of gratitude, he rehandled the *Joan* again and again. It would furnish an instructive lesson to a young writer to note how its asperities were softened, its spasm subdued, its swelling words abated. Yet its chief interest will be perceived only by readers of the earlier text. To the second book Coleridge contributed some four hundred lines, where Platonic philosophy and protests against the Newtonian hypothesis of æther are not very appropriately brought into connexion with the shepherd-girl of Domremi. These lines disappeared from all editions after the first.¹

¹ I find in a Catalogue of English Poetry, 1862, the following passage from an autograph letter of S. T. Coleridge, dated Bristol, July 16, 1814, then in Mr. Pickering's possession: "I looked over the first five books of the first (quarto) edition of *Joan of Arc* yesterday, at Hood's request, in order to mark the lines written by me.

The neighbourhood of Bristol was for the present Southey's home. The quickening of his blood by the beauty, the air and sun, of Southern Europe, the sense of power imparted by his achievement in poetry, the joy of reunion with his young wife, the joy, also, of solitude among rocks and woods, combined to throw him into a vivid and creative mood. His head was full of designs for tragedies, epics, novels, romances, tales—among the rest, "My Oriental poem of The Destruction of the Dom Daniel." He has a "Helicon kind of dropsy" upon him; he had rather leave off eating than poetizing. He was also engaged in making the promised book of travel for Cottle; in what leisure time remained after these employments he scribbled for *The Monthly Magazine*, and to good purpose, for in eight months he had earned no less than "seven pounds and two pair of breeches," which, as he observes to his brother Tom, "is not amiss." He was resolved to be happy, and he was happy. Now, too, the foolish estrangement on Coleridge's part was brought to an end. Southey had been making some acquaintance with German literature at second hand. He had read Taylor's rendering of Bürger's *Lenore*, and wondered who this William Taylor was; he had read Schiller's *Cabal and Love* in a wretched translation, finding the fifth act dreadfully affecting; he had also read Schiller's *Fiesco*. Coleridge was just back after a visit to Birmingham, but still

I was really astonished—1, at the schoolboy, wretched allegoric machinery; 2, at the transmogrification of the fanatic Virago into a modern Novel-pawing proselyte of the Age of Reason, a Tom Paine in petticoats, but so lovely! and in love more dear! 'On her rubied cheek hung pity's crystal gem;' 3, at the utter want of all rhythm in the verse, the monotony and the dead plumb down of the pauses, and of the absence of all bone, muscle, and sinew in the single lines."

held off from his brother-in-law and former friend. A sentence from Schiller, copied on a slip of paper by Southey, with a word or two of conciliation, was sent to the offended Abdiel of Pantisocracy: "Fiesco! Fiesco! thou leavest a void in my bosom, which the human race, thrice told, will never fill up." It did not take much to melt the faint resentment of Coleridge, and to open his liberal heart. An interview followed, and in an hour's time, as the story is told by Coleridge's nephew, "these two extraordinary youths were arm in arm again."

Seven pounds and two pair of breeches are not amiss, but pounds take to themselves wings, and fly away: a poet's wealth is commonly in the *paulo-post-futurum* tense; it therefore behoved Southey to proceed with his intended study of the law. By Christmas he would receive the first instalment of an annual allowance of 160*l.* promised by his generous friend Wynn upon coming of age; but Southey, who had just written his *Hymn to the Penates*—a poem of grave tenderness and sober beauty—knew that those deities are exact in their demand for the dues of fire and salt, for the firstlings of fruits, and for offerings of fine flour. A hundred and sixty pounds would not appease them. To London, therefore, he must go, and Blackstone must become his counsellor. But never did Sindbad suffer from the tyrannous old man between his shoulders as Robert Southey suffered from Blackstone. London in itself meant deprivation of all that he most cared for; he loved to shape his life in large and simple lines, and London seemed to scribble over his consciousness with distractions and intricacies. "My spirits always sink when I approach it. Green fields are my delight. I am not only better in health, but even in heart, in the country." Some of his father's love of rural sights and

sounds was in him, though hare-hunting was not an amusement of Southey the younger; he was as little of a sportsman as his friend Sir Thomas More: the only murderous sport, indeed, which Southey ever engaged in was that of pistol-shooting, with sand for ammunition, at the wasps in Bedford's garden, when he needed a diversion from the wars of Talbot and the "missioned Maid." Two pleasures of a rare kind London offered—the presence of old friends, and the pursuit of old books upon the stalls. But not even for these best lures proposed by the Demon of the place would Southey renounce

"The genial influences
And thoughts and feelings to be found where'er
We breathe beneath the open sky, and see
Earth's liberal bosom."

To London, however, he would go, and would read nine hours a day at law. Although he pleaded at times against his intended profession, Southey really made a strenuous effort to overcome his repugnance to legal studies, and for a while Blackstone and *Madoc* seemed to advance side by side. But the bent of his nature was strong. "I commit wilful murder on my own intellect," he writes, two years later, "by drudging at law." And the worst or the best of it was that all his drudgery was useless. Southey's memory was of that serviceable, sieve-like kind which retains everything needful to its possessor, and drops everything which is mere incumbrance. Every circumstance in the remotest degree connected with the seminary of magicians in the Dom Daniel under the roots of the sea adhered to his memory, but how to proceed in the Court of Common Pleas was always just forgotten since yesterday. "I am not indolent; I loathe indolence; but, indeed, read-

ing law is laborious indolence—it is thrashing straw. . . . I have given all possible attention, and attempted to command volition; . . . close the book and all was gone.” In 1801 there was a chance of Southey’s visiting Sicily as secretary to some Italian Legation. “It is unfortunate,” he writes to Bedford, “that you cannot come to the sacrifice of one law-book—my whole proper stock—whom I design to take up to the top of Mount Etna, for the express purpose of throwing him straight to the devil. Huzza, Grosvenor! I was once afraid that I should have a deadly deal of law to forget whenever I had done with it; but my brains, God bless them, never received any, and I am as ignorant as heart could wish. The tares would not grow.”

As spring advanced, impatience quickened within him; the craving for a lonely place in sight of something green became too strong. Why might not law be read in Hampshire under blue skies, and also poetry be written? Southey longed to fill his eyesight with the sea, and with sunsets over the sea; he longed to renew that delicious shock of plunging in salt waves which he had last enjoyed in the Atlantic at the foot of the glorious Arrabida mountain. Lodgings were found at Burton, near Christ Church (1797); and here took place a little Southey family-gathering, for his mother joined them, and his brother Tom, the midshipman, just released from a French prison. Here, too, came Cottle, and there were talks about the new volume of shorter poems. Here came Lloyd, the friend of Coleridge, himself a writer of verse; and with Lloyd came Lamb, the play of whose letters show that he found in Southey not only a fellow-lover of quaint books, but also a ready smiler at quips and cranks and twinklings of sly absurdity. And here he found John Rickman, “the sturdiest of jovial companions,” whose clear head and stout

heart were at Southey's service whenever they were needed through all the future years.

When the holiday at Burton was at an end Southey had for a time no fixed abode. He is now to be seen roaming over the cliffs by the Avon, and now casting a glance across some book-stall near Gray's Inn. In these and subsequent visits to London he was wistful for home, and eager to hasten back. "At last, my dear Edith, I sit down to write to you in quiet and something like comfort. . . . My morning has been spent pleasantly, for it has been spent alone in the library; the hours so employed pass rapidly enough, but I grow more and more homesick, like a spoilt child. On the 29th you may expect me. Term opens on the 26th. After eating my third dinner, I can drive to the mail, and thirteen shillings will be well bestowed in bringing me home four-and-twenty hours earlier: it is not above sixpence an hour, Edith, and I would gladly purchase an hour at home now at a much higher price."

A visit to Norwich (1798) was pleasant and useful, as widening the circle of his literary friends. Here Southey obtained an introduction to William Taylor, whose translations from the German had previously attracted his notice. Norwich, at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present, was a little Academe among provincial cities, where the *belles-lettres* and mutual admiration were assiduously cultivated. Southey saw Norwich at its best. Among its "superior people" were several who really deserved something better than that vague distinction. Chief among them was Dr. Sayers, whom the German critics compared to Gray, who had handled the Norse mythology in poetry, who created the English monodrame, and introduced the rhymeless measures followed

by Southey. He rested too soon upon his well-earned reputation, contented himself with touching and retouching his verses; and possessing singularly pleasing manners, abounding information and genial wit, embellished and enjoyed society.¹ William Taylor, the biographer of Sayers, was a few years his junior. He was versed in Goethe, in Schiller, in the great Kotzebue—Shakspeare's immediate successor, in Klopstock, in the fantastic ballad, in the new criticism, and all this at a time when German characters were as undecipherable to most Englishmen as Assyrian arrow-heads. The whirligig of time brought an odd revenge when Carlyle, thirty years later, hailed in Taylor the first example of "the natural-born English Philistine." In Norwich he was known as a model of filial virtue, a rising light of that illuminated city, a man whose extraordinary range pointed him out as the fit and proper person to be interrogated by any blue-stocking lady upon topics as remote as the domestic arrangements of the Chinese Emperor, Chim-Cham-Chow. William Taylor had a command of new and mysterious words: he shone in paradox, and would make ladies aghast by "defences of suicide, avowals that snuff alone had rescued him from it; information, given as certain, that 'God save the King' was sung by Jeremiah in the Temple of Solomon;"² with other blasphemies borrowed from the German, and too startling even for rationalistic Norwich. Dr. Enfield, from whose *Speaker* our fathers learnt to recite "My name is Norval," was no longer living; he had just departed in the odour of diletantism. But solemn Dr. Alderson was here, and was now engaged in giving away his daughter Amelia to a divorced

¹ See Southey's article on "Dr. Sayers's Works," *Quarterly Review*, January, 1827.

² Harriet Martineau: *Autobiography*, i. p. 300.

bridegroom, the painter Opie. Just now Elizabeth Gurney was listening in the Friends' Meeting-House to that discourse which transformed her from a gay haunter of country ball-rooms to the sister and servant of Newgate prisoners. The Martineaus also were of Norwich, and upon subsequent visits the author of *Thalaba* and *Kehama* was scrutinized by the keen eyes of a little girl—not born at the date of his first visit—who smiled somewhat too early and somewhat too maliciously at the airs and affectations of her native town, and whose pleasure in pricking a wind-bag, literary, political, or religious, was only over-exquisite. But Harriet Martineau, who honoured courage, purity, faithfulness, and strength wherever they were found, revered the Tory Churchman, Robert Southey.¹

Soon after his return from Norwich, a small house was taken at Westbury (1797), a village two miles distant from Bristol. During twelve happy months this continued to be Southey's home. "I never before or since," he says in one of the prefaces to his collected poems, "produced so much poetry in the same space of time." William Taylor, by talks about Voss and the German idylls, had set Southey thinking of a series of English Eclogues; Taylor also expressed his wonder that some one of our poets had not undertaken what the French and Germans so long supported—an Almanack of the Muses, or Annual Anthology of minor poems by various writers. The suggestion was well received by Southey, who became editor of such annual volumes for the years 1799 and 1800. At this period were produced many of the ballads and short pieces which are perhaps more generally known than any other of Southey's writings. He had served his apprenticeship to

¹ See her "History of the Peace," B. vi. chap. xvi.

the craft and mystery of such verse-making in the *Morning Post*, earning thereby a guinea a week, but it was not until *Bishop Bruno* was written at Westbury that he had the luck to hit off the right tone, as he conceived it, of the modern ballad. The popularity of his *Mary the Maid of the Inn*, which unhappy children got by heart, and which some one even dramatized, was an affliction to its author, for he would rather have been remembered as a ballad writer in connexion with *Rudiger* and *Lord William*. What he has written in this kind certainly does not move the heart as with a trumpet; it does not bring with it the dim burden of sorrow which is laid upon the spirit by songs like those of Yarrow crooning of "old, unhappy, far-off things." But to tell a tale of fantasy briefly, clearly, brightly, and at the same time with a certain heightening of imaginative touches, is no common achievement. The spectre of the murdered boy in *Lord William* shone upon by a sudden moonbeam, and surrounded by the welter of waves, is more than a picturesque apparition; readers of goodwill may find him a very genuine little ghost, a stern and sad justicer. What has been named "the lyrical cry" is hard to find in any of Southey's shorter poems. In *Roderick* and elsewhere he takes delight in representing great moments of life when fates are decided; but such moments are usually represented as eminences on which will and passion wrestle in a mortal embrace, and if the cry of passion be heard, it is often a half-stifled death cry. The best of Southey's shorter poems, expressing personal feelings, are those which sum up the virtue spread over seasons of life and long habitual moods. Sometimes he is simply sportive, as a serious man released from thought and toil may be, and at such times the sportiveness, while genuine as a schoolboy's, is, like a schoolboy's, the reverse of

keen-edged; on other occasions he expresses simply a strong man's endurance of sorrow; but more often an undertone of gravity appears through his glee, and in his sorrow there is something of solemn joy.

All this year (1799) *Madoc* was steadily advancing, and *The Destruction of the Dom Daniel* had been already sketched in outline. Southey was fortunate in finding an admirable listener. The Pneumatic Institution, established in Bristol by Dr. Beddoes, was now under the care of a youth lately an apothecary's apprentice at Penzance, a poet, but still more a philosopher, "a miraculous young man." "He is not yet twenty-one, nor has he applied to chemistry more than eighteen months, but he has advanced with such seven-leagued strides as to overtake everybody. His name is Davy"—Humphry Davy—"the young chemist, the young everything, the man least ostentatious, of first talent that I have ever known." Southey would walk across from Westbury, an easy walk over beautiful ground, to breathe Davy's wonder-working gas, "which excites all possible mental and muscular energy, and induces almost a delirium of pleasurable sensations without any subsequent dejection." Pleased to find scientific proof that he possessed a poet's fine susceptibility, he records that the nitrous oxide wrought upon him more readily than upon any other of its votaries. "Oh, Tom!" he exclaims, gasping and ebullient—"oh, Tom! such a gas has Davy discovered, the gaseous oxyde! . . . Davy has actually invented a new pleasure for which language has no name. I am going for more this evening; it makes one strong, and so happy! so gloriously happy! . . . Oh, excellent air-bag!" If Southey drew inspiration from Davy's air-bag, could Davy do less than lend his ear to Southey's epic? They would stroll back to Martin Hall—so christened because the birds who

love delicate air built under its eaves their "pendant beds"—and in the large sitting-room, its recesses stored with books, or seated near the currant-bushes in the garden, the tenant of Martin Hall would read aloud of Urien and Madoc and Cadwallon. When Davy had said good-bye, Southey would sit long in the window open to the west, poring on the fading glories of sunset, while about him the dew was cool, and the swallows' tiny shrieks of glee grew less frequent, until all was hushed and another day was done. And sometimes he would muse how all things that he needed for utter happiness were here—all things—and then would rise an ardent desire—except a child.

Martin Hall was unhappily held on no long lease; its owner now required possession, and the Southeys, with their household gods, had reluctantly to bid it farewell. Another trouble, and a more formidable one, at the same time threatened. What with Annual Anthologies, Madoc in Wales, Madoc in Aztlan, the design for a great poem on the Deluge, for a Greek drama, for a Portuguese tragedy, for a martyrdom play of the reign of Queen Mary—what with reading Spanish, learning Dutch, translating and reviewing for the booksellers—Southey had been too closely at work. His heart began to take fits of sudden and violent pulsation; his sleep, ordinarily as sound as a child's, became broken and unrefreshing. Unless the disease were thrown off by regular exercise, Beddoes assured him, it would fasten upon him, and could not be overcome. Two years previously they had spent a summer at Burton, in Hampshire; why should they not go there again? In June, 1799, unaccompanied by his wife, whose health seemed also to be impaired, Southey went to seek a house. Two cottages, convertible into one, with a garden, a fish-pond, and a pigeon-house, promised a term of quiet and

comfort in "Southey Palace that is to be." Possession was not to be had until Michaelmas, and part of the intervening time was very enjoyably spent in roaming among the vales and woods, the coombes and cliffs of Devon. It was in some measure a renewal of the open-air delight which had been his at the Arrabida and Cintra. "I have seen the Valley of Stones," he writes: "Imagine a narrow vale between two ridges of hills somewhat steep; the southern hill turfed; the vale which runs from east to west covered with huge stones and fragments of stones among the fern that fills it; the northern ridge completely bare, excoriated of all turf and all soil, the very bones and skeleton of the earth; rock reclining upon rock, stone piled upon stone, a huge and terrific mass. A palace of the Preadamite kings, a city of the Anakim, must have appeared so shapeless and yet so like the ruins of what had been shaped, after the waters of the flood subsided. I ascended with some toil the highest point; two large stones inclining on each other formed a rude portal on the summit: here I sat down; a little level platform about two yards long lay before me, and then the eye fell immediately upon the sea, far, very far below. I never felt the sublimity of solitude before."

But Southey could not rest. "I had rather leave off eating than poetizing," he had said; and now the words seemed coming true, for he still poetized, and had almost ceased to eat. "Yesterday I finished *Madoc*, thank God! and thoroughly to my own satisfaction; but I have resolved on one great, laborious, and radical alteration. It was my design to identify *Madoc* with *Mango Capac*, the legislator of Peru: in this I have totally failed; therefore *Mango Capac* is to be the hero of another poem." There is something charming in the logic of Southey's "there-

fore;" so excellent an epic hero must not go to waste; but when, on the following morning, he rose early, it was to put on paper the first hundred lines, not of Mango Capac, but of the Dom Daniel poem which we know as *Thalaba*. A *Mohammed*, to be written in hexameters, was also on the stocks; and Coleridge had promised the half of this. Southey, who remembered a certain quarto volume on Pantisocracy and other great unwritten works, including the last—a Life of Lessing, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge—knew the worth of his collaborateur's promises. However, it matters little; "the only inconvenience that his dereliction can occasion will be that I shall write the poem in fragments, and have to seam them together at last." "My Mohammed will be what I believe the Arabian was in the beginning of his career—sincere in enthusiasm; and it would puzzle a casuist to distinguish between the belief of inspiration and actual enthusiasm." A short fragment of the *Mohammed* was actually written by Coleridge, and a short fragment by Southey, which, dating from 1799, have an interest in connexion with the history of the English hexameter. Last among these many projects, Southey has made up his mind to undertake one great historical work—the History of Portugal. This was no dream-project; Mango Capac never descended from his father the Sun to appear in Southey's poem; Mohammed never emerged from the cavern where the spider had spread his net; but the work which was meant to rival Gibbon's great history was in part achieved. It is a fact more pathetic than many others which make appeal for tears, that this most ambitious and most cherished design of Southey's life, conceived at the age of twenty-six, and kept constantly in view through all his days of toil, was not yet half wrought out when, forty years later, the pen dropped

from his hand, and the worn-out brain could think no more.

The deal shavings had hardly been cleared out of the twin cottages at Burton, when Southey was prostrated by a nervous fever; on recovering, he moved to Bristol, still weak, with strange pains about the heart, and sudden seizures of the head. An entire change of scene was obviously desirable. The sound of the brook that ran beside his uncle's door at Cintra, the scent of the lemon-groves, the grandeur of the Arrabida, haunted his memory; there were books and manuscripts to be found in Portugal which were essential in the preparation of his great history of that country. Mr. Hill invited him; his good friend Elmsley, an old schoolfellow, offered him a hundred pounds. From every point of view it seemed right and prudent to go. Ailing and unsettled as he was, he yet found strength and time to put his hand to a good work before leaving Bristol. Chatterton always interested Southey deeply; they had this much at least in common, that both had often listened to the chimes of St. Mary Redcliffe, that both were lovers of antiquity, both were rich in store of verse, and lacked all other riches. Chatterton's sister, Mrs. Newton, and her child were needy and neglected. It occurred to Southey and Cottle that an edition of her brother's poems might be published for her benefit. Subscribers came in slowly, and the plan underwent some alterations; but in the end the charitable thought bore fruit, and the sister and niece of the great unhappy boy were lifted into security and comfort. To have done something to appease the moody and indignant spirit of a dead poet, was well; to have rescued from want a poor woman and her daughter, was perhaps even better.

Early in April, 1800, Southey was once more on his way

from Bristol, by Falmouth, to the Continent, accompanied by his wife, now about to be welcomed to Portugal by the fatherly uncle whose prudence she had once alarmed. The wind was adverse, and while the travellers were detained Southey strolled along the beach, caught soldier-crabs, and observed those sea-anemones which blossom anew in the verse of Thalaba. For reading on the voyage, he had brought Burns, Coleridge's poems, the Lyrical Ballads, and a poem, with "miraculous beauties," called *Gebir*, "written by God knows who." But when the ship lost sight of England, Southey, with swimming head, had little spirit left for wrestling with the intractable thews of Landor's early verse; he could just grunt out some crooked pun or quaint phrase in answer to inquiries as to how he did. Suddenly, on the fourth morning, came the announcement that a French cutter was bearing down upon them. Southey leaped to his feet, hurriedly removed his wife to a place of safety, and, musket in hand, took his post upon the quarter-deck. The smoke from the enemy's matches could be seen. She was hailed, answered in broken English, and passed on. A moment more, and the suspense was over; she was English, manned from Guernsey. "You will easily imagine," says Southey, "that my sensations at the ending of the business were very definable—one honest, simple joy that I was in a whole skin!" Two mornings more, and the sun rose behind the Berlings; the heights of Cintra became visible, and nearer, the silver dust of the breakers, with sea-gulls sporting over them; a pilot's boat, with puffed and flapping sail, ran out; they passed thankfully our Lady of the Guide, and soon dropped anchor in the Tagus. An absence of four years had freshened every object to Southey's sense of seeing, and now he had the joy of viewing all familiar things as strange through so dear a companion's eyes.

Mr. Hill was presently on board with kindly greeting; he had hired a tiny house for them, perched well above the river, its little rooms cool with many doors and windows. Manuel the barber, brisk as Figaro, would be their factotum, and Mrs. Southey could also see a new maid—Maria Rosa. Maria by-and-by came to be looked at, in powder, straw-coloured gloves, fan, pink-ribands, muslin petticoat, green satin sleeves; she was “not one of the folk who sleep on straw mattresses;” withal she was young and clean. Mrs. Southey, who had liked little the prospect of being thrown abroad upon the world, was beginning to be reconciled to Portugal; roses and oranges and green peas in early May were pleasant things. Then the streets were an unending spectacle; now a negro going by with Christ in a glass case, to be kissed for a petty alms; now some picturesque, venerable beggar; now the little Emperor of the Holy Ghost, strutting it from Easter till Whitsuntide, a six-year-old mannikin with silk stockings, buckles, cocked hat, and sword, his gentlemen ushers attending, and his servants receiving donations on silver salvers. News of an assassination, from time to time, did not much disturb the tranquil tenor of ordinary life. There were old gardens to loiter in along vine-trellised walks, or in sunshine where the grey lizards glanced and gleamed. And eastward from the city were lovely by-lanes amid blossoming olive-trees or market-gardens, veined by tiny aqueducts and musical with the creak of water-wheels, which told of cool refreshment. There was also the vast public aqueduct to visit; Edith Southey, holding her husband’s hand, looked down, hardly discovering the diminished figures below of women washing in the brook of Alcantara. If the sultry noon in Lisbon was hard to endure, evening made amends; then strong sea-winds swept the narrowest alley, and rolled their

current down every avenue. And later, it was pure content to look down upon the moonlighted river, with Almada stretching its black isthmus into the waters that shone like midnight snow.

Before moving to Cintra, they wished to witness the procession of the Body of God—Southey likes the English words as exposing “the naked nonsense of the blasphemy”—those of St. Anthony, and the Heart of Jesus, and the first bull-fight. Everything had grown into one insufferable glare; the very dust was bleached; the light was like the quivering of a furnace fire. Every man and beast was asleep; the stone-cutter slept with his head upon the stone; the dog slept under the very cart-wheels; the bells alone slept not, nor ceased from their importunate clamour. At length—it was near mid-June—a marvellous cleaning of streets took place, the houses were hung with crimson damask, soldiers came and lined the ways, windows and balconies filled with impatient watchers—not a jewel in Lisbon but was on show. With blare of music the procession began; first, the banners of the city and its trades, the clumsy bearers crab-sidling along; an armed champion carrying a flag; wooden St. George held painfully on horseback; led horses, their saddles covered with rich escutcheons; all the brotherhoods, an immense train of men in red or grey cloaks; the knights of the orders superbly dressed; the whole patriarchal church in glorious robes; and then, amid a shower of rose-leaves fluttering from the windows, the Pix, and after the Pix, the Prince. On a broiling Sunday, the amusement being cool and devout, was celebrated the bull-feast. The first wound sickened Edith; Southey himself, not without an effort, looked on and saw “the death-sweat darkening the dun hide”—a circumstance borne in mind for his *Thalaba*. “I am not

quite sure," he writes, "that my curiosity in once going was perfectly justifiable, but the pain inflicted by the sight was expiation enough."

After this it was high time to take refuge from the sun among the lemon-groves at Cintra. Here, if ever in his life, Southey for a brief season believed that the grasshopper is wiser than the ant; a true Portuguese indolence overpowered him. "I have spent my mornings half naked in a wet room dozing upon the bed, my right hand not daring to touch my left." Such glorious indolence could only be a brief possession with Southey. More often he would wander by the streams to those spots where purple crocuses carpeted the ground, and there rest and read. Sometimes seated sideways on one of the surefooted *burros*, with a boy to beat and guide the brute, he would jog lazily on, while Edith, now skilled in "ass-womanship," would jog along on a brother donkey. Once and again a fog—not unwelcome—came rolling in from the ocean, one huge mass of mist, marching through the valley like a victorious army, approaching, blotting the brightness, but leaving all dank and fresh. And always the evenings were delightful, when fireflies sparkled under the trees, or in July and August, as their light went out, when the grillo began his song. "I eat oranges, figs, and delicious pears—drink Colares wine, a sort of half-way excellence between port and claret—read all I can lay my hands on—dream of poem after poem, and play after play—take a siesta of two hours, and am as happy as if life were but one everlasting to-day, and that to-morrow was not to be provided for."

But Southey's second visit to Portugal was, on the whole, no season of repose. A week in the southern climate seemed to have restored him to health, and he assail-

ed folio after folio in his uncle's library, rising each morning at five, "to lay in bricks for the great Pyramid of my history." The chronicles, the laws, the poetry of Portugal, were among these bricks. Nor did he slacken in his ardour as a writer of verse. Six books of *Thalaba* were in his trunk in manuscript when he sailed from Falmouth; the remaining six were of a southern birth. "I am busy," he says, "in correcting *Thalaba* for the press. . . . It is a good job done, and so I have thought of another, and another, and another." As with *Joan of Arc*, so with this maturer poem the correction was a rehandling which doubled the writer's work. To draw the pen across six hundred lines did not cost him a pang. At length the manuscript was despatched to his friend Rickman, with instructions to make as good a bargain as he could for the first thousand copies. By *Joan* and the miscellaneous *Poems* of 1797, Southey had gained not far from a hundred and fifty pounds; he might fairly expect a hundred guineas for *Thalaba*. It would buy the furniture of his long-expected house. But he was concerned about the prospects of Harry, his younger brother; and now William Taylor wrote that some provincial surgeon of eminence would board and instruct the lad during four or five years for precisely a hundred guineas. "A hundred guineas!" Southey exclaims; "well, but, thank God, there is *Thalaba* ready, for which I ask this sum." "*Thalaba* finished, all my poetry," he writes, "instead of being wasted in rivulets and ditches, shall flow into the great Madoc Mississippi river." One epic poem, however, he finds too little to content him; already *The Curse of Kehama* is in his head, and another of the mythological series which never saw the light. "I have some distant view of manufacturing a Hindoo romance, wild as *Thalaba*; and a nearer one of a

Persian story, of which I see the germ of vitality. I take the system of the Zendavesta for my mythology, and introduce the powers of darkness persecuting a Persian, one of the hundred and fifty sons of the great king; an Athenian captive is a prominent character, and the whole warfare of the evil power ends in exalting a Persian prince into a citizen of Athens." From which catastrophe we may infer that Southey had still something republican about his heart.

Before quitting Portugal, the Southneys, with their friend Waterhouse and a party of ladies, travelled northwards, encountering very gallantly the trials of the way; Mafra, its convent and library, had been already visited by Southey. "Do you love reading?" asked the friar who accompanied them, overhearing some remark about the books. "Yes." "And I," said the honest Franciscan, "love eating and drinking." At Coimbra—that central point from which radiates the history and literature of Portugal—Southey would have agreed feelingly with the good brother of the Mafra convent; he had looked forward to precious moments of emotion in that venerable city; but air and exercise had given him a cruel appetite; if truth must be told, the ducks of the monastic poultry-yard were more to him than the precious finger of St. Anthony. "I *did* long," he confesses, "to buy, beg, or steal a dinner." The dinner must somehow have been secured before he could approach in a worthy spirit that most affecting monument at Coimbra—the Fountain of Tears. "It is the spot where Inez de Castro was accustomed to meet her husband Pedro, and weep for him in his absence. Certainly her dwelling-house was in the adjoining garden; and from there she was dragged, to be murdered at the feet of the king, her father-in-law. . . . I, who have long

planned a tragedy upon the subject, stood upon my own scene." While Southey and his companions gazed at the fountains and their shadowing cedar-trees, the gowmsmen gathered round; the visitors were travel-stained and bronzed by the sun; perhaps the witty youths cheered for the lady with the squaw tint; whatever offence may have been given, the ladies' protectors found them "impudent blackguards," and with difficulty suppressed pugilistic risings.

After an excursion southwards to Algarve, Southey made ready for his return to England (1801). His wife desired it, and he had attained the main objects of his sojourn abroad. His health had never been more perfect; he had read widely; he had gathered large material for his History; he knew where to put his hand on this or that which might prove needful, whenever he should return to complete his work among the libraries of Portugal. On arriving at Bristol, a letter from Coleridge met him. It was dated from Greta Hall, Keswick; and after reminding Southey that Bristol had recently lost the miraculous young man, Davy, and adding that he, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, had experiences, sufferings, hopes, projects to impart, which would beguile much time, "were you on a desert island and I your *Friday*," it went on to present the attractions of Keswick, and in particular of Greta Hall, in a way which could not be resisted. Taking all in all—the beauty of the prospect, the roominess of the house, the lowness of the rent, the unparalleled merits of the landlord, the neighbourhood of noble libraries—it united advantages not to be found together elsewhere. "In short"—the appeal wound up—"for situation and convenience—and when I mention the name of Wordsworth, for society of men of intellect—I know no place

in which you and Edith would find yourselves so well suited."

Meanwhile Drummond, an M.P. and a translator of Persius, who was going as ambassador, first to Palermo and then to Constantinople, was on the look-out for a secretary. The post would be obtained for Southey by his friend Wynn, if possible; this might lead to a consulship; why not to the consulship at Lisbon, with 1000*l.* a year? Such possibilities, however, could not prevent him from speedily visiting Coleridge and Keswick. "Time and absence make strange work with our affections," so writes Southey; "but mine are ever returning to rest upon you. I have other and dear friends, but none with whom the whole of my being is intimate. . . . Oh! I have yet such dreams. Is it quite clear that you and I were not meant for some better star, and dropped by mistake into this world of pounds, shillings, and pence?" So for the first time Southey set foot in Keswick, and looked upon the lake and the hills which were to become a portion of his being, and which have taken him so closely, so tenderly, to themselves. His first feeling was one not precisely of disappointment, but certainly of remoteness from this northern landscape; he had not yet come out from the glow and the noble *abandon* of the South. "These lakes," he says, "are like rivers; but oh for the Mondego and the Tagus! And these mountains, beautifully indeed are they shaped and grouped; but oh for the grand Monchique! and for Cintra, my paradise!"

Time alone was needed to calm and temper his sense of seeing; for when, leaving Mrs. Southey with her sister and Coleridge, he visited his friend Wynn at Llangedwin, and breathed the mountain air of his own Prince Madoc, all the loveliness of Welsh streams and rivers sank into his

soul. "The Dee is broad and shallow, and its dark waters shiver into white and silver and hues of amber brown. No mud upon the shore—no bushes—no marsh plants—anywhere a child might stand dry-footed and dip his hand into the water." And again a contrasted picture: "The mountain-side was stony, and a few trees grew among its stones; the other side was more wooded, and had grass on the top, and a huge waterfall thundered into the bottom, and thundered down the bottom. When it had nearly passed these rocky straits, it met another stream. The width of water then became considerable, and twice it formed a large black pool, to the eye absolutely stagnant, the froth of the waters that entered there sleeping upon the surface; it had the deadness of enchantment; yet was not the pool wider than the river above it and below it, where it foamed over and fell." Such free delight as Southey had among the hills of Wales came quickly to an end. A letter was received offering him the position of private secretary to Mr. Corry, Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland, with a salary of four hundred pounds a year. Rickman was in Dublin, and this was Rickman's doing. Southey, as he was in prudence bound to do, accepted the appointment, hastened back to Keswick, bade farewell for a little while to his wife, and started for Dublin in no cheerful frame of mind.

At a later time, Southey possessed Irish friends whom he honoured and loved; he has written wise and humane words about the Irish people. But all through his career Ireland was to Southey somewhat too much that ideal country—of late to be found only in the region of humorous-pathetic melodrama—in which the business of life is carried on mainly by the agency of bulls and blunderbusses; and it required a distinct effort on his part to con-

ceive the average Teague or Patrick otherwise than as a potato-devouring troglodyte, on occasions grotesquely amiable, but more often with the rage of Popery working in his misproportioned features. Those hours during which Southey waited for the packet were among the heaviest of his existence. After weary tackings in a baffling wind, the ship was caught into a gale, and was whirled away, fifteen miles north of Dublin, to the fishing-town of Balbriggan. Then, a drive across desolate country, which would have depressed the spirits had it not been enlivened by the airs and humours of little Dr. Solomon, the unique, the omniscient, the garrulous, next after Bonaparte the most illustrious of mortals, inventor of the Cordial Balm of Gilead, and possessor of a hundred puncheons of rum. When the new private secretary arrived, the chancellor was absent; the secretary, therefore, set to work on rebuilding a portion of his *Madoc*. Presently Mr. Corry appeared, and there was a bow and a shake of hands; then he hurried away to London, to be followed by Southey, who, going round by Keswick, was there joined by his wife. From London Southey writes to Rickman, "The chancellor and the scribe go on in the same way. The scribe hath made out a catalogue of all books published since the commencement of '97 upon finance and scarcity; he hath also copied a paper written by J. R. [John Rickman] containing some Irish alderman's hints about oak-bark; and nothing more hath the scribe done in his vocation. Duly he calls at the chancellor's door; sometimes he is admitted to immediate audience; sometimes kicketh his heels in the antechamber; . . . sometimes a gracious message emancipates him for the day. Secrecy hath been enjoined him as to these State proceedings. On three subjects he is directed to read and re-

search—corn-laws, finance, tythes, according to their written order.” The independent journals meanwhile had compared Corry and Southey, the two State conspirators, to Empson and Dudley; and delicately expressed a hope that the poet would make no false *numbers* in his new work.

Southey, who had already worn an ass’s head in one of Gillray’s caricatures, was not afflicted by the newspaper sarcasm; but the vacuity of such a life was intolerable; and when it was proposed that he should become tutor to Corry’s son, he brought his mind finally to the point of resigning “a foolish office and a good salary.” His notions of competence were moderate; the vagabondage between the Irish and English headquarters entailed by his office was irksome. His books were accumulating, and there was ample work to be done among them if he had but a quiet library of his own. Then, too, there was another good reason for resigning. A new future was opening for Southey. Early in the year (1802) his mother died. She had come to London to be with her son; there she had been stricken with mortal illness; true to her happy, self-forgetful instincts, she remained calm, uncomplaining, considerate for others. “Go down, my dear; I shall sleep presently,” she had said, knowing that death was at hand. With his mother, the last friend of Southey’s infancy and childhood was gone. “I calmed and curbed myself,” he writes, “and forced myself to employment; but at night there was no sound of feet in her bedroom, to which I had been used to listen, and in the morning it was not my first business to see her.” The past was past indeed. But as the year opened, it brought a happy promise; before summer would end, a child might be in his arms. Here were sufficient reasons for his resignation; a library and a nursery ought, he says, to be stationary.

To Bristol husband and wife came, and there found a small furnished house. After the roar of Fleet Street, and the gathering of distinguished men—Fuseli, Flaxman, Barry, Lamb, Campbell, Bowles—there was a strangeness in the great quiet of the place. But in that quiet Southey could observe each day the growth of the pile of manuscript containing his version of *Amadis of Gaul*, for which Longman and Rees promised him a munificent sixty pounds. He toiled at his *History of Portugal*, finding matter of special interest in that part which was concerned with the religious orders. He received from his Lisbon collection precious boxes folio-crammed. “My dear and noble books! Such folios of saints! dull books enough for my patience to diet upon, till all my flock be gathered together into one fold.” Sixteen volumes of Spanish poetry are lying uncut in the next room; a folio yet untasted jogs his elbow; two of the best and rarest chronicles coyly invite him. He had books enough in England to employ three years of active industry. And underlying all thoughts of the great Constable Nuño Alvares Pereyra, of the King D. Joaõ I., and of the Cid, deeper than the sportsman pleasure of hunting from their lair strange facts about the orders Cistercian, Franciscan, Dominican, Jesuit, there was a thought of that new-comer whom, says Southey, “I already feel disposed to call whelp and dog, and all those vocables of vituperation by which a man loves to call those he loves best.”

In September, 1802, was born Southey's first child, named Margaret Edith, after her mother and her dead grandmother; a flat-nosed, round-foreheaded, grey-eyed, good-humoured girl. “I call Margaret,” he says, in a sober mood of fatherly happiness, “by way of avoiding all commonplace phraseology of endearment, a worthy child and

a most excellent character. She loves me better than any one except her mother; her eyes are as quick as thought; she is all life and spirit, and as happy as the day is long; but that little brain of hers is never at rest, and it is painful to see how dreams disturb her." For Margery and her mother and the folios a habitation must be found. Southey inclined now towards settling in the neighbourhood of London—now towards Norwich, where Dr. Sayers and William Taylor would welcome him—now towards Keswick; but its horrid latitude, its incessant rains! On the whole, his heart turned most fondly to Wales; and there, in one of the loveliest spots of Great Britain, in the Vale of Neath, was a house to let, by name Maes Gwyn. Southey gave his fancy the rein, and pictured himself "housed and homed" in Maes Gwyn, working steadily at the *History of Portugal*, and now and again glancing away from his work to have a look at Margery seated in her little great chair. But it was never to be; a difference with the landlord brought to an end his treaty for the house, and in August the child lay dying. It was bitter to part with what had been so long desired—during seven childless years—and what had grown so dear. But Southey's heart was strong; he drew himself together, returned to his toil, now less joyous than before, and set himself to strengthen and console his wife.

Bristol was henceforth a place of mournful memories. "Edith," writes Southey, "will be nowhere so well as with her sister Coleridge. She has a little girl some six months old, and I shall try and graft her into the wound while it is yet fresh." Thus Greta Hall received its guests (September, 1803). At first the sight of little Sara Coleridge and her baby cooings caused shootings of pain on which Southey had not counted. Was the experiment of

this removal to prove a failure? He still felt as if he were a feather driven by the wind. "I have no symptoms of root-striking here," he said. But he spoke, not knowing what was before him; the years of wandering were indeed over; here he had found his home.

CHAPTER IV.

WAYS OF LIFE AT KESWICK, 1803—1839.

THE best of life with Southey was yet to come; but in what remains there are few outstanding events to chronicle; there is nowhere any splendour of circumstance. Of some lives the virtue is distilled, as it were, into a few exquisite moments—moments of rapture, of vision, of sudden and shining achievement; all the days and years seem to exist only for the sake of such faultless moments, and it matters little whether such a life, of whose very essence it is to break the bounds of time and space, be long or short as measured by the falling of sandgrains or the creeping of a shadow. Southey's life was not one of these; its excellence was constant, uniform, perhaps somewhat too evenly distributed. He wrought in his place day after day, season after season. He submitted to the good laws of use and wont. He grew stronger, calmer, more full-fraught with stores of knowledge, richer in treasure of the heart. Time laid its hand upon him gently and unfalteringly: the bounding step became less light and swift; the ringing voice lapsed into sadder fits of silence; the raven hair changed to a snowy white; only still the indefatigable eye ran down the long folio columns, and the indefatigable hand still held the pen—until all true life had ceased. When it has been said that Southey was appoint-

ed Pye's successor in the laureateship, that he received an honorary degree from his university, that now and again he visited the Continent, that children were born to him from among whom death made choice of the dearest; and when we add that he wrote and published books, the leading facts of Southey's life have been told. Had he been a worse or a weaker man, we might look to find mysteries, picturesque vices, or engaging follies; as it is, everything is plain, straightforward, substantial. What makes the life of Southey eminent and singular is its unity of purpose, its persistent devotion to a chosen object, its simplicity, purity, loyalty, fortitude, kindness, truth.

The river Greta, before passing under the bridge at the end of Main Street, Keswick, winds about the little hill on which stands Greta Hall; its murmur may be heard when all is still beyond the garden and orchard; to the west it catches the evening light. "In front," Coleridge wrote when first inviting his friend to settle with him, "we have a giants' camp—an encamped army of tent-like mountains, which by an inverted arch gives a view of another vale. On our right the lovely vale and the wedge-shaped lake of Bassenthwaite; and on our left Derwentwater and Lodore full in view, and the fantastic mountains of Borrowdale. Behind us the massy Skiddaw, smooth, green, high, with two chasms and a tent-like ridge in the larger." Southey's house belongs in a peculiar degree to his life: in it were stored the treasures upon which his intellect drew for sustenance; in it his affections found their earthly abiding-place; all the most mirthful, all the most mournful, recollections of Southey hang about it; to it in every little wandering his heart reverted like an exile's; it was at once his workshop and his playground; and for a time, while he endured a living death, it became his ante-

chamber to the tomb. The rambling tenement consisted of two houses under one roof, the larger part being occupied by the Coleridges and Southey's, the smaller for a time by Mr. Jackson, their landlord. On the ground-floor was the parlour which served as dining-room and general sitting-room, a pleasant chamber looking upon the green in front; here also were Aunt Lovell's sitting-room, and the mangling-room, in which stood ranged in a row the long array of clogs, from the greatest even unto the least, figuring in a symbol the various stages of human life. The stairs to the right of the kitchen led to a landing-place filled with bookcases; a few steps more led to the little bedroom occupied by Mrs. Coleridge and her daughter. "A few steps farther," writes Sara Coleridge, whose description is here given in abridgment, "was a little wing bedroom—then the study, where my uncle sat all day occupied with literary labours and researches, but which was used as a drawing-room for company. Here all the tea-visiting guests were received. The room had three windows, a large one looking down upon the green with the wide flower-border, and over to Keswick Lake and mountains beyond. There were two smaller windows looking towards the lower part of the town seen beyond the nursery-garden. The room was lined with books in fine bindings; there were books also in brackets, elegantly lettered vellum-covered volumes lying on their sides in a heap. The walls were hung with pictures, mostly portraits. . . . At the back of the room was a comfortable sofa, and there were sundry tables, beside my uncle's library table, his screen, desk, etc. Altogether, with its internal fittings up, its noble outlook, and something pleasing in its proportions, this was a charming room." Hard by the study was Southey's bedroom. We need not ramble farther

through passages lined with books, and up and down flights of stairs to Mr. Jackson's organ-room, and Mrs. Lovell's room, and Hartley's parlour, and the nurseries, and the dark apple-room supposed to be the abode of a bogle. Without, greensward, flowers, shrubs, strawberry-beds, fruit-trees, encircled the house; to the back, beyond the orchard, a little wood stretched down to the river-side. A rough path ran along the bottom of the wood; here, on a covered seat, Southey often read or planned future work, and here his little niece loved to play in sight of the dimpling water. "Dear Greta Hall!" she exclaims; "and oh, that rough path beside the Greta! How much of my childhood, of my girlhood, of my youth, were spent there!"

Southey's attachment to his mountain town and its lakes was of no sudden growth. He came to them as one not born under their influence; that power of hills to which Wordsworth owed fealty, had not brooded upon Southey during boyhood; the rich southern meadows, the wooded cliffs of Avon, the breezy downs, had nurtured his imagination, and to these he was still bound by pieties of the heart. In the churchyard at Ashton, where lay his father and his kinsfolk, the beneficent cloud of mingled love and sorrow most overshadowed his spirit. His imagination did not soar, as did Wordsworth's, in naked solitudes; he did not commune with a Presence immanent in external nature: the world, as he viewed it, was an admirable habitation for mankind—a habitation with a history. Even after he had grown a mountaineer, he loved a humanized landscape, one in which the gains of man's courage, toil, and endurance are apparent. Flanders, where the spade has wrought its miracles of diligence, where the slow canal-boat glides, where the *carillons* ripple from old spires, where sturdy burghers fought for freedom, and where vellum-bound

quartos might be sought and found, Flanders, on the whole, gave Southey deeper and stronger feelings than did Switzerland. The ideal land of his dreams was always Spain; the earthly paradise for him was Cintra, with its glory of sun, and a glow even in its depths of shadow. But as the years went by, Spain became more and more a memory, less and less a hope; and the realities of life in his home were of more worth every day. When, in 1807, it grew clear that Greta Hall was to be his life-long place of abode, Southey's heart closed upon it with a tenacious grasp. He set the plasterer and carpenter to work; he planted shrubs; he enclosed the garden; he gathered his books about him, and thought that here were materials for the industry of many years; he held in his arms children who were born in this new home; and he looked to Crosthwaite Churchyard, expecting, with quiet satisfaction, that when toil was ended he should there take his rest.

“I don't talk much about these things,” Southey writes; “but these lakes and mountains give me a deep joy for which I suspect nothing elsewhere can compensate, and this is a feeling which time strengthens instead of weakening.” Some of the delights of southern counties he missed; his earliest and deepest recollections were connected with flowers; both flowers and fruits were now too few; there was not a cowslip to be found near Keswick. “Here in Cumberland I miss the nightingale and the violet—the most delightful bird and the sweetest flower.” But for such losses there were compensations. A pastoral land will give amiable pledges for the seasons and the months, and will perform its engagements with a punctual observance; to this the mountains hardly condescend, but they shower at their will a sudden largess of unimagined beauty. Southey would sally out for a constitutional at his

three-mile pace, the peaked cap slightly shadowing his eyes, which were coursing over the pages of a book held open as he walked; he had left his study to obtain exercise, and so to preserve health; he was not a laker engaged in view-hunting; he did not affect the contemplative mood which at the time was not and could not be his. But when he raised his eyes, or when, quickening his three-mile to a four-mile pace, he closed the book, the beauty which lay around him liberated and soothed his spirit. This it did unflinching; and it might do more, for incalculable splendours, visionary glories, exaltations, terrors, are momentarily possible where mountain, and cloud, and wind, and sunshine meet. Southey, as he says, did not talk much of these things, but they made life for him immeasurably better than it would have been in city confinement; there were spaces, vistas, an atmosphere around his sphere of work, which lightened and relieved it. The engagements in his study were always so numerous and so full of interest that it needed an effort to leave the table piled with books and papers. But a May morning would draw him forth into the sun in spite of himself. Once abroad, Southey had a vigorous joy in the quickened blood, and the muscles impatient with energy long pent up. The streams were his especial delight; he never tired of their deep retirement, their shy loveliness, and their melody; they could often beguile him into an hour of idle meditation; their beauty has in an especial degree passed into his verse. When his sailor brother Thomas came and settled in the Vale of Newlands, Southey would quickly cover the ground from Keswick at his four-mile pace, and in the beck at the bottom of Tom's fields, on summer days, he would plunge and re-plunge and act the river-god in the natural seats of mossy stone. Or he would be over-

powered some autumn morning by the clamour of childish voices voting a holiday by acclamation. Their father must accompany them; it would do him good, they knew it would; they knew he did not take sufficient exercise, for they had heard him say so. Where should the scramble be? To Skiddaw Dod, or Causey Pike, or Watenlath, or, as a compromise between their exuberant activity and his inclination for the chair and the fireside, to Walla Crag? And there, while his young companions opened their baskets and took their noonday meal, Southey would seat himself—as Westall has drawn him—upon the bough of an ash-tree, the water flowing smooth and green at his feet, but a little higher up broken, flashing, and whitening in its fall; and there in the still autumn noon he would muse happily, placidly, not now remembering with over-keen desire the gurgling tanks and fountains of Cintra, his Paradise of early manhood.¹

On summer days, when the visits of friends, or strangers bearing letters of introduction, compelled him to idleness, Southey's more ambitious excursions were taken. But he was well aware that those who form acquaintance with a mountain region during a summer all blue and gold, know little of its finer power. It is October that brings most often those days faultless, pearl-pure, of affecting influence,

“In the long year set
Like captain jewels in the carcanet.”

Then, as Wordsworth has said, the atmosphere seems refined, and the sky rendered more crystalline, as the vivifying heat of the year abates; the lights and shadows are more delicate; the colouring is richer and more finely

¹ For Westall's drawing, and the description of Walla Crag, see “Sir Thomas More:” Colloquy VI.

harmonized; and, in this season of stillness, the ear being unoccupied, or only gently excited, the sense of vision becomes more susceptible of its appropriate enjoyments. Even December is a better month than July for perceiving the special greatness of a mountainous country. When the snow lies on the fells soft and smooth, Grisedale Pike and Skiddaw drink in tints at morning and evening marvellous as those seen upon Mont Blanc or the Jungfrau for purity and richness.

“Summer,” writes Southey, “is not the season for this country. Coleridge says, and says well, that then it is like a theatre at noon. There are no *goings on* under a clear sky; but at other seasons there is such shifting of shades, such islands of light, such columns and buttresses of sunshine, as might almost make a painter burn his brushes, as the sorcerers did their books of magic when they saw the divinity which rested upon the apostles. The very snow, which you would perhaps think must monotonize the mountains, gives new varieties; it brings out their recesses and designates all their inequalities; it impresses a better feeling of their height; and it reflects such tints of saffron, or fawn, or rose-colour to the evening sun. *O Maria Santissima!* Mount Horeb, with the glory upon its summit, might have been more glorious, but not more beautiful than old Skiddaw in his winter pelisse. I will not quarrel with frost, though the fellow has the impudence to take me by the nose. The lake-side has such ten thousand charms: a fleece of snow or of the hoar-frost lies on the fallen trees or large stones; the grass-points, that just peer above the water, are powdered with diamonds; the ice on the margin with chains of crystal, and such veins and wavy lines of beauty as mock all art; and, to crown all, Coleridge and I have found out that stones thrown

upon the lake when frozen make a noise like singing birds, and when you whirl on it a large flake of ice, away the shivers slide, chirping and warbling like a flight of finches." This tells of a February at Keswick; the following describes the *goings on* under an autumn sky:—"The mountains on Thursday evening, before the sun was quite down, or the moon bright, were all of one dead-blue colour; their rifts and rocks and swells and scars had all disappeared—the surface was perfectly uniform, nothing but the outline distinct; and this even surface of dead blue, from its unnatural uniformity, made them, though not transparent, appear transvious—as though they were of some soft or cloudy texture through which you could have passed. I never saw any appearance so perfectly unreal. Sometimes a blazing sunset seems to steep them through and through with red light; or it is a cloudy morning, and the sunshine slants down through a rift in the clouds, and the pillar of light makes the spot whereon it falls so emerald green, that it looks like a little field of Paradise. At night you lose the mountains, and the wind so stirs up the lake that it looks like the sea by moonlight."

If Southey had not a companion by his side, the solitude of his ramble was unbroken; he never had the knack of forgathering with chance acquaintance. With intellectual and moral boldness, and with high spirits, he united a constitutional bashfulness and reserve. His retired life, his habits of constant study, and, in later years, his shortness of sight, fell in with this infirmity. He would not patronize his humbler neighbours; he had a kind of imaginative jealousy on behalf of their rights as independent persons; and he could not be sure of straightway discovering, by any genius or instinct of good-fellowship, that common ground whereon strangers are at home with one an-

other. Hence—and Southey himself wished that it had been otherwise—long as he resided at Keswick, there were perhaps not twenty persons of the lower ranks whom he knew by sight. “After slightly returning the salutation of some passer-by,” says his son, “he would again mechanically lift his cap as he heard some well-known name in reply to his inquiries, and look back with regret that the greeting had not been more cordial.”

If the ice were fairly broken, he found it natural to be easy and familiar, and by those whom he employed he was regarded with affectionate reverence. Mrs. Wilson—kind and generous creature—remained in Greta Hall tending the children as they grew up, until she died, grieved for by the whole household. Joseph Glover, who created the scarecrow “Statues” for the garden—male and female created he them, as the reader may see them figured toward the close of *The Doctor*—Glover, the artist who set up Edith’s fantastic chimney-piece (“Well, Miss Southey,” cried honest Joseph, “I’ve done my Devils”), was employed by Southey during five-and-twenty years, ever since he was a ’prentice-boy. If any warm-hearted neighbour, known or unknown to him, came forward with a demand on Southey’s sympathies, he was sure to meet a neighbourly response. When the miller, who had never spoken to him before, invited the laureate to rejoice with him over the pig he had killed—the finest ever fattened—and when Southey was led to the place where that which had ceased to be pig and was not yet bacon, was hung up by the hind feet, he filled up the measure of the good man’s joy by hearty appreciation of a porker’s points. But Cumberland enthusiasm seldom flames abroad with so prodigal a blaze as that of the worthy miller’s heart.

Within the charmed circle of home, Southey’s temper

and manners were full of a strong and sweet hilarity ; and the home circle was in itself a considerable group of persons. The Pantisocratic scheme of a community was, after all, near finding a fulfilment, only that the Greta ran by in place of the Susquehanna, and that Southey took upon his own shoulders the work of the dead Lovell, and of Coleridge, who lay in weakness and dejection, whelmed under the tide of dreams. For some little time Coleridge continued to reside at Keswick, an admirable companion in almost all moods of mind, for all kinds of wisdom, and all kinds of nonsense. When he was driven abroad in search of health, it seemed as if a brightness were gone out of the air, and the horizon of life had grown definite and contracted. "It is now almost ten years," Southey writes, "since he and I first met in my rooms at Oxford, which meeting decided the destiny of both. . . . I am perpetually pained at thinking what he ought to be, . . . but the tidings of his death would come upon me more like a stroke of lightning than any evil I have ever yet endured."

Mrs. Coleridge, with her children, remained at Greta Hall. That quaint little metaphysician, Hartley—now answering to the name of Moses, now to that of Job, the oddest of all God's creatures—was an unceasing wonder and delight to his uncle: "a strange, strange boy, 'exquisitely wild,' an utter visionary, like the moon among thin clouds, he moves in a circle of his own making. He alone is a light of his own. Of all human beings I never saw one so utterly naked of self." When his father expressed surprise that Hartley should take his pleasure of wheel-barrow-riding so sadly, "The pity is"—explained little Job—"the pity is, *I*'se always thinking of my thoughts." " 'I'm a boy of a very religious turn,' he says ; for he always talks of himself and examines his own character, just

as if he were speaking of another person, and as impartially. Every night he makes an extempore prayer aloud; but it is always in bed, and not till he is comfortable there and got into the mood. When he is ready, he touches Mrs. Wilson, who sleeps with him, and says, 'Now listen!' and off he sets like a preacher." Younger than Hartley was Derwent Coleridge, a fair, broad-chested boy, with merry eye and roguish lips, now grown out of that yellow frock in which he had earned his name of Stumpy Canary. Sara Coleridge, when her uncle came to Keswick after the death of his own Margery, was a little grand-lama at that worshipful age of seven months. A fall into the Greta, a year and a half later, helped to change her to the delicate creature whose large blue eyes would look up timidly from under her lace border and muffings of muslin. No feeling towards their father save a reverent loyalty did the Coleridge children ever learn under Southey's roof. But when the pale-faced wanderer returned from Italy, he surprised and froze his daughter by a sudden revelation of that jealousy which is the fond injustice of an unsatisfied heart, and which a child who has freely given and taken love finds it hard to comprehend. "I think my dear father," writes Sara Coleridge, "was anxious that I should learn to love him and the Wordsworths and their children, and not cling so exclusively to my mother and all around me at home." Love him and revere his memory she did; to Wordsworth she was conscious of owing more than to any other teacher or inspirer in matters of the intellect and imagination. But in matters of the heart and conscience the daily life of Southey was the book in which she read; he was, she would emphatically declare, "upon the whole, the best man she had ever known."

But the nepotism of the most "nepotious" uncle is

not a perfect substitute for fatherhood with its hopes and fears. May-morning of the year 1804 saw "an Edithling very, very ugly, with no more beauty than a young dodo," nestling by Edith Southey's side. A trembling thankfulness possessed the little one's father; but when the Arctic weather changed suddenly to days of genial sunshine, and groves and gardens burst into living greenery, and rang with song, his heart was caught into the general joy. Southey was not without a presentiment that his young dodo would improve. Soon her premature activity of eye and spirits troubled him, and he tried, while cherishing her, to put a guard upon his heart. "I did not mean to trust my affections again on so frail a foundation — and yet the young one takes me from my desk and makes me talk nonsense as fluently as you perhaps can imagine." When Sara Coleridge—not yet five years old, but already, as she half believed, promised in marriage to Mr. De Quincey—returned after a short absence to Greta Hall, she saw her baby cousin, sixteen months younger, and therefore not yet marriageable, grown into a little girl very fair, with thick golden hair, and round, rosy cheeks. Edith Southey inherited something of her father's looks and of his swift intelligence; with her growing beauty of face and limbs a growing excellence of inward nature kept pace. At twenty she was the "elegant cygnet" of Amelia Opie's album verses,

" 'Twas pleasant to meet
And see thee, famed Swan of the Derwent's fair tide,
With that elegant cygnet that floats by thy side"—

a compliment her father mischievously would not let her Elegancy forget. Those who would know her in the loveliness of youthful womanhood may turn to Wordsworth's

poem, *The Triad*, where she appears first of the three “sister nymphs” of Keswick and Rydal; or, Hartley Coleridge’s exquisite sonnet, *To a lofty beauty, from her poor kinsman* :

“Methinks thy scornful mood,
 And bearing high of stately womanhood—
 Thy brow where Beauty sits to tyrannize
 O’er humble love, had made me sadly fear thee :
 For never sure was seen a royal bride,
 Whose gentleness gave grace to so much pride—
 My very thoughts would tremble to be near thee,
 But when I see thee by thy father’s side
 Old times unqueen thee, and old loves endear thee.”

But it is best of all to remember Southey’s daughter in connexion with one letter of her father’s. In 1805 he visited Scotland alone; he had looked forward to carrying on the most cherished purpose of his life—the *History of Portugal*—among the libraries of Lisbon. But it would be difficult to induce Mrs. Southey to travel with the Edithling. Could he go alone? The short absence in Scotland served to test his heart, and so to make his future clear:—

“I need not tell you, my own dear Edith, not to read my letters aloud till you have first of all seen what is written only for yourself. What I have now to say to you is, that having been eight days from home, with as little discomfort, and as little reason for discomfort, as a man can reasonably expect, I have yet felt so little comfortable, so great sense of solitariness, and so many homeward yearnings, that certainly I will not go to Lisbon without you; a resolution which, if your feelings be at all like mine, will not displease you. If, on mature consideration, you think the inconvenience of a voyage more than you ought to submit to, I must be content to stay in England, as on my part it certainly is not worth

while to sacrifice a year's happiness; for though not unhappy (my mind is too active and too well disciplined to yield to any such criminal weakness), still, without you I am not happy. But for your sake as well as my own, and for little Edith's sake, I will not consent to any separation; the growth of a year's love between her and me, if it please God that she should live, is a thing too delightful in itself, and too valuable in its consequences, both to her and me, to be given up for any light inconvenience either on your part or mine. An absence of a year would make her effectually forget me. . . . But of these things we will talk at leisure; only, dear, dear Edith, we must not part."

Such wisdom of the heart was justified; the year of growing love bore precious fruit. When Edith May was ten years old her father dedicated to her, in verses laden with a father's tenderest thoughts and feelings, his *Tale of Paraguay*. He recalls the day of her birth, the preceding sorrow for his first child, whose infant features have faded from him like a passing cloud; the gladness of that singing month of May; the seasons that followed during which he observed the dawning of the divine light in her eyes; the playful guiles by which he won from her repeated kisses: to him these ten years seem like yesterday; but to her they have brought discourse of reason, with the sense of time and change:—

“And I have seen thine eyes suffused in grief
 When I have said that with autumnal grey
 The touch of old hath mark'd thy father's head;
 That even the longest day of life is brief,
 And mine is falling fast into the yellow leaf.”

Other children followed, until a happy stir of life filled the house. Emma, the quietest of infants, whose voice

was seldom heard, and whose dark-grey eyes too seldom shone in her father's study, slipped quietly out of the world after a hand's-breadth of existence; but to Southey she was no more really lost than the buried brother and sister were to the cottage girl of Wordsworth's *We are seven*. "I have five children," he says in 1809; "three of them at home, and two under my mother's care in heaven." Of all, the most radiantly beautiful was Isabel; the most passionately loved was Herbert. "My other two are the most perfect contrast you ever saw. Bertha, whom I call Queen Henry the Eighth, from her likeness to King Bluebeard, grows like Jonah's gourd, and is the very picture of robust health; and little Kate hardly seems to grow at all, though perfectly well—she is round as a mushroom-button. Bertha, the bluff queen, is just as grave as Kate is garrulous; they are inseparable playfellows, and go about the house hand in hand."

Among the inmates of Greta Hall, to overlook Lord Nelson and Bona Marietta, with their numerous successors, would be a grave delinquency. To be a cat, was to be a privileged member of the little republic to which Southey gave laws. Among the fragments at the end of *The Doctor* will be found a Chronicle History of the Cattery of Cat's Eden; and some of Southey's frolic letters are written as if his whole business in life were that of secretary for feline affairs in Greta Hall. A house, he declared, is never perfectly furnished for enjoyment unless there is in it a child rising three years old and a kitten rising six weeks; "kitten is in the animal world what the rosebud is in the garden." Lord Nelson, an ugly specimen of the streaked-carrotty or Judas-coloured kind, yet withal a good cat, affectionate, vigilant, and brave, was succeeded by Madame Bianchi, a beautiful and singular creature, white, with

a fine tabby tail; "her wild eyes were bright, and green as the Duchess de Cadaval's emerald necklace." She fled away with her niece Pulcheria on the day when good old Mrs. Wilson died; nor could any allurements induce the pair to domesticate themselves again. For some time a cloud of doom seemed to hang over Cat's Eden. Ovid and Virgil, Othello the Moor, and Pope Joan perished miserably. At last Fortune, as if to make amends for her unkindness, sent to Greta Hall almost together the never-to-be-enough-praised Rumpelstilzchen (afterwards raised for services against rats to be His Serene Highness the Archduke Rumpelstilzchen), and the equally-to-be-praised Hurly-burlybuss. With whom too soon we must close the catalogue.

The revenue to maintain this household was in the main won by Southey's pen. "It is a difficult as well as a delicate task," he wrote in the *Quarterly Review*, "to advise a youth of ardent mind and aspiring thoughts in the choice of a profession; but a wise man will have no hesitation in exhorting him to choose anything rather than literature. Better that he should seek his fortune before the mast, or with a musket on his shoulder and a knapsack on his back; better that he should follow the plough, or work at the loom or the lathe, or sweat over the anvil, than trust to literature as the only means of his support." Southey's own bent towards literature was too strong to be altered. But, while he accepted loyally the burdens of his profession as a man of letters, he knew how stout a back is needed to bear them month after month and year after year. Absolutely dependent on his pen he was at no time. His generous friend Wynn, upon coming of age, allowed him annually 160*l.*, until, in 1807, he was able to procure for Southey a Government pension for literary services amount-

ing, clear of taxes, to nearly the same sum. Southey had as truly as any man the pride of independence, but he had none of its vanity; there was no humiliation in accepting a service from one whom friendship had made as close as a brother. Men, he says, are as much better for the good offices which they receive as for those they bestow; and his own was no niggard hand. Knowing both to give and to take, with him the remembrance that he owed much to others was among the precious possessions of life which bind us to our kind with bonds of sonship, not of slavery. Of the many kindnesses which he received he never forgot one. "Had it not been for your aid," he writes to Wynn, forty years after their first meeting in Dean's Yard, "I should have been irretrievably wrecked when I ran upon the shoals, with all sail set, in the very outset of my voyage." And to another good old friend, who from his own modest station applauded while Southey ran forward in the race:—"Do you suppose, Cottle, that I have forgotten those true and most essential acts of friendship which you showed me when I stood most in need of them? Your house was my house when I had no other. The very money with which I bought my wedding-ring and paid my marriage-fees was supplied by you. It was with your sisters I left Edith during my six months' absence, and for the six months after my return it was from you that I received, week by week, the little on which we lived, till I was enabled to live by other means. It is not the settling of a cash account that can cancel obligations like these. You are in the habit of preserving your letters, and if you were not, I would entreat you to preserve *this*, that it might be seen hereafter. . . . My head throbs and my eyes burn with these recollections. Good-night! my dear old friend and benefactor."

Anxiety about his worldly fortunes never cost Southey a sleepless night. His disposition was always hopeful; relying on Providence, he says, I could rely upon myself. When he had little, he lived upon little, never spending when it was necessary to spare; and his means grew with his expenses. Business habits he had none; never in his life did he cast up an account; but in a general way he knew that money comes by honest toil and grows by diligent husbandry. Upon Mrs. Southey, who had an eye to all the household outgoings, the cares of this life fell more heavily. Sara Coleridge calls to mind her aunt as she moved about Greta Hall intent on house affairs, "with her fine figure and quietly commanding air." Alas! under this gracious dignity of manner the wear and tear of life were doing their work surely. Still, it was honest wear and tear. "I never knew her to do an unkind act," says Southey, "nor say an unkind word;" but when stroke followed upon stroke of sorrow, they found her without that elastic temper which rises and recovers itself. Until the saddest of afflictions made her helpless, everything was left to her management, and was managed so quietly and well, that, except in times of sickness and bereavement, "I had," writes her husband, "literally no cares." Thus free from harass, Southey toiled in his library; he toiled not for bread alone, but also for freedom. There were great designs before him which, he was well aware, if ever realized, would make but a poor return to the household coffer. To gain time and a vantage-ground for these, he was content to yield much of his strength to work of temporary value, always contriving, however, to strike a mean in this journeyman service between what was most and least akin to his proper pursuits. When a parcel of books arrived from the *Annual Review*, he groaned in spirit over

the sacrifice of time; but patience! it is, after all, better, he would reflect, than pleading in a court of law; better than being called up at midnight to a patient; better than calculating profit and loss at a counter; better, in short, than anything but independence. "I am a quiet, patient, easy-going hack of the mule breed"—he writes to Grosvenor Bedford—"regular as clock-work in my pace, sure-footed, bearing the burden which is laid on me, and only obstinate in choosing my own path. If Gifford could see me by this fireside, where, like Nicodemus, one candle suffices me in a large room, he would see a man in a coat 'still more threadbare than his own,' when he wrote his 'Imitation,' working hard and getting little—a bare maintenance, and hardly that; writing poems and history for posterity with his whole heart and soul; one daily progressive in learning, not so learned as he is poor, not so poor as proud, not so proud as happy. Grosvenor, there is not a lighter-hearted nor a happier man upon the face of this wide world." When these words were written, Herbert stood by his father's side; it was sweet to work that his boy might have his play-time glad and free.

The public estimate of Southey's works as expressed in pounds, shillings, and pence, was lowest where he held that it ought to have been highest. For the *History of Brazil*, a work of stupendous toil, which no one in England could have produced save Southey himself, he had not received, after eight years, as much as for a single article in the *Quarterly Review*. *Madoc*, the pillar, as he supposed, on which his poetical fame was to rest; *Madoc*, which he dismissed with an awed feeling, as if in it he were parting with a great fragment of his life, brought its author, after twelve months' sales, the sum of 3*l.* 17*s.* 1*d.* On the other hand, for his *Naval Biography*, which interested him

less than most of his works, and which was undertaken after hesitation, he was promised five hundred guineas a volume. Notwithstanding his unwearied exertions, his modest scale of expenditure, and his profitable connexion with the *Quarterly Review*—for an important article he would receive 100*l.*—he never had a year's income in advance until that year, late in his life, in which Sir Robert Peel offered him a baronetcy. In 1818, the lucky payment of a bad debt enabled him to buy 300*l.* in the Three-per-cents. "I have 100*l.* already there," he writes, "and shall then be worth 12*l.* per annum." By 1821 this sum had grown to 625*l.*, the gatherings of half a life-time. In that year his friend John May, whose acquaintance he had made in Portugal, and to whose kindness he was a debtor, suffered the loss of his fortune. As soon as Southey had heard the state of affairs, his decision was formed. "By this post," he tells his friend, "I write to Bedford, desiring that he will transfer to you 625*l.* in the Three-per-cents. I wish it was more, and that I had more at my command in any way. I shall in the spring, if I am paid for the first volume of my History as soon as it is finished. One hundred I should, at all events, have sent you then. It shall be as much more as I receive." And he goes on in cheery words to invite John May to break away from business and come to Keswick, there to lay in "a pleasant store of recollections which in all moods of mind are wholesome." One rejoices that Southey, poor of worldly goods, knew the happiness of being so simply and nobly generous.

Blue and white china, mediæval ivories, engravings by the Little Masters, Chippendale cabinets, did not excite pining desire in Southey's breast; yet in one direction he indulged the passion of a collector. If, with respect to

any of "the things independent of the will," he showed a want of moderation unworthy of his discipleship to Epicurus, it was assuredly with respect to books. Before he possessed a fixed home, he was already moored to his folios; and when once he was fairly settled at Keswick, many a time the carriers on the London road found their lading the larger by a weighty packet on its way to Greta Hall. Never did he run north or south for a holiday, but the inevitable parcel preceded or followed his return. Never did he cross to the Continent but a bulkier bale arrived in its own good time, enclosing precious things. His morality, in all else void of offence, here yielded to the seducer. It is thought that Southey was in the main honest; but if Dirk Hatteraick had run ashore a hundred-weight of the *Acta Sanctorum* duty-free, the king's laureate was not the man to set the sharks upon him; and it is to be feared that the pattern of probity, the virtuous Southey himself, might in such circumstances be found, under cover of night, lugging his prize landwards from its retreat beneath the rocks. Unquestionably, at one time certain parcels from Portugal—only of such a size as could be carried under the arm—were silently brought ashore to the defrauding of the revenue, and somehow found their way, by-and-by, to Greta Hall. "We maintain a trade," says the Governor of the Strangers' House in Bacon's philosophical romance, "not for gold, silver, or jewels, nor for silks, nor for spices, nor any other commodity of matter, but only for God's first creature, which was *light*." Such, too, was Southey's trade, and he held that God's first creature is free to travel unchallenged by revenue-cutter.

"Why, Montesinos," asks the ghostly Sir Thomas More in one of Southey's *Colloquies*, "with these books and the

delight you take in their constant society, what have you to covet or desire?" "Nothing," is the answer, "... except more books." When Southey, in 1805, went to see Walter Scott, it occurred to him in Edinburgh that, having had neither new coat nor hat since little Edith was born, he must surely be in want of both; and here, in the metropolis of the North, was an opportunity of arraying himself to his desire. "Howbeit," he says, "on considering the really respectable appearance which my old ones made for a traveller — and considering, moreover, that as learning was better than house or land, it certainly must be much better than fine clothes — I laid out all my money in books, and came home to wear out my old wardrobe in the winter." De Quincey called Southey's library his wife, and in a certain sense it was wife and mistress and mother to him. The presence and enjoying of his books was not the sole delight they afforded; there was also the pursuit, the surprisal, the love-making or wooing. And at last, in his hours of weakness, once more a little child, he would walk slowly round his library, looking at his cherished volumes, taking them down mechanically, and when he could no longer read, pressing them to his lips. In happier days the book-stalls of London knew the tall figure, the rapid stride, the quick-seeing eye, the eager fingers. Lisbon, Paris, Milan, Amsterdam, contributed to the rich confusion that, from time to time, burdened the floors of library and bedrooms and passages in Greta Hall. Above all, he was remembered at Brussels by that best of bookmen, Verbeyst. What mattered it that Verbeyst was a sloven, now receiving his clients with gaping shirt, and now with stockingless feet? Did he not duly honour letters, and had he not 300,000 volumes from which to choose? If in a moment of prudential weakness one

failed to carry off such a treasure as the *Monumenta Boica* or Colgar's *Irish Saints*, there was a chance that in Verbeyst's vast store-house the volume might lurk for a year or two. And Verbeyst loved his books, only less than he loved his handsome, good-natured wife, who for a liberal customer would fetch the bread and burgundy. Henry Taylor dwelt in Robert Southey's heart of hearts; but let not Henry Taylor treasonably hint that Verbeyst, the prince of booksellers, had not a prince's politeness of punctuality. If sundry books promised had not arrived, it was because they were not easily procured; moreover, the good-natured wife had died — *bien des malheurs*, and Verbeyst's heart was fallen into a lethargy. "Think ill of our fathers which are in the Row, think ill of John Murray, think ill of Colburn, think ill of the whole race of bibliopoles, except Verbeyst, who is always to be thought of with liking and respect." And when the bill of lading, coming slow but sure, announced that saints and chroniclers and poets were on their way, "by this day month," wrote Southey, "they will probably be here; then shall I be happier than if his Majesty King George the Fourth were to give orders that I should be clothed in purple, and sleep upon gold, and have a chain upon my neck, and sit next him because of my wisdom, and be called his cousin."

Thus the four thousand volumes, which lay piled about the library when Southey first gathered his possessions together, grew and grew, year after year, until the grand total mounted up to eight, to ten, to fourteen thousand. Now Kirke White's brother Neville sends him a gift of Sir William Jones's works, thirteen volumes, in binding of bewildering loveliness. Now Landor ships from some Italian port a chest containing treasures of less dubious value than the Raffaelles and Leonardos, with which he lib-

erally supplied his art-loving friends. Oh, the joy of opening such a chest; of discovering the glorious folios; of glancing with the shy amorousness of first desire at title-page and colophon; of growing familiarity; of tracing out the history suggested by book-plate or autograph; of finding a lover's excuses for cropped margin, or water-stain, or worm-hole! Then the calmer happiness of arranging his favourites on new shelves; of taking them down again, after supper, in the season of meditation and currant-rum; and of wondering for which among his father's books Herbert will care most when all of them shall be his own. "It would please you," Southey writes to his old comrade, Bedford, "to see such a display of literary wealth, which is at once the pride of my eye, and the joy of my heart, and the food of my mind; indeed, more than metaphorically, meat, drink, and clothes for me and mine. I verily believe that no one in my station was ever so rich before, and I am very sure that no one in any station had ever a more thorough enjoyment of riches of any kind or in any way."

Southey's Spanish and Portuguese collection—if Heber's great library be set aside—was probably the most remarkable gathering of such books in the possession of any private person in this country. It included several manuscripts, some of which were displayed with due distinction upon brackets. Books in white and gold—vellum or parchment bound, with gilt lettering in the old English type which Southey loved—were arranged in effective positions pyramid-wise. Southey himself had learned the mystery of book-binding, and from him his daughters acquired that art; the ragged volumes were decently clothed in coloured cotton prints; these, presenting a strange patch-work of colours, quite filled one room, which was

known as the Cottonian Library. "Paul," a book-room on the ground-floor, had been so called because "Peter," the organ-room, was robbed to fit it with books. "Paul is a great comfort to us, and being dressed up with Peter's property, makes a most respectable appearance, and receives that attention which is generally shown to the youngest child. The study has not actually been Petered on Paul's account, but there has been an exchange negotiated which we think is for their mutual advantage. Twenty gilt volumes, from under the 'Beauties of England and Wales,' have been marched down-stairs rank and file, and their place supplied by the long set of Lope de Vega with green backs."

Southey's books, as he assures his ghostly monitor in the *Colloquies*, were not drawn up on his shelves for display, however much the pride of the eye might be gratified in beholding them; they were on actual service. Generations might pass away before some of them would again find a reader; in their mountain home they were prized and known as perhaps they never had been known before. Not a few of the volumes had been cast up from the wreck of family or convent libraries during the Revolution. "Yonder Acta Sanctorum belonged to the Capuchines at Ghent. This book of St. Bridget's Revelations, in which not only all the initial letters are illuminated, but every capital throughout the volume was coloured, came from the Carmelite Nunnery at Bruges. . . . Here are books from Colbert's library; here others from the Lamoignon one. . . . Yonder Chronicle History of King D. Manoel, by Damiam de Goes; and yonder General History of Spain, by Esteban de Garibay, are signed by their respective authors. . . . This Copy of Casaubon's Epistles was sent to me from Florence by Walter Landor. He had perused it

carefully, and to that perusal we are indebted for one of the most pleasing of his Conversations. . . . Here is a book with which Lauderdale amused himself, when Cromwell kept him in prison in Windsor Castle. . . . Here I possess these gathered treasures of time, the harvest of many generations, laid up in my garners: and when I go to the window, there is the lake, and the circle of the mountains, and the illimitable sky."

Not a few of his books were dead, and to live among these was like living among the tombs; "Behold, this also is vanity," Southey makes confession. But when Sir Thomas asks questions, "Has it proved to you 'vexation of spirit' also?" the Cumberland mountain-dweller breaks forth: "Oh no! for never can any man's life have been passed more in accord with his own inclinations, nor more answerably to his desires. Excepting that peace which, through God's infinite mercy, is derived from a higher source, it is to literature, humanly speaking, that I am beholden, not only for the means of subsistence, but for every blessing which I enjoy; health of mind and activity of mind, contentment, cheerfulness, continual employment, and therefore continual pleasure. *Suavissima vita indies sentire se fieri meliorem*; and this, as Bacon has said and Clarendon repeated, is the benefit that a studious man enjoys in retirement." Such a grave gladness underlay all Southey's frolic moods, and in union with a clear-sighted acceptance of the conditions of human happiness—its inevitable shocks, its transitory nature as far as it belongs to man's life on earth—made up part of his habitual temper.

Southey coursed from page to page with a greyhound's speed; a tiny *s* pencilled in the margin served to indicate what might be required for future use. Neatness he had learnt from Miss Tyler long ago; and by experience he ac-

quired his method. On a slip of paper which served as marker he would note the pages to which he needed to return. In the course of a few hours he had classified and arranged everything in a book which it was likely he would ever want. A reference to the less important passages sufficed; those of special interest were transcribed by his wife, or one of his daughters, or more frequently by Southey himself; finally, these transcripts were brought together in packets under such headings as would make it easy to discover any portion of their contents.

Such was his ordinary manner of eviscerating an author, but it was otherwise with the writers of his affection. On some—such as Jackson and Jeremy Taylor—“he *fed*,” as he expressed it, “slowly and carefully, dwelling on the page, and taking in its contents, deeply and deliberately, like an epicure with his wine ‘searching the subtle flavour.’” Such chosen writers remained for all times and seasons faithful and cherished friends:—

“With them I take delight in weal,
And seek relief in woe;
And while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedewed
With tears of thankful gratitude.”

“If I were confined to a score of English books,” says Southey, “Sir Thomas Browne would, I think, be one of them; nay, probably it would be one if the selection were cut down to twelve. My library, if reduced to those bounds, would consist of Shakspeare, Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton; Jackson, Jeremy Taylor, and South; Isaac Walton, Sidney’s *Arcadia*, Fuller’s *Church History*, and Sir Thomas Browne; and what a wealthy and well-stored

mind would that man have, what an inexhaustible reservoir, what a Bank of England to draw upon for profitable thoughts and delightful associations, who should have fed upon them !” It must have gone hard with Southey, in making out this list, to exclude Clarendon, and doubtless if the choice were not limited to books written in English, the Utopia would have urged its claim to admission. With less difficulty he could skip the whole of the eighteenth century. From *Samson Agonistes* to *The Task*, there was no English poem which held a foremost place in his esteem. Berkeley and Butler he valued highly ; but Robert South seemed to him the last of the race of the giants. An ancestral connection with Locke was not a source of pride to Southey ; he respected neither the philosopher’s politics nor his metaphysics ; still, it is pleasant, he says, to hear of somebody between one’s self and Adam who has left a name.

Four volumes of what are called Southey’s *Common-place Books* have been published, containing some three thousand double-column pages ; and these are but a selection from the total mass of his transcripts. It is impossible to give a notion of a miscellany drawn from so wide-ranging a survey of poetry, biography, history, travels, topography, divinity, not in English alone, but also in Latin, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese. Yet certain main lines can be traced which give some meaning to this huge accumulation. It is easy to perceive that the collector wrought under an historical bias, and that social, literary, and ecclesiastical history were the directions in which the historical tendency found its play. Such work of transcribing, though it did not rest Southey’s hand, was a relief to his mind after the excitement of composition, and some of it may pass for a kind of busy idleness ; but most

of his transcripts were made with a definite purpose—that of furnishing materials for work either actually accomplished or still in prospect, when at last the brain grew dull and the fingers slack. “I am for ever making collections,” he writes, “and storing up materials which may not come into use till the Greek Calends. And this I have been doing for five-and-twenty years! It is true that I draw daily upon my hoards, and should be poor without them; but in prudence I ought now to be working up those materials rather than adding to so much dead stock.” When Ticknor visited him in 1819, Southey opened for the young American his great bundles of manuscript materials for the *History of Portugal*, and the *History of the Portuguese East Indies*. Southey had charmed him by the kindness of his reception; by the air of culture and of goodness in his home; by his talk, bright and eager, “for the quickness of his mind expresses itself in the fluency of his utterance; and yet he is ready upon almost any subject that can be proposed to him, from the extent of his knowledge.” And now, when Ticknor saw spread before him the evidence of such unexampled industry, a kind of bewilderment took possession of him. “Southey,” he writes in his diary, “is certainly an extraordinary man, one of those whose characters I find it difficult to comprehend, because I hardly know how such elements can be brought together, such rapidity of mind with such patient labour and wearisome exactness, so mild a disposition with so much nervous excitability, and a poetical talent so elevated with such an immense mass of minute, dull learning.”

If Ticknor had been told that this was due to Epictetus, it might have puzzled him still more; but it is certain that only through the strenuous appliance of will to the formation of character could Southey have grown to be what he

was. He had early been possessed by the belief that he must not permit himself to become the slave or the victim of sensibility, but that in the little world of man there are two powers ruling by a Divine right—reason and conscience, in loyal obedience to which lies our highest freedom. Then, too, the circumstances of his life prompted him to self-mastery and self-management. That he should every day overtake a vast amount of work, was not left to his choosing or declining—it was a matter of necessity; to accomplish this, he must get all possible advantage out of his rapidity of intellect and his energy of feeling, and at the same time he must never put an injurious strain on these. It would not do for Southey to burn away to-day in some white flame of excitement the nerve which he needed for use to-morrow. He could not afford to pass a sleepless night. If his face glowed or his brain throbbed, it was a warning that he had gone far enough. His very susceptibility to nervous excitement rendered caution the more requisite. William Taylor had compared him to the mimosa. Hazlitt remembered him with a quivering lip, a hectic flush upon his cheek, a roving fire in his eye, a falcon glance, a look at once aspiring and dejected. Crabb Robinson found in him a likeness to Shelley. Humphry Davy had proved the fineness of his sensibility by that odd neurometer, the nitrous oxide. “The truth is,” writes Southey, “that though some persons, whose knowledge of me is scarcely skin-deep, suppose I have no nerves, because I have great self-control as far as regards the surface, if it were not for great self-management, and what may be called a strict intellectual regimen, I should very soon be in a deplorable state of what is called nervous disease, and this would have been the case any time during the last twenty years.” And again: “A man had better

break a bone, or even lose a limb, than shake his nervous system. I, who never talk about my nerves (and am supposed to have none by persons who see as far into me as they do into a stone wall), know this." Southey could not afford to play away his health at hazard, and then win it back in the lounge of some foreign watering-place. His plan, on the contrary, was to keep it, and to think about it as little as possible. A single prescription sufficed for a life-time—*In labore quies*. "I think I may lay claim," he says, "to the praise of self-management both in body and mind without paying too much attention to either—exercising a diseased watchfulness, or playing any tricks with either." It would not have been difficult for Southey, with such a temperament as his, to have wrecked himself at the outset of his career. With beautiful foiled lives of young men Southey had a peculiar sympathy. But the gods sometimes give white hairs as an aureole to their favoured ones. Perhaps, on the whole, for him it was not only more prudent but also more chivalrous to study to be quiet; to create a home for those who looked to him for security; to guard the happiness of tender women; to make smooth ways for the feet of little children; to hold hands in old age with the friends of his youth; to store his mind with treasures of knowledge; to strengthen and chasten his own heart; to grow yearly in love for his country and her venerable heritage of manners, virtue, laws; to add to her literature the outcome of an adult intellect and character; and having fought a strenuous and skilful fight, to fall as one whose sword an untimely stroke has shattered in his hand.

CHAPTER V.

WAYS OF LIFE AT KESWICK, 1803—1839 (*continued*).

THE texture of Southey's life was so uniform, the round from morning till night repeated itself with so much regularity, that one day may stand as representative of a thousand. We possess his record of how the waking hours went by when he was about thirty years old, and a similar record written when he was twice that age. His surroundings had changed in the mean time, and he himself had changed; the great bare room which he used from the first as a study, fresh plastered in 1804, with the trowel-lines on the ceiling pierced by the flaws of winter, containing two chairs and a little table—"God help me!" he exclaims, "I look in it like a cock-robin in a church"—this room had received, long before 1834, its lining of comely books, its white and gold pyramids, its brackets, its cherished portraits. The occupant of the study had the same spare frame, the same aspect of lightness and of strength, the same full eyebrows shadowing the dark-brown eyes, the same variously expressive muscular mouth; the youthful wildness in his countenance had given place to a thoughtful expression, and the abundant hair still clustering over his great brow was snowy white. Whatever had changed, his habits—though never his tyrants—remained, with some variations in detail, the same. "My

actions," he writes to a friend not very long after his arrival in Keswick, "are as regular as those of St. Dunstan's quarter-boys. Three pages of history after breakfast (equivalent to five in small quarto printing); then to transcribe and copy for the press, or to make my selections and biographies, or what else suits my humour till dinner-time; from dinner to tea I read, write letters, see the newspaper, and very often indulge in a siesta—for sleep agrees with me. . . . After tea I go to poetry, and correct, and rewrite, and copy till I am tired, and then turn to anything else till supper; and this is my life—which, if it be not a very merry one, is yet as happy as heart could wish." "See how the day is disposed of!" begins the later record; "I get out of bed as the clock strikes six, and shut the house-door after me as it strikes seven.¹ After two hours with Davies, home to breakfast, after which Cuthbert engages me till about half-past ten, and when the post brings no letters that either interest or trouble me (for of the latter I have many), by eleven I have done with the newspaper, and can then set about what is properly the business of the day. But letters are often to be written, and I am liable to frequent interruptions; so that there are not many mornings in which I can command from two to three unbroken hours at the desk. At two I take my daily walk, be the weather what it may, and when the weather permits, with a book in my hand; dinner at four, read about half an hour; then take to the sofa with a different book, and after a few pages get my soundest sleep, till summoned to tea at six. My best time during the winter is by candle-light; twilight

¹ *I. e.*, to go to Davies' lodgings; Davies, Dr. Bell's Secretary, was engaged in arranging a vast accumulation of papers with a view to forwarding Southey in his *Life of Bell*.

interferes with it a little; and in the season of company I can never count upon an evening's work. Supper at half-past nine, after which I read an hour, and then to bed. The greatest part of my miscellaneous work is done in the odds and ends of time."

It was part of Southey's regimen to carry on several works at once; this he found to be economy of time, and he believed it necessary for the preservation of his health. Whenever one object entirely occupied his attention, it haunted him, oppressed him, troubled his dreams. The remedy was simple—to do one thing in the morning, another in the evening. To lay down poetry and presently to attack history seems feasible, and no ill policy for one who is forced to take all he can out of himself; but Southey would turn from one poetical theme to another, and could day by day advance with a pair of epics. This was a source of unfailing wonder to Landor. "When I write a poem," he says, "my heart and all my feelings are upon it. . . . High poems will not admit flirtation." Little by little was Southey's way, and so he got on with many things. "Last night," he writes to Bedford, "I began the Preface [to *Specimens of English Poets*]
—huzza! And now, Grosvenor, let me tell you what I have to do. I am writing—1. *The History of Portugal*; 2. *The Chronicle of the Cid*; 3. *The Curse of Kehama*; 4. *Es-priella's Letters*. Look you, all these *I am* writing. . . . By way of interlude comes in this preface. Don't swear, and bid me do one thing at a time. I tell you I can't afford to do one thing at a time—no, nor two neither; and it is only by doing many things that I contrive to do so much: for I cannot work long together at anything without hurting myself, and so I do everything by heats; then, by the time I am tired of one, my inclination for

another is come round." A strong, deliberate energy, accordingly, is at the back of all Southey's work; but not that blind creative rapture which will have its own way, and leaves its subject weak but appeased. "In the daytime I laboured," says Landor, "and at night unburdened my soul, shedding many tears. My *Tiberius* has so shaken me at last that the least thing affects me violently." Southey shrank back from such agitations. A great Elizabethan poet is described by one of his contemporaries as one standing

"Up to the chin in the Pierian flood."

Southey did not wade so far; he stepped down calmly until the smooth waters touched his waist; dipped seven times, and returned to the bank. It was a beautiful and an elevating rite; but the waves sing with lyric lips only in the midmost stream; and he who sings with them, and as swift as they, need not wonder if he sink after a time, faint, breathless, delighted.

Authorship, it must be remembered, was Southey's trade, the business of his life, and this, at least, he knew how to conduct well. To be a prophet and call down flame from heaven, and disappear in a whirlwind and a chariot of fire, is sublime; but prophets can go in the strength of a single meal for more days and nights than one would choose to name in this incredulous age, and, if they eat, there are ravens to bring them food. No ravens brought loaves to Greta Hall; and Southey had an unprophet-like craving for the creature comforts of beef and bread, for wine if it might be had, and at supper for one meditative tumbler of punch or black-currant rum. Besides, what ravens were ever pledged to feed a prophet's sisters-in-law, or his nephews and nieces? Let it be praise enough for much

of Southey's performance that he did good work in workmanlike fashion. To shift knowledge into more convenient positions is to render no unimportant service to mankind. In the gathering of facts, Southey was both swift and patient in an extraordinary degree; he went often alone, and he went far; in the art of exposition he was unsurpassed; and his fine moral feeling and profound sympathy with elementary justice created, as De Quincey has observed, a soul under what else might well be denominated, Miltonically, "the ribs of death." From the mending of his pens to the second reading aloud of his proof-sheets, attending as he read to the fall of each word upon the ear, Southey had a diligent care for everything that served to make his work right. He wrote at a moderate pace; re-wrote; wrote a third time if it seemed desirable; corrected with minute supervision. He accomplished so much, not because he produced with unexampled rapidity, but because he worked regularly, and never fell into a mood of apathy or ennui. No periods of tempestuous vacancy lay between his periods of patient labour. One work always overlapped another—thus, that first idle day, the begetter of so many idle descendants, never came. But let us hear the craftsman giving a lesson in the knack of authorship to his brother, Dr. Henry Southey, who has a notion of writing something on the Crusades:

"Now then, supposing that you will seriously set about the *Crusades*, I will give you such directions in the art of historical book-keeping as may save time and facilitate labour.

"Make your writing-books in foolscap quarto, and write on only one side of a leaf; draw a line down the margin, marking off space enough for your references, which should be given at the end of every paragraph; noting page, book, or chapter of the author referred to. This minuteness is now

demand, and you will yourself find it useful; for, in transcribing or in correcting proofs, it is often requisite to turn to the original authorities. Take the best author; that is to say, the one that has written most at length of all the *original* authors, upon the particular point of time on which you are employed, and draw up your account from him; then, on the opposite page, correct and amplify this from every other who has written on the same subject. This page should be divided into two columns, one of about two-thirds of its breadth, the other the remaining one. You are thus enabled to *add* to your *additions*.

“One of these books you should have for your geography; that is to say, for collecting descriptions of all the principal scenes of action (which must be done from books of travels), their situation, their strength, their previous history, and in the notes, their present state. [Another book—he adds in a subsequent letter—you must keep for the bibliography of your subject.]

“These descriptions you can insert in their proper places when you transcribe. Thus, also, you should collect accounts of the different tribes and dynasties which you have occasion to mention. In this manner the information which is only to be got at piecemeal, and oftentimes incidentally, when you are looking for something else, is brought together with least trouble, and almost imperceptibly.

“All relative matter not absolutely essential to the subject should go in the form of supplementary notes, and these you may make as amusing as you please, the more so, and the more curious, the better. Much trouble is saved by writing them on separate bits of paper, each the half of a quarter of a foolscap sheet—numbering them, and making an index of them; in this manner they are ready for use when they are wanted.

“It was some time before I fell into this system of book-keeping, and I believe no better can be desired. A Welsh triad might comprehend all the rules of style. Say what you

have to say as *perspicuously* as possible, as *briefly* as possible, and as *rememberably* as possible, and take no other thought about it. Omit none of those little circumstances which give life to narration, and bring old manners, old feelings, and old times before your eyes."

Winter was Southey's harvest season. Then for weeks no visitor knocked at Greta Hall, except perhaps Mr. Wordsworth, who had plodded all the way from Rydal on his indefatigable legs. But in summer interruptions were frequent, and Southey, who had time for everything, had time to spare not only for friends but for strangers. The swarm of lakers was, indeed, not what it is now-a-days, but to a studious man it was, perhaps, not less formidable. By Gray's time the secret of the lakes had been found out; and if the visitors were fewer, they were less swift upon the wing, and their rank or fame often entitled them to particular attention. Coroneted coaches rolled into Keswick, luggage-laden; the American arrived sometimes to make sure that Derwentwater would not be missed out of Lake Michigan, sometimes to see King George's laureate; and cultured Americans were particularly welcome to Southey. Long-vacation reading-parties from Oxford and Cambridge—known among the good Cumberland folk as the "cathedrals"—made Keswick a resort. Well for them if, provided with an introduction, they were invited to dine at Greta Hall, were permitted to gaze on the choice old Spaniards, and to converse with the laureate's stately Edith and her learned cousin. Woe to them if, after the entanglements of a Greek chorus or descriptions of the temperate man and the magnanimous man, they sought to restore their tone by a cat-worrying expedition among the cottages of Keswick. Southey's cheek glowed, his eye darkened and flashed, if he chanced to witness cru-

elty ; some of the Cambridge "cathedrals" who received a letter concerning cats in July, 1834, may still bear the mark of its leaded thong in their moral fibre, and be the better for possessing Southey's sign-manual.

A young step-child of Oxford visited Keswick in the winter of 1811-12, and sought the acquaintance of the author of *Thalaba*. Had Southey been as intolerant or as unsympathetic as some have represented him, he could not have endured the society of one so alien in opinion and so outspoken as Shelley. But courtesy, if it were nothing more, was at least part of Southey's self-respect ; his intolerance towards persons was, in truth, towards a certain ideal, a certain group of opinions ; when hand touched hand and eye met eye, all intolerance vanished, and he was open to every gracious attraction of character and manner. There was much in Shelley that could not fail to interest Southey ; both loved poetry, and both felt the proud, secluded grandeur of Landor's verse ; both loved men, and thought the world wants mending, though their plans of reform might differ. That Shelley was a rebel expelled from Oxford did not shock Southey, who himself had been expelled from Westminster and rejected at Christ Church. Shelley's opinions were crude and violent, but their spirit was generous, and such opinions held by a youth in his teens generally mean no more than that his brain is working and his heart ardent. Shelley's rash marriage reminded Southey of another marriage, celebrated at Bristol some fifteen years ago, which proved that rashness is not always folly. The young man's admiration of *Thalaba* spoke well for him ; and certainly during the earlier weeks of their intercourse there was on Shelley's part a becoming deference to one so much his superior in years and in learning, deference to one who had achieved

much while Shelley still only dreamed of achievement. Southey thought he saw in the revolutionary enthusiast an image of his former self. "Here," he says, "is a man at Keswick who acts upon me as my own ghost would do. He is just what I was in 1794. His name is Shelley, son to the member for Shoreham. . . . At present he has got to the Pantheistic stage of philosophy, and in the course of a week I expect he will be a Berkeleyan, for I have put him upon a course of Berkeley. It has surprised him a good deal to meet, for the first time in his life, with a man who perfectly understands him and does him full justice. I tell him that all the difference between us is that he is nineteen and I am thirty-seven; and I daresay it will not be very long before I shall succeed in convincing him that he may be a true philosopher and do a great deal of good with 6000*l.* a year; the thought of which troubles him a great deal more at present than ever the want of sixpence (for I have known such a want) did me." There were other differences between Robert Southey and the inconstant star that passed by Greta Hall than that of years. Southey had quickly learned to put a bound to his desires, and within that bound to work out for himself a possession of measureless worth. It seemed to him part of a man's virtue to adhere loyally to the bond signed for each of us when we enter life. Is our knowledge limited—then let us strive within those limits. Can we never lay hands on the absolute good—then let us cherish the good things that are ours. Do we hold our dearest possessions on a limited tenure—that is hard, but is it not in the bond? How faint a loyalty is his who merely yields obedience perforce! let us rather cast in our will, unadulterate and whole, with that of our divine Leader; *sursum corda*—there is a heaven above. But Shelley—the nympholept

of some radiant ante-natal sphere—fled through his brief years ever in pursuit of his lost lady of light; and for him loyalty to the bond of life seemed to mean a readiness to forget all things, however cherished, so soon as they had fulfilled their service of speeding him on towards the unattainable. It could not but be that men living under rules so diverse should before long find themselves far asunder. But they parted in 1812 in no spirit of ill-will. Southey was already a state-pensioner and a champion of the party of order in the *Quarterly Review*; this did not prevent the young apostle of liberty and fraternity from entering his doors, and enjoying Mrs. Southey's tea-cakes. Irish affairs were earnestly discussed; but Southey, who had written generously of Emmett both in his verse and in the *Quarterly*, could not be hostile to one whose illusions were only over-sanguine; and while the veritable Southey was before Shelley's eyes, he could not discern the dull hireling, the venomous apostate, the cold-blooded assassin, of freedom conjured up by Byron and others to bear Southey's name.

Three years later Shelley presented his *Alastor* to the laureate, and Southey duly acknowledged the gift. The elder poet was never slow to recognize genius in young men, but conduct was to him of higher importance than genius; he deplored some acts in Shelley's life which seemed to result directly from opinions professed at Keswick in 1811—opinions then interpreted as no more than the disdain of checks felt by every spirited boy. Southey heard no more from him until a letter came from Pisa inquiring whether Shelley's former entertainer at Keswick were his recent critic of the *Quarterly Review*, with added comments, courteous but severe, on Southey's opinions. The reply was that Southey had not written the paper, and

had never in any of his writings alluded to Shelley in any way. A second letter followed on each side, the elder man pleading, exhorting, warning; the younger justifying himself, and returning to the attack. "There the correspondence ended. On Shelley's part it was conducted with the courtesy which was natural to him; on mine, in the spirit of one who was earnestly admonishing a fellow-creature."

Much of Southey's time—his most valued possession—was given to his correspondents. Napoleon's plan of answering letters, according to Bourrienne, was to let them lie unopened for six weeks, by which time nine out of ten had answered themselves, or had been answered by history. Coleridge's plan—says De Quincey—was shorter; he opened none, and answered none. To answer all forthwith was the habit of Southey. Thinking doubtless of their differences in such minor moralities of life, Coleridge writes of his brother-in-law:—"Always employed, his friends find him always at leisure. No less punctual in trifles than steadfast in the performance of highest duties, he inflicts none of those small pains which irregular men scatter about them, and which in the aggregate so often become formidable obstacles both to happiness and utility; while, on the contrary, he bestows all the pleasures and inspires all that ease of mind on those around or connected with him, which perfect consistency and (if such a word might be framed) absolute *reliability*, equally in small as in great concerns, cannot but inspire and bestow; when this, too, is softened without being weakened by kindness and gentleness." Odd indeed were some of the communications for which the poet-laureate, the Tory reformer, and the loyal son of the Church was the mark. Now a clergyman writes to furnish him with Scriptural illustrations of

Thalaba; now another clergyman favours him with an ingenious parallel between Kehama and Nebuchadnezzar; now some anonymous person seriously urges on Southey his duty of making a new version of the Psalms, and laying it before the King to be approved and appointed to be sung in churches; now a lunatic poet desires his brother to procure for his title-page the names of Messrs. Longman and Rees; now a poor woman, wife to a blind Homer, would have him led carefully to the summit of Parnassus; now a poor French devil volunteers to translate *Roderick* if the author will have the goodness to send him a copy—even a defective copy—which he pledges himself religiously to return; now a Yankee, who keeps an exhibition at Philadelphia, modestly asks for Southey's painted portrait, "which is very worthy a place in my collection;" now a herdsman in the vale of Clwyd requests permission to send specimens of prose and verse—his highest ambition is the acquaintance of learned men; now the Rev. Peter Hall begs to inform Southey that he has done more harm to the cause of religion than any writer of the age; now a lover requests him to make an acrostic on the name of a young lady—the lover's rival has beaten him in writing verses; enclosed is the honorarium. Southey's amiability at this point gave way; he did not write the acrostic, and the money he spent on blankets for poor women in Keswick. A society for the suppression of albums was proposed by Southey; yet sometimes he was captured in the gracious mood. Samuel Simpson, of Liverpool, begs for a few lines in his handwriting "to fill a vacancy in his collection of autographs, without which his series must remain for ever most incomplete." The laureate replies:

"Inasmuch as you Sam, a descendant of Sim,

For collecting handwritings have taken a whim,

And to me, Robert Southey, petition have made,
In a civil and nicely-penned letter—post-paid—
That I to your album so gracious would be
As to fill up a page there appointed for me,
Five couplets I send you, by aid of the Nine—
They will cost you in postage a penny a line:
At Keswick, October the sixth, they were done,
One thousand eight hundred and twenty and one.”

Some of Southey's distractions were of his own inviting. Soon after his arrival at Keswick, a tiny volume of poems, entitled *Clifton Grove*, attracted his attention; its author was an undergraduate of Cambridge. The *Monthly Review* having made the discovery that it rhymed in one place *boy* and *sky*, dismissed the book contemptuously. Southey could not bear to think that the hopes of a lad of promise should be blasted, and he wrote to Henry Kirke White, encouraging him, and offering him help towards a future volume. The cruel dulness of the reviewer sat heavily on the poor boy's spirits, and these unexpected words of cheer came with most grateful effect. It soon appeared, however, that Southey's services must be slight, for his new acquaintance was taken out of his hands by Mr. Simeon, the nursing-father of Evangelicalism. At no time had Southey any leanings towards the Clapham Sect; and so, while he tried to be of use to Kirke White indirectly, their correspondence ceased. When the lad, in every way lacking pith and substance, and ripening prematurely in a heated atmosphere, drooped and died, Southey was not willing that he should be altogether forgotten; he wrote offering to look over whatever papers there might be, and to give an opinion on them. “Down came a box-full,” he tells Duppa, “the sight of which literally made my heart ache and my eyes overflow, for never did I behold such proofs of hu-

man industry. To make short, I took the matter up with interest, collected his letters, and have, at the expense of more time than such a poor fellow as myself can very well afford, done what his family are very grateful for, and what I think the world will thank me for too. Of course I have done it gratuitously. . . . That I should become, and that voluntarily too, an editor of Methodistical and Calvinistic letters, is a thing which, when I think of, excites the same sort of smile that the thought of my pension does." A brief statement that his own views on religion differed widely from those of Kirke White sufficed to save Southey's integrity. The genius of the dead poet he overrated; it was an error which the world has since found time to correct.

This was but one of a series of many instances in which Southey, stemming the pressure of his own engagements, asserted the right to be generous of his time and strength and substance to those who had need of such help as a sound heart and a strong arm can give. William Roberts, a Bristol bank-clerk, dying of consumption at nineteen, left his only possession, some manuscript poems, in trust to be published for the benefit of a sister whom he passionately loved. Southey was consulted, and at once bestirred himself on behalf of the projected volume. Herbert Knowles, an orphan lad at school in Yorkshire, had hoped to go as a sizar to St. John's; his relations were unable to send him; could he help himself by publishing a poem? might he dedicate it to the laureate? The poem came to Southey, who found it "brimful of power and of promise;" he represented to Herbert the folly of publishing, promised ten pounds himself, and procured from Rogers and Earl Spencer twenty more. Herbert Knowles, in a wise and manly letter, begged that great things might not be expected of

him; he would not be idle, his University career should be at least respectable:—"Suffice it, then, to say, *I thank you from my heart*; let time and my future conduct tell the rest." Death came to arbitrate between his hopes and fears. James Dusautoy, another schoolboy, one of ten children of a retired officer, sent specimens of his verse, asking Southey's opinion on certain poetical plans. His friends thought the law the best profession for him; how could he make literature help him forward in his profession? Southey again advised against publication, but by a well-timed effort enabled him to enter Emanuel College. Dusautoy, after a brilliant promise, took fever, died, and was buried, in acknowledgment of his character and talents, in the college cloisters. When at Harrogate in the summer of 1827, Southey received a letter, written with much modesty and good feeling, from John Jones, an old serving-man; he enclosed a poem on "The Redbreast," and would take the liberty, if permitted, to offer other manuscripts for inspection. Touches of true observation and natural feeling in the verses on the little bird with "look oblique and prying head and gentle affability" pleased Southey, and he told his humble applicant to send his manuscript book, warning him, however, not to expect that such poems would please the public—"the time for them was gone by, and whether the public had grown wiser in these matters or not, it had certainly become less tolerant and less charitable." By procuring subscribers and himself contributing an Introductory Essay on the lives and works of our Uneducated Poets, Southey secured a slender fortune for the worthy old man, who laid the table none the less punctually because he loved Shakspeare and the Psalter, or carried in his head some simple rhymes of his own. It pleased Southey to show how much intellectual pleasure and moral

improvement connected with such pleasure are within reach of the humblest; thus a lesson was afforded to those who would have the March of Intellect beaten only to the tune of *Ca ira*. “Before I conclude” — so the Introduction draws to an end—“I must, in my own behalf, give notice to all whom it may concern that I, Robert Southey, Poet-laureate, being somewhat advanced in years, and having business enough of my own fully to occupy as much time as can be devoted to it, consistently with a due regard to health, do hereby decline perusing or inspecting any manuscript from any person whatsoever, and desire that no application on that score may be made to me from this time forth; this resolution, which for most just cause is taken and here notified, being, like the laws of the Medes and the Persians, not to be changed.”

It was some time after this public announcement that a hand, which may have trembled while yet it was very brave and resolute, dropped into the little post-office at Haworth, in Yorkshire, a packet for Robert Southey. His bold truthfulness, his masculine self-control, his strong heart, his domestic temper sweet and venerable, his purity of manners, a certain sweet austerity, attracted to him women of fine sensibility and genius who would fain escape from their own falterings and temerities under the authority of a faithful director. Already Maria del Occidente, “the most impassioned and most imaginative of all poetesses,” had poured into his ear the tale of her slighted love. Newly come from Paris, and full of enthusiasm for the Poles, she hastened to Keswick to see in person her sympathetic adviser; she proved, says Southey, a most interesting person of the mildest and gentlest manners. With him she left, on returning to America, her *Zophiel* in manuscript, the publication of which he superintended.

“*Zophiel*, Southey says, is by some Yankee woman”—Charles Lamb breaks forth—“as if there ever had been a woman capable of anything so great!” Now, in 1837, a woman of finer spirit, and capable of higher things than *Zophiel*, addressed a letter to Robert Southey, asking his judgment of her powers as disclosed in the poems which she forwarded. For some weeks Charlotte Brontë waited, until almost all hope of a reply was lost. At length the verdict came. Charlotte Brontë’s verse was assuredly written with her left hand; her passionate impulses, crossed and checked by fiery fiats of the will, would not mould themselves into little stanzas; the little stanzas must be correct, therefore they must reject such irregular heavings and swift repressions of the heart. Southey’s delay in replying had been caused by absence from home. A little personal knowledge of a poet in the decline of life might have tempered her enthusiasm; yet he is neither a disappointed nor a discontented man; she will never hear from him any chilling sermons on the text, All is vanity; the faculty of verse she possesses in no inconsiderable degree; but this, since the beginning of the century, has grown to be no rare possession; let her beware of making literature her profession, check day-dreams, and find her chief happiness in her womanly duties; then she may write poetry for its own sake, not in a spirit of emulation, not through a passion for celebrity; the less celebrity is aimed at, the more it is likely to be deserved. “Mr. Southey’s letter,” said Charlotte Brontë, many years later, “was kind and admirable, a little stringent, but it did me good.” She wrote again, striving to repress a palpitating joy and pride in the submission to her director’s counsel, and the sacrifice of her cherished hopes; telling him more of her daily life, of her obedience to the day’s duty, her efforts to be

sensible and sober: "I had not ventured," she says, "to hope for such a reply—so considerate in its tone, so noble in its spirit." Once more Southey wrote, hoping that she would let him see her at the Lakes: "You would then think of me afterwards with the more good-will, because you would perceive that there is neither severity nor moroseness in the state of mind to which years and observation have brought me. . . . And now, madam, God bless you. Farewell, and believe me to be your sincere friend, Robert Southey." It was during a visit to the Lakes that Charlotte Brontë told her biographer of these letters. But Southey lay at rest in Crosthwaite churchyard.

"My days among the dead are past"—Southey wrote, but it is evident that the living, and not those of his own household alone, claimed no inconsiderable portion of his time. Indeed, it would not be untrue to assert that few men have been more genuinely and consistently social, that few men ever yielded themselves more constantly to the pleasures of companionship. But the society he loved best was that of old and chosen friends, or if new friends, one at a time, and only one. Next to romping with my children, he said, I enjoy a *tête-à-tête* conversation with an *old* friend or a *new*. "With one I can talk of familiar subjects which we have discussed in former years, and with the other, if he have any brains, I open what to me is a new mine of thought." Miscellaneous company to a certain extent disordered and intoxicated him. He felt no temptation to say a great deal, but he would often say things strongly and emphatically, which were better left unsaid. "In my hearty hatred of assentation I commit faults of the opposite kind. Now I am sure to find this out myself, and to get out of humour with myself; what prudence I have is not ready on demand; and so it is that

the society of any except my friends, though it may be sweet in the mouth, is bitter in the belly." When Coleridge, in their arguments, allowed him a word, Southey made up in weight for what was wanting in measure; he saw one fact quickly, and darted at it like a greyhound. De Quincey has described his conversation as less flowing and expansive than that of Wordsworth—more apt to clothe itself in a keen, sparkling, aphoristic form; consequently sooner coming to an abrupt close; "the style of his mind naturally prompts him to adopt a trenchant, pungent, aculeated form of terse, glittering, stenographic sentences—sayings which have the air of laying down the law without any *locus penitentie* or privilege of appeal, but are not meant to do so." The same manner, tempered and chastened by years, can be recognized in the picture of Southey drawn by his friend Sir Henry Taylor:—

"The characteristics of his manner, as of his appearance, were lightness and strength, an easy and happy composure as the accustomed mood, and much mobility at the same time, so that he could be readily excited into any degree of animation in discourse, speaking, if the subject moved him much, with extraordinary fire and force, though always in light, laconic sentences. When so moved, the fingers of his right hand often rested against his mouth and quivered through nervous susceptibility. But excitable as he was in conversation, he was never angry or irritable; nor can there be any greater mistake concerning him than that into which some persons have fallen when they have inferred, from the fiery vehemence with which he could give utterance to moral anger in verse or prose, that he was personally ill-tempered or irascible. He was, in truth, a man whom it was hardly possible to quarrel with or offend personally, and face to face. . . . He was averse from argumentation, and would commonly quit a subject, when it was passing into that shape,

with a quiet and good-humoured indication of the view in which he rested. He talked most, and with most interest, about books and about public affairs; less, indeed hardly at all, about the characters and qualities of men in private life. In the society of strangers or of acquaintances, he seemed to take more interest in the subjects spoken of than in the persons present, his manner being that of natural courtesy and general benevolence without distinction of individuals. Had there been some tincture of social vanity in him, perhaps he would have been brought into closer relations with those whom he met in society; but though invariably kind and careful of their feelings, he was indifferent to the manner in which they regarded him, or (as the phrase is) to his *effect* in society; and they might, perhaps, be conscious that the kindness they received was what flowed naturally and inevitably to all, that they had nothing to give in return which was of value to him, and that no individual relations were established."

How deep and rich Southey's social nature was, his published correspondence, some four or five thousand printed pages, tells sufficiently. These letters, addressed, for the most part, to good old friends, are indeed genial, liberal of sympathy, and expecting sympathy in return; pleasantly egotistic, grave, playful, wise, pathetic, with a kind of stringent pathos showing through checks imposed by the wiser and stronger will. Southey did not squander abroad the treasures of his affection. To lavish upon casual acquaintance the outward and visible signs of friendship seemed to him a profaning of the mystery of manly love. "Your feelings," he writes to Coleridge, "go naked; I cover mine with a bear-skin; I will not say that you harden yours by your mode, but I am sure that mine are the warmer for their clothing." With strangers a certain neutral courtesy served to protect his inner self like the low leaves of his own holly-tree:

“Below, a circling fence, its leaves are seen
Wrinkled and keen;
No grazing cattle through their prickly round
Can reach to wound;”

but to those of whose goodness and love he was well assured, there were no protecting spines:

“Gentle at home amid my friends I'd be,
Like the high leaves upon the Holly-tree.”

“Old friends and old books,” he says, “are the best things that this world affords (I like old wine also), and in these I am richer than most men (the wine excepted).” In the group of Southey's friends, what first strikes one is, not that they are men of genius—although the group includes Wordsworth, and Scott, and Henry Taylor—but that they are good men. No one believed more thoroughly than Southey that goodness is a better thing than genius; yet he required in his associates some high excellence, extraordinary kindness of disposition or strength of moral character, if not extraordinary intellect. To knit his friends in a circle was his ardent desire; in the strength of his affections time and distance made no change. An old College friend, Lightfoot, to visit Southey, made the longest journey of his life; it was eight-and-twenty years since they had met. When their hands touched, Lightfoot trembled like an aspen-leaf. “I believe,” says Southey, “no men ever met more cordially after so long a separation, or enjoyed each other's society more. I shall never forget the manner in which he first met me, nor the tone in which he said ‘that, having now seen me, he should return home and die in peace.’” But of all friends he was most at ease with his dear Dapple, Grosvenor Bedford, who suited for every mood of mirth and

sorrow. When Mrs. Southey had fallen into her sad decay, and the once joyous house was melancholy and silent, Southey turned for comfort to Bedford. Still, some of their Rabelaisian humour remained, and all their warmth of brotherly affection. "My father," says Cuthbert Southey, "was never tired of talking into Mr. Bedford's trumpet." And in more joyous days, what noise and nonsense did they not make! "Oh! Grosvenor," exclaims Southey, "is it not a pity that two men who love nonsense so cordially and naturally and *bonâfide* as you and I, should be three hundred miles asunder? For my part, I insist upon it that there is no sense so good as your honest, genuine nonsense."

A goodly company of friends becomes familiar to us as we read Southey's correspondence:—Wynn, wherever he was, "always doing something else," yet able, in the midst of politics and business, to find time to serve an old school-fellow; Rickman, full of practical suggestions, and accurate knowledge and robust benevolence; John May, unflinching in kindness and fidelity; Lamb for play and pathos, and subtle criticism glancing amid the puns; William Taylor for culture and literary theory, and paradox and polysyllables; Landor for generous admiration, and kindred enthusiasms and kindred prejudices; Elmsley, and Lightfoot, and Danvers for love and happy memories; Senhora Barker, the Bhow Begum, for frank familiarities, and warm, womanly services; Caroline Bowles for rarer sympathy and sacred hopes and fears; Henry Taylor for spiritual sonship, as of a son who is also an equal; and Grosvenor Bedford for everything great and small, glad and sad, wise and foolish.

No literary rivalries or jealousies ever interrupted for a moment any friendship of Southey. Political and relig-

ous differences, which in strangers were causes of grave offence, seemed to melt away when the heretic or erring statist was a friend. But if success, fashion, flattery, tested a man, and proved him wanting, as seemed to be the case with Humphry Davy, his affection grew cold; and an habitual dereliction of social duty, such as that of Coleridge, could not but transform Southey's feeling of love to one of condemning sorrow. To his great contemporaries, Scott, Landor, Wordsworth, his admiration was freely given. "Scott," he writes, "is very ill. He suffers dreadfully, but bears his sufferings with admirable equanimity. . . . God grant that he may recover! He is a noble and generous-hearted creature, whose like we shall not look upon again." Of Wordsworth:—"A greater poet than Wordsworth there never has been, nor ever will be." "Two or three generations must pass before the public affect to admire such poets as Milton and Wordsworth. Of such men the world scarcely produces one in a millennium." With indignation crossed by a gleam of humour, he learnt that Ebenezer Elliott, his pupil in the art of verse, had stepped forward as the lyrical of radicalism; but the feeling could not be altogether anger with which he remembered that earnest face, once seen by him at a Sheffield inn, its pale grey eyes full of fire and meaning, its expression suiting well with Elliott's frankness of manner and simplicity of character. William Taylor was one of the liberals of liberal Norwich, and dangled abroad whatever happened to be the newest paradox in religion. But neither his radicalism, nor his Pyrrhonism, nor his paradoxes, could estrange Southey. The last time the oddly-assorted pair met was in Taylor's house; the student of German criticism had found some theological novelty, and wished to draw his guest into argument; Southey parried the

thrusts good-humouredly, and at last put an end to them with the words, "Taylor, come and see me at Keswick. We will ascend Skiddaw, where I shall have you nearer heaven, and we will then discuss such questions as these."

In the year 1823 one of his oldest friends made a public attack on Southey, and that friend the gentlest and sweetest-natured of them all. In a *Quarterly* article Southey had spoken of the *Essays of Elia* as a book which wanted only a sounder religious feeling to be as delightful as it was original. He had intended to alter the expression in the proof-sheet, but no proof-sheet was ever sent. Lamb, already pained by references to his writings in the *Quarterly*, some of which he erroneously ascribed to Southey, was deeply wounded. "He might have spared an old friend such a construction of a few careless flights that meant no harm to religion." A long expostulation addressed by Elia to Robert Southey, Esq., appeared in the *London Magazine* for October, only a portion of which is retained in the *Elia Essays* under the title of "The Tombs of the Abbey;" for though Lamb had playfully resented Coleridge's salutation, "my gentle-hearted Charles," his heart was indeed gentle, and could not endure the pain of its own wrath; among the memorials of the dead in Westminster he finds his right mind, his truer self, once more; he forgets the grave aspect with which Southey looked awful on his poor friend, and spends his indignation harmless as summer lightning over the heads of a Dean and Chapter. Southey, seeing the announcement of a letter addressed to him by Lamb, had expected a sheaf of friendly pleasantries; with surprise he learnt what pain his words had caused. He hastened to explain; had Lamb intimated his feelings in private, he would have tried, by a passage in the ensuing *Quarterly*, to efface the

impression unhappily created; he ended with a declaration of unchanged affection, and a proposal to call on Lamb. "On my part," Southey said, "there was not even a momentary feeling of anger;" he at once understood the love, the error, the soreness, and the repentance awaiting a being so composed of goodness as Elia. "Dear Southey"—runs the answer of Lamb—"the kindness of your note has melted away the mist that was upon me. I have been fighting against a shadow. . . . I wish both magazine and review were at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) will be still more so, for this folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since. My guardian angel was absent at the time. I will make up courage to see you, however, any day next week. We shall hope that you will bring Edith with you. That will be a second mortification; she will hate to see us; but come and heap embers; we deserve it, I for what I have done, and she for being my sister. Do come early in the day, by sunlight, that you may see my Milton. . . . Your penitent C. Lamb."

At Bristol, in 1808, Southey met for the first time the man of all others whom he most desired to see, the only man living, he says, "of whose praise I was ambitious, or whose censure would have humbled me." This was Walter Savage Landor. *Madoc*, on which Southey had built his hope of renown as a poet, had been published, and had been coldly received; *Kehama*, which had been begun, consequently now stood still. Their author could indeed, as he told Sir George Beaumont, be contented with posthumous fame, but it was impossible to be contented with posthumous bread and cheese. "St. Cecilia herself could not have played the organ if there had been nobody to blow the bellows for her." At this moment, when he

turned sadly and bravely from poetry to more profitable work, he first looked on Landor. "I never saw any one more unlike myself," he writes, "in every prominent part of human character, nor any one who so cordially and instinctively agreed with me on so many of the most important subjects. I have often said before we met, that I would walk forty miles to see him, and having seen him, I would gladly walk fourscore to see him again. He talked of *Thalaba*, and I told him of the series of mythological poems which I had planned, . . . and also told him for what reason they had been laid aside; in plain English, that I could not afford to write them. Landor's reply was, 'Go on with them, and I will pay for printing them, as many as you will write, and as many copies as you please.'" The princely offer stung Southey, as he says, to the very core; not that he thought of accepting that offer, but the generous words were themselves a deed, and claimed a return. He rose earlier each morning to carry on his *Kehama*, without abstracting time from better-paid task-work; it advanced, and duly as each section of this poem, and subsequently of his *Roderick*, came to be written, it was transcribed for the friend whose sympathy and admiration were a golden reward. To be praised by one's peers is indeed happiness. Landor, liberal of applause, was keen in suggestion and exact in censure. Both friends were men of ardent feelings, though one had tamed himself, while the other never could be tamed; both often gave their feelings a vehement utterance. On many matters they thought, in the main, alike—on the grand style in human conduct, on the principles of the poetic art, on Spanish affairs, on Catholicism. The secret of Landor's high-poised dignity in verse had been discovered by Southey; he, like Landor, aimed at a clas-

sical purity of diction; he, like Landor, loved, as a shaper of imaginative forms, to embody in an act, or an incident, the virtue of some eminent moment of human passion, and to give it fixity by sculptured phrase; only the repression of a fiery spirit is more apparent in Landor's monumental lines than in Southey's. With certain organic resemblances, and much community of sentiment, there were large differences between the two, so that when they were drawn together in sympathy, each felt as if he had annexed a new province. Landor rejoiced that the first persons who shared his turret at Llanthony were Southey and his wife; again, in 1817, the two friends were together for three days at Como, after Southey had endured his prime affliction—the death of his son:—

“Grief had swept over him; days darkened round;
 Bellagio, Valintelvi smiled in vain,
 And Monte Rosa from Helvetia far
 Advanced to meet us, wild in majesty
 Above the glittering crests of giant sons
 Station'd around . . . in vain too! all in vain.”

Two years later the warm-hearted friend writes from Pistoia, rejoicing in Southey's joy: “Thank God! Tears came into my eyes on seeing that you were blessed with a son.” To watch the happiness of children was Landor's highest delight; to share in such happiness was Southey's; and Arnold and Cuthbert formed a new bond between their fathers. In 1836, when Southey, in his sixty-third year, guided his son through the scenes of his boyhood, several delightful days were spent at Clifton with Landor. I never knew a man of brighter genius or of kinder heart, said Southey; and of Landor in earlier years:—“He does more than any of the gods of all my mythologies, for his

very words are thunder and lightning—such is the power and splendour with which they burst out.” Landor responded with a majestic enthusiasm about his friend, who seemed to him no less noble a man than admirable a writer :

“ No firmer breast than thine hath Heaven
 To poet, sage, or hero given :
 No heart more tender, none more just,
 To that He largely placed in trust :
 Therefore shalt thou, whatever date
 Of years be thine, with soul elate
 Rise up before the Eternal throne,
 And hear, in God’s own voice, ‘ Well done ! ’ ”

That “ Well done ” greeted Southey many years before Landor’s imperial head was laid low. In the last letter from his friend received by Southey—already the darkness was fast closing in—he writes, “ If any man living is ardent for your welfare, I am ; whose few and almost worthless merits your generous heart has always overvalued, and whose infinite and great faults it has been too ready to overlook. I will write to you often, now I learn that I may do it inoffensively ; well remembering that among the names you have exalted is Walter Landor.” Alas ! to reply was now beyond the power of Southey ; still, he held *Gebir* in his hands oftener than any other volume of poetry, and, while thought and feeling lived, fed upon its beauty. “ It is very seldom now,” Caroline Southey wrote at a later date, “ that he ever names any person : but this morning, before he left his bed, I heard him repeating softly to himself, *Landor, ay, Landor.*”

“ If it be not now, yet it will come : the readiness is all ”—this was ever present to Southey during the happy days of labour and rest in Greta Hall. While he was disposing

his books so as to make the comeliest show, and delighting in their goodly ranks; while he looked into the radiant faces of his children, and loved their innocent brightness, he yet knew that the day of detachment was approaching. There was nothing in such a thought which stirred Southey to a rebellious mood; had he not set his seal to the bond of life? How his heart rested in his home, only his own words can tell; even a journey to London seemed too long:—"Oh dear; oh dear! there is such a comfort in one's old coat and old shoes, one's own chair and own fire-side, one's own writing-desk and own library—with a little girl climbing up to my neck, and saying, 'Don't go to London, papa—you must stay with Edith;' and a little boy, whom I have taught to speak the language of cats, dogs, cuckoos, and jackasses, etc., before he can articulate a word of his own;—there is such a comfort in all these things, that *transportation* to London for four or five weeks seems a heavier punishment than any sins of mine deserve." Nor did his spirit of boyish merriment abate until overwhelming sorrow weighed him down:—"I am quite as noisy as I ever was," he writes to Lightfoot, "and should take as much delight as ever in showering stones through the hole of the staircase against your room door, and hearing with what hearty good earnest 'you fool' was vociferated in indignation against me in return. Oh, dear Lightfoot, what a blessing it is to have a boy's heart! it is as great a blessing in carrying one through this world, as to have a child's spirit will be in fitting us for the next." But Southey's light-heartedness was rounded by a circle of earnest acquiescence in the law of mortal life; a clear-obscure of faith as pure and calm and grave as the heavens of a midsummer night. At thirty he writes:—"No man was ever more contented with his lot than I am, for few

have ever had more enjoyments, and none had ever better or worthier hopes. Life, therefore, is sufficiently dear to me, and long life desirable, that I may accomplish all which I design. But yet I could be well content that the next century were over, and my part fairly at an end, having been gone well through. Just as at school one wished the school-days over, though we were happy enough there, because we expected more happiness and more liberty when we were to be our own masters, might lie as much later in the morning as we pleased, have no bounds and do no exercise—just so do I wish that my exercises were over.” At thirty-five:—“Almost the only wish I ever give utterance to is that the next hundred years were over. It is not that the uses of this world seem to me weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable—God knows far otherwise! No man can be better contented with his lot. My paths are paths of pleasantness. . . . Still, the instability of human happiness is ever before my eyes; I long for the certain and the permanent.” “My notions about life are much the same as they are about travelling—there is a good deal of amusement on the road, but, after all, one wants to be at rest.” At forty:—“My disposition is invincibly cheerful, and this alone would make me a cheerful man if I were not so from the tenor of my life; yet I doubt whether the strictest Carthusian has the thought of death more habitually in his mind.”

Such was Southey's constant temper: to some persons it may seem an unfortunate one; to some it may be practically unintelligible. But those who accept of the feast of life freely, who enter with a bounding foot its measures of beauty and of joy—glad to feel all the while the serviceable sackcloth next the skin—will recognize in Southey an instructed brother of the Renunciants' rule.

CHAPTER VI.

CHANGES AND EVENTS, 1803—1843.

IN October, 1805, Southey started with his friend Elmsley for a short tour in Scotland. On their way northward they stopped three days at Ashestiel. There, in a small house, rising amid its old-fashioned garden, with pastoral hills all around, and the Tweed winding at the meadow's end, lived Walter Scott. It was the year in which old Border song had waked up, with ampler echoings, in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and Scott was already famous. Earlier in the year he had visited Grasmere, and had stood upon the summit of Helvellyn, with Wordsworth and Davy by his side. The three October days, with their still, misty brightness, went by in full enjoyment. Southey had brought with him a manuscript containing sundry metrical romances of the fifteenth century, on which his host pored, as far as courtesy and the hours allowed, with much delight; and the guests saw Melrose, that old romance in stone so dear to Scott, went salmon-spearing on the Tweed, dined on a hare snapped up before their eyes by Percy and Douglas, and visited Yarrow. From Ashestiel they proceeded to Edinburgh. Southey looked coldly on the grey metropolis; its new city seemed a kind of Puritan Bath, which worshipped propriety instead of pleasure; but the old town, seen amid the slant light of a wild,

red sunset, impressed him much, its vast irregular outline of roofs and chimneys rising against tumultuous clouds like the dismantled fragments of a giant's palace. Southey was prepared to find himself and his friends of the Lakes persons of higher stature than the Scotch *litteratuli*. Before accepting an invitation to meet him at supper, Jeffrey politely forwarded the proof of an unpublished review of *Madoc*; if the poet preferred that his reviewer should not present himself, Mr. Jeffrey would deny himself the pleasure of Mr. Southey's acquaintance. Southey was not to be daunted, and, as he tells it himself, felt nothing but good-humour on beholding a bright-faced homunculus of five-foot-one, the centre of an attentive circle, eēnunciating with North-British eēlocution his doctrines on taste. The lively little gentleman, who thought to crush *The Excursion*—he could as easily crush Skiddaw, said Southey—received from the author of *Madoc* a courtesy *de haut en bas* intended to bring home to his consciousness the fact that he was—but five-foot-one. The bland lips of the gods who looked down on Auld Reekie that evening smiled at the magnanimity alike of poet and critic.

Two years later (1807), differences having arisen between the proprietors and the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, it was in contemplation to alter the management, and Longman wrote requesting Southey to review him two or three articles "in his best manner." Southey did not keep firkins of criticism of first and second brand, but he was not unwilling to receive ten guineas a sheet instead of seven pounds. When, however, six months later, Scott urged his friend to contribute, Judge Jeffrey still sat on the bench of the *Edinburgh Review*, hanging, drawing, and quartering luckless poets with undiminished vivacity. It

was of no use for Scott to assure Southey that the homunculus, notwithstanding his flippant attacks on *Madoc* and *Thalaba*, had the most sincere respect for their author and his talents. Setting all personal feelings aside, an irreconcilable difference, Southey declared, between Jeffrey and himself upon every great principle of taste, morality, and policy, occasioned a difficulty which could not be removed. Within less than twelve months Scott, alienated by the deepening Whiggery of the *Review*, and by more personal causes, had ceased to contribute, and opposite his name in the list of subscribers Constable had written, with indignant notes of exclamation, “*Stopt!!!*” John Murray, the young bookseller in Fleet Street, had been to Ashestiel; in “*dern privacie*” a bold complot was laid; why should the Edinburgh clique carry it before them? The spirit of England was still sound, and would respond to loyalty, patriotism, the good traditions of Church and State, the temper of gentlemen, courage, scholarship; Gifford, of the Anti-Jacobin, had surely a sturdier arm than Jeffrey; George Ellis would remember his swashing-blow; there were the Roses, and Matthias, and Heber; a rival *Review* should see the light, and that speedily; “a good plot, good friends, and full of expectation—an excellent plot, very good friends.”

Southey was invited to write on Spanish affairs for the first number of the *Quarterly* (February, 1809). His political opinions had undergone a considerable alteration since the days of Pantisocracy and *Joan of Arc*. The Reign of Terror had not caused a violent reaction against the doctrine of a Republic, nor did he soon cease to sympathize with France. But his hopes were dashed; it was plain that “the millennium would not come this bout.” Man as he is appeared more greedy, ignorant, and dangerous

than he had appeared before, though man as he may be was still a being composed of knowledge, virtue, and love. The ideal republic receded into the dimness of unborn time; no doubt—so Southey maintained to the end—a republic is the best form of government in itself, as a sundial is simpler and surer than a time-piece; but the sun of reason does not always shine, and therefore complicated systems of government, containing checks and counter-checks, are needful in old countries for the present; better systems are no doubt conceivable—for better men. “Mr. Southey’s mind,” wrote Hazlitt, “is essentially sanguine, even to overweeningness. It is prophetic of good; it cordially embraces it; it casts a longing, lingering look after it, even when it is gone for ever. He cannot bear to give up the thought of happiness, his confidence in his fellow-men, when all else despair. It is the very element ‘where he must live or have no life at all.’” This is true; we sacrifice too much to prudence—Southey said, when not far from sixty—and in fear of incurring the danger or the reproach of enthusiasm, too often we stifle the holiest impulses of the understanding and the heart. Still, at sixty he believed in a state of society actually to be realized as superior to English society in the nineteenth century, as that itself is superior to the condition of the tattooed Britons, or of the Northern Pirates from whom we have descended. But the error of supposing such a state of society too near, of fancying that there is a short road to it, seemed to him a pernicious error, seducing the young and generous into an alliance with whatever is flagitious and detestable.

It was not until the Peace of Amiens (1802) that Southey was restored in feeling to his own country. From that hour the new departure in his politics may be

said to date. The honour of England became as dear to him as to her most patriotic son; and in the man who had subjugated the Swiss Republic, and thrown into a dungeon the champion of Negro independence, and slaughtered his prisoners at Jaffa, he indignantly refused to recognize the representative of the generous principles of 1789. To him, as to Wordsworth, the very life of virtue in mankind seemed to dwell in the struggle against the military despotism which threatened to overwhelm the whole civilized world. Whatever went along with a spirited war-policy Southey could accept. It appeared to himself that his views and hopes had changed precisely because the heart and soul of his wishes had continued the same. To remove the obstacles which retard the improvement of mankind was the one object to which, first and last, he gave his most earnest vows. "This has been the pole-star of my course; the needle has shifted according to the movements of the state vessel wherein I am embarked, but the direction to which it points has always been the same. I did not fall into the error of those who, having been the friends of France when they imagined that the cause of liberty was implicated in her success, transferred their attachment from the Republic to the Military Tyranny in which it ended, and regarded with complacency the progress of oppression because France was the oppressor. 'They had turned their faces toward the East in the morning to worship the rising sun, and in the evening they were looking eastward, obstinately affirming that still the sun was there.' I, on the contrary, altered my position as the world went round."¹

Wordsworth has described in memorable words the sudden exaltation of the spirit of resistance to Napoleon,

¹ The words quoted by Southey are his own, written in 1809.

its change from the temper of fortitude to enthusiasm, animated by hope, when the Spanish people rose against their oppressors. "From that moment," he says, "this corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality." Southey had learned to love the people of the Peninsula; he had almost naturalized himself among them by his studies of Spanish and Portuguese history and literature. Now there was in him a new birth of passion at a period of life when ordinarily the crust of custom begins to encase our free spirits. All his moral ardour flowed in the same current with his political enthusiasm; in this war there was as direct a contest between the principles of evil and good as the elder Persians or the Manicheans imagined in their fables. "Since the stirring day of the French Revolution," he writes to John May, "I have never felt half so much excitement in political events as the present state of Spain has given me." Little as he liked to leave home, if the Spaniards would bury their crown and sceptre, he would gird up his loins and assist at the ceremony, devout as ever pilgrim at Compostella. A federal republic which should unite the Peninsula, and allow the internal governments to remain distinct, was what Southey ardently desired. When news came of the Convention of Cintra (1808), the poet, ordinarily so punctual a sleeper, lay awake all night; since the execution of the Brissotines no public event distressed him so deeply. "How gravely and earnestly used Samuel Taylor Coleridge"—so writes Coleridge's daughter—"and William Wordsworth and my uncle Southey also, to discuss the affairs of the nation, as if it all came home to their business and bosoms, as if it were their private concern! Men do not canvass these matters now-a-days, I think, quite in the same tone."

That faith in the ultimate triumph of good which sustains Southey's heroine against the persecution of the Almighty Rajah, sustained Southey himself during the long struggle with Napoleon. A military despotism youthful and full of vigour, he said, must beat down corrupt establishments and worn-out governments; but how can it beat down for ever a true love of liberty and a true spirit of patriotism? When at last tidings reached Keswick that the Allies were in Paris, Southey's feelings were such as he had never experienced before. "The curtain had fallen after a tragedy of five-and-twenty years." The hopes, and the ardours, and the errors, and the struggles of his early life crowded upon his mind; all things seemed to have worked together for good. He rejoiced that the whirlwind of revolution had cleared away the pestilence of the old governments; he rejoiced that right had conquered might. He did not wish to see the bad Bourbon race restored, except to complete Bonaparte's overthrow. And he feared lest an evil peace should be made. Paris taken, a commanding intellect might have cast Europe into whatever mould it pleased. "The first business," says Southey, with remarkable prevision, "should have been to have reduced France to what she was before Louis XIV.'s time; the second, to have created a great power in the North of Germany, with Prussia at its head; the third, to have consolidated Italy into one kingdom or commonwealth."

The politicians of the *Edinburgh Review* had predicted ruin for all who dared to oppose the Corsican; they ridiculed the romantic hopes of the English nation; the fate of Spain, they declared in 1810, was decided; it would be cruel, they said, to foment petty insurrections; France had conquered Europe. It was this policy of despair which roused Scott and Southey. "We shall hoist the bloody

flag," writes the latter, "down alongside that Scotch ship, and engage her yard-arm to yard-arm." But at first Southey, by his own request, was put upon other work than that of firing off the heavy *Quarterly* guns. Probably no man in England had read so many books of travel; these he could review better, he believed, than anything else; biography and history were also within his reach; with English poetry, from Spenser onwards, his acquaintance was wide and minute, but he took no pleasure in sitting in judgment on his contemporaries; his knowledge of the literary history of Spain and Portugal was a speciality, which, as often as the readers of the *Review* could bear with it, might be brought into use. Two things he could promise without fail—perfect sincerity in what he might write, without the slightest pretension of knowledge which he did not possess, and a punctuality not to be exceeded by Mr. Murray's opposite neighbour, the clock of St. Dunstan's.

Southey's essays—literary, biographical, historical, and miscellaneous—would probably now exist in a collected form, and constitute a storehouse of information—information often obtained with difficulty, and always conveyed in a lucid and happy style—were it not that he chose, on the eve of the Reform Bill, to earn whatever unpopularity he could by collecting his essays on political and social subjects. Affairs had hurried forward with eager strides; these *Quarterly* articles seemed already far behind, and might safely be left to take a quiet corner in Time's wallet among the alms for oblivion. Yet Southey's political articles had been effective in their day, and have still a value by no means wholly antiquarian. His home politics had been, in the main, determined by his convictions on the great European questions. There was a party of revolution in this country eager to break with the past,

ready to venture every experiment for a future of mere surmise. Southey believed that the moral sense of the English people, their regard for conduct, would do much to preserve them from lawless excess; still, the lesson read by recent history was that order once overthrown, anarchy follows, to be itself quelled by the lordship of the sword. Rights, however, were pleaded—shall we refuse to any man the rights of a man? “Therapeutics,” says Southey, “were in a miserable state as long as practitioners proceeded upon the gratuitous theory of elementary complexions; . . . natural philosophy was no better, being a mere farrago of romance, founded upon idle tales or fanciful conjectures, not upon observation and experiment. The science of politics is just now in the same stage; it has been erected by shallow sophists upon abstract rights and imaginary compacts, without the slightest reference to habits and history.” “Order and improvement” were the words inscribed on Southey’s banner. Order, that England might not fall, as France had fallen, into the hands of a military saviour of society; order, that she might be in a condition to wage her great feud on behalf of freedom with undivided energy. Order, therefore, first; not by repression alone—though there were a time and a place for repression also—but order with improvement as a portion of its very life and being. Southey was a poet and a moralist, and judged of the well-being of a people by other than material standards; the wealth of nations seemed to him something other and higher than can be ascertained by wages and prices, rent and revenue, exports and imports. “True it is,” he writes, “the ground is more highly cultivated, the crooked hedge-rows have been thrown down, the fields are in better shape and of handsomer dimensions, the plough makes longer furrows, there is more corn

and fewer weeds; but look at the noblest produce of the earth—look at the children of the soil, look at the seeds which are sown here for immortality!" "The system which produces the happiest moral effects will be found the most beneficial to the interest of the individual and the general weal; upon this basis the science of political economy will rest at last, when the ponderous volumes with which it has been overlaid shall have sunk by their own weight into the dead sea of oblivion." Looking about him, he asked, What do the English people chiefly need? More wealth? It may be so; but rather wisdom to use the wealth they have. More votes? Yes, hereafter; but first the light of knowledge, that men may see how to use a vote. Even the visible beauty and grace of life seemed to Southey a precious thing, the loss of which might be set over against some gain in pounds, shillings, and pence. The bleak walls and barrack-like windows of a manufactory, the long, unlovely row of operatives' dwellings, struck a chill into his heart. He contrasts the old cottages substantially built of native stone, mellowed by time, taken by nature to herself with a mother's fondness, the rose-bushes beside the door, the little patch of flower-garden—he contrasts these with the bald deformities in which the hands of a great mill are stalled.

Before all else, national education appeared to Southey to be the need of England. He saw a great population growing up with eager appetites, and consciousness of augmented power. Whence were moral thoughtfulness and self-restraint to come? Not, surely, from the triumph of liberal opinions; not from the power to read every incentive to vice and sedition; nor from Religious Tract Societies; nor from the portentous bibliolatry of the Evangelical party. But there is an education which at

once enlightens the understanding and trains the conscience and the will. And there is that great association for making men good—the Church of England. Connect the two—education and the Church; the progress of enlightenment, virtue, and piety, however gradual, will be sure. Subordinate to this primary measure of reform, national education, many other measures were advocated by Southey. He looked forward to a time when, the great struggle respecting property over—for this struggle he saw looming not far off—public opinion will no more tolerate the extreme of poverty in a large class of the people than it now tolerates slavery in Europe; when the aggregation of land in the hands of great owners must cease, when that community of lands, which Owen of Lanark would too soon anticipate, might actually be realized. But these things were, perhaps, far off. Meanwhile how to bring nearer the golden age? Southey's son has made out a long list of the measures urged upon the English people in the *Quarterly Review*, or elsewhere, by his father. Bearing in mind that the proposer of these measures resisted the Reform Bill, Free Trade, and Catholic Emancipation, any one curious in such things may determine with what political label he should be designated:—National education; the diffusion of cheap and good literature; a well-organized system of colonization, and especially of female emigration;¹ a wholesome training for the children of misery and vice in great cities; the establishment of Protestant sisters of charity, and a better order of hospital

¹ “With the Cape and New Holland I would proceed thus:—‘Govern yourselves, and we will protect you as long as you need protection; when that is no longer necessary, remember that though we be different countries, each independent, we are one people.’”—R. S. to W. S. Landor. Letters, vol. ii. p. 263.

nurses; the establishment of savings-banks in all small towns; the abolition of flogging in the army and navy, except in extreme cases; improvements in the poor-laws; alterations in the game-laws; alterations in the criminal laws, as inflicting the punishment of death in far too many cases; execution of criminals within prison walls; alterations in the factory system for the benefit of the operative, and especially as to the employment of children; national works—reproductive if possible—to be undertaken in times of peculiar distress; the necessity of doing away with interments in crowded cities; the system of giving allotments of ground to labourers; the employment of paupers in cultivating waste lands; the commutation of tithes; and last, the need for more clergymen, more colleges, more courts of law.

“Mr. Southey,” said Hazlitt, “missed his way in Utopia; he has found it at old Sarum.” To one of Southey’s temper old Sarum seemed good, with its ordered freedom, its serious aspiration, its habitual pieties, its reasonable service, its reverent history, its beauty of holiness, its close where priests who are husbands and fathers live out their calm, benignant lives—its amiable home for those whose toil is ended, and who now sleep well. But how Southey found his way from his early deism to Anglican orthodoxy cannot be precisely determined. Certainly not for many years could he have made that subscription to the Articles of the Church of England, which at the first barred his way to taking orders. The superstition, which seemed to be the chief spiritual food of Spain, had left Southey, for the rest of his life, a resolute opponent of Catholicism; and as he read lives of the Saints and histories of the Orders, the exclamation, “I do well to be angry,” was often on his lips. For the wisdom, learning,

and devotion of the Jesuits he had, however, a just respect. Geneva, with its grim logic and stark spirituality, suited nerves of a different temper from his. For a time Southey thought himself half a Quaker, but he desired more visible beauty and more historical charm than he could find in Quakerism. Needing a comely home for his spiritual affections, he found precisely what pleased him built in the pleasant Anglican close. With growing loyalty to the State, his loyalty to the Church could not but keep pace. He loved her tolerance, her culture; he fed upon her judicious and learned writers—Taylor, with his bright fancies like the little rings of the vine; South, hitting out straight from the shoulder at anarchy, fanaticism, and licentiousness, as Southey himself would have liked to hit; Jackson, whose weight of character made his pages precious as with golden bullion. After all, old Sarum had some advantages over Utopia.

The English Constitution consisting of Church and State, it seemed to Southey an absurdity in politics to give those persons power in the State whose duty it is to subvert the Church. Admit Catholics, he said, to every office of trust, emolument, or honour; only never admit them into Parliament. "The arguments about equal rights are fit only for a schoolboy's declamation; it may as well be said that the Jew has a right to be a bishop, or the Quaker an admiral, as that the Roman Catholic has a right to a seat in the British Legislature; his opinions disqualify him." To call this a question of toleration was impudence; Catholics were free to practise the rites of their religion; they had the full and free use of the press; perfect toleration was granted to the members of that church, which, wherever dominant, tolerates no other. Catholic Emancipation would not conciliate Ireland; the great

source of Irish misery had been, not England's power, but her weakness, and those violences to which weakness resorts in self-defence; old sores were not to be healed by the admission of Catholic demagogues into Parliament. The measure styled Emancipation would assuredly be followed by the downfall of the Protestant Establishment in Ireland, and by the spread of Catholicism in English society. To Pyrrhonists one form of faith might seem as good or as bad as the other; but the great mass of the English people had not advanced so far in the march of intellect as to perceive no important difference between Catholic and Protestant doctrine, or between Catholic and Protestant morality. By every possible means, better the condition of the Irish peasantry; give them employment in public works; facilitate, for those who desire it, the means of emigration; extend the poor-laws to Ireland, and lay that impost on absentees in such a proportion as may compensate, in some degree, for their non-residence; educate the people; execute justice and maintain peace, and the cry of Catholic Emancipation may be safely disregarded.

So Southey pleaded in the *Quarterly Review*. With reference to Emancipation and to the Reform Bill, he and Wordsworth—who, perhaps, had not kept themselves sufficiently in relation with living men and the public sentiment of the day—were in their solitude gifted with a measure of the prophetic spirit, which in some degree explains their alarms. For the prophet who knows little of expediency and nothing of the manipulation of parties, nothing of the tangled skein of contending interests, sees the future in its moral causes, and he sees it in a vision. But he cannot date the appearances in his vision. Battle, and garments rolled in blood, and trouble, and dimness of an-

guish pass before him, and he proclaims what it is given him to see. It matters not a little, however, in the actual event, whether the battle be on the morrow or half a century hence; and the prophet furnishes us with no chronology, or at best with some vague time and times and half a time. New forces have arisen before the terrors of his prediction come to pass, and therefore, when they come to pass, their effect is often altogether different from that anticipated. Wordsworth and Southey were right in declaring that a vast and formidable change was taking place in the England of their day: many things which they, amid incredulous scoffs, announced, have become actual; others remain to be fulfilled. But the events have taken up their place in an order of things foreign to the conceptions of the prophets; the fire from heaven descends, but meanwhile we, ingenious sons of men, have set up a lightning-conductor.

Southey and the *Quarterly Review* were often spoken of as a single entity. But the *Review*, in truth, never precisely represented his feelings and convictions. With Gifford he had no literary sympathies. Gifford's heart was full of kindness, says Southey, for all living creatures except authors; *them* he regarded as Isaac Walton did the worm. Against the indulgence of that temper Southey always protested; yet he was chosen to bear the reproach of having tortured Keats, and of having anonymously glorified himself at the expense of Shelley. Gifford's omissions, additions, substitutions, often caused Southey's article in the *Review* to be very unlike the article which he had despatched to the editor in manuscript. Probably these changes were often made on warrantable grounds. Southey's confidence in his own opinions, which always seemed to him to be based upon moral principles, was

high; and he was not in the habit of diluting his ink. Phrases which sounded well in the library of Greta Hall had quite another sound in Mr. Murray's office in Fleet Street.

On arriving in London for a short visit in the autumn of 1813, Southey learnt that the Prince Regent wished to confer on him the Laureateship, vacant by the death of Pye. Without consulting the Regent, Lord Liverpool had previously directed that the office should be offered to Walter Scott. On the moment came a letter from Scott informing Southey that he had declined the appointment, not from any foolish prejudice against holding it, but because he was already provided for, and would not engross emoluments which ought to be awarded to a man of letters who had no other views in life. Southey hesitated, having ceased for several years to produce occasional verses; but his friend Croker assured him that he would not be compelled to write odes as boys write exercises at stated times on stated subjects; that it would suffice if he wrote on great public events, or did not write, as the spirit moved him; and thus his scruples were overcome. In a little, low, dark room in the purlieus of St. James'—a solitary clerk being witness—the oath was duly administered by a fat old gentleman-usher in full buckle, Robert Southey swearing to be a faithful servant to the King, to reveal all treasons which might come to his knowledge, and to obey the Lord Chamberlain in all matters of the King's service. It was Scott's belief that his generosity had provided for his poorer brother bard an income of three or four hundred pounds a year. In reality the emolument was smaller and the task-work more irksome than had been supposed. The tierce of Canary, swilled by Ben Jonson and his poetic sons, had been wickedly commuted for a small sum;

the whole net income amounted to 90*l.* But this, "the very least of Providence's mercies," as a poor clergyman said when pronouncing grace over a herring, secured an important happiness for Southey: he did not employ it, as Byron puts it, to butter his bread on both sides; he added twelve pounds to it, and vested it forthwith in an insurance upon his own life. "I have never felt any painful anxiety about providing for my family, . . ." he writes to Scott; "but it is with the deepest feeling of thanksgiving that I have secured this legacy for my wife and children, and it is to you that I am primarily and chiefly indebted."

Croker's assurance was too hastily given. The birthday Ode, indeed, fell into abeyance during the long malady of George III.; but the New-Year's Ode had still to be provided. Southey was fortunate in 1814; events worthy of celebration had taken place; a dithyramb, or rather an oration in lines of irregular length, was accordingly produced, and was forwarded to his musical yoke-fellow, Sir William Parsons. But the sight of Southey's page, over which the longs and shorts meandered seemingly at their own sweet will, shocked the orderly mind of the chief musician. What kind of ear could Mr. Southey have? His predecessor, the lamented Mr. Pye, had written his Odes always in regular stanzas. What kind of action was this exhibited by the unbroken State Pegasus? Duly as each New Year approached, Southey set himself to what he called his *odeous* job; it was the price he paid for the future comfort of his children. While his political assailants pictured the author of *Joan of Arc* as a court-lacquey following in the train of the fat Adonis, he, with grim cheerfulness, was earning a provision for his girls; and had it not been a duty to kiss hands on the appointment, His

Royal Highness the Prince Regent would never have seen his poet. Gradually the New-Year's Ode ceased to be looked for, and Southey was emancipated. His verse-making as laureate occasionally rose into something higher than journeyman work; when public events stirred his heart to joy, or grief, or indignation, he wrote many admirable periods of measured rhetoric. *The Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte* is of a higher strain; a knell, heavy yet clear-toned, is tolled by its finely wrought octosyllabics.

A few months after the battle of Waterloo, which had so deeply moved Southey, he started with his wife, a rare voyager from Keswick, and his little daughter Edith May, on a pilgrimage to the scene of victory. The aunts remained to take care of Bertha, Kate, and Isabel, with the nine-years-old darling of all, the only boy, Herbert. With Bruges, "like a city of Elizabeth's age—you expect to see a head with a ruff looking from the window," Southey was beyond measure delighted. At Ghent he ransacked bookshops, and was pleased to see in the Beguinage the realization of his own and Rickman's ideas on Sisterhoods. On a clear September day the travellers visited the battlefield; the autumnal sunshine with soft airs, and now and again a falling leaf, while the bees were busy with the year's last flowers, suited well with the poet's mood of thankfulness, tempered by solemn thought. When, early in December, they returned with a lading of toys to their beloved lake-country, little Edith had hardly recovered from an illness which had attacked her at Aix. It was seven o'clock in the evening by the time they reached Rydal, and to press forward and arrive while the children were asleep would be to defraud everyone of the first reward earned by so long absence. "A return home under fortunate circumstances has

something of the character of a triumph, and requires daylight." The glorious presence of Skiddaw, and Derwent bright under the winter sky, asked also for a greeting at noon rather than at night. A depth of grave and tender thankfulness lay below Southey's joy that morning; it was twelve years since he had pitched his tent here beside the Greta; twelve years had made him feel the touch of time; but what blessings they had brought! all his heart's desire was here—books, children, leisure, and a peace that passeth understanding. The instant hour, however, was not for meditation but for triumph:—

“ O joyful hour, when to our longing home
The long-expected wheels at length drew nigh!
When the first sound went forth, ‘they come! they come!
And hope’s impatience quicken’d every eye!
‘Never had man whom Heaven would heap with bliss
More glad return, more happy hour than this.’

“ Aloft on yonder bench, with arms dispread,
My boy stood, shouting there his father’s name,
Waving his hat around his happy head;
And there a younger group his sisters came:
Smiling they stood with looks of pleased surprise
While tears of joy were seen in elder eyes.

“ Soon all and each came crowding round to share.
The cordial greeting, the beloved sight;
What welcomings of hand and lip were there!
And when those overflowings of delight
Subsided to a sense of quiet bliss,
Life hath no purer, deeper happiness.

“ The young companion of our weary way
Found here the end desired of all her ills;
She who in sickness pining many a day
Hunger’d and thirsted for her native hills.

Forgetful now of suffering past and pain,
Rejoiced to see her own dear home again.

“Recovered now the homesick mountaineer
Sate by the playmate of her infancy,
The twin-like comrade,¹—render'd doubly dear
For that long absence; full of life was she
With voluble discourse and eager mien
Telling of all the wonders she had seen.

“Here silently between her parents stood
My dark-eyed Bertha, timid as a dove;
And gently oft from time to time she woo'd
Pressure of hand, or word, or look of love,
With impulse shy of bashful tenderness,
Soliciting again the wished caress.

“The younger twain in wonder lost were they,
My gentle Kate and my sweet Isabel:
Long of our promised coming, day by day,
It had been their delight to hear and tell;
And now when that long-promised hour was come,
Surprise and wakening memory held them dumb.

* * * * *

“Soon they grew blithe as they were wont to be;
Her old endearments each began to seek;
And Isabel drew near to climb my knee,
And pat with fondling hand her father's cheek;
With voice and touch and look reviving thus
The feelings which had slept in long disuse.

“But there stood one whose heart could entertain
And comprehend the fulness of the joy;
The father, teacher, playmate, was again
Come to his only and his studious boy;

¹ Sara Coleridge.

And he beheld again that mother's eye
Which with such ceaseless care had watched his infancy.

“Bring forth the treasures now—a proud display—
For rich as Eastern merchants we return!
Behold the black Beguine, the Sister grey,
The Friars whose heads with sober motion turn,
The Ark well filled with all its numerous hives,
Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japhet, and their wives.

“The tumbler loose of limb; the wrestlers twain;
And many a toy beside of quaint device,
Which, when his fleecy flocks no more can gain
Their pasture on the mountains hoar with ice,
The German shepherd carves with curious knife,
Earning in easy toil the food of frugal life.

“It was a group which Richter, had he viewed,
Might have deemed worthy of his perfect skill;
The keen impatience of the younger brood,
Their eager eyes and fingers never still;
The hope, the wonder, and the restless joy
Of those glad girls and that vociferous boy.

“The aged friend¹ serene with quiet smile,
Who in their pleasure finds her own delight;
The mother's heart-felt happiness the while;
The aunt's rejoicing in the joyful sight;
And he who in his gaiety of heart,
With glib and noisy tongue performed the showman's part.”

It was manifest to a thoughtful observer, says De Quincy, that Southey's golden equanimity was bound up in a trinity of chords, a threefold chain—in a conscience clear of offence, in the recurring enjoyments from his honourable industry, and in the gratification of his parental affec-

¹ Mrs. Wilson—then aged seventy-two.

tions. In the light of Herbert's smiles his father almost lived; the very pulses of his heart played in unison with the sound of his son's laughter. "There was," De Quincey goes on, "in his manner towards this child, and towards this only, something that marked an excess of delirious doating, perfectly unlike the ordinary chastened movement of Southey's affections; and something also which indicated a vague fear about him; a premature unhappiness, as if already the inaudible tread of calamity could be divined, as if already he had lost him." As a baby, while Edith was only "like an old book, ugly and good," Herbert, in spite of his Tartar eyes, a characteristic of Southey babyhood, was already beautiful. At six he was more gentle and more loving, says Southey, than you can almost conceive. "He has just learnt his Greek alphabet, and is so desirous of learning, so attentive and so quick of apprehension, that, if it please God he should live, there is little doubt but that something will come out of him." In April, 1809, Southey writes to Landor, twenty-four hours after an attack of croup which seized his boy had been subdued: "Even now I am far, very far, from being at ease. There is a love which passeth the love of women, and which is more lightly alarmed than the lightest jealousy. Landor, I am not a Stoic at home; I feel as you do about the fall of an old tree! but, O Christ! what a pang it is to look upon the young shoot and think it will be cut down! And this is the thought which almost at all times haunts me; it comes upon me in moments when I know not whether the tears that start are of love or of bitterness."

The alarm of 1809 passed away, and Herbert grew to the age of nine, active and bright of spirit, yet too pale, and, like his father, hanging too constantly over his books;

a finely organized being, delicate in his sensibilities, and prematurely accomplished. Before the snow had melted which shone on Skiddaw that day when the children welcomed home their parents, Herbert Southey lay in his grave. His disease was an affection of the heart, and for weeks his father, palsied by apprehension, and unable to put hand to his regular work, stood by the bedside, with composed countenance, with words of hope, and agonized heart. Each day of trial made his boy more dear. With a trembling pride Southey saw the sufferer's behaviour, beautiful in this illness as in all his life; nothing could be more calm, more patient, more collected, more dutiful, more admirable. At last, worn with watching, Southey and his wife were prevailed upon to lie down. The good Mary Barker watched, and it is she who writes the following lines:—“Herbert!—that sweetest and most perfect of all children on this earth, who died in my arms at nine years of age, whose death I announced to his father and mother in their bed, where I had prayed and persuaded them to go. When Southey could speak, his first words were, ‘*The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord!*’ Never can I forget that moment” (1816).

“I am perfectly resigned,” Southey wrote to Bedford on the most mournful of all days, “and do not give way to grief. Thank God I can control myself for the sake of others.” But next morning found him weak as a child, even weaker in body than in mind, for long anxiety had worn him to the bone, and while he tried to calm and console the rest, his limbs trembled under him. His first wild wish to fly from Keswick passed away; it was good to be there near the boy's grave. Weak as he was, he flung himself upon his work. “I employ myself incessantly,

taking, however, every day as much exercise as I can bear without injurious fatigue, which is not much." "It would surprise you were you to see what I get through in a day." "For the first week I did as much every day as would at other times have seemed the full and overflowing produce of three." From his early discipline in the stoical philosophy some help now was gained; from his active and elastic mind the gain was more; but these would have been insufficient to support him without a heart-felt and ever-present faith that what he had lost was not lost for ever. A great change had indeed come upon him. He set his house in order, and made arrangements as if his own death were at hand. He resolved not to be unhappy, but the joyousness of his disposition had received its death-wound; he felt as if he had passed at once from boyhood to the decline of life. He tried dutifully to make head against his depression, but at times with poor success. "I employ myself, and have recovered strength, but in point of spirits I rather lose ground." Still, there are hidden springs of comfort. "The head and flower of my earthly happiness is cut off. But I am *not* unhappy." "When I give way to tears, which is only in darkness or solitude, they are not tears of unmingled pain." All beloved ones grew more precious; the noble fortitude of his wife made her more than ever a portion of his best self. His uncle's boy; Edward, he could not love more than he had loved him before; but, "as far as possible, he will be to me hereafter," writes Southey, "in the place of my son." And in truth the blessing of Herbert's boyhood remained with him still; a most happy, a most beautiful boyhood it had been; he was thankful for having possessed the child so long; "for worlds I would not but have been his father." "I have abundant blessings left; for each and all of these I

am truly thankful; but of all the blessings which God has given me, this child, who is removed, is the one I *still* prize the most." To relieve feelings which he dared not utter with his lips, he thought of setting about a monument in verse for Herbert and himself, which might make one inseparable memory for father and son. A page or two of fragmentary thoughts in verse and prose for this poetic monument exists, but Southey could not keep his imagination enough above his heart to dare to go on with it; to do so would have dissolved his heart anew. One or two of these holy scriptures of woe, truly red drops of Southey's life-blood, will tell enough of this love passing the love of women.

"Thy life was a day; and sum it well, life is but a week of such days—with how much storm and cold and darkness! Thine was a sweet spring day—a vernal Sabbath, all sunshine, hope, and promise."

"And that name
In sacred silence buried, which was still
At morn and eve the never-wearying theme
Of dear discourse."

"Playful thoughts
Turned now to gall and esil."

"No more great attempts, only a few autumnal flowers like second primroses, etc."

"They who look for me in our Father's kingdom
Will look for him also; inseparably
Shall we be remembered."

"Come, then,
Pain and Infirmity—appointed guests,
My heart is ready."

From the day of his son's death Southey began to step down from the heights of life, with a steadfast foot, and head still held erect. He recovered cheerfulness, but it was as one who has undergone an amputation seeks the sunshine. Herbert's grave anchored him in Keswick. An offer of 2000*l.* a year for a daily article in the *Times* did not tempt him to London. His home, his books, his literary work, Skiddaw, Derwentwater, and Crosthwaite churchyard were too dear. Three years later came the unlooked-for birth of a second boy; and Cuthbert was loved by his father; but the love was chastened and controlled of autumnal beauty and seriousness.

When the war with France had ended, depression of trade was acutely felt in England; party spirit ran high, and popular passions were dangerously roused. In the spring of 1817, the Laureate saw to his astonishment a poem entitled *Wat Tyler*, by Robert Southey, advertised as just published. He had written this lively dramatic sketch in the full fervour of Republicanism twenty-three years previously; the manuscript had passed into other hands, and he had long ceased to think of it. The skulking rogue and the knavish publisher who now gave it to the world had chosen their time judiciously; this rebuke to the apostate of the *Quarterly* would be a sweet morsel for gossip-mongers to roll under the tongue, an infallible pill to purge melancholy with all true children of progress. No fewer than sixty thousand copies, it is said, were sold. *Wat Tyler* suited well with Southey's nonage; it has a bright rhetorical fierceness of humanity. The speech-making radical blacksmith, "still toiling, yet still poor," his insulted daughter, her virtuous lover, the communist priest John Ball, whose amiable theology might be that of Mr. Belsham in his later days, stand over against the tyrant

king, his Archbishopal absolver from oaths, the haughty nobles, and the servile minions of the law. There was nothing in the poem that could be remembered with shame, unless it is shameful to be generous and inexperienced at the age of twenty. But England in 1817 seemed charged with combustibles, and even so small a spark as this was not to be blown about without a care. The Prince Regent had been fired at; there were committals for treason; there were riots in Somersetshire; the swarm of Manchester Blanketeers announced a march to London; the Habeas Corpus was suspended; before the year was out, Brandreth and his fellows had been executed at Derby. Southey applied to the Court of Chancery for an injunction to restrain the publication of his poem. It was refused by Lord Eldon, on the ground that the publication being one calculated to do injury to society, the author could not reclaim his property in it. There the matter might have dropped; but it seemed good to Mr. William Smith, representing liberal Norwich, where Southey had many friends, to take his seat in the House of Commons one evening with the *Quarterly Review* in one pocket and *Wat Tyler* in the other, and to read aloud contrasted extracts showing how the malignant renegade could play the parts, as it suited him, of a seditious firebrand and a servile courtier. Wynn on the spot administered a well-deserved rebuke; Wilberforce wrote to Southey that, had he been present, his voice would also have been heard. Coleridge vindicated him in the *Courier*. Seldom, indeed, was Southey drawn into controversy. When pelted with abuse, he walked on with uplifted head, and did not turn round; it seemed to him that he was of a stature to invite bespattering. His self-confidence was high and calm; that he possessed no common abilities, was certain: and

the amount of toil which went into his books gave him a continual assurance of their worth which nothing could gainsay; he had no time for moods of dejection and self-distrust. But if Southey struck, he struck with force, and tried to leave his mark on his antagonist. To repel this attack made in the House of Commons, was a duty. *A Letter to William Smith, Esq., M.P.*, was written, as Wordsworth wished, with the strength of masculine indignation; blow after blow is planted with sure effect; no word is wasted; there is skill in the hard hitting; and the antagonist fairly overthrown, Southey, with one glance of scorn, turns on his heel, and moves lightly away. "I wish you joy," wrote Walter Scott, "of your triumphant answer. . . . Enough of this gentleman, who I think will not walk out of the round again to slander the conduct of individuals." The concluding sentences of the Letter give in brief Southey's fearless review of his unstained career.

"How far the writings of Mr. Southey may be found to deserve a favourable acceptance from after-ages, time will decide; but a name which, whether worthily or not, has been conspicuous in the literary history of its age, will certainly not perish. . . . It will be related that he lived in the bosom of his family, in absolute retirement; that in all his writings there breathed the same abhorrence of oppression and immorality, the same spirit of devotion, and the same ardent wishes for the melioration of mankind; and that the only charge which malice could bring against him was, that as he grew older, his opinions altered concerning the means by which that melioration was to be effected, and that as he learnt to understand the institutions of his country, he learnt to appreciate them rightly, to love, and to revere, and to defend them. It will be said of him that in an age of personality he abstained from satire; and that during the course of his literary life, often as he was assailed, the only occasion on which

he ever condescended to reply was when a certain Mr. William Smith insulted him in Parliament with the appellation of renegade. On that occasion, it will be said, he vindicated himself, as it became him to do, and treated his calumniator with just and memorable severity. Whether it shall be added that Mr. William Smith redeemed his own character by coming forward with honest manliness, and acknowledging but is not of the slightest importance to me."

One other personal strife is worthy of notice. When visiting London in 1813, he made the acquaintance of Byron. "Is Southey magnanimous?" Byron asked Rogers, remembering how he had tried his wit in early days on *Thalaba* and *Madoc*. Rogers could answer for Southey's magnanimity, and the two poets met, Southey finding in Byron very much more to like than he had expected, and Byron being greatly struck by Southey's "epic appearance." "To have that poet's head and shoulders," he said, "I would almost have written his Sapphics." And in his diary he wrote:—"Southey's talents are of the first order. His prose is perfect. . . . He has probably written too much of poetry for the present generation; posterity will probably select; but he has passages equal to anything." At a later date Byron thought Southey's *Roderick* "the first poem of the time." But when about to publish *Don Juan*, a work "too free for these very modest days," what better mode of saucily meeting public opinion, and getting a first laugh on his side, than to dedicate such a poem to a virtuous Laureate, and show that he and his fellows, who had uttered nothing base, were yet political turncoats, not entitled by any superfine morality to assume airs of indignation against him and his reprobate hero? The dedication was shown about and laughed over,

though not yet printed. Southey heard of these things, and felt released from that restraint of good feeling which made him deal tenderly in his writings with every one to whom he had once given his hand. An attack upon himself would not alone have roused Southey; no man received abuse with more self-possession. Political antagonism would still have left him able to meet a fellow-poet on the common ground of literature. When distress fastened upon Leigh Hunt, whose *Examiner* and *Liberal* had never spared the Laureate, Mr. Forster did not hesitate to apply to Southey for assistance, which was declined solely because the circular put forward Leigh Hunt's political services as those chiefly entitling him to relief. "Those who are acquainted with me," Southey wrote, "know that I am neither resentful nor intolerant;" and after expressing admiration of Leigh Hunt's powers, the letter goes on to suggest that his friends should draw up a circular in which, without compromising any of his opinions, the appeal might be made solely upon the score of literary merit, "placing him thus, as it were, within the sacred territory which ought always to be considered and respected as neutral ground." Wise and admirable words! But there was one offence which was to Southey the unforgivable sin against the holy spirit of a nation's literature. To entice poetry from the altar, and to degrade her for the pleasure of wanton imaginations, seemed to Southey, feeling as he did the sanctity of the love of husband and wife, of father and child, to be treason against humanity. Southey was, indeed, tolerant of a certain Rabelaisian freedom in playing with some of the enclosed incidents of our life. "All the greatest of poets," he says, "have had a spice of Pantagruelism in their composition, which I verily believe was essential to their greatness." But to take an extrava-

gant fling in costume of a *sans-culotte*, and to play the part of "pander-general to the youth of Great Britain," were different things. In his preface to *A Vision of Judgment*, Southey deplored the recent fall in the ethical spirit of English literature, "which for half a century had been distinguished for its moral purity," and much of the guilt he laid on the leaders of "the Satanic School." In the long-run the interests of art, as of all high endeavour, are invariably proved to be one with the interest of a nation's morality. It had taken many lives of men to lift literature out of the beast. From prudential virtue and the lighter ethics of Addison it had risen to the grave moral dignity of Johnson, and from that to the impassioned spirituality of Wordsworth. Should all this be abandoned, and should literature now be permitted to reel back into the brute? We know that the title "Satanic School" struck home, that Byron was moved, and replied with brilliant play of wit in his *Vision of Judgment*. The laughers went over to Byron's side. One who would be witty has certain advantages, if content to disregard honesty and good manners. To be witty was not Southey's concern. "I saw," he said, many years after, "that Byron was a man of quick impulses, strong passions, and great powers. I saw him abuse these powers; and, looking at the effect of his writings on the public mind, it was my duty to denounce such of them as aimed at the injury of morals and religion. This was all." If continental critics find in what he set down a characteristic example of the bourgeois morality of England, we note with interest their point of view.¹

¹ To certain false allegations of fact made by Byron, Southey replied in *The Courier*, and reprinted his letters in *Essays, Moral and Political*, vol. ii. pp. 183-205.

“Bertha, Kate, and Isabel,” wrote Southey on June 26, 1820, “you have been very good girls, and have written me very nice letters, with which I was much pleased. This is the last letter which I can write in return; and as I happen to have a quiet hour to myself here at Streatham, on Monday noon, I will employ that hour in relating to you the whole history and manner of my being ell-ell-deed at Oxford by the Vice-Chancellor.” Public distinctions of this kind he rated, perhaps, below their true value. To stand well with Murray and Longman was more to him than any handle to his name. A similar honour from Cambridge he declined. His gold medal from the Royal Society of Literature he changed for a silver coffee-pot for Mrs. Southey. To “be be-doctored and called everything that ends in *issimus*,” was neither any harm nor much good; but to take his seat between such doctors as the Duke of Wellington, and—perhaps—Sir Walter Scott was a temptation. When his old school-fellow Phillimore presented Southey, the theatre rang with applause. Yet the day was, indeed, one of the heaviest in his life. Never had he stopped for a night in Oxford since he left it in 1794, intending to bid farewell to Europe for an Utopia in some back settlement of America. Not one who really loved him—for Scott could not appear—was present. When in the morning he went to look at Balliol, no one remembered him except old Adams, who had attempted to dress his hair as a freshman, and old Mrs. Adams, the laundress, both now infirm. From the tumultuous theatre Southey strolled into Christ Church walks alone. What changes time had made! Many of the friends with whom he had sauntered there were in their graves. So brooding, he chewed the bitter-sweet of remembrance, until at length a serious gratitude prevailed. “Little girls,” the letter

ends, "you know it might be proper for me now to wear a large wig, and to be called Doctor Southey, and to become very severe, and leave off being a conical papa. And if you should find that ell-ell-deeing has made this difference in me, you will not be surprised. However, I shall not come down in my wig, neither shall I wear my robes at home."

While in Holland, in the summer of 1826, a more conspicuous honour was unexpectedly thrust upon Southey. The previous year he had gone abroad with Henry Taylor, and at Douay was bitten on the foot by Satan, according to his conjecture, sitting squat at his great toe; at Leyden he was obliged to rest his inflamed foot, and there it was his good fortune to be received into the house of the poet Bilderdijk, a delightful old erudite and enthusiast, whose charming wife was the translator of *Roderick*. In 1826 he visited his kind friends once more, and at Brussels received the surprising intelligence that during his absence he had been elected a member of Parliament. Lord Radnor, an entire stranger, had read with admiration Southey's confession of faith concerning Church and State, in the last paragraph of his *Book of the Church*. By his influence the poet had been elected for the borough of Downton: the return, however, was null, for Southey held a pension during pleasure; and even if this were resigned, where was the property qualification? This latter objection was met by Sir Robert Inglis, who desired to know whether Southey would sit in Parliament if an estate of 300*l.* a year were purchased for him. An estate of 300*l.* a year would be a very agreeable thing to Robert Lackland; but he had no mind to enter on a new public sphere for which he was ill qualified by his previous life, to risk the loss of health by midnight debates, to abandon the

education of his little boy, and to separate himself more or less from his wife and daughters. He could not be wrong, he believed, in the quiet confidence which assured him that he was in his proper place.

Now more than ever before, Edith Southey needed her husband's sustaining love. On the day of his return to Keswick, while amused to find himself the object of mob popularity, he learnt that one of his daughters was ailing; the illness, however, already seemed to have passed the worst. This appearance of amendment quickly proved deceptive; and, on a Sunday evening in mid July, Isabel, "the most radiant creature that I ever beheld or shall behold," passed away, while her father was on his knees in the room below, praying that she might be released from suffering either by recovery or by death. All that had been gone through ten years before, renewed itself with dread exactness. Now, as then, the first day was one of stunned insensibility; now, as then, the next morning found him weak as a child, and striving in his weakness to comfort those who needed his support; now, as then, he turned to Grosvenor Bedford for a heart on which he might lay his own heart prone, letting his sorrow have its way. "Nothing that has assailed my character, or affected my worldly fortune, ever gave me an hour's vexation, or deprived me of an hour's rest. My happiness has been in my family, and there only was I vulnerable; that family is now divided between earth and heaven, and I must pray to remain with those who are left, so long as I can contribute to their welfare and comfort, rather than be gathered (as otherwise I would fain be) to those who are gone." On that day of which the word *Τετέλεσται* is the record, the day on which the body of his bright Isabel was committed to earth, Southey wrote a letter to his three

living daughters, copied with his own hand for each. It said what he could not bear to say of consolation and admonishment by word of mouth; it prepared them for the inevitable partings to come; it urged on them with measureless tenderness the duty of self-watchfulness, of guarding against little faults, of bearing and forbearing; it told them of his own grief to think that he should ever by a harsh or hasty word have given their dead sister even a momentary sorrow which might have been spared; it ended with the blessing of their afflicted father.

Sorrows of this kind, as Southey has truly said, come the heavier when they are repeated; under such strokes a courageous heart may turn coward. On Mrs. Southey a weight as of years had been laid; her spirits sank, her firmness gave way, a breath of danger shook her. Southey's way of bearing himself towards the dead is that saddest way—their names were never uttered; each one of the household had, as it were, a separate chamber in which the images of their dead ones lay, and each went in alone and veiled. The truth is, Southey had little native hardihood of temperament; self-control with him was painfully acquired. In solitude and darkness his tears flowed; when in his slumbers the images of the dead came to him, he could not choose but weep. Therefore, all the more among those whom he wished to lead into the cheerful ways of life, he had need to keep a guard upon his tenderness. He feared to preserve relics, and did not like to bear in mind birthdays, lest they should afterwards become too dangerously charged with remembrance and grief. "Look," he writes, "at some verses in the *Literary Souvenir*, p. 113; they are written by a dear friend of mine on the death of—you will know who"—for his pen would have trembled in tracing the name Isa-

bel. And yet his habitual feelings with respect to those who had departed were not bitter; the dead were absent—that was all; he thought of them and of living friends at a distance with the same complacency, the same affection, only with more tenderness of the dead.

Greta Hall, once resounding with cheerful voices, had been growing silent. Herbert was gone; Isabel was gone. In 1829 Sara Coleridge went, a bride, tearful yet glad, her mother accompanying her, to distant London. Five years later, Edith May Southey became the wife of the Rev. John Warter. Her father fell back, even more than in former years, upon the never-failing friends of his library. It was in these darkening years that he sought relief in carrying out the idea, conceived long before, of a story which should be no story, but a spacious receptacle for mingled wit and wisdom, experience and book-lore, wholesome nonsense and solemn meditation. *The Doctor*, begun in jest after merry talks with Grosvenor Bedford, grew more and more earnest as Southey proceeded. "He dreamt over it and brooded over it, laid it aside for months and years, resumed it after long intervals, and more often, latterly, in thoughtfulness than in mirth, and fancied at last that he could put into it more of his mind than could conveniently be produced in any other form." The secret of its authorship was carefully kept. Southey amused himself somewhat laboriously with ascribing it now to this hand and now to that. When the first two volumes arrived, as if from the anonymous author, Southey thrust them away with well-assumed impatience, and the disdainful words, "Some novel, I suppose." Yet several of his friends had shrewd suspicions that the manuscript lay somewhere hidden in Greta Hall, and on receiving their copies wrote to thank the veritable donor; these thanks were forwarded by Southey, not with-

out a smile in which something of irony mingled, to Theodore Hook, who was not pleased to enter into the jest. "I see in *The Doctor*," says its author, playing the part of an impartial critic, "a little of Rabelais, but not much; more of Tristram Shandy, somewhat of Burton, and perhaps more of Montaigne; but methinks the *quintum quid* predominates?" The *quintum quid* is that wisdom of the heart, that temper of loyal and cheerful acquiescence in the rule of life as appointed by a Divine Master, which characterizes Southey.

For the third volume of *The Doctor*, in that chapter which tells of Leonard Bacon's sorrow for his Margaret, Southey wrote as follows:

"Leonard had looked for consolation, where, when sincerely sought, it is always to be found; and he had experienced that religion effects in a true believer all that philosophy professes, and more than all that mere philosophy can perform. The wounds which stoicism would cauterize, religion heals.

There is a resignation with which, it may be feared, most of us deceive ourselves. To bear what must be borne, and submit to what cannot be resisted, is no more than what the unregenerate heart is taught by the instinct of animal nature. But to acquiesce in the afflictive dispensations of Providence—to make one's own will conform in all things to that of our Heavenly Father—to say to him in the sincerity of faith, when we drink of the bitter cup, 'Thy will be done!'—to bless the name of the Lord as much from the heart when he takes away as when he gives, and with a depth of feeling of which, perhaps, none but the afflicted heart is capable—this is the resignation which religion teaches, this is the sacrifice which it requires."

These words, written with no forefeeling, were the last put on paper before the great calamity burst upon Southey. "I have been parted from my wife," he tells Gros-

venor Bedford on October 2, 1834, "by something worse than death. Forty years she has been the life of my life; and I have left her this day in a lunatic asylum."

Southey's union with his wife had been at the first one of love, and use and wont had made her a portion of his very being. Their provinces in the household had soon defined themselves. He in the library earned their means of support; all else might be left to her with absolute confidence in her wise contrivance and quiet energy. Beneath the divided work in their respective provinces their lives ran on in deep and still accord. Now he felt for the first time shrunk into the limits of a solitary will. All that had grown out of the past was deranged by a central disturbance; no branch had been lopped away, but the main trunk was struck, and seared, and shaken to the roots. "Mine is a strong heart," Southey writes; "I will not say that the last week has been the most trying of my life; but I will say that the heart which could bear it can bear anything." Yet, when he once more set himself to work, a common observer, says his son, would have noticed little change in him, though to his family the change was great indeed. His most wretched hour was when he woke at dawn from broken slumbers; but a word of hope was enough to counteract the mischief of a night's unrest. No means were neglected which might serve to keep him in mental and bodily health; he walked in all weathers; he pursued his task-work diligently, yet not over-diligently; he collected materials for work of his choice. When, in the spring of 1835, it was found that the sufferer might return to wear out the body of this death in her own home, it was marvellous, declares Cuthbert Southey, how much of his old elasticity remained, and how, though no longer happy, he could be contented and cheerful, and take pleasure

in the pleasures of others. He still could contribute something to his wife's comfort. Through the weary dream which was now her life she knew him, and took pleasure in his coming and going.

When Herbert died, Southey had to ask a friend to lend him money to tide over the short period of want which followed his weeks of enforced inaction. Happily now, for the first time in his life, his income was beforehand with his expenses. A bequest of some hundreds of pounds had come in; his *Naval Biographies* were paying him well; and during part of Mrs. Southey's illness he was earning a respectable sum, intended for his son's education, by his *Life of Cowper*—a work to which a painful interest was added by the study of mental alienation forced upon him in his own household. So the days passed, not altogether cheerlessly, in work if possible more arduous than ever. "One morning," writes his son, "shortly after the letters had arrived, he called me into his study. 'You will be surprised,' he said, 'to hear that Sir Robert Peel has recommended me to the King for the distinction of a baronetcy, and will probably feel some disappointment when I tell you that I shall not accept it.'" Accompanying Sir Robert Peel's official communication came a private letter asking in the kindest manner how he could be of use to Southey. "Will you tell me," he said, "without reserve, whether the possession of power puts within my reach the means of doing anything which can be serviceable or acceptable to you; and whether you will allow me to find some compensation for the many sacrifices which office imposes upon me, in the opportunity of marking my gratitude, as a public man, for the eminent services you have rendered, not only to literature, but to the higher interests of virtue and religion?" Southey's answer

stated simply what his circumstances were, showing how unbecoming and unwise it would be to accept the proffered honour: it told the friendly statesman of the provision made for his family—no inconsiderable one—in the event of his death; it went on to speak of his recent affliction; how this had sapped his former confidence in himself; how it had made him an old man, and forced upon him the reflection that a sudden stroke might deprive him of those faculties by which his family had hitherto been supported. “I could afford to die, but not to be disabled,” he wrote in his first draft; but fearing that these words would look as if he wanted to trick out pathetically a plain statement, he removed them. Finally, if such an increase of his pension as would relieve him from anxiety on behalf of his family could form part of a plan for the encouragement of literature, it would satisfy all his desires. “Young as I then was,” Cuthbert Southey writes, “I could not, without tears, hear him read with his deep and faltering voice, his wise refusal and touching expression of those feelings and fears he had never before given utterance to, to any of his own family.” Two months later Sir Robert Peel signed a warrant adding 300*l.* annually to Southey’s existing pension. He had resolved to recognize literary and scientific eminence as a national claim; the act was done upon public grounds, and Southey had the happiness of knowing that others beside himself would partake of the benefit.

“Our domestic prospects are darkening upon us daily,” Southey wrote in July, 1835. “I know not whether the past or the present seems most like a dream to me, so great and strange is the difference. But yet a little while, and all will again be at the best.” While Mrs. Southey lived, a daily demand was made upon his sympathies and

solicitude which it was his happiness to fulfil. But from all except his wife he seemed already to be dropping away into a state of passive abstraction. Kate and Bertha silently ministered to his wants, laid the books he wanted in his way, replenished his ink-bottle, mended his pens, stirred the fire, and said nothing. A visit to the south-west of England in company with his son broke the long monotony of endurance. It was a happiness to meet Landor at Bristol, and Mrs. Bray at Tavistock, and Mrs. Bray's friend, the humble poet, Mary Colling, whose verses he had reviewed in the *Quarterly*. Yet to return to his sorrowful home was best of all; there is a leap up of the old spirits in a letter to his daughters announcing his approach. It is almost the last gleam of brightness. In the autumn of that year (1835) Edith Southey wasted away, growing weaker and weaker. The strong arm on which she had leaned for two-and-forty years, supported her down stairs each day and bore her up again at evening. When the morning of November 16th broke, she passed quietly "from death unto life."

From that day Southey was an altered man. His spirits fell to a still lower range. For the first time he was conscious of the distance which years had set between him and his children. Yet his physical strength was unbroken; nothing but snow deterred him from his walk; he could still circle the lake, or penetrate into Borrowdale on foot. But Echo, whom he had summoned to rejoice, was not roused by any call of his. Within-doors it was only by a certain violence to himself that he could speak. In the library he read aloud his proof-sheets alone; but for this he might almost have forgotten the sound of his own voice. Still, he was not wholly abandoned to grief; he looked back and saw that life had been good; its hardest moral

discipline had served to train the heart: much still remained that was of worth—Cuthbert was quietly pursuing his Oxford studies; Bertha was about to be united in marriage to her cousin, Herbert Hill, son of that good uncle who had done so much to shape Southey's career. "If not hopeful," he writes, "I am more than contented, and disposed to welcome and entertain any good that may yet be in store for me, without any danger of being disappointed if there should be none." Hope of a sober kind indeed had come to him. For twenty years he had known Caroline Bowles; they had long been in constant correspondence; their acquaintance had matured into friendship. She was now in her fifty-second year; he in his sixty-fifth. It seemed to Southey natural that, without making any breach with his past life, he should accept her companionship in the nearest way possible, should give to her all he could of what remained, and save himself from that forlorn feeling which he feared might render old age miserable and useless.

But already the past had subdued Southey, and if any future lay before him it was a cloud lifeless and grey. In the autumn of 1838 he started for a short tour on the Continent with his old friend Senhouse, his son Cuthbert, John Kenyon, their master of the horse, Captain Jones, the chamberlain, and Crabb Robinson, who was intendant and paid the bills. On the way from Boulogne they turned aside to visit Chinon, for Southey wished to stand on the spot where his first heroine, Joan of Arc, had recognized the French king. At Paris he roamed along the quays and hunted bookstalls. The change and excitement seemed to have served him; he talked freely and was cheerful. "Still," writes his son, "I could not fail to perceive a considerable change in him from the time we had last travel

led together—all his movements were slower, he was subject to frequent fits of absence, and there was an indecision in his manner and an unsteadiness in his step which was wholly unusual with him.” He often lost his way, even in the hotels; then laughed at his own mistakes, and yet was painfully conscious of his failing memory. His journal breaks off abruptly when not more than two-thirds of the tour had been accomplished. In February, 1839, his brother, Dr. Southey—ever a true comrade—describes him as working slowly and with an abstraction not usual to him; sometimes to write even a letter seemed an effort. In midsummer his marriage to Caroline Bowles took place, and with her he returned to Keswick in August. On the way home his friends in London saw that he was much altered. “The animation and peculiar clearness of his mind,” wrote Henry Taylor, “was quite gone, except a gleam or two now and then. . . . The appearance was that of a placid languor, sometimes approaching to torpor, but not otherwise than cheerful. He is thin and shrunk in person, and that extraordinary face of his has no longer the fire and strength it used to have, though the singular cast of the features and the habitual expressions make it still a most remarkable phenomenon.” Still, his friends had not ceased to hope that tranquillity would restore mental tone, and he himself was planning the completion of great designs. “As soon as we are settled at Keswick, I shall resolutely begin upon the *History of Portugal*, as a duty which I owe to my uncle’s memory. Half of the labour I consider as done. But I have long since found the advantage of doing more than one thing at a time, and the *History of the Monastic Orders* is the other thing to which I shall set to with hearty good-will. Both these are works of great pith and moment.”

Alas! the current of these enterprises was already turned awry. In August it was not without an occasional uncertainty that he sustained conversation. "He lost himself for a moment; he was conscious of it, and an expression passed over his countenance which was very touching—an expression of pain and also of resignation. . . . The charm of his manner is perhaps even enhanced at present (at least when one knows the circumstances) by the gentleness and patience which pervade it." Before long the character of his handwriting, which had been so exquisite, was changed to something like the laboured scrawl of a child; then he ceased to write. Still he could read, and, even when he could no longer take in the meaning of what was before him, his eye followed the lines of the printed page. At last even this was beyond his power. He would walk slowly round his library, pleased with the presence of his cherished possessions, taking some volume down mechanically from the shelf. In 1840 Wordsworth went over to Greta Hall. "Southey did not recognize me," he writes, "till he was told. Then his eyes flashed for a moment with their former brightness, but he sank into the state in which I had found him, patting with both hands his books affectionately like a child." In the *Life of Cowper* he had spoken of the distress of one who suffers from mental disease as being that of a dream—"a dream, indeed, from which the sufferer can neither wake nor be awakened; but it pierces no deeper, and there seems to be the same dim consciousness of its unreality." So was it now with himself. Until near the end he retained considerable bodily strength; his snow-white hair grew darker; it was the spirit which had endured shattering strokes of fate, and which had spent itself in studying to be quiet.

After a short attack of fever, the end came on the 21st

of March, 1843. Never was that "Well done!" the guerdon of the good and faithful servant, pronounced amid a deeper consent of those who attended and had ears to hear. On a dark and stormy morning Southey's body was borne to the beautiful churchyard of Crosthwaite, towards which he had long looked affectionately as his place of rest. There lay his three children and she who was the life of his life. Skiddaw gloomed solemnly overhead. A grey-haired, venerable man who had crossed the hills stood there leaning on the arm of his son-in-law; these two, Wordsworth and Quillinan, were the only strangers present. As the words, "ashes to ashes," were uttered, a sudden gleam of sunshine touched the grave; the wind dropped, the rain was over, and the birds had begun their songs of spring. The mourners turned away thinking of a good man's life and death with peace—

"And calm of mind, all passion spent." °

CHAPTER VII.

SOUTHEY'S WORK IN LITERATURE.

SOUTHEY'S career of authorship falls into two chief periods—a period during which poetry occupied the higher place and prose the lower, and a period during which this order was reversed. His translations of romantic fiction—*Amadis of Gaul*, *Palmerin of England*, and *The Cid*—connect the work of the earlier with that of the latter period, and serve to mark the progress of his mind from legend to history, and from the fantastic to the real. The poet in Southey died young, or, if he did not die, fell into a numbness and old age like that of which an earlier singer writes:—

“Elde that in my spirit dulleth me,
Hath of endyting all the subtilité
Welnyghe bereft out of my remembraunce.”

After thirty Southey seldom cared to utter himself in occasional verse. The uniformity of his life, the equable cheerfulness maintained by habits of regular work, his calm religious faith, his amiable Stoicism, left him without the material for lyrical poetry; and one so honest and healthy had no care to feign experiences of the heart which were not his. Still, he could apply himself to the treatment of large subjects with a calm, continuous energy; but as time went on his hand grew slack, and wrought

with less ease. Scarcely had he overcome the narrative poet's chief difficulty, that of subduing varied materials to an unity of design, when he put aside verse, and found it more natural to be historian than poet.

The poetry of sober feeling is rare in lyrical verse. This may be found admirably rendered in some of Southey's shorter pieces. Although his temper was ardent and hopeful, his poems of pensive remembrance, of meditative calm, are perhaps the most characteristic. Among these his *Inscriptions* rank high. Some of those in memory of the dead are remarkable for their fine poise of feeling, all that is excessive and transitory having been subdued; for the tranquil depths of sorrow and of hope which lie beneath their clear, melodious words.

Southey's larger poetical works are fashioned of two materials which do not always entirely harmonize. First, material brought from his own moral nature; his admiration of something elevated in the character of man or woman — generosity, gentleness, loyalty, fortitude, faith. And, secondly, material gathered from abroad; mediæval pomps of religion and circumstance of war; Arabian marvels, the work of the enchanters and the genii; the wild beauties and adventure of life amid New-World tribes; the monstrous mythology of the Brahman. With such material the poet's inventive talent deals freely, rearranges details or adds to them; still Southey is here rather a *finder* than a *maker*. His diligence in collecting and his skill in arranging were so great that it was well if the central theme did not disappear among manifold accessories. One who knows Southey, however, can recognize his ethical spirit in every poem. Thalaba, as he himself confessed, is a male Joan of Arc. Destiny or Providence has marked alike the hero and the heroine from mankind; the

sheepfold of Domremi, and the palm-grove by old Moath's tent, alike nurture virgin purity and lofty aspiration. Thalaba, like Joan, goes forth a delegated servant of the Highest to war against the powers of evil; Thalaba, like Joan, is sustained under the trials of the way by the sole talisman of faith. We are not left in doubt as to where Southey found his ideal. Mr. Barbauld thought *Joan of Arc* was modelled on the Socinian Christ. He was mistaken; Southey's ideal was native to his soul. "Early admiration, almost adoration of Leonidas; early principles of Stoicism derived from the habitual study of Epictetus, and the French Revolution at its height when I was just eighteen—by these my mind was moulded." And from these, absorbed into Southey's very being, came Thalaba and Joan.

The word *high-souled* takes possession of the mind as we think of Southey's heroic personages. Poetry, he held, ought rather to elevate than to affect—a Stoical doctrine transferred to art, which meant that his own poetry was derived more from admiration of great qualities than from sympathy with individual men or women. Neither the quick and passionate tenderness of Burns nor the stringent pathos of Wordsworth can be found in Southey's verse. No eye probably ever shed a tear over the misery of Lardlad and his persecuted daughter. She, like the lady in *Comus*, is set above our pity and perhaps our love. In *Kehama*, a work of Southey's mature years, the chivalric ardour of his earlier heroes is transformed into the sterner virtues of fortitude and an almost despairing constancy. The power of evil, as conceived by the poet, has grown more despotic; little can be achieved by the light-winged Glendoveer—a more radiant Thalaba—against the Rajah; only the lidless eye of Seeva can destroy that tyranny of

lust and pride. *Roderick* marks a higher stage in the development of Southey's ethical ideal. *Roderick*, too, is a delegated champion of right against force and fraud; he too endures mighty pains. But he is neither such a combatant, pure and intrepid, as goes forth from the Arab tent, nor such a blameless martyr as *Ladurlad*. He is first a sinner enduring just punishment; then a stricken penitent; and from his shame and remorse he is at last uplifted by enthusiasm, on behalf of his God and his people, into a warrior saint, the Gothic Maccabee.

Madoc stands somewhat away from the line of Southey's other narrative poems. Though, as Scott objected, the personages in *Madoc* are too nearly abstract types, Southey's ethical spirit dominates this poem less than any of the others. The narrative flows on more simply. The New-World portion tells a story full of picturesque incident, with the same skill and grace that belong to Southey's best prose writings. Landor highly esteemed *Madoc*. Scott declared that he had read it three times since his first cursory perusal, and each time with increased admiration of the poetry. Fox was in the habit of reading aloud after supper to eleven o'clock, when it was the rule at St. Ann's Hill to retire; but while *Madoc* was in his hand, he read until after midnight. Those, however, who opened the bulky quarto were few: the tale was out of relation with the time; it interpreted no need, no aspiration, no passion of the dawn of the present century. And the mind of the time was not enough disengaged to concern itself deeply with the supposed adventures of a Welsh prince of the twelfth century among the natives of America.

At heart, then, Southey's poems are in the main the outcome of his moral nature; this we recognize through all disguises — Mohammedan, Hindoo, or Catholic. He

planned and partly wrote a poem — *Oliver Newman* — which should associate his characteristic ideal with Puritan principles and ways of life. The foreign material through which his ethical idea was set forth went far, with each poem, to determine its reception by the public. Coleridge has spoken of “the pastoral charm and wild, streaming lights of the *Thalaba*.” Dewy night moon-mellowed, and the desert-circle girdled by the sky, the mystic palace of Shedad, the vernal brook, Oneiza’s favourite kidling, the lamp-light shining rosy through the damsel’s delicate fingers, the aged Arab in the tent-door—these came with a fresh charm into English narrative poetry eighty years ago. The landscape and the manners of Spain, as pictured in *Roderick*, are of marked grandeur and simplicity. In *Kehama*, Southey attempted a bolder experiment; and although the poem became popular, even a well-disposed reader may be allowed to sympathize with the dismay of Charles Lamb among the monstrous gods: “I never read books of travels, at least not farther than Paris or Rome. I can just endure Moors, because of their connexion as foes with Christians; but Abyssinians, Ethiops, Esquimaux, Dervises, and all that tribe I hate. I believe I fear them in some manner. A Mohammedan turban on the stage, though enveloping some well-known face, . . . does not give me unalloyed pleasure. I am a Christian, Englishman, Londoner, Templar. God help me when I come to put off these snug relations, and to get abroad into the world to come.”

Though his materials are often exotic, in style Southey aimed at the simplicity and strength of undefiled English. If to these melody was added, he had attained all he desired. To conversations with William Taylor about German poetry — certainly not to Taylor’s example—he as-

cribes his faith in the power of plain words to express in poetry the highest thoughts and strongest feelings. He perceived, in his own day, the rise of the ornate style, which has since been perfected by Tennyson, and he regarded it as a vice in art. In early years Akenside had been his instructor; afterwards he owed more to Landor than to any other master of style. From *Madoc* and *Roderick*—both in blank-verse—fragments could be severed which might pass for the work of Landor; but Southey's free and facile manner, fostered by early reading of Aristotle, and by constant study of Spenser, soon reasserts itself; from under the fragment of monumental marble, white almost as Landor's, a stream wells out smooth and clear, and lapses away, never dangerously swift nor mysteriously deep. On the whole, judged by the highest standards, Southey's poetry takes a midmost rank; it neither renders into art a great body of thought and passion, nor does it give faultless expression to lyrical moments. But it is the output of a large and vigorous mind, amply stored with knowledge; its breath of life is the moral ardour of a nature strong and generous, and therefore it can never cease to be of worth.

Southey is at his best in prose. And here it must be borne in mind that, though so voluminous a writer, he did not achieve his most important work, the *History of Portugal*, for which he had gathered vast collections. It cannot be doubted that this, if completed, would have taken a place among our chief histories. The splendour of story and the heroic personages would have lifted Southey into his highest mood. We cannot speak with equal confidence of his projected work of second magnitude, the *History of the Monastic Orders*. Learned and sensible it could not fail to be, and Southey would have recognized

the more substantial services of the founders and the brotherhoods; but he would have dealt by methods too simple with the psychology of religious emotions; the words enthusiasm and fraud might have risen too often to his lips; and at the grotesque humours of the devout, which he would have exhibited with delight, he might have been too prone to smile.

As it is, Southey's largest works are not his most admirable. *The History of Brazil*, indeed, gives evidence of amazing patience, industry, and skill; but its subject necessarily excludes it from the first rank. At no time from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century was Brazil a leader or a banner-bearer among lands. The life of the people crept on from point to point, and that is all; there are few passages in which the chronicle can gather itself up, and transform itself into a historic drama. Southey has done all that was possible; his pages are rich in facts, and are more entertaining than perhaps any other writer could have made them. His extraordinary acquaintance with travel gave him many advantages in narrating the adventures of early explorers; and his studies in ecclesiastical history led him to treat with peculiar interest the history of the Jesuit Reductions.

The History of the Peninsular War suffers by comparison with the great work of Sir William Napier. That heroic man had himself been a portion of the strife; his senses, singularly keen, were attuned to battle; as he wrote, the wild bugle-calls, the measured tramp, the peals of musketry, the dismal clamour, sounded in his ears; he abandoned himself again to the swiftness and "incredible fury" of the charge. And with his falcon eye he could discern amid the shock or formless dispersion, wherever hidden, the fiery heart of victory. Southey wrought in

his library as a man of letters; consulted sources, turned over manuscripts, corresponded with witnesses, set his material in order. The passion of justice and an enthusiasm on behalf of Spain give unity to his work. If he estimated too highly the disinterestedness and courage of the people of the Peninsula, the illusion was generous. And it may be that enduring spiritual forces become apparent to a distant observer, which are masked by accidents of the day and hour from one who is in their midst.

History as written by Southey is narrative rendered spiritual by moral ardour. There are no new political truths, he said. If there be laws of a nation's life other than those connected with elementary principles of morality, Southey did not discover these. What he has written may go only a little way towards attaining the ultimate ends of historical study, but so far as it goes it keeps the direct line. It is not led astray by will-o'-the-wisp, vague-shining theories that beguile night wanderers. Its method is an honest method as wholesome as sweet; and simple narrative, if ripe and sound at first, is none the less so at the end of a century.

In biography, at least, one may be well pleased with clear and charming narrative. Here Southey has not been surpassed, and even in this single province he is versatile; he has written the life of a warrior, of a poet, and of a saint. His industry was that of a German; his lucidity and perfect exposition were such as we rarely find outside a French memoir. There is no style fitter for continuous narrative than the pedestrian style of Southey. It does not beat upon the ear with hard, metallic vibration. The sentences are not cast by the thousand in one mould of cheap rhetoric, nor made brilliant with one cheap colour. Never dithyrambic, he is never dull; he affects neither the

trick of stateliness nor that of careless ease; he does not seek out curiosities of refinement, nor caress delicate affectations. Because his style is natural, it is inimitable, and the only way to write like Southey is to write well.

“The favourite of my library, among many favourites;” so Coleridge speaks of the *Life of Wesley*—“the book I can read for the twentieth time, when I can read nothing else at all.” And yet the schoolboy’s favourite—the *Life of Nelson*—is of happier inspiration. The simple and chivalric hero, his splendid achievements, his pride in duty, his patriotism, roused in Southey all that was most strong and high; but his enthusiasm does not escape in lyrical speech. “The best eulogy of Nelson,” he says, “is the faithful history of his actions; the best history that which shall relate them most perspicuously.” Only when all is over, and the captain of Trafalgar lies dead, his passion and pride find utterance:—“If the chariot and the horses of fire had been vouchsafed for Nelson’s translation, he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory.” From Nelson on the quarter-deck of the *Victory*, to Cowper caressing his tame hares, the interval is wide; but Southey, the man of letters, lover of the fireside, and patron of cats, found it natural to sympathize with his brother poet. His sketches of literary history in the *Life of Cowper* are characteristic. The writer’s range is wide, his judgment sound, his enjoyment of almost everything literary is lively; as critic he is kindly yet equitable. But the highest criticism is not his. Southey’s vision was not sufficiently penetrative; he culls beauties, but he cannot pluck out the heart of a mystery.

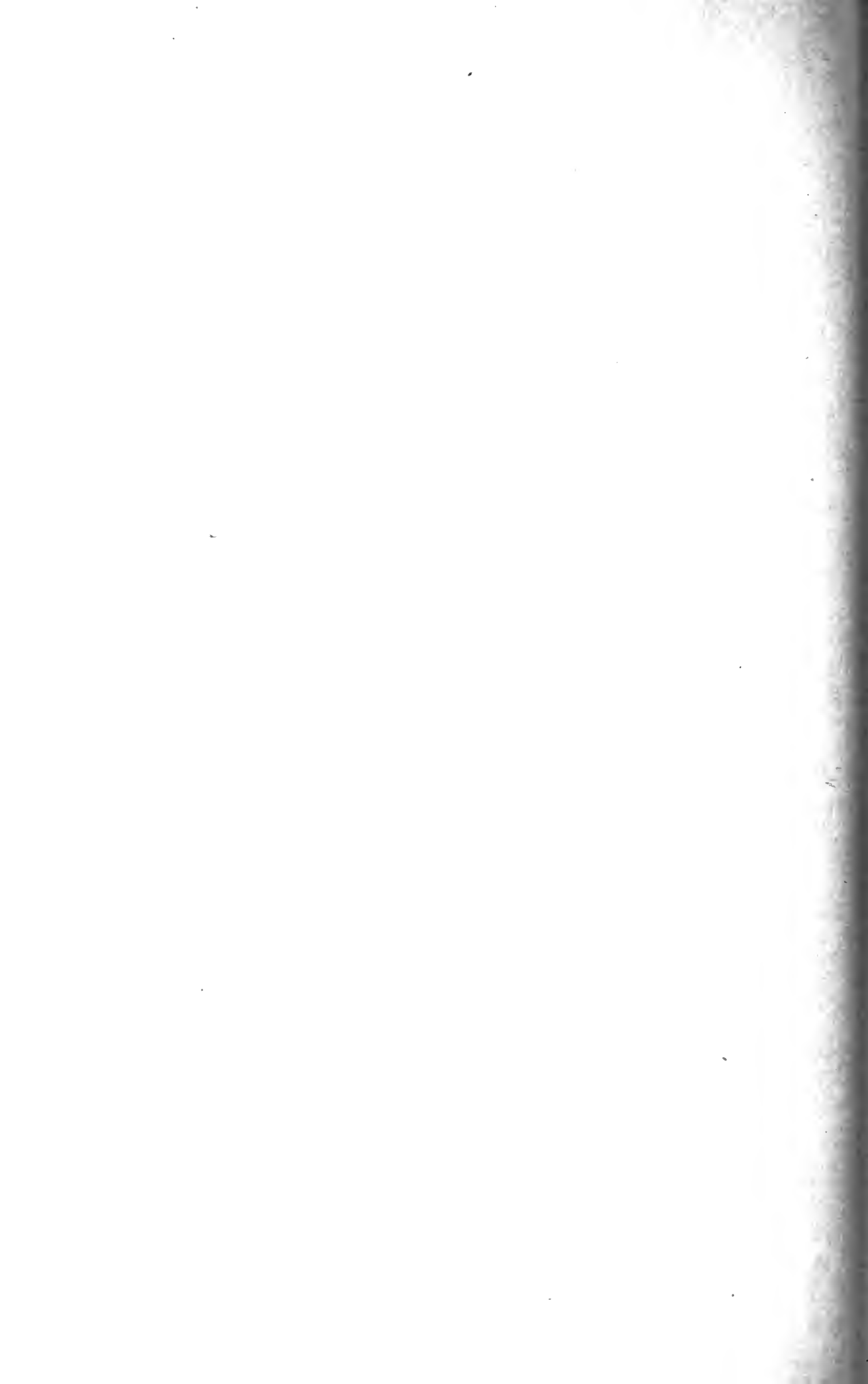
His translations of romantic fiction, while faithful to their sources, aim less at literal exactitude than at giving the English reader the same pleasure which the Spaniard

receives from the originals. From the destruction of Don Quixote's library Master Nicholas and the curate spared *Amadis of Gaul* and *Palmerin of England*. Second to Malory's grouping of the Arthur cycle *Amadis* may well take its place. Its chivalric spirit, its wildness, its tenderness and beauty, are carefully preserved by the translator. But Southey's chief gift in this kind to English readers is *The Cid*. The poem he supposed, indeed, to be a metrical chronicle instead of a metrical romance—no fatal error; weaving together the best of the poem, the ballads and the chronicle, he produced more than a mere compilation. "I know no work of the kind in our language," wrote Coleridge, "none which, uniting the charms of romance and history, keeps the imagination so constantly on the wing, and yet leaves so much for after-reflection."

Of Southey's political writings something has been said in a former chapter. Among works which can be brought under no general head, one that pleased the public was *Espriella's Letters*, sketches of English landscape, life, and manners, by a supposed Spanish traveller. The letters, giving as they do a lively view of England at the beginning of the present century, still possess an interest. Apart from Southey's other works stands *The Doctor*; nowhere else can one find so much of his varied erudition, his genial spirits, his meditative wisdom. It asks for a leisurely reader content to ramble everywhere and no whither, and still pleased to take another turn because his companion has not yet come to an end of learning, mirth, or meditation. That the author of a book so characteristic was not instantly recognized, is strange. "The wit and humour of *The Doctor*," says Edgar Poe, a keen critic, "have seldom been equalled. We cannot think Southey wrote it." Gratitude is due to Dr. Daniel Dove from innumer-

able "good little women and men," who have been delighted with his story of *The Three Bears*. To know that he had added a classic to the nursery would have been the pride of Southey's heart. Wide eyes entranced and peals of young laughter still make a triumph for one whose spirit, grave with a man's wisdom, was pure as the spirit of a little child.

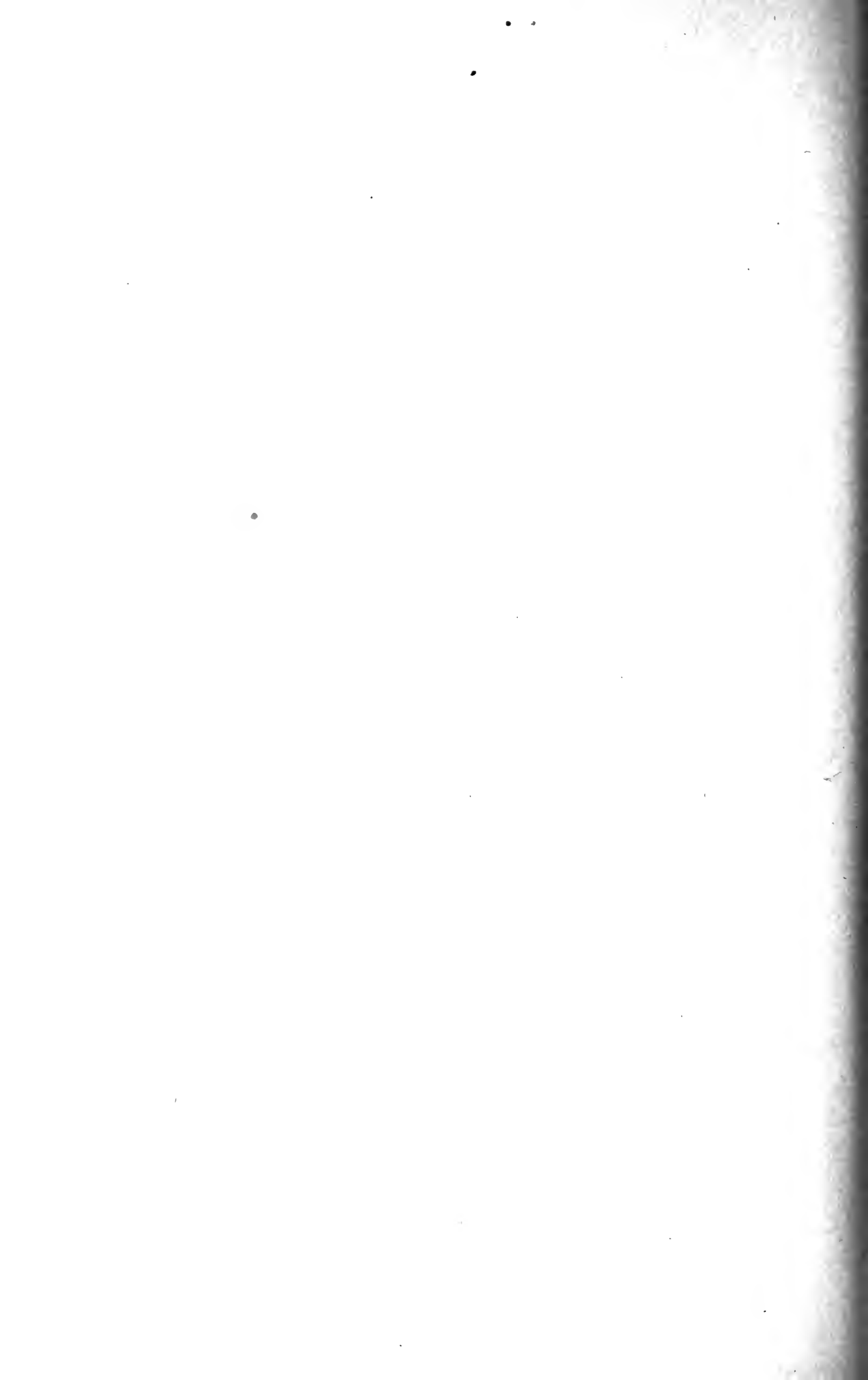
THE END.



B Y R O N

BY

JOHN NICHOL



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1. The Narrative of the Honourable John Byron, Commodore, in a late Expedition Round the World, &c. (Baker and Leigh) 1768
2. Voyage of H. M. S. *Blonde* to the Sandwich Islands in the years 1824–1825, the Right Hon. Lord Byron, Commander (John Murray) 1826
3. Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Right Hon. Lord Byron (H. Colburn) 1822
4. The Life, Writings, Opinions, and Times of G. G. Noel Byron, with courtiers of the present polished and enlightened age, &c., &c., 3 vols. (M. Iley) 1825
5. Narrative of Lord Byron's last Journey to Greece, from Journal of Count Peter Gamba 1825
6. Medwin's Conversations with Lord Byron at Pisa, 2 vols. (H. Colburn). 1825
7. Leigh Hunt's Byron and His Contemporaries (H. Colburn) 1828
8. The Works of Lord Byron, with Life by Thomas Moore, 17 vols. (Murray) 1832
9. Galt's Life of Lord Byron (Harpers). 1830
10. Kennedy's Conversations on Religion (Murray) . . . 1830
11. Countess of Blessington's Conversations (Harpers) . 1834
12. Lady Morgan's Memoirs, 2 vols. (W. H. Allen) . . . 1842

13. Recollections of the Countess Guiccioli (Harpers) 1869
14. Castelar's Genius and Character of Byron (Harpers) 1870
15. Elze's Life of Lord Byron (Murray) 1872
16. Trelawny's Reminiscences of Byron and Shelley . . . 1858
17. Torren's Memoirs of Viscount Melbourne (Macmillan) 1878
18. Rev. F. Hodgson's Memoirs, 2 vols. (Macmillan) . . . 1879
19. Essays and Articles, or Recorded Criticisms, by Mac-
aulay, Scott, Shelley, Goethe, G. Brandes, Mazzini,
Sainte Beuve, De Chasles, H. Taine, &c.
20. Burke's Knightage and Peerage 1879

GENEALOGY OF THE BYRON FAMILY.

THE BYRON FAMILY, FROM THE CONQUEST.

Ralph de Burun (estates in Nottingham and Derby).

— Hugh de Burun (Lord of Horestan).

— Hugh de Burun (became a monk).

— Sir Roger de Buron (gave lands to monks of Swinstead).

— Cecilia = Robert de Byron.

— Robert de Byron.

— Sir John Byron (Governor of York under Edward I.).

— Sir John (knighted at siege of Calais).

Sir Richard Byron.

Sir John (knighted in 3rd year of Henry V.).

Sir John Butler.

— Alice = Sir Nicholas.

Sir John (knighted by Richmond at Milford; fought at Bosworth; died 1488).

— 2nd wife, widow of George Halgh = Sir John Byron (received grant of Newstead from Henry VIII., May 26, 1540).

— Sir Nicholas (made K. B. at marriage of Prince Arthur; died 1503).

Bar
Sister

Sir Nicholas Strelleye.

— John Byron of Clavton (inherited by gift, knighted by Elizabeth, 1579).

Anne = Sir John (K. B. at coronation of James I.; Governor of Tower) Sir Nicholas (at Edgehill; Governor of Chester; Minister to the Dutchess)

(Buried at Hucknall Torkard) *RICHARD*, 2nd Lord (1605-1679). *Sir JOHN*, 1st Lord (created Baron Byron, of Rochdale, Oct. 24, 1643; at Newbury, Edgehill, Chester, &c.; Governor of Duke of York; died at Paris, 1652).

Viscount Chaworth.
 Elizabeth = *WILLIAM*, 3rd Lord (died 1695). Lord Berkeley.
WILLIAM, 4th Lord (1669-1736) = Frances (3rd wife).

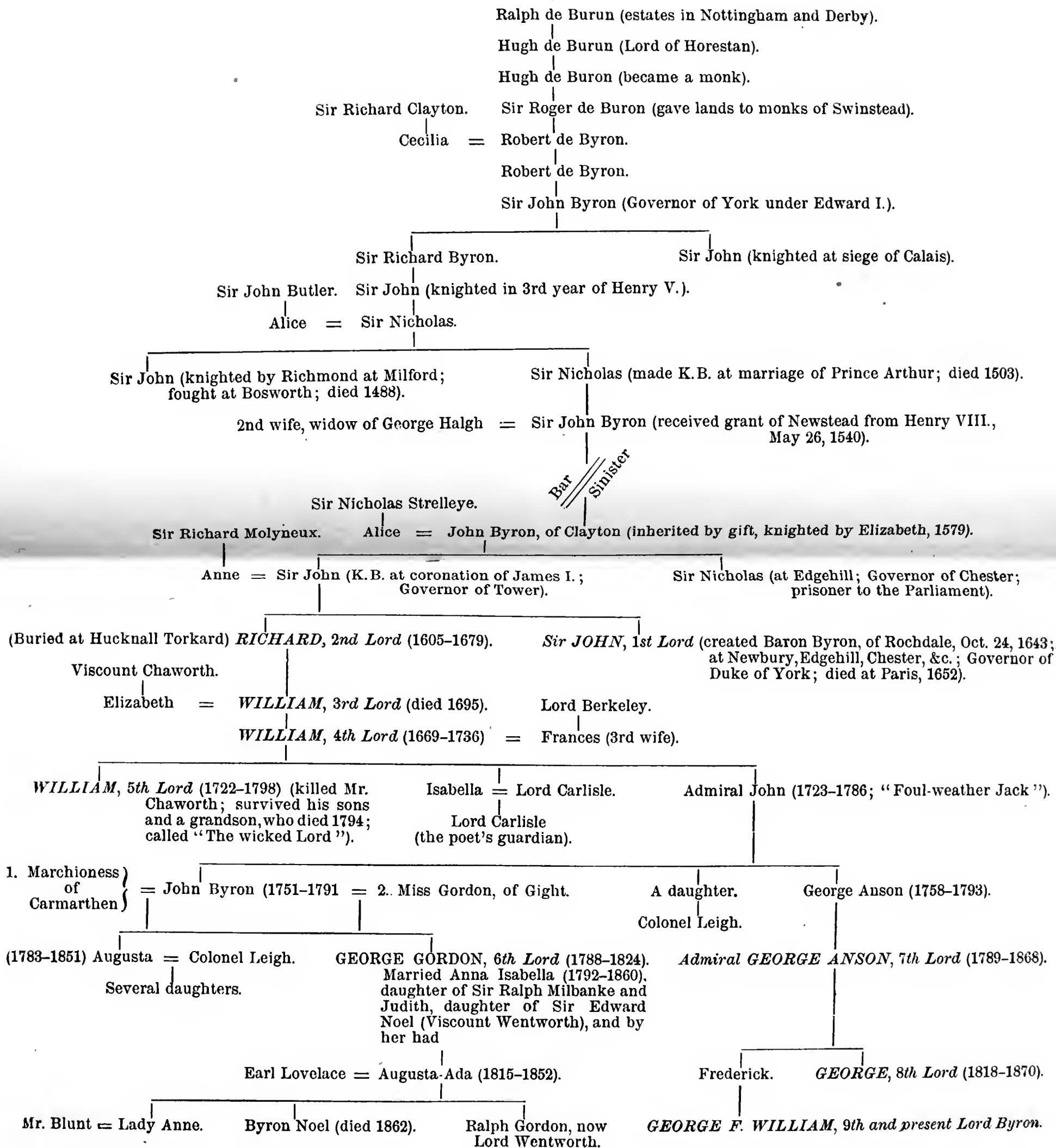
WILLIAM, 5th Lord (1722-1798) (killed Mr. Chaworth; survived his sons and a grandson, who died 1794; called "The wicked Lord").
 Isabella = Lord Carlisle.
 Lord Carlisle
 (the poet's guardian).

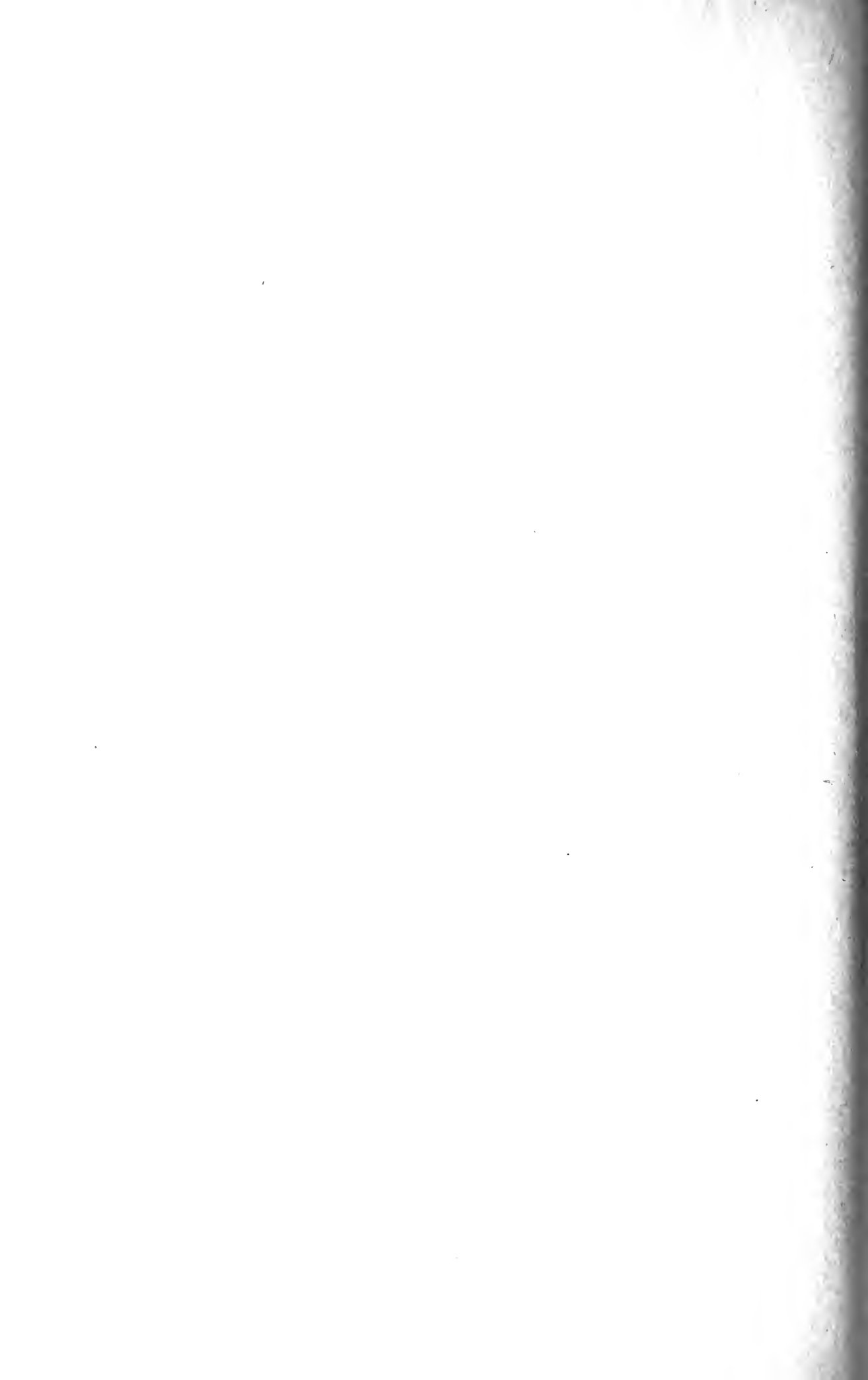
1. Marchioness of Carmarthen } = John Byron (1751-1791) = 2. Miss Gordon, of Gight. A daughter.
 George Anson (1758-1793).
 Colonel Leigh.

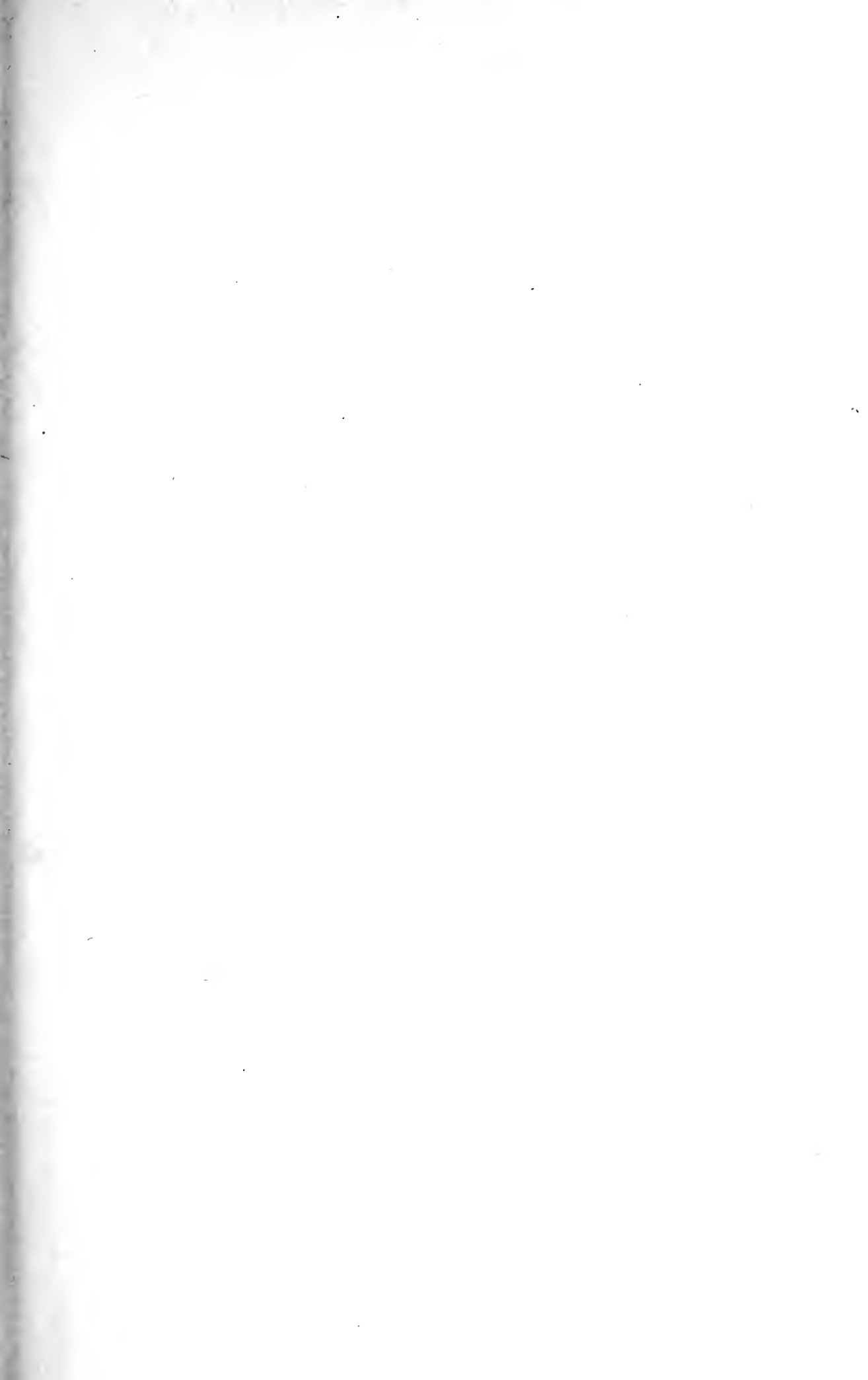
(1783-1851) Augusta = Colonel Leigh. *GEORGE GORDON*, 6th Lord (1788-1824). *Admiral GEORGE ANSON*, 7th Lord (1789-1868).
 Several daughters. Married Anna Isabella (1792-1860), daughter of Sir Ralph Milbanke and Judith, daughter of Sir Edward Noel (Viscount Wentworth), and by her had

Earl Lovelace = Augusta-Ada (1815-1852). Frederick. *GEORGE*, 8th Lord (1818-1870).
 Mr. Blunt = Lady Anne. Byron Noel (died 1862). Ralph Gordon, now Lord Wentworth. *GEORGE F. WILLIAM*, 9th and present Lord Byron.

THE BYRON FAMILY, FROM THE CONQUEST.









BYRON.

CHAPTER I.

ANCESTRY AND FAMILY.

BYRON'S life was passed under the fierce light that beats upon an intellectual throne. He succeeded in making himself—what he wished to be—the most notorious personality in the world of letters of our century. Almost every one who came in contact with him has left on record various impressions of intimacy or interview. Those whom he excluded or patronized, maligned; those to whom he was genial, loved him. Mr. Southey, in all sincerity, regarded him as the principle of Evil incarnate; an American writer of tracts in the form of stories is of the same opinion: to the Countess Guiccioli he is an archangel. Mr. Carlyle considers him to have been a mere “sulky dandy.” Goethe ranks him as the first English poet after Shakespeare, and is followed by the leading critics of France, Italy, and Spain. All concur in the admission that Byron was as proud of his race as of his verse, and that in unexampled measure the good and evil of his nature were inherited and inborn. His genealogy is, therefore, a matter of no idle antiquarianism.

There are legends of old Norse Buruns migrating from their home in Scandinavia, and settling, one branch in Normandy, another in Livonia. To the latter belonged a shadowy Marshal de Burun, famous for the almost absolute power he wielded in the then infant realm of Russia. Two members of the family came over with the Conqueror, and settled in England. Of Erneis de Burun, who had lands in York and Lincoln, we hear little more. Ralph, the poet's ancestor, is mentioned in Doomsday Book—our first authentic record—as having estates in Nottinghamshire and Derby. His son Hugh was lord of Horestan Castle in the latter county, and with his son of the same name, under King Stephen, presented the church of Ossington to the monks of Lenton. The latter Hugh joined their order; but the race was continued by his son Sir Roger, who gave lands to the monastery of Swinstead. This brings us to the reign of Henry II. (1155–1189), when Robert de Byron adopted the spelling of his name afterwards retained, and by his marriage with Cecilia, heir of Sir Richard Clayton, added to the family possessions an estate in Lancashire, where, till the time of Henry VIII., they fixed their seat. The poet, relying on old wood-carvings at Newstead, claims for some of his ancestors a part in the crusades, and mentions a name not apparently belonging to that age—

“Near Ascalon's towers, John of Horestan slumbers—”

a romance, like many of his, possibly founded on fact, but incapable of verification.

Two grandsons of Sir Robert have a more substantial fame, having served with distinction in the wars of Edward I. The elder of these was governor of the city of York. Some members of his family fought at Cressy, and one of

his sons, Sir John, was knighted by Edward III. at the siege of Calais. Descending through the other, Sir Richard, we come to another Sir John, knighted by Richmond, afterwards Henry VII., on his landing at Milford. He fought, with his kin, on the field of Bosworth, and dying without issue, left the estates to his brother, Sir Nicholas, knighted in 1502, at the marriage of Prince Arthur. The son of Sir Nicholas, known as "little Sir John of the great beard," appears to have been a favourite of Henry VIII., who made him Steward of Manchester and Lieutenant of Sherwood, and on the dissolution of the monasteries presented him with the Priory of Newstead, the rents of which were equivalent to about 4000*l.* of our money. Sir John, who stepped into the Abbey in 1540, married twice, and the premature appearance of a son by the second wife—widow of Sir George Halgh—brought the bar sinister of which so much has been made. No indication of this fact, however, appears in the family arms, and it is doubtful if the poet was aware of a reproach which in any case does not touch his descent. The "filius naturalis," John Byron of Clayton, inherited by deed of gift, and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1579. His descendants were prominent as staunch Royalists during the whole period of the Civil Wars. At Edgehill there were seven Byrons on the field.

"On Marston, with Rupert 'gainst traitors contending,
Four brothers enrich'd with their blood the bleak field."

Sir Nicholas, one of the seven, is extolled as "a person of great affability and dexterity, as well as martial knowledge, which gave great life to the designs of the well affected." He was taken prisoner by the Parliament while acting as governor of Chester. Under his nephew, Sir John, New-

stead is said to have been besieged and taken; but the knight escaped, in the words of the poet—never a Radical at heart—a “protecting genius,

For nobler combats here reserved his life,
To lead the band where godlike Falkland fell.”

Clarendon, indeed, informs us, that on the morning before the battle, Falkland, “very cheerful, as always upon action, put himself into the first rank of the Lord Byron’s regiment.” This slightly antedates his title. The first battle of Newbury was fought on September, 1643. For his services there, and at a previous royal victory, over Waller in July, Sir John was, on October 24th of the same year, created Baron of Rochdale, and so became the first Peer of the family.

This first lord was succeeded by his brother Richard (1605–1679), famous in the war for his government and gallant defence of Newark. He rests in the vault that now contains the dust of the greatest of his race, in Hucknall Torkard Church, where his epitaph records the fact that the family lost all their present fortunes by their loyalty, adding, “yet it pleased God so to bless the humble endeavours of the said Richard, Lord Byron, that he repurchased part of their ancient inheritance, which he left to his posterity, with a laudable memory for his great piety and charity.” His eldest son, William, the third lord (died 1695), is worth remembering on two accounts. He married Elizabeth, the daughter of Viscount Chaworth, and so wove the first link in a strange association of tragedy and romance: he was a patron of one of those poets who, approved by neither gods nor columns, are remembered by the accident of an accident, and was himself a poetaster capable of the couplet,—

“ My whole ambition only does extend
To gain the name of Shipman’s faithful friend ”—

an ambition which, considering its moderate scope, may be granted to have attained its desire.

His successor, the fourth lord (1669–1736), gentleman of the bedchamber to Prince George of Denmark, himself living a quiet life, became, by his third wife, Frances, daughter of Lord Berkeley, the progenitor of a strange group of eccentric, adventurous, and passionate spirits. The eldest son, the fifth lord, and immediate predecessor in the peerage of the poet, was born in 1722, entered the naval service, left his ship, the “ Victory,” just before she was lost on the rocks of Alderney, and subsequently became master of the stag-hounds. In 1765, the year of the passing of the American Stamp Act, an event occurred which coloured the whole of his after-life, and is curiously illustrative of the manners of the time. On January 26th or 29th (accounts vary) ten members of an aristocratic social club sat down to dinner in Pall-mall. Lord Byron and Mr. Chaworth, his neighbour and kinsman, were of the party. In the course of the evening, when the wine was going round, a dispute arose between them about the management of game, so frivolous that one conjectures the quarrel to have been picked to cloak some other cause of offence. Bets were offered, and high words passed, but the company thought the matter had blown over. On going out, however, the disputants met on the stairs, and one of the two, it is uncertain which, cried out to the waiter to show them an empty room. This was done, and a single tallow-candle being placed on the table, the door was shut. A few minutes later a bell was rung, and the hotel master rushing in, Mr. Chaworth was found mortally wounded. There had been a struggle in the dim light, and Byron,

having received the first lunge harmlessly in his waistcoat, had shortened his sword and run his adversary through the body, with the boast, not uncharacteristic of his grand-nephew, "By G—d, I have as much courage as any man in England." A coroner's inquest was held, and he was committed to the Tower on a charge of murder. The interest in the trial, which subsequently took place in Westminster Hall, was so great that tickets of admission were sold for six guineas. The peers, after two days' discussion, unanimously returned a verdict of manslaughter. Byron, pleading his privileges, and paying his fees, was set at liberty; but he appears henceforth as a spectre-haunted man, roaming about under false names, or shut up in the Abbey like a baited savage, shunned by his fellows high and low, and the centre of the wildest stories. That he shot a coachman, and flung the body into the carriage beside his wife, who very sensibly left him; that he tried to drown her; that he had devils to attend him—were among the many weird legends of "the wicked lord." The poet himself says that his ancestor's only companions were the crickets that used to crawl over him, receive stripes with straws when they misbehaved, and on his death made an exodus in procession from the house. When at home he spent his time in pistol-shooting, making sham fights with wooden ships about the rockeries of the lake, and building ugly turrets on the battlements. He hated his heir presumptive, sold the estate of Rochdale—a proceeding afterwards challenged—and cut down the trees of Newstead, to spite him; but he survived his three sons, his brother, and his only grandson, who was killed in Corsica in 1794.

On his own death in 1798, the estates and title passed to George Gordon, then a child of ten, whom he used to talk of, without a shadow of interest, as "the little boy

who lives at Aberdeen." His sister Isabella married Lord Carlisle, and became the mother of the fifth earl, the poet's nominal guardian. She was a lady distinguished for eccentricity of manners, and (like her son satirized in the *Bards and Reviewers*) for the perpetration of indifferent verses. The career of the fourth lord's second son, John, the poet's grandfather, recalls that of the sea-kings from whom the family claim to have sprung. Born in 1723, he at an early age entered the naval service, and till his death in 1786 was tossed from storm to storm. "He had no rest on sea, nor I on shore," writes his illustrious descendant. In 1740 a fleet of five ships was sent out under Commodore Anson to annoy the Spaniards, with whom we were then at war, in the South Seas. Byron took service as a midshipman in one of those ships—all more or less unfortunate — called "The Wager." Being a bad sailer, and heavily laden, she was blown from her company, and wrecked in the Straits of Magellan. The majority of the crew were cast on a bleak rock, which they christened Mount Misery. After encountering all the horrors of mutiny and famine, and being in various ways deserted, five of the survivors, among them Captain Cheap and Mr. Byron, were taken by some Patagonians to the Island of Chiloe, and thence, after some months, to Valparaiso. They were kept for nearly two years as prisoners at St. Iago, the capital of Chili, and in December, 1744, put on board a French frigate, which reached Brest in October, 1745. Early in 1746 they arrived at Dover in a Dutch vessel.

This voyage is the subject of a well-known apostrophe in *The Pleasures of Hope*, beginning—

"And such thy strength-inspiring aid that bore
The hardy Byron from his native shore.

In torrid climes, where Chiloe's tempests sweep
 Tumultuous murmurs o'er the troubled deep,
 'Twas his to mourn misfortune's rudest shock,
 Scourged by the winds and cradled by the rock."

Byron's own account of his adventures, published in 1768, is remarkable for freshness of scenery like that of our first literary traveller, Sir John Mandeville, and a force of description which recalls Defoe. It interests us more especially from the use that has been made of it in that marvellous mosaic of voyages, the shipwreck, in *Don Juan*, the hardships of his hero being, according to the poet—

"Comparative
 To those related in my grand-dad's narrative."

In June, 1764, Byron sailed with two ships, the "Dolphin" and the "Tamar," on a voyage of discovery arranged by Lord Egmont, to seek a southern continent, in the course of which he took possession of the largest of the Falkland Islands, again passed through the Magellanic Straits, and sailing home by the Pacific, circumnavigated the globe. The planets so conspired that, though his affable manners and considerate treatment made him always popular with his men, sailors became afraid to serve under "foul-weather Jack." In 1748 he married the daughter of a Cornish squire, John Trevanion. They had two sons and three daughters. One of the latter married her cousin (the fifth lord's eldest son), who died in 1776, leaving as his sole heir the youth who fell in the Mediterranean in 1794.

The eldest son of the veteran, John Byron, father of the poet, was born in 1751, educated at Westminster, and, having received a commission, became a captain in the guards; but his character, fundamentally unprincipled,

soon developed itself in such a manner as to alienate him from his family. In 1778, under circumstances of peculiar effrontery, he seduced Amelia D'Arcy, the daughter of the Earl of Holderness, in her own right Countess Conyers, then wife of the Marquis of Carmarthen, afterwards Duke of Leeds. "Mad Jack," as he was called, seems to have boasted of his conquest; but the marquis, to whom his wife had hitherto been devoted, refused to believe the rumours that were afloat, till an intercepted letter, containing a remittance of money, for which Byron, in reverse of the usual relations, was always clamouring, brought matters to a crisis. The pair decamped to the continent; and in 1779, after the marquis had obtained a divorce, they were regularly married. Byron seems to have been not only profligate but heartless, and he made life wretched to the woman he was even more than most husbands bound to cherish. She died in 1784, having given birth to two daughters. One died in infancy; the other was Augusta, the half-sister and good genius of the poet, whose memory remains like a star on the fringe of a thunder-cloud, only brighter by the passing of the smoke of calumny. In 1807 she married Colonel Leigh, and had a numerous family, most of whom died young. Her eldest daughter, Georgiana, married Mr. Henry Trevanion. The fourth, Medora, had an unfortunate history, the nucleus of an impertinent and happily ephemeral romance.

The year after the death of his first wife, John Byron, who seems to have had the fascinations of a Barry Lyndon, succeeded in entrapping a second. This was Miss Catherine Gordon of Gight, a lady with considerable estates in Aberdeenshire—which attracted the adventurer—and an overweening Highland pride in her descent from James I., the greatest of the Stuarts, through his daughter

Annabella, and the second Earl of Huntly. This union suggested the ballad of an old rhymer, beginning—

“O whare are ye gaen, bonny Miss Gordon,
O whare are ye gaen, sae bonny and braw?
Ye’ve married, ye’ve married wi’ Johnny Byron,
To squander the lands o’ Gight awa’.”

The prophecy was soon fulfilled. The property of the Scotch heiress was squandered with impetuous rapidity by the English rake. In 1786 she left Scotland for France, and returned to England towards the close of the following year. On the 22nd of January, 1788, in Holles Street, London, Mrs. Byron gave birth to her only child, George Gordon, sixth lord. Shortly after, being pressed by his creditors, the father abandoned both, and leaving them with a pittance of 150*l.* a year, fled to Valenciennes, where he died, in August, 1791.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY YEARS AND SCHOOL LIFE.

SOON after the birth of her son, Mrs. Byron took him to Scotland. After spending some time with a relation, she, early in 1790, settled in a small house at Aberdeen. Ere long her husband, who had in the interval dissipated away his remaining means, rejoined her; and they lived together in humble lodgings, until their tempers, alike fiery and irritable, compelled a definite separation. They occupied apartments, for some time, at the opposite ends of the same street, and interchanged visits. Being accustomed to meet the boy and his nurse, the father expressed a wish that the former should be sent to live with him, at least for some days. "To this request," Moore informs us, "Mrs. Byron was at first not very willing to accede; but, on the representation of the nurse that if he kept him over one night he would not do so another, she consented. On inquiring next morning after the child, she was told by Captain Byron that he had had quite enough of his young visitor." After a short stay in the north, the Captain, extorting enough money from his wife to enable him to fly from his creditors, escaped to France. His absence must have been a relief; but his death is said to have so affected the unhappy lady, that her shrieks disturbed the neighbourhood. The circumstance recalls an anecdote of a similar outburst—attested by Sir W. Scott, who was

present on the occasion — before her marriage. Being present at a representation, in Edinburgh, of the *Fatal Marriage*, when Mrs. Siddons was personating Isabella, Miss Gordon was seized with a fit, and carried out of the theatre, screaming out “O my Biron, my Biron.” All we know of her character shows it to have been not only proud, impulsive, and wayward, but hysterical. She constantly boasted of her descent, and clung to the courtesy title of “honourable,” to which she had no claim. Her affection and anger were alike demonstrative, her temper never for an hour secure. She half worshipped, half hated, the blackguard to whom she was married, and took no steps to protect her property; her son she alternately petted and abused. “Your mother’s a fool!” said a school companion to him years after. “I know it,” was his unique and tragic reply. Never was poet born to so much illustrious, and to so much bad blood. The records of his infancy betray the temper which he preserved through life — passionate, sullen, defiant of authority, but singularly amenable to kindness. On being scolded by his first nurse for having soiled a dress, without uttering a word he tore it from top to seam, as he had seen his mother tear her caps and gowns; but her sister and successor in office, May Gray, acquired and retained a hold over his affections, to which he has borne grateful testimony. To her training is attributed the early and remarkable knowledge of the Scriptures, especially of the Psalms, which he possessed: he was, according to her later testimony, peculiarly inquisitive and puzzling about religion. Of the sense of solitude, induced by his earliest impressions, he characteristically makes a boast. “My daughter, my wife, my half-sister, my mother, my sister’s mother, my natural daughter, and myself, are or were all

only children. But the fiercest animals have the fewest numbers in their litters, as lions, tigers, &c.”

To this practical orphanhood, and inheritance of feverish passion, there was added another, and to him a heavy and life-long burden. A physical defect in a healthy nature may either pass without notice or be turned to a high purpose. No line of his work reveals the fact that Sir Walter Scott was lame. The infirmity failed to cast even a passing shade over that serene power. Milton's blindness is the occasion of the noblest prose and verse of resignation in the language. But to understand Pope, we must remember that he was a cripple: and Byron never allows us to forget, because he himself never forgot it. Accounts differ as to the extent and origin of his deformity; and the doubts on the matter are not removed by the inconsistent accounts of the indelicate post-mortem examination made by Mr. Trelawny at Mesolonghi. It is certain that one of the poet's feet was, either at birth or at a very early period, so seriously clubbed or twisted as to affect his gait, and to a considerable extent his habits. It also appears that the surgical means—boots, bandages, &c.—adopted to straighten the limb, only aggravated the evil. His sensitiveness on the subject was early awakened by careless or unfeeling references. “What a pretty boy Byron is!” said a friend of his nurse. “What a pity he has such a leg!” On which the child, with flashing eyes, cutting at her with a baby's whip, cried out, “Dinna speak of it.” His mother herself, in her violent fits, when the boy ran round the room laughing at her attempts to catch him, used to say he was a little dog, as bad as his father, and to call him “a lame brat”—an incident which notoriously suggested the opening scene of the *Deformed Transformed*. In the height of his popularity he fancied that the beggars and

street-sweepers in London were mocking him. He satirized and discouraged dancing; he preferred riding and swimming to other exercises, because they concealed his weakness; and on his death-bed asked to be blistered in such a way that he might not be called on to expose it. The Countess Guiccioli, Lady Blessington, and others, assure us that in society few would have observed the defect if he had not referred to it; but it was never far from the mind, and therefore never far from the mouth, of the least reticent of men.

In 1792 he was sent to a rudimentary day school of girls and boys, taught by a Mr. Bowers, where he seems to have learnt nothing save to repeat monosyllables by rote. He next passed through the hands of a devout and clever clergyman, named Ross, under whom, according to his own account, he made astonishing progress, being initiated into the study of Roman history, and taking special delight in the battle of Regillus. Long afterwards, when standing on the heights of Tusculum and looking down on the little round lake, he remembered his young enthusiasm and his old instructor. He next came under the charge of a tutor called Paterson, whom he describes as "a very serious, saturnine, but kind young man. He was the son of my shoemaker, but a good scholar. With him I began Latin, and continued till I went to the grammar school, where I threaded all the classes to the fourth, when I was recalled to England by the demise of my uncle."

Of Byron's early school days there is little further record. We learn from scattered hints that he was backward in technical scholarship, and low in his class, in which he seems to have had no ambition to stand high; but that he eagerly took to history and romance, especially luxuriating in the *Arabian Nights*. He was an indifferent pen-

man, and always disliked mathematics; but was noted by masters and mates as of quick temper, eager for adventures, prone to sports, always more ready to give a blow than to take one, affectionate, though resentful.

When his cousin was killed at Corsica, in 1794, he became the next heir to the title. In 1797, a friend, meaning to compliment the boy, said, "We shall have the pleasure some day of reading your speeches in the House of Commons," he, with precocious consciousness, replied, "I hope not. If you read any speeches of mine, it will be in the House of Lords." Similarly, when, in the course of the following year, the fierce old man at Newstead died, and the young lord's name was called at school with "Dominus" prefixed to it, his emotion was so great that he was unable to answer, and burst into tears.

Belonging to this period is the somewhat shadowy record of a childish passion for a distant cousin slightly his senior, Mary Duff, with whom he claims to have fallen in love in his ninth year. We have a quaint picture of the pair sitting on the grass together, the girl's younger sister beside them playing with a doll. A German critic gravely remarks, "This strange phenomenon places him beside Dante." Byron himself, dilating on the strength of his attachment, tells us that he used to coax a maid to write letters for him, and that when he was sixteen, on being informed by his mother of Mary's marriage, he nearly fell into convulsions. But in the history of the calf-loves of poets it is difficult to distinguish between the imaginative afterthought and the reality. This equally applies to other recollections of later years. Moore remarks—"that the charm of scenery, which derives its chief power from fancy and association, should be felt at an age when fancy is yet hardly awake and associations are but few, can with diffi-

culty be conceived." But between the ages of eight and ten an appreciation of external beauty is sufficiently common. No one doubts the accuracy of Wordsworth's account, in the *Prelude*, of his early half-sensuous delight in mountain glory. It is impossible to define the influence of Nature, either on nations or individuals, or to say beforehand what selection from his varied surroundings a poet will, for artistic purposes, elect to make. Shakspeare rests in meadows and glades, and leaves to Milton "Teneriffe and Atlas." Burns, who lived for a considerable part of his life in daily view of the hills of Arran, never alludes to them. But in this respect, like Shelley, Byron was inspired by a passion for the high-places of the earth. Their shadow is on half his verse. "The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow" perpetually remind him of one of his constantly recurring refrains—

"He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below."

In the course of 1796, after an attack of scarlet fever at Aberdeen, he was taken by his mother to Ballater, and on his recovery spent much of his time in rambling about the country. "From this period," he says, "I date my love of mountainous countries. I can never forget the effect, years afterwards, in England, of the only thing I had long seen, even in miniature, of a mountain, in the Malvern Hills. After I returned to Cheltenham I used to watch them every afternoon, at sunset, with a sensation which I cannot describe." Elsewhere, in *The Island*, he returns, amid allusions to the Alps and Apennines, to the friends of his youth:—

"The infant rapture still survived the boy,
And Lach-na-gair with Ida look'd o'er Troy,

Mixed Celtic memories with the Phrygian mount,
And Highland linns with Castalie's clear fount."

The poet, owing to his physical defect, was not a great climber, and we are informed, on the authority of his nurse, that he never even scaled the easily attainable summit of the "steep frowning" hill of which he has made such effective use. But the impression of it from a distance was none the less genuine. In the midst of a generous address, in *Don Juan*, to Jeffrey, he again refers to the same associations with the country of his early training:—

"But I am half a Scot by birth, and bred
A whole one; and my heart flies to my head
As 'Auld Lang Syne' brings Scotland, one and all—
Scotch plaids, Scotch snoods, the blue hills and clear streams,
The Dee, the Don, Balgounie's brig's black wall—
All my boy feelings, all my gentler dreams
Of what I then dreamt, clothed in their own pall,
Like Banquo's offspring. . . ."

Byron's allusions to Scotland are variable and inconsistent. His satire on her reviewers was sharpened by the show of national as well as personal antipathy; and when, about the time of its production, a young lady remarked that he had a little of the northern manner of speech, he burst out, "Good God! I hope not. I would rather the whole d—d country was sunk in the sea. I the Scotch accent!" But in the passage from which we have quoted the swirl of feeling on the other side continues,—

"I rail'd at Scots to show my wrath and wit,
Which must be own'd was sensitive and surly.
Yet 'tis in vain such sallies to permit;
They cannot quench young feelings, fresh and early.

I scotch'd, not kill'd, the Scotchman in my blood,
And love the land of mountain and of flood."

This suggests a few words on a question of more than local interest. Byron's most careful biographer has said of him: "Although on his first expedition to Greece he was dressed in the tartan of the Gordon clan, yet the whole bent of his mind, and the character of his poetry, are anything but Scottish. Scottish nationality is tainted with narrow and provincial elements. Byron's poetic character, on the other hand, is universal and cosmopolitan. He had no attachment to localities, and never devoted himself to the study of the history of Scotland and its romantic legends." Somewhat similarly Thomas Campbell remarks of Burns, "He was the most un-Scotsmanlike of Scotchmen, having no caution." Rough national verdicts are apt to be superficial. Mr. Leslie Stephen, in a review of Hawthorne, has commented on the extent to which the nobler qualities and conquering energy of the English character are hidden, not only from foreigners, but from ourselves, by the "detestable lay figure" of John Bull. In like manner, the obtrusive type of the "canny Scot" is apt to make critics forget the hot heart that has marked the early annals of the country, from the Hebrides to the Borders, with so much violence, and at the same time has been the source of so much strong feeling and persistent purpose. Of late years, the struggle for existence, the temptations of a too ambitious and over-active people in the race for wealth, and the benumbing effect of the constant profession of beliefs that have ceased to be sincere, have for the most part stifled the fervid fire in calculating prudence. These qualities have been adequately combined in Scott alone, the one massive and complete literary type of his race. Burns, to his ruin, had

only the fire: the same is true of Byron, whose genius, in some respects less genuine, was indefinitely and inevitably wider. His intensely susceptible nature took a dye from every scene, city, and society through which he passed; but to the last he bore with him the marks of a descendant of the Sea-Kings, and of the mad Gordons in whose domains he had first learned to listen to the sound of the "two mighty voices" that haunted and inspired him through life.

In the autumn of 1798 the family, *i. e.*, his mother—who had sold the whole of her household furniture for 75*l.*—with himself, and a maid, set south. The poet's only recorded impression of the journey is a gleam of Loch Leven, to which he refers in one of his latest letters. He never revisited the land of his birth. Our next glimpse of him is on his passing the toll-bar of Newstead. Mrs. Byron asked the old woman who kept it, "Who is the next heir?" and on her answer "They say it is a little boy who lives at Aberdeen," "This is he, bless him!" exclaimed the nurse.

Returned to the ancestral Abbey, and finding it half ruined and desolate, they migrated for a time to the neighbouring Nottingham. Here the child's first experience was another course of surgical torture. He was placed under the charge of a quack named Lavender, who rubbed his foot in oil, and screwed it about in wooden machines. This useless treatment is associated with two characteristic anecdotes. One relates to the endurance which Byron, on every occasion of mere physical trial, was capable of displaying. Mr. Rogers, a private tutor, with whom he was reading passages of Virgil and Cicero, remarked, "It makes me uncomfortable, my lord, to see you sitting there in such pain as I know you must be suffering." "Never

mind, Mr. Rogers," said the child, "you shall not see any signs of it in me." The other illustrates his precocious delight in detecting imposture. Having scribbled on a piece of paper several lines of mere gibberish, he brought them to Lavender, and gravely asked what language it was; and on receiving the answer, "It is Italian," he broke into an exultant laugh at the expense of his tormentor. Another story survives, of his vindictive spirit giving birth to his first rhymes. A meddling old lady, who used to visit his mother and was possessed of a curious belief in a future transmigration to our satellite—the bleakness of whose scenery she had not realized—having given him some cause of offence, he stormed out to his nurse that he "could not bear the sight of the witch," and vented his wrath in the couplet,—

" In Nottingham county there lives, at Swan Green,
As curst an old lady as ever was seen ;
And when she does die, which I hope will be soon,
She firmly believes she will go to the moon."

The poet himself dates his "first dash into poetry" a year later (1800), from his juvenile passion for his cousin Margaret Parker, whose subsequent death from an injury caused by a fall he afterwards deplored in a forgotten elegy. "I do not recollect," he writes through the transfiguring mists of memory, "anything equal to the *transparent* beauty of my cousin, or to the sweetness of her temper, during the short period of our intimacy. She looked as if she had been made out of a rainbow—all beauty and peace. My passion had the usual effects upon me—I could not sleep; I could not eat; I could not rest. It was the texture of my life to think of the time that must elapse before we could meet again. But I was a fool then, and not much wiser now." *Sic transit secunda.*

The departure at a somewhat earlier date of May Gray for her native country gave rise to evidence of another kind of affection. On her leaving, he presented her with his first watch, and a miniature by Kay, of Edinburgh, representing him with a bow and arrow in his hand and a profusion of hair over his shoulders. He continued to correspond with her at intervals. Byron was always beloved by his servants. This nurse afterwards married well, and during her last illness, in 1827, communicated to her attendant, Dr. Ewing, of Aberdeen, recollections of the poet, from which his biographers have drawn.

In the summer of 1799 he was sent to London, entrusted to the medical care of Dr. Baillie (brother of Joanna, the dramatist), and placed in a boarding school at Dulwich, under the charge of Dr. Glennie. The physician advised a moderation in athletic sports, which the patient in his hours of liberty was constantly apt to exceed. The teacher—who continued to cherish an affectionate remembrance of his pupil, even when he was told, on a visit to Geneva in 1817, that he ought to have “made a better boy of him”—testifies to the alacrity with which he entered on his tasks, his playful good-humour with his comrades, his reading in history beyond his age, and his intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures. “In my study,” he states, “he found many books open to him; among others, a set of our poets from Chaucer to Churchill, which I am almost tempted to say he had more than once perused from beginning to end.” One of the books referred to was the *Narrative of the Shipwreck of the “Juno,”* which contains, almost word for word, the account of the “two fathers,” in *Don Juan*. Meanwhile Mrs. Byron—whose reduced income had been opportunely augmented by a grant of a 300*l.* annuity from the

Civil List—after revisiting Newstead, followed her son to London, and took up her residence in a house in Sloane-terrace. She was in the habit of having him with her there from Saturday to Monday, kept him from school for weeks, introduced him to idle company, and in other ways was continually hampering his progress.

Byron on his accession to the peerage, having become a ward in Chancery, was handed over by the Court to the guardianship of Lord Carlisle, nephew of the admiral, and son of the grand-aunt of the poet. Like his mother, this earl aspired to be a poet, and his tragedy, *The Father's Revenge*, received some commendation from Dr. Johnson; but his relations with his illustrious kinsman were from the first unsatisfactory. In answer to Dr. Glennie's appeal, he exerted his authority against the interruptions to his ward's education; but the attempt to mend matters led to such outrageous exhibitions of temper that he said to the master, "I can have nothing more to do with Mrs. Byron; you must now manage her as you can." Finally, after two years of work, which she had done her best to mar, she herself requested his guardian to have her son removed to a public school, and accordingly he went to Harrow, where he remained till the autumn of 1805. The first vacation, in the summer of 1801, is marked by his visit to Cheltenham, where his mother, from whom he inherited a fair amount of Scotch superstition, consulted a fortune-teller, who said he would be twice married, the second time to a foreigner.

Harrow was then under the management of Dr. Joseph Drury, one of the most estimable of its distinguished head-masters. His account of the first impressions produced by his pupil, and his judicious manner of handling a sensitive nature, cannot with advantage be condensed.

“ Mr. Hanson,” he writes, “ Lord Byron’s solicitor, con- signed him to my care at the age of thirteen and a half; with remarks that his education had been neglected; that he was ill prepared for a public school; but that he thought there was a *cleverness* about him. After his departure I took my young disciple into my study, and endeavoured to bring him forward by inquiries as to his former amusements, employments, and associates, but with little or no effect, and I soon found that a wild mountain colt had been submitted to my management. But there was mind in his eye. In the first place, it was necessary to attach him to an elder boy; but the information he received gave him no pleasure when he heard of the advances of some much younger than himself. This I discovered, and assured him that he should not be placed till by diligence he might rank with those of his own age. His manner and temper soon convinced me that he might be led by a silken string to a point, rather than a cable: on that principle I acted.”

After a time, Dr. Drury tells us that he waited on Lord Carlisle, who wished to give some information about his ward’s property and to inquire respecting his abilities, and continues: “ On the former circumstance I made no remark; as to the latter I replied, ‘ He has talents, my lord, which will add lustre to his rank.’ ‘ Indeed!’ said his lordship, with a degree of surprise that, according to my feeling, did not express in it all the satisfaction I expected.” With, perhaps, unconscious humour on the part of the writer, we are left in doubt as to whether the indifference proceeded from the jealousy that clings to poetasters, from incredulity, or a feeling that no talent could add lustre to rank.

In 1804 Byron refers to the antipathy his mother had

to his guardian. Later he expresses gratitude for some unknown service, in recognition of which the second edition of the *Hours of Idleness* was dedicated "by his obliged ward and affectionate kinsman," to Lord Carlisle. The tribute being coldly received, led to fresh estrangement, and when Byron, on his coming of age, wrote to remind the earl of the fact, in expectation of being introduced to the House of Peers, he had for answer a mere formal statement of its rules. This rebuff affected him as Addison's praise of Tickell affected Pope, and the following lines were published in the March of the same year:—

"Lords too are bards ! such things at times befall,
And 'tis some praise in peers to write at all.
Yet did or taste or reason sway the times,
Ah ! who would take their titles with their rhymes.
Roscommon ! Sheffield ! with your spirits fled,
No future laurels deck a noble head ;
No muse will cheer, with renovating smile,
The paralytic puling of Carlisle."

In prose he adds, " If, before I escaped from my teens, I said anything in favour of his lordship's paper-books it was in the way of dutiful dedication, and more from the advice of others than my own judgment ; and I seize the first opportunity of pronouncing my sincere recantation." As was frequently the case with him, he recanted again. In a letter of 1814 he expressed to Rogers his regret for his sarcasms ; and in his reference to the death of the Hon. Frederick Howard, in the third canto of *Childe Harold*, he tried to make amends in the lines—

" Yet one I would select from that proud throng,
Partly because they blend me with his line,
And partly that I did his sire some wrong."

This is all of any interest we know regarding the fitful connection of the guardian and ward.

Towards Dr. Drury the poet continued through life to cherish sentiments of gratitude, and always spoke of him with veneration. "He was," he says, "the best, the kindest (and yet strict too) friend I ever had; and I look on him still as a father, whose warnings I have remembered but too well, though too late, when I have erred, and whose counsel I have but followed when I have done well or wisely."

Great educational institutions must consult the greatest good of the greatest number of commonplace minds, by regulations against which genius is apt to kick; and Byron, who was by nature and lack of discipline peculiarly ill-fitted to conform to routine, confesses that till the last year and a half he hated Harrow. He never took kindly to the studies of the place, and was at no time an accurate scholar. In the *Bards and Reviewers*, and elsewhere, he evinces considerable familiarity with the leading authors of antiquity, but it is doubtful whether he was able to read any of the more difficult of them in the original. His translations are generally commonplace, and from the marks on his books he must have often failed to trust his memory for the meanings of the most ordinary Greek words. To the well-known passage in *Childe Harold* on Soracte and the "Latian echoes" he appends a prose comment which preserves its interest as bearing on recent educational controversies: "I wish to express that we become tired of the task before we can comprehend the beauty; that we learn by rote before we get by heart; that the freshness is worn away, and the future pleasure and advantage deadened and destroyed, at an age when we can neither feel nor understand the power of composition, which

it requires an acquaintance with life, as well as Latin and Greek, to relish or to reason upon. . . . In some parts of the continent young persons are taught from common authors, and do not read the best classics till their maturity."

Comparatively slight stress was then laid on modern languages. Byron learnt to read French with fluency, as he certainly made himself familiar with the great works of the eighteenth century; but he spoke it with so little ease or accuracy that the fact was always a stumbling-block to his meeting Frenchmen abroad. Of German he had a mere smattering. Italian was the only language, besides his own, of which he was ever a master. But the extent and variety of his general reading was remarkable. His list of books, drawn up in 1807, includes more history and biography than most men of education read during a long life; a fair load of philosophy; the poets *en masse*; among orators, Demosthenes, Cicero, and Parliamentary debates from the Revolution to the year 1742; pretty copious divinity, including Blair, Tillotson, Hooker, with the characteristic addition—"all very tiresome. I abhor books of religion, though I reverence and love my God without the blasphemous notions of sectaries." Lastly, under the head of "Miscellanies" we have *Spectator*, *Rambler*, *World*, &c., &c.; among novels, the works of Cervantes, Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, Mackenzie, Sterne, Rabelais, and Rousseau. He recommends Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* as the best storehouse for second-hand quotations, as Sterne and others have found it, and tells us that the great part of the books named were perused before the age of fifteen. Making allowance for the fact that most of the poet's autobiographic sketches are emphatically "*Dichtung und Wahrheit*," we can believe that he was an omnivorous reader—"I read eating, read

in bed, read when no one else reads"—and, having a memory only less retentive than Macaulay's, acquired so much general information as to be suspected of picking it up from Reviews. He himself declares that he never read a Review till he was eighteen years old—when he himself wrote one, utterly worthless, on Wordsworth.

At Harrow, Byron proved himself capable of violent fits of work, but of "few continuous drudgeries." He would turn out an unusual number of hexameters, and again lapse into as much idleness as the teachers would tolerate. His forte was in declamation: his attitude and delivery, and power of extemporizing, surprised even critical listeners into unguarded praise. "My qualities," he says, "were much more oratorical and martial than poetical; no one had the least notion that I should subside into poesy." Unpopular at first, he began to like school when he had fought his way to be a champion, and from his energy in sports more than from the impression produced by his talents had come to be recognized as a leader among his fellows. Unfortunately, towards the close of his course, in 1805, the headship of Harrow changed hands. Dr. Drury retired, and was succeeded by Dr. Butler. This event suggested the lines beginning—

"Where are those honours, Ida, once your own,
When Probus fill'd your magisterial throne?"

The appointment was generally unpopular among the boys, whose sympathies were enlisted in favour of Henry Drury, the son of their former master, and Dr. Butler seems for a time to have had considerable difficulty in maintaining discipline. Byron, always "famous for rowing," was a ringleader of the rebellious party, and compared himself to Tyrtæus. On one occasion he tore down the window

gratings in a room of the school-house, with the remark that they darkened the hall; on another he is reported to have refused a dinner invitation from the master, with the impertinent remark that he would never think of asking him in return to dine at Newstead. On the other hand, he seems to have set limits to the mutiny, and prevented some of the boys from setting their desks on fire by pointing to their fathers' names carved on them. Byron afterwards expressed regret for his rudeness; but Butler remains in his verse as "Pomposus of narrow brain, yet of a narrower soul."

Of the poet's free hours, during the last years of his residence, which he refers to as among the happiest of his life, many were spent in solitary musing by an elm-tree, near a tomb to which his name has been given—a spot commanding a far view of London, of Windsor "blossomed high in tufted trees," and of the green fields that stretch between, covered in spring with the white and red snow of apple blossom. The others were devoted to the society of his chosen comrades. Byron, if not one of the safest, was one of the warmest of friends, and he plucked the more eagerly at the choicest fruit of English public school and college life, from the feeling he so pathetically expresses,—

"Is there no cause beyond the common claim,
 Endear'd to all in childhood's very name?
 Ah, sure some stronger impulse vibrates here,
 Which whispers Friendship will be doubly dear
 To one who thus for kindred hearts must roam,
 And seek abroad the love denied at home.
 Those hearts, dear Ida, have I found in thee—
 A home, a world, a paradise to me."

Of his Harrow intimates, the most prominent were the Duke of Dorset, the poet's favoured fag; Lord Clare (the

Lycus of the *Childish Recollections*); Lord Delawarr (the Euryalus); John Wingfield (Alonzo), who died at Coimbra, 1811; Cecil Tattersall (Davus); Edward Noel Long (Cleon); Wildman, afterwards proprietor of Newstead; and Sir Robert Peel. Of the last, his form-fellow and most famous of his mates, the story is told of his being unmercifully beaten for offering resistance to his fag master, and Byron rushing up to intercede with an offer to take half the blows. Peel was an exact contemporary, having been born in the same year, 1788. It has been remarked that most of the poet's associates were his juniors, and, less fairly, that he liked to regard them as his satellites. But even at Dulwich his ostentation of rank had provoked for him the nickname of "the old English baron." To Wildman, who, as a senior, had a right of inflicting chastisement for offences, he said, "I find you have got Delawarr on your list; pray don't lick him." "Why not?" was the reply. "Why, I don't know, except that he is a brother peer." Again, he interfered with the more effectual arm of physical force to rescue a junior protégé—lame like himself, and otherwise much weaker—from the ill-treatment of some hulking tyrant. "Harness," he said, "if any one bullies you, tell me, and I'll thrash him if I can;" and he kept his word. Harness became an accomplished clergyman and minor poet, and has left some pleasing reminiscences of his former patron. The prodigy of the school, George Sinclair, was in the habit of writing the poet's exercises, and getting his battles fought for him in return. His bosom friend was Lord Clare. To him his confidences were most freely given, and his most affectionate verses addressed. In the characteristic stanzas entitled "L'amitié est l'amour sans ailes," we feel as if between them the qualifying phrase

might have been omitted ; for their letters, carefully preserved on either side, are a record of the jealous complaints and the reconciliations of lovers. In 1821 Byron writes, "I never hear the name Clare without a beating of the heart even now ; and I write it with the feelings of 1803-4-5, *ad infinitum*." At the same date he says of an accidental meeting : "It annihilated for a moment all the years between the present time and the days of Harrow. It was a new and inexplicable feeling, like a rising from the grave to me. Clare too was much agitated—more in appearance than I was myself—for I could feel his heart beat to his fingers' ends, unless, indeed, it was the pulse of my own which made me think so. We were but five minutes together on the public road, but I hardly recollect an hour of my existence that could be weighed against them." They were "all that brothers should be but the name ;" and it is interesting to trace this relationship between the greatest genius of the new time and the son of the statesman who, in the preceding age, stands out serene and strong amid the swarm of turbulent rioters and ranting orators by whom he was surrounded and reviled.

Before leaving Harrow the poet had passed through the experience of a passion of another kind, with a result that unhappily coloured his life. Accounts differ as to his first meeting with Mary Ann Chaworth, the heiress of the family whose estates adjoined his own, and daughter of the race that had held with his such varied relations. In one of his letters he dates the introduction previous to his trip to Cheltenham, but it seems not to have ripened into intimacy till a later period. Byron, who had, in the autumn of 1802, visited his mother at Bath, joined in a masquerade there, and attracted attention by the liveliness of his manners. In the following year Mrs. Byron again

settled at Nottingham, and in the course of a second and longer visit to her he frequently passed the night at the Abbey, of which Lord Grey de Ruthven was then a temporary tenant. This was the occasion of his renewing his acquaintance with the Chaworths, who invited him to their seat at Annesley. He used at first to return every evening to Newstead, giving the excuse that the family pictures would come down and take revenge on him for his grand-uncle's deed, a fancy repeated in the *Siege of Corinth*. Latterly he consented to stay at Annesley, which thus became his headquarters during the remainder of the holidays of 1803. The rest of the six weeks were mainly consumed in an excursion to Matlock and Castleton, in the same companionship. This short period, with the exception of prologue and epilogue, embraced the whole story of his first real love. Byron was on this occasion in earnest; he wished to marry Miss Chaworth, an event which, he says, would have "joined broad lands, healed an old feud, and satisfied at least one heart."

The intensity of his passion is suggestively brought before us in an account of his crossing the Styx of the Peak cavern, alone with the lady and the Charon of the boat. In the same passage he informs us that he had never told his love; but that she had discovered—it is obvious that she never returned—it. We have another vivid picture of his irritation when she was waltzing in his presence at Matlock; then an account of their riding together in the country on their return to the family residence; again, of his bending over the piano as she was playing the Welsh air of "Mary Anne;" and, lastly, of his overhearing her heartless speech to her maid, which first opened his eyes to the real state of affairs—"Do you think I could care for that lame boy?"—upon which he rushed out of the

house, and ran, like a hunted creature, to Newstead. Thence he shortly returned from the rougher school of life to his haunts and tasks at Harrow. A year later the pair again met to take farewell, on the hill of Annesley—an incident he has commemorated in two short stanzas, that have the sound of a wind moaning over a moor. “I suppose,” he said, “the next time I see you, you will be Mrs. Chaworth?” “I hope so,” she replied (her betrothed, Mr. Musters, had agreed to assume her family name). The announcement of her marriage, which took place in August, 1805, was made to him by his mother, with the remark, “I have some news for you. Take out your handkerchief; you will require it.” On hearing what she had to say, with forced calm he turned the conversation to other subjects; but he was long haunted by a loss which he has made the theme of many of his verses. In 1807 he sent to the lady herself the lines beginning—

“O had my fate been joined with thine.”

In the following year he accepted an invitation to dine at Annesley, and was visibly affected by the sight of the infant daughter of Mrs. Chaworth, to whom he addressed a touching congratulation. Shortly afterwards, when about to leave England for the first time, he finally addressed her in the stanzas—

“’Tis done, and shivering in the gale,
The bark unfurls her snowy sail.”

Some years later, having an opportunity of revisiting the family of his successful rival, Mrs. Leigh dissuaded him. “Don’t go,” she said, “for if you do you will certainly fall in love again, and there will be a scene.” The romance of the story culminates in the famous *Dream*, a

poem of unequal merit, but containing passages of real pathos, written in the year 1816 at Diodati, as we are told, amid a flood of tears.

Miss Chaworth's attractions, beyond those of personal beauty, seem to have been mainly due—a common occurrence—to the poet's imagination. A young lady, two years his senior, of a lively and volatile temper, she enjoyed the stolen interviews at the gate between the grounds, and laughed at the ardent letters, passed through a confidant, of the still awkward youth whom she regarded as a boy. She had no intuition to divine the presence, or appreciate the worship, of one of the future master-minds of England, nor any ambition to ally herself with the wild race of Newstead, and preferred her hale, commonplace, fox-hunting squire. "She was the beau ideal," says Byron, in his first accurate prose account of the affair, written 1823, a few days before his departure for Greece, "of all that my youthful fancy could paint of beautiful. And I have taken all my fables about the celestial nature of women from the perfection my imagination created in her. I say created; for I found her, like the rest of the sex, anything but angelic."

Mrs. Musters (her husband re-asserted his right to his own name) had in the long-run reason to regret her choice. The ill-assorted pair, after some unhappy years, resolved on separation; and falling into bad health and worse spirits, the "bright morning star of Annesley" passed under a cloud of mental darkness. She died, in 1832, of fright caused by a Nottingham riot. On the decease of Musters, in 1850, every relic of her ancient family was sold by auction and scattered to the winds.

CHAPTER III.

CAMBRIDGE, AND FIRST PERIOD OF AUTHORSHIP.

IN October, 1805, on the advice of Dr. Drury, Byron was removed to Trinity College, Cambridge, and kept up a connexion with the University for less than three years of very irregular attendance, during which we hear nothing of his studies, except the contempt for them expressed in some of the least effective passages of his early satires. He came into residence in bad temper and low spirits. His attachment to Harrow characteristically redoubled as the time drew near to leave it, and his rest was broken "for the last quarter, with counting the hours that remained." He was about to start by himself, with the heavy feeling that he was no longer a boy, and yet against his choice, for he wished to go to Oxford. The *Hours of Idleness*, the product of this period, are fairly named. He was so idle as regards "problems mathematic," and "barbarous Latin," that it is matter of surprise to learn that he was able to take his degree, as he did, in March, 1808.

A good German critic, dwelling on the comparatively narrow range of studies to which the energies of Cambridge were then mainly directed, adds, somewhat rashly, that English national literature stands for the most part beyond the range of the academic circle. This statement is often reiterated with persistent inaccuracy; but the

most casual reference to biography informs us that at least four-fifths of the leading statesmen, reformers, and philosophers of England have been nurtured within the walls of her universities, and cherished a portion of their spirit. From them have sprung the intellectual fires that have, at every crisis of our history, kindled the nation into a new life; from the age of Wycliffe, through those of Latimer, Locke, Gibbon, Macaulay, to the present reign of the Physicists, comparatively few of the motors of their age have been wholly "without the academic circle." Analysing with the same view the lives of the British poets of real note from Barbour to Tennyson, we find the proportion of University men increases. "Poeta nascitur et fit;" and if the demands of technical routine have sometimes tended to stifle the comparative repose of a seclusion "unravaged" by the fierce activities around it, the habit of dwelling on the old wisdom and harping on the ancient strings, is calculated to foster the poetic temper and enrich its resources. The discouraging effect of a sometimes supercilious and conservative criticism is not an un-mixed evil. The verse-writer who can be snuffed out by the cavils of a tutorial drone is a poetaster silenced for his country's good. It is true, however, that to original minds, bubbling with spontaneity, or arrogant with the consciousness of power, the discipline is hard, and the restraint excessive; and that the men whom their colleges are most proud to remember, have handled them severely. Bacon inveighs against the scholastic trifling of his day; Milton talks of the waste of time on litigious brawling; Locke mocks at the logic of the schools; Cowley complains of being taught words, not things; Gibbon rejoices over his escape from the port and prejudice of Magdalen; Wordsworth contemns the "trade in classic niceties," and

roves "in magisterial liberty" by the Cam, as afterwards among the hills.

But all those hostile critics owe much to the object of their animadversion. Any schoolboy can refer the preference of Light to Fruit in the *Novum Organum*, half of *Comus* and *Lycidas*, the stately periods of the *Decline and Fall*, and the severe beauties of *Laodamia*, to the better influences of academic training on the minds of their authors. Similarly, the richest pages of Byron's work—from the date of *The Curse of Minerva* to that of the "Isles of Greece"—are brightened by lights and adorned by allusions due to his training, imperfect as it was, on the slopes of Harrow, and the associations fostered during his truant years by the sluggish stream of his "Injusta noverca." At her, however, he continued to rail as late as the publication of *Beppo*, in the 75th and 76th stanzas of which we find another cause of complaint—

"One hates an author that's all author, fellows
In foolscap uniforms turn'd up with ink—
So very anxious, clever, fine, and jealous,
One don't know what to say to them, or think."

Then, after commending Scott, Rogers, and Moore for being men of the world, he proceeds:—

"But for the children of the 'mighty mothers,'
The would-be wits and can't-be gentlemen,
I leave them to the daily 'Tea is ready,'
Snug coterie, and literary lady."

This attack, which called forth a counter-invective of unusual ferocity from some unknown scribbler, is the expression of a sentiment which, sound enough within limits, Byron pushed to an extreme. He had a rooted dislike of professional *littérateurs*, and was always haunted by a dread

that they would claim equality with him on the common ground of authorship. He aspired through life to the superiority of a double distinction—that of a peer among poets, and a poet among peers. In this same spirit he resented the comparison frequently made between him and Rousseau, and insisted on points of contrast. “He had a bad memory—I a good one. He was of the people—I of the aristocracy.” Byron was capable of unbending where the difference of rank was so great that it could not be ignored. On this principle we may explain his enthusiastic regard for the chorister Eddlestone, from whom he received the cornelian that is the theme of some of his verses, and whose untimely death in 1811 he sincerely mourned.

Of his Harrow friends, Harness and Long in due course followed him to Cambridge, where their common pursuits were renewed. With the latter—who was drowned in 1809, on a passage to Lisbon with his regiment—he spent a considerable portion of his time on the Cam, swimming and diving, in which art they were so expert as to pick up eggs, plates, thimbles, and coins from a depth of fourteen feet—incidents recalled to the poet’s mind by reading Milton’s invocation to Sabrina. During the same period he distinguished himself at cricket, as in boxing, riding, and shooting. Of his skill as a rider there are various accounts. He was an undoubted marksman, and his habit of carrying about pistols, and use of them wherever he went, was often a source of annoyance and alarm. He professed a theoretical objection to duelling, but was as ready to take a challenge as Scott, and more ready to send one.

Regarding the masters and professors of Cambridge, Byron has little to say. His own tutor, Tavell, appears pleasantly enough in his verse, and he commends the head

of his college, Dr. Lort Mansel, for dignified demeanour in his office and a past reputation for convivial wit. His attentions to Professor Hailstone at Harrowgate were graciously offered and received; but in a letter to Murray he gives a graphically abusive account of Porson, "hiccuping Greek like a Helot" in his cups. The poet was first introduced at Cambridge to a brilliant circle of contemporaries, whose talents or attainments soon made them more or less conspicuous, and most of whom are interesting on their own account as well as from their connexion with the subsequent phases of his career. By common consent Charles Skinner Matthews, son of the member for Herefordshire, 1802-6, was the most remarkable of the group. Distinguished alike for scholarship, physical and mental courage, subtlety of thought, humour of fancy, and fascinations of character, this young man seems to have made an impression on the undergraduates of his own, similar to that left by Charles Austin on those of a later generation. The loss of this friend Byron always regarded as an incalculable calamity. In a note to *Childe Harold* he writes: "I should have ventured on a verse to the memory of Matthews, were he not too much above all praise of mine. His powers of mind shown in the attainment of greater honours, against the ablest candidates, than those of any graduate on record at Cambridge, have sufficiently established his fame on the spot where it was acquired; while his softer qualities live in the recollection of friends who loved him too well to envy his superiority." He was drowned when bathing alone among the reeds of the Cam, in the summer of 1811.

In a letter written from Ravenna in 1820, Byron, in answer to a request for contributions to a proposed memoir, introduces into his notes much autobiographical matter.

In reference to a joint visit to Newstead he writes: "Matthews and myself had travelled down from London together, talking all the way incessantly upon one single topic. When we got to Loughborough, I know not what chasm had made us diverge for a moment to some other subject, at which he was indignant. 'Come,' said he, 'don't let us break through; let us go on as we began, to our journey's end;' and so he continued, and was as entertaining as ever to the very end. He had previously occupied, during my year's absence from Cambridge, my rooms in Trinity, with the furniture; and Jones (the gyp), in his odd way, had said, in putting him in, 'Mr. Matthews, I recommend to your attention not to damage any of the movables, for Lord Byron, sir, is a young man of *tumultuous passions.*' Matthews was delighted with this, and whenever anybody came to visit him, begged them to handle the very door with caution, and used to repeat Jones's admonition in his tone and manner. . . . He had the same droll sardonic way about everything. A wild Irishman, named F., one evening beginning to say something at a large supper, Matthews roared, 'Silence!' and then, pointing to F., cried out, in the words of the oracle, 'Orson is endowed with reason.' When Sir Henry Smith was expelled from Cambridge for a row with a tradesman named 'Hiron,' Matthews solaced himself with shouting under Hiron's windows every evening—

'Ah me! what perils do environ
The man who meddles with hot Hiron!'

He was also of that band of scoffers who used to rouse Lort Mansel from his slumbers in the lodge of Trinity; and when he appeared at the window, foaming with wrath, and crying out, 'I know you, gentlemen—I know you!'

were wont to reply, 'We beseech thee to hear us, good Lort. Good Lort, deliver us!' "

The whole letter, written in the poet's mature and natural style, gives a vivid picture of the social life and surroundings of his Cambridge days: how much of the set and sententious moralizing of some of his formal biographers might we not have spared, for a report of the conversation on the road from London to Newstead. Of the others gathered round the same centre, Scrope Davies enlisted the largest share of Byron's affections. To him he wrote after the catastrophe: "Come to me, Scrope; I am almost desolate—left alone in the world. I had but you, and H., and M., and let me enjoy the survivors while I can." Later he says, "Matthews, Davies, Hobhouse, and myself formed a coterie of our own. Davies has always beaten us all in the war of words, and by colloquial powers at once delighted and kept us in order; even M. yielded to the dashing vivacity of S. D." The last is everywhere commended for the brilliancy of his wit and repartee: he was never afraid to speak the truth. Once when the poet, in one of his fits of petulance, exclaimed, intending to produce a terrible impression, "I shall go *mad!*" Davies calmly and cuttingly observed, "It is much more like silliness than madness!" He was the only man who ever laid Byron under any serious pecuniary obligation, having lent him 4800*l.* in some time of strait. This was repaid on March 27, 1814, when the pair sat up over champagne and claret from six till midnight, after which "Scrope could not be got into the carriage on the way home, but remained tipsy and pious on his knees." Davies was much disconcerted at the influence which the sceptical opinions of Matthews threatened to exercise over Byron's mind. The fourth of this quadrangle of amity was John

Cam Hobhouse, afterwards Lord Broughton, the steadfast friend of the poet's whole life, the companion of his travels, the witness of his marriage, the executor of his will, the zealous guardian and vindicator of his fame. His ability is abundantly attested by the impression he left on his contemporaries, his published description of the Pilgrimage, and subsequent literary and political career. Byron bears witness to the warmth of his affections and the charms of his conversation, and to the candour which, as he confessed to Lady Blessington, sometimes tried his patience. There is little doubt that they had some misunderstanding when travelling together, but it was a passing cloud. Eighteen months after his return the poet admits that Hobhouse was his best friend; and when he unexpectedly walked up the stairs of the Palazzo Lanfranchi, at Pisa, Madame Guiccioli informs us that Byron was seized with such violent emotion, and so extreme an excess of joy, that it seemed to take away his strength, and he was forced to sit down in tears.

On the edge of this inner circle, and in many respects associated with it, was the Rev. Francis Hodgson, a ripe scholar, good translator, a sound critic, a fluent writer of graceful verse, and a large-hearted divine, whose correspondence, recently edited with a connecting narrative by his son, has thrown light on disputed passages of Lord Byron's life. The views entertained by the friends on literary matters were almost identical; they both fought under the standards of the classic school; they resented the same criticisms, they applauded the same successes, and were bound together by the strong tie of mutual admiration. Byron commends Hodgson's verses, and encourages him to write; Hodgson recognizes in the *Bards and Reviewers* and the early cantos of *Childe Harold* the

promise of *Manfred* and *Cain*. Among the associates who strove to bring the poet back to the anchorage of fixed belief, and to wean him from the error of his thoughts, Francis Hodgson was the most charitable, and therefore the most judicious. That his cautions and exhortations were never stultified by pedantry or excessive dogmatism, is apparent from the frank and unguarded answers which they called forth. In several, which are preserved, and some for the first time reproduced in the recently-published Memoir, we are struck by the mixture of audacity and superficial dogmatism, sometimes amounting to effrontery, that is apt to characterize the negations of a youthful sceptic. In September, 1811, Byron writes from Newstead: "I will have nothing to do with your immortality; we are miserable enough in this life, without the absurdity of speculating upon another. Christ came to save men, but a good Pagan will go to heaven, and a bad Nazarene to hell. I am no Platonist, I am nothing at all; but I would sooner be a Paulician, Manichean, Spinozist, G ntile, Pyrrhonian, Zoroastrian, than one of the seventy-two villainous sects who are tearing each other to pieces for the love of the Lord and hatred of each other. I will bring ten Mussulmen, shall shame you all in good-will towards men and prayer to God." On a similar outburst in verse, the Rev. F. Hodgson comments with a sweet humanity, "The poor dear soul meant nothing of this." Elsewhere the poet writes, "I have read Watson to Gibbon. He proves nothing; so I am where I was, verging towards Spinoza; and yet it is a gloomy creed; and I want a better; but there is something pagan in me that I cannot shake off. *In short, I deny nothing, but doubt everything.*" But his early attitude on matters of religion is best set forth in a letter to Gifford, of 1813, in which he says, "I am no bigot

to infidelity, and did not expect that, because I doubted the immortality of man, I should be charged with denying the existence of a God. It was the comparative insignificance of ourselves and our world, when placed in comparison of the mighty whole of which man is an atom, that first led me to imagine that our pretensions to eternity might be overrated. This, and being early disgusted with a Calvinistic Scotch school, where I was cudgelled to church for the first ten years of my life, afflicted me with this malady; for, after all, it is, I believe, a disease of the mind, as much as other kinds of hypochondria.”

Hodgson was a type of friendly forbearance and loyal attachment, which had for their return a perfect open-heartedness in his correspondent. To no one did the poet more freely abuse himself; to no one did he indulge in more reckless sallies of humour; to no one did he more readily betray his little conceits. From him Byron sought and received advice, and he owed to him the prevention of what might have been a most foolish and disastrous encounter. On the other hand, the clergyman was the recipient of one of the poet's many single-hearted acts of munificence—a gift of 1000*l.*, to pay off debts to which he had been left heir. In a letter to his uncle, the former gratefully alludes to this generosity: “Oh, if you knew the exultation of heart, aye, and of head too, I feel at being free from those depressing embarrassments, you would, as I do, bless my dearest friend and brother, Byron.” The whole transaction is a pleasing record of a benefit that was neither sooner nor later resented by the receiver.

Among other associates of the same group should be mentioned Henry Drury—long Hodgson's intimate friend, and ultimately his brother-in-law, to whom many of Byron's first series of letters from abroad are addressed—

and Robert Charles Dallas, a name surrounded with various associations, who played a not insignificant part in Byron's history, and, after his death, helped to swell the throng of his annotators. This gentleman, a connexion by marriage, and author of some now forgotten novels, first made acquaintance with the poet in London early in 1808, when we have two letters from Byron, in answer to some compliment on his early volume, in which, though addressing his correspondent merely as "Sir," his flippancy and habit of boasting of excessive badness reach an absurd climax.

Meanwhile, during the intervals of his attendance at college, Byron had made other friends. His vacations were divided between London and Southwell, a small town on the road from Mansfield and Newark, once a refuge of Charles I., and still adorned by an old Norman minster. Here Mrs. Byron for several summer seasons took up her abode, and was frequently joined by her son. He was introduced to John Pigot, a medical student of Edinburgh, and his sister Elizabeth, both endowed with talents above the average, and keenly interested in literary pursuits, to whom a number of his letters are addressed; also to the Rev. J. T. Becher, author of a treatise on the state of the poor, to whom he was indebted for encouragement and counsel. The poet often rails at the place, which he found dull in comparison with Cambridge and London; writing from the latter, in 1807: "O Southwell, how I rejoice to have left thee! and how I curse the heavy hours I dragged along for so many months among the Mohawks who inhabit your kraals!" and adding that his sole satisfaction during his residence there was having pared off some pounds of flesh. Notwithstanding, in the small but select society of this inland watering-place he passed, on the whole, a pleasant time—listening to the music of the

simple ballads in which he delighted, taking part in the performances of the local theatre, making excursions, and writing verses. This otherwise quiet time was disturbed by exhibitions of violence on the part of Mrs. Byron, which suggest the idea of insanity. After one more outrageous than usual, both mother and son are said to have gone to the neighbouring apothecary, each to request him not to supply the other with poison. On a later occasion, when he had been meeting her bursts of rage with stubborn mockery, she flung a poker at his head, and narrowly missed her aim. Upon this he took flight to London, and his Hydra or Alecto, as he calls her, followed: on their meeting, a truce was patched, and they withdrew in opposite directions, she back to Southwell, he to refresh himself on the Sussex coast, till in the August of the same year (1806) he again rejoined her. Shortly afterwards we have from Pigot a description of a trip to Harrowgate, when his lordship's favourite Newfoundland, Boatswain, whose relation to his master recalls that of Bounce to Pope, or Maida to Scott, sat on the box.

In November Byron printed for private circulation the first issue of his juvenile poems. Mr. Becher having called his attention to one which he thought objectionable, the impression was destroyed; and the author set to work upon another, which, at once weeded and amplified, saw the light in January, 1807. He sent copies, under the title of *Juvenilia*, to several of his friends, and among others to Henry Mackenzie (the Man of Feeling), and to Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee. Encouraged by their favourable notices, he determined to appeal to a wider audience, and in March, 1807, the *Hours of Idleness*, still proceeding from the local press at Newark, were given to

the world. In June we find the poet again writing from his college rooms, dwelling with boyish detail on his growth in height and reduction in girth, his late hours and heavy potations, his comrades, and the prospects of his book. From July to September he dates from London, excited by the praises of some now obscure magazine, and planning a journey to the Hebrides. In October he is again settled at Cambridge, and in a letter to Miss Pigot, makes a humorous reference to one of his fantastic freaks: "I have got a new friend, the finest in the world—a *tame bear*. When I brought him here, they asked me what I meant to do with him, and my reply was, 'He should sit for a fellowship.' This answer delighted them not." The greater part of the spring and summer of 1808 was spent at Dorant's Hotel, Albemarle Street. Left to himself, he seems during this period for the first time to have freely indulged in dissipations, which are in most lives more or less carefully concealed. But Byron, with almost unparalleled folly, was perpetually taking the public into his confidence, and all his "sins of blood," with the strange additions of an imaginative effrontery, have been thrust before us in a manner which even Théophile Gautier might have thought indelicate. Nature and circumstances conspired to the result. With passions which he is fond of comparing to the fires of Vesuvius and Hecla, he was, on his entrance into a social life which his rank helped to surround with temptations, unconscious of any sufficient motive for resisting them; he had no one to restrain him from the whim of the moment, or with sufficient authority to give him effective advice. A temperament of general despondency, relieved by reckless outbursts of animal spirits, is the least favourable to habitual

self-control. The melancholy of Byron was not of the pensive and innocent kind attributed to Cowley, rather that of the *μελαγχολικοί* of whom Aristotle asserts, with profound psychological or physiological intuition, that they are *ἀεὶ ἐν σφοδρᾷ ὀρέξει*. The absurdity of Mr. Moore's frequent declaration, that all great poets are inly wrapt in perpetual gloom, is only to be excused by the modesty which, in the saying so, obviously excludes himself from the list. But it is true that anomalous energies are sources of incessant irritation to their possessor, until they have found their proper vent in the free exercise of his highest faculties. Byron had not yet done this, when he was rushing about between London, Brighton, Cambridge, and Newstead—shooting, gambling, swimming, alternately drinking deep and trying to starve himself into elegance, green-room hunting, travelling with disguised companions,¹ patronizing D'Egville the dancing-master, Grimaldi the clown, and taking lessons from Mr. Jackson, the distinguished professor of pugilism, to whom he afterwards affectionately refers as his "old friend and corporeal pastor and master." There is no inducement to dwell on amours devoid of romance, further than to remember that they never trenched on what the common code of the fashionable world terms dishonour. We may believe the poet's later assertion, backed by want of evidence to the contrary, that he had never been the first means of leading any one astray—a fact perhaps worthy the atten-

¹ In reference to one of these, see an interesting letter from Mr. Minto to the *Athenæum* in the year 1876, in which, with considerable though not conclusive ingenuity, he endeavours to identify the girl with "Thyrza" and with "Astarté," whom he regards as the same person.

tion of those moral worshippers of Goethe and Burns who hiss at Lord Byron's name.

Though much of this year of his life was passed unprofitably, from it dates the impulse that provoked him to put forth his powers. The *Edinburgh*, with the attack on the *Hours of Idleness*, appeared in March, 1808. This production, by Lord Brougham, is a specimen of the tomahawk style of criticism prevalent in the early years of the century, in which the main motive of the critic was, not to deal fairly with his author, but to acquire for himself an easy reputation for cleverness, by a series of smart, contemptuous sentences. Taken separately, the strictures of the *Edinburgh* are sufficiently just, and the passages quoted for censure are all bad. Byron's genius as a poet was not remarkably precocious. The *Hours of Idleness* seldom rise, either in thought or expression, very far above the average level of juvenile verse; many of the pieces in the collection are weak imitations, or commonplace descriptions; others, suggested by circumstances of local or temporary interest, had served their turn before coming into print. Their prevailing sentiment is an affectation of misanthropy, conveyed in such lines as these:—

“Weary of love, of life, devour'd with spleen,
I rest, a perfect Timon, not nineteen.”

This mawkish element unfortunately survives in much of the author's later verse. But even in this volume there are indications of force and command. The *Prayer of Nature* indeed, though previously written, was not included in the edition before the notice of the critic; but the sound of *Loch-na-Gair* and some of the stanzas on *Newstead* ought to have saved him from the mistake of

his impudent advice. The poet, who through life waited with feverish anxiety for every verdict on his work, is reported, after reading the review, to have looked like a man about to send a challenge. In the midst of a transparent show of indifference, he confesses to have drunk three bottles of claret on the evening of its appearance. But the wound did not mortify into torpor; the Sea-Kings' blood stood him in good stead, and he was not long in collecting his strength for the panther-like spring, which, gaining strength by its delay, twelve months later made it impossible for him to be contemned.

The last months of the year he spent at Newstead, vacated by the tenant, who had left the building in the tumble-down condition in which he found it. Byron was, by his own acknowledgment, at this time "heavily dipped," generosities having combined with selfish extravagances to the result; he had no funds to subject the place to anything like a thorough repair, but he busied himself in arranging a few of the rooms for his own present and his mother's after use. About this date he writes to her, beginning in his usual style, "Dear Madam," saying he has as yet no rooms ready for her reception, but that on his departure she shall be tenant till his return. During this interval he was studying Pope, and carefully maturing his own satire. In November the dog Boatswain died in a fit of madness. The event called forth the famous burst of misanthropic verse, ending with the couplet—

"To mark a friend's remains these stones arise;
I never knew but *one*, and *here* he lies;"—

and the inscription on the monument that still remains in the gardens of Newstead—

“ Near this spot
Are deposited the remains of one
Who possessed Beauty without Vanity,
Strength without Insolence,
Courage without Ferocity,
And all the virtues of Man without his Vices.
This Praise, which would be unmeaning Flattery
If inscribed over human ashes,
Is but a just tribute to the Memory of
Boatswain, a Dog,
Who was born at Newfoundland, May, 1803,
And died at Newstead Abbey, November 18, 1808.”

On January 22, 1809, his lordship's coming of age was celebrated with festivities, curtailed of their proportions by his limited means. Early in spring he paid a visit to London, bringing the proof of his satire to the publisher, Cawthorne. From St. James's Street he writes to Mrs. Byron, on the death of Lord Falkland, who had been killed in a duel, and expresses a sympathy for his family, left in destitute circumstances, whom he proceeded to relieve with a generosity only equalled by the delicacy of the manner in which it was shown. Referring to his own embarrassment, he proceeds in the expression of a resolve, often repeated, “Come what may, Newstead and I stand or fall together. I have now lived on the spot—I have fixed my heart on it; and no pressure, present or future, shall induce me to barter the last vestige of our inheritance.” He was building false hopes on the result of the suit for the Rochdale property, which, being dragged from court to court, involved him in heavy expenses, with no satisfactory result. He took his seat in the House of Lords on the 13th of March, and Mr. Dallas, who accompanied him to the bar of the House, has left an account of his somewhat unfortunate demeanour.

“His countenance, paler than usual, showed that his mind was agitated, and that he was thinking of the nobleman to whom he had once looked for a hand and countenance in his introduction. There were very few persons in the House. Lord Eldon was going through some ordinary business. When Lord Byron had taken the oaths, the Chancellor quitted his seat, and went towards him with a smile, putting out his hand warmly to welcome him; and, though I did not catch the words, I saw that he paid him some compliment. This was all thrown away upon Lord Byron, who made a stiff bow, and put the tips of his fingers into the Chancellor’s hand. The Chancellor did not press a welcome so received, but resumed his seat; while Lord Byron carelessly seated himself for a few minutes on one of the empty benches to the left of the throne, usually occupied by the lords in Opposition. When, on his joining me, I expressed what I had felt, he said, ‘If I had shaken hands heartily, he would have set me down for one of his party; but I will have nothing to do with them on either side. I have taken my seat, and now I will go abroad.’”

A few days later the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* appeared before the public. The first anonymous edition was exhausted in a month; a second, to which the author gave his name, quickly followed. He was wont at a later date to disparage this production, and frequently recanted many of his verdicts in marginal notes. Several, indeed, seem to have been dictated by feelings so transitory, that in the course of the correction of proof blame was turned into praise, and praise into blame; *i.e.*, he wrote in MS. before he met the agreeable author—

“I leave topography to coxcomb Gell;”

we have his second thought in the first edition, before he saw the *Troad*—

“I leave topography to classic Gell;”

and his third, half-way in censure, in the fifth—

“I leave topography to rapid Gell.”

Of such materials are literary judgments made!

The success of Byron's satire was due to the fact of its being the only good thing of its kind since Churchill—for in the *Baviad* and *Mæviad* only butterflies were broken upon the wheel—and to its being the first promise of a new power. The *Bards and Reviewers* also enlisted sympathy, from its vigorous attack upon the critics who had hitherto assumed the prerogative of attack. Jeffrey and Brougham were seethed in their own milk; and outsiders, whose credentials were still being examined, as Moore and Campbell, came in for their share of vigorous vituperation. The Lakers fared worst of all. It was the beginning of the author's life-long war, only once relaxed, with Southey. Wordsworth—though against this passage is written “unjust,” a concession not much sooner made than withdrawn—is dubbed an idiot, who—

“Both by precept and example shows,
That prose is verse, and verse is only prose;”

and Coleridge, a baby—

“To turgid ode and tumid stanza dear.”

The lines ridiculing the encounter between Jeffrey and Moore are a fair specimen of the accuracy with which the author had caught the ring of Pope's antithesis:—

“ The surly Tolbooth scarcely kept her place.
 The Tolbooth felt—for marble sometimes can,
 On such occasions, feel as much as man—
 The Tolbooth felt defrauded of her charms,
 If Jeffrey died, except within her arms.”

Meanwhile Byron had again retired to Newstead, where he invited some choice spirits to hold a few weeks of farewell revel. Matthews, one of these, gives an account of the place, and the time they spent there—entering the mansion between a bear and a wolf, amid a salvo of pistol-shots; sitting up to all hours, talking politics, philosophy, poetry; hearing stories of the dead lords, and the ghost of the Black Brother; drinking their wine out of the skull-cup which the owner had made out of the cranium of some old monk dug up in the garden; breakfasting at two, then reading, fencing, riding, cricketing, sailing on the lake, and playing with the bear or teasing the wolf. The party broke up without having made themselves responsible for any of the orgies of which Childe Harold raves, and which Dallas in good earnest accepts as veracious, when the poet and his friend Hobhouse started for Falmouth, on their way “*outré mer.*”

CHAPTER IV.

TWO YEARS OF TRAVEL.

THERE is no romance of Munchausen or Dumas more marvellous than the adventures attributed to Lord Byron abroad. Attached to his first expedition are a series of narratives, by professing eye-witnesses, of his intrigues, encounters, acts of diablerie and of munificence, in particular of his roaming about the isles of Greece and taking possession of one of them, which have all the same relation to reality as the *Arabian Nights* to the actual reign of Haroun Al Raschid.¹

Byron had far more than an average share of the *émigré* spirit, the counterpoise in the English race of their otherwise arrogant isolation. He held with Wilhelm Meister—

“To give space for wandering is it,
That the earth was made so wide;”

and wrote to his mother from Athens: “I am so convinced of the advantages of looking at mankind, instead of reading about them, and the bitter effects of staying at home with all the narrow prejudices of an islander, that I think there should be a law amongst us to send our young men abroad for a term, among the few allies our wars have left us.”

¹ Those who wish to read them are referred to the large three volumes—published in 1825, by Mr. Iley, Portman Square—of anonymous authorship.

On June 11th, having borrowed money at heavy interest, and stored his mind with information about Persia and India, the contemplated but unattained goal of his travels, he left London, accompanied by his friend Hobhouse, Fletcher his valet, Joe Murray his old butler, and Robert Rushton, the son of one of his tenants, supposed to be represented by the Page in *Childe Harold*. The two latter, the one on account of his age, the other from his health breaking down, he sent back to England from Gibraltar.

Becalmed for some days at Falmouth, a town which he describes as "full of Quakers and salt fish," he despatched letters to his mother, Drury, and Hodgson, exhibiting the changing moods of his mind. Smarting under a slight he had received at parting from a school-companion, who had excused himself from a farewell meeting on the plea that he had to go shopping, he at one moment talks of his desolation, and says that, "leaving England without regret," he has thought of entering the Turkish service; in the next, especially in the stanzas to Hodgson, he runs off into a strain of boisterous buffoonery. On the 2nd of July, the packet by which he was bound sailed for Lisbon, and arrived there about the middle of the month, when the English fleet was anchored in the Tagus. The poet in some of his stanzas has described the fine view of the port and the disconsolate dirtiness of the city itself, the streets of which were at that time rendered dangerous by the frequency of religious and political assassinations. Nothing else remains of his sojourn to interest us, save the statement of Mr. Hobhouse, that his friend made a more perilous, though less celebrated, achievement by water than his crossing the Hellespont, in swimming from old Lisbon to Belem Castle. Byron praises the neighbouring Cintra as "the most beautiful village in the world," though he

joins with Wordsworth in heaping anathemas on the Convention, and extols the grandeur of Mafra, the Escorial of Portugal, in the convent of which a monk, showing the traveller a large library, asked if the English had any books in their country. Despatching his baggage and servants by sea to Gibraltar, he and his friend started on horseback through the south-west of Spain. Their first resting-place, after a ride of 400 miles, performed at an average rate of seventy in the twenty-four hours, was Seville, where they lodged for three days in the house of two ladies, to whose attractions, as well as the fascination he seems to have exerted over them, the poet somewhat garrulously refers. Here, too, he saw, parading on the Prado, the famous *Maid of Saragossa*, whom he celebrates in his equally famous stanzas (*Childe Harold*, I., 54-58). Of Cadiz, the next stage, he writes with enthusiasm as a modern Cythera, describing the bull-fights in his verse, and the beauties in glowing prose. The belles of this city, he says, are the Lancashire witches of Spain; and by reason of them, rather than the sea-shore or the Sierra Morena, "sweet Cadiz is the first spot in the creation." Hence, by an English frigate, they sailed to Gibraltar, for which place he has nothing but curses. Byron had no sympathy with the ordinary forms of British patriotism, and in our great struggle with the tyranny of the First Empire, he may almost be said to have sympathized with Napoleon.

The ship stopped at Cagliari, in Sardinia, and again at Girgenti, on the Sicilian coast. Arriving at Malta, they halted there for three weeks—time enough to establish a sentimental, though Platonic, flirtation with Mrs. Spencer Smith, wife of our minister at Constantinople, sister-in-law of the famous admiral, and the heroine of some exciting adventures. She is the "Florence" of *Childe Harold*,

and is afterwards addressed in some of the most graceful verses of his cavalier minstrelsy—

“Do thou, amidst the fair white walls,
 If Cadiz yet be free,
 At times from out her latticed halls
 Look o'er the dark blue sea—
 Then think upon Calypso's isles,
 Endear'd by days gone by—
 To others give a thousand smiles,
 To me a single sigh.”

The only other adventure of the visit is Byron's quarrel with an officer, on some unrecorded ground, which Hobhouse tells us nearly resulted in a duel. The friends left Malta on September 29th, in the war-ship “Spider,” and after anchoring off Patras, and spending a few hours on shore, they skirted the coast of Acarnania, in view of localities—as Ithaca, the Leucadian rock, and Actium—whose classic memories filtered through the poet's mind and found a place in his masterpieces. Landing at Previsa, they started on a tour through Albania—

“O'er many a mount sublime,
 “Through lands scarce noticed in historic tales.”

Byron was deeply impressed by the beauty of the scenery, and the half-savage independence of the people, described as “always strutting about with slow dignity, though in rags.” In October we find him with his companions at Janina, hospitably entertained by order of Ali Pasha, the famous Albanian Turk, bandit, and despot, then engaged in besieging Ibrahim in Illyria. They proceeded on their way by “bleak Pindus,” Acherusia's lake, and Zitza, with its monastery door battered by robbers. Before reaching the latter place they encountered a terrific thunder-storm,

in the midst of which they separated, and Byron's detachment lost its way for nine hours, during which he composed the verses to Florence, quoted above.

Some days later they together arrived at Tepelleni, and were there received by Ali Pasha in person. The scene on entering the town is described as recalling Scott's Branksome Castle and the feudal system; and the introduction to Ali, who sat for some of the traits of the poet's corsairs, is graphically reproduced in a letter to Mrs. Byron. "His first question was, why at so early an age I left my country, and without a 'lala,' or nurse? He then said the English minister had told him I was of a great family, and desired his respects to my mother, which I now present to you (date, November 12th). He said he was certain I was a man of birth, because I had small ears, curling hair, and little white hands. He told me to consider him as a father whilst I was in Turkey, and said he looked on me as his son. Indeed he treated me like a child, sending me almonds, fruit, and sweetmeats twenty times a day." Byron shortly afterwards discovered his host to be a poisoner and an assassin. "Two days ago," he proceeds, in a passage which illustrates his character and a common experience, "I was nearly lost in a Turkish ship-of-war, owing to the ignorance of the captain and crew. Fletcher yelled after his wife; the Greeks called on all the saints, the Musulmen on Alla; the captain burst into tears and ran below deck, telling us to call on God. The sails were split, the mainyard shivered, the wind blowing fresh, the night setting in; and all our chance was to make for Corfu—or, as F. pathetically called it, 'a watery grave.' I did what I could to console him, but finding him incorrigible, wrapped myself in my Albanian capote, and lay down on the deck to wait the worst." Unable from his lameness,

says Hobhouse, to be of any assistance, he in a short time was found amid the trembling sailors fast asleep. They got back to the coast of Suli, and shortly afterwards started through Acarnania and Ætolia for the Morea, again rejoicing in the wild scenery and the apparently kindred spirits of the wild men among whom they passed. Byron was especially fascinated by the fire-light dance and song of the robber band, which he describes and reproduces in *Childe Harold*. On the 21st of November he reached Mesolonghi, where, fifteen years later, he died. Here he dismissed most of his escort, proceeded to Patras, and on to Vostizza, caught sight of Parnassus, and accepted a flight of eagles near Delphi as a favouring sign of Apollo. "The last bird," he writes, "I ever fired at was an eaglet on the shore of the Gulf of Lepanto. It was only wounded, and I tried to save it—the eye was so bright. But it pined and died in a few days; and I never did since, and never will, attempt the life of another bird." From Livadia the travellers proceeded to Thebes, visited the cave of Trophœnus, Diana's fountain, the so-called ruins of Pindar's house, and the field of Cheronea, crossed Cithæron, and on Christmas, 1809, arrived before the defile, near the ruins of Phyle, where he had his first glimpse of Athens, which evoked the famous lines:—

" Ancient of days, august Athena ! where,
 Where are thy men of might ? thy grand in soul ?
 Gone, glimmering through the dreams of things that were.
 First in the race that led to glory's goal,
 They won, and pass'd away : is this the whole—
 A schoolboy's tale, the wonder of an hour ?"

After which he reverts to his perpetually recurring moral, " Men come and go ; but the hills, and waves, and skies, and stars endure "—

“Apollo still thy long, long summer gilds ;
 Still in his beam Mendeli’s marbles glare ;
 Art, glory, freedom fail—but nature still is fair.”

The duration of Lord Byron’s first visit to Athens was about three months, and it was varied by excursions to different parts of Attica—Eleusis, Hymettus, Cape Colonna, Sunium, the scene of Falconer’s shipwreck, the Colonos of Œdipus, and Marathon, the plain of which is said to have been placed at his disposal for about the same sum that thirty years later an American volunteered to give for the bark with his name on the tree at Newstead. Byron had a poor opinion of the modern Athenians, who seem to have at this period done their best to justify the Roman satirist. He found them superficial, cunning, and false ; but, with generous historic insight, he says that no nation in like circumstances would have been much better ; that they had the vices of ages of slavery, from which it would require ages of freedom to emancipate them.

In the Greek capital he lodged at the house of a respectable lady, widow of an English vice-consul, who had three daughters, the eldest of whom, Theresa, acquired an innocent and enviable fame as the Maid of Athens, without the dangerous glory of having taken any very firm hold of the heart that she was asked to return. A more solid passion was the poet’s genuine indignation on the “lifting,” in Border phrase, of the marbles from the Parthenon, and their being taken to England by order of Lord Elgin. Byron never wrote anything more sincere than the *Curse of Minerva* ; and he has recorded few incidents more pathetic than that of the old Greek who, when the last stone was removed for exportation, shed tears and said “τέλος !” The question is still an open

one of ethics. There are few Englishmen of the higher rank who do not hold London in the right hand as barely balanced by the rest of the world in the left; a judgment in which we can hardly expect Romans, Parisians, and Athenians to concur. On the other hand, the marbles were mouldering at Athens, and they are preserved, like ginger, in the British Museum.

Among the adventures of this period are an expedition across the Ilissus to some caves near Kharyati, in which the travellers were by accident nearly entombed; another to Pentelicus, where they tried to carve their names on the marble rock; and a third to the environs of the Piræus in the evening light. Early in March the convenient departure of an English sloop-of-war induced them to make an excursion to Smyrna. There, on the 28th of March, the second canto of *Childe Harold*, begun in the previous autumn at Janina, was completed. They remained in the neighbourhood, visiting Ephesus, without poetical result further than a reference to the jackals, in the *Siege of Corinth*; and on April 11th left by the "Salsette," a frigate on its way to Constantinople. The vessel touched at the Troad, and Byron spent some time on land, snipe-shooting, and rambling among the reputed ruins of Ilium. The poet characteristically, in *Don Juan* and elsewhere, attacks the sceptics, and then half ridicules the belief.

"I've stood upon Achilles' tomb,
And heard Troy doubted! Time will doubt of Rome!

* * * * *

There, on the green and village-cotted hill, is,
Flank'd by the Hellespont, and by the sea,
Entomb'd the bravest of the brave Achilles.—
They say so: Bryant says the contrary."

Being again detained in the Dardanelles, waiting for a fair wind, Byron landed on the European side, and swam, in company with Lieutenant Ekenhead, from Sestos to Abydos—a performance of which he boasts some twenty times. The strength of the current is the main difficulty of a feat, since so surpassed as to have passed from notice; but it was a tempting theme for classical allusions. At length, on May 14, he reached Constantinople, exalted the Golden Horn above all the sights he had seen, and now first abandoned his design of travelling to Persia. Galt, and other more or less gossiping travellers, have accumulated a number of incidents of the poet's life at this period, of his fanciful dress, blazing in scarlet and gold, and of his sometimes absurd contentions for the privileges of rank—as when he demanded precedence of the English ambassador in an interview with the Sultan, and, on its refusal, could only be pacified by the assurances of the Austrian internuncio. In converse with indifferent persons he displayed a curious alternation of frankness and hauteur, and indulged a habit of letting people up and down, by which he frequently gave offence. More interesting are narratives of the suggestion of some of his verses, as the slave-market in *Don Juan*, and the spectacle of the dead criminal tossed on the waves, revived in the *Bride of Abydos*. One example is, if we except Dante's *Ugolino*, the most remarkable instance in literature of the expansion, without the weakening, of the horrible. Take first Mr. Hobhouse's plain prose: "The sensations produced by the state of the weather"—it was wretched and stormy when they left the "Salsette" for the city—"and leaving a comfortable cabin, were in unison with the impressions which we felt when, passing under the palace of the Sultans, and gazing at the gloomy

cypress which rises above the walls, we saw two dogs gnawing a dead body." After this we may measure the almost fiendish force of a morbid imagination brooding over the incident—

“ And he saw the lean dogs beneath the wall
 Hold o'er the dead their carnival :
 Gorging and growling o'er carcass and limb,
 They were too busy to bark at him.
 From a Tartar's skull they had stripp'd the flesh,
 As ye peel the fig when its fruit is fresh ;
 And their white tusks crunched on the whiter skull,
 As it slipp'd through their jaws when their edge grew dull.”

No one ever more persistently converted the incidents of travel into poetic material ; but sometimes, in doing so, he borrowed more largely from his imagination than his memory, as in the description of the seraglio, of which there is reason to doubt his having seen more than the entrance.

Byron and Hobhouse set sail from Constantinople on the 14th July, 1810—the latter to return direct to England, a determination which, from no apparent fault on either side, the former did not regret. One incident of the passage derives interest from its possible consequence. Taking up, and unsheathing, a yataghan which he found on the quarter-deck, he remarked, “ I should like to know how a person feels after committing a murder.” This harmless piece of melodrama—the idea of which is expanded in Mr. Dobell's *Balder*, and parodied in *Firmilian*—may have been the basis of a report afterwards circulated, and accepted among others by Goethe, that his lordship had committed a murder ; hence, obviously, the character of *Lara*, and the mystery of *Manfred!* The poet parted from his friend at Zea (Ceos) ; after spending some time in solitude on the little island, he returned to Athens,

and there renewed acquaintance with his school friend, the Marquis of Sligo, who after a few days accompanied him to Corinth. They then separated, and Byron went on to Patras, in the Morea, where he had business with the Consul. He dates from there at the close of July. It is impossible to give a consecutive account of his life during the next ten months, a period consequently filled up with the contradictory and absurd mass of legends before referred to. A few facts only of any interest are extricable. During at least half of the time his head-quarters were at Athens, where he again met his friend the Marquis, associated with the English Consul and Lady Hester Stanhope, studied Romaic in a Franciscan monastery—where he saw and conversed with a motley crew of French, Italians, Danes, Greeks, Turks, and Americans—wrote to his mother and others, saying he had swum from Sestos to Abydos, was sick of Fletcher bawling for beef and beer, had done with authorship, and hoped, on his return, to lead a quiet recluse life. He nevertheless made notes to *Harold*, composed the *Hints from Horace* and the *Curse of Minerva*, and presumably brooded over, and outlined in his mind, many of his verse romances. We hear no more of the *Maid of Athens*; but there is no fair ground to doubt that the *Giaour* was suggested by his rescue of a young woman whom, for the fault of an amour with some Frank, a party of Janissaries were about to throw, sewn up in a sack, into the sea. Mr. Galt gives no authority for his statement, that the girl's deliverer was the original cause of her sentence. We may rest assured that if it had been so, Byron himself would have told us of it.

A note to the *Siege of Corinth* is suggestive of his unequalled restlessness. "I visited all three—Tripolitza, Napoli, and Argos—in 1810–11; and in the course of

journeying through the country, from my first arrival in 1809, crossed the Isthmus eight times on my way from Attica to the Morea. In the latter locality we find him, during the autumn, the honoured guest of the Vizier Valhi (a son of Ali Pasha), who presented him with a fine horse. During a second visit to Patras, in September, he was attacked by the same sort of marsh fever from which, fourteen years afterwards, in the near neighbourhood, he died. On his recovery, in October, he complains of having been nearly killed by the heroic measures of the native doctors: "One of them trusts to his genius, never having studied; the other, to a campaign of eighteen months *against* the sick of Otranto, which he made in his youth with great effect. When I was seized with my disorder, I protested against both these assassins, but in vain." He was saved by the zeal of his servants, who asseverated that if his lordship died they would take good care the doctors should also; on which the learned men discontinued their visits, and the patient revived. On his final return to Athens, the restoration of his health was retarded by one of his long courses of reducing diet; he lived mainly on rice, and vinegar and water. From that city he writes in the early spring, intimating his intention of proceeding to Egypt; but Mr. Hanson, his man of business, ceasing to send him remittances, the scheme was abandoned. Beseet by letters about his debts, he again declares his determination to hold fast by Newstead, adding that if the place, which is his only tie to England, is sold, he won't come back at all. Life on the shores of the Archipelago is far cheaper and happier, and "Ubi bene ibi patria," for such a citizen of the world as he has become. Later he went to Malta, and was detained there by another bad attack of tertian fever. The next record of consequence is

from the "Volage" frigate, at sea, June 29, 1811, when he writes in a despondent strain to Hodgson, that he is returning home "without a hope, and almost without a desire," to wrangle with creditors and lawyers about executions and coal-pits. "In short, I am sick and sorry; and when I have a little repaired my irreparable affairs, away I shall march, either to campaign in Spain, or back again to the East, where I can at least have cloudless skies and a cessation from impertinence. I am sick of fops, and poesy, and prate, and shall leave the whole Castalian state to Bufo, or anybody else. Howbeit, I have written some 4000 lines, of one kind or another, on my travels." With these, and a collection of marbles, and skulls, and hemlock, and tortoises, and servants, he reached London about the middle of July, and remained there, making some arrangements about business and publication. On the 23rd we have a short but kind letter to his mother, promising to pay her a visit on his way to Rochdale. "You know you are a vixen, but keep some champagne for me," he had written from abroad. On receipt of the letter she remarked, "If I should be dead before he comes down, what a strange thing it would be." Towards the close of the month she had an attack so alarming that he was summoned; but before he had time to arrive she had expired, on the 1st of August, in a fit of rage brought on by reading an upholsterer's bill. On the way Byron heard the intelligence, and wrote to Dr. Pigot: "I now feel the truth of Mrs. Gray's observation, that we can only have *one* mother. Peace be with her!" On arriving at Newstead, all their storms forgotten, the son was so affected that he did not trust himself to go to the funeral, but stood dreamily gazing at the cortége from the gate of the Abbey. Five days later, Charles S. Matthews was drowned.

CHAPTER V.

SECOND PERIOD OF AUTHORSHIP.—LIFE IN LONDON.—

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SCOTT.

THE deaths of Long, Wingfield, Eddlestone, Matthews, and of his mother had narrowed the circle of the poet's early companions; and, though he talks of each loss in succession as if it had been that of an only friend, we can credit a degree of loneliness, and excuse a certain amount of bitterness in the feelings with which he returned to London. He had at this time seen very little of the only relative whom he ever deeply loved. He and his half-sister met casually in 1804, and again in the following year. After her marriage (1807), Byron writes from abroad (1810), regretting having distressed her by his quarrel with Lord Carlisle. In 1811 she is mentioned as reverent heiress of his estate. Towards the close of 1813, there are two allusions which testify to their mutual affection. Next we come to the interesting series of letters of 1815-16, published with the Memoir of Mr. Hodgson, to whom, along with Hobhouse and Scrope Davies, his lordship, in a will and codicil, leaves the management of his property. Harness appears frequently at this period among his surviving intimates: to this list there was shortly added another. In speaking of his *Bards and Reviewers*, the author makes occasional reference to the possibility of his being called to account for some of his

attacks. His expectation was realized by a letter from the poet Moore, dated Dublin, January 1, 1810, couched in peremptory terms, demanding to know if his lordship avowed the authorship of the insults contained in the poem. This letter, being entrusted to Mr. Hodgson, was not forwarded to Byron abroad; but shortly after his return, he received another in more conciliatory terms, renewing the complaint. To this he replied, in a stiff but manly letter, that he had never meant to insult Mr. Moore; but that he was, if necessary, ready to give him satisfaction. Moore accepting the explanation, somewhat querulously complained of his advances to friendship not being received. Byron again replied that, much as he would feel honoured by Mr. Moore's acquaintance, he being practically threatened by the irate Irishman, could hardly make the first advances. This called forth a sort of apology; the correspondents met at the house of Mr. Rogers, and out of the somewhat awkward circumstances, owing to the frankness of the "noble author," as the other ever after delights to call him, arose the life-long intimacy which had such various and lasting results. Moore has been called a false friend to Byron, and a traitor to his memory. The judgment is somewhat harsh, but the association between them was unfortunate. Thomas Moore had some sterling qualities. His best satirical pieces are inspired by a real indignation, and lit up by a genuine humour. He was also an exquisite musician in words, and must have been occasionally a fascinating companion. But he was essentially a worldling, and, as such, a superficial critic. He encouraged the shallow affectations of his great friend's weaker work, and recoiled in alarm before the daring defiance of his stronger. His criticisms on all Byron wrote and felt seriously on religion are almost worthy of a con-

venticle. His letters to others on *Manfred*, and *Cain*, and *Don Juan* are the expression of sentiments which he had never the courage to state explicitly to the author. On the other hand, Byron was attracted beyond reasonable measure by his gracefully deferential manners, paid too much regard to his opinions, and overestimated his genius. For the subsequent destruction of the memoirs, urged by Mr. Hobhouse and Mrs. Leigh, he was not wholly responsible; though a braver man, having accepted the position of his lordship's literary legatee, with the express understanding that he would see to the fulfilment of the wishes of his dead friend, would have to the utmost resisted their total frustration.

Meanwhile, on landing in England, the poet had placed in the hands of Mr. Dallas the *Hints from Horace*, which he intended to have brought out by the publisher Cawthorne. Of this performance—an inferior edition, relieved by a few strong touches of the *Bards and Reviewers*—Dallas ventured to express his disapproval. “Have you no other result of your travels?” he asked; and got for answer, “A few short pieces, and a lot of Spenserian stanzas; not worth troubling you with, but you are welcome to them.” Dallas took the remark literally, saw they were a safe success, and assumed to himself the merit of the discovery, the risks, and the profits. It is the converse of the story of Gabriel Harvey and the *Faery Queene*. The first two cantos of *Childe Harold* bear no comparison with the legend of *Una and the Red Cross Knight*; but there was no mistake about their proof of power, their novelty, and adaptation to a public taste as yet unjaded by eloquent and imaginative descriptions of foreign scenery, manners, and climates.

The poem—after being submitted to Gifford, in defiance

of the protestations of the author, who feared that the reference might seem to seek the favour of the august *Quarterly*—was accepted by Mr. Murray, and proceeded through the press, subject to change and additions, during the next five months. The *Hints from Horace*, fortunately postponed and then suspended, appeared posthumously in 1831. Byron remained at Newstead till the close of October, negotiating with creditors and lawyers, and engaged in a correspondence about his publications, in the course of which he deprecates any identification of himself and his hero, though he had at first called him Childe Byron. “Instruct Mr. Murray,” he entreats, “not to call the work ‘Child of Harrow’s Pilgrimage,’ as he has done to some of my astonished friends, who wrote to inquire after my *sanity*, as well they might.” At the end of the month we find him in London, again indulging in a voyage in “the ship of fools,” in which Moore claims to have accompanied him; but at the same time exhibiting remarkable shrewdness in reference to the affairs of his household. In February, 1812, he again declares to Hodgson his resolve to leave England for ever, and fix himself in “one of the fairest islands of the East.” On the 27th he made in the House of Lords his speech on a Bill to introduce special penalties against the frame-breakers of Nottingham. This effort, on which he received many compliments, led among other results to a friendly correspondence with Lord Holland. On April 21 of the same year he again addressed the House on behalf of Roman Catholic Emancipation; and in June, 1813, in favour of Major Cartwright’s petition. On all these occasions, as afterwards on the continent, Byron espoused the Liberal side of politics. But his rôle was that of Manlius or Cæsar, and he never fails to remind us that he himself was *for*

the people, not *of* them. His latter speeches, owing partly to his delivery, blamed as too Asiatic, were less successful. To a reader the three seem much on the same level. They are clever, but evidently set performances, and leave us no ground to suppose that the poet's abandonment of a parliamentary career was a serious loss to the nation.

On the 29th of February the first and second cantos of *Childe Harold* appeared. An early copy was sent to Mrs. Leigh, with the inscription: "To Augusta, my dearest sister and my best friend, who has ever loved me much better than I deserved, this volume is presented by her father's son and most affectionate brother, B." The book ran through seven editions in four weeks. The effect of the first edition of Burns, and the sale of Scott's *Lays*, are the only parallels in modern poetic literature to this success. All eyes were suddenly fastened on the author, who let his satire sleep, and threw politics aside, to be the romancer of his day, and for two years the darling of society. Previous to the publication, Mr. Moore confesses to have gratified his lordship with the expression of the fear that *Childe Harold* was too good for the age. Its success was due to the reverse being the truth. It was just on the level of its age. Its flowing verse, defaced by rhythmical faults perceptible only to finer ears, its prevailing sentiment, occasional boldness relieved by pleasing platitudes, its half affected rakishness, here and there elevated by a rush as of morning air, and its frequent richness—not yet, as afterwards, splendour—of description, were all appreciated by the fashionable London of the Regency; while the comparatively mild satire, not keen enough to scarify, only gave a more piquant flavour to the whole. Byron's genius, yet in the green leaf, was not too far above the clever masses of pleasure-loving manhood by which it

was surrounded. It was natural that the address on the reopening of Drury Lane Theatre should be written by "the world's new joy"—the first great English poet-peer; as natural as that in his only published satire of the period he should inveigh against almost the only amusement in which he could not share. The address was written at the request of Lord Holland, when of some hundred competitive pieces none had been found exactly suitable—a circumstance which gave rise to the famous parodies entitled *The Rejected Addresses*—and it was thought that the ultimate choice would conciliate all rivalry. The care which Byron bestowed on the correction of the first draft of this piece is characteristic of his habit of writing off his poems at a gush, and afterwards carefully elaborating them.

The Waltz was published anonymously in April, 1813. It was followed in May by the *Giaour*, the first of the flood of verse romances which, during the three succeeding years, he poured forth with impetuous fluency, and which were received with almost unrestrained applause. The plots and sentiments and imagery are similar in them all. The *Giaour* steals the mistress of Hassan, who revenges his honour by drowning her. The *Giaour* escapes; returns, kills Hassan, and then goes to a monastery. In the *Bride of Abydos*, published in the December of the same year, Giaffir wants to marry his daughter Zuleika to Carasman Pasha. She runs off with Selim, her reputed brother—in reality her cousin, and so at last her legitimate lover. They are caught; he is slain in fight; she dies, to slow music. In the *Corsair*, published January, 1814, Conrad, a pirate, and man of "one virtue and a thousand crimes!" is beloved by Medora, who, on his predatory expeditions, sits waiting for him (like Hassan's

and Sisera's mother) in a tower. On one of these he attacks Seyd Pasha, and is overborne by superior force; but Gulnare, a female slave of Seyd, kills her master, and runs off with Conrad, who finds Medora dead and vanishes. In *Lara*, the sequel to this—written in May and June, published in August—a man of mystery appears in the Morea, with a page, Kaled. After adventures worthy of Mrs. Radcliffe—from whose Schledoni the Giaour is said to have been drawn—Lara falls in battle with his deadly foe, Ezzelin, and turns out to be Conrad, while Kaled is of course Gulnare. The *Hebrew Melodies*, written in December, 1814, are interesting, in connexion with the author's early familiarity with the Old Testament, and from the force and music that mark the best of them; but they can hardly be considered an important contribution to the devotional verse of England. The *Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina*, composed after his marriage in the summer and autumn of 1815, appeared in the following year. The former is founded on the siege of the city, when the Turks took it from Menotti; but our attention is concentrated on Alp the renegade, another sketch from the same protoplastic ruffian, who leads on the Turks, is in love with the daughter of the governor of the city, tries to save her, but dies. The poem is frequently vigorous, but it ends badly. *Parisina*, though unequal, is on the whole a poem of a higher order than the others of the period. The trial scene exhibits some dramatic power, and the shriek of the lady mingling with Ugo's funeral dirge lingers in our ears, along with the convent bells—

“In the grey square turret swinging,
With a deep sound, to and fro,
Heavily to the heart they go.”

These romances belong to the same period of the author's poetic career as the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*. They followed one another like brilliant fireworks. They all exhibit a command of words, a sense of melody, and a flow of rhythm and rhyme, which mastered Moore and even Scott on their own ground. None of them are wanting in passages, as "He that hath bent him o'er the dead," and the description of Alp leaning against a column, which strike deeper than any verse of either of those writers. But there is an air of melodrama in them all. Harmonious delights of novel readers, they will not stand against the winnowing wind of deliberate criticism. They harp on the same string without the variations of a Paganini. They are potentially endless reproductions of one phase of an ill-regulated mind—the picture of the same quasi-melancholy vengeful man, who knows no friend but a dog, and reads on the tombs of the great only "the glory and the nothing of a name," the exile who cannot flee from himself, "the wandering outlaw of his own dark mind," who has not loved the world nor the world him—

"Whose heart was form'd for softness, warp'd by wrong,
Betray'd too early, and beguiled too long"—

all this, *decies repetita*, grows into a weariness and vexation. Mr. Carlyle harshly compares it to the screaming of a meat-jack. The reviewers and the public of the time thought differently. Jeffrey, penitent for the early *faux pas* of his *Review*, as Byron remained penitent for his answering assault, writes of *Lara*, "Passages of it may be put into competition with anything that poetry has produced in point either of pathos or energy." Moore—who afterwards wrote, not to Byron, that seven devils had entered into *Manfred*—professes himself "enraptured with

it." Fourteen thousand copies of the *Corsair* were sold in a day. But hear the author's own half-boast, half-apology: "*Lara* I wrote while undressing after coming home from balls and masquerades, in the year of revelry 1814. The *Bride* was written in four, the *Corsair* in ten days. This I take to be a humiliating confession, as it proves my own want of judgment in publishing, and the public's in reading, things which cannot have stamina for permanence."

The pecuniary profits accruing to Byron from his works began with *Lara*, for which he received 700*l.* He had made over to Mr. Dallas, besides other gifts to the same ungrateful recipient, the profits of *Harold*, amounting to 600*l.*, and of the *Corsair*, which brought 525*l.* The proceeds of the *Giaour* and the *Bride* were also surrendered.

During this period, 1813–1816, he had become familiar with all the phases of London society, "tasted their pleasures," and, towards the close, "felt their decay." His associates in those years were of two classes—men of the world, and authors. Fêted and courted in all quarters, he patronized the theatres, became in 1815 a member of the Drury Lane Committee, "liked the dandies," including Beau Brummell, and was introduced to the Regent. Their interview, in June, 1812, in the course of which the latter paid unrestrained compliments to *Harold* and the poetry of Scott, is naively referred to by Mr. Moore "as reflecting even still more honour on the Sovereign himself than on the two poets." Byron, in a different spirit, writes to Lord Holland: "I have now great hope, in the event of Mr. Pye's decease, of warbling truth at Court, like Mr. Mallet of indifferent memory. Consider, one hundred marks a year! besides the wine and the disgrace." We can hardly conceive the future author of the *Vision of*

Judgment writing odes to dictation. He does not seem to have been much fascinated with the first gentleman of Europe, whom at no distant date he assailed in the terrible "Avatar," and left the laureateship to Mr. Southey.

Among leaders in art and letters he was brought into more or less intimate contact with Sir Humphry Davy, the Edgeworths, Sir James Mackintosh, Colman the dramatic author, the elder Kean, Monk Lewis, Grattan, Curran, and Madame de Staël. Of the meeting of the last two he remarks, "It was like the confluence of the Rhone and the Sâone, and they were both so ugly that I could not help wondering how the best intellects of France and Ireland could have taken up respectively such residences."

About this time a communication from Mr. Murray, in reference to the meeting with the Regent, led to a letter from Sir Walter Scott to Lord Byron, the beginning of a life-long friendship, and one of the most pleasing pages of biography. These two great men were for a season perpetually pitted against one another as the foremost competitors for literary favour. When *Rokeby* came out, contemporaneously with the *Giaour*, the undergraduates of Oxford and Cambridge ran races to catch the first copies, and laid bets as to which of the rivals would win. During the anti-Byronic fever of 1840-1860 they were perpetually contrasted as the representatives of the manly and the morbid schools. A later sentimentalism has affected to despise the work of both. The fact, therefore, that from an early period the men themselves knew each other as they were is worth illustrating.

Scott's letter, in which a generous recognition of the pleasure he had derived from the work of the English poet, was followed by a manly remonstrance on the subject of the attack in the *Bards and Reviewers*, drew from

Byron in the following month (July, 1812) an answer in the same strain, descanting on the Prince's praises of the *Lay* and *Marmion*, and candidly apologizing for the "evil works of his nonage." "This satire," he remarks, "was written when I was very young and very angry, and fully bent on displaying my wrath and my wit; and now I am haunted by the ghosts of my wholesale assertions." This, in turn, called forth another letter to Byron, eager for more of his verses, with a cordial invitation to Abbotsford on the ground of Scotland's maternal claim on him, and asking for information about Pegasus and Parnassus. After this the correspondence continues with greater freedom, and the same display on either side of mutual respect. When Scott says, "the *Giaour* is praised among our mountains," and Byron returns, "*Waverley* is the best novel I have read," there is no suspicion of flattery—it is the interchange of compliments between men,

"Et cantare pares et respondere parati."

They talk in just the same manner to third parties. "I gave over writing romances," says the elder, in the spirit of a great-hearted gentleman, "because Byron beat me. He hits the mark where I don't even pretend to fledge my arrow. He has access to a stream of sentiment unknown to me." The younger, on the other hand, deprecates the comparisons that were being invidiously drawn between them. He presents his copy of the *Giaour* to Scott, with the phrase, "To the monarch of Parnassus," and compares the feeling of those who cavilled at his fame to that of the Athenians towards Aristides. From those sentiments he never swerves, recognizing to the last the breadth of character of the most generous of his critics, and referring to him, during his later years in Italy, as the Wizard and

the Ariosto of the North. A meeting was at length arranged between them. Scott looked forward to it with anxious interest, humorously remarking that Byron should say--

“Art thou the man whom men famed Grissell call?”

And he reply—

“Art thou the still more famed Tom Thumb the small?”

They met in London during the spring of 1815. The following sentences are from Sir Walter's account of it: “Report had prepared me to meet a man of peculiar habits and quick temper, and I had some doubts whether we were likely to suit each other in society. I was most agreeably disappointed in this respect. I found Lord Byron in the highest degree courteous, and even kind. We met for an hour or two almost daily in Mr. Murray's drawing-room, and found a great deal to say to each other. Our sentiments agreed a good deal, except upon the subjects of religion and politics, upon neither of which I was inclined to believe that Lord Byron entertained very fixed opinions. On politics he used sometimes to express a high strain of what is now called Liberalism; but it appeared to me that the pleasure it afforded him as a vehicle of displaying his wit and satire against individuals in office was at the bottom of this habit of thinking. At heart, I would have termed Byron a patrician on principle. His reading did not seem to me to have been very extensive. I remember repeating to him the fine poem of Hardyknute, and some one asked me what I could possibly have been telling Byron by which he was so much agitated. I saw him for the last time in (September) 1815, after I returned from France; he dined or lunched with me at Long's in Bond Street. I never saw him so full of gaiety and

good humour. The day of this interview was the most interesting I ever spent. Several letters passed between us—one perhaps every half year. Like the old heroes in Homer, we exchanged gifts; I gave Byron a beautiful dagger mounted with gold, which had been the property of the redoubted Elfi Bey. But I was to play the part of Diomed in the *Iliad*, for Byron sent me, some time after, a large sepulchral vase of silver, full of dead men's bones, found within the land walls of Athens. He was often melancholy, almost gloomy. When I observed him in this humour I used either to wait till it went off of its own accord, or till some natural and easy mode occurred of leading him into conversation, when the shadows almost always left his countenance, like the mist arising from a landscape. I think I also remarked in his temper starts of suspicion, when he seemed to pause and consider whether there had not been a secret and perhaps offensive meaning in something that was said to him. In this case I also judged it best to let his mind, like a troubled spring, work itself clear, which it did in a minute or two. A downright steadiness of manner was the way to his good opinion. Will Rose, looking by accident at his feet, saw him scowling furiously; but on his showing no consciousness, his lordship resumed his easy manner. What I liked about him, besides his boundless genius, was his generosity of spirit as well as of purse, and his utter contempt of all the affectations of literature. He liked Moore and me because, with all our other differences, we were both good-natured fellows, not caring to maintain our dignity, enjoying the *mot-pour-rire*. He wrote from impulse, never from effort, and therefore I have always reckoned Burns and Byron the most genuine poetic geniuses of my time, and of half a century before me. We

have many men of high poetic talents, but none of that ever-gushing and perennial fountain of natural waters."

Scott, like all hale men of sound sense, regretted the almost fatal incontinence which, in the year of his greatest private troubles, led his friend to make a parade of them before the public. He speaks more than once of his unhappy tendency to exhibit himself as the dying gladiator, and even compares him to his peacock, screeching before his window because he chooses to bivouac apart from his mate; but he read a copy of the Ravenna diary without altering his view that his lordship was his own worst maligner. Scott, says Lockhart, considered Byron the only poet of transcendent talents we had had since Dryden. There is preserved a curious record of his meeting with a greater poet than Dryden, but one whose greatness neither he nor Scott suspected. Mr. Crabbe Robinson reports Wordsworth to have said, in Charles Lamb's chambers, about the year 1808, "These reviewers put me out of patience. Here is a young man who has written a volume of poetry; and these fellows, just because he is a lord, set upon him. The young man will do something, if he goes on as he has begun. But these reviewers seem to think that nobody may write poetry unless he lives in a garret." Years after, Lady Byron, on being told this, exclaimed, "Ah, if Byron had known that, he would never have attacked Wordsworth. He went one day to meet him at dinner, and I said, 'Well, how did the young poet get on with the old one?' 'Why, to tell the truth,' said he, 'I had but one feeling from the beginning of the visit to the end, and that was *reverence*.'" Similarly, he began by being on good terms with Southey, and after a meeting at Holland House, wrote enthusiastically of his prepossessing appearance.

Byron and the leaders of the so-called Lake School were, at starting, common heirs of the revolutionary spirit; they were, either in their social views or personal feelings, to a large extent influenced by the most morbid, though in some respects the most magnetic, genius of modern France, J. J. Rousseau; but their temperaments were in many respects fundamentally diverse; and the pre-established discord between them ere long began to make itself manifest in their following out widely divergent paths. Wordsworth's return to nature had been precluded by Cowper; that of Byron by Burns. The revival of the one ripened into a restoration of simpler manners and old beliefs; the other was the spirit of the storm. When they had both become recognized powers, neither appreciated the work of the other. A few years after this date Byron wrote of Wordsworth, to a common admirer of both: "I take leave to differ from you as freely as I once agreed with you. His performances, since the *Lyrical Ballads*, are miserably inadequate to the ability that lurks within him. There is, undoubtedly, much natural talent spilt over the *Excursion*; but it is rain upon rocks, where it stands and stagnates; or rain upon sand, where it falls without fertilizing." This criticism, with others in like strain, was addressed to Mr. Leigh Hunt, to whom, in 1812, when enduring for radicalism's sake a very comfortable incarceration, Byron had, in company with Moore, paid a courteous visit.

Of the correspondence of this period—flippant, trenchant, or sparkling—few portions are more calculated to excite a smile than the record of his frequent resolutions made, reasseverated, and broken, to have done with literature; even going the length on some occasions of threatening to suppress his works, and, if possible, recall the ex-

isting copies. He affected being a man of the world unmercifully, and had a real delight in clever companions who assumed the same rôle. Frequent allusion is made to his intercourse with Erskine and Sheridan; the latter he is never tired of praising, as "the author of the best modern comedy (*School for Scandal*), the best farce (*The Critic*), and the best oration (the famous Begum speech) ever heard in this country." They spent many an evening together, and probably cracked many a bottle. It is Byron who tells the story of Sheridan being found in a gutter in a sadly incapable state; and, on some one asking "Who is this?" stammering out "Wilberforce." On one occasion he speaks of coming out of a tavern with the dramatist, when they both found the staircase in a very corkscrew condition; and elsewhere, of encountering a Mr. C——, who "had no notion of meeting with a bon-vivant in a scribbler," and summed the poet's eulogy with the phrase, "he drinks like a man." Hunt, the tattler, who observed his lordship's habits in Italy, with the microscope of malice ensconced within the same walls, makes it a charge against his host that he would not drink like a man. Once for all it may be noted, that although there was no kind of excess in which Byron, whether from bravado or inclination, failed occasionally to indulge, he was never for any stretch of time given over, like Burns, to what is technically termed intemperance. His head does not seem to have been strong, and under the influence of stimulants he may have been led to talk a great deal of his dangerous nonsense. But though he could not say, with Wordsworth, that only once, at Cambridge, had his brain been "excited by the fumes of wine," his prevailing sins were in other directions.

CHAPTER VI.

MARRIAGE, AND FAREWELL TO ENGLAND.

“As for poets,” says Scott, “I have seen all the best of my time and country, and, though Burns had the most glorious eye imaginable, I never thought any of them would come up to an artist’s notion of the character, except Byron. His countenance is a thing to dream of.” Coleridge writes to the same effect, in language even stronger. We have from all sides similar testimony to the personal beauty which led the unhappiest of his devotees to exclaim, “That pale face is my fate!”

Southern critics, as De Chasles, Castelar, even Mazzini, have dealt leniently with the poet’s relations to the other sex; and Elze extends to him in this regard the same excessive stretch of charity. “Dear Childe Harold,” exclaims the German professor, “was positively besieged by women. They have, in truth, no right to complain of him: from his childhood he had seen them on their worst side.” It is the casuistry of hero-worship to deny that Byron was unjust to women, not merely in isolated instances, but in his prevailing views of their character and claims. “I regard them,” he says, in a passage only distinguished from others by more extravagant petulance, “as very pretty but inferior creatures, who are as little in their place at our tables as they would be in our council chambers. The whole of the present system with regard to the

female sex is a remnant of the barbarism of the chivalry of our forefathers. I look on them as grown-up children; but, like a foolish mamma, I am constantly the slave of one of them. The Turks shut up their women, and are much happier; give a woman a looking-glass and burnt almonds, and she will be content."

In contrast with this, we have the moods in which he drew his pictures of Angiolina, and Haidee, and Aurora Raby, and wrote the invocations to the shade of Astarte, and his letters in prose and verse to Augusta; but the above passage could never have been written by Chaucer, or Spenser, or Shakspeare, or Shelley. The class whom he was reviling seemed, however, during "the day of his destiny," bent on confirming his judgment by the blindness of their worship. His rank and fame, the glittering splendour of his verse, the romance of his travels, his picturesque melancholy and affectation of mysterious secrets, combined with the magic of his presence to bewitch and bewilder them. The dissenting malcontents, condemned as prudes and blues, had their revenge. Generally, we may say that women who had not written books adored Byron; women who had written or were writing books distrusted, disliked, and made him a moral to adorn their tales, often to point their fables with. He was by the one set caressed and spoilt, and "beguiled too long;" by the other, "betrayed too late." The recent memoirs of Frances Ann Kemble present a curious record of the process of passing from one extreme to the other. She dwells on the fascination exerted over her mind by the first reading of his poetry, and tells how she "fastened on the book with a grip like steel," and carried it off and hid it under her pillow; how it affected her "like an evil potion," and stirred her whole being with a tempest of

excitement, till finally she, with equal weakness, flung it aside, "resolved to read that grand poetry no more, and broke through the thralldom of that powerful spell." The confession brings before us a type of the transitions of the century, on its way from the Byronic to the anti-Byronic fever, of which later state Mrs. Jamieson, Mrs. Norton, and Miss Martineau are among the most pronounced representatives.

Byron's garrulity with regard to those delicate matters on which men of more prudence or chivalry are wont to set the seal of silence, has often the same practical effect as reticence; for he talks so much at large—every page of his *Journal* being, by his own admission, apt to "confute and abjure its predecessor"—that we are often none the wiser. Amid a mass of conjecture, it is manifest that during the years between his return from Greece and final expatriation (1811–1816), including the whole period of his social glory—though not yet of his solid fame—he was lured into liaisons of all sorts and shades. Some, now acknowledged as innocent, were blared abroad by tongues less skilled in pure invention than in distorting truth. On others, as commonplaces of a temperament "all meridian," it were waste of time to dwell. Byron rarely put aside a pleasure in his path; but his passions were seldom unaccompanied by affectionate emotions, genuine while they lasted. The verses to the memory of a lost love veiled as "Thyrza," of moderate artistic merit, were not, as Moore alleges, mere plays of imagination, but records of a sincere grief.¹ Another intimacy exerted so much influence on this phase of the poet's career, that to

¹ Mr. Trelawny says that Thyrza was a cousin, but that on this subject Byron was always reticent. Mr. Minto, as we have seen, associates her with the disguised girl of 1807–8.

pass it over would be like omitting Vanessa's name from the record of Swift. Lady Caroline Lamb, granddaughter of the first Earl Spencer, was one of those few women of our climate who, by their romantic impetuosity, recall the "children of the sun." She read Burns in her ninth year, and in her thirteenth idealized William Lamb (afterwards Lord Melbourne) as a statue of Liberty. In her nineteenth (1805) she married him, and lived for some years, during which she was a reigning belle and toast, a domestic life only marred by occasional eccentricities. Rogers, whom in a letter to Lady Morgan she numbers among her lovers, said she ought to know the new poet, who was three years her junior, and the introduction took place in March, 1812. After the meeting, she wrote in her journal, "Mad—bad—and dangerous to know;" but, when the fashionable Apollo called at Melbourne House, she "flew to beautify herself." Flushed by his conquest, he spent a great part of the following year in her company, during which time the apathy or self-confidence of the husband laughed at the worship of the hero. "Conrad" detailed his travels and adventures, interested her by his woes, dictated her amusements, invited her guests, and seems to have set rules to the establishment. "Medora," on the other hand, made no secret of her devotion, declared that they were affinities, and offered him her jewels. But after the first excitement, he began to grow weary of her talk about herself, and could not praise her indifferent verses: "he grew moody, and she fretful, when their mutual egotisms jarred." Byron at length concurred in her being removed for a season to her father's house in Ireland, on which occasion he wrote one of his glowing farewell letters. When she came back, matters were little better. The would-be Juliet beset the poet with renewed advances, on one occasion

penetrating to his rooms in the disguise of a page, on another threatening to stab herself with a pair of scissors, and again, developing into a Medea, offering her gratitude to any one who would kill him. "The 'Agnus' is furious," he writes to Hodgson, in February, 1813, in one of the somewhat ungenerous bursts to which he was too easily provoked. "You can have no idea of the horrible and absurd things she has said and done since (really from the best motives) I withdrew my homage. . . . The business of last summer I broke off, and now the amusement of the gentle fair is writing letters literally threatening my life." With one member of the family, Lady Melbourne, Mr. Lamb's mother, and sister of Sir Ralph Milbanke, he remained throughout on terms of pleasant intimacy. He appreciated the talent and sense, and was ready to profit by the experience and tact of "the cleverest of women." But her well-meant advice had unfortunate results, for it was on her suggestion that he became a suitor for the hand of her niece, Miss Milbanke. Byron first proposed to this lady in 1813; his offer was refused, but so graciously that they continued to correspond on friendly, which gradually grew into intimate terms, and his second offer, towards the close of the following year, was accepted.

After a series of vain protests, and petulant warnings against her cousin by marriage, who she said was punctual at church, and learned, and knew statistics, but was "not for Conrad, no, no, no!" Lady Caroline lapsed into an attitude of fixed hostility; and shortly after the crash came, and her predictions were realized, vented her wrath in the now almost forgotten novel of *Glenarvon*, in which some of Byron's real features were represented in conjunction with many fantastic additions. Madame de Staël was kind enough to bring a copy of the book before his notice

when they met on the Lake of Geneva, but he seems to have been less moved by it than by most attacks. We must, however, bear in mind his own admission in a parallel case. "I say I am perfectly calm; I am, nevertheless, in a fury." Over the sad vista of the remaining years of the unhappy lady's life we need not linger. During a considerable part of it she appears hovering about the thin line that separates some kinds of wit and passion from madness; writing more novels, burning her hero's effigy and letters, and then clamouring for a lock of his hair, or a sight of his portrait; separated from, and again reconciled to, a husband to whose magnanimous forbearance and compassion she bears testimony to the last, comparing herself to Jane Shore; attempting Byronic verses, loudly denouncing and yet never ceasing inwardly to idolize, the man whom she regarded as her betrayer, perhaps only with justice in that he had unwittingly helped to overthrow her mental balance. After eight years of this life, lit up here and there by gleams of social brilliancy, we find her carriage, on the 12th of July, 1824, suddenly confronted by a funeral. On hearing that the remains of Byron were being carried to the tomb, she shrieked, and fainted. Her health finally sank, and her mind gave way under this shock; but she lingered till January, 1828, when she died, after writing a calm letter to her husband, and bequeathing the poet's miniature to her friend, Lady Morgan.

"I have paid some of my debts, and contracted others," Byron writes to Moore, on September 15, 1814; "but I have a few thousand pounds which I can't spend after my heart in this climate, and so I shall go back to the south. I want to see Venice and the Alps, and Parmesan cheeses, and look at the coast of Greece from Italy. All this, however, depends upon an event which may or may

not happen. Whether it will, I shall probably know to-morrow ; and if it does, I can't well go abroad at present." "A wife," he had written, in the January of the same year, "would be my salvation;" but a marriage entered upon in such a flippant frame of mind could scarcely have been other than disastrous. In the autumn of the year we are told that a friend,¹ observing how cheerless was the state both of his mind and prospects, advised him to marry, and after much discussion he consented, naming to his correspondent Miss Milbanke. To this his adviser objected, remarking that she had, at present, no fortune, and that his embarrassed affairs would not allow him to marry without one, &c. Accordingly, he agreed that his friend should write a proposal to another lady, which was done. A refusal arrived as they were one morning sitting together. "'You see,' said Lord Byron, 'that after all Miss Milbanke is to be the person,' and wrote on the moment. His friend, still remonstrating against his choice, took up the letter; but, on reading it, observed, 'Well, really, this is a very pretty letter; it is a pity it should not go.' 'Then it *shall* go,' said Lord Byron, and, in so saying, sealed and sent off this fiat of his fate." The incident seems cut from a French novel; but so does the whole strange story—the one apparently insoluble enigma in an otherwise only too transparent life. On the arrival of the lady's answer he was seated at dinner, when his gardener came in and presented him with his mother's wedding-ring, lost many years before, and which had just been found, buried in the mould beneath her window. Almost at the same moment the letter arrived; and Byron exclaimed, "If it contains a consent (which it did), I will be married with this very ring." He had the highest anticipations of his bride,

¹ Doubtless Moore himself, who tells the story.

appreciating her "talents, and excellent qualities;" and saying, "she is so good a person that I wish I was a better." About the same date he writes to various friends in the good spirits raised by his enthusiastic reception from the Cambridge undergraduates, when in the course of the same month he went to the Senate House to give his vote for a Professor of Anatomy.

The most constant and best of those friends was his sister, Augusta Leigh, whom, from the death of Miss Chaworth to his own, Byron, in the highest and purest sense of the word, loved more than any other human being. Tolerant of errors which she lamented, and violences in which she had no share, she had a touch of their common family pride, most conspicuous in an almost cat-like clinging to their ancestral home. Her early published letters are full of regrets about the threatened sale of Newstead, on the adjournment of which, when the first purchaser had to pay 25,000*l.* for breaking his bargain, she rejoices, and over the consummation of which she mourns, in the manner of Milton's Eve—

"Must I then leave thee, Paradise?"

In all her references to the approaching marriage there are blended notes of hope and fear. In thanking Hodgson for his kind congratulations, she trusts it will secure her brother's happiness. Later she adds her testimony to that of all outsiders at this time, as to the graces and genuine worth of the object of his choice. After the usual preliminaries, the ill-fated pair were united, at Seaham House, on the 2nd of January, 1815. Byron was married like one walking in his sleep. He trembled like a leaf, made the wrong responses, and almost from the first seems to have been conscious of his irrevocable mistake.

“I saw him stand
Before an altar with a gentle bride:
Her face was fair, but was not that which made
The starlight of his boyhood. He could see
Not that which was—but that which should have been—
But the old mansion, the accustom'd hall.
And she who was his destiny came back,
And thrust herself between him and the light.”

Here we have faint visions of Miss Chaworth, mingling with later memories. In handing the bride into the carriage he said, “Miss Milbanke, are you ready?”—a mistake said to be of evil omen. Byron never really loved his wife; and though he has been absurdly accused of marrying for revenge, we must suspect that he married in part for a settlement. On the other hand, it is not unfair to say that she was fascinated by a name, and inspired by the philanthropic zeal of reforming a literary Corsair. Both were disappointed. Miss Milbanke's fortune was mainly settled on herself; and Byron, in spite of plentiful resolutions, gave little sign of reformation. For a considerable time their life, which, after the “treacle moon,” as the bridegroom called it, spent at Halnaby, near Darlington, was divided between residence at Seaham and visits to London, seemed to move smoothly. In a letter, evidently mis-dated the 15th December, Mrs. Leigh writes to Hodgson: “I have every reason to think that my beloved B. is very happy and comfortable. I hear constantly from him and *his rib*. It appears to me that Lady B. sets about making him happy in the right way. I had many fears. Thank God that they do not appear likely to be realized. In short, there seems to me to be but one drawback to all our felicity, and that, alas, is the disposal of dear Newstead. I never shall feel reconciled to the loss of that sacred re-

vered Abbey. The thought makes me more melancholy than perhaps the loss of an inanimate object ought to do. Did you ever hear that *landed property*, the GIFT OF THE CROWN, could not be sold? Lady B. writes me word that she never saw her father and mother so happy; that she believes the latter would go to the bottom of the sea herself to find fish for B.'s dinner, &c." Augusta Ada was born in London on the 10th of December, 1815. During the next months a few cynical mutterings are the only interruptions to an ominous silence; but these could be easily explained by the increasing embarrassment of the poet's affairs, and the importunity of creditors, who in the course of the last half-year had served seven or eight executions on his house and furniture. Their expectations were raised by exaggerated reports of his having married money; and by a curious pertinacity of pride he still declined, even when he had to sell his books to accept advances from his publisher. In January the storm which had been secretly gathering suddenly broke. On the 15th, *i. e.*, five weeks after her daughter's birth, Lady Byron left home with the infant to pay a visit, as had been agreed, to her own family at Kirkby Mallory, in Leicestershire. On the way she despatched to her husband a tenderly playful letter, which has been often quoted. Shortly afterwards he was informed—first by her father, and then by herself—that she did not intend ever to return to him. The accounts of their last interview, as in the whole evidence bearing on the affair, not only differ, but flatly contradict one another. On behalf of Lord Byron it is asserted that his wife, infuriated by his offering some innocent hospitality on occasion of bad weather to a respectable actress, Mrs. Mardyn, who had called on him about Drury Lane business, rushed into the room, exclaiming, "I leave you for ever"—and did

so. According to another story, Lady Byron, finding him with a friend, and observing him to be annoyed at her entrance, said, "Am I in your way, Byron?" whereupon he answered, "Damnably." Mrs. Leigh, Hodgson, Moore, and others did everything that mutual friends could do to bring about the reconciliation for which Byron himself professed to be eager, but in vain; and in vain the effort was renewed in later years. The wife was inveterately bent on a separation, of the causes of which the husband alleged he was never informed, and with regard to which as long as he lived she preserved a rigid silence.

For some time after the event Byron spoke of his wife with at least apparent generosity. Rightly or wrongly, he blamed her parents, and her maid—Mrs. Clermont, the theme of his scathing but not always dignified "Sketch;" but of herself he wrote (March 8, 1816), "I do not believe that there ever was a brighter, and a kinder, or a more amiable or agreeable being than Lady Byron. I never had nor can have any reproach to make to her, when with me." Elsewhere he adds, that he would willingly, if he had the chance, "renew his marriage on a lease of twenty years." But as time passed and his overtures were rejected, his patience gave way, and in some of his later satires he even broke the bounds of courtesy. Lady Byron's letters at the time of the separation, especially those first published in the *Academy* of July 19, 1879, are to Mrs. Leigh always affectionate and confidential, often pathetic, asking her advice "in this critical moment," and protesting that, "independent of malady, she does not think of the past with any spirit of resentment, and scarcely with the sense of injury." In her communications to Mr. Hodgson, on the other hand—the first of almost the same date, the second a few weeks later—she

writes with intense bitterness, stating that her action was due to offences which she could only condone on the supposition of her husband's insanity, and distinctly implying that she was in danger of her life. This supposition having been by her medical advisers pronounced erroneous, she felt, in the words only too pungently recalled in *Don Juan*, that her duty both to man and God prescribed her course of action. Her playful letter on leaving she seems to defend on the ground of the fear of personal violence. Till Lord Byron's death the intimacy between his wife and sister remained unbroken; through the latter he continued to send numerous messages to the former, and to his child, who became a ward in Chancery; but at a later date it began to cool. On the appearance of Lady Byron's letter, in answer to Moore's first volume, Augusta speaks of it as "a despicable tirade;" feels "disgusted at such unfeeling conduct;" and thinks "nothing can justify any one in defaming the dead." Soon after 1830 they had an open rupture on a matter of business, which was never really healed, though the then Puritanic precisian sent a message of relenting to Mrs. Leigh on her death-bed (1851).

The charge or charges which, during her husband's life, Lady Byron from magnanimity or other motive reserved, she is ascertained, after his death, to have delivered with important modifications to various persons, with little regard to their capacity for reading evidence or to their discretion. On one occasion her choice of a confidante was singularly unfortunate. "These," wrote Lord Byron in his youth, "these are the first tidings that have ever sounded like fame in my ears—to be redde on the banks of the Ohio." Strangely enough, it is from the country of Washington, whom the poet was wont to reverence as

the purest patriot of the modern world, that in 1869 there emanated the hideous story which scandalized both continents, and ultimately recoiled on the retailer of the scandal. The grounds of the reckless charge have been weighed by those who have wished it to prove false, and by those who have wished it prove true, and found wanting. The chaff has been beaten in every way and on all sides, without yielding a particle of grain; and it were ill-advised to rake up the noxious dust that alone remains. From nothing left on record by either of the two persons most intimately concerned can we derive any reliable information. It is plain that Lady Byron was during the later years of her life the victim of hallucinations, and that if Byron knew the secret, which he denies, he did not choose to tell it, putting off Captain Medwin and others with absurdities, as that "He did not like to see women eat," or with commonplaces, as "The causes, my dear sir, were too simple to be found out."

Thomas Moore, who had the *Memoirs*¹ supposed to have thrown light on the mystery, in the full knowledge of Dr. Lushington's judgment and all the gossip of the day, professes to believe that "the causes of disunion did not differ from those that loosen the links of most such marriages," and writes several pages on the trite theme that great genius is incompatible with domestic happiness. Negative instances abound to modify this sweeping generalization; but there is a kind of genius, closely associated with intense irritability, which it is difficult to subject to the most reasonable yoke; and of this sort was Byron's. His valet, Fletcher, is reported to have said that "Any woman could manage my lord, except my lady;" and Madame De Staël, on reading the *Farewell*, that "She

¹ Captain Trelawny, however, doubts if he ever read them.

would have been glad to have been in Lady Byron's place." But it may be doubted if Byron would have made a good husband to any woman; his wife and he were even more than usually ill-assorted. A model of the proprieties, and a pattern of the learned philanthropy of which in her sex he was wont to make a constant butt, she was no fit consort for that "*mens insana in corpore insano.*" What could her placid temperament conjecture of a man whom she saw, in one of his fits of passion, throwing a favourite watch under the fire, and grinding it to pieces with a poker? Or how could her conscious virtue tolerate the recurring irregularities which he was accustomed not only to permit himself but to parade? The harassment of his affairs stimulated his violence, till she was inclined to suspect him to be mad. Some of her recently printed letters—as that to Lady Anne Barnard, and the reports of later observers of her character—as William Howitt, tend to detract from the earlier tributes to her consistent amiability, and confirm our ideas of the incompatibility of the pair. It must have been trying to a poet to be asked by his wife, impatient of his late hours, when he was going to leave off writing verses; to be told he had no real enthusiasm; or to have his desk broken open, and its compromising contents sent to the persons for whom they were least intended. The smouldering elements of discontent may have been fanned by the gossip of dependants, or the officious zeal of relatives, and kindled into a jealous flame by the ostentation of regard for others beyond the circle of his home. Lady Byron doubtless believed some story which, when communicated to her legal advisers, led them to the conclusion that the mere fact of her believing it made reconciliation impossible; and the inveterate obstinacy which lurked beneath her gracious

exterior made her cling through life to the substance—not always to the form, whatever that may have been—of her first impressions. Her later letters to Mrs. Leigh, as that called forth by Moore's *Life*, are certainly as open to the charge of self-righteousness, as those of her husband's are to self-disparagement.

Byron himself somewhere says, "Strength of endurance is worth all the talent in the world." "I love the virtues that I cannot share." His own courage was all active; he had no power of sustained endurance. At a time when his proper refuge was silence, and his prevailing sentiment—for he admits he was somehow to blame—should have been remorse, he foolishly vented his anger and his grief in verses, most of them either peevish or vindictive, and some of which he certainly permitted to be published. "Woe to him," exclaims Voltaire, "who says all he could on any subject!" Woe to him, he might have added, who says anything at all on the subject of his domestic troubles! The poet's want of reticence at this crisis started a host of conjectures, accusations, and calumnies, the outcome, in some degree at least, of the rancorous jealousy of men with whose adulation he was weary. Then began that burst of British virtue on which Macaulay has expatiated, and at which the social critics of the continent have laughed. Cottle, Cato, Oxoniensis, Delia, and Styles were let loose, and they anticipated the *Saturday* and the *Spectator* of 1869, so that the latter might well have exclaimed, "Pereant qui ante nos nostra dixerunt." Byron was accused of every possible and impossible vice. He was compared to Sardanapalus, Nero, Tiberius, the Duke of Orleans, Heliogabalus, and Satan—all the most disreputable persons mentioned in sacred and profane history; his benevolences were maligned, his most

disinterested actions perverted. Mrs. Mardyn, the actress, was on his account, on one occasion, driven off the public stage. He was advised not to go to the theatres, lest he should be hissed; nor to Parliament, lest he should be insulted. On the very day of his departure a friend told him that he feared violence from mobs assembling at the door of his carriage. "Upon what grounds," the poet writes, in an incisive survey of the circumstances, in August, 1819, "the public formed their opinion, I am not aware; but it was general, and it was decisive. Of me and of mine they knew little, except that I had written poetry, was a nobleman, had married, became a father, and was involved in differences with my wife and her relatives—no one knew why, because the persons complaining refused to state their grievances.

"The press was active and scurrilous; . . . my name—which had been a knightly or a noble one since my fathers helped to conquer the kingdom for William the Norman—was tainted. I felt that, if what was whispered and muttered and murmured was true, I was unfit for England; if false, England was unfit for me. I withdrew; but this was not enough. In other countries—in Switzerland, in the shadow of the Alps, and by the blue depth of the lakes—I was pursued and breathed upon by the same blight. I crossed the mountains, but it was the same; so I went a little farther, and settled myself by the waves of the Adriatic, like the stag at bay, who betakes himself to the waters."

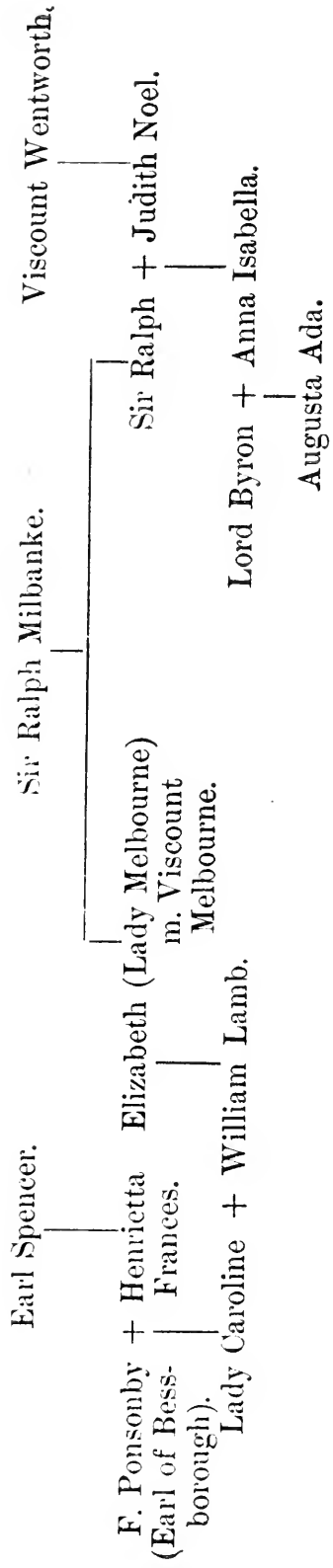
On the 16th of April, 1816, shortly before his departure, he wrote to Mr. Rogers: "My sister is now with me, and leaves town to-morrow. We shall not meet again for some time, at all events, if ever (it was their final meeting), and under these circumstances I trust to stand ex-

cused to you and Mr. Sheridan for being unable to wait upon him this evening." In all this storm and stress, Byron's one refuge was in the affection which rises like a well of purity amid the passions of his turbid life.

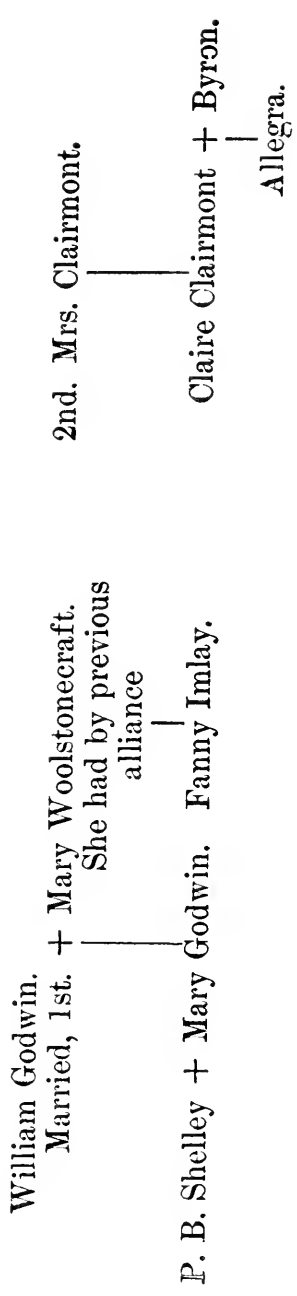
"In the desert a fountain is springing,
In the wild waste there still is a tree;
And a bird in the solitude singing,
That speaks to my spirit of thee."

The fashionable world was tired of its spoilt child, and he of it. Hunted out of the country, bankrupt in purse and heart, he left it, never to return; but he left it to find fresh inspiration by the "rushing of the arrowy Rhone," and under Italian skies to write the works which have immortalized his name.

DESCENT OF LADY BYRON AND LADY C. LAMB.



DESCENT OF ALLEGRA.



CHAPTER VII.

LIFE ABROAD.—SWITZERLAND TO VENICE.—THIRD PERIOD
OF AUTHORSHIP.—CHILDE HAROLD, III., IV.—MANFRED.

ON the 25th of April, 1816, Byron embarked for Ostend. From the "burning marl" of the staring streets he planted his foot again on the deck with a genuine exultation.

"Once more upon the waters, yet once more,
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows her rider. Welcome to the roar!"

But he brought with him a relic of English extravagance, setting out on his land travels in a huge coach, copied from that of Napoleon taken at Genappe, and being accompanied by Fletcher, Rushton, Berger, a Swiss, and an Italian physician, called Polidori, son of Alfieri's secretary—a man of some talent but fatal conceit. A question arises as to the source from which he obtained the means for these and subsequent luxuries, in striking contrast with Goldsmith's walking-stick, knapsack, and flute. Byron's financial affairs are almost inextricably confused. We can, for instance, nowhere find a clear statement of the result of the suit regarding the Rochdale Estates, save that he lost it before the Court of Exchequer, and that his appeal to the House of Lords was still unsettled in 1822. The sale of Newstead to Colonel Wildman in 1818, for 90,000*l.*, went mostly to pay off mortgages and debts. In April,

1819, Mrs. Leigh writes, after a last sigh over this event: "Sixty thousand pounds was secured by his (Byron's) marriage settlement, the interest of which he receives for life, and which ought to make him very comfortable." This is unfortunately decisive of the fact that he did not in spirit adhere to the resolution expressed to Moore never to touch a farthing of his wife's money, though we may accept his statement to Medwin, that he twice repaid the dowry of 10,000*l.* brought to him at the marriage, as in so far diminishing the obligation. None of the capital of Lady Byron's family came under his control till 1822, when, on the death of her mother, Lady Noel, Byron arranged the appointment of referees—Sir Francis Burdett on his behalf, Lord Dacre on his wife's. The result was an equal division of a property worth about 7000*l.* a year. While in Italy, the poet received, besides, about 10,000*l.* for his writings—4000*l.* being given for *Childe Harold* (iii., iv.) and *Manfred*. "Ne pas être dupe" was one of his determinations, and, though he began by caring little for making money, he was always fond of spending it. "I tell you it is too much," he said to Murray, in returning a thousand guineas for the *Corinth* and *Parisina*. Hodgson, Moore, Bland, Thomas Ashe, the family of Lord Falkland, the British Consul at Venice, and a host of others were ready to testify to his superb munificence. On the other hand, he would stint his pleasures, or his benevolences, which were among them, for no one; and when he found that to spend money he had to make it, he saw neither rhyme nor reason in accepting less than his due. In 1817 he begins to dun Murray, declaring, with a frankness in which we can find no fault, "You offer 1500 guineas for the new canto (*C. H.*, iv.). I won't take it. I ask 2500 guineas for it, which you will either give or not, as

you think proper." During the remaining years of his life he grew more and more exact, driving hard bargains for his houses, horses, and boats, and fitting himself, had he lived, to be Chancellor of the Exchequer in the newly-liberated State, from which he took a bond securing a fair interest for his loan. He made out an account in £ s. d. against the ungrateful Dallas, and when Leigh Hunt threatened to sponge upon him, he got a harsh reception; but there is nothing to countenance the view that Byron was ever really possessed by the "good old gentlemanly vice" of which he wrote. The Skimpoles and Chadbands of the world are always inclined to talk of filthy lucre: it is equally a fashion of really lavish people to boast that they are good men of business.

We have only a few glimpses of Byron's progress. At Brussels the Napoleonic coach was set aside for a more serviceable caleche. During his stay in the Belgian capital he paid a visit to the scene of Waterloo, wrote the famous stanzas beginning, "Stop, for thy tread is on an empire's dust!" and, in unpatriotic prose, recorded his impressions of a plain which appeared to him to "want little but a better cause" to make it vie in interest with those of Platea and Marathon.

The rest of his journey lay up the Rhine to Basle, thence to Berne, Lausanne, and Geneva, where he settled for a time at the Hôtel Secheron, on the western shore of the lake. Here began the most interesting literary relationship of his life, for here he first came in contact with the impassioned Ariel of English verse, Percy Bysshe Shelley. They lived in proximity after they left the hotel, Shelley's headquarters being at Mont Alégre, and Byron's for the remainder of the summer at the Villa Diodati; and their acquaintance rapidly ripened into an intimacy which, with

some interruptions, extended over the six remaining years of their joint lives. The place for an estimate of their mutual influence belongs to the time of their Italian partnership. Meanwhile, we hear of them mainly as fellow-excursionists about the lake, which on one occasion, departing from its placid poetical character, all but swallowed them both, along with Hobhouse, off Meillerie. "The boat," says Byron, "was nearly wrecked near the very spot where St. Preux and Julia were in danger of being drowned. It would have been classical to have been lost there, but not agreeable. I ran no risk, being so near the rocks and a good swimmer; but our party were wet and incommoded." The only anxiety of Shelley, who could not swim, was, that no one else should risk a life for his. Two such revolutionary or such brave poets were, in all probability, never before nor since in a storm in a boat together. During this period Byron complains of being still persecuted. "I was in a wretched state of health and worse spirits when I was in Geneva; but quiet and the lake—better physicians than Polidori—soon set me up. I never led so moral a life as during my residence in that country, but I gained no credit by it. On the contrary, there is no story so absurd that they did not invent at my cost. I was watched by glasses on the opposite side of the lake, and by glasses, too, that must have had very distorted optics. I was waylaid in my evening drives. I believe they looked upon me as a man-monster." Shortly after his arrival in Switzerland he contracted an intimacy with Miss Clairmont, a daughter of Godwin's second wife, and consequently a connexion by marriage of the Shelleys, with whom she was living, which resulted in the birth of a daughter, Allegra, at Great Marlow, in February, 1817. The noticeable events of the following two months are

a joint excursion to Chamouni, and a visit in July to Madame de Staël at Coppet, in the course of which he met Frederick Schlegel. During a wet week, when the families were reading together some German ghost stories, an idea occurred of imitating them, the main result of which was Mrs. Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Byron contributed to the scheme a fragment of *The Vampire*, afterwards completed and published in the name of his patron by Polidori. This eccentric physician now began to develop a vein of half insanity; his jealousy of Shelley grew to such a pitch that it resulted in the doctor's sending a challenge to the poet. Shelley only laughed at this; but Byron, to stop further impertinences of the kind, remarked, "Recollect that, though Shelley has scruples about duelling, I have none, and shall be at all times ready to take his place." Polidori had ultimately to be dismissed, and, after some years of absurd adventure, committed suicide.

The Shelleys left for England in September, and Byron made an excursion with Hobhouse through the Bernese Oberland. They went by the Col de Jaman and the Simmenthal to Thun; then up the valley to the Staubbach, which he compares to the tail of the pale horse in the Apocalypse — not a very happy, though a striking comparison. Thence they proceeded over the Wengern to Grindelwald and the Rosenlau glacier; then back by Berne, Friburg, and Yverdun to Diodati. The following passage in reference to this tour may be selected as a specimen of his prose description, and of the ideas of mountaineering before the days of the Alpine Club:—

"Before ascending the mountain, went to the torrent again, the sun upon it forming a rainbow of the lower part, of all colours, but principally purple and gold, the bow moving as you move. I never saw anything like this; it

is only in the sunshine. . . . Left the horses, took off my coat, and went to the summit, 7000 English feet above the level of the sea, and 5000 feet above the valley we left in the morning. On one side our view comprised the Jungfrau, with all her glaciers; then the Dent d'Argent, shining like truth; then the Eighers and the Wetterhorn. Heard the avalanches falling every five minutes. From where we stood on the Wengern Alp we had all these in view on one side; on the other, the clouds rose up from the opposite valley, curling up perpendicular precipices, like the foam of the ocean of hell during a spring tide; it was white and sulphury, and immeasurably deep in appearance. . . . Arrived at the Grindelwald; dined; mounted again, and rode to the higher glacier—like a frozen hurricane; starlight beautiful, but a devil of a path. Passed whole woods of withered pines, all withered; trunks stripped and barkless, branches lifeless; done by a single winter. Their appearance reminded me of me and my family.”

Students of *Manfred* will recognize whole sentences, only slightly modified in its verse. Though Byron talks with contempt of authorship, there is scarce a fine phrase in his letters or journal which is not pressed into the author's service. He turns his deepest griefs to artistic gain, and uses five or six times, for literary purposes, the expression which seems to have dropped from him naturally about his household gods being shivered on his hearth. His account of this excursion concludes with a passage equally characteristic of his melancholy and incessant self-consciousness:—

“In the weather for this tour I have been very fortunate. . . . I was disposed to be pleased. I am a lover of nature, &c. . . . But in all this the recollection of bit-

terness, and more especially of recent and more home desolation, which must accompany me through life, have preyed upon me here; and neither the music of the shepherd, the crashing of the avalanche, the torrent, the mountain, the glacier, the forest, nor the cloud, have for one moment lightened the weight upon my heart, nor enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty, and the power, and the glory around, above, and beneath me."

Such egotism in an idle man would only provoke impatience; but Byron was, during the whole of this period, almost preternaturally active. Detained by bad weather at Ouchy for two days (June 26, 27), he wrote the *Prisoner of Chillon*, which, with his noble introductory sonnet on Bonnivard, in some respects surpasses any of his early romances. The opening lines--

"Lake Lemman lies by Chillon's walls;
A thousand feet in depth below,
Its massy waters meet and flow"—

bring before us in a few words the conditions of a hopeless bondage. The account of the prisoner himself, and of the lingering deaths of the brothers; the first frenzy of the survivor, and the desolation which succeeds it—

"I only loved: I only drew
The accursed breath of dungeon dew."—

the bird's song breaking on the night of his solitude; his growing enamoured of despair, and regaining his freedom with a sigh, are all strokes from a master hand. From the same place, at the same date, he announces to Murray the completion of the third canto of *Childe Harold*. The productiveness of July is portentous. During that month he wrote the *Monody on Sheridan*, *The Dream*,

Churchill's Grave, the *Sonnet to Lake Lemán*, *Could I remount the River of my Years*, part of *Manfred*, *Prometheus*, the *Stanzas to Augusta*, beginning,

“My sister! my sweet sister! If a name
Dearer and purer were, it should be thine;”

and the terrible dream of *Darkness*, which at least in the ghastly power of the close, where the survivors meet by the lurid light of a dim altar fire, and die of each other's hideousness, surpasses Campbell's *Last Man*.¹ At Lausanne the poet made a pilgrimage to the haunts of Gibbon, broke a sprig from his acacia-tree, and carried off some rose leaves from his garden. Though entertaining friends, among them Mr. M. G. Lewis and Scrope Davies, he systematically shunned “the locust swarm of English tourists,” remarking on their obtrusive platitudes; as when he heard one of them at Chamouni inquire, “Did you ever see anything more truly rural?” Ultimately he got tired of the Calvinistic Genevese—one of whom is said to have swooned as he entered the room—and early in October set out with Hobhouse for Italy. They crossed the Simplon, and proceeded by the Lago Maggiore to Milan, admiring the pass, but slighting the somewhat hothouse beauties of the Borromeo Islands. From Milan he writes, pronouncing its cathedral to be only a little inferior to that of Seville, and delighted with “a correspondence, all original and amatory, between Lucretia Borgia and Cardinal Bembo.” He secured a lock of the golden hair of the Pope's daughter, and wished himself a cardinal.

At Verona, Byron dilates on the amphitheatre, as surpassing anything he had seen even in Greece, and on the

¹ This only appeared in 1831, but Campbell claims to have given Byron in conversation the suggestion of the subject.

faith of the people in the story of Juliet, from whose reputed tomb he sent some pieces of granite to Ada and his nieces. In November we find him settled in Venice, "the greenest isle of his imagination." There he began to form those questionable alliances which are so marked a feature of his life, and so frequent a theme in his letters, that it is impossible to pass them without notice. The first of his temporary idols was Mariana Segati, "the wife of a merchant of Venice," for some time his landlord. With this woman, whom he describes as an antelope with oriental eyes, wavy hair, a voice like the cooing of a dove, and the spirit of a Bacchante, he remained on terms of intimacy for about eighteen months, during which their mutual devotion was only disturbed by some outbursts of jealousy. In December the poet took lessons in Armenian, glad to find in the study something craggy to break his mind upon. He translated into that language a portion of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians. Notes on the carnival, praises of *Christabel*, instructions about the printing of *Childe Harold* (iii.), protests against the publication under his name of some spurious "domestic poems," and constant references, doubtfully domestic, to his Adriatic lady, fill up the records of 1816. On February 15, 1817, he announces to Murray the completion of the first sketch of *Manfred*, and alludes to it in a bantering manner as "a kind of poem in dialogue, of a wild metaphysical and inexplicable kind;" concluding, "I have at least rendered it *quite impossible* for the stage, for which my intercourse with Drury Lane has given me the greatest contempt."

About this time Byron seems to have entertained the idea of returning to England in the spring, *i. e.*, after a year's absence. This design, however, was soon set aside, partly in consequence of a slow malarial fever, by which

he was prostrated for several weeks. On his partial recovery, attributed to his having had neither medicine nor doctor, and a determination to live till he had "put one or two people out of the world," he started on an expedition to Rome.

His first stage was Arqua; then Ferrara, where he was inspired, by a sight of the Italian poet's prison, with the *Lament of Tasso*; the next, Florence, where he describes himself as drunk with the beauty of the galleries. Among the pictures, he was most impressed with the mistresses of Raphael and Titian, to whom, along with Giorgione, he is always reverential; and he recognized in Santa Croce the Westminster Abbey of Italy. Passing through Foligno, he reached his destination early in May, and met his old friends, Lord Lansdowne and Hobhouse. The poet employed his short time at Rome in visiting on horseback the most famous sites in the city and neighbourhood—as the Alban Mount, Tivoli, Frascati, the Falls of Terni, and the Clitumnus—re-casting the crude first draft of the third act of *Manfred*, and sitting for his bust to Thorwaldsen. Of this sitting the sculptor afterwards gave some account to his compatriot, Hans Andersen: "Byron placed himself opposite to me, but at once began to put on a quite different expression from that usual to him. 'Will you not sit still?' said I. 'You need not assume that look.' 'That is my expression,' said Byron. 'Indeed,' said I; and I then represented him as I wished. When the bust was finished he said, 'It is not at all like me; my expression is more unhappy.'" West, the American, who five years later painted his lordship at Leghorn, substantiates the above half-satirical anecdote, by the remark, "He was a bad sitter; he assumed a countenance that did not belong to him, as though he were thinking of a frontispiece

for *Childe Harold*." Thorwaldsen's bust, the first cast of which was sent to Hobhouse, and pronounced by Mrs. Leigh to be the best of the numerous likenesses of her brother, was often repeated. Professor Brandes, of Copenhagen, introduces his striking sketch of the poet by a reference to the model, that has its natural place in the museum named from the great sculptor whose genius had flung into the clay the features of a character so unlike his own. The bust, says the Danish critic, at first sight impresses one with an undefinable classic grace; on closer examination, the restlessness of a life is reflected in a brow over which clouds seem to hover, but clouds from which we look for lightnings. The dominant impression of the whole is that of some irresistible power (*Unwiderstehlichkeit*). Thorwaldsen, at a much later date (1829-1833), executed the marble statue, first intended for the Abbey, which is now to be seen in the library of Trinity College, in evidence that Cambridge is still proud of her most brilliant son.

Towards the close of the month—after almost fainting at the execution by guillotine of three bandits—he professes impatience to get back to Mariana, and early in the next we find him established with her near Venice, at the villa of La Mira, where for some time he continued to reside. His letters of June refer to the sale of Newstead, the mistake of Mrs. Leigh and others in attributing to him the *Tales of a Landlord*, the appearance of *Lalla Rookh*, preparations for *Marino Faliero*, and the progress of *Childe Harold* (iv.). This poem, completed in September, and published early in 1818 (with a dedication to Hobhouse, who had supplied most of the illustrative notes), first made manifest the range of the poet's power. Only another slope of ascent lay between him and the

pinnae, over which shines the red star of *Cain*. Had Lord Byron's public career closed when he left England, he would have been remembered for a generation as the author of some musical minor verses, a clever satire, a journal in verse exhibiting flashes of genius, and a series of fascinating romances — also giving promise of higher power—which had enjoyed a marvellous popularity. The third and fourth cantos of *Childe Harold* placed him on another platform, that of the *Dii Majores* of English verse. These cantos are separated from their predecessors, not by a stage, but by a gulf. Previous to their publication he had only shown how far the force of rhapsody could go; now he struck with his right hand, and from the shoulder. Knowledge of life and study of Nature were the mainsprings of a growth which the indirect influence of Wordsworth, and the happy companionship of Shelley, played their part in fostering. Faultlessness is seldom a characteristic of impetuous verse, never of Byron's; and even in the later parts of the *Childe* there are careless lines and doubtful images. "Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again," looking "pale and interesting;" but we are soon refreshed by a higher note. No familiarity can detract from "Waterloo," which holds its own by Barbour's "Bannockburn" and Scott's "Flodden." Sir Walter, referring to the climax of the opening, and the pathetic lament of the closing lines, generously doubts whether any verses in English surpass them in vigour. There follows "The Broken Mirror," extolled by Jeffrey with an appreciation of its exuberance of fancy and negligence of diction; and then the masterly sketch of Napoleon, with the implied reference to the writer at the end.

The descriptions in both cantos perpetually rise from

a basis of rhetoric to a real height of poetry. Byron's "Rhine" flows, like the river itself, in a stream of "exulting and abounding" stanzas. His "Venice" may be set beside the masterpieces of Ruskin's prose. They are together the joint pride of Italy and England. The tempest in the third canto is in verse a splendid microcosm of the favourite, if not the prevailing mood of the writer's mind. In spite of manifest flaws, the nine stanzas beginning "It is the hush of night," have enough in them to feed a high reputation. The poet's dying day, his sun and moon contending over the Rhætian hill, his Thrasymene, Clitumnus, and Velino, show that his eye has grown keener, and his imagery at least more terse, and that he can occasionally forget himself in his surroundings. The Drachenfells, Ehrenbreitstein, the Alps, Lake Lemman, pass before us like a series of dissolving views. But the stability of the book depends on its being a Temple of Fame, as well as a Diorama of Scenery. It is no mere versified Guide, because every resting-place in the pilgrimage is made interesting by association with illustrious memories. Coblenz introduces the tribute to Marceau; Clarens an almost complete review, in five verses, of Rousseau; Lausanne and Ferney the quintessence of criticism on Gibbon and Voltaire. A tomb in Arqua suggests Petrarch; the grass-grown streets of Ferrara lead in the lines on Tasso; the white walls of the Etrurian Athens bring back Alfieri and Michael Angelo, and the prose bard of the hundred tales, and Dante, "buried by the upbraiding shore," and

"The starry Galileo and his woes."

Byron has made himself so master of the glories and the wrecks of Rome, that almost everything else that has

been said of them seems superfluous. Hawthorne, in his *Marble Faun*, comes nearest to him; but Byron's *Gladiator* and *Apollo*, if not his *Laocoon*, are unequalled. "The voice of Marius," says Scott, "could not sound more deep and solemn among the ruins of Carthage than the strains of the pilgrim among the broken shrines and fallen statues of her subduer." As the third canto has a fitting close with the poet's pathetic remembrance of his daughter, so the fourth is wound up with consummate art—the memorable dirge on the Princess Charlotte being followed by the address to the sea, which, enduring unwrinkled through all its ebbs and flows, seems to mock at the mutability of human life.

Manfred, his witch drama, as the author called it, has had a special attraction for inquisitive biographers, because it has been supposed in some dark manner to reveal the secrets of his prison-house. Its lines have been tortured, like the witches of the seventeenth century, to extort from them the meaning of the "all nameless hour," and every conceivable horror has been alleged as its *motif*. On this subject Goethe writes with a humorous simplicity: "This singularly intellectual poet has extracted from my *Faust* the strongest nourishment for his hypochondria; but he has made use of the impelling principles for his own purposes. . . . When a bold and enterprising young man, he won the affections of a Florentine lady. Her husband discovered the amour, and murdered his wife; but the murderer was the same night found dead in the street, and there was no one to whom any suspicion could be attached. Lord Byron removed from Florence, but these spirits have haunted him all his life. This romantic incident explains innumerable allusions," *e. g.*,

"I have shed
Blood, but not hers; and yet her blood was shed."

Were it not for the fact that the poet had never seen the city in question when he wrote the poem, this explanation would be more plausible than most others, for the allusions are all to some lady who has been done to death. Galt asserts that the plot turns on a tradition of unhallowed necromancy—a human sacrifice, like that of Antinous attributed to Hadrian. Byron himself says it has no plot; but he kept teasing his questioners with mysterious hints, *e. g.*, "It was the Staubbach and the Jungfrau, and something else more than Faustus, which made me write *Manfred*;" and of one of his critics he says to Murray, "It had a better origin than he can devise or divine, for the soul of him." In any case most methods of reading between its lines would, if similarly applied, convict Sophocles, Schiller, and Shelley of incest, Shakspeare of murder, Milton of blasphemy, Scott of forgery, Marlowe and Goethe of compacts with the devil. Byron was no dramatist, but he had wit enough to vary at least the circumstances of his projected personality. The memories of both Fausts—the Elizabethan and the German—mingle, in the pages of this piece, with shadows of the author's life; but to these it never gives, nor could be intended to give, any substantial form.

Manfred is a chaos of pictures, suggested by the scenery of Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald, half animated by vague personifications and sensational narrative. Like *Harold* and Scott's *Marmion*, it just misses being a great poem. The Coliseum is its masterpiece of description; the appeal, "Astarte, my beloved, speak to me," its nearest approach to pathos. The lonely death of the hero makes an effective close to the moral tumult of the preceding

scenes. But the reflections, often striking, are seldom absolutely fresh: that beginning,

“The mind, which is immortal, makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts,
Is its own origin of ill and end,
And its own place and time,”

is transplanted from Milton with as little change as Milton made in transplanting it from Marlowe. The author's own favourite passage, the invocation to the sun (act iii., sc. 2), has some sublimity, marred by lapses. The lyrics scattered through the poem sometimes open well, *e. g.*,—

“Mont Blanc is the monarch of mountains;
They crowned him long ago,
On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,
With a diadem of snow;”

but they cannot sustain themselves like true song-birds, and fall to the ground like spent rockets. This applies to Byron's lyrics generally; turn to the incantation in the *Deformed Transformed*: the first two lines are in tune—

“Beautiful shadow of Thetis's boy,
Who sleeps in the meadow whose grass grows o'er Troy.”

Nor Sternhold nor Hopkins has more ruthlessly outraged our ears than the next two—

“From the red earth, like Adam, thy likeness I shape,
As the Being who made him, whose actions I ape (!)”

Of his songs: “There be none of Beauty's daughters,” “She walks in beauty,” “Maid of Athens,” “I enter thy garden of roses,” the translation “Sons of the Greeks,” and others, have a flow and verve that it is pedantry to

ignore; but in general Byron was too much of the earth earthy to be a great lyricist. Some of the greatest have lived wild lives, but their wings were not weighted with the lead of the love of the world.

The summer and early months of the autumn of 1817 were spent at La Mira, and much of the poet's time was occupied in riding along the banks of the Brenta, often in the company of the few congenial Englishmen who came in his way; others, whom he avoided, avenged themselves by retailing stories, none of which were "too improbable for the craving appetites of their slander-loving countrymen." In August he received a visit from Mr. Hobhouse, and on this occasion drew up the remarkable document afterwards given to Mr. M. G. Lewis for circulation in England, which appeared in the *Academy* of October 9, 1869. In this document he says, "It has been intimated to me that the persons understood to be the legal advisers of Lady Byron have declared their lips to be sealed up on the cause of the separation between her and myself. If their lips are sealed up they are not sealed up by me, and the greatest favour they can confer upon me will be to open them." He goes on to state that he repents having consented to the separation—will be glad to cancel the deed, or to go before any tribunal to discuss the matter in the most public manner; adding, that Mr. Hobhouse (in whose presence he was writing) proposed, on his part, to go into court, and ending with a renewed asseveration of his ignorance of the allegations against him, and his inability to understand for what purpose they had been kept back, "unless it was to sanction the most infamous calumnies by silence." Hobhouse and others, during the four succeeding years, ineffectually endeavoured to persuade the poet to return to England. Moore and others insist that Byron's heart was

at home when his presence was abroad, and that, with all her faults, he loved his country still. Leigh Hunt, on the contrary, asserts that he cared nothing for England or its affairs. Like many men of genius, Byron was never satisfied with what he had at the time. "Romæ Tibur amem ventosus Tibure Romam." At Seaham he is bored to death, and pants for the excitement of the clubs; in London society he longs for a desert or island in the Cyclades; after their separation, he begins to regret his wife; after his exile, his country. "Where," he exclaimed to Hobhouse, "is real comfort to be found out of England?" He frequently fell into the mood in which he wrote the verse—

" Yet I was born where men are proud to be,
Not without cause: and should I leave behind
Th' immortal island of the sage and free,
And seek me out a home by a remoter sea?"

But the following, to Murray (June 7, 1819), is equally sincere: "Some of the epitaphs at Ferrara pleased me more than the more splendid monuments of Bologna; for instance—

" 'Martini Luigi
Implora pace.'

" 'Lucrezia Picini
Implora eterne quiete.'

Can anything be more full of pathos? These few words say all that can be said or sought; the dead had had enough of life; all they wanted was rest, and this they implore. There is all the helplessness, and humble hope, and death-like prayer that can arise from the grave—'implora pace.' I hope, whoever may survive me, and shall

see me put in the foreigner's burying-ground at the Lido, within the fortress by the Adriatic, will see these two words, and no more, put over me. I trust they won't think of pickling and bringing me home to Clod, or Blunderbuss Hall. I am sure my bones would not rest in an English grave, or my clay mix with the earth of that country." Hunt's view is, in this as in other subtle respects, nearer the truth than Moore's; for with all Byron's insight into Italian vice, he hated more the master vice of England—hypocrisy; and much of his greatest, and in a sense latest, because unfinished work, is the severest, as it might be the wholesomest, satire ever directed against a great nation since the days of Juvenal and Tacitus.

In September (1817) Byron entered into negotiations, afterwards completed, for renting a country house among the Euganean hills near Este, from Mr. Hoppner, the English Consul at Venice, who bears frequent testimony to his kindness and courtesy. In October we find him settled for the winter in Venice, where he first occupied his old quarters in the Speziera, and afterwards hired one of the palaces of the Countess Mocenigo on the Grand Canal. Between this mansion, the cottage at Este, and the villa of La Mira, he divided his time for the next two years. During the earlier part of his Venetian career he had continued to frequent the salon of the Countess Albrizzi, where he met with people of both sexes of some rank and standing who appreciated his genius, though some among them fell into absurd mistakes. A gentleman of the company informing the hostess, in answer to some inquiry regarding Canova's busts, that Washington, the American President, was shot in a duel by Burke, "What in the name of folly are you thinking of?" said Byron, perceiving that the speaker was confounding Washington with

Hamilton, and Burke with Burr. He afterwards transferred himself to the rival coterie of the Countess Benzoni, and gave himself up with little reserve to the intrigues which cast discredit on this portion of his life. Nothing is so conducive to dissipation as despair, and Byron had begun to regard the Sea-Cybele as a Sea-Sodom—when he wrote, “To watch a city die daily, as she does, is a sad contemplation. I sought to distract my mind from a sense of her desolation and my own solitude, by plunging into a vortex that was anything but pleasure.” In any case, he forsook the “Dame,” and by what his biographer calls a “descent in the scale of refinement for which nothing but the wayward state of his mind can account,” sought the companions of his leisure hours among the wearers of the “fazzioli.” The carnivals of the years 1818, 1819, mark the height of his excesses. Early in the former, Mariana Segati fell out of favour, owing to Byron’s having detected her in selling the jewels he had given as presents, and so being led to suspect a large mercenary element in her devotion. To her succeeded Margarita Cogni, the wife of a baker, who proved as accommodating as his predecessor, the linen-draper. This woman was decidedly a character, and Señor Castelar has almost elevated her into a heroine. A handsome virago, with brown shoulders and black hair, endowed with the strength of an Amazon, “a face like Faustina’s, and the figure of a Juno—tall and energetic as a pythoness,” she quartered herself for twelve months in the palace as “Donna di governo,” and drove the servants about without let or hindrance. Unable to read or write, she intercepted his lordship’s letters to little purpose; but she had great natural business talents, reduced by one half the expenses of his household, kept everything in good order, and, when her violences roused his wrath, turned it

off with some ready retort or witticism. She was very devout, and would cross herself three times at the Angelus. One instance, of a different kind of devotion, from Byron's own account, is sufficiently graphic: "In the autumn one day, going to the Lido with my gondoliers, we were overtaken by a heavy squall, and the gondola put in peril, hats blown away, boat filling, oar lost, tumbling sea, thunder, rain in torrents, and wind unceasing. On our return, after a tight struggle, I found her on the open steps of the Mocenigo Palace on the Grand Canal, with her great black eyes flashing through her tears, and the long dark hair which was streaming, drenched with rain, over her brows. She was perfectly exposed to the storm; and the wind blowing her dress about her thin figure, and the lightning flashing round her, made her look like Medea alighted from her chariot, or the Sibyl of the tempest that was rolling around her, the only living thing within hail at that moment except ourselves. On seeing me safe, she did not wait to greet me, as might have been expected; but, calling out to me, 'Ah! can' della Madonna, xe esto il tempo per andar' al' Lido,' ran into the house, and solaced herself with scolding the boatmen for not foreseeing the 'temporale.' Her joy at seeing me again was moderately mixed with ferocity, and gave me the idea of a tigress over her recovered cubs."

Some months after, she became ungovernable—threw plates about, and snatched caps from the heads of other women who looked at her lord in public places. Byron told her she must go home; whereupon she proceeded to break glass, and threaten "knives, poison, fire;" and on his calling his boatmen to get ready the gondola, threw herself in the dark night into the canal. She was rescued, and in a few days finally dismissed; after which he saw

her only twice, at the theatre. Her whole picture is more like that of Théroigne de Méricourt than that of Raphael's Fornarina, whose name she received.

Other stories, of course, gathered round this strange life—personal encounters, aquatic feats, and all manner of romantic and impossible episodes; their basis being that Byron on one occasion thrashed, on another challenged, a man who tried to cheat him, was a frequent rider, and a constant swimmer, so that he came to be called “the English fish,” “water-spaniel,” “sea-devil,” &c. One of the boatmen is reported to have said, “He is a good gondolier, spoilt by being a poet and a lord;” and in answer to a traveller's inquiry, “Where does he get his poetry?” “He dives for it.” His habits, as regards eating, seem to have been generally abstemious; but he drank a pint of gin and water over his verses at night, and then took claret and soda in the morning.

Riotous living may have helped to curtail Byron's life, but it does not seem to have seriously impaired his powers. Among these adverse surroundings of the “court of Circe,” he threw off *Beppo*, *Mazeppa*, and the early books of *Don Juan*. The first canto of the last was written in November, 1818; the second in January, 1819; the third and fourth towards the close of the same year. *Beppo*, its brilliant prelude, sparkles like a draught of champagne. This “Venetian story,” or sketch, in which the author broke ground on his true satiric field—the satire of social life—and first adopted the measure avowedly suggested by Frere's *Whistlecraft*, was drafted in October, 1817, and appeared in May, 1818. It aims at comparatively little, but is perfectly successful in its aim, and unsurpassed for the incisiveness of its side strokes, and the courtly ease of a manner that never degenerates into mannerism. In *Ma-*

zeppa the poet reverts to his earlier style, and that of Scott; the description of the headlong ride hurries us along with a breathless expectancy that gives it a conspicuous place among his minor efforts. The passage about the howling of the wolves, and the fever faint of the victim, is as graphic as anything in Burns—

“The skies spun like a mighty wheel,
I saw the trees like drunkards reel.”

In the May or June of 1818 Byron's little daughter, Allegra, had been sent from England, under the care of a Swiss nurse too young to undertake her management in such trying circumstances, and after four months of anxiety he placed her in charge of Mrs. Hoppner. In the course of this and the next year there are frequent allusions to the child, all, save one which records a mere affectation of indifference, full of affectionate solicitude. In June, 1819, he writes, “Her temper and her ways, Mr. Hoppner says, are like mine, as well as her features; she will make, in that case, a manageable young lady.” Later he talks of her as “flourishing like a pomegranate blossom.” In March, 1820, we have another reference. “Allegra is prettier, I think, but as obstinate as a mule, and as ravenous as a vulture; health good to judge by the complexion, temper tolerable but for vanity and pertinacity. She thinks herself handsome, and will do as she pleases.” In May he refers to having received a letter from her mother, but gives no details. In the following year, with the approval of the Shelleys, then at Pisa, he placed her for education in the convent of Cavalli Bagni in the Romagna. “I have,” he writes to Hoppner, who had thought of having her boarded in Switzerland, “neither spared care, kindness, nor expense, since the child was sent to me. The

people may say what they please. I must content myself with not deserving, in this instance, that they should speak ill. The place is a *country* town, in a good air, and less liable to objections of every kind. It has always appeared to me that the moral defect in Italy does *not* proceed from a *conventual* education; because, to my certain knowledge, they come out of their convents innocent, even to ignorance of moral evil; but to the state of society into which they are directly plunged on coming out of it. It is like educating an infant on a mountain top, and then taking him to the sea and throwing him into it, and desiring him to swim." Elsewhere he says, "I by no means intend to give a natural child an English education, because, with the disadvantages of her birth, her after settlement would be doubly difficult. Abroad, with a fair foreign education, and a portion of 5000*l.* or 6000*l.* (his will leaving her 5000*l.*, on condition that she should not marry an Englishman, is here explained and justified), she might, and may, marry very respectably. In England such a dowry would be a pittance, while elsewhere it is a fortune. It is, besides, my wish that she should be a Roman Catholic, which I look upon as the best religion, as it is assuredly the oldest of the various branches of Christianity." It only remains to add that, when he heard that the child had fallen ill of fever in 1822, Byron was almost speechless with agitation, and, on the news of her death, which took place April 22nd, he seemed at first utterly prostrated. Next day he said, "Allegra is dead; she is more fortunate than we. It is God's will; let us mention it no more." Her remains rest beneath the elm-tree at Harrow which her father used to haunt in boyhood, with the date of birth and death, and the verse—

"I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me."

The most interesting of the visits paid to Byron during the period of his life at Venice was that of Shelley, who, leaving his wife and children at Bagni di Lucca, came to see him in August, 1818. He arrived late, in the midst of a thunder-storm; and next day they sailed to the Lido, and rode together along the sands. The attitude of the two poets towards each other is curious; the comparatively shrewd man of the world often relied on the idealist for guidance and help in practical matters, admired his courage and independence, spoke of him invariably as the best of men, but never paid a sufficiently warm tribute in public to his work. Shelley, on the other hand, certainly the most modest of great poets, contemplates Byron in the fixed attitude of a literary worshipper.

The introduction to *Julian and Maddalo*, directly suggested by this visit, under the slight veil of a change in the name, gives a summary of the view of his friend's character which he continued to entertain. "He is a person of the most consummate genius, and capable, if he would direct his energies to such an end, of becoming the redeemer of his degraded country. But it is his weakness to be proud; he derives, from a comparison of his own extraordinary mind with the dwarfish intellects that surround him, an intense apprehension of the nothingness of human life. His passions and his powers are incomparably greater than those of other men; and instead of the latter having been employed in curbing the former, they have mutually lent each other strength;" but "in social life no human being can be more gentle, patient, and unassuming. He is cheerful, frank, and witty. His more serious conversation is a sort of intoxication; men are held by it as by a spell."

Subsequently to this visit Byron lent the villa at Este

to his friend, and during the autumn weeks of their residence there were written the lines among the Euganean hills, where, in the same strain of reverence, Shelley refers to the "tempest-cleaving swan of Albion," to the "music flung o'er a mighty thunder-fit," and to the sun-like soul destined to immortalize his ocean refuge—

"As the ghost of Homer clings
Round Scamander's wasting springs,
As divinest Shakspeare's might
Fills Avon and the world with light."

"The sun," he says, at a later date, "has extinguished the glowworm;" and again, "I despair of rivalling Lord Byron, as well I may; and there is no other with whom it is worth contending."

Shelley was, in the main, not only an exquisite but a trustworthy critic; and no man was more absolutely above being influenced by the fanfaronade of rank or the din of popularity. These criticisms are therefore not to be lightly set aside, nor are they unintelligible. Perhaps those admirers of the clearer and more consistent nature, who exalt him to the rank of a greater poet, are misled by the amiable love of one of the purest characters in the history of our literature. There is at least no difficulty in understanding why he should have been, as it were, concussed by Byron's greater massiveness and energy into a sense—easy to a man half bard, half saint—of inferiority. Similarly, most of the estimates—many already reversed, others reversible—by the men of that age, of each other, can be explained. We can see how it was that Shelley overestimated both the character and the powers of Hunt; and Byron depreciated Keats, and was ultimately repelled by Wordsworth, and held out his hand to meet

the manly grasp of Scott. The one enigma of their criticism is the respect that they joined in paying to the witty, genial, shallow, worldly, musical Tom Moore.

This favourite of fortune and the minor muses, in the course of a short tour through the north of Italy in the autumn of 1819, found his noble friend on the 8th of October at La Mira, went with him on a sight-seeing expedition to Venice, and passed five or six days in his company. Of this visit he has recorded his impressions, some of which relate to his host's personal appearance, others to his habits and leading incidents of his life. Byron "had grown fatter, both in person and face, and the latter had suffered most by the change, having lost by the enlargement of the features some of that refined and spiritualized look that had in other times distinguished it; but although less romantic, he appeared more humorous." They renewed their recollections of the old days and nights in London, and compared them with later experiences of Bores and Blues, in a manner which threatened to put to flight the historical and poetical associations naturally awakened by the City of the Sea. Byron had a rooted dislike to any approach to fine talk in the ordinary intercourse of life; and when his companion began to rhapsodize on the rosy hue of the Italian sunsets, he interrupted him with, "Come, d—n it, Tom, *don't* be poetical." He insisted on Moore, who sighed after what he imagined would be the greater comforts of an hotel, taking up his quarters in his palace; and as they were groping their way through the somewhat dingy entrance, cried out, "Keep clear of the dog!" and a few paces farther, "Take care, or the monkey will fly at you!" an incident recalling the old vagaries of the menagerie at Newstead. The biographer's reminiscences mainly dwell on his lord-

ship's changing moods and tempers and gymnastic exercises, his terror of interviewing strangers, his imperfect appreciation of art, his preference of fish to flesh, his almost parsimonious economy in small matters, mingled with allusions to his domestic calamities, and frequent expressions of a growing distaste to Venetian society. On leaving the city, Moore passed a second afternoon at La Mira, had a glimpse of Allegra, and the first intimation of the existence of the notorious Memoirs. "A short time after dinner Byron left the room, and returned carrying in his hand a white leather bag. 'Look here,' he said, holding it up; 'this would be worth something to Murray, though *you*, I dare say, would not give sixpence for it.' 'What is it?' I asked. 'My life and adventures,' he answered. 'It is not a thing,' he answered, 'that can be published during my lifetime, but you may have it if you like. There, do whatever you please with it.' In taking the bag, and thanking him most warmly, I added, 'This will make a nice legacy for my little Tom, who shall astonish the latter days of the nineteenth century with it.'"¹ Shortly after, Moore for the last time bade his friend farewell, taking with him from Madame Guiccioli, who did the honours of the house, an introduction to her brother, Count Gamba, at Rome. "Theresa Guiccioli," says Cas-

¹ In December, 1820, Byron sent several more sheets of memoranda from Ravenna; and in the following year suggested an arrangement by which Murray paid over to Moore, who was then in difficulties, 2000*l.* for the right of publishing the whole, under the condition, among others, that Lady Byron should see them, and have the right of reply to anything that might seem to her objectionable. She on her part declined to have anything to do with them. When the Memoirs were destroyed, Moore paid back the 2000*l.*, but obtained four thousand guineas for editing the *Life and Correspondence*,

telar, "appears like a star on the stormy horizon of the poet's life." A young Romagnese, the daughter of a nobleman of Ravenna, of good descent but limited means, she had been educated in a convent, and married in her nineteenth year to a rich widower of sixty, in early life a friend of Alfieri, and noted as the patron of the National Theatre. This beautiful blonde, of pleasing manners, graceful presence, and a strong vein of sentiment, fostered by the reading of Chateaubriand, met Byron for the first time casually when she came in her bridal dress to one of the Albrizzi reunions; but she was only introduced to him early in the April of the following year, at the house of the Countess Benzoni. "Suddenly the young Italian found herself inspired with a passion of which till that moment her mind could not have formed the least idea; she had thought of love but as an amusement, and now became its slave." Byron, on the other hand, gave what remained of a heart never alienated from her by any other mistress. Till the middle of the month they met every day; and when the husband took her back to Ravenna she despatched to her idol a series of impassioned letters, declaring her resolution to mould her life in accordance with his wishes. Towards the end of May she had prepared her relatives to receive Byron as a visitor. He started in answer to the summons, writing on his way the beautiful stanzas to the Po, beginning—

"River that rollest by the ancient walls
Where dwells the lady of my love."

Again passing through Ferrara, and visiting Bologna, he left the latter on the 8th, and on his arrival at his destination found the Countess dangerously ill; but his presence, and the attentions of the famous Venetian doctor Aglietti,

who was sent for by his advice, restored her. The Count seems to have been proud of his guest. "I can't make him out at all," Byron writes; "he visits me frequently, and takes me out (like Whittington the Lord Mayor) in a coach and six horses. The fact appears to be, that he is completely governed by her—and, for that matter, so am I." Later he speaks of having got his horses from Venice, and riding or driving daily in the scenery reproduced in the third canto of *Don Juan* :—

"Sweet hour of twilight! in the solitude
Of the pine forest, and the silent shore
Which bounds Ravenna's immemorial wood."

On Theresa's recovery, in dread of a possible separation, he proposed to fly with her to America, to the Alps, to "some unsuspected isle in the far seas;" and she suggested the idea of feigning death, like Juliet, and rising from the tomb. Neither expedient was called for. When the Count went to Bologna, in August, with his wife, Lord Byron was allowed to follow; and after consoling himself during an excursion which the married pair made to their estate, by hovering about her empty rooms and writing in her books, he established himself, on the Count's return to his headquarters, with her and Allegra at Bologna. Meanwhile, Byron had written *The Prophecy of Dante*, and in August the prose letter, *To the Editor of the British Review*, on the charge of bribery in *Don Juan*. Than this inimitable epistle no more laughter-compelling composition exists. About the same time, we hear of his leaving the theatre in a convulsion of tears, occasioned by the representation of Alfieri's *Mirra*.

He left Bologna with the Countess on the 15th of September, when they visited the Euganean hills and Arqua,

and wrote their names together in the Pilgrim's Book. On arriving at Venice, the physicians recommending Madame Guiccioli to country air, they settled, still by her husband's consent, for the autumn at La Mira, where Moore and others found them domesticated. At the beginning of November the poet was prostrated by an attack of tertian fever. In some of his hours of delirium he dictated to his careful nurses, Fletcher and the Countess, a number of verses, which she assures us were correct and sensible. He attributes his restoration to cold water and the absence of doctors; but, ere his complete recovery, Count Guiccioli had suddenly appeared on the scene, and run away with his own wife. The lovers had for a time not only to acquiesce in the separation, but to agree to cease their correspondence. In December Byron, in a fit of spleen, had packed up his belongings, with a view to return to England. "He was," we are told, "ready dressed for the journey, his boxes on board the gondola, his gloves and cap on, and even his little cane in his hand, when my lord declares that if it should strike one—which it did—before everything was in order, he would not go that day. It is evident he had not the heart to go." Next day he heard that Madame Guiccioli was again seriously ill, received and accepted the renewed invitation which bound him to her and to the south. He left Venice for the last time almost by stealth, rushed along the familiar roads, and was welcomed at Ravenna.

CHAPTER VIII.

[1820-1821.]

RAVENNA.—DRAMAS.—CAIN.—VISION OF JUDGMENT.

BYRON'S life at Ravenna was during the first months comparatively calm; nevertheless, he mingled in society, took part in the Carnival, and was received at the parties of the Legate. "I may stay," he writes in January, 1820, "a day—a week—a year—all my life." Meanwhile, he imported his movables from Venice, hired a suite of rooms in the Guiccioli palace, executed his marvellously close translation of Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore*, wrote his version of the story of *Francesca of Rimini*, and received visits from his old friend Bankes and from Sir Humphry Davy. At this time he was accustomed to ride about armed to the teeth, apprehending a possible attack from assassins on the part of Count Guiccioli. In April his letters refer to the insurrectionary movements then beginning against the Holy Alliance. "We are on the verge of a row here. Last night they have over-written all the city walls with 'Up with the Republic!' and 'Death to the Pope!' The police have been searching for the subscribers, but have caught none as yet. The other day they confiscated the whole translation of the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, and have prosecuted the translator." In July a Papal decree of separation between the Countess and her husband was obtained, on condition of the latter paying from

his large income a pittance to the lady of 200*l.* a year, and her undertaking to live in her father's house—an engagement which was, first in the spirit, and subsequently in the letter, violated. For a time, however, she retired to a villa about fifteen miles from Ravenna, where she was visited by Byron at comparatively rare intervals. By the end of July he had finished *Marino Faliero*, and ere the close of the year the fifth canto of *Don Juan*. In September he says to Murray, "I am in a fierce humour at not having Scott's *Monastery*. No more Keats,¹ I entreat. There is no bearing the drivelling idiotism of the manikin. I don't feel inclined to care further about *Don Juan*. What do you think a very pretty Italian lady said to me the other day, when I remarked that 'it would live longer than *Childe Harold*?' 'Ah! but I would rather have the fame of *Childe Harold* for three years than an immortality of *D. J.*'" This is to-day the common female judgment; it is known to have been La Guiccioli's, as well as Mrs. Leigh's, and by their joint persuasion Byron was for a season induced to lay aside "that horrid, wearisome Don." About this time he wrote the memorable reply to the remarks on that poem in *Blackwood's Magazine*, where he enters on a defence of his life, attacks the Lakers, and champions Pope against the new school of poetry, lamenting that his own practice did not square with his precept; and adding, "We are all wrong, except Rogers, Crabbe, and Campbell."

¹ In a note on a similar passage, bearing the date November 12, 1821, he, however, confesses: "My indignation at Mr. Keats' depreciation of Pope has hardly permitted me to do justice to his own genius, which malgré all the fantastic fopperies of his style was undoubtedly of great promise. His fragment of *Hyperion* seems actually inspired by the Titans, and is as sublime as *Æschylus*. He is a loss to our literature."

In November he refers to reports of his letters being opened by the Austrian officials, and the unpleasant things the Huns, as he calls them, are likely to find therein. Early in the next month he tells Moore that the commandant of their troops, a brave officer, but obnoxious to the people, had been found lying at his door, with five slugs in him, and, bleeding inwardly, had died in the palace, where he had been brought to be nursed.

This incident is versified in *Don Juan*, v. 33–39, with anatomical minuteness of detail. After trying in vain to wrench an answer out of death, the poet ends in his accustomed strain—

“But it was all a mystery. Here we are,
And there we go:—but *where?* Five bits of lead—
Or three, or two, or one—send very far!”

Assassination has sometimes been the prelude to revolution, but it may be questioned if it has ever promoted the cause of liberty. Most frequently it has served as a pretext for reaction, or a red signal. In this instance—as afterwards in 1848—overt acts of violence made the powers of despotism more alert, and conduced, with the half-hearted action of their adversaries, to the suppression of the rising of 1820–21. Byron’s sympathy with the movement seems to have been stimulated by his new associations. Theresa’s brother, Count Pietro, an enthusiastic young soldier, having returned from Rome and Naples, surmounting a prejudice not wholly unnatural, became attached to him, and they entered into a partnership in behalf of what—adopting a phrase often flaunted in opposite camps—they called constitutional principles. Finally, the poet so committed himself to the party of insurrection that, though his nationality secured him from

direct attack, his movements were necessarily affected by the fiasco. In July the Gambas were banished from the Romagna, Pietro being actually carried by force over the frontier; and, according to the articles of her separation, the Countess had to follow them to Florence. Byron lingered for some months, partly from a spirit of defiance, and partly from his affection towards a place where he had enlisted the regards of numerous beneficiaries. The Gambas were for some time bent on migrating to Switzerland; but the poet, after first acquiescing, subsequently conceived a violent repugnance to the idea, and early in August wrote to Shelley, earnestly requesting his presence, aid, and counsel. Shelley at once complied, and, entering into a correspondence with Madame Guiccioli, succeeded in inducing her relatives to abandon their transmontane plans, and agree to take up their headquarters at Pisa. This incident gave rise to a series of interesting letters, in which the younger poet gives a vivid and generous account of the surroundings and condition of his friend. On the 2nd of August he writes from Ravenna: "I arrived last night at ten o'clock, and sat up talking with Lord B. till five this morning. He was delighted to see me. He has, in fact, completely recovered his health, and lives a life totally the reverse of that which he led at Venice. . . . Poor fellow! he is now quite well, and immersed in politics and literature. We talked a great deal of poetry and such matters last night, and, as usual, differed, I think, more than ever. He affects to patronize a system of criticism fit only for the production of mediocrity; and, although all his finer poems and passages have been produced in defiance of this system, yet I recognize the pernicious effects of it in the *Doge of Venice*." Again, on the 15th: "Lord B. is greatly improved in every respect—in

genius, in temper, in moral views, in health and happiness. His connexion with La Guiccioli has been an inestimable benefit to him. He lives in considerable splendour, but within his income, which is now about 4000*l.* a year, 1000*l.* of which he devotes to purposes of charity. Switzerland is little fitted for him; the gossip and the cabals of those Anglicised coteries would torment him as they did before. Ravenna is a miserable place. He would in every respect be better among the Tuscans. He has read to me one of the unpublished cantos of *Don Juan*. It sets him not only above, but far above, all the poets of the day. Every word has the stamp of immortality. . . . I have spoken to him of Hunt, but not with a direct view of demanding a contribution. I am sure, if I asked, it would not be refused; yet there is something in me that makes it impossible. Lord B. and I are excellent friends; and were I reduced to poverty, or were I a writer who had no claim to a higher position than I possess, I would freely ask him any favour. Such is not now the case." Later, after stating that Byron had decided upon Tuscany, he says, in reference to La Guiccioli: "At the conclusion of a letter, full of all the fine things she says she has heard of me, is this request, which I transcribe: 'Signore, la vostra bontà mi fa ardita di chiedervi un favore, me lo accordarete voi? *Non partite da Ravenna senza milord.*' Of course, being now by all the laws of knighthood captive to a lady's request, I shall only be at liberty on my parole until Lord Byron is settled at Pisa."

Shelley took his leave, after a visit of ten days' duration, about the 17th or 18th of April. In a letter, dated August 26, he mentions having secured for his lordship the Palazzo Lanfranchi, an old spacious building on the Lung' Arno, once the family residence of the destroyers of Ugo-

lino, and still said to be haunted by their ghosts. Towards the close of October, he says they have been expecting him any day these six weeks. Byron, however, did not leave till the morning of the 29th. On his road, there occurred at Imola the accidental meeting with Lord Clare. Clare—who on this occasion merely crossed his friend's path on his way to Rome—at a later date came on purpose from Geneva before returning to England to visit the poet, who, then at Leghorn, recorded in a letter to Moore his sense of this proof of old affection undecayed. At Bologna—his next stage—he met Rogers by appointment, and the latter has preserved his memory of the event in well-known lines. Together they revisited Florence and its galleries, where they were distracted by the crowds of sight-seeing visitors. Byron must have reached Pisa not later than the 2nd of November (1821), for his first letter from there bears the date of the 3rd.

The later months of the poet's life at Ravenna were marked by intense literary activity. Over a great part of the year was spread the controversy with Bowles about Pope, *i. e.*, between the extremes of Art against Nature, and Nature against Art. It was a controversy for the most part free from personal animus, and on Byron's part the genuine expression of a reaction against a reaction. To this year belong the greater number of the poet's Historical Dramas. What was said of these at the time by Jeffrey, Heber, and others, was said with justice; it is seldom that the criticism of our day finds so little to reverse in that of sixty years ago.

The author, having shown himself capable of being pathetic, sarcastic, sentimental, comical, and sublime, we would be tempted to think that he had written these plays to show, what no one before suspected, that he could also

be dull, were it not for his own exorbitant estimation of them. Lord Byron had few of the powers of a great dramatist; he had little architectural imagination, or capacity to conceive and build up a whole. His works are mainly masses of fine, splendid, or humorous writing, heaped together; the parts are seldom forged into one, or connected by any indissoluble link. His so-called Dramas are only poems divided into chapters. Further, he had little of what Mr. Ruskin calls Penetrative Imagination. So it has been plausibly said that he made his men after his own image, his women after his own heart. The former are, indeed, rather types of what he wished to be than what he was. They are better, and worse, than himself. They have stronger wills, more definite purposes, but less genial and less versatile natures. But it remains true, that when he tried to represent a character totally different from himself, the result is either unreal or uninteresting. *Marino Faliero*, begun April, finished July, 1820, and prefixed by a humorous dedication to Goethe—which was, however, suppressed—was brought on the stage of Drury Lane Theatre early in 1821, badly mangled, appointed, and acted—and damned.

Byron seems to have been sincere in saying he did not intend any of his plays to be represented. We are more inclined to accuse him of self-deception when he asserts that he did not mean them to be popular; but he took sure means to prevent them from being so. *Marino Faliero*, in particular, was pronounced by Dr. John Watkins—old Grobius himself—“to be the dullest of dull plays;” and even the warmest admirers of the poet had to confess that the style was cumbrous. The story may be true, but it is none the less unnatural. The characters are comparatively commonplace, the women especially being mere

shadows; the motion is slow; and the inevitable passages of fine writing are, as the extolled soliloquy of Lioni, rather rhetorical than imaginative. The speeches of the Doge are solemn, but prolix, if not ostentatious, and—perhaps the vital defect—his cause fails to enlist our sympathies. Artistically, this play was Byron's most elaborate attempt to revive the unities and other restrictions of the severe style, which, when he wrote, had been "vanquished in literature." "I am persuaded," he writes in the preface, "that a great tragedy is not to be produced by following the old dramatists, who are full of faults, but by producing regular dramas like the Greeks." He forgets that the statement in the mouth of a Greek dramatist that his play was not intended for the stage, would have been a confession of failure; and that Aristotle had admitted that even the Deity could not make the Past present. The ethical motives of Faliero are, first, the cry for vengeance—the feeling of affronted or unsatiated pride—that runs through so much of the author's writing; and, second, the enthusiasm for public ends, which was beginning to possess him. The following lines have been pointed out as embodying some of Byron's spirit of protest against the mere selfish "greasy domesticity" of the Georgian era:—

I. BER.

"Such ties are not

For those who are called to the high destinies
Which purify corrupted commonwealths:
We must forget all feelings save the one,
We must resign all passions save our purpose,
We must behold no object save our country,
And only look on death as beautiful
So that the sacrifice ascend to heaven,
And draw down freedom on her evermore.

CAL. "But if we fail—?"

I. BER.

“They never fail who die
 In a great cause: the block may soak their gore;
 Their heads may sodden in the sun; their limbs
 Be strung to city gates and castle walls,
 But still their spirit walks abroad”

—a passage which, after his wont, he spoils by platitudes about the precisian Brutus, who certainly did not give Rome liberty.

Byron's other Venetian Drama, the *Two Foscari*, composed at Ravenna, between the 11th of June and the 10th of July, 1821, and published in the following December, is another record of the same failure and the same mortification, due to the same causes. In this play, as Jeffrey points out, the preservation of the unities had a still more disastrous effect. The author's determination to avoid rant did not hinder his frequently adopting an inflated style; while professing to follow the ancient rules, he forgets the warning of Horace so far as to permit the groans of the tortured Foscari to be heard on the stage. The declamations of Marina produce no effect on the action, and the vindictiveness of Loricano, though effectively pointed in the closing words, “He has paid me,” is not rendered interesting, either by a well established injury, or by any trace of Iago's subtle genius.

In the same volume appeared *Sardanapalus*, written in the previous May, and dedicated to Goethe. In this play, which marks the author's last reversion to the East, we are more arrested by the majesty of the theme—

“Thirteen hundred years
 Of empire ending like a shepherd's tale”—

by the grandeur of some of the passages, and by the development of the chief character, made more vivid by its

being distinctly autobiographical. Sardanapalus himself is Harold, raised "high on a throne," and rousing himself at the close from a life of effeminate lethargy. Myrrha has been often identified with La Guiccioli, and the hero's relation to his Queen Zarina compared with that of the poet to his wife; but in his portrait of the former the author's defective capacity to represent national character is manifest: Myrrha is only another Gulnare, Medora, or Zuleika. In the domestic play of *Werner*—completed at Pisa in January, 1822, and published in November—there is no merit either of plan or execution; for the plot is taken, with little change, from "The German's Tale," written by Harriet Lee, and the treatment is throughout prosaic. Byron was never a master of blank verse; but *Werner*, his sole success on the modern British stage, is written in a style fairly parodied by Campbell, when he cut part of the author's preface into lines, and pronounced them as good as any in the play.

The *Deformed Transformed*, another adaptation, suggested by a forgotten novel called *The Three Brothers*, with reminiscences of *Faust*, and possibly of Scott's *Black Dwarf*, was begun at Pisa in 1821, but not published till January, 1824. This fragment owes its interest to the bitter infusion of personal feeling in the first scene, and its occasional charm to the march of some of the lines, especially those describing the Bourbon's advance on Rome; but the effect of the magical element is killed by previous parallels, while the story is chaotic and absurd. The *Deformed Transformed* bears somewhat the same relation to *Manfred*, as *Heaven and Earth*—an occasionally graphic dream of the world before the Deluge, written October, 1821, and issued about the same time as Moore's *Loves of the Angels*, on a similar theme—does to *Cain*. The last

named, begun in July, and finished at Ravenna in September, is the author's highest contribution to the metaphysical poetry of the century. In *Cain* Byron grapples with the perplexities of a belief which he never either accepted or rejected, and with the yet deeper problems of life and death, of good and ill. In dealing with these, his position is not that of one justifying the ways of God to man—though he somewhat disingenuously appeals to Milton in his defence—nor that of the definite antagonism of *Queen Mab*. The distinction in this respect between Byron and Shelley cannot be over-emphasized. The latter had a firm faith other than that commonly called Christian. The former was, in the proper sense of the word, a sceptic, beset with doubts, and seeking for a solution which he never found, shifting in his expression of them with every change of a fickle and inconsistent temperament. The atmosphere of *Cain* is almost wholly negative; for under the guise of a drama, which is mainly a dialogue between two halves of his mind, the author appears to sweep aside with something approaching to disdain the answers of a blindly accepted tradition, or of a superficial optimism, *e. g.*—

CAIN. "Then my father's God did well
When he prohibited the fatal tree.

LUCIFER. "But had done better in not planting it."

Again, a kid, after suffering agonies from the sting of a reptile, is restored by antidotes—

"Behold, my son! said Adam, how from evil
Springs good!

LUCIFER. "What didst thou answer?"

CAIN. "Nothing; for

He is my father; but I thought that 'twere
A better portion for the animal
Never to have been stung at all."

This rebellious nature naturally yields to the arguments of Lucifer, a spirit in which much of the grandeur of Milton's Satan is added to the subtlety of Mephistopheles. In the first scene Cain is introduced, rebelling against toils imposed on him by an offence committed before he was born—"I sought not to be born"—the answer, that toil is a good, being precluded by its authoritative representation as a punishment; in which mood he is confirmed by the entrance and reasonings of the Tempter, who identifies the Deity with Seva the Destroyer, hints at the dreadful visitation of the yet untasted death; when Adah, entering, takes him at first for an angel, and then recognizes him as a fiend. Her invocation to Eve, and comparison of the "heedless, harmless, wantonness of bliss" in Eden, to the later lot of those girt about with demons from whose fascination they cannot fly, is one of the most striking in the drama; as is the line put into the mouth of the poet's most beautiful female character, to show that God cannot be alone—

"What else can joy be, but diffusing joy?"

Her subsequent contrast of Lucifer with the other angels is more after the style of Shelley than anything else in Byron—

"As the silent sunny moon,
All light, they look upon us. But thou seem'st
Like an ethereal night, where long white clouds
Streak the deep purple, and unnumber'd stars
Spangle the wonderful mysterious vault
With things that look as if they would be suns—
So beautiful, unnumber'd, and endearing;
Not dazzling, and yet drawing us to them,
They fill my eyes with tears, and so dost thou."

The flight with Lucifer, in the second act, in the abyss of space and through the Hades of "uncreated night,"

with the vision of long-wrecked worlds, and the "interminable gloomy realms

"Of swimming shadows and enormous shapes"

—suggested, as the author tells us, by the reading of Cuvier—leaves us with impressions of grandeur and desolation which no other passages of English poetry can convey. Lord Byron has elsewhere exhibited more versatility of fancy and richness of illustration, but nowhere else has he so nearly "struck the stars." From constellation to constellation the pair speed on, cleaving the blue with mighty wings, but finding in all a blank, like that in Richter's wonderful dream. The result on the mind of Cain is summed in the lines on the fatal tree—

"It was a lying tree—for we *know* nothing ;
At least, it *promised knowledge* at the price
Of death—but *knowledge* still ; but what *knows* man ?"

A more modern poet answers, after beating at the same iron gates, "Behold, we know not anything." The most beautiful remaining passage is Cain's reply to the question—what is more beautiful to him than all that he has seen in the "unimaginable ether?"—

"My sister Adah.—All the stars of heaven,
The deep blue noon of night, lit by an orb
Which looks a spirit, or a spirit's world—
The hues of twilight—the sun's gorgeous coming—
His setting indescribable, which fills
My eyes with pleasant tears as I behold
Him sink, and feel my heart flow softly with him
Along that western paradise of clouds—
The forest shade—the green bough—the bird's voice—
The vesper bird's, which seems to sing of love,
And mingles with the song of cherubim,

As the day closes over Eden's walls :—
 All these are nothing, to my eyes and heart,
 Like Adah's face."

Lucifer's speech at the close of the act is perhaps too Miltonic to be absolutely original. Returning to earth, we have a pastoral, of which Sir Egerton Brydges justly and sufficiently remarks, "The censorious may say what they will, but there are speeches in the mouth of Cain and Adah, especially regarding their child, which nothing in English poetry but the 'wood-notes wild' of Shakspeare ever equalled." Her cry, as Cain seems to threaten the infant, followed by the picture of his bloom and joy, is a touch of perfect pathos. Then comes the interview with the pious Abel, who is amazed at the lurid light in the eyes of his brother, with the spheres "singing in thunder round" him—the two sacrifices, the murder, the shriek of Zillah—

"Father! Eve!
 Adah! come hither! Death is in the world;"

Cain's rallying from stupor—

"I am awake at last—a dreary dream
 Had madden'd me,—but he shall never wake:"

the curse of Eve; and the close—*μείζον ἢ κατὰ δάκρυα—*

CAIN. "Leave me.

ADAH. "Why all have left thee.

CAIN. "And wherefore lingerest thou? Dost thou not fear?"

ADAH. "I fear
 Nothing except to leave thee.

* * * * *

CAIN. "Eastward from Eden will we take our way.

ADAH. "Leave! thou shalt be my guide; and may our God
 Be thine! Now let us carry forth our children.

7*

CAIN. "And *he* who lieth there was childless. I
Have dried the fountain of a gentle race.
O Abel!

ADAH. "Peace be with him.

CAIN. "But with *me!*"

Cain, between which and the *Cenci* lies the award of the greatest single performance in dramatic shape of our century, raised a storm. It was published, with *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*, in December, 1821, and the critics soon gave evidence of the truth of Elze's remark—"In England freedom of action is cramped by the want of freedom of thought. The converse is the case with us Germans; freedom of thought is restricted by the want of freedom in action. To us this scepticism presents nothing in the least fearful." But with us it appeared as if a literary Guy Fawkes had been detected in the act of blowing up half the cathedrals and all the chapels of the country. The rage of insular orthodoxy was in proportion to its impotence. Every scribbler with a cassock denounced the book and its author, though few attempted to answer him. The hubbub was such that Byron wrote to Murray, authorizing him to disclaim all responsibility, and offering to refund the payment he had received. "Say that both you and Mr. Gifford remonstrated. I will come to England to stand trial. 'Me me adsum qui feci'"—and much to the same effect. The book was pirated; and on the publisher's application to have an injunction, Lord Eldon refused to grant it. The majority of the minor reviewers became hysterical, and Dr. Watkins, amid much almost inarticulate raving, said that Sir Walter Scott, who had gratefully accepted the dedication, would go down to posterity with the brand of *Cain* upon his brow. Several even of the higher crit-

ics took fright. Jeffrey, while protesting his appreciation of the literary merits of the work, lamented its tendency to unsettle faith. Mr. Campbell talked of its "frightful audacity." Bishop Heber wrote at great length to prove that its spirit was more dangerous than that of *Paradise Lost*—and succeeded. The *Quarterly* began to cool towards the author. Moore wrote to him, that Cain was "wonderful, terrible, never to be forgotten," but "dreaded and deprecated" the influence of Shelley. Byron showed the letter to Shelley, who wrote to a common friend to assure Mr. Moore that he had not the smallest influence over his lordship in matters of religion, and only wished he had, as he would "employ it to eradicate from his great mind the delusions of Christianity, which seem perpetually to recur, and to lie in ambush for the hours of sickness and distress." Shelley elsewhere writes: "What think you of Lord B.'s last volume? In my opinion it contains finer poetry than has appeared in England since *Paradise Lost*. Cain is apocalyptic; it is a revelation not before communicated to man." In the same strain, Scott says of the author of the "grand and tremendous drama:" "He has certainly matched Milton on his own ground." The worst effect of those attacks appears in the shifts to which Byron resorted to explain himself—to be imputed, however, not to cowardice, but to his wavering habit of mind. Great writers in our country have frequently stirred difficult questions in religion and life, and then seemed to be half scared, like Rouget de Lisle, by the reverberation of their own voices. Shelley almost alone was always ready to declare, "I meant what I said, and stand to it."

Byron having, with or without design, arraigned some of the Thirty-nine Articles of his countrymen, proceeded

in the following month (October, 1821) to commit an outrage, yet more keenly resented, on the memory of their sainted king, the pattern of private virtue and public vice, George III. The perpetration of this occurred in the course of the last of his numerous literary duels, of which it was the close. That Mr. Southey was a well-meaning and independent man of letters there can be no doubt. It does not require the conclusive testimony of the esteem of Savage Landor to compel our respect for the author of the *Life of Nelson*, and the open-handed friend of Coleridge; nor is it any disparagement that, with the last-named and with Wordsworth, he in middle life changed his political and other opinions. But in his dealings with Lord Byron, Southey had "eaten of the insane root." He attacked a man of incomparably superior powers, for whom his utter want of humour—save in its comparatively childish forms—made him a ludicrously unequal match, and paid the penalty in being gibbeted in satires that will endure with the language. The strife, which seems to have begun on Byron's leaving England, rose to its height when his lordship, in the humorous observations and serious defence of his character against "the Remarks" in Blackwood, 1819 (August), accused the Laureate of apostasy, treason, and slander.

In 1821, when the latter published his *Vision of Judgment*—the most quaintly preposterous panegyric ever penned—he prefixed to it a long explanatory note, in the course of which he characterizes *Don Juan* as a "monstrous combination of horror and mockery, lewdness and impiety," regrets that it has not been brought under the lash of the law, salutes the writer as chief of the Satanic school, inspired by the spirits of Moloch and Belial, and refers to the remorse that will overtake him

on his death-bed. To which Byron, *inter alia*: "Mr. Southey, with a cowardly ferocity, exults over the anticipated death-bed repentance of the objects of his dislike, and indulges himself in a pleasant 'Vision of Judgment,' in prose as well as verse, full of impious impudence. What Mr. Southey's sensations or ours may be in the awful moment of leaving this state of existence, neither he nor we can pretend to decide. In common, I presume, with most men of any reflection, *I* have not waited for a death-bed to repent of many of my actions, notwithstanding the 'diabolical pride' which this pitiful renegado in his rancour would impute to those who scorn him." This dignified, though trenchant, rejoinder would have been unanswerable; but the writer goes on to charge the Laureate with spreading calumnies. To this charge Southey, in January, 1822, replies with "a direct and positive denial," and then proceeds to talk at large of the "whip and branding iron," "slaves of sensuality," "stones from slings," "Goliaths," "public panders," and what not, in the manner of the brave days of old.

In February, Byron, having seen this assault in the *Courier*, writes off in needless heat, "I have got Southey's pretended reply; what remains to be done is to call him out"—and despatches a cartel of mortal defiance. Mr. Douglas Kinnaird, through whom this was sent, judiciously suppressed it, and the author's thirst for literary blood was destined to remain unquenched. Meanwhile he had written his own *Vision of Judgment*. This extraordinary work, having been refused by both Murray and Longman, appeared in 1822 in the pages of the *Liberal*. It passed the bounds of British endurance; and the publisher, Mr. John Hunt, was prosecuted and fined for the publication.

Readers of our day will generally admit that the "gouty

hexameters" of the original poem, which celebrates the apotheosis of King George in heaven, are much more blasphemous than the *ottava rima* of the travesty, which professes to narrate the difficulties of his getting there. Byron's *Vision of Judgment* is as unmistakably the first of parodies as the *Iliad* is the first of epics, or the *Pilgrim's Progress* the first of allegories. In execution it is almost perfect. *Don Juan* is in scope and magnitude a far wider work; but no considerable series of stanzas in *Don Juan* are so free from serious artistic flaw. From first to last, every epithet hits the white; every line that does not convulse with laughter stings or lashes. It rises to greatness by the fact that, underneath all its lambent buffoonery, it is aflame with righteous wrath. Nowhere in such space, save in some of the prose of Swift, is there in English so much scathing satire.

CHAPTER IX.

[1821-1823.]

PISA.—GENOA.—DON JUAN.

BYRON, having arrived at Pisa with his troop of carriages, horses, dogs, fowls, monkeys, and servants, settled himself quietly in the Palazzo Lanfranchi for ten months, interrupted only by a sojourn of six weeks in the neighbourhood of Leghorn. His life in the old feudal building followed in the main the tenour of his life at Ravenna. He rose late, received visitors in the afternoons, played billiards, rode or practised with his pistols in concert with Shelley, whom he refers to at this time as "the most companionable man under thirty" he had ever met. Both poets were good shots, but Byron the safest; for, though his hand often shook, he made allowance for the vibration, and never missed his mark. On one occasion he set up a slender cane, and at twenty paces divided it with his bullet. The early part of the evening he gave to a frugal meal and the society of La Guiccioli—now apparently, in defiance of the statute of limitations, established under the same roof—and then sat late over his verses. He was disposed to be more sociable than at Venice or Ravenna, and occasionally entertained strangers; but his intimate acquaintanceship was confined to Captain Williams and his wife, and Shelley's cousin, Captain Medwin. The lat-

ter used frequently to dine and sit with his host till the morning, collecting materials for the *Conversations* which he afterwards gave to the world. The value of these reminiscences is impaired by the fact of their recording, as serious revelations, the absurd confidences in which the poet's humour for mystification was wont to indulge. Another of the group, an Irishman, called Taafe, is made, in his lordship's correspondence of the period, to cut a somewhat comical figure. The master-passion of this worthy and genial fellow was to get a publisher for a fair commentary on Dante, to which he had firmly linked a very bad translation, and for about six months Byron pesters Murray with constant appeals to satisfy him; *e. g.*, November 16, "He must be gratified, though the reviewers will make him suffer more tortures than there are in his original." March 6, "He will die if he is not published; he will be damned if he is; but that he don't mind." March 8, "I make it a point that he shall be in print; it will make the man so exuberantly happy. He is such a good-natured Christian that we must give him a shove through the press. Besides, he has had another fall from his horse into a ditch." Taafe, whose horsemanship was on a par with his poetry, can hardly have been consulted as to the form assumed by these apparently fruitless recommendations, so characteristic of the writer's frequent kindness and constant love of mischief. About this time Byron received a letter from Mr. Shepherd, a gentleman in Somersetshire, referring to the death of his wife, among whose papers he had found the record of a touching, because evidently heart-felt, prayer for the poet's reformation, conversion, and restored peace of mind. To this letter he at once returned an answer, marked by much of the fine feeling of his best moods. Pisa, December 8:

“Sir, I have received your letter. I need not say that the extract which it contains has affected me, because it would imply a want of all feeling to have read it with indifference. . . . Your brief and simple picture of the excellent person, whom I trust you will again meet, cannot be contemplated without the admiration due to her virtues and her pure and unpretending piety. I do not know that I ever met with anything so unostentatiously beautiful. Indisputably, the firm believers in the Gospel have a great advantage over all others—for this simple reason, that if true they will have their reward hereafter; and if there be no hereafter, they can but be with the infidel in his eternal sleep. . . . But a man’s creed does not depend upon *himself*: who can say, I *will* believe this, that, or the other? and least of all that which he least can comprehend. . . . I can assure you that not all the fame which ever cheated humanity into higher notions of its own importance would ever weigh in my mind against the pure and pious interest which a virtuous being may be pleased to take in my behalf. In this point of view I would not exchange the prayer of the deceased in my behalf for the united glory of Homer, Cæsar, and Napoleon.”

The letter to Lady Byron, which he afterwards showed to Lady Blessington, must have borne about the same date; and we have a further indication of his thoughts reverting homeward in an urgent request to Murray—written on December 10th, Ada’s sixth birthday—to send his daughter’s miniature. After its arrival nothing gave him greater pleasure than to be told of its strong likeness to himself. In the course of the same month an event occurred which strangely illustrates the manners of the place, and the character of the two poets. An unfortunate fanatic having taken it into his head to steal the wafer-box

out of a church at Lucca, and being detected, was, in accordance with the ecclesiastical law till lately maintained against sacrilege, condemned to be burnt alive. Shelley, who believed that the sentence would really be carried into effect, proposed to Byron that they should gallop off together, and by aid of their servants rescue by force the intended victim. Byron, however, preferred, in the first place, to rely on diplomacy; some vigorous letters passed; ultimately a representation, conveyed by Taaffe to the English Ambassador, led to a commutation of the sentence, and the man was sent to the galleys.

The January of 1822 was marked by the addition to the small circle of Captain E. J. Trelawny, the famous rover and bold free-lance (now sole survivor of the remarkable group), who accompanied Lord Byron to Greece, and has recorded a variety of incidents of the last months of his life. Trelawny, who appreciated Shelley with an intensity that is often apt to be exclusive, saw, or has reported, for the most part the weaker side of Byron. We are constrained to accept as correct the conjecture that his judgment was biassed by their rivalry in physical prowess, and the political differences which afterwards developed between them. Letters to his old correspondents—to Scott about the *Waverleys*, to Murray about the Dramas, and the *Vision of Judgment*, and *Cain*—make up almost the sole record of the poet's pursuits during the five following months. On February 6 he sent, through Mr. Kinnaird, the challenge to Southey, of the suppression of which he was not aware till May 17. The same letter contains a sheaf of the random cynicisms, as—“Cash is virtue,” “Money is power; and when Socrates said he knew nothing, he meant he had not a drachma”—by which he sharpened the shafts of his assailants. A little later, on

occasion of the death of Lady Noel, he expresses himself with natural bitterness on hearing that she had in her will recorded a wish against his daughter Ada seeing his portrait. In March he sat, along with La Guiccioli, to the sculptor Bartolini. On the 24th, when the company were on one of their riding excursions outside the town, a half-drunken dragoon on horseback broke through them, and by accident or design knocked Shelley from his seat. Byron, pursuing him along the Lung' Arno, called for his name, and, taking him for an officer, flung his glove. The sound of the fray brought the servants of the Lanfranchi to the door; and one of them, it was presumed—though in the scuffle everything remained uncertain—seriously wounded the dragoon in the side. An investigation ensued, as the result of which the Gambas were ultimately exiled from Tuscany, and the party of friends was practically broken up. Shelley and his wife, with the Williamses and Trelawny, soon after settled at the Villa Magni at Lerici, in the Gulf of Spezia. Byron, with the Countess and her brother, established themselves in the Villa Rossa, at Monte Nero, a suburb of Leghorn, from which port at this date the remains of Allegra were conveyed to England.

Among the incidents of this residence were, the homage paid to the poet by a party of Americans; the painting of his portrait and that of La Guiccioli by their compatriot, West, who has left a pleasing account of his visits; Byron's letter making inquiry about the country of Bolivar (where it was his fancy to settle); and another of those disturbances by which he seemed destined to be harassed. One of his servants—among whom were unruly spirits, apparently selected with a kind of *Corsair* bravado—had made an assault on Count Pietro, wounding him in the face. This outburst, though followed by tears

and penitence, confirmed the impression of the Tuscan police that the whole company were dangerous, and made the Government press for their departure. In the midst of the uproar, there suddenly appeared at the villa Mr. Leigh Hunt, with his wife and six children. They had taken passage to Genoa, where they were received by Trelawny, in command of the "Bolivar"—a yacht constructed in that port for Lord Byron, simultaneously with the "Don Juan" for Shelley. The latter, on hearing of the arrival of his friends, came to meet them at Leghorn, and went with them to Pisa. Early in July they were all established on the Lung' Arno, having assigned to them the ground-floor of the palazzo.

We have now to deal briefly—amid conflicting asseverations it is hard to deal fairly—with the last of the vexatiously controverted episodes which need perplex our narrative. Byron, in wishing Moore from Ravenna a merry Christmas for 1820, proposes that they shall embark together in a newspaper, "with some improvement on the plan of the present scoundrels," "to give the age some new lights on policy, poesy, biography, criticism, morality, theology," &c. Moore absolutely refusing to entertain the idea, Hunt's name was brought forward in connexion with it, during the visit of Shelley. Shortly after the return of the latter to Pisa, he writes (August 26) to Hunt, stating that Byron was anxious to start a periodical work, to be conducted in Italy, and had proposed that they should both go shares in the concern, on which follow some suggestions of difficulties about money. Nevertheless, in August, 1821, he presses Hunt to come. Moore, on the other hand, strongly remonstrates against the project. "I heard some days ago that Leigh Hunt was on his way to you with all his family; and the idea seems to be that you and

he and Shelley are to conspire together in the *Examiner*. I deprecate such a plan with all my might. Partnerships in fame, like those in trade, make the strongest party answer for the rest. I tremble even for you with such a bankrupt Co.! You must stand alone." Shelley — who had in the meantime given his bond to Byron for an advance of 200*l.* towards the expenses of his friends, besides assisting them himself to the utmost of his power—began, shortly before their arrival, to express grave doubts as to the success of the alliance. His last published letter, written July 5, 1822, after they had settled at Pisa, is full of forebodings. On the 8th he set sail in the "Don Juan"—

"That fatal and perfidious bark,
Built in th' eclipse, and rigg'd with curses dark,"

and was overtaken by the storm in which he perished. Three days after, Trelawny rode to Pisa, and told Byron of his fears, when the poet's lips quivered, and his voice faltered. On the 22nd of July the bodies of Shelley, Williams, and Vivian were cast ashore. On the 16th August, Hunt, Byron, and Trelawny were present at the terribly weird cremation, which they have all described, and after which they were seized with a fit of the hilarious delirium which is one of the phases of the tension of grief. Byron's references to the event are expressions less of the loss which he indubitably felt, than of his indignation at the "world's wrong." "Thus," he writes, "there is another man gone, about whom the world was ill-naturedly and ignorantly and brutally mistaken. It will, perhaps, do him justice now, when he can be no better for it." Towards the end of the same letter the spirit of his dead friend seems to inspire the sentence—"With these things and these fellows it is necessary, in the present clash of

philosophy and tyranny, to throw away the scabbard. I know it is against fearful odds, but the battle must be fought."

Meanwhile, shortly after the new settlement at the Lanfranchi, the preparations for issuing the *Liberal*—edited by Leigh Hunt in Italy, and published by John Hunt in London—progressed. The first number, which appeared in September, was introduced, after a few words of preface, by the *Vision of Judgment*, with the signature, Quevedo Redivivus, and adorned by Shelley's translation of the "May-Day Night," in *Faust*. It contained, besides, the *Letter to the Editor of my Grandmother's Review*, an indifferent Florentine story, a German apologue, and a gossiping account of Pisa, presumably by Hunt. Three others followed, containing Byron's *Heaven and Earth*, his translation of the *Morgante Maggiore*, and *The Blues*—a very slight, if not silly, satire on literary ladies; some of Shelley's posthumous minor poems, among them "I arise from dreams of thee," and a few of Hazlitt's essays, including, however, none of his best. Leigh Hunt himself wrote most of the rest, one of his contributions being a palpable imitation of *Don Juan*, entitled the *Book of Beginnings*; but he confesses that, owing to his weak health and low spirits at the time, none of these did justice to his ability; and the general manner of the magazine being insufficiently vigorous to carry off the frequent eccentricity of its matter, the prejudices against it prevailed, and the enterprise came to an end. Partners in failing concerns are apt to dispute; in this instance the unpleasantness which arose at the time rankled in the mind of the survivor, and gave rise to his singularly tasteless and injudicious book—a performance which can be only in part condoned by the fact of Hunt's afterwards expressing regret,

and practically withdrawing it. He represents himself throughout as a much-injured man, lured to Italy by misrepresentations that he might give the aid of his journalistic experience and undeniable talents to the advancement of a mercenary enterprise, and that when it failed he was despised, insulted, and rejected. Byron, on the other hand, declares, "The Hunts pressed me to engage in this work, and in an evil hour I consented;" and his subsequent action in the matter—if not always gentle, never unjust—goes to verify his statements in the letters of the period. "I am afraid," he writes from Genoa, October 9, 1822, "the journal is a bad business. I have done all I can for Leigh Hunt since he came here; but it is almost useless. His wife is ill, his six children not very tractable, and in the affairs of this world he himself is a child." Later he says to Murray, "You and your friends, by your injudicious rudeness, cement a connexion which you strove to prevent, and which, had the Hunts prospered, would not in all probability have continued. As it is . . . I can't leave them among the breakers." On February 20 we have his last word on the subject, to the same effect.

In the following sentences Moore seems to give a fair statement of the motives which led to the establishment of the unfortunate journal: "The chief inducements on the part of Lord Byron to this unworthy alliance were, in the first place, a wish to second the kind views of his friend Shelley in inviting Mr. Hunt to Italy; and in the next, a desire to avail himself of the aid of one so experienced as an editor in the favourite object he has so long contemplated of a periodical work in which all the offspring of his genius might be received as they sprung to light." For the accomplishment of this purpose Mr. Leigh Hunt was a singularly ill-chosen associate. A man of

Radical opinions on all matters, not only of religion but of society—opinions which he acquired and held easily but firmly—could never recognize the propriety of the claim to deference which “the noble poet” was always too eager to assert, and was inclined to take liberties which his patron perhaps superciliously repelled. Mrs. Hunt does not seem to have been a very judicious person. “Trelawny here,” said Byron, jocularly, “has been speaking against my morals.” “It is the first time I ever heard of them,” she replied. Mr. Hunt, by his own admission, had “peculiar notions on the subject of money.” Byron, on his part, was determined not to be “put upon,” and doled out through his steward stated allowances to Hunt, who says that only “stern necessity and a large family” induced him to accept them. Hunt’s expression that the 200*l.* was, *in the first instance*, a debt to Shelley, points to the conclusion that it was remitted on that poet’s death. Besides this, Byron maintained the family till they left Genoa for Florence, in 1823, and defrayed up to that date all their expenses. He gave his contributions to the *Liberal* gratis; and, again by Hunt’s own confession, left to him and his brother the profits of the proprietorship. According to Mr. Galt, “The whole extent of the pecuniary obligation appears not to have exceeded 500*l.*; but, little or great, the manner in which it was recollected reflects no credit either on the head or heart of the debtor.”

Of the weaknesses on which the writer—bent on verifying Pope’s lines on Atossa—from his vantage in the ground-floor, was enabled to dilate, many are but slightly magnified. We are told, for instance, in very many words, that Byron clung to the privileges of his rank while wishing to seem above them; that he had a small library, and was a one-sided critic; that Bayle and Gibbon supplied

him with the learning he had left at school; that, being a good rider with a graceful seat, he liked to be told of it; that he showed letters he ought not to have shown; that he pretended to think worse of Wordsworth than he did; that he knew little of art or music, adored Rossini, and called Rubens a dauber; that, though he wrote *Don Juan* under gin and water, he had not a strong head, &c., &c. It is true, but not new. But when Hunt proceeds to say that Byron had no sentiment; that La Guiccioli did not really care much about him; that he admired Gifford because he was a sycophant, and Scott because he loved a lord; that he had no heart for anything except a feverish notoriety; that he was a miser from his birth, and had "as little regard for liberty as Alfieri"—it is new enough, but it is manifestly not true. Hunt's book, which begins with a caricature on the frontispiece, and is inspired in the main by uncharitableness, yet contains here and there gleams of a deeper insight than we find in all the volumes of Moore—an insight which, in spite of his irritated egotism, is the mark of a man with the instincts of a poet, with some cosmopolitan sympathies, and a courage on occasion to avow them at any risk. "Lord Byron," he says truly, "has been too much admired by the English because he was sulky and wilful, and reflected in his own person their love of dictation and excitement. They owe his memory a greater regard, and would do it much greater honour, if they admired him for letting them know they were not so perfect a nation as they supposed themselves, and that they might take as well as give lessons of humanity, by a candid comparison of notes with civilization at large."

In July, when at Leghorn, the Gambas received orders to leave Tuscany; and on his return to Pisa, Byron, being

persecuted by the police, began to prepare for another change. After entertaining projects about Greece, America, and Switzerland — Trelawny undertaking to have the “Bolivar” conveyed over the Alps to the Lake of Geneva — he decided on following his friends to Genoa. He left in September with La Guiccioli, passed by Lerici and Sestri, and then for the ten remaining months of his Italian life took up his quarters at Albaro, about a mile to the east of the city, in the Villa Saluzzo, which Mrs. Shelley had procured for him and his party. She herself settled with the Hunts — who travelled about the same time, at Byron’s expense, but in their own company — in the neighbouring Casa Negroto. Not far off, Mr. Savage Landor was in possession of the Casa Pallavicini, but there was little intercourse between the three. Landor and Byron, in many respects more akin than any other two Englishmen of their age, were always separated by an unhappy bar or intervening mist. The only family with whom the poet maintained any degree of intimacy was that of the Earl of Blessington, consisting of the Earl himself — a gouty old gentleman, with stories about him of the past — the Countess, and her sister, Miss Power, and the “cupidon déchaîné,” the Anglo-French Count Alfred d’Orsay — who were to take part in stories of the future. In the spring of 1823, Byron persuaded them to occupy the Villa Paradiso, and was accustomed to accompany them frequently on horseback excursions along the coast to their favourite Nervi. It has been said that Lady Blessington’s *Conversations with Lord Byron* are, as regards trustworthiness, on a par with Landor’s *Imaginary Conversations*. Let this be so, they are still of interest on points of fact which it must have been easier to record than to imagine. However adorned, or the reverse, by the fancies

of a habitual novelist, they convey the impressions of a good-humoured, lively, and fascinating woman, derived from a more or less intimate association with the most brilliant man of the age. Of his personal appearance—a matter of which she was a good judge—we have the following: “One of Byron’s eyes was larger than the other; his nose was rather thick, so he was best seen in profile; his mouth was splendid, and his scornful expression was real, not affected; but a sweet smile often broke through his melancholy. He was at this time very pale and thin (which indicates the success of his regimen of reduction since leaving Venice). His hair was dark brown, here and there turning grey. His voice was harmonious, clear, and low. There is some *gaucherie* in his walk, from his attempts to conceal his lameness. Ada’s portrait is like him, and he is pleased at the likeness, but hoped she would not turn out to be clever—at any event not poetical. He is fond of gossip, and apt to speak slightly of some of his friends, but is loyal to others. His great defect is flippancy, and a total want of self-possession.” The narrator also dwells on his horror of interviewers, by whom at this time he was even more than usually beset. One visitor of the period ingenuously observes—“Certain persons will be chagrined to hear that Byron’s mode of life does not furnish the smallest food for calumny.” Another says, “I never saw a countenance more composed and still—I might even add, more sweet and prepossessing. But his temper was easily ruffled, and for a whole day; he could not endure the ringing of bells, bribed his neighbours to repress their noises, and failing, retaliated by surpassing them; he never forgave Colonel Carr for breaking one of his dog’s ribs, though he generally forgave injuries without forgetting them. He

had a bad opinion of the inertness of the Genoese; for whatever he himself did he did with a will—‘*toto se corpore miscuit,*’ and was wont to assume a sort of dictatorial tone—as if ‘I have said it, and it must be so,’ were enough.”

From these waifs and strays of gossip we return to a subject of deeper interest. The Countess of Blessington, with natural curiosity, was anxious to elicit from Byron some light on the mystery of his domestic affairs, and renewed the attempt previously made by Madame de Staël, to induce him to some movement towards a reconciliation with his wife. His reply to this overture was to show her a letter which he had written to Lady Byron from Pisa, but never forwarded, of the tone of which the following extracts must be a sufficient indication: “I have to acknowledge the receipt of Ada’s hair. . . . I also thank you for the inscription of the date and name; and I will tell you why. I believe they are the only two or three words of your handwriting in my possession, for your letters I returned, and except the two words—or rather the one word ‘household’ written twice—in an old account-book, I have no other. Every day which keeps us asunder should, after so long a period, rather soften our mutual feelings, which must always have one rallying-point as long as our child exists. We both made a bitter mistake, but now it is over. I considered our reunion as not impossible for more than a year after the separation, but then I gave up the hope. I am violent, but not malignant; for only fresh provocations can awaken my resentment. Remember that if you have injured me in aught, this forgiveness is something, and that if I have injured you, it is something more still, if it be true, as moralists assert, that the most offending are the least forgiving.”

“It is a strange business,” says the Countess, about Lady Byron. “When he was praising her mental and personal qualifications, I asked him how all that he now said agreed with certain sarcasms supposed to be a reference to her in his works. He smiled, shook his head, and said, they were meant to spite and vex her, when he was wounded and irritated at her refusing to receive or answer his letters; that he was sorry he had written them, but might on similar provocations recur to the same vengeance.” On another occasion he said, “Lady B.’s first idea is what is due to herself. I wish she thought a little more of what is due to others. My besetting sin is a want of that self-respect which she has in excess. When I have broken out, on slight provocation, into one of my ungovernable fits of rage, her calmness piqued and seemed to reproach me; it gave her an air of superiority that vexed and increased my *mauvaise humeur*.” To Lady Blessington as to every one, he always spoke of Mrs. Leigh with the same unwavering admiration, love, and respect.

“My first impressions were melancholy—my poor mother gave them; but to my sister, who, incapable of wrong herself, suspected no wrong in others, I owe the little good of which I can boast; and had I earlier known her it might have influenced my destiny. Augusta was to me in the hour of need a tower of strength. Her affection was my last rallying-point, and is now the only bright spot that the horizon of England offers to my view. She has given me such good advice—and yet, finding me incapable of following it, loved and pitied me but the more because I was erring.” Similarly, in the height of his spleen, writes Leigh Hunt—“I believe there did exist one person to whom he would have been generous, if she pleased: perhaps was so. At all events, he left her the bulk of his

property, and always spoke of her with the greatest esteem. This was his sister, Mrs. Leigh. He told me she used to call him 'Baby Byron.' It was easy to see that of the two persons she had by far the greater judgment."

Byron, having laid aside *Don Juan* for more than a year, in deference to La Guiccioli, was permitted to resume it again in July, 1822, on a promise to observe the proprieties. Cantos vi.—xi. were written at Pisa. Cantos xii.—xvi. at Genoa, in 1823. These latter portions of the poem were published by John Hunt. His other works of the period are of minor consequence. The *Age of Bronze* is a declamation, rather than a satire, directed against the Convention of Cintra and the Congress of Verona, especially Lord Londonderry's part in the latter, only remarkable, from its advice to the Greeks, to dread

"The false friend worse than the infuriate foe ;"

i. e., to prefer the claw of the Tartar savage to the paternal hug of the great Bear—

"Better still toil for masters, than await,
The slave of slaves, before a Russian gate."

In the *Island*—a tale of the mutiny of the "Bounty"—he reverts to the manner and theme of his old romances, finding a new scene in the Pacific for the exercise of his fancy. In this piece his love of nautical adventure reappears, and his idealization of primitive life, caught from Rousseau and Chateaubriand. There is more repose about this poem than in any of the author's other compositions. In its pages the sea seems to splash about rocks and caves that bask under a southern sun. "'Byron, the sorcerer,' he can do with me what he will," said old Dr. Parr, on reading it. As the swan-song of the poet's sentimental

verse, it has a pleasing if not pathetic calm. During the last years in Italy he planned an epic on the Conquest and a play on the subject of Hannibal, neither of which was executed.

In the criticism of a famous work there is often little left to do but to criticise the critics—to bring to a focus the most salient things that have been said about it, to eliminate the absurd from the sensible, the discriminating from the commonplace. *Don Juan*, more than any of its precursors, is Byron, and it has been similarly handled. The early cantos were ushered into the world amid a chorus of mingled applause and execration. The minor Reviews, representing middle-class respectability, were generally vituperative, and the higher authorities divided in their judgments. The *British Magazine* said that “his lordship had degraded his personal character by the composition;” the *London*, that the poem was “a satire on decency;” the *Edinburgh Monthly*, that it was “a melancholy spectacle;” the *Eclectic*, that it was “an outrage worthy of detestation.” *Blackwood* declared that the author was “brutally outraging all the best feelings of humanity.” Moore characterizes it as “the most painful display of the versatility of genius that has ever been left for succeeding ages to wonder at or deplore.” Jeffrey found in the whole composition “a tendency to destroy all belief in the reality of virtue;” and Dr. John Watkins classically named it “the Odyssey of Immorality.” “*Don Juan* will be read,” wrote one critic, “as long as satire, wit, mirth, and supreme excellence shall be esteemed among men.” “Stick to *Don Juan*,” exhorted another; “it is the only sincere thing you have written, and it will live after all your *Harolds* have ceased to be ‘a school-girl’s tale, the wonder of an hour.’ It is the best of all

your works—the most spirited, the most straightforward, the most interesting, the most poetical.” “It is a work,” said Goethe, “full of soul, bitterly savage in its misanthropy, exquisitely delicate in its tenderness.” Shelley confessed, “It fulfils in a certain degree what I have long preached, the task of producing something wholly new and relative to the age, and yet surpassingly beautiful.” And Sir Walter Scott, in the midst of a hearty panegyric, “It has the variety of Shakspeare himself. Neither *Childe Harold*, nor the most beautiful of Byron’s earlier tales, contain more exquisite poetry than is to be found scattered through the cantos of *Don Juan*, amid verses which the author seems to have thrown from him with an effort as spontaneous as that of a tree resigning its leaves.”

One noticeable feature about these comments is their sincerity: reviewing, however occasionally one-sided, had not then sunk to be the mere register of adverse or friendly cliques; and, with all his anxiety for its verdict, Byron never solicited the favour of any portion of the press. Another is the fact that the adverse critics missed their mark. They had not learnt to say of a book of which they disapproved, that it was weak or dull: in pronouncing it to be vicious, they helped to promote its sale; and the most decried has been the most widely read of the author’s works. Many of the readers of *Don Juan* have, it must be confessed, been found among those least likely to admire in it what is most admirable—who have been attracted by the very excesses of buffoonery, violations of good taste, and occasionally almost vulgar slang, which disfigure its pages. Their patronage is, at the best, of no more value than that of a mob gathered by a showy Shakspearian revival, and it has laid the volume open to the charge of being adapted “*laudari ab illaudatis.*” But the wel-

come of the work in other quarters is as indubitably due to higher qualities. In writing *Don Juan*, Byron attempted something that had never been done before, and his genius so chimed with his enterprise that it need never be done again. "Down," cries M. Chasles, "with the imitators who did their best to make his name ridiculous." In commenting on their failure, an excellent critic has explained the pre-established fitness of the ottava rima—the first six lines of which are a dance, and the concluding couplet a "breakdown"—for the mock-heroic. Byron's choice of this measure may have been suggested by Whistcraft; but he had studied its cadence in Pulci, and the *Novelle Galanti* of Casti, to whom he is indebted for other features of his satire; and he added to what has been well termed its characteristic jauntiness, by his almost constant use of the double rhyme. That the ottava rima is out of place in consistently pathetic poetry, may be seen from its obvious misuse in Keats's *Pot of Basil*. Many writers, from Frere to Moultrie, have employed it successfully in burlesque or mere society verse; but Byron alone has employed it triumphantly, for he has made it the vehicle of thoughts grave as well as gay, of "black spirits and white, red spirits and grey," of sparkling fancy, bitter sarcasm, and tender memories. He has swept into the pages of his poem the experience of thirty years of a life so crowded with vitality that our sense of the plethora of power which it exhibits makes us ready to condone its lapses. Byron, it has been said, balances himself on a ladder like other acrobats; but alone, like the Japanese master of the art, he all the while bears on his shoulders the weight of a man. Much of *Don Juan* is as obnoxious to criticism in detail as his earlier work; it has every mark of being written in hot haste. In the midst of the

most serious passages (*e. g.*, the "Ave Maria") we are checked in our course by bathos or commonplace, and thrown where the writer did not mean to throw us; but the mocking spirit is so prevailingly present that we are often left in doubt as to his design, and what is in *Harold* an outrage is in this case only a flaw. His command over the verse itself is almost miraculous: he glides from extreme to extreme, from punning to pathos, from melancholy to mad merriment, sighing or laughing by the way at his readers or at himself or at the stanzas. Into them he can fling anything under the sun, from a doctor's prescription to a metaphysical theory.

"When Bishop Berkeley said there was no matter,
And proved it, 'twas no matter what he said,"

is as cogent a refutation of idealism as the cumbrous wit of Scotch logicians.

The popularity of the work is due not mainly to the verbal skill which makes it rank as the *cleverest* of English verse compositions, to its shoals of witticisms, its winged words, telling phrases, and incomparable transitions; but to the fact that it continues to address a large class who are not in the ordinary sense of the word lovers of poetry. *Don Juan* is emphatically the poem of intelligent men of middle age, who have grown weary of mere sentiment, and yet retain enough of sympathetic feeling to desire at times to recall it. Such minds, crusted like Plato's Glaucus with the world, are yet pervious to appeals to the spirit that survives beneath the dry dust amid which they move; but only at rare intervals can they accompany the pure lyricist "singing as if he would never be old," and they are apt to turn with some impatience even from *Romeo and Juliet* to *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. To them, on the other hand,

the hard wit of *Hudibras* is equally tiresome, and more distasteful; their chosen friend is the humourist who, inspired by a subtle perception of the contradictions of life, sees matter for smiles in sorrow, and tears in laughter. Byron was not, in the highest sense, a great humourist; he does not blend together the two phases, as they are blended in single sentences or whole chapters of Sterne, in the April sunshine of Richter, or in *Sartor Resartus*; but he comes near to produce the same effect by his unequalled power of alternating them. His wit is seldom hard, never dry, for it is moistened by the constant juxtaposition of sentiment. His tenderness is none the less genuine that he is perpetually jerking it away—an equally favourite fashion with Carlyle—as if he could not trust himself to be serious for fear of becoming sentimental; and, in recollection of his frequent exhibitions of unaffected hysteria, we accept his own confession—

“If I laugh at any mortal thing,
’Tis that I may not weep”—

as a perfectly sincere comment on the most sincere, and therefore in many respects the most effective, of his works. He has, after his way, endeavoured in grave prose and light verse to defend it against its assailants, saying, “In *Don Juan* I take a vicious and unprincipled character, and lead him through those ranks of society whose accomplishments cover and cloak their vices, and paint the natural effects;” and elsewhere, that he means to make his scamp “end as a member of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, or by the guillotine, or in an unhappy marriage.” It were easy to dilate on the fact that in interpreting the phrases of the satirist into the language of the moralist we often require to read them backwards: Byron’s own

statement, "I hate a motive," is, however, more to the point:

"But the fact is that I have nothing plann'd
Unless it were to be a moment merry—
A novel word in my vocabulary."

Don Juan can only be credited with a text in the sense in which every large experience, of its own accord, conveys its lesson. It was to the author a picture of the world as he saw it; and it is to us a mirror in which every attribute of his genius, every peculiarity of his nature, is reflected without distortion. After the audacious though brilliant opening, and the unfortunately pungent reference to the poet's domestic affairs, we find in the famous storm (c. ii.) a bewildering epitome of his prevailing manner. Home-sickness, sea-sickness, the terror of the tempest, "wailing, blasphemy, devotion," the crash of the wreck, the wild farewell, "the bubbling cry of some strong swimmer in his agony," the horrors of famine, the tale of the two fathers, the beautiful apparitions of the rainbow and the bird, the feast on Juan's spaniel, his reluctance to dine on "his pastor and his master," the consequences of eating Pedrillo—all follow each other like visions in the phantasmagoria of a nightmare, till at last the remnant of the crew are drowned by a ridiculous rhyme—

"Finding no place for their landing better,
They ran the boat ashore, and overset her."

Then comes the episode of Haidee, "a long low island song of ancient days," the character of the girl herself being like a thread of pure gold running through the fabric of its surroundings, motley in every page; *e. g.*, after the impassioned close of the "Isles of Greece," we have the stanza:—

“Thus sang, or would, or could, or should, have sung,
The modern Greek, in tolerable verse;
If not like Orpheus quite, when Greece was young,
Yet in those days he might have done much worse—”

with which the author dashes away the romance of the song, and then launches into a tirade against Bob Southey's epic and Wordsworth's pedlar poems. This vein exhausted, we come to the “Ave Maria,” one of the most musical, and seemingly heartfelt, hymns in the language. The close of the ocean pastoral (in c. iv.) is the last of pathetic narrative in the book; but the same feeling that “mourns o'er the beauty of the Cyclades” often re-emerges in shorter passages. The fifth and sixth cantos, in spite of the glittering sketch of Gulbeyaz, and the fawn-like image of Dudù, are open to the charge of diffuseness, and the character of Johnson is a failure. From the seventh to the tenth, the poem decidedly dips, partly because the writer had never been in Russia; then it again rises, and shows no sign of falling off to the end.

No part of the work has more suggestive interest or varied power than some of the later cantos, in which Juan is whirled through the vortex of the fashionable life which Byron knew so well, loved so much, and at last esteemed so little. There is no richer piece of descriptive writing in his works than that of Newstead (in c. xiii.); nor is there any analysis of female character so subtle as that of the Lady Adeline. Conjectures as to the originals of imaginary portraits are generally futile; but Miss Millpond—not Donna Inez—is obviously Lady Byron; in Adeline we may suspect that at Genoa he was drawing from the life in the Villa Paradiso; while Aurora Raby seems to be an idealization of La Guiccioli:—

“Early in years, and yet more infantine
 In figure, she had something of sublime
 In eyes, which sadly shone, as seraphs shine:
 All youth—but with an aspect beyond time;
 Radiant and grave—as pitying man’s decline;
 Mournful—but mournful of another’s crime,
 She look’d as if she sat by Eden’s door,
 And grieved for those who could return no more.

“She was a Catholic, too, sincere, austere,
 As far as her own gentle heart allow’d,
 And deem’d that fallen worship far more dear,
 Perhaps, because ’twas fallen: her sires were proud
 Of deeds and days, when they had fill’d the ear
 Of nations, and had never bent or bow’d
 To novel power; and, as she was the last,
 She held her old faith and old feelings fast.

“She gazed upon a world she scarcely knew,
 As seeking not to know it; silent, lone,
 As grows a flower, thus quietly she grew,
 And kept her heart serene within its zone.”

Constantly, towards the close of the work, there is an echo of home and country, a half involuntary cry after

“The love of higher things and better days;
 Th’ unbounded hope, and heavenly ignorance
 Of what is call’d the world and the world’s ways.”

In the concluding stanza of the last completed canto, beginning—

“Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
 ’Twi’x night and morn, on the horizon’s verge”—

we have a condensation of the refrain of the poet’s philosophy; but the main drift of the later books is a satire on London society. There are elements in a great city

which may be wrought into something nobler than satire, for all the energies of the age are concentrated where passion is fiercest and thought intensest, amid the myriad sights and sounds of its glare and gloom. But those scenes, and the actors in them, are apt also to induce the frame of mind in which a prose satirist describes himself as reclining under an arcade of the Pantheon: "Not the Pantheon by the Piazza Navona, where the immortal gods were worshipped—the immortal gods now dead; but the Pantheon in Oxford Street. Have not Selwyn, and Walpole, and March, and Carlisle figured there? Has not Prince Florizel flounced through the hall in his rustling domino, and danced there in powdered splendour? O my companions, I have drunk many a bout with you, and always found 'Vanitas Vanitatum' written on the bottom of the pot." This is the mind in which *Don Juan* interprets the universe, and paints the still living court of Florizel and his buffoons. A "nondescript and ever varying rhyme"—"a versified aurora borealis," half cynical, half Epicurean, it takes a partial, though a subtle view of that microcosm on stilts called the great world. It complains that in the days of old "men made the manners—manners now make men." It concludes—

"Good company's a chess-board; there are kings,
Queens, bishops, knights, rooks, pawns; the world's a game."

It passes from a reflection on "the dreary *fuimus* of all things here" to the advice—

"But 'carpe diem,' Juan, 'carpe, carpe!'
To-morrow sees another race as gay
And transient, and devour'd by the same harpy.
'Life's a poor player,'—then play out the play."

It was the natural conclusion of the foregone stage of Byron's career. Years had given him power, but they were years in which his energies were largely wasted. Self-indulgence had not petrified his feeling, but it had thrown wormwood into its springs. He had learnt to look on existence as a walking shadow, and was strong only with the strength of a sincere despair.

“ Through life's road, so dim and dirty,
I have dragg'd to three and thirty.
What have those years left to me?
Nothing, except thirty-three.”

These lines are the summary of one who had drained the draught of pleasure to the dregs of bitterness.

CHAPTER X.

[1821-1824.]

POLITICS.—THE CARBONARI.—EXPEDITION TO GREECE.—
DEATH.

IN leaving Venice for Ravenna, Byron passed from the society of gondoliers and successive sultanas to a comparatively domestic life, with a mistress who at least endeavoured to stimulate some of his higher aspirations, and smiled upon his wearing the sword along with the lyre. In the last episode of his constantly chequered and too voluptuous career, we have the waking of Sardanapalus realized in the transmutation of the fantastical Harold into a practical strategist, financier, and soldier. No one ever lived who in the same space more thoroughly ran the gauntlet of existence. Having exhausted all other sources of vitality and intoxication—travel, gallantry, and verse—it remained for the despairing poet to become a hero. But he was also moved by a public passion, the genuineness of which there is no reasonable ground to doubt. Like Alfieri and Rousseau, he had taken for his motto, “I am of the opposition;” and, as Dante under a republic called for a monarchy, Byron, under monarchies at home and abroad, called for a commonwealth. Amid the inconsistencies of his political sentiment, he had been consistent in so much love of liberty as led him to de-

nounce oppression, even when he had no great faith in the oppressed—whether English, or Italians, or Greeks.

Byron regarded the established dynasties of the continent with a sincere hatred. He talks of the “more than infernal tyranny” of the House of Austria. To his fancy, as to Shelley’s, New England is the star of the future. Attracted by a strength or rather force of character akin to his own, he worshipped Napoleon, even when driven to confess that “the hero had sunk into a king.” He lamented his overthrow; but, above all, that he was beaten by “three stupid, legitimate old dynasty boobies of regular sovereigns.” “I write in ipecacuanha that the Bourbons are restored.” “What right have we to prescribe laws to France? Here we are retrograding to the dull, stupid old system, balance of Europe—poising straws on kings’ noses, instead of wringing them off.” “The king-times are fast finishing. There will be blood shed like water, and tears like mist; but the peoples will conquer in the end. I shall not live to see it, but I foresee it.” “Give me a republic. Look in the history of the earth—Rome, Greece, Venice, Holland, France, America, our too short Commonwealth—and compare it with what they did under masters.”

His serious political verses are all in the strain of the lines on Wellington—

“Never had mortal man such opportunity—
 Except Napoleon—or abused it more;
 You might have freed fallen Europe from the unity
 Of tyrants, and been blessed from shore to shore.”

An enthusiasm for Italy, which survived many disappointments, dictated some of the most impressive passages of his *Harold*, and inspired the *Lament of Tasso* and the

Ode on Venice. The *Prophecy of Dante* contains much that has since proved prophetic—

“What is there wanting, then, to set thee free,
And show thy beauty in its fullest light?
To make the Alps impassable; and we,
Her sons, may do this with one deed—*Unite!*”

His letters reiterate the same idea, in language even more emphatic. “It is no great matter, supposing that Italy could be liberated, who or what is sacrificed. It is a grand object—the very poetry of politics: only think—a free Italy!” Byron acted on his assertion that a man ought to do more for society than write verses. Mistrusting its leaders, and detesting the wretched lazzaroni, who “would have betrayed themselves and all the world,” he yet threw himself heart and soul into the insurrection of 1820, saying, “Whatever I can do by money, means, or person, I will venture freely for their freedom.” He joined the secret society of the Carbonari, wrote an address to the Liberal government set up in Naples, supplied arms and a refuge in his house, which he was prepared to convert into a fortress. In February, 1821, on the rout of the Neapolitans by the Austrians, the conspiracy was crushed. Byron, who “had always an idea that it would be bungled,” expressed his fear that the country would be thrown back for 500 years into barbarism, and the Countess Guiccioli confessed with tears that the Italians must return to composing and strumming operatic airs. Carbonarism having collapsed, it of course made way for a reaction; but the encouragement and countenance of the English poet and peer helped to keep alive the smouldering fire that Mazzini fanned into a flame, till Cavour turned it to a practical purpose, and the dreams of the idealists of 1820 were finally realized.

On the failure of the luckless conspiracy, Byron naturally betook himself to history, speculation, satire, and ideas of a journalistic propaganda; but all through his mind was turning to the renewal of the action which was his destiny. "If I live ten years longer," he writes in 1822, "you will see that it is not all over with me. I don't mean in literature, for that is nothing—and I do not think it was my vocation; but I shall do something." The Greek war of liberation opened a new field for the exercise of his indomitable energy. This romantic struggle, begun in April, 1821, was carried on for two years with such remarkable success, that at the close of 1822 Greece was beginning to be recognized as an independent state: but in the following months the tide seemed to turn; dissensions broke out among the leaders, the spirit of intrigue seemed to stifle patriotism, and the energies of the insurgents were hampered for want of the sinews of war. There was a danger of the movement being starved out, and the committee of London sympathizers—of which the poet's intimate friend and frequent correspondent, Mr. Douglas Kinnaird, and Captain Blaquière, were leading promoters—was impressed with the necessity of procuring funds in support of the cause. With a view to this it seemed of consequence to attach to it some shining name, and men's thoughts almost inevitably turned to Byron. No other Englishman seemed so fit to be associated with the enterprise as the warlike poet, who had twelve years before linked his fame to that of "grey Marathon" and "Athena's tower," and, more recently, immortalized the isles on which he cast so many a longing glance. Hobhouse broke the subject to him early in the spring of 1823: the committee opened communications in April. After hesitating through May, in June Byron con-

sented to meet Blaquièrè at Zante, and, on hearing the results of the captain's expedition to the Morea, to decide on future steps. His share in this enterprise has been assigned to purely personal and comparatively mean motives. He was, it is said, disgusted with his periodical, sick of his editor, tired of his mistress, and bent on any change, from China to Peru, that would give him a new theatre for display. One grows weary of the perpetual half-truths of inveterate detraction. It is granted that Byron was restless, vain, imperious, never did anything without a desire to shine in the doing of it, and was to a great degree the slave of circumstances. Had the *Liberal* proved a lamp to the nations, instead of a mere "red flag flaunted in the face of John Bull," he might have cast anchor at Genoa; but the whole drift of his work and life demonstrates that he was capable on occasion of merging himself in what he conceived to be great causes, especially in their evil days. Of the Hunts he may have had enough; but the invidious statement about La Guiccioli has no foundation, other than a somewhat random remark of Shelley, and the fact that he left her nothing in his will. It is distinctly ascertained that she expressly prohibited him from doing so; they continued to correspond to the last, and her affectionate, though unreadable, reminiscences are sufficient proof that she at no time considered herself to be neglected, injured, or aggrieved.

Byron, indeed, left Italy in an unsettled state of mind: he spoke of returning in a few months, and as the period for his departure approached, became more and more irresolute. A presentiment of his death seemed to brood over a mind always superstitious, though never fanatical. Shortly before his own departure, the Blessingtons were preparing to leave Genoa for England. On the evening

of his farewell call he began to speak of his voyage with despondency, saying, "Here we are all now together; but when and where shall we meet again? I have a sort of boding that we see each other for the last time, as something tells me I shall never again return from Greece:" after which remark he leant his head on the sofa, and burst into one of his hysterical fits of tears. The next week was given to preparations for an expedition, which, entered on with mingled motives—sentimental, personal, public—became more real and earnest to Byron at every step he took. He knew all the vices of the "hereditary bondsmen" among whom he was going, and went among them with yet unquenched aspirations, but with the bridle of discipline in his hand, resolved to pave the way towards the nation becoming better, by devoting himself to making it free.

On the morning of July 14 (1823) he embarked in the brig "Hercules," with Trelawny; Count Pietro Gamba, who remained with him to the last; Bruno, a young Italian doctor; Scott, the captain of the vessel, and eight servants, including Fletcher; besides the crew. They had on board two guns, with other arms and ammunition, five horses, an ample supply of medicines, with 50,000 Spanish dollars in coin and bills. The start was inauspicious. A violent squall drove them back to port, and in the course of a last ride with Gamba to Albaro, Byron asked, "Where shall we be in a year?" On the same day of the same month of 1824 he was carried to the tomb of his ancestors. They again set sail on the following evening, and in five days reached Leghorn, where the poet received a salutation in verse, addressed to him by Goethe, and replied to it. Here Mr. Hamilton Brown, a Scotch gentleman with considerable knowledge of Greek affairs, joined the party,

and induced them to change their course to Cephalonia, for the purpose of obtaining the advice and assistance of the English resident, Colonel Napier. The poet occupied himself during the voyage mainly in reading—among other books, Scott's *Life of Swift*, Grimm's *Correspondence*, La Rochefoucauld, and Las Casas—and watching the classic or historic shores which they skirted, especially noting Elba, Soracte, the Straits of Messina, and Etna. In passing Stromboli he said to Trelawny, "You will see this scene in a fifth canto of *Childe Harold*." On his companions suggesting that he should write some verses on the spot, he tried to do so, but threw them away, with the remark, "I cannot write poetry at will, as you smoke tobacco." Trelawny confesses that he was never on shipboard with a better companion, and that a severer test of good-fellowship it is impossible to apply. Together they shot at gulls or empty bottles, and swam every morning in the sea. Early in August they reached their destination. Coming in sight of the Morea, the poet said to Trelawny, "I feel as if the eleven long years of bitterness I have passed through since I was here were taken from my shoulders, and I was scudding through the Greek Archipelago with old Bathurst in his frigate." Byron remained at or about Cephalonia till the close of the year. Not long after his arrival he made an excursion to Ithaca, and, visiting the monastery at Vathi, was received by the abbot with great ceremony, which, in a fit of irritation, brought on by a tiresome ride on a mule, he returned with unusual discourtesy; but next morning, on his giving a donation to their alms-box, he was dismissed with the blessing of the monks. "If this isle were mine," he declared on his way back, "I would break my staff and bury my book." A little later, Brown and Trelawny being sent off with letters

to the provisional government, the former returned with some Greek emissaries to London to negotiate a loan; the latter attached himself to Odysseus, the chief of the republican party at Athens, and never again saw Byron alive. The poet, after spending a month on board the "Hercules," dismissed the vessel, and hired a house for Gamba and himself at Metaxata, a healthy village about four miles from the capital of the island. Meanwhile, Blaquièrè, neglecting his appointment at Zante, had gone to Corfu, and thence to England. Colonel Napier being absent from Cephalonia, Byron had some pleasant social intercourse with his deputy, but, unable to get from him any authoritative information, was left without advice, to be besieged by letters and messages from the factions. Among these there were brought to him hints that the Greeks wanted a king, and he is reported to have said, "If they make me the offer, I will perhaps not reject it."

The position would doubtless have been acceptable to a man who never—amid his many self-deceptions—affected to deny that he was ambitious; and who can say what might not have resulted for Greece, had the poet lived to add lustre to her crown? In the meantime, while faring more frugally than a day-labourer, he yet surrounded himself with a show of royal state, had his servants armed with gilt helmets, and gathered around him a body-guard of Suliotes. These wild mercenaries becoming turbulent, he was obliged to despatch them to Mesolonghi, then threatened with siege by the Turks and anxiously waiting relief. During his residence at Cephalonia, Byron was gratified by the interest evinced in him by the English residents. Among these the physician, Dr. Kennedy, a worthy Scotchman, who imagined himself to be a theologian with a genius for conversion, was conducting a series

of religious meetings at Argostoli, when the poet expressed a wish to be present at one of them. After listening, it is said, to a set of discourses that occupied the greater part of twelve hours, he seems, for one reason or another, to have felt called on to enter the lists, and found himself involved in the series of controversial dialogues afterwards published in a substantial book. This volume, interesting in several respects, is one of the most charming examples of unconscious irony in the language, and it is matter of regret that our space does not admit of the abridgment of several of its pages. They bear testimony, on the one hand, to Byron's capability of patience, and frequent sweetness of temper under trial; on the other, to Kennedy's utter want of humour, and to his courageous honesty. The curiously confronted interlocutors, in the course of the missionary and subsequent private meetings, ran over most of the ground debated between opponents and apologists of the Calvinistic faith, which Kennedy upheld without stint. The *Conversations* add little to what we already know of Byron's religious opinions; nor is it easy to say where he ceases to be serious and begins to banter, or vice versâ. He evidently wished to show that in argument he was good at fence, and could handle a theologian as skilfully as a foil. At the same time he wished, if possible, though, as appears, in vain, to get some light on a subject with regard to which in his graver moods he was often exercised. On some points he is explicit. He makes an unequivocal protest against the doctrines of eternal punishment and infant damnation, saying that if the rest of mankind were to be damned, he "would rather keep them company than creep into heaven alone." On questions of inspiration, and the deeper problems of human life, he is less distinct, being naturally inclined to a speculative ne-

cessitarianism, and disposed to admit original depravity; but he did not see his way out of the maze through the Atonement, and held that prayer had only significance as a devotional affection of the heart. Byron showed a remarkable familiarity with the Scriptures, and with parts of Barrow, Chillingworth, and Stillingfleet; but on Kennedy's lending, for his edification, Boston's *Fourfold State*, he returned it with the remark that it was too deep for him. On another occasion he said, "Do you know I am nearly reconciled to St. Paul, for he says there is no difference between the Jews and the Greeks? and I am exactly of the same opinion, for the character of both is equally vile." The good Scotchman's religious self-confidence is throughout free from intellectual pride; and his own confession, "This time I suspect his lordship had the best of it," might perhaps be applied to the whole discussion.

Critics who have little history and less war have been accustomed to attribute Byron's lingering at Cephalonia to indolence and indecision; they write as if he ought, on landing on Greek soil, to have put himself at the head of an army and stormed Constantinople. Those who know more confess that the delay was deliberate, and that it was judicious. The Hellenic uprising was animated by the spirit of a "lion after slumber," but it had the heads of a Hydra hissing and tearing at one another. The chiefs who defended the country by their arms compromised her by their arguments, and some of her best fighters were little better than pirates and bandits. Greece was a prey to factions—republican, monarchic, aristocratic—representing naval, military, and territorial interests, and each beset by the adventurers who flock round every movement, only representing their own. During the first two years of success they were held in embryo; during the later years

of disaster, terminated by the allies at Navarino, they were buried; during the interlude of Byron's residence, when the foes were like hounds in the leash, waiting for a renewal of the struggle, they were rampant. Had he joined any one of them he would have degraded himself to the level of a mere condottiere, and helped to betray the common cause. Beset by solicitations to go to Athens, to the Morea, to Acarnania, he resolutely held apart, biding his time, collecting information, making himself known as a man of affairs, endeavouring to conciliate rival claimants for pension or place, and carefully watching the tide of war. Numerous anecdotes of the period relate to acts of public or private benevolence, which endeared him to the population of the island; but he was on the alert against being fleeced or robbed. "The bulk of the English," writes Colonel Napier, "came expecting to find the Peloponnesus filled with Plutarch's men, and returned thinking the inhabitants of Newgate more moral. Lord Byron judged the Greeks fairly, and knew that allowance must be made for emancipated slaves." Among other incidents we hear of his passing a group, who were "shrieking and howling as in Ireland" over some men buried in the fall of a bank; he snatched a spade, began to dig, and threatened to horsewhip the peasants unless they followed his example. On November 30 he despatched to the central government a remarkable state paper, in which he dwells on the fatal calamity of a civil war, and says that, unless union and order are established, all hopes of a loan—which, being every day more urgent, he was in letters to England constantly pressing—are at an end. "I desire," he concluded, "the wellbeing of Greece, and nothing else. I will do all I can to secure it; but I will never consent that the English public be deceived as to the real state of

affairs. You have fought gloriously; act honourably towards your fellow-citizens and the world, and it will then no more be said, as has been repeated for two thousand years, with the Roman historians, that Philopœmen was the last of the Grecians."

Prince Alexander Mavrocordatos—the most prominent of the practical patriotic leaders—having been deposed from the presidency, was sent to regulate the affairs of Western Greece, and was now on his way with a fleet to relieve Mesolonghi, in attempting which the brave Marco Bozzaris had previously fallen. In a letter, opening communication with a man for whom he always entertained a high esteem, Byron writes, "Colonel Stanhope has arrived from London, charged by our committee to act in concert with me. . . . Greece is at present placed between three measures—either to reconquer her liberty, to become a dependence of the sovereigns of Europe, or to return to a Turkish province. She has the choice only of these three alternatives. Civil war is but a road that leads to the two latter."

At length the long-looked-for fleet arrived, and the Turkish squadron, with the loss of a treasure-ship, retired up the Gulf of Lepanto. Mavrocordatos, on entering Mesolonghi, lost no time in inviting the poet to join him, and placed a brig at his disposal, adding, "I need not tell you to what a pitch your presence is desired by everybody, or what a prosperous direction it will give to all our affairs. Your counsels will be listened to like oracles."

At the same date Stanhope writes, "The people in the streets are looking forward to his lordship's arrival as they would to the coming of the Messiah." Byron was unable to start in the ship sent for him; but in spite of medical warnings, a few days later, *i. e.*, December 28, he embark-

ed in a small fast-sailing sloop called a *mistico*, while the servants and baggage were stowed in another and larger vessel under the charge of Count Gamba. From Gamba's graphic account of the voyage we may take the following: "We sailed together till after ten at night; the wind favourable, a clear sky, the air fresh, but not sharp. Our sailors sang alternately patriotic songs, monotonous indeed, but to persons in our situation extremely touching, and we took part in them. We were all, but Lord Byron particularly, in excellent spirits. The *mistico* sailed the fastest. When the waves divided us, and our voices could no longer reach each other, we made signals by firing pistols and carbines. To-morrow we meet at Mesolonghi—to-morrow. Thus, full of confidence and spirits, we sailed along. At twelve we were out of sight of each other."

Byron's vessel, separated from her consort, came into the close proximity of a Turkish frigate, and had to take refuge among the Scrofes' rocks. Emerging thence, he attained a small seaport of Acarnania, called Dragomestri, whence sallying forth on the 2nd of January under the convoy of some Greek gunboats, he was nearly wrecked. On the 4th Byron made, when violently heated, an imprudent plunge in the sea, and was never afterwards free from a pain in his bones. On the 5th he arrived at Mesolonghi, and was received with salvoes of musketry and music. Gamba was waiting him. His vessel, the "*Bombarda*," had been taken by the Ottoman frigate, but the captain of the latter, recognizing the Count as having formerly saved his life in the Black Sea, made interest in his behalf with Yussuf Pasha at Patras, and obtained his discharge. In recompense, the poet subsequently sent to the Pasha some Turkish prisoners, with a letter requesting him to endeavour to mitigate the inhumanities of the war. Byron

brought to the Greeks at Mesolonghi the 4000*l.* of his personal loan (applied, in the first place, to defraying the expenses of the fleet), with the spell of his name and presence. He was shortly afterwards appointed to the command of the intended expedition against Lepanto, and, with this view, again took into his pay five hundred Suliotes. An approaching general assembly to organize the forces of the West had brought together a motley crew, destitute, discontented, and more likely to wage war upon each other than on their enemies. Byron's closest associates during the ensuing months were the engineer Parry, an energetic artilleryman, "extremely active, and of strong practical talents," who had travelled in America, and Colonel Stanhope (afterwards Lord Harrington), equally with himself devoted to the emancipation of Greece, but at variance about the means of achieving it. Stanhope, a moral enthusiast of the stamp of Kennedy, beset by the fallacy of religious missions, wished to cover the Morea with Wesleyan tracts, and liberate the country by the agency of the press. He had imported a converted blacksmith, with a cargo of Bibles, types, and paper, who on 20*l.* a year undertook to accomplish the reform. Byron, backed by the good sense of Mavrocordatos, proposed to make cartridges of the tracts, and small shot of the type; he did not think that the turbulent tribes were ripe for freedom of the press, and had begun to regard Republicanism itself as a matter of secondary moment. The disputant allies in the common cause occupied each a flat of the same small house; the soldier by profession was bent on writing the Turks down, the poet on fighting them down, holding that "the work of the sword must precede that of the pen, and that camps must be the training-schools of freedom." Their altercations were sometimes fierce—

“Despot!” cried Stanhope, “after professing liberal principles from boyhood, you, when called to act, prove yourself a Turk.” “Radical!” retorted Byron, “if I had held up my finger I could have crushed your press”—but this did not prevent the recognition by each of them of the excellent qualities of the other.

Ultimately Stanhope went to Athens, and allied himself with Trelawny and Odysseus and the party of the Left. Nothing can be more statesmanlike than some of Byron’s papers of this and the immediately preceding period, nothing more admirable than the spirit which inspires them. He had come into the heart of a revolution, exposed to the same perils as those which had wrecked the similar movement in Italy. Neither trusting too much nor distrusting too much, with a clear head and a good will he set about enforcing a series of excellent measures. From first to last he was engaged in denouncing dissension, in advocating unity, in doing everything that man could do to concentrate and utilize the disorderly elements with which he had to work. He occupied himself in repairing fortifications, managing ships, restraining licence, promoting courtesy between the foes, and regulating the disposal of the sinews of war.

On the morning of the 22nd of January, his last birthday, he came from his room to Stanhope’s, and said, smiling, “You were complaining that I never write any poetry now,” and read the familiar stanzas beginning—

“’Tis time this heart should be unmoved,”

and ending—

“Seek out—less often sought than found—

A soldier’s grave, for thee the best;

Then look around, and choose thy ground,

And take thy rest.”

High thoughts, high resolves; but the brain that was overtasked, and the frame that was outworn, would be tasked and worn little longer. The lamp of a life that had burnt too fiercely was flickering to its close. "If we are not taken off with the sword," he writes on February 5, "we are like to march off with an ague in this mud basket; and, to conclude with a very bad pun, better *martially* than *marsh-ally*. The dykes of Holland when broken down are the deserts of Arabia, in comparison with Mesolonghi." In April, when it was too late, Stanhope wrote from Salona, in Phocis, imploring him not to sacrifice health, and perhaps life, "in that bog."

Byron's house stood in the midst of the exhalations of a muddy creek, and his natural irritability was increased by a more than usually long ascetic regimen. From the day of his arrival in Greece he discarded animal food, and lived mainly on toast, vegetables, and cheese, olives and light wine, at the rate of forty paras a day. In spite of his strength of purpose, his temper was not always proof against the rapacity and turbulence by which he was surrounded. About the middle of February, when the artillery had been got into readiness for the attack on Lepanto—the northern, as Patras was the southern, gate of the gulf, still in the hands of the Turks—the expedition was thrown back by an unexpected rising of the Suliotes. These peculiarly froward Greeks, chronically seditious by nature, were on this occasion, as afterwards appeared, stirred up by emissaries of Colocatroni, who, though assuming the position of the rival of Mavrocordatos, was simply a brigand on a large scale in the Morea. Exasperation at this mutiny, and the vexation of having to abandon a cherished scheme, seem to have been the immediately provoking causes of a violent convulsive fit which,

on the evening of the 15th, attacked the poet, and endangered his life. Next day he was better, but complained of weight in the head; and the doctors applying leeches too close to the temporal artery, he was bled till he fainted. And now occurred the last of those striking incidents so frequent in his life, in reference to which we may quote the joint testimony of two witnesses. Colonel Stanhope writes, "Soon after his dreadful paroxysm, when he was lying on his sick-bed, with his whole nervous system completely shaken, the mutinous Suliotes, covered with dirt and splendid attires, broke into his apartment, brandishing their costly arms and loudly demanding their rights. Lord Byron, electrified by this unexpected act, seemed to recover from his sickness; and the more the Suliotes raged the more his calm courage triumphed. The scene was truly sublime." "It is impossible," says Count Gamba, "to do justice to the coolness and magnanimity which he displayed upon every trying occasion. Upon trifling occasions he was certainly irritable; but the aspect of danger calmed him in an instant, and restored him the free exercise of all the powers of his noble nature. A more undaunted man in the hour of peril never breathed." A few days later, the riot being renewed, the disorderly crew were, on payment of their arrears, finally dismissed; but several of the English artificers under Parry left about the same time, in fear of their lives.

On the 4th, the last of the long list of Byron's letters to Moore resents, with some bitterness, the hasty acceptance of a rumour that he had been quietly writing *Don Juan* in some Ionian island. At the same date he writes to Kennedy, "I am not unaware of the precarious state of my health. But it is proper I should remain in Greece, and it were better to die doing something than nothing."

Visions of enlisting Europe and America on behalf of the establishment of a new state, that might in course of time develope itself over the realm of Alexander, floated and gleamed in his fancy; but in his practical daily procedure the poet took as his text the motto "festina lente," insisted on solid ground under his feet, and had no notion of sailing balloons over the sea. With this view he discouraged Stanhope's philanthropic and propagandist paper, the *Telegrapho*, and disparaged Dr. Mayer, its Swiss editor, saying, "Of all petty tyrants he is one of the pettiest, as are most demagogues." Byron had none of the Slavonic leanings, and almost personal hatred of Ottoman rule, of some of our statesmen; but he saw on what side lay the forces and the hopes of the future. "I cannot calculate," he said to Gamba, during one of their latest rides together, "to what a height Greece may rise. Hitherto it has been a subject for the hymns and elegies of fanatics and enthusiasts; but now it will draw the attention of the politician. . . . At present there is little difference, in many respects, between Greeks and Turks, nor could there be; but the latter must, in the common course of events, decline in power; and the former must as inevitably become better. . . . The English Government deceived itself at first in thinking it possible to maintain the Turkish Empire in its integrity; but it cannot be done—that unwieldy mass is already putrified, and must dissolve. If anything like an equilibrium is to be upheld, Greece must be supported." These words have been well characterized as prophetic. During this time Byron rallied in health, and displayed much of his old spirit, vivacity, and humour, took part in such of his favourite amusements as circumstances admitted, fencing, shooting, riding, and playing with his pet dog Lion. The last of

his recorded practical jokes is his rolling about cannon-balls, and shaking the rafters, to frighten Parry in the room below with the dread of an earthquake.

Towards the close of the month, after being solicited to accompany Mavrocordatos to share the governorship of the Morea, he made an appointment to meet Colonel Stanhope and Odysseus at Salona, but was prevented from keeping it by violent floods which blocked up the communication. On the 30th he was presented with the freedom of the city of Mesolonghi. On the 3rd of April he intervened to prevent an Italian private, guilty of theft, from being flogged by order of some German officers. On the 9th, exhilarated by a letter from Mrs. Leigh with good accounts of her own and Ada's health, he took a long ride with Gamba and a few of the remaining Suliotas, and after being violently heated, and then drenched in a heavy shower, persisted in returning home in a boat, remarking with a laugh, in answer to a remonstrance, "I should make a pretty soldier if I were to care for such a trifle." It soon became apparent that he had caught his death. Almost immediately on his return he was seized with shiverings and violent pain. The next day he rose as usual, and had his last ride in the olive woods. On the 11th a rheumatic fever set in. On the 14th, Bruno's skill being exhausted, it was proposed to call Dr. Thomas from Zante, but a hurricane prevented any ship being sent. On the 15th, another physician, Mr. Milligen, suggested bleeding to allay the fever, but Byron held out against it, quoting Dr. Reid to the effect that "less slaughter is effected by the lance than the lancet—that minute instrument of mighty mischief;" and saying to Bruno, "If my hour is come I shall die, whether I lose my blood or keep it." Next morning Milligen induced him to

yield, by a suggestion of the possible loss of his reason. Throwing out his arm, he cried, "There! you are, I see, a d—d set of butchers. Take away as much blood as you like, and have done with it." The remedy, repeated on the following day with blistering, was either too late or ill-advised. On the 18th he saw more doctors, but was manifestly sinking, amid the tears and lamentations of attendants who could not understand each other's language. In his last hours his delirium bore him to the field of arms. He fancied he was leading the attack on Lepanto, and was heard exclaiming, "Forwards! forwards! follow me!" Who is not reminded of another death-bed, not remote in time from his, and the *Tête d'armée* of the great Emperor who with the great Poet divided the wonder of Europe? The stormy vision passed, and his thoughts reverted home. "Go to my sister," he faltered out to Fletcher; "tell her—go to Lady Byron—you will see her, and say"—nothing more could be heard but broken ejaculations: "Augusta—Ada—my sister, my child. Io lascio qualche cosa di caro nel mondo. For the rest, I am content to die." At six on the evening of the 18th he uttered his last words, "Δεῖ με νῦν καθεύδειν;" and on the 19th he passed away.

Never, perhaps, was there such a national lamentation. By order of Mavrocordatos, thirty-seven guns—one for each year of the poet's life—were fired from the battery, and answered by the Turks from Patras with an exultant volley. All offices, tribunals, and shops were shut, and a general mourning for twenty-one days proclaimed. Stanhope wrote, on hearing the news, "England has lost her brightest genius—Greece her noblest friend;" and Trelawny, on coming to Mesolonghi, heard nothing in the streets but "Byron is dead!" like a bell tolling through

the silence and the gloom. Intending contributors to the cause of Greece turned back when they heard the tidings, that seemed to them to mean she was headless. Her cities contended for the body, as of old for the birth of a poet. Athens wished him to rest in the Temple of Theseus. The funeral service was performed at Mesolonghi. But on the 2nd of May the embalmed remains left Zante, and on the 29th arrived in the Downs. His relatives applied for permission to have them interred in Westminster Abbey, but it was refused; and on the 16th July they were conveyed to the village church of Hucknall.

CHAPTER XI.

CHARACTERISTICS, AND PLACE IN LITERATURE.

LORD JEFFREY at the close of a once-famous review quaintly laments: "The tuneful quartos of Southey are already little better than lumber, and the rich melodies of Keats and Shelley, and the fantastical emphasis of Wordsworth, and the plebeian pathos of Crabbe, are melting fast from the field of our vision. The novels of Scott have put out his poetry, and the blazing star of Byron himself is receding from its place of pride." Of the poets of the early part of this century Lord John Russell thought Byron the greatest; then Scott; then Moore. "Such an opinion," wrote a *National* reviewer, in 1860, "is not worth a refutation; we only smile at it." Nothing in the history of literature is more curious than the shifting of the standard of excellence, which so perplexes criticism. But the most remarkable feature of the matter is the frequent return to power of the once discarded potentates. Byron is resuming his place: his spirit has come again to our atmosphere; and every budding critic, as in 1820, feels called on to pronounce a verdict on his genius and character. The present times are, in many respects, an aftermath of the first quarter of the century which was an era of revolt, of doubt, of storm. There succeeded an era of exhaustion, of quiescence, of reflection. The first years of the third quarter saw a revival of turbu-

lence and agitation ; and, more than our fathers, we are inclined to sympathize with our grandfathers. Macaulay has popularized the story of the change of literary dynasty which in our island marked the close of the last, and the first two decades of the present, hundred years.

The corresponding artistic revolt on the continent was closely connected with changes in the political world. The originators of the romantic literature in Italy, for the most part, died in Spielberg or in exile. The same revolution which levelled the Bastille, and converted Versailles and the Trianon—the classic school in stone and terrace—into a moral Herculaneum and Pompeii, drove the models of the so-called Augustan ages into a museum of antiquarians. In our own country, the movement initiated by Chatterton, Cowper, and Burns was carried out by two classes of great writers. They agreed in opposing freedom to formality ; in substituting for the old new aims and methods ; in preferring a grain of mother wit to a peck of clerisy. They broke with the old school, as Protestantism broke with the old Church ; but, like the sects, they separated again. Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, while refusing to acknowledge the literary precedents of the past, submitted themselves to a self-imposed law. The partialities of their maturity were towards things settled and regulated ; their favourite virtues, endurance and humility ; their conformity to established institutions was the basis of a new Conservatism. The others were the Radicals of the movement : they practically acknowledged no law but their own inspiration. Dissatisfied with the existing order, their sympathies were with strong will and passion and defiant independence. These found their master-types in Shelley and in Byron.

A reaction is always an extreme. Lollards, Puritans,

Covenanters were in some respects nauseous antidotes to ecclesiastical corruption. The ruins of the Scotch cathedrals and of the French nobility are warnings at once against the excess that provokes and the excess that avenges. The revolt against the *ancien régime* in letters made possible the Ode that is the high-tide mark of modern English inspiration, but it was parodied in page on page of maundering rusticity. Byron saw the danger, but was borne headlong by the rapids. Hence the anomalous contrast between his theories and his performance. Both Wordsworth and Byron were bitten by Rousseau; but the former is, at furthest, a Girondin. The latter, acting like Danton on the motto "L'audace, l'audace, toujours l'audace," sighs after *Henri Quatre et Gabriëlle*. There is more of the spirit of the French Revolution in *Don Juan* than in all the works of the author's contemporaries; but his criticism is that of Boileau, and when deliberate is generally absurd. He never recognized the meaning of the artistic movement of his age, and overvalued those of his works which the Unities helped to destroy. He hailed Gifford as his Magnus Apollo, and put Rogers next to Scott in his comical pyramid. "Chaucer," he writes, "I think obscene and contemptible." He could see no merit in Spenser, preferred Tasso to Milton, and called the old English dramatists "mad and turbid mountebanks." In the same spirit he writes: "In the time of Pope it was all Horace; now it is all Claudian." He saw—what fanatics had begun to deny—that Pope was a great writer, and the "angel of reasonableness," the strong common sense of both, was a link between them; but the expressions he uses during his controversy with Bowles look like jests, till we are convinced of his earnestness by his anger. "Neither time, nor distance, nor grief, nor age can

ever diminish my veneration for him who is the great moral poet of all times, of all climes, of all feelings, and of all stages of existence. . . . Your whole generation are not worth a canto of the *Dunciad*, or anything that is his." All the while he was himself writing prose and verse, in grasp, if not in vigour as far beyond the stretch of Pope, as Pope is in "worth and wit and sense" removed above his mimics. The point of the paradox is not merely that he deserted, but that he sometimes imitated his model, and when he did so, failed. Macaulay's judgment, that "personal taste led him to the eighteenth century, thirst for praise to the nineteenth," is quite at fault. There can be no doubt that Byron loved praise as much as he affected to despise it. His note, on reading the *Quarterly* on his dramas, "I am the most unpopular man in England," is like the cry of a child under chastisement; but he had little affinity, moral or artistic, with the spirit of our so-called Augustans, and his determination to admire them was itself rebellious. Again we are reminded of his phrase, "I am of the opposition." His vanity and pride were perpetually struggling for the mastery, and though he thirsted for popularity he was bent on compelling it; so he warred with the literary impulse of which he was the child.

Byron has no relation to the master-minds whose works reflect a nation or an era, and who keep their own secrets. His verse and prose is alike biographical, and the inequalities of his style are those of his career. He lived in a glass case, and could not hide himself by his habit of burning blue lights. He was too great to do violence to his nature, which was not great enough to be really consistent. It was thus natural for him to pose as the spokesman of two ages—as a critic and as an author; and of

two orders of society—as a peer, and as a poet of revolt. Sincere in both, he could never forget the one character in the other. To the last he was an aristocrat in sentiment, a democrat in opinion. “Vulgarity,” he writes, with a pithy half-truth, “is far worse than downright black-guardism; for the latter comprehends wit, humour, and strong sense at times, while the former is a sad abortive attempt at all things, signifying nothing.” He could never reconcile himself to the English radicals; and it has been acutely remarked that part of his final interest in Greece lay in the fact that he found it a country of classic memories, “where a man might be the champion of liberty without soiling himself in the arena.” He owed much of his early influence to the fact of his moving in the circles of rank and fashion; but though himself steeped in the prejudices of caste, he struck at them at times with fatal force. Aristocracy is the individual asserting a vital distinction between itself and “the muck o’ the world.” Byron’s heroes all rebel against the associative tendency of the nineteenth century; they are self-worshippers at war with society; but most of them come to bad ends. He maligned himself in those caricatures, and has given more of himself in describing one whom with special significance we call a brother poet. “Allen,” he writes in 1813, “has lent me a quantity of Burns’s unpublished letters. . . . What an antithetical mind!—tenderness, roughness—delicacy, coarseness—sentiment, sensuality—soaring and grovelling—dirt and deity—all mixed up in that one compound of inspired clay!” We have only to add to these antitheses, in applying them with slight modification to the writer. Byron had, on occasion, more self-control than Burns, who yielded to every thirst or gust, and could never have lived the life of the soldier at Meso-

longhi; but, partly owing to meanness, partly to a sound instinct, his memory has been more severely dealt with. The fact of his being a nobleman helped to make him famous, but it also helped to make him hated. No doubt it half spoiled him in making him a show; and the circumstance has suggested the remark of a humourist, that it is as hard for a lord to be a perfect gentleman as for a camel to pass through the needle's eye. But it also exposed to the rancours of jealousy a man who had nearly everything but domestic happiness to excite that most corroding of literary passions; and when he got out of gear he became the quarry of Spenser's "blatant beast." On the other hand, Burns was, beneath his disgust at Holy Fairs and Willies, sincerely reverential; much of *Don Juan* would have seemed to him "an atheist's laugh," and—a more certain superiority—he was absolutely frank.

Byron, like Pope, was given to playing monkey-like tricks, mostly harmless, but offensive to their victims. His peace of mind was dependent on what people would say of him, to a degree unusual even in the irritable race; and when they spoke ill he was, again like Pope, essentially vindictive. The *Bards and Reviewers* beats about, where the lines to Atticus transfix with Philoctetes' arrows; but they are due to a like impulse. Byron affected to contemn the world; but, say what he would, he cared too much for it. He had a genuine love of solitude as an alterative; but he could not subsist without society, and, Shelley tells us, wherever he went, became the nucleus of it. He sprang up again when flung to the earth, but he never attained to the disdain he desired.

We find him at once munificent and careful about money; calmly asleep amid a crowd of trembling sailors, yet never going to ride without a nervous caution; defying

augury, yet seriously disturbed by a gipsy's prattle. He could be the most genial of comrades, the most considerate of masters, and he secured the devotion of his servants, as of his friends; but he was too overbearing to form many equal friendships, and apt to be ungenerous to his real rivals. His shifting attitude towards Lady Byron, his wavering purposes, his impulsive acts, are a part of the character we trace through all his life and work—a strange mixture of magnanimity and brutality, of laughter and tears, consistent in nothing but his passion and his pride, yet redeeming all his defects by his graces, and wearing a greatness that his errors can only half obscure.

Alternately the idol and the horror of his contemporaries, Byron was, during his life, feared and respected as "the grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme." His works were the events of the literary world. The chief among them were translated into French, German, Italian, Danish, Polish, Russian, Spanish. On the publication of Moore's *Life*, Lord Macaulay had no hesitation in referring to Byron as "the most celebrated Englishman of the nineteenth century." Nor have we now; but in the interval between 1840–1870 it was the fashion to talk of him as a sentimentalist, a romancer, a shallow wit, a nine days' wonder, a poet for "green unknowing youth." It was a reaction such as leads us to disestablish the heroes of our crude imaginations till we learn that to admire nothing is as sure a sign of immaturity as to admire everything.

The weariness, if not disgust, induced by a throng of more than usually absurd imitators, enabled Mr. Carlyle, the poet's successor in literary influence, more effectively to lead the counter-revolt. "In my mind," writes this critic, in 1839, "Byron has been sinking at an accelerated

rate for the last ten years, and has now reached a very low level. . . . His fame has been very great, but I do not see how it is to endure; neither does that make him great. No genuine productive thought was ever revealed by him to mankind. He taught me nothing that I had not again to forget." The refrain of Carlyle's advice during the most active years of his criticism was, "Close thy Byron, open thy Goethe." We do so, and find that the refrain of Goethe's advice in reference to Byron is—"Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ." He urged Eckermann to study English that he might read him; remarking, "A character of such eminence has never existed before, and probably will never come again. The beauty of *Cain* is such as we shall not see a second time in the world. . . . Byron issues from the sea-waves ever fresh. I did right to present him with that monument of love in *Helena*. I could not make use of any man as the representative of the modern poetic era except him, who is undoubtedly to be regarded as the greatest genius of our century." Again: "Tasso's epic has maintained its fame, but Byron is the burning bush which reduces the cedar of Lebanon to ashes. . . . The English may think of him as they please; this is certain, they can show no (living) poet who is to be compared to him. . . . But he is too worldly. Contrast *Macbeth* and *Beppo*, where you are in a nefarious empirical world. On Eckermann's doubting "whether there is a gain for pure culture in Byron's work," Goethe conclusively replies, "There I must contradict you. The audacity and grandeur of Byron must certainly tend towards culture. We should take care not to be always looking for it in the decidedly pure and moral. Everything that is great promotes cultivation, as soon as we are aware of it."

This verdict of the Olympian as against the verdict of

the Titan is interesting in itself, and as being the verdict of the whole continental world of letters. "What," exclaims Castelar, "does Spain not owe to Byron? From his mouth come our hopes and fears. He has baptized us with his blood. There is no one with whose being some song of his is not woven. His life is like a funeral torch over our graves." Mazzini takes up the same tune for Italy. Stendhal speaks of Byron's "Apollonic power;" and Sainte Beuve writes to the same intent, with some judicious caveats. M. Taine concludes his survey of the romantic movement with the remark: "In this splendid effort, the greatest are exhausted. One alone — Byron — attains the summit. He is so great and so English, that from him alone we shall learn more truths of his country and his age than from all the rest together." Dr. Elze ranks the author of *Harold* and *Juan* among the four greatest English poets, and claims for him the intellectual parentage of Lamartine and Musset in France, of Espronceda in Spain, of Puschkin in Russia, with some modifications, of Heine in Germany, of Berchet and others in Italy. So many voices of so various countries cannot be simply set aside: unless we wrap ourselves in an insolent insularism, we are bound at least to ask what is the meaning of their concurrent testimony. Foreign judgments can manifestly have little weight on matters of form, and not one of the above-mentioned critics is sufficiently alive to the egregious shortcomings which Byron himself recognized. That he loses almost nothing by translation is a compliment to the man, a disparagement to the artist. Scarce a page of his verse even aspires to perfection; hardly a stanza will bear the minute word-by-word dissection which only brings into clearer view the delicate touches of Keats or Tennyson; his pictures with a big brush were

never meant for the microscope. Here the contrast between his theoretic worship of his idol and his own practice reaches a climax. If, as he professed to believe, "the best poet is he who best executes his work," then he is hardly a poet at all. He is habitually rapid and slovenly; an improvisatore on the spot where his fancy is kindled, writing *currente calamo*, and disdaining the "art to blot." "I can never recast anything. I am like the tiger; if I miss the first spring, I go grumbling back to my jungle." He said to Medwin, "Blank verse is the most difficult, because every line must be good." Consequently, his own blank verse is always defective—sometimes execrable. No one else—except, perhaps, Wordsworth—who could write so well, could also write so ill. This fact in Byron's case seems due not to mere carelessness, but to incapacity. Something seems to stand behind him, like the slave in the chariot, to check the current of his highest thought. The glow of his fancy fades with the suddenness of a southern sunset. His best inspirations are spoilt by the interruption of incongruous commonplace. He had none of the guardian delicacy of taste, or the thirst after completeness, which mark the consummate artist. He is more nearly a dwarf Shakspeare than a giant Pope. This defect was most mischievous where he was weakest, in his dramas and his lyrics, least so where he was strongest, in his mature satires. It is almost transmuted into an excellence in the greatest of these, which is by design and in detail a temple of incongruity.

If we turn from his manner to his matter, we cannot claim for Byron any absolute originality. His sources have been found in Rousseau, Voltaire, Chateaubriand, Beaumarchais, Launson, Gibbon, Bayle, St. Pierre, Alfieri, Casti, Cuvier, La Bruyere, Wieland, Swift, Sterne, Le Sage, Goe-

the, scraps of the classics, and the Book of Job. Absolute originality in a late age is only possible to the hermit, the lunatic, or the sensation novelist. Byron, like the rovers before Minos, was not ashamed of his piracy. He transferred the random prose of his own letters and journals to his dramas, and with the same complacency made use of the notes jotted down from other writers as he sailed on the Lake of Geneva. But he made them his own by re-casting the rough ore into bell-metal. He brewed a cauldron like that of Macbeth's witches, and from it arose the images of crowned kings. If he did not bring a new idea into the world, he quadrupled the force of existing ideas and scattered them far and wide. Southern critics have maintained that he had a southern nature, and was in his true element on the Lido or under an Andalusian night. Others dwell on the English pride that went along with his Italian habits and Greek sympathies. The truth is, he had the power of making himself poetically everywhere at home; and this, along with the fact of all his writings being perfectly intelligible, is the secret of his European influence. He was a citizen of the world; because he not only painted the environs, but reflected the passions and aspirations of every scene amid which he dwelt.

A disparaging critic has said, "Byron is nothing without his descriptions." The remark only emphasizes the fact that his genius was not dramatic. All non-dramatic art is concerned with bringing before us pictures of the world, the value of which lies half in their truth, half in the amount of human interest with which they are invested. To scientific accuracy few poets can lay claim, and Byron less than most; but the general truth of his descriptions is acknowledged by all who have travelled in

the same countries. The Greek verses of his first pilgrimage—*e. g.*, the night scene on the Gulf of Arta, many of the Albanian sketches, with much of the *Siege of Corinth* and the *Giaour*—have been invariably commended for their vivid realism. Attention has been especially directed to the lines in the *Corsair* beginning—

“But, lo! from high Hymettus to the plain,”

as being the veritable voice of one

“Spell-bound, within the clustering Cyclades.”

The opening lines of the same canto, transplanted from the *Curse of Minerva*, are even more suggestive:—

“Slow sinks, more lovely ere his race be run,
 Along Morea’s hill the setting sun,
 Not, as in northern climes, obscurely bright,
 But one unclouded blaze of living light,” &c.

In the same way, the later cantos of *Harold* are steeped in Switzerland and in Italy. Byron’s genius, it is true, required a stimulus; it could not have revelled among the daisies of Chaucer, or pastured by the banks of the Doon or the Ouse, or thriven among the Lincolnshire fens. He had a sincere, if somewhat exclusive, delight in the storms and crags that seemed to respond to his nature and to his age. There is no affectation in the expression of the wish, “O that the desert were my dwelling-place!” though we know that the writer on the shores of the Mediterranean still craved for the gossip of the clubs. It only shows that—

“Two desires toss about
 The poet’s feverish blood;
 One drives him to the world without,
 And one to solitude.”

Of Byron’s two contemporary rivals, Wordsworth had

no feverish blood; nothing drove him to the world without; consequently his "eyes avert their ken from half of human fate," and his influence, though perennial, will always be limited. He conquered England from his hills and lakes; but his spirit has never crossed the Straits which he thought too narrow. The other, with a fever in his veins, calmed it in the sea and in the cloud, and, in some degree because of his very excellencies, has failed as yet to mark the world at large. The poets' poet, the cynosure of enthusiasts, he bore the banner of the forlorn hope; but Byron, with his feet of clay, led the ranks. Shelley, as pure a philanthropist as St. Francis or Howard, could forget mankind, and, like his Adonai's, become one with nature. Byron, who professed to hate his fellows, was of them even more than for them, and so appealed to them through a broader sympathy, and held them with a firmer hand. By virtue of his passion, as well as his power, he was enabled to represent the human tragedy in which he played so many parts, and to which his external universe of cloudless moons, and vales of evergreen, and lightning-riven peaks, are but the various background. He set the "anguish, doubt, desire," the whole chaos of his age, to a music whose thunder-roll seems to have inspired the opera of *Lohengrin*—a music not designed to teach or to satisfy "the budge doctors of the Stoic fur," but which will continue to arouse and delight the sons and daughters of men.

Madame de Staël said to Byron, at Ouchy, "It does not do to war with the world: the world is too strong for the individual." Goethe only gives a more philosophic form to this counsel when he remarks of the poet, "He put himself into a false position by his assaults on Church and State. His discontent ends in negation. . . . If I call *bad* bad,

what do I gain? But if I call *good* bad, I do mischief." The answer is obvious: as long as men call *bad* good, there is a call for iconoclasts: half the reforms of the world have begun in negation. Such comments also point to the common error of trying to make men other than they are by lecturing them. This scion of a long line of lawless bloods—a Scandinavian Berserker, if there ever was one—the literary heir of the Eddas—was specially created to wage that war—to smite the conventionality which is the tyrant of England with the hammer of Thor, and to sear with the sarcasm of Mephistopheles the hollow hypocrisy—sham taste, sham morals, sham religion—of the society by which he was surrounded and infected, and which all but succeeded in seducing him. But for the ethereal essence—

"The fount of fiery life
 Which served for that Titanic strife,"

Byron would have been merely a more melodious Moore and a more accomplished Brummell. But the caged lion was only half tamed, and his continual growls were his redemption. His restlessness was the sign of a yet unbroken will. He fell and rose, and fell again; but never gave up the struggle that keeps alive, if it does not save, the soul. His greatness, as well as his weakness, lay in the fact that from boyhood battle was the breath of his being. To tell him not to fight was like telling Wordsworth not to reflect, or Shelley not to sing. His instrument is a trumpet of challenge; and he lived, as he appropriately died, in the progress of an unaccomplished campaign. His work is neither perfect architecture nor fine mosaic; but, like that of his intellectual ancestors, the elder Elizabethans whom he perversely maligned, it is all animated by the spirit of action and of enterprise.

In good portraits his head has a lurid look, as if it had been at a higher temperature than that of other men. That high temperature was the source of his inspiration, and the secret of a spell which, during his life, commanded homage and drew forth love. Mere artists are often manikins. Byron's brilliant though unequal genius was subordinate to the power of his personality; he

“ Had the elements
So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world—‘ This was a man.’ ”

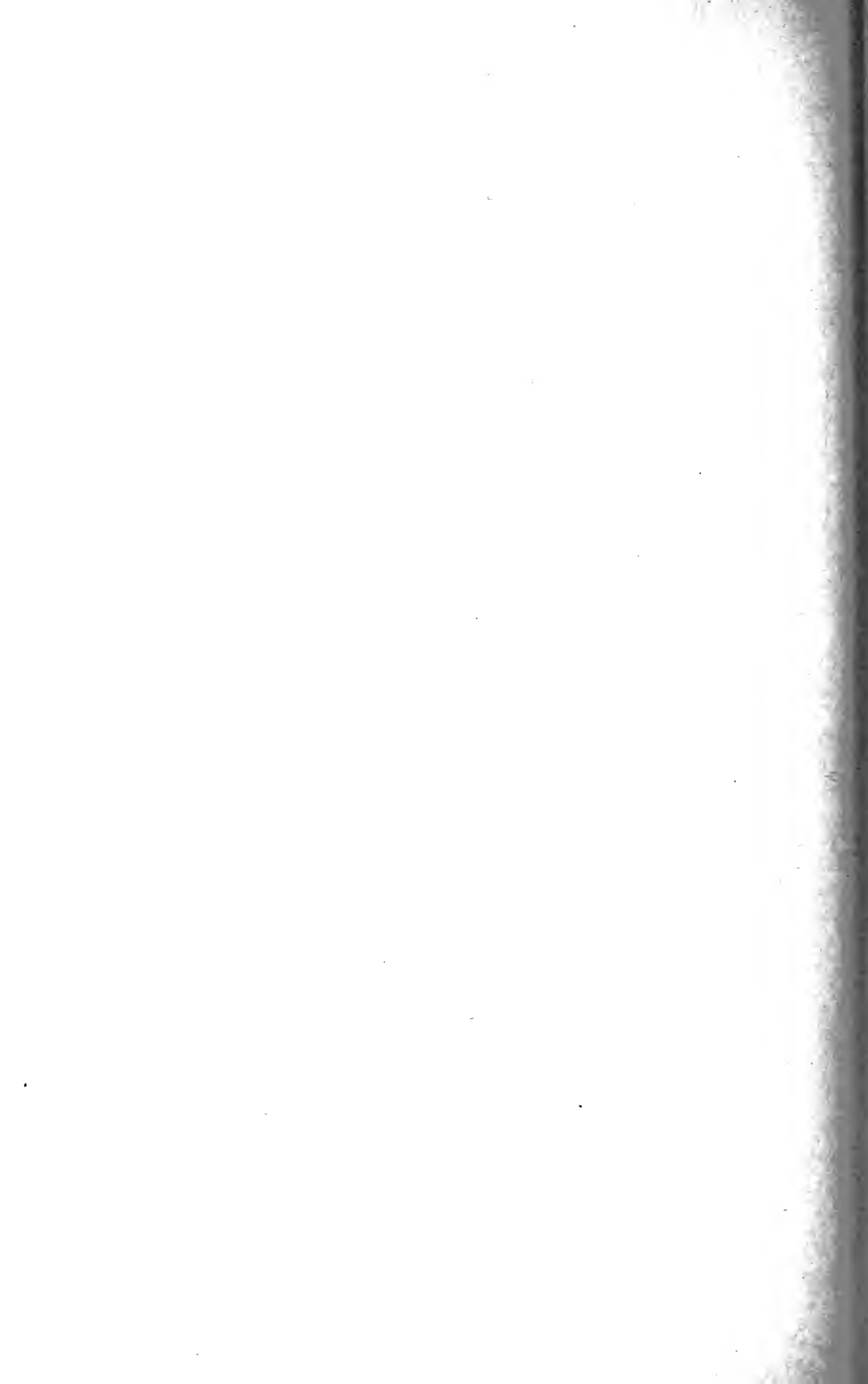
We may learn much from him still, when we have ceased to disparage, as our fathers ceased to idolize, a name in which there is so much warning and so much example.

THE END.

D E F O E

BY

WILLIAM MINTO



P R E F A C E.

THERE are three considerable biographies of Defoe—the first, by George Chalmers, published in 1786; the second by Walter Wilson, published in 1830; the third, by William Lee, published in 1869. All three are thorough and painstaking works, justified by independent research and discovery. The labour of research in the case of an author supposed to have written some two hundred and fifty separate books and pamphlets, very few of them under his own name, is naturally enormous; and when it is done, the results are open to endless dispute. Probably two men could not be found who would read through the vast mass of contemporary anonymous and pseudonymous print, and agree upon a complete list of Defoe's writings. Fortunately, however, for those who wish to get a clear idea of his life and character, the identification is not pure guess-work on internal evidence. He put his own name or initials to some of his productions, and treated the authorship of others as open secrets. Enough is ascertained as his to provide us with the means for a complete understanding of his opinions and his conduct. It is Defoe's

misfortune that his biographers on the large scale have occupied themselves too much with subordinate details, and have been misled from a true appreciation of his main lines of thought and action by religious, political, and hero-worshipping bias. For the following sketch, taking Mr. Lee's elaborate work as my chronological guide, I have read such of Defoe's undoubted writings as are accessible in the Library of the British Museum—there is no complete collection, I believe, in existence—and endeavoured to connect them and him with the history of the time.

W. M.

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DANIEL DEFOE.

CHAPTER I.

DEFOE'S YOUTH AND EARLY PURSUITS.

THE life of a man of letters is not as a rule eventful. It may be rich in spiritual experiences, but it seldom is rich in active adventure. We ask his biographer to tell us what were his habits of composition, how he talked, how he bore himself in the discharge of his duties to his family, his neighbors, and himself; what were his beliefs on the great questions that concern humanity. We desire to know what he said and wrote, not what he did beyond the study and the domestic or the social circle. The chief external facts in his career are the dates of the publication of his successive books.

Daniel Defoe is an exception to this rule. He was a man of action as well as a man of letters. The writing of the books which have given him immortality was little more than an accident in his career, a comparatively trifling and casual item in the total expenditure of his many-sided energy. He was nearly sixty when he wrote *Robinson Crusoe*. Before that event he had been a rebel, a mer-

chant, a manufacturer, a writer of popular satires in verse, a bankrupt; had acted as secretary to a public commission, been employed in secret services by five successive Administrations, written innumerable pamphlets, and edited more than one newspaper. He had led, in fact, as adventurous a life as any of his own heroes, and had met quickly succeeding difficulties with equally ready and fertile ingenuity.

For many of the incidents in Defoe's life we are indebted to himself. He had all the vaingloriousness of exuberant vitality, and was animated in the recital of his own adventures. Scattered throughout his various works are the materials for a tolerably complete autobiography. This is in one respect an advantage for any one who attempts to give an account of his life. But it has a counterbalancing disadvantage in the circumstance that there is grave reason to doubt his veracity. Defoe was a great story-teller in more senses than one. We can hardly believe a word that he says about himself without independent confirmation.

Defoe was born in London, in 1661. It is a characteristic circumstance that his name is not his own, except in the sense that it was assumed by himself. The name of his father, who was a butcher in the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate, was Foe. His grandfather was a Northamptonshire yeoman. In his *True Born Englishman*, Defoe spoke very contemptuously of families that professed to have come over with "the Norman bastard," defying them to prove whether their ancestors were drummers or colonels; but apparently he was not above the vanity of making the world believe that he himself was of Norman-French origin. Yet such was the restless energy of the man that he could not leave even his adopted name alone;

he seems to have been about forty when he first changed his signature "D. Foe" into the surname of "Defoe;" but his patient biographer, Mr. Lee, has found several later instances of his subscribing himself "D. Foe," "D. F.," and "De Foe" in alternation with the "Daniel De Foe," or "Daniel Defoe," which has become his accepted name in literature.

In middle age, when Defoe was taunted with his want of learning, he retorted that if he was a blockhead it was not the fault of his father, who had "spared nothing in his education that might qualify him to match the accurate Dr. Browne, or the learned Observator." His father was a Nonconformist, a member of the congregation of Dr. Annesley, and the son was originally intended for the Dissenting ministry. "It was his disaster," he said afterwards, "first to be set apart for, and then to be set apart from, that sacred employ." He was placed at an academy for the training of ministers at the age, it is supposed, of about fourteen, and probably remained there for the full course of five years. He has himself explained why, when his training was completed, he did not proceed to the office of the pulpit, but changed his views and resolved to engage in business as a hose-merchant. The sum of the explanation is that the ministry seemed to him at that time to be neither honourable, agreeable, nor profitable. It was degraded, he thought, by the entrance of men who had neither physical nor intellectual qualification for it, who had received out of a denominational fund only such an education as made them pedants rather than Christian gentlemen of high learning, and who had consequently to submit to shameful and degrading practices in their efforts to obtain congregations and subsistence. Besides, the behaviour of congregations to their ministers, who were de-

pendent, was often objectionable and un-Christian. And finally, far-flown birds having fine feathers, the prizes of the ministry in London were generally given to strangers, "eminent ministers *called* from all parts of England," some even from Scotland, finding acceptance in the metropolis before having received any formal ordination.

Though the education of his "fund-bred" companions, as he calls them, at Mr. Morton's Academy in Newington Green, was such as to excite Defoe's contempt, he bears testimony to Mr. Morton's excellence as a teacher, and instances the names of several pupils who did credit to his labours. In one respect Mr. Morton's system was better than that which then prevailed at the Universities; all dissertations were written and all disputations held in English; and hence it resulted, Defoe says, that his pupils, though they were "not destitute in the languages," were "made masters of the English tongue, and more of them excelled in that particular than of any school at that time." Whether Defoe obtained at Newington the rudiments of all the learning which he afterwards claimed to be possessed of, we do not know; but the taunt frequently levelled at him by University men of being an "illiterate fellow" and no scholar, was one that he bitterly resented, and that drew from him many protestations and retorts. In 1705, he angrily challenged John Tutchin "to translate with him any Latin, French, or Italian author, and after that to retranslate them crosswise for twenty pounds each book;" and he replied to Swift, who had spoken of him scornfully as "an illiterate fellow, whose name I forget," that "he had been in his time pretty well master of five languages, and had not lost them yet, though he wrote no bill at his door, nor set Latin quotations on the front of the *Review*." To the end of his days Defoe could not

forget this taunt of want of learning. In one of the papers in *Applebee's Journal* identified by Mr. Lee (below, Chapter VIII.), he discussed what is to be understood by "learning," and drew the following sketch of his own attainments:—

"I remember an Author in the World some years ago, who was generally upbraided with Ignorance, and called an 'Illiterate Fellow,' by some of the *Beau-Monde* of the last Age. . . .

"I happened to come into this Person's Study once, and I found him busy translating a Description of the Course of the River Boristhenes, out of *Bleau's Geography*, written in *Spanish*. Another Time I found him translating some Latin Paragraphs out of *Leubinitz Theatri Cometici*, being a learned Discourse upon Comets; and that I might see whether it was genuine, I looked on some part of it that he had finished, and found by it that he understood the Latin very well, and had perfectly taken the sense of that difficult Author. In short, I found he understood the *Latin*, the *Spanish*, the *Italian*, and could read the *Greek*, and I knew before that he spoke *French* fluently—*yet this Man was no Scholar*.

"As to Science, on another Occasion, I heard him dispute (in such a manner as surprised me) upon the motions of the Heavenly Bodies, the Distance, Magnitude, Revolutions, and especially the Influences of the Planets, the Nature and probable Revolutions of Comets, the excellency of the New Philosophy, and the like; *but this Man was no Scholar*.

"In Geography and History he had all the World at his Finger's ends. He talked of the most distant Countries with an inimitable Exactness; and changing from one Place to another, the Company thought, of every Place or Country he named, that certainly he must have been born there. He knew not only where every Thing was, but what everybody did in every Part of the World; I mean, what Businesses, what Trade, what Manufacture, was carrying on in every Part

of the World; and had the History of almost all the Nations of the World in his Head—*yet this Man was no Scholar.*

“This put me upon wondering, ever so long ago, what this *strange Thing* called a Man of Learning *was*, and what is it that constitutes a *Scholar*? For, *said I*, here’s a man speaks five Languages and reads the Sixth, is a master of Astronomy, Geography, History, and abundance of other useful Knowledge (which I do not mention, that you may not guess at the Man, who is too Modest to desire it), and yet, they say *this Man is no Scholar.*”

How much of this learning Defoe acquired at school, and how much he picked up afterwards under the pressure of the necessities of his business, it is impossible to determine, but at any rate it was at least as good a qualification for writing on public affairs as the more limited and accurate scholarship of his academic rivals. Whatever may have been the extent of his knowledge when he passed from Mr. Morton’s tuition, qualified but no longer willing to become a Dissenting preacher, he did not allow it to rust unused; he at once mobilised his forces for active service. They were keen politicians, naturally, at the Newington Academy, and the times furnished ample materials for their discussions. As Nonconformists they were very closely affected by the struggle between Charles II. and the defenders of Protestantism and popular liberties. What part Defoe took in the excitement of the closing years of the reign of Charles must be matter of conjecture, but there can be little doubt that he was active on the popular side. He had but one difference then, he afterwards said in one of his tracts, with his party. He would not join them in wishing for the success of the Turks in besieging Vienna, because, though the Austrians were Papists, and though the Turks were ostensibly on the

side of the Hungarian reformers whom the Austrian Government had persecuted, he had read the history of the Turks and could not pray for their victory over Christians of any denomination. "Though then but a young man, and a younger author" (this was in 1683), "he opposed it and wrote against it, which was taken very unkindly indeed." From these words it would seem that Defoe had thus early begun to write pamphlets on questions of the hour. As he was on the weaker side, and any writing might have cost him his life, it is probable that he did not put his name to any of these tracts; none of them have been identified; but his youth was strangely unlike his mature manhood if he was not justified in speaking of himself as having been then an "author." Nor was he content merely with writing. It would have been little short of a miracle if his restless energy had allowed him to lie quiet while the air was thick with political intrigue. We may be sure that he had a voice in some of the secret associations in which plans were discussed of armed resistance to the tyranny of the King. We have his own word for it that he took part in the Duke of Monmouth's rising, when the whips of Charles were exchanged for the scorpions of James. He boasted of this when it became safe to do so, and the truth of the boast derives incidental confirmation from the fact that the names of three of his fellow-students at Newington appear in the list of the victims of Jeffreys and Kirke.

Escaping the keen hunt that was made for all participants in the rebellion, Defoe, towards the close of 1685, began business as a hosier or hose-factor in Freeman's Court, Cornhill. The precise nature of his trade has been disputed; and it does not particularly concern us here. When taunted afterwards with having been apprentice to

a hosier, he indignantly denied the fact, and explained that though he had been a trader in hosiery he had never been a shopkeeper. A passing illustration in his *Essay on Projects*, drawn from his own experience, shows that he imported goods in the course of his business from abroad; he speaks of sometimes having paid more in insurance premiums than he had cleared by a voyage. From a story which he tells in his *Complete English Tradesman*, recalling the cleverness with which he defeated an attempt to outwit him about a consignment of brandy, we learn that his business sometimes took him to Spain. This is nearly all that we know about his first adventure in trade, except that after seven years, in 1692, he had to flee from his creditors. He hints in one of his *Reviews* that this misfortune was brought about by the frauds of swindlers, and it deserves to be recorded that he made the honourable boast that he afterwards paid off his obligations. The truth of the boast is independently confirmed by the admission of a controversial enemy, that very Tutchin whom he challenged to translate Latin with him. That Defoe should have referred so little to his own experience in the *Complete English Tradesman*, a series of Familiar Letters which he published late in life "for the instruction of our Inland Tradesmen, and especially of Young Beginners," is accounted for when we observe the class of persons to whom the letters were addressed. He distinguishes with his usual clearness between the different ranks of those employed in the production and exchange of goods, and intimates that his advice is not intended for the highest grade of traders, the merchants, whom he defines by what he calls the vulgar expression, as being "such as trade beyond sea." Although he was eloquent in many books and pamphlets in upholding the dignity of trade, and lost no opportunity

of scoffing at pretentious gentility, he never allows us to forget that this was the grade to which he himself belonged, and addresses the petty trader from a certain altitude. He speaks in the preface to the *Complete Tradesman* of unfortunate creatures who have blown themselves up in trade, whether "for want of wit or from too much wit;" but lest he should be supposed to allude to his own misfortunes, he does not say that he miscarried himself, but that he "had seen in a few years' experience many young tradesmen miscarry." At the same time it is fair to conjecture that when Defoe warns the young tradesman against fancying himself a politician or a man of letters, running off to the coffee-house when he ought to be behind the counter, and reading Virgil and Horace when he should be busy over his journal and his ledger, he was glancing at some of the causes which conduced to his own failure as a merchant. And when he cautions the beginner against going too fast, and holds up to him as a type and exemplar the carrier's waggon, which "keeps wagging and always goes on," and "as softly as it goes" can yet in time go far, we may be sure that he was thinking of the over-rashness with which he had himself embarked in speculation.

There can be no doubt that eager and active as Defoe was in his trading enterprises, he was not so wrapt up in them as to be an unconcerned spectator of the intense political life of the time. When King James aimed a blow at the Church of England by removing the religious disabilities of all dissenters, Protestant and Catholic, in his Declaration of Indulgence, some of Defoe's co-religionists were ready to catch at the boon without thinking of its consequences. He differed from them, he afterwards stated, and "as he used to say that he had rather the Popish House of Austria should ruin the Protestants in

Hungaria, than the infidel House of Ottoman should ruin both Protestants and Papists by overrunning Germany," so now "he told the Dissenters he had rather the Church of England should pull our clothes off by fines and forfeitures, than the Papists should fall both upon the Church and the Dissenters, and pull our skins off by fire and faggot." He probably embodied these conclusions of his vigorous common sense in a pamphlet, though no pamphlet on the subject known for certain to be his has been preserved. Mr. Lee is over-rash in identifying as Defoe's a quarto sheet of that date entitled "A Letter containing some Reflections on His Majesty's declaration for Liberty of Conscience." Defoe may have written many pamphlets on the stirring events of the time, which have not come down to us. It may have been then that he acquired, or made a valuable possession by practice, that marvellous facility with his pen which stood him in such stead in after-life. It would be no wonder if he wrote dozens of pamphlets, every one of which disappeared. The pamphlet then occupied the place of the newspaper leading article. The newspapers of the time were veritable chronicles of news, and not organs of opinion. The expression of opinion was not then associated with the dissemination of facts and rumours. A man who wished to influence public opinion wrote a pamphlet, small or large, a single leaf or a tract of a few pages, and had it hawked about the streets and sold in the bookshops. These pamphlets issued from the press in swarms, were thrown aside when read, and hardly preserved except by accident. That Defoe, if he wrote any or many, should not have reprinted them when fifteen years afterwards he published a collection of his works, is intelligible; he republished only such of his tracts as had not lost their practical interest. If, however,

we indulge in the fancy, warranted so far by his describing himself as having been a young "author" in 1683, that Defoe took an active part in polemical literature under Charles and James, we must remember that the censorship of the press was then active, and that Defoe must have published under greater disadvantages than those who wrote on the side of the Court.

At the Revolution, in 1688, Defoe lost no time in making his adhesion to the new monarch conspicuous. He was, according to Oldmixon, one of "a royal regiment of volunteer horse, made up of the chief citizens, who, being gallantly mounted and richly accoutred, were led by the Earl of Monmouth, now Earl of Peterborough, and attended their Majesties from Whitehall" to a banquet given by the Lord Mayor and Corporation of the City. Three years afterwards, on the occasion of the Jacobite plot in which Lord Preston was the leading figure, he published the first pamphlet that is known for certain to be his. It is in verse, and is entitled *A New Discovery of an Old Intrigue, a Satire levelled at Treachery and Ambition*. In the preface, the author said that "he had never drawn his pen before," and that he would never write again unless this effort produced a visible reformation. If we take this literally, we must suppose that his claim to have been an author eighteen years before had its origin in his fitful vanity. The literary merits of the satire, when we compare it with the powerful verse of Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, to which he refers in the exordium, are not great. Defoe prided himself upon his verse, and in a catalogue of the Poets in one of his later pieces assigned himself the special province of "lampoon." He possibly believed that his clever doggerel was a better title to immortality than *Robinson Crusoe*. The immediate popular

effect of his satires gave some encouragement to this belief, but they are comparatively dull reading for posterity. The clever hits at living City functionaries, indicated by their initials and nicknames, the rough ridicule and the biting innuendo, were telling in their day, but the lampoons have perished with their objects. The local celebrity of Sir Ralph and Sir Peter, Silly Will and Captain Tom the Tailor, has vanished, and Defoe's hurried and formless lines, incisive as their vivid force must have been, are not redeemed from dulness for modern readers by the few bright epigrams with which they are besprinkled.

CHAPTER II.

KING WILLIAM'S ADJUTANT.

DEFOE'S first business catastrophe happened about 1692. He is said to have temporarily absconded, and to have parleyed with his creditors from a distance till they agreed to accept a composition. Bristol is named as having been his place of refuge, and there is a story that he was known there as the Sunday Gentleman, because he appeared on that day, and that day only, in fashionable attire, being kept indoors during the rest of the week by fear of the bailiffs. But he was of too buoyant a temperament to sink under his misfortune from the sense of having brought it on himself, and the cloud soon passed away. A man so fertile in expedients, and ready, according to his own ideal of a thoroughbred trader, to turn himself to anything, could not long remain unemployed. He had various business offers, and among others an invitation from some merchants to settle at Cadiz as a commission agent, "with offers of very good commissions." But Providence, he tells us, and, we may add, a shrewd confidence in his own powers, "placed a secret aversion in his mind to quitting England upon any account, and made him refuse the best offers of that kind." He stayed at home, "to be concerned with some eminent persons in proposing

ways and means to the Government for raising money to supply the occasions of the war then newly begun." He also wrote a vigorous and loyal pamphlet, entitled, *The Englishman's Choice and True Interest: in the vigorous prosecution of the war against France, and serving K. William and Q. Mary, and acknowledging their right.* As a reward for his literary or his financial services, or for both, he was appointed, "without the least application" of his own, Accountant to the Commissioners of the Glass Duty, and held this post till the duty was abolished in 1699.

From 1694 to the end of William's reign was the most prosperous and honourable period in Defoe's life. His services to the Government did not absorb the whole of his restless energy. He still had time for private enterprise, and started a manufactory of bricks and pantiles at Tilbury, where, Mr. Lee says, judging from fragments recently dug up, he made good sound sonorous bricks, although according to another authority such a thing was impossible out of any material existing in the neighbourhood. Anyhow, Defoe prospered, and set up a coach and a pleasure-boat. Nor must we forget what is so much to his honour, that he set himself to pay his creditors in full, voluntarily disregarding the composition which they had accepted. In 1705 he was able to boast that he had reduced his debts in spite of many difficulties from 17,000*l.* to 5,000*l.*, but these sums included liabilities resulting from the failure of his pantile factory.

Defoe's first conspicuous literary service to King William, after he obtained Government employment, was a pamphlet on the question of a Standing Army raised after the Peace of Ryswick in 1697. This Pen and Ink War, as he calls it, which followed close on the heels of the

great European struggle, had been raging for some time before Defoe took the field. Hosts of writers had appeared to endanger the permanence of the triumph of William's arms and diplomacy by demanding the disbandment of his tried troops, as being a menace to domestic liberties. Their arguments had been encountered by no less zealous champions of the King's cause. The battle, in fact, had been won when Defoe issued his *Argument showing that a Standing Army, with consent of Parliament, is not inconsistent with a Free Government*. He was able to boast in his preface that "if books and writings would not, God be thanked the Parliament would confute" his adversaries. Nevertheless, though coming late in the day, Defoe's pamphlet was widely read, and must have helped to consolidate the victory.

Thus late in life did Defoe lay the first stone of his literary reputation. He was now in the thirty-eighth year of his age, his controversial genius in full vigour, and his mastery of language complete. None of his subsequent tracts surpass this as a piece of trenchant and persuasive reasoning. It shows at their very highest his marvellous powers of combining constructive with destructive criticism. He dashes into the lists with good-humoured confidence, bearing the banner of clear common sense, and disclaiming sympathy with extreme persons of either side. He puts his case with direct and plausible force, addressing his readers vivaciously as plain people like himself, among whom as reasonable men there cannot be two opinions. He cuts rival arguments to pieces with dexterous strokes, representing them as the confused reasoning of well-meaning but dull intellects, and dances with lively mockery on the fragments. If the authors of such arguments knew their own minds, they would be entirely on

his side. He echoes the pet prejudices of his readers as the props and mainstays of his thesis, and boldly laughs away misgivings of which they are likely to be half ashamed. He makes no parade of logic; he is only a plain freeholder like the mass whom he addresses, though he knows twenty times as much as many writers of more pretension. He never appeals to passion or imagination; what he strives to enlist on his side is homely self-interest, and the ordinary sense of what is right and reasonable. There is little regularity of method in the development of his argument; that he leaves to more anxious and elaborate masters of style. For himself he is content to start from a bold and clear statement of his own opinion, and proceeds buoyantly and discursively to engage and scatter his enemies as they turn up, without the least fear of being able to fight his way back to his original base. He wrote for a class to whom a prolonged intellectual operation, however comprehensive and complete, was distasteful. To persuade the mass of the freeholders was his object, and for such an object there are no political tracts in the language at all comparable to Defoe's. He bears some resemblance to Cobbett, but he had none of Cobbett's brutality; his faculties were more adroit, and his range of vision infinitely wider. Cobbett was a demagogue, Defoe a popular statesman. The one was qualified to lead the people, the other to guide them. Cobbett is contained in Defoe as the less is contained in the greater.

King William obtained a standing army from Parliament, but not so large an army as he wished, and it was soon afterwards still further reduced. Meantime, Defoe employed his pen in promoting objects which were dear to the King's heart. His *Essay on Projects*—which “relate to Civil Polity as well as matters of negoce”—was

calculated, in so far as it advocated joint-stock enterprise, to advance one of the objects of the statesmen of the Revolution, the committal of the moneyed classes to the established Government, and against a dynasty which might plausibly be mistrusted of respect for visible accumulations of private wealth. Defoe's projects were of an extremely varied kind. The classification was not strict. His spirited definition of the word "projects" included Noah's Ark and the Tower of Babel, as well as Captain Phipps's scheme for raising the wreck of a Spanish ship laden with silver. He is sometimes credited with remarkable shrewdness in having anticipated in this Essay some of the greatest public improvements of modern times—the protection of seamen, the higher education of women, the establishment of banks and benefit societies, the construction of highways. But it is not historically accurate to give him the whole credit of these conceptions. Most of them were floating about at the time, so much so that he had to defend himself against a charge of plagiarism, and few of them have been carried out in accordance with the essential features of his plans. One remarkable circumstance in Defoe's projects, which we may attribute either to his own natural bent or to his compliance with the King's humour, is the extent to which he advocated Government interference. He proposed, for example, an income-tax, and the appointment of a commission who should travel through the country and ascertain by inquiry that the tax was not evaded. In making this proposal he shows an acquaintance with private incomes in the City, which raises some suspicion as to the capacity in which he was "associated with certain eminent persons in proposing ways and means to the Government." In his article on Banks, he expresses himself dissatisfied that the Government did not

fix a maximum rate of interest for the loans made by chartered banks; they were otherwise, he complained, of no assistance to the poor trader, who might as well go to the goldsmiths as before. His Highways project was a scheme for making national highways on a scale worthy of Baron Haussmann. There is more fervid imagination and daring ingenuity than business talent in Defoe's essay; if his trading speculations were conducted with equal rashness, it is not difficult to understand their failure. The most notable of them are the schemes of a dictator, rather than of the adviser of a free Government. The essay is chiefly interesting as a monument of Defoe's marvellous force of mind, and strange mixture of steady sense with incontinent flightiness. There are ebullient sallies in it which we generally find only in the productions of madmen and charlatans, and yet it abounds in suggestions which statesmen might profitably have set themselves with due adaptations to carry into effect. The *Essay on Projects* might alone be adduced in proof of Defoe's title to genius.

One of the first projects to which the Government of the Revolution addressed itself was the reformation of manners—a purpose at once commendable in itself and politically useful as distinguishing the new Government from the old. Even while the King was absent in Ireland at the beginning of his reign, the Queen issued a letter calling upon all justices of the peace and other servants of the Crown to exert themselves in suppressing the luxuriant growth of vice, which had been fostered by the example of the Court of Charles. On the conclusion of the war in 1697, William issued a most elaborate proclamation to the same effect, and an address was voted by Parliament, asking his Majesty to see that wickedness was discouraged in high places. The lively pamphlet in which

Defoe lent his assistance to the good work entitled *The Poor Man's Plea*, was written in the spirit of the parliamentary address. It was of no use to pass laws and make declarations and proclamations for the reform of the common *plebeii*, the poor man pleaded, so long as the mentors of the laws were themselves corrupt. His argument was spiced with amusing anecdotes to show the prevalence of swearing and drunkenness among members of the judicial bench. Defoe appeared several times afterwards in the character of a reformer of manners, sometimes in verse, sometimes in prose. When the retort was made that his own manners were not perfect, he denied that this invalidated the worth of his appeal, but at the same time challenged his accusers to prove him guilty of any of the vices that he had satirised.

It is impossible now to ascertain what induced Defoe to break with the Dissenters, among whom he had been brought up, but break with them he did in his pamphlet against the practice of *Occasional Conformity*. This practice of occasionally taking communion with the Established Church, as a qualification for public office, had grown up after the Revolution, and had attracted very little notice till a Dissenting lord mayor, after attending church one Sunday forenoon, went in the afternoon with all the insignia of his office to a Conventicle. Defoe's objection to this is indicated in his quotation, "If the Lord be God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him." A man, he contended, who could reconcile it with his conscience to attend the worship of the Church, had no business to be a Dissenter. Occasional conformity was "either a sinful act in itself, or else his dissenting before was sinful." The Dissenters naturally did not like this intolerant logical dilemma, and resented its being forced upon them

by one of their own number against a practical compromise to which the good sense of the majority of them assented. No reply was made to the pamphlet when first issued in 1698; and two or three years afterwards Defoe, exulting in the unanswerable logic of his position, reprinted it with a prefatory challenge to Mr. Howe, an eminent Dissenting minister. During the next reign, however, when a bill was introduced to prohibit the practice of occasional conformity, Defoe strenuously wrote against it as a breach of the Toleration Act and a measure of persecution. In strict logic it is possible to make out a case for his consistency, but the reasoning must be fine, and he cannot be acquitted of having in the first instance practically justified a persecution which he afterwards condemned. In neither case does he point at the repeal of the Test Act as his object, and it is impossible to explain his attitude in both cases on the ground of principle. However much he objected to see the sacrament taken as a matter of form, it was hardly his province, in the circumstances in which Dissenters then stood, to lead an outcry against the practice; and if he considered it scandalous and sinful, he could not with much consistency protest against the prohibition of it as an act of persecution. Of this no person was better aware than Defoe himself, and it is a curious circumstance that, in his first pamphlet on the bill for putting down occasional conformity, he ridiculed the idea of its being persecution to suppress politic or state Dissenters, and maintained that the bill did not concern true Dissenters at all. To this, however, we must refer again in connexion with his celebrated tract, *The Shortest Way with Dissenters*.

The troubles into which the European system was plunged by the death of the childless King of Spain, and

that most dramatic of historical surprises, the bequest of his throne by a death-bed will to the Duke of Anjou, the second grandson of Louis XIV., furnished Defoe with a great opportunity for his controversial genius. In Charles II.'s will, if the legacy was accepted, William saw the ruin of a life-long policy. Louis, though he was doubly pledged against acknowledging the will, having renounced all pretensions to the throne of Spain for himself and his heirs in the Treaty of the Pyrenees, and consented in two successive treaties of partition to a different plan of succession, did not long hesitate; the news that he had saluted his grandson as King of Spain followed close upon the news of Charles's death. The balance of the great Catholic Powers which William had established by years of anxious diplomacy and costly war, was toppled over by a stroke of the pen. With Spain and Italy virtually added to his dominions, the French King would now be supreme upon the Continent. Louis soon showed that this was his view of what had happened, by saying that the Pyrenees had ceased to exist. He gave a practical illustration of the same view by seizing, with the authority of his grandson, the frontier towns of the Spanish Netherlands, which were garrisoned under a special treaty by Dutch troops. Though deeply enraged at the bad faith of the most Christian King, William was not dismayed. The stone which he had rolled up the hill with such effort had suddenly rolled down again, but he was eager to renew his labours. Before, however, he could act, he found himself, to his utter astonishment and mortification, paralysed by the attitude of the English Parliament. His alarm at the accession of a Bourbon to the Spanish throne was not shared by the ruling classes in England. They declared that they liked the Spanish King's will better than Wil-

liam's partition. France, they argued, would gain much less by a dynastic alliance with Spain, which would exist no longer than their common interests dictated, than by the complete acquisition of the Spanish provinces in Italy.

William lost no time in summoning a new Parliament. An overwhelming majority opposed the idea of vindicating the Partition Treaty by arms. They pressed him to send a message of recognition to Philip V. Even the occupation of the Flemish fortresses did not change their temper. That, they said, was the affair of the Dutch; it did not concern England. In vain William tried to convince them that the interests of the two Protestant States were identical. In the numerous pamphlets that were hatched by the ferment, it was broadly insinuated that the English people might pay too much for the privilege of having a Dutch King, who had done nothing for them that they could not have done for themselves, and who was perpetually sacrificing the interests of his adopted country to the necessities of his beloved Holland. What had England gained by the Peace of Ryswick? Was England to be dragged into another exhausting war, merely to secure a strong frontier for the Dutch? The appeal found ready listeners among a people in whose minds the recollections of the last war were still fresh, and who still felt the burdens it had left behind. William did not venture to take any steps to form an alliance against France, till a new incident emerged to shake the country from its mood of surly calculation. When James II. died and Louis recognised the Pretender as King of England, all thoughts of isolation from a Continental confederacy were thrown to the winds. William dissolved his Long Parliament, and found the new House as warlike as the

former had been peaceful. "Of all the nations in the world," cried Defoe, in commenting on this sudden change of mood, "there is none that I know of so entirely governed by their humour as the English."

For ten months Defoe had been vehemently but vainly striving to accomplish by argument what had been wrought in an instant by the French King's insufferable insult. It is one of the most brilliant periods of his political activity. Comparatively undistinguished before, he now, at the age of forty, stepped into the foremost rank of publicists. He lost not a moment in throwing himself into the fray as the champion of the king's policy. Charles of Spain died on the 22nd of October, 1701; by the middle of November, a few days after the news had reached England, and before the French King's resolve to acknowledge the legacy was known, Defoe was ready with a pamphlet to the clear and stirring title of—*The Two Great questions considered. I. What the French King will do with respect to the Spanish Monarchy. II. What measures the English ought to take.* If the French King were wise, he argued, he would reject the dangerous gift for his grandson. But if he accepted it, England had no choice but to combine with her late allies the Emperor and the States, and compel the Duke of Anjou to withdraw his claims. This pamphlet being virulently attacked, and its author accused of bidding for a place at Court, Defoe made a spirited rejoinder, and seized the occasion to place his arguments in still clearer light. Between them the two pamphlets are a masterly exposition, from the point of view of English interests, of the danger of permitting the Will to be fulfilled. He tears the arguments of his opponents to pieces with supreme scorn. What matters it to us who is King of Spain? asks one adversary. As well ask, retorts Defoe, what it matters to

us who is King of Ireland. All this talk about the Balance of Power, says another, is only "a shoeing-horn to draw on a standing army." We do not want an army; only let us make our fleet strong enough and we may defy the world; our militia is perfectly able to defend us against invasion. If our militia is so strong, is Defoe's reply, why should a standing-army make us fear for our domestic liberties? But if you object to a standing-army in England, avert the danger by subsidising allies and raising and paying troops in Germany and the Low Countries. Even if we are capable of beating off invasion, it is always wise policy to keep the war out of our own country, and not trust to such miracles as the dispersion of the Armada. In war, Defoe says, repeating a favourite axiom of his, "it is not the longest sword but the longest purse that conquers," and if the French get the Spanish crown, they get the richest trade in the world into their hands. The French would prove better husbands of the wealth of Mexico and Peru than the Spaniards. They would build fleets with it, which would place our American plantations at their mercy. Our own trade with Spain, one of the most profitable fields of our enterprise, would at once be ruined. Our Mediterranean trade would be burdened with the impost of a toll at Gibraltar. In short Defoe contended, if the French acquired the upper hand in Spain, nothing but a miracle could save England from becoming practically a French province.

Defoe's appeal to the sense of self-interest fell, however, upon deaf ears. No eloquence or ingenuity of argument could have availed to stem the strong current of growling prepossession. He was equally unsuccessful in his attempt to touch deeper feelings by exhibiting in a pamphlet, which is perhaps the ablest of the series, *The danger of the*

Protestant Religion, from the present prospect of a Religious War in Europe. "Surely you cannot object to a standing army for the defence of your religion?" he argued; "for if you do, then you stand convicted of valuing your liberties more than your religion, which ought to be your first and highest concern." Such scraps of rhetorical logic were but as straws in the storm of anti-warlike passion that was then raging. Nor did Defoe succeed in turning the elections by addressing "to the good people of England" his *Six Distinguishing Characters of a Parliament Man*, or by protesting as a freeholder against the levity of making the strife between the new and the old East India Companies a testing question, when the very existence of the kingdom was at stake. His pamphlets were widely distributed, but he might as soon have tried to check a tempest by throwing handfuls of leaves into it. One great success, however, he had, and that, strangely enough, in a direction in which it was least to be anticipated. No better proof could be given that the good-humoured magnanimity and sense of fair-play on which English people pride themselves is more than an empty boast than the reception accorded to Defoe's *True-Born Englishman*. King William's unpopularity was at its height. A party writer of the time had sought to inflame the general dislike to his Dutch favourites by "a vile pamphlet in abhorred verse," entitled *The Foreigners*, in which they are loaded with scurrilous insinuations. It required no ordinary courage in the state of the national temper at that moment to venture upon the line of retort that Defoe adopted. What were the English, he demanded, that they should make a mock of foreigners? They were the most mongrel race that ever lived upon the face of the earth; there was no such thing as a true-born Englishman; they

were all the offspring of foreigners ; what was more, of the scum of foreigners.

“ For Englishmen to boast of generation
 Cancels their knowledge, and lampoons the nation.
 A true-born Englishman 's a contradiction,
 In speech an irony, in fact a fiction.

* * * * *

And here begins the ancient pedigree
 That so exalts our poor nobility.
 'Tis that from some French trooper they derive,
 Who with the Norman bastard did arrive ;
 The trophies of the families appear,
 Some show the sword, the bow, and some the spear
 Which their great ancestor, forsooth, did wear.
 These in the herald's register remain,
 Their noble mean extraction to explain,
 Yet who the hero was no man can tell,
 Whether a drummer or colonel ;
 The silent record blushes to reveal
 Their undescended dark original.

* * * * *

“ These are the heroes that despise the Dutch
 And rail at new-come foreigners so much ;
 Forgetting that themselves are all derived
 From the most scoundrel race that ever lived ;
 A horrid crowd of rambling thieves and drones,
 Who ransacked kingdoms and dispeopled towns ;
 The Pict and painted Briton, treacherous Scot,
 By hunger, theft, and rapine hither brought ;
 Norwegian pirates, buccaneering Danes,
 Whose red-haired offspring everywhere remains ;
 Who joined with Norman French compound the breed
 From whence your true-born Englishmen proceed.

“ And lest, by length of time, it be pretended,
 The climate may this modern breed have mended,

Wise Providence, to keep us where we are,
Mixes us daily with exceeding care ;
We have been Europe's sink, the jakes where she
Voids all her offal outcast progeny ;
From our fifth Henry's time the strolling bands
Of banished fugitives from neighbouring lands
Have here a certain sanctuary found :
The eternal refuge of the vagabond,
Wherein but half a common age of time,
Borrowing new blood and manners from the clime,
Proudly they learn all mankind to contemn,
And all their race are true-born Englishmen."

As may be judged from this specimen, there is little delicacy in Defoe's satire. The lines run on from beginning to end in the same strain of bold, broad, hearty banter, as if the whole piece had been written off at a heat. The mob did not lynch the audacious humourist. In the very height of their fury against foreigners, they stopped short to laugh at themselves. They were tickled by the hard blows as we may suppose a rhinoceros to be tickled by the strokes of an oaken cudgel. Defoe suddenly woke to find himself the hero of the hour, at least with the London populace. The pamphlet was pirated, and eighty thousand copies, according to his own calculation, were sold in the streets. Henceforth he described himself in his title-pages as the author of the *True-Born Englishman*, and frequently did himself the honour of quoting from the work as from a well-established classic. It was also, he has told us, the means of his becoming personally known to the King, whom he had hitherto served from a distance.

Defoe was not the man to be abashed by his own popularity. He gloried in it, and added to his reputation by taking a prominent part in the proceedings connected with

the famous Kentish Petition, which marked the turn of the tide in favour of the King's foreign policy. Defoe was said to be the author of "Legion's Memorial" to the House of Commons, sternly warning the representatives of the freeholders that they had exceeded their powers in imprisoning the men who had prayed them to "turn their loyal addresses into Bills of Supply." When the Kentish Petitioners were liberated from the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms, and feasted by the citizens at Mercers' Hall, Defoe was seated next to them as an honoured guest.

Unfortunately for Defoe, William did not live long after he had been honoured with his Majesty's confidence. He declared afterwards that he had often been privately consulted by the King. The pamphlets which he wrote during the close of the reign are all such as might have been directly inspired. That on the Succession is chiefly memorable as containing a suggestion that the heirs of the Duke of Monmouth should be heard as to King Charles's alleged marriage with Lucy Walters. It is possible that this idea may have been sanctioned by the King, who had had painful experience of the disadvantages attending a ruler of foreign extraction, and besides had reason to doubt the attachment of the Princess Sophia to the Protestant faith. When the passionate aversion to war in the popular mind was suddenly changed by the recognition of the Pretender into an equally passionate thirst for it, and the King seized the opportunity to dissolve Parliament and get a new House in accord with the altered temper of the people, Defoe justified the appeal to the freeholders by an examination and assertion of "the Original Power of the Collective Body of the People of England." His last service to the King was a pamphlet bearing the paradoxical title, *Reasons against a War with France*. As Defoe had

for nearly a year been zealously working the public mind to a warlike pitch, this title is at first surprising, but the surprise disappears when we find that the pamphlet is an ingenious plea for beginning with a declaration of war against Spain, showing that not only was there just cause for such a war, but that it would be extremely profitable, inasmuch as it would afford occasion for plundering the Spaniards in the West Indies, and thereby making up for whatever losses our trade might suffer from the French privateers. And it was more than a mere plundering descent that Defoe had in view; his object was that England should take actual possession of the Spanish Indies, and so rob Spain of its chief source of wealth. There was a most powerful buccaneering spirit concealed under the peaceful title of this pamphlet. The trick of arresting attention by an unexpected thesis, such as this promise of reasons for peace when everybody was dreaming of war, is an art in which Defoe has never been surpassed. As we shall have occasion to see, he practised it more than once too often for his comfort.

CHAPTER III.

A MARTYR TO DISSENT?

FROM the death of the King in March, 1702, we must date a change in Defoe's relations with the ruling powers. Under William, his position as a political writer had been distinct and honourable. He supported William's policy warmly and straightforwardly, whether he divined it by his own judgment, or learned it by direct or indirect instructions or hints. When charged with writing for a place, he indignantly denied that he held either place or pension at Court, but at another time he admitted that he had been employed by the King and rewarded by him beyond his deserts. Any reward that he received for his literary services was well earned, and there was nothing dishonourable in accepting it. For concealing the connexion while the King was alive, he might plead the custom of the time. But in the confusion of parties and the uncertainty of government that followed William's death, Defoe slid into practices which cannot be justified by any standard of morality.

It was by accident that Defoe drifted into this equivocal position. His first writings under the new reign were in staunch consistency with what he had written before. He did not try to flatter the Queen as many others did by

slighting her predecessors; on the contrary, he wrote a poem called *The Mock Mourners*, in which he extolled "the glorious memory"—a phrase which he did much to bring into use—and charged those who spoke disrespectfully of William with the vilest insolence and ingratitude. He sang the praises of the Queen also, but as he based his joy at her accession on an assurance that she would follow in William's footsteps, the compliment might be construed as an exhortation. Shortly afterwards, in another poem, *The Spanish Descent*, he took his revenge upon the fleet for not carrying out his West Indian scheme by ridiculing unmercifully their first fruitless cruise on the Spanish coast, taking care at the same time to exult in the capture of the galleons at Vigo. In yet another poem—the success of the *True Born Englishman* seems to have misguided him into the belief that he had a genius for verse—he reverted to the Reformation of Manners, and angered the Dissenters by belabouring certain magistrates of their denomination. A pamphlet entitled *A New Test of the Church of England's Loyalty*—in which he twitted the High-Church party with being neither more nor less loyal than the Dissenters, inasmuch as they consented to the deposition of James and acquiesced in the accession of Anne—was better received by his co-religionists.

But when the Bill to prevent occasional conformity was introduced by some hot-headed partisans of the High Church, towards the close of 1702, with the Queen's warm approval, Defoe took a course which made the Dissenters threaten to cast him altogether out of the synagogue. We have already seen how Defoe had taken the lead in attacking the practice of occasional conformity. While his co-religionists were imprecating him as the man who had brought this persecution upon them, Defoe added to

their ill-feeling by issuing a jaunty pamphlet in which he proved with provoking unanswerableness that all honest Dissenters were noways concerned in the Bill. Nobody, he said, with his usual bright audacity, but himself "who was altogether born in sin," saw the true scope of the measure. "All those people who designed the Act as a blow to the Dissenting interests in England are mistaken. All those who take it as a prelude or introduction to the further suppressing of the Dissenters, and a step to repealing the Toleration, or intend it as such, are mistaken. . . . All those phlegmatic Dissenters who fancy themselves undone, and that persecution and desolation is at the door again, are mistaken. All those Dissenters who are really at all disturbed at it, either as an advantage gained by their enemies or as a real disaster upon themselves, are mistaken. All those Dissenters who deprecate it as a judgment, or would vote against it as such if it were in their power, are mistaken." In short, though he did not suppose that the movers of the Bill "did it in mere kindness to the Dissenters, in order to refine and purge them from the scandals which some people had brought upon them," nevertheless it was calculated to effect this object. The Dissenter being a man that was "something desirous of going to Heaven," ventured the displeasure of the civil magistrate at the command of his conscience, which warned him that there were things in the Established form of worship not agreeable to the Will of God as revealed in Scripture. There is nothing in the Act to the prejudice of this Dissenter; it affects only the Politic Dissenter, or State Dissenter, who if he can attend the Established worship without offending his conscience, has no cause to be a Dissenter. An act against occasional conformity would rid the Dissenting body of

these lukewarm members, and the riddance would be a good thing for all parties.

It may have been that this cheerful argument, the legitimate development of Defoe's former writings on the subject, was intended to comfort his co-religionists at a moment when the passing of the Act seemed certain. They did not view it in that light; they resented it bitterly, as an insult in the hour of their misfortune from the man who had shown their enemies where to strike. When, however, the Bill, after passing the Commons, was opposed and modified by the Lords, Defoe suddenly appeared on a new tack, publishing the most famous of his political pamphlets, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, which has, by a strange freak of circumstances, gained him the honour of being enshrined as one of the martyrs of Dissent. In the "brief explanation" of the pamphlet which he gave afterwards, he declared that it had no bearing whatever upon the Occasional Conformity Bill, pointing to his former writings on the subject, in which he had denounced the practice, and welcomed the Bill as a useful instrument for purging the Dissenting bodies of half-and-half professors. It was intended, he said, as a banter upon the High-flying Tory Churchmen, putting into plain English the drift of their furious invectives against the Dissenters, and so, "by an irony not unusual," answering them out of their own mouths.

The *Shortest Way* is sometimes spoken of as a piece of exquisite irony, and on the other hand Mr. Saintsbury¹ has raised the question whether the representation of an extreme case, in which the veil is never lifted from the writer's own opinions, can properly be called irony at all.

¹ In an admirable article on Defoe in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

This last is, perhaps, a question belonging to the strict definition of the figures of speech; but, however that might be settled, it is a mistake to describe Defoe's art in this pamphlet as delicate. There are no subtle strokes of wit in it such as we find in some of Swift's ironical pieces. Incomparably more effective as an engine of controversy, it is not entitled to the same rank as a literary exercise. Its whole merit and its rousing political force lay in the dramatic genius with which Defoe personated the temper of a thorough-going High-flier, putting into plain and spirited English such sentiments as a violent partisan would not dare to utter except in the unguarded heat of familiar discourse, or the half-humorous ferocity of intoxication. Have done, he said, addressing the Dissenters, with this cackle about Peace and Union, and the Christian duties of moderation, which you raise now that you find "your day is over, your power gone, and the throne of this nation possessed by a Royal, English, true, and ever-constant member of and friend to the Church of England. . . . We have heard none of this lesson for fourteen years past. We have been huffed and bullied with your Act of Toleration; you have told us that you are the Church established by law as well as others; have set up your canting synagogues at our Church doors, and the Church and members have been loaded with reproaches, with oaths, associations, abjurations, and what not. Where has been the mercy, the forbearance, the charity, you have shown to tender consciences of the Church of England, that could not take oaths as fast as you made them; that having sworn allegiance to their lawful and rightful King, could not dispense with that oath, their King being still alive, and swear to your new hodge-podge of a Dutch constitution? . . . Now that the tables are turned upon you, you

must not be persecuted; 'tis not a Christian spirit." You talk of persecution; what persecution have you to complain of? "The first execution of the laws against Dissenters in England was in the days of King James I. And what did it amount to? Truly the worst they suffered was at their own request to let them go to New England and erect a new colony, and give them great privileges, grants, and suitable powers, keep them under protection, and defend them against all invaders, and receive no taxes or revenue from them. This was the cruelty of the Church of England—fatal lenity! 'Twas the ruin of that excellent prince, King Charles I. Had King James sent all the Puritans in England away to the West Indies, we had been a national, unmixed Church; the Church of England had been kept undivided and entire. To requite the lenity of the father, they take up arms against the son; conquer, pursue, take, imprison, and at last put to death the Anointed of God, and destroy the very being and nature of government, setting up a sordid impostor, who had neither title to govern, nor understanding to manage, but supplied that want with power, bloody and desperate councils, and craft, without conscience." How leniently had King Charles treated these barbarous regicides, coming in all mercy and love, cherishing them, preferring them, giving them employment in his service. As for King James, "as if mercy was the inherent quality of the family, he began his reign with unusual favour to them, nor could their joining with the Duke of Monmouth against him move him to do himself justice upon them, but that mistaken prince thought to win them by gentleness and love, proclaimed a universal liberty to them, and rather discountenanced the Church of England than them. How they requited him all the world knows." Under King

William, "a king of their own," they "crope into all places of trust and profit," engrossed the ministry, and insulted the Church. But they must not expect this kind of thing to continue. "No, gentlemen, the time of mercy is past; your day of grace is over; you should have practised peace, and moderation, and charity, if you expected any yourselves."

In this heroic strain the pamphlet proceeds, reaching at length the suggestion that "if one severe law were made, and punctually executed, that whoever was found at a conventicle should be banished the nation, and the preacher be hanged, we should soon see an end of the tale—they would all come to church, and one age would make us all one again." That was the mock churchman's shortest way for the suppression of Dissent. He supported his argument by referring to the success with which Louis XIV. had put down the Huguenots. There was no good in half-measures, fines of five shillings a month for not coming to the Sacrament, and one shilling a week for not coming to church. It was vain to expect compliance from such trifling. "The light, foolish handling of them by mulcts, fines, etc., 'tis their glory and their advantage. If the gallows instead of the counter, and the galleys instead of the fines, were the reward of going to a conventicle, to preach or hear, there would not be so many sufferers—the spirit of martyrdom is over. They that will go to church to be chosen sheriffs and mayors, would go to forty churches rather than be hanged." "Now let us crucify the thieves," said the author of this truculent advice in conclusion. "And may God Almighty put it into the hearts of all friends of truth to lift up a standard against pride and Antichrist, that the posterity of the sons of error may be rooted out from the face of this land for ever."

Defoe's disguise was so complete, his caricature of the ferocious High-flier so near to life, that at first people doubted whether the *Shortest Way* was the work of a satirist or a fanatic. When the truth leaked out, as it soon did, the Dissenters were hardly better pleased than while they feared that the proposal was serious. With the natural timidity of precariously situated minorities, they could not enter into the humour of it. The very title was enough to make them shrink and tremble. The only people who were really in a position to enjoy the jest were the Whigs. The High-Churchmen, some of whom, it is said, were at first so far taken in as to express their warm approval, were furious when they discovered the trick that had been played upon them. The Tory ministers of the Queen felt themselves bound to take proceedings against the author, whose identity seems to have soon become an open secret. Learning this, Defoe went into concealment. A proclamation offering a reward for his discovery was advertised in the *Gazette*. The description of the fugitive is interesting; it is the only extant record of Defoe's personal appearance, except the portrait prefixed to his collected works, in which the mole is faithfully reproduced:—

“He is a middle-aged, spare man, about forty years old, of a brown complexion, and dark-brown coloured hair, but wears a wig; a hooked nose, a sharp chin, grey eyes, and a large mole near his mouth: was born in London, and for many years was a hose-factor in Freeman's Yard in Cornhill, and now is the owner of the brick and pantile works near Tilbury Fort in Essex.”

This advertisement was issued on the 10th of January, 1703. Meantime the printer and the publisher were

seized. From his safe hiding, Defoe put forth an explanation, protesting, as we have seen, that his pamphlet had not the least retrospect to or concern in the public bills in Parliament now depending, or any other proceeding of either House or of the Government relating to the Dissenters, whose occasional conformity the author has constantly opposed. It was merely, he pleaded, the cant of the Non-juring party exposed; and he mentioned several printed books in which the same objects were expressed, though not in words so plain, and at length. But the Government would not take this view; he had represented virulent partisans as being supreme in the Queen's counsels, and his design was manifest "to blacken the Church party as men of a persecuting spirit, and to prepare the mob for what further service he had for them to do." Finding that they would not listen to him, Defoe surrendered himself, in order that others might not suffer for his offence. He was indicted on the 24th of February. On the 25th, the *Shortest Way* was brought under the notice of the House of Commons, and ordered to be burnt by the common hangman. His trial came on in July. He was found guilty of a seditious libel, and sentenced to pay a fine of 200 marks to the Queen, stand three times in the pillory, be imprisoned during the Queen's pleasure, and find sureties for his good behaviour for seven years.

Defoe complained that three Dissenting ministers, whose poor he had fed in the days of his prosperity, had refused to visit him during his confinement in Newgate. There was, doubtless, a want of charity in their action, but there was also a want of honesty in his complaint. If he applied for their spiritual ministrations, they had considerable reason for treating his application as a piece of pro-

voking effrontery. Though Defoe was in prison for this banter upon the High-fliers, it is a mistake to regard him as a martyr, except by accident, to the cause of Toleration as we understand it now, and as the Dissenters bore the brunt of the battle for it then. Before his trial and conviction, while he lay in prison, he issued an exposition of his views of a fair Toleration in a tract entitled *The Shortest Way to Peace and Union*. The toleration which he advised, and which commended itself to the moderate Whigs with whom he had acted under King William and was probably acting now, was a purely spiritual Toleration. His proposal, in fact, was identical with that of Charles Leslie's in the *New Association*, one of the pamphlets which he professed to take off in his famous squib. Leslie had proposed that the Dissenters should be excluded from all civil employments, and should be forced to remain content with liberty of worship. Addressing the Dissenters, Defoe, in effect, urged them to anticipate forcible exclusion by voluntary withdrawal. Extremes on both sides should be industriously crushed and discouraged, and the extremes on the Dissenting side were those who, not being content to worship after their own fashion, had also a hankering after the public service. It is the true interest of the Dissenters in England, Defoe argued, to be governed by a Church of England magistracy; and with his usual paradoxical hardihood, he told his co-religionists bluntly that "the first reason of his proposition was that they were not qualified to be trusted with the government of themselves." When we consider the active part Defoe himself took in public affairs, we shall not be surprised that offence was given by his countenancing the civil disabilities of Dissenters, and that the Dissenting preachers declined to recognise him as properly belong-

ing to their body. It was not, indeed, as a Dissenter that Defoe was prosecuted by the violent Tories then in power, but as the suspected literary instrument of the great Whig leaders.

This, of course, in no way diminishes the harsh and spiteful impolicy of the sentence passed on Defoe. Its terms were duly put in execution. The offending satirist stood in the pillory on the three last days of July, 1703, before the Royal Exchange in Cornhill, near the Conduit in Cheapside, and at Temple Bar. It is incorrect, however, to say with Pope that

“Earless on high stood unabashed Defoe.”

His ears were not cropped, as the barbarous phrase went, and he had no reason to be abashed. His reception by the mob was very different from that accorded to the anti-Jacobite Fuller, a scurrilous rogue who had tried to make a few pounds by a Plain Proof that the Chevalier was a supposititious child. The author of the *True-Born Englishman* was a popular favourite, and his exhibition in the pillory was an occasion of triumph and not of ignominy to him. A ring of admirers was formed round the place of punishment, and bunches of flowers instead of handfuls of garbage were thrown at the criminal. Tankards of ale and stoups of wine were drunk in his honour by the multitude whom he had delighted with his racy verse and charmed by his bold defiance of the authorities.

The enthusiasm was increased by the timely publication of a *Hymn to the Pillory*, in which Defoe boldly declared the iniquity of his sentence, and pointed out to the Government more proper objects of their severity. Atheists ought to stand there, he said, profligate beaux, swindling

stock-jobbers, fanatic Jacobites, and the commanders who had brought the English fleet into disgrace. As for him, his only fault lay in his not being understood; but he was perhaps justly punished for being such a fool as to trust his meaning to irony. It would seem that though the Government had committed Defoe to Newgate, they did not dare, even before the manifestation of popular feeling in his favour, to treat him as a common prisoner. He not only had liberty to write, but he found means to convey his manuscripts to the printer. Of these privileges he had availed himself with that indomitable energy and fertility of resource which we find reason to admire at every stage in his career, and most of all now that he was in straits. In the short interval between his arrest and his conviction he carried on a vigorous warfare with both hands,—with one hand seeking to propitiate the Government, with the other attracting support outside among the people. He proved to the Government incontestably, by a collection of his writings, that he was a man of moderate views, who had no aversion in principle even to the proposals of the *New Association*. He proved the same thing to the people at large by publishing this *Collection of the writings of the author of the True-Born Englishman*, but he accompanied the proof by a lively appeal to their sympathy under the title of *More Reformation, a Satire on himself*, a lament over his own folly which was calculated to bring pressure on the Government against prosecuting a man so innocent of public wrong. When, in spite of his efforts, a conviction was recorded against him, he adopted a more defiant tone towards the Government. He wrote the *Hymn to the Pillory*. This daring effusion was hawked in the streets among the crowd that had assembled to witness his penance in the

“hieroglyphic State-machine,
Contrived to punish Fancy in.”

“Come,” he cried, in the concluding lines—

“Tell ’em the M—— that placed him here
Are Sc——ls to the times,
Are at a loss to find his guilt,
And can’t commit his crimes.”

“M——” stands for Men, and “Sc——ls” for Scandals. Defoe delighted in this odd use of methods of reserve, more common in his time than in ours.

The dauntless courage of Defoe’s *Hymn to the Pillory* can only be properly appreciated when we remember with what savage outrage it was the custom of the mob to treat those who were thus exposed to make a London holiday. From the pillory he was taken back to Newgate, there to be imprisoned during her Majesty’s pleasure. His confinement must have been much less disagreeable to him than it would have been to one of less hardy temperament. Defoe was not the man to shrink with loathing from the companionship of thieves, highwaymen, forgers, coiners, and pirates. Curiosity was a much stronger power with him than disgust. Newgate had something of the charm for Defoe that a hospital full of hideous diseases has for an enthusiastic surgeon. He spent many pleasant hours in listening to the tales of his adventurous fellow-prisoners. Besides, the Government did not dare to deprive him of the liberty of writing and publishing. This privilege enabled him to appeal to the public, whose ear he had gained in the character of an undismayed martyr, an enjoyment which to so buoyant a man must have compensated for a great deal of irksome suffering. He attributed the failure

of his pantile works at Tilbury to his removal from the management of them; but bearing in mind the amount of success that had attended his efforts when he was free, it is fair to suppose that he was not altogether sorry for the excuse. It was by no means the intention of his High-Church persecutors that Defoe should enjoy himself in Newgate, and he himself lamented loudly the strange reverse by which he had passed within a few months from the closet of a king to a prisoner's cell; but on the whole he was probably as happy in Newgate as he had been at Whitehall. His wife and six children were most to be commiserated, and their distress was his heaviest trial.

The first use which Defoe made of his pen after his exhibition in the pillory was to reply to a Dissenting minister who had justified the practice of occasional conformity. He thereby marked once more his separation from the extreme Dissenters, who were struggling against having their religion made a disqualification for offices of public trust. But in the changes of parties at Court he soon found a reason for marking his separation from the opposite extreme, and facing the other way. Under the influence of the moderate Tories, Marlborough, Godolphin, and their invaluable ally, the Duchess, the Queen was gradually losing faith in the violent Tories. According to Swift, she began to dislike her bosom friend, Mrs. Freeman, from the moment of her accession, but though she may have chafed under the yoke of her favourite, she could not at once shake off the domination of that imperious will. The Duchess, finding the extreme Tories unfavourable to the war in which her husband's honour and interests were deeply engaged, became a hot partisan against them, and used all their blunders to break down their power at Court. Day by day she impressed upon the Queen the necessity

of peace and union at home in the face of the troubles abroad. The moderate men of both parties must be rallied round the throne. Extremes on both sides must be discouraged. Spies were set to work to take note of such rash expressions among "the hot and angry men" as would be likely to damage them in the Queen's favour. Queen Anne had not a little of the quiet tenacity and spitefulness of enfeebled constitutions, but in the end reason prevailed, resentment at importunity was overcome, and the hold of the High-Churchmen on her affections gave way.

Nobody, Swift has told us, could better disguise her feelings than the Queen. The first intimation which the High-Church party had of her change of views was her opening speech to Parliament on the 9th November, 1703, in which she earnestly desired parties in both Houses to avoid heats and divisions. Defoe at once threw himself in front of the rising tide. Whether he divined for himself that the influence of the Earl of Nottingham, the Secretary of State, to whom he owed his prosecution and imprisonment, was waning, or obtained a hint to that effect from his Whig friends, we do not know, but he lost no time in issuing from his prison a bold attack upon the High-Churchmen. In his *Challenge of Peace, addressed to the whole Nation*, he denounced them as Church Vultures and Ecclesiastical Harpies. It was they and not the Dissenters that were the prime movers of strife and dissension. How are peace and union to be obtained, he asks. He will show people first how peace and union cannot be obtained.

"First, Sacheverell's Bloody Flag of Defiance is not the way to Peace and Union. *The shortest way to destroy is not the shortest way to unite.* Persecution, Laws to Compel, Restrain or force the Conscience of one another, is not the way

to this Union, which her Majesty has so earnestly recommended.

“Secondly, to repeal or contract the late Act of Toleration is not the way for this so much wished-for happiness; to have laws revived that should set one party a plundering, excommunicating and unchurching another, that should renew the oppressions and devastations of late reigns, this will not by any means contribute to this Peace, which all good men desire.

“New Associations and proposals to divest men of their freehold right for differences in opinion, and take away the right of Dissenters voting in elections of Members; this is not the way to Peace and Union.

“Railing pamphlets, buffooning our brethren as a party to be suppressed, and dressing them up in the Bear’s skin for all the dogs in the street to bait them, is not the way to Peace and Union.

“Railing sermons, exciting people to hatred and contempt of their brethren, because they differ in opinions, is not the way to Peace and Union.

“Shutting all people out of employment and the service of their Prince and Country, unless they can comply with indifferent ceremonies of religion, is far from the way to Peace and Union.

“Reproaching the Succession settled by Parliament, and reviving the abdicated title of the late King James, and his supposed family, cannot tend to this Peace and Union.

“Laws against Occasional Conformity, and compelling people who bear offices to a total conformity, and yet force them to take and serve in those public employments, cannot contribute to this Peace and Union.”

In this passage Defoe seems to ally himself more closely with his Dissenting brethren than he had done before. It was difficult for him, with his published views on the objectionableness of occasional conformity, and the pro-

priety of Dissenters leaving the magistracy in the hands of the Church, to maintain his new position without incurring the charge of inconsistency. The charge was freely made, and his own writings were collected as a testimony against him, but he met the charge boldly. The Dissenters ought not to practise occasional conformity, but if they could reconcile it with their consciences, they ought not to receive temporal punishment for practising it. The Dissenters ought to withdraw from the magistracy, but it was persecution to exclude them. In tract after tract of brilliant and trenchant argument, he upheld these views, with his usual courage attacking most fiercely those antagonists who went most nearly on the lines of his own previous writings. Ignoring what he had said before, he now proved clearly that the Occasional Conformity Bill was a breach of the Act of Toleration. There was little difference between his own *Shortest Way to Peace and Union* and Sir Humphrey Mackworth's *Peace at Home*, but he assailed the latter pamphlet vigorously, and showed that it had been the practice in all countries for Dissenters from the established religion to have a share in the business of the State. At the same time he never departed so far from the "moderate" point of view, as to insist that Dissenters ought to be admitted to a share in the business of the State. Let the High-Church ministers be dismissed, and moderate men summoned to the Queen's councils, and the Dissenters would have every reason to be content. They would acquiesce with pleasure in a ministry and magistracy of Low-Churchmen.

Defoe's assaults upon the High-Church Tories were neither interdicted nor resented by the Government, though he lay in prison at their mercy. Throughout the winter of 1703-4 the extreme members of the Ministry, though

they had still a majority in the House of Commons, felt the Queen's coldness increase. Their former high place in her regard and their continued hold upon Parliament tempted them to assume airs of independence which gave deeper offence than her unruffled courtesy led either them or their rivals to suspect. At last the crisis came. The Earl of Nottingham took the rash step of threatening to resign unless the Whig Dukes of Somerset and Devonshire were dismissed from the Cabinet. To his surprise and chagrin, his resignation was accepted (1704), and two more of his party were dismissed from office at the same time.

The successor of Nottingham was Robert Harley, afterwards created Earl of Oxford and Mortimer. He gave evidence late in life of his love for literature by forming the collection of manuscripts known as the Harleian, and we know from Swift that he was deeply impressed with the importance of having allies in the Press. He entered upon office in May, 1704, and one of his first acts was to convey to Defoe the message, "Pray, ask that gentleman what I can do for him." Defoe replied by likening himself to the blind man in the parable, and paraphrasing his prayer, "Lord, that I may receive my sight!" He would not seem to have obtained his liberty immediately, but, through Harley's influence, he was set free towards the end of July or the beginning of August. The Queen also, he afterwards said, "was pleased particularly to inquire into his circumstances and family, and by Lord Treasurer Godolphin to send a considerable supply to his wife and family, and to send him to the prison money to pay his fine and the expenses of his discharge."

On what condition was Defoe released? On condition, according to the *Elegy on the Author of the True-Born*

Englishman, which he published immediately after his discharge, that he should keep silence for seven years, or at least “not write what some people might not like.” To the public he represented himself as a martyr grudgingly released by the Government, and restrained from attacking them only by his own bond and the fear of legal penalties.

“Memento Mori here I stand,
 With silent lips but speaking hand;
 A walking shadow of a Poet,
 But bound to hold my tongue and never show it.
 A monument of injury,
 A sacrifice to legal t(yrann)y.”

“For shame, gentlemen,” he humorously cries to his enemies, “do not strike a dead man; beware, scribblers, of fathering your pasquinades against authority upon me; for seven years the True-Born Englishman is tied under sureties and penalties not to write.

“To seven long years of silence I betake,
 Perhaps by then I may forget to speak.”

This elegy he has been permitted to publish as his last speech and dying confession—

“When malefactors come to die
 They claim uncommon liberty:
 Freedom of speech gives no distaste,
 They let them talk at large, because they talk their last.”

The public could hardly have supposed from this what Defoe afterwards admitted to have been the true state of the case, namely, that on leaving prison he was taken into the service of the Government. He obtained an appoint-

ment, that is to say a pension, from the Queen, and was employed on secret services. When charged afterwards with having written by Harley's instructions, he denied this, but admitted the existence of certain "capitulations," in which he stipulated for liberty to write according to his own judgment, guided only by a sense of gratitude to his benefactor. There is reason to believe that even this is not the whole truth. Documents which Mr. Lee recently brought to light make one suspect that Defoe was all the time in private relations with the leaders of the Whig party. Of this more falls to be said in another place. The True-Born Englishman was, indeed, dead. Defoe was no longer the straightforward advocate of King William's policy. He was engaged henceforward in serving two masters, persuading each that he served him alone, and persuading the public, in spite of numberless insinuations, that he served nobody but them and himself, and wrote simply as a free lance under the jealous sufferance of the Government of the day.

I must reserve for a separate chapter some account of Defoe's greatest political work, which he began while he still lay in Newgate, the *Review*. Another work which he wrote and published at the same period deserves attention on different grounds. His history of the great storm of November, 1703, *A Collection of the most remarkable Casualties and Disasters which happened in the late Dreadful Tempest, both by Sea and Land*, may be set down as the first of his works of invention. It is a most minute and circumstantial record, containing many letters from eye-witnesses of what happened in their immediate neighbourhood. Defoe could have seen little of the storm himself from the interior of Newgate, but it is possible that the letters are genuine, and that he compiled other details

from published accounts. Still, we are justified in suspecting that his annals of the storm are no more authentic history than his *Journal of the Plague*, or his *Memoirs of a Cavalier*, and that for many of the incidents he is equally indebted to his imagination.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REVIEW OF THE AFFAIRS OF FRANCE.

It was a bold undertaking for a prisoner in Newgate to engage to furnish a newspaper written wholly by himself, "purged from the errors and partiality of news-writers and petty statesmen of all sides." It would, of course, have been an impossible undertaking if the *Review* had been, either in size or in contents, like a newspaper of the present time. The *Review* was, in its first stage, a sheet of eight small quarto pages. After the first two numbers, it was reduced in size to four pages, but a smaller type was used, so that the amount of matter remained nearly the same—about equal in bulk to two modern leading articles. At first the issue was weekly; after four numbers it became bi-weekly, and so remained for a year.

For the character of the *Review* it is difficult to find a parallel. There was nothing like it at the time, and nothing exactly like it has been attempted since. The nearest approach to it among its predecessors was the *Observer*, a small weekly journal written by the erratic John Tutchin, in which passing topics, political and social, were discussed in dialogues. Personal scandals were a prominent feature in the *Observer*. Defoe was not insensible to the value of this element to a popular jour-

nal. He knew, he said, that people liked to be amused; and he supplied this want in a section of his paper entitled "Mercure Scandale; or, Advice from the Scandalous Club, being a weekly history of Nonsense, Impertinence, Vice, and Debauchery." Under this attractive heading, Defoe noticed current scandals, his club being represented as a tribunal before which offenders were brought, their cases heard, and sentence passed upon them. Slanderers of the True-Born Englishman frequently figure in its proceedings. It was in this section also that Defoe exposed the errors of contemporary news-writers, the *Postman*, the *Post-Boy*, the *London Post*, the *Flying Post*, and the *Daily Courant*. He could not in his prison pretend to superior information regarding the events of the day; the errors which he exposed were chiefly blunders in geography and history. The *Mercure Scandale* was avowedly intended to amuse the frivolous. The lapse of time has made its artificial sprightliness dreary. It was in the serious portion of the *Review*, the *Review* proper, that Defoe showed most of his genius. The design of this was nothing less than to give a true picture, drawn with "an impartial and exact historical pen," of the domestic and foreign affairs of all the States of Europe. It was essential, he thought, that at such a time of commotion Englishmen should be thoroughly informed of the strength and the political interests and proclivities of the various European Powers. He could not undertake to tell his readers what was passing from day to day, but he could explain to them the policy of the Continental Courts; he could show how that policy was affected by their past history and present interests; he could calculate the forces at their disposal, set forth the grounds of their alliances, and generally put people in a position to follow the great

game that was being played on the European chess-board. In the *Review*, in fact, as he himself described his task, he was writing a history sheet by sheet, and letting the world see it as it went on.

This excellent plan of instruction was carried out with incomparable brilliancy of method, and vivacity of style. Defoe was thoroughly master of his subject; he had read every history that he could lay his hands on, and his connexion with King William had guided him to the mainsprings of political action, and fixed in his mind clear principles for England's foreign policy. Such a mass of facts and such a maze of interests would have encumbered and perplexed a more commonplace intellect, but Defoe handled them with experienced and buoyant ease. He had many arts for exciting attention. His confinement in Newgate, from which the first number of the *Review* was issued on the 19th February, 1704, had in no way impaired his clear-sighted daring and self-confident skill. There was a sparkle of paradox and a significant lesson in the very title of his journal—*A Review of the Affairs of France*. When, by and by, he digressed to the affairs of Sweden and Poland, and filled number after number with the history of Hungary, people kept asking, "What has this to do with France?" "How little you understand my design," was Defoe's retort. "Patience till my work is completed, and then you will see that, however much I may seem to have been digressing, I have always kept strictly to the point. Do not judge me as you judged St. Paul's before the roof was put on. It is not affairs *in* France that I have undertaken to explain, but the affairs *of* France; and the affairs of France are the affairs of Europe. So great is the power of the French money, the artifice of their conduct, the terror of their arms, that they can bring the greatest

kings in Europe to promote their interest and grandeur at the expense of their own.'

Defoe delighted to brave common prejudice by throwing full in its face paradoxes expressed in the most unqualified language. While we were at war with France, and commouplace hunters after popularity were doing their utmost to flatter the national vanity, Defoe boldly announced his intention of setting forth the wonderful greatness of the French nation, the enormous numbers of their armies, the immense wealth of their treasury, the marvellous vigour of their administration. He ridiculed loudly those writers who pretended that we should have no difficulty in beating them, and filled their papers with dismal stories about the poverty and depopulation of the country. "Consider the armies that the French King has raised," cried Defoe, "and the reinforcements and subsidies he has sent to the King of Spain; does that look like a depopulated country and an impoverished exchequer?" It was perhaps a melancholy fact, but what need to apologise for telling the truth? At once, of course, a shout was raised against him for want of patriotism; he was a French pensioner, a Jacobite, a hireling of the Peace-party. This was the opportunity on which the chuckling paradox-monger had counted. He protested that he was not drawing a map of the French power to terrify the English. But, he said, "there are two cheats equally hurtful to us; the first to terrify us, the last to make us too easy and consequently too secure; 'tis equally dangerous for us to be terrified into despair and bullied into more terror of our enemies than we need, or to be so exalted in conceit of our own force as to undervalue and contemn the power which we cannot reduce." To blame him for making clear the greatness of the French power, was to act as if

the Romans had killed the geese in the Capitol for frightening them out of their sleep. "If I, like an honest Protestant goose, have gaggled too loud of the French power, and raised the country, the French indeed may have reason to cut my throat if they could; but 'tis hard my own countrymen, to whom I have shown their danger, and whom I have endeavoured to wake out of their sleep, should take offence at the timely discovery."

If we open the first volume, or indeed any volume of the *Review*, at random, we are almost certain to meet with some electric shock of paradox designed to arouse the attention of the torpid. In one number we find the writer, ever daring and alert, setting out with an eulogium on "the wonderful benefit of arbitrary power" in France. He runs on in this vein for some time, accumulating examples of the wonderful benefit, till the patience of his liberty-loving readers is sufficiently exasperated, and then he turns round with a grin of mockery and explains that he means benefit to the monarch, not to the subject. "If any man ask me what are the benefits of arbitrary power to the subject, I answer these two, *poverty* and *subjection*." But to an ambitious monarch unlimited power is a necessity; unless he can count upon instant obedience to his will, he only courts defeat if he embarks in schemes of aggression and conquest.

"When a Prince must court his subjects to give him leave to raise an army, and when that's done, tell him when he must disband them; that if he wants money, he must assemble the States of his country, and not only give them good words to get it, and tell them what 'tis for, but give them an account how it is expended before he asks for more. The subjects in such a government are certainly happy in having their property and privileges secured, but if I were of his

Privy Council, I would advise such a Prince to content himself within the compass of his own government, and never think of invading his neighbours or increasing his dominions, for subjects who stipulate with their Princes, and make conditions of government, who claim to be governed by laws and make those laws themselves, who need not pay their money but when they see cause, and may refuse to pay it when demanded without their consent; such subjects will never empty their purses upon foreign wars for enlarging the glory of their sovereign."

This glory he describes as "the leaf-gold which the devil has laid over the backside of ambition, to make it glitter to the world."

Defoe's knowledge of the irritation caused among the Dissenters by his *Shortest Way*, did not prevent him from shocking them and annoying the high Tories by similar *jeux d'esprit*. He had no tenderness for the feelings of such of his brethren as had not his own robust sense of humour and boyish glee in the free handling of dangerous weapons. Thus we find him, among his eulogies of the Grand Monarque, particularly extolling him for the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. By the expulsion of the Protestants, Louis impoverished and unpeopled part of his country, but it was "the most politic action the French King ever did." "I don't think fit to engage here in a dispute about the honesty of it," says Defoe; "but till he had first cleared the country of that numerous injured people, he could never have ventured to carry an offensive war into all the borders of Europe." And Defoe was not content with shocking the feelings of his nominal co-religionists by a light treatment of matters in which he agreed with them. He upheld with all his might the opposite view from theirs on two important questions of for-

eign policy. While the Confederates were doing battle on all sides against France, the King of Sweden was making war on his own account against Poland for the avowed purpose of placing a Protestant prince on the throne. Extreme Protestants in England were disposed to think that Charles XII. was fighting the Lord's battle in Poland. But Defoe was strongly of opinion that the work in which all Protestants ought at that moment to be engaged was breaking down the power of France, and as Charles refused to join the Confederacy, and the Catholic prince against whom he was fighting was a possible adherent, the ardent preacher of union among the Protestant powers insisted upon regarding him as a practical ally of France, and urged that the English fleet should be sent into the Baltic to interrupt his communications. Disunion among Protestants, argued Defoe, was the main cause of French greatness; if the Swedish King would not join the Confederacy of his own free will, he should be compelled to join it, or at least to refrain from weakening it.

Defoe treated the revolt of the Hungarians against the Emperor with the same regard to the interests of the Protestant cause. Some uneasiness was felt in England at cooperating with an ally who so cruelly oppressed his Protestant subjects, and some scruple of conscience at seeming to countenance the oppression. Defoe fully admitted the wrongs of the Hungarians, but argued that this was not the time for them to press their claims for redress. He would not allow that they were justified at such a moment in calling in the aid of the Turks against the Emperor. "It is not enough that a nation be Protestant and the people our friends; if they will join with our enemies, they are Papists, Turks, and Heathens, to us." "If the Protestants in Hungary will make the Protestant religion

in Hungary clash with the Protestant religion in all the rest of Europe, we must prefer the major interest to the minor." Defoe treats every foreign question from the cool high-political point of view, generally taking up a position from which he can expose the unreasonableness of both sides. In the case of the Cevennois insurgents, one party had used the argument that it was unlawful to encourage rebellion even among the subjects of a prince with whom we were at war. With this Defoe dealt in one article, proving with quite a superfluity of illustration that we were justified by all the precedents of recent history in sending support to the rebellious subjects of Louis XIV. It was the general custom of Europe to "assist the malcontents of our neighbours." Then in another article he considered whether, being lawful, it was also expedient, and he answered this in the negative, treating with scorn a passionate appeal for the Cevennois entitled "Europe enslaved if the Camisars are not relieved." "What nonsense is this," he cried, "about a poor despicable handful of men who have only made a little diversion in the great war!" "The haste these men are in to have that done which they cannot show us the way to do!" he cried; and proceeded to prove in a minute discussion of conceivable strategic movements that it was impossible for us in the circumstances to send the Camisards the least relief.

There is no reference in the *Review* to Defoe's release from prison. Two numbers a week were issued with the same punctuality before and after, and there is no perceptible difference either in tone or in plan. Before he left prison, and before the fall of the high Tory Ministers, he had thrown in his lot boldly with the moderate men, and he did not identify himself more closely with any political section after Harley and Godolphin recognized the value

of his support and gave him liberty and pecuniary help. In the first number of the *Review* he had declared his freedom from party ties, and his unreserved adherence to truth and the public interest, and he made frequent protestation of this independence. "I am not a party man," he kept saying; "at least, I resolve this shall not be a party paper." In discussing the affairs of France, he took more than one side-glance homewards, but always with the protest that he had no interest to serve but that of his country. The absolute power of Louis, for example, furnished him with an occasion for lamenting the disunited counsels of Her Majesty's Cabinet. Without imitating the despotic form of the French Government, he said, there are ways by which we might secure under our own forms greater decision and promptitude on the part of the Executive. When Nottingham was dismissed, he rejoiced openly, not because the ex-Secretary had been his persecutor, but because at last there was unity of views among the Queen's Ministers. He joined naturally in the exultation over Marlborough's successes, but in the *Review*, and in his *Hymn to Victory*, separately published, he courteously diverted some part of the credit to the new Ministry. "Her Majesty's measures, moved by new and polished councils, have been pointed more directly at the root of the French power than ever we have seen before. I hope no man will suppose I reflect on the memory of King William; I know 'tis impossible the Queen should more sincerely wish the reduction of France than his late Majesty; but if it is expected I should say he was not worse served, oftener betrayed, and consequently hurried into more mistakes and disasters, than Her Majesty now is, this must be by somebody who believes I know much less of the public matters of those days than I had the honour to be informed of."

But this praise, he represented, was not the praise of a partisan; it was an honest compliment wrung from a man whose only connexion with the Government was a bond for his good behaviour, an undertaking "not to write what some people might not like."

Defoe's hand being against every member of the writing brotherhood, it was natural that his reviews should not pass without severe criticisms. He often complained of the insults, ribaldry, Billingsgate, and Bear-garden language to which he was exposed; and some of his biographers have taken these lamentations seriously, and expressed their regret that so good a man should have been so much persecuted. But as he deliberately provoked these assaults, and never missed a chance of effective retort, it is difficult to sympathise with him on any ground but his manifest delight in the strife of tongues. Infinitely the superior of his antagonists in power, he could affect to treat them with good humour, but this good humour was not easy to reciprocate when combined with an imperturbable assumption that they were all fools or knaves. When we find him, after humbly asking pardon for all his errors of the press, errors of the pen, or errors of opinion, expressing a wish that "all gentlemen on the other side would give him equal occasion to honour them for their charity, temper, and gentlemanlike dealing, as for their learning and virtue," and offering to "capitulate with them, and enter into a treaty or cartel for exchange of good language," we may, if we like, admire his superior mastery of the weapons of irritation, but pity is out of place.

The number of February 17, 1705, was announced by Defoe as being "the last Review of this volume, and designed to be so of this work." But on the following

Tuesday, the regular day for the appearance of the *Review*, he issued another number, declaring that he could not quit the volume without some remarks on "charity and poverty." On Saturday yet another last number appeared, dealing with some social subjects which he had been urged by correspondents to discuss. Then on Tuesday, February 27, apologising for the frequent turning of his design, he issued a Preface to a new volume of the *Review*, with a slight change of title. He would overtake sooner or later all the particulars of French greatness which he had promised to survey, but as the course of his narrative had brought him to England, and he might stay there for some time, it was as well that this should be indicated in the title, which was henceforth to be A Review of the Affairs of France, with Observations on Affairs at Home. He had intended, he said, to abandon the work altogether, but some gentlemen had prevailed with him to go on, and had promised that he should not be at a loss by it. It was now to be issued three times a week.

CHAPTER V.

THE ADVOCATE OF PEACE AND UNION.

IN putting forth the prospectus of the second volume of his *Review*, Defoe intimated that its prevailing topic would be the Trade of England—a vast subject, with many branches, all closely interwoven with one another and with the general well-being of the kingdom. It grieved him, he said, to see the nation involved in such evils while remedies lay at hand which blind guides could not, and wicked guides would not, see—trade decaying, yet within reach of the greatest improvements, the navy flourishing, yet fearfully mismanaged, rival factions brawling and fighting when they ought to combine for the common good. “Nothing could have induced him to undertake the ungrateful office of exposing these things, but the full persuasion that he was capable of convincing anything of an Englishman that had the least angle of his soul untainted with partiality, and that had the least concern left for the good of his country, that even the worst of these evils were easy to be cured; that if ever this nation were shipwrecked and undone, it must be at the very entrance of her port of deliverance, in the sight of her safety that Providence held out to her, in the sight of her safe establishment, a prosperous trade, a regular, easily-supplied

navy, and a general reformation both in manners and methods in Church and State.”

Defoe began as usual by laying down various clear heads, under which he promised to deal with the whole field of trade. But as usual he did not adhere to this systematic plan. He discussed some topics of the day with brilliant force, and then he suddenly digressed to a subject only collaterally connected with trade. The Queen, in opening the session of 1704–5, had exhorted her Parliament to peace and union; but the High-Churchmen were too hot to listen to advice even from her. The Occasional Conformity Bill was again introduced and carried in the Commons. The Lords rejected it. The Commons persisted, and to secure the passing of the measure, tacked it to a Bill of Supply. The Lords refused to pass the Money Bill till the tack was withdrawn. Soon afterwards the Parliament — Parliaments were then triennial — was dissolved, and the canvass for a general election set in amidst unusual excitement. Defoe abandoned the quiet topic of trade, and devoted the *Review* to electioneering articles.

But he did not take a side, at least not a party side. He took the side of peace and his country. “I saw with concern,” he said, in afterwards explaining his position, “the weighty juncture of a new election for members approach, the variety of wheels and engines set to work in the nation, and the furious methods to form interests on either hand and put the tempers of men on all sides into an unusual motion; and things seemed acted with so much animosity and party fury that I confess it gave me terrible apprehensions of the consequences.” On both sides “the methods seemed to him very scandalous.” “In many places most horrid and villainous practices were set on foot to supplant one another. The parties stooped to vile and

unbecoming meannesses; infinite briberies, forgeries, perjuries, and all manner of debauchings of the principles and manners of the electors were attempted. All sorts of violences, tumults, riots, breaches of the peace, neighbourhood, and good manners were made use of to support interests and carry elections." In short, Defoe saw the nation "running directly on the steep precipice of confusion." In these circumstances, he seriously reflected what he should do. He came to the conclusion that he must "immediately set himself in the *Review* to exhort, persuade, entreat, and in the most moving terms he was capable of, prevail on all people in general to STUDY PEACE."

Under cover of this profession of impartiality, Defoe issued most effective attacks upon the High-Church party. In order to promote peace, he said, it was necessary to ascertain first of all who were the enemies of peace. On the surface, the questions at stake in the elections were the privileges of the Dissenters and the respective rights of the Lords and the Commons in the matter of Money Bills. But people must look beneath the surface. "King James, French power, and a general turn of affairs was at the bottom, and the quarrels between Church and Dissenters only a politic noose they had hooked the parties on both sides into." Defoe lashed the Tackers into fury by his exhortations to the study of peace. He professed the utmost good-will to them personally, though he had not words strong enough to condemn their conduct in tacking the Occasional Bill to a Money Bill when they knew that the Lords would reject it, and so in a moment of grave national peril leave the army without supplies. The Queen, in dissolving Parliament, had described this tacking as a dangerous experiment, and Defoe explained the experiment as being "whether losing the Money Bill, breaking

up the Houses, disbanding the Confederacy, and opening the door to the French, might not have been for the interest of the High-Church." Far be it from him to use Billingsgate language to the Tackers, but "the effect of their action, which, and not their motive, he had to consider, would undoubtedly be to let in the French, depose the Queen, bring in the Prince of Wales, abdicate the Protestant religion, restore Popery, repeal the Toleration, and persecute the Dissenters." Still it was probable that the Tackers meant no harm. *Humanum est errare*. He was certain that if he showed them their error, they would repent and be converted. All the same, he could not recommend them to the electors. "A Tacker is a man of passion, a man of heat, a man that is for ruining the nation upon any hazards to obtain his ends. Gentlemen freeholders, you must not choose a Tacker, unless you will destroy our peace, divide our strength, pull down the Church, let in the French, and depose the Queen."

From the dissolution of Parliament in April till the end of the year Defoe preached from this text with infinite variety and vigour. It is the chief subject of the second volume of the *Review*. The elections, powerfully influenced by Marlborough's successes as well as by the eloquent championship of Defoe, resulted in the entire defeat of the High Tories, and a further weeding of them out of high places in the Administration. Defoe was able to close this volume of the *Review* with expressions of delight at the attainment of the peace for which he had laboured, and, the victory being gained and the battle over, to promise a return to the intermitted subject of Trade. He returned to this subject in the beginning of his third volume. But he had not pursued it long when he was again called away. The second diversion, as he pointed out, was

strictly analogous to the first. It was a summons to him to do his utmost to promote the union of the two kingdoms of England and Scotland. "From the same zeal," Defoe said, "with which I first pursued this blessed subject of peace, I found myself embarked in the further extent of it, I mean the Union. If I thought myself obliged in duty to the public interest to use my utmost endeavour to quiet the minds of enraged parties, I found myself under a stronger necessity to embark in the same design between two most enraged nations."

The union of the two kingdoms had become an object of pressing and paramount importance towards the close of William's reign. He had found little difficulty in getting the English Parliament to agree to settle the succession of the House of Hanover, but the proposal that the succession to the throne of Scotland should be settled on the same head was coldly received by the Scottish Parliament. It was not so much that the politicians of Edinburgh were averse to a common settlement, or positively eager for a King and Court of their own, but they were resolved to hold back till they were assured of commercial privileges which would go to compensate them for the drain of wealth that was supposed to have followed the King southwards. This was the policy of the wiser heads, not to accept the Union without as advantageous terms as they could secure. They had lost an opportunity at the Revolution, and were determined not to lose another. But among the mass of the population the feeling was all in favour of a separate kingdom. National animosity had been inflamed to a passionate pitch by the Darien disaster and the Massacre of Glencoe. The people listened readily to the insinuations of hot-headed men that the English wished to have everything their own way. The

counter-charge about the Scotch found equally willing hearers among the mass in England. Never had cool-headed statesmen a harder task in preventing two nations from coming to blows. All the time that the Treaty of Union was being negotiated which King William had earnestly urged from his deathbed, throughout the first half of Queen Anne's reign they worked under a continual apprehension lest the negotiations should end in a violent and irreconcilable rupture.

Defoe might well say that he was pursuing the same blessed subject of Peace in trying to reconcile these two most enraged nations, and writing with all his might for the Union. An Act enabling the Queen to appoint Commissioners on the English side to arrange the terms of the Treaty had been passed in the first year of her reign, but difficulties had arisen about the appointment of the Scottish Commissioners, and it was not till the Spring of 1706 that the two Commissions came together. When they did at last meet, they found each other much more reasonable and practical in spirit than had appeared possible during the battle over the preliminaries. But while the statesmen sat concocting the terms of the Treaty almost amicably, from April to July, the excitement raged fiercely out of doors. Amidst the blaze of recriminations and counter-recriminations, Defoe moved energetically as the Apostle of Peace, making his *Review* play like a fireman's hose upon the flames. He did not try to persuade the Scotch to peace by the same methods which he had used in the case of the High-fliers and Tackers. His Reviews on this subject, full of spirit as ever, are models of the art of conciliation. He wrestled ardently with national prejudices on both sides, vindicating the Scotch Presbyterians from the charge of religious intolerance, labouring to prove that

the English were not all to blame for the collapse of the Darien expedition and the Glencoe tragedy, expounding what was fair to both nations in matters concerning trade. Abuse was heaped upon him plentifully by hot partisans; he was charged with want of patriotism from the one side, and with too much of it from the other; but he held on his way manfully, allowing no blow from his aspersers to pass unreturned. Seldom has so bold and skilful a soldier been enlisted in the cause of peace.

Defoe was not content with the *Review* as a literary instrument of pacification. He carried on the war in both capitals, answering the pamphlets of the Scotch patriots with counter-pamphlets from the Edinburgh press. He published also a poem, "in honour of Scotland," entitled *Caledonia*, with an artfully flattering preface, in which he declared the poem to be a simple tribute to the greatness of the people and the country without any reference whatever to the Union. Presently he found it expedient to make Edinburgh his head-quarters, though he continued sending the *Review* three times a week to his London printer. When the Treaty of Union had been elaborated by the Commissioners and had passed the English Parliament, its difficulties were not at an end. It had still to pass the Scotch Parliament, and a strong faction there, riding on the storm of popular excitement, insisted on discussing it clause by clause. Moved partly by curiosity, partly by earnest desire for the public good, according to his own account in the *Review* and in his *History of the Union*, Defoe resolved to undertake the "long, tedious, and hazardous journey" to Edinburgh, and use all his influence to push the Treaty through. It was a task of no small danger, for the prejudice against the Union went so high in the Scottish capital that he ran the risk of being

torn to pieces by the populace. In one riot of which he gives an account, his lodging was beset, and for a time he was in as much peril "as a grenadier on a counter-scarp." Still he went on writing pamphlets, and lobbying members of Parliament. Owing to his intimate knowledge of all matters relating to trade, he also "had the honour to be frequently sent for into the several Committees of Parliament which were appointed to state some difficult points relating to equalities, taxes, prohibitions, &c." Even when the Union was agreed to by the Parliaments of both kingdoms, and took effect formally in May, 1707, difficulties arose in putting the details in operation, and Defoe prolonged his stay in Scotland through the whole of that year.

In this visit to Scotland Defoe protested to the world at the time that he had gone as a diplomatist on his own account, purely in the interests of peace. But a suspicion arose and was very free expressed, that both in this journey and in previous journeys to the West and the North of England during the elections, he was serving as the agent, if not as the spy, of the Government. These reproaches he denied with indignation, declaring it particularly hard that he should be subjected to such spiteful and injurious treatment even by writers "embarked in the same cause, and pretending to write for the same public good." "I contemn," he said in his *History*, "as not worth mentioning, the suggestions of some people, of my being employed thither to carry on the interest of a party. I have never loved any parties, but with my utmost zeal have sincerely espoused the great and original interest of this nation, and of all nations—I mean truth and liberty,—and whoever are of that party, I desire to be with them." He took up the same charges more passionately in the

Preface to the third volume of the *Review*, and dealt with them in some brilliant passages of apologetic eloquence.

“I must confess,” he said, “I have sometimes thought it very hard, that having voluntarily, without the least direction, assistance, or encouragement, in spite of all that has been suggested, taken upon me the most necessary work of removing national prejudices against the two most capital blessings of the world, Peace and Union, I should have the disaster to have the nations receive the doctrine and damn the teacher.

“Should I descend to particulars, it would hardly appear credible that in a Christian, a Protestant, and a Reformed nation, any man should receive such treatment as I have done, even from those very people whose consciences and judgments have stooped to the venerable truth, owned it has been useful, serviceable, and seasonable. . . .

“I am charged with partiality, bribery, pensions, and payments—a thing the circumstances, family, and fortunes of a man devoted to his country’s peace clears me of. If paid, gentlemen, for writing, if hired, if employed, why still harassed with merciless and malicious men, why pursued to all extremities by law for old accounts, which you clear other men of every day? Why oppressed, distressed, and driven from his family and from all his prospects of delivering them or himself? Is this the fate of men employed and hired? Is this the figure the agents of Courts and Princes make? Certainly had I been hired or employed, those people who own the service would by this time have set their servant free from the little and implacable malice of litigious persecutions, murdering warrants, and men whose mouths are to be stopt by trifles. Let this suffice to clear me of all the little and scandalous charges of being hired and employed.”

But then, people ask, if he was not officially employed, what had he to do with these affairs? Why should he meddle with them? To this he answers:—

“Truly, gentlemen, this is just the case. I saw a parcel of people caballing together to ruin property, corrupt the laws, invade the Government, debauch the people, and in short, enslave and embroil the nation, and I cried ‘Fire!’ or rather I cried ‘Water!’ for the fire was begun already. I see all the nation running into confusions and directly flying in the face of one another, and cried out ‘Peace!’ I called upon all sorts of people that had any senses to collect them together and judge for themselves what they were going to do, and excited them to lay hold of the madmen and take from them the wicked weapon, the knife with which they were going to destroy their mother, rip up the bowels of their country, and at last effectually ruin themselves.

“And what had I to do with this? Why, yes, gentlemen, I had the same right as every man that has a footing in his country, or that has a posterity to possess liberty and claim right, must have, to preserve the laws, liberty, and government of that country to which he belongs, and he that charges me with meddling in what does not concern me, meddles himself with what ’tis plain he does not understand.”

“I am not the first,” Defoe said in another place, “that has been stoned for saying the truth. I cannot but think that as time and the conviction of their senses will restore men to love the peace now established in this nation, so they will gradually see I have acted no part but that of a lover of my country, and an honest man.”

Time has undeniably shown that in these efforts to promote party peace and national union Defoe acted like a lover of his country, and that his aims were the aims of a statesmanlike as well as an honest man. And yet his protestations of independence and spontaneity of action, with all their ring of truth and all their solemnity of asseveration, were merely diplomatic blinds. He was all the time, as he afterwards admitted, when the admission could do

no harm except to his own passing veracity, acting as the agent of Harley, and in enjoyment of an "appointment" from the Queen. What exactly the nature of his secret services in Scotland and elsewhere were, he very properly refused to reveal. His business probably was to ascertain and report the opinions of influential persons, and keep the Government informed as far as he could of the general state of feeling. At any rate it was not as he alleged, mere curiosity, or the fear of his creditors, or private enterprise, or pure and simple patriotic zeal that took Defoe to Scotland. The use he made of his debts as diplomatic instruments is curious. He not merely practised his faculties in the management of his creditors, which one of Lord Beaconsfield's characters commends as an incomparable means to a sound knowledge of human nature; but he made his debts actual pieces in his political game. His poverty, apparent, if not real, served as a screen for his employment under Government. When he was despatched on secret missions, he could depart wiping his eyes at the hardship of having to flee from his creditors.

CHAPTER VI.

DR. SACHEVERELL, AND THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT.

SOME of Defoe's biographers have claimed for him that he anticipated the doctrines of Free Trade. This is an error. It is true that Defoe was never tired of insisting, in pamphlets, books, and number after number of the *Review*, on the all-importance of trade to the nation. Trade was the foundation of England's greatness; success in trade was the most honourable patent of nobility; next to the maintenance of the Protestant religion, the encouragement of trade should be the chief care of English statesmen. On these heads Defoe's enthusiasm was boundless, and his eloquence inexhaustible. It is true also that he supported with all his might the commercial clauses of the Treaty of Utrecht, which sought to abolish the prohibitory duties on our trade with France. It is this last circumstance which has earned for him the repute of being a pioneer of Free Trade. But his title to that repute does not bear examination. He was not so far in advance of his age as to detect the fallacy of the mercantile system. On the contrary, he avowed his adherence to it against those of his contemporaries who were inclined to call it in question. How Defoe came to support the new commercial treaty with France, and the grounds on which he supported it, can only be understood by looking at his relations with the Government.

While Defoe was living in Scotland in 1707, and filling the *Review* so exclusively with Scotch affairs that his readers, according to his own account, began to say that the fellow could talk of nothing but the Union, and had grown mighty dull of late, Harley's position in the Ministry was gradually becoming very insecure. He was suspected of cooling in his zeal for the war, and of keeping up clandestine relations with the Tories; and when Marlborough returned from his campaign at the close of the year he insisted upon the Secretary's dismissal. The Queen, who secretly resented the Marlborough yoke, at first refused her consent. Presently an incident occurred which gave them an excuse for more urgent pressure. One Gregg, a clerk in Harley's office, was discovered to be in secret correspondence with the French Court, furnishing Louis with the contents of important State papers. Harley was charged with complicity. This charge was groundless, but he could not acquit himself of gross negligence in the custody of his papers. Godolphin and Marlborough threatened to resign unless he was dismissed. Then the Queen yielded.

When Harley fell, Defoe, according to his own account, in the *Appeal to Honour and Justice*, looked upon himself as lost, taking it for granted that "when a great officer fell, all who came in by his interest fall with him." But when his benefactor heard of this, and of Defoe's "resolution never to abandon the fortunes of the man to whom he owed so much," he kindly urged the devoted follower to think rather of his own interest than of any romantic obligation. "My lord Treasurer," he said, "will employ you in nothing but what is for the public service, and agreeably to your own sentiments of things; and besides, it is the Queen you are serving, who has been very

good to you. Pray apply yourself as you used to do; I shall not take it ill from you in the least." To Godolphin accordingly Defoe applied himself, was by him introduced a second time to Her Majesty and to the honour of kissing her hand, and obtained "the continuance of an appointment which Her Majesty had been pleased to make him in consideration of a former special service he had done." This was the appointment which he held while he was challenging his enemies to say whether his outward circumstances looked like the figure the agents of Courts and Princes make.

The services on which Defoe was employed were, as before, of two kinds, active and literary. Shortly after the change in the Ministry early in 1708, news came of the gathering of the French expedition at Dunkirk, with a view, it was suspected, of trying to effect a landing in Scotland. Defoe was at once despatched to Edinburgh on an errand which, he says, was "far from being unfit for a sovereign to direct or an honest man to perform." If his duties were to mix with the people and ascertain the state of public feeling, and more specifically to sound suspected characters, to act, in short, as a political detective or spy, the service was one which it was essential that the Government should get some trustworthy person to undertake, and which any man at such a crisis might perform, if he could, without any discredit to his honesty or his patriotism. The independence of the sea-girt realm was never in greater peril. The French expedition was a well-conceived diversion, and it was imperative that the Government should know on what amount of support the invaders might rely in the bitterness prevailing in Scotland after the Union. Fortunately the loyalty of the Scotch Jacobites was not put to the test. As in the case

of the Spanish Armada, accident fought on our side. The French fleet succeeded in reaching the coast of Scotland before the ships of the defenders; but it overshot its arranged landing-point, and had no hope but to sail back ingloriously to Dunkirk. Meantime, Defoe had satisfactorily discharged himself of his mission. Godolphin showed his appreciation of his services by recalling him as soon as Parliament was dissolved, to travel through the counties and serve the cause of the Government in the general elections. He was frequently sent to Scotland again on similarly secret errands, and seems to have established a printing business there, made arrangements for the simultaneous issue of the *Review* in Edinburgh and London, besides organizing Edinburgh newspapers, executing commissions for English merchants, and setting on foot a linen manufactory.

But we are more concerned with the literary labors of this versatile and indefatigable genius. These, in the midst of his multifarious commercial and diplomatic concerns, he never intermitted. All the time the *Review* continued to give a brilliant support to the Ministry. The French expedition had lent a new interest to the affairs of Scotland, and Defoe advertised, that though he never intended to make the *Review* a newspaper, circumstances enabled him to furnish exceptionally correct intelligence from Scotland as well as sound impartial opinions. The intelligence which he communicated was all with a purpose, and a good purpose—the promotion of a better understanding between the united nations. He never had a better opportunity for preaching from his favourite text of Peace and Union, and he used it characteristically, championing the cause of the Scotch Presbyterians, asserting the firmness of their loyalty, smoothing over trading griev-

ances by showing elaborately how both sides benefited from the arrangements of the Union, launching shafts in every direction at his favourite butts, and never missing a chance of exulting in his own superior wisdom. In what a posture would England have been now, he cried, if those wiseacres had been listened to, who were for trusting the defence of England solely to the militia and the fleet! Would our fleet have kept the French from landing if Providence had not interposed; and if they had landed, would a militia, undermined by disaffection, have been able to beat them back? The French king deserved a vote of thanks for opening the eyes of the nation against foolish advisers, and for helping it to heal internal divisions. Louis, poor gentleman, was much to be pitied, for his informers had evidently served him badly, and had led him to expect a greater amount of support from disloyal factions than they had the will or the courage to give him.

During the electoral canvass, Defoe surpassed himself in the lively vigour of his advocacy of the Whig cause. "And now, gentlemen of England," he began in the *Review*—as it went on he became more and more direct and familiar in his manner of addressing his readers—"now we are a-going to choose Parliament men, I will tell you a story." And he proceeded to tell how in a certain borough a great patron procured the election of a "shock dog" as its parliamentary representative. Money and ale, Defoe says, could do anything. "God knows I speak it with regret for you all and for your posterity, it is not an impossible thing to debauch this nation into a choice of thieves, knaves, devils, shock dogs, or anything comparatively speaking, by the power of various intoxications." He spent several numbers of the *Review* in an ironical advice to the electors to choose Tories, showing with all his skill

“the mighty and prevailing reason why we should have a Tory Parliament.” “O gentlemen,” he cried, “if we have any mind to buy some more experience, be sure and choose Tories.” “We want a little instruction, we want to go to school to knaves and fools.” Afterwards, dropping this thin mask, he declared that among the electors only “the drunken, the debauched, the swearing, the persecuting” would vote for the High-fliers. “The grave, the sober, the thinking, the prudent,” would vote for the Whigs. “A House of Tories is a House of Devils.” “If ever we have a Tory Parliament, the nation is undone.” In his *Appeal to Honour and Justice* Defoe explained, that while he was serving Godolphin, “being resolved to remove all possible ground of suspicion that he kept any secret correspondence, he never visited, or wrote to, or any way corresponded with his principal benefactor for above three years.” Seeing that Harley was at that time the leader of the party which Defoe was denouncing with such spirit, it would have been strange indeed if there had been much intercourse between them.

Though regarded after his fall from office as the natural leader of the Tory party, Harley was a very reserved politician, who kept his own counsel, used instruments of many shapes and sizes, steered clear of entangling engagements, and left himself free to take advantage of various opportunities. To wage war against the Ministry was the work of more ardent partisans. He stood by and waited while Bolingbroke and Rochester and their allies in the press cried out that the Government was now in the hands of the enemies of the Church, accused the Whigs of protracting the war to fill their own pockets with the plunder of the Supplies, and called upon the nation to put an end to their jobbery and mismanagement. The victory of

Oudenarde in the summer of 1708 gave them a new handle. "What is the good," they cried, "of these glorious victories, if they do not bring peace? What do we gain by beating the French in campaign after campaign, if we never bring them nearer to submission? It is incredible that the French King is not willing to make peace, if the Whigs did not profit too much by the war to give peace any encouragement." To these arguments for peace, De-foe opposed himself steadily in the *Review*. "Well, gentlemen," he began, when the news came of the battle of Oudenarde, "have the French noosed themselves again? Let us pray the Duke of Marlborough that a speedy peace may not follow, for what would become of us?" He was as willing for a peace on honourable terms as any man, but a peace till the Protestant Succession was secured and the balance of power firmly settled, "would be fatal to peace at home." "If that fatal thing called Peace abroad should happen, we shall certainly be undone." Presently, however, the French King began to make promising overtures for peace; the Ministry, in hopes of satisfactory terms, encouraged them; the talk through the nation was all of peace, and the Whigs contented themselves with passing an address to the Crown through Parliament urging the Queen to make no peace till the Pretender should be disowned by the French Court, and the Succession guaranteed by a compact with the Allies. Throughout the winter the *Review* expounded with brilliant clearness the only conditions on which an honourable peace could be founded, and prepared the nation to doubt the sincerity with which Louis had entered into negotiations. Much dissatisfaction was felt, and that dissatisfaction was eagerly fanned by the Tories when the negotiations fell through, in consequence of the distrust with which the allies regarded Louis, and

their imposing upon him too hard a test of his honesty. Defoe fought vigorously against the popular discontent. The charges against Marlborough were idle rhodomontade. We had no reason to be discouraged with the progress of the war unless we had formed extravagant expectations. Though the French King's resources had been enfeebled, and he might reasonably have been expected to desire peace, he did not care for the welfare of France so much as for his own glory; he would fight to gain his purpose while there was a pistole in his treasury, and we must not expect Paris to be taken in a week. Nothing could be more admirable than Godolphin's management of our own Treasury; he deserved almost more credit than the Duke himself. "Your Treasurer has been your general of generals; without his exquisite management of the cash the Duke of Marlborough must have been beaten."

The Sacheverell incident, which ultimately led to the overthrow of the Ministry, gave Defoe a delightful opening for writing in their defence. A collection of his articles on this subject would show his controversial style at its best and brightest. Sacheverell and he were old antagonists. Sacheverell's "bloody flag and banner of defiance," and other High-flying truculencies, had furnished him with the main basis of his *Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. The laugh of the populace was then on Defoe's side, partly, perhaps, because the Government had prosecuted him. But in the changes of the troubled times, the Oxford Doctor, nurtured in "the scolding of the ancients," had found a more favourable opportunity. His literary skill was of the most mechanical kind; but at the close of 1709, when hopes of peace had been raised only to be disappointed, and the country was suffering from the distress of a prolonged war, people were more in

a mood to listen to a preacher who disdained to check the sweep of his rhetoric by qualifications or abatements, and luxuriated in denouncing the Queen's Ministers from the pulpit under scriptural allegories. He delivered a tremendous philippic about the Perils of False Brethren, as a sermon before the Lord Mayor in November. It would have been a wise thing for the Ministry to have left Sacheverell to be dealt with by their supporters in the press and in the pulpit. But in an evil hour Godolphin, stung by a nickname thrown at him by the rhetorical priest—a singularly comfortable-looking man to have so virulent a tongue, one of those orators who thrive on ill-conditioned language—resolved, contrary to the advice of more judicious colleagues, to have him impeached by the House of Commons. The Commons readily voted the sermon seditious, scandalous, and malicious, and agreed to a resolution for his impeachment; the Lords ordered that the case should be heard at their bar; and Westminster Hall was prepared to be the scene of a great public trial. At first Defoe, in heaping contemptuous ridicule upon the High-flying Doctor, had spoken as if he would consider prosecution a blunder. The man ought rather to be encouraged to go on exposing himself and his party. "Let him go on," he said, "to bully Moderation, explode Toleration, and damn the Union; the gain will be ours."

"You should use him as we do a hot horse. When he first frets and pulls, keep a stiff rein and hold him in if you can; but if he grows mad and furious, slack your hand, clap your heels to him, and let him go. Give him his belly full of it. Away goes the beast like a fury over hedge and ditch, till he runs himself off his mettle; perhaps bogs himself, and then he grows quiet of course. . . . Besides, good people, do you not know the nature of the barking creatures? If you

pass but by, and take no notice, they will yelp and make a noise, and perhaps run a little after you; but turn back, offer to strike them or throw stones at them, and you'll never have done—nay, you'll raise all the dogs of the parish upon you."

This last was precisely what the Government did, and they found reason to regret that they did not take Defoe's advice and let Sacheverell alone. When, however, they did resolve to prosecute him, Defoe immediately turned round, and exulted in the prosecution, as the very thing which he had foreseen. "Was not the *Review* right when he said you ought to let such people run on till they were out of breath? Did I not note to you that precipitations have always ruined them and served us? . . . Not a hound in the pack opened like him. He has done the work effectually. . . . He has raised the house and waked the landlady. . . . Thank him, good people, thank him and clap him on the back; let all his party do but this, and the day is our own." Nor did Defoe omit to remind the good people that he had been put in the pillory for satirically hinting that the High-Church favored such doctrines as Sacheverell was now prosecuted for. In his *Hymn to the Pillory* he had declared that Sacheverell ought to stand there in his place. His wish was now gratified; "the bar of the House of Commons is the worst pillory in the nation." In the two months which elapsed before the trial, during which the excitement was steadily growing, Sacheverell and his doctrines were the main topic of the *Review*. If a popular tempest could have been allayed by brilliant argument, Defoe's papers ought to have done it. He was a manly antagonist, and did not imitate coarser pamphleteers in raking up scandals about the Doctor's private life—at least not under his own name. There was, indeed, a pamphlet issued by "a Gentleman of Ox-

ford," which bears many marks of Defoe's authorship, and contains an account of some passages in Sacheverell's life not at all to the clergyman's credit. But the only pamphlet outside the *Review* which the biographers have ascribed to Defoe's activity, is a humorous Letter from the Pope to Don Sacheverellio, giving him instructions how to advance the interest of the Pretender. In the *Review* Defoe, treating Sacheverell with riotously mirthful contempt, calls for the punishment of the doctrines rather than the man. During the trial, which lasted more than a fortnight, a mob attended the Doctor's carriage every day from his lodgings in the Temple to Westminster Hall, huzzaing, and pressing to kiss his hand, and spent the evenings in rabbling the Dissenters' meeting-houses, and hooting before the residences of prominent Whigs. Defoe had always said that the High-fliers would use violence to their opponents if they had the power, and here was a confirmation of his opinion on which he did not fail to insist. The sentence on Sacheverell, that his sermon and vindication should be burnt by the common hangman and himself suspended from preaching for three years, was hailed by the mob as an acquittal, and celebrated by tumultuous gatherings and bonfires. Defoe reasoned hard and joyfully to prove that the penalty was everything that could be wished, and exactly what he had all along advised and contemplated, but he did not succeed in persuading the masses that the Government had not suffered a defeat.

The impeachment of Sacheverell turned popular feeling violently against the Whigs. The break up of the Gertruydenberg Conference without peace gave a strong push in the same direction. It was all due, the Tories shouted, and the people were now willing to believe, to the folly of our Government in insisting upon impossible conditions

from the French King, and their shameless want of patriotism in consulting the interests of the Allies rather than of England. The Queen, who for some time had been longing to get rid of her Whig Ministers, did not at once set sail with this breeze. She dismissed the Earl of Sunderland in June, and sent word to her allies that she meant to make no further changes. Their ambassadors, with what was even then resented as an impertinence, congratulated her on this resolution, and then in August she took the momentous step of dismissing Godolphin, and putting the Treasury nominally in commission, but really under the management of Harley. For a few weeks it seems to have been Harley's wish to conduct the administration in concert with the remaining Whig members, but the extreme Tories, with whom he had been acting, overbore his moderate intentions. They threatened to desert him unless he broke clearly and definitely with the Whigs. In October accordingly the Whigs were all turned out of the Administration, Tories put in their places, Parliament dissolved, and writs issued for new elections. "So sudden and entire a change of the Ministry," Bishop Burnet remarks, "is scarce to be found in our history, especially where men of great abilities had served both with zeal and success." That the Queen should dismiss one or all of her Ministers in the face of a Parliamentary majority excited no surprise; but that the whole Administration should be changed at a stroke from one party to the other was a new and strange thing. The old Earl of Sunderland's suggestion to William III. had not taken root in constitutional practice; this was the fulfilment of it under the gradual pressure of circumstances.

Defoe's conduct while the political balance was rocking, and after the Whig side had decisively kicked the beam,

is a curious study. One hardly knows which to admire most, the loyalty with which he stuck to the falling house till the moment of its collapse, or the adroitness with which he escaped from the ruins. Censure of his shiftiness is partly disarmed by the fact that there were so many in that troubled and uncertain time who would have acted like him if they had had the skill. Besides, he acted so steadily and with such sleepless vigilance and energy on the principle that the appearance of honesty is the best policy, that at this distance of time it is not easy to catch him tripping, and if we refuse to be guided by the opinion of his contemporaries, we almost inevitably fall victims to his incomparable plausibility. Deviations in his political writings from the course of the honest patriot are almost as difficult to detect as flaws in the verisimilitude of *Robinson Crusoe* or the *Journal of the Plague*.

During the two months' interval between the substitution of Dartmouth for Sunderland and the fall of Godolphin, Defoe used all his powers of eloquence and argument to avert the threatened changes in the Ministry, and keep the Tories out. He had a personal motive for this, he confessed. "My own share in the ravages they shall make upon our liberties is like to be as severe as any man's, from the rage and fury of a party who are in themselves implacable, and whom God has not been pleased to bless me with a talent to flatter and submit to." Of the dismissed minister Sunderland, with whom Defoe had been in personal relations during the negotiations for the Union, he spoke in terms of the warmest praise, always with a formal profession of not challenging the Queen's judgment in discharging her servant. "My Lord Sunderland," he said, "leaves the Ministry with the most unblemished character that ever I read of any statesman in the world." "I am making no

court to my Lord Sunderland. The unpolished author of this paper never had the talent of making his court to the great men of the age." But where is the objection against his conduct? Not a dog of the party can bark against him. "They cannot show me a man of their party that ever did act like him, or of whom they can say we should believe he would if he had the opportunity." The Tories were clamouring for the dismissal of all the other Whigs. High-Church addresses to the Queen were pouring in, claiming to represent the sense of the nation, and hinting an absolute want of confidence in the Administration. Defoe examined the conduct of the ministers severally and collectively, and demanded where was the charge against them, where the complaint, where the treasure misapplied?

As for the sense of the nation, there was one sure way of testing this better than any got-up addresses, namely, the rise or fall of the public credit. The public stocks fell immediately on the news of Sunderland's dismissal, and were only partially revived upon Her Majesty's assurance to the Directors of the Bank that she meant to keep the Ministry otherwise unchanged. A rumour that Parliament was to be dissolved had sent them down again. If the public credit is thus affected by the mere apprehension of a turn of affairs in England, Defoe said, the thing itself will be a fatal blow to it. The coy Lady Credit had been wavering in her attachment to England; any sudden change would fright her away altogether. As for the pooh-pooh cry of the Tories that the national credit was of no consequence, that a nation could not be in debt to itself, and that their moneyed men would come forward with nineteen shillings in the pound for the support of the war, Defoe treated this claptrap with proper ridicule.

But in spite of all Defoe's efforts, the crash came. On

the 10th of August the Queen sent to Godolphin for the Treasurer's staff, and Harley became her Prime Minister. How did Defoe behave then? The first two numbers of the *Review* after the Lord Treasurer's fall are among the most masterly of his writings. He was not a small, mean, timid time-server and turncoat. He faced about with bold and steady caution, on the alert to give the lie to anybody who dared to accuse him of facing about at all. He frankly admitted that he was in a quandary what to say about the change that had taken place. "If a man could be found that could sail north and south, that could speak truth and falsehood, that could turn to the right hand and the left, all at the same time, he would be the man, he would be the only proper person that should now speak." Of one thing only he was certain. "We are sure honest men go out." As for their successors, "it is our business to hope, and time must answer for those that come in. If Tories, if Jacobites, if High-fliers, if madmen of any kind are to come in, I am against them; I ask them no favour, I make no court to them, nor am I going about to please them." But the question was, what was to be done in the circumstances? Defoe stated plainly two courses, with their respective dangers. To cry out about the new Ministry was to ruin public credit. To profess cheerfulness was to encourage the change and strengthen the hands of those that desired to push it farther. On the whole, for himself he considered the first danger the most to be dreaded of the two. Therefore he announced his intention of devoting his whole energy to maintaining the public credit, and advised all true Whigs to do likewise. "Though I don't like the crew, I won't sink the ship. I'll do my best to save the ship. I'll pump and heave and haul, and do anything I can, though he that pulls with me were my en-

emy. The reason is plain. We are all in the ship, and must sink or swim together."

What could be more plausible? What conduct more truly patriotic? Indeed, it would be difficult to find fault with Defoe's behaviour, were it not for the rogue's protestations of inability to court the favour of great men, and his own subsequent confessions in his *Appeal to Honour and Justice*, as to what took place behind the scenes. Immediately on the turn of affairs he took steps to secure that connexion with the Government, the existence of which he was always denying. The day after Godolphin's displacement, he tells us, he waited on him, and "humbly asked his lordship's direction what course he should take." Godolphin at once assured him, in very much the same words that Harley had used before, that the change need make no difference to him; he was the Queen's servant, and all that had been done for him was by Her Majesty's special and particular direction; his business was to wait till he saw things settled, and then apply himself to the Ministers of State to receive Her Majesty's commands from them. Thereupon Defoe resolved to guide himself by the following principle:—

"It occurred to me immediately, as a principle for my conduct, that it was not material to me what ministers Her Majesty was pleased to employ; my duty was to go along with every Ministry, so far as they did not break in upon the Constitution, and the laws and liberties of my country; my part being only the duty of a subject, viz., to submit to all lawful commands, and to enter into no service which was not justifiable by the laws; to all which I have exactly obliged myself."

Defoe was thus, as he says, providentially cast back upon his original benefactor. That he received any considera-

tion, pension, gratification, or reward for his services to Harley, "except that old appointment which Her Majesty was pleased to make him," he strenuously denied. The denial is possibly true, and it is extremely probable that he was within the truth when he protested in the most solemn manner that he had never "received any instructions, directions, orders, or let them call it what they will, of that kind, for the writing of any part of what he had written, or any materials for the putting together, for the forming any book or pamphlet whatsoever, from the said Earl of Oxford, late Lord Treasurer, or from any person by his order or direction, since the time that the late Earl of Godolphin was Lord Treasurer." Defoe declared that "in all his writing, he ever capitulated for his liberty to speak according to his own judgment of things," and we may easily believe him. He was much too clever a servant to need instructions.

His secret services to Harley in the new elections are probably buried in oblivion. In the *Review* he pursued a strain which to the reader who does not take his articles in connexion with the politics of the time, might appear to be thoroughly consistent with his advice to the electors on previous occasions. He meant to confine himself, he said at starting, rather to the manner of choosing than to the persons to be chosen, and he never denounced bribery, intimidation, rioting, rabbling, and every form of interference with the electors' freedom of choice, in more energetic language. As regarded the persons to be chosen, his advice was as before, to choose moderate men—men of sense and temper, not men of fire and fury. But he no longer asserted, as he had done before, the exclusive possession of good qualities by the Whigs. He now recognised that there were hot Whigs as well as moderate

Whigs, moderate Tories as well as hot Tories. It was for the nation to avoid both extremes and rally round the men of moderation, whether Whig or Tory. "If we have a Tory High-flying Parliament, we Tories are undone. If we have a hot Whig Parliament, we Whigs are undone."

The terms of Defoe's advice were unexceptionable, but the Whigs perceived a change from the time when he declared that if ever we have a Tory Parliament the nation is undone. It was as if a Republican writer, after the *coup d'état* of the 16th May, 1877, had warned the French against electing extreme Republicans, and had echoed the Marshal-President's advice to give their votes to moderate men of all parties. Defoe did not increase the conviction of his party loyalty when a Tory Parliament was returned, by trying to prove that whatever the new members might call themselves, they must inevitably be Whigs. He admitted in the most unqualified way that the elections had been disgracefully riotous and disorderly, and lectured the constituencies freely on their conduct. "It is not," he said, "a Free Parliament that you have chosen. You have met, mobbed, rabbled, and thrown dirt at one another, but election by mob is no more free election than Oliver's election by a standing army. Parliaments and rabbles are contrary things." Yet he had hopes of the gentlemen who had been thus chosen.

"I have it upon many good grounds, as I think I told you, that there are some people who are shortly to come together, of whose character, let the people that send them up think what they will, when they come thither they will not run the mad length that is expected of them; they will act upon the Revolution principle, keep within the circle of the law, proceed with temper, moderation, and justice, to support the

same interest we have all carried on—and this I call being Whiggish, or acting as Whigs.

“I shall not trouble you with further examining why they will be so, or why they will act thus; I think it is so plain from the necessity of the Constitution and the circumstances of things before them, that it needs no further demonstration—they will be Whigs, they must be Whigs; there is no remedy, for the Constitution is a Whig.”

The new members of Parliament must either be Whigs or traitors, for everybody who favours the Protestant succession is a Whig, and everybody who does not is a traitor. Defoe used the same ingenuity in playing upon words in his arguments in support of the public credit. Every true Whig, he argued, in the *Review* and in separate essays, was bound to uphold the public credit, for to permit it to be impaired was the surest way to let in the Pretender. The Whigs were accused of withdrawing their money from the public stocks, to mark their distrust of the Government. “Nonsense!” Defoe said, “in that case they would not be Whigs.” Naturally enough, as the *Review* now practically supported a Ministry in which extreme Tories had the predominance, he was upbraided for having gone over to that party. “Why, gentlemen,” he retorted, “it would be more natural for you to think I am turned Turk than High-flier; and to make me a Mahometan would not be half so ridiculous as to make me say the Whigs are running down credit, when, on the contrary, I am still satisfied if there were no Whigs at this time, there would hardly be any such thing as credit left among us.” “If the credit of the nation is to be maintained, we must all act as Whigs, because credit can be maintained upon no other foot. Had the doctrine of non-resistance of tyranny been voted, had the Prerogative been exalted above the Law, and property sub-

jected to absolute will, would Parliament have voted the funds? Credit supposes Whigs lending and a Whig Government borrowing. It is nonsense to talk of credit and passive submission."

Had Defoe confined himself to lecturing those hot Whigs who were so afraid of the secret Jacobitism of Harley's colleagues that they were tempted to withdraw their money from the public stocks, posterity, unable to judge how far these fears were justified, and how far it was due to a happy accident that they were not realized, might have given him credit for sacrificing partisanship to patriotism. This plea could hardly be used for another matter in which, with every show of reasonable fairness, he gave a virtual support to the Ministry. We have seen how he spoke of Marlborough, and Godolphin's management of the army and the finances when the Whigs were in office. When the Tories came in, they at once set about redeeming their pledges to inquire into the malversation of their predecessors. Concerning this proceeding, Defoe spoke with an approval which, though necessarily guarded in view of his former professions of extreme satisfaction, was none the less calculated to recommend.

"Inquiry into miscarriages in things so famous and so fatal as war and battle is a thing so popular that no man can argue against it; and had we paid well, and hanged well, much sooner, as some men had not been less in a condition to mistake, so some others might not have been here to find fault. But it is better late than never; when the inquiry is set about heartily, it may be useful on several accounts, both to unravel past errors and to prevent new. For my part, as we have for many years past groaned for want of justice upon wilful mistakes, yet, in hopes some of the care-

ful and mischievous designing gentlemen may come in for a share, I am glad the work is begun."

With equal good humour and skill in leaving open a double interpretation, he commented on the fact that the new Parliament did not, as had been customary, give a formal vote of thanks to Marlborough for his conduct of his last campaign.

"We have had a mighty pother here in print about rewarding of generals. Some think great men too much rewarded, and some think them too little rewarded. The case is so nice, neither side will bear me to speak my mind; but I am persuaded of this, that there is no general has or ever will merit great things of us, but he has received and will receive all the grateful acknowledgments he OUGHT to expect."

But his readers would complain that he had not defined the word "ought." That, he said, with audacious pleasantry, he left to them. And while they were on the subject of mismanagement, he would give them a word of advice which he had often given them before. "While you bite and devour one another, you are all mismanagers. Put an end to your factions, your tumults, your rabbles, or you will not be able to make war upon anybody." Previously, however, his way of making peace at home was to denounce the High-fliers. He was still pursuing the same object, though by a different course, now that the leaders of the High-fliers were in office, when he declared that "those Whigs who say that the new Ministry is entirely composed of Tories and High-fliers are fool-Whigs." The remark was no doubt perfectly true, but yet if Defoe had been thoroughly consistent he ought at

least, instead of supporting the Ministry on account of the small moderate element it contained, to have urged its purification from dangerous ingredients.

This, however, it must be admitted, he also did, though indirectly and at a somewhat later stage, when Harley's tenure of the Premiership was menaced by High-fliers who thought him much too lukewarm a leader. A "cave," the famous October Club, was formed in the autumn of 1711, to urge more extreme measures upon the ministry against Whig officials, and to organize a High-Church agitation throughout the country. It consisted chiefly of country squires, who wished to see members of the late Ministry impeached, and the Duke of Marlborough dismissed from the command of the army. At Harley's instigation Swift wrote an "advice" to these hot partisans, beseeching them to have patience and trust the Ministry, and everything that they wished would happen in due time. Defoe sought to break their ranks by a direct onslaught in his most vigorous style, denouncing them in the *Review* as Jacobites in disguise and an illicit importation from France, and writing their "secret history," "with some friendly characters of the illustrious members of that honourable society" in two separate tracts. This skirmish served the double purpose of strengthening Harley against the reckless zealots of his party, and keeping up Defoe's appearance of impartiality. Throughout the fierce struggle of parties, never so intense in any period of our history as during those years when the Constitution itself hung in the balance, it was as a True-born Englishman first and a Whig and Dissenter afterwards, that Defoe gave his support to the Tory Ministry. It may not have been his fault; he may have been most unjustly suspected; but nobody at the time would believe his protestations of in-

dependence. When his former High-flying persecutor, the Earl of Nottingham, went over to the Whigs, and with their acquiescence, or at least without their active opposition, introduced another Bill to put down Occasional Conformity, Defoe wrote trenchantly against it. But even then the Dissenters, as he loudly lamented, repudiated his alliance. The Whigs were not so much pleased on this occasion with his denunciations of the persecuting spirit of the High-Churchmen, as they were enraged by his stinging taunts levelled at themselves for abandoning the Dissenters to their persecutors. The Dissenters must now see, Defoe said, that they would not be any better off under a Low-Church ministry than under a High-Church ministry. But the Dissenters, considering that the Whigs were too much in a minority to prevent the passing of the Bill, however willing to do so, would only see in their professed champion an artful supporter of the men in power.

A curious instance has been preserved of the estimate of Defoe's character at this time.¹ M. Mesnager, an agent sent by the French King to sound the Ministry and the country as to terms of peace, wanted an able pamphleteer to promote the French interest. The Swedish Resident recommended Defoe, who had just issued a tract, entitled *Reasons why this Nation ought to put an end to this expensive War*. Mesnager was delighted with the tract, at once had it translated into French and circulated through the Netherlands, employed the Swede to treat with Defoe, and sent him a hundred pistoles by way of earnest. Defoe kept the pistoles, but told the Queen, M. Mesnager recording that though "he missed his aim in this person,

¹ I doubt whether it adds to the credibility of the story in all points that the minutes of M. Mesnager's Negotiations were "translated," and probably composed by Defoe himself. See p. 136.

the money perhaps was not wholly lost; for I afterwards understood that the man was in the service of the state, and that he had let the Queen know of the hundred pistoles he had received; so I was obliged to sit still, and be very well satisfied that I had not discovered myself to him, for it was not our season yet." The anecdote at once shows the general opinion entertained of Defoe, and the fact that he was less corruptible than was supposed. There can be little doubt that our astute intriguer would have outwitted the French emissary if he had not been warned in time, pocketed his bribes, and wormed his secrets out of him for the information of the Government.

During Godolphin's Ministry, Defoe's cue had been to reason with the nation against too impatient a longing for peace. Let us have peace by all means, had been his text, but not till honourable terms have been secured, and meantime the war is going on as prosperously as any but madmen can desire. He repeatedly challenged adversaries who compared what he wrote then with what he wrote under the new Ministry, to prove him guilty of inconsistency. He stood on safe ground when he made this challenge, for circumstances had changed sufficiently to justify any change of opinion. The plans of the Confederates were disarranged by the death of the Emperor, and the accession of his brother, the Archduke Charles, to the vacant crown. To give the crown of Spain in these new circumstances to the Archduke, as had been the object of the Allies when they began the war, would have been as dangerous to the balance of power as to let Spain pass to Louis's grandson, Philip of Anjou. It would be more dangerous, Defoe argued; and by far the safest course would be to give Spain to Philip and his posterity, who "would be as much Spaniards in a very short time, as

ever Philip II. was or any of his other predecessors." This was the main argument which had been used in the latter days of King William against going to war at all, and Defoe had then refuted it scornfully; but circumstances had changed, and he not only adopted it, but also issued an essay "proving that it was always the sense both of King William and of all the Confederates, and even of the Grand Alliance itself, that the Spanish monarchy should never be united in the person of the Emperor." Partition the Spanish dominions in Europe between France and Germany, and the West Indies between England and Holland—such was Defoe's idea of a proper basis of peace.

But while Defoe expounded in various forms the conditions of a good peace, he devoted his main energy to proving that peace under some conditions was a necessity. He dilated on the enormous expense of the war, and showed by convincing examples that it was ruining the trade of the country. Much that he said was perfectly true, but if he had taken M. Mesnager's bribes and loyally carried out his instructions, he could not more effectually have served the French King's interests than by writing as he did at that juncture. The proclaimed necessity under which England lay to make peace, offered Louis an advantage which he was not slow to take. The proposals which he made at the Congress of Utrecht, and which he had ascertained would be accepted by the English Ministry and the Queen, were not unjustly characterised by the indignant Whigs as being such as he might have made at the close of a successful war. The territorial concessions to England and Holland were insignificant; the States were to have the right of garrisoning certain barrier towns in Flanders, and England was to have some portions of Cana-

da. But there was no mention of dividing the West Indies between them—the West Indies were to remain attached to Spain. It was the restoration of their trade that was their main desire in these great commercial countries, and even that object Louis agreed to promote in a manner that seemed, according to the ideas of the time, to be more to his own advantage than to theirs. In the case of England, he was to remove prohibitions against our imports, and in return we engaged to give the French imports the privileges of the most favoured nations. In short, we were to have free trade with France, which the commercial classes of the time looked upon as a very doubtful blessing.

It is because Defoe wrote in favour of this free trade that he is supposed to have been superior to the commercial fallacies of the time. But a glance at his arguments shows that this is a very hasty inference. It was no part of Defoe's art as a controversialist to seek to correct popular prejudices; on the contrary, it was his habit to take them for granted as the bases of his arguments, to work from them as premisses towards his conclusion. He expressly avowed himself a prohibitionist in principle:—

“I am far from being of their mind who say that all prohibitions are destructive to trade, and that wise nations, the Dutch, make no prohibitions at all.

“Where any nation has, by the singular blessing of God, a produce given to their country from which such a manufacture can be made as other nations cannot be without, and none can make that produce but themselves, it would be distraction in that nation not to prohibit the exportation of that original produce till it is manufactured.”

He had been taunted with flying in the face of what he had himself said in King William's time in favour of

prohibition. But he boldly undertakes to prove that prohibition was absolutely necessary in King William's time, and not only so, but that "the advantages we may make of taking off a prohibition now are all founded upon the advantages we did make of laying on a prohibition then: that the same reason which made a prohibition then the best thing, makes it now the maddest thing a nation could do or ever did in the matter of trade." In King William's time, the balance of trade was against us to the extent of 850,000*l.*, in consequence of the French King's laying extravagant duties upon the import of all our woollen manufactures.

"Whoever thinks that by opening the French trade I should mean . . . that we should come to trade with them 850,000*l. per annum* to our loss, must think me as mad as I think him for suggesting it; but if, on the contrary, I prove that as we traded then 850,000*l.* a year to our loss, we can trade now with them 600,000*l.* to our gain, then I will venture to draw this consequence, that we are distracted, speaking of our trading wits, if we do not trade with them."

In a preface to the Eighth Volume of the *Review* (July 29, 1712), Defoe announced his intention of discontinuing the publication, in consequence of the tax then imposed on newspapers. We can hardly suppose that this was his real motive, and as a matter of fact the *Review*, whose death had been announced, reappeared in due course in the form of a single leaf, and was published in that form till the 11th of June, 1713. By that time a new project was on foot which Defoe had frequently declared his intention of starting, a paper devoted exclusively to the discussion of the affairs of trade. The *Review* at one time had declared its main subject to be trade, but had claimed a liberty of

digression under which the main subject had all but disappeared. At last, however, in May, 1713, when popular excitement and hot Parliamentary debates were expected on the Commercial Treaty with France, an exclusively trading paper was established, entitled *Mercator*. Defoe denied being the author—that is, conductor or editor of this paper—and said that he had not power to put what he would into it; which may have been literally true. Every number, however, bears traces of his hand or guidance; *Mercator* is identical in opinions, style, and spirit with the *Review*, differing only in the greater openness of its attacks upon the opposition of the Whigs to the Treaty of Commerce. Party spirit was so violent that summer, after the publication of the terms of the Treaty of Utrecht, that Defoe was probably glad to shelter himself under the responsibility of another name; he had flaunted the cloak of impartial advice till it had become a thing of shreds and patches.

To prove that the balance of trade, in spite of a prevailing impression to the contrary, not only might be, but had been, on the side of England, was the chief purpose of *Mercator*. The Whig *Flying Post* chaffed *Mercator* for trying to reconcile impossibilities, but *Mercator* held stoutly on with an elaborate apparatus of comparative tables of exports and imports, and ingenious schemes for the development of various branches of the trade with France. Defoe was too fond of carrying the war into the enemy's country, to attack prohibitions or the received doctrine as to the balance of trade in principle; he fought the enemy spiritedly on their own ground. "Take a medium of three years for above forty years past, and calculate the exports and imports to and from France, and it shall appear the balance of trade was always on the English

side, to the loss and disadvantage of the French." It followed, upon the received commercial doctrines, that the French King was making a great concession in consenting to take off high duties upon English goods. This was precisely what Defoe was labouring to prove. "The French King in taking off the said high duties ruins all his own manufactures." The common belief was that the terms of peace would ruin English manufacturing industry; full in the teeth of this, Defoe, as was his daring custom, flung the paradox of the extreme opposite. On this occasion he acted purely as a party writer. That he was never a free-trader, at least in principle, will appear from the following extract from his *Plan of the English Commerce*, published in 1728:—

"Seeing trade then is the fund of wealth and power, we cannot wonder that we see the wisest Princes and States anxious and concerned for the increase of the commerce and trade of their subjects, and of the growth of the country; anxious to propagate the sale of such goods as are the manufacture of their own subjects, and that employs their own people; especially of such as keep the money of their dominions at home; and on the contrary, for prohibiting the importation from abroad of such things as are the product of other countries, and of the labour of other people, or which carry money back in return, and not merchandise in exchange.

"Nor can we wonder that we see such Princes and States endeavouring to set up such manufactures in their own countries, which they see successfully and profitably carried on by their neighbours, and to endeavour to procure the materials proper for setting up those manufactures by all just and possible methods from other countries.

"Hence we cannot blame the French or Germans for endeavouring to get over the British wool into their hands, by the help of which they may bring their people to imitate our

manufactures, which are so esteemed in the world, as well as so gainful at home.

“Nor can we blame any foreign nation for prohibiting the use and wearing of our manufactures, if they can either make them at home, or make any which they can shift with in their stead.

“The reason is plain. ’Tis the interest of every nation to encourage their own trade, to encourage those manufactures that will employ their own subjects, consume their own growth of provisions, as well as materials of commerce, and such as will keep their money or species at home.

“’Tis from this just principle that the French prohibit the English woollen manufacture, and the English again prohibit, or impose a tax equal to a prohibition, on the French silks, paper, linen, and several other of their manufactures. ’Tis from the same just reason in trade that we prohibit the wearing of East India wrought silks, printed calicoes, &c.; that we prohibit the importation of French brandy, Brazil sugars, and Spanish tobacco; and so of several other things.”

CHAPTER VII.

DIFFICULTIES IN RE-CHANGING SIDES.

DEFOE'S unwearied zeal in the service of Harley had excited the bitterest resentment among his old allies, the Whigs. He often complained of it, more in sorrow than in anger. He had no right to look for any other treatment; it was a just punishment upon him for seeking the good of his country without respect of parties. An author that wrote from principle had a very hard task in those dangerous times. If he ventured on the dangerous precipice of telling unbiassed truth, he must expect martyrdom from both sides. This resignation of the simple single-minded patriot to the pains and penalties of honesty, naturally added to the rage of the party with whose factious proceedings he would have nothing to do; and yet it has always been thought an extraordinary instance of party spite that the Whigs should have instituted a prosecution against him, on the alleged ground that a certain remarkable series of Tracts were written in favour of the Pretender. Towards the end of 1712 Defoe had issued *A Seasonable Warning and Caution against the Insinuations of Papists and Jacobites in favour of the Pretender*. No charge of Jacobitism could be made against a pamphlet containing such a sentence as this:—

“Think, then, dear Britons! what a King this Pretender must be! a papist by inclination; a tyrant by education; a Frenchman by honour and obligation;—and how long will your liberties last you in this condition? And when your liberties are gone, how long will your religion remain? When your hands are tied; when armies bind you; when power oppresses you; when a tyrant disarms you; when a Popish French tyrant reigns over you; by what means or methods can you pretend to maintain your Protestant religion?”

A second pamphlet, *Hannibal at the Gates*, strongly urging party union and the banishment of factious spirit, was equally unmistakable in tone. The titles of the following three of the series were more startling:—*Reasons against the Succession of the House of Hanover—And what if the Pretender should come? or Some considerations of the advantages and real consequences of the Pretender's possessing the Crown of Great Britain—An Answer to a Question that nobody thinks of, viz. But what if the Queen should die?* The contents, however, were plainly ironical. The main reason against the Succession of the Prince of Hanover was that it might be wise for the nation to take a short turn of a French, Popish, hereditary-right *régime* in the first place as an emetic. Emetics were good for the health of individuals, and there could be no better preparative for a healthy constitutional government than another experience of arbitrary power. Defoe had used the same ironical argument for putting Tories in office in 1708. The advantages of the Pretender's possessing the Crown were that we should be saved from all further danger of a war with France, and should no longer hold the exposed position of a Protestant State among the great Catholic Powers of Europe. The point

of the last pamphlet of the series was less distinct; it suggested the possibility of the English people losing their properties, their estates, inheritance, lands, goods, lives, and liberties, unless they were clear in their own minds what course to take in the event of the Queen's death. But none of the three Tracts contain anything that could possibly be interpreted as a serious argument in favour of the Pretender. They were all calculated to support the Succession of the Elector of Hanover. Why, then, should the Whigs have prosecuted the author? It was a strange thing, as Defoe did not fail to complain, that they should try to punish a man for writing in their own interest.

The truth, however, is that although Defoe afterwards tried to convince the Whig leaders that he had written these pamphlets in their interest, they were written in the interest of Harley. They were calculated to recommend that Minister to Prince George, in the event of his accession to the English throne. We see this at once when we examine their contents by the light of the personal intrigues of the time. Harley was playing a double game. It was doubtful who the Queen's successor would be, and he aimed at making himself safe in either of the two possible contingencies. Very soon after his accession to power in 1710, he made vague overtures for the restoration of the Stuarts under guarantees for civil and religious liberty. When pressed to take definite steps in pursuance of this plan, he deprecated haste, and put off and put off, till the Pretender's adherents lost patience. All the time he was making protestations of fidelity to the Court of Hanover. The increasing vagueness of his promises to the Jacobites seems to show that, as time went on, he became convinced that the Hanoverian was the winning cause. No man could better advise him as to the feeling of the English

people than Defoe, who was constantly perambulating the country on secret services, in all probability for the direct purpose of sounding the general opinion. It was towards the end of 1712, by which time Harley's shilly-shallying had effectually disgusted the Jacobites, that the first of Defoe's series of Anti-Jacobite tracts appeared. It professed to be written by An Englishman at the Court of Hanover, which affords some ground, though it must be confessed slight, for supposing that Defoe had visited Hanover, presumably as the bearer of some of Harley's assurances of loyalty. The *Seasonable Warning and Caution* was circulated, Defoe himself tells us, in thousands among the poor people by several of his friends. Here was a fact to which Harley could appeal as a circumstantial proof of his zeal in the Hanoverian cause. Whether Defoe's Anti-Jacobite tracts really served his benefactor in this way, can only be matter of conjecture. However that may be, they were upon the surface written in Harley's interest. The warning and caution was expressly directed against the insinuations that the Ministry were in favour of the Pretender. All who made these insinuations were assumed by the writer to be Papists, Jacobites, and enemies of Britain. As these insinuations were the chief war-cry of the Whigs, and we now know that they were not without foundation, it is easy to understand why Defoe's pamphlets, though Anti-Jacobite, were resented by the party in whose interest he had formerly written. He excused himself afterwards by saying that he was not aware of the Jacobite leanings of the Ministry; that none of them ever said one word in favour of the Pretender to him; that he saw no reason to believe that they did favour the Pretender. As for himself, he said, they certainly never employed him in any Jacobite intrigue. He defied his

enemies to "prove that he ever kept company or had any society, friendship, or conversation with any Jacobite. So averse had he been to the interest and the people, that he had studiously avoided their company on all occasions."

Within a few months of his making these protestations, Defoe was editing a Jacobite newspaper under secret instructions from a Whig Government. But this is anticipating.

That an influential Whig should have set on foot a prosecution of Defoe as the author of "treasonable libels against the House of Hanover," although the charge had no foundation in the language of the incriminated pamphlets, is intelligible enough. The Whig party writers were delighted with the prosecution, one of them triumphing over Defoe as being caught at last, and put "in Lob's pound," and speaking of him as "the vilest of all the writers that have prostituted their pens either to encourage faction, oblige a party, or serve their own mercenary ends." But that the Court of Queen's Bench, before whom Defoe was brought—with some difficulty, it would appear, for he had fortified his house at Newington like Robinson Crusoe's castle—should have unanimously declared his pamphlets to be treasonable, and that one of them, on his pleading that they were ironical, should have told him it was a kind of irony for which he might come to be hanged, drawn, and quartered, is not so easy to understand, unless we suppose that, in these tempestuous times, judges like other men were powerfully swayed by party feeling. It is possible, however, that they deemed the mere titles of the pamphlets offences in themselves, disturbing cries raised while the people were not yet clear of the forest of anarchy, and still subject to dangerous panics—offences of the same nature as if a man should shout fire in sport in a crowded theatre. Possibly, also,

the severity of the Court was increased by Defoe's indiscretion in commenting upon the case in the *Review*, while it was still *sub judice*. At any rate he escaped punishment. The Attorney-General was ordered to prosecute him, but before the trial came off Defoe obtained a pardon under the royal seal.

The Whigs were thus baulked of revenge upon their renegade. Their loyal writers attributed Defoe's pardon to the secret Jacobitism of the Ministry—quite wrongly—as we have just seen he was acting for Harley as a Hanoverian and not as a Jacobite. Curiously enough, when Defoe next came before the Queen's Bench, the instigator of the prosecution was a Tory, and the Government was Whig, and he again escaped from the clutches of the law by the favour of the Government. Till Mr. William Lee's remarkable discovery, fourteen years ago, of certain letters in Defoe's handwriting in the State Paper Office, it was generally believed that on the death of Queen Anne, the fall of the Tory Administration, and the complete discomfiture of Harley's trimming policy, the veteran pamphleteer and journalist, now fifty-three years of age, withdrew from political warfare, and spent the evening of his life in the composition of those works of fiction which have made his name immortal. His biographers had misjudged his character and underrated his energy. When Harley fell from power, Defoe sought service under the Whigs. He had some difficulty in regaining their favour, and when he did obtain employment from them, it was of a kind little to his honour.

In his *Appeal to Honour and Justice*, published early in 1715, in which he defended himself against the charges copiously and virulently urged of being a party-writer, a hireling, and a turncoat, and explained everything that was

doubtful in his conduct by alleging the obligations of gratitude to his first benefactor Harley, Defoe declared that since the Queen's death he had taken refuge in absolute silence. He found, he said, that if he offered to say a word in favour of the Hanoverian settlement, it was called fawning and turning round again, and therefore he resolved to meddle neither one way nor the other. He complained sorrowfully that in spite of this resolution, and though he had not written one book since the Queen's death, a great many things were called by his name. In that case, he had no resource but to practise a Christian spirit and pray for the forgiveness of his enemies. This was Defoe's own account, and it was accepted as the whole truth, till Mr. Lee's careful research and good fortune gave a different colour to his personal history from the time of Harley's displacement.¹

During the dissensions, in the last days of the Queen which broke up the Tory Ministry, *Mercator* was dropped. Defoe seems immediately to have entered into communication with the printer of the Whig *Flying Post*, one William Hurt. The owner of the *Post* was abroad at the time, but his managers, whether actuated by personal spite or reasonable suspicion, learning that Hurt was in communication with one whom they looked upon as their enemy, decided at once to change their printer. There being no copyright in newspaper titles in those days, Hurt retaliated by engaging Defoe to write another paper under the same title, advertising that, from the arrangements he had

¹ In making mention of Mr. Lee's valuable researches and discoveries, I ought to add that his manner of connecting the facts for which I am indebted to him, and the construction he puts upon them, is entirely different from mine. For the view here implied of Defoe's character and motives, Mr. Lee is in no way responsible.

made, readers would find the new *Flying Post* better than the old. It was in his labours on this sham *Flying Post*, as the original indignantly called it in an appeal to Hurt's sense of honour and justice against the piracy, that Defoe came into collision with the law. His new organ was warmly loyal. On the 14th of August it contained a highly-coloured panegyric of George I., which alone would refute Defoe's assertion that he knew nothing of the arts of the courtier. His Majesty was described as a combination of more graces, virtues, and capacities than the world had ever seen united in one individual, a man "born for council and fitted to command the world." Another number of the *Flying Post*, a few days afterwards, contained an attack on one of the few Tories among the Lords of the Regency, nominated for the management of affairs till the King's arrival. During Bolingbroke's brief term of ascendancy, he had despatched the Earl of Anglesey on a mission to Ireland. The Earl had hardly landed at Dublin when news followed him of the Queen's death, and he returned to act as one of the Lords Regent. In the *Flying Post* Defoe asserted that the object of his journey to Ireland was "to new model the Forces there, and particularly to break no less than seventy of the honest officers of the army, and to fill up their places with the tools and creatures of Con. Phipps, and such a rabble of cut-throats as were fit for the work that they had for them to do." That there was some truth in the allegation is likely enough; Sir Constantine Phipps was, at least, shortly afterwards dismissed from his offices. But Lord Anglesey at once took action against it as a scandalous libel. Defoe was brought before the Lords Justices, and committed for trial.

He was liberated, however, on bail, and in spite of what

he says about his resolution not to meddle on either side, made an energetic use of his liberty. He wrote *The Secret History of One Year*—the year after William's accession—vindicating the King's clemency towards the abettors of the arbitrary government of James, and explaining that he was compelled to employ many of them by the rapacious scrambling of his own adherents for places and pensions. The indirect bearing of this tract is obvious. In October three pamphlets came from Defoe's fertile pen; an *Advice to the People of England* to lay aside feuds and faction, and live together under the new King like good Christians; and two parts, in quick succession, of a *Secret History of the White Staff*. This last work was an account of the circumstances under which the Treasurer's White Staff was taken from the Earl of Oxford, and put his conduct in a favourable light, exonerating him from the suspicion of Jacobitism, and affirming—not quite accurately, as other accounts of the transaction seem to imply—that it was by Harley's advice that the Staff was committed to the Earl of Shrewsbury. One would be glad to accept this as proof of Defoe's attachment to the cause of his disgraced benefactor; yet Harley, as he lay in the Tower awaiting his trial on an impeachment of high treason, issued a disclaimer concerning the *Secret History* and another pamphlet, entitled *An Account of the Conduct of Robert, Earl of Oxford*. These pamphlets, he said, were not written with his knowledge, or by his direction or encouragement; "on the contrary, he had reason to believe from several passages therein contained that it was the intention of the author, or authors, to do him a prejudice." This disclaimer may have been dictated by a wish not to appear wanting in respect to his judges; at any rate, Defoe's *Secret History* bears no trace

on the surface of a design to prejudice him by its recital of facts. *An Appeal to Honour and Justice* was Defoe's next production. While writing it, he was seized with a violent apoplectic fit, and it was issued with a Conclusion by the Publisher, mentioning this circumstance, explaining that the pamphlet was consequently incomplete, and adding: "If he recovers, he may be able to finish what he began; if not, it is the opinion of most that know him that the treatment which he here complains of, and some others that he would have spoken of, have been the apparent cause of his disaster." There is no sign of incompleteness in the *Appeal*; and the Conclusion by the Publisher, while the author lay "in a weak and languishing condition, neither able to go on nor likely to recover, at least in any short time," gives a most artistic finishing stroke to it. Defoe never interfered with the perfection of it after his recovery, which took place very shortly. The *Appeal* was issued in the first week of January; before the end of the month the indomitable writer was ready with a Third Part of the *Secret History*, and a reply to Atterbury's *Advice to the Freeholders of England* in view of the approaching elections. A series of tracts written in the character of a Quaker quickly followed, one rebuking a Dissenting preacher for inciting the new Government to vindictive severities, another rebuking Sacheverell for hypocrisy and perjury in taking the oath of abjuration, a third rebuking the Duke of Ormond for encouraging Jacobite and High-Church mobs. In March, Defoe published his *Family Instructor*, a book of 450 pages; in July, his *History, by a Scots Gentleman in the Swedish Service, of the Wars of Charles XII.*

Formidable as the list of these works seems, it does not represent more than Defoe's average rate of production

for thirty years of his life. With grave anxieties added to the strain of such incessant toil, it is no wonder that nature should have raised its protest in an apoplectic fit. Even nature must have owned herself vanquished, when she saw this very protest pressed into the service of the irresistible and triumphant worker. All the time he was at large upon bail, awaiting his trial. The trial took place in July, 1715, and he was found guilty. But sentence was deferred till next term. October came round, but Defoe did not appear to receive his sentence. He had made his peace with the Government, upon "capitulations" of which chance has preserved the record in his own handwriting. He represented privately to Lord Chief Justice Parker that he had always been devoted to the Whig interest, and that any seeming departure from it had been due to errors of judgment, not to want of attachment. Whether the Whig leaders believed this representation we do not know, but they agreed to pardon "all former mistakes" if he would now enter faithfully into their service. Though the Hanoverian succession had been cordially welcomed by the steady masses of the nation, the Mar Rebellion in Scotland and the sympathy shown with this movement in the south warned them that their enemies were not to be despised. There was a large turbulent element in the population, upon which agitators might work with fatal effect. The Jacobites had still a hold upon the Press, and the past years had been fruitful of examples of the danger of trying to crush sedition with the arm of the law. Prosecution had been proved to be the surest road to popularity. It occurred therefore that Defoe might be useful if he still passed as an opponent of the Government, insinuating himself as such into the confidence of Jacobites, obtained control of their publications, and nipped mischief in the

bud. It was a dangerous and delicate service, exposing the emissary to dire revenge if he were detected, and to suspicion and misconstruction from his employers in his efforts to escape detection. But Defoe, delighting in his superior wits, and happy in the midst of dangerous intrigues, boldly undertook the task.

CHAPTER VIII.

LATER JOURNALISTIC LABOURS.

FOR the discovery of this "strange and surprising" chapter in Defoe's life, which clears up much that might otherwise have been disputable in his character, the world is indebted solely to Mr. William Lee. Accident put Mr. Lee on the right scent, from which previous biographers had been diverted by too literal and implicit a faith in the arch-deceiver's statements, and too comprehensive an application of his complaint that his name was made the hackney title of the times, upon which all sorts of low scribblers fathered their vile productions. Defoe's secret services on Tory papers exposed him, as we have seen, to misconstruction. Nobody knew this better than himself, and nobody could have guarded against it with more sleepless care. In the fourth year of King George's reign a change took place in the Ministry. Lord Townshend was succeeded in the Home Secretary's office by Lord Stanhope. Thereupon Defoe judged it expedient to write to a private secretary, Mr. de la Faye, explaining at length his position. This letter along with five others, also designed to prevent misconstruction by his employers, lay in the State Paper Office till the year 1864, when the whole packet fell into the hands of Mr. Lee. The following succinct fragment of autobiography is dated April 26, 1718.

“Though I doubt not but you have acquainted my Lord Stanhope with what humble sense of his lordship’s goodness I received the account you were pleased to give me, that my little services are accepted, and that his lordship is satisfied to go upon the foot of former capitulations, etc. ; yet I confess, Sir, I have been anxious upon many accounts, with respect as well to the service itself as my own safety, lest my lord may think himself ill-served by me, even when I have best performed my duty.

“I thought it therefore not only a debt to myself, but a duty to his lordship, that I should give his lordship a short account, as clear as I can, how far my former instructions empowered me to act, and in a word what this little piece of service is, for which I am so much a subject of his lordship’s present favour and bounty.

“It was in the Ministry of my Lord Townshend, when my Lord Chief Justice Parker, to whom I stand obliged for the favour, was pleased so far to state my case, that notwithstanding the misrepresentations under which I had suffered, and notwithstanding some mistakes which I was the first to acknowledge, I was so happy as to be believed in the professions I made of a sincere attachment to the interest of the present Government, and, speaking with all possible humility, I hope I have not dishonoured my Lord Parker’s recommendation.

“In considering, after this, which way I might be rendered most useful to the Government, it was proposed by my Lord Townshend that I should still appear as if I were, as before, under the displeasure of the Government, and separated from the Whigs ; and that I might be more serviceable in a kind of disguise than if I appeared openly ; and upon this foot a weekly paper, which I was at first directed to write, in opposition to a scandalous paper called the *Shift Shifted*, was laid aside, and the first thing I engaged in was a monthly book called *Mercurius Politicus*, of which presently. In the interval of this, Dyer, the *News-Letter* writer, having been dead,

and Dormer, his successor, being unable by his troubles to carry on that work, I had an offer of a share in the property, as well as in the management of that work.

“I immediately acquainted my Lord Townshend of it, who, by Mr. Buckley, let me know it would be a very acceptable piece of service; for that letter was really very prejudicial to the public, and the most difficult to come at in a judicial way in case of offence given. My lord was pleased to add, by Mr. Buckley, that he would consider my service in that case, as he afterwards did.

“Upon this I engaged in it; and that so far, that though the property was not wholly my own, yet the conduct and government of the style and news was so entirely in me, that I ventured to assure his lordship the sting of that mischievous paper should be entirely taken out, though it was granted that the style should continue Tory as it was, that the party might be amused and not set up another, which would have destroyed the design, and this part I therefore take entirely on myself still.

“This went on for a year, before my Lord Townshend went out of the office; and his lordship, in consideration of this service, made me the appointment which Mr. Buckley knows of, with promise of a further allowance as service presented.

“My Lord Sunderland, to whose goodness I had many years ago been obliged, when I was in a secret commission sent to Scotland, was pleased to approve and continue this service, and the appointment annexed; and with his lordship’s approbation, I introduced myself, in the disguise of a translator of the foreign news, to be so far concerned in this weekly paper of *Mist’s* as to be able to keep it within the circle of a secret management, also prevent the mischievous part of it; and yet neither *Mist*, or any of those concerned with him, have the least guess or suspicion by whose direction I do it.

“But here it becomes necessary to acquaint my lord (as I hinted to you, Sir), that this paper, called the *Journal*, is not

in myself in property, as the other, only in management; with this express difference, that if anything happens to be put in without my knowledge, which may give offence, or if anything slips my observation which may be ill-taken, his lordship shall be sure always to know whether he has a servant to reprove or a stranger to correct.

“ Upon the whole, however, this is the consequence, that by this management, the weekly *Journal*, and *Dormer's Letter*, as also the *Mercurius Politicus*, which is in the same nature of management as the *Journal*, will be always kept (mistakes excepted) to pass as Tory papers and yet, be disabled and enervated, so as to do no mischief or give any offence to the Government.”

Others of the tell-tale letters show us in detail how Defoe acquitted himself of his engagements to the Government—bowing, as he said, in the house of Rimmon. In one he speaks of a traitorous pamphlet which he has stopped at the press, and begs the Secretary to assure his superiors that he has the original in safe keeping, and that no eye but his own has seen it. In another he apologizes for an obnoxious paragraph which had crept into *Mist's Journal*, avowing that “ Mr. Mist did it, after I had looked over what he had gotten together,” that he [Defoe] had no concern in it, directly or indirectly, and that he thought himself obliged to notice this, to make good what he said in his last, viz. that if any mistake happened, Lord Stanhope should always know whether he had a servant to reprove or a stranger to punish. In another he expresses his alarm at hearing of a private suit against Morphey, the printer of the *Mercurius Politicus*, for a passage in that paper, and explains, first, that the obnoxious passage appeared two years before, and was consequently covered by a capitulation giving him indemnity for all former mistakes; secondly, that the thing itself was not his, neither could any

one pretend to charge it on him, and consequently it could not be adduced as proof of any failure in his duty. In another letter he gives an account of a new treaty with Mist. "I need not trouble you," he says, "with the particulars, but in a word he professes himself convinced that he has been wrong, that the Government has treated him with lenity and forbearance, and he solemnly engages to me to give no more offence. The liberties Mr. Buckley mentioned, viz. to seem on the same side as before, to rally the *Flying Post*, the Whig writers, and even the word 'Whig,' &c., and to admit foolish and trifling things in favour of the Tories. This, as I represented it to him, he agrees is liberty enough, and resolves his paper shall, for the future, amuse the Tories, but not affront the Government." If Mist should break through this understanding, Defoe hopes it will be understood that it is not his fault; he can only say that the printer's resolutions of amendment seem to be sincere.

"In pursuance also of this reformation, he brought me this morning the enclosed letter, which, indeed, I was glad to see, because, though it seems couched in terms which might have been made public, yet has a secret gall in it, and a manifest tendency to reproach the Government with partiality and injustice, and (as it acknowledges expressly) was written to serve a present turn. As this is an earnest of his just intention, I hope he will go on to your satisfaction.

"Give me leave, Sir, to mention here a circumstance which concerns myself, and which, indeed, is a little hardship upon me, viz. that I seem to merit less, when I intercept a piece of barefaced treason at the Press, than when I stop such a letter as the enclosed; because one seems to be of a kind which no man would dare to meddle with. But I would persuade myself, Sir, that stopping such notorious things is not without its good effect, particularly because, as it is true that some

people are generally found who do venture to print anything that offers, so stopping them here is some discouragement and disappointment to them, and they often die in our hands.

“I speak this, Sir, as well on occasion of what you were pleased to say upon that letter which I sent you formerly about *Killing no Murder*, as upon another with verses in it, which Mr. Mist gave me yesterday; which, upon my word, is so villainous and scandalous that I scarce dare to send it without your order, and an assurance that my doing so shall be taken well, for I confess it has a peculiar insolence in it against His Majesty’s person which (as blasphemous words against God) are scarce fit to be repeated.”

In the last of the series (of date June 13, 1718), Defoe is able to assure his employers that “he believes the time is come when the journal, instead of affronting and offending the Government, may many ways be made serviceable to the Government; and he has Mr. M. so absolutely resigned to proper measures for it, that he is persuaded he may answer for it.”

Following up the clue afforded by these letters, Mr. Lee has traced the history of *Mist’s Journal* under Defoe’s surveillance. Mist did not prove so absolutely resigned to proper measures as his supervisor had begun to hope. On the contrary, he had frequent fits of refractory obstinacy, and gave a good deal of trouble both to Defoe and to the Government. Between them, however, they had the poor man completely in their power. When he yielded to the importunity of his Jacobite correspondents, or kicked against the taunts of the Whig organs about his wings being clipped—they, no more than he, knew how—his secret controllers had two ways of bringing him to reason. Sometimes the Government prosecuted him, wisely choosing occasions for their displeasure on which they

were likely to have popular feeling on their side. At other times Defoe threatened to withdraw and have nothing more to do with the *Journal*. Once or twice he carried this threat into execution. His absence soon told on the circulation, and Mist entreated him to return, making promises of good behaviour for the future. Further, Defoe commended himself to the gratitude of his unconscious dupe by sympathizing with him in his troubles, undertaking the conduct of the paper while he lay in prison, and editing two volumes of a selection of *Miscellany Letters* from its columns. At last, however, after eight years of this partnership, during which Mist had no suspicion of Defoe's connexion with the Government, the secret somehow seems to have leaked out. Such at least is Mr. Lee's highly probable explanation of a murderous attack made by Mist upon his partner.

Defoe, of course, stoutly denied Mist's accusations, and published a touching account of the circumstances, describing his assailant as a lamentable instance of ingratitude. Here was a man whom he had saved from the gallows, and befriended at his own risk in the utmost distress, turning round upon him, "basely using, insulting, and provoking him, and at last drawing his sword upon his benefactor." Defoe disarmed him, gave him his life, and sent for a surgeon to dress his wounds. But even this was not enough. Mist would give him nothing but abuse of the worst and grossest nature. It almost shook Defoe's faith in human nature. Was there ever such ingratitude known before? The most curious thing is that Mr. Lee, who has brought all these facts to light, seems to share Defoe's ingenuous astonishment at this "strange instance of ungrateful violence," and conjectures that it must have proceeded from imaginary wrong of a very grievous nat-

ure, such as a suspicion that Defoe had instigated the Government to prosecute him. It is perhaps as well that it should have fallen to so loyal an admirer to exhume Defoe's secret services and public protestations; the record might otherwise have been rejected as incredible.

Mr. Lee's researches were not confined to Defoe's relations with *Mist* and his journal, and the other publications mentioned in the precious letter to Mr. de la Faye. Once assured that Defoe did not withdraw from newspaper-writing in 1715, he ransacked the journals of the period for traces of his hand and contemporary allusions to his labours. A rich harvest rewarded Mr. Lee's zeal. Defoe's individuality is so marked that it thrusts itself through every disguise. A careful student of the *Review*, who had compared it with the literature of the time, and learnt his peculiar tricks of style and vivid ranges of interest, could not easily be at fault in identifying a composition of any length. Defoe's incomparable clearness of statement would alone betray him; that was a gift of nature which no art could successfully imitate. Contemporaries also were quick at recognising their Proteus in his many shapes, and their gossip gives a strong support to internal evidence, resting as it probably did on evidences which were not altogether internal. Though Mr. Lee may have been rash sometimes in quoting little scraps of news as Defoe's, he must be admitted to have established that, prodigious as was the number and extent of the veteran's separate publications during the reign of the First George, it was also the most active period of his career as a journalist. Managing *Mist* and writing for his journal would have been work enough for an ordinary man; but Defoe founded, conducted, and wrote for a host of other newspapers—the monthly *Mercurius Politicus*, an octavo of sixty-four pages (1716—1720);

the weekly *Dormer's News-Letter* (written, not printed, 1716—1718); the *Whitehall Evening Post* (a tri-weekly quarto-sheet, established 1718); the *Daily Post* (a daily single leaf, folio, established 1719); and *Applebee's Journal* (with which his connexion began in 1720 and ended in 1726).

The contributions to these newspapers which Mr. Lee has assigned, with great judgment it seems to me, to Defoe, range over a wide field of topics, from piracy and highway robberies to suicide and the Divinity of Christ. Defoe's own test of a good writer was that he should at once please and serve his readers, and he kept this double object in view in his newspaper writings, as much as in *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and the *Family Instructor*. Great as is the variety of subjects in the selections which Mr. Lee has made upon internal evidence, they are all of them subjects in which Defoe showed a keen interest in his acknowledged works. In providing amusement for his readers, he did not soar above his age in point of refinement; and in providing instruction, he did not fall below his age in point of morality and religion. It is a notable circumstance that one of the marks by which contemporaries traced his hand was "the little art he is truly master of, of forging a story and imposing it on the world for truth." Of this he gave a conspicuous instance in *Mist's Journal* in an account of the marvellous blowing up of the island of St. Vincent, which in circumstantial invention and force of description must be ranked among his master-pieces. But Defoe did more than embellish stories of strange events for his newspapers. He was a master of journalistic art in all its branches, and a fertile inventor and organizer of new devices. It is to him, Mr. Lee says, and his researches entitle him to authority, that we owe the

prototype of the leading article, a Letter Introductory, as it became the fashion to call it, written on some subject of general interest and placed at the commencement of each number. The writer of this Letter Introductory was known as the "author" of the paper.

Another feature in journalism which Defoe greatly helped to develop, if he did not actually invent, was the Journal of Society. In the *Review* he had provided for the amusement of his readers by the device of a Scandal Club, whose transactions he professed to report. But political excitement was intense throughout the whole of Queen Anne's reign; Defoe could afford but small space for scandal, and his Club was often occupied with fighting his minor political battles. When, however, the Hanoverian succession was secured, and the land had rest from the hot strife of parties, light gossip was more in request. Newspapers became less political, and their circulation extended from the coffee-houses, inns, and ale-houses to a new class of readers. "They have of late," a writer in *Applebee's Journal* says in 1725, "been taken in much by the women, especially the political ladies, to assist at the tea-table." Defoe seems to have taken an active part in making *Mist's Journal* and *Applebee's Journal*, both Tory organs, suitable for this more frivolous section of the public. This fell in with his purpose of diminishing the political weight of these journals, and at the same time increased their sale. He converted them from rabid party agencies into registers of domestic news and vehicles of social disquisitions, sometimes grave, sometimes gay in subject, but uniformly bright and spirited in tone.

The raw materials of several of Defoe's elaborate tales, such as *Moll Flanders* and *Colonel Jack*, are to be found in the columns of *Mist's* and *Applebee's*. In connexion with

Applebee's more particularly, Defoe went some way towards anticipating the work of the modern Special Correspondent. He apparently interviewed distinguished criminals in Newgate, and extracted from them the stories of their lives. Part of what he thus gathered he communicated to *Applebee*; sometimes, when the notoriety of the case justified it, he drew up longer narratives and published them separately as pamphlets. He was an adept in the art of puffing his own productions, whether books or journals. It may be doubted whether any American editor ever mastered this art more thoroughly than Defoe. Nothing, for instance, could surpass the boldness of Defoe's plan for directing public attention to his narrative of the robberies and escapes of Jack Sheppard. He seems to have taken a particular interest in this daring gaol-breaker. Mr. Lee, in fact, finds evidence that he had gained Sheppard's affectionate esteem. He certainly turned his acquaintance to admirable account. He procured a letter for *Applebee's Journal* from Jack, with "kind love," and a copy of verses of his own composition. Both letter and verses probably came from a more practised pen, but, to avert suspicion, the original of the letter was declared to be on view at Applebee's, and "well known to be in the handwriting of John Sheppard." Next Defoe prepared a thrilling narrative of Jack's adventures, which was of course described as written by the prisoner himself, and printed at his particular desire. But this was not all. The artful author further arranged that when Sheppard reached his place of execution, he should send for a friend to the cart as he stood under the gibbet, and deliver a copy of the pamphlet as his last speech and dying confession. A paragraph recording this incident was duly inserted in the newspapers. It is a crowning illustration of the inven-

tive daring with which Defoe practised the tricks of his trade.

One of Defoe's last works in connection with journalism was to write a prospectus for a new weekly periodical, the *Universal Spectator*, which was started by his son-in-law, Henry Baker, in October, 1728. There is more than internal and circumstantial evidence that this prospectus was Defoe's composition. When Baker retired from the paper five years afterwards, he drew up a list of the articles which had appeared under his editorship, with the names of the writers attached. This list has been preserved, and from it we learn that the first number, containing a prospectus and an introductory essay on the qualifications of a good writer, was written by Defoe. That experienced journalist naturally tried to give an air of novelty to the enterprise. "If this paper," the first sentence runs, "was not intended to be what no paper at present is, we should never attempt to crowd in among such a throng of public writers as at this time oppress the town." In effect the scheme of the *Universal Spectator* was to revive the higher kind of periodical essays which made the reputation of the earlier *Spectator*. Attempts to follow in the wake of Addison and Steele had for so long ceased to be features in journalism; their manner had been so effectually superseded by less refined purveyors of light literature — Defoe himself going heartily with the stream — that the revival was opportune, and in point of fact proved successful, the *Universal Spectator* continuing to exist for nearly twenty years. It shows how quickly the *Spectator* took its place among the classics, that the writer of the prospectus considered it necessary to deprecate a charge of presumption in seeming to challenge comparison.

“Let no man envy us the celebrated title we have assumed, or charge us with arrogance, as if we bid the world expect great things from us. Must we have no power to please, unless we come up to the full height of those inimitable performances? Is there no wit or humour left because they are gone? Is the spirit of the *Spectators* all lost, and their mantle fallen upon nobody? Have they said all that can be said? Has the world offered no variety, and presented no new scenes, since they retired from us? Or did they leave off, because they were quite exhausted, and had no more to say?”

Defoe did not always speak so respectfully of the authors of the *Spectator*. If he had been asked why they left off, he would probably have given the reason contained in the last sentence, and backed his opinion by contemptuous remarks about the want of fertility in the scholarly brain. He himself could have gone on producing for ever; he was never gruelled for lack of matter, had no nice ideas about manner, and was sometimes sore about the superior respectability of those who had. But here he was on business, addressing people who looked back regretfully from the vulgarity of *Mist's* and *Applebee's* to the refinement of earlier periodicals, and making a bid for their custom. A few more sentences from his advertisement will show how well he understood their prejudices:—

“The main design of this work is, to turn your thoughts a little off from the clamour of contending parties, which has so long surfeited you with their ill-timed politics, and restore your taste to things truly superior and sublime.

“In order to this, we shall endeavour to present you with such subjects as are capable, if well handled, both to divert and to instruct you; such as shall render conversation pleasant, and help to make mankind agreeable to one another.

“As for our management of them, not to promise too much for ourselves, we shall only say we hope, at least, to make our work acceptable to everybody, because we resolve, if possible, to displease nobody.

“We assure the world, by way of negative, that we shall engage in no quarrels, meddle with no parties, deal in no scandal, nor endeavour to make any men merry at the expense of their neighbours. In a word, we shall set nobody together by the ears. And though we have encouraged the ingenious world to correspond with us by letters, we hope they will not take it ill, that we say beforehand, no letters will be taken notice of by us which contain any personal reproaches, intermeddle with family breaches, or tend to scandal or indecency of any kind.

“The current papers are more than sufficient to carry on all the dirty work the town can have for them to do; and what with party strife, politics, poetic quarrels, and all the other consequences of a wrangling age, they are in no danger of wanting employment; and those readers who delight in such things, may divert themselves there. But our views, as is said above, lie another way.”

Good writing is what Defoe promises the readers of the *Universal Spectator*, and this leads him to consider what particular qualifications go to the composition, or, in a word, “what is required to denominate a man a *good writer*.” His definition is worth quoting as a statement of his principles of composition.

“One says this is a polite author; another says, that is an excellent *good writer*; and generally we find some oblique strokes pointed sideways at themselves; intimating that whether we think fit to allow it or not, they take themselves to be very *good writers*. And, indeed, I must excuse them their vanity; for if a poor author had not some good opinion of himself, especially when under the discouragement of hav-

ing nobody else to be of his mind, he would never write at all; nay, he could not; it would take off all the little dull edge that his pen might have on it before, and he would not be able to say one word to the purpose.

“Now whatever may be the lot of this paper, be that as common fame shall direct, yet without entering into the enquiry who writes better, or who writes worse, I shall lay down one specific, by which you that read shall impartially determine who are, or are not, to be called *good writers*. In a word, the character of a good writer, wherever he is to be found, is this, viz., that he writes so as to please and serve at the same time.

“If he writes to *please*, and not to *serve*, he is a flatterer and a hypocrite; if to *serve* and not to *please*, he turns cynic and satirist. The first deals in smooth falsehood, the last in rough scandal; the last may do some good, though little; the first does no good, and may do mischief, not a little; the last provokes your rage, the first provokes your pride; and in a word either of them is hurtful rather than useful. But the writer that strives to be useful, writes to *serve* you, and at the same time, by an imperceptible art, draws you on to be pleased also. He represents truth with plainness, virtue with praise; he even reprehends with a softness that carries the force of a satire without the salt of it; and he insensibly screws himself into your good opinion, that as his writings merit your regard, so they fail not to obtain it.

“This is part of the character by which I define a good writer; I say 'tis but part of it, for it is not a half sheet that would contain the full description; a large volume would hardly suffice it. His fame requires, indeed, a very good writer to give it due praise; and for that reason (and a good reason too) I go no farther with it.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLACE OF DEFOE'S FICTIONS IN HIS LIFE.

THOSE of my readers who have thought of Defoe only as a writer of stories which young and old still love to read, must not be surprised that so few pages of this little book should be left for an account of his work in that field. No doubt Defoe's chief claim to the world's interest is that he is the author of *Robinson Crusoe*. But there is little to be said about this or any other of Defoe's tales in themselves. Their art is simple, unique, incommunicable, and they are too well known to need description. On the other hand, there is much that is worth knowing and not generally known about the relation of these works to his life, and the place that they occupy in the sum total of his literary activity. Hundreds of thousands since Defoe's death, and millions in ages to come, would never have heard his name but for *Robinson Crusoe*. To his contemporaries the publication of that work was but a small incident in a career which for twenty years had claimed and held their interest. People in these days are apt to imagine, because Defoe wrote the most fascinating of books for children, that he was himself simple, child-like, frank, open, and unsuspecting. He has been so described by more than one historian of literature. It was not so that he appeared to his contemporaries, and it is not so that

he can appear to us when we know his life, unless we recognise that he took a child's delight in beating with their own weapons the most astute intriguers in the most intriguing period of English history.

Defoe was essentially a journalist. He wrote for the day, and for the greatest interest of the greatest number of the day. He always had some ship sailing with the passing breeze, and laden with a useful cargo for the coast upon which the wind chanced to be blowing. If the Tichborne trial had happened in his time, we should certainly have had from him an exact history of the boyhood and surprising adventures of Thomas Castro, commonly known as Sir Roger, which would have come down to us as a true record, taken, perhaps, by the chaplain of Portland prison from the convict's own lips. It would have had such an air of authenticity, and would have been corroborated by such an array of trustworthy witnesses, that nobody in later times could have doubted its truth. Defoe always wrote what a large number of people were in a mood to read. All his writings, with so few exceptions that they may reasonably be supposed to fall within the category, were *pièces de circonstance*. Whenever any distinguished person died or otherwise engaged public attention, no matter how distinguished, whether as a politician, a criminal, or a divine, Defoe lost no time in bringing out a biography. It was in such emergencies that he produced his memoirs of Charles XII., Peter the Great, Count Patkul, the Duke of Shrewsbury, Baron de Goertz, the Rev. Daniel Williams, Captain Avery the King of the Pirates, Dominique Cartouche, Rob Roy, Jonathan Wild, Jack Sheppard, Duncan Campbell. When the day had been fixed for the Earl of Oxford's trial for high treason, Defoe issued the fictitious *Minutes of the Secret Negotia-*

tions of *Mons. Mesnager* at the English Court during his ministry. We owe the *Journal of the Plague in 1665* to a visitation which fell upon France in 1721, and caused much apprehension in England. The germ which in his fertile mind grew into *Robinson Crusoe* fell from the real adventures of Alexander Selkirk, whose solitary residence of four years on the island of Juan Fernandez was a nine days' wonder in the reign of Queen Anne. Defoe was too busy with his politics at the moment to turn it to account; it was recalled to him later on, in the year 1719, when the exploits of famous pirates had given a vivid interest to the chances of adventurers in far-away islands on the American and African coasts. The *Life, Adventures, and Piracies of the famous Captain Singleton*, who was set on shore in Madagascar, traversed the continent of Africa from east to west past the sources of the Nile, and went roving again in the company of the famous Captain Avery, was produced to satisfy the same demand. Such biographies as those of *Moll Flanders* and the *Lady Roxana* were of a kind, as he himself illustrated by an amusing anecdote, that interested all times and all professions and degrees; but we have seen to what accident he owed their suggestion and probably part of their materials. He had tested the market for such wares in his *Journals of Society*.

In following Defoe's career, we are constantly reminded that he was a man of business, and practised the profession of letters with a shrewd eye to the main chance. He scoffed at the idea of practising it with any other object, though he had aspirations after immortal fame as much as any of his more decorous contemporaries. Like Thomas Fuller, he frankly avowed that he wrote "for some honest profit to himself." Did any man, he asked, do anything without some regard to his own advantage?

Whenever he hit upon a profitable vein, he worked it to exhaustion, putting the ore into various shapes to attract different purchasers. *Robinson Crusoe* made a sensation; he immediately followed up the original story with a *Second Part*, and the *Second Part* with a volume of *Serious Reflections*. He had discovered the keenness of the public appetite for stories of the supernatural, in 1706, by means of his *True Relation of the Apparition of one Mrs. Veal*.¹ When, in 1720, he undertook to write the life of the popular fortune-teller, Duncan Campbell—a puff which illustrates almost better than anything else Defoe's extraordinary ingenuity in putting a respectable face upon the most disreputable materials—he had another proof of the avidity with which people run to hear marvels. He followed up this clue with *A System of Magic, or a History of the Black Art*; *The Secrets of the Invisible World disclosed, or a Universal History of Apparitions*; and a humorous *History of the Devil*, in which last work he subjected *Paradise Lost*, to which Addison had drawn attention by his papers in the *Spectator*, to very sharp criticism. In his books and pamphlets on the Behaviour of Servants, and his works of more formal instruction, the *Family Instructor*, the *Plan of English Commerce*, the *Complete English Tradesman*, the *Complete English Gentleman* (his last

¹ Mr. Lee has disposed conclusively of the myth that this tale was written to promote the sale of a dull book by one Drelincourt on the *Fear of Death*, which Mrs. Veal's ghost earnestly recommended her friend to read. It was first published separately as a pamphlet without any reference to Drelincourt. It was not printed with Drelincourt's *Fear of Death* till the fourth edition of that work, which was already popular. Further, the sale of Drelincourt does not appear to have been increased by the addition of Defoe's pamphlet to the book, and of Mrs. Veal's recommendation to the pamphlet.

work, left unfinished and unpublished), he wrote with a similar regard to what was for the moment in demand.

Defoe's novel-writing thus grew naturally out of his general literary trade, and had not a little in common with the rest of his abundant stock. All his productions in this line, his masterpiece, *Robinson Crusoe*, as well as what Charles Lamb calls his "secondary novels," *Captain Singleton*, *Colonel Jack*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Roxana*, were manufactured from material for which he had ascertained that there was a market; the only novelty lay in the mode of preparation. From writing biographies with real names attached to them, it was but a short step to writing biographies with fictitious names. Defoe is sometimes spoken of as the inventor of the realistic novel; realistic biography would, perhaps, be a more strictly accurate description. Looking at the character of his professed records of fact, it seems strange that he should ever have thought of writing the lives of imaginary heroes, and should not have remained content with "forging stories and imposing them on the world for truth" about famous and notorious persons in real life. The purveyors of news in those days could use without fear of detection a licence which would not be tolerated now. They could not, indeed, satisfy the public appetite for news without taking liberties with the truth. They had not special correspondents in all parts of the world, to fill their pages with reports from the spot of things seen and heard. The public had acquired the habit of looking to the press, to periodical papers and casual books and pamphlets, for information about passing events and prominent men before sufficient means had been organized for procuring information which should approximate to correctness. In such circumstances, the temptation to invent and embellish was irresistible. "Why,"

a paragraph-maker of the time is made to say, "if we will write nothing but truth, we must bring you no news; we are bound to bring you such as we can find." Yet it was not lies but truth that the public wanted as much as they do now. Hence arose the necessity of fortifying reports with circumstantial evidence of their authenticity. Nobody rebuked unprincipled news-writers more strongly than Defoe, and no news-writer was half as copious in his guarantees for the accuracy of his information. When a report reached England that the island of St. Vincent had been blown into the air, Defoe wrote a description of the calamity, the most astonishing thing that had happened in the world "since the Creation, or at least since the destruction of the earth by water in the general Deluge," and prefaced his description by saying:—

"Our accounts of this come from so many several hands and several places that it would be impossible to bring the letters all separately into this journal; and when we had done so or attempted to do so, would leave the story confused, and the world not perfectly informed. We have therefore thought it better to give the substance of this amazing accident in one collection; making together as full and as distinct an account of the whole as we believe it possible to come at by any intelligence whatsoever, and at the close of this account we shall give some probable guesses at the natural cause of so terrible an operation."

Defoe carried the same system of vouching for the truth of his narratives by referring them to likely sources, into pamphlets and books which really served the purpose of newspapers, being written for the gratification of passing interests. The History of the Wars of Charles XII., which Mr. Lee ascribes to him, was "written by a Scot's gentleman, in the Swedish service." The short narrative

of the life and death of Count Patkul was "written by the Lutheran Minister who assisted him in his last hours, and faithfully translated out of a High Dutch manuscript." M. Mesnager's minutes of his negotiations were "written by himself," and "done out of French." Defoe knew that the public would read such narratives more eagerly if they believed them to be true, and ascribed them to authors whose position entitled them to confidence. There can be little doubt that he drew upon his imagination for more than the title-pages. But why, when he had so many eminent and notorious persons to serve as his subjects, with all the advantage of bearing names about which the public were already curious, did he turn to the adventures of new and fictitious heroes and heroines? One can only suppose that he was attracted by the greater freedom of movement in pure invention; he made the venture with *Robinson Crusoe*, it was successful, and he repeated it. But after the success of *Robinson Crusoe*, he by no means abandoned his old fields. It was after this that he produced autobiographies and other *primâ facie* authentic lives of notorious thieves and pirates. With all his records of heroes, real or fictitious, he practised the same devices for ensuring credibility. In all alike he took for granted that the first question people would ask about a story was whether it was true. The novel, it must be remembered, was then in its infancy, and Defoe, as we shall presently see, imagined, probably not without good reason, that his readers would disapprove of story-telling for the mere pleasure of the thing, as an immorality.

In writing for the entertainment of his own time, Defoe took the surest way of writing for the entertainment of all time. Yet if he had never chanced to write *Robinson Crusoe*, he would now have a very obscure place in English

literature. His "natural infirmity of homely plain writing," as he humorously described it, might have drawn students to his works, but they ran considerable risk of lying in utter oblivion. He was at war with the whole guild of respectable writers who have become classics; they despised him as an illiterate fellow, a vulgar huckster, and never alluded to him except in terms of contempt. He was not slow to retort their civilities; but the retorts might very easily have sunk beneath the waters, while the assaults were preserved by their mutual support. The vast mass of Defoe's writings received no kindly aid from distinguished contemporaries to float them down the stream; everything was done that bitter dislike and supercilious indifference could do to submerge them. *Robinson Crusoe* was their sole life-buoy.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the vitality of *Robinson Crusoe* is a happy accident, and that others of Defoe's tales have as much claim in point of merit to permanence. *Robinson Crusoe* has lived longest, because it lives most, because it was detached as it were from its own time and organized for separate existence. It is the only one of Defoe's tales that shows what he could do as an artist. We might have seen from the others that he had the genius of a great artist; here we have the possibility realized, the convincing proof of accomplished work. *Moll Flanders* is in some respects superior as a novel. Moll is a much more complicated character than the simple, open-minded, manly mariner of York; a strangely mixed compound of craft and impulse, selfishness and generosity—in short, a thoroughly bad woman, made bad by circumstances. In tracing the vigilant resolution with which she plays upon human weakness, the spasms of compunction which shoot across her wily designs, the selfish after-

thoughts which paralyse her generous impulses, her fits of dare-devil courage and uncontrollable panic, and the steady current of good-humoured satisfaction with herself which makes her chuckle equally over mishaps and successes, Defoe has gone much more deeply into the springs of action, and sketched a much richer page in the natural history of his species than in *Robinson Crusoe*. True, it is a more repulsive page, but that is not the only reason why it has fallen into comparative oblivion, and exists now only as a parasite upon the more popular work. It is not equally well constructed for the struggle of existence among books. No book can live for ever which is not firmly organized round some central principle of life, and that principle in itself imperishable. It must have a heart and members; the members must be soundly compacted and the heart superior to decay. Compared with *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders* is only a string of diverting incidents, the lowest type of book organism, very brilliant while it is fresh and new, but not qualified to survive competitors for the world's interest. There is no unique creative purpose in it to bind the whole together; it might be cut into pieces, each capable of wriggling amusingly by itself. The gradual corruption of the heroine's virtue, which is the encompassing scheme of the tale, is too thin as well as too common an artistic envelope; the incidents burst through it at so many points that it becomes a shapeless mass. But in *Robinson Crusoe* we have real growth from a vigorous germ. The central idea round which the tale is organized, the position of a man cast ashore on a desert island, abandoned to his own resources, suddenly shot beyond help or counsel from his fellow-creatures, is one that must live as long as the uncertainty of human life.

The germ of *Robinson Crusoe*, the actual experience of

Alexander Selkirk, went floating about for several years, and more than one artist dallied with it, till it finally settled and took root in the mind of the one man of his generation most capable of giving it a home and working out its artistic possibilities. Defoe was the only man of letters in his time who might have been thrown on a desert island without finding himself at a loss what to do. The art required for developing the position in imagination was not of a complicated kind, and yet it is one of the rarest of gifts. Something more was wanted than simply conceiving what a man in such a situation would probably feel and probably do. Above all, it was necessary that his perplexities should be unexpected, and his expedients for meeting them unexpected; yet both perplexities and expedients so real and life-like that, when we were told them, we should wonder we had not thought of them before. One gift was indispensable for this, however many might be accessory, the genius of circumstantial invention—not a very exalted order of genius, perhaps, but quite as rare as any other intellectual prodigy.¹

Defoe was fifty-eight years old when he wrote *Robinson Crusoe*. If the invention of plausible circumstances is the great secret in the art of that tale, it would have been a marvellous thing if this had been the first instance of its exercise, and it had broken out suddenly in a man of so advanced an age. When we find an artist of supreme excellence in any craft, we generally find that he has been practising it all his life. To say that he has a genius for it, means that he has practised it, and concentrated his main force upon it, and that he has been driven irresisti-

¹ Mr. Leslie Stephen seems to me to underrate the rarity of this peculiar gift in his brilliant essay on Defoe's Novels in *Hours in a Library*.

bly to do so by sheer bent of nature. It was so with Defoe and his power of circumstantial invention, his unrivalled genius for "lying like truth." For years upon years of his life it had been his chief occupation. From the time of his first connexion with Harley, at least, he had addressed his countrymen through the press, and had perambulated the length and breadth of the land in assumed characters and on factitious pretexts. His first essay in that way in 1704, when he left prison in the service of the Government, appealing to the general compassion because he was under government displeasure, was skilful enough to suggest great native genius if not extensive previous practice. There are passages of circumstantial invention in the *Review*, as ingenious as anything in *Robinson Crusoe*; and the mere fact that at the end of ten years of secret service under successive Governments, and in spite of a widespread opinion of his untrustworthiness, he was able to pass himself off for ten years more as a Tory with Tories and with the Whig Government as a loyal servant, is a proof of sustained ingenuity of invention greater than many volumes of fiction.

Looking at Defoe's private life, it is not difficult to understand the peculiar fascination which such a problem as he solved in *Robinson Crusoe* must have had for him. It was not merely that he had passed a life of uncertainty, often on the verge of precipices, and often saved from ruin by a buoyant energy which seems almost miraculous; not merely that, as he said of himself in one of his diplomatic appeals for commiseration,

"No man hath tasted differing fortunes more,
For thirteen times have I been rich and poor."

But when he wrote *Robinson Crusoe*, it was one of the

actual chances of his life, and by no means a remote one, that he might be cast all alone on an uninhabited island. We see from his letters to De la Faye how fearful he was of having "mistakes" laid to his charge by the Government in the course of his secret services. His former changes of party had exposed him, as he well knew, to suspicion. A false step, a misunderstood paragraph, might have had ruinous consequences for him. If the Government had prosecuted him for writing anything offensive to them, refusing to believe that it was put in to amuse the Tories, transportation might very easily have been the penalty. He had made so many enemies in the Press that he might have been transported without a voice being raised in his favour, and the mob would not have interfered to save a Government spy from the Plantations. Shipwreck among the islands of the West Indies was a possibility that stood not far from his own door, as he looked forward into the unknown, and prepared his mind, as men in dangerous situations do, for the worst. When he drew up for Moll Flanders and her husband a list of the things necessary for starting life in a new country, or when he described Colonel Jack's management of his plantation in Virginia, the subject was one of more than general curiosity to him; and when he exercised his imagination upon the fate of Robinson Crusoe, he was contemplating a fate which a few movements of the wheel of Fortune might make his own.

But whatever it was that made the germ idea of *Robinson Crusoe* take root in Defoe's mind, he worked it out as an artist. Artists of a more emotional type might have drawn much more elaborate and affecting word-pictures of the mariner's feelings in various trying situations, gone much deeper into his changing moods, and shaken our

souls with pity and terror over the solitary castaway's alarms and fits of despair. Defoe's aims lay another way. His Crusoe is not a man given to the luxury of grieving. If he had begun to pity himself, he would have been undone. Perhaps Defoe's imaginative force was not of a kind that could have done justice to the agonies of a shipwrecked sentimentalist; he has left no proof that it was; but if he had represented Crusoe bemoaning his misfortunes, brooding over his fears, or sighing with Ossianic sorrow over his lost companions and friends, he would have spoiled the consistency of the character. The lonely man had his moments of panic and his days of dejection, but they did not dwell in his memory. Defoe no doubt followed his own natural bent, but he also showed true art in confining Crusoe's recollections as closely as he does to his efforts to extricate himself from difficulties that would have overwhelmed a man of softer temperament. The subject had fascinated him, and he found enough in it to engross his powers without travelling beyond its limits for diverting episodes, as he does more or less in all the rest of his tales. The diverting episodes in *Robinson Crusoe* all help the verisimilitude of the story.

When, however, the ingenious inventor had completed the story artistically, carried us through all the outcast's anxieties and efforts, and shown him triumphant over all difficulties, prosperous, and again in communication with the outer world, the spirit of the itery trader would not let the finished work alone. The story, as a work of art, ends with Crusoe's departure from the island, or at any rate with his return to England. Its unity is then complete. But *Robinson Crusoe* at once became a popular hero, and Defoe was too keen a man of business to miss the chance of further profit from so lucrative a vein. He

did not mind the sneers of hostile critics. They made merriment over the trifling inconsistencies in the tale. How, for example, they asked, could Crusoe have stuffed his pockets with biscuits when he had taken off all his clothes before swimming to the wreck? How could he have been at such a loss for clothes after those he had put off were washed away by the rising tide, when he had the ship's stores to choose from? How could he have seen the goat's eyes in the cave when it was pitch dark? How could the Spaniards give Friday's father an agreement in writing, when they had neither paper nor ink? How did Friday come to know so intimately the habits of bears, the bear not being a denizen of the West Indian islands? On the ground of these and such-like trifles, one critic declared that the book seems calculated for the mob, and will not bear the eye of a rational reader, and that "all but the very canaille are satisfied of the worthlessness of the performance." Defoe, we may suppose, was not much moved by these strictures, as edition after edition of the work was demanded. He corrected one or two little inaccuracies, and at once set about writing a Second Part, and a volume of *Serious Reflections* which had occurred to Crusoe amidst his adventures. These were purely commercial excrescences upon the original work. They were popular enough at the time, but those who are tempted now to accompany Crusoe in his second visit to his island and his enterprising travels in the East, agree that the Second Part is of inferior interest to the first, and very few now read the *Serious Reflections*.

The *Serious Reflections*, however, are well worth reading in connexion with the author's personal history. In the preface we are told that *Robinson Crusoe* is an allegory, and in one of the chapters we are told why it is an alle-

gory. The explanation is given in a homily against the vice of talking falsely. By talking falsely the moralist explains that he does not mean telling lies, that is, falsehoods concocted with an evil object; these he puts aside as sins altogether beyond the pale of discussion. But there is a minor vice of falsehood which he considers it his duty to reprove, namely, telling stories, as too many people do, merely to amuse. "This supplying a story by invention," he says, "is certainly a most scandalous crime, and yet very little regarded in that part. It is a sort of lying that makes a great hole in the heart, in which by degrees a habit of lying enters in. Such a man comes quickly up to a total disregarding the truth of what he says, looking upon it as a trifle, a thing of no import, whether any story he tells be true or not." How empty a satisfaction is this "purchased at so great an expense as that of conscience, and of a dishonour done to truth!" And the crime is so entirely objectless. A man who tells a lie, properly so called, has some hope of reward by it. But to lie for sport is to play at shuttlecock with your soul, and load your conscience for the mere sake of being a fool. "With what temper should I speak of those people? What words can express the meanness and baseness of the mind that can do this?" In making this protest against frivolous story-telling, the humour of which must have been greatly enjoyed by his journalistic colleagues, Defoe anticipated that his readers would ask why, if he so disapproved of the supplying a story by invention, he had written *Robinson Crusoe*. His answer was that *Robinson Crusoe* was an allegory, and that the telling or writing a parable or an allusive allegorical history is quite a different case. "I, Robinson Crusoe, do affirm that the story, though allegorical, is also historical, and that it is the

beautiful representation of a life of unexampled misfortunes, and of a variety not to be met with in this world." This life was his own. He explains at some length the particulars of the allegory :—

“ Thus the fright and fancies which succeeded the story of the print of a man’s foot, and surprise of the old goat, and the thing rolling on my bed, and my jumping up in a fright, are all histories and real stories; as are likewise the dream of being taken by messengers, being arrested by officers, the manner of being driven on shore by the surge of the sea, the ship on fire, the description of starving, the story of my man Friday, and many more most natural passages observed here, and on which any religious reflections are made, are all historical and true in fact. It is most real that I had a parrot, and taught it to call me by my name, such a servant a savage and afterwards a Christian, and that his name was called Friday, and that he was ravished from me by force, and died in the hands that took him, which I represent by being killed; this is all literally true; and should I enter into discoveries many alive can testify them. His other conduct and assistance to me also have just references in all their parts to the helps I had from that faithful savage in my real solitudes and disasters.

“ The story of the bear in the tree, and the fight with the wolves in the snow, is likewise matter of real history; and in a word, the adventures of Robinson Crusoe are a whole scheme of a life of twenty-eight years spent in the most wandering, desolate, and afflicting circumstances that ever man went through, and in which I have lived so long in a life of wonders, in continued storms, fought with the worst kind of savages and man-eaters, by unaccountable surprising incidents; fed by miracles greater than that of the ravens, suffered all manner of violences and oppressions, injurious reproaches, contempt of men, attacks of devils, corrections from Heaven, and oppositions on earth; and had innumerable ups

and downs in matters of fortune, been in slavery worse than Turkish, escaped by an exquisite management, as that in the story of Xury and the boat of Sallee, been taken up at sea in distress, raised again and depressed again, and that oftener perhaps in one man's life than ever was known before; shipwrecked often, though more by land than by sea; in a word, there's not a circumstance in the imaginary story but has its just allusion to a real story, and chimes part for part, and step for step, with the inimitable life of *Robinson Crusoe*."

But if Defoe had such a regard for the strict and literal truth, why did he not tell his history in his own person? Why convey the facts allusively in an allegory? To this question also he had an answer. He wrote for the instruction of mankind, for the purpose of recommending "invincible patience under the worst of misery; indefatigable application and undaunted resolution under the greatest and most discouraging circumstances."

"Had the common way of writing a man's private history been taken, and I had given you the conduct or life of a man you knew, and whose misfortunes and infirmities perhaps you had sometimes unjustly triumphed over, all I could have said would have yielded no diversion, and perhaps scarce have obtained a reading, or at best no attention; the teacher, like a greater, having no honour in his own country."

For all Defoe's profession that *Robinson Crusoe* is an allegory of his own life, it would be rash to take what he says too literally. The reader who goes to the tale in search of a close allegory, in minute chronological correspondence with the facts of the alleged original, will find, I expect, like myself, that he has gone on a wild-goose chase. There is a certain general correspondence. Defoe's own life is certainly as instructive as *Crusoe's* in the lesson of

invincible patience and undaunted resolution. The shipwreck perhaps corresponds with his first bankruptcy, with which it coincides in point of time, having happened just twenty-eight years before. If Defoe had a real man Friday, who had learnt all his arts till he could practise them as well as himself, the fact might go to explain his enormous productiveness as an author. But I doubt whether the allegory can be pushed into such details. Defoe's fancy was quick enough to give an allegorical meaning to any tale. He might have found in Moll Flanders, with her five marriages and ultimate prostitution, corresponding to his own five political marriages and the dubious conduct of his later years, a closer allegory in some respects than in the life of the shipwrecked sailor. The idea of calling *Robinson Crusoe* an allegory was in all probability an after-thought, perhaps suggested by a derisive parody which had appeared, entitled *The life and strange surprising adventures of Daniel de Foe, of London, Hosier, who lived all alone in the uninhabited island of Great Britain, and so forth.*

If we study any writing of Defoe's in connexion with the circumstances of its production, we find that it is many-sided in its purposes, as full of side aims as a nave is full of spokes. These supplementary moral chapters to *Robinson Crusoe*, admirable as the reflections are in themselves, and naturally as they are made to arise out of the incidents of the hero's life, contain more than meets the eye till we connect them with the author's position. Calling the tale an allegory served him in two ways. In the first place, it added to the interest of the tale itself by presenting it in the light of a riddle, which was left but half-revealed, though he declared after such explanation as he gave that "the riddle was now expounded, and the intelli-

gent reader might see clearly the end and design of the whole work." In the second place, the allegory was such an image of his life as he wished, for good reasons, to impress on the public mind. He had all along, as we have seen, while in the secret service of successive governments, vehemently protested his independence, and called Heaven and Earth to witness that he was a poor struggling, unfortunate, calumniated man. It was more than ever necessary now when people believed him to be under the insuperable displeasure of the Whigs, and he was really rendering them such dangerous service in connexion with the Tory journals, that he should convince the world of his misfortunes and his honesty. The *Serious Reflections* consist mainly of meditations on Divine Providence in times of trouble, and discourses on the supreme importance of honest dealing. They are put into the mouth of Robinson Crusoe, but the reader is warned that they occurred to the author himself in the midst of real incidents in his own life. Knowing what public repute said of him, he does not profess never to have strayed from the paths of virtue, but he implies that he is sincerely repentant, and is now a reformed character. "Wild wicked Robinson Crusoe does not pretend to honesty himself." He acknowledges his early errors. Not to do so would be a mistaken piece of false bravery. "All shame is cowardice. The bravest spirit is the best qualified for a penitent. He, then, that will be honest, must dare to confess that he has been a knave." But the man that has been sick is half a physician, and therefore he is both well fitted to counsel others, and being convinced of the sin and folly of his former errors, is of all men the least likely to repeat them. Want of courage was not a feature in Defoe's diplomacy. He thus boldly described the particular form of dishonesty

with which, when he wrote the description, he was practising upon the unconscious Mr. Mist.

“There is an ugly word called cunning, which is very pernicious to it [honesty], and which particularly injures it by hiding it from our discovery and making it hard to find. This is so like honesty that many a man has been deceived with it, and have taken one for t’other in the markets: nay, I have heard of some who have planted this *wild honesty*, as we may call it, in their own ground, have made use of it in their friendship and dealings, and thought it had been the true plant. But they always lost credit by it, and that was not the worst neither, for they had the loss who dealt with them, and who chaffered for a counterfeit commodity; and we find many deceived so still, which is the occasion there is such an outcry about false friends, and about sharpening and tricking in men’s ordinary dealings with the world.”

A master-mind in the art of working a man, as Bacon calls it, is surely apparent here. Who could have suspected the moralist of concealing the sins he was inclined to, by exposing and lamenting those very sins? There are other passages in the *Serious Reflections* which seem to have been particularly intended for Mist’s edification. In reflecting what a fine thing honesty is, Crusoe expresses an opinion that it is much more common than is generally supposed, and gratefully recalls how often he has met with it in his own experience. He asks the reader to note how faithfully he was served by the English sailor’s widow, the Portuguese captain, the boy Xury, and his man Friday. From these allegoric types, Mist might select a model for his own behaviour. When we consider the tone of these *Serious Reflections*, so eminently pious, moral, and unpretending, so obviously the outcome of a wise, simple, ingenuous nature, we can better understand the

fury with which Mist turned upon Defoe when at last he discovered his treachery. They are of use also in throwing light upon the prodigious versatility which could dash off a masterpiece in fiction, and, before the printer's ink was dry, be already at work making it a subordinate instrument in a much wider and more wonderful scheme of activity, his own restless life.

It is curious to find among the *Serious Reflections* a passage which may be taken as an apology for the practices into which Defoe, gradually, we may reasonably believe, allowed himself to fall. The substance of the apology has been crystallized into an aphorism by the author of *Becky Sharp*, but it has been, no doubt, the consoling philosophy of dishonest persons not altogether devoid of conscience in all ages.

“Necessity makes an honest man a knave; and if the world was to be the judge, according to the common received notion, there would not be an honest poor man alive.

“A rich man is an honest man, no thanks to him, for he would be a double knave to cheat mankind when he had no need of it. He has no occasion to prey upon his integrity, nor so much as to touch upon the borders of dishonesty. Tell me of a man that is a very honest man; for he pays everybody punctually, runs into nobody's debt, does no man any wrong; very well, what circumstances is he in? Why, he has a good estate, a fine yearly income, and no business to do. The Devil must have full possession of this man, if he should be a knave; for no man commits evil for the sake of it; even the Devil himself has some farther design in sinning, than barely the wicked part of it. No man is so hardened in crimes as to commit them for the mere pleasure of the fact; there is always some vice gratified; ambition, pride, or avarice makes rich men knaves, and necessity the poor.”

This is Defoe's excuse for his backslidings put into the

mouth of *Robinson Crusoe*. It might be inscribed also on the threshold of each of his fictitious biographies. Colonel Jack, Moll Flanders, Roxana, are not criminals from malice; they do not commit crimes for the mere pleasure of the fact. They all believe that but for the force of circumstances they might have been orderly, contented, virtuous members of society.

A Colonel, a London Arab, a child of the criminal regiment, began to steal before he knew that it was not the approved way of making a livelihood. Moll and Roxana were overreached by acts against which they were too weak to cope. Even after they were tempted into taking the wrong turning, they did not pursue the downward road without compunction. Many good people might say of them, "There, but for the grace of God, goes myself." But it was not from the point of view of a Baxter or a Bunyan that Defoe regarded them, though he credited them with many edifying reflections. He was careful to say that he would never have written the stories of their lives, if he had not thought that they would be useful as awful examples of the effects of bad education and the indulgence of restlessness and vanity; but he enters into their ingenious shifts and successes with a joyous sympathy that would have been impossible if their reckless adventurous living by their wits had not had a strong charm for him. We often find peeping out in Defoe's writings that roguish cynicism which we should expect in a man whose own life was so far from being straightforward. He was too much dependent upon the public acceptance of honest professions to be eager in depreciating the value of the article, but when he found other people protesting disinterested motives, he could not always resist reminding them that they were no more disinterested than the

Jack-pudding who avowed that he cured diseases from mere love of his kind. Having yielded to circumstances himself, and finding life enjoyable in dubious paths, he had a certain animosity against those who had maintained their integrity and kept to the highroad, and a corresponding pleasure in showing that the motives of the sinner were not after all so very different from the motives of the saint.

The aims in life of Defoe's thieves and pirates are at bottom very little different from the ambition which he undertakes to direct in the *Complete English Tradesman*, and their maxims of conduct have much in common with this ideal. Self-interest is on the look-out, and Self-reliance at the helm.

“A tradesman behind his counter must have no flesh and blood about him, no passions, no resentment; he must never be angry—no, not so much as seem to be so, if a customer tumbles him five hundred pounds' worth of goods, and scarce bids money for anything; nay, though they really come to his shop with no intent to buy, as many do, only to see what is to be sold, and though he knows they cannot be better pleased than they are at some other shop where they intend to buy, 'tis all one; the tradesman must take it, he must place it to the account of his calling, that 'tis his business to be ill-used, and resent nothing; and so must answer as obligingly to those who give him an hour or two's trouble, and buy nothing, as he does to those who, in half the time, lay out ten or twenty pounds. The case is plain; and if some do give him trouble, and do not buy, others make amends and do buy; and as for the trouble, 'tis the business of the shop.”

All Defoe's heroes and heroines are animated by this practical spirit, this thoroughgoing subordination of means to ends. When they have an end in view, the plunder of

a house, the capture of a ship, the ensnaring of a dupe, they allow neither passion, nor resentment, nor sentiment in any shape or form to stand in their way. Every other consideration is put on one side when the business of the shop has to be attended to. They are all tradesmen who have strayed into unlawful courses. They have nothing about them of the heroism of sin; their crimes are not the result of ungovernable passion, or even of antipathy to conventional restraints; circumstances and not any law-defying bias of disposition have made them criminals. How is it that the novelist contrives to make them so interesting? Is it because we are a nation of shopkeepers, and enjoy following lines of business which are a little out of our ordinary routine? Or is it simply that he makes us enjoy their courage and cleverness without thinking of the purposes with which these qualities are displayed? Defoe takes such delight in tracing their bold expedients, their dexterous intriguing and manœuvring, that he seldom allows us to think of anything but the success or failure of their enterprises. Our attention is concentrated on the game, and we pay no heed for the moment to the players or the stakes. Charles Lamb says of *The Complete English Tradesman* that "such is the bent of the book to narrow and to degrade the heart, that if such maxims were as catching and infectious as those of a licentious cast, which happily is not the case, had I been living at that time, I certainly should have recommended to the grand jury of Middlesex, who presented *The Fable of the Bees*, to have presented this book of Defoe's in preference, as of a far more vile and debasing tendency. Yet if Defoe had thrown the substance of this book into the form of a novel, and shown us a tradesman rising by the sedulous practice of its maxims from errand-boy to

gigantic capitalist, it would have been hardly less interesting than his lives of successful thieves and tolerably successful harlots, and its interest would have been very much of the same kind, the interest of dexterous adaptation of means to ends.

CHAPTER X.

HIS MYSTERIOUS END.

“THE best step,” Defoe says, after describing the character of a deceitful talker, “such a man can take is to lie on, and this shows the singularity of the crime; it is a strange expression, but I shall make it out; their way is, I say, to lie on till their character is completely known, and then they can lie no longer, for he whom nobody deceives can deceive nobody, and the essence of lying is removed; for the description of a lie is that it is spoken to deceive, or the design is to deceive. Now he that nobody believes can never lie any more, because nobody can be deceived by him.”

Something like this seems to have happened to Defoe himself. He touched the summit of his worldly prosperity about the time of the publication of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). He was probably richer then than he had been when he enjoyed the confidence of King William, and was busy with projects of manufacture and trade. He was no longer solitary in journalism. Like his hero, he had several plantations, and companions to help him in working them. He was connected with four journals, and from this source alone his income must have been considerable. Besides this, he was producing separate works at the rate, on an average, of six a year, some of them pamphlets,

some of them considerable volumes, all of them calculated to the wants of the time, and several of them extremely popular, running through three or four editions in as many months. Then he had his salary from the Government, which he delicately hints at in one of his extant letters as being overdue. Further, the advertisement of a lost pocket-book in 1726, containing a list of Notes and Bills in which Defoe's name twice appears, seems to show that he still found time for commercial transactions outside literature.¹ Altogether Defoe was exceedingly prosperous, dropped all pretence of poverty, built a large house at Stoke Newington, with stables and pleasure-grounds, and kept a coach.

We get a pleasant glimpse of Defoe's life at this period from the notes of Henry Baker, the naturalist, who married one of his daughters and received his assistance, as we have seen, in starting *The Universal Spectator*. Baker, originally a bookseller, in 1724 set up a school for the deaf and dumb at Newington. There, according to the notes which he left of his courtship, he made the acquaintance of "Mr. Defoe, a gentleman well known by his writings, who had newly built there a very handsome house, as a retirement from London, and amused his time either in the cultivation of a large and pleasant garden, or in the pursuit of his studies, which he found means of making very profitable." Defoe "was now at least sixty years of age, afflicted with the gout and stone, but retained all his mental faculties entire." The diarist goes on to say that he "met usually at the tea-table his three lovely daughters, who were admired for their beauty, their education, and their prudent conduct; and if sometimes Mr. Defoe's disorders made company inconvenient, Mr. Baker was enter-

¹ *Lee's Life*, vol. i. pp. 406-7.

tained by them either singly or together, and that commonly in the garden when the weather was favourable." Mr. Baker fixed his choice on Sophia, the youngest daughter, and, being a prudent lover, began negotiations about the marriage portion, Defoe's part in which is also characteristic. "He knew nothing of Mr. Defoe's circumstances, only imagined, from his very genteel way of living, that he must be able to give his daughter a decent portion; he did not suppose a large one. On speaking to Mr. Defoe, he sanctioned his proposals, and said he hoped he should be able to give her a certain sum specified; but when urged to the point some time afterwards, his answer was that formal articles he thought unnecessary; that he could confide in the honour of Mr. Baker; that when they talked before, he did not know the true state of his own affairs; that he found he could not part with any money at present; but at his death his daughter's portion would be more than he had promised; and he offered his own bond as security." The prudent Mr. Baker would not take his bond, and the marriage was not arranged till two years afterwards, when Defoe gave a bond for £500 payable at his death, engaging his house at Newington as security.

Very little more is known about Defoe's family, except that his eldest daughter married a person of the name of Langley, and that he speculated successfully in South Sea Stock in the name of his second daughter, and afterwards settled upon her an estate at Colchester worth £1020. His second son, named Benjamin, became a journalist, was the editor of the *London Journal*, and got into temporary trouble for writing a scandalous and seditious libel in that newspaper in 1721. A writer in *Applebee's Journal*, whom Mr. Lee identifies with Defoe himself, commenting upon

this circumstance, denied the rumour of its being the well-known Daniel Defoe that was committed for the offence. The same writer declared that it was known "that the young Defoe was but a stalking-horse and a tool, to bear the lash and the pillory in their stead, for his wages; that he was the author of the most scandalous part, but was only made sham proprietor of the whole, to screen the true proprietors from justice."

This son does not appear in a favourable light in the troubles which soon after fell upon Defoe, when Mist discovered his connexion with the Government. Foiled in his assault upon him, Mist seems to have taken revenge by spreading the fact abroad, and all Defoe's indignant denials and outcries against Mist's ingratitude do not seem to have cleared him from suspicion. Thenceforth the printers and editors of journals held aloof from him. Such is Mr. Lee's fair interpretation of the fact that his connexion with *Applebee's Journal* terminated abruptly in March, 1726, and that he is found soon after, in the preface to a pamphlet on *Street Robberies*, complaining that none of the journals will accept his communications. "Assure yourself, gentle reader," he says,¹ "I had not published my project in this pamphlet, could I have got it inserted in any of the journals without feeing the journalists or publishers. I cannot but have the vanity to think they might as well have inserted what I send them, *gratis*, as many things I have since seen in their papers. But I have not only had the mortification to find what I sent rejected, but to lose my originals, not having taken copies of what I wrote." In this preface Defoe makes touching allusion to his age and infirmities. He begs his readers to "excuse the vanity of an over-officious old man, if, like Cato, he

¹ Lee's *Life*, vol. i. p. 418.

inquires whether or no before he goes hence and is no more, he can yet do anything for the service of his country." "The old man cannot trouble you long; take, then, in good part his best intentions, and impute his defects to age and weakness."

This preface was written in 1728; what happened to Defoe in the following year is much more difficult to understand, and is greatly complicated by a long letter of his own which has been preserved. Something had occurred, or was imagined by him to have occurred, which compelled him to fly from his home and go into hiding. He was at work on a book to be entitled *The Complete English Gentleman*. Part of it was already in type when he broke off abruptly in September, 1729, and fled. In August, 1730, he sent from a hiding-place, cautiously described as being about two miles from Greenwich, a letter to his son-in-law, Baker, which is our only clue to what had taken place. It is so incoherent as to suggest that the old man's prolonged toils and anxieties had at last shaken his reason, though not his indomitable self-reliance. Baker apparently had written complaining that he was debarred from seeing him. "Depend upon my sincerity for this," Defoe answers, "that I am far from debarring you. On the contrary, it would be a greater comfort to me than any I now enjoy that I could have your agreeable visits with safety, and could see both you and my dear Sophia, could it be without giving her the grief of seeing her father *in tenebris*, and under the load of insupportable sorrows." He gives a touching description of the griefs which are preying upon his mind.

"It is not the blow I received from a wicked, perjured, and contemptible enemy that has broken in upon my spirit; which, as she well knows, has carried me on through greater

disasters than these. But it has been the injustice, unkindness, and, I must say inhuman, dealing of my own son, which has both ruined my family, and in a word has broken my heart. . . . I depended upon him, I trusted him, I gave up my two dear unprovided children into his hands; but he has no compassion, but suffers them and their poor dying mother to beg their bread at his door, and to crave, as it were an alms, what he is bound under hand and seal, besides the most sacred promises, to supply them with, himself at the same time living in a profusion of plenty. It is too much for me. Excuse my infirmity, I can say no more; my heart is too full. I only ask one thing of you as a dying request. Stand by them when I am gone, and let them not be wronged while he is able to do them right. Stand by them as a brother; and if you have anything within you owing to my memory, who have bestowed on you the best gift I have to give, let them not be injured and trampled on by false pretences and unnatural reflections. I hope they will want no help but that of comfort and council; but that they will indeed want, being too easy to be managed by words and promises.”

The postscript to the letter shows that Baker had written to him about selling the house, which, it may be remembered, was the security for Mrs. Baker's portion, and had inquired about a policy of assurance. “I wrote you a letter some months ago, in answer to one from you, about selling the house; but you never signified to me whether you received it. I have not the policy of assurance; I suppose my wife, or Hannah, may have it.” Baker's ignoring the previous letter about the house seems to signify that it was unsatisfactory. He apparently wished for a personal interview with Defoe. In the beginning of the present letter Defoe had said that, though far from debarring a visit from his son-in-law, circumstances, much to

his sorrow, made it impossible that he could receive a visit from anybody. After the charge against his son, which we have quoted, he goes on to explain that it is impossible for him to go to see Mr. Baker. His family apparently had been ignorant of his movements for some time. "I am at a distance from London, in Kent; nor have I a lodging in London, nor have I been at that place in the Old Bailey since I wrote you I was removed from it. At present I am weak, having had some fits of a fever that have left me low." He suggests, indeed, a plan by which he might see his son-in-law and daughter. He could not bear to make them a single flying visit. "Just to come and look at you and retire immediately, 'tis a burden too heavy. The parting will be a price beyond the enjoyment. But if they could find a retired lodging for him at Enfield, "where he might not be known, and might have the comfort of seeing them both now and then, upon such a circumstance he could gladly give the days to solitude to have the comfort of half an hour now and then with them both for two or three weeks." Nevertheless, as if he considered this plan out of the question, he ends with a touching expression of grief that, being near his journey's end, he may never see them again. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that he did not wish to see his son-in-law, and that Baker wished to see him about money matters, and suspected him of evading an interview.

Was this evasion the cunning of incipient madness? Was his concealing his hiding-place from his son-in-law an insane development of that self-reliant caution, which for so many years of his life he had been compelled to make a habit, in the face of the most serious risks? Why did he give such an exaggerated colour to the infamous conduct of his son? It is easy to make out from the pas-

sage I have quoted, what his son's guilt really consisted in. Defoe had assigned certain property to the son to be held in trust for his wife and daughters. The son had not secured them in the enjoyment of this provision, but maintained them, and gave them words and promises, with which they were content, that he would continue to maintain them. It was this that Defoe called making them "beg their bread at his door, and crave as if it were an alms" the provision to which they were legally entitled. Why did Defoe vent his grief at this conduct in such strong language to his son-in-law, at the same time enjoining him to make a prudent use of it? Baker had written to his father-in-law making inquiry about the securities for his wife's portion; Defoe answers with profuse expressions of affection, a touching picture of his old age and feebleness, and the imminent ruin of his family through the possible treachery of the son to whom he has entrusted their means of support, and an adjuration to his son-in-law to stand by them with comfort and counsel when he is gone. The inquiry about the securities he dismisses in a postscript. He will not sell the house, and he does not know who has the policy of assurance.

One thing and one thing only shines clearly out of the obscurity in which Defoe's closing years are wrapt — his earnest desire to make provision for those members of his family who could not provide for themselves. The pursuit from which he was in hiding, was in all probability the pursuit of creditors. We have seen that his income must have been large from the year 1718 or thereabouts, till his utter loss of credit in journalism about the year 1726; but he may have had old debts. It is difficult to explain otherwise why he should have been at such pains, when he became prosperous, to assign property to his chil-

dren. There is evidence, as early as 1720, of his making over property to his daughter Hannah, and the letter from which I have quoted shows that he did not hold his Newington estate in his own name. In this letter he speaks of a perjured, contemptible enemy as the cause of his misfortunes. Mr. Lee conjectures that this was Mist, that Mist had succeeded in embroiling him with the Government by convincing them of treachery in his secret services, and that this was the hue and cry from which he fled. But it is hardly conceivable that the Government could have listened to charges brought by a man whom they had driven from the country for his seditious practices. It is much more likely that Mist and his supporters had sufficient interest to instigate the revival of old pecuniary claims against Defoe.

It would have been open to suppose that the fears which made the old man a homeless wanderer and fugitive for the last two years of his life, were wholly imaginary, but for the circumstances of his death. He died of a lethargy on the 26th of April, 1731, at a lodging in Ropemaker's Alley, Moorfields. In September, 1733, as the books in Doctors' Commons show, letters of administration on his goods and chattels were granted to Mary Brooks, widow, a creditrix, after summoning in official form the next of kin to appear. Now, if Defoe had been driven from his home by imaginary fears, and had baffled with the cunning of insane suspicion the efforts of his family to bring him back, there is no apparent reason why they should not have claimed his effects after his death. He could not have died unknown to them, for place and time were recorded in the newspapers. His letter to his son-in-law, expressing the warmest affection for all his family except his son, is sufficient to prevent the horrible

notion that he might have been driven forth like Lear by his undutiful children after he had parted his goods among them. If they had been capable of such unnatural conduct, they would not have failed to secure his remaining property. Why, then, were his goods and chattels left to a creditrix? Mr. Lee ingeniously suggests that Mary Brooks was the keeper of the lodging where he died, and that she kept his personal property to pay rent and perhaps funeral expenses. A much simpler explanation, which covers most of the known facts without casting any unwarranted reflections upon Defoe's children, is that when his last illness overtook him he was still keeping out of the way of his creditors, and that everything belonging to him in his own name was legally seized. But there are doubts and difficulties attending any explanation.

Mr. Lee has given satisfactory reasons for believing that Defoe did not, as some of his biographers have supposed, die in actual distress. Ropemaker's Alley in Moorfields was a highly respectable street at the beginning of last century; a lodging there was far from squalid. The probability is that Defoe subsisted on his pension from the Government during his last two years of wandering; and suffering though he was from the infirmities of age, yet wandering was less of a hardship than it would have been to other men, to one who had been a wanderer for the greater part of his life. At the best it was a painful and dreary ending for so vigorous a life, and unless we pitilessly regard it as a retribution for his moral defects, it is some comfort to think that the old man's infirmities and anxieties were not aggravated by the pressure of hopeless and helpless poverty. Nor do I think that he was as distressed as he represented to his son-in-law by apprehensions of ruin to his family after his death, and suspicions

of the honesty of his son's intentions. There is a half insane tone about his letter to Mr. Baker, but a certain method may be discerned in its incoherencies. My own reading of it is that it was a clever evasion of his son-in-law's attempts to make sure of his share of the inheritance. We have seen how shifty Defoe was in the original bargaining about his daughter's portion, and we know from his novels what his views were about fortune-hunters, and with what delight he dwelt upon the arts of outwitting them. He probably considered that his youngest daughter was sufficiently provided for by her marriage, and he had set his heart upon making provision for her unmarried sisters. The letter seems to me to be evidence, not so much of fears for their future welfare, as of a resolution to leave them as much as he could. Two little circumstances seem to show that, in spite of his professions of affection, there was a coolness between Defoe and his son-in-law. He wrote only the prospectus and the first article for Baker's paper, the *Universal Spectator*, and when he died, Baker contented himself with a simple intimation of the fact.

If my reading of this letter is right, it might stand as a type of the most strongly marked characteristic in Defoe's political writings. It was a masterly and utterly unscrupulous piece of diplomacy for the attainment of a just and benevolent end. This may appear strange after what I have said about Defoe's want of honesty, yet one cannot help coming to this conclusion in looking back at his political career before his character underwent its final degradation. He was a great, a truly great liar, perhaps the greatest liar that ever lived. His dishonesty went too deep to be called superficial, yet, if we go deeper still in his rich and strangely mixed nature, we come upon stubborn foundations of conscience. Among contemporary comments on

the occasion of his death, there was one which gave perfect expression to his political position. "His knowledge of men, especially those in high life (with whom he was formerly very conversant) had weakened his attachment to any political party; but, in the main, he was in the interest of civil and religious liberty, in behalf of which he appeared on several remarkable occasions." The men of the time with whom Defoe was brought into contact, were not good examples to him. The standard of political morality was probably never so low in England as during his lifetime. Places were dependent on the favour of the Sovereign, and the Sovereign's own seat on the throne was insecure; there was no party cohesion to keep politicians consistent, and every man fought for his own hand. Defoe had been behind the scenes, witnessed many curious changes of service, and heard many authentic tales of jealousy, intrigue, and treachery. He had seen Jacobites take office under William, join zealously in the scramble for his favours, and enter into negotiations with the emissaries of James either upon some fancied slight, or from no other motive than a desire to be safe, if by any chance the sceptre should again change hands. Under Anne he had seen Whig turn Tory and Tory turn Whig, and had seen statesmen of the highest rank hold out one hand to Hanover and another to St. Germans. The most single-minded man he had met had been King William himself, and of his memory he always spoke with the most affectionate honour. Shifty as Defoe was, and admirably as he used his genius for circumstantial invention to cover his designs, there was no other statesman of his generation who remained more true to the principles of the Revolution, and to the cause of civil and religious freedom. No other public man saw more clearly what was for the good of the country, or pursued it more

steadily. Even when he was the active servant of Harley, and turned round upon men who regarded him as their own, the part which he played was to pave the way for his patron's accession to office under the House of Hanover. Defoe did as much as any one man, partly by secret intrigue, partly through the public press, perhaps as much as any ten men outside those in the immediate direction of affairs, to accomplish the two great objects which William bequeathed to English statesmanship—the union of England and Scotland, and the succession to the United Kingdom of a Protestant dynasty. Apart from the field of high politics, his powerful advocacy was enlisted in favour of almost every practicable scheme of social improvement that came to the front in his time. Defoe cannot be held up as an exemplar of moral conduct, yet if he is judged by the measures that he laboured for and not by the means that he employed, few Englishmen have lived more deserving than he of their country's gratitude. He may have been self-seeking and vain-glorious, but in his political life self-seeking and vain-glory were elevated by their alliance with higher and wider aims. Defoe was a wonderful mixture of knave and patriot. Sometimes pure knave seems to be uppermost, sometimes pure patriot; but the mixture is so complex, and the energy of the man so restless, that it almost passes human skill to unravel the two elements. The author of *Robinson Crusoe*, is entitled to the benefit of every doubt.

THE END.







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