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LIFE AND LETTERS  
OF  
JOHN RICKMAN

ORLO WILLIAMS







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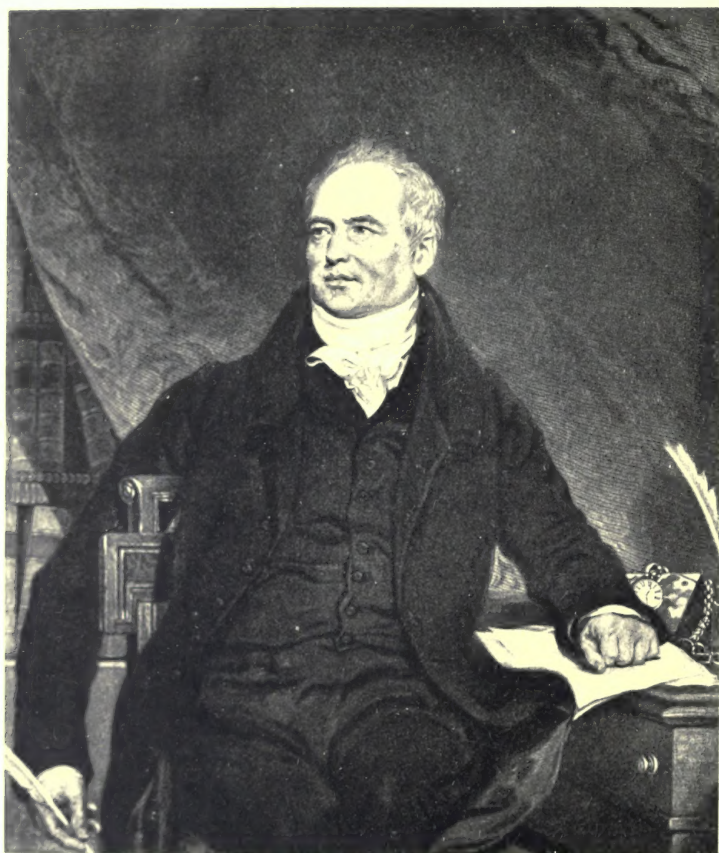


**LIFE AND LETTERS OF JOHN RICKMAN**









JOHN RICKMAN.

*(From an engraving published in 1813.)*



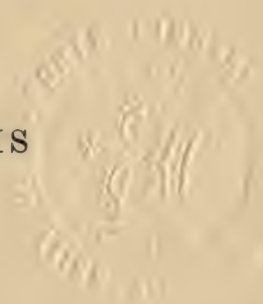
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Lamb's Friend the Census-Taker

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LIFE AND LETTERS OF  
JOHN RICKMAN

BY  
ORLO WILLIAMS



*ILLUSTRATED*

BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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TO MY  
MOTHER AND FATHER



## PREFACE

MY thanks are due in the first place to the Rev. W. F. Rickman, the grandson of John Rickman, for his goodness in placing at my disposal the bulk of the correspondence which is in his possession. Without his kindness this book would have been impossible. To John Rickman's granddaughter, Miss Lefroy, I am also very deeply indebted. She has allowed me to reproduce a unique sketch made by her mother, to draw upon her mother's very interesting reminiscences, and to use some other letters of her grandfather's which are in her possession. I wish to thank Miss Warter for permission to give extracts from unpublished letters of Southey's, Mr. E. V. Lucas and Mr. Gordon Wordsworth for permission to print a long letter from Lamb to Rickman, Messrs. Macmillan & Co. for permission to use letters which appeared in Mrs. Sandford's *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, and H.M. Office of Works for the loan of a photograph. Leave to publish the Coleridge letters was given by Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge. I also mention that two articles by me, based on the letters, appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* this year, and that for the political history I have received great assistance from vol. xi. of *The Political History of England*.

ORLO WILLIAMS.

20 IVERNA COURT,  
KENSINGTON, W.





# CONTENTS

Introduction . . . . .	PAGE 1
------------------------	-----------

## CHAPTER I

The Rickman family—Early life of John Rickman—His meeting with Southey— <i>Béguinages</i> —Departure from Christchurch . . . . .	19
--	----

## CHAPTER II

1800

Rickman in London—George Dyer—The Magazine—Lamb's 'pleasant hand'—Southey's <i>Thalaba</i> —Dyer's preface—The first Population Act—Rickman and the census . . . . .	26
--	----

## CHAPTER III

1801 to early 1802

George Burnett—Rickman secretary to Abbot in Ireland—Letters from Lamb—G. D.'s rescue—His letter—'Horse medicine' for Burnett—His 'second birth' and tutorship—Lamb and the <i>Morning Post</i> —Abbot appointed Speaker—Rickman leaves Ireland . . . . .	44
---	----

## CHAPTER IV

1802-1805

Secretaryship to the Speaker—Bag and sword—Thomas Poole—George Burnett again—G. B. quarrels with Southey—Lamb's opinion of it—Southey's first visit to Rickman—Poole and Poor Laws—Another letter from G. Dyer—His 'patronage' of Lamb—Burnett's letters—Rickman's temper—Coleridge—Rickman finds him a ship—His letters—Ned Phillips—Overwork—An unromantic marriage . . . . .	77
---	----

# x LIFE AND LETTERS OF JOHN RICKMAN

## CHAPTER V

	PAGE
Family life at Westminster—A stern father—The houses in Palace Yard—Church parade—Late dinner—The Burneys and other friends—Lamb's Wednesday evenings—Driving in the gig—Telford—Rickman's official work . . . . .	118

## CHAPTER VI

1806-1816

Political letters to Southey and Poole— <i>The Friend</i> —The Regency Bill—The <i>Quarterly Review</i> —Burnett's death—Coleridge on Lamb's weaknesses—Shelley—Murder of Perceval—Coleridge on 'Remorse'—Rickman's good advice to Southey—Southey Poet Laureate—His truculence curbed by Rickman—Waterloo—Rickman the consoler—Economic distress in the country—Rickman on 'Mock Humanity' and the Press . . . . .	135
---	-----

## CHAPTER VII

1817-1829

Southey's 'Wat Tyler'—Rickman's views on poor law reform—His article in the <i>Quarterly</i> —A letter from Luke Hansard—Rickman's depression—Letters to Lord Colchester—Scottish tour with Southey—The model <i>béguinage</i> —Depression again—Rickman on Canning—Opening of the Caledonian Canal—Bertha Southey—Roman Catholic relief—Rickman's part in Southey's essays—State of Ireland—Catholic Relief Bill passed—Cooperation—Rickman Lamb's 'friend' in 1829 . . . . .	188
--	-----

## CHAPTER VIII

1830-1832

Parliamentary reform—Letters purely political—Macaulay's maiden speech—Rickman the political philosopher—Calls Southey to arms—'Monarchy or Democracy'—The projected Colloquies—Rickman's outline—Introduction of the Reform Bill—Rickman on the debate—Dissolution—The second Bill—An all-night sitting—O'Connell's Irish devils—Murray and the Colloquies—The third Bill—Wellington's failure to form a ministry—The Bill passes—Murray and Spottiswoode impede the Colloquies—Rickman wishes to retire . . . . .	249
---	-----



CONTENTS

xi

CHAPTER IX

1833-1840

	PAGE
The reformed House of Commons—The new Devils and the Whig Devils—Lamb dines with Rickman—Rickman on Wellington—The fire at the Houses of Parliament—A graphic account—Henry Taylor the hero—Lamb's death—Rickman's comment—Southey offered a baronetcy—The Exchequer demolished—Judge Jeffreys' house—Rickman's illness and death—Tribute of the House . . . . .	299



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

JOHN RICKMAN . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
<i>From an engraving published in 1843</i>	
ST. STEPHEN'S CHAPEL AND THE SPEAKER'S HOUSE BEFORE THE FIRE IN 1834 . . . . .	<i>Facing page 77</i>
<i>From a drawing in the British Museum</i>	
THE ENTRANCE FROM NEW PALACE YARD TO THE SPEAKER'S COURT . . . . .	,, 124
<i>From Smith's 'Antiquities of Westminster'</i>	
THE SPEAKER'S COURTYARD FROM THE SOUTH- WEST . . . . .	,, 124
<i>From Smith's 'Antiquities of Westminster'</i>	
RICKMAN LEAVING THE CLERK ASSISTANT'S HOUSE . . . . .	,, 125
<i>From a water-colour sketch by Mrs. Lefroy (1831)</i>	
NORTH-WEST VIEW OF WESTMINSTER HALL, TAKEN BEFORE THE REMOVAL OF THE COFFEE-HOUSES AND PILLARS, BY THOMAS SANDBY, R.A. . . . .	,, 129
<i>From Smith's 'Antiquities of Westminster'</i>	
THE BURNING OF THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT IN 1834 . . . . .	,, 309
<i>From a drawing in the British Museum</i>	
JUDGE JEFFREYS' HOUSE IN DUKE STREET, WEST- MINSTER . . . . .	,, 317
<i>From a water-colour sketch by T. H. Shepherd in 1853, in the British Museum</i>	
A VIEW OF JUDGE JEFFREYS' HOUSE FROM BIRD- CAGE WALK, TAKEN JUST BEFORE ITS DEMO- LITION IN 1910 . . . . .	,, 318
<i>From a photograph lent by H.M. Office of Works</i>	





# LAMB'S FRIEND THE CENSUS-TAKER

## INTRODUCTION

It was in collecting material for a memorandum on the history of the officials of the House of Commons—of whom I am happy to be one—that I first met the name of John Rickman ; and it was from the memoir by his son, reprinted from an obituary notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, that I first learnt the details of his life. I discovered that one of my own profession—for Rickman was Speaker's Secretary for twelve, and Clerk at the Table for twenty-six, years—had been the originator of the census in England and supervised the population returns for four successive decades, that he had become a statistician celebrated even outside England, that he was intimate with Southey and Lamb and Coleridge, and—most interesting of all—that he had left a large body of correspondence with these and other friends. Now the memoir, written in the formal, lapidary style dear to the Early Victorians, does not present Rickman as a particularly promising subject for a biographical study. It leaves the reader with an impression of an austere being who lived only to perform prodigious labours : a worthy person no doubt, but, to put it briefly, dull. Yet the memoir is humanised by one inclusion, that of Charles Lamb's well-known letter to Manning in 1800, describing his new acquaintance Rickman as a 'pleasant hand' with all the exuberance of Elian ecstasy. The fact that Rickman could have inspired such words from such a man was enough to tempt me further. I determined, if it were humanly possible, to possess myself of a correspondence which had apparently lain hidden for seventy years. My inquiries as to its existence were delayed by the exigencies of other tasks, but I was able in the meantime to gather

such further information as was to be derived from published sources. Rickman's name appears in many books—frequently in Southey's voluminous correspondence, in Mrs. Sandford's *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, in the correspondence of Lamb, in biographies of Lamb, Southey, and Coleridge, in Crabb Robinson's and Lord Colchester's diaries, and in the Dictionary of National Biography—yet at the end of my reading I seemed to have gained no more than indications of Rickman's possible interest if more were known about him. He seemed to flit through the pages of books like a literary ghost to whom flesh and blood had never been given, though Mr. E. V. Lucas, in his charming and masterly *Life of Charles Lamb*, has certainly been successful in giving him some semblance of reality; but the information available to Mr. Lucas was comparatively scanty, and so elusive does even *his* Rickman seem to be that none of my friends—even those who prided themselves on peculiar intimacy with Lamb's life and circle—has ever shown the smallest sign of intelligence on my mentioning his name. Yet Lamb lauded him to the skies, and found him the fittest recipient of the latest drolleries of his friends; Southey leaned upon him for forty years; Coleridge admired him whole-heartedly: his life was spent in laborious service for England, and he invented the means for his carrying out that numbering of the people which has taken place this year for the twelfth time. If he had lived and died in more modern times he would have been highly honoured in his life, and his biography would have anticipated the first anniversary of his death. But plain John Rickman, F.R.S., shunned notoriety while he lived, and when he died he was forgotten.

And why has he been forgotten? Chiefly because we have known nothing of the man himself—whether he was prig or prude, witty or dull, Whig or Tory; why he was so prized at Lamb's Wednesday evenings, what he had to do with such oddities as George Dyer and George Burnett, how he regarded the political conflict of which he was a close witness for nearly forty years. The answers to these



questions are now no longer in doubt, and that is the reason of this book. The quest of Rickman's letters proved absurdly easy, and if Lamb's 'pleasant hand' is still a phantom, the fault is entirely mine.

Of the documents themselves I must say a word in passing, for they are not inconsiderable in bulk. The correspondence preserved in the Rickman family consists, firstly, of the letters which passed between Southey and Rickman from 1798 to 1839; secondly, of certain letters written by Rickman to his wife or daughters, mostly accounts of tours; thirdly, twenty-three letters from Charles Lamb; fourthly, fifteen letters from Coleridge. In the British Museum are some thirty letters from Rickman to Coleridge's friend, Thomas Poole of Nether Stowey. Mr. Gordon Wordsworth has another letter from Lamb, one of the longest and most characteristic in all Lamb's correspondence; and there are four letters from Rickman quoted in the diaries of Lord Colchester, to whom, as Speaker Abbot, Rickman was secretary. The Southey-Rickman correspondence consists of over twelve hundred letters of varying length. It was used by the editors of Southey's correspondence, who have published about two hundred of Southey's, and quoted from about thirty of Rickman's, letters. From this mass I have had to select what was of permanent interest, and in doing so I have only quoted Southey sparingly, chiefly from unpublished letters, for the tenor of his correspondence is already well known. Two at least of Rickman's family letters are of great interest, and with them may be classed the reminiscences of his daughter, Mrs. Lefroy, which give many details of the household life at Westminster. The letters from Lamb, except that in Mr. Gordon Wordsworth's possession, were published in Canon Ainger's 1906 edition of *Lamb's Letters*, and I am precluded from using them. I publish seven of the Coleridge letters for the first time, a proceeding which their interest fully justifies. I have selected, again, from the Poole letters in the British Museum, omitting some passages included in Mrs. Sandford's *Thomas Poole and*

*his Friends*, and including others not quoted there. These various items supplement one another particularly well, and there are practically no *lacunae* making conjecture necessary, though we cannot but lament the absence of Rickman's letters to Lamb.

My aim, so far as possible, has been to allow the letters to speak for themselves ; still, even for the task of selecting and combining, a point of view is necessary. My point of view is illustrated by the title I have chosen, which is an answer to a difficult question frequently put to me, namely, 'Who *was* Rickman?' He was many things, as I have said—census-taker, Parliamentary official, the friend of several men whose names will live as long as English literature. But the quality which has appealed most of all to my mind, and on which I base the *immediate* interest of this book, is that he was Lamb's friend, that is, a human being with certain distinctive human qualities. Rickman, I admit, was far more intimately acquainted with Southey than with Lamb, but to have been Southey's friend is no *differentia*. With Lamb it is different. Elia, as he tells us himself, chose his 'ragged regiment' of 'intimados' with care, and he immortalised them all—Dyer, Burnett, Jem White, 'Ralph Bigod,' and the rest—as parts of his own immortal character. He cared not one whit for a man's achievements or possessions, but took a friend to his heart, and planted him there, because, vigorous or feeble, radiant or sickly, he was of that genus called common humanity, which Elia loved so dearly till the day he died. I have tried, therefore, to let Rickman reveal himself, not as the austere, stolid worker (which was only one side of him), but as a very definite personality with forcible views and an interesting life. Some may think that I have treated his actual work too summarily ; but this is not an economical treatise on the census, which, when all has been said, is not a particularly enlivening subject.

Who, then, was Rickman ? As I have begun, so I will continue, by speaking first of his friendships, for they are a clue to his character. It is remarkable that, though he

was externally unbending and severe, intolerant of other people's weaknesses, and indifferent whether his very great benevolence was presented in acceptable form to those who stood in need of it, his friends invariably spoke of him with admiration and affection. Lamb, besides the letter to Manning which I have mentioned, wrote on another occasion: 'His memory will be to me as the brazen serpent to the Israelites,—I shall look up to it, to keep me straight and honest.' Coleridge called him a 'sterling man,' and assured him of his unaffected esteem. Talfourd alludes to him as 'the sturdiest of jovial companions.' From Southey's many expressions of affection I choose this: 'God bless you, my dear R., I would often give much for a quiet evening's conversation with you.' Southey was Rickman's earliest friend, for their meeting took place in 1797, when Rickman was twenty-six, and the friendship lasted without a shadow till Rickman's death. What drew them together was a certain firmness of character and similarity of views. Both were revolutionaries when they met; both crystallised simultaneously into Tories. Rickman befriended Southey in every possible way. He acted as his literary agent when the poet was in Portugal, he procured him a secretaryship when he returned, he opened his house to him whenever he visited London, he sent him books and Parliamentary papers for his reviews, he was never too busy to research for him and embody the result in eight quarto pages of close writing, he paid his fees for a doctor's degree in a particularly graceful manner, and he would have lent him money if it had been necessary. If he was stoical as a comforter, he was admirable as a counsellor. With equal good sense he pointed out the extravagances of Southey's first poem as Laureate, remonstrated with him on his excessive use of religious epithets, and dissuaded him from outraging public opinion by refusing to adopt the incorrect name of Waterloo for Wellington's great victory. But the friendship with Southey was so intimate a part of Rickman's whole life that I need say no more of it here. I will but mention the interesting fact,



which comes to light, that Rickman practically wrote the whole of one of Southey's published essays, and that the letters, among other things, give many interesting details of the never-finished 'Colloquies' which the two friends undertook in collaboration in 1831.

Mr. E. V. Lucas gives a very adequate account of Rickman's friendship with Lamb. It began in great warmth on both sides. Lamb thought Rickman 'absolute in all numbers,' and Rickman hugely enjoyed Lamb's wit. So long as Lamb lived in London this firm attachment lasted. Rickman attended regularly to play whist at the Wednesday evenings, and he was one of that steadier crew who checked the more demoralising influence of such men as Fell and Fenwick on the volatile Elia. The affection of Lamb for Rickman is proved by the fact that in 1803 he came to stay in Palace Yard while Mary Lamb was suffering from one of her attacks of lunacy, for on these occasions Lamb shunned all ordinary society. Mrs. Lefroy gives a picture of the Lambs on a visit—Charles 'with rather the air of a dissenting preacher' uttering a pun in a far corner of the room, and Mary 'a stout, roundabout little body with a turban, and a layer of snuff on her upper lip.' In later years the friendship cooled to some extent. Rickman became busier, the Lambs left London, and Charles became more intemperate. Yet in 1829—a fact not hitherto known—Lamb again stayed with Rickman when Mary was ill, and in 1833 he dined with him to be reconciled to his friend Godwin. Lamb died at the end of 1834, and his death occasioned curious remarks from both Rickman and Southey, which are characteristic of their not too sympathetic natures.

The chief interest of Coleridge in Rickman's life lies in the unpublished letters. One of these is an ingenuous comment by the opium-drinker on Hazlitt's too frequently convivial visits to Lamb, with a curious remark about the influence of tobacco on Lamb's desire for alcohol. Another describes the rehearsals of his tragedy 'Remorse,' proving that Rickman made some very acceptable emendations.



The census-taker had a profound admiration for Coleridge's genius, and an entire contempt for his character. He wrote of him : ' If he dies, it will be from a sulky imagination, produced from the general cause of such things, *i.e.* a want of regular work and application.' Yet, as one of the letters which I publish shows, Coleridge entertained the most lively feelings for Rickman.

Those who have any acquaintance with Lamb's life and letters will remember his two butts, George Dyer—' G. D.' or ' George I.,'—and George Burnett—' George II.' or the ' Bishop.' Rickman was the friend of both, and his correspondence gives many new facts about them. It was George Dyer who introduced Rickman to Lamb, and who procured him the editorship of the *Commercial, Agricultural, and Manufacturers' Magazine*. The Southey-Rickman letters give two new and amusing stories of his relations with Lamb. One relates how he persuaded a friend unasked to buy Lamb's play at half-price, and gravely handed 1s. 6d. to Lamb, regretting he could do so little for his friends ; and the other tells how the Lambs talked him into love with a famous blue-stocking. Moreover, in this correspondence there are preserved three original letters from George Dyer, from whose pen no private letters have hitherto been known. The first, which I do not print, settles a date in Lamb's life. The second is exceedingly precious, for it is a sequel to Lamb's exquisitely humorous letter describing Dyer's rescue from starvation. The third is recommendation from Dyer of a deserving young man who wished for copying work, his character being vouched for by Dyer's washerwoman. Rickman found the man to be an arrant rogue, and the incident is thoroughly typical of him whom Lamb called the ' common liar of benevolence.'

Rickman enjoyed and appreciated what was good in Dyer, but his feelings towards George Burnett were more mixed. Burnett's life, if it had its humorous side, was a sad chapter of failure, which has never been properly put together. The Rickman correspondence supplies a good deal of new information, which I collected in an article in

*Blackwood's Magazine* for March of this year. The scheme of the present book prevented me from incorporating this article *en bloc*, but no essential points are omitted, though the events are recounted as they occurred as incidents in Rickman's life. The real cause of Burnett's failure was his indolent, vain character; the immediate cause was the unsettlement of his mind by his meeting Southey at Balliol, and his introduction to Coleridge. Southey always felt the responsibility, and I am able to give some new and highly interesting extracts from Southey's letters, which set forth his views on the conduct of his unfortunate friend. Rickman's relations with Burnett show the mixture of harshness and benevolence in his nature. He saw the unmistakable talent and the weak character which made it useless. Again and again he put himself out to find work for Burnett, after exclaiming that he would never have any more to do with him. Whenever 'George II.' showed the slightest tendency to reform, he could count on Rickman's assistance. On the other hand, Rickman never showed any tact in his handling of that neurotic being. He plainly displayed his contempt, he wrote him letters which Lamb called 'a cruel dose of yellow gamboodge,' he even went so far 'as a cosmopolite' as to wish him dead that some more useful being might consume his share of sustenance. The amazing story of Burnett's commission as a surgeon in the militia, which is told in part by Mrs. Sandford, can now be followed to its absurd conclusion, and in this connection I quote in full Burnett's three original letters which Thomas Poole preserved. It is just a hundred years ago since Burnett, the author of two quite interesting books, died in a workhouse infirmary, and I am glad, if only for the sake of elucidating Lamb's humorous references to him, that I can add to the knowledge of his career.

Rickman's friendships with these men and others—Poole, Telford, the engineer, and the Burneys—were characterised by a certain external formality which strikes rather chill upon the modern reader, who must remember, however, that society a hundred years ago was more patriarchal and



punctilious than it is to-day. Yet rigidity was natural to the man. His family motto was 'Fortitude in Adversity,' and perhaps a puritanical fortitude in everything would best sum up his character. He was sturdily unromantic. He could write to Southey that he had 'lately imported a wife,' and remonstrate with Poole for supposing that he married for love. In his family his word was law, and even to his children his letters were rather portentously solemn. The grave homily administered to his daughter Ann on the occasion of her having confessed her inability to play quadrille music at a children's party might have come out of a Jane Austen novel. His taste for pleasure was not very highly developed. When the Lambs took him to Sadlers Wells he slept, and his only recreation consisted in long driving tours in the yellow gig which Mrs. Lefroy describes, and these tours were planned on distinctly 'improving' lines. He had a hatred of show and affectation, which led him to avoid 'dinner party intercourse,' and deliberately banish the terms 'drawing room' and 'dining room' from his own house. A little litany which comes at the end of a letter to Southey gives a clue to some of his dislikes: 'From all novelists, tourists, anecdotists, beauty-mongers, selectors, abbreviators, et id genus omne, good Lord deliver us! And also from overgrown theatres, which insure bad plays and bad acting.' The beauties of Nature, he thought, were morbidly insisted on by the Lake poets: in his view they should be 'as play hours.' But Rickman was not in the least crabbed. 'You know,' he said, 'I am in the habit of looking on the white side of futurity'; and again: 'The wiser economy of life is to like as much as possible, and to dislike as little as possible.' Neither was he a domestic tyrant, and his excellent letters on Bertha Southey are proof that he had a fatherly soul. His home life, indeed, was undisturbedly happy, and it is a pretty picture on which Mrs. Lefroy has allowed us to look. We see Rickman, the cares of office cast away, sleeping on his grass slope at Westminster, with his children around weaving daisy chains and itching to pull papa's pigtail;

we can imagine his garden with the 'Hamboro' grape' and the 'mound to bury kittens and canaries in'—if indeed we can conceive anything so pastoral in stately Westminster. Mrs. Lefroy has preserved a charming memory of the official 'church parade' for Sunday service at St. Margaret's, and has drawn a portrait of her father in his tight pantaloons with 'very pointed toes to his shoes,' his shirt frill 'very neatly plaited,' his cravat of fine white nainsook, and his swallow-tail coat. In early days at Westminster, Rickman's hair was curled and powdered every day; and though he abandoned powder when the fashion died out, he was the last of the clerks to wear a stock and knee-breeches at the Table of the House.

Considering that he enjoyed intimate friendship with men whose names are great in English literature, Rickman's own want of literary taste is a little surprising. He had small appreciation for *belles lettres*, and none at all for poetry. His earliest letter to Southey, a criticism of 'Joan of Arc' from the point of view of antiquarian accuracy, contains the remark: 'Poetry has its use and its place, and like some known superfluities we should feel awkward without it.' On another occasion he says: 'I abjure all my little aversion to poetry in deference to your cogent reasons; I only think poetry bad in a man who may be better employed: a toy in manhood.' Yet he was not without some critical insight. He thought Southey's 'Madoc' bad, and told him so; on the other hand, he was enthusiastic over Lamb's play, 'John Woodvil,' and offered to lend all the money necessary for its publication. Of Wordsworth's articles in the *Friend* he said: 'It seems to me that Wordsworth has neither fun nor common sense in him.' In spite of his editorship of the *Commercial, Agricultural, and Manufacturers' Magazine*, Rickman found literary composition a difficult task. He could not embroider, but marshalled his facts in severe order. For that reason he refused to become a regular contributor to the *Quarterly*, and it was only for Southey's benefit that he wrote the article on the poor law which appeared in



that magazine. In this case and in the case of the 'Colloquies' he strictly stipulated that Southey should apply the file without compunction. The actual matter of his writing was admirable, and more than once Southey bestows on it the highest praise, but what was wanting was that picturesque vigour of expression which gives so strong a flavour to his letters.

Rickman's style is at its breeziest when he writes about politics, a subject on which his remarks are both entertaining and extremely interesting. His political views were, to say the least, well defined. He was, in fact, a strong Tory. But he was neither a party politician nor a landowning squire who imbibed his politics with his mother's milk. He had been, with Southey, a revolutionary for a glorious year or two, but a study of economic and social subjects settled him a Tory—a Tory, if I may say so, of the 'Manchester school,' for he held that the only safe rule was individualism or 'selfishness,' and that the Whigs and Reformers erred through a sentimental desire to be benevolent, a 'mock-humanity.' He was perfectly sincere in the conviction that, owing to the spread of Liberal ideas, a tremendous and devastating revolution was about to occur in England at any time before the Reform Bill was actually passed, and so distressed was he on more than one occasion that he confessed to a kind of melancholia of despair. But it is just his intellectual Toryism which makes his political letters unique, besides the fact that most of the contemporary memoirs are Whig, and Colchester's diaries end before the Reform Bill. His letters are an expression of the point of view of an extremely intelligent Tory, who was completely acquainted with the political events of his day, and bound by no party allegiance. They remind us, to whom the Tory politics of the early nineteenth century cannot but appear hopelessly reactionary, what a hard-headed man then feared from the Whigs, and by what spirit he was animated in his hatred for their political aims.

Rickman's Parliamentary experience was longer than

that which falls to the lot of most members ; he was in the service of the House of Commons for thirty-eight years. When he first came to Palace Yard the House was nearing the end of its most brilliant epoch. Burke was dead, but Pitt and Fox, Sheridan and Grattan were still there. The brilliance of debates was diminished under the long Tory administration, but the House was kept from stagnation by the unrest in the country, and the violent agitation of the small band of reformers, led by Burdett, Whitbread, and (later) Brougham, who raised annually the questions of Catholic emancipation and Parliamentary reform. Of these burning questions Rickman saw the rise, the climax, and the settlement, and it may naturally be supposed that his accounts of the debates are worth reading. I do not pretend that he had any access to the inner sources of political knowledge. His contempt for politicians was too great for him to trouble his head about their secrets. 'One cannot live so near the House of Commons,' he wrote, 'without becoming cynical towards all who figure there.' His judgment, too, was often at fault. He was singularly mistaken about Perceval's ability in 1807 : he saw in Brougham only the 'noisy adventurer,' in Canning the intriguer, and in Wellington 'little more of the statesman than a vulgar appetite for power.' He was over-ready to believe political gossip discreditable to the other side. Thus, he was convinced in 1801 that Pitt resigned solely to escape impeachment, and that Catholic emancipation was not the real question at issue ; that the Duke of York's fear of impeachment forced the Ministry of All the Talents on the King, and that Grey's resignation after the second rejection of the Reform Bill was a cleverly stage-managed trick. Nevertheless, in spite of his prejudices and his credulity, Rickman is a valuable witness. Parliamentary officials are politely supposed to have no political opinions. It is amusing, therefore, to imagine the Speaker's Secretary, who was a model of correctness, putting off his bag and sword to write to Southey or Poole that Pitt 'had genius without acquired knowledge ; whence his affectation of infalli-

bility and all the woes of Europe'; that 'Charley Fox eats his former opinions daily, and even ostentatiously, showing himself the worst man but the better Minister of a corrupt Government, where three people in four must be rogues and three deeds in four bad'; or 'I expected Mr. Perceval to be murdered, but I had expected it from the Burdetts and other vermin rendered infuriate by the weekly poison they imbibe from sixteen newspapers emulous in violence and mischief'; or, after a joyful account of the Regent's rebuff to Grenville and Grey in 1811, 'the pangs of the M. Chronicle are delicious. Canting villain!' Still more entertaining is it to think of Rickman from 1814 onwards, sitting staidly at the Table in his wig and gown, courteously giving his attention to members of any party who required his advice on procedure, entering blameless minutes, editing questions, pruning motions into orderly shape, and all the while mentally fulminating against those whom he called the 'Whiggamores,' or contemptuously damning the Tories for their want of backbone. Little did Brougham, Canning, Whitbread, O'Connell, Peel, or Wellington imagine, if in the course of a full-dress second-reading debate their eye fell for a moment on the peacefully writing Clerk Assistant, that he was criticising them as bitterly as any of their opponents, recording Brougham's 'deeply infernal toned "Hear! hear!"', Peel's haughty coldness, or Macaulay's maiden speech, or urging his friend, the trenchant reviewer of the *Quarterly*, to open the eyes of England to the machinations of the 'Mobocracy' backed by the 'hell-hounds of the Press.' The Roman Catholic question filled him with all kinds of gloomy forebodings, and he never forgave Wellington for his opportunism in the matter, calling it 'the grossest of all specimens of impropriety in civil government.' But the political interest of Rickman's correspondence reaches its climax at the time of the Reform Bill agitation. His feelings were passionately aroused, and he called to Southey to make a last stand with him, and to sound the bugle for all true patriots. Then was planned the writing of those 'Colloquies'



between 'Montesinos' and 'Metretes'—Southey and Rickman—which never saw the light. Rickman's first suggested title for the book was 'Monarchy or Democracy,' and the motto *Ne quid detrimenti respublica capiat*. It was to supply Southey with necessary political knowledge that his letters on the Reform debates are so frequent and full, and their tone may be judged from the description of Lord John Russell's first Reform Bill speech: 'The backing speech of the Tricolor Donkey Lord was truly asinine.' What strikes the reader particularly about the letters at this period is their modernity. With a few changes of names, they might have been written by a Unionist at any time during the last eighteen months. The House of Lords, the question of creating peers, an Irish party ('O'Connell's squadron of Irish Devils') that boasted of holding the balance of power—there are parallels at the moment of writing.<sup>1</sup> Rickman's vivacious outcries against the 'Whiggamores,' if a little pathetic, were seriously meant. This is proved by the fact that, after comforting himself in 1833 that 'in our Pandemonium' the 'new devils' were 'cuffing and scratching the Whig Devils beautifully,' he practically ceased to take any further interest in politics. In his relations to political events and persons as well as in his relations to his friends, Rickman shows intensely human qualities. My reason, therefore, for including so many political letters has been that they are not only interesting for what they say, but illustrate, often most entertainingly, a certain type of mind.

I suspect that the uncompromising nature of his views was responsible in part for the small amount of public recognition which Rickman received for his really important statistical work. Yet he shunned all appearance of self-advertisement, and would have looked with suspicion on officially bestowed honours. Indeed, it is to be noticed that he suspected his employment on the population returns to be meant as a bribe. But Rickman's sole ambition was to be of utility, and in that aim he was certainly successful.

<sup>1</sup> May 1911.



Even the industrious Southey marvelled at his prodigious capacity for work.

His official business was to him little more than so much routine, but he was never lax in its performance, and he was always ready to do such extra work as came in his way—the indexing of Hatsell and of the Journals, the institution of a new system of publishing the Votes and Proceedings, digesting various returns, supplying evidence for a committee, or even sending in a secret scheme for combating the Radicals. Till his death he remained in harness, though he certainly wished to retire in 1832, and complained of intrigues which prevented this. His work on the three Commissions for building the Caledonian Canal, making roads, and building churches in the Highlands was invaluable. He was Telford's loyal supporter for seventeen years in the Caledonian Canal enterprise, and it was due to him that Southey wrote for it his three inscriptions. But the only subject in which Rickman truly took a real interest was what is now called economics, though he would have hated the word, having the utmost contempt for the political economists of his day. Social science was his study from the time he left Oxford, and he regarded the population returns quite rightly as giving data for the widest political and social deductions, though he was a little too reliant on statistical evidence in the face of palpable fact. It was a pity that Rickman had no opportunity of dealing with the poor laws of this country. The subject was one on which he had very definite views, for he saw their great defects (before 1834), if his remedies were a little drastic. He conceived that treating poor men according to their deserts—bread and water for the idlers—would suffice to abolish the poor rates and introduce good character instead. He forgot, perhaps, that many of the rich would also have deserved bread and water. He believed in competition, in unrestricted manufactures, and *laissez-faire* with a strong police. And yet he was willing enough to be socialistically benevolent for women. In 1800 he started as a hobby a little speculation on the subject of *béguinages* in England,

which he took up again in later life, and one of his letters gives a sketch of a model female institution—a model which is not so far from reality now. Rickman, in fact, useful as he was to his country, might have been far more useful, if only governments then had known, as they do now, how to use their permanent officials.

Rickman, at heart, was as little reactionary as he was a tyrant. His ideal state would have been a benevolent despotism, and in his relations with others he was inclined to act the benevolent despot himself. Save, perhaps, in his extreme respect for intellectual knowledge, he was a typical John Bull. I am saved from any further effort to sum up his character by being able to quote, in conclusion of these preliminary remarks, a letter written by his friend, the historian Sharon Turner, for inclusion in his son's memoir.

‘20 *Sept.* 1840.

‘My impression, whenever I saw your father, was, that he had a strong and resolute mind, very discursive, full of varied but promiscuous knowledge, ready to bring it out whenever called upon, and always pleased to have a reason to do so, and to talk with those who would be interested to hear him ; whoever did so, could not fail to be both gratified and informed. For he had a large store of facts and thoughts, and frequently viewed things in an original though sometimes also in a peculiar manner. He was fond of intellectual labour as an exercise of the mind as well as for the prosecution of the object he undertook ; and whatever he directed his attention to, he pursued with a zeal and perseverance, and with an almost insensibility of fatigue that can seldom be paralleled. . . . He thought little of those who pursued any object with indolence and indifference and believed that mental activity always did good to the health, and that the evils ascribed to it arose from other causes.

‘He was peculiarly a man of facts and realities, and well adapted to all things that required close attention,

investigation, and continued mental labour. He was very anxious never to be deceived himself, and never to deceive others. He had not a philosophical cast of mind, nor did he view his subjects with that course and style of thought. But he saw his main points quickly and adhered tenaciously to them, and always threw light upon them.

‘I would not call him a man of genius, but of a powerful and solid mind—quick, ardent, penetrating, self-confident from experienced success in what he undertook, and not willing to yield his own opinions to the opposing conclusions of others—he was therefore rather peremptory, both from the strength of his own convictions, and his earnest desire that what he deemed right should be thought or deemed so by others : but it was always in good humour. He had a very straightforward, upright, and honest-meaning mind, with nothing of the base or shabby in it. I never saw anything like trick or subterfuge, or fraud, or hypocrisy in him : nor could he endure these in any other. He liked to skirmish in conversation, and so often attacked what he thought wrong in all parties, and in their leaders, that it was not easy to know what his settled opinions were on many of our political questions. He was at times a little impatient and stern ; but whatever his manner might be, he was always a kind-hearted and worthy man—one of steady, moral conduct—and desirous that all should be so. . . .’

[NOTE.—For the benefit of those—and they are many—who take a particular interest in the smallest fact concerning Charles Lamb, I summarise here the new points which the Rickman correspondence brings to light.

(1) George Dyer’s first letter in 1801 fixes the approximate date of Lamb’s removal from Pentonville to Southampton Buildings (p. 34).

(2) Rickman’s letter to Southey enclosing Dyer’s second letter of 1801 fixes within a few days the date of Lamb’s long letter to Rickman describing Dyer’s rescue from starvation. Mr. E. V. Lucas heads this letter ‘? November.’ Dyer’s letter, too, corroborates Lamb’s account (pp. 56-60).

(3) A short undated letter from Lamb to Rickman, printed by



Canon Ainger after one on November 24, 1801, is shown to belong to November 9 or 10 (p. 60).

(4) The allusion in Lamb's letter to Rickman of July 16, 1803, where he refers to a 'gentle ghost' who wishes to return, has mystified all commentators. I think its date, together with the contents of letters from Southey and Rickman, proves it conclusively to refer to a kind of circular sent by George Burnett to his friends, announcing his return to the paths of reason, and expressing regret for former aberrations together with a desire for work. This confirms Mr. E. V. Lucas in a conjecture which he seems to have abandoned (p. 90).

(5) Lamb stayed with Rickman in 1803 during one of Mary Lamb's attacks of insanity (p. 87).

(6) On July 25, 1829, Lamb wrote to Bernard Barton describing a visit paid, during a recent attack of Mary Lamb's, to a friend in London, 'one of the individuals of my old long knot of friends, card-players, pleasant companions—that have tumbled to pieces into dust and other things.' The identity of this friend has hitherto been unknown, but Rickman's letter to Southey of July 14, 1829, proves him to have been Lamb's entertainer (p. 247).

(7) Three letters from Coleridge refer to Lamb (pp. 105, 106, 157), the last giving a particularly interesting account of Lamb's convivialities.

(8) Two new stories of Lamb's connection with George Dyer occur in the Rickman correspondence with Southey (pp. 76, 93, 94).

(9) Lamb's estimate of Southey's and Coleridge's responsibility for Burnett's aberrations is quoted by Rickman (p. 85).

(10) Mrs. Lefroy in her reminiscences gives a portrait of the Lambs at Rickman's house (p. 128).

(11) I am able to quote Rickman's and Southey's interesting comments on Lamb's death (p. 313).]



## CHAPTER I

The Rickman family—Early life of John Rickman—His meeting with Southey—*Béguinages*—Departure from Christchurch.

FROM the genealogical researches made by John Rickman's father, the Rev. Thomas Rickman, it appears that the family of Rickman, Rykeman or Richman, originated in Somersetshire, for the arms—or, three piles azure, three bars gules, over all a stag trippant; with a crest, a stag's head coupé proper—were originally granted to Rickman of Somersetshire. The family seems to have overflowed first into Dorsetshire, where John Ritcheman is known to have been rector of Porton in 1380, and members of the family represented Lyme in Parliament in the reigns of Henry IV. and Henry V. The Rickmans of Hampshire, from whom John Rickman more immediately sprang, had the same arms and a slightly different crest with the motto, 'Fortitude in Adversity.' The earliest mention of the family is in the parish register of Wardleham, where the baptism of John Rickman, son of Richard Rickman and Isabel his wife, is recorded in 1542. A William Rickman who lived at Marchwood in Eling appears in 1556 among the subscribers to the defence of the country against the Spanish Armada. In 1623 a Richard Rickman was married at Eling to Elizabeth Stubbs, and their son William was baptised in 1627. The son of this William, James Rickman, was father of three sons, William, John, and James, the first of whom was born in 1701 at Milford. John Rickman, the subject of this book, was his grandson.

There is a letter by John Rickman, written to his eldest daughter, which gives an interesting account of his near ancestors. This long letter, which occupies forty-two quarto

pages, was written purely as a warning to his younger daughter not to embark upon rash expenditure in her newly married life. This lesson in economy—so typical of its writer's formal mind—can only be quoted in extract. It is dated '8 December, 1836,' and after the exordium continues thus :—

'The grandfather of my grandfather (a portrait of which last we have) was a yeoman of small property, 50 or 60 acres, on the coast of Hampshire, at Hordwell in the parish of Milford near Lymington, and possessor of a windmill there. He being a patriot, and no Popery man, left his plough and his mill and joined the army of the Duke of Monmouth which was defeated at Sedgmoor in the year 1685. He escaped the slaughter of the day and the vengeance of Judge Jefferies, and returned home to tell of his adventures, to boast of them (no doubt) after the triumph of his party at the Revolution in 1688. The son of the miller who succeeded to the landed property had three sons of whom my grandfather W. R. was the eldest, and being a studious lad of good talents was placed in the country house of Mr. Missing, a wealthy merchant at Portsmouth, who dying left a son remarkably unfit for business, which therefore devolved on my grandfather upon his marriage in the year 1729 with the daughter of his former employer. . . .

'In the year 1739, a war commenced between England and Spain, and my grandfather (through Portsmouth Borough influence, I suppose) obtained the contract for supply of provisions to the Spanish prisoners of war confined in Porchester Castle. His business was very lucrative, and as he had become a proficient in the Spanish language, indeed well read in Spanish literature, he had opportunity of being attentive to Don Ulloa,<sup>1</sup> the Spanish officer employed in mensuration of a degree of longitude near the equator in Spanish America, who in his narrative makes grateful mention of his English friend, Mr. Rickman.'

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Ulloa was captured in 1745. The reference is in Book ix. ch. ix. of his *Narrative of a Voyage to S. America*, and speaks of William Rickman's great care for the prisoners' comfort.

William Rickman thus became a prosperous man. He made considerable purchases of land, was made a Justice of the Peace, in which office he distinguished himself in bringing a gang of murderers and smugglers to book for their crimes, and in 1747 served as Sheriff for the county. This was the summit of his prosperity. The Spanish war merged into a French war, and another merchant was given the contract to feed the French prisoners. William Rickman was practically superseded, and his income fell considerably. Further, he had become surety for his brother, a Custom House collector, in £8000, a sum which he forfeited on his rascally relative's absconding. A nephew also lost him £1500 on another suretyship. William Rickman's affairs thus fell into decay, so that when he died in 1764 he had sold all his landed property.

His son, Thomas Rickman, was at this time on the verge of entering Holy Orders. In 1766 he became vicar of Newburn in Northumberland. He married a Miss Beaumont in 1770, of which marriage John Rickman, born in 1771, was the only son, the two other children being daughters. In 1776, when the taxes caused by the American war began to pinch, he was offered an exchange and second benefice at Compton, near Winchester, which he exchanged in 1780 for the livings of Ash, near Farnham in Hampshire, and Stourpaine in Dorset, which he held till his death in 1809. In 1796, however, being no longer able to perform divine service, he retired to Christchurch. 'Soon after this,' says Rickman in the same letter as I have quoted above, 'the Income Tax was imposed, and I had some prospect of employment in London. The salary of a curate at Ash was a heavy burden on my father's income, and the price of provisions was enormous, so that my father upon my leaving the family broke up his little establishment, and went to reside between Lymington and Christchurch with some of his relations. . . . This continued till 1803, when upon my being well established in Palace Yard my father again ventured on housekeeping till he died in 1809.'

John Rickman himself was educated at Guildford



Grammar School from 1781 to 1788, when he went to Magdalen Hall, and thence to Lincoln College, Oxford. No allusion is ever made by Rickman to his boyhood, except when he mentions that he suffered several years' reasonable misery through a mistake in deciding upon a profession.<sup>1</sup> Probably he had had early ideas of entering the Church, which residence at Oxford had dissipated. After taking his degree in 1792 or 1793, Rickman seems to have remained at Christchurch reading the books in the library left by his grandfather, especially those upon economic subjects, thus laying in the wide stock of knowledge which stood him in such good stead later in his career. The recollections of Mrs. Lefroy (Rickman's elder daughter Ann) mention that Rickman used to act as tutor in the vacations to the son of a very rich man named Clark, whose daughter became Marchioness of Ormond. Mr. Clark offered Rickman a large living in Kent if he would take Holy Orders, but he refused. He seems to have had an attachment, not wholly unreturned, for Miss Clark, who remained a close friend of his throughout her life. On her death in 1818 he was made her executor, and received a legacy of £7000.

The first event of any note in Rickman's life was his acquaintance with Robert Southey, the future Poet Laureate. In the summer of 1797 Southey and his wife took lodgings at Burton, near Christchurch, and it was not long before they met John Rickman. In a letter from Southey to Cottle, the publisher, dated June 18, 1797,<sup>2</sup> he speaks of going down Christchurch harbour in Rickman's boat, and calls his new friend 'a sensible young man, of rough but mild manners, and very seditious.' In a note Cottle says: 'On visiting Southey at Christchurch, he introduced me to the Mr. Rickman, whom I found sensible enough, blunt enough, and seditious enough; that is, simply anti-ministerial.' Their dislike of Pitt's war

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Southey of September 23, 1817, giving advice as to the profession which Derwent Coleridge should adopt.

<sup>2</sup> Cottle, *Reminiscences of Southey and Coleridge*, p. 214.

policy and their desire to ameliorate society—Southey had not long got over the scheme of Pantisocracy—soon bound these two friends with links of mutual respect and esteem, and the friendship, however restrained was its expression, ripened into a warm and lifelong affection.

The first letter of their correspondence is from Rickman, dated November 13, 1798. It was written to thank Southey for sending a new edition of his *Joan of Arc*, and contains some detailed criticisms of that poem, chiefly on historical matters of fact. Rickman corrects Southey on such points as the date when the fife was introduced as military music and the material of which cannons were first made. There is then a gap for more than a year, and the next letter, also from Rickman, on January 4, 1800, contains a proposition that Southey shall devote his verse to some definitely utilitarian object.

‘Poetry has its use and its place, and like some known superfluities we should feel awkward without it. But when I have sometimes considered with some surprise the facility with which you compose verse, I have always wished to see that facility exerted to some solid purpose in prose. The objects I propose for your investigation are therefore: the employment, and consequent amelioration, of womankind, the consequences on the welfare of society, and some illustration of the possibility of these things. You think it too good an alteration to be expected—and so do I, from virtue: but if the vanity of leading women could be interested, it might become *fashionable* to promote certain establishments to this purpose, and then it might go down.’

Rickman’s purpose, in fact, was to urge the establishment of *béguinages* on the model of those in the Netherlands. He promises in this letter to furnish any dry deductions on the head of political economy. He continues:—

‘You like women better than I do; therefore I think it likely that you may take as much trouble to benefit the

sex, as I to benefit the community by this means. For all that I have been in love these ten years, not enough to put me beside calculation, but with a fixed and unaltered preference.'

It was the secret of Rickman's character that no emotion or affection ever put him 'beside calculation.' This letter contains another personal touch in the words: 'I begin to be almost tired of staying in this obscure place so long. I imagine I was born for better purpose than to vegetate at Christchurch.' This contradicts his own statement, in the letter to his daughter quoted above, that he went to London in 1799. The first letter to Southey mentions a visit to London, but it is clear from this passage that Rickman had no occupation in London at the beginning of 1800.

Southey answered Rickman's letter with great interest on January 9, urging him to undertake the task himself, and pleading the unsuitability of his own style to methodical deduction and his prospective departure, for health's sake, to some other climate as obstacles to his own performance of it. He ended by inviting Rickman to stay with him at Bristol. Rickman replied that his own style was too severe to please the public, and supplied further information upon the subject, touching upon various other matters in the course of a long letter. Southey then consented to undertake the work; his and Rickman's next letters are given up to a discussion of the position of women in various nations. On February 17 Rickman announced his probable arrival at Bristol in the following week, requesting Southey to engage him lodgings near the harbour, that he might also observe the tides—a subject in which he took great interest. This letter contains an early instance of Rickman's violent political views:—

'I expect peace soon, at least to all the world except England; and it is better for us to fight on till slow indignation shall finish Pitt and the war together. I have laughed at Lord Castlereagh's panegyric on the comprehensive mind of this sorry drunkard, who in 16 years has



produced no measure of eternal utility—the paltry resources of immediate rapacity are dignified with the name of finance ; this methodised pillage has stamped him a great man among the vulgar.’

Southey looked forward to Rickman’s visit with no little enthusiasm, as is proved in his letter of February 18, 1800, to John May describing the proposed scheme, calling Rickman ‘a man of uncommon talents and knowledge,’ and saying that he himself would be ‘little more than mason under the master architect.’<sup>1</sup> Rickman, having sent his box by coach, arrived on foot from Christchurch, and stayed till the end of March at Bristol, where he made the acquaintance of Humphry Davy, who was then experimenting at the Pneumatic Institute. It is impossible to say what progress was made with the *béguinage* scheme, for Southey was forced by continued ill-health to set out for Portugal in April. The project therefore dropped, but, as we shall see, it was revived twenty years later. When Southey left to join his vessel at Falmouth, Rickman went to London to take up his abode. It was for him the beginning of a wider life, the life of utility for which he always craved. This fresh start will be better left to a separate chapter.

<sup>1</sup> Southey’s *Life and Correspondence*, ii. 51.

## CHAPTER II

1800

Rickman in London—George Dyer—The Magazine—Lamb's 'pleasant hand'—Southey's *Thalaba*—Dyer's preface—The first Population Act—Rickman and the census.

IN April 1800, before Southey had left Falmouth, Rickman had settled in London. It is not possible to determine precisely what his prospects of literary employment were, but from hints in his letters it is evident that Southey had recommended him to the editor of the *Critical Review*, that he might succeed to the place of reviewer of poetry vacated by Southey, and that he had given him a letter of introduction to George Dyer, Lamb's immortal G. D.,<sup>1</sup> who was at this time pursuing a literary career in Clifford's Inn. Dyer, whom Hazlitt called 'one of God Almighty's gentlemen,' in spite of his slovenliness, absent-mindedness, and his execrable taste in poetry, was a most constant and warm-hearted friend to men of letters. Southey could have recommended Rickman to no better person, and it is pleasant to notice that Dyer and Rickman became firm friends. This friendship has preserved to us three of Dyer's private letters—no others are known—and has furnished a few more facts in the life of the genial G. D. Rickman's first letter to Southey from London mentions their meeting:—

'LONDON, Apr. 13th, 1800.

'MY DEAR SIR,—Having called on Mr. Dyer on Thursday he appointed this morning (Saturday) for the proposed

<sup>1</sup> See Lamb's *Essays*, 'Oxford in the Vacation' and 'Amicus Redivivus,' also his earlier letters. Mr. E. V. Lucas gives a very good account of Dyer in his *Life of Charles Lamb*, ch. xiv.

inspection of your books. [Here follow details of the books.] G. Dyer is a great curiosity ; his room more so ; and I was witness to the regular apologies he makes to every visitor on its unusual disorder. Their answers are as regular, that they never saw it otherwise. He is very busy printing some poetry. He read me some from the manuscript : whence he seems no unhappy forger of the Spenserian style. He received me with the highest civility, and professes great regard for you. . . .—I remain your obliged Servant,  
‘JOHN RICKMAN.’

In spite of their warm friendship Rickman's style in addressing Southey was, in accordance with his character, most formal. The formality softened in the course of years to ‘My dear S.’ and a ‘God bless you, my dear S. Yrs. J. R.’, but in all letters, even to his family, he found it difficult to express affection in words. The next letter shows that George Dyer was able to find Rickman employment without delay.

‘LONDON, *Apr. 18th*, 1800.

‘MY DEAR SIR,—As I have indirect intelligence that you could not reach Falmouth sooner than the 15th I venture to direct another letter to your name there, supposing from the S.W. winds that you are not yet put to sea. The letter you found waiting at Falmouth was a hurried one, and you may consider this as a supplement. I learnt at the India-house that Mr. Coleridge has taken a flight northward ; to Cumberland I think. By this I suppose his German plays are completed, though I have not seen them. Cottle<sup>1</sup> cannot be more busy with Alfred at Bristol than G. Dyer at present is about a publication. He has promised all his friends, and the public, that an octavo of poems shall be

<sup>1</sup> Amos Cottle, brother of Joseph Cottle, the Bristol publisher, who first published the poems of Coleridge and Southey. The poem ‘Alfred’ was exceedingly dull. Its author died shortly after its publication, and there is a very humorous letter from Lamb to Coleridge of October 9, 1800, describing his visit of condolence to Joseph Cottle.



ready for delivery on the first of May. The copy is as yet very imperfect, and the printing not *commenced*. But I suppose every body knows him well enough, to know that punctuality and method are not among his virtues, and the "Sad dog" (as he calls himself) will be pardoned. He has been very attentive to my interest, as he has offered to my acceptance, the task of conducting a Magazine. As its proprietor Griffiths seems no *haughty* bookseller, and is in much present distress, I shall do what I can for him for this month or two; and afterwards consider more maturely about the business. The circumstances of this publication stand thus: the title is promising—The Commercial and Agricultural Magazine. It has reached No. 8 with tolerable, not splendid success. Indeed it has not deserved much, and the bundle of papers the Editor has sent me for selection are very pitiful. It is printed with about the same letterpress as a Review. He offers 2½ guineas p. sheet, and 2 guineas p. month for arrangement and correction. The last sum seems very low. He excuses the offer by the infant state and small returns of the Magazine. I suppose it may be possible for me to manage this concern with success; as the usual subjects are things on which I have been accustomed to think often. Luckily I have some short essays (which you have not seen) which may help out the present dearth of matter, and the editor seems rather fearfull that I should chuse to contribute too much than too little for the future. He seems to have been ill-used in this respect by his last conductor, who thereby wished to get the power of the property into his own hands—thereby also disgusting the best correspondents.

'In my opinion to write anonymously is small trouble, because it requires no fastidious correction; and I am persuaded I write better speedily, than maturely. But the conduct of a publication infers a kind of conscious, irksome responsibility, which I do not like so well: and I should not meddle with this, but from a sincere wish to save a publication from sinking, whose future repute may possibly collect a useful body of information. I am also somewhat

biased towards an acceptance of the task that I may not seem to undervalue the efforts of so good a man as G. D.

‘He wishes of all things he could get me some employment in the reviews : I did not tell him, I had any prospect of that sort, though I suppose your intended transfer will be accepted by S. Hamilton,<sup>1</sup> if you have not failed to promise a renewal of communication at your return. I do not know enough of the history of poetry to execute the business very well—the general knowledge of good and evil is scarcely stock enough for a reviewer’s observations. However if it be offered, I must dash through thick and thin—depending chiefly on your opinion (I fear me a partial one) that the performance will not be below par. Thus have I given you a faithful history of the proffered employ which I indirectly owe to your civility. I conjecture that a constrained abode at Falmouth will be far from adverse to the completion of *Thalaba* : I have some curiosity to watch the public taste on that intended innovation in the Commonwealth of Poesy. . . .

‘33 SOUTHAMPTON BUILDINGS, HOLBORN.’

Southey arrived at Lisbon on May 1, and remained there till the middle of 1801. His letters to Rickman during that period are chiefly descriptions of the state of Portugal. As three of them have been published in Southey’s correspondence, it is unnecessary further to allude to them. Southey was finishing his poem ‘*Thalaba*,’ and Rickman had undertaken to negotiate for its sale and publication in England. To this we shall have several allusions.

Rickman continued to edit the *Commercial, Agricultural, and Manufacturers’ Magazine* till he went to Ireland. In the appendix to the memoir by his son a list of the articles contributed by him is given. They range over many economic subjects—bread laws, tides, clocks, the condition of the poor, Phœnician commerce, weights and measures, paper money, and cottage gardens.

<sup>1</sup> Editor of the *Critical Review*.

Rickman's next letter is dated May 28.

'I read the letter with much pleasure which informed me of your safe arrival at Lisbon. I suppose by this time your sea-sickness is almost forgotten. I am glad that you ascertained that imagination can also cure this disease.<sup>1</sup> This fact may hereafter be valuable when Davy<sup>2</sup> shall have to give the death-blow to quacks of all descriptions. It was singular that about the time (I supposed) you sailed, a rumour was current here that the French fleet had also sailed for Lisbon. You had then found unwelcome guests in the Tagus. I suppose a Republican Frenchman is a more terrible animal at Lisbon, than even an *Irishman*; I confess that in England it would be no bad regulation to make an Irishman a contraband freight; however as they are soon to be imported as legislators I must take care of the *Scandalum magnatum* penalties. I suppose fortune hunting will be more successful in the Parliament House, than it has ever been at Bath<sup>3</sup> to the Paddies. The Union business has become so stale, that when the deputation of both houses attended his Majesty with the address on that subject, *half an hour* after the appointed time, they were told that he was set out for Windsor, lest he should be too late for dinner-time! You must know ere this, that the King has been fired at by a madman,<sup>4</sup> with little danger of being struck, from the *distance*, and from the *random* effects of a common pistol shot. However we thank God in the churches for this mercy vouchsafed to a sinful people! The man is to be tried by a special commission; but his lunacy is undoubted. At the first rumour I thought it another scheme of Dundas<sup>5</sup> to revive the expiring flame of loyalty—however it has not had that effect; the pro-

<sup>1</sup> Southey had related how an alarm of an attack by a French cutter had cured him of sea-sickness for six hours.

<sup>2</sup> The scientist, Sir Humphry Davy.

<sup>3</sup> Where Pitt was recovering from the gout.

<sup>4</sup> On May 15 in Drury Lane Theatre. The man was an old soldier called James Hadfield.

<sup>5</sup> Afterwards Lord Melville; at this time Secretary for War.



posal of Bonaparte for peace has sank deep into the public mind, and the minister is at his wits' end. A proposed severity in the collection of the income tax had not *one* advocate in the City. It is therefore dropped, at least in regard to those whose income *exceeds* £2000 per ann. Other people they wish still to submit to a ruinous scrutiny. But this seems a partiality to loan mongers too violent to go down. Pitt under his disappointment absented himself so long from the House, that it was currently reported he was gone mad! To be sure Ld. Camelford<sup>1</sup> is a specimen of madness in the family; he has been in two scrapes since I came hither, for the last of which Ld. Kenyon has hold of him, and threatens heavily. I wrote to Davy a few days before the Lisbon packet arrived and prophesied a good passage to you—a lucky prophet—but you know I am in the habit of looking on the white side of futurity—a certain gain for the present, and little consequent loss. I expect to hear from Davy before he visits the metropolis; where he ought to remain for the important purposes of fame and fortune. If I can persuade him that the public good is implicated in his acquisition of these things, he perhaps may not be impregnable: arguments which have self at bottom will not touch him. I shall have truth to help me in my plea: for surely on his fame and repute much universal good is consequent. . . . I have not heard of *Hamilton* about the Review; I am not inclined to make application to him, nor am I very solicitous about the matter; if it is offered I shall do the best I can. They have a month or two of the poetical department in store. I thank you for your offers of assistance in the Magazine affair; but I do not enough care about its success to give you the least trouble about it. The printer is a very civil man; but has not correspondents enough, or dash enough for the undertaking. So let it go on *jog-trot*. In so far as your enquiries relative to the Portuguese history may *coincide* with its title, I should be well pleased to receive any communication—on this condition, that you do not *mispend*

<sup>1</sup> Finally killed in a duel in Kensington in 1804.

any precious time in it. I have a confused recollection of some Portuguese edict about preventing the planting new vineyards, under *pretence* of not diminishing corn-land; in *fact* to establish a monopoly in favour of some lords who hold most vineyards. It is said that port is raised lately to £10 per pipe in Portugal—from the above cause perhaps. The first of your enquiries on this subject would be acceptable: as would be any thing on the population, agriculture, tenure of farms, commerce, supply of Lisbon with fuel and necessaries, price of provision etc. So far as these things may be pertinent in the history I should like to receive them in company with Thalaba; the best of your poems yet published; and I conjecture more strictly poetical than will be Madoc. The air of history in the epic, always (to my feel) takes off the continuous, fine edge of poetry. . . . I am in possession of the benefit of your civility in the Westminster library, though I have made very little use of it yet, having been much engaged with various, compulsory company. Among the rest the people of Christchurch seem to have combined together to visit town. To speak of them in due order of precedence, first, Lady Strathmore<sup>1</sup> for interment. She was so silly as to will her body to be deposited in Poets Corner (!) and lyes there within three yards of Shakspeare's Monument. *Concordes Animae! Kindred Spirits!* She was coffined in her wedding suit, and with her a *speaking trumpet!* When one recollects her *confessions* recorded in Doctors' Commons, and published by Bowes, and which (beside her amours with Gray)<sup>2</sup> relate two artificial abortions, one must confess that according to the trumpet application in Butler's description of fame, this interred trumpet is in considerable danger of an unsavoury blast.

<sup>1</sup> Mary Elizabeth Bowes, Countess of Strathmore, 1749-1800. Her husband, the ninth earl, died in 1776. After some very indiscreet flirtations she married an adventurer, who took her surname, treated her with great brutality, and finally abducted her when she was suing for divorce. She was rescued, and he was imprisoned. Her confessions, published in 1793 were probably extorted by her husband.

<sup>2</sup> The Hon. George Grey.

. . . There is a Bill pending before Parliament to prevent nunneries in England. I hear they increase fast, and that there are two large ones in Essex—Quocirca hoc? Why, it proves that if the Sex are so sensible of their forlorn condition as to embrace a new religion, and unpleasant vows for the sake of a nunnery, that they will ardently embrace the Béguinage when it is established. Do you go on building this institution in your head? I should *not* reckon that waste time compared with the researches for the history of Portugal. If you mention in your next that the Béguinage is not forgotten, I will try to proceed *pari passu*; but no *faster* than *you will deign to march*, in this chivalrous emprize. G. Dyer has not put out his Spenserian volume yet. . . . I see little of him, he is much engaged in private tutorage. I imagine he does any thing better than he writes poetry. But it would be dangerous to tell him so; he is so confident of not imbibing the stream from the nether orifice of that bird in the Edda. J. Cottle is vigorously printing unfortunate Alfred. I look with melancholy to his future disappointment. Amos Cottle dines with me on Saturday. We shall drink your health, and speedy return to the land of intellect and morality. I hear that R. Cottle (whom I do not know) is going to commence a bookselling business. Your letter is down at Clifford's Inn. As it contained no secret, I thought it would gratify G. D. and A. C.<sup>1</sup> to see themselves not forgotten, and perhaps in some sort give you a greater latitude of longer silence to either of them; for of writing letters you must be well nigh weary. I am as glad as you that you have not forgotten Portuguese; that will save much time. Mrs. E. S. proceeds in that task with rapidity, I daresay; I think females are good at learning to talk outlandish tongues, especially if she can accommodate herself to Portuguese company. There are no middle-aged women in Portugal, therefore the *Prince of Wales* (perhaps) did not follow you. G. Dyer desires me to convey to you Mrs. Opie's<sup>2</sup> remembrances with his own. He proposes

<sup>1</sup> Amos Cottle.

<sup>2</sup> The novelist and poet, wife of John Opie, the painter.



to send you a budget of literary news next month. His chivalry is anxious that his respects should be particularly conveyed to Mrs. Southey. I without chivalry desire the same thing.'

There is nothing of particular moment in Rickman's letter to Southey of July 29, except that one page of it is written by G. Dyer, and that it contains the news: 'Mr. Lamb is soon to be my neighbour in Southampton Buildings.' Dyer's letter is written in what Lamb afterwards called his 'Grecian's hand,' and is only just legible. It gives Southey news of the literary world, mentioning in particular the poems of R. Bloomfield, the shoemaker-poet. Lamb moved in this year from Pentonville to lodge with his friend Gutch, the law-stationer, at 27 Southampton Buildings, and his move is announced in a letter to Coleridge. This letter of Rickman's proves that the move was not made till well into the summer of 1800. Rickman had as yet not made Lamb's acquaintance, though he was familiar with his name. Southey had known Lamb since 1795, and Lamb had even stayed with him at Burton in 1797, but it was presumably before he had met Rickman. The meeting between Lamb and Rickman took place in the autumn of this year, and Lamb describes it in an ecstatic letter to his friend Manning dated November 3.

'I have made an acquisition latterly of a *pleasant hand*, one Rickman, to whom I was introduced by George Dyer, not the most flattering auspices under which one man can be introduced to another. George brings all sorts of people together, setting up a sort of agrarian law, or common property, in matter of society; but for once he has done me a great pleasure, while he was only pursuing a principle, as *ignes fatui* may light you home. This Rickman lives in our Buildings, immediately opposite our house; the finest fellow to drop in a' nights, about nine or ten o'clock—cold bread and cheese time—just in the *wishing* time of the night, when you *wish* for somebody to come in, without a distinct

idea of a probable anybody. Just in the nick, neither too early to be tedious, nor too late to sit a reasonable time. He is a most pleasant hand ; a fine rattling fellow, has gone through life laughing at solemn apes ;—himself hugely literate, oppressively full of information in all stuff of conversation, from matter of fact to Xenophon and Plato—can talk Greek with Porson, politics with Thelwall, conjecture with George Dyer, nonsense with me, and anything with anybody ; a great farmer, somewhat concerned himself in an agricultural magazine ; reads no poetry but Shakespeare ; very intimate with Southey, but never reads his poetry ; relishes George Dyer ; thoroughly penetrates into the ridiculous wherever found ; understands the *first time* (a great desideratum in common minds)—you need never twice speak to him ; does not want explanations, translations, limitations, as Professor Godwin does when you make an assertion ; *up* to anything ; *down* to everything ; whatever *sapit hominem*. A perfect *man*. . . . You must see Rickman to know him, for he is a species in one ; a new class ; an exotic ; any slip of which I am proud to put in my garden pot ; the clearest headed fellow ; fullest of matter, with least verbosity. If there be any alloy in my fortune to have met with such a man, it is that he commonly divides his time between town and country, having some foolish family ties at Christchurch, by which means he can only gladden our London hemisphere with returns of light. He is now going for six weeks.'

It is not easy to realise from his letters by what charm Rickman, who in all that he wrote was too matter of fact to display his winning qualities, so gained the affection of such men as Lamb and Southey. Southey's letters from Portugal never end without a regret that Rickman is not there too, while there is something almost pathetic in Lamb's enthusiasm. Lamb's letters to him are full of affection and admiration, while Rickman, though, as we shall see, he appreciated Lamb very highly, and was ready to assist him in any way, never alludes to him with any

warmth of feeling, even after his death. In his next letter to Southey of December 23, which opens with an account of the incomplete negotiations for the sale of *Thalaba* to Longmans, Rickman quotes Lamb's opinion of the poem that 'it contains more poetry and manifests more care than *Joan of Arc*.' This letter contains an allusion to Rickman's decision not to enter the Church. He says :—

'I am very glad to learn . . . that your brother has a very promising prospect before him, if he chuses to enter the Church. I hope he has not genius or severity enough to refuse it. Though I myself have (somewhat to my cost) declined telling lies once a week for hire, I wish my friends a different opinion and less scrupulosity.'

Rickman goes on to speak of Cottle, whom a wicked wit in his rooms had called the 'Epic Owl,' and concludes with an account of the failure of Godwin's play *Antonio*, of which Lamb told the story so inimitably in his essay on the old actors in the *London Magazine*, and in a letter to Manning of December 16.

The next letter to Southey deserves quotation at length.

'Decr. 27th, 1800.

'I wish you to consider my last, as only *half* a letter; otherwise the omission of any remembrance of Mrs. Southey, and enquiring about the state of your own health, and about the period of your return to England may be felt as incivility. However you know how one sometimes slips on to the end of the paper, unconscious. As I really wish to be informed on the above points, satisfy my longing in your next. About *Thalaba*—Longman has this day given a three months' note payable to the order of Mr. J. May. He made a push to obtain the edition at 100 guineas, but I told him, time could not be afforded to consult you by letter, and that I myself could not feel justified in taking less than £115, thus splitting the difference between your first demand, and his first offer. You are to have a dozen



copies. I asked for half of them on large paper : but it is pleaded that the printing expense of those few, would be same as of 250. Otherwise Mr. L. would make no objection. I think his plea valid, and have given up the point. He has a great appetite to mutilate the beauty of the title page, by inserting, *A Metrical Romance*. I would not assent to this, and the matter is compromised by liberty to say these words on the second title, *after* the preface. It was necessary to say it somewhere, and that seems the fittest place. [Here follow further details about the printing of the poem.] . . . G. Dyer has your letter. He dines with me to-day. I am about to attempt to persuade him *not* to cancel a long preface of 80 or 90 pages, which he has prefixed to a vol. of poems, printed but not published—and this, because forsooth, he thinks he has *committed* himself in some opinion given of some poet or other. Thus in this idle punctilio, he is likely to waste £20 or £30. His poems are publishing by subscription : I fear me much, that his necessities will spend the money received, and the future bill from the printer will drive him half-mad. He projects three vols. : it is humourous to see him anxious about some feeble criticism, which no soul will ever read. But his exertion of a fanciful literary justice is honourable to him—I wish it was not expensive. He exhibits an obstinacy on this point, which I fear I shall not conquer.<sup>1</sup>

‘ We feel also a scarcity here. Bread about 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. a lb.—and little hope of fall till next harvest. The mob (high and low) prate about monopoly : and if Mr. Pitt had not luckily in his youth read Adam Smith, by this time England would have been a scene of injustice, and the future summer had produced an absolute and fatal famine. Rice is sent for, and expected in June. Meat is not dear (considering) ; about 7d. per lb., much the cheapest aliment ; the people tolerably quiet under their affliction ; perhaps it may issue

<sup>1</sup> Lamb describes Dyer’s crazy obstinacy in a very amusing letter to Manning of December 27. The half-burnt cancelled preface bound into Lamb’s copy of the poems is in the British Museum. The first volume was issued in 1801 without a preface, and two complete volumes in 1802.

in the first of national goods : a general inclosure Bill. . . . Your brother goes into the Church : and the product of Thalaba (a thing of more consequence) into your pocket. Had I been aware of that destination, I had pushed Longman for a shorter date. Three months I considered as a fair distance for an apprenticeship fee. However, it may be readily discounted. I thank you for the commercial intelligence which you occasionally give me. By inserting it (in a guarded shape) I make your epistles pay me much more than the postage to and from Lisbon. I have continued to conduct the Magazine, I mentioned to you. As it is quite in my own way, it is rather a pleasurable occupation, and producing about £70 per ann. The Critical Reviewers have (I suppose) got some other poet-taster. They were not so civil as to write to me on the subject : but from starving scribblers, and brutal booksellers one does not expect much attention. As I have a very mean opinion of my talents for that task, I am glad to avoid it, hoping you will resume it on your return. For as you must wish to read the political effusions of the day (I had almost called them *ephemeral*) the money rec<sup>ed</sup>. may be esteemed clear gain. I have another occupation offered me : of which this is the history. At my suggestion, they have passed an Act of Parliament for ascertaining the population of Great Britain, and as a compliment (of course) have proposed to me to superintend the execution of it. Next March the returns will be made, and I shall be busy enough for a short time, I suppose. I suspect all this attention (it is more immediately from G. Rose) is intended as a decent bribe : which I shall reject, by doing the business well, and taking no more remuneration, than I judge exactly adequate to the trouble. It is a task of national benefit, and I should be fanciful to reject it, because offered by rogues. As they well *know* me for their foe, I cannot suspect them of magnanimity enough to notice me with any good intention. At all events, I shall go *strait forward*. I wish you and Mrs. S. a merry Xmas, and a happy New Year ! leaving the rest of the paper to be filled next Tuesday morning.

J. R.'

'December 30th, 1800.

'I have this morning reced. a letter from Mr. J. May, and in consequence have transmitted to him the note of £115. He is in Wiltshire, therefore I was so many days in hearing from him. So that the pecuniary part of the business is now complete. . . . I sometimes *think* of our projected *Béguinage* with satisfaction. If it can be brought to bear (it seems not impossible) I hope all the Ladies will allow, that at least I have a little solid gallantry towards their sex. I have not written a word more about it: but will with my first leisure—in February—the last half of which, I purpose to spend in the country. I have a very pleasant neighbour opposite, C. Lamb. He laughs as much as I wish, and makes even *puns*, without remorse of conscience. He has lately completed a dramatic piece,<sup>1</sup> rather tragic (without murder). The language entirely of the last century, and farther back: From Shakespeare, Beaumont, and Fletcher. He demurs on printing it. I wish him to *set it forth* under some fictitious name of that age—Shirley (perhaps) who was burnt out at the great fire of London. Lamb is peculiarly happy in his heroine, and altogether I have not seen a play with so much humour, moral feeling and correct sentiment, since the world was young.

'G. Dyer is miserable about his unfortunate preface. I am quite vexed at his obstinacy. Lamb calls him, *Cancellarius Magnus*, The Lord High Cancellor. I have been twice at Christchurch this year, once in Sussex. But still London is best, though we have not seen the sun for the last month till to-day. Snow fell in the night. There was never such perpetual, general fog known: an unhealthy year throughout, except for invalids, who had Portugal summer. Bill of mortality 23,000—4000 above the average. Make my best compts. to Mrs. Southey and your uncle. May God preserve you far into the nineteenth century!'

<sup>1</sup> Lamb's play, *John Woodvil*. It is mentioned again in Rickman's correspondence.



The first Population Act for Great Britain passed the House of Lords the very day on which the first part of this letter was written. Herein, little as he knew it then, lay the life-work in which Rickman was to take the highest pride, for it enabled him to be of that 'utility' which was his continual aim. It is curious that he should speak of his employment in so nonchalant a manner to Southey, for he must have looked upon his own handiwork already with pride. In 1796, while Rickman was still in obscurity at Burton, he wrote a paper entitled 'Thoughts on the Utility and Facility of a general Enumeration of the People of the British Empire,' extracts from which are given in the memoir by W. C. Rickman. These extracts set forth, in a very dry manner, the economic advantages of ascertaining the number of the population, the probability of its being far higher than the usual estimate, and the facility of arithmetically deducing it from the parish registers. This paper was communicated by Mr. (afterwards Sir George) Rose, the member for Christchurch, to Charles Abbot, the future Speaker, who was also interested in the subject. Abbot introduced the Population Bill in 1800, and on its being passed offered to Rickman the supervision of the returns. In view of Abbot's subsequent employment of Rickman as his secretary, it is not hard to suppose that Rickman's suspicions of a bribe were unfounded, and that his anti-ministerial ardours in reality blazed unseen.

I hope I may be excused here in making a short digression upon the census, the work upon which Rickman was occupied more or less continuously for the rest of his life, though I do not propose to go into the question of its economic results. The whole machinery was set to work in 1801 by Rickman, who was given an office in the Cockpit,<sup>1</sup> and authority to choose his clerks. The aim was to find out not only the number of the population, but also to estimate the increase or decrease from the records in the parish registers. The returns of 1801 were made by the clergy under six heads :—

<sup>1</sup> A little valley off the Birdcage Walk.

- (1) The number of inhabited houses, the number of uninhabited houses, and the number of families inhabiting each house ;
- (2) The number of persons, excluding soldiers and sailors, found in the parish on the day of inquiry ;
- (3) The number of persons engaged in trade, agriculture, manufacture, and the number not so engaged ;
- (4) The number of baptisms and funerals during every period of ten years from 1700 to 1780, and from 1780 to 1800, in each year ;
- (5) The number of marriages yearly between 1754 and 1800 (the Marriage Act not having been enforced till 1754); and
- (6) Explanatory remarks.

From this short list of questions has sprung the elaborate census paper of to-day. It is not surprising that the returns of 1801, important as they are, were very inaccurate. The clergy were not all equally intelligent in drafting their returns, and there was considerable difficulty in determining what constituted a family. The further question, requiring a return of parish registers, was so inaccurately answered that the results were not printed. In 1811 some improvements were made in the questions, old houses being distinguished from new, and in the question as to occupation families were substituted for persons. Only the births, deaths, and marriages were returned by the clergy, the rest of the inquiry being entrusted to the overseers of the parish. In 1821 the questions were much the same, except that the number of persons of various ages—the unit being 5 years from 1 to 20 and 10 years from 20 to 100—was specifically asked.

In 1831 the scope of the inquiry was considerably enlarged. The difficulty of determining the constitution of a family was solved by applying the inquiry to males of twenty years of age, and making a careful schedule of the various trades and professions. The agricultural class was divided into occupiers of land employing labourers,

occupiers not so doing, and labourers. The Parish Register Act of 1812 enabled a return to be made of ages at the time of death, and the whole returns were arranged for the first time under parishes, and no longer under hundreds. The returns of 1801, 1811, and 1821 were issued in single volumes. Those of 1831 were more elaborate. In view of the Reform Bill it was necessary to publish the information as soon as possible. By a stupendous effort the digest of twenty-eight thousand returns, which did not come in till August 1831, was published in January 1832, in two volumes, entitled *A Comparative Account of the population of Great Britain in 1831*. Rickman's very able preface includes an account of the origins of London, and remarks upon the increased duration of life, with a mortality table for the county of Essex. But these two hastily produced volumes were superseded in 1833 by the *Abstract of Returns*, in three volumes, to which was prefaced a comparative account, in one volume, of the results of the four census years. The *Abstract* contains a complete account of the parish registers of England. Rickman's preface to this *Abstract* shows him a master of his subject. 'A controversy,' as he says, 'of some duration had existed as to the increase or diminution of the population; and the result of the Act of 1801 being adverse to the opinions of those who had taken a gloomy view of national resources, insinuations were not wanting against the accuracy of the enumeration.' Rickman therefore carefully explains the machinery, proves the efficacy of the 1821 returns from their use in the debates on the Reform Bill, and goes into the whole question of parish areas. There is also a general statistical inquiry to produce data for the average expectancy of life, and finally a comparison of the *vie moyenne* (expectation of life at birth), as calculated from the ages of the deceased (1813-1830), with the percentage increase of the population during the years 1801-1831 in the several counties of England.

By his labours Rickman earned a well-deserved reputation, at home and abroad, as a statistician. He became a



Fellow of the Royal Society in 1815, and in 1833 received the honorary membership of the Société Française de Statistique Universelle. He contributed several articles on the probability of life to the *Medical Gazette* between 1835 and 1837, and translated Deparcieux's work on the *Probabilities and Duration of Human Life*. During the last years of his life he was working continuously on the returns for 1841, as he had obtained leave to ask for returns of births, deaths, and marriages from 1570 to 1750, where early parish registers were known to exist. The result of this inquiry appears in the preface to the census return of 1841, in the form of a table giving the calculated population of the counties of England and Wales at intervals between 1570 and 1750.

Rickman's work upon the census was in every way patriotic. He had to make headway against many opponents, chiefly of the Malthusian school, and even in the last year of his life he had to defend himself in a letter to the Home Office against an anonymous attack. In this letter, extracts from which are given in the MS. memoir in the House of Commons Library, he proves that, though he received on an average five hundred guineas for each return, this payment was supposed to cover a number of other statistical labours in intermediate years, and that on the whole, from the necessity of advancing immediate working expenses which could not be recovered, he was financially an actual loser. Such a result is hardly creditable to the governments he had served. For far less services than his men have been heaped with rewards, but it is probable that Rickman's uncompromising political views made it only too easy to ignore the just claims which he himself would have scorned to put forward.

## CHAPTER III

1801 to early 1802

George Burnett—Rickman secretary to Abbot in Ireland—Letters from Lamb—G. D.'s rescue—His letter—'Horse medicine' for Burnett—His 'second birth' and tutorship—Lamb and the *Morning Post*—Abbot appointed Speaker—Rickman leaves Ireland.

By the summer of 1801 Southey and his wife had returned from Portugal, and were staying at Bristol with their friends the Danvers. Southey had a hope of returning to Southern Europe as secretary to a legation, which explains Rickman's allusion to his going 'cost free' in his letter of July 13. This and the following letter contain Rickman's views upon the political crisis which followed the union with Ireland, when Pitt resigned, and was succeeded by Addington. His explanation of events is hardly one that can be accepted in view of our present historical knowledge, but these letters show that aversion to the Whig party and that readiness to believe the worst of them which is so strong in his later letters. The first mention is here made by Rickman of the unfortunate George Burnett, the friend of Southey, Coleridge, and Lamb, who finally died in a workhouse in 1811. Rickman's letters enable us to fill up some gaps in his story, which has never been fully told, though his name appears in lives of Lamb, in Mrs. Sandford's *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, and in Crabb Robinson's Diary. He was the son of a farmer in Somersetshire, and was sent to Balliol with a view to entering the Church. Unfortunately for him—for he was of a weak, vain character—he met Southey, then in his most revolutionary mood. Coleridge's visit to Oxford in 1794 resulted in the scheme of Pantisocracy, which, as Southey told Cottle, was talked into shape by Burnett and himself. Burnett threw up all idea of entering the Church,

and devoted himself to this mad plan of settling a Utopia on the banks of the Susquehanna. He fell entirely under Coleridge's domination, and lived with him for a time during his honeymoon at Clevedon. When Pantisocracy died he seems to have studied surgery in Edinburgh, and in 1798 he was a Unitarian minister at Yarmouth, where he became tutor to Southey's brother, and made the acquaintance of William Taylor, the translator of Goethe. It is not certain when he came to London, nor how he met Rickman. I suspect that Dyer, the self-constituted support of the needy, took him in hand and introduced him to Rickman, possibly at Southey's recommendation. He was a man of some talent, but absolutely unpractical, as we shall see. Lamb found in him a continual source of laughter, Rickman as continual a source of irritation. Rickman's appointment as Abbot's secretary speaks for itself. It was the beginning of an official career which only ended with his death. So much preface was necessary to the following two letters to Southey :—

‘ July 13th, 1801.

‘ I received an unexpected pleasure on my return home this evening in hearing that you once more retread your *natale solum*. I suppose you stand among the last of the English in Portugal ; your description of their campaign is exactly what I expected of these Lusitanian heroes. I am glad you are pleased with the appearance of Thalaba in his new dress ; for my part I like him better in print than I did in MS. : wherefore, I know not. . . . I question whether you have not formed a wrong opinion of the new Ministry ; in as far as you seem to identify them with their predecessors. I don't think there is the least connection. There are mutual reasons for civility—from Pitt, that he might escape a threatened impeachment, from them to gain the aid of his personal friends—I should perhaps say *political* friends, since his cold heart can have gained no other. However he gave away much necessarily ; and while gratitude is extant, must therefore retain some in-



fluence. There is some hope of the present Premier<sup>1</sup>; I suppose that even self-love cannot whisper to him that he is a great man; therefore he is the more likely to conform to the public wish, and builds his hopes of stability on a speedy peace on reasonable terms. That he is well affected to science and improvements, I am well assured. Pitt had genius without acquired knowledge; whence his affectation of infallibility and all the woes of Europe. The King's influence has turned him out; a good effect from a bad cause. I am concerned, though not surprised to find you a little embarrassed about the purse; I wish common sense had been suffered to take its course in your brother; I find Burnet is one of the delinquents there. But he is so abstracted and thoughtless of the future in his own affairs, that nothing but ignorance of the world is to be imputed to him there. I am trying to teach him the worth of money by making him live on two guineas per week. Incredible as it may seem, he has spent all his resources without an exertion at anything decisive. I wish that you may resume the Review, that at least you may leave it to him as a legacy at your next departure. After the respectful criticisms on Alfred,<sup>2</sup> you may do that with a safe conscience. I hope and am trying to secure him better employment—when his present labour ceases. You know that he is a fellow workman with me on a tedious job; made so by the incredible inaccuracy of the returns under the Population Act. I write hundreds of letters to little purpose, and have worked about 9 weeks without being able to say that anything is done. However, I have made interest to have the state of the business published that blame may be shifted from me to those who deserve it; and that thereby they may be stimulated to activity. However my vexation at this delay will be well repaid; since I am to follow Mr. Abbot to Ireland as his private secretary; when you know that he is to be the real Governor of Ireland, you will think this a post of some consideration; especially as I understand he means to attend the English Parliament

<sup>1</sup> Addington.

<sup>2</sup> Cottle's poem. See note p. 27.

annually, and must therefore leave important matters to his *Suppléans*.

‘I thank God the Irish parliament is annihilated by the Union! No dirty business to manage with the vilest assembly under the sun! So I have heard them described by some of themselves. I am told that I shall have no disagreeable business, and have no objection to labour for the improvement of Ireland. You may suppose that nothing can be more pleasant in prospect than experiments for the civilisation of the untutored Irish. I am to be in Dublin (if possible) by the first of Sepr., therefore should be glad to hear of you, how you apportion your nearest time. I am to be partly here, and partly in Hampshire till the time of departure; and have a power of choice about the “when” if timeously informed; so that I may have much of the pleasure of your society. Longman has twice desired me to say, that he hopes to see you whenever you come to town. I abjure all my little aversion to poetry in deference to your cogent reasons; I only think poetry bad in a man who may be better employed: a toy in manhood. Only don’t write for the Stage: I think I don’t slide into too strong a phrase, when I say, that the success of good dramatic poetry is *physically* impossible in England, while the theatres are so enormous. When the *audience* can no longer *hear*, they must degenerate into *spectators* of scenery and pantomime. I hope soon to see you in town—to hear from you again sooner. I knew not that Davy was hence till I learnt it from your letter. I daresay you find him well pleased with his change of situation. He will be a great man in this only theatre of greatness. Danvers too is busy—a glorious thing for a commonsense man, like him. For my part I think in all men that science is a relaxation in business—business in science; so two good things go on at a time. I am near the end of my paper—therefore dedicate it to send my remembrances to Mrs. Danvers, Edith, Davy and Danvers—and to desire that I may hear of you again at your first leisure. When you see Mrs. Southey mention me to her.’

‘LONDON, *July 24, 1801.*

‘ . . . I was in a mistake about the rout of the English from Portugal ; and you about the rout of Pitt, for the same reason—distance from the scene. You speak of the Catholic question as involved in the last affair. It was a mere excuse—so compleatly so, that the titular Bishop (of Cork I think) the agent here for the Irish Catholics, had only to observe, when applied to by the Opposition, that his employers in Ireland were well enough satisfied, as things are. And well they may be so, as what they call *Emancipation*, consists only in a right to sit in Parliament—they already vote for Members, which Catholics in *England* cannot do. If the point were conceded, only four or five Catholics would be returned—“Parturiunt montes.” Here’s a plain tale ; the King quarrelled with Pitt about the rejection of an augmentation of Army pay and Army patronage for the amusement of young hopefull, the Duke of York. Pitt was in the right ; but in England the King’s influence is omnipotent with the aid of the *Opposition*, which he would be sure of always against *any* Minister. So Pitt went out, and both parties had obvious reasons for a decent ostensible cause.

‘ I am in intention of visiting Hampshire in the commencement of August, then come back to arrange the last of the Population returns, then for Ireland. I am much distressed about Burnet : I never saw so unconvertible talents as his. I puzzle myself in thinking what he can ever be fit for. He thinks too highly of himself for common purposes ; and God knows he is fit for no other. I am trying to starve him into common sense and moderate expectations—but I fear he is incurable. At present he is confoundedly out of humour with me for administering this horse medicine. Our Population business is so much beneath him, that he has not yet condescended to understand it, and does not 2 hours work in a day. I must dismiss all who cannot *employ themselves without leading strings* when I go for Christchurch ; so that his unwilling occupation will cease on Saturday week. He might be assistant at Hackney



School; or at a private academy at Cork if he would! but receives such proposals with indignation as a disparagement to his abilities. Yet, greater men than he, have submitted to this drudgery. I know not what to do about him. On some surgical whim he writes to you this week. I am convinced there is nothing solid to be expected by him on that speculation. A little clinical—Edinburgh—theory is not much to the purpose in London. I shall be glad to hear from you by August 1st before I depart hence.’

On August 1 there is further news of Burnett in a letter written to Southey just before Rickman’s departure from London.

‘Burnet improves; he has had a recommendatory letter from Norwich, from Mr. Taylor to Dr. Aikin. This letter extols the said Burnet as one of the first men of the age; and has had the good effect thus to rouse him from his lethargy, and make him walk erect. Dr. Aikin will admit his productions into the Monthly Mag. and may perhaps get him some other literary employ. But at this Burnet can never thrive—anything like a task scares him, and give[s] him the Blue Devils, during whose influence he is fit for nothing but pestering his friends with moping epistles. I am pleased that he will soon come to knowledge of himself, of what he can do. At present it is all in the strong box. I am already lecturing him on this text, “Now that you are sure your labour will not be wasted, why don’t you begin to write?” He intends it, he says, and will doubtless *intend* it, till he discovers that he is incapable of any steady exertion. In the mean time on my expostulation, he has at length consented to condescend to understand our present business; therefore of course he stays to the end of it. Hitherto he has always said that there was nothing to understand; and therefore would not attend to thought about it. He has carried his abstraction, or the affectation of it, so far, as to have asked, oftener than once, for instructions what he should do, when he had copied anything wrong. The answer, “Scratch it out, and correct it”

did not disconcert him at all. His abstraction was to go for philosophy, and an indication of mental powers superior to the business-doing part of mankind. I begin to have hopes of him for all this, and as you may suppose, shall do for him as much real good as I can.'

Of Rickman's departure Lamb wrote to his friend Manning on August 31 :—

'I have just lost Rickman, a faint idea of whose character I sent you. He has gone to Ireland for a year or two to make his fortune ; and I have lost by his going what seems to me I can never recover—a *finished man*. His memory will be to me as the brazen serpent to the Israelites, —I shall look up to it, to keep me straight and honest.'

Lamb constituted himself the chief news-writer to Rickman during his absence from London, and six letters from him during the autumn of 1801 begin the collection of twenty which Rickman preserved. These letters were only published in the last edition of Lamb's Letters by Canon Ainger (1906), so that they are little known. I am, unfortunately, prevented from quoting them. The first letter, dated September 16, is from Margate, and refers to a letter from Rickman containing an offer about Lamb's play—probably the offer which was repeated later to defray the cost of its printing. Lamb refuses, as he is expecting the repayment of a loan. He proceeds to relate the fact that George Dyer has introduced him to the *Morning Chronicle* ; that Burnett (whom Lamb nicknamed George II., the Bishop, and G. B.) has just finished a metaphysical essay, on which he humorously comments, and is in very comfortable rooms with the son of a wine merchant who keeps them in two sorts of wine ; and that Godwin is about to married, his second play having been refused. Lamb follows this with an inimitable description (on October 9) of a visit to George Dyer, whom he found very dirty and inconsolable because he had no tribute ready to the memory of Gilbert Wakefield, the editor of Lucretius, who was just dead. George Burnett, who was nearly well of his 'metaphyz,' had sipped with him

the night before, and Lamb gives the gist of his mad argument about the ethics of prosecuting a highwayman when you had promised under violence not to do so. He also describes a visit from a needy visitor, for whom Lamb humorously asks Rickman to find a post.

Rickman arrived in Ireland at the beginning of September; Abbot, as we learn from his *Diary*,<sup>1</sup> having arrived in July. England was still at war, and there were considerable fears of rebellion and invasion at Dublin. The official life of that ardent reformer was highly strenuous, and we can be sure that Rickman, who makes little reference to his official business, had all the work he could desire. In October Southey joined his friend at Dublin. Through Rickman's influence he had been appointed private secretary to Mr. Corry, who was then Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland. He held the post, which meant alternate residence in London and Dublin, for nearly a year. On October 16 Southey wrote to his wife<sup>2</sup> :—

'John Rickman is a great man in Dublin and in the eyes of the world, but not one jot altered from the John Rickman of Christchurch, save only that, in compliance with an extorted promise, he has deprived himself of the pleasure of scratching his head, by putting powder on it. He has astonished the people about him. The government stationer hinted to him that if he wanted anything in the pocket book way, he might as well put it down in the order. Out he pulled his own—"Look sir, I have bought one for two shillings." His predecessor admonished him not to let himself down by speaking to any of the clerks. "Why, sir," said John Rickman, "I should not let myself down if I spoke to every man between this and the bridge." And so he goes on his own right way.'

To his friend Grosvenor Bedford Southey wrote<sup>3</sup> :—

'I am reconciled to my lot, inasmuch as the neighbour-

<sup>1</sup> *Diary of Lord Colchester*, i. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Life and Correspondence of R. S.*, ii. 168.

<sup>3</sup> *Selections from the Letters of R. S.*, i. 175.



hood of Dublin is very lovely, and in John Rickman's society I feel little want of any other. He and I, like a whale and a man, are of the same genus, though with great specific differences. If he lives long enough, I expect to see him one of the greatest and most useful men our country has produced. He bends everything to practice. His very various knowledge is always brought to bear upon some point of general importance; and his situation will now give him the power of producing public benefit.'

Early in November Lamb wrote again to Rickman. The following letter was found by Mr. Gordon Wordsworth, and by his permission and that of Mr. E. V. Lucas, who printed it in his edition of Lamb's works, I am permitted to reproduce it. It is one of the best Lamb ever wrote:—

'A letter from G. Dyer will probably accompany this. I wish I could convey to you any notion of the whimsical scenes I have been witness to in this fortnight past. 'Twas on Tuesday week the poor heathen scrambled up to my door about breakfast time. He came thro' a violent rain with no neckcloth on, and a *beard* that made him a spectacle to men and angels, and tap'd at the door. Mary open'd it, and he stood stark still and held a paper in his hand importing that he had been ill with fever. He either wouldn't or couldn't speak except by signs. When you went to comfort him he put his hand upon his heart and shook his head, and told us his complaint lay where no medicine could reach it. I was dispatch'd for Dr. Dale, Mr. Phillips of St. Paul's Churchyard, and Mr. Friend, who is to be his executor. George solemnly delivered into Mr. Friend's hands and mine an old burnt preface that had been in the fire, with injunctions which we solemnly vow'd to obey that it should be printed after his death with his last corrections, and that some account should be given to the world why he had not fulfill'd his engagement with subscribers. Having done this and borrow'd two guineas of his bookseller<sup>1</sup> (to whom he imparted in confidence that he

<sup>1</sup> Phillips.

should leave a great many loose papers behind him which would only want methodising and arranging to prove very lucrative to any bookseller after his death), he laid himself down on my bed in a mood of complacent resignation. By the aid of meat and drink put into him (for I all along suspected a vacuum) he was enabled to sit up in the evening, but he had not got the better of his intolerable fear of dying; he expressed such philosophic indifference in his speech and such frightened apprehensions in his physiognomy that if he had truly been dying, and I had known it, I could not have kept my countenance. In particular, when the doctor came and ordered him to take little white powders (I suppose of chalk or alum, to humour him) he ey'd him with a *suspicion* which I could not account for; he has since explained that he took it for granted Dr. Dale knew his situation and had ordered him these powders to hasten his departure that he might suffer as little pain as possible. Think what an aspect the heathen put on with these fears upon a dirty face. To recount all his freaks for two or three days while he thought he was going, and how the fit operated, and sometimes the man got uppermost, and sometimes the author, and he had this excellent person to serve, and he must correct some proof sheets for Phillips, and he could not bear to leave his subscribers unsatisfy'd, but he must not think of these things now, he was going to a place where he should satisfy all his debts—and when he got a little better he began to discourse what a happy thing it would be if there was a place where all good men and women in the world might meet, meaning heav'n, and I really believe for a time he had doubts about his soul, for he was very near, if not quite, light-headed. The fact was he had not had a good meal for some days and his little dirty Neice (whom he sent for with a still dirtier Nephew, and hugg'd him, and bid them farewell) told us that unless he dines out he subsists on tea and gruels. And he corroborated this tale by ever and anon complaining of sensations of gnawing which he felt about his *heart*, which he mistook his stomach to be, and sure enough these gnawings were dissi-



pated after a meal or two, and he surely thinks that he has been rescued from the jaws of death by Dr. Dale's white powders. He is got quite well again by nursing, and chirps odes and lyric poetry the day long—he is to go out of town on Monday, and with him goes the dirty train of his papers and books which follow'd him to our house. I shall not be sorry when he takes his nipt carcase out of my bed, which it has occupied, and vanishes with all his Lyric lumber, but I will endeavour to bring him in future into a method of dining at least once a day. I have proposed to him to dine with me (and he has nearly come into it) whenever he does not go out; and pay me. I will take his money beforehand and he shall eat it out. If I don't it will go all over the world. Some worthless relations, of which the dirty little devil that looks after him and a still more dirty nephew, are component particles, I have reason to think divide all his gains with some lazy worthless authors that are his constant satellites. The Literary Fund has voted him seasonably £20 and if I can help it he shall spend it on his own carcase. I have assisted him in arranging the remainder of what he calls Poems and he will get rid of 'em I hope in another. . . . [*Here three lines are lost in which Lamb makes a transition to George Burnett.*]

'I promised Burnet to write when his parcel went. He wants me to certify that he is more awake than you think him. I believe he may be by this time, but he is so full of self-opinion that I fear whether he and Phillips will ever do together. What he is to do for Phillips he whimsically seems to consider more as a favor done to P. than a job from P. He still persists to call employment *dependence*, and prates about the insolence of booksellers and the tax upon geniuses. Poor devil! he is not launched upon the ocean and is sea-sick with aforethought. I write plainly about him, and he would stare and frown finely if he read this treacherous epistle, but I really am anxious about him, and that nettles me to see him so proud and so helpless. If he is not serv'd he will never serve himself. I read his long letter to Southey, which I suppose you have



seen. He had better have been furnishing copy for Phillips than luxuriating in tracing the causes of his imbecillity. I believe he is a little wrong in not ascribing more to the structure of his own mind. He had his yawns from nature, his pride from education.

‘I hope to see Southey soon, so I need only send my remembrances to him now. Doubtless I need not tell him that Burnett is not to be foster’d in self-opinion. His eyes want opening, to see himself a man of middling stature. I am not oculist enough to do this. The booksellers may one day remove the film. I am all this time on the most cordial supping terms of amity with G. Burnett and really love him at times : but I must speak freely of people behind their backs and not think it back-biting. It is better than Godwin’s way of telling a man he is a fool to his face.

‘I think if you could do anything for George in the way of an office (God knows whether you can in any haste, but you talk of it) it is my firm belief that it would be his *only chance* of settlement ; he will never live by his *literary exertions*, as he calls them—he is too proud to go the usual way to work and he has no talents to make that way unnecessary. I know he talks big in his letter to Southey that his mind is undergoing an alteration and that the die is now casting that shall consign him to honor or dishonour, but these expressions are the convulsions of a fever, not the sober workings of health. Translated into plain English, he now and then perceives he must work or starve, and then he thinks he’ll work ; but when he goes about it there’s a lion in the way. He came dawdling to me for an Encyclopædia yesterday. I recommended him to Norris’ library and he said if he could not get it there, Phillips was bound to furnish him with one ; it was Phillips’ interest to do so and all that. This was true with some restrictions—but as to Phillips’ interests to oblige G. B. ! Lord help his simple head ! P. could by a *whistle* call together a host of such authors as G. B. like Robin Hood’s merry men in green. P. has regular regiments in pay. Poor writers are his crab-lice and suck at him for

nutriment. His round pudding chops are their *idea* of plenty when *in their idle fancies they aspire to be rich*.

‘What do you think of a life of G. Dyer? I can scarcely conceive a more amusing novel. He has been connected with all sects in the world and he will faithfully tell all he knows. Every body will read it; and if it is not done according to my fancy I promise to put him in a novel when he dies. Nothing shall escape *me*. If you think it feasible, whenever you write you may encourage him. Since he has been so close with me I have perceiv’d the workings of his inordinate vanity, his gigantic attention to particles and to prevent open vowels in his odes, his solicitude that the public may not lose any tittle of his poems by his death, and all the while his utter ignorance that the world don’t care a pin about his odes and his criticisms, a fact which every body knows but himself—he is a *rum genius*.  
C. L.’

This letter shows Lamb’s solicitude for his ‘ragged regiment’ of friends. That Burnett should have won his affection is sufficient proof that G. B. was not without many good qualities. He was at this time working for Phillips upon Dr. Mavor’s *Universal History*, which appeared in 1802—a dull enough compilation in some twenty volumes. The date of Lamb’s letter which Mr. Lucas gives as ‘? Nov.’ is approximately settled by Rickman’s letter of November 7 (quoted below) enclosing it to Southey<sup>1</sup> together with the letter from George Dyer which Lamb mentions as about to accompany his own. Dyer’s letter has been preserved, and is interesting from the fact that no private letters from the incomparable G. D. have ever been published. Southey had left Dublin to attend Mr. Corry in London, and had doubtless shown to Rickman the foolish letter written by Burnett, who had a mania for bursting out into tirades against his friends, especially Southey, for not making a better man of him. Similar outbursts to

<sup>1</sup> Southey must have sent the letter on to Wordsworth, in whose possession it remained.

Rickman, as we shall see, brought down thunder upon his head in a very short time. His metaphysical essay does not seem to have been published.

‘DUBLIN CASTLE,  
‘Saturday Night, Novr. 7th, 1801.

‘I have just received yours, from whence I gladly hear of your arrival in town. Your letter has arrived at a most awkward time for the immediate and solid answer, since the next post goes not till Monday night, and it is too late to procure English notes for transmissal. You would think me a little tardy in not being prepared; but I had good reason for not moving in this business till necessary, since the exchange has been constantly more and more favourable, and I expect to transmit to you at  $9\frac{1}{2}$  instead of  $13\frac{1}{2}$ , which I believe you paid. This will be 40/ in the small sum to be sent. You know  $8\frac{1}{2}$  is *par*: and we are now exporting beef and corn so fast that it will be there soon. That you will be idle enough, i.e. that you will have much time at your own disposal under Mr. Corry, I did and do believe—but I retract the idea I held about the non-existence of your office in peace, I have now cause almost to *know* the contrary. Be that as it may, so much the better for you and also so much the better for me. I like head work well, so that somebody follows science *for me*; that is Irish science; for I should be itching after some literary memory and tokens and monuments of the present Administration here, if I were alone, and perhaps itching in vain from over-much occupation, but if you will take care of that part of the business, I shall work on as comfortably and steadily as the dullest dray-horse. I have had divers letters from London since your departure, part of one packet I have remitted to you, and with this you receive the rest of it, except a letter of ineffable absurdity from G. B. to J. R. Lamb will shew you an extract *speciminis ergo*. The joke was going too far, and I have endeavoured to cure the man’s insanity by a paper containing horse medicine: coarse in itself and rather



caustic, but (as you say of cod-fish) a good *substratum* for medicaments of the best kind which you must administer. In his answer it seems that he still reveres honesty—a good symptom. When you read his essay—P. 25—push him once and again upon the consequences of that page: it contains the metaphysical gradations to determined villainy, stopping short of the mark which the writer could not see to. Nevertheless I am vexed that I cannot oppose anything to such arguments, but the old, true observation—“By their fruits shall ye know them.” If you can quash them better, and *a priori*, I reckon it a serious good. I send you herewith what I much value; a letter from Lamb of exquisite, perhaps unparalleled description; and of an interesting affair; literally and seriously, of G. Dyer *starving to death* and rescued from that ruefull fate by the said C. Lamb. What strange men do we know! Dyer who can starve to death, *without knowing it*, Lamb who can rescue him, and *enjoy it as a joke*, and Burnet of whom no mortal can make any thing: certainly most unaccountable of all. The *Goules* also must be put on your list of remarkables; he is high on mine. If you see him not at Lamb’s, call at the Cockpit; if the Population gentry are at work ask for Mr. Beaumont—and say who you are. If you converse with him three minutes, and in casting round your eyes in pursuit of ugliness you do not detect Simmonds, I pronounce you have no taste or nose for Goules. . . .

‘G. Dyer’s letter lyes before me; I must send it, garnished with mischievous scrawls. Give my compts. to Burnet—the writer of his own times—and tell him that his essay is, *me judice*, very good in choice of words, though tinged with what my brutal taste calls modern jargon. That it is commonplace, but very good commonplace—and that I doubt no part of his ability to write his Introduction or future history, except his industry and perseverance—of which no one can pronounce, as Solon I think said, before the end. That I have reced. his last letter, and am well pleased with it, though I think he ought to have been a little more angry, finally that I wish him well.’

Here is Dyer's letter. The exclamations in parentheses are in Rickman's hand.

'DEAR SIR,—I am much obliged by your favour, and ought to have replied sooner, tho' indeed I have been lately so unwell, that I have been obliged to lay aside attention to letter writing. Yes, I have had a fever, and have been this fortnight past the guest, night and day with our good friend Charles Lamb; his sister has been my kind nurse, and by help of her, and a physician I am brought right again. How dare you call me a railer at all Governments? (Exquisite George!!!) My opinion is, I think both modest and *generous*, viz.: that some govern too much, and too much government, sooner or later, defeats its own purposes, and brings on troubles. Rulers therefore should be taught moderation; and should understand, that if their interest, and the interest of the people are not the same, they are, so far, not standing on good and solid ground. I am glad you find employment, that you like, and I most heartily wish you could find some for Burnett. I begin *very much* to fear; from what Lamb says, that he will succeed but poorly in authorship, for it is not for every one, even of talents, to live by authorship (climax here); and Burnett will not engage in tuition. In short, Rickman, I fear, if you do not stand his friend he is likely to fare but ill. I can render him, I fear, no service. His objects are out of my sight, and his wishes are beyond my reach. The truth is I can, now, render *nobody* any service, and must confine my attention to a very few subjects, and a very few persons: I shall be obliged to do so, as well from the weak state of my health, as from my total inability; much seclusion, little company, and few anxieties I am determined to seek after, as the only means, that can now make me tolerably easy or render an existence for a few years either probable or desirable. So among other cases of distress I *must* give up *Burnett*, for, I fear his will prove one case of distress (G. Dyer still), unless you can find him some snug birth in Ireland; you know the man. If I *could* render him service I should be happy: but things that I

proposed to him he disapproves, and therefore I entreat you to think of him, for he seems to me to possess some good qualities (G. Dyer again), and if you could serve him, I think you would have no reason to accuse your own humanity only to cause you folly. I intend to have two volumes of poems out in the winter, and I hope they will be more readable, and appear in a more agreeable form, than my last, smaller size, better print, and paper, than the first. I shall always be very happy to hear from you. This is one of the first letters I have written this fortnight; for Charles Lamb (I have not been able to write myself) has been condescending enough to be my scribe. So I may say, see how large a letter I have written with my own hand.—  
Yrs. truly,  
G. DYER.

‘P.S. Lamb and sister unite in good wishes. Having filled my letter, I am obliged to make an odd bundle of a letter to put under cover to an M.P.—I intended to have written to R. Southey, by this conveyance, but was not sure he was with you; and, indeed, he has been travelling so about, that I never knew where I could send to him with safety. I owe him a letter, which I shall be happy to pay him: have however written full enough for me at present.’

The letter from Burnett to Rickman must have arrived late in October or early in November, for in a short, undated letter to Rickman Lamb alludes to his having received Rickman’s extract from it—a demand for a place at six weeks’ notice—and takes upon himself the blame of having so addressed the packet that it cost Rickman seventeen shillings, a fact which added considerably to the latter’s indignation. In this letter Lamb says that Southey is not arrived, which dates his own letter before November 7, though Canon Ainger has wrongly printed it after Lamb’s of November 24. A postscript to this same letter speaks of having received ‘this moment’ a packet for Southey—probably the letter quoted above. If so, Lamb’s undated letter certainly should be dated November 9 or 10. As we



shall see, Rickman's ire had also been roused by accounts of Burnett's laziness over the population business, and this, added to the fact that he received Burnett's letter after drinking claret, which (as he says) always put him in a bad humour, seems to have produced a downright anathema for poor Burnett, in which he was cruelly informed that both Rickman and Southey considered him a mediocrity. In his letter of November 24 Lamb says he has seen this 'rouzing' letter, and deprecates its harshness, while bowing to Rickman's better judgment. Southey's first letter from town, in which he begins by humorously describing his duties,<sup>1</sup> which he obviously found trivial and vexatious, makes no allusion to Rickman's 'horse medicine,' for he proceeds :—

'Nov. 20th, 1801.

' . . . Burnett's essay may be entitled Much Ado About Nothing. It is well written in its way, but a damned ugly long way it is. These metaphysicians tease me—wire spinning and gold beating their meaning—they have to tell you the amount of ten times ten—they take an hour in getting at the sum unit by unit. I am sorry you did not see his letter to me. *That* is curious. It is the history of his own mind—the out-blaze of a vanity that has been smoking under green weeds for seven good years. Written with warmth and feeling, for the subject was at his heart and in his heart, if he could but be as animated by anything else—it would do. A fair trial of the trade will do him good. At work he is, and where no great despatch is needful George can work as well as any of Mr. Phillips' merry-men, when he has found out that his metaphysics are not saleable, that he has not quickness enough ever to acquire much knowledge, and that what knowledge he has is not ready at need, then I suppose he will condescend to the common employment of life. Poor fellow! he would think himself degraded by giving to boys the elements of learning—and yet he will

<sup>1</sup> The first part (which I omit) and the last part of this letter are published in *Life and Correspondence of R. S.*, ii. 174.

write for Mr. Phillips' hire, restricted as to subject and even as to pages—and under Dr. Mavor's name! If this be not great straining and camel swallowing with a vengeance!—he should be sowing the grain—and he will be making the bread.

. . . . .  
*Ευρηκα. Ευρηκα. Ευρηκα.*

'You remember your heretical proposition de Cambro-Britannis that the principality had never produced and never could produce a great man, that I opposed Owen Glendwr and Sir Henry Morgan to the assertion but in vain, but I have found the Great man—and not merely the Great man—the Maximus homo—the μέγιστος άνθρωπος, the μεγιστότατος—we must create a super-superlative to reach the idea of his magnitude. I found him in the Strand—in a shop window—laudably therein exhibited by a Cambro-Briton, the Engraver represents him sitting in a room—that seems to be of a cottage or at best—a farm—pen in hand—eyes-uplifted, and underneath is inscribed,

The Cambrian Shakespear.

but woe is me for my ignorance—the motto that followed surpassed my skill in language—tho' it doubtless was a delectable morsel from that Great Welshman's poems. You must however allow the justice of the name given him, for all his writings are in Welsh—and the Welshmen say he is as great a man as Shakespear, and they must know—because they can understand him. I enquired what might be the trivial name of this light and lustre of our Dark age—but it hath escaped me—only that it meant, being interpreted either Tom—a—Denbigh or some such everyday baptismal denomination. And now am I no prophet if you have not before you have arrived thus far uttered a three-worded sentence of malediction. . . .

'To-day I go dine with Lord Holland. Wynn<sup>1</sup> is inti-

<sup>1</sup> Southey's friend, C. W. Wynn, M.P., who became President of the Board of Control in 1822 in Liverpool's ministry.

mate with him and my invitation is for the sake of Thalaba, the sale of Thalaba is slow—about 300 only gone.

‘George Dyer has just been here, his disorder he said required a violent exertion to remedy it. Lamb has made a perfect cure. Thank you for that nonpareil letter. Edith’s remembrance.—Yours truly,  
R. SOUTHEY.’

This letter and a shorter one, saying that Corry had hinted to Southey that he might write the history of the war in Egypt, were answered by Rickman in a letter of November 26.

‘DUBLIN CASTLE, *Novr. 26th*, 1801.

‘I am glad to learn by yours of the 21st inst. that the £40 arrived safe. The packet should have reached you the same day, and I suppose did so the next. I shall enquire the wherefore of the delay. In the meantime I am glad I sent the bill under a distinct cover, and put it into the Post Office myself.

‘I am amused by your no-occupation, and am well pleased to find that as I suspected the Chan. Exchequer seems to intend to retain you for purposes much to your taste. Were I asked to write of Egypt, I should fear that the official knowledge is rather dry and uncircumstantial. However Sir Sydney Smith can aid you much if he chooses, having (as I hear) brought over with him a copy of all the orders issued by Bonaparte while in Egypt. In doing justice to all parties, I do not think you will have occasion to displease Government; you will find Bonaparte rather worse than at present you may perhaps suspect. Have you heard of his slaughter of 3500 Turks at Jaffa, who had surrendered on terms? He drew them up in a line opposite to his armed troops, and gave the word, Charge Bayonet! In fact, he seems something between Cæsar and Alexander; without the follies of the last, and (as I think) without so much solidity as the first. Which of the three be the greatest rascal, *απορω*! All in their day the enemies of mankind; Cæsar and Bonaparte of their



own country. Remember the *Deux-Tiers* affair; which first raised the Frenchman into notice; and remember his mean avarice of fame at the Bridge of Novi and at Marengo. What myriads were sacrificed in vain of those to whom he was military parent as General! For *management*, and good fortune, he is surely eminent; whether he *has* literature, whether he *likes it*, or whether he thinks it good policy to *seem* to like it, is not clear—I suspect the last—but you know how much I detest the French—I should hold the *scales* dangerously. Thank you for the Welshman, whom I commend to your better acquaintance, you must now learn Welsh of course, and translate his plays. Your picture of G. Burnett is very just. I am quite sick of him, longer connection naturally keeps him nearer you, and I should be sorry he were quite deserted. Additional to his silly letter (a place at six weeks notice) the same post brought me a letter of information about him, for which I had laid a train. As you have now learnt surely, I may tell you here. I left him a trifling task—ruling certain lines in the Population books, merely to try his power of attention to anything like a fixed task. The unlucky wight who was to write in the said lines suffered for this, forced to go for the sheets one by one, to urge the gentleman daily for supply, sometimes finding him in bed at *One*, at other times at a stand on a plea of *wanting ink*, and finally by necessity the task thrown up in despair! A good specimen of activity in business. I have done with him.

‘I wish I could lend you all I ever knew or thought about the subjects which you are to perpend.<sup>1</sup> There is something about most of them in that Magazine,<sup>2</sup> which Lamb can lend you. I believe I can even rummage out some MS. on the subject, 2 or 3 years old. In your next (if you think of it) tell me whether that publication goes on. I suppose not at all, or most vilely. Tell Lamb I want to hear from him, and of his play. I shall receive money enough (from

<sup>1</sup> Corry had told him to read up corn law, finance, and tythes.

<sup>2</sup> Edited by Rickman in 1800.

the Population business) soon, and he may draw largely on that projected publication. Though as a *play* (in the abstract) it is not good, there is much too good to be lost in it, besides I wish to give the world one more chance of shewing taste.'

Southey meanwhile had written again.<sup>1</sup>

' 25 BRIDGE STREET,  
' WESTMINSTER, *November 27, 1801.*

' MY DEAR RICKMAN,—This morning I called on Burnett, whom I found recovering from a bilious flux and in the action of folding up a letter designed for you. He then for the first time shewed me your letter and his reply. I perceived that the provoking blunder in Lamb's direction affected the tone of yours, and that the seventeen shillings-worth of anger fell upon George. Your caustic was too violent: it eat thro' the proud flesh, but it has also wounded the feeling and healthy part below. The letter which I have suppressed was in the same stile as his last. I prevailed on him to lay it up in his desk, because it was no use showing you the wound you had inflicted, and your time would be better anyhow employed than in reading full pages that were not written with the design of giving pleasure. That your phrases were too harsh I think, and Lamb and Mary Lamb think also 'twas a horse medicine—a cruel doze of yellow gamboodge.

' What I foresaw—or rather hoped would take place is now going on in him. He begins to discover that hackneying authorship is not the way to be great, to allow that six hours writing in a public office is *better* than the same number of hours labour for a fat publisher, that it is more certain, less toilsome, quite as respectable. I have even prevailed on him to attend to his hand-writing, on the possibility of some such happy appointment, and doubt not ere long to convince him, in his own way, of the moral fitness of writing straight lines and distinct letters accord-

<sup>1</sup> *Selections from the Letters of R. S.*, i. 181-183.

ing to all the laws of mind. He *wishes* to get a tutor's place. In my judgment a clerk's would suit him better, for its permanence. Nothing like experience! He would not think its duties beneath him, and if he were so set at ease from the daily bread and cheese anxieties that would disorder a more healthy intellect than his, I believe that passion for distinction which haunts him, would make him, in the opinion of the world, the booksellers and himself, a very pretty historian—quite as good as any of the Scotch breed. It puzzles me how he has learnt to sound his sentences so ear-tickingly. He has never rough-hewn anything, but he finishes like a first journey-man.

‘Write to him some day, and lay on an emollient plaister, it would heal him, and comfort him. A very active man we shall never have, but as active as nature will let him he will soon be, and quite enough for daily official work. If you could set him in the land of potatoes we should, I believe in conscience see the Historian of the Twelve Cæsars become a great man. A more improbable prophecy of mine about the wretched Alfred has been fulfilled.

‘Mr. Corry and I have met once since my last, and no mention was made about Egypt. The silence satisfied me because Portugal is a better and far more suitable subject. It is odd that he has never asked me to dine with him, and not quite accordant with his general courtliness of conduct. Seeing little of him I have not formed so high an opinion of his talents or information as you had led me to conceive. Doubtless in his own department he possesses both, but on all other ground I am the better traveller, and he hardly knows the turnpike when I have beat thro’ all the byways and windings and cross roads. I found it expedient to send him my sundry books in compliance with a hint to that effect. He called to thank me, and this dropping a card has been the extent of my personal and avoidable civility. To my great satisfaction I have entire leisure—that is to my *present comfort*—for it does not promise much for the future. . . . The Magazine exists, I certify its existence having seen one for this month



in a window. The spirit having left it I suspect *Vampirism* in its present life.

'Coleridge is in town,<sup>1</sup> you should commute your Star for the *Morning Post*, in which you will see good things from him, and such occasional verses as I may happen to execute. The Anthology is revivescient under the eye of blind Tobin,<sup>2</sup> to whom all the honour and glory and papers are transferred. There will be enough of the old leaven to keep up the family likeness to its half-brothers. Madoc is on the anvil—slow and sure. I expect my Portugal paper this evening with my Mother and shall return with new appetite to my dear old folios.

'The letter to which you referred in your money-letter as directed *here*, never arrived. You who have the Great Seal at command had better always write *straight*, and do give Burnett a line—your letter was too hard—and you would do a kind action by easing him of resentment.'

The offer of money which Rickman made to Lamb through Southey was again refused in an undated letter, the sixth in the collection of Lamb's letters to him. It tells of George Dyer's dining regularly with Lamb and bringing his shilling; of Burnett being 'much reduced,' and Coleridge's recommendation of him to the editor of the *Morning Post*, on which Lamb also hoped to get work; of Southey and the impending death of his mother; and of Lamb's friends Godwin, Fenwick, and Fell.

On December 5 a short note from Rickman to Southey shows that he appreciated the humours of the Irish. He announces that he has just read *Castle Rackrent*, and 'can I be aisly again at all at all till I have put all my friends in possession of a bit of the bog of Allybally-carrickoshaughlin?' He asks Southey to order six copies, four to be given to his cousin Beaumont, one to Lamb, and one to Southey's

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge was in London from November 15 till Christmas.

<sup>2</sup> Of Clifford's Inn, friend of Lamb and Coleridge. His brother was a dramatist. Lamb refers to him in his essay 'Thoughts on Books and Reading.'

mother. He announces having written a penitent letter to Burnett, and ends: 'I wrote to Lamb the other day, and am quite pleased to think I have been accessory to the regeneration and *first* edition of my noble Margaret (the heroine of *John Woodvil*). I shall be desperately in love when I meet her counterpart.' In a second note he writes:—

'Under a trivial Irish name of a place, Mr. A. has detected an Etymology which would enliven a whole page of any dull Etymologic: Magnum.

'The Gentry about Dublin are in the habit of calling their country seats by outlandish names. Hence we have *Marino*, *Bellevue*, *Casino*, etc. in the neighbourhood. In this taste a gentleman building a new house towards Drogheda christened it—Bel-retiro.

'I charge you to pause three full minutes before you turn over; and guess at its present trivial Irish name.

#### BALLYRUDDERY.

300 Copies.

Chear thee, Chear thee, Thalaba.  
A little yet hold on.

---

Criticum Britannicum ipse vidi.  
Splash! Splash! Splash!

'J. R.'

Southey's answer soon followed.

'Friday, December 11, 1801.

'Yesterday (the day after your letterling reached me) I journeyed to Johnson's for my friend Thady.<sup>1</sup> You were mistaken in supposing I could get them at the trade

<sup>1</sup> Thady Quirk, the narrator of the story in *Castle Rackrent*, which Miss Edgeworth published anonymously.

price. I cannot even get my own books without paying the full charge. There were no copies ready—else I should have dropt one with Mary Lamb, and introduced myself to Mr. Beaumont with the others. Of course they will arrive to-day.

‘Mr. Corry has found out an employment for me—to go with him and his son to Walker’s lectures—and sit two hours every other morning hearing what I have known God knows how long.

‘Burnett has a situation which he cannot keep! It is only to make up matter for the Courier from the French papers and from Peltier’s<sup>1</sup> Paris, after the *news* has been taken from them, mere child’s work: for two or three columns a week he receives a guinea and a half while on trial, two guineas if he continues; his sawneying and unteachable indolence almost surpasses belief. He is tottering now in Coleridge’s leading strings. I know not what can become of him. He is in deep water, and will neither strike out hand or foot to save himself. Bless the newspapers! Lamb also has an engagement with the Morning Post. *He* will be eminently useful there, and will I doubt not make it a permanent source of income. . . .

‘London robs me of all leisure. One calls and another calls, and if I have not those interruptions, the inconvenience of one only sitting-room effectually prevents continuous attention to any subject. At the year’s end I shall not be richer than if this connection with the Irish Chancellor had not existed. True that the salary is gained without effort, and so much exertion saved, should be accounted gain; with the year it must end, and my ultimate gain will be what little knowledge of Ireland may be acquired in the next visit; it is worth a year’s hard travelling to see a floating Island.

‘Thanks for the etymology!

<sup>1</sup> A French refugee who edited a paper called *Paris* in London. His attacks on Napoleon were made a subject of complaint by the Emperor to the British Government.



‘ I enclose a second note with great pleasure—to announce the real and true second birth of George Burnett. He has found out his blunder, and actually discovered to his own downright conviction, that he is not fit for an author. His eyes are opened upon his own ignorance.

‘ Conveniently I believe that he is enough awake now to discharge the manual duties of any situation in which you could place him. Do not now curse him for the recollection of the Cock-pit, for that recollection has risen in him like an evil conscience. For George Burnett I have an habitual feeling of affection, as you know they have never blinded me to his faults. I will make a report of his progress in the next week. Think of him in any but a claret-humour. Farewell.

R. S.’

At the beginning of 1802 Southey was tired of his secretaryship, and depressed at the illness of his mother, who was dying of consumption; and Lamb had begun to write for the *Morning Post*, a fact at which Rickman rejoiced, so much so that he ordered a subscription to be taken out in the name of his father at Christchurch. Burnett had been appointed tutor to the two sons of Lord Stanhope, the democratic peer. He had finished his introduction to the *Universal History*. These facts explain Rickman’s letter which follows :—

‘ DUBLIN CASTLE, *January 5th*, 1802.

‘ . . . I am a little out of intelligence from London ; (save from the Cockpit) last I heard of G. Dyer, who printeth—but hath not begun his *Vita Authoris* schemed for him by Lamb’s ingenuity. Lamb also printeth, to better purpose, he has pruned Margaret, he says, into my shape and conception of things. I hope carefully, since certainly I know not much of the drama ; nothing beyond instinct.

‘ I receive the *Morning Post* and search it diligently ; he owneth certain theatrical reports, and I find jokes besides. I think they will have an interest in paying him very handsomely. When daily papers run against one another in

peace, in times of no intelligence, where can such an aid be found as Lamb? I have heard wit from him in an evening to feed a paper for a week. I am much pleased that Burnet is well placed, it was an arduous task to do so, and may be esteemed a resurrection from the dead. From his last to me I calculated on his despair. I think he will do well for instilling the languages into the young nobles. Lord Stanhope is an acute man, and will instil other things himself, and Burnet will have leisure enough. I should like to see the famous preface, which must have almost worn out the anvil, the arm and the hammer. It is for his future health of soul, that he discovered that authorship is not a resource to the idle, before this lucky hit put him beside the acquisition of that knowledge; were I to name hard work, it would be that work—and followed as a book-making trade it is not glorious—to write per sheet soon resolves itself into *not* writing per excellence. I admire your *task*, and do more than suspect a semi-tutorship. I did not know of the young Chancellor, till from you. Mr. C.'s particular wish for regular education, and knowledge of the classics is now better explained than it was. I was puzzled at it. What the devil has Greek to do with taxation, and amounts and loans? I wonder with you that you have not dined with him, the more as I used to dine with him so often here that I was ashamed of it. I imagine your connections with the opposite people bears a little upon this point. But while you have leisure, it is of little consequence. *Dabit Deus his quoque finem*. We shall see some sequel, if you [do your] part, you will be sure of his interest for other purposes at all events. I hope you [will get] a certain popular knowledge of the knowledge of the day by your tarrying in town. I thank you for the book-commission executed. I read 10 pages of Miss Hannah Blagden,<sup>1</sup> and saw wit, and I concede a little religion to my female friends and relations. I desire my best respects to all your ladies,

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* Hannah More. The allusion is to the 'Blagdon controversy' which raged round the school founded by her at Blagdon in Somersetshire from 1800 to 1802. The schoolmaster was accused of holding a conventicle.

among whom I see on your list Mrs. Lovel,<sup>1</sup> whom I remember with pleasure. Does Mrs. Edith S. like town or not? Coleridge seems to have done much good in town to Burnet—Lamb—etc. What is he doing himself—and what is Davy doing? Do you assail him? Do his Meta—Meta—Meta-physicks succumb? I suppose you attend his lectures occasionally. . . .’

Three letters from Lamb come in here, written on January 9, January 14, and January 18 respectively. They speak of his work for the *Morning Post*, of Dyer’s bringing the eccentric Earl of Buchan to see him, and of Burnett’s arrival—late as usual—to take up his appointment. On January 17 Southey philosophically enough announced his mother’s death, with some gossip about Cottle. On February 1 Rickman received a characteristic account from Lamb of the elopement of Burnett’s two pupils. Their mother’s family had probably enticed them away, fearing the democratic influence of ‘Citizen’ Stanhope, so ‘George II.’ remained with his employer as secretary instead of tutor. Rickman was now very busy, as Abbot had gone to London, leaving his secretary to represent him. By the courtesy of the present Lord Colchester I am able to reproduce in part one of Rickman’s official letters. It refers among other matters to the death of Lord Clare, the Irish Lord Chancellor, which, says Abbot in his Diary, delivered the Irish and British Governments from much trouble. He was a violent and overbearing man, whose authority had been weakened by the Union. A special inquiry was subsequently made into the Board of Works, of which Rickman speaks so feelingly.

‘DUBLIN CASTLE, *Feby.* 1, 1802.

‘SIR,—Having considered that Sunday is the quietest day for recollecting the occurrences of the week, I propose to dispatch the weekly letter by Monday’s mail, if you see no reason for preferring any other day of the week.

<sup>1</sup> Sister of Mrs. Southey and Mrs. Coleridge. Lovell was also one of the Pantisocrats.



‘The occurrence which has filled every one’s thoughts is the death of the Chancellor ; all consider the loss irreparable. I have heard of no new speculations about a successor ; the old speculations are still heard, but with diminished confidence.

‘The public are much gratified by the propriety of His Excellency in putting off the intended drawing room which was appointed for the evening of Thursday. As it was known that the present Government here, and the Chancellor were not cordial, the attention shewn was unexpected and made the greater impression on the public mind.

‘Mr. Grattan is reported to have said, on occasion of the Chancellor’s death, that as the race of wolf dogs in Ireland soon became extinct, when no wolves were left, so the Chancellor has not long outlived the ruin of his country, viz. the Union, caused chiefly by his means. An ill-natured allusion, and not very happy ; if the quarrelsome, snarling harpies of the late Irish Parliament were made to stand for the wolves, the comparison had been more compleat ; but could not have proceeded from the mouth of Grattan. . . .

‘I have commenced the *Excise* returns ; because Dublin Port which would naturally stand first in the Custom retn. is not arrived yet. I suffer some interruption by letters and visits from the gentlemen on the medical staff ; I cannot blame them, neither can I hope to be clear of this nuisance till the Admr. furnishes the account, which he promises daily. I hope then to put the business in such train, that no more trouble shall occur.

‘I have explained your wishes about ascertaining the number of Holyhead passengers for the last 11 years to Mr. Lees, who promises to do all he can. . . . Mr. Lees talks of you in the usual manner ; his applause you do not consider as very sincere ; I confess I incline to Mr. Marsden’s opinion of the old gentleman ; that he is a political Swiss, who is really the very faithful and devoted servant of every successive Government, and that he may perhaps feel a trifling preponderance to see Ireland well governed. . . .

‘The Board of Works go on as might be expected ; all

confusion; three days since Mr. Woodgate brought me an Order issued to him, that he should forthwith inspect and examine the mass of their old Accounts. He said to me, that then it must of course be impossible for him to go on with his other duties. I told him to say to them as of himself, that he did not conceive his instructions warranted him in such application of his time, and that he feared he might displease Government in so doing—therefore declined the task.

‘The Secretary has become visible; but disclaims performance of any duty, beyond writing his signature; he says he is not used to such things as taking minutes, drafting official papers, etc.—In truth to work with such an awkward tool as the Board of Works seems a great waste of exertion. Besides ignorance and inaptitude for any real business, they seem to exhibit some presumption, in appointing Mr. Spear Pro-Secretary, and in refusing a room for an Office. . . .’

Rickman had requested both Lamb and Southey to compose an epitaph on a Miss Mary Druitt who died at Wimborne. Lamb’s lines are among his poetical works, and Southey in a not very interesting letter of February 6 refused the task. On February 14 Lamb informed Rickman of his break with the *Morning Post*, and of his inability to work to order. He alluded to Abbot’s elevation to the Speakership, which took place on February 10, to Dyer’s being kept from starvation by a committee of friends, and to Burnett’s self-importance at being sent on any trumpery errand. On February 17 Southey wrote again, asking if Abbot’s elevation would bring Rickman to London as Speaker’s Secretary. He continued:—

‘. . . You have received “John Woodville.” I retain my first opinion. It is delightful poetry badly put together. An exquisite picture in a clumsy frame. Margaret is a noble girl. The other characters not so well conceived. A better imitation of old language I have never seen, but was the language of the serving men ever the language of



nature? Lamb has copied the old writers, I expect that they did not copy existing characters. Those quaint turns of words and quainter contortions of thought never could be produced by ignorant men. The main interest of the play (the discovery) is too foolish. The effect produced too improbable. Withal so beautiful is the serious dialogue that more than redeems the story. Most I like the concluding scene.

'I am half amused and half provoked by the civilities which my Secretaryship procures me, and receive them with an accurate sense of their value. I on my part also am more civil perhaps than usual. My wish is to get abroad, and I am old enough never to kick away the stone which I may want to step upon. Abroad I must go—so says my head and my whole intestinal canal and my inclination. Lisbon of course is the place desirable. I would compound for Madrid, it is a hateful city, and only its books can atone for a bad situation both as to earth and heaven. If in October however I see no near chance of a legation southward, as the world will be before me, I shall seriously think of taking root in Portugal, and seriously labour to get money enough for a land journey from Bilbao to St. Sebastian thro' Biscay to Madrid, and thence elbow out of the straight road to Toledo and Cordova. These plans you see are post-obit speculations, for the natural death of my office may be calculated upon.

'Did I tell you how Burnett's tutorship is like my Secretaryship—a happy sinecure? that his pupils have both eloped, and that he receives his salary for eating and drinking with Lord Stanhope, and talking late after supper? The Historian's ambition is gone by; a passion for the utilities has succeeded, and we have given him the new title Professor of Mathematics. The Lord who is not only a good man, but a very clever one, has many mechanical inventions to bring forward, of which I suppose some one will fall to the share of Burnett, and so make him lazy for life by a valuable patent. He is as happy as the Great Mogul. Of the other George I have more doleful tidings. Mary



Lamb and her brother have succeeded in talking him into love with Miss Benjay or Bungey or Bungay; but they have got him into a quagmire and cannot get him out again, for they have failed in the attempt to talk Miss Bungay or Bungey or Benjey into love with him. This is a cruel business, for he has taken the injection, and it may probably soon break out in sonnets and elegies. . . .’

The curious story of Dyer’s being persuaded into losing his heart is quite new. Lamb makes no mention of it. The lady in question was Miss Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger, an author who wrote a biography of John Tobin, the dramatist. Madame de Staël described her as the most interesting woman she had met in England. Miss Benger was a friend of Sarah Wesley, John Wesley’s niece, who was herself a friend of Coleridge. It was through Miss Wesley that Lamb met Miss Benger, who was a thorough blue-stocking. He describes the meeting to Coleridge in a letter of April 1800. Charles and Mary Lamb went to her lodgings, and were frightened out of their wits by her solemn priggishness. Lamb said he was preparing for the next meeting by reading all the magazines and reviews of the last month, by which means he hoped to cut a ‘tolerable second-rate figure.’ I suspect that the Lambs’ persuasion of Dyer into love with her was only a joke. Rickman answered on February 23, in a letter which announced his near return to London as Speaker’s Secretary ‘at some diminution of income, but immense increase in happiness.’ He was very glad to leave Ireland, and had refused a permanent appointment there worth £800 a year. On Southey’s story of Dyer he comments: ‘Poor Dyer in *love*! That cannot hurt him; he may *love in sonnett*, while he eats Lamb’s beef. Take away starvation and he will live like the Kings of Persia—for ever.’ Within a month he hoped to be in London.





ST. STEPHEN'S CHAPEL AND THE SPEAKER'S HOUSE BEFORE THE FIRE IN 1834. THE LITTLE HOUSE IN THE FOREGROUND WAS THAT OF MR. WILDE, THE CLERK OF THE EXCHEQUER.

*(From a drawing in the British Museum.)*



## CHAPTER IV

1802-1805

Secretaryship to the Speaker—Bag and sword—Thomas Poole—George Burnett again—G. B. quarrels with Southey—Lamb's opinion of it—Southey's first visit to Rickman—Poole and Poor Laws—Another letter from G. Dyer—His 'patronage' of Lamb—Burnett's letters—Rickman's temper—Coleridge—Rickman finds him a ship—His letters—Ned Phillips—Overwork—An unromantic marriage.

'I DID not gain much, indeed was rather out of pocket at the end of the first half-year [*i.e.* of the Irish secretaryship] when Mr. Abbot became Speaker of the House of Commons ; but I was offered good office (£800 a year) if I chose to settle in Ireland. This I declined from attachment to England or to a young lady at Chidham, and became Speaker's Secretary, an office producing about £300 annually and moreover about £1000 or £1200 in an election year, which occurs about once in five years, and was to happen by necessary dissolution of Parliament in 1802. I was expected to inhabit an official house adjoining the Speaker's and the Exchequer in the corner of Palace Yard, and for so doing, accepted as a useful inmate a maiden Aunt Beaumont assisted by a maid servant, and I paid £200 for the articles of furniture left by my predecessor, a man of some fortune and good taste.'

This is Rickman's account, written to his daughter in later years, of that move which was in a sense the last move of his life. The Speaker's Secretary was, and still is, one of the officials of the House of Commons. His duties are to attend the Speaker on all official occasions, besides fulfilling the ordinary functions of a private secretary.

He was then paid, as were most of the officials of the House at that time, by fees which were charged upon every conceivable proceeding of Parliament. Until the strenuous inquiries of the reformed Parliament into official salaries began in 1833, the only salaries fixed by law, as far as the officials of the House were concerned, were those of the Speaker and of the Clerks at the Table.<sup>1</sup> At that period election petitions were many and costly, and the fees brought profit to others besides the Speaker's Secretary.<sup>2</sup> The days of the unreformed Parliament, as far as salaries are concerned, may well be regretted by the permanent officials of to-day.<sup>3</sup> Besides his fees Rickman, as Speaker's Secretary, enjoyed another privilege. All letters and packages could be sent to him free under a cover addressed to the Speaker, though this privilege only held good while Parliament was actually sitting. Rickman profited by it all the years that he was Speaker's Secretary, and so did his friends; but, as we shall see, both Coleridge and Poole brought down wrath upon their heads by making the Speaker an intermediary between themselves and some other person than Rickman. He was also able to obtain 'franks' for sending letters from the Speaker, though it was not until he became Clerk Assistant that Rickman had the power of franking his own letters. It was a power which was in some ways irksome to its possessor, for all his friends expected him to send them 'franks,' or letter-covers signed with his name. Of Rickman's other emolument, his official house, I shall say something in the next chapter. There is abundant proof in the letters that he found his work at Westminster distasteful. He became used, indeed, to wearing the 'bag and sword,' which was in itself an innovation to one whose dress had formerly been so rough that he

<sup>1</sup> The Speaker's salary was fixed by an act of 1790, those of the Clerks at the Table by an act of 1800.

<sup>2</sup> But the Speaker's Secretary profited very largely from them, because so many documents requiring the Speaker's signature were necessary, on each of which the Secretary received a fee.

<sup>3</sup> See my article on 'The Officers of the House of Commons' in *Blackwood's Magazine* for March 1909.

once narrowly escaped being seized by the Press Gang<sup>1</sup>; but what annoyed him chiefly was having to spend so much of his time in details of routine, which were of small importance. He found himself too busy to read or to devote himself to what he considered useful studies and meditations. If he had not wished to marry it is possible that he might have given up official life, but marriage made a fixed salary necessary. Nevertheless, if his work was dull, the political life, of which he was a spectator, was interesting enough. The House of Commons has never been more brilliant than it then was, and feeling ran high. Abroad Napoleon, about to break the peace of Amiens, dominated the horizon; at home, the quarrels of George III. and his son, and the intrigues of the various parties, charged the political atmosphere. The ministry of Addington was a failure, and when war broke out again Pitt was obviously wanted at the helm, but Addington's pride, the King's dislike of Fox, and the disunion of the Whigs generally, caused a year to be spent in schemes and parleyings before Pitt again took office. Rickman did not consider that his position debarred him from commenting strongly upon these political events from a Tory point of view.

When the new Speaker's Secretary entered on his duties, his friend Southey, to his regret, left London. The secretaryship to Mr. Corry, which had become a kind of tutorship to his son, wearied Southey, who returned to Bristol, and refused to entertain a definite offer of a tutorship. He had thoughts of looking out for a house at Richmond, but his joint occupation of Greta Hall with the Coleridges, at first not a wholly satisfactory experiment, proved to be a settlement for life. The correspondence between Southey and Rickman, which it is impossible to reproduce in full, was frequent and copious. Southey's projected history of Portugal, his reviews, his translation of *Amadis*, requests for books to be sent, and other literary matters fill up a good deal of the space. Rickman was

<sup>1</sup> Southey's letter to W. S. Landor, *Life and Correspondence of R. S.*, iii. 215.



always ready to put his information at his friend's service. One letter contains a long disquisition by him on currency, and in several others there are discussions of the etymology of words. Rickman's project of translating the Septuagint, the troubles of Southey's brother Tom and the escapades of his brother Edward, the prospects of George Fricker,<sup>1</sup> whom Coleridge had brought to London, a quarrel between Godwin and Southey, and a visit to Edinburgh are other topics. The name of Captain (afterwards Admiral) Burney, the historian of the South Seas, often occurs, and there are several letters in his hand to Southey.

Two other friends came into correspondence with Rickman at this time. Coleridge he already knew, though not very intimately. Coleridge's letters of 1804 were written when he was in London looking for a ship to carry him to Malta. It was Rickman who found him the vessel. The other correspondent was Thomas Poole of Nether Stowey, Coleridge's friend, of whom Southey said that he was more akin in mind to Rickman than any man he knew. Mrs. Sandford in her memoir of Poole says that Coleridge introduced him to Rickman in January 1802, when they went up to hear Davy lecture at the Royal Institution. This cannot be so, for Rickman was at that date in Ireland. Southey must have engineered the first introduction through Davy in June 1802, as his and Rickman's letters in that month show. The common interests of the two men in economic subjects drew them together. Both had strong views upon the Poor Laws, so that when an act, introduced by George Rose, M.P., was passed in 1803 providing that all parish overseers should make returns as to the condition of the poor in their parishes, Rickman, whose assistance Rose had requested, offered to Poole the task of supervising in London the administration of the act, an offer which Poole at once accepted. An office and lodgings were found for him in Abingdon Street, Westminster, and several clerks were put under him. In a letter to Coleridge Poole spoke of his gratitude for Rickman's friendship and

<sup>1</sup> Brother-in-law of Southey and Coleridge.

‘flattering partiality’ in the matter. His labours took him nearly a year, during part of which Coleridge stayed with him at Abingdon Street; but the friendship with Rickman, though rather formal, continued to show itself in a correspondence which ranges over ten years.

For the greater part of 1802 I shall only take short extracts from Rickman’s correspondence. On June 2 Southey wrote from Bristol :—

‘I met Poole here on his way to France, and desired that he would make Davy take him to you. He is a man you will like to converse with, for his pursuits have been chiefly agriculture and political economy.’

Rickman answered on June 12 :—

‘I have seen Mr. Poole, and like him well. A little dogmatic, from the nature of country contemplation, which is so undistracted that a man must hug the bantling which has cost him brain-sweat. But we were all so once; and I verily believe that the literary dissipation of London can by no means suffer original thought to flourish. . . . Davy is working hard and usefully. I reckon it a great gain to myself and the world that he has become anti-gallican, and has now seen enough of the great and the famous to have learned quantum est in rebus *inane*. . . . His present foible is the undue exaltation of science into authority, where her investigations have not been most perfect. . . . However all will be right with him in time. Excuse a distracted letter by Saturday post. Dyer who dines with me has been running about the room looking at the lettering of your books, which he pronounces a fine collection, not knowing ten of them in all.’

Later in June Rickman makes the first mention of Captain Burney, who became a great friend of his, and on July 2 he observes :—

‘We have sent off the Parliament at last to my great joy, being heartily sick of the misery of dressing daily, and of doing nothing to any purpose. . . . I suppose

Dyer sent you his Poems with his letter. Could any body but Dyer have been so simple as to inscribe a poem, *The Padlocked Lady* ?

On August 5 we hear of unexpected political activity on the part of Dyer, who, says Rickman, 'has lately been very profitably employed considering his office of *Cancellarius Magnus*. He has been on Sir Francis Burdett's<sup>1</sup> committee, reckoning himself and Sir F. allied, because the said Sir F. talked about the Bastille, and G. D. wrote a book intituled the *Complaints of the Poor*.'<sup>2</sup>

In the autumn the wretched George Burnett again began troubling his friends. He had left Lord Stanhope, who had paid him a full year's salary of £200, and had resumed his literary vagabondage. He had also taken to opium, probably from Coleridge's example; and, as usual when he was particularly down on his luck, he laid all his troubles at Southey's door. On October 14 Southey writes of his being at Bristol :—

'Burnett—God knows why—thinks my acquaintance beneath him, and talked so very absurdly about me to Danvers, that Danvers made him answer, "George Burnett, if I had a horsewhip, and we were not in the street, I would lay it over you as long as I was able." Poor fellow, an envy of which he is too proud and too self-satisfied to be conscious has refined into dislike, and will end in hatred. I am really sorry, for you know what a bottom of affectionate good-will there has been and is in all my feelings respecting him. He talks of a pistol, and will talk of it till pure shame forces him to play the fool with it, because he is laughed at for his cowardly bravados. God Almighty must have designed him for a gentleman at least, if not for higher rank, he is so utterly unfit for any earthly employment.'

Rickman, who never suffered fools gladly, for all his desire to help them, replied by return :—

<sup>1</sup> The reformer, for many years M.P. for Westminster.

<sup>2</sup> *Complaints of the Poor People of England*, published in 1793.



‘I did not suppose the Bishop would have been so very silly as you mention, and I no longer repent of that caustic I once applied to his overweening folly. He envies, it seems; why does he not emulate? Whom does he see succeed in any thing by yawning and metaphysics? Does he see *you* idle? Does he see *me* idle? Did he see even *Lord Stanhope* idle? . . . I believe there is no fear of his using a pistol, but it might be well if in an absent fit he should walk over the edge of the quay. So would the aliment be bestowed on some more profitable animal, which is now consumed by him. As a cosmopolite, it is moral to wish him dead.’

A few days later Burnett had come to London, having refused a tutorship offered him at Bristol, and the benevolent Dyer was trying to find him work: a ‘characteristic situation,’ says Southey. Rickman’s letter of December 16 deserves longer quotation. Besides the mention of his friends, it contains the first hint of his thoughts of marriage. It must be confessed that they were unromantic enough.

‘NEW PALACE YARD, *December 16th, 1802.*

‘. . . I begin to become less irritated with the daily nonsense of Bag and Sword, and have reduced the ceremony of dressing in costume down to 7 minutes—undressing 2 minutes. I have a wig to which the bag is appended, and as to the lower part of my dress, that goes through the day. So that I shall go on not displeas’d with my situation *immediately*; especially as the first year or two of Parliament doubles the income: the election petitions being great plagues, but some profit. I have not yet become satisfied with house-keeping; indeed it has been managed badly, and much illness of my aunt, and some of the maid servants, has annoyed me not a little. I begin to think that at last I shall be forced to find out a wife, and though I am rather past falling in love, I daresay I should not chuse the more unwisely for that. However this matter is *sub judice*; it still appears to me a perilous

engagement and something of constraint. A man cannot strike his tent so speedily, and want of rapidity in that, is bad in warfare. I think I ought in conscience to keep myself among the light infantry; for I want to do so many things before I die, that time seems hardly sufficient, husband it by not being a husband, as much as I may.\*

‘George the first dined here to-day, coming in very orderly and comfortably about dinner time. I like to see him happy; I question whether anybody, with the same scanty means, ever created so much happiness to his numerous friends as he. He now pretends to be a little castigated as to the *generality* of his benevolence, and immediately recommends two or three “ingenious young men” for divers purposes. Lamb met George the second a day or two since. The gentleman looked wildly, talked of desperation etc. In fact he takes opium, and I suppose will some day muster up courage to take a *potent dose* of it. I have no objection to his doing so. Lord Stanhope gave him so fair a chance in giving him £200, and that fair chance has been so completely thrown away without effort or device for permanent subsistence, that I deem the moon-struck man as a hopeless case. . . .

\* \* N.B. Lamb supped with me last night. Infection!’

The first news of 1803 is of Burnett, who had again gone to pour out his wrath over Southey. Southey describes the scene on January 12:—

‘George the second has quarrelled with me in the oddest of all possible ways: he says I treated him with neglect and contempt in London, and that another person saw it as well as himself. There is reason to believe he means Lamb, and if it be so, Burnett has been making some mistake about him as well as me, taking jest perhaps for sober earnest. This however is the least part of my offence. I and Coleridge he says have been the cause of all his unhappiness, and what he justly calls idiotism: we never *treated* him properly. Now *treated* is here used in the dis-

pensary sense of the word. "Every human being can influence the mind of another human being if placed near him, and upon this great truth all the principles of education depend." The second George laid down this proposition in Bristol streets at noonday, speaking so loud that every body might hear him, and rolling his eyes to see who listened. Well—now for the minor: "but you and Coleridge did not properly influence my mind," and so the syllogism was to end in a quarrel, that is he gravely desired never to see me while he was in Bristol. His mind was not healthy enough to form a sound result (tho' he was sure he was right), and if on his recovery from a stomach complaint he found out that he had been mistaken in thinking thus harshly of me, why he would let me know. All this is truly absurd, but certain old habits of affection make me sorry for it. Damn his fool's head, he has been feeding upon Scotch metaphysics . . . he walks tiptoe and talks of his high moral views of things and principles of action above those of common men. "Common men!" By God he is an uncommon one, mad as ever was Don Quixote or Loyola, and precisely from the same cause, exclusively reading what he did not understand.'

In answer Rickman remarks:—

'I understand that Burnet was much worse than ever before, and it seems that Bristol does not agree with him, nor I think will any part of this planet of ours: would he were departed from it; a wish conceived in charity to *him*.'

And in postscript to a letter of February 1:—

'About George II.: Lamb indeed thinks that you and Coleridge did mischief to the man by your notice and society: but does not therein find fault with the *agents* but with the *patient*. The fool *always* thought himself a wit doubtless; which was a mistake: and after *you noticed him*, an *eminent* wit; which was a *greater* mistake. But only the material was to blame; what had been polish to a firmer substance was dissolution to his flimsy skull.'



Lamb was a keen judge of men.

In March comes Rickman's first letter to Thomas Poole.<sup>1</sup>

‘ *March 23rd, 1803.*

‘ MY DEAR SIR,—I saw your friend Mr. Coleridge on Monday, and learned from him that you were returned to England after having attained the objects of your peregrination very fully. I enclose with this letter a few pages to be bound up with the Popn. Vols., which I believe you have, though for my soul I cannot recollect in what manner, yet I am sure I sent them to somebody who was to send them to you, I think to Chancery Lane. If you have them not, write to enquire thereof your French house.

‘ I understand from Mr. C. that you are working hard at the Poor Laws (that are to be), and I long to know the result of your speculations therein, depending on it that something very practical and therefore useful will be produced by you on that subject. But what will you do with town poor? My wish sends all London miserables to Primrose Hill to grow vegetables for us, out-door work seeming desirable, and the workhouses in town miserable gaols to the inhabitants, and unwholesome for the whole neighbourhood. However, in the winter my ragged colony (that is, redeemed from rags. Am I in Ireland again?) may pursue many other manufactures, which may require most manipulation. For the country poor I desire only a compulsory law that parishes shall provide certain ground for those thought worthy of indulgence, and the rest would soon become worthy.

‘ You see how freely I write my rambling ideas, hoping to receive something valuable in return. You must know I take you for a sort of *cosmopolite*, willing to apply all things to the best purpose for the general benefit of mankind. Looking upon you as a machine of some value in that behalf, I would desire you to consider whether you ought not to spend a year or two in London for your improvement. I know that the country produces or fosters

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, ii. 107.

genius beyond the town, but of knowledge, not so. I think that a man's store must have many chasms in it who is not conversant with the *Catalogue Men* who know something of everything and prate like parrots what they have heard of others. They serve for vehicles of knowledge, though one cannot hold them very high, and I think you would gain much by being in the way of all the modes by which knowledge here approaches to *general knowledge* more or less. How often have I spent my brain in considering and labouring certain points in the country and afterwards found all the world has long since perfectly known and agreed in the result of my lucubrations. It is provoking so to waste one's self, but I think it must happen sometimes in the metropolis as well as in other countries remote. I suppose I have an inclination that you should be here for the pleasure of seeing you sometimes. I am sure, however, that is not my first motive, for I, too, in my degree of affectation at least, chance also to be a cosmopolite, and therefore (among better reasons) your friend and servant.'

The next letter to Southey shows how great was Lamb's attachment to Rickman. During Mary Lamb's attacks of insanity he used to cut himself off from all but the very closest friends.

'*March 30th, 1803.*

' . . . Yesterday evening or rather afternoon, C. Lamb came in somewhat abruptly, and at sitting down, shed some tears. The cause is distressing; inasmuch as his sister is again seized with an unhappy derangement; and has been therefore compelled to go into custody, away from home, but as she has usually recovered in about two or three months, we may hope the best. Poor Lamb recovered himself pretty well towards night, and slept at my house: he dines with me to-day, and then hopes that he will be steadied. He desires me to thank you for the wish you expressed of his spending some time with you in his next vacation. Write to him just to amuse him, he feels dreary,

and would like a letter from any friend. I believe Coleridge is going to chum with him some time for company's sake. . . . Mr. Poole of Stowey has returned from the Continent, as I hear, full of information about the poor of all places. He is a solid thinking man; and his subject of contemplation and enquiry well chosen—very useful and very practicable, as I take it. *Quære*—Whether a Béguinage story may not make an appendix to anything he may think of publishing concerning the poor in general.

'I learnt of this gentleman's return from Coleridge, whom I have seen twice. I am a little annoyed by a habit of *assentation*, which I fancy I perceive in him; and cannot but think that he likes to talk well, rather than to give or receive much information. I understand he is terribly pestered with invitations to go to parties, as a singer does, to amuse the guests by his talent; a hatefull task I should think: I would rather not talk finely, than talk to such a purpose. . . .'

Rickman had heard a rumour that Southey intended visiting London to complete some business with his publishers. In a letter of April 4, asking him to stay, Rickman makes a characteristic comment:—

'I understand Longman and Rees affect to furnish tea and toast once a week to hungry Literati. A blessed society it must be, considering the fashionable sort of conversation among that class of beings; abstraction of all sorts; information of no sort; envy, murmurings and meanness. The day of little men is come!'

Southey's visit occurred in June. It was the first of many occasions when he stayed at Westminster with Rickman. Writing to W. S. Landor in 1809<sup>1</sup> Southey thus describes his welcome:—

'His manners are stoical; they are like the husk of a cocoanut, but his inner nature is like the milk within its kernel. When I go to London I am always his guest.

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Correspondence of R. S.*, iii. 215.



He gives me but half his hand when he welcomes me at the door, but I have his whole heart,—and there is not that thing in the world which he thinks would serve or gratify me that he does not do for me, unless it be something which he thinks I can as well do myself.<sup>1</sup>

I will also quote here Southey's description of another visit in 1806.<sup>1</sup> It is to his friend Danvers.

'So I passed much of my time,—that is at Rickman's, —and usually got to bed at my own right reasonable hour, as soon as the clock struck ten. . . . I was left at perfect liberty, and no difference was made in the domestic arrangements whether I dined there or abroad. John the boy, the happiest of all boys in London, was at my service, to light a fire for me in the little parlour below stairs whenever I chose, to bring me biscuits, cheese, and ale when I was hungry, and to run errands for me whenever I was pleased to call him from running after a butterfly in the garden, picking snails, playing with the cat, or quarrelling with the maid, who is an ogress, and beats him with the fire-shovel.'

It was during this visit in 1803 that Southey, Rickman, and his sister went with the Lambs to Sadlers Wells to see some absurd plays. The excursion is mentioned in a letter from Mary Lamb to Dorothy Wordsworth,<sup>2</sup> who says that while Charles and Miss Rickman laughed the whole time, Southey and Rickman went to sleep. Southey at this time also made an arrangement with Longmans to edit the *Bibliotheca Britannica* on a large scale. Rickman was to do articles on Bacon and others. The scheme, however, fell through.

In July Rickman made his offer to Thomas Poole to supervise the administration of the new Poor Law Act, which was accepted with alacrity. The correspondence

<sup>1</sup> *Selections from the Letters of R. S.*, i. 374.

<sup>2</sup> Published for the first time by Mr. E. V. Lucas, *Works of C. and M. Lamb*, vi. 275.

on the subject during the next few months is quoted by Mrs. Sandford.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, George Burnett had, in a fit of repentance, sent a circular round to his friends (which Southey mentions) announcing his recovery from 'mental distortion,' and asking Rickman for a place under the Government. Rickman's comment to Southey is that he wishes to have nothing to do with him. He cautions Southey against telling him of Poole's prospective employment, because he would rather lose his right hand 'than be accessory again to his [Burnett's] ruining office business with his yawning presence: it was moral turpitude in me to suffer him so long on a similar occasion; he stopped positive work in others to the amount of treble his own negative idleness and unconscionable sloth.'

It is probably to this circular letter of Burnett's, which Southey also mentions, that Lamb alludes in the short note to Rickman dated July 16.

'DEAR RICKMAN,—I enclose you a wonder, a letter from the shades. A dead body wants to return, and be inrolled *inter vivos*. 'Tis a gentle ghost, and in this galvanic age it may have a chance.'<sup>2</sup>

Lamb proceeds to mention that he and Mary are setting out for the Isle of Wight, and on July 27 he and Captain Burney sent a very humorous joint letter from Cowes describing their mode of life.<sup>3</sup>

But soon a fresh scheme was on foot for Burnett's regeneration, into which Southey and Rickman threw themselves with a will. On July 28 Southey announced that Burnett wished to become a naval surgeon, and asked Rickman

<sup>1</sup> *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, ii. 109-113.

<sup>2</sup> In his note on this letter Mr. E. V. Lucas (*Works of C. and M. Lamb*, vi. 278) says: 'I cannot explain the reference to the dead body. . . . I have no real theory to put forward; but it once occurred to me that the letter from the shades was from George Burnett, who had quarrelled with Rickman, and had now possibly appealed to his mercy through Lamb.'

<sup>3</sup> This was published in Ainger's edition of the *Letters*, ii. 253.

to do what he could. 'Poor devil,' he concludes, 'if he should one day cut off a leg *above* the tourniquet by mistake, God forgive me if he should. But what can be done, for he will neither drown nor turn Methodist parson?' Rickman, though unwilling to come into direct communication again with George II., replied that he would give every information. The result was that Burnett shortly appeared in London, where Carlisle (afterwards Sir Anthony), the surgeon, gave him hospital practice free. The even tone of the correspondence of Southey and Rickman was broken by the sad news of the death of the poet's daughter. Southey's letter is very touching.

'August 24, 1803.

'You have probably heard how my home comforts have been cut down to the ground. My little girl was laid by the side of Mrs. Danvers yesterday. She was the little wonder and favourite of the neighbourhood. I loved her better than man ought to love anything of such uncertain existence.

'We are going to Keswick, the best place for poor Edith, she is almost heart-broken. Hers are all chronic feelings, and it will be long before she recovers. As for me suppression is so much my habit and system that a stricture ought to be my natural death. I work double tides, work bodily at packing, talk, eat, as I should do. I am resigned and shall soon be contented—cheerful and even joyous—but happy as I have been to that full extent and with all that full knowledge of my own happiness, that cannot be till I have another child, if it please God to give me another, nor even then unless it shall be such as the one we have lost.  
—God help you, R. S.'

On November 9 news came from Rickman of a jibbing disposition on Burnett's part.

'George II. works on pretty well at the W. [Westminster] Hospital. I have not seen him often; but the



last time he visited me (three days since) he exhibited rebellious symptoms against the navy, and threatened that he would go into the militia as a more genteel situation. I told him that I wished the navy for him, not as a school of manners or society, but as the most likely cure for his disease, which is yet so strong upon him, that (*inter oscitandum*) he held forth for two hours about the action of mind on mind; of the peculiarity of circumstance which has induced his former imbecillity; of the particular attention he ought to pay to a person of so much value as himself; of not embracing any offer of service which might in the event lead him into any dangerous climate, etc., etc. I look upon it, that the army is a service tending to *cause* such a disease as his; and that his longing for it is a mark that he is incurable. If so, he may as well saunter and yawn with a red coat on his back as any other colour.'

On the same day Rickman, obviously being in a trenchant mood, gave his opinion to Poole of the British Government.<sup>1</sup>

'... It would be very pleasant if we could make Englishmen a little better informed than they are. Whether this can be done by *any* Government I know not, but feel uncomfortably certain that such an attempt will never be made by *our* Government, the distinguishing character of which seems to consist in being more backward in proportion to the intellect of many of its subjects than any Government in the world. What think you of the manner of distributing schedules throughout the Kingdom? As it might have been done in the days of Alfred. The institution of the Post Office bestows no facility, because Government have never thought it worth while to establish agents through the country for the purpose of internal regulation and information. I fear we shall never see our Government worthy of our country. They make loans and new taxes; both badly, and that is the sum total of their exploits in the last century.'

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, ii. 113.

A week or two later Rickman received a characteristic letter from George Dyer.

' 21 November 1803.

' DEAR SIR,—I understood, at the time I wrote this letter, that you was not returned : a person by the name of Stow was to call on you, whom I recommended to you as a writer, a man of good character, and who, as a writer, will be able to give a good account of himself to you. I have another case to mention to you ; if you have room for more writers, there is a person of Clifford's Inn, who is of (*sic*) admirably qualified, for quickness, elegance etc. etc. Indeed he is qualified to possess a much higher situation—has himself been in one—and will be so again soon. In the mean time, he is now in *great want* of a situation for a few months, and it would be *great kindness* to find him employment. I am not personally acquainted with him myself. But my laundress is his laundress, and from what I have seen of his writing, and know of his character and situation from Mrs. Devonshire, I know you could not have a more proper person to copy for you. He would I know much rather have the writings to his own rooms to copy ; and that perhaps, might suit you as well. But of this you will judge. If you wish to know more, pray favour me with a line or call, or write to or call on " Mrs. Devonshire, Clifford's Inn." This woman is kind and good to everybody, and keeps his rooms for him, etc. for at present he is not in chambers. The gentleman's name is Marrill. I do not spell his name right ; but that is no matter. If you write to Mrs. Devonshire, or call upon her, you will either hear from, or see him immediately. This vile weather, conspiring with my vile complaint, prevents my calling on you ; but I will the first opportunity.

Yours truly,  
G. DYER.'

This letter was sent by Rickman to Southey on December 4 with a delightful commentary.

' . . . Geo. 1. is relapsed into the full enjoyment of

petty patronage and blind benevolence. He went to Lamb the other day, and put 1/6 into his hand, explaining that he had prevailed on somebody to buy the unfortunate Jno. Woodville at that half price (he Geo. I. not having been desired to have anything to do with the sale of the book). Lamb pocketed the 1/6 with due complacency, and G. D. concluded his exploit with saying, how little he could now do for those he wished to serve! I also send you herewith a recommendatory letter from the said Geo. I. which you may place in your Museum Curiosum: the man thus recommended, turns out to be a spendthrift, whose friends being weary of paying his debts, he is forced to keep close.

'Geo. II. is *unus* and *idem*. He discovered that a sea-life and sea-companions are very unworthy of his high moral views and intellectual enjoyment, and moreover said he, I may be ordered to the W. Indies, and then the yellow fever! Said I, Why are not you to take your chance, as do other men? You talk in the second person, said Geo. II. So his maritime views are abandoned, and he has got some appointment in a militia. For this he wants money, and wrote a begging circular to all he knew; and thinks himself justified in being sulky with all who did not chuse to aid him in his militia scheme. I understood from Carlisle, that he had properly *stuffed* him with surgery for the occasion of some subordinate examination; which passed, Carlisle wished him to expend the rest of the *stuffing* on the Surgeons' Hall Examination, which is final for H.M. Service. George II. pleaded want of cash, £3. This appearing a usefull expence, I sent the needfull to Carlisle, and wrote to B. accordingly; but true to himself he refused the exertion, so that now if promotion in the miserable militia should be offered him, he must again come to town, again study, and be examined at last. I have *private* intelligence that W. T. [Taylor] of Norwich has been very munificent to this poor useless lofty wretch. . . .'

The incorrigible G. B. had taken the opportunity, on



passing his minor examination, of trying to raise loans from all likely persons. Southey was annoyed because Burnett had applied to his friend May for £30, without even knowing him, and Poole, who was a near neighbour of Burnett's in Somerset, received the following letter, which he preserved :—

‘MY DEAR SIR,—I doubt not you will be surprised to receive a letter from one of whom you possibly have not even heard for some years. I have learned from Mr. Rickman the circumstance of your being in town, as also your place of abode. The subject of my present address will perhaps still more excite your wonder. But I will not take up your time by needless apologies, indeed my only excuse for troubling you is that of *necessity*.

‘I have lately procured an appointment as assistant surgeon in a Militia regiment, but the expenses of equipment are far too considerable for my purse, which in truth is exhausted. As the regiment is in barracks, and bedding etc., in addition to regimentals, must be found by the officers, I have calculated, or rather it has been done for me, by the person I am to succeed, that not less than £40 will be required to furnish the perquisites to my entering upon duty. I know not any one among the number of my friends who both can and will advance me such a sum. Indeed I have already made some ineffectual applications. Would such a favour too far exceed the limit of *your* generosity? My means of repayment are these :—My pay will be £2 a week, *exclusive* of the Mess dinner, and as the regiment is in barracks my other expenses may be comparatively trifling. Surely I may save half my pay and devote it to the liquidation of my debt, which I should prefer doing by instalments as £4 or £5 a month. In the course of a twelvemonth at any rate the whole may be discharged.

‘I have moreover a prospect of obtaining some literary job from Phillips when I know what exercises of this sort will be compatible with the above-mentioned situation.

On this source of repayment however, you perceive, I do not rely.

‘I have set my heart on this situation, not only because it seems to be my only present resources for a maintenance but because I feel a confidence that it will rouse me from that joyless torpor into which I have been long sunk. It is of little consequence whether the situation be desirable, absolutely considered, it is enough that it prove good as a *mean*. The enchantment of Pantisocracy threw a gorgeous light over the objects of life, but it soon disappeared and has left me in the darkness of ruin !

‘Allow me to request a speedy answer. I have written not with the expectation but only with the hope that your kindness will oblige.—Your obedient servant,

‘GEO. BURNETT.’

Poole apparently showed this to Rickman, who was very incensed with Burnett for refusing to enter for the final Surgeons’ Hall examination. He forwarded Burnett’s reply, with a note of his own, to Poole.

‘SIR,—The *now* or *never* do not appear to me the only possible alternatives. Should I hereafter determine to look forward to advancement in His Majesty’s service it would perhaps be advisable to take out my diploma. This expense would be considerable and I should have an objection to incurring what I should deem an unnecessary obligation. I thank you however for your good intentions and remain, yours, etc.

‘Was ever before such an animal extant? He lives at 27 William Street if you chuse to give him a drive. J. R.’

Poole seems to have urged Burnett to do as Rickman wished ; whereupon he received the following pompous communication :—

‘SIR,—I have now scarcely a doubt remaining that I

shall be able to accomplish *my own* object. If therefore an examination at Surgeons' Hall should hereafter be thought necessary it will be easy, at any time during the ensuing winter to get leave of absence for a few days, and to come to town for that express purpose. In this case I shall incur no obligation.

' You say that in submitting myself to an examination at the present time I shall oblige Mr. Rickman. Surely in a matter which concerns my own happiness only I have a right to choose. Whether Mr. Rickman *designs* me any future good is a question impossible for me to decide. He has never treated me with sufficient respect and confidence to declare any intentions he might *possibly* have formed respecting me. For this reason only therefore it behoves me not to look to him for any future elevation. I have moreover his positive declaration that I am to expect nothing from him under any condition. Besides I had lately a note from him in which he *trusts* I shall look forward to advancement in the army or navy *only* for my future means of support. Hence, unless there be nothing in words and declarations, I have nothing either to hope or to fear from Rickman. If the promises he has given me be just, I have shown it would be vain to hope, it would be in like manner absurd to fear, because I am too insignificant a personage to be thought worthy even of Mr. Rickman's contempt.

' Your note evidently proceeds on the supposition that my *means* of going into the Militia will fail me. Allow me also to add that your plans, if such they may be called, as well as those of Rickman, rest on the opinion not only of my *present incapacity* but on the assumption likewise of *paulo post future incapacity*. This may be the case; perhaps it is likely it will, still I cannot help thinking that such an inference is not perfectly *logical*. It is now about five years since all enjoyment of life, that deserves the name of enjoyment, has to me been annihilated. This is a tyranny of condition which withers the soul more than can be imagined by those whose situation in life has been



different. Yet I own that myself am chiefly to blame. As soon as I suffered anxiety to make me idle I grew continually worse and worse till from failure of memory I had lost the power of self-improvement. Latterly I have been gradually rising again, and I trust that as soon as I have a definite situation I shall be once more restored to health, to confidence and hope. But I forget that I am trespassing upon your time.—Yours etc.’

Meanwhile Rickman had been showing Poole one of his worst characteristics—a harsh temper. Poole’s friend, Tom Wedgwood, who was an invalid, had twice sent letters addressed to Poole under cover to the Speaker, in spite of one warning. On the second offence Rickman breaks out :—

‘ December 3rd, 1803.

‘ SIR,—I see a letter at the Speaker’s directed to you which I believe came under cover to him by yesterday’s post. I am sorry to believe that the hand-writing is the same as the former letter imperfectly addressed to me, and on the receipt of which, (if my message was not imperfectly delivered) I requested you to write instantly to stop any further such unpleasant occurrence. I request to know of you at what post town this letter was probably put in, that I may enclose it with a note to Mr. Freeling, and desire him to charge it properly. Before these instances I never heard of any person sending under cover to another without permission, and much less to one so much unknown to you and your correspondent as is the Speaker, who in common decency is not to be made a letter carrier. If you can give any explanation which may take away from you any blame in these two instances, I shall be very glad to receive it, when you send me intelligence of the post town of this letter. Both for public and private reasons I shall be very sorry to be compelled to think ill of your delicacy, but I must beg that you do not attempt to see me until you have sent this explanation.’

Poor Poole answered at once :—

‘I have this instant received your letter and I can easily imagine good reasons for the warmth with which it is written, and as easily convince you how little of that warmth ought to light upon me. In the early part of our own correspondence you desired me to address your letters and any papers which I wished to send you under cover to the Speaker, which I of course invariably did. When you were in Hampshire you wrote me a letter advising me to be in town in a few days and at the same time proposed to me to request some friend to take lodgings for me by the time I came up. I wrote and requested lodgings to be taken, but there was not time before it was necessary that I should leave home for me to receive an answer informing me where these lodgings were. I knew my business in town would lead me immediately to you, and I knew too that you would know where I was, and I was not certain that any other friend of mine in town would for some days know this fact. When I came to Bristol I met with Mr. T. Wedgwood. He asked me where a letter would immediately find me in town, as he thought he should be obliged to write to me the next day requesting me to go to the War Office concerning a Volunteer Corps which he was raising in Westmorland. I told him I did not know where I should be, but that Mr. Rickman would know, and that a letter *under cover* to him would certainly find me. I added, and Mr. Rickman’s address you may put *under another cover* to the Speaker. On the very day on which I received that letter, agreeably to your message to me and certainly to my own feelings I expressly informed him that my address was now No. 16 Abingdon Street. How he omitted to attend to this I am at a loss to imagine, unless I may suppose that he had mislaid my letter and forgotten the address which it contained, and yet, wishing to write to me, had repeated his former mistake. I need not say that I will write to him expressly on the subject, so soon as I receive the letter which you say was received

yesterday by the Speaker, and will take care that no repetition of the circumstance occurs.

'You have now the sum of my offence, and will appreciate it as you think proper. I leave it to your discernment to ascertain the want of delicacy in my conduct and to determine how far I was actuated by the desire of saving postage. You do not yet know me, and your letter was written hastily and with unnecessary asperity.'

Rickman's answer to this very fair excuse was grudging, to say the least of it.

'December 5th, 1803.

'MY DEAR SIR,—I send you the Bristol letter which I have released from durance by reading your explanation to the Speaker. He had already sent to No. 16 Abingdon Street to enquire for his new acquaintance, and was to keep the letter till applied for. You do not know how much jealousy this affair of franks necessarily exists under ; I myself remember once to have opened a large packet in Ireland supposed to be a Government despatch, which contained a quantity of smuggled muslin for a maid-servant at the Castle.

'I am sorry that I cannot see your justification in the same light that you put it, since I think that the Bristol conversation with Mr. W. was rather imprudent than blameable, and not worth notice, and that the blame altogether rests on your neglect of not distinctly desiring your friend *not to direct under cover again* when you found that you had brought my name in question in so disagreeable a manner. As to *giving your own direction*, that had no reference to my desire nor to a remedy of the evil complained of.

'I shall not notice this provoking affair any further, there are reasons enough of all sorts why nothing more should be said about it.'

Poole's dignified answer seems to have healed the breach.



‘I cannot describe to you, my dear sir, the pain which the business of franks and letters has given me within the last two or three days. When your harsh letter of Saturday arrived I was extremely ill, and little wanted the assistance of mental irritation to render me incapable of fully and properly stating what I had to say in my defence. I was conscious that I had not swerved from all the feeling of honour and of delicacy which I had been able to collect by the limited correspondence which I had had with the world. I contented myself therefore with stating the simple facts on which by some means or another originated my conduct and left it to your own clear discernment to deduce my justification, or at least with an excuse which would satisfy one whom I thought a familiar friend. And now what was my offence? *It was taking a liberty with you* which though it afterwards by W.’s mistake turned out to be taking a liberty with the Speaker, yet I was utterly unconscious that such would be the event. I took this liberty with you unthinkingly, it was the only result of the kindness and confidence with which you had treated me. I considered (if I considered at all, or rather I felt without thought) that it would be a sort of affectation to have a letter directed to your house without its being under cover to the Speaker, so much had I been in the habit of addressing everything which was to come to your hands under his name, and after all is not this view of the subject very analogous to the common one which is made of franks? When a man gets a frank, does he not make what use of it he pleases? Does he not, (the man of the nicest delicacy) transmit in it the letter of one friend and of another, all perfectly unknown to the member who gives the privilege, and what is the difference? Only that the one is going to the member, the other is coming from him. The accommodation to the person who gives is the same, the effect on the public revenue is the same.

‘As for the subsequent mistakes of the last two letters, I am surprised at them. I am sure from the tenor of my

conversation with Wedgwood he was to direct to you only till I could ascertain my fixed abode in town, and my fixed abode I expressly mentioned to him in my first letter from town, but God forbid I should cast any weight off my shoulders, merited or not, to throw it upon his which can so ill support it. It would make him miserable if he knew what I had suffered on this occasion. He is already pressed down with calamities which are almost too great for human nature to bear. His case, considering his character, is one of those which tempt one to rail against providence, and to doubt the justice and benevolence of God. I know not that I can say more ; perhaps you will think I have already said too much. . . .

‘ I have now but one thing to add which I feel of great importance. It is that you will obtain my pardon from the Speaker, and make every due apology to him for my having in a manner so improper, though certainly not intended, obtruded myself on his notice. With this may all end, and I trust that we shall be better friends, if better could be, than ever.’

Early in 1804 Coleridge came up to London on his way to Malta. He stayed for a short time with Poole at Abingdon Street, and then migrated to Tobin’s house in Barnard’s Inn. Rickman writes to Southey of him and others on February 28.

‘ Poor Coleridge suffers from the absence of steady work ; and as far as I can perceive labours under a disease (which is *not* the *Nostalgia*) from that cause only. Homer talks of persons in grief “ eating up their own hearts ”—*κηρ φιλον εξεδων*—and I think a man of vivid genius, idle in the country, must always do so, to the no small annoyance of himself and co-habitants. This word reminds me of George 2nd, who, having reached his regiment, immediately discovered that it was not worth while to retain a situation “ which he might get any day.” So he returned without having purchased regimentals, and now feeds on money procured by his mendicant circular. *Quaere*, Is

not this *to obtain money on false pretences* : uncourteously termed in the vulgar tongue, *swindling* ? I understand that he thinks, or pretends to think, that he is going with a Polish nobleman to Poland, to take care of some books there. . . . Poole works on pretty well : except that vanity in his employment has overset him more than could have been expected. But the thing will be pretty well done.'

Of Poole's little weakness Rickman says in another letter :—

'His friends are all *invited* to disturb the office that they may see his greatness in it, and he writes long useless letters continually to the Under Secretary of State, or any other great man he can find pretence to address. In the mean time his handwriting and his verbose indirect style equally unfit him for official correspondence.'

During February and March Rickman, who had undertaken to find a ship for Coleridge, received nine letters from that wayward genius. All are not of equal interest, but four are worthy of publication. It will be seen that Coleridge too had some little trouble about a frank ; but Rickman must have refrained from hurting Coleridge's sensibilities, for, in addition to the warm expressions which Coleridge uses, he says in another farewell note that he will think of Rickman wherever he is 'in simple nakedness of heart.'

'Feb. 18, 1804.

'MY DEAR SIR,—You were so kind as to express your intention of gaining some information for me from the gentleman, whom I was so unlucky as to miss meeting. I am not quite certain whether or not I distinctly stated the desiderata :—1. Are there any vessels likely to go to Malta or Sicily ? And when ? Is there a King's ship going, with other, or by itself ? And what chance have I of procuring a passage on board it ? My object is to reach Catania as shortly and inexpensively, as I can—and I *suppose*, that my



only, or best, way is to be landed at Malta, and thence to Syracuse in a (by me unspellable) Spallonieri, which is but six hours voyage. I am at present lodged at Tobin's: wholly disengaged, every day but Friday next, and so I shall keep myself. If you should happen to have even only an hour or two of any of the intervening evenings, before we meet at Tobin's, it would be a pleasure to me to be with you—if you would let me know what time you are even *likely* to be at home, and really have the time quite *ad libitum*. Of course, I should not take the liberty of saying this but that it will not give me the least pain, if your time should be wholly pre-engaged tho' it will give me pleasure if it should be otherwise—and if I did not know enough of you, and hope that you know enough of me, to believe that you will use no sort of ceremony whatsoever; indeed, if I do not hear from you, I shall take it for granted that your time is anticipated. I met G. Burnet this morning. It made my heart feel almost as if it was going to ake when I looked at his eyes—they seemed so thoroughly those of an opium chewer—Heaven be praised, if I am mistaken—but he talked so nervously and stated his plans so very, very helplessly. He is going to Poland with no French in the power of his tongue, and much less, than he himself supposes in the power of his eyes—and as to looking into a Slavonic or German Grammar—why, yes he had been *thinking* of it. —Your's my dear Sir with unfeigned esteem,

‘ S. T. COLERIDGE.

‘ I had an excellent letter yesterday from Southey. I know no instance of greater prospects made in *vigor* of mind, in robustness of understanding, than that made by our friend in the last two or three years.’

‘ *Tuesday Morning* [Feb. 25].

‘ MY DEAR SIR,—I have been day after day about to answer your kind and to me very interesting note. I had called on Mr. Welles, long long before Southey's letter—indeed as early as was necessary. But the general remark

has truth in it, but not as a short [? word omitted] of my original nature, neither does there exist on earth a man more joyous, more various, in my enjoyments of retired life, than I am. I have not been for some years without great objects—and my indolence has almost altogether arisen from my having been too constantly forced off from these objects—but enough! You will forgive me this little escape of feeling—I have felt in your society a feeling of confidence which I never felt in so short an acquaintance, even in my younger days—a feeling arising, no doubt, in great part from the familiarity of your name to my ears, from Lamb and Southey, the two men, whom next to Wordsworth, I love the best in the world. I have said this even to *you* and fearless: indeed, I apprehend that we seldom fear to say anything that we can say with the whole heart. I have sent you some essays written at different times in the *M. Post*—but the best are unfortunately not there, especially the character of Pitt and one on Lord Grenville's *Politus*, which I have never been able to think meanly of, and (shame on me, if I speak with any affected humility) to think meanly of what I have written, almost immediately after the hot fit of composition, is ever a disease of my mind. Those, I suppose that will stand the best chance of interesting you are [on] Mr. Poole's *Defence of Farmers*.

'As soon as my *Volunteer Essays*, and whatever of a *Vindiciae Addingtonianae* I can effect by simple attacks of the antagonists of [that] Minister, are published, they shall be sent to you without fail. If you have heard anything of the ship for Malta, you will be so good as to give me a line from 9 in the morning till 4 o'clock. My best address is, Mr. Coleridge, Courier Office, Strand. After that time No. 7, Barnard's Inn, Holborn. . . .—Believe me, dear Sir, your's very sincerely,

S. T. COLERIDGE.

'I spent yester-evening with Lamb—and shall be there this evening *sans* fail.'

‘Wednesday, March 14, 1804.

‘MY DEAR SIR,—I thank you for your kind note. I received the letter duly. To-morrow I must *dine* with Stuart,<sup>1</sup> as I shall be at his office arranging my own concerns till the very hour of dinner; but I will be with you by a quarter before 7 infallibly, and Mary with Lamb will come with me. . . . The East India House has very politely made me a present thro’ Mr. Charles Lamb, an *Eminent* in the Indian Service, of a hundred or so of pens; and if the H. of Commons would do the same, with a stick or two of wax, in short, any little additament that might be made instrumental in the service of G. Britain by spreading and increasing its literary action upon the world, I should consider as a flattering mark of respect from that Honorable Assembly—and should prize it considerably more than ever a Vote of Thanks and recommendation for a title—unless a good warm salary or estate were the gilt lace to my *Coat of Arms*.—Yours, my dear sir, with affectionate well wishing and sincere esteem,

S. T. COLERIDGE.’

‘7, BARNARD’S INN, TOBIN’S,

‘Monday, March 26, 1804.

‘MY DEAR SIR,—I have crawled hither, and having crawled on to the Strand, to Stuart’s, I must be *carried* back. I have again been miserably ill . . . but I am literally *sick* of thinking, talking, and writing about my own miserable carcase. I have received *orders* from the Captain instantly to take my place for Portsmouth, at the latest to be at Portsmouth by Wednesday early-morning. Accordingly, I have taken my place by the Tuesday’s evening Mail. So much of myself.—As to the *pacquets* the greatest part by far of my suffering arise from my imagination having conjured up very livelily the possibility of your having been placed in an uneasy situation—in an indelicate one for you, and there seemed such a dreadful unappropriateness in your character to the very pretence of such a

<sup>1</sup> Editor of the *Morning Post*.



thing, that I at first and till I received your letter, fretted about it. My dear sir! I am on the point of leaving my friends, children, country—and in a very weak state of health, and that my mind is rather in a sad and somewhat solemn mood, will appear to most people no other than natural. Whether I return is to my own feelings uncertain. If I had stayed, I know that I should have had your friendship, if not in the highest, yet definedly not in the commonplace sense of the word, for I should have appeared to you finally as I am, and of the *sum-total* of that I am not ashamed. Of yourself let me say a few words to you, at a minute, when I am incapable of even thinking a thought not accorded to by my earnest conviction. I had been taught to form a high opinion of you by two men, whom I love and know, and I leave you with a far higher. All your habits both of action and feeling, your whole code of self-government—would to God I could but imitate them as entirely as I approve of them! If I had written, admire them, you ought not to have been disgusted, for approbation accompanied by a sense of the difficulty would make no very bad definition of admiration.—But I am as weak at heart as in body and must have . . . [illegible]. If I see anything in Malta or Sicily likely to interest you, be assured, that all my habits of indolence will not be strong enough to prevent me from communicating them to you. I inclose W. Taylor's letter. It is a very sensible one—every one must have his prepossessions. My coolest retrospects do not furnish me with anything decisive in favour of Mr. Fox, either as a wise or a good man.—God bless you, my dear Sir, I shall ever remain, with affectionate esteem your friend and present well-wisher,

S. T. COLERIDGE.'

On Coleridge's departure Rickman comments thus to Southey :—

' Mar. 26th, 1804.

' I have just heard from Coleridge, that he goes for Portsmouth to-morrow evening. He is very unwell in

body and his mind very depressed, and very excitable by objects to other men scarce visible or feelable. Your prudence will not tell this to his fireside, and the voyage may cure him. If he dies, it will be from a sulky imagination, produced from the general cause of such things; i.e. want of regular work or application: which is great pity. Happening to look into the Lyrical Ballads the other day, there was (under the title "Lines left on Seat under a Yew Tree") an account of somebody so written as to be very evidently a *self-portrait*—Wordsworth's I believe; and the same would not be very un-true of Coleridge. It is certainly to admire Nature in the country too much, when it leads us into final Evil, and self-discontent, so founded as those lines demonstrate to be felt, and *justly* felt, can hardly be denied. Why should not the beauties of Nature be to a grown thinking man, what play hours are at school? Then no harm would be done, and the world would not lose men capable of being the most usefull members of society. Miserable contemplations these!!! Farewell! Let us not cease to *work*, and let imagination work only when it *will* work.'

Two letters of this summer, written to Southey and Poole respectively, show Rickman's opinion of the new Government of Pitt. To Southey:—

' May 4th, 1804.

' . . . Perhaps you will expect that I should say something of the expected new Administration; but it is not out yet; and I rather think Dominus Rex holds out. It is said, that his royal stomach can *digest* one disagreeable morsel, but that Pitt and Fox at once are too much for him.<sup>1</sup> In the mean time this is so compleatly rumour, that I myself do not happen to believe that Fox will be proposed to him at all. I like Fox better than I did, for having joined his ancient foe Pitt on the needfull occasion of ousting such

<sup>1</sup> This was, of course, the case. The King expressly refused to admit Fox.

disgracefull and dangerous fools and Court-favourites as we have now been governed by a long three years. Our nation was approaching vilification at a great rate. I hope that we have seen the last experiment of Court appointment of an Administration. Messrs. Addington, Yorke,<sup>1</sup> and Hobart<sup>2</sup> at London, and Mr. Drake<sup>3</sup> at Munich! *Τρισμέγιστοι Πάντες!* It is a load off the mind, to have been lightened of such pitifull, mean, sneaking, shuffling fellows. They just went out in time to prevent the P. of W. putting in for a large share of power. That virtuous character is not now likely to gain anything by his policy and machinations, which have been incessant lately. If the new Ministry should be, what it may by possibility be, we shall not for some time have to fear this man, even though he should become King.'

To Poole :—

*August 14th, 1804.*

'Your letter has followed me into Sussex where I am trying to be as idle as I can for a week or two. I desire among other things to see the harvest, but the sight is bad and the prospect not very good, for the present weather is unfavourable and the blight you speak of very visible here. I think Billy Pitt will be glad that the Corn Law No. 1 was lost, else he would have heard more than he wished of it at Xmas. That the natural rise of price had actually prevented export would have aided him little with the mob, whose opinion and that of the House of Commons are the only opinions he cares for. Your friend Mr. Giddy published a short pamphlet about the Corn Law as now passed. If there are people of good sense on both sides of the question we have the better chance for improvement in knowledge if not in practice. Indeed that may be further off, the Government of Britain not being yet civilised enough to have advanced beyond temporary considerations and

<sup>1</sup> Charles Yorke, M.P. for Cambridge; then Secretary at War.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Hobart, ex-governor of Madras; Secretary for War and Colonies in Addington's ministry. In 1804 he became Earl of Buckinghamshire.

<sup>3</sup> British envoy at Munich.



imperfect shifts in everything. I am sure our country will be ruined before the benefit and indeed present necessity of official government and comprehensive arrangement of our mighty power and capabilities be enforced. A sleepy Government of Quietism will not be safe again until France by some accident becomes once more badly, that is inefficiently, governed. . . .

‘At present I am much dissipated in mind. Wanting to write something of some half dozen things I write nothing, chiefly because I know not which to begin with, and partly because, though sure of my foundations I have not had time so to establish each particular part as to be fit for examination. I have a great mind to write of many things just as far as I know them and just as I talk of them, and then see if the medley seems worth mending. When I have made up my mind about this you shall know that you may see I am not unwilling, but much more really unable to do well what much wants doing. Be sure I have a keen appetite to methodise, or at least to point out methods for the good management of our noble country in many reforms of our neglected Government of the interior; a waste of half our national energy.’

In May Southey came to London, where he met Captain Burney at Rickman’s. The first letter after his departure contains a passage characteristic of Rickman’s utter disbelief in the honesty of all reformers.

‘Do you think that the verminous Wilberforce really expected to carry through his Slave Trade Bill? <sup>1</sup> Or that he introduced it so late in the Session that he might augment his odour of sanctity and philanthropy etc., among his devotees, and yet the slaves might still be carried to the W. Indies? You will observe that, had he introduced it directly after Xmas, it might ere now have been law. Oh! Smithfield and fiery faggots for that Holy Man! I would willingly exalt him into a martyr.’

<sup>1</sup> It passed its third reading in the Commons on June 27, but was thrown out in the Lords.

The only other news of 1804 was that Burnett really did go to Poland, and earned for himself the nickname of Count Burnetski. He was for nine months a kind of private secretary to Count Zamoyski at his country estate. The result of this voyage was a series of letters to the *London Magazine*, which appeared in 1807 as a book entitled *A View of the Present State of Poland*. The reader of this book, knowing Burnett's character, will be surprised at the sanity and vividness of his writing. It is a most lively description of social life in Poland, which shows that Burnett, in spite of his faults, was truly a man of parts. In October 1805 he returned to England, violently in love with a Polish princess, as Southey told Rickman. This was probably Princess Czartoriska, of whom there is a glowing portrait in the book. For a few years after his return Burnett lived quite an exemplary life of labour. He produced his best known work, *Specimens of English Prose Writers to the End of the Seventeenth Century*, in 1807, and in 1809 a new edition of Milton's prose works. Both of these books show considerable erudition and acuteness of criticism.

During 1805 there are several letters from Rickman to Poole, who had left London, having completed his task. Besides his own extra labours—the secretaryships to two Royal Commissions for constructing the Caledonian Canal and for building roads and bridges in the Highlands—of which I shall say more anon, and a few allusions to politics, the chief subject was one Phillips, who had been employed by Poole as a clerk on the Poor Law business, and who was now in debt. Rickman took up with regard to him the same attitude of stern benevolence that he did to Burnett. He was willing to help him on the condition that no sentimental friends interfered, and that Phillips worked out his own salvation. Ned Phillips was a friend of Lamb, and we know from Lamb's letters that he was disappointed a few years later of some official post in the employment of the Royal Society. But his salvation came in 1814, when he succeeded Rickman as Speaker's Secretary, a post

in which he continued certainly till 1833.<sup>1</sup> Lamb commented on this change of fortune with great joy to Coleridge in a letter of August 13, 1814. This particular passage is only newly discovered, and is printed by Mr. Lucas (*Works of C. and M. Lamb*, vii. 972). Lamb says that 'poor, card-playing Phillips,' who was always hopelessly in debt and down on his luck, can hardly believe his good fortune; so much so that cribbage has lost its interest for him, since he no longer plays for to-morrow's dinners or the price of necessary clothes. The one condition imposed was that he should remain single. 'Here,' says Lamb, 'I smell Rickman,' for Phillips had already made one most unfortunate marriage.

It must have been gratifying to Rickman after his failure with Burnett to find his caustic methods succeed with another ne'er-do-weel.

The first letter to Poole in 1805 is dated May 12.

' . . . I am obliged to you for hunting country materials for my purpose, and that you write with satisfaction at your own. I am sorry to think that I shall have little opportunity of communing with you here about that or anything else, I shall be so painfully busy for the next three weeks. The Caledonian Canal and Scotch Roads both now claim an annual report of me, and the materials of the labour have been expected in vain for three weeks. When they come (tomorrow I hope) I must set to work for ten hours a day for some time. . . .

' I am almost low spirited at thinking of the threatened pressure of labour before me, but suppose that as usual when at it I shall forget that sensation in my eagerness and haste. However you must not say anything of brain work to me till I have accomplished my task. Highland improvement is a good thing, but not for my convenience. . . .

' Southey's *Madoc* has been out some time; a bad book;

<sup>1</sup> He made a return of his salary to the Committee on the Offices of the House of Commons which sat in that year.



I cannot read it through, and as I dislike to tell him so it will be long ere I write to him about it.

'Politics go on badly; Pitt stays in because the King and most of his subjects are afraid of Bonaparte's friend and advocate, C. J. Fox. The Catholics petition tomorrow. Impudent slaves of the Pope to ask for more than Protestant Dissenters have. They will have their one answer I trow.'

Rickman *did* tell Southey. His criticism is contained in a long letter of June 27, in which he says:—

'About Madoc: I am very glad to hear that the world admires it and buys it; though in reading it I confess I cannot discover that it is in any degree so good as your two former poems which I have read lately by way of comparison. . . . The Virgilian Preface very oddly (as I think) sets forth the planting of Christianity in America. It is in the license of poetry to vary circumstances and to insert incidents, but surely not to predicate a result notoriously false. . . . Besides this, I much dislike the sort of nameless division you have adopted, and the want of numbering the lines. . . . Neither do I like the metaphysical kind of preachings produced by your Welshmen for the instruction of savages. . . . There are many sparkling well-finished passages, most of which I had seen before; the rest seems filled up with a very ill-assorted betweenity.'

Southey, it must be said, took this very well; he knew, of course, that Rickman was no judge of poetry.

Poole's next letter is wholly of Phillips.

'4th July, 1805.

'I write chiefly because you write as *pleading* for Phillips. The truth is that neither you nor anybody can be, or can make me, better inclined to serve him than I am; my little pettishness does not interfere with serious calamities. It is, that nothing can be done, not that I am unwilling to do all in my power. Who can serve him, who heedlessly,

or, as you better say, through languor in money matters, travels the road to ruin? Alas! the end of that road is not difficult to reach! I am very glad, however, to know of the debt to you and Dalton; there is not the least occasion that you should mention the intelligence to Phillips, but I wish you would desire Purkis to pay me £16 less than £50 equal £34. In a better posture of his affairs I should have great reason to be angered with Phillips for contracting debts with anybody whom he knows only through me. In such case though one's name is not used the influence is felt, and I am extremely glad not to have that kind of *half* debt (so incurred for me without my knowledge) on my mind. I hope Dalton will lend him no more. I am not surprised that I never knew the extent of Phillips' embarrassment, but I am truly surprised to find now, that *after* he was sensible I was near upon breaking with him at his wife's death for sending her 60 miles in a hearse, and *after* his protestation then given to a common friend that his wife's mother was not to be any kind of expense to him, to find that the woman remained a burden on him to her death, and—incredible!—that he sent her down when dead 60 miles after her daughter! I detested this vulgar old woman because she conveyed to Phillips his wife's desire to be buried at Towcester. If his wife did so desire (which I believe not) the mother should have stifled such a heinous folly uttered in the half delirium of approaching death;—if the wife did *not* so desire, what a horrid fiction, big with ruin to the man who with romantic generosity married a woman distressed, who had been refused to him till that happened. I write myself into a passion thinking of this low-lived creature.

'The sum total of evil (so far as I can collect) is that to do any good to Phillips £200 down and £200 a year is the lowest reasonable computation; this being out of the question, he must cease to consider himself as capable of relief, and I think should enter himself as a marine; for that is the best service for a man who cannot dig or beg, and whose imprudence has made him incurable, and must

keep him so. Prevent Dalton from lending him any more and do not throw away any money in vain yourself.'

On August 21, in a letter to Poole which alludes to the party negotiations of Pitt, who had been having trouble in his Cabinet since the vote of censure on Melville (at which Rickman's 'chief' gave the casting vote), the Secretary grows melancholy about his own labours. He complains that he has been wasting precious hours doing work 'not above the capacity of an attorney's clerk,' and continues :—

'I heartily wish you were not in a mistake about the possibility of my doing any part of my business by proxy. So very small a portion of it could be so done that the attempt is hopeless. Of course I am much discontented at this and since the prorogation have discovered myself to have been most basely and injuriously treated where it was least to be expected, but I am caught in a net from which I do not see the term of my liberation. My vexation at this and other things has been very heavy upon me lately so that I am scarcely fit for anything, and you must accordingly excuse any seeming inattention. Say nothing of this to anyone, nor notice it to myself.'

The chief event of 1805 for Rickman was his marriage, though he would not have his friends consider it so. The lady of his choice was Miss Susannah Postlethwaite of Harting in Sussex. Rickman had intended to marry her for some time, but he speaks of what was, in many senses of the term, a happy marriage in a most obstinately matter-of-fact spirit. In September 1804 he had written to Southey : 'I have some intention of writing into the country for a wife ; but have not quite made up my mind about it' ; and he spent Christmas of that year at Harting, as the addresses on his letters show. The truth was that he was tired of being uncomfortable with 'Aunt Beaumont and a maid,' he was in a permanent and honourable position with a certain income, and his friends, as he told his daughter in



after years, thought the time had come to marry; and so he did, not without misgivings. On October 23, in the course of a letter to Southey, he says: 'You will find here an additional person to welcome you, as I lately imported a wife from the country by way of experiment: I think it will answer: we shall see. I know you are on the side of matrimony.' His announcement of the 'experiment' to Poole is lost, but Poole seems to have replied with congratulations a trifle too sentimental for the sturdy Rickman. I close this chapter with Rickman's reply.

' 30th October 1805.

' I ought to notice your last letter first and very heartily thank you for the good wishes it contains, as does the lady who shares in them. You seem to think I have had various speculations or intentions in the affair of marriage, but it is not so, for I have done it quite in commonplace way, except it may not be common, that the main ingredient determining my choice was not love or gain—but an esteem of very long standing—having been well acquainted with the lady who has consented to migrate hither rather more than a dozen years, and having always perhaps had so much influence over her as to cause her, sensibly or insensibly, to do and to think very much after my own taste. So that when you come to town you may expect to see a person not much unlike myself, abating that portion of violence or eagerness which I would not encourage in petticoats. As to reasons for marrying now and not before, they have chiefly been founded on not having been at all satisfied with my vile employment in the House of Commons, and reckoning myself therefore but a sojourner in this house, which otherwise seemed to ask for a mistress from the day I took possession of it. At last I thought that half the age which David assigns to us permitted not prolonged delay, and I have taken the chance of events, only unwillingly as feeling myself hereby rather more fastened to the House of Commons, because every woman loves to remain in a good house, and the lady in question has im-

ported a country taste for plants and a neat garden which can be indulged here. You perceive by all this that I have nothing to say of marriage *in general*, much a creature of circumstance I should think—and I daresay, knowingly or not—circumstance has chiefly made you think of it. It seems to me a comfortable thing, but I have not so much to say of rapture as you seem to expect—and heartily glad am I of that—having a more permanent possession in a more lasting affection from sources of slower growth and slower decay than that. . . .

‘Public news! God help us—decision against indecision has had the usual success<sup>1</sup> and the mighty coalition of mighty powers *stat Nominis Umbra*! You know I think not the term of our national existence very long, unless we most unexpectedly—I had almost said impossibly—alter our deliberative form of Government. The continental vortex is enlarged and no Government but an absolute Government can oppose absolute power now organised into the machine of a large French army in which temporary derangement causes little defect—whose temporary success ensures future success *ad infinitum*.’

<sup>1</sup> Rickman obviously refers to Ulm, and ignores the effects of Trafalgar.

## CHAPTER V

Family life at Westminster—A stern father—The houses in Palace Yard—Church parade—Late dinner—The Burneys and other friends—Lamb's Wednesday evenings—Driving in the gig—Telford—Rickman's official work.

RICKMAN'S marriage practically closed his chapter of adventures. The few chances and changes of his uneventful life—the choice of a career, the first census, the Irish secretaryship—were over; the great friendship of his life had been firmly wrought; he had won the affection of Lamb, Coleridge, Poole, William Taylor, and the Burneys. It is possible that Westminster, with its 'bag and sword' and all that they implied, would not have kept him long had he remained a bachelor. He wished himself, and his friends wished him, in a more efficient position. But marriage made a permanent income necessary; it was the anchor which held him to his official life; so that, during all that period of our history which was disturbed first by war with France, then by agricultural distress and riots, and finally by the agitation for Parliamentary reform, Rickman, however agitated in mind, however fearful of a revolution more terrible than the French, however infuriated against rabid Whigs and weak Tories, however oppressed by accumulating labours, passed the remainder of his days in the outwardly tranquil enjoyment of a stable and assured position, which he held even till his last breath. I have therefore thought it permissible to depart for a moment from the historical order of events which the sequence of letters forces upon us, and to give a general picture of Rickman's domestic and social life at Westminster between the time of his marriage and the burning of the Houses of Parliament in 1834.



The entirely unromantic marriage was, so far as can be judged from letters, a most successful 'experiment.' Mrs. Rickman was obviously content to be under her husband's thumb and to be patronised as the weaker vessel—domestic happiness would have been otherwise impossible for the masterful Rickman—though no doubt she was not blind to his faults nor averse to leading him with tact. She bore him four children, three girls and a boy, and she died in 1836. The daughter Martha died young in 1810, but Ann and Frances and William, the son, outlived their father by many years. Mrs. Rickman seems to have been favourably received by the friends of her husband's bachelor days, though in November 1810 Lamb wrote in a letter to Hazlitt: 'One or two things have happened . . . which . . . gesture and emphasis might have talked into some importance. Something about Rickman's wife for instance: how tall she is and that she visits prank'd out like a Queen of the May with green streamers—a good-natured woman though, which is as much as you can expect from a friend's wife, whom you got acquainted with as a bachelor.' Here lies the germ of Elia's essay, 'A Bachelor's Complaint.' But both Lamb and Southey seem to have got on very well with Mrs. Rickman; they were ready to entertain her, and to be entertained by her, as they were, with unflinching kindness. Southey always sent some courtly message to her in his letters, and was glad to allow his daughter Bertha to stay more than once with the Rickmans.

It is evident that Rickman was sincerely attached to his children, but he was a formal and severe parent. Some light is thrown upon this side of his character by the MS. reminiscences of his daughter Ann (Mrs. Lefroy). A 'black rattan' was always hanging by the side of the drawing-room chimney, and at least one occasion is recorded of its use. But what is more remarkable in Rickman's family relations is their old-fashioned punctilio. He almost always referred to his daughters as 'Miss A.' and 'Miss Fr.,' and to his son as W. C. R., even in family letters. He was anxious for them to acquire knowledge, which he looked on

as supremely useful for its own sake, and Mrs. Lefroy records the fact that they were accustomed to ask for their dessert in Latin. At the same time, to use her own words, 'Papa looked down on any routine of teaching and discipline, "no one should be pressed to learn—there were plenty of books (folios) in the shelves for Miss Ann to read if she cared to do so." In truth I did not care, and I am very sorry that I had no stiff training. I generally was occupied, seated "square" before a sheet of "Pot paper," copying out some official paper, circular or otherwise, or drawing papers from beneath Papa's hand, just so exactly that he could go on signing paper after paper without any pause, to the number of 500 perhaps.' Rickman was no slave-driver in education, but the following letter will show his views and his character better than anything I can say. It is a letter which Jane Austen would have treasured. Poor sixteen-year-old Ann! It must have caused her bitter tears, but she preserved it nevertheless. Its date is 1823.

'MY DEAR CHILD,—I write to you, lest from what passed yesterday morning you should feel yourself precluded from dancing at Mr. Williamson's tomorrow evening; for although it is necessary in common civility that those who dance in domestic parties should enable themselves to play to others, yet I do not wish your defect, and my opinion of it, to become very public. Dance therefore Tuesday evening, and afterwards practice quadrille musick till you have mastered it. You are not aware (I daresay) that you expressed your own general defect in every thing, when you alledged as an excuse for not being able to play, "that it was very difficult to do so." And pray, what part of knowledge, or what acquirement, is meritorious, unless it is difficult? Because even that kind of knowledge which can be derived from books, and even from conversation, is difficult and even impracticable to those who cannot give their fixed attention to any useful information which is open to them. Much less of course can they hope to attain that dry kind of knowledge which is only such as being



introductory to larger sources of knowledge : I speak of the rudiments and phraseology of languages, which cannot be acquired without willingness and determination of mind in the learner, after the tender age in which authority and compulsion can be exercised is passed away, as in your case.

' You will err, if you suppose what I have said to be a preface to any endeavour to force you for your good to be attentive to your Latin, or to any other useful study ; quite the contrary ; because I believe that your backwardness and inattention is caused by your reliance on me, that I shall be able to make you learn without any labour of your own. But I beg to decline the task of feeding a person who has no appetite, and for the future it will rest entirely with yourself, whether you chuse to remain among the vulgar and the ignorant, or to acquire laboriously the degree of knowledge which becomes your station in life and your relationship to me, whom you very well know to have benefited largely by cultivating the talent which you seem to undervalue.

' Considering that no expence is spared for your gratification, no opportunity of giving you pleasure pretermitted, I am not sure whether morally speaking you have any right to remain in ignorance contrary to the wishes of those who shew you so much favour ; but I do not insist on this, and leave you to your own reflections, and your own resources, always willing to instruct you whenever you shall bend your mind on improvement, but not willing to accompany you as now stationed for about three years upon what is called *Pons Asinorum*, that is, the difficult and disagreeable part of study which is introductory, and where by relying on me instead of yourself, you seem in a fair way to remain always, forgetting exactly as much as you learn for want of attention and strenuous effort. Remember that in future you rely on yourself ; I cannot afford in my hours of relaxation to be distressed by seeing and knowing that  $\frac{1}{10}$  of your gaiety and happiness is obscured by a consciousness of not having done what is required of you for your own benefit. Knowledge I have found to be a good



thing in itself ; and the increasing fashion of education places all young persons virtually in one vast school, where all other rank is superseded by acquirements which thus become necessary not only to him that would rise, but to him who is unwilling to sink from the station in which Providence has placed him. *Radix Doctrinae acerba, fructus dulcis.*

‘ I should here finish this letter, but for one thing which will very soon be of importance in our domestic life. I am not without intentions of a large investigation in etymologies, if I am destined to a long life ; and it would have been in progress before now with your assistance, had you not so unexpectedly failed in acquiring this preliminary knowledge necessary to make you useful as a scribe and assistant in that purpose. But there is another young lady (Miss Fr. Rickman) of whom I ought not [to] despair without fair trial ; and though I give you permission to be as ignorant as you please, you will not I am sure expect that in compliment to your choice of that negative quality, I am to abstain from cultivating her taste for reading, and I hope for knowledge. I mean by this that you ought to prepare yourself for the possible event of her surpassing you in what you do not seem to value, and that it will be very unreasonable hereafter for you ever to interrupt her in her future studies ; and still worse to suffer any sinister feelings to intrude into your mind, if by chance I should succeed with her better than I have with you. I shall not insist further upon this point, because all the consequences will be quite as obvious to your mind upon consideration as to me. Guard yourself and prepare yourself accordingly. I shall attempt Frances the sooner perhaps from having thus committed you to your own care, as to all matters of study : in which however I hope you will yet do well.

‘ I write no further, nor desire any answer to this, which, as all other letters which you receive or write, you are to communicate to your Mama, and on other occasions not to forget to show her due deference. Farewell, my dear child.—Your affec. father,  
J. R.’

It is to be feared that Frances equally failed to become the desired amanuensis. Rickman's hobby for etymology never resulted in any published work, and his loose papers have now been lost. The second daughter came in for her share of fatherly admonition after her marriage, when she and her husband wished to enlarge their vicarage, as he thought, imprudently. The long account of his own life and finances—from which quotation has already been made, and will be made again<sup>1</sup>—was written solely to dissuade her from a course of action which, as it appears from a second letter, turned out exactly as he foretold. An inferior architect was employed who both did the work badly and exceeded the estimate. Rickman generously put his hand in his pocket, but treated his daughter to some very salutary advice, and sketched out a budget to which he desired that she and her husband should adhere to make good the losses. It is plain that the Rickman of the fireside was the same man that Lamb and Southey knew—exceedingly generous, unsparing of his own time in helping, improving, or teaching others, but impatient of carelessness and weakness, judging the capacities of all by the standard of his own strong self.

The Rickmans lived in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster till after the fire of 1834. People of to-day, who are accustomed to the uniform Gothic building designed by Barry, have little idea how different Westminster Palace looked less than a hundred years ago. Westminster Hall is the one visible relic (from the outside) of the past. The rest of the buildings, including the beautiful old St. Stephen's Chapel, were a collection of different styles and periods. Where gazers from excursion steamers now see the Terrace, there were then only roofs of different heights, many back windows, the east end of St. Stephen's, and a garden or two to be seen. New Palace Yard was not the railed-in space, jealously guarded by policemen, that it now is. In front of Westminster Hall was a wide expanse paved with cobble-stones; on each side of it there were

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 20, 21, 24, 77, 125, 127.

quite low houses, some of red brick, some of stone. On the eastern wing of the Yard, now occupied by officials' houses and terminated by the Clock Tower, there was only a portion of the old Exchequer Buildings, which included the famous Star Chamber, at the northern end of which was a water-gate (I must mention—for it is perhaps only fully realised at sunrise after an all-night sitting—that the river at Westminster runs north and south). From 1802, till he became first Clerk Assistant in 1821, Rickman lived in the official house of the Speaker's Secretary, next to the Speaker's house, which stood opposite the east side of Westminster Hall, farther south than the present Speaker's house. 'Our house,' says Mrs. Lefroy, 'was in a small court, entered by two archways; the "Speaker's Archway" we called one, which looked rather new and well stuccoed, and the Speaker's carriage always drove in and out of that, and in doing so, passed under a buttress which belonged to the east side of Westminster Hall. Our front door was in an old stone wall opposite to the Westminster Hall wall with a small bricked up old Gothic arch in it; we were close to the other archway entrance to the court; this was very old and shabby without any architectural merits, and dark to pass through, 60 or 70 feet in length. Close to our door, and closer to this arch, was a narrow door and passage which led into a garden in which were laburnum trees and a lawn: this was Mr. Wilde's garden. The passage passed under some official rooms of the Exchequer, an old wooden building of Queen Elizabeth's time, standing on wooden legs. Mr. Wilde held the office of Keeper of the Exchequer . . . [his house] stood so close to the river Thames that at spring tide there was great pleasure to us children in dipping our fingers down into the water from the sitting room windows. . . .

'How much better our house was than Mr. Wilde's because it was at the beginning of the garden, so we had a bright, pleasant piece of ground, with a terrace and rails to the river, and the roses and other flowers grew luxuriantly, and against the end of Mr. Wilde's house on the terrace there





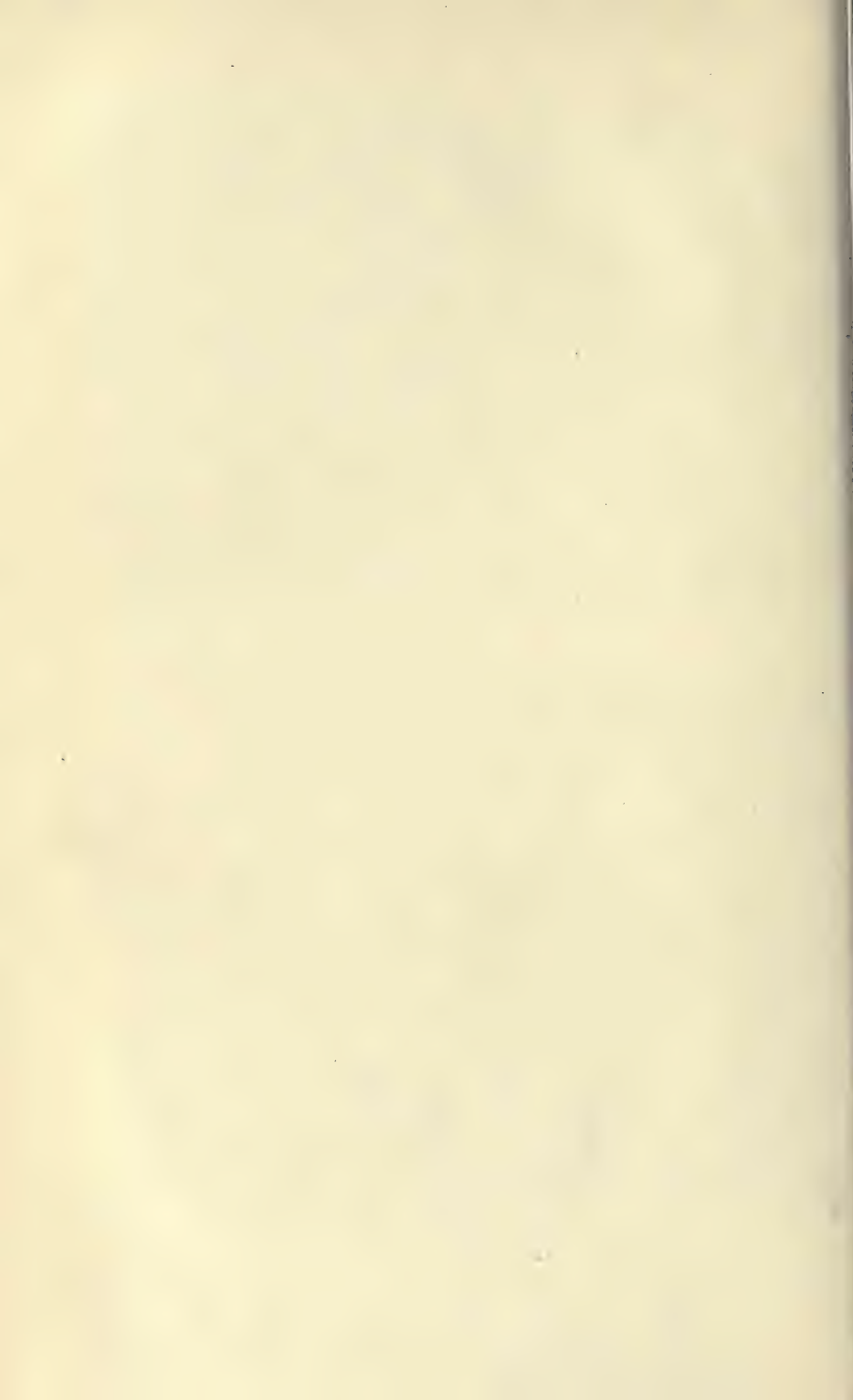
THE ENTRANCE FROM NEW PALACE YARD TO THE  
SPEAKER'S COURT.

*From Smith's "Antiquities of Westminster."*



THE SPEAKER'S COURTYARD FROM THE SOUTH-WEST.  
THE LAMP IS OVER THE DOOR OF THE SPEAKER'S  
SECRETARY'S HOUSE.

*(From Smith's "Antiquities of Westminster.")*









RICKMAN LEAVING THE CLERK ASSISTANT'S HOUSE.  
(From a water-colour sketch made in 1824 by his daughter Ann, afterwards Mrs. Leffroy.)

was a Hamboro' grape; and we had gooseberries too and a Morella cherry besides a very pretty Bird cherry tree . . . and there was a corner and a mound to bury the kittens and canaries in, and a place where we all dug. . . . It was a very smooth lawn, and in the centre a round border, with some shrubs and a hedge of white jasmine. . . . Papa very often in warm weather stretched himself down on the slope of turf that formed the terrace, in the centre of which were four stone steps: he generally went to sleep, and we made daisy chains to dress him up, and looked at his pig-tail, but we never quite made up our minds to pull it.'

An idyllic pleasance indeed, which the officials of to-day may well envy. Rickman, in his own account written to his daughter, gives some details of the interior. The living-rooms were on the first floor. The best of these had three windows looking on the river, and was called the 'sitting-room': here the family lived entirely when alone. The other room was called the 'book-room,' though it was used as a dining-room when guests were present, and was probably the one consecrated to Southey's use. The terms 'drawing-room' and 'dining-room' were purposely avoided, lest they should lead to a style of living incommensurate with income.

When Rickman became first Clerk Assistant he moved into a red-brick house in New Palace Yard, which occupied the whole space between the two archways to the Speaker's Court, the site of the present members' entrance. I reproduce a water-colour sketch made by Mrs. Lefroy in 1831. The front door was in a corner facing west, and on the right stood the old Star Chamber. There was an old watchman there, and also a Speaker's watchman, according to Mrs. Lefroy, who carried a lantern and wore a heavily caped coat. He called out: 'Twelve o'clock and a cloudy night' in the traditional style, for in those days there was only a little oil lamp, trimmed daily by the lamp-lighter. Opposite this house stood the 'King's Arms,' the hotel where the Westminster Committee held their turbulent meetings for Sir Francis Burdett.

Life at Westminster was not dull in those days. When Parliament was sitting Palace Yard was full of bustle with members arriving in their carriages. The Westminster elections were a continuous riot, and there were several special occasions which Mrs. Lefroy records. She saw Queen Caroline driving every day to her trial, and the coronation of George IV., which was celebrated with unexampled splendour. The special stable for the Champion's horse was in front of Rickman's house, and it was near by that the Queen alighted when she tried to force her presence upon the King. 'From above,' says Mrs. Lefroy, 'we could plainly see her and hear her say aloud "Show me to my husband," whereupon the large porter in scarlet slammed the door and locked it—a terrible moment for everybody.' The new Lord Mayor brought by water in his gold barge, and the King's Birthday procession, were annual sights. Other excitements were the Panorama, Miss Linwood's exhibition of needlework, a voyage by water to the Royal Academy at Somerset House, Braham singing and fireworks at Vauxhall, and 'Astley's' across the river. I cannot resist closing this paragraph with Mrs. Lefroy's account of the official church parade in those days. First 'the Speaker and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Abbott, [in] her bright emerald silk *pélisse* trimmed with deep ermine, a muff as large as a pillow with deep cuffs and a long tippet *en suite*. The footman behind her with her prayer-book; Mr. Abbott with pig-tail and broad-brimmed hat, a black swallow-tail coat, tight grey pantaloons and Hessian boots rather short with a tassel in front. Our Father had much the same dress, but his boots varied, and sometimes had a straight rim and no tassel, but there was a pig-tail. Mamma had sable *en suite*, her *pélisse* was "Waterloo blue" silk. . . . Then came Mr. and Mrs. Dyson [the deputy-Clerk and his wife] . . . he in country gentleman costume, the pig-tail, white stockings with short nankeen gaiters, and the short knee breeches of light drab or nankeen, a striped linen waistcoat, white cravat, and a coat of snuff brown cloth. . . . Then Mr. and Mrs. Wilde, she in black and black lace . . . he with



black silk stockings and shorts buckled to his knees, high shoes tied in good bows by his daughter, a large silver headed stick, . . . and a very important pig-tail under his large hat.'

Though he was fond of society, Rickman purposely avoided dinner-party intercourse, as he called it, from considerations of economy. As he told his daughter, he 'attained to this needful economy by an oval dinner table made for six, but capable of holding eight persons well packed, and two dishes of meat and fish, two of vegetables.' When he became Clerk Assistant he invested in a table which would accommodate ten. He was conservative in his tastes. As he remained faithful to the old-fashioned stock and knee-breeches, so he adhered to four o'clock as the hour for dinner. Late dinners found no favour in his sight, as we may gather from a characteristic passage:—

'It has occurred luckily I think in modern society that a late dinner hour infers luncheon which you bestow on morning visitors, and which renders dinner company really injurious to rational intercourse; which is much better attained by your friends having really dined with or without their children at two o'clock, and visiting you at tea-time, their stomachs in a much better state than when distended with a second feed and half a dozen unnecessary glasses of wine, which separate the sexes very ridiculously during the best hours of the evening.'

But Rickman was by no means a hermit, and Mrs. Lefroy has preserved many memories of his friends. There was Captain Burney,<sup>1</sup> whom we have met already, with his wife and daughter, and his friend Colonel Phillips, who was with Captain Cook when he was murdered at Otaheite. Captain Burney was an 'odd fish,' who kept his daughter's wardrobe very limited, and Colonel Phillips always had a 'schism between his waistcoat and his trousers.' Madame d'Arblay was also a friend of the Rickmans, and the second

<sup>1</sup> He accompanied Cook on his second and third voyages, and afterwards wrote *A Chronological Account of the Discoveries in the South Seas*.

daughter was christened after her. The Burneys were a very musical family, and Mrs. Lefroy records a meeting at her father's house of a string quartet. It is a pity that we have no record of Rickman's views on such music. We may imagine that his 'cosmopolite' scorn, which made him regard poetry as a 'toy in manhood,' would have found still more contemptuous phrases for an art that has so little semblance of utility, in Bentham's sense of the word. Another pair of musical friends were Mr. and Mrs. Ayrton. Ayrton was Lamb's 'my friend A—' in the essay 'A Chapter on Ears': Mrs. Lefroy says he was 'rather a fine gentleman, and a joke with the set in rusty waistcoats,' among whom she instances Charles and Mary Lamb. They 'often came upon the scene, he so very thin and black, thread lace stock quite as "Elia" should be, rather the air of a dissenting preacher, underhung, and making a pun in a low voice in a distant corner of the room, where he generally seated himself. His good sister Mary Lamb, a stout, roundabout little body, with a turban, and a layer of snuff on her upper lip. She was so good-natured and had a gruff kind of voice.'

Lamb's famous Wednesday evenings began in 1806, and at them Rickman was a regular guest, he and Captain Burney being two of the players in the game of whist which always began the evening, before the punch came in and tongues were loosened. It is evident Rickman was one of the more serious set of Lamb's friends, whose influence opposed that of the more dissolute Fell, Fenwick, and others, who encouraged Elia's taste for alcohol and wild extravagances. 'There was R.,' said Leigh Hunt in the *Examiner*, 'to represent among us the plumpness of office and the solidity of government'; and Talfourd in his *Final Memorials* called him 'the sturdiest of jovial companions, severe in the discipline of whist as at the Table of the House of Commons.' He was noted for his taste for argument, so much that, writing to Sarah Hazlitt in 1810 of Hazlitt's absence, Mary Lamb said: 'Rickman argues and there is none to oppose him.' Hazlitt, speaking of these evenings







NORTH-WEST VIEW OF WESTMINSTER HALL TAKEN BEFORE THE REMOVAL OF THE COFFEE-HOUSES AND PILLARS BY THOMAS SANDBY, R.A. THE CLERK ASSISTANT'S HOUSE IS THAT ON THE LEFT WITH THE FENCE IN FRONT OF IT.

(From Smith's "Antiquities of Westminster.")

in his essay 'On the Conversation of Authors,' gives a good description of Rickman's conversational propensities.

'There was Rickman, who asserted some incredible matter-of-fact as a likely paradox, and settled all controversies by an *ipse dixit*, a *fiat* of his will, hammering out many a hard theory on the anvil of his brain—the Baron Munchausen of politics and practical philosophy.'

Crabb Robinson,<sup>1</sup> who does not seem to have known Rickman intimately, often mentions his presence at Lamb's, and records an after-dinner visit to his house at Westminster in 1813 with Lamb and Burney. It was there that Lamb made his famous pun on Chatterton's Rowley poems. Rickman showed a manuscript in which there were seventeen kinds of e's all written differently. 'Oh,' said Lamb, 'that must have been modern—written by one of "the mob of gentlemen who write with ease."'

After 1814 Rickman's duties at the House must have kept him away from Lamb's whist-table, and I suspect that he found Lamb an uncomfortable guest to entertain at Westminster. Nevertheless, the friendship did not die out, though it was a little tried when Rickman found it necessary to dismiss first Tom Holcroft—son of Lamb's friend the dramatist—and then Martin Burney from clerkships he had given them. Crabb Robinson records both these incidents, and how upset the Lambs were. On the latter occasion Mary Lamb went to plead in person, and told Robinson that both Mr. and Mrs. Rickman had given her a most kind reception, and that Rickman had walked with her as far as Bishopsgate Street. Martin Burney was not reinstated, but Lamb's Latin letter to Rickman in 1828<sup>2</sup> about Burney's prospects in the profession of law shows that no rancour remained; and in a letter of the following year Rickman tells Southey that Lamb is staying with

<sup>1</sup> In his Diary, a selection from which is published.

<sup>2</sup> Printed in Canon Ainger's last edition of Lamb's Letters, and translated by Mr. E. V. Lucas for his own edition.

him during Mary Lamb's convalescence from one of her periodical attacks.

Rickman was not one who found it necessary to divert his ever active brain with such harmless amusements as sport or theatre-going. Many of the hours which were free from professional work were devoted to the consideration of certain subjects which were his hobbies. Chief among these were etymology and architecture. His researches upon these subjects were sometimes printed for private circulation. Most of his pamphlets and papers are lost, but there is a thin little volume, a copy of which is in the British Museum, entitled *Historical Curiosities relating to St. Margaret's Church, Westminster*, which is a description of the windows, the beadle's staff, and the bas-relief over the altar. It was printed at the private press of an invalid friend of the family. Out of doors, as well as indoors, Rickman made his recreation serve a practical purpose. During the Parliamentary recesses, particularly in the summer, he used to make long tours in order to see places of interest, and the journeys were always minutely recorded in letters home which have been preserved. Unfortunately, the extreme dryness of Rickman's epistolary style to his family makes these letters unsuitable for quotation. His tour in the Netherlands with Southey and Henry Taylor (the author of *Philip van Artevelde*) was the subject of a very long letter to Lord Colchester—the former Speaker Abbot—which has the same literary defect. But the holidays which Rickman most enjoyed were spent in driving tours about England. The first of these took place in 1814, when, foreseeing his elevation to the Table of the House, he bought a horse-chaise and one horse, and drove all over the north of England, seeing the cathedrals and other sights of interest, with a visit to Southey at Keswick by the way. Little Ann, who was then six years old, accompanied her mother and father on this tour, and she was able in later years to give some account of it. The gig, she says, 'was a comfortable large yellow affair on two wheels, with hood to move up and down, and a pro-



jection behind called "the sword case"; in this I made many long journeys with papa and mama, seated between them on a high mahogany box, with stuffed green baize on the top. . . . I think we went about 24 miles a day, resting always on Sunday. . . . Behind our feet was a small long narrow box which held the shoes, the seat box on which papa sat held his toilette, my little baize box hid our Sunday bonnets, and the box under the seat took all the rest. . . . I believe when I was eight years old I had seen every cathedral in England and Wales. . . . There were no railways then, the good old days of fine turnpike roads and fine inns, with old-fashioned landlords, great civility—almost friendship—shown, and the waiter relating the sights of the town, as he brought in the dinner, with perhaps the special fish of the river.' The chaise was soon succeeded by a four-wheeled gig which held all the family, and when Rickman succeeded to the Clerk Assistant's post, he bought two horses. With these the children used to come up and down from Epsom, where Rickman rented a villa. In 1830 he made a special tour to the antiquities round Salisbury, Silchester, Stonehenge, and Abury, an account of which he communicated to the Society of Antiquaries. Also, he made more than one tour in Scotland in company with Telford, the famous engineer, whose acquaintance he gained through his secretaryship to the Commissions for the Caledonian Canal and Highland Roads. Telford and Rickman became fast friends, and worked in complete unanimity, Telford doing the constructive, Rickman the business and diplomatic, parts of the great work. When Telford died in 1834 Rickman edited his autobiography, supplying notes, a preface, and a supplementary account of his personality. It is interesting to notice that Rickman ascribed Telford's early democratic views to the influence of the republican tendencies in the Greek and Latin classics which that remarkable man found time to read while he was only a hard-working young mason. It is doubtful whether the liberal bias of the great writers of antiquity would nowadays seem a

sufficient argument for the retention of compulsory Greek in the eyes of modern reformers.

Having spoken of his diversions, I must give some account of Rickman's work at Westminster. As Speaker's Secretary his duty was to attend the Speaker on all official occasions in 'bag and sword,' to answer letters, and assist the Speaker in searching for precedents or answers to other special questions. The work was tiresome rather than arduous, and we have seen that Rickman often found it very distasteful. But few who have begun an official career ever give it up, and Rickman was no exception. His average salary, produced by fees, was about £300 a year when he entered upon his duties, with the expectation of another £1000 or £1200 in any year of election petitions on the sitting of a new Parliament. Rickman was fortunate in seeing four years of election petitions, out of which he made £3800. In 1801 Telford made a survey of the Highlands, and the result of his report was the appointment of the two Commissions, which I have already mentioned, for constructing the Caledonian Canal and for building roads and bridges in the Highlands. From these joint secretaryships, which he held till 1829, Rickman earned another £400 a year. From 1825 to 1831 he was secretary, at £100 a year, to another Commission for building churches in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. These secretarial posts were no sinecures. A considerable amount of opposition had to be encountered, and there was a great deal of correspondence and balancing of accounts, while the production of the annual report often cut Rickman's hours of sleep down to three hours a night for a week or more. Telford testifies to his unfailing zeal and perseverance; and it is indeed fortunate for Scotland that these two men continued together for so many years. It was in no spirit of self-laudation that Rickman told Southey that the death of either Telford or himself would have been most disastrous, especially for the Caledonian Canal.

When Rickman became second Clerk Assistant, the



salary of that post was £1500, and the salary of Clerk Assistant, to which he succeeded in 1820, was £2500. The character of his work changed entirely upon his translation. The duty of the Clerks at the Table was very much the same then as it is now. They are bound to be in their places whenever the House is sitting—except that the Chief Clerk is absent when the House is in Committee—and they keep a record of the actual business done, which serves as a basis for the Votes and Proceedings and for the Journal which are compiled by the clerks in the Journal Office. They are also the chief authorities upon procedure, and are continually consulted by members throughout a sitting. During a session of Parliament the hours of duty are in general long and wearisome, especially when all-night sittings are frequent, and the ventilation of the old House must have been considerably worse than that of the present one, which is by no means ideal. But besides this ordinary official work, which, it must be remembered, was combined with constant and, at times, overwhelming work upon the population returns and for the two Commissions, Rickman found time to do other signal services for the House of Commons. In 1817 he was very largely responsible for the introduction of a new and more expeditious method of printing the Votes and Proceedings. Before that year the Votes—which record the proceedings of the House in a less elaborate form than the Journal—were not published till three or four days after the transaction of the business which they recorded. Rickman drew up a memorandum which explained the advantages of an improvement, which was chiefly to be made by shortening entries and omitting unnecessary items. His scheme was approved by a committee, and the form which is used to-day is practically the same as that then introduced, its advantage being that the Votes can be published soon enough to reach members early the next morning. The change was not made without considerable labour on the part of the three Clerks at the Table, and it was necessary for Rickman to remain in the office for two



or three hours after the adjournment of the House, till things ran smoothly. In 1818 he indexed the Statutes, having made a new index to Hatsell's *Precedents and Proceedings* the year before, and in 1825 he busied himself over the indexing of the Journals. In 1829 he produced a catalogue of the House of Commons Library. From 1816 to 1839 he was occupied annually with making various returns of local taxation, which were of the highest use for the first Poor Law Act of the reformed Parliament. Not content with all these official labours, Rickman was ever amassing information in economic subjects which he was ready to put at the disposal of a committee or a friend, no matter how much labour it cost him. His letters to Southey nearly all contain answers to questions which had arisen in the course of Southey's literary work, and in many cases four or five closely written folio pages followed almost by a return some query from Keswick. Of the article in the *Quarterly* for April 1818, which was nominally the work of Southey, I shall speak in a later chapter.

Rickman's unprinted pamphlets and papers have all been lost, though a complete list of them is given in the memoir by his son. He published pamphlets on Poor Law amendment and the Poor Law in Ireland in 1832 and 1833 respectively. His only other literary work was to edit Lord Colchester's speeches, delivered when he was Speaker, conveying the thanks of the House to the military commanders between 1807 and 1816. The volume is entitled *Military Thanks*, and is prefaced by a biographical sketch of Lord Colchester.

I hope that I have managed to convey some general idea of Rickman's social and family life, his amusements and his labours, and that this digression will explain, without need of further comment, many allusions in the letters which follow.

## CHAPTER VI

1806-1816

Political letters to Southey and Poole—The *Friend*—The Regency Bill—The *Quarterly Review*—Burnett's death—Coleridge on Lamb's weaknesses—Shelley—Murder of Perceval—Coleridge on 'Remorse'—Rickman's good advice to Southey—Southey Post Laureate—His truculence curbed by Rickman—Waterloo—Rickman the consoler—Economic distress in the country—Rickman on 'Mock Humanity' and the Press.

THE period of eleven years, from 1806 to 1816, was a most momentous one in English history. Home affairs were completely overshadowed by the progress of our armies in the Peninsula and of Napoleon's armies on the Continent. Southey, having twice visited Portugal, was particularly interested in the Peninsular War, and few letters passed between him and Rickman which did not contain some allusion to the campaigns or criticism of the strategy. They paid less attention to Napoleon's victories in Prussia, though they rejoiced over Moscow and Waterloo. To the war with America there is no reference, and what is still more strange is that the economist, Rickman, never remarks upon the continental system or the Orders in Council, though these measures and counter-measures affecting trade were of vital importance to the protagonists in the great struggle. The deaths of Pitt and Fox, the various changes of Government before Perceval's assassination, and the intrigues which centred round the Regency drew comments from Rickman, though his more intimate connection with the Parliamentary debates only began in 1814, when he came as a Clerk to the Table of the House. The subject, perhaps, which most engaged the attention of his leisure hours was the condition of the poor, and the generally

unsatisfactory economic conditions which prevailed in England during the later part of this period. Most of the evils he assigned to the bad administration of the poor rate and want of education, refusing on theoretical grounds to admit that the undoubted excess of manufactured commodities over the demand, due to mechanical inventions, was anything but a sign of prosperity. A great deal of the correspondence with Southey was concerned with Southey's literary work, the discussion of books, and family details (Rickman's children were all born during this time) which are to-day hardly of compelling interest.

In the early part of 1806 Rickman discussed with Southey some of the questions raised in the poet's *Espriella* letters. In particular, the sturdy Rickman objected to any criticism of pugilism, contending that it was a convenient safety-valve for violent passions. In April Southey came to stay at Westminster and make the acquaintance of Mrs. Rickman. However, the chief letters of interest for this year are those from Rickman to Thomas Poole, to whom he paid a short visit in August. The selections which I have made chiefly refer to politics. In January Pitt fell mortally ill, and died. After some negotiations between Grenville, Fox, and the King the Ministry of All the Talents was formed, which included Lord Howick (afterwards Lord Grey) and Lord Henry Petty (afterwards Lord Lansdowne), as first Lord of the Admiralty and Chancellor of the Exchequer respectively. The King's known dislike for Fox caused the wildest political rumours to circulate as to the terms which had been agreed upon, and it may safely be said that Rickman's story in the first letter about the Duke of York is false. When Colonel Wardle caused an inquiry to be made into his conduct in 1809, it was proved that his hands had been entirely clean, however injudicious he had been in allowing the notorious Mrs. Clarke to use illegitimate influence on behalf of her admirers. The five letters to Poole explain themselves for the most part, so that further preamble is unnecessary.



'31st January 1806.

' . . . The political world is very busy, but I remain indifferent and uninterested as usual, thinking evil more radical than to be cured by any men shackled with certain deliberative bodies. Perhaps you do not know in the country what made G. R. agree so soon to receive men he hates so thoroughly and eternally. The Duke of Y. was so terrified at the expectation of impeachment for disposal of commissions in the army gazetted "without purchase" that he prevailed on his father to make his own non-impeachment the only stipulation. The wretch is frightened out of his little wit and is said to have threatened self-murder if Fox came in without that bargain. The P. of W. was understood to be the chief mover against his rascal brother, *ipse peior*. . . .'

The army reform mentioned in the next letter was left to be carried out by Castlereagh in the Portland administration of 1807: the measure passed in 1806 only made further provision for the training of the militia. The 'Duke of York's Council' was the advisory council advocated by Grenville to control the Commander-in-Chief, but the King's opposition to the scheme caused it to be given up. Lord Moira was Master of Ordnance; Alexander Davison was the Government contractor, Nelson's friend, who was convicted in 1808 of charging buyer's commission for goods supplied by himself as merchant; Colonel (afterwards General Sir Herbert) Taylor was then the King's private secretary; Sir Robert Calder was the admiral who was court-martialled and severely reprimanded for his failure to follow up a victory gained off Cape Finisterre in 1805 against the French and Spanish fleets.

'13th March 1806.

'I am glad to learn by yours of the 18th February that your benevolent efforts go on favourably. I do not see much good likely to be done here in the *large way*, and can tell

you nothing at all about the intentions of the new Ministry from whom I do not and did not hope much ; the evil is more radical, I fear, than anything so trifling as *this* or *that* Ministry can cure. I believe the present people cannot at all agree among themselves even about the army reform so much talked of by themselves before they were in. Yet there is good room for easy improvement ; above two and a half millions thrown away at present upon volunteers would maintain about seventy thousand regulars, and the unofficered militia swallows up about three and a half millions which would maintain almost a hundred thousand men. As to the Duke of York's Council I believe it is given up and his promise of amendment accepted. It is sufficient sign of assentation and compromise that he remains at all, and perhaps he may not long, as the Court at Carlton House is against him. The new Ministry have done infinite harm to themselves by suffering the interference of the P. of W. to such an extent. He has been appointed to most of the great offices ; the ordnance is all his own and figures away accordingly ; Lord Moira is a mere Don Quixote and of Alexander Davison (alias in the House of Commons Trotter)—what can be said but that the salary of the Treasurership of the Ordnance pays interest for a sum of money lent by him to Carlton House ! I do not know much of Colonel Taylor ; by a report he is a man of remarkably good abilities especially as a linguist. As to Reform of Parliament Grey <sup>1</sup> has told the applicants "this is not a proper time." Pitt said so once before and for the same reason. I should reckon Reform of Parliament certain ruin to an old shattered edifice very unsafe for its inmates already. By these I do not mean the House of Commons but the people whom it governs ; which is much worse. As for Fox he too has discovered "that this is not a season for the Catholic claims." And all of them have discovered "that Lord Wellesley has been quite right in the East, though the Commerce of the E. I. Company is ruined by his extravagance," chiefly by his

<sup>1</sup> Charles Grey ; he succeeded to the title of Lord Howick in this year.

personal extravagance. 2,300 boats to escort him on the Ganges! I question whether any tea can be bought in China this year. But Lord Wellesley is a friend of Lord Grenville's. I suppose St. Vincent's command will disgust the whole navy. The hoary tyrant now domineers from the Mediterranean to the North Pole. The lately published life of Nelson proves that the action which gave him fame, a title and a pension ought to have given him a halter for his base desertion of Nelson, who fought the whole fleet of the enemy but whose name is *not mentioned* in the despatches of St. Vincent; the omission, I understand, was at the suggestion of Calder, another worthy who has lately escaped hanging (or rather shooting) by the kindness of the late Admiralty in keeping back both charges and evidence. . . .

' Captain Burney is well and just about to produce his second volume. . . .

' P.S. The Army estimates are voted for 2 months only, so that within that time the mountain is to bring forth. Do not let anyone see this letter.'

The impeachment of Lord Melville, the passing of the motion for which in the Commons so distressed Pitt, resulted in his acquittal. The charge was of misapplication of public money when he was treasurer of the navy.

' 30th April 1806.

' I am just escaped from Westminster Hall leaving our people and the House of Lords busy there on Melville's impeachment. Whitbread opened yesterday, making a tolerable exordium but nothing good afterwards: his speech being very much the same thing as an appendix to one of the naval inquiry reports. I suppose somebody has told him that his savage spirit has been rather too manifest in some of his proceedings, so he made a long distinction between persecution and prosecution, showing that this trial was of the latter kind. This tenor of his mind had a ridiculous effect throughout his speech. Now



and then out popped something "with a damned deal of the Brewer in it," and when he became conscious of this he tried to repair it by extravagant encomium on the party aggrieved, so that in the course of his speech you learned that he thought Pitt had been a sun in the political firmament and lamented his death as a deep national loss. After he had talked coarsely of Lord Melville as a man who had affirmed and even written direct falsehoods he paid him for this unnecessary insult by calling him a man of the greatest ability, of most generous spirit, of the loftiest contempt of pecuniary gain, admitting the propriety of the personal attachment of his many friends. Melville seemed to eye him with sour contempt, not at all receiving this kind of expiation as an *amende honorable*. I do not see, after this kind of absurd encomium with what propriety punishment can be urged, surely such a man has sustained more than punishment enough already. Whitbread himself would doubtless suck his blood to the last drop, but I imagine nobody else cares a farthing about him; this is a good symptom that the trial will not be protracted. The accusation of the man made way for the change of administration; without it Melville had now headed the Pittites instead of sitting on a lowly stool at the Lords' Bar. It is curious that the thing now praised in him, the abolition of fees at the Navy office, is the worst thing he ever did in his life. The effect of it has been that the clerks are doubled in number and all business of account in long arrear. You will understand this if you personate for a moment a purser, or even an officer about to receive pay; formerly you said to any junior clerk that you desired the thing to be done, and, a fee of a guinea being understood, the clerk worked for you till the thing was done. At present the same fee is received for the public under the name of a fee fund and the clerks, having no power of thus augmenting their scanty income by fair labour bestowed for applicants at the office, slumber over the desks and duly depart at four in the afternoon. For this *reform* Melville receives applause! And no officer receives his

pay, or purser settles his accounts, without ruinous delay, though he pays as much as before. A curse on all reformers; the few that do good bear no proportion to those that do mischief—a bad breed who might all be hanged with national benefit.

‘Charley Fox eats his former opinions daily, and even ostentatiously, showing himself the worst man but the better minister of a corrupt Government where three people in four must be rogues and three deeds in four bad. To-day we have the new Army Bills debated. I see little to care about in them, except the gradual abolition of the militia which seems intended. It was foolish in Windham to talk of the volunteers as *almost* enemies of their country. There is much offence given by this, and to-day we shall have his apologies under the title of explanation I suppose! He has praised the Duke of Y. egregiously. The Irish Population Bill is dropped, why I know not. I took the trouble to correct it for the muddy-headed man that brought it in, and I believe my observations on his errors and blunders disgusted him. I am glad it is dropped, expecting to see it in better hands next year. . . .’

‘29th June 1806.

‘. . . You may well depict the conduct of the vaunted Whigs. You know how little I expect from any Ministry while a Ministry has so little free will, but I did not expect what I may venture to call an ostentatious dereliction of all the principles produced in his long political life of C. Fox. He takes a manifest pleasure in publishing his own apostacy. He should have died for his fame a little sooner—before Pitt. Now he is likely to die within a fortnight and may have such an epitaph as fair Rosamund. The probable speculation is that at his death the Whigs and the Addingtons go out and Lord Grenville takes the Pittites into partnership. Indeed if Fox lives the same thing may possibly happen. He is said to be imperious and consequently odious in the Cabinet. Windham is unfit for business though not a Whig. Lord St. Vincent and Lord



Howick may be reckoned the Ursa Major and Ursa Minor in partnership at the Admiralty, having nothing remarkable but ill-nature and ill-manners. Lord Henry Petty has been produced too soon, he should have been a recipient (as you call him) ten years longer. He will soon sink entirely at the end of his taxation before he gets through one budget, a percentage on the assessed taxes being manifestly a last resource, and what a resource! Mr. Rose has pretty well expounded his Public Accountant scheme to be a patronage scheme.<sup>1</sup> There is a proverb about setting a thief to catch a thief, but this is sparring without mufflers and will enlighten the public too much. Heretofore there has been an understood caution not to call the mysteries of our Government by coarse names, which must soon destroy its reputation even with the vulgar. . . .

‘ August 31st, 1806.

‘ I found your letter awaiting me here and now thank you for your hearty invitation, which you find I acted upon by the spirit of prophesy, or, in profaner language, of anticipation. I assure you I am exceedingly pleased with the mode and capabilities of your hospitality, and enjoyed myself even more than I expected, though I had before no mean opinion of your fertile county or of its inhabitants. My sister too desires to offer her best thanks for your attention to her.

‘ We had a pleasant journey homewards, the rain being trifling, you sent us one *long expected* scud from Bridgwater to Polsden Hill which made us stop under shelter of a hedge for ten minutes.

‘ We saw Glastonbury Ruins and Wells Cathedral and reached Frome at 6 o’clock. The city of Wells seems to me the most comfortable looking town I have ever seen. I suppose the real or prepared residence of the clergy adds many good houses to it. I was quite in a monastic humour

<sup>1</sup> This refers to a measure passed for consolidating the Boards of Commissioners for auditing Public Accounts. The Commissioners were to have large salaries, the chairman £1500, and his colleagues £1200 each.



before night, being always sufficiently disposed to think with regard of the religious institutions abolished by the rapacity of a detestable tyrant whereby fox-hounds and country squires have since been maintained instead of educated men and respectable women—whereby too, mark me, the evil of the Poor Laws was first established. . . .

‘ Coleridge is in town ; he is said to return poor, and says that on some occasion he was forced to throw over-board his MSS. intended for publication. Perhaps these were MSS. he had intended to write. I do not forget the story of the two quartos ready for publication which he talked of before he commenced traveller. . . . ’

It is perhaps not quite easy to explain Rickman’s objection to Fox’s ‘apostacy,’ though it is to some extent explained in the following letter to Southey. The fact was that Fox loyally continued Pitt’s policy of resistance to Napoleon by means of alliances on the Continent, and recognised that it was not the time for pressing his former views of peace and Parliamentary reform. Rickman had no desire for peace or reform, at any rate, and he does not specify what measures would have commanded his admiration. Perhaps he was secretly longing for a despotism.

‘ Dec. 29, 1806.

‘ . . . Lately we have had good specimen of this most politic indecision : people begin to say that we pay too dearly for the pleasure of having a Government composed of checks, that is, of low clashing interests, which makes our colossal strength ridiculous rather than efficient. What a whimsical negotiation we have had ! Says Geo. III. to Mr. Bonaparte—“ I must have my dear Hanover.” “ Certainly,” says Mr. B., “ because England will always remain my slave while I can always threaten to seize it ; and therefore, you, Mr. King of Prussia, must give me Hanover, that I may give it to England, as an equivalent for some share of her colonies and commerce : and I must also have an open road to this Hanover, that I may be able to take it

without discussions with you about my march thither ; therefore, good Mr. King of Prussia, I must have your East Friesland of you too." This K. of P. (who had made so great a mistake as to suppose he had a good army, for no better reason than because he had never tried it) expressed his rage at being likely to be pillaged of his pillage, earned by so many lies and base condescensions. So he fought, and was conquered in about half an hour, with this appropriate aggravation of his misfortune, that he feared to tell the real cause of the war, so implicated is he in French politics. I am heartily glad at the rupture of the negotiation with us. Who can tell the mischiefs of a peace founded on the adoption of Hanover by C. J. Fox, and to be perpetuated only by condescensions to our mortal enemy, on account of that Hanover ? Soon it would have been obvious to the very Vulgar that the interest of the nation had been sacrificed to the King's private partialities, and that in fact he had delivered us bound into the hand of France ! . . .'

The correspondence between Rickman and Southey during 1807 was mainly occupied with the details of Southey's history of Brazil, on which he was busily engaged. There were one or two allusions to Burnett's improvement, and one letter from Southey contains a strong animadversion on Coleridge's separation from his wife, in which he declared that Coleridge's habits were 'murderous of all domestic comfort.' Rickman replied in much the same spirit, saying that he had heard Coleridge called for brandy in the morning 'without respect of persons.' In this year, too, Southey received a proposal to write for the *Edinburgh Review*, upon which he consulted Rickman, finally refusing the offer. The Ministry of All the Talents, after passing the abolition of the slave trade—to which Rickman does not refer—fell in March, owing to Howick's moving for leave to bring in a bill opening all commissions in the army and navy to Roman Catholics. The King refused his sanction, and required his ministers to give him a written pledge never to urge concessions to Roman Catholics upon him. This they



refused to do, and resigned. The nominal head of the new Government was Portland, but Perceval was the real leader. The following is an extract from a letter to Southey :—

‘ 26 March, 1807.

‘ High hustle we are in here with the change of administration, a great evil ; because now again nobody in office will know his business for three months ; anarchy all.—Who has done this ? The Catholic Bill gave Geo. III. opportunity, which, by the advice of his sage sons, he has not neglected, and now we are to have apparently a short lived administration, and perhaps a new Parliament. The very mob will be let into the secret that without forbearances and courtesies and understandings the English form of supposed government is no govt. at all. I am glad you are agt. the Catholic Military Service Bill. I am so, taking that to be the common-sense side of the question. If one made them M.P.’s and magistrates, it would be said, this is dangerous, chiefly *because* it may introduce them by successive indulgences into the army and navy. But this bill began with the greater mischief, by some infatuation of Grenville and Howick. It would have produced a Roman Cath. Chaplain into every ship of the Navy, in its immediate operation. Would not the ships soon put into Brest ? At least we should look for mutinies out of number, when there was a Holy Legate over the Captain of the ship. . . .’

A letter to Poole expresses very much the same opinion.

‘ 8th April 1807.

‘ . . . As to politics—all bad—I do not see how they can help uncovering the nakedness of our venerable form of Government, and the old lady so treated will I fear look very ridiculous ! If the present Government stands, the King is an absolute monarch ; if they do not stand and the Grenville and Howick people come in again, it seems we are to be plagued with the Catholic question. I have not seen in the newspapers Sheridan’s witticism “ that he had heard



of people running their heads against a stone wall, but never before of their building a stone wall for that purpose." This seems very just of the exit of the late Ministry, and to this hour is a most incomprehensible thing to me, how they could *commence* their meditated indulgence to the wild Irish by admitting their religion into the army and navy. In immediate prospect the Bill permitted an R.C. Priest in every ship of war. Who would be Captain then? If not the R.C. Priest, the ship would be in a mutiny and sail for Brest. I am sick of all politics. To-morrow at this time there will be a fine battle in the House of Commons.<sup>1</sup> A game of skittles in a china shop, a battle for pillage in a shipwreck.

'I have not heard of the opinion of the Prince of Wales' speedy decease, but have no great objection. It is said that the royal Dukes have much to do with present politics. For my part I shall think nothing of any Ministry who permit such a wretch as the Duke of Y. to remain at the head of the army. For this thing, *inter alia*, I despised the late Administration heartily. But one cannot live so near the House of Commons without becoming cynical towards all who figure there. It will not much improve my respect for them if the new men have a majority tomorrow. I hear that the parties are numbered to be within 20 of each other. Even so there must be a good crop of apostacy.

'I conclude this odious subject with my old opinion that with many changes our Government is nearly a nonentity, and a habit of that sort will soon destroy it totally. Shall we live to see an embassy to France to send over somebody to govern us? . . .'

The only other extract for this year is from a letter to Southey giving Rickman's opinion of Perceval. It proves that his estimates of ability were as fallible as those of most partisans. It will be seen that by the time of Perceval's death he had virtually recanted his harsh judgment.

<sup>1</sup> On April 9 there was a debate upon a motion that it was wrong for ministers to constrain themselves by any kind of pledge not to give advice to the Crown on any subject.

‘ May 23, 1807.

‘ . . . Another month peoples the Ho. Commons again, with the same breed doubtless, but more in favour of the present Ministry than was expected even by themselves. They have made a worse administration than was necessary. How could they think of disturbing the dotage of an approved fool, and of making Perceval Chanr. of the Excheqr. ? I suppose he never learned more than the four first rules of arithmetic, and has not practiced one of them for 20 years last past. A polite scholar, and a generous man—but as Chanr. of the Excheqr. !—Alas for England ! ’

The years 1808 and 1809 produced no very striking letters. The birth of Rickman’s daughter Ann was the theme of a humorous letter from Southey on the superiority of girls to boys. Literary matters and the Peninsular War were the chief topics of correspondence : Rickman gave criticisms of a new edition of Southey’s ‘ Cid,’ and of Coleridge’s paper *The Friend*, in which Southey assisted. In 1808 Southey again stayed with Rickman, who returned the visit in the succeeding year. Of the three extracts here given from letters to Southey, the first is to show that Rickman’s view of the power of the House of Commons differed materially from that which he expressed in 1831 and 1832, when the Lords were presenting a stiff front to the passage of the Reform Bill.

‘ June 22, 1808.

‘ . . . Tomorrow Perceval is such a blockhead as to intend to move for a deviation from the usual manner of putting all the grants of the year in one Appropriation Act, and this for *fear* the Lords should throw it out ; as both he and they would both rather do injustice to Palmer than not worship the former opinions of Billy Pitt, the Talker. If Mr. Perceval does this, which is nearly equivalent to moving for an abolition of the power of the Ho. Commons, he will raise a flame which will consume far beyond himself and his associates.’

The next extract refers to the foundation of the *Quarterly Review*, of which Southey became one of the pillars. The scheme of publishing a counterblast to the *Edinburgh Review* was started in 1808, and in a letter to G. C. Bedford Southey had already suggested that Rickman's name should stand on the list of contributors instead of Malthus. 'Rickman,' he said, 'has tenfold his knowledge and abilities. There is no man living equal to Rickman upon the subject of political economy. He, too, is a Crusader as to this war. Malthus will prove a peacemonger.'

But Rickman had some insuperable objection to obtaining notoriety by writing. In spite of his obvious qualifications and his burning interest in many questions which such a review would discuss, he could not bring himself to write for the Press. He therefore wrote :—

'Feb. 6, 1809.

' . . . I write in furious haste, or I would say something about a *Quarterly Review* about which Mr. G. Bedford talked to me the other day ; he says you are concerned to help it, and that you wish me to help, which I do not know that I can do. If you really care about it, I daresay that, interposing you as a shield from notoriety, I could find time for such few books as you might think fit. However I gave the said G. B. little encouragement, not expecting the *Review* likely to be the better for his being suffered to write in it.'

The following extract speaks for itself ; I include it to show that on occasion Rickman could translate the tenderness of his heart into the written word :—

'Aug. 11, 1809.

' . . . See the instability of human affairs ! I, who talked of going to Keswick, am now at Christchurch, summoned to attend the funeral of my good Father, who is to be gathered to his ancestors at Milford . . . tomorrow. His illness was short . . . so that he has died, as desirable,



at a good old age, and without the sting of mortal dissolution. Peace be with him ! A man of milder temper and of more general benignity never lived. In the peacefull qualities of the mind, a better man than his son : in activity, perhaps in utility, inferior. You knew him, and I think held his countenance and his heart to be in happy unison.’

The end of 1809 was notable for the unfortunate Walcheren expedition, the duel between Castlereagh and Canning, and the subsequent collapse of Portland’s Cabinet, which was shortly followed by Portland’s death. After considerable negotiation between the King and various parties, Perceval became Prime Minister, Grenville and Grey having found it impossible to accept office. The year 1810 opened with great public discontent over the Walcheren failure, and excitement was deliberately fomented by Cobbett, Sir Francis Burdett, and other reformers. The famous arrest of Burdett, which caused serious riots, took place in April, but the unrest subsided before Parliament adjourned. The best letter of this year is to Thomas Poole.

‘17th *January* 1810.

‘. . . It seems high time that Parliament should meet, that it may not be supplanted by the rival legislation of linen drapers and shopmen at Guildhall. If their impudence were not dangerous it would afford amusement to think of these fellows bullying the poor old King to receive personally their address, differing only by the insertion of a little insolence from one received by him from the Corporation of London a few days before. I have not read Cobbett<sup>1</sup> for some time, but suppose this must be thought a very patriotic impudence in the Livery by him and his adherents. True it is however that the original weakness and unlucky dissention in the present administration affords dangerous encouragement to the malcontents

<sup>1</sup> Cobbett’s *Weekly Register*.

and I believe it is fit that a prudent lover of his country should rather wish for new faces at the helm. This too seems very likely to happen, and it must be allowed that Lord Grenville and Lord Wellesley with Canning and Huskisson, for a financier a Vansittart, would form a stronger Government than we have now, however short of what might be wished. The M. of Wellesley is said to treat his present colleagues with intolerable hauteur, and I suppose will find it very difficult to drop his so long assumed character of an Eastern despot. This man has abilities, I think, of acting with decision, orator he is not, and of wealth and Parliamentary strength in boroughs has little or nothing. I do not understand why he and his brothers are so much courted. The Opposition say that they can bring 240 votes into the field next week, and I think they will really produce full two thirds of that number, or even 180. This will look much like a new administration, and I suppose if the Rump Whigs get in again they will not ruin themselves by vainly expecting to last for ever, as certainly they expected after Pitt's death, and provoked the nation rather to repose in the present feeble hands. Grenville, I hear, retreats considerably from his designs against the Irish Protestants since he has been elected Chancellor of Oxford, and if he moderates at all I do not see what more he can desire for the Catholics than they have already. I am in hopes that Grey will not come in if the Ministry changes, and I reckon that Whitbread will by choice stand aloof from any possible administration, and this always that he may be able to continue his delectable occupation of finding fault without pointing out a remedy.

'I do not ask whether you read the *Friend* with attention, as I believe I perceive that you occasionally furnish matter for it from your cabinet of letters from C. [Coleridge] when he was in Germany, also I guess you supply part of the *ways and means*, as I understand that Mr. Ward's<sup>1</sup> brother is appointed receiver. When I call and pay for the 20 numbers I will introduce myself to him. Coleridge to be

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Poole's partner.

sure is strangely unlucky in his *Pay-Day* No. 20,<sup>1</sup> which appears entirely unreadable. He should have reserved Mr. Wordsworth's crude didactics for another time if he must needs insert such mountain lore.<sup>2</sup> It seems to me that Wordsworth has neither fun nor common sense in him. He soars far above both, and in my notion makes himself disagreeable and ridiculous accordingly. Of Coleridge however I think the better for his friendly productions, there is writing of a high order thickly interspersed—and putting aside any expectation of method—a fulfilment of his frequent promises; it must be owned that he often develops sentiments which few have elevation enough to cogitate. As usual in his conversation, so in his writing, he does the devil's dirty work—flattery,—without hope of reward—and now we are to expect a grand batch of it, in the promised eulogy of Sir Alexander Ball<sup>3</sup>—a man with whom he parted on the worst terms, on a mutual notorious hatred of each other. To be sure Sir Alexander's family will be astonished at a panegyric from S. T. C. Yet there is room for panegyric, and if C. had begun with saying, "Such is the infirmity of human nature that personally I could not endure this man, yet will I try to do justice to his merit," this had been well. The contrary is not very much unlike falsehood—and partakes of the old failing, flattery without benefit to himself.

'I have asked you about the Poor Laws—and you ask me—the subject is too large for a letter: the outline of any conclusion is, that the poor rate is a great evil, more in the trouble it gives than even in the expense—and I much question whether it does any good at all. As to building and managing workhouses, I look upon it to be a radical and universal absurdity to expect maintenance so cheap or work so productive from persons under coercion

<sup>1</sup> The scheme for subscription to the *Friend* was that payment should be made after the twentieth number.

<sup>2</sup> The article by Wordsworth was 'Reply to a letter by Mathetes.'

<sup>3</sup> Coleridge's *Friend* contains a most fantastic and exaggerated eulogy of Sir A. Ball, the famous admiral and friend of Nelson.



(I do not quite venture the parallel of slave labour) as from those who are struggling to maintain themselves, and to improve their condition in life. I am surprised at myself for having been so long blind in this. I do not mean that I was ever an advocate for workhouses, but I never scouted them as I ought always to have done. True, I never thought much about the matter. I think I could make (or will you say feign?) a splendid representation of what England would have now been uncursed by poor laws. You know I do not hate a thing by halves. Also I begin to suspect that, from the perversity of human nature, there is quite as much village learning—now that it must be *bought*—as there would be if it were given gratis. Has not every village a dame's school and most villages a writing master?'

The correspondence with Southey during this year turned chiefly upon literary matters. The name of George Burnett occurs several times. In February Rickman informed Southey that he had had 'two or three begging letters from that wretch Burnett, but his misery is so entirely self-acquired, his view of benefit from any largess so absurd, and his morals so shattered, that it is not worth while to pay for the right of giving him advice.' In March Burnett stood for the post of assistant librarian at the London Institution, and Rickman wrote a commendation for him, but in May told Southey that he had failed as usual through his own absurdity, and now said that he was starving. Rickman wished him to return to his home at Huntspill. The following passage from a letter to Southey refers to the debate upon November 15, after the final relapse of the King into insanity and blindness, on the question of adjournment for a fortnight. It appears from the list of the minority in *Hansard* that some of the official Opposition, including Tierney, voted with Burdett and the other Radicals.

‘Nov. 19, 1810.

‘. . . What a stupid debate had we the other night! The Ho. Commons seemed to imitate the soap-suds of Lord G. When the King is in health, the whole current of debate rolls upon the theory, that every act of Governmt. is not the King’s but his Ministers’. When the King is ill, the State is in danger from the want of its Chief Magistrate even for a fortnight! Precious and beautiful art of debating! Ponsonby was rather too late in bringing down word from the Ho. Lords that no division was intended, for just before he came, Tierney (the usual watchword of the party) had given word for a division. So they were oddly mixed with the Burdetters. The Prince of Wales affects to be a good boy on this occasion, and this I suppose curbs the Talents a little in their indications.’

The Regency Bill raised very high feelings, the limitation of the Regent’s powers by Act of Parliament being much resented by the Prince of Wales and his friends. But Perceval had the precedent of 1788 before him, and was able to pass the bill as he wished it in February 1811. The Opposition hoped for a change of ministry, and the Whig Lords Grenville and Grey, after private communications with the Prince, drafted a speech for him to deliver to an address from both Houses preliminary to the Regency Bill. This draft displeased the Prince, who adopted another composed by Sheridan. Grey and Grenville thereupon addressed a haughty remonstrance to him, and he decided to keep Perceval in office. This will explain a rapturous letter from Rickman to Southey.

‘3 February 1811.

‘So the Scoundrels (as I told you to expect) are not to be our masters: Settled at Windsor on Saturday—and yesterday the P. W. gave them their congé at Carlton Ho. Furious they are at him—and we may sing, Tantarara!

‘The P. W. was so ignorant of the nature of the Government that he expected *servants*, and they undeceived him

in the speech which Lords Gr. and Gr. wrote for him in answer to the Resolutions. Sheridan swore he was ruined for life, if he insulted Parliament in his first intercourse, and, drunk as he was, wrote the answer finally sent. Whereupon Lords Gr. and Gr. sent in an *humble Remonstrance*, that they could be of no service to His R. H. if he varied in anything from their *advice*. The P. W. then went and tried Lord Holland, but he said he was not able to carry majorities ; then the Prince returned to Gr. and Gr. for a few days, but new experiments of their *humble advice* disgusted him again. Huzza for Old England !

‘ 4 Febr’y.

‘ The Pangs of the M. Chronicle are delicious.

‘ I send a copy. Canting Villain ! ’

In 1810 Southey had undertaken to write a yearly survey of current events for the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, and he was also reviewing for the *Quarterly* a book upon the British army by a Captain Pasley, which he made the peg for a vigorous attack upon the Government generally. In both of these tasks Rickman gave him invaluable assistance, as appears from the correspondence. Not only did he collect and send him all kinds of Parliamentary papers, but also frequent accounts and commentaries written by himself for Southey to remodel : their breezy character may be imagined from his asking Southey to allow for his exasperation in seeing the ‘ villains,’ Burdett and others, so often. Among other matters Rickman discussed the currency question, which attracted considerable attention during 1810 and 1811.

Southey made such good use of Rickman’s material in his review for the *Quarterly* that he scandalised Croker and Gifford, the editor, who refused to print the article without considerable mutilation. Southey was much annoyed, and had thoughts of throwing all the material Rickman had sent him into an anonymous pamphlet. A letter of Rickman’s makes some observations on the incident.



' 11 April 1811.

' I had no idea that the Quarterly Review was ministerial, —that is, in avowed communication with them—and it is entertaining to see Gifford fathering an objection upon them, instead of their using such a man for purposes of that kind. It is amusing to me who know Croker, to imagine him sitting in judgment upon anything you or I may say or think. Not that he is not a sharp fellow; but that it is as impossible as it is against fact that a man of Irish habits, till within about two years, should know anything of English affairs. Their Government anterior to the Union was rather municipal than national, the question of taxation the only one they had to discuss in their Parliament, save when they once appointed the Pr. of Wales Regent. As to external policy they had nothing to do with it, and their ignorance of all things necessary to it is remarkable beyond credulity. The commonest knowledge of geography and history they really seem to have abjured in a body, and by common consent. . . .

' The Speaker has desired to enquire on behalf of some friend of his, what three months are the best for *Laking* in Cumberland; what the best residence from whence to wander occasionally for that purpose, including the consideration of being able to hire a house entire, and fit for residence of a small family. And whether the place recommendable with their views, be also a post town? Answer this question or questions in a separate note, that I may give it him in original.—Yours,  
J. R.

' Of Burnet—I understand he died of a rapid decline, and in an hospital where he had due attention. I knew not why the thing was represented worse than this; and I can tell you, that the over-acted sorrow of C. [Coleridge] has been very mischievous. Would to God he had not come to London.'

Rickman's postscript, referring to George Burnett's

miserable end, was in answer to a passage in a previous letter from Southey, in which he said :—

‘ Your Greek tells me the end of a dismal history. It shocked me the more because I could not but think it was quite as well for the world that he was out of it, and better for himself. Poor fellow, in an evil hour did he become acquainted with me, and yet had he always listened to me he might at this day have been a happy and useful member of society.’

Burnett died early in March in a workhouse infirmary. Crabb Robinson’s diary has an entry for March 6 : ‘ After dinner called on C. Lamb ; heard from him that Geo. Burnett had died wretchedly in a workhouse. Hazlitt and Coleridge were there and seemed sensibly affected by the circumstance ’ ; and a commentary on Rickman’s reference to Coleridge is to be found in the entry for March 8 : ‘ Learnt that Miss Lamb had had a renewal of her attack. H. [Hazlitt] thinks that Burnett’s death occasioned the present relapse. . . . H. thinks that poor Miss L. as well as her brother is injured by Coleridge’s presence in town, and their frequent visits and constant company at home which keep their minds in perpetual fever.’ Coleridge was then in town negotiating about the delivery of a course of lectures, and his extravagant lamentations over a ruined career, for which he was more to blame than Southey, were calculated to upset a less excitable mind than that of Mary Lamb. It is interesting, therefore, to find that he was still on friendly terms with Rickman, and in his confidence with regard to Lamb’s convivial habits, as the following letter from him shows :—

‘ *October 1811.*

‘ DEAR SIR,—On Tuesday next Mr. Morgan<sup>1</sup> and myself will avail ourselves of your kind invitation. I was (and am) in town on the arrival of your letter. I have this moment received it. My business has been to bring about

<sup>1</sup> With whom Coleridge lived at Hammersmith.

a lecture Scheme—the prospectus of which I shall be able to bring with me on Tuesday. Re the subject of dining with Lamb I had a long conversation with him yester-evening—and only blame myself, that having long felt the deepest convictions of the vital importance of his not being visited till after 8 o'clock and then, too, rarely except on his open nights, I should yet have been led to take my friend M. there, at dinner, at his proposal, out of a foolish delicacy in telling him the plain truth, that it must not be done. I am right glad, that something effective is now done—tho' permit me to say to you in confidence, that as long as Hazlitt remains in town I dare not expect any amendment in Lamb's health, unless luckily H. should grow moody and take offence at being desired not to come till 8 o'clock. It is seldom indeed, that I am with Lamb more than once in the week—and when at Hammersmith, most often not once in a fortnight, and yet I see what harm has been done even by me—what then if Hazlitt—as probably he will—is with him 5 evenings in the seven? Were it possible to wean C. L. from the pipe, other things would follow with comparative ease, for till he gets a pipe, I have regularly observed that he is contented with porter—and that the unconquerable appetite for spirit comes in with the tobacco—the oil of which especially in the gluttonous manner in which he *volcanizes* it, acts as an instant poison on his stomach or lungs.—Believe me, dear Sir, yours with affectionate Esteem,

S. T. COLERIDGE.'

During 1812 the correspondence between Southey and Rickman was mainly concerned with the war and the poor laws, on which latter subject Southey, instructed by Rickman, was preparing an article for the *Quarterly*. Another subject was the financial misfortunes of William Taylor of Norwich, who had lost a large sum of money, and wrote to Rickman asking about a vacant post at the Museum. Rickman wrote him a most sympathetic letter, beginning: 'Your letter . . . cuts me to the heart,' but was obliged to announce that the post had already been filled. Perhaps



the most interesting letter of the year is Southey's description of Shelley's sudden departure from Oxford.

*January 6th, 1812. KESWICK.*

' . . . Do you know Shelly the member for Shoreham ? (not the Lewes Member). His eldest son is here under curious circumstances. At Eton he wrote poetry and romances, went to University College, and not liking Oxford society amused himself with studying Hebrew, metaphysics, and Godwin's original quartos. What may become of the Hebrew remains to be seen, what came of the metaphysics was the usual result, followed however by consequences not quite so usual, for the youth happened to have an excellent heart, high moral principles, and enthusiasm enough for a martyr. So he prints half a dozen papers which he entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*, prefixed a short advertisement requesting that any person who felt able would publish a reply to it in the same brief clear and methodical form, folded up one of the pamphlets with this taking title, and directed to Copplestone.<sup>1</sup> Copplestone either tracing the handwriting, or finding out the author thro' the printer (for he printed it at Worthing), sends the argument to the Master of University. He calls for Shelly, and asks if the argument be his, which the philosopher of course avows. Dr. Griffiths then offers to pass it over if he will recant his opinion. A Christian might do that, was his reply, but I cannot. Expulsion of course followed instanter.—Away goes Shelly to a graduate (a friend of Hannah More's) whom he had been zealously helping to raise a subscription for some protegée, to settle this business with him, tells him for what he came, and that the reason was that he was about to leave Oxford having just been expelled for atheism, at which terrific word the man absolutely fainted away !! Poor Shelly a little astonished at finding himself possessed of this sort of basilisk property, used his best endeavours to recover him, lets him out into the garden, and had the farther pleasure of hearing himself addressed, as soon as

<sup>1</sup> The famous tutor of Oriel; afterwards Bishop of Llandaff.

the Evangelist recovered his speech in these charitable words, I pray God, sir, that I may never set eyes on you again.

'Well, the story does not end here. My philosopher, feeling how much better he himself was made by his own philosophy (which in truth he was for he would have been burnt alive for it as willingly as the Evangelical would have burnt him), thought it incumbent upon him to extend the benefits of his saving anti-faith, and after the examples of Mahomet and Taylor the Pagan began with his own family. Of his father and mother there was no hope, but he had a sister at school who was old enough for an example. Accordingly he writes to her upon this pleasant subject. The correspondence is forbidden, but as she loved her brother dearly, means are found of carrying it on thro' a Miss Westbrook, her schoolfellow and esteemed friend. This is discovered at last. Miss W. gets miserably tormented (I believe the school was an Evangelical one)—becomes very unhappy in consequence,—dreads the thoughts of returning to this place of suffering after the holydays, and he to deliver her proposes a journey to Gretna Green,—he 19 she 17. His father has cast him off,—but cannot cut off £6000 a year, tho' he may deprive him of as much more,—her's allow them £200 a year, and here they are. The D. of Norfolk is trying to bring about a reconciliation. I, liking him as you may suppose the better for all this, am in a fair way of convincing him that he may enjoy £6000 a year when it comes to him, with a safe conscience, that tho' things are not as good as they will be at some future time, he has been mistaken as to the way of making them better, and that the difference between my own opinion and his is—that he is 19 and I am 8 and 30. No other harm has been done than the vexation to her from her family, for as for the early marriage I consider that rather a good than an evil, seeing—as far as I have yet seen—that he has chosen well. If you know the father well enough to speak upon such a subject—endeavour to make him understand that a few years will do everything for his son which he ought to wish.

He is got to Pantheism already, and in a week more I shall find him a Berkeleyan, for I have put the Minute Philosopher at his hands. He will get rid of his eccentricity, and he will retain his morals, his integrity and his genius, and unless I am greatly deceived there is every reason to believe he will become an honour to his name and his country. No possible chance have thrown him in the way of a better physician, nor of one who would have taken a more sincere interest in the patient.—God bless you, R. S.’

On May 12 the Prime Minister, Perceval, was assassinated in the lobby of the House by a madman named Bellingham. His death broke up the Government, and after fruitless negotiations with Wellesley on the one hand, and the Grenville party on the other, the Regent entrusted affairs to Lord Liverpool, who formed that Tory administration which lasted fifteen years, always harassed, but never dislodged. Rickman’s letter to Southey upon Perceval’s death is characteristically vigorous.

‘16th May 1812.

‘ . . . What shall I say of the unhappy event which has happened here ? I expected Mr. Perceval to be murdered, but I had expected it from the Burdetts, and other vermin rendered infuriate by the weekly poison they imbibe from 16 Newspapers emulous in violence and mischief. In reading your little book about the rogue Lancaster,<sup>1</sup> I do not find that you discuss the main question, whether the mob can be conveniently taught reading while the liberty of the Press exists as at present. Every one who reads at all reads a Sunday newspaper, not the Bible ; and if any

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Lancaster was a young Quaker who in a pamphlet drew attention to the use he had made in a London school of Dr. Bell’s Madras system of mutual education. A dispute arose between him and Bell, which became, in fact, a dispute between the respective upholders of secular and Church education. Southey took Bell’s side in the *Quarterly*, and published his article in 1811 as ‘The Origin, Nature and Object of the New System of Education.’



man before doubted the efficiency of that prescription, the behaviour of the mob upon Mr. P.'s death, may teach them better knowledge. The assassin's is really a respectable character (doing a strong deed, upon what appeared to him a great injury) compared to those who, when the horrid deed was done, applauded it, and collected here to encourage and rescue the assassin, who was necessarily conveyed away through the Speaker's House to avoid them. At Nottingham the temper was yet worse. Poor Perceval breathed his last on the green table in my Ho. Commons Room, which you may remember :—but I was at home, and saw none of the tragedy. After he was shot he walked on but 6 or 7 steps, as if unconscious, and so much in his usual gait as to be recognised by it through the crowd, when he approached the door of the Ho. Commons, he struck both his hands upon his breast, and fell prostrate. Who the Administration are to be, nobody knows ; I hope the Opposition will not profit by the murder. Their *Mornng. Chron.* distant apologies speak as if consciously of having instigated more mischief than they now think may be convenient to any future Ministry, even to themselves. Rascals ! Who never thought but of their disappointed ambition ; and would overthrow England, if they cannot govern England.

' Lord Wellesley and Canning would probably be the best Administration ; but if the present men can get a Debate in Ho. Commons they mean it is said to recollect the Dionysian policy of not stirring till dragged out by the heels. Poor Perceval used very unfairly to be forced to speak for all the departments of the Government. He has rest from his labours,—and you and I, and *England*, and *Spain*, and *Europe* still have cause to rue his death ! '

The only other letter of interest for 1812 is one from Coleridge.

' *Friday, 17 July 1812.*

' MY DEAR SIR,—I well know, how little time you have to throw away—and Mr. Morgan and myself have therefore

long struggled with the desire of inducing you to dine and spend the evening with us, and one or two intelligent friends at 71, Berner's Street. But Mr. Morgan has requested me to ask you, whether it is in your power or plan of time to mention any day in the next week, or the week after, which you can afford and if there were any chance of Mrs. Rickman and your sister's favouring us, Mrs. Morgan would not only be most happy to see them, but would previously call on Mrs. R. to make a personal invitation.

'In whatever part of Christendom a genuine philosopher in Political Economy shall arise, and establish a system, including the laws and the disturbing forces of that miraculous machine of living Creatures, a Body Politic, he will have been in no small measure indebted to you for authentic and well guarded documents. The Prel. Observv.<sup>1</sup> interested me much in and for themselves—and as grounds or hints for manifold reflections they were at least equally valuable. I am about to put to the press a second volume of *The Friend*, and in all points but one, treated of in the work I seem to myself to be in broad daylight, but in that one, perplexed and darkling and dissatisfied. The subject is the constitution of our Country and the expediency? and (if expedient) the practicability? of an improvement (for Reform is either a misnomer or a lie to all our history) of the House of Commons. A series of weak Ministries; the strange co-existence of little knots and sub-parties in the legislature; the strength of the stronger party to do harm and its weakness to effect, even what they themselves consider, good, upon any *system*; and above all, the rapid increase both of inorganised and of self-organising\* power of action throughout the kingdom; make a deep impression on me as far as the wish for some improvement goes, while the general laxness and almost *flaccidity* of intellectual manhood, the scarcity of true virile productive strong-

\* Wens, Hydatids etc., under the name of Societies, Committees, Associations etc.' [Coleridge's note.]

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* to the census returns for 1811.

sense, renders me despondent even as to the formation in Parliament of any grand *outline*. Where shall we find 500 better?—or if I reply—the very same men would be better if sent into Parliament by better means, then comes the yet harder question—What are the means which, effecting this one end, would not at the same time reduce the Peerage of the Realm to a puppet shew, and the Ministers of the Crown to a Committee of Public Safety reporting to the National Convention? If I have been rightly informed, there never was a House of Commons that contained so large a number of men without estates or known property as the present. Most certainly there never was one so cowardly *plebicular*. I fear, I fear, that it is a hopeless business and will continue so till some fortunate Grant-mind starts up and revolutionises all the present notions concerning the education of both gentry and middle classes. While this remains in statu quo, I expect that good Dr. Bell's Scheme<sup>1</sup> carried into full effect by the higher classes may suggest to a thinking man the image of the Irishman on the bough with his face toward the trunk sawing himself off.—Excuse my garrulity and believe me, my dear sir, your's with affectionate Respect,

S. T. COLERIDGE.'

The first letter of 1813 is from Coleridge, describing the rehearsals of his tragedy 'Remorse.' In 1797 he had written a tragedy, called 'Osorio,' at Sheridan's request, but it had been rejected on the ground of obscurity. In 1812, through the influence of Lord Byron, this play, rewritten under the title of 'Remorse,' was accepted by the Drury Lane Committee. It was produced on January 23, 1813, with great success, and ran for twenty nights. From the receipts Coleridge received £400, besides his profits from the sale of a published edition. It will be seen from the letter that Rickman had offered some judicious criticisms which were accepted. The prologue to which Coleridge refers was by Charles Lamb, while the epilogue was by himself.

<sup>1</sup> See note to p. 160.



'Monday night, 25 January 1813.

'MY DEAR SIR,—Having stayed at home this evening from that persecuting stomach and bowel faintness of mine, and alone too (a delightful feeling now and then, even when those, who are for a few hours absent, are dearly loved), for Morgan, and the women, both parlourtry and kitchentry, are at the theatre, I have time to thank you for your kind gratulation, and still more for your remarks, the greater part of which coincided with my own previous judgments, and the rest produced instant conviction. All were acted upon this morning, except that I could not persuade either actor or manager to give up Isidore's description of Alvar's Cottage and the Dell, and in truth it was somewhat odd, as the world goes, to have the writer pleading strenuously for more and more excisions, and the actor (and in one or two instances the manager) arguing for their retention. Indeed it has been so far from escaping notice, that Arnold<sup>1</sup> and Raymond,<sup>2</sup> I hear, have given me the name of "*The Amenable Author*." But then with Sir Fretful Plagiary in *The Critic* "I will print every word of it." Tho' that is not true either, for many of the omissions have improved the piece no less as a dramatic poem than as an acting tragedy.

'By the bye, that most beastly assassination of Ordonio by the Moor, that lowest depth of the *μισητερον*, was so far from being a deed of mine, that I saw it perpetrated for the first time on Saturday night. I absolutely had the hiss half way out of my lips and retracted it. . . . It is, perhaps, almost the only case in which scenic life is the same as real life. We can as little endure the *imitation* of absolute *baseness*, as we can its reality. It is now altered, or rather reformed to my original purpose and so as to obviate your very just objection to Alhadra's *Sneak-Exit*. After the words "These little ones will crowd around and ask me—Where is our Father? I shall curse thee then!!!!" the cry of rescue "Alvar! Alvar!" and

<sup>1</sup> Manager of Drury Lane.

<sup>2</sup> Stage-manager.

the voice of Valdez, is heard from behind the scenes—and Alhadra with these words—

“ Ha ! a rescue !—and Isidore un-revenged !  
 The deed be mine ! (Stabs Ordonio.)  
 Now take *my* life !  
 ALVAR. Arm of avenging Heaven ! etc.”<sup>1</sup>

‘ I had never once attended the rehearsal of the last act, the bowel-gripping cold from the stage floor and weariness from cutting blocks with a razor having always sent me packing homeward before the conclusion of the fourth. They attempted to justify it by the death of Coriolanus ; but in the first place Shakespear is borne out by the *historical fact*, in the second place the mode of the murder (in Shakespear at least, for I never saw it acted) is quite different ; and lastly, in Morgan’s copy of Shakespear’s works I had some three weeks ago expressed my incapability of explaining the character of Titus Aufidius consistently with the re-creating psychologic (if not omni-, yet) hominiscience of “ *The Myriad-minded* ” Bard. This, my only word in it, puts me in mind of the Prologue, of which I have yet nothing to say in addition to your *remarks*. I am a miserable coward when pain is to be given—I hesitated and hesitated, till (had I even plucked up fortitude enough to have declined it) I had no longer time to substitute a better. It is hard to say which was worse, Prologue or Epilogue, videlicet, *as* Prologue and Epilogue to this particular

<sup>1</sup> The passage ran as follows in the published edition :—

‘ ALHADRA. Those little ones will crowd around and ask me,

Where is our father ? I shall curse thee then !

Wert thou in heaven, my curse should pluck thee thence !

TERESA. He doth repent ! See, see, I kneel to thee !

O let him live ! that aged man, his father——

ALHADRA. Why had he such a son ?

[*Shouts from the distance of, Rescue ! Rescue ! Alvar ! Alvar ! and the voice of Valdez heard.*

Rescue ?—and Isidore’s spirit unavenged ?—

The deed be mine !

[*Suddenly stabs Ordonio.*

Now take my life.

ORDONIO (staggering from the wound). Atonement !

ALVAR. Arm of avenging heaven, etc.’

Tragedy. Only the Prologue, because it was *Pro*, did harm, and the *Epi* no good. However, I shall begin to brave Nemesis by a full joy, if all go off as well to-night as it did on Saturday. With best respects to Mrs. Rickman and to your sister I am, my dear Sir, with unfeigned esteem and regard, your

S. T. COLERIDGE.

‘P.S. If it would amuse Mrs. R., Miss R., or you deem it right to let little Anne see the Pantomime at so early an age, I have half a dozen box tickets at their service for any day of this or the next week, should “The Remorse” run so long. I have not yet read what the *remorseless* critics of the “ano abstersurae Chartae” say of the play, but I know that Hazlitt in the M[orning] C[hronicle] has sneered at my presumptions in entering the Lists with Shakespear’s Hamlet in Teresa’s description of the two brothers: when (so help me the Muses) that passage never once occurred to my conscious recollection, however it may, unknown to myself, have been the working idea within me. But mercy on us! Is there no such thing as two men’s having similar thoughts on similar occasions? To all poetry primæval revelation, as I have sometimes laughingly asserted of good jests, that the very same, mutatis paraphernalibus, are to be found in all languages, and were revealed for the amusement of Noah and his household during their year-long see-saw on the 5 mile deep inundation, which accounts for every phenomenon in geology, only not for that miraculous olive tree, the leaf from which the tame pigeon (pigeon or raven) brought back to the Jewish Ogyges. This woundy long letter will, I fear, remind you of another over copious correspondent—but it is one advantage (postage out of the question) that letters have over conversation, that a man may shut his eyes, but has no ear-lids, and may burn an epistle, when neither to that or to other more economic uses, he would or could employ a talker.’

In 1813 Southey was working on his famous *Life of*



*Nelson*, which was one of the chief subjects of correspondence with Rickman, whom he informed that he was to have £105 for the first edition. Other details mentioned in the letters were the death of George Fricker, Southey's brother-in-law, from consumption, the finding of a man hanged in Coleridge's shirt, and the phenomenon of a horsehair turning into a worm when left in water, by the accretion or growth of animalculæ. This scientific wonder was discussed by the two friends with the keenest interest, and in one letter Rickman devoted two pages to it. After the battle of Vittoria had been fought, Rickman sent Southey a plan of it drawn by himself. Southey's article on the poor appeared in the *Quarterly* for December 1812, and as it was a violent attack upon Malthus, it was after Rickman's own heart. The letter of March 12 gives his comments thereupon. A brief word is necessary upon the other matters mentioned by Rickman. In the new Parliament of 1813 the affairs of the East India Company occupied a great deal of attention. The whole House sat in committee on the subject, and an act was finally passed renewing its charter and confirming its privileges, but with great restrictions. From April 10, 1814, the India trade was thrown open, and the charter made terminable on three years' notice after 1831. A committee was also appointed, on Grattan's motion, to consider the claims of the Roman Catholics, but no bill was passed. The Princess of Wales sent a letter to Parliament at the beginning of March complaining of certain proceedings of the Privy Council. Brougham, who entered Parliament in 1810, was her adviser till her unfortunate attempt to be present at the Coronation in 1821.

' 12 *March* 1813.

' . . . I have read your article on the poor with good satisfaction, for the abundance of wit it contains, and the general truth of its statements and reflections. With some things you know I do not agree, for instance not in your dislike of manufactures to the same degree, especially I

do not find them guilty of increasing the poor. For instance, no county is more purely agricultural than Sussex (as I perfectly know) where 23 persons, parents and children, in 100, receive parish relief : no county more clearly to be referred to the manufacturing character than Lancaster, where the persons relieved by the parish are 7 *in 100*—not a third part of the agricultural poverty. An explanation of this, not in a letter, will perhaps lead you to different views of the poor-rate plan of relief, which in agricultural counties operates as a mode of equalising wages according to the number of mouths in a family : so that the single man receives much less than his labour is worth, the married man much more. I do not approve of this, nor of the poor laws at all ; but it is a view of the matter which in your opinion (more perhaps than in mine) may lessen the amount of their mischief.

‘ Of these things and others we may talk in May ; but I am afraid nothing will settle my mind about your wide education plan,—a great *good*, or a great *evil*, certainly, but which, I am not sure, while the liberty of the Press remains. I believe that more seditious newspapers than Bibles will be in use among your pupils.

‘ We are going on badly in the Ho. Commons,—the contemptible state of the Administration, and the more contemptible state of the Opposition is, taken together, very odd. The Ministry consider nothing forsooth as a Cabinet Question ; that is, they have no opinion collectively. I cannot imagine any thing in history more pitifull than their junction and alliance with the high and mighty mob against the E. India Company, an establishment second only, if second, to the English Government in importance to mankind. As to the Catholics, they will gain little from the Ho. Commons, and nothing from the Lords ; and the issue of the attempt I hope will be to place the Catholic orators in no pleasant situation, and to open the eyes of the rest of the world as to the placable conciliating disposition of the Irish Catholics and rebels.

‘ The Princess of Wales, the most shameless of her sex,

seems determined to push her case into public discussion, and as the days of beheading are past, I suppose we shall in due have an Act of Attainder to send her into durance, or out of England: I care not which. Brougham allows himself to be her adviser *generally*; but not of her late letters. I believe however he wrote the first half of the first letter, which he thus disowns because nobody thinks well of it. It is whimsical to see the natural attraction between B. and Her R. H. The two persons eminently farthest removed from bashfulness in this realm. But I think Jupiter may stultify more extensively than he has done before we are overset. Besides if chance is sometimes against us, it is sometimes for us. Witness the stupid presumption of the Gre Gres<sup>1</sup> a year ago. Their refusal of power which, misdirected as it was in 1806, would have dispirited Russia into peace and subjection when Alexander was wavering, and have altered the whole destiny perhaps of Europe for ages to come. . . .'

Later in the year comes a letter from Rickman which shows how fearless and sensible he was in giving literary advice to Southey, whose revulsion of feeling since his revolutionary ardours led him to use exaggerated language in praise of those who withstood Napoleon, and, as we shall see, in execration of Napoleon himself.

'20 November 1813.<sup>2</sup>

' . . . I have not read any of your annual Regr. very lately, but I remember some of my former mental criticisms upon it, which I know you will have no objection to hear; be they right or wrong, valuable or worthless.

'In the first place, I who yet am no Puritan, can never read sacred epithets applied to human actions without a little shuddering; involuntarily I believe I refer all political

<sup>1</sup> The name Rickman and Southey used to designate the Grenville and Grey party. The conditions they sought to impose upon the Regent in 1812 made it impossible for him to give them office.

<sup>2</sup> In *Selections from the Letters of R. S.*, ii. 337 sq., extracts from this letter and Southey's answer are given.



feelings to morality (high or low as the case may be) never to religion. Thus I would dignify the obstinate resistance of the Spaniards by any epithets denoting the steadfastness of their patriotism, and their heroic suffering; but I do not class this kind of merit, nor any not of Gospel creation, as *holy* or *righteous*: two words which I seem to remember often in your historical style. The founder of our national religion said his Kingdom was not of this world, and his Quaker precepts are utterly incompatible with *national* existence, if literally followed. If you would drop all religious epithets, you may be sure your style will still have strength enough left; and there is another branch of the same question, which may best be prefaced by asking, do you approve of the annual Church fasts and occasional thanksgivings in war time? I confess I do not, thinking either that the God of all may not much prefer one nation of his creatures before another, or that it is impertinent to offer our opinions or wishes to him, in his government of mankind. Here we come to the large question of a particular providence or not. I happen to believe that the Creator constituted the earth and all creatures in it in the best manner for their well being; but that he interferes no farther; careless (so to speak) of the individual, even sometimes of a whole species of animals (the mammoth for example), careful only to insure general results. The old instance of the weather as well as any other may serve to refute the notion of a particular providence. We see often enough that "He maketh the rain to fall on the just and on the unjust." The hitherto prosperity of the devastator of Europe is quite as strong an instance, and if he should now be destroyed particular providence could not be the less disgraced in the mischief he has been suffered to do. I do not mean by this that the disbelief of a particular providence is to be *professed*; but I think it should be the *esoteric* belief of an historian.

'In another view of the same subject, we ought not to forget, that however severe the process of conquest, without it, the world could never have been civilised. The little

petty tribes, created by family connection, would still have wandered over the earth incapable of any acquirement beyond rude subsistence. The consolidation of large kingdoms mainly results from the successes of some conqueror, and we must suffer the end to sanctify the means. In my creed this is universally true in politics; as universally as it is untrue and unallowable in private conduct. Doubtless some conquests have introduced slavery and barbarism, and I mourn such instances; but the Corsican Adventurer (for his own purposes indeed) by loosening all attachment to reigning families and by confounding territorial limits in Germany, has taken the only practicable mode of the resuscitation of that people of mighty name, but for many centuries of feeble means, for want of some such sweeping generalising conqueror as the man they are now roused to resist. Even Italy, and perhaps Switzerland, has profited in this way, and, the renovation of Europe accomplished, we shall have to own that no less severe a visitation could have sufficiently loosened ancient privileges and prejudices. This you see is a further argument against any particular providence in this or that battle or accident favourable to Spain or England; and, though I allow Bonaparte no more merit in the final good which he may do, than Judas Iscariot on another occasion, yet I would have the tone of a serious history restrained by such considerations, and when holding out for worthy imitation the deeds of patriots and of heroes.

'You know very well how far I am from the sickly liberality, which seems likely to blight every noble motive of action, and which has grown to such a pitch, that it is almost forgotten of ancient selfishness, that all the things which we valued most in the world have sprung and must for ever spring from that aboriginal but disgraced quality. A book which should settle the just points between selfishness and liberality would be a grand performance, though I suppose the author would be abused for a Mandevilian.

'Thus much have I scribbled in a winter evening.  
*Fruere ut libet. . .*'

Southey replied on November 30.

‘Thank you for your letter. It cautions me well against the indiscreet use of words which ought to be reserved for great occasions, and I do not discover that we differ in opinion when we understand each other. I see as you do, and surely have often expressed, that the whirlwind of the Revolution was necessary to clear away the pestilence of the old governments, and think as you do that in the moral government of the world and of the universe general results are those which are contemplated, and that to these, individuals, species, and nations will sometimes be sacrificed. The belief that Good is stronger than Evil sets all right upon the great scale, and all is set right for individuals also in a future state. Certainly I do not believe that God can prefer one nation to another. But in cases like the old Dutch war against Spain, and the present struggle against Bonaparte, the struggle is between good and evil, and the contest is actually what the Crusades were only erroneously called—a Holy War. However I shall be sparing of such epithets.’

At the end of the year the Poet Laureateship fell vacant. The post was offered to Sir Walter Scott, who retired in favour of Southey. The new Laureate’s first work was to write an ode upon the war, which he sent to Rickman in manuscript with the following letter:—

‘December 8, 1813.

‘Verses which are to be printed have a certain flavour in manuscript analogous to the sweetness of stolen water, and the pleasantness of bread eaten in secret,—a pleasantness, by the bye, which I do not understand, having no taste for a crust in a corner, nor for dry bread at any time. Mrs. R. may peradventure like to cast her eye over the Laureate’s first performance. I send it therefore unwafered. When she has read it, consign it to the twopenny post, that it may find its way to the Row.<sup>1</sup> . . .

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* Paternoster Row, where Longmans’ office was and is.



‘ If you ask me why I call it *Carmen Annuum*—not in imitation of *Carmen Seculare* (which however justifies the title) but because I can hit upon no suitable English appellation. An Ode it is not, because of its length : so at least I think, and *Carmen* is a general word.

‘ My next appearance in my new character will be with a series of Inscriptions upon the event of the peninsular war, as far as the British Army has been concerned.—God bless you,  
R. S.’

Southey’s poem, however, seemed to the judicious Rickman too truculent for an official effusion, and he replied with a long letter of general criticism from which I take these extracts :—

‘ . . . I am not sure you do not forget that *office* imposes upon a man many restraints besides the one-day Bag and Sword at Carlton House. Put the case, that through the mediation of Austria we make peace with Bonaparte, and he becomes in course a *friendly Power*—can you stay in office, this *Carmen* remaining on record ? I would say more with this view of the matter, did I not suppose that before the *Carmen* is publicly seen, Mr. Croker will see it, and he can judge the degree of official reserve necessary. . . . In reading this I see that the stanzas which mention France and the French Emperor in so truculent a manner are not so many but that the *Carmen* might be long enough without them, if by Mr. Croker’s judgment to be in prudence omitted. I confess I should be very sorry that you should print without his approbation of them ; for as Laureat *official*, I think you should . . . identify yourself very much with the government. Be as ample in praise as you please, but do not treat an enemy as though never to become a friend. If you did not know me for as desperate an antigallican as yourself (I wish the French one neck and a hatchet in my hand) I should not have spoken so freely of official reserve towards them : but I know you will take all in good part.

‘ I assure you I only dread your being superseded in your office, whenever a small sacrifice may in the chance of

events be to be made to Bonaparte and the vile Whigs. . . . As to the Whigs, it will be said, whatever they deserve, yet not rebuke from your hand, who apparently received favour <sup>1</sup> from their Administration. I grant you it was only *apparent*, but as you could not give the explanation, you could not repel the charge of ingratitude, which will be made if you lacerate them too cruelly.'

This letter was followed by another enclosing some proofs.

' 15 *December* 1813.

' Too late for post time to-day, was brought a proof of the *Carm. Ann.*, about half of it. I inclose it; also a letter from your brother.

' I don't think that I have anything to add to what I said before. . . .

' If you choose to call Bonaparte a tyrant, you will say Hiero was called so: but the assassination finale you must not venture on. Indeed the stories you bring in aid of your exhortation, are not well authenticated. Toussaint's and Capt. Wright's tortures I *believe*, but do not know. Pichegru's murder I do *not* believe in any further than that he murdered himself. The D. of Enghien you must remember chose to station himself close to France to foment disturbances; and as to all Governments, good or bad, the right of self-preservation indefeasibly pertains, I am not sure that he was ill-used. I know I would willingly do the same favour by torchlight or day-light could he be seized in Ireland and brought here for that good purpose. Palm and Hofer I grant you were bad and notoriously bad affairs.'

The good advice of Rickman and Croker was taken by Southey, who cut out the dangerous passages, and published the poem next year as 'An Ode written during the Negotiations with Bonaparte in January, 1814.'

During 1814 and 1815 the correspondence between Rickman and Southey turned chiefly upon political affairs and

<sup>1</sup> A small pension was given to Southey in 1806.

Southey's official poems. Most of the letters are from Southey, and there is one congratulating Rickman on his appointment to the Table. 'You used,' he says, 'to notice a sort of entailed longevity belonging to parliamentary offices: may you keep up the custom, and live to a better old age than your predecessor.' The joke about 'entailed longevity' is still a good one in the Civil Service, though a statutory age limit has robbed it of some of its point. It was in the autumn of 1814 that Rickman made his first driving tour. For these years I only give two letters, the first from Southey to Rickman on Napoleon's abdication, the second from Rickman to Poole.

' April 11, 1814.

' MY DEAR R.,—So it is over, dating from the destruction of the Bastille, a tragedy of five and twenty years! During two and twenty of which I have borne a full share of interest in all the events.

' I am glad that the French have given fresh proofs of their baseness; this gratifies my English feeling. And I am satisfied with Buonaparte's fate, for this upon consideration gratifies my vindictive principle. Three likely terminations had suggested themselves to me: that he would find enough followers to *die game*; that he would kill himself; or that he would abscond *and be lost*. I did not suspect that he—even he—was mean enough to be pensioned off, and retire to hear the execrations of all Europe, to read his own history, and taste of damnation drop by drop, before the Devil drenches him with it from a cup like the widow's cruise. (1 Kings, 16.)

' If I knew Whitbread, I should like to give him joy upon this occasion.'

The letter to Poole mentions the corn laws. Owing to the fluctuations in the price of corn during the war, a select committee of the House of Commons was appointed to consider the question in 1813. This committee reported in favour of a sliding scale, and a bill became law in 1815 which prohibited the importation of foreign corn, so long as



wheat did not rise above eighty shillings a quarter. When that price was exceeded, it might be imported free. To understand Rickman's strictures on the mob, it must be remembered that the Luddite riots had already occurred, and that the London mob grew very fractious over the Burdett case in 1810 and over the contested Westminster elections.

'16th February 1815.

'MY DEAR SIR,—I have received yours and am glad your desires as to the property tax and corn laws are likely to be effected. I have not the least objection to abolishing the one, or amending the other, but as I happen to think we live under a Government too much influenced by the mob (the ignorant vulgar) I go over to the other side always, by way of helping the vessel against such shifting ballast. For fear of this same mob I suppose we are to legislate *rapidly* as to the corn laws lest we should be overwhelmed with ignorant petitions as last session. This is our doing or not doing or undoing anything—*Vox Populi, Vox Dei*—the mob is to be chiefly regarded. About the endeavour to enlighten this said tyrannical mob, I shall not pretend to argue, as it is one of the few subjects upon which I have not made up my mind. I suppose that whatever sum total of knowledge is to be produced in society, it will still be convenient that the wisest should legislate for the rest. My feeling is against the modern rage for education, because it savours of the mock philanthropy and liberality which during my time have been the curse of Europe, and the tide is not yet turned. Scoundrels are to be well lodged and well fed at the expense of others while in prison, and criminals are to be pitied and protected instead of the society they injure. Debtors, poor men! are not to pay their debts. . . .'

The first letter for 1816 is another instance of Rickman's excellent sense.

'15 January 1816.

'MY DEAR SOUTHEY,—G. Bedford called here four days ago for a frank, and under great uneasiness lest you should

publicly gainsay all the English authorities for calling the Battle of the 18th June after the name of the English head quarters at Waterloo. I who know how strongly you feel on that subject, should hardly venture to ask you to change your intention of *not* calling it the Battle of Waterloo; but are you bound to call it by any name? If you are writing *sub specie* of a New Year's Ode—that will be the title,—and you need not make yourself a martyr for the sake of propriety of a name: for I verily believe the indignity so pointed at the Duke's silly—indeed *disgraceful* misnomer—would be resented deeply, and to your serious injury, which would be the more vexatious, as the shrewdest people who have traversed the field of battle, at present allow your Quarterly Review narrative to be not only the best, but better than themselves could compile. So that being on the *plus* side with regard to that famous field, it will be the more vexatious if you pass over to the *minus*.

'Morally speaking too, I am of opinion we have no right to be prudent in such a case; the name and the reputation of the Duke of Wellington is a very solid possession, valuable to England, and to Europe while he lives, even to history afterwards! Surely we are not bound, by any superlative or hyperbolical taste for justice, to drag any of his failings into the light. Let us grieve for them in private as much as you please; but not pamper French rivalry by displaying them. As for changing the name of the battle, that is impossible—*abiiit in morem*—the *Waterloo Men* cannot be made to change their cognomen so well earned, and you must allow that it is public mischief—because inconvenient to all—to have contending names of any thing. I suppose the execrable French will name the Battle *Mont St. Jean*—they are welcome, so the Russians tutored by Laharpe; the Prussians, *Belle Alliance*, but the latter came into battle very late in the day—too late almost for any impediment to explain, and evidently too late in their own opinion, since they think it worth while to err three hours at least in the date of their appearance.

'Pray let history speak of the Battle of *Waterloo*, not

because it is the *best* possible name, but because it is become *the name*. For yourself I hope you can avoid any endeavour to assign any particular name, if you cannot endure to countenance the new popular misnomer.'

There are many allusions to Waterloo in the correspondence of 1815 and 1816, for in the former year Southey had gone to survey the field of battle in person. He had written an account of the battle in the *Quarterly Review*, and was meditating a poem, for which Rickman sent him some further information. In the spring of 1816 Southey was struck down by the greatest sorrow of his life: his son Herbert, after a decline of some weeks, died in April of an affection of the heart. In spite of his philosophical reserve in letters to his friends, it is quite clear that he was heart-broken by the death of the boy he so passionately loved. The letter announcing the news to Rickman was only a short note.

'Ap. 19, 1816.

'I was prepared for the worst, and know how to bear it, having much practical philosophy and much real religion—which stands me in better stead. Time will do the rest. My bodily frame is sorely shaken, but this will soon be remedied. Much happiness is left me, more than falls to the lot of most men, and I never can be too thankful for having so long enjoyed that which is now lost.'

Rickman replied with a letter which shows the imperiousness of his nature to emotion, and will strike most readers as rather over-philosophic in tone, however kindly it was meant.

'23rd April 1816.

'MY DEAR SOUTHEY,—I have just read yours of the 19th, having been in the country on a melancholy errand, the burial of Mrs. Rickman's mother, who died 10 days since. Mrs. R. had sufficient notice of her illness, as to go down two days before her decease, which was very



fortunate for the feelings of the now dead and of the living. I have just brought back Mrs. R. and our young gentleman, who was staying with the good old people.

‘So much of this affair; an extremely light loss compared with yours. That an old lady should sleep in peace after a blameless and happy life—past “Threescore years and Ten”—is much in the order of things, but that a youth destined to renew in himself what his parents were, who now outlive him, is very melancholy in all cases, and peculiarly so in yours. But we must not think too much on the aggravations which might be enumerated. I have to recede from high hopes which I had begun to form from your late accounts of his habits and of his mind.

‘I am very glad though much surprised that you can even speak of patience on this occasion, for in truth I feared as much for you as for the youth a fortnight ago. You have said too that Mrs. Southey bore up during the illness, but I always calculate that women will do so; men are overset sometimes by the many reasons they have against giving vent to their feelings.’

Of the other letters from Rickman to Southey during 1816, the first, which gives the writer’s views on his own work, explains itself. The pessimistic tone of the others is accounted for by the depression and discontent in the country. The end of the war had brought down prices with a run. There was a glut of British commodities in the market, and corn was as low as fifty-two shillings and sixpence a quarter. There were many bankruptcies, labourers and workpeople were turned adrift, the ranks of unemployment were swelled by the disbanded soldiers—all this, added to the fact that trade conditions were still not properly re-adjusted after their disturbance, due to the advent of factories and machinery, and that the price of bread was kept high, produced intense misery among the people, with its usual result of turbulent meetings and rioting, in which the desire for relief was mingled with the wild clamour for Parliamentary reform. The harvest of 1816 was a failure,

and bread riots ensued. The Government, though discredited in the popular view by its refusal to abolish the income tax, by its abandonment of the malt tax, and by its opposition to Parliamentary reform, was not blind to the situation. Schemes for the relief of pauperism were widely discussed, and considerable attention was drawn to the scheme introduced by Owen at Lanark for the common holding of land. At the same time, those in authority, with the lesson of the French Revolution before them, cannot be wholly blamed for their determination to take strong measures against sedition. The misguided violence of such men as 'Orator' Hunt and William Cobbett, who deliberately fostered discontent by dangling before the eyes of the common people the wildest schemes of democratic reform as panaceas, led the Government not unnaturally to consider the advisability of more stringent measures against seditious meetings and the licence of the Press. These reactionary tendencies came to a head in the 'six acts' of 1819. Rickman, it must be admitted, took an excessively doctrinaire view of things. Because the population was increasing, and because goods were plentiful, he persuaded himself that the cry of general distress was a falsehood of those whom he called the 'mock humanity' men. Like Southey, he was a violent partisan on the side of order and authority.

In 1816 Southey was summoned by Lord Liverpool, as the former told Rickman, to consult with him on some scheme for opposing 'pen to pen.' The idea seems to have been either to found some Government newspaper to combat the Radical Press, or to publish a book giving the Government view of the situation. It will be seen that Rickman strongly urged Southey not to become a journalist in the pay of the Government. But Southey had no desire to go to London, and as there seemed nothing particularly advantageous in the proposition, he refused the interview. So much will explain the allusions in the remaining letters of this chapter, all from Rickman to Southey.



‘22nd July 1816.

‘. . . Scottish affairs all, of which, contrary to expectation and probability, I have had a more oppressive load during the last Session than ever, but I hope at this expence I have secured a lighter load *in futurum*, but I wish even that could be laid on somebody else; no payment can compensate such a tantalising quantity of work, yet from this I cannot escape without the art of brain transfusion could be discovered, and all my memory of the subject placed on another man’s shoulders. But this cannot be, and for 3 years more I must drudge on. Yet on the bright side of the subject, I ought not to be dissatisfied at having been the instrument of trying a new experiment, which I myself much distrusted originally, and trying it successfully; I speak of the aid given to Highland roads, and of the other affair the C. [Caledonian] Canal; I ought not to forget that it is of unexampled dimensions, and consequently of much originality in its details, that my history of it in the Annual Reports is the first regular history of the formation of a canal, and a history, which with the adaptation of the appendixes, those of *workmen* and of *amounts*, I do not fear will ever be equalled. We must see this canal next year, taking Telford with us (or find him there) whom I think you may have seen here—a very able and very liberal man, whose plainness you will much like, an early friend of T. Campbell the Poet, and of Colonel Pasley—proof of his good taste; both of them respect him highly, and in his unostentatious manner I doubt not his friendship has served them much. . . .’

‘7 September 1816.

‘. . . As to the schemes of cultivation by paupers, even colonists, ardent colonists, never have succeeded in working for a common fund, which is an insuperable premium held out to idleness. You have read more than anybody of the practical efforts of such a scheme in the early history of Virginia and the colonies. Nothing can counteract it



but tyranny in every domestic and personal circumstance, nor perhaps even tyranny unless aided by some religious delusion—the confessional of the Moravians and Methodists superadded to the scourge of the task master. Alas! What is human nature and human liberty doomed to suffer from those who mean best for both! Habits and forms of society have formed themselves not on argument or pre-conceived advantages, but gradually by practice, and no speculator in dangerous novelties opposed by such experience ought to think his chance of being in the right above 1 to 1000. Such diffidence however is unusual. I almost forget that the Jesuits in Paraguay and in California have taught us what kind of human beings,—men—children—may be produced labouring and feeding in common. They too had illusions like Owen of Lanark, and the feeble-minded idiots paraded too in processions. But I shall tire you and myself. One thing I wish to say as to an opinion which you seem to entertain as to the well-being, or rather ill-being of the poor, that their state has grown worse and worse of late. Now if one listens to common assertion everything in grumbling England grows worse and worse; but the fact in question (the belief in it) is even a curiosity. Human comfort is to be estimated by human health, and that by the length of human life. Now I imagine I have proved in a very unexceptionable manner, (see p. xxii. of my population Preface) that since 1780 life has been prolonged as 5 to 4, and the poor form too large a portion of society to be excluded from this general effect; rather they are the main cause of it, for the upper classes had food and cleanliness abundant before. I wish I had time to make a few more observations in your poor laws treatise, which is very good in the main. The Bedford lace makers and straw platters do not enter into the computation of agricultural net produce, which is reckoned according to rent and tythe: they increase neither of these.

‘How many theories of yours and mine have we not to talk over next year! and if you lead me to Lanark, and I you to the Caledonian Canal, we shall not lessen the number.

I hope all this will happen. I am in a bad state of mind, sorely disgusted at the prevalence of that mock humanity which is now becoming the instrument of dissolving all authority, Government, and, I apprehend, human society itself. Again we shall have to go through chaos and all its stages. It is of no use to think, or to try to act for the benefit of mankind, while this agreeable poison is in full operation as at present. I retire hopeless into my own nut-shell, till I am disturbed there, which will not be long if the humanity men prevail. The revolution will not I expect be less tremendous nor less mischievous than that of France, this mocking humanity being only a mode of exalting the majesty of the people—of putting all things into the power of the mob. I wish I may be wrong in my prognostic on this subject. In the mean time, Farewell!’

‘24 September 1816.

‘I have received yours, and I ought not to delay writing when such a subject is on the anvil. It has conquered my growing apathy, proof that the same thing would happen to others, were the standard of resistance widely displayed. For your own particulars, it is enough for you to say that you *expect* no reward, but pray never say needlessly you *will decline* any. How long has it been that the workman in a good cause is bound to decline what is due to him? If nothing due, it can only be that he is an inefficient workman. Pray avoid superfluous liberality, the growing vice of the age; and much connected (as I suppose I could prove) with the mock humanity of the day—the most powerful tool at present of the anarchists. Justice as a general rule, liberality as a *rare* exception, for if not *rare* it supersedes the rule, so that the good are not protected, and the bad not restrained. Be sure that a great deal more selfishness than either you or I have, is but justice. Why *postpone* R. S. or J. R. to the rest of the alphabet? Why not accept what in another’s case you would be first to give, because most justly: so far in defence of you against yourself, and



be sure if you come to town, you do so at the expense of the secret service money.

‘As to book or journal, a book certainly first, and let circumstances settle about the other, in which I should be sorry to see you responsibly concerned, not only from the obvious meanness of the occupation, connected as it must be with private intelligence, and other necessary evils, but much more from the total absorption of all time; so that as an author who writes per sheet, soon thinks most of *finishing the sheet*, a journalist would soon be worried out of all high principle, and mainly consider the easy completion of the daily task.

‘Besides, connected argument is wanted. The book must pass whole and undivided in every one’s hand, and become the standard of the party, who must be banded against the anarchs or the latter must needs conquer, by repetition of attack of an undefended post, or defended only by political Quakerism.

‘A book too, if written with the understood countenance of Government, but not at their dictation, would do the more good, because they want many lessons which they could not consent to promulgate themselves. Even high interests must be attacked, in case a cyclopædia of good salutary measures is to be attempted, and the book would have the more weight and reputation for that degree of independence, which every single man in office would allow to be good except where it touched himself. The first being that nothing is more injurious than their tenderness (mock humanity again!) to each other. No man is turned out for inefficiency, or for non-attendance in his place in Parliament—this last is an especial evil. How often were the Gt. beaten last Session because their troops did not appear so punctually as their opponents? And how should they be brought down to the H. C. from their business or their dinners when such a Creature as A.<sup>1</sup> is the Secretary of the Treasury intrusted with the important management of the H. C.? The members both hate and despise him,

<sup>1</sup> Charles Arbuthnot.



for his silly vanity and coxcombry, and so little is he informed of what it is his peculiar business best to know, that on the evening of the Income Tax defeat,<sup>1</sup> he assured his employers they would carry the vote by thirty and upwards. And yet this man still smiles and simpers in office. You may imagine he is not the only instance of such ill-judging tenderness, but the most flagrant and the most dangerous of course he is. No session can pass without defeats very discouraging to the friends of Govt. and good order, till he is ousted.

‘Your book ought to take a large range. Let Mrs. S. have the custody of this Letter, and all that relate to it, that in case of need she may destroy all trace. *Finis.*’

‘November 25th, 1816.

‘I send . . . the Police Report which has been procured for me. If you read it, reflect that it is one of the maladies of the age to abuse everything enormously which is not *quite perfect*, and this confusion of various degrees of comparative merit with the blackest crimes is one of the bad symptoms of our time: induced like most of our other evils by the licentiousness of the Press, the effect of which makes one doubt (I do very sincerely) whether the no-information of former times or the mis-information of the present, be the greater evil. Knowledge does not appear to me to have increased during the period of my observation, and the gross ignorance which has been and is manifested in the popular disputes regarding corn laws—on both sides the most absurd proposals—makes me more lowly in my opinion of the *reasoning* people of England. True, Parliament is full enough of really wise men on this subject and most others. But the better part of wisdom is (really in legislators) discretion. And thence they dare not tell the disputants, infuriated by the newspapers, that agriculturists have been injured only by their own

<sup>1</sup> The Government wished to diminish the tax from 10 to 5 per cent., but Brougham, who proposed its abolition, carried the vote against them.

extravagant expectations and consequent expences, and that the rest of the nation are not injured at all, nor could now be thought to be in "distress" unless the said newspapers had said so, and thus encouraged every man who is lazy or profligate to talk loudly of *general distress*. And in truth, besides these gentlemen who are distressed through their own demerits, there must always be a large quantity of real distress in a large nation, but there is no more now than usual. Somebody has told us, that Dr. Stoddart<sup>1</sup> has lately discovered (perhaps puts his opinion in print?) that we labour under the evil of too much population. Now the following facts are indisputable:—houses more than find tenants: warehouses full of clothing, more than can be worn;—corn and cattle (last year throughout) more than could be eaten. Even wool and hides almost unmarketable. We are distressed through our own *superabundance of maintenance*, and then hear of *too much population*. Pray destroy this folly, and shew that an industrious race of people cannot be too populous, that their number only makes them more and more independent of foreign markets for their products, manufactured and otherwise. Were it not for the maintenance of our navy by means of the carrying trade, I should not be afraid of going to a Chinese, nay Japanese extent in this case as far as national wealth is concerned. But there is no fear I believe of our not having most of the commerce of the world for the next half century at least, for what nation or people can go on so well without us, as we could without them? This is conclusive.

'The last Edinburgh Reviews I see have a last article about as dull and stupid as your last of the last Quarty. is spirited and well informed. The rascals think they have offended their spurious allies the democrats, by their not going all lengths in Parliamentary Reform in the preceding number, and now seek as bastard a conciliation. They do not know how to steer between their own Opposition tenets and the principle of the anarchists; between the

<sup>1</sup> Leader writer on the *Times*. In 1817 he started the *New Times*.

no-principle and the principle of mischief. There is no need to observe much upon this feeble diatribe, except only that the admission or audience at the Ho. Commons and consequent publication of debates is a weight ten-fold heavier on the side of liberty than all the petty encroachments of the Crown, which they alledge, and falsely alledge two thirds of them. Certainly our Parliament ought to have, that is, to exercise the same complete right of occasional exclusion as is exercised in democratic America; and the want of that occasional practice is ten millions a year against us in war time. . . . Demolish all this nonsense and preach stoutly upon the parodied text, "that the power of the populace has increased, is increasing, and must be diminished"—or a revolution must move.

'The article on the liberty of the Press is dull enough, but not so absurd; I have no objection to submitting the question of the *truth* of a libel to the jury, but would add by way of rider to such a bill, that all public libels should be punishable in your manner, and that no public meeting should be held unless convened by the Lord Lieutenant, or Sheriff, or three magistrates in a Corporate Town: and that the moment such convening officers or magistrates absent themselves, the meeting becomes *illegal*; and rebellious after the first half hour. What but arms have been wanting to this quality in some of the late meetings in Lancashire? what at Nottingham? The laws which protect and thereby encourage constables in keeping the peace ought to be published by Government on a half sheet and disseminated. But they are asleep:—so are not you, and even my quietism is stirred a little. Farewell.'



## CHAPTER VII

1817-1829

Southey's 'Wat Tyler'—Rickman's views on poor law reform—His article in the *Quarterly*—A letter from Luke Hansard—Rickman's depression—Letters to Lord Colchester—Scottish tour with Southey—The model *béguinage*—Depression again—Rickman on Canning—Opening of the Caledonian Canal—Bertha Southey—Roman Catholic relief—Rickman's part in Southey's essays—State of Ireland—Catholic Relief Bill passed—Co-operation—Rickman Lamb's 'friend' in 1829.

FROM 1815 onwards the correspondence between Rickman and Southey, with the exception of three letters to Lord Colchester, is the only source on which we can draw, but that is a plentiful source. Between 1817 and 1832 the political interest of the letters grows till it reaches its climax in the almost weekly interchange of views and opinions on the subject of the Reform Bill. During 1817, though Rickman was overwhelmed by an 'unexpected gale of work'—probably the stress was due to his superintendence of the new system for printing the Votes and Proceedings, his work for the two Scottish Commissions, and the abstraction of poor returns—the letters were fairly frequent. One of the incidents of the year which closely affected Southey was the illicit republication of his 'Wat Tyler' poem, which was written in the days of his revolutionary ardour. It was no small scandal that such a youthful indiscretion should be revived against the Poet Laureate and the sturdy pillar of the *Quarterly Review*, at a time when there were riots in England and the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended. Southey applied ineffectually for an injunction against the publisher; and the matter was made worse when Mr. William Smith, the Liberal M.P. for Norwich, came down to the House with 'Wat Tyler' in one hand and the

*Quarterly* in the other, to read out conflicting extracts from the pen of one whom his party held to be a renegade and a time-server. But Southey's part was warmly taken by his friends in the House; he was defended in the *Courier* by Coleridge; and he himself ended the matter in his 'Letter to William Smith, Esq. M.P.,' which was a vigorous and fearless attack upon his unworthy opponent. Rickman alluded to the scene in the House in a letter dated March 17.

'17 March 1817.

' . . . Oddly enough, as you have seen, W. S. seems to have suffered B. [Brougham] to have put a brief in his hand against you. But however this happened, you may congratulate yourself on the venom being spit, so entirely without effect, or rather with favourable effect to yourself, every body seeming to cry shame on the malice of the thing, and nobody almost applauding except B. with a few of the most deeply infernal toned *Hear, Hear!* that I ever chanced to hear. The said B. seems to recognise you as his antagonist, and thus expresses his unfeigned esteem. Mr. W. W. [Wynn] defended you very well, and after his saying that you were not above 19 when you wrote *Wat Tyler*, W. S. began to wriggle in his seat and half apologise by gesture, afterwards by words, for so strangely lugging in so strange a criticism in so strange an assembly. *Wat Tyler* may now do his worst, which will be little. B. made a long speech on the distress which he has created, stuffed with the usual ingredients; upon the faith, no doubt, of the Ministry in their timidity not chusing to answer much that was answerable. Yet they answered enough to make him retract half, under the accustomed form, that he could not have meant the things he had said with high emphasis. Yet the emphasis goes forth, and recantation is confined to the Ho. Comm. For all this he was very poorly answered, though it is plain enough that things are coming round so far that a fortnight hence his speech of distresses could not be uttered. Had there been no such birds of ill-omen to

fright commercial credit and enterprise, no distress whatever would have existed. At last the fact is working off the sophism, and the market is glutted with the money which should have [been] employed in the proper channels had the Messrs. B. and Co. permitted. Farewell.'

The country was still in a very disturbed state owing to economic distress. In December 1816 the Spa Fields riot had occurred, and in the spring of 1817 the Manchester Blanketeers began their abortive march upon London. The minds of all thinking citizens were turned upon some means of remedying the social evils of destitution and crime, and one fact which was prominently brought to light was the unsatisfactory state of the poor law. The whole system of poor relief was founded upon an act of Elizabeth's reign, which threw upon parishes the responsibility for relieving the infirm and setting the able-bodied to work. This, together with the law of settlement, passed in the reign of Charles II., was the cause of the chief evils. The settlement law caused an excess of labour to accumulate in parishes, for which they had to find employment. The labourers became idle and improvident, and were made more so by the tendency of the preceding century—marked particularly in Gilbert's Act—to make relief accessible to as many as possible. The stress of the war with France increased the laxity of poor-law administration. What Rickman with some truth called 'mock humanity' resulted in the almost universal application of poor rates in aid of wages, especially when the excuse could be made that by such means the families of those who shed their blood for the country were being kept from want. The poor rate therefore increased with alarming speed, without conferring any great benefit, for the system kept wages low and encouraged idleness. In 1801 the poor rate was £4,000,000 for a population of nine millions, in 1813 it was over £6,500,000, in 1818 it was £7,870,801, or 13s. 3d. a head for the whole population. In 1817 a committee to inquire into the poor laws was moved for in the House, the mover



being Mr. Curwen, who recommended making the poor rate a national charge to be levied on income. The committee sat under the chairmanship of Mr. Sturges Bourne, and made its report in July. The actual proposals made were so inadequate that no legislation resulted, but the publication of the report first brought the enormity of the abuses before the public. For this committee Rickman abstracted the poor rate return of 1748-1750 and of 1816-1818. After that year he abstracted the return annually for seventeen years—work for which he received no remuneration. But the poor laws, ever since his association with Poole, had been a favourite study of Rickman's; and, not content with statistical labours, he urged Southey to write upon the subject in the *Quarterly*, undertaking to supply him not only with all Parliamentary papers, but also with his own views and deductions in manuscript. It is with this subject, therefore, that most of the letters of 1817 are concerned, for Southey embraced the scheme warmly. The first letter which I quote from Rickman contains suggestions for an article on which Southey was engaged early in the year. The castration of this article by Croker and Gifford aroused Rickman's and Southey's great indignation.

'Feb. 1817.

' . . . Pray mention another quality of our friends the newspapers, the power of creating a *newspaper distress*, as it is at present in great measure. But this must be said not as if of the *present moment*, but generally—that they could do so, and must have done so, because the prosperity we now are instructed by them to look back at in the war, they always called adversity. See how their cursed venom operates. Every instance of unlucky speculation is published with comments and exaggeration, any profitable speculation kept snug among the merchants for future use; so that we, having more mercantile misfortune, as we have more shipwrecks (because we have more ships than all the world together), may always seem to be as unfortunate as

we please, by enumeration not comparative or proportionate. So of the landed interest: a man who reads that nobody can pay his full rent certainly will not pay his. A lazy fellow who likes begging better than work easily joins into the general opinion that no work can be had, and begs or goes to the parish. Thus the newspapers create 100,000 beggars, by making it seem necessity not crime. See how largely this tells upon the profligate in all degrees, making each more profligate, because more excusable, as children are set to rob lately by the mock philanthropist humanity of no punishment. In the aggregate the good people of England are always to be kept discontented and unhappy by the cursed newspapers, who with as much influence as erst the R. C. religion enforce the belief of a transubstantiation of happiness and prosperity into its opposite.'

The next letter refers to Curwen's speech on the motion for the poor law committee.

'11 *March* 1817.

' . . . Curwen again will be the ruin of any poor law improvement. Such an ignorant long-tongued man to be chairman of a committee, after having in two following years showed different degrees of palpable ignorance in the speech moving for such a committee; and who will work in it under his name and banner? Yet many members are very eager and very well informed: but Curwen must ruin all. You touch on a vexatious subject, the cowardice of the Ministry, which I anticipated but too surely. They have passed an act for the safe custody of Cobbett, and Hunt, and now are afraid to act at all, thus damning their own proceedings and furnishing innumerable arguments to the Opps. Where was the *necessity* of such a Bill, inactive? It irks me to think of these feeble creatures.'

The following letter gives a fair indication of Rickman's very level-headed views on the poor law question. If he was unduly sanguine of the success of individualism in dealing with the question, he was perfectly justified in his

condemnation of parish officers and magistrates, and in his demand that thrift and industry should be encouraged by making relief unwelcome to those who could work.

‘ 8 *May* 1817.

‘ I can hardly express how much I desire to write to you, but the days and nights are so occupied that all good things of even half an hour’s cost must be omitted.

‘ As to the poor rate question, pray prepare a good common place in praise of *selfishness*, the only mover of large beneficial action, because general, and from it I would deduce that no one man shall undertake to understand another’s affairs, nor provide for his wants, real or pretended, upon an investigation ruinous of valuable time, and, from many causes, ineffectual, or worse, to its aim. No parish officers therefore or magistrates to scrutinise, and exercise either their ill humour against the poor, or their facility against their neighbours. A rule of reasonable duress must be general, mere sustenance of the cheapest kind, and nothing better *by law*, whereupon in walks industry, care and thrift in the poor ; genuine humanity,—alms judiciously bestowed—circles of endeared dependents,—active and passive happiness to the rich. The poor must thus attain good character or fall upon the *legal* sustenance, which very soon none would fall upon, because they who had not friends (which yet is next to impossible in case of good character) would find establishments in aid of the *friendless*, and those behaving well would attain friends. The world would all be bound together by the mutual tye of good character, and our English age would assure the purity which our degree of civilisation would then be the measure and indication of, instead of the antagonist. But you must steel your soul for a short time for future good. Bread and water and straw for all who have not character to elicit, or industry to acquire, better maintenance. That each man shall take care of his own peculiar affairs, and that no man shall have a right to *demand* another’s property beyond the civilised propriety of not being starved, must be the begin-



ning of future good ; and I hope my hurried exposition of what would take a just volume, will enable you to look far into the matter ; which yet do not mention till we have had opportunity, travelling in the Highlands, to discuss difficulties and look to consequences. I feel convinced, and if I can put into you a temporary severity for final good purposes, we will overthrow all the evils of human society, by abolishing poor rates, and introducing universal good character instead. Charity in the large sense, shall then be at least as wide as England. Perpend. Farewell, and prosper in your journey.'

In the autumn Rickman took one of his driving tours in the north. He visited Southey at Keswick, and went on to stay with the Wordsworths.

*'Tuesday, 23 September 1817.*

'For many reasons I write sparingly when not at home, but as to our proceedings I must inform you that we encountered Miss Wordsworth in our road to Ambleside, and made an appointment to drink tea with her, where we saw the Rydal waterfall, and we were not too late to admire the views, near and distant, from Rydal Mount. But indeed the whole ride to Ambleside, especially the repose of Grasmere, cannot be surpassed for beauty. I was sorry that W. Wordsworth was absent from home in Furness, and if I had seen him I believe I should have touched upon the subject of the good and evil principles, which have to fight so great a battle in our time, if we live many years. Hitherto the good principle has eminently prevailed in England, as is evident in the superior degree of civilisation we enjoy, and the majority of well meaning people is as great as ever, but their good meaning must be out on its guard and into activity, or the mischievous minority, with their mighty ally the Press, will revolutionise everything, by way of sop till they can dare a general assault. I will read what Mr. W. has said as to the advantage acquired by wickedness in every contest, and I should expect that if he can con-

descend to detail, nobody could better place in view this momentous danger. But I will say no more on this subject at present. . . .'

The following letter was aroused by the fate of Southey's article :—

‘ 8 October 1817.

‘ . . . I heard yesterday that Mr. Gifford is dangerously ill of a fever ; as far as the Review is concerned, his death would be a good thing, if he be indeed the cause of the miserable servility which goes not an inch beyond or an inch short of the feeble and frightened Administration : but I fear Murray himself, instigated or controlled by Mr. Croker, chooses to keep in that narrow path. There is good apology for the conduct of the Administration, who have suffered the mob to encroach upon them in Parliament and out of it, that the great cause of Europe might not be interrupted ; at least I give them credit for such motive in late years, and now they cannot retrieve their steps till some revulsion (God send it) shall happen. You may give them credit for this in the exordium of your Peninsular History. But why should Murray keep his Review in such a servile state, a cock boat in tow of a first rate, instead of a consort aiming at the same good end, but by a more direct course than allowable or possible to Government, and by a course much more consistent with the professions of independence which all publications affect to make on fit occasions ? Can Murray be so blind as not to see that in point of interest he would thus attach a large party, and a very growing party (from the weakness of Government becoming more and more obvious daily : a species of weakness and confusion which must bequeath weakness to all future Administrations :) so that a sect of Ultras must spring up in self-defence, and what were more noble or more profitable than to lead them, and to embody them ? . . .’

It was not till late in October that Rickman got to work upon his poor-law reflections for Southey.

‘ 29 October 1817.

‘ Herewith you have Brazil, the first sheet I see of Vol. III. Success to its progress through the press, and in the world afterwards.

‘ I thought I might have written before now to you about the poor laws, or rather the abolition of them. But lo ! I am called upon to make an index to the new edition of Mr. Hatsell’s Precedents ; four vols. ; and the former index being quite worthless is no aid. The vols. too are very full of Ho. Commons matter, which I am supposed to understand, and must try to do so on this occasion. So I have stuck to it closely for the last fortnight, and have sent to the press the index of one volume, but next month will close before I have finished the rest, after which (my other *opera*, which you wot not of, being now in train) I shall begin to pour out my concocted animosity against the poor laws. Will this suit your order of battle ? Pray store up ammunition in the mean time, as occasion offers for reflection. But we must contrive the explosion typographic to take place by the meeting of Parliament, say the 20 January. I do not know that I say any more than already voiced in the following sketch.

‘ Human civilisation is founded on the sacredness of private property, which is enormously trenched upon by the poor laws, which take it from one person and give it to another, who has had nothing to do in acquiring or realising it. The poor in fact are authorised to plunder the rich by law, when in time all must become poor and barbarian. Never was so unjust an agrarian law.

‘ Liberality (which means the transfer of property without legal compulsion) if carried to excess is the same in operation and effect as the poor laws, but it depends upon volition and fashion of the age, and is not capable of gaining so far. It goes much too far however, and must be proved to be a question of degree, and a question of justice, inasmuch as you cannot be *liberal* on most occasions without being *unjust* to other claims. As a king cannot be liberal



of the money of his subjects ; he only takes from some, for the pleasure of giving to others.

‘ The poor then have no *right* to relief, they must be made to *ask* and to *demand* it ; and in case of bad character, the overseer, if confirmed by the decision of the magistrate, shall be enabled to refuse it, and send the poor man of lazy habits to the workhouse ; thus to be fed on the lowest species of fare that any working man in Great Britain eats. On oatmeal, potatoes, and water, till he thinks it worth to deserve a better character. Under such a law, it is safe to limit the poor rates so as to decrease  $\frac{1}{10}$  each year, which would leave about £330 per Ann. out of £1000 in ten years, and we might then see whether farther diminution proper. Volunteer cavalry must be maintained in such proportion as to check all Jaquery—and in time all men would acquire industrious habits and good character, and almsgiving would resume its proper function, peace and goodwill spreading away thro’ all the various orders of society.

‘ The details are infinite under these heads, the episodal openings many and tempting ; and if we begin, the difficulty will be to compress the exuberant material.’

Rickman’s progress was not quite so fast as he expected, but the material which he sent to Southey was so good, as the letters plainly show, that his paper was almost untouched and sent to the *Quarterly*, where it appeared in the number for April 1818 under the title ‘The means of improving the People.’ ‘Your labours have given me a sort of holiday from the review,’ wrote Southey, who held over the material which he himself had prepared till the autumn number. The authorship of Rickman’s article was well concealed ; in fact, it seems to be still a secret, for the editors of Southey’s letters do not publish those in which he admits that he only grafted about two pages in all upon Rickman’s, and softened the roughness of his style. The article itself is a sensible discussion of the poor law question on Tory lines, strong and straightforward : the

author points out as evils the decay of the old system of apprenticeship, the excessive issuing of liquor licences, the want of severity in dealing with crime, the insufficiency of education, especially of religious education. I suspect that the insistence of the value of catechising and of firm religious convictions was Southey's handiwork ; for Rickman never abandoned his somewhat matter-of-fact deistic beliefs, and there is a clause in his will expressing the wish that his son should not take orders. The remedies which Rickman suggested were savings banks, which were then being instituted, a system of general co-operation in villages and towns, the better regulation of prisons, and the abolition of excessive legal penalties for misdemeanours, on the ground that they only defeated their own end. Of the subsequent publication of this essay with Southey's essays something will be said below. In the first letter of this year, 'E. B.' (Bennett), W. Davison, and W. T. Courtenay are the authors of three books upon the poor, the titles of which appeared at the head of the essay in the *Quarterly*.

'January 6, 1818.

'Since I wrote to you another funeral interruption has delayed my attention to the P. L. The Marchioness of Ormonde having died, and appointed me one of her extors.,<sup>1</sup> I was under the necessity of going into Kent with the funeral, instead of coming here to quiet labour ; and to send Miss A. R. under other convoy to spend her Xmas with Mrs. R. and her brother and sister. All are well, and here I am much at the service of the P. L. and even with practical people about me ; who like very well to be talked on the subject. My head is become so well loaded by thinking at intervals that I shall find ease by scribbling such sheets as now I enclose. But I must expound ; what you have now is not only to follow the commonplaces which you may perhaps have prepared, but the article must begin with a sketch or catalogue of the evils of the P. L.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 22.

and an exposure (brief as possible) of all the quacking which at different times has been applied to the subjects,—work-houses, cow-cottagers,<sup>1</sup> and the like. What I send is the back-bone of the new principle, strong enough I think, and excellent you shall soon hope for receiving other bones, and joints, and muscles; these come next, and you shall receive them in as tolerable order as I can put them together. With them you will not have much trouble beyond copying with amendments my scribble; but the main principle now inclosed ought to be quite re-written I think in a careful manner, and in your strong style. I have here the E. B. and W. Davison, the first is contemptible as might be anticipated; the latter is very respectable, and in some parts eloquent and impressive. As to his schemes, I shall speak hereafter. W. T. Courtenay's book is not *sold*, and I cannot ask for it without giving cause of suspicion of what I am about. So you must cut the stitches of your copy, and put in the post under 2 oz. packets. . . . I find difficulty and restraint in writing without using the first person; if I do that, can you turn it into reviewer's plurality?

'If you are pressed for the article, tell of what importance you think it, or communicate the important sheet when re-written. Say also that at the meeting of Parlt. returns will be presented, without the use of which a *series* of poor rate information, necessary to the strength, or rather the research of the article, cannot be obtained. This is true, much beyond what can be supposed, but at present a secret: and you may promise all the article about this day month, which I if err not, will put out the next No. at a three month period. But of course you will insist upon your convenience as strongly as you please, or as strongly as W. Gifford's occasions of illness or leisure sometimes do. I am quite vexed at having him so inevitably and so repeatedly pushed away from the subject in question, but now I hope to stick to it. Farewell.

<sup>1</sup> There were schemes put forward for providing the poor with cottages and cows.



‘I hope you keep Twelfth Night; our young ones are looking out for a cake to-day.’

‘10 *January* 1818.

‘I send you 3 or 4 sheets of MS. Two or three more will lead me to the close of the article, but I can prefix to what you now have, a history of poor rates, catalogue *raisonné* of the abominable effects of the poor laws, *exposé* of the injudicious quackeries which from generation to generation have made bad worse. Of all this, or these large subjects, you shall have quant. suff. for prefixing to all an honourable mention of the article in a late Edin. Review (by Dr. Campbell the popular preacher it was written), and thus tormenting these northern revolutionists into co-operation with the good instead of the bad in the poor law question. How they will curse their own independence in having committed themselves on the right side of a question, and will they not writhe and twist to escape such a misfortune! You may even call upon the Parly. Oppn. in the same strain, and their feelings and conduct will not be dissimilar. Pray soften my abrupt straitforward style, and do not let a word or a phrase remain in compliment to me, who shall feel the more out of sight by it, and the more comfortable. Farewell—I turn to my work.’

On the same date as the above a letter was written by Southey to Rickman, which shows his decision to use Rickman’s article entire. It is to be observed that he made no offer, as far as can be known, to pay Rickman any of the proceeds of the article; however, Rickman would have most certainly refused any such offer.

‘10 *January* 1818.

‘MY DEAR R.,—I send you Courtenay’s letter; he is a worthy and well-meaning man, who has all the disposition for doing good, if he had but the ability.

‘I have done a good deal, and altho’ what I have done should not prove to be amalgamable with your communications, there will be no labour lost, for all that is not

relevant to the thread of your argument may be set aside to form a separate paper. It is evident that you have a clear and connected whole in your mind, bearing as it ought to do with full weight and force upon one point : two head pieces might interfere with each other, so I will act as mouth piece only. I had been spinning perhaps an overfine thread, partly for want of straightforward matter ; and partly to take off common attention from the main argument, by the garnish with which it was drest up, like gilding a pill, or sugaring the cup from which a child takes bitter physic. Not that it is mere garnish ; on the contrary, it may make a wholesome and substantial dish by itself in a following number.

‘ So I shall make Murray wait, and go to work upon your papers in good hope that they may be found materially instrumental in forwarding a great work. God help you.’

On March 11 Southey wrote :—

‘ Your finale is very good, and cannot I think be improved. Indeed the whole paper carries such weight with it, that surely some of the truth must make its way.’

In spite of his humanity Rickman was a firm opponent of Romilly’s criminal law reforms, on the ground that they tended to increase crime, and were the result of exaggerated complaints on the part of prejudiced people. Thus he writes :—

‘ 25 *March* 1818.

‘ . . . I send the 2d. Police Report ; what is in it, I know not, but know its final aim to be the impunity of crime. This is pursued by the anarchists with a long train of mock humanity men at their heels, and is perhaps the most dangerous as being the most thriving pursuit of the anarchists. You remember Sir S. R. [Romilly] began many years since, and that W. Frankland gave him an answer. He has persevered however, and will persevere till unmasked. Forbearance towards him has gone too far. Since that we have heard of the ill usage of prisoners, who yet have been better

and better treated continually (*usque nunc*) to the enormous expence of the counties, i.e. of the public who are not in the habit of gaol-occupancy. Then gaolors were attacked because the great Finnerty<sup>1</sup> was confined for a libel at Lincoln, and a Commission appointed to examine that, Lancashire, and I think another gaol or two. They reported all excellent in care, kindness, and regulation. Of course such a report was unnoticed, and slander continued. Then visitations of the gaols here by our deluded Commons (led by an anarchist) and last autumn rebellions by the *injured* prisoners, in direct consequence. At four prisons in one month I believe last autumn much damage was done, paid for by the city, and no punishment possible of the offenders. Now another gaol Commn. is about to cause the do. repeated. So much for the terrors of imprisonment. Then the police officers are attacked, with a cry of blood money, of course ascribed to all, if any one or two guilty, and lately on the simple assertion of a condemned felon, long examinations of a meritorious officer to the same end. So that the officer, not the thief, or equally with the thief, is to be questioned by Mr. Thief and associates in crime, whose testimony well managed must be decisive. After disposing of the police, the judges are to be slandered into insignificance; and as to juries, they are sacred and right just when and where and so long as they are with the populace, and the Press which leads and follows the mob for its weekly and daily bread. I write in great haste but you will perceive the largeness of the conspiracy, and the effect already is a vast increase of crime, and of the expense of conviction, and as to injustice, we know that the slightest question of a good man's character and conduct is worse to him than the Old Bailey trials of a rogue, each a triumph to be boasted of. Is the Quarterly brave enough to enter upon this theme? and the *liberty* of the Press which must soon govern or be governed?

<sup>1</sup> A quite unimportant person, who brought certain charges against the gaolers at Lincoln.



'The second Rept. on education herewith! Mr. Brougham was busy or on a journey—or—— and contented himself with *proposing* a Commn. in 1817, which afterwards he forgot I believe, till the last day almost of the Session. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

The next letter is from Southey, announcing the good effect of Rickman's essay on Murray, Croker ' (the grand Castrator '), and Bedford.

'22 April 1818.

'If the paper makes as much impression abroad as it has done upon Murraymagne, the Grand Castrator and G. C. B., it will do its work in the world. The latter, whom I desired not to speak of the article as mine upon the pretext that it was well not to be marked as the writer in case of any mobs upon the business (a valid reason, tho' I had a better motive for caution), replies that it will not be recognised for mine by the style; and then he praises the style very properly as right good English, and me not quite so properly for having divested myself of all mannerism. This will amuse you. The odd thing is that he has not the slightest suspicion of my real ignorance on such subjects as are there fathomed, nor, what is more, of my incapacity for them. . . .'

Rickman replied on April 26.

'I inclose you another invigorating proof sheet. You know my canon of criticism, that nobody writing a book in one language has a right to expect any other language to be understood by his reader. I speak of the text, not of notes or authorities, which must have full licence.

'I am amused as well as pleased with the blindness of G. B. [Bedford]. I had proof enough of it here, as he brought me one or two of the proof sheets himself, and swore specially to your hand-mark as to the fling at Malthus, (by the bye a very odd inconsistency to let it stand so soon after the

<sup>1</sup> Brougham's commission on education resulted in the establishment of the Charity Commission.

Malthus review probably written by himself or some of Edin. Review friends). G. B. also recognised you in every phrase as to the city of Ely, and only wondered that you could possibly talk of self concealment as author of the article. For certain I did not discourage this, and when he asked me why I did not wish to be supposed to correct the notes or to have furnished any of them, I told him I could not be known to have done so without becoming the common referee of all M.P.s whether ignorant or knowing; and that in this shape I could not consent to incur such danger. This suited his notion of Pandemonium very well, and though I daresay he did not think the reason hindered him from telling Asm[odeus] G. [Gifford] who corrected the notes, he also gave him the above reason for such a trifling point of knowledge going no further. I think I saw in G. B. that so much of communication was needful to keep the Gr. Castrator from exercise of his talent. Altogether our harmless conspiracy has been very successful. The Poor Law Commn. have proposed feeble Bills, and if I mistake not symptoms, the leading members are annoyed and tired by the incessant applications of all possible parish officers and amateur magistrates; and besides much dissatisfied to *find* that in their own heads they can only find that they have found nothing effectual, though after taking much thought, they will soon become ridiculous, if not enlightened *ab extra*, as soon may happen, though the Quarterly is slow in coming out—a bad thing when an affair in motion is in question. Already the Commn. have fore-sworn some things for which they are therein praised, introduced an enormous imprudence there deprecated. But such accidents cannot be avoided.’

This political correspondence during the early part of the year was diversified by a pleasing interchange of letters between Southey and Rickman upon the prospects of a young man called Robert Lovell,<sup>7</sup> a common friend of them both who had come to London to earn his living as a printer. He was a modest, industrious person, whom

Rickman took a pleasure in helping. Accordingly when Hansard, his employer, mentioned to Rickman that he thought he could promote him in the office on account of superior education, if Southey would testify that he was so qualified, Rickman wrote asking Southey to do so. Southey expressed all willingness, but the good designs were partially hindered by Lovell's modesty in doubting his own efficiency as a corrector. Rickman, however, overrode his objections, and sent the recommendation, which drew forth the following letter from Luke Hansard, the original publisher of the Debates, the style of which, says Southey, is 'truly Hansardic.'

'(Mch. 1818.)

'Mr. Hansard has perused and reperused with much pleasure Mr. Southey's classical and biographic sketch of *Robert Lovell*; a sketch equally honourable to the gentleman by whom it is drawn, as it is creditable to the gentleman who is the subject of it.

'So far as can at present be observed of Robert Lovell's progress in the printing-office, Mr. Southey's interesting trait is not overdrawn; and if the young man *perseveres* in the variety of trying scenes ever attendant upon a parliamentary business—late and early, chiefly *early* hours, some cram-full to overflowing, then standing still (but yet in awaiting) and then to another overflowing of diversities, still waiting and giving instant attention—Mr. Hansard will then have fair opportunities—even though Lovell be but a young man and a new hand but just come into camp—Mr. Hansard will have fair opportunities, which he shall gladly seek for and as gladly embrace, of coming up to Mr. Southey's and Mr. Rickman's kind and solicitous wishes.'

The beginning of 1818 had been quieter, but before the end of the year there was a strike of cotton-spinners at Manchester, which led to many deeds of violence. The agitation in that city culminated the next year in the



'Peterloo massacre,' at which the soldiers charged an enormous crowd that had met in St. Peter's Fields. This revival of agitation seems to have depressed Rickman considerably, as the two following letters prove. Southey at the time was occupied in fulminating against Brougham in Westmorland. Rickman's depression, which recurred more violently a few years later, was perfectly genuine, but it may be suspected that overwork had a good deal to do with it.

'5 Sept. 1818.

' . . . I confess that my hopes do not improve, quite the contrary, and if I do not write often, I am afraid you must ascribe it to worse spirits than ever I felt before in my life. But do not mention this.

' It is singular that the most likely to be questioned point of the poor law review, the reprobation of friendly societies, should so soon have found ample justification at Manchester, where the lower order of human society is rotten to the core. In 1816-17 they set out for the metropolis (in imitation of the Marseillais) because they had no work. But the then cheapness of labour renewed the suspended export of cotton goods : that reacting raised the price and demand for labour. Instantly a portion of that price was vested in friendly society funds for the sake of future mischief now in progress. The spirit which could premeditate to this degree of self-privation for 20 months will succeed in time if not now ; and the staring absurdity, that, the price of labour raised, all commodities must rise in price, will convince no mechanic that the Manchester rebels are not in the right. I doubt not they have the majority of every town and of most villages in England in their favour. Still it is better that the rebellion is not political in its rise—pure accident this, but a lucky one, for their higher allies would have joined. As it is, the Manchester rebels, I hear, damn the reformers, their former leaders in the Blanket campaign.'

‘2nd Oct. 1818.

‘Your notes are quite a comfort to me in my depression, to see how vigorously you are employed. . . . I don’t know when I shall be so much my former self as to think to any purpose; at present I see in prospect a jacquerie aided by the scarcity of next winter, and the anarchists of higher order all agreeing in effort to depreciate and destroy whatever is established, if but because it is so. In this they act together by an instinctive worldly wisdom, while their opposers, having conscience, disagree in the points each would defend, and will make a feeble stand accordingly. I am vexed at seeing this, without seeing remedy. We shall not even have a fair field for the mortal combat.’

Rickman was accustomed to write accounts of debates in the House of Commons to his old chief, Speaker Abbot, who had now become Lord Colchester. A few of these are printed in Lord Colchester’s Diaries, and two of them come in opportunely for the early part of 1819, when the correspondence between Rickman and Southey is scanty. The first is a criticism of Vansittart’s methods of conducting business. A dissolution was due in June, and Rickman’s prophecies so far came true that the Opposition gained several seats.

‘March, 1819.

‘MY LORD,— . . . I am afraid I have been inattentive in not answering your Lordship’s late letter, but, in truth, our work at the House of Commons costs full twelve hours a day, and I am forced to apologise to my own conscience for as many defaults as well as I can. . . .

‘The Chancellor of the Exchequer fulfils the *semper idem* which was applied in the feminine gender to Queen Anne. He went into the Committee of Supply (miscellaneous services) with thirty-seven M.P.’s behind him; among them one Lord of the Treasury, not one of the Admiralty; the Opposition mustering about fifty in front of him. When they came to the Caledonian Canal, I

remembered that poor Mr. Arbuthnot, in his distress, once referred to me in the debate, so I prudently left the Committee in care of Mr. Brogden<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Ley,<sup>2</sup> and retreated to one of the Serjeant's dog holes, where I heard quite enough. However, the grant will be had hereafter ; no thanks to the generalship of Mr. Vansittart and his aide-de-camp, Mr. Arbuthnot, who is in himself quite enough to overset any Administration. Equal in small things as in great, having moved an Irish writ a day too soon, he forgot it for a fortnight, and, I think, has not moved any writ this session without some blunder. . . .

' I think the Opposition has a good chance to come in, at least if it be considered that they will always be sure of the support of the friends of the present Administration in the impending battle between the mob and their betters, the newspapers and Parliament ; and that themselves and the mob, in spurious alliance, can and will hasten that crisis. I do not see how they can fail to arrive at this.

' To be sure there will be an awkwardness in their turning short about to oppose Reform of Parliament (now in commencement at Penryn<sup>3</sup>), and Juries (as now in practice of usurped power) and the liberty of the press (incompatible, as now practised, with the liberty of any other thing, and already more powerful than Parliament) ; but *all this will be done with effrontery enough* doubtless, and good men will have to rally under the guidance of the incendiaries when all is in flame.

' Mr. Brougham does not show himself much ; but, in fact, he is ill, low-spirited. . . . His absence, however, keeps concord as yet undisturbed among the Opposition. They muster well. Lord Castlereagh, in passing Mr. Tierney the other evening, said, " I should like to learn the secret of your association." The Opposition has, I think, gained in number many more than the Government

<sup>1</sup> Chairman of Committees.

<sup>2</sup> Clerk Assistant.

<sup>3</sup> Disfranchised in 1828, after motions for its disfranchisement had been made every year for several years.



will allow, and gained much more in M.P.'s who always attend. . . .

'Always your Lordship's most obedient servant.'

The second letter describes the debate on Grattan's motion for an inquiry into the laws affecting the state of the Roman Catholics.

'May 4, 1819.

'MY LORD,—I fear the election petition business of the morning will allow me but a few moments to tell our last night's history.

'Mr. Grattan made *his last speech*; so he said before the day came. Mr. Croker made an odd speech, blaming oaths because not enacted at once. He ought to have a code in reward of his ingenious perversions. These spoke two hours each; afterwards Leslie Foster an hour; others brought it to twelve o'clock; then Mr. Lamb, Mr. Peel, and Mr. Plunkett, all charged and primed, reserved their fire for half an hour, mutually wishing the others to speak first, till the gallery and under it were pretty well cleared (for the popish priests, in both places, exhibited the silent impudence and perverseness of so many Quakers on this occasion). The Opposition had directed an assemblage at twelve, it appeared; so that all those of the other side, who expected a late division or adjourned debate, were absent. After one negative voice given, Plunkett pretended that he wished to speak, but this Mr. Wynn's solitary point of order withstood, and it was not permitted. The division took place: Opposition 242, Anti-Catholic, 248. And from the surprise practised, some of the last (sent for in haste) came in while the dispute about Mr. Plunkett lasted and the door opened to let out some of the most tardy of the Papists. Then all M.P.'s were directed to state whether or not they were in the House when the question was put, which had been done at twelve; disputed if final till half-past; put finally afterwards: so that what their statements referred to no man could tell. A fine confusion, which

terminated at half-past one. Ayes, 241; Noes, 243, as corrected.

'The Opposition counted 252 instead of 242, and were sadly chagrined at finding themselves in a minority, after a thousand congratulations *inter se*, wagers won and lost, and the supposed decision reversed, etc. . . . Yours most obliged.'

During the autumn Southey accompanied Rickman and Telford on a tour in Scotland, which he described in a long letter to his friend Neville White. The party, starting from Edinburgh, went by Loch Katrine and Dunkeld to Dundee, thence up the east coast to Aberdeen, Banff, and Inverness. They proceeded to follow the Caledonian Canal to Loch Lomond, and ended at Glasgow. Southey had many pleasant recollections of this tour, and his recollections were transcribed for the benefit of Rickman's family. A pleasing sequel to this tour was that, after computing Southey's share of the expense next year, Rickman asked his friend to consider that he had repaid the money by devoting it to paying the fees for the honorary degree of LL.D. conferred on him at Oxford in 1820. Two political letters to Southey end the year. The first describes the debate on the second reading of the Seditious Meetings Prevention Bill, one of the so-called 'six acts' which the Government considered it necessary to pass for the repression of disorder.

'Friday Evening [Dec. 3, 1819].

'To-night we have holiday from debate; Brougham's *indisposition* which made him speak 2½ hours after midnight was rather tiresome this *morning*. Lord Palmerston who said a few words afterwards (in notice of some of B.'s personalities) made a laugh by assuring the House he was himself in perfect health and therefore they might dread from him another speech of 3 hours. Brougham has quite fallen off from all logic or argument; this second long speech of his like the first contained nothing of either, dextrous

personality and misrepresentation made the sum total of both. Yet this noisy adventurer is likely soon to take the post of *Leader of Opposition*, Mr. T. [Tierney] being very sick of it. I am much afraid that the Administration is about to relapse into liberality; that they will make the Bill *temporary* to save a few hours debating, and in that case the Opp. will have to boast they were right in opposing the Bill before it was so modified. So again will they be able to raise their heads which at present lie in political perdition, or at least in the slough of despond. The mania for opposition to Government in England is stronger than the very Opps. themselves reckoned upon. Only 30 less vote with them now than on the dry party qn. of last year,—the pitched battle which Mr. Tierney had cause to remember. And their steady phalanx of 150 is no more than they expected at the beginning of the Session. They lost indeed 22 last evening, and as Lord Darlington begins to discover that his Durham friends are rather dangerous to his lordship, the Opps. who draw more from his purse and politics than from any other source want to escape from contest, and in proportion to their wish for escape will be the folly of the Government, if they permit it. The Bill which is to curb the press is ridiculously feeble compared to the disease—so I expected, but as I see no good done without a direct censorship, I am not likely to be satisfied till better times come. I called on Dr. Stoddart since my return to feel how bravely his pulse beat. Slop; slop, slop, was the response.<sup>1</sup> He *praised his own prudence* in not too rashly applauding or justifying the conduct of Government in dismissal of Lord F.<sup>2</sup> though he said he was desired to do this. Charming neutrality!—of which I in my rashness comprehend neither policy. He should take decided part for his own sake.'

<sup>1</sup> Stoddart, editor of the *New Times*, was nicknamed 'Dr. Slop' by his contemporaries.

<sup>2</sup> Lord FitzWilliam was dismissed from the lord-lieutenancy of Yorkshire for taking a prominent part in a meeting held to pass a vote of censure on the conduct of the Manchester magistrates in the 'Peterloo' affair.



‘ 11 Dec. 1819.

‘ I see the patriotism of the Oppn. is nearly weary, and they begin to leave town, after having given up a large fortnight of their time to the brave Radicals ; so that we shall be able to adjourn at or soon after Xtmas. The worst feature of our proceedings—or rather of *intended proc.*—has been the actual design of granting to Mr. Bennett <sup>1</sup> a committee—*To enquire into the state of the Manufacturing Districts*—as if the effect of such a comm. would not have been many times worse than any other sort of parly. enquiry that could have been devised. Luckily Mr. B. prefaced his motion with a speech which fairly displayed his intention of leading his comm. into a wide field of political enquiry. Whether the violence of his temper or his personal disinclination to sacrifice his holidays induced him to this declaration, I know not ; and I cannot conceive that Govt. can be ignorant, that had his comm. been granted, nothing could have hindered him from collecting all his Radical allegations now extant, and a large crop which would have sprung up for the occasion, and this would have been printed with the apparent sanction of the Ho. Commons. Of course all persons who have conspicuously resisted the Radicals, especially the Manchester magistrates, would have been summoned, or would have appeared without summons before this comm., and what sort of treatment they would [have] had before a court constituted of Mr. Bennett solus, or supported by Burdett, Lambton and the like, Ministers ought to have considered : but they are infatuated, or could not have adopted the *liberal* intention of committing all things to a comm. of this kind.’

The interest of 1820 is again mainly political. The Cato Street Conspiracy to assassinate the ministers was the first excitement of the year. Then the King died, and was succeeded by George IV. Finally, the whole nation was set in commotion by the so-called ‘ Queen’s trial,’ which

<sup>1</sup> A prominent reformer.

won the Queen the highest popularity and resulted in a virtual defeat for the Ministry. Rickman seems to have continued in rather low spirits, and told Southey that he was meditating a list of words by misapprehension of which the world was governed badly, and a plan by which a book of several chapters might be so made. Southey, who was hard at work on his *Peninsular War*, was moved by political events to begin his *Colloquies*, which finally appeared in 1829. Of the four letters from Rickman to Southey which I give for this year, three are on current politics, and one (the third) gives Rickman's own imaginary scheme for his *béguinage*, a Utopian dream of which he never tired.

' 10 January 1820.

' Our Parliamentary campaign was sharp though short, and left me some accumulation of various business chiefly Highland, and now I must work hard at a Road and Bridge Report till Parlt. meets, and in the appendages till Easter I suppose. In fact the history of proceedings is more to me than the business itself—a necessary evil however, and one of which I now see the termination. Part of life has been well spent perhaps in starting well such a novelty in the government of civilised nations as the half contribution scheme pursued in the Highland improvements, and on similar occasions, if ever they occur, the managers will perceive that it is possible by care and attention to produce a satisfactory result. It has been lucky that Mr. Hope, Mr. Telford, and I have all lived 17 years, as the death of any one of us would have produced a terrible derangement—*De hoc satis*.

' The laws that have been passed, especially those which strike at the *liberty!* of the Press, seem to me good, as a necessary preface to better, when they are found to be ineffectual. Have you seen the impudent declaration of the hell-hounds of the Press, which puts the matter fairly enough at issue, as a question of domination? I inclose it, copied from a famous caricature libel of theirs, which

probably has reached you. The two worst things the Session has produced are the proof of the amazing blindness of Lord C. [Castlereagh] to the effect of Mr. Bennett's Comms., and still worse the apparent concession to the Whig scheme of Parly. Reform, which the self complacent little M.P. for Tavistock<sup>1</sup> introduced, and which ought to have been answered: Yes, provided we begin with the independent borough of Tavistock. For the plan cannot but extinguish all boroughs in succession; the witnesses being forced to speak out as to all past transactions, and as to the general character and custom of the borough. Yet I am afraid both Lord C. and Mr. Canning are not unfavourable to an experiment, which very experiment will take away all ground of argument against going farther, and will soon produce revolution and thereby in succession a military government of course.

'Unless the text I mentioned be openly and convincingly insisted on, this cannot be prevented, especially as the other source of revolution, an unbridled press and the number of readers increasing geometrically, cannot so exist without the same result. Dr. Bell's scheme seems to suppose a censorship of the Press, or its omnipotence. Now I confess it to be a sort of government I had rather not exist under. I feel half a slave already, I wish to throw off my chains. . . .'

*Παψωδία.*

' 10 February 1820.

'Oddly enough I was taking a sheet of paper to write on to you when yours of this day's arrival made its appearance. I was ruminating on your present task, and thinking the occasion good for clearing away the villainous mist of prejudice and misrepresentation which by agency of the oligarchs of the Oppn. Press prevents the nation from recognising the indubitable signs of the unexampled prosperity of the last  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a century, and this due under Pro-

<sup>1</sup> Lord John Russell.



vidence to an unavoidable war and peculiarly to the very attack made on our commercial prosperity by Napoleon. Our taxation has been *enough perhaps*, but certainly not more than enough to draw forth our energies (as an uncertain northern climate has made us improve in agriculture and grow more corn than the countries round the Mediterranean where our corn is indigenous) and there can be no real doubt (I don't include Opp. doubt) that we are more able at the accession of Geo. iv. to make national exertions if needed, than at any past time. The technical question about our finances and national debt is a low one, fit for Opp. The Chancellor of the Excheqr. may be perplexed in finding unexceptionable machinery, but after all a man is not the poorer for being indebted to *himself*: the two sides of a ledger, merely phantoms of Dr. and Cr. and so it is with old England and her bugbear debt.

‘And who would not extol what George iv. our Regent has performed by his perseverance in the late war? For that was *personal*, because the devolution of power into the hands of those early *friends*(!), who would not have so persevered, was practicable and even tempting to the Regent if but to avoid or preclude the incessant malice and mud that he was sure enough these early friends of his would favour him with, and if he broke from their factious trammels, that is, declined persevering in a conspiracy against *himself*, his future crown and dignity, he must have been a fool indeed not to have foreseen the consequences of still remaining a modern Whig (though indeed these early friends did once build a stone wall for their own purposes in that taste, and ran against it to the lasting benefit of John Bull). Thank God their late sneaking, denied, allowed, rejected, alliance with the Radicals has sunk them low enough! Did you see the pitiful answer of the high Whig Lord Fitz.<sup>1</sup> to the address of the Yorkshire Whig Radicals the other day? The subdued tone is very satisfying.

<sup>1</sup> FitzWilliam.

‘ You are in good order (by favour of Coxe) for a comparison of the D. of Marlborough and the English exploits of that age in the same scenes of action (France excepted !) with the D. of Wellington and our own age. I cannot execrate the Opp. spirit sufficiently, when I perceive that their perseverance working on English feelings (always querulous, and captious of public men) has not only disguised from the nation the magnitude and importance of military exploits of the Regency, but even prevents *myself*, without argument and induction, and comparison historical, from feeling the new glories of my country. To what extent must that misrepresentation (both in quality and quantity) be which shall habitually influence the feelings of the man who sees and complains of it—the very antagonist power of truth which sometimes exaggerates, is palsied ! Frightful ! ’

‘ 20th February 1820.

‘ . . . My notion of a female establishment is, that any benefactor erecting a set of chambers, shall thereby acquire a right (alienable by will, gift, or sale, like other property) to place inmates there on certain conditions, such as that security shall be given that each enjoy a competent income not less than £— while she resides there ; that she shall be bound to the necessary rules of female decorum on pain of instant expulsion, and to such other rules as are indispensable to the well being of the community. But that nothing like common meals shall be proposed, the ladies to choose their own mutual society, of which there would be enough, and to make all minor arrangements among themselves. I believe for external appearance, to prevent expence and vanity, and to restrain the number of idle applications, a uniform dress would be proper ; and for many purposes, such as prayers, bad weather and peripatetic exercise, a large room would be a respectable adjunct to the edifice, and for which the *fundatores* might be taxed a per centage upon their several chambers.

‘ Under such easy laws as these, and considering how

fashionable and how laudable is the appetite for virtuous patronage, I do not see how there should be failure among the female nobility and thousands of other opulent females so to invest part of their money. None of it could be spent more for their own reputation and respectability, and considering that the individuals admitted would not of necessity (nor usually) be *maintained* by the foundress of the chamber, but recommended to her by those who might have interest or gratification in giving security for the maintenance of the inmate, I cannot but think that the foundress, who might even let or sell an admission, the immediate patron of the admitted female, who might thus exonerate himself from care and anxiety were better motive wanting, and the admitted female, whose maintenance for life, or at least for a specified term of years, must be secured before her admission, would all find motive enough for falling into a plan simple and unambiguous in its arrangements, and (if not woefully mismanaged) of the highest respectability.

‘I do not know whether you are prepared to agree with me as to the necessity of a secured income to each female, but I have enquired enough in and about such female societies (such there are for clergymen’s widows at Branley, at Winchester, at Froxfield, at Lichfield, and I daresay elsewhere) as to be fully convinced that respectability cannot otherwise be maintained. You cannot hope to keep poverty and meanness apart, even dishonesty and sordid habits too often accompany it, and if a female is poor and friendless she is not for that the *better or more worthy*, in short there must be a *classification* of relief, and I treat of the *upper class*: observing only, that many would be exalted into that upper class were the means of so exalting them easy, and obvious to the wealthy. Few wills would be without bequests of the competent annuity to some humble friend. Various societies would be at various rates. I should say from £50 to £100 per annum, or some such *minimum* and if a wealthy foundress resided herself, she would have larger facility for beneficence than



display. Her love of the community (so conspicuous among monks in former times) would found libraries, plantations, walks, cloisters, gaudy days (whether obit or birthday), medical attendance, a chaplain perhaps, *Creados*<sup>1</sup> sufficient for the garden, the porter's lodge, for watch and defence and for government the foundress must legislate, the inmates elect their executive among themselves. . . .'

' 6 March 1820.

' . . . The Opps. would be in a doleful plight, did Governmt. stir a finger in its own behalf ; but that I suppose is become unlawful, and I really believe that the zeal of the hell hounds, few and contemptible as they are, will cause the Opps. to profit by the new election in spite of the manifestation of the outward and visible effect of Oppn. patriotism. Yet I do not despair of reaction hereafter. The Liberals are uncloaking apace ; Germany, France, England<sup>2</sup> have seen the commencement of assassination already, and the mass of mankind cannot much longer be blind to its origin : and if we can abolish the hellish Press, I do not despair of human society, founded on more bland principles than individual independence, which is become a power of misbehaving without punishment, and consequent mob-government.'

In 1821, the year of the coronation, at which the Queen made her ill-advised attempt to be present, Rickman was very busy in compiling a very long Highland Roads and Bridges report, a Caledonian Canal report, and the population returns. His letters were, therefore, few. However, the following fragment throws an interesting light on Rickman's early character :—

' 6 Nov. 1821.

' I have been much edified by reading your Cromwell

<sup>1</sup> Presumably Rickman means *criados*=servants (Spanish).

<sup>2</sup> Rickman refers probably to the respective assassinations of Kotzebue, the Duc de Berry, and Perceval.

in the Q. Review. I even allow that the Peninsular War ought not to grumble at such *Remorae*. When I was young, no book was more in my hand than Rushworth, so I became learned in the histy. of his time, and am agreeably surprised to perceive that you know more about it than I do. . . . I was such an Oliverian in my time at Oxford as to have obtained the agnomen of Old Nol: but I believe half my zeal was feigned to tease certain Royalists. Here I am working hard at the Population Abstract into the preliminary observations of which I think I shall be able [? to insert] some matter, which will put to flight for ever and aye the *Distress of the Times*—in past history—with good inference when the Opps. raise that cry again.’

The quarrel between Southey and Byron, which after the publication of Southey’s *Vision of Judgment* late in 1821 became acute, had its echo in the correspondence with Rickman, who sympathised entirely in the Laureate’s attack on the ‘Satanic School.’ Politics, however, were the subject uppermost in his mind. At the beginning of the year, Liverpool, who had already secured Wellesley and Peel, tried to strengthen his party by attracting some of the Grenville following. Grenville himself refused office, but Southey’s friend, Charles Wynn, became a cabinet minister. Rickman, however, did not regard affairs in a much brighter light. The prospects of the Caledonian Canal, for instance, were viewed by him with undue pessimism. On April 30, 1822, he wrote to Southey.

‘30 April 1822.

‘. . . We continue to be much obliged to you for your kind communication of northern remembrances. I am sorry to say that the Caledonian Canal is a tender subject at present. It is come to the birth, but whether strength will be afforded in this economical year to bring it forth—to open it throughout—I am not confident, so that I am ill at ease on any allusion to a subject which but for this ought to be most pleasing to me, and I am exceedingly

overwhelmed with the Population Abstract and other business at present. After the Session I hope to recover from a sort of depression thus occasioned. . . .’

Later in the year, in the course of a long letter complaining of very heavy work, he addressed Southey in desperation.

‘2nd July 1822.

‘. . . Political affairs are tending fast to dissolution of Government, unless, when all see that, a revulsion happens; we shall have a chance to witness the result. At present the country gentlemen half of them vote *against* the Administration *because corn is cheap*; not seeing *with whom* they therefore vote, of course *with* the anarchists. Practically I suppose the Ho. Commons will be the scene of the impending dissolution of the English *constitution*, as it is called. The Opps. have at this moment an unquestionable and practical veto, somewhat acquired by insolence and perseverance, more by the liberality (God help the word) of the Administration, who act too without concert and in disgust (natural enough) of the degraded state in which they collectively feel themselves. Do you not observe that we have been doing nothing for more than two months, that is, nothing but listening to opposition speeches, and resisting their motions? Defensive war must be successful in the sequel: already the friends of Government are gone to their country seats, and a compact squadron of Radicals prevent all business by clamour, or on pretence of a late hour, or the absence of somebody who takes interest in the proper business of the evening. In fact half the supplies of the year and the most disputeable are not yet granted, nor have the Govt. been able to go into the Co. Supply *since Easter*, though it has been specially appointed, and notices of motions in it given by the Treasury oftener than once a week. But the Opps. have a complete veto. Whether this Session (as is likely) may disclose this irresistably, or whether they have so much



mercy in their own conscience as to defer the result, I know not, perhaps care little, for such a contemptible state of things is not agreeable, and this mode of destruction is inconvenient to us of the Ho. Commons, the wear and tear of endless debates, or to no purpose but to prove the unchecked insolence of the Opps., and of an interminable Session being a melancholy mode of extinction of mind and body. And now the habit has been established by the oscillancy of the Govt., the Press will not permit recovery of power. In that mob-engine is no slackness, and concession is never regained from it, the result of which two is certain: what always advances, never recedes, must arrive at its own end, at sovereignty, sooner or later, unless the eyes of the stock-holders and of country gentlemen are opened by some outward and visible sign of what they cannot see without some violent process. It is quite comical (if not of such serious import) that they continue to be lookers on of the contest between the Govt. and the Radical squadron, as if it were a game for their amusement. You will not wonder if I am fatigued and disgusted at what I must see, and cannot help to remedy, an essential neutral, like the inhabitants of the seat of war. No comfortable situation; I see no chance of the Session ending till the middle of August.

‘Farewell—Mrs. R. desires her remembrances. I shall be much gratified, if I ever exist again for rational purposes, to see your colloquies.’

During the session Peel succeeded Sidmouth as Home Secretary, and on August 12 Castlereagh, who had lately become Marquis of Londonderry, committed suicide in a fit of morbid depression. In March Canning had accepted the governor-generalship of India, and was preparing to depart when Castlereagh died. It was felt that Canning was the only possible successor to the position of Foreign Secretary, but it took some little time to overcome the King’s dislike for him. So on September 7 Rickman told Southey:—

‘At present Canning or no Canning is the question. An intriguing man ever, and from one of his intrigues a Queenite. Yet such is the state of things that the Ho. Commons business cannot be carried on, without quite so much as his help, and Governmt. without him will expire from lack of physical force.’

Canning was appointed on September 9, and Rickman again vented his dislike to Southey.

‘18th September 1822.

‘. . . Are we all to travel through anarchy to despotism ? I fear it must be so, and I take the cause to lie in the one simple aim of the wicked, against the divided opinions of their opponents. Mr. Canning, for instance, strenuously resists reform of Parl., *but* is an advocate for at least the present degree of the *liberty* of the Press, though nothing can be more evident than the misnomer, it is indeed domination, and of a kind held intolerable by all men except in this instance,—power without responsibility, and irresistible in its incessant encroachments, while it so remains. I do not think the Ho. Commons will be the death of Mr. Canning, *because* I expect he will be assassinated before that happens. His wit and eloquence when often exerted in behalf of the established order of things, will be felt too severely, when it is also felt that nothing stands in the way of the dissolution of the British Government if he can be removed ; for in that case the present Administration must succumb from mere inanition, and the reign of the Whigs, intolerable to the monied interest, could not last three months unless in revolutionary form, in concessions to the Radicals—An unpleasant prospect ! . . .’

Canning was a prominent supporter of Roman Catholic relief, and, while he was still out of office, had brought forward a bill to enable Catholic peers to vote in the House of Lords. Southey and Rickman felt acutely on the question, and on Southey’s having informed Rickman of a reported plan of Canning’s to oust certain opponents of

Catholic relief from the Cabinet, Rickman replied on December 20 :—

‘ I have to thank you for your letter of political intelligence, none of which had reached me, beyond a general intimation that Canning was at his old sport—intrigue—from which he will never refrain till at the head of affairs. . . . I should not be surprised if Mr. Canning and some other seeming friends of the R.C. should really like a rebellion, which would get them out of the scrape which their liberal absurdity has placed them in. While cheapness of provisions prevails, the Radicals of England are powerless, and a religious war in Ireland will place matters in a clear point of view.’

The beginning of 1823 saw the appearance of the first volume of Southey’s *Peninsular War*, upon which Rickman wrote him a generous appreciation, though he could not keep politics out. ‘ One cannot,’ he says, ‘ in imagination picture a more contemptible animal than a Whig Radical.’ Nevertheless, he had more pleasant thoughts to fill his mind, connected with the opening of the Caledonian Canal. Southey, fired by his tour in 1819, wrote three inscriptions to be put up at Clachnaharry, Fort Augustus, and Banavie respectively. These lines were carved on stone at Rickman’s direction as a surprise for Telford. The following letter refers to this pleasant incident.

‘ 4th April 1823.

‘ I am much obliged to you for sundry letters, which ungratefully or from my daily living I have not answered, but this is the Easter week ; I have cleared away arrear of business, and am paying my debts of private correspondence.

‘ You have been so good I know to write inscriptions ; *et his similia*, of and concerning our Highland works. All is well there, now ; the Canal open and becoming popular, and I foresee I shall conquer the absurd reliance which the semi-barbarians have imbibed, that they are not to pay



for the maintenance of their roads. They have been indulged so much as to believe, that they do me a favour in suffering me to repair those roads, but it is come to such a pass this, that I have turned upon them sharply enough to convince them of their error, and all will be well. They are spoiled children learning to kiss the rod, so that on the whole you may celebrate in prose or verse, all our exploits, with great safety, and I will support you, if needful, and therein myself. . . .’

In April there comes an interesting letter from Rickman to Lord Colchester, describing the debate on Plunket’s motion for Catholic relief. The Radicals seceded owing to the high words that had arisen between Brougham and Canning, Brougham having accused Canning of deserting the Roman Catholics on taking office; Plunket was then left in a considerable minority. The first part of the letter refers to a charge which was brought against Plunket of unconstitutional procedure as Attorney-General for Ireland.

‘April 18, 1823.

‘MY LORD,— . . . We go on in the House of Commons very well as to the Catholics. Plunkett, in the anguish of an evil conscience, and terror of disgrace, was so imprudent as to defend himself by criminating others on notoriously false evidence, I am told, and this is capable of proof. The Administration, it is said, will resist Sir F. Burdett’s motion on Tuesday next for inquiry into facts. If so they will be sure of defeat. All the Opposition with all the Protestants on the Ministerial side of the House being quite enough to overwhelm them, even if Plunkett should be so indecent as to vote against inquiry himself.

‘Last night we had a curious scene as to the Catholic question. The Catholics being certain of defeat, and many of the Opposition hating Plunkett as *a rat*, accused him of bad faith, and the Radicals (about a dozen) seceded on that pretence, to disguise the majority which they anticipated against the Roman Catholics. At half past twelve,

nobody offering to speak, the gallery was cleared for a division. To prevent which Sir John Nugent moved an adjournment, because, he said, strangers were excluded. It was of no use to say that it could not be otherwise when the debate was over, and all sorts of adjournments were proposed to prevent any division upon the real question, in which the Roman Catholics would have been beaten by about three score. . . . Yours truly.'

In connexion with the year 1823, it must be noted as rather remarkable that no allusion was made in the correspondence between Rickman and Southey to the unfortunate incident between the latter and Lamb. Southey had mildly censured the *Essays of Elia*, in an otherwise favourable *Quarterly* review, for want of religious feeling. Lamb replied with a very strong letter in the *London Magazine*, which wholly took Southey by surprise. He wrote a tactful private letter to Lamb, who dissolved into penitence at once. Perhaps, however, the absence of reference in the letters is explained by the fact that in December Southey was in London.

During 1824 the two friends were knit together by a new bond. In April Southey's daughter Bertha came to stay with the Rickmans for fourteen months as a companion to Ann Rickman, and to acquire some accomplishments which were not possible in remote Keswick. Rickman's letters upon Bertha are truly precious pieces of comment.

'6th July 1824.

'Miss Bertha S. I assure you improves fast, both in her good looks, and strength of both kinds. As to the timidity, which you speak of as her characteristic, no more remains than the playful memory of it. Upon receiving your last, I thought of a good *experimentum crucis*. W. C. R. has just come home for his holidays. He was to see the representation of the battles of Ligny, Quatre Bras, and Waterloo at Astley's—the best spectacle ever

produced, the actors being Waterloo men mostly of the Guards, above 100 infantry; the Cavalry 50 of the equestrian troop, and plenty of artillery. The actions being fiercely contested, there is much gunpowder spent, even cannons fired on the stage. All dreadful to Bertha, when she saw it by some chance, a month since. So I told W. C. R. to choose his party, and said nothing, beyond asking at dinner time, who was going? And among the volunteers was enumerated Miss B. S. who enjoyed it as much as anybody, and said, "She saw it all." Moreover, as she had professed her dread of going in a boat on the Thames, I gave her the option of so moving to St. Paul's this morning; and heard not a word of repugnance or of terror. If at St. Paul's she did not go up to the ball, so did not Miss A. R., and they are both too tall for the experiment, which cannot be achieved, without aid for guiding the feet from below. She is not very fond of being taught musick and dancing, but submits with a good grace, and improves in both.

'We go from London to-morrow—to stay a fortnight at a farm-house—and afterwards in the island of Portsea—the first of the time including hay-making and the cherry season.

'Miss B. S. anticipated (as well as journeying in the abstract,) with much pleasure, and I doubt not will like Portsea equally well afterwards. Farewell, I am busy enough packing necessaries, and writing letters and leaving instructions on departing, but could not go with a clear conscience without saying thus much of Bertha, who is a favourite with everybody.'

The second letter contains the announcement that Rickman was building himself a country house near Portsmouth. His first place of *villeggiatura* had been Epsom, where a house had been taken annually since Willy had suffered from the croup. They had also frequently visited the farm belonging to Rickman's brother at Chidham in Sussex. Thenceforward, all holidays were



spent at Portsmouth, where Rickman found it very convenient to retire, even in winter, to recover from the effects of overwork.

‘CHIDHAM, 8th September 1824.

‘ We are not at Portsmouth yet, but are to be there early next week. I do not know whether you are aware of part of our projected occupation,—the fitting up a house now in *shell* (as the builders speak), for I find by experience that my autumn half-year cannot be spent in desolated Westmr. nor elsewhere with satisfaction, unless in so fixed a place, as to find my books etc. about me; and all things are disregarded at Westmr. (except the purpose of business) during the Session; therefore, and for other causes, I have built me an house, and we are going to reside next door to it. Not that it stands in a street, but in a shady lane, on an half acre of garden ground, for fruit trees and flowers. This you will think well, and Bertha will tell you more about it soon, she being endowed with a due share of enquiry and observation. Financially speaking, you are to understand, that the interest of money has so fallen as to render house-building not imprudent. For instance, if I spend £3000 in house and furniture, I am but £100 a year poorer, and save more summer house rent than that.

‘ Of our tarrying 8 or 9 weeks,—we are at Mrs. Rickman’s birth place, guests of her brother, who now cultivates as much of his father’s land as is near the house: with what effect, Bertha’s inclosed MS. will inform you. Large inferences are deducible, as you will see, but the facts were put together for Bertha’s use, she having full experience in hay-making, and harvest (just finished) and acquaintance with the cows, calves and pigs. To the latter especially in the form of bacon and pork, she seems most partial. Besides this knowledge there is a poney absolutely without volition, who goes just as fast and just as slow as the rider pleases, and starts at nothing. By means of this animal, Bertha has practised riding enough to go through life with her, and as she and A. R. are fond of this exercise, which

puts to flight head-ache, the poney (hight *Victor*) goes to Portsmouth with us. We live here with somewhat of the ancient frugality of the farm house—"Waste not, want not,"—a good ingredient in the happiness of future life, which Bertha will not let escape her; she being as Milton said with other meaning, in polemic pun—very *morigera*—and is become I daresay very rich in country-life imagery, for after use; so that the time here has been well spent, though so much of it was not intended to be so appropriated. At Portsmouth other points of knowledge may be pursued with advantage; ships and fortifications we are sure of, society of all sorts q.s., and they say a good drawing master. In musick Miss B. S. is much improved, and she holds herself erect at all times as much as Mrs. R. desires. Of course, you expect her to be liable to innocent *impulses*. I do not know that I can say anything unfavourable of her, except perhaps in a point of every day good manners. I am not sure she would not in after life lessen kind feelings and intentions sometimes, by not seeming to thank cordially for any little proffered kindness for which she has not at the moment occasion, or will to avail of it. Thus far of the new house of Chidham, and of B. S.'

These kindly remarks were duly forwarded by Southey to Miss Bertha, with injunctions to mend her manners.

In 1825 the question of Catholic relief, which has already appeared more than once in Rickman's letters, became really acute. Since Pitt's resignation in 1801 the cause had been resolutely pushed by its supporters. From 1805 onwards motions in support of the Catholic claims were frequently made in both Houses; Grattan, Grenville, Burdett and Canning were the leading supporters; Eldon, Peel and Wellington were in opposition. In 1812, after Liverpool had succeeded Perceval, though the question was left open in the Cabinet, Canning carried a motion pledging the House to consider the question in the next session; and in 1813 a bill for the removal of Catholic disabilities passed its second reading. It was, however,



wrecked in committee by the opposition of Speaker Abbot. In 1817 the motion for relief was discussed at some length, and defeated by twenty-four. Two years later Grattan, after a great speech, reduced that majority to two. Finally, in 1821, a comprehensive measure for Catholic relief passed the Commons by a majority of nineteen, though the uncompromising hostility of the Duke of York and Eldon ruined its chance in the Lords. From 1821 onwards, therefore, it was known that it was only the Lords from whom successful opposition was to be feared. An important factor in the question was the disturbed state of Ireland since the Union. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended in 1803 after Emmet's rebellion, and in several years before 1817. Violence and outrage were common, and it was probably this state of things which prevented the cause of the Catholics becoming a really popular cause in England. Of Canning's bill in 1822 enabling Catholic peers to vote, of the quarrel between Canning and Brougham, and of Plunket's fiasco in 1823 I have already spoken. In 1823 the Catholic Association, which practically usurped the functions of government in Ireland, was founded by O'Connell and Sheil. This Association was not suppressed by Lord Wellesley, the lord-lieutenant, but that it should be suppressed was strongly held in the House. A bill for its suppression was introduced in 1825 and commanded large majorities in both Houses. Burdett, nevertheless, moved a new resolution for Catholic relief on March 1, which was carried by a small majority. A relief bill was promptly introduced and read a second time. This was the position when on April 4 Rickman wrote to Southey. His eighteen months in Ireland had engendered a firm hatred in his Saxon mind for all things Irish, as will be seen.

' 4 April 1825.

' . . . I think if the R.C. do not carry their point this year they will in the next Session. There is a kind of wearisomeness in being always on the defensive, modern



liberality not permitting the use of such weapons as cut deep, unless on the liberal side of the argument. Hence it is that Brougham does prudently in venturing to use his tomahawk without means of self-defence. It is not permitted to say that you do not oppose the Irish R.C. quasi R.C. simply, but as barbarians, and therefore under the domination of their priesthood as much as Europe was in the time of the Crusades. Not as R.C. simply, but as savages who less than 30 years since commenced a massacre with as hearty a good will as did their forefathers in 1641, and who give proofs from time to time that they are not unready for another when occasion shall serve. To me it is strange that nobody observes in a lucid manner, that liberality, not being justice, must always be injustice, when it steps beyond the disposal of your own individual property or rights, because what is given to one must be taken from another, and you have no right to give away what you cannot give without first taking from A. to give to B. This no trustee or extor. is ever expected, as not empowered, to give, but we surrender one thing after another till we are already on the brink of merging our national Church, as Pope did in the universal prayer, and we are approaching the glorious time when it will be every man's interest to be a felon. No man forsooth is to be decerned other than an innocent till found guilty, and then the judge, prosecutor, etc., are all to conspire for remission of punishment. Some time since I read in a newspaper, that a woman who stole cheese in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden, was taken to a police officer by the shopman, who said his master lost too much not to make an example. But the woman pleading hunger, etc., which every thief pleads in the case of eatables, the magistrate was shocked at the inhumanity of the cheesemonger, and the said cheesemonger hastened to town, disowned in the police office the deed of his trusty shopman, and found it prudent to give the woman five shillings because she had been caught in robbing him; so the woman was sure of cheese, or money, or both, in doing that for which in better times she would have been

pilloried or whipt at the cart's tail, and imprisoned. But real punishment is obsolete !'

Burdett's bill was carried by a majority of twenty-one on May 10; Peel at once tendered his resignation to Liverpool. Two days afterwards, the Duke of York made a sensational and unconstitutional speech, in which he attributed George III.'s madness to agitation on the Catholic question, and avowed that he would remain by his principles till his last moment 'whatever might be his station in life.' In spite of a furious counter-attack by Brougham, the bill was thrown out in the Lords by forty-eight.

In the summer Southey made a voyage in Holland, where a festered foot kept him longer than he expected in Leyden. He described his sojourn there, and his acquaintance with the old poet Bilderdijk, in more than one letter to Rickman. On Rickman, meanwhile, another burden was laid, the secretaryship to the Commission for building churches in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. He acted in this capacity, in which he was again associated with his friend Telford, till the final report of the Commission in 1830. As he said to Southey, he was 'cruelly oppressed' with work, and in the late autumn he endeavoured to find relief in a tour in Normandy to view, among other things, the Bayeux tapestry. Rickman's account of this tour has been preserved in part, and it shows with how little ease he took relaxation. His love for precise information led him ceaselessly to make notes and collect measurements and tabulate details of all that he saw. For him the real joy of indolent, restful travelling was an impossibility. He kept a precise journal, which was transcribed later and sent to Southey as a return for the latter's 'northern remembrances.' In spite of his voyage, the next year only found Rickman more depressed, and Southey urged him in three consecutive letters to take a rest. The following are extracts.

'30 *March* 1826.

'I hope the Easter holydays have been, in the language

of the Saints, *improved* by you, that is that you have profited by them to get that refreshment which green fields and an open sky afford after long and close attention to business in London. How you stand such perpetual wear and tear of intellect is to me marvellous. I have a reputation for hard-working, but had this head of mine been worked half as much, or half as intensely as yours, it would have been under the sod long ere this. My bow is never kept strung, and half its time only with a loose string, which just serves for letting fly a fool's bolt. Idleness and mirthfulness have done much towards keeping me in working trim.'

' 10 April 1826.

' I do not doubt that over-tension of mind has been the primary cause of the evil, and probably some obscure bodily derangement the proximate one. The remedy is to be sought in change of circumstances, scene and air. . . . Take a journey as soon as Parliament breaks up. . . . You want change and sunshine, and open air, and motion, and that sort of occupation which is amusement, and which can in no other way be so surely attained as by travelling in a foreign country.'

' 30 April 1826.

' . . . You have had more than your share of this world's business. I doubt whether any other man who has worked so hardly, has worked so continuously and so long. Our occupations withdraw us all too much from nearer and more lasting concourse. Time and nature—especially when aided by any sorrows—prepare us for better influences, and when we feel what is wanting, we seek and find it. The clouds then disperse, and the evening is calm and clear, even till night closes. . . .'

The result was that in June Southey, Rickman and Henry Taylor, the poet, took a short tour in the Netherlands. Of this tour Rickman compiled a laborious account



which he sent as a letter to Lord Colchester, but it is such an uninspiring document, that I shall do best service to his memory by refraining from quotation. Southey, during his absence, was elected M.P. for Downton by the influence of his unknown admirer, Lord Radnor. As he held a pension during pleasure, and, further, had no property qualification, his election was void. Nevertheless, his friend, Sir Robert Inglis, offered to purchase him a landed estate yielding £300 a year, if he would consent to sit; but after due deliberation Southey wisely decided to remain at Keswick, aloof from the busy world.

In February 1827, Lord Liverpool was stricken by a fatal illness, and for nearly six weeks there was no Prime Minister. The Cabinet was split into two parties led by Canning and Peel respectively, and a conciliatory premier of Liverpool's stamp was not forthcoming. Finally the King, irritated by the refusals of Wellington and Peel, decided to send for Canning. His short-lived ministry was not a happy one. He was in failing health, and all his Tory colleagues but Huskisson deserted him. The general opinion, as may be seen in Colchester's Diary, was that Canning would fail to form an administration: that which he did form came in for unsparing criticism, and the session ended in dissension and dispute. The following letter, written by Rickman to Southey just as Parliament met, contains an unwarranted accusation, for Burdett had moved his Catholic relief motion before Canning took office, and Canning had violently attacked the Master of the Rolls, Copley, who opposed the motion.

' 3 May 1827.

' . . . Certainly we have now plenty of explanation from the ex-Ministers, in which they successfully repel all the insinuations cunningly thrown out against them. The result of the change, as far as the R. Catholic Qn. is concerned, is curious. Its supporters, being in office are not to stir in it nor to be urged to it. *Mr. Brougham* says, he must be an enemy to his country who brings it into agita-

tion *at present*—during the Reign of Geo. iv., I suppose ; and the Protestants having the dangers visibly before them, with Mr. C. at the head of a R. Catholic Cabinet, must now become zealous. The danger was in the state of things which liberally permitted organized sedition in Dublin and outrage in Ireland to the R.C. and on the Protestants imposed silence and endurance. The R. Catholics, I expect, will be furious when they understand the effects of their friends being in office, and they will find out how little Mr. C., Mr. Brougham, or Sir F. Burdett really care about them. A vexatious opposition would soon kill Canning, especially as he retains no Cabinet Minister in that Ho. Commons to answer for him in his absence. He has made a mistake we suppose in sending Mr. Robinson (Lord Goodrich) to the Ho. Peers. . . .’

On August 8 Canning died, and the political sky seemed to clear for a moment, for Goderich managed to form another Ministry of compromise with Wellington, Huskisson, Herries and Tierney. But for the moment a different subject occupied the attention of Southey and Rickman. A letter from Southey gives the details.

‘ 15 Aug. 1827.

‘ I am about to reprint in a separate form such of my stray papers as are worth collecting from the *Q. R.* etc. . . . Shall I print with these your remarks upon the Economical Reformers—in the *Ed. Ann. Register* of 1810—and your paper upon the poor laws ? Certainly not, if you have any intention of collecting your own papers, which I wish you would do. But if you have no such intention, or contemplate it at an indefinite distance, then it would be well that so much good matter should be placed where it would be in the way of being read ; and there I should like it to be as some testimony and memorial of an intimacy which has—now for thirty years—contributed much to my happiness, and in no slight degree to my intellectual progress. In this case I will take care to notice that the credit of these

papers is not due to me, either specifying whose they are, or leaving that unexplained as you may like best. . . .’

He followed this by another letter—which I do not quote—giving particulars of the papers which he proposed to republish. Rickman’s reply was one of complete acquiescence. Peel’s bill, to which he refers, was for the resumption of cash payments for notes in 1823. This date was anticipated by the Bank of England by two years.

‘ 13 September 1827.

‘ I am much obliged to you for your letter of 27th August explanatory of your intended publication, of the success of which there is good hope, everybody seeming to concur in their approbation, I may say admiration, of your prose works, so that collecting scattered parts together will confer enlarged benefits. I agree with you that there is no occasion to alter any of your opinions in the papers of which you give me a list. Crazy politics are perhaps somewhat dormant at present, which I attribute to the cowardly sort of compromise whereby the Parly. Opposition have been kept comparatively quiet during the last 8 or 10 years, the first very remarkable instance being the sudden conversion of the Bullion Commees. of both Houses, I believe in 1819, when Mr. Peel, the Chairman of the Ho. Commons Commee., brought in the Bill which the Bank of England Directors afterwards outran in their natural eagerness to escape the imputations current against them. The Whigs were consistent enough in hating paper currency, without the domestic use of which in England their idol Bonaparte might perhaps have prevailed; but the Ministry should not have gratified them by turning off so useful a servant with disgrace; and it is curious that the absurd discouragement of what ought to be left to regulate itself, the existence of one pound notes, or any sort of currency which the public like, and which is so clearly proved on investigation to have been the source of the prosperity of Scotland, that the grand *general* principle of the Whigs cannot be carried



into effect there ; although if it be not good as a general principle, it must needs be good for nothing. . . .'

Southey's *Essays, Moral and Political*, appeared in 1832, but they contain no acknowledgment of Rickman's work. I have already shown<sup>1</sup> that the essay on 'The means of improving the People' was almost entirely Rickman's work. But Southey, in his letter of August 27, also refers to two other passages for which he was indebted to Rickman, both of which appeared in the *Edinburgh Annual Register*. The first passage from the *Annual Register*, vol. ii. part 2, pp. 288-294, is incorporated in Southey's essay on Sir Francis Burdett's motion for Parliamentary reform. It is a spirited diatribe against pure democracy, and against the reformers for being purely factious when opportunities for so much peaceful social reform lay ready to their hands. The second passage, from the *Annual Register*, vol. iii. part 2, pp. 211 sqq., is incorporated in the essay 'On the Economical Reformers.' It is a defence of sinecures and high salaries, on the ground that they attract good men, and it contains some characteristic paragraphs upon the better results of paying civil servants by fees rather than by fixed salaries. The germ of this argument we have already seen in one of Rickman's letters to Poole (see p. 140). It is curious that this very question arose in 1833 when a committee inquired into the offices of the House of Commons. The old clerks all concurred in their evidence that the subordinates worked better when paid by the piece than at fixed rates. On this point, however, Rickman's evidence was not taken. In these essays Rickman's rugged style was polished by Southey, but it is possible to recognise its craggy outlines in a passage, which I have taken from Southey's third essay :—

'No good can ever be effected by appealing to evil passions. He who would benefit his country, instead of fostering the discontent of the public and pimping for their suspicions, should address their generous feelings, encourage

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 107-203.

their national spirit, and exalt their hopes. The methods of reform . . . are these. Institute parochial schools, . . . extend your system of colonization, . . . establish the principle of limited service in your fleets and armies, and make the reward of service adequate and certain . . . Carry on the war with all the might, all the soul, and all the strength of this mighty Empire; you will then beat down the power of France; and then, and not till then . . . the public burden may be lessened.'

It is curious that Rickman refused, as he must have done, to let Southey make the slightest public acknowledgment of his assistance. It is also interesting to see what an effect Rickman's depression had upon his convictions. It would seem from the extract below that he had come round to a melancholy justification of the views on population propounded by the execrated Malthus.

'21 Nov. 1827.

' . . . I find that if I add annotations to the Poor Law essay, they will be of hopeless character, as my reflections have led me to a conviction, that the increase of poor rates took place from increase of kindly feeling towards the lower classes, which operated early in your life-time and mine upon magistrates first, who were disposing of other people's money. Since that the same feeling has operated more extensively, and an imperceptible reliance on this has caused undue increase of population. We cannot make the poor comfortable without making them increase and multiply, and as humanity is not likely to retrograde, poor rates will not diminish; perhaps we ought not to wish it. . . .'

The quarrel between Huskisson and Herries over the appointment of a finance committee, and the dissensions with the King over the battle of Navarino, brought the Goderich Cabinet to an ignominious downfall by the end of the year. On January 9, 1828, the King sent for Wellington, and gave him office on the condition that Catholic relief was not to be made a cabinet question. He was joined by

Peel, Huskisson and some of Canning's followers, a mixture which was destined to produce violent fermentation.

Rickman opened the year with a strong comment on Southey's review of Hallam's *History*.

'25th January 1828.

'I have read your review of Hallam's work—miscalled (as it seems) a *History* of England. He seems to display the thorough-paced Whig to a degree of imprudence convenient to the adversaries of his friends. As they were in the beginning, they are now, and I suppose ever will be, self-seekers, the enemies of all good men in general, and of their country in particular. I observe the Scottish insertion *versus* William III. inconsistent with the honourable mention of him in the former part of the Review. He was not an immaculate character, sure enough, but considering the now displayed baseness of that age which left materials for other publicity, the actors thinking themselves as safe as their ancestors, behind an impenetrable veil, considering that all public men from 1660 to 1715 assured to themselves the privilege of wickedness in various degrees, Clarendon himself not immaculate (as Agar Ellis's new book<sup>1</sup> proves) and the Whig inventors of the Popish Plot the most infernal villains that ever disgraced history, who are and must ever be a national disgrace to us all—considering such an age of public men, W. III. is always to be deemed above par. I wish those 9 interpolated pages had been filled by a vivid condensed exposure of the Popish Whigs, who have never yet arrived at the general detestation they deserve. You have good reason to be delicate as to the name of Russell, and lucky it has been for the noble family that they unknowingly laid out an anchor to windward at Streatham,<sup>2</sup> or they would e'er now have drifted (cum

<sup>1</sup> *A Historical Inquiry respecting the character of Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon.*

<sup>2</sup> Rickman refers to the fact that Southey's uncle, Dr. Hill, for whom Southey had a great respect, was given his living of Streatham by the Duke of Bedford.



multis aliis their Whig companions) to the shoals of eternal infamy to stick as a beacon for the benefit of future ages.'

The next letter refers to Wynn's disappointment at being passed over by Wellington.

'7th February 1828.

'I received yours of the 2nd: and have since tried to learn more about Mr. Wynn's state of affairs. I must speak rather from circumstantial symptoms than information, but I suspect that a negotiation existed whether or not the Speaker would take office as a Secretary of State on the recent changes: and that he did not accede upon difference of terms as to his peerage in that case (aiming higher than a barony) and perhaps as to amount of retiring pension, on quitting his present office, which he has filled ten years. While it was supposed he would accept the terms offered, I think it likely that the new Administration destined the Speakership for Mr. Wynn, who could not be retained at the E. India Board on account of Lord Melville not returning to the Admiralty.

'At present I collect that the Speaker has no thought of quitting his office, unless perchance the D. of Wellington should see cause for quitting his present unnatural office and thereupon Mr. Peel should become the declared Premier, (and this is not beyond speculation), in which case the Speaker (his intimate friend) might make his own terms, or otherwise arrange matters. At present this cannot be calculated upon, and Mr. Wynn is applying for one of the retiring pensions (£3000 per annum) as a Cabinet Minister of above 3 years standing, pensions created by the Act for abolition of sinecures, and the allowed number is not yet filled up. Lord Goodriche applies on behalf of Mr. Wynn, but I think the D. of Wellington will not second him, as not only Mr. Wynn was become an efficacious friend of Canning's, but also by some miscalculation connected his official existence with that of Lord Lansdowne, an over-

rated Whig. Nobody seems to feel satisfied of the stability of the present Government : the affair of Navarino, which of course delights the Liberals, and the Whitehall Window Question, whether General Burton is really to go as Governor to Canada, hanging up all surmise in suspense. *Deus aliquis viderit!* . . .

Wellington was embarrassed early in the year by a quarrel with Huskisson, and by the strong dissent of the Whigs from his condemnation of Codrington's action at Navarino. His first reverse was the success of Lord John Russell in carrying his bill for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and in May Huskisson and the other Canningites resigned on the question of the disfranchised borough of East Retford. The question of Catholic relief had not been prominent during the short administrations of Canning and Goderich, but after the success of Lord John Russell another motion on the subject was brought forward by Burdett, which was carried by a majority of six. Then all men were electrified by the Clare election. Vesey Fitzgerald, who became president of the Board of Trade on Grant's resignation, offered himself for re-election at Clare. He was a popular landlord, and held to be certain of support by the other landlords and the forty-shilling freeholders. O'Connell amazed the political world by standing against him. The forty-shilling freeholders deserted the landlord for the priest in a body, and the Catholic champion O'Connell was elected. The Clare election made Catholic relief inevitable. We now know that Peel shortly afterwards made up his mind to give way, because in his view civil war was the only alternative. But the public at large knew nothing of the impending *volte-face* of the Tory leader ; they were chiefly pre-occupied with the fresh proof of the shocking state of affairs in Ireland. Thus on Nov. 12 Rickman wrote to Southey :—

‘To be sure absenteeism is a crying evil, but if you ask one of those to reside in his country on his estate, the answer

always is, he would rather lose it. So that the turbulence of the people drives away the landlords, and the absence of these reacts upon the barbarism of the Irish. An unpleasant reciprocity, but inevitable until this Island shall have been under water for half an hour. You may very well interpolate a pamphlet into your R.C. article if Murray thinks fit—and Protestant ears are more open than they were. Plunkett's insidious law, and O'Connell's impudence have caused a revulsion, so that things are in a much better state than if neither one or the other had existed: especially considering that nothing but Protestant spirit was left for our defence, Lord P. [Plunket] having R. Catholicized the army, which at a distance in Lancashire, etc., overawes what it could not resist in contact.

'I think political economists are dying a natural death, and I am collecting poor law matter, though without any particular encouragement. I have been thinking that there is a good room for a new Laputa, where the said p. economists might have a mansion with those who have disturbed the nation with new weights and measures such as are a glorious defiance of utility—the North Pole expeditions, Dr. Gall and Spurtzeim<sup>1</sup> would be there, and other worthies, if one turned one's mind to recollections of that kind.

'The Govt. are very much like their predecessors, without strong intentions of any kind, who would yield to the R.C. if the Protestants had not stirred. So the Turks seem to profit and improve from the attack made by Russia; nothing else could have done so much for them. Their case is whimsically like that of the Irish Protestants. Lethargy at an end with both. . . .

'W. C. R. is to go to Ch. Ch. Oxford and to take orders, if he alter not his mind. He is of a quiet spirit and fit for a quiet profession. . . .'

Southey was engaged in writing a *Quarterly* article against

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Gall and Dr. Spurtzeim were the founders of the science of phrenology.



the Catholic claims, for which Rickman had sent him one or two long letters full of historical information. He received the sum of £150 for the essay, £50 more than usual. Rickman had also been meditating an attack on the economic school of Macculloch, the 'egregious absurdities' of whom, wrote Southey, 'no man is so capable of demolishing as yourself.' The final paragraph in the above letter is interesting, considering his determination, expressed in his will, that his son should not enter the Church. Southey, in his answer, rejoiced that Rickman's son, whom he always called the 'charioteer' from his fondness for driving, had the intention of taking orders.

'24 Nov. 1828.

'I am glad that my young-old friend the charioteer is inclined to a profession which seems to me of all others that in which a well-minded man will find most reason to be satisfied with his choice. I know not any person who can or ought to be happier than a clergyman who is not dependent on his profession for a maintenance, and is therefore exempt from all anxieties about preferment, and may refuse to fix himself in an unhealthy spot or a place disagreeable to him on any other account. That the Ch. of England will have its existence set upon the die in our children's time I think is but too probable: but if it be so, his condition will not be the worse for belonging to it.'

Rickman ended the year by writing the obituary of his old friend Luke Hansard, whom he had defended earlier in the year before a committee of the House. His notice appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for December. His praise is perhaps conventionally expressed, but it is a sincere tribute of undisguised friendship and admiration.

After bringing the strongest influence to bear on the King, Peel and Wellington succeeded in wringing his consent to the introduction of a measure of Catholic relief. The King's Speech contained some indications of such a course, and Peel resigned his seat for Oxford University. He

failed to secure re-election, and was subsequently returned for Westbury. On March 5 he moved a resolution in favour of Catholic relief in a great speech. Rickman wrote on that night to Southey.

'5 March 1829.

'A bright day precedes a stormy evening! Mr. Peel however does not venture to-day further than a resolution similar to the K.'s Speech, in general terms. However he is to tell us what our masters intend; against which I expect both parties will protest to-day, and vote hereafter. There is a subdulous scheme to introduce the concession in *one Bill*, the restrictions in *another*; so that the first might pass without the last. A sad mishap, would say Mr. Peel and Co.! But we are not quite at their mercy; the Ho: Lords we know are not so recreant as to be managed thus. Yet perhaps it may be tried. . . . Your petition was presented yesterday, and was a good text for Sir R. H. Inglis to descant upon, in denying the *universal* stupidity and unargumentative obstinacy of *all* the Anti-Caths., largely insisted on by that respectable orator, Sir J. Mackintosh.'

This letter was soon followed by another.

'9 March 1829.

'The demons, after three days intestine war, have agreed to throw over the 40s. men,<sup>1</sup> to which abandonment the Opps. and R. Caths. could have no real objection; their vows and promises to defend these wretched slaves in a privilege bootless to the possessor kicking the beam, the D. of W. being imperative. So I suppose the confederates will go on swimmingly, though the Protestants numbered about 30 on the divn. beyond expectation, and make a better fight than was expected of them. I have begun . . . a sketch of Irish history from the flood to 1829; Celts, Kimbers, and Gaels (Gauls) (the last the generic name)

<sup>1</sup> The disfranchisement of the 40s. freeholders was the price paid by O'Connell for Catholic relief.

I take to be incapable of mutual government, I mean by juries etc. ; a slave race who must be governed by absolute power, and better for them if not by any of their own breed. So I arrive at the fitness of military law in Erin, because no other law can really exist there. An unhappy experiment of James I., who was No. 1 of the Liberals in this particular, gave them juries, and the massacre of 1640, Cromwell's just severity, the war of 1688-90, all failed to take away that misapplied privilege, because they could not distinguish the natives from the new settlers at these times of just severity.

' *P.S.*—Mr. Peel seems surprised that every body does not turn with him, specially that his father says he will give him no more than the £12,000 a year he has settled on him ; and his wife is said to adhere to the opinions which she learned from the arguments of the said R. P. forgotten only by himself. Yes, his is a mere placekeeping affair ; the D. of W. having Huskisson in his pocket, if he yielded not.'

The Catholic Relief Bill passed the House of Commons by nearly two hundred, and on April 4, when Rickman again wrote, it passed second reading in the Lords by a hundred and five.

' *4th April 1829.*

' . . . The Lords are debating a third night upon the R. Cath. Bill. They are as bad as the Commons in yielding to undue influence, and the business of the Bps. moves one's bile. Yet when the first of their apostasy is seen, they will not be unfrocked.

' I reconcile myself well with the experiment of the R. Cath. Bill, thanking God it is not of my trying, yet not sorry it should be tried at the peril of those base conspirators, who have made concession almost necessary—or at least the alternative with civil war—by encouraging the R. Cath. and discouraging the Protestants in Ireland, recruiting ready made rebels into the army, etc. If the experiment fails, as I expect, may we not hope to see Liberalism



repudiated even in our time? And is that hope worth nothing? The contradictory arguments of the conspirators as to the no danger and the great danger of these R. Caths. is worthy of a bad cause, which in point of argument was never so low as this year. And the hero of Waterloo to profess that he yielded from dread of a bugbear, of a ragged mob of his countrymen. I say again the R. Caths. look to ulterior objects—so do I with pleasure. The Protestants will be on their guard, and put them down.'

I quote two other comments by Rickman on the session of 1829.

'11th June 1829.

' . . . The Session of Parlt. is arrived at termination of business, but the Prorogation comes not, under colour of some London Bridge question in the Ho. Lords. In fact the Protestants will not vote with Peel, and the Opps. laugh at the forlorn fate of their apostate, who has thus served 6 months in office dearly. As the result, Govt. cannot command 100 votes in the Ho. Commons (even in a Buckingham Palace question) and the D. of Wellington seems to hope to make a patch-work Ministry by conciliating some of the Whigs, and a few great families. But patch-work never yet answered well, and the Cabinet maker will probably find his work crack upon the first wear and tear, dissolve the Parlt. and try a Tory Administration hereafter. This is the future; at present, we suppose Parlt. is not prorogued, for the sake of new writs upon promotion of those who are expected now to have foot in stirrup. . . .'

'7 July 1829.

' . . . I wish we had a new Secretary for the Home Department . . . for besides Peel's imbecil (*sic*) concession and Liberality habits, his grandeur is become such that no man (not a slave) can work with him or for him; and no other Cabinet Minister cares to encroach upon the province of the Leader (God help us) of the Ho. Comm. . . .'

The two letters with which I close this chapter are concerned chiefly with a co-operative scheme which was started at Brighton, and in which Southey's friend Gooch and Southey himself contrived to interest Rickman very strongly. He found on visiting the headquarters that it was not a satisfactory venture, but his letters show that his views on social reforms, if conservative, were not unenlightened.

' 14 July 1829.

' I thank you for your intelligence *de Cooperatoribus* and propose to visit them. . . . *Labour in common* produces idleness in all, or injustice to the industrious, which they will not tolerate. But under modifications, whereby individual labour is rewarded (especially by task work) I think the co-partnership contrivance not impossible, and it cannot but be beneficial, if it open such prospect as to encourage thrift and accumulation among the numerous classes of society. I have no doubt the world might become a place comfortable for all, if (as you will observe) the good would be as active and zealous as the bad. At present, for lack of proper direction, efforts to do good much oftener do evil. Witness the lady's bazaar and sundry—id genus—exuberances of blundering benevolence. If I composed *Canons of Benevolence*, they would appear repulsive and severe. The down-hill path of almsgiving and patronage is pleasant to the individuals who give and who receive, cruelly mischievous to the community in an enlarged view of consequences. Now the same mind which disposes to kindness and benevolence will not endure discipline and contradiction in what seems laudable zeal, and therefore I think it is that evil, which is always a down-hill path (*patet janua Ditis*), prevails so fearfully. However if I could first rectify the administration of the poor laws, in which the wasteful expense is not in my opinion the greatest part of the evil, I should look afield for further work.

'Miss Lamb is said to be convalescent; p. interim he is here visiting me and enjoys himself well.'

Those to whom all Lamb's goings and comings are of interest will see that the last paragraph supplies a fact, which was hitherto unknown. The Lambs were now at Enfield, and on May 3rd Mary was taken ill, and did not return home till the end of September. Lamb's loneliness is described in a very pathetic letter written on July 25<sup>1</sup> to Bernard Barton, in which he says that he spent ten days of his loneliness 'at a sort of a friend's house, but it was large and straggling—one of the individuals of my old long knot of friends, card-players, pleasant companions—that have tumbled to pieces into dust and other things.' So far from 'enjoying himself well' Lamb was in the last stage of depression. London, empty of his old friends, was not what it was, and it is to be feared that Rickman, with his political preoccupations, was changed too. Nevertheless, it is interesting to know who was Lamb's friend of those ten days.

Southey in his reply sent a message to Lamb:—

'Remember me most kindly to Lamb, and tell him that the Every Day and Table Books have given me a great liking for his friend Hone, whom I would shake hands with heartily if he came in my way, or lay in mine.'

Co-operation and politics fill the last letter.

'25 Sept. 1829.

' . . . He who seeks to enter into a cooperation circle, must be, or must mean to become, a thrifty character with all the due appendages of respectability in his station of life: because the new punishment of expulsion which he thus creates against his future misconduct will weigh upon his mind constantly—in time to the creation of propriety in all his behaviour. . . . Cooperation would also produce

<sup>1</sup> Lucas, *Works of C. and M. Lamb*, vol. vii. p. 813.



the same sort of benefit as arises (without being generally perceived) in every large family of children, wherein the natural watchfulness of all for the benefit of each counterbalances the seeming difficulty in providing for many. . . . The frequent meetings of cooperators would soon lead to such rapid intelligence of openings for the entrance into life of suitable aspirants, as would preclude those who chuse to live in the dark corners of the map from equal chance: whereupon they would become worthy candidates for admission, and universal society would rely upon good behaviour. And this is a good large view of benefit, because we should no longer be annoyed by frequent crime. . . . Another evil we might abolish, if the lower orders in general had recourse to ready money payment—the scandalous frauds resulting from the Insolvent Debtors' Court. . . .

‘I go to town for the Prorogation of 15th Oct.: as yet no govt. exists, and I expect that the Whigs will force the D. of W. to their terms of sharing very largely in the power he loves to keep to himself. Of the Tory party he can find no representatives with whom to negotiate; for who can answer for another that the conspiracy whereby the R. Catholic question was carried shall be forgiven, that the betrayer will not again betray? I send you a curious proof of the state of things in placable Ireland. The R.C.'s are disarming the Protestants, and thereby arming themselves in the South; and as they cannot do this in Ulster, they modestly petition Govt. to disarm the Protestants there for them. . . .’

I omit a very long letter written in October, which is a summary of all Irish history for Southey's benefit. By the end of 1829 the first political crisis which the two friends had so long dreaded was over. Worse was to come. But the Reform Bill needs a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER VIII

1830-1832

Parliamentary reform—Letters purely political—Macaulay's maiden speech—Rickman the political philosopher—Calls Southey to arms—'Monarchy or Democracy'—The projected Colloquies—Rickman's outline—Introduction of the Reform Bill—Rickman on the debate—Dissolution—The second Bill—An all-night sitting—O'Connell's Irish devils—Murray and the Colloquies—The third Bill—Wellington's failure to form a ministry—The Bill passes—Murray and Spottiswoode impede the Colloquies—Rickman wishes to retire.

FROM 1830 till the passing of the first Reform Bill the interest of the Rickman and Southey correspondence is entirely political, and Rickman's letters during that period seem to me to be peculiarly interesting. The Tory Lord Colchester died in 1829, and the extant memoirs of the time, with the exception of Croker's, are all more or less Whig. Rickman's uncompromising accounts of the stormy sessions, and of the scenes which he himself witnessed, supply more, perhaps, than Colchester could have given us—the reflections of an intelligent, if bigoted, Tory upon the Reform movement, of which he did not know the inner political workings. I, therefore, only make a passing reference here to less important topics that appear in the letters—Rickman's struggle with the Macculloch school of political economists on the occasion of the census of 1831, his article on co-operation for the *Brighton Co-operator*, Telford's building of the Clifton suspension bridge, the holiday in 1830 spent in examining harbours with Telford, the education of Southey's nephew, and a second long visit of Bertha Southey. Reform and the projected *Colloquies*, of which further mention will be made, take up the whole field of vision.

The movement for Parliamentary reform had been in existence throughout Rickman's life, though it had received a severe check from the outbreak of the French Revolution. During the war against France there was a strong reaction among the governing classes against reform, and the frenzied outpourings of such men as Hunt, Cobbett and Burdett, and the riots of Spa Fields and Peterloo, however much they may have educated public opinion, only convinced the governing classes that reform meant revolution. With the advent of Canning and Lord John Russell, the agitation took a calmer tone. In 1821 Lord John Russell secured the disfranchisement of Grampound, and in 1827 East Retford and Penryn suffered the same fate. The Tories were apt to ascribe the decrease of violent agitation to a general loss of interest in the cause, but in fact the body of quiet conviction was growing more and more overwhelming. By the beginning of 1830 the air was thoroughly charged: the great time was felt to be at hand by the reformers, while the Tories were uneasy and painfully aware of the weakness of Wellington's Government. Rickman's letters up till the dissolution of Parliament in June give a very good indication of the Tory nervousness. Southey and he, sturdy Britons both, felt that a last struggle must be made, and it was Rickman who first suggested to Southey that he should enter the field in defence of law and order. The challenge was accepted with alacrity, but it was not till later that the plan took shape.

A passage from a long letter of Rickman's on co-operation early in the year may be taken as a preliminary bugle call.

‘*Jan. 11, 1830.*

‘ . . . The D. of W. seems to be trying a new system of govt. by means of the nominees of the peers in the Ho. Comm., in which he will have so little success, I guess, as in attempting a military govt. at once. It may issue indeed in universal outcry for reform of Parlt. and this cause a revolution, which if it happen at all will be on the democrat



side entirely. In all dangers however let us keep a cheerful heart and a good countenance. . . .’

Parliament met on February 4, but the session was unimportant, except to display Wellington’s weakness. Political unions in favour of reform were springing up all over the country, and several reform motions were introduced, though defeated, in the House. On April 15 the King’s illness was known; on June 26 he died, and Parliament was prorogued on July 23 by William IV. in person. Rickman’s letters during the session need little comment.

‘*Monday Evening, 29th March 1830.*

‘We have spent much time here in long debates, and have arrived at nothing useful or agreeable. The Govt. began the session knowing themselves to be outnumbered, and have been steering their narrow course sometimes buffeted, often yielding, and the other day beaten. Of course the Whigs and Radicals profit by this, and few days pass without some concession so that the Govt. must soon to cease to govern by influence, and we shall have to choose between arbitrary power, and democracy. I do not like either, but the first rather better of the twain. The Administration are trying to tide it over the session, and will then I suppose try their luck with a new Parliament. But I think they will not fare much better than now, as trenchant arguments are not admissable, nor anything beyond the worn out armour of sham defence, . . . nor is it easy to go deeper, to utter any thing adverse to mobbish prejudices being impossible as matters stand here. I daresay we shall have reform of Parlt. triumphant in a twelvemonth. I do not know whether you could invent any daring truth-telling vehicle. Otherwise the prophesies which occur here every evening as to the growing power of *public opinion* will doubtless produce their own accomplishment. I assure you I see all persons hampered in the web of Liberality which has now spread so many cords, that no argument

can be pursued to utterance without being stopped by prudence, which is become obviously necessary to prevent being stopped by clamour and hooting. The nonsense of free trade and reciprocity is still unchecked, though it wants nothing to its overthrow than pursuing the argument of *selfishness*, every man taking care of his own interest, whereby the interest of all is pursued, and which by no means could be obtained by the care of all exerted in behalf of individuals. And if you can imagine a society of twenty men in which they very sensibly attend to their own interest and that of their families and the twentieth thinks only of reciprocity, there would be little doubt that the last would be ruined, and that without the least blame to the rest. The sooner ruined indeed if they played the rogue, but ruined he must be by their vigilance opposed to his Liberality and attention to the interest of all. This is the true picture of a State pursuing the phantom of free trade.

‘Again as affecting the internal trade (our mutual dealings—about 6 times as important as foreign dealings) the folly and mismanagement is not less. The story of the Belly and Members ought to be retold. The free trade people set each vocation against some other. The abolition of the corn law (already ruinously weakened) is still urged and no man could here venture to suggest that manufacturers without customers could not prosper. I inclose you a whimsical view of their absurdity, and I think there are half a dozen other absurdities of the same kind, all sacred and intangible, all surrounded by a halo of sanctity, of beastly error in the mantle of philosophy. I am sick of it, and I shall rebel when I have time and encouragement—and of time I shall have more henceforth, having got quit of the Hd. Roads and Caln. Canal by which I was oppressed. Of another matter. The other day a Commn. was appointed on the state of the Irish Poor, I think intending an investigation of the fitness of poor rates in Ireland. It chanced I fell into conversation with Spring-Rice (their Chairman) who said they must make a great effort in

Ireland at agricultural improvement, but could not without advance granted by the Government. This seems singularly impudent expectation in the sister nation which pays no taxes, and I said, I thought they ought to do it on their own resources, if they were in earnest. He, who is courteous, asked How? I told him that during some long speech evening I could write evidence for his Commn., and I have done so, much in the argument of taxing the land for its own improvement, as I think I wrote in the vacation to you; but more circumstantially, as on a single unmixed subject. I gave him this, which he took as a God-send at a dead lift, and says he has sent it to the printer for the edification of his Commn.; If I get a copy, I will send it you, and if it does nothing else, I think it will hinder any quacking in a matter very important, and only to be rationally dealt with in heavy armour.

'The Whigs, certainly the Whiglings, expect office forthwith and individuals have offered their services to the D. of W., but what he will do I know not. He likes power but employs inefficient instruments, people who neither bring credit to his Govt. nor votes. Yet we are without any hope of change for the better, so distracted are politics and party, and the mob will break in unless repelled by police men and bayonets. Thus you have the fruit of a few long speeches. Sir James Graham speaks very eloquently but always in the wrong.'

The two following extracts—the first from Southey, the second from Rickman—allude to Macaulay's maiden speech which was made on April 5 for the second reading of Grant's bill for the remission of Jewish disabilities. Rickman's allusion to Sierra Leone is explained by Zachary Macaulay's having been the first governor of Sierra Leone, which was founded by Wilberforce and others for liberated slaves. On leaving Sierra Leone, Zachary Macaulay set up as an Africa merchant, in which business the connexion with Sierra Leone was doubtless of considerable benefit.



'Ap. 13, 1830.

' . . . You have a young cockatrice in Bab Macaulay, who is in league with the sinners by principle (if the abnegation of all on which good principles can rest may be so called) and with the Saints by blood. . . .'

'Ap. 20, 1830.

' . . . Young Mr. Macaulay threw off with a good specimen speech, rather too epigrammatic I thought for good taste, but shewing ability and dexterity of thought. I heard of the admixture of saint and sinner in him. The Sierra Leone virtual monopoly accounts for the first, native taste and appetite, I suppose, for the second half of his character. . . .'

The next letter is a very interesting clue to the working of Rickman's mind.

'19th April 1830.

' . . . We have had more confinement in the Dom. Comm. than I ever remember before Easter, and I thought it no bad set off, to pass rapidly through the air during the Easter week. Therefore putting post horses to an open four wheeled carriage, I conveyed our young ladies to Silchester, Abury, Stonehenge, Sarum, Winchester, expounding as I went partly with the aid of the "Celtic Druids"—the title of the book above-mentioned—and as I paid the author with written observations, you shall have the benefit of them when copied.

'Sitting on the hinder seat alone during 262 miles, perhaps 26 hours of journey, I hummed my tunes and thought over affairs general and particular, in my constrained leisure, and arrived at strong conclusions in both kinds, so that I do not think your Colloquies<sup>1</sup> of trenchant form enough to meet the foe, who unless met steadily front to front will demolish the English form of Government in the course of the next Parliament, in 5 or 6 years. At what time the

<sup>1</sup> i.e. the *Colloquies with Sir T. More* (1829).

English Constitution was in its safest state, best balanced I mean between despotism and democracy, I cannot decide, but conjecture it already to have inclined to the latter evil when the personal character of Geo. III. was requisite to turn out Carlo Khan<sup>1</sup> and his Indian Bill. Pitt's character, or rather that of his bolder prompter R. Dundas, afterwards attained a decided preponderance on the same side, and the grand war carried us on by the necessity of events till it was closed at Waterloo; nor did we feel the increase of democracy in or out of Parliament till the troops returned home from Flanders occupation, and were disbanded not very long before our trip to Scotland. Then came the influence of Hunt, the field of Peterloo, and the outrageous lies about it, indicating the virulent appetite which could swallow and propagate them.

'In fact we began to feel the want of Geo. III. before he died, and in that event the freaks of Q. Caroline II. shewed us what a want of ballast we had experienced. The monarchy disgraced themselves (even that became possible) by the attack of foreign witnesses at Dover and induced the necessity of guarding them by land and by water in their Cotton Garden residence. The Whig aristocracy disgraced themselves (which was possible enough, but not probable) in taking part with a woman whom they beyond all others had publicly represented, (justly indeed), as a notorious Messalina on the Continent, who poisoned Ompteda at Rome, and hired assassination for Col. Ward, though unsuccessfully. Even this woman, whom in charity we must deem insane, shook the throne as soon as it was unworthily occupied, and from that time to this the *Signa labentis Imperii* have increased upon us shadily and fearfully; the dark clouds rising from every point of the horizon.

'It is said, but I do not believe the alledged extent of the change, that offices compatible with a seat in Parliament have decreased in about 100 years (the beginning of Geo. II.) from 250 to 50. If the first of these numbers was tolerable and convenient long after the boasted Revolution, the last

<sup>1</sup> FOX.

is defective to the amount of another revolution : and it really is so, the zeal of attack rendering the Oppositions in Parlt. much better disciplined troops than the Governt. party, which is weakened in this respect by the Prime Ministers, Liverpool and now Wellington being in the Ho. Peers, and not personally suffering from the unceremonious inattention of their Ho. Common friends, who unless the enemy strike at the throat (a rare imprudence) prefer a dinner party or the Opera to a debate and division. Canning was still worse, his frequent gout and his constant personal impatience granting all minor points rather than endure a late debate, in fact buying off by repeated commissions and personal gratifications the attacks which ought to have been otherwise resisted (as our Saxon ancestors paid Dane-geld, till in natural process a Dane became their king). This same Canning had long been (for the purposes of his own boundless ambition) leader of the defection which preferred R. Catholic emancipation to all other political motives ; and the Whig Radicals, wise in their generation, understood the benefit of having half the man, for making the Church, which is or was, half the support of the State.

‘ The D. of W. with little more of the statesman than a vulgar appetite for power, succeeds the intriguer Canning, who in his year eased himself of a financial statement by borrowing 7 or 8 Millions upon the promise of a Finance Commee. in the next Session. So the D. of W. in his year eased himself of Opposition by conceding the R.C. question (for I do not believe in any higher or other motive), and upon the strength of this meritorious sacrifice relied on the steady support of the Whig Radicals for how long a time I know not. But that he did so, is proved by the otherwise incredible spectacle of an Administration meeting Parliament with the weakest party of three in the Ho. Commons ; and a flying squadron (Huskisson and Co.) who hate the minister that discarded them when they tried the experiment of a Canning intrigue upon him.

‘ And what a spectacle have we seen ! Saved on the second night of the session by the aid of Joseph Hume & Co.,



yielding many points of dangerous importance since, to avoid defeat; saved when Paulet Thompson<sup>1</sup> aimed at the throat, at the management of the Exchequer, saved beyond their hopes by the Brunswickers<sup>2</sup> relenting for the sake of their country, and coming down in a phalanx of 50, which again saved the Administration. Still more degrading sight, that the Govt. party coming to a Vote with the avowed expectation of beating the Jews 2 to 1, were beaten by a sedulous Jew canvas of M.P.s. Thus it is plain that the Ministry are actually afraid to enquire which way any of their supposed friends intends to vote; and so much are the patrons of boroughs and their nominees at variance that 100 M.P.s are known to have been in town on a night of pressure and importance, but have absented themselves from the House.

‘Of course the Mob cry of distress, economy, unsparring retrenchment, relief from taxation etc. flourishes under such incoherent semblance of authority, and the monarchy of England is weakened every day by the abolition of offices high and low, which will soon leave it without a prop. Already a motion is announced for the abolition of the office of lord lieutenant of Ireland, and the same arguments which have already prevailed as to lower offices, and will be repeated on that occasion, are equally valid against the office of kings—now shorn of its consistent defenders by their disgust at the virtual contempt of all public principle in the R. Cath. concession which thus has produced evil which seems unremediable, and I am persuaded is so, unless good men rally for their own sakes for steady defence for what is left; which indeed I do not think can be merely defended, the vantage ground must be regained, or sordid turbulent democracy will not fail to overwhelm us with vulgar commonplace arguments which from non-resistance, have assumed the force of axioms of accredited truth, supported of course by the *spirit of the times*, the *march of*

<sup>1</sup> Poulett Thomson, afterwards Lord Sydenham and Governor-General of Canada.

<sup>2</sup> The anti-Catholic party.

*intellect, liberal opinions; and the schoolmaster whom Mr. Brougham has put in motion.'*

On May 4 Rickman begins by lamenting the revolutionary tendency of the times, and he continues :—

' . . . This has come to pass from the R.C. Relief Bill, and more I think from the manner than the matter of what was very bad in itself ; but what is stratagem in warfare, is treachery in legislation, and all M.P.s who think so, have seceded from support of Government, many of them venture active opposition, though in doing so they join with the inveterate revolutionists, who cannot be kept in check, unless the steady part of the House vote with the Govt. on all dangerous questions. Properly speaking, an attempt to govern without the support of a decided majority of the Ho. Commons is unconstitutional, if not revolutionary, and shows a degree of ignorance, or of dangerous intention in the D. of W. which is tremendous in contemplation. It is indeed his ignorance in larger proportion than his ambition, and of course he and his colleagues are in a ridiculous condition, kicked and cuffed on all questions, giving way whenever the Whig-Radicals, or the Brunswickers do not find motive to help them. . . . Pitiably it is to witness their weakness ; last evening they reckoned upon the *K's illness* to carry a Windsor vote, but they reckoned erroneously, and had to make shameful retreat. But the same state of things which produced this, which in itself imports little, produces also a clear prospect of reform of Parliament in the next session ; this appearing a less evil to many good men than a faithless Govt., which beyond doubt is capable of anything for self-preservation. If the D. of W. were not crest-fallen from his discovery of feebleness in his expected strength (for he had actually counted on *gratitude* in the R.Cs. and the Opps.) he would e'er now have undertaken to *regulate Church property*, and he carries on official reform for the sake of vulgar applause of revolutionists and fools in a manner equally demonstrative of unfeeling selfishness, as of ignorance that the influence of

the executive Govt. is already so low, that military Govt. or democratic anarchy cannot but ensue unless some sound defence is built behind the breach.

‘This can only be done by throwing off all disguise, all cant; by allowing that all men being alike and none perfect, our kind of Government can only subsist on influence: that unless a thorough conviction of this, and an open avowal of it can be produced, false defences founded on what does not exist (absolute purity) must fail; and the scum of mankind will take possession of power instead of those who though they have not realised absolute purity have arrived at a higher grade of morality than ever occurred before in the history of the world. I question indeed, whether the power of wickedness, of profligacy, arising from no conscience and no responsibility (you understand this well) can be resisted, unless we openly distinguish public from private affairs, and confine to the latter the strict rule of never doing evil that good may come; meaning by the evil (what Democrats declaim against) influence on the conduct of the powerful, as far as to be sure of their support of the existing system of Government, without which it becomes and must remain matter of dangerous uncertainty, how long any Government will endure. For instance; if the K. dies, there will be no need to move in Parliament, that a K. is an unnecessary officer of the State; but a Democrat might gravely say, That a million a year to maintain an unseen monarch in his drives to Virginia Water and the cottage in Windsor Park, is sadly mispent, and £100,000 a year will be fitter allowance: and this would abolish the Civil List revenue, and therein monarchy, in the course of 7 years.

‘I aim at proving to you (in desultory manner) that it is fit you should shew yourself in the field; and I think it would be far from creating deficiency in your ways and means, if you dedicate yourself to this for the next six months, so as to produce an 8<sup>vo</sup> at Christmas. I can give you infinite matter, if I am enabled unseen to do so; but intimate news of essentials, and knowledge of the motives



and movements of the actors and the public stage of politics and Parliament, is indispensable, and you must *seem* to acquire this yourself at some sacrifice : that is ; you must undergo the trouble of attending a few debates in the Ho. Commons, and spending some time in London intercourse, to induce a probability of your knowing *aliunde* all I know, and of your introducing from your so acquired stores all the commonplaces I can produce on the effects of Parliamentary reform, on the free trade folly, and on the frame of human society, all on the same principle of developing the naked truth and exposing vividly, but civilly, all the vulgar mistakes fearfully current, as being in their consequences incompatible with justice and social happiness. Finally, for all good purposes, you must call for your portmanteau, put yourself in the coach, and visit us here for a month at least before Parlt. separates ; say you must come in the middle of May, and dedicate yourself, R. S., to Parly. observations, with my comments thereupon. Are not any of your young ladies in full state of age and acquirement, that you could bring one with you as a half-feint of motive for coming hither, and without preventing you from dedicating your time peremptorily to what you please ?

‘ Consider my large scheme and perpend whether you ought not to enable yourself to put into good form your own thoughts, and my practical views of men, causes, and consequences. The fertility of the subject is such that selection, not matter, will be the difficulty.

‘ My time is exhausted, my paper full. Farewell.’

Southey expressed his readiness to come to London in June to gain Parliamentary experience. But owing to the King’s illness and death, and the prorogation, he did not pay the visit till the end of October. Rickman continued to furnish him with food for thought.

‘ 12 May 1830.

‘ The impending Popn. Act for 1831 now in Parliament has let loose upon me several of the Pol. Oeconts. besides

Macculloch ; their habitual insolence, (so habitual that they manifestly are unconscious of it) is amusing, but it has cost me 3 or 4 days hard work, Friday, Saturday and Sunday (all the glimpse of leisure in a week) to fight them by anticipation ; for if once they give an opinion, judge whether I should be able, unaided by any, to keep their nonsense out of the act. This task, and not reaching home till daylight, confuses me somewhat, but I think I wrote a few words to you on Monday. The K. is in a pitiable state, dying in asthmatic and spasmodic misery. W. iv. will continue the Ministry, *sub modo*, which *modus*, when fully displayed, will make them resign. Then Lord Holland, joined by Huskisson and Co. will come in. A sincere Whig, and a free trade intriguer. Pretty work we shall have ; two or three changes, new Parliament and *p. interim* monarchy abolished ; or perhaps only an euthanasia. You must attend Parliament enough to render it uncertain whether I communicate out of school or not. We expect dissolution about the 25th May, say, the end of the month ; 50 days go deep into July—but when Parliament meets, you must be summoned to your duty of inspection.'

'Sunday, 23rd May 1830.

' . . . Now for our affair, the Ministry are feebler and feebler ; and curiously enough (considering your recent mention of Bain's limit for libel) this very week Lord Morpeth, a promising Whigling, having given notice of motion for repealing the law which you know inflicts banishment for the second offence, was stopped last Tuesday from doing so—And how ? By Mr. Atty. Genl. undertaking to do it himself ; and this mean cowardly insolent fellow has done so accordingly. You shall have a printed copy of this bill in a day or two. You knew Scarlet[t] was the tool of the D. of W. in two or three imprudent prosecutions just before Parliament met, when the D. thought himself inexpugnable and the Radicals his friends, and this is Scarlet[t]'s peace offering, in atonement for himself and the Duke, whose crest is fallen ; his ignorance

of parties and men, and things not military is marvellous, yet I believe it will be expedient to apologise for his misdeeds, and support him, or he will doubtless turn democrat first and tyrant afterwards. We will consider this at leisure ; which leisure I think will soon occur. For I make up my mind now that the K. will live long enough to carry the session to its end. If he lives three weeks, they would go on three weeks more and end it, leaving much business undone. Now if Parliament was dissolved and did not meet till November, my purpose of your obtaining ostensible knowledge of affairs and especially of the Ho. Commons would fail very inconveniently ; so if you please, as soon as can be in the month of June leave the hay-fever at Keswick, and under cover of that, and of shewing your young lady useful novelties, let us expect you and her on Thursday week or thereabouts ; you to suffer martyrdom in some degree at the Ho. Commons, she to find as much amusement and instruction as she can in London. For your purpose you must be on a steady visit here, and I think you will not say much of your intention of coming, lest engagements too much anticipate and embarrass your Parly. attendance. I think I shall be tolerably clear of my Popn. tormentors before the end of this week, and I shall then in the House, during the tiresome debates, oftener squabbles, produced by the present state of affairs, ponder my schemes of action, and mark down the topics on which to accumulate matter. My present notion is, not to prepare the book as of any party, but as a warning voice, to prevent revolution finding men unawares, because it is not in the shape of popular violence. I would treat as a problem the effects of various forms of Govt. in England, and let all men see that non-resistance against the growing power of the Oppn. and non-defence of what is left to the Crown, cannot but lead to reform of Parlt., which again cannot but abolish tythes, seize Church land, ruin agriculture and the landed interest by free import of corn, and under the name of "equitable adjustment" pay as much, or rather as little, of the interest of the National Debt, as the tax payers



think fit. Property in fact must disappear, and the obvious inconvenience of all this, when plainly proved, will form a strong phalanx, who ought to enter into steady combination, and will do so, if they are heartily frightened.

‘ My notion of title is—

‘ Monarchy or Democracy

and the motto,

‘ *Ne Quid Detrimenti Respublica capiat.*

‘ Whether monarchy [is] better than democracy in the abstract, and whether it is better in England : and if so, what is necessary for maintaining it here in due vigour. To prove in a friendly manner to the Whigs, that they must cease their habitual attacks on a fortress which they do not seriously mean to batter down : to the Tories that they must defend it steadily and keep guard as a regular army, behind the wide breaches made since the death of Lord Castlereagh. They must do more, and strengthen the Crown by more numerous officers of Govt. For at present the bodily and mental fatigue of all efficient members of the Administration destroys them as rational beings. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof ; and I know from my own last fifteen years existence during the session, how impossible it is for a harassed man to think his own thoughts, or to start into a new field of action. The answer which is uttered, or which is kept back, always amounts to a plea of impossibility of doing more than what is absolutely necessary, that is, of opposing their enemies in the Ho. Commons who during the session make incursions into every department. This sort of annoyance goes so far, added to the small power of the Crown to remunerate service, that we are near in danger of finding anybody to take office. At present Lord Althorp, the most respectable of the Whigs, professes (and truly) that he does not aim at it. So Sir Richard Vyvyan, the most sensible of the Tories, while the Chancellor of the Exchequer <sup>1</sup> (who and

<sup>1</sup> Goulburn.

Herries, are the only true labourers in office) openly professes his office to be one which he would gladly relinquish. So that the Govt. is in danger of dying of the dead palsy. Brougham, who I suppose might have any thing, cannot take office whether for good or for evil because he cannot afford it prudentially. Mr. Peel with his augmented wealth will get sick of flummery, whether given or swallowed in the midst of his feeble doings; and I really believe that as matter of calculation, I shall see refusals of the highest offices, unless the dread of ruin consolidate the Tories and all honest men, so as bear down the ignoble assailants who now think themselves, and I am afraid politically speaking, justly think themselves, of weight and consequence from their mere power of annoyance.

‘I hope you will answer that your portmanteau is airing; you know how happy Mrs. R. will be to receive your visit, and for my part I have often found your friendship a species of nobility, very useful to me, as well as ornamental, so that from interest as well as from inclination, I say the longer you can give us your company here the better.—Yours truly always,

J. R.

‘P.S.—Monday, the K.’s symptoms recur—water collected in thorax.’

‘29 June 1830.

‘Today we are told per Message from King W. iv. that Parliament is to be dissolved *quam citissimum*; so say I, but I doubt whether all the beating and buffeting undergone by the Ministers this session has made them know that they cannot yet push in some of the foolish feeble trash now before the House: we shall see. I think a rattling debate (tomorrow probably) will irradiate their obscurity and force dissolution forthwith. I hope so, at least, heartily tired of the disgrace of fatigue about nothing—the Ho: Comm: absolutely contemptible in its ways and doings.’

A tremendous impetus to Liberal sentiments during the general election was given by the July Revolution in France.

Before Parliament met on October 26 fifty seats had changed hands, and the Tory *régime* was doomed. During the recess Rickman continued to discuss topics with Southey. The following are some extracts from his letters.

' 31st August 1830.

' . . . If we may judge of our own Govt. by the *Courier*, they are in contemptible timidity, palliating and seeking to disguise from themselves the recurrence of the old spirit of revolution. . . . Unless there be such a defection of the Whigs, and such association of those who have property, as at the commencement of the first Revn., our Govt. also must change its nature—by the obvious mode of reform of Parl. But I think our National Debt will again be our sheet anchor. Will. iv. will be better than his predecessor in troublesome times. I believe Geo. iv. had not a friend in the world; his odious liability to sudden and capricious dismissal of his personal and household friends keeping all in uneasiness. Will. iv. may perchance keep the mob in huzzaing humour, which will be clear gain. I scribble occasionally what occurs for our purpose, and will send you (at least) a list of topics fit to be interwoven. I am oppressed by the multiplicity of matter which urges for delivery, and dissatisfied therefore with whatever preference or priority I allow to any part of so diversified a subject. Farewell.'

' 7 September 1830.

' . . . So of a reform of Parliament, I am not afraid of it, if it arrived at the height of precluding the populace from any share in elections, the qualification to be measured by direct taxation: and herein all foreign nations (our imitators) have the same advantage of us, as in juries. They can establish better (*in tabulâ rasâ*) on view of our imperfect rudeness of antiquity; but what our reformers require, and the only alteration practicable, is to throw more power into the hands of the populace, who already by their clamorous interference, exercise great influence, even where



they have no vote. Thus if one third of the Ho. Commons is created by the aristocracy, a full third are as direct representatives of the mob. 'I am sent here (says Hobhouse) for this,' when half laughing at the absurdity of his own assumed violence in favour of his mob Parish Vestry Bill. The county representation is also become exceptionable from the increase of freeholders. No man could face a contested election either in Yorkshire or Lancashire unless meaning to spend £200,000. Accordingly Stewart Wortley and Lord Milton have abandoned the former to Whig adventurers, who were *quite safe* from making any large expenditure. In fact the forty shilling qualification ought to be made £40, for the same reason as it became 40/ when the best land was not worth 1/ per acre per annum.

'I really do not know a single place in England where the qualification of voters is unexceptionable; so that though the Ho. Commons as a whole is not a bad representation of *all*, yet a reform whereby property might best protect itself might be safer than the rude manner now in practice—the antagonism of parties, whence practically comes a good result. Against *reform* therefore we need not argue, but against any reform which gives *more power to the populace*, and which could scarcely fail to be followed by excessive national degradation for 20 or 30 years. . . .'

'Friday Morning, 17 Sept. 1830.

' . . . The Govt. cannot be in a more contemptible posture. If you had seen the D. of W. sitting night after night, affecting to listen to the East Retford evidence, for the sake of credit with the reformers (who little meant to carry that point), you would have pitied him. The enmity of the D. of Cumb. and Huskisson is a whimsical specimen of one poison antidote agt. another, for the contingent good of the public. The D. of W. cares nothing about free trade nor aught else beyond office; in which too he is uneasy, because he must perforce search for colleagues beyond those who have submitted to military sway.

'I hear the Whiggamores begin to be frightened (Rascals !) and to meditate a defection as in 1792. We might make them an excuse for it.'

The reference here to Huskisson has a pathetic interest, for on September 15, at the public opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, he was knocked down by an engine and fatally crushed. He died during the night ; but it must be supposed that the news had not reached Rickman.

'4 October 1830.

' . . . I think the Government since the Revolution has been one of antagonism, the weakest of the two parties (the outs) always ready to call in popular help, and thus being pledged (a vile system) to yield something on coming into office. What the Crown has thus lost: The royal negative ; the elective votes of all employees [in the] customs, excise, stamps as if proscribed persons ; the presence in Parlt. of all offices since 6. Anne prohibited, *cum multis aliis*—for which we must read history.

'Is antagonism the best system still ? It is found to be so in law, where justice could not be administered unless lawyers pleaded on both sides. This seems unfit, until the contrary is proved to be more unfit, as may indeed be proved. Yet no scandal is more common, none more obvious and popular, than the blame of lawyers taking fees on the notoriously wrong side. I support then that antagonism is also good in political affairs ; spite of Opposition increases the responsibility of Ministers by displaying everything, and thus injures their good conduct. Yet this antagonism, which relies on the influence of the aristocracy (unless where the useful rotten boroughs intermix the influence of wealth) is become scandalous. Every fool can gibe at it, and the power of such fools, and their fine friend the Press is become so great, through the liberalism of the said aristocracy courting popular aid, that antagonism can be supported no longer, and we shall make good compromise if in a general reform of Parlt. we can keep from voting the populace.

‘ But in treating of these subjects, it will be fair to display the good arguments (recondite indeed) in favour of antagonism and influence, which however after nine years surrender (I date from the death of Lord Londonderry) I think cannot be supported.

‘ As to present men, I am not sure W. iv. and the D. of W. would not join the mob rather than lose their power. Indeed reform of Parliament from the Throne and Prime Minister, even by surprise and stratagem, would be but quite in march after the R.C. concession which really was but to secure one or two years of power without further trouble.’

Much disappointment was caused by the King’s speech on November 2, which did not mention reform, and feeling against the government was made still stronger by the Duke of Wellington’s speech in the Lords in which he roundly declared against reform. This declaration was rather embarrassing to the Cabinet, but they stood by Wellington. Brougham at once gave notice of a motion for Parliamentary reform, but before it came on the government was defeated on a motion regarding the civil list. On November 16 Wellington resigned, and Lord Grey was asked to form an administration. Meanwhile Southey had paid a long visit to Rickman, lasting throughout November and December. During this visit the literary plan of campaign was matured. A new series of *Colloquies* was to be written jointly by Rickman and Southey ; Southey was to continue in the character of Montesinos, which he had assumed in his published *Colloquies*, and Rickman was to assume some other fictitious name. It was also agreed for purposes of secrecy that the copy should be sent by Rickman to Robert Lovell, who was in Hansard’s, to be set up privately, in the expectation that Murray, when he was apprised of the scheme, would be willing to carry on the printing in this manner. As will appear in the sequel, it was chiefly owing to difficulties connected with the printing that these *Colloquies* never appeared. After a visit to



Rickman's country home, Southey returned to Keswick at the end of December. Rickman at once got to work, and it was not long before he sent a sketch of the projected work to Southey, who was to compose an introduction, describing the visit of Montesinos to his friend in London, and his return with the friend to Keswick, where the *Colloquies* should begin.

' 3 January 1831.

' . . . For my part, I have once more had cause to remember the old school thesis which has always haunted me *Dimidium incepti, qui bene coepit, habet*. Beginning is the great obstacle with me ; the other half I always find easier, and work in good hope and eagerness : especially as the materials may serve for something hereafter if not now speedily in use. My persuasion that the time presses for opposing hitherto unresisted error urges me on and I feel that I shall work daily in January 1831. Occasionally I have remarked to you upon various points of your colloquy sufficiently for recognition under whatever name you choose to assign to me. You will remain a mountaineer. I should prefer a name not significant of anything but manner,—suppose *Instantius*—a word derivable obscurely from *insto, instans, instantior*, but perhaps you will hit on a better name.

' Supposing you to begin with fit recognition—expectant of conflict and paradox, and by no means laudatory—I presume you to remove what you say in your *Colloquies* of my notion in behalf of the National Debt, and to ask longer explanation as much needed at present, provided it can be given unencumbered with the modern metaphysics of political economy. . . . [Here follow some detailed comments.]

' I know you are well employed, yet you see I do not offer a sinecure for your acceptance. Of course you will say whether to pursue the *Colloquies* at this expense—though I give needful clue for your interpellations, I bargain that you write every word of them, and smoothe the angles

of my phraseology (which will grow smoother as I write more), in fact, alter as much as you can. If I try to furnish bone and muscle, you must be answerable for skin and colour. If we can get out a *pars prior* of a volume in February, comprizing (1) Corn Laws, (2) National Debt, (3) Free Trade, (4) Poor Laws, (5) Currency, (6) Liberality and Selfishness, (7) The Power of Wickedness (you are Kehama), (8) Secondary Punishments, or any other more tempting subject which may occur in progress of the work, this done, the *pars posterior* may be political to suit the pressure of the time not yet distinctly foreseen and unsafe till the former part in sale as a shoeing horn—which *pars posterior* may also teem with notes (*preuves* as the French speak) in some detail, and presuming largely on the possible ignorance of the reader.

‘All this may make a first volume and without difficulty, for I find (perhaps you have found) the personification of a listener to produce much facility of composition, and the conversational form abolishes, as conveniently for the author as the reader, the necessity of regular classification and induction which costs much, retards much, and spends the brains of both parties to little purpose. Farewell. I will not now be guilty in that kind—and pray write as shortly as you please whether and how you wish me to proceed. Bertha’s cough is exhausted, and she is merry with the rest.’

How much Southey appreciated Rickman’s work may be judged from the two following extracts.

‘4 Jan. 1831.<sup>1</sup>

‘. . . I will begin earnestly as soon as I get home. . . . I cannot work with your iron industry indeed, nor with anything like your expedition, yet I will make good haste and no ill speed, and polish and inlay when it can be done with good effect, taking however care never to take away from the strength of a rough hewn style. We shall make a

<sup>1</sup> *Selections from the Letters of R. S.*, iv. 205.

new sort of Beaumont and Fletcher, to my great gratification, for I like dearly to think of being held in intimate remembrance hereafter with those from an intimacy with whom I have derived most advantage and delight.'

'Jan. 8, 1831.

'I am so in love with your work that it puts me out of humour with my own, because pressure of time prevents me from immediately following up my part. You will certainly set the public right in very many most essential points, and me also upon some, by the way.'

Two further letters from Rickman show the eagerness with which he threw himself into the work.

'11 January 1831.

'I have now collected a large stock of materials for the series of Colloquies, but cannot write so confidently (therefore less rapidly), while I feel a sensation that much of the connecting machinery will be badly patched in hereafter, that the spirit of conversation of characters will have no natural touches, if it be all penurious interpolation. So I have been thinking of addl. *Mr. persona dramatis*. I do not see how he can carry you this kind of freight unless from London, and therefore that you among your mountains shall receive a visit from this gentleman whom you may oppose in title to your *Montesinos* by some Spanish name, as if a courtier or employee of some kind of Spanish office, who has read your Colloquies with Sir T. More, but from much business has been prevented from visiting you many years; who from an impediment in his speech (my situation of hearing but not speaking in the Ho. Commons) has communicated his strong opinion to no one unless casually and dogmatically, not seeking to impress them, but that the prudential errors in all subjects becoming more and more practical and dangerous, it may be interesting to *Montesinos* to hear summarily the conclusions at which his friend has



arrived, trusting to general recollections of dates and facts—(which to be reserved for appx. or notes).

‘I don’t think a Spanish name will be worse for being understood by few.

‘Now I turn to my National Debt heap of materials.’

‘14 January —31.

‘I received your note, pray remember “When the wicked man turns away from his wickedness”—and let us give him fair chance. He has talents too. May he apply them *pro bono publico*.

‘I see that 12 or 13 sheets will be enough for our present purpose; for there must be appx. or notes after the 2nd part of the vol. as much as in your first vol. of Colloquies. I find that Messrs Hansard have been employed by Murray *confidentially* in setting up private matter—in preparation for the Q.R.—and R. Lovell being with Messrs H., with my influence there we may command all sort of accommodation. I would not consult Murray; that will be soon enough before the book is finally printed; and if it prospers, it can afford to pay the first typed MS.; if not, I will pay it willingly. I like very well your projected order of battle; provided you do not mix any party politics in your London remarks, as I would wish to offend no man in what is really not matter of party, but of human society. I shall try to be smooth even with Malthus—to whom personally I owe heavy grudges.

‘Pray let me have an outlandish Spanish name. Is there not an office about the Court and the Councils there—a *Camerario*? Would that do? I send you 3 sheets, and put you in sight of my National Debt conclusion. The more I send, the more excursively you will think. I doubt not your rapidity of execution when you reach home full of concocted matter. I reckon on finishing the 8 subjects before the Ho. Commons meets.’

Grey’s Government, which included Althorp, Palmerston, Melbourne, Goderich and Graham, with Brougham as Lord

Chancellor, was considerably troubled by disturbances in the south of England, the question of the civil list, the revolutionary movement in Belgium—which subsequently resulted in separation from Holland—and an unsuccessful budget. Their credit, especially shaken as it was by the budget, was only preserved by the general anticipation of a measure for Parliamentary reform. Rickman's letter of February 25 strikes the general note of the opposition.

' 25 February 1831.

' I receive continuation of your MS. and send it to Mr. Lovell, through Hansard's. It is not certain the reformers will carry the *introduction* of their expected bill, unless the other party play (I think) the better game of letting them print the abortion, before they strangle it. This may depend on what it is. The present Govt. (so called) is not expected to last beyond the Easter holidays—by themselves; others allow shorter term. They place their hopes in a war, which may cover over a financial blunder, in loans, etc. The disturbances in Ireland will produce active union among all men of property, and give us good example here. That done, all danger is over, but unless we can obtain some large act of *reform*, in disqualifying all voters throughout G. Britain, who are not freeholders, or do not pay taxes for a house of £20 or £30 a year value, our calm will not be long. It is said, that the infamous Wakley is to be brought in for Middx. or Westminster by Mr. Taylor Place<sup>1</sup> and the blackguards at the next general election.'

On March 1 the Reform bill, which was broadly the same as the measure finally passed, was introduced by Lord John Russell. After a long debate of seven days, it passed first reading on March 9 without a division. Rickman sent Southey frequent and spirited bulletins of progress.

' 2 March 1831.

' . . . Great sport we had last evening in the Ho.

<sup>1</sup> Francis Place, the leading spirit of the Westminster Election Committee, and one of the originators of trades unions, was originally a breeches-maker.

Commons in laughing at the silly though destructive plan of Lord Johnny for reform of Parlt., and the backing speech of the Tricolor Donkey Lord was truly asinine. No other member of the Govt. spoke; and there were three good speeches against reform, touching the particular plan (for which nobody was prepared) but slightly of course. Sir R. P. undertakes this to-night.

‘The whimsical mismanagement of this immortal plan (for it will remain a scare crow in history) is such, that by now excluding all bribeable freemen *non-resident*, and by excluding *all* such in the next generation, a strong party will be furious against it in the large boroughs, and Lord Johnny’s proposal for improving the small boroughs which his lordship spares from proscription by infusion of districts round them alienates all the boroughs *favoured* at this expence,—this half extinction. And who is to form the limits of the districts thus *cut off from county elections* whether they will or nill? A Commee. of the Privy Council!

‘I heard it mentioned as *opinion* (of fact secretly obtained, I believe) that these wisemen have enormously altered their plan towards Radicality, much within the last week; and it being clear that no Govt. could go on 6 months with a Parlt. so reformed, the inference is (drolly expressed you will say), that the contemptible failure of budget and their mutual recriminations in consequence, have given them a near view of exit; and they had rather *blaze* out, than *stink* out. Yet in this tactic they continue to blunder; because their declaration of war against all bribeable freemen will procure them internecine enemies, fiercer and more efficacious than any idle ballot mob can be in their favour.

‘I am too closely worked to write Colloquy; but as I am well ahead, I shall be able to fetch up at Easter. A speedy war and soon!’

‘4 *March* 1831.

‘Here we are on the fourth day of reform of Parlt. Mr. A. Baring gave heavy fire upon the reformers last evening,



a friend of their own. His nephew Baring Wall made an excellent speech against reform the preceding evening. It seemed as if no Cabinet Minister (except the Tricolor the first evening) were willing to speak. At last Lord P. [Palmerston] lashed himself up to an uphill speech. A Canningite in favour of reform. Then Sir Rob. Peel spoke, the best speech he ever made, very trenchant on the Administration in the first half, very conclusive of reform in the latter part. I think to-day the reformers seem to resolve on producing the great scare crow; I feared they were scared from it by their looks last evening. It is said they have sent to the City for alliance from bullying City meetings, and one of them arrived just now. . . .'

'Tuesday, 6 March —31.

'The sixth night—eloquence worn thread-bare.

'Majority of "the Reform Bill" anticipated 46. I think more.

'Lord Howick told us last evening that England for lack of such reform had been governed wretchedly during the last 40 years: and this young Radical is the prime mover of his father, Lambton the Second.'

'March 12, 1831.

' . . . The Ministers in their desperate humour are evidently intriguing with O'Connell, and are rapacious for radical aid, although Hunt tells them that he and his friends will push on regardless of any such concession as is contained in the inimitable bill which is to appear on Tuesday unless (as is likely) they break their promise. In the meantime, every tool of agitation is at work. We reckon about 260 or 270 will vote for the bill, 300 to 320 are against it, but there may be fearful defection by wilfull absentees. The Coward of Kent (Sir E. K.)<sup>1</sup> already shews the white feather in asking a fortnight's "leave of absence," fore-

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edward Knatchbull, M.P. for Kent. He had declined office in Grey's administration, being unable to go the whole length of the reform measure. He did not stand at the general election, but sat again for East Kent after the bill was passed.

seeing ill health with careful eye. In fact they hazard their elections, as if future elections were desirable, if the bill passes. The learned say the bill will be defeated, 46 majority against the second reading.'

The debate on the second reading of the bill occupied March 21 and 22. In a short note on March 22 Rickman announced the result.

'Ayes 302. Noes 301.

'The Whigs have had a shout, but their bill will drop, without going into Commee., so they seem to allow is necessary, because about 30 M.P.'s bullied by their constituents into *yes* upon the 2nd reading, reserved opposition to details. All has happened in the best possible manner, as we shall see.'

I conjecture that an imperfectly dated letter of some length was written next day, Wednesday, 23 March. The Government had indeed contemplated dissolution, but not on account of the second reading division. On March 16 they had been defeated on the proposed timber duties, and it was only at the King's instance that they remained in office.

'*Wednesday Evening* [23 March, 1831].

'You know that we have arrived at the fit termination of Lord J. Russell's bill, for the Whigs do not pretend they can proceed with it. Indeed to-day they have held Cabinet Council as to immediate dissolution of Parliament, but I believe they do not foresee their gain in this, and are going on with the Civil List, as decency extorts from them a tardy attention to the personal comfort of the King, who has had to receive a quarter's salary as *Duke of Clarence*, for pocket money.

'I believe the Queen is much against dissolution of Parlt. at the bidding of the Whigs, whom by this time she cannot but detest, and dread: but the K. hesitates between her

influence, and his mob popularity, so that perhaps the Whigs do not think fit to put their power with W. IV. to the test; and as they are out of office, whenever Sir R. Peel's party use the means in their power, perhaps the evils of a new Parliament may be averted, which will allow time for better thoughts. For it seemed to me that Sir R. P. did *not* speak on the question for 2d reading because he could not do so, unless avowing consent or dissent as to the necessity of *some* reform of Parlt.; most of his friends who spoke yielding so far to the popular voice, or themselves thinking reform of Parliament necessary; so do you and I, but not for other reason than that the present state of things is (nationally speaking) dangerous and intolerable, the duration of every supposeable Administration being much at the mercy of the press, and with no security against the chance of any prevalent popular delusion.

' Lord J. Russell seems to have abandoned in pure despair of maintainable attitude the silliest and wickedest whiggery of his bill, whereby he and some two or three others of the Privy Council were to settle at their discretion the component parts of three fourths of the boroughs which they condescend to leave in existence (if in propriety of speech boroughs can exist without corporate rights of voting). This high function rarely exercised by Parlt. itself in single delinquent boroughs, he allows ought to be further considered; but he hopes the Opposition will be so good as to invent for him some better mode of doing this—a pleasant devolution of employment to enemies of the bill, to do for him what he cannot do himself, the author of it. Every borough and its intended satellites would create a lengthened investigation, and if appeal allowed, twenty years would elapse before this task (itself a creature for spawning Whig influence) could be so finished, as to go to work in member of Parlt. making. Having considered the matter on all sides during some of our hours of debate, I am clear in preference of your scheme for electing electors. There is no other way of arriving at a definitive sound arrangement such as can bear argument, and exhibit impregnable defence



if once established, without which ingredient reform is but the preface to reform without end, in which process the anarchists would not fail to succeed sooner or later in their efforts, which are argus-eyed. The baseless confidence of Lord J. R. that his reform would produce a limit of reform, I cannot understand—to me an unintelligible self-delusion, yet I think sincere,—for three months' experience of modern Whiggery in office has lowered estimation of their intellect to this grade, without in the least raising that of their morality. For their very reform (if human nature do not suddenly change) is but their own death warrant delayed—it reminds one of the exclamation of Catiline when he rushed into hopeless rebellion.

' Things are come to this position : unless the friends of good government emulate in some degree the activity of the enemies of all govt., no administration can count on stability—can be useful at home or respectable abroad. If the friends of good govt. would combine in a corporation society (which seems only to require a first move or movement among the rich in the city) the press might perhaps find its interest in comparative moderation, and the anarchists be repressed. The experiment ought to be tried before adventuring on any reform of Parlt. or on a new election. (Saturday morning). Supposing dissolution of Parliament not to happen immediately as is now currently reported—but some say not till actually in the Committee on the bill (14 April)—I will try to put my thoughts in shape to-morrow.'

The motion for going into committee on the Reform Bill was made on April 18, and General Gascoyne proposed to move that the number of representatives from England and Wales should not be diminished. The division on this latter motion, taken on April 19, resulted in a defeat for the Government by 299 to 291, whereupon they advised the King to dissolve Parliament, the formal prorogation of which took place on April 22, amidst considerable uproar. This will be sufficient comment on the next three letters from Rickman, who remained in the conviction that light

would eventually dawn upon the electors. It was a most gross delusion.

' April 14, 1831.

' . . . Our precious reformers expect to be beaten as to England retaining 513 members ; but will not be sorry for that, calculating on so much more influence, as they have more seats to distribute. They really seem in earnest with their foolish bill, although it seems impossible (even with Whig prejudices) not to foresee their own sure destruction following close after the triumphal pæan.

' I think they will withdraw this, and bring in a new bill, or play off some such trick as may keep them in to the end of the session, and then they have  $\frac{1}{2}$  year of undisturbed official existence in sure prospect. At all events they will be unmasked finally, and nothing can be more useful. The very mob begin to dislike ten pounder masters, who are indeed the basest persons in human society—the very sharks of bribery in all our election petition evidence, and not too numerous to be bribed. The mob of universal suffrage men could present the saving quality of difficulty or impossibility in their very numbers. . . .'

Ap. 19, 1831. 12 o'clock Tuesday Morning.

' . . . Yesterday two rumours were launched by the Whigs, one that Parliament should be dissolved on Wednesday, the other that they would modify their bill, meaning to tide it over on pretence of the new census in May next.

' Last week, Lord J. R. fearing the success of Genl. Gascoyne's motion, said that if the sense of the House was in favour of it, he saw no surrender of principle in accommodating the bill to it. Two days after Mr. Stanley and Lord Althorp said Lord J. R. had been misunderstood and that it could not be conceded (this to gratify their worthy ally O'Connell and other Irish friends, who vote for the bill, bribed by the surrender of English franchise, of *tax-paying* England—on the *principle* of *pauper* population in Ireland being very numerous). Yesterday after two vacil-

lations (at 10 and 2 o'clock) comes down Lord J. R. with an amended bill, giving half of what was required; 31 members left out of 62 (or rather 72) intended to have been retained from England, for trafficking purposes in the progress of the Whig bill. But Genl. G. does not swallow the bait, and when the discussion closes, it is said that the Whigs will be defeated by majority of 26. I should rather say half that number.

'Lord Grey said this evening in the Ho. Peers *how much he regretted that Brougham was taken from the Ho. Commons before he made his reform of Parlt. motion*, which would have been mild and acceptable compared with the Whig bill; intended indeed as a shield between the Govt. and the failure of budget and desperate in proportion to the necessity of the case. Now, in fact, Brougham's threat in the Ho. Commons to bring in a Reform bill made him L. Chancellor; Lord Grey sending for him that evening, and making him accept or reject the sudden offer without a moment's delay, thereby preventing the said B. from conference with his hungry party, who had claims in plenty. So that if any peer had said to the veracious Premier, you lie,—and know you lie—what would the noble lord have said? The result of all is, that the Whigs knowing that their success in this their attempt at reform is the future ruin of themselves, yet they hate their successors enough to act on Catiline's resolve,—*Meâ ruinâ extingam*.

'Greater wickedness no statesman ever conceived. It was bad enough even in the Roman traitor.'

'24 April 1831.

'Last evening produced the proclamation for dissolution of Parliament, and here I am Sunday afternoon writing on a large sheet of paper, in recollection of the days of no franking, which do not exceed a fortnight, and in the interim I have means of *receiving* letters without expence. Our St. Margaret's window <sup>1</sup> will be best as a *finale*, and I

<sup>1</sup> It was intended to include Rickman's description of the antiquities of St. Margaret's, Westminster, in the *Colloquia*.



think in fact you must attend the meeting of Parliament, I had nearly said your duty in Parliament—for a watchman at hand will be useful in these troublous times.

'Whether the Radical Ministry will gain numerically by the dissolution is not certain. I think they will, but I also think that time for truth to break through the artificial mist (in which the half-taught and therefore doubly ignorant classes are enveloped by the unanimous press) will be gained, so that many a man who goes into the House a Radical on the 14th. June may find cause in himself or his constituents to be a good subject at Xmas. I believe the tactic of the Radical Govt. to be solely directed to duration in office, and that when Parliament meets, it will be thought by them too late in the year to do more than lay on the table a new edition of their *bill*. If they have a majority in numbers, this will keep them in till Xmas; and my notion of such intention is much fortified by accidentally knowing that they at first thought of stretching the necessary 52 days to 60 for the meeting of the new Parliament, which yet seems late enough in the year to do no more than gallop through the supplies, and the private bills left unfinished now. On the whole I congratulate myself personally on 7 weeks holiday, which I shall try to employ to good purpose. . . .'

During the holiday the *Colloquies* proceeded apace. Rickman had finally decided to maintain his part under the name of 'Metretes,' which is an allusion to his favourite motto, μέτρον ἄριστον, 'Moderation is best.' These first slips printed by Lovell had reached Southey on March 24, and by the beginning of May the project was ripe for communication to Murray. Southey also wished to show the proofs to Wordsworth, as he feared that Coleridge would 'travel from Dan to Beersheba in the margin.' Southey sent a letter to Murray, suggesting an interview with Rickman, which the latter thus describes on May 6.

' . . . I sent Murray's letter yesterday evening from the *Gerrard St.* twopenny post. Forthwith he trudged hither

through the rain to inquire of the *opus*, of which he said he formed high expectation from your letter. It happened a week since, Mrs. Rickman met him at Mr. S. Turner's. I suppose he had taken a glass too much from the manner in which he addressed her about you—with great admiration, but lamenting that you did not write for the public, in popular form and taste. So I told him Mrs. R.'s report of the conversation, and asked if I could be any use in giving you a hint. With some little embarrassment he confessed he thought colloquy not so acceptable as other forms. I said perhaps so *now*, but that I found most scholars better pleased with *Cicero* in the Senectute, etc., than in his Offices and formal attempts. He affected to know this, and to yield his opinion readily. . . .

Meanwhile the elections had proceeded to the cry of 'the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill,' and amidst great popular excitement. The Government found itself with a large majority in the Commons. On June 24 the new Reform bill, differing little from the old one, was introduced by Lord John Russell. On July 8 it passed second reading by a majority of 136. But the Government was not out of the wood. Owing to opposition obstruction, and O'Connell's quarrel with the Ministry over the 'tithe-war' in Ireland, the committee stage was prolonged till September 7. The bill passed third reading on the 21st by 109, but after a second-reading debate in the Lords lasting five nights it was rejected by 41. On the 20th Parliament was prorogued, but Grey remained in office with the intention of introducing a third bill in the next session. Several letters from Rickman cover this period.

' 26 June 1831.

' . . . The new Ho. Commons are better looking, and better behaved people than the last, and I am willing to argue well from physiognomy. The inconvenience to be apprehended is just that which Lord A. apprehends in his mention of Sir R. Peel, that by reason of his frozen un-

cordial manner,<sup>1</sup> nobody personally likes him, and as a grand apostate he has no right to claim, nor appearances to justify confidence in him. I confess that in fact I expect he will be in office with the Whigs before Xtnas, for his knowledge of Parly. tactics and public business and his eloquence (which from out-of-office leisure grows powerful, from the opposite cause which ruins that of Sir J. Graham and the other Whig Radicals). His eloquence is quite unmatched at present, and alone would shame the rogues out of office, which yet *he* will not take with any chance of holding it. I believe long continuance in office, that is, in a crowd of business so harassing as to admit no interruption from human feelings and unconstrained intercourse with family and friends, to create no attachment, and even to cease to feel any, has unfitted Sir R. Peel for being the focus or polestar of any party, and this at present is sad for England, as the Radical party (all volunteers or zealots in a bad cause) can only be well opposed by parliamentary combination under a good general. Our best hope is that in the Committee on the bill, there will be woeful discord among those who mean mischief and those who are hitherto dupes, the last party being vastly the most numerous.

'The bill was withdrawn during the 8 weeks recess, omitting the division of counties, and the Privy Council Office Committee; but they have been twitted with "the whole bill and nothing but the bill," so effectually as to have altered nothing but the Committee into Commissioners to be appointed by the bill. Not so silly and indecorous as the other scheme, but of like effect.

'Sir James Graham having struck off publicly in one

<sup>1</sup> The following is an extract from Greville's *Diary* for March 1831:—  
'I continue to hear great complaints of Peel—of his coldness, incommunicativeness, and deficiency in all the qualities requisite for a leader, particularly at such a time. There is nobody else, or he would be deserted for any man who had talents enough to take a prominent part, so much does he disgust his adherents. Nobody knows what are his opinions, feelings, wishes, or intentions; he will not go *en avant*, and nobody feels any dependence upon him. There is no help for it and a man's nature can't be altered.'



affair, notoriously in a second, and privately in a third, now thinks to turn Drawcansir,<sup>1</sup> and to retrieve his valorous reputation by saying "unprovoked with ire"—that he proposes to answer anybody not in the House but in private, who shall impugn his character. This was received with a grunt, of unpleasant sound to him I daresay. . . .'

' 29th June 1831.

' . . . The Whigs have not said that they will not pass the Reform bill through the House previously to the recess: rather they insinuate that they will allow to the end of August for the two Houses to pass the bill (a month each), but I think this cannot happen, as the Tories of the H. C. mean to resist pertinaciously throughout the Committee, in order to give fair ground to the peers to resist and reject the bill, as not carried with any appearance of concurrence in the Ho. Commons. I suppose by the continuance of Lord Shaftesbury as Chairman of Committees there is a decided majority against the bill in the Ho. Lords, and we may suppose some of them (such as Marquis Stafford and M. Cleveland) will open their eyes, so unaccountably closed at present, that each of them keeps his son out of the Ho. Commons (Lord F. L. Gower and Lord W. Powlet), because the young men foresee destruction to their families and titles instead of reform in the Whig bill. The Bps. are the men most to be distrusted; their baseness in the R.C. bill has nearly destroyed all hope of them, if promotion of these reverend self-seekers is well managed. Still the upshot of all will depend more on uncontrollable contingencies than on Parliament: I mean on the lucky or unlucky combination of development, when the monied interest, the middle classes, and perhaps the landed interest open their eyes, and set properly in full opposition to democracy and confiscation. Then will the dark clouds be blown away, as in 1793. We have other chances in our favour, such as a No. 2. revolution in France, No. 3. in Belgium, and a continental war in consequence.

<sup>1</sup> The bully in Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*.

'I am glad Mr. Wordsworth likes our plain speaking colloquies. They ought to be published at Christmas. If Murray likes not a daring refutation of popular errors, somebody else may be found to venture the brunt. Large topics rise before me—The *praises* of *prejudice* and of *selfishness* and the odious results of *independence*. My paper is filled.'

'Tuesday Evening [12 July].

'What with the Popn. work, the Highland Churches, and the Reform bill, I have more than enough to do and little time for thinking. At present moment, we are here undergoing the ceremony of successive divisions on the qn. of adjournment, urged by the foolish portion of the Tories, much to the disadvantage of the party, who thus early, and on such trivial occasion, cannot agree in their mode of resistance against the bill.

'The Whigs are wholly governed by the newspapers, the popular, and Mr. O'Connell—a short threat from whom has prevented them from disarming his Irish subjects, although this was rumoured as the formal and even unwilling decision of the full Cabinet as on a matter of clear necessity. The Ministry cannot carry their bill in the Ho. Peers, and project a Coronation as a fair excuse for large creation, and this will vilify that house, so that nobody will wish to save it from destruction. Wherefore I think even the slaves to the mob and Reform will hesitate before they really do thus.'

'Wednesday [13 July].

'You will find we were all night deciding the House upon a question of adjournment in which both parties allowed during 7 hours that they were contending for nothing; *ergo*, both equally wrong in so disgracing the House.

'Sir R. Peel went home at 12, refusing to be party to this; a sad proof how little the Tories cohere, but his ice-cold distant manner attaches nobody, and I should not be surprised if he takes sulk from the defection of last night

of  $\frac{2}{3}$  of his adherents, who almost in words abjured him as leader.<sup>1</sup>

‘Sad work all this; and intolerably foolish pertinacity in that side to which all the blame will be attributed by the Press and the populace.’

‘25/26 July 1831.

‘. . . We go on in the Reform bill about as fast or about as slow as expected, but the Government are dispirited not only at their own defect of answer or argument, but as foreseeing that their labours will be lost in the Ho. Peers, where it is said they already expect a defeat, by a growing majority of 65; too many for any profligate creation of peers to overcome, seeing that such creation is prohibited by the adverse feeling of their friendly peers, who like not to be thus degraded. They are to venture about three or four creations of plebeians, [and] about 15 of eldest sons, prematurely moved from home to the Upper House.

‘We do not despair of strong opposition on leading points; on £10 voters (in fact, rulers of the realm), the division of counties, and the Riding Commission; and moreover the Whigs begin to discover one after another that they will not be sure of re-appearing here if their monster bill should become law. Candidates of lower grade are at work everywhere, and then (unless where conquered by bribery) will prevail.

‘It is said the Lords will entertain the bill by deciding not to notice it till the Scottish and Irish bills pass the Ho. Commons, and this evasion, by whatever majority carried, will be sufficient indication of what will happen—that is, the Whigs will not find it worth while to plague us

<sup>1</sup> Greville alludes to this debate in his *Diary* for July 14, 1831:— ‘The effects of Peel’s leaving the party to shift for itself were exhibited the night before last. He went away . . . and the consequence was that they went on in a vexatious squabble of repeated adjournments till 8 o’c. in the morning, when the Govt. at last beat them. The Oppn. gradually dwindled down to 25 . . . while the Govt. kept 180 together to the last. . . . After these two night it is impossible not to consider the Tory party as having ceased to exist for all practical and legitimate ends of pol: association. . . . There is still a rabble of Opposition, etc.’



with those additional monsters, especially as the absurd novelty of measuring representation otherwise than by produce of taxation will overwhelm us with sturdy Irish beggars, already strenuous for public grants to Irish purposes, the said Irish not paying a farthing in direct taxation and the collecting of absentee rental costing about £800,000 in the Irish Establishment.'

*'Wednesday Evening [Aug. 10].*

'We have jumped forward on the returning officer clause, and I think the ten pound electors will be on the anvil in the beginning of next week. . . . As to the wide door for imitating Liverpool bribery, that argument will not be omitted. Perhaps the effect of the extinction of the 40/ freeholders in Ireland proves that universal, or at least scot and lot, suffrage would allow much more influence to the wealthy, than the £10 franchise; it is plain the landed aristocracy in Ireland have lost all their former influence, by similar £10 franchise which hits the level of priestly influence and half independence, as if by artificial adjustment. If I opposed the senseless bill, I would move, in preference to £10, suffrage to pot-wallopers, or at least all rate payers, whereby the 50 Radicals now in the House would and must vote against Government and the ten pound voters, who are the basest and vilest class of men in the kingdom. Nor would my preference be feigned—partly because it would at least make the quick-sand bill more like firm ground, solid brimstone in pandemonium but not in perpetual throes and explosion. . . .

'Farewell, I am in good spirits, although in over work, House of Commons and Popn. being two heavy weights, but the infinite blunder of the wicked Whigs in foreign affairs, paralleled only by their immortal budget, will be matter of history, and the Peel currency bill (however ill judged concession to the said Whigs) will frighten everybody in good time, and turn the tide, for it is plain any man will hoard gold, or at least keep such a sum by him, as to half ruin all shopkeepers and artizans and give them a salutary

foretaste of Reform. Also the Government must forthwith suspend payment of the saving-bank men, who thereupon must enlist on the right side. Thus good will grow from evil. . . .’

*Thursday [Aug. 11].*

‘Last evening O’Connell’s squadron of Irish Devils—he rates them at 40—testified through his mouth their sudden quarrel with the Whigs, whom they have driven to some unavoidable rebellion against O’Connell’s wishes. I suspect he required all Protestant yeomanry to be disarmed, and this the Whig absentees thought portended no increase of their Irish rents. This squadron of 40 are now at the service of the present Opposition, and boast they can put out or in any party by their weight in either scale. This looks well, as it is likely to lead to combination on this side St. George’s Channel as well as the other.’

*‘17th August 1831.*

‘. . . The senseless bill founders in every particular,—not a word uttered in defence of it. The Whiggery too is attacked by the Radical Press, and if Milord Grey not speedily out of office, he is to withdraw it as rather cumbrous in its machinery; and after an adjournment of a fortnight, reproduce another hopeful chrysalis. I approve of adjournment for any reason whatever, you will rightly conclude, being insufferably worked to no purpose. Yet in good health and spirits.’

*‘25/30 August 1831.*

‘We make little way in the senseless bill. As far as it went to abolish and beat down, the operation was simple though foolish and unjust, but when it begins to *create*, and therein seeks to prove negatives, (that unforeseen difficulty and mischief will *not* arise from any clause) the affair becomes complex in infinite proportion, and here we are likely to sit accordingly. The Coronation is to create about 15 peers, but this is only to gratify so many Whiggamores, for I do not think that anybody now fails to foresee

entire revolution if the bill passes, and the Whigs tremble at the possible success of their own sweet bill. . . .

'In our own affair, I have been thinking, you should expunge all blame of the Press, as issuing from the mouth of *Metreux*: in order that when you open your plan of reform, we may strike a harder blow at the execrable abuse of the Press, by showing that your gradation of representation would so completely abolish all chance of usurpation in Government, that the licence now held to be necessary as a rude corrective, in conjunction with mobs and juries, would no longer be needful and therefore without excuse. Much I think might be urged on this basis.

'The Radicals are become so troublesome and dangerous to Government that I expect the Whigs and Tories are trying to coalesce. The D. of W. and Lord Grey have met on some fair excuse, and Sir Robert Peel's opposition is more and more measured. He grows intimate with nobody, and I presume will use no argument which can give offence to the mob of any grade. The ten pound householders he did not speak against at all, and I suppose he will soon say, that trade stagnates so much from the prolonged discussion, that it will be better to *expedite the bill to the Lords* for rejection. Thus will he escape the unpopularity of strenuous resistance. I do not think that anybody possesses more good arguments which he deems *unspeakable*, and perhaps in proportion to their power. Thus I fear he is not worth prompting. But he will not do anything *very wrong*, and his eloquence and habits of labour in office are indispensable to any strong Government, for all our pigmy statesmen in mass could scarcely compose a Govt. of decent strength or capacity. We seem to lack some stirring event to produce something better, if the whole generation of mankind be not really emasculated, by having read nothing but reviews; all the little knowledge they have being second or third hand, and reproducing nothing, like seed two or three years old, and effete as to procreation. How many, or rather how few, M.P.s have ever read a folio, nay a quarto author, unless perhaps of travels?



Every subject discussed displays mere penury of knowledge and deep thought, and this lamentable symptom has been increasing till the race of men, of thinking men, is nearly extinct.

‘Mr. Sadler is talking of Irish Poor Rates this evening, and says the poor have a *right* to relief, not to be poor; if the application of this principle is to be judged *by the poor* all property of course is extinct.

‘*Per contra*, Torrens pours out all the nonsense of political economy, of transition, etc. So that we cannot tell which errs most widely. My Population goes on well, and though I grumble at wasting 12 hours in 24 here, I must allow that the dissolution of the last Parliament gave me a precious 7 weeks, in which I issued infinite instructions and placed all the machinery in such order, as nothing else could have enabled me to do. Now I have good materials in possession, and if I cannot produce results quite *so soon* as if there were no Reform bill, that is of less moment.’

A fragment from Southey written on September 1 is also worth quoting:—

‘1 Sept. 1831.

‘. . . The bill and the Ministry are likely to go together, and I make little doubt that Sir R. Peel will have to gather up the fragments of both, and make what he can out of them. . . . Never before was poor England so befooled, be-pressed, be-whigged, and be-devilled. But it is some satisfaction to think that they who have brought things to this pass are in a fair way to be—for their pains.’

Meanwhile, in spite of the industry of Rickman and Southey, and the fact that six plates—views of the Lakes—had been engraved by William Westall, there was a hitch in the *Colloquies*. It seems that Murray on receiving his first copy had proceeded to set it in type at his own printer’s, Spottiswoode’s, and had expected to print all further copy in this way. Rickman was incensed at what he considered a high-handed proceeding, and Southey was

perturbed, because Murray not only had omitted to answer his letters on the subject, but had not paid him for his last contributions to the *Quarterly*. On October 25 Southey received news that Murray was in seriously embarrassed circumstances owing to the decline of the *Quarterly's* sales. Rickman comments sternly on this information.

' 28 October 1831.

' I have your note of the 25 October, which puzzles me, because I think Murray more likely to go mad, than bankrupt. To be sure he has thrown away great sums in idle expenditure unbecoming a tradesman, and his *Representative*<sup>1</sup> experiment cost him £14,000. Yet after that I had intimate knowledge of his affairs (as I thought) from his brother the purser, who speaking with apparent knowledge said, that as Murray's *mind* had with *difficulty* overcome the failure of a foolish but favourite project, all was well, and the loss of little consequence farther than keeping him in business a few years longer. Besides, his non-correspondence previously to his now supposed pecuniary distress was much like madness in a man of his extensive business; and why does his son, who seems a man of the world, partake of this defect, which must ruinously disorganise all his affairs, though not immediately. The whole is a riddle, but does he or not stop the progress of the *Colloquies*? I suppose Spottiswoode will trust him; though the absurd obstinacy of re-setting types already well set (as Murray must have perceived) savours of dependance and money due. I see that but one volume can come out in time for the Parliament, but that will only throw your double distilled representation into the first volume instead of the second, and without some of the (*Admicula*) buttresses which might have helped it by graceful and imperceptible induction; but it may be managed well enough. I think Sir James Mackintosh in his brilliant

<sup>1</sup> The morning paper started by Murray in which Benjamin Disraeli originally had a share. It ran from January to July 1826, and cost Murray £26,000.

book of inconclusive generalities (*Vindiciae Gallicae*) lauds the French notions of that kind, and I am convinced more and more that no other popular representation is practicable, without inducing sure mobocracy.

'I know not whether Parliament will meet for a few days in December to permit the Whigs to produce another bill for the amusement of Xtmass holidays. They have fallen low in their own estimation I well perceive, and are in a down-hill state with the more honest mob. Farewell. I am going to dine with Mrs. Rickman at Windsor, *Cras rediturus*. Let me know what you think of a solitary volume? I think the time critical, for the half-reformers Peel & Co. are more than half as mischievous as the Whigs and quite as silly to think they could govern with a half reform, when they found, in the irksome experience of their three last years, they could not govern at all, without the degrading concessions of Test and Corporation Reform, R. Cath. Relief, Beer Bill, Cheap gin, no prosecutions of the Press—etc. etc. etc.'

On November 14 Southey wrote that the riddle of Murray's conduct was solved. In paying Southey for two articles he had paid at the rate of £20 per sheet instead of £100 an article, pleading the general stagnation of business. 'With all his follies and negligence and fits of incivility,' says Southey, 'I am sorry for him.' Rickman petulantly replied that Murray had better go bankrupt, and that in any case he must decide whether he would carry on the *Colloquies* or not. But the year ended without any definite answer being forced out of the procrastinating publisher, though he satisfied Southey's demands for full payment for past work.

The final agitation for reform is too common a matter of history to need more than bare reference. There were riots in London and the provinces: a great open air meeting was held at Birmingham, and at Bristol the mob carried all before them, owing to the weak conduct of Colonel Brereton, who commanded the troops. Behind the scenes great efforts were made by the King and the moderate



peers to effect a compromise, but when Parliament again met on December 6 no agreement had been arrived at. The Reform bill was introduced on December 12, and on the 16th passed its second reading by a majority of two to one. The committee stage lasted twenty-two nights, and on March 23 the bill passed the Commons. The Lords now remained to be dealt with. The creation of sufficient peers to swamp the Opposition was very objectionable to the King, and Grey promised to propose no creations at any rate before the second reading, which was carried on April 14 by 9 votes. Two letters from Rickman are interesting on this period.

*' Sunday Evening, 5 February 1832.*

*' . . . In the meantime their beautiful reform of Parliament bill improves in deformity as it proceeds, and the infinite ramifications of Whig-jobbery (now that they are borough limiting according as Whig property is situate near every place) puzzles its parents, and they have now in type 600 pp. of what they term "wrong reports" of boroughs, which yet we must possess with Whig corrections, before we can proceed far with our Commee. on the Bill. The introduction of actual value as the criterion of £10 seems to me a voluntary felo-de-se of the main principles of the new bill. Lord Althorp, a diligent Chairman of Quarter Sessions, cannot but know from litigated questions of settlement of paupers that the law has twice declared such criterion to be impracticable; and the blunder, worthy of Lord J. Russell, the dullest of men, whereby evidence is virtually to be admitted on one side only, that of the claimant to vote, crowns the mass of litigation in which every parish every year is to be involved. After all no other Government can come in, and we look forward into a beautiful obscurity. It may be enlightened by the torch of war. . . .'*

*' 18 April 1832.*

*' To-day is arrived your grand volume iii. of the Peninsular War. I thank you much for it, but in general*

times at present, too much harassed, *curis et negotio*, to say or do more.

‘Politics are wilder than ever; the rebellion in Ireland being a palpable concomitant of any such reform of Parliament as was madly promised by the Whigs in reward for Irish support, their English friends will not go to this length, and they must keep touch with O’Connell and Co. or quit office. I suppose the strength of the absentees is now on the alert against obvious consequences of the Irish Reform, and the said absentees act in squadron on all occasions of danger for their dear selves—and their dearer Irish property.

‘If once the Protestants were put down by a Reform bill supervening in the open partiality of the new Government to the R. Catholic dictation, they might duly be beaten and massacred in due course by their rascal countrymen, and nothing but force applied on the other side by the base absentees can avert this evil.

‘Whigs, Whiggamores, Whiggissimi. I have not thanked you for a former book from Murray—My distraction must excuse this.’

When Parliament reassembled after a recess on May 7 difficulties at once occurred. Lord Lyndhurst moved in committee that the consideration of Schedule A. should be postponed. On this question the Government were beaten, but they decided to make a stand, recommending the King to create sufficient peerages to pass the bill. The only alternative was for the King to accept their resignation, and this he chose to do. Wellington was ready to step into the breach, but without Peel he was helpless; and Peel, seeing that reform was inevitable, refused steadfastly to adopt a measure against which he had so strongly declared. Vain efforts were made by Lyndhurst and Wellington to make a Government without Peel and his party, but after six days of negotiation Wellington was forced to accept the assurance of Manners-Sutton and Alexander Baring that the attempt was hopeless, and on the 15th Wellington

advised the King to recall Grey. It will be seen that Rickman's version of affairs was somewhat distorted. On May 15 he wrote to Southey :—

' 15 May 1832.

' Here we are, in the midst of political confusion, not worth telling of, but that at a distance such tales are acceptable.

' The D. of W. held a conclave of peers before the Co. on the Reform Bill, and they manœuvred so well, that Lord Grey *professed* desperation, and that he would ask the King to create Peers Q.S. Then said Lord Ellenborough, professing to speak the sense of his friends (the conclave), we are willing to bid a little higher for mob favour and will so pass the Bill.

' Lord G. having made ten times more promises than he wished to make peers actual, takes advantage of pretended discomfiture, and puts the question to the K. in such shape as to invite refusal, and the next day, he and Lord A. say they are out of office. The K. has recourse to the D. of W. who hesitated till he could try his friends, as to forming an Administration. But in this he fails, Sir R. P. not thinking fit to turn about so quickly, even Mr. Croker declining to lead the Ho. Commons, and respectable men not much liking the trickery on both sides.

' So that last evening upon an unauthorized, I believe unintentional, phrase or hint by Mr. A. Baring, it was said by many with much more than usual seeming sincerity and abstraction from party, that the Whig Government ought to carry through their own bill, for good or for evil. And I believe the D. of W. sees he can do no better than follow this notion. *Mundus vertitur sicut mola* says some Dutch emblem. My own affairs rest till Whitsuntide, in a favourable position; I think more favourably if the Whigs are in office than otherwise.'

Grey's firmness had its reward. Most of the Opposition peers abstained from voting on the committee stage, and



by June 7 the Reform bill received the royal assent. Strangely enough there is no expression of disgust to be found in Rickman's correspondence at this time. His feelings perhaps were too strong for expression. Reform had come, and no *Colloquies* had appeared to rouse the country, for Murray had defied, possibly of necessity, all the efforts of Southey and Rickman to get the printing done in their own way. Rickman professes to explain his proceedings in a letter of October 17.

'I have received your letter of 15 Oct., and now write my budget of intelligence of Mr. Murray. Mr. Strahan (King's Printer) died leaving two nephews, Spottiswoodes, in his business. The youngest, a passable kind of man, died at Carlisle a month since of a cold caught on your Lakes. Andrew, who remains, was in Parlt. to give the K. Printer's Vote (fitly due to Govt.), but he was ousted on petition last Parlt. A most odious person, very greedy, but more morose and insolent, so that he actually loses much by the general aversion he has created towards himself. He married the daughter of Longman, her portion [being] that he should have all Longman's printing, and he pushes his claim far beyond the *understanding of the trade* in such cases. But he is as stout as Shylock and defies ill-will. When he came to know of Murray's embarrassment, he was ready to extricate him, provided he gave security, and what Shylock took in pawn are all the plates of the edition of Lord Byron's works, of which Murray cannot sell a copy without accounting to A. Spottiswoode, who superadded (on the strength of his forbearance in not publishing Murray's circumstances) the same conditions as on Longman—to print all Murray's publications also. This explains the grossness of your dialogue case, and the impossibility of Murray's explanation, and of any communing with Sp. If Robt. Sp. had lived, I was thinking of making an arrangement, but with A. S. this is universally known to be impossible. He never answers, yields or compromises. I know the man well, and shall amuse you when we meet

with scenes I have had with him in presence of his uncle, or when he was dependent. . . .'

Whatever the rights and the wrongs of the matter were, the *Colloquies* never appeared, and the manuscript seems to have been lost.

At the end of his letter of May 15 Rickman refers to 'his own affair.' This was no less than a project of retiring from his post altogether, to devote the rest of his life to leisurely pursuits. Southey heartily praised this determination to leave the disappointing world of official labour, and advised Rickman to betake himself to those books from which overwhelming work had long kept him. Rickman seems to have anticipated no difficulties at first. On January 13, 1832, he wrote :—

'Rejoice with me at my thus deliverance, *still more* you will rejoice, if next week I appear not at the Ho. Comm., but this design is a secret yet.'

And again on February 5.

'5 Feb. 1832.

'I foresee no reason which can prevent me from quitting my hard service at Easter; indeed I think I have power (in the background) for enforcing it upon those whose intrigues stopped me the other day. If they raise any feeling beyond the long-lived contempt which they mistake for abstraction, woe awaits them. . . .'

But for some reason, to which there is no clue, his retirement was postponed again and again. In May it was put off till Whitsuntide, and on June 26 he wrote: 'My escape from the H. of C. is impeded by procrastinating manoeuvres of which I do not well understand the motive and cannot overcome.' Later in the year he wrote in a more despondent mood.

'Ecce iterum! From some unintelligible jobbery, I am now told that as my legal claim for retirement accrues

not till a *month* hence, it is unsafe to go out upon trust : true, I shall gain £150 a year by this delay. But I had rather quit now. As it is, I have resented the lateness of objection so far as to insist on a country trip the rest of this week, under colour of fatigue (for I have worked so as not to have slept above 3 hours in the 24 since Xmas) but really to avoid personal complaints and civilities upon issue of the Popn. Volume ; for the *éclat* of closing my appearance with which, I have so worked. If you hear mentioned my proposed retirement, stop the rumour by saying it was premature. The Tory party is no more ; if they cling together so little as to leave to ruin our victorious champion, assailed only by a radical dissenter shopkeeper, who can ever serve them ? I do not wonder *much* ; but we now have only to keep as right as we can our Whig-Masters. For all, we will do so.'

Nevertheless, 'unintelligible jobbery' prevailed, and Rickman died in office eight years later. To those remaining years a separate chapter must be devoted. The vigour of his mind was now on the decline : the success of the long drawn out reform movement had thoroughly disgusted him, and from 1832 onwards the life seems to have left his trenchant pen. He had no longer a cause for which to fight.



## CHAPTER IX

1833-1840

The reformed House of Commons—The new Devils and the Whig Devils—Lamb dines with Rickman—Rickman on Wellington—The fire at the Houses of Parliament—A graphic account—Henry Taylor the hero—Lamb's death—Rickman's comment—Southey offered a baronetcy—The Exchequer demolished—Judge Jeffreys' house—Rickman's illness and death—Tribute of the House.

THE election after the Reform bill changed the state of parties in the House of Commons less than was generally expected. Half of the members were Ministerial: there were about 190 Radicals and freelances, including O'Connell's following; while it was calculated that the 'Conservatives,' as Peel's party was now called, numbered 150, including the remainder of the old Tories. The chief legislative task was the settlement of the atrocious state of affairs in Ireland, which had been inexcusably neglected in the agitation for reform. In February the Irish Coercion bill became law, and an Irish Church Temporalities bill was passed by August. The new House showed extraordinary legislative activity. Many measures of social reform, including a bill to abolish colonial slavery and the first general Factory act, were added to the Statute book. It was a long and tiring session, during which the Government, in spite of its efforts, declined in popularity, and there was a slight reaction in the country in favour of the Tories. Rickman, as he says, had lost all real interest in politics, but several of his letters show that his power of caustic comment still remained.

*'Friday Evening [no date].*

*' . . . We have seen enough of this Ho. Commons to see it will not work, and I suppose everybody will see this in*

the month of August. The composition of it is made up of about 150 Conservatives, as many Radicals, who not very covertly go the length of republicanism and of whom about half go the other halfway to anarchy—Destructives I think is their title invented for them by their heretofore allies. I think there are nearly 100 more of the pledged men, who will not dare to support the Administration upon a pinching question, such as will occur too often for the comfort, perhaps to the extinction, of the said Admn.

‘ I put no faith in the big words of K. W.’s speech versus K. O’Connell as to *reform* of the Church, and tearing other things to pieces, the miserable position of the Admn. will make them more than fulfill all that the enemies of order expect of them. But I do not despair of a revulsion (a reaction will not be enough), and nothing short of the abominable state of domestic, and colonial, and foreign affairs (what a triad ! ) and the portentous darkness around us as to the future would be enough to alarm (not too late) all the holders of property, with regard to which desirable end some one of the Conservatives (Sir R. Peel, or Mr. Herries) ought to move a resolution on some occasion when the House is going into a Committee of Ways and Means, or on any motion for repeal of any tax, “ That this House will in no case consent to any proposal which shall hazard the possibility of keeping faith with the public creditor.” About 100 of our reformed M.P.’s would object to this motion and the alarm would perhaps commence, especially if the Ministers, in assentation to their dreaded friends, were to move the previous qn. <sup>1</sup> in escape from honesty. This might lead to better things, but the absurdly timid reticence upon such questions as this is exactly what the enemies of all property pray for, until things are prepared for suddenly producing their bad-faith as a thing of course, prefaced by the sufferance of speeches and actions involving the principle of national bad faith towards the public creditor. The intention ought to be dragged into daylight, and its enormity, with its consequences, fully explained

<sup>1</sup> The previous question is a motion ‘ that the question be not now put.’

in its operation in all classes above the actual pick-pocket rabble. Consider whether you can with propriety say anything of the fitness of speaking out and thus making the Destructives speak out, so that a line of demarcation be well traced, and the plague stayed. . . .'

' 16 Feb. 1833.

' The key to the conduct of the present Govt. (I may say of all past Govts.) as to Ireland is the dictation of the great absentees. " Thus far shall ye go, and no further " is said too potentially for resistance. ' Unhappy predicament of the national happiness ! An absentee expectant from his childhood is hardened in selfishness, and joins the secret fellowship before he is of age. He sees not the misery of exacted high rents, if an English army can secure them. In this view we pay about 1½ millions p. annum that they may receive twice as much.'

' 18 March 1833.

' . . . Our Pandemonium would be perfectly devilish and intolerable, did not the new Devils cuff and scratch and tear to pieces the Whig Devilry beautifully, by making speeches in close imitation of the factious speeches of the latter, and always refuting their arguments out of their own mouths, or of the former mouth of Lord Brougham.

' In time (how soon the tormented Whigs must decide) they must resist the Radicals and their enlisted union, and I, willing to do good in the day of need, have sent in an easy plan for this purpose. It may lye unexecuted till remedy is too late ; but I have done my devoir ; reckoning this, added to bringing into daylight the unavoidable design to cease payment of the National Debt, to be the best or only practicable steps of proceeding. I inclose copy, which however you will not shew, though talk founded on it is quite lawful. You will see I have sent it in, and through what channel. Not a bad one, as I am in good odour, and deserve to be so, at the Home Office.

' You have perceived by the newspapers, that at present



we are doubly harassed by the Ho. Commons, and the Irish yells are so fierce and frequent that I can't abstract myself so as to write letters etc. at the table, which has prevented me from writing this during last week. . . .'

' *Monday Evening, 1 July 1833.*

'I am much obliged to you for your letters, inasmuch as I give scant return, too much occupied by waste of time and attention *here* and by the better occupation of the Popn. abstract, which looks towards its close—that is England and Wales finished, Scotland begun. This month of July will cut deep into the remnant. I shall produce three handsome volumes, and not leave much undone. To-day I learn from one fresh from the Cambridge meeting (your well named Wittenagemote) that next year at Edin: they are to commence a statistical Commee., "and who the leaders?" said I. Dr. Chalmers<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Malthus, the first an orator fluent of unusual phraseology and in strange confusion of ideas and ideal projects about the poor—a problem which he was attacking practicably, when you and I were together at Glasgow. He covered his failure by removing to a professorship at St. Andrews: I think he has since flitted to Edin. As to Mr. Malthus, he has himself profited more than the public by the up-side down speculations he began to produce 25 years since; and the success of an impossible supposition (refuted perpetually from the creation of the earth to that day), was truly surprising, and the well marked comment perhaps of the decadence of real knowledge in our time. Since that time the *Esse quam Videri* is quite reversed, and mountebank theorists, praters, and puffers have the ascendant, because the objects of conversation have increased so much in number that no conspicuous man can afford time to acquire solid knowledge and to think solidly on any *one* subject. Yet he must pretend to have done so of *all*, and is not likely to dogmatize less because he knows less, and hence innovations in all things, and even history forgotten. If I look

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Thomas Chalmers, the eminent Scottish divine and philanthropist.

round me *here*, how many gentlemen do I see with knowledge in inverse quantity to their own opinion of their sweet selves ! To-night they talk of banking and currency, which touches upon the new light of *political* œconomy, which one of my left hand debaters just now ycleped a *science*, without joking in the least.

‘ How the session is to end, nobody can foresee. To finish their business, 24 hours a day till Xtmas will not suffice, so that in some manner we shall arrive at the ridiculous but very appropriate termination of the adventure of the cat and fiddle, and the reformed Parliament in going to its constituents will shew its hinder parts in no honour, nothing done. Generally speaking, the Ministry are less in mischievous mood than they were, so are the Radicals, but a light accident might make the latter rampant, and their numbers are such that they may gain the ascendant. I look on with great indifference, not sorry at present to be within view of the process going on before me. . . .’

‘ 28 Sept. 1833.

‘ . . . I suppose we shall have the world in arms next year—Monarchy or Democracy—and a bit of a revolution here, when the Lord Miltonians have matured their resistance to taxation. So be it, say I, come quickly. It is the downhill *slide to perdition* which leaves no chance, and in which the predecessors of the Whigs were blindly (or wilfully) culpable. . . . In any case let us keep up our spirits. Hard work does much in this behalf, driving away demons omnigenous. . . .’

‘ 21 November 1833.

‘ . . . At present politics are dull. The Lord Miltonians seem to be defeated, and we are in danger of another confused session of more and more concessions to the republican taste of the times. Large steps in this direction occurred last session ; the King, the constitutional conservator of the peace if he be anything, cannot use precaution against a mob meeting for avowed revolution,

but that two Commees. of the House of Commons are to examine into the conduct of the Secretary of State and the police; a mob jury says that killing is no murder if a policeman be the sufferer, and a second jury acquits the murderer because the King's Solicitor General adduces feeble evidence and says nothing for the prosecution, because (said he) a *bill was pending* in Parliament to enable the prisoner to employ counsel to plead his cause, and in the interval, till this charming idea shall become law, it would be illiberal to speak against a prisoner (if a mob delinquent). So the King is supposed to command the army. No, said the experience of last session, when we had half a dozen courts martial of various dates called in question, and some of the sentences remitted, to escape further discussion. Moreover we had a Commission on Military Governments headed by that loud-voiced thick-headed, but eminent Whig Lord Ebrington, but we may thank God for these disgusts are forced on army officers, who will not forget this in the day of need.

'Worst of all is the contemptible state of the party (if it exist) of the D. of W. and Sir Robert Peel, who have never recovered from the suicidal stab of the Catholic concession, whereby they became unworthy of trust, indeed their perpetual concessions to the popular opinion by abolition of offices, diminution of salaries, and other varieties of folly, became more dangerous than a Whig administration, who may perhaps produce a state of affairs so palpably tending to ruin as to unite all the holders of property against the already united vulgar who have no property. I am not sorry that in France and her cousin Belgium the mechanics are producing combinations, we shall see the result. It is uncertain whether from dulness or evil design Joseph Hume abolished all laws against combination, because the masters were not prevented from combining, all which was fair enough, provided breach of the peace and violation of liberty in the well-disposed workman had been effectually suppressed, which being impossible till we have military law and *cadi* justice, combination must



be rampant, to the injury of the employer and employed equally.'

A committee of the House was appointed in 1833 to consider the establishment of the House of Commons—one of the many committees of inquiry into public expenditure for which the ardour of Joseph Hume was responsible. A very large body of evidence was given by the officials of the House of Commons which revealed a good many abuses.<sup>1</sup> Rickman, in common with the other officials, made a return of all his emoluments, and was also examined upon the question of the Speaker's Secretary's salary. It is a proof of his disgust with affairs generally that no letter of his contains an allusion to this committee, for he must naturally have resented its appointment. Some of the old clerks, in fact, took up in their evidence Rickman's own point of view that payment by fees ensured better and quicker work than a fixed salary.

Several of Rickman's letters in this year were short treatises on the corn duties for the benefit of Southey, who was writing an article on the subject for the *Quarterly*. But he does not mention a fact of more general interest, that in July Lamb dined with him at the 'Bell' to meet Godwin and be reconciled after an estrangement. There is a letter from Lamb to Miss Rickman, written on May 23, in which he says that he is glad she likes the *Essays of Elia*. It refers also to the Rickmans calling on the Godwins.

Southey's daughter Edith was married in this year to Mr. Warter, who afterwards edited the *Selections* from Southey's correspondence. Mr. Warter stayed with the Rickmans early in 1834, and he pays his tribute to his host in the following words :—

'I avail myself of a note to express the high respect I entertained for this excellent man. In 1834 I spent a fort-

<sup>1</sup> My article on 'The Officers of the House of Commons' in *Blackwood's Magazine* for March 1909 contains a summary of the state of affairs revealed by this evidence.

night at his house, and marvelled at his immense stores of information, and at his facility as well as pleasure in imparting them to a willing hearer like myself. I may mention, likewise, how, under a somewhat hard exterior, there was the deepest sense of Christian charity. I had a never-to-be-forgotten opportunity of noticing this in a large party at his house, on which occasion (admitting his errors) he defended the name and memory of Porson, whom he knew, from needless censure.’<sup>1</sup>

Rickman’s attitude to post-Reform politics is well illustrated in a passage from a letter of 12 February 1834 :—

‘ . . . I am fortunately arrived at a callous state, and feel nothing of annoyance because nothing of interest in what is going on around me : and as to result, always relying on Shakespeare’s text—‘ Fair is foul and foul is fair ’—I care not at what rate they travel towards an issue, because I do not clearly see what pace is most likely to lead to a good issue.’

The first political event of more than party importance in this year was the publication of the Poor Law report, which led to the Poor Law Amendment act. Rickman’s interest in the question, as I have shown, was constant throughout his life, and the following passage from a letter written three years before this date shows how deeply he had considered poor law reform :—

‘ 24 April 1831.

‘ . . . I hesitate about the best movement towards the amendment of the Poor Laws ; there is likelihood I think that Sir Robert Peel would gladly try to effect this during his absence from office, which would give him a great reputation, but which would cost too much attention when in office. I could fit up the apparatus readily, having not only *arguments* but *clauses* ready drawn in store. I would propose that he should make a circumstantial speech and print the bill in the summer session, and I could hear

<sup>1</sup> *Selections from the Correspondence of R. S.*, ii. 125, note.

and dispose of all observations (they would not be few) in the autumn. . . .'

Nevertheless, when the report was issued his comment upon it to Southey was rather grudging. In common with many other people he seems to have regarded the recommendation to appoint commissioners with great disfavour, as giving an opening for political jobbery—a view somewhat inconsistent with his defence of sinecure offices as a support for Government in Parliament.

The Government in 1834 was torn by internal dissensions over their Irish policy. On July 9 Grey resigned, and for a short time Melbourne, assisted by Althorp, carried on the Administration. Rickman's commentary on the outward aspect of affairs is worth quoting.

'2 May 1834.

' . . . We have no light here as to the end of the session. The ministry cannot carry their imperfect bills unless in a huddle, as last session in the month of August, so that I anticipate not early liberation.

' A rumour is afloat that Lord Grey from age and an increasing rupture will no longer keep office, and who to substitute they know not. Lord Brougham would have no objection and the indecorum could not be greater than making such a ——— Keeper of the K.'s conscience.

' I value the D. of W.'s opinion not at all. As bad a statesman as he is a good general, and curiously substituting one character for the other in the stratagem of surprise whereby he carried the R. Cath. question, the grossest of all specimens of impropriety in civil government. His insult to all Scotland in the promotion of Abercromby<sup>1</sup> was not so bad. But the worst of proceedings from want of foresight or pure ignorance of the working of the English Government was the abolition of about 20 offices which produced the regular squadron in support of Government in the Ho. Commons. At present this band of defence is

<sup>1</sup> He was made chief baron of the Exchequer of Scotland in 1830.



reduced to about 20, they are low enough at 50, and the Government now lies open to defeat from any concert of 50 Democrats on any question; and by multiplying such questions the Democrats and Radicals cannot but succeed in course of time. So much for the wisdom of the D. of W. If we can arrive at a good military government, the only chance left, the said Duke will do well enough, till then he is best on the shelf. . . .'

During this year Mrs. Southey had been gradually sinking into hopeless insanity. In June, writing to Rickman, Southey refers to 'my poor Edith,' and at the beginning of October he left her at a lunatic asylum in York. On October 7 he writes to Rickman: 'We have an account from York to-day, not a favourable one, yet perhaps quite as much so as ought to have been expected.' It was the great tragedy of his closing years, which had a very marked effect upon his spirits and his intellectual powers. Rickman very truly sympathised, though he was incapable of expressing his feelings. Yet when he found that Telford had left Southey a legacy of £500, he offered to advance at once any sum up to £450 'if from recent event (or otherwise) desirable.'

On October 16 occurred the disastrous fire in which the greater part of the Houses of Parliament were burnt down. As is well known, it was caused by the too rapid burning of old Exchequer tallies of wood in a stove. It began in the House of Lords and rapidly spread. The Rickmans were in Palace Yard at the time, except Ann Rickman, who was in the country with her uncle. It is to this fact that we owe the graphic account written on the very night by Frances Rickman, afterwards Mrs. Hone, to her sister. By Miss Lefroy's courtesy, I am enabled to reproduce it.

'PALACE YARD, 17th Oct.

' $\frac{1}{2}$  past 3 A.M.

'Thank God, my dearest Anne, after near eight hours





THE BURNING OF THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT IN 1834.

(From a drawing in the British Museum.)



dreadful doubt, we seem all safe, though I am still partly lighted by the still blazing House of Commons! I fear you will hear of the awful fire before this reaches you. . . . I will give you as collected an account as I can, for my legs ache and I could not sleep, so I may as well write. After dinner, at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past six this evening, Papa and Mamma taking a nap, in came Ellis, "I think, Miss, there's a small fire broke out at the House of Lords." I said "Come with me to the leads to see it," and there, even then, a volume of flame was blowing towards the Wildes'. Papa at first thought it could be got under, but soon it fearfully grew, and we had little doubt the Hall would catch. The House of Lords we could not see, but some heard that it and Mr. Ley's and the Library were destroyed: then the flames burst from the House of Commons windows, and sooner than I could believe the interior of that was destroyed. Now see my view, the west window in bow room my prospect, front state rooms of Speaker's remain entire (outwardly), red smoke rises from the quadrangle, and the open House of Commons arches (ruined like Fountains Abbey) are filled with an orange light, nearly the whole of the south end of the Speaker's is destroyed. . . . But for the woeful effects on us! I first ran to the Wildes' who with Mr. Gurtkin were in agony that, as first appeared probable, they would be burnt; even then blazing papers were floating over and in their garden. I brought some valuables to our house. But soon the tide turned and *we* were in danger, so Papa thought we should put things together. . . . Poor Mamma was much overcome at first, but that made me stronger, as I felt I must look to everything, Papa being then rather provokingly easy. By this time we had many helps and constant knocking at the door. . . . Presently in came poor Mr. Manning who had spent the day out . . . he saw it in Oxford Street and rushed down. Ellis, Mr. Pritt, Apps, James the Dean of Ripon's servant sent to help. Mrs. Doctor Holland's coachman and footman here, when came a knock, and Henry Taylor answered my "your name, if you please," before I let him in. He had

a tall, elegant friend with him, Mr. Edward Villiers,<sup>1</sup> and they insisted on being active chief managers under me, and worked furiously, H. T. getting coaches, taking their number, filling them, and sending a servant on the box of each to unload . . . for the books were tied in sheets, drawers emptied, everything dismantled. Here (bow room) only a few chairs, sofas and the table remain. . . . Fancy the whole house dismantled, H. T. and his friend working away, I shall never cease to respect his judicious management and energy. . . . Captain Colquhoun was directing on the Speaker's House. They knocked in the roof. The furniture all thrown out of the windows, even china, mirrors. . . . The police order was beautiful. The Horse Guards down, and H. T. as he came met Lord Munster, and consider-

<sup>1</sup> This is curiously corroborated by a letter published for the first time this year in Mrs. C. W. Earle's *Memoirs and Memories*. Mr. Edward Villiers was her father, and on October 17, 1834, he wrote as follows to his mother :—

‘Of course the fire is the engrossing topic; the accounts in all the newspapers are so very full and correct that there is no use in repeating them. I saw it all, at least from the commencement till one o'clock, and part of the time was very actively engaged. I left the Athenæum where I had been dining with Taylor and Rickman, the Clerk of the House of Commons, a great friend of his. We went to see if he wanted assistance, as his house stands on one side of Westminster Hall, in immediate danger. I assisted in gutting his house, and such a scene of confusion never was seen. I got also a most splendid view of the fire which was burning all around the house. Had I not seen half Constantinople burnt down I would say it was the finest sight I had ever seen, and here also there were peculiar beauties which the other could not have, such as the lighting up of the Abbey, a more beautiful sight than that never was beheld. All the attempts to arrest the fire were for hours unsuccessful; they deserved to be, for they were really contemptible considering the age in which we live, nothing ready, nothing effective when it was ready, and no management whatever. Nothing of great value is lost, and nothing which cannot be replaced—so as the glorious old Hall is saved (and it really was almost a miracle that it was), I don't so much mind, and nothing is known as to its origin, but the evidence which they have had at the Home Office is all in favour of accident, some stoppage in the flues. It certainly, however, burst forth in three places at once. The people gave three cheers when the roof of the House of Lords fell in. The King has, I believe, offered Buckingham Palace. This is a true and particular account of all I know on the matter. It is still burning but quite subdued, and they are emptying the Thames upon it. . . .’



ately asked for a dozen soldiers to stand at our door. What a subject for his next poem! I am truly thankful that I was able to use more energy than I can now believe possible. Truly strength is given in the day of trial. Poor Hannah was white as a sheet and Jane very frightened. Dear Mamma soon became cool and packed in the trunks as if going on a journey. Mr. Manning established himself in two chairs in the long passage. Papa and Mr. Payne took me out to the corner of Palace Yard to see the Abbey, such a grand sight as I pray I may never see again; the bright moon in dark clouds, and the clear red and blue and yellow light. Oh! no one who did not see it can picture it. . . . You will be astonished that H. Taylor should be the hero. I should think the Speaker will be up soon. I hope the Gobelin tapestry is saved. Fancy the Spanish Armada and all etc. destroyed! . . . The Whigs and Reform Parliament will indeed be remembered. We need not look for a new lease in this neighbourhood. . . .

‘Half past six. Daylight, and after a hard fight to save the Hall, the fire is all out. . . .’

At the prorogation of Parliament, which occurred soon after, Rickman acted as Clerk, Mr. Ley, the Clerk, and his son, the second Clerk Assistant, having lost their wigs in the fire. Rickman announced the news to Southey with great composure.

‘22 October 1834.

‘We are all well, and the good of destroying a mass of useless incumbrances is equivalent to the repairable evil of £1000 £1500 in buying books for the upper rooms of the library, the contents of the lower room little injured. The Ho. Commons (I beg pardon of the improved St. Stephen’s Chapel) makes an excellent ruin, the crypt and beautiful cloister adjoining prove the efficacy of arched roofs, as they are imagined, even to the *colouring* of the keystones and bosses, so you must not blame me for vilifying the wooden substitute (a kind of architectural fraud) at York,



which caught fire in 1829, and has cost £100,000 in reparation.

‘Miss F. R. who did not quail in the least—will I think send you a sketch—which will show how wonderfully the hall escaped. The populace are greatly interested for that in particular, and exulted loudly when the engines seemed to prevail. All our books and other *valuables* were moved, and all are safely at home again, the police and military maintaining order without difficulty, no outrage attempted. Mr. Taylor visited us early in the fire, and distinguished himself as commander in chief of our auxiliaries till all was over, at half past two o’clock. He will dine with us to-morrow with other fire workers—to glory in past labours and past peril.’

Rickman’s last letter of the year refers to the change of Ministry. On Althorp’s going to the House of Lords, Melbourne found it impossible to carry on. The King again had recourse to Wellington, who never disobeyed a royal command. Peel joined him, and before going to country early in 1835, he issued his famous ‘Tamworth Manifesto’ containing the Conservative policy.

‘26 Nov. 1834.

‘. . . So far as political change has gone, I look at it with little interest; the eagerness of the D. of W. for office indicates surely enough that he will do anything to keep it—and in any manner. So much of consistency one cannot help ascribing to him after his oblique military movement in carrying the R.C. question, whence and from his official retrenchments, which abolished half the influence of the Crown, followed of necessity Reform of Parlt. which, good man! he then opposed. Was he sincere in his blindness? Posterity will have to decide. And whether Sir R. P. was duped or a confederate? The horns of this dilemma are awkward against him. . . .’

The year 1834 saw the death of two old friends. Coleridge died on July 25. Southey’s coldness on this event is well-

known—a lapse in an otherwise generous character. Rickman's attitude was very similar. On December 27 Lamb followed Coleridge to the grave. Five days before, he had stumbled over a stone, and the effects of the fall were fatal. Talfourd tells how Mr. Ryle, who was co-executor with him of Lamb's will, called to tell him of Lamb's danger. It is therefore interesting to read Rickman's letter to Southey upon his death. The authority which Rickman had for ascribing the remoter cause of Lamb's death to intoxication is, of course, vague. It will be charitable to suppose that his severity towards certain human weaknesses had perhaps distorted his version of what he had heard. It is certainly melancholy to compare his cold words with Lamb's warm letter upon their first acquaintance, more than thirty years back. Southey had already written on January 3, 1835:—

' . . . Poor Lamb! It is better that he should have gone first than that he should have survived his poor sister. She, when she is in a condition to understand her loss, will be better able to bear it wisely than he would have been, because she will more naturally (as it were) fly to the only source of consolation. When the time comes for their sad story to be told, I know no author whose writings will be perused with a more mournful interest. . . . '

Here is Rickman's answer.

' 24 January 1835.

' . . . Lamb died just before I left town and Mr. Ryle of the E. India House, one of his extors., whom I know, notified it to me, and promised to call, but he has not yet done so, and I believe his letter gave too favourable a statement of circumstances. He said Miss L. was resigned and composed at the event, but it was from her malady, then in mild type, so that when she saw her brother dead, she observed on his beauty when asleep and apprehended nothing further. In like manner, it was said by Mr. Ryle, that C. L. died of erysipelas, but induced (if induced at all) I now find by some unhappy violence he sustained in a

state of reckless intemperance. I always thought such must be his end, and am surprised how it was delayed so long. The better side of the picture is, that he has left about £1200, with which and otherwise, Miss L. will be well sustained. I do not know further particulars, which you will learn (no doubt) here.

‘The new Tory Government are determined to stand, as I believe at whatever expense of concession to their enemies, and to outbid the Whigs in reform of Church and State. The Whigs on their part, especially the Dissenter Whigs or State puritans, seemed to join the Radicals during the elections, because otherwise they had no chance of a strong party in Parliament. How these worthies will act, we cannot foresee. Each will jesuitize for himself I suppose, and these will a beautiful medley. Farewell. With good wishes to your circle.’

The end of Rickman’s letter refers to the result of the general election which was held in January. The Conservatives numbered about 270 in the new House, but a coalition of the Whigs and Irish outnumbered them, the first proof of which was the election of Abercromby as Speaker against the Ministerial candidate, Manners-Sutton. In April Peel saw no course open to him but resignation. He was succeeded by Melbourne and the Whigs, whose government remained in office till after the accession of Queen Victoria. Rickman’s last letter upon politics was written in this year.

‘July 31, 1835.

‘We at the Ho. Commons are mispending our time sadly, —but the Rads. and the Whiggery are so nearly matched in the Ho. Commons, and have so lost their influence with the *Vox populi* that the Ho. Lords resumes its efficacy, and no great harm can be attempted, and less effected.

‘The regular Squad of Rads. had a steady muster last evening, and beat the Ministry and such of the Tories as



were present.<sup>1</sup> So contemptible is become Government influence over their own official men, that they could not muster half a dozen M.P.'s, and this against a motion, which if pursued to the extent the Rads. expect, annihilates the authority of the Crown over the army, inasmuch as a Commn. of Rads. would reverse the sentence of a court martial after royal approval.'

Early in the year Peel had written to Southey offering him a baronetcy, and asking whether there was anything else which he could do in recognition of his literary achievements. Southey sent a long and dignified answer, in which he refused the baronetcy, on the grounds of having no property with which to support such an honour. But he pointed out at the same time that his labours had been the sole means of supporting the family to whom he was so devoted; and that, since old age was now upon him, he would be grateful for anything that could make their worldly position more secure. Peel's answer was to increase his pension soon afterwards to £300 a year. There is a characteristic passage in a letter from Rickman referring to the proffered baronetcy, an honour for which he had a great contempt.

'7 February 1835.

'I have received your letter and am glad to learn that I may direct to you as usual. I somewhat dreaded the Tuesday Gazette, lest you might there have fallen under the description of the some men "who have honours cast upon them." You will see by this that H. T. [Taylor] had called here, (Sunday evening in fact) and told what was threatened. I pleaded against your baronetcy, the fitness of landed property, almost of entailed property, and the enormous unfitness of making honours cheap by a compulsory instance. About the more sensible part of the double intention in your favour I said what occurred to me,

<sup>1</sup> On a motion to appoint a select committee to inquire into the conduct of General Darling while Governor of New South Wales. The House sat till after twelve o'clock on the 31st, and the Government were beaten by 55 to 47.

and as H. T. was to dine with the magnates on Tuesday, he begged me to write (if time permitted) to him on Monday. So I did, and I think urged successfully the impolicy of *grades of pension*, an eternal source it would be of malice and spite and dissension where there should be none, and the whole affair would be disgraced by personal polemics before the public.'

In September of this year Rickman was finally removed from his old house in Palace Yard. It was curious that though the old Exchequer had been threatened several years before, it had, as a matter of fact, outlived the wholly unexpected destruction of the Houses of Parliament by fire. As early as 1825 Southey had written: 'My dearest associations with London will be destroyed when your house and the Exchequer shall be pulled down.' Again on May 29, 1830 Southey wrote:—

' . . . I almost think if your house in P. Yard and the old Exchequer were pulled down, I should hardly ever have heart to visit London again, so many, many years have I had a home in that corner, or made my first visit to it on my arrival in town. From 1788 to 1792 I frequented it as a schoolboy, and have frequented it ever since. And never have I spent more pleasant or more profitable hours than in your society and as your guest. The luckiest chance of my life (for mere chance it apparently was) was that which took me to Christchurch.'

However, the demolition scheme came to nothing, and on February 5, 1832 Rickman wrote:—

'The old Excheqr. has a kind of reprieve in the dismissal of Sir Henry Parnell,<sup>1</sup> who aimed at establishing himself and his coadjutor, or rather bear-leader, Dr. Bowring . . . in office for life, suspending the old fashioned Excheqr.'

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Lord Congleton. He was secretary at war in 1831, and was dismissed in January 1832 for refusing to support the ministry in the Russian-Dutch war question.







JUDGE JEFFREYS' HOUSE IN DUKE STREET, WESTMINSTER.  
*(From a water-colour by T. H. Shepherd in 1853.)*

Now, however, the rebuilding of the Palace of Westminster made demolition inevitable, and Rickman found his last resting-place in that house in Duke Street, Westminster, which was built by Judge Jeffreys, and had once been used as the Admiralty. This house, which stood till the beginning of last year in Delahay Street, has now itself been pulled down to make room for new Government offices. Rickman writes of it as follows :—

‘ 23 DUKE STREET, WESTMR.,  
‘ 17 Sept. 1835.

‘ Your letter finds me rather unsettled, in a new abode, as we were desired to quit Palace Yard at the end of August to make room for the demolition of the old Excheqr., and consequently of your ancient haunt. On the pressure of the occasion I found a house in most desolate murky condition, as a receptacle for furniture rather than inhabitants, but window-cleaning, whitewashing, etc. have so improved appearances that we are likely to settle here. It constitutes a fourth part of a mansion temp. Car. II., built I believe by Jeffries, who became known and was rewarded for his cruelty by the Chancellorship. But the mob caught him, I believe, at the Revolution. We possess his central staircase and the adjoining rooms, which are sufficiently ample. Everybody has worked with zeal, and with good help; yet a month’s work will be required (three weeks of it already passed) to arrive at convenience. . . .’

Southey replied :—

‘ Sept. 20, 1835.

‘ So you are unhoused at last, and when I next come to London my old haunts of six and forty years will have disappeared from the face of the earth. Well, they may easily make a handsomer building on the Exchequer, but pleasanter society than I have enjoyed by your presence in that corner will never be collected upon the same ground—or elsewhere.

‘ I hope your emancipation is at hand : for otherwise in

bad weather and cold nights you will feel the inconvenience of the distance from W. Hall. . . .’

Early in 1836 the two friends had some idea of working up the material of their *Colloquies*. Southey wrote on January 31: ‘. . . Two months hence I hope to feel so much at leisure as to work up Colloquial materials. John Murray is now so utterly regardless of all business or forms of business, that there could not be a fitter person to bring into the present cabinet.’

But nothing came of the scheme. Between April 1836 and August 1838 no letters from Rickman to Southey have been preserved. In May 1836 Mrs. Rickman died, and in the same year Frances Rickman became Mrs. Hone. In Southey’s letters during the autumn, which are very short, there are allusions to an operation upon Rickman’s eyes. Nevertheless, we know that between 1835 and 1837 Rickman contributed several articles to the *Medical Gazette*. In October 1837 Southey wrote sadly: ‘Our long tragedy is now fast drawing to a close’; and Mrs. Southey died in November. From then till his death Southey gradually sunk into a state of childishness, though at first it was only shown in a certain incapacity for concentration. In 1838 he reviewed the *Life of Telford*, edited by Rickman, in the *Quarterly*, and in December again spoke of resuming the *Colloquies*.

In 1839 Southey married Caroline Bowles, but there is no allusion to her in his short notes to Rickman, of whom we know nothing but that he produced in that year a large Return of Local Taxation based upon all his former returns. In 1840 he began to be busy with the Population Bill for 1841 which was brought in on June 1. On June 2 Rickman fell ill. Exposure to the night air after long sittings in the House, now necessitated by his no longer living in the precincts, caused an ulcerated larynx. It was with difficulty that he was persuaded to remain away from his work, but even on his sick-bed he was able to write a long letter of thirty-six paragraphs to the Home Office to defend him-





A VIEW OF JUDGE JEFFREYS' HOUSE FROM BRIDGE WALK TAKEN JUST BEFORE ITS DEMOLITION IN 1910. THE CARS ARE STANDING IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE.

*(From a photograph lent by H. M. Office of Works.)*



self, in the words of his son's memoir, against 'a series of anonymous strictures' upon the methods of compiling the Population Returns. 'The commentary proved to be conclusive': but the hardy census-taker was not to see a fifth census. Rickman's illness was fatal: 'a sad painful struggle for breath it was,' says Mrs. Lefroy. For two months he lingered, and died on August 11, 1840, 'in great composure of mind and body.' He was buried beside his wife in St. Margaret's, Westminster.

So died John Rickman in his sixty-ninth year. I cannot conclude this memoir more fittingly than by noticing the proceedings of the House of Commons on February 2 and 3, 1841. On February 2 the Speaker called the notice of the House to Rickman's death, and to a letter from his son relating to a series of papers on procedure collected by Rickman, which he desired to place at the disposal of the House. Lord John Russell thereupon gave notice that he would move a resolution on the subject next day. On February 3 the resolution was proposed by Lord John Russell and seconded by Mr. Goulburn, both of whom spoke of Rickman's services in the highest terms, referring especially to the fund of information which he was always ready to impart to those who desired it. Rickman's friend, Sir Robert Inglis, also pronounced a eulogy, but perhaps the most remarkable tribute was from the Radical, Joseph Hume, with whose views Rickman was in violent disagreement, as will have been gathered. He said: 'I am unwilling to allow this vote to pass without expressing my humble approbation of the conduct of the late Mr. Rickman. I have never known a public officer so modest, so unassuming, possessed of such varied knowledge respecting the affairs of Parliament, and yet so ready to afford every information to others. The labours of Mr. Rickman generally in statistical matters, to which I have paid particular attention, have been highly valuable; and, specially as regards the preface to the Population Returns, will stand unrivalled in the amount of information and in the concise manner in which he brought it before this House. I therefore most



cordially concur in expressing my sense of the value of his services. I may add that I had frequently occasion to consult him on matters connected with the rules of this House, and on documents before it, and I always found him most friendly and ready to afford every information in his power. I am bound to say that I received most valuable assistance from Mr. Rickman in my various duties in this House. . . .’

The resolution, passed *nem. con.*, ran as follows :—

‘That this House entertains a just and high sense of the distinguished and exemplary manner in which John Rickman, Esquire, late Clerk Assistant of this House, uniformly discharged the Duties of his situation during his long attendance at the Table of this House.’

The portrait which forms the frontispiece of this volume was subsequently published, and underneath was written a verdict which Rickman himself would have considered the highest praise—

AN HONEST MAN.

## INDEX

- ABBOT, CHARLES. *See* Colchester.  
 Abercromby, James (Lord Dunfermline), 307, 314.  
 Absenteeism, Rickman on, 241, 301.  
 Addington, Henry (Lord Sidmouth), 44, 46, 79, 105, 109, 141.  
 Aikin, Dr., 49.  
 All the Talents, Ministry of, 12, 136-44.  
 Althorp, Lord, 263, 272, 279, 282, 293, 295, 307, 312.  
 Arbuthnot, Charles, 184, 185, 208.  
 Astley's Circus, 126, 225, 226.  
 Ayrtou, William, 128.
- BALL, SIR ALEXANDER, 151.  
 Baring, Alexander, 274, 294, 295.  
 Bedford, G. C., 51, 52, 148, 176, 203, 204.  
*Béguinages*, 15, 16, 23-25, 33, 39, 88, 216-18.  
 Bell, Dr., 160, 163, 214.  
 Bellingham, John, 160, 161.  
 Benger, Elizabeth, 76.  
 Bennet, Hon. Henry, 212.  
 Bilderdijk, the Dutch poet, 231.  
 Bourne, Sturges, 191.  
 Bristol, Southey at, 24, 25, 44, 81, 82, 83, 85.  
 Brougham, Lord, 12, 13, 167-69, 185, 189, 190, 203, 206, 208, 210-12, 224, 230, 233, 234, 258, 264, 268, 272, 273, 280, 301, 307.  
 Brunswickers, the, 257, 258.  
 Burdett, Sir F., 12, 13, 82, 125, 149, 152, 153, 160, 212, 224, 228, 229, 231, 234, 236, 240, 250.  
 Burnett, George, 2, 4, 67.  
   his relations with Rickman, 7, 8, 45, 58, 63, 90-92, 94-98, 102, 103, 144, 152.  
 Lamb's opinion of, 18, 50, 51, 54-56, 74, 85.
- Burnett, George—*continued*.  
   early life of, 44, 45.  
   employed by Rickman on the census, 46, 48, 49, 64.  
   idle disposition of, 49, 50, 83.  
   literary work of, 56, 111.  
   his relations with Coleridge, 44, 45, 85, 103, 104, 155, 156.  
   Dyer's opinion of, 59, 60.  
   scolded by Rickman, 60, 61, 65.  
   quarrels with Southey, 61, 62, 82, 84, 85.  
   Southey's opinion of, 61, 62, 65, 66, 71.  
   tutor to Lord Stanhope's sons, 71, 72, 75, 82, 83.  
   wishes to become a naval surgeon, 90-92.  
   gets a commission as surgeon in the militia, 94-98.  
   gives it up, 102, 103.  
   goes to Poland, 103, 104, 111.  
   reduced to misery, 152.  
   dies in a workhouse, 155, 156.  
   letters of, to Thomas Poole, 8, 95-98.  
   — to Rickman, 8, 96.  
 Burney, Admiral, 9, 80, 81, 90, 110, 118, 127, 128, 129, 139.  
 — Martin, 129.  
 Burton, Southey at, 22.  
 Byron, Lord, 163, 219; works of, 296.
- CALDER, SIR ROBERT, 137, 139.  
 Caledonian Canal, the, 15, 111, 112, 131, 132, 181, 182, 207, 210, 218, 219, 220, 223, 252.  
 Campbell, Thomas, 181.  
 Camelford, Lord, 31.  
 Canning, George, 12, 13, 149, 150, 161, 214, 221-23, 224, 228, 229, 233, 234, 250, 256; administration of, 233, 234, 240.

- Carlisle, Sir Anthony, 91, 94.  
 Caroline, Queen, 126, 167-69, 212, 213, 218, 222, 255.  
*Castle Rackrent*, 67, 68.  
 Castlereagh, Lord, 137, 149, 208, 214, 221.  
 Catholic Association, the, 229.  
 Cato Street Conspiracy, the, 212.  
 Census, the. *See* Population Returns.  
 Chalmers, Dr., 302.  
 Chidham, Rickman at, 76, 226-28.  
 Christchurch, Rickman at, 21, 22, 24, 25, 32, 35, 39, 316.  
 Clare election, the, 240.  
 Clark, Miss (Marchioness of Ormond), 22, 198.  
 Clerks of the House of Commons, the, 10, 78, 133, 305.  
 Cleveland, Lord, 284.  
 Cobbett, William, 149, 180, 192, 250.  
 Cockpit, the, 40, 58, 70.  
 Colchester, Lord (Charles Abbot, Speaker of the House of Commons), 40, 45, 51, 72, 74, 98-102, 115, 126, 134, 155, 207, 229, 249, *and see* Rickman, J., letters of; diaries of, 2, 3, 51, 207-10, 233.  
 Coleridge, Samuel Hartley, 27, 34, 76, 78, 79, 86, 112, 118, 167, 281.  
   his high opinion of Rickman, 2, 5, 105, 107.  
   on Lamb's smoking and drinking, 6, 157.  
   Rickman's opinion of, 7, 88, 102, 107, 108, 143, 144, 151.  
   his relations with Burnett, 8, 44, 45, 69, 72, 84, 85, 104, 155, 156.  
   works for the *Morning Post* in London, 67.  
 Rickman finds him a ship, 102-108.  
 returns from Malta, 143.  
 separates from his wife, 144.  
 edits the *Friend*, 147, 150, 151.  
 on Parliamentary reform, 162, 163.  
 his tragedy 'Remorse,' 163-66.  
 defends Southey in the *Courier*, 189.  
 death of, 312, 313.
- Coleridge, Samuel Hartley—*contd.*  
 letters of, to Rickman, 3, 18, 80, 103-107, 156, 157, 161-66.  
*Commercial, Agricultural, and Manufacturers' Magazine*, the, 7, 10, 28, 29, 31, 38, 64, 66.  
 Commission for building churches in the Highlands and Islands, 15, 132, 231, 285.  
 Commission for building roads and bridges in the Highlands, 15, 111, 112, 131, 132, 181, 213, 218, 224, 252.  
 Commons, House of, 12, 13, 14, 15, 77-79, 81, 83, 106, 109, 116, 128, 133, 134, 146, 147, 152, 153, 160, 161, 162, 167, 168, 175, 184, 185, 187, 189, 202, 207-12, 220, 221, 222, 224, 225, 228-31, 236, 243-45, 250-54, 256-58, 260-64, 266, 267, 273-96, 299-305, 307, 308-12, 314, 315, 319, 320.  
 Conservative Party, the, 299, 300, 312, 314.  
 Co-operation, 198, 246-49.  
 Corn Laws, the, 109, 175, 176, 185, 252, 270, 305.  
 Corporation Act, repeal of, 240, 292.  
 Corry, Isaac, 51, 56, 57, 63, 64, 69, 71, 79.  
 Cottle, Amos, 27, 33, 36, 46.  
 — Joseph, 22, 27, 33, 44, 72.  
 — R., 33.  
 Crabb Robinson, diary of, 2, 44, 129, 156.  
 Croker, John Wilson, 154, 155, 173, 174, 191, 195, 203, 209, 249, 295.  
 Cumberland, Duke of, 266.  
 Currency, Rickman on, 80, 235, 236, 270, 287, 288.  
 Curwen, John Christian, 191, 192.
- DALE, DR., 53, 54.  
 Danvers, Charles, 44, 47, 82, 89.  
 D'Arblay, Madame, 127, 128.  
 Davison, Alexander, 137, 138.  
 Davy, Sir Humphry, 25, 30, 31, 47, 72, 80, 81.  
 Druitt, Mary, 74.  
 Drury Lane Theatre, Coleridge at, 163-66.



- Dublin, Rickman at, 51, 52, 57, 63, 68, 72-74, 76.
- Dundas, R. *See* Melville, Lord.
- Dyer, George, 2, 4, 33, 56, 58, 70, 74.  
introduces Rickman to Lamb, 7, 34, 35.  
procures Rickman an editorship, 7, 28, 29.  
and Charles Lamb, 7, 17, 18, 34, 35, 39, 50, 93, 94.  
talked by the Lambs into love with Miss Bengier, 7, 75, 76.  
character of, 26.  
first meeting of Rickman with, 26, 27.  
poems of, 27, 37, 39, 54.  
and George Burnett, 45, 59, 60, 83, 84.  
rescued by Lamb from starvation, 52-54, 60, 63.  
dines with Rickman, 81, 83.  
on Sir F. Burdett's Committee, 82.  
letters of, to Rickman, 7, 17, 34, 59, 60, 93.
- Dyson, Thomas, 126.
- EAST INDIA COMPANY, the, 106, 138, 139, 167, 168.
- East Retford, disenfranchisement of, 240, 250, 267.
- Ebrington, Lord, 304.
- Economic distress in England, 37, 179, 180, 186, 190-92, 206, 207, 214, 215, 219, 257.
- Edinburgh Annual Register*, the, 154, 234-37.
- Edinburgh Review*, the, 144, 148, 186, 200, 204.
- Eldon, Lord, 228, 229, 231.
- Election petitions, 77, 78, 83, 132.
- Ellenborough, Lord, 295.
- Exchequer Buildings, 124, 125, 316, 317.
- Etymology, Rickman on, 80, 122, 123, 130.
- FREES *versus* Salaries, Rickman on, 140, 141, 236.
- Fitzwilliam, Lord, 211, 215.
- Foreign affairs, Rickman on, 46, 63, 64, 117, 135, 143, 144, 167, 173, 174, 218, 240, 284, 287, 304.
- Forty-shilling freeholders, 240, 243, 266, 287.
- Franking, privilege of, 78, 98-102, 103, 106, 107.
- Free Trade, Rickman on, 252, 260, 270.
- Fricker, George, 80, 167.
- Friend*, the, 10, 147, 150, 151, 162.
- Fox, Charles James, 12, 13, 79, 107, 108, 113, 135, 136-38, 141-44, 255.
- GALL, DR., 241.
- Gascoyne, General, 278, 279, 280.
- George III., 12, 30, 46, 48, 79, 108, 113, 136, 143-45, 149, 152, 153, 212, 231, 255.
- George IV., 13, 109, 126, 137, 138, 146, 153, 154, 155, 212, 214, 221, 234, 237, 242, 243, 251, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 264, 265.
- Gifford, William, 154, 155, 191, 195, 199, 204.
- Goderich, Lord, 234, 239, 272  
administration of, 234, 237, 240.
- Godwin, William, 6, 35, 36, 50, 55, 80, 305.
- Goulburn, Henry, 263, 264, 319.
- Graham, Sir James, 253, 272, 283, 284.
- Grampond, disenfranchisement of, 250.
- Grattan, Henry, 12, 73, 167, 209, 228, 229.
- Grenville, Lord, 13, 105, 136, 137, 139, 145, 149, 150, 153, 154, 160, 168, 219, 228.
- Grenville's *Diary*, 283, 286.
- Grey, Lord, 12, 13, 136, 138, 142, 144, 145, 149, 150, 153, 154, 168, 263, 272, 280, 288, 289, 293, 295, 296, 307; administration of, 268, 272-90, 292-96, 299-305, 307.
- Griffiths, the bookseller, 28, 31.
- Guildford Grammar School, Rickman at, 21, 22.
- HADFIELD, JAMES, 30.
- Hallam's *Constitutional History*, 238.
- Hanover, Rickman on, 143, 144.
- Hansard, Luke, 205, 242; letter of, to Rickman, 205.

- Hansard's printing office, 268, 272, 273.
- Hazlitt, William, 6, 26, 119, 128, 129, 156, 157, 166.
- Herries, John Charles, 234, 237, 264, 300.
- Hill, Dr., 39, 238.
- Hobhouse, J. Cam (Lord Broughton), 266.
- Holcroft, Tom, 129.
- Holland, Lord, 154, 261.
- Howick, Lord, 275.
- Hume, Joseph, 257, 304, 305, 319, 320.
- Hunt, Leigh, 128.
- 'Orator,' 180, 192, 250, 255, 275.
- Huskisson, William, 150, 233, 234, 237, 238, 240, 244, 256, 261, 266, 267.
- INGLIS, SIR ROBERT, 233, 243, 319.
- Ireland, 30, 44, 46, 47, 51, 52, 57, 68, 72-74, 100, 141, 155, 223, 229, 230, 240, 241, 243, 244, 248, 252, 253, 257, 273, 282, 287, 294, 299-301.
- Irish Party, the, 14; *and see* O'Connell.
- Joan of Arc*, Southey's poem, criticised by Rickman, 23.
- 'John Woodvil,' by Charles Lamb, 10, 39, 64, 65, 68, 70, 74, 75, 94.
- Journals of the House of Commons, the, 15, 133, 134.
- Judge Jeffreys, house of, in Duke Street, 317.
- KESWICK, Southey at, 79, 91, 130, 134, 194, 225, 233, 262, 269.
- Knatchbull, Sir Edward, 275, 276.
- LAMB, CHARLES—
- his friendship with Rickman, 2, 4, 34-36, 39, 118.
- his Wednesday evenings, 2.
- Essays of, 4, 36, 119, 225.
- and George Dyer, 7, 26, 52-54, 56, 58-60, 67, 72, 76, 94.
- and Burnett, 8, 54-56, 57, 59, 61, 72, 84, 85, 86, 156.
- Lamb, Charles—*continued*
- his play, 'John Woodvil,' 10, 39, 64, 65, 67, 68, 74, 75, 94.
- new facts about, 17, 18.
- and Coleridge, 27.
- introduced by Dyer to Rickman, 34, 35, 39.
- his opinion of Southey's *Joan of Arc*, 36.
- Rickman's news-writer in 1801, 50, 51.
- writes in the *Morning Post*, 69, 70, 71, 72.
- Rickman on his wit, 39, 71.
- his epitaph on Mary Druitt, 74.
- stays with Rickman, 87, 88, 247.
- goes to Sadlers Wells with Southey and the Rickmans, 89.
- Coleridge on, 105, 106, 156, 157, 165, 166.
- and Edward Phillips, 111, 112.
- on Mrs. Rickman, 119.
- at Rickman's house, 128, 129.
- pleads for Martin Burney, 129.
- writes the Prologue for Coleridge's 'Remorse,' 163, 165, 166.
- his dispute with Southey, 225.
- Southey's message to, 247.
- dines with Rickman in 1829, 335.
- Rickman and Southey on his death, 313, 314.
- letter of, to Hazlitt, 119.
- letters of, to Manning, 1, 5, 34, 35, 50.
- to Rickman, 3, 17, 18, 35, 52-56, 72, 74, 90.
- Frederick. *See* Melbourne.
- Mary, 6, 9, 18, 59, 60, 65, 69, 75, 76, 87, 89, 90, 106, 128, 129, 130, 156, 247, 313, 314.
- Lancaster, Joseph, 160.
- Lansdowne, Lord, 136, 239, 240.
- Ley, John Henry, 208, 308, 311.
- Liberalism, 11, 171, 176, 183, 184, 196, 197, 211, 212, 218, 244, 245, 251, 252, 257, 258, 259, 267, 268.
- Liverpool, Lord, administration of, 160, 168, 180, 184, 185, 187, 189, 192, 195, 207, 208, 210-12, 213, 218, 219-25, 228-31, 233, 235.
- and Manchester Railway, opening of, 267.
- Lincoln College, Rickman at, 22.

- Longmans' publishing house, 36, 37, 38, 47, 88, 89, 296.
- Lords, House of, 14, 139, 140, 147, 153, 168, 222, 229, 231, 244, 245, 268, 280, 282, 284, 285, 286, 289, 293-95, 308-12, 314.
- Lord Miltonians, the, 303.
- Lovell, Robert, 204, 205, 268, 272, 273, 281.
- Lucas, E. V., 1, 6, 17, 18, 26, 129, 247.
- Lyndhurst, Lord, 294.
- MACAULAY, LORD, 13, 253, 254.
- Macculloch, John Ramsay, 242, 249, 260, 261.
- Mackintosh, Sir James, 243, 291, 292.
- 'Madoc,' Southey's poem, Rickman on, 112, 113.
- Magdalen Hall, Rickman at, 22.
- Malthus, Thomas Robert, 43, 148, 167, 203, 204, 237, 272, 302.
- Manners-Sutton, Charles, 239, 294, 314.
- Mavor's *Universal History*, 56, 62, 70.
- May, John, 25, 36, 39.
- Melbourne, Lord, 209, 272, 307, 312, 314.
- Melville, Lord, 30, 115, 139-41, 255.  
—— (son of the above), 239.
- Moir, Lord, 137, 138.
- More, Hannah, 71, 158.
- Morning Post*, the, 67, 69, 70, 72, 105, 106.
- Morpeth, Lord, 261.
- Murray, John, 195, 201, 203, 241, 268, 272, 281, 282, 285, 290, 291, 292, 296, 318.
- NAPOLEON, 31, 63, 64, 79, 113, 135, 143, 144, 145, 169, 171, 173, 174, 175, 215, 235.
- Natural beauty, Rickman on, 108.
- Navarino, battle of, 237, 240.
- Netherlands, the, Rickman visits, 232, 233.
- Normandy, Rickman in, 231.
- O'CONNELL, DANIEL, 13, 14, 229, 240, 241, 243, 275, 279, 282, 285, 288, 294, 299, 300.
- Ompsted, 255.
- Opie, Mrs., 33.
- Owen of Lanark, 180, 182.
- PALMERSTON, LORD, 210, 272, 275.
- Pantisocracy, 23, 44, 45, 96.
- Parliamentary reform, 12, 118, 138, 162, 163, 179, 180, 208, 214, 222, 236, 240, 249-96, 312.
- Parnell, Sir Henry, 316.
- Poel, Sir Robert, 13, 209, 219, 221, 228, 233, 235, 238, 239, 240, 242-45, 264, 274, 275, 277, 282, 283, 285, 286, 287, 289, 290, 292, 294, 295, 299, 300, 304, 306, 312, 314, 315.
- Penryn, disenfranchisement of, 208, 250.
- Perceval, Spencer, 12, 13, 135, 145-47, 153, 160, 161, 228.
- 'Peterloo' massacre, the, 206, 211, 250, 255.
- Petty, Lord Henry. *See* Lanedowne.
- Phillips, Colonel, 127.
- Phillips, Edward, 111, 112, 113-15.  
—— the bookseller, 52, 53-55, 61, 95.
- Pitt, William, 12, 22, 30, 31, 37, 44, 45, 46, 48, 105, 108, 109, 113, 115, 135, 136, 138-41, 147, 228, 255.
- Place, Francis, 273.
- Plunket, Lord, 209, 224, 229, 241.
- Poetry, Rickman on, 23, 35, 47.
- Poland, Burnett in, 103, 104, 111.
- Political economists, Rickman's dislike of, 241, 242, 249, 260, 261, 290, 302, 303.
- Poole, Thomas, 3, 78, 80, 81, 85, 88, 89, 90, 95-103, 105, 118, 136, 191; letters of, to Rickman, 99-102.
- Poor Law reform, 15, 80, 86, 88, 89, 134, 135, 136, 143, 151, 152, 157, 167, 168, 180, 181, 182, 190-94, 196-204, 206, 237, 241, 246-48, 270, 290, 306, 307.  
—— report of 1834, 306, 307.
- Population Acts, the, 40-43.  
—— returns, 15, 38, 40-43, 46, 48, 86, 162, 182, 219, 220, 237, 260,



## 326 LIFE AND LETTERS OF JOHN RICKMAN

- 261, 262, 285, 287, 290, 298, 302, 318, 319.
- Porson, Richard, 35, 306.
- Portland, Lord, administration of, 137, 145-47, 149.
- Portugal, Southey in, 5, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35-39, 45, 75.
- Press, the, Rickman on, 13, 160, 161, 166, 180, 185, 187, 191, 192, 194, 202, 208, 211, 213, 214, 218, 221, 222, 267, 278, 281, 286, 288, 289, 292.
- Previous question, motion of the, 300.
- Prison reform, 201, 202.
- Privy Council and the Reform Bill, 274, 275, 283.
- Pugilism, Rickman on, 136.
- Quarterly Review*, the, 10, 13, 148, 154, 155, 157, 177, 178, 186, 188, 189, 191, 195, 197, 198, 203, 204, 219, 225, 234-37, 238, 241, 272, 291, 292, 305, 318.
- RADICALS**, the. *See* Reform Party.
- Reform Bill, the first, 11, 13, 14, 147, 188, 248, 249-51, 273-96, 299, 311.
- Party, the, 11, 12, 152, 186, 212, 214, 215, 218, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 229, 251, 256, 258, 261, 266, 273, 280, 283, 287, 289, 299, 300, 301, 303, 308, 314, 315.
- Regency, Bill, the, 153, 154.
- Religious epithets, Rickman on, 169-72.
- ‘Remorse,’ by Coleridge, 6, 163-66.
- Representative*, the, 291.
- Rickman family, origin of, 19.
- Ann (Mrs. Lefroy), 119, 120-22, 124, 125, 130, 131, 147, 166, 198, 226, 227, 254, 305, 308.
- — — reminiscences of, 3, 6, 9, 10, 18, 22, 119, 120, 124-28, 319.
- Frances, 119, 122, 123, 124, 125, 198, 254, 308-11, 312, 318.
- — — letter of, to Ann Rickman, 308-11.
- John—  
introduction *passim*.  
born in 1771, 21.
- Rickman, John—*continued*.  
educated at Guildford Grammar School, Magdalen Hall, and Lincoln College, Oxford, 21, 22.  
early idea of entering the Church, 22.  
life at Christchurch, 22-25.  
makes acquaintance of Robert Southey, 22.  
stays with Southey at Bristol in 1800, 24.  
goes to London, 25.  
life in London, 26-39.  
meets George Dyer, 26.  
becomes editor of the *Commercial, Agricultural, and Manufacturers’ Magazine*, 28.  
acts as Southey’s literary agent, 29, 36, 37.  
first acquaintance with Lamb, 35, 36.  
employed in digesting the first census, 38.  
his work on the population returns 1801-1840, 40-43. *And see* Population returns.  
meets George Burnett, 46.  
appointed secretary to Abbot, Chief Secretary for Ireland, 46.  
goes to Dublin, 50.  
procures Southey a secretaryship in Ireland, 51.  
his troubles with Burnett, 57, 58, 60, 61, 64-67, 90-92, 94-98, 102, 152.  
appointed Speaker’s Secretary in 1802, 76.  
comes to live at Westminster, 77.  
meeting with Thomas Poole, 80, 81.  
first thoughts of marriage, 83.  
Lamb stays at his house in 1803, 87.  
Southey visits him, 88, 89, 110, 136, 147, 268.  
his hospitality, 88, 89.  
visits Sadlers Wells with Southey and the Lambs, 89.  
procures work for Thomas Poole, 80, 89.  
has a tiff with Thomas Poole, 98-102.  
finds a ship for Coleridge in 1804, 103-107.

- Rickman, John—*continued*.  
 marries Miss Postlethwaite in 1805, 115-17.  
 his family life at Westminster, 118-34.  
 at Lamb's Wednesday evenings, 6, 128, 129.  
 his views on education, 119-23, 152, 176.  
 his first house at Westminster, 123-25, 127-29.  
 his house as Clerk Assistant, 125.  
 his holiday tours, 130, 131, 254.  
 his official work, 132-34.  
 his writings, 130, 134, 190-204, 234-37.  
 visits Thomas Poole, 136, 142.  
 visits Southey, 130, 147.  
 checks Southey's truculence, 169-74.  
 becomes second Clerk Assistant, 129, 130, 135, 175.  
 his work on the poor rate returns, 191.  
 indexes Hatsell's *Precedents*, 196.  
 depressed by the political situation, 206, 207.  
 tours in Scotland with Southey and Telford, 210.  
 becomes Clerk Assistant, 124, 125, 130.  
 Bertha Southey stays at his house, 225-28.  
 builds a house at Chidham, 226-28.  
 tours in Normandy, 231.  
 tours in the Netherlands with Southey, 232, 233.  
 witnesses debates on the Roman Catholic Relief Bill, 243-45.  
 visited by Lamb in 1829, 247.  
 rouses Southey to action against the reform movement, 259-264.  
 his views on Parliamentary reform, 262, 263, 265, 266, 267.  
 describes debates on the Reform Bill, 273-90, 291-95.  
 wishes to retire in 1832, 297, 298.  
 sends in a plan for combating the Radicals, 301.  
 witnesses the burning of the Houses of Parliament, 308-12.
- Rickman, John—*continued*.  
 on Lamb's death, 312.  
 leaves Palace Yard for Judge Jeffreys' house in Duke Street, 316-18.  
 falls ill and dies in 1840, 318, 319.  
 tributes to him in the House of Commons, 319, 320.  
 his artistic tastes, 10.  
 his dress, 10, 78, 83, 126, 127.  
 character of, 4, 5, 9, 14, 16, 17, 51, 98, 110, 115, 116, 119, 120-23, 127, 129, 178, 231, 305, 306.  
 his emoluments, 77, 78, 83, 132, 133.  
 his honours, 43.  
 letters of, to his daughter Ann, 3, 9, 19-21, 77, 115, 116, 120-22.  
 — to Lord Colchester, 3, 72-74, 130, 207-10, 224, 225, 232, 233.  
 — to Southey, 3, 9, 10, 17, 23, 24, 26, 27-29, 30-34, 36-39, 44-50, 57, 58, 63-65, 67, 68, 70-72, 76, 81, 83-85, 88, 91, 92, 93, 94, 102, 103, 107-109, 110, 113, 115, 116, 129, 134, 135, 136, 143-45, 147-49, 152-56, 166-75, 176-87, 188-207, 210-24, 225-28, 229-31, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237-41, 243-43, 250-98, 299-305, 306-308, 311, 312, 313-17.  
 — to Thomas Poole, 3, 9, 86, 87, 89, 92, 96, 98, 109, 110, 111-17, 136-43, 145, 146, 149-52, 175, 176, 236.  
 political opinions of, 11, 12, 14, 42, 45, 46, 47, 48, 79, 92, 117, 138-47, 149, 150, 153-55, 168, 172, 176, 210-16, 218, 219, 220-24, 229-31, 235, 236, 237, 238, 240, 241, 243-45, 250-68, 273-290, 293-95, 298, 299-304, 306-308, 314, 315. *See also* Burnett, Coleridge, Dyer, Lamb (C.), and Southey (R.).  
 and Southey, proposed *Colloquies* of, 6, 13, 14, 249, 262-64, 265, 268-74, 280, 281, 282, 289, 290, 291, 292, 296, 297, 318.  
 — Martha, 119.  
 — Mary, 89, 162.

- Rickman, Mrs., 115-17, 119, 126, 129, 131, 136, 162, 166, 172, 178, 179, 198, 221, 227, 228, 264, 282, 292, 309, 311, 318.
- Rev. Thomas, 19, 21, 149.
- William, 19, 20, 21.
- W. C., 119, 124, 125, 198, 225, 226, 241, 242, 319.
- — his *Memoir* of John Rickman, 1, 40, 318-20.
- Roman Catholic Emancipation, 12, 13, 48, 113, 144-46, 150, 167, 168, 209, 210, 222-25, 228-31, 233, 234, 237, 240-45, 248, 256, 258, 268, 284, 292, 304, 307, 312.
- Romilly, Sir Samuel, 201.
- Rose, Sir George, 38, 40, 80, 142.
- Russell, Lord John, 14, 214, 240, 250, 273-80, 282, 293, 319.
- Ryle, Mr., Lamb's executor, 313.
- SADLERS WELLS, 89.
- St. Margaret's, Westminster, 1, 130, 280, 319.
- St. Vincent, Lord, 139, 141.
- Sandford, Mrs., *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, 1, 3, 8, 44.
- Scarlett, Jas. (Lord Abinger), 261, 262.
- Selfishness, Rickman on, 183, 193, 194, 196, 230, 252, 270.
- Shaftesbury, Lord, 284.
- Shelley, P. Bysshe, expelled from Oxford, 158-60.
- Sheridan, R. B., 12, 145, 146, 153, 154, 163.
- Six Acts, the, 180, 210, 211.
- Slave Trade Bill, the, 110.
- Smith, William, 188, 189.
- Southey, Bertha, 9, 119, 225-28, 249, 270.
- Herbert, 178, 179.
- Mrs., 33, 34, 38, 39, 44, 47, 72, 91, 179, 185, 308, 318.
- Robert—
- his friendship with Rickman, *passim*.
- meets Rickman at Christchurch, 22, 23.
- his work criticised by Rickman, 23, 79, 112, 113, 136, 169-74, 176-78, 223.
- visited by Rickman at Bristol, 24, 25.
- Southey, Robert—*continued*.
- goes to Portugal, 26, 29.
- sale of 'Thalaba' negotiated by Rickman, 29, 36, 37, 39, 63, 68.
- introduces Rickman to Dyer, 26.
- returns to Bristol, 44.
- his early connection with Burnett, 44, 45.
- becomes secretary to Mr. Corry, 51, 56, 63, 66, 69, 71, 75.
- his life at Dublin, 51, 52.
- Burnett quarrels with him, 8, 56, 82, 84, 85.
- goes to London, 56, 60, 63, 66, 69.
- his opinion of Burnett, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70, 75, 82, 84, 85, 90, 91, 95, 156.
- Dyer visits him, 63.
- his opinion of Lamb's play, 74, 75.
- quarrels with Godwin, 80.
- leaves London to settle at Keswick, 79.
- introduces Poole to Rickman, 80, 81.
- Lamb's opinion of his influence on Burnett, 85.
- visits Rickman at Westminster, 88, 89, 110, 125, 136, 147, 268.
- goes to Sadlers Wells with the Lambs and Rickmans, 89.
- loses his daughter, 91.
- praised by Coleridge, 104, 105.
- his poem 'Madoc,' 112, 113.
- on Coleridge's habits, 144.
- his work for the *Quarterly Review*, 148, 154, 155, 157, 167, 178, 186, 190, 195, 218, 219, 225, 238, 241, 291, 292, 305, 318.
- his work for the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 154, 169.
- Rickman sends him material, 134, 144, 191-94, 305.
- describes Shelley's escapade, 158-60.
- his *Life of Nelson*, 166, 167.
- becomes Poet Laureate, 172.
- on the death of his son, 178.
- invited to write for the Government, 180.
- Rickman's advice on the invitation, 183, 184.



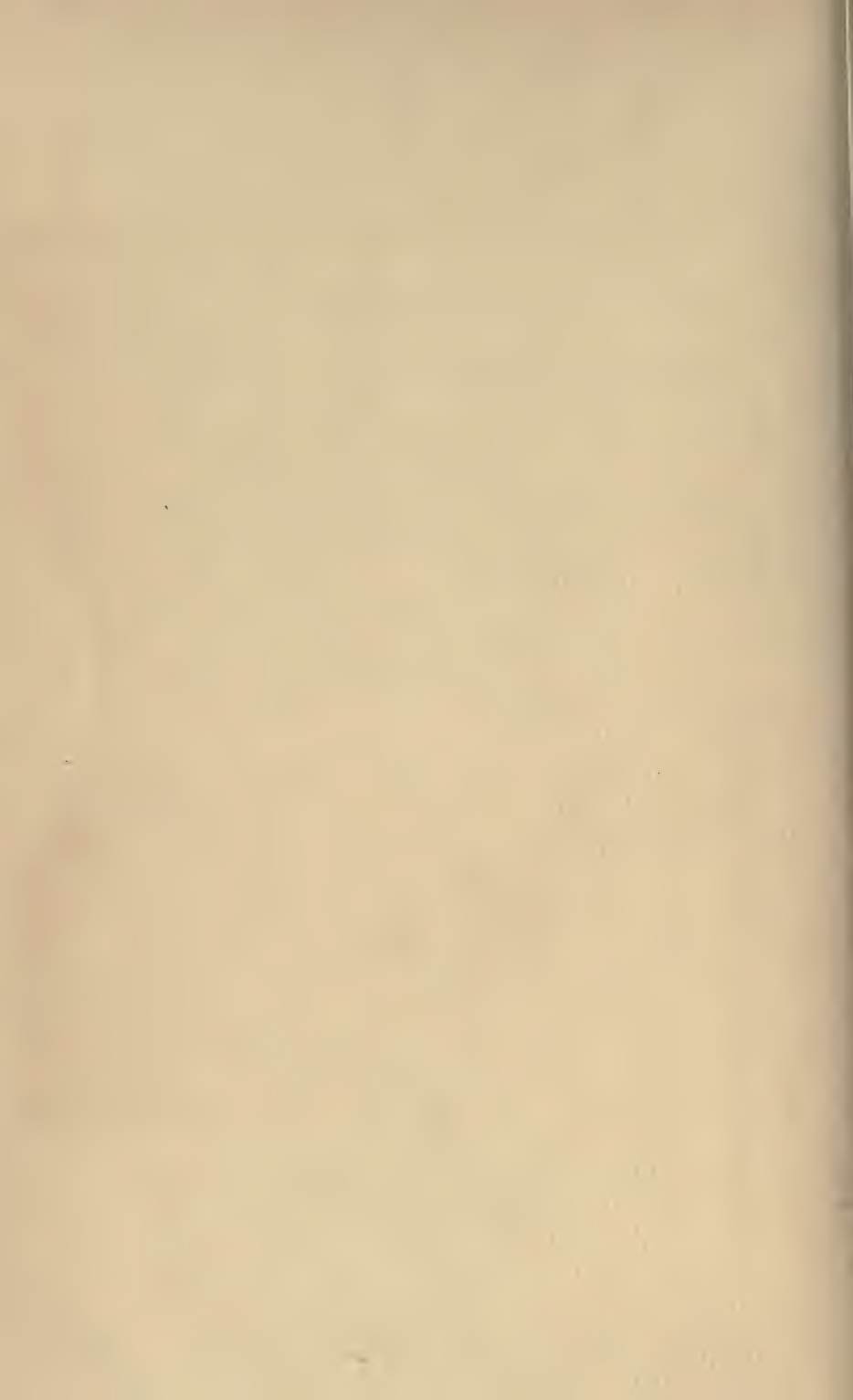
- Southey, Robert—*continued*.  
 his 'Wat Tyler' attacked by W. Smith, M.P., 188-90.  
 visited at Keswick by Rickman, 130, 194.  
 Rickman's share in his published work, 197-201, 203, 204, 234-37.  
 writes to Hansard on behalf of R. Lovell, 204, 205.  
 tours with Rickman in Scotland, 210.  
 his *Colloquies with Sir T. More*, 213, 221.  
 his quarrel with Byron, 219.  
 writes inscriptions for the Caledonian Canal, 223.  
 his quarrel with Lamb, 225.  
 voyages in Holland, 231.  
 on Rickman's capacity for work, 232.  
 tours in the Netherlands with Rickman and Henry Taylor, 22, 232, 233.  
 elected M.P., 233.  
 on Rickman's son intending to enter the Church, 242.  
 interests Rickman in co-operation, 246, 247, 248.  
 his message to Lamb, 247.  
 on Macaulay, 254.  
 roused by Rickman to write on Parliamentary reform, 259-64.  
 the proposed joint *Colloquies*, 6, 13, 14, 249, 262-64, 265, 268-74, 280-82, 289-92, 296, 297, 318.  
 on his wife's illness, 308.  
 on Lamb's death, 313.  
 on Rickman's house in Palace Yard, 316, 317.  
 marries Caroline Bowles, 318.  
 political opinions of, 11, 175, 180, 222, 250, 290.  
 letter of, to Danvers, 89.  
 — to W. S. Landor, 88, 89.  
 letters of, to G. C. Bedford, 51, 52, 148.  
 — to his wife, 51.  
 — to Rickman, 3, 5, 18, 24, 29, 30, 35, 61-62, 65-67, 68-70, 74-76, 81, 84, 85, 90, 111, 147, 156, 158-60, 172, 173, 175.
- Southey, Robert—*continued*.  
 200, 201, 203, 231, 232, 234, 235, 242, 247, 254, 270, 271, 281, 282, 290, 308, 313, 316, 317, 318.  
 Southampton Buildings, Lamb and Rickman at, 34, 35, 39.  
 Speaker's Secretary, functions of, 77, 78.  
 Spottiswoode, the firm of, 290, 291, 296, 297.  
 Spring Rice, Thomas, 252, 253.  
 Spurzeim, Dr., 241.  
 Stafford, Lord, 284.  
 Stage, the, Rickman on, 9, 47.  
 Stanhope, Lord, 70, 71, 72, 75, 82, 83, 84.  
 Stoddart, Dr., 186, 211.  
 Strathmore, Countess of, 32.
- TALFOURD, SERGEANT, 5, 128, 313.  
 'Tamworth Manifesto,' Peel's, 312.  
 Taylor, Sir Henry, 130, 232, 233, 309-12, 315, 316.  
 — Sir Herbert, 137, 138.  
 — William, 45, 49, 94, 107, 118, 157.  
 Telford, Thomas, 8, 15, 131, 132, 181, 210, 213, 231, 249, 308, 318.  
 Ten-pound freeholders, Rickman on, 279, 286, 287, 289, 293.  
 Test Act, repeal of, 240, 292.  
 'Thalaba,' Southey's poem, 29, 36, 37, 62, 63.  
 Thomson, Poulett (Lord Sydenham), 257.  
 Tierney, George, 152, 153, 208, 211, 234.  
 Tobin, George, 104, 106.  
 Tories, 5, 11, 12, 79, 118, 150, 160, 168, 208, 233, 234, 240, 242-45, 248, 249, 250, 251, 263, 264, 277, 284, 285, 288, 289, 294, 295, 298, 299, 304, 314, 315.  
 Turner, Sharon, letter of, to W. C. Rickman on John Rickman's death, 16, 17.
- ULLOA, DON, 20.
- VANSITTART, NICHOLAS (Lord Bexley), 150, 207, 208.  
 Vesey Fitzgerald, 240.

### 330 LIFE AND LETTERS OF JOHN RICKMAN

- Villiers, Edward, 310.  
 Votes and Proceedings of the House of Commons, the, 15, 133, 134, 188.  
 Vyvyan, Sir Richard, 263.
- WALL, BARING, 275.  
 Ward, Colonel, 255.  
 Warter, Rev. J., on Rickman, 305, 306.  
 Waterloo, battle of, 177, 178, 225, 226, 255.  
 Wedgwood, Josiah, 99, 100, 102.  
 Wellesley, Lord, 138, 139, 150, 160, 161, 219, 229.  
 Wellington, Duke of, 12, 13, 177, 216, 228, 233, 234, 239, 240, 242, 245, 248, 250, 251, 253, 256, 258, 261, 266, 268, 289, 294, 295, 304, 307, 308, 312; administrations of, 237-45, 248, 250-53, 256, 257, 258-68, 312, 314, 315.  
 Westall, William, 290.  
 Westbrook, Miss, and Shelley, 159.  
 Westminster, life at, 10, 77-79, 81, 83, 115, 118-30, 132-34.  
 — Palace of, 10, 123-26, 227, 308-12, 316, 317.
- Whigs, 11, 14, 79, 108, 118, 141, 142, 150, 152, 153, 154, 160, 168, 174, 208, 211, 212, 215, 218, 224, 225, 235, 238, 239, 240, 242-45, 248, 249, 250, 251, 253, 255, 256, 258, 261, 263, 265, 267, 276, 277-89, 292-96, 298, 299, 301, 303, 304, 311, 314, 315.  
 Whiggamores. *See* Whigs.  
 Whitbread, Samuel, 12, 13, 139, 140, 150, 175.  
 Wilberforce, William, 110.  
 Wilde, Mr., 124, 126, 127, 309.  
 William III., 238.  
 William IV., 251, 261, 264, 265, 268, 276, 277, 278, 293, 294, 295, 300, 310.  
 Windham, William, 141.  
 Wordsworth, Dorothy, 89, 194.  
 — William, 10, 108, 151, 194, 195, 281, 285.  
 Wynn, C. Williams, 61, 189, 209, 219, 239, 240.
- YORK, DUKE OF, 12, 48, 136, 138, 141, 229, 231.  
 ZAMOYSKI, COUNT, 111.













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