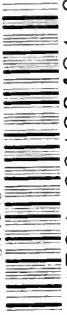


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THOMAS POOLE

AND HIS FRIENDS



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~~1888~~
THOMAS POOLE

AND HIS FRIENDS

BY
Margaret E.
(MRS. HENRY) SANDFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

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CHAPTER I

‘The horrors of such a harvest as that of 1799 . . . can only be conceived by those who have witnessed them, and by those who have witnessed, they will not easily be forgotten.’

THELWALL'S *Prefatory Memoir*.

NEWSPAPER work seems to have been the one direction in which Coleridge achieved immediate success and instant popularity; but Pegasus did not take kindly to working in harness, and his letters to Thomas Poole are at this time all written in a spirit of craving to get away from London, and to find, if possible, a house in the Stowey neighbourhood. For to make another home near Stowey still appears to be his reigning intention, though it cannot but be suspected that he was already beginning to feel unconsciously drawn northward by the strong magnet of Wordsworth's influence, especially as he had now become acquainted with the grander beauty of the Lake scenery. A suitable house had indeed been heard of at Aisholt; ‘the situation,’ he writes, ‘is delicious; all I could wish.’

But then it was very solitary—there would be no society for his wife ; and the conviction presses upon him daily that—

‘Sara being Sara, and I being I, we must live in a town or else close to one, so that she may have neighbours and acquaintances. For my friends form not that society which is of itself sufficient to a woman. I know nowhere else but Stowey (for to Bristol my objections are insurmountable), but our old house in Stowey, and that situation will not do for us. God knows where we can go ; for that situation which suits my wife does not suit me, and what suits me does not suit my wife. However, that which is, is,—a truth which always remains equally clear, but not always equally pleasant. . . .’

Well! We all remember what Mrs. Carlyle thought of the solitude of Ecclefechan, and Mrs. Carlyle was an immeasurably stronger woman mentally than Sara Coleridge. The fact that Coleridge, abstracted as he was into regions where she could never follow him, still remembered and felt that he had not only himself to consider, seems distinctly a point to his credit.

Tom Poole gave him no counsels to stay on in London, for, as we have already seen, he never could look on journalism as anything else but a turning aside of Coleridge’s powers from higher ends. Thus on January 21 he writes :—

‘Whether by the employment you have chosen, you

have exactly performed the *duty* you owe *yourself*, is what you can determine much better than I. However that may be, *I* in truth long for the period when you shall have gained that sum of money which is necessary to replace what you last year expended beyond your income, as it will give me solid satisfaction to see you resume, or rather begin, employments more consonant to your former intentions, more worthy of your abilities, more permanently useful to society, to yourself now, and to your family *hereafter, for ever*. Where you begin those employments it is for you to choose. I need not say, if it be here, or in this neighbourhood, it will contribute greatly to my happiness and wellbeing, as it would be supposing affectation in you not to be aware that your society here is that sort of acquisition which nothing can replace. Yes, Coleridge, I am much indebted to you, and though you've found in my mind perhaps an unfruitful, you never shall in my heart, an ungrateful soil.

'I write to you with constraint, because I think you treated me with unmerited silence, and when you wrote you seemed to perform a duty, not a pleasure. I remarked to Mrs. Coleridge that I was afraid my disposition was altered, and that I was acquiring the *heart-withering* faculty of losing men's *hearts* though I retained their *heads*. If this be true I must and will endeavour to rectify it, and when I see errors and inconsistencies in those whom I love, where I can't sympathise I will at any rate be silent. Thus much, my dear Col., I have written, and let it not give you pain, or draw from you a long reply. The former would distress me beyond measure, and the latter would take up more of your time

than I would wish you to expend in letter-writing. . . . When I anxiously wish you to reside here, it is on this sole condition, *that you can do as well here what you propose doing, as elsewhere.* If this be not the case, it would be weakness and imprudence, at any rate for the present, to think of residing here. . . .’

Stowey news follows, and suggestions as to houses, and the letter concludes with remarks upon the *Morning Post* :—

‘I cannot but approve of what you have written in the papers. It is done in a masterly manner. Your observations . . . are, without doubt, just, though I think you have borne hard on Buonaparte and the French Constitution. There is more of *Harrington* in the latter than you seem aware of. Read *Harrington* and *comment* upon it; it will bring a neglected book, which deserves the study of all politicians, into new notice. But beware how you do it; and conceal, I beg you, your name, and your present avocations, from the world. Your ode to the Dutchess was a delightful thing—the letter from Talleyrand excellent. Do you know, by the bye, that Talleyrand was in England during the tyranny of Robespierre, and ordered to quit the country by Lord Grenvill? If anything occur to me worthy the *Morning Post* I will send it to you. Purkis tells me he dined with you, and was gratified at meeting those I would not have given a button to meet. He speaks that in conversation men talk boldly of Atheism, etc. I implore you, my dear Col., not by any *levity* for a moment to countenance such principles and sentiments;

not to share the withering curse which God now scatters upon men—a curse which causes men of *no* feeling to give up all to *feeling*, contrary to the conviction which intellect must award if allowed to act. You often, from good nature, or from a certain perverseness of disposition, or from vanity, give countenance to men and principles at which in the moments of *true* self-possession you would spurn and tremble. . . . Purkis is one of your lovers. He writes with great facility—tell him to send you something for the newspaper; I've no doubt he would. God bless you.—Yours ever, THOS. POOLE.

'P.S.—Say in the *Post*—that one of the *subordinate* taxes of ministers will be an additional impost on *male* servants, with some regulations to prevent evasion, particularly that evasion of parish apprentices; that in future every lad, without exception, above ten years old who waits at table, or performs any *womanly* offices in a house, will be liable to taxation.'

'How could you take such an absurd idea into your head,' wrote Coleridge in reply,¹ 'that my affections have weakened towards you? Sometimes I have thought you rash in your judgments of my conduct, but I perceived rather than felt it. But, enough of this. My affections are what they are, and, in all human probability, ever will be. I write merely to desire you to be on the look-out for a house. I shall, beyond all doubt, settle at Stowey, if I can get . . . a house with a garden, and large enough for me to have a study out of the noise of women and children. This is absolutely necessary for me. I have

¹ February 14, 1800. Postmark 449 Strand.

given up the *Morning Post*, but the editor is importunate against it. To-night I must go with him to the House of Commons. . . . If I can get a house, I should wish to be settled at midsummer; but if no house is to be got by that time, we shall take lodgings at Minehead or Porlock. . . .'

'You have closed, you say, with the *Morning Post*,' remonstrates Tom Poole.¹ 'I never liked your being a newspaper writer, but I trust as you entered into an engagement, that you have fulfilled it, and that you have not closed without answering your *own* and Stuart's purpose. To do this would make the last error greater than the first. When I say I do not wish you to be a newspaper writer, I do not simply speak impartially, but contrary to my own pleasure and interest; for the regular receipt of the *Morning Post*, and what you have written in it, have given me great delight. I was highly pleased with the last of your Pitt's speeches. It was an eminent instance of the magick of language upon truth and reason—the finest manufacture from the worst materials. But wherefore deck out the minister in this way? Why had you not reported Sheridan and his side? If you have given up the paper, what are you doing? Let me know. . . .'

Then the letter, like the last, goes on to discuss the chances of obtaining a house in Stowey. Amongst the greetings with which it closes there is a message of kind remembrances to Wordsworth;

¹ February 22, 1800.

but perhaps it was not in human nature that so eager an affection as Tom Poole's could endure with perfect equanimity the spectacle of Coleridge's growing devotion to the one man before whom he habitually veiled his crest, joyfully owning in him a superior. Tom Poole could not see it. He loved Coleridge and admired Wordsworth; and when the man whom he loved set the man whom he admired above himself, he was irritated and impatient.

'Certainly no one, neither you or the Wedgwoods, although you far more than any one else,' wrote Coleridge,¹ 'ever entered into the feeling due to a man like Wordsworth, of whom I do not hesitate in saying that, since Milton, no one has *manifested* himself equal to him.'

Coleridge wrote from Lamb's, where, he said, he was 'very quiet,' but wished himself at Stowey! He wished, too, from the bottom of his heart, that he could 'get Wordsworth to retake Alfoxden,'² which Poole had told him remained unlet. It is as if he would fain put back the hands of time, and have 1798 again.

Poole's answer has not been preserved, but he seems to have petulantly accused Coleridge of

¹ Written from Lamb's, 36 Chapel Street, Pentonville, March 1800.

² Was it, then, in Wordsworth's power to do so? And had Poole's letter to Mrs. St. Albyn actually produced some effect?

making an idol of Wordsworth, and *prostrating* himself before him ; for—

‘ You charge me,’ wrote Coleridge,¹ ‘ with prostration in regard to Wordsworth. Have I affirmed anything miraculous of W. ? Is it impossible that a greater poet than any since Milton may appear in our days ? Have there any *great* poets appeared since him ? . . . Future greatness ! Is it not an awful thing, my dearest Poole ? What if you had known Milton at the age of thirty, and believed all you now know of him ?—What if you should meet in the letters of any then living man, expressions concerning the young Milton *totidem verbis* the same as mine of Wordsworth, would it not convey to you a most delicious sensation ? Would it not be an assurance to you that your admiration of the *Paradise Lost* was no superstition, no shadow of flesh and bloodless abstraction, but that the *Man* was even so, that the greatness was incarnate and personal ? Wherein blame I you, my best friend ? Only in being borne down by other men’s rash opinions concerning W. You yourself, for yourself, judged wisely. . . .’

In relation to the question of lodgings Tom Poole seems to have mentioned some possibility of renting part of a farmhouse, which would, however, involve the joint-use of a kitchen. This Coleridge fears would lead to continual squabbles between their servant and the farmer’s wife, and ‘ be worse than the old hovel fifty times over.’

¹ March 31, 1800.

'Do not, my dearest Poole, deem me cold, or finical, or indifferent to Stowey, full and fretful in objection; but on so important an affair to a man who has, and is likely to have, a family, and who *must* have silence and a *retired study*, as a house is, it were folly not to consult one's own feelings, folly not to let them speak audibly, and having heard them, hypocrisy not to utter them. . . . My dearest friend, when I have written to you lately, I have written with a mind and heart completely worn out with the fag of the day. I trust in God you have not misinterpreted this into a change of character. I was a little jealous at an expression in your last letter—"I am happy you begin to feel your power." Truly and in simple verity, my dear Tom, I feel not an atom more power than I have ever done, except the power of gaining a few more paltry guineas than I had supposed. On the contrary, my faculties appear to myself dwindling, and I do believe if I were to live in London another half year, I should be dried up wholly.'

Evidently fate was not propitious to a return to Stowey, where all Tom Poole's researches could not discover any residence which would fulfil the required conditions. But it is difficult not to believe that in any case Coleridge could never have been contented to live in the west of England whilst Wordsworth was living in the north. A letter, dated July 4, 1800, describes his arrival at Keswick, and the commencement of his residence at Greta Hall. It is an unhappy omen that the letter begins, as almost every letter that Poole

received from Coleridge during his stay at Greta Hall does either begin or end, with a description of illness. A cold caught on the journey northwards has increased almost to a rheumatic fever; he has been several days in bed, and it has left him so weak and listless that writing was hateful to him. 'And with that feeling never will I write to you,' he adds. In a letter written about three weeks later to Josiah Wedgwood,¹ he speaks of himself as recovering, and describes the wonderful beauty of his new surroundings. Nevertheless he would rather have been at Stowey!

'I parted from Poole with pain and dejection,' he says,—'for him, and for myself in him. I should have given Stowey a decided preference as a residence; . . . but there was no suitable house, and no prospect of a suitable house. . . .'

On August 14 he wrote to Poole that he was well, that Greta Hall was a delightful residence, that his landlord was a quiet, sensible man, with as large a library as Tom Poole's, perhaps larger, well stored with encyclopædias, dictionaries, and histories, all modern; and he has free access to Sir Gilfred Lawson's 'magnificent library' besides. The same letter contains an acknowledgment of some literary contributions sent by Tom Poole for the *Morning Post*:—

¹ Published in Cottle's *Reminiscences*.

'Your two letters I received exactly four days ago. . . . I read them and liked them, and was working them off in Agricultural Letters, with notes of my own, when I received letters from Phillips so pressing, that I was *obliged* to put the thing I had engaged for out of hand. I meant to have sent the letters to Stuart, with orders to have them first in his paper, and then republished in the form of a pamphlet. A most important question arises: Has there been *any* scarcity? The newspapers are now running down the monopolists, etc. Is it not a burning shame that the Government have not taken absolute means to decide a question so important? It grieved me that you had felt so much from my silence. Believe me, I have been *harrassed* with business, and shall remain so for the remainder of the year. . . . God bless you, and for God's sake never doubt that I am attached to you beyond all other men,

S. T. COLERIDGE.'

In reply Mr. Poole wrote as follows:—

'DEAR COL.—“*A most important question,*” you say, “*arises: Has there been any scarcity? Is it not a burning shame that Government have not taken absolute means to decide a question so important?*” The thing is so obvious that it would be ridiculous in Government to take any further steps on the subject. I considered the existence of scarcity so well ascertained that, in the little thing I sent you, I took it for granted. . . . The very fact that monopolists had been able to raise the price is a proof of scarcity. Grain is an article too bulky, too widely diffused, and too valuable to be monopolised, even by the large capitals which exist in this country, without the thing itself being actually scarce. . . . Moreover, most of

the large farmers have their senses about them, and do not want capital, and if they see a probability of corn being dearer, they keep it themselves to receive the advantage of increased price ; and we can hardly call that a monopoly where every individual producer of the article is the possessor of it. Whether the farmers have kept back the corn longer than the exigencies of the time required, is a question to be answered by considering a very few facts. Does any one see old stacks of corn about in the farmer's yards? No. There used to be, at this season, one or more in every respectable farmer's yard. We hear of one man and another man having a few quarters of corn—and ought it not to be so? In a community so numerous as this, in an article of the first necessity, can or ought things to be so balanced that the last quarter of old wheat shall be consumed on the day the new comes into the market? Supposing the harvest had been a month later, as it well might have been . . . where then would have been the superfluous quantity of old wheat? Or, supposing . . . we had had wet weather during wheat harvest, so that the wheat would not have been in a state to be ground for two or three months, should we not have been starved? I do not believe that of English wheat there is more by any means in the world than a fortnight's consumption for this country. We hear of one farmer refusing a guinea a bushel, another selling for 23s. or 24s. per bushel ; all this is bad in the individual, and may be from infamous motives, but it was wholesome restraint to the community. We hear of damaged corn and flour being thrown into a river. An accident may happen in scarce times as well as in plenty, and no one in *plenty* would damage corn wilfully, or throw it

into a river unless damaged. It is all stuff. What do those quantities amount to?—I suppose the city of London alone, even with economy, consumes 10,000 quarters a week. There would not have been a handful of wheat left but for the introduction of foreign wheat. Who knew when this would come, or if it would come at all? . . . When foreign wheat has been imported it must be a species of monopoly, because few only can be the importers; but the price was raised before foreign wheat came, so I cannot much blame the importers. The price was raised by the natural scarcity of the article, but to double the price, it never ought to be, even by any scarcity. There should be a maximum fixed for wheat, and in times of scarcity Government should import—or rather, the government of every county, or of every hundred, and the district should bear the loss. But on public granaries I could say a great deal—but then, if corn be kept down when crops are bad, the farmer ought to be remunerated, or he is treated with injustice, and will be ruined.'

Tom Poole goes on to say that 'whether from vanity or from better motives,' he is anxious to see his Essay immediately published.

'But don't give yourself much trouble about altering it, for I fear there will be great incongruity between your writing and mine, and I fear, too, to alter it to the principles of Mr. Stuart's paper, whatever they may happen now to be, and to the opinions of his *Patrons*, may give the thing a different spirit from that which I intended. I think if you would write a plain introduction, stating some of the arguments of this

letter on the existence of scarcity, and correct the bad English, and publish it as a pamphlet, it would be the best way. If any loss should occur, I will pay it, however, give me if it be but five lines, to say what you have done, or can *immediately conveniently* do. God bless and preserve you, and if it be possible, add to the great talents you possess, the punctuality of a common man.—Yours truly,

THOS. POOLE.'

Coleridge's letters to Thomas Poole have degenerated into what must have been considered mere notes in comparison with the immense sheets that he used to fill in Germany. Who can wonder at it, when we remember that he was now in the regular harness of journalism, an occupation which is apt to leave both hand and mind with very little freshness to bestow on private correspondence? But Tom Poole hardly considered this enough, and was a little disposed to be hurt at the short letters—not so very short after all, judged by modern measurements—and the long silences, which added a colder chill to the sense of separation involved in Coleridge's departure into the North. It is curious to discover from his next (endorsed October 1800 and written on a half-sheet of foolscap) that, for some reason or other, Poole did not take in the *Morning Post* regularly, and therefore never saw his own articles when they in due course appeared. Coleridge begins by saying

that he has been for some time 'about to write,' but 'jolts, and ruts, and flings have constantly unhorsed his resolves.'

'The essays have been published in the *Morning Post*, and have, to use the cant phrase, made great sensation. In *one* place only I have ventured to make a slight alteration, and I prefixed one essay, *chiefly* of my own writing, and made two or three *additions* in the enumeration of the effects of war. Now I wish all to be republished in a small pamphlet, but should like to have one more essay . . . detailing the effect . . . of paper currency on the price of the articles of life. . . . In the meantime I wish you could contrive . . . to take in the *Morning Post*. You will see therein all I am able to say and reason, and your arguments will come up in the rear, like the Roman Triarii, on whom alone, you know, depended the stress of the battle and the hope of the victory. Those hitherto published I shall cut out, and enclose in a letter (paying the postage, that you may not lose your temper!)

The series of letters here spoken of appeared in the *Morning Post* on October 3, October 4, October 8, October 9, and October 14, 1800. They have been reprinted by Mrs. H. N. Coleridge, in Coleridge's *Essays on His Own Times*, with the following note:—

'The *Letters on Monopolists and Farmers*¹ were

¹ An inquiry into the truth of the popular opinion concerning these classes of men. *Essays on His Own Times*, by S. T. Coleridge, being his articles from the *Morning Post*, etc., reprinted by his daughter, vol. ii. p. 413.

chiefly the work of Mr. Poole of Nether Stowey, but as my father had much to do with their composition and appearance, I think they may be fitly introduced among his contributions to the *Morning Post*. On the margin of No. III. Part I., "Introduction only by S. T. C.," is written in his hand; at the end of the second part he has written, "Wholly Poole's." No. I. was composed by himself, for the most part. . . . The letter of October 14 . . . is certainly my father's, since the writer speaks of himself as living 300 miles from London, which applied to him, and not to Mr. Poole.'

On a former article¹ of Poole's, also reprinted among Coleridge's *Essays*, Mrs. H. N. Coleridge writes:—

'This article was contributed by that "excellent and remarkable man, Mr. Poole of Nether Stowey." . . . I need hardly apologise for not detaching it from those contributions of Mr. Coleridge with which it first saw the light, feeling sure that all who are interested in my father's personal and literary career—and for such this volume is especially intended—will receive it gladly, as a slight sample of the early mind of the great friend of his life, and a token or remembrance of that almost lifelong friendship. It was the opinion of many, who knew Mr. Poole, that he might have commanded success in literature, if it had suited him to pursue it persistently, and I never heard a dissentient voice from my father's declaration concerning "the originality and raciness of his intellect."'—*Note 'E' to Essays on His Own Times.*

¹ An article on the Abolition of Slavery contributed to the *Watchman*.

The next letter that has been preserved was written on Tom Poole's birthday :—

‘November 14, 1800.

‘MY DEAR COL.—It is my birthday, and I make a point of collecting as many agreeable sensations on this day as I possibly can. It is, I think, beginning the new year of my existence well. To write to you is always agreeable to me. We were most happy to hear of the safety of Mrs. Col. and the newborn. . . . I congratulate you both—I am glad it is a boy—why had you not called him after his godfather, *i.e.* *Thomas*.

‘I also received your letter. You ask me the effect of paper money on the price of provisions.—I had not much thought of that part of the subject when I sent that Essay. If I had, instead of merely hinting at it as a cause of the rise of provisions, I should have dwelt largely on it, for I am persuaded that the immense emission of paper money has been a great cause of the rise of the price of everything bought and sold, and will, if not checked, greatly prevent the diminution of that price, and, 2nd., that this excess of paper has been principally occasioned by the financial system of the present war. Paper money is now multiplied without end. If a man has five guineas he takes it to a bank and gets one of their bills for it ; he immediately negotiates the bill and the banker negotiates the gold, so that the money in the market is doubled by this single operation. This five guineas on being sent out is carried again to a banker. The same operation is repeated. The five guineas is now come to fifteen, and so on from fifteen to twenty, and from twenty to twenty-five, I will

venture to say with every five guineas in the kingdom. Money being thus immensely and easily increased, it of course becomes of less value. How then can it purchase as much of the necessaries of life, or anything else, as it did before? Is it not a cruel thing, when money is thus decreased in value, to pay the labourer the same coin for a certain quantum of labour which was paid before that decrease? This excess of paper money has had precisely the same effect on the labourer as a deterioration of the coin would have had; the same as if . . . a groat was paid him for the same labour for which before he received a shilling. And this excess of paper has been mainly occasioned by the miserable financial system of stopping payment at the Bank of England, which was, to all intents and purposes, a deterioration of the coin of the Kingdom—the last miserable resource of sinking states. For if they added one half, or whatever it might have been, of their paper to the circulating medium, without engaging to give the value which that paper represented whenever it was required, the whole mass of the circulating medium was consequently deteriorated in proportion to the quantity so emitted. And this alloy is profusely circulated throughout the kingdom by every petty agent of Government, every ox or quarter of corn bought by contractors is paid for with this paper. When we are thus made rich by paper which represents nothing, is it any wonder that it sells for nothing? or, in other words, that it so deteriorates the circulating medium that a much less quantity of provisions, and of everything else, is exchanged for a given quantity of the circulating medium so deteriorated, than was exchanged before. The rise of everything will

be as permanent as the cause which has produced it. If the Bank of England continues to emit more paper than it pays, things will continue to rise, and *vice versâ*. But without this *abominable vice* of the Bank of England, the operation of banking in general has produced the fatal effects which I first stated, though the bills be *bona fide*. One of the best measures (next to making the Bank of England immediately pay their bills, which is impossible) would be to *limit the trade of banking*. No bills should be issued from any bank of less than £20 value. This would alter the price of provisions more than all the laws against forestallers, etc., all the *hubbub* against farmers, etc. etc. But the measure which would cover every machination of knaves, and every blunder of fools—the measure which alone would be practicable, wise, humane, and honest, would be to fix by law a ratio between the price of labour and the price of provisions. Suppose, for instance, a man in full vigour should always be paid for a week's labour half a bushel of wheat and 20 lbs of beef, or the market price of those articles,—for I would have them compounded,—a woman half the above—justices to have power in case of age or decrepitude to fix the diminution. Difficulties may at first appear in carrying the plan into execution, but I am confident they may be got over. . . . I returned Monday last from Gunville, where . . . I found young Watt of Birmingham, T. Wedgwood [and others]. . . . The more I see of T. W. the more I admire him, and the more I lament the terrible state of health which he seems doomed to suffer. It affects me almost to tears to see him hovering over the fire, pinched with disease, and, at the same time, his mind active and ardent, planning schemes of good and

pleasure for future years, and discriminating men and things with a delicacy and an acuteness which I have rarely seen equalled. God grant he may live. The two Miss Wedgwoods are sensible women, apparently very good-tempered. The eldest interested me very much. . . . We talked and talked of you, and while I was there a letter came from you. It gave us all great pleasure, and to none more than to me. Why could you not confess to me what you did in that letter? What reason is there, Coleridge, why you cannot write to me with as much pleasure as heretofore? We shall soon, I have little doubt, somehow or other live near together again. If you feel the want of my company I indeed feel the want of yours. I can truly say I owe you much, very much indeed; but the debt of gratitude does not oppress my affection for you. . . .

‘Mother is better than perhaps you ever knew her, God be praised. Kind love to Mrs. Col. and to all. We shall see you at Christmas. Heaven bless you,
‘THOS. POOLE.’

But that Christmas visit never came to pass. Instead we find a letter, containing, indeed, passages of great interest and beauty, but full of those melancholy complaints of ill health with which Coleridge's letters now begin to abound. For months he has been afflicted with rheumatic pains in the back of his head and chronic inflammation of his eyes.¹ And all this illness has thrown

¹ See also letter of Coleridge to Davy, December 2, 1800. ‘For the last month I have been trembling on through the sands and swamps of evil and bodily grievance. My eyes have been inflamed, etc. etc.’—*Fragmentary Remains of Sir H. Davy*, edited by his brother.

him so sadly behindhand with his work, that he 'almost fears he will not be able to raise money enough by Christmas to make it prudent to journey southward.'

'If I cannot come,' he concludes, 'I will write you a very, very long letter, containing the most important of the many thoughts and feelings which I want to communicate to you, but hope to do it face to face. . . . God have you ever in His keeping, making life tranquil to you. Believe me to be what I have been ever, and am, attached to you one degree more at least than to any other living man.'

'S. T. COLERIDGE.'

CHAPTER II

‘For not to think of what I needs must feel,
 But to be still and patient, all I can,
 And haply by abstruse research to steal
 From my own nature all the natural man—
 This was my sole resource, my only plan :
 Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
 And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.’
 COLERIDGE’S *Dejection: an Ode.*

A GOOD deal of correspondence passed between Poole and Coleridge in the year 1801. We find Coleridge early in January writing from his ‘wearisome bed’ pitiable letters, in which he dwells much at length, as an invalid always will, to any friend of whose patience and sympathy he feels sure, upon the various miseries of his condition, and that with a vividness of detail and simplicity of impatience at all the pain he has had to go through, and the length of time that he has been ill, which it goes to one’s heart to read.

‘O me, my dear fellow,’ he writes,¹ ‘the notion of a

¹ Letter undated, postmark Keswick. Endorsed, From Col., January 7, 1801.

soul is a comfortable one to a poor fellow who is beginning to be ashamed of his body! For the last four months I have not had a fortnight of continuous health—bad eyes, swoln eyelids, boils behind my ears! and heaven knows what! From this year I commence a Liver by Rule—the most degrading, perhaps, of all occupations, and which, were I not a husband and father, I should reject, as thinking human life not worth it.

‘My visit to the South I must defer to the warm weather—the remaining months of the winter and the spring I must give *totis viribus* to health and money.’

For his illness has thrown him behindhand, and he is grievously worried with petty anxieties and embarrassments, whilst still ‘so dizzy from long lying in bed’ that he hardly knows whether he writes ‘legibly in manner or intelligibly in matter,’ and has ‘scarce strength to fold up his letter.’

‘MY DEAR COL.,’ writes Poole in answer,¹ ‘I this morning received yours of Jan. 7th. I need not describe the pain which the contents have given me. I am afraid you have been running about too much in the country where you are. . . . You should not tumble about on precipices, nor expose yourself to stormy wet weather, nor remain with wet feet and wet cloathes. Your mind is too strong for your body. It proposes labours under which the poor *mortal* sinks. . . .

‘I do, my dear Col., feel deeply interested for you. I bitterly regret your leaving Stowey. I fancy if you had continued here this would not have happened.

¹ Stowey, January 11, 1801.

I could go on with this rough tenderness of reproach, but of what avail? Let me beg you to take care of yourself, and to persevere in that plan . . . of living by rule. In that rule, I need hardly observe, due attention must be paid to *appropriate* exercise, and to appropriate clothing during that exercise. These are of more consequence than diet—*excess of it* being excluded.

‘Besides being a husband and a father, there are reasons which belong to few why you should take care of your health. The only security which mankind hath of retaining your spirit, is the health of the frail bonds which enclose it. It is a spirit of much power cast among us—power, I trust, to be productive of good. But, remember, it has not yet fulfilled its errand. You are, I know, impressed with this truth.

‘As to the money part of your letter, I will write . . . to King desiring him to pay Mrs. Fricker £15.¹ You may desire Mr. W. to pay me or not, as you like. There is no reason why you should not draw on Mr. W. for the £110.² I would receive the annuity but not *anticipate* it. Rather than do that, have some money of me. The W.’s, I am certain, believe that if you have done but little since they granted you the annuity, you have been preparing to do much.

‘They think the money you spent in Germany was well spent, and spoke to me with much satisfaction of the compleat manner in which all the objects you proposed

¹ Out of his slender means Coleridge regularly sent his wife’s mother £20 a year.

² Coleridge had written, ‘It is gall to me to receive any more money from them till I can point to something I have done, with an inward consciousness that therein I have exerted the whole of my mind.’

to yourself by that journey were attained. When you get well, *be calm*. Feel yourself settled *for the present* where you are. I will come to see you some time during this year. I will, remember, *at any time*, if you are very ill, or have any particular wish to see me, come and see you. . . .

‘We are all well. Mother is well. I never was stronger, body and mind. I hope you’ll soon say the same. Mother begs her kind affection to you and to Mrs. Coleridge. God love the little Hartley.

‘THOS. POOLE.’

Poole ‘*bitterly regretted*’ his friend’s departure from Stowey, and Coleridge too, in writing to the Wedgwoods,¹ had let them plainly see, at the same time, how sorely he misses that friend in whom, as he once said, beyond all other friends he had found ‘an Anchor.’

‘My situation here is indeed a delightful situation,’ he writes, November 1, 1800, ‘but I feel what I have lost—feel it deeply; it recurs more often and more painfully than I had anticipated—indeed, so much so that I scarcely ever feel myself impelled, that is to say, pleurably impelled, to write to Poole. I used to feel myself more at home in his great windy parlour than in my own cottage. We were well suited to each other,—my animal spirits corrected his inclination to melancholy;

¹ Letter from Keswick of November 1, 1800, printed in Cottle’s *Reminiscences*. It was received at Gunville whilst Poole was staying there, and is the letter referred to in that which Poole wrote on his birthday, November 14.

and there was something both in his understanding and in his affections so healthy and manly that my mind freshened in his company, and my ideas and habits of thinking acquired, day after day, more of substance and reality. . . . Yet when I revise the step I have taken, I know not how I could have acted otherwise than as I did act. Everything I promised myself in this country has answered far beyond my expectation. The room in which I write commands six distinct landscapes—the two lakes, the vale, the river and mountains, and mists, and clouds and sunshine, make endless combinations, as if heaven and earth were for ever talking to each other. Often when in a deep study I have walked to the window, and remained there looking without seeing; all at once the lake of Keswick and the fantastic mountains . . . at the head of it have entered into my mind, with a suddenness as if I had been snatched out of Cheapside, and placed for the first time in the spot where I stood. And that is a delightful feeling—these fits and trances of novelty received from a long-known object. . . .’

‘MY DEAR POOLE,’ wrote Coleridge (February 1, 1801), ‘it mingles with the pleasures of convalescence, with the breeze that trembles on my nerves, the thought how glad you will be to hear that I am striding back to my former health with manful paces. . . . One week more of repose I am enjoined to grant myself, and then I gird up my loins, first, to disembarass my circumstances by fulfilling all my engagements, and then to a Work—O my dear, dear friend! that you were with me by the fireside of my study here, that I might talk it over with you to the tune of this nightwind that

pipes its thin, doleful, climbing, sinking notes, like a child that has lost its way and is crying aloud, half in grief, and half in the hope to be heard by its mother. But when your Ripping is over you will come, or, at furthest, immediately after hay harvest. Believe me, often and often in my walks amid these sublime landscapes I have trod the ground impatiently, *irritated* that you were not with me. . . .'

Ten days before, he had already written that, though 'not without sorrowful relapses,' he was 'mending fast,' and had given proof of returning health in the eagerness with which he speaks of the forthcoming new edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*.

'For my sake, and Wordsworth's, and your own,' he says to Poole, 'you will purchase not only the new volume, but likewise the 2d edition of the first volume, on account of the valuable preface. By my advice, and at Longman's expense, copies, with appropriate letters, were sent to the Dutchess of Devonshire, Sir Bland Burgess, Mrs. Jordan, Mr. Fox, Mr. Wilberforce, and two or three others. I dictated all the other letters, while Wordsworth wrote the one to Mr. Fox. I have had that letter transcribed for you, for its excellence, and mine to Wilberforce, because the two contain a good view of our notions and motives, poetical and political. . . .'

And accordingly three sides of the foolscap sheet on which he writes are occupied with copies of these two letters in Mrs. Coleridge's hand.

Poole's next letter is dated February 8, 1801:—

‘MY DEAR COL.—I am indeed happy to hear that you are likely soon to get well. Be sure to take care of yourself. Remember an indiscretion is a relapse, and a relapse is worse than the first attack. I will assuredly go into the North of England before next Michaelmas, and probably early this Spring; what say you to the beginning of May? . . .

‘Is the work to which you mean to apply anything with which I am not acquainted? Whatever it may be, I trust you will have perseverance to execute it. Man and God require it of you.

‘I was much pleased by the letters to Fox and Wilberforce. Are any answers returned, or do you expect any? I have sent for the *Lyrical Ballads*. . . . I some time since received a letter from Mr. Jos. W[edgwood], in which he says:—

“*When Tom was here he enjoyed a high satisfaction in explaining to Mackintosh the result of his metaphysical speculations, and in finding M. concur with him in his opinions, after discussing the points, though not at first disposed to do so. He has also convinced Sharpe, as far as he has opened the business to him. The subjects he has cleared are no less than Time, Space, and Motion; and Mackintosh and Sharpe think a metaphysical revolution likely to follow. It has given him great pleasure to be confirmed in the result of several years’ meditation, and to acquire confidence to pursue what he has, I believe, so well begun, as far as his miserable health will permit. . . .*”

‘Has T. W. ever said anything to you on this subject? I shall desire some further account of it, though it is very improbable I shall be able to understand it. . . .

‘I have sent you a bill for £18 : 18. I had not £20

except a bank bill,¹ which is dangerous to send by post. God bless you, and restore you soon to perfect health and life, body and soul.—Ever yours,

‘THOS. POOLE.

‘Write by return of post on account of the bill. Before you pass this bill you must write your name on the back of it.’

Unimportant details relating to a man's private money affairs are, as a rule, to be omitted in biographies, as belonging to that class of facts which every one has a right to keep to himself, and into which none but vulgar-minded persons would desire to pry. Sometimes, however, such details are too closely interwoven with character to be altogether passed over, and the question of Coleridge's money relations with his friends has been so much discussed and commented upon, that it may be well to remark here, that although there was certainly an impression amongst those who knew both well, that Tom Poole ‘did a great deal for Coleridge,’ no memorandum or tradition has been handed down in the Poole family showing that he ever advanced any large sum of

¹ In response to T. P.'s offer, p. 24, S. T. C. had entered in some detail into the subject of the petty financial perplexities which were haunting his thoughts and retarding his recovery; and had said it would make his mind easy if Poole could, without inconvenience, let him have £20 for six weeks.—S. T. C. to T. P., February 1, 1801.

money to him at any one time. What does appear to be true is, that they were upon such brotherly terms that Coleridge could always send to Poole without scruple for £5, £10, or even £20, whenever he was for the moment straightened for ready cash.

Coleridge's next letter was written¹ in overflowing delight at the prospect of Poole's visit:—

'If you come in the beginning of May, you will make it joyous as an Italian month to me. Only let it be in the middle of May, that the leaves may be all out. I shall begin to look at the Lake and the encamped host of mountains with a new interest—"that will delight him." God ever bless you, my dear dear Friend.'

Then he goes on to say that he thinks as little of Sharpe as he does of Mackintosh.² *Their* opinion weighs as nothing with him; but *Tom* Wedgwood's own opinion is a very different matter; he is exceedingly likely to have fallen upon some valuable truth, if only it be not as he almost fears it is, that his conclusions have been anticipated:—

'Since I have been at Keswick I have read a great deal, and my reading has furnished me with many reasons for being exceedingly suspicious of *supposed discoveries* in metaphysics. . . .

¹ February 13, 1801.

² Coleridge's want of admiration for Mackintosh is noticed with extreme indignation by Jeffrey.—*Edinburgh Review*, October 1835.

'My letters to the Wedgwoods shall be copied out and sent you. . . . I do not think they will entertain you very much, those already written I mean, for they are crowded with dates and quotations, and relate chiefly to the character of Mr. Locke,¹ whom I think I have *proved* to have gained a reputation to which he had no honest claim; and Hobbes as little to the reputation to which T. Wedgwood, and after him Mackintosh, have laboured to raise him. But all this *inter nos*. . . . Change of ministry interests *me* not. I turn at times, half reluctantly, from Leibnitz or Kant, to read a smoking new newspaper—such a *purus putus* metaphysician am I become. . . . Mrs. Coleridge desires her kindest, very kindest love to your mother, and she sends her love to Ward, and begs and intreats of him—if your mother is not disposed to write—that he will immediately write *her* a letter full of news, Stowey news, of Mr. and Mrs. Rich, of the Chesters, of everybody and everything. She hates the sight of your nasty

¹ 'Of Locke he spoke as usual with great contempt, that is, in reference to his metaphysical work. He considered him as having led to the destruction of metaphysical science, by encouraging the unlearned public to think that with mere common sense they might dispense with disciplined study. He praised Stillingfleet as Locke's opponent [T. Poole's copy of the *Origines Sacrae* with S. T. C.'s marginal notes, is in the British Museum], and he ascribed Locke's popularity to his political character, being the advocate of the new against the old dynasty; to his religious character as a Christian though but an Arian—for both parties, the Christians against the sceptics, and the liberally-minded against the orthodox, were glad to raise his reputation; and to the nationality of the people, who considered him and Newton as the adversaries of the German Leibnitz. Voltaire, to depress Leibnitz, raised Locke.'—S. T. Coleridge's conversation, December 23, 1810. Reported in H. C. Robinson's *Diary*, vol. i. chap. xiii.

letters with not a word for a woman to read in them. But Ward is a bad hand. Do get your dear mother to write.

“O May, best month of all the year!”

‘Derwent is going to be inoculated with the cow-pox. He is a beautiful boy. And Hartley—I could fill sheets about him.—God love my dearest friend,

‘and S. T. COLERIDGE.’

When we remember Locke’s position in relation to French philosophic thought, and Tom Poole’s ardent sympathy with the aims and achievements of the Constituent Assembly, and his admiration for the French literature of the eighteenth century, we shall not be surprised to find that the disparagement of Locke contained in the foregoing letter, and in the letters to the Wedgwoods, was more than he could endure without protest.

‘MY DEAR COL.,’ he writes,¹ ‘I received your letter and the copy of your letter to Mr. J. Wedgwood. I thank you for both, particularly the latter. You have, I think, made a strong case against Mr. Locke’s claim to originality . . . if metaphysics were always written so plainly I should be fond of the subject. . . . And yet I could have wished to have seen you draw your powerful weapon against any one rather than Locke! The *image* of Locke comprises a large apartment of the materials of every sound virtuous mind, and though in those minds there are more attributes annexed to that

¹ Stowey, March 14, 1801.

image than (as you have clearly made appear) belong to it, yet I am loath to mutilate it, lest the sound parts should be discarded with those you prove to be defective. If you prove Locke's mind to have been less powerful than has been believed, in the same proportion his authority is lessened as an advocate for religion and liberty; but if you prove him a liar, he ceases to be any authority at all for either. I must believe, after having read your letter, that Locke was unacquainted with the authorities you quote (in which case he has the *merit* of a discoverer); for considering the whole of Mr. Locke's character, I think it was out of his nature to wish to appear that which he did not believe himself to be. Had he known those authorities, and *understood them in the sense we do*, he would have acquired merit as new and as important as that which we have been used to give him, by illustrating . . . in a popular way doctrines which had hitherto been comprised in a few dogmas found in books read only by the learned. Moreover, by showing that those doctrines were general principles on which the whole fabrick of the human mind depended, and that they led to consequences much more important than the *authors* of them had any conception of, he in this point of view would have had a claim to originality—just as Dr. Priestley discovered that vegetables not only served for the food of animals, but for the purification of that element in which animals live; as Newton, that gravity not only existed, but bound the universe together, etc. etc.¹

¹ Poole was no metaphysician, and perhaps hardly understood the points in question; it was, no doubt, as a recognised teacher of the reforming party in politics that he chiefly revered Locke.

‘I have said thus much, and could say much more, as your mind will easily say for me. It will induce you to think before you join the herd of *Little-ists*, who, without knowing in what Locke is defective, wish to strip the *popular mind* of him, leaving in his place *nothing—darkness, total darkness*. In writing the progress of Metaphysics, in God’s name stick to *truth*. Say what every one discovered. If Locke discovered anything, or made a *new* extension of old principles, which I suppose was the case, an extension so convincing that it laid all opposite principles asleep—state this, for it *was* new. But don’t state what he did not do, nor deprive a man of the character of benevolent, who, giving all he had, and thinking it five thousand, on the calculation of his successors it was found but five hundred.

‘Lend me if you can (I won’t say as you have promised) the copies of the following letters to J. W. They are great gratifications to me. But do not waste *your own time* in copying them. Get some one to do it for you, I entreat. If no one else I beg Mrs. Coleridge will do it, and as an inducement, all that follows of this letter is addressed to her.

‘MY DEAR MRS. COL.—You desire my mother to write to you. You shall see that I can write as pleasant a letter as she. . . .’

And then there comes, covering something more than a closely written page of foolscap, a most thorough and painstaking record of everything that Mr. Poole can imagine likely to interest a little person who much prefers gossip to meta-

physics. The Chesters, he tells her, are as usual. The girls without husbands or sweethearts that he can hear of. John¹ is learning French of Mr. Barbey, and says he understands it very well. Mr. Barbey, on the contrary, says he knows little about it. And so the letter goes on, with the oddest miscellany of local news,—what babies have been born, whose children have had the whooping cough, what young lady is likely to be married, and what relation of his own has bought a new house. Lastly, he had almost forgotten to tell her of his visit to Bristol, when he went to the play, and saw *Life* and *Paul and Virginia*,—

‘The last an instance of a good story mutilated and ill-told. But my imagination supplied the defect from the real story . . . and I made myself much interested. . . .’

And then he bids her

‘kiss Hartley and the New-born, which I suppose is a fine fellow, and believe me seriously, yours affectionately,

‘THOS. POOLE.’

Coleridge’s next communication, dated March 23, simply expresses satisfaction that ‘the letter respecting Locke’ has been read with interest; ‘those which follow are abundantly more entertaining and important,’ but he has no one to transcribe them. Yet although he is sure that ‘the

¹ Who was in Germany with Coleridge.

whole of Locke's system, as far as it was a system, and to the exclusion of those parts only which have been given up as absurdities by his warmest admirers, pre-existed in the writings of Descartes in a far more pure, elegant, and delightful form,' Tom Poole, he goes on to say, must never be afraid

'that I shall join the party of the *Little-ists*. I believe that I shall delight you by the detection of their artifices. Now Mr. Locke was the founder of this sect, himself a perfect Little-ist. My opinion is this—that deep thinking is attainable only by a man of deep feeling, and that all Truth is a species of Revelation.'

Coleridge's metaphysical opinions do not, however, come within the limits of the present work, except in so far as the interchange of thought upon such subjects illustrates the nature of his friendship with Tom Poole; so I must not go on to quote the rather wild speculations concerning Sir Isaac Newton with which the letter continues, and which, indeed, only represented a first superficial impression, formed whilst 'endeavouring to master his easier work, that on Optics,' and so little in accordance with his later convictions that he afterwards wrote to beg that his former letter may be burnt.

I am afraid very few people do make it a point of conscience to burn interesting letters when

requested to do so, and certainly at this date Coleridge's reputation stands far too high to be injured by the discovery that when he was a young man he, like other young men, was not exempt from the propensity to hasty conclusions; and though gifted beyond others with the noble capacity for reverence and admiration, which is a characteristic of all true greatness, he had also the unlimited intellectual audacity which finds no name too high, no reputation too established, to be brought to the bar and proved and questioned. And with Coleridge thought always *hurried* to clothe itself in expression. It was not without reason that the little circle at Stowey named him 'the Bard,' for the very *idea* of a bard is, not a poet merely, but the poet of a *people*,¹—a gifted and inspired nature, with an inborn power of awakening responsive chords in the hearts of those whom he addresses, pouring himself forth in winged words. His true position would have been the position of a philosopher of old, *speaking* by word of mouth to a group of trained disciples. The pen can never

¹ A *people*, that is, as distinguished from a nation. It is hardly to be said of Coleridge 'he was not of an age but for all time.' He was born to be a power in his own generation, touching other generations mainly through those whose minds were shaped by his influence. Of course the *Ancient Mariner* will live as long as the language; but ballads, as a rule, detach themselves from personality; of the most celebrated the composer's name has been entirely forgotten.

have been to him a very congenial instrument, and it is characteristic of him that his poems seem always to have been *composed and recited* before, by laborious after-process, they were committed to paper. It is probable that there are many writers of the present day who so entirely reverse the operation that they could not be *sure* of being able to recite any part even of their own best verses, unless they had definitely committed them to memory. Coleridge's was the more ancient method, and, perhaps, some of the unsuccess of his life, in a worldly point of view, was due to the want of correspondence of the bardic nature with the conditions of modern life. When he wrote, he was apt to write as he talked, and it may well be that his writings can be best understood, and more certainly best enjoyed, by reading them aloud. In his letters, he simply uses that means to convey the impressions of the moment with the most prodigal waste of material. When he was not inclined to do this he disliked to write at all. When, on the other hand, he was in the mood to hold written communion with a friend, he would give himself up to the task with a careless excess of industry, which, turned in a different direction, might have easily produced a good income. To such a friend as Tom Poole the thought, the fancy, the burden, yes, even the irritation of the moment,

dropped from his pen with as little self-restraint as they might have dropped from his lips in the book-room at Stowey. Unformed notions and half-shaped beginnings of thought are to be found side by side with carefully-worded opinions, which are evidently the result of serious and energetic meditation.

All the letters of this period, whether to Poole, to the Wedgwoods, or to Davy, show us Coleridge absorbed in metaphysical speculations.

‘I have been *thinking* vigorously during my illness,’ he writes to Davy,¹ ‘so that I cannot say that my long, long wakeful nights have been all lost to me. The subject of my meditations has been the relation of thoughts to things—in the language of Hume, of ideas to impressions. . . .’

Metaphysics, it is clear, was the dominant occupation of his mind,—an occupation from which neither profit, nor even poetry, neither Wordsworth’s counsels, nor Poole’s suggestions, had power to detach his attention. It is characteristic of the depth of his patriotism and the warmth of his sympathies that the one only subject which could, and did, break in upon his abstraction, and change the whole current of his thoughts, was the alarming condition of his country, and the wretchedness of the labouring poor. To ‘sigh and cry’² over the

¹ *Fragment. Rem.*, p. 88.

² Compare Ezekiel ix. 4.

sins and the miseries of his age and nation was a part of his very being, and we have here the true key both to the passionate crudities of his early youth, and to the extraordinary depth and fruitfulness of the political ideas of his later life.

But Poole was not overpleased when his friend wrote to him in what he himself owns to have been a 'wildly wailing strain,' now longing to escape to America to get out of sight of the wretchedness of the destitute beggars wandering about the country with their half-famished children, and denouncing 'the ignorance and hard-heartedness of all parties alike,' now retracting his words because his country is his country, and he will never leave it till he is 'starved out of it'—a not unlikely contingency, he thinks, for his works will never sell. No one buys books except rich men, and what can he write that can please a rich man?

' . . . Dear Poole, a man may be so kindly tempered by nature, and so fortunately placed by unusual circumstances, as that, for a while, he shall, though rich, bear up against the anti-human Influences of Riches ; but they will at last conquer him. It is necessary for the human being, in the present state of society, to have felt the pressures of actual hardships, in order to be a moral being. . . .

'*Write to me,*' he concludes. 'I cannot express to you what a consolation I receive from your letters.

'S. T. C.'

Tom Poole had not written a line since that letter which began with metaphysics and ended with gossip, for the same distress amongst the poor, the very sight of which cut Coleridge to the heart, and filled him with bitter thoughts and gloomy forebodings, was giving occupation to all his energies, and absorbing every moment that he could snatch from his necessary business. Food riots had taken place throughout the west of England, and much alarm and anxiety prevailed. At Stowey Thomas Poole was endeavouring to allay the general discontent in the only way that was practically possible, by careful and sympathetic attention to all available measures of relief. Perhaps he scarcely deserved the hard words against the rich which Coleridge had written in the haste and indignation of the moment; perhaps he was so entirely conscience free as actually not to apply them to himself, though we shall see by a later letter that it *was* even Tom Poole himself that Coleridge had in his mind when he wrote; perhaps he was well accustomed to meet eager overstatements with a tolerant smile. For truly there are no such two classes—the Rich and the Poor—as Coleridge, in the wrath of his heart, depicted, but rather an infinite series of gradations, as little capable of being separated by a hard-and-fast boundary-line as the colours of the sunset sky.

The abstracts Rich and Poor can only be used very generally, or as the denominations of extremes; but the terrible chasms which do actually yawn between those who go in carriages and those who want for bread are of a nature to dispose the human mind to the contemplation of extremes, and pity which cannot find a vent in active helpfulness is apt to work itself off in extravagant expressions.

‘STOWEY, *April 9, 1801.*

‘MY DEAR COLERIDGE—I am sure you have been expecting a letter from me for some days past; I therefore write, though I cannot say half what I wish to say. Ever since the receipt of your last three letters (*i.e.* two metaphysical and one miscellaneous) we have been in a continued state of agitation and alarm by the riots concerning the price of provisions. It began in Devonshire, and has gradually travelled down to the Land’s End and upwards to this neighbourhood, so that last week it might have been said that from the Land’s End to Bridgwater the whole people had risen *en masse*. It is not now much otherwise, though there is a momentary calm. It is now, I understand, all in arms at Bristol, and among all the colliers, miners, and Pill-men of that neighbourhood. Here, for the present, the people have succeeded in lowering the price of provisions as follows:—the quartern loaf¹ from 21d. to 10d.; butter, cheese, and bacon from 1s. and 14d. to 8d.; shambles meat from 9d. to 6d. per lb.

¹ This at a time when labourers’ wages did not exceed 7s. a week, and often fell lower.

‘The men of Stogursey and the neighbouring parishes joined the people here, and patrolled the country. They committed no violence, indeed they met with no opposition. I have been, as you may suppose, engaged enough by this business—a hundred people calling on me, being with the magistrates, etc. It is a curious phenomenon, but we see the people doing what Government dared not do, and Government permitting them to do it. Is Government timid, weak, or ignorant? One of the three it must be. . . . Remember me kindly to Wordsworth. Tell him he is not only the best, but will soon be the most popular poet of his age. In a future letter I will give you my opinions at large of the preface and the new volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*. . . . God bless you, and preserve you in these perilous times—and direct you to the production of that good which you are capable of producing.—Yours ever, THOS. POOLE.’

A letter from Coleridge followed, in which all consideration for metaphysics seems to have completely receded into the background in comparison with the all-absorbing question of the condition of the poor. He writes in a gloomy and despondent strain; as if hope had deserted him, and he had no other expectation but that of seeing a continual downward progress from bad to worse; but the close of the letter partly explains this tone of desolate depression. He is ill again, and thinks himself very ill. What he suffers in mere pain is ‘almost incredible.’ Every movement is attended

with suffering, and even in his bed he feels the transitions of the weather.

‘Another winter in England would do for me,’ he writes. ‘Besides, I am rendered useless and wretched. Not that my bodily pain afflicts me; God forbid!—Were I a single man and independent I should be ashamed to think myself wretched merely because I suffered pain. That there is no evil which may not ultimately be reduced into pain is no part of my creed. . . . It is not my bodily pain, but the gloom and distresses of those around me, for whom I ought to be labouring and cannot. But enough of this. . . . You have perplexities enough of your own. God love you and
‘S. T. COLERIDGE.’

It is hard for the healthy to realise the effect of illness on the mind and spirits, and the tone of Tom Poole’s reply, affectionate as it may be, is rather too blunt and bracing, even in its friendship, to have been entirely acceptable to sick sensibilities and exhausted nerves:—

‘STOWEY, *May 7, 1801.*

‘MY VERY DEAR COL.—The latter part of your last letter afflicted me sorely, and what shall I say to you? I cannot help suspecting that much of your indisposition arises from the little plagues in pecuniary matters which are continually harassing you. You say, if you were an independent man, etc. etc. In God’s name, why do you not think yourself independent? You have, after deducting Mrs. Fricker’s £20 a year, £130 a year clear, besides

what your own labours may produce. It is true £130 a year (as times are) is a small sum; but how many do I see, with a larger number in family than you have, live in a manner which would make you happy, upon less. With respect to your family, care nothing for them. Think only of the present moment. Should anything happen to you, there is certainly a good Providence that will take care of them. What I mean by Providence is, that by the common course of cause and effect, there are *bearings* upon your person and mind which will inevitably insure a provision for your family in case of your death.

‘Of your death! What a curious thing to talk of to a man under thirty; but you appear in so melancholy a mood that we must meet this mood and discuss it. If I continue unmarried, I promise you, if you and Mrs. Coleridge consent to it, in case of your death, to take one of your boys into my own house, and bring him up, and put him in a way to go through the world with credit and happiness. If I marry, being in my own house, must, in some measure, I easily feel, depend upon the will of another, but the pecuniary assistance to produce those ends will ever depend (with God’s blessing) on myself alone. Do you suppose that I could not find others . . . who would act similarly to other branches of your family? Wherefore then this despondency? If you can, as I doubt not you will, find means yourself to provide for your family, so much the better; but if you cannot, for God’s sake, be happy. Have courage, and make Mrs. Coleridge have courage to live within your income, be it what it will. What have you to do with the poverty, and misery, and sufferings around you? Have you caused the havock?

‘If your disease be really *bodily*, and not the consequence of an irritated mind, and if that bodily disease will be lessened or healed by a warmer climate, to a warmer climate you must go; but I never yet heard that complaints like yours were particularly alleviated by a warmer climate. However, if this be thought advisable, try, by all means, to get out as a companion to some one going to a warm climate. Write to all your friends on the subject, and I will write to mine. Dr. Langford is willing, and probably has more means of being able to be of use in this way than any man I know. Shall I write to him? If you went abroad and saw a place where you would like to remain, Mrs. Col. may come to you. In the meantime set your house in order in the best way you can—your actual house and your metaphorical house—the place in which you dwell and *yourself*. Let rigid economy and order prevail in the former, and your natural elevation and tranquillity in the latter. God knows, if I were disposed to perplex myself, I may be perplexed enough; for though I have considerable property, my affairs are very wide. I get money and I lend it, and I borrow to lend; so that every day I am richer and more in debt. But I feel I have credit to carry on this stream, and that I do good by it.

‘In your literary labours for the present moment, do throw aside metaphysics and poetry. They both require too great exertions of mind for a valetudinarian. Lay in your box the valuable things you have of the former, and, for the latter, let Wordsworth write it and you attend to it. Occupy yourself with something you can *throw off easily*; something which will amuse you without overwhelming you, or giving you the weight of a

task. Could you think of a humorous philosophical novel, a farce, or anything in this way? You will perceive by my writing in this kind of way that I can't come to you immediately. I am *Overseer*, and I must not, nor cannot, for the present moment leave the neighbourhood. Would a sea-voyage be of use to you? Is there any trade between your nearest port and Bridgewater, so that you could come down in a vessel, stay here while the vessel stays, and return with her? I need not say how glad I should be to see you. I sacrifice much in giving up my jaunt to you in this month. . . . Let me hear from you immediately. I should have written before, but I have been so much occupied by the poor people and my own business that *literally* I have not had time. . . .'

It will be observed that there is not one word in the foregoing letter to show that Coleridge's account of his bodily *sufferings* had made any impression on the writer's mind. The sympathy and consideration is all for the mental anxiety which Poole could easily understand and enter into; but no one who has ever suffered pain will doubt that Poole was mistaken in supposing that the apprehensions of the mind as to worldly affairs outweighed the anguish of the body. Nothing else is ever so vividly present to the imagination as the intolerableness of actual pain, and to poor suffering Coleridge there may well have seemed a want of tenderness in his friend's failure to recognise this.

‘If your disease be really bodily’ was an expression that rankled; and though Coleridge thanked him ‘with a full heart’ for a letter which ‘was as wise as it was kind,’ yet he adds¹—

‘Ah, dear friend! had you seen me a few days before the date of it, you would have needed no other evidence that my gloom and forebodingness respecting pecuniary affairs were the effects, and in no degree the causes, of my personal indisposition.’

If he could but get well, he would soon cut through his pecuniary entanglements, if not—

‘God’s will be done! I must do what I can, though it would be unusually painful to me to continue in debt even to those who love me, desirous as I am that no one should, with truth, impute my disregard of wealth for myself to want of strict honesty and punctuality in my money-dealings with others. I have written you many letters; and yet from all of them you will scarcely have been able to collect a connected story of my health and its downfalls. I will give it now as briefly as I can. . . .’

And then come three closely written pages of sorrowful details of the pain and sickness which had been the leading feature of his existence for more than five tedious months.

‘I pray God with a fervent heart, my beloved and honoured Poole, that these words may ever remain *words* to you, unconstrued by your own

¹ Sunday evening, May 17, 1801.

experience,' is a mournful little parenthesis on the third page. He concludes the sad record by mentioning for the first time that he has 'heard much from Captain Wordsworth (W.'s brother, and worthy to be so),' of the cheapness of living at the Azores, and that, if his health does not mend, he is thinking that, 'even in a pecuniary light,' it might be a good plan to winter there.

'I had hopes when I began this letter that half of it would have sufficed for my story,' he concludes, crowding his last words into the little space under the direction, 'and now I am at the end, and have no room to say aught about my disappointment in not seeing you. And now, too, the country is in its very lustre of beauty, and hitherto unpestered by the tourists.'

So wrote Coleridge, in just the old strain of intimate affection and confidence; and yet, as we shall later perceive, there was in his mind a certain reserve of dissatisfaction, which he withheld from expression, but which, in the sequel, led to an outburst of irritated feeling quite disproportionate to the particular occasion that called it forth, and to a short period of angry misunderstanding, during which Coleridge allowed himself to write words of such bitter and unjust disparagement as might almost have been the death of any friendship less deeply rooted, and less tolerant of faults and peculiarities on either side. For Tom Poole had

his faults and peculiarities as well as Coleridge, and it will probably have occurred to many readers that his didactic tone, and too constant tendency to give advice, cannot always have been acceptable, and may sometimes have been felt to be rather provoking. Still, even here, we must make due allowance for the sententiousness of the time, and remember that if Poole used great freedom in advising Coleridge, he always gave at the same time the largest possible measure of recognition to his friend's genius and greatness.

CHAPTER III

‘But that this long illness has impoverished me, I should immediately go to St. Miguels, one of the Azores—the baths and the delicious climate might restore me. . . . But the scheme, from the present state of my circumstances, is rather the thing of a *wish* than of a *hope*.’—*Coleridge to Davy*, May 4, 1801.

THE first of the two following letters from William Wordsworth to Thomas Poole was written in April 1801, to ask his opinion of one particular poem contained in the newly published edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. It will be noticed that he speaks of having lately seen Coleridge, and says that he was looking in better health than he had been for months; and this corresponds with the statement made in the last chapter that there appears to have been a short interval during the months of March, April, and May (1801) in which, for the moment, Coleridge was almost well.¹ But the respite did not last. The last two letters from which quotations have been made were written in

¹ ‘My health is better, etc.’—Letter to Davy, May 20, 1801, published in *Fragmentary Remains*.

grievous suffering and despondency—perhaps, who can tell? his condition was even then aggravated by the laudanum to which he had again resorted as a refuge from pain,—and the notion that he should never get well unless he spent the following winter in a warm climate had become dominant in his mind. Wordsworth, it is clear, believed him to be very ill, and thought it a matter of real urgency that he should escape the severity of the northern winter, and in considering the question of ways and means he, perhaps rather too easily, and yet, I think, not at all unnaturally, concluded that the simplest expedient would be to lay the matter before Tom Poole, and to ask him whether he would be willing to advance £50 or £100 for the necessary expenses of a voyage and of a winter residence at the Azores. In reply Tom Poole wrote, not to Wordsworth but to Coleridge himself, making various suggestions, and offering to join with others in advancing £20 each, but declining to lend the larger sum—why it does not clearly appear, but it seems not altogether unlikely that it may really have been because he actually had not just then the ready money to spare.¹ Those were difficult times for men of business ; and

¹ Indeed the extract from Coleridge's letter of July 1 shows that he, at least, was well aware that it was not the right moment to ask Poole to advance money.

we may besides be sure that Tom Poole did not give his time and energies to the relief of the poor, without opening his purse likewise to the full extent of his means.

The fact of his refusal, and the fancy that the will was wanting, hurt Coleridge very much. For more than a month he brooded over his wounded feelings, and then they took shape in a somewhat bitter letter which, by one of the cruel chances of life, was received by Tom Poole just at the very time of the death of his much-loved mother, which was rather sudden at the last. Coleridge wrote a tender letter of consolation and sympathy directly he heard the news, and was greatly troubled at the unlucky coincidence of time; but he did not repent of his resentment, and even when, in answer to a letter from his friend asking counsel as to the ordering of his future life, he breaks into enthusiastic appreciation of Poole's excellence and superiority, he cannot refrain from a meaning allusion to the narrowing and hardening influence of wealth as though the possession of a good income had been a moral disadvantage, condemning him to a spiritual short-sightedness which must disable him for ever from seeing eye to eye with himself and Wordsworth.

Poole's replies have not been preserved, but it will be seen that he was indignant, and justly so.

Anger, however, never lasted long between these two friends who so sincerely loved one another ; and the year closes with a long visit of Coleridge to Stowey, a kind of renewal of old times which must have been very delightful to both.

Yet, even when hasty words are forgiven and forgotten, their effect is apt to remain ; the affection between the friends remains unbroken, but their correspondence from this time forward becomes a *little* less regular and unreserved, and the tone of mutual trust and comprehension is never again *quite* so perfect as it was before.

And now, after these introductory remarks, the letters may well be left to speak for themselves, and I give them accordingly, in the order of their dates :—

‘GRASMERE, *April* 9.

‘MY DEAR POOLE—I am afraid that you will not think the subject of this letter of sufficient consequence to justify my putting you to the expense of postage in these hard times. Should you feel disposed to blame me, I have an excuse to make, beyond what I feel does exist in anything which gives me an opportunity of assuring you how highly I esteem your character, and what affectionate recollections I carry about with me of you and your good mother.

‘In the last poem of my 2nd volume [“Michael”] I have attempted to give a picture of a man, of strong mind and lively sensibility, agitated by two of the most powerful affec-

tions of the human heart—the parental affection, and the love of property, *landed* property, including the feelings of inheritance, home and personal and family independence. This poem has, I know, drawn tears from the eyes of more than one—persons well acquainted with the manners of the “Statesmen,” as they are called, of this country; and, moreover, persons who never wept in reading verse before. This is a favourable augury for me. But nevertheless I am anxious to know the effect of this poem upon you, on many accounts; because you are yourself the inheritor of an estate which has long been in possession of your family; and above all, because you are so well acquainted, nay, so familiarly conversant with the language, manners, and feeling of the middle order of people who dwell in the country. Though from the comparative infrequency of small landed properties in your neighbourhood, your situation has not been altogether so favourable as mine, yet your daily and hourly intercourse with these people must have far more than counterbalanced any disadvantage of this kind; so that all things considered, perhaps in England there is not a more competent judge than you must be of the skill and knowledge with which my pictures are drawn. I had a still further wish that this poem should please you, because in writing it I had your character often before my eyes, and sometimes thought I was delineating such a man as you yourself would have been under the same circumstances. Do not suspect me of a wish to bribe you into an admiration of the poem in question; by this time no doubt you must have read it, and it must have had a fair trial upon you.

‘I am now come to the circumstance which was the

determining cause of my writing to you. The second volume is throughout miserably printed, and after the line, page 210—

“Receiving from his father hire of praise,”

by a shameful negligence of the printer there is an omission of fifteen lines absolutely necessary to the connection of the poem. If in the copy sent to you this omission has not been supplied, you may be furnished with half a sheet which has been reprinted, if you have any acquaintance who will call at Longman's for it and send it down to you. In the meanwhile my sister will transcribe for you the omitted passage. I should be vexed if your copy is an imperfect one, as it must have then been impossible for you to give the poem a fair trial.

‘Remember me affectionately to your mother and also to Ward, and believe me, dear Poole, yours sincerely,

‘W. WORDSWORTH.

‘Tell whether you think the insertion of these lines an improvement.

‘We shall be highly delighted to see you in this country. I hope you will be able to stay some time with us. Coleridge was over at Grasmere a few days ago; he was both in better health and in better spirits than I have seen him for some time. He is a great man, and if God grant him life will do great things.

‘My sister desires to be affectionately remembered to you and your mother, not forgetting Ward. W. W.

‘*Christabel* is to be printed at the Bulmerian Press, with Vignettes, etc. etc. I long to have the book in my hand; it will be such a beauty. Farewell.’

A letter from Coleridge to Poole, dated July

1, 1801, comes next—it is a long letter, full of petty, harassing money perplexities, and mournful complaints of pain and sickness. ‘Nine dreary months, and has he had even a fortnight’s full and continuous health?’ The desirability of wintering in a warm climate, and the question how to raise means for going to the Azores, is then discussed in much detail, and the letter concludes as follows:—

‘I do not apply to you, partly because I am vexed that I have not yet been able to repay you the £37 I already owe, and partly because I know how manifold and vexatious your pecuniary responsibilities already are, and am somewhat too proud willingly to force you to think of *me*, at the time you are thinking of poor — and —. I shall apply, therefore, elsewhere, if I can think of anybody else. If not, I will try my rhetoric to persuade some bookseller to advance the sum without security; and not till that have failed, shall I ask you. Consider this letter, therefore, only as one giving you occasion for writing to advise me, if you have any advice to offer, or any reason for believing that I am wrong in my present determination. Something I must do, and that speedily. . . . Wordsworth mentioned to me that he meant to write to you. I told him I should certainly write myself, and was about to state what I meant to say—but he desired me not to do it, that he might write with his opinions unmodified by mine. *We* are all well but *I*. Best love to your mother. God for ever bless you, my dear Poole, and

S. T. COLERIDGE.’

The following letter from Wordsworth, undated, but endorsed July 1801, must be the one above alluded to.

‘MY DEAR POOLE—Your long and kind letter I received some time ago ; it gave me the highest pleasure to learn that in the poems about which alone I was anxious, I had pleased you ; and your praise was expressed with such discrimination as gave it a high value indeed. On some future occasion I will write to you at length on the subject of your letter. In the meantime, accept my *best thanks* for it.

‘At present I have taken up the pen solely on Coleridge’s account, and must confine my letter to him and his affairs. I know how much you will be concerned to hear that his health cannot be said to be much better, indeed any better at all. He is apparently quite well one day, and the next the fit comes on him again with as much violence as ever. These repeated shocks cannot but greatly weaken his constitution ; and he is himself afraid that, as the disease (which is now manifestly the gout), keeps much about his stomach, he may be carried off by it with little or no warning. I would hope to God that there is no danger of this ; but it is too manifest that the disease is a dangerous one ; it is the gout in a habit not strong enough to throw it out to the extremities. At all events, as I have said, his body must be grievously weakened by the repeated attacks under which he is at present labouring. We all here feel deeply persuaded that nothing can do him any effectual good but a change of climate. And it is on this subject that I have now written to you. The place which he thinks of going to

is the Azores—both for the climate and the baths, which are known to be exceedingly salutary in cases of gout and rheumatism ; and on account of the cheapness of living there, and the little expense in getting thither. But you know well how poor Coleridge is situated with respect to money affairs ; indeed it will be impossible for him to accomplish the journey without some assistance. He has been confined to his bed, one may say, the half of the last ten months ; this has rendered it impossible for him to earn anything, and his sickness has also been expensive. It was the more unfortunate that this sickness should have come upon him just after an expensive journey, and other expenses necessary, previously to his settling in this country. In short, I see it will be utterly out of his power to take this voyage, and pass some time there, without he can procure a sum amounting at the *lowest* to £50. Further, it seems to me absolutely necessary that this sum should be procured in a manner the least burthensome to his feelings possible. If the thought of it should hang upon his mind when he is away, it will undo or rather prevent all the salutary effects of the climate. I have thought it my duty to mention these circumstances to you as being a person more interested perhaps than any other in what befalls our common friend. Wade of Bristol is, I know, a most excellent and liberal man, and one who highly values Coleridge, and one whom Coleridge values also greatly, but he has a family, and I have therefore thought it right not to speak to him on the subject before I had consulted with you.

‘As Coleridge at present does not intend to take his wife or children with him, I should hope that £50 might

be enough ; if she goes, I am sure he will want £100, or near it.

‘ Now it is my opinion, and I daresay will be yours, that the money should be lent to him, in whatever way you think will *ultimately* hang the least upon his mind. He has mentioned to me a scheme of this sort, viz. that he would write to Godwyn desiring him to call upon some bookseller to request him to advance £100 upon some work to be written by Coleridge within a certain time, for the repayment of which £100 Coleridge would request you or some other of his friends to be security, if the work were not forthcoming at the time appointed. This plan, for my own part, though I did not like to say so abruptly to Coleridge, I greatly disapprove, as I am sure it would entangle him in an engagement which it is ten to one he would be unable to fulfil, and what is far worse, the engagement, while useless in itself, would prevent him from doing anything else.

‘ My dear Poole, you will do what you think proper on this statement of facts ; if, in case of Coleridge’s death, you could afford to lose £50, or more if necessary, it may perhaps appear proper to you to lend him that sum, unshackled by any conditions, but that he should repay it when he shall be able ; if he dies, if he should be unwilling that any debt of his should devolve on his brothers, then let the debt be cancelled. This is what I should propose to him myself if I could do it with any propriety.

‘ I therefore need not apologize to you for what I have said. If a larger sum than £50 would be wanted, Wade or some other of his friends would be willing to

divide the risque or loss among them. I have said this because it would perhaps be fair in itself, and would give them pleasure.

‘Pray be so good as to excuse this letter. I only half know what I have been writing; a friend came in just as I began, and my sister and he have been talking all the time, to my great confusion.’

[The letter is unsigned.]

In reply Poole writes—July 21, 1801—as follows, to Coleridge himself.

‘MY DEAR COL.—To hear of the state of your health grieves me more than I can express. What really would be of service undoubtedly ought to be done. You speak, I trust, from *authority*, when you say that a warm climate would probably repair your constitution. From what you have written I should think it would, and, from this persuasion, before I received your last letter, I had, in answer to a letter from Mr. Jos. Wedgwood, informing me of his brother’s intention of wintering in Sicily, ventured to say that it would probably do you good if you accompanied him as a companion. To this letter I have received no answer, and, indeed, waiting for an answer has so long delayed my writing to you. If you go to the Azores money must be raised, and you must take care to get a letter of credit to some one to supply you while you are there, in case of any unforeseen delays or any unforeseen exigencies. Of the propriety of the different plans you have mentioned for raising money here you are the best judge, because you know best your own feelings. . . .

‘I have received a letter from Wordsworth in which

he proposes my lending you £50, or if Mrs. Col. went with you £100; or, if it were inconvenient to me to advance the whole, for me to join with some of your friends. Coleridge, you know I have many claims, and to all it is my duty, or I believe it my duty, to attend. What I do I do with all my heart, and I am sure you would think me less worthy of your friendship if I did more than I did with that full feeling of satisfaction. I will lend you £20, and send it to you, if you go, as soon as you desire me to. Let Wade and one or two other of your friends do the same. Suppose one or two of the booksellers advanced each so small a sum as this—which I am sure would not be refused—it would be no weight on your mind, and there would be no parade of security. This seems to me . . . the most rational plan, and that which I advise you to adopt if you go abroad. Remember me kindly to Wordsworth. Show him what I have written, as it will prevent my troubling him with a letter. Tell him I thank him sincerely for his communication, and soon expect the letter he has promised me in answer to my last.

‘Coleridge—God, I hope, will preserve you. It seems to me impossible to imagine that you would not be well, if you could have a mind freely at ease. Make yourself that mind. Take from it—its two weak parts—its tendency to restlessness and its tendency to torpor, and it would make you great and happy. It would in a moment see what is right, and it would possess the power, and that steadily, to execute it. . . . Live, dear Coleridge, and make us live. God forbid that the organisation should be weak which contains your spirit. Don’t let the asperities of the sword (to use a very

hackneyed metaphor) destroy the scabbard. Let me hear from you soon. . . .—Yours ever,

‘THOS. POOLE.’

‘KESWICK, *September 7, 1801.*

‘MY DEAR POOLE—It has been, you may be well assured, neither a falling off of my affection to you, nor doubt of your’s to me, which has produced my long silence, but simply confusion, and ignorance, and indecision, and want of means respecting the disposal of myself in order to the preservation of a life which, Heaven knows, but for a sense of duty I would resign as quietly and blessedly as a baby fallen asleep lets the mother’s nipple slip from its innocent gums.

‘I have such an utter dislike to all indirect ways of going about anything, that when Wordsworth mentioned his design of writing to you, but would not explain to me, even by a hint, what he meant to write, I felt a great repugnance to the idea, which was suppressed by my habitual deference to his excellent good sense. I wish I had not suppressed it. He wrote without knowing you, or your circumstances, your habitual associations in the whole growth of your mind, or the accidental impressions of disgust made by your many losses, and the squandering of your exertions on objects that had proved themselves unworthy of them. It is impossible that you should feel, as to pecuniary affairs, as Wordsworth or as I feel—or even as men greatly inferior to you in all other things that make man a noble being. But this I always knew and calculated upon, and have applied to you in my little difficulties, when I could have procured the sums with far less pain to myself from

persons less dear to me, only that I might not estrange you wholly from the outward and visible realities of my existence, my wants and sufferings. In all my afflictions I never dreamt, however, for a moment, of making such an application to you as Wordsworth did. He acted erroneously, but not wrongly; for you, I understand, had requested him to write to you freely on all that, in his opinion, concerned my welfare. However, error generates error. His letter untuned your mind. You wrote to me when you ought assuredly to have written to him; and you wrote to the Wedgwoods, and made a most precipitate and unwise request, which, coming from you will, I am sorry to say, in all human probability connect in their minds a feeling of disgust with my character and relations to them—a feeling of disgust, and a notion of *troublesomeness*. Besides the request itself!—O God! how little you must have comprehended the state of my body and mind not to have seen that to have accompanied Tom Wedgwood was the very last thing I could have submitted to. Two invalids! And two men so utterly unlike each other in opinions, habits, requirements, and feelings. . . .

‘But enough of this. Let us, for the future, abstain from all pecuniary matters. If I live, I shall soon pay all I at present owe—and if I die, the thought of being in your debt will never disquiet me on my sickbed. I love you too well to have one injurious thought respecting you.

‘You deem me, too often perhaps, an enthusiast. Enthusiast as I may be, Poole! I have not passed through life without learning that it is a heart-sickening degradation to borrow of the rich, and a heart-withering affliction to owe to the poor. . . .’

The letter concludes with a very despondent view of his own health, and the description of a new plan for spending the winter at his friend Pinny's house in the island of Nevis. He has given up all idea of the Azores on account of the reported dampness of the climate. A passing mention of Southey and Wordsworth follows, and the usual greetings.

'KESWICK, *September 19, 1801.*

'By a letter from Davy I have learnt, Poole, that your mother is with the Blessed. I have given her the tears and the pang which belong to her departure, and now she will remain to me for ever, what she has long been—a dear and venerable image, often gazed at by me in imagination, and always with affection and filial piety. She was the only being whom I ever *felt* in the relation of mother: and she is with God! We are all with God!

'What shall I say to *you*? I can only offer a prayer of thanksgiving for you, that you are one who has habitually connected the act of thought with that of feeling; and that your natural sorrow is so mingled up with a sense of the omnipresence of the Good Agent, that I cannot wish it to be other than what, I know, it is. The frail and the too painful will gradually pass away from you, and there will abide in your spirit a great and sacred accession to those solemn Remembrances and faithful Hopes, in which, and by which, the Almighty lays deep the foundations of our continuous Life, and distinguishes us from the Brutes that perish. As all things pass away, and those Habits are broken up which constituted our

own and particular Self, our nature by a moral instinct cherishes the desire of an unchangeable Something, and thereby awakens, or stirs up anew, the passion to promote *permanent* good, and facilitates that grand business of our Existence—still further and further still to generalize our affections, till Existence itself is swallowed up in Being, and we are in Christ, even as He is in the Father.

‘It is among the advantages of these events that they learn us to associate a new and deep feeling with all the good old phrases, all the reverend sayings of comfort and sympathy, that belong, as it were, to the whole human race. I felt this, dear Poole, as I was about to write my old—God bless you and love you for ever and ever. Your affectionate Friend, S. T. COLERIDGE.

‘Would it not be well if you were to change the scene awhile? Come to me, Poole! No—no—no. You have none that love you so well as I. I write with tears that prevent my seeing what I am writing.’

‘GRETA HALL, *October 5, 1801.*

‘MY DEAR POOLE—I have this evening received your letter. That I felt many and deep emotions of tenderness and sympathy, you will know without my telling you, and in truth minds like mine, and (in its present mood) yours too, require to be *braced* rather than *suppled*. Your plan for your own life appears to me wise and judicious; and I cannot too earnestly impress upon you the solemn duty you owe to yourself, your fellowmen, and your Maker, to exert your faculties, to give evidence of that which God has delivered to your keeping, first, to your own mind, and next to that of your countrymen. Great talents

you undoubtedly possess. Indeed, when I consider the vast disadvantages that you have laboured under as an *intellectual* being, from the circumstances of having been born to a patrimony, and of having had, almost from your birth, hourly doings with *money*—all dear relationships,¹ all social intercourses, in some measure modified or interrupted by influences of *money*—and compare with these disadvantages your opinions, powers, and habits of feeling, I experience an *indefiniteness* in my conception of your talents, a faith that they are greater than even to your own mind they have hitherto appeared to be.

‘To some great work I expect you to devote yourself as soon as ever the hurry of grief and mutation is over, as soon as the darkness of sorrow has thinned away into gloom; to some great work which shall combine a predominance of self-collected *fact* and *argument* with the necessity of wide and extensive *reading*. Poole! I have seen only two defects in your making up that are of any importance. (Let me premise before I write the next sentence that by family attachment I do not mean *domestic* attachment, but merely *family*—*Cousinships*; not brother, or sister, or son, for these are real relations—but family as far as it is mere accident.) The two defects which I have seen in you are: 1. Excess of *family* and *local* attachment, which has fettered your moral free-agency, and bedimmed your intellectual vision. It has made you half a coward at times when (I dream at least that) I

¹ Those who feel tempted to pass a rather severe judgment on this part of the letter should remember, *as no doubt T. Poole did*, the sad petulance and irritability, the disposition to take up everything by the wrong handle, which is perhaps the heaviest burden that a long-continued and depressing illness is apt to bring in its train.

should have been more than brave ; 2. A too great desire and impatience to produce *immediate* good ; to see with your own eyes the plant of which you have sown the seed. Mustard cress may be raised this way ; and we will raise mustard cress. But acorns, acorns—to plant them is the work, the calling, the labour, of our moral being.

‘This, in this awful tone, I have been powerfully impelled to say ; though, in general, I *detest* anything like giving advice. I was with an acquaintance lately, and we passed a poor idiot boy, who exactly answered my description ; he—

“ “ Stood in the sun, rocking his sugar-loaf head,
And staring at a bough from morn to sunset,
See-sawed his voice in inarticulate noises.”

“I wonder,” says my companion, “what that idiot means to say.” “To give advice,” I replied. “I know not what else an idiot can do, and any idiot can do that.”

‘It is more accordant with my general habits of thinking to resign every man to himself, and to the quiet influences of the Great Being—and, in that spirit, and with a *deep, a very deep affection*, I now say—God bless you, Poole ! . . .

‘I am sorry that my letter affected you *so* painfully, and I need not say what a pang I felt at the accident of the time in which it must have reached you. The letter itself I cannot, after the most dispassionate review, consider objectionable. Why should you feel pain at my affirming that it is impossible for you and me to feel alike in money concerns ? From my childhood I have associated nothing but pain with money. I have had no wish, no dream, no one pleasure connected with wealth. The only pleasure which the possession of a few pounds

has ever given me is this :—Well, for a week or two, I shall have no occasion to interrupt my thoughts and feelings by any accursed consideration about money. . . . I own I have formed long and meditative habits of aversion to the Rich, love to the Poor or the *unwealthy*, and belief in the excessive evils arising from Property. How is it *possible*, Poole, that you can have all these feelings? You would not wish to have them. . . . I *was* vexed that Wordsworth should have applied to you; for I know enough of the human heart to have felt . . . that there is a great difference between our foreseeing that such or such an answer *would be* the result of such or such an application, and that such or such an answer *has been* the result. That *I* should not have refused the £50, though it had been my only £50 beyond the expenses of the ensuing month, is saying nothing; because I should not have refused it, on a less important necessity, to many a man for whom I have but a very diluted love and esteem, and to whom I should refuse many a sacrifice of much greater difficulty, which you would willingly make for me. But different as our feelings are respecting money, I am assured that you would not have refused twice the sum, if necessary, had you believed the state of my health to be that which I know it to be. No, Poole! I love you, and I know that you love me. Even at this moment it almost irritates me that Wordsworth should have applied to you—the money might have been raised from so many quarters; indeed, I was prevented from going to the Azores, not by this but by intelligence received of the exceeding dampness of the climate. . . .

‘God love you, my dear Poole, and restore you to that degree of cheerfulness which is necessary for virtue and

energetic well-doing. May He vouchsafe the same blessings to your affectionate friend,
S. T. COLERIDGE.'

There is no more perfect test of the reality and depth of any affection than the manner in which it will endure a real strain. Superficial likings, however cordial and pleasant, are often entirely destroyed by intimacy—but a genuine friendship has in it this measure of the nature of genuine love, that it is gifted with an almost unlimited power of making allowances. Yet it is rather rash when those who love one another presume too much, as they sometimes do on the assurance 'I love you, and I know that you love me.' The affection which once flowed in a never-failing stream may be pent back to its source until, if it be not lost, it is for the moment gone!

'What is it then? I scarce dare tell,
A comfortless and hidden well.'

The time was to come when even the friendship between Poole and Coleridge should thus, as it were, run underground for years; but that time was not yet. Just now they were both vexed with one another; Coleridge, because he thought Poole had failed in sympathy, or would he ever have refused a paltry £50 to such an appeal as Wordsworth's; Poole, because Coleridge's resentment was expressed in a manner which seemed to him

both wounding and outrageous ; but only let them meet—that, they both seem to feel—and it is scarcely necessary to say that all will be clear as daylight between them in a moment.

‘ October 21, 1801.

‘ MY DEAR POOLE—Was my society then *useless* to you during my abode at Stowey? Yet I do not remember that I ever once offered you *advice*? If, indeed, under this word you chuse to comprehend all that free communication of thought and feeling which distinguished our intercourse, I have nothing to do but to subscribe to your *meaning*, referring you to the dictionary for the better wording thereof. By the “quiet influences of the great Being” I wished to convey all that all things do from natural impulse, rather than direct and prospective volition : not that I meant to interdict the latter—on the contrary, in that very letter I felt it my duty to give you *plump advice*. Nay, I admit that man is an *advising* animal, even as he is a concupiscent one. Now as Religion has directed its main attacks against Concupiscence, because we are too much inclined to it, so does Prudence against *Advice-giving*, and for the same reason. In short, I meant no more than that it is well to have a general suspicion of ourselves in the moment of an inclination to advise ; this suspicion not as a ham-stringer to cripple, but as a curb-rein to check. As to myself, advice from almost anybody gives me pleasure, because it informs me of the mind and heart of the adviser ; but from a very, very dear friend it has occasionally given me great pain ; but, so help me Heaven, as I *believe* at least that I speak truly, on *his* account alone, or *if* on my own, on my own

only as a disruption of that sympathy in which friendship has its being. A thousand people might have advised all that you did, and I might have been pleased ; but it is the *you, you* part of the business that afflicted me, though by what figure of speech any part of my letter could be called outrageous, I can discover by the science of metaphysics rather than by any hitherto published art of Rhetoric. And here ends, I trust, the controversial, from which I have seldom seen much good come even in conversation, and never anything but evil when letters have been the vehicle.

‘I will come to you as soon as I can get the money necessary. . . .’

And as if in proof that the late cloud between them is to be regarded as a thing of the past, the usual minute details of his pecuniary situation follow. Altogether £25 in ready money is wanted, and if Poole can spare that sum for four months Coleridge will be glad to receive it from him.

Under a fold of the letter is written the words, ‘Yesterday was my birthday’ [the 21st was his birthday], ‘twenty-nine years of age! O that I could write it without a sigh, or rather without occasion for one!’

The next letter acknowledges the receipt of the sum in question, and announces Coleridge’s intention of starting the following Saturday, if he can, for London, where he proposes taking medical advice, and settling literary business, and then he

is coming down to Stowey for a two months' visit. His health was much improved, speaking generally, but, with the ill-luck peculiar to that year 1801, he had broken a thorn into his leg in crossing a fence, and was not merely lame, but completely laid up, and suffering very acutely in consequence,—a state of affairs in which 'valuable lights thrown upon the exceedingly interesting and obscure subject of pain' can hardly have been a sufficient consolation, though he professes to be 'quite in spirits about it. O how I *watched* myself (he says) while the lancet was at my leg!' ¹

Six weeks later and he was in London, writing for the *Morning Post*, and hunting up 'curious metaphysical works in the old Libraries,' though it was all 'buz, buz, buz with his poor head.' But he has met Tom Wedgwood, who spoke to him of Poole with such 'an enthusiasm of friendship' that it brought the tears into his eyes, and wellnigh caused him to make a fool of himself in the streets; and in health, he is better than he could expect, and would so much rather talk than write to Poole that he is 'right glad' to think that they will soon be together.

¹ See letter to Davy, October 31, 1801 (published in *Fragmentary Remains*): 'But that I have metaphysicized most successfully on Pain, in consequence of the accident, by the Great Scatterer of Thoughts, I should have been half mad. As it is, I have borne it *like a woman*, which I believe to be two or three degrees at least beyond a *stoic*.'

CHAPTER IV

‘Is it a reed that’s shaken by the wind,
 Or what is it that ye go forth to see?—
 Lords, lawyers, statesmen, squires of low degree,
 Men known, and men unknown, sick, lame, and blind,
 Post forward all. . . .’

‘France lured me forth. . . .’

WORDSWORTH.

Sonnet, August 1802; and *The Prelude*.

‘WE, *i.e.* Wordsworth and myself, regard the Peace as necessary, but the terms as most alarming,’ wrote Coleridge to Tom Poole in October 1801. The allusion is, of course, to that Treaty of Amiens which ‘everybody was glad of and nobody was proud of.’ Fox, speaking at the Shakespeare Tavern on the 10th of the same month, expressed himself far more warmly, and indeed could not refrain from open exultation over the complete failure of the Second Coalition:—

‘It may be said that the peace we have made is glorious to the French Republic, and glorious to the First Consul.’ Thus he is reported to have spoken.¹ ‘Ought it

¹ *Morning Chronicle* of Monday, October 12, 1801, quoted in

it not to be so?—ought not glory to be the reward of such a glorious struggle? France stood against a confederacy composed of all the great kingdoms of Europe ; she completely baffled the attempts of those who menaced her independence. . . . Some complain that we have not gained the object of the war. The object of the war we have not gained most certainly, and I like the peace by so much the better.'

When we remember Tom Poole's detestation of the war, we cannot doubt but that his sentiments in regard to these early triumphs of the genius of Napoleon must have been very nearly of the same description, though I think he was far too thoroughly an Englishman to share entirely in feelings, which even Fox himself admitted to be such as could not 'with prudence be avowed,' when, in answer to a remonstrance from Grey, he wrote :¹ 'The triumph of the French Government over the English² does, in fact, afford me a degree of *pleasure* which it is very difficult to disguise.'

Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*. See also Coleridge's letter to Fox, November 4, 1802; *Essays on His Own Times*, vol. ii. 'I am at a loss to determine, sir, which was the greater, the inconsistency or the folly of this speech, the impolicy or the unfeelingness.'

¹ Letter to Mr. Grey, October 22, 1801, quoted in Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*.

² 'Quoique la guerre eût donné à l'Angleterre l'empire de l'Inde et la domination de l'océan, cette paix était la plus humiliante qu'elle eût faite depuis deux siècles. Deux îles semblaient le prise unique de 10 ans d'efforts et de 4 milliards de dette ! et on laissa la Revolution Française maîtresse de la Belgique, des provinces du Rhin, de l'Italie, ayant sous son protectorat la Hollande, l'Allemagne, la Suisse, l'Espagne !'—Lavallée, *Hist. de France*, iv. 343.

It was only the Preliminaries that were signed on October 1 ; then Lord Cornwallis met Joseph Buonaparte at Amiens, and five months of negotiations dragged their weary length before the actual treaty was finally concluded on March 27, 1802. It was, in reality, nothing more than an armistice, and did not last many weeks beyond the first twelvemonth ; but even a year's respite was of importance, if only to separate those early chapters of the war, in which the sympathies of Englishmen were so deeply and unalterably divided, from those latter chapters, in which almost the entire nation was aware that everything they possessed that was dear and sacred was at stake, in the prolonged duel with the mighty conqueror, who, for the time, seemed to have gathered all the available resources of Europe into his single hand.

Meanwhile the first effect of the Treaty of Amiens was to throw open the gates of Paris to a crowd of eager visitors, amongst whom Tom Poole was one of the earliest. In the following letter to Coleridge he gives some account of his plans, and there is one to Thomas Wedgwood of almost the same date,¹ in which he thanks him for a letter of introduction to the Swiss Minister, and begs him, as to the question of their travelling together to consider *himself only*, and 'not to allow any

¹ May 1, 1802.

apprehension of being a dead weight' on his friend's plans, to influence his decision. In the end Thomas Poole started on his journey alone, and although there was in his disposition a tender affectionateness which might have made him a very acceptable companion to an invalid, it is probable that his own opportunities of observation and enjoyment would really have been seriously hampered by associating himself with a man in such broken health, and so grievous a sufferer from depression of spirits, as poor Tom Wedgwood had become. It may be well to remark that, after a few weeks' visit to Stowey,¹ Coleridge had returned to London, whither Tom Poole seems to have accompanied him, for there is a note, dated February 19, 1802, in which he writes that, with the exception of a passing indisposition, his 'health has been on the mend ever since Poole left town, *nor has he had occasion for opiates of any kind.*'

There is something ominous in this last sentence. I do not believe that any one who carefully considers the records that remain to us of the life of Coleridge can doubt that the beginning of the thralldom which was to exercise so sinister an influence both on mind and body, is to be sought for in a natural recourse to opiates as a relief from acute pain. It would almost seem

¹ December 1801-February 1802,

that Tom Poole's friendship had already detected a danger lest the occasional practice should become a habit, and the habit an imperative necessity, and that some word of warning, some promise to take care, must have already passed between the friends. After this note it is evident that Coleridge did not write again for more than two months, and Tom Poole did not even know for certain when he had left London.

' *May 2, 1802.*

'MY DEAR COLERIDGE—Why is there so little communication between us? I suppose this letter will reach you, but I certainly do not know where you are by any information which you have given me. Can you suppose me uninterested in your welfare, and in your happiness in every point? Then wherefore this silence?

'The plan which I had in view when we parted I am about to realize. I shall leave home perhaps in a fortnight, and, for certain (barring accidents which I cannot foresee), by the 31st of this month. I go to Bristol, London, where I shall remain a little, then to Paris, to the South of France, Geneva, and Switzerland. . . . Tell me anything which suggests itself to you . . . as to route, inquiries, objects worthy of attention, men, conduct, and company suitable for me. With whom I shall go I know not. Davy talked of going; Purkis talked of going; and, perhaps, at last, I shall be alone. . . .

'Recommend me any books which I ought to read before I go, or which I ought to buy to bring home with me. I say nothing about your health—your employment

—or your future intentions, but all *you will say* of those things will be abundantly interesting to me. . . .

‘This is a short letter to send so far, but a *new* correspondence is always deficient in topicks.¹ Let me hear from you. I shall write to you again before I go. . . .

‘I have at last received your *German picture*.² It is a good picture—certainly like you—but it *wants character*. Nevertheless, I value it much. It is a very agreeable picture, and it gives one pleasure to look at; but it is *Mr. Coleridge* and not *Coleridge*. You are in the drawing-room, and not in the vales of Quantock, or on the top of Skiddaw.’

The above letter found Coleridge at Keswick, and was answered within a week :—

‘I were sunk low indeed,’ he wrote,³ ‘if I had neglected to write to you from any lack of affection. I have written to no human being—which I mention, not as an excuse, but as preventive of any exaggeration of my fault. . . .

‘And you are going to France, Switzerland, Italy! Good go with you, and with you return. I have, you well know, read nothing in French but metaphysical French—of French books I know nothing, of French manners nothing. Wordsworth, to whom I shall send your letter to-morrow, may, perhaps, have something to communicate, he having been the same route. But what can you want? I never saw you in any company in which you

¹ Does this mean a new beginning after the autumn’s misunderstanding?

² I think this must be the portrait now in the possession of the Miss Wards.

³ May 7, 1802.

did not impress every one present as a superior man, and you will not be three days in France without having learnt the way of learning all you want.

‘I advise one thing only ; that, before you go, you skim over *Adam Smith*, and that, in France, you look through some of the most approved writers on Political Economy, and that you keep your mind *intent* on *this*. I am sure that it is a Science in its Infancy. Indeed, Science it is none—and you, I would fain anticipate, will be a benefactor to your species by making it so.

‘Had I been you I would have gone through France and Switzerland, and returned by Paris, and not gone to Paris first. Such a crowd of eager Englishmen will be there at the same time with you, all pressing forward with their letters of recommendation, and you will find it difficult, perhaps, to remain disentangled by their society—to which, as a more important reason, I may add the superior skill and fluency in French and French manners—the naturalisation of look and tongue—which will enable you to converse with the *litterati* of Paris on a better footing if you take Paris last. . . . You will (though I have little claim upon you, I confess) give me the delight of hearing from you. . . .’

A memorandum in Tom Poole’s handwriting, written on the back of his letter to Tom Wedgwood, of which he seems to have kept a copy, records—

‘I went to Paris. Thence through Champaign, Lorrain, and Alsace, to Bâle. Through Switzerland, back across France, by Lions, again to Paris. Through

Flanders to Holland. Home again about Christmas. Brought with me the Walcheren Fever.'

Two of his letters to Coleridge, written from Paris, have been preserved. The point which appears to me the most remarkable in them is the ease and immediateness with which he obtained access not alone to places, but also to people of remarkable interest. He writes as though it were the simplest thing in the world to find opportunities of seeing, and even conversing with, many of the distinguished men of the day. A curious story has been handed down of his accidentally meeting Sir James Mackintosh at the Louvre, and making acquaintance over the picture of an albatross. The story runs¹ that, whilst both were looking at this picture, Poole overheard a stranger repeat, with much emphasis, the words—

'He shot the albatross,'

whereupon he eagerly exclaimed, 'Sir, you are quoting the poem of my dearest friend.'

'He is a friend of mine too,' was the answer, and on exchanging cards, each must have found that the other's name was already well known to him, through their common friends the Wedgwoods.

Sir James is said to have told Poole that the

¹ Told me by Mrs. Joseph Anstice.

First Consul was holding a levée that same afternoon, and to have offered to present him. 'By all means,' said Tom Poole; and presented he accordingly was. But when the news crept out at home it caused so much scandal that it really seemed as though 'people would not have been at all more shocked if he had been presented to His Satanic Majesty.'¹ Those who think this anecdote preposterous and exaggerated should look at the account of Sir Humphrey Davy's visit to Paris a few years later, when Napoleon, in pure homage to his genius, having heard of his desire to prosecute certain inquiries in connection with the extinct volcanoes in Auvergne, had magnanimously sent him a free permission to visit France, that his scientific researches might not suffer hindrance, even in time of war; and notice the dogged determination, obstinate even to discourtesy, of his resolve that at least he will never be *presented* to the Emperor. It may also be noticed that Fox's attendance at 'Bonaparte's Levée' met with the most vehement disapproval from Coleridge,² as an unpatriotic action.

The two following letters were written by Poole to Coleridge during his stay in Paris:—

¹ Mrs. Joseph Anstice.

² See his second letter on this subject to the *Morning Post*, November 9, 1802.—*Essays on His Own Times*.

‘HOTEL DE COURLANDE, PLACE DE LA CONCORDE,
‘PARIS, July 20, 1802.

‘MY DEAR COL.—I hope you received a letter which I wrote you a few days before I left London. From London I went to Dover and was on the giddy height of Shakespeare’s Cliff, as it is called—saw the old castle and the famous cannon—took a good dinner, and, between dinner and coffee, in six minutes less than three hours, sat down, surrounded by French, at Calais.

‘Calais is a clean, quiet town ; and I was much pleased to see the women, in particular, belonging to the common people, cleaner than any I had seen in the same station in England. They are also, I think, very pretty. I walked round the ramparts, castle, etc., and recollected the feats of our forefathers on those walls. We passed through a pleasant country to Boulogne, where we heard the people laugh at Lord Nelson—not a single shell came within half a mile of the town—the ships were not chained, but moored in the common manner—one boat only was destroyed. At Montreuil we saw the ruins of eleven churches, which were destroyed, out of twelve, in the Revolution. An agreeable and *well-cultivated* country brought us to Paris ; and on my way I a thousand times thought of poor Mary Queen of Scots when going to her barbarous countrymen. At Clermont I met, to my astonishment, Mr. T. Wedgwood returning to England. He recommended me to this Hotel. . . . This part of Paris is delightful ; our hotel is the mass of building which answers to the *Garde-meuble* of the king. Wordsworth can describe it to you. But *the streets* of Paris, in general, are abominable.

‘And now for the wonders here ; and they are, without

doubt, great. The French have wisely collected *en masse* whatever France, or the countries they have conquered, possessed, of great or interesting, on any particular subject; and these form a series of objects more interesting than anything which the world before has had to offer. I feel how little the compass of a letter is capable of giving you anything like an idea of these things, and at any rate in this letter I will not attempt it. Yet of the Apollo Belvidere I must say a few words. The first view of this statue astonishes you—it awes you—you can hardly look at it. A further contemplation has really a sublime moral effect. The stone makes you eloquent and perspicuous; it elevates your mind, and you feel that you are in the company of a superior being. You leave it with regret, and you anticipate your return to it with a pure pleasure; it is not the feeling of returning to see a sight, but it is the feeling of being made wiser and better, of having your whole being dilated by its presence. I have said, and I repeat, that I can easily imagine that this statue could chain a man at Paris in the same way that the passion of love might.

‘There are other statues of a less sublime nature, whose effects are not less astonishing. They have in the collection at present—and more are coming—214 of the finest remains of antiquity. But I know you would rather I talked of living beings than of statues and pictures.

‘I dined with Monsieur Barthélemy the banker the other day, where I met with Barthélemy the Ex-Director. I had always a great respect for this man, and when I saw him, his appearance did not lessen it. I almost melted into tears. His aspect is, upon the whole, melancholy,

and though he was tolerably cheerful, and often smiled, yet the smiles seemed to come as strangers to his face. His features are small and regular, but impressive. He has a quick, dark eye and a fine forehead. He is a stout man, and I think nearly an inch taller than I am. I was placed next but one to him at dinner; nothing remarkable was said.

‘I have heard Fourcroy¹ lecture twice. Nothing can be more pleasant. I could hardly have conceived such elegance, variety, and rapidity of language, consistent with great perspicuity. I should have liked the man if I had not recollected the share he had in the murder of Lavoisier. No one by looking at Fourcroy would imagine him able to speak as he does.

‘I called one morning on Thomas Paine. He is an original, amusing fellow. Striking, strong physiognomy. Said a great many quaint things, and read us part of a reply which he intends to publish to Watson’s *Apology*. We have in this Hotel with us Kemble—our Kemble. He is a hearty, pleasant fellow. . . . He went with us last night to Miss Williams’s² house. We there met, first Miss W. herself, who is a very obliging woman, but a little affected. Lord Holland was there, who is Charles Fox diminished into a common, good-natured man. Carnot

¹ Anthony Francis de Fourcroy, chemist and natural philosopher. Born 1755, died 1809.

² Helen Maria Williams, born 1762. She was a political novelist and a warm supporter of the French Revolution, but, for her advocacy of the Girondistes, was imprisoned in the Temple at Paris until the fall of Robespierre. She returned to Paris in 1796, and died there December 1827. In her later writings she has changed her political opinions, and become a friend of the Bourbons. —*Allibone*.

the Ex-Director was there; he is a shrewd-looking fellow—long, quick eyes, and a large nose, *broad at the nostrils*. I had some conversation with him—not about war or politicks, but about the stereotype printing here. Carnot was one of the two who lately had courage to oppose in the Senate Buonaparte's being consul for life. At this party were also Mr. Livingston (the American Ambassador), Joel Barlow, Italian Princesses and German Princes; many of the *literati* of Paris, etc. etc.

'I was at the National Institute, where, contrary to what I had heard, everything was conducted with the utmost decorum. Lalande read an astronomical paper. Several papers were read, and a poet recited, in a theatrical, vehement manner, a translation of a Greek ode. You at any rate *saw* here all their celebrated men. The audience, too, was interesting. There were placed in a seat of particular distinction, Mesdames de Rochefoucauld and De Montmorency. Sicard's lecture, and his deaf and dumb pupils, which I heard and saw at his house, interested me much. A deaf and dumb boy takes a book, and reads it by signs to another, who writes it down correctly, etc.

'And now, my dear Col., for myself. I intend remaining at Paris, and applying closely to the language (for I find it a *sine quâ non*), at least six weeks longer. Then to the south, to Switzerland, etc. Whether I shall winter in Italy will depend on circumstances. Let me hear from you, my dear Col. Tell me your plans for the winter, and all which interests you. . . . How, above all things, is your health? . . . Fuffin will take this to London. He leaves Paris to-morrow, and I go into a pleasant French family. Direct for me À Monsieur Th.

Poole, chez Monsieur Bataillard, Rue de Verneuil,
No. 839, Paris. Heaven bless you.—Yours with sincere
affection,
THOS. POOLE.'

'PARIS, *ye 22d August 1802.*

'MY DEAR COL.—I had hopes you would have found time to have written to me, as I trust you received a letter which I wrote you more than a month ago. You must be satisfied that a letter from you would give me most sincere pleasure, for however gay the scene is around you, there are moments when nothing will give satisfaction but the certitude of being beloved. . . . I am going to-morrow to Switzerland. If you write and direct thus, I shall receive your letter:—À Monsieur, M. Poole, Gentilhomme Anglais. À Genève, Poste Restante. But before I get to Geneva I shall, unless prevented by the little disturbances there, make the compleat tour of Switzerland. I shall enter at Basle—go to the Lake of Constance and the little Cantons—and after a great many zigzags, get to Zurich, Lausanne, and Berne; then round about to the Vallais and Chamouny, and at last to Geneva. From Geneva (unless T. Wedgwood should meet me there to go to Italy) I shall go to the south of France, by the canal of Languedoc to Bordeaux, and so to Paris again. On my return, which I suppose will be in about two months, I will write to you. . . .

'Since I have been here a revolution has passed in France; very quietly, I assure you, for no one says anything—a very bad symptom of its popularity. Those who do speak, speak as you may suppose men would who had hopes of being free. We will talk of this

hereafter. You know the English newspapers are prohibited in France.

‘Fox is here. He has been treated with great attention. Before I left England I was introduced to General de Grave. He came with me to France. (He was *War Minister* with *Roland*.) He has behaved with uncommon kindness to me here. Fox treated him with great kindness in England, and has made him his *Factotum* on coming to Paris. I have seen his letters to him ; they are written with great ease and simplicity of style, some in French and some in English. He writes very good French.¹ His great object here is to examine the archives and libraries which contain any documents relative to the history he is writing. All these are opened to him with the greatest politeness, for I was with General de Grave when he applied to Talleyrand’s secretary on the occasion. By the bye, this same secretary is a very amiable man, and a great friend of mine. Fox seems much interested about his history. He desired that his lodgings may be very near the great national library, in which case, said he, I shall be able to go there afoot, and I shall spend many half-hours, and perhaps hours, in the library, which I should not if I am obliged to go in a carriage. His lodgings are accordingly near Hotel de Richelieu. I was there with De Grave. They are uncommonly pleasant, with windows which open from the floor into a pretty garden, ornamented with orange-trees. If I remained at Paris it is very

¹ He did not *speak* very good French. ‘*Premier Consul, ôtez vous donc cela de votre tête,*’ was his frequent remark to Napoleon, during this very visit, when the First Consul used to insist that the English Ministry had attempted his assassination.

likely I should see something of him. He has brought Mrs. Armstead here with him, and she is announced as *Mrs. Fox*.¹ It is curious that I should write to you about an Englishman from Paris; but there are few subjects so interesting as Fox to be found in France.

‘I was at Versailles. It is here you see Louis XIV. better than by any picture, or in any history. It is the residence of a great king, magnificent and imposing. You can form no conception of its majesty without seeing it. I was of course at Trianon, the favourite haunt of poor Marie Antoinette. The people of Versailles weep when they talk of past days. One poor man said to me in speaking of the king, “*Il étoit trop bon et trop doux.*”

‘*The king himself* actually used to go to the bedside of the poor of Versailles when they were sick. The man who comes to me every morning to do what I have to do, was one of the guards round the guillotine at the execution of the queen. He said she rose, herself, from the *cart* in which she was drawn to execution, and mounted the steps to the guillotine, as if she was ascending to the throne. She looked round on the Palaces which surround the place where she was executed, and submitted herself to death without the least change of countenance. He said she looked thin. Her hair was got gray. But she was beautiful and noble to the last.

‘This is the account of a common soldier. I have heard since I have been here such pictures—of the most atrocious crimes and the most sublime virtues, being performed in the same hour, by the same men.

¹ They had been privately married for seven years, but she was now first acknowledged as his wife.

The night of the proscription of Robespierre was one day painted to me by a lady in such terms as would have made your heart leap again. But what is a letter to speak of those things, where the whole beauty, except the gross fact, depends on detail? You may as well show an oak-tree in the dockyard, for an oak adorned with all its branches and foliage, as tell such a story in a letter.

‘I have seen most, and discoursed with many, of the distinguished men here. Among the rest I passed a most interesting morning with Bernardin de St. Pierre. He is an interesting old man of sixty-seven, but still vigorous, as you may judge from his having a young wife and two children. I will give you his conversation in detail hereafter, for it is worth hearing. I have been boarding here with a very respectable man and an author; his wife is a very pleasant woman. He gives me French lessons, and I hear nothing but French; I feel I am much improved in the language. I have been three times to Helen Marie Williams’s *conversations*. You meet here a very interesting society. Many of the *litterati*. A poet and a poetess recited some verses about to be published. I met here Lord Holland, the American and Swiss Ambassadors, Carnot, etc. etc. I keep a Journal in French.

‘Heaven bless you, my dear Col. Let me hear from you soon.—Yours most affectionately,

‘THOS. POOLE.’

No account has been preserved of Poole’s visit to Switzerland, except that there is a tradition that he either travelled with Sir James Mackintosh or else met him at some point on his journey, and

that Sir James Mackintosh took him to Coppet, and introduced him to Madame de Staël.¹ Of the 'journal in French,' mentioned above, only a scanty fragment remains, containing a few notes taken on his homeward way through Belgium and Holland, when he was evidently sickening with fever and extremely wretched and homesick. Scanty as the notes are, however, they possess a special interest from the time at which they were taken, but they are rather difficult to make out, being written² partly in pencil, in disjointed fragments, and in a curious mixture of French and English. The French is not elegant, and in no way above the mark of a school exercise.

'Left Paris *November 12.*—At two leagues' distance detained by the wheel. Dined at Senlis. . . . Passed Cambrai. Fortified place. The population 1000 less since the Revolution. There were 600 *Religieux* of both sexes. 71 Religious Houses. Population now not 12,000. The Church and Castle where lived Fénelon destroyed. Still speak of him with veneration. Well-built place. Great commerce of wheat. 2000 sacks sold of a Market-day; each sack three quintain. Miserable cabaret. Good coffee.

'Valenciennes. Walked round the ramparts. Breach made during the siege. Three-fourths of the town sur-

¹ Told me by Mrs. Joseph Anstice.

² On very rough paper in a notebook bought at Geneva, October 19, 1802. It was placed in my hands by the kindness of the late Mr. W. Poole King, of Bristol.

rounded by water; shut up 22d May, surrendered the beginning of August. Bombardment 42 days. 3000 citizens lost their lives during the siege, and 3000 afterwards by the sickness. The Austrians levied money on the city to be paid afterwards, *which the French took*. 3000 balls to be seen in the *place*, fired at the Cap of Liberty on the tower. An immense quantity of houses now in ruins. The disease by the dead not well buried, and the stagnant waters. They are going to plant trees on the ramparts. Population at present 18,000.

‘*November* 14, my birthday.—Passed by Onay. Rich Flanders black earth. People ploughing though Sunday. I see nothing extraordinary in the husbandry as yet. . . . Before you come to Quiévrain, the first town in Flanders, the land changes to a Cornish sand. Not a stone to be seen. *Wooden harrows*. Houses of brick. Fortifications of Valenciennes of brick. They sow here three crops of wheat—oats, fallow, wheat again. . . . As you approach the towns you see the earth get black. The truth is, they don’t carry their manure far. Bossus. Saw a plough enter the yard of a very pretty house. Lands very neatly put out of hand. Water furrows and odd corners done with the spade. Three-fourths of the land to wheat. All looking good and clean. Roads paved. Country like our marsh,¹ not quite so heavy. Women very interesting. Fair, and like English women. Ploughs the small wheel plough with two horses. Windmills begin to be well built, the houses clean, and the whole to smell a little of Holland.

‘Passed Carion, a large village. Thus in the seven leagues from Valenciennes to Mons you find a little

¹ The fertile marsh country of Somerset.

town almost at every league. Passed several coal-pits. It was no small pleasure to me to see, for the first time since I left England, a coal-fire at Cambray.

‘On arriving at Mons I found all in a bustle by a Fair which lasts for ten days. The merchandise was exposed for sale as if it had not been Sunday, and this in Flanders, *autrefois si religieux*! I have suffered from a sort of feverishness for the last two days. I intend to rest here to-morrow that I may try and get rid of it.

‘November 15.—I perspired freely during the night, and this morning I feel better, though my pulse is at 98, and I still have headache. I took some tea with bread and butter, *à la mode anglaise*, and went out to deliver a letter that I had from Monsieur Chevalier to Monsieur le Prefet here. He received me politely, and gave me directions for seeing the battlefield of Jemappes, at half a league’s distance from the town. We talked also of the Battle of Malplaquet, which began at the wood of Bruges in this department of Jemappes. He told me they were beginning to re-establish the cloth manufacture, but very quietly. On the subject of agriculture he could not give me much information. Last year’s harvest was superb, nevertheless corn was dear. “*Les fermiers étaient fort riches et savoient retenir les grains.*” They had greatly enriched themselves by the sale of the Church lands. *Three-fourths of this country belonged to the Church.* A farmer has often bought his land with the proceeds of one year’s harvest. The whole was sold at a very low price, and the farmers bought the greater part of it.¹

¹ It will be remembered that the Revolutionary Government at Paris insisted on the sale of Church lands, and the issue of Assignat in Flanders as in France.

‘The Prefet of a department lives like a little Prince. Sentinels at his door. People who wait in the Ante-room, etc. etc. Whilst speaking of the battles I had occasion to see the exact statement which is kept of the department, for he wanted to look up some papers on the subject. He told me also of the Austrian General (name wanting) to whom the First Consul had given his lands in this department ; and he added with much emphasis, that it was on account of the *personal esteem* in which the First Consul held him, and this cause was set forth as the motive of the gift. The First Consul had fought against him in Italy. The lands in question are very considerable.

‘After my visit to Monsieur le Prefet I ascended the tower of the old castle, which is very lofty, and whence one can see Valenciennes on the one side, and almost as far as Brussels on the other. The bloody battle of Jemappes, which lasted for four days, was fought at less than a league’s distance from this town. I passed the place in coming from Valenciennes, and intended to revisit it to-day ; but I have been so ill I could not venture to make the attempt. From this tower one can see the field of Jemappes better perhaps than on the spot itself. You see the height upon which the Austrians were encamped, and the places where the French made their reiterated attacks. There was a coal mine on the field of battle—they filled the shafts of this mine with the dead. . . .

‘Mons is situated on the Trouille, rather a pretty town. Before the Revolution it numbered forty churches and chapels ; now there are twenty. . . .

‘Both the country and the customs here are in all respects very like England, and perhaps even more like

the England of thirty years ago. The *Marchandes* at the fair, with their wares, reminded me of Nancy Cussens. The various shows—the noise—even the drunken men—all these things gave me pleasure. It was almost the first time I had seen a drunken man since leaving England. I really could have liked to go and get drunk with them. In the houses all is like England in the olden time. You eat off tin plates. . . .

‘The Flemings are like the men of our marsh. The women have, almost all of them, very rosy cheeks, which astonishes me, as I should have expected pale faces in a town surrounded with almost stagnant waters. They are very obliging; but rather rough. Every one combines to take advantage of a foreigner, but especially of an Englishman. At the inn they made me pay double what a native would have paid. It is the same everywhere, except, *perhaps*, at Berne and at Geneva.

‘*November 16, Brussels.*—I started for Brussels at five with a bad headache, but not nearly so bad as yesterday. We dined at Hal, very cheaply, and reached this town at half-past two. I went out at once with a guide to see the town.’

And then he gives a description of all the principal sights of Brussels,¹ and adds that he had thought of going to the theatre, but whilst he was in the streets a horrible shivering fit attacked him,² accompanied by internal spasms. He tried

¹ Omitted, because of no special interest.

² ‘Pendant que j’étois dehors, mon ami le *shiver* me saisit. Je marchais plus fort que jamais, mais tout en vain . . . si je n’avais pas entré dans une boutique, j’aurois peut-être tombé dans la rue.’

hard to walk on in spite of it, but in vain. He was forced to seek shelter in a shop, for he could scarcely stand, and on returning to the inn found his pulse was at 116.

‘I am convinced that this country has given me the ague,’ he writes, as he sits in his room drinking tea, and consoling himself with the thought that he has after all seen, though ‘with great exertion,’ everything that was best worth seeing in Brussels. To-morrow he will go to Antwerp, and the next day, he hopes, to Rotterdam, when he really must shake off this horrid malady.

‘I am writing,’ he says, ‘with much difficulty; but what one sees so rapidly one must either write down or forget.’

And he even tries to write down his observations on the state of agriculture between Mons and Brussels, but writing and spelling are alike indistinct, and at nine o’clock he winds up with his usual declaration that he is better, and goes to bed.

‘*November 17.*—Much fever during the night; but after having had some tea, I felt better than I have felt for three days. . . . We arrived at Antwerp at half-past twelve, having passed many beautiful villages, and the pretty little town of Mechlin, where the Duke of York encamped when retreating before Pichegru. The tower

of the great church is a majestic specimen of Gothic architecture; the finest thing that I have seen. This church, astonishing to say, was not at all despoiled by the French. All the little chapels are full of pictures, and divided from the church by beautiful iron balustrades. . . .

‘The town of Antwerp interests me in every way. At every step I think of its history. . . . And when I saw the Scheldt, here larger than the Thames at London, I wondered at the impudence of daring to close such a river as this one. There are many little quays which jut into the river. Commerce is beginning anew after having been enchained for a century, and I observed a respectable number of vessels. . . .

‘The most interesting thing to see is the School of Painting. Here Rubens taught his scholars, and everything is almost as he left it. One sees his chair of gilded leather with his name in the old gilding, the table at which his pupils sat, etc. etc. There are many fine pictures in the School. The Family of Rubens, as well as the Holy Family by Rubens, a fine picture of his first wife and his first child, as the Holy Virgin and Jesus—these two pictures were carried to Paris, where they were shown at the Louvre; but they were a little while ago sent back to Antwerp as to their native place, . . . and the government has just presented the School with a beautiful collection of models from the finest *Statues* in Paris. But they have not had the justice to send back Antwerp’s most famous picture—I mean *The Descent from the Cross*, which I have often seen with admiration at Paris. In the cathedral they showed me where this masterpiece used to hang. It was not over the great

altar; it adorned a chapel beside the organ, opposite the central door of the church, which has been sadly despoiled. They are now restoring it. Even the pavement, which was covered with inscriptions, was dug up and sold. They have bought it back.

‘The Maison de Ville is very beautiful. . . . I saw there a gentleman to whom Monsieur Verbec had given me a letter. He told me the French laws relating to commerce were changing every month. He was obliged to send the *tarif* once a month to the Custom-house to be corrected. What an excellent method of promoting commerce! Who changes those laws? I know not; for the legislative bodies do not assemble very often.

‘The Bourse at Antwerp is pretty. Arriving there at twelve o’clock, I found at least one hundred merchants. In this town commerce is the only topic of conversation. Monsieur ——— proposed to me a purchase of tanned hides. I thought of it, but abandoned the idea for, as I think, good reasons. I might, perhaps, have made some money by this speculation. . . .’

‘*November 18.*—Set out for Breda at eight. The country at first is as on the other side of Antwerp; but soon the sand becomes lighter and lighter, and increasingly barren. At last it is only covered with heath. The road is no longer paved, you are plunged into the sand. Doing less than a league in an hour, you advance through the most melancholy country in the world. To add to your annoyance, you are met half way by a *waggon* without springs, which only holds four persons inside, whilst the other two are obliged to go in the *cabriolet*. We arrived at Breda, very tired, at half-past six. I believe the road on this frontier is left in such a bad state

on purpose. This desert is a veritable frontier formed by nature. . . .’

. At the strongly fortified and ‘extremely clean’ town of Breda, the journal suddenly breaks off. It is more than possible that Mr. Poole had become too ill to continue to write. We only know from his own memoranda that he reached home some time in December. It seems probable that he carried out his intention of sailing from Rotterdam, and he must then have been laid up for some little while in London. An affectionate but slightly cross-grained letter from Coleridge greeted his return to Stowey.

‘TRECASTLE, *Friday night, December 17, 1802.*

‘MY DEAR POOLE—Both T. Wedgwood and myself are sorry that we cannot congratulate you on your return to England with unmingled pleasure. But this d——d Dutch ague—I pray God you may have Stowey-ized it to the Devil, or back again to the Low Countries, which I should suppose a worse punishment for an ague—unless indeed, like Milton’s devils, it should move alternately from the fiery to the icy end of hell.

‘And now let me defend myself against the charge of neglecting you. When your letter arrived at Keswick I was absent—out among the mountains on a fortnight’s tour. Your letter came the very day I left home. Mrs. C. will bear witness for me, how vexed and wounded I was, that a letter from you should have been a fortnight unanswered, and how immediately and exclusively I set about answering it. I wrote you a *long* and (for my head and heart were both full) not an ineloquent or

valueless letter. If it were at all in my character to set any price on my own compositions, I should be vexed that I had not taken a copy. I wished to do it, but did not—for eagerness to forward it to you. This letter *must* have arrived at your lodgings in Paris the day you left it. Did you not pass through Paris on your return? You yourself, my dear friend, are not wholly blameless in having stayed so long at Paris without writing to me. On receiving your second letter, I wrote to you at the Poste Restante, Geneva, not indeed immediately, but time enough in all conscience for it to have reached the place before your arrival. This was a mere letter of affection, with a little effusion of old English *Gall contra Gallos*. It grieves me that you have not received these letters—because it does a friendship no good for a man to have felt resentfully, and *woundedly*, towards his friend, for three or four months, even though he find afterwards that he has wronged his friend.

‘Now of all earthly things I detest explanations. After the Day of Judgment there will be an end to them—*veniat regnum tuum*. . . .’

Then he goes on to explain that he is staying with the Wedgwoods in Wales, at Crescelly, the seat of the Mrs. Wedgwoods’ father,¹ and that he is very happy there, and that they have ‘plenty of music, and *plenty of cream*.’

‘For at Crescelly (I mention it as a remarkable circumstance, it being the only place I was ever at in which it was not otherwise), *though* they have a Dairy, and

¹ Mr. Allen.

though they have plenty of milk, they are not at all stingy of it. In all other houses, where cows are kept, you may drink six shillings' worth of wine a day and welcome, but use three penny-worth of cream, and O Lord! the feelings of the household! their looks would curdle the cream dish! I have never been able to understand or analyse this strange folly; it is a perfect mystery why three penny-worth of cream should be more costly than a shilling's worth of butter.¹ . . .'

Then come sad particulars concerning T. Wedgwood's health. His own is better, and the wheels of his home life are running rather more smoothly.

'From Keswick I shall write again, but T. Wedgwood joins with me in begging and entreating that you will immediately write to him or me at Keswick, informing us how you are, for *in very truth we are both anxious.*'

'After I had last written to you,' he continues in a letter from Keswick dated December 29, announcing the birth of his daughter 'Sarah,' 'my heart misgave me that I had written triflingly, and in a tone unworthy of you and of myself, in a first letter on your return to your native country after your first absence . . . and in ill-health to boot. But I was not writing for myself only, and this writing half for myself, and half as a kind of amanuensis untuned my feelings. I found your letter here: both T. W. and myself mourn that your ill-health clings about you. I doubt not I shall see you soon. . . .'

¹ *Note by T. Poole.*—C. used to be very fond of the *clouted cream*, eating more than my dairymaid thought sufficient. The reproof within is meant for her, *or me.*

CHAPTER V

‘One sometimes gets a friend in the middle of life who becomes an old friend in a short time.’

Lamb to Coleridge, October 1809.

WHEN Tom Poole accompanied Coleridge up to London in January 1802, the main purpose of the journey was to hear Davy lecture at the Royal Institution. Coleridge’s admiration of Davy’s genius was unbounded, and he had even cherished thoughts of initiating himself in Chemical Science, partly for its own sake, but most of all that he might learn to understand and sympathise with Davy’s doings.¹

‘Sympathise blindly with it all I do even *now*, God knows! from the very middle of my heart’s heart,’ he wrote, ‘but I would fain sympathise with you in the light of knowledge. . . . Give me your advice how to *begin*.’

Yet after all, he wrote, only three months later, May 20—

¹ Letters of Coleridge to Davy, February and May 1801, published in *Fragmentary Remains of Sir H. Davy*. See also letter of October 31 (conclusion).

'I am sometimes apprehensive that my passion for science is scarcely true and genuine—it is but *Davyism*! that is, I fear I am more delighted at *your* having discovered facts, than at the facts having been discovered.'

'I go to Davy's Lectures,' he is reported to have said, 'to increase my stock of images.' This winter visit to London in 1802 would seem to have been the occasion upon which he heard him for the first time, Poole being his companion, and it was then that he introduced Poole to John Rickman, whom Poole liked from the first moment, and 'if I may judge from his conduct since,' wrote Poole,¹ some time afterwards, 'he liked me.' This John Rickman was Secretary to the Speaker, and well known as the person who conducted the first regular census ever taken of the inhabitants of Great Britain. Already, in 1799, Southey had written of him to Davy as a 'particular friend,' whom he should like to introduce to him as 'a man of the most varied knowledge that he had ever known.' He certainly combined, in a very unusual degree, great practical ability, with strong literary tastes and brilliant social qualities; and he was, besides, penetrated with that same enthusiasm after *usefulness*, which was, as has been said before, the very bond and password of the

¹ Letter of Sept. 14, 1803, quoted in Cottle's *Reminiscences*, p. 477.

set amongst whom Tom Poole formed his friendships. There was, however, more of the man of the world about him than about any of the others. No rose-coloured veils of sentiment ever obscured his vision, no tenderness of friendly feeling ever turned the edge of his judgment. He was, as Coleridge used to call him,¹ 'a sterling man,' and for sterling worth, of any kind, he had always a hearty and delighted recognition; but for weakness he had little mercy, and his most noticeable characteristic seems to have been a sarcastic and unrelenting common sense, which spared nobody, and sometimes made his very benefits intolerable to thin-skinned and unlucky souls. He had a quick temper, and could occasionally be overbearing, but he was, upon the whole, a man to be much admired and respected, and, to those who could endure a rather bracing atmosphere, his society was as agreeable as it was invigorating. The following charming description of him, in the merely social point of view, is from the pen of Charles Lamb, into whose rooms in Mitre Court Buildings he was introduced,² one November evening in 1800, by a rather indiscreet friend who was too much in the habit of bringing

'all sorts of people together, setting up a sort of

¹ See selections from the *Letters of Robert Southey*, vol. i. p. 270.

² Charles Lamb's letter to Mr. Manning, November 3, 1800.

agrarian law, or common property, in matter of society ; but, for once,' wrote Lamb, 'he has done me a great pleasure, when 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 . . . thoroughly penetrates into the ridiculous wherever found, understands the *first time* (a great desideratum in common minds), you need never speak twice 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*. All this farrago, which must perplex you to read, and has put me to a little trouble to select ! only proves how impossible it is to describe a *pleasant hand*. You must see Rickman to know him, for he is a *species* in one. A new class. . . . 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.'

Though it was to Coleridge that Mr. Tom Poole owed his original introduction to Rickman, Southey also had his share in bringing them together, for writing to Rickman from Bristol, on June 2, 1802, he says¹:—

'I met Poole here, on his way to France, and desired that he would make Davy take him to you. He is a man whom you will like to converse with; for his pursuits have been chiefly agriculture and political economy. He is self-taught, and his mind powerful, active, and discriminating. . . .'

As a result, probably, of this letter, the two men saw one another pretty frequently, during the months of May and June, and found at least one subject upon which they had many thoughts in common in

'the Poor Laws; the sin of their first principle, their restraints, their contradictions, their abuses, their encouragement to idleness, their immense burdens to those who pay, and their degradation to those who receive. . . .'

The following letter,² written not very long after Poole's return from France, will show how

¹ *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, vol. i. p. 197.

² 'New Palace Yard, March 23, 1803.'

fully Rickman appreciated the value of his new acquaintance :—

‘I saw your friend, Mr. Coleridge, on Monday,’ he begins, ‘and learnt from him that you were returned to England after having attained the objects of your peregrination very fully. . . .

‘I understand from Mr. Coleridge 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 the London Miserables to Primrose Hill, to grow vegetables for us—outdoor work seeming desirable, and the workhouses *in* town, miserable gaols to the inhabitants, and unwholesome for the whole neighbourhood. However, in winter my ragged colony (that is, redeemed from rags—am I in Ireland again?) may pursue manufactures. . . . 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 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, Genius, beyond the town; but 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 had, 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 Somersetshire, as well as in other counties remote from the metropolis.

'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 and affectation, at least, chuse also to be a Cosmopolite, and therefore (among other better reasons) your friend and servant,

JOHN RICKMAN.'

Many minds were in those days directed to the state of the Poor Laws; for the condition of the labouring poor was a grief and a scandal to every right-thinking person who was acquainted with the facts. The enormous drop in the value of money had produced serious dislocation in the relations between the labourer's earnings and the cost of the necessaries of life; the difficulty was aggravated by the rise in the price of provisions, consequent upon war and bad harvests, and deepened rather than remedied, by the miserable

expedient of adding an allowance from the poor rates to eke out earnings on which it was manifestly impossible that a family could live. The smaller ratepayers were crushed under the ever-increasing burden of the rates ; the honest labourer was humiliated and degraded ; habits of dependence, pauperism, and improvidence were as carefully fostered and encouraged as if these very things were not the fatal seeds of which the natural produce is the ruin of a nation. Meanwhile many people were vaguely conscious that something certainly ought to be done ; but the public mind was far from being sufficiently informed, either as to the magnitude of the evil, or the nature of the remedies from which any lasting good might be anticipated. Rickman's next letter to Tom Poole enclosed

'a Bill which had passed the House of Commons, and aimed at such general information as (Rickman believed) Poole would be very glad to receive.'

The Bill authorised the sending to all the Parish Overseers in the country of a paper of questions on the condition of the poor. Rickman wrote that

'Mr. Rose (late Secretary of the Treasury) has got the Bill passed : he is very sanguine on the effects of Friendly Societies, and so are you ; and perhaps I

should be, had I time to consider the thing in all its bearings. Be that as it may, the Bill was sent to me by Mr. Rose, and he wished me to make any observations which might occur to me on it. In consequence, I scribbled on it, as you will see, and afterwards, at his desire, full-filled my scribblings into clauses, questions, etc., so that you will have a good idea of the Bill by taking it to stand according to my notion of procuring most certainly, a Good Sensible Return. You know I have some experience in the *gross amount* of the dulness of all probable Overseers, and can better provide accordingly. . . .

‘I think you must be almost tired of this detail, which is only intended as a preface to ask you whether you may think it advisable to come to town, and superintend the execution of this Act? (for I take it for granted that it will pass the Lords). The reasons for your doing so appear to me strong—you will possess yourself thereby, of a kind of Right to Speak, with some weight, of the Poor Laws, etc. You will ensure a *good Abstract* of the information gained, which will be a *public benefit*, and which, therefore, you ought to do. And, besides, you will become acquainted with many persons who may make observations on the schedules, and with whom you will have a right to correspond for further information, if you chuse. And you will be faithfully labouring in your Vocation of amending the Poor Law of England. *You only* know what you may have to set against these proper motives, and you will let me know about it. I have taken care that a good large Room is provided, and prompt payment for the Scribes you will have to employ, if you undertake it. . . . My reckoning

is that about six or eight persons might work at it about three months, to do it well. More cannot be well managed, as I know from disagreeable experience. However, as the thing goes on and the men grow tractable, possibility of increase might occur.

‘As to your own payment, I doubt not you put it out of the question, beyond the expense of maintenance here in your accustomed manner, about a guinea a day : but if you chuse more than that, you may have a *douceur* (at discretion, to a certain degree) besides. . . . Let me hear from you about all this ; which humours my general wish that you be not always absent from London.’

Hardly anything could have given Tom Poole greater pleasure than the receipt of this letter. He wrote by return of post to accept the delightful task proposed to him,¹ if Rickman really thought him the fittest person to execute it. But

‘you may very safely leave with me the discretion of chusing whom I think fittest for the work,’ was Rickman’s answer, ‘or rather, it is true that I have already exercised the best discretion I could, in proposing it to you. As to the thing being well enough done, that is a very secondary consideration, and safe enough. What I aim at is deeper ; that you may think more, and speak with more chance of attention, after having laboured in the cause. I have only promised, in general, that I would

¹ ‘More than 20,000 Returns will come in, and think of the addition of £ s. d. ! If you saw the volumes you have not received, (the Census Returns) you would see the magnitude of a similar work—a large Folio.’—Letter from Rickman, July 23, 1803.

take care that the business shall be in good hands. You are to understand that I had not the Bill under my tuition above twenty-four hours, and of course entered not at all into the Rationale of the thing desired ; merely into the practical machinery of the Bill, which, I think, will work well enough. . . . In general, I observed to Mr. Rose, that I thought too many things were asked ; but there was no time to cut off without injury.' ¹

Poole, in the promptitude of his enthusiasm, had lost not a day in answering Rickman's letter, but parish officers were hardly likely to be so rapid in their proceedings, and though October had been named as the month in which his services were likely to be wanted, it was not till October 31 that Rickman was even able to say that Mr. Rose had just shown him the 'first and only schedule' that had come to hand !

'He found it very unintelligible,' writes Rickman, 'and wrote for an explanation without receiving much information in return. He seemed to wonder at the difficulty, but I am afraid from the numerous questions, and the nature of Parish Officers, that few schedules will be returned which answer the questions in a plain direct manner.'

Mr. Tom Poole had already discovered that the justices in his own neighbourhood were actually *intending* to return imperfect schedules.

¹ Rickman to T. P., July 23.

'I do not very well understand,' answers Rickman, 'their distinction betwixt the Act and the Schedule which is part of it. Sure enough they must make the Overseers swear a false oath if they prevent them from filling in *all* the columns. . . . However, the same error was not uncommon in the Poor Returns¹ of 1787; some whole counties making no return of County Rates—but that was not then the case in Somersetshire.² . . .'

'It would be very pleasant,' he continues,³ '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 in the days of Alfred. The institution of the Post-office bestows no facility; because Government have never thought it worth while to establish some known agents throughout the country, for the purposes 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 for the last century.'

It was not, in the end, till the dark days of December that Poole's presence was really required

¹ The names of places were to be copied from the Poor Returns of 1787, and the same order to be preserved, to facilitate comparison.

² October 17, 1803.

³ November 9, 1803.

at Westminster, and, meanwhile, the mind of the nation had been occupied, during the greater part of the year, with a subject of far more immediate and absorbing interest than schedules of questions, of which only the enlightened few were likely to see the use, concerning the condition of the poor. The Treaty of Amiens had come to an end, thousands of harmless English travellers had been suddenly arrested and were repenting in French prisons of their rashness in leaving their native land, and both the Government and people of England were almost hourly expecting a French invasion, whilst the general conviction of Napoleon's almost super-human genius and good luck suggested a poignant foreboding that the odds *might* be against us; which, however, instead of daunting the national spirit, raised it to an extraordinary pitch of fierceness.

Coleridge had paid a visit to Stowey in February.¹ In March he was at Gunville, just decided, after many hesitations, to go abroad with Thomas Wedgwood,² 'when lo! pounce comes down the King's message, and *a war!*' In April he returned to Keswick, whence he soon writes one of those sad letters, full of death and despondency, which so often came to Tom Poole from Greta Hall.³

¹ S. T. C. to T. P., February 2, 1803.

² S. T. C. to T. P., March 13, 1803.

³ S. T. C. to T. P., May 20, 1803.

‘I wish exceedingly that you could come to me this summer or autumn,’ he writes, ‘and, God knows my heart, I *wish* very few things.’

‘Do not, I beseech you, accustom yourself to think that you are to be a valetudinarian,’ wrote Tom Poole, in reply.¹ ‘With your youth, and soundness of the nervous system and the lungs, why should you not live, and live long? If you should be *taken off*, as you term it, depend upon it I will be as great a friend to you dead as alive. I will do as you shall direct, and, where you are silent, I will, to the best of my judgment, do what is right.

‘If you die, you will have left me, as Lord Whitworth has left Mr. Talbot, to settle the pecuniary affairs of the Embassy; and, when I return to you, I hope we shall give a good account together to our great Principal of the use we have made of the powers entrusted to us, and of our particular care to maintain his government and dignity in the country where we have been placed. It may please him *then*, to impart a larger portion of his confidence, to delegate us to more important trusts.

‘Coleridge, my dear Coleridge, what a desert would my heart become, if I thought all the relations created by the scheme of existence here, were to be dissolved with it. I have heard you certainly raise important objections to this train of feeling, but how is this state a preparation for the next, or a necessary forerunner of the next, if the link of association be entirely broken between the two states? . . .

‘I need not tell you if you think the S. of England better for you than the North, come here. Or if you

¹ Stowey, May 25, 1803.

think it will do better for you to pass the winter, come and pass it here. . . . But I fully intend seeing you at Keswick before the winter comes. I have made a nice, very nice *book-room*, in which *you may regulate the climate as you like*; in which there is even a bed, though you can't see it. I promise to get you any books you want, and any which you have that are most out of the way, or out of my way, you can read before you come. . . .

* [Have you heard from our poor friend T. W.? I have received a letter from Mons. Monod at Geneva in which he tells me T. W. has been there, but is now turning his face towards England. . . . God grant we may see him in better health. I have amazing conceptions of his power, and heart, for utility and goodness, if he had health. . . .

'I have done nothing concerning the Poor Laws, but I hope to set about it immediately. I was indebted to you for a very kind letter, and for a very flattering one (for it is you who deck me) from Rickman concerning the Poor Laws. I stated to him the general principles of the plan I propose, but it is impossible to feel their force without much consideration, or seeing them developed in the way I should endeavour to do. . . .

'I am afraid this War, too, will be some interruption to me. If it is carried on in good earnest I suppose there will be a general arming, and I fear I shall hardly be able to keep myself out of it. I don't consider it as a war for this spot of ground or that—but that despicable Wasp, Buonaparte, has endeavoured to encroach on the territory of every Englishman's heart, and this Fortress, built by every man for himself, every man must endeavour to preserve. . . . They talk of a Volunteer Corps here,

and I suppose I should be called on to be active on the occasion. What must I do? I should not enter into a thing of that kind by halves. It must have, as the cause has, all my heart. . . .

‘What think you of the conversation between Lord Whitworth and Buonaparte? There is a great deal of nature and feeling in it; but it is the nature and feeling of turbulent and disappointed ambition, with a good deal of feverish vanity jumbled together.’

A long interval seems to have elapsed before Coleridge wrote again.¹

‘Be sure you leave strict orders if you die,’ said Tom Poole in his answer,² ‘to Mrs. Coleridge, or some one, to write to me immediately, that I may be certain while I do not hear from you that you have not been dead long. All this is *badinage*. I was agitated by reading your letter, and almost felt, by your description, the tortures which you have felt. But I cannot for my life persuade myself that you are soon to die. I never fancy that your diseases come near the silver cord. Besides I cannot help believing that nature will, after such pompous promises, give you some bright years for the good of this world. . . . May the gout restore you to health and power.’

‘You ask me what I am doing. The answer is short—*Nothing*. I have been much occupied with workpeople and making alterations in and about the house. This, in your sense of the word, is *Nothing*. I have been much

¹ October 3, 1803. As usual, a melancholy record of ill-health.

² Stowey, October 9, 1803.

occupied with the Volunteer business. Mr. Acland was at the head of it. It was a very extensive plan, which cost me much time and trouble; *he* thought, on the whole, that the men of property did not come forward as they ought, so that ended in nothing. . . . Davy and Purkis have successively been with me; these have occupied my time, and if I have done *nothing*, I hope in such society I have learnt *something*. And this is the best account I have to give. As to what I am going to do, I will tell you.'

Then follows, at considerable length, a full account of Mr. Rickman's application to him to undertake the making of an abstract, to be laid before Parliament, of the returns sent in answer to the inquiries under Mr. Rose's Act.

'I need not,' he continues, 'remark to you who know me, how sensibly I feel Rickman's partiality and friendship on this occasion. I wish I may do credit to his choice. I certainly will devote my best abilities to the subject. As to pecuniary considerations, R. told me that I may have my expenses paid, and a considerable *douceur* into the bargain. I stipulated only for my expenses, and told him the *douceur* would be the recollection of having contributed my mite to the service of the poor.¹ I am to be in London some time before Christmas. . . . Rickman

¹ Rickman to T. Poole, July 23, 1803. 'I understand that £300 or £400 has been paid for a similar work . . . but I did not suppose you would think of any reward beyond your expenses, other than the reward you mention. . . . I want to persuade myself to think more of the poor than I do; and I have an inveterate love for the Poor Laws, imperfect as they are.'

thinks that I may have eight clerks under me, and imagines the task will take three months. I can by no means think so much time will be necessary, yet he who has performed a work of the same nature as to labour (the Population business) must be the best judge. . . .

‘One circumstance has already occurred which will make my residence agreeable in London. . . . I learn that T. Wedgwood is in London and means . . . to remain there during the winter. . . . He seems highly pleased to hear that I am coming to town, and desires me to dine with him every day when I am not better engaged. You perceive by this style of writing that he is much better than he has been for some time past, which I am sure will give you great pleasure, as it does me. Shall we ever see him well? God grant we could.

‘You, my dear Col., add another agreeable . . . circumstance by coming to London also. We shall thus be all together, and all in the centre of action, during this interesting and bustling winter—a winter when a daring attempt will be made for the Empire of the world. We shall be able to lend our heads and our arms, I hope, to counteract this atrocious assault on the dignity of man. After all, there are those who can hardly believe that Buonaparte will even *attempt* an invasion. Purkis is among the number. Certainly, without a series of miracles he cannot succeed, and if the Supreme Being chooses again to have recourse to miracles, we must submit. Your conclusion is just. It will be right if we are conquered, *for we shall have deserved it*; but Heaven, I humbly hope, will be *neuter*, if not for us—in either case we have nothing to fear.

‘You ask me what part I have taken in this business.

Nothing, as aforesaid, but stirring myself about the Volunteers, of whom, when the business was given up, we had 400; and writing a sermon for Henry Poole, which he has preached, with great *éclat*, in all the neighbouring churches. What have you done? Could you not give us more of the men and the times? What has Wordsworth done in this or *any other way*? I am truly grieved to hear you speak of his hypochondriacal feelings.¹ . . . I forgot to say that Rickman tells me Mr. Rose has a high opinion of benefit societies, so that probably we shall particularly agree in endeavouring to extend their spirit, and to hive as many as possible from the cold blasts of life with their protecting wings. I cannot conclude without saying another word of Rickman. I think there is a great deal of disinterestedness and patriotism, as well as flattering partiality to me, in his conduct on this business. The first, in not making money of it; his wishing me to do it, I can resolve into nothing but the second.

‘What a *linking*, my dear Col., there is in things. It was between you and Southey, I think, that I became known to Rickman.’

¹ ‘Wordsworth, himself a brooder over his painful hypochondriacal sensations, was not my fittest companion [on the Scotch tour].’—S. T. C. to T. Poole, October 3, 1803.

CHAPTER VI

'God bless Poole! He looks so worshipful in his office, among his clerks, that it would give you a few minutes' good spirits to look in upon him.'

Coleridge to T. Wedgwood, January 1804.

AS might have been expected, Mr. Rickman was right in his reckoning that the Abstract would take at least three months to complete. Poole came up to town in December, and took lodgings at 16 Abingdon St., Westminster, where Coleridge shortly afterwards joined him. There is a letter from him, dated January 15, 1804, begging to know whether his friend can take him in—he had such a dread of sleeping at any inn or coffee-house. And he had been ill, very ill indeed, but tenderly nursed by Mrs. Wordsworth and Dorothy, at Wordsworth's house at Grasmere, and was anxious to talk with Tom Poole of the practicability of going immediately to Madeira, or if not, to Devonshire. And yet he was 'less dejected than in any former illness,' for his mind was actively employed in

forming plans—alas ! it was ever in forming plans that he was apt to silence the uneasy consciousness of long lapses of time, which had as yet borne little visible fruit—and he cherished sober though confident expectations of being able to render a good account of what may have appeared, both to Poole and to others, ‘a distracting manifoldness’ in his objects and attainments.

‘You,’ he concludes, ‘are nobly employed—most worthily of you. *You* are made to endear yourself to mankind as an immediate benefactor : I must throw my bread on the waters. You sow Corn, and I plant the Olive. Different evils beset us. You shall give me advice, and I will advise you—to look steadily at everything, and to see it as it is—to be willing to see a thing to be Evil, even though you see, at the same time, that it is, for the present, an irremediable Evil ; and not to overrate, either in the convictions of your intellect, or the feelings of your heart, the Good, because it is present to you, and in your power—and, above all, not to be too hasty an admirer of the Rich, who seem disposed to do good with their wealth and influence, but to make your esteem strictly and severely proportionate to the worth of the Agent, not to the *value* of the Action, and to refer the latter wholly to the Eternal Wisdom and Goodness, to God, upon whom it wholly depends, and in whom alone it has a moral worth.

‘I love and honor you, Poole, for many things ; scarcely for anything more than that, trusting firmly in the rectitude and simplicity of your own heart, and

listening with faith to its revealing voice, you never suffered either my subtlety, or my eloquence, to proselyte you to the pernicious doctrine of Necessity.¹ All praise to the Great Being who has graciously enabled me to find my way out of that labyrinth-den of sophistry, and I would fain believe, to bring with me a better clue than has hitherto been known to enable others to do the same. I have convinced Southey and Wordsworth, and W., as you know, was, even to extravagance, a Necessitarian. Southey never believed, and abhorred the Doctrine, yet thought the arguments for it unanswerable. I have convinced both of them of the sophistry of the arguments, and wherein the sophism consists, viz. that all have hitherto—both the Necessitarians and their Antagonists—confounded two essentially different things under one name, and in consequence of *this* mistake, the victory has been always hollow, in favour of the Necessitarians. God bless you, and

S. T. COLERIDGE.'

All Thomas Poole's chief friends were greatly interested in his work in London, though, perhaps, only a few shared in the vigorous energy of hope which underlay all his activity.

'Joss says you must study Malthus on Population, second edition,' wrote Thomas Wedgwood.² 'It is a work of very great credit. I am always afraid you are too sanguine about bettering the condition of the Poor; the

¹ See *The Friend*, Section I. Essay xvi. Concluding paragraph, and note.

² T. Wedgwood to T. Poole, November 7, 1803. T. W. wrote from Cote House, where his mother and sisters had taken refuge, 'not to be too near the coast in case the French should land.'

causes of their declining condition are so intimately connected with those of the general corruption of all other classes.'

Happily, however, for himself and others, Tom Poole was sanguine, at times even enthusiastically sanguine, as to the good effect of the various reforms and improvements into which he threw his heart. He had much faith in God, much in human nature, and much in that great work of the education of the poor, to the organisation of which his cousin, John Poole, was already beginning to give himself, with that patient enthusiasm in long-continued daily effort, humble, laborious, inconspicuous, persevered in for fifty years, which is far less brilliant than the other kind of enthusiasm that speaks, and urges, and does magnificent things by fits and starts, but without which no great hopes can ever be fulfilled, no great causes ever achieve lasting success.

'The Marshmillians have left Marshmill,' wrote Tom Poole to Coleridge in October 1803. They had removed to the newly-built parsonage at Enmore, where there had been, for a long time, no resident clergyman, and where John Poole seems to have soon afterwards opened, what is now one of the commonest commonplaces of everyday life—an elementary school for the education of the children of the village. It was then so far from

being a commonplace that Mr. John Poole had everything to do himself, and he seems to have begun with a Sunday school only, where children were not only taught to read, but even to write and to reckon,—such as had already existed for some years in Over and Nether Stowey.¹ It was not till 1810 that he began his day school, and in his *Village School Improved, or the New System² of Education practically explained and adapted to Country Parishes*, he has actually to use arguments to prove that ‘the plan of instruction must not be on too contracted a scale,’ that is to say, instruction *must* be given in *writing and arithmetic*, as well as in reading; and to admit that there may be persons who will be disposed to question the propriety, as well as the necessity, of introducing such subjects as ‘English Grammar and the Higher Rules of Arithmetic,’ both of which were regularly taught at Enmore, into a village school. Qualified teachers, of course, there were none to be had, so he had to train his own by teaching them himself, finding his material mainly amongst the children of the farmers, and making, with modi-

¹ The Rev. John Poole defends this practice in his *Village School Improved*: ‘It is not possible, and, if possible, would not be wise, to confine a child’s attention through the whole day to the subject of religion. To preserve his mind alert and active, and in a disposition to profit by instruction, there must be variety in his occupations.’

² Bell and Lancaster’s.

fications, great use of the monitorial system, as suggested by Dr. Bell. He succeeded almost too well, for the teaching qualities of his young assistants became renowned, and he constantly found himself robbed, first of one and then of another, by neighbours who desired to follow his good example and begin the same kind of work elsewhere. Indeed, it was commonly believed that hardly any one *could* teach arithmetic like the teachers trained by Mr. John Poole, and it was from a farmer's daughter educated in Enmore school that my own father, and several other members of my grandfather's family, acquired their earliest notions of the elements of that science.

There had been, up to this point, very little in common between the family at Marshmill and Tom Poole's literary friends. Indeed it seems to be probable that this was the direction in which Coleridge's remark was aimed, that it seemed to him to be a defect in Tom Poole's composition that he was so extremely fond of his cousins. And yet the whole family was above the usual level in culture; even the sisters were great readers, and all were steadily intent upon leading useful lives. But, in their judgment of Tom Poole's friends, their minds were warped by incurable suspicion, and they could never see them as they really were; whilst, in the eyes of Coleridge

and the rest, they themselves must, naturally, have appeared in the light of very prejudiced and narrow-minded people. Both were perfectly unaware that, though upon different lines, they were fellow-workers in the same cause, and that the spirit of service, the fire of genuine patriotism, glowed with equal fervour in the breasts of either side.

And, from 1810 onwards, the name of the Rev. John Poole of Enmore begins to appear, with increasing frequency, in the letters from Keswick and Grasmere, and the greatest interest is expressed in the progress of his school, which, indeed, rapidly attained to very great celebrity, and 'was visited from far and near, by people of all ranks, and even foreigners.'¹ It may even have been this very Enmore school, of which amongst others, Wordsworth was thinking, when he penned the well-known lines in the *Excursion*, of the 'mighty issues' which were surely to be expected

'From the pains

And faithful care of unambitious schools

Instructing simple childhood's ready ear. . . .'

and, too much in earnest to care whether or no he marred his poem, by the introduction of passages which *must* read like an educational

¹ Mrs. Joseph Anstice. 'You have no idea of the celebrity of the school during my childhood,' she said to me.

pamphlet,¹ proclaimed his longing for the coming of that 'glorious time,' when the State should recognise it as a *duty* to provide instruction for the children of the people.

But this is a digression ; we must return to Tom Poole and his work in London. He and Rickman seem thoroughly to have suited one another, and a regular series of letters, extending over more than ten years, still remains to testify to the strong mutual regard which existed between them. It was not an *affectionate* friendship, like that between Poole and Coleridge, or even between Poole and Sir Humphry Davy—all the letters begin with a formal 'My dear sir,' and end with a 'Yours faithfully,' or 'Yours sincerely'; but, perhaps, in all Poole's correspondence, there are no letters which breathe a more robust spirit of esteem and confidence. Once, only, for a few days, there was a sharp and sudden break in the good understanding between them, and Poole had a short but sufficiently uncomfortable experience of that impulsive and inconsiderate heat of temper, and harshness of expression, which is a defect sometimes to be found side by side with much real goodness of heart, however seemingly inconsistent therewith. The matter is almost too trivial to be mentioned, but for the curious illustration that it

¹ *Excursion*, Book IX.

gives us of the customs of the times, and of the complications and worries which must have been perpetually arising out of the absurd practice of first charging a very high rate of postage, and then allowing a large number of privileged persons to use and to distribute *Franks*.

All official letters connected with the returns reached Poole under cover to the Speaker, and paid no postage; and this was the manner in which he had for months been accustomed to send letters to Mr. Rickman. It was, however, a very different matter when Tom Wedgwood, with the waywardness of a chronic invalid, having either forgotten or neglected to observe his friend's instructions, was so ill-advised as to take the liberty of addressing two letters from himself to Thomas Poole in the same way. An irregularity, of course, it was, but not, one would say, an incident of sufficient magnitude to create the storm that immediately arose. On the first occasion, indeed, Poole merely received a message to beg him not to let the thing happen again, and he accordingly wrote particularly to give the address of his lodgings to Tom Wedgwood, but probably he was not explicit enough in his insistence that private letters must always be directed to Abingdon Street, for a second offence followed, and Rickman wrote in really furious indignation

at the repetition of the 'unpleasant occurrence,' which seems to have even brought blame to himself. If so, he certainly passed it on with interest.

'I request to know of you,' he writes, '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 to your correspondent, as is the Speaker, who, in common decency, is not to be made a letter-carrier. If you can give me any explanation which may take away from you any blame in these two Instances, I shall be glad to receive it. . . . Both for public and private reasons I shall be very sorry to think ill of your Delicacy. . . .'

Poor Tom Poole replies with a whole foolscap sheet of explanation. How he had, indeed, before his lodgings were engaged, told Tom Wedgwood he could write to him under cover to Mr. Rickman, and put that into a second cover addressed to the Speaker, because Wedgwood was anxious to know where a letter would immediately find him in town, in case he should want to ask Poole to go to the War Office for him, about the Volunteer Corps he was raising in Westmoreland; how Tom Wedgwood not only made a mistake and directed to him under cover to the Speaker himself, but had repeated the blunder a second

time notwithstanding that Poole had 'expressly mentioned' the address of his 'fixed abode' in the very first letter he wrote to him from London. 'How he omitted to attend to this I am at a loss to imagine,' he gravely continues, 'unless I am to suppose that he had mislaid my letter, and forgotten the address.' But the last thing Poole wishes, is to shift any blame off his own shoulders to those of Tom Wedgwood, who 'would be miserable if he knew' the trouble that his mistake had occasioned.

All he can do is to beg to be allowed, through Rickman, to make all due apologies to the Speaker for having 'in a manner so improper' though certainly not intentionally, obtruded himself on his notice. And then there is a gentle hint that although Poole can imagine good reasons to excuse Rickman's warmth, nothing really has happened to justify the 'unnecessary asperity' of his style.

Perhaps Rickman himself was a little bit ashamed of it, though he does not write very graciously in sending Poole his letter, 'released from durance,' by reading his explanation to the Speaker, who 'had already sent to Abingdon Street to inquire for his new acquaintance.'

'... You do not know,' he continues, '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 distinctly desiring your friend *not to direct under cover again*, when you found you had brought my Name in question in so disagreeable a manner.'

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

A sentiment in which, I think, my readers will probably, perhaps even eagerly, agree. Let us be duly thankful that the days of franks are over, as are also the days of foolscap letters, and that we ourselves have been born to the comfortable equality of the penny post, as well as to the inexpensive curtness of note-paper and post-cards.

Perhaps there may be some people sufficiently interested in poor George Burnett to care to see the following letters addressed by him to Poole in December 1803:—

'I doubt not,' he writes, 'you will be surprized at receiving a letter from one of whom you possibly have not even heard for some years. I have learnt 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*.'

He goes on to say that he has lately procured an appointment as assistant surgeon in a militia regiment, but does not know how to meet the expenses of equipment, which would amount to £40, and he has no friend who either can or will advance him such a sum, which he is sure he could return in the course of a twelvemonth, out of savings from his pay, and out of the proceeds of 'a literary job,' promised him by Phillips, if he might do so in monthly instalments. 'Would such a favour too far exceed the limits of Poole's generosity?'

'I have set my heart on this situation,' he continues, 'not only because it seems to be my only present resource 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 if 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. . . . I have written not with the expectation, but only with the hope that your kindness will oblige your obedt. servant, GEORGE BURNETT.'

Poole seems to have shown this letter to Rickman, and Rickman, sternly benevolent, appears to have told Burnett, rather imperatively, that he ought to take his diploma without further loss of time, and that he would himself either lend or give him whatever funds might be needful. But we cannot do favours in the imperative mood ; indeed there is perhaps no act which requires to be performed with greater tact and gentleness than the act of putting any one under an obligation. Probably Mr. Rickman, strong and successful, never so much as imagined the soreness of those who have failed, to any rough touch of blame.

‘Sir,’ wrote Burnett, with that pathetic strain after dignity and independence which is so sad, and excites so little sympathy, in those who are down in the world, ‘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 adviseable to take out my diploma. This expence 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., GEO. BURNETT.’

‘Was ever before such an animal extant?’ wrote Rickman across the paper, as he sent this note on to Poole, giving at the same time notice of a change in Burnett’s address, in case Poole

should 'chuse to give him a drive.' That the help originally asked for, or some part of it, was advanced and accepted, seems probable, for in his next letter Burnett writes—'I have now scarcely a doubt remaining that I shall be able to accomplish *my own* object,'¹—but he is irritated, even with Poole, for trying to persuade him to 'oblige Mr. Rickman' by going in for the suggested examination. Oblige Mr. Rickman! He is 'too insignificant a personage to be thought worthy even of Mr. Rickman's contempt.' Perhaps, alas! there was a large element of mistrust in his own powers mingled with his impatient refusal to be helped except in his own way, mistrust largely increased by his consciousness of what must be the opinion of all who know him. They do not expect him to exert himself; they do not believe he will succeed in anything.

'Allow me to add,' he writes, '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 an enjoyment of life, that deserves the name of enjoyment,

¹ And yet he never did become attached to the militia. He got some appointment in Poland instead, and, on his return, wrote an account of Poland, but nothing ever prospered with him.

has to *me* been annihilated. This is a tyranny of condition that 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 once more be restored to health, to confidence, and hope. But I forget that I am trespassing upon your time.—Yours etc.

‘GEORGE BURNETT.’

And with this last mournful utterance, the once enthusiastic companion of Southey and Coleridge again disappears. The ‘honesty’ which the youth of twenty carried ‘depicted on his countenance,’¹ is still present in the bitter sincerity of his avowal of his own mistakes and their consequences; but where is the ‘habitual good temper,’ which was his other characteristic? It is usually between eighteen and twenty-five that a man makes or mars his chances of happiness and usefulness, by the way in which he meets the first great test which comes to the full-grown youth, whether he knows how to obey, and can loyally accept and endure those bonds of authority and discipline which naturally claim his allegiance; or whether, in his haste to snatch at what he fancies

¹ Cottle’s *Reminiscences*, p. 5.

to be the rights and privileges of complete manhood, he will spend himself in efforts to shake off all control, and take his life into his own hands to do as he likes with it. This Burnett had done, leaving his college career incomplete and therefore almost valueless, and so wasting all that had been spent to give him a good start in life, in the fervour of, it is true, a not unworthy enthusiasm, but, none the less, to his own irrecoverable disadvantage. It may be questioned whether those greater men who were his companions, would not also have been not only happier, but even stronger and more useful to the world which they so earnestly desired to serve, if they, like him, had not also refused to bear the yoke in their youth. And yet

‘Wenn sich der Most auch ganz absurd geberdet,
Es giebt zuletzt doch noch ’nen Wein’¹

—only sometimes the wine is hardly worth drinking; poor, weak stuff, like George Burnett’s ruined life.²

In April 1804, we find Poole once more at home at Stowey, but before he left London he had received a short note from Coleridge, dated

¹ ‘Absurd indeed may be the fermentation,
Still in the end it yields a wine.’

² Many attempts were made to help Burnett, by Southey and others, but with little effect. He died in Marylebone Workhouse, February 1811.—*Nat. Dict. of Biog.*

March 27, 1804, bidding him farewell before leaving England. The note is affectionate, but lacks the perfect spontaneousness of their earlier intercourse.

‘Have you seen T. Wedgwood lately?’ he had written in a former letter.¹ ‘O Davy *did* talk hard-heartedly about him yesterday, but so have you of me—so do all who, like you, are healthy, and happy, and prosperous, of the sickly etc. who are long sickly.’

He seems to have spent a great deal of time in the early part of this year at Poole’s lodgings in Abingdon Street, sometimes when Poole was there, sometimes when he had gone to Stowey for one of his occasional visits to look after his private affairs. In February Coleridge paid a visit to the Beaumonts at Dunmow, their place in Essex, and it was from his friend Tobin’s chambers in Barnard’s Inn that, in the last days of March, he took his departure for Portsmouth to join the ‘Speedwell,’ the vessel on which he had taken his passage for Malta. He seems to have slipped away from London without any spoken word of farewell to Poole, to whom on the 27th March, he wrote the following note, addressed to Abingdon Street:—

‘I will write to you from Portsmouth,’ he says; ‘At present, weak as I am and daily tottering into relapses,

¹ January 30, 1804. From Poole’s lodgings in Abingdon Street to Poole at Stowey.

it would not be wise, scarcely safe, for me either to write to you at full or to take leave of you in person. May the Almighty guide you onward wherever and whenever the road leads to happiness, and that sole Virtue which is in *Faith*, not in the *outward Works*.

‘S. T. COLERIDGE.’

Tom Poole was at his London lodgings in May for ‘the settling of accompts,’ at the conclusion of his task; three weeks, he supposed, would be as much time as he should need, but there are letters addressed to him at the ‘Parliament Office’ in July, and, indeed, it was not till a year later, in May 1805, that the Abstract was actually in print, together with a Broadside Total Sheet upon which, writes Rickman,¹

‘Hansard glorifies himself extremely . . . he cannot endure the thought of its travelling per post as vulgar Parl. Proc. lest it should be injured in folding; so he is going to send it in rolls, packed in boxes made on purpose.’

Then Rickman goes on to say how ‘painfully’ busy he is, the Caledonian Canal and Scotch Roads ‘both now claim an annual report of him, and the materials have been expected in vain for three weeks; when they come, he must set to work ten hours a day for some time.’ To Poole’s question whether this labour is really necessary, he promptly replies:

¹ May 12, 1805. A copy was to be sent to every magistrate.

‘As to publishing an Annual Report of Progress, without it there ought to be a presumption of misconduct in all great works, and proprietors of wet docks and dry railroads would find their account in paying handsomely for the trouble of writing and expense of printing similar Reports. It is a great check on improper conduct. . . .’

A month later the reports are written, the session has ended, and Mr. Rickman might, if he would, be free to enjoy a little leisure ; but he has already succeeded in setting himself a holiday task of no small dimensions.

‘As soon as Parliament was prorogued,’ he writes,¹ ‘I set myself to work in procuring materials of a good map of Scotland, and till I left town found no leisure from that occupation, and the vile remnants of trouble, which do not quite vanish with the Session. It is natural to increase my eagerness in doing any useful thing, from considering the number of precious hours I waste about the H. of Commons in doing nothing beyond the capacity of an Attorney’s clerk. You will therefore suppose I had no time to spare when in quest of Map materials, and I have succeeded beyond Hope, so that hereafter the Highlands will be the best delineated portion of Great Britain. A huge map (almost 2 inches to a mile) was made by General Roy about 50 years ago, during which space it has lain *very safe* in the King’s Library at Buckingham House, almost forgotten and never seen. It was supposed to be a mere military sketch, but turns out to be a very elaborate survey, a

¹ August 21, 1805.

work of years, and founded on a Base Line measured from Edinburgh to Glasgow. I had some trouble to get at it : but at present 9 persons are copying it, under the Inspection of Arrowsmith. The Admiralty, too, furnishes many coast Charts, the forfeited estate plans, and our own Road survey of 1200 or 1300 miles, much of the interior, and I have hope of still further materials of a high order, having hunted out all the Math^{cal} Instruments, and the users of them in Scotland. So you see the thing is safe, and pays me a little for the time I deem rather misspent about the Highland Roads, which, however, gave the power of obtaining all these materials. . . .'

We begin to understand what Coleridge meant when he called Rickman 'a sterling man,' and to realise the patient force of that enthusiasm which possessed the finest spirits of the eighteenth century. They did not glorify their age as men do now, for probably never since the world began has any century been so largely dosed with flattery—drugged, in fact, almost to insensibility—as the nineteenth ; but, if they did not flatter, if even they were rather too apt to give way to disparagement and almost to despair, in the depth of their disgust at evils crying aloud for reform, they certainly did *serve*. To look upon life as chiefly an opportunity for service ; to think more of usefulness than of happiness ; to work at dry details with disinterested self-devotion ; in a word, to live

to serve one's generation ; this was the habit of mind which was characteristic, though in very different ways, of all the best men of the time. And I feel bound to say that, as far as I can judge, the signal that set in motion this tide of benevolence was given by the anarch Rousseau, weak, morbid, incomplete, undisciplined, fatally mischievous, perhaps, in many of his tendencies, but so perfectly in sympathy with the inarticulate sense of brotherhood and responsibility which was silently stirring at the heart of thousands, that he *first* seems to have uttered that word of command, which when spoken 'in the right voice,' that voice 'which has the quality to bring forth what lies slumbering,' men and women are bound to follow 'as the water follows the moon, silently, with fluid steps anywhere around the globe.'

We might, if we would, learn toleration by observing how plainly it is the will of God to work by imperfect instruments ; and how entirely, for those who have eyes to see, and hearts to understand, wisdom *is* justified of all her children.

The name of Arrowsmith in the last letter has some personal interest for myself as the only living link I have actually touched in connection with the circle of men of whom I am writing. More than twenty years ago, at an evening party at Sir Roderick Murchison's, I heard some one

say at my shoulder that Mr. Arrowsmith wished to be introduced to me, and turning, I beheld a very old man, looking at me with an air of wistful interest which rather perplexed me.

‘You are, perhaps, a relation of the late Mr. Tom Poole,’ he said.

But he looked disappointed when I told him that Mr. Tom Poole had died before I was born ; and I was young then, and chiefly under the influence of astonishment at meeting the Mr. Arrowsmith whose name was on the very oldest atlas that I ever remembered, so I seemed to find but little to say to him.

‘I knew Mr. Tom Poole,’ he said, more to himself than to me ; ‘every one, almost, connected with those days is dead. But they were great days. It was something to be alive then.’

And so the opportunity of asking many questions of one who had really known Mr. Tom Poole during his life in London passed by, never to return. It was one of those opportunities which are useless, because they arrive too soon.

Rickman’s letters seldom conclude without some sarcastic allusion to contemporary politics, and the month of August 1805 was, as we all must remember, a period of great national danger. It was on the 4th of that very month that Napoleon wrote the celebrated letter to his Minister of

Marine, in which he said that England would cease to be if he could but be master of the Channel for twelve hours. One might have fancied the whole mind of the nation concentrated on the emergency, the sympathies of the entire people going forth to strengthen the hands of him to whom was committed the difficult office of steering the ship of state in that hour of storm and peril. How different from the reality !

‘Affairs here are going on as bad or worse than usual,’ writes Rickman on the 21st. ‘If Pitt cannot succeed in his party negotiations, he will dissolve Parliament, and trust to his fortune for a better. How wretched a Consideration—that the mind of a Prime Minister must always be above half expended on thinking of Majorities and Minorities.’

Wretched, indeed ! But what else can be expected of government by party,—government, that is, on the principle of a house divided against itself,—but ever-increasing paralysis of the executive, and ever-advancing disintegration of our laws and constitution,—the death, in fact, unless some appropriate check can be discovered or devised, of representative government, as a means of securing freedom combined with order and security ?

Mr. Poole replies in a letter, of which an incomplete copy is preserved in his note-book, and which

possesses this special interest that it gives the date¹ of a distinct epoch in his life, the epoch when, having taken young Ward into partnership, he quitted the old house with the tanyard at the back, and the garden with the 'harbour' in which Coleridge liked to sit, and withdrew from all practical concern in the tanning business, though to the end of his life he loved to call himself a tanner. Years later, when a county magistrate, and a very leading man in his own neighbourhood he was always ready to proclaim in the loud, uncompromising tones of what had become, by the constant habit of taking snuff, a very harsh voice: 'For my part I am a plebeian. I am a tanner, you know, *I am a tanner*'; and the young wits of Taunton hit upon an appropriate nickname. They used to call him *Lord Chancellor Hyde*.

'MY DEAR SIR—The interesting account of your Map-labour in your last letter gave me great satisfaction. I wish to share with you in all that gives you satisfaction and pleasure, and I wish to share in all that disappoints and vexes you. Without this there is no true understanding of each other. With this, every little variation from an ordinary conduct and ordinary feelings becomes intelligible. It is this sort of confidence, too, among friends, that beyond all things heightens the joys, alleviates the pains, and props the weaknesses of human nature.

¹ Autumn of 1805. The letter is undated, but it is preceded by one dated September, and followed by one dated October, 1805.

‘I am myself in a situation in which there is little of alarm and little of hope. I mean of hope of any other than of the ordinary results of the ordinary events of a country life. If I vest money in the tanning trade, I expect 15 per cent for it, and get it. If I use good husbandry I expect a good crop, and generally have it. In such a life as this I can have little to say about myself, and if I am seldom very happy, I ought to be whipped if I am very unhappy. But even in this sort of life I find plagues enough, though they are little ones, and the reflection that one *is* plagued by them is the worst plague of all. A person proposes to himself even in a system of trifles a great deal of order, and an approximation to perfection. These are continually disturbed by the prejudice and listlessness of servants (supposing what we call great vices out of the question), and to remedy this, not only daily but hourly attention is required; and this, not by occupying, but by distracting, is another source of dissatisfaction, inasmuch as you are unable to fix the mind to an object in a manner by which it may be improved, or may improve the object.

‘There is another source of dissatisfaction—idle society; though I certainly have lately disembarassed myself somewhat of this. The manners of the country will not allow the same method of dismissing it as can be taken advantage of in town; at any rate I have no reason which I chuse to show for adopting that method. My property too is diffused in a variety of ways which, though productive enough of pecuniary advantage, and in some instance, of self-satisfaction as doing good to others; yet requires a steady attention to keep perfectly in place. These and the like, are the circumstances

which prevent me from pursuing with the undivided attention I could wish, many of those subjects upon which we have often talked and written. . . .

‘We have been a good deal together, but I hardly know if you are acquainted with my real situation. On my Mother’s death, four years ago, I took a young man (Mr. Ward) as a partner in the Tanning and Malting trades. He served his apprenticeship with me, and was, and is, in every sense of the word, worthy of the confidence with which I did and do treat him. Part of the agreement was that he was to take the whole pains of conducting the business. I accordingly gave him up my house, took to this in which I now reside, and became no otherwise concerned in the trade than by seeing it, if I choose, properly conducted, and sharing the profits. . . . My other concern, in which I am alone, is the occupation of 195 Acres of good land, which are chiefly my own, and on which I endeavour to exhibit the best husbandry I can. My whole property, supposing all were turned into money, would be about ——

‘I write, my dear Sir, all this in confidence to you, which no other person has heard, except that Purkis, who assisted me in arranging with Ward, knew the then state of my affairs. I write this to you that you may know me exactly as I am, and that with this knowledge you may at all times mention to me whatever your head and your heart may suggest which may be useful to me, or may make me more useful.

‘You do not say that you will not come down, which I take to be a half promise that you will. Make it a whole promise in your next, and tell me when to expect you. . . . Yours most sincerely, THOS. POOLE.’

Mr. Rickman's reply has not been preserved. It would appear that it contained the announcement of his marriage, to which Poole responded by congratulations a little too suggestive of romantic sentiments to suit his friend's peculiar humour. He got married, he assures Poole (October 30, 1805),

' . . . quite in a commonplace way, except it be not 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 and eagerness which I would not encourage in petticoats.

' . . . 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, whether knowingly or not, circumstance chiefly has 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 I am of this, having a more permanent possession in a more lasting affection from sources of slower growth and slower decay than that.'

From the above extract it would seem that Tom Poole had said something in his letter as to the desirability of marriage for himself, but it

must have been of marriage in the abstract, for neither then, nor at any after time in his life, is there any indication of his having been definitely attracted by any other woman than Penelope Poole. But the loss of Coleridge had left a great blank in his life, and the final return to Stowey after so many months spent in London may have brought with it a sense of flatness and vacancy which carried with it some suggestion of the means by which other men created homes for themselves, and surrounded themselves with household affections, warm and constant, and not so apt to drift out of reach as the wonderful friendship which had been for some years the central interest of his life. Besides, though Coleridge's was ever the first place, Tom Wedgwood had also been very dear to him, and Tom Wedgwood's death, in July 1805, had been felt by him as a very real bereavement. Writing to his brother Josiah he says :¹—

'He was a man who mixed sublime and comprehensive views of general systems, with an acuteness of search into the minutiae of the details of each, beyond any person I have ever met with. It was this which gave him that exquisite taste whether in morals or physicks, for which he was so eminently distinguished. With this superiour intellect, he had a heart so full of benevolence

¹ July 15, 1805.

that it seemed ever looking about for objects worthy of his regard.

‘. . . Upon the loss of such a part of our being as a friend of this description makes, I have long had but one possible consolation. It is the belief that we shall meet again. And with this belief all is bearable. It is a belief supported by better proofs than anything to the contrary, and I feel but one inconvenience in it. It makes one (at least when the spirits are harassed) long to rejoin our friends. I have a Mother and a Brother, and now another. There is not any society so dear to my heart left behind for certain.

‘This feeling is corrected by a Notion, not altogether unsupported by Evidence, that our friends are at least permitted to know *how* they are remembered by those on Earth. If these Notions be true, what a trifling affair is Death! or rather, what a desirable change. The body falls asleep and the mind steals from it, retaining all its knowledge of this world, acquiring knowledge of another world, and meeting all which it has lost. . . .’

‘I now often think of all I remember him to have said,’ he continues in another letter,¹ ‘but particularly I am impressed by a conversation I had with him when last at Gunville. It seemed as if he felt it would be the last time he should see me. He said he thought we must tread back our steps, and that the more we deviated from a simple mode of life the less happy we were, and the more difficult it was to be made happy. The refined man, said he, does not meet with one in a hundred whose society gives him pleasure, the peasant does not

¹ August 3, 1805.

meet with one in a hundred from whom he cannot extract pleasure. These remarks he illustrated with a force and vivacity which proved how clearly he saw through and seemed to leave behind him the vanities of human nature. Much must be allowed for the melancholy state in which he was, but yet if we retain that love of a simple life, so natural, I believe, to every virtuous mind—that capability of being easily pleased and easily satisfied, which most of us feel at the beginning of life, and at the same time not sink into inactivity or any of the defects of simple life, we shall possess the frame of mind which does give the largest share of happiness on earth.

‘From his influence in private life I am led often to think of what his influence would have been (had he been blessed with health) on the public. Here is, in fact, the greatest loss; for I am persuaded that with his originality and acuteness of mind, and his inclination to apply those powers to useful rather than to curious speculations, he would by his labour eminently have increased the happiness of mankind. Whatever he did would have been seasoned with a delicacy and simplicity of moral feeling, and with a correctness of taste which, if not essential to reasoning, are always the safeguards against its abuse, and the surest passport for its reception. All this is past; but I trust you will think it proper that what he left behind him may in due time appear. I allude chiefly to those metaphysical essays which Sir James Mackintosh undertook to bring forward. If he has hitherto omitted to arrange them, surely this event will stimulate him to perform his engagement. . . .’

Tom Wedgwood gone hence, and Coleridge far away and utterly silent! These were losses for which not even the robust cordiality of Rickman, the cheerful friendship of Purkis and Sir Humphrey Davy, could afford sufficient compensation. The somewhat depressed tone of Poole's letters in this summer of 1805 is not difficult to account for.

CHAPTER VII

' . . . Ne'er held marble in its trust
Of two such wondrous men, the dust.
With more than mortal powers endowed,
How high they soared above the crowd !
Theirs was no common party race,
Jostling, by dark intrigue, for place ;
Like fabled gods, their mighty war
Shook realms and nations in its jar ;
Beneath each banner, proud to stand,
Looked up the noblest in the land,
Till through the British world were known
The names of Pitt and Fox alone.'

Scott's *Marmion*—Introduction to Canto I.

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND FIVE was the year of Austerlitz ; and that month of October in which Poole and Rickman exchanged letters on the subject of the latter's marriage was marked, not only by the great naval victory of Trafalgar,¹ but also by the disastrous capitulation of Ulm. The news of Trafalgar had not yet reached London when Rickman wrote, on October 30, and though it would almost seem that the following lines,

¹ October 21.

with which Rickman's letter concludes, *must* refer to the capitulation of Ulm on October 19, it is nevertheless doubtful whether the news even of that event can have been received before November.

'Public News!' writes Rickman—'God help us! Decision against indecision has had the usual success, 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*.'

But Tom Poole stoutly refused to believe in the inevitable progress of the French victories. Here is an extract from a letter of his to Purkis, dated December 26, 1805.

'You are one of the most reasonable men I know,' he says, 'but I find the most reasonable are sometimes superstitious; such I take your notions to have been, in spite of all data, concerning the probability in the first instance of the success of the French. *You* believe in the Star of Buonaparte! We must keep the *heresy* far from these shores, for certain, or we are all undone.'

The 'evil news' of Austerlitz must have arrived even at Stowey within a week after the

writing of this letter, and, as we all know, Austerlitz was the deathblow of the great statesman whom Poole, in common with most of his chief friends, had for years regarded with almost fanatical hostility.

‘What an awful event is the death of Mr. Pitt!’ Poole writes on January 28. ‘It has excited much serious reflection in my mind. Although I disapprove of much of Mr. Pitt’s conduct, and think the last act, by which he probably sacrificed his existence, one of the worst of his life—I mean his undertaking the whole of the government himself by the formation of the last Ministry—yet I believe him to have been an HEROIC, DISINTERESTED, and most able man, prepared to make all sacrifices if his country required it, and who would have died on the last acre of free ground in the Island. But yet it has amazed me that such a Character should for a moment lend his great sanction to measures that had not his hearty concurrence. I have heard, and I think from good authority, that he disapproved of the *last War at its Commencement*; the consequence of which was the destruction of the House of Bourbon, and the establishment of a military despotism over the fairest portion of the globe. It is well known that he was sincere in wishing a broad administration on the resignation of Mr. Addington; he assented to one that has deprived the country of himself for ever, and has been, to say the least, contemporary with the most alarming exercise of the same despotism before established. Oh! if Mr. Pitt had averted the last War, if he had maintained, only for a few days longer, the dignified conduct

he manifested during his short recess from power, we should not be now lamenting a Man imbued with all that is most sublime and excellent in human nature. . . .’

‘If he had loved power less,’ he writes to another friend,¹ ‘he would have been one of the greatest men that ever lived. . . . He *was* a very great Man, and, as an Orator, a wonderful man, I suppose next to Demosthenes, the first that ever lived.

‘The loss of such a rare combination of the most transcendent of the human faculties is deeply to be lamented ; and I do lament it, and am more thoughtfully affected by it than, I believe, most of his Partisans.’

Mr. Purkis seems to have demurred to Poole’s high opinion of Mr. Pitt’s eloquence, and to have addressed remonstrances to him, which drew forth the following justification of his opinion : ²—

‘To be eloquent it is not necessary to say anything new, anything profound or comprehensive. It is only necessary to say old commonplace things well. These every man understands, and they partake sufficiently of his own train of thought to flatter his vanity, to make him think that he, too, might have said the same had he been called upon to do it. Moreover, it is not likely that a new thing should be more weighty in itself than an old one, and it puts common minds out of their way, and piques their pride. It is still worse with profound things, for they are altogether out of the reach

¹ His old friend, Mr. Purkis.

² February 20, 1806.

of common hearers, and produce corresponding alienation. No wonder then that the late Minister was a great Orator.

'Had he been placed in different circumstances, he might have been a great Genius, but he had no time for *Reflection*,¹ no time to make new combinations, no time to acquire what books and living men can teach beyond the necessities of the present hour, and this acquired in the hour and for the hour, and generally dismissed to make room for the wants of the succeeding hour. How could this form a great and comprehensive mind which is to possess much, and to hold all that it possesses at once before it, as in a mirror for contemplation? Had Pitt been out of office for ten years, he might yet have been a very great man.'²

These extracts show how far-reaching was the sense of a grave national loss in the death of Pitt, extending even to those who had most consistently opposed his policy, and most sincerely desired to see him out of power, and who could not but welcome the formation of a ministry in which the chief place would, of necessity, be taken by Charles James Fox.

'I have great hopes now,' wrote Poole to Rickman, 'that we have a government pregnant with all good, and

¹ Compare S. T. C.'s character of Pitt (*Essays on His Own Times*).

² It would have been interesting to compare parallel passages on the death of Fox, but, by some strange chance, none seem to have been preserved.

that it will appear as fast as circumstances will permit. I should think the late events on the Continent will very much simplify the labours of the Office for Foreign Affairs, and therefore hope that the energy of the Secretary,¹ and his long-accumulated wisdom, will not be confined to one department, but will pervade every branch of the Government. . . . Do write to me whenever any of the new plans of Government transpire, for many such they must have if they are equal to save themselves and their country: if they are not equal it cannot be for want of talent, it must be that they are tainted with the vices of selfishness and compromise, in which case the government of the country will pass into foreign hands, or *into a perfectly new class at home*. In other words, a Revolution will take place.

‘I only hope no member of the present administration will be weak and wicked enough to remain in office an hour to sanction measures he does not approve, or to neglect measures which he thinks would essentially contribute to the welfare of the State.’

But Poole’s ‘great hopes’ were hardly shared by Rickman.

‘The Political World is very busy,’ he had written, ‘but I remain indifferent and uninterested as usual; thinking the evil more radical than to be cured by any Men shackled with certain deliberative bodies.’

‘The evil is more radical,’ he repeats,² ‘than anything so trivial as *this* or *that* ministry can cure. I believe the present people cannot at all agree among themselves even about Army Reform, so much talked of by them-

¹ Fox.

² March 13, 1806.

selves before they were in. . . . As to Reform of Parliament, Grey 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 don't 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. . . .'

Hopefulness was an illusion Rickman did not permit himself, though he may have liked it in Tom Poole. His point of view seems to have been one of indignantly-accepted discouragement at the corruption and want of principle which he saw around him, and which led him to expect little from any reforms which must leave individual baseness untouched, whilst he had so keen an eye for the mischievousness of ill-considered changes, crude, incomplete, and ill-adapted to their purpose, that in one letter¹ he even burst forth with

' . . . A curse on all Reformers! The few that do good bear no proportion to those who do mischief: a bad breed, who might all be hanged with national benefit. . . .'

but concludes the very same epistle with an expression of satisfaction that a scheme of his own, intended to correct 'the ridiculous inefficiency of the Home Department' is likely to be adopted—

¹ April 30, 1806.

‘You see that I speak very fairly,’ he adds, ‘in condemning all reforms and then attempting one myself, pleading exemption (as all men plead) from usual dulness of conception.’

With Charles James Fox he was utterly, and one would think very unreasonably, disappointed ; for it was simply the inexorable facts of the situation which compelled that great man to accept what was identically the policy of his predecessors.

‘Charley Fox eats his former opinions daily and even ostentatiously,’ wrote Rickman in the same letter, ‘showing himself the worse man, but the better minister of a corrupt government, where three people in four must be rogues, and three deeds in four bad. . . .’

Again,¹ two months later, he writes :—

‘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 by C. Fox. . . . 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. . . .’

Well ! We cannot escape from our origin. Primitive man beating his idols is a kind of hieroglyphic, representing the attitude of disappointed faith in every stage of human experience.

¹ June 29, 1806.

When a man's name has become a political symbol it passes into an abstract region of fierce lights and unmitigated shadows, in which all power of making allowances is lost. Rickman's sense of the corruptions and robbery that prevailed in political life was so deep, and his judgments so unsparing, that it is only fair to quote a sentence in the same letter, which shows that he could recognise and record exceptions.

'Melville, you find, is acquitted, not by so great a majority as I expected; for in truth the charges turned out to be so frivolous that it was scandalous to pursue them so far. *I could not have believed that any public man was so pure* [Italics mine] on less evidence than such a complete development of his private affairs as the Brewer attained. (If he boasts of his Brewership let him have the title. He boasted to the peers of the *Dies notanda* when his father first commenced business, the 10th June; if the acquittal had been a day earlier, he might have marked the day again.)'

One other letter of the year 1805, which must be quoted here, is from Clarkson. It is quoted partly because Clarkson, too, was one of the brotherhood, his work appealing to the deepest sympathies of every one of Poole's most intimate friends; and partly because it contains one of those scanty and scattered allusions to Coleridge with which his friends were fain to be content in the absence of all direct communication from himself.

‘Coleridge,’ he says,¹ ‘was well at Malta about twelve weeks ago ; he had just returned from Sicily. He had been twice at the top of Mount Ætna. His health was improving.’

So great was the strength of the slave-trading interest, the blind insensibility to facts, the force of passive prejudice on the side of a custom of many centuries, that the bill for the abolition of the slave-trade had in 1805 again been lost, though only by a minority of seven, and, as Clarkson thought, through the accidental absence of the Irish members who had promised to support it, in spite of the combined influence of Pitt and Fox both earnestly in favour of the measure. Fox, on his deathbed, is said to have declared it to be *one* of the two objects that he had most desired to see accomplished ; the other being peace with France. Of Pitt, Clarkson says that, without his fostering hand, the weak beginnings of the Abolitionists could never have maintained their ground at all.

What the movement owed to Clarkson himself has long become a dim tradition. Great reforms are always associated in the public memory with the name of the man who brings the thing forward in Parliament ; but other efforts are needed, long-continued, patient, laborious, involving endless

¹ March 29, 1805.

self-sacrifice, before such a cause as the abolition of the slave-trade can be brought forward with any chance of success. As in the olden days, so now, *this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting*, but these sacrifices are for the most part silent, and the names of those who make them are forgotten or overshadowed. They would not indeed care to have it otherwise; heart and soul they are absorbed in their work, and have absolutely forgotten themselves. Coleridge relates that he once asked Tom Clarkson whether he ever thought of his probable fate in the next world, and received the characteristic answer, 'How can I? *I think only of the slaves in Barbadoes.*'

The following is his letter to Poole on March 29, 1805:—

'Our defeat,' he says, 'was quite unexpected. The Planters had made the most vigorous canvass almost ever remembered, and several of our own friends, in the fullest confidence that we should gain the victory, absented themselves on trivial business, and are now on the Stool of Repentance for the loss their absence has occasioned. But notwithstanding all this we must not despair; neither must we cease from our exertions, for we must never, by deserting this Cause, allow it to be engrafted into the moral code of our posterity, that the Slave-Trade is only a common Traffick, or that Slavery is not an improper condition for man.

'I am not without the hope that we shall even recover our

ground this Session. I have urged Wilberforce to move for the abolition of that part of the trade by which Trinidad, Guiana, and foreign places are supplied; and he will do it; and I have advised that we should employ ourselves from this time to the next year in preparing to take the Field more vigorously than ever. This Plan I will communicate to you when I have the pleasure of seeing you. We shall have on our side some very dreadful instances of cruelty, committed in Barbadoes, and reported by the Governor, Lord Seaforth, whose printed letters will be laid on the table of the H. of Commons this evening. But even these facts will not help us wholly through, unless we can get evidence; and I again solicit your interference with Mr. King¹ and Captain Buckle to give us their assistance if it should be deemed necessary. Why not promise us conditionally? How can they deny themselves the Pleasure and the Comfort that will eternally attend them, when they reflect upon this subject, if they thus offer their Mite towards the abolition of this infamous Traffick? Will they allow me to come down to them to Bristol? And will they freely converse with me? And will they give us their Evidence, if I should pronounce it of importance? I do not hesitate to say that if they would disclose all they know, they would be considerable instruments towards its abolition. We find the utmost difficulty in getting Evidence. We know many who could serve us effectually, but being concerned in Trades in which it would be in the Power of the Planters to injure them, we dare not solicit their evidence. We would propose only to bring about eight

¹ Poole's brother-in-law—his sister's husband. He was an African merchant, trading in palm oil and ivory.

persons—and we cannot count upon more than two, and these are not of the best kind. . . .

‘If you should come to town you need not ask at Wilberforce’s where I am, but only leave a Note for me at his house, stating where you are to be found, and I will come to you. It will not lie longer than three days before I have it; as I mean to call upon him every third day, if not oftener. If you write to me, write under cover to Wilberforce; but pray tell me something of Mr. King and Captain Buckle when you do write.’

A favourite device of the planters to delay or prevent the abolition of the slave-trade had been to induce the House of Lords to require to hear evidence before they would consent to pass the Bill, representing the abolitionists to be fanatics and hypocrites, who could not substantiate their accusations. To gather evidence, and, more particularly, to induce witnesses to come forward, was the most painful and difficult portion of Clarkson’s labour, for an unrelenting animosity was shown by the planters against any one who had the courage to tell what he knew. Often some tale of cruelty would be poured into Clarkson’s ears by some sailor, ship’s surgeon, or retired captain, who had actually witnessed the circumstances, perhaps retired in horror from the slave-trade on that very account; but, when asked to repeat what he had said before the House of Lords, he would draw back, afraid to encounter the persecution which

would certainly follow. The injuries and losses inflicted on persons whom he had actually persuaded to have the courage to come forward, together with the recollection of the horrid barbarities with which he had been compelled to become acquainted, and which haunted him night and day, so preyed upon Clarkson's mind that at one time (1794) he utterly broke down in health.

But he struggled to his feet again and continued to work, and Mr. Whitbread, hearing that Clarkson was actually crippling his own means by aiding those thrown out of employment, or otherwise suffering pecuniary loss for having been bold enough to give evidence for the abolitionists, gave valuable relief by taking it upon himself to make good, as far as he could, all injuries to individuals persecuted on the above account.

Poole had been for many years an ardent friend to the abolitionist cause. My readers perhaps may remember the *honey* pie with which Coleridge was regaled in 1797, and it is certain that for many years it had become his habit, as it was of the entire body of the Society of Friends, and of very many other persons, utterly to refrain himself from the use of every article which was known to be connected with slave labour, and to employ, besides, every inducement he could think of, to persuade others to do the same.

A story has been handed down of his having pressed the duty of *leaving off sugar* with immense vehemence upon his brother-in-law, Mr. King, who, driven into a corner, at length took refuge in a compromise. He *would* give up sugar *for a year*, if Tom Poole would during the same period consent to give up snuff. Now Tom's partiality for snuff was well known. Nevertheless he instantly agreed to the bargain, and for a whole year became a total abstainer from his favourite luxury ; but, at the end of the year, if family traditions are to be trusted, so great was his hurry to begin again, that he sat up till midnight, opposite to a collection of well-filled snuff-boxes standing ready on the table, and joyfully indulged in a first pinch the very instant that the clock had struck twelve.

In February 1806, we find him actively engaged in doing what he can to advance the cause of abolition in his own neighbourhood.

'I have delayed writing from week to week, and from month to month,' he writes to Clarkson, 'in hopes of being able to tell you that there was not only a desire in this Neighbourhood to see the Slave-trade abolished, but that there was active zeal to promote that event. I have distributed many of the pamphlets. . . . I have talked with many whom I thought likely to be useful. All allow the wickedness and impolicy of the trade ; but they say, unless other people moved, unless new reasons

occurred, it would be useless (after what passed in Parliament last year) to interfere at present.

‘On the whole I think I may say: if a great effort is made, if, by any means, a new impulse is given, the inhabitants of this district will, in general, come forward and exert any influence they possess over their Representatives, for the accomplishment of the desired end. I hope that the late change in the administration will be favourable to Abolition, and that this event will be the new impulse. With the *sincere* co-operation of Government the business is settled; without it, I fear the evil will be left to find its own remedy, according to its own dreadful Nature. Most of the great Evils of the world are so left, and tremendous is the Process.

‘Favour me with information if it be meant to move the question this Session; if any particular exertions are making in other quarters; if you would wish any made here, and of what nature. Be certain I will do all in my power, and if I fail in being of service, it shall not be for want of zeal in the cause.’

The autumn of 1806 brought Rickman on a short visit to Stowey, which he seems to have much enjoyed, throwing himself, after his usual energetic fashion, into the study of the antiquities of the neighbourhood, and becoming very eager over the question whether Bridgwater could be proved to be the *Uxella* of the Romans. This is his characteristic account of his journey back to town; it will be observed that it also contains a rather impatient notice of the return of Coleridge:—

' August 31, 1806.

' We had a pleasant journey homewards, the rain being trifling. You sent us one *long-expected* scud from Bridgwater to Polden Hill, which made us stop and shelter under a hedge for ten minutes. We saw Glastonbury Ruins, and Wells Cathedral, and reached Frome at six o'clock. The City of Wells seems to me the most comfortable-looking town I have ever seen. I suppose the Residence of the Clergy adds many good houses to it. I was quite in a Monastic humour before night, being always sufficiently disposed to think with regret 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. I called on Mr. Cunningham at Heytesbury; his Celtic collection from the Barrows is very copious; I was surprized to see that the most antient weapon-heads and hatchets are not distinguishable from those of the South Sea Islands. A kind of stone mallet head perforated for a handle is common; it is made to cut on both sides. . . . We passed Stonehenge, and on entering that venerable Circle, found a most pestilent Animal who has taken up his abode there—a Wiltshire Clown, who gravely offered his services to knock off pieces of the stones for us! I could scarcely keep hands from him when he enforced his offer by saying that the Altar stone was indeed harder than the rest, but he could furnish a piece even of that. I find since that he offers the same courtesies to all travellers, from whom he procures Money for this gradual destruc-

tion of the most valuable Antiquity in the world, the Pyramids *perhaps* excepted.

‘Coleridge is in town ; he is said to return poor, and says that on some occasion he was forced to throw overboard 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. . . .’

Thus Rickman, always unsparing in his judgments and particularly disdainful of excuses, but perhaps not often altogether unjust.

Davy, now Sir Humphry Davy, had not, it would seem, visited Stowey this year, though, as a rule, it formed a convenient resting-place between London and Cornwall. He seems to have been in Ireland instead, and to have written Poole a very dark account of the condition of the Irish peasantry.

‘Your remarks on the peasantry of Ireland are, I believe, very just,’ wrote Poole in reply,¹ ‘and an unhappy thought it is that that fine country, and that ardent and highly capable race of men should be, after being governed by England for more than six hundred years, in a state of comparative barbarism. It is one of the articles of impeachment against our Government at the bar of Heaven, and, probably, *sentence is past*. The great defect in human nature seems to be that man does not consider himself, and the age in which he lives, so much as a part of the whole series of human existence, as he

¹ March 18, 1806.

considers the age as his own age and himself as an individual. Hence modes of immediate gratification and convenience are constantly preferred to the adoption of permanent good, should that good require any sacrifice of that immediate gratification and convenience. This does not appear to arise from want of ability, but from the scarcity of true greatness of mind ; for all look back with affected dignity on the Past as a whole of the past of the series, despising altogether the individual. This deficiency in acting on large and prospective views, this falsely estimated selfish policy, has been the ruin of Ireland and of all the dependencies of the British Government, and the system is persisted in and marching with great strides. We shall fall, and speedily ; unless it be most speedily changed.'

This chapter may conclude with a letter from Tom Poole to a young man named Stephens, for whom he had been instrumental in obtaining an appointment in India.

'As to further advice,' he writes,¹ 'I know not what I can say. Recollect all I have heretofore said to you, and use it for the government of yourself, and for the government of your conduct, both as it relates to yourself and to those with whom you are connected and concerned. . . .

'If you have kept my letters I wish you occasionally to read them, because I believe you have an affection for me, and advice is never followed with so much pleasure as when it is given by those we love.

¹ March 11, 1806.

‘There is one subject on which I have seldom spoken, and never written to you. I mean *Religion*. I have refrained from this subject because I knew, with your feeling, it was impossible to be without Religion. The particular forms of religion, the ceremony of going to church, the inquiry into the truth of disputed doctrines, are, to a person in your situation, of comparatively small importance. Not that I mean to lessen the value of those things, as they are essential to good Government, and of great consequence by the influence of their example, and to many minds necessary to their peace. But a sincere belief, *operating upon our thoughts and conduct*, of those great truths of which, I think, upon a strict examination, the proofs are clear and decisive, I trust you do hold, and ever will hold, and make every other consideration give way to their maintenance. They are the Existence and Omnipresence of God, Who is with us when we are alone, and Who partakes of our thoughts when they are secret—a future state in which men will be rewarded according to their merits. The first great truth was taught by the revelation to Adam, and again, distinctly, to the Jews; the second by the Christian Dispensation, to all the world. This second truth is the great incitement to perform our duties in this world, as the first, if constantly borne in mind, effectually deters us from the vices of our nature.

‘God has also been pleased, through Our Saviour Christ, to inform us what those duties are, and how they are to be performed.

‘They are Charity in heart and action; Industry to carry it into effect; Courage to invigorate that Industry; perfect Justice; love towards all that is, rejoicing when

an instance occurs which is in every respect worthy to call it forth; and, finally, *frequent prayer*, that God would by the inspiration of his actual essence prompt us to the performance of those duties.

‘Such, I trust, will be the opinions which will direct you in life, and, if so, be certain that they will not only console you in death, but, come when it may, make it welcome.

‘Thus much for the first, and probably the last time, on this subject, which ought frequently to be the first, and will most certainly be the *last* subject in your mind.’

CHAPTER VIII

‘Of all men there seems most need to say, “God bless poor Coleridge!” One could almost believe that an enchanter’s spell was upon him, forcing him to be what he is, and yet leaving him the power of showing what he might be.’

Mrs. Clarkson to H. C. Robinson. Dec. 1811.

THOMAS POOLE, looking in 1835 over the list he had made of Coleridge’s letters, almost broke down when he came to that short note in which Coleridge takes leave of him before starting for the Mediterranean. The list is covered with remarks and annotations, scribbled on the margin, or cramped into any vacant space between the lines, and here he has written in his scrambling and irregular hand, the words—

‘I cannot read this affecting farewell without deep feeling, being conscious that the intimate, dear, and to me most valuable intercourse, which had existed between us for the preceding ten years, formed the happiest period of my hitherto life.’

That note was the last received by Poole

from Coleridge for three years, and even though occasional letters were afterwards written from the one to the other, and some of them are deeply touched with the old affection, those few farewell sentences do actually mark the close of a period, for the unrestrained familiar interchange of thought and sympathy, the constant brotherly intercourse ever breaking into spontaneous communication, was never again to return, or at least never altogether as it had been, with the exception, perhaps, of one happy interval in the summer of 1807, when Coleridge, with his wife and children, visited Stowey for the last time.

There had been, it would seem, some traces of wounded feeling, some half-acknowledged soreness at undeserved oblivion, in Tom Poole's mind towards his friend, whose state of infirmity was, at this time, either unknown or only very imperfectly known to him ; but what vexed him most especially, was the strange silence towards the Wedgwoods, and the apparent insensibility to the death of Tom Wedgwood, which was unhappily, but certainly not unnaturally, giving serious offence to his brother Josiah. Whilst Coleridge was abroad, indeed, he had made great allowance for him.

'I heard last night,' he writes (Gunville, August 12, 1806), 'that Coleridge is now performing quarantine at Portsmouth. His situation has been so insecure that I

am very glad to hear of his being in safety. I cannot account satisfactorily for his apparent total neglect of my brother and myself for so long a time; but I am neither piqued nor angry, for I consider him as privileged to dispense with the ordinary rules that govern the conduct of common men to each other in the less essential points of their intercourse. His genius excites my admiration, and his hypochondriacal affection, that too frequent attendant on genius, my pity.

‘I must apply to him, when I hear of his being at liberty and well enough, to furnish me with materials for a Life of my brother, which Sir J. Mackintosh has undertaken to write, as an introduction to his metaphysical work, about which Sir James is now engaged. I know Coleridge has a great dislike of Sir James, but I believe he will not permit that to prevent his assisting me in a matter about which he will feel a warm interest, and in which he is peculiarly qualified to be useful. I hope you will favour me with any facts or observations that have occurred to you in the course of your intimacy with him. Sir James says, “You must send me the dates of his birth, of his various courses of study, reading, or meditation, of his travels, of his illness, with such anecdotes as have impressed themselves on your mind, and such observations on his intellectual and moral character as have occurred to you in the course of that affectionate and really brotherly intimacy that subsisted between you.”’

But two months later we find him writing to Poole that he has not ‘heard a word of Coleridge, except that he was expected at Keswick some

time ago ;' and, in November, he tells Poole that, being in correspondence with Wordsworth, he has begged *him* to request Coleridge to furnish him with materials for his brother's life :—

' . . . Wordsworth tells me he has heard little more from Coleridge than his other friends have ; but he believes, if the state of his mind was known, his friends would be more inclined to pity than to blame him, which I daresay is true ; but though they may pity him, I suspect their regard for him is likely to be diminished, judging of others by what I feel myself.'

Tom Poole, in reply, does not attempt to defend Coleridge.

'Tom Southey, the lieutenant in the navy, Southey's brother, is now with me,' he writes.¹ 'He brings me a letter from Southey, dated September 28th. Southey says, "Coleridge is expected here this week after his three years' absence. He waits in London for an interview with Lord Howick, at Lord Howick's desire. What it may lead to remains to be seen. Coleridge talks of Reflections moral and political, occasioned by two years' Residence in Malta and Italy! and he is engaged to deliver lectures at the Royal Institution on the Principles of Taste. From this I shall endeavour to dissuade him if it be not too late, because it will detain him from what is of greater immediate importance ; because he will never be ready, and therefore always on the fret ; and because I think his prospects such that it is not prudent to give lectures to ladies and gentlemen in Albemarle

¹ November 8, 1806.

St.—Sidney Smith is good enough for them.” I think Southey very right; but yet I hope before Coleridge proceeds to reflections, Lectures, or anything else, he will endeavour to repair the injury he has done himself in the minds of his friends, both for his own and their sake. I shall write to Southey in a few days, and shall desire him to inform me what Coleridge now says (for I understand he arrived at Keswick as intended), if he pleads idleness, carelessness, or want of opportunity as apologies for his past neglect; or if he be indifferent to his friends, or indifferent to their feeling towards him. . . .’

Poole’s message produced as little effect as Josiah Wedgwood’s, and in the next letter from Etruria (dated December 2, 1806), Mr. Wedgwood indignantly declares:—

‘. . . I have not heard a word from Coleridge. I sent a message to him by Wordsworth which would have produced a reply from any good man with feelings such as men usually possess. . . .’

And in January (1807) he continues:—

‘I have not heard a word from Coleridge, and I do not expect it. I don’t doubt he is ill and unhappy, but I cannot continue to esteem him. I believe if I had made the request I did to him, to even a total stranger, who might happen to possess information relative to my brother, scarcely any one would have refused to give it me, and no man, with proper feelings, would have suffered me to be without an answer. If he can undertake public lectures, or even give a moment’s thought to the proposal to lecture, what reason can he assign for return-

ing me no answer? If you happen to hear whether I am to expect anything from him on the subject of my brother's memoirs, pray let me know it—that is the only matter on which I wish in future to hold communication with him, and on that I expect nothing from him. . . .'

But it so happened that Wedgwood's eldest boy, another 'Jos,' who was at school at the Rev. George Coleridge's at Ottery, was in this same month of January taken seriously ill with scarlet fever. His father and mother hurried to his bedside, and the 'hospitality and cordial kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Coleridge,' during the long weeks of anxiety and fatigue, touched them very deeply. George Coleridge seems to have used the opportunity, with both tact and kindness, to get Mr. Wedgwood to mitigate his judgment of his brother's seemingly inexcusable silence.

'Some things I have heard from Mr. C.,' continues Josiah, after giving Tom Poole an account of his son's illness and convalescence, 'induce me to think that S. T. C. has not entirely forgotten my late brother, and that it is owing to unfortunate accidents that he or I did not once hear from him. I am inclined to believe that it is to his miserably hypochondriacal state that I may impute the obtaining no answer to my late application to him; and if so, I pity him from my heart. For the condition itself is the most miserable that man can fall into, and I doubt not he suffers at times severely, when he reflects

on the omission of a duty which even common civility would require of him.'

Wordsworth, too, had, as we see, given a merciful hint that Coleridge should be pitied rather than blamed, yet it was hardly possible that any one not fully aware of the truth should make the necessary allowances. Alas! even when the truth should be known, how few could refrain from visiting both the weakness itself and its effects with indiscriminating and unrelenting censure, utterly refusing to accept either in the light of an excuse for the other. We cannot be surprised to find Josiah Wedgwood writing again a little more than two months later—

'Have you heard or seen anything of Coleridge? I understand he has been, or was to be, at Bristol lately. His lectures at the Royal Institution appear to have been given up. If you happen to know where he may be found, in the next fortnight or later, I wish to write to him, though I shall do it unwillingly, for, feeling as I do, I cannot write to him as a friend, and I would rather have no communication with him than as a mere stranger. Or, if you know where Mrs. Coleridge is, I would write to her, as it is a matter of business. . . .'

When Tom Poole received this letter Coleridge with his wife and children had been actually at Stowey for above a week. Southey had written in April of a projected visit to Devonshire, 'where

the longer they stay the better,' and, of course, Stowey was to be taken on the way; but it was not till June that Mrs. Coleridge, with the children, met her husband at Bristol, whence we find her writing, in some exasperation of mind, an apologetic letter to Mr. Poole, saying that the illness of Coleridge, and of one of the children, had interfered with their intention of paying their respects to him on a certain Tuesday evening. At present, she continues,

' . . . it is his and my present intention to leave Bristol to-morrow, *i.e.* Friday morning. But as it is utterly impossible for *me* to guess what that morning may produce (near though it is), I write to request you, dear sir, to pardon this want of punctuality, which, believe me, is not to be reckoned among my numerous faults. I have had all our clothes packed since Tuesday, and am waiting with great seeming patience to set off. Yet it is my private opinion we may not get off to-morrow. I am well aware this letter will not reach you until you have been four days in expectation of us, and I wish I had written on Tuesday, after my first disappointment, to have saved you at least one day of expectation, which I have so often smarted under, but relying on your goodness, with most ardent wishes to see you (which, by the way, I hoped to have done long since at Keswick), I remain, with much respect and affection,

'S. COLERIDGE.'

A short note from T. Poole to Mr. Chester—

probably the same who was with Coleridge in Germany—dated June 11, gives the first notice of the Coleridges' actual arrival. 'They have been with me since Saturday last,' writes Poole, 'and will remain here about a fortnight.' The radiant cordiality of welcome with which they were received long remained in Mrs. Coleridge's memory,¹ and, instead of a fortnight, they stayed for more than two months, and never went on into Devonshire at all,² though there were short intervals in which Coleridge paid visits to other friends near at hand, such as Lord Egmont, for instance, at Enmore, and Mr. Chubb, at Bridgwater. All the few records that remain seem to show that in the society of his old friend, and amid the surroundings of the little rural town which was connected with so many happy memories, Coleridge's health and spirits immediately began to improve, and he was soon better than he had been for years. The friendship between him and Poole was founded on such a deep-seated mutual affection, and they were always so perfectly satisfied with one another's companionship, that they never could quarrel except by letter. Every cloud of estrangement seemed to vanish when they met, whilst there was something in Poole's vigour

¹ Mrs. S. T. C. to T. Poole in 1808.

² Letter of Mrs. S. T. C. quoted in her daughter's Memoirs. 'We did not go on to Ottery at all; I believe they had illness there.'

touched with tenderness, and his strong common sense, which yet did not exclude imaginative sympathy, which influenced Coleridge as a bracing climate will sometimes influence, even it may not cure, a chronic invalid. But whatever Poole might hope, poor Coleridge was no convalescent, ready to be insensibly wooed back to perfect health; for—

‘ . . . How begin? And whence? “The mind is free,
Resolve!” the haughty moralist would say,
“This single act is all that we demand.”
Alas! such wisdom bids a creature fly
Whose very sorrow is, that time hath shorn
His natural wings.’

At first, however, there was, as we have said, a visible improvement. ‘Friendship’s succour’ was not altogether in vain, and it looks like a real return to his better self when we find that before Coleridge has been many weeks under Poole’s roof he has, at any rate, been roused to send a letter to Josiah Wedgwood. It was written from Aisholt, a beautifully-situated village close to Stowey, whither he had gone for a three days’ visit, in a mournful strain of mingled self-reproach and self-justification, and is already published at full length in Miss Meteyard’s *Group of Englishmen*. Tom Poole wrote also, giving the following account of his impressions of Coleridge’s state of mind and body.

‘. . . I admire and pity him,’ he says, ‘more than ever. His information is much extended, the *great* qualities of his mind heightened and better disciplined; but alas! his health is weaker, and his great failing, procrastination, or the incapability of acting agreeably to his wish and will, much increased. Where a man has such a heaven in his own mind he is averse to exercise the body; and if the body is weak it has little power over the mind. The tide of life which gives joy does not exist; there is in such a being little reciprocity of action between body and soul. But the worst of all is this—that for want of such corporeal exercise, the weak body gets weaker and weaker, till it is finally shook off, and then we lament; for the only medium through which we could communicate with such a spirit in this world, and through which such a spirit could be useful to us, is destroyed. Heaven grant that Coleridge may be an exception to this sort of necessity attending such men.

‘Certainly, Coleridge’s neglecting to write to your dear brother, and to you and to me, did not arise from the want of the sincerest love. He was dreadfully affected when I first spoke of your brother, and he told me, as a proof of how much he had been in his thoughts, that he had a paper, now on its way from Malta, in which he had portrayed your brother, and, to the best of his ability, made a sketch of his extraordinary mind. This was done while he was at Malta, and he did not hear of his death until his arrival in England. . . .’

Then Poole goes on to describe the children. Hartley ‘exactly like his father’; Derwent, like him too, but stronger bodied, and with more of the

common world in him ; Sara 'a sweet little animated fairy,' like her mother's family with her cap on—the little mob - cap children sometimes wore in those days—but like her father with her cap off. And he adds that Coleridge was educating the boys himself, teaching them Greek before Latin, an innovation which Poole thought 'very right.' The Grammar and Lexicon spoken of in Coleridge's letter to Wedgwood were intended for their especial use.

'I was truly glad to hear from him,' wrote Wedgwood in reply. 'His letter removed all those feelings of anger which occasionally, but not permanently, existed in my mind towards him. I am very sorry for him.'

We soon catch some glimpse, too, of Coleridge's old interest in his friend's ways and doings. Thomas Poole had now definitely entered upon that career of local usefulness to which he was to devote himself during the remaining thirty years of his life. No special occasion for doing good in a remarkable way ever presented itself, no grand opportunity of achieving distinction ever came to him ; and, indeed, never at any period of his life, does the ambition *to distinguish himself* appear to have found a place in his thoughts, though we cannot doubt that distinction might have been his, had he cared to try for it. Most usually those who set their minds with constancy and determin-

ation upon any one thing do sooner or later obtain it; for we must remember that the power of willing anything persistently is, in itself, a far from common endowment. Poole had that endowment; but to distinguish himself was a mark that he did not aim at. In early boyhood he had willed the cultivation of his own mind, and accordingly, we find him, in after life, the fit and chosen associate of those who are, intellectually, the foremost persons of his day; but his laboriously acquired mental education was never regarded by him as anything but a means, a preparation, for some other end beyond itself. The real purpose and intention of all his endeavours and sacrifices was, in perfect simplicity and single-heartedness, the completion of his own manhood, which must otherwise fall below the level of what it might be, *as an instrument of service in the cause of humanity*; and his was eminently one of those lives of which it has been most truly said, that the growing good of the world is largely dependent upon unhistoric acts,¹ acts of faithful service which asked nothing but permission to serve, and never even desired reward or recognition.

There had been, no doubt, when Poole was young, and 'there was more hope in the world,'² a time in which he had indulged in dreams of

¹ George Eliot.

² Letter to Rickman.

great reforms, and immense improvements in the condition of the poor, that he himself should live to witness. Coleridge once told him that he was always too eager for immediate results. But in 1807 he had realised that he must learn to possess his soul in patience ; his country was in the grip of a great struggle, in which the chances of success seemed far from certain, so much so that even such a cool-headed man as Josiah Wedgwood could write that he was at times tempted to regret that he was a father, for he feared he might be leaving his children to evil days. Poole knew that while that struggle lasted, few, if any, of the things that he had most at heart could be brought forward, but 'when we cannot do great things, we must be contented to do what we can in small things,' he wrote to Rickman, and in accordance with this resolve, whilst he continued to pursue his studies in the direction of social economy, and to desire large reforms in the Poor Laws, he so far accepted things as they were as to throw himself, with all his ability and eagerness, into every plan of doing good in his own town and neighbourhood which presented itself to his energies. It was, besides, characteristic of him that he would give endless time and pains to the service of individuals, so that every one in Stowey who was in trouble or difficulty was almost sure to come to him for aid

and counsel, and there are some still living who have told me of the ready cordiality with which his assistance would always be given.

And yet he was not universally popular. His manners were abrupt, his voice was loud, and in everything to which he set his hand he had an unconscious habit of predominance, which, perhaps, did not sufficiently consider the susceptibilities of less capable people. He had eccentricities, too, and absent-minded ways, which often raised a smile at his expense, whilst his temper was as hasty as it was generous. There were many people in Stowey who thought there was nobody like him, and who would say so with tears in their eyes; but there were always some who considered him a rather overbearing person, and remembered his revolutionary opinions with perpetual disapproval.

But there is something touching in the fact that it is this rough-hewn Tom Poole, by this time generally, and not without reason, considered as a confirmed old bachelor, who, in the course of his plans for serving the poor, is found to be the first person in the Stowey neighbourhood to devote time and pains to the formation of a Female Friendly Society. Such societies, under various names, are common enough now; but in Tom Poole's day, an association for giving special aid to working *women* in times of sickness, in child-

birth, in widowhood, and in old age, was a new departure, and a good deal of tact and experience was needed to make the first beginnings possible and acceptable. Poole's society was based on the idea of encouraging thrift and self-help; every member was to be a subscribing member, and the larger contributions of the rich were to meet and supplement the modest payments of the poor. He took infinite pains in drawing up the articles of association, which were submitted to Mr. Rickman's supervisal, and began by enlisting in the cause the principal county lady in the immediate vicinity, Mrs. Acland of Fairfield, who inaugurated the first branch of the Society at Stogursey (Stoke de Courcy), a little town of somewhat similar calibre to Stowey.

The thing worked, did good, and became very popular, and a second branch was almost immediately formed at Stowey, where, I am told, it still exists, and continues to be useful. Tom's head and heart were full of the matter when Coleridge came to him in 1807, and it was quite in keeping with all his antecedents and sympathies that, far from regarding such an association as a dull parochial detail, a mere instance of the machinery of charity organisation, he too became cordially interested, and on a certain afternoon when, in the fashion of village clubs and Free-

masons, the Female Friendly Society walked to church to hear a sermon from Mr. Starkey, 'on the occasion of their first anniversary,' it is still remembered that 'Mr. Coleridge,' then staying with Tom Poole, supplied a motto for the Society's banner which has been used ever since—

'Foresight and Union
linked
by Christian Love
Helped by the Good below
and Heaven above.'

The procession was to start at four o'clock, 'all the ladies of the town heading it, and the gentlemen looking on.' After church the gentlemen were to join the Society, and to drink tea with them. Was S. T. C., one wonders, among these gentlemen?

Josiah Wedgwood's letter, quoted above, is dated July 26. On the very same day, Cottle, too, was writing to Tom Poole a note of introduction, describing 'the bearer, Mr. De Quincey,' as 'a Gentleman of Oxford, a scholar and a man of genius,' who felt 'a high admiration for Coleridge's character,' and desired to make his acquaintance.

Coleridge was just then absent, but De Quincey was not slow to recognise in Poole 'a person well deserving a separate notice.' He goes on

to say¹ that, 'as Coleridge afterwards remarked to him,'

' . . . Poole was almost an ideal model for a useful Member of Parliament. I found him,' he says, 'a stout, plain-looking farmer, leading a bachelor life in a rustic, old-fashioned house; the house, however, upon further acquaintance, proving to be amply furnished with modern luxuries, and especially with a good library, superbly mounted in all departments bearing at all on political philosophy; and the farmer turning out a polished and liberal Englishman, who had travelled extensively, and had so entirely dedicated himself to the service of his humble fellow-countrymen, the hewers of wood and drawers of water in this southern part of Somersetshire—that for many miles round he was the general arbiter of their disputes, the guide and counsellor of their difficulties; besides being appointed executor and guardian to his children by every third man who died, in or about the town of Nether Stowey. . . .'

Poole took De Quincey to visit Alfoxden, and invited him to stay till Coleridge should return, but after two or three days of expectation, he determined to follow him to Bridgwater, where, in a man of remarkable appearance, standing, lost in thought, under an archway, he speedily recognised one who could be none other but the person he sought, and experienced that easy accessibility, that

¹ In his *Autobiographical Sketches* (Recollections of the Lakes, 1863, p. 41).

winning readiness to give himself forth, that simple taking a high standard of comprehension and receptivity for granted in those who sought him, that made Coleridge so lovable wherever he was understood and known. He was beginning to be understood and known in Bridgwater, and De Quincey has left an attractive picture of the 'lively esteem' with which he was regarded. Those 'smiling recognitions,' those friendly 'inquiries after his health' from first one and then another of the groups of townspeople who were 'abroad to enjoy the lovely summer evening,' must have been almost medicinal to Coleridge, whose nature craved the goodwill of his fellows, and had often smarted cruelly under their judgments and misjudgments; and yet how sad, upon the whole, was the impression carried away by De Quincey of one plunged in cheerless despondency and perpetually weighed down with gloomy thoughts. It may be that even that visit, to a larger town than Stowey, and out of reach of Poole's personal watchfulness, was the occasion of a falling back into old evil habits which we may suppose at Stowey had been almost given up or altogether suspended. De Quincey has recorded the passionate warning against the use of opium, as the beginning of a bondage wretched beyond all description, that was addressed to himself. There can be little

doubt that the condition of pecuniary embarrassment hinted at in the subjoined letter to Sir H. Davy, was mainly, perhaps entirely, due to this one cause, and though De Quincey's gift, soon afterwards conveyed to him anonymously through Cottle, might relieve the momentary pressure of money difficulties, it could not touch the fatal infirmity from which they and so many others sprang.

It was towards the end of August that Sir Humphry Davy sent the following message in a letter to Tom Poole :—

‘ . . . If Coleridge is still with you, will you be kind enough to say to him that I wrote, nearly a week ago, two letters about lectures, and not knowing where he was, I addressed them to him at different places. I wish very much he would seriously determine on this point. The Managers of the Royal Institution are very anxious to engage him; and I think he might be of material service to the public, and of benefit to his own mind, to say nothing of the benefit his purse might receive. In the present condition of society, his opinions in matters of taste, literature, and metaphysics must have a healthy influence; and unless he soon become an actual member of the living world, he must expect to be brought to judgment “for hiding his light.” . . . ’

In reply, Coleridge,—after a sorrowful preface in which he speaks with profound admiration of Davy as being one to whom he ‘could not justly equal’ any other person, as ‘combining in one

view, powers of intellect and the steady moral exertion of them to the production of direct and indirect good,' and of himself as bowed down with 'shame and self-reproach' for having profited neither by his counsels nor his example,—goes on to say that 'for some days past' he has felt himself so much better in body and in mind as almost to justify a hope that the 'morbid and oppressive weight is gradually lifting up,' and his will 'acquiring some degrees of strength and power of reaction.' Mrs. Coleridge and the children had gone to Bristol towards the end of July, whilst he stayed on at Stowey in the tranquil enjoyment of his old friend's society.

' . . . I have,' he continues, 'received such manifest benefit from horse exercise, and gradual abandonment of fermented, and total abstinence from spirituous, liquors, and by being alone with Poole, and the renewal of old times, by wandering about among my dear old walks of Quantock and Alfoxden, that I have seriously set about composition, with a view to ascertain whether I can conscientiously undertake, what I so very much wish, a series of Lectures at the Royal Institution. . . .'

And, having 'discussed the subject with Poole,' he had come to the conclusion that in a course of lectures on the Principles of Poetry he might give 'the whole result of many years' continued reflection on the subjects of taste, imagination, fancy,

passion, the source of our pleasures in the fine arts, in the *antithetical* balance-loving nature of man, and the connection of such pleasures with moral excellence.' He had his materials ready; nothing was needed but to reduce them to writing, and to begin this he should have no objection to pledging himself at once, but that he was so 'surrounded by embarrassments' as to be incapable of making any final promise before the end of the month.¹

How earnestly Tom Poole would use, and even *strain*, his influence, to get Coleridge to begin his task of arrangement, may be easily imagined; how far he succeeded may perhaps be gathered from a little oblong piece of paper, merely a slip torn from some old letter, which I think is the saddest, as well as the most precious, of the memorials of this last visit to Stowey. It is endorsed by Poole 'Reply of Coleridge on my urging him to exert himself, 1807,' and contains just two lines, and the name 'Coleridge,' written below them, apparently in Poole's handwriting—

'Let Eagle bid the Tortoise sunward soar,
As vainly Strength speaks to a broken Mind !'

COLERIDGE.

But it was, perhaps, only when the actual call to exertion came that poor Coleridge realised

¹ Coleridge to Sir H. Davy, September 11, 1807, printed in *Fragmentary Remains of Sir H. Davy*.

the state of incapacity to which he had reduced himself. Here is a memento of a very different kind, which shows that Stowey air had still something of its old power to set him talking nonsense, and poking grotesque fun, just as he used to do. It is merely a few lines of doggerel verse, scribbled on the back of a letter,¹ in ridicule of Poole's way of walking over his farm, and making perpetual pauses to contemplate crops or cattle, and then contriving that every road and pathway about Stowey should include a possibility of going round by Enmore, where 'the Marshmillians,' as he called them, were now established at the Parsonage,—all except Penelope, who had married and gone away to live in Shropshire:—

'Relative to a Friend remarkable for *gœorgoepiscopal* Meanderings, and the combination of the *utile dulci* during his walks to and from any given place, composed, together with a book and a half of an Epic Poem, during one of the *Halts*—

'Lest after this life it should prove my sad story
That my soul must needs go to the Pope's Purgatory,
Many prayers have I sigh'd, May T. P * * * * be my guide,
For so often he'll halt, and so lead me about,
That e'er we get there, thro' earth, sea, or air,
The last Day will have come, and the Fires have burnt out.

'JOB JUNIOR,

'*circumbendiborum patientissimus.*

¹ Endorsed by T. P. 'On my Walks. Written by Col. : September 1807.'

'P.S.—Shortly will be published a new road map of the country between N. Stowey and Enmore, comprising many pleasant new roads from the former place to the latter, by way of Ferriton, Fairfield, Cummage, etc.'

No doubt these endless walks and talks must have been to Poole the crowning pleasure of these summer weeks. But in spite of the jocosé tone of these lines, the general character of the conversation, if Coleridge's talk can ever be termed *conversation*, must have been, almost certainly, very serious. Religion, metaphysics, and poetry, not politics, seem to have been at this time his main topics, with an especial bent towards the first. The conversations reported by Cottle, and more particularly the fine letter¹ dated 'Bristol 1807,' show that 'reflection and reading, particularly the Bible,' together with the terrible lessons of life itself, 'sorrow,' and 'ill-health,' and 'disappointment,' and last, and worst of all, the ever-present consciousness of his own 'fallen nature, and of the incapability of man to heal himself,' had worked a deep and far-reaching change in his religious views, making him thoroughly sensible of the inadequacy of the Unitarian conception of the Saviour, and bringing him to a complete belief in Jesus, as the Divine Son, 'able to save to the uttermost all who come

¹ Cottle's *Reminiscences*, p. 314.

unto God through Him.’¹ This great advance in spiritual enlightenment seems first to have become known to his friends in the west of England during the summer and autumn of 1807. Evidently his mind was full of it, and, as was ever his wont, he poured himself forth out of the abundance of his heart. He was full, too, of the thoughts suggested by reading Archbishop Leighton, of whom he has said that ‘if there could be an intermediate space between inspired and uninspired writings, that space would be occupied by Leighton.’ We all know the use that he afterwards made in his *Aids to Reflection* of quotations from this favourite writer, as a channel for conveying his own principles, and we may be sure that he failed not to ask his more congenial friend at Stowey, as he asked Cottle, ‘whether he was familiar with Leighton’s works’; and to enlarge on the beautiful character of the old divine, who ‘resigned his Archbishopric, and retired to voluntary poverty, on account of the persecutions of the Presbyterians,

¹ But in spite of his preachings at Unitarian chapels, did S. T. C. ever actually regard Christ from the Socinian point of view? Note C. Lamb’s scruples over the ‘religious letter,’ which was indeed an ‘inestimable treasure’ in his hour of distress, but still—‘You say,’ writes Lamb, ‘you are a temporary sharer in human misery, that you may be an eternal partaker of the divine nature. What more than this do those men say who are for exalting the Man Christ Jesus into the second person of an unknown Trinity? . . .’—Lamb to Coleridge, October 24, 1796.

saying "I should not dare to introduce Christianity itself with such cruelties, how much less a surplice and the name of a bishop."'¹

But talk of what he would, Coleridge always left the same impression. He '*talked very much like an angel*,' said Lord Egmont to De Quincey, and it does appear rather strange that it so seldom occurred to anybody to write careful notes of some of those splendid monologues. People listened with wonder and admiration, and said what a pity it would be should such a man vanish like an apparition, and leave those who had known him with 'the usual fortune of ghost-seers,'—an absolute want of power to make others believe their report; but while every one was sorry that Coleridge could not be persuaded to sit down to the production of 'some great monumental work,' very rarely did any one take pen in hand when the marvellous display was over to try to preserve what could be recollected. H. N. Coleridge, indeed, did so at a later period, and Sara Coleridge herself has left her regrets on record that she never attempted it.

Writing was probably *always* a distasteful effort to Coleridge, except when he poured himself forth spontaneously in letters to individual

¹ These extracts are made from a letter written to Cottle in 1807. *Reminiscences*, p. 315 (second edition, 1848).

friends. To give forth *vocally* was his proper calling; the labour of writing down ought to have been performed by those who heard him. Tom Poole once called him a 'meteor'; on Lord Egmont he produced, as we have seen, the effect of an apparition. He was, indeed, amongst men as, in some sense, a being from another sphere, gifted, it is true, with marvellous sympathies, but strangely helpless in connection with the hard facts of mortal life, stumbling and falling, and becoming wretchedly entangled, chiefly through a curious want of command over his own humanity, with its burden of pain and perpetual cravings; but always, even in the days of his worst bondage, carrying with him a certain atmosphere of the Divine, which had, and still has, an upward-drawing influence, a spell we recognise, if we cannot exactly put it into words, upon all who possess in their own natures the needful power of response. What the world in general would say and think of such an one is obvious, and scarcely needs to be remarked upon. It was difficult even for those who loved him best not to be hard on him sometimes.

One half-sheet of paper does exist, covered with notes in Coleridge's own handwriting, and headed by Tom Poole with the words:—

'The following was written by Coleridge after a warm conversation concerning Miracles, 1809.'

A note to Miss Cruikshank, written about September 21, 1807, preserved in Mr. Cosens' Collection, shows that the topic was probably suggested by some book on the subject of miracles, just then circulating in the Stowey Book Society, for Coleridge apologises for having made marginal annotations, under the impression that the volume belonged to Tom Poole.

'I had no suspicion that the book was a Society Book,' he writes. 'Mr. T. P. had repeatedly entreated me to write notes in his books, and I had written such notes (especially in Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacrae*¹) as precluded to *him* all possibility of misconception. I regret the accident, because I am aware that the words were not cautiously chosen, though I meant no more than to point out the false logic of the writer, and then passed off to a general reflection. . . .'

The offence in question must, I think, have been committed very nearly at the end of Coleridge's visit to Stowey. His letter to Davy was written on September 11, and the thought of the Lectures at the Royal Institution made him restless. He resolved to go up to London to see Davy himself on the subject, and within three days he had left Stowey and had joined his wife at Bristol. The following extract from Poole's Second Copying-book is headed 'To Col., September 14,

¹ Now in the British Museum. The annotations were printed by Dr. Garnett a few years ago, in the *Athenaeum*.

1807,' and seems to have been written under the influence of recent habits of companionship in thought and feeling, which delighted to communicate even passing impressions of enjoyment and admiration :—

'The weather is delicious here. I yesterday rode up from the marsh by the river-side near Cummage. The day was veiled with soft, thick clouds ; the air mild, and so still that not a leaf moved. The lazy tide glided between the sand-banks just rising out of the bottom of the river, and on which, here and there, a vessel was stuck, but not a word heard on board either of them. A fisherman had stretched his whole length at the bottom of his boat, waiting, with two rods and lines out, the coming of the fish. . . . At a distance were tops of houses and vessels, among trees. All still. Nothing could exceed the tranquillity of the scene. It was not asleep, but oh, how silently awake.'

But this letter was never answered—perhaps it was not even read. Coleridge was gone, and in a very little while it was almost as though he had never been, for not a word reached Tom Poole from him or his until the following December, when a letter arrived from Mrs. Coleridge, who, from this time forward, continues to write regularly, about once in twelve months.

'KESWICK, *December 28, 1807.*

'MY DEAR SIR—If Coleridge has not written to you lately, I guess, from the interest you have always taken

in our concerns, you will not think a few lines, even from my feeble pen, an unpardonable intrusion. But where shall I begin? I cannot endure to presuppose your never having heard anything of us since C. left your most hospitable dwelling: yet what is more likely?

'However, when he at length joined us at Bristol in such excellent health and improved looks, I thought of days "lang syne," and hoped and prayed it might continue. Alas! in three or four days it was all over. He said he must go to town *immediately* about the Lectures, yet he stayed three weeks without another word about removing, and I durst not speak lest it should *disarrange* him.

'Mr. de Quincey, who was a frequent visitor to C. in College Street, proposed accompanying me and the children into Cumberland, as he wished much to pay Wordsworth and Southey a visit. This was a pleasant scheme for me, only I was obliged to give up my visits at Birmingham and Liverpool, which I was rather loth to do, but it was a small evil when set against the great convenience of travelling all the way in chaises, and under the protecting wing of kind Mr. de Q. Towards the end of October, accordingly, I packed up everything, C.'s things (as I thought, for London) and our own, and left Bristol. We [reached] Chester the third night, and the next day got to Eastham, and crossed the passage to Liverpool, where we all stayed four days, and had the pleasure of hearing Madame Catalani sing, and afterwards being in her company. She is handsome, and her manner is exceedingly lively and engaging. . . .

'On the second night we all arrived at Grasmere [Wordsworth's], and they wishing us to stay a night, we

sent back the chaise to Ambleside, and ordered it for the next afternoon. At Keswick they were all in expectation of us, and, though it was quite dark, they were out with lanterns to light us through the fields, and trying which should get us out first. . . .

‘Now for C. I left him (as I thought) ready to jump into the mail for London. Lo! three weeks after I received a letter from him dated White Horse Stairs [Cellar], Piccadilly; he was just arrived in town, had been ill, owing to sitting in wet cloaths, had passed three weeks at the house of a Mr. Morgan, and been nursed by his wife and her sister in the kindest manner.

‘C. found Davy very ill. The Lectures on that account were postponed. Stewart had insisted on his being at the Courier Office during his stay in town. . . .

‘Southey bids me say that he hopes to pass a couple of days with you in the Spring. He and his brother Tom leave this place in February for London, where Southey will stay a month and then travel westward. I shall be cruelly disappointed if you do not fix the time with him for coming to Keswick, and I hope you will stay a great while, for you cannot see the Lakes in a flying visit. Tom Southey often talks of the extreme comfort of your house, in which I join most cordially, and the children talk for evermore of the happiness of Stowey. . . .’

In January 1808, writing to congratulate Davy on his recovery, of which he has heard by a letter from Purkis, Poole adds that the same letter tells him of Coleridge's having actually delivered his first lecture at the Royal Institution.

'Purkis,' he says, 'speaks highly of the Lecture and its effects. I heretofore thought Coleridge might employ himself in something more permanently important than lecturing on such subjects as he would lecture on at the Royal Institution. But from my more intimate knowledge of his present state and habits, I am now convinced that he *cannot* exert himself to better purpose, and further, that nothing whatever is more likely to stimulate him to exert his matchless powers (so he is constituted, and so morbid feelings oppress him) than the reading his productions to such an audience.

'He may make these productions what he thinks proper. One of the best books in the language was delivered in lectures—I mean Blackstone's *Commentaries*. Blackstone had to digest law, as C. has now to digest poetry. Blackstone's materials were the arbitrary, contradictory, accidental, too often vicious suggestions of human wisdom—dry bones of which genius even could only form a skeleton, and miserably out of joint at last. Coleridge's materials are the expression of human feelings affused with the Divine Spirit, which must ever be as durable as our nature, and the present mercy of God to man. With such a subject in such hands, what may we not hope? May he succeed, and may he and you, my dear Davy, and such as you, eminently appointed by God to unfold His workings in spirit and in matter, faithfully fulfil your destiny, and ever walk in Heaven while you are upon earth, so that the transition may finally be insensible. . . .'

Genius in Poole's estimation was a great gift of God.

‘I must acknowledge Genius with me (and I know it does with you too, in your heart),’—thus he wrote to Rickman about the same time—‘covers everything but gross vices, and is the only thing that allows me to be tolerant of great errors. Perhaps in this sentiment you think me too tolerant, and too intolerant. . . .’

CHAPTER IX

'Were it but for the remembrance of him alone, and of his lot here below, the disbelief of a future state would sadden the earth around me, and blight the very grass in the field.'

Coleridge, of Thos. Wedgwood—'The Friend,' i. 196 (1844).

WITH the Autumn of the year 1808 we come to the end of Mr. Tom Poole's copying-books, commonplace books, or whatever else may be the appropriate name of the two large manuscript volumes in stiff marbled paper covers, wherein so much valuable biographical material has been preserved that the difficulty has been not so much what to use as what to select. The last volume, which begins in April 1805, and ends in September 1808, is in itself a kind of epitome of Poole's life at this period, with its various interests, occupations, and sympathies. Notes on the Poor Laws, letters to Rickman, the articles of the Female Friendly Society, written out at length with many erasures and corrections, are intermingled with scattered notices of Coleridge, letters

almost purely literary to Sir Humphry Davy, to Southey, and to others of less note, with remarks on the prospects of the tanning trade, with the expression of strong and usually indignant feeling in politics, and with outpourings of personal sympathy and tenderness, such as the last letter he ever wrote to T. Wedgwood, which drew forth a message from the dying man that it had, almost in his last moments, 'soothed and consoled him,' and that he sympathised entirely in the views that it unfolded. 'He wished you to know,' adds Josiah, in his formal way, writing to Poole to announce his brother's death,¹ 'that it did your head and heart equal honour, in his estimation.' In another letter of Poole's we have the announcement of the death of a young nephew, his sister's eldest boy, named after himself, of an infectious fever; and Poole tells how he had, as usual, shared the task of nursing, and how he could not express the sorrow he felt for the loss of 'as promising a boy as to understanding and feeling, and as fine a person of eight and a half as he ever saw.' Later in the year he writes that the little girl who was ill at the same time has recovered, and that his sister 'is since put to bed, and is with her little one as well as can be expected,' but both parents were still 'much de-

¹ Josiah Wedgwood to Thomas Poole, July 11, 1805.

pressed,' and the father especially seemed quite unable to bear his loss with fortitude.

This bit of family intelligence forms the opening of the letter in which Poole complies with Josiah Wedgwood's request for aid towards the proposed biography of his brother Thomas :—

'I should have answered your letter before,' he says, 'but I thought it necessary to look over all the letters I had of your brother's, . . . this I have been prevented doing till now by Tobin's being with me, and Rickman and his sister. . . . The most interesting of the letters I have selected and sent this day by coach, and I hope, if they should even go to the East Indies, you will take care they are returned to me some time or another. . . . You desire me to communicate any facts relative to him which may have occurred in the course of our intimacy. In such a noiseless and domestic intercourse as ours, it is difficult to select prominent facts. During the eight or nine years that I knew him, he was incessantly struggling with that disease which at last put an end to his life. And he did struggle with a resolution and an activity that showed the variety and strength of his mind. . . . To recover his health what did he not do! In addition to every resource of medicine, he tried the effects of every state of being, from perfect repose to even the severest manual labour. I recollect once finding him at Comb Florey digging down a hedge with a heavy sort of mattock that we call a Bisgay, to use which requires great exertion. "Oh," said he to me, "how cheerfully would I continue thus from morning to night,

if I could enjoy such health as that man possesses," pointing to a labourer who was near us. If change of scene or climate was recommended, weak as he was, neither distance nor seas nor dangers deterred him. Witness his passage to the West Indies, his excursions to the Continent, and his frequent change of place even in the severest weather in this country. If peculiar abstinence as to quantity of food or drink, or from any particular sort of either, was thought advisable, he assented without a murmur, and submitted to the restraint without a thought of deviation. At one time I recollect him living wholly on animal food without a morsel of bread; at another wholly on bacon with a little vegetable food. In the latter years of his life . . . when the medical men had pronounced their kind but usual expression of despair, "You may do what you like," he consulted his weak appetite, and perhaps no man hit upon a greater variety of combinations in cookery than he did. These were commonly very simple, and often proved new, palatable, and economical dishes for general adoption. I have several which I introduce frequently; as, for instance, rice-macaroni,—that is, rice dressed like macaroni. In this way he laboured on his life, and a heavy labour it was; often has he told me nothing but a sense of duty could induce him to exist an hour.

‘As to his intellectual acquirements, they were so much beyond, and so much out of the line of my own, that it would be presumption in me to attempt appreciating them. But the natural vigour and acuteness of his mind to whatever subject it was applied, every one immediately felt. Nothing could escape his quickness of perception, nor no subtlety elude the rigid analysis he

was in the habit of applying to men's feelings and motives. This sort of investigation was his delight; often, when unable to speak, he would be tracing back effect and cause to a distance where few could follow him, and by abstracting his mind from his debilitated body, obtain some respite from pain.

'The next trait . . . most prominent in his intellectual character, was his love for, and patronage of, the useful and fine arts. Whatever was ingenious, whatever was rationally gratifying to any of the faculties of man, was sure to meet with his attention and encouragement. His life was a series of those attentions and encouragements, directed with no less judgment than liberality. Merit was all he sought, and it was received by him with open arms, whether found in the simplest labourer or mechanick, or in the author of the highest specimens of the human powers. He could give appropriate sympathy to a fine poem—an acute and abstruse investigation—a good picture or impressive statue; or to the turning of a furrow—the pinion of a watch—the construction of a culinary utensil. To all these subjects he brought correctness of judgment, and to the higher ones an indescribable delicacy of taste. . . .

'In his moral character Benevolence was the great trait. It was his passion; if ever his reason was for a moment subdued, it was by his benevolence. To see happiness was his greatest happiness. To love and to be conscious of being worthy to be loved—nay, to be certain that he was beloved by all who knew him well—these considerations were, I believe, the source of the only positive pleasure which he felt during the latter years of his life. . . .

'It was not only to the objects which immediately

came before him, or were proposed to him, that his benevolence was extended, but while sitting confined to a chair, more like a man dead than alive, his mind went abroad in pursuit of its favourite gratification. While I was in London in December I received a letter from him exhorting me to speak to some distinguished character whom he mentioned, to put forward a subscription in favour of those of our countrymen at that time detained in France, offering himself to subscribe whatever circumstances may make proper.

‘But when this Benevolence was prompted by a positive duty, with what zeal did he proceed to the performance of that duty? In 1802, when every man, feeling for the honour and safety of our country, appeared ready to come forward in its defence, he said to me: “I think, as my health will not permit me to serve in person, it is my duty to serve by my purse. I have therefore made an offer to raise a company of volunteers, and clothe them at my own expense.” . . . I need not add the offer was accepted, and the company has ever since existed in Cumberland, without Government incurring any charge whatever. I suppose of all instances of zeal in the public cause at that period, this was the freest from personal considerations. The company was raised in a neighbourhood where he was almost unknown, where he had no views, present or future, of influence. He understood there was a generous spirit in that neighbourhood, without the means to manifest itself: he supplied the means.

‘Perhaps if there ever was one man more than another capable of forming and maintaining a cordial and affectionate friendship, it was your brother. He entered with

so much zeal into the feelings of his friends, that in all their concerns and interests he seemed to take upon him their very being. He may be truly said to have given them himself, he was so prodigal of his faculties in their service. I need not go beyond my own experience for proof of this.

‘Next to his Benevolence, the most striking part of his moral character was a certain simplicity and naturalness in his manners and feelings. His high and varied acquirements, his active and exalted intellectual discipline, his mixing by turns with the gay and fashionable, as well as with the literary, scientific, and common world, had not diminished the freshness of his mind, or his relish for simple enjoyments. . . . His manners always struck me as more natural, and at the same time more elegant, than those of any other man I had seen. They were always the same, yet never out of place ; always graceful, acceptable, and intelligible to all ranks. In conversation he chose the most simple terms to express himself, admiring in particular that part of our language which we derive from the Saxons. . . . In conversing with him you were struck with . . . the neatness of his narrating, and the facility with which he would make a plain understanding comprehend and relish abstract and difficult subjects. He loved human nature ; but he despised its affectations and follies, and hated its grossness and its vices. The last conversation I had with him, and which I shall never forget, may be almost called his dying words on that head. His life proved that he acted on the sentiments declared in that conversation.

‘If the above should ever be read by one who did not know your brother, it may be asked if he had no faults.

I know of none. I believe all I have written to be true. *O si sic omnia!*—barring his sufferings. . . .’

The last paragraph is crossed out, and perhaps was never sent ; but, long as the letter is, it is so characteristic of the reverence, as well as the affection, felt by Poole for Tom Wedgwood, and it gives so pleasing a portrait of one who was amongst the dearest of his friends, and of whom the little that is known has only excited a general desire to know more about him, that I have given it almost in full.

Very early in the pages of the Second Copying-book we come upon a letter addressed to ‘John Chester, Redruth, Cornwall,’ which is evidently an answer to a proposal for the re-working of an abandoned copper mine, known as the Buckingham mine, and situated about a mile from Nether Stowey. Poole has already spoken to several people upon the subject, but they seemed ‘averse to the business,’ and he does not think many would be likely to join in such an undertaking. The high price of copper is, doubtless, a great encouragement to mining, but then, he believes the expenses of working a mine to have increased also. Still—

‘ . . . I know no men on whom I should more rely in a business of this sort than on Mr. Jenkins and Captain Samuel Gross, and hearing from you their opinion

that the Mine would probably pay for working, and having heard often before Captain Sam's opinion, I for one should be by no means backward in the business, *provided others in this neighbourhood* would also come forward. But, as I said before, I have little hopes. . . .'

So wrote Poole, not, as it would seem, very eagerly interested, but any scheme for the development of the resources of his own neighbourhood would be so naturally congenial to his mind that we cannot be surprised to find him very soon becoming one of the chief promoters of the undertaking. A lease is obtained from the Marquis of Buckingham, who himself becomes one of the 'Adventurers,' and Poole writes to Purkis and to Rickman and to Josiah Wedgwood, asking them to take one or two of the sixty-four shares into which the mine is to be divided. As the total expense of making 'an effectual tryal'¹ is estimated at from £3000 to £5000, the loss upon each share, says Poole to Rickman—

'Supposing the money all lost, which is quite out of the nature of the thing, cannot be more than £78:2:6, and the gain may be—I will not say how much. I have detailed the whole business to Purkis and Davy. I should to you, but I was afraid you would laugh at us. I will give you leave if you will join us. . . . I take two shares, and Purkis and his friends four.'

¹ Letters to J. Camplin and to John Rickman.

Rickman immediately consented to take a share, upon the very characteristic pretence that he liked the insecurity of the investment!

‘Chance and speculations of that kind, in moderation,’ he writes,¹ ‘give a wholesome flutter of feeling and appetite for success; it may very well stand in the place of gambling, to which all of us are by nature inclined. It is better, for instance, than paying £100 for five lottery tickets in as many years, the said tickets being notoriously worth only £10 each—two to one against the purchaser. I am glad your calculation of loss is so odd a sum—£78:2:6. This everybody will consent to make £100 in the day of need, if such occurs—if you want larger steam engines, or deeper shafts (or, as you call them in Latin, *Adits*). It would be an additional satisfaction to get a good bargain out of the *Noble* Marquis of B.—What luxury if one could cheat such a personage!’

Josiah Wedgwood, on the contrary, was quite sure that neither he nor any of his family would care to put money into any scheme of the kind. One would hardly imagine that *he* had any touch in his composition of that ‘love of gambling’ to which Rickman thought all men naturally inclined. But the point to notice is the sympathetic nature of Tom Poole, which must impart *whatever* interests him—family troubles, business, politics, plans, even friendships, all must be shared with those whom he loves, and in whose attachment to himself he has confidence.

¹ June 29, 1806.

In return, he takes the keenest interest in all that concerns them, and, in especial, he had that genuine delight in the wellbeing and progress of their children, which never fails to go straight to a parent's heart. More than once his letters record how he goes to meet young 'Jos' Wedgwood on his way to and from school, and how pleased he would be to have him to spend his holidays at Stowey, and what a manly lad he thought him, 'as fit to go through the world, and as interesting a boy as he ever saw.'

'I am very much pleased that you liked what you saw of him,' wrote Josiah in reply. 'I believe one is more gratified by the approbation bestowed on one's children than by any praise of one's self.'

Sure of sympathy from Poole he fills his letters with all sorts of little details of his family life—how his eldest girl has curvature of the spine, and what doctors he 'carries' her to see, and how a recumbent position has been recommended for her, and how bright and patient she is under the tedium of being always on the sofa. Here, too, are some of his anxieties over the education of Jos, which may be read with interest by others besides Tom Poole:—

'If I could determine what will be my son's line of life, I could more easily resolve whether to send him to a public school or not. Perhaps the wisest course he can

pursue would be to follow my business, . . . yet when I consider how improbable it is that a young man should elevate himself to the laborious and minute attention requisite for carrying on a business such as ours with success, unless compelled to it by necessity, I think it would be unwise to give him an education peculiarly suiting such a destination ; yet an education conducted on a different plan may, and probably will, unfit him for the way of life which offers him the greatest chance of pecuniary success. This subject is perpetually present to my mind, but I make no progress towards forming a resolution. I am not satisfied with either alternative ; but when I think of his being a rich, ignorant, ill-bred manufacturer, or a well-educated man moderately provided for, I prefer the latter ; and I shall certainly not place him at the desk for several years, when I daresay he will not chuse to go to it at all. I am going to Carlisle in a few days to meet a lady that we are in treaty with as a Governess. How happy you bachelors ought to be that have none of these anxieties arising from having only a choice of evils, or at least doubtful advantages, with indications too obscure to enable us to chuse with confidence ! Yet my family is of that age which occasions the least anxiety to a parent. What will it be when they feel the passions that are now not formed in their little hearts ? I assure you I am often disposed to envy your light-hearted fraternity, and more especially when I reflect on the horrible times that are fallen upon us. . . .'

' It appears to me that Buonaparte succeeds in a very great degree in his blockade of the Continent,'

he had written in a former letter ; and even such a business as the Wedgwoods' had been 'suffering for the want of a continental market,' though some of their goods did get into Holland, Hamburg, and Italy. 'I have not time to say how ill I think of our affairs, domestic and foreign,' he says on another occasion ; and a little later, 'Our trade is in a wretched state, for a great part of it was to the north of Germany and Holland, all which is completely stopped.' The firm had just bought a house in Dublin, and intended to open a shop there such as they had in London, but with 'no great expectation of success.'

Poole suggests Liverpool rather than Dublin as a good place for a depot. He thinks the wish to extend their home trade 'very rational,' for the home demand, if not the most profitable, is less exposed to accidents than foreign trade. As to Ireland, however,

'I must acknowledge the *political state* of that country would make me hesitate to give large credit there.'

Of 'Jos,' he says—

' . . . With your property, do you never think of putting business out of the question, and allotting it to your second or other sons? In this case, I think I would breed Jos to the Bar, though he never practised. One may fancy, in a concern like yours, each generation may establish an Elder Son as a Man of Property. This, I

grant, is an aristocratic notion, and I don't know if you will like it.'

Poole and Wedgwood did not always see eye to eye in commercial matters, for in questions that concerned the tanning manufacture Poole was far from being unreservedly in favour of Free Trade. Thus in February 1807, when there is a bill before Parliament for repealing that one of the James I. Statutes which forbade the buying of oak bark to sell again, we find him on his way up to London to see what can be done to prevent its passing.

' . . . If the Bark trade is absolutely thrown open,' he writes to Josiah Wedgwood, 'we think we can prove that bark will much exceed its present enormous price; and if this should be the case, the leather trade must be much diminished, or the price of leather much increased; either of which would be injurious to all classes. If you could assist us, I would send you details. . . .'

'I do not know how I could be useful to you,' wrote Wedgwood in reply. 'On general principles I should oppose you, unless some particular circumstances will make the trade in Oak bark an exception to other trades. . . .'

The very last letter in the Copying-book is addressed to Josiah Wedgwood; and although much of it has already been printed in Miss Meteyard's *Group of Englishmen*, it must, I think, also find a place here; amongst other reasons, because it

illustrates the active interest taken by Mr. Tom Poole in a matter of practical husbandry, the attempts, namely, that were being made to introduce the Merino breed of sheep into this country. He had been in correspondence on this subject with M. de Lasteyrie, the President of the French Societé d'Agriculture, as far back as 1802, and M. de Lasteyrie had sent him his book, *Sur les Moutons de Race Espagnole*. Indeed M. de Lasteyrie had very earnestly desired that Tom Poole should be his companion upon his journey into Spain, to collect materials for that work, and had written to him at Geneva proposing that they should agree to meet for this purpose either at Toulouse or Perpignan.

‘Je désirerois beaucoup,’ he writes, ‘que vous fussiez déterminé à faire ce voyage agricultural avec moi. Je crois que vous trouverez des objets de culture qui vous intéresseront, et qui vous seront utiles pour diriger votre culture en Angleterre, quoique les deux climats ne se ressemblent pas sous beaucoup de rapports. Vous trouverez en Espagne des races de bœufs, de chevaux, et de cochons ainsi que des moutons qui pourront vous intéresser, sans compter les différentes méthodes de cultures, qui sont très variées en Espagne, et qui offrent dans plusieurs parties des procédés, dont vous et moi nous pouvons tirer partie pour l’agriculture de notre patrie. J’ai lu tous les ouvrages François, Anglois, et Espagnols qui donnent la description de l’Espagne, ou qui traitent

de son agriculture, et j'en ai fait des extraits que je porterai avec moi, ce qui nous sera d'une grande utilité pour nous guider et pour ne rien laisser échapper de ce qui mérite d'être observé par des cultivateurs. . . .'

He had taken notes, too, on the 'monumens antiques et autres curiosités,' and he understands Spanish, and can speak it enough to get on with ; besides he has a Spanish friend, 'un excellent homme et un bon agriculteur,' who will perhaps accompany them. As to the manner of the journey, they can either hire a carriage, or go on foot, 'accompagné d'un mulet et d'un domestique,'—in any case the expense will not be great.

'Voyez, Monsieur, si votre temps vous permet d'être de la partie. Je serois enchanté de faire ce voyage avec un compagnon comme vous, dont la société me procurera bien de l'agrément, et doublera les jouissances que j'espère trouver. . . .'

M. de Lasteyrie signs himself 'avec affection, votre dévoué ami,' and the whole tone of the invitation shows that Tom Poole, blunt, peculiar, and abrupt as he was said to be, could as easily make himself acceptable, and establish cordial relations with a Frenchman, as he could with his own compatriots, wherever a common ardour in the pursuit of usefulness furnished the necessary basis of sympathy. The Dr. Parry, mentioned in the following letter, was an English agriculturist,

as was also Mr. Tollet. Of course the object of the journey into Cornwall was to obtain increased knowledge of mining, for the special benefit of the 'Adventurers' in the Buckingham mine.

'Soon after I received your last letter I went into Cornwall, going down by the north coast to the Land's End, and returning by Dartmouth. . . . I had a delightful excursion, without an accident or a heavy hour. The finest thing I saw of *pure* nature was Nenance Cove at the Lizard; where Nature and the hand of man were mixed I need hardly mention Mount Bay and Mount Edgecumbe. The business of the mines, and the gigantic machinery employed about them, was extremely interesting; as were also, in an agricultural point of view, the peculiar barrenness of the uncultivated parts of Cornwall, and the peculiar fertility of the cultivated parts. Indeed, I know no soil which is so wonderfully improved by cultivation. It is no uncommon thing to see a field surrounded by waste land not worth 3s. an acre, yielding a rent of £3 an acre. The cultivation is without doubt expensive, but the expense is well repaid. Plantations also are perhaps more profitable than anywhere else, and certainly nowhere more wanted. But the chief attention is turned to mines, *and boroughs*.

'I was much obliged to you for procuring me that interesting account from Mr. Tollet of his fine-woolled flock. I transmitted it to Dr. Parry. . . .

'Too much praise cannot be given to Mr. Tollet for his spirited exertions. Such men deserve a peerage more than any Cornish boroughmongers. Dr. Parry asks me if

I have seen the second edition of Sir F. Eden's pamphlet on the Maritime Rights of Great Britain. It contains, he continues, "on my suggestion, a discussion on the expediency and possibility of employing the means now in our hands for a full supply of our fine-woolled manufactures, without going to Spain for the raw material." I have not seen the pamphlet, but our relations with Spain are wonderfully changed, and the progress of the *moral miracle* working there is so rapid, that perhaps we shall in future be little anxious to find substitutes for Spanish produce. This may be short-sighted policy; but at present we must talk of no competition with Spain, excepting in acts of generosity, and in the love of liberty. Yet it is good to be independent, even of our best friends.

'What a magnificent series of events is passing before us in Spain! . . . I cannot describe to you the interest I take in the Spanish cause. It exceeds everything, except that perhaps which I felt in the first moments of the French Revolution. May the Spaniards obtain perfect liberty, and raise the goddess for the admiration of mankind from that abyss in which the French have left her! But that the Spaniards should be chosen for this achievement would have been the thing most contrary to human prediction six months ago. It seems as if to confound our ability that, in all great dispensations, instruments are chosen whom we should have thought the most inadequate to the work. It is a fine lesson to nations and to governors; teaching the first never to despair, and the last never to tyrannise. It shows with all our inquiry into the subject of Government, how ignorant we are of what are causes to produce certain

effects. Who was aware that a few wretches like the old government of Spain were a cause equal to keep so long in degradation such a people as the Spaniards have shown themselves to be? A good people, we were told, would make a good government ; and a good government a good people. The first clause of the maxim is contradicted in Spain, and probably the second in North America. Certainly the Spaniards were kept in obedience by the abuse of their religion, and by a laudable application of it they have been chiefly now excited. Both are striking instances of the power of this principle, and of the little knowledge of human nature in our modern writers on Government, who (except those avowedly profane) have rather spoken of religion because it was decorous to speak of it, than laid it down, or proposed its being used, as the greatest principle by which man is actuated. . . .'

CHAPTER X

‘Not only did the Plan seem to accord better than any other with the Nature of my own Mind, both in its strength and in its weakness ; but conscious that, in upholding the principles both of Taste and Philosophy, adopted by the great Men of Europe from the middle of the fifteenth till toward the close of the seventeenth century, I must run counter to many Prejudices of many of my Readers (*for old Faith is often modern Heresy*), I perceived too, in a periodical Essay, the most likely means of winning, instead of forcing my Way.’

Prospectus of the *Friend*.

IN December 1808, after more than a year’s complete silence, the correspondence between Poole and Coleridge suddenly re-opens with a letter written almost in the old familiar tone of affectionate security, and which may be an answer to some note of inquiry which has not been preserved, for it seems to take it for granted that the main outline of his intentions in regard to the publication of the *Friend* is already known to Poole. It is written on the fly-leaf of a prospectus.

‘GRASMERE, KENDAL, *December 4, 1808.*

‘MY DEAR POOLE—I will make a covenant with you.

Begin to count my life, as a Friend of your's, from 1st January 1809. I think this is not unfair; for if I ask, on the one hand, an amnesty for all my *omissions* towards you (for I cannot charge myself with any positive acts of wrong), yet, on the other, I abandon all claim on your remembrance of my never-fluctuating love and esteem of you, and zeal to see the whole man of God and his country developed in you.

'In truth, I have been for years almost a paralytic in mind from self-dissatisfaction—brooding in secret anguish over what, from so many baffled agonies of effort, I had thought and felt to be inevitable, but which yet from moral cowardice, and a strange, tyrannous reluctance to make any painful concern of my own the subject of discourse—a reluctance strong in exact proportion to my esteem and affection for the persons with whom I am communing—I had never authorized my conscience to pronounce inevitable by submitting my case, carefully and faithfully, to some physician. I have, however, done it at last,¹ and the result, after a severe trial, proved what I had anticipated; yet such is the blessedness of walking altogether in light, that my health and spirits are better than I have known them for years. But of all this hereafter.

'I have ordered some Prospectuses to be sent to you, I earnestly intreat you to do me what good you can. O, I should be made for ever if *you* would exert for me

¹ Compare a letter from Coleridge to Davy on the same subject, December 1808: 'A very painful effort of moral courage has been remunerated by tranquillity. . . .' It is followed by an amusing letter contrasting the *Friend* with Cobbett's *Weekly Sheet*.—*Fragmentary Remains of Sir H. Davy*, pp. 101-105.

and this work one fourth of the zeal with which you acted for our friend Ackland, [at an election.] (By the bye, send him a Prospectus. But nay, I will send one myself.) . . .

‘My love to Ward. He will do what he can for me. Hereafter I will be a better correspondent. Indeed, indeed, I have never been at ease with myself, without instantly wishing for a nearer communion with you. For as you were my first friend, in the higher sense of the word, so must you for ever be among my very dearest.

S. T. COLERIDGE.’

Poole’s reply has not been preserved ; but it is certain that he took the greatest interest in the *Friend*, and in writing two months later,¹ Coleridge acknowledges some letter that has evidently given him very deep pleasure.

After a first page, which is entirely occupied with the *Friend* (‘You will, I know, exert yourself to procure me as many names as you can, for if it succeeds, it will almost *make* me’), he continues as follows :—

‘I cannot say whether I was—indeed both I and W. W.—more pleased or affected by the whole of your last letter ; it came from a very pure and warm heart, through the mould of a clear and strong brain. But I have not now time to write on these concerns. For *my* opinions, feelings, hopes and apprehensions, I can safely refer you to Wordsworth’s pamphlet. . . .’

¹ From Grasmere, February 3, 1809.

Then in a postscript :—

‘O if you knew what a warmth of unusual feeling, what a genial air of new and living hope breathed upon me as I read that casual sentence in your letter seeming to imply a chance we have of seeing you at Grasmere ! I assure you that the whole family, Mrs. Wordsworth and her all-amiable sister, with not less warmth than W. W. and Dorothy, were made chearful, and wore a holiday look the whole day after. O *do, do* come !’

Wordsworth too, about the same time,¹ wrote an anxious letter to Poole on the subject of the *Friend*, and his fears, nay his certainty, that Coleridge was in no fit state to make himself answerable for the regular appearance of a periodical publication. The *Friend* may indeed appear, ‘but it cannot go on for any length of time—I am *sure* it cannot.’ And yet he does not see that anything can be done either by remonstrance or by advice. He has written to Poole because, as one of Coleridge’s ‘nearest and dearest friends,’ he wishes him ‘to take into most serious consideration Coleridge’s condition, above all with reference to his children,’ and he earnestly and repeatedly expresses his wish that he could come down to Grasmere that summer. There is much

¹ March 31, 1809. The first part of the letter is occupied with W. W.’s explanation of a vexatious delay in the appearance of his *Cintra* pamphlet.

that he would wish to say to him that he cannot write.

One wonders how Poole could resist these appeals, and, indeed, we gather from various allusions¹ that he promised and fully intended not to let the summer go by without visiting Keswick and Grasmere, but as life advanced he had allowed himself to become so entangled in a network of petty claims and duties that he had settled into a habit of believing that he could *never* leave home. Here is an extract from his Copying-book that was written as far back as 1806:—

‘I should like,’ he says to an old friend, ‘to accompany you on your northern tour; but at present my engagements stand round me like a ring round a wrestler, nor will they let me out till I conquer or fall.’

‘What folly are nine-tenths of us guilty of! We allow ourselves to be hooked and chained by every feeling and every passion, till we are fixed to a spot like a criminal on the rack. And what is worse, we hug those chains until we are incapable of enjoying liberty, or until we escape to the next world, hoping (perhaps vainly) to enjoy that in the unknown country of which we deprive ourselves here.’

On the 11th of April Coleridge writes that

¹ ‘Our trio of mountain bards have each been expecting a letter from you to fix the time,’ wrote Mrs. S. T. C. in October, ‘as in your letter to Southey you had given us such full hopes of seeing you.’

the *Friend* is actually ready; the first number will appear on the first Saturday in May. (It did actually appear on the 1st of June.) He will not detail the succession of disappointments, vexations, and delays which have harassed him in making his arrangements, but—

'Do what you can for me, my dear friend,' he concludes, 'by yourself and by your influence, or the influence of your friends, for this is to make or mar me. And be pleased to let me know the names of those whom you have procured as subscribers by the 27th of this month at farthest. May God bless you and

'S. T. COLERIDGE.

'P.S.—By the bye, though this is not the time or place to write about it, yet I cannot help forewarning you that you *must* write me a number for the *Friend* upon that infamous, lace-beslavered set of Lazzaroni, those rascally male servants, in and out of livery, in those stinking Gold and Silver Fish ponds, the Squares and Places and Grandee Streets in London. Likewise an essay on the means by which a man may make his *wealth* conducive to, productive and augmentative of, his *happiness*. You may call it Ariadne's Clue improved, or how a Jason¹ with a Golden Fleece may thread both Minos's Labyrinth, and Jesus's Eye of the Needle. But sans joking, I should like hugely to see an essay of your's on wealth as a means of additional happiness. Some evening throw yourself into a day-dream, suppose yourself with your present notions, information, and desire of information,

¹ *Jason pro Theseus*, a small confusion.—(S. T. C.'s note.)

at the age of 21, and with £20,000 a year. *Live* through 15 years (from 21 to 36); your biography of this should make the first essay. Then from 36 to 55 the second, and from 55 to 70 or 80, or as you like. People it with any probable events—only *be* married, and take precious care *whom*, and have sons and daughters.'

A few days after receiving this letter, Tom Poole sent the following appeal to his Cousin John, writing, like Coleridge to himself, on the fly-leaf of a prospectus of the *Friend*.

'April 19, 1809.

'MY DEAR JOHN—Coleridge has desired me to circulate among my friends the Prospectus on the other side of this sheet. I am accordingly doing it, and urging them with all the warmth that I can to become subscribers to the work.

'To you I can use no arguments (for I need not speak of his abilities), and if I attempted any, it would only be to remove unfavourable prejudices which you may entertain concerning him; and these he alone can remove, and I doubt not he effectually would, if chance obliged you to be two or three days together. I have said to some of my friends: "If you like Coleridge, take in the work; if you do not like Coleridge, *take it in* and he will make you like him." I may add to you, take it in that you may know *why* you do not like him.

'He has promised you his *whole mind*, and, I will venture to say, he will keep his word, for alas! his only error always has been to say openly all that at the moment occurs to him. I need not remark the censures

that most of us would have been liable to, had we acted with the same incaution. . . .'

[Remainder torn away.]

Thus did Poole exert himself to obtain subscribers for Coleridge's new enterprise, to which he also gave very substantial aid by advancing one-third of the cost of the stamped paper. Wordsworth, too, was doing what he could; the feeling seems to have been that if the thing failed it should not be because of any lack of help or sympathy from Coleridge's friends. Mrs. Wordsworth's sister, perhaps, gave the most indispensable aid of all, by acting as his amanuensis, and showing much gentle feminine persistency in insisting upon being dictated to. Poole¹ seems, however, to have urged upon Coleridge the propriety of making some concessions to the popular taste, or rather to the popular *distaste* for depths and difficulties, to which Coleridge replies in the following manner:—

' October 9, 1809.

' MY DEAR POOLE—I received your's late last night, and sincerely do I thank you for the contents. The whole shall be arranged as you have recommended. Yet, if I know my own wishes, I would far rather you had refused me,² and said you should have an opportunity in a

¹ Southey also. See his *Life and Correspondence*, iii. 261.

² The allusion is doubtless to money details. Probably Poole had told S. T. C. that Ward's London brother would collect the subscriptions there. (See Rickman's letter of 17th January 1810, *infra*.)

few days of explaining your motives *in person*, for O, the Autumn is divine here. You never beheld, I will answer for it, such combinations of exquisite *beauty*, with *sufficient* grandeur and elevation, even in Switzerland. Besides, I sorely want to talk with you on many subjects.

‘All the defects you have mentioned I am perfectly aware of, and am anxiously endeavouring to avoid. There is too often an *entortillage* in the sentences and even the thoughts that nothing can justify; and, always almost, a stately piling up of story on story in one architectural period, which is not suited to a periodical essay, or to essays at all (Lord Bacon, whose style mine more nearly resembles than any other in his greater works, thought Seneca a better model for his Essays), but least of all suited to the present illogical age, which has, in imitation of the French, rejected all the *cements* of language, so that a popular book is now a mere bag of marbles, *i.e.* aphorisms and epigrams on one subject. But be assured that the Nos. will improve. . . .’

Again, as in a former letter, he begs for a contribution:—

‘. . . If you have no *particular* objection,’ he says, ‘no *very* particular and *insurmountable* reason against it, do, do let me have that narrative of John Walford, which of itself stamps you as a poet of the first class in the pathetic, and [in] the *painting* of poetry, so very rarely combined. . . .’

‘O but, Poole, do stretch a point and come,’ are his concluding words.

The narrative of John Walford never did

appear in the *Friend*, perhaps because it may have been found too long for what Coleridge calls 'the Procrustes bed of sixteen pages.' It is an account of the tragical fate of a wretched charcoal burner, a man well known to Poole in his boyish days, who, having met with a disappointment in love, drifted into evil courses, and was forced into a disastrous marriage with a poor degraded creature whom he almost loathed, and whom in the end he murdered. It is a terrible record of rural immorality—too painful, I should almost think, for publication; and yet it is characteristic of Tom Poole that he compels the reader to realise that there was in this John Walford, this being of undisciplined impulses and brutal passions, a capacity for better things, and to feel sympathy for him to the very end. And there are certainly vivid, poetic touches. The execution, for instance, which took place on the spot where the crime was committed, 'amidst the beautiful scenery of the Quantock Hills,' is wonderfully described, and yet with what I should call the rudest simplicity. It is pure narration, without one redundant adjective. Ann Rice, the woman whom John Walford had really loved and had been prevented from marrying, suddenly appears 'pale and trembling,' as he goes on his way to the gallows. She 'climbs the cart,' and a few minutes' conversation takes place

between them. She was a girl in service—‘a fine, good girl, and a very clever woman.’ It was understood that their marriage had been broken off by the violent opposition of his mother. At the very last he calls for her again :—

‘ . . . “Is Ann Rice here?” was echoed through the concourse of people. Some one said she was back behind the brow of the hill. They went for her, and she was dragged up, almost lifeless, to the cart, and as she knelt on the straw he bent down his head over her shoulder. They talked together nearly ten minutes, or rather he talked to her. No one heard what passed, nor do I find that she ever mentioned it to any one. The people, intensely interested, had their eyes fixed on them. He raised up his head for a moment, and then bent down endeavouring to kiss her. The officer, who was by, held his arm and said, “You had better not; it can be of no use.” He then snatched her hand, and as she was drawn back, kissed it, some tears for the first time rolling down his cheeks. She was removed, and he, after recollecting himself a few minutes, wiped his face and said, “*I am now ready.*”

‘The usual prayers were read to him. He joined in the Lord’s Prayer and the Belief with an audible voice. After which he stood upon a board put across the cart, and the rope was tied round his neck. He then addressed the people, and said with a loud, firm, unbroken voice : “I am guilty of the crime I am going to die for; but I did it without fore-intending it, and I hope God and the world have forgiven me.”

‘All were amazed—afraid to breathe; the buzz of the

multitude was so hushed that even the twittering of the birds in the neighbouring woods was heard. . . .'

It was when walking with Coleridge and Wordsworth near the spot where the gibbet stood, that Poole had told them what he knew of the 'poor being who was there offered a victim to the offended laws,' and was by them 'requested to draw up the story in writing.' If we are to admit that Coleridge's estimation of it seems rather overstrained, we have only to remember how dear all the memories of that time must have been to him, and how easy it is to over-estimate that which we recal in the midst of a halo of happy associations.

But, as a weekly essay, the *Friend*, like the *Watchman*, was foredoomed to failure. It has none of those superficial qualities which belong to ephemeral successes, and though reflective minds, with a natural affinity for principles, might read it with enjoyment and appreciation, and in the form of a *book*, it was actually destined to a very lasting and far-reaching influence,¹ yet in the periodical

¹ 'A Motive too for honourable Ambition was supplied by the Fact that every periodical Paper of the kind now attempted, which had been conducted with Zeal and Ability, was not only well received at the Time, but has become permanently, and in the best Sense of the Word, popular. By honourable Ambition I mean the strong Desire to be useful, aided by the wish to be generally acknowledged to have been so.'—Prospectus of the *Friend*.

The *Friend* was not well received at the time, but the rest of the prognostic has been fulfilled.

shape it was far too heavily weighted ; it was simply impossible that it should live, being planned, whether as a commercial speculation or as a literary venture, on lines difficult to comprehend, and perplexing to every ordinary understanding.

Wedged into the centre of a foolscap sheet which begins with politics and concludes with the poor laws,¹ we discover, not without interest, Mr. Rickman's opinion on the matter :—

‘I do not ask whether you read the *Friend* with attention,’ he writes, ‘as I believe I perceive that you occasionally furnish matter for it from your cabinet of letters from C. when he was in Germany ; also I guess you supply part of *the Ways and Means*, as I understand Mr. Ward's brother is appointed Receiver. When I call to pay for the twenty numbers I will introduce myself to him. Coleridge, to be sure, is strangely unlucky in his Pay-day, No. 20—which appears entirely unreadable. He should have reserved Mr. Wordsworth's crude didactics for another time, if he must needs insert such mountain lore. 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, or fulfilment of his frequent promises, it must be owned that he often develops sentiments which few

¹ Palace Yard, January 17, 1810.

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, 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 by 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.'

And then Rickman plunges into the usual subject, the question that is an unsolved problem still, in spite of all the thought and work that has been spent upon it:—

'I have asked you about the Poor Laws, and you ask me. The subject is too large for a letter. The outline of my conclusions 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 (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 surprized at myself for having been so long blind to 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. . . .'

'I have read the *Friend*,' wrote Josiah Wedgwood,¹ with a far deeper and more unqualified dissatisfaction, 'but I do not think it will either raise Coleridge's reputation, or do much good, for very few, I presume, can understand it. I am afraid—for as a source of exertion and profit I wish he may continue it—the work is at an end. . . .'

Two months later² he wrote again:—

'It seems the *Friend* is at an end. I fear Col. is a lost man. I do not think any intercourse is likely to take place between him and me. We are so very dissimilar in our acquirements, habits, and pursuits, and now so much estranged, that nothing could restore the degree of intimacy that once subsisted between us, but our being thrown together, which can scarcely happen. I do not know him now. I see the wreck of genius with tender concern, and without a hope. I am myself the centre of a system out of which I have little attraction—not that I want the feelings that would render a more extended communication delightful, but I am so circumstanced that my time and thoughts are pretty exclusively employed on my own objects, and it would be idle to regret what cannot be altered. Nor am I sure that a different state of things would be really for my advantage.

¹ Maer, April 23, 1810.

² Maer, June 26, 1810.

‘I believe your politics and mine agree in the main,’ he continues, drifting off into an entirely different subject. ‘I conceive, as you do, that we can exist only by the interest that is excited by a consciousness of liberty, and by an open discussion of all our concerns. We have done so much better than any other people under institutions apparently corrupted, but perhaps in some degree adapted to the changes of circumstances, that I place no reliance on the plans of *radical* reformers, but should tremble to put what we possess to the hazard of their experiments. I have, however, no doubt that something is called for, and ought to be done. The continuance of the present administration against the decided voice of the people, and in the face of several majorities in the House of Commons, makes a new æra. I am afraid we cannot consider the Catholic question as gained in the opinion of the people, though its friends look upon it as gained in Parliament. On the whole, I look upon our condition as very insecure. I hope you will come and see me if you can. There are more things we have to talk about than can be put in a letter.’

It was indeed the fact that, with the twenty-seventh number (March 15, 1810), the *Friend* had come to a conclusion, the last words being characteristically *to be continued in our next*, a next number that never appeared; and with the *Friend* the renewed correspondence with Poole also suddenly flickers out. A letter from Mrs. Coleridge in August,¹ written, one would say, in the faint hope

¹ August 3, 1810.

that Poole may even yet come northwards, to some extent fills up the blank. She is very unhappy, poor woman.

‘Heaven knows,’ she says, ‘I am so bewildered about our affairs that I know not what to think or what to do.’

And she cannot help writing to ask what has prevented Mr. Poole from performing his promise, and to say how great was her disappointment at not seeing him that summer. Coleridge has been at home for four or five months ‘in an almost uniform kind disposition towards us all.’ His conversation has been greatly admired, his spirits had been, in general, better than she had known them for years, he has been teaching Italian both to the younger Sara and to her mother—only he is doing nothing else.

‘The last number of the *Friend* lies on his desk, the sight of which fills my heart with grief and my eyes with tears.’

Poor thing! One pities her. She scarcely understands that the *Friend* cannot be continued; all she knows of literature is that to some it is a source of regular income, but not to her husband. She turns in a kind of desperation to her husband’s old friend:

‘My dear sir,’ she adds at the close of her letter, ‘no day has passed since the commencement of September that we have not said, O that Mr. Poole were but here!’

But still Poole did not come, and the opportunity passed and Coleridge drifted out of reach—drifted to London, a broken and disappointed man, lost, like a rudderless ship, by what he himself had called ‘a paralysis of the mind’; drifted into the sullen shallows and treacherous quicksands of a wretched, aimless, hand-to-mouth existence, dark and cheerless enough in itself, but darkened into the absolute blackness of despair by the ever-increasing bondage in which he lived, and by the agonies of helpless self-reproach; and drifted, alas, into painful estrangement not only from the home which though ‘he loved no other place’ was yet ‘no home to him,’ but even from the friend who, in kinship of the mind, had ever been to him far more than any other human being ever could be. But there was something in Coleridge’s personality which so seldom failed to inspire strong attachment that he never really knew what it was to find himself friendless in the hour of need; and in this, perhaps the most forlorn period of his life, the Morgans opened to him their hospitable door, and watched over him, and tried to save him from himself, with a long-suffering fidelity and patience which can never be sufficiently admired. He must often have been almost penniless, for the Wedgwood Annuity was devoted to the support of his wife and children; and who shall say what propor-

tion of the fitful earnings of his pen must not have been absorbed in the purchase of the fatal drug that was his bane !

Occasional gleams of light and interest do, however, sometimes come to mitigate the depression of this dreary time, and one of these reaches us when, on January 23, 1813, the tragedy of *Osorio*, recast and renamed as *Remorse*, was successfully performed at Drury Lane. Since the close of the *Friend* no letters seemed to have passed between Poole and Coleridge. There had even been some melancholy, unexplained alienation between them. But now Poole eagerly seized this opportunity to write a few affectionate lines of heartfelt congratulation, and these drew forth an instant response, penetrated with all the old tenderness :—

‘DEAR POOLE—Love so deep and so domesticated with the whole being as mine was to you, can never cease *to be*. To quote the best and sweetest lines I ever wrote—

‘Alas ! they had been Friends in Youth !
 But whispering Tongues can poison Truth ;
 And Constancy lives in Realms above ;
 And Life is thorny ; and Youth is vain ;
 And to be wroth with one we love,
 Doth work like Madness in the Brain !
 And so it chanced (as I divine)
 With Roland and Sir Leoline.
 Each spake words of high Disdain
 And Insult to his heart’s best Brother.
 They parted—ne’er to meet again !
 But never either found another
 To free the hollow Heart from Paining—

They stood aloof, the Scars remaining,
Like Cliffs which had been rent asunder,
A dreary Sea now flows between ;—
But neither Frost, nor Heat, nor Thunder,
Can wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

‘Stung as I have been with your unkindness to me in my sore adversity, yet the receipt of your true heart-engendered lines was sweeter than an unexpected strain of sweetest music, or, in humbler phrase, it was the only pleasurable sensation that the success of the *Remorse* has given me. . . .’

And then comes an outpouring of griefs and difficulties, with some allusion at the end to the withdrawal of the Wedgwood pension, and to the ‘year-long difference between Wordsworth and himself,’ compared with the sufferings of which, he writes, ‘all former afflictions of my life were less than flea-bites.’ They were reconciled, indeed, ‘but—aye, there remains an immedicable *But*.’ Even Mrs. Coleridge, writing to Tom Poole about this time upon the same subject, has insight enough to fear that ‘there never again will be *that* between them that there has been.’ Nor, indeed, does any further correspondence follow this one long letter to Poole, written though it is with all, and more than all, the old heedless impetuosity and want of caution. The mutual affection was unchanged—it quickens at the lightest touch ; but the day of constant communication, whether personally or by letter, is gone by, and gone by never to return.

CHAPTER XI

‘Keep your Friendships in Repair.’

Dr. JOHNSON.

IT was suggested in the first chapter of this work that Mr. Poole must have been endowed by nature with a very large measure of the gift, or faculty, of *friendship*; this has, perhaps, been sufficiently illustrated by innumerable tokens of the warmth and activity of his sympathies, but the unchanging constancy of his attachments is no less remarkably a proof of the same thing. He never tired of his friends or outgrew his affection for them, or showed himself indifferent to those of less illustrious name because he enjoyed the honour of intimacy with some of the foremost men of his time, just as he never tired of his birthplace or grew impatient of the commonplace surroundings of so small a country town as Nether Stowey, because he had known a much wider field of usefulness, and had felt what it was to be borne along by the current

of the great stream of London life. Still, as time went on, he could not escape that inevitable ebb in the tide which is the allotted portion of every human being. That year when Coleridge and Wordsworth both were with him, and both in the glorious dawn of their powers, not yet recognised by the world, but believed in by him with that full energy of faith which is one of the happiest moods of being, could never return again ; it was much, both for him and for them, that they had it to remember. He and they, and with them all the others who in the last years of the eighteenth century had formed, as it were, one body of friendship with them, upon that common basis of the single-hearted enthusiasm for *usefulness* which possessed them all, were now together treading the table-land of middle life, the age of fulfilled ambition and of accomplished achievement, the age, too, of failures and farewells, and of the recognition of impossibilities and limitations which youth is either too happy or too hopeful to foresee. Neither letters nor journals nor notebooks are to be found in much abundance to furnish materials for this portion of Mr. Poole's life. All we know is that he was constantly occupied in the round of local usefulness which he had accepted as the path of service appointed for himself. In 1814 we find Josiah Wedgwood writing to him to ask for a 'rough sketch' of the

‘beautiful school’ that he had built at Stowey, to serve as a model for the school for 200 children which he himself ‘has it in design’ to build at Etruria. It is a short letter, for ‘the opening of the Continent’ has made him very busy. In two or three years he hopes that his son, who has been in Switzerland and France since June, and whom he daily expects to see, on his way to his final session at Edinburgh, will ‘give him some liberty.’ So it appears that the question of ‘Jos’s’ future is settled, and that he has decided in favour of ‘the business.’

Here, too, is a characteristic letter from Mr. Rickman, who evidently writes, when he does write, with all his old freedom and vigour :—

‘PALACE YARD, *February 16, 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 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. Thus in 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 on 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. This puts me in mind of a Somersetshire story I heard yesterday of a Banker, who, starting in business with an empty Purse, effected a *Settlement* of £70,000 on his Wife, and when he had succeeded (after some years of Industry) in getting that Sum into his Hands, lo! he becomes Bankrupt in order to retire upon the said Settlement. . . . I hear most pitiable cases of Ruin have arisen from his fraudulent Bankruptcy. Pray, cannot you persuade some of the Sufferers—there are women among them—to lay the Case before Parliament in the shape of a circumstantial Petition, praying that the House may apply such remedy as in their Wisdom may seem fit? If this does not produce a *Privilegium*, not a *Privilege*, in *favour* of the Rascal, it might lead to some useful Regulation about the Estates of Banker Bankrupts—the most inexcusable of Mankind.

‘I perused your Newspaper with much pleasure. I know you cannot do too much for Mr. Ackland in Somersetshire.—Yours faithfully, J. R.

‘P.S.—What villainous paper I am writing on—Water-mark, 1804!—Store no Sore! what a Mob Lye.’

‘I have sealed my letter without saying how wisely I think you have acted in becoming one of H.M. Justices of Peace. You live for the benefit of a certain circle, which will grow wider, and be more benefited by your more Power—— But don’t be *liberal*; send Rogues to the dirtiest Bridewell you can hear of; and fit up a Little-ease at Stowey.’

By a custom now obsolete Tom Poole was generally known in his own neighbourhood, from this time forwards, as Mr. Justice Poole, and it is by this name that he is even now spoken of in Stowey by those of the aged poor who still survive to remember him. One of these told the present Incumbent of Stowey, by whom the circumstance was mentioned to me, that Mr. Justice Poole was a very father to the poor, but none the less a terror to evil-doers; for with all his pitiful-heartedness he could be inexorably stern to *vice*.

Nor was Poole the only member of the little company of friends, once so jealously misdoubted by the wisecracks of Stowey as notorious harbourers of contraband opinions, who lived to find himself invited to take his seat on the magistrates’ bench.

‘You perhaps do not know,’ writes Mrs. S. T. Coleridge in 1818, ‘that Wordsworth is, like yourself, a *Justice of the Peace*. I spent the Christmas month with him and his family, and many a laugh we had at him about this same “Justice,” which then he had not undertaken, and I think the ladies were much against it,

thinking it would break in upon his poetic musings, and that he would not be able to perform the duties of it; but his son John, a youth in his sixteenth year, a very good, sweet-tempered lad, but without one spark of imagination, or the slightest feeling for the importance of his father's studies, gave it, as *his* opinion, that his father would be employing a part of his time *very wisely* in undertaking the office, for J. Carter, the Clerk, was able to do almost all belonging to the distribution of the Taxes [Stamps]. . . .'

Another of Mrs. Coleridge's letters, dated September 20, 1815, gives an account of a bonfire on the top of Skiddaw in honour of the victory of Waterloo—'Wordsworth and Southey and their families ascended, besides a very large party of ladies and gentlemen;' whilst Sir George and Lady Beaumont viewed the sight from the windows of Greta Hall. 'A splendid thing it was to behold,' writes Mrs. Coleridge, 'and seeing the company descend by the light of torches had a most uncommon and beautiful effect.' But it was a nine hours' expedition, and had been pronounced much too fatiguing for poor young Sara Coleridge, —very delicate, even then,—and she had seen her cousins set out 'with tears in her eyes, protesting that she could perform the thing with the greatest ease, but all set a face against her attempting it.'

Of the general effect of the peace upon the

country, the following letter from Poole to Rickman gives some idea :—

‘STOWEY, *June 28, 1816.*

‘MY DEAR SIR—I have to thank you for various parliamentary Reports, and for your prompt reply while I was in Bath to my Inquiries about the Coroner’s Bill.

‘We think if there were any good reasons for increasing the Pay of Coroners this was not the time to ask for it, and if the Bill as it now stands should get through the Lords, we are glad by your notice of it to have saved 1s. out of 2s. 6d., and the Country, I will venture to say, £20,000 per annum.

‘Where was the watchful opposition to allow this new tax on the Farmer? *The Party* triumphed in gaining a thousand a year the other day from the Irish treasuryship, but *it* and Government would join together to inflict an additional £50,000 a year of taxation on a ruined Class of Men!!!

‘In truth, to increase any species of income-tax now, or rather not to diminish it, is a brutal insult to the mass of suffering now existing.

‘To give you some indications of it : A friend of mine came from the neighbourhood where they have been trying the Rioters. “Why,” said I, “were these people discontented?” “Because,” he replied, “one-half of them had not work, and those who had the Farmers gave tenpence a day to.” There is a rumour of putting forward some mining business in this neighbourhood, in consequence of which poor Miners flock here from all quarters, and give the most deplorable accounts. I saw a letter yesterday from a Miner from Wales begging to know if

work could be found here ; he said he was obliged to work for *a third* part of the wages which he received two years ago—that they met in flocks by day and night, and serious rioting was expected. Their masters could not help them. Many had failed, and Iron was now selling at £8 per ton. It is the same in other branches. A journeyman Tanner from Hampshire called on Mr. Ward the other day,—said his master had gone bankrupt—he could get no employ—he would be glad to work for half wages. Our people here are much distressed ; carpenters and masons, excellent workmen and worthy men, are glad to pick up scanty employment haymaking, and dissolving their engagements with their Apprentices because they cannot find them meat.

‘Is this a time to persist in large establishments, in increasing salaries, and, consequently, in heavy taxation ? It is *now*, and not before, that *the pressure of the War is felt*. The war and its circumstances diminished, as we know, the value of money. Peace has raised it to its natural price, and every species of payment we have to make should now be regulated according to the existing value of money. By this means alone can taxation be reduced ; and not to reduce it now is to inflict a double tax. In spite of everything Government can do (though it may do, or *might have done, much*) there will still be calamity enough in the country, occasioned by the improvident obligations which so many of the most active and most useful part of the community have entered into, whilst money was at its reduced value. These were the people who chiefly employed the labouring classes. Many of them are sunk—more are yet struggling with ruin—and all are terrified. There ought to be a general

sympathy through every part of the community, and *all*, *all* should have their privations.

‘To come to a less gloomy subject. I have read with pleasure your Report of the progress in the Caledonian Canal. If I would have increased any grant, it should have been that to this object, and, indeed, I would have borrowed the money to have done it; for the year’s tolls that would have been gained would have been more than ten times the interest of it. The money expended in objects of this nature is expended the most to my mind.

‘What a sad figure — cuts in the Bedlam business!! From what I recollect of him by meeting him at your house, I should think him, like many other men of genius, a very indolent man; and hence, I suppose, all the abuses under his administration. The Bill proposed for the future regulation of Mad-houses I do not like. I am afraid those permanent commissioners will be another permanent job. Justices in the neighbourhood I should think the best judges of the propriety of licensing, and they might easily have been excited to a more vigilant discharge of duty. It is departing from the genius of our Government, from our greatest glory (as M. Neckar called, in my hearing, the unpaid magistracy of this country), to introduce more *paid* executors of the laws than are absolutely necessary. . . .’

In 1817, Poole enjoyed the delight of once more meeting Coleridge at the house of his old—almost his oldest—friend, Mr. Purkis. Coleridge had then been living for more than a year at Mr. Gillman’s. He writes from Highgate to express

the consolation and pleasure that the meeting had given him :—

‘July 22, 1817.

‘MY DEAR POOLE—It was a great comfort to me to meet and part from you as I did at Mr. Purkis’s ; for me-thinks every true friendship that does not go with us to heaven must needs be an obstacle to our own going thither—to one of the parties at all events.’

Then he begs Poole’s acceptance of a corrected copy of his *Sibylline Leaves* and *Literary Life*—‘and so wildly have they been printed that a corrected copy is of some value to those to whom the works themselves are of any,’—gives some account of the forthcoming third volume of the *Friend*, which he had been ‘strenuously’ advised by Frere to ‘keep within a certain fathom of metaphysical depth,’ and continues as follows :—

‘Hartley has been with me for the last month. He is very much improved ; and if I could see him more systematic in his studies, and in the employment of his time, I should have little to complain of in him, or to wish for. He is very desirous to visit the place of his Infancy, poor fellow ! And I am very desirous, if it were practicable, that he should be in the neighbourhood, as it were, of his uncles, so that there might be a probability of one or the other of them inviting him to spend a few weeks of his vacation at Ottery. His cousins (the sons of my brothers James and George) are very good and affectionate to him ; and it is a great comfort to me to see the chasm of the first generation closing and

healing up in the second. From the state of your sister-in-law's health when I last saw you, and the probable results of it, I cannot tell how your household is situated, otherwise I should venture to intreat of you that you would give poor Hartley an invitation to pass a fortnight or three weeks with you this vacation. . . .'

That such a letter would draw forth an immediate and most affectionate response from Poole hardly needs to be said.

'MY DEAR COLERIDGE,' he wrote,¹ 'I have never for a moment, since I first knew you, ceased to feel that sort of affection for you which neither time nor circumstance can displace. It is that affection which makes the person for whom it is felt a part of yourself. If he is virtuous and prosperous, or wicked and unfortunate, you feel that it is yourself acted upon; and you can no more fail to rejoice in one case, or to mourn and pardon in the other, than you would be insensible to your own good, or uncharitable to your own infirmities.

'This species of affection is felt by the generality of men towards near relations—parents and children, husband and wife, etc.—and I hope, too, by many where no unalterable ties exist. It is, I think, among the best remains of our original resemblance to the Deity.

'Thus feeling towards you, I need not say the pleasure it gave me to meet you, and to meet you *as I found you*.

'Proceed, my dear Friend, in the manner you are going on; as you hardly know my selfishness, you cannot estimate the happiness it will give me.

¹ 'Stowey, ye 31st July, 1817.'

‘I think no circumstance should induce you to leave your *present residence*; and it seems impossible that you can employ your time better (or rather better discharge the duty allotted to you by Heaven) than by pursuing the plan which you have proposed to yourself, and which your friends near you have approved.

‘You are happy in your friends near you. Mr. Gillman is an invaluable treasure. He gives you *himself*; and I respect, I had almost said revere, him for it, and for the feelings which prompt the conduct. Remember me to him with great kindness. . . .

‘Your *Literary Life* and *Sibylline Leaves*, received with your letter yesterday, I shall read with great interest. My best thanks for them; but why had you not written in the title-page *my Title* to the book? Since my return home I have been much engaged, and I have not read your Lay Sermons. You shall in due time hear my opinion of the whole. . . .

‘Tell Hartley it will give me much pleasure to see him; . . . there is no one I more wish to see, and I dare say the *meditative infancy* which used so much to interest me, does not disappear in the young man. There is an old friend of his, Mrs. Rich,¹ who will leap for joy when she hears he is coming. . . . I will introduce him to all your acquaintance, and, among the most interesting, to every Brook, Hill, and Dale, and all which they furnish; not forgetting my own devious Paths, nor the Orchard and *the now* classic old Apple tree bent *earthward*. His excursion to Devonshire will be easy from Stowey, and the happy effect which you hope for will I trust take place. My house, *saving ourselves*, is now quite empty,

¹ His nurse.

and he may come on the shortest notice. . . . I found my sister-in-law at Clifton revived. She still continues there in a sad state of health. My excellent and extraordinary niece bears anxious days and watching nights with great fortitude, and without visibly impairing her good health. Ward has been with his brother at Bruton since Saturday. His wife and *three* delightful girls are quite well.

‘I am very well, but *common property*, as I suppose old Bachelors ought to be, and I need not add, Claimants enough to make me very busy.

‘God bless, and His Spirit direct you. It is the wish of this moment, and the frequent Prayer of your affectionate Friend,

THOS. POOLE.

‘*P.S.*—Mrs. Gillman desired me to transmit copies of some of your letters; I forget of what letters.’¹

The invitation to Hartley was forthwith accepted in a very boyish scrawl. There is a tradition that the young man spent more than one vacation at Stowey, where he was well-known and very popular, though the young ladies of the place either themselves called him the Black Dwarf, or cherished a conviction that that was his nickname at Oxford. They certainly thought him eccentric; but then eccentricity is excusable

¹ I do not know what letters these were, but *in July 1821* Coleridge sends a note by a friend, asking Poole if he has still in his possession ‘the two letters of the biography of my own childhood, which I wrote at Stowey for you, and a copy of the letter from Germany containing an account of my journey to the Harz, and my ascent of Mount Brocken, etc.’ that he would have them transcribed, and send him the transcript.

in a young man who is clever, and writes poetry. Some Stowey ladies still remember being 'seen home' by him one moonshiny night after spending the evening at Mr. Tom Poole's, and when their mother remarked that he need not have taken the trouble on that occasion, for the girls could have come home 'by the light of the parish lanthorn,' meaning the moon, he gave a bright smile and said 'that would be a good subject for a poem.' Hartley's letters to Mr. Tom Poole are full of affectionate messages to all sorts of people in Stowey. Tom Poole had taken much interest in his going to college, and was bearing some small portion of the expense.¹ The progress of her children's education usually formed the main subject of Mrs. S. T. Coleridge's letters, and he had long been aware both of the boy's ability, and also of the eccentric and desultory habits, which excited misgivings whether he would ever be able to achieve the success to which he was naturally entitled. It was Wordsworth who first suggested to him the desirability of making a united effort to send him to the University; and when the matter was at last arranged—

'I have done all in my power,' he wrote, 'to impress upon Hartley's mind the necessity of not trusting vaguely to his talents, and to an irregular sort of knowledge,

¹ £10 a year.

however considerable it may be in some particulars, and of applying himself zealously and perseveringly to those studies which the University points out to him.'

Ill-fated Hartley! It is not without an actual heartache that I can take up a letter¹ which Mr. Poole has endorsed—

'Pleasant letter!!

Pleasant news!!'

He was absent from home when it reached Stowey, and Ward 'cannot refrain from sending it on without any delay,' because of the 'great pleasure' which he knows it will give. It is Hartley's letter announcing the 'joyful tidings' that he is 'fellow elect of Oriel.' It is curious to observe how unformed the writing (and even the spelling) still is, and the letter is signed, 'Your very grateful and sincere little friend, H. Coleridge.' Any one accustomed to read handwriting could scarcely have failed to detect in his the sad tale of great promise without adequate power of fulfilment, of childlike simplicity combined with an only too childlike incapacity for self-guidance, which was to write the hard word *failure* across a life which, under happier stars, might have been so brilliant and so useful. A letter from Mrs. Coleridge, written on 'a folio-sheet,' because she has so much to say, soon arrived to impart the joy that Hartley

¹ Oxford, April 19, 1819.

Coleridge's success had given at Keswick and Grasmere, and to tell of 'little William Wordsworth's' report of the frantic delight of Hartley's old schoolmaster, who 'as soon as he got the letter, rose up, gave a shout, and proclaimed a holiday. The boys all huzzaed, and *there was such an uproar,*' so he told his mother.

Alas! The joy was not of long duration, and the grief that followed, 'sudden as a peal of thunder from a cloudless sky,' was the most cruel that fate could still inflict upon Hartley's father. I fancy no one will think the worse of Poole for the fury of perhaps unreasonable indignation which he ever entertained, at what he considered the ruthless severity of the college authorities. Whether the charges against Hartley Coleridge had been grievously multiplied and magnified, whether he had really been treated with an unjust harshness which would never have been used towards the son of a man of greater social power and position, may very possibly be open to question, but there is no doubt that Mr. Tom Poole thought so, and that, even to the end of his life, the very name of Dr. Coplestone could never be heard by him with patience, or without some fierce word of denunciation of all the authorities of Oriel. One may imagine that he and his Cousin John must have had many a difference of opinion on the subject.

CHAPTER XII

'Thy dying father comes upon my soul
With that same look with which he gave thee to me :
I held thee in mine arms, a powerless babe,
While thy poor mother with a mute entreaty
Fix'd her faint eyes on mine. . . .'

COLERIDGE'S *Osorio*,¹ Act I. Sc. i.

THE place to which Ward forwarded Hartley Coleridge's letter was Wells, where Mr. Tom Poole was staying at the house of his widowed sister-in-law, Mrs. Richard Poole, who had removed from Stowey to Wells for the education of her daughter Elizabeth, the little one who had been born in 1799 amid circumstances of so much sorrow, and whom her Uncle Tom loved almost with the love of a father for an only daughter. From her earliest years she had been observed to be a child of unusually quick parts, and Cousin John of Enmore, the great family authority in matters of education, was known to

¹ Written at Nether Stowey in the same year that Poole's brother died.

have given it as his opinion that 'this little maid ought to learn Greek'; but there were few opportunities in Stowey of learning either Greek or anything else, whilst at Wells there was a possibility of instruction from a gentleman who acted as tutor to Bishop Ryder's sons, and under whom the young Elizabeth soon became a very fair classical scholar, learning with a zeal and enthusiasm which was no small refreshment to her teacher, after his usual work of instilling Greek and Latin into boys who, for the most part, only learnt because they must. In those days the *average* of female education was infinitely below the present standard; but the few who did study, did so from a sincere desire for knowledge, and a genuine sense of the duty of self-improvement. Nothing was or could be attempted, as the majority of subjects are attempted nowadays, merely with a view to pass an examination.¹

Presently, to the solid foundation of Greek and Latin, Elizabeth Poole added the knowledge of French and Italian. She learnt music, too, of the cathedral organist, and became an accomplished musician, playing always rather serious, and what

¹ This, of course, is not the intention, but the abuse, of our present system; it is, however, an abuse which is only too common. We seem to have disengaged ourselves from the defects of the past only to discover an entirely new set inherent in the very advantages that it has been such a triumph to win.

would now be called *classical* music, with a depth and feeling peculiarly her own. My father once said to me that he could not *describe* the charm of her playing, but that every one *felt* it. In music, as in all else, whatever she did, she did thoroughly. 'We should always be on our guard against imperfect attainment,' she wrote later in life, in her book on *Female Education*. And then she had very engaging manners; she was full of sympathy with all noble and great purposes; full, too, of earnestness and goodness, and the desire to lead a useful life. Probably if she had been commonplace, or even unattractive, Tom Poole would still have loved her as his brother's orphan; but being what she was, it was natural and inevitable that she should become, as she certainly was, the very pride and darling of his heart.

'One of the most touching points in Mr. Tom Poole's character,' writes Mrs. Joseph Anstice, 'was his *adoration* for his niece Elizabeth. How he came to allow her mother to make that very wise move from Stowey to Wells I cannot tell. . . . She was, I suppose, about ten when the move was made, and he may then not have given up all idea of marrying and living his own life, or he may have been unselfish, and considered the advantage to her.'

But, of course, residence at Wells did not preclude frequent visits to Stowey; and she had

ever a second home in her uncle's house. Hartley Coleridge had met her there, and sends a message of remembrance to her as 'Miss Lizzy,' a freedom none but old Stowey friends seem to have taken with her name, which was unabbreviated Elizabeth to every one else. The letters from Keswick and Grasmere almost always contain some allusion to her,¹ Mrs. Coleridge having a special remembrance of her as born in the same month as the babe Berkeley who died while Coleridge was in Germany, the unforgotten little one whom everyone else had long ceased to think of. Writing to Mr. Poole in 1819, she says:—

'You, my dear sir, will always live in my remembrance as connected with my early married days, with the infancy of my beloved Hartley, and with the *whole existence* of that other dear babe, whose name you have more than once unwittingly given to my *third* son, in your kind inquiries for him, thereby recalling many tender, and some very bitter recollections connected with his birth and death—sweet child. But I do not wish him here. . . .'

Mrs. Coleridge was one of those women who make devoted mothers. That constant unreasoning tenderness which nothing can alter or alienate, and which alone can satisfy our deepest cravings for affection, was the natural attitude of her whole

¹ 'I hear wonders of your niece.'—W. W. to T. P.

being towards her children. For her husband she had, indeed, kindness, but kindness mingled with criticism. Her children, whatever might be their faults, were to her simply the most entirely satisfactory of human creatures.

‘I have no right to complain,’ she writes to Tom Poole, in her first grief and dismay at the withdrawal of the half of the Wedgwood annuity—*‘but if Mr. Wedgwood had but once seen these children! . . .’*

During the years in which Elizabeth Poole was passing through her teens, Hartley and Derwent and Sara Coleridge were all growing up, and Southey’s children also, and Wordsworth’s; it is therefore natural enough that the letters of this period should be full to overflowing of educational details. And besides, it was just at this time that Mr. John Poole’s village school had attained to its greatest celebrity, and that the now well-worn subject of the education of the labouring classes was beginning to take full possession of the popular mind. The following extracts from Miss Charlotte Poole’s journal contain references to the opening of a similar school at Stowey, in the building which served as a model for Mr. Wedgwood’s school at Etruria :—

‘*March 22, 1813.*—Stowey School opens next Monday

in a very good room built by Mr. Tom Poole,¹ with Miss Price as the mistress, and Jane Turner as her assistant.'

'*Thursday, April 1.*—John dined at Mr. Tom Poole's. He went to see the Stowey School, which opened on Monday with a large number of children, and increased on this day to 85, Jane Turner managing the whole admirably.'

'*April 27.*—John again went to Stowey. The school has now increased to 118.'

Jane Turner was the daughter of an Enmore farmer, and a person of first-rate abilities. She had been educated entirely at the Enmore School, and remained for some years, first as assistant, and then as head-mistress, in the school at Stowey. She afterwards carried on a successful preparatory school of a somewhat higher grade for little boys, at the neighbouring village of Cannington, to which Mr. John Poole's younger brother, my own grandfather, sent two of his sons.

Few schools can have been more truly places of education than the National School at Enmore, with John Poole himself teaching daily, and demanding as the final test of acquirement, not merely the answering of questions either written or *viva voce*, but some proof of actual capacity to

¹ In the earlier journals it is always 'Tom Poole,' but it is as *Mr. Tom Poole* that he was always spoken of among the cousins of the next generation, the children of Penelope Anstice and of my grandfather.

communicate what had been learnt to another, the principle that every scholar must in his turn become a teacher being the fundamental idea of the whole Madras system. So, doubtless, thought Penelope Anstice when, in 1813, she left her own eldest boy under the care of his uncle and aunts at Enmore, simply for the sake of letting him begin his education in the Enmore School; and this nephew, Joe Anstice, was the gifted boy whom John Poole afterwards adopted and sent to the University, and whose brilliant successes and early death have already been mentioned in these pages.

A great controversy was then raging between the rival schemes of Bell and Lancaster, the former being regarded with almost exclusive approval by members of the Church of England. Tom Poole much regretted this importation of party feeling into the business.¹ If, from that feeling, church people were to refuse to consider the improvements made by John Lancaster on Dr. Bell's plan, they would, he was persuaded, do a great injury to the cause.

'The religious instructions should, of course, be that of the Established Church,' he writes to his friend Mr. Acland, in connection with some important meeting that had to do with starting national schools, 'but it

¹ Letter to Mr. Acland of Fairfield, February 3, 1812.

would indeed be folly to reject the *method* which has been found most efficacious, because it has been in a great measure perfected, and its practicability and extensive utility shown, by John Lancaster. . . . Indeed John Poole appears to me to have combined, with very material improvements of his own, the advantages both of Dr. Bell's and J. Lancaster's plans. . . .'

The following letters will show how deeply interested Wordsworth was in the same subject. The first time he had mentioned the *Excursion* in writing to Tom Poole was in the letter of April 28, 1814, of which the main topic was the education of Hartley Coleridge.

'But to an old friend,' the poet continues, 'I cannot but add two or three words about myself. . . .'

'I live at present,' he says, 'in a most delightful situation, and have a public employment which is a comfortable addition to my income. . . . My marriage has been as happy as a man's could be, save that we have lost two sweet children (out of five), a boy and a girl, of the several ages of six and a half and four years. . . . My poetical labours have often suffered long interruptions; but I have at last resolved to send to the Press a portion of a Poem which, if I live to finish it, I hope future times "will not willingly let die." These, you know, are the words of my great Predecessor, and the depth of my feelings upon some subjects seem to justify me in the act of applying them to myself, while speaking to a friend, who, I know, has always been partial to me.'

A year later it was settled that Hartley was

to go to Oxford, and in conveying that news to Poole, Wordsworth adds (March 13, 1815):—

‘I rejoice to hear of your thriving School. I have not yet seen your Relation’s pamphlet which you recommended. I have heard it praised by others and shall procure it.¹ If you have read my Poem, the *Excursion*, you will see what importance I attach to the Madras System.² Next to the art of Printing it is the noblest invention for the improvement of the human species. Our population in this neighbourhood is not sufficient to apply it on a large scale, but great benefit has been derived from it on a small one. If you have read the Poem, I should like to have a history of your feelings during the perusal and your opinion afterwards. If it has not deeply interested you, I should fear that I have missed my aim in some important particulars. I had the hope of pleasing you in my mind during the composition in many parts, especially those in which I have alluded to the influence of the manufacturing spirit; and in the pictures, in the last book but one, which I have given of Boys in different situations in life, the manufacturer, the boy of the Yeomanry, and the clergyman’s and gentleman’s son. If you can conscientiously recommend this expensive work to any of your wealthier friends, I will thank you, as I wish to have it printed in a cheaper form for those who cannot afford to buy it in its present shape. And, as it is in some places a little abstruse, and in all, serious, without any of the modern attractions of glittering style, or incident to provoke curiosity, it cannot be ex-

¹ The *Village School Improved*.

² Dr. Bell’s. So called because first used at Madras.

pected to make its way without difficulty ; and it is therefore especially incumbent on those who value it to exert themselves in its behalf. My opinion as to the execution of the minor parts of my works is not in the *least altered*. My Poems are on the point of being republished in two volumes octavo, with a new preface and several additions, though not any pieces of length. I should like to present you with a copy as a testimony of my regard, if you would let me know where you wish to have it sent—or if you could call or desire anybody to call for it at Longmans'. . . .—Most faithfully yours,
‘W. WORDSWORTH.’

All the impetuosity and vehemence of Tom Poole's character entered into his affection for his niece, and at one period of her girlhood, when serious fears were entertained for her health, his anxiety was almost fiercely uncontrollable. The chief symptom which was thought alarming was a persistent quickness of the pulse, and she related afterwards how he would tramp up and down the room, watch in hand, feeling her pulse every few minutes, and exclaiming almost angrily, ‘I *would* lower my pulse, Elizabeth! I am sure you *could*. I have the greatest faith in the power of the will.’

Elizabeth was very good and patient in submitting to whatever was required of her, but the wonder is that she survived the remedies then deemed the right thing for a person threatened with consumption. They took her to Clifton, and

imprisoned her for a whole winter in a house at the Hot Wells, where the windows were actually *pasted up*, to make sure that she never had any fresh air. It was further considered proper that she should be *bled* at regular intervals. Modern minds will experience no astonishment at hearing that she looked very pale and ill, but will rather admire the marvellous strength of a nature which could emerge from such a course of treatment, not only without the cough that it was intended to cure, but apparently without any serious injury to her general health.

Those were the early days of the great evangelical movement in the Church of England, and it was natural, almost inevitable, that Elizabeth's ardent religious feelings, quickened, no doubt, under the experience of having been called upon to face the thought that her life might be fated to be a short one, should pour themselves into this mould, and natural, too, that the effect should be a certain narrowness which was rather a trial to her uncle. She, on her side, was a little troubled by the evident want of harmony between the incomprehensible freedom of his views, and the religious formulas of her favourite teachers. Later on in life she would have understood him much better, but at that time she used to say, in some distress, 'I can't think what my uncle really does believe. He sometimes seems to me more like a Roman

Catholic than anything else. He believes in Purgatory and prayers for the dead !'

Her husband, Archdeacon Sandford, was a hard-working evangelical curate at Wells when she first met him. Soon after their marriage his health broke down, partly from overwork, partly from the effects of the relaxing Somersetshire climate, and they went to stay at Edinburgh, at the house of his father, Bishop Sandford, with the intention of remaining there until he got some preferment which was hoped for from his godfather, the Bishop of Durham, who shortly afterwards did give him the living of Chillingham. This removal to Edinburgh was a great sorrow to Tom Poole, for in the days before railroads Edinburgh seemed an untold distance. 'I remember one day,' says Mrs. Joseph Anstice, 'his saying to my father and myself, with tears in his eyes, "I might hear of her being ill and, before I could get to her, she might be——" He had not the courage to speak the word that was in his poor heart,—"*well again,*" he concluded with a trembling lip.'

He did follow her to Edinburgh, going first by sea from Bristol to Ireland, and taking as his companion his nephew William King, then a rather unformed youth of twenty or thereabouts, but clever, and with considerable knowledge of chemistry. His journal shows that, whatever

may have been his opinions as to purgatory and prayers for the dead, Tom Poole's strong early prejudices against Romanism were very little diminished, and even politically he was much less ardently in favour of the Catholic Relief Bill than his friend Josiah Wedgwood, for instance. Elizabeth looked forward to his visit with rather mingled feelings. She knew that he and her husband did not entirely suit one another. ('Mr. Poole would not have thought an archangel good enough for his niece,' some one is reported to have said.) She was a little afraid lest his abruptness and eccentricity should make an unfavourable impression, and prevent her new relations from seeing what he really was. And then she would rather he had come alone. Boys, she reflected with some uneasiness, are always apt to be in the way, either awkward and silent, or talking too much and saying the wrong thing. But she need not have feared. Bishop Sandford knew the world better than she did, and understood perfectly with whom he had to do. 'He invited all the literary and scientific people he could muster, and, of course, in the Modern Athens there were plenty such, and with these her cousin's talent and knowledge of chemistry found hearty appreciation, as well as her uncle's literary tastes and experiences.'¹ In after

¹ Mrs. Joseph Anstice.

years she remembered with pleasure what a success the visit had been, and how it had ended in a sincere mutual liking between her much-loved uncle and the bishop.

Before this, in May 1823, Mrs. Coleridge and her daughter Sara had paid a three weeks' visit to Stowey, and the younger Sara had much enjoyed the 'companionship' of her father's old friend; to see the place where she dimly remembered having been very happy as a child, and to trace the associations connected with her father's early life, had long been a cherished wish of hers. Mr. Poole's niece was not at that time in Stowey. Mrs. Richard Sandford had fallen into declining health (she died a little before her daughter's marriage), and Elizabeth could seldom leave home. Mr. Poole sought a companion for Sara Coleridge in the other Elizabeth, then more commonly known as Bessy Poole, and in those days not much more than fifteen, and lately returned from a French boarding-school.¹ She is the very 'E.' of whom Fanny Kemble speaks in the *Records of her Girlhood* as having been an object of the most unbounded admiration to herself, so that she even tried to learn Latin in imitation of the classical tastes of her more studious schoolfellow. Bessy Poole was a beautiful girl, exceedingly like her

¹ Mrs. Joseph Anstice.

Aunt Penelope, people used to say, and either for that reason or some other, a decided favourite with her Cousin Tom, towards whom, curiously enough, she had almost exactly the same feeling as her aunt's had been, namely, a strong appreciation of his many excellences, tempered by an almost equally strong distaste for his peculiarities of manner and behaviour, and combined with something very like *fear* of his vehemence and impetuosity. In the same way she seems to have been quite unable to respond to Fanny Kemble's girlish enthusiasm, chiefly out of sheer distaste to the unusual. How *could* she like a girl who was always startling her nerves by doing something impulsive? When she was scolded, Fanny would snatch the comb from her abundant hair, and let it fall wildly over her shoulders. She had even been known to threaten to throw herself out of window. Elizabeth Poole was more inclined to admire the strong-minded teacher who coolly opened the window and left her, in tranquil assurance that the passion was dramatic only.

Of Sara Coleridge she once said to me that she seemed to her simply the loveliest person she had ever beheld; but Mrs. Coleridge had grown very stout, and it was difficult to identify her with the 'pensive Sara' of a poet's imagination. The homely respectability of her appearance was much

more in keeping with the natural sphere of the sister of a Bristol dressmaker, and there was a certain incongruity in knowing her to be the mother of so exquisite a daughter. The two girls went out walking together, and Sara tried to wean her younger companion from her admiration of Byron, and to lead her to read Wordsworth, whose poetry was then quite unknown to her. In after years she became an ardent Wordsworthian, and always remembered gratefully how she had been first taught to appreciate him. The following lines 'To E. S. R. P.' will give Sara Coleridge's impression of the meeting :—

'One bright May day we've spent together,
One happy day of genial weather,
Ourselves in life's delightful Spring.
To celebrate with honour due,
Our meeting blithe, our warm adieu,
I'd fain a vernal garland bring.

'But fancy's favours are not mine,
And all unused to deck her shrine,
To call upon her name I fear!
Her wreaths of most resplendent hue
The partial nymph reserves for you,
For you, sweet maid, her bright compeer.

'Oh! would she aid one ardent prayer,
Poured forth for you, her favourite fair,
Content I'd end this farewell lay,

That still, howe'er the seasons roll,
Her airy dreams may glad your soul,
There lighting up perpetual May.'

Sara Coleridge was already an authoress, but had begun with a work so little fanciful as the laborious translation of a Latin book of travels. 'E. S. R. P.' must have allowed her to find out that she had already tried her young hand at writing verses, a favourite accomplishment of her girlhood. The close yet musical version of Thekla's Song, given in the notes to her husband's *Translations of Greek Choric Poetry* is from her hand :—

'The clouds are flitting,
The oakwoods roar,
And the maid is sitting
On Ocean's shore ;
And the waves of the billowy sea
Are dashing mightily, mightily ;
On the murky night floats out her sigh,
And tears are in her troubled eye.

'My heart has perished,
The world is a void,
With nought to be cherished,
Or wished, or enjoyed.
Then, Holy Mother ! hear and call
Thy child to her home above ;
The cup of bliss—I have drained it all—
I have lived ; and lived to love.'

Schiller's poem is used as an illustration to the 'Dirge on Alcestis.' But Mrs. Joseph Anstice wrote very little during her short married life, and a sonnet of poetical remonstrance, beginning—

'O gentle nightingale, whose woodland home
Is empty now of thine accustomed lay . . .
Why is there silence with thee now? The tone
Sleeps in the lyre—wilt thou not break its rest? . . .'

was addressed to her by Arthur Hallam, who was a special friend of her husband's college days.

The two girls did not meet again till both were married, and both married to their cousins, but Sara Coleridge, though lovely as ever, was almost a chronic invalid, and scarcely able to feel pleasure in seeing any one. More than any of his other children, she complained, did she inherit from her father 'that uneasy health of his'; perhaps also more than any of his other children did she inherit his mental powers and characteristics.

During the years of which we are now speaking Mr. Tom Poole 'rather heard of than from Coleridge.' 'Nevertheless,' he declares, 'I believe that our mutual affection was at no time abated.' A short note written to him by Coleridge in 1821, and asking for copies of certain letters, has been already mentioned. It has the following affectionate conclusion:—

‘O that Riches would but make wings for me instead of for itself, and I would fly to the seashore at Porlock and Lymmouth, making a good halt at dear, ever fondly remembered Stowey ; of which, believe me, your image, and the feelings and associations connected therewith, constitute four-fifths to, my dear Poole, your obliged and affectionate friend, S. T. COLERIDGE.’

Another letter has been preserved, dated January 2, 1827, in which Coleridge writes—*‘Not to say I shall be glad to see you, for that would be wasting ink and paper and postage, not to add pen, time, and daylight, in mere superfluity,’* but to transmit a very cordial invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Gillman, to dine and sleep at Highgate, Poole being then in London. The endorsement of the letter shows that the invitation was accepted.

‘Coleridge talked a great deal of you,’ says Mrs. Coleridge, writing from Hampstead on August 16, 1832, to give Mr. Poole an account of the christening of her daughter’s firstborn child,—when ‘it received the name of Edith, and what will perhaps greatly surprise you, as it did all his friends, the grandfather came from Highgate to be present, and to pass the day here,’—‘Coleridge talked a great deal of you, as he always does when he speaks of his early days.’

CHAPTER XIII

‘ Ah, could I recover anything like that freshness of mind which I possessed at twenty-five, and which, like the dew of dawning morning, covered all objects, and nourished all things that grew, and in which they were more beautiful even than in mid-day sunshine,—what would I not give ! . . . How well I remember that delightful season, when, full of power, I sought for power in others ; and power was sympathy, and sympathy power ; when the dead and the unknown, the great of other ages and of distant places, were made, by force of the imagination, my companions and friends ; when every voice seemed one of praise and love ; when every flower had the bloom and odour of the rose ; and every spray or plant seemed either the poet’s laurel or the civic oak, which appeared to offer themselves as wreaths to adorn my throbbing brow. But, alas ! this cannot be.’

Sir H. DAVY in *Salmonia*.

‘ To Thomas Poole, Esq., of Nether Stowey, in remembrance of thirty years of continued and faithful friendship.’ Such were the words dictated by the dying Sir Humphry Davy for the dedication of his latest book, which was composed in the enforced leisure of his last illness, and called *Consolations in Travel: or, The Last Days of a Philosopher*—a book now so entirely forgotten that it will not be superfluous to say that it is a

series of dialogues between the author and certain friends, who are to be accepted as personified types of conflicting views. In the opening dialogue the friends meet in the Colosseum, and the scene around them naturally leads to the subject of the rise and fall of empires, until, lingering alone amid the ruins, the author falls into a musing fit on the strange effects of Time upon everything material. 'The world, like the individual, flourishes in youth, rises to strength in manhood, falls into decay in age; and the ruins of an empire are like the decrepit frame of an individual, except that they have some tints of beauty, which nature bestows upon them.' How long, he questions within himself, will it be ere our present civilisation also shall reach its culminating point, and begin to crumble to its fall? But as these thoughts pass through his mind, lo! a Spirit arises, rebuking his despondency, and shows him in a vision the progress of Man, ebbing and flowing, but ever advancing, like an advancing wave, and wresting from each successive epoch of existence some permanent conquest to enrich the entire race—a vision which is the more interesting because in the second dialogue the author declares that 'the most important parts of it really occurred to him in sleep, particularly that in which he seemed to leave the earth, and launch

into the infinity of space, under the guidance of a tutelary genius.'

Every one will be reminded of Coleridge's saying that if Sir Humphry Davy had not been a great natural philosopher he would have been a great poet. It is plain that in him that 'shaping spirit of imagination' which the poet must possess, was strong and active, and yet, in the usual sense of the word, poet he was not; his verses lack the fiery touch which fuses feeling into imperishable form, and he is, except on scientific subjects, diffuse even in his prose. It was in another region, the region of science, that his imagination found wings and became the interpreter of unknown truths, that prophetic faculty darting forward, as in all great discoveries I think it must do, along the line of thought, and giving direction and enthusiasm to the long and patient toil by which her intuitive conclusions must be verified.¹ Yet when seeking for a moment to recal the personality of the real man, the Humphry Davy whom Coleridge delighted in, and Thomas Poole loved, it is a good deal to our purpose to remember that the President of the Royal Institution, the great chemist, the inventor of the safety lamp, was one whose mind had the true poetic impulse, and habitually tended *upwards*, from the visible to the invisible, from

¹ Cf. Tyndall's *Use of the Imagination in Science*.

form to origin, from matter to spirit, from the world to the world's Maker,—a tendency which accounts for the charm that Coleridge found in his conversation even when he first came to Bristol, a raw Cornish boy.¹ To Mr. Tom Poole it appeared that

‘his most striking characteristic was the quickness and truth of his apprehension. It was a power of reasoning so rapid that . . . it must, I think, have been felt by him as it appeared to me, pure intuition. I used to say to him, *You understand me before I half understand myself.*’

In the beginning of their acquaintance Davy knew little of the practice of agriculture, whilst Mr. Poole was a considerable farmer and very fond of the occupation. ‘At first,’ he says, ‘I was something like his teacher, but my teacher soon became my master, both in theory and practice.’

On his very first arrival in London, when Count Rumford thought the new lecturer on chemistry looked so young and boyish that he would not allow him to lecture in the *large* theatre until he had himself heard what he could do, Davy had at once been made acquainted with Poole's early friend Mr. Purkis, and perhaps thereby was led to the series of experiments on the Chemistry of

¹ He was but eighteen when he first came to Bristol, twenty-two when he went to London.—Paris's *Life*.

Tanning, which were embodied in the first regular series of Lectures given by him at the Royal Institution. Certainly the two men became very intimate, and it was on a walking tour together in 1802, when Davy was already becoming famous, that the comic incident occurred of meeting at the little Inn of Tan y Bwlch the intelligent tourist, who discoursed with so much self-complacency on 'hydrogen and oxygen, hornblende and grawacké,' and told Purkis that he thought Davy 'rather a clever young man, with some general scientific knowledge.'

'What is his name?' he asked. And we can imagine the satisfaction Purkis enjoyed in being able to reply, with all imaginable tranquillity, '*Davy*, of the Royal Institution.'

'Davy! was that *Davy*?' cried the stranger. 'Oh, how have I exposed my ignorance and presumption!'

Towards Poole, Davy entertained a peculiar feeling of trust and confidence, which reminds us of Coleridge's affectionate phrase in the early days of their friendship, 'In you I have found an anchor.' Thus in May 1801 he writes:—

'Have you no thoughts of coming to London? I have always recollected the short periods that you have spent in town with a mixed feeling of pleasure and regret. In the bustling activity occasioned in cities by the action and

reaction of diversified talents, occupations, and passions, our existence is, as it were, broken into fragments, *and with you I have always wished for unbroken intercourse and continuous feeling. . . .*'

Poole had heard of Davy's social successes, and had evidently expressed some fears as to the effects of fashionable life on the mind of so young and so untried a philosopher, but Davy reassures him; there are, he says,

'in the intellectual being of all men, permanent elements, certain habits and passions that cannot change. I am a lover of Nature, with an ungratified imagination. . . . My *real*, my *waking* existence is amongst the objects of scientific research; common amusements and enjoyments are necessary to me only as dreams, to interrupt the flow of thoughts too nearly analogous to enlighten and to vivify. . . .'

A fine description of Coleridge's conversation follows. It is a picture of what he was *at his best*, just before leaving London for Malta. I saw him, says Davy,

'generally in the midst of large companies where he is the image of power and activity. His eloquence is unimpaired; perhaps it is softer and stronger. His will is probably less than ever commensurate with his ability. Brilliant images of greatness float upon his mind; like the images of the morning clouds upon the waters, their forms are changed by the motion of the waves, they

are agitated by every breeze, and modified by every sunbeam. He talked in the course of one hour of beginning three works, and he recited the poem of *Christabel* unfinished, as I had before heard it. What talent does he not waste in forming visions ; sublime, but unconnected with the real world ! I have looked to his efforts, as to the efforts of a creating being ; but as yet he has not even laid the foundation for the new world of intellectual forms.'

When Davy's health failed—he died in 1829—he twice came to Stowey for that perfect rest and quietness which he had been recommended to seek. On the first occasion, in 1826, he could still enjoy, or seem to enjoy, the field sports which used to be his favourite amusement ; he could still fancy he should like to 'shoot a few woodcocks on the Quantock Hills,' only Poole must find a pony for him ; he cannot walk as he used to do. In 1827 he only took short, occasional rides to the covers, with his dogs around him, and a servant walking by his side and carrying a gun. 'I believe he never fired it,' says Poole. His favourite sport of all, however, was angling ; and as he could not be idle, he employed his mornings, during the last November and December that he ever spent at Stowey, in composing his *Salmonia*, a work written upon the model of Isaac Walton's *Angler*, whence, no doubt, the original suggestion of writing in

dialogues came, both for this book and for the *Consolations of Travel*.

After dinner Poole used to read aloud, both friends being particularly interested in Southey's *Life of Nelson*, then recently published. In the evening Mr. and Mrs. Ward usually came in to make up a rubber of whist. For Ward was now married, and had a brood of 'sweet little children' growing up around him,—children who are now elderly people, and to some of whom I am indebted for many traits and recollections embodied in these Memoirs. For general society Davy was utterly unfit, but there was yet another friend of Mr. Tom Poole's whose company gave him genuine pleasure, and this was Mr. W. Baker,¹ a young tradesman carrying on business as a carrier at Bridgwater, but a person of great talent and cultivation of mind, and a devoted student of Natural History. On seeing his drawings Davy expressed a wish to make his acquaintance, and the joy and honour of this introduction was reckoned by Mr. Baker as perhaps the most valuable of all, out of many benefits which had come to him through the friendship of Thomas Poole. For think what it was to have been an almost isolated student in Nature's School,

¹ The quotations which follow are taken from *A Brief Memoir . . . of William Baker, F.G.S., by John Bowen. Taunton, 1854.* An extremely interesting little book.

working, inquiring, collecting, and grateful enough for whatever interest in his own favourite pursuits he may chance to encounter or awaken in those around him, to meet with such a *maestro di color che sanno* as Sir Humphry Davy; to utter his thoughts to one who habitually lived in that atmosphere of investigation which was so strange a world to most people; and to be set a problem in natural history to work out, with the certainty that both the result and the steps that should lead to it would be looked for with attention and interest!

It had been on a Saturday evening, twenty years before, that William Baker's father had returned from a business visit to Stowey, during which he had chanced to remark, at the sight of Mr. Poole's library, 'My son Bill, sir, would love to see these books,' with a message that if his son were fond of books Mr. Poole would be glad to see him at any time.

At any time! William Baker 'immediately resolved' that he would go *the next day*, and, indeed, he actually presented himself at Nether Stowey on Sunday morning before breakfast. He felt rather shy and uncomfortable at first, but Mr. Poole's kindness set him at ease, and he was soon introduced to the Book-room, where he found not only well-stored shelves, but even 'a few cases of beautiful minerals, and some other objects of Natural History. Then

he was 'taken to church by Mr. Poole, and placed by him in his pew,' and a talk about education followed after dinner. When he took his departure he was invited to come again as often as he liked, and many times during that summer, which happened to be the very summer of 1807 when Coleridge was staying with Mr. Poole for the last time, did he walk to Stowey on Saturday and stay over Sunday. If he returned on Sunday evening Mr. Poole would often accompany him for the first two or three miles of his way, and in these walks it was his habit to indulge in reciting poetry—perhaps wishing to awaken the taste in his young companion—repeating principally from Goldsmith and Thomson. One taste, very near akin to the love of poetry, he did awaken. These Sundays at Stowey made young Baker familiarly acquainted with the lovely coombs and heathy summits of the Quantocks, and the result was that enduring delight in the beauty of beautiful scenery, which, when once gained, is never lost, and distinctly heightens the enjoyment of life for all who possess it.

It is a characteristic trait that the young naturalist was nothing like so much impressed by meeting Coleridge as he was, in later life, by meeting Sir Humphry Davy.

'I remember,' he says, 'I felt myself incapable of understanding his conversation when it became metaphysical,

which was the case whenever there was company, especially after dinner. Of course I could but wish that I was capable of comprehending him clearly. . . . When he indulged in poetry, I was delighted.'

Mrs. Coleridge struck him as 'a quiet, unaffected, pleasant lady,' whom he was a little inclined to pity for being 'made uncomfortable by the habits of a man of learning,' who not only 'sat up late,' but was even capable of getting up 'after he had retired to rest, when a bright idea came to his mind.'

It may here be mentioned that, through the good offices of Mr. Anstice,¹ William Baker was brought into connection with others of the scientific men of his day besides Sir Humphry Davy; and on Dr. Buckland's nomination, was elected a member of the Royal Geological Society in 1842. He also corresponded with Lyon Playfair, and used to be invited by Sir John Trevelyan of Nettlecombe to meet any persons of scientific pursuits who might happen to be his guests.

Another gentleman of the neighbourhood who knew and valued William Baker, and who was also a friend of Mr. Poole's, was Mr. Andrew Crosse of Broomfield, a fine old country-house on the Taunton side of the Quantock Hills, where

¹ It will be remembered that Mr. Anstice's tastes were definitely scientific.

Mr. Crosse was wont to pursue his investigations of the abstruse and then little known subject of Electricity with so much ardour, that to the imagination of the neighbouring villages he had become an object of mysterious awe, a sort of wizard squire,¹ whose domains no one would approach after night-fall without dire necessity. Mr. Crosse had offered his house to Sir Humphry Davy as soon as he heard that he was in search of west country air, and though 'he was fatigued with the journey,' he nevertheless roused himself sufficiently to go one day to call at Broomfield, in company with Mr. Poole. 'Very languidly' they were walking round the house, when a door was opened which led them straight into the laboratory, a great room sixty feet in length, which was provided with 'an extensive philosophical apparatus, particularly complete in electricity and chemistry.' Sir Humphry threw one glance round the room, his eyes brightened, his whole countenance changed. For a moment he looked like himself—his old self of twenty years ago.

As I write the names arise before me in a kind

¹ So my father used to tell me. See the delightful description of Broomfield in the *Memoirs of Andrew Crosse the Electrician*, by his widow, p. 152. Probably the legend that a servant had upset a pot of lightning originated in the real adventure of the housemaid who dusted the brass cylinder inscribed *Noli me tangere*, which she interpreted to mean No danger, and therefore exempted from the general orders not to touch *any* of her master's apparatus.

of chain, one suggesting another : Mr. Anstice, and Mr. William Baker, and Sir John Trevelyan, and Mr. Tom Poole, and Mr. Andrew Crosse—Mr. John Poole of Enmore I might add to the list, for he was a man of the same type, and had affinities with science in his intense delight in botany. He was greatly interested, too, in scientific research, and counted Mr. Leonard Horner¹ as his intimate and valued friend.

Where are their successors now? The world is a hundredfold better instructed, and yet where are the country neighbourhoods in which such a half dozen of men can be easily found, living within no very great distance of one another, and each in his own way remarkable for genuine intellectual work, loved for its own sake, and pursued with lifelong ardour? Some of their work has, indeed, been recognised and appreciated—Andrew Crosse's name, for instance, is famous in the scientific world—but this was not the *aim* with any of them.

¹ Also a friend of Tom Poole's and a great admirer of his niece. In a letter asking Poole to find lodgings in Stowey for himself and family for a month or six weeks, in the autumn of 1813, he says, 'I hope we shall be fortunate enough to meet our charming young friend Elizabeth, for whom I have the greatest admiration. . . .' The Horners were really fond of her, and when she was sixteen wanted her to come to them in London for a long visit, and offered to introduce her into society; but her mother thought her too young to accept such an invitation.

More might be said about these and about others who would naturally come within the circle of Thomas Poole's friends ; but my space is not unlimited, and it is time to draw this record to a close.

In May 1834 Mr. Poole went to Highgate and spent 'some hours' with Coleridge, whose mind he found as 'strong as ever, seeming impatient to take leave of its encumbrance.' But, indeed, Coleridge had never associated any painful thought with what he calls, in a letter addressed to Poole in July 1830, the extrication of his spirit from 'the Body of this Death.' A letter from Henry Nelson Coleridge, dated July 25, 1834, announced that his 'most dear and venerated uncle and father-in-law S. T. C.' had breathed his last at half-past six that morning. The letter is endorsed in Poole's handwriting 'The death of my beloved friend, Coleridge,' and a little below the words, 'Alas! they *all* leave me.' Thomas Wedgwood, Sir Humphry Davy, and S. T. Coleridge—these were the three friends who had been beyond all others dear to him ; all three were younger than himself, yet all were gone before him. Wedgwood's prime of manhood was withered by incurable disease. Davy had not more than reached the middle period of life, and Coleridge was but at the threshold of age when he, too, was called away. Poole's life was as useful as ever ;

many valued friendships still remained to him ; his favourite niece came yearly, with her children, to visit him ; there was a whole younger generation looking to him with affection and esteem ; nevertheless his chief treasures must have been in his recollections, and to him, as to many, life had nothing more to offer that could console him for the loss of ' the old familiar faces.'

The task of looking through Coleridge's letters, and setting them in order to send to Mr. Green, must have brought with it a very vivid renewal of the associations and memories of the past, and by the ' Catalogue of Coleridge's letters sent to Mr. Green, his Executor, June 4, 1835,' Poole would appear to have entrusted the Coleridge family with over one hundred letters, of which eighty-seven were written between 1795 and 1805. The few that he reserved were, no doubt, deemed by him unsuitable for publication at that time, such as the angry epistle of December 1796, in which S. T. Coleridge so vehemently upbraids the unfriendliness of using arguments to dissuade him from living at Stowey, and the two rather bitter letters written, no doubt, under the influence of depressed spirits and much uneasiness of body, in resentment of what perhaps seemed to him Poole's backwardness to believe in the broken state of his health, and his need of a warm climate. It is characteristic of the singular

absence of egotism that distinguished Poole to find in these letters almost every passage personal to himself, even to the special epithets and messages of affection that bear witness to the warmth and intimacy of the friendship between him and Coleridge, has been underlined for omission ; and this, no doubt, is the reason why everything of that kind was actually left out in those letters which have already appeared in the *Biographical Supplement*, and may also explain why Poole's figure, standing so quietly in the background, has up to this time never been seen distinctly enough to recognise, with any degree of accuracy, what manner of man he really was.

One very interesting letter of his has, unfortunately, not been preserved ; it was a letter addressed to Mrs. S. T. Coleridge, in which, besides inquiring whether any biography of Coleridge was in contemplation, and offering, with some reservations, the use of the letters that he had in his possession, he went on to speak of his own feeling towards Coleridge, and of his unchangeable conviction of the enduring character of his genius and of his influence. Such, at least, we may conceive to have been the nature of the communication to which the following letter from Sara Coleridge was a reply :—

‘HAMPSTEAD, *September 5, 1834.*

‘MY DEAR MR. POOLE—Yesterday I learnt from my husband that he had fixed to set off for Helleston last Wednesday—the very day when your kind and interesting letter, which I forwarded immediately, must have reached the place where I supposed him to be. I write now to tell you of this circumstance which will explain why you may not hear from him for some days. . . . Your remarks on [my father’s] character and genius have been delightful to us; they are among those valuable tributes from valued persons which have mingled sweetness with our cup of sorrow. We mourn not only one near and dear taken from our sight, but the extinction of a light such as can never beam over our earthly path again. It has made this world more spiritual, and the next in some sort more visible to our apprehensions—“the feeling of this loss can never be old.” But there was everything in the circumstances of his departure to soothe our regret, and we feel happy in the hope that his writings will be widely influential for good purposes. All his views, philosophical and theological, may not be adopted, and the effect of his posthumous works must be impaired by their fragmentary condition, but I think there is reason to believe that what he has left behind him, published and unpublished, will introduce a higher and more improving mode of thinking, and teach men to consider some subjects on principles more comprehensive and accordant to reason, than has hitherto been done. Immediately popular they can never be, but their exposition of truth may mould the opinions and tinge the feelings of hundreds who have never read the works themselves, by the intervention of more popular

agents ; and we all know that pious but simple persons would never have wrought out for themselves those pure and exalted views of Christian faith and morals which, by means of the gifted few, they now entertain. I have often heard that the more intellectual among the Americans have begun to study my father's writings. Every condition of society has its besetting sins, and for those which attend upon the state of things in America it is thought that these metaphysical productions will afford a powerful remedy.

'I have been encouraged by your expressions, my dear Mr. Poole, to write thus freely to you. I cannot often express my hopes and feelings on the subject, for the assertion of high claims of any sort is not much relished by the world in general, and to most persons claims founded on speculative writings are as imperceptible as Duncan's disembodied spirit was to the guests of Macbeth : they fancy that you are dwelling on a phantom of your own imagination, and wonder how you can imagine that any practical benefit is to arise from works which do not treat of matters of fact.

'Mama has deputed me¹ to write to you because she is very far from well at present, and I am somewhat fatigued with letters which were to be finished in a hurry, so that I must conclude without giving you any account of friends of ours in whom I know you are interested. We were much gratified by Mrs. Sandford's remembrance. I look forward to becoming acquainted with her as one of the pleasures that may attend my recovery. Bishop Sandford's Memoir and Diary were greatly admired by my father, and it may interest Mr. and Mrs. Sandford to know

¹ Poole's letter was addressed to Mrs. S. T. C.

that this was one of the last books which he ever read, and that a few notes pencilled by him on the margin were among the last sentences which he wrote. . . .'

The circumstance that the *Life of Bishop Sandford* was 'the last book that S. T. Coleridge read through' had been mentioned by Mr. H. N. Coleridge also.

'S. T. C.,' he says, 'was remarkably pleased with the execution of the Memoir, and deeply impressed with the Bishop's character. He wrote several notes, one exquisite one, upon a very exquisite passage in the Memoir, in which the Bishop's courteous demeanour to his daughters is mentioned. He said he had never seen it before, but it was most just and true, and then he developed it and worked it out into a beautiful picture. How profoundly courteous he always was to Sara. . . .'

The passage referred to is to be found in the first volume of the Memoir, p. 77. It occurs in a description of Bishop Sandford's home life:—

' . . . In the society of his daughters he was always happy and always delightful ; and there never was a more beautiful picture than that exhibited in his intercourse with them. His manner towards women was uniformly that of deference and courtesy,—to his daughters it united tenderness with respect. The closeness of affinity, which is sometimes considered a plea for indifference, was with him only an argument for more exact and delicate attention.

'He used frequently to say that the Gospel was the

only true code of honour, and that the Christian was the only real gentleman. His own principles were loftier than were ever learnt in the school of chivalry, for they were founded, not on conventional rule, but on the law of his God, and involved not a readiness to resent imputations, but a religious avoidance of what might provoke them. His politeness also was that of the good as well as of the high-bred man, consisting in a quiet and unaffected deference to the feelings and opinions of others, and showing itself, not in verbal compliment, but in actual attentions. It was the expression of benevolence as well as of refinement, and was displayed in all those nameless amenities which soothe and brighten life, and are intelligible to men of every degree. . . .'

There is another allusion to the same subject in *Table Talk* :—

'I have been very deeply interested in the account of Bishop Sandford's Life published by his son,' S. T. Coleridge is reported to have said (July 5, 1834). 'He seems to have been a thorough gentleman upon the model of St. Paul, whose manners were the finest of any man's upon record.'

One more memento of S. T. Coleridge remains to be mentioned which has always been a source of some perplexity to me. It is the inscription on the fly-leaf of an old German book (the *Todten Tanz*) bought by Mr. Tom Poole in Basle in 1802, in Coleridge's own handwriting, of—

'ESTESE's αυτοεπιταφιον.'

—the same, with some variations, that is to be found in his published poems, with the date November 9, 1833. Yet the late Mr. William Poole King, who lent me the book to look at, has added the words, 'Written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in my Uncle's library at Nether Stowey, when he was on a visit.'

It is, however, certain that Coleridge's last visit to Nether Stowey was made in 1807, and it is almost needless to observe that the epitaph *cannot* have been written then. Must not we suppose that the book must have been lent to, or accidentally carried off, by Coleridge, and returned by him to Tom Poole many years later? There is something that goes to the heart in the sight of those three words 'to be forgiven,' underlined by Coleridge's own hand.

'Here lies a Poet—or what once was He.

Pray, gentle Reader, pray for S. T. C.,

That he who threescore years, with toilsome breath,
Found death in life, may now find life in death.

Mercy for praise, *to be forgiven* for fame,

He asked, and hop'd, thro' Christ. Do thou the same.

CHAPTER XIV

‘He was emphatically the friend of his brother Man . . . a sort of connecting link between the two classes of society :—the poor man’s advocate, the rich man’s counsellor—the best friend of both.’—*Sermon preached in Nether Stowey Church, September 15, 1837.*

MR. TOM POOLE died, rather suddenly, of pleurisy, September 8, 1837. He was seventy-two years of age, but active and vigorous as ever. ‘It seemed as if the very life of the place was gone,’ said a lady to me who remembered the general feeling of bereavement his departure occasioned in Stowey.

I cannot discover that he ever drew up any account of his recollections of Coleridge, as he was several times entreated to do; perhaps he may have conceived a distaste to the task owing to his extreme dislike to the publication of Cottle’s *Early Recollections* in 1837, a subject upon which he almost quarrelled with honest Joseph, who was determined to bring out his very readable, but

very indiscreet and inaccurate record, in precisely his own way. But in everything that concerned his friend's memory Poole took the deepest interest, and was far from being easily satisfied. When a copy of *Table Talk* was presented to him in May 1835, he promptly wrote to remonstrate with H. N. Coleridge for the Tory sentiments put into his old friend's mouth.

'As to the mere fidelity of my reporting,' wrote H. N. C. in reply, 'I assure you that the only liberty taken by me was to omit—perhaps in a few instances also to soften—language of the same sort as that to which you object. When you wrote you had not, I think, read the whole book, but I think, when you have done so, you will acquit me of making a Tory of S. T. C., although, of course, his reprobation of modern Whig politics cannot be approved by you. I am sure I cannot myself go quite as far in some points as he expresses himself in *Table Talk*, either as to the Church, or as to personal loyalty to the King; but you see it had no weight with me in my report. Hence whilst you surmise that I make a Tory of him, Cobbett has quoted him for an American in feelings and opinions. The *whole* book shows clearly that he was far enough from either. It suits the *M. Chronicle* . . . to say that S. T. C. vituperated Parliamentary Reform; no such thing, he only abused this Reform Bill—a very different thing, I conceive. So with regard to the Church, the principal subject of state which affected his mind; his indignation was confined to, and directed against, what he declared to

be a spoliation, not so unjust as it was inexpedient and anti-popular in any worthy and national sense of those words. But surely I need only refer you to his *Church and State* to acquit myself of any imputation of making him speak any supposed politics of my own.

‘That the tone of my Uncle’s conversation on some matters of national import, as expressed in the *Table Talk*, is materially different from what you can remember of it in his earlier, and perhaps more vigorous years, I can easily believe. He would not himself allow that any change had taken place in principle, dating from his confirmed manhood,—and certainly I can perceive no discrepancy between the positions and conclusions of the *Friend* (1809) and what may be found in the *Table Talk*, except what the liveliness of conversation necessarily gives. De Quincey himself says that, in 1807, he would have suffered martyrdom for the Church; but earlier still I imagine him to have breathed what is called more liberally. Be that as it may. I had and have nothing to do with it as far as *Table Talk* was concerned. The dates of what he said are given throughout, and that it is a faithful record, taken generally, for those latter years of his life, I doubt not. . . .’

To be eagerly ready to make amends whenever his impetuosity of temper had hurried him into some rash utterance was a marked characteristic of Tom Poole’s. Within a very few days of receiving the above letter he wrote as follows:—

‘June 22, 1835.

‘MY DEAR SIR—I have often observed that when a person has done a foolish thing, he soon finds it out.

'The ink of the hasty note I wrote was hardly dry before I regretted having transmitted the crude remarks which it contained, but I believe I mentioned the motives (such as they were) which, for the moment, led me to write without information and without thought. In truth, I had only glanced at a few heads of the *Table Talk*, and those chiefly relative to *modern politics*; on reading which my impression was that had I been conversing with Coleridge, I should have induced him to have *much modified* his assertions! but I trust you did not for a moment entertain the thought that I fancied you were making him talk *any supposed politics of your own*. No, I AM SURE that your report is *most correct*; and further, that you are quite entitled to the high credit you disclaim, viz. of representing the *individuality* of his conversation; and I can also truly add that you have well described its splendour in your admirable preface, in which you have so graphically portrayed, if I may so speak, the whole spirit of the *Man*. Nothing can be better done. It gives Life to the Image—to the Image of my beloved Friend, which so often rises up before me. It is *himself*.

'In reading your Preface, I need not say what my feelings were in coming to your notice of De Quincey's Memoir. As for the conversation he states as having had with me, I am sure *it must be incorrect*; ¹ for as I never considered Coleridge as a Plagiarist, I never could have said what he has given me, as cited in your Preface, p. 43. I have no recollection of the conversation which passed between me and De Quincey, but I should indeed

¹ The passage follows the description of Poole in the *Autobiographical Sketches*.

be sorry if the *whole Tone of his report* is not unlike my general mode of expressing myself.

‘I might among other things have said that I had heard Coleridge explain Pythagoras’s prohibiting his Disciples the use of Beans, in the manner mentioned, as in fact I had done ; *but I never heard him pretend that the solution was his*, and therefore I could not have said that he took credit for the discovery. De Quincey closes his account of our conversation by saying, “Both of us had sufficient reasons.” For what? For charging Coleridge with Plagiarism? *I beg leave to say, I had no reason whatever.* . . .

‘In going through the *Table Talk* I find in every page something to *admire*, something to make me think, though I sometimes meet with opinions to which I cannot subscribe, and here and there what I consider as *obvious errors*. It would delight me to read the whole through *with you, if this busy world would permit time*. Your *Notes* are always pertinent and often *very interesting*. You have, I think, produced a Book which everybody will read, and in which men of very different principles, both in religion, politics, and other subjects, will find something to their purpose. This argues no inconsistency in the *elevated Author* of its matter ; but that he, separated from, but looking on the world, endeavouring to discover *Truth*, found her in Fragments scattered among all.¹ . . .

¹ The allusion must be to a well-known passage in Milton’s *Areopagitica*. ‘Truth, indeed, came once into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape most glorious to look on ; but when he ascended . . . then strait arose a wicked race of deceivers who, as that story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the good Osiris, took the virgin

'It gave me great pleasure to learn . . . that your dear Sara was resuming, on the whole, *good health*. And that Mrs. S. T. C. was quite well. Say everything for me to both. I trust your most delightful children go on in the best health. Poor Miss Wordsworth! I am grieved at your account. She has been a *fine-minded creature*. How devoted to her Brother! How, how is Mrs. Southey?—pray inform me. I had hopes of seeing Southey and his son Cuthbert westward during the spring, and now hope it *during the summer*. . . .—Yours, my dear sir, ever sincerely,

'THOS. POOLE.

'Wordsworth's reputation seems advancing, realising Coleridge's predictions, *when few concurred with him*.'

'Your faithful—in formal politics a good deal dissentient, but in substantial patriotism nearly accordant—friend, H. N. Coleridge,' is the signature of a somewhat later letter. This phrase probably represents pretty accurately the relations between Mr. Tom Poole and another very dear and intimate friend, Sir Peregrine Acland, the son of the still older friend whose name has been often mentioned in these pages. Sir Peregrine was a country squire of almost ideal excellence, a model landlord, beloved by his tenantry, honoured by the whole neighbourhood, ever ready with hand, heart, Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces, and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since the sad friends of Truth . . . imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down, gathering up limb by limb still as they could find them.'

and purse, to aid in every local good work for miles round ; on the other hand he was impetuous and hasty in his temper, and, very likely, somewhat narrow and tenacious in his ideas. In politics he was a strong Tory. Poole was much the older man, and Sir Peregrine regarded him with almost filial esteem, and had the highest respect for his judgment in all the general concerns of life. 'Tom Poole is a tower of strength,' he used to say.

But as to giving in when politics were in question—Never ! And the two men were equally impetuous, and each equally confident in his own convictions. There was a younger generation of cousins and nephews who took the most mischievous delight in the 'glorious row' which usually took place during the after-dinner discussions that were sure to arise whenever Mr. Tom Poole dined at Fairfield ; but however vehemently he and Sir Peregrine might disagree on these occasions, vehemence even rising to vociferation, and expressing itself in the strongest possible language, these differences never interfered with the friendship which kept its uninterrupted course on all other subjects.

This heat of temper was a weak point in Tom Poole, though, perhaps, his friends loved him none the less for it. Few would guess it to have been

a chief characteristic of his from the only portrait¹ that remains of him, which represents him to us as a rather aquiline-featured man with a fine forehead and an unmistakable air of culture and high-mindedness ; and this portrait, some people say, was very like him. But those who knew him best declare that though it might and does resemble him, it is but a formal and impersonal kind of likeness, giving little idea of the real man,—rough-hewn, abrupt, tender, sympathetic, made up, as it were, of contraries, but always natural and forcible. When eager in conversation his face would work and twitch into uncounted wrinkles, which, of course, left unmistakable traces behind them, even when his countenance was in repose, and he would sometimes exhale his excitement by pushing out his lips, and actually *snorting* with indignation, an odd habit which irreverent youth would sometimes call 'blowing like a porpoise.'

There is a story told of one terrible dinner-party, when a person of some local importance, and with certain claims to respect and deference which everybody recognised, took it into his head to hold forth in Tom Poole's presence—perhaps out of pure love of irritating a fellow-creature—in authoritative disparagement of Coleridge and Wordsworth. This Poole never could endure

¹ Reproduced as the Frontispiece to this book.

without an outburst ; accordingly he boiled over with indignation, and before he could be judiciously got out of the room, had told the reviler, in the most emphatic manner, that he was a fool. A peacemaking friend followed him into the garden, where he found him fuming and panting and pacing up and down, and remonstrating with him for his unwarrantably rude behaviour, soon brought him round to a state of extreme penitence.

‘*Did* I call him a fool? How very wrong of me, how very wrong! Would it do any good to apologise? I am sure if it would give him any satisfaction I would apologise in a moment.’

So into the house he returned, and at once began to express his regrets.

‘I am sure, sir, I am very sorry. I am *very* sorry I was so rude to you just now. I apologise most sincerely. I wish I wasn’t so hasty. It was extremely wrong of me. But—but—but’ (with a great gulp, as if he were all but choking)—‘how *could* you be *such a d——d fool?*’

Let us hope that both the offence and the apology may have been drowned in a shout of laughter, since the story has survived as a joke through all these many years.

‘I wonder if it will be possible for you, who never knew him, to pourtray Tom Poole as he really was. He was such a compound of contra-

dictions, and yet had such a strong individuality of his own.' These words, said to me by one of the few who remember him well, have been often in my mind during the preparation of these Memoirs. If I have in any degree succeeded, I think it will be because I have tried to allow his own letters, and those of his friends, to speak for themselves; and now that I am nearly at the end of my task, and would fain conclude with some kind of sketch of his general characteristics which should give a faithful impression of the whole man, it seems to me that the best way to do it will be to set side by side all the various notices of his personality that I have been able to collect from contemporary sources.

'Few of my old friends are left,' wrote Southey, on hearing of his death. '. . . I had known him three and forty years, and we had been upon no ordinary terms of mutual esteem. I shall not look upon his like again.'

In another letter Southey speaks of himself to Mrs. Sandford as one of her uncle's *oldest acquaintances*; and indeed he was never Poole's *friend* in the sense in which Coleridge was, or Sir Humphry Davy; but, as years went on, the memories they had in common, and the sincere respect each entertained for the other, drew them together, and Southey seems to have been often at Stowey, where a hearty welcome always awaited him,

though perhaps he and Tom Poole never did entirely suit one another.

'Tom Poole is not content to be your friend; he must be your saviour,' Southey once said to Mr. John Kenyon, who was another friend of Poole's, and also of his neighbour, Mr. Andrew Crosse's;¹ but this did not prevent his exclaiming on another occasion, with equal emphasis, but in a much less genial mood, 'Here comes Tom Poole, clod-hopping over my feelings.'

The same kind of contrast appears in the following extracts from letters addressed to me by Mrs. Joseph Anstice:—

'Tom Poole,' she writes, 'was rather rustic in appearance, perhaps ostentatiously so, and provincial in his dialect; though he was, in later life at least, in all the best county society, and looked up to and trusted beyond any one. . . .'

'His clownish exterior, and rough, imperious manner, with his very disagreeable voice, spoilt by snuff, made a strange contrast with his great mental cultivation, and excessive sensibility and tenderness of heart. No one would have thought he was on the same social level as my father and uncle. I suppose, in his republican days, he cultivated clownishness, just as he left off powder.'

There is a tradition that Mr. Tom Poole took

¹ I owe this anecdote to my friend Mrs. Andrew Crosse, the great electrician's widow.

eternal belief
inner fire
material

immense pains to get rid of the local accent, which was the unavoidable result of a boyhood spent exclusively at Stowey, but he never succeeded. He once told the story of his own mortification on being asked in the course of an interesting conversation with a chance acquaintance, during which the west of England had not been once mentioned, 'Well, sir, and *how are the crops in Somersetshire?*'

His outrageous fondness for snuff has been already alluded to. There is an old woman still living who was once in service at a house where Tom Poole was a frequent visitor. 'I remember that I was always rung for to sweep up the snuff when he left,' is the circumstance that seemed to stand out the most vividly in her recollection.

Instances of his tenderness in times of trouble have been already cited. Mrs. Anstice has told me how he watched all night by the bedside of a little cousin, an only daughter, whose parents had turned away like Hagar with the bitter lamentation, 'Let us not see the child die,' continuing with his own hands to administer restoratives until signs of returning strength rewarded his patient care, and the little one lived after all. Yet there was often a fire and vehemence even in his sympathy which startled some people.

'How *dare* you say she will die?' he almost

thundered to those who were despairing over the fragile appearance of the fatherless babe of a young widowed relation. 'Wasn't she *sent* to be a comfort?' And the rough energy of faith went straight to the heart of the sorrowful mother, who never forgot it as long as she lived.

Another story tells of his trying to move heaven and earth to save the life of a poor forger who had been born in Stowey. 'He did not succeed. He talked over all the Cabinet, but the Governor of the Bank of England was obdurate,' and the man was hung.

N/3 'The charm of his character, the true secret of his social influence, lay in his sympathy with his fellowmen,' said Mr. Sandford in the funeral sermon which he preached in Nether Stowey Church. '... I can appeal to those who hear me for the truth of what I say. . . . There is not a rich man among you who did not prize and use his friendship. There is not a poor man within miles of his residence, who in his difficulties, his sorrows, or his wrongs, could not look to him for advice, condolence, or redress. You will all say, as one of his most dear and distinguished friends did to me in the room his presence had so often illumined, "I found him a sympathising and constant friend in prosperity, but most of all in sorrow." . . .

'His benevolence was expansive. It dilated with the calls upon it. . . . He took a brotherly interest in the progress of transatlantic improvement. He felt for the

wrongs of the enslaved African and the exiled Pole, and when that great measure passed which emancipated the sable millions of the West, he showed his delight by tears.

‘But did his benevolence spend itself on foreign objects?—Let the annals of his own parish speak. He built your village school, and taught in it. He founded your Friendly Society, and managed its concerns; and though he often came home worn in body and spirit, he never complained. He organised your savings-bank and your village choir; there is not a charitable institution amongst you which he did not either originate or support. Above all, he was the healer of your differences—the common peacemaker of the neighbourhood. . . .

‘There were few in whom such unbounded confidence was placed. The poor man deposited his money in his hands. . . . Litigants came to him as an impartial umpire, and stood by his decision. . . .

‘He was not, indeed, a man to be biassed by his likings or by his prejudices. He never sacrificed the poor to the rich, or the rich to the poor. Though naturally of an impatient temper, he was never wearied by the narration of the poor man’s real or fancied wrongs, but would talk with him in his own homely phraseology for hours, in his desire to extract the truth. . . .

‘No man ever remembered a greater body of distinguished friends, and of all, separated as they might be from him by distance, or by religious and political opinion, he never lost one. . . . “Seldom did a day pass,” wrote one of them, “when I was in society, but I had

*kindred
with all
mankind*

to quote something he had said or done. I feel that altogether I shall never come near a man like him, and I feel at this moment, more than ever, how very very much I owe him." . . .

'It was not a trifling proof of his excellence that he never allowed these distinguished friendships to interfere with his humbler associates ; that no man could say he had overlooked him because a richer or a more celebrated individual courted his society. His house and heart were open to all alike, and the memory of the poorest was cherished as much as that of the most illustrious. A small packet labelled "The hair of my poor shepherd, who served me faithfully for twenty-three years," was found in his bureau, carefully laid away among the sacred mementoes of those whom he loved best. . . .'

The fullest expression of the varied culture and intellectual tastes which were quite as much a part of Tom Poole as his personal characteristics of manner and of temper was to be found in his house—a plain substantial house in a street in Stowey, whose commonplace appearance furnishes a very parable of what he was doing all his life—working out his own ideals in whatever the material might be that lay ready to his hand. Upstairs on the second floor was the 'delicious room'¹ which he called his 'Book-room,' a delightful apartment lined with well-chosen volumes, as was

¹ Mrs. Anstice.

also the ante-room through which it was entered. There hung Poole's copy by Curnock, a Bristol artist, of Allston's portrait of Coleridge. The original, which is the only good portrait of S. T. Coleridge in existence, belonged to his Bristol friend Mr. Wade, who told Poole that he had left it to S. T. Coleridge himself in his will, but thought Hartley 'too unsettled' to transfer the bequest to him. Poole suggested Sara's name, but apparently the suggestion was not accepted, and the portrait has fortunately found its way to the National Portrait Gallery. The book-room also contained a fine portrait of Sir Humphry Davy; whilst on the mantelpiece stood the exquisite Barberini vase—that triumphant copy from the antique which was the Wedgwoods' 'masterpiece, and of which they executed but few examples, one of which they presented to Tom Poole.

A portrait of Mrs. Sandford, by Raeburn, hung in the parlour below, and there, too, stood her piano, ready for her to use whenever she visited her uncle. She with her husband and children had spent a month in Stowey in the summer of 1836, but her little brood had outgrown the accommodations of Mr. Tom Poole's house, so that a detachment of the nursery had to be located in lodgings near at hand. The two eldest boys were old enough to be sent by their great-uncle to the

Stowey National School, thereby both illustrating his faith in the excellence of his Cousin John's adaptation of the Bell and Lancaster systems, and carrying out a favourite theory that the children of all classes might with advantage take their first steps in learning at the same school. Harry, the elder of the brothers, remembered the experience very well. The Sandfords were on their way to their new home at Dunchurch, close to Rugby, where Mrs. Sandford soon founded a Female Friendly Society on her uncle's model—I believe it still exists—and threw herself with ardour into all the avocations of a country clergyman's wife. She and her husband were now both deeply touched with those aspirations after a higher corporate life, expressing itself in improved order, more reverent worship, and greater activity in good works, which were almost everywhere arising as the complement of the old evangelical movement; and in the *Life of Bunsen* there is preserved a pleasant record of his impression of Dunchurch as a model parish, the place which he would choose before all others for his son Henry's first curacy.

'I hope I shall some day or another see your house,' writes Tom Poole, in a letter which is endorsed 'My dearest uncle's last, August 22, 1837.' It was written late in the evening, and over against the date the writer's hand has added the words,

‘An hour before midnight—an emblem of my age.’ The letter contains a message to the children, begging a tear from each of them for the death of poor Jacky—evidently the favourite monkey whose pranks were the subject of many a story among Mr. Poole’s neighbours.

‘Alas! alas!’ he writes, ‘he caught cold one day, and in spite of the tenderest attention, died the next. He is, according to the practice of the ancient Egyptians towards their princes, sent to be embalmed.’

Perhaps this monkey may have been an African monkey, the gift of Mr. King, or of one of his sons, of whom the younger, William, seems to have been a favourite nephew. He was a great comfort to his uncle in an illness from which he suffered in 1830. Tom Poole rather enjoyed the naughtiness of his monkey, who loved to swoop down from his pole and carry off the caps of unwary errand boys who did not keep a sharp eye on his movements. Another great pet was a magnificent poodle, named Toby, a dog of great size and intelligence, who used to fetch Mr. Poole’s *manchet*¹ from the baker’s every morning, carrying a penny in the basket to pay for it. When his master died Toby crept under the bed whereon the body

¹ A manchet is a kind of breakfast cake, which I believe is peculiar to Somersetshire.

lay, and remained there broken-hearted till the funeral, after which he died almost immediately.

It will be well to conclude with the fine passage in which S. T. Coleridge has left on record his appreciation of his early friend. The short note to Poole, dated 'Friday, July 1830,' and written from Highgate, was designed as 'a MSS. proof' that Coleridge was 'yet in the land of the living,' and, what he trusts would be taken for granted without his adding it, 'most faithfully and affectionately' Poole's 'attached friend.' The note accompanied a copy of the second edition of *Church and State*. Across the letter, just below the date, is written—

'Chap. V., and from p. 143 to p. 183 will, I flatter myself, interest you.—S. T. C.'

But the note which contains the sketch of Poole's character is appended to p. 115; perhaps Coleridge knew too well the retiring disposition of the man he had to do with to venture to bring it to his notice. 'It is a remarkable proof of my uncle's spirit,' wrote Mrs. John Sandford, 'that he never directed even my attention to the passage. But there was in him a singular absence of all ostentation. . . .'

And this is how Coleridge speaks of his friend :—

‘A man whom I have seen now in his harvest-field, or the market; now in a committee-room with the Rickmans and Ricardos of the age; at another time with Davy, Woolaston, and the Wedgwoods; now with Wordsworth, Southey, and other friends not unheard of in the republic of letters; now in the drawing-rooms of the rich and the noble; and now presiding at the annual dinner of a Village Benefit Society; and in each seeming to be in the very place he was intended for, and taking the part to which his tastes, talents, and attainments gave him an admitted right.

‘And yet this is not the most remarkable, not the most individualising trait of our friend’s character. It is almost overlooked in the originality and raciness of his intellect; in the life, freshness, and practical value of his remarks and notices, truths plucked as they are growing, and delivered to you with the dew on them, the fair earnings of an observing eye, armed and kept on the watch by thought and meditation; and above all in the integrity, *i.e.* *entireness* of his being (*integrum et sine cerva vas*), the steadiness of his attachments, the activity and persistence of a benevolence, which so graciously presses a warm temper into the service of a yet warmer heart, and so lights up the little flaws and imperfections incident to humanity, in its choicest specimens, that were their removal at the option of his friends (and few have, or deserve to have, so many!), not a man among them but would vote for leaving him as he is. . . .’

‘A correspondent of mine in America,’ wrote H. N. Coleridge to T. Poole in September 1836,

‘wished much to know of whom was the beautiful

contrast of
his versatile
spontaneity
his feelings
the deepest
+ interest in
work he had
hand.

character in the *Church and State* of S. T. C. . . . Of course you know the passage. *Absit Omen!* but I think that in substance it might be worthily converted into an epitaph.'

Yes: and who so fit to pen Tom Poole's epitaph as the friend whom he loved above all others, and whose friendship was the chief treasure, as it was also the most remarkable experience, of his life? I feel that I cannot conclude this book more fitly than by thus leaving the last word about Thomas Poole to be spoken by S. T. Coleridge.

INDEX

- ACLAND, Mr. and Mrs., of Fairfield, ii. 118, 189, 228.
 Acland, Sir Peregrine, ii. 307, 308.
 Adscombe, i. 174, 175, 179, 181.
 Aisholt, a village near Stowey, ii. 1, 183.
 Albyn, Mrs. St., i. 240, 249.
 Alfoxden, i. 225, 241, 242, 265, 270; ii. 7, 191, 194.
 Amiens, Treaty of, ii. 74-76.
 Anstice, Joseph, first Prof. of Classics at the London University, i. 50; son of Penelope Poole, 51; adopted at Enmore, ii. 268.
 Anstice, Mrs. Joseph (see E. S. R. Poole).
 Anstice, Robert, grandfather of Joseph Anstice, i. 46, 47; a remarkable man, 48, 49; his mathematical tastes, 52; warning to T. P., 92; 274, 275; ii. 291.
 Anstice, William, married Penelope Poole, i. 51, 52, 53.
 Anti-Jacobin, the, i. 243.
 Antwerp, ii. 96, 99.
 Armistead, Mrs., ii. 89.
 Arrowsmith, ii. 141, 142, 143.
 Auvergne, extinct volcanoes in, ii. 82.
 BAKER, WILLIAM, ii. 288-291, 293.
 Ball, Sir Alexander, ii. 239.
 Ballads, the Lyrical, i. 263; issuing from the press, 272, 273; mentioned by Mrs. S. T. C., 301, 302; ii. 28, 43; new edition, 27, 28.
 Banks, Sir Joseph, i. 46, 95.
 Barbey, the Abbé, i. 116, 117, 165; ii. 33, 35.
 Barthélemy, the Ex-Director, ii. 84.
 Bartholomew, John, i. 225, 226, 240, 241.
 Beaumont, Sir George and Lady, i. 301; ii. 138, 251.
 Beddoes, Dr., i. 230, 253, 254, 256.
 Bell and Lancaster, ii. 125, 126, 268, 269, 318.
 Book Society, the Stowey, i. 44, 45, 85, 86; ii. 201.
 Bridgwater, i. 35, 47, 48, 49, 145, 161, 208. The Market Cross, i. 275; ii. 191, 192.
 Brissot, i. 101, 112, 113.
 Broomfield, ii. 291, 292.
 Buckland, Dr., ii. 291.
 Buckle, Captain, ii. 164, 165.
 Buonaparte, Joseph, ii. 76.
 Buonaparte, Napoleon. Campaign in Italy, i. 219, 220; his levée, ii. 82, 86, 114; prospects of invasion by, 119, 154, 218.
 Burnett, George, i. 99, 207, 208, 209; ii. 132-137.

- CARNOT, the Ex-Director, ii. 85.
- Chester, John, i. 279; ii. 35, 181, 214.
- Christabel*, to be published, ii. 56.
- Clarkson, Thos., visits Bridgewater, i. 48; 113, 252; ii. 161, 162, 163, 165, 166, 167.
- Cobbett, ii. 203.
- Coleridge, Berkeley, the infant, i. 281; death of, 289, 293; ii. 265.
- Coleridge, David Hartley, i. 157, 161, 199, 200, 203; ii. 23, 25, 31; with Derwent, 32, 35, 184, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 269.
- Coleridge, Rev. George, ii. 179.
- Coleridge, Henry Nelson, ii. 294, 299; reply to T. P. concerning *Table Talk*, 303, 307, 321.
- Coleridge, S. T. Letter to T. P., i. 1; story of his meeting T. P. in the guise of a workman, examined, 83; first acquaintance with T. P., 85; first visit to Stowey, 95; T. P.'s account of him, 96, 97; local traditions, 100-102; notice in contemp. journal, 103, 104, 105; his marriage, 121, 127, 128; Redcliff Hill, 129; at Stowey, 130; the *Watchman*, 130-137, 139-142, 145; aid offered by T. P. and other friends, 142-144; his reply, 144-146; at Stowey, 146; return to Bristol, 147; struggles and perplexities, 148-159; interest in T. P.'s pursuits, 171, 172; desire to live at Stowey, 173-175, 179-182; taking laudanum for neuralgia, 177; agitated letter, 183-193; decision, and move to Stowey, 195-197; arrival, 198, 199; the cottage, 200, 201, 209; refuge with T. P., 201, 202; his garden, 203, 204; grotesque fun, 210-212; friendship with Lamb, 212-216; with Wordsworth, 223, 224-227; straitened circumstances, 228; his tragedy, 231, 232; ii. 226; letter to Thelwall, 236-238; the *Ancient Mariner*, 247-250, 302; the Wedgwood annuity, 257-261; Summer at Stowey, 262, 263; to T. P. on his brother's death, 268, 269; going to Germany, 270-274; *Satyrane's Letters*, 277; his child's death, 290-296; longing for T. P., 297; question of future home, 299; at Stowey again, 303; his pens, 304, 306; the Devil's Walk, 307; in London writing for *M. Post*, 307; ii. 1, 73; wish to find house in Stowey, 1, 2, 5, 7-9; arrival in the N., 9; letters written in pain and weariness, 22, 23; longing for T. P., 26, 27; opinion of Locke, 31; on influence of riches, 40; his own ill-health, 44-48; desire to winter abroad, 44; vexed with T. P., 63, 64; on death of T. P.'s mother, 65; counsels and criticisms, 66-72; coming to Stowey, 72; on T. P.'s going to Paris, 79; German portrait, 79; on T. P.'s return in ill-health, 99; introd. T. P. to Rickman, 103; at Stowey, 114; with T. P. in Abingdon Street, 121; on T. P.'s employment in London, 122; leaving England, 137-139; opinion of Rickman, 141; return from Malta, 170; at Stowey, 180-182; writes to J. Wedgwood, 183, 187; motto for Friendly Society, 190; benefit from stay at Stowey, 194; on

- T. P.'s urging him to exertion, 195; on T. P.'s walks, 196; his talk, 199, 200; end of visit to Stowey, 201, 202; first lecture at Royal Inst., 204; reopens corresp. with T. P., 226; the *Friend*, 226, 228, 229, 231, 232, 237, 240, 241, 242, 304; received by the Morgans, 242; performance of his tragedy, 244; to T. P. about the *Remorse*, 244, 245; to T. P. in 1821, 279; Davy on S. T. C.'s conversation, 286; W. Baker on S. T. C.'s conversation, 290; death, 294; letters to T. P., 295; epitaph, 300, 301; *Table Talk*, 303, 304; *Church and State*, 304, 320, 321; on Wordsworth's poetry, 307; portrait, 317; sketch of T. P.'s character, 320-322.
- Coleridge, Mrs. S. T., i. 121, 130, 150, 156, 190, 198, 200, 202, 237; to T. P. announcing her child's death, 262, 289, 300; Lyrical Ballads mentioned by, 301, 302; ii. 17, 23, 25, 31, 34, 35, 45, 46, 99, 194; letter to T. P. apologising for delayed arrival in Stowey, 1807, 181; recollections of visit to Stowey, 182; 202, 204, 230, 241, 245, 250, 251, 259, 260, 265, 275, 280, 291, 296, 307.
- Coleridge, Sara (Mrs. H. N. C.), ii. 15, 16, 251, 266, 275, 276-278, 296; on influence of her father's writings, 297, 298, 317.
- Cornwallis, Lord, ii. 76.
- Cottle, Joseph, i. 127, 129, 137, 148, 184, 191, 192, 193, 194, 211, 227; ii. 190, 193, 197, 302.
- Coulsons, the, American friends of T. P., i. 15, 16, 17.
- Crescelly, seat of Mrs. Wedgwood's father, ii. 100, 101.
- Crosse, Andrew, ii. 291, 292, 293, 312.
- Cruikshank, John, i. 143, 174.
- Cruikshank, Miss, ii. 201.
- Cussens, Nancy, ii. 95.
- DAVY, Sir Humphry, i. 251; the carver's son of Tredrea, 254; comes to Bristol to the Pneumatic Institution, 276; ii. 20, 39, 73, 78; his visit to Paris, 82; lecturing at the Royal Institution, 102, 103; friendship with T. P., 128, 138, 152; letter from Ireland, 170; wishes S. T. C. to lecture at Royal Institution, 193, 204, 208, 215, 227; learns agriculture of T. P., 284; tour with Purkis, 285; life in London, 286; at Stowey in ill-health, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292; dead, 294, 311.
- De Quincey, i. 111; ii. 190, 193, 203, 304-306.
- Devonshire, Duchess of, ii. 27.
- EDEN, Sir F.'s pamphlet, ii. 224.
- Egmont, Lord, i. 174; ii. 182; on S. T. C.'s conversation, 199, 200.
- Elsworth, Sir Richard, i. 8.
- Estlin, i. 143, 184, 185, 227, 230, 257, 259, 271.
- Evans, Mrs., of Darley, i. 152, 153, 154.
- FÉNELON, still spoken of with veneration, ii. 91.
- Fisher, Dr. John, vicar of Stowey, i. 65, 170, 241.
- Fourcroy, A. F. de, ii. 85.
- Fox, C. J., ii. 27, 28, 74, 75, 88, 153, 157, 160, 162.
- Fricker, Mrs., ii. 24, 44.

- GARNETT, Mr., American friend of T. P., i. 17, 18, 109, 118, 120, 171, 230.
 Gillman, Mr., ii. 259.
 Grave, General de, ii. 88.
 Green, Mr., ii. 295.
 Greta Hall, description sent to T. P., ii. 10.
 Gross, Captain Samuel, ii. 2, 14.
- HALLAM, ARTHUR, ii. 279.
 Hansard, ii. 139.
 Haskins, Mr., i. 109, 123.
 Hobbes, ii. 31.
 Holland, Lord, ii. 85, 90.
 Horner, Leonard, ii. 293.
- KEMBLE, at Paris, 1802, ii. 85.
 King, Mr. and Mrs. (see Sara Poole).
 King, William, ii. 273.
- LAMB, CHARLES, i. 172, 203, 209, 212, 213, 214, 215, 251; visit to Stowey, 216-218; to Southey on the *Ancient Mariner*, 302; ii. 7; describes Rickman, 104; 198.
 Langford, Dr., vicar of Stowey, i. 246; ii. 46.
 Lasteyrie, Mons. de, ii. 221, 222.
 Lawson, Sir Gilfred, ii. 10.
 Leibnitz, ii. 31.
 Leighton, Archbishop, ii. 198.
 Lepaux, a French charletan, i. 243.
 Lewis, Mr., curate of Over Stowey, i. 103.
 Lloyd, Charles, i. 155-158, 172, 189, 192, 194, 206, 213; visits Lamb in London, 215; letter from T. P. to, 228; 251, 262, 302.
 Locke, S. T. C.'s disparagement of, ii. 31; T. P.'s defence of, 32-36.
 Lovell, i. 99.
- MACKINTOSH, Sir James, ii. 28, 30, 31, 81, 90, 151, 176.
 Majendie, Dr., vicar of Stowey, i. 27, 28; rector of Hungerford, resigns Stowey, 59, 60, 61; letter of T. P., 61, 81.
 Marie Antoinette, ii. 89.
 Marshmill, home of the John Pooles, i. 11, 12, 15, 22, 23, 28, 29, 31, 35, 56, 79, 100, 108, 111, 123, 124, 126, 135, 136, 137, 163, 164, 244.
 Melville, ii. 161.
 Milton, i. 193; ii. 8, 99, 306.
 Monod, Mons., ii. 116.
 Montmorency, Madame de, ii. 86.
 Morgans, the, ii. 204.
Morning Post, i. 307; ii. 4, 6; T. P.'s contributions, 10, 14, 15.
- NECKAR, ii. 254.
 Nelson, Lord, ii. 83.
 Newton, Sir Isaac, ii. 31, 33, 36.
 Nile, the battle of, i. 274, 275, 276.
- PAINE, TOM, i. 34, 35, 36, 40; ii. 85.
 Pains, Mons., a French priest, i. 114, 115, 116, 165.
 Pantisocratic Scheme, i. 96, 99, 128.
 Parry, Dr., ii. 222.
Paul and Virginia, ii. 35.
 Perceval, Mons., a French refugee, ii. 114.
 Pitt, Mr., i. 20, 209; ii. 6, 144, 153, 154, 156, 157, 160, 162.
 Political economy, ii. 106.
 Poole, Alice, aunt of T. P., i. 7.
 Poole, Charlotte, i. 12, 17, 23, 40, 43, 55, 56; her journal, 15, 23, 32, 35, 39, 40, 54, 79, 90, 109, 111, 118; notice of "Coldridge," 124; journal, 127, 135, 136, 146, 222, 235, 246, 251, 274.

- Poole, Elizabeth (Mrs. John Sandford), ii. 262-265; T. P.'s affection for her, 262, 272, 273; her marriage, 273-275; 293, 298, 311, 317, 318, 320.
- Poole, Elizabeth S. R. (Mrs. Joseph Anstice), i. 49; ii. 264-273, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279; on T. P.'s character and appearance, 312, 313.
- Poole, John, of Marshmill, i. 7, 11, 29.
- Poole, the Rev. John, of Enmore, son of the above, educated at Oxford, i. 8, 9, 11; kept a journal, 18; severe illness, 31, 32; 48, 79, 80, 85, 86, 87, 88; reads Latin with T. P., 89; Fellow of Oriol, 67; entry in his journal about Southey and Coleridge, 102, 103; 108, 109, 111, 163, 164, 207; giving himself to education, ii. 124; *Village School Improved*, 125; Enmore school, 126, 127, 266, 268, 293, 318; asked to take in the *Friend*, 232.
- Poole, Mrs. John, i. 135.
- Poole, Joseph Ruscombe, i. 67, 68, 85, 89.
- Poole, Nathanael, i. 68, 80.
- Poole, Penelope, i. 12, 13, 25, 51, 110, 246; ii. 149, 196, 268.
- Poole, Richard, only brother of T. P., i. 3, 68; educated for medical profession, 9; goes to Sherborne, 14; sympathy with T. P., 35; called a flaming democrat, 62, 64; letter to S. T. C., 137-140; illness and death, 267; birth of his daughter, 268.
- Poole, Mrs. Richard, i. 268; ii. 262, 275.
- Poole, Sarah (Mrs. King), only sister of T. P., i. 10, 15, 29, 40, 76; marriage, 181, 182; Mr. King, ii. 164, 165, 167.
- Poole, Thomas. Birth, i. 3; his cousin Penelope, 13, 14; early resolve to be useful, 18, 19; sent as a delegate to London, 20; acquaintance with Purkis, 23; Stowey Sunday School, 28, 58; his uncle's death, 29, 30; care of his cousin John, 31, 32; his politics, 34, 35, 41, 42; studying daily, 43; his "emigration," 54; letter to Dr. Majendie, 56; on retirement of Purkis from business, 67-70; seeking employment as a working tanner, 71-76, 80-83; dark view of politics, 77; America considered as an asylum of peace and liberty, 77, 78; brings S. T. C. and Southey to Marshmill, 100, 107; his illness, 108, 109; first letter to S. T. C., 121; contribution to *Watchman*, 123; verses to S. T. C., 124-126; to Purkis about S. T. C., 150; anger at Mrs. Evans, 152; letter to S. T. C., 160; takes Ward as a pupil, 160; new bark mill, 171; finds house for S. T. C. in Stowey, 179-199; letter about Napoleon's victories, 219; to Mrs. St. Albyn about Wordsworth, 240; takes W. W. and S. T. C. to Marshmill, 246; affection for T. Wedgwood, 255; to S. T. C. with copy of Wedgwood's offer of annuity, 257; grief at brother's death, 269; first introduction to Davy, 276; to S. T. C. in Germany, 277-287; to S. T. C. on his child's death, 290; to S. T. C. on newspaper work, ii. 2, 6; his letters in the *M. Post*, 11-15; on paper money, 17; greatly missed by S. T. C.,

- 25, 26; letters to S. T. C., 28-30; on the food riots, 42, 43; letter of advice and encouragement, 44, 45; T. P. overseer, 47; misunderstanding with S. T. C., 52, 61, 63; view of his character and situation, 67; visit to Paris, 76-78; presented to Buonaparte, 82; letters from Paris, 83-90; home through Belgium and Holland, 91-99; introduction to Rickman, 106; invited to make abstract of returns, 109, 110; to S. T. C. combating anticipation of early death, 115-117; interest in volunteer movement, 116, 117, 120; friendship with Rickman, 128; difficulty between them, 129-132; abstract completed, 129; to Rickman on his possessions and surroundings, 145; on T. Wedgwood's death, 149; on the death of Pitt, 155; on his eloquence, 156, 157; year's abstinence from snuff, 167; on Ireland, 170, 171; on religion, 171-173; on S. T. C.'s farewell note, 174, 175; his Female Friendly Society, 188-190; De Quincey's sketch of him, 191; scene near Cummage, 202; to Davy on S. T. C.'s lectures, 205; his copying-books, 207; not entirely for Free Trade, 220; sympathy with Spain, 224, 225; interest in the *Friend*, 228, 232, 233; asked to write for it, 231, 234; entreated to visit Grasmere, 229, 230, 234; does not do so, 242, 243; school at Stowey, 248; a magistrate, 250; to Rickman on the general distress, 252, 253; meets S. T. C. at Purkis's, 254; invites Hartley to Stowey, 257; special affection for his brother's orphan daughter, 264, 271; at Highgate, 280, 294; feels the death of S. T. C., 294, 295; absence of egotism, 296; death, 302; to H. N. C. about *Table Talk*, 304; his hasty temper, 308-310; rough exterior, 312; great power of sympathy, 313, 314; his book-room, 317; his pets, 319; last letter to his niece, 319; his retiring disposition, 320.
- Poole, Thomas, father of the above, i. 7, 8, 10; on keeping accounts, 24; "often very disagreeable," 40; very ill, 75; death, 117.
- Poole, Mrs. Thomas, mother of T. P., i. 10, 160, 164.
- Poole, William, of Marshmill, i. 7.
- Poole, William, uncle of T. P., i. 175, 176.
- Poor laws, ii. 106, 107, 108, 109, 113, 116.
- Priestley, Dr., ii. 33.
- Purkis, Samuel, i. 23, 25, 26, 27, 30, 32, 36; letters from Poole, 25, 29, 32, 36, 52, 53, 90, 92, 94; his article in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 39, 95; letters to Poole, 150, 151; described by S. T. C., 271; a lover of S. T. C., ii. 5; 78, 119, 147, 152, 154, 156, 204, 205, 215, 254, 255, 284.
- RICH, Mrs., ii. 257.
- Rickman, John, i. 252; ii. 103, 104, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110, 118, 129, 139-141, 144; on his marriage, 148, 153, 154, 158, 159, 160, 161; at Stowey, 168, 170, 187, 215; opinion of the *Friend*, 238, 239; to Poole, Feb. 1815, 248, 249.
- Robespierre, i. 95, 100, 104, 105; ii. 4, 90.

- Rochefoucauld, Madame de, ii. 86.
- Roskilly, Mr., curate of Stowey, i. 25, 27.
- Roy, General, made map of Highlands, ii. 140.
- Rubens, ii. 97, 98.
- ST. PIERRE, BERNARDIN DE, ii. 90.
- Sandford, Archdeacon, ii. 273, 314.
- Sandford, Bishop, ii. 273, 274.
- Seaforth, Lord, Governor of Barbadoes, ii. 164.
- Sharpe, ii. 28, 30.
- Smith, Adam, i. 97; ii. 80.
- Southey, Robert, i. 71, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 128, 251; at Exeter, 303; his part in the Devil's Walk, 302, 306, 307; ii. 65, 103, 106, 120, 136, 137, 177, 178, 204, 230; on death of T. P., 311, 312.
- Southey, Tom, ii. 177.
- Stillingfleet, ii. 31, 201.
- Stowey, Nether, i. 1, 3, 18, 23, 25, 27, 28, 30, 55, 56, 57, 74, 75, 100, 101, 109, 147, 148; S. T. C.'s cottage in, 201; the church choir, 246, 247; 262, 296; S. T. C.'s desire to find another home there, ii. 1-10; but must have retired study, 9; regrets, 23, 24; visit of S. T. C., 54, 125.
- Stowey, Over, village of, i. 11, 14; Sunday school, 28; Mr. Lewis, curate of, 39; ii. 125.
- Stuart, editor of the *Morning Post*, i. 261, 279, 282; ii. 6, 11, 12, 13.
- Symes, Richard, i. 35; spreads report about T. P. and Paine's *Rights of Man*, 36-38.
- THELWALL, JOHN, i. 154, 203-206, 218; at Alfoxden, 232, 233; S. T. C.'s opinion of, 234, 235, 236, 238, 242, 243.
- Tollet, Mr., ii. 223.
- Trevelyan, Sir John, ii. 291, 293.
- Turner, Jane, ii. 267, 268.
- WADE, Mr., i. 184, 191; ii. 317.
- Walford, John, narrative of, ii. 234-237.
- Ward, Miss, i. 83, 104; ii. 79.
- Ward, Thomas, i. 82, 159, 283, 284; mending pens, 304-306; ii. 31, 32; taken into partnership, 145, 147, 228, 233, 238, 253, 258, 262, 288.
- Warwick, Henrietta, i. 131-134, 166, 270.
- Waterloo, ii. 251.
- Watt, young, of Birmingham, ii. 19.
- Wedgwood, John, i. 256.
- Wedgwood, Josiah, i. 256, 259, 271; ii. 10, 61, 123, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 183, 185, 187, 208, 216, 220, 240, 247, 266, 274.
- Wedgwood, Josiah, son of the above, ii. 217, 218, 219, 249.
- Wedgwood, Thomas, i. 253, 254, 276; ii. 19, 28, 30, 31, 32, 64, 73, 76, 77, 80, 83, 99, 101, 114, 116, 119, 123, 129, 130, 131, 138, 149, 152, 175, 207, 208; Poole's reminiscences of, ii. 209-214, 294.
- Wedgwoods, the, i. 16, 142, 235, 251, 253; ii. 24, 25, 39, 219.
- Wedgwoods, the two Miss, ii. 20.
- White, Mrs., of Huntspill, i. 207, 208.
- Wilberforce, i. 27, 28.
- Williams, Helen M., ii. 85, 90.
- Willmott, Mr., i. 235.
- Wordsworth, Dorothy, i. 223, 224, 226; ii. 121, 307.
- Wordsworth, William, i. 106, 117, 157, 206, 223, 224, 225, 227, 228, 232, 233, 234, 238,

- 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 248, 249, 250, 262, 264, 270, 271, 278, 287, 298, 299; ii. 1, 7, 8, 9, 27, 39, 43, 46; letters to T. P., 51, 52; on his poems, 54, 70; about S. T. C.'s going to the Azores, 58; on the Peace of Amiens, 74; hypochondriacal feelings, 120; interest in education, 123, 127, 177; holds S. T. C. to be pitied rather than blamed, 178, 180, 203, 228; anxiety about the *Friend*, 229, 233, 238, 245, 247, 250, 251; the *Excursion*, 269, 270, 271, 307, 309.
- YOUNG, ARTHUR, ii. 59.

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